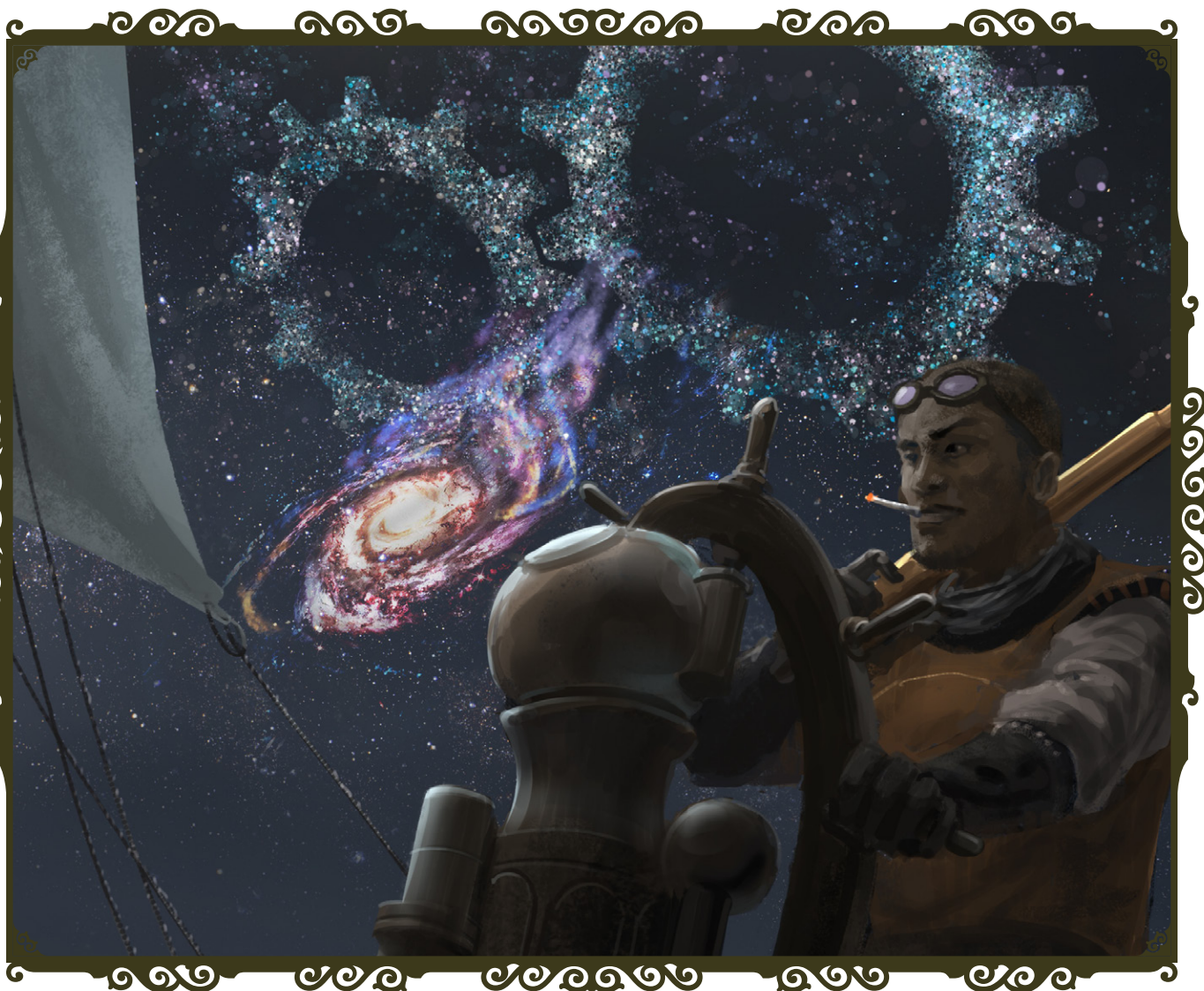




ENsider Presents:

The ZEITGEIST Adventure Path Player's Guide

Part 5

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Setting Overview (cont'd)

WHILE MOST OF THE ZEITGEIST ADVENTURE path occurs in the nation of Risur, there is a great deal of world beyond its borders. Part 4 of this Player's Guide includes languages and accents of the nations of ZEITGEIST as a roleplaying aid; it has been reprinted here for your convenience.

Crisillyir

Crisillyir is ruled by the hierarchs of the Clergy, the religion that freed the nation from demonic rule a millennium ago. Today, Crisillyir is a rich land, its fields bountiful, its coffers full of colonial gold. Centuries of divine rituals have turned its great cities into beacons of enlightenment and magical research, though this prosperity seems to attract attention from supernatural threats. Elaborate aqueducts feed water from the snowcapped Enfantes Mountains throughout the nation; it is said that each column in the aqueduct system is engraved with one chapter from the Clergy's holy book, acting as a massive ward against the ancient evil that still lurks in the land.

In Crisillyir, the power of the church is supreme, but not unquestioned. While the grand summoners conjure forth tortured specters from the Bleak Gate to cow their flocks into piety, collegial arcanists debate conceptions of the cosmos that do not match church dogma. Fat merchant lords pay lip service to the faith, sell weapons and ritual components to eladrin assassins, then purchase indulgences to absolve themselves. And though the inquisitive halo-bearing geneu credetos ('spirits of belief,' or more commonly 'godhands') are tasked with guarding the nation from unholy, fey, and undead influences, criminal organizations nevertheless manage to smuggle in contraband and use resurrections to extort even the dead.

The Clergy.

According to the church's holy text, one thousand years ago a human fisherman named Triegenes from what today is Danor discovered the secret of divinity while lost in a storm at sea. He returned and preached about the divine spark within all mortals, and how by constantly challenging oneself, a person can become

Languages and Accents.

If you're interested in giving characters from different nations distinctive accents, here are some guidelines. These suggestions are intended for Anglophones, so if English isn't your native language, other assumed dialects may work better for you.

Risur speaks Primordial, derived from the ancient speech of the original fey titans who ruled the land. Educated people of Risur often speak Common as well. Risuri speakers have English accents (or whatever local variant of English you speak: American, Australian, Canadian, etc.). All PCs gain Primordial as a bonus language.

Risur has a diverse culture, with local elves, gnomes, and halflings who all have their own traditional languages, but even they almost always also speak Primordial. The skyseers and other druidic sects are rumored to have their own secret language.

The language Common, which served a role in Lanjyr similar to Latin in Europe, is spoken in Ber, Crisillyir, and Danor, albeit with some local variations.

Ber mixes Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc, and Common, with most state business conducted in Common. Berans have a Spanish accent (or Mexican, if that's easier for you).

Crisillyir speaks Common as well as Dwarvish, with strong Drakran influences. Crisillyiri sound like Eastern Europeans (or perhaps Italians, if that's easier for you).

Danor speaks Common, but its schools and academies are strict in maintaining the language's purity. Danorans sound like the French.

Drakr speaks Dwarvish. Drakrans sound Russian.

Elfaivar speaks Elvish, plus the Common of their conquerors. Elf-aivarans should have a non-European accent: perhaps Iraqi, Indian, or Japanese.

The fey of the Dreaming speak Sylvan or Elvish amongst themselves, though most of them also speak Common. They tend to have a sing-song cadence and earthy pronunciation, a bit like someone reciting *Beowulf* in Old English, though smaller fey like pixies just tend to sound high-pitched.

The seldom seen races that live under the sea have a language of their own known as Deep Speech, but their affairs almost never interact with people of the surface.

The languages known as Abyssal and Celestial has only been found in fragments on truly ancient artifacts, decipherable only by magic. No one can be said to truly understand these languages.

Infernal, the language of the fallen Demonocracy, is practically extinct except for curious scholars, a handful of demented cultists, and the warriors of the Clergy who strive to stamp out the last lingering traces of that unholy empire.

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like a god. He inspired followers to fight beside him, and together they toppled tyrants, slew legendary monsters, and eventually established a new nation, based upon a hierarchy of divinity, where rank and reward were based solely on merit.

After his kingdom was established, Triegenes undertook the greatest challenge left in the mortal world: to defeat the Demonocracy that oppressed the lands to the east. He confronted the abyssal lords who had taken residence on this world, sacrificed himself to banish them forever, and then left his mortal shell and ascended to godhood.

The Clergy believe in many gods, with no pinnacle godhead, but they preach foremost the teachings of Triegenes, that every man has greatness within him, and he merely needs to be challenged to awaken his potential. And while a thousand years have burdened this original message with a complex celestial bureaucracy, vaguely-interpreted visions of a multiverse of planes, and a strong emphasis on the superior potential of humans above all other races, the simple dogma that anyone can improve their life, and that indeed this is the main purpose of life, holds strong appeal. The Clergy is now the most widespread faith in Lanjyr.

Cities.

The capital city Alais Primos is dominated by massive temples, sepulchers, and libraries, some so large they straddle the canals that run through the city. Massive and enchanted walls once surrounded it, holding back the eladrin armies, and while the city has long since expanded beyond their boundaries, their magic still defends the heart of the city. Since the Clergy views the godless tieflings of Danor as apostates, industry and technology are forbidden in Alais Primos. Confiscated items are ritually disposed of in a fiery rift of Enzyo Mons in the nearby mountains, symbolically casting back the tools of evil.

The island city of Sid Minos is site of the nation's greatest naval yards and its military academies, which train paladins and warpriests to hunt unnatural beasts, as well as fight foreign armies. Tunnels and dungeons riddle the rocky island beneath the city, and undead horrors occasionally emerge from these dark lands, but their source is unknown. Because the hierarchs view Sid Minos as already somewhat tainted, they allow technology onto the island. Off the shore lies the Isle of Odiem, home to the Crypta Hereticarum, where the Clergy stores the most vile cursed beasts and objects that they cannot simply destroy.

An isthmus connects Crisillyir and Elfaivar, and the city of Vetricce has grown fat from taxing trade through its gates, including the Avery Coast Railroad that terminates here. A grand arched bridge that once spanned the channel between the two nations was destroyed during the Second Victory, but Danor is funding its repair, hoping to extend the railroad so it can feed through the city and into Elfaivar.

Colonies to the East.

After the eladrin empire fell in the Second Victory, Crisillyir and the other conquering nations established garrisons within the collapsing eladrin nation, and divided the land into several colonies. Despite the great wealth these colonies provide, they are a thorn in Crisillyir's side; intermittent rebellions and acts of terrorism target

Sacred Kingdom of Crisillyir.

- **Capital:** Alais Primos
- **Government:** Ecclesiastical elective monarchy
- **Heads of State:** Prime Cardinal Tito Banderesso, Arch Secula Natalia Degaspore
- **Official Language:** Common
- **Common Races:** Human 85%, gnome 7%, dwarf 4%, other 4%.



The Humble Hook.

When Triegenes passed on from his mortal shell, the prelates of the Clergy cremated his remains in a grand state funeral. As they gathered his ashes to spread across the nation's soil, they found a small harpoon hook—the kind used by some fishers— which somehow had been caught in the living god's body since before he achieved divinity.

The priests crafted the hook into a pendant, and for over a thousand years it has been worn by the hierarchs of the faith, as a reminder that we all have humble origins. Doctrine claimed that it let its wearer learn the history and background of anyone he met, allowing the leader of the faith to deal with overly prideful enemies and heads of state.

In 260 A.O.V., however, it was lost when an eladrin assassin slew that era's hierarch and stole the pendant. Critics of the faith claim that its loss was part of a plan to steer the Clergy away from its original humble core, so that high priests could better profit from their stations.



the colonial governors and their allies in the homeland. At least once a decade, a spree of assassinations strikes, shaking the complacency of the nobility, and frightening the common folk.

The largest colonial city is Santi Simone, over the ruins of Elfaivar's original capital Bharata. In an uncharacteristically sympathetic move, the Clergy built a giant memorial to the countless dead eladrin women, interring their bodies in tombs carved into a massive rock that sits along the city's river.

Devas, Angels, and the Dead.

The Second Victory ended with a legendary battle just outside the walls of Alais Primos, where legions of Clergy-blessed warriors faced an army led by the goddess Srasama herself. After hours of battle, Srasama was felled by a thousand cuts, and fire exploded from her body. The warriors nearest to her were annihilated, but those who survived and were close enough to see the death of a god were marked by the experience.

Many of these veterans settled in the lands liberated by the eladrin army's retreat. In the years that followed, whenever one of them died, open flames would flicker for miles around, and somewhere within three days' travel the man or woman would be reborn in the wilderness. No longer quite human, these reincarnated souls took the name deva, from an eladrin word for deity.

When a deva reincarnates, he recalls language, culture, and enough knowledge to make his way in the world, but usually possesses only vague recollections of his previous life. Acquaintances are unfamiliar, and expert skills like magic, craftsmanship, or swordplay fade, but usually the deva quickly slips into the same basic role he held before death.

Where devas are rare, one that dies is usually found quickly after reincarnation, and after a period of acclimation he will manage to continue as if nothing had happened at all. In Crisillyir, though, devas are common enough that they seldom manage to return to their previous lives. In either case, devas still fear death because it means an end to all they are. While a reincarnated deva might be able to continue the same mission, he'll never recreate the emotions and memories that made him unique.

Many devas find a place in the Clergy, where through special training they can act as vessels for invoked celestial beings. Such angelic visitations never last long, and occasionally result in the death of the vessel, so they are only used in situations where the priesthood feels inadequate to answer questions of guilt or opine on matters of morality.

In a similar way, on certain bleak holy days the priests of the Clergy will reach through the veil into the Bleak Gate and capture uneasy spirits, which they parade in front of crowds of worshippers. Compelled by magic, these undead specters wail about the sins they committed in life that left their souls trapped in 'Purgatory.' The priests then offer absolution, and destroy the unholy beings.

The Family.

One of the few chinks in the strong face the Clergy presents is a criminal organization known as the Family. Most people only know of them in rumors and hearsay, but it is said that they are behind most of the crime on both sides of the Avery Sea.

Where they have taken root, crime becomes civilized. The Family seems to respect loyalty and avoids doing violence to innocents, though when they move into a new city they viciously cut out the current criminal element and institute a more refined form of corruption and lawlessness.

Danor

Guided by a congress of businessmen and scholars, Danor is devoted to endless progress. Old beliefs, especially religion, are cast aside in the face of newer and more profitable ideas. After surviving an apocalyptic collapse five hundred years ago, reason and hard work have created armies more powerful than any in the world, where a common man can wield weapons as mighty as the magic of legendary heroes. After centuries of complacency, the other great nations eye Danor with envy, and with fear.

Following the Second Victory, the social order in old Danor was upended. The Great Malice left the capital of the Clergy bereft of magic. Horrible monsters that spawned in the border regions of wild magic wrought havoc as quavering holy warriors struggled to destroy them without their divine aid. The whole country was cut off from its usual channels of communication, and in a matter of weeks, thousands of priests killed themselves, believing their gods had died, and many more fled in every direction. A once-mighty nation fractured into desperate enclaves, and the old capitol was abandoned as an accursed place.

A major contributor to the region's downfall was that its previous leaders—the hierarchs of the Clergy—had been transformed by the Great Malice into seemingly demonic creatures with horns and barbed tails. People in what today are the Malice Lands refused to let these people reach the new capital in Crisillyir, believing the old rulers were “from the deep pit of hell,” and thus dubbed them “deeplings” or “tiefplings.”

After decades of chaos, a tiefling named Jierre who had once been a priest near the top of the sacred hierarchy gathered the fractious leaders and managed to convince them in the span of a mere five years to reunite under a new vision. If the hands of the gods could no longer reach into Danor, then it would be the hands of mortals that would give them power and safety.

Republic of Danor.



- + **Capital:** Cherage
- + **Government:** Constitutional republic
- + **Head of State:** Sovereign Han Jierre
- + **Official Language:** Common
- + **Common Races:** Human 81%, tiefling 17%, other 2%.



Wild and Dead Magic.

Within Danor's borders, magic quickly seeps away, a consequence of the Great Malice, wherein the eladrin goddess Srasama died five hundred years ago. A creature's own innate magical powers still function, such as a tiefling's hellish rebuke or an eladrin's fey step.

Creatures cannot cast spells or use magical class abilities unless they have some sort of permanent magic item as a focus. These items carry enough innate magic with them to power spells and prayers, but over a period of weeks or months, their power fades entirely. (As a guideline, common or uncommon items are disenchanting within a week; rare and very rare items within a few weeks; and legendary items might last a month or more, subject to GM adjudication.)

Until such time as they lose their enchantments, magic items brought to Danor function normally. In addition, rituals cannot be

cast within Danor, though spells with the ritual tag can still be cast with spell slots.

It is believed impossible to create magic items in Danor, so almost no Danorans study magic. The few Danoran mages there are either traveled to other nations to study, or purchased magic implements and paid exorbitant amounts to import tutors.

Just beyond Danor's borders, in a broad swath hundreds of miles wide, the fabric of magic is damaged but not destroyed. In these places, known as the Malice Lands, whenever a character casts a spell (either from a class or an item) or activates some sort of magical class power, roll an unmodified 1d20. On a 1, a mishap occurs. This usually takes the form of the magic backfiring, manifesting as a free-willed monster, or otherwise going dangerously awry.

It was magic, after all, and the superstitions and archaic beliefs that were its trappings, that had held back the people of Danor from their potential. Jierre understood that they had a unique opportunity. No foreign nations would bother a land without magic, so the new Danor needed not to worry about invasion. It would decide its own fate, and as long as all were devoted to the ideal of progress, Danor would one day be the strongest nation in the world. Finally, after centuries of insular work and struggle to build a new society, Danor has begun to claim its place in the world.

The House of Jierre.

Common belief attests that Srasama cursed the leaders of the Clergy with infernal horns and jagged tails, sacrificing half her mortal followers in a Great Malice when she realized she could not defeat the armies arrayed against her. When Jierre united Danor's factions, almost all those so accursed joined him, adopting the moniker "tiefling" as a badge of rebellion. Some became decisive merchant leaders, while others took a role in government.

Jierre, for his part, refused to be crowned king, and for his remaining years he served as part of a congress of peers. In the centuries since his death, though, his family – tieflings all – has proven a source of many great statesmen, scholars, and inventors. Though officially Danor has only a Congress and a Sovereign who is elected every decade, the House of Jierre is effectively Danor's royal family. Where they point, most follow.

The Sovereign today is **Han Jierre**, former president of the nation's oldest and most prestigious academy of war, the Jierre Sciens d'Arms. Various relatives and in-laws hold many positions in the government and military. A few have even traveled abroad to study magic and apply Danoran principles of science to explain how it works, rather than

relying on traditional beliefs. So far, detailed theories have eluded them, as if magic itself refuses to let itself be understood.

Without a doubt, the House of Jierre rules Danor, but their prominence has not gone uncontested. Periods of riots and protests have plagued the nation, especially in the early days of its industrial revolution, though it certainly helped that, in a realm where few have ever even seen magic, any tiefling can still rebuke a person who attacks him by engulfing him in infernal flame.

Cities and Industry.

Danor's historical capital of Methia lies abandoned. Though Danorans reject superstition, even they cannot help but feel uneasy in these ruins. Nothing grows there, wild animals stay out, and even in the height of summer a chill breeze blows under overcast skies.

The modern capital of Cherage, though, is a bustling center of business and trade. Two centuries of practice at industry has moved the pollution-coughing factories and poverty-riddled worker villages outside the city, where deep canals provide the water for mills. After the city was attacked in the Third Yerasol War, the Danoran navy constructed landfill islands off the shore to place massive artillery batteries and look-out stations.

Trains powered by steam crisscross the nation, and the great Avery Coast Railroad runs from mountainous Beaumont on the west coast, through Cherage, and on eastward to Drakr, passing through Crisillyir, before finally ending three thousand miles away just across a channel from Elfaivar. Warships armored with iron churn along the nation's coast and among the islands it holds in the Yerasol Archipelago, protecting shipments of food that feed Danor's burgeoning population of industrial workers.



SOVEREIGN HAN JIERRE



VLENDAMD HEID



Drakr

Before the rise of the kingdom of Triegenes, dwarven warlords in Drakr subdued the undead titans of the land, encased them in crystal, and buried them deep beneath the earth. The dwarven warlords allied with the Demonocracy in the east, trading the lives and souls of their mostly-human subjects for infernal power. Each warlord erected a tower as a symbol of his power, and from these bases they marched unnatural armies to battle for territory and supremacy.

Later Triegenes assailed those towers, toppling each as a stepping stone toward the Demonocracy itself. The tyrants fell, and dwarves became an oppressed minority in what had once been their homeland. When the Great Malice shattered the kingdom of Triegenes, several clans of dwarves overthrew the priests who had ruled over them. They prepared for war, intending to recreate new dwarven kingdoms, but the deadly threat from the Malice Lands forced them to band together, even unite with humans to keep newly-birthed abominations at bay.

The dwarven clans and fractured human provinces that survived the collapse of the kingdom of Triegenes created a loose federation that has grown ever more united. Regional governors, mostly human, handle normal farming and trade, while dwarven lords direct grand mining operations and command the nation's army and navy.

Once again the nation has grown fond of towers, not just as symbols of power but as strongholds against intermittent waves of monstrous incursions from the Malice Lands. Dark magic is not precisely endorsed, but it is tolerated as a necessary evil for the nation's defense. Criminals convicted of any great crime vanish into mountain prisons to serve in hellish mines, until the day they are sacrificed to empower a magical ward or weapon.

Metal and Magic.

Unsurprisingly, Drakr has taken easily to alliances with Danor, both military and economic. In particular they helped build and still today defend the Avery Coast railroad, and are in the process of building their own rail lines. Their trains, however, are powered by arcane furnaces that burn blood red yet whose metal skin feels eerily cool to the touch.

Similarly, the Drakran military has embraced firearms, and several companies have become famous for slaying implacable

The Lost Riders.

After most of the dwarven tyrants had fallen to Triegenes, the last five warlords gathered at a fiery tower in the Shawl Mountains to discuss a plan for war. As they camped and planned, one of their archmage servants warned that a winter storm stronger than any in history was approaching. Afraid of being stranded from their battle, the five warlords mounted their various dread steeds and rode forth. But when the storm fell upon them, they lost their direction.

Too cruel and convinced of their invincibility to die, the five continued riding until they vanished forever into the blizzard. For over a millennium the dwarves of Drakr have told tales of the lost riders, continuing to search for the battle that they should have fought and won. Folk tales warn never to offer aid to lost travelers, lest you anger their pride and earn their wrath.

malice beasts which previously would have taken an army to defeat. The finest guns come from Drakr, and many of those are enchanted. Unlike Risur, however, Drakr has not rushed to develop steam warships. They have limited interest in naval matters, and prefer to defend their coasts with forts and cannons, though a few Drakran shipyards do construct ironclad vessels for Danor.

The capital city of Trekhom is a major hub of industrial trade, as well as a nexus for several rail lines. Every day countless tons of refined steel arrives by train from the northern forge city of Mirsk, high in the snowy Shawl Mountains. It is said that giants work some of the mines in those frigid mountains, lending their physical might in exchange for enchanted weapons and armor.

Where the Avery Coast railroad crosses the border into the Malice Lands, a steel spire rises five hundred feet above the desolate landscape, guarded by a battalion of soldiers and mages. Its purpose is unclear, but some suspect it is enchanted to drive away malice beasts, or to help mend the tear in the fabric of magic.

The Philosophy of Governance.

Though intellectuals of the rest of the world are quick to disassociate themselves with some of the darker trends in Drakran philosophy – those grounded in the power of the old warlords – many heap great praise on the wise and open deliberations in the nation's parliament.

The old ecumenical tradition of the Clergy survived the Great Malice in the form of schools of philosophy. Often each clan or township would have its own line of local philosophers. Their ideas would influence local leaders and businessmen, who would in turn spread them through the rest of the nation, with the most successful and intriguing philosophers earning their home prestige and profit.

Today the most visible philosophy is Heid Eschatol, which focuses on proper endings to all of life's affairs. Its founder, **Vlendam Heid**, makes a living speaking to audiences around the world, engaging them with philosophy rather than letting them be passive consumers of ideas from books. But other ideologies still battle in the marketplaces and academies of Drakr, and any successful federal representative has to be a studied philosopher, or else espouse wild teachings that will get him noticed.

Federated Drakran States.



- + **Capital:** Trekhom
- + **Government:** Federal parliamentary republic
- + **Head of State:** Chancellor Dmitra Takhenov
- + **Official Language:** Dwarven
- + **Common Races:** Human 67%, dwarf 30%, other 3%.



Elfaivar

Before the Great Malice, the kings of Elfaivar held power to rival all the other nations of Lanjyr. Commanding legions of slave armies from the far east and fielding battalions of fey mages and monsters, the long-lived eladrin monarchs were able to ensure the security and prosperity of the mightiest nation in the world.

Today, only ruins survive.

The Great Malice slew every eladrin woman in the empire and beyond, with only the rarest and most unlikely survivors: women currently polymorphed, on other planes, or who had forsaken the Elfaivaran faith entirely. Within weeks the once-glorious empire, which had been poised to crush the impudent Clergy who had twice launched a holy war against it, descended into chaos. Within decades the population had collapsed to the tiniest sliver of its original number.

A stirring eulogy of the poet Vekesh convinced a few eladrin to seek harmony, to endure, and to prosper – and above all else, to find and free eladrin women from bondage so the race could heal. But for millions of grief-stricken eladrin men, the aftermath of the Great Malice was a time of constant battle.

Those few women who had survived were quickly claimed as property, and anyone who could keep ownership of a wife against a hundred thousand other suitors could command enclaves of desperate followers. Whole cities of despairing men would fight to the death for the chance of winning their lord another wife. Mages laid curses upon swaths of cropland, but some enclaves chose to starve rather than hand over their “queen.” Slavers brought ships of human and elf women magically transmuted to pass as eladrin and then sold into servitude, only to be slain when the truth was discovered.

Many eladrin men fled to other lands, seeking wives of other races, but they could sire no children. As attrition whittled down survivors, and too few children were born to keep society alive, ever more wealth and magical relics pooled in the hands of fewer and fewer men. When foreigners from Crisillyir or the distant east tried to claim Elfaivaran land they were driven back by fearsome eladrin warriors. Trained by constant battles for survival, and possessed of the finest arms and armor of entire cities, each man was match for a hundred normal soldiers.

Eladrin are long-lived, but old age eventually claims even them. Some made pacts with the powers of the Dreaming or other planes, but after two centuries, Elfaivar was practically a ghost nation. It took nearly a century more for Crisillyir and other nations to defeat the few vengeful hold-outs and begin to colonize the empty landscape.

Jungle had reclaimed cities. Mighty magical effects had lost their cohesion, spilling strange enchantments into the land. In some places the material world had blended and merged with the Dreaming. It was in these confusing borderlands that a handful of Vekesh-inspired enclaves survived.

Modern Enclaves.

Early on, the freed women of Vekesh enclaves gained great power, both politically and magically, for they came to embody the hopes of thousands of survivors. New daughters were fiercely guarded and

Empire of Elfaivar.



- **Capital:** Bharata (now Santi Simone)
- **Government:** Feudal monarchy
- **Official Language:** Elf



ASRABEY VARAL,
ELADRIN CHAMPION

The Arsenal of Dhebisu.

Eladrin tell a tale of a god who turned against their pantheon and was transformed into a tiger that walked like a man: a rakshasa. As a god, no weapon in the world could harm him, and he ravaged the lands of Elfaivar, drowning villages and tearing entire cities free from the earth with a swipe of his clawed hands.

A warrior named Dhebisu, infamous for her incongruous brilliance as a poet and lewd sense of humor, was called upon to defeat the rakshasa. She befriended the cats of the jungle to learn of the monster's weakness, and consulted with sages to learn when the next meteor shower would occur. That night she sang a mocking tune to lure out the rakshasa.

The beast attacked her, but she pulled a falling star from the sky and wove it into her hair. Thenceforth any weapon she touched became infused with the powers of the heavens. They battled through the night, until finally, the rakshasa tried to slay her with a poisoned arrow. But Dhebisu snatched the bolt and plunged it into the fiend's loins, destroying it so that it could never reincarnate.



intensely trained so they could defend themselves and someday lead their own enclaves. Despite this, sometimes foreign mercenaries would manage to abduct an eladrin woman, for they became prized status symbols in the rest of Lanjyr.

These abductions led to the first Vekeshi retributions, as mystics undertook daring missions to rescue lost women or at least punish those who would steal them. In general, though, the enclaves stay hidden. They'll deploy spies to keep eyes on human activity in nearby lands, and will make bargains with fey to scare off those who get too close, but they realize that they cannot risk antagonizing the human nations.

A rare few eladrin seek to integrate with human society. They wear as much gold as they can, which prevents them from using their fey step, in an effort to cut themselves off from their fey heritage. By contrast, some Vekeshi mystics also adorn themselves in gold, but only as rituals of self-flagellation, to meditate on their distance from their people's history so they can ponder how best to reclaim their birthright.

The Fallen Goddess.

Srasama was just one of dozens of prominent gods in the Elfaivar pantheon. Traditionally she was the six-armed sculptor who gave form to the raw creation discovered by her husband. She had dominion over the lives of women, and she particularly oversaw rituals of womanhood, marriage, and grief. For these, she would take three different forms of maiden, mother, and crone, but in all she was a fierce defender of the Elfaivar empire.

The famous adventurer Hamyd of the East claimed in the year 72 A.O.V. to have witnessed a conclave of eladrin matriarchs, wherein they performed the ancient rituals of Srasama. According to him, though, they cut short the rituals of the crone, and his guide alleged that this was because the matriarchs had forsworn grief, and so can never age.

The World

All of the events of the campaign occur on the continent of Lanjyr, aside from a few forays into the coterminous planes of the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate, so we leave it to the GM and players to decide the nature of the world beyond the edges of the map.

Border States and the Malice Lands.

Risur, Ber, Crisillyir, Danor, Drakr, and Elfaivar are the largest and most prominent nations in Lanjyr, but by no means are they the only ones. Some regions on the continental map are marked as "border states." These lands play no noteworthy role in the ZEITGEIST campaign, but you should feel free to use them for whatever purpose the GM needs.

Other areas surrounding Danor are called the Malice Lands. When Danor had its magic stripped away during the Great Malice, these lands were at the edge of the effect's radius. The magic there was left fractured and unstable. While Danor was able to restore itself in the relative stability of its dead magic zone, the wild magic of the Malice Lands has led to irregular catastrophes and small

cataclysms that tend to wipe out any nation that tries to establish itself there.

Most people in the Malice Lands live in small villages or as nomads in order to avoid the more deadly manifestations of wild magic. These war-torn lands are also havens for criminals who cross into neighboring countries to pillage and plunder. One noteworthy exception is the city-state of Orithea, which has managed to prosper in a small pocket of stable, albeit weakened magic.

In general, the border states between Risur and Ber are little more than mountainous tribal lands that refuse to join either larger nation. The border states between Crisillyir and Drakr are fairly autonomous and stable, while the border between Drakr and Danor is near anarchy. North of Drakr, a few minor nations stay out of the politics of greater Lanjyr, while beyond Elfaivar lie powerful protectorates of a distant empire, still recovering from the fall-out of the collapse of Elfaivar centuries ago.

These lands are generally outside the scope of this campaign, which gives the GM an excuse to add strange and exciting personal touches to the world.

Calendar.

The region generally uses a simple calendar devised over a millennium ago by the skyseers of Risur. This calendar divides the year into four 91-day seasons, each starting on an equinox or solstice. After the 91st of Winter, one extra day is used to celebrate the new year.

The most common celestial rhythm is the cycle of the moon over 29 and a half days. People might say something happened "a month ago," but individual months are not named. Instead dates are referenced in the format "17 Spring 473 A.O.V."

In the year 500 A.O.V., the first first-quarter moon of each season occur on 12 Spring, 10 Summer, 9 Autumn, and 7 Winter. Festivals of the Old Faith typically fall on these nights. More colloquially, there are names for each prominent moon phase throughout the year. These terms have fallen out of favor except in poetry, academia, and mysticism.

Lunar Myth.

Some say the moon is made of glass, and they claim they can see stars through it, or perhaps within it. Poets have long noted that the "right side" of the moon (the edge that crests the horizon first) seems to have the shape of a man with his arms extended, while the left side has the image of a woman facing away from the man. This gave rise to a shared myth of the moon.

In this tale, an orphan boy meets a girl whose mother is dying beneath a cypress tree. The girl is taken away to be trained as a mage (or an artist, a princess, or a scholar depending on the version), and the orphan boy joins a band of hunters (or rogues, brigands, or rebels). They cross paths, fall in love through their trials, wed, and become heroes. But he dies, and she lives on to raise their child.

Though different seasons can have more specific names, generally the first quarter moon – when only the "man" is visible – is called Hunter's moon. The full moon is Lovers' moon – when both man and woman are present. The third quarter is Maiden's moon – with the woman alone. And the new moon is Dreamer's moon.

Much of the nuance of Skyseer prophecy depends on which moon rises first in a season, and which stars if any are in conjunction with it. The specialized names typically start with the first Hunter's moon each season; phases before those are just called by the generic terms early Lovers, early Maiden, or early Dreamer moon.

The more flavorful names, in order, are below:

- ♦ **Spring.** Hart moon, Plow moon, Thunder moon, Dreamer's moon. Stranger's moon, Forest moon, Mage's moon, Dancer's moon. Hero's moon, High Spring moon, Legend's moon, Dreamer's moon.
- ♦ **Summer.** Husband's moon, Marriage moon, Bride's moon, Dreamer's moon. Dragon moon, Honey moon, Kraken moon, Sleeper's moon. Hero's moon, High Summer moon, Legend's moon, Dreamer's moon.
- ♦ **Autumn.** Serpent moon, Harvest moon, Mother moon, Dreamer's moon. Martyr's moon, Pyre moon, Widow moon, Black moon. Hero's moon, High Autumn moon, Legend's moon, Dreamer's moon.
- ♦ **Winter.** Hunger moon, Snow moon, Wolf moon, Dreamer's moon. Orphan's moon, Cypress moon, Daughter's moon, Hope moon. Hunter's moon, High Winter moon. Maiden's moon. Dreamer's moon.

Planes.

Everyone knows that the fey live in the Dreaming, and that spirits of the dead can linger in the Bleak Gate, but most people are unclear on just what they are. They disagree on whether you can physically go to these realms by walking, or if you would need magic, and if you went there just what you'd see.

The Clergy states that the Dreaming, which they call the Green Temptress or Hell's Garden, is where people's minds go when they sleep, and that the beings called the fey are dreams given flesh by evil magic. Folk religion in Ber proclaims that the moon is a looking glass, and the Dreaming is what we look like reflected in it, while many Drakrans believe it's a trap between this world and the afterlife, meant to trick people from their just ends.

As for the Bleak Gate, common lore of the Clergy calls it Purgatory, and envisions it as a hollow copy of this world lying just underground, a place where the dead pass through on their way to their reward or punishment in the afterlife. The dwarves of Drakr know better, and believe that it is a vision of the distant future, of what the world will look like when everyone has died. Berans believe it lies on the dark side of the moon.

In Risur, folk tales say that once the beings of the Dreaming lived here in our world, and then King Kelland defeated the fey titans

Planets and Planes.

Common lore in Risur claim the heavens are a massive distant dome, and that the planets of the night sky move in reaction to the unseen hand of fate. According to the skyseers, each star is a source of magic, and the planets in particular are the source of key elemental powers.

Each planet and star is conceived of as an empty garden that only comes alive when an outsider enters, and which has no permanent existence. Skyseer myths say ancient men once traveled freely to these worlds, where they could tap directly into powerful magic, but that the stars grew distant. Even today, though, wise men can look skyward and see clues to the course of fate.

The Clergy, by contrast, believe that the heavens are a black sea, and that every star and planet is a physical world, each with its own people and gods. Danoran astronomers, though usually loathe to agree with the Clergy on anything, claim that they have seen the surfaces of the planets through their finely-crafted telescopes, though they cannot confirm any civilizations.

Meanwhile, a modern celebrity named Rock Rackus tells wild tales of using magic to visit these worlds, meet the strange locals, and return with treasure as proof. Skyseers dismiss his claims as a fool being tricked by fey, but Rackus's shows sell out as audiences delight at his bawdry and bold adventures.

Below we list the most prominent objects in the sky, along with the myths and theories associated with each. These myths aren't necessarily consistent with each other.

- ♦ **Vona.** The sun, source of pure arcane force and magical radiance, but too bright to observe the surface. It influences revelations and discoveries.
- ♦ **Jiese.** The plane of fire, home to serpent men whose skin glow like coal. Ancient myths claimed this was a dragon, which chased

the eagle Avilona. Jiese influences war and strife, as well as notable births.

- ♦ **Avilona.** The plane of air, where desolate islands of rock float amid the clouds, covered in long-abandoned ruins. Ancient myths claimed this world was a titanic eagle, fleeing ravenous Jiese. Influences weather, notable deaths, and animals.
- ♦ **Av.** This ancient name for the moon comes from a legend about a sleeping queen of the fey, cursed to slumber after her soul was captured in her reflection on a bottomless pool. Influences nothing, but reflects subtle clues of people's desires.
- ♦ **Mavisha.** The plane of water, home to krakens lurking beneath the waters and leviathans swimming rippling liquid columns that writhe above the sea like the tentacles of a living world. Legend states that a drowned bride long ago cursed sailors to join her in the lightless depths of this endless ocean. Influences the seas, great movements of people, and conflicts within families.
- ♦ **Urim.** The plane of earth, or rather a scattered, shattered belt of relatively tiny shards of metal, which sometimes fall from the sky bearing precious ores and accursed worms. Influences the earth, the rise and fall of fortunes, and random meetings of strangers.
- ♦ **Apet.** The distant plane, said to be a permanent storm of sand and dust on a featureless plane, with the only point of reference being an arc of silver an unknowable distance above. Influences subtle nuances of distance and time, as well as the grand cycle of ages.
- ♦ **Nem.** The plane of ruin, this planet is a myth among the skyseers, who say it sheds no light, and can only be seen as it glides silently through the heavens, devouring stars and leaving nothing but a hole in the night. Influences secrets and the dead.



ROCK RACKUS



and split the world in two, giving the fey and humanity each their own homes, though the titans would exist in each. The Bleak Gate was thought to be a darker, more malevolent part of the Dreaming, a belief reinforced of late. As industry has narrowed the streets of Flint and darkened its alleys with soot, more and more people have begun to speak of disappearances, and of strange black beings that walk in the shadows.

Key Religions.

Four religions dominate in the ZEITGEIST campaign setting. Unlike in a typical Fifth Edition campaign, there is no planar travel, and magic to summon extraplanar creatures is exceedingly rare and brief; only once in recorded history has a god actually physically appeared in the world – and then she was killed. While it is undeniable that powers and forces exist beyond this world, their shapes cannot be proven, and must be taken on faith.

The Clergy.

Organized religion based in Crisillyir. Mortals can empower themselves, even reach godhood, by confronting the challenges of the world. Beyond this world exist many planes, each a perfect manifestation of some aspect of reality, and they are presided over by powerful gods, angels, and spirits that can be entreated for power.

Guerro.

Folk religion of Ber. Every tribe has its own gods, conquered from the tribes who were not strong enough to stand alone. As the tribes battle, so do the gods. For now, it seems, the gods are at peace, and so we make peace, but all good things die in battle. A syncretic combination of Clergy and Guerro is enjoying a popular surge in Drakr.

The Old Faith.

Folk religion of Risur. Honor the spirits of the land, and draw power from nature. The stars above trace patterns that predict events on our world, but the only other worlds are the ones we can visit: the Dreaming and the Bleak Gate.

Seedism.

Folk religion of Elfaivar. Our actions seed change in the world, though it may take ages. Elves and eladrin have long memories. Before the rise of humans, the gods spoke, and we still remember their names and teachings. Srasama, the three-faced mother-warrior-queen, was slain by human treachery, but it is our duty to endure and outgrow this injury. The archfey of the Dreaming were once vassals of the gods, and so we revere and respect them.



"PLANET SIZES HAVE BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED TO REVEAL DETAILS INVISIBLE TO THE UNAIDED EYE."

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The Philosophy of William Miller.

While Drakran philosophy is in ascendance today, many older works are still read and discussed throughout Lanjyr. Most popular are the writings of a clerical monk, William Miller, who in the run up to the Great Malice composed a treatise on hypocrisy, suggesting that it is better to admit you are uncertain of your beliefs than to act in contradiction with your stated values. The book, widely recognized as an attack on the Clergy, allegedly drove the monk to flee persecution.

Miller reappeared several years after the Great Malice with a new work of political philosophy that coincided with his effort to found a small nation, Pala, amid the chaos of the Malice Lands. In his multi-chapter book he examined possible social structures, comparing robustness and stability with various moral values. Early chapters

allude to a conclusion that would detail a handful of ideal nations, but today there are no complete copies of the book.

In 18 A.O.V., the reconstituted Clergy branded Miller a heretic, invaded Pala, and sacked its capital. He was brought to Alais Primos, the new seat of the Clergy, where he was tortured in an effort to compel a confession. After he refused to recant, his captors made a pyre of his heretical writings and burned him alive upon it.

Today, Miller's incomplete writings are popular among the bohemian dockers in Flint and philosophically minded followers of the Panoply in Ber. Rumors say that copies of Miller's final chapters are kept in a library vault in Alais Primos, where it shares shelf space with other "heretical" texts.

Dominant Philosophies.

Certain groups promote secular ideologies independent from the metaphysics of religion.

Heid Eschatol.

Developed in Drakr, popular in Risur. It is important to plan for good endings, whether that's for a business venture, a story, a love affair, or your own life.

Panoply.

Nascent philosophy from Ber, concerned with examining how and why cultures differ. Followers often feel dissatisfied with the traditions of their homeland, and defend the value of foreign ideas.

Pragati.

Official position of the Jierre ruling party in Danor. Gods are the creation of men who were unable to comprehend the real structure of the world. Those who hold false beliefs, be they in gods, in disproven economic theories, or anything else, are a threat to progress.

Vekesh.

Guiding principle that helped the eladrin survive after the fall of Elfaivar. After a tragedy, the best revenge is to heal and grow stronger than you were before.

The Story Begins

An incredible tale is about to unfold, and you are at the center of it. The circumstances of your First Mission are detailed in Part 3 of this *Player's Guide*, and have been reprinted here for your convenience.

First Mission: Launch Party.

It is spring of the year 500 A.O.V. (After Our Victory).

Seven years after the end of the Fourth Yerasol War, the shipyards in Flint have completed the first Risuri warship powered solely by steam engine, not sail. Your monarch, King Aodhan, has come to Flint to witness the official launch of this mighty vessel. Wooden-hulled but with a heart and skin of iron, the Royal Naval Ship *Coaltongue* will act as a deterrent against future aggression from Risur's enemy across the sea, the nation of Danor.

The Royal Homeland Constabulary has been called upon to provide security, and you have spent the past several weeks working to make sure this event goes off without a hitch: canvassing the docks, performing background checks on the guest list, coordinating with the local police to set up a perimeter around the royal docks, and following various directives of your superiors. Now, as a warm breeze off the sea mingles the scents of elaborate floral decorations with the pervasive coal soot that always hovers over Flint, the king's carriage approaches, and you spy disgruntled faces amid the cheering crowd.

Start your mission in ZEITGEIST Adventure One, *Island at the Axis of the World*.