

Cosmology

There are said to be eight planes. The first two were the Astral Plane and the Abyss. These have come to be known by their liturgical names, Endless Light and Absolute Darkness. In between them is the Shadow Plane. Embedded in the Shadow Plane is the Material Plane, where Earth is located. There is also a plane for each of the four elements, fire, water, earth and air. Finally, the ethereal plane binds and connects them all.

How the world was made according to the priests of Mazda

In the beginning, there was nothing in the universe but the Wise Lord Mazda, who lived in the Endless Light, and the Evil Spirit Ahriman, who lived in the Absolute Darkness. Between these realms was the empty Shadow. One day, Mazda made the sky out of air, shining and bright. Second, he made pure water, flowing and clear. Third, he made the earth, firm and deep. Fourth, he made the plants, moist with no thorns. Fifth, he created animals, great and small. Then, he created the First Man, called Gayomard, bright, tall, and handsome. Last, he created fire and placed it throughout his creation. The Wise Lord commanded fire to serve mankind in preparing food and overcoming cold.

The Evil Spirit peeked out of his dark world to see all the amazing new creations. The Wise Lord called to him and said, "Evil Spirit! Aid my creatures and give them praise so that you will be immortal!" The Evil Spirit snarled, "Why should I aid your creatures? Why should I praise them? I am more powerful than they are! I will destroy you and your creatures!" Then, he crawled back to the darkness to create demons, devils and monsters to attack the Endless Light. The Wise Lord was All-Knowing. He knew that the Evil Spirit was raising an army, and he was facing a great battle with the dark side. To guard his creations against the Endless Darkness, the Wise Lord fashioned six spirits: The Holy Immortals. He shaped them from his own soul, and gave each a part of his own nature.

The first Holy Immortal was Khashathra, the spirit of Righteous Power, guardian of the sky. The second was Haurvatat, the spirit of Peace and Perfection, protector of the waters. The third was Armaiti, the spirit of Holy Devotion, protector of the Earth. The fourth was Vahishta, the spirit of Justice, protector of the Fire. The fifth was Manah, the spirit of Good Mind, protector of the animals. The sixth was Ameretat, the spirit of Immortality, protector of the plants. Mazda himself would watch over men. Khashathra, Haurvatat, Armaiti and Vahishta were known as the Elemental Lords.

Ahriman saw the Wise Lord's Holy Immortals and was enraged. "Mazda! I will destroy you and all your creations. You will never be victorious!" he bellowed. He ordered his demons to attack Mazda's creations one by one. They tried to destroy the water but they could only bring bitterness to it. They tried to destroy the earth but they could only gouge it with mountains and valleys. They tried to wither the plants but they only grew thorns. The Evil Spirit and his demons brought sadness against happiness, pain against pleasure, pollution against purification and death against life. They attacked Gayomard, the First Man, and gave him sickness and

death.

The Evil Spirit thought he had destroyed mankind and achieved victory against the light, but he was ignorant and foolish. When Gayomard died, from his bones grew a man and a woman, Mashya and Mashyana. Mashyana gave birth to fifteen sets of twins, and promised the Wise Lord that her children would help him in his battle with the Evil Spirit. Mashya and Mashyana scattered every pair around the world, and each became a different group of people. Seeing what sprung from Gayomard's remains, Ameretat buried his heart, and from the ground above it sprung the elves. Manah, not wishing to be outdone, gave up her higher nature, her imagination, and from it the gnomes were born. The Elemental Lords saw how happy their siblings were with their creations, but were unwilling to sacrifice of themselves to give life to new beings. They approached Mazda about this problem, and he suggested a solution. They would all take wives from amongst the humans. The children of the Immortals would aid them in ruling over men. So it came to pass, that fire, water, earth, and wind entered into the blood of the children of Gayomard and they became as one flesh. Their children were blessed with a fraction of Mazda's power and wisdom, and made to be lords over men. All the lands were united under one Emperor in peace and prosperity, and the Wise Lord saw that he had done well. Their children begat children down all the long ages of the Earth.

The Return of Darkness

Ahriman saw all that Mazda and the Immortals had done and his heart burned with hatred. He knew he could do better. He went amongst the children of the Holy Ones and told them lies. He taught them that Mazda and his Immortals were just being selfish and hoarding all the power for themselves. He pointed to the power of the elves and gnomes, comparing it to the Immortals' own power. He insinuated that Ameretat and Manah had loved the elves and the gnomes enough to give them a part of themselves, but that the elemental lords did not. He taught the children of men the ways of magic, so that they might steal power from Mazda and the Immortals. To the oracles and witches he gave his own warped version Mazda's power. He taught the sorcerers to siphon power through their blood from their Immortal forebears. But the gifts came with a price. As more and more magic was worked, the Elemental Lords slowly started losing their power. Once they realized what was happening they begged with their children to stop, but the taste of magic was too sweet. Chaos spread across the lands as the Immortals tried to halt the spread of magic amongst their children. But they could not stop magic, as it drew on their own power.

They went to the Endless Light to beg an audience with Mazda, and told him of what had come to pass. He was furious. "Your children are undoing all the good work that I have done. They have forgotten their place, and so have you. Now you have abandoned your charges to complain to me? Even now the forces of darkness spill onto the Earth." It was true, Ahriman, seeing that the Immortals had fled to the Endless Light, had opened a great portal to the Absolute Darkness. Demons, nightmares and all manner of terrible monsters came pouring through. But Mazda had a plan. He led the Immortals back to the Earth, and once there he

sought out the most righteous of men. To them he bequeathed rays of his infinite light, creating the Aasimar. He taught them to use the powers of their minds to combat magic. All of the aasimar were able to learn, and they in turn taught those others who had the talent and were willing to help. Seeing this, Ahriman put his own seed of chaos into the strongest of the human spellcasters who had joined his side, creating Tieflings. What would later become known as the Great War raged for centuries between the armies of light and darkness. Eventually it became clear that the only way to end the war was to seal the portal to the Absolute Darkness. As penance for their failure to control their creations, the Elemental Lords gave up their essences at the height of a great final battle, sealing the portal to the chaos beyond and ending the War.

The Aftermath

The final battle in the great war was fought one hundred and fifty years ago. As punishment for working magic, Mazda deposed the elemental-blooded and left the Aasimar in charge of man, giving them a set of laws which should govern their lives. He retreated to the Endless Light, seeing in his wisdom that the Earth must create its own destiny. Most of the elves and gnomes were gone from the world. The few that remained have retreated into the wilds, using their powers to hide and insulate themselves from the outside world. Magic remained a constant threat, and each spell cast was a theft of power that weakened the seal on the Absolute Darkness. The Earth remained full of darkness and chaos, most of the former lands of the Holy Empire of Man had fallen. The church and the military were the only institutions that had survived centuries of war. They created a new empire based around the city of Allacosta, the former capital of the Holy Empire. Families of Aasimar control both secular and ecclesial power. The Emperor Quinius Sextus I claimed divine right, and was backed by the psionic priests and inquisitors of Mazda. In the years since, successive Emperors have expanded and restored the Empire to a mere shadow of its former glory. The current ruler Quinius Sextus IV continues the quest to return mankind to its rightful place as rulers of all the Earth.

The Laws of Mazda

1: I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no other gods, nor idols.

2: Thou shalt not kill except in defense of thine own life.

3: Thou shalt not steal.

4: Thou shalt not lie.

5: Thou shalt not practice sorcery, those who do shall be burned to death. This is the only unforgivable sin.

(Sorcery is defined as casting non-druid spells. Racial SLAs do not count as magic. Witchcraft is a term interchangeable with sorcery.)

The Allacostan Empire

Allacosta

Metropolis

Corruption +2; **Crime** +4; **Economy** +7; **Law** +5; **Lore** +6; **Society** +4

Qualities pious, academic, holy site, prosperous, strategic location, tourist attraction

Demographics

Government Autocracy

Population 200,000 (150,000 humans; 45,000 demi-humans; 5,000 Planetouched)

Notable NPCs

Emperor Quinius Sextus IV (M Aasimar Aristocrat 2/Psychic Warrior 10)

Empress Helene Barone, High Priestess of Mazda (F Aasimar Psion 9)

High Priest of Mazda Pantaleon Rocca (M Aasimar Psion 12)

High Inquisitor Raginald Sextus (M Aasimar Rogue 4/Psychic Warrior 10)

Chancellor Nikanor Lodovico-Longo (M Human Aristocrat 1/Expert 5)

Head Merchant Judocus Calligaris (M Human Expert 7)

Venture Syndicate Primus Gisbert Richter (M Human Fighter 2/Rogue 10)

Marketplace

Base Value 25,168 gp; Purchase Limit 150,000 gp;

Minor Items *; Medium Items 4d4; Major Items 3d4

Allacostan Social Classes

The Allacostan Empire has several defined social classes. There are three classes of citizen. The highest are the Patricians. They are wealthy landowners who control the other classes. The Patricians are further divided into Nobles (born to it) and Equestrians (bought it). Next on the latter are the Plebians, or land owning citizens. They are the equivalent of the middle class. Below them rest the Proletarii, who are the lowest level of citizens. They are the working class of the empire. Non citizens are divided into Peregrini (foreigners) and Liberti (Freemen). They lack the rights of citizens, but have it better off than slaves. The lowest social class is the Servi (Slaves). They have no rights, and are considered property.

Politics

The Church is intricately entwined in the politics of the Empire. It is lead by the High Priest and Priestess (the Hierophants), considered to be the spokespeople of Mazda on Earth. They are selected for life by a council of cardinals. Any Emperor or King must be confirmed by both the Hierophants before his rule can be considered legitimate. The Emperor has absolute executive power, he must ratify all laws and has complete personal control of the military. There is a legislative Senate composed of the leaders of the provinces, but any laws they propose must be ratified by the Emperor. They also hold the ability to petition the Hierophants for

excommunication of the Emperor should they feel he has lost divine favor. This requires a three quarters majority of the Senators to vote on it, followed by a unanimous decision from the Hierophants. The Hierophants cannot excommunicate the Emperor without the request of the Senate. Any Patrician may challenge a law as against the five Great Laws of Mazda, and the Hierophants must hear their case. The Hierophants can rescind any law by unanimous decision. The only way to override them is for both the Emperor and three fourths of the Senate to agree.

The Empire is made up of Allacosta itself, and many smaller client states. Each is allowed to maintain their national identity as long as they conform to the laws of the Empire. Local leadership is often left in place, and simply given Patrician titles and a seat in the Senate. The Senate is full of Kings, Dukes, Barons, Governors and Premiers. But when they are in Allacosta, they are all simply Senatorii.

Religion

Mazda

Mazda is the one true God, and Wise Lord. His church is the official religion of the Empire. He represents all that is light and good, and the only defense against the endless dark.

History

Mazda is the creator of everything and the father of mankind. He created man in his own image, and watches over all of creation as its protector and Lord. He was with men from the beginning, after the first war with darkness he left them in the care of his children, the Immortals. During the Great War, he returned to Earth and saved man, but seeing that all his interference was only causing more trouble for his creations he left after the War. All that remains of him on Earth are his children the Aasimar, his Laws and the power he gave them to protect man against the creatures of the Absolute Darkness.

Appearance and Symbols

Mazda is usually depicted as a giant man, perfect in form. He shines with a radiance so bright that any who look at him will be instantly blind, though in reality he can take any form he chooses. Some areas depict him as a great living flame. His most common symbols are a sunburst, a flame, or a man with the sun encircling his head like a halo. He is also associated with great birds of prey, such as eagles and falcons.

Servants

Mazda is served by all manner of angels and celestials, but these creatures are rarely seen on the Material plane. The greatest of his mortal servants are the metallic dragons, which have become so few in number after the Great War. The Aasimar are his most numerous allies on Earth. They can be found ruling over men and the church, using their psionic powers to hold the darkness at bay.

