
ÆRCHUS GAZETTEER

What follows is a cursory overview of the prominent features, continents, terrain, and places of the World of Ærchus. A great portion of the work before you has been gleaned from both ancient writings and mythology, though, in more recent years, explorers from Ærchus' great empires have braved the unknown to provide solid answers to the question of what lies across the stretches of the globe.

I. ☉ ⊕ OVERVIEW

I.1 PHYSICAL DATA

Ærchus itself is some 10,000 miles in diameter, with a hydrography of roughly 60%. It maintains an axial tilt somewhat less than that of our own Earth (i.e., approximately 23 degrees), and seasonal variation by latitude is therefore likened to Terra's. Ærchus occupies a solar system with a single sun (called Sol) and possesses two moons, Vincula and Hierodule. A single rotation of Ærchus lasts 24 hours, while a single revolution about the sun occurs once every 366 days.

Vincula waxes and wanes over a period of 30 days, and this cycle has for centuries dictated the measurement of months on calendars across the globe. In a fashion similar to that of Earth's own moon, Vincula's aspect is new at the beginning of the month, and its waxes to full after a period of roughly 15 days. Until the end of the month, Vincula wanes, becoming gradually less visible in the night sky until the 30th day of the cycle, at which point it is new once more.

Hierodule's erratic orbit makes it visible from Ærchus only six times a year (i.e., once every 61 days, though it rises for a period of six days prior and falls for a period of six days after). It is on the days of Hierodule's visibility that various peoples of Ærchus place great import, typically in association with the prevailing mythology of their homeland. As such, Hierodule's Days host festivals, religious fasts and ceremonies, conclaves, consecrations, etc. While the details of these holidays vary from culture to culture, the appearance of Hierodule is always regarded as significant.

In civilised lands, one of two prominent schemes are utilised for measuring the progression of days throughout the year. In most western lands, the Tårnic Calendar is used; this system is based on the cycle of Vincula and divides the year into 12 thirty-day months. Each month is further divided into five six-day weeks. In eastern lands, the Ocealean Progression is used. Based on the cycle of Hierodule, this system counts out six 61-day seasons throughout the year, with each season itself divided into 12 5-day weeks, with a single holiday each season marking the zenith of Hierodule's ascension.

I.2 CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Being similar in many aspects to Earth, the planet Ærchus sports a variety of climatic environments. While a detailed system of weather generation is beyond the scope of this gazetteer (such is included in individual regional gazetteers), certain generalities may be made.

To simplify global climate, Ærchus is divided into five distinct climatic bands, spread more or less evenly from the equator to both the north and south poles.

The equator itself is straddles the breadth of the tropical climate belt. Seasonal variation here is subtle, as the weather remains fairly constant throughout the year. Periods of daylight and night are roughly equal. Areas within this band are generally quite hot, and winter is often characterised by violent rainstorms and hurricanes (in those places where rain does fall). Tropical forests are known as jungles, and grass- and scrub lands do exist, but the bulk of land is considered desert.

The next band is known as sub-tropical and hosts areas of predominately high temperatures, with long dry summers and short rainy winters. Land is covered by lush forests and grasslands; large bodies of abundant vegetation occur where rainfall is acute (even in the summer). Seas are warm throughout the year. In the northern hemisphere, the southern-most border of the sub-tropical climate belt marks the extreme of the planet's axial tilt, known as the Northern Tropic (which lies some 1,500 miles and 23 degrees from the equator. In the southern hemisphere, the opposite is true).

Beyond the sub-tropical band lies the temperate climate belt, where regions of moderate temperature exist. Seasons are highly distinct, characterised by hot summers, cold winters and moderate autumns and springs. The distinct seasonal variation leads to easily predicted periods of growing and harvesting. All manner of vegetation covers the ground; so large standing forests, lush grasslands and plains, and steppe are common.

As the polar regions are approached, one crosses through the sub-arctic climate bands. These regions are quite cold, and periods of daylight and night are skewed by the axial tilt of the planet, depending on the time of year. Thus, during winter months, when Ærchus' southern hemisphere faces Sol, daylight in the northern hemisphere is drastically reduced as one travels farther north. Sparse vegetation grows in sub-arctic areas: hearty scrub and evergreen dominate the land when the temperature is high enough to melt the permafrost and allow growth. Icebergs are common on the seas while deep snow is common on land, as are ice floes around lakes and rivers, throughout much of the year.

The final climate band of the planet is known as arctic, and these areas surround both the north and south poles. These regions are typified by extreme cold and a lack of vegetation. Both land and sea are covered with a mix of ice and snow

(and, below the ground's surface, frozen soil). The non-uniform periods of daylight and night are more pronounced in this region than in the sub-arctic, and, as one nears the pole, one experiences days when the sun never sets or rises (in the northern hemisphere, this point is known as the arctic circle, which, by definition, is the southern most point on the globe where Sol is not visible during the winter solstice; mathematically, this point is as many latitudinal degrees south of the north pole as the northern and southern tropics are from the equator. The same is true in the southern hemisphere).

1.3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

While a detailed timeline of Ærchus is beyond the scope of this Gazetteer, some general data regarding the Ages of Ærchus are encapsulated below. It should be noted that these data are spawned from the perspective of the Târnic Empire, which traditionally holds itself as the centre of the Known World.

The Age of Creation (AC) describes time prior to recorded history. Scholars debate how ancient the events of this age are, and figures from 100,000 to one million years ago are still debated. It was during this time that, according to the mythology of most western cultures, the Elder Powers, in particular an entity known as the Pancreator, sculpted Ærchus from the stuff of the multiverse and populated it with various peoples.

The Age of Dreams (AD) witnessed the mortal populations of Ærchus fashion great empires across the globe. During this time, these peoples supposedly enjoyed regular and frequent contact with the divine. Gifts of great knowledge and beauty were granted by the Elder Powers. Magic was quite common and practised more as a science than as an esoteric art. As the (scant) recorded histories account, mortals of all races lived in relative harmony, and though their continued contact with the Elder Powers, the peoples of Ærchus excelled in art, philosophy, architecture, technology, magic, and science.

The decline of this age is believed to have been heralded by the coming of a divine entity known primarily as the Bane God. Delighting in carnage and deceit, this deity appears to have spawned the goblinoid races and set them loose against the mannish and demi-human peoples of Ærchus. The goblinoids, wretched and cruel shadows of the peaceful mortal races of the globe, sowed fear, paranoia, and war across the lands, and their influence began to bend the minds of the goodly peoples toward mistrust, deceit, and aggression.

Ærchus came to be blanketed by doom and foreboding, and the mortal races shaped their energies to hostility and destruction. Warfare among and within the various races withered enlightened development in the arts and sciences, and generations rapidly degenerated into dull-witted barbarians intent only on conquest. The subtle secrets of magic were forgotten as arcane energies became twisted into powerful weapons. Tech-

nologies that once improved the quality of life were brought to bear as tools of mass extermination.

Thus came the Weeping of Heaven, the culmination of unchecked hostility spawned by terror and mistrust. This cataclysmic event, also known as the Bane God's Legacy, and, most commonly, the Shivering, was marked by the total destruction of many of Ærchus' great nations and their peoples. The land was thrown into turmoil, as wonton magicks erupted into earthquakes and violent weather patterns that destroyed civilisations and reshaped the world as clay. Whole cultures died, and entire generations perished in the turmoil. Sages posit that no more than ten percent of the world's population survived into the following age. According to many scholars, the Age of Dreams lasted a little over 3,000 years, though due to the lack of surviving records, it is not known how long ago this age actually occurred.

The Age of Ignorance (AI) followed the Shivering. Little is recorded about this era, since the peoples who survived the Bane God's Legacy struggled for simple survival in the dead world the Ærchus had become. It is known, however, that those who did survive had to adapt to the major shifts and changes that resulted from the Weeping of Heaven—continents had been reformed, new oceans had been created, and climate had altered radically. The task of day-to-day survival was brutal and unyielding as once-civilised peoples reverted to barbarism in an effort to simply live.

While it is not known how long this period lasted, it is clear that, eventually, the world's survivors began to ascend to more refined modes of life. The strongest of these carved out pockets of civilisation from the chaos of the Shivering. Fledging fortress-communities evolved on various continents, and paved the way for the flourishing civilisations of Ærchus' present.

The close of the Age of Ignorance is marked by the founding of Cynd, a city-state built along the shores of what is now Mare Nostrum, along the south-west reaches of the Ærchelon continent. Populated by the Târn, a tribe of fierce human barbarians who had congregated in the area for its abundant resources, the Cynd grew from a small, fortified village to a town, and then to a walled city with a population of at least 5,000 souls. It is not known exactly when this occurred, but the first year of the Târnic Calendar is noted by the crowning of the first Târnic King, ushering in what we know today as the Age of History (AH).

The Age of History is the current era of Ærchus, and it has been a little less than 1,000 years since the founding of Târn. This age is divided into two eras: The First Era (FE), which chronicles the rise and dominance of the Târn in the Known World, and the Second Era (SE), which comprises all recorded history since the decline of the Târnic Empire some two-and-a-half centuries ago.

Similar in many ways to the ancient Romans of Earth, the Tãm were the first highborn mannish race to emerge from the barbarism that characterised the Age of Ignorance. While their stature is less today than in centuries past, the legacy of their empire cannot be denied, for the Tãm revitalised interest in the arts, sciences, philosophy, and magic. They practised warfare, to be sure (and, indeed, at one time, dominated the largest geographical area during the Age of History), but they also developed a complex system of codified laws, strict codes of citizenship and government, significant leaps in agriculture and science, and unheard of strides in international commerce, trade, and mercantile development.

By 175 AH, large stretches of both Northern Mueretania and the eastern shore of Mare Nostrum were entirely under Tãmnic rule. The Mare Nostrum region of Ærchelon benefited greatly from the cohesion and security offered by membership within the Tãmnic Empire. Sparked by lucrative trade with Cynd, the Percians of Mueretania developed a fledging empire no later than 200 AH, as did the Aramishi in the Gilded Archipelago, which enjoyed rich trade from both the Pherasii to the south and the Tãm to the west. The commercial ventures of these three civilisations bolstered further cultural development within the region, and, like a stone cast into a pool, sent out ripples to bordering lands.

In Northern Ærchelon, the Ældûn peoples solidified their culture east of the Dusk Sea, and, bolstered by the protection offered by Tãmnic occupation, matured into a civilisation that, by the close of the sixth century AH, stretched east to the shores of the Glimming Sea. Around the same time, the country of Nador saw its beginnings in Southern Ærchelon.

Little is known in the west of how the eastern lands of Ærchus fared following the Shivering, though it is known that powerful empires developed. Strange names reach the ears of westerners: Nippon, Galba, D'aansk, and Tartek. The peoples of these lands are entirely unknown in the west, though their assumed reputation is common knowledge, for the Aramishi tell of mighty and cruel sea empires; mighty navies with ships powered by elementals, riding on both air and sea; and rich kingdoms whose treasuries could purchase entire homelands in the east. Obviously, such tales are exaggerations, though the Aramishi, known for their honest dealings, are largely believed to honour some grain of truth, however small, in their reports.

But the Known World does not generally acknowledge the kingdoms of the east as integral to their own affairs. Indeed, the western lands continued to cultivate powerful kingdoms and cultures of their own, following the example set forth by the Tãmnic Empire. This changed when, in 752 AH, news that Tãm had fallen reached the ears of the western world. While the empire had not collapsed completely, it was in serious decline, for in that year, several frontier provinces of the Tãm rebelled, other borders were attacked by hostile armies, and a civil war erupted in the capitol city of Cynd. Reeling from the

shock of these simultaneous calamities, the Tãm reduced their borders and subsequent influence, marking a new era in which the nations of the Known World could come into their own without the influence or protection of the Cyndic peoples.

As Tãm receded to tend its own affairs, they left in their wake a legacy of stoutly defended and rich civilisations. Thus, with the beginning of the Second Era of the Age of History upon them, the western kingdoms struggled with the challenges of relative autonomy and strengthened at once their borders, their economic ties, and their armies.

The Ældûn Empire has been pivotal in this respect, and its role in Northern Ærchelon mirrors somewhat Tãm's influence amongst the lands surrounding Mare Nostrum. With Tãm no longer protecting Ældûn's holdings, the Northern Realm has won its own conquests of the lands beyond their borders, through both bloody warfare and lucrative commercialism.

Tãm has since halted its decay, and though it continues to represent a strong trading and martial power, it holds less than half the dominions that it held at its height less than four centuries ago. Still, much trade and commerce flows in and out of Tãm and its remaining provinces, and shades of the Empire's influence touch the art, philosophy, and science of many civilised nations. Even today, as in centuries past, the Tãmnic tongue (akin to the Latin of Earth) continues to be the preferred language of scholars and magi.

A word regarding historical terminology is necessary at this point. Years in the Age of History are referenced by most folk as Common Years spanning the gap from 1 AH, though serious scholarly writings prefer to distinguish chronological notations according to their proper era. Thus, the Common Year 465 indicates the 465th year of the Age of History, or 465 AH. However, scholars refer to the same year as 465 FE. In a similar vein, scholars refer to the present year as 246 SE, though most members of the general population prefer 998 AH. To simplify chronologies and gain readership, some scholars adopt the Common Year nomenclature but list the appropriate Second Era year if the citation refers to some time after 752 AH.

Table 1.3: Summary of the Ages of Ærchus

Age	Duration	Years Past
Creation	unknown	> 100,000
Dreams	3,000 years (?)	unknown
Ignorance	unknown	unknown
History (First Era)	1 AH – 752 AH ¹	246
History (Second Era)	752 AH – 998 AH ²	Present

¹ Alternately, 1 FE – 752 FE.

² Alternately, 1 SE – 246 SE.

1.3.1 THE VOYAGE OF THE *FESTINA LAUDE*

In 624 AH, a Tânic vessel named the *Festina Laude* (Tânic: “Hastened Praise”) left Cynd on a voyage of exploration, principally for the purpose of discovering new trading partners west of Mare Nostrum. The captain of the vessel, Marcus Auros Calamîr, was joined by one of the most renowned historians of the day, Gaius Polybius. The ship itself was of Aramishi design and manned by a mixed crew of Tâm and sailors from the Glimming Sea.

This mixed crew’s journey is a marvel of maritime exploration to this day, and no voyage since has matched Calamîr’s mileage or distance from the Known World. During its six-year voyage, the *Festina Laude* travelled as far as the western coast of Azamon and as far south as Terra sine Vivendi. It is generally agreed that the *Festina*’s complement of Aramishi sailors, as well as the superior Aramishi design of the vessel, were chief contributors to the safe return of the ship and its crew, though it is suspected that Calamîr enjoyed some arcane or otherwise supernatural aid as well.

Regardless, it is worthy of note that Calamîr’s voyage was a technical failure, as no viable trading partners were found beyond the Oceanus Fluvio. However, the logs maintained by both Calamîr and Polybius serve as the only existing record of what lands and seas lie to the west of the Known World. As such, these writings are prized by scholars and historians, and several copies have been penned throughout the years, to be sold to universities civilised lands.

It should be no surprise, then, that many accounts of the hitherto unknown and uncivilised lands of Ærchus in the sections to follow are gleaned from these records.

2.0 GEOGRAPHY

The Geography section of this gazetteer deviates somewhat from those found in regional gazetteers, in that it grants broad overviews of prominent land areas and bodies of water. Namely, it centres on the descriptions of oceans, seas, large islands, and continents of the global map. More detailed information regarding these places can be found in the various regional gazetteers.

2.1 BODIES OF WATER

This section provides detail on the prominent aquatic environments of Ærchus.

2.1.1 AQUITANE, SEA OF

A broad expanse of cold sea separating Ærachelon from its north-western neighbour, the island-continent of Aquitane. Travel across this sea is considered dangerous, as numerous ice floes crowd the waters during the cold months, and choppy waves characterise the sea throughout the year. The mythol-

ogy of the Frisians of Northern Ærachelon allude to dealings with the inhabitants of Aquitane across the sea, but it is doubtful that these accounts are more than popular legend, since the Frisians are not generally known for their seamanship.

2.1.2 COLD SEA, THE

A frigid body of water spanning the western shores of Aquitane and eastern Ocealea, and touching the northern coast of Azamon. Little is known of this sea, save for the scattered tales of sea-lore told by the Nordic peoples of the Nord Sea region. These tales are most often couched in the framework of young warriors seeking to prove their mettle against Tempen, the Nordic Lord of the Seas (an aspect of Straasha). These tales commonly involve embarking on raids against the whaling villages located on the numerous islands scattered about the Cold Sea. While the centre of these tales is the exploits of the protagonist, the Cold Sea is consistently described as tumultuous and freezing, dominated by icebergs, beset upon by endless winds from the north, and, most prominently, typified by a sense of profound emptiness. None of the Nordic sagas describe any voyages further than the north-eastern tip of Ocealea, and so the features of this body between that point and western Aquitane are entirely unknown.

2.1.3 GALBA, SEA OF

A small sea located off the south-eastern coast of Ocealea. The sea is said by the Aramishi to host to a large volume of merchant traffic between the Gilded Archipelago and the Nippon Empire, though it is also home to the navy maintained by the Exalted Autarch of the City-state of Galba.

As Aramishi accounts relate, the Galban navy does little to impede traffic through the sea, though certainly not for lack of resources. Instead, it provides much appreciated protection to shipping from the numerous pirate factions that ply the area, thereby increasing the wealth and stature of Galba, which is viewed as an attractive port by vessels in transit.

The waters of the sea are said to be warm and clean, home to a great variety of sea life and not a few intelligent aquatic races. Predominantly, the sea is calm and easily navigated, though terrible hurricanes to plague its shipping lanes during the autumn months. These waters are also known as the Grave of Navies, due to the prominence of sunken vessels that line the bottom. Most of these dead vessels are the result of battles between the Galban navy and pirates, though some are victims of the autumnal hurricanes. There are also persistent rumours of a sunken city several hundred miles off the Galban coast, but nothing factual about these tales has surfaced.

2.1.4 GLIMMING SEA, THE

A warm, tropical sea dominated by the islands of the Gilded Archipelago (q.v.). As such, it carries a horde of mercantile traffic from several nations. Not surprisingly, this abundance of

trade has made the region exceptionally wealthy, giving the sea its name as its surface “glimmers” from the sheen of the fortunes it carries.

Pirates, attracted by the region’s opulence, constantly ply the sea’s waters, and there are dozens of hidden pirate enclaves scattered throughout the countless isles of the archipelago. The only protection from buccaneers is represented by the navy of the Sea Folk, who maintain numerous ports of varying size throughout the region. The Sea Folk’s Man O’War vessels pursue pirate activity with a vengeance, as the sea’s shipping lanes are crucial to their continued commercial influence.

The sea itself is remarkably calm and quite warm. Several intelligent sea races make their home in these waters, and other aquatic life is abundant. Of course, the region does have its share of violent storms and hurricanes in the autumn months, and the wrecks of several vessels serve as testament to the power and ferocity of these natural calamities.

2.1.5 MARE NØSTRUM

Literally, “Our Sea,” in the Târnic tongue, this body of water separates South-western Ærchelon from Northern Mueretania. Its name is derived from the Târn, who have relied upon Mare Nostrum for food, trade, and safety since the inception of their empire during the dawn of the Age of History.

The sea itself is warm and generally calm. It is also regularly patrolled by the Târnic navy, who keeps watch over shipping traffic entering from and leaving through the eastern sea passage that leads to Southern Ærchelon, Southern Mueretania, and the Gilded Archipelago. Pirates are understandably uncommon here, given the might of the Târnic navy, though their activities persist, most notably from the divided city-states that dot Southern Ærchelon’s eastern coast and which had once been solidly governed by the Târnic Empire.

2.1.6 MARE VENTI

Literally, “The Sea of Winds,” in the Târnic language, this small, warm sea hosts the islands of the Calamîr Archipelago. The waters of this sea are notoriously dangerous due to the prevalence of geothermal activity beneath the waves, a fact first recorded during the voyage of the Târnic exploration vessel, the *Festina Laude*, in 624 FE. Undersea earthquakes and volcanic eruptions create giant whirlpools, columns of boiling water, and great, spouting geysers. These abnormal phenomena also affect local weather patterns, so that gale force winds and violent storms typify the region.

According to the *Festina*’s log, the sea is populated by hundreds of islands that comprise the Calamîr Archipelago. The extreme danger of traversing the sea by ship, and its distance from the Known World, however, has done much to discourage further investigation.

2.1.7 NØRD SEA, THE

First explored by an Ældûn expedition during the eighth century AH, this cold sea surrounds Greater Sjælland, the homeland of the Nordic peoples. A small body of water, the Nord Sea is home to several dozen small whaling and fishing villages that lie on the numerous, rocky islands appearing above the waves. Little commerce is trafficked across this sea, as the icy, tumultuous waters and abundant icebergs make travel perilous. As a result, the most common seafarers found on this body of water are adventurous Nordic warriors or lordlings seeking to prove themselves in Tempen’s watery realm.

2.1.8 ØCEANUS FLUVIØ

A broad expanse of water marking the western boundary of the Known World. The only information known of the Ocean of Flows is gleaned from the logbooks of the *Festina Laude*.

One reported aspect of the Fluvio is worthy of note, however, and that is the predominance of strong currents which Calamîr, the captain of the *Festina*, believed to carry the ship along faster than could have been achieved under sail alone. It is for these currents that the ocean is named, though Calamîr hints that they were not natural but instead manifestations of the Târnic demi-god Eulchio (an aspect of Auralion).

2.1.9 SÜD ØCEAN, THE

A vast ocean stretching from the eastern coast of Ocealea to the western coast of Azamon and mingling with the western extent of Mare Venti. According to the maps rendered by Gaius Polybius, the cartographer of the *Festina Laude*, this ocean represents the largest body of water on Ærchus, running from the equator south to border Terra sine Vivendi.

The most careful and reliable exploration of the Süd was conducted by the crew of the *Festina Laude*. The log books of the voyage describe an ocean south of Azamon and west of Mare Venti that was generally calm and featureless. Little more regarding the Süd is known.

2.1.10 TARTEK SEA

A small body of water described by the Nord as hugging the northern coast of Ocealea, bordered by the Nord Sea to the north-west and the Cold Sea to the north-east. The origin of the sea’s name apparently derives from its proximity to the TarteK Ranges, a vast grassland reportedly nestled along the north-eastern peninsula of Ocealea.

The sea itself is unremarkable, though it sees much traffic from the Nord, who traverse it while conducting raiding forays against the scattered settlements of Ocealea’s northern coast.

2.2 ISLANDS AND ARCHIPELAGØS

This section provides information regarding the various archipelagos of Ærchus, as well as the island formations that are too small to be classified as actual continents.

2.2.1 ARAMISHI

This large island dominates the Gilded Archipelago, and is home to a people known as the Aramishi, or Sea Folk. These people are shrewd traders and hard bargainers who act as commercial liaisons between the civilised lands to the east and west. The island's coasts are dotted with trading centres and port cities, and the Sea Folk have managed to place themselves in a perfect commercial niche with any neighbour that can be reached across the waters of the Gilded Archipelago.

The island itself produces many unique goods—waterproof lumber, strong yet supple silks, fine earthenware vessels (known as porcelain), and leaded crystal glass—all of which have contributed to Aramishi's role as the economic lynchpin between the Known World and the lands beyond its borders.

The Sea Folk themselves are unparalleled seamen, and they often appear uneasy on land, or, at least, when on non-Aramishi soil. Only the coasts of the island are known by foreigners, since the merchants, traders, and crews that make port on Aramishi conduct their business along the numerous breakwaters and trading harbours that border the isle. The interior of the island is visibly known to give rise to heavily forested highlands of jungle growth, but little more than that observation can be considered common knowledge.

2.2.2 CALAMÏR ARCHIPELAGØ

This small, scattered archipelago rests in the heart of Mare Venti and is named for the captain of the *Festina Laude*, who arrived in this region in early 625 FE. The entire region is reportedly beset upon by raw, elemental fury: huge, spouting geysers, gale force winds, and severe storms.

CalamÏr described the islands as heavily forested with tropical growth, and supporting numerous enclaves of apparently friendly tribesmen. Contact with the natives was generally beneficent, as it is recorded that the *Festina* was able to restock its stores and effect repairs during several landfalls. Commerce and interaction between the tribes of various islands appeared to be limited, owing to the obvious peril associated with sea travel in the region, but the ship's historian and cartographer, Gaius Polybius, noted that the various tribes shared several common traits.

Among these was the indigenous peoples' worship of a handful of Air and Water elemental powers, and the lofty hierarchical positions within their society enjoyed by native priests (known to the Târ as *praestigiatori*). Indeed, it seemed that the natives were entirely devoted to the teachings of these shaman-like individuals. For example, the natives did not use

fire for any purpose, and actively shunned crewmen bearing torches or lanterns. It was quickly assumed by Polybius that the element of fire was antithetical to the lifestyle taught by the *praestigiatori*, and so, considered anathema.

Lending credence to this speculation is an incident recorded by CalamÏr: a young native chief was invited to sup with CalamÏr on the *Festina*. Upon entering the anteroom to CalamÏr's cabin, the youthful chieftain indignantly and deliberately extinguished the vessel's *Flamma Consilium* (Târnic: "Flame of Guidance," a token altar of burning coal dedicated to the Târnic demi-god Eulchio, the patron of successful sea voyages whose guiding flame assures crewmen that even the mighty waters of the seas cannot extinguish the vitality and hope promised by earthly fire). According to CalamÏr, the chief was visibly horrified by the sight of a freely burning brazier, obviously noting that it held some religious significance. Stilling the *Flamma Consilium* was (and remains) an ill omen for Târnic seafarers, and while CalamÏr forgave the youth his ignorance, he quickly dismissed him with strong words of admonishment.

The *Festina*'s logbook records scant days in the region after the incident when the vessel was blown off course and forced toward Azamon's hostile shores by a particularly violent storm. The incident left CalamÏr shaken; he believed the accident to be Eulchio's punishment for letting the *Flamma Consilium* die. Polybius offered a more sinister explanation to the effect that the freak storm was summoned by the *praestigiatori* in an effort to rid the islands of the *Festina* and its sacrilegious crew.

2.2.3 GILDED ARCHIPELAGØ, THE

A vast expanse of island chains nestled in the Glimmring Sea between the eastern coast of Ærachelon and the western coast of Ocealea. Since the dawn of the Age of History, the Archipelago has served as a commercial conduit between the two continents, supporting commerce from the Ældûn port-city of Manaðer, the Târnic capital of Cynd, The city-state of Galba, the Nippon realm of Shun Tao, and the Percian island holding of Salba. The Archipelago's role in commercial traffic gives the islands their collective name, as the region drips with wealth.

The Archipelago is dominated by Aramishi, the island-continent of the Sea Folk. Indeed, the Sea Folk maintain major trading ports along both coasts of the Barrier Isle off eastern Ærachelon and the Three Sisters west of the Ocealean shores. The countless islands of the Archipelago are home to dozens of smaller supply towns.

It is no surprise that the Archipelago is the lair of many pirates and buccaneers who seek to plunder the rich trading vessels that cross the shipping lanes of the Glimmring Sea. In an effort to provide some protection against this common menace, the Sea Folk maintain an active navy consisting of both large and small galleys well full armament. Each vessel, known generally as an Aramishi Man O'War, bears impressive armaments and can travel with superior speed.

2.2.4 HEBRIDANE

A large island in the southern Süd Ocean once marked the far border of the Percian Empire southern Mueretania. Little is known of this land, save for the occasional reports from Aramishi tradesmen, who reveal that the island itself is cold and uninviting, with the southern most regions effectively blocked in by large ice floes for most of the year. The western coast of Hebridane is somewhat warmer, gifted as it is by the Mueretanian Stream, a warm water current originating in Mare Venti that winds its way south and east.

The exact extent of Percian influence on Hebridane is unknown, though fragmentary reports seem to indicate that the empire annexed the island sometime in the late 4th century AH, relinquished it for unknown reasons in the 5th century, and has made several half-hearted attempts to re-occupy it in the years since.

Why the Percians consider this wasteland significant is unknown, though the peoples of this land are assumed to be quite hardy; if this is the case, it is likely that Hebridane's indigenous population fetches premium prices when returned to the slave markets of the Percian capital of Drakkar.

2.2.5 HYBØRIA

A cold and foreboding land of hills and glaciers; its arctic regions mark the northern extent of solid land on Ærchus. The island's only habitations are those just south-east of the Nord Sea, where Nordic whaling settlements are sparsely scattered.

Hyboria's popular role is as a backdrop for a few Nordic sagas, which name the island as the Gladsyr's Range, the domain of Gladsyr, the Nordic god of hunting and winter (an aspect of Balidae). According to the sagas, Gladsyr shares his land with his sister Kralya, the Nordic goddess of hope and aspiration (Fortuna). Together, the pair aid mortals who aspire toward success no matter what the odds, provided that the mortal is a courageous and respectful servant of the divine. Typically, this land is cited in the sagas when a Nordic warrior or lordling, while questing, is shipwrecked on the island and must serve Gladsyr or Kralya in some way before receiving the divine aid required to resume the quest.

2.2.6 SALBA

This small island is reported by the Sea Folk to be part of the Percian Empire, and was first settled by these peoples sometime in the fifth century AH. The island itself is not known for any particular features, though its location in the Percian Empire is ultimately strategic, due to its proximity to the Gilded Archipelago in general and Aramishi in particular.

2.2.7 TERRA SINE VIVENDI

Literally "Land without the Living" in the Tâmic language, this bleak landscape marks the southernmost extent of land on

Ærchus. It was discovered and named by the crew of the Tâmic vessel, *Festina Laude*, during that ship's famous exploration voyage into the unknown west of the Known World.

The crew of the *Festina* described the land as almost totally barren, blanketed with ice and snow, and terrifically frigid. The land that could be accessed behind numerous icebergs was described as featureless and devoid of life. After less than five weeks of hugging the coast from west to east, as the logbooks report, the *Festina* began its return home.

2.2.8 TÂRN BALÂR

One of several discoveries made on the famous journey of the Tâmic exploration vessel *Festina Laude*. This small archipelago is nestled in the temperate waters of the southern Süd Ocean. In the Tâmic tongue, the name of the archipelago is difficult to translate, but the closest match is "The land of the knowledge root of the Târn."

The reasoning for this name can be gleaned from the *Festina's* logbooks, which describe wondrous discoveries, guessed to be remnants of the Age of Dreams, on the islands here. The captain of the *Festina*, Calamîr, noted that the islands were dotted with large and ancient ruins, and, most notably, strange statues resembling elongated human heads poking out of the bare ground. Yet the lands were entirely uninhabited. Upon further investigation, Polybius, the crew's historian, discovered sigils and inscriptions that closely matched the iconography of the *Oratio Târna Antiquus*, or the Ancient Tongue of the Târn, the forebear of the then modern Tâmic language.

Several examples of the iconography were translated, to the effect that a people known as the Târn would migrate to the cradle of the sun (east) and spread their wisdom to the barbarians they found there, eventually gaining the influence to become the dominators of the world. Polybius discovered also artefacts, supposedly from the Age of Dreams; none had any discernible use (these were returned to Cynd, and, from all accounts, remain there today in the *Turris Discere*).

The result of these discoveries was the strong implication that powerful entities from the Age of Dreams (perhaps ancestors of the Târn themselves who survived the Age of Ignorance) foretold the rise of the Tâmic Empire, describing at the same time its influential role amongst the eastern peoples.

Waning supplies forced the *Festina* onward, but plans to return directly to the islands were made upon returning to Cynd. No return was ever made, however, as the Empire's ruling senate dismissed Polybius' descriptions as a bid for self-glorification. While Polybius maintained the validity of his discovery (and was supported by Calamîr), his continued attempts to gain funding for the return voyage worked against him as he went to further and further extremes to sway others to his cause. Eventually, Polybius was publicly disgraced as a dangerous ec-

centric whose theories and teachings were tantamount to the ravings of a madman.

No subsequent attempts to visit Târn Balâr have been recorded, and it is likely that Calamîr's voyage to these mysterious islands was the last.

2.3 CØNTINENTS

This final section on Ærchus' geography regards the five continents of the globe.

2.3.1 ÆRCHELØN

The second-largest of Ærchus' five continents, Ærchelon is the seat of the Known World. The continent's climate ranges from arctic to tropical, hosting a variety of mountain ranges, hill-land, forests, and cultivated plains. Mannish races form the highest civilised populations on the continent, followed by duravs and ardi. Among the uncivilised races, orsch and ogrek can be found in great numbers, though such are located in wilderness areas far from strongly defended and settled regions (most abundantly in the northern wasteland of Ungfél).

Ærchelon has cultivated two highborn mannish races, both of which have carved out mighty empires that exist in some form today. The oldest is that of the Târn, a people based loosely on the ancient Romans of Earth. Centred on a peninsula along the south-western portion of the continent, the Târn capitol of Cynd rules an empire nearing 1,000 years in age. The pinnacle of the Empire of the Târn was reached in 617 FE, when the Târn claimed sovereignty over all lands and waterways not blocked by natural barriers (including much of Northern Mueretania). The decline of the Empire can be attributed to the pressures of policing ever-increasing borders and the seemingly inevitable decay inflicted by the extravagant indulgences of absolute power and great wealth among the nobility and the rich, mercantile classes. Specifically, in 752 FE, the Târn suffered the simultaneous misfortunes of defending themselves from rebellious provinces, attacking armies, and a civil war. Since that time, Târn has not regained its former stature, though it still maintains a formidable presence across the lands that border Mare Nostrum.

The south central portion of the continent is host to several, relatively small, commercial city-states that have gained their wealth and solidarity by virtue of their relationship with the Târn. As one travels north through Ærchelon, the mannish cultures come to resemble more and more those akin to Middle Age Europe. These individual realms are characterised by varying governmental systems, including autocracies, theocracies, confederacies, monarchies, and oligarchies; it should not be surprising that numerous bids for influence and outright conquest exist among these kingdoms. Almost universally, these kingdoms manifest some manner of feudalism in their economies. While many of these nations were spawned or partially influenced by the Târn, nearly all have gained a

measure of self-sufficiency since the Târn decline. Even so, most conduct third- or second-hand trade with the Târn though myriad mercantile entities along Ærchelon's eastern coast and the islands of the Gilded Archipelago.

The pinnacle of these realms is represented by the second highborn mannish empire hosted by Ærchelon: that of the Ældûn, a race of barbaric men who, with the aid of the Târn in the fifth century AH, founded a region of allied city-states along the fertile plains and vales of east-central Ærchelon. While the original Ældûn stock were barbaric, the influence of the Târn and the ardi helped to cultivate a civilised nation, and at its height, the Ældûn Empire stretched from the eastern shores of the Dusk Sea to the eastern coast of the continent. Wars of conquest against northern barbarians and humanoids toughened these already stout people, and blossoming trade with the Sea Folk to the south-east stimulated their coffers to great extent. Today the empire is largely sundered into a collection of separately administered and independent nations, known collectively as the Northern Realms.

In the arctic reaches of Ærchelon is the nation of Ungfél, an uncivilised and dangerous wasteland populated by goblinoid tribes of great number. This realm is said to be held in loose control by an ancient ruler known to the rest of Ærchelon as Agamemnon, or, more popularly, the Liche King. This being's exact nature is unknown, though popular belief assumes him to be a remnant of the Age of Ignorance, and the chief servant of the Bane God on Ærchus.

Agamemnon's exact purposes in Ærchelon are the subject of wide speculation, though it is certain that his underlying goal is to orchestrate the fell plots of the Bane God, and he is widely believed to be the earthly leader of the Ebon Cabal. It is certain, as evidenced though writings captured by the Holy Order of Brightsashes, that Agamemnon galvanised goblinoid armies drawn from the Pits of Ungfél to wage the so-called Orc Wars periodically recorded during the Age of History.

The northern reaches of Ærchelon also host two tribal nations of organised barbarians, the Jutes and the Frisians; these two cultures are collectively known as the Frost Peoples; a third barbarian nation, Narbonensis, exists west of the Shadow Peak Range and Narbon's Peaks. Historically, all three groups have played a part in the history of the continent's northern region, principally through their resistance against Agamemnon's machinations. Outside of their role in these conflicts, little is known of these peoples, and little regular contact exists between them and the more civilised realms of the continent.

2.3.2 AQUITANE

The smallest of Ærchus' five continents, Aquitane is a cold and misty land shrouded in mystery. Few explorers have ventured to this land, known as the Misty Realm, and those who have report hilly, forested wilderness populated by disorganised barbarians of mannish, ardic, and beast-like stock. There are sev-

eral varying accounts from Târníc explorers who, since 409 FE, have sought to subjugate these peoples so that they might trade in the country's apparently abundant resources, but all universally agree that the barbarians are ferocious and wild, entirely uncivilised, and un-alterably hostile to outsiders.

These accounts—surely the tall tales of sailor folk—are contradicted by the tribal lore of the Frisians of Northern Ærchelon that cite references to mighty strongholds and organised trading centres within the Misty Realm. Of course, these accounts, coming from the barbaric Frisians, are subject to scepticism. Indeed, with the shores of Aquitane facing the barbaric coast of Northern Ærchelon, it is doubtful that Aquitane is home to any manner of civilised people at all. As a result, the descriptions offered by the Târn—through probably exaggerated—remain the most probable.

2.3.3 ΔΖΑΜΘΝ

Azamon is roughly half the size of Ærchelon and known only from the accounts recorded in the logbooks of the Târníc vessel *Festina Laude*. According to the log, the *Festina* lost its course during a powerful geyser storm in Mare Venti, and was blown to the shores of South-eastern Azamon.

When the *Festina* returned to Cynd in 632 FE, the ship's historian and cartographer, Gaius Polybius, published maps in the *Librium Majoris* of Cynd depicting the coastlines of Azamon. The cartographer reported that much of the visible coastline was overgrown with jungle, and that during the few landfalls made by the vessel, the crew was forced to defend themselves from hostile mannish savages. During one such instance, the Târn captured a dozen or so natives, but the only information gleaned was of a large inland sea, which seemed to hold some religious significance. Instead of risking further assaults, the crew opted to circle the continent, mapping the coastlines, before turning south to discover the small archipelago that would eventually be known as Târn Balâr.

It is assumed from Polybius' records that the southern portion of the continent is almost completely covered in jungle growth. The northern portion appears covered with stout forests and hills. Little else is known about this land, and no subsequent attempt to explore the continent has been made.

2.3.4 ΠΥΕΡΕΤΑΝΙΑ

The third largest continent of Ærchus, this land's role in global history has been significant. Throughout the ages, Mueretania, sometimes known as the Battlefield of Empires, has been the home of diverse peoples and the site of their conflicts. The land itself is highly varied in terrain and climate and is similar in many respects to the African continent of Earth.

Mueretania's northern regions are blanketed by the S'hara, a vast and intensely unyielding desert of hilly outcroppings and rocky wasteland. Historically, the S'hara has been the home-

land of a few widespread mannish races: the Carths, the Songhay, the Bedouin, and the Ægyptians. Of the four, the now-extinct Ægyptians, based in north-eastern Mueretania, seem to have been the most successful in terms of civil development. Several scholarly volumes cite the significant achievements these people made during the Age of Dreams—fantastic astrological devices, the ability to instantly travel great distances, and their supposed contact with beings not native to Ærchus. While surely exaggerated through the ages, these tales are lent credence by the incomprehensible artefacts left behind by these mysterious people. Unfortunately, their secrets were lost to antiquity when the race disappeared sometime during the Age of Ignorance. The only remnants of these peoples are their great desert monoliths, huge stone pyramids (assumed to be tombs), and vast complexes hewn into the rocky desert valleys of north-eastern Mueretania.

The Songhay and the Carths, rising to prominence sometime around the late second century AH, developed their communities into limited trading empires along the north-eastern and north-central coasts of the continent, respectively. Both were conquered by the Târn during the fourth century AH. The Bedouin are (and have always been) a race of nomadic traders and herdsmen clinging mostly to the grasslands north and east of the Horns of Ukulu, the mountain range that appears to divide the continents northern and southern halves.

In Southern Mueretania lies the fabled Percian Empire, which, if tales are true, commands almost the whole of the continent south of Ukulu's Horns. Loosely based on a composite of Middle Eastern cultures of ancient Earth, the Percian Empire is a wise, highly spiritual, and advanced realm. Their empire was born during the third century AH, and has steadily expanded southward since then. Throughout most of the First Era, the bulk of the Empire's martial efforts have been directed at the Târn. In particular, those portions of northern Mueretania annexed by the Târníc Empire are the most attractive targets, and a constant state of war exists between the two Empires.

The decline of the Târn has not been lost on the Percians, who have augmented their efforts to expand their holdings northward. Unfortunately for the Percians, the Târníc Empire's significant remaining hold on sea trade to the north continues to fund Târn's continued defence of its Mueretanian provinces.

2.3.5 ΘΥΕΑΛΕΑ

The largest of Ærchus' continents, Ocealear is a strange and mysterious land in the eyes of the Known World. Much of the information known about the lands of this continent are gleaned from the Sea Folk, who conduct no small amount of trade with Ocealear partners. True to their confidential nature, however, the Aramishi are loathe to reveal exact details about any facet of this enigmatic land.

The greatest knowledge centres on Western Ocealear, where some trading and exploration vessels of Ærchelon have man-

aged to drop port. The north-western shores of the continent are home to more traditional western kingdoms. In the north are the Nord, who have settled the mountainous Ocealean Peninsula. This people most is modelled after the Vikings of Earth, and they are an aggressive, fearsome, but civilised, people who frequently engage in raids on the “softer” kingdoms of Ærchelon’s eastern peninsula.

The feudal kingdoms of D’aansk, Elbareth and Brammen are found on Western Ocealean, south of the Ocealean Peninsula. Along with a few other petty nations along this coast, these states are members of the Ocealean League, an aligned confederation of mercantile interests that maintains strong commercial ties with the Gilded Archipelago. While still subject to raiding from the Nord, the League’s membership is relatively well protected from such hostility by virtue of surrounding geography and wilderness. The most protective element of these states, however, is the oath that member nations must make to protect other League countries in case of attack.

The League’s headquarters is in the Free City of Viscarth, sprawled across the delta of the K’anth River at the approximate centre of Ocealea’s western coastline. A joint council rules the League, and every member nation has a single representative on this body. The Council also seats a representative of Aramishi, who traditionally sways all decisions through Aramishi’s commercial influence in the area. While all members of the League are ostensibly aligned, each nation does seek to hold its own interests above its peers, and Viscarth’s nickname, the City of Intrigue, is not undeserved.

The south-western tip of Ocealea is dominated by the City-state of Galba, ruled by the Exalted Autarch of Galba. Reports from the Sea Folk label this city as highly debauched, clearly decadent, but dripping with wealth. Galba is not apparently a member of the Ocealean League, a condition largely believed to spring from the eccentric arrogance of the Autarch, whose coffers fund one of the world’s strongest navies.

To the east is the great unknown, though the Aramishi have hinted at a great empire called Nippon along the continent’s eastern shores. The wealth of this place, if tales be true, is unparalleled, and the empire produces fabulous craftsmanship and wondrous trade goods, all of which fetch high prices in western markets.

North of this place is a vast grassland occupied by barbarian horsemen, known by the Nord as the Tartek. If little is known about Nippon, even less is known about these folk, as they rebuff visitors with uniform hostility and do not engage in trade with any civilised nation.

The interior of Ocealea is rumoured to comprise wide grasslands enclosed on all sides by mountains. At the centre of these lands is supposedly a large inland sea, but little else is known about the inhabitants of the continent’s heart. Travelers report that the lands here are barely civilised and given to

petty warfare and bids for conquest. Others maintain that Ocealea’s centre is an uncivilised region of near-insolvent kingdoms and baronies, all ruled by exiles and outcasts from Nippon. Regardless of the truth, it is known that the mountains surrounding this area make it difficult to reach, and that none of the societies reported to be within enjoy (or desire to make) contact with the outside world.

3.⊗ P⊕PULATIONS

Ærchus hosts myriad populations of several distinct racial types. Within each race are sometimes many sub-races, each particularly suited to the terrain and climate environments they call home. The distribution of these races is indeed far-flung, and nearly every explored continent is home to some manner of organised peoples.

3.1 RACIAL TYPES

Humans dominate, and four highborn mannish races exist on the globe: the Tårn, who conquered and settled the lands surrounding the Mare Nostrum; the Ældûn, whose kingdoms populate Northern Ærchelon; the Pherasii, who dwell in Southern Mueretania; and the Nippon, who have carved out a vast empire on the eastern continent of Ocealea. Another highborn mannish race, the Ægyptians, dwelt in Northern Mueretania during ancient times, but are now extinct.

From these distinct highborn men are sprung several common mannish peoples, and these are distinguished principally by the area in which they now dwell. While most have managed to cultivate civilised cultures, some remain barbaric peoples who either never progressed beyond bronze or iron age technology, or who have never, for whatever reason, co-mingled with other mannish peoples.

Demi-human races abound throughout the world; the ardi (elfish) and duarvs (dwarfish) are the most common examples, though halflings and centaurs also claim sizeable kingdoms. The ardi, easily the longest-lived race on the planet, prefer to dwell in secluded woodlands, carving out their sylvan kingdoms beneath the verdant boughs of unspoiled forest and jungle. Conversely, the duarvish peoples live principally underground, hewing their kingdom halls from the hard rock beneath the mountains that form the foundation of the world. Halflings have adapted to life either above or below the surface, though most prefer to dwell amid gently rolling hills, where farmland and good pastures abound. The centaur peoples opt to live their lives on broad, open grasslands and plains.

Several goblinoid races, supposedly spawned by the Bane God, share Ærchus’ reaches with humans and demi-humans. Orcs and ogres are common in mountains and rugged hills or wasteland, while the lesser goblinoids—goblins and kobolds—are commonly located in subterranean lairs or within the confines of thick and tangled woodland. While most goblinoids

have been pushed beyond the borders of civilised lands, their numbers do swell to the point of overflowing at times, and goblinoid raiding is common along the frontiers of nearly all kingdoms. It is recorded in the annals of several civilised nations that periodic goblinoid raids have developed into full-fledged warfare, with hordes of goblin-folk ravaging county-sides for months at a time before either being driven off or taking permanent root (only to move on again after they have consumed their conquest's store of resources).

There are some far-away wilderness areas where the goblin-folk have managed to solidify themselves into cohesive and quasi-civilised groups, erecting walled towns and even fortified cities. Fortunately, such enclaves are rarely within easy reach of more lawful and ordered lands.

3.2 DISTRIBUTION

Several prominent regions of settled populations are mentioned above, and a quick look at the various regional maps reveal where these areas lie across the globe. A few words regarding the size and distribution of populated settlements is therefore necessary.

The two universal rules in population distribution are that people settle where food is to be found, and that the size of any settlement is significantly affected by its proximity to transportation networks of natural or constructed origin.

Sustenance is chiefly achieved through agriculture, though herding, hunting, and fishing may substitute for or complement such. Population density is highest where abundant food resources are found. The prevalence of resources is affected by climate, weather, and terrain, though it must be noted that *any* land that can be worked to grow crops or husband animals will be used to do so—wilderness areas do exist, though such consist of non-arable land or impenetrable terrain.

Settlements are connected to each other via waterways and roads; the volume of trade conducted between them proportionally dictates the size of the artery that connects two communities. As such, most settled places are villages, liberally scattered throughout the countryside and sheltering the undisputed majority of any realm's population. Where high volumes of commerce occur, larger towns are found. Where even larger trade routes exist, cities are founded.

A logical foundation for all of this is the relative availability of resources in a given area. These are known as Resource Ratings and are defined as Non, Sparse, Low, Average, High, and Abundant. To simplify the generation of populations in individual realms, whole kingdoms are assigned one of the Ratings described below:

Non indicates a virtually non-existent supply of resources or no populations of more than 15 people per square mile. If the

area is settled at all, people dwell in highly isolated enclaves of individual family units or clans.

Sparse indicates few available resources, but enough to sustain no more than about 30 souls per square mile. Light herding is practised in such areas, and such provides the principle means of obtaining food and trade goods.

Low indicates areas where light farming and some animal husbandry is practised. Lands of this sort may support up to 50 people per square mile, though the quality of available farmland is poor.

Average areas may support up to 75 folk per square mile, most of whom work the relatively good farmland. Often, animal husbandry, hunting, and fishing supplement the general supply of food.

High indicates areas with fertile croplands and pastures so as to support up to 100 souls per square mile. Settlements, on the whole, are significant in size, as ample trade routes are likely to criss-cross such areas.

Abundant describes areas where farmland is especially fruitful, capable of supporting up to 120 people per square mile. Perhaps ironically, such areas tend to support larger wilderness areas, since the high quality of the soil allows that less physical area be devoted to cropland.

The tables that follow provide guidelines for the relative size of and distance between settlements nestled in areas of differing Resource Ratings, using the information above.

Table 3.2-a: Settlement Population Ranges³

Population Rating	Village	Town	City ⁴
Sparse	1d4-2	N/A	N/A
Low	1d2	1d6+4	N/A
Average	1d3+1	(1d2)*10	1d6+4
High	2d3+2	(1d3+1)*10	1d6+6
Abundant	1d6+4	(2d3+2)*10	1d8+8

In general, then, villages shelter from 50 to 1,000 people, while towns house from 500 – 8,000 souls. Cities, lying at the crossroads of major trade routes, tend to contain from 5,000 to 16,000 persons; some grand cities have larger populations, though certainly less than 100,000 people, and settlements of this size should always be placed deliberately by the GM.

³ The number indicated represents the number of population blocks that might dwell in a settlement of the type given; each population block is 100 people. Results of zero or less indicate a single block of 50 persons.

⁴ City population blocks measure 1,000 people.

Obviously, in order to survive, settlements of any type must be sufficiently distant from one another so as to avoid competing for resources. The following table cites distance guidelines for settlements based on Resources Rating:

Table 3.2-b: Settlement Distance Ranges⁵

Resource Rating	Village	Town	City ⁶
Sparse	1d10	N/A	N/A
Low	1d6	3d10	N/A
Average	1d4	3d6	5d10
High	1d3	3d4	5d8
Abundant	1d2	3d3	5d4

All of the above are meant to be used as guidelines in those instances where exact cartographic information is unavailable, so for well mapped areas, the contents of the previous tables will already have been taken into account.

It is also necessary to make a few parting notes in closing. First, the term resources is used to denote actual sources of food, whether via hunted game or arable land; it is not to be confused with the area's Industrial Resources, which describe what commodities are sold or developed by an area as a source of profit. Thus, a mining village may sit upon rich silver veins, making the area's industrial resources quite high, though the barren hills where the mine is situated are devoid of game or cropland, granting a Resource Rating of Sparse or Low (perhaps the inhabitants receive foodstuffs and other supplies from regular support caravans from the heartland).

Second, GMs may use the various Resource and Population Ratings to gauge the severity of famines or the degree of surplus, as it is entirely possible for a region's Resource Rating to change over time. For example, if an Average population resides in an area of Low resources, food will eventually run out, and people will starve. Conversely, if a Sparse population moves into an area of Low or High resources, food will be available in plenty (which will foster the growth of the population so as to match the amount of resources). In all cases, the laws of supply and demand dictate a natural equilibrium between the size of the population and the resources to be had.

3.3 CUSTØMS AND DRESS

These details are covered in depth within the various regional gazetteers.

3.4 HISTØRY AND LANGUAGES

These details are covered in depth within the various regional gazetteers, though a few languages are worthy of note here.

By far, the most commonly known human tongue in the Known World is Tårnic, which originated from amalgamated tribal dialects at the beginning of the Age of History in the Mare Nostrum region of Ærchelon. As the Tårnic Empire grew, their language spread throughout their holdings and developed into Cyndic, a common form of the original language. Still, Tårnic survives in its unadulterated form as the preferred tongue of scribes, politicians, scholars, and otherwise educated peoples, and it is most commonly found in educational or scientific works throughout the Known World.

Another common language in Ærchelon is known as Ældic, which has since matured greatly from its barbaric roots. When the Ældün first settled the lands east of the Dusk Sea, they cultivated their native tongue; when the Tårn began to occupy their lands as a protectorate, Ældic became infused accordingly. Today, many common words in Ældic have traceable roots to Tårnic. Regardless of its history, however, Ældic is the effective standard of spoken and written communication within the Northern Realms.

In a similar vein, the barbarians of the northern reaches have largely conformed to what is generally known as the Cold Tongue, or Firsii. This language is spoken by the Frisians, the Jutes, the Nord, and a few other scattered northerners. Although its original form consisted only of spoken words, a written, rune-like script has developed to match the rudimentary concepts and ideals of the language.

Demi-humans tongues are highly mature and of varying dialects. The ard of Ærchelon speak and write in Olvish, a complex and multi-syllabic tongue of inherent beauty and subtle meaning. The duarvish races of the same regions speak Denuar, similar to (and probably the progenitor of) the Cold Tongue. Ancient versions of each exist, known as Auld Olvish and Auld Denuar; these languages are used almost exclusively in religious ceremonies and in esoteric writings.

The halflings sprinkled throughout the Known World generally adopt local human tongues in an effort to augment trade relations. However, a pure halfling tongue, Dimelic, does exist, and, like the ancient speech of the ardic and duarvish peoples, it is used in high ceremonies or scholarly works.

The goblinoids of the lands in or bordering the known world generally speak some dialect of Unthek, a harsh and guttural language commonly known as the Black Speech. While most goblinoids cannot read or write, Unthek does have a written form, which is used primarily by the Banecreed, members of the Ebon Cabal who serve the Bane God. This linguistic choice promotes the secrecy of the Cabal, since the tongue is twisted and dark, and those not of the Banecreed typically suf-

⁵ All distances are in measured in miles.

⁶ Cities may support outlying farming communities or manorial estates; these are not subject to the guidelines of this table.

fer some malady of evil when trying to translate it (in game terms, efforts to translate Unthek require a Hard resistance roll against the translator's WPR, unless they are Banecreed or have acquired skill in Unthek (which has a TDR of Hard); a failed roll indicates some form of insanity).

3.5 DIVINITY

Several deities are worshipped by the cultures of Ærchus, and these divine entities occupy positions in a single pantheon known simply as "The Celestiani." While it is largely believed that these deities were extant during the Age of Creation, and were worshipped during the Age of Dreams, little record of their activities prior to the Age of History may be found.

The Celestiani are immortalised aspects of myriad natural forces and emotions, though they have counterparts in both demi-human and goblinoid religion. Thus, ardic folk worship Balidae, the patron of Nature and Wisdom, under the name of Celerene. Gods worshipped by different names retain their general qualities, spheres of influence, and arcana, though they may grant special powers or provide specific benefits to members of particular races (alternate aspects of each deity are listed in the appropriate deity's description).

Most members of the Celestiani have little actual interest in mortal affairs, as they have much more weighty matters that require their divine attentions. Nevertheless, organised worship of these entities is common across the Known World, and nearly every individual who dwells within a civilised realm puts at least some stock in the power held by the gods. This blanket faith is periodically renewed through the occurrence of extraordinary events (i.e., perceived miracles) that bless or curse mortals on occasion—famines, bounty, earthquakes, the appearance of comets, strange phenomena, et. al. While these events may be perfectly justified through scientific explanations, most are ignorant of such esoteria, and there is enough doubt in their hearts to favour divine intervention as the cause.

Thus, most folk develop a healthy respect for divine power, and it is not uncommon for individuals to honour multiple deities in the course of everyday life (or extra-ordinary lives in the case of adventurers). Such veneration does not extend to consecrating full-blown alters or observing every holy day of every known deity, though it does manifest as oaths or prayers in times of particular need, or small offerings left at the shrines of such gods when the opportunity presents itself.

Consequently, nearly everyone holds a place of reverence for the Pancreator, the chief god of the Celestiani. In many places, the Pancreator is worshipped as the single, ultimate deity, with all other immortal powers acting as background extensions or specific facets of his omnipotence.

Priests, as a matter of their profession, limit their worship to but a single deity, and they necessarily form the leadership for lay worshippers of any specific god. Because most inhabitants

of Ærchus are somewhat religious, priests are generally common, and they serve as the spokes-persons for the gods as well as the spiritual advisors to local rulers and kings.

Some cultures worship divine patrons that are not recognised as members of the Celestiani. The various beast lords (q.v.) are notable examples, though other, more fell beings are sometimes venerated as gods. In this latter respect, influential immortal powers from the both the middle and lower planes of Infernus, Arcticus, Chaosium, Nocturnus, and Misericoria, are sometimes venerated by obscure cults and evil orders. In a similar vein, there are some deeply esoteric cults that worship individual Elemental Lords, certain demi-gods of the upper planes, and even some immortal creatures who appear god-like because of their extra-ordinary powers.

One prominent cult in the known world is known as the Ebon Cabal, or the Dark Fidelity. This secretive and thoroughly wicked order venerates the Bane God, and members are known as the Banecreed. The Banecreed are responsible for all manner of evil and depraved acts in the name of their deity, and they sow random terror as much as organised plots to topple kings, military rulers, and their chief foes, those who venerate the Pancreator.

Combating the evil of the Banecreed is the Holy Order of Brightsashes, a fanatic branch of the Church of the Pancreator whose task is to decisively eliminate the Ebon Cabal. The Brightsashes are based in the Kingdom of Nador, on the eastern coast of Ærachelon, and from this place, they work ceaselessly to carry out their charge. While effective, their zeal is fearsome, and their unswerving loyalty has, on occasion, motivated them to label anyone who opposes them as Banecreed (often with arrests, torture, and death following).

While the descriptions to follow are transcribed from a decidedly Ældic perspective, certain immortal powers are worshipped under varying names by different cultures. Where applicable, these alternates are cited in the deity's description under the headings Mannish, Demi-human, and Goblinoid. These reflect various gods of human, demi-human, and goblinoid cultural pantheons; when cited, the deity's alternate name is given with its sex and cultural following. Where no alternate is given, assume that the immortal is worshipped by other cultures as listed, or, by omission, not at all. As a final note, if the alternate name appears in *italics*, it indicates that the deity is the ruler of that particular culture's pantheon.

All that stated, general details regarding the membership of the Celestiani are summarised on **Table 3.5**, below.

Table 3.5: The Celestiani

Deity	Rank	Spheres of Influence	Greater Arcana ⁷	Lesser Arcana
Ærchia	Elder Power (f)	Earth and Fertility	Elemental Earth Generation Para-elemental mud/lava Vitality	Fauna (earth) Flora (earth)
Auralion	Elder Power (m)	Air and Sky; Weather	Brilliance Elemental Air Para-elemental smoke/vapour	Entropy Fauna (aerial) Prognostication
Balidae	Greater Goddess (f)	Hunting, Nature, and Wisdom	Fauna (all) Flora (all) Cogitation	Prognostication Symmetry
Bane God	Elder Power (m)	Unbridled Evil and Oppression	All	N/A
Beast Lord	Demi-god (var.)	one specific animal	Fauna (one type)	none
Bhalaki	Lesser God (m)	Secrets and Knowledge	Cogitation Prognostication	Enchantment Warding
Chronos	Greater God (m)	Time	Chronology Degeneration Substance	Brilliance Despair Prognostication
Coskk	Lesser God (m)	War and Conflict	Conflict Entropy	Necromantic Warding
Delgorion	Lesser God (m)	Darkness and Decay; Cold	Degeneration Despair	Fauna (cold) Flora (cold)
Fortuna	Greater Goddess (f)	Luck and Fortune	Brilliance Despair Entropy Symmetry	Cogitation Prognostication
Mephestus	Lesser God (m)	Fear and Terror; Malice	Despair Entropy	Enchantment
Polyborus	Lesser God (m)	Lycanthropy	Entropy Generation	Symmetry
Pancreator	Elder Power (m)	All	All	N/A
Promethelon	Elder Power (m)	Fire and Industry; Heat	Elemental Fire Generation Para-elemental lava/smoke	Degeneration Fauna (hot) Warding
Satyrius	Lesser God (m)	Emotions and Self-expression; beauty	Brilliance Enchantment	Entropy
Straasha	Elder Power (f)	Water and Healing	Elemental Water Para-elemental vapour/mud Vitality	Fauna (aquatic) Flora (aquatic) Entropy
Templar	Greater God (m)	Law and Order; Justice	Brilliance Symmetry Warding	Cogitation Conflict
Urtul	Greater God (m)	Death and the Underworld	Degeneration Despair Necromantic	Fauna (subterranean) Flora (subterranean)

Brief descriptions of the above-named deities follow:

3.5.1 ÆRCHIA

The Earth Mother, The Queen of Bounty

Symbol: A bound sheaf of wheat

Mannish: Mish (female, Frost Peoples); Brina (female, Nordic); *Cyriasmus* (male, Tâmic)

Demi-human: Melik (female, duarvish); Ampalla (female, halfling)

Ærchia the Earth Mother is the goddess of bounty and fertility, the provider of needs, and the matronly protector of her adherents. She is worshipped by most as the source of food, shelter, and goods that come from the earth and the womb, though she provides only to those who demonstrate hard and honest work. As such, she is often the patron of farmers and given some worship by mothers-to-be. Priests of Ærchia serve the populace as agricultural advisors (who, in some regions, perfect techniques of crop rotation and irrigation), midwives, and some physicians well practised in the healing arts.

⁷ All deities possess Peregrination and Conjunction as Greater Arcana.

3.5.2 AURALIØN

The Sky King, The Lord of Winds, Sol

Symbol: Sol (the sun, often stylised)

Mannish: Brig (male, Frost Peoples); Luthia (female, Nordic); Eulchio (male, Târníc)

Demi-human: Melik (female, duarvish); Ampalla (female, halfling)

The god Auralion is the ruler of the skies and weather. Husband to Ærchia, he provides the rain and sunshine necessary for growth upon the earth. He is given sacrifice mostly by those who have some dependence on the weather for their livelihood or current endeavour (farmers, sailors, caravan merchants, et. al.). Priests of Auralion generally have some talent at meteorology and astrology, though there are few organised churches dedicated to this deity.

3.5.3 BALIDAE

The Hunter, The Wood-sage, The Mistress of Wisdom

Symbol: An arrowhead

Mannish: Brig (male, Frost Peoples), Gladsyr (male, Nordic); Delphia (female, Târníc)

Demi-human: Maredaceon (male, centaur); Celerene (female, ardic)

The goddess of Nature and Wisdom, Balidae is frequently worshipped by hunters, woodsmen, trappers, and wardens. Priests of Balidae are commonly known as druids in some societies, and their message is that total harmony with Nature is the greatest goal, and that this is achieved only by obtaining the wisdom the natural world can offer. The worship of Balidae, taking place in well hidden, sanctified wilderness areas, is seen by some as cult-like and not a little barbaric.

3.5.4 BANE GØD

Lord of Deceit, The Dark One, Dweller of Cold Shadows, Ebon Patron, The Doomgiver

Symbol: Serpent's forked tongue in any form

Mannish: Urden (male, Nordic); Malesprae (male, Târníc)

Demi-human: Mortul (male, duarvish); Orilar (male, ardic)

Goblinoid: *Progya* (none, goblin); *Tegric* (male, orc); *Mog* (male, ogre)

The Bane God is the dark patron of unreserved evil and cruelty. He seeks to oppress all in his lust for uncompromising power, and he despises all that is good and kind. This deity is the immortal patron of the Ebon Cabal, or the Dark Fidelity, a secret cult whose members (called the Banecreed) work to destroy on Ærchus all that their god despises, all the while spreading terror and fear. Affiliation with the Cabal is often sufficient grounds for arrest and hanging in most societies; the chief enemy of the Dark One is the Pancreator.

As shown, in goblinoid societies, the Bane God is often the leader of their respective pantheons; this is not surprising, since it is said that the Doomgiver is the father of all goblinoid peoples.

3.5.5 BEAST LØRD

Symbol: A distinguishing aspect of the appropriate animal

Beast lords are immortal patrons of various animals, and there is typically one lord for every type of animal known. These demi-gods are not often worshipped outside primitive societies, where various clans of barbarians or savage peoples unite under specific animal totems (the people of Narbonensis are the most exemplary of such in the Known World). Such clans venerate the beast lord of their totem, and the demi-god, in turn, serves as a spiritual guide through life on the path toward greater wisdom or peace. Of course, some beast lords represent more aggressive animals, and so those banded under such totems are typically warlike and aggressive themselves.

3.5.6 BHALAKI

The Riddler, The Riddle-master, The Trickster, Lord of Mages

Symbol: A solitary key (to a lock)

Mannish: Ungi (male, Nordic); Zenestes (male, Târníc)

Demi-human: Artinorelae (female, ardic); Lilt (female, duarvish); Fremis (male, halfling)

Goblinoid: Mekaliat (female, goblin); Singh (female, ogre); Mortosh (female, orc)

Bhalaki is the patron of all secrets, the keeper of the Arcane, and the master of the knowledge necessary to unravel all mysteries. He is not generally worshipped as a single deity, but he is sometimes offered sacrifice in exchange for titbits of knowledge or information. Priests of Bhalaki practice divination and often serve as advisors to rulers.

3.5.7 CHRØNØS

Father Time, Lord of Time, The Keeper of Events; The Maker of Chronicles

Symbol: An hourglass

Mannish: Orndall (male, Nordic); Livy (male, Târníc)

Demi-human: Khronus (male, duarvish); Balidae (male, ardic)

Chronos is the timekeeper of the multiverse, and it is his influence that maintains the cycles of the seasons, the planets, and the heavens. Because all things are created and destroyed through time, Chronos is said to choose when all things are born and when they die. His worship is small and isolated, though his priests (when found) are invariably learned souls, always with an acute sense of the passage of time and the occurrence of events. Some are reported to even practice divination merely by "feeling" how the flow of time will influence current events.

3.5.8 CΘSKK

The Warlord, The Battle-King, The Lord of War-play

Symbol: Crossed sword and spear

Mannish: *Tesh* (male, Cold Peoples); *Skrava* (female, Nordic); *Kros* (male, Tâmic)

Demi-human: *Maredaceon* (male, centaur); *Illimor* (male, ardic)

Goblinoid: *Taguvialt* (male, goblin), *Krosh* (male, ogre); *Gruentar* (male, orc)

A bloodthirsty god, Coskk is the patron of all who do battle, and he is most frequently venerated during or just before major conflicts. His preferred form of sacrifice is blood, preferably on the battlefield. It is said that he cares not for the morality or justification of any side in a conflict, but that he instead lends his preference to combatants of the most bloodthirsty disposition. Priests of Coskk are rare, though templars form many fighting orders dedicated to the Warlord.

3.5.9 DELGΘRIΘN

The Shadow-Master, The Frostclaw

Symbol: Curved claw

Mannish: *Fros* (male, Frost Peoples);

Demi-human: *Duloskk* (male, duarvish); *Delegorion* (male, ardic); *Nadine* (female, halfling)

Goblinoid: *Ubliyet* (male, goblin); *Garduar* (male, orc)

Delgorion is the master of darkness and cold, decay and withering bounty, often represented as a black-garbed humanoid with fearsome claws. He is not generally worshipped, and his role in the Celestiani is generally to serve as punisher of those who destroy or take for granted the prizes offered by warmth and light. Thus, his displeasure is often viewed as the cause of withered crops, a blight, famine, or the loss of bounty and life. Delgorion is a henchman of Bane God, and in this respect, he is the agent of the decay wrought by his evil patron.

3.5.10 FΘRTUNA

Lady of Luck, Mistress of Fortune, The Lady of Fate

Symbol: A 12-spoked wheel

Mannish: *Kralya* (female, Nordic); *Appanestra* (female, Tâmic)

Demi-human: *Melik* (female, duarvish); *Melarindel* (female, ardic); *Borphoris* (male, halfling)

Goblinoid: *Dekkar* (male, orc)

Fortuna is the capricious patroness of luck and fortune, for good or ill. She is sometimes represented as carrying a set of balance scales, for it is generally believed that good fortune and bad luck are experienced in equal measure. Thus, Fortuna brings both misery and fortune, and order and chaos into the lives of all. As such, she is a popular goddess, frequently men-

tioned in the prayers of merchants, gamblers, rulers, soldiers, and, of course, adventurers. Fortuna enjoys a lively priesthood, albeit a rather small one, and her priests teach others to make the best of their misfortune during hard times, and to appreciate with gladness times of joy and plenty.

3.5.11 MPEPHESTUS

The Dreadlord, Lord of Terror, The Loathsome One, The Herald of Doom

Symbol: Stylised lattice-work representing a cage

Mannish: *Fros* (male, Frost Peoples); *Miser* (male, Tâmic)

Demi-human: *Lilt* (female, duarvish); *Calidom* (male, halfling)

Goblinoid: *Mekaliat* (female, goblin); *Torgon* (male, orc)

The god of terror and unadulterated malice, Mephestus thrives on the fears and doubts experienced by mortals. His symbol represents the self-made prison mortals place themselves in when riddled by guilt, hatred, indecisiveness, dread, fear, or self-recrimination. As such, he is the bane of productivity and decisive action, and he stands in direct opposition of Templar, his greatest enemy. He is not worshipped outside small, secular cults who spread fear and indecision in an effort to appease their malevolent patron. This is not the case with his goblinoid worshippers, who venerate the Dreadlord openly. Mephestus is the chief agent of the Bane God.

3.5.12 PΘLYBΘRUS

The Changeling, The Many-faced One

Symbol: Vincula (in any aspect, often stylised)

The self-made lord of change, Polyborus is sometimes represented as a servant of Chronos because he embodies in physical form the alterations imposed by time; he enjoys sporadic veneration amongst all races. Polyborus is viewed as the patron of lycanthropes, whose strange afflictions are often tied to the phases of the moon. As such, he is frequently worshipped by those afflicted with the disease and lycanthropes of both evil and goodly outlooks tend to worship both malignant and favourable countenances of this god. The organised priesthood of Polyborus is invariably comprised of lycanthropes of some sort, though (for obvious reasons), members do not flaunt their affiliation (or their affliction)

3.5.13 THE PANCREATΘR

The All Father, The One God, The Lord of Hosts, The Root of Breath, The Dragon

Symbol: A serpentine dragon (sometimes depicted as eating its own tail)

Mannish: *Frieden* (male, Nordic)

Demi-human: *Prometheon* (male, centaur); *Firedalinar* (male, ardic); *Duludain* (male, duarvish); *Soriben* (male, halfling)

The chief elder power of the Celestiani, the Pancreator represents the pinnacle of god-hood to many civilised folk. Consequently, he is often worshipped as a single, all-encompassing deity, with all other gods represented as mere extensions or servants of his omnipotence. The Pancreator is husband to Straasha, and father to the brothers Auralion and Promethelion. In the mythology of the Celestiani, the Pancreator is responsible for the creation of Ærchus and the multiverse that contains it; all mortal life—plant or animal—owes its creation to his divine influence, and the world as seen as his cradle. Thus, the Pancreator stands for all that is good, just, and right in the world. Consequently, he is the staunch enemy of the Bane God, though the relationship between these two deities is responsible for the single schism that exists in the Church of the Pancreator.

The fundamentalist faction, the Holy Order of Brightsashes, views the Bane God as the one-time servant of the Pancreator whose lust for power led him on the path to darkness and evil. Reformationists within the Church have adopted a more shocking viewpoint: that the Bane God is actually the son of the Pancreator who, fascinated by the sin and evil of mortals, was thus led astray himself. In practice, the fundamentalist Brightsashes believe that anything related to the Bane God must be destroyed or made to recant their evil allegiance (often through torture). The reformationist Lightbringers have adopted a stance that calls for tolerance and compassion, believing that even the minions of the Bane God may be led back to goodness through understanding, forgiveness, and love.

The two branches of the church are positively split, and while their underlying loyalty to the Pancreator is equally staunch, their separate modes of worship and conversion serve to embitter the Brightsashes and frustrate the Lightbringers.

3.5.14 PRØMETHELØN

The Craftsman, The God-smith, The Blade-father, The Blade-hone

Symbol: Hammer and anvil

Mannish: Jorg (male, Nordic); Horestephus (male, Târnic)

Demi-human: Dwaalgar (male, duarvish)

The smith of the gods, Promethelion is the lord of fire and forging; in more subtle aspects, the Blade-father represents honest work and industry. The son of the Pancreator and brother to Auralion, Promethelion is responsible for crafting the 12 Forgeblades (q.v.), and is the natural patron of all smiths and craftsmen. In mythology, Promethelion taught the mortals of Ærchus to make fire and thus begin their ascension toward civilisation. Thus, he is also viewed as a generous and kindly god, though he can be stern and fatherly when granting his gifts—recipients are expected to use his largess with wisdom and responsibility. His priesthood is small, and members typically act as advisors to craftsmens' guilds; Promethelion is a great friend of Templar.

3.5.15 SATYRIUS

The Enchanter, Lord of Revel, Patron of Vice

Symbol: A sprig of grapes

Mannish: Skalden (male, Nordic); Nalbion (male, Târnic)

Demi-human: Inphictus (male, centaur); Feyathlorian (female, ardic)

The Lord of Revel often assumes the appearance of a faun or satyr (half-man, half-goat), frequently drunk, and always attended to by a retinue of frolicking nymphs, dryads, and sprites. Considered by most to be a carefree and frivolous god, Satyrius is a lover of beauty, and he brings celebration and goodwill to all. At the same time, he enchants mortals with his mystic flute and ever-full flagon of wine. As might be expected, his representation as a harbinger of joy, mirth, and drunken hedonism is viewed with pleasure, and celebrants offer to him toasts of wine and fine foods at the commencement of any revel. While his (profligate) priesthood conducts ceremonies of drunken orgies on a weekly basis, Satyrius is venerated on a lesser (and more conservative) scale by bards of many realms.

3.5.16 STRAASHA

The Maiden of the Waters, The Queen of the Depths, The Bitch-Queen of Tempests

Symbol: Sea shell of any type

Mannish: Tempen (male, Nordic); Aquais (male, Târnic)

Demi-human: Melaquanel (female, ardic)

This goddess of the water is the patroness of all aquatic environments, and she is revered by sailors, merchants, and those who dwell on or near coasts. She is wife to the Pancreator and mother of Auralion, to whom she granted her command of the weather. Because all life depends on water, Straasha is also the goddess of healing, and she is frequently represented as carrying a gleaming mother-of-pearl coloured conch shell filled with revitalising draughts. Priests of Straasha are organised only in proximity to water, and the company of one on any aquatic journey is generally seen as a blessing. Her monniker pertaining to tempests is used mostly by sailors who have had the misfortune to experience her wrath, manifested by tumultuous seas and fatal storms.

3.5.17 TEMPLAR

The Bright God, The Just, The Lawgiver

Symbol: Balance scale

Mannish: Seeg (male, Frost Peoples); Frieden (male, Nordic);

Bellistra (female, Târnic)

Demi-human: Coressk (male, duarvish); Mylra (female, halfling)

Templar is the patron of just warfare and the overseer of law and order. His role is to mete out justice and, if necessary,

punish by force of arms those who commit wrong or inequity. Like Promethelon, he is interested in the protection of the weak and he espouses order as the yardstick by which the value of any person, society, or culture is measured. Templar's priesthood is large, and members typically act as barristers and advocates in local disputes. As his name implies, Templar is supported by several fighting orders (comprised, naturally, of templars) who serve to carry justice to the unjust through strength of arms. While this charge is akin to that of the Brightsashes (q.v.), the fighting orders of Templar are generally more tolerant, as their pursuit of objective justice does not tend to make them self-righteous fanatics.

3.5.18 URTUL

Lord of the Underworld, Soul-warden, Death-bringer, Bed-master of Souls

Symbol: Skull of any sort

Mannish: Urng (male, Frost Peoples); Nilf (male, Nordic); Urgion (male, Tâmic)

Demi-human: Khronus (male, duarvish)

Goblinoid: Korebag (male, goblin); Zeddek (male, ogre); Niviar (female, orc)

Urtul is the king of the underworld, that place in the mythology of the Celestiani where the souls of the dead find their final rest. While Urtul is not evil or malicious, his name is spoken in hushed whispers and dread, since his attentions invariably lead to the death of a loved one or a companion. Urtul's realm is supposedly divided, and he judges those who enter. Those who led virtuous lives are permitted to occupy subterranean recesses of beauty and comfort; those of evil or malignant dispositions are imprisoned as animals, to be tortured for the pleasure of Delgorion and Mephestus. It is also said that it is possible to journey physically to Urtul's Court in order to request audience with those who have passed on. While this may be true, mythology suggests that Urtul does not suffer such trespass lightly, and that he drives hard bargains for this privilege. Urtul does not enjoy any organised priesthood, though his name may be spoken with reverence during funerals, as it is customary to offer propitiation to him at these sad ceremonies so that he might look upon the deceased with favour.

3.6 TRAVEL

Travel across the lands and seas of Ærchus is a dangerous and ill-advised undertaking for most folk, unless via well-established routes inside the borders of friendly kingdoms. In other circumstances, there is little guarantee of safety, for there remain vast tracts of unexplored (and assumed to be hostile) wilderness separating the majority of known population centres.

Naval transportation is the preferred mode of travel, since such routes do not require the dangerous construction of roads through the wilderness. To that is added the fact that most set-

tlements are nestled on or along sizeable waterways already, and so aquatic travel via river or coast is a practical (and almost relatively easy) mode of transport between population centres. As a result, river travel dominates one's selection of available transportation, though travel across large lakes, inland seas, and along coastal areas by boat is also common.

Oceanic travel across Ærchus is severely limited, with the notable exception of the Tâmic exploration vessel, the *Festina Laude* (see **Section 1.3.1**, above). Generally, travel across the open sea is limited to known routes that lead to the mapped coastlines of distant shores. This fact is best illustrated by the prevalence of travel by ship across the Gilded Archipelago, where almost countless islands and sub-continentals serve as landfalls for ocean-going vessels. Outside this particular area, ocean travel is generally consigned to coastal ventures, and treks across the broad, watery expanses of the Oceanus Fluvio or the Süd Ocean are virtually unheard of.

Of course, there is not always a convenient waterway to carry one to one's desired destination, and those who must travel overland as a necessity of commerce, conquest, or adventure may make use of the known roadways that sometimes criss-cross the lands of some realms. When presented, roads offer the safest mode of overland travel, though only the most well-settled and tame areas afford the traveller this luxury. Cases in point include the many highways constructed by the Tâm that are found in the sub-kingdoms and city-states surrounding Mare Nostrum. In Northern Ærachelon, the former Empire of the Ældûn boasts a fair number of similar highways, each linking regional capitals to each other, as well as extending into wilderness outposts that lie, in most cases, a few dozen miles short of established borders. If these highborn mannish races are any indication, it is assumed that similar by-ways exist in settled parts of Southern Mueretania and Ocealear.

The final option for any traveller, of course, is to strike out through the wilderness toward his destination. Unless such individuals are well armed and protected by guards, henchmen, or similar allies, this option is not generally advised, for as mentioned, great stretches of wild country abound on Ærchus, and one may never be sure of the dangerous obstacles that may be thrown up by the unknown.

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