Creating a New World: Explorations of the Sci-Fi/Fantasy Genre

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Introduction to the Project

This project is an exploration into the fantasy world of Ledarhig. Within it, humans share a world with many other fantastical races of beings, monsters, and gods that directly interfere with their lives. Twelve distinct regions are explored, each of a particular race or kingdom, each a discussion of its history, society, and some enlightening cultural information. There are also maps included of each region and a few maps of the whole of Ledarhig, as well as some rough conceptual sketches of some of the beings that inhabit it. It is all done in the guise and persona of Perdruin, a leading scholar in the main kingdom of Erhfaelis. Perdruin (PĀR-drū-in) was commissioned by the late King Tychold to travel across Ledarhig to chronicle its various races and kingdoms, which took several years. Thus it will read much like an encyclopedia, divided into each of the twelve regions. There is also a beginning introduction to the overall history and religious pantheon of Ledarhig, as well as its races and how they came to be. For the reader’s ease, a glossary has been included at the end of Perdruin’s encyclopedia, containing the most important names of people, places, and concepts and brief descriptions. It was my intention to give enough of a glimpse into each kingdom so as to be memorable, but not to give too many details so as to overwhelm the rest of the text. I hope that you will find each kingdom has its own character and personality, and when finished have a good sense of the vast world of Ledarhig.

I have heard before that JRR Tolkien did not write Lord of the Rings to write a story, but to write a new world, to explore its languages and people. Though I am not writing a story with this project, I am trying to create that world that I hope to one day develop into both books and video games. I have included a synopsis of a first book that I have made plans for at the end of Perdruin’s discussion. This synopsis includes an overall plot of the book, quick blurbs of its main characters, and description of the four main stories or plots involving those characters in the first book.

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank Mr. Mark Neely for advising me in this enormous undertaking. He both helped me to keep focused and gave plenty of encouragement, as well as provided critical feedback to aid me.
- I would also like to thank my friends and family who were patient and helpful with my many questions and lists of names, drawings, concepts, etc…
Creative Abstract and Rationale

Since I was a child, I have been creating fantasy worlds in my mind. It first began with my toys, giving them background, motivations, settings. As I grew older, it expanding into video games and written works. As I entered college, I began to see the value of the creation of fantasy as more than just fun, but an important tool. With the fantasy genre, whole worlds and ideas can be explored that we have never seen, never thought about. And within the fantasy genre, we can also explore our own world and its inter-relationships, its history and societies, its culture. With this in mind, I decided to pursue the concept of a fantasy world I developed a few years ago, much never attempted to flesh out. It began with a map, and through a long process has become a more fully realized fantasy world.

The rationale for this project, and its significance with my area of study, creative writing and medieval history, is an intensive experience within a deep and expansive creative endeavor, which calls upon various themes that relate to the study of history, society, culture, and geography. In creating a fantasy world, I not only had to develop interesting (or so I hope) characters and races of beings, places and societies, but I also had to give them a level of depth and roundedness, as much as possible within the time constraints. I could not only create a world, but an interrelated world with common themes and uniting structures, so that each of the twelve regions of Ledarhig I developed would be unique and able to stand on its own, but also familiar enough to fit alongside the others. There was also a sense of plot and characterization that had to be worked into the overall study of Ledarhig as well. In a sense, this project called upon all of my studies in creative writing, to pull them all together in one giant project.

Along with the creative aspects for this project, I also had to consider various other ideas within the realm of Ledarhig. While it was a study in creative writing, this project also became a study in history, society, culture, and geography. To create a new world, I had to do some analyzing of these broad themes, and how to apply them. Here is a breakdown of what I considered with these themes while developing Ledarhig:

History: the tapestry of a people, of a continent, the connections and influences within and across boundaries. Before I began to develop each region fully, I had to create a rough history of Ledarhig, to understand when and where the different races interacted with one another, why they did so, and the direct effects of that interaction, the most significant interaction typically being war. History shapes how a people develop, and I had to consider that while developing my own.

Society: how a people structure themselves. While developing regions, I found that how a people structure themselves can say a lot about the character of those people: whether there are a free democracy or a hereditary monarchy or any other type of government; the presence of societies within a society, such as class system, social clubs, even gangs. I tried to give each race of beings a distinct social structure that had greater implications on their character as a people, and implications within their society as well.
Culture: how a people define themselves. Such a topic could be endless, so I tried to develop a few unique and interesting bits of cultural information about each race of beings, again to give them character as well as color and life. Even small bits of culture can make a race far more colorful and alive than whole histories and societal studies. When I tried to develop cultures, I tried to make each unique, but to also develop common themes across the races.

Geography: the relationship between the other themes, their connections within a people and with others. In a way, geography takes the other three themes, and affects relationships between different groups based on them. In other words, I feel that the separate histories of two neighboring peoples can affect their relationship with one another. Culture spills over boundaries, history weaves people together, societies accept or reject the presence of neighbors...I feel that geography describes the complex systems of inter-connections between peoples, and I had to keep that in mind while I developed Ledarhig.

While the fantasy genre not only provides a tool with which we can explore the themes of our own world, it is perhaps most powerful as a tool to explore what does not exist in our world (and in doing so, evaluate it), what I call the great question, “what if?” For example, there are no winged humans in our world. But if there were, what ramifications would that have? How would it structure the winged people; how would that affect wingless people? A particular “what if?” I sought to explore was the direct presence of supernatural beings, of gods in their world. The races of Ledarhig have seen the effects of their gods directly, physically; they all believe, without a doubt, in a single pantheon. But in structuring that, does it have any difference than the current situation in our world, with various religions, with no evidence but in faith? That is a third major rationale for my project: exploring the unknown, the seemingly impossible, and in doing so, gaining a better understanding and appreciation of what is known (or thought to be).

Ledarhig, my fantasy world, is now at a stage where it can be observed. There is still much to be worked on, but that is where the fantasy world develops into a career. I can continue to develop the world as I write potential books and/or help to develop video games based on the world. This would in part engage my readers玩家们 in the development of the world, as they would experience it; new worlds held only as myth before, great events that change the world they grew used to. These are only hopes at this point, but they illustrate the potential for such an endeavor in a career mindset. I plan to continue working on Ledarhig and other worlds as well, and hope to one day pursue it as a career. That is perhaps the greatest rationale for this project, as it represents my aspirations for the future.
I was forced to make many academic decisions during the course of my project:

- Many of my decisions were already made before I began the project, as I have previously worked on Ledarhig, especially the previous summer to establish a foundation to work from. I already had a map and the twelve kingdoms decided beforehand, and decided to stick with those twelve and not break them up further, so as the project would not get quickly out of hand. There was also a nice balance with the twelve I had already established, none too big to handle efficiently, and they had already identities in my mind.

- I decided to implicate all four themes I had discussed into each of the twelve regions, to give an equally rounded view of them where possible. Some of the kingdoms/regions, however, where not given the same depth. This I did for two main reasons: one, to limit the amount of work I could do on them, thus making the project more manageable in my time frame, and two, to give Ledarhig an element of mystery, of worlds waiting to be discovered by its characters and thus its readers. By leaving some kingdoms in mystery, I leave room for later explorations with reader/players, as well as give a sense of myth to the world.

- I decided that both written descriptions and rough sketches of various key characters would help to give both a visual for the reader, but also a description with which they might craft their own idea in their mind as well. This gives part of the world back to the reader, as a platform for their own imagination, not only viewing what I have created.

- I chose to use a character to present the information to give the world immediate life and realization. Had it come from me, it might have sounded more clinical and dry. Thus the narrator, Perduin, is an attempt to take the reader away from reality and put them in the world.

- I had to maintain some of our established vocabulary and even grammatical structure (such as ‘etc’, quotations, parentheses, etc.) in order to sustain a form that could be easily understood, but have its own unique flavor as well (new dating system, languages, expressions, etc.). In later writings more unique quirks of Ledarhig may enter its grammar and writing about it, but for the purposes of this project our common language is used to facilitate better comprehension.
To cite many specific sources that served as inspiration and context would be difficult, as my inspiration has been what I have learned over the course of my life about people and history. Everything from the history of Sparta to ancient Celtic mythology to a number of contemporary movies, books, and video games have each provided the inspiration and context for this project, I'm sure most in ways I have not realized. I can cite a few specific sources from which I drew ideas during this semester and the summer leading up to it:

Books:


Video Games:


Movies:


The Histories of Ledarhig and its Twelve Kingdoms

I, Perdruin, Priest in Chief of the Head Temple of Mighty Erhfael, set forth to describe the various peoples, regions, and histories of our ancient and glorious continent of Ledarhig at the behest of the late and most glorious King Tychof of the Erhfaelin Dynasty, father to our most noble King Hentiani. In completing such an enormous undertaking, I traveled across the breadth of Ledarhig for over three years, to chronicle the structures that define each of the twelve kingdoms, to uncover details in the great libraries, to seek knowledge from the world’s great scholars. Into some mighty kingdoms I was heartily welcomed, given all the aid and information I could ever need, often even asked to stay and help with their own scholarly work. Others obliged grudgingly, wanted to appear diplomatic but not wishing me to remain, sometimes not giving me any aid but only free use to whatever resources I could find. And some nations yet were hostile, inhospitable, even threatening my very life, so that I was forced to obtain what information I could from other sources, of which the magnificent libraries of old Grynhoelm were most helpful, as well as those from old Nehnemin and the scholars in the Western Keys, and especially the vast knowledge and wisdom of the Great Rettraer of the Leetneb Klan of the Northern Wastes. From these sources, as well as my own extensive travels and efforts with other scholars and historians (of which I made many close friends and allies), I was able to compile an extensive, though incomplete, study of our grand continent’s history. For the purposes of this first book, I sought only to give a brief overview of each kingdom, for the ease of the average reader. Much later I will attempt to use the rest of my notes to publish further studies of particular kingdoms, where I learned a far greater amount of information. Also included are printed maps of Ledarhig, and each region, and some novice sketches that I drew, to help to illustrate the marvelous things that I saw to the reader. Without further introduction, here follows my encyclopaedia of the histories of Ledarhig and its twelve kingdoms.

Here are a few guidelines for my encyclopaedia:

- I begin with a brief overall history of Ledarhig and its gods, for those unfamiliar with its legacy beyond their particular race.
- In each kingdom section, I try to highlight several aspects I consider important to understanding that kingdom: its geography and history, then its society, especially government, and finally its relationship to the gods and any revealing cultural information. I have tried to relate the character of its people through these aspects, where information was available.
- Gods are mentioned with their titles. This is for those scribes and scholars who are translating my text and may not be familiar with our particular names for the gods.
- All time is reckoned in the Erhfaelin Age system, meaning the count start over once a new Age has begun. The Erhfaelin systems of age are as follows: the First Age, from 0-422; the Magick Age, from 422-800 (0-378 GA); the Middle Age, from 800-1285 (0-485 MA); the Age of Haelschyn or Haelschyn Age, from 1285-1503 (0-218 HA); and finally the New Age, from 1503-1829 (0-326 NA).
- I have included a glossary at the end of important people, places, and concepts for reference.
An Overview in Brief of the History of Ledarhig and its Gods

(This history I took from an Erhfaelin religious text in the Great Temple, with my own notes. It regards the creation of the world, as well as the overview of the overall development of Ledarhig.)

In the beginning there was only the Essence of Life, Attyiae ((ÂT-yê-ä) “the breath of life”, mother goddess of life and growth), who breathed the breath of life. She gave breath until she filled the Void, and could breathe no longer. So Luebyohs ((LÔ-bê-ôsh) “the cold hand”, god of death and decay) came about to smother her breath until a balance was formed, that she might keep breathing. From this the world could be created, and Anadrihnoelm ((ûn-ÀD-rîn-ôlm) “the shoulder of the world”, god of earth and mountains) was born, to make her breath solid, the first of her children. The form was shapeless, and growing, so Attyiae birthed Daehmiae ((DÂ-mê-ä) “the flow of life”, goddess of water), to give shape to her hardened breath, and to flow her breath through Anad. These siblings were the Support of Life, its foundation and flow, and thus the world was born.

Once again the breath of Attyiae was filling the world, so she birthed Jykhelviae ((ji-KÊL-vê-ä) “the eater of life”, goddess of fire) to smother the flow of life, until again a balance was formed. To channel this destruction, Attyiae then birthed Sykattyohsm ((si-KÂT-tzê-ÖSH-êm) “the sharp hand of change”, god of air), to bring change to the world and complete the cycle of life and these siblings were the Manipulation of Life.

The cycle now maintained, Attyiae birthed Lynda! ((lin-DOL) “mother of plants”), crafter of the plants, and then Vaetigryn ((VÊT-ig-rîn) “lover of beasts”), who crafted the beasts to balance the plants, and more beasts to balance those beasts. And to continue the cycle, Phochyst ((FO-kist) “cloud-eye”, god of the sun, husband of Jykhelviae) was born, to give warmth to those who lived, and brother Naksent ((NOK-sênt) “sleep-guardian”, god of the moon, husband of Daehmiae) to balance his warmth, and let the living sleep, and the last of the Godchildren.

And after the life cycle began, and plants and beasts flourished, the Gods of the Second Generation (Anad, Daehmiae, Jykhelviae, and Sykatt) gathered with their mother. It was decided that new life must be created, beings that would rule the world, who would give form to the world, and shape it, who would make it flow and manipulate through destruction and change, and create their own cycle. Into these beings they would each place their best qualities: the stubborn sturdiness and strength of Anad, the flowing wisdom and calm of Daehmiae, the mischief, intelligence, and creativity of Sykatt, and the passion and emotions of Jykhelviae. Thus humans were formed, who would write the story of the gods upon the world they created. (Nine tribes of humans, all different, were created and placed in key spots on Ledarhig. They were the Avus, Alyn, Mishra, Heuvl, Boire, Hiaed, Jhavri, Myn’ Ithrest, and Enookin. They would soon discover magick, the Essence of Life that dwells in us all, and learn how to use it powers in their lives, how to draw it from each of the different gods to cast different effects. The greatest magi even learned to manipulate the elements of the earth, to heal fatal wounds, to conjure beasts from other planes, and even to raise the dead. This dangerous tool changed the lives of humans forever. Each group learned to draw upon it in different ways, for some through study and research, others through religious ceremonies, or shamanistic rituals to draw it
directly from the soul. Magick became a part of everyday life, loved by some, distrusted by others, misunderstood and underestimated by most. Its use evolved alongside the humans, and shaped their world.)

Long after the first humans had reigned (over 1200 years) and spread across Ledarhig, making their own kingdoms, fighting wars and shifting in power amongst themselves, the Gods of the Second Generation felt that the humans were imperfect, not strong enough, corrupted, arrogant. That perhaps in giving only small parts of themselves, their powers were not realized in humans. They spoke with mother Attyiae, who agreed to help them each create their own races. Thus the Haelschyn (HÅL-shín) were born, who were more concentrated beings of the four elements of life. One race for each of the four gods was born, who would contain the qualities of their god foremost, the children of the gods. Anadrihnoelm created the Jern (JURN), a stout, stubborn race that would be masters of the mountains. To the Jern he gave great strength to carve and mine stone, tough skin like the rocks, and wide eyes to see in the dark caverns of the world. They are a hearty, strong-willed race. Daehmiae, the Flux, created the Qyt (KÉT), a mysterious, peaceful race of water-dwellers. She gave them gills and fins to breathe underwater, and a tentacled head sensitive to the currents and pressure. They are a mercantile race who care little for war but ably defend themselves. Jykhelviae, Queen Wrath, created her Inidra (in-ĬD-drū), a race of passion and the grace of fire. She gave her Inidra a dark reddish skin to protect them from the desert sun, unrivaled speed to cross the hot sands quickly, and eyes that burn like white fire. They are a fiery, warlike race. And lastly, Sykattyohsm created the Navok (NĀ-vōk), a tall, winged race, powerful in magick and highly intelligent. Sykatt granted them powerful wings to soar the winds, high skulls to fit their organs that grant such power in magick. They are a cruel race, dedicated to conquering and enslaving the world. Thus the four races were created, and finally placed in the world to grow and carve their own space in Ledarhig. (This was known as The Abandonment by humans, as before the Haelschyn were created, the second generation gods focused all their attentions upon them, and the humans felt the loss in their lives, hence the Abandonment.)

After these races were created, a Pact of the Gods was made. No more races were to be created, as it would create to fierce a competition on Ledarhig, and only end in tragedy. The gods also agreed to not interfere with the races of Ledarhig, only providing guidance, but casting no magick or using their power in the world, to prevent an all out war across the lands of their creations, which would only destroy all they created. This did not satisfy the Quiet Mother, however. The Haelschyn proved not so perfect, at least in the eyes of Attyiae. Perhaps containing too much of their patron gods, the races of the world began to fight bitterly, with a heavy loss of life, especially for the humans. Attyiae grew concerned over the destruction of her creation, the world, as the great amounts of death were so contrary to her nature. So, as mother, she created her own Haelschyn in secret, that would live in peace together, in harmony with life, and when the other races destroyed each other, they could come forth to heal the land. Thus she created the Arrechi on a far away island, who were the essence of beauty, the worshippers of life and growth, and its protectors. But when the influence of Luebyohs appeared on Ledarhig, she could
The Great Founding Tribes!

Avus
Boire
D.AJ
Enookin
Heuvl
Jhavri
Myn' lthrest
Nehne
Ollhrest

not stand to see such blight upon her creation. She sent her Arrechi forth, and broke the Pact of the Gods, and they purged the taint of Luebyohs from the world. (This was called the Discarding by the humans, as their last true god had left them, and they were now alone without a guiding deity to aid them, or even to listen. This was a major event in Ledarhig history, as hundreds of thousands wept for years over their loss, feelings of inadequacy, failure, and loss of direction abounded. Eventually the humans recovered, especially with the aid of demi-gods (more on them later)).

The Pact was broken, and the gods furious with their mother. Vaetigryn was especially angry, and having no Haelschyn race of his own, decided he would avenge by casting a large spell upon the Myn’ Ithrest humans, to change them into beast-men, mutating her race while making his own, the Kruejar (krū-ā-jūr). Also angry was Naksent, who had long been jealous of his brother Phochyst, as everyone reveled in his light, and went reluctantly into the night under Naksent’s watch. With the help of Vaetigryn, he made his own race that would live under his glow, and not his brother’s, and the Kyslm (KIS-lêm) were born.

Now seeing things were growing out of hand, and that their first creations, the humans, were being destroyed, the gods chose to intervene again, to aid the mighty Grynnish Empire, by giving them a champion. They chose Erhfael (UR-fäl), orphaned boy of great power, and bade him enter a Labyrinth of challenges, that would teach him and forge him into the perfect king. Erhfael emerged from the Labyrinth and led his people to make the kingdom of Erhfaelis. Upon his death, he was given the status of a demi-god, of the pantheon but in a lower position, and with less power, able to give immortal guidance to his kingdom of Erhfaelis. Other demi-gods have been born as well, to lead other human kingdoms: Neyjek of the North, and Anagh Lladyn of the Forsaken. More may come after as well. So without gods, the humans may struggle on under their own deities, while the Haelschyn try to take more of their land. That is how it stands now, the history of Ledarhig and its gods until now.
The Northern Wastes

The first region I shall strive to illuminate is the vast land known as the Northern Wastes. It will receive the largest discussion, as it is more a group of six "kingdoms" united by a common terrain and ancestry. To say they are united, however, is far from the truth, as they are very disparate and far-flung. Perhaps what has caused the humans of the Northern Wastes to be so disunited and individualistic is the nature of the region: cold, unforgiving, and always a challenge for survival. Humans there have been forced to live together in small clusters, not one continuous region, and perhaps that has created the common tendency of fragmented communities rather than one large nation, often to their disadvantage. The Wastes is currently a region of six distinct Klans, each operating as its own independent realm, and there are often sub-clans within these larger bodies. Here follows a brief overview of the entire region, and a shorter description of each of those six Klans.

- The Northern Wastes is the wintry land north of the Shield mountain range. It has a bitter climate, with long, harsh winters and fleeting summers. The humans there have adapted as best as any can, but still many perish in the winter's icy grasp, especially in the northeast and northwest. But it is also heavily forested in many areas, notably the great Deadwood Forest at the heart of the Wastes. The Wastes also has two of Ledarhig's largest lakes, most notable the Lake Avusteen, more the size of a small sea than a lake. I have visited the Wastes a few times prior to my current endeavor, and found that though the air never loses its chill, there is a particular beauty in the vast stretches of tundra, the thick green of the forests, and especially the crystal waters of Lake Avusteen. One can look out upon the lapping waters and see no end, and imagine they are looking across an eternity. The Northern lands show the beauty in extreme, the beauty in wild danger that our divine mother, Attyiae, can foster.

- There have been few external threats to the Northern Wastes, until the last three centuries. This is partly due to the natural protection of the region: the climate itself, and the Shield range, which keeps most out, as its few traversable passes can be easily defended. But it is also due to the isolationist ways of the Northern Klans: in the past, they hardly interacted with each other, let alone the rest of the known world. Thus the first four Ages of Ledarhig were rather quiet for the Northeners, but the current Age is showing them more involved and threatened than they have ever been before.
  - The Northern Wastes has been inhabited by the same people, the same basic structures, since the beginning of time. The Great Founding Tribe, the Avus, settled the region in ancient times, spreading across the entire breadth of the continent north of the Shield range, including Drikyn Isle and the Lost Lands (see map of Great Founding Tribes). Late in the First Age, as the enormous Great Founding Tribes split into many new factions, the Avus became three separate groups: the kingdoms of the Syttlikit in the Lost Lands, the Mishra on Drikyn Isle, and the remaining Avus in the area that is now considered the Wastes; a common ancestry, but separated nations. The Avus would continue on, settling the entire area, before
splitting again into three Klans (around 120 MA): the Leetneb, the Detwart, and the Skalllic. This would be the last major change of the Klans in the Wastes until the New Age.

- The New Age brought the Klans out of the Wastes into the larger world of Ledarhig, as well as saw their ancient structure split once again (20 NA). The Leetneb Klan, the largest of Klans, split into three (quite the theme amongst the Klans), as the Haupteg and Rinen Klans declared themselves independent. Shortly after this disunity, the Klans were challenged by a Navok invasion in the 2nd Slave War (27 NA). Under the leadership of a klansmen named Turgeis, leader of the new Haupteg Klan, the Klans surprisingly united to facedown their foe, and defeat him. This alliance would last after the war, known as the Federak, which still exists, stronger than ever. With their newfound unity, the Klans went out into the larger world, giving military aid to the kingdom of Erhfaelis in the Nievkeyt Wars and the Syttlkit in the Refugee War (though they still lost) in desperate wars of their own. By forging alliances, opening their cities to foreign trade, and strengthening the internal structure of their own realms, the Klans were able to finally begin to become actual kingdoms, and an actual nation in Ledarhig. A lot has yet to be done, and not every Klan is proactive in such aspirations, but a new challenge arising less than two decades ago is forcing all the Klans to consider their unity, that of their own realms and the Northern Wastes as a whole. The Avus Ney, detailed later, are a new force within the Wastes, who seek to unite those who join them, and destroy those who do not. Thus a more imminent and direct threat is upon them, and each Klan must proceed carefully or be left behind.

- The humans of the Northern Wastes are large and hardy individuals. The average Northerner typically stands at least a half a foot over the average Erhfaelin, some reaching almost eight feet. The men are broad-shouldered and hairy; the women thicker and more curvaceous than Erhfaelin women. The usual hair color is blonde, ranging from dirty to white blondes, and sometimes red hair is seen as well. Men typically grow their hair thick, not usually longer than the shoulders, and almost always have facial hair (typically a thick beard). Women also grow long hair, often braided or pulled back (In the cold climate of the Wastes, long hair is practically a necessity. My head, with short cut Erhfaelin hair, was usually freezing, and I hardly ever went without a cap). They are a different sort of people, their daily lives usually simple, even the higher classes. They are predominantly trappers, hunters, fishers, and so on, as there is little farmland. Most Klansmen and women gather in small villages, where they will hold most important business and trade, as well as celebrate and holiday. A large part of life is simply survival; they do not always have the opportunities to create such massive buildings and castles, to explore arts and music, or to amass the wealth of Erhfaelin or other nobility. Survival is difficult, and leaves little room for other pursuits.

- For the most part, Klans gather to share mead and stories, to pass down oral legends and sagas about past heroes, or, before the Abandonment, to
worship. The winter months are necessarily spent indoors as such, but the summer is more a celebration of being outside, free of winter’s hold. Great festivals and games will take place during the few summer months, as well as the bulk of the military training. For the most part, however, interaction between Klans is minimal. All speak the same root language, Avusner, but time has evolved many dialects and regional differences. The languages, however, are usually close enough so that some understanding is established, and some in the Federak are pushing for a revival of the original Avusner language to facilitate ease of communication between these Klans. But these are big steps for the young alliance, as are many similar attempts to unite the Klans more on cultural bases. If they do unite more firmly, I still feel they will always be a nation of six distinct peoples, and have seen the great differences on my journeys between them. Each Klan (from what I could gather of them) is distinct and fascinating in its own right, and I have plans to further develop them in later books. Here follows the six Klans of the Northern Wastes.

- The Avus Ney (AV-ūs NĀ) are a new clan in the north. They seceded from the Leetneb Klan in 309 NA, and have been pushing their borders outwards ever since. I was allowed access to their libraries, but received no help, and no humans there would talk with me (I’m not quite sure how I escaped alive). As they are a new clan in the Northern Wastes, there is not much about them, as they still function much like the Leetneb Klan in many ways. Their main and startling difference is the existence of their demi-god, Neyjek, God of the North. Therefore I will seek to describe this aspect of their culture.
  - Demi-gods (dealt with in the religion section) are becoming more numerous among Ledarhig humans as they seek new guidance in their lives. In the case of the Avus Ney, it is believed that their mystics made contact with the spirit of Jekarrl, an ancient and legendary shaman warrior of the founding Avus tribe, and were able to obtain his reentry into the world as a demi-god. Neyjek, meaning “Jekarrl reborn”, is now known as the so-called “God of the North”, and is rapidly gaining followers. He demanded that his chosen people rename and secede themselves from the Leetneb Klan, and are now pushing to claim the lands of new followers, as well as “living space” for themselves. Neyjek’s appearance has caused turmoil in the surrounding areas of the Wastes, as many wonder whether to submit to this new god, or to follow their own paths. It stands to see whether this new god will unite the Klans under a new banner, or cause further dissension. Neyjek appears to outsiders as a cruel, unforgiving god, much like the climate of the Northern wastes. But the Avus Ney revere their homeland, see such harsh treatment as strength. The Avus Ney believe the humans of the Wastes as the chosen race, as the true rulers of the world. Those northerners who accept Neyjek as their god and earn his approval can join the chosen. Those who find him too cruel are considered
"soft", and unworthy to live. This strict tenet is what has dissuaded many northerners from worshipping Neyjek, and drawn other to him.

- Neyjek asks for constant proof of strength and mettle. As such, in order to hold any sort of authoritative position, an intense test must be passed first, testing both strength and wit, to deem one fit. Particulars of the tests could not be found (they would not release such sacred information to an outsider like myself), but I have witnessed the results and can say this: they must be brutal and often fatal. Thus one can expect those in the highest ranks of society to be the strongest, of body, mind, and heart. The ruling body in a council of five, each having passed this test, two women and two men. The fifth is the highest of the entire race, the chosen of Neyjek as his human representative, thus his direct influence is with every decision. This chosen, the Altraum, is currently the same mystic who discovered Neyjek and helped his entry as a demi-god. As such this mystic, Malvik (MAAL-fik), has been granted an unnatural youth, appearing to have aged very little over the past seventeen years as Altraum. This council is the authority of the Avus Ney, and as their god influences it, they are never questioned.

- To even be able to worship Neyjek, one must pass a rigorous test of spirit. Things like crime and unrest do not really occur there, as a chosen of Neyjek does not act in such a way, and is therefore slain if caught engaged in criminal or rebellious acts. It is a nation of devoted followers. Worship is somewhat different than other peoples; Neyjek feels that worship unto him is performed in a daily life of strength, not "groveling" before him. This is why worship often takes the form of physical and mental contests between people or groups of people. Board games of wit are often played; outright brawls or other feats of strength are performed regularly. Military training for men is also often a daily routine. All is for the glory of Neyjek and the Avus Ney.

- The stance of the Avus Ney was made very clear to me, so that I might pass it on to other nations. Right now, they are seeking to enlighten their Northern brothers and sisters to join them as the chosen race under Neyjek. After a time, they will strike; those too soft to be worthy of Neyjek, or those not of the chosen, will be struck down in their path. This is their view of the world, and from what I have seen of their culture, they are to be feared.

- The Leetneb (LÄT-nib) Klan of the Northern Wastes are an ancient Klan, having been in existence since the Middle Age, when the Avus tribe split into three. Obtaining information about the whole of the Klan was somewhat difficult, as the entire Klan is split up into a number of sub-clans, called Kennigs. Each Kennig operates rather independently from the others, and thus has a different story and opinion about certain events in history. What I have dissected and ascertained from these various histories, as well as my own references elsewhere, follows, and I feel is a decent overview of the Klan itself.
As stated before, the Leetneb is an ancient tribe. It was once the most powerful of the three Avus factions, but has since lost power during the New Age. This is mostly due to the nature of their society. The entire Klan claims a common heritage, that of the Leetneb faction of the Avus tribe. But within that heritage are the Kennigs, sub-clans that each claim lineage to a particular founding family or tribe of the original Avus. The power or distance these Kennigs have obtained is what led to the major fragmentation of the New Age, as the Baerkult of the Rinen Klan sought no further connection to the Leetneb, and the Haupteg grew tired of the constant infighting of the Kennigs. And more recently, the appearance of a new god has taken another part of their territory. The Kennigs persist, however, still bickering and jockeying for position with one another, though given a common goal or enemy, they quickly unite, if only for a while.

Later studies can examine them in detail, but for now I will discuss the major Kennigs and the common traits of the entire Leetneb Klan. The governing body is a gathering of the heads of the seven main Kennigs. There is a complex and extensive charter that dictates the governance of Leetneb and the interaction of the Kennigs, called the Haubvedrag. The leading expert of the Haubvedrag is known as the Rettraer (rēt-TRĀ-ür), who has the position for life, and leads the meetings of the council, which is called the Alknig. The Alknig meets four times a year, or more in emergencies, and is a body of equal members (Note: the Rettraer is only a mediator and executor of the meetings, has no official say in policy or decisions. He is also considered extremely wise, however, and his advice is actively sought. His role is considered sacred, as he holds the ancient documents of the governance of the Klan, and is never address by any other name but Rettraer. He has his own considerable home with a considerable library, as he is the leading scholar of the tribe as well. He was an extraordinary man, incredibly wise and seemingly ancient, almost seeming from another plane. He sees all as passing around him; if we are the ripples of life, he observes the river. From him I obtained the most information, and he had his scribes copy several books on the Kennigs and Leetneb history, as well as histories of the other regions, and from these I will transcribe much. I am forever indebted to him, a foremost of scholars, and of men). This tradition of no single leader has caused some problems for the council, as indecision often slows crucial execution of leadership, and bickering furthers the gap between Kennigs. But the Rettraer has a powerful, albeit impartial influence on the proud heads of the Kennigs, and often defuses potential internal strife, and helps the process of governance move along. Thus has the Leetneb Klan continued for centuries.

The religion of the Leetneb Klan is dead. None worship any god, and most are angry at the gods for abandoning them. The appearance of Neyjek has caused many to wonder, many others to become jealous. Why should they not have their own demi-god as well? This problem has united the
Kennigs for the moment, as they are determining how to deal with the Avus Ney threat, both its expansion militarily and through converts in their lands. Many Kennigs are also pressing to search for their own demi-god as well, though this plan has come to no real fruition (as each Kennig wants to be the one to find the new god themselves). This has also caused the Alknig to finally (and grudgingly) join the Federak under Friedyrik, as they now see the need for allies against this new force (the Leetneb never officially joined, not wanted to align themselves with the splinter Klan of the Hauptidefs, a former Kennig of the Leetneb, though they acted as an ally to the Federak). The Kennigs are united now, but how long they remain so will determine the success of the Avus Ney, whenever they decide to attack.

- Kennigs occupy different chunks of the Leetneb territory, and typically don’t intermingle (it is considered forbidden). Cities are a different story; though different Kennigs don’t usually marry, friends are sometimes made. Cities are centers of trade for all the Kennigs, moving goods and money across the land. Any sort of festivals or official undertakings, however, are typically restricted to Kennig (though outsiders are often snuck in). It is a segregated society that intermingles behind the curtains. Though they are united, each Kennig handles its own military, finances, and internal affairs itself. A common currency is used for ease, and there are common laws throughout the realm, but each Kennig has its own laws and customs within as well. The Seven Kennigs are: Agdinir, Corradin, Schfarz, Grezen, Schetin, Zchissul, and Kostlik. They are the body parts of the Leetneb; if they could only find a single mind, they would walk more easily together.

- The Fierce Rinen (RĪN-in) Klan of the Northern Wastes graciously accepted me into their society for a time so that I might chronicle their histories. It seems I caught them at a time of reform, as their leader, Úlbaer (ÜL-bär) Ravki, is very interested in writing down their language and culture himself, appointing women for the task (their first position available outside of housewife, and a big step for women in Rinen culture, though it is only because writing and chronicling is thought to be ‘women’s work’). I discovered a great deal about their people, especially on the Baerkult that they follow. Their culture and nation is centered on the Baerkult, or the cult of the Bloodbaer. Considered backwards by some, they mostly live in small villages, and are a very individualistic people. The new clan leader, the Úlbaer Ravki, however, is trying to lead the Klan in a more “sophisticated” direction, establishing central temples and other structures in the capital village of Úlfraek. He is attempting to make his people more modern and “civilized” to be respected more in the larger world, and is sometimes resented for this by the older generation, loved for by the younger.
  - The Bloodbaer is massive, standing eight to nine feet tall, sometimes stretching to ten, and ferocious when disturbed. Their fur has a blood tint to it, except their face, which is a buff-colored mask of sorts. They have long, jagged teeth and claws and could (and have) knock the head off a
man's shoulders. The Rinen men grow long goatees that they often stain with real blood before battle, along with other accoutrements to connect them to their revered Bloodbaers. Actual Bloodbaers are never killed in their culture, but various parts of bears slain in battle are used as relics and worn with pride in battle, believed to imbue the wearer with the spirit of the slain bear, most especially the head, teeth, and claws. This is practiced by those who have obtained a Bloodbaer companion, those warriors who have grown to establish a spiritual link to a particular bear. They ride this bear into battle, where they then dismount as fight alongside the bear, becoming a doubly formidable foe. The bear and rider are said to form an unbreakable spiritual bond that lasts through death. When a rider's bear dies, he gently cares for the corpse in a ritual that seals the bond between him and the spirit of the bear. Care is taken to preserve special parts of the bear: the fur, especially the head, and claws. The heart is also eaten by the rider, to ingest the bear's spirit within him. The pelt is preserved and worn as a headdress and cape (tailored to fit from the Bloodbaers size). The claws are fashioned into a sort of gauntlets for the hands, and the klansman uses the gauntlets as a weapon in battle. The klansman goes into battle nude except these two accoutrements (and boots), with runes painted across his face and chest, meant to call upon the spirit of the bear to protect him. These super-warriors, known as Baergausts (Ghost bears), are among the fiercest in the world. Only Baergausts are permitted to wear the vestige of the Bloodbaer, as only they have obtained that level of connection. Baergausts are the highest order in the clan, the highest level of achievement. They are typically the leaders of Fraeks (if one is present) and the chieftains. They are considered the wisest, imbued with the wisdom of the Bloodbaer, and can be distinguished by the facial tattoo that mimics the Bloodbaer's mask, as only they are allowed to wear it.

- The Fraek system has been in place since ancient times in Rotkuisten. The Rinen only gather in small clusters, communities that only cover a few miles at most. These smaller villages make up the Fraek, and all are connected to a larger village, known as the Fraekhut. There are nine Fraeks in Rotkuisten, each one ruled and represented by a leading Baergaust of the region. The Baergausts come together several times each year to handle domestic and foreign issues, and ascertain if there is any need to bring the Fraeks together. They meet at the capital “town” of Ülfraek as a council of nine. The head of the Rinen “government”, known as the Ülbaer, is elected by the other council members by a simple vote. Many Ülbaers are sons or nephews or grandsons of the former Ülbaer, but this is not always the case. Until the reign of Ravki, the Ülbaer and council did not convene often or play a large part in the society. Most things are handled within Fraeks, with little real cohesion or interaction.

- The religion of the Rinen Klan centers on the Baerkult. The spirit of the elder Baer, known as Rine (RİN-uh), is worshipped as a demi-god of sorts, as humans no longer have a patron god. The Rinen believe in the other gods, as their work and power is seen, but whether or not Rine is a true
Baergaust

milky white eyes

Bladboer

black "mask"
of feet often occurs

Bear

Runes
deity is not known. The spirit of Rine is called on especially during times of war, where warriors invoke its power to aid them, often inducing a berserker state. Baersker are the regular warriors in the Rinen Klan. In Rinen warfare, the offensive is the strategy; they wear no shields to protect them, only thick padded leather tunics, greaves, and bracers, no helm, in imitation of the Bloodbaer. There are only Baerskers and Baergausts (with or without a baer companion), and these are the men that gather to battle. The Rinen have no compulsion against ambushes and surprise attacks from the woods of the region: it is the way of the Baer, to burst forth unto your enemy and slaughter. Thus the same people have existed there for quite some time. They do not typically act as mercenaries in any sense, but have been known to send warriors to aid battles in the past, notably in the Syttikits Wars against the Kyslm, and most especially during the Second Slave War, where the Rinen people sent a few hundred of their warriors to slay the Navok. That was a time of particular friendliness towards their neighbors, as they saw the danger of Navok expansion. Beyond that, however, the Rinen keep to themselves, and are let alone by others.

- The Haupteg (HWP-tég) Klan is one of the newer klans in the north, having been a former Kennig of the Leetneb Klan that broke away in 20 NA, claiming they were tired of the constant infighting of the Kennigs. Their current leader, Vereiner (meaning “uniter”) Friedyrick, was very helpful and forthcoming with information, seeing my efforts as a way to connect his people to the larger world. What follows is a description of their people, especially recent history and their political goals.
  - The Haupteg Klan has been on a mission since the creation of the Federak to further unite and strengthen the bond between the Klans and the other nations of the world. Their position in the wealthy heartland of the Northern Wastes has given them a good amount of prosperity and success as a Klan, in part determining their ability to secede from the Leetneb Klan, as well as leading to a far more developed region in terms of cities and roads, ports, and so on. Upon observing their lands, it appeared more like one of our provinces in Ehrhafelis, not the usual villages and distant towns of the other Northern Klans I had seen. I see the realm of the Haupteg as the most well-equipped to unite and lead the Northern Klans, should they be allowed. Unfortunately, rather than be admired and followed, the Haupteg’s glory has only caused jealousy and resentment, especially from their former rulers, the Leetneb Klan. And with the appearance of the Avus Ney, it is unsure whether their dreams of unity will ever be achieved.
  - Though its history as a separate entity has been rather brief on Ledarhig, the Haupteg Klan has accomplished much. During the 2nd Slave War, as the Navok invaded in 27 NA, the Haupteg would soon move to action (though as news travels in the Wastes, they did not find out until a year later), sending money, materials, and warriors to the aid of the Skallie Klan. The Haupteg leader at the time, Turgeis, also began work to unite
the Klans, knowing that only their united strength could possibly hope to turn the Navok back. Working hard through much dissension, he was able to unite the Skallic and Detwart Klans with the Haupteg, and also got promises of warriors from the Leetneb and Rinen Klans. Turgeis himself was put at the head of this coalition army, and they turned the invasion back at the famous Battle of Detwart in 30 NA. After that the Navok were in retreat, until defeated for good in the Battle of Drikyn Straits in 35 NA. A year later Turgeis was able to construct an actual alliance pact between the Haupteg, Skallic, and Detwart Klans into what is called the Federak. Each Klan promises the others aid in times of war and other emergencies, with the Haupteg as the leader. The Leetneb would not agree to the pact, but did sign an alliance pact with the Federak. The Federak now stands as a cohesive entity of several states; not a united kingdom, but a loose federation.

- Not wanting to repeat the failings of the government they left, but also not wanting to appoint one single overlord, the Haupteg tried to combine both into their government. They have both a council of thirteen, called the Waalrekt (VAAL-rekt), and an elected leader, the Vereiner. The council is comprised of elected officials from all the provinces of the Haupteg realm. Regions are still divided into Kennigs, and each Kennig is divided further into four districts called Stads, governed by an official called the Dukt. Therefore the Waalrekt is made up of thirteen Dukts, one from each Stad, and one more for the capital of Eisenflett. This council convenes and makes the laws and manages the state. The Vereiner is a chief, elected by the Waalrekt, who is the executor of the laws and decisions of the Waalrekt. He also manages the military and foreign relations. There are checks on both ruling bodies by one another to maintain a balance, and thus far it has been a rather successful system. Men or women can be Dukts, however the only female Dukt in Haupteg history is Gwendolyn of Eisenflett, the current Dukt of Eisenflett. Though it is now only considered one, when the Haupteg seceded they actually brought three Kennigs with them, which had all been closely linked in the Leetrauln region. These Kennigs are more intermixed than those of then Leetneb: they intermingle freely, participate as much together as separate, and even marry one another (when an inter-Kennig marriage occurs, either person can join the other Kennig, but the couple has to belong to one). Internal fighting still goes on, but not nearly to the level in the Leetneb Klan. The cooperation between Kennigs in the Klan has been far greater than the Leetneb, but they have their own difficulties as well.

- Eisenflett often seems its own entity at times, being larger than the next four cities in the Haupteg realm combined. It is a beacon of culture and foreign influences in the Wastes, and would most assuredly be considered the capital of the region. It is among the largest in the world, and is known for its enormous markets and as a center for trade and learning. Traders from all reaches enter its ports, from its dominating location on Lake Avusteen, and several nations have sections of the city for their own...
purposes, so much do their merchants travel there, such as Erhsaelis, the Heuvl, and now the Jern. It is a truly magnificent sight; the city is built upon a hill that slopes downward toward the lake. When out on the lake, looking to the city, the mighty fortress at the center of the city towers above all, as the city slopes down all around it toward the shore. When in the fortress, one might look out to the water and imagine they are at sea, as the opposite shore cannot be seen, so mighty is Lake Avusteen. Being the capital city, Eisenflett is the center for all that transpires, especially as the headquarters of the Federak. Its current leader is Dukt Gwendolyn. The status and responsibility of the capital has given the patrons of Eisenflett a particular nature and amount of pride amongst themselves.

- The Haupteg have no religion of their own, have not for some time. The appearance of the Avus Ney has unsettled many of its people. So long have the Northeners been without a god, should they not embrace Neyjek as their saviour? It seems hard to ignore a god that has manifested for your people. But many do not like the nature of Neyjek, his demand for the utmost strength, his plans to dominate the world. The Haupteg believe in the Federak, believe that it is the key to uniting the Klans, without destroying their independence and personal freedoms. Thus the Haupteg Klan is unsure: Neyjek is the god of Northeners, but should we accept him? Their answer very well may determine the fate of the Northern Wastes.

- The Skallic (SKAAL-lik) Klan of the northeastern Wastes has had a long history of violence and misfortune. Their realm is the area of the harshest weather, the most fierce inhabitants, and repeated aggression from their Navok neighbors. They allowed me to observe and document some of their history, which was written down only in the form of oral legends and in the minds of their mystics. They aided me, but were not sad to see me leave either. The people of that region have many worries, and little time for scholars like myself.
  - The realm of the Skallic Klan is extremely harsh. Few if any crops can be cultivated, and game is rather scarce in the inland areas. That is why the people of the Skallic tribe gather in villages around the many rivers and the coasts. There the game is more plentiful, and they can also fish, especially for the great seekels: enormous aquatic beasts, something like sea-cattle, with smooth midnight blue skin and a large tail and flippers rather than limbs, that provide much of the furnishings of Skallic life, including tools, clothing, and food. Fortresses mark the land in every area of villages, so that its people can flee to safety in times of skoje attacks (more on skoje later). The master of the fortress, the Hund, is the outright leader and authority of the region. There are no true cities, just three main fortresses, one for each Fluslhem, where many of the administrative functions are performed, as well as being trade centers. As their dangerous homeland demands, they have skilled, hardened warriors, who can be ready and determined to fight at a moment’s notice. As resources are
scarce, they also have to make armor and weaponry out of unusual items. The seekels are a common source for armor, made from their thick hides, and weapons from their bones. The scythe-like arms of the skoje are also typically used in battle as well. Skallic warriors learn to fight early. Their very lives depend on it.

- The structure of Skallic government is very limited and centered around few people. At the basic level, each area of villages is overseen by the Hund. The danger of day to day demands strict obedience to the Hund. His orders are final and absolute, and not to be questioned. Some Hunden are rather harsh, but there are limits to their power, and guaranteed rights of the people. The Hund is appointed by his king, and can be removed if deemed unfit. At the highest level of Skallic government are the three Kings of the Fluslhem (FLÜS-lêm) or Riverhomes. There are two mighty rivers that divide the Skallic lands into three sections, each a Fluslhem, and each one has a king that decides all for his realm. The three kings come together to decide for the whole Skallic realm. There has been little if any cases where the three did not cooperate, even during the 2nd Slave War, and they rule their lands to the best that they can. This is the system of the Skallic Klan: rulers with absolute authority to make immediate decision for the safety of their people.

- The biggest threat to Skallic life is the monstrosities known as the Skoje, or “fleshers” to us. They are vicious, malevolent beasts with enough intelligence to prove great enemies to the Skallic. Standing up they can reach over eight feet, but typically they walk bent over on all four limbs of their skeletal bodies. When they do so their back arches high and curves, and looks most unnatural. They have long, skeletal tails and hind legs (perhaps that is why they are hunched, their limbs are disproportioned). Their forearms are the deadliest part: they have long, slender fingers with sharp claws, and a long scythe-like appendage that seems to come straight from their wrists. When they need to use them, they can bend their hands backwards far enough to allow the scythes to replace them. The most frightening part is their head: it looks much like a skull with high, horned frills up from the forehead and out above the earholes. Its maw is enormous and can stretch wide, and its eyes are a pure, icy blue, with no pupils. They are the things of nightmares, demonic, and impossibly malicious. They come out of the woods to attack Skallic villages, in coordinated groups sometimes, though one is challenge enough to slay. They seem to kill regardless of any desire, other than the slaughter (though if they retreat they will take corpses with them to feed upon). They are a constant threat that has necessitated the strict and rough ways of the Skallic Klan.

- The religion of the Skallic Klan has developed into something of ancestor worship. The Skallic have always revered their ancestors, but it became the dominant practice once they realized they were abandoned. The practices are very private, and differ greatly between families and villages, so I could not gain much information about worship. It is very interesting
to note, however, that the Skallic practice of ancestor worship is what led to the discovery and rise of Neyjek, an ancestor of Malvik. The Skallic, however, believe in the power of their particular ancestors, and will continue to worship them regardless of any other gods.

- The Detwart (DÉT-vaart) Klan is a mysterious clan that dwells in the thick forested region north of Jernskjôld. I was not able to gain any real information from them (they refused to see me, as they like to keep their ways and culture rather secretive, even from their Northern brethren). I did, however, gain some knowledge from the books that were given me by the great Rettraer. They are a people of the trees, the great Deadwood trees of their namesake. They build their villages within the boughs of these trees, mighty as they are, and live a life in the air, coming down to gather food and provisions. It is not known how or when the Klan began to live in trees, but it has been as long as anyone living or any book I have discovered can remember. The daily practices of their life are largely unknown, beyond their reverence for the trees. It is known that their warriors, who played a vital role in the Battle of the Detwart during the 2nd Slave War, equip themselves with the natural armor of the trees, lovingly enhanced with strange magicks to make it strong as steel. For weapons the fallen branches (for the never cut down their trees) are fashioned into wicked maces and warhammers. It was their suggestion and knowledge of the forest that persuaded Turgeis to form a plan to lead the Navok into the woods, where their wings would prove only a hindrance. Their place in the Federak is a peculiarity, as they seem to know when they are needed and react as such. Personally I discovered that they are aware of what goes on in every area of their forest, as I was halted the moment I stepped inside (and turned away). As for trade, they venture out, no one in, and in war they are nigh undefeatable in their homeland, descending from the trees to strike down on their enemy in great numbers before they are aware. It is doubtful they will ever expand beyond their wooded home, and as doubtful anyone will expand inward. Often commanders simply choose to go around. It seems their leader is known as the Wodd (VAAD), by the name of Grimm, but any formal meeting with the Detwart Klan is done through a representative. It is said however that Grimm himself will make an appearance in the upcoming meeting of the Federak to discuss the threat of the Avus Ney.

- These are the most distinguishing aspects of the Klans, whose presence can no longer be ignored and should no longer go unappreciated. I believe they have a lot to offer Ledarhig, and hope the Vereiner Friedyrik’s efforts continue and gain support. I feel that Ledarhig could also offer these humans aid, to perhaps ease the burdens in their daily lives, but it would take their own willingness to be accepted into the wider world as well. This future is unknown, but the hardiness and strength of their lifestyles ensure that their future will make itself known.
The Qyt (KET) are a mysterious race, and masters of keeping their secrecy. They dwell on Enookin Isle, an island covered by thick jungles, surrounded by calm and clear waters, with colorful reefs and deep caverns one can look upon from the ship, and an ancient source of many exotic goods not found anywhere else in Ledarhig. Little has been written of their history, save that which has directly affected the other kingdoms of Ledarhig. This is because no one is allowed into their realm, and those that manage to go there do not come back, or are rumored to be sworn to secrecy with many coins and many promises of consequence should they speak. Rumor is the base of our knowledge of the Qyt, and I am sorry to admit that that is largely the basis of my information, except what I could obtain from other writings (which is most likely also myth, unless it deals with actual contact with them), along with what little I could gain from the Qytish governors on the Ledarhig mainland (I and my small crew were able to stay in those colonies for a weeks time, under heavy guard and severely limited to where we could go). I myself was hopeful I could gain more from their homeland, as they are said to be a peaceful race, but my ship was turned away along the coasts of Enookin Isle before I entered their realm. The whole coast of the Enookin Isle is heavily guarded by those strange Qytish ships (more detail on them is to follow). The only real interaction with them is in the trading posts and colonies they have established, although these cannot be considered to represent their race or culture as a whole. Here follows what I was able to discover.

- A brief history of the Qyt is necessary to understand them as a whole. They are the Haelschyn race of Daehmie, goddess of the water and waves of the world. The exact location of their entrance to Ledarhig during the Haelschyn Invasions is unknown, though we do know that within a few centuries all traces of the humans of Enookin Isle were lost. Unfortunately not much was lost in that respect, as we knew little about the Great Founding Tribe of the Enookin beforehand, most contact occurring at the many trading cities along the Enookin coast. The time of the Qytish expansion is placed somewhere between 20 and 212 AH. I was able to find only one surviving account from the annals of the old kingdom of Babidram that told of their ships disappearing on voyages to the Enookin Isle. A record of a Babid voyage during the year 212 AH claimed that their ships were turned away from all Enookin ports by mysterious new ships, manned by strange “fish-people”. That is all we know about the Qytish expansion over the Enookin Isle.
  - The Qyt have largely remained out of the major history of Ledarhig. They are foremost known as traders, arriving in ports of every kingdom to barter and sell their exotic goods. One of the only historical events of the Qyt was their sudden expansion in 19-21 NA onto key locations on Ledarhig. One such location was in the west, the small territory of Routu, a sort of half-island formed by the forking of the great Aoneh Taishe river. It is said to have been purchased by the Qyt, from the kingdom of the Arrechi. The other is more impressive on a military scale. A small kingdom once existed on the southeastern edge of Balokandyarin, the kingdom of the Khatchri. The Qyt swooped down upon this unsuspecting kingdom with thousands of warriors, both their own and mercenary armies. In just under
two years, the Khatchri were utterly destroyed, and the Qyt ruled the land as their own. When I spoke with the Qytish governor of the region, now known as Sutdaneb, I asked him what brought on this annihilation, if it was provoked. He replied simply that the land was needed for the Qyt, no provocation. He spoke as if it were a business acquisition, not the destruction of an entire people. This is the only entrance of the Qyt onto our mainland, and with the indifferent coldness of the governor’s response, I hope it is the last.

Beyond the acquisition of Routu (ROO-too) and Sutdaneb (soot-DĀN-ēb), there is only one other event worth noting, though little was said or could be found on it. That is the 2nd Haelschyn War, a short war fought between the Qyt and the Inidra in Sutdaneb in the years 142-147 NA. The governor of Sutdaneb, Kyndipuo, told me little: only that most threats to the Qyt are handled by paying off the aggressor. The Inidra, however, could not be bought off. They were angry at the number of their male warriors who had gone to Sutdaneb to become mercenaries, and also desired their rich port lands. Their fierce warriors made initial gains against the Qyt, but with the arrival of further mercenaries the Qyt pushed them back out of Sutdaneb for good. This ends what we know of Qytish history.

The actual society of the Qyt is the most unknown to us. Their mainland territories of Routu and Sutdaneb do not represent their culture on a whole, but I can speak of what I saw there. The overall government of the Qyt I could not discover; I only know that Kyndipuo is the governor of Sutdaneb, and makes all the decisions, with various officers underneath him. I assume it is the same in Routu, however I could not obtain an audience with the governor before we were asked to leave. The Qyt there adapted the existing buildings, of which there were plenty, to suit their needs. Daily life in the capital city of Kytlnox was much as in any other city, with merchants and artisans working, farmers bringing in goods for sale. They do harvest the resources of the area, but I was not able to determine what that was specifically, and what was simply imported. At night we were not allowed out, though on a few occasions I was able to hear strange chanting and singing after nightfall outside our guarded cottage. What this was no one would tell me, and became angry when I asked. As for the rest of the Qyt living on the Enookin Isle, only myth and rumor can be used. For instance, it is rumored that the Qyt are as comfortable living underwater, if not more so, than on land, and have vast underwater cities in the many caverns underneath the Enookin Isle. Their cities on the mainland cities are said to be sleek and beautiful, marked with towers, rich in artwork and unworldly architecture. The legend of the Qyt contrasts heavily with their sparse and dull life on the mainland. The nature of Qyt homes in Sutdaneb, coupled with their apparent refusal to bring some of their culture to the mainland, suggested to me that perhaps these colonies are only temporary, or trader cities in the extreme, in that they are only for business, not pleasure or expression. Either way, it can be said that there is a whole culture that will remain largely undiscovered for some time, one whose legendary beauty enters the children’s tales of other cultures.
Oryth Warship

Extra sails can be extended

Keel planks can be extended
coloumns rotate

Portholes for bolts and spears

mass like a Bu
A small side note should be made. Perhaps the largest concentrations of mercenaries outside of Bladehome live in the colonies of Sutdaneb and Routu. There they blend into the Qyt life as well as any Qyt, and gather in large guild halls or other dormitories, as well as live in independent housing. There are no known relations between Qyt and other races (perhaps the differences are simply too stark), but many seem to be friends and accepted members of these colony societies. It has been hinted that some mercenaries have even taken to the religious practices of the Qyt as well. Mercenaries range through most races, though are mostly made up of humans (with a significant proportion of Mantivesti in Sutdaneb. The Qyt employ them frequently, and when not in use they use these areas as bases.

The Qyt themselves are rather strange looking by human standards. They very much look like "fish-people". They stand about five to six feet, though their backs are stooped slightly, so that some might reach six-and-a-half if they stretched. They have very long and gangly arms and legs, with webbed fingers and toes for swimming. A large spiked fin protrudes from their hunched backs. Their faces are perhaps the oddest part. They have large, round, yellow eyes, made larger by their long thin faces and thick lips. Thick tentacles protrude from the backs of their heads. And the most interesting, a pair of gills appears underneath where their ears should be, which are replaced by holes. They do not wear much clothing; no shirts and just short pants that cover their thighs and private areas. When they speak it sounds gurgled, and all but indiscernible. Fortunately they know many languages, a necessity for traders, and were able to communicate with me clearly. The Qytish language itself seems influenced by those they came into contact with on land, such as humans, Arrechi, etc., as well as a strong foundation in the old Enookin tongues. This is their general appearance, though others like the governor dress a bit richer. Their warriors, like the guards posted there, wear only the traditional short pants and no armor but a large oval shield. There are always armed with spears with curved blades, designed for thrusting and slashing, and made of some composite to be sturdy enough to parry sword blows. All in all they are a fascinating race to look upon, and I can only wonder with excitement what secrets their hidden island would reveal.

A final note can be made about the legendary Qytish Navy. Their boats seem innumerous, as the coast is always heavily guarded. Their ships are peculiar themselves, thin and sleek, appearing much like giant fish themselves. There are many sizes and designs, but the most common is a medium sized vessel with two sails, one large sail in the middle, and a smaller in the front. The sails look like large fins. The rudder is an enormous fin-like structure at the rear of the ship. It is said no ship sails faster than Qytish ships, and that they are impossible to sink.
The Inidra (in-İH-drû) hate all humankind. I dared not venture into their lands without entirely endangering my life (and found no crew willing to take me either). It is said I would have been killed on contact. The limited information I have comes from two main sources, one being an ancient Tanim text that speaks of the Inidra, though its pages were faded and incomplete, many had already fallen apart or disappeared. The other is a small amount of information I was able to buy from Mantivesti, the male warriors of the Inidra, who had become mercenaries in the Qytish colony of Sutdaneb. They would not divulge much, but it was nonetheless helpful. There are also rumors and snippets from the Qyt as well, but nothing substantiated. Most of what I learned is of the past Inidra, while they were still a young and expanding race, and whether or not they have changed is unknown.

- The Sunthrone is an aptly named region in the southeastern reach of Ledarhig. It is a barren land, over a third covered in harsh desert, the other parts mostly plains. It is the hottest and driest area of the continent, sporting only two significant river system despite its size. It also has one of the largest lakes of Ledarhig. Lake Montivagus was the seat of the Great Founding Tribe of the Jhavri. From there they spread across the Sunthrone and the swamps of Balokandyrin, oddly occupying the wettest and driest regions simultaneously. As time took hold, however, the distinct natures of those two very different climates produced very different cultures. The Tanim tribe emerged, ruling over the Sunthrone until the Haelschyn Invasion. The Inidra conquered them wholly, and the hatred of the Inidra for all things human led them to destroy most of what records and writings existed of the Tanim. Much of their writings are believed to be held in secret Jhavri vaults in the wetlands of Balokandyrin, but it may be some time before those are recovered. For now the Tanim are shrouded in mystery.

- The Inidra are the chosen race of the goddess of fire, Jykhelviae. During the Haelschyn Invasion, they quickly swept over the Sunthrone between 148 and 217 AH. Many Tanim fled into Jhavri lands, but would find little comfort once the Nievkeyt began to invade. For some time the Inidra seemed content to hold the Sunthrone as their own, until the 2nd Haelschyn War against the Qyt in 142-147 NA. This war they lost, achieving little except to drive even more of their Mantivesti warriors across their borders into mercenary camps. They have remained relatively quiet to the outside world, and it is unknown what they plan.

- Much of what I discovered about the Inidra (and that is very little) comes from Mantivesti, male warriors of Inidren society who fled their lower status to become mercenaries outside, mostly for the Qyt in Sutdaneb. Lower status I say in assumption; they speak of a female leader, and it is whispered that their status in the kingdom is much like a slave: they have little say, and are used primarily as workers, warriors, and reproducers. I was able to purchase information (who answered grudgingly, I felt as though my Qyt guardians in Sutdaneb were the
only deterrent of my murder. The promise of money was my only motivator for those gruff men). They would not speak of their status when asked, and it visibly offended them. One of my Qyt guardians, who was rather amused by the Mantivesti (coming from a male-dominated society), told me the name meant roughly “slave clothing”. That is the basis for my conjecture. The men did not like me, but gave me enough to trace a crude outline of this ferocious race of beings.

- My Mantivesti informants (they gave no names), as well as the Tanim accounts (which will be given in parentheses), told me that since the early years of the Inidra, there has been the Matriarch. The Great Skia (SKÉ-ë) became leader of the first group of villages of the Inidra, and set such traditions that would forever make the women rule over the men (the Inidren women are by far more gifted in magick than the men, which gave them a decided edge in maintaining their completely dominant position). Both sexes are vicious in battle, fighting with an inborn passion. The Matriarch Skia is now a position, chosen when is necessary (usually meaning the current Matriarch has died, or is being deposed, after which she will be severely beaten and burned alive. This rarely happens however, and the Matriarch must gravely abuse her power to deserve to be deposed). The new Matriarch is chosen by the people (and cannot be declined, a crime punishable by similar means as being deposed); she forsakes her previous name and life and takes on the name and title “Matriarch Skia”. She is a religious ruler of sorts, and supreme. That is little else I could gather about their society; they revere the sun and fire, and spend much of their time trying to survive the barren Sunthrone. Most of their settlements most likely occur near the many oases in the region, though I could not confirm that. The northern region is the most populous, as it is less forbidding and moist. Their cities, their lives, their religious practices...these I could find nothing about. Unless the Inidra cast aside their hate for humans, I will not find out soon either.

- The Inidra appear as starkly different from humans as do the other Haelschyn. Their body shape is very similar to ours in size and form, except for their double-jointed legs (similar to great cats), and small tails used for balance when running (at which they excel, none are said to be faster). Their skin is hairless except for their heads, tougher than it appears, and a bold reddish hue. Their hair is always white, head or face, that matches their white, pupil-less eyes. They appear lithe, but I do not doubt their strength. They speak in a clear, hard voice, very different than the Qyt alongside them, and their language sounds very foreign and exact. Though very different in features, they seem much closer in appearance to humans for a reason I cannot quite understand. No matter, as they would never agree to or admit such a statement.
The Kruejar Territories

*Cities shown last known area of settlement*
The Kruejar Territories

The Kruejar (krú-Ă-júr) are another mysterious race, one of strange beast-men that overtook the old human kingdoms of the southern reaches of the Ledarhig mainland. Several of the tribes are hostile to humans, and others I was not able to find, as one tends to get lost in the thick forests of the region (not to mention the danger of straying into hostile territory). One race in particular was very friendly and helpful to me, the Krihbits (KRI-bits), though communication with them is very limited due to language and cultural boundaries. I was also able to unearth some ancient accounts of the human kingdoms that dwelled there (which I will deal with only briefly), and especially accounts of the Toghuit (TÔ-gwit), the transformation of the humans there into the Kruejar beasts that now dwell in their ruins. Here follows what I was able to discover.

- The region now known as the Kruejar Territories is at the southern end of the Ledarhig mainland, south of the Htedifris (hú-TÊD-i-fris) River. It was once inhabited by several human kingdoms, notably the Myn’ Ithrest (MÍN-ÎTH-rêst), the Haaodih (HÔ-ôd’î), and the Ruffisiut (RÚF-i-soot); however, all traces of those kingdoms and their people have vanished, or more accurately, transformed in the Toghuit. The region was founded by the Great Founding Tribe of the Myn’ Ithrest long ago, having since split into various kingdoms and principalities. An extensive account of the human history there will be discussed in other texts; the most significant event for our purposes is the Toghuit, the Dire Transformation, which will be dealt with later. The region itself is very varied, mostly wooded, with some jungle in the southern peninsula, but also contains a small desert and a few mountain ranges, not to mention numerous rivers and small lakes. This variety of terrain and climate has perhaps led to the wide variety of Kruejar “species”.

- The Toghuit, or Dire Transformation, was the process which brought about the Kruejar. The event took place between 12 and 22 NA, and saw the humans of the region changed entirely in Kruejar beasts, or destroyed in the process. The legend has it that the gods were responsible, as would be expected from such an extraordinary occurrence. It all began with the creation of the Arrechi, another Haelschyn race created in secret by Attyiae, on an island far away and unknown to Ledarhig. When they appeared after the Horror of Babidram, the other gods felt betrayed, as they had agreed to not create anymore Haelschyn. The Pact of Gods was broken, and Vaetigryn, god of beasts, then went about creating his own race of super beasts, the Kruejar, in spite of Attyiae. Rather than create a race from nothing (which he could not do without her help), he cast an enormous spell over the humans to the south of the Htedifris River. They began to change into his Kruejar beasts, slowly at first, but growing exponentially, into at least seven distinct species. During the Kruejar morph, the humans of the region were horrified. They believed it to be a plague, a grave illness of sorts. They sought answers everywhere, but found none. This was the first time the gods had so powerfully influenced their lives. Imagine a disease striking, allowing no preparation, no way to prevent it. Imagine the terror, the pain of seeing your loved ones change. Though most Kruejar are peaceful, imagine waking to find your
loved ones turn, and begin attacking (such as the vicious Hrkahtans). The change was so quick that Kruejar species are generally identified by the region where the morph began. The Anpriah, Wue, but more commonly known now as the Toghuit, the morph spread without care or preference, and brought on another great human casualty of the Haelschyn races and the quarrels between the gods.

- All the seven known Kruejar species are shrouded in mystery. It is unsure whether they practice any real religion, have any government or other evidence of civilization (except for the Krihbits, which I will come to later). Nothing is known of any culture or society for that matter either. The only contact is with wandering Krihbit, or deadly meetings with the more vicious species like the Hrkahtans (HūR-ki-tōn) or Tboans (tih-Bō-ēns). It is assumed they are more than mere beasts, but to what extent more there it is hard to tell. I myself am not sure if the Krihbit I have spoken with was representative of their entire society, or merely remarkable individuals. Much of their appearance I have learned and seen from past accounts, or others living who have. For now I will give what is known about these seven species (and a note about the Island of Jaeber).

  - First I will describe the Krihbits. It seems they inhabit the northernmost part of the Territories, south across the Htedifris and Aoneh Taishe (see map). They replaced most of what the Haaodih kingdom once held. They are a very curious, yet timid species. My first contact with one was wandering through the thick forest just after crossing the Htedifris, in search of Kruejar settlements. It was very foggy, and near dusk. I caught a glimpse of a figure in the mist before me. It stood over six feet high, covered in short, downy, grayish-brown fur. It had claws and paws like a cat (though with a large thumb), and double-jointed feet. Its face was some cross between a cat and a terrier. It stood there in the fog; I was frozen in fear and surprise. Both of us had never seen the other. Finally I attempted to talk to it, using several languages. To ancient Grynnish it had some sort of response, though it was like barking or chattering. At great lengths I discovered that it spoke some strange dialect of ancient Haaodihn, and luckily I had brought a scholar of their history along, for this purpose. He was not able to understand much of what was said, but enough to share basic communication. We brought him to our camp, and learned what we could, also sharing with him as well. His name was Tokyit, and described his species as the Krihbits. I was always amazed to hear him speak, as his outward appearance was so bestial, except for the leather loincloth he wore around his waist (which suggested some sort of society or culture to me, beyond beast). We learned that he was called a Wanderer, one who travels where he may, seeking guidance and enlightenment (we assumed; we could not quite translate it correctly). He was able to give us many tidbits about the other species, and also spoke somewhat of a “home” he once had, and some figure of authority named “Mezetros”, who lived south near the Kjeran (kūz’SHAIR-ūn) Barrens. He was very excited to meet us, and spoke fondly of traveling to our lands at some point, if we would help and lead him. To this we agreed, and I am thrilled that soon the day will come. I also fear we won’t find him, however, as he spoke
with fear of traveling to the eastern lands of the Territories, that perhaps he would be attacked was my only guess. But he insisted that he must go, and I hope we will find him once again.

Close neighbors to the Krihbits are both the Sdirk (SĪH-dūrk) and the Tboans (tīh-BŌ-ēns). The Sdirk dwell in the area just south of Routu (see map), in the forests and hills of that region. They more closely resemble a large, bulky human with the head of an owl. They are rarely seen, but those that have are said to be covered in a mixture of fur and feathers, the feathers surrounding the head and neck mostly. They are large as well, standing near seven feet, and have long, sharp claws protruding from fisted hands (it is unknown whether the claws serve as fingers, or whether they have fingers at all). Each one seen seems to have the head of a different owl. The Sdirk are not aggressive, and stay within their woodland home for the most part. The Tboans are difficult to describe in appearance. They have wide faces and eyes, and what looks like a moustache under their small noses. Their ears seem to grow from the top of their heads, facing downwards. Tokyit spoke of them as aggressors, starting constant fights with his own people, but said little else, as though he would not speak of them. They dwell in the southeastern part of the Territories.

Another species of Kruejar dwells in the ancient area of the great Myn’ Ithrest kingdom, south of the Amysvut Mountains. This is the species that I believe Tokyit referred to when he spoke of “Mezetros”, but I know little else of that. The Minithistrans are another cat-like species, who live in the barrens and desert of the area. The males have great manes around their heads, and have bearded snouts. They have large almond-shaped eyes, and long protruding ears. The females look the same, without the mane. They have a range of colors, from cream to dark brown (though there is a myth of a black Minithistran, deadly and cunning). They don’t bother humans much as long as a distance is kept, but have attacked before. Another species lives to the south of the Minithistrans, known as the Ltnomyini (lit-NŌM-ēn-e). They are sleek, deadly stalkers that dwell in the forest and jungle areas nearest to Enookin Isle. Their fur is very short, with brown and yellow ochre stripes, and they have slender, yet powerful frames. Their ears are pointed straight outwards, and they have enormous golden eyes with white slits for pupils. The Ltnomyini are unique in that they have a sub-species, known more formally as the Kwipejj, that dwell further south where it is only thick jungle. They are almost identical, however the Kwipejj are all black, even less hairy than their cousins, and have bright green eyes. Both are deadly and seem to meld with the shadows. They attack humans unless they are outnumbered, in which case they will wait in the trees watching until the group disperses. They are known to be fiercely territorial.

A final two species of Kruejar are the Ruffys and the Hrkahtans. The Ruffys dwell in a strip of land in the eastern part of the territories, south of the Htedifris and Fdofen Rivers. They appear much like human-foxes,
with red or grey fur, and the heads of a bearded fox, though they are tremendously burly. They are another species known to be peaceful, like the Krihbits, but Tokyat informed us they are often drawn into fights or battles with their cousins the Hrkahtans, perhaps the most cruel and fierce of the Kruejar. The Ruffys prove to be resilient, as they have lasted. The Hrkahtans are frightening, and besides the Krihbits have had the most contact with others, though in an entirely different manner. They often lead long ranging raids into other kingdoms (as the historical accounts have said, as well as my own personal knowledge of attacks into Erhfaelis). They more closely resemble wolf-men, with long thick snouts and long ears that grow straight upwards. They also have large tufts of fur that grow out from either side of their muzzle, and large pale yellow eyes. Oddly, the color of their “face” is near opposite from their body and the tufts, typically cream on black or dark grey, and vice versa. Perhaps most strange is that they often wear cloth masks over their faces, though it is not known why. They have actively hunted and raided humans and other races, including Kruejar, since they came about, and any who enter their realm can expect a quick death.

Lastly to mention is the island of Jaeber. Little is known about its current standing; it was once an independent kingdom known as Jabeur. It could have succumbed to the Toghuit, but no one has gone to the island and returned alive. Not even Qytish traders venture there. Some speak of a worse disease, a curse placed upon the humans of Jaeber for offending Vaetigryn, or perhaps Luebyoys. Some say they are simply monsters. Therefore it is troublesome to group them with the Kruejar, as we do not understand what they are, and I personally can find no one who knows, or is willing to find out.
The Kyslm and the Lost Lands

The Kyslm (KĪSS-līm) are another race that despises all humankind. Had I been able to actually find their underground cities, I would not have come back alive. They are also a young race, steeped in myth, so other sources on them were also limited. They are more often the subject of bedtime stories than historical accounts, and I am afraid my account will sadly not be much more than myth. The only surviving race to have contact with them, the Klans, has long since forgotten what happened over 150 years ago. They too keep the memory of the Kyslm only in tales and legends, though those have too died out, as no one has seen a Kyslite since their last conflict. Not even the great Rettraer had much to tell. Thus what you will read is mostly myth, fantasy, and no one living knows the truth of it.

- The Lost Lands is a region in the northwest of Ledarhig. The Great Founding Tribe of the Avus settled there in ancient times, later splintering into a tribe known as the Syttlkit (SĪT-ul-kit). The Syttlkit kingdom had long been isolationist, having little to do with the outside world. And the outside wanted little to do with it, as it is the least hospitable region of the continent, frozen in tundra with seemingly little resources or food. Legends say that life is teeming beneath the mountains and many caves that pock the whole region, but that is unsubstantiated. Somehow the Syttlkit survived, and the Klans had contact with them every once in a while (This coming from the Rettraer of the Lectneb Klan). Sometime in the early 1st century NA (around 26 NA perhaps), the Syttlkit complained of an invasion on their main island, an unexplainable human-like race that burst forth from the mountains, somehow kept out of notice. They felt the work of a god, but said little else (Note: Legend has it that Naksent, god of the moon, created the Kyslm out of jealousy of Phochyst, god of the sun. After the Truce of the Gods was broken, Naksent enlisted the aid of Vaetigryn, lord of beasts, to help him create his race from a strange lizard-mammal beast that lived under the mountains of the Lost Lands. Vaetigryn agreed, and the Kyslm bred and grew in the heart of the mountains until strong enough to surface and take over the Lost Lands). Thus the Kyslm were born into legend. The Klans had no further contact with the Syttlkit until around 83 NA. They spoke of the Kyslm again, saying they had conquered the Lost Islands under a leader named Oentynilyk (ÕN-tēn-ĪL-ēk). And the next contact was with the refugees from a further invasion around 93 NA. The Kyslm swept across the Lost Lands for the next 40 years, and refugees were accepted into the Wastes (namely Rotkuisten), swearing vengeance or death. It would be death, annihilation in fact, as the Kyslm conquered all of the Lost Lands, the Syttlkit refugees mounted a counter-offensive along with Klan warriors in the Refugee War. They failed utterly, and were wiped out, along with a few thousand Klan warriors. That was the last contact anyone had with the Kyslm, and brutal as it was, it has been largely forgotten.

- Nothing is known of the religion of the Kyslm, beyond their legendary creation, nor their government, culture, society, etc. The corresponding map shows only what Syttlkit information survives, as they did reconnaissance prior to their attempted counter-attack. Thus it is mostly conjecture, and most names of rivers,
cities, and so forth, are simply what the Sytlikit termed them beforehand, translated as best as possible, as the Sytlikit language (and perhaps the Kyslm as well) is very different than ours, using a rune-based alphabet. They supposedly live underground, under the mountains and in the complex and extensive systems of caverns and caves throughout the Lost Lands. It is also rumored that they are active primarily at night, much as we are mostly active during the day. As for appearance, they are said to be lithe and quick, pale white-blue in deep purple armor, with stabbing purple eyes. It is said they move like ghosts, and kill quiet as the wind. Nothing is spoken of the Kyslm that is not meant to scare, so I am at a loss to determine what is true. This is as far as I could uncover; it will fall on others to investigate this ghostly race.
Navokarylia

The Navok (NĀV-ōk) are both an awesome and despicable race. They are the cruel children of Sykattyoshm, the god of air, and seem to be full of malice and arrogance toward all other beings. The Navok are the only race to practice enslavement of others, and the only race proud enough to attempt to create life of their own, the gruesome Nievkeyt (nē'IV-kē't). Their beasts included, the Navok have single-handedly wiped out almost 5 kingdoms of humans, including the Jhavri, Cyid, and the poor Mishran tribe, who lives on only as a nation of slaves. A race detested by all, it is also among the mightiest. The power of a single Navok warrior is perhaps equal to three men, such is their size and skill in magick. Their mighty wings also give them quite an advantage. They have been beaten before, however costly, and perhaps one day many will unite to defeat this scourge. It would be a bloody day, the bloodiest in history perhaps, but the Navok seek to rule over the world, and the time may come when humans have no choice. I was able to arrange myself to be snuck into the Free State of Mishra, at great cost, the greatest of which had we been caught. Mishra, once a powerful kingdom of the North, has now been reduced to a tiny land, where they attempt to carve a life from their subjection (more to follow later). The Mishran people were very helpful, risking themselves to accommodate myself and crew (they told me they were willing to risk it, so that the larger world might learn of their centuries-long plight). It is said the Navok would not hesitate to capture me and put me to the slave mines, or worse. They have little fear of other kingdoms, nor any retribution from my kingdom should I be caught. I have discovered that the Navok are a constant threat to be monitored, and guarded against continually. They are chronicled well, due to their presence in much of recent history, as well as their Mishran slaves, who interact with them on the deepest levels of their society, and have successfully written down all that they have discovered about the Navok during their enslavement (the Mishran people were always known as great scholars, and what remains of their once great libraries was of infinite help to me in my journey). The Mishra are a gentle and kind people, but more will follow on them later. Here is what follows, in brief, on what I discovered about the Navok.

- To clarify to those who have yet to witness a Navok, I will briefly describe them. They are much larger and definitely more menacing than the average Erhfaelin. I recall my first encounter while in the Mishran state. He was an armored guard, and I had to stretch upwards to see his eyes, standing at least seven feet in height (I was later told he was small for their standards, which is why he was put on guard in the Mishran state, an insult for any Navok. This probably explains his rather harsh attitude towards us; he shoved me around like a bully to a child, and was our nearest moment of being discovered for what I truly was. Quick speaking from my lead caretaker, Rajid, saved me from certain doom). Their height is made greater by their wings, of which they have two pair: a larger set for thrust, and smaller for maneuvering. They remind me of insect wings, and the two pair are over ¾ the size of their body. They have powerful legs for perching, with three toes like talons. They also have three fingers (including a thumb) on each hand. Their heads are the most unusual. Their foreheads seem to expand outwards, extending outwards over earholes (no ear part to speak of). And their skulls
stretch upward in a small cone, which I am told houses a special organ that increases their potential for magick, as well as senses wind currents and other vital flying information. They appear entirely foreign, and completely dangerous. They have a manner of looking at humans as though we were only vermin, an annoyance they must live with. Even with my mission in mind, I was not upset when they left our presence.

• The Navok inhabit the lands of the ancient kingdom of Mishra and the mainland kingdom of the once mighty Boire. The eastern mainland, from the straits of Drikyn (DRİ-kên) in the north to the swamps of Balokandyrin in the south, is their land, from ice to bog, the foggy seas around Drikyn Isle and the infamous Slave Mountains. It is split almost in half by the dangerously swift Brylkhars Deka (BRİL-kûrs dî-KÖ), which is only fordable at a few key locations. A varied landscape and array of resources have given the Navok a formidable and rich territory to consolidate and increase their strength. Their extensive slave system has allowed them to exploit that land to its fullest.

• The history of the Navok must be dealt with to a degree, as they have perhaps influenced or outright caused many of the major events of the New Age, as well as brought about the downfall or complete restructuring of numerous kingdoms. The Nievkeyt in Balokandyrin, the new state of Ellan Boirey (and to some degree their new goddess), and even the creation of the Federak all owe their inception to the catalyst of Navok aggression. Therefore in discussing Navok history, even to a small degree (which I will only allow myself), we are discussing the history of Ledarhig as a whole. It is because of this that the Navok are surprisingly well chronicled, because of their interactions with the various other races. None of the information I obtained was from any Navok necessarily, but from stolen books (not by my hand) and the scholars of other nations who have dealt with them.

  o The Navok wasted no time in expanding from their root home, nestled on the windy western side of Drikyn Island in between the Vokynaben (VÖ-kill-NÖ-bên) Mountains and the Haljot coast. As was the case with the other Haelschyn, 1000 Navok formed the original race, set in their place by their patron god Sykatt. Also as with other Haelschyn, no human kingdom was able to penetrate this “womb”, while the Navok grew in numbers and power for 150 years. Scouting parties, even whole armies, would find brutal storms guarding the mountain passes, vicious winds protecting the coast from any landing force. Thus were the early Navok protected from being wiped out, until around 150 AH, when they spilled forth from this “Haelwomb”, now aided and guided by the storms that preceded them like mighty harbingers in those first pivotal battles. They began to annihilate whole Mishran armies, capturing all those they didn’t slaughter. Hundreds of slaves, men and women, young and old, were sent back to Navok Ridirs, the capital. It seemed nothing could slow their invasion of Drikyn Island, and by 171 AH it was firmly in Navok hands. The only Mishran presence left was the now thousands of slaves now being dispersed throughout the realm to work the farms and other facilities that the Navok wouldn’t bother themselves with (the adoption of slavery in Navokarylia has deeper roots, more fully discussed later).
Shortly before conquering Drikyn Island, the Navok foresaw a problem with their population: it was too small to launch an effective invasion onto the mainland. After a few years of debate and study, they came up with a solution that they quickly launched. It was the first of the Lovikyldasyv (lō-VĪK-īl-DĀS-ēv) Projects (Vdoekt (fī-DŌ-ēkt) in their tongue), the effort to create life of their own, in the form of so-called “battle slaves” to make up the bulk of their armies. Many different beasts were created (that now inhabit their realm and the swamps of Balokandyrin), but only one was kept and “mass-produced”: the Nievkeyt. Giant, vicious, difficult to kill, and above all, simple-minded, the Nievkeyt proved to be very successful foot soldiers, slaughtering without mercy, but just smart enough to understand basic orders, without too much intelligence to prove a threat themselves (at least initially). This first Project finished, the Navok began their invasion anew in 178 AH, now spreading to the mainland. They swept through and conquered the entire Mishran kingdom by 181 AH, and would stop only briefly to consolidate their gains before turning to their new foe: the Boire Empire.

The Boire had seen the effects of the Navok and their Nievkeyt brutes. They prepared themselves as best they could, but there was little to stop the Navok, now that they had perfected their tactics with the Nievkeyt, as well as add a few new monsters to their armies. In four years the Navok had driven down to the Brylkhrs Deka, again capturing what Boire they could, killing the rest. By 205 AH they had control of most of the Boire kingdom, held up by the final stand of the Boire armies. No one could have expected the ferocity and tenacity of the Navok armies. With slaves managing their production and food, there were no ties for the armies to go back to. They were a professional army, through and through, incredibly powerful, vicious, and difficult to kill. By 214, the last resistance of the Boire was defeated, and the Navok now control the realms of two formerly mighty human kingdoms. But they would soon discover the harsh price of their creations.

Now that the common enemy was gone, and many years of experience had somewhat increased the intelligence of the Nievkeyt, they began to turn on their creators. With their lower intelligence, the Nievkeyt had always feared Navok magick, which had been the greatest tool to keep them in check. But led by a few ring leaders, along with their quiet and surprising “evolution” over the short existence into more intelligent beings, began to see the benefit of their overwhelming size and numbers. They began revolting in large numbers, demanding space of their own. Many Navok were killed in this widespread rebellion, and they began to lose their foothold in the newly conquered Boire lands. Fearing an invasion from the Cyid kingdom to the south, or the Boire refugees to the east on Ellan Boirey, the Navok attempted to turn the Nievkeyts’ newfound self-awareness into a tool of their own. They were able to successfully convince the Nievkeyt to not turn on their masters, but instead to the swamps to the south, where the Cyid kingdom ruled (though their
intelligence had grown as a whole, they were still not very bright creatures). Without their foot army, the Navok would not have the strength necessary to continue their conquest, nor fight off the Nievkeyt without greatly weakening themselves in the process. Thus they struck two down with one blow: at the beginning of the New Age, they unleashed the rebellious Nievkeyt onto the unsuspecting Cyid kingdom, who would see itself destroyed by their hands.

The Nievkeyt began destroying the Cyid kingdom piecemeal. With the vicious onslaught underway, the Cyid had little with which to defend themselves, as their magick, their primary weapon by far, had begun to dwindle in power for mysterious reasons (though it is believed that the Navok may have influenced that somehow). By 20 NA, over half the Cyid kingdom was destroyed, and the Nievkeyt began spilling into Jhavri lands as well, another fated kingdom in the region of Balokandyrin. Shortly after, the Navok began raiding the Cyid and Jhavri kingdoms, capturing as many as they could, in what would be known as the 1st Slave War. They raided for almost a year, capturing many slaves to put to work in what became the Slave Mountains, mining precious metals as well as a mysterious ore known as Bothkhus or Temkyl (mining was very dangerous in the mountains, so the Navok dared not risk losing their "primary" slaves). This combined with the Nievkeyt onslaught was enough to wipe out the two kingdoms by 22 NA. Two more human kingdoms now destroyed, and the Nievkeyt placated, the Navok begin the second of the Lovikyldasyv Projects, this time to create a more reliable minion, as well as a security force for the burgeoning and rebellious slaves in the Slave Mountains.

The Slave Mountains prove to be an extremely abundant and valuable resource. But the vast numbers of slaves captured during the 1st Slave War perished, under the harsh conditions, as well as mass suicides. The Navok needed another source for labor, and turned their eyes westward to the Northern Wastes. In 27 NA they invaded the realm of the Skallic Klan, and were highly successful, hoping to perhaps establish some sort of "slave kingdom" to replenish their miners. They also found the huge Northerners to be better equipped for mining than the smaller Cyid and Jhavri. They were highly successful over the next few years, until stopped by a united front under Turgeis of the Haupteg Klan in 30 NA. Not willing to commit the troops necessary to defeat the united Klans, the Navok retreated, taking a large numbers of slaves with them, to be lost forever in the mines. It would be their first major defeat, but not their last.

Over the next five decades the Navok concentrate on the Lovikyldasyv Projects and their operations in the mines. They defeated a few rescue expeditions sent by the Boire (also put to work in the mines) and the Northerners, but were mostly silent. In 74 NA, the Nivkin Wars began, but ended much later in defeat for the Navok and Nievkeyt puppets (dealt with in Balokandyrin section). The last chapter of Navok history involves several unsuccessful wars versus the Jern and other kingdoms. In 92 NA,
the Navok invade the Jernnish kingdom, angry at their involvement in the
Nivkin Wars (and also hoping to capture some Jernnish slaves, excellent
miners and mountaineers). The so-called 1st (and 3rd) Haelschyn Wars saw
little gain, except quarreling over a region around the north of the Slave
Mountains, which is still contested now. A final war fought in recent
Navok history was known as the Beast Wars. In 282 NA, the results of
further Lovikyldasyv Projects resulted in a variety of new beasts that the
Navok wished to test. They unleashed them upon the island of Ellan
Boirey to the immediate south, and make some gains into the north of that
realm. Strangely enough, however, the Arrechi, far removed from the
interests of the Navok, come to the aid of the Aird-Boire people, and drive
the Navok out. No serious interest is taken in a full war, so the Navok
leave, satisfied with their new creations. So ends the history of the Navok,
an active and key history to the development of the eastern half of
Ledarhig. They have been relatively quiet in the past years, with raids into
the Northern Wastes here and there, and other small campaigns, as well as
the conflict with the Jern. Navok history is crucial to an understanding of
the current standing of Ledarhig, though I have been extremely brief in
detail to the major events.

- Of Navok society, I also received a great wealth of information, all of which I
wrote down and chronicled, but only a small portion of which I will discuss here.
I learned a tremendous amount from the Mishran slaves, with whom I was so
graciously taken in, who have experienced every facet of Navok life, on every
level. A note must be first made as to how this was accomplished. As a result of
the 3rd Haelschyn War, the Mishra earned their own “free” state to carry on their
personal affairs, to remain a cohesive people, albeit in captivity (further detail
discussed later). Into this free state I was smuggled in, at great expense and
danger to the Mishra. The full reason I will never know, but I do know that the
Mishra were great scholars of the past, and have a tremendous desire to chronicle
others, as well as their own people. I was continually amazed at how meticulously
they have chronicled the Navok, down the finest details. They are truly dedicated
scholars, and strange ones, in that they so closely study their tyrannical masters.
Still, they wished to write down all that they knew, and also wished the outside
world to become more aware of the status of the Mishra and other slaves. They
hid me among their people for near a month, passing me off as an elderly scholar
where needed, though for the most part the Navok garrison did not pay much
attention (they mostly let the Mishran state carry on it pleases, so long as they pay
tribute and are peaceful. They are also prejudiced to humans, and cannot readily
pick out the differences between a Mishran and Erhfaelin human. To them, we all
look alike: small and ugly). They gave me access to all the books and written
accounts they had, and I had interviews with a wide array of former Mishran
slaves with different backgrounds. Here follows my brief account of Navok
society, detailing only what I feel is most important to gaining a basic
understanding of their way of life and structure.
Navok society is something very different than most humans might experience. It is utterly patriarchal, in that the females (termed Matkha (MÁT-kü)) have no say in anything, and are barred from most exploits (except for the Orska, more on them to follow). It is elitist, meaning the members of the society all form a privileged elite, compared to the Mishran slaves (termed Dasyv (DÁS-ëv), who could be termed a “part” of their society as well). It is also divided into two sects, into which every Navok (meaning male, termed Myskil (MÉS-kyüll)) falls: warrior or magi. The average Myskil lives a life of luxury, off of the fat of his “land” that he rarely lives on, as well as the general wealth of the cities shared amongst all. Depending on warrior or magi (Khadobyl (KÁD-ö-bēl) or Skresa), the average Myskil would either spend much of his time in war games and tactical discussion, or in a laboratory and research. The greatest of each sect will go on to lead armies or “committees” (Khomutet (KÓM-u-tët)), or even to rule on the Supreme Council (the Bylchs Khodoka (BÍLKS kō-DŌ-kü)). Much of their lives are spent towards these gains, as well as personal projects, and the ever-present factional strife between and within the sects. To have any say in the society, a Myskil must make a name for himself.

There is a huge rift in Navok society between Khadobyl and Skresa, making very different lifestyles, cultures, even languages. The two sects are constantly engaged in a power struggle that causes vast amounts of internal strife. It is often like two rival nations forced to coexist in the same space. Cities and regions are typically dominated by either side, leaving a patchwork of power bases for either side throughout the kingdom. They have separated enough to form different dialects as well: Khadobyl use a “low” dialect, harsher and more basic, and Skresa use a “high” language, more flowery and elegant. They are from same stem language, though outsiders may not realize it. Both dialects are thought to come from the respective aspect of their patron god, Sykatt. One could also pick a sect out from its dress and stature. Khadobyl are the enormous, hulking Navok encased in special armor designed to work with their wings, protecting without hindering flight. Skresa are more slender, typically shorter as well, and always don the flowing robes of their sect. A sect is chosen when very young, often through influence of the father Myskil (though a resentful child might go the other way as well). This sectarian structure has gone far enough to designate which Matkha are best for breeding either side, as well as special nurseries for each. Another peculiarity of their race, which has led its own structure, as well as bred soldiers and magi that are arguably the most deadly in Ledarhig.

It is appropriate to note the particular life habits of the Navok which result in their relatively small population, as it in part caused their need for slaves, as well as the Lovikyl-dasyv Projects. The Navok do not reproduce often, nor have any strong concepts of marriage or love. In their male-dominated society, most relations between the sexes occur in Syvodrejl (SíV-ö-DRé-jil). These are very much like brothels: particularly attractive
Matkha are picked for this profession at the adolescent age, considered a blessing by many, as these Yrso (ĒR-sō) are very well treated and cared for by the state. Any Myskil may enter the Syvod and choose an Yrso, enter a furnished room or take her where he pleases (some Myskil have Yrso living in their homes, though their conditions are sometimes worse off). The Syvodrejl are completely free to Myskil, paid for by the state, and are very well-kept and elaborate buildings, often more like estates. One could find these in even the small cities (it is said that some Myskil even have strange desires for Mishran women as well, but this is completely forbidden to them). This is the main form of intercourse for the Navok. Occasionally this results in offspring, (as they have developed special ways of preventing conception, using either magic or herbalist remedies, which are usually successful), and all Myskil are expected to produce at least one new Navok for the race, with more “care” taken in choosing the mother. But this is not strictly enforced or followed, and as such their numbers are few. This is what in part led them to slavery (coupled with their sense of superiority over other races, particularly humans), now that they had the power and human captives to procure forced labor. Thus no Navok has truly engaged in farming or other resource gathering since around 150-160 AH, relying solely on their slaves. This small population number also sparked the many Lovikyldasyv Projects. This single peculiarity of their race has had perhaps the widest ranging repercussions in their culture, society, and history, as well as the impact on other kingdoms like the Mishra and the Boire, who could be called indirect “victims” of their sexual practices.

The Navok ruling body, the Bylchs Khodoka, is made up of Myskil from either side of the Navok society. They only ascend once they grow tired of the factional strife, as factional behavior is typically grounds for dismissal. Ideally they are ascending to a higher purpose, though some may keep a hint of their prejudice with them. They serve as a buffer between the warrior and magi sides of the society, striving to keep the careful balance between the two warring sides, which has been recognized as inevitability. There are four of each sect at all times, and there is an Orska (matron) who sits on the ninth seat, to cast deciding votes and add the occasional opinion, but historically plays little role in the council. Their influence and commands are generally obeyed within Navok society, and their neutrality is typically true (though at times a Bylch may be swayed to a particular cause). They are the deciding body in all matters, convening nine regular times during the year (more frequently for special matters, such as war), rotating between each of the three capitals three times, Navok Ridirs (on Drikyn Island), Navok Lumen (in the Mishran Valley), and Belekan (in the Boire Fade on Lake Skytkhew). They hold a meeting in special building known as the Irsbodelj (RĪS-bō-delj), where all Myskil (and Orska) are allowed to attend and bring matters to the Bylchs Khodoka. Most often it is an argument between the sects, mediated by the Bylchs Khodoka, until one side is forced to back down, or the Bylchs Khodoka is
forced to intercede and cast their own decision. Even with the constant bickering, the Bylchs Khodoka manages to maintain a strong grip on the rule of the society, and successfully mitigates what could become a severe weakness for the Navok if the factional strife went on unmediated.

- The Navok Orska hold a special place in their society, as women are typically looked down upon and disregarded. On the council they are often (grudgingly) respected, part of tradition as well as their particularly strong connection to magick. The Orska are a very small, secretive, and exclusive sect, but wield comparatively great authority, as it is rumored that some can see into the future, or know how to manipulate the winds of change. Of all the things the Mishra knew about in the Navok world, the Orska are the only part they are never allowed in. I have seen them myself: always in blood-colored robes with black veils, and special shawls thrown over their wings. They maintain chapters in the major cities, and have taken a peculiar interest in the Mishran state. During my encounter with one, my Mishran escort and I were moving from one building to another. She walked down the street, completely clothed and hidden. When I approached, she stopped in her path. I sensed she was staring at me from under the veil; it gave me a very eerie feeling, as though she saw through our deception. Horrified, I stopped in my tracks, and she held my gaze for several moments. Then, she turned and walked on, as though I had never existed. These Orska must have some power, albeit mysterious, to be allowed such authority as they have.

- Now that Navok strength has been spread through their massive kingdom, they focus on manipulation and weakening kingdoms, while they concentrate on creating their monstrosities. Much of their energy also goes towards unlocking the potential of the mysterious Bothkus ore, which some believe can be used to magickally augment their weapons, or channel magickal energy in ways never dreamed of before. However, it is termed “dark metal” for more than just its color: dangerous accidents have befallen many Skresa in their studies of this ore. It is also extremely dangerous to mine, occurring in deep places prone to collapse, areas of noxious gases that seem to emerge on contact, and caverns guarded by warped and twisted beasts that flay and devour countless slave-miners. They have been mining for years, but do not have but a few cartfuls, much of the process slowed by its hazardous environment. When the Skresa unlock the secrets of the Bothkus ore, it may prove a dark day for Ledarhig. The Navok are incredibly powerful, and believe they have the ability to conquer the world. And though they have much conflict within, they are united against everyone else, with the powerful Bylchs Khodoka at the head. A formidable foe for anyone, they remain rulers of the East, and a constant threat to all other existence.
Balokandyrin

The Nievkeyt (NYÉV-kät) (meaning “never die” in Navok language, more commonly known as “Nivkin” in Erhfaelin) are a race of fierce beasts, created long ago by Navok magi, a fusion of man and monster brought on by perverse and wicked experimentation on captive humans, known as the Lovikyl-dasyv Projects. To enter their lands is a death sentence, not only from the harsh environment they inhabit, but from their infamous malice towards humans, which typically involves slow torture before being devoured. Created as foot soldiers, a body of brute strength to slay and dull wits to follow orders blindly, they are a somewhat simple race. What limited contact humans have had (and lived to record) came mostly from the Nivkin Wars of mighty Erhfael’s time, with a few rogue accounts from adventurous (or foolish) explorer’s. I myself have witnessed a Nivkin raid, albeit a small one, while staying at the fortress that guards Yravin’s Stair. I went along with a patrol down the Stair, young and full of foolish curiosity. They set upon us from out of the bog, some rising out of the muck itself, others leaping down from trees or other hiding spots. They are enormous beasts at over eight feet sometimes, lithe yet powerful, with gaping, jutting maws and small blood-red eyes. Their fingers are long and throttle men with ease, have tough hides to shrug off most blows, even hacked limbs won’t stop them for long, as they can recuperate from even deep wounds rather quickly. They make horrible shrieking and guttural sounds, and smell like rotting cow dung. It was midnight dark; they circled us and our torchlight, me in the middle of the brave Erhfaelin patrolmen. They set upon us with an insane bloodlust, no real organization, save a few shouts from one in the back, who was hurling primitive magick our way with a full staff he wielded as a large wand. Only after several of their small party were hacked to a final death did the leader call them away, covering their retreat with more erratic bolts, one that struck down one of his comrades (they made sure to go back for this corpse before finally disappearing). The patrolmen told me the Nivkin beasts often try to lay such traps, that their patrols have to continue to slow any build-up of Nivkin near the border. That handful of no more than seven Nievkeyt almost destroyed half of our twenty-man patrol; imagine the effects of a horde like those that came upon Yravin’s Stair during the Nivkin Wars. Brutal to the extreme and relentless, it is only their low cunning that separates them from simple beasts (and often that is not enough). Here I will go into a brief description of their history after the Navok abandoned them (see appropriate section for the Navok relationship to the Nievkeyt, and their early history).

- Balokandyrin is a region of lowland marshes, swamps, bogs, as well as some areas of very fertile grasslands, as the wetlands are a depository for good soil washed down from the many, many rivers that drain into the area. It is also a region starkly separated from the rest of Ledarhig; the Daakon-Lekos mountain range bars the South, the Gheam River the north. The Boire Sea forms the eastern border, while the Worldspine Plateau traces its entire western and southwestern limits. Therefore it is a basin, cut off from most of the world, which provides the “best” place for caging the Nievkeyt. If not for this region’s geography, the Nievkeyt may have spread further throughout Ledarhig; without barriers they would be nigh uncontrollable. The major problem with this (besides their continued existence) is that the region is full of valuable farmland and rich in
resources, including many exotic plants like the stoutlip and apieiya, and strange creatures (many of which were also created and discarded by the Navok magi). There are also the ruins of the Jhavri and Cyid kingdoms, who left innumerable valuable artifacts and tomes within their legendary palaces. It is therefore a land that needs to be explored and developed, but can no longer be traversed in any degree of safety. But private caravans travel through constantly, even though Erhfaelis has declared that no aid will be given to those who enter those lands. For some the promise is too great. It would take the armies of many realms to conquer and wipe out the Nievkeyt, who become more numerous (and surprisingly, more intelligent) every year. For now it is only containment, and the very rare and lucky traveler that makes it home with some trinket or cart full of exotic goods keeps the region’s deadly mystique alive.

- During a hot and hazy summer in 75 NA, the silence of the dawn was broken by guttural shrieks, as thousands of Nievkeyt stomped across the Erhfaelin border around what is now known as the province of Nivkinvale. Their warriors tore through unprepared Erhfaelin defenders, bearing few weapons, simply ripping limbs from bodies, heads from shoulders, sometimes gnawing on bits of flesh while advancing, supported by their leaders, those who lucked upon strange artifacts from the Jhavri and Cyid ruins and spouted crude magicks across battlefields, often hitting their brethren as much as their enemies. The wave was endless, the individuals incredibly difficult to kill by the unfamiliar defenders. Armies were sent to the relatively undefended area, but many were recalled as more Nievkeyt managed to sneak up the Gheam and Jeryi Falls. By winter, the Nievkeyt had conquered the Ethi peninsula, and were pressing up the short slope known now as Yravin’s Stair, that would provide them easy access to Erhfaelis past the Worldspine should they conquer it. Knowing this, Champion Yravin held a final defense at Anad Kolnter, the fortress guarding the Stair, calling upon even woman and child to defend their homeland until reinforcing armies could arrive and try to plug the hole, or at least prevent the Nievkeyt from spreading unhindered throughout southern Erhfaelis. All were annihilated, comrades dealing each other the final blow rather than be captured and eaten alive by the monsters. Anad Kolnter fell, but Yravin’s Stand, lasting several months, gave reinforcements time to arrive and contain the invasions. Erhfaelin blood flooded the Ethi peninsula; the Nivkin Wars had begun.

- By the spring of 75 NA, the Nievkeyt had established footholds in three spots in the Erhfaelin realm: the Ethi peninsula, at the Jeryi Falls in the province of Lachoden, and at Gheam Falls in the province of Aerysdalia (see Erhfaelin map for details). Within two years, they broke through and surrounded Erhfaelin Proper, and began to lay siege. By this time it was known that some extraordinary leadership must be directing the invasion, as it was far too organized and intelligently handled (for Nievkeyt, anyway) for any regular raid. The Nievkeyt Chupa (warlord) Kitak was the great arbiter of this invasion. Extremely intelligent by Nievkeyt standards, as well as having an inherent gift for magick, he proved an adept commander. The capital in danger, and with more Nievkeyt beginning to break through in the south, Erhfaelis found itself in dire
straits. It turned to desperate measures: a bold and risky plan put forth by Erhfael’s chief magi, Sarpaed.

- Sarpaed’s Folly was a plan used by the head magi of Erhfael’s court in late 79 NA. It was intended to wipe out an entire arm of the Nivkin force, thus lifting the siege around Erhfaelis Proper. Hundreds of magi gathered to prepare and cast the spell, taking several months. The end result was an enormous sphere of energy that would settle over the Nievkeyt area and destroy them. Many opposed the project; Erhfael also did not trust the effects. But their capital under siege, desperate as they were, they agreed. The project was near completion, but, as was feared, the magi lost control of the magick. The sphere settled over the area and killed thousands, Nievkeyt and Erhfaelin alike, and devastated the land. All were horrified; over 3000 Erhfaelin lives were lost, over 5000 Nievkeyt. People sought justice, and demanded magick be outlawed hence forth, and that every magi been imprisoned or slain. Erhfael, forced by circumstance, outlaw magick under penalty of death, and was forced to exile the magi, lest they be murdered by angry Erhfaelins. Sarpaed, the chief magi under Erhfael, was sold out and tricked from his protective house arrest in Erhfael’s castle, and beaten severely, then hanged outside of Erhfaelis Proper near the devastation, all against the decree that no magi was to be harmed. Erhfael was especially troubled, as Sarpaed was a very dear friend. Thus was the end of magick in Erhfaelis. But it was a new chapter in the war. While countless were lost, the siege was lifted, and Erhfaelin armies could attack forward. It seemed there would be hope yet, until the real arbiter of the war was revealed.

- The Navok have pulled the strings of the Nievkeyt since their creation. Seeking to weaken the Erhfaelins, considered their strongest enemy, the Navok bribed Chupa Kitak with the promise of magickal artifacts and power to rule over the whole of Balokandyrin. This was the impetus for the invasion, and shortly after Sarpaed’s Folly in 79 NA, the Navok invasion was set to begin. Their forces swept over the weakened Erhfaelin lands, conquering all of Aerysdalia in a few short months. To add to their plight, Heuvl armies seize the opportunity to conquer the province of Koultrgate. Beset by three seemingly unstoppable foes, Erhfael was forced to seek aid. He implored his neighbors to help, hoping someone would help rescue Erhfaelis. Seeing a kindred spirit in their fellow humans, the Federak responded, hoping to also gain a powerful ally and stop a power gain by the Navok. The Jem also agree to help, by letting Federak armies to traverse their realm where needed, also seeking to stop the Navok advance. It was a desperate situation, but not quite over for the Erhfaelins.

- The Klans press on, making gains against both the Navok and the Heuvl. To save his people, Erhfael is given a gift by a sympathetic mother, Attiae: to once again tame the mighty beasts of Grynhoelm for battle. Fierce dhargans and noble gryphons soon enter the fray in 81 NA, dealing huge blows to the Nievkeyt and Navok armies. Soon Erhfaelin armies rally and begin pushing the aggressors out. By the end of 82 NA the
Nievkeyt invaders are destroyed, the Navok retreating to conserve their numbers. By 83 NA, the Erhfaelin borders are restored, and Nievkeyt power forever etched on their memory. As a result, Nivkinvale and the Ethi Peninsula has become more of a border march dominated by fortresses and Erhfaelin garrisons, and fortresses are places at all other perceived entrances onto the Worldspine Plateau. For the Nievkeyt, most are now united under the “leadership” of the ruling Chupa tribe, as Kitak survived to found a dynasty under his namesake, the only real semblance of unity and structure to the Nievkeyt. His great-grandson, Kitak (all heritable sons in the line are named this), now rules, who might have even greater power in magick than his predecessor. The Nivkin Wars began as a small invasion that quickly expanded to include the major powers of central Ledarhig. It shaped further relations between realms, and help forge the structure of the Nievkeyt. It is certainly one of the most significant wars of New Age history.

- The appearance of the Nievkeyt was given before, if one can stand to imagine it. One would be surprised, however, at the amazing amount of diversity between individuals, who appear as or even more different than one human from the next. The patrolmen I was with also claim that one can tell the difference between tribes by their coloration, which might range from all sorts of greens and grey-blues to even some dark purplish and black skins. There is little difference between males and females in size or height; only in the features of the face and the wail, as females tend to have softer faces and more piercing wails. Both fight equally in any battle. Patrolmen I have since talked to have also claimed that the Nivkin are “evolving”; that the typical form has morphed into two new forms as well: a smaller, weaker form aptly named Grunts, and a much larger form called Bulls, which also have a large frill that circles around their necks, making it harder to decapitate them, which until now was the most effective way to kill a Nievkeyt (he also told me that the bulls seem to be challenging and winning control of the established tribes, which is causing a huge power shift and internal conflict amongst the beasts). As far as battle, there is an underlying strategy, I believe, though others discount it. They use their particular strengths to their advantage: brute strength, intensity, hardiness. They charge in wildly, slashing, using their terrifying form to unnerve their enemies. All the while their primitive magi cast spells from behind this protection (something learned in the Nivkin Wars, when the Erhfaelins developed special squads to seek out and destroy these magi). They wear little armor or weapons, unless they find them useful, as their natural weapons tend to be more effective. Certain tribes might paint crude things upon their bodies as a designator, presumably as a sort of uniform for battle amongst themselves to differentiate. The most active tribe near Erhfaelis is the Gnudlug tribe, identified by the bright pink handprint on their chest and back of their heads. They strike ferociously, often using the swamp to hide themselves, or even in rare occasion as a weapon itself, setting traps or using poisons. The more cunning they become, the more deadly they will become, and we will have to develop better ways of defeating them.
The Nievkeyt are a simple race in their lifestyle, what little we truly know. They dwell in shoddy huts, generally solitary in nature, and don’t usually gather in any sort of cities beyond village-sized, where their society breaks down to the tribal level. There are a few “cities”, however, where a few tribes inhabit the ruins of the once-famous cities of the Jhavri and Cyid. These tribes are the envy of the other Nievkeyt, and tribal wars often ensue for control of these ruins, as well as the magickal artifacts hidden there. The most famous of these, of course, is the Chupa tribe of Ba’ Dorin Thur, the ancient capital of the Jhavri, taken over by the Cyid late in the Age of Haelschyn. The entire region of Balokandyrin is separated into “islands” by the major rivers. Usually those islands are dominated by a several Nivkin tribes, or sometimes under one warchief. As for the inner workings of their daily life, little can be known, as no one can get that close and survive. They must be adaptively strong, as much of the swampland of Balokandyrin is very dangerous. Many bogs emit noxious gases and a poisonous fog settles over whole areas. All manner of hunting creatures and even hunter plants also live in the swamps, a few we know of that would prove a challenge even to a vicious Nievkeyt. How they manage to survive with so simple a society is a wonder, so that I myself wonder if they might be more sophisticated than are given credit. They are beasts most of the time that I am aware, and myself have often felt they should be exterminated, especially while studying the Nivkin Wars. Yet at other times, I have heard that they can be so very empathetic as living creatures as well. One brave explorer reported witnessing a mother carry around a baby, nurse it, even protect it with her life against an abusive male, seen another male tending to the wounds of a fellow caught in a swamp hunter’s trap. It seems they might simply be misunderstood, but the wounds of the Nivkin Wars are still too fresh to consider anything but their annihilation for most. I, however, as always, wish for further information.
The Shadowlands

The Shadowlands is the hilly and heavily forested region to the northwest of Erhfaelis. It was settled by the Great Founding Tribe of the Heuvl (HÖY-vül). The system of the power in place there since the beginning of humankind, the Clans, have shaped the history of the Shadowlands, from a loose federation in the early ages to the more unified single entity of today. I myself have journeyed there only a few times, as relations between Erhfaelis and the Heuvl shift every year, delving into their great libraries and talking with their great scholars as well. I have both been welcomed with open arms, and also turned back to the border under penalty of death. During my time there, however, I noticed a certain amount of secrecy within, even when openly welcomed. There is something hiding in the underbelly of Heuvl society, and I must report what I know.

- The Shadowlands is aptly named; the entire region is dominated by the foothills of the Key Shield and Pitr Sagiyb (PI-tür sä-GEB) Mountains and thick, dark forests. It also has perhaps the largest number of lakes outside of Balokandyrin. This terrain has definitely helped the Heuvl defend their lands in the past, to all but the might of the Grynnish Empire. The Shadowlands region is also a realm full of bustling, wealthy cities, in part due to the presence of the Clans, who closely control and manage their individual realms within the Shadowlands. There is also the chain of islands known as the “Key of the West” (Sleutsdeutel (SLOYTZ-döyt-ül)) or Western Islands, whose placement in ancient times provided potential conquerors a means to circumvent the Shield Mountains. They are also wealthy islands, rich in resources and as waypoints for ships passing through or leaving from the Shadowlands. None know their land better than the Heuvl, and they seem to use it to its fullest potential.

- Before I say anything further, I must make a distinction. One should not confuse the Heuvl “Clans” of the Shadowlands with the “Klans” of the Northern Wastes. Whereas the Klans of the North are hereditary, communal structures, the Clans of the Shadowlands are more power bases. Clan leaders will often recruit powerful members into their group (in secret), which function as closed societies. There are six Clans: Bloedbomn (BLÜD-böm), Vrulik (VRÜ-lük), Dukervrig (DÜK-tür-frig), Groenhaav (GRÜN-év), Hoofd, and Vahd Geluk (VŌD gē-LÜK). This system also further divides their society into those who are in a Clan (the majority of Heuvl), and those who are not, the Uitludner (WĪT-lūd-nūr) (meaning “outlander”, this is mostly foreigners like the Nehne refugees or the lower classes, and a small percentage of conscious dissidents). This is the seven part “united” Shadowlands, with each individual entity struggling and maneuvering for slightly more power for its own within the larger structure. And this structure has directly influenced Heuvl life since the First Age.

- Heuvl history is as long as human time itself, and well documented. To begin at the most significant stage, we must go back a long way, over 900 years, to a time before the strange Haelschyn and other new races, to when only humans ruled Ledarhig. This was the time of the Alytn of the North, of the legendary kingdom of Dharganad and early Grynhoelm. The Heuvl people were split into two entities: the Groenhaav Clan, who controlled the coast and the Western Islands
with their rich ports, and the Riddr Clan, who controlled the rest of the Shadowlands (as well as the present Erhfaelin province of Koultrgate). After much maneuvering and alliance made, the six clans of the Heuvl people (Hoofder did not become its own Clan in the Heuvl kingdom until 19 NA) finally split in 107 MA, in what became known as the Clan Wars. For centuries the Riddr Clan had lordship over the Bloedborn, Vrulik, Dukervrig, and Vahd Geluk clans. Orchestrated by the leader of the Groenhaav Clan, Raalo, the leaders of the Bloedborn, Vrulik, Dukervrig, Groenhaav, and Vahd Geluk clans met in secret. Raalo hoped to weaken his rival by inciting the other clans to revolt all at once. A pact was made, to not war against each other until the Riddr clan was taken over. This was carried out over the next 8 years, through several generations, until finally the Riddr clan was wiped out; their land divided, their key members eliminated. By 115 MA, the Heuvl lands were split into five realms: Bloedborn, Vrulik, Dukervrig, Groenhaav, and Vahd Geluk. It was a new step in their identity, but would lead to a dark age for them. Once their common enemy was gone, the five Clans reduced to fighting amongst themselves. This paved the way for the conquest of the Heuvl kingdoms by the Grynnish Empire.

- In less than 50 years after the Clan Wars, Grynhoelm had assimilated the new Clans of the Heuvl. It would not be until the Haelschyn Age that they would become independent once again. Around 180 AH, the Grynnish Empire was under pressure from within and without, especially by the Jern, who were expanding at a tremendous rate. Their overlords distracted, the Clans saw this as the time to rebel. By 200 AH, the Vahd Geluk Clan had succeeded, and others soon followed, until by the end of the Haelschyn Age, the ancient Heuvl realm was restored, and stronger than ever. New problems and enemies would now emerge, and as always, the Clans fought for power amongst themselves.

- After the Horror of Babidram, the Arrechi were unleashed upon the necromancers of Nehnemin. Early in the New Age, refugees began to flood over the Pitr Sagiyb mountains. Some were accepted, others deemed too dangerous to allow in, including many known necromancers, lest the Heuvl bring the wrath of the Arrechi down upon them as well. (It is rumored, however, that perhaps these necromancers weren’t always turned away, but brought in secret. As figures of immense power and wealth they were not easily ignored, nor denied. More on the necromancers will follow). Soon, however, the refugees stopped coming, as the Nehne were all but annihilated. With careful promises and tension between the Heuvl and Arrechi, the existing refugees were assimilated, though forever placed in the class of Uitludner, never to rise high or join the Clans. Therefore they held off an Arrechi invasion, but found themselves against a new foe: a champion named Erhfael, who sought to restore the glory of Grynhoelm.

- By 40 NA, Erhfael had reduced Heuvl borders to their present size, never to be successfully expanded again. After this, the Heuvl were quiet. They made some gains against the Erhfaelins during the Nivkin Wars, but to no avail. It wasn’t for 150 years that anything significant happened, the first
hint of necromantic activity since Nehnemin. And it would spark a Second Healing Crusade of the Arrechi, this time against the Heuvl.

- The Dukervrig Clan occupies the southernmost reach of the Heuvl lands. It was there that most Nehnin refugees eventually settled, so a strong Nehnin presence has since then been a part of their society. The Arrechi learned of this, and launched a Second Healing Crusade in 242 NA to eliminate a supposed necromantic presence, to “cleanse the land” once again. By 247 NA the Dukervrig realm, known as Suidelijkoog (SWID-li-JEK-oog), was lost to the Arrechi, and the invasion stopped. Only recently, in my time, did the Heuvl recapture this land, between 322-325 NA. The tension between these countries, however, is still there, and the territory is still very much in question, as well as the chance of all-out war between the two powerful realms.

- A final historical note should be made about the Western Islands, who have been apart from and re-assimilated into the Heuvl realm many times. Early on, during the Clan Wars, they belonged to the Groenhaav Clan. But when the Grynnish Empire conquered the Heuvl realm, the Western Islands remained independent. The largest island, known as Sleutshoofd (SLÖYTZ-üfd), remained in the control of the Hoofder Clan. The other three came under the rule of the Turquist Clan. They remained independent and extremely wealthy for quite some time, until the Hoofder Clan successfully conquered the Turquist islands, uniting the Western Islands in 12 NA (with surprisingly little bloodshed; eventually both sides saw the benefit of pooling their resources for protection from the larger realms around them, and the downside to wasting so much money on the masses of mercenaries both sides had hired). The Islands eventually came to be known under the name of the Hoofder Clan, and were finally persuaded to join under the protective wing of Heuvl hegemony in 20 NA, though they maintain a somewhat disconnected status; more a principality of the Heuvl realm than an integrated part. They remain very independent (and also are skipped in the rotation of the Vregnig, more on this later), but hold a special status and have a say in the government, being far too wealthy too alienate into secession, too successful to disrupt their administration by conquest.

- The complicated Heuvl government developed to placate and create “fairness” between the rival Clans. In essence it is two parts: one part is a council made up of the different heads of the six Clans. The other part is a system that fundamentally allows the Clans to “take turns” as the ruling body. In the end I found that, at heart, their system tries to give the Heuvl equal say in their rule. In practice however, it is corrupt, manipulated, and often a platform for greedy men to extend their power.

  - I was able to witness the first half of this system, the council of the Clans known as the Vregnig (FRÉG-níg). It took place in a massive stone hall; a stately and proud building with a vaulted ceiling reaching towards the clouds, bedecked with the banners of the six clans, hanging down in front like badges. Two enormous fountains flank both sides, as it sits within a
open square all its own. Large flags jut out from its sides, depicting legendary battles and past heroes. The entrance is a set of gigantic doors shaped like a leaf, that take several guards to open, to let a greater number of people in. Inside the ceiling stretches higher than one can see. Wooden benches line the walls on either side, filled with dozens of rows. At first it appears lonely, vast, impossible, but as people file in the quiet wood and stone comes to life. Yet even at full capacity, some Heuvl voices seem to disappear into the heights of the ceiling. At the far end sit the heads of the Clans in a half circle, other officials arranged in rows behind them. When one of them comes to speak, he must be incredibly loud, and stand at the heart of the circle, facing the crowd. The bustle of the room drops to a tiny whisper as the man speaks, then explodes into mind-numbing arguing raucous after he finishes, until someone else speaks. If a man from the crowd speaks, he must come down from the benches to the empty space in the middle. The discussion seems to go on for hours, with little being accomplished that I was aware of, though my grasp of their language is limited. It seemed mostly bickering and positioning, until the head Clan at the time steps forward and announces its decision, which is responded with murmurs and snickers, occasionally a muffled cry. The Vregnig meets once a quarter, and for special meetings as well, to deal with the business of the realm. The heads of each Clan meet together, meaning the required Maasdr and Onnlmaasd (master and submaster) of each Clan, and whatever district or provincial representatives they have. This is to ensure that the majority of Heuvl in each Clan is heard. There is also a similar function of the Uitludner, who have a Wredvrd (RED-vurd) and Zekret (ze-KRET), along with representatives. They meet in the manner I described before, arguing over the policies and decisions that the Heuvl must make. Both men and women could sit in on the meeting of the Vregnig, and voice their opinions, as well as the Uitludner, though their input is typically disregarded, and they don’t speak up but for the most critical of issues. This is the hectic nature of their council, but surprisingly things are accomplished; this is mostly due to the second structure in their government: the Ulclan.

- The Ulclan functions to make sure the decisions of the Vregnig are executed, as well as cast the deciding vote on any issue. An entire Clan assumes the position, carried out by its officials, for three years. The position is then rotated to the next Clan, continuously. This ensures that only one Clan is in charge of executing the will of the Vregnig, to increase its efficiency, and also ensures that no one Clan will dominate the rule of the realm. The Ulclan therefore becomes the ruler for a time, and is given governance of the communal province of Mittl, where the capital Vredstad is located. I believe that this practice began to solve the dispute over the land there, as well as give the Ulclan additional resources to carry out their policies and defend against any internal usurpation. (I asked the librarian in their capital’s library about this; they would offer no direct help to me, only allow me to research in places they felt comfortable with me poking
my nose around) I wondered about the possibility of the Ulclan usurping power with the additional resources providing by Mittl. The librarian appeared offended. This makes the province of Mittl a peculiarity, as hardly any members of the Clans dwell there, only in their homelands. It is the land of the Uitludners and other Heuvl who do not belong to a Clan. It must be strange, to be under such radically different leadership every three years, but any resentment toward that I could not find. The capital of Vredstad is also peculiar, as all the Clans may dwell there during meeting times, but it is also run by the Uitludner. This perhaps keeps the capital out of any one Clans direct control, but again I am puzzled to the purpose, and the Heuvl seem very proud of their system. The Uitludner seem indifferent; in fact, when I asked a few at a local tavern they seemed angered by my questions. There is a degree of bitterness, understandably, but the complicate cogs of Heuvl government still turn, and most likely grind a few unfortunates in their teeth along the way.

- Heuvl society is much like our own on the surface, with some exceptions, and each Clanholm is a little different. But what lies underneath this society, these Clan leaders, these Clan Wars, borders on insanity. I came across a sinister display of Clan violence in the capital of the Bloedbomn Clan, Bloedbomn Veg. A young Heuvl, man or women, cannot join a Clan until they turn 16. At this young time in a child’s life, age is not always so recognizable. While passing through to Vredstad, I stayed a night in this capital. While returning to my provided inn one night, I witnessed a young man, who appeared around 13 or 14, not Clan age, being pulled through the streets. The guard holding him, a hulking, gruff man with a torn ear, would stop every few minutes and slug the poor boy in the face. By the time they passed me, his face was already covered in blood. My escort told me that this boy was a spy for another Clan: he looked young enough to pass for a child and, it was thought, would thus not be suspect. The boy was to be executed. He asked if I wished to see what this entailed; I agreed if only out of morbid curiosity. I regret my decision still. We were taken to the local garrison, to the dungeons below. The boy was tossed into a pit, as we observed from above. His face was still bloodied, clothing torn, tears in his young eyes. The guard with the torn ear grunted and bellowed out “What Clan?” The boy didn’t answer, only hid in the corner of the square pit. An iron grate opened from within the shadows of one side. A colossal beast emerged, ducking to leave the hole he’d come from. It had the powerful legs of a horse or bull, or possibly a stag, the torso and arms of a giant man, and the head looked like some cross between bull and stag, and with a long, drooling snout filled with teeth made for a wolf or lion. Its horns were not quite bovine or stag, but perhaps both, and made him reach at least ten feet. “What Clan?” The guard bellowed. The boy whimpered and soiled himself. The beast came and snatched him by his hair, lifting him like dead chicken. I gasped aloud; my escort smirked. “What Clan?” the guard roared. The boy screamed, grasped at the beast’s fingers to pry himself free. “Answer him!” I shrieked, unable to control myself as I leaned over into the pit. The beast took hold of the boy’s arm and began to pull, slowly. I heard a nauseating pop, and a howl. “Vrulik!” he managed to wail. The guard grunted and walked away. The beast
flung the boy headfirst into the stone wall. His neck snapped; I found myself leaving quickly.

- The rivalry between Clans is sometimes more intense than between countries. How they manage to function as a nation I have yet to understand. It seems that they have these blood vendettas, these cloak-and-dagger wars, or even open warring and rivalry, but can also manage to put those hatreds aside to function as one nation when needed. This sinister energy they put forth can be turned and focused upon any external threat in a heartbeat. At the time I was there, I saw little advantage of one Clan over the other. Vahd Geluk was the Ul clan, a Clan with ancient roots in the Riddr Clan. Each Clan has its own advantages and flaws, and is a little different (not, perhaps, as distinct as the Northern Klans, however). They have some uniting qualities as well, especially the chosen Uitschel (WITS-shù). Shadowland magi are masters in the art of conjuring beasts from other worlds, other planes of existence. They are leaders in the art, and have done extensive studies. Different clans are associated with different Uitschel that they bring in great numbers to battle, considered their personal embodiment. The conjuration can only last so long, however, and is difficult to perform. The conjurer, known as the Tovlaar, has to maintain sight of the creatures, as well as intensely focus his/her mind (it is one profession in Heuvl society where women are equally respected). Usually it is only through the Tovlaar’s intense concentration that the beasts can remain in our realm for any period of time; though some powerful Tovlaar have learned to maintain the link without maintaining full concentration, and even established permanent links with a few individuals, such as the torture beast mentioned earlier (known as a gorehorn, more on them later). The more the Tovlaar learn, the stronger connections they make, and may someday learn how to bring larger numbers of beasts here permanently. This is just one uniting quality, however now I will proceed to briefly describe each Clan.

- The Groenhaav Clan has always controlled the rich coastal region and river delta of the Shadowlands. As such they have always been very focused on mercantile and financial undertakings, are really a Clan of merchants and business men, shrewd and good at making money, no matter the expense. Their capital Groenhaav Veg is situated near the coast, well-connected through well-paved roads to the massive port called Havenstad. They do not focus much on their military, relying more on mercenaries, as well as huge flocks of their Uitschel, the Kyte. The Kyte is a strange beast: it has the face of a lion or other predator, with a set of horns that curve downward toward its mouth. The body is essentially a pair of wings and two hind legs, and a long tail. There are small paws on the wings that it uses to eat with, and Kytes are bigger than the biggest eagles, though not nearly the size of gryphons. In attack, they descend upon their foe, grapple him with their hind legs, and
bite down with their snout. They are very effective in sea battle, as they can attack ships in dozens and render them derelict.

- The Bloedbomn Clan is filled with violent brutes, as seen with the treatment of the spy I related earlier. Their name comes from the Blood Forest that spans most of their realm, including their capital, Bloedbomn Veg, which is situated right in the middle of the great forest (it is called so for the blood-colored sap that flows freely from the trees). What they specialize in I do not know, as they were rather curt and rude towards me. The whole society seems to be arrogant and violent toward one another, each wanting the other to mind his own business. How they get along I am not sure, but I constantly felt uneasy there, as though my existence was an affront to the others, as was everyone’s attitude towards one another, or so it seemed. The Bloedbomn have big brutish warriors, and mostly rely on their Uitschel, the Gorehorns, or Bloedtoet, in battle. They are not particularly wealthy or martial, though much effort is spent on maintaining the link required to keep their Uitschel in this realm. They were the first to establish a permanent link, and remain the forerunners of this study.

- The Vrulik Clan rules the territory known as the Irfaalnmaart, the border march between the Shadowlands and Erhfaelis. They are a martial Clan, very oriented around their warriors and battle. I was not allowed to stay there, was constantly turned away as an Erhfaelin at their border checks. The other Clans would not discuss them much either, though I know their capital is Vrulikstad. I also learned that they have been trying to implement more realm-wide standards for training the military, in hopes to create a strong army for future campaigns. As Clans have different priorities, this did not go very far. Their Uitschel are giant beasts known as kryllogres, that look somewhat humanoid, but easily at least double our size, if not greater. They’re also more hunched over, mostly because for some odd reason, their right arm is always at least twice the size and bulk of the left. They also have large fin-like frills that start on top of their heads and continue down their backs. I have only seen illustrations, but they seem to be bred brutes for killing, as well as living siege engines of a sort. And these dot the armies of the Vrulik whenever they go to battle.

- The Vahd Geluk are very secretive, and still harbor their roots in the ancient Riddr clan. Something in the shadows in their realm; many have whispered necromancy, that many Nehnin nekrom infiltrated there. There have also been whispers that they’re perhaps they’re trying to create undead monsters, or casting other evil spells. The Vahd Geluk were also the new Ulclan at my most recent stay, under the leadership of Maasdr Lechr. Not much else can be said of them either, as again I was turned away from their border capital of Riddr. I did learn that they have always had great
interest in magick, other forms beyond conjuring. They do have
their own Uitschel, however, the Knuusten. The Knuusten is
essentially a lumbering man-like beast made of stone, living stone,
that can take on differing forms as need be, often forming itself as
a ram or bear shape and charging through enemy lines. The face
and spirit of the beast seems to be within; it is said one can see the
eyes underneath the outer shell of stone. Strange and mysterious in
origins, it is a perfect reflection of the Vahd Geluk: a seemingly
simple outside which shrouds and deflects from the mysterious
layer within.

- The Dukervrig Clan has had much influence from Omeah and
Nehne in the past, which may have led to the many refugees they
received during the 1st Healing Crusade. They were also the first
Clan to practice dark magick openly, which caused the
aforementioned invasion of the Arrechi, in the 2nd Healing
Crusade. To say this without explanation, however, is unfair, as
they were the most accommodating and peace-loving Clan I
encountered. They dwell in the fertile land between the Pitr
Sagriyb and Tylakk mountain ranges, and much of their existence
is farming and harvesting the other resources of the valley,
especially wine and mead, for which they are famous throughout
Ledarhig. The majority are a simpler people, more like the
Erhfaelins of the central lands. In their capital of Deeyt they have
an enormous market where they exchange their wide variety of
goods, and also live with their peaceful and shy companions,
the Centaur. The Centaur are another blend of beast and man: it is the
body and legs of a horse or stag, and the torso of a man, and a head
that is a man’s, but also with horns and a few other bestial
qualities. These beasts are more widely known, so I won’t detail
them further, but I will remark on their arrival. They were Uitschel
long ago, but became so fundamental to the Dukervrig, as their
lifestyles were similar in their world. Vaetigryn, lord of beasts,
then help to establish a small population of the Centaur in our
world, so that they now live here independently and are no longer
conjured or summoned. These two groups live rather majestic lives
in the country of their realm. But a few members of the nobility of
the Clan were the men who began to practice necromancy so
openly, which brought down the wrath of the Arrechi (this heavy
necromantic influence is perhaps due to the close proximity of the
Nehne, as there the two realms were not separated by a dense
mountain range as the rest of the Shadowlands). Regardless, as was
mentioned, their situation is teetering now because of these few
rogue practitioners of the dark arts, and it is unclear of Dukervrig’s
fate. I only hope the more innocent, farming people of the land are
spared the wrath of the Arrechi.
The Hoofd Clan has been mentioned before, and I will not detail too much more except to say that their capital of Hoofder lies on the main island, Sleutshoofd. Their Uitschel is not called upon much, as it can be unwieldy, but is known as the Minion. Minions are very odd, unpredictable beasts, perhaps the most alien to Ledarhig. They stand a few feet shorter than a man, but always squat their legs. This is probably because their arms dangle almost the length of their entire body, and they lean forward on their knuckles. They also have thin, leathery flaps that connect from their wrists down to their thighs, that allow them to glide great distances from the Key Cliffs, where a small number have established themselves. The Minions are skilled in manipulating magick; not using it directly, as in casting spells, but in shifting magickal energy of others, especially when they are casting, as that is a fragile time for the control of the magickal energy. Thus they made excellent disruptors for enemy magi, but a few have also manipulated their conjuration to maintain their link into the world. They are somewhat mischievous, or so it seems; sometimes I feel they need to manipulate magick, but for what purpose I cannot tell. And whether by preference, or some otherworldly link, all those that escape their banishment to the Otherworld always manage to gather in the same location in the Key Cliffs, where they seem to be nesting. Only one can be conjured at any time, as they are too powerful, but one out of every handful escapes. I wonder if they are simply opportunists, or if perhaps they are using the Hoofd Tovlaar as a gate into our world. Their small, isolated population is fine for now, but in greater numbers they could prove rather mischievous, even dangerous, to the Heuvl magi.

A last comment, one of grave consequence: it is my firm belief that Nehne nekrom have infiltrated the highest ranks of most, if not all the Clans. When the Arrechi invaded, I believe many fled to the Heuvl to purchase refuge with much gold and promises of power, which the feuding Clans were all too eager to accept. The nekrom may not be the actual leader of Clans (though I have suspicions about Maasdr Lechr), I believe they have heavy influence, if not direct control as puppetmasters of some of the Clans. To give evidence as of now would incriminate far too many innocents, so until I can find a better way my confession now will have to suffice. Whatever the Heuvls’ plans are, or whether or not the nekrom are truly there, I believe they have become a sinister people (at least those in power), and only see shadows in their future path.
Ghurendihn

The land of Ghurendihn (GŬ-rĭn-DĔN) is populated by the most beautiful, and perhaps most deadly of races in Ledarhig: the Arrechi (ŭh-RĔTCh-ĕ). The Arrechi arrived as "crusaders" in 14 NA, who in reality conquered and eliminated most traces of the kingdom of Nehnemin (NĂ-nĕ-mĭn). Their history has been short and swift, but has had (and continues to have) an enormous impact on Ledarhig. A name which literally means "healing hand", the kingdom of Ghurendihn claims to rule at the behest of Attyiae, goddess of life and healing, and seeks to root out all evil they perceive. That is perhaps the deadliest aspect of their race: their conception of "good" and "evil". If a kingdom performs something against their tenet, they can expect quick retribution, as the entire race will join to "cleanse and purge" the continent of any "taint" of the god of death and decay, Luebyohs. I spent two months among them in their capital of Dihn, absorbing all that I could and obtaining what information their scholars would relate, as well as the commonfolk. I have much to tell, but will impress only the most important aspects of their way of life.

- The lands of Ghurendihn are gentle foothills and rich, fertile plains, full of sunshine and meadows, crystalline lakes and swift rivers. Their lands fall southwest of the Pitr Sagiyb Mountains, southwest of the Shadowlands. Forming their eastern border is the famous Aoneh Taishe, an enormous, wide and winding river. The Aoneh Taishe is difficult to cross except at a few key points (making it an excellent defensive border), and also provides an ample water highway for goods and men to travel (making it a very wealthy river as well). The land is incredibly stunning; I once climbed to the top of Mount Izjep, a popular destination near the northern end of the Pitr Sagiyb for travelers such as myself. The land softly rolled out underneath us like a rippled green tapestry, worked by the most delicate and skilled hands. Strands of blue wound throughout it, dotted by darker green bushes of forests and the delicate white fingers of their great marble temples. And the gentle green blue sea laid out on my right, like a silken border. A beautiful land of beautiful people, it should be the envy of all, and the second to none.

- The history of the Arrechi is very important to the new age. They heralded the so called "second generation" of Haelschyn: the Arrechi, Kruejar, and the Kyslm. They arrival broke the Pact of the Gods, and destroyed the only influence of Luebyohs in Ledarhig (at least, apparent and direct influence). As this has also been well-documented, I will only go into brief detail, beginning with a short description of the Nehne and their place in human Ledarhig.
  - The Nehne were one of the Great Founding Tribes. They settled in the very region that the Arrechi dominate now, never truly expanding or losing ground from there. During the Magick Age, the magick the Nehne discovered was the art of necromancy. The necromancers of the Nehne kingdom led a coup in 276 GA, taking control of the kingdom. From then on, they openly worshipped the god of death and decay, Luebyohs, and were known to wield great necromantic power. The Nehnin magi, known as Nekrom, were able to raise the dead, and to bring forth sinister demons
and other foul monstrosities from the depths of darkness. As much power as they had, one might wonder as to why they were so content upon maintaining their ancient homeland, and never expanding forward. But they never did, save one fateful time, which led to their downfall: the invasion of the small island kingdom of Babidram.

- Beginning in 11 NA, the Nehnemin launched a massive invasion of the heavily fortified island of Babidram (and its one external territory, the small principality of Routu, now owned by the Qyt). Though it took some time and much of their resources (dead and living), the Nehne were celebrating their victory late in 12 NA. To commemorate their victory, however, they committed one of the greatest atrocities in Ledarhig history: the Horror of Babidram. The final battle of the invasion occurred at Castle Babityrg, and ancient coastal fortress situated in the middle of one of largest and mightiest fortresses in all of Ledarhig to this day. The top Nehnin priests ordered that every infant in the surrounding city of Babidram be rounded up. In a lavish, elaborate ceremony, in the dead of midnight, lit by the fires of the still burning countryside, every infant was cast from the castle walls into the crags of the sea below, as a grotesque sacrifice to their deity, Luebyohs. I need not, nor do I wish to, go into any further detail about this horrendous massacre.

- During the Haelschyn Invasions, there was a great loss of life in Ledarhig. Some Haelschyn despised humans, thought nothing of their murder, even still seek their elimination. Brute races like the Nievkeyt, atrocities like Sarpaed’s Folly and the Horror of Babidram caused such enormous losses that Attyiae became both increasingly saddened, and enraged. She saw her land, her people dying, the atrocities an affront to life and growth. In secret, she created her own Haelschyn race, one that would revere life, protect it, nourish it, as she sought to. In an unknown island far off the coastal waters of Ledarhig, the Arrechi were born. There they grew, expanded, and became powerful in their own right. Originally, Attyiae had no intentions for them to arrive on Ledarhig. But after the Horror of Babidram, she was pushed to bring her chosen race to Ledarhig, to “heal” the land and purge it of the taint of the Nehne and other offenders like them. She commanded her Arrechi forward, to invade ancient Nehnemin and cleanse the land of them (whether or not the entire race came forward is unknown; there could be an even larger number of Arrechi still on their homeland island. The scholars were not forthcoming with this; I believe they wish to keep their origins and home island a secret from any potential invaders). In 14 NA, the first Arrechi ships landed on the southern beaches of the island of Babidram, with the hand of Attyiae beside them. Ledarhig would witness for the first time the scorn of the mother goddess, the true power of the gods.

- The invasion was quick, efficient, and over by 27 NA. Many Nehne fled over the Pitr Sagiyb Mountains into the Shadowlands; many nekrom especially were never heard from again. The hand of Attyiae swept up and crushed the Nehne evil forever. Once their living presence was eradicated,
the Arrechi set forth to "cleanse the land" of the taint, by tearing down the onyx towers dedicated to Luebyohs, replacing them with the pure white marble of Attyiae, re-dedicating the land in her name, and changing the face of the region as well. They also made a monument to the infants of Badidram, a very sacred site that many Arrechi make solemn travels to every year. I had the chance to travel to it on my trip into Ghurendihn, and I must say there is a power in the whole area. The Arrechi constructed first a temple within Castle Babinyr for the site, made of the purest white marble. The temple itself is in the shape of a pregnant women's torso, with the actual temple area within her womb. Inside is simple, solemn: the rounded room, still in the shape of the womb, has a white and sapphire mosaic spread across the floor, depicting an infant sleeping peacefully in the hand of Attyiae, symbolic of their final journey through her arms, before their souls leave to be reborn. Around the entire wall and circle is a single painting of pregnant mothers kneeling, their heads bowed and hands cupped and held outward, an Arrechi way of praying for successful childbirth; the mothers are to receive the water of life into their palms, that they then will rub upon their womb. Beside each mother is a father kneeling with his left arm outstretched as though he were holding a shield, his duty as a father to protect. These pairs alternate around a large spiral at the top of womb-like room, which represents the process of mortal life. Though moving, it is also an eerie room; I believe the Arrechi constructed the temple to somehow pick up the sound of the ocean wind, so that there is often a whispery, wailing sound that echoes through the silent chamber (they would not admit to this however; I'm sure it was to protect the ethereal feeling and power of the chamber). There is also a monument among the crags where the infants were actually dropped, though the sea was far too choppy to enter the cove. I am told that it is also simple, yet elegant in its simplicity. And haunted by the spirits of the infants as well, though this is only accepted as myth, not discussed openly. The Arrechi have done much to heal the land of Ghurendihn, which means "healing hand" in their language, but vestiges of its former owners still linger on and will forever haunt the region.

The Arrechi would remain silent in their lands for over two hundred years, when yet another malicious race would stir their vengeance. The Navok, forever developing their "projects", decided to test a new monster upon the Aird-Boire people of Ellan Boirey. They unleashed this new brand of beast upon them in 271 NA and were able to gain a foothold on the island. Though they had not asked for aid, the Arrechi soon arrived to help drive the Navok out. No one is sure, however, if this aid was for the benefit of the Ellan Boirey, or simply another "cleansing" of a race they did not agree with. Regardless, the Navok were defeated and driven from the island. Afterwards, perhaps at the behest of Attyiae, who may have felt guilty for the "abandonment" of humans, the Arrechi guided the Aird-Boire people in the search for the own demi-god and champion, much like Erhfael for Erhfaelis. And they succeeded: Anagh Lladyn was reborn as
their patron deity. Once this was accomplished the Arrechi turned home, but would soon seek out another crusade, this time against the Shadowlands.

- No one is certain why the Arrechi invaded the southern tip of the Shadowlands between 242 and 247 NA in the so-called 2nd Healing Crusade. The only I received from them was that the land and people were tainted, and must be cleansed (odd, as their clerics in the great temple library of Dihn were more than happy to discuss any other topics, but never their motivations). Some speculate otherwise, as that particular territory they invaded is rich and strategically important, being the source of the Aoneh Taishe. Regardless, they succeeded at first, though the Heuvl “recaptured” the land between 322-325 NA (it should also be noted that Attyiae was forced to not help her Arrechi directly, as this move would have provoked an all out war amongst the gods, due to her direct interference during the 1st Healing Crusade. This may have caused in part their recent defeat, as they developed their battle strategies around her divine aid). The land now is somewhat held jointly, the Heuvl have official control, under the approval and suzerainty of the Arrechi. The conflict has been heightening, however, and soon may erupt into another war. A short, yet crucial history of the Arrechi thus far in Ledarhig.

- Arrechi call themselves “breathers”, as they are “breathing in” nature, and also linked to Attyiae, who breathes life into us all. Being closely linked to the Quiet Mother, their motivations, as they told me, were purely to “protect” nature and life, taking over condemned and devastated lands to “save” it. In doing so they claim to act in the interests of the Quiet Mother. And though the Arrechi seem to have good intentions, “healing the land”, many have wondered if healing is becoming an excuse for expansion, or perhaps if there is no one else that can live up to their standards. Here follows what I discovered while there, which was a great deal, and mostly from the clerics I worked with. They were very forthcoming with information about most topics, but only related and dictated these things to me: I was not allowed access to any of their texts or records. In a way this was not unusual or upsetting, as they would have had to translate their documents anyway. But their reluctance to let me observe their records worried me, so I also spoke with many citizens as well. Many were not very helpful either.

- A first note of interest should be made about their government, which is a system they developed on their home island. It is the religious officials of the Arrechi who are (in theory) the supreme rulers of their society. The Gram Solarnnid (sō-LŌM-nīd) is the ultimate ruler and decider, and is chosen by a council of seven. This council is known as the Cascul (CĀS-kūl), made up of the seven Primedihns (PRI-mū-dēn), who are the supreme rulers of each of the seven Dacta (the main provincial division of the land, literally the seven “fingers” of the “healing hand”). The seven Dacta are Cure di Alir (KŪR di ĀL-ēr) and Nuv Ghuren in the north, Mesetir (MĒZ-ū-tēr) and Deli Scipo (SKĪ-pō) of the central, Aoneh Taishe Tir of the south, and the island of Babidram. Each Dacta is further developed into provinces (a different amount in each), each one controlled
by a Falad (FÄ-lūd), whose provinces are further divided and given to the control of other officials, and so on. Think of it as a tree: the Gram Solamnid is the trunk, which spreads into seven branches. Each of these branches spreads into further branches, which spread into further branches, until you reach the tiny twig at the very end. That tiny twig is a Ramose (rū-MÖSK), and is controlled by a Respi (RĒZ-pē). These Respi and other officials handle the religious duties of the people, as well as have the final say in all decisions, within their particular province, no matter its size. These positions, except for the Gram Solamnid, are attained in a variety of ways, the most typical selection in advance by the current holder of the position. Though they are the final authority in their particular territory, they typically only handle religious affairs; the day-to-day business of the land is carried out by lay officials: collectively known as the Spadescet (SPĀ-di-skēt).

- The Spadescet handle the day-to-day governance, and, most importantly, the military of Ghurendihn. The Gram Giudiscer (JŪ-di-skūr) is chosen by the Gram Solamnid, and is the overall leader of the lay officials, and the military. He may also be deposed by the Gram Solamnid, though I am told this has not happened since their early beginnings. He has no power over any church official, and must completely defer to the church, especially the Gram Solamnid, his supposed counterpart. The structure of the Spadescet is just like that of the religious rulers (collectively known as the Dreghir (drē-GĒR)). The Cascul of Primedihns replaced by the Protor (PRŌ-tōr) of Albards. The Primedihns also select their corresponding Albard (usually with some influence from the Giudiscer), but every other position in the Spadescet is obtained much like in the Dreghir. The overall structure of Arrechi government closely resembles two ladders, stacked on top on one another, with the religious leaders on the top ladder. Those in the Spadescet must defer to their own leader above them, and their corresponding Dreghir official as well (though on the lower levels this does not happen often, as rule is not always so clear cut). It is a complicated structure at times, as true jurisdiction is squabbled over, or so I have learned from the ordinary citizens. For them the system places certain people at the head who don’t always see to the needs of the people. But, it is tradition, and would probably be a long time before it was changed.

- This two-part system seeks to divide the land of Ghurendihn into the smallest manageable parts, and then develops a hierarchy of control around those parts leading to the two top officials. The Dreghir is in place to ensure the true “will” of the Arrechi (meaning the supposed will of Attyiae) into effect foremost, and in doing so keep the Spadescet in check. In theory, this is the relationship, but it is the military who truly decides. The Spadescet therefore often has a vast amount of power (some might say the
true power) in Arrechi society, and sometimes there are struggles between the two sides (though no officials would speak of this, only a few individuals I was able to speak with in town). Where the majority of military power lies gives an incredible amount of sway. Civil war has not occurred since before the Vig Esod (VIG ez-OD), their long journey to Ledarhig (which includes the Healing Crusade). The potential for internal strife, however, is there, and is certainly growing now that the threat of a true common enemy is removed. But if the Arrechi are pulled in conflict with the Shadowlands, they may be more firmly united again, distracted before falling into civil war.

The current Gram Solamnid is a young and unworldly beautiful Arrechi woman named Velecia (vu-LE-se-11). I was able to witness her addressing the people in prayer at the glorious temple of Pahlsina (literally “heartbeat”) in the capital of Dihn. Her eyes and voice were captivating; pulsing with power and resolve in one moment, soft as a gentle snow in the next. She herself was the heartbeat of the Arrechi, and held mine in thrall as she spoke. There was a real fire about her, a youthful confidence and readiness to face all. I have learned from locals in Dihn and elsewhere a range of opinions, though most agree she is a radical crusader for “reparation” of the land, responsible herself for the push against the Shadowlands to demand reparation and an investigation for possible nekrom within their ranks, to be carried out by special Arrechi investigators. There are many, especially near the Heuvl border, that believe this is too bold and brash on Velecia’s part, and believe it will drag them into a war against a foe who has become more than ready over the past 100 years. A controversial leader, she nonetheless embodies the radical spirit of the original Arrechi crusaders.

As I said before, the Arrechi are an incredibly beautiful race. They stand slightly shorter than humans, with a finer, more graceful build. They remind me of flowers in their delicateness, of trees in their strength. All about them is the color and shape of nature; the most apparent their green skin, which comes in a variety of shades. Their eyes are perhaps the second most striking feature (and my favorite). It is said that the essence of a particular flower is taken into the spirit of a newborn Arrechi, and that the particular colors of that flower are reflected in their eyes. Hair also comes in a variety of shades as well that often are common to specific families, as a sort of family crest. There was a particular Arrechi woman I was rather taken with during my stay in the countryside of Dihn. Her skin was a rich light green, her complexion perfect, like the smooth face of a leaf. Her hair was a midnight blue, long and thick, in a nest like a crown that fell in curls to her shoulders; one stray lock graced her left cheek. Her eyes glistened like a ripened orange (only later did I discover her full nest of midnight curls was trademark of the Lascil, the ruling family of Dihn).
Their likeness is often the stuff of children’s stories and songs, often tales of Arrechi maids leading human warriors into a glade, to be lost forever, or fables about vanity. Very foreign to us in many ways, and beautiful in ways we humans could never attain, the Arrechi are something of a phenomenon to witness, a treasure to live amongst, if only briefly.

With their arrival on Ledarhig, the Arrechi brought more than just their beauty and grace. They brought a very new culture. New types of poetry, music, art. There is the particular practice of young Arrechi who show promise in the arts, called Melefiorli (means “tongue of the honey-flower”). They will take forced exile into the more secluded areas or the Arrechi lands, especially the forests of the north and the beaches of the south. There they are said to take in the essence of Attyiae, of growth and life, and then translate that into works of art that capture its beauty. Their work is revered, and they are held in very high esteem. They are also said to be cursed, to never be able to stop searching for their art, to be ever restless in their search for the essence of Attyiae. The Arrechi army is very much cavalry-based, as there is an abundance of horses and other, strange grassland beasts (brought along with them), like the Tirighell: a graceful, winged beast, with a long thin neck and enormous beak, and two long scale-covered legs that speed it over the plains. Its head is a gaudy mane of bright feathers that runs down its neck, similar to a horse; many different color patterns show up, similar to the eyes and hair of the Arrechi as well. There is also a scarcity of iron, but wood and other methods are much preferred anyway. Spears and staves are favored over swords by the clerics, and armor is usually light, (though there is a heavy cavalry unit, encased in Tirighell scales). And for the warriors, a most unusual substance is used: rock crystal. Apparently the Arrechi mastered the art of growing these crystals, though they would not under any circumstances share any part of this with me. There are, yet again, many different colors and types (including the rare and very expensive Roucia, which is be like a rainbow, and change through colors as the light hits it differently), use to make blades and to enhance armor as well. There are special crystal farmers, trained over decades to create the strongest, yet surprising lightweight (for a rock) crystal used by the warriors. Often thin plates are used to line armor, but I have no clue as to how the weapons are made. Regardless, there are simply more evidence of the unusual world that the Arrechi brought with them, yet are reluctant to share and spread through ours. Little by little more of their legend is replaced with fact, but I feel it will be some time before they are more widely known and understood in all their peculiarities.

The Arrechi are a gentle race. Amongst each other. Their unity and fervor is akin to the Avus Ney, though the Arrechi apparently have a darker past as well. Many of the commonfolk I questioned spoke of the Healing Crusade as a turning point for their race, a nostalgia for a time of the past generation, when the warring tribes (I wasn’t sure what this referred to; no one would answer my questions into their past) were brought together to do the work of the Quiet Mother. The new generation is the one that has grown up on Ledarhig, with big plans for the future, promises of cleansing the land of the taint of all evil, of restoring the land to its former glory. As they consolidate and grow on Ledarhig, they will make their presence more fully known to the ancient and new races alike.
Ellan Boirey

- Beryl Sea
- Phlaexid Sea

Legend:
- Foddeagh
- Ferscape
- Eebyrteeagh
- Airdlynn-Lhomaag
- Baidheagh
- Creeagh
- Droghad Thie
- Nikkesen

Map showing geographical features and regions, including
- Caithbhall
- L. Lhomaag
- Waigh
- L. Ilthblass
- Boire~
- N. Nikkesen

Distance Scale:
- 0
- 40
- 80 miles
**Ellan Boirey**

The island of Ellan Boirey (ÉL-lān bō-RĪ) is inhabited by a group of humans known alternately as the Aird-Boire (ARD BOY-ur) and the Neuhaaghit (nō-HÔG-hit). Their history is long and tragic, being amongst the forefront of the first Navok invasion and many subsequent attacks. Sometimes termed the “Forsaken Kingdom” of humans (a term they themselves coined), they are completely separated from the other human kingdoms, and surrounded by hostile enemies. But they have prevailed, and are on the rise, in part due to their intimate knowledge and love of their homeland, and their extremely talented navy. I was admitted in to their island, but never truly welcomed, allowed to peruse their records but never given aid. The Neuhaaghit I spoke with were not very open either, terming me “outlander” or Cuihdér (KÜL-dür), which translates roughly as “one who forsook us”, even though my kingdom did not fully exist until after their tragedy had taken place. There was also a language barrier: I only had a rough knowledge of ancient Boire, and their language has changed considerably since then. And as they are effectively cut off (and somewhat understandably bitter), they have no knowledge of any other language that I know. Most of the information that follows is from ancient records, what little information I could translate while there, and quite a bit from Neuhaaghit mercenaries, a few of which had learned Dhargish (the Erhfaelin tongue) in their profession. It is not nearly enough, but hopefully as the Neuhaaghit grow and expand outward, we will someday reunite with them on better terms.

- The island of Ellan Boirey is a verdant and picturesque land, thick with trees and full of lakes and a variety of terrain. There are the fertile grass and scrublands of the north of the island. There are the Dirrag Mountains and foothills of Eebyrtecaigh (Ā-ū-BĒR-tyā-āgh) of the east. The heart of the island is thick with forests, full of mystery and the source of many folktales, as well as the rich ports along the western coast. Just south of the heartland is the marsh land of Baidheagh (boyd-HA-yagh), long thought to be a place of great magick, and also evil. And the land of Creeagh (KRĀ-yāgh) in the south is a land of rocky highlands and caves. There are two smaller islands as well, Nikkesen (nīk-HĒSS-īn) and Droghad Thie (DRÔG-hēd TĒ), the so-called “dragon land”. The Neuhaaghit have always been deeply in love with their land, have grand festivals to celebrate the land and each season (though I was not able to take part in or even directly observe the festivals during my stay, I could hear their merriment from the capital of Aird-Velle, see the enormous bonfires, smell the fragrant branches they threw upon the blaze, see the colorful costumes as they danced through town to the event). They tie everything in their society to the land, especially marriage and death. They always burn their dead in a lavish ceremony, and symbolically spread their ashes in a place of their desire, usually where one was born. Along with their worship of their land is a love for Attyiae, whom they believe the essence of nature and the land is an aspect of her divinity. They continue to revere her, along with their new demi-goddess, Anagh Lladyn (ŌN-ēgh LŌ-din), who in many ways connect them to the Quiet Mother. Such a deep love and respect for their land has given them quite an edge in defense, as they have learned over the
centuries how to best use it to their advantage. I believe that is what has most kept them from conquest during the Haelschyn Invasions.

- The history of the Aird-Boire people is as ancient as any. Ellan Boirey was settled by a group of dissidents from the Great Founding Tribe of the Boire sometime in the First Age, and won its independence from the Boire Empire near the beginning of the Middle Age. At that point its humans were known simply as the Airdllyn. It was able to maintain that independence throughout the Middle Age, and remained peaceful until the Navok invasion. Here follows the brief account I was able to decipher from their records.

  - Around 190 AH, thousands of Boire refugees began crossing the sea, fleeing slavery and death from the Navok and their Nievkeyt beasts. The Airdllyn allowed their brethren to settle in the grasslands of the north (known as Foddeeagh (FÔD-a-agh)). Many Airdllyn families there either accommodated or even moved (with aid from the government) to make room for their lost cousins. So many had come over, that by the end of the Haelschyn Age, the Boire had pushed further south, and dominated the north of the island. Early in the New Age, tensions increased between the two distinct people. The Boire, now in such significant numbers, demanded the northern half of the island be ceded to them, and they be allowed their own government and independence. The Airdllyn were understandably angered, having provided shelter and protection to the Boire, who now demanded a significant chunk of their beloved homeland. Civil war broke out, and the two fought for several years before coming to their senses, realizing how much they were weakening themselves for further invasions. The Boire, who were losing badly anyway, agreed to assimilate, as long as they were given a say in the rule of the land. A separate office was set up for them (though after three hundred years, this position has disappeared. There are still politicians, however, that claim strong ties to their Boire heritage, and still try to maintain their particular heritage with festivals and a distinct culture within the larger scope of the island). The two finally became a relatively united one: the Neuhaaghit.

  - History remained relatively quiet for the new Neuhaaghit humans for the next two hundred years. There were a few raids, attempted invasions, and internal struggle, but the next major event would again be started by the Navok. In the process of creating new beasts for their armies, the Navok unleashed new “prototypes” on Ellan Boirey in 271 NA, specifically in Foddeaagh. I could find no details on the beasts themselves, but they were a success for the Navok, as they gained a foothold. Quite suddenly, and very unexpectedly, an unknown savior appeared in the Boire Sea: the Arrechi. Claiming to be acting in the name of Attyiae, the Arrechi helped the Neuhaaghit drive the Navok out. Afterwards, the Arrechi helped the Neuhaaghit to discover their new demi-god, Anagh Lladyn (more on her later), before departing, as suddenly and unexpectedly as they came. This finished, the Neuhaaghit settled in and began to grow, and that is where they are today.
Neuhaaghit society is rather different from other humans, perhaps again from this extreme separation. It is not only their extreme love for their land, but also their extreme love for one another. They have a true care for fellow human; during my stay in Aird-Yelle, I saw no poor along the streets, no beggars. This is because they help one another, consciously giving money to those who need it. There is also little crime, as no one is lacking much. There are always, of course, Neuhaaghit who do steal, rich who do not always help out their fellow, especially now that Ellan Boirey is one the rise. Most of the rich keep up the appearance of helping, but only to maintain credibility. There are always those who seek to take advantage; it is the flaw of mortals, who wish the most out of our short lives. It is still remarkable however, to hear of this characteristic of their society. I learned of this, and most of my cultural information came from one source: a Neuhaaghit mercenary named Dhomnaill. I sat with him many nights at the tavern, while he talked for hours about his beloved homeland, which he hoped to return to someday.

I found Dhomnaill (DÖM-nüll) on Bladehome, the sovereign state ruled by the League of Mercenaries. He stood a head over me, tall for his race, with thick bared arms under a dark green jerkin. He wore bark-brown trousers, ringed by a broad belt which held a plain bastard sword in a leather hilt. His black boots were lined with rabbit fur, into which was tucked a long dagger, and wherever he stood he seemed to grow right out of the ground. But when we sat in one of Bladehome’s many taverns to talk, his body eased, his jawline relaxed. His face was dark with tan, probably because he was outdoors most of his time, at work and at rest, even though he wore a long pointed hat that matched his trousers, with a large white and rust-colored feather. He said he preferred working outdoors; though it was a far different landscape, it reminded him of home. Dhomnaill would never tell me why he left, though I was hinted that he was forced to leave by some circumstances. There is a hardness to his eyes at times when he spoke of his homeland, but I got the impression that I was not familiar enough to be trusted with private matters, whatever they were. Dhomnaill, as a bowyer, archer, and hunter, is part of a long and famous tradition of the Neuhaaghit. There are two famed parts of the Neuhaaghit military: one is their navy, which has played a huge role in defense of their homeland, and their ships and training are the envy of Ledarhig (save perhaps the Qyt). The other is their archers. Every Neuhaaghit, man or woman, is trained as a child in the use of the bow. Neuhaaghit mercenaries are always bowmen, like Dhomnaill, the best in Ledarhig, and very expensive. Hunting is also an important tradition, a religious tradition, especially falconry and hawking. And to be a bowyer, Dhomnaill tells me, is a great honor, as he is trained to craft the symbol of his people. It is an art for him; his bow is both a beautiful weapon and deadly piece of artwork and craftsmanship. He named it Tekkslachd (teks-LÖ-kid), the aspect or essence of the falcon. It is in the color and shape of a crescenting moon, engraved around the handle with runic symbols and the three flowered crowns of the Three Queens (more on them later). The
bow stands nearly as tall as me, and looks as though it might split a tree in half. There is a pride to being a hunter and archer, Dhomnaill tells me, but every Neuhaaghit must learn to defend himself at close range as well, which I heard from his comrades he also excels at, as they pounded their mugs on the counter and nudged him. It is not held in the regard that the bow is, however. After a few tales of the hunt, Dhomnaill moved on to other topics; most importantly, he began to detail the government of Ellan Boirey, and the Three Queens, which he spoke very highly of.

One night Dhomnaill traded his pointed hat for a crown of large white flowers, interwoven with smaller red and purple blooms. I was waiting at the counter, in our usual place, when he arrived. He received many jeers from his fellows in the tavern, to which he simply replied with a glare or a shove out of chair. When he came to me, he explained that it was the night of the three queens, a festival in late summer when all three of the flowers are in bloom and the Neuhaaghit celebrate their three queens who rule over their island together. In the morning they go out into the fields to pick flowers of the three colors (the three that bloom together are found only in the heart of the island, so other parts simply use flowers of the same colors). In the afternoon they gather to make the crowns and feast and laugh and dance together. And at dusk, they don the crowns and dance in large circles around a great fire until midnight. The Neuhaaghit are very proud of their queens, who represent the three sisters that led the first colonists over from the Boire Empire long ago. They rule the island together, the eldest being the supreme queen, and her two junior queens, who may rule against her decisions if they do so together. There must be three queens at all times (though they need not be blood sisters). The sister-queens always have two chosen candidates to replace them (sometimes their own daughters, often not), if anything should happen, as each prospective queen must go through an intense amount of schooling and training to be considered worthy and prepared for their position (though it has happened a few times that young prospects had to take over before finished with their training, which they had to successfully finish during their reign, or be removed). There is also an important tradition of the three queens being symbolically made into sisters, through a long ceremony. They live together and in all ways act like sisters, and become so in their minds and the minds of the Neuhaaghit. The current supreme queen is Myrneen (mŭr-NĔN), with her sisters Gwyndail (gwen-DŎl) and Nyniveve (NĬ-nŭ-vĕv).

- There is also a council chosen by the queens, which consists of the heads of the army and navy, the head of the cities, and the heads of each Thien (THĔN) or “home”, which are the provinces of Ellan Boirey, several of which I have already mentioned. There is also the head of their religion, but I shall come to that later. This council may also rule against the decisions of the queens, but like the junior queens, may only do so if they do so in unity. There is a theme of unity with the Neuhaaghit: if you wish to disagree with
the queens, or with authority, you must do so in unison, otherwise it is merely dissension, not valid. This council helps to ease the burden of managing such a large area by (ideally) implementing the queens’ will. As the Neuhaaghit grow in power, however, some officials are beginning to push for expansion that the sister-queens feel Ellan Boirey is not ready for, and more than once has this led to some rivalry between the two groups.

- Even though most humans feel that Attyiae and the other gods abandoned them, the Neuhaaghit retained their deep connection to the Quiet Mother. The name Neuhaaghit itself means “the forgotten children”, a tragic belief that though Attyiae has gone to her new race, she still loves them as she always had. This continued reverence of Attyiae makes them an oddity amongst humans, and as I stayed there I would often sense not just resentment towards me, but also a sort of pity or sadness, perhaps that I had “lost my way”. Attyiae is still very much a part of their society, which may in part have led to their rescue by the Arrechi during the Beast Wars. Perhaps Attyiae had felt some guilt for “abandoning” these humans who still loved her so, and commanded her Arrechi to aid them in finding their new demi-goddess, in an effort to comfort them. It was perhaps also a way to “wean” them off of her love, to find themselves in a new deity, in this new time. That is my belief, but regardless, the worship of Attyiae is still prominent amongst the Neuhaaghit. But growing in this is the worship of Anagh Lladyn, which began as more of a cult following, as has recently expanded into a following equal to that of Attyiae.

- Anagh Lladyn means “Fey Ladies”, and came from the spirit of a pair of legendary twins in Boire history: Nin, the huntress, and her sister Eebyrta (A-ū-BEER-tū), the druid sorceress. These were two of the original three sisters who founded the Ellan Boirey, and had split it amongst themselves. Legend has it that their third sister, Marbhyna (MÔR-bën-ū), fell to darkness and began to worship Luebyohs. She held out in the marshlands of Baidheagh with her demonic minions to consolidate her power and make a bid to take over the island. Her two sisters joined forced and eliminated her threat (interestingly, they chose another to rule her third, rather than divide it with each other. This in part perpetuated the three sister-queen tradition). Both embodied the most important aspects of the Neuhaaghit: the huntress, the druid, and the unity against evil. They were perfect choices for a new deity. Though he knew less of Eebyrta, Dhomnaill spoke long of Nin. He says she has the spirit of the hawk and falcon both: sharp-eyed, quick, precise. She is always the huntress, armed with her bow, short sword, and skinning dagger. She has a thick cloak which can blend in with any landscape around her, and her hair is thick and curled like vines. He also began to speak of a wife who looked like the image of Nin, but stopped, and changed the subject immediately.
Another crucial part to the Neuhaaghit society and military especially is the magi, which is further divided into two aspects: the clerics and the druids. The clerics, who use the white magick of Attyiae, and use their spells to heal, whether it be the ailments of the townspeople or fallen warriors on the battlefield. There is a cleric's temple in every town and city, within reach of every corner of Ellan Boirey. Though most races have clerics or healers, the Neuhaaghit are perhaps the best, second only to the Arrechi. They are also unique (again except to the Arrechi) as using white magick on the battlefield. They might cast spells to blind their opponents, or sear them with white, holy fire, or other such powerful magicks that lie within the realm of Attyiae. Alongside them are the druids. The druids embody the spirit of Eebyrta, who used the magick of the land, of growth, especially plants. They can be found in all terrain, living amongst it. They are said to be able to make plants grow, to cover their bodies in bark armor, to pin enemies in place with vines and roots that wrap around their bodies. But to master either art takes years of training. Dhomnaill spoke of his younger sister being sent off with immense pride to become a cleric when she was only 10. He never saw her again, even before his departure 12 years later. His father was a druid, who showed Dhomnaill the ways of the forest before falling in battle against a Navok slave raid when he was 19. He told me that this variety of paths was not unusual, though more often families championed one particular path. There was a deep pride in the many facets of Neuhaaghit religion, rooted within the family, who practices together.

As I said before, the island of Ellan Boirey is on the rise. But what are its intentions? That I could not glean from any one person or text. There is an intense hatred for the Navok, understandably, and a desire to take back much of their land. The sister-queens, however, do not feel the Neuhaaghit are up to such a task (nor do I; I have seen Navok might). Historically the Neuhaaghit are excellent at defending their homeland, but have little experience outside that. Many in the upper ranks of Neuhaaghit society also scream for expansion, to ease the burden on their burgeoning population. But where to go? All available land is accounted for, and they are ringed by powerful foes. Ellan Boirey is poised to do something, to go beyond its waters, but extreme care must be taken in this. I hope that the wisdom of the current sister-queens holds strong.
The Jern (JÜRNI; JURN-skyöld) are the stout, stubborn race of Anadrihnoelm, god of the earth, that dwell in the region of the Shield Mountains, both underground and in the foothills. They are somewhat different than the other Haelschyn, interacting more amiably with the humans that surround them (though they have no love for other races, they have no hatred either, except for perhaps the Navok). They are masters of the mountains, and excel in both mining, stonecutting, and about anything else that has to do with rock or metal. They are also remarkably peaceful, when compared to the other races of Ledarhig; virtually all of their major conflicts arose from Navok aggression. When I arrived in the above-ground capital of Ufoulbi (ÚF-úl-bē), I was quickly delegated to the Guild of Scholars, who then directed me to a particular scholar named Askyl, who specializes in Erhfaelin history and speaks excellent Dhargish. He was my liaison for the above-ground territories, the so-called “sky kingdom” or Sklyrykki (skī-RI-ke). My similar liaison from the underground “kingdom”, or Jordskjedd (which in many respects acts as a separate kingdom) was Mangard. Both Jern were rather different, and both represented different sides to the overall Jernnish realm. As I was not allowed to walk about on my own (there are always foreign quarters of the cities where outsiders must remain), I could only rely on their information, and that is most of what I will be conveying to you.

- The Shield Mountain range is by far the largest chain on Ledarhig. It is separated into three parts: the Eastern Shield, the Headshield, and the Key Shield. The mountains are too treacherous to cross except through the passes between these sections, and even there claim many lives each year. Underneath the mountain, however, the Jern at least have flourished; though, their lineage to Anad makes this no surprise. They have also spread above ground in the foothills south of the Headshield and Eastern Shield ranges, into the ancient home of the Alytn (AL-it-tin). The Alytn were yet another of the Great Founding Tribes, and another human tribe eliminated as a consequence of the Haelschyn invasions, though interestingly not from the direct cause of the Jern. There were many pressures on the Alytn when the Jern invaded. They had already lost a significant portion of their population at the expansion of the Grynnish Empire, whom they defended bitterly against several centuries before the Haelschyn age, and had never fully recovered. They became another lost kingdom under Grynnish control. When the Jern began to press on Grynnish territory, many pockets of Alytn revolted as well. Rather than be effective, however, it began to have a heavy toll on their population. They continued to fight on anyway; it is possible that they saw themselves between the hammer and anvil, and rather than allow themselves to be conquered by either side, fought to become a wedge between them. The Alytn simply beat themselves against the Grynnish anvil to the edge of existence. The Alytn eventually died out as a tribe of humans. The Jern simply took over the area they left behind.

- By the end of the Age of Haelschyn, the Jern had control over the ancient Alytn homeland, a chunk of the Northern Wastes, and the belly of the entire Shield range. For almost a century after, their lives were relatively quiet, a few internal
conflicts and border disputes, but nothing significant. They also gave aid to a few kingdoms in different ways, one in particular which would draw them into their first major conflict: the 1st Haelschyn War.

- The Jern gave supplies and rights of passage to Erhfaelis and allies during the Nivkin Wars. This angered the Navok, who lost the war due in part to this aid. The Navok invaded Jernskjold north and south of the Eastern Shield in 92 NA, and gained a tenuous foothold. The war grinded on for the next two decades (with a few hiatuses), with the Navok making minimal gains. Then in 121 NA, the war turns, and the Jern began shoving the Navok out of their land, and then began to make gains into Navok territory south of the Eastern Shield. In 130 NA, the Navok agreed to peace, losing a sizeable chunk of land.

- Peace came to Jernskjold for another century, until the Navok invaded again, seeking to regain their lost territory, especially around the Slave Mountains. The 3rd Haelschyn War began in 230 NA, with the Navok again gaining a small foothold, this time in their lost territory (known as the Skjeginsk). Another long and bloody war ensued, ending in a peace in 253 NA that granted a chunk of territory around the Slave Mountains in the eastern part of the Skjeginsk. This would be the last major conflict for the Jern, though the Skjeginsk is still held as a border march, expecting the Navok to someday invade again.

- Askyl is a red-faced, bright-eyed Jern, with deep wrinkles from a great deal of chuckling over his 212 years. He laughed whenever he could; his enormous black eyes, about twice the size of my own (which was typical of Jern, whose pupils are long vertical slits) would light up like a child’s (especially when a little drunk). He only came up to my chest when we met (again all common for Jern), as he remarked proudly that the tallest Jern he had ever known was just at six feet (up to the bridge of my nose, perhaps; mind you I’m a little tall for Erhfaelin standards). This, of course, discounted his topknot, which was wrapped in brown leather cord to stand another half a foot on top of his head, and his set of horns which protruded from his temples and curved outward. He had a long, thick, graying beard, the hallmark of the Jern. It was braided, as was custom; he wore his in one thick braid from his chin, over a foot in length, which he tugged at when flustered or deep in thought. The Jern love growing their beards (especially in Skylrykki to fight the cold; it is surprisingly warm underground in Jornskjedd, for being so far north). For them it is a symbol of manhood; you become a man when you have a full beard. The longer and thicker the beard, the manlier you are, until it starts to grey; then, the greyer your beard, the wiser you are. One of the greatest insults (and pranks) to another Jern is to cut his beard. In old tales, a Jernnish warrior might fling a throwing axe (Jern are renowned for their abilities with these weapons) at his foe in such a way to trim his beard to the chin. These are just some of the tales Askyl told me as we went through the city of Ofoulbi, stopping at many beer halls along the way, he in his thick fur-lined coat and pants (as it was early winter), exaggerating his stout frame. It was from him I got a better picture of Jernnish culture and Jerns; the joke amongst aged Jern to “break 300”
(the oldest Jern ever was 297), the legendary temper of their wives (and the Matron’s Guild), even the pranks the children play on their parents once they become of age. History and society I received from Mangard.

- Grimmnjell appeared nearly the opposite of Ofoulbi. The bright, snow crusted streets of Ofoulbi were not found in the dark, dirt paths of Grimmnjell. The air was stale, no wind or weather. Where in Ofoulbi I might receive a grudging nod from the Jern, possibly a grin in the tavern, in Grimmnjell only scowls, even jeers, or a mother rushing her child past myself and Mangard, who simply scowled back. Like the city, Mangard appeared almost the opposite of Askyl. A few inches shorter, he had a bit of a slouch; his topknot was not wrapped, but drooped down from the crown of his head. His eyes were somewhat bigger than Askyl, and light grey, and where Askyl had wrinkles from laughing, Mangard had them from frowning or scowling. He seemed to have a permanent dimple on one side of his mouth from when he began muttering to himself and scowled through his beard, which was thinner and more scraggly than Askyl. In fact the Jern of the underground tend to have less beard, and larger ears to listen to the rocks (a clear sign they were once one people is that Mangard tugs at his ears instead of his beard when frustrated or thinking). He was also quite a bit younger than Askyl; though he would not share his age, there was only a hint of grey in his beard. He also had three shorter horns instead of two curved, the third one from the middle of his forehead. As we walked around Grimmnjell, the capital of Jordskjedd, he rushed us along (which I didn’t mind too much, with the share of scowls and mothers rushing their gaping children past us). He pointed and spoke at some points, at others he simple muttered “you don’t need to know about that.” Though he could recite a great deal of history, he knew little else. We stopped to eat a few times (and I experienced the Jordskjedd ale Askyl told me about and nearly fell from my chair twice), where Mangard was very reserved, huddled over his plate as though it told secrets. What he did detail extensively one night at dinner, was the Jernnish government, which I tried to comprehend and take notes on after my roasted bull mushrooms and mutton absorbed some of that bitter black ale.

- Both “kingdoms” of the Jern are very similar in most respects, save for the major differences between living in air and living completely underground. One aspect that they share wholly is their governmental structure, which both Askyl and Mangard were more than happy to explain to explain to me in detail. It was curious to be told this same story by the two, who in all other ways try to vehemently differentiate between the two “kingdoms”. They were both bursting with pride, which I was used to from Askyl, but took me by surprise with Mangard. The system was very complex and confusing, could turn one’s head upside down. But to the Jern it makes perfect sense, and both asked me, expectantly, how many other kingdoms so far had adapted their system. When I replied none, both seemed baffled and flustered (much beard-tugging on Askyl’s part, much ear-pulling from Mangard). This is the most simplified version I could pick out from their excited explanations (note that for simplicity, I will translate their titles only once into Jern, or not at all for guild names)
The whole Jernnish society is divided into five parts, known as the five Horns of Jernskjold: the Horn of the Army (Horn av Krigheere (KRIG-hær)), of Builders (Vluggskjer (VLÜG-skyür)), of Cities (Bakkrn (BÄK-urn)), of Husbandry (Letbryk (LËT-brík)), and the Horn of Anad. The elected leaders of each Horn make a council of five, called the Raod (RAWD), which acts as the ruling body for the Jern (note that both sky and mountain kingdoms each have this; there are then ten Horns of Jernskjold, two of each). The Raod manages all Jernskjold, each Horn manages a separate part of Jernskjold, represented by guilds. Virtually every Jern has a profession, and virtually every profession is gathered into a guild, from the Miner’s Guild to the Merchant’s Guild, the Guild of sewer Cleaners to the Guild of Matrons (which Askyl informed me was the most fiery and outspoken guild in all Jernskjold). Each guild is placed under a different Horn, so that every guild, and therefore every profession (and every Jern), is accounted for.

Every city or region has a guild chapter with chosen leaders who help carry out the decisions of the chapter. Each chapter will elect leaders to the Guild Hall, the ruling chapter that carries out the business of the whole guild. As each guild fits into one of the five Horns of Jernskjold, each Guild Hall will select a representative to voice their concerns at the Horn (typically the guild leader). Those leaders makes decisions for the Horn, including choosing their candidate for the Hornthrone (typically not the Horn leader). And each of the five Hornthrones makes up the Raod. Since the Horns and the Raod meet in the capital (Ofoulbi or Grimmnjell), each Horn gets to voice the concerns of it guild, so that all Jernnish society is represented (at least in theory). I feel this manner of explaining is the easiest way, from bottom up, to think about their structure, as it suggests that every Jern has the chance to one day sit on the Hornthrone (though not an equal chance).

The two Horns that do not break into guilds are the Horn of the Army and the Horn of Anad. The Army is simply the army, with no need for further break down, at least into guilds (regiments instead perhaps). Proud of their military as they are, not every Jern is expected or even allowed to serve. It is a profession for them, like anything else, and requires extensive training and ability. Jern warriors are very good, wielding large warhammers, or all types of maces and flails. They tend to stray away from bladed weapons like swords and axes, though spears are sometimes used as well. Their army is built around defense, and to that end they excel. Often they work with magi as well (though reluctantly). The Horn of Anad, the religious part of Jernnish society, is different altogether. Gudtryl is what the Jernnish magi are called. They are seen as sneaky, strange Jern that no one understands or wishes to. Mangard spat after speaking their name, and wore his scowl as he
described them. Hooded menace, stonethrowers, lookers...sometimes their doings are more mythical than fact. I found it strange that the Jern would have this relationship with their religious leaders, to which Askyl replied (with a chuckle) that Jern revere Anad through their labor, through their profession, and through personal reverence in the home. These so-called "religious leaders" are for the Raod, and for war. They can divine the future, or can cast powerful magicks in battle. Sometimes individual Jern might seek them out as well for personal problems, but never in the open; Askyl remembers his mother sneaking him through the streets of Ofoulbi to the Gudtryl’s hut to take care of a strange growth he had. With their reputation, few seek the Anad out as a profession. The Horn of the Anad choose their candidates, in secret, plucked from their homes never to be seen (recognizably) again.

- Though both Askyl and Mangard were proud of their profession neither one seemed convinced of his chance to sit on the Hornthrone, or even be guild leader. There is a hierarchy Askyl grunted, his beard wet with beer foam. It starts with the wealthy, he says, and ends with the poor, those whose professions, like his own, are not so lucrative. There is also a hierarchy of common respect, with Builders and Husbandry guilds at the top, along with the Guild of Merchants and Guild of Bankers. The Guild of Scholars, along with the Guild of Bards, of Painters, and so on, receive little respect, and little say in their Guild Hall. Askyl spoke this with bitterness and regret; Mangard was seething. Even though most Jern know, at heart, that every profession is crucial to their society, they still continue to bicker. It hasn’t brought on outright conflict in a long time, but the potential is there.

- Masters of the mountains and foothills, the Jern seem content with them as well. Neither Askyl nor Mangard gave any interest in expansion beyond their borders: above ground. Exploration underground is constant, and the Jern continually push further into the belly of the world. Mangard informed me that all of Jordskjedd is excited as of late, as the Guild of Exploration feels they are close to opening a new chamber, capable of holding a substantial population, which will ease the burden from the burgeoning mountain home. Who knows what treasures we might find, says Mangard, what knowledge, what new life. Or what danger, I say, but I keep silent lest I provoke another snarl; a pity when he is actually smiling.
Erhfaelis

Erhfaelis (ür-FÄ-liš), land of Erhfael, the savior of the Hiaed (HĪ-ĕd) humans. Land of cities, of champions. Heart of the old Grynnish Empire. Seeing the other lands of Ledarhig has surely made me appreciate my homeland much more. But not as simple pride, but of understanding of my people, of my roots, of the land I love. But, I must strive to be objective, and give a fair analysis for those who read my notes from other lands (most of which I found fascinating in their own rights, and hope to go back to). Being a leading scholar of Erhfaelis, I must also strive to be brief, lest this section become a book of its own. Erhfaelín history is well-known and documented throughout the world, and most of what I leave out here can be readily found in most large libraries. I encourage all to journey here to find out more about us, as I will try to only go into as much depth here as I have for other kingdoms.

- The lands of Erhfaelis are verdant and varied. To the north are the foothills of Koultrgate (KŬL-tür-găt) and the Tarheldyn Mountains, that gradually change to rolling hills and thick forests of Dharganad and surrounding provinces, then to the grasslands of Omeah (ÕM-e-ă) in the south. Erhfaelís has six enormous lakes, three mountain ranges, and countless rivers. Its eastern border is made of the Worldspine, the plateau that Erhfaelis sits upon, its edge clearly defined by the cliff face separating Erhfaelis from Balokandyrin. The north and northeast are set apart by the Worldspine River, the longest river of Ledarhig. To the west are two mountain ranges, the Tarheldyn and the Tylakk, connected by the Pahlst-Kam Bluf, a tall ridge that now divides Erhfaelis from the Shadowlands. To the southwest is the Aoneh Taishe, the widest river of Ledarhig, and the richest, and the southern border is made by the Htedifris (hī-TĒD-i-frís) River. These strong borders have helped defend Erhfaelis since its tumultuous beginning, and throughout its war-torn history. Full of resources and people, it has never ceased to be a powerful and rich part of Ledarhig; the true heartland of Ledarhig, making it beset on all sides by other who desire that power and wealth.

- Erhfaelín history is complex and long, involving many other nations and many different situations. It began in earnest long before the rise of Erhfael and its founding. The area of Erhfaelis was settled by the Great Founding Tribe of the Hiaed. It later developed into two early kingdoms: Grynhoelm (GRĬN-höl)m) (roughly the area south of Tylakk Mountains) and Dharganad (roughly the area between the Tylakk and Tarheldyn Mountains). Early in the Middle Age, Grynhoelm began to rapidly grow in power, and slowly began to conquer land. By the mid Middle Age, many wars and conquests later, the Grynnish Empire included all of modern Erhfaelis, along with the realms of the Shadowlands and the Jern as well. It was massive and very powerful, and very much in charge of Ledarhig. For over two hundred years, the so-called “Web of Peace” was established, and the Grynn used their might to keep Ledarhig in relative peace. All of that changed, however, with the Haelschyn invasions, and that is where the true birth of Erhfaelis begins.

  - As the Haelschyn began to press on the borders of the Grynnish Empire, the lands they had conquered seized the opportunity to finally free
themselves. The Heuvl Clans had long resented the rule of the Grynn, and with their armies’ attention elsewhere, began to revolt in 185 AH. Pockets of resistance sprung up all over the former Shadowlands, who had been planning their rebellion for decades. The Imperial armies were diverted to deal with this threat, but were not deployed in strength, and due to some internal corruption, the Grynnish began to lose key battles on other fronts, as other human kingdoms also chose to seize the opportunity to gain land from the Empire. The Grynnish had to defend themselves on all fronts, and succeeded for a time. Then, in 201 AH, the former Vahd Geluk Clan were able to achieve independence, and the Grynnish armies were not able to stop them, considering the land lost in favor of winning other battles. Instead it opened the floodgates, as the Grynn were focused on maintaining their hold over the rebelling Alytn, other Clans soon achieved independence as well. Losing many key battles, due in part to internal corruption as well as poor management, the Grynn also began to lose land in the north to the invading Jern, who capitalized on lands that were no longer in firm control. Soon, the last resistance of the Alytn dwindled, but too late to stop the Jern from conquering the north. The Heuvl Clans also united to drive out the Grynn, leaving a sizeable chunk of their armies trapped in the north, lost forever. By 213 AH, the Empire was reduced to half of its size, controlling little more than the current borders of Erhfaelis today. It was here that the final blow was struck. The realm of Omeah in southern Erhfaelis seceded; the Grynn were too weak to stop them, and once again their territory was cut almost in half. Beset on all sides, a new champion rose to save the heartland of the Grynnish Empire, one of mythical proportions. Emerging from the Labyrinthe (more details later), Erhfael united disparate armies and humans to his banner, to save the heart of the Hiaed tribe and restore its former glory.

Erhfael was promised by the gods to have the power to reclaim a kingdom from the tatters of the Grynnish Empire, to reinstate its ideals of justice and peace, and to ensure that a human power survived the Haelschyn Invasions. Beginning in the territory of what is now the capital of Erhfaelis Proper, Erhfaelis consolidated his rule, removed the corrupt officials there, and began to conquer the lands the remnants of the Empire still held on to. By 20 NA he conquered the provinces of Dharganad, Aerysdalia, and others, and quickly pressed outwards to establish the current border with the Shadowlands. He then focused on Omeah, another ancient kingdom of rich land. After many wars and bloody conquests, he finally reconquered Omeah in 34 NA, the region of Koultrgate in the north by 36 NA. What we now call Erhfaelis was complete, but would see a long road of hardship before its power today. To strengthen his control, he put control of the imperial provinces under men (and a few women) that he could trust, who shared his vision. He also reformed the military, focusing on trained professionals who sought the job, rather than levies, and establish a strict code of conduct for his warriors that mirrored his own journey through the Labyrinthe. He helped to establish a sense of
pride for his warriors, made sure their integrity and skill was their prerogative, not land and wealth, and dismissed any who showed signs of greed or corruption. He also passed strict, but just laws to reward those who lived justly, and to exile those who tarnished his ideal. He quickly made alliances and established relations with other kingdoms, to instill a new image of the Hiaed tribe, and to bring his kingdom to power. His realm grew in wealth and power under his just rule, but would soon be tested yet again.

- In 75 NA, the Nivkin Wars began, and for some time it was uncertain whether the new kingdom would survive (this is dealt with in more detail under the Balokandyrin section). But Erhfael and his people prevailed, and by 90 NA Erhfaelis was once again restored. Erhfael would lead a life of relative peace thereafter until his death in 120 NA, ending his legendary and god-like reign. At his death he lived on in spirit for his kingdom, as the first demi-god, hoping his legacy and gentle guidance would continue his dream. Erhfaelis would go on relatively intact for another century, seeing some change but staying true to Erhfaelis’ plan. But in 237 NA, another darkness would settle over the land, as Omeah once again would secede, this time under the leadership of Phaeklyd, the disinherited son of the Erhfaelis king Makus (more on the throne later). Omeah won independence, and as it gained in power, began to conquer the southern provinces of Erhfaelis. In 271 NA, the province of Koultrgate also rebelled, adding to the misfortune of Erhfaelis once again. It would fall to another legendary king, King Tycho (Tl-kold), father of our current king Hentiani (HEN-te-6N-e), to save Erhfaelis once again.

- Tycho was another powerful king, in many ways the image of Erhfael himself, a pillar of strength and wisdom, the cornerstones of Erhfaelis. His battle was hard fought and long, taking up most of his reign, but by 318 NA, Erhfaelis was once again restored to its current borders. He also reformed Erhfaelis, bringing in new laws, ousting enemies in Omeah and replacing them with trusted officials, and securing new alliances with old friends, especially the Haupteg Klan of the Northern Wastes. He died of illness just last year in 325 NA, shortly after his son’s marriage to the daughter of Friedyrik of the Haupteg, Queen Honigen (HUN-i-gen). And that is the current status of the kingdom of Erhfaelis.

- I suppose to give the best account of Erhfaelis society, I could speak a bit from my own experiences, if it does not seem too proud. I am the picture of the average Erhfael, a bit taller than the average of six feet. Some say Erhfaelins are the picture of the average human as well, all different colors of hair, styles, dress depending on region. My own hair is black, graying significantly now, and balding on the top for some time now as I approach my fifty-second year (too soon I might add). I wear the green and gold trimmed robes of my profession as head scholar of Erhfaelis Proper, and chief of the High Temple of Erhfael there at the top of the hill (more on the capital later). I grew up rather well-off, my father the lord of our home city, Jaidhe (JA-du), my mother the heir to a successful
merchant business there. My siblings and I were encouraged to pursue our own dreams as youth, a luxury not all Erhaftelins can afford, as the range of wealth is as great here as in many other lands. One choice a youth can always make is to enter the military, especially the high order of the Champions of Erhaftal for boys, the Shieldmaidens of Aerys (Ā-ris) for girls. Of my four siblings, my youngest brother and sister went to the military schools, my eldest sought to inherit the family businesses. The middle child of sorts, I chose to pursue my love for learning, and through an equally long and strenuous process of training as my martial siblings, earned my way through the ranks of scholars until inheriting my current position from my master. Striving for excellence is expected in Erhaftelis, no matter the venue; sloth and weakness is not tolerated. From a very young age every Erhaftelin is taught the legend of the Labyrinth and Erhaftal, to serve as a guide for the proper way to live as an Erhaftelin, a tale I will relate to you in brief.

- Erhaftal was a strong young man of 28 when he began to have visions from the gods about his potential legacy, should he accept it. He was orphaned as a boy, and raised by his uncle to be both strong in body and heart, and to be wise above his brawn. Struggling to help his foster family in the dark times of the fall of the Empire, a mystical guide came to answer these visions, and lead him to his fate. He was chosen by the gods to face the Labyrinth, which would forge him into the most perfect of warrior kings, who would lead the greater ideal of justice the Grynnish Empire once held to restoration. With him went a few comrades, especially the blademistress Aerys, who became his lover and queen. He fought many battles and monstrosities, and faced many hardships, all to teach him strength, wisdom, justice, and all the lessons he would need to be the true leader of humans and prevail against the Haelschyn onslaught. Why the gods did this no one is for sure, perhaps partly out of guilt for leaving their first creations to fight a new wave of beings. When he emerged from the Labyrinth at the age of thirty, he was offered the crown of a demi-god, if he could lead the Hiaed humans to victory. He was to rule for 120 years, and knew the exact day of his death. He took on the emblem of the Gildryst tree, massive trees wider than ten feet, and ancient as humans, old symbols of both strength and wisdom (his own Gildryst, the Eldbough, which he often sat under as a youth, sits in the market tier of Erhaftelis Proper, our greatest monument and symbol of Erhaftelis). His life and reign are taught to be the model for every Erhaftelin, as well as that of his wife Aerys, who also shared the qualities of her magnanimous husband. His tale is the foundation of our entire way of life.

- Erhaftelis Proper is also very symbolic to Erhaftelins. It is a tiered city, representing the uphill battle Erhaftal fought to defeat the Labyrinth, and the tiers of our everyday lives. The outer walls of the city surround the markets and main housing, located at the bottom, or market tier. The next tier is the shield tier, where the military schools and garrisons are found, and is the first line of defense for the city. The next tier, the crown tier, is where the great libraries and scholars are housed, as well as the old magi schools, empty of that purpose since Sarpaed’s Folly in 78 NA. Then it
was considered the second line of defense, and still is now, but not for the same purposes. And the top tier is the heart tier, courage, the last line of defense. Here are housed the high temples of Erhfael (and now Aerys, more on her later), the garrisons for the royal guard, the Gildryst Champions and Highblade Shieldmaidens, and the royal palace, which is more formally a keep. A massive city, a formidable city, and a noble city, Erhfaelis Proper is another important symbol of our heritage.

- Being raised by Mergvin, I learned about Erhfaelin government early on, and can say it is rather simple compared to other governments I've encountered in my travels, and relies of the integrity of its individuals in power. At the head is the king, who is lord of the capital, and the lord over the whole kingdom, of course. The whole dominion of Erhfaelis is divided first into three realms, each under a Lord: Omeah, Grynhoelm, and Dharganad (Koultrgate is its own realm, without a Lord). These realms are divided into sixteen provinces, known as Vales, and each is lorded by a Valetyr (VÅL-ē-tür). Usually these Vales are divided into Dukedoms, each lorded by a Duk (DÜK). And the smallest divisions are the Daehls, each ruled by a Mergvin. A Daehl is typically a town and its surrounding area; some are actual cities, but most are town-sized or even smaller. Each Daehl has its own “capital”, with at least a fort, if not a full castle or fortress, as each Daehl is the first line of defense. Each lord, Mergvin, Duk, or Valetyr, is responsible to his lord above him, and can have his seat revoked by his lord (father’s lord was Duk Rhiker, whose lord was Valetyr Haakon, who answered to the king alone). This system allows for close management of personal land by the Mergvin, guided and overseen by the hierarchies above. Its central power again depends on the integrity of the lords, and their loyalties, but in most cases that is not much a problem, at least during Tychold’s reign. A strong king can maintain the loyalty of his noble lords, and rein in and control those who stray, and, hopefully, root out the ignoble and deal them with justice.

- A now briefly the royal inheritance of power, a key factor in our history. Erhfaelin heirs take the throne when they turn 30, even if their fathers are still alive. The king then steps down as a primary advisor. If at the time of the king’s death, the prince is not 30, then he may only act as a part of a ruling committee, consisting of himself and the other top officials of the king’s court. Once he becomes thirty he then ascends the throne. An heir can only be a child born from the current king. Thus while the king may have other sons from prior relationships, only the firstborn of his queen may be the heir. If he divorces, then again it must be of the current queen. This custom comes from Erhfael himself, who carefully planned the birth of his last child so that he might turn 30 the day of his death. His heir was Kaelyn, and when Kaelyn’s son, Dhelmus, turned 30, Kaelyn, 63, announced he would step down as his son was now the chosen age that he was when he ascended. It has involved many kings waiting until they ascend the throne to declare a wife, or simply remarrying, so that they might rule longer, or at least it results in many kings seeing the deaths of
their sons, who are eager to win glory. It has caused some unrest in the past, but still a tradition we hold onto, as the will of mighty Erhfael.

- A final note should be made about the military. Perhaps a story of my martial siblings would best illustrate it. From a young age they had always been thrilled to hear of the legends of Champions, and especially the tale of Erhfael. They would reenact famous battles, fighting side by side (with us other siblings as the enemy). They dreamed of joining the elite corps of Erhfaelin military, and when they turned 14 (my sister was one year behind), both left for Sentinel, the premier training city and the only place one could train to one day enter the royal guard. Both had our family’s think black hair; my brother’s fell to his shoulders, my sister’s long down her back. My brother, Riythen, was the largest of us, able to swing a battleaxe high over his head (and fling women over his shoulder). He had sharp, steely eyes that would narrow when confused. My sister, Daalyi, always braided her hair over her shoulder, and it would hang to her waist. When sparring, or any other contest, she would curl her lip just before her victory stroke. Both have changed only in size and demeanor since I have last seen them, more studied, observing, patient. They are more fit than I though possible for humans; I feel they could run across Ledarhig and ask “what next?” And they are always armed, Riythen with a massive battleaxe, Daalyi with two slender blades. They told me the weapons denote particular units or groups they fight with, somewhat like ranks or specializations. Both have beautiful steeds, also armored, always in the emerald and gold of Erhfael, or the crimson and azure of Aerys. It is something like religion for them, to be in the elite guard, something they, and the rest of our family, are immensely proud of. I only hope nothing happens to make them use their training, but I know both are itching to prove themselves.

- Another interesting part of the military is the Grynriekt (GRÍN-rekt). They are beast-masters, practitioners of the ancient art of beast training that began with the ancient Grynn and Dhargan tribes. That was a major advantage for the Grynnish Empire: their use of beasts in warfare. Most notable of these are the Dhargan, a brawny mix of dragon and hound, almost as large as the average human. It has no wings, but powerful limbs and jaws, most effective at leaping at mounted warriors to knock them from their saddle, then tear through their armor. There is also the more uncommon, but devastating Gryphon. They are enormous creatures, much bigger than the biggest horse, a lion’s body with the head, claws, and wings of an eagle, upon which specially trained warriors would mount and fly into battle. Always wild and picky about their riders, they proved unpredictable, yet very intelligent beasts. No more than a handful would be seen in even the largest armies, but often that was the deciding punch in any battle. In order to train these beasts, it takes a special person, who shows a link to beasts at an early age. They must then learn to channel their skill, to speak with the beasts, and to gain their trust. Once a
Various Beasts of Ledahig

Brenlix

Krellbyrd

v

Bakkala
Grynriekt connects with beasts, he gains trust, finds it easier to tame others (though only Grynriekts can ride Gryphons, and only highly skilled ones at that). Often once a Grynriekt loses the trust of the beasts; it is hard, if not impossible to regain it, a so-called “fallen” Grynriekt. They are coveted, privileged individuals, who in the past have been targets of jealousy, even assassinations both internal and external, as many rose to positions of power. Now they have a somewhat different place, being distrusted by some as a sort of magi. They are still respected and used in the military, but are growing more aloof from society, preferring to dwell in the woods and mountain homes of their charges. Some have even tried to suppress their talent, to avoid the ostracism, but there are many physical signs that mark a Grynriekt, such as change in eyes, markings, and so on. And animals of all kinds can sense them as well. A mysterious part of our society, they continue to live amongst, but ever more discreetly, and may disappear altogether at some point.

• Erhfaelis is revered, for his is our guiding spirit. We call upon him for wisdom, we call upon him for strength. We celebrate him, we invoke his guidance. We honor him by doing our best, striving for more. He is our god, our savior, and we revere him as such. We also see him as a kindred spirit, as one who once lived as a human, shared our lives; therefore, the relationship is somewhat different than with immortal gods, who have never lived in the world. Along with his reverence, there has also been a cult following of his wife, Aerys, the spirit of the female warriors. Erhfaelins wish to unite our beloved Erhfael with his lover, his queen, and seek to elevate Aerys to demi-god power. We are unsure of the path, but seek to bring her to light someday. Along with the push for demi-gods for other humans, we might soon see a new pantheon emerge, which will make the divide between human and Haelschyn even greater, and tensions higher. I am sure the gods themselves would resent such a move most of all.

• At our current stage, as I last knew it, Erhfaelis is as strong as ever, but Omeah still stirs, and the rising power of the Heuvl is a mounting threat. Young Hentiani has a lot on his shoulders after the successful reign of his father, and his every move may determine the future of Erhfaelis in these darker times of nations on the brink of war. It can be sure that our mighty kingdom will be drawn into conflict, given our central position. Only Hentiani’s guidance, that of mighty Erhfael, and the strength and wisdom of Erhfaelins can decide if our dream will last.
Glossary of People

Alytn (ÀL-i-tìn)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they once ruled a kingdom just south of the Shield mountain range, in its foothills. They were eventually wiped out by the Grynnish during the Haelschyn Invasions, though it is evident that their language, culture, and way of life influenced the Jern greatly before they were destroyed.

Anagh Lladyn (ÒN-ëgh LÓ-dìn)—the new demi-god of the Neuhaaghit, as the twin aspects of the sisters Nin and Eebyrta, the huntress and the sorceress. Two of the three legendary founding sisters of Ellan Boirey, they united to defeat their sister Marbhyna, who plotted to rule the island for her own evil purposes.

Arrechi (u-RETCH-e)—the “breathers (of life)”, a race of human-like beings created by mother goddess Attyiae. They were created to “heal the land” from the taint of the necromancers of Nehnemin, and any others who seek to pervert or blight life. They now live in the former territory of the Nehne. They look much like humans, except built lighter and smaller, “more perfect” in their estimation, and a green tint to their skin.

Avus (ÀV-ús)—one of the Great Founding Tribes. A somewhat nomadic, warlike tribe, they once inhabited the entire region north of the Shield mountain range, then broke up into several groups, and now are only recognized as a common ancestor of the humans in the Northern Wastes.

Avus Ney (ÀV-ús NÀ)—the most recent division of the Northern Klans, they split from several other Klans as a group who worshipped the new demi-god of the North, Neyjek. They center their society on worship of Neyjek, and his supposed plans to dominate Ledarhig.

Babid (BA-bld)—a once wealthy and respected human kingdom that inhabited the fortress-like island of Babidram and the small, rich area on the mainland in the Aoneh Taishe known as Routu. Their kingdom was invaded in 11 NA by the kingdom of Nehnemin, and after a long and vicious war were destroyed, culminating in the Horror of Babidram. This event sparked the entrance of the Arrechi to Ledarhig.

Boire (BOY-ûr)—one of the Great Founding Tribes of humans, they were once a very powerful empire in the east, the predecessors of the Airdllyn tribe that inhabit Ellan Boirey. The Navok drove into their lands with the Nievkeyt, killing or displacing them all. Many refugees fled to Ellan Boirey, where they were given a sizeable area to live. Once the Navok completed their conquest, the remaining Boire fought a civil war with the Airdllyn, ending in their final assimilation. Many Neuhaaghit (Aird-Boire) still maintain links to their Boire ancestry.
Enookin (ën-Ū-kín)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they settled Ennokin Isle in the south. Not much is known about them, or if they even still exist, as no one besides the Qyt have been on the island since.

Erhfael (ŬR-fāl)—legendary champion and demi-god of the kingdom of Erhfaelis, he entered the legendary Labyrinth to be forged into the “perfect human king”. Upon emerging from the Labyrinth, he led a successful campaign to establish the kingdom of Erhfaelis from the remnants of the Grynnish Empire, a kingdom which lasts to this day, much the same as under his rule.

Friedyrick (FRĒ-Dăr-rīk)—the current Vereiner of the Federak, and ruler of the Haupteg Klan. Friedyrick has secured alliances with many human kingdoms (and others), hoping to create a united force against the Navok and other threats, most recently the marriage of his daughter Honigen to the Erhfaelin king Hentiani.

Hentiani (HĪN-te-ŎN-e)—the current king of Erhfaelis, Hentiani seeks to further his father’s successes, as well as establish Erhfaelis as a leading power.

Heuvl (HOY-vūl)—one of the Great Founding Tribes who settled in the region known as the Shadowlands, in western Ledarhig between the Shield and Pitr Sagiyb mountain ranges. Masters in the art of conjuring beasts from other planes, the realm is ruled in turn by the six Clans of Heuvl (not to be confused with the Klans of the Northern Wastes).

Hiaed (HĪ-ĕd)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they settled the center of Ledarhig, becoming the ancient kingdoms of Grynhoelm, Omeh, and Dharganad. Their descendants now exist as the kingdom of Erhfaelis.

Human (HYU-mūn)—the original race of Ledarhig. Their appearance varies greatly across Ledarhig, pale to dark skin, all shades of hair and eyes, and a wide variety of cultures. Originally the children of all the gods, they were left in the Abandonment without a patron deity. The emergence of demi-gods has now given some human realms patronage, but not one single entity.

Inidra (ĬN-ID-drū)—a fierce, matriarchal race of human-like beings created by the fire goddess Jykhelviae that inhabit the Sunthrone. Little is known of them, as they despise all humans, but many of their male warriors, known as Mantivesti, form the ranks of mercenaries around Ledarhig, especially in the Qytish armies.

Jern (JŬRN)—a race of stout, stubborn, human-like beings created by the earth god Anadrihnoelm. They dwell in the Shield Mountain Range to the north and its foothills. They keep mostly to themselves, but are the most amiable to humans of the Haelschyn races.
Jhavri (JOY-ru)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they initially spread out through the marshland of Balokandyrin and the Sunthrone, before splitting into several kingdoms. Masters of magick, their ruins in Balokandyrin are the main target of artifact hunters, as well as the domain of the vicious Nievkeyt.

Klan (KLÄN)—the humans of the Northern Wastes divide themselves into six distinct distinct “kingdoms” based on ancient heritage. They are the Leetneb, Haupteg, and Rinen, in the west, the Avus Ney and Detwart of the center, and the Skallic of the east.

Kruejar (kru-Ä-jär)—a strange race of beast-men that inhabit the forests and jungles of the southern end of mainland Ledarhig. Created by the beast-god Vaetigryn, they were once humans, morphed into these beasts in the Dire Transformation, known as the Toghuit. Seven distinct species are known to exist: the Sdirk, Tboans, and Krihbits of the west, the Minithistrans and Ltnomyni of the south, and the Ruffys and Hrkahtans of the east. The island of Jaeber also underwent a transformation, but whether into Kruejar is unknown. They are at best considered monstrous changelings.

Kyslm (KIS-lêm)—a mysterious Haelschyn race that dwell in the Lost Lands in northwest Ledarhig. Little is actually known, but myth suggests they are also a race of beast-men, created by the moon god Naksent with the aid of Vaetigryn, from a strange lizard-mammal beast that lived under the mountains of the Lost Islands.

Mishra (MlSH-ru)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they once inhabited the northern half of Navokarylia. They were conquered and enslaved during the Haelschyn Invasions, and now exist as a “slave state” alongside the Navok, under their control.

Myn’ Ithrest (MEN-ith-RËST)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they once inhabited the southern reaches of mainland Ledarhig. They spread across this area and split into several kingdoms, before the Dire Transformation morphed them into the beast-men known as the Kruejar. What is left of their society is unknown, as few can penetrate the Kruejar Territories and return alive.

Navok (NA-vök)—a race of human-like beings created by the air god Sykatt, distinguishable by their large wings and tapered skulls. They are extremely skilled in magic and the only race to enslave others. They are also the creators of the wicked Nievkeyt that dwell in the vast swamp and marshlands of Balokandyrin.

Nehne (NA-nü)—one of the Great Founding Tribes, they inhabited the region south of the Pitr Sagiyb range and west of the Aoneh Taish river. A race of necromancers who worship the god of death Luebyohs, they brought about their destruction with the Horror of Babidram, which brought the Arrechi to their shores, who invaded
and destroyed most traces of their existence, except those who fled into the neighboring kingdom of the Shadowlands.

Neuhaaghit (nû-HAAG-hît)—also known as the Aird-Boire, a race of humans that inhabit the island of Ellan Boirey. Their Boire ancestors settled the island in the First Age, and there on became a people of their own, the Airdllyn. When the Navok invaded the Boire Empire, thousands of refugees were admitted into Ellan Boirey, where after some conflict were finally assimilated.

Nievkeyt (nëIV-kêt)—a vicious race of beasts created by the Navok as brutal foot soldiers. After the successful conquest of the Boire Empire, the Nievkeyt rebelled, and were directed to the swamps of Balokandyrin, where they conquered and eliminated the Jhavri kingdoms there, and now dwell.

Qyt (KÉT)—a race of human-like beings created by the water goddess Daehmiæ, they inhabit the southern Enookin Isle (as well as two colonies on the mainland) after conquering it from the Enookin humans during the Haelschyn Invasions. Merchants foremost, their powerful navy protects their homeland shores from any intruder, and shrouds their homeland society in secrecy from the rest of Ledarhig.

Syttlkit (SJT-ül-kit)—a race of humans that inhabited the Lost Lands in northwest Ledarhig, who descended from the Avus tribe. They were conquered and wiped out by the Kyslm in the mid New Age.

Turgeis (tûr-Ġûs)—a hero from the Haupteg Klan of the Northern Wastes, who united the Klans and drove the Navok out during the 2nd Slave War. Afterwards he established the Federak, a federation of the Klans that exists to this day.

Tychold (TI-kold)—the recent king of Erhfaelis, who reconquered the province of Koultrgate and defeated Omeah in the Omeahn Independence to reestablish the borders of Erhfaelis under Erhfael, as well as lead many reforms to re-strengthen Erhfaelis and reduce the chance of another Omeah secession. He also united Erhfaelis with the Federak with the marriage of his son Hentiani to the daughter of Friedyrick of the Haupteg Klan.

Glossary of Places

Aoneh Taishe (YO-nû TÔSH-ë)—a wide, rushing river that forms the boundary between Ghurendihn and Erhfaelis. Difficult to cross but at a few points, it has served as an important barrier, as well as a wealthy ferry for goods and men traveling out towards the sea ports. It is most crucial to the city of Hentianis (Omeah), who officially controls the river.
Babidram (Bā-bī-drām)—a small island off the coast of Ghurendihn, and location of the ancient Babid kingdom. A very wealthy and well-fortified island, it was conquered by the Nehne in 12 NA, and then again by the Arrechi shortly after, who are the current rulers.

Balokandyrin (Bā-lō-KĀN-di-rīn)—a swampy wetland region north of the Daakon–Lekos Mountains and east of the Worldspine. Home to the ancient Jhavri tribes, it was conquered by the vicious Nievkeyt in the early New Age, who remain there now. Though a deadly region, full of toxic environments and dangerous plants and animals, it is also full of resources, including many exotic plants and materials not found elsewhere in Ledarhig, as well as a wealth of artifacts from the Jhavri, which still attracts treasure-hunters and private mercantile companies, along with a steady host of mercenaries to protect them.

Bladhome—home of the Bladhome mercenaries, a guild that spans Ledarhig, managing most all major mercenary contracts. Bladhome itself is a sovereign state between the borders of Navokarylia and Jernskjold, on the Chrukh River. They manage themselves as a large guild that spans Ledarhig, acting much like a kingdom of their own, diving the mercenaries into Bladhome or freelancers.

Ellan Boirey (ÉL-lān bō-RĪ)—an island off the eastern coast of Ledarhig, it is the home of the Neuhaaghit people. It is verdant and varied in biomes, giving the Neuhaaghit an immense amount of pride, as well as wealth.

Enookin Isle (ēn-Ū-kīn Ī-ul)—the mysterious island to the south of mainland Ledarhig, once inhabited by the Enookin humans, now dominated by the Qyt. Not much is known about the island, or either group that has lived there.

Erhfaelis (ūr-FĀ-līs)—a kingdom forged in the New Age by Erhfael, its legendary hero and demi-god. It is formed of the heartland of the old Grynnish Empire, at the center of Ledarhig, surrounded by friend and foe alike. Its kings have had to fight to maintain its borders since its creation, which has led to a powerful internal structure and military.

Jernskjold (JURN-skyōld)—the kingdom of the Jern, covering the Shield Mountain Range and its foothills. Most of the kingdom is actually under the mountains, where few outsiders are allowed, and both the surface and mountain kingdoms are very different in culture.

Jhavri Basin (JŌV-rē)—the basin that forms Balokandyrin, separated by the Worldspine Plateau and the Daakon-Lekos Mountains, into which many of Ledarhigs rivers flow, making the entire region the swampy wetlands it is.

Ledarhig (lē-DŌR-Ig)—the mainland continent as its surrounding islands, with terrain ranging from frozen tundra to thick jungles and desert, from flat plains to hilly
grasslands, and all in between. It has been the home to many races, humans and otherwise, and is the only known continent in the world.

Navokarylia (NĀ-vū-kū-RĪ-lē-ū)—a kingdom of the Navok, spanning from Drikyn Island in the northeast to the Boire Fade just north of Balokandyrin. A long and varied kingdom, it incorporates many different peoples, all under the harsh rule of the Navok, most notably the Mishran slave state. Rich in minerals and other resources, it has made the Navok strong and wealthy.

Northern Wastes—the icy region north of the Shield Mountain Range, home to the Klans, a group of smaller “kingdoms” of humans descended from the Avus tribe. A bitter, harsh region, it has long winters and made the Klans into a hardy, resilient group, where every year is a fight for survival.

Pitr Sagiyb (PĪT-ūr sā-GĒB)—a mountain range in the west, that separates the Shadowlands from Ghurendihn, known for its treacherous passes and strange, magickal beasts that dwell within it.

Rotkuisten (rōt KŪY-stēn)—a region in the southwest Northern Wastes, home to the Rinen Klan and the violent Bloodbaer. It also the Bay of Death, a treacherous inlet that has caught and destroyed many ships looking for ports, with reefs that seem to shift and horrendous monsters that live in its waters.

Shadowlands—region between the Key Shield range and the Pitr Sagiyb, home to the Heuvl tribe of humans. Hilly and full of thick, dark forests, it also earns its nickname by the nature of Heuvl magi, who conjure strange beasts from other planes for their own purposes. Also a wealthy region, for its gem and gold deposits, and its bustling port cities.

Shield Mountain Range—also known as the Shield, Northshield, and the Brow of the World, the Shields are a continuous range of mountains that span the continent north of the Alytn Highlands and the Shadowlands. It is commonly divided into three parts by the two major rivers that flow from them, the Worldspine and the Fjellskug. The main, central part is simply the Shield. The eastern half in the Eastern Shield, and the western is known as the Key Shield, after the Key Islands just southwest of that section (as militaries would use the islands as bases to circumvent the nigh impassable mountains). The Shield Range includes several of the highest mountains in Ledarhig, and has only a few true passes that are easily traversed. They have served as a successful boundary to protect the Avus humans of the Northern Wastes, until the mountain-dwelling Jern came into the world, who now inhabit the underbelly of the entire range.

Sunthrone—the barren, desert land in the southeast reach of mainland Ledarhig, home once to the ancient Tanim kingdom of humans, and now to the Inidra. Though much is desert, the races there have learned to adapt, and also live in the many oases and floodplain of its two main rivers, the Trassimalvent and the Fluorital.
Worldspine (plateau)—an enormous plateau upon which the kingdom of Erhfaelis sits, which ends in cliffs along the eastern border of Erhfaelis, starkly separating it from the swampland of Balokandyrin, except at a few key points, notably a sloping point called Yravin’s Stair, an area of lesser decline that allows troops to safely descend to the Jhavri Basin.

Worldspine (river)—the river that runs down the middle of Ledarhig, starting a Lake Avusteen in the Northern Wastes, until it turns sharply east to flow into the Jhavri Basin at Shaetyran Falls. Once it reaches the edge of the Worldspine Plateau it follows it south, emptying at a few other locations along the way, where it forms other rivers from the falls, such as Gheam Falls at the southwestern corner of Navokarylia. Another important river for the movement of goods and men, it is also a dangerous river, with many rapids and wide areas, making it a natural boundary for Erhfaelis and the kingdoms before it.

Glossary of Concepts

1st Haelschyn War (HAL-shin)—a long, bloody conflict between the Jern and the Navok. The Navok were angry over the Jernnish intervention in the Nivkin Wars, and also sought to capture Jernnish slaves for their mining abilities. Little changed, except the Jern gained territory just north of the Slave Mountains, which would be contested once again in the 3rd Haelschyn War.

1st Slave War—the Navok sought to deliver the final blow to the Jhavri and Cyid kingdoms in Balokandyrin, who were being slowly destroyed by the expansion and invasion of the Nievkeyt into their lands. The Navok also sought powerful Jhavri magickal artifacts, as well as an abundance of slaves for the mines in the Slave Mountains. They were successful, and the Jhavri and Cyid kingdoms collapsed soon after, leaving only their legacy and ruins behind.

2nd Haelschyn War—the Inidra sought to expand into the Qytish colony of Sutdaneb, to gain access to its rich ports and trade out of Balokandyrin. They made initial gains but were eventually driven back by a horde of Qytish mercenaries, many the Inidra’s own Mantivesti warriors. No land changed hands, but the Inidra lost even more of their male warriors to the Qyt as casualties and mercenaries.

2nd Slave War—the Navok, running low on mining slaves due to the dangerous environment, sought to establish a “slave kingdom”, like the Mishran slave state but on a greater scale, and invaded the Northern Wastes. Initially they were very successfully, driving through the disunited Klansmen. Turgeis of the Haupteg Klan, however, united the Klans and drove the Navok out, forging the Federak, a permanent alliance of the Klans afterward.
3rd Haelschyn War—the Navok sought the contested territory they lost to the Jern during the 1st Haelschyn War. The two races fought to a standstill, and finally the Navok won a small part of that territory to the northeast of the Slave Mountains. The area is still contested, and could spark into war again.

Abandonment—before the Haelschyn were created, humans worshipped all the gods as their creators (except for Luebyohs). But when the Haelschyn entered the world, the Gods of the Second Generation abandoned them for their favored races, leaving them with only Attyiae and the third generation gods.

Age of the Haelschyn (HÄL-shín)—designated as AH, also known as the Haelschyn Age, the age marked by the emergence of the Haelschyn and subsequent Invasions, the eradication of many human kingdoms and tribes, and the creation of the Nievkeyt. It ended with the rise of Erhfael.

AH—see ‘Age of the Haelschyn’

Anadrihnoelm (än-ÄD-rin-öl)m)—also known as Anad, of the Second Generation. God of the earth and mountains, he gives foundation to all life, and resists other forces. His chosen race is the Jern, and he is the opposition to Sykatt. His opposition is Daehmiae, goddess of water, and together they are the Support of Life.

Attyiae (ÄT-yē-a)—also known as the Quiet Mother, the mother goddess. She is the goddess of life and growth, the first god, and mother to all others except Luebyohs, her opposite, god of death. Her chosen race is the Arrechi.

Daehmiae (DÄ-mē-a)—also known as Flux, of the Second Generation. Goddess of water and flow, she carves and flows life through Anad. Her chosen race is the Qyt, and she is the opposition of Anad; together they form the Support of Life. Her opposition is Jykhelviae, goddess of fire.

Demi-god (DE-me)—once the Haelschyn were created, the gods first creation, the humans, were left behind. Thought to be out of pity for their “firstborn”, the gods showed Erhfael how to achieve his legendary power, and then gave him a status as a sort of half-god, immortal but not as powerful as the creator gods, and without as much say in their doings. As he is only worshipped by Erfhælis, his faith-power is also limited (as gods must have faith in them to grow in power). There are other demi-gods for individual groups of humans: Neyjek for the the Northern Wastes, and Anagh Lladyn for the Neuhaaghit. There are a few other spirits gaining faith-power as well, such as Rine of the Rinen Klan. Their growth is certain, as more humans begin to worship them, and they are admitted into the pantheon.

Discarding—after the Haelschyn wreaked havoc upon the world, Attyiae, goddess of life, created her own race to heal the land, a new favored race. Humans felt this as their final abandonment by the gods, and sought other sources of divine aid and
power, including the arrival of further demi-gods beyond Erhfaelis, such as Neyjek of the North.

Essence—known also as spirit, soul, essentially the power and essence of life and existence, from which magick is drawn.

FA—see ‘First Age’

Federak (FÊD-úr-åk)—a permanent alliance of the northern Klans, forged by Turgeis of the Haupteg Klan after the 2nd Slave War. It acts as a federation, uniting the Klans as a single entity, without placing them under any single rule. The only Klans not part of the Federak are the Avus Ney and the Leetneb, though the Leetneb have a formal alliance with it.

First Age—designated as FA, the age marked by the emergence of the Great Founding Tribes of humans, who spread across the whole of Ledarhig and began to create kingdoms among themselves, and ended with the discovery of magick.

GA—see ‘Magick Age’

Gods of the First Generation—inf. 1st Generation gods. The original creator gods, Attyiae and Luebyohs, who form the balance of the Essence of life. From them came the four gods of the Second Generation.

Gods of the Second Generation—inf. 2nd Generation gods. After the balance of Essence was established, the world was created in these gods: earth, air, water, and fire. Earth and water came from Attyiae, air and fire from Luebyohs, and together with their parents created the balance of the world, now ready for living things.

Gods of the Third Generation—inf. 3rd Generation gods. After the world was created, life was created to live upon it. The gods of the previous generations created Vaetigryn, god of beasts, and Lyndal, goddess of plants. To give warmth to the life in the world, Phochyst, the god of the sun, was created. To give the life respite from Phochyst, Naksent, god of the moon, was created. Now all was created, and all the gods chose to create the humans to rule the world they had created.

Great Founding Tribes—the nine original tribes of humans that were placed on the earth by the Gods of the First and Second Generations (excluding Luebyohs) and spread throughout Ledarhig, hence every human can trace themselves back to a single Great Tribe. They were: the Avus, the Alytn, the Boire, the Heuvl, the Nehne, the Jhavri, the Hiaed, the Myn’ Ihrest, and the Enookin.

Grynhoelem (GRÎN-ôlm)—the heartland of the Hiaed tribe of humans, the Grynnish people created the largest empire in Ledarhig history during the Middle Age, and established several centuries of relative peace, known as the Web of Peace. During the Haelschyn Invasions, their Empire crumbled under external pressures
and internal strife. Its heart would be saved by Erhfael during the New Age, becoming the current kingdom of Erhfaelis.

Haelschyn (HĀL-shīn)—the races created by each of the 2nd generation gods, and later Attyiae. Fed up with the corruption and arrogance of some humans, and seeking greater power for themselves, the 2nd generation gods each created their own personal race, with help from Attyiae, to represent them more fully on Ledarhig. They are the Jern of Anad, the Navok of Sykatt, the Qyt of Daehmiae, and the Inidra of Jykhelviae. After the enormous loss of life during the Haelschyn, Attyiae decided to create her own Haelschyn to heal the world, the Arrechi. The Kyslm and Kruejar are not quite Haelschyn, as they are a morphed mix of beast and human, though gods were responsible for their creation. Vaetigryn “created” both his Kruejar and Naksent’s Kyslm.

Haelwomb (HĀL-wūmb)—after placed on Ledarhig, each of the Haelschyn was given a magickal bubble of sorts that would protect their young race as it grew to strength and power for 150 years. Whether rockslides, fierce storms, tidal waves, or wildfires, no human kingdom could penetrate this “womb” to interfere with the Haelschyn until they were ready to emerge themselves in the Invasions.

Healing Crusade—led by the Arrechi, with the direct aid of Attyiae, it was to heal the land and purge the taint of the Nehne and their necromancers after the Horror of Babidram. It was successful, as the Nehne were eliminated, and the Arrechi took their place, renaming Nehnemin as the new Empire of Ghurendihn. A second crusade took place more recently, against purported Nehne refugees in the Heuvl province of Dukervrig.

Horror of Babidram (BĀ-bī-drām)—a horrendous event in 12 NA that culminated the Nehnin invasion of the island kingdom of Babidram. It was a ritual to dedicated to Luebyohs, in which every baby in the city was thrown from the walls of Castle Babityrg by Nehne necromancers.

Jykhelviae (jī-KĒL-vē-ā)—also known as Queen Wrath, of the Second Generation. Goddess of fire and heat, she curtails the spread of life through destruction. Her chosen race is the Inidra, and she is the opposition of Daehmiae. Her opposition is Sykatt, god of air, and together they form the Manipulation of Life.

Lovikyldasyv Projects (lō-VIK-ī-l-DĀS-ēv)—several projects carried out by the Navok to create monstrous soldiers for use in battle. Most notable are the Nievkeyt.

Luebyohs (LŪ-ŏ-bē-ŏsh)—also known as the Blight, the Black Hand, or Darkclock. He is the god of death and decay, the second god, the embodiment of nothingness, and the antagonist to all life. He interferes in the matters of the gods very little, except in his role as death. Only the Nehne have ever worshipped him, though theirs was more a worship of his power.
Lyndal (Līn-DŌL)—goddess of the plants, of the Third Generation. A quiet goddess, she has said little amongst the gods, though her power is great. The Arrechi notably call upon her power, as well as the druids of Ellan Boirey.

MA—see ‘Middle Age’

Magi (MĀ-ji)—typically, anyone practicing magick. This includes a broad range of purpose, gods/goddesses, methods, and so on. Magi are not accepted in every society, are embraced and revered in others. Regardless, they are the major “scientists” of Ledarhig

Magick Age—designated as GA, the age marked by the discovery of magick. It also saw the founding of the first true kingdoms and power in Ledarhig, and ended with a major fragmentation of those large kingdoms within the Great Founding Tribes (most notably the Heuvl Clan Wars) into smaller, more distinct powers.

Mercenaries—soldiers for higher, coming from many races in Ledarhig, especially humans and male Inidra. They never come from the Arrechi, Kyslm, Qyt, of Kruejar. They fulfill endless roles, but are most often found among the Qytish colonies, the Key Islands of the Shadowlands, and outside of Balokandyrin, as guards for treasure-hunting parties and private mercantile companies. They have their own state, Bladehome, acting much like a kingdom of their own, diving the mercenaries into Bladehome or freelancers.

Middle Age—designated as MA, the age marked by the major fragmentation of the Great Founding Tribes (most notably the Heuvl Clan Wars). It also saw the rise of the Grynnish and Boire Empires, as well as the Web of Peace created by them. It ended with the emergence of the Haelschyn on Ledarhig.

NA—see ‘New Age’

Naksent (NŌK-sěnt)—the god of the moon, of the Third Generation. Jealous of brother Phochyst, he enlisted Vaetigryn to aid him in creating the Kyslm, a people beholden to him as the rest of Ledahig was beholden to Phochyst. Also linked to Dachmiacs, his "wife".

New Age—designated as NA, also known as the Age of Erhfaelis; the Age of the Forsaken. It is marked by the rise of Erhfael and Erhfaelis, as well as the invasion of the Arrechi, the creation of the Kruejjar and Kyslm, of demi-gods, the Federak, and countless wars. Still continuing, though many say a new age is upon us, the Age of Demi-Gods.

Neyjek (NĀ-jěk)—the newest demi-god, patron of the Northern Wastes, especially the Avus Ney Klan. He demands strength and wits, and considers all who dislike his harsh rule as weak, and feels the descendants of the Avus tribe should conquer and rule all Ledarhig.
Nivkin Wars (NĪ-V-kīn)—a violent and brutal war carried out in the early New Age between Erhfaelis and the Nievkeyt of Balokandyrin, and later the Navok, Heuvl, and Klans. It was the most widespread war, involving the most kingdoms to date, and influenced many further wars and developments, though it ended in victory for the Erhfaelins.

Pact of the Gods—an agreement of all the gods made after the creation of the four original Haelschyn races, that no more Haelschyn would be created, and to no longer directly interfere in the lives of those on Ledarhig, meaning they could guide their chosen, but cast no magick themselves. This was mostly to prevent the gods from destroying Ledarhig through their direct conflict, or through additional warring races. It was broken by Attyiae when she created the Arrechi.

Phochyst (FŌ-kīst)—the god of the sun, of the Third Generation. His brother Naksent created the Kyslm to spite him, and gain influence of his own. Also linked to Jykhelviae, his “wife”.

Refugee War—when the Kyslm conquered the Lost Lands, many Syttlkit refugees gathered in Rotkuisten, and led a failed counterattack in 135 NA with help from the Klans to reclaim their homeland. Afterwards the Syttlkit died out, and no further contact was made with the Kyslm.

Sykattyoshm (sf-KĀT-tzē-ÖSH-ēm)—also known as Sykatt, of the Second Generation. God of air and storms, he manipulates the flow of life with the Winds of Change. His chosen race is the Navok, and he is the opposition of Jykhelviae; together they form the Manipulation of Life. His opposition is Anad, god of the earth.

Toghuit (TŌG-hūt)—also known as the Dire Transformation, a magickal transformation of the Myn’ Ithrest tribe of humans into the Kruejar beasts they are today. Angry at Attyiae for breaking the Pact of the Gods, he decided he would create his own race without her approval. The humans of the region changed in strange beastmen, into seven distinct species that exist today. The transformation was quick, and there are few remnants of the humans that once lived there.

Ülbaer (UL-bār)—leader of the Rinen Klan, a legendary warrior in his own right who leads the council of Baergausts to decide for the Rinen.

Vaetigryn (VĒT-ig-rīn)—the god of beasts, of the Third Generation. He was responsible for the Toghuit and the transformation of the Myn’ Ithrest tribe of humans into the Kruejar beasts they are today. He also helped Naksent to create his race, the Kyslm. The old beastmasters of Grynhoelm (and now Erhfaelis) also call upon his power in their art.
Synopsis of First Book

The story of the first book would take place around the time just after Perdruin has published his history of the world. As he described in the Histories, in many ways tensions are high on Ledlerhig, and things are coming to a head, especially regarding the Shadowlands and Erhfaelis. The story would develop two main plots, alongside two subplots, describing an overall coming conflict between Erhfaelis and the Shadowlands, and the emergence of yet another demi-god. This would form the first book of a series (most likely a trilogy). At the end of the trilogy, Ledlerhig would be entering what is considered a new Age, the Age of Demi-gods, thus placing the reader directly in the middle of a developing world, in the center of a conflict that will involve many nations before the end, and the threat of a powerful god with vengeance at heart. The book will possibly be divided into two parts, the first focusing on the development of events early on, then the second to move forward several years to the time when the actual events unfold. Here I will briefly describe the main characters, and the four plots of the first book.

Maerick (MÂR-ik)—He is the only son of King Hentiani’s head captain and closest friend, Laityn. He lost his mother to suicide long ago, and is often abandoned by his father, who is constantly away on military business, and chooses not to take him along. He is usually dropped off with his uncle Roderick, where he has grown up alongside cousins Braidyn and Hayeden. A brooding young boy, the most recent drop-off seems to have affected him the most, as he speaks little, and is off alone much of the time. Maerick is seen through the eyes of Braidyn, as the reader never goes inside Maerick’s head. Together they enter the military academy of nearby Sentinel, where the first part of the book ends. Maerick has found a father figure of his own, a spirit that came to him while off brooding in the woods alone. The spirit has been consoling him, trying to replace his father, and Maerick lets him in. In the second part, the boys graduate, and the father-spirit sends Maerick on a quest. Braidyn goes along to protect his cousin, grown close over their years in the academy. Their quest will take them around Ledlerhig, through many dangers, the greatest of which lies waiting should they complete their journey.

Braidyn (BRÎ-dîn)—Braidyn was the younger son, and felt as though he was not as favored, not as cherished as his “perfect” brother Hayeden, though it was not his parents’ intent. He also had an interest in magick he was never allowed to pursue, as it is forbidden in Erhfaelis. He studied in secret however, and after graduating the military academy with cousin Maerick, went with him on his quest, not quite understanding what it was for, but wishing to protect his cousin anyway, who has seemed dark and brooding since they were young boys. Braidyn also wishes to further pursue his studies in magick along the way, possibly encountering rogue magi who might teach him. The further the quest progresses, however, the more Braidyn feels he is losing his best friend, to a darker path he doesn’t understand. Braidyn will eventually have to make a choice, to follow his friend, the only person he ever felt respected him and his interests, or to do what he knows in his heart is right, and stop Maerick before he unleashes a deadly force into the world.
Niklos (NÉK-lös)—Niklos lost his family as a child in a Navok raid, and was captured and placed in the Slave Mines. There he was singled out by the overlord of his particular mine; it seems he had an untapped gift in the ways of magick, that the Navok magi wished to unlock. In the first part of the book, we see Niklos escaping from the mines, as he learns to use some of this power, though it is untrained and unwieldy. A long and arduous journey, he finally makes it into the land of Bladhome, where the first part ends for him. In the second part, we see him as a freelance mercenary, using his power to his advantage. He is a strange personality, seeming to take great risks for no gain, but to simply take them. He eventually meets the scholar Perdruin, who senses great potential in this young man, and takes him under his tutelage, even with the risk of magick-casting. Niklos soon learns of his heritage, and his destiny, in which he is called on as a new hero for Ledarhig.

Laityn (LI-tën)—Laityn suffered the suicide of his own beloved wife, and blames himself for it. He tries to assuage his guilt and perceived failings as a husband by devoting himself entirely to his career as a military officer, and the martial right-hand of the king. This means often abandoning his son to his uncle, rather than take him along; he has a complex relationship to Maerick, as his son reminds him of his wife, thus his guilt and shame for the loss of her. He also then feels guilt for abandoning his son, but it has become a vicious cycle for him, that he can’t seem to break. There will come a time soon, however, when Laityn will be forcefully reunited with his son, and with have to face his failings as a father. How he does this may deeply affect the future of Ledarhig.

Honigen (HUN-ig-ën)—Queen Honigen is from a very different land from Erhfaelis: the Northern Wastes. She is not used to the courtly proceeding, the enormous cities, the dress, the attentions. In the first part of the book, her beloved husband has recently left to answer a threat on the Erhfaelin border, and she is left alone and pregnant, only her aid Midge to comfort her. She slowly becomes accustomed to the ways of Erhfaelis, and in the second part of the book we see her sparring with a Shieldmaiden in front of an audience in the palace. She is fast becoming a strong Erhfaelin queen; appropriate, as she soon must defend her husband’s kingdom, which in the process will become her kingdom as well.

Lechr (LÉ-chůr)—He is the effective ruler of the Heuvl Clans of the Shadowlands. He is also a master necromancer in the shadows. He seeks to expand the Heuvl realm into an empire, beginning with Erhfaelis, to gain the strength to reveal the Heuvl necromancers, so they no longer will be forced to hide in the underbelly of the Shadowlands. Cunning and powerful, he will prove a tough adversary, and his machinations will drag much of Ledarhig into conflict.

The first main plot involves Maerick and Braidyn. Fresh out of the military academy, Maerick quickly goes AWOL on his father-spirit’s quest, with Braidyn close behind. Their journey first takes them to Balokandyrin, in search of an artifact, where Maerick’s father-spirit also helps Braidyn to unlock some of his potential as a magi.
(through Maerick, as he is the only one who sees him). Much later when the two run in to Perdruin and Niklos, we discover that this spirit is the spirit of Sarpaed, the legendary magi whose “folly” killed thousands and led to the forbiddance of magick in Erhfaelis. Sarpaed seeks vengeance and power, to become a demi-god through unconventional means, and is using this descendant of his as his agent. Sarpaed wishes to reinstate the power of magick in Erhfaelis, and take vengeance upon Erhfael, once his friend, who he felt betrayed him. Should Sarpaed ascend to demi-god, it will be a dark day for Erhfaelis.

The second main plot involves Niklos, who upon meeting Perdruin has discovered a great potential within himself, as well as a destiny to rise as a savior and hero of Ledarhig. Perdruin helps him to develop and control his magickal power, which has made the two outlaws in Erhfaelis. They go on a journey that in many ways resembles Erhfael’s Labyrinth, and they wonder if their demi-god might have something to do with Niklos’ fate. When they meet with Maerick and Braidyn, and learn that perhaps this is the meaning of Nikos’ destiny, they chase after, hoping to stop them before Sarpaed is unleashed upon the world, as well as help defeat the armies arranged against Hentiani.

The third sub-plot involves Hentiani and Laityn. Hentiani, young king eager to prove his worth, as he must live up to the legendary name of his father, feels he senses a danger coming from the Heuvl kingdom, feeling his father’s spirit is trying to warn him. Others are not convinced as he rides out to meet this supposed threat (though they keep their opinions to themselves. Laityn, however, is extremely loyal to his king, and believes him, though is afraid of the consequences of such a belief. Hentiani turns out to be right to perceive this threat: Lechr’s plan, however, is to draw Erhfaelis into a war, so that he might conquer them and reveal his necromantic armies. Lechr has made a secret alliance with the Kyslm, to distract Hentiani’s greatest ally, the Federak, and now wishes to pull Erhfaelis into conflict, to avoid drawing the sympathy of the Arrechi by making Hentiani the aggressor. Hentiani perceives this threat, however, before Lechr is ready, but still pulls Erhfaelis into a conflict that will soon involve much of Ledarhig.

The fourth sub-plot involves Queen Honigen. Having recently given birth to the heir of Erhfaelis, Honigen now trains to become a strong queen, to care for her husband’s realm while he fights to protect it. In this she uncovers a plot by the Lord Thaerin of Omeah. He wishes the old kingdom of Omeah to secede once again from Erhfaelis. Honigen is forced to stop him, the young queen, still alone and unsure in this new land. She will find friends, however, to help her in stopping this plot to ruin her kingdom from within.

These are dark times for Ledarhig. A shadowy ruler named Lechr seeks to conquer the lands of King Hentiani, aided by his allies, the mysterious and alien Kyslm. As kingdoms join to either protect or destroy Erhfaelis, two young cousins embark on a quest that neither quite understands, to free the spirit of a legend from long ago. And young Niklos, escaped slave turned freelance mercenary, discovers a great potential and destiny within himself, while Queen Honigen seek to overturn a plot to corrupt Erhfaelis from within. These events seek to change the face of Ledarhig. The Age of Demi-gods is upon us…