

The Suzerainty of Vo Darune

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Terms

Alhalsu - a predominantly military fortification or settlement with a strong implied control over the surrounding lands, which may often change hands between K'nyazy in the dynamic internal politics of Vo Darune. These are suffixed depending on the region.

Archpontiff - Head of the military arm of the Abbey of the Axioms (Alturi), public face of the religious clergy, gets involved in politics

Archprelate - Head of a Eunir, powerful but usually stays aloof, will give spiritual advice to their locals

Alturi - Elite religious warriors selected from or by the clergy. They are not mercenaries or levies; they serve a dual purpose of ministry and defending the Abbey. They are the biggest sword-fighting faction in the nation and spend a lot of time on their martial arts

Bit-Durani - a city that serves as the capital for the state. These are prefixed with Vo-

Ennir - a temple/house of worship

Eridu - a manor or villa within a city that belongs to a K'nyaz Estate. This does not change hands involuntarily, unlike Alhalsu, which can be reassigned by the monarchy

Esharra - the seat of a K'nyaz Estate or government. Is either an Alhalsu or an Eridu, depending on the nature of the family in question

Eunir - a Grand Temple, in one of the major cities.

Khedive - Head K'nyazy of Korodar

King/Queen - Nominal rulers of Vo Darune

K'nyazy - a noble, belongs to a *K'nyaz Estate*

Lector - technically the assistant to the Vizier, he holds the power to break ties if the Nomarchy is divided on an issue. He is also always the successor to the seat of Vizier. He does not always (but usually does) hold a seat as Nomarch

Liderc - the familiar of a Daruni

Nomarchy - Civilian government

Prelate - One of the Communion of the Nine, stays even more aloof than Archprelates

Shah-Pasha - Head K'nyazy of Seranastúr, means Emperor-General

Sippar - a city

Vizier - Head of the Nomarchy, over the past few centuries has been the Head K'nyazy of Pol-Erat, though technically a commoner

Veliahd - Crown Prince

The People of Vo Darune

Daruni

The Daruni people are born as very close to humans, though they are taller (150-225 cm vs humans at 120-150 cm), and have slightly different physiology. They are less fertile than humans, but have air sacs within their lungs, atrial arches in key locations in their body, sharper eyes, and larger ears. They have piercing green, yellow, or blue eyes, skin that comes in tones of gray rather than brown. Their blood is still red, but it does not show up through their skin as clearly as in humans. They have tawny blonde/brown hair that darkens as they age. Usually, though, they dye their hair a number of colors.

What makes Daruni unique is that at age 5, their bloodline presents as a tattoo of a bird across their back. Some time in approximately the next 5 years (the deeper the bloodline, the later), the tattoo leaves the body and the Daruni soul inhabits both the bird and the main body. When trying to describe the phenomenon to humans, the Daruni simply say the birds, known as *liderc* are like a second limb. They can see through their eyes, fly and act as if they themselves were the *liderc*. The stronger the bloodline, the stronger the *liderc* and the further it can travel from the main body. If a *liderc* dies, another one gets born from the Daruni within a year, though it is usually weaker than the original. If a Daruni dies, they can be reborn from a *liderc* over the course of 5 years. In either case, the lifespan of the Daruni is significantly decreased.

The Daruni may hold any office in Vo Darune.

Humans

Humans are a relatively new phenomenon in Vo Darune. There are not many of them. Most of them are freemen/middle class, though they can also be commoners. They cannot hold any governmental office, but neither are they suppressed or subjugated. However, they have no representation in the government. They constitute approximately 2% of the population.

Marags

The Marags, Morindim within Vo Darune, are another semihuman species. Their arms can expand into batlike wings, allowing them to fly (though they can't use their arms while flying) and their head/upper torso is that of a large bat.

The Marags are a suppressed people in that they by and large restricted to commoner status. That being said, there are few cases of overt racism towards them amongst the commoners. They are governed by a council formed by a governmental Mandate. It allows for formal requests to be made of the government of Vo Darune on the behalf of the Marag people. Many cities within Pol-Erat and Seranastúr were formerly inhabited primarily by Marags, and as a result, their population is relatively high on the countryside near those areas.

Demographics

Vo Darune has a population of approximately 10 million. The Daruni constitute approximately 80% of the population. Of these, approximately 7% are nobles/belong to a noble estate as soldiers or servants, 10% freemen/merchants/master crafters, 1% are clergy/associated with the clergy, and the remaining 62% are commoners. Humans constitute approximately 2% of the population. Marags constitute approximately 18% of the population.

The standard available military is approximately 600,000 trained men, though in war, the army swells with at most a further 1 million commoner conscripts. Conscription efforts, though, take significant effort and time. Furthermore, the 600,000 trained units are primarily stationed across the numerous Alhalsu through the land (and are under the direct control of the nobility), and as a result are also difficult to organize into a large fighting force quickly, if at all.

A little more than 4 million people live within Korodar, making it the most populous state. It also has the largest military out of all the three states. Approximately 3 million live within Pol-Erat, which has the highest middle-class population, and the highest Marag population. Seranastúr has only two and a half million people, but its military is stronger due to its social structure. Furthermore, within Axiom Avalona, there is a population of further 350,000 or so people.

Government of Vo Darune

The Royal Family

Consists of the Hanim-Pasha of Seranastúr (the eldest daughter of the *Shah-Pasha*) as Queen and the Grand Duke (the eldest son of the *Khedive*) of Korodar as King. The designated heir to House Hon'eth (not always the son of the King) will be next Grand Duke and King upon marriage, while the King becomes the next *Khedive*. Before this, the designated heir is known as the Veliahd, or Crown Prince. This is due to the technical victory of Korodar as foremost state of Vo Darune. The royal family controls the international relations and are the commanders of the standing armies. The King controls the Navy, and the Queen the Army. The monarchy also controls the assignment of nobles to Alhalsu. Because the King and Queen will be replaced and take positions within the nobility before their lifetimes end, they have never consolidated true military power under Royal central authority, deferring most of the true strength to the feudal nobility. The two monarchs are effectively puppets of the ruling families of Seranastúr and Korodar, even though the Royal Family are Suzerains of the two Vassals (and the Protectorate of Pol-Erat) on paper.

The K'nyaz Estates

The nobility. The primary families here are the Vassals of Korodar and Seranastúr. A variety of lesser families here as well. Of note are the *Pasha* families of Seranastúr, and the *Satrap* families of Korodar, as well as the *Viceroy* legacies of the Protectorate of Pol-Erat. They swear allegiance through a hierarchy that culminates in the Queen. This means that though Korodar controls the royal lineage, the Queen technically retains some measure of control of the nobility even after she gives up her title. The K'nyaz Estates retain most of their power through access to large labor populations; the vast numbers of indentured workers belong to the Estates. The Estates also have great sway over the Royal Family through bloodline, tradition, and real military power. However, their lack of financial and legal control makes them strongly curtailed by the Nomarchy.

The Nomarchy

The civilian government, headed by a vizier that is approved by the Royal Family. The Vizier is the chief advisor of the nation. Consists of seats determined by wealth donated to the government. In theory, a puppet of the K'nyaz Estates, since the K'nyaz Estates are those with the most wealth. Over time, the K'nyaz Estates have lost sway to the former Electors of Pol-Erat. The *Tjati* consists of a number of Nomarchs who vote on the laws of the land. The Vizier has exclusive control over the budget of the land; so the funds required to maintain seats in the *Tjati* can be used at the discretion of the Vizier. Each Nomarch has a small contingent of *yeniçeri* that serve as elite intelligence/combat forces. The Vizier, through multiple channels, is the true power of this nation. He effectively runs a cultural, financial, and espionage fuelled shadow government. By circling through the complex court system in place within Vo Darune, he is able

to rule the nation. For the past two centuries, the Vizier has belonged to the Protectorate of Pol-Erat, making the conquered state the true leader of the Suzerainty.

The Abbey of the Axioms

The religious center of Vo Darune, its Seat is located within Vo Daru. Though it is headed by one Archpontiff, the main power of the Abbey lies in the Communion of the Nine and the Archprelates of the three Eunir. The Communion consists of nine Prelates who control religious affairs for all Daruni. The Archpontiff is not a member of the Communion. Rather, he controls the religious army and the religious coffers.

The Plutocracy/Protectorate of Pol-Erat

The former governmental system was a plutocracy where the nobility were both warlords and inherited leaders of their principalities. Together they formed the Zifu Electorate, who selected from the various Princes from the Ran family the Chancellor that would rule the state.

When the protectorate was formed, the main family ruling Pol-Erat was stripped of noble title, and many of the former Electors also lost their nobility. A few minor Electors were named as Viceroys by the Seranastúrians and given the rule of the Protectorate, though they were still subservient. Seranastúr underestimated the solidarity of the Electorate of Pol-Erat, though, and former K'nyaz Estates of Pol-Erat reasserted their control through more covert means. The Pashas of Seranastúr (and later the Satraps of Korodar) took a willing back seat, and today the Protectorate is primarily run by the Nomarchy.

Most commoners are indentured workers within Pol-Erat. Debt can be inherited along familial lines, thus making most commoners indebted to the K'nyaz Estates. This debt was not forgiven with the formation of the Protectorate, which allowed the former K'nyazy to retain their influence. Citizens who are no longer in debt to a K'nyazy family are considered debtors of the government, though they may purchase a K'nyazy title. The debt system is highly regulated by the government, and wages are highly standardized. The most popular way to escape debt is through the Principality Exams. The Principality Exams allowed for apprenticeships or raises in wages. The K'nyazy children also took these exams in order to increase the stature of their own Estate.

The Stratocracy of Seranastúr

The Stratocracy of Seranastúr is led by a number of *Pasha*, or generals of the army. They are each assigned to oversee bureaus which handle day-to-day government. In this way, the military extends its control over the entirety of the stratocracy. Each *Pasha* selects his or her successor from a pool of qualified applicants, including the *Shah-Pasha*. In this way, the K'nyaz Estates of Seranastúr have maintained control over the military higher command, and the *Shah-Pasha* has

remained of the House of Mahmut. Today, the *Diwan* no longer makes laws, but is still an influential political force.

All people of Seranastúr are technically part of the military and the society itself is highly tied to the authority structure in place. As a result, the majority of commoners are low-ranking laborers who follow the orders of their superiors. Commoners who perform well in mandatory military service may receive great promotions that will make them influential figures and potential to be adopted into a K'nyaz Estate. The K'nyaz Estates grow in might as their progeny perform well in military duties.

The Kritarchy of Korodar

A Kritarchy literally means “rule of the judge.” The Satraps of the Kritarchy have exactly that power, they are the judges of the laws decided by formerly the Khedive (head of the Kritarchy, always from House Hon’eth) and currently the Nomarchy. Despite this being their technical role, though, their actual power extends far beyond. There is no set number of Satrap positions, rather there is, every 100 years, a Grand Trial, where the various K'nyaz Estates and their branches compete in trials of combat, arts, diplomacy, knowledge, and wealth. The ranking is thus determined and as a result the various Satrapies may expand, shrink, or even have their ruling family entirely replaced.

The commoners of the Kritarchy are either serfs or freemen. The serfs of Korodar are tied to land owned by their Satrap (they are considered a feature or resource of the land), while freemen are required to declare their affiliation to a K'nyaz Estate. The Estate to which they are affiliated is given the authority to exact legal oversight over their freemen and excise taxes, while the freemen can leverage a variety of privileges that a serf cannot (owning property among these privileges). Freemen must be personally freed by their K'nyazy, and their children are born as serfs unless a K'nyazy frees them as well. Freemen are not a common phenomenon, they are usually merchants, though some master craftsmen may be freemen as well. Many shopkeepers and craftsmen are also serfs, and may be tied to their shop or to a plot of land away from where they are located.

Mandate of Maragor

The government, through legislative mandate, has permitted the High Council of Maragor to make decisions for the Marag people, which it can then request the Nomarchy to make into law. Usually, these requests are honored. The High Council meets in Tol Marag. The Marags provide a limited number of archers as soldiers, known as Marag Daemons. These elite archers are often conscripted and not part of a standing army, though they are trained by their fellow Marags.

Marag commoners (theoretically) have loyalty to the various states of Vo Darune, not to the Mandate’s High Council.

Cities and Fiefs of Vo Darune

Axiom Avalona

Approximate population: 350,000

Vo Daru -

- The capital city, located on an island.
- Formerly the location of the Archpontiff's Esharra (the Abbey of the Axioms), it was converted to a secular capital after the Suzerainty of Vo Darune was formed.
- The Royal Court has its Esharra here.
- There are no cities under Vo Daru, but the Alhalsu under Vo Daru is suffixed Cthol.
- Approximate population: 250,000

Mishrak Cthol -

- The largest Alhalsu in the country, this Alhalsu functions as a massive religious fortress
- This is the current Esharra of the Archpontiff, though the Abbey itself remains within Vo Daru. The Alturi (military arm of the Abbey) is headquartered here
- A large portion of the clergy reside here
- The harbor is also located here, not within Vo Daru
- Approximate population: 100,000 stationed and controlled

Pol-Erat

Approximate total population: 3,000,000

Vo Erat -

- The capital of the Protectorate of Pol-Erat. A carefully planned, well engineered city, but also the smallest of the three great *Bit-Durani*. Rebuilt after it was burned in the Fall of Pol-Erat
- The *Bit-Durani* of the former Plutocracy of Pol-Erat, currently Protectorate of Pol-Erat.
- The Eunir here is dedicated to the Faction of the Stars.
- Famous for its roses, art, and architecture. A major center for trade and commerce
- The cities under Vo Erat are prefixed with Tol. The Alhalsu held by K'nyazy under Vo Erat are suffixed with Tor.
- Approximate population: 300,000

Tol Marag -

- The city in Pol-Erat with the highest concentration of Marags.
- The former capital of Morindor, this city is the Esharra of the High Council of Maragor. Its architecture is distinct compared to the modern Daruni city of Vo Erat.
- Approximate population: 210,000

Arot Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Marag
- Approximate population: 15,000 stationed, controls 220,000

Tol Seo -

- Approximate population: 170,000

Seini Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Seo
- Approximate population: 10,000 stationed, controls 170,000

Mardu Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Seo
- Approximate population: 13,000 stationed, controls 190,000

Tol Zelik -

- Approximate population: 190,000

Daala Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Zelik
- Approximate population: 18,000 stationed, controls 150,000

Xeng Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Zelik
- Approximate population: 12,000 stationed, controls 190,000

Tol Iridi -

- Approximate population: 100,000
- Port city of Pol-Erat, is still very small

Mandor Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Iridi
- Approximate population: 30,000 stationed, controls 260,000

Lila Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Iridi
- Approximate population: 25,000 stationed, controls 140,000

Ygolo Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Iridi.
- This Alhalsu has always been led by a woman, and is home to some of Vo Darune's best alchemists and poisonmasters. All of the men that reside permanently within Ygolo Tor

are eunuchs. It is common knowledge that the Alhalsu serves as essentially a massive brothel/drug haven.

- Approximate population: 9,000 stationed, controls 100,000

Tol Teiwa -

- Approximate population: 180,000

Htym Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Teiwa
- Approximate population: 21,000 stationed, controls 100,000

Umin Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Teiwa
- Approximate population: 18,000 stationed, controls 170,000

Goban Tor -

- Alhalsu under Tol Teiwa
- Approximate population: 16,000 stationed, controls 160,000

Seranastúr

Approximate total population: 2,500,000

Vo Sera -

- The middle city of the three *Bit-Durani*. A massive, impregnable fortress. Well-defensible and a center for industry.
- ‘The *Bit-Durani* of the Stratocracy of Seranastúr.
- The Eunir here is dedicated to the Faction of the Moon.
- Exports its treeant fruit alcohol and ironwood.
- The cities under Vo Sera are prefixed with Val. The Alhalsu held by K’nyazy under Vo Sera are suffixed with Yar.
- Approximate population: 335,000

Val Dorín -

- Approximate population: 170,000
- Port city of Seranastúr

Nében Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Dorín
- Approximate population: 30,000 stationed, controls 190,000

Alorn Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Dorín

- Approximate population: 33,000 stationed, controls 180,000

Val Zeth -

- Biggest city of Seranastúr in both land area and in population
- Approximate population: 355,000

Veni Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Zeth
- Approximate population: 28,000 stationed, controls 160,000

Eichen Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Zeth
- Approximate population: 20,000 stationed, controls 140,000

Val Flören -

- Crossroads city, main link to Korodar, the siege of Val Flören ended the civil wars
- Approximate population: 160,000

Veld Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Flören
- Approximate population: 30,000 stationed, controls 170,000

Val Nisca -

- A very beautiful city, famous for its woodwork furniture
- Approximate population: 190,000

Lansc Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Nisca
- Approximate population: 20,000 stationed, controls 170,000

Mira Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Nisca
- Approximate population: 30,000 stationed, controls 120,000

Sinnh Yar -

- Alhalsu under Val Nisca
- Approximate population: 32,000 stationed, controls 160,000

Korodar

Approximate total population: 4,150,000

Vo Korod - The largest city of Vo Darune. A massive, sprawling city. The *Bit-Durani* of the Kritarchy of Korodar. The Eunir here is dedicated to the Faction of the Sun. Famous for its metalcraft, jewelry and horses. It is also a great center of sport.

The cities under Vo Korod are prefixed with Rak. The Alhalsu held by K'nyazy under Vo Korod are suffixed with Mal.

Rak Insel - Formerly Val Insel, this city is primarily controlled by House Ver'kat. The city was taken by Korodar as part of the invasion of Seranastúr that followed the Fall of Pol-Erat. This is the only major city in Vo Darune to have access to grasslands for horses, and as a result most of the cavalry of Vo Darune hail from this city.

The Axioms of the Nine

The religion is universally followed by all the Daruni. The Abbey in Vo Daru acts as the center of organized religion, but the Grand Temples in each of the various states of Vo Darune act as the primary religious centers for the general populace. Specific practice varies from region to region and family to family depending on the primarily worshipped deity/faction and other cultural factors. The religious canon is universal, though, and has great cultural sway over even politics. The clergy under the Archpontiff are an active political force, and have influence over most layers of the political landscape. However, the Communion of the Nine and the Archprelates of the Eunir tend to avoid political struggles. As a result, their words carry a lot more religious and cultural weight. They have never interfered in current affairs, even during the fall of Pol-Erat.

Faction of the Sun

The Faction of the Sun is the inexorable, creative force of good in the world. They and their followers are hard and rigid in their outlook, often with black-or-white, conservative morals.

The Phoenix

- Its name is Fang-agn
- Leader of the faction, fuels the unlimited fires of creation that consume the existing world, sexless deity.
- Patron of organized religion.
- Opposed to the Void Roc
- Virtue: ambition.
- Element: Fire.
- Axiom: Creation comes from something else
- Heraldic totem of House Hon'eth (Eagle)

The Vermillion Bird

- Her name is Mu-tie
- Goddess who teaches humanity how to build tools and tame nature.

- Patron of craftsmen.
- Opposed to the Paper Crane
- Virtue: Integrity
- Element: Wood
- Axiom: The sum of two parts is greater than the whole
- Heraldic totem of House Issa (Peacock)

The Golden Crow

- His name is Sur-Araya
- Sun-god
- Depicted with three legs
- Opposed to the Auroral Luan
- Patron of war.
- Virtue: valor
- Element: Metal
- Axiom: Conflict is inevitable
- Heraldic totem of House Ver'kat (Swan)

Faction of the Moon

The Faction of the Moon is the force that curtails the Faction of the Sun to prevent destruction.

The Paper Crane

- Its name is O-rikishi
- A shapeshifter, sexless deity of earth and wildlife, leader of the faction.
- Counteracts the Vermillion Bird, for nature provides the materials from which we create.
- Patron of farmers.
- Virtue: Humility
- Element: Earth
- Axiom: Everything consists of the same things in different shapes
- Heraldic totem of House Mahmut (Crane)

The Auroral Luan

- His name is Ao-yunim
- Moon & sea-god.
- The Luan tempers the Golden Crow, lest eternal sun destroy the world
- Patron of peace, sailors and nobility.
- Virtue: Charity/sacrifice
- Element: Water
- Axiom: Everything has its opposite
- Heraldic totem of House Zeth (Flamingo)

The Void Roc

- Her name is Ti-kagal
- Lady of life and death.
- She keeps the Phoenix in check, for otherwise his fires of creation would destroy and reform the universe at too great a rate.
- Patron of childbirth, fertility, and the hunt.
- Virtue: Forgiveness.
- Element: Wind
- Axiom: Chaos is incessant
- Heraldic totem of House Zaganos (Vulture)

Faction of the Stars

The role of the Faction of the Stars is to act as support for the other two factions to ensure balance does not become disrupted. They tend to be the most flexible and open to change; their followers are similar.

The Polestar Owl

- Its name is An-Awatum
- The sexless deity who acts as the keeper of all knowledge. The Polestar Owl supports the Faction of the Stars. Leader of the faction.
- He maintains the Library of Awatum, which exists within an alternate dimension. It is here that the world of the Gods exists, and where, one day, the Raventwins will have the power to bring the Daruni.
- Patron of artists, scientists, and scholars.
- Virtue: Wisdom
- Element: Lightning
- Axiom: Knowledge is power
- Heraldic totem of House Ran (Owl)

The Feathered Dragon

- Her name is Ur-nuteb
- Female goddess of the weather, natural disasters, and wealth. Aids the Faction of the Sun.
- She is the patron goddess of merchants. She punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous. She is also the goddess of good fortune.
- Virtue: Justice.
- Element: Light
- Axiom: All actions have consequences
- Heraldic totem of House Mandor (Anhinga)

The Raventwins

- His original name can no longer be spoken in this world (according to mythos, the universe can never produce the sound of it any more), but their current names are Ka-Lunin and Ka-Nianin
- God whose soul is split into twin male ravens by the Golden Crow as they assisted the Luan in his combat with the Golden Crow. The Daruni were created when these two first attempted to rejoin after they were split. The twins were saved from death by The Polestar Owl, and to be able to live on they must read all the books of history in the library of the gods. One reads all that is past, and one reads all that will be. Once they have read all the books, they will come to the world to help the Daruni join the gods. The Raventwins are tasked with the role of assisting the Faction of the Moon, but their trapped status keeps them from their job. As a result, the Auroral Luan is unable to fully resist the Golden Crow and must flee from the sky at times. (phases of the moon)
- Patrons of commoners, destitute, cripples, homosexuals, twins, and of familiars. Gods of soothsayers and seers.
- They are the most widely worshipped, even by nobles, for they are the forefathers of the Daruni
- Virtue: Love (and Fate)
- Element: Space-time/shadow
- Axiom: The future cannot exist without the past
- Heraldic totem(s) of Tei-wa House (Raven)

A Brief History of Vo Darune

The Three States

The Daruni initially belonged to three tribes, which went on to develop into three flourishing states: the Plutocracy of Pol-Erat, the Stratocracy of Seranastúr, and the Kritarchy of Korodar, seated in Vo Erat, Vo Sera, and Vo Korod respectively. These three flourishing states careened between war and peace, between desolation and prosperity. Despite the ties of religion and species, the differences in culture and government proved to be irreconcilable.

The Morindim Wars

The centuries-old enemy of the Daruni is not humans, rather it is a species known as the Morindim. The Morindim of the Monarchy of Morindor had originally inhabited the lands of both Seranastúr and Pol-Erat alongside the, at the time, Tribes of Daruni. However, Daruni continued to increase their presence in the jungle as the lands of what is now Korodar could not sustain the Daruni. The relationship between the two species was at best terse and at worst outright hostile. The Morindim believe themselves the very apex of existence, and as a result, suppressed the Daruni ruthlessly. The Daruni, though, leveraged their relationship with domesticated beasts to gain an advantage over the Morindim, slowly pushing the ancient nation back. This series of wars lasted centuries, as the earth thirstily devoured the blood of Daruni and Morindim alike. In the end, though, the favored children of the universe prevailed. The Eratii

chose to expand on the other side of the channel, while Seranastúrians remained close to the homeland. Korodar chose to forgo closeness to Vo Daru, the planned home of the Abbey, in return for the already urbanized homelands. The Morindim of Seranastúr were relatively easily crushed, but the Morindim of Pol-Erat were much more difficult. Bitter wars raged in Pol-Erat for further centuries, and kept the contentious new states from truly conflicting. After all, if two states were in conflict, it fell to the third to protect all Daruni from eternal subjugation. This quickly became the role of the Abbey: ensuring a balance of power was maintained. Historians maintain the Morindim Wars to be the greatest irony of Daruni history. By unifying to fight off the Morindim, every tribe of Daruni began to foster ambitions of unifying all Vo Darune under one tribe. In their moment of greatest unity was born the seeds of their greatest discord.

The Fall of Pol-Erat

Five centuries prior to the modern day, the Chancellor of Pol-Erat (Ran Bohryun IV) discovered that Korodar planned to leverage a small rebel faction within Seranastúr to break the peace between the Stratocracy and Pol-Erat. The two states had just used the expansion of the Empire of the Holy Watcher into the lands of the Morindim to drive back the threat of the Monarchy the furthest it had ever been forced.

Upon receiving this information, he chose to send word to the *Shah-Pasha* (Emperor-General) in Vo Sera, and the Archpontiff of the Abbey. The Archpontiff did not respond, but the *Shah-Pasha* (Mahmut Tahazu I) did, and pounced upon this opportunity to forge a stronger alliance with Pol-Erat in order to launch an offensive to ambush the Koroduar. The Chancellor was wary of such an action, but the Zifu Electors were eager for blood. Every family was split internally, but eventually the majority of the nobility in Vo Erat decided they would perform a preemptive assault on Vo Korod.

What they found, though, was a trap. The Seranastúrians and the Koroduar had devised a clever plan to defeat the Eratii. Historical records show that this plan dated back well over 20 years prior, to lull the Chancellor of Vo Erat into complacency, then betray them. The forces sent out by Pol-Erat were crushed by Koroduar, while Seranastúr sustained an invasion of Pol-Erat herself. The nation quickly crumbled as the Abbey, too, betrayed Pol-Erat and leveraged its resources to sabotage any siege defenses. This unprecedented move by the Archpontiff radically changed the political nature of the Abbey for the coming centuries. The Abbey, too, now had ambitions, as it hoped to institute theocratic rule over parts of what is today Vo Darune. The secret deal they struck promised it further real control, as before this the Abbey only had influence.

Thus did Pol-Erat fall and become a Protectorate of Seranastúr. The nobility of Pol-Erat (the Electors) were stripped of their titles, though not their land and power. The land was then subjugated by Seranastúr. The resources expended by Vo Sera, though, made it very easy for the Koroduar invasion 5 years later to bring the now-larger state to its knees. Korodar conquered Val Insel and renamed it Rak Insel. The invasion paused here, though. The Khedive of Vo Korod

(Hon'eth Nedrian III) knew he could not effectively rule a unified Vo Darune due to the extensive size of the nation and the resources it would take to conquer all of Seranastúr. As a compromise, he proposed the Suzerainty, though without the current Nomarchy branch. It would be a joint monarchy, though Korodar would take over the role of dominance over Pol-Erat and retain Rak Insel. Vo Sera had no choice but to accept at the Treaty of Val Flören.

The Silent Rebellion

Approximately fifty years after the formation of the Suzerainty, the Abbey, promised a theocracy in Pol-Erat by the Koroduar after they crushed Vo Sera, realized it was never going to happen. They felt betrayed, and exhorted the fallen Electorate of Pol-Erat to organize a rebellion. The Eratii refused, and instead blackmailed the Abbey into assisting them, as they had evidence of the Abbey's duplicitous nature. They organized a large number of disaffected K'nyazy, commoners, and clergy. Together, they pressured the King and the Queen to create a civilian government to dictate non-military affairs. The King and Queen refused at first, leading to high tensions for the following 50 years. However, the schemes went deeper than mere pressure. As a "concession," they obtained their true goal: the Abbey would retain exclusive education of the Veliahd (the heir apparent to the throne). The Veliahd was heavily indoctrinated by the Abbey, and when he ascended the throne, he had enough sway to force through the civilian government. The Nomarchy was designed around wealth, primarily to ensure it would remain a puppet for the K'nyaz Estates. However, the Eratii, who had been organizing their wealth in the form of trade for the past century, were able to slowly but surely exert control over the *Tjati*. The first Eratii Vizier, nearly 200 years before modern day, was able to consolidate the post and highly strengthen the importance of the Royal Court to the nation, bringing Vo Darune into the modern world as a strong mercantile and cultural power while the military traditions waned along with the waning of K'nyazy influence.

The K'nyazy Families

Estates of Pol-Erat

House Ran

- Their bloodline gives them *liderc* which are owls.
- Former K'nyazy, no branch family of House Ran can hold a noble title
- Viziers, formerly Chancellors, come from this house
- Dominant family of Pol-Erat
- Merchants and spies by trade
- Their Esharra is in Tol Zelik
- Controls (by puppet through Tei-wa and Mandor) Arot Tor, Xeng Tor, Daala Tor, Seni Tor

House Tei-wa

- Their *liderc* is the Raven

- Their Esharra is in Tol Teiwa
- Fallen K'nyazy. A branch family holds the noble title, the main bloodline is forbidden from inheriting it, though it still retains its hegemony within the House
- Closest allies of the Ran family
- Engineers by trade
- Controls Goban Tor, Htym Tor, Umin Tor
- As the weakest of the three major K'nyaz Estates of Pol-Erat, chosen by Seranastúr to be the Viceroys. Thus, on paper, they are the most powerful K'nyazy of Pol-Erat

House Mandor

- Their *liderc* is the anhinga
- Fallen K'nyazy. A branch family holds the noble title, the main bloodline is forbidden from inheriting it, though it still retains its hegemony within the House
- Military arm of former Pol-Erat
- Mercenaries by trade
- Controls Lila Tor, Mandor Tor, Mardu Tor, Ygolo Tor
- Second most powerful Estate, gets along well with Tei-wa and Ran

Estates of Seranastúr

House Mahmut

- Their *liderc* is the crane
- *Shah-Pasha* and Queens come from this house
- Their Esharra is in Vo Sera, the only House to hold Esharra in a Bit-Durani
- Master archers (compared to the rest of Vo Darune)
- Controls Nében Yar, Alorn Yar, Eichen Yar

House Zeth

- Their *liderc* is the flamingo
- Their Esharra is in Val Zeth
- They are experts in industry, such as weaving, crafting, etc.
- House Zeth is known to be fond of the finer parts of life. They are well-liked by everyone, and thus their gatherings tend to be major social, political, and cultural events where the most elite K'nyazy will vie for supremacy. Despite the expense, this also allows House Zeth a surprising amount of influence considering their comparatively weak military tradition within a Stratocracy
- Controls Veni Yar, Lansc Yar

House Zaganos

- Their *liderc* is the vulture
- Their Esharra is in Sinnh Yar
- Everyone knows that House Mahmut is the strongest in Seranastúr, but that House Zaganos, fanatically loyal to the Mahmut family, is the most dangerous

- First to tame Quetzals, their Quetzalcorps are extraordinary
- Controls Sinnh Yar, Mira Yar, Veld Yar

Estates of Korodar

House Hon'eth

- Their bloodline *liderc* is the eagle
- Khedives and Kings come from this house
- A ruthless and powerful family, the most powerful in Vo Darune.
- Their main flaw is their unbridled arrogance
- Their Esharra is in Hon'eth Mal
- House Hon'eth is home to the strongest of the Inaknights, as well as holds the biggest standing military force in the nation
- Controls Hon'eth Mal, Sarac Mal, Goska Mal, Gerr Mal

House Issa

- Their bloodline *liderc* is the peacock
- They are unique in that they are House Issa, but their last names are all Issus
- Their Esharra is in Rak Sthiss
- They are renowned for being a more lazy, sluggish house, much to the frustration of the Hon'eth. Once roused, though, they are rumored to be unstoppable. The only time that house Issa has gone to war in recorded history was against the Morindim.
- House Issa are expert potters and farmers
- Controls Ny-iss Mal, Genet Mal, Ropol Mal, Issth Mal

House Ver'kat

- Their bloodline *liderc* is the swan
- Their Esharra is in Verkat Mal
- Famous for very beautiful women
- House Ver'kat is one of the few Houses that utilizes cavalry, for they also control Rak Insel.
- Controls Verkat Mal, Azell Mal

Important Figures

(Vizier /u/no_eight)

- His *liderc* is a barn owl
- Hates Marags with a passion unusual even for a house member. Though he never revealed the reason, many assume he may have some more personal
- There are rumors that his bloodline was made impure by the affair of an ancestor
- He is unusually interested in the conflict with the Monarchy and with Lila Tor, often to the point of distraction from other priorities

- Beyond suppression of the Morindim, he has a general distaste for armed conflict, believing one can resolve disputes with greater efficacy through diplomatic channels or subterfuge
- However, he will not hesitate to authorize military action if he deems it necessary (though he may find another to pawn the details off to)
- Strong of will and stronger of personality, his conservative viewpoints can frequently be abrasive
- When speaking with foreigners or members of the K'nyazy, he can appear as a completely different person, taking on a false yet highly believable air of respect and dignity. This leads those that know him well to call him two-faced
- He considers his foremost objective to advance the unity of the state, though not necessarily around the Royal Family
- He has no ambitions for greater lands, instead holding the firm position that Vo Darune should strengthen what they have
- He secretly envies those with trained or bonded animals, leading him to become even more standoffish when in the presence of animal-using K'nyazy or soldiers
- He hates new nonmonogamy traditions and will speak out against them, even when the time is not appropriate
- He is incredibly wise, though only moderately well read. He attempts to cover the gaps in his knowledge with evasion or strong ad hominem and appeals to emotion
- He has no mind for tactics, and has been known to lose those battles that he insisted on commanding himself
- Though he responds aggressively to dissent or disagreement, he is very stable under pressure, and unlikely to crack in adverse situations
- However, his resolve may become strengthened to the point of recklessness
- There are little in this life he considers himself close to, making him remarkably independent and unbiased, but similarly lacking in compassion
- He has shown no romantic intentions toward any, instead choosing to bury himself in politics and work from the earliest age he was able
- Overall, his negative traits do not make him an unpleasant person (they only flare up in given situations), but his focus on work and his straight-to-the-point nature make him largely friendless
- He considers most recreation to be a frivolous use of time, unless it hones the mind, or gives an opportunity to advance one's position or connections (he is a frequent host and an even more frequent attendee of parties)
- He makes a point of leaving his hair undyed, revealing its 'natural' coloration of tawny brown.

Lector (Vizier's heir, /u/dennysaurus539) - Ran Chaldor (Rahn KAL-dohr)

- Heir to the family's main bloodline
- His mother was of House Tei-wa, his father of the main bloodline, both dead
- Treats the current Vizier as an uncle (-zhan-rey)

- Victim to an assassination attempt when very young since his tattoo indicated a very deep Ranite bloodline; the attempt left him blind, so he sees through his *liderc*
- Thus, even though his *liderc* is strong/can travel far, he keeps it near him for sight
- Slightly insane (definite Machiavellian personality disorder), highly vindictive (can be baited), unpredictable yet very clever, somewhat ADHD, goes through cycles of focus
- His greatest talent is in gauging people's intentions. He is able to see through subterfuge very easily (unless you've made him angry or aroused, and even then it isn't a sure bet)
- He is passionate for martial training, which is odd for his family. He has basic skills in calligraphy, dance and sculpture, like others from his family. He learned the finer arts from a young age, but he has not seemed particularly keen on showcasing his talents.
- For some reason, he has not pursued those who took his sight....is he biding his time?
- It was believed to be the Morindim who attempted to kill him, but he knows it was really House Hon'eth and House Mahmut working together. He has not indicated as such, though, leaving both families wondering as to whether or not their framing of the Morindim worked or not.
- Openly sleeps with both men and women, known to be somewhat of a casanova (much to the distress of House Ran, who wants a main bloodline successor) This makes him both vulnerable to seduction approaches but also a master of using them to his own gain. Entangling with him is a risk many feel worth taking.
- He has resisted betrothal as of yet. He uses this as an effective bargaining chip, for ties to the vizier are becoming ever more important.
- Very protective of his nine-tailed *kitsune* which served as a guide for him when he was blind and without a *liderc*.
- Paler and taller than normal (250 cm), fairly lanky with long hair he dyes white and red
- His face is conventionally handsome, but is marred by a number of scars across his eyes where the assassins attempted to slice into his head. He covers the scars with a blindfold. He rarely reveals these scars unless he wants to shock and/or show vulnerability (often a calculated move)
- His *liderc* is a Snowy Owl
- Holds affection for his uncle, the vizier, though they have conflicting personalities. When asked about it, he once remarked that "Multiple roads can lead to the same place."
- He tends to be very reserved in public about his opinions on the direction of the nation
- Very religious, but also quiet about it. He found great solace in religion after his maiming, so it is a very sensitive subject for him. This means, though, that he will follow religion as a matter of conscience and not as a matter of convenience. His religious fervor is the sole source of "morals" in his twisted mind. He's known to be an avid devotee of the Raventwins, and has ties to the cults of the Raventwins throughout all of Vo Darune
- Fascinated by diplomacy and geopolitics, he is known to entertain diplomats of various nations, often under his uncle's nose (inviting them when he knows his uncle plans to). It's both a way of flaunting his future influence and a way of exposing himself to interesting ideas. He seems especially interested in foreign military affairs, but this could be a front for other interests.
- Largely ignores his role as a Nomarch, another point of contention with his uncle

- He is known to be an almost sadistic drillmaster to his personal corps, but they tend to like him as he participates in training with them. “Like” is a relative term, though, and being drafted into his unit, is a general fear of the *yeniçeris* at large. The loyalty he’s built (or some may say conditioned) into them is deep and multilayered, perhaps because of his obsessive and borderline insane nature. Some of them he controls through having slept with them, some of them he controls through an intimate knowledge of their lives, others through money, others through pure loyalty, others through fear, and others through admiration. He makes sure, though, to know each and every one very well and have full control over them.
- Something of an ego. Not a narcissist by any means, but he knows his assets and doesn’t mind flaunting them. He does want a private island

King (House Hon’eth)

Queen (Married into House Hon’eth, from House Mahmut)

Archpontiff

Khedive (House Hon’eth)

Shah-Pasha (House Mahmut)

Veliahd (House Hon’eth)

- Has a twin sister

Queen Dowager (Married into House Hon’eth, from House Mahmut)

Honorifics Table

<i>Honorific</i>	<i>Application</i>
-Yin	Standard neutral. Use when unsure of comparative stature, but not intending to show respect. Also used to demonstrate equal standing or nominal respect
-Yan	Shows respect in a very basic form. Does not always indicate that the person you are speaking to is of higher stature, but can be used as such.
-Finn	Applies to a teacher, respectful.
-Bey	Refers to a woman. Highlights their role as

	female. Can be used to identify mother, sister, aunt, etc. if used with other honorifics
-Rey	Refers to a man. Highlights their role as male. Can be used to identify father, brother, uncle, etc. if used with other honorifics
-Dal	Refers to a clergy member, highlights their role as clergy, respectful
-K'nyaz	Refers to a noble, highlights their role as nobility, respectful
-Ked	Diminutive. Used when referring to juniors or students
-Wei	Used when referring to juniors of higher station or showing them great respect
-Vor	Used to show the highest of respect. Rarely used, for it indicates that you view this person as a paragon. Also used when referring to royalty, or on occasion the Vizier, Khedive, Viceroy, or Shah-Pasha (also formerly Chancellor)
-Kal	Honorific used to refer to a deity, <i>never</i> used on a mortal, even in sarcasm. This honorific is most often seen in sermons, etc.
-Gar	Used to refer to a direct superior, often seen in the military or amongst nobles where one is the vassal of the other
-Von	Used to refer to a direct inferior or a subject
-Shan	Used to refer to a parent or someone treated as though they are a surrogate parent. This is a very charged and important honorific
-Zhan	Used to refer to an elder in the family of the direct previous generation (aunt, uncle, etc.)
-Min	Used to refer to a child, or as a term of endearment
-Nei	Used to refer to an elder sibling/more respected sibling

-Koh	Used to refer to a younger sibling/diminutive sibling
-o-	A modifier put between the name and the honorific to specifically indicate a formal setting
-y-	A modifier put between the name and the honorific to specifically indicate a casual setting. Can be hard for the untrained ear to distinguish this from the -i- honorific modifier
-i-	A modifier that is used as a sort of +1, for example -i-shan means grandparent, -i-i-shan means great-grandparent, etc. Is never used in conjunction with -y- or -o-.
-Guai	An honorific that is used only as a highly derogatory or insulting term, usually to those who wouldn't know better (or have no social ability to protest). Originated as a term for the Morindim back when they were first encountered by the Daruni. Normal insults simply downgrade the appropriate level of formality.

Names follow the scheme: Last Name, First Name, Honorific(s). When chaining honorifics, the longer honorific comes first. If same length, the more status/role-based comes before the respect-based.

Honorifics are used in speech only, never in writing unless dictating speech.

Examples: Hon'eth Nedrian-o-k'nyaz-vor indicates you are referring to Hon'eth Nedrian as a noble with the highest respect in a formal setting. Ran Chaldor-y-wei-min indicates you are referring to Ran Chaldor as a child of higher status, but in an informal and endearing fashion. The -y- is not strictly necessary, but is there due to the seemingly conflicting nature of -wei and -min in order to show that there is no disrespect intended because it is in a casual setting. When referring to him as a stranger of equal stature, someone may simply call him Ran Chaldor-yin.

Flora and Fauna

Inanna - Griffins; creatures with the head and wings of an eagle (and with front legs mirroring the legs of an eagle), but the body and back legs of a lion. These solitary predators live almost entirely in Korodar, and can be trained through one-on-one bonding. Inanna cannot be

domesticated, and a bonded inanna cannot be given to another master, making them a very elite and prestigious mount.

Tiamat - lion-headed bat with dart-throwing tail, like a manticore. These creatures are native to the southern peninsula, and are considered incredibly dangerous. Some Daruni nobles hunt them for sport.

Surfrider - giant flying whale-like creature, gains nutrition from giant photosynthetic algal sacs that cause it to glow at night. It flies in the air at a slow pace. Very docile and good transport for Daruni. Not very good for war. Come in various sizes, from 30m to 5m in length.

Woodless Larva - eats stone and produces abnormally strong silk

Kitsune - massive multitailed foxes, a favored pet of Eratii K'nyazy. They are capable of extremely limited telepathic links through small swamp-light-eque wisps of light known as link-lights. They can use these offensively to induce psychedelic visions in order to incapacitate prey lured to the lights. The more tails a kitsune has, the more link-lights it can create (one for every tail, up to nine tails). If a kitsune gains six tails, its bark becomes capable of creating a short link with however hears it, though this psychic roar cannot be used too frequently lest the kitsune permanently damage its own psyche. This became a very effective weapon in the Morindim wars. If a kitsune gains nine tails, it becomes capable of stronger psychic links, becomes far more intelligent, and becomes capable of rudimentary telekinetic pulses of wind. Daruni usually communicate with the kitsune by having its link-light connect it to a *liderc*. The kitsune are also capable of unnaturally large leaps, though they use this semi-floating jump very rarely. They are a favored mount of Eratii nobility, albeit very rare.

Xuanwu - giant turtlesnakes, a danger to ships. This is why surfrider travel is often vastly preferred.

Ironwood Tree - jungle tree with iron fibers within its wood, fairly common. It burns purple

Rukh - When domesticated, they are known as the *Rokh*, Rukhs are giant birds of prey, most often observed to be Osprey. The Rukh pose a low threat to civilized peoples, but can pose a significantly higher threat to untended livestock. Rokhriders are a small, elite military unit that rides smaller, more docile *Rokh*, more similar to massive peregrine falcons that have been domesticated over generations. The Rukh are generally considered harbingers of good fortune and are respected universally. The church has for centuries promised to recompense any livestock stolen by Rukh. In this case, for once, the Daruni do not show their duplicitous nature; no Daruni would dare lie about their livestock being stolen by Rukh (the idea wouldn't even cross their minds).

Quetzals - Longevide monsters that resemble a serpentine dragon covered in feathers, often with 3 or more stark colors (similar to the coloration of the avian Quetzal, which shares the same

name). The feathers are not made of usual bird plumage, rather they are much more firm and sharp; often used by the Quetzal when trying to scratch or cut their way through things. Quetzals have a distinctive frill around their neck, which expands when they are threatened or attracting mates. When Quetzal are carved, this frill is often depicted at its fullest extent. Quetzal use their control over air and wind to move through the air as a moccasin does through water, which allows them to move at alarming speeds even through narrow corridors or dense jungle. Quetzals, though they have a distaste for technology-using species, will often take up residence in abandoned structures (especially those made of stone). The presence of Quetzals makes exploring or reclaiming ruins even harder than it might otherwise be, due to the high speed and strength of an enraged Quetzal. Though wild Quetzals often react violently to humanoids, several genealogies of tamed Quetzals are maintained as pets for the nobles of Seranastúr. They are a favored companion used for hunting, or, more rarely, in war as part of an elite corps similar to Roman war dog units. Quetzals are extremely toxic, and capable of spreading a variety of poisons. These include a virulent, gas-like poison, a paralyzing agent, and a physically corrosive toxin. Switching between poisons takes Quetzals time, and you can tell which type of poison the Quetzal has filled its poison sacs with by the color of their eyes: green, blue, or red. Also, they are known to, when in large numbers (a rare occurrence outside of domesticated Quetzals) be capable of creating whirlwinds and other minor windstorms. These small windstorms are no larger than ten meters in radius or height, but can be created and propelled forwards by the Quetzals. This windstorm was useful as a counter to Morindim archery in the Morindim wars. Wild Quetzals use this against Tiamat.

Jungle Otters - Industrious and large water loving mustelids. Jungle Otters feed almost exclusively on fish and shellfish. Unlike typical otters, the industrious jungle otter is known to dam tributaries feeding into the mangroves of the area. Some otter dams are large enough to create permanent--if small--lakes and ponds. Jungle Otters are not particularly prized for their meat or as pets, but their pelts can fetch a moderate price from nobles.

Treeants - Ironwood trees taken over by very dangerous ants that turns the tree into a sentient predator and makes it produce highly nutritious fruit. Both Squibbons and Quetzals can safely take fruit from Treeants, with the latter deliberately enraging the tree first.

Gragos - large airsac on its head that it can use to make loud noises, like a megasquid (<http://speculativeevolution.wikia.com/wiki/Megasquid>), has tusks on its tentacles, the trees only go up to its knees, 150 m (500 ft) high & 50m radius, capable of 360-degree aura detection with a 100 m radius out. They tend to detect and avoid settlements. They move very slowly.

Squibbon - friendly bonobo-like behavior, favorite pets, agile terasquids, small. Good at getting fruits off of treeants. These are often the pets of commoners in Seranastúr and Pol-Erat, though some nobles will keep them as well.

Ninagal - These birds live exclusively underwater. They have the appearance of red-tailed hawks. Gill-like filters have been found in their lungs and air sacs. Similar to porpoises, Ninagal

have been known to approach ships, though it is often believed that they are simply following a vessel to see if it is a fishing ship.

Demonsquitos - Large evil bloodsucking insects that pose a serious threat to most mammals, though the Morindim consider them a delicacy. Demonsquitos are most common in the furthest south reaches of Pol-Erat, but they exist as far north as Val Nisca.

Hrulgin - clawed, carnivorous horses from the grasslands to the East. Some blame the presence of these deceptive beasts for the low population of the otherwise lush grasslands on the east coast. Notable for being the crest of Rak Insel. There have been numerous attempts to tame these creatures, especially among the younger generation. They have unequivocally failed.

Biomes and Geography

Vo Darune is a little less than 1.4 million square kilometers in land area.

There are four predominant geographies within Vo Darune, though one of them alone (Rainforest) makes up an assumed 70% of Vo Darune's territory. Despite this, even that area is not fully homogenous, leading to a series of observable sub-habitats within Vo Darune's borders.

Anu Plains - This largely rainless region, along with the mountains, is considered to be the ancestral homeland of the Daruni. Located in modern-day Korodar, this area is dominated by dry grassy flats and gentle rocky hills. The main respite that keeps the otherwise dry area from becoming like the sandy deserts to the west is the series of rivers that flow from the mountains in central Korodar. These rivers, though rare, have very high volume, creating the grassy Marduk-Ninmah river valleys with enough water to support highly productive agriculture. Due to the unforested nature of the Plains, this actually makes these river valleys the most agriculturally productive part of Vo Darune, which is ironic given low rainfall. Sheep and pigs are very important livestock in this area, and wheat is the most predominantly planted crop due to its fondness for the climate and low maintenance.

Asharak Mountains - Located in central Korodar there is a small yet steep copse of mountains. Though they make up a significant chunk of Korodar land, these mountains are largely uninhabited by Daruni. Many rivers flow both east and west from these mountains, making them the source of most water in the North Peninsula. These mountains are notable for being the native home of the Inanna and Rukh (wild mountain Rokhs).

Gorim Grasslands - Though there are no major rivers in the area, the proliferation of small streams running from the Mountains makes this strip of land along the east coast very lush and green. Despite the outwardly appealing nature of this area, only a tiny bit is owned by Korodar (and this is most likely only held by Korodar due to the fact that the land was won in a war with Seranastúr, rather than out of a desire to utilize the area for agriculture). These grasslands are home to both horses and hrulgin, the latter of which is so violent and deadly that Daruni have

little desire to brave this area. Only one major city, Rak Insel, formerly Val Insel, is located in the Grassland.

Sahaswara Rainforest - Also known as the jungle, this is a largely impenetrable forest of tall trees, murky conditions, and prolific plant life. Much of central Korodar and Seranastúr is unoccupied land due to the sheer density of this forest. The majority of terrestrial Vo Darunian biodiversity can be observed in this area, including the Gragos, Sqibbon, Jungle Otter, Treeant, and Quetzal. Though these species are observed elsewhere, they have a high density in Seranastúr specifically. Due to the sheer density of the rainforest in the center of the peninsula, some settlements have to be accessed by Surfrider, due to the otherwise high difficulty of maintaining a road. This makes Surfrider perhaps the most valuable animal in the region, despite its low speed and battle utility. Surfrider themselves appear to naturally congregate around a series of large freshwater lakes in the vicinity of Val Nisca and Val Flören.

The Mangroves - This coastal habitat is found in stretches along the coast of both peninsulae. Characterized by shallow brackish water, unstable bottom, and submerged-root deciduous trees, this area has plentiful fruit, fish, crustaceans, bats, and bird life, but is almost useless to fisherman due to its low navigability. These mangroves were historically prized by the Morindim for the fruit and bug life within, but offer no yield high enough to warrant their use agriculturally. Currently these biomes remain largely untouched save for individual fisherman.

Bamboo Rainforest - more of a sub-biome, these forests are characterized by their lower density of vegetation, and their unique monoculture of bamboo trees. These forests are easier to navigate than the thicker tropical rainforests, and make up much of northern Pol-Erat. Due to the low fruit found in these areas, there is notably less fauna in this sub-biome.

Qing Wu Forest and Tie Li Mù Rainforest - Though otherwise similar to the Seranastúrian Rainforest, the Eratii Rainforest is notable for being both much larger and much sparser. These rainforests were the ancestral homeland of the Morindim (though they exist as far north as Genet Mal). The Eratian Rainforest contains many lost ruins, due to its sparser canopy allowing much thicker floor-level growth. This jungle is fairly similar to that in Seranastúr as far as animal life goes, but Eratii jungle contains more Demonsquitos, and is the only part of Vo Darune to contain Kitsune. The population of Gragos is also far higher here, compared to that within Seranastúr.

Lokh Erat - the namesake of Pol-Erat, this is a massive freshwater lake near the north of modern Pol-Erat. No major tributaries run from this lake to the ocean, making it more of an inland freshwater sea. Varying densities of freshwater marsh ring the lake, including the largest marsh around the site of Vo Erat. This is the largest lake in the known world, making it somewhat of a treasure to the Eratii. Its coastline is used for rice farming, making this one site responsible for feeding over half of Pol-Erat. Though rice is the predominant crop around the lake, a variety of fruits and vegetables are also cultivated using the Floating Garden technique of the Morindim, which makes use of marshy areas to alleviate the need for irrigation.

Axiom Avalona - This island, home to the national capital of Vo Daru, is both a spiritually significant site and a geographical anomaly. A steep mountain rises almost directly from the water, with some rock lowlands to its south where Mishrak Cthol is located. The city of Vo Daru is built directly on the mountain itself, which has a secluded lake near the peak considered to be a very holy site. At the base of the mountain is thick rainforest that transitions into mangroves, making the island largely useless for agriculture. Fishing and imports keep the capital ironically dependent on outside aid, though the fruit-yielding trees of the island could supply the capital for several seasons.

Cultural Features

Language

The Daruni speak a more archaic form of the common tongue. It would not be uncommon to see even a Daruni peasant speaking with thee's and thou's.

The use of honorifics is incredibly ingrained in normal speech, even down to the commoners. All Daruni have their pride, and misusing honorifics is a sure-fire way to get on the bad side of even humble and understanding Daruni.

The local Marags and the Morindim speak in a Scot-Irish-style brogue. Peasants may also speak in this fashion, especially those with prolonged contact with Marags/Morindim.

The accents vary across Vo Darune, from harsh and guttural in Korodar to soft and lilting in Pol-Erat. The "standard" accent is said to be in Vo Sera.

Mating and Bloodlines

Families will often nurture one "main bloodline," along with multiple "branch bloodlines" with differing levels of priority. The main bloodline will often contain the deepest connection to the ancestral *liderc* of a family, even amongst commoners. The *liderc* of a Daruni is most often the *liderc* of the parent with the deepest bloodline, though there is some random chance that it may be a non-dominant result or be a mutant *liderc* that is entirely different. The child of a noble with a shallow bloodline and a commoner with a deep bloodline will often have a commoner's *liderc*. As a result, for the K'nyaz Estates, maintaining the purity of the main bloodline is very important. They will occasionally make use of marriage within the clan to maintain purity, but they will often also use marriages as diplomatic tools. In this fashion, branch children or weaker bloodlines are often valuable to the families as well and are not disregarded. After all, the House they marry into will also want to preserve its bloodline and will not want the bloodline of the one marrying into the House to override and result in a child bearing a *liderc* not of the House. This is why the tattoo of the child before they present their *liderc* is crucial.

Liderc bloodlines also follow a hierarchy. Certain birds, often birds of prey, are considered “better” bloodlines, but are less common.

After the rapid expansion of the Daruni into formerly Morindim lands, their low fertility rates meant that standard monogamy was not adequate for sufficient population growth. As a result, the Daruni within these lands adapted a practice from the Morindim: nonmonogamy. The Morindim practiced polygamy due to uneven gender ratios, while the Daruni practiced polyamory due to their more even gender ratios. There was a strict hierarchy to partners, though, with every partner expected to mutually have another “primary” partner. This allowed for the purity of bloodline to be maintained while also permitting the spread of Daruni in an unprecedented population boom. Today, only within the Abbey, the more conservative parts of Korodar, and certain noble families is nonmonogamy frowned upon. The view on homosexuality mirrors views on nonmonogamy. Homosexual seduction is a favored form of espionage amongst Eratii, especially. Pederastic relationships are common in Seranastúr, while Pol-Erat follows a more fluid notion of sexuality. That being said, there is still persecution of those who are exclusive homosexuals, especially amongst commoners and against women. As a result, many homosexuals will take another of the same gender as their “primary” but still maintain a sexual relationship with one of the opposite sex for reproduction purposes. This is heavily frowned upon amongst the nobility, who seek to preserve their bloodlines. In the case of children, the “primary” couple with the more dominant bloodline will claim the child as their own. Out-of-wedlock children are frowned upon heavily, though conception out-of-wedlock is acceptable as long as partners make a lifebond.

Arts

The primary artistic traditions vary from area to area. Within Korodar, music, literature and poetry are the primary arts. Seranastúr has expert painters, jewellers and weavers, while Pol-Erat favors calligraphy, sculpture, and dance.

Daruni music is often complemented by birdsong. Popular stringed instruments include the zither, while a variety of percussion, wind, and other instruments are also used. Poetry and song are highly regarded, with composers often using convoluted cross-talk between the instrument and the bird.

Dress

Daruni dress in garments made of silk, linen, wool, or hemp. The typical dress includes a form-fitting light set of garments, along with a much looser robe that forms the main garment. Usually, even the most revealing of outfits will incorporate this two-layer philosophy, even if the second layer is reduced to nothing more than a scarf or sash. This style is universal from commoner to noble, though the materials vary. Nobles will usually use a silk first layer and a linen second layer. Commoners will use hemp for the first layer, and wool for the second. The main distinction, though, lies in the dyes used; nobles tend to be able to afford more extravagant

dyes. Commoners, due to their heavy workload and lack of armor in war, will often wear rougher, more covering clothing than nobles so as to protect them.

Cultural Attitudes

The Daruni people are not particularly xenophobic. They are more than happy to entertain visitors or engage in diplomacy. The only barrier is the complex societal system that makes interacting with the Daruni a formidable task only suited for the most expert of diplomats. There is a vague sense of racism against the Marags, but that is less superiority and more antagonism due to historical feuds.

Religion

Religion is omnipresent in Daruni life, but not extremely active for the most part. All Daruni, without exception, follow the Axioms of the Nine. The stories within are intrinsic to the creation of their species, and are inherent within their ancestral memories. Oftentimes rituals will be highly specific to a given region as Daruni wish for luck or guidance. Rituals of the Axioms often involve altars (which can be symbolic instead of with real statues), incense, and always involve fire, since the Phoenix, god of fire, is also god of religion.

The most common “organized religion” is linked through the various temples established throughout the country, where the people worship and the Abbey stations at least one formal priest as a connection to the central religious authority. Most of the construction, maintenance, and religious service at each temple, though, is performed by a branch of the various cults throughout the country. The central priest only guides the flock and speaks words of wisdom, the true control at the local level lies in the hands of the cults.

The cults provide an interesting internal dynamic within the religion itself. They are very attuned to the populace, but their connections to the central Abbey waxes and wanes. At times, cult members have taken places in the Communion, but often the numerous cults for each god, faction, or set of god prevents them from gaining dominance. This works well for the Abbey, as they and the Archpontiff can struggle over central power while the main Communion and Archprelates focuses on religious doctrine.

The religion of the Daruni is a true religion, and the Archprelates, Archpontiff, and Communion of the Nine can communicate with the gods. The Gods themselves will give blessings and speak to the Prelates and Archprelates, but will never command the Daruni into any form of action. Rather, the purpose of the gods is far more concerned with moral and scientific development. Oftentimes, the Gods will suggest things to the people of Vo Darune, but allow them to discover how it is to be done. Examples include the first Rokhridders, the first Inaknights, Quetzalcorps, Kitsunekin, how to craft ironwood, etc. The most recent “judgment” revealed by the Gods came 30 years prior to the modern day. The Raventwins revealed to the clergy that having a “primary” partner of the same sex was not necessarily to be forbidden. Do note that this did not suggest it

should be permitted either, but it indicates that a ban did not have a religious standing. As a result, now some will take partners of the same sex as their “primary” partner, whereas before they would treat them as primary partners but take an opposite-sex partner as the legal primary. Attitudes take time to change, though, and as a result, significant prejudice against homosexuals still exists, especially because it was institutionalized for so long.

The Marags follow a different religion, though this religion is not officially recognized nor is its worship sanctioned. It is not, though, oppressed either, since the Axioms of the Nine are solely concerned with the Daruni.

Currency

To be determined. Debt is tracked and legally standardized.

Military

Mostly run by the K’nyazy, the military tradition of Vo Darune is strong, albeit in decline. The majority of the army is levies, but there are small standing armies as well. Usually these are under exclusive control of influential parties such as Nomarchs, K’nyazy, or the Abbey.

The standing army numbers approximately 600,000 men, though this can be swelled through conscripts.

Standard Units

Spearman - Usually the backbone of the army. They use ironwood or ceramic spears, helmets, armor and shields. They are trained by the nobility, and are the personal army of said nobility. Spearman can be nobles, commoners, freemen. They are the most common formal unit.

Archers - only archers within Seranastúr, the ranged units of Pol-Erat use a rough *nu* and Korodar uses a mix of atlatlists and slingers.

Cavalry - cavalry only really exist within Korodar, and that too a small contingent from Rak Insel under House Ver’kat. The most elite of commoner troops are cavalry. Horses can be found outside Vo Korod as well, but they are used for travel or as beasts of burden, not for war.

Swordsmen - usually highly trained peasants, mostly used by Seranastúr. Heaviest infantry. They are also used by the Abbey of the Axioms as the majority of the Alturi personally led by the Archpontiff. They are the only ones to use metal armor.

Irregulars - the vast majority of Daruni forces are these irregulars. They are not highly organized. They use wicker shields and fight with an assortment of weapons, such as axes, short

spears, short swords, tridents, etc. The most common irregular weapons are the glaive and the single-bladed saber

Onagers - weak siege units

Rams - weak siege units

Solar ships - very rudimentary, single hulled, single layered ships used mainly for basic protection of fishing fleets. More suited to rivers than the sea. Vo Darune's naval traditions is effectively nonexistent, though the Nomarchy has shown interests in developing it further.

Unique Units

Rokhriders - the most devastating force on the field, a warrior riding an armored Rokh equipped with javelins and a long spear

Rokh Skirmisher - a Rokhrider who is capable of ranged fire via bow and arrow. Unique to Seranastúr

Inaknights - warriors from Korodar who ride heavily armored Inanna

Quetzalcorps - A noble warrior, often an archer, who fights alongside his Quetzal pet in war

Kitsunekin - kitsune generally cannot be armored, but they are capable of leaping into and out of battle easily, using their link-lights to disorient and devastate multiple soldiers at once while their riders slaughter the weakened soldiers. Weak to archer fire and large clumps of prepared spearmen. They are strongest in the lines of infantry, where they can jump into conflict as soon as the enemy lines are broken. The rare six-tailed or above kitsune can be devastating if it times its barks appropriately. As a result, they may sometimes be equipped with wooden armor to protect them from archers, though this hampers their jump significantly.

Marag Daemons - Marag archers, conscripted, usually from Pol-Erat

Yeniçeri - Elite forces, small corps used by Nomarchs and rarely K'nyaz Estates. The signature weapons of the yeniçeris are the ribbon/sash and the chakram hoop.

OOO Notes (Options Bin):

Korodar is pseudo-Egyptian/Sumerian and Seranastúr is pseudo-Turkish/Persian, while Pol-Erat is more Asian. Because of Pol-Erat's fall, the Mesopotamian influences are far more prominent, though Pol-Erat's effective hegemony today makes for heavy Asian cultural parallels.

The cities need more extensive histories

Names for King, Queen, Archpontiff, Khedive, Shah-Pasha, Vizier (no_eight's character) needed, and historical names if possible (some historical names filled in)

A desperate House picks up Marag career archers