

# Aura

*The Essential Guide*

## **PLEASE NOTE**

This document is a very early draft. It may contain errors, incomplete or conflicting information, and may be subject to frequent and major changes. The latest version of this document can always be found at [www.tangveje.dk/aura/](http://www.tangveje.dk/aura/)

Version 0.1.0

Copyright © Casper Tang Veje - All Rights Reserved

[www.tangveje.dk/aura/](http://www.tangveje.dk/aura/)

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
The Bones of the World.....	2
The History of Aura.....	4
<b>The World and Beyond.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Šéla and Máña.....	6
Celestial Objects.....	6
Timekeeping and Calendars.....	7
Death and Thereafter.....	8
<b>Races and Cultures.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Lycanthropes.....	13
Werewolves, Wargs and Wendigo.....	17
Humans.....	20
Ghouls.....	22
Wights.....	25
Revenants and Changelings.....	27
Fae.....	28
Nereids and Medusae.....	31
Other Creatures.....	32
<b>The Heartlands.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Vása.....	36
Amályar.....	38
Satóra.....	40
Kóron.....	42
Kormaňe.....	43
Iltáime.....	44
Várna.....	45
Alyúme.....	46
Voraz.....	47
Aiúna.....	48
Aňhem.....	50
Allénir.....	51
Méru.....	52
<b>The North.....</b>	<b>55</b>
Aňa Kiéla.....	56
Remla.....	58
Beor.....	60
Sun Aa.....	61
Ardurín and Kordurín.....	63
<b>The South.....</b>	<b>65</b>
Madár.....	66
Amarin.....	70
Nyíre.....	71
Kumica.....	72
Sepil Már.....	73
Eđin Leng.....	74
<b>The West.....</b>	<b>75</b>
Ililakúsa.....	76
May Wen.....	78
Vánakilne.....	80
Laimi.....	82
Náda.....	83
<b>The Chthonic Realm.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>History.....</b>	<b>87</b>
A Brief Timeline.....	88
The First World.....	89
First Age of Mortals.....	89
The Second Age.....	92

The Third Age.....	95
<b>Religion and Mythology.....</b>	<b>97</b>
Creation Myth.....	98
Deities and other Spirits.....	98
<b>Magic, Crafts, and Technology.....</b>	<b>101</b>
Alchemy and Magic.....	102
Crafts and Technology.....	103
<b>Life and Society.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Culture and Art.....	106
Relationships and Sexuality.....	106
Currencies.....	107
Notable People.....	108
<b>Flora and Fauna.....</b>	<b>111</b>
Bestiary.....	112
Flora.....	114
<b>Languages and Dialects.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Ayrnáva.....	119
Narumach.....	120

# Introduction

*"Here we shall not linger long, but for now and ever wander, undaunted towards such other shores beyond the seas, where no sails avail nor compass lead."*

*-- epitaph of Lady Melinda Miúka of Lyán (316-353 SR)*

Welcome traveller, to a world both savage and beautiful, where grim hunters pursue black beasts in dark woods, armies clash under darkened skies, and eldritch horrors and shadows from out of time and space lurk in the depths of the world. A world of fear and terror, of dark mysteries, wonder, and hard won glory. Seek here your destiny, or uncover that of others.

## The Bones of the World

---

It is difficult to sum up the world in just a few short sentences. This section tries to give you just the essentials, the things that set this world apart from others of its kind and makes it what it is, the very bare bones if you will. If you read nothing else, let it be these few pages.

### A world of difference

Aura [aʊ'ɹa] is the name we will use to refer to the world as a whole. Aura is a dark fantasy world, but I like to think it is so much more, and that it is unique and different in many ways from what is already out there.

I draw inspiration from many sources, but perhaps in particular from the tales of Lovecraft, Poe, and Tolkien, the old Norse sagas and other myths, and legends of the real world, as well as music and art much too numerous to mention. While I am frequently inspired by the real world and its history, striving to make Aura as naturalistic as possible, I am very concerned about not creating any overly obvious associations to the real world in the cultures and history of Aura, as I personally tend to dislike such things.

### Not your stars

The name Aura technically refers to a single star, but stars are not like we know them from the real world. They are not giant globes of nuclear fury, but rather more like islands of matter adrift in a sea of immaterial mists, complete with oceans and mountains, forests, seas, and caves. The boundary between a star and the misty space surrounding it is fuzzy, and it is technically possible to sail, fly or dig your way into "outer space" and perhaps even sail between stars. It has never truly been attempted, however, and those who claim to have done it and survived to tell the tale are rarely if ever believed.

### Cosmic dreams

The misty space in which the stars drift endlessly is known as Šéla ['ʃɛ:lə], or simply the (Outer) Mists. It is an immaterial space, a turbulent sea of misty void. But Šéla is more than just "outer space", it is the realm of spirits and of dreams, part of a duality. It can be experienced through dreams and visions, but physical things may drift in the Mists as well and many tales are told of people getting hopelessly lost in the Mists, never to return. The next chapter describes this alternate cosmology in much greater detail.

### A dark world

Because stars are not as we know them, Aura (the star) has no sun. This makes it literally a dark world. While some of the stars can be seen as tiny points of faint light against the sky, their light is far too dim to provide any real illumination. The only persistent light of note comes from the moons, certain glowing rocks and other substances, and even plants and animals.

### Figuratively

Aura is also a dark world in a figurative sense. It is a world of horror and darkness, of death and fear, where hope is often scant and life short and brutal. It is not a world of shining knights on white horses, or heroes of pure hearts, nor is it a world of unconditionally happy endings. None of this should come as a surprise, when one counts Lovecraft as a major inspiration. However, Aura is not entirely devoid of beauty, love, and wonder, and these things may be all the more shining because of the darkness in which they appear.

## **A mature world**

Aura is intended as a mature world. It sometimes deals with topics and themes only suitable for a mature audience. This includes but is not limited to extreme violence and brutality, torture, mutilation, sex and sexuality including sexual violence, racism, genocide, and drug use. These things are part of human nature and the real world, and because of this I try to deal with them in a mature and above all serious way. This, among other things, means trying very hard not to overdo it. If you do not enjoy mature topics however, then this may not be a world for you. There are many other excellent worlds out there designed for a general audience.

## **Of wolves and men**

Aura, unlike most other fantasy settings, is not dominated by humans, and the humans of Aura are not the masters of adaption and versatility that they are often depicted as elsewhere. The humans of Aura are a very young race, and like most of the other civilized races are descended from lycanthropes who by far dominate the surface, while ghouls - also descended from lycanthropes - dominate the Chthonic realm deep beneath the surface of the world. Humans have always struggled for a place in the world, and many live as slaves or second class citizens among lycanthropes. In some places humans are even viewed as contagious mutants and terrorists, and are killed or driven off on sight.

## **Lycanthropes and werewolves**

Lycanthropes and werewolves are not the same in Aura. While lycanthropes are an ancient and civilized race, werewolves are bestial creatures driven by uncontrollable rage and lust for blood. The first werewolves were created in a dark ritual from captured lycanthropes, who were subjected to terrible torture. The first hordes of werewolves, known as the Terror, nearly brought the northern lands to their knees in what became known as the Reign of Terror, before they and their creator, the shadow dragon Ašiva [a'ci:va], were defeated by the lycanthropic saint Válisanti [va:li'santi]. Many werewolves escaped and their descendants continue to plague the world and spread their dark curse to this day.

## **The world in a song**

Undeniably the most haunting phenomenon in all of Aura is the enigmatic melody or song which can be heard anywhere, if one listens closely. From the highest mountain to the deepest cave, in forest or at sea, the song is always present and is said to be different for everyone. According to legend, this is the song of the Nightingale, the creator goddess, and her song is that of Creation itself. It is said that the day the song dies, the world dies with it. Only once in the records of history, during the last years of the Reign of Terror, have the song become quiet.

People all over the world contemplate upon this song, and imitate its notes and words. Through such imitation and contemplation, followers of the Nightingale believe they become closer to the goddess, and some even perform miracles or have visions of past and future. Many believe that the song only persists while the people of the world listen and imitate in this way.

## **The Nightingale**

Many names have been given to the creator goddess whose divine song is said to have brought the world into being. In the north she is generally known as the Nightingale, while the people of the south know her as the Phoenix. Other names and depictions are known, but all are associated with a lone creator whose song is the song of Creation.

## **Dragons and Immortals**

The first children of the Nightingale were the primordial dragons, great spirits who fashioned the material world through runes of dreams and power. The primordial dragons also created the first living creatures of the world, known as the immortals. When strife erupted among the dragons, brought about by shadows from unknown voids beyond the world, the world was shattered in a cataclysmic war and the first shadow dragons born from the corrupted souls of dead dragons. In response, the Nightingale banished all dragons, except two who were set to guard the gate at the edge of the world against those who clawed at it from beyond. Ever since, the world has been broken and its people no longer immortal.

## Speaking in tongues

The peoples of Aura speak many different tongues. Some of them are related and similar, others are very different. If you're familiar with other fantasy worlds, you may have noticed how these very often have a "common" tongue (sometimes even *called* "Common"), spoken by all or nearly all civilized people and races. Aura does not have such a language.

Another important thing to note is that the languages of Aura are not just empty labels. While this is an area where a lot of work remains to be done, it is my hope in time to create fully developed languages, with complete linguistic descriptions and extensive dictionaries. Languages that are not just ciphers of English and which you could actually learn to speak like any natural language, much like Tolkien developed actual languages for his world. If you have never found constructed languages interesting, take solace in the fact that knowing the languages of Aura won't be necessary to enjoy the world.

### **Native terms in this book**

Occasionally native terms (such as the name Aura itself) will be used throughout this and other books on Aura. Most of these will be in the language Ayrnáva [aj<sup>h</sup>yr<sup>h</sup>'na:va], and phonetic transcriptions using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) may be given in square brackets, like here, to help with pronunciation.

## The History of Aura

---

Aura began its slow rise on the Giant in the Playground free-form Play-by-Post forums - back then known to its players as The Town - sometime around 2005. My very first character in The Town was a minotaur mage and planeswalker by the name of Arslan, who came from a distant world but had been flung into the D&D universe (and ultimately the chaotic web of worlds and pure insanity which was the Town) by some cosmic cataclysm in his own world, and now found himself trapped there, unable to return. It was all very vague back then, but Arslan's story lives on in the form of the revenants and the great cataclysm which brought their conquest of the world to an abrupt end (detailed later in this book). While minotaurs became revenants (and more things in between) and their story has taken on a more sinister twist over the years, the basic tale remains the same.

Arslan was but the first of many, many characters I introduced to the wild and chaotic world of the Town. Most of them came and went, and even Arslan eventually moved on when he found a way back home with the help of his new friends in Town. Arslan's gate back to his home world became a portal for other characters to enter the Town, and so began my quest to detail the world which had previously been inaccessible but had now been opened by Arslan.

One of these later characters was Aeri, a troubled young paladin on a mission for her Lord to hunt down a dangerous man who had escaped through Arslan's portal and thus evaded justice. With Aeri was born the idea of the werewolves, the nation of Satóra [sa'to:ɹa], and the two dragon gods Azúran [aɟz'u:ɹan] and Išáraka [i'ʃa:ɹaka] and the epic struggle between them and their respective followers. It was all rather different back then; The names were different, and the great dragon Azuran was actually sitting on the throne of Satóra, sending out his soldiers and paladins to conquer the rivers and slay the werewolves. His opponents in turn were clinging to an ancient prophecy foretelling the return of Išáraka and a second Great War of the dragons. But while much has changed, the core remains largely the same to this day.

Later still I began working on a different world, but it never got far and instead I merged a few ideas from the new world with the old one. The largest of these ideas was the introduction of the goddess known as the Nightingale and her divine song, as well as the lack of a sun, making the world darker and also, I feel, much more interesting.

Looking back, there have been a lot of changes and additions over the years, but much of the core remains the same. Names have changed, maps have changed, many, many details have changed, but I like to think I have ended up with something better, much more fully developed than the early, vague ideas that began it all.

# The World and Beyond

This chapter describes the basic cosmology of the world as it is understood by its inhabitants, as well as issues related to timekeeping and death.

## Šéla and Máña

---

The world is divided into two spheres of existence, two realms or dimensions.

The first sphere is called Šéla ['ʃɛ:la] - the soul, or more commonly the Mists - out of which all life springs. It is like a vast sea of mist in which everything floats. If anything exists outside Šéla it is unknown and perhaps unknowable. Some equate Šéla with the creator goddess known as the Nightingale, while others place her outside and beyond all known existence. Whatever the case, Šéla is the origin of all spirit, life, and energy. It is the immaterial universe, the endless outer space, and the realm of dreams and memories. Šéla is eternal and ever changing, without permanent form.

The second sphere is called Máña ['ma:ŋa] - cognate with words for earth and stone, and referring to something material or physical - from which all matter originates. In the beginning Máña was whole and perfect, a single monolith of unmoving, unliving matter called the Worldstone. Using ancient runes of dreams and power, the primordial dragons carved the Worldstone and bound within its unmoving mass the spirit of Šéla. Thus was shaped the first world and the first material life, a union of matter and spirit. The first world was a perfect world, eternal and its life immortal. When strife and war broke out between the first dragons, the Worldstone and the world carved upon it was shattered. Only broken pieces remained, like islands scattered amidst the endless sea of mists. Life survived and new worlds grew up, but Máña will forever be broken, imperfect and slowly decaying. No life may live forever, and eventually even the mountains and seas shall crumble and dry up, leaving only the eternal spirit once bound to it behind.

## Celestial Objects

---

Both the stars and moons are quite different from their counterparts in the world we know. Stars are not gigantic burning globes of nuclear reactions but more like islands of matter adrift in an ocean of mist; and moons are enigmatic wanderers of the sky, thought to be illusions or spirits of some sort rather than physical objects orbiting the world.

### Stars

The shattered remains of the Worldstone now form the countless stars. These are most easily described like islands of matter floating in the sea of mists, yet each star may comprise a complete world with seas, mountains, lakes and plains. One such star is Aura which consists of at least five major continents and countless islands with sea between. It is known to any sailor of the seas that should you sail too far in one direction you will leave the world and sail straight into the eternal mists and that you could in theory sail between stars. Not many have dared such a voyage, and it is not certain how many - if indeed any - have survived it. Countless tales of such journeys exist, but few are credible. In the same way, were you to fly too high or dig too deep, you would leave the world and enter the mists that surround it.

Since stars are not burning globes of nuclear energy, Aura and other stars are perpetually shrouded in darkness and have no cycle of day and night. Stars in the sky do shine faintly, some more than others, but most of what little light exists comes from various glowing stones, plants, and other growths as well as artificial (mainly alchemical) sources. Many life forms, both plants and animals, have adapted to produce light. Heat and energy comes primarily from geological processes. Aura is both a very dark and cold world in general.

### Moons

Aura has five known moons, although the true number is unknown and it is not known whether other stars have moons like those of Aura. The moons of Aura are not rocky objects orbiting the world, but are believed to be phantoms or even spirits of a sort. They appear on the sky like circular mirages, and some claim to observe within them at times the reflection of other worlds

or perhaps a memory of Aura's long lost past. They move across the sky, but not in any discernible pattern or rhythm. They have even been observed to spontaneously change course. Sometimes they are gone for ages only to reappear suddenly. This is the primary reason for the difficulty in counting them. Only five have been positively identified in the records of history, but it is rare to see more than two or three on the sky at a time.

Due to their otherworldly and unpredictable nature, the moons hold great spiritual and mystical significance to the people of Aura, particularly the lycanthropes who have studied them intensely over countless ages. They feature heavily in divinations and each of the five moons are attributed with various powers and omens.

### **Oroz**

Oroz [o'ɔɔd͡z̥] is a large red moon. Its colour varies between a deep blood red and a faint, nearly transparent red. It is associated with fire, power, bravery, hunting, and vitality and is often considered a good omen, particularly by lovers. It is said to have been high on the sky and particularly vibrant several times during the rise and march of Válsanti against the Terror. In the south it is strongly associated with the Nightingale, known there as the Phoenix. It is mentioned in records going back to the earliest of times.

### **Káli**

Káli [ka:li] is a medium, pale green moon. It is associated with truth, the senses, and divination. Along with Azelle it is favoured among seers and prophets.

### **Tenġéri**

Tenġéri [tɛn'jɛ:ji] is a medium, pale blueish white moon. It is associated with endurance, water, cold, and ice as well as the sea and sailors.

### **Aráto**

Aráto [a'ɔa:to] is a small black moon. It was the last to be discovered, partly because of its black colour which makes it nearly invisible against the dark sky. It is associated with death, decay, and the afterlife.

### **Azelle**

Azelle [aðz'ɛɰ] is a small, translucent white moon. It is associated with spirits, dreams, mysticism, and the seasons. Like Aráto it was discovered relatively late.

## The Tail of Azúran

When it is particularly dark, one can observe the so-called Tail of Azúran stretching across the sky. This faint band of light is named so for the legend saying that it is in fact the tail of the mighty primordial dragon Azúran, who rests at the edge of the cosmos, ever watching for those clawing from beyond to get in.

## Timekeeping and Calendars

---

The people of Aura, particularly the lycanthropes, have always looked to the stars. Without a sun or moon to track time, most people have traditionally turned to the stars for timekeeping.

Of the countless stars always visible on the sky, one is of particular note; Máður's Eye is the largest and brightest star in the sky. It has two features which makes it essential to timekeeping all across Aura. First, it pulsates slowly, its light waxing and waning in strength in a regular pattern. The period from least to greatest brightness and back (one blink) is roughly 18 hours by our measure, and is the closest the people of Aura have to our concept of a day. The people of Aura do not speak about days however, most speak of tides. The relationship between Máður's Eye and the tides is a mysterious one, however.

Most tribes of Aura have traditionally lived close to the seas, rivers and lakes, and they learned quickly to observe the rising and falling of water levels. It is believed that Aura, seen from far away, blinks in a manner identical to that of Máður's Eye. It is thought that the star continually shrinks and grows under the influence of the surrounding Mists, in a phenomenon often called the "breathing" of the star. This is what causes the tides. As the Mists draw closer and the world shrinks, global water levels rise, and vice versa. Explanations for why it appears that Aura's

blinking is synchronized with the blinking of Máður's Eye are few, the most convincing being that the Eye is actually a reflection or mirage of Aura and not a real star of its own. Whatever the truth, the result is that the tides rise and fall in perfect synchrony with this blinking star.

The second property of Máður's Eye is that it travels along the perimeter of the sky in a circular path, from north to south and back to north. The time it takes the star to make a full rotation like that is roughly 520 tides, or 390 days by our measure. This time period is known as a turn, a rough parallel to our concept of a year.

While there are no seasons as we know them, there certainly are fluctuations in the weather. Winter simply refers to any period of exceptional cold for a region, while spring is the end of a period of winter where the cold recedes and life grows anew. A term similar to summer is not known, however, and fall is only rarely used (in referring to the early onset of winter).

## Calendars

There are various calendars in use across Aura.

Most tribes of the northern lands divide the history of the world into four ages; the Age of Immortals followed by the three Ages of Mortals. The First Age of Mortals (or simply the First Age) stretches from the shattering of the first creation all the way to the fall of the revenant empire. The Second Age begins with the fall of the revenants, and ends with the defeat of the Terror. The Third and current Age began with the defeat of the Terror less than four centuries ago.

The First Age is also known as Shattered, the Second Age as Fall, and the Third Age as Spring. Thus an age may be given relative to the start of one of these ages, such as 378 Spring (current date) or 3267 Fall (birth of the first werewolves). Dates before the beginning of the second age are given as 1680 BF (first human records) where BF is short for Before the Fall.

A different way to designate dates, particularly common in Vása and surrounding lands, is Spring Reckoning. Spring Reckoning (SR) simply marks the beginning of the Third Age and the raising of the Circle of Spring to commemorate the defeat of the Terror as year 1 and counts from there. Thus 378 SR is the current date, and -3411 SR is equal to 1 Fall.

In Madár, it is common to mark the founding of the country as year 1 and count from there. This calendar is known as the Old Calendar, shortened OC. Year 1 OC corresponds to -9557 SR or 6068 BF, nearly ten thousand years ago in other words.

## Death and Thereafter

---

Ever since the end of the Age of Immortals and the beginning of the First Age of mortals in aeons past, death has been an unavoidable part of life. The material world and everything in it slowly decays and crumbles, from the lowly plants to the mighty mountains. When the body becomes too frail - either from old age, disease or injury - to hold the spirit, the spirit rejoins with the Mists and the body becomes once again like the unmoving, unliving earth.

The soul, once free from the body, quickly loses its tie to the body and most memories of its former life. What eventually becomes of the spirit and its memories depends on the spirit, as well as other factors. Some linger in the world while others drift in the endless mists, eventually perhaps fading away or changing entirely.

Ancient rituals exist to contact spirits of the dead, but since they quickly lose all ties to their former lives they are not always reliable sources of information. Sometimes bits of information can be obtained through divination or contact with spirits, sometimes still clinging to objects or locations in the world. But searching the sea of dreams and memories for specific pieces of information is nearly impossible, even for the greatest of seers.

It is possible, through complex rituals, to draw a spirit into a body or object. This may be a means to return a dead person to life, or for other - often nefarious - purposes. Resurrection of the dead must take place quickly, lest the person lose too much of their memory, or worse. If too much time passes or the body is not in a good condition, the result can be terrifying. At best the ritual will fail, but at worst the spirit may be trapped in the dead body and go mad. Undead monstrosities created in this fashion are sadly common, often caused by relatives who

hoped to see their loved ones returned to life.

A soul may be brought back into a different body from the one it previously possessed. This is particularly popular as a means for those who have lost their own body irrevocably to return to life, or who wishes a new identity for one reason or another. The new body has to come from somewhere, however, and it is rarely if ever that of a consenting donor.

Spirits can possess a living person or animal, taking control of their mind and body. Exorcising such spirits almost always leads to the death of the unfortunate target, though prompt and competent action may avoid it.

Finally, spirits may possess any physical object or be tied to a certain location. Ghosts are examples of the latter, spirits who for one reason or another can't find rest. Spirits of the land and other natural spirits are less nefarious examples, often serving as guardians or guides and protectors of the wild. In the former case, the spirit often goes mad from its imprisonment and may seek to cause harm or mischief. A spirit may be trapped so either through some accident or by a deliberate act of magic.

## The Afterlife

There are many views and beliefs regarding the fate of the spirit when the body dies. While some spirits may linger or drift aimlessly, others are thought to travel to various kinds of afterlives, usually depending on race or even tribe, as well as deeds performed in life.

### **Ouranandai**

Among the lycanthropes the most common belief, in one form or another, is the legend of Ouranandai [ɔ̃jɔ̃a'nandai]. According to myth, Ouranandai was the first homeland of the lycanthropes in the far north before they migrated south to other lands. This may have actually been before the beginning of the first age of mortals, but there is much uncertainty about the exact time and place of Ouranandai. Many lycanthropes believe that those who prove worthy in life get to return home to Ouranandai upon their death, a final journey for the spirit. It is generally believed that Ouranandai is tied to Aura specifically, and not to other stars, whose inhabitants may have their own, entirely different afterlives.

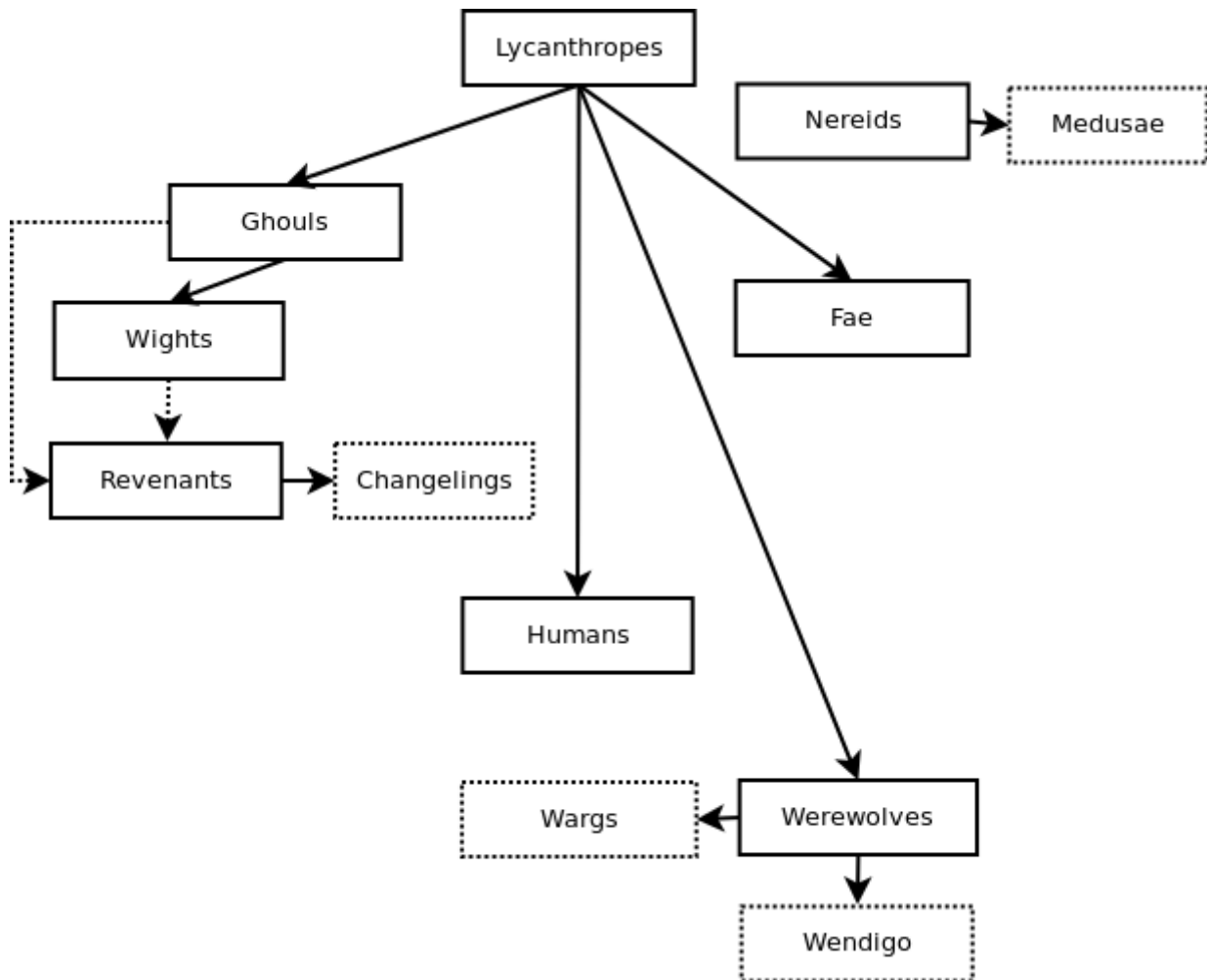


# Races and Cultures

Aura is inhabited by many creatures, some of which are intelligent and even civilized. The eight so-called civilized races encompass those which are descended from the lycanthropes (we count the werewolves as belonging among the civilized races, even though this is not without controversy), as well as the nereids.

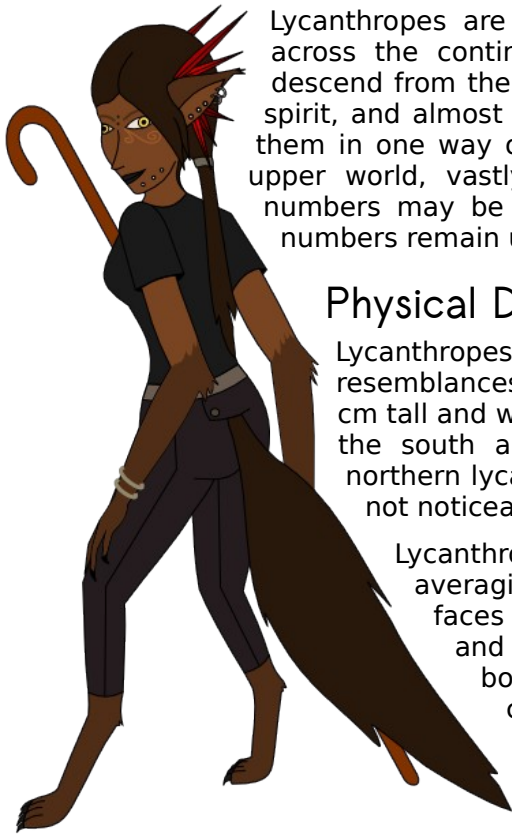
The chart below shows the relationships between the civilized races, as far as it is known. Directly descended from the lycanthropes are the ghouls, fae, humans and werewolves. From the ghouls are descended the wights and possibly the revenants; other sources place the revenants as descendants of the wights. Humans and fae have no known descendants. The chart tries to show roughly the age of the races; the further towards the top, the older the race.

The races with a dotted outline are not actual races but terms used for purposes of distinction. For example, wargs refer to werewolves who were afflicted rather than born with the curse, and changelings are people possessed by revenant spirits. The wendigo is generally accepted to be an advanced stage of the werewolf curse, although a few consider it a race in its own right.



# Lycanthropes

---



Lycanthropes are an ancient civilized race, having existed and spread across the continents since the dawn of time. They are believed to descend from the first immortals, in particular from Māður the great wolf spirit, and almost all the other civilized races are in turn descended from them in one way or the other. They are by far the dominant race of the upper world, vastly outnumbering all the other races there, but their numbers may be rivalled by the ghouls of the Chthonic realms whose numbers remain unknown.

## Physical Description

Lycanthropes are bipeds with distinctive canine features, with some resemblances to coyotes or jackals. They stand between 150 and 170 cm tall and weigh on average between 40 and 60 kg. Lycanthropes of the south are typically taller than their northern kin, while the northern lycanthropes are more heavily built. Males and females are not noticeably different in size.

Lycanthropes have digitigrade feet, wolf-like ears, and tails averaging a little less than half the length of their body. Their faces are flat with large eyes and sharp teeth, and their hands and feet have four fingers and toes with strong claws. Their bodies are covered in a light coat of fur, with a stronger coat along the spine, around the neck and shoulders, and on hands and feet.

Lycanthropes grow long hair on their heads, particularly the females, and men tend to develop strong facial hair in addition. Females lack the strong

facial hair but often develop small tufts of hair on the tip of their ears which males do not.

Beneath the fur their skin is black, but due to the fur this is not usually visible except for the lips, palms, and foot pads. Most common fur and hair colours are grey, black, and brown with red, yellow, and white being rarer. Patterns of varying tones and colours are common, with hair typically darker than the rest of the fur. Eye colour is yellow, golden, amber, or green. Albinos are comparatively more common among lycanthropes than other races, particularly in the northern reaches.

With their digitigrade feet, long tails, and a light bone structure, lycanthropes are built for running and are excellent jumpers as well.

Average life spans under normal living conditions are around 35-40 years, but some lycanthropes have been known to live as long as 90 years if conditions are favourable

## Reproduction and Sexuality

Lycanthropes are usually strictly monogamous. Most lycanthropes bond very closely with a single partner, usually for life. Such life partners are often friends they have known since childhood although bonding can happen much later and between near strangers. Partners usually live together and mate exclusively with each other. A lycanthrope whose partner dies is often reluctant to find a new one even after many years.

A normal pregnancy lasts between 260 and 300 tides (approximately 7 months by our measure). Twins and occasionally triplets are common with lycanthropes. Lycanthropes reach sexual maturity around the age of fourteen and are fully grown around twenty.

Lycanthropes can breed with both humans, werewolves and wendigo, but not with other races. Relationships between lycanthropes and humans happen occasionally but are not common and not always well accepted. The offspring of a lycanthrope and a human are always lycanthropes and there are often serious complications associated with such a pregnancy. It is also well known that these half-bloods grow up to be sterile, but there are no other physical characteristics to distinguish them from other lycanthropes.

Actual relationships between lycanthropes and werewolves or wendigo are non-existent, but rape is unfortunately common. Most such victims become werewolves themselves and flee into the wild to give birth to their cursed offspring. Those few who escape the curse themselves almost always choose abortion due to the widely held belief that the children will be born with the curse. This has led some to suggest that, perhaps with the right care and treatment early on, the child could be spared the curse and born normally. So far it remains speculation.

## History and Origin

The nation of Madár vehemently insists on being the birthplace of the very first lycanthropes in aeons past, but many signs point to this not being the case. Instead it is believed that the first lycanthropes emerged in the far north, in the lands of Aña Kiéla, Remla, or even further north in lands unknown before the encroaching mountains of ice made that area uninhabitable.

For most of their early history lycanthropes lived nomadic lives, and may have spread south early on, long before the mountains of ice covered the north. There are signs that lycanthropes migrated south and settled the distant lands of Nyíre and Madár as early as 50.000 years ago or even earlier. Most likely this migration happened via the Sea of Stars and what is now Kumica, at a time when the continents were closer together.

There are many relics but few ruins from this early period, speaking of a highly productive but constantly moving population. The first known civilization, with large, permanent cities, arose in the far northern mountains of Sun Aa more than 30.000 years ago. These industrious lycanthropes were well versed in the ancient runes and magics of the primordial dragons, and used it to forge a vast empire in the inhospitable and impenetrable mountains. To aid in their work they created vast numbers of golems and gave them life, but no minds of their own. These unthinking slaves, the first ghouls, worked tirelessly in the depths to carve out the empire of the lycanthropes and to gather and safeguard their runes and lore. From long exposures to these ancient runes of creation, the slaving ghouls gained minds and purposes of their own, and eventually they rose up to overthrow their masters.

The lycanthropes of Sun Aa were driven out by their former slaves, the ghouls, and escaped into the far north beyond the North Sea. There they are said to have raised the mountains of ice behind them to stop the ghouls from pursuing. From there they may have travelled west and eventually settled Vánakilne and its surrounding lands along with the few ghouls still loyal to them. There may have been lycanthropes already living in these distant western lands, but this time generally marks the point when the lycanthropes are certain to have inhabited all the known continents of Aura, and with the encroaching ice followed a mass migration south, causing an explosion in the number of peoples there.

Many nations and civilizations followed, particularly the great nation of Várna in the vast forests of Iltaíme in the heartlands, and later on the federation of southern tribes which became Madár. Despite these nations, lycanthropes have always been nomads by heart and continue to live on the move in many parts of the world despite the rise of cities and nations.

## Personality and Behaviour

Lycanthropes are renowned for their inquisitiveness and unbounded wanderlust. Only the lycanthropes of Madár seem to eschew this constant desire to seek out new lands. They are greatly fascinated by the stars and moons and the vast mysteries of the world. For millenia they have painstakingly mapped out both sky and earth, explored far and wide, and collected lore from all corners of the world and beyond.

While lycanthropes love to wander and to live and express themselves freely, they are also highly social and greatly enjoy and value the close community of their tribe and friends.

### **Relation to Other Races**

Lycanthropes tend to be relatively indifferent towards other races, and are only openly hostile towards the werewolves and wendigo. They often maintain trading relations with other races and aside from the nation of Madár and southern Ililakúsa they usually allow humans and other races to live openly and freely among them. Lycanthropes view humans with a mixture of curiosity and pity, although some do form close relationships or even bond with them.

During the Reign of Terror, relations between lycanthropes and humans degraded severely in

many places of the heartlands. Most humans lived separated in small clans in the wild, and what few fortresses remained of lycanthropes eventually stopped allowing human refugees inside their walls. Those humans who lived within the walls of such fortresses were poor and often abused. Human girls were routinely sterilized to keep the human population from growing, and few humans could get any job, forcing them to resort to theft or prostitution to survive. Those who were caught stealing had their fingers and sometimes entire hands cut off and their foreheads branded as punishment. Few were caught more than once, most died from blood or food poisoning, or from starvation after being unable to provide for themselves and having no one else to care for them. Casteless lycanthropes (those without known parents) were only marginally better off.

While the end of the Terror brought great improvements to the relationship between lycanthropes and humans, even today humans are often poor and overlooked. Most humans today are descendants of those few human tribes who lived in the wild and were ignored by the lycanthropes, but many still resent the treatment of their kin within the fortresses.

## Culture and Society

Lycanthropes have always been highly nomadic in nature, building few permanent settlements and roaming far and wide. Madár is the largest and oldest truly permanent nation of lycanthropes still remaining to this day, though others have existed before. In recent centuries more permanent settlements and large cities have begun to emerge, but for the most part lycanthropes still tend towards a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.

While much lore and tradition has been lost over millenia, lycanthropes maintain a strong and highly advanced culture, and they constantly seek to recover what has been lost to the ages.

### Clothing and Fashion

Lycanthropes dress very differently depending on where they live, and even in the same region there is often a lot of variety. Clothes are usually made from various furs, wool, and occasionally silk. In colder climates fur and heavy wool is more commonly used. Wool - from llamas primarily - and goat skins are the most common fabrics in Aiúna, while silk is mostly limited to Madár, Nyire and the forested parts of the Heartlands. In these latter places the silk is harvested from goldspinner spiders, while in Madár and Nyire both spiders and silk worms are used.

Feathers are commonly used for decorative purposes. Since most lycanthropes don't hunt or intentionally harm birds, such feathers are usually gathered from abandoned nests and other areas where birds are commonly found and feathers dropped.

Many lycanthropic tribes practice extensive tattooing, scarification, and piercing. These are often both of tribal, religious, and personal significance. They may signify things such as tribe, deeds, dreams and omens, or they may be of a magical nature.

### Arms and Armor

The most common armor among lycanthropes are simple leather or hide armor. Finer armor is usually of a lamellar type, constructed from highly refined leather or occasionally metal. The finest armors, however, are usually various forms of brigandines - thick cloth or leather garments lined with small metal plates or scales of various forms riveted to the fabric. These pieces of metal can be hidden beneath or inside the layers of cloth or leather, or may show through and form various intricate patterns.

In Madár, the elite members of the Black Guard of the Sovereign Host wear armor and helmets constructed from metal plates sewn to a backing of cloth. These armors provide a great balance between protection and mobility, and are both easy to fabricate and keep. The helmet is usually worn along with a metal mask which covers the entire face. These masks are similar to those worn by the judges of Madár, to hide their identity.

Swords and other blades are very common weapons among lycanthropes. Blades are usually of a curved design. Spears and glaives are also highly popular, particularly in Vása and surrounding lands due to the legend of Válisanti, who was said to wield either a spear or glaive made from the bones of werewolves. Bows are the most popular ranged weapons.

The finer pieces of arms and armor are usually alchemically or magically treated.

## **Diet and Cuisine**

Lycanthropes are primarily carnivorous. Their diet consists mainly of wild game as well as fish and crustaceans caught in the rivers or along the coasts. For religious reasons, most lycanthropes refrain from hunting or eating birds or their eggs. Plant food is usually limited to various berries and mushrooms, as well as herbs used for seasoning. Since most lycanthropes were traditionally nomadic, food is often dried and the meat salted to allow longer storage. This tradition is still used even among non-nomadic lycanthropes

In the southern lands of Madár, the lynx is a staple of the local cuisine and the large cat is hunted extensively. The markets of Madár are often full of lynxes, sold whole and freshly skinned. Other common delicacies of these lands include scorpions and snakes.

## **Languages**

Lycanthropes speak a large number of languages, all thought to descend from a single root in the ancient past. These many languages are roughly divided between a northern and a southern branch. The tribes of the north speak various dialects and branches of Samédi, which includes Ayrnáva, while the tribes of the south speak various languages of the Haiki branch which includes Rosnàúá.

Of the original language, Ounau, is known little, but it is believed to have been an imitation of the Nightingale's divine song as heard by the first lycanthropes who settled the lands. In certain parts of the world and among certain tribes, particularly among the lycanthropes of Madár, the language is considered a sacred gift and a tribute to the goddess. A lot of debate over which language or dialect is closest to the original and thus the most sacred of them all have arisen countless times throughout history.

## **Religion**

Lycanthropes venerate the Nightingale and her divine song above all else. The song of the Nightingale has been a part of the culture and religion of the lycanthropes since the dawn of time, and few are the lycanthropes who go against this heritage. In the southern lands she is generally known as the Phoenix, and views of her vary much, but the fundamental myths are largely the same throughout Aura.

Most lycanthropes are in general indifferent towards the primordial dragons. Some may pay respect to them occasionally, but for the most part lycanthropes view them as lost souls and their tale at best a cautionary one. The great exception is the nation of Satóra and its detractors primarily of Vása and the Heartwood. The nation of Satóra is founded on the ideals of Azurán, one of the two remaining dragons. According to Satóra, the world must stand united and ever vigilant of threats, just like they claim Azurán does. Their enemies invoke the tale of Azurán's counterpart Išáraka, to promote freedom and to depict Azurán as a tyrant and traitor who went against the word of the Nightingale. Despite these theological conflicts, both sides still revere the Nightingale as the first and prime Creator, where they differ is in their views of the primordial dragons and where to place the blame. But beyond these lands, most lycanthropes pay little attention to the primordial dragons.

Of the immortals, lycanthropes principally revere Máður, the great wolf spirit thought to be the progenitor of the lycanthropic race. Small shrines to other minor immortals are not uncommon in lycanthropic settlements or areas that lycanthropes frequent. Offerings and prayers to immortals are primarily a means of gaining good fortune in hunts or other daily matters.

## **Moons and Astrology**

The moons and stars have always been a great fascination for the lycanthropes, who have worked for aeons to chart out their movements and significance.

While the lycanthropes have long had detailed charts of the stars and their movements, the moons have proved completely impervious to such attempts. Some general rules have been deduced which often predict the appearances and movements of the moons to some degree, but still fail spectacularly a lot of the time due to completely unexpected and seemingly random changes in the courses of the moons.

Because of the great mysteries surrounding the moons, the lycanthropes have always considered them bringers of omens and imbued them with special meanings. Children born

under a full moon are thought to be blessed, and those born under particularly unusual configurations of the moons likewise. Great events of history are often associated with some peculiar moon or configuration of moons. For example, the final battle against the Terror where Ašiva was finally killed is said to have happened under an unusually strong, blood red moon and the great saint Válsanti who lead that battle is thought to have been born under some strong set of moons although which exactly is a matter of great speculation.

### **Burial Rites**

The most common form of burial among lycanthropes is to burn the body, scatter the ashes to the winds, and bury the bones which are left behind by the fire.

Among certain tribes of the north, it is tradition to eat the heart of the dead before the body is burned. This is usually done by one close to the dead lycanthrope, such as their life partner. This has been the practice of many prominent tribes and peoples of the north, perhaps most notably the great saint Válsanti whose heart was consumed by her lover after her death. In this practice, the heart is cut out and consumed raw by the one chosen to do so. After the heart has been consumed, the body is placed on a pyre and burned. The ashes are then scattered and the bones buried in the normal fashion.

This practice of a three-fold burial - the eating of the heart, burning of the flesh, and burial of the bones - is an ancient one dating back to some of the first great civilizations of the north. It is believed that by eating the heart, the dead lycanthrope's spirit will always be a part of the one who ate the heart, as well as the tribe in general. Burning the body represents a freeing of the spirit and also represents the eternal cycle of birth and rebirth - the ashes will be scattered and will nourish the life of the land, causing new life to spring from the old. By burying the bones, the spirit will never forget the land that bore and nourished it in life.

A few tribes have been known to consume the whole body of their dead and only bury the bones. Occasionally the bones are cleaned and kept as a sort of effigy, rather than being buried. These practices are rare, however, and found only among a few remote tribes.

## **Werewolves, Wargs and Wendigo**

---

Werewolves are the vile and bestial spawn of lycanthropes once captured by the shadow dragon Ašiva nearly six hundred years ago. The women were forcefully impregnated in a dark ritual, while the men were slaughtered and fed to the women. The vile and twisted offspring grew up to spread their dark curse across the lands. The first hordes of werewolves, under the command of Ašiva, were known as The Terror and nearly conquered the entire northern lands before finally being defeated by the lycanthropic saint Válsanti. Some escaped into the wild, however, and continue to be a threat to this day.

A wendigo is a kind of physically degenerate and beastly cousin of the werewolves. Unlike werewolves they are intelligent, cunning, and able to lead hordes of mindless werewolves. Their origin is unknown, but they first began to appear in the western regions of Voraz and Várna some time after the fall of Ašiva. Some have suggested that they are very old werewolves who, through age or perhaps other means, have undergone further transformation into an almost completely animalistic form. They are far fewer in number than the werewolves, but their cunning and leadership makes them a serious concern, and their howls have been known to break the hearts and wills of even the stoutest men and women.

### **Physical Description**

The first werewolves came from lycanthropes and looked much like them, although bigger, heavier and much more bestial in appearance. Few werewolves today can trace their line directly back to these first werewolves, but those who can are often the largest and most feral of their kind. The werewolf's curse can spread to most natural creatures with a single known exception of fae who seem to be immune, perhaps as a result of their own curse.

Most often the term *werewolf* refers both to those born and those cursed as such creatures, with no distinction. When a distinction is necessary or preferred the name *warg* is often used to refer to those who were not born as werewolves but were cursed through bites or other unfortunate circumstances. We will use this distinction in the following.

A werewolf stands on average around 180-190 cm in height but may easily be as tall as two meters or more. They have stronger bones and more muscular builds than lycanthropes, easily weighing around 100-120 kg on average. There is no great difference in size between male and female werewolves. Their skulls are slightly flatter and their faces longer, with a more canine appearance than that of lycanthropes.

Wargs are at first not much different in appearance from their former selves, but behaviour deteriorates quickly into the uncontrolled rage and bestial fury characteristic of the werewolf. Those who survive slowly degenerate into more bestial forms similar to the werewolves - a slow and excruciatingly painful transformation which is almost as terrible to behold as it is to go through. It is thought that the pain is partly what drives the rage. Despite this, even the oldest wargs retain a general appearance of their former selves and never look exactly like the werewolves. Particularly, they generally remain the same size as before, or may even appear to shrink due to changed posture. Young children who become wargs change the most from the curse and are harder to distinguish from werewolves once they grow up.

Neither werewolves nor wargs tend to live very long. In fact the average lifespan is thought to be no more than 15 years at most because of the violent and brutal lives they lead. Wargs have the lowest average lifespan, rarely living more than a few years after their curse. Only the strongest and most cunning werewolves live longer. Some of these, it is thought, become wendigo in their advanced age but it is unknown when exactly this transformation occurs.

A wendigo looks like an old, emaciated werewolf but they walk almost exclusively on all fours and in general have a much more animalistic look. They are the same size as werewolves, but tend to be much more slender and consequently weigh much less. Wendigo are very agile and swift runners, and are particularly skilled at moving around without being seen or heard.

## **Reproduction and Sexuality**

Werewolves are driven entirely by uncontrollable rage and lust, and have no concept of bonding. Werewolves do not form relationships, and rape is the norm. Werewolf males regularly rape both females and males, in the latter case primarily to assert dominance.

A werewolf pregnancy is significantly shorter than that of lycanthropes and most other races, lasting around 140-180 tides (approximately 4 months by our measure) from conception to birth. Werewolves also reach maturity earlier than lycanthropes, around the age of 10.

Aside from normal breeding, werewolves spread their curse in two ways. First of all, most living creatures, with the exception of fae, who are bitten by a werewolf may themselves be stricken with the curse, if the wound is not swiftly and properly treated. Those who inadvertently ingest werewolf blood, or are forced to do so, may suffer the same curse. Other ways to get the curse may exist but are not widely known of.

Second, werewolves can breed with both lycanthropes, humans, ghouls, and wights and the offspring is believed to always carry the curse. Most such victims become wargs and flee into the wild to give birth to their cursed offspring. Those who manage to avoid the curse themselves almost always choose abortion, or even suicide, rather than facing the prospect of giving birth to a werewolf. This has led some to suggest that, with swift and proper care, the child could perhaps be born without the curse. No such treatment is known to work, however.

During the Reign of Terror, werewolves were known to drag off countless female lycanthropes, humans, ghouls, and even wights to become slaves of breeding. These unfortunate souls were routinely raped and kept in large slave pens deep underground. There they lived out the rest of their short lives, giving birth to werewolves. This is one of the major reasons why the werewolves were able to grow so vastly in numbers during this time. Since the end of the Terror, the werewolves have had no great leader to keep their rage in check, which means that most werewolves have since reverted to pure savagery and no longer possess the self control needed to keep such slaves. For this reason their numbers have waned greatly since then.

## **History and Origin**

Around 3276 Fall, long winters had been plaguing the heartlands, and in the frequent snowstorms many lycanthropes disappeared without a trace. These disappearances were spread out over vast areas, only a few disappearing in any one place and so arousing little suspicion. But the truth was far more chilling even than the freezing winds.

The missing lycanthropes were brought deep into the Fang mountains north of current day Satóra by their captor, the shadow dragon later known as Ašíva. There the males were tortured, mutilated, and slain, while the females were forcefully impregnated in a vile ritual and forced to consume the blood and flesh of the slain males. The dark offspring they gave birth to were the first werewolves, born from terror and bound by the blood of their creator to do her bidding unquestioningly. Those women who eventually died were fed to the others, and a steady stream of new captives continued to keep their numbers growing. As the first werewolves grew up they would rape these women, perpetuating the nightmare breeding without the original ritual and growing ever in numbers.

Once the werewolves made their appearance in the upper world, many attempts were made to root them out and track them down to their source. Many great battles were fought, but in the end they all fell to the Terror, as the hordes of werewolves came to be called. For nearly two centuries the werewolves subjugated the lands, driving its people into hiding in the wild or on the vast oceans. In the end, when all seemed lost, the scattered peoples of the heartlands rose up under the banner of Válsanti, a casteless lycanthrope who rose from the ashes of one of the great fortresses of that time and lead the last rebellion against the werewolves. In that last great war, Ašíva was finally revealed and destroyed, and with her ended the Reign of Terror.

Far from all the werewolves were killed in that war, and many escaped into the wild and hid in far corners of the world. Many gathered in the bleak and scorched lands north of Várna, and eventually founded their own nation of Voraz. There they remain to this day, while many others prowl the wild regions or sneak around in the midst of the other races, spreading their terror.

No one knows where the shadow dragon Ašíva came from. It was not until she was unveiled by Válsanti that the people of Aura were even aware that she existed. Until then there had been whispers of a sinister intelligence behind the otherwise mindless werewolves, but the true nature of this power behind the horde could only be guessed at.

## Personality and Behaviour

Werewolves are vicious, brutal and completely driven by an unrestrained lust and rage. Only under the influence of a particularly strong leader can they be considered even remotely civilized or intelligent. They rarely build cities or strong communities, rather living in ruins and other abandoned places, often having driven out the original inhabitants.

It is told that werewolves know neither pain nor fear. The great saint Válsanti is said to have tortured countless werewolves in brutal fashion in an attempt to learn their minds and make them fear her. Some claim she alone succeeded where all others have failed.

Wendigo are extremely cunning and shifty, and perhaps exactly because of this they are much more cruel and sinister than werewolves. They enjoy hunting their victims over large distances, teasing them with the prospect of escape but of course never intending them to actually get away. They torture, rape and pillage with immense glee.

### **Relation to Other Races**

Werewolves have no relation to other races other than as prey. Most werewolves are entirely unable to control their rage and lust, and may even attack each other in the absence of a strong leader to keep them under control. The lairs and ruins of werewolves are said to be flowing with blood and corpses from constant battles. With Ašíva gone and her power broken, this is believed to have grown worse and is given as a reason why the werewolves have so far failed to regain the power they held under her leadership. Regardless, the werewolves remain a serious and constant threat to all civilized races, and should they gain a new leader the result could be devastating.

Wendigo are the spies and commanders of the werewolf hordes. While they can not gather and control as vast hordes as Ašíva did during the Reign of Terror, they are able to lead and inspire bands of werewolves and in doing so pose a serious threat. They are also very effective at gathering information and hunting down individuals.

## Culture and Society

Werewolves have no real culture, and their society is tenuous at best in the absence of a true leader to control and guide them. Wendigo can occasionally serve as such a leader on a small

scale, keeping small bands of werewolves together in a tenuous community or leading them on raids against the civilized world.

### **Clothing and Fashion**

Werewolves have no fashion, and usually wear simple clothes made from hide and fur, or indeed no clothes at all. Werewolves lack the culture and art of lycanthropes, and rarely practice the same forms of tattoos and piercings as the lycanthropes. However, crude scarifications and even mutilations are common and often used to signify status and personal power. A werewolf with many scars of battle commands great respect among its kind.

### **Arms and Armor**

Most werewolves rarely wear armor, relying on their supernatural resilience and regeneration. Those who do wear armor generally steal it from their victims. Few werewolves have the patience and self control needed for making armor or other such items, beyond the most crude pieces made from hide and bone.

Likewise, werewolves mostly prefer to use their claws and teeth as weapons, although they will occasionally pick up weapons from enemies or make simple clubs and pikes from bones, wood and stone. When under the control of a proper leader werewolves are capable of using much more sophisticated arms and armor, usually taken from their enemies.

### **Diet and Cuisine**

Werewolves are entirely carnivorous and eat anything they can get their hands on, including carrion and each other. They rarely cook or otherwise prepare their food, instead eating it raw. Wendigo are much more likely to prepare their food, though the act of preparation in this case stems more from a desire to dissect and defile the corpse than anything else.

### **Languages**

Werewolves have their own language, known as Narumach. It was supposedly taught them by Ašiva, although its deeper origin is entirely unknown. It is a dark and profane language, and few non-werewolves dare speak it, fearing the dark power of the words. Few werewolves learn other languages, though many wendigo do to better spy on their enemies.

## **Religion**

Werewolves venerate their creator, the shadow dragon Ašiva, exclusively despite her supposed destruction. The werewolves do not believe that she is truly gone, and some of those who retain a semblance of control - wendigo in particular - work tirelessly to bring her back through dark and terrible rituals which often involve mass sacrifices of innocent captives.

### **Burial Rites**

Werewolves don't bury their dead. If they are not consumed entirely by other werewolves, the carcass is generally just left to rot where it fell. While animals generally avoid werewolves, it does happen that an animal consumes the cursed blood and becomes tainted. Such animals can cause great harm in their rabid rampages. The blood and decomposing flesh has even been known to corrupt the ground, plants and trees, leading to wide areas of twisted and diseased ground where all life becomes twisted and mad from the curse.

Wendigo are known to perform burial rites for their own, unlike the bestial werewolves. This rite includes carefully removing the skin of the dead before the flesh and organs are consumed. The skin and bones are then preserved and kept as a kind of effigy.

## **Humans**

---

Humans are descended from lycanthropes only some five thousand years ago. The first accounts of humans come from the southern lands of Amarin between Madár and Nyíre. They likely descended from the lycanthropes of Amarin - originally exiles of Madár - but no one knows precisely how or why the human race came to be. They have always struggled for a place in a world where they are at best ignored and at worst seen as degenerate freaks or cheap slave labour. In the lands of Madár humans are viewed as diseased and possibly contagious vermin much like werewolves (although werewolves are quite rare in the south) and are killed on sight, not even deemed fit for slavery like the ghouls.

## Physical Description

Humans are slightly larger than lycanthropes on average, standing 165 to 185 cm tall and weighing 60-80 kg on average. Unlike lycanthropes, males are generally taller and heavier than females and humans of the north are slightly smaller and heavier than those of the south.

They lack the tails, digitigrade feet, wolf-like ears, and fur (though particularly the males retain some measure of body hair). Their noses are less flat, their eyes smaller, teeth flatter and they have no claws. They also have five fingers and five toes on each hand and foot, where lycanthropes have only four.

Some humans retain a slight trace of canine features, such as stronger than average body hair or particularly sharp teeth, but such minor traits are rarely of any real note and most humans lack any canine features entirely.

Skin colour ranges from light brown to dark or nearly black, and hair colour varies from brown to black with a few cases of red. Eyes are either green, amber, brown, or nearly black. Albinos are not as common among humans as lycanthropes, only occurring rarely.

Humans live on average around 35 years under normal living conditions, but some have been known to live as long as 60 or 70 years under favourable conditions.

## Reproduction and Sexuality

Humans are not quite as strongly monogamous as lycanthropes, and vary much more in how they form relationships. While many bond with a single partner at a time, these relationships are often not for life. Many others live more promiscuous lives.

A human pregnancy lasts between 345 and 392 tides (around nine months by our measure). They reach sexual maturity around the age of fourteen and are fully grown around eighteen.

While humans can breed with both lycanthropes, werewolves, and wendigo the offspring is never human, there are often serious complications associated with the pregnancy and in the case of the other parent being lycanthrope the child is known to become infertile.

## History and Origin

The first records of humans date back to an account from 1680 BF, more than five thousand years ago, in the mountains between Nyíre and Madár. It is believed that they descended from the Madárran exiles of those regions, but nothing else is known about their origins.

At first the lycanthropes of Madár considered the humans a strange new disease, and sought to eradicate what they perceived to be a serious threat. Many humans were hunted down and killed or captured for dissection to determine the cause of their disease and a possible cure. The Madárrans never did find a cure, and the mountains proved an effective hideout for the humans, making the hunt for them difficult. Added to the problems were the exiles of Amarin who did not approve of Madár invading their territory, and so sided with the humans.

Thus many humans managed to stay hidden and to survive, until the Madárrans decided to simply keep them out of their borders. Since then no human has been allowed inside Madár, and those who are caught there are summarily executed. While many humans remained in Amarin, others migrated west into Nyíre and eventually found their ways north to other lands in their desire to escape the prosecution of Madár. Unfortunately they were not often given a more friendly welcome elsewhere and have always struggled against adversity and suspicion.

## Personality and Behaviour

Humans do not wander quite as much as lycanthropes and have a greater tendency towards forming permanent or semi-permanent settlements. Despite this many humans still live as nomads like the lycanthropes.

## Relation to Other Races

Humans have historically had a hard time finding a place of their own in the world, and have always lived in the shadow of other races, particularly the lycanthropes. Some are openly resentful towards the lycanthropes, while others try to fit in with them instead. In many places they are still kept as slaves or even hunted and killed.

## Culture and Society

For the most part, humans share the culture of the lycanthropes, particularly those humans who live among lycanthropes.

The closest to a human nation in all of Aura is the small nation of Añhem west of Aiúna. The northern islands of Ililakúsa and certain parts of Nyíre also have high concentrations of humans but can not be termed nations as such. Elsewhere humans live either among lycanthropes who outnumber them or as nomads in scattered tribes of their own.

### **Clothing and Fashion**

Humans wear much the same kinds of clothes as the lycanthropes, but due to their general poverty they rarely possess silks and other fine materials.

### **Arms and Armor**

Since most humans are quite poor, they rarely wear fine armor, sticking mostly to leather and hide which they can produce themselves or which is relatively cheap to buy. Humans use much the same weapons as lycanthropes, although again they are rarely the finest. Human-made blades are less often curved like lycanthropic blades tend to be, and are also often heavier. Axes and many weapons adapted from common tools are popular among humans as well.

### **Diet and Cuisine**

Humans are more omnivorous than lycanthropes, regularly supplementing their diet with vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds. Since agriculture is not well developed, various grains are only rarely used, and then mostly wild varieties. Humans are also more likely to hunt and eat birds or their eggs, often not having the same taboos about this as the lycanthropes.

### **Languages**

The human race is thought to have originated in the mountains of Amarin between Nyíre and Madár and spread out from there. For this reason most humans of both north and south speak Áuvaséil as their native tongue, although many of the humans living among lycanthropes of the north have adopted one of the local tongues, either as a secondary or their primary language.

## Religion

Humans for the most part share the myths and religion of their lycanthropic kin, though they are not always as pious and many explore other myths and faiths, feeling less attached to the Nightingale and her song than the lycanthropes.

### **Burial Rites**

Humans in much higher degree than lycanthropes tend to bury their dead, although burning and scattering of ashes is also common particularly with those humans living among lycanthropes. Another tradition, particularly in old Vása and among many sea faring tribes, is to offer the dead body to the sea or the rivers where it will be lost in the depths.

## Ghouls

---

Ghouls are subterranean cousins of the lycanthropes, most of them living in deep caves far beneath the earth where they hunt and scavenge what food they can find in the deep. Lycanthropes view them with disdain, seeing them as degenerates and lost souls. This feeling is mixed with a generic fear that the ghouls might try to overrun the surface. Many of those on the surface live as slaves or among human tribes. Their exact numbers are unknown, but they completely dominate the Chthonic realm and their total number may even outnumber the lycanthropes. This is mere speculation, however, perhaps born more out of fear than fact.

## Physical Description

Ghoul females are about the same size of lycanthropes, while males tend to be bigger, from 170-180 cm on average. Both males and females are much more dense and heavy, with thicker bones and more muscular builds, than lycanthropes. They move with a noticeably crouched posture, occasionally even walking on all fours for brief periods. They are well adapted to

hunting and scavenging in dark, narrow places deep underground.

They resemble lycanthropes in general, but their tails are atrophied and their faces much more wolf-like with short muzzles. Their bodies are entirely hairless, and their skin grey or brown with a stone-like appearance. Their eyes are larger but have the same colours as lycanthropes. Females have distinctly larger eyes than males. Like lycanthropes, ghouls have four fingers and four toes on each hand and foot.

Ghouls have purple blood, rather than red.

Ghouls live on average as long as lycanthropes, about 35-40 years under normal conditions, but may get as old as 120 years under favourable conditions.

### **Reproduction and Sexuality**

Ghouls, unlike lycanthropes, are polygamous. Females generally select their mate, but a single male may have several mates. The largest and most powerful males attract the most mates. Males guard their mates well from other males, but it is not unknown for a female who is dissatisfied with her current mate to leave him and find another one.

A normal pregnancy lasts between 280 and 320 tides (approximately 8 months by our measure), a little longer than for lycanthropes. Ghouls reach sexual maturity around the age of sixteen and are fully grown around twenty two.

Ghouls can breed with werewolves and wendigo, but not with other races with the possible exception of wights. Due to the cold relations between the two it will likely remain unknown. Relationships between ghouls and werewolves or wendigo are non-existent, but rape is common. As with lycanthropes and humans, it is not known for sure if the offspring is doomed to bear the curse of the werewolves since most victims become werewolves themselves and the few who don't would rather choose abortion than give birth to a werewolf.

### **History and Origin**

The first ghouls were created almost 30.000 years ago by the lycanthropes of Sun Aa in the vast mountains of the far north. They were created as golems and imbued with life but no minds, and meant to work in the mines or carving out vast halls in the mountains. Others were set to guard and keep the vast libraries of lore and runes collected by the lycanthropes.

For ages the ghouls worked tirelessly in the depths. But over time, their long exposures to the residual magic of the ancient runes of life and creation gave them minds of their own for the first time. No longer willing to serve mindlessly under their lycanthropic masters, these first few ghouls set about creating a revolution.

In secret they worked to free other golems from their mindless slaving, putting their access to the lore and runes of the lycanthropes to good use. Over centuries they grew immensely in numbers, keeping all the new, free ghouls safely out of sight of the lycanthropes in deep tunnels and caves far beneath the mountains. In these secret places they prepared for war, developing strategies and martial skills as well as magic designed for war.

But not all went as the ghouls planned. Before the ghouls had finished their complex plan and fully prepared, a few of their own betrayed them. The ghouls have always seen this as an act of cowardice, but it is suggested that the betrayers wished to try a peaceful solution first but failed. The traitors revealed their kin and all the schemes to the lycanthropes, who quickly but quietly gathered their forces for a surprise strike before the ghouls could do the same.

The ensuing battle was terrible and countless lives were lost on both sides. It raged for years, deep beneath the mountains in dark caves. The ghouls managed to stand strong thanks to their deep knowledge of the terrain and many secret tunnels, and in the end they struck a serious blow against the lycanthropes and drove them into the mountains and beyond the sea. It is here that the legends tell of how the lycanthropes raised immense mountains of ice behind them to block the pursuing ghouls. How they managed such a feat of magic is still a topic of great debate, many claiming that it was not done without the sacrifice of many lives whose bodies now lie forever frozen in the ice which their howling spirits keep in place.

The ghouls cleared the mountains and took over the ancient halls of their former masters, building their own empire. The traitors who had nearly doomed the plan managed to escape

into the far corners of the world, where over thousands of years they became the wights, a bitter and broken people despised and hunted by their kin. The wights have always claimed that their ancestors simply sought a peaceful resolution.

For a long time the ghouls ruled the mountains of the north, building one of the most impressive and powerful empires ever to exist. But around 15.000 years ago something finally drove them out. The long war that followed is one of the greatest mysteries of the world. To this day no one can say who or what the ghouls fought in those dark years, no records mention it and the ghouls themselves have long since forgotten. The ghouls were driven out of their mountains, and then nothing more happened. Many attempts were later made at reclaiming the mountains, but none of them had any success and many never returned. Even to this day the northern mountains of Sun Aa remains a dark place avoided by all. A curse is said to hang over those mountains, and even the ghouls have long since given up hope of reclaiming the ruins of their first empire from whatever holds it now.

With their defeat, the ghouls sought south and spread out over the lands, settling in mountains and deep beneath the earth where they began rebuilding and carving out new empires.

## Personality and Behaviour

Ghouls value freedom and the pursuit of knowledge. They lead regular expeditions to excavate ancient ruins or discover lost lore or relics of the past. They are an industrious people, building vast cities and living in large numbers together. They are also highly secretive, supposedly having several secret languages which only they know, and it is said that their libraries are full of lore and items which have never been seen by others but the ghouls themselves.

Ghouls are sometimes characterized as slow, but this is a misconception. More properly they are careful and never rash, taking their time to consider their options and actions.

### Relation to Other Races

Ghouls mostly remain below the ground, paying little attention to other races on the surface. Some still live as slaves on the surface, most often born into this life with no contact with or even knowledge of their free kin. Occasionally the ghouls sneak in means for these slaves to rise up and free themselves, but rarely launch actual attacks against the surface.

Many lycanthropes suspect that the ghouls may outnumber them and that at any time they could decide to attack the surface and enslave everyone. There are no signs of any of this being true, but the fear remains.

In fact the ghouls in many places have regular dealings with the surface races, particularly humans but also lycanthropes, and a lively trade occurs between the surface and the Chthonic realm of the ghouls. The nation of Amályar was even founded on a formal alliance with the ghouls, until the ghouls were driven out of their cities by the werewolves.

Ghouls have an ancient grudge against the wights, for what they perceive as the betrayal of their own kin back in the first wars against the lycanthropes of Sun Aa. While the exact relationship between ghouls and revenants are not known, ghouls have never doubted that the revenants were related to wights and always treated them accordingly.

## Culture and Society

Ghoulish society is much more sharply divided between male and female than lycanthrope society. Females are scouts, hunters and guardians, while males build and defend. Males are also more likely to pursue intellectual careers.

Ghouls, regardless of gender, are formidable warriors in general. Over millenia the ghouls have developed and perfected a complex martial art specialized for close combat in tight quarters.

### Clothing and Fashion

Ghouls usually wear little clothes, except when armored. Simple skirts made from long pieces of cloth are often the only garments worn. Heavy capes of wool are often wrapped around the body to keep warm during rest, but rarely at other times. When on the move, these capes can be rolled up and carried on the back.

Instead, ghouls use extensive body paints and wear elaborate masks over their faces. These

masks are usually made from various metals and decorated with runes.

### **Arms and Armor**

Ghouls craft fine armor of metals, but many – particularly females – eschew armor and prefer to rely on their natural abilities and resilience. Most ghouls prefer weapons either aimed at close combat such as short blades strapped to arms, elbows and knees, or thrown weapons.

### **Diet and Cuisine**

Like lycanthropes, ghouls are mainly carnivorous but their diet tends to consist of larger, heavier game. Ghouls also raise large numbers of small, flightless birds known as Kúba, which are native to the mountains and the Chthonic realm, and use their eggs extensively.

### **Languages**

Ghouls speak many widely different languages, some of which are kept secret and may be dating back to their earliest days as slaves to the lycanthropes. The most widely spoken language among the ghouls is Edaên.

## **Religion**

Ghouls venerate the original masters of the runes, the first primordial dragons who first used and mastered the runes of power and dreams. They have never had as close a relationship with the Nightingale as the lycanthropes, though most ghouls honour her as the mother of the first dragons and show her at least passing veneration. To a ghoul, however, nothing is more sacred than the runes which gave them minds, and so they worship the first dragons above all.

### **Burial Rites**

Ghouls practice a form of mummification of their dead and inter the preserved bodies in vast, expansive mausoleums often containing thousands of dead bodies. The dead in such mausoleums are divided by gender, class, and station in particular ways.

The mummification involves the removal and preservation of individual organs as well as the body itself. Ghouls of low station are wrapped in clothes and interred deep in the mausoleum. Those of higher regard are encased in stone caskets formed to fit and look like the body, and then placed upright like statues in a position befitting their station.

## **Wights**

---

Wights are the degenerate, feral descendants of those ghouls who – according to the ghouls – betrayed their own kind in the ancient rebellion against their lycanthropic masters. They live deep underground or in remote corners of the world, and are rarely seen. Ghouls despise them, but most other races are indifferent towards or simply unaware of these reclusive creatures. A few live among the humans and lycanthropes, but most avoid all other races.

### **Physical Description**

Wights look like ghouls in general, but are not as heavy. There are the same physical differences between males and females as for ghouls; females are smaller and have larger eyes. Their skin is pale or even white, as are their eyes. Unlike ghouls, wight males grow modest hair on their head, which is usually black or dark brown. Females remain hairless. Also unlike ghouls, wights have red blood, not purple.

Wights do not live as long as other races on average, due to their harsh conditions. Most wights live around 25-30 years only, although those who live among humans or lycanthropes or in other large groups tend to live longer; around 35-40 years on average. Few wights reach an advanced age, but a few manage to live 60-70 years.

### **Reproduction and Sexuality**

Wights are much more disposed towards monogamy than their polygamous kin, particularly those who live in small groups. In this they emulate their lycanthropic kin.

A normal pregnancy lasts between 280 and 320 tides (approximately 8 months by our measure), the same as ghouls. Wights reach sexual maturity around the age of fifteen and are fully grown around twenty.

It is not known if wights and ghouls can breed, and due to their cold relations it is not likely that it would happen either way. Like ghouls and most other races, wights are sometimes the victims of rape by werewolves and wendigo. Most become werewolves themselves and flee into the wild along with any offspring they may carry as a result of the rape.

## History and Origin

Wights were originally ghouls like any other, freed from mindless slaving by the long exposure to residual magical energy in the runes they were set to guard. When the free ghouls schemed the overthrow of their lycanthropic masters, some betrayed their kin and revealed the plot to the lycanthropes. The wights themselves have always insisted they merely sought a peaceful resolution, before resorting to all-out war, but the ghouls have never accepted this claim. When the lycanthropes fell at the hands of the ghouls and were driven off, the betrayers fled into the far corners of the world to escape being hunted. There they have lived ever since, becoming the wights; a scattered, broken and shamed people.

## Personality and Behaviour

Wights are highly pragmatic, somewhat cunning and most of all reclusive. They trust few but themselves, and they live in constant fear of the ghouls.

### **Relation to Other Races**

Wights stay far away from ghouls, who despise and hunt them. Some live among humans and lycanthropes, but most live in the wild, hiding in far corners of the world where few care about them. Aside from the ghouls, most other races are either unaware of or indifferent towards the wights. Lycanthropes generally treat them like other ghouls or like humans.

## Culture and Society

Many wights live alone or in small groups, far from any civilization. A few live in larger groups. The only close thing to a wight nation is the Frozen Wood in the furthest north-west of Remla which is home to a large clan of wights who live there in peace.

### **Clothing and Fashion**

Wights primarily live in cold and inhospitable regions, mostly of the north, and their clothes speak of this. Furs and skins are the most common materials. Males tend to keep their hair in long pony tails. Wights practice some body painting, but no extensive tattooing or other body arts like many other races.

### **Arms and Armor**

Wights produce a large variety of arms and armor, mostly of hide and leather but also of metal which they mine in the mountains. As with many things, their craft is pragmatic and concerned little with decorations and other artistic elements. Their armors and weapons are meant for use not for ceremony, and it shows.

### **Diet and Cuisine**

Wights are more omnivorous than lycanthropes and ghouls, thanks to a life in the most inhospitable and untamed regions of the world where food can be hard to come by. Lichen and mushrooms play an important part in their diet, as do fish, particularly salmon from the vast rivers of the north where many wights hunt.

### **Languages**

Wights speak an ancient tongue called Copal which is believed to have been derived from the language spoken by the lycanthrope of Sun Aa, which in turn descended from Samédi, the same branch which contains Ayrnáva.

## Religion

Wights have no real religion and are not particularly spiritual. They tend to be pragmatic, but often build small shrines where they give offerings to various natural spirits.

### **Burial Rites**

Wights bury their dead under small, unmarked mounds of stone. They have few formal rites

associated with burial or other parts of life, due to their pragmatic outlook.

## Revenants and Changelings

---

Revenants are undead or spiritual beings, once thought to have been living descendants of either the ghouls or the wights. They originate from the fabled lands of Eðin Leng in the deep south, but are now thought to have disappeared from the world.

### Physical Description

Revenants must have had much the same appearance as the ghouls or wights in life, but when they first appeared were little more than disembodied spirits. When seen they still resembled phantasmal ghouls or wights, floating in the mists. More often they would possess a body, becoming a so-called changeling. These changelings could easily move around and infiltrate enemy cities or camps. Occasionally such a changeling could be exorcised and the person saved, if action was taken swiftly, but most eventually died. The possessing spirit could keep possessing the body even after it had physically died, thus becoming a walking corpse.

Revenants did not die, already being dead in a sense. But they could be banished or exorcised, and their tie to the world severed.

### Reproduction and Sexuality

As spiritual creatures, revenants did not reproduce naturally. It is thought that instead the revenants reproduced by corrupting the souls of other races. When a revenant possessed another person, that person's soul may have become corrupted when its body died, and could have lived on as a revenant itself. The truth of this remains unknown, however. Some claim that the revenants simply couldn't reproduce, and that this is why there are apparently none left.

### History and Origin

The revenants came from the fabled continent of Eðin Leng in the deep south, beyond the known world. When and how they came to live there in the first place is unknown. From what little has been pieced together over the ages, they were once a living, thriving people who built great empires, but in their greed they stripped the continent of resources, reducing it to a frozen wasteland. Whether by some ritual or by some freak chance, the immortal souls of the dying race of the revenants lingered on, somehow clinging to the world.

In death they sought new lands, and perhaps new bodies to inhabit. Turning their eyes towards the north they set out to conquer all of Aura. They arrived in Vánakilne in 78 BF and began an intensive war against the dragons, lycanthropes and ghouls inhabiting that land. No records exist of the events themselves, except for terrified accounts from the tribes of Ililakúsa speaking of vast thunderstorms and flaming clouds to the north.

In the end the revenants proved too much for the peoples of Vánakilne. The revenants settled in the vast mountains, enslaving thousands of lycanthropes and wights to work in their underground halls. It is said that the revenants worked to build a vast network of portals between continents and even between stars, perhaps to conquer more lands and slaves, or perhaps for even more nefarious purposes. No one can tell.

Once their power over Vánakilne and its surrounding lands had been firmly cemented, the revenants turned their gaze east, to the heartlands of Aura. For almost fifty years the revenants warred with the people of the heartlands. Only the great nation of Várna stood firm against the invaders, but they knew it could not last. It seemed like it was only a matter of time before the revenants would lay the lands empty.

And then they simply disappeared, although not without a sound. Something happened, to this day no one knows what, but in a raging storm of fire and thunder the revenants seemed to have been cleansed from the world. The cataclysm left most of the heartlands ravaged and scorched, and even to this day there are places which still bear the scars, such as the ashen plains of Voraz which have never recovered. But no lands suffered more than Vánakilne and its surrounding lands. Great masses of land sank into the ocean, along with countless ancient cities and towers of the ghouls. The whole mountain was blackened by fires, and to this day it

is a cold, dead place haunted by terrible spirits and perhaps even worse creatures brought there from alien worlds by the revenants.

Some say the revenants summoned something through their gates which they could neither control nor banish again, and they all perished at its hands. What became of this supposed being is another mystery; perhaps it perished too, or perhaps it is still there, deep within the blackened peaks of Vánakilne, slumbering away until some day it will awaken once more.

Whatever the case, the revenants disappeared as suddenly as they had come, and none have been sighted since, and everyone hopes they will stay away forever.

## Personality and Behaviour

The revenants were nothing if not power hungry and ruthless. They had little regard for other creatures, enslaving and killing thousands upon thousand of people in their quest for total dominance. Perhaps death made them this way, but there are some signs that they were ruthless even while still alive.

### Relation to Other Races

The revenants may have been distant cousins of the ghouls or wights, but they were evenly hostile towards both as well as all other races.

## Culture and Society

The revenants were possessed of immense magical power and lore, but little else is known of them or their culture. They supposedly expanded vastly upon the halls of the ghouls in the mountains of Vánakilne, and built many towers both hidden and well known throughout the heartlands. Many of these towers - now all but in ruins - were said to house portals between each other or even leading to other worlds. The ruins that remain are widely feared and avoided, but are said to hold many secrets.

### Languages

The revenants spoke a secret tongue of their own, but next to nothing is known of it. Among scholars it is known as Zitol, and only a few fragments of written text exists in it, not nearly enough to piece together the full language or even a large part of it.

## Religion

From all accounts the revenants were very irreverent beings, disavowing the Nightingale and the primordial dragons. They may have worshipped other entities, but for the most part they seem to have been more concerned about personal power than anything else.

## Fae

---

The fae are tiny moth-like creatures indigenous to the vast mossy forests of Nyíre. Legend has it that the fae were originally one of the lycanthropic tribes of Madár, long before that nation was officially founded, who struck a bargain for knowledge with a demon and were cursed into their current form and doomed with ill fortune. They are little known to other races, and have spawned many legends and myths, as well as many names such as “the hidden ones” and “the dead ones”. Throughout history they have been likened to demons and other spirits, and in Madár the fables lead to the naming of the infamous Elves (an old term once associated with the fae), a group of assassins and infiltrators who have nothing to do with the fae beyond the name and certain employed imagery.

## Physical Description

Fae look much like tiny lycanthropes, standing between 10 and 15 cm in height. Fae have external skeletons (exoskeletons) with scales, as well as large membranous wings like those of a moth. Both their wings and parts of their bodies are covered in a fine fuzz which resembles fur. Males are typically a uniform brown, grey or black with minor red patterns near the base of the wings, while females have bright red or reddish brown patterns on their wings which resemble eyes - two large eyes on the hind wings and a variable number of smaller eyes on the

fore wings. The edges of these eye patterns can glow faintly in the dark.

As insects, female fae do not have mammary glands or develop breasts, but do retain the same basic body shape as their lycanthropic ancestors, including wide hips and a protruding chest which gives the appearance of a feminine figure.

Fae do not speak, not having the ability to produce the vocal sounds of other races. Instead they communicate through a mixture of movement and what has generally been described as a song consisting of clicks and whistles. The language of the fae is not well studied or understood by other races, although it is believed to be a fully featured language.

It is unknown exactly how long fae can live, as very few fae die of old age. If they do not die by disease or accident, fae are traditionally burned alive before they reach old age. The age of this ritual sacrifice is not fixed, but depends on the individual. Some fae are sacrificed at an early age, while others live for many decades. Supposedly a fae knows when its time has come.

## **Reproduction and Sexuality**

Fae are heterogamous, which means that they can reproduce both sexually and asexually depending on circumstances at the time. Female fae can reproduce without fertilization by a male, through parthenogenesis, typically in times where males are unavailable. The children born of a lone female in this way are always female, though not necessarily genetically identical to their mother. This leads to a relatively large majority of females among fae. Once males are again available, the females are capable of mating with them and creating normal offspring of both sexes. Thus a male fae always has two parents (a mother and father) while a female may have only a mother.

Regardless of whether they reproduce sexually or not, a female lays between two and three eggs. The larvae hatched from these eggs are wingless and almost entirely transparent. During their first year of life they undergo a metamorphosis into their adult form.

Due to the large majority of females, fae are highly polygamous by nature. Fae do not bond with a partner, and such concepts as marriage are foreign to them. It is not uncommon for a healthy male to mate with hundreds or even thousands of females over a lifetime and he almost never takes part in the care of the children. The act of mating usually occurs in flight and is accompanied by vivid song which may incite others in the area to mate as well. This effect can quickly spread over immense areas, and the mating song may also help lead females towards available males.

## **History and Origin**

Only little of the fae and their history is known among the other races. Legends among themselves, and roughly pieced together by others as well, claims that they were once one of the tribes of lycanthropes in what would later become Madár. Some have suggested that the tribe in question may have been the Dao tribe, which thrived in the western parts of Madár and eastern Nyíre more than forty thousand years ago, but disappeared from all later records.

According to the legends, these lycanthropes were skilled in the arts of magic, and sought to expand their sight and knowledge. In a bid for great wisdom and knowledge of the future, the tribe struck a bargain with a powerful demon. The name of the demon is said to have been Márid, but nothing else is known of it. The tribe used their newly gained knowledge to wage war on the other tribes, but as time went by they began to change. In despair at what they were becoming, they fled into the forests and hid themselves. There they became the fae, the hidden ones, the moth people and over time they disappeared from memory.

## **Personality and Behaviour**

Fae are mysterious and reclusive. Little is known of them or their society. Seen in the eyes of other races they are somewhat primitive, a view which is not entirely unjustified, but they are both intelligent and civilized in their own way.

## **Relation to Other Races**

Fae are reclusive and avoid all contact with other races. Much of this reclusiveness stems from their curse, but also due to extensive abuse they have faced at the hands of other races. This has led many fae to harbour a deep hatred of other races and some of them actively hunt and

kill lycanthropes and humans in the vast forests. It is not for nothing that the assassins of Madár took their name and imagery from the fae.

## Culture and Society

Fae live in widely scattered groups of only a few individuals each. Most fae have no actual cities, instead moving constantly between temporary settlements. A few exceptions are the nation of Kumica which is the only actual fae nation with permanent cities, as well as a few movable cities in Nyíre and the Silwood of northern Aiúna.

### Clothing and Fashion

Fae are skilled at weaving, and the only race who can regularly afford silk because of their limited size. Most of their clothes are produced from the silks of spiders and silk worms, as well as feathers gathered from abandoned nests.

### Arms and Armor

Because of their size and physique, fae don't use armor. It would provide little help against anything much larger than themselves anyway. Instead they rely upon superior speed and agility, as well as their flight, to stay out of reach of enemies.

Fae use bows or thrown weapons almost exclusively. Due to their size these weapons won't cause much harm to lycanthropes or humans. The fae are masters of alchemy, however, and concoct many potent poisons, some of which they dip their arrows in. While the wound won't be great, the poison can easily overcome even the largest of targets.

### Diet and Cuisine

A staple of the fae diet comes from the green moss wolves who roam the forests of Nyíre. While neither the fae nor the wolves usually hunt each other, the wolves' milk features heavily in the diet of the fae. The wolves tend to stay near fae communities and the female wolves allow the fay to milk them in return for food and care from the fae. The milk is usually consumed fresh but is occasionally fermented or combined with other foods.

Aside from this milk, fae live primarily on small lizards, toads, snakes, rodents and fish hunted in the vast forests and swamps of Nyire, as well as various insects such as spiders. While small amounts of mushrooms and roots feature in the diet of fae, they are primarily carnivorous. They prefer to capture their prey alive and not slay them until right before they are to be consumed. The animals are usually slain by cutting the throat and letting the blood drain completely as the blood is believed to contain the soul and is not consumed. Fae eat both raw and cooked meat, depending on the source.

Like most lycanthropes, fae do not wilfully harm or consume birds or their eggs. Fae may even be stricter about this taboo than lycanthropes, as they believe birds to be the reincarnations of their dead and guardians of the land. When a fae is killed by a bird of prey it is explained as retaliation for some wrongful act against the birds.

### Languages

Fae have a language of their own, entirely different from all other languages. Since fae are incapable of producing the sounds of other languages, they use various clicks and whistling sounds and combine these with movements to communicate. The language is generally called nu-ejúmì by the lycanthropes of Madár, but it remains poorly studied.

While fae can not speak other languages some learn to understand and even write them.

## Religion

The fae revere the Nightingale, although like all the other peoples of the south they know her instead as the Phoenix. They have no relationship with the primordial dragons, but pay regular respect to many different spirits of the land.

### Ritual Sacrifice

One of the most peculiar practices of the fae is that of ritual sacrifice. At some point in their life, a fae will feel a calling. Once a fae has reached this point, they undergo a series of rites intended to prepare them for their last journey. Once these rites have been performed, which can take from a few days to several years, the fae is burned alive upon a pyre. The fae believe

that the spirits of these fae join their ancestors as protectors of the land.

Fae who die of illness or by accident before they hear their calling are mourned greatly. Their bodies are likewise burned, but their spirits are thought to have become lost.

It is not known where or why this practice originated, although it is often suggested that it is part of the fae's ancient curse that they are doomed to die in flames.

## Nereids and Medusae

---

Nereids are mimics of the sea, similar in their natural form to large jellyfish. Their nature is so alien that it is widely held that they are not native to Aura but came here from elsewhere, perhaps even a different star. They live in the deep oceans and rarely come near the surface. For this reason they are known to other races almost exclusively through the occasional sighting at sea or beached corpse.

### Physical Description

Nereids are alien creatures resembling jellyfish. They have an elongated, slender bell-shape giving the appearance of a long, flowing gown. Their bodies are semi-transparent and soft, with no bones. They are about 140-150 cm long, but have thin, trailing tentacles which may reach a length of 35 meters and which release a powerful toxin causing intense pain and paralyzation.

The body of a nereid is to some degree amorphous, making them able to take on a limited resemblance to other creatures or objects. Their skin contains cells which can change colour or produce a faint glow, used for camouflage and imitation as well as communication. This mimicry of shape and colour is limited and does not allow fine detail.

Nereids communicate partly through chemicals released into the water and caught by their trailing tentacles. Despite their alien nature and inability to communicate in the usual way, nereids are quite intelligent and civilized though very alien to other races. They possess an advanced, distributed nerve net rather than a central nervous system or brain.

Nereids breathe through their skin and thus have no lungs.

Nereids are the longest lived of the civilized races, regularly reaching a hundred years of age, and in some cases even living two hundred years.

### Reproduction and Sexuality

Nereids exhibit neoteny. The juvenile form is known as medusae. Medusae are amorphous polypous creatures which live on the bottom of the sea in colonies. Not all medusae undergo the metamorphosis into the adult form, some reach maturity without undergoing the metamorphosis. These adult medusae may reproduce but retain their juvenile form. In rare cases an adult medusa may metamorphose later in life.

Medusae are hermaphrodites. During metamorphosis into their adult form their sex becomes fixed, either male or female. Nereids are ovoviviparous, developing from eggs within the female but born live. A female typically gives birth to between 3 and 12 young medusae at a time.

### History and Origin

The origin of nereids is unknown, but subject to much speculation. Due to their very alien nature compared to the other races, it is thought that they may have come from a different world, either by themselves or brought here. By all accounts, nereids are an ancient race however, as there are records of beachings going back to the very earliest times.

### Personality and Behaviour

Despite appearances, nereids are both intelligent and civilized. Nereids are natural mimics, fond of taking on the appearance of what they observe or have seen before. This mimicry is part of their communication and culture.

### Relation to Other Races

Nereids have no relation to other races as they live their entire lives deep beneath the surface

of the vast oceans. Occasional sightings by sailors or near the shore have led to many tales of "mermaids" and similar creatures, no doubt in large part thanks to the propensity of nereids to imitate the form and appearance of what they see. Beachings of these odd creatures have led to even stranger tales among the other races.

## Culture and Society

Nereids live in vast cities on the ocean floor and rarely if ever come to the surface. Most of them may not even be quite aware that there is anything but more water above. They live in the vast, open oceans, but are particularly common among the islands of the Sea of Stars and in the depths of the Vast. They are said to have great, sparkling cities in the deepest oceans, but no one has ever really seen such cities.

### **Clothing and Fashion**

Nereids do not wear clothes or other items of fashion. Instead they take on the appearance and colours of things around them or from memory. The appearance of a nereid changes constantly.

### **Arms and Armor**

Like clothes, nereids do not wear armor, and they rely mostly on their tentacles for defence and hunting rather than artificial weapons.

### **Diet and Cuisine**

Nereids live almost exclusively on plankton and small shellfish.

### **Languages**

Nereids have no spoken language and are incapable of producing sounds. They communicate in various ways through change of form and colour, through faint glows of light, and through the release of chemicals into the water which they detect using their long tentacles.

## Religion

Nereids have been observed in large groups - called blooms - glowing and changing colours and shape in a rhythmic sync. This is generally believed to be a kind of "song" or other reverent performance, in the same way that other races listen to and imitate the song of the Nightingale. While nereids can not sing or speak, it is believed that they can hear, though some suggest they experience the song of the Nightingale through different means than sound.

## Other Creatures

---

Many creatures have called Aura their home throughout history. Some have faded away while others still remain. What the following have in common compared to those described above is that they are either not considered civilized or are thought to be purely mythical in nature. For details on various beasts and animals of the wild, see the chapter on Fauna and Flora.

### Creatures of Sepil Már

Sepil Már and its potential inhabitants remain a mystery since no confirmed accounts exist of anyone visiting these lands. The accounts of explorer and sailor Emil Tau of Madár are the only detailed accounts, but they are rarely taken seriously. In the opinion of most these are nothing but fanciful tales by someone who has spent too long at sea.

#### **Ailuranthropes**

According to Emil Tau's extensive accounts, Sepil Már is dominated by a race not unlike the lycanthropes, but related to felines rather than wolves. Tau describes them as similar in traits to caracals. According to his accounts, they call themselves Mazéru, but Tau calls them ailuranthropes in comparison with lycanthropes. They are said to live in large camps or cities in the deserts and forests of Sepil Már, where they build large maze-like arenas. These mazes hold thousands of slaves, mostly other races, which are kept for amusement and sport.

#### **Minotaurs**

Emil Tau describes a race of bull-headed creatures living as slaves to the ailuranthropes. These minotaurs are nearly extinct now; Tau estimates only a few hundred remain, all of them

trapped in the maze-like arenas of the ailuranthropes where they fight futile fights for the amusement of their masters.

### **Centaur**

A brief remark exists in some of Emil Tau's accounts of a race of horse creatures on the far eastern plains of Sepil Már, where they live as nomads and wage constant war with the ailuranthropes who seek to enslave them.

## **Spirits and Outsiders**

Spirits are beings of memories and dreams. They have no bodies, no fixed forms and rarely any real personalities. Some spirits were once bound to a physical body and may retain memories of that life, but most have fragmentary memories at best. Some possess fragmentary memories and dreams from countless lives. Spirits are manifestations of Šéla, and most inhabit the Mists and are never seen in the physical world. Others inhabit physical bodies, are called through magic or other means into the physical world, or have some other tie to it. The latter are typically spirits of nature or the spiritual remnants of the first Immortals. Most spirits take on many shapes and can change them at will when not bound to a physical body. Most but not all spirits are neutral towards the world and its physical inhabitants.

The benign spirits are usually spirits of nature, or Immortals. They hold memories and dreams of the world and past lives in it, and often serve as protectors of the natural world. Of the malign spirits are two groups, the shadows and the demons. Shadows may or may not have slipped in from spheres of existence even outside the Mists, and among them are the shadow dragons, the most feared and reviled of all spirits. Demon is a catch-all name used to describe just about any malevolent spirit, usually excluding the shadows. They manifest in countless ways and can be difficult to recognise. Most of them are thought to have been driven mad from fragmentary dreams and visions which they can not make sense of, rather than being malign by nature. Like other spirits who manifest in the physical world, demons may have once had a physical life, and perhaps it was something in this life which drove their spirits insane.

Occasionally creatures are seen, or thought to be seen, which defy all attempts at explaining their nature. These are called the Outsiders because of the wide belief that they are not from this world, perhaps having slipped through from worlds beyond like the shadows. However, they may in fact simply be demons or other spirits, or even natural creatures from other stars.



# The Heartlands

The heartlands are named such because they lie in between the other regions and somewhat in the middle of most maps of the known world. It encompasses the vast forests of Iltáime and the lands immediately surrounding it; from Aíúna in the south, Voraz in the north and Vása, Amályar, Satóra and Kóron in the east. The pirate nation of Kormañe is sometimes counted as a part too. It is perhaps the most varied of the four regions, incorporating many widely different races and cultures. Aside from Aíúna, the heartlands have been for the most part a land of wandering nomads and other itinerants since the dawn of time. In recent times more and more permanent settlements and cities have begun to spring up, particularly in the eastern parts. The nation of Satóra is a prime example of this, starting as a swampy farmland and turning into one of the most powerful and influential nations in little more than a few centuries.

## Vása

---

**Capital:** Vasúv

**Population:** 16.780.000 (lycanthropes 60%, humans 25%, others 15%)

**Government:** Theocracy

**Religions:** Nightingale, Išáraka, Máður

**Languages:** Ayrnáva, Àuvaseíl (humans)

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:**

**Exports:** Cider and apple wine, spider silk, weapons

Vása once encompassed everything between Iltáime to the west and Aña Kiéla in the north. Once a land of vast, open fields and countless tribes of wandering nomads, Vása has seen its lands divided by the emergence of other nations and its people gathering more and more in cities and other permanent settlements. While the people of Vása hold on to their rugged independence and love of freedom, their lands are undeniably changing.

## History

The first peoples of Vása were lycanthropic nomads from the north, wandering down from Aña Kiéla in times immemorial. Finding a fertile and relatively warm land, many tribes settled here while others continued further west into Iltáime and beyond.

The first great division of Vása occurred in 1775 Fall with the formal founding of Amályar. Despite this, the two nations have always been close and the border between them highly fuzzy until more recent times. To most people it was still one land. With the founding of Satóra in 143 Spring the land was further divided, and more sharply so.

## Geography

Aside from the two forests in the north and south, Vása is a land of open plains of tall grass cut through by rivers as they wind their way towards the sea.

### Walk of Kings

The Walk of Kings is an area of bare hills considered sacred to the tribes of Vása. In the past it served as burial ground for kings and others of note. The dead would be carried through these hills in a last procession to a cliff overlooking lake Ízak. There the body was burned, the ashes scattered over the waters, and the bones buried on one of the hills. Countless old stone monuments remain here, scattered among the peaks.

Today the area is highly contested, claimed by both Satóra and Vása, none of which are willing to give up what they consider ancient ancestral land.

### Ryšán Fields

The southern hills and fields of Vása are home to many nomadic clans and few settlements. It gains its name from the clan of Ryšan which ruled here before the arrival of the revenants.

## **Dew Wood**

This dense area of trees and marshland is plagued by swarms of mosquitoes and other insects and the area has an eerie reputation. Despite this both Satóra and Vása fight regularly over it and its resources.

## **Southstep Mountains**

The Southsteps provide Vása with a steady stream of iron and silver, most of which is dug out by slaves in and around Érontas and made into weapons for the rebel forces in Vása or shipped to the Heartwood or even as far as Várna.

## **Fields of Swallows**

Named for its vast and impressive flocks of the namesake bird, the fields of swallows is home to many nomadic and semi-nomadic people who stick proudly to their old ways. It is the most populated part of Vása, with several permanent and semi-permanent settlements.

## **Singing Woods**

Named for the many birds who live and nest among its canopies, the Singing Wood is also famous for its ancient and massive redwood trees as well as the large number of goldspinner spiders which fill the wood with their large, golden webs between the trees. Many small settlements of lycanthropes and humans live in this forest, harvesting silk from the spiders.

## **Risen Peaks**

Not the tallest mountains, but among the most difficult to traverse, the Risen Peaks were a favoured hiding place for many tribes during the reign of terror due to the relative ease with which the tribes could remain hidden from the werewolves there. The mountains were also home to a number of fortresses, all well hidden within the rugged mountains. The most famous of these fortresses was without a doubt the mighty Vális, which stood for more than a century against the werewolves until it finally fell in the year 3485 Fall.

## **Locations**

In the past Vása had few permanent settlements. In recent times, particularly after the end of the Reign of Terror, more cities, villages and farm holds have begun to appear here.

### **Vasúv**

Vasúv is the capital and northern seaport of Vása, a bustling city where ships arrive from many lands and where people of all sorts converge to trade.

### **Rémen**

Rémen is the western-most city of Vása, marking the western border against Amályar. In the past it was a thriving city of the lycanthropes. During the early years of the Reign of Terror it served as one of the focus points for the campaign against the werewolves. It was here the legendary Herġan gathered the last great army against the werewolves, and the fall of Rémen usually marks the official beginning of the Reign of Terror. After the Reign ended Rémen was rebuilt, but to this day it remains but a shadow of its former self, more fortress than free city.

### **Érontas**

The southern jewel of Vása, Érontas provides the lowlands with stones and metals mined from the southern mountains where many slaves work. It also serves as a favourite stop for many travellers, and at any given time most of its free population is merely passing through. Despite its sizeable workforce of slaves, Érontas is commonly known as the City of Rebels due to its unofficial role as the seat of the Vásan branch of rebels against Satóra. In this role it is seen as the sister city to Camp Alfaz in the Heartwood.

The slaves of Érontas, mostly humans, are treated well for slaves and many have their own small villages in the mountains where they live when they are not working in the mines.

### **Vális**

The famous fortress which stood against the Terror for more than a century. It is, however, no doubt most famous as the birthplace of the saint Válisanti. Since the fall of the terror its exact location has been lost, although there are some known sites variously claimed to be the remains of the once great fortress.

## Wolf's Fall

Wolf's Fall is an old site and waterfall, famous as the supposed place where Válsanti was found by the White Bear tribe after her fateful escape from Vális. At the time the site was in ruins, but has been restored in recent years. It is now a small village and shrine.

# Amályar

---

**Capital:** Vizára (lycanthropes) and Kerna (ghouls, now fallen)

**Population:** 13.230.000 (lycanthropes 55%, humans 30%, ghouls 10%, others 5%)

**Government:** Constitutional Diarchy (at present a de facto monarchy)

**Religions:** Nightingale, Azúran

**Languages:** Vestáva, Àuvaséil (humans), Edaên (ghouls)

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:**

**Exports:** Arms and armor, metals

Amályar was the first nation to split off from Vása. It started as a loose association between the ghouls of the mountains and the lycanthropes and humans of the plains. Eventually the two groups signed a formal coalition, forming the nation of Amályar. Over time it has grown into a vast and powerful nation, although it took a devastating blow during the Reign of Terror and has only recently begun to recover.

## History

Amályar was founded as a coalition between the lycanthropes of the plains and the ghouls of the mountains. At first it was merely a coalition of convenience, a trading union, but in the year 1775 Fall the two nations formally signed the constitution and became a single nation.

According to the constitution, the nation of Amályar is ruled by two kings, one representing the lycanthropes the other representing the ghouls. During the Reign of Terror the entire nation fell to the werewolves. With the end of the Terror, the nation was restored along with one of its capitals. The capital of the ghouls, Kerna in the deep mountains, remains in ruins to this day and many ghouls left for other lands. Ever since, Amályar has had only one acting king, representing the lycanthropes. The king of the ghouls still holds formal power, but in his absence the king of the lycanthropes rules alone. Many still believe that a new king will arise among the ghouls and take up his seat to restore the nation to its full glory.

## Geography

Amályar is a land of vast, semi-arid fields bordered by the tall imposing mountains of the north and the impenetrable Heartwood to the south.

### Crowned Peaks

The crowned peaks count as the tallest mountains in the heartlands. They were once home to many ghouls, considered the second great ghoulish empire after the fall of the first empire of ghouls in the far north. During the Reign of Terror this empire was torn apart and many ghouls left for other lands. Today many parts of these mountains are avoided and whispered of in eerie tales. Some former ghoulish strongholds have been reclaimed and restored, but most still lie in ruins, including the vast halls of Kerna, the former capital of the ghouls.

### Herġan's March

The vast, desolate plains at the foot of the Fang Mountains have seen endless battles fought on its ground, and the area is avoided by most. Most people prefer to walk around rather than through its wastes. It is named for the famous warrior, Herġan, who led an army against the Terror but was ultimately defeated. It was also the site of the final clash between the Terror and the free people lead by Válsanti, in which Ašíva was finally defeated.

## **The Fang**

The Fang, or the Fang Mountains, are a small, narrow ridge of mountains bordering the Heartwood. It gained great notoriety as the seat of Ašiva and her werewolves during the Reign of Terror. Many attempts have since been made to cleanse the place of all evil, in particular by the nearby Circle of Spring, but even today it remains a sad and eerie place. At its heart still lies the vast fortress where Ašiva bred the first werewolves and from where she later ruled the lands.

## **Locations**

Along with Satóra, Amályar has seen a large number of permanent settlements and cities sprout up in recent times. The ghouls have always had several large cities in the mountains, although many have now fallen into ruin, and the lycanthropes and humans of the plains are quickly following in the steps of their southern neighbour.

### **Kerna**

The capital of the second empire of the ghouls, after they fled from their northern halls in Sun Aa. At the founding of Amályar it became capital of the new joint nation along with Vizára. It was conquered during the Reign of Terror by the werewolves, and have been lost ever since. Today it is a dark and haunted place. Some attempts have been made at reclaiming and cleansing it, but so far with no luck.

### **Vizára**

Capital of Amályar, Vizára is built around a large waterfall and is known for its beautiful masonry and streets carved into the rock. Like Kerna it was lost during the Reign of Terror, but was rebuilt after the defeat of the werewolves.

### **Arvos**

Arvos has a long history as one of the oldest cities of the region. Like so many others, it fell during the Reign of Terror, but has since been restored. Today it is a major trading hub.

### **Redmarsh**

Redmarsh served as a de facto capital of the region before the formal foundation of Amályar as a nation, and even after that it held great influence. During the Reign of Terror its ruling family was eradicated and the city fell into ruin. It has since been restored but has lost its former status.

### **Tangĝa**

Tangĝa is a trading port, sending regular shipments of soldiers, armor and weapons from Amályar to the war-torn lands of Várna. In recent years, with the loss of the Dragon's Eye island to the werewolves, Tangĝa has been assaulted by fleets of werewolves using that island as an easy gateway past the defenders of Várna. Tangĝa is ill suited as a fortress and has had great trouble defending itself and Amályar from the new threat. It has been kept free mainly thanks to a large force of soldiers from the Circle of Spring and Satóra.

### **The Circle of Spring**

The Circle of Spring is one of the largest and most impressive fortresses. It was built as a small shrine over the grave of the saint Válsanti, but grew with the ages to become a fortress and a symbol of perseverance, endurance and vigilance. At its heart still stands Válsanti's grave, and the main temple of the Nightingale in the heartlands. It is the most holy site in the heartlands, and is regularly visited by pilgrims from all over the heartlands and the north.

### **Vérazet**

The old seat of the Terror and their hidden master, Ašiva. Today the deep catacombs far beneath the mountains are cursed and haunted. Only few dare enter this forsaken place, although some large expeditions have been arranged by the Circle of Spring to cleanse the place. These excursions have only been marginally successful to date.

# Satóra

---

**Capital:** Atlan

**Population:** 17.390.400 (lycanthropes 80%, humans 15%, ghouls 5%)

**Government:** Theocracy

**Religions:** Azúran, Nightingale

**Languages:** Ayrnáva, Àuvaséil (humans)

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Satóra is a very recent addition to the political landscape of the North, formed only a little more than two centuries ago. Originally a land of scattered farmholds living off the wet and highly fertile land, Satóra has practically exploded into a vast and powerful nation best known for its military and naval superiority, expansionist mentality and pious devotion to its leader and founder, Ilia Vañetas who claims divine inspiration.

## History

Before the Reign of Terror, southern Vása was a marshy land with only a few scattered farmholds living off the fertile land. With the end of the Terror the land was in disarray and many conflicts erupted among various new and old settlers. Several small tribes claimed parts of the southern lands, and many were at odds with each other. Some were new in the region, driven out of their former lands by the werewolves, others claimed to descend from the Ryšan people who lived here in the past. Each felt they had a right to these lands.

Into this conflict stepped an unlikely person. Ilia Vañetas was a simple man who had come down from the Stormpeaks along with others of his kin and settled the fertile marshland near the delta of the great river. There he eked out a simple existence as yet another new landowner for a time. As the many conflicts grew, Ilia joined others in defence of their homes, but the endless fights wore on him. During one of the worst years, Ilia claims to have had several visions, showing him the path to peace and prosperity for the lands and its people.

Claiming divine guidance, Ilia united large parts of the southern marshlands and convinced them to stop fighting each other and use their energy instead on building a strong nation. In only a few years he had managed to build a small but growing nation under his rule. Ever since then, Satóra has grown and expanded, with Ilia's goal of uniting all of the heartlands under one banner, to stand ever vigilant against any threats that may arise in the future.

Ilia draws upon the cautionary tale of the Terror and the old myths about the vigilant and dutiful Azúran who guards the gate at the edge of the world forever against those who scratch and claw at it from beyond. His empire is built upon the vision of a world united and vigilant, able to rise up and face any threat, such as the Terror, with superior and decisive force.

While Ilia has managed to convince large numbers of people and have even managed an alliance with Amályar to the north, many see it differently, warning that Ilia's beautiful words may hide a less honourable motivation. Vása in particular is widely against the expansionist mentality of Satóra and what it sees as an infringement upon the freedom of individuals. Large numbers of rebels constantly work against Satóra, although it seems a hopeless battle.

While Satóra was founded more than two centuries ago, its people are convinced that Ilia still lives. Ilia himself has not been seen for a long time, except supposedly by the highest members of the clergy. His supporters insist that he is alive and that he does make occasional, albeit rare, appearances. His rare appearances are attributed to his busy schedule keeping the nation safe, and his longevity to divine favour. Opponents have other, more sinister explanations for both his absence and supposed longevity.

## Geography

Satóra remains a wet yet fertile marshland concentrated around the river and the Bay of Dolphins. Borders are highly fluid and frequently contested by Vása to the east and the Heartwood rebels on the eastern border. In the north Satóra borders Amályar, traditionally splitting lake Ízak roughly in half. Satóra has long claimed the entire region around the Bay of Dolphins, although the Ryšan fields and Dew Wood are mostly under Vásan control.

### Lake Ízak

This lake was at the heart of the tribes of Vása before the founding of Amályar and Satóra. Now it has been firmly claimed by Satóra despite fierce opposition from Vása which considers it holy ground belonging to the ancestors of its tribes. It was used as burial ground for the kings and other great leaders of the tribes of Vása, but due to Satóra's claim it is rarely used for such any more. Now it is a hub of traffic and commerce between Satóra and Amályar, and is perhaps best known for the infamous flood pirates of Lyán

### The Heartwood

While actually a part of the great forests of Iltaíme, the Heartwood is often considered separate. It is heavily contested, with Satóra working hard to tame the wild woods while its depths are home to large rebel forces which oppose the nation at every turn.

### Stormpeaks

These rugged peaks are a near twin to the Fang mountains on the northern edge of the heartwoods. The Stormpeaks served as a refuge for many tribes during the Reign of Terror, and it was primarily these tribes which later repopulated southern Vása and founded Satóra.

### Bay of Dolphins

This large bay is the heart of Satóra and a safe harbour for its vast fleet of both warships and merchant vessels. Its namesake animals are common sights for sailors here.

### Dew Isle

The southern outpost of Satóra, Dew Isle is a barren isle of rock and stone in the middle of the bay's mouth. It has a few small villages supporting the central fort overlooking the entrance and all traffic in and out of the bay.

### Arlan's Rock

Named for the hermit who built a tower here during the Reign of Terror. Today the tower is in ruins and the rock is largely avoided. It is said that the hermit's ghost still remains and defends the small rock from intruders.

### The Crawling Shoal

The Crawling Shoal is a long, low strip of land which is regularly flooded. Its sandy dunes constantly change due to this flooding, lending it its name.

### Southsend Mountains

Often considered a southern arm of the Southstep Mountains, the Southsends are rarely a concern to most people or nations. Satóra considers it part of their land but have little interest in enforcing this view.

## Locations

Satóra is home to some of the largest cities in the heartlands, including the great capital of Atlan. Many of its people are still semi-nomadic, but it is one of the most settled regions within the heartlands. Despite its vast majority of lycanthropes, Satóra welcomes both humans and ghouls as free citizens.

### Atlan

The great capital of Satóra, Atlan is the largest city outside Madár and a truly spectacular sight.

### Lyán

Lyán is the second largest city in Satóra, and is particularly infamous for its flood pirates.

## Rivañ

Rivañ is the central hub in the long effort to penetrate and control the vast forest to the west. The city is constantly at odds with the rebels of the Heartwood.

## Camp Alfaz

The largest rebel camp opposed to Satóra and particularly working against their plans to tame the wild forest. Despite its size, the camp moves around constantly to avoid detection. It is sometimes considered a sister city to Érontas in Vása which also works against Satóra's interests and frequently supplies Alfaz with weapons and other supplies. These supplies often have to be smuggled through the Bay of Dolphins which is firmly under Satórran control. For this reason most supplies for the rebels are mixed with supplies destined for war-torn Várna and are "lost" along the way.

## Fort Varkon

Fort Varkon is the southern eye of Satóra, keeping the bay and all its traffic under strict observation. Very little gets past its ever vigilant eyes. The fort itself is supported by a number of small fishing villages where its soldiers live when they are not on patrol.

# Kóron

---

**Capital:** Tanzil Keep

**Population:** 6.690.000 (lycanthropes 55%, humans 40%, wights 5%)

**Government:** Chiefdom

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður

**Languages:** Oráhva, Copal (wights)

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Only slightly older than Satóra, Kóron was founded shortly after the end of the Reign of Terror by various groups of bandits and others who had fought alongside Válisanti in the war. They settled in the deep valley between the two great mountain chains, around the vast waterfalls there, and formed a loose nation of their own. Kóron is generally peaceful towards its neighbours, but demand great tolls for travel within its borders.

## History

The area has a long history. Due to its strategic location as a gate to the far north it has frequently been held by various groups and nations claiming dominion over it.

The nation of Kóron itself was only founded after the Reign of Terror by groups of bandits and other outcasts who had fought with Válisanti against the werewolves. Feeling entitled to a land of their own for their aid, they took advantage of the chaos and disorder after the war to seize the region. Meeting no resistance they quickly consolidated their rule.

## Geography

Kóron lies nestled in between the two great mountain chains of the north. It is a misty and immensely beautiful land riddled with ancient paths and secret passages.

## The Gate

The gate is the wide valley between the Crowned Peaks and the Risen Peaks. Large masses of water flow down from the mountains, forming one of the worlds largest waterfalls. It is a spectacularly beautiful place, but also foreboding. Since ancient times it has been the most direct path between Vása and the far north, and careful paths have been laid out through its treacherous regions. Because of this strategic importance it has long been fought over by various nations and people trying to control it.

## Locations

Kóron has many secret hideouts and tunnels, but only one major city.

### Tanzil Keep

Originally built by the ghouls of Amályar, Tanzil Keep now serves as the capital of Kóron and the seat of its self-imposed chief. Amusing and ironic to some, although certainly not to the ghouls, the current chief of Kóron is a wight named Amun Sef.

## Kormaňe

---

**Capital:** Batóng

**Population:** 5.090.000 (lycanthropes 65%, humans 30%, wights 5%)

**Government:** Oligarchy (officially), Anarchy (de facto)

**Religions:** Máður, Nightingale

**Languages:** Sámon, Oráhva, Copal (wights)

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

The pirate nation of the north, Kormaňe has gained both fame and infamy throughout history. It has long been a desolate region shunned by the surrounding tribes and inhabited only by a few fearless outcasts and criminals.

## History

Kormaňe was founded during the Reign of Terror by tribes of lycanthropes who fled out to sea to escape the werewolf threat. There they claimed the kormaňe island off the coast north of Vása, but kept small outposts in the inhospitable coast lands east of the risen peaks.

During the last days of the Reign of Terror, they joined forces with Válistanti, sailing from Kormaňe around the southern coasts and up through the waters of the Heartwood, to flank the werewolves near Tangđa. After the victory they returned to their island realm.

## Geography

The nation of Kormaňe was traditionally restricted - officially - to the Kormaňe island north east of Vása. Later, a strip of land south of Aňa Kíela became associated with the nation as well, since the pirates were the only ones who regularly stayed there.

### Kormaňe Island

The Kormaňe island is a large, mountainous island north east of Vása. It is a rugged island, known for its many crags, tunnels and caves as well as for its hot springs and geysers.

### Pirate Bay

This large bay or cove is well protected by its narrow entrance and surrounding mountains, making it easy to defend from outside forces. Large fleets of pirate ships regularly sail these waters, either coming or going. Only ships bearing the sails of the nation and knowing the secret signals are allowed to enter within these waters.

### Salt Marshes

The salt marshes is a long strip of barren and blighted land, struck long ago by some curse or disease. Its is named for the large deposits of salt and other minerals, making the growth of any vegetation virtually impossible. These stretches of dry rocks and minerals are broken up by low areas which are frequently flooded; swamp-like areas covered in rotting seaweed and other material washed up by the tides. The area has long had a sinister reputation and only the pirates occasionally visit these lands.

## Woods of Iriðin

This forest, sometimes known as the Saltwood, is shrouded in tales and myths and even the pirates avoid it and are wary when near its borders. The trees are sickly and strange and it is said that its heart is infested with some twisted sickness.

## Añrok Mountains

This small mountain has much the same reputation as the nearby forest and has long been shunned by the peoples of the north. Despite this the pirates have a few small outposts along its eastern edges, but rarely dare to move deeper into its rocky landscape.

## Locations

The lands of Kormañe are riddled with secret hideouts, temporary ports and semi-permanent hamlets. Only two major settlements are known to exist.

### Batóng

The capital of Kormañe is a wild and rowdy place rumoured to have few laws. Anything can be had here, for a price or for those who can take it for themselves.

### Kóvan

Originally just a small landing site for ships, Kóvan became famous for its role in Válisanti's quest to defeat the Terror. It was here that she met the pirates, while one of their ships was briefly docked there, and it was there that she struck the deal under which the pirates promised to fight on her side in the coming battle. Since then the small landing site has grown into a small city.

## Iltaíme

---

**Capital:** None

**Population:** 11.660.000 (92% Lycanthropes, 8% Others)

**Government:** None

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður, Ašíva

**Languages:** Ersána, Nyfaling, Árlingan, Narumach (werewolves)

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

Iltaíme is the name of the great forest which once stretched across most of the heartlands but has receded somewhat over the ages. It is a wild and untamed land, nearly impenetrable and populated only by wild beasts and a few scattered people. It is said that at its heart lies the ancient cities of the Várna clan of lycanthropes, once one of the most advanced cultures of the north before the conquest of the revenants. But none have seen these lost cities, for the forest seems almost to possess a mind and life of its own, and it does not welcome explorers.

## History

Iltaíme refers to the woods as a whole, which have seen many empires and borders throughout its ages. It once covered the entire heartlands from southern Aña Kiéla to Aiúna. It was home to many mighty lycanthropic empires in the past, before the revenant onslaught. The largest and most powerful of these ancient empires was Várna at the heart of the great forest with control over the Inner Sea and its commerce. With the arrival of the revenants, the heartlands were ravaged by war and the empires crumbled under the overwhelming power of the enemy.

Many lands were scoured and blighted during the cataclysmic disappearance of the revenants, and some, like Voraz, never recovered. Since then the great forest has been much diminished and slowly receding against growing logging and attempts to colonize these fertile lands.

Only two empires remain in the heart of Iltaíme, both remnants of the once mighty empire of

Várna and both much diminished like the forest around them.

## Geography

The forest stretches from Satóra and Amályar in the east to Aiúna in the south, technically including both the Heartwood and Silwood. It is a vast, in many places impenetrable, forest of mighty trees and tangled growths.

### The Inner Sea

The Inner Sea has always been vital to the region's trade and transportation. In ancient times it was a bustling place, thousands of small ships sailing back and forth between majestic cities and empires with goods and messages. With the great fall of these once mighty nations and the later arrival of the werewolves it has become less travelled, but is still considered vital. Recently it has become a battleground as the werewolves seek to gain control over it to have easy access to other lands.

## Várna

---

**Capital:** Várna

**Population:** 6.570.000 (90% Lycanthropes, 8% Humans, 2% Ghouls)

**Government:** Theocracy

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður

**Languages:** Árlingan

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal)

**Imports:** Armor, Weapons

**Exports:**

Once a great empire, Várna has fallen into ruin. Today only a few fortresses remain, constantly at war with the neighbouring werewolves while hoping to restore their lost glory.

## History

Várna was one of the first great lycanthropic empires, and one of the most powerful and influential. They held off against the onslaught of the revenants, but were left much diminished and weakened despite their victory. For a time after they slowly recovered, but were finally overcome in the last years of the Reign of Terror. With the defeat of Ašíva and her werewolves, Várna was reformed to defend against the werewolves who had fled and sought to resettle in these abandoned lands. Since then Várna has struggled to fend off the growing werewolf threat from Voraz while recovering and regaining their lost glory.

## Geography

Várna originally comprised the large stretch of forest between the Mirage Peaks, The Shield mountains and the southern Inner Sea. Today most of these places are unpopulated and ruined, and only the southern shore of the Inner Sea is populated.

### Mirage Peaks

Known for its green valleys and unusual rock formations, the Mirage Peaks were once full of life during the peak of the nation's glory. Today the area is mostly left alone as neither Várna nor the werewolves have any serious interest in these mountains.

### Lake Várna

This large, crystal clear lake was the heart of the nation along with the capital in ancient times, when it was at its peak. After the revenant incursion and the fall of the empire, the lake and the area around it became a ruined, desolate place. Today it is rarely seen and it is said that the forest itself allows few to pass.

## Locations

The lands of Várna are strewn with countless ruins of the past. Some have crumbled over ages, while others have been restored, sometimes several times.

### Várna

The once grand capital of the empire, Várna is now a massive fortress city, many parts still ruined from many centuries of war. It still stands and its people are fierce and determined to fight the werewolves to the last.

### Vélan

In ancient times, Vélan was one of the great cities of the empire, second only to the capital Várna. During the Reign of Terror it became a fortress, but fell as so many others during this time. It was reclaimed and restored with the defeat of Ašiva. Since then it has been at the forefront of the battle against the surviving werewolves. It fell recently to a concerted attack by the werewolves, and has since become a ruined battlefield as the defenders of Várna seek to reclaim their lost fortress.

### Méza

Méza was once a thriving trading port. Like all other cities of the region it has seen many wars and has fallen more than once. After the Reign of Terror it was restored and its defences strengthened. Today it is a refuge for those who are not at the front of the war against the werewolves; women, children and the sick or wounded primarily live here.

### Herað

This small fortress port receives a steady stream of soldiers, weapons, armor and other supplies and aid from Várna's eastern allies. From here all goods are transported west through secret and highly guarded paths to where it is most needed. Despite its closeness it is not associated with the rebels of the Heartwood and Camp Alfaz; at least not officially, as Várna would not risk losing the support of Satóra.

## Alyúme

---

**Capital:** Dafríne

**Population:** 3.900.000 (95% Lycanthropes, 4% Humans, 1% Ghouls)

**Government:** Theocracy

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður

**Languages:** Nyfaling, Ersána

**Currencies:** Šek (common, special and royal), siğna (rare), rams and skins (rare)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Alyúme is a run-off from Várna, well protected by the forest and mountains, but struggling to reclaim what was lost long ago. Alyúme has the majority of its troops in Várna, to help the defence and eternal war with the werewolves.

## History

Alyúme was formed some time after the revenant cataclysm which left the region and its great empires in ruins. It was founded by survivors from Várna who sought to restore their nation to its former glory. Alyúme originally kept the name Várna, but changed it when other survivors to the north restored the former capital and refounded the current Várna.

## Geography

Alyúme claims the entire area surrounding the Via bay as theirs, but most settlements are restricted to the narrow band of land between the bay and the Shield.

## Via Bay

This large bay was a thriving place in the past, but sees little activity these days beyond a few ships from Alyúme or visiting traders from Aiúna.

## The Shield

This distant arm of the Mirage Peaks gained its name because of its defensive nature, like a shield protecting against the beasts of the north. The mountains are difficult to traverse - nearly impossible for a large force - leaving for the most part only the two small strips of land to the east and west to defend.

## Banta and Corre

These two islands officially belong to Alyúme. They are sparsely populated, with only a few small settlements and farm holds. Corre serves an important role as a lookout for ships entering the bay and has several small outposts stationed along its shore.

## Lake Ulvo

Lake Ulvo is the site of many ruins, all of them from to the first empires of the region. Many of the ruins have been searched and well documented, but others remain largely uncharted.

## Locations

Most settlements are concentrated in the Shield or in its shadow. The rest of the lands surrounding the Via bay are used mainly for hunting.

## Dafríne

The capital of Alyúme is a sprawling city, well protected by the mountains. While it tries to hide it, Dafríne is a fortress indeed, and while most of its forces are off in Várna to fight the werewolves the city is far from undefended.

## Háno

The only major trading city of Alyúme. Háno receives many goods from other villages in the region, but most major trade comes from Aiúna.

# Voraz

---

**Capital:** Níðaldým

**Population:** Estimated around 15.000.000 (95% Werewolves, 5% Others)

**Government:** Chiefdom

**Religions:** Ašíva

**Languages:** Narumach

**Currencies:** None

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

The dark nation of the werewolves is widely feared. The werewolves of Voraz are more organised than most, though it is unknown what sort of power leads them and keeps them in line. While they are not quite as great a threat as the original Terror, it is feared that should they grow enough in number and their mysterious leader gain a stronger hold on them, they might once again become a real terror outside of Voraz. Those fighting back are hard pressed.

## History

Voraz was once a wild and fertile woodland, a part of the great forest and its southern parts belonging to the nation of Várna before its fall during the revenant incursion. The cataclysm of the revenants permanently marred and scorched this land however, and today it is a wasteland of ash and bones ruled by werewolves.

Many werewolves fled here with the fall of Ašíva, although it had been home to many

werewolves during the latter part of the Reign of Terror. With the end of the Terror, the werewolves scattered, but somehow many of those in Voraz managed to keep together in a tenuous and chaotic nation which has grown ever since.

## Geography

Most of Voraz is a scorched wasteland of ash and stone, burned down by the revenant cataclysm and now blighted by the werewolves and their dark curse.

### Ashen Plains

Once fertile forest, these plains were scorched and left burnt and black by the cataclysm which caused the disappearance of the revenants. For unknown reasons the land refuses to heal, and now with the werewolves torturing the land even further the Ashen Plains have become a nightmarish land avoided by all but the werewolves.

### Mountains of the Black Blood

The heart of the werewolf empire, these mountains have become a place of terror and death. It is said that the blood of millions taint this place.

### Dragon's Eye

Due to its immensely strategic position in the middle of the Inner Sea, the Dragon's Eye has been heavily contested. It is currently held by the werewolves who conquered it and drove out all lycanthropes only a few years back. They now use it to bypass the vigilant defenders of Várna and gain easy access to Amályar where they regularly launch attacks.

### Long and Dove Island

Largely left alone by the werewolves and having been spared the worst of the revenant cataclysm that ravaged the rest of Voraz, these two islands are rarely of concern to anyone. Many maps don't even show them. It is believed that they were once connected with the mainland, but were torn apart during the revenant cataclysm.

## Locations

Voraz is full of ruins but no real settlements beyond the great catacombs of Níðaldým. The werewolves rarely care to build anything, simply settling in whatever ruins are available.

### Níðaldým

The capital, if it can be called such, of Voraz. Níðaldým is an ancient and deep catacomb once built by the ghouls but now taken over and perverted by the werewolves. No one knows exactly how deep it reaches, or how many werewolves live here.

## Aiúna

---

**Capital:** Líma

**Population:** 17.250.000 (80% Lycanthropes, 15% Ghouls, 4% Humans, 1% Others)

**Government:** Democracy and constitutional monarchy

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður

**Languages:** Inismát, Àuvaséil (humans)

**Currencies:** Rams and skins, siğna

**Imports:**

**Exports:** Clothes, Leather, Wool

Aiúna is a strangely idyllic land, considering the recent werewolf threat from the north. It is a land of lycanthropes living off the rich and fertile hills and mountains. Its people are known for their quiet and peaceful living, their herds of llamas and sheep which they raise for their wool, and for the mild weather and regular festivities they enjoy.

Aiúna is the only true democracy and matriarchy in Aura. Officially Aiúna has a single female monarch, the queen, but her role is primarily symbolic and spiritual. The land is divided into

regions each surrounding a major city. Each region elects a representative for the government, who rules for as long as he or she has support from his or her region. Anyone, except members of the clergy or the noble house of the monarch, can be elected for the government. The clergy are excluded because they hold a judicial role. The clergy presides in matters of justice and also administer the national reserves of food. These reserves are collected through taxes and administered to those in need or in times of scarcity.

## History

Aiúna was a small nation of scattered tribes at the height of Várna to the north. It suffered greatly during the revenant incursion, made worse by a vast civil war spawned by a dissatisfaction with the monarchy and their handling of the revenant threat. The people of Aiúna took up arms and decided to take matters into their own hands. When the revenants disappeared, Aiúna fell into chaos as the two factions warred and everyone starved. In the end the two factions came together to form the current nation, in which the royal family holds a merely symbolic and spiritual role while the people elect representatives among themselves to govern the nation. To alleviate the hunger a national reserve of food was arranged, administered by the clergy, supported by taxes to prevent widespread hunger during scarcity.

## Geography

Aiúna is a land of vast plains interspersed with low mountains and rocky plains. In the west it rises into a tall range of mountains. Officially Aiúna includes the Silwood, but most people of Aiúna leave that forest well alone.

### **Cloudpeak Mountains**

Eternally shrouded in clouds, these tall mountains are immensely important to Aiúna for their rich ores of rare metals, most importantly silver. They are also home to large herds of llamas which are kept primarily for their fur.

### **Shadewood**

This large forest of stone pines and various firs is densely populated. It gains its name for the umbrella-like crowns of the widespread pine trees, which creates a dense roof under which there is constant shade and little vegetation.

### **Moon Isle**

The Moon Isle is considered holy and neutral ground by the peoples of Aiúna. The island has a single shrine on its highest point, which is used for various rites of importance and for resolving serious judicial matters. Only the clergy, the queen and members of the government are allowed on the isle.

### **Lake Aimi**

The area around lake Aimi is home to large herds of sheep. The lake itself is shallow and mostly used for watering the animals.

## Locations

Aiúna was among the first nations of the north to build large, permanent cities and most of its people live in permanent settlements rather than as nomads. Aiúna has the largest number of cities and villages outside Madár, although others like Amályar and Satóra are catching up.

### **Líma**

The capital of Aiúna is one of the largest cities of the north. It is home to the royal family and its head, the queen, as well as the council of representatives from each region.

### **Anǵúri**

The second largest city in Aiúna, and home to the main temple of the Nightingale. The high priest or priestess resides here, and for this reason Anǵúri is often considered a secondary capital, twin city of Líma. It is one of the two cities in which the majority of the national reserve of food is kept, the other city being Anǵos.

### **Fort Aǵnafál**

Aǵnafál is as much a fort as a trading city. Its main purpose is to defend against the new

werewolf threat from Méru, but since the ghouls for the most part keep the werewolves at bay the fort mostly conducts trade and keeps vigil.

### **Anĝos**

Anĝos is a nexus and trading centre, receiving goods from the mountains and the northern plains around lake Aimi. It is one of the two cities in which the majority of the national reserve of food is kept, the other city being Anĝúri.

### **Amun Piu**

The fur capital of Aiúna, Amun Piu is a gathering place for the many farmsteads dotting the region. Here fur is brought from the plains to be sold.

### **Ménarún**

The mining hub of the mountains, Ménarún receives shipments of ore, gems and llama fur from all over the mountains, shipping it down the river to the lowlands. It also holds a small part of the national reserve of food.

### **Erva**

The largest and most important mining city of Aiúna, Erva is a large city in the mountains, having grown rich from its massive production of silver and other rare metals.

### **Lóva**

The largest city within the Shadewood, Lóva sends wood and other goods along the coast to Líma and Anĝúri. It also holds a small part of the national reserve of food.

### **Šálin**

Second largest city within Shadewood. Šálin is rather secluded, but makes a good living from the plentiful fish in the lake and wild game of the forest.

### **Camp Míĉa**

Camp Míĉa is a meeting place for the hunters and trappers of the forest.

### **Líva Grove**

This large grove is one of the largest shrines dedicated to Máður, the great wolf. It is home to a small group of dedicated worshippers who keep it and the surrounding forest.

## **Añhem**

---

**Capital:** Lonely Harbour

**Population:** 10.000 (90% Humans, 9% Lycanthropes, 1% Ghouls)

**Government:** Timocracy (rule by property owners)

**Religions:** Nightingale, Išáraka

**Languages:** Àuvaséil, Inismát

**Currencies:** Rams and skins (rare), siĝna (rare)

**Imports:** Meat, metals

**Exports:** Salt, minerals, shellfish

One of the few human nations, Añhem is also one of the smallest nations in terms of population. It stays on good terms with its neighbours and makes a good living on salt and other minerals harvested or mined from its land, as well as plentiful shellfish from its waters.

## **History**

Añhem began as a single household of Ben Márdi and his family, who came here in the year 5354 Fall during the Reign of Terror. Ben and his family were fleeing the werewolves and found the secluded and inhospitable lands west of Aiúna to be ideal. Hidden near the edge of the forest they built their home. Over time more people fled here due to the werewolves and the conditions for humans in the fortresses of Aiúna. This led to the formation of the modest nation of Añhem, and since then its people have been content with their new home.

## Geography

Most of Añhem is a completely inhospitable plain of salt and rocks. Only the mountains and a small strip of forest along their border provides a bit of cover from the harsh land.

### White Wood

The White Wood is a small strip of forest, mainly birch and beech trees, along the western border of Añhem on the edge of the mountains. Due to its relative hospitality it is home to most of the nation's settlements, particularly along the small river running down from the mountains through the forest.

## Locations

Añhem has only one major city, the rest of its population live in scattered farmsteads, primarily in and around the mountains and the White Wood.

### Lonely Harbour

The only major city of Añhem, the Lonely Harbour is the western-most harbour of the heartlands and most famously served as a landing site for captain Meñarde Lupéru and his crew during their infamous journey to Vánakilne. It was likewise sailors from Añhem who found the poor captain again as he drifted on the waves on a piece of driftwood.

## Allénir

---

**Capital:** Ğil Len

**Population:** 5.700.000 (75% Fae, 20% Werewolves, 5% Others)

**Government:** Tribal

**Religions:** Phoenix, Ašíva

**Languages:** Nu-ejúmì (fae), Inismát (lycanthropes), Narumach (werewolves)

**Currencies:** None

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

While most maps count the Silwood as a part of Aiúna, most people of Aiúna leave it alone. Allénir is the name of the nation of Fae which resides here, mostly unknown to the rest of the world. It is the only concentration of Fae anywhere outside Nyíre and Kumica to the south and it is not known how or why the fae of Allénir came here in the first place.

## History

It is not known when the fae first arrived in the Silwood, or where they came from. Even before their arrival, the Silwood was only sparsely populated due to its denseness and wild beasts. With the arrival of the fae, only the southern edge of the forest is populated and used for logging by the peoples of Aiúna. While most people of Aiúna and beyond know nothing about the fae, there are many whispered tales of the forest and its beasts.

## Geography

The Silwood is technically part of the great forest of Iltáime, but is often considered separate. It is believed that it once covered all of Aiúna.

### Silwood

The Silwood is a dense and almost impenetrable forest. Only the tiny fae move about with ease among the densely packed trees and thorny bushes. The forest is home to many other beasts, and although most are relatively small predators the people of Aiúna have long known to leave them well alone. In recent years the forest has become home to large numbers of werewolves as well. These werewolves claim the forest as theirs, but are seen as little more than bandits by Aiúna and Méru.

## Lakes Vaku and Fuémi

These two lakes at the heart of the forest are rich in fish, but virtually impossible to reach for anything much bigger than the fae.

## Locations

There are few actual settlements within the forest. Some lycanthropic and human settlements can be found on the southern edge of the wood.

### Ĝil Len

Like all fae settlement, Ĝil Len moves around a lot, but stays near the heart of the wood in the area between the two large lakes.

## Méru

---

**Capital:** Mount Keop

**Population:** 9.680.000 (90% Ghouls, 10% Werewolves)

**Government:** Kingdom (ghouls), Chiefdom (werewolves)

**Religions:** Dragons, Ašíva

**Languages:** Narumach (werewolves)

**Currencies:** Siĝna

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Méru is a nation of ghouls, currently at war with invading werewolves who claim it as their own nation. While the ghouls are still in control and holding out against the insurgence, the werewolves are proving a serious concern to surrounding lands as well. While the ghoulish nation of Méru is accepted as a sovereign state by its neighbours, the werewolf nation is seen simply as a group of bandits despite their own claims.

## History

Méru was originally part of Aiúna, one of its two large mining areas. The mines were controlled by the lycanthropes of Aiúna, but mainly worked by ghouls slaving away in the dark. In the year 2578 Fall the ghouls started an uprising to regain their freedom. The war with the lycanthropes lasted for nearly five years and resulted in massive losses on both sides. After a long and protracted war the two sides finally came to a peaceful resolution, whereby the ghoulish nation of Méru was founded with the promise that they would not invade the lowlands, that they would pay a tax of metals and weapons to Aiúna and that they would aid Aiúna in case of invasion or war.

## Geography

The forested mountains of Méru are rich with natural resources, making them ideal for settlers.

### Iron peaks

The Iron Peaks are rich in metals and other valuable resources, and have been mined for centuries by the lycanthropes of Aiúna and later the ghouls of Méru.

### Isin Vale

The Isin Vale was originally part of Allénir and home to many fae. With the arrival of the werewolves the fae have been driven out and the secluded vale is now the seat of the werewolf bandit nation from where they launch their assaults on the ghouls of the mountains.

### Potóu Island

The eastern border of Méru includes this island, which is inhabited by ghouls.

## **Ghoul's Wood**

This wood in southern Méru is cut in half by the sea; it includes the stretch of forest on the Potóu island. Due to an unusual circle of stone statues at its heart, this wood has become home to a large number of ghouls who have settled here instead of in the mountains.

## **Locations**

Both mountains and forests of Méru are riddled with settlements primarily of ghouls, but now also infested with werewolves.

## **Mount Keop**

The capital of Méru is an old mine turned into a vast and bustling city in the mountains.

## **Ghoul's Council**

Ghoul's Council is a large circle of stone statues in the heart of the forest. The origin of these statues which resemble ghouls gathered in a sort of meeting is unknown, but it has naturally drawn many ghouls over time, and many houses have been built around this circle. While the forests are not normally the choice of home for ghouls, many of them have chosen to make this particular wood their home, giving rise to its name.



# The North

The far northern lands were the cradle of civilization in the ancient past, the birth land of both the lycanthropes and ghouls. It is a frigid and harsh land which has resisted change for aeons, but with a colourful past. Its people are wandering nomads, proud of their ways, their freedom and their lands.

## Aña Kiéla

---

**Capital:** None

**Population:** ~20.000.000 (Lycanthropes 55%, Humans 20%, Werewolves 15%, Others 10%)

**Government:** Tribal

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður, Ašiva

**Languages:** Samédi, Àvaséil (humans), Copal (ghouls), Narumach (werewolves)

**Currencies:** None, common šek (rare)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Aña Kiéla lies exactly north of Vása and was one of the first homelands of the lycanthropes in the ancient past. It is the most hospitable and consequently the most inhabited of the far northern lands. Its people - lycanthropes and humans primarily - are hardy but close, living in tightly knit clans of nomads. There are very few permanent settlements, only a few villages which are inhabited a few months of the year, particularly when the scattered tribes move north in the summer. After the end of the Reign of Terror, many bands of werewolves have fled into these vast northern lands to prowl and hunt at random.

## History

Archaeological evidence suggests that the first lycanthropic tribes may have arrived in Aña Kiéla more than two million years ago, possibly from lands even further north. At this time they were primitive tribes of scattered people, with little discernible culture or civilization. As time passed they began to spread out to other lands, and to develop simple civilizations.

Over time, these lands have changed very little. They are still home to proud and free tribes of lycanthropes, and later humans, who eke out a life in the harsh wilderness. It is almost as if these lands resist change and the passage of time.

## Geography

Aña Kiéla is a vast land of primarily open plains and flowing rivers, where one can ride for days in any direction without meeting any other people. It reaches from Kóron in the south to the North Sea in the North, and from the village of Mólo in the west to Beor in the east.

### The White Forest

This large forest in the south of Aña Kiéla is now home to a large number of bandits, loosely related to the bandits of Kóron with whom they mingle and trade. In the past, before the fall of the Terror, it was said to be home to witches and protected by spirits of the land. Since the last day of the Terror, these seem to have disappeared or hidden themselves away in the depths of the wood. Many werewolves now haunt the woods as well, particularly in its northern reaches.

### The Lakes

The five large lakes at the heart of Aña Kiéla are home to many small, semi-permanent settlements, few of which are populated year round but see a lot of activity in the warm seasons when fish and game are plentiful.

### Plains of Running Ice

The northern wasteland is known for its countless streams of fresh, cold water which make their way from the glaciers and mountains to the lower land in the summer. The tribes of Aña Kiéla migrate here in the warm periods to hunt salmon and other plentiful game in the running streams. In the winter the land freezes over, becoming a marsh of ice and snow.

## **Bay of Teeth**

This large body of water connects the north sea with the ocean. Its waters are treacherous and rarely sailed, but its shores are populated by many tribes living off its rich wildlife.

## **Gnawing Woods**

The gnawing wood is a dangerous place, steeped in fables. The beasts prowling the dense forest are fierce and the arrival of werewolves has not helped. Despite this it has a few settlements, although its people are grim and have little contact with the other tribes.

## **Locations**

There are very few settlements in Aña Kiéla. Almost all of its people are nomads who live in easily movable camps of tents, or move between semi-permanent settlements.

### **Dómo**

If Aña Kiéla can be said to have a capital, Dómo would be it. A small village with twenty or so houses, Dómo has only a handful of residents who live here all year. It is the official meeting ground for all the tribes, and has served as such for uncounted generations. Its location on a wide hilltop gives it a good view of the surrounding area.

### **Mólo**

Mólo marks the western-most border of Aña Kiéla. It is a small trading port, populated only a few months a year but serving all year round as a place for ships to dock. Very few ships reach this far north, especially now with the werewolf activity in Voraz and the Inner Sea.

The village is little more than a few small huts of wood and stone and a large flat plain for tents. Occasionally a wandering tribe may be found camping here before moving on. In recent times it has come under attack by werewolves, who use it to access the northern lands.

### **Dam**

The southern-most village and the largest port of Aña Kiéla. While it has few permanent inhabitants, it is frequently visited by traders and pirates.

### **Pordu**

One of the busiest villages during the summer season, when large numbers of people flock to these regions to hunt for salmon and the bears that follow them. During the rest of the year Pordu is abandoned to the ice and snow.

### **Purlom**

Purlom has a relatively large number of semi-permanent inhabitants, people who live here most of the year. It sees most of its activity during the summer season, when all the people migrate north to hunt and fish.

### **Han and Teña**

Twin cities, Han and Teña are abandoned most of the year, but are busy ports during the summer season.

### **Lahta**

Lahta has served as port of choice for many adventurous groups seeking to sail north to reclaim Muran and the rest of Sun Aa. It has a small core of permanent settlers, some of which are foreigners, keeping the inn and warehouses.

### **Ngervi**

One of the very few villages with a significant permanent population in all of Aña Kiéla, Ngervi in the northern part of the Gnawing Wood is a secluded village inhabited by a grim folk. The village conducts occasional trade with Lahta and other local tribes across the bay, but mostly sticks to itself. It is frequently attacked by werewolves.

# Remla

---

**Capital:** None

**Population:** ~5.000.000 (Lycanthropes 70%, Wights 15%, Werewolves 10%, Others 5%)

**Government:** Tribal

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður, Ašiva

**Languages:** Haiki, Copal (wights), Narumach (werewolves)

**Currencies:** None, common šek (rare)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Remla lies far to the north-west, isolated and mostly devoid of civilized beings. It is perpetually covered in snow and steeped in myth and tales. Little enough is known about it and its few peoples, but it is said to be ruled by an ancient witch who lives in the western forests and commands the spirits of ice and cold. Some legends say that her and the people she commands can trace their ancestry back to the mighty lycanthropes of Sun Aa. The werewolves seem to have a keen interest in these lands of late.

## History

Remla has little history, at least of concern to the world at large. Like Aña Kiéla it has been home to wandering tribes of lycanthropes and other hardy races for ages, with little distinction between the two lands or its people. Remla is much less hospitable than Aña Kiéla, however, and thus less populated even in the relatively warm seasons.

## Geography

Remla is the strip of land south of the Icerim and Whitecap mountains, which shelter it from the worst of the northern winds. Despite this it is a land of eternal snow and ice, with temperatures rarely rising above freezing.

### Whitecap Mountains

These grand mountains are of greater importance to Aña Kiéla than to Remla, due to the rivers and streams flowing down from its high glaciers in the summer to supply the Plains of Running Ice with fresh water.

### Winter's Wood

Nestled south of the Whitecap mountains, Winter's Wood is occasionally visited in the summer season by hunters and people seeking to fish in lake Amis or the Rinmar fjord.

### Rinmar Fjord

Winding its way between the two mountain ranges, this fjord is rich in fish and game, but rarely visited due to the freezing weather most of the year.

### Lake Amis

Connected with the Rinmar fjord, lake Amis has a few settlements along its shore, none of which have any permanent inhabitants.

### Fields of Lestórra

Long ago these fields were the site of great battles. It is not clear who fought who or why. Today they lie empty, travelled only by a few nomads.

### Icerim Mountains

Barely charted, these mountains hold many mysteries and ruins left over from ancient times.

### Cliffs of Esonğaur

These vast and steep cliffs facing the north sea are carved with massive figures of stones, like eternal sentinels watching against the encroaching ice from the north. It is believed that these

impressive and enigmatic figures were carved by ghouls in ancient times, perhaps to ward against the fleeing lycanthropes of Sun Aa, but nothing certain is known of their origin or purpose.

### **The Frozen Wood**

The most curious feature of these frozen lands, the Frozen Wood seems to defy common sense, apparently growing and thriving right next to the massive glaciers. This despite its trees being as frozen as the ground in which they grow.

The forest is home to tribes of hardy lycanthropes and wights, about whom many tales and myths are told but very little known for certain. Unlike most of the people of the north, these tribes live in small but permanent villages inside and on the edge of the wood, and it is said that they are ruled by a powerful and ancient witch, named Izalva.

### **Crystal Ayre**

This crystal clear, azure lake is frozen almost year round. In the warm seasons when its ice melts briefly, it connects with the sea to the south. The people of the forest drill holes in the thick ice to catch fish in the cold seasons.

### **Shoals of Frost**

This narrow piece of land is regularly flooded in the warm seasons, connecting the sea with the Crystal Ayre.

### **Wade Island**

This mystical island has drawn many who wished to see its icy splendours. Its forests are known for the snow crystals which make them glitter with the light of the stars and moons. It is thought to be uninhabited.

### **The North Sea**

The north sea lies at the top of the known world, a dark sea of floating ice. It is believed to have originally connected with the oceans in both ends, but the western end has later been blocked by the massive glaciers. It is home to large whales and other hardy animals.

### **The Ice Titan**

Supposedly raised by the lycanthropes of mighty Sun Aa in their attempt to hold off their former slaves, the ghouls, these massive mountains of pure ice and snow rise into the sky and stretch for thousands of miles. It is completely uninhabitable and stands as a solid barrier between the unknown lands of the deep north where none have ventured in aeons.

### **Sea of Daggers**

West of the great glacier lies the Sea of Daggers, so named for the large, ragged pieces of ice floating in the water, making passage extremely perilous.

## **Locations**

Most settlements are found in the Frozen Wood or around lake Amis. No settlements outside the Frozen Wood have any permanent inhabitants.

### **Talva**

Said to be a relatively large village in the heart of the Frozen Wood, Talva is well hidden from the sights of outsiders.

### **Izalva's Grove**

No outsiders have ever seen this place, and its location and even existence is uncertain, but it is said to be the home of a great witch of unknown origin. All that is known is her name, Izalva.

### **Ebenlí**

A small port, the only village associated with the Frozen wood and its people which is visited by outsiders, mostly the wandering peoples of the plains but also rare visitors from the south. In recent times it has seen an increase in raids by werewolves who show a strange interest in these lands.

# Beor

---

**Capital:** None

**Population:** ~2.500.000 (Lycanthropes 90%, Others 10%)

**Government:** Tribal

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður, Ašiva

**Languages:** Samédi, Hebála, Copal (wights), Narumach (werewolves)

**Currencies:** None, common šek (rare)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

The southern foothills of the great northern mountains are known as Beor. It is a remote and desolate land, inhabited by only a few grim folk. Only the south-western part sees any contact with the wandering people of Aña Kíéla, limited mostly to a bit of trade.

## History

Little record exists of Beor and its history. The region generally referred to as Beor has been populated by various tribes throughout history, and as with all the northern lands the distinction between Beor and Aña Kíéla is not entirely clear at all times.

## Geography

Beor is one of the more varied lands of the north, with forests and rolling plains in the shadow of the mountains. It is cold and harsh, but also holds great beauty.

### The Great Speaker

These tall cliffs are riddled with caves and tunnels, which produce characteristic sounds when the wind passes through, giving the place its name.

### Tolva

This large, rocky island is home to many birds but few people. Pirates from Kormaňe land here occasionally and are rarely bothered by others.

### Kenwoods and Iron Woods

These two woods are the most populated regions of Beor, providing some measure of protection against the winds and cold.

### Mountains of Rust

A southern branch of Mountains of Ruin, the Mountains of Rust are named for the reddish colour of its rock and the rich ores of iron. It is only mined sparsely, however, due to its proximity to Sun Aa as well as the general lack of miners among the peoples of Beor.

### The Lost Wood

This great forest was once home to many people, but with the fall of the ghoulish empire of Sun Aa and the shadow that has fallen over those lands, the Lost Wood has become a sinister place. In recent times groups of werewolves have settled in the wood and its ruins.

## Locations

Like the rest of the north, Beor is a land of nomads who rarely settle in one place for long. Most small settlements are to be found in the Kenwood around the three lakes there.

# Sun Aa

---

**Capital:** None (previously Kađavan)

**Population:** Unknown

**Government:** None

**Religions:** None

**Languages:** None

**Currencies:** None

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

Sun Aa is the great northern wall of mountains, some of the tallest mountains in all of Aura and stretching for thousands of miles. What lies beyond these mountains, in the highest of North, is unknown but much speculated. These mountains are said to have been home to the first ghouls. Today the ancient halls of their empire lie ruined and are avoided by all but the most daring - or foolish. What drove out the ghouls long ago and forced them to flee south is a mystery, but all subsequent attempts at reclaiming the mountains have failed.

## History

Lycanthropes from Aña Kíela migrated and settled in Sun Aa and other lands of the north early on, long before the first definite records. Whether they learned the art of rune craft before coming to Sun Aa, or after, is not known but through the magic of the primordial runes the lycanthropes of Sun Aa created for themselves the first known major civilization in the inhospitable and inaccessible mountains of the north.

The rise of the first lycanthropic civilization coincides with the emergence of the ghouls. It is said in the old myths and legends of the ghouls, that the first ghouls were created through magic and runes by the lycanthropes of Sun Aa, as mindless golems to slave away in the mines and libraries of that great empire. It was through the help of these mindless workers that the lycanthropes created their vast halls and temples of stone.

For centuries the lycanthropic empire of the far north grew thanks to the hardships of the ghouls, and they gathered large collections of runes and other magic. All this lore was kept by their mindless servants, and over time it happened that the ghouls gained minds of their own from long exposure to these runes of creation and life. Keeping this development from their masters, the ghouls began to organise themselves in secret. For unknown ages they toiled away, slowly freeing more of their kind and secretly studying the lore they were set to guard.

Eventually they even managed to steal the secret of how their kind was created, and tweaked it for their own purposes. Using this knowledge, they created the first truly free ghouls, who not only had minds but could breed like other living creatures. These new ghouls and their free children were kept hidden away in secret tunnels and chambers far beneath the earth where they grew in number and strength.

But not all ghouls wished a war, and - perhaps seeking a peaceful resolution - warned the lycanthropes of the plot. The lycanthropes in return arranged a swift counter attack before the ghouls could finish their own plans. The fighting lasted for years and decades, and countless lives were lost on both sides. But in the end, the ghouls were victorious, driving their former masters off into the deep and unknown reaches of the north.

It is said that here, in the frozen north, the fleeing lycanthropes used their magic in one final desperate attempt to save themselves, raising vast mountains of pure ice in the way of the pursuing ghouls. These mountains became the Ice Titan, the massive glacier which sits at the top of the known world and effectively prevents all passage further north. What became of the fleeing lycanthropes is not known, but it is often suggested that they fled further west and by unknown routes came to Vánakilne and its surrounding lands where they settled. Whether this is true, and whether they were the first to make it there is not known.

Back in Sun Aa, the conquering ghouls settled in the vast halls of their former masters, creating a powerful empire of their own while those of their kind who had betrayed them fled into the wild and became the wights. This empire prospered and grew for many centuries, until an unnamed evil drove out all the ghouls and forced them to flee south to other lands. What this evil was has never been revealed, but to this day a shadow hangs over the mountains of Sun Aa and its countless abandoned ruins. All later attempts to reclaim that lost empire have failed, and over time the area has gained a fearful reputation as few who venture there ever return.

## Geography

Sun Aa is a frozen wasteland of rock and mighty peaks. The mountains stretches for thousands of miles and have never been fully charted. Today a bleak shadow hangs over Sun Aa and no people are known to live here any more.

### **Mountains of Ruin**

The southern leg of the mountains, these rugged peaks hold many ruins, some of which are occasionally reclaimed only to fall back into ruin and obscurity shortly after.

### **Last Peaks**

The eastern stretch of the mountains, the Last Peaks have always been isolated and rarely seen even during the height of the lycanthropic and ghoulish empires. Only its eastern-most ranges are travelled by the fierce peoples of Ardurín and Kordurín and its southern lowlands serve as a bridge between Beor and Ardurín, used for occasional trade.

### **Mountains at the top of the World**

The north-western range of the great mountains, the Mountains at the Top of the World are occasionally visited by daring people of Aña Kiéla who hunt its wild beasts. Many never return, but the riches of these mountains are considered worth the risk by many.

### **Ilva Fjord**

The Ilva fjord was once the heart of Sun Aa's trade with the other northern regions. Today it is rarely sailed by any living souls. It maintains an awe inspiring beauty despite the shadow hanging over the mountains and the bitter cold plaguing the entire region.

## Locations

Countless ruins cover these lands, both above and below the ground. No one has the slightest idea how many ruins are here or what they hide, or how deep the ancient tunnels go.

### **Kaðavan**

The former capital of the two great empires of Sun Aa, situated deep within the mountains. The streets and deep corridors of Kaðavan supposedly have not been walked for centuries or even millenia, and if they have no one have returned to tell of it.

### **Muran**

Long stairs carved into the cliffs lead to the once illustrious city of Muran. Today the mountains around it are home to flocks of birds and little else. The city has been sought reclaimed countless times due to its location, but all with little success.

# Ardurín and Kordurín

---

**Capital:** Unknown

**Population:** Unknown

**Government:** Unknown

**Religions:** Nightingale, Máður

**Languages:** Hebáľa, Copal (wights)

**Currencies:** Unknown, common šek (rare)

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

The distinction between Ardurín and Kordurín is vague at best. Its people are fierce and their lands hard to reach. Only a few people of Beor and occasionally pirates from Kormaňe make a bit of trade with the people of Ardurín in the summer period, while Kordurín remains completely isolated and often left off maps entirely.

## History

Trade between Beor and Ardurín has gone on for a long time, and the two people are said to be closely related. It is thought that these far lands were populated long before the rise and subsequent fall of Sun Aa, and that the people living there today are descended from these ancient tribes. Since the fall of Sun Aa and the rise of the ghouls, many wights fled north-east into Ardurín and Kordurín where they settled and still live today.

## Geography

Ardurín covers the small strip of lowlands south of the Last Peaks and south-west of the Kordurín forests, as well as the islands Baudwa and Ğelden. Kordurín covers the forested lands east of the Last Peaks. No one knows how far north or east these forests stretch or what is beyond them.

### **Baudwa and Ğelden**

Baudwa and Ğelden are the two large islands south of Ardurín's mainland. Baudwa is the site of occasional trading between the people of Ardurín and Kormaňe.

## Locations

No cities or settlements are known of in either Ardurín or Kordurín. Ardurín is mostly populated by nomads and dotted by small camps or homesteads, but it is sometimes said that Kordurín has several cities and that it may be the seat of some ancient nation. If this is so, the peoples of both lands are tight-lipped.



# The South

The Southern lands refers primarily to the southern continent dominated by Nyíre and Madár. It is a relatively warm continent, inhabited mostly by lycanthropes and fae as well as some humans. Other races are quite rare here, although Madár keeps a number of ghouls as slaves. The two mythical lands of Eðin Leng and Sepil Már are occasionally included, although they are barely known and their exact locations are uncertain.

## Madár

---

**Capital:** Mišrál

**Population:** 52.184.000 (Lycanthropes 98%, ghouls [slaves] 2%)

**Government:** Unitary State

**Religions:** Phoenix

**Languages:** Rosnàuá, Audresváł (Scorpion's Tail)

**Currencies:** Káit

**Imports:** Wood and timber

**Exports:**

Madár is an ancient union of states - formerly independent tribes - in the southern lands, founded almost ten thousand years ago by the shaman Taiz Madár when he unified the lands. It is perhaps best known as a land of lycanthropic supremacists ruled by an immensely powerful caste of undead priests called the Sovereign Host; as well as for the Elves of Madár, a highly clandestine group of assassins and infiltrators whispered to run the nation behind the scenes. It is a land of ancient traditions, intrigue and powerful magics.

## History

The lands of Madár were once a lush and rich land of many scattered, wandering tribes of lycanthropes. Most of these tribes had little or no contact, and their relationships were mostly peaceful. Each tribe was ruled by a chieftain or shaman, who looked after the clan.

Around 6000 BF several large volcanic eruptions covered the eastern half of the continent in layers of ash, reducing the once lush region to a barren desert of rock and ash. Animals and plants died, leading to great wars between the clans for the scarce resources. Around the same time a terrible sickness, known as the black plague, ravaged the population leading to mass death. Hunger and sickness drove the tribes to the brink of extinction.

One of those stricken with the plague was a shaman of the Madaraš tribe, Taiz Madár. The Madaraš tribe had been hit hard by the volcanic ashes, its entire lands reduced to a lifeless desert. Facing his own death and the death of his clan, Taiz prayed for days for a solution, a way to save his tribe. On the fifth day, when he could barely whisper his prayers, it is said he received a vision as a newborn phoenix burst from the ashes.

Taiz instructed his tribesmen to cut out his heart and preserve it, and to burn his body on a bed of coals. His followers did as instructed, and as his flesh burned away, his bones arose, released from the weakness of the flesh, reborn immortal.

Followed by his devout tribe, Taiz set out to return to land he loved from the ashes of ruin and death. Able to care for the sick without fear of being infected, Taiz soon became popular, and his word spread across the land. Of those too sick to be saved were many shamans and others of importance, who were offered to join Taiz in undeath, freed from disease and able to care for their sick and dying tribesmen.

Taiz quickly gathered around him a large following, and defeated all opposition. Finally, having gathered the tribes, Taiz founded the coalition of tribes and formed the nation of Madár. In time the plague disappeared, in large part thanks to the care given by Taiz and his undead followers, and the land slowly recovered, although never fully returning to the lush forests of the past.

## The Union States

Madár is a unitary state made up of 21 individual states with a complex power hierarchy. These states represent most of the major original tribes and clans of the land who joined under Taiz Madár. Each state has a certain amount of autonomy, but the nation as a whole has one government which is effectively supreme in its power over the individual states.

### **Madaraš**

The old tribal lands of Taiz Madár, founder of the nation, and now primary seat of the Sovereign Host. Most of its lands are considered sacred ground and only members of the Sovereign Host are allowed to walk freely within these areas. It has only a few settlements, as a result.

### **Terra**

Terra resides over some of Madár's most fertile ground, and thus most of its farms and agricultural land. It thrives on a large trade with the other states who require its products.

### **Neora**

The lands of the Náğa, Neora is the land around the large fjord in the south east. It does a lot of trade in fishing, thanks to its plentiful waters.

### **Pelín**

Pelín is also known as the Amber State due to its large trade in amber which washes up on its shores. It is one of the most populous states of Madár.

### **Scorpion's Tail**

The Scorpion's Tail refers both to the state and the land of the far south. It is a fierce land and the most independent of the states. While still officially under the rule of Madár, the people of Scorpion's Tail prefer to remain isolated and take care of their own affairs.

## Geography

Madár is a land of rocky plains of endless brown and drab greens surrounded by imposing, grey mountain ranges. Most of the land has only sparse vegetation.

### **Sovereign Mountains**

These imposing mountain ranges are among the tallest known mountains in Aura. They are home to some wild tribes, but is best known as a nest for phoenixes which live here in vast numbers and can regularly be seen in immense flocks.

### **Sacred Valley**

The Sacred Valley encompasses most of the old Madaraš tribal lands at the foot of the Sovereign Mountains. They were the birthplace of Taiz Madár, founder of the nation, and are considered sacred. Only the Sovereign Host are allowed to walk freely within its borders.

### **Lake Madár**

This cold, blue lake is a hub of commerce between the northern and southern states. It is regularly travelled by countless ships bringing wares between its two main ports Dumás and Desón. It also provides a rich source of fishing.

### **Gray Mountains**

The Gray Mountains are a main source of metal ore, mined in the deep by ghouls slaves. This is the only place in Madár where ghouls are allowed, kept under strict watch to prevent escapes or rebellions. The mountains are rich in ore, particularly iron.

### **Náğa Fjord**

These waters are the main source of fish in Madár, with countless fishing settlements and trading ports along its winding shores. Its depths are also home to the elusive and rare náğas.

### **The Scorpion's Tail**

These southern islands gained their name due to their appearance on maps, like the tail of a scorpion.

## **Blackwood**

This forest is nurtured by the rich and fertile volcanic ashes of the past. It is the only major source of wood within Madár and has strict restrictions on logging. Due to its limited supplies, most wood is shipped from Nyíre instead.

## **Ashen Peaks**

The Ashen Peaks mark the northern extent of Madár. They contain a number of volcanoes, a few of which are still regularly active although rarely of a major concern to the lands below.

## **Fuhirro Caldera**

The remains of a long dormant volcano, thought to have been one of the volcanoes whose eruptions brought the southern lands to its knees and forced the tribes to form the nation of Madár. Today the caldera is particularly valued for its vast deposits of black glass.

## **Locations**

Madár has several large cities, including the largest in the known world.

### **City of the Dead**

The grand and ancient temple and monastery in which the First of the Sovereign Host dwell. No one knows just how deep these ancient halls go, but it is rumoured to contain immense libraries of lore and vast halls of artefacts. It is also rumoured that in its depths dwells the immortal remains of Taiz Madár himself, now little more than a crumbling skull adorned with precious jewels and metals. None but the First are allowed within its sacred halls, however, so no one knows for certain what wonders this place holds.

### **Miśrál**

Miśrál is not only capital of Madár and its largest city, it is without doubt the largest city in all of Aura. A bustling metropolis, Miśrál is tugged into a small fjord in the north of the country.

### **Amraðin**

Second largest city in Madár, Amraðin and Miśrál openly compete for the title of capital and grandest city of the nation. Despite this rivalry there is a brisk trade between the two.

### **Eon**

A dusty town with wide streets and only a token population, Eon primarily serves as a temporary stop for ships headed elsewhere. Eon is a hub, but sees little trade itself.

### **Iyau**

The mining capital of Madár, Iyau lies at the foot of the Gray Mountains. It has a small number of ghouls among its population, but only as slaves.

### **Dumás and Desón**

Dumás and Desón are the two largest trading cities in Madár, connecting north and south. Trade between these two cities is intense and varied. If it can be found in Madár it can be found here, for a price.

### **Denár**

Capital of Neora, Denár has a constant smell of fish about it as fishing vessels from all over the fjord dock here to sell their daily catches.

### **Orpúnos**

Capital of Pelín, Orpúnos has become known as the Amber City, much like the state itself is known as the Amber State. It is a large city with wide streets and many markets.

### **Orðan**

Capital of the Scorpion's Tail region, Orðan is a large port and only major trading post in the region. It is starkly different from most cities in Madár and most of its people feel only little kinship with the northern states.

## The Sovereign Host

The Sovereign Host is the highest order of priesthood within Madár, standing entirely above the normal society and holding supreme power over the nation. The Host is a grim and almost nightmarish gathering. Members of the Host give up their former lives, both figuratively and quite literally, to pursue higher spheres of study and wisdom. A new member is chosen through a long and arcane procedure, designed to ensure that only the most exalted individuals are picked. The candidate then goes through an ancient rite where their heart is cut out and embalmed. The body is ritually cleansed and placed on a bed of burning coal. Once the fires have died out the charred corpse rises as an undead skeleton, freed from the bounds of life and death to pursue its new exalted life.

The oldest and most highly regarded members of the Host are the known as the First, who are treated as divinities, most favoured of the Phoenix. The First reside in the so-called City of the Dead in the mountains of southern Madár. It is the most sacred place within Madár. No one knows how many of the First actually exists, and some are said to be as old as Madár itself, now little more than crumbling skulls decorated with precious gems. What kinds of exalted spheres of existence these divine elders walk within are beyond the minds of mere mortals, as the people of Madár regularly claim with pride.

Madár, in particular with the Sovereign Host, may very well be the most powerful nation in all the lands of Aura. It is perhaps fortunate that neither Madár nor the Host seem to have any interest whatsoever in expanding their territory or conquering new lands.

## The Black Guard

The Black Guard is the elite group of warriors directly under the Sovereign Host, which enforces the laws of the land and operates between states. Each state may have their own enforcement, but the Black Guard works above these.

## The Elves

The Elves of Madár, or simply the Elves, are a group of assassins and infiltrators supposedly working behind the scenes of the nation. Until only a few decades ago their existence was completely unknown. A pair of small pamphlets entitled Anatomy of Elves released in several copies with a few weeks between detailed the organisation for the first time. Who wrote the two Anatomies and for what reasons has been the matter of great debate. From the detailed account given in the Anatomies, it is argued that it must have been an insider, and likely one of high rank with many connections. Anyone who possessed a copy of one or both of the Anatomies were soon found dead and the documents missing. No further pamphlets were released after the second, leading to speculation that the writer was revealed and eliminated, though only the Elves know the truth. Some suggest the Anatomies were released intentionally to mislead or for other nefarious purposes.

The Anatomies describe the Elves as a highly clandestine network of assassins and infiltrators who work behind the scenes in Madár. According to the Anatomies, the Elves practically run the nation through extensive infiltration and influence. They are supposed to have members among the highest political posts in Madár, perhaps even among the First of the Sovereign Host. Some go so far as to equate the Host with the Elves, though such claims are invariably unpopular and typically lead to arrests for heresy and even treason. The Anatomies never revealed the identities of any Elves, leading to much speculation on the matter.

Elves are supposedly all lycanthropes, strictly adhering to the common Madárran belief of lycanthropic supremacy. Elven assassins - as opposed to members in various public positions - employ an unusual alchemical extract from certain luminescent mushrooms, which they apply to their eyes. This causes their eyes to glow strongly red, if only for a short time. Some go further and inject the extract into the eye using a small needle, to make the effect more lasting. As the Elven mantra goes, only the dead know them. This is commonly believed to refer to the fact that until the Anatomies emerged, there was no knowledge of the Elves, and none who ever saw these trademark red eyes lived to tell of it.

The Elves took their name from the old legends of the fae before these were more than whispered rumours. The old tales spoke of the Hidden People or the Dead Ones, demons with

red eyes who stalked the woods with sinister schemes. The word "elf" was an old term for these creatures, before they become known as the fae.

## Magic and the Denominations of Practitioners

Magic in Madár is highly regulated. There are a number of denominations in common use in Madár to describe various practitioners of magic. An ainher (shaman/witch) is a member of the Sovereign Host. These stand above the law and can use their magic without regulation except by those higher in the Host to whom they ultimately answer.

An aišin (mage/wizard) is an official judge or lawyer of Madár. Some serve in the courts, but most spend their time studying the law in private. All are masters of magic and many later go on to join the Host to become ainher.

A practitioner of magic not associated with the Host or the courts is known as a saiðbjañ (warlock/sorcerer). They are required by law to register with the courts and only those with special permission are allowed to practice their craft in public, and then usually only in special venues or situations determined by their particular license. Practice of magic in private is rarely regulated as long as the practitioner is registered. Those who are not registered are considered outcasts of society and have no rights. Registration is usually a trivial matter handled by a clerk in the courthouse (for a price) while special licenses must be granted by a judge, a process which can be both expensive and time consuming.

## Amarin

---

**Capital:** Kerradin

**Population:** 9.760.000 (Lycanthropes 50%, humans 45%, others 5%)

**Government:** Stratocracy (military government)

**Religions:** Phoenix

**Languages:** Àuvaséil, Rosnàúá, Audresvát

**Currencies:** Shields, merchant tokens

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Amarin is a coalition of outcasts from Madár, both lycanthropes who have been exiled from their homeland and humans which are not welcome in Madár at all. The people of Amarin are proud of their freedom from the strict regime of Madár, and welcome anyone who have no home elsewhere. Madár sees Amarin as a state of terrorists and a threat to its safety and culture and a great effort is made to keep everything from Amarin out of Madár.

The first known records of humans come from Amarin, and it is conjectured that the human race originated from lycanthropic exiles of these lands. How exactly this came to be remains unknown, but there are countless theories.

Amarin has a large standing army, and the nation is formally ruled by the military elite. In case of invasion from outside the military has the authority to draft anyone capable of wielding a weapon, but in ordinary times military service is not compulsory. Still, anyone can freely join the military, and many do.

## History

The lands that Amarin now occupies once belonged to several tribes, some of which joined Madár later on. The nation of Amarin was not formally founded until later, but it can be said to date back to the founding of Madár itself where some tribes refused to join the union. War broke out between these tribes and Madár, and in the end Madár was victorious. The rebel tribes were cast out. Some fled east into Nyíre and other lands beyond, while some remained in the mountains, making a living on their own, proud of their freedom from the tyranny of Madár.

Over time these tribes came together to defend themselves against Madár and to claim a land

of their own. Thus around the time of the first human accounts they claimed the eastern border mountains - already in large part under their control - and founded the nation of Amarin around the Taurosvíd, perhaps in response to Madár's increasing incursions into their land in the war against the human "plague".

Aside from occasional excursions into eastern Madár, the people of Amarin keep to themselves. Many Madárrans feel that a concerted attack should be launched to stamp out this threat to the east for good, but so far fighting has been contained at the borders and the Sovereign Host seems content as long as the people of Amarin stay in their own lands.

## Geography

Amarin is almost entirely confined to the mountains of south-eastern Madár. These are rough and inhospitable lands, but full of caves and tunnels to hide in which has made it perfect for the former exiles of Madár as well as the humans who often find themselves hunted.

### Wall of Flames

Named so for its many spectacular flights of phoenixes, these mountains mark the eastern border of Madár. While the southern parts are occupied by Amarin, most of these mountains are still firmly under Madárran rule and control.

### Firebloom Mountains

Like all the mountains in the region, the Firebloom Mountains are home to large numbers of phoenixes. These sacred birds nest widely in these parts, which gave rise to the name. The Firebloom Mountains are also home to many tribes of humans and lycanthropes associated with Amarin, and many fae also travel here in secret on spiritual quests.

### Taurosvíd

This large fjord is the heart of Amarin, providing food as well as easy access to the waters around Nyíre. Its steep cliffs are riddled with caves, tunnels and fortresses built by the lycanthropes and humans of Amarin.

### The Broken Vale

Amarin has long fought to hold this land which Madár still considers as part of its nation. Many battles are fought here, and the land has gained a bad reputation for being haunted by the ghosts of the dead who fell here. It is a rugged and inhospitable land with vast, rocky plains of sparse and dry vegetation and all over these plains are scattered large and ragged monoliths of stone like thousands of scattered teeth tossed at random by some giant.

## Locations

Most settlements of Amarin are secret and well hidden within the deep mountains. Caves and tunnels riddle the rock and provide shelter for its scattered tribes.

### Kerradin

The capital of Amarin sits as a vast fortress in the Taurosvíd. It is the seat of the ruling elite, and the main city within Amarin. Aside from the fortress itself it has a large number of secret tunnels and caves carved into the mountains and cliffs.

## Nyíre

---

**Capital:** Aulung (lycanthropes, humans) ; Akoáme (fae)

**Population:** Unknown (Fae 60%, lycanthropes 25%, humans 15%)

**Government:** Tribal

**Religions:** Phoenix

**Languages:** Máiko, Rosnàúá, Àuvaséil, Nu-ejúmì (fae)

**Currencies:** None, káit (rare)

**Imports:**

## **Exports:**

Nyire is a land of vast, mossy woods and deep swamps. It is also known simply as the Moss Wood due to its extensive growths of such plants. Nyire is inhabited by large numbers of fae, who consider it their ancestral lands, but also lycanthropes and humans live here. The tribes of lycanthropes and humans living in the depths of Nyire are rather feral and only a few permanent settlements exist.

## **History**

The forests and swamps of Nyíre are ancient and full of mysteries and legends. In ancient times it was home to many tribes, loosely related to the tribes of Madár. A few of these later joined Madár, but most kept to themselves, unaffected by the black plague and ash that ravaged Madár. One tribe, it is thought, became the fae and went on to dominate the forest.

## **Geography**

Nyíre is dominated by dense forests and swamps. It is a wild place, inhabited by feral tribes and strange beasts.

### **Lake Nyíre**

The largest fresh water lake in the known world, and one of the deepest as well, lake Nyíre is the heart of several tribes and several settlements line its shore.

### **Lake Elan**

It is said that lake Elan and lake Nyíre are connected through underground caves.

### **The Green Sea**

Due to its easy access, the Green Sea is regularly sailed by the people of Madár who seek wood and other resources from the vast woods.

### **Marsh of Tún**

The Marsh is home to the majority of fae in Nyíre. It is a wet and mossy area nearly impenetrable to anything much bigger than the fae.

### **Lake Sélii, Enokim and Sépis**

More swamp than lakes, these three bodies of water are also collectively known as the Face of Tún because of their eerie resemblance to a face on maps of the area. Among the lycanthropes and humans it is whispered to be a portal to a terrible nightmarish world of demons.

### **Emerald Bay**

The Emerald bay and its shores are heavily populated by the people of Amarin who get wood and other resources from it, which is easily brought to their cities in the Taurosvid.

### **Firebloom Vale**

The firebloom vale is named partly for its colourful flowers and other vegetation, partly for the large flocks of phoenixes flying over its vales. It is a favoured place of the fae.

## **Locations**

Nyíre has few cities. The forest is difficult to traverse and most of it is dominated by the fae who don't welcome visitors in their lands.

### **Aulung**

Aulung is the largest known settlement in Nyíre and is home to lycanthropes and humans. The area is relatively free of fae, making it an ideal location for lycanthropes and humans.

### **Kuenğa and Lukipa**

Outposts of Madár, but inhabited mostly by local tribes who trade with the ships of Madár. Kuenğa and Lukipa provide wood and other products not widely available in Madár. Lukipa is very close to the fae realm, and few people like to stay there for long. It is stubbornly kept despite the fae, due to the immense richness of the forest and swamps in that area.

## Akoáme

Akoáme is the centre of fae society, their capital one might say, but like all their cities Akoáme has little resemblance to the cities of the lycanthropes or humans. It moves regularly and is never to be found in the same place for long.

## Kumica

---

**Capital:** Eoíwa and Pánaca

**Population:** Unknown (99% Fae)

**Government:** Tribal, Magocracy

**Religions:** Phoenix

**Languages:** Nu-ejúmì

**Currencies:** None

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Kumica is a nation of fae, considered separate from the rest of Nyíre. Like all fae societies it is reclusive and does not welcome visitors. It is the only fae nation with actual cities by lycanthropic or human standards. While mostly tribal, it is said to have a circle of learned fae who serve as spiritual leaders and judges.

## History

As a gateway to the Sea of Stars and ultimately the north, Kumica was historically inhabited by many varied tribes and frequently in a state of internal war. Many tribes came and went, some moved elsewhere others died out. It is thought that the fae of Aiúna to the north may have been driven away from Kumica during these early wars, when fae and lycanthropes battled for control of Kumica. Ultimately the fae won. Fights have erupted frequently since, but the fae remain in control to this day. It has been suggested that Kumica was the original homeland of the tribe which was cursed long ago and became the fae.

## Geography

Kumica is an island realm, covered in mossy woods like the rest of Nyíre. The islands have several hidden caverns in its heart, many of which were dug out by lycanthropes in the distant past before the fae took over.

## Locations

Only two settlements are known of, but it is thought that the fae have others hidden within the dense forests and in deep groves and caves.

### Eoíwa and Pánaca

Situated at opposite ends of the strait from each other, Eoíwa and Pánaca are the only two cities of Kumica known to the outside world.

## Sepil Már

---

**Capital:** Unknown

**Population:** Unknown

**Government:** Unknown

**Religions:** Unknown

**Languages:** Unknown

**Currencies:** Unknown

**Imports:** Unknown

**Exports:** Unknown

Only scattered tales exist of Sepil Már east of Madár, and very few of these are considered trustworthy. What is usually agreed upon is that Sepil Már is a golden land of endless sand. It may be home to several feline creatures, such as lynxes and caracals.

One of the most detailed accounts comes from the tales of Madárran explorer Emil Tau, who claimed to have been there and endured more than a year as a slave to a feline race, not unlike lycanthropes but more akin to cats than wolves. According to Emil's lengthy accounts, these felines - which he calls Ailuranthropes - build great cities and extensive maze-like arenas in which they pit slaves against each other for entertainment or hunt them through the mazes for sport. He also mentions a race of large bull-headed beings, almost extinct and living in slavery. Not many of Emil's tales are taken seriously, most feel he simply spends too much time at sea.

## History

Tales of the golden land to the east are not new, but there have never been much more than the occasional account from sailors. The first major account of these lands was that of Emil Tau, a notoriously boisterous captain and explorer from Madár, whose wild tales are the subject of much ridicule by his peer.

## Geography

Sepil Már is described as a land of golden deserts and sandy forests. This is the only thing there is general agreement upon, but little else is known about its geography.

## Locations

Emil Tau describes several large cities in the southern deserts, but beyond his tales there is nothing known about Sepil Már or any possible cities.

## Eđin Leng

---

**Capital:** Kadađ

**Population:** Unknown

**Government:** Unknown

**Religions:** Unknown, presumably irreverent

**Languages:** Zitol

**Currencies:** Unknown

**Imports:** Unknown

**Exports:** Unknown

Eđin Leng, or merely Leng, is a fabled land, shrouded in myths and whispered tales of terror. It is believed to have been the home of the revenants, once a lush and beautiful realm but now a bleak and frozen desert. What happened there exactly, and whether anything still lives there is unknown. Its exact location is unknown as well, and none have seen it except from far away through mists and fog. Ancient tales, supposedly gleaned from the revenants themselves, tell of mountains even taller and vaster than those of the mighty Vánakilne. Here, it is said, sits the city of Kadađ, the terrible city of which High Kadađ atop Vánakilne is a mere reflection.

## History

Tales of Eđin Leng emerged with the arrival of the revenants. Before that no accounts are known to mention any lands south of Nyíre and Madár. The few who have tried to reach it have either never returned, or at best returned with tales of brief and distant glimpses.

## Geography

The geography of Eðin Leng is unknown, except for tales of immense mountain chains with some mountains taller even than the ones of mighty Vánakilne. It is widely agreed to be a frozen wasteland of eternal ice and snow.

## Locations

Only one city is known of in all of Eðin Leng, although it is believed that the revenants had several large cities and fortresses.

### **Kadað**

Kadað is the whispered twin of High Kadað atop Vánakilne. It has never been seen and exists only in old tales supposedly drawing their knowledge from information gleaned from the revenants themselves. Some think it is nothing more than a legend, born of fear.



# The West

The West refers to the great archipelago west of Aiúna known as Ililakúsa, as well as the mighty mountains of Vánakilne and its surrounding lands. Most of the western lands are steeped in mystery and ancient fables, particularly the northern reaches which remain mostly unexplored to this day. A few ancient records tell of these lands before the revenant incursion, but almost all lore has been lost now and not many have seen these lands even from afar.

## Ililakúsa

---

**Capital:** Tinpieng (unofficial)

**Population:** 8.700.000 (67% Lycanthropes, 33% Humans)

**Government:** Tribal

**Religions:** Nightingale, Phoenix

**Languages:** Kiwárra, Dèisuúg (humans)

**Currencies:** None

**Imports:**

**Exports:**

Ililakúsa is a vast archipelago in the Sea of Night east of Aiúna. It consists of several large as well as many smaller islands stretching for thousands of miles from north to south. These islands are mainly composed of chalk and other forms of limestone, forming vast, white cliffs with only sparse and coarse vegetation. These characteristic white cliffs are what gave the islands their name, Ililakúsa, which in the local tongue means "the bone yard".

The islands were originally inhabited by tribes of lycanthropes who may have migrated there from Nyíre or possibly Vánakilne to the north in ages past. It was later colonized by lycanthropes and their human slaves from Madár. Much conflict between the two groups have lead to a division of the islands since. The south is dominated by the republic of May Wen, an entirely lycanthropic nation, while the northern isles are home to scattered clans of native lycanthropes and human slaves escaped from May Wen. The two peoples of the north live in relative peace together, but they both detest the lycanthropes of the south.

## History

The first inhabitants of Ililakúsa were lycanthropes from Nyire and possibly Laimi to the north, who migrated and settled the islands sometime before the revenant incursion. Very little is known of these early people or their culture, except what has been passed down through the ages to their descendants who still roam the northern islands. As nomads they left no ruins and no records, and only a few minor relics have been recovered to this day.

During the revenant conquest of the north, Ililakúsa was largely left alone due to its insignificance, managing to avoid much of the destruction which affected the other lands. The northern island of Kakeo still contains ruins of revenant origin, but there are no signs that their presence spread any further or posed a significant concern to the rest of the archipelago. These southern outposts of the revenant empire may have simply served as strategic lookouts.

In the wake of the revenants' disappearance, tribes of lycanthropes began to drift up from the south and colonized the southern islands of Ililakúsa. They brought with them human slaves and killed or enslaved the native population where they settled.

The conflict between the new settlers and the native population quickly split the archipelago in north and south. While the newcomers colonized and settled the Isle of May and Ni Dai Ven, the natives held on fiercely to the northern islands. The island of Ĝekámo became a battleground between the two sides, until it was finally claimed conclusively by the south in 2107 Fall.

Once they had secured the Island of May and Ni Dai Ven, the new settlers quickly founded the republic of May Wen, a lycanthropic state, around 1379 Fall. Many human and native slaves worked themselves to death building the twin cities of Mídas which became the capital of the republic, as well as the majestic bridges between them, known as the Archon Bridges.

Some two hundred years after its foundation, in the year 1600 Fall, a massive slave uprising caused chaos all throughout Mídas. While many were brought down, thousands still managed to escape to the northern islands on stolen ships. While smaller uprisings before may have lead to some escapes, this represents the first major settlement of free humans on Ililakúsa.

## Geography

Large distances separate the islands of Ililakúsa, making travel between them slow and often risky. Most of the islands are composed of chalk and other limestone, with only sparse vegetation. Despite all this the tribes thrive.

### **Wainem**

While not the largest or most populated island, Wainem is home to the largest single tribe, the Wainem tribe. The island is moderately forested, the second largest and second most green island after Kidang Bál. A single large city, Tinpieng, is home and meeting place for the Wainem tribe and also serves as trading post and unofficial capital for other tribes from other islands.

### **Kidang Bál**

The largest, most populous, most forested and most contested island, Kidang Bál is home to many tribes trying to keep away the colonizers from May Wen. The island is widely forested except in the north where it turns to rocky plains. The city of Kinwó on its eastern side serves as meeting place for the many tribes of the island.

### **Ǵúro**

The island of Ǵúro has the largest human population. It is regularly under assault from May Wen due to its closeness, and its people are fiercely determined to keep it free. The city of Ǵúro on its western shore is the only actual fortress of the northern islands, built by the humans over the centuries as a safe harbour. It has the largest collection of ships in the north, some built by the humans and lycanthropes, others captured from May Wen.

### **Kakeo**

This northern island is largely unpopulated. It is a rocky island with little vegetation. A few ruins left over from the time of the revenants can still be found here. The tribes leave the place mostly alone and over time the ruins have crumbled away to nothing. In its centre rises a low mountain, a dormant volcano best known for its large caldera whose waters are said to have healing powers. Due to its inaccessibility it is only rarely visited, however. The mountains of Kakeo are home to numerous wild goats.

## Locations

As a land of wandering tribes, Ililakúsa has few permanent settlements outside May Wen.

### **Tinpieng**

The unofficial capital of Ililakúsa, Tinpieng is home to the Wainem tribe and also serves as meeting place for the other tribes of the islands.

### **Kinwó**

Largest city on Kidang Bál, Kinwó serves as a meeting place for the many tribes of that island.

### **Ǵúro**

Built by humans, ǵúro is a small fortress city and port. It occasionally receives ships and trade from Aiúna and other lands to the east, sometimes mistakenly when the foreign ships mistake the island for ǵekámo. The people of ǵúro have no scruples about taking trade meant for May Wen, however, and like to encourage such mistakes.

# May Wen

---

**Capital:** Mídas

**Population:** 6.500.000 (70% Lycanthropes, 30% Humans)

**Government:** Oligarchic Republic

**Religions:** Phoenix

**Languages:** Dèisuńg

**Currencies:** Shells

**Imports:** Wood

**Exports:** Minerals, Turtle eggs

May Wen is a nation of lycanthropes in southern Ililakúsa, originally settlers from Madár and Nyire to the south. It consists of the Isle of May, Ni Dai Ven and Ğekámo and its capitals are the twin cities of Mídas. It is at constant odds with the free and native tribes of the northern islands in its pursuit of colonizing those lands and enslaving its people.

May Wen is an oligarchy and republic. The noble families of the original settlers hold the official power, and select from among themselves an Archon to represent them. The Archon rules officially, but can always be replaced by the families through a majority vote. A great deal of power struggles and intrigue goes on between the families and the appointed Archon.

## History

The first ships from Madár arrived in southern Ililakúsa around 433 Fall, bringing human slaves with them. They settled the island of May, and warred extensively with the native tribes for control of the island. While many battles were fought, and while the island was under the newcomers control more than once, their definite victory came only much later, in 1379 Fall.

The nation has had many ups and downs over the ages. The slave uprising of 1600 Fall was one of the worst blows to the republic. Hundreds of thousand slaves somehow managed to escape their bonds and rise up, stealing several large ships and burning down large parts of the twin cities of Mídas. It has been said that the uprising could not have happened without some support from someone in a position of power, and at the time many accusations were voiced, but nothing ever proven.

In 2107 Fall a massive military campaign finally lead to a decisive victory on the island of Ğekámo, where the nation had long fought with the native tribes for dominion. With this victory May Wen formally claimed the island as their own.

## Geography

May Wen holds power over the islands of May, Ni Dai Ven, Ibis Isle and Ğekámo, all of which have only sparse vegetation.

### Isle of May

The Isle of May is the main island within the republic of May Wen, holding the majority of its cities and population. It is a long, low island with a vegetation mostly of evergreen shrubs. Most settlements are concentrated towards the northern part of the island, as the southern part has a tendency to flood. In its northernmost part lies one half of the twin cities of Mídas, the so-called lower Mídas which contains the harbour and markets.

Archons of May Wen	
...	
1366F - 1379F (13)	Falas I (M)
1379F - 1387F (8)	Falas II (M)
1387F - 1390F (3)	
1390F - 1399F (9)	
1399F - 1403F (4)	
1403F - 1415F (12)	Falas III (M)
...	
1497F - 1521F (24)	Némi Zun (F)
...	

## **Ni Dai Ven**

Ni Dai Ven is an island north-west of the Isle of May. It is a barren island with tall, steep cliffs rising out of the sea. Its only major settlement is Upper Mídas, one half of the twin cities of Mídas, which is home to the upper circles of society and the castle of the Archon.

## **Ibis Isle**

While officially a part of May Wen, the southern Ibis Isle is not inhabited as it is regularly flooded. It is home to large numbers of its namesake bird and is therefore considered holy ground. There are several small shrines on the island, in the form of nesting trees for the birds.

## **Ĝekámo**

Ĝekámo is the most recent addition to the republic of May Wen, an island located north of Ni Dai Ven. It is a mountainous island with some sparse forests in its northern reaches. These forests are the only real source of wood in May Wen, and are logged extensively. Due to the limited resources, only officially approved loggers are allowed to cut down trees or gather wood in the forests and the price of wood in May Wen is high. Its two most significant landmarks are the Datúngda crater and the Black Sands beach. The Datúngda crater is a large, almost perfectly circular crater from a meteor impact ages ago. It is entirely flooded and is a favoured fishing ground. The Black Sands of the south are wide stretches of beach, so named because of the black sand and stones which cover the shores. It is home to many birds as well as a regular breeding ground for sea turtles, whose eggs are gathered and sold in Mídas. The island has a single major city, Ĝaréna, which ships off wood and other products to Mídas. Many small logging and hunting communities are scattered in the northern woodlands.

## **Locations**

The great pride of the nation of May Wen are its twin cities of Mídas and the great bridges linking them, known as the Archon Bridges.

### **Twin Cities of Mídas**

The capital of May Wen are the twin cities, Upper and Lower Mídas. Lower Mídas is home to the working classes, the markets and the harbour, while Upper Mídas is home to the ruling families and the current archon. The large number of slaves are usually restricted to Lower Mídas and the shanty towns outside its gates. In total the two cities have a population of almost two million, a large percentage of which are slaves.

Since the slave uprising of 1600 Fall, all slaves are required to wear shackles on their feet when not under strict observation by their master, greatly limiting their ability to move. Guards regularly patrol the shanty towns and strike down any slave who seems to be causing trouble. No slave is allowed to bear arms, even while under observation.

### **The Archon Bridges**

The Archon Bridges connect the two parts of the twin cities. There are almost a hundred separate bridges in all, spanning the waters and islets between the cities. All the bridges are segmental arch bridges, or viaducts, constructed from stone. All the bridges are 15 meters (49 feet) wide. The longest bridge is nearly two kilometres (1.24 miles) long, and the tallest almost fifty meters (164 feet) high. Stairs have been cut out in the chalk and stone of the islets to connect the bridges at varying heights. The sides of the bridges are carved with historical figures and events, depicting the greatness of the republic and its ruling houses. The full construction took nearly a century and was carried out primarily by human and native slaves originally under the supervision of the lycanthropic engineer Deágarlas and later his two sons Menador and Irfán. Construction was ordered to begin under the archon Falas III in the year 1412 Fall, and the final stone was placed in honour of archoness Némi Zun in the year 1509 Fall. The Archon Bridges are the pride of the republic of May Wen, a symbol of their greatness, and are among the greatest constructions of the upper world.

# Vánakilne

---

**Capital:** None

**Population:** None

**Government:** None

**Religions:** None

**Languages:** None (previously Añrúva)

**Currencies:** None

**Imports:** None

**Exports:** None

Vánakilne - the Dragon Peaks or Mountains of the Gods - is a land of the far north-west. It is dominated by a star-shaped range of mountains, the tallest mountains in the known world (even taller mountains in distant Eðin Leng are whispered of, but have never been seen). It was the seat of the revenants, where they built their mighty empire and from which they spread out to conquer the northern continents. It is thought to be identical to the lands of certain ancient records, speaking of a distant western land of dragons and ancient civilizations of lycanthropes and ghouls building strange towers of obsidian among the mighty peaks. Since the invasion and subsequent catastrophic disappearance of the revenants, Vánakilne has been reduced to a bleak and haunted place of sunken cities and great graveyards of dragon bones.

## History

Little is known about the early history of Vánakilne and surrounding lands. A few artefacts and ancient records mention lands to the far west, which are thought to be references to Vánakilne and its neighbours. Since there have been so few successful expeditions to these lands in recent times it is hard to say much about the current lay of the lands or to confirm the old records.

The vast mountains were referred to in the records as the mountains of gods or the dragon peaks, after which the modern name comes. It was called so because it was home to large numbers of dragons who nested in the tall, forbidding mountains.

South and west of these mountains the land flattened into a vast area of forested plateaus. These lands feature in certain records, and were populated by lycanthropes apparently possessed of an advanced culture. In some of the records are depictions of lycanthropes taming and riding dragons, but these may just be fanciful depictions of local legends and myths rather than any real historic accounts.

In the north-east parts of the mountains are known to have lived a highly advanced civilization of ghouls, who built strange spiralling towers of black stone. Ruins of many such towers and structures still remain, although none of them have been explored. Like the rest of the region and its people, little is known about these ghouls, their origins or their society.

North of Vánakilne lie the eternally frozen wastes of Náda, a land of which even less is known.

## Revenant Incursion

Around the years 78 BF, revenants arrived in Vánakilne and surrounding lands. No records exist of the exact time or events preceding or following their arrival. The time frame is inferred based upon tales told by the tribes of Ililakúsa, telling of lightning and great thunder to the far north. It is believed that the revenants arrived and began a prolonged war with the dragons, lycanthropes and ghouls over control of the mountain. Details of this war are non-existent, but the revenants emerged victorious around 65 BF. They settled the mountains, taking over the towers and halls of the ghouls as well as building their own fortresses.

The most infamous of the revenant fortress cities is High Kadað, located high above the skies in the impassable mountains. It is said to have been a twin of the dread city of (Old) Kadað far to the south in the mythical lands of Eðin Leng where the revenants came from. Little is known about this fabled city, either during its reign or after its fall. It is mentioned in some records

from the time, but only ever in a hushed tone.

Once their control of the area was ensured, the revenants once more set sail and headed for the lands to the east. The war that followed was long and bloody, and with the coming of each year it seemed like the revenants only kept growing in numbers and strength while all others waned and fell to their onslaught.

In the end the revenants simply disappeared. Or at least so it might have seemed to the world outside Vánakilne and nearby lands. What really happened is unknown, but there are many theories. What is known is that a sudden cataclysmic storm swept across the lands, scouring and destroying many regions. As far as Voraz are still signs of the terrible forces at work. But Vánakilne and its neighbours were the ones who were hit the hardest. Vast areas of land sank into the ocean, and those that remained were scoured and covered in a blanket of death and destruction. Since that day, these lands have been cursed and haunted and left alone by all but the foolish or daring. Whispers of the horrors unleashed by the revenants in their final days are still told over the fire in taverns and camps all over the world.

It is said that the revenants constructed vast networks of portals, some even to far off stars and alien worlds, from which they pulled horrors beyond mortal nightmares. Some think the portals collapsed, swallowing up their creators in a fiery cataclysm, others postulate that something was summoned that the revenants could not control, and the war that ensued was what finally destroyed them. If so, it is a topic of many hushed whispers what became of the summoned monster itself. The only thing that is certain is that no revenant has been seen since, and the once green and proud lands of Vánakilne, Laimi and Náda were left barren and desolate and cursed in their wake.

### **Lupéru's Expedition**

For a long time after the fall of the revenant empire, the lands around Vánakilne were given a wide berth. Whispered tales of ghosts and cursed spirits became common. Some daring explorers tried making the journey, but many returned without luck while others were never heard from again. Some brought back tales of distant sightings, claiming that at least the mountains were still standing, and still being tall.

The first one to make the journey and return with a full account was captain Meñarde Lupéru, who set sail from the city of Atlan in Satóra in the year 352 Spring with the ship Adryána and a crew of daring explorers including his wife Melinda Miúka. Their goal was to sail from Satóra to Aiúna, then Ililakúsa and from the city of Kinwó make it to Vánakilne from the south.

Their journey was long and eventful, and in the year 353 Spring after slightly less than a year at sea, they caught sight of land to the north. They came first to the large bay south of Laimi, which was named in the captain's honor as Lupéru Bay. When they arrived the bay was covered in heavy mists, and they couldn't see very far in any direction. Creeping along the coast carefully they reached the forests of Laimi where they anchored and went on land. Their visit there was brief. The mist made Lupéru and his men nervous, and Lupéru later described the forest as very disquieting. Wanting to get away from the fog they set sail and headed back along the coast, intending to follow the coastline east.

They snuck around the southern horn and headed north along the coast. They made several stops to explore the coast lands, but never ventured far inland. Lupéru's main objective, according to his later accounts, was primarily to map the coastline and provide a guide for future explorations.

They reached the Sea of Black Spires two months later. At this point the morale had sunk and sickness and despair seemed to plague the ship. Lupéru described it as the empty, bleak environment causing people to lose faith. When they reached the southern shores of Náda, many of his men had died and his wife had caught sick. Melinda Miúka finally succumbed while they were exploring the land for food and fresh water. Lupéru buried her near the lake that now bears her name in memory of her, building a small shrine over her grave.

The last part of the journey through the canals south of Náda was a desperate one. Lupéru was determined not to give up yet, despite protests from his men. What madness drove him to continue even facing mutiny is not known. Lupéru himself explains that he remembers little of this last part. He reached the Sea of Tar in the year 354 Spring, with only a small crew left. He described it vividly in his later accounts as a cursed sea, the water black like tar and a

merciless wind howling down from the mountains. In a storm the ship crashed upon the rocks in the southern sea and all but three men died in the waters.

Lupéru was found two years later, north of Añhem, drifting on a crude raft, delirious from starvation and his experiences. His tale has become famous, and his account of the lands to the far west and north is considered the most valuable one yet.

## Geography

Vánakilne is completely dominated by the massive star-shaped range of mountains. These mountains are the tallest known mountains of Aura, some of its central peaks reaching as high as 11.3 km (7 miles) or more.

### Lakes of Steam

Documented by Lupéru, the lakes of steam are aptly named. Surrounded by ice and snow, the lakes keep warm thanks to geothermal heat. Lupéru describes them as clear but with a terrible taste, which some suggest may have caused the sickness among some of his crew.

## Locations

The mountains of Vánakilne are riddled with ruins, particularly in the north-eastern part around the sea of black spires where countless strange towers of black stone still stand. None of these have been explored, and only little is known of them through ancient records.

### High Kadađ

High Kadađ is a city of myth. No one has seen it since the days of the revenants, and the old records are vague at best. It is said to have once been a great fortress of the ghouls, but was claimed by the revenants and turned into their capital, a dark mirror of (Old) Kadađ, their dread city to the far south. Or so it is told.

## Laimi

---

**Capital:** Unknown

**Population:** Unknown

**Government:** Unknown

**Religions:** Unknown

**Languages:** Unknown (previously Verjia and possibly Añrúva)

**Currencies:** Unknown

**Imports:** Unknown

**Exports:** Unknown

Laimi west of Vánakilne is all that remains of the ancient and majestic forested plateaus where lycanthropes hunted in ancient times. During the cataclysmic end of the revenant empire, most of these lands sank into the ocean or were scorched and left barren, but somehow Laimi survived unscathed or perhaps rose anew afterwards and its forests remain to this day. According to Lupéru's accounts, the only ones detailing these lands, a curse seems to hang over it now. Whether anything living still remains somewhere in the heart of the forest is unknown, nor is it known how far west it stretches or if any lands exist beyond its borders.

## History

Little is known of Laimi. No one except Lupéru has visited it since the revenant incursion, and records from before that time speak only in vague tones about a green land to the far north-west which are assumed to refer to Laimi. Only a few relics exist, thought to have been brought to the east in the ancient past or found by Lupéru.

## The Virsi Káta

The Virsi Káta is an ancient scroll of vellum attributed to a bard of ancient Laimi. The name has been deciphered to mean "Great Hymn", and it details the lands of Laimi and its people. It is thought to vastly pre-date the revenant arrival, and unfortunately is only partially legible. It is in a precarious state of decay due to its advanced age and is kept under very careful watch by the ghouls, encased in crystal.

## Geography

Laimi is a land of vast forested plateaus or tables; massive plates of rock at varying levels of elevation, covered in dense forests. Little is known of its geography; the ancient records are vague and Lupéru only visited it briefly.

## Locations

There are no known cities, ruins or other landmarks in Laimi. It is reasoned that many ruins must exist, but none have been conclusively located so far.

## Náda

---

**Capital:** Unknown

**Population:** Unknown

**Government:** Unknown

**Religions:** Unknown

**Languages:** Kórva, possibly Añrúva

**Currencies:** Unknown

**Imports:** Unknown

**Exports:** Unknown

Náda is a land of eternal ice north of Vánakilne. It is spoken of in a few ancient records, but little enough is known about it. It was once inhabited by tribes of fierce and hardened warriors, and some think they still live there, having somehow held off the revenants.

No one has any idea how far north Náda reaches. There are speculations that it connects with the eastern lands somewhere north of Remla and the vast glaciers and mountains of ice but there is no evidence to back up these claims other than the idea that lycanthropes originally migrated that way from the east in aeons past and became to peoples of Náda and Vánakilne.

## History

The first peoples of Náda are believed to have migrated there from Ouranandai, about the same time the first lycanthropes settled Aña Kíéla and other lands of the east. Some speculate that lycanthropes of Sun Aa, driven out of their homeland by the first ghouls, migrated west and settled these frozen lands at a later point. The truth of this remains unknown, and no records exist which might shed some light on the history of Náda.

## The Ahar Tablet

The Ahar Tablet is a relic thought to depict Náda and its people. It is the only relic known to refer to these lands and has been studied extensively. Like most such relics it is kept by the ghouls, but copies of its depictions and texts have been made, to varying degrees of precision.

The tablet depicts a region which is thought to be southern Náda, including the plateau with the lake now called Lake Miúka. There are depictions of large people, most likely lycanthropes or close relatives. Some of them appear to have the heads of crows on the tablet, perhaps meant to represent some transformation from lycanthrope to bird although the actual meaning has been lost. There are a few sentences of text near the bottom, but most of them are no longer legible. It refers either to the land or to its people as "Crava". The tablet was most likely made by the ghouls of Vánakilne, although its dating is not clear.

## Geography

Most of Náda is uncharted territory. Only its southern region, a rocky plateau at the foot of a range of mountains is known, having been roughly mapped by Lupéru during his brief visit.

### **Lake Miúka**

This lake is thought to be the same one depicted on the Ahhar tablet. It is a glacial lake, thought to be frozen most of the year. It was named by Lupéru in memory of his wife who died and was buried nearby.

## Locations

No known settlements or ruins exist in the few records of Náda.

# The Chthonic Realm

The Chthonic realm refers to the entire underground realm which exists deep below the mountains and seas of the world. It is inhabited by many creatures, some harmless but many which are widely feared or only heard of in whispered tales if at all. It is also home to vast numbers of ghouls - the exact numbers are unknown - who build vast stone cities and fortresses of impressive design and connected by immense networks of tunnels.

# History

The history of the world is long and complex. This chapter tries to give an account of the most significant events which have shaped the world over time.

## A Brief Timeline

The timeline below shows the most important events in chronological order for an easy overview of the history of the world. Dates are given in three calendars; Spring Reckoning (SR), the Old Calendar of Madár (OC) and finally by ages. In the latter case S stands for Spring (the third age of mortals), F stands for Fall (second age of mortals) and BF is short for Before the Fall measuring backwards from the start of the second age. The early events are only approximately dated and for this reason are only given in Spring Reckoning.

Year (SR)	Year (OC)	Year (ages)	Events
-2,5M	-	-	- The First Age of Mortals begins. The date is little more than a pure guess.
-2,0M	-	-	- First primitive lycanthropes hunt the plains and forests of the new world.
-50.000	-	-	- First known tribes of lycanthropes in Nyíre and Madár.
-30.000	-	-	- First lycanthropic civilization of Sun Aa.
-22.000	-	-	- First ghouls created by lycanthropes of Sun Aa.
-18.000	-	-	- Fall of the lycanthropes of Sun Aa. Founding of the first ghoulish empire
-15.000	-	-	- Fall of the first ghoulish empire.
-14.603	-5.046	11.114 BF	Founding of the ghoulish city of Kerna.
-9.557	<b>1</b>	6.068 BF	Founding of Madár as a coalition of independent tribes of lycanthropes under Taiz Madár.
-5.169	4.388	1.680 BF	First recorded human tribes in Amarin south of Madár.
-3.489	6.068	78 BF	Arrival of the revenants on Vánakilne.
-3.411	6.146	<b>1 F</b>	Starfall - The fall of the revenant empire and disappearance of the revenants. Beginning of the second age of mortals.
-2.978	6.579	433 F	Lycanthropes of Madár and Nyíre settle southern Ililakúsa, causing conflicts with the native population
-2.032	7.525	1.379 F	Lycanthropes of May Wen in southern Ililakúsa consolidate their hold over the islands of May and Ni Dai Ven
-1.811	7.746	1.600 F	A massive slave uprising in May Wen causes chaos in the republic and leads to thousands of human slaves escaping to the northern islands where they settle among the old native tribes.
-1.636	7.921	1.775 F	Founding of Amályar
-1.304	8.253	2.107 F	May Wen conquers the island of Ğekámo
-833	8.724	2.578 F	Slave uprising in Aiúna
-838	8.729	2.583 F	Founding of Méru by free ghouls of Aiúna
-213	9.344	3.276 F	Birth of the first werewolves.
-188	9.369	3.301 F	Massacre of the Fang.
-147	9.410	3.342 F	Herĝan arrives in the city of Rémen.
-139	9.418	3.350 F	The Black Year - The March and Fall of Herĝan. Official beginning of the Reign of Terror.
-4	9.553	3.485 F	Fall of Vális, the last fortress of the north, to the Terror.

Year (SR)	Year (OC)	Year (ages)	Events
-3	9.554	3.486 F	Válsanti's march against the Terror and the defeat of Ašíva.
<b>1</b>	9.557	<b>1 S</b>	The raising of the Circle of Spring to commemorate the end of the Reign of Terror. Beginning of the third age of mortals.
143	9.700	143 S	Founding of Satóra.
352	9.910	353 S	Lupéru's expedition to Vánakilne sets off from Atlan in Satóra.
378	9.935	378 S	Current year.

## The First World

---

The first world was the creation of the primordial dragons, carved with runes of dreams and power in the massive worldstone. Before this creation existed only the endless seas of Mist and the unmoving, unliving Worldstone. Before the dragons bound spirit and matter to create life as it is known, only spirits drifted across the mists, the dragons themselves being creatures of dream and spirit rather than flesh and blood.

Little indeed is known about the world of the Dragons or its first inhabitants. It is said to have been a perfect world, an immortal world where nothing ever died or decayed. But something crept into the world and corrupted it, leading the mighty dragons to war amongst themselves. Aeons of war lead eventually to the cataclysmic shattering of the Worldstone and the banishing of all but two dragons from the world. Over time, the fractured pieces of the Worldstone, drifting aimlessly among each other in the vast sea of Mists, became the world known today. A world no longer perfect or whole, but left to chaos and decay.

For more details on the creation myth of the world, see the chapter on Religion and Mythology.

## First Age of Mortals

---

The first aeons of the new world are believed to have been a time of slow, uncertain growth. Plants and trees began to grow again, and various creatures emerged anew to settle the lands. Whether these first creatures represent survivors from the old world, now mortal, or whether they were new to the world is unknown. The first primitive lycanthropes are believed to have emerged early on, hunting the wild plains in small bands. The first small steps towards civilization would not happen until ages later.

The first evidence of lycanthropic civilization, in the form of semi-permanent settlements, art and primitive records occur around 50.000 years ago, emerging in the north and south roughly around the same time. Some sources talk about earlier civilizations in other parts of the world, such as the fabled lands of Vánakilne and Eðin Leng, but next to nothing is known of either before the arrival of the Revenants much later.

## Lycanthropes and Ghouls

Lycanthropes from Aña Kiéla migrated and settled in Sun Aa and other lands of the north early on, long before the first definite records. Whether they learned the art of rune craft before coming to Sun Aa, or after, is not known, but through the magic of the primordial runes the lycanthropes of Sun Aa created for themselves the first known major civilization in the inhospitable and inaccessible mountains of the north.

The rise of the first lycanthropic civilization coincides with the emergence of the ghouls. It is said in the old myths and legends of the ghouls, that the first ghouls were created through magic and runes by the lycanthropes of Sun Aa, as mindless golems to serve as slaves in the mines and libraries of that great empire. It was through these mindless workers that the lycanthropes carved out their vast halls and temples of stone.

For centuries the lycanthropic empire of the far north grew thanks to the hardships of the

ghouls, and they gathered large collections of runes and other magic. All this lore was kept by their mindless servants, and over time it happened that the ghouls gained minds of their own from long exposure to these runes of creation and life. Keeping this development from their masters, the ghouls began to organise themselves in secret. For unknown ages they toiled away, slowly freeing more of their kind and secretly studying the lore they were set to guard. Eventually they even managed to steal the secret of how their kind was created, and tweaked it for their own purposes. Using this knowledge, they created the first truly free ghouls, who not only had minds but could breed like other living creatures. These new ghouls and their free children were kept hidden away in secret tunnels and chambers far beneath the earth where they grew in number and strength.

But not all went as the ghouls planned. Before the ghouls had finished their complex plan and fully prepared, some among them revealed the plan to the lycanthropes, perhaps seeking a peaceful resolution before resorting to war. The lycanthropes quickly gathered their forces and attacked before the ghouls could do the same.

The fighting was immense and terrible. But in the end, the ghouls were victorious, driving their former masters off into the deep and unknown reaches of the north. It is said that here, in the frozen north, the fleeing lycanthropes used their magic in one final desperate attempt to save themselves, raising vast mountains of pure ice in the way of the pursuing ghouls. These mountains became the Ice Titan, the massive glacier which sits at the top of the known world and effectively prevents all passage further north. What became of the fleeing lycanthropes is not known, but it is often suggested that they fled further west and by unknown routes came to Vánakilne and its surrounding lands where they settled. Whether this is true, and whether they were the first to make it there is not known. It is also not known how ghouls ended up in that place, although some ghouls may have been trapped by the glacier and followed, and eventually the two races may have found peace and lived side by side in the far west.

Back in Sun Aa, the conquering ghouls settled in the vast halls of their former masters, creating a powerful empire of their own. This empire prospered and grew for many centuries, until an unnamed evil drove out all the ghouls and forced them to flee south to other lands. What this evil was has never been revealed, but to this day a shadow hangs over the mountains of Sun Aa and its countless abandoned ruins. All later attempts to reclaim that lost empire has failed, and over time the area has gained a fearful reputation as few who venture there ever return.

## Founding of Madár

The founding of Madár in 6068 BF (year 1 in the Old Calendar of Madár) is well documented. A series of extensive eruptions by nearby volcanoes had caused the once fertile lands to grow barren and arid as thick layers of ash rained upon the land. The many nomadic tribes of these lands were having a harder and harder time surviving as plants withered and wild game fell in number. At the same time a terrible sickness spread among the people of the south, perhaps related to the ash and known as the Black Plague. Most tribes sought towards the coasts where fishing could better sustain them, but this massive migration caused great conflicts among the many tribes and scattered wars broke out over rights to the limited coast lands and the fish.

It was from these bloodstained ashes that a new hope arose. The great shaman Taiz Madár had seen his clan fall ill and had himself felt the hands of death strengthening its hold around him. Praying long nights to the Nightingale for an answer, for a sign, Taiz saw a drastic path laid out before him. As the land stripped itself of life, so would he, and from the ashes of the fallen would rise a new order of unlife, an immortal form like that of the first and perfect world. Taiz prepared the ritual even as he grew weaker. When he threw himself upon the fires, his people watched in horror. But as he arose again, undying and eternal, they understood and followed. Faced with death, Taiz and his people chose to greet it.

Taiz travelled the coast, followed by his Host, and gathered the broken clans. Those who were sick were given a chance to prove themselves worthy of an eternal life among his Sovereign Host, while those still alive and unafflicted were made to swear fealty to Taiz. Thus from the broken tribes and ashes Taiz formed the nation of Madár, a nation under a new sacred order.

Eventually the ashes settled but the land would prove forever changed, no longer a fertile forest but a vast plain of ashes and barren rocks. Taiz and his Host needed no sustenance, however, and under his rule the living tribes merged and learned to cooperate and share what

resources could be found in this new land.

## First Humans

The first humans are thought to have emerged some 5-6000 years ago, most likely in Amarin south of Madár. The first records in Amarin of humans occur in 1680 BF, where notes about "degenerate populations" in the southern mountains are made by scholars in Madár. From the records it is clear that Madár sought to eradicate this perceived sickness early on. In this way the first humans may have been driven into Nyire from the mountains, seeking refuge from the forces of Madár. From there they spread out over the continent and later came to other lands beyond the sea by various paths.

The Madárran caught many humans, believing the "degenerates" to be the subjects of some sickness or vile magic and fearing that it might spread suddenly and cause an epidemic. For this reason countless humans were subjected to extensive tests and dissection over the ages, in the hope of finding the exact cause and a cure. If the Madárrans learned anything of the origin of the humans, it has not become known to the wider world. No "cure" was evidently found, and eventually the investigations stopped. Humans have never been allowed within Madár, however. The lycanthropes of Madár continue to see them as unclean, degenerate freaks, unworthy of walking the sacred lands of Madár.

Those humans who remained in the southern mountains joined with the tribes of outcast lycanthropes of these regions. They remain to this day.

## The Revenant Occupation

Around 4000 years ago the first revenants are thought to have arrived from the south and settled on the vast mountains of Vánakilne. There they warred with the native lycanthropes and eventually spread out, seeking to colonize all surrounding lands.

The revenants are thought to have come from the far southern lands of Eðin Leng, a cold and arid continent of which next to nothing is known. The sources describe the revenants as terrible spirits, able to possess various bodies and with knowledge of dark, unrivalled magic. Some speculate that the revenants were related to ghouls, who had destroyed all life in their own land and whose undead spirits now sought out new lands to claim for their own.

The revenants first came to Vánakilne where they built their seat of High Kadað. Some legends exist of the indigenous people of Vánakilne before the revenant occupation. Most tales tell of vast cities of strange spires and of a highly developed civilization of lycanthropes. Records of "distant thunder" from nearby lands, particularly the islands of Ililakúsa, may have been signs of the great war the revenants waged against the natives of Vánakilne.

Once Vánakilne had been fully subjugated and its people either slain or enslaved, the revenants began to pour into surrounding lands, coming in vast fleets from across the sea. For five decades the revenants spread across the northern continents, driving away other civilizations and colonizing the land. Countless people of all races were captured and enslaved, most brought back to High Kadað to work in the depths.

Of the true motivations of the revenants only speculation exists. It is told, however, that they did not settle for Aura alone, but sought to conquer other stars as well. In the depths of the mountains of Vánakilne, and in many outposts across the world, the revenants constructed vast networks of portals, some connecting their various cities and colonies on Aura, but others supposedly connecting countless stars both near and distant - strange and alien worlds, from which they brought alien and terrible creatures. It is whispered that many of these portals still exist in various states of function, and that the depths of the world may still be inhabited by alien terrors from distant stars brought here by the revenants or which later slipped through these left-over portals.

As suddenly and mysteriously as the revenants had appeared, they would disappear even more suddenly and with even greater mystery. Some seven decades after they had begun their colonization of the north, a great cataclysm brought an end to their nation and laid the lands of Vánakilne scorched and ravaged. Large masses of land around Vánakilne sank into the ocean, and many other lands faced similar destruction. In mere moments, great lands had been left barren and lifeless all across the northern continents. Some say the great portals of the

revenants collapsed, that the magic failed under its own power, others have even wilder explanations for what happened including the chilling theory that the revenants brought something through the portals which they could neither control nor banish.

Of the revenants no trace could since be found. It was as if they had vanished in the thin air. Thus began the second age of mortals, with a bang and the fall of an empire.

## The Second Age

---

The second age began with the fall of the revenants. Large parts of the north had been ravaged in the cataclysmic explosion, and no land more so than Vánakilne. The once proud mountain, rising above all others, was left deserted and blighted. Large parts of the continent had sunken entirely into the ocean, and what remained above the sea was scorched and cursed. To this day, Vánakilne and the terrible cities of the revenants are said to be haunted, and all but the most foolish stay far away from the mountain and surrounding waters, for something evil dwells there now.

### The Reign of Terror

The Reign of Terror began officially with the fall of Herġan to the Terror in 3350 Fall, and the subsequent subjugation of most of the northern lands by the werewolves. This reign lasted nearly 200 years, before Ašíva was finally killed and the Terror dissolved and scattered to the winds by the lycanthropic saint Válsanti.

#### **The First Werewolves**

No one knows where the shadow dragon Ašíva came from. It was not until she was unveiled by Válsanti that the people of Aura were even aware that she existed. Until then there had been whispers of a sinister intelligence behind the otherwise mindless werewolves, but the true nature of this power behind the horde could only be guessed at.

Around 3276 Fall, long winters had been plaguing the lands, and in the frequent snowstorms many lycanthropes disappeared without a trace. These disappearances were spread out over vast areas, only a few disappearing in any one place and thus arousing little suspicion. The truth was far more chilling even than the freezing winds sweeping across the continent.

The missing lycanthropes were brought deep into the earth by their captor. There, the males and children were tortured, mutilated and slain, while the females were forcefully impregnated in a vile ritual and forced to consume the blood and flesh of the slain males and children. The dark offspring they gave birth to were the first werewolves, born from terror and bound by the blood of their creator to do her bidding unquestioningly. Those women who died were fed to those who survived, and a steady stream of new captives continued to keep their numbers growing. As the first werewolves grew up they would rape these women, perpetuating the nightmare breeding without the original ritual and growing ever in numbers.

#### **The Black Hunters**

It was a terrible shock as the first werewolves began to trickle out of the mountains just as the people first noticed the pattern of disappearances. The first days were a massacre unlike anything anyone had ever witnessed before. The werewolves surged forth and struck from the shadows, killing men and boys, but taking away women and girls to unknown fates. Those who were wounded trying to fight back suffered painful transformations, soon joining the enemy they had just fought. The dark hordes of werewolves were soon named The Terror, and it grew at a frightening pace each day.

After most of his tribe had been slaughtered by the werewolves, Ízak the Red, a chieftain of the Redmarsh area, tracked the werewolves to the Fang Mountains. Determined to fight them at the source, Ízak gathered a host of skilled hunters from surrounding lands and approached the mountain from the south through the deep forest. Here he meant to take the beasts by surprise in their own lair, and bring an end to their terror.

Ízak and his men were veterans of many battles, and many had lived in the region all their lives and knew the mountains like the back of their hands. They laid complex strategies for how to take the werewolves by surprise and prevent them from escaping the mountains. They laid

countless traps and gathered every bit of knowledge about their foe that they could. But they knew nothing of the real horror behind the werewolves.

When Ízak eventually stormed the caves of the werewolves they were slaughtered to the last. No one knew how it happened, except that it must have been a massacre. The corpses of all Ízak's men were found the next morning, impaled upon spears in long rows along the edge of the forest south of the mountain. Ízak himself was never found again and a shadow of fear and avoidance soon fell over the mountains.

## **The Steel Wolf**

For four decades, the people of Amályar and Vása fought the growing horde of werewolves. Great armies gathered and fell like waves on the sea, and only small victories were had. Cities and fortresses fell one by one to the Terror, and the surviving people were pressed ever back to other fortresses. One of these fortresses was Rémen, a heavily walled city. It had stood against the waves of attacks for decades, but with the surrounding lands quickly overrun by werewolves and the city cut off from the rest of the world, it was soon to fall.

It was to Rémen that a small company of men from the north came around 3342 Fall. Led by a large lycanthrope called Herĝan, they flanked the werewolves and helped drive them away from the gates of the city for a time. Herĝan became known for his incredible toughness, earning him the name of the Steel Wolf. With the help of Herĝan, the city was reinforced and what forces were still left across the land were called to Rémen.

While the city of Rémen gathered its forces under Herĝan, the ghouls of the mountains were under massive assault. They had fallen back to the great capital of Kerna and were surrounded on all sides by the enemy. Seeing no way to win the battle, the ghouls devised a different plan. Unable to win or flee, they capitulated, offering themselves as slaves to the enemy in return for their lives. Kerna fell under the dominion of the werewolves, and the ghouls were moved to the Fang Mountains where they were put to work. This was exactly what the ghouls had hoped, for it provided them with an opportunity to learn more of the true enemy and subtly work against it from within. Their plan would take time and no small amount of luck, but ghouls are nothing if not patient.

Elsewhere, Herĝan had amassed all the forces he could find in the war torn lands surrounding Rémen. From near and far, warriors trickled into the fortress, and in the early year 3350 Fall this army marched towards the Fang Mountains under Herĝan's banner. The army drove through the wall of werewolves as it slowly but surely forced its way into the shadow of the mountain. And here the two great forces clashed, the last armed forces of the free world under Herĝan's command on one side and the vastly greater Terror on the other side.

While Herĝan's might was great and his toughness legendary, his pride became his weakness. Herĝan saw the werewolves as a great shame of the lycanthropic people, a taint upon their honor. This was not a human war or a ghoulish war, in Herĝan's mind. This war was to be fought by the lycanthropes, for the honor of the lycanthropes alone, and Herĝan would allow no aid from humans or ghouls. While his army was vast and its warriors great men and women, Herĝan was massively outnumbered and in the shadow of the mountain his followers were slain one by one. When the dust settled, thousands of corpses hang from spears in long rows and ever since that day the shadow of the mountain has been cursed. Of Herĝan it is said that he was brought to the top of the mountain and nailed to a cliff. There he was forced to watch the lands fall to the terror and all his people slaughtered or subdued.

Scattered and defenceless, the people of the north lost all hope in one fell swoop. Those who still survived sought deep into the wild, hiding in small scattered groups wherever they could and constantly on the move to hide from the growing Terror. All of Amályar and Vása was conquered by the Terror with the fall of Herĝan, and the rest of the northern lands followed in swift succession. Only a few fortresses withstood the onslaughts of the werewolves, but eventually they too would fall until only one remained.

## **Fall of Vális**

Nearly 150 years after the fall of Herĝan, the northern lands had been entirely subjugated by the werewolves. Only a few tribes of lycanthropes and humans survived in the desolate and remote regions where they could hide from the Terror, and with the fall of Várna only decades earlier the fortress of Vális in the Risen Mountains was the last bastion of a free world.

Not much had happened in the last century. The Terror seemed content to hunt at random, now and then attacking the few remaining fortresses but showing no real motivation to bring them down. It has been suggested that Ašiva was more interested in breaking the spirit of the land than to conquer it, and that she deliberately allowed small groups to survive so she could prolong their despair and the decay of civilization. She must have felt like victory had long since been hers, and that no possible resistance could arise any more.

And so Vális remained standing, hidden deep within the inaccessible mountains and protected by countless traps. It is said that no werewolf had ever been within an arrow's flight of the city itself. Large bands of werewolves often assaulted the fortress, but were always brought down before they even got within sight of the walls.

While Vális could withstand the attacks of the werewolves and could remain self-sustained, the fortress was not a pleasant place to live. Despite vast caves and tunnels carved into the mountain and constantly expanded, the city was completely overcrowded and the vast majority of its people lived in terrible squalor with little or nothing to survive by. Particularly the few humans, but also the casteless lycanthropes, lived what could barely be called a life. Forced to survive by stealing, murder or prostitution, and with sickness rampant, Vális was no sanctuary.

The werewolves continued their occasional attacks on Vális, but no one within the city were particularly concerned by this. All except a lonely, casteless lycanthrope who foresaw the impending disaster but was powerless to convince anyone. What this unnamed lycanthrope saw was distraction and complacency. The werewolves clearly did not put any real effort into attacking the city, and their feeble attacks could only serve one purpose, to distract and lure the people of Vális into a false sense of safety. Meanwhile the werewolves were busy carving their way through the mountain with the aid of ghoulish techniques. When the true Terror broke through the rock into the inner caves of Vális, no one were prepared and within an hour the great fortress had fallen, its people massacred or dragged off to be eaten or worse.

## **Válisanti**

The life of the young, casteless lycanthrope who foresaw the fall of Vális but was powerless to prevent it, has been told in great detail ever since she as the only known survivor escaped Vális and was found, mortally wounded, by a small tribe of humans. The tales often focus entirely on what she achieved after that and very little on the person behind the deeds.

Of her true identity next to nothing was known. She had come from Vális, as a lone survivor. As a casteless she had no known parents, and was never given a formal name. What she may have been called by friends while living in Vális will never be known, for since her escape she was known simply as "she from Vális" -- Válisanti.

Her escape from Vális was not without its marks upon her, and her recovery would prove very long. Mortally wounded by a spear and brutally raped before being left for dead by the werewolves, Válisanti survived miraculously but would bear both great scars and the burden of a cursed child for the rest of her short life. The wound from the spear left her unable to feel anything, and she would forever be burdened by great sadness. Válisanti was convinced that she had died, but was called back by the Song of the Nightingale to unite the shattered lands and rekindle the Song in the hearts of those who had abandoned it long ago. After nearly two centuries of terror and despair, no one still sang the old songs and many had never even known it. Válisanti was a lone voice in a world of apathy and hopelessness.

Válisanti united the shattered lands, her song and words bringing together lost tribes of all races. Unlike Herġan, Válisanti sought out and brought together people from all races and of all walks of life. Not just great warriors and hunters, but women and children and people of questionable morality and honor, including vast fleets of pirates - people who had sought out to sea to escape the werewolves but now gathered under Válisanti's banner to reclaim the land they had fled. She even got in contact with ghoulish rebels, and spirits of the land.

But Válisanti's greatest achievement may have been the unmasking of the true evil behind the werewolves. When the army marched against the werewolves, cutting a bloody path across the cursed fields where Herġan and his warriors had fallen to the Terror centuries earlier, Válisanti called out Ašiva and faced the beast with divine fury. The battle that ensued was terrible and prolonged, and there seemed no end to the hordes of werewolves.

Válisanti stood alone against the terrible shadow, but never for a second did her courage or

conviction falter. But as her army began to fall apart around her, pressed and surrounded by werewolves, Ašiva pressed the attack. In a moment of utter despair and darkness, Válsanti was slung to the ground and her body crushed under the dragon's weight. As the dragon held up the prophets broken body, a deathly stillness fell over the battlefield and for a moment the people faltered. Then a singular scream of utter rage shredded the stillness and a lone figure appeared from the shadows, charging across the fields and driving Válsanti's dropped spear deep into the heart of the gloating dragon. At the fall of their empress, the hordes of werewolves dissolved and fled into the shadows. Thus ended the reign of the Terror, after nearly two centuries of brutal reign.

Of the nameless hero who delivered the killing blow to Ašiva, little if anything is ever mentioned in most legends. Only many years later did the full story of Válsanti's life and final battle get told by one of her closest followers, including the revelation that two people had survived Vális. It remains the only account of the woman behind the legend and the great personal trials and sorrows she went through. Of Válsanti's child was revealed little, except that around two months before the final battle she supposedly gave birth to a single boy. Whether the child was a werewolf or not, and what became of him, may never be known.

Válsanti's ashes (except the heart) were buried where she fell. A few years later, to commemorate the end of the Terror and in honor of Válsanti, a shrine was raised around the grave. Over the next centuries this shrine, known as the Circle of Spring, grew into a veritable fortress. It stands still as a memory of those centuries of darkness which are now over.

## The Third Age

---

Since the fall of Ašiva, the lands have struggled to recover. Only a little less than three centuries have passed since, and while much has improved and the lands once again prosper, the shadow of the Terror has never quite left. Werewolves, although not quite the terror they were under Ašiva, still lurk in the dark places of the world and remain a constant threat to all of the civilized world.



# Religion and Mythology

While religious beliefs and practices may vary widely, the foundational myths are for the most part the same across Aura, with only some disagreements. This chapter tells the most widely accepted creation myth of the world and details the various religious and spiritual beliefs common across the lands of Aura.

## Creation Myth

---

It is said that the Nightingale created Šéla through her divine Song, an infinite realm of mists and dreams. And in these dreams lived the spirits; first and greatest among them the primordial dragons, the blessed children of the Nightingale. From Šéla was then born Máña as an endless range of mountains. The dragons dreamt of great runes of power with which they would shape a world out of Máña, binding the spirit of Šéla within its unmoving stone to animate and give life. Thus was made the first world, and upon it was born the first Immortals - wild and graceful children of the dragons, born to rule the material world.

But shadows lurked beyond Creation, and they envied the Nightingale's work. Unable to enter the world on their own, they projected instead their twisted dreams of envy, deceit and hatred upon the dreams of the dragons. Thus strife began to brew amidst the dragons until finally the dragon Lílaš Tán [ˈli:lɑç ˈtʰɑ:n] murdered his sister Máni Díerra [ˈma:ni diˈjɛ:ra] in a rage of jealousy spawned by the hateful dreams of the Shadows. From the murder of the first dragon was born the first shadow dragon, the dead soul of a once graceful dragon seized and possessed by a shadow which could now move freely in the world it both envied and loathed.

War broke out among the dragons over the murder of Máni Díerra, the strife fuelled by the whispers of her shadow. As the dragons turned against each other, those who fell were seized upon by the lurking shadows outside Creation, creating a gate through which the terrors could pour and enter the world. The war raged for aeons uncounted, until that final, cosmic cataclysm in which Máña was shattered and the first world destroyed.

For their crime, the Nightingale banished all, dragons and shadows alike, from the world. All except two - the mighty dragon lords Išáraka [iˈʃɑ:ɹɑka] and Azúran [ɑd͡zˈu:ɹɑn] - who she set to guard the gates at the edge of the world forever against those clawing at it from beyond. But strife still burned strongly in the hearts of these two guardians, and they continued to fight each other. In the end Azúran overpowered Išáraka and trapped her in an eternal dream within her own mind. Now he rests above her sleeping form at the edge of the world, forever watching the gate beyond which horror lurks and claws to get through.

Meanwhile the shattered world began its long recovery, new and old creatures emerging among the stars. While no longer whole and perfect, the world remained and thrived.

## Deities and other Spirits

---

### The Nightingale

The Nightingale is the major (and usually lone) creator deity encountered at the heart of nearly all religions of Aura. While known by many names - in much of the south as the Phoenix for example - it is accepted that all of these names refer to the same being, whose song of life and creation is heard on the wind and in the depths of the world. She is usually depicted as a dragon or a phoenix, or occasionally some other kind of bird. Some say she dwells beyond the world, perhaps in the same place the shadows come from, others that either she or her Song is the world in some sense.

### Dragons and Shadows

The Primordial Dragons were the children of the Nightingale, the first spirits of Šéla who created the first world. Only the two dragons Išáraka and Azúran are said to have survived, although Išáraka is trapped within her own mind by Azúran.

The Shadow Dragons are the dead souls of dragons possessed by shadows from beyond the

world. No one knows if any shadow dragons remain in the world, maybe having escaped banishment or snuck through the gate while its two guardians were still fighting each other. Only one shadow dragon, Ašiva who created the werewolves, has ever been seen in the world since the banishment; or at least only Ašiva was ever recorded.

The name Ašiva is a deliberate corruption in Ayrnáva, of the name Alsjehra used by werewolves in their native Narumach. This name, Alsjehra, means approximately „supreme mother“ and other races are cautious not to speak this name, thus the common corruption Ašiva.

## Immortals

The Immortals of the first world are all thought to have died when Máña was shattered. Their spirits remain, however, and some of them are said to still wander the world in various forms. They are worshipped by many as minor deities or guardians of a place, tribe or race. The lycanthropic race is sometimes said to descend from an immortal named Máður, a great wolf spirit who still wanders the world according to some legends.



# Magic, Crafts, and Technology

Aura is a land of magic and dark lore. It has a very low level of technology as we know it, but it has advanced very far in alchemy, magic and various crafts.

## Alchemy and Magic

---

Magic pervades the world, and while true masters of such arcane and esoteric arts are rare indeed, minor magic is a common and essential part of life in Aura. Even the lowliest commoner knows of magic and relies upon it in their daily lives. There are three major schools or kinds of magic : alchemy, rune craft and pact magic. Each with its minor branches.

### Alchemy

Alchemy is one of the most commonly used forms of magic across Aura. It ranges from the very simple and entirely practical applications such as the various herbs and extracts used in traditional medicine, to applications in metallurgy, leather work and other crafts, and finally to the deeply esoteric and philosophical form of true alchemy which is concerned less with applications than with theory and pure experimentation for its own sake. To most people, alchemy is simply a collection of practical lore about substances and materials. To the true alchemist, it is an art and a philosophy.

Alchemy can be said to be the study of the interaction between matter and spirit, how spirit is bound to matter and how this interaction works. In this it often touches upon and draws upon knowledge and experience from runecraft (see below). To most people, including many practitioners, alchemy is simply a craft, the application of certain lore about materials and substances to achieve certain goals. Such alchemists follow recipes to create a desired result and care little about the esoteric theory underpinning their work. To a true alchemist, it is exactly the theory and not the practice, that matters, and most of all how the theory can lead to new discoveries.

### Runecraft

Runecraft refers to the study and application of the ancient runes of power used first by the Primordial Dragons to bind life and matter together to create the world. While most of these runes and their lore was lost with the Dragons, bits and pieces have been recovered and passed down through the ages. Such runes can hold immense power and are widely sought after, as are the small pieces of primordial rock known as charms on which they are often etched. These charms are believed to be the remnants of the stone upon which the Dragons carved their runes, and some still retain traces of previous runes.

Runecraft and alchemy often mingle, since both are concerned with the fundamental interaction between matter and spirit, although they often approach it in different ways.

### Pact Magic

Pact magic is perhaps the most varied of the magics, and like alchemy it is widely used. Pact magic may refer to anything from simple swears, curses and oaths to prayers and much more powerful hexes, summonings and bindings. Pact magic always involves a spirit of some sort, whether it is the invocation of a particular spirit's name to lend power to a swear or curse, the request of knowledge or answers from the spirits of the Mists, the calling of a spirit to ask for favours or boons, and even the binding of a spirit in a physical object or body. Spirits are inherently unpredictable, however, and the summoning, calling or binding of spirits can be exceedingly dangerous, often leading to possession of the caller or others. Exorcising a possessing spirit unfortunately tends to lead to the death of the host.

### The Divine Song

The Divine Song of the Nightingale represents a special case of pact magic. The Song is heard on the wind and in the depths of the world, clearly audible everywhere though supposedly heard differently by all. It is the Song of Creation and of Life itself, and devout followers of the Nightingale imitate this Song in praise of the Goddess and meditate upon its melodies and tones in an attempt to grow closer to Her and the Song. Through such imitations and

meditations, the priests and priestesses of the Nightingale may work great magic or even miracles by their devotion to the Goddess and Her Divine Song.

## Crafts and Technology

---

Aura has a low level of technology, limited almost exclusively to such simple mechanical constructions as mills and primitive clocks. All work is done by hand or with the aid of animals; transportation is done by foot, riding or on board small boats sailing the vast rivers and shores.

What the people of Aura lack in technology, they make up for in crafts. Leather working, weaving of wool and silks, blacksmithing and metallurgy, stonework and construction, carpentry, boat building, medicine and surgery. Despite the lack of technology, thus requiring doing most things by hand, all these crafts are highly developed in most lands and cultures, and many of these also benefit from a highly advanced alchemical lore.

The sailing ships of Vása and surrounding lands, while small and usually not suited for sailing the oceans, are exceptionally fast and nimble. The bridges of southern Ililakúsa are true wonders of engineering, and the deep fortresses of the ghouls are breathtaking. Leather, wool and fur of all kinds as well as silks from spiders and other materials are used for strong and colourful garments crafted with great skill and care. The people of Aura work true wonders of crafts and engineering with little more than their hands and simple tools.



# Life and Society

Life in Aura is harsh and most people rarely live long. The average lifespan among lycanthropes and humans is rarely much more than 30 to 40 years, although a few individuals may live much longer given enough luck and fortunate circumstances. Violence, disease, pacts gone bad and extensive drug abuse account for most early deaths. Even Madár has a relatively low average lifespan - when not counting its undead caste - despite being almost entirely unaffected by the werewolf threat. The Elves probably have a great deal to do with that.

Cannibalism is not uncommon, particularly among wights and werewolves. Some tribes of lycanthropes also consume their dead (commonly just the heart) and bury only the bones, thus believing that their dead will always remain a part of them. Some tribes and races, fae most notably, also practice ritual sacrifice; at times quite extensively.

For religious reasons, nearly all lycanthropes, fae and some humans refuse to harm or consume birds or their eggs. Ghouls usually have no such aversion towards hunting birds, hunting and raising the small, flightless birds of the underground extensively.

Drug use is common and in some areas - notably Amarin - is almost ubiquitous. One of the more powerful drugs is white moss or so-called "snow", which induces a powerful state of anaesthesia or near-coma described by its users as "living death". They may act normally - walking around and carrying out daily tasks - but show no emotion or reaction to stimuli such as pain, and usually remember little once the effect fades. High doses lead to coma and death.

## Culture and Art

---

Like more practical crafts, most of Aura has a highly evolved culture and art. Madár in particular is known for its vivid art, music, dance, theatres and other performances, trying hard to bring life and colour back to an otherwise scorched land. Dance, song and other performing arts are highly valued by the lycanthropes in general.

Extensive tattoos or body paint, piercings, scarifications and other body art is highly popular all across Aura. One of the more unusual such practices is found among the Elves of Madár who are said to inject alchemical extracts made from various subterranean mushrooms into their eyes to make them glow red in the dark. Occasionally, when the effect is only desired briefly, the extract is merely dripped into the eye. When a longer effect is desired a small needle is used to inject the substance, in which case it can remain for days.

## Music and Instruments

### **Vjalðfañ**

The vjalðfañ is a wind instrument popular in Madár and parts of Nyíre. It is similar to the didgeridoo of Australia.

## Relationships and Sexuality

---

### Greetings and Kissing

Kissing is an almost purely human practice, used both for greetings and intimacy. Among friends it is common practice to kiss the cheeks and/or forehead as part of an embrace. For meetings between strangers, a kiss on the hand or wrist is a more common greeting. A short bow, often with the right hand held horizontally across the abdomen, is also well used among humans when more distance is deemed appropriate.

Among lycanthropes, a brief touch between noses and/or foreheads is a common greeting between family or clan, and occasionally friends. Hugs are more common between friends or even strangers, often performed with one hand, typically the left, held behind the back. At a longer distance, various whistles and other brief sounds - varying between cultures - are used frequently as greetings, sometimes followed by a closer greeting upon meeting. Sometimes a hand gesture, similar to waving, is included.

Mouth-to-mouth kissing is a purely human practice, and often viewed as a filthy one by other races. For humans living among lycanthropes this means the practice is usually kept private, in fact in some places it is outright prohibited in public.

## Currencies

---

Most people of Aura trade through exchange of goods or services. Precious metals and rare gems also serve as currency, particularly when large sums are involved. In addition to these simple systems of trade, some nations mint coins or other forms of currency which are sometimes only accepted within that particular nation.

### The Heartlands

The heartlands - excluding Aiúna, Méru and their close neighbours - have adopted a common currency known as the *šek*. It originated in Amályar, minted first by the ghouls and adopted as a common trade coin of the new nation. It has later been adopted by most other nations of the heartlands, who have long depended on trade between each other.

The common (sometimes *gold*) *šek* is a gold coin of a standard size and weight. The coin contains a high percentage of gold and is relatively soft, making it easy to cut into halves or quarters when dealing with smaller values. The *šek* is the most commonly used coin, as it is valuable but not too valuable for common folk. Two other coins, the *electrum* (sometimes *special*) *šek* and *silver* (sometimes *royal*) *šek*, are more valuable and used mostly by merchants or others who handle large amounts. They are rarely cut. There are 24 common *šek* per electrum and 8 electrum per silver, meaning a silver *šek* is worth 192 common *šek*. It is normal to refer to the three coins as just *šek*, *special* and *royal* respectively.

In Alyúme the currencies of Aiúna and Méru are also sometimes accepted, although not universally and mostly by traders who frequent those lands.

### Aiúna

The natio of Aiúna uses small, rectangular sheets of wool with various denominations, similar to modern money. These notes are created in certain amounts by the clergy and circulated among the population. If handed in to the clergy or government, it can be exchanged for goods or precious metals. Large notes are known as "rams" because they traditionally depict a ram, while smaller denominations, depicting sheep, lambs and occasionally llamas, are known commonly as "skins". Such money, regardless of value, is referred to as "wool".

The coins of Méru are also widely accepted, and a few traders, particularly those who regularly visit Alyúme or other lands, may even accept the *šek* of the heartlands.

### Méru

The ghouls of Méru mint coins made of an alloy of copper, gold and silver. The alloy is primarily copper with around 5-10% gold or silver. The color ranges from dark blue, purple and black. All coins are small solid discs. The value of the coin depends on its composition and weight. The composition is etched on one side, with the weight on the other side. The coins of Méru are called *siĝna*, but commonly known as *bulls* among non-ghouls because they have a bull-like head above the value mark.

Larger amounts are exchanged as trade bars of pure metals, or in the form of precious gems.

### Madár

The nation of Madár mints a variety of coins, collectively called *káit* but with each coin often named after its design. The Sovereign Host dictates a set of standards regarding things like weights and values, but each state is free to create their own designs as long as they follow the standards of the Host. Among these standards is the requirement that all coins must have a hole so they can be put on a string - coins are often worn as necklaces in this manner. Many states mint particularly artistic coins, in the shape of weapons, feathers, keys and other figures. Occasional rare coins are minted, with unusual designs, weights, metal compositions or values.

These special coins are only minted in a small number and usually given as gifts to deserving people; they rarely enter regular circulation and must be approved and registered by the Host.

## Amarin

The military of Amarin mints a set of silver coins, known as "shields". Their shape is elliptical with circular indentations on each of the long sides (somewhat hyperboloid). They are not widely used, due to their high value.

For more common trade, copper and iron tokens minted by various merchant and trade guilds are also popular. The military does not officially accept or recognise these tokens, but virtually all traders and common folk use them.

## May Wen

May Wen mints a set of glass-ceramic coins in the shape of turtle shells, and commonly referred to as "shells". Shells are minted by the royal houses and bear their insignias. Shells may lose their value if the house whose insignia they bear falls into disfavour, as other houses may decline to accept them.

## Ililakúsa

The tribes of Ililakúsa primarily trade by exchange of goods. However, precious shells and pearls are sometimes used as a kind of currency, particularly between tribes.

## Notable People

---

There are many notable people of Aura, living or not, some of them described elsewhere. This section tries to gather most of them in one place, providing a brief biography of each.

### Heartlands

The heartlands is a varied place, full of people from all walks of life. It has many notable personalities, some of which are described briefly below.

#### **Herġan**

Herġan (died 3350 F) was a chieftain of the north who gained great fame during the early years of the Reign of Terror, though he ultimately failed and his fall at the battlefield often marks the official beginning of the Reign. Little is known of Herġan and his small company of men from the north, but he became famous for his incredible toughness and was often known as the Steel Wolf.

#### **Válisanti**

Válisanti (ca. 3467 F - 3486 F) was born casteless and poor, but rose to become a saint and saviour of the north as she led the last rebellion against the Terror. Next to nothing is known of her early life and origin. She was born in Vális during the last years of the Reign of Terror. Her parents were unknown, making Válisanti one of the countless nameless casteless who scraped by a minimal living through theft, murder and prostitution in the depths of the fortress. It is known that she served briefly as one of the Birds of War - a special unit of female defenders in Vális - before the fall of Vális, a rare honor for a casteless. When the fortress was overrun by werewolves she was nearly killed, but escaped as the only known survivor of Vális. She was found the next day in the mountains, mortally wounded, by a small clan of humans. She gathered the lost and broken peoples of Vása and the north, and led them against the Terror. She died during the battle, killed by Ašíva. While Válisanti is usually credited with killing the dragon, the killing blow was not in fact dealt by Válisanti but by another, often unnamed hand.

#### **Captain Meñarde Lupéru**

Captain Meñarde Lupéru (born 315 S) is a fleet captain of Satóra. He became famous for his daring expedition to fabled Vánakilne. The expedition was expensive and was financed almost entirely by his wife, Melinda Miúka of Lyán, because few else were willing to put money into an expedition claimed to be doomed from the start. Lupéru succeeded in reaching and exploring much of the coast of Vánakilne, but lost his entire crew including his wife along the way. He was

found drifting in the sea near Añhem, sole survivor.

### **Lady Melinda Miúka**

Lady Melinda Miúka of Lyán (316 S - 353 S) was head of one of the merchant guilds of Lyán in Satóra. She was greatly popular in the city's politics, although persistent rumours linked her with the notorious flood pirates of the city. She married captain Meñarde Lupéru of Atlan at the age of 15 and joined his expedition to Vánakilne, an expedition she also financed. She died of an unknown sickness during the expedition and is buried in southern Náda.

### **Ven Fáren**

Ven Fáren (born 346 S) is current Grand Marshal at the Circle of Spring in Amályar. He is known as a master tactician and is in charge of the continuing effort against the werewolves, directing the forces sent to aid Várna as well as the forces still remaining at the Circle. Like all of the Circle, Ven is highly pious and reveres the saint Válisanti.

### **Amun Sef**

Amun Sef (born 329 S) is the current chief of Kóron, succeeding his father Amun Dai in 369 S. The Amun family of wights has held the throne several times in the short history of Kóron, and is considered one of the most influential families; a rare thing for wights anywhere.

### **Dína Eliz deúna Rynne**

Dína Eliz deúna Rynne (born 357 S) is the current regent of Aiúna, ascending the throne in 376 S as the youngest queen in the history of the nation. There are persistent rumours that she killed her own mother, who died of unknown causes, and that she now seeks to subvert the elected government to reinstate the original monarchy.

## **The South**

Of the southern lands, Madár in particular has a lot of notable people, although many - members of the notorious Elves especially - remain unknown.

### **Taiz Madár**

Taiz Madár (born 6011 BF) was a shaman of the Madaraš tribe and later founder of Madár. He nearly died of the Black Plague but according to legend received a divine omen and stripped himself of the mortal life, becoming the first of the Sovereign Host. Most people of Madár believe he still remains deep within the hallowed halls of the Host, now little more than a crumbling, jewel-encrusted skull, and many consider him a demigod.



# Flora and Fauna

The wildlife and fauna of Aura is rich. Some of it is well known from our own world, other elements are lesser known or unique to Aura. This chapter gives brief descriptions of various animals and plants found across the world.

## Bestiary

---

Aura is teeming with life both civilized and wild. This section describes some of the most notable wildlife species found across the world, many of which are vital to the peoples of Aura either as food or for their fur and skin or in medicine and alchemy.

### Mammals

Mammals doesn't just include most of the civilized races, with the exception of the fae and nereids, but also many other creatures and wild beasts. Many are hunted or bred for food, leather and wool while others are kept as pets or beasts of burden.

#### Caracal

Caracals live wild in Madár and Nyíre and are bred and hunted extensively in Madár where they are a staple of the local cuisine. The hunting of caracals is almost a sport in Madár, due to their great ability to hide from hunters, making the hunting a challenge.

#### Jackal

The jackals are widespread throughout Madár. Tame jackals are quite popular, both as pets and for hunting. The jackals of Madár are ash-gray or black.

#### Llama

Llamas are common in the mountains of Aiúna where they are raised in large numbers for their rich fur.

#### Moss Wolf

The moss wolf or green wolf is a small species of wolf native to the forests of Nyíre, commonly known as the Moss Woods, where its distinctive colour helps it blend in with its surroundings. Its milk is a staple of the fae diet.

### Birds

Bird species are both varied and numerous. Their dropped feathers are often used in fashion and art, but most cultures refrain from hunting birds or their eggs, and many birds have great religious and spiritual significance in various cultures.

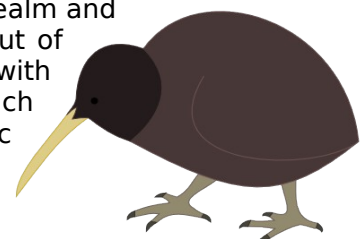
#### Dragon

Dragons were once numerous, particularly in the immense mountain chains of Vánakilne (the name of which literally means "Dragon Peak") and other mountainous ranges of the north. With the arrival of the revenants they were nearly driven to extinction, although some are thought to have fled further into the frigid north.

Dragons are huge, feathered snake-like creatures usually assumed to be distant relatives of the much smaller phoenix of the south. While the phoenix has brightly red, yellow and orange plumage, dragons typically have bright blue, green and white feathers and scales. They are viewed with great awe and respect by the civilized races of the north. The Nightingale is often depicted by her northern worshippers as an immense dragon, variously with black or radiant plumage and scales.

#### Kúba

The kúba is a small flightless bird found throughout the chthonic realm and in mountains of the north where it lives on insects that it digs out of holes with its long beak. It is about the size of a small pigeon, with grey and light brown plumage. The kúba lays large grey eggs which are easily confused with rocks in the darkness of the chthonic realm. It is bred extensively by the ghouls who use both it and its eggs in their diet.



## **Phoenix**

The phoenix are smaller relatives of the dragons, native to the southern lands of Madár, Amarin and Nyíre. They live in the tall mountains south and west of Madár. They have bright red, yellow or orange plumage. The largest phoenixes are known as rocs and feature in many legends and myths of the south.

## **Reptiles**

Reptiles include many widely different species. Some are used for food, either the animal itself or their eggs, particularly in the south and west.

## **Náğa**

The náğa is a large snake-like creature indigenous to the rivers and lakes of Madár and Nyíre.

## **Leatherback Turtle**

Leatherback turtles are common in the Sea of Night, particularly around Ililakúsa, as well as the Amber Sea south east of Madár.

## **Insects**

Insects may be the most varied group of animals. Some have served as a source of food in some cultures, while others are used in alchemy or medicine. Most are a nuisance, however.

## **Mimydáilon and Mindworm**

Native to swamps and wetlands of Nyíre, the mimydáilon is a sinister species of beetle whose larvae are known as the mindworm. The beetle is a small, dark blue species. Pregnant females carry a large number of brightly red eggs in their womb. The beetle was once used commonly in the cuisine of many tribes, usually roasted, until it was linked with many gruesome deaths. The bright red eggs turned out to be resistant to heat, and would often survive the roasting. They would line the mouth and throat and could travel up through the nasal cavity to infect the brain. Once the larvae hatched they would slowly devour the living brain, causing derangement and eventual death. When corpses were regularly found with the entire skull full of these beetles, the practice of using them as food died out quickly. Despite this the beetle or its eggs still occasionally find their way into other food unnoticed and is widely feared.

## **Arachnids**

Spiders are common and mostly used for either their poison or their silk, but occasionally in some cultures also as food. Most spider silk is too difficult to harvest, but a few species produce enough to be useful.

## **Goldspinner**

The goldspinner is a large species of spider indigenous to the northern forests. It has a slender body with long legs, and can grow as large as 10 cm in length (including the legs). They are black with bright yellow or light orange markings. Goldspinners are remarkable for their vast, golden webs after which they are named. These intricate structures can span several trees in the dense woods. When covered in dew the threads glimmer slightly in the dark, which is thought to attract insects. The silk of gold spinners has long been harvested and used for bowstrings and even textiles (the cost of which is exorbitant). Gold spinners are not poisonous, but their bite can be painful.

## **Mythical Creatures**

Mythological creatures are beings mentioned in old sagas, but not known to exist outside dreams and fantasy. Since spirits may appear in the world under any guise, it is often believed that sightings of mythical creatures are simply encounters with such spirits. Other explanations include mistaking woodland creatures and other natural things for something supernatural.

## **Kelpie**

The kelpie is a mythical creature inhabiting swamps and shallow waters. It looks much like a centaur, with the body of a horse and torso and head of a lycanthrope or human, but it lives in the water and only comes to the surface to hunt. Its skin is black and similar to that of a seal,

but as cold as death to the touch. They are often attributed with powers of illusion and the ability to change shape - usually into a horse or a beautiful man or woman. They are said to lure unsuspecting people, particularly children, into the water where they can drown and consume them. They are sometimes considered an omen of death.

## **Elves**

Elves are invisible, red-eyed demons occurring in the myths and tales of the south. It is generally agreed that the myth of the elves was based on encounters with hostile fae in the dense, dark woods of Nyíre. The fables of the elves has lost a lot of their former fascination in recent times, but lives on as inspiration for the name and certain imagery of the Elves of Madár, a group of assassins and infiltrators.

## **Flora**

---

Plants and trees are used for building materials, medicine, alchemy and much more. Many are vital to the peoples of Aura, while others are less commonly used.

### **Flowering Plants**

Countless flowering plants are used in herbal medicine, alchemy and for other purposes.

#### **Eilín**

The eilín is a flowering vine which grows on mountain sides and cliffs of the north. It grows small, white flowers on long, curling tendrils. The flowers exhibit strong bioluminescence, regularly glowing a vivid red to attract insects. In large clusters the flowers synchronize to glow at the same times, often creating very regular cycles and illuminating large areas. Many tribes of people have traditionally lived close to such areas of eilín, using their glow as a natural way to regulate sleep patterns. Often the name *eilín* refers specifically to the flowers; it is also a popular girls name.

#### **Mandrake**

Mandrake grows widely in the heartlands, particularly around Aiúna. It has long featured in alchemy and herbal medicine. In the north it has traditionally been given as a gift to a young woman coming of age, as a sign of good fortune and a symbol of fertility.

#### **Wolf's Bane**

This flowering plant grows in the mountains of the north. Extracts have been used for thousands of years as a poison and occasionally in medicine, but it has become particularly valuable since the Reign of Terror not just as an effective poison against werewolves but also as one ingredient in the only known cure of the werewolf curse. This cure sadly has to be administered very quickly and carefully or it will kill rather than cure the subject.

### **Trees and Shrubs**

Aura has many large forests and wooded areas, with no lack of diversity. Most are used as building materials, but some have other uses.

#### **Red Dwarf Willow**

The sap from this small willow is used as a drug, while the bark is said to be an aphrodisiac. The sap is typically harvested and boiled to a thick, black substance. This thick substance is traditionally applied directly to an open wound or occasionally smoked. It usually has no effect when ingested. The initial effect is intense agony, which may last for several minutes as the drug spreads through the blood. After this initial effect is typically experienced a great euphoria which may last for hours. It is a very popular drug among bandit clans and mercenaries, often used as a proof of endurance due to the intense pain experienced initially.

### **Mosses and Lichens**

Mosses and lichens are common and used in many ways from food to medicine and as a building material. The forests of Nyíre, known also as the Moss Wood, are especially rich in mosses and lichens of all sorts, but these growths can be found nearly everywhere.

**Tail kírí**

This soft, dark green moss grows wild in forests all across the world. The fresh moss is most commonly used as a form of contraception. A small bit of fresh moss is soaked in water and inserted prior to intercourse, serving as a barrier and spermicide.

**White Moss**

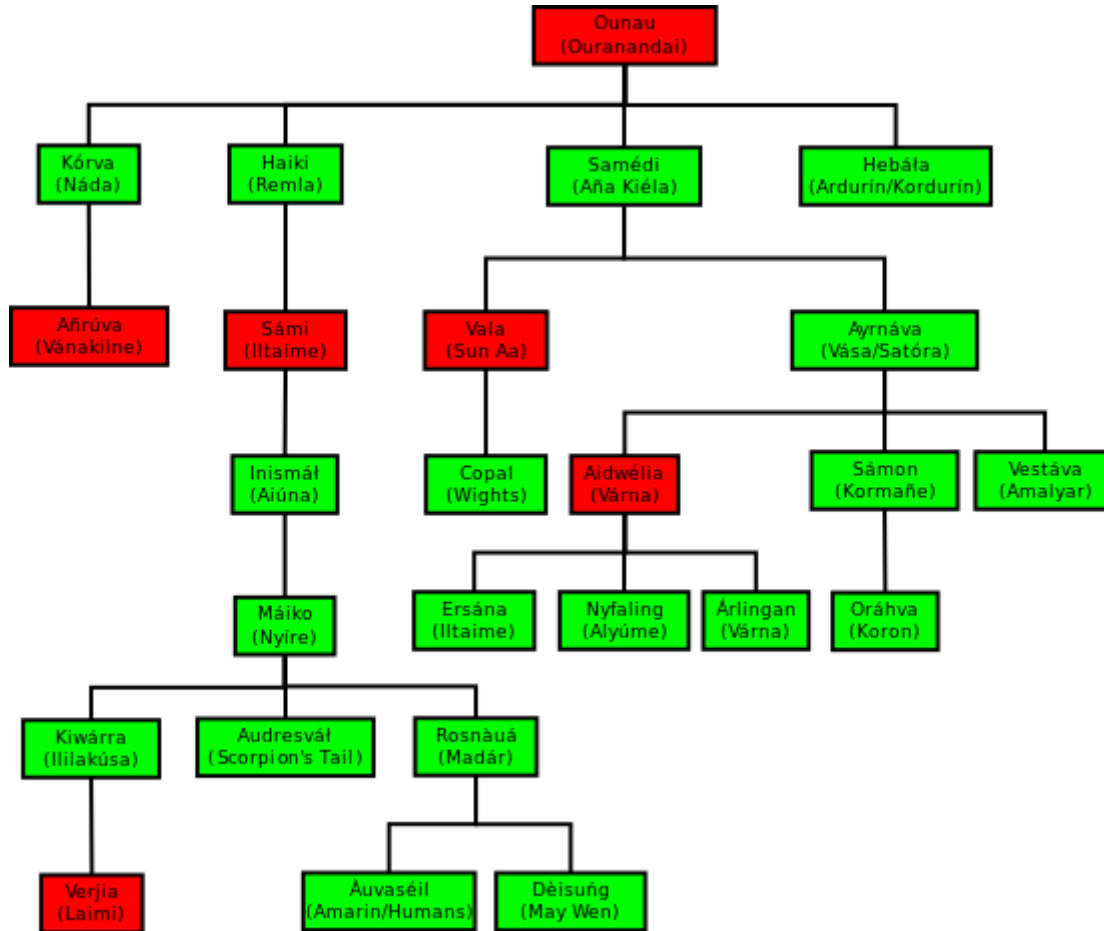
White moss is a rare form of moss growing in damp caves, often near underground lakes or rivers. As it gets older it takes on a grey colour and becomes stiff and coarse. It is harvested while still white, and either used immediately or preserved in alcohol. Once it dries it quickly loses its value. White moss is a powerful sedative drug typically ingested. It induces a state often described as living death accompanied by amnesia. The subject may appear awake and active to observers, even continuing their normal chores and activities, but will express no emotions or reactions to stimuli such as pain. When the effect wears off the subject rarely remembers anything of what happened while they were affected. Overdose - which happens all too easily - leads to coma and ultimately death. Aside from being highly addictive, long time users have been known to develop acute depression, paranoia, delirium and aggression.

Because of its sedative and anaesthetic effect, white moss may be used in medicine, particularly during surgery. Ingestion is known to cause miscarriages, and for this reason it has also been used as an abortive. The effectiveness and safety of this is highly debated, however.



# Languages and Dialects

There are several languages and countless dialects of each spoken among the many races and cultures of Aura. The languages of the lycanthropes, humans, and wights are all thought to belong to the same language family. The diagram below shows the descentance of the languages and where or by whom they are primarily spoken, according to the common view among the lycanthropes of the north. The lycanthropes of the south, particularly Madár and May Wen, still claim their tongues are nearer to the root, like they claim Madár was the original homeland of the lycanthropes. Languages in red are believed to be extinct, with no native speakers left. Each language may have several dialects, which are not listed.



The locations shown in parentheses mostly apply to the lycanthropes. Many humans, even outside Amarin, still speak Àvaséil, while others have adopted the local tongue either as a first or second language. Wights likewise still speak their native tongue, Copal, but in some places adopt the local tongue in addition.

Werewolves speak a dark language called Narumach supposedly taught them by Ašíva, and the ghouls have several languages of their own, some of which are kept secret. Fae and nereids also have their own languages, although very little is known of these. All of these, however, are believed to constitute independent language families and are not part of the Ounau branch.

# Ayrnáva

---

Ayrnáva is the language primarily spoken in Vása and Satóra, mostly by the lycanropes but also adopted by many humans there, though many humans still speak Ávaséil, the language of their original homeland, as their first language.

## The Alphabet

The traditional script of Ayrnáva is known as Zanši. Since this is a unique script and very different from the Roman (or Latin) alphabet, most examples of Ayrnáva in this and other documents on Aura will be transcribed using mostly Roman letters with a few extra diacritic marks. In this transcription, Ayrnáva possesses the following letters.

a, b, c, d, e, f, ģ, h, i, k, l, m, n, ng, nj, o, p, r, ñ, s, š, t, ð, u, v, w, y, z

Note some of the differences. The letters j, q and x are missing although all the sounds normally associated with them may not be. The letters ng and nj should actually be considered single letters and not combinations, particularly since g and j do not exist as separate letters.

Many of the letters are pronounced different than in English and other languages, and some of the special characters/diacritics may warrant a note. The exact phonetic details of Ayrnáva are beyond the scope of this book; here is given only a rough explanation.

### The Consonants

The letters *b, d, f, h, k, l, m, n, ng, nj, p, s, t, v,* and *w* are mostly as in English and should not be causing much confusion as to pronunciation.

The letter *c* is NEVER pronounced like *k* or *s*, it is ALWAYS pronounced somewhat like *ch* in *chip*. The letter *r* is normally pronounced like in *free*. However, when it occurs twice as *rr* it is pronounced with a distinctive trill like Spanish *r*. The letter *z* is pronounced as *dz* and not like *s*.

The letter *ģ* is pronounced differently depending on its position in a word; typically it is pronounced like the *g* in *saga* rather than as in *rage*, except when it follows another consonant in which case it is either something like *lj* as in Spanish *millón* (when following an *r*) or something like *hj* (when following a consonant other than *r*). If the little *ˇ* is a problem to type, a normal *g* may be used, although this may lead to confusion with *ng* - does it mean *n* followed by *ģ* or just *ng*? The two sounds *ng* and *nģ* are not the same, the first is the same as in *sing* while the latter is something like *nhj* which doesn't exactly exist in English.

The letter *ñ* is pronounced *rn*, roughly as in *harness*, though not exactly. It is NOT the same as Spanish *ñ*. If the *~* is a problem to type *rn* may be used instead, although this causes some confusion with the combination *rn* which is not pronounced the same.

The letter *š* is pronounced roughly like *sh* in *sheep*, and the letter *ð* as *th* in either *this* (at the end of word) or *thin* (elsewhere). If these cause problems to type, *sj* and *th* may be used respectively instead, although *th* may cause confusion since the combination *th* is actually pronounced differently than *ð*.

### The Vowels

The six vowels *a, e, i, o, u* and *y* each have long versions *á, é, í, ó, ú* and *ý*. The difference is perhaps best seen as the difference between the words *boot* and *but*; the vowel sounds in these are not the same, but the point should still be clear, the vowel in one is clearly longer than in the other.

Most of the vowels are completely regular, unlike in English where each vowel may have several different sounds. The vowel *a* is always pronounced as in *car*. The vowel *e* is always pronounced as in *bed*. The vowel *i* is always pronounced like *ee* in *free*, although normally shorter (*í* would be exactly like *ee* in *free*). The vowel *o* is always pronounced as in *hot*, and the vowel *u* always as *oo* in *boot*, although normally shorter (*ú* would be exactly like *oo*). The vowel sound *y* does not exist in English, it is pronounced like *u* in French *chute* or *oo* in Scottish *food*, except when it appears as the first letter in the word in which case it is pronounced like *ö* in German *schön* or *eu* in French *peu*. English often uses *y* as a consonant, Ayrnáva does not.

There is a slight exception to the above regularity. The vowel *e* is silent - that is, not

pronounced - at the end of words if it follows *n*, *ng* or a double consonant and the next word begins with a vowel. For example *tene* is pronounced *ten* before a word like *aran*, but *tene* before a word like *vána*.

## Vowel Clusters and the Consonant J

The consonant *j* actually exists as a sound, but is never written (except as in *nj*). It occurs between most vowel clusters with the exception of *ai*, *au*, *ei*, *eo* and *iy*. Here it works to break up the cluster, and is pronounced either like *y* in *you* or something like *j* in *jack* (when following one of the five mentioned special clusters).

The vowel cluster *iy* is pronounced *iy* where the *j* is pronounced like *y* in *you*. Note again that the vowel *y* is not like in English. The other clusters are pronounced as expected according to the pronunciation of vowels described above.

## A Sample Text

The following is a line from the epic poem Beowulf, translated as close as possible.

**Ayrnáva:** "aybehtame ngehanak mea tólunas e urdu umálenat, e hér zálánet, e urdu añor, e emmañas maleñed ayğepame ir, il sedeme aibena ayvedra ile doheña mea ğaliseñas anri mea dani cañeanet!"

**English:** "I utter in words my thanks to the Ruler of all, the King of Glory, the everlasting Lord, for the treasures which I here gaze upon, in that I have been allowed to win such things for my people before my day of death!"

## Narumach

---

The dark tongue of the werewolves was passed down from the first werewolves, who supposedly were taught it by Ašiva, who is known as Alsjehra in their own tongue.

## The Alphabet

The traditional script of Narumach has yet to be developed, but is unlikely to end up being easy to type on a computer. For this reason, most examples of Narumach in this and other documents on Aura will be transcribed using Roman/Latin letters. In this transcription, Narumach possesses the following letters.

a, b, ch, d, e, f/ph, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, rl, rn, s, sh/sj, t, u, v, w, wh, z

The letters *ch*, *ph*, *rl*, *rn*, *sh*, *sj*, and *wh* should actually be considered single letters and not combinations, although *ch* is the only one which isn't composed of single characters (no *c*).

## The Consonants

The consonants *b*, *d*, *f/ph*, *h*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *p*, *rl*, *s*, *sh/sj*, *t*, *v*, *w*, and *z* should be relatively similar to English pronunciation.

The *ch* character is pronounced like in Scottish *loch*. The *g* is always pronounced like in *saga*, never as in *rage*. The *j* is pronounced like *y* in *yes*, except before a consonant where it is pronounced like *j* in *jack*. The *n* is pronounced as in English, except when it is the first letter in a word where it is pronounced *nj*. The *r* is generally pronounced like *r* in American *red*. As the first letter in a word, as well as after another consonant, it is pronounced differently however (look up *uvular trill* and *voiced uvular fricative* on wikipedia for examples). The *rn* is similar to *harness*, and *wh* like Scottish *whine* (maybe imagine it reversed to *hw*).

## The Vowels

Narumach has only four vowels: *a*, *e*, *o*, and *u*. The *a* is pronounced as in *car*, *e* as in *bed*, *o* as in *dog*, and *u* as in *boot* but shorter. Pairs of vowels *aa*, *ee*, *oo*, and *uu* are prolonged, so *uu* is exactly like *oo* in *boot* where *o* is simply shorter. Likewise, a vowel followed by *hX*, where *X* is any consonant, is also prolonged.

## A Sample Text

A famous quote, slightly changed:

**Narumach:** „Un vohr, moen jhe gmaok un vohr dro“

English: „To be, or not to be a werewolf“, literally it translates „To be, or a werewolf to be not“