

## **CITIES**

There are six major city-states in our chunk of the Seas; each has its own political system, culture, problems, needs, and quirks. They fight with each other quite often, using mercenary companies and privateers.

You can be wanted in one city and not in another, though you might get extradited. Gold is gold and water is water everywhere, always.

### **Qasira**

*Qasiran*

**Ruled by:** a conclave of Merchant-Princes

**Has:** fruit, wine, religious enlightenment, specialty Southern goods

**Needs:** salt, soldiers

The city closest to the southern border of the Sands, near Synnius and Kreitar. It's situated around a large central oasis, and is famous for its fruit orchards, religious ascetics, and rambling, chaotic atmosphere. It's ruled over by a loose conclave of Merchant-Princes, who combine muscle and wealth to earn a place in the city's ruling class.

Qasira—with its uneasy ally Ahmerrad—is in an off-and-on war with Veluca over salt, which Qasira deeply lacks. The conclave has declared that only their salt ships can bring it, but those are being hit by pirates and soldiers, and so salt of any kind is in high demand. A few wealthy merchants can get passes, but smuggling is running rampant.

### **Veluca**

*Velucan*

**Ruled by:** a handful of semi-corporate semi-criminal families

**Has:** salt, drugs, commerce

**Needs:** wood, water, soldiers

Of all the great cities, Veluca is the only one to not sit on a natural spring or oasis. There are a handful of extremely deep wells, but the city is constantly in need of water, making it a popular spot for water merchants. The city itself is criss-crossed with sandy canals, making it extremely easy for ships to navigate, and thus is popular with merchants of all kinds, as there are very few customs or regulations to follow.

Its ruling families have gotten into a war with Qasira over salt, and are pouring their resources into winning it. While Veluca has salt, gold, and gemstones in spades, it occasionally runs the risk of running out of water, or its derivatives—food, wood, and textiles. Anyone bringing those in, merchant or smuggler or otherwise, will see high prices easily fetched.

### **Ahmerrad**

*Ahmerradi*

**Ruled by:** a bureaucratic theocracy, headed by Cenobiarch and chamber of deacons

**Has:** wood, food, soldiers, "religious enlightenment"

**Needs:** liquor, drugs, spices, luxury goods

Famed for its planned streets, towering white sandstone walls, stepped gardens, and overseeing Temple, Ahmerrad is a theocracy through-and-through. It has rigid curfews, clear

wards and boundaries, and a strict social ranking system, but also provides its citizens, and its many natural springs ensure the city never thirsts.

The Cenobiarch and the Temple have been drawn into a questionable alliance with Qasira against Veluca, but they're not sure about it. Mainly, they're trying to stop the flow of Velucan drugs into the city.

Because of its rigid laws, Ahmerradi citizens will pay through the nose for illicit luxury goods. While good for business, the Temple Guard are infamously brutal to smugglers and racketeers; their broken bodies hang from the walls as a warning to any who attempt to break the Temple laws.

### **Khalkadinn**

*Khalkadine*

**Ruled by:** a tenuous republican legislative body, called the Hive Assembly

**Has:** honey, water, mostly-secular academies

**Needs:** gold, peace, traders

Khalkadinn sits on a large, marshy oasis; it's the only city in the Seas where water—at least small quantities of it—is free. The city is divided into roughly thirty individual sub-districts, each of which has its own micro-oasis, locally elected political representative to the Hive, apiary, and criminal enterprise. Khalkadinn has always been famed for its bounteous honey, as well as its academic institutions, where some of the best thinkers in the Seas come to learn and study.

For the past several hundred years, Khalkadinn was ruled over either by Qasira or Din Deresh, and only in the past half-century has freed itself and established something resembling a republic. Its history is one of war and conquest waged by foreigners, and the city has suffered for it. In the wake of its freedom, criminal enterprises have gained traction, pushing against the high-minded ideals of the Hive and academies.

Both Din Deresh and Qasira have levied tariffs against their former holding, pushing the city's already-weak economy even weaker.

### **Din Deresh**

*Dereshi*

**Ruled by:** the All-Din, a warlord-monarch

**Has:** soldiers, silver, cheap labor, food

**Needs:** an educated class, arms & armor, luxury goods, ships

A thousand years ago, the Dereshi Empire ruled over the entirety of the Seas with an iron fist, and was a world power. Now, Din Deresh is a militant city, constantly pushing its own sputtering war machine. The city sits on kiln sand, and old canals surround the area, making it ripe for farming, as it can be walked nearly all the time; beneath its old hill stretch miles of silver mines, fueling the city's iron heart.

Over the past long while, Din Deresh has pushed out many of its more enlightened figures—bankers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, scholars—in favor of laborers and soldiers. It's a forced to be reckoned, likely able to muster enough troops to storm any city, but the city waxes and wanes with its All-Din. A good All-Din will massively expand the territory in a decade, and then their child will waste it all drinking and whoring.

It's a city with a long and storied history, but now is hobbled by that same history.

## **Zolunis**

*Zolunite*

**Ruled by:** a nominal Patrician, but realistically the heads of a dozen guilds

**Has:** textiles, luxury goods, bankers

**Needs:** food, soldiers, talented merchants

Zolunis itself sits in an uncomfortable position: several hundred miles to its east lies the sea—the actual ocean, with water—and to its west is bone sand, kiln sand, and pyro sand. A thread of king's runs nearby, but it's dangerous sailing for any captain.

Zolunis is famous for its guilds and its banks: its craftspeople are second to none, and a Zolunis Guild Mark ensures quality of the highest order anywhere in the Seas. Likewise, its banks are impregnable, and they're reliable to a fault: if the Zolunite Banking Guild owes you money, you will be paid; if you owe them, you will be found.

Despite this, the city's fertile ground is mostly spent, and so there is a constant-need for food. Likewise, because its goods are so valuable, pirates are commonly seen in the fraught sands around the city, willing to brave fire and death for a chance at riches. For any talented captain that can navigate the sands around the city, they'll be well-paid by the guilds.

## **TOWNS**

**Have:** food, water, cheap labor

**Need:** an educated class, specialty goods, traders

There are about 10 smaller towns scattered throughout the Seas. Towns typically have to be self-sustaining in terms of food and water, as they just can't survive without it. They almost always have food and water to sell, as well as recruits, and are lacking in special-made goods, the things cottage industries can't make, as well as expertise. Traders are usually welcome.

Politically, towns are semi-independent, overseen usually by some collection of elders or respected community members. They aren't officially part of any city-state's holdings, usually, but will almost always comply if one of them asks for something—towns don't have the military strength to withstand a siege, or the economic strength to outlast a trade war.