

I'd like to take a moment to thank Thom and all of the crew over at Excelsior Entertainment for taking the time to answer each and every one of the questions that I sent them.

Mark Theurer

In addition to the answers Thom was good enough to send along a map that goes along with the Chronopia game and some information about each race. Whether you are an old-school veteran of Chronopia or if this is your first exposure to it I'm sure that you'll find it interesting.



The World of Chronopia is a place of turmoil and hidden dangers. While much beauty and wonder exist in the lands, one must be careful to keep a watchful eye on the shadows. We have turned a corner in the Fourth Age, one of heightened conflict and desperate action. I have penned these thoughts to provide the traveler with some idea of what he may face in the central lands (referred to as the Inner Lands) of Chronopia.

### The Blackblood Empire

**Capital:** Kharabad (Population 75,000)

**Population:** +/- 7,000,000 (includes satellite provinces)

**Race (s):** Ogres (1.4m), Orcs (2.3m), Goblins (2.5m), Trolls (@ 800k), Giants (@ 15k), Bokor (1.2m)

**Resources:** cloth, salt, copper, silver, gold, gemstones, bronze, and foodstuffs.

### Current Relations

**The Firstborn:** The Blackblood Empire as a whole view the Firstborn with open contempt and distrust. Believing the One King to be a dark force that threatens their independence, the Empire will not tolerate any Firstborn incursion into their lands, and they seldom differentiate between human kingdoms. They openly blame the One King for the release of the Devout into the world and further add the Stygian menace to his meddling activities. Emperor Nizar views these two actions as part of a larger military scheme, to ply the One King's enemies with so many threats they will fall easily to his waiting armies once they have been weakened enough. Because of this belief, humans are generally considered spies or advanced scouts and executed on sight, unless of course you are from the Northern Tribes.

While the Blackbloods did not suffer the presence of Firstborn Slaves to the extent that the Elves or Dwarves did following the Great Fall, they now have adjusted their opinion of the Firstborn to reflect a harsher worldview and would prefer to simply kill them all and end their threat for all time.

**The Sons of Kronos:** Considered to be isolationists and unorganized, the Blackblood Empire does not consider the Untamed to be any concern at all. Their beliefs and practices separate them enough for even the racist Blackbloods to notice the differences between them and the Firstborn. This difference is the only thing that allows them to exist without the ire of the Empire though this by no means indicates a position of friendliness. If anything the Blackbloods recognize that, like themselves, the Sons of Kronos simply wish to be left alone.

**The Elves:** Former allies in the Triad, the Empire views the Elves with begrudging respect. While the Empire considers the Elven dependence on Lotus plants to be a weakness, their opulence and hedonistic ways a sickness, and their religious views sadly fatalistic, they have found their battle skills and prowess to be worthy of their respect. Emperor Nizar keeps frequent council with Duke Heliac and has placed ambassadors throughout the friendly Elven Houses to make sure relations and support continue, though much of this has since ceased due to the Heliacs position regarding the One King.

Among the Raj's of the Empire there has arisen considerable dissent about the role the Elves are playing in the rebellion of the Swamp Goblins. Previously genial relations have broken down considerably since the secession of the Fallen Lands. Only the current affairs assailing the Empire have prevented direct retaliation against the Elves as a whole for their role in the matter.

With the current state of affairs with the Devout and the Stygian, Nizar has found the need to reassert his friendship and support with the Elves in spite of some of their involvement with the traitorous Swamp Goblins. While he will use his allies in the Elven Court to bolster his Empires defense, he will not forget their involvement in the schism of the Fallen Lands and he will have his revenge.

**The Dwarves:** While once strong and formidable, the Dwarven race has degenerated with countless blows to its integrity. The loss of their lands and the corruption of their Gods have left the Dwarves far weaker than they were during the days of the Triad. They are isolated and fragmented, a people torn and as dangerous to themselves as they are to their allies.

The Empire is both skeptical and wary of any Dwarven envoy and now prefers to secretly relegate the Dwarves to a buffering position between themselves and the Devout and Stygian threats. Dwarven mining balloons are still found amongst the Empires larger cities bringing the wonders of the deep earth to market.

**The Stygian:** Released by the meddling schemes of the One King, the Stygians are a swarm of death that the Empire fears for it does not act in any manner they understand. Riches and power do not seem to drive them, and their actual motivations seem to involve only the extinction of all non-Stygian life. Believed to be a summoned menace brought to this plane by the hated Firstborn, the Stygian are reviled and hated throughout the Empire.

**The Devout:** Another force that was brought into existence by the One King, the Devout are a plague on the face of Chronopia and the Empire will not tolerate its presence at all. It will marshal its might against the Devout wherever they emerge to challenge the Empires borders. The doctrines of the Dark Prophets represent a diametrically opposed viewpoint to that of the Empire, and the Blackbloods find all they stand for an utter affront. Death is a sacred rite and journey for the Blackbloods who view the undead and necromantic practices of the Devout as anathema.

### **Life in the Empire**

The sprawling Blackblood Empire sits proudly on the eastern shores of the Inner Sea and spreads inwards all the way to the Lands of Flame in the Far East and the Frozen Sea to the North. While popular opinion is that the Empire is little more than a collection of humanoid savages, this could not be farther from the truth. Their customs are very different and harsher than many other realms but this merely hides the quite dignity the Empire is filled with. This sense of honor and respect of power however does not mean this is a safe place for the unwary to travel.

The Empire prides itself in having some of the grandest and oldest cities in the world. Although the outlying areas of the cities are flat and sprawling, consisting of mainly single- and double-story clay brick buildings, the central parts are walled behind huge, square, fortress-like structures. These fortresses are extremely wide and contain military barracks and training yards, as well as quarters for officers, stables for war beasts and roadways broad enough to accommodate chariots passing in both directions. Vast crenellated towers are evenly positioned along the walls and contain various types of catapults and armaments. Each face of the fortress features a large rectangular tower inset with a gate leading to the heart of the city. The gates' inner walls are decorated with friezes of heroes and great military leaders who have died in battle as well as scenes of fantastic creatures from Blackblood mythology. In all, the Blackbloods sport the largest freestanding army in the world (though the exact size of the Stygian hordes is unknown).

Vast, diaphanous domed buildings with spires and minarets of alabaster and onyx dominate the inner parts of the cities. Here are the homes and dwellings of the elite in Blackblood society as well as the Halls of Justice, the Great Libraries, and the Royal Merchant Houses. There are immense tropical gardens complete

with fauna, large plazas decorated with mosaics and fountains, and huge open markets where one can find goods from all over the world. Each of the provincial capitals has a small palace for the Emperor as well as a Court and quarters for the Satrap and his retinue.

The Grand Vizier Bukhir has his quarters in the Jade Gates of the fortress wall at Kharabad. These immense jade-faced gates are topped by two golden lions and appear to stretch to the very heavens themselves. Kharabad is also the capital of the Empire and home to the Emperor. His colossal golden-domed palace is situated at the center of the city. Its opulence is renowned throughout the world and marveled at by all who visit. Nizar presides over his court sitting on the legendary Blood Throne, an intricately carved throne made entirely of amber.

Belshazzar, the greatest Blackblood city in the Lands of the Flame, sits before a vast ravine that joins the caravan trails of the North to the Lake of Souls far in the West. This beautiful city faced with glazed tiles of blue, green and yellow and lined with carved alabaster—reflect the sunlight of the desert in a dazzling aura that overwhelms the first-time viewer with its grandeur. Ruled by the Emperor's cousin Tabukhar, Belshazzar occupies an important place in the defense of the Empire's southern trade interests. Unfortunately, with the incursions of the Devout and the Stygians, Belshazzar is now more an armed fortress than a trading city, relying heavily on the support of Kharabad to maintain its walls.

The coastal trading ports along the western seaboard are vital to the Empire's continued prosperity since they provide it with an important gateway to the Inner Sea. The most famous of these are Bezek and Azaghur. The citadel at Bezek is situated on a vast granite stack connected to the coastline via an enormous stone bridge. The land connecting it to the coast fell away nearly a thousand years ago. The harbor and most of the city is spread around the base of this natural pillar. The city is surrounded by a low wall but has large loading jetties and wharves jutting out into the sea. A twisting road with regularly positioned gates spirals around the pillar up to the citadel and the inner city. Bezek is the second city of the Empire. Its citizens boast that their city has never fallen to invaders. In fact, the city has produced some of the Empire's proudest warriors, including the Emperor himself. Azaghur is positioned on the banks of the river Ortyx. The inner city is probably the largest in the Empire, and its market place is famous throughout the known world. Because of its exposed position, the outer walls of Azaghur are constructed similarly to the inner fortress walls of most of the other cities in the Blackblood Empire. Other important cities are Araxus, set in the central plateaus, the lakeside city of Japur, and the Goblin city of Terakan, cut out of the living rock and approachable only by a road built along the knife-edge ridge of a mountain range. Yet, with the coming of the Devout the Blackbloods have lost several cities, including the ancient of city Varhorn in the forests of Qatuk. But all roads lead to Kharabad, and Kharabad provides the heart for the Blackblood Empire.

When Negral raised his Dark Citadel amid the Frozen Sea, some of the most northerly settlements of the Blackblood Empire were cut off from the main Empire. Now the Blackbloods must supply these isolated settlements by secret caravan routes across the shifting ice-flows of the Frozen Sea and by their great balloons of silk, which are born aloft by the power of the Alchemists' Accumulators. The Emperor Nizar knows the importance of having watchful eyes at every corner of his realm so he diligently maintains the line of towers that runs between the western coast of the Frozen Sea and the Dragon's Spine which is under the command of one of his most loyal Satraps.

There are a number of trading outposts scattered through the southern deserts that come under the control of the Emperor, however none are greater than the wall-city of Delshazzar. The walled city blocks a deep ravine that joins the caravan trails of the north to the source of the river Sippar, known as the Lake of Souls. Overlooking the city from the high ridges to the southeast is the royal palace that stands as testimony to the Blackblood engineers who constructed it. Its slender azure towers reach to the heavens, resplendent with their inlays of lapis lazuli. Vast friezes of mythical beasts, exquisitely carved in alabaster, decorate the



palace walls. The gates at Delshazzar are also marveled at as they are faced with glazed tiles of blue, green and yellow.

Protecting the borders of the Empire is the greatest and certainly the largest land army of the world. The core of the Emperor's army is stationed at Kharabad, and similarly, the provincial Satraps have armies based in their capitals. In times of war, the Emperor levies forces from these provinces. His army is further augmented with conscripts from the smaller towns throughout the Empire.

All Blackbloods like to wear richly colored and intricately embroidered costumes. The varying colors in their dress often reflect the troops' home provinces. Likewise, their bright silvered armor is elaborately embellished with gold and other precious metals. The Blackbloods believe that if they are going to die, they should be wearing their finest before presenting themselves before their Gods.

The Emperor and his nobility often enter battle atop a large armored palanquin set between four Myrmaidons. However it is not unknown for them to enter the fray in less formal ways, as Nizar and his brother did in their younger days, leading from the front with the bloodlust filling them. There is a saying in Blackblood society, "When an Ogre picks up a blade people die. When the Emperor picks up a blade, nations die."

### The Cursed Lands of the Devout

**Capital:** Driaz in Jebel, Korasant in the Storm Peaks, Curak'tal in the Flame Lands and Portantis.

**Population:** unknown (conservative estimation including demons and undead places this around 3 million)

**Race (s):** elves, dwarves, humans, orcs, ogres, goblins, trolls, giants, undead, demons, and devils

**Resources:** unknown

### Current Relations

**The Firstborn:** The Dark Prophets hate the One King and everything the Firstborn society stand for. Their efforts, while fragmented and self-aggrandizing, all center on seeing the One King impaled up on a huge pike above the highest towers of the Dark Citadels. While the hordes of the Devout make no distinction between whom they torture and slay, the Confessors of the Devout do. It is their infernal duty to bring the Gospel of their Dark Master to the hearts of the unbeliever and swell the ranks of the Devout with willing soldiers. Confessors can be found traveling the lands of Chronopia seducing its populace

into joining their unholy crusade. Both Aleha and Lokoth seem to have directed the bulk of their forces against the Firstborn.

**The Sons of Kronos:** Little distinction is made amongst the Dark Prophets as to the differences between the Untamed and the Firstborn; to them they are all either potential converts or sacrifices meant for their Dark Master. Only Lokoth, who was born of these peoples, has any understanding as to their motivations and powers. At present he has kept this council to himself and allowed the other Prophets to discover what he already knows. Since his defeat at the hands of the Untamed, Negral has elevated them to a prominent place in his genocidal campaigns.

**The Elves:** The best service an Elf can perform for the Dark Master is to march in his Risen warbands. The Dark Prophets view all things Elven with unilateral contempt; they are a fallen people whose Gods have abandoned them to this place called Chronopia. They are beneath the notice of the Dark Master.

Only Aleha seems to have any fascination with the Elven people and society, though it is with the eyes of a perverse child that she regards them. None amongst the Apostles can forget the role the Elves played in the Triad's formation and the One King's first death, and they are eager to return the deed in kind.

Elves are rarely seen corrupted into the service of the Devout, though it has happened from time to time. The Elven dependence on Lotus seems to be an avenue the Dark Prophet Aleha is determined to exploit in her bit to absorb the Elven Houses. It is this very tactic that has allowed Aleha to insinuate her Confessors into the House of the Topaz Scorpion and bring it almost completely to her service. The rest of the Elven Houses have most recently condemned the actions of the Topaz Scorpion and cast it out from their order. Even the Obsidian Serpent House turned its back on the lesser House.

**The Dwarves:** The Dwarves are little more than annoying vermin that are too stupid to know when they are beaten and too useless to be converted to the Devout's cause. The Devout have destroyed the Dwarven Gods, taken over many of their most significant Ringholds, and sent the remnants of the Dwarven Clans running fearfully into the Under Realms. To the Dark Apostles, the issue is closed, the threat of the Dwarves is over. While there are Dwarves, like the Jackal Clan, that serve the cause of the Devout, these cases are rare and they are generally treated with only passing notice by the true believers of the Devout.

Until recently the Dwarves were being driven to extinction by the relentless onslaught of the Devout. It was the rise of the Stygians which forced the Dark Apostles to split their attentions from their dark crusade and pull back their assaults. With the respite provided by the Stygians, the Dwarves have mounted a new campaign to retake their homelands and restore their Gods to their former Divinity. By contrast, the Devout plan on sacrificing every Dwarf on the blood soaked altars of their Dark Master.

**The Stygian:** There are few things that surprise the Dark Apostles of the Devout; few occurrences that go unforeseen by the prophetic meditations of the Devout leaders. The Stygian are just such a surprise, a complete enigma. Their goals are completely alien and unfathomable to the Devout and their spirits seem incorruptible and immune to the Confessors dark promises. They are not interested in attracting converts to their cause or in swelling their coffers with riches, but rather seem simply focused on the extinction of all mammalian life on Chronopia.

When the Stygians first appeared the Devout had known only constant expansion and victory. Following their unannounced appearance the Devout have been forced to regroup and pull back their lines to prevent devastating losses from the Stygian menace.

**The Blackbloods:** The Blackbloods reject the teachings of the Devout and view the promise of unlife with abject disdain. The Devout therefore have no place for the Blackbloods in their armies, unless

unless it is to bolster the ranks of the Necromancer's Risen.

**The Swamp Goblins:** Of all the races of Chronopia, only the Swamp Goblins are not even considered in the machinations of the Devout. The secrets of their domain are too small and inconsequential to factor into the great plans of the Devout's Dark Master.

While fallen Swamp Goblins can be found amongst the Risen of the Devout, this sight serves to enrage the Swamp Goblins who consider the walking dead an affront to the cycle of their lives. If the Dark Prophets were to turn their gaze upon the Fallen Lands, many believe the Swamp Goblins would last only a few weeks at best before falling to the Devout's might.

Aleha has recently begun a new campaign that has impacted the Fallen Lands in a most sinister way and is causing the Swamp Goblins great concern. While the focus of her plans revolves around the Jade House of the Elves, the Swamp Goblins are experiencing collateral damage they are both unprepared for and unable to understand. Left unchecked, Aleha may be able to topple the Swamp Goblins without much effort at all, having discovered the intrinsic symbiotic relationship between the Swamp Goblins and the Fallen Lands.

### In the Cursed Lands

The lands claimed by the Devout all share one common thing, they are permeated by death and decay. From jungles teeming with foul insects and brackish waters to harsh deserts scorched with heat the lands of the Devout reflect the domains of their dark master beyond the seven Hells; the environment themselves are dangerous. Like a cancerous growth the Cursed Lands seem to spread and grow with the advances of the Devout Host.

Cities, like the land itself, that have fallen to the Devout become places of desolation and ruin. Nothing grows in the wake of a Devout victory and what is not leveled in the actual battle is pulled down by the Devout hosts in their triumph. Some larger cities take on the appearance of the citadels of the four Prophets. Old buildings are pulled down and new structures are raised in reverence to the God of the Devout, the Lord of Darkness. The enslaved are mercilessly goaded on to build these demonic shrines, black as the blackest night, after which they will be cast into the sacrificial pits for the greater glory of Devout's Dark Master.

An impenetrable darkness casts a deadly shadow over both the Dark Lord's cities and lands, interrupted only by the screams of the dead and dying. Few sane beings travel the lands of the Devout for there is nothing to be found there but death and pain.

As if by some sinister design, each Prophet settled in one of the far corners of the inner lands and began to build a deviant dark capital to serve as the center of corruption for the domain. Each citadel is a grim reflection of its master and a focus for the worship of the Dark One. These huge edifices of towering malevolence with their great



walkways and colonnades lined with statues depicting the Dark God and the rest of the Hell-spawned pantheon are built of black marble streaked with blood-red iridescence and are situated at the mouths of each of the Vortexes. Their vast, vitreous pillars pierce the sky in homage to their Dark Lord serving as capitals in the New World, a world of death and decay, the world of the Devout.

Negral's city was the first completed. It is said that the pain-filled groans of the dead echo constantly through its corridors; the souls of all sacrificed there going straight to the Dark One. Built on the island where the Prophets first came together to discuss plans of treachery and rebellion against the One King, the city is a grim and terrifying sight. The Frozen Sea around the city is not nearly as cold as the heart of the island's dark master. Nightmare birds of prey circle the spires looking for fresh victims. Here amid the cold malevolence of this kingdom were born the first of the Necromancers.

To the distant east of Negral's necropolis, in the broken and cracked Lands of the Flame, is the fiery pit that is home to Lokoth, a dark tainted version of his birthplace among the Untamed, its opposite in every way. Here amid the lava and flames of a hell on Earth, Lokoth plans and schemes against the races of the Upper Lands. His fiery demons and dark minions assail the Dwarven Talon Gates and the outer edges of the Blackblood Empire with impunity and relentless drive. Were it not for the sudden and unexpected appearance of the Stygians, Lokoth's forces would have splintered the Eastern arm of the Blackblood Empire by now and sent its forces reeling back to Karabad for succor. Contrasting the tumultuous realm of Lokoth, Nemeth's Citadel is constructed on the remains of a Dwarven Ringhold far in the West, a quiet and dark place where the scent of the dead fills every pore, where a never ending flow of sacrificial victims is being cast into the charnel pit of flesh that lies at the heart of the dark keep. Nemeth has made it a personal mission to become first amongst the Dark Prophets and is aggressive in his efforts to cull the world for his Master. He hates Dwarves most of the races of Chronopia with an unbridled passion and resentful rage. Until the debacle in the north with the Untamed and the Stygian, Nemeth was the only Dark Apostle to know no defeat, a situation that has enraged him to limitless anger. Making his shame worse, he has lost ground about his own citadel, a situation he remains determined to reverse.

Aleha's palace is set deep in the jungles of Jebel, safe from the prying eyes of the other races of Chronopia. Around her fortress, like a vast shadow, all living things have died leaving a vast blackened desolate plain of decayed matter surrounding her on all sides. Aleha is the consummate schemer, a plotter of unmatched duplicity. It was only the unforeseen threat posed by the Stygian that have caused her to ally with her brethren at all. Prior to this event, she has maintained a distant and uncooperative relationship with her fellow Prophets.

Aleha's forces are vast, and she is given to the frequent creation of undead to bolster their numbers and swell her ranks.

### The Rhingholds of the Dwarves

**Capital:** Varies upon the Dwarven Clan

**Population:** Wolf Clan (750,000), Vulture Clan (920,000), Dark-Tusk (1.2m), Blood-Bone (1.5m), Horned Ones (856,000)

**Race (s):** dwarves, some Gnom

**Resources:** Varies upon Ringhold, gold, platinum, gems, pearls, marble.

### Current Relations

**The Firstborn:** The High Council of the Dwarves is concerned for the return of the One King. If this man truly is the leader they had seen slain all those years ago during the time of the Triad, then the Council suspects he will unleash a great revenge upon them. For the most part the Dwarves share a measure of blame for the atrocities committed against the Firstborn by the Jackal and Vulture Clans, a subject they still find distasteful. As the Founders had once taught them though, what you shape in the stone you must forever live with.

The blood bond the Clans share has caused them to internalize this guilt collectively and live with the repercussions of those actions. As a result, humans are traded with and fairly treated.

The Dwarves (most at least) do not blame the Firstborn for the Devout threat as the Blackbloods do, though they do view the Stygian menace as the work of the One King; being the feared revenge he would take on them. In spite of this belief, the Dwarven Council does not retaliate against them. The revenge of the Firstborn is viewed as expected and justified and as such the Council is attempting to deal with the problem at large content in the knowledge that the scales will be balanced once they have overcome it.

The Vulture Clan however does not accept this imposed view and hates the One King and his followers with a passion reserved for few others. Thuul routinely erupts in anti-Firstborn fervor, when they are not fighting against the Stygian menace.

The Sons of Kronos: The Untamed of the northern lands have never been a threat to the Dwarves and as such the current Council has no designs against them. Cuhn Gul, Overlord of the Elk Clan has on several occasions reported favorable interactions with the north men, a situation the Dwarves are considering looking closely at in terms of formal alliance and mutual defense. According to Cuhn, there are those within the Untamed who also view the One King with fear and disdain, Tribes that would serve the needs of the Dwarves quite well. With Nemeth entrenched where he is, neither land above or below is safe. In the fullness of the Falling Moon, it is expected that Cuhn will bring an emissary from Moriath of the Tribe of the Goddess to address the Council.

The Elves: The Dwarves have varying opinions about the Elves, each depending on the House being discussed. Duke Zazen has earned the Council's grudging respect and the High Council receives his ambassadors regularly. The same cannot be said for the House of the Obsidian Serpent, whom the Dwarves view with both suspicion and apprehension. In all, relations with the Elves are infrequent at present as the Dwarves have much to deal with on their own. The current High Council has shunned Elven Houses that enjoyed the benefits of Firstborn slaves captured during the days of the Triad.

Further eroding better relations is the Rogue Duke's present enslavement of Dragon Clan Dwarves, which he uses in the most belittling ways in the armies of the Obsidian Serpent. The Clans cannot forgive nor tolerate this action and the Elven argument is frequently hung up on this point. In some instances open hostilities have erupted where Duke Valimyr's interests are concerned.

All however is not completely bleak. The Wolf and Blood Bone Clans have a much higher regard for Duke Heliac, who has been aiding their efforts against the Devout for numerous cycles. Relations between the Clans and the House of Helios are quite promising to the point where open trade exists and the Duke's word carries some measure of weight.

The Blackbloods: The Blood Throne is a powerful ally and a dangerous enemy. Since the dissolution of the Triad, most Dwarves have had little to do with the Blackbloods, the only issues arising being those of border disputes and trade route rights. At present the High Council has not opened any negotiations with the Emperor as they know they must do so when they are at a position of strength, anything less will cause the Blood throne to react adversely and view them as weak.

The Stygian: The Dwarves view the Stygians as a penance, the results of the actions they took part in following the defeat of the One King. While not all Clans were guilty of this affront, the fate of one is the fate of all, the Dwarves linked inexorably by their Gods and oaths. They will defeat this menace as they will defeat the Devout, and in so doing wash away the sins of their past.

The Devout: The hordes of the Devout have caused the most damage to the Dwarves, displacing their Clans and taking over their sacred Ringholds. The return of their Dark Master to this realm

seems to be predicated upon the destruction of the Caged and their children. With their newly renewed fellowship, the Dwarves are determined to drive the Devout back to the pit they crawled from, no matter the cost.

The Swamp Goblins: The Dwarves do not interact with the former members of the Blackblood Empire and know little of their motives and politics.

### Dwarven Ringholds

Carved by their Gods centuries before recorded history, the Ringholds are mysterious and magnificent places concealing a thousand secrets. According to Dwarven legend, the circular structure of the Holds is said to reflect the very shape of the universe and allows energy and good fortune to fill the Hold and all inside.

Massive pits, sometimes miles across are sunk into the earth, at the center of which stands the mighty central column of the Ringhold. This pillar city is linked to the bedrock by countless bridges and walkways and houses many thousands of Dwarves. Barracks, dwellings and workshops rise up beside the great halls, galleries and meeting chambers. At the base of the central column Dwarven society spreads out beneath the earth where farms and stables follow the course of subterranean rivers and dockyards serve ships that navigate the rivers. Some of these rivers lead out to the Inner Sea but the routes are guarded lest the other races learn ways of reaching the Dwarven Ringholds from the Ocean.

Most Dwarven Ringholds are surrounded by a series of smaller holds, some of which are open to the sky and some, which are closed. The most common formation is the Circle of Nine. In this configuration, the first hold lies directly north of the central Ringhold with the others evenly spaced around the core system in a clockwise direction. Surrounding each Ringhold is a network of caves and tunnels that have been fashioned and tamed by the Dwarves over the centuries. These areas are known as the Dwarven labyrinths and they can reach for hundreds of miles beneath the surface of Chronopia, meandering across the land to link an endless expanse of subterranean wilderness known as the Feral Dark. Even the Dwarves must use great caution when moving through the Feral Dark.

The doors of preternatural strength known as Titan Seals protect the heart of each Ringhold. Like the Ringholds, these doors were forged and set in place by the Founders before the Gods were brought low by the tragedy of the Wilding. The Titan Seals guard all major routes into a Ringhold and once they are closed, a Ringhold is almost completely invulnerable. With limited accessibility to these doors, defending them is a simple matter in times when war comes to the Ringhold. Of common design, all the Dwarven Ringholds are situated on mountainous black granite plateaus.

The Dwarfs have mastered technologies foreign to the rest of the world. They have discovered vast loads of ores, minerals and gems never seen on the surface world, making them both rare and precious. These rare gifts they have mastered in their cavernous workshops and put to use with great effect in their factories.

Many of the Dwarf holds are located near the sea and are connected by subterranean tunnels to underground harbors situated at the central core. These harbors are vast, often protected by maze-like waterways, which house the great shipyards. Ringholds are characterized on the surface by a thin tower, built above the central



pillar, surrounded by a simple circular wall with gateways built at regular intervals around its circumference.

The few outsiders to set foot in the Holds have all been stunned by the craft and style involved in their creation. Most assume that Ringholds would reflect Dwarven appearance and be miserable, dark places, yet this could not be farther from the truth. Some, it is true, have darkened, notably the homes of the Vulture Clan and the Horned Ones, who have lost many of their Ringholds to the advance of the Devout. Many are still palatial and splendid. Made for their Gods to inhabit as well as the Dwarves, vast archways with carved histories of Dwarven mythology are everywhere.

### **The Noble Houses of the Elves**

**Capital:** Varies upon the Elven House

**Population:** Elves (collectively about 4m), Elementals

**Race (s):** dwarves, some Gnom

**Resources:** Varies upon Ringhold, lotus, and spice

### **Current Relations**

**The Firstborn:** The Elven opinion of the Firstborn is not very favorable, with opinions varying from house to house. Only Duke Zazen seems able to consider working with the One King to thwart the Devout, but this is only due to the dread visions of the future he has had and how their very survival necessitates their working together.

Many of the supporters of Zazen defer to his judgment though they may disagree with it personally. The recent attacks of the Stygian however are making Zazen's case for unity difficult, the other houses believing the Stygian Swarm to be released by the One King expressly to destroy them. This is an opinion loudly proclaimed by Duke Valimyr and a growing area of contention amongst the houses. When Zazen sided with the One King, he created a vindictive enemy in the Obsidian House.

The Jade House and the House of Helios both would prefer the Firstborn removed from the world, but their attentions are focused in other directions by the Stygian and the Devout.

**The Sons of Kronos:** Seemingly content to stay in their isolated realms, the Elves in general do not interact with the Untamed much and when they do, it is usually unpleasant. Tensions have gotten worse since the fall of the Crystal Caves to the Elves and the Sons of Kronos have a growing resentment for the Elves.

**The Dwarves:** The former allies of the Triad are in no position to offer help to the Elves, so focused are their attentions inwards. While other houses have slowly stopped trading with them, Duke Zazen has maintained an open dialogue with the Dwarven High Council and routinely has ambassadors carrying messages to the Dwarves. It is Zazen's hope that the Dwarves can rally to a common cause again and join together with the Elves against their mutual enemies. Zazen had been trying to placate the Dwarven High Council by demanding Valimyr release the Dwarven slaves he currently exploits, but these negotiations ended when he took up arms against Valimyr in favor of the hated One King.

Duke Heliac had very favorable relations with the Wolf and Blood Bone Clans and presents the most promising inroad currently available to Zazen's unity agenda. The other houses do not interact with the Dwarves for numerous other reasons.

**The Blackbloods:** While fragmentation and conflict have weakened the other members of the Triad, the Blackbloods have been consolidating and growing strong. The Elven Court has many fundamental disagreements with the Blood Throne all stemming from views and beliefs. Relations would probably be much worse were it not for the many herbs and minerals the Blackblood Alchemical Guilds garner from Elven trade. This business alone has kept an uneasy peace between the nations, at least for now.

The secession of the Swamp Goblins is currently being blamed on the interference of the Jade House, without whose support the Swamp Goblins could never have withstood Nizar's army, let alone formulated the schemes they had.

**The Stygian:** The Stygian are simply a scourge upon the face of Chronopia, a blight that there can be no reasoning with. Information gleaned from the captured Tablet of Destiny has shown Duke Zazen that the only way to deal with the Stygian is to exterminate them to the last, a plan he will need a united front to achieve. If his information is correct, the Stygian are but the first wave of an ancient threat that will return to punish the warm-blooded races of Chronopia.

**The Devout:** The Devout are repellent and the Elven Dukes can trace back most of the catastrophes of their race and the Dwarven race to the Devout's Dark Master. This Lord of Pain the Devout serve is an abhorrent evil long ago banished from the world. The current army that marches to his banner is but the latest weapon he has fashioned to return himself to this plane and end his exile. Duke Zazen is concerned that the timing and execution of this latest effort may just be the one that wins his freedom, a freedom that will spell the end of all living things.

**The Swamp Goblins:** Since the rise of the Jade House, all Elven eyes have trained their attention to the Fallen Lands and the lucrative lotus trade there. Despite numerous attempts to cajole and steal the Yellow Lotus, the other Houses have not been able to entreat with the Swamp Goblins as successfully as the Jade House.

Currently the other houses view the Swamp Goblins as little more than savages, too long deprived of the luxury of civilization and hence unworthy of attention. Duke Valimyr, in spite of repeated sanctions by the other houses, has mounted repeated expeditions into the Fallen Lands to acquire the elusive plants. On all these occasions, the Duke was confronted not only by crudely armed Swamp Goblins, but goblins defended by the Jade House.

### **The Elven Lands of the Inner Sea**

Most of the Elven cities are described as spiral wonders that climb high into the sky. The cities are built as a series of conical structures, the largest of these being situated in the center containing the royal palace of the ruling Duke. Each structure has a spiral road running to its peak with a myriad of tapering sky bridges connecting them to others. Towers shoot out at a variety of angles creating the illusion that the city has been formed naturally.

Buildings line the streets with the most prestigious houses situated near the top of the city. Sky barge loading platforms and the towers of the Lotus-Eaters are amongst the highest pinnacles in the city. Splendid gardens lie in between the colossal towers and two concentric circular walls surround the entire city. While symbols of the various houses dot the Elven skyline the higher reaches are decorated with only those standards of the ruling house.

Of the notable Elven wonders, the Garden Island of Yynn is one of the most breathtaking. Yynn is a relatively small island surrounded on all sides by steep mountains that prevent access to the central areas by any land force. Contained within the protective confines of these giant ice peaks is the fabled Garden of Yynn. The island is lush with thick and exotic vegetation. The beloved Lotus flower grows profusely here, particularly the blue and silver varieties.

The Lotus Flower is central to all Elvish magic. This makes the House of the Crystal Lotus very powerful as they control the largest supply of the best flowers in the lands. Other Houses have their own gardens to be sure, but nothing to rival the scale or quality of Yynn. The Palace is situated in the center of the island not far from the great processing towers of the Lotus-Keepers and is used as the administrative hub for the distribution of the flowers to the Elven peoples. Huge loading platforms for the sky barges are located on the central tower where their precious cargo is loaded for travel to the mainland.



The mountains surrounding the island are peppered with sentinel towers, which protect the gardens against attack should a determined force try to assail the realm by air. Stationed at the Palace as well as in the surrounding sentinel towers are units drawn from the Lotus Guard.

Elymris is the crystal jewel in the Lotus Empire. It is a magnificent spiral city built of marble and quartz; its gleaming towers stretch to the sky, shimmering with opalescence. A vast crystalline causeway connects the three major islands that make up the capital city of the House of the Crystal Lotus. The higher levels of the city are shrouded in mist and are set amongst white mountainous peaks, which are permanently wrapped in ice and snow. Its Duke, Zazen, is one of the few people still living who recall the days before the Firstborn and the First wars with the One King. His ancient frame is kept alive by an almost continuous infusion of various lotus plants as he watches over the ministrations of his magnificent city.

Helio is the seat of Duke Heliac's power. It is a vast island spiral city on a horseshoe shaped lake inset in the coast. A breathtaking array of magnificent waterfalls acts as a backdrop to the city. When the sun is at its height, its rays make the water golden, giving the feel that the whole city is ablaze with energy. Heliac has a strong connection to the city, with his early fame coming from leading the Elven forces in its defense. Since then, Heliac has constructed vast fortifications to help in the event of another attack. The island also houses a separate circular military harbor set in the cliff faces behind the waterfalls.

Duke Valimyr of the Obsidian Serpent has his base at Baal-Hazor. Baal-Hazor is a dark spiral city built from black granite and polished obsidian. Its very appearance is sinister and foreboding, which directly mirrors the character of the Rogue Duke. This Neolithic spiral city is the most recently built of all Elven cities and is built upon great death. Beneath it is the remnants of the Ringhold of the Dragon Clan Dwarves. Wiped out by Valimyr and his Obsidian warriors, rumors suggest that some still fight in the deepest pits of the Hold while a few have even sworn allegiance to the Duke and now fight alongside him. The city itself can be seen for miles around and some say it resembles some dark and brooding bird of prey perched on the corpse of the Dragon Clan Hold.

Khal Adrien originally began as a fortified outpost over a thousand years ago. Protected on one side by the formidable Palisades Mountains and on the other by the sheer cliffs of the Fallen Lands, Khal Adrien was the perfect staging area for Elven assaults into the eastern Blackblood Empire. The disposition of the city would change when the Elves here discovered the Yellow Lotus, a new variety of lotus never seen before. When it became apparent that the Swamp Goblins alone knew the secrets of their cultivation, the city entered into formal negotiations with the Goblins and a mutually beneficial alliance has occurred ever since.

Unlike the other varieties of lotus, Yellow Lotus is both the most addictive and the only one that can be ingested by a common elf, not just the elitist Lotus Eaters. Today Duke Ortheus leads the Jade

Elves in their quest to perfect the rare Yellow Lotus and it is his barges alone that carry this potent flower to the other Elven lands.

### The Kingdom of the Firstborn

**Capital:** Chronopia (168,000)

**Population:** Human (3.1m)

**Race (s):** Human

**Resources:** lumber, foodstuffs, fish, clay, gold

### Current Relations

**The Sons of Kronos:** Though it seems difficult to believe, the Sons of Kronos share the same ancestry as the Firstborn. Indeed they are both Firstborn. The One King himself united the tribes of the Untamed, but when Kronos A'Kallach refused to acknowledge his kingship then the paths of the Firstborn and the Untamed went their different ways. Those tribes that followed the One King claimed the title of Firstborn for their own and went on to build the great kingdom that the world of Chronopia hates and fears, even to this day. The tribes of the Untamed however, remained true to their past and to the worship of the Earth Goddess' cycle of life, death and rebirth. But still there remains a strong sense of kinship between these two great peoples.

Their shared history has not been an easy one but friction and conflicts have always fallen short of all out war. Even now the hearts of the Untamed are torn between respect for the One King, who was blood brother to Kronos himself, and condemnation for the disdain he shows for the ancient customs. The Firstborn have no such division in their loyalty to the One King. They have great respect for the Sons of Kronos, but for them the history of the Firstborn began with the birth of the One King. They are content to leave the Wildlands of the Untamed to the Sons of Kronos, knowing they could not have a more dependable wall of flesh and steel at their backs. The Firstborn hate the Shadow Tribe however, and consider them to be no better than the Devout they have joined.

**The Elves:** The Firstborn still feel great anger and resentment towards the Elves who for so many years abused and tortured their people. While the One King has made it clear to point out that not all Elves are guilty of the atrocities committed against the Firstborn, even he understands the depths of their rage. The recent campaigns in the north were orchestrated to help his people understand the importance of their working together. By allowing the Obsidian Serpents the opportunity to attack him, it both forced Zazen to take his side against his own people and demonstrated to the Firstborn the wisdom of the One King's plans.

While most of the Firstborn still harbor a deep hatred of the Elves, they have come to accept that not all Elves are as unspeakable as the Obsidian Serpents, a calculated move the One King will be using in his future endeavors. The Chronomancers have already begun telling of the homage Duke Zazen has paid the One King in the battle at the Wall of Ages in taking up arms against one of his own to defend the One King.

**The Dwarves:** Much like the Elves, the Dwarves are painted with the same wide brush strokes of hatred and rage, little discerning the differences between Clans. As far as the Firstborn are concerned, the Dwarves are just as evil as the Elves and they wish them nothing but pain. To date, the One King has made no forays onto their lands to challenge them, though they did seek to impede the One King's progress in the Land of Two Rivers. For this affront and those of the past the Firstborn wish the Dwarves dead.

**The Stygian:** The secrets of time and the power to shape it are guarded by the Stygian. In dark dreams the One King had learned of this and it was then, seeing this knowledge allowing him to vanquish the Devout that the One King mounted his great desert campaign and entered the Forbidden Dunes where he would ultimately wake the Stygian menace. While the Stygian are a formidable threat, the One King believes that they will allow him to do today what he failed to do centuries before; to claim lordship over the other races.

The Devout: There are none more hated than the Devout. In spite of the torture the Firstborn endured during their years of captivity, there are none that embody all the qualities that the Firstborn hate as much as the Devout. Traitors, sadists and monsters, the Devout are openly attacked whenever they are encountered, and there are none more sought after in all the Firstborn Kingdom than the four Dark Prophets whose moment of weakness and betrayal has led to this present suffering and shame.

The Swamp Goblins: The Firstborn have no direct interaction with the Swamp Goblins of the Fallen Lands. Secretly sending aid to the Jade House, the One King has been fermenting the Swamp Goblin secession for years. By separating the Fallen lands from the Empire, the One King could seriously impede the abilities of the Orc Alchemical Guilds, Guilds who pose a vast threat to later plans the One King has.

The One King has further dispatched an emissary to the Jade House to offer the Swamp Goblins aid against the poison threatening their home, a poison they believe caused by the Devout. This secret activity was done to accomplish two things, to cement another Elven Alliance with the Firstborn and to weaken the Blood Thrones position by aiding the Swamp Goblin secession. Knowing Nizar cannot acknowledge this action for fear of losing face, the One King is reasonably sure this course will yield the desired effects he requires.

The Blackbloods: While the Blackbloods took few slaves compared to the other races, they are treated as equals in the conspiracy to extinct the Firstborn. Most of the kingdom views the Blackbloods as savages and cretins, devoid of honor and kindness. While partially correct, the Blackbloods are hardly savages and fools. Regardless of this, the Firstborn would love to see them all roasting on great spits, their cooked entrails being fed to the dogs and the Dwarves.

### The Kingdom

Chronopia is one of the greatest cities of the world. Even the Elves look at its proud towers and wide, paved streets with envious eyes. The fortifications of Chronopia reflect the fear of enslavement that is in the heart of every Firstborn citizen. Huge broad battlements cross the city like an iron grid. Vast gateways link the various quarters of the city together. Huge fortified wharves, bristling with armaments, jut out into the harbor. Beyond these defenses, a double wall of granite and steel surrounds the city.

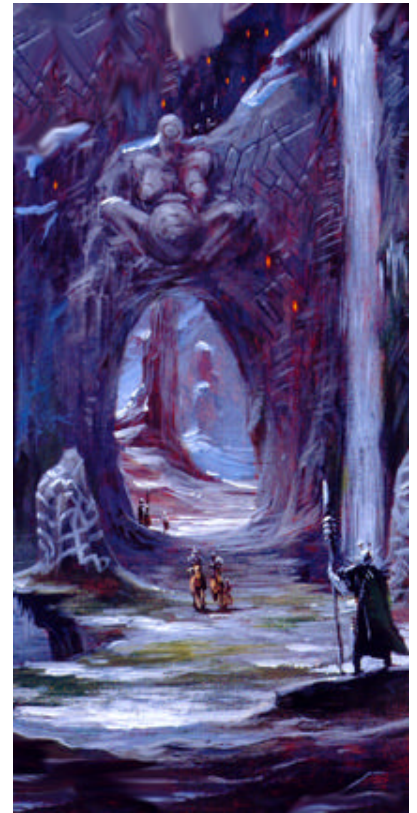
Upon its completion, the One King divided the land into seven princedoms, each with its own warrior-prince in control. In each of these domains, he constructed one of his legendary Eternal Towers, gigantic tapering columns with the symbol of the One King fixed on their highest battlements.

The first, and by far the largest of these towers is in the heart of the capital and the One King spends as much time in its mysterious walls as he does in the royal palace. It is inside the towers that the Chronomancers learn and practice their art and it is here that seekers of wisdom try to decipher ancient texts and unravel the secrets of creation itself.

All the cities of the Firstborn are heavily fortified with the resolute Iron Guard watching over every aspect of Firstborn life. Since the Great Treachery, they have been joined by the Judges who seek out Devout sympathizers and put them to the axe. While many fear the Judges, they are also viewed as a necessary evil and most prefer them to the possibility of the Devout infiltrating their society. The fortifications of Chronopia reflect the fear of enslavement that is at the heart of every Firstborn citizen. Huge broad battlements cross the city in an iron grid pattern. Vast gateways link the various quarters of the city together. Huge fortified wharves jut out into the harbor bristling with armaments. The city is also surrounded in a double wall curtain of granite and steel.

All the cities in the Firstborn kingdom have had a troubled history but none more so than Aregath, on the borders of Dwarven and Elven lands. All the three races have laid claim to it at some time but it has

been under Firstborn control for the past several decades. Aregath is one of the darker kingdoms and still looked down on by the Untamed who remember the day, centuries before, when the Firstborn therein refused to take up arms against their Elven Dukes when they attacked the city. The Eternal Tower is also the home to one of the toughest Judges in the kingdom, sent there especially by the One King to guard against the influence of the Devout which he feels is stronger in that mountainous and shadowy part of the world than anywhere else. The new walls and towers the Firstborn have constructed there should help them maintain control of this great city for many years to come. To the north, the Sons of Kronos live nomadic and barbaric lives centered on the city of Nuria.



These ancient halls of the Untamed have been strengthened by the One King with the construction of an Eternal Tower and the arrival of Chronomancers to help them fight off the attacking Devout horde.

### The Harsh North

**Capital:** Varies upon Tribe

**Population:** 2.8m

**Race (s):** Human (2.4m), Brikier (@300,000), Gnarlach (unknown)

**Resources:** Varies upon Ringhold, furs.

### Current Relations

The Firstborn: The Tribe of the Dawn is currently allied closely with the One King and are considered comrades in arms by the Firstborn. Relations between the two are very genial and openly supportive. The Tribe of the Goddess has only recently forgiven the One King for spurning its Queen and relations between the two are improving as they unite against the Devout and the Stygian. Were the Queen to realize that the One King was responsible for unleashing the reptilian menace that is the Stygian, relations could very well cool off again. By contrast, the Shadow Tribe hates the One King and all the Firstborn that serve him. Given any opportunity they would see the kingdom of the Firstborn razed to the ground, their treasures plundered and their dead defiled.

The Blackbloods: Until recently the Untamed have not had many conflicts with the Blackbloods who seemed content to leave them to their isolated realm. This has changed when the former Satrap of the Northern Province was removed from his long-held post and replaced with a more aggressive ruler. Clashes in the mountain passes of the north are becoming more frequent and both the Tribes of the Mother and the Dawn are reporting escalating aggression from the Ogre leader.

Survivors from small border clans have reported being attacked by Blackblood raiding parties. The motives for these attacks are at present unknown, and because the Untamed are focused on the



problems with the Devout and Stygians, they have not been able to muster the resources to fully deal with this new problem. While the Tribe of the Dawn is petitioning the One King for direction, Moriath has issued an edict that Blackbloods trespassing on the soil of the Mother's sacred land be executed without mercy or parlay.

**The Elves:** The Elves are meddlesome and intrusive, elitists and without honor. While the Sons of Kronos have always shunned the Elves, their constant encroachment into their lands has brought the problem to a new level. Was it not for the menace of the Devout and the Stygian, there would probably be an all out war between the Elves and the Untamed.

When the Elves ousted the Untamed from the Crystal Caves, the two Tribes declared a Pao' Dhan, or Blood Feud again: According to the tenants of a Pao' Dahn, the kill any Elf that crosses their path. To date, the Untamed's expeditionary force has survived more than two days travel into the Wildlands beyond the Caves, some three hundred and forty eight Elven warriors disappearing into the deep forests never to be seen again.

Only the Shadow Tribe do not view this Elven aggression with the same outrage, and delegations from the Shadow Tribe have been seen visiting the Crystal Caves often, a situation that strains their relations with the other Tribes even further.

**The Dwarves:** The Untamed do not know the Dwarves, a race that has little interest in their remote realm. What little they know has been passed down to them from the days of the Triad. When Moriath's tribe received a visit from a Dwarven emissary from the High Council, the Untamed Queen felt that the Earth Mother had sent her a sign, a promise that the wars begun by the other races would not intrude upon them further.

The Tribe of the Dawn however still harbors an ancient grudge against the Dwarves for their conspiracy against the One King. Their diminutive race is treated with hostile emotions, even today. The Vulture Clan is infamous for their brutal treatment of the Firstborn and the Tribe of the Dawn waits their turn to suffer for their cruelty.

**The Stygian:** Hated as much as the Devout, the Stygian are a new threat to the Untamed, a threat that has cost them one of their most sacred shrines. While Moriath hates the Stygian swarm, she has come to view them as a challenge sent by the Goddess to strengthen their resolve during the upcoming conflicts. The Tribe's ability to defend the sacred lands of the Earth Goddess must become her primary concern and Moriath is carefully plotting their removal. The cycle of life, death and rebirth will be played out in the Wildlands and the Sons of Kronos will rise to the challenge. That the Stygian must be destroyed is the one thing that all three Tribes agree upon.

**The Devout:** The Devout are a source of great shame to the Untamed. None deny the betrayal they feel as the Prophets pledged their souls to the Dark Devourer and unleashed upon the world a malignant plague that is slowly consuming everything it touches. The corruption of the Shadow Tribe and the resulting weakening of the Sons of Kronos because of it make the severity of this cancerous taint more noticeable. The untainted Tribes of the Untamed will not rest until both the Shadow Tribe and its corrupted masters are banished from the lands of the Earth Mother.

**The Swamp Goblins:** The distant Swamp Goblins are considered as



Blackbloods to the Untamed, who make no distinction about their secession from the Empire. They have yet to interact with the Swamp Goblins in any way.

### **The Deep North**

The Sons of Kronos make their homes in the wilderness and the closest things they have to cities are their great High Fortresses. These megalithic structures of dark granite stand on the summit of mountains like a gesture of defiance to the Sky God. They are not visited by unfaithful. Most travelers who brave the hard winds and biting cold trade in friendly villages made of wood and nestled within the confines of the deep wood.

Locked in the inner sanctum of these cities are the Cruachs. Golden idols fashioned in the image of the Earth forged by the Fathers of Men and are held in perhaps the most well protected items in the realms. Some even suggest that the High Fortresses are built solely to protect the Cruachs from the unfaithful.

### **The Land of Two Rivers**

**Capital:** Unknown  
**Population:** unknown  
**Race (s):** Stygian  
**Resources:** Gems, silver, marble, cassia.

### **Current Relations**

Unlike the other races and nations of Chronopia, the Stygian view them all as chattel, fit only as offerings to their great Mistress. If there is any underlying scheme or plan of attack beyond simply overwhelming their enemies, no one has yet to discern it. The Stygian have demonstrated the ability to breed creatures, which will better serve their needs in the different realms of their enemies. Tree Devils and Ophidians are just such intentionally bred aberrations. A more recent abomination, the Tenebrous Crawler forces its way through rocky earth with ease allowing the Stygian Swarms to follow in the tunnel it creates. How they accomplish what evolution takes thousands of years to achieve remains, like so much about the Stygians, a mystery.

### **The Deep Desert**

The Land of Two Rivers, where it all began, is a cruel and merciless place. During the day the sun burns and scorches the land, leaving it parched and broken. At night, even the finest armor offers little protection from the icy winds that scour the desert floor, freezing all living things to the bone. In the failing light of dusk, the crimson sky turns the desert sand the color of burnt amber. No race has laid claim to the interior of this accursed place as a general sense of foreboding and doom accompany any foray into this realm. Even the industrious Dwarves stopped their building on the outer circle of the desert, remembering a subconscious ancestral warning to stay out of this land.

Examination of the historical records of the various races all point to references about this grim and cursed place, references littered with warnings of horrific suffering and cataclysmic effect. Regardless of the particulars that are given to interpretation, all the cultures of Chronopia are clear about one aspect of this place; the desert was formed by the spilling of blood; so much blood that races disappeared in its spilling and the Savannah of Antol became a desert. The time of this myth dates back eons ago, during an era when the Stygian ruled the world and the young races were

butchered on their altars in veneration of the rapacious Goddess, the Great She Serpent, the Mother of all Gods- Tiamat.

As time marched on and the world forgot its bloody past, two great rivers slowly split this sun-baked land, rivers that are today called the Sippar or the River of Time, and the Psantikj meaning the River of Blood. They both rise from deep in the south and flow north meandering across the central desert to finally spill out over the Great Delta and into the Inner Sea. Between these rivers is a vast, arid and inhospitable tract of land, now referred to as the Plain of Bones.

The main body of the desert is surrounded in the east by high mesas. These pepper the land in ever-increasing size towards the Lands of the Flame where they eventually merge with the high Black Plateaus of the eastern region. To the south the desert rises towards the Thunder Mountains, where lies the Lake of Souls, the source for the Sippar. To the west of this are the Vermilion Peaks, overlooking the Chasms of the Sea God. These ridged mountains hold the source to the River of Blood. Westwards the desert ends abruptly in the Black Plateaus of the Vulture Clan Dwarves. The coastal areas in the north are rich with dense vegetation and in some areas of the Great Delta there are enormous reed swamps as yet unexplored. However, these vivid areas give way quickly to the arid deserts beyond, which are broken only occasionally by an oasis or fortified outpost.

Found protruding from the suffocating sands of the inner desert are the great Chaos Tombs of the Stygian, colossal megaliths of an age long passed and equally forgotten. They appear as pyramids of shimmering stone, piercing the sky as if sacrificing the very heavens themselves to their saurian Goddess. These pyramids are steep-sided with shallow steps allowing access to the distant summits, above while obelisk-like structures are often found surrounding their base like stoic sentries awaiting an order to arise.

These tombs, located deep in the southern desert are wrought from a curious, pristine, milky-white stone unknown to the current races of the world and mighty edifice-like portals emerge from the foot of the pyramids at irregular intervals around the base. Flanking each entranceway are great statues of mighty demons, Lord Guardians to the She-Serpent. There are also dozens of enormous bas-relief facades depicting scenes from the Stygian past lining these gaping portals.

The internal construction of the pyramids is still largely unknown. The central sacrificial altars and the rare chambers housing the Tablets of Destiny have been well documented by the Firstborn; however, the lower crypts and breeding chamber remain the stuff of maze-haunted nightmare.

Many of these pyramids have now been found in the Land of Two Rivers, the most well known are at Ipkur-Kish and Hathor, but others exist often being discovered by the unwary city that finds itself in the path of its Stygian denizens. Over the last several cycles, sweeping hordes of Stygian have appeared all over the land as if the coils of the mighty She Serpent were stretching out and tightening the earth in its crushing grip.

### **The Fallen Land**

**Capital:** unknown, reputed to be called the Tree of Life

**Population:** 321,000

**Race (s):** Swamp Goblins

**Resources:** Teak, Yellow Lotus, Herbs, Kylvite Resin.

### **Current Relations**

The Firstborn: The Swamp Goblins have no present interaction with the Firstborn, their remote lands too distant to be involved in the One King's machinations. Their only knowledge of the Firstborn comes from the visions garnered by their Shaman during their communal meditations in the Spirit World. In these visions the image of the One King has been revealed when trying to

understand the threat of the Stygian, a conundrum the Shaman are trying to understand.

The Sons of Kronos: The tribes of the Fallen Lands do not know the Untamed.

The Elves: For all a Swamp Goblins limitations, they are fairly good judges of character. With the exception of the Jade House of Elves, the rest of that race has no respect for the Fallen Lands, its traditions, the tribes' customs or their dominion. The Swamp Goblins have repelled numerous incursions into their lands by Elven Houses covetous of their Yellow Lotus. While they are hostile to the other Houses, they truly hate the Obsidian House of Elves, the House that was responsible for the abduction, torture and death of two Swamp Goblin Shaman. This action has set in motion a pact of cooperation that exists between the tribes whenever the Obsidian House enters the Fallen Lands. Only the Elves of the Jade House are treated with respect and acceptance, and this is predominately because the Jade House has demonstrated an affinity with the land and a respect for the will of the jungle.

The Dwarves: Dwarven incursions into the Fallen Lands are very rare and the Children of the Gourd seem to view them as they do any intruder, as fertilizer.

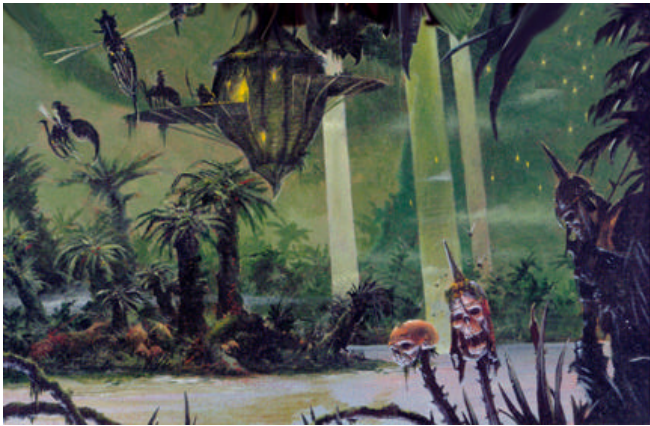
The Stygian: Coming out of an area of the Fallen Lands long considered forbidden to enter, the Stygian are the devourers of Swamp Goblin myth. Unlike the other races, the Stygian do not seem to want to change the Land, so the Swamp Goblins view them as they do any predator and defend themselves against their aggressions. Though they are feared for where they come from, they are not the Devout.

The Devout: The evil of the Devout is something previously unknown to the Swamp Goblins, a corrupting presence that epitomizes the stain of all civilization upon the Fallen Lands. The raising of the dead and the other atrocities of the Devout have struck the Swamp Goblins at the core of their beliefs and for the first time they have felt fear, and they do not like it.

The Blackbloods: Once part of the Blackblood Empire, if only peripherally, the Swamp Goblins view their civilized cousins with distrust and suspicion, and more recently with righteous anger. The relationship deteriorated when the Emperor returned their ambassador to the Blackblood Court to them as a decapitated head and their sacred icon, the Sarukh'ti Nishtar held hostage. The Sarukh'ti Nishtar is a giant emerald fashioned in the shape of the gourds of the Fallen Lands and is one of the Swamp Goblins most cherished relics.

With tensions at an all time high and the Swamp Goblins guarding their borders with a ferocious zeal, the Alchemical Guilds of the Empire are looking at a shortage of many of their most powerful herbs and minerals. At the currently escalating rate of herbal consumption, the Guilds are looking at substantial distillation





problems within six moons. Almost desperate, the Orc Alchemists have been guilty of frequently violating the Swamp Goblin's lands in a quest for their coveted ingredients, a situation that has left the Swamp Goblins with a powerful taste for Orc blood.

The only Blackbloods the Swamp Goblins tolerated were the Goblins of Terakan, though they do not maintain communications with them since the failed coup.

#### Into the Fallen Lands

Swamp Goblin society is a difficult thing to fathom. The values they place on life is often so alien that they defy understanding by the other races. Life in the Fallen Land revolves around two things; the Gourd Cities and the Yellow Lotus. The Gourd Cities are the vast trees in which the strongest tribes of Swamp Goblins make their homes. These broad trees tower for more than a thousand feet over the jungle and can accommodate many thousands of Goblins. Here,

amid the sanctuary of the trees, the Swamp Goblins are able to command a significant advantage over the ground moving creatures and intruders that may enter their domain.

There are only five Gourd Cities known to the outside world but others surely exist in the depths of the jungle. The name 'Gourd City' is derived from the fruiting bodies that are produced by the huge trees. These take the form of enormous pods, hanging from the branches of the tree like great lanterns, their latter maturation causing them to emit a steady luminescence. They are known as gourds and are hollowed out by the Swamp Goblins and used as dwellings, barracks and other types of buildings. As gourd husks are incredibly resistant to weathering and fire, they make for perfect homes and armaments, the latter being a task the Swamp Goblins are only just learning to exploit.

There are hundreds of Swamp Goblin tribes in the Fallen Land and they live in a constant flux of sporadic wars and shifting territory. The strongest tribes fight for control of the Gourd Cities. The battles for the Gourd Cities are swift and savage and rarely last longer than a day or two. In all the fighting that occurs between tribes, the gourd tree is never harmed. The warring tribes fight around the tree until one emerges victorious and then the fighting stops. The defeated tribe immediately departs the Gourd City leaving it in the hands of the victors. Despite its savagery, the Swamp Goblins have perhaps the most civilized method of warfare of all the other races; the important point being remembered is that the tending of the tree is not to be interrupted.

Highly territorial, any intruder into this deadly swamp will either meet his death at the hands of the swamp or at the poisoned stings of the Children of the Gourd.

The pyramids of Giza, the Sphinx, the Mona Lisa...

Quality simply won't be rushed.

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