

2017



THE RACES OF VARA

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IMPORTANT!

The information in this document should NOT be considered known in full by all characters. Details of specific guilds and groups should be limited in the most part to Characters who are members or those with a high 'Lore' skill. When in doubt always check with a Ref.

Good examples include the existence of the Incanters Guild or the history and weapons of the Bounty Dogs.

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Now bugger off and have fun, that's what it's about after all!

The Races of Vara

Dwarves

Dwarves live in underground complexes known as Holds, each hold houses both the living and crafting quarters. While they do grow some crops above ground dwarves tend to trade heavily for the things they need that they cannot produce easily underground.

Holds are lit by many means, Oil lanterns, pitch torches, candles, mirrors reflecting sunlight down shafts and wondrous items crafted in rituals all help. They also make use of mosses and metals that give off light in the darkness and with the aid of glass and mirrors they focus this light. Some of the gander holds have vast galleries filled with wondrous networks of light-shafts that are breathtaking in their beauty.

Many of the larger holds are also hubs or stop-offs on the trade canal network the Dwarves have constructed. The entrance locks are both decorative and also highly defensible and lead to large docks with cranes and repair areas.

Holds tend to have large halls for meetings and trade work, the forges tend to be buried deep in the hold where they can access natural heat and sometimes even the raw liquid fire of the land it's self. Every forge hall will have side chambers for master smiths and a prominent 'Master Forge' resides in the main hold where items of magical power are forged through arcane arts known to the master smiths.

There will also be eating halls, with entrance ways that allow the dwarves to clean off the grime of their labours for these are a fastidious people when it comes to presenting themselves well for meals. The living quarters are private and while their architecture tends towards the angular they are furnished comfortably and where possible richly.

The living quarters of the leader of the hold are normally the most defensible part of the hold, and can be used if needs be as a refuge for the young and infirm during an attack, the last chamber before these living quarters are reached will hold the Sacred 'Hold Flame' an ever burning flame that is dedicate to Osroes as the creator of the Dwarves.

Every hold will have a specially crafted item that the ruler of the hold bears; it will contain elements that represent five of the six elements, light being represented by the flame outside the leader's quarters. Gemstones and coloured metals are the main things used, though other materials are known. Usually the item is either a circlet or a helm, though again collars or belts have been used.

A Hold leader will normally have to go on some kind of quest or trial, encountering elementals and gaining their approval to be given the materials needed to forge the hold item. Many such trials take place in the hold it's self in larger settlements, or in the area round it. Dwarves and elementals tend to have cordial relations and elementals assist in the empowering of items forged through arcane means in the master forge.

The Clans:

There are three major clans of dwarves upon Vara. These are the following:

***Clan Yannash** resides within the western mountains of Erinan and on the canal ways of the country. Their major home is known as Ganra-Hate; loosely translated this means 'Traders Meet'.*

***Clan Kazzalin** resides within the northern hills of Calsmeer along with the highland humans. Their major home is the hill bastion known as Drie'e'kazaak. Loosely translated this means 'Day to Die'.*

***Clan Daemar** resides within the northern mountains of Gralamire. Their major home is the grand mountain citadel Karak Hiela. Loosely translated this means 'Dragon Home'.*

Each clan has three major noble houses which are made up of the social elite and those who have worked their way into power.

There are of course more houses than this however these are the most widely known.

CLAN YANNASH:

Clan Yannash has a long line of traders and craftsmen; they are mainly river tradesmen and are famed for their canal ways. They are the clan most likely to have surface dwellings; this mainly being due to the need for waterway villages and it is not smart to dig near a waterway.

Their political view as a clan is that good trade and good contracts with the humans wouldn't be a bad thing and it would bring new opportunities etc. They are the most open of the clans.

The major houses of this clan are as follows:

House Uberwalen.

House Haustus.

House Archide.

CLAN KAZZALIN:

Clan Kazzalin is quiet in its comings and goings. Its folk have a broad Scottish accent.

It feels it has little to no need to have anything to do with humanity as it is rather self-sufficient, but beneath this proud veneer cracks are appearing and people are starting to notice.

This clan has a long history of storytellers and sages, dwarfs of learning.

The major houses of this clan are as follows:

House Dranir.

House Firebeard.

House Gruni.

CLAN DAEMAR:

This clan is the most secretive of them all.

It wants absolutely nothing to do with the humans or other races; it is very proud and holds its head above the others for its so-called 'purer' bloodlines.

The major noble houses are as follows:

House Brackzer.

House Fengal.

House Lanius.

The Houses:

House Uberwalen: The originator of this house was Uberwalen, a very good haggler and tradesman; this house's blood has guilder in its depths.

House Haestus: Haestus was the first Dwarven smith to create items for outside races albeit at great prices. It is for this reason that some view this bloodline with disdain.

House Archide: Archide was an alchemist, a rather good one too. This bloodline is respected for their elder's abilities with alchemy.

House Dranir: Dranir was a politician, a man of the people and a wise councillor in his days. His bloodline has distinct white hair that marks them out.

House Firebeard: Firebeard was a storyteller and a bard of great ability within the Dwarven realms. His bloodline carries this legacy forward today.

House Gruni: Gruni was originally a paladin of Osrose; this house takes its priestly past seriously.

House Brackzer: Brackzer was a berserker, a fierce warrior of much skill and insanity. The house hasn't moved on much.

House Fengal: Fengal was the master smith who studied under Daemar, who studied under Morri, who studied under Osrose himself. While Haestus might make good wares, Fengal produces only the very best and only for dwarves. It combines the best secrets of Dwarven magic with the best secrets of Dwarven metal work.

House Lanius: This house makes itself responsible for protecting caravans of dwarves. It also attempts to keep the tunnels clear of nightshades and other creatures that attempt to nest there.

The history behind the system:

Morri Hammerthief was the first Dwarven ruler and had three sons: Yannash, Kazzalin, and Daemar. Upon coming of age Yannash and Kazzalin left their father's hold to make ones of their own. Thus the three clans were created. Each brother had three wise councillors or tradesmen to which they gave the noble title of Lord. These Lords gave their sons titles and so forth and so forth, creating bloodline and lineage. There are of course more houses than these, but these are the predominant ones. You are able to tell what clan a dwarf belongs to by finding out which mountain's 'shadow' you were born under.

The current head is a "High Lord" while one who has held the position before retains the title of "Lord"

The current power bases in the houses are:

CLAN YANNASH

UBERWALEN: High Lord Rathman controls this house currently. He is its overseer and its public spokesperson. He also happens to be the current lord of clan Yannash.

Baron Jerrin and baron in waiting Kernis are second in power.

Baron Dranil and Baron in waiting Elgin are third in power.

Lord Gerrick is fourth in power.

There are approximately eight major landowners after this point.

Then at the bottom are the merchants and commoners.

HAESTUS: the current High Lord of this house is Fiandar who still remains without children.

Baron Unter and baron in waiting Yanar are second in power.

Lord Branion is third in power.

Then eight major landowners.

Then all the craftsmen and commoners.

ARCHIDE: The current High Lord of this house is Daxilion.

Baron Phion and baron in waiting

Phion the Younger are second in power.

Baron Jasnar and baron in waiting

Fedan are third in power.

Eccentric Lord Linial is fourth in power.

Then eight major landowners.

Then the commoners and craftsmen.

The current political situation of Kazzalin is unknown other than the following.

CLAN KAZZALIN

DRANIR: The High Lady of Dranir is Hildae.

Baron Derin and baron in waiting Cuno are second in power.

Baron Kernis and baroness in waiting Hildana are third in power.

Lord Iniol III and baron in waiting Iniol IV are fourth in power.

Followed by the eight landowners and the commoners etc.

HOUSE FIREBEARD: The current High Lady of house Firebeard is Jillian. Baroness Jenna and Baroness in waiting Jessin are second in power. Baron Rufus is third in power: he has no offspring. Lord Janil Firebeard XXIII is fourth in power.

HOUSE GRUNI: The current High Lord of house Gruni and Clan Kazzalin is High Lady Charon.

Second in power are Baron Duncan III and baron in waiting Duncan IV.

Third in power is Baron Joss and Baron in waiting Duin.

CLAN DAEMAR

HOUSE BRACKZER: The current High Lord of this house is Lord Aarkov. Second in power are Baron Od (pronounced odd) and Baroness in waiting Helena. Third in power is Lord Fenra.

HOUSE FENGAL: The High lord of this house and of clan Daemar is High Lord Feomri. Second in power is Baroness Charlene: she has no offspring.

Third in power is Baron Urstus. Lord Morri is fourth in power.

HOUSE LANIUS:

The High lord of this house is High Lady Julien. Second in power is Baron Grisamar with baroness in waiting Gena.

Third in power is Baroness Katherine: she has no offspring.

Lady Rea is fourth in power.

The number of dwarfs is falling rapidly. Holds are being lost constantly due to infestation and Nightshade incursion. Hildae Dranir is pushing within her house for her clan to make a pact with humans to further their economic advancement, as is her husband Jerrin Uberwalen. Jerrin, it appears, is having more success. Things are bleak on the out look for the dwarfs.

At the end of every four years the landowners choose a new lord for each house from the two current barons and upon the baron's ascendancy or death the baron in waiting steps in. If there is no baron in waiting a landowner is elected to take his place. The populace then votes upon the three lords. He who wins is basically the chief of the clan for four years. The three chiefs are then voted upon by the entire Dwarven nation to see who is the king of the dwarves for the next four years.

The king is to be crowned upon the 'stone of rulership' that was crafted by Morri Hammerthief himself and the king takes his seat on the throne in Karak Hiela. A king is voted for every four years however it is usually very unlikely that it will be changed each time unless the current king is doing an excessively bad job.

There are two problems currently with the Dwarven king though. Firstly the Daemar fiefs have been closed to all including other dwarfs and secondly the last king elected was twenty eight years ago and no one is sure if there is actually a king on the throne.

The method of succession within the Dwarven Houses

The leadership of a house is accomplished in five stages.

Firstly they are presented at court to the current leaders as possible successors and explain why they wish to rule.

Then comes Trial by Peers - a question and answer session where both friend and enemy alike who know the hopeful discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the candidate in front of a public gallery so as to give the people a chance to get to know their new leader. The hopeful is then put under the reveal truth spell, questioned and given an opportunity to defend themselves from their critics, though any question the hopeful refuses to answer will immediately drop them out of the challenge as they are deemed to have something to hide. This can be a humiliating process as any question can be asked.

Then there is the Trial of Humility, which happens one week after trial by peers. The hopeful is cast out, all rank, money and privileges are removed and they are forced to endure insult and poverty working in the mine with no pay and very little food. They are then brought in front of the rulers of the house and once again the candidate is put under a reveal truth spell and asked about his experiences and to discover if he has learned anything from his experience and if so, what. The foreman of the mine is then requested to come forward and asked under a reveal truth spell how the candidate behaved and how hard he worked. If all are satisfied that he behaved appropriately he can then proceed to the next stage.

The Trial by Combat - this occurs the day after the last trial so many of the combatants are suffering from malnutrition as well as many other aches and pains from the mines. This is a series of competitions whereby the contenders for the leadership fight each other to prove their strength and skill. At the end of this contest the only remaining candidate will move on to the final test.

The Trial of Leadership - the last remaining hopeful is put on work experience. For a week the candidate must rule the house, demonstrating the characteristics of the previous trials; strength, humility, wisdom and honesty. He is expected to council lower house members, demonstrate knowledge of the laws and must carry out one diplomatic effort. For this period authority remains with the former ruler so as to stop a bad candidate from going mad with power. If the candidate proves himself during this week he will then be crowned Lord of the house. However if he cannot prove himself during this time the process must begin again.

The Dwarven rites of adulthood:

A dwarf at the age of 20 is usually made to work to accrue 3000 guilder. This amount may be spent but each coin must be carefully noted and there must be something to show from the spending. The dwarf must also gain a set of skills while doing this so that they may have a trade to practice. Once this has been achieved the dwarf may return to his home and undergo the rites of adulthood.

The rites are performed in a temple of Osrose which is labyrinthine in style; the candidate must survive and exit to become a full adult. It is very common for a successful dwarf to be given gifts upon reaching adulthood.

Religion: *Osrose is the god of many of the dwarves. He is the god of life; his symbol is the flame. Flame for the hearths, of the forges and the fires of the earth. What is life to a dwarf but his craft? The ties of blood to his ancestors embody a continuation of life and a responsibility to those that have gone before and those that come after. To a Dwarf nothing could be more terrifying and abhorrent than the undead body of an ancestor: what a defilement of such a sacred thing as the physical remains of their forefathers.*

Flames make light which when seen through a gemstone make it dance and come alive with its inner reflections. Flame keeps back the dark of the tunnels and drives off creatures of the night. Even those oath-bound to seek their death in battle fight with all they have to stay alive until they die in combat.

Dwarven heraldry

*Clan Yannash: is denoted by a red field.
House Uberwalen: the mark of this house is three yellow cart wheels in an upward pointing triangle.*

House Haestus: the mark of this house is three flames in an upward pointing triangle.

House Archide: the mark of this house is three green conical potion bottles in an upward pointing triangle.

Clan Kazzlin: is denoted by a green field.

House Dranir: the mark of this house is two heads joined at the neck, one white on the left, one black on the right. There are usually two of these marks on a heraldry piece, one on the left and one on the right.

House Firebeard: the mark for this house is a flute on the left and a book on the right of the piece.

House Gruni: the mark for this house is two flames of orange in circles of yellow, one on each side of the piece, left and right.

Clan Daemar: is denoted by an orange field.

House Brackzer: the mark for this house is a lightning bolt of yellow at the top centre of the piece.

House Fengal: the mark for this house is a bronze humanoid figure at the top centre of the piece.

House Lanius: the mark for this house is a lantern at the top centre of the piece.

Status marks:

Commoner - quarterstaff

Squire/craftsman - dagger

Landowner/knight - spear

Baron in waiting - hammer

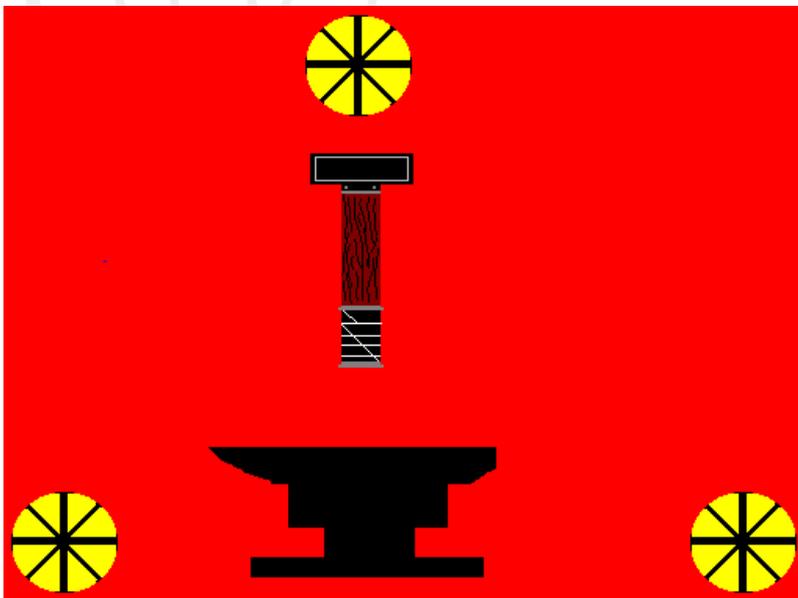
Baron - axe

Lord - two-handed sword

High Lord of a House – flame Icon over the rank image

High Lord of a clan - white flame wreathing around the outside of the clan field

The king requires no heraldry as he is chosen from a clan by the lords of the clans; his symbol is the belt of kingship, which is his sign of power and authority. The war banner of the King is a pair of crossed axes on a white field surrounded by orange flame. Brothers of the clan or bastard / illegitimate children's status are shown as befits their parent s or adopted parent but is shown with a line through it from the diagonal upper left to bottom right to show they should be accorded respect but have no legitimate stake or claim to power or inheritance in regard to the main family line.



Here we see the heraldry for Kernis Uberwalen. The red field denotes he is of clan Yannash whilst the three yellow wheels denote a member of House Uberwalen. The hammer in the centre denotes the status of baron in waiting whilst the anvil below is the person's own mark, usually used to define specific nobles and landowners regiments on a battlefield or to show differing barons in waiting.

Dwarves have several warrior societies and groups of note, please see the document "The Guilds of Vara" for more information on these.

The creation of life upon Vara according to the Dwarves.

Millennia ago, when there was nought but the gods, and the land that was then Vara was empty of animals and rich in minerals. Osrose thought unto himself that day:

“This realm, this universe, it is...lifeless.”

Now Osrose had been thinking about this for some time as he was wont to do, and then one day he decided to act upon his thoughts and create life, the power that was his true domain.

So he went unto his forge and there he bashed and hammered at steel and at bronze for many a day and many, many a night until he had there, cooling in the palm of his hand, a creature not unlike himself but smaller. For you see Osrose really had put a lot of thought into this and he reasoned that if a creature were this size you'd be able to fit twice as many of them into a forge, and thus you'd be able to work twice as fast. So he placed this creature down upon the ground and breathed into it and gave it life.

The creature stirred, and grew and grew until it was half the size of Osrose, going through adolescence right there in front of him all the way until Osrose had felt a good age for the creature to be an adult.

The creature looked up right into Osrose's eyes.

“Who are you?”

“I am Osrose, god of life, creator of you young one.”

And the creature looked at himself and said unto himself.

“Bloody hell, neat trick.”

Osrose laughed aloud and explained to the creature, that he had decided to call a dwarf due to its size, the ways of the forge and the ways of getting the best minerals out of the land below.

One day in the workshop that the dwarf now also worked in, the dwarf pointed to a large two-handed hammer that hung upon the wall by two great brass hooks.

"Father" as he now called Osrose. "What is that hammer for? I have seen hammers for beating, hammers for use with a chisel but never have I seen that hammer being used."

Osrose was very concerned about the dwarf's questioning, for if he told him the truth, the dwarf would have knowledge that none other should have. He would have the knowledge of how Osrose would bring life to Vara below, if he so ever wished.

Now to understand all of this you must also understand that Vara at that time was in effect the play ground of the gods. They used and took what they wanted from its rich ground. Each god had their own 'playthings' as such. The Crone had her 'goblins'. Shashay had her Nightshades Elves. Starsha had the Clearwater Elves. Ash'i'el had the Treewalker Elves. Lanokash the Suntop Elves. Bronwen, her humans and trolls. Neroz had the failings of Bronwen, and up to that point Osrose had been without his own personal creation; of course he had helped when the others asked, but it wasn't quite the same. Any way I am digressing. The point being is that it was the creation's place to follow and serve. If he gave the dwarf this knowledge it too might become a creator.

For you see that hammer held the knowledge of all of Osrose's creations: all of the trolls, humans and elves he had helped make, the final blow had been made by that hammer. And thus that hammer knew the secrets of making those races.

And a plan came to Osrose's mind.

He had helped create the land below and the races above, and he remembered how he had felt all alone as those creatures above might also feel.

He smiled. "Dwarf of mine that hammer is the hammer of life which I have used at my forge every time I created something, that hammer always delivered the last blow giving the creature shape. Why if that hammer were to be used upon the land below, life would be everywhere and uncontrolled and I'd be in much trouble. So I ask you not to use it ever."

Now the dwarf was very mischievous but at the same time aware of his father's wishes.

“Very well Father, as you wish.”

But every day in that workshop that hammer called unto him like a gong for dinner. And finally one eve when his father had gone to rest the dwarf walked across and picked up the hammer, feeling its weight. It was as if designed for his hands.

So quietly he sneaked out of the house and down to the land below.

Meanwhile Osrose smiled as he sat upon his seat.

"That is it my son, go make life everywhere, and place my power upon the world for all to see."

So the dwarf walked down from the home and entered the world that is now Vara.

He saw the land flat and calm all around him.

A great compulsion overtook him suddenly and he wanted to change it all, to craft something for himself.

And without him realising it the hammer swung down and connected with the earth.....

The hammer sung out as though it were a hundred choirs.

Again and again the hammer came down upon the world. Each reverberating crash brought the land splitting and rising, rivers turning to seas and mountain peaks in the distance and with the last and final reverberating hit upon the ground, Vara was shaped.

Life appeared; humans walked staring up at the sky. The trolls, elves and dwarfs were there also. However something strange had happened upon the beating of the earth: the hammer had churned out many new forms of Elf, Halflings, beasts and many, many other creatures.

The dwarf looked around himself amazed.

Osrose appeared behind the dwarf.

"My son, you have put into action the plan I have been waiting millennia to do, to change that once flat void landscape into a place of *life*."

And the other gods came down from their astral homes and shouted and raged at Osrose telling him he had gone too far, but while they were doing this their followers started moving away and conversing with other creatures of their kind. Slowly it occurred to the gods that this might well be a better thing, to be able to govern over many with their power than over few.

And Osrose spoke once more unto the dwarf.

"Dwarf you have put my plan into action and for this I thank you and I give you your name, I name you Morri Hammerthief."

And Morri over time became the king of the nation of the dwarves. He taught his people the secrets of mining and metallurgy and smithing.

And thus that is the story of creation according to the dwarves, in short that the world was forged by the first of them known in common as 'MasterSmith Hammerthief', or simply 'he who forged the world'.

Halflings

The small people known as Halflings are spread out all across Vara. They are well known as lovers of good food and a quiet life.

They are friendly people that tend to live in large families in their own communities and appoint sheriffs to make sure all is well within those communities. They usually concern themselves mostly with farming, gardening, brewing, baking and a range of other trades. Halfling lands are often some of the most fertile in Vara and they happily trade all their extra produce to other races.

Although Halflings are only small they are very brave and when the need comes to defend their homes prove surprisingly tough foes. Halflings are especially accurate with slings and other ranged weapons and are noted for being able to find a chink in their opponent's armour, though not that many Halflings take up fighting anyway.

The only thing rarer than a dedicated Halfling warrior is a Halfling mage. They are just too laid back to have the desire to control that much power. Halfling Druids and Priests are more common but they rarely become very powerful: druids tend to use a few spells to help the weather and priests just tend to their Halfling communities.

That's not to say you don't get adventurous Halflings, just that their spirit of community is very strong. This does mean though that any Halfling will always be welcome amongst them, unlike how some other races may react to adventurers.

One very notable legend among Halflings is that of Finnmere, a Halfling settlement in Gralamire where it is believed that the dreaded (by those they have met them and lived) Halfling berserkers originate. These fearsome individuals are not to be taken lightly.

Other tales about small Halfling tribes in Amatukiland state that dangers lurk in every tree and bush and that you never know where the poison dart could come from next.

Halflings in Dralazar tend to own large caravan trains bedecked in bright colours and bring their trade in exotic items to anywhere there is money to be made.

Elves

Suntop

If you go to the kingdom of Dralazar you will, without a doubt, encounter Suntop elves. While they are common in other places they are at their best in the home of their desert kingdom where the sun beats down on white sands and dates and palms grow at oases. The cities are grand with golden minarets and marbled walls. Clad in flowing silks these elves seem to have both the harshest and most idyllic lives. In other lands they tend to integrate themselves more into the local culture and way of life.

Numbers

There are ten clans of Suntop Elves with numbers remaining stable for roughly eight centuries.

Reproduction

A female Suntop is capable of giving birth to children once every ten to fifteen years. In extremely rare cases twins are born, roughly every ten thousand or so births. These are automatically given special treatment as they are always special individuals.

Locations

The exact locations of all the settlements of the individual clans are known to no one outside of each clan and even those who have been away from their clan for more than a year may have problems finding the clan without help. Some of the clans are nomadic, and will rarely stay in one place for more than a few months at a time.

Enemies

Suntops find themselves at odds with the predominance of the Nightshade race and any other creature of a shadowy nature. Chaos is something that they detest.

Allies

Suntops have allies in any Priest of Starsha, as well as races with predominantly good or lawful tendencies.

Neutrals

Suntops have had neutral relations with Treewalker, Clearwater and Ember-eye Elves, never quite evolving into alliances because of the less lawful and more arrogant nature that many of these Elves show. The same goes for the Church of Ash'i'el.

Ethos

The Suntops stand for the advancement of light and truth in its many forms, and the protection of the ten clans and their traditions.

Leadership

All of the ten clans are united under the leadership of the monarch of Dralazar. He is the ruler of Dralazar and attends to matters regarding the whole nation while his Queen (or an appointed member of the council of elders) governs all Suntop clan matters. The 'Kings' and 'Queens' of the Suntops all come from the Mordici clan. These noble people rule the Clans in a democratic manner via a council of elders. Only in times of war will this approach be set aside for direct rule. The clans have no time for the formal human system of Lords and Barons, believing that true strength comes from unity and trust, they use the title of Lord or Lady only to denote those of high rank, and since these positions are hereditary, they are accorded the same respect and rights under High King's Law, however the ranks of 'King' and 'Queen' are not accorded the same rights under High Kings law, and they are taken as that of 'Lord' or 'Lady', however protocol dictates they are shown some deference over those of a lower rank in their own culture.

Dragon Riders

From the Clan of Mordici, every hundred years, ten children are born who are destined to join the ranks of the Dragon Riders at Mount Amistad. Once every two hundred years a clutch of ten eggs is laid in the red-hot hatching grounds of Amistad. These eggs give rise to ten very special Dragons of varying colours and temperaments. A flight of the Dragon-riders then travels to the Mordici clan and bring any expectant mothers to the Weyr. These children are born alongside the hatching of the eggs, and because of the 'impressioning' that the young dragons go through; dragon and child are impressed upon each other straight from birth. These children rarely live their full life spans, as their dedication to fighting evil will ensure that almost all are long dead by the time the next ten are born.

Cloud Riders

The most powerful Wizards of the Suntop Elves tend to join this clan rather than be born into it. The Cloud Riders have been known to sacrifice all of their power, and in some cases their lives, in defence of the realm and are revered amongst the rest of the Clans.

History

A lot of the most ancient history of the Elves has been lost to the passage of time and the murky depths of the mystic age. Their recent history mostly concerns their incessant battles with the Nightshades and their kin. The most prevalent of their surviving legends are those of the Cloud Riders and Dragon Riders.

Naming Traditions

The First Name

Is chosen by the clan elders: each name represents the spirit of the child. Elves will only use first names on an intra-family basis; it is expected that all others use the last name in greeting. Only for the purpose of courtship will the first name be used, and it is considered an act of proposal.

The Second Name

The second name is even more complicated: the first part is taken from the father's name, and the second from the mother's, and then put together to form a new branch of the clan, so the branch only grows if the same two branches keep forming couples. The name is given to the children of the couple, who keep it until they marry.

Example. Lord Thallanun Pol-Hamver, weds Lady Kathrine Cas-Dever. They become Lord and Lady Pol-Dever, and all their children will hold this name as well. The branches may not marry to a namesake branch ever, so a Pol-Dever can't marry into a branch with Pol, Cas, Dever or Hamver in the name.

Titles

The First couple to hold a branch name automatically become Lord and Lady. Their children inherit the title to the name until marriage, when they either pass it on to the eldest remaining couple or return the title to the clan elders. The clan elders then hold on to the title for the next branch of the same name. Other titles are given out as non-inheritable ranks of office, again decided by the clan elders in general session.

Clans

The Ten Clans are named as follows.

Mordici: Lord rulers of the Suntop Elves. The clan to which the Dragon Riders are born, mainly also comprising of mages and warriors.

Edarki: Priesthood of the Church of Lanokash, being mainly Priests and Warriors.

Farrowki: Priesthood of the Church of Ash'i'el, being only Priests.

Pas-atas-ki: Mountain dwellers that refuse to venture down to the forests below.

Ravenkal: Plains dwellers and nomads who range all over the lands of Vara.

Aroveli: Being the closest related to the Sky-wise their clan bears children with wings, choosing to be warriors and scouts in profession.

Zi-halen: Those who are most learned of the clans. They have devoted themselves to providing information to all.

Galen: The Cloud Riders, the most powerful of the Suntop mages.

K'pelen: The betrayers who sold the Suntops to a Nightshade many years ago, earning the enmity of the other clans.

Droeki: The oldest and most skilled of the Suntops, who are declining in numbers.

Intermarriage

Clan intermarriage is neither discouraged nor encouraged, nor does the marriage offer any alliance to each clan; the couple join whichever clan they wish to. When they decide to marry, it is a lifelong commitment to the clan.

Intermarriage between races is different. For an Elf to marry a human is unusual among the clans, although not unheard of. This is not out of racism, but for the simple fact that any child born from such a union will likely die long before the Elven parent.

However, if a member of the Clan does choose to do so, then they are aided in everyway so that they may spend more time with their children. The Clan Droeki will very rarely intermarry with other races, in an attempt to maintain their dwindling numbers.

Inheritance

Property descends via the rule of 'Gender Rightfulness'. The eldest son will receive the father's sword, while the eldest daughter will receive the mother's cloak, and so on down the family tree.

In the case of property that cannot be divided in such a way it is given to the highest-ranking child, not always the eldest. All disputes are put to the vote of the clan.

Traditions

Those that exist are well guarded, and most are family ideals rather than deep-rooted racial traditions.

Titles

As has been discussed before, these are handed out by the Council of Elders.

Marriage

Suntop marriages are always for life, whether between two Suntops or a Suntop and a member of another race. In a few rare occasions when the partner has been killed, the survivor may remarry, but as the bond formed in marriage is so strong, a new bond is almost impossible to form.

The bond formed from marriage is sacrosanct. It forms one of the strongest tenets of Suntop culture, mainly because of the importance they hold in the concept of unity. The small population also has a contribution to the strength of these marriages.

Children

Orphans are adopted by the closest branch of the family, and are treated as the last of their line. This allows them to keep their surname to carry on at least part of their family name.

Age Groups

0 - 14 is the same as humans. After this point children slow to Elven growth rate.

15 - 22 is considered adolescence and the training period of an Elf's life. They tend to spend this time travelling and refining any crafts they have been taught.

23 - death is spent pursuing their goals.

Education

This is dependant on which clan they are born into and what trade, if any, they are expected to learn.



Clearwater

There are two distinct types of Clearwater: those that live in fresh water and those that live in salt water.

Freshwater

Housing

These Elves, though capable of living above water, spend much of their time under it. Where space permits, they live in large mushroom shaped constructs which are formed from the dead 'shells' of freshwater coral. Holes are made near the base for an entranceway and the stalk fills with water. Due to pressure and the shape of the shells, an air bubble is formed at the top of the construct in the dome and this is where the Elves live. A platform round the inner edge of the stalk provides a living platform and a sealable entrance/exit.

Normally found on the platform is a small 'hearth' made from heated rocks. If the settlement is near a geothermal spring or outlet, then rocks will be gathered from there and used. Otherwise lumps of granite will be heated and enchanted to hold the heat. These are only used for heating the building, as what little cooking that is to be done will be done on the surface using flame. Lighting is provided by a series of lumps of luminescent moss that are gathered from deep lakes. In areas where they are grown this is a major source of trade, not only to other Clearwater colonies but also to other groups.

If there is room, a second platform may be built above the first, and connected to the lower using rope ladders. This is rare, as to be able to support this kind of building work the original shell has to be strong, and the building must be constructed properly, which costs a lot of money. For this reason only wealthy households and public buildings have this done as a sign of wealth and to allow for large groups of people to gather.

These shells normally house one extended family, consisting of grandparents, their children and spouses, the grandchildren, and, depending on the availability of housing and the size of that home, great grandchildren. These shells normally remain useable for up to 150 years, though this time frame can be extended or shortened depending on the flow of the water where the shells have grown. Those found in lakes can last for far longer than those growing in fast flowing rivers. The availability of constructs limits where colonies can grow, and as wear and tear decreases their numbers colonies are forced to continually move. This can cause territory disputes, or force colonies to live permanently on the surface, which leads to the loss of tradition and culture.

Some groups are beginning to experiment using magic to prolong the lives of these constructs, while other Druidic groups are testing out ways of speeding and enhancing the growth of the coral, with varying degrees of success.

Storage

Storage is a major concern in Clearwater homes. Clothing tends to be stored in nets hanging from the ceiling of the shells, with shelving and small boxes also being hung in this way. Weapons tend to be stored on mounted brackets on the walls for ease of use and access. Food that can be kept cold is stored in boxes under the floor of the overhangs, which can be then accessed through lids built into the floor.

Food

Because building a fire underwater is problematic, the constructs are flammable and the heating stones do not give out enough heat to cook by, any cooking that is done has to be done on the surface.

Very little meat finds its way into Clearwater diet. Fish, while common, is somewhat dependant on the location and, in some cases, the time of year, meaning that vegetarianism is common in Clearwater culture. When fish is incorporated into their diet it is generally smoked above ground and eaten cold as this makes it more practical to store and lets one catch last far longer than it would were it cooked and eaten that day.

Paper

Paper, being made the way it is, does not last long in a Clearwater home unless the container is completely watertight and even then it cannot be used when underwater as the ink will run and the paper itself will disintegrate. Fairly early on in the development of their underwater culture Clearwater scribes realised that another surface would be needed to document their history and make day to day records. Many materials were tried until they found that the sap of some riverside trees could be pressed into thin flexible sheets that would hold ink and not fall apart on contact with water. They also found that the ink produced by some kinds of squid was less likely to run in water than normal ink. The sap first has to be collected and kept warm to keep it runny. It is then placed on a flat surface and spread into a sheet and allowed to dry. Once it is only slightly tacky a weight is placed on top of it to make sure that it dries completely flat and it is left to dry out fully. Once it is dry it is cut into strips to be used. Its colour varies from virtually see through to a dark orange depending on the thickness of the sheet and the type of sap used. Sometimes dyes are added for ceremonial documents.

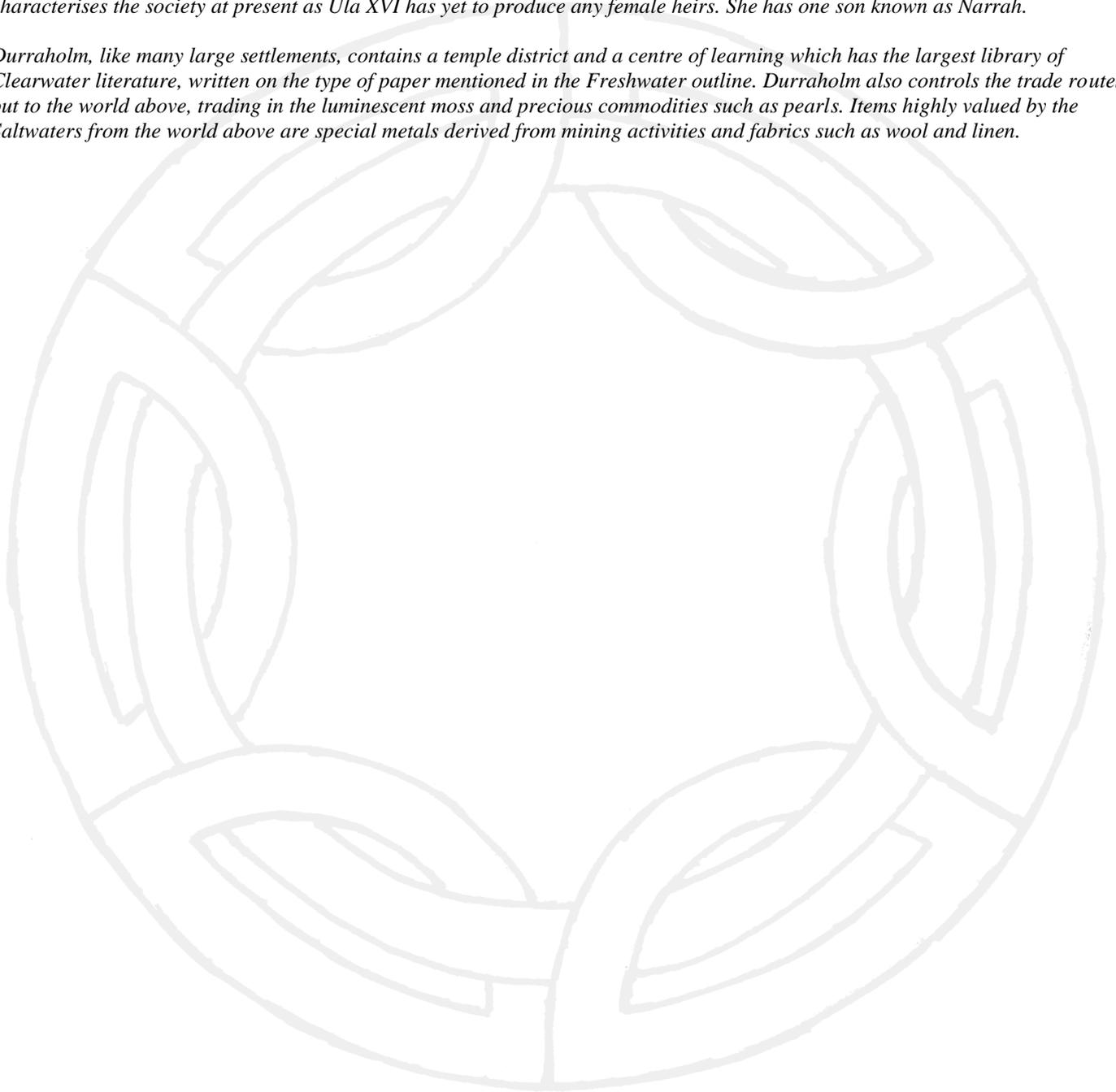
Clearwaters tend to carry any documents in sealed tubes, which are easy to carry round and take up very little room. Books are also stored this way: the pages bound together in a corner and kept in tubes. This means that libraries are easier to relocate when a settlement is forced to move.

Saltwater

The Saltwater elves are found in the Inland Sea, in either the main settlement of Durraholm, situated in the centre of the sea or in the towns and villages surrounding the city. There are not many differences between the Freshwater and the Saltwater. The housing is very much like the Freshwater, yet in the city the people are a lot wealthier. Houses are much larger in size with many more floors, which are either connected by the traditional rope ladders or if owned by wealthier families have staircases hollowed out of the sides of the shell like houses.

The Saltwater elves are a matriarchal-based society. The mother is the most important person in the family with rule passing down the female line. Most males are collectively known as brother or as father and females are known to have taken more than one husband. Due to this there has always been a female ruler who maintains the Saltwater society. The present leader is known as Ula XVI. Since the reign of Ula I (which was a prosperous age) all leaders have been called as such. However unrest characterises the society at present as Ula XVI has yet to produce any female heirs. She has one son known as Narrah.

Durraholm, like many large settlements, contains a temple district and a centre of learning which has the largest library of Clearwater literature, written on the type of paper mentioned in the Freshwater outline. Durraholm also controls the trade routes out to the world above, trading in the luminescent moss and precious commodities such as pearls. Items highly valued by the Saltwaters from the world above are special metals derived from mining activities and fabrics such as wool and linen.



Nightshade

The major centre of Nightshade Elves in Vara is the underground city of Ahn-Feshang. This city is near the Stone-fist City of Kellambek, which the Nightshades have been at war with for many centuries. No one knows the way to Ahn-Feshang or even which Varan kingdom it is under as it is only reachable by a route twisting through many caverns and tunnels.

Nightshades are very much the product of their environment. Their society coalesced around two things: survival underground and a general vicious and irritable attitude as when the culture went underground, the strongest or nastiest were able to get more resources: only by being nasty could you rise in power. Since the women were more valuable for continuing the society men were sent into the dangerous areas to explore. If they died it was not as bad as losing childbearing women, which meant women came to be viewed as more valued than men. While most law comes down to "if you can enforce it, its right", certain crimes were taken to threaten the community as a whole and were dealt with harshly and normally fatally.

Do not weaken the structure of the caves.

Do not foul the water supply.

Do not endanger the food supply.

No male may cause or allow any Nightshade female of childbearing age to die.

While you may kill to enforce your own will, any act that risks the safety of a settlement as a whole will result in the forfeiture of your life.

It should be noted that while these laws are broken at times, should the culprit be found out there is little room for appeal. It should also be apparent how women were able to become the heads of the power structure.

Nightshades are all about acquiring power: anything that puts them ahead in the game and does not violate their law is acceptable. They are not so much deliberately evil as they are amoral.

Nightshades tend to follow Shashay as a goddess, since her indulgent and sensual tenets mesh well with their approach to life.

Nightshades have a deep-seated loathing of spiders, as many settlements were overrun by giant spiders early on in their history. Couple this with the way Suntop raids into the caves were accompanied by Sun-Spiders to render the natural defence of darkness powerless, the Nightshades consider the spider to be an unlucky symbol and relate it to death and the loss of the safety of settlements. They use Lizards as riding beasts, but it is considered weird (and generally disgusting) to have a "Spider Fetish". The Nightshades do use spiders in a form of agriculture - literally milking them for the silk, which is highly prized for both clothing and bowstrings. However, keeping one as a pet is regarded as being as strange as a human having a pet sheep in their living room! Only the lowest social class work with spiders, as it is considered an unclean profession.

One thing that should be stressed is that the natural environment for Nightshades is not underground; those who dwell in actual caves are considered rustics (which would include those in remote or new Nightshade settlements). The favoured habitat of the Nightshade race is the city, where their talents for intrigue may be used to their best advantage. Nightshades build cities in massive caverns underground, as opposed to Stone-fists that live harmoniously in natural cave warrens that already exist.

As a side note, the word "Drowe" is a very rude insult in all Elven languages, but especially so in Nightshade; as such calling a Nightshade a "Drowe" will get you attacked on the spot, and saying it in front of them is likely to get a deeply unpleasant reaction.

Loosely it translates as:

"One who eats excrement, fornicates with his immediate kin (both sexes), allows themselves to be mounted by beasts of burden and whose very blood is an affront to all existence."

(As a historical note, Drowe was the name of a powerful Elf who allied with the great evil in the mystic age and was responsible for the deaths of many beloved Elven women of every bloodline of Elf.)

Frost-mane

The main concentration of Frost-mane elves is in their ancestral kingdom of Gralamire, living in their fortress cities.

Ember-eye

There is no real main homeland of the Ember-eye elves, instead they just tend to be found in more mountainous areas, preferably where there is some kind of volcanic activity.

Stone-fist

The largest and most well known about Stone-fist city is that of Kellambek. This city is close to the Nightshade capital of Ahn-Feshang and the two cities have been at war for many centuries. There are some tentative links to the surface but no one knows the way to the city of the Stone-fist elves.

Treewalker

There are two distinct types of Treewalker. Those that live in the rain-forests of Amatukiland, who appear to be very primal and feral, sometimes almost primitive, and the more well known branch of the clan that live in the other kingdoms who tend to live in harmony with the land in more isolated forest communities. They blend their homes into the area and tend towards homes and walkways built on platforms in among the trees themselves. Only certain buildings (forges and the like) which place the trees in danger or need sources of flowing water are constructed on the ground.

The Treewalkers tend to have close links with any Clearwater settlements in the same area; indeed intermarriage is far from unknown and such mixed blood children are known as 'Shorelings'.

The community functions much like an extended family and they seem to suffer from a kind of communal fertility cycle, that is that all the women of the community become fertile at the same time, resulting in a spate of births close together. Thus each group of young elves is taught by their parents until age twelve, then during the month of Mai they undergo a set of trials to determine their strengths. From there they are apprenticed and go to live with their teacher almost as a foster child, calling them "Craft Mother" or "Craft Father". They are then taught until they reach the age of maturity to ensure they both have a craft and a way to contribute to the community, at which point they can chose to continue, or to become their own independent individual.

Traditions:

The Treewalkers value their friends, and are ruthlessly efficient with their enemies. To a friend you can give the "White Arrow", a carved arrow of Ironwood which is a sacred bond to protect the holder it is given to, even unto the giver's death. The reverse of this is the "Black Arrow", a shaft of ember-blackened Ironwood that has been carved with incantations of contempt. This can either be magically enhanced or even capable of slaying the target outright, but only the named target. Rarely are such shafts crafted.

The Treewalkers also have a celebration held on the 16th of July where a grand feast is prepared and a place left empty for each fallen warrior to be remembered. An extra place is also always laid next to the head of the community. This feast is called "The gathering for the departed" and commemorates those lost to the dangers of the world. It dates back to the Mystic age.

Notable Groups:

The Stags of the Wood.

This group of insular Treewalkers hates the intrusion of any other race (and even sometimes other elves) into the forests: they will use terror tactics and raids to try to make such interlopers leave their lands. Luckily they tend to be tied to a specific area, as if they were to range further afield they would be a much more dangerous group. They show a dislike for fire-based spells that do damage as they feel they cause too much wanton destruction.

Sky-wise

The largest settlement of Sky-wise Elves is in Amatukiland. Explorers and travellers have told tales of a massive granite citadel rising out of the steamy rainforests and onwards into the clouds. The Sky-wise Elves have steady if slightly strained relationships with the Treewalker elves. The citadel can only be reached by flight, the sides being too smooth for even the most skilled climber to ascend.

Newfolks of Note

Halthananen

Most of them now reside in Cathedral at Appia, or within the Church of Starsha, and a large number of the younger generation are now Shield Bearers.

Tanatha-uendi

The Green Elves have their roots around the year 520, in which the Treewalker elves in northern Calsmeer found their lands under constant raiding. It was a hard year, and many elves and humans perished fighting Wyldmen, goblins and other less than savoury folk. Winter closed the passes and allowed a brief respite during which the Treewalkers debated ways in which to defend themselves better in the years to come. In the end they opted to send out several small bands scouting major paths and routes to passes in the mountains, which caught the incoming raiders on the hop that spring – being attacked many miles away from the common perimeter of patrols. As the years wore on these patrols began taking many casualties but remained away for more and more of the year, until the survivors of these patrols began to band together under the leadership of their greatest captain - Lenewes. They began to form their own ties, and returned to their settlements less and less, until one year they simply stopped going back. They developed their own nomadic way of life and were very successful in what they did, sometimes journeying all the way into northern Gralamire to interact, trade and so forth with the Ember-Eye and Frost-mane communities there. Through the next few centuries they continued their battles, their numbers remaining just about constant as their young replaced the casualties of the never-ending war. It was a hard life, but a rewarding one – the possibility of death every year made these elves less distant from their world than most of their kind and they took more notice of and appreciated more and more their surroundings. The records of their lore masters record the death of Lenewes in the daring raid of a Wyldmen encampment in year 683: he was succeeded as their leader by his cousin Hërrin, under whose leadership they developed newer tactics and their numbers grew to almost 400 – at which point they once more split up into the original organisation of bands of 50 fighters. This ‘scattering’ as it is known to them happened around 752, fifty years before Hërrin’s tragic death. His young granddaughter Elanor took charge of his band and her line led it conservatively from then until the battle of Mara.

The march of the Darkling Lord’s army was widely known about, and Elanor, a descendant of the first, mustered all of her people to march and help in the defence of Vara, leading about three hundred skirmishers that harassed the vanguard and rearguard of the Darkling Lord’s army for a time with some success until an ambush was laid for her.

Elanor’s troops had mustered into six bands, four of which she led to attack the rearguard again, each group attacking from a different angle with prolonged hit and run tactics, one group hitting causing the guard to muster against them while another hit the guard from the rear as the first retreated. At least, that was the plan. The rearguard had concealed units outside the rearguard of the column itself in a ring. When the four groups rushed in they found themselves quickly surrounded and, though brave, the lightly armour skirmishers died quickly. Elanor herself was the last to fall, holding her banner in her left hand and her mace in her right, a valiant though hopeless fight. A week later, when the Darkling Lord’s army moved onwards, the remainder of her people found her and her forces’ bodies, remaining where they lay. This is the point, a week before the battle of Mara that the Tanatha-uendi withdrew and retreated back to their beloved forests, judging their contribution enough, though few among the forces of the Varan kingdoms even realised they had contributed to the war effort! The one hundred odd elven adults and their children retreated back to their beloved forests, vowing never to meet enemies in the open again – they would never again leave their forests. This vow they have not yet broken in the four hundred years since then.

After Elanor’s death, the Tanatha-uendi’s way of life changed completely – the tribe disbanded into its component families – sometimes two or three banding together, though never more than twelve elves travelling together. They met once every two years back at the place of the last moot of the people before they marched to war – the grove of Elanor glan-Eleneth (so named to commemorate her and honour her memory) to trade, marry, and share their tidings. The moot lasts for a month, before they all move on, roaming where their will takes them and fighting intruders into their forest as they find them. Numbers rose slightly, but due to their second ‘scattering’ after Mara they have fluctuated around the two hundred mark of adults ever since. Their duties changed somewhat after the Second Scattering, as their original mission – to fight raiding bands of Wyldmen, Goblins and various beasts became impossible in such small numbers. Instead, the Green Elves concentrated on smaller things – Wyldmen or goblin scouts, animals gone mad, that sort of thing. Occasionally, a moot may result in a war band being assembled, to fight an encampment, but such events were rare. The very fact that they were willing to attempt this shows that they still acted within the customs and traditions of their ancestors – they did not give up the fight against evil, even though they maintain no ties to the south. They hunt down evil for the sake of protecting others.

Recently, their last moot has not yet broken, due to the increased activity in the forest – raids have picked up of late, Wyldmen, goblins and undead being rife, rumours of a necromancer attacking the lands to the north and the strange dreams giving rise to a fear of things coming from the north. Lenewes’s descendents have once more taken charge of the Tanatha-uendi, lead by Leodric, who is a warrior just leaving his prime. He has two sons, Teyaspa and Keraspa, one of whom he plans to send north in order to examine the lands once more, and maybe to re-establish contact with the Treewalkers from whom the Tanatha-uendi descend – in case a retreat from the ever more dangerous forest is required.

Of course, the most visible sign that all is not well is the fact that the Tanatha-uendi have stayed in one place for a long time. This is their strength – that they cannot be defeated by the destruction of a base camp. Kinthane Leodric realises that soon he will have to move his people, and is debating whether it is safe to dissolve the moot, or whether he should return to the old days where the entire tribe travelled together.

Structure within the Tanatha-uendi

The original structure of the Tanatha-uendi war band was fifty or so soldiers led by a Warleader. Under the Warleader there are four subordinates – the First, Second, Third and Fourth, who issue the Warleader's commands to the nine elves under their command, hence each band consisted of five units of ten elves (the Warleader himself directs nine other elves in battle, making up the fifth unit). There is no fixed number of each type of weapon – some favour darts, some slings, some javelins and some swords though very few have ever tried archery. Staves are common as they are easy to make, and daggers are usually carried due to their utilitarian value.

In Elanor's time with all the bands reunited they gave her a new title, the Kinthane d'anatha (literally, leader of the green kin). The moot has given this title to Leodric. Leodric has organised his forces into four bands once more with the old organisation. He has also resurrected an ancient elven warrior band, named the Wayforgers, who prize the art of attacking, both covert and overt, and are also master scouts. Leodric has set a limit of twenty members from among the Tanatha-uendi, and it is to contain the greatest fighters that they can produce.

Each family or group of families when they are roaming alone after the moot are led by a First. This tends to be the eldest.

Art Users are prized among the Tanatha-uendi, and their numbers are few. There are approximately nine Art-users, each of which has one or two apprentices. The priests are always mystics, as no gods are worshipped more or less than any other. Even the Crone was acknowledged, so as to offend none of the gods – in a world with as many enemies as the Tanatha-uendi have it doesn't do to offend anyone that you do not have to. With the advent of Liren, such callings of the Gods are now a more palatable experience.

Wizards are rare, and druids tend toward the plant sphere rather than the animal sphere, at least at first. There is little magical lore among the green elves and as such knowledge of spheres is rare, leading to Art users tending to specialise in one or two. One of the Art users is the Lore Master, who keeps all historical and magical lore. Each volume of records describes the events of every two years between the moots since the battle of Mara, and before that there was no fixed length of each volume. Volumes are placed in a special watertight box and buried at the glan-Eleneth, and are dug up at every moot in order that the Lore master and his apprentice may study the histories and not forget anything. The Lore master is a Sorcerer so that he may learn all of the magic possessed by the tribe, theoretically at least.

The Moot

The Green Elves moot once every two years at glan-Eleneth to share tidings, wed, learn and share skills and to trade. From time to time the Green Elves do trade outside their own kind, though very rarely. As a result they have few metal weapons, and those they do have are old. The last time any were purchased was in approximately 1418, in Gralamire, where five swords were purchased along with many rivets for leather armour which is made by the few artisans that the Tanatha-uendi possess. The Moot is held after the spring thaws, in the fourth month of the year to allow time for the people to muster. It is the duty of the First of each family to remember when the moot is and lead his family there. The moot lasts for one month, on average, although the moot of 1508 is still ongoing and has lasted many years.

Day to day survival

The way families survive in the forest is entirely dependent on their own skills. Some travel around hunting and foraging. Others 'slash and burn' creating a small amount of fertile ground for a few months in the summer and grow as many wild crops as they can, baking them into breads as is needed, moving to a secure winter base in order to survive the cold. So some range all the time, some only seasonally; either way, all are eager in their pursuit of honey from wild bees – these Green Elves are willing to risk being stung to death for it! It is used as a preservative, the combs are eaten usually on the spot, and honey is also used to cook fresh meat – honey roasted wild pig is a particular favourite.

Unfortunately, due to their harsh way of life, Green Elves past their prime tend to die quickly: most do not live beyond 200 years of age. When they reach this age they remain with the family if they are still valued fighters. When they start to slow down, and senses begin to dull, they return to a place in glan-Eleneth, where the Lore master leads them to his residence. There they share the tale of their life, their crafts, and live to help the Lore master and his apprentice in day-to-day life. In this way the elder Green elves live a full and rich life, their twilight years out of the harsh combat of their younger years.

The last point bearing note is that there is little scope for trading within the Green Elves. Most items are just offered up as they are required – there is no real sense of owning anything among the Tanatha-uendi. When something is needed it is found. At the moot, items are gifted in straight swap, or very occasionally with currency – the Green elves do have some, but with so little to spend it on, it was long since surrendered to the Lore master. He gifts it out as it is needed, on trading missions, for example, or recently to his son for his mission to the south.

Customs

Coming of age

The Tanatha-uendi consider their young to be old enough to fight by the age of 16, which is still very young by Elven standards, but the Green Elves have always needed as many fighters as they can gain. At this point they are gifted their own weapons and armour, and are blooded as soon as possible. Training is begun as young as twelve in the art of combat, so even children can fight with daggers if the occasion comes up – which occasionally does happen if the family is ambushed.

Marriage

Marriage happens only at moots, and is a rare event, due to the low numbers among the Tanatha-uendi. As a result marriages are occasions for great merriment, and after a service during which the blessings of all the gods are asked for and an animal sacrifice is made (the blood being painted on the faces of the betrothed in traditional patterns) a great feast is prepared – everyone eats their fill and more, usually the best meal in any Green Elf's life. Marriage is for life, though if one partner dies, the widow can remarry providing they are still fertile – production of children is as important to the Tanatha-uendi as slaying vicious creatures on their way to trouble Calsmeer. The husband tends to join the bride's family upon marriage.

Death

Death ceremonies vary from band to band. If at all possible, the body is embalmed and taken to the moot, at which the Lore master and a priest preside over the funeral. At the funeral the body is stripped, given a staff made from oak and dressed in a loincloth, and prayers of protection, blessing and guidance are written on the body with charcoal. It is then cremated, and as the funerary fire is lit their life is sung by the First of their family. Possessions are handed out among the family, and anything that is not required is then taken to the market at the moot. In the early days of Lenewes it is said that all of the deads possessions were burned with the body so it would travel with them to the afterlife, though due to the scarcity of equipment Hërrin ended this practice during the first Scattering. If the elf that died was the First of their family, the eldest remaining elf in that family becomes the First.

Government at the moot

After the death of Elanor, with no pronounced leader of the Tanatha-uendi, the Green elves found that there was no one to settle disputes, or to establish new laws. To this end, they created the Green Council (or Demoth'a'n Tanatha) on a very basic principle. Every Green Elf of age had one vote, and one wooden dagger with his name carved on it. He or she places this when any vote is called in one of two receptacles (large hollow tree trunks) – one containing yes votes, one no votes. Any who do not wish to vote do not. When the votes are counted the elves may pick up their tokens once more. Leodric has stated that the council will continue to meet on issues he considers to affect all of the Tanatha-uendi. In the meantime, he assembles all of the Warleaders, Art users and the Lore master in glan-Eleneth to ratify his decision. If they do not ratify his decrees, that item of business will be passed on to the Demoth'a'n Tanatha. This practice does not continue, obviously, in combat for in that domain the Kinthane's word is law.

The future

Kinthane Leodric has stated that until times settle down the moot will not end, and the war bands and the Wayforgers have since stuck together for the most part. Two war bands are always out on patrol, however, so as not to be lax in their duty to defend the forests. Leodric knows that these perilous times, if he is not careful, could be the twilight of their days. The day-to-day battle of their lives is getting more ferocious, though for the last few months the forest has been eerily quiet. Leodric has termed this the calm before the storm – the dreams have not gone away, and the threat of something terrible to the north still stands. It is for this reason that he considers breaking the vow not to leave the wild woods, and for this reason that he is to send his son south to find out about the people of northern Calsmeer and possibly to re introduce the green elves to their Treewalker cousins. He does not relish the prospect, and knows that if his people return the Treewalkers are unlikely to view them as their own people and frown on their practices, so a retreat to the west is also possible, toward the sea. This is also being considered, as the Calsmeerians are likely to be a little upset about a few hundred elves settling upon their land.

Puzzlingly the dreams persist even after the defeat of the Shadowlings, Leodric now fears some other dire threat is the cause of them, and remains with an eye towards the North with trepidation.

Other Newfolk

There are several other Newfolk groups; the following list groups them by the general nature of their innate ability.

Animal Related:

Furkindred, possessing an affinity with animals that reduces hostility. Brown skinned with tawny highlights near the eyes.
Tigrians. These elves have a strange patterning reminiscent of whiskers or fangs on the face, and can sprout fearsome claws. They hail from Amatukiland.

Control Related:

Argyves. These elves have pale skin with a distinctive 'raccoon mask' colouration; they have the ability to make objects in the hands of others slip out of the person's grasp.

Energy Related:

Shimmerlings, have a faint glimmer to their skin tone, and have the ability to make others glow faintly.
Storm Hearts, *Wa'ank*, *Storm Elves*, *Maenean*: All of these are able to project energy of some kind at a target.

Faith Related:

Soul Reaver. These rare Newfolk can throw powerful blasts of spiritual energy.
Amoraki, the disturbing colouration of white, red and black over the eyes of these elves stands out, as does their ability to see the nature of a person's soul.

Harm Related:

Shattran elves have the power to sunder the bones in the limbs of others. They have a colouration of black lines, with blue accent to the eyes.

Healing Related:

Halthalenen Newfolk are common in the Appian Cathedral of Starsha; they have a pure white flash round their eyes. Their touch is known to have a minor healing power.
Soothe Song Newfolk have a stronger ability than their cousins the *Halthalenen*; their Newfolk marking is a heavily defined eye marking in black and a cultural topknot.
Life-Breathers. Sporting a pale blue cross on the face, these Newfolk are said to be blessed by Starsha herself. They have the power to call the dead back to life.

Knowledge Related:

Deep Eyes. Newfolk have a large flash of dark black over the eyes; they possess the ability to see magical auras.

Movement Related:

Skydancer: marked by a black wing marking over the right eye, they have the ability to take to the air and soar.
World-Walkers. Golden toned markings denote the ability of these elves to transport themselves and others from place to place magically.

Nature Related:

Befoulers. The nasty ability to render water undrinkable is given away by a greyish skin with a sickly green dripping down it.
Fool-Eye. These happy go lucky Newfolk have pale grey skin with a strong blue line across the eyes. They can evade sight when they want to not be found.

Necromancy Related:

Deathcallers. These Newfolk can call a boy to rise as a shambling corpse, they have grey skin with white round the eyes.
Deadspeakers, Marked with the runes of life and Death on their faces, these elves can speak with the spirits of the dead.
Daat; a solid black line down one side of the face and body marks these elves who can restore a soul to its body, but in a state of unlife.

Plant Related:

Lightfoots, able to leave no mark of their passing in woodlands. Leaf pattern overlaying green skin.
Eshi'agorn and *Rashal'agorn*. These Newfolk can imbue berries with healing powers. Ivy and vine patterns to the face.
Treewakers have the power to call the trees themselves to their aid.

Thaumaturgy Related:

Bedazzlers, able to blind opponents momentarily.
Blade-Breakers, who have the ability to shatter the weapons of others.

An examination of the Orc & Goblin races

By
Marius Shanan

Orcs and Goblins are prevalent amongst the wilder regions of Vara and can range from mostly harmless to a dire peril indeed. Many orcs turn to banditry and raiding and so I have compiled this text with a mind to understanding these creatures for the safety of travellers in times to come.

“Common” Orcs

The common Orc is so called because it is simply the most successful and therefore the populous. They are very adaptable creatures (possibly quite like primitive humans could have been!) with a very strong digestive system that can easily purge their system of toxins. Orcs themselves are very crude and superstitious; as to whether this is natural or simply due to a lack of education is another matter. They have a great fear of the colour purple; particularly deranged shamans are the only orcs that would ever consider wearing it. They tend to live a nomadic lifestyle and raid for extra supplies when they need them, although it is not unheard of for them to settle down somewhere. While there are Orc mystics, priests and sorcerers there seem to be no Orc mages, possibly because they do not think the right way to be able to learn the more formalised magic of the mage.

“Common” Goblins

Very closely associated with their cousins the Orcs, they are smaller and more cunning than Orcs but can be easily duped; they also happen to be extremely numerous. Goblins tend to settle down more and be more enterprising than Orcs, probably due to the fact that they are smaller and more vulnerable to danger.

Varieties of the Orc

Gnolls

Gnolls are a desert dwelling Orc mainly found in Dralazar. They are more gangly than normal orcs with more canine like jaws. They are very well adapted for a desert existence and so can lair in the desert and raid the caravans. They are often beaten back by Knights of the Blazing Sun when large numbers of them amass.

Bugbears

Bugbears live in the north of Vara along the mountains and the hills of northern Calsmeer. They are relatively few in number but are bigger and more ferocious than normal Orcs with long shaggy coats of hair that can give them the appearance of bears from a distance. They live in caves and are fiercely territorial.

Derrow

Derrow live underground and are a predominantly evil and very territorial kind of Orc. They pose a constant threat to Nightshades, Stone-fists and Dwarves as they attempt to take over their settlements rather than construct their own.

Varieties of the Goblin

Hobgoblins

Hobgoblins are somewhere in between Orcs and Goblins in size and they know it. They like to push around smaller Goblins but show great deference to Orcs. They are the most war-like of all Goblins and like to march around the place a lot in large hobnail boots, hence the name.

Kobolds

Kobolds are the smallest of all Goblins, and the most cowardly. They will do their best to avoid a fight at any cost and so they are well known, even amongst Goblins, for laying traps to confuse and confound their opponents. They tend to live in forested areas in the trees, above large predatory animals.

Troglodytes

These wretched Goblins live deep underground; they are very cruel and selfish creatures that are quite misshapen from overcrowded conditions and the overbearing presence of their shamans. The shamans control the others and pray to spirits of corruption for their Art. Thankfully these Goblins hate sunlight and the outside world and so are very rarely seen on the surface.

Gnomes

Gnomes are very different to normal Goblins as they have adapted to the cities of men, indeed their skill at invention makes them tolerated within settlements, unless of course too many of their experiments go wrong. Quite a number are making their home in Erinan in a town that was founded by a gnome not too long ago; the reason for the towns (the place is called “Yu Rich”, their inventiveness for names is still at goblin levels it seems) success is the bank that the Gnomes have built. It provides a safe repository for money held by an independent party, and many have now taken up its offer as the Gnomes also seem to be shrewd investors, making a lot of money back from mercenary expenditure during the recent Beastman war.

Ogres

Ogres are the product of a union between an Orc and a Troll; they are as big and strong as their Troll parent but also as crude and stupid as their Orc parent. They are also viciously insane. Thankfully these creatures are sterile and cannot reproduce themselves, however their small intellect revolves around the urges to eat, kill and rut and nothing else seems to intrude into their minds other than these three things.

Lizard-men

(I will say here that other races may call them 'lizard-men' but they refer to themselves as the Mokambe)

The Lizard-men live in what would appear to be one of the most unpleasant places imaginable on the world of Vara, a place that no sane creature would venture let alone live, a great swamp. The air is foul smelling and full of insects, the ground is at best soggy beneath your feet and the paths seem to twist and turn upon themselves. All but the most wary find themselves lost and sinking into the treacherous ground. While this sort of home would not be chosen by any race the Lizard-kin live here for many reasons but there are three that stand out:

Firstly the wetland appeals to the nature of the Lizard-men: they have always lived near water and some of them have lived in the great swamp for uncounted generations. Admittedly, most Lizard-men used to wander further afield and explore but that all changed many years ago.

The second reason is probably the main reason that the Lizard-men have lived almost exclusively in the great swamps and have travelled little. Many generations ago they lived much like all races do and most of them lived in towns in the area now covered by the great swamp. Then the war came, armies marched across the land and despite the Lizard-men wanting to remain out of the war they found themselves attacked on all fronts. The Lizard-men fought bravely but their foes simply outnumbered them by too many and despite their best efforts their towns were burned and Lizard-men died. At every battle they fell back until a small ragtag band, a mere handful of the Lizard-men that had been (but all who had escaped death) stood on the very edge of the swamp and had no where else to go.

Now, the Lizard-men feared the swamps for the swamps were used as their ceremonial burial grounds and were to be treated with respect but they also believed that the spirits of their dead wandered in the swamps and they were fearful of disturbing them. One brave group volunteered to enter the swamps to try and locate a safe path for the others. They had been gone for only a few hours when one of their number staggered out from the swamps with grievous wounds. With his dying breath he said that they had disturbed the rest of the dead and had suffered the consequences. The remaining Lizard-men knew they now had no choice but to fight and die on the edges of the swamps for at least they would die in their burial grounds and their spirits would join their ancestors in the swamps. Better that than insulting the dead and facing their wrath. And so the small group stood and made their peace with the dead and asked them to allow them victory or a swift death and to keep them a place in their after life. As their prayers were completed a call went out that their foes had been spotted and were quickly coming their way. The Lizard-men formed ranks and prepared to sell their lives as dearly as they could. As the battle was joined an unexpected thing happened. As had happened before their foes outnumbered the Lizard-men and there seemed to be no hope until rank upon rank of the dead Lizard-men they had so revered walked out of the swamp. At the head of them walked two of the group who entered the swamp and a third figure with a hooded face who carried a staff. The revered dead smashed into the lines of the foe; they proved to be more resilient than the Lizard-men and despite their extra numbers the revered dead began to drive the enemy back. As they did so the hooded figure and the two surviving members of the scouting party gathered the surviving Lizard-men and lead them in to the swamps. The hooded figure lead the group easily, always knowing the correct paths and avoiding the danger areas. Periodically he would stop the group and call out to the ancestors of the living to rise up and stop their enemy advancing after them.

The enemy of the Lizard-men did indeed enter the swamps in pursuit of them but between the revered dead watching over the retreat of the Lizard-men and the treacherous swamps themselves they found that they lost vast numbers to the fetid waters and soon gave up their pursuit. In truth it mattered not to them: the Lizard-men were broken and they had others to conquer.

The hooded figure led the last of the Lizard-men to an area in the swamps where they were able to set up camps and could find some food. Many of the Lizard-men had already guessed but the hooded figure revealed himself as one of the keepers of the ancestors. One of the Lizard-men who had devoted his life to looking after the spirits of the dead and tending to them in their after life.

Now the Lizard-men had no choice but to make the swamps their home but their customs dictated that only the keepers of the ancestors may live in the swamps. At first the Lizard-men decided to leave the swamps and head back out in to the world again. The keeper knew that to enter the world again would surely mean death to the Lizard-men but he also knew that there was a reason that only keepers could live within the swamps. The revered dead who wandered the swamps were not often friendly and only the keepers who knew how to calm them could survive with them wandering freely. It was decided that if only keepers could live within the swamp then the remaining Lizard-men must become keepers. Between building homes and gathering food they all became keepers of the ancestors, able to walk freely in the swamps without fear of the dead they hold in such high esteem.

Over the generations since the retreat into the swamps customs have changed a little within the Lizard-man society and now not everyone becomes a keeper, though having said that everyone received enough teaching in the art of the keeper that they may wander the great swamp freely.

This is the third reason that the Lizard-men remain in the swamps: they see themselves as watching over their ancestors and keeping them safe in their after life, but they also know that they can call on their ancestors in times of great need. They can also, if needed, call on the dead of their one time enemies to aid them as well. The swamp provides a near inexhaustible army should the Lizard-men ever need it but their respect for the dead keeps them from calling upon the aid of their ancestors except in the most dire of circumstances. It should be noted that they are more willing to use the dead of other races than their own but even then, only when the situation absolutely requires it.

No one seems to know why the dead of the swamp seem to walk around once in a while: if the Lizard-men know they are not saying. Fortunately, they do not all seem to wander at the same time and they are never seen outside the swamp, unless led by a keeper. It is also not known why the great swamp seems to be slowly growing in size.

Now, after many years the lizard-man society is rebuilt and they are starting to want to find out what is going on in the world outside the swamp. The last they knew, great armies were warring across the land and they believe that the war surely must be over by now and they want to know the shape of things in the world.

Lizard-men are not naturally evil despite the powers they call on, although most outsiders see them as such. They prefer to see themselves as guiding the dead through their afterlives rather than using them for conquest or other less desirable purposes. They only ask one payment from the dead in return for this gentle guidance, that they may call on them in times of need. For this reason you will not see a lizard-man use undead for mundane jobs as most necromancers might. Having said this they will use undead as sentries or bodyguards, but only for the most important people such as their leaders and emissaries.

Virtually all Lizard-men priests follow Neroz, the god of the dead: such priests are referred to as keepers. Lizard-men may choose to follow other gods but this is rare.

A History of the Ents

The Ents are a mystical, mysterious and magical race. Ents pre-date the Elves and they first appeared some time in the mystical age of Vara. Even the youngest Ent is several thousands of years old in human terms, not that they measure time in the human sense. They have little or no notion of time or mortality and their outlook on life is completely and utterly alien to humans. There are both male and female Ents. They are not immortal, they just have life spans outside the comprehension of most humans or Elves.

Ents keep the forests in check, they prevent their destruction but keep the malevolent forces inside the largest forests from spilling out and overrunning Vara. They keep to themselves, however they do know what is happening in the outside world.

They rarely interfere with business which does not directly affect them or their glades. They will tend to ignore logging activities at the edge of forests: those that make attempts to move into the depths of any of the large forests in Vara rarely come back. The Ents are extremely protective of their glades and trees.

They gave a written language, and culture to the Treewalker Elves. They spent many years teaching the Elves the ways of the forests, hence their tolerance of the Elven communities in Amatukiland.

There are Ents across Vara in each of the major forests. The Ents of Vara are all of the same species, although their appearances can vary wildly, and all loosely know what is happening to Ents in different areas of the world. All Ents can cover great distances with little effort and are greatly skilled at staying hidden from humans, so in theory they could travel across the land to visit their cousins in far off lands, but in reality few Ents travel far from their homes these days.

Very few humans, Elves, Trolls or Dwarves in Vara know of their existence: even fewer have met with an Ent.