

DRAGONFIRE

R'hllorism in the Bay of Dragons

A recounting of the apostate Targaryen, the rise of R'hllorism in Meereen, and the Riots of the Harpy, by Maester Jojen

The followers of the Red God in Essos have always been in conflict with the followers of the Gods of Ghis. Try as they might, the cultists had never been able to convert the Masters of Yunkai, Astapor, and Meereen. The most the red priests could do was purchase slaves from the cities and induct them into their temples. This was still quite different than spreading the faith to Slaver's Bay though, and the R'hllorites longed for the opportunity to do so. The opportunity first came when Daenerys Targaryen conquered the bay and freed the slaves, posing a threat to the established religion of the Gods of Ghis. Though High Priest Benerro preached that Daenerys was Azor Ahai reborn and had plans to try to sway her to his faith, a new issue cropped up for the High Priest that took his attention away from the Bay of Dragons. The schism between the Orthodox and the Azorian temples and priests consumed the entire faith for years, and distracted the clergy from converting the Targaryens, though the idea persisted and was not easily forgotten.

When High Priest Vaario ascended to the head of the Orthodox faith in 351 AC, one of his main promises was that "nightfires will be lit and the Lord's warmth will be spread to cities it has never been spread to before". The cities Vaario eyed in particular were Astapor, Yunkai, and especially Meereen. His reasoning for this was that he had received a vision in the flames revealing to him that a Targaryen would be Azor Ahai. The High Priest was a learned man, however, and knew that the Targaryens had long been fascinated by the stories of Azor Ahai. Thus, some believe that the High Priest made up the vision. Whatever the case, he instructed a group of sixteen red priests to travel to Meereen and spread the word that Daenerys Targaryen's line would lead to Azor Ahai.

The group of sixteen arrived in the Meereen in 353, and began to preach of the revelation that one of Daenerys' descendants would be Azor Ahai. Three of the priests later moved to Yunkai, and four to Astapor, to spread the message even further. The remaining nine stayed, but their preaching for the most part fell on deaf ears. In the early stages, some people converted, enough to support a red temple, but not enough

to bring the change that High Priest Vaario wished for. Eventually one of the red priests decided to request an audience with the current head of the Targaryens himself, Viserys Targaryen.

Viserys agreed to the audience, yet was doubtful of the words that the priests preached. They moved on from words and started making displays of fire magics, trying to amaze the dragon into believing their words, but he had seen wonders from across the world and remain unimpressed. Finally, the red priests introduced him to the prophecy of Azor Ahai, and how it'd been seen that a member of his house, likely even himself or one of his descendants, would be the Prince Who Was Promised. They painted pictures in his mind of House Targaryen not only being remembered as a great family, but also as religious saviors, to be worshipped for centuries. This caught Viserys' attention, and he decided to delve further into learning about R'hllor.

As Viserys Targaryen learned more about R'hllorism, the more it appealed to him. Eventually he came to realize that the Lord of Light was the true god for him, so he forsook his old faith and forever became known as Viserys the Apostate. He provided funds for the Red Temple of Meereen, and publicly announced that the Lord of Light as the only true god. The majority of the population dismissed it as mad ramblings, but still a considerable amount of people across the Bay of Dragons heeded his words and adopted R'hllor as their own good too.

Though Viserys continued to grow obsessed with becoming Azor Ahai or having one of his descendants become him, his beliefs never truly spread to the rest of the family, and he was never able to convert more than a quarter of Meereen to R'hllorism. Still, his conversion did leave an impact that's continued since his death. A slightly different form of Orthodox R'hllorism now exists in the Bay of Dragons, which strictly believes that Azor Ahai will come again as someone with Targaryen blood, though the High Priests and clergy in other parts of Essos have stopped promoting this prophecy. The conversion also introduced R'hllorism into the Bay of Dragons, spreading its influence further than ever before, and setting the stage for one of the most violent religious riots in recent memory.

In 364 AC, the Red Temple of Meereen hatched a plan to delegitimize the gods of Ghis, prompting people to join R'hllor instead. A group of slave warriors and fanatics who were skilled at stealth infiltrated a temple dedicated to the Ghiscari pantheon, setting its western wing completely ablaze. This caused a massive outrage among the faithful, and many of those that remembered stories of the days before the Targaryens thought that the new rulership had given heathens far too much leeway. A charismatic

woman called herself the new Green Grace, and gained a loyal following that wished to bring back the Order of the Graces and expel the R'hllorites from Meereen.

Followers of the Green Grace, both clergy and the faithful, took to the streets in anger, brandishing cudgels, daggers, and any other item on hand that could be used as a weapon. In a furious rage, they marched towards the Red Temple, slaughtering any R'hllorites who got in their way. By the time they reached the temple, however, they had caused so much violence in the streets that the mob transformed into a chaotic riot. People from all religions, not just the Ghiscari and the R'hllorites, were caught up in the affair. One riot became several, and as they carried on into the night and the next day a whole swath of the city was consumed in turmoil. The riots shut down part of the Meereen for a week straight, and it wasn't until the city guard was sent in to force the Ghiscari back to the Temple of the Graces, and the R'hllorites back to the Red Temple, that the fighting was quelled. The previously harmonious faiths had now spilled blood, and ever since there has been growing tension between the two, not just in Meereen but in Astapor and Yunkai too.