

The World of Caledar

3/5/05

The World is old. No one knows how many ages passed before the Chaos War, how the old gods were slain, or how long men have walked the earth. The great Elder Age, with its mighty civilizations and powerful magic, is shrouded in mystery. Nothing remains but Lornish, the ancient tongue, and a few fragments of legend. Of what transpired before that illustrious time, no one seems to know. Sages speculate that Dorak knows, but he does not speak of such things.

The World is young. In the time of healing after the Chaos War, the world was re-named “Caledar,” said to mean “rebirth” in a forgotten tongue. New kingdoms have risen. The Lords of Rillia, Kystfelde, Aridane, Versic, Sapphiria, Pavia, Kesh, and other lands contend for their right to rule. Even the gods are young in their way.

Much of this world is unknown to you—for you are young, and your travels have just begun—but the basic beliefs, traditions, and customs of Caledar have been with you since childhood. Herein is the knowledge and basic lore which you take for granted.

The Moons

Four moons shine in the night sky of Caledar. The meanings of their names are lost to antiquity. Some believe they are merely descriptive words, while others maintain they are names of Elder Gods. Their cycles never change from year to year, and are the basis for many religious and secular events.

Mahanga

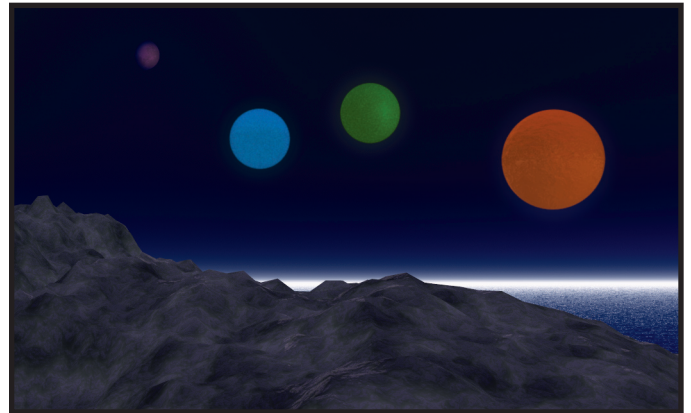
Known as “The Greater,” Mahanga is a large, orange moon which dominates any clear night sky. It is associated with order, law, and goodness...especially among the Commons. Mahanga’s cycle is the basis of the eight-day week, which begins with its waxing and ends upon its waning.

Gisatva and Govinda: The Twins

These two moons travel in the same orbit, and are roughly the same size (about half the size of Mahanga). Gisatva, called “The Leader,” rises first each evening, and is pale green in appearance. The second twin is Govinda, a pale blue moon. Govinda is know as “The Follower,” and its phase is always the one displayed by Gisatva the previous night. Both moons spend two nights at the extremes of waxing and waning. They complete a full cycle of phases every three weeks.

Hinegha

The smallest of the moons, Hinegha is a pale gray orb, often barely visible. Though small, it is believed to possess a strong malign influence and is more greatly feared when it is not seen. It associated with chaos and evil. Hinegha’s cycle is exactly one year long, though it does not correspond with the traditional year which begins on the Day of Rebirth.



Lunar Symbolism

It is believed that order and goodness are most powerful during the day. At night chaos and evil predominate, but many faiths believe that their powers are weaker when the moons are bright and unobscured.

Coinciding phases, whether full or new, are also believed to be of significance. These nights occur every 1½ weeks, when Mahanga and the Twins are in conjunction. The full and new phases of all four moons each coincide once a year. Both of these nights are major events: The Festival of Lights and The Night of Thieves (see below).

Time and the Calender

A year in Caledar consists of ten months of 36 days. Each month is named for one of the major gods. Occasional confusion results from this practice, as it is not always clear whether a speaker refers to the god or the month named for him. Thus, it is common to hear modifiers such as “the god/goddess (name),” “the holy (name),” “the month of (month),” or rarely, “the time of (month).” Some regions differentiate the months by adding suffixes (ex. -time, or -tide) or possessives (ex. Skerta’s month).

The months are as follows:

Delaeni (Spring)

Named for the goddess of life and fertility, Delaeni is a time of rebirth and reawakening. Spring begins on the first day of, when the goddess is believed to be reborn from the dead.

Though only the first month is named for her, many religions believe Delaeni watches over the first three seasons (7½ months) of the year. It is her task to defend living things from the influences of Deloco, Fabian, Xar’al, Skerta, Vrarra, and other gods. Those who worship Delaeni believe their faith affects her power to do so.

Aeshandra (Spring)

The goddess of passion reigns over the second month of spring, a popular time for weddings among the young.

Rhondelain (Spring/Summer)

Spring matures into summer during this time. The god of travel's influence makes it a popular month to begin pilgrimages and other journeys.

Ponteous (Summer)

The hottest of all the months. Order, law, and goodness are believed to have their greatest influence.

Caidian (Summer)

Caidian is a time of waiting, especially for the harvest, and temperatures are milder. It is also considered a time of ease and relaxation, even to Commons whose lives are constant toil.

Tasman (Autumn)

Harvest begins as the leaves begin to turn. Tasman is a time of planning and preparation for winter, as befits the god of knowledge and wisdom for which it was named.

Uriah (Autumn)

This month is named for the god of justice. As harvesting is completed, each man is believed to reap what he has sown in the past year...physically and spiritually.

Deloco (Autumn/Winter)

The protector of fools and madmen presides over this month of wild and erratic weather. The transition from autumn to winter is unpredictable. Though temperatures gradually grow colder, any day can bring sunshine, rain, snow, an early frost, or unseasonable warmth. There is always wind, ranging from strong breezes to stormy gales.

Winter officially begins on the 19th day, when the custody of the world passes to Vrarra the god of death. No month is named for Vrarra, but his influence is felt the rest of the year.

Fabian (Winter)

Chaos and evil reign supreme in this, the darkest of the ten months. Occasionally a day will dawn with a hint of warmth, as if on a fine autumn day, but wise folk remember that this is the trickster's month, and know the skies will probably turn foul by day's end.

Skerta (Winter)

The coldest month of the year is named for the ice goddess of the Sapphirians, who reaches the height of her power during this time. Fierce battles are fought in the north as the ice witches seek to expand their mistress' territory. Vrarra's time comes to an end on the last day, and the year begins anew.

Days of the Week

The Calendar week follows the cycle of Mahanga, beginning with its waxing. Each day officially begins at dawn. The eight days are as follows:

Newday

The "new" in Newday indicates both a new week and the first visible appearance of a new Mahanga. This is typically a day of worship, celebration, and rest. Major religious ceremonies such as weddings, coming of age, conversion to the faith, and major sacrifices are often performed on this day. The nobility, middle class, and freemen consider it bad luck to work on Newday, but this does not apply to personal servants, serfs or slaves.

Newday evenings are likewise a time of rest and celebration, but on a more secular level. (Mahanga waxing quarter)

Ploughday

The first day of the work week, a time of much grumbling and complaint among the Commons. (Mahanga waxing half)

Furrowday

Normal workday. (Mahanga waxing gibbous)

Lawday

While courts of law generally operate every day except Newday, major functions are performed on Lawday. Strongly contested or questionable cases are often tried (or begin trial) on this day. In the case of particularly important rulings or prisoners, the authorities may even wait for a "High Lawday," when multiple moons are full. (Mahanga full, Twins also full on High Lawdays...every three weeks)

Turnday

Normal workday. Generally considered the "middle" of the week. (Mahanga waning gibbous)

Hammerday

Normal workday. (Mahanga waning half)

Wageday

As the name suggests, this is the day when hired workers or soldiers are typically paid (this does not always take place every week...some are paid every two weeks or once each month).

Wageday nights are good for taverns, temples of Aeshandra, and other entertainment-related businesses. (Mahanga waning quarter)

Clenday

The end of the work week is a day of cleansing and preparation. Extra work is done in anticipation of Newday, especially food preparation, laundry, and other domestic tasks. Among the fearful, many precautions are taken against the powers of the night, which are believed to be strongest on Clenday night. This is especially true of "thrice-dark nights" or "thrice-nights," which take place every three weeks. (Mahanga new, Twins new on thrice-dark nights)

Major Festivals and Holidays

Numerous feasts of significance are celebrated by Caledar's many religions. Irreverent folk often jest that every day is sacred to someone, but this is not far from the truth. Of these countless holidays, the following festivals affect the world at large, and are celebrated by most folk regardless of their primary faith.

The Day of Rebirth (Delaeni 1)

The goddess Delaeni is reborn on this feast, which is both the first day of spring and the beginning of the calendar year. It is also a reminder of the world's rebirth after the Chaos War. Great significance is placed on this day, and exceptionally good or bad weather or events are taken as omens for the coming year. Births which occur on this day are considered very lucky for both mother and child, regardless of any bad omens which might occur.

Though the Day of Rebirth is the first day of the calendar year, its relationship to Ashendusk should not be overlooked. It is essentially the second part of a two-day event, and is a time of great relief and rejoicing.

The Grand Loving (Aeshandra 9)

The spring equinox marks this festival of love, which is celebrated in various ways depending on one's faith. It is best known for the wild, and often orgiastic celebrations practiced by worshippers of Delaeni, Aeshandra, and others; but some faiths disdain these practices. Followers of Caidian, for example, generally exchange small gifts or show special affection to their loved ones in other ways. Adherents of Uriah try to spend the Grand Loving with those they really love, especially if they married another for political reasons.

The Festival of Lights (Ponteous 24)

All four moons are full three nights before the summer solstice, and their light is augmented by many candles, lanterns, torches and the like. The association of full moons with order makes this a major feast day for the followers of Uriah, Tasman, and Ponteous; but the occasion is gradually evolving into a secular holiday.

The precise character of the Festival of Lights varies by region, but family gatherings and gift-giving are common most everywhere. The celebration takes place in the early evening, sometimes with activities upon the rising of each moon. As with the Day of Rebirth, bad weather is considered an ill omen.

The Offering of Justice (Uriah 9)

The autumnal equinox is a sober time when the worst of criminals are burned at the stake as an offering to the gods. To be condemned as a sacrificial victim on this date is considered the worst form of execution, as it combines great pain, public humiliation, and (it is believed) certain punishment in the afterlife.

Depending on the local religious climate, the Offering is performed by the priests of Ponteous, Uriah, or both. Secular participation also varies, being strongest in Aridane (where the

secular authority must release the prisoners into the custody of the priests), to almost non-existent in Kystfelde (where the priests of Ponteous have their own courts).

Harvestide (Uriah 33-34)

This two-day feast of eating, drinking, and merry-making is considered the last opportunity to enjoy life prior to the coming of winter. It is of special significance to the worshippers of Delaeni, who consider it a kind of farewell feast to the Goddess before Ashendawn. The better the harvest, the more lively the celebration.

Ashendawn (Deloco 19)

The Goddess Delaeni dies on the first day of winter, but life must continue. Ashendawn is a day of remembrance, when final ceremonies are performed for those who have died in the previous year. In the evening, dead ancestors are recalled at gatherings of families and friends, so that the memory of them may be passed on to future generations.

Fabian's Dark/The Night of Thieves (Fabian 24)

Law-abiding folk lock their doors and stay close to their possessions, for on Fabian's Dark every thief who desires the favor of the Trickster must steal...the more cunning and difficult the theft, the greater the favor for the coming year. The protection of Fabian's temple does not apply on this night, and the wealthy hire extra guards.

Ashendusk (Skerta 36)

The last day of the year is cold and bleak, but otherwise unremarkable. The night, however, is a terrifying ordeal when the dead walk the streets, attempting to carry off the living to Vrrarda's kingdom. Usually it is enough to stay inside behind locked and bolted doors, but in times of great darkness the dead have been known to try and force their way in. Children born on this day are considered unlucky, especially those born during the night.

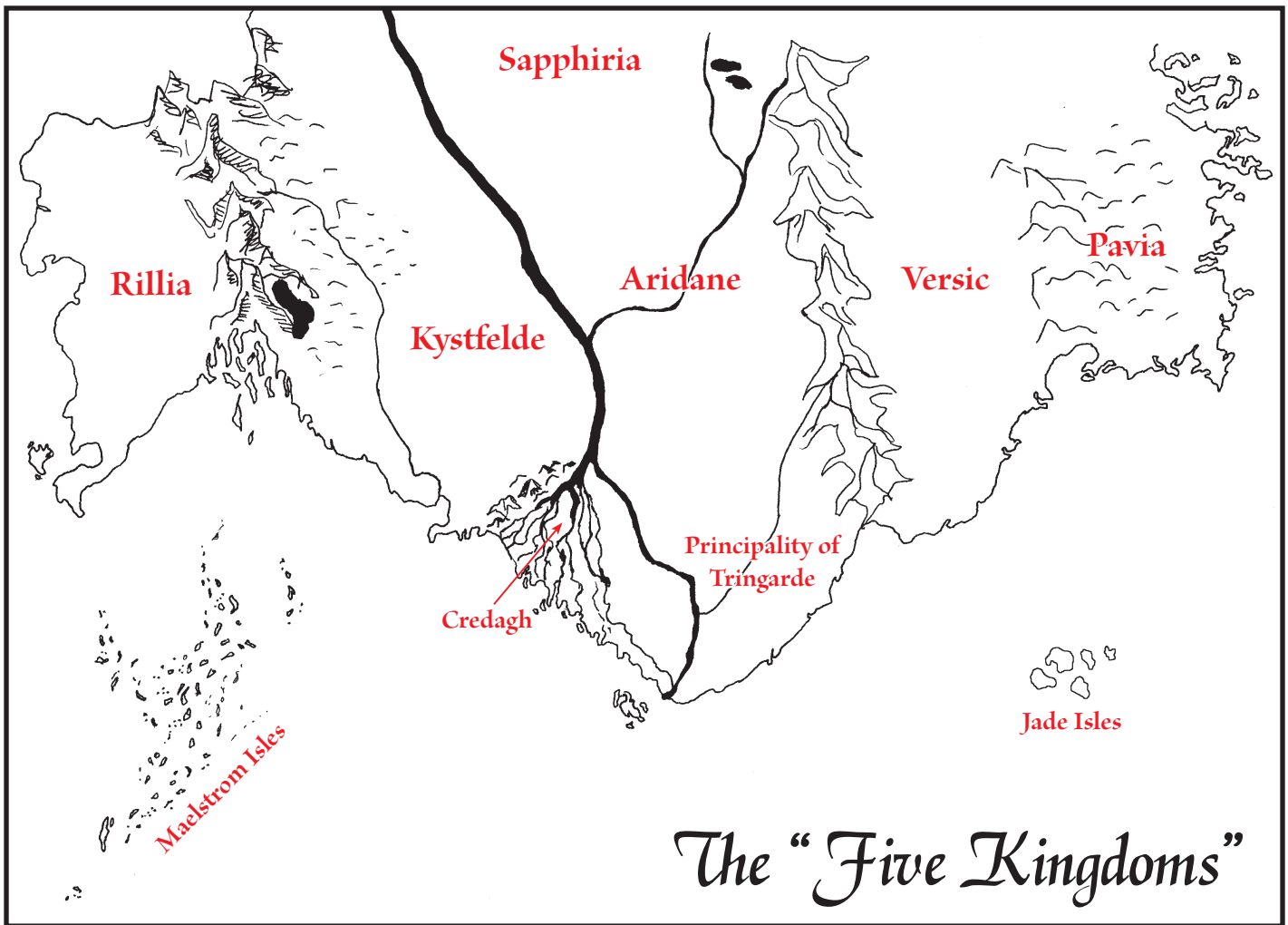
The Five Kingdoms

The northern continent of Caledar is currently dominated by five major political states, collectively referred to as the "Five Kingdoms." From west to east, they are:

Rillia

Rillia is a magocracy, ruled by representatives of the nine recognized arcane houses. Its central governing body is the *Concilium*, composed of one representative from each house and a supreme arbiter known as the *Primus*. A larger governing body known as the *Curia* assists in the day-to-day management of the realm.

Though the smallest of the five in both land mass and population, Rillia is a center of culture and learning and its magical resources are unequalled. It was here that the art of the magi was rediscovered by Ilnazzer, and the scholars of Rillia have long striven to maintain their advantage in the mystic arts.



The "Five Kingdoms"

Worship of Tasman is the primary faith, though Uriahns also have some influence. While Ponteanism is not prohibited, it has little support.

Rillia has little desire for contact with other kingdoms apart from commercial trade, and has expressed no interest in expanding its territory. Relations with nearby Kystfelde are uneasy, but no major flare-ups have occurred for several decades.

True to the teachings of Ilnazzer, Rillia's schools of magic will teach all those who come to learn, provided they have the gift and ready money. Since the magic which they have mastered is desired throughout the world, the Lords of Rillia have become quite wealthy.

Kystfelde

The name "Kystfelde" literally translates as "the meeting of land and sea." Appropriately enough, it is a strong agricultural state as well as a dominant seafaring power. The powerful House of Mendelar has ruled here for several generations, and has at long last been able to control the numerous warring noble families. However, the Mendelarian kings have lost much commercial influence as a result of numerous debts and poor economic decisions. A thriving middle class of merchants and craftsmen is gradually evolving as a result.

Kystfelde is the seat of power for Ponteanism, which is the state religion here. Their priests are extremely powerful, and

have, among other privileges, the right of Coronation. The Giver of Law, considered throughout the world as the highest mortal authority of the Pontean religion, resides in the capital city. Vrarrda's clerics are highly respected, and a number of other faiths are tolerated, but worshippers of Uriah and Xar'al are actively suppressed.

When the noble families are not actively intriguing against one another, Kystfelde is a powerful nation of fierce warriors. The northmen are more than equal to the task of holding back the Sapphirian tribes, and have even been known to regain territories lost to the ice witches. Those who live further south jealously covet the resources of Rillia, but do not dare to attack it for fear of trade restrictions. A wide expanse of wasteland separates Kystfelde from Aridane, which prevents the sort of territorial disputes which occasionally arise with Rillia. They are active traders, with ships often travelling as far as Versic and Kesh.

Aridane

Aridane is the largest of the Five Kingdoms, both in population and territory. It has a proud history as the only Tallen-controlled kingdom strong enough to drive out the southern invaders before the empire collapsed from its own decay.

This hereditary strength was not enough to prevent the conquest of Aridane by the Duchy of Candria some 90 years ago. The conquerors have effectively been absorbed into the

population by several generations of intermarriage, but many changes have been made which will affect the kingdom for centuries to come.

Aridane is recovering from a bitter civil war which raged from approximately 727–743. The current king is young, headstrong, and widely respected...even by his enemies. His stated intention has been restore the kingdom to the condition it was in prior to the war, but many adjustments and compromises have been necessary.

Foremost among these has been the king's unwillingness to declare a state religion. The priests of Pontoous and Uriah are both highly active in the kingdom, having each enjoyed reigns of dominance. The king is playing them off each other at present. All other religions may be found here to some degree, though not always in the open. Crime is still rampant in the wake of the civil war, but revisions in common law and judicial procedure are slowly getting matters under control.

Aridane controls the large territory of Tringarde, which it took by force from the Tallen Empire in 405. The present king has hereditary rule of the Duchy of Candria, as well as the region of Chartraille which he acquired by marriage. The king has conducted a few abortive campaigns into Credagh, briefly obtaining token acknowledgement of his sovereignty. He has also attempted to take control of lands claimed by Versic, but has met with less success than elsewhere. A vast amount of territory is thus essentially controlled by one man, but it seems likely that it will one day be divided among his sons.

Aridane was a strong crusading nation when Uriahnism was predominant. The practice has fallen out of favor since the tragic Battle of the Sable Plain in 710 gave rise to civil war at home. The Holy Land still holds some allure, however, and enough younger sons have been drawn south to the Crusade that there is concern for the integrity of the northern border against Sapphiria.

Versic

Often viewed as decadent and foppish by citizens of other kingdoms, the Versi people are passionate, cultured and religious. They are a lusty folk, fond of good food, wine, the arts, and many other comforts.

Uriah is the chief deity of Versic, and his faith is stronger here than anywhere else in the world. Crusaders are held in high favor, and the king himself has spent much time in the Holy Land. Aeshandra is also prominent here.

Versic is a fragmented state, frequently in conflict with its neighbors. They are not a powerful nation at present, faced with Sapphirians to the north, Candrians to the west, and Pavia to the east. As if this three-sided threat were not enough, the pious Versi nobles are often found in the south, crusading in Kesh. The present king is attempting to centralize his power, but has been hampered until recently by the lack of a male heir.

Pavia

Pavians are solid, practical people. They are strong in combat but a trifle dull in social situations despite their rich oral tradition. They have a natural aptitude for armory, weapon-smithing and the construction of siege engines.

Pavians chiefly worship Uriah, but with a strong emphasis on the vengeful aspect of his nature. They are evolving their own sect of the Uriahn faith, and have established a rival hierarchy in opposition to the one which rules from Versic.

Pavia occasionally attempts to expand its territory, sometimes by force, sometimes via religious influence. At present, however, the Sapphirian threat is greater here than elsewhere, and much of the kingdom's current resources are expended in maintaining the northern border.

Other Major Political States

Sapphiria

The frozen lands of the north are controlled by Sapphirians, blue-skinned humanoids who worship Skerta, the goddess of ice. Organized in nomadic matriarchal tribes ruled by ice witches, they labor as a race to expand the territory of their goddess.

Sapphirians are most active in winter, when the cold gives them the greatest advantage. Ice and snow follow large groups of witches, which helps them maintain a foothold in conquered territories during warmer months.

The Sapphirians are fanatically devoted to their goddess, and pose a threat to most other nations on the northern continent. At present they are strongest in territories to the north of Pavia, becoming gradually weaker further west.

The Maelstrom Isles

This turbulent archipelago is said to be the remnants of an ancient continent, shattered into pieces by a conflict which predates the Chaos War. Its inhospitable islands are buffeted by frequent storms and prone to areas of wild magic. The region is a haven for pirates and other outlaws desperate enough to brave its dangers. An ever-changing tapestry of rival island states vie for influence.

The Jade Isles

This cluster of islands is home to several diverse orders of monks and mystics. Those who seek serenity, self-mastery, and isolation from the outside world seek refuge in its self-sustaining communities and well-tended gardens. Many are turned away or unable to find the islands at all.

Tal

The island nation of Tal was the first to regain contact with a divine power in the wake of the Chaos War. Spurred on by the priests of the war god Abalion, the Tallens began a rampage of conquest against their neighbors across the sea, and were, for a time, the undisputed lords of much of the northern continent. For three and a half centuries they plagued the lands now known as the Five Kingdoms, ultimately falling from internal decay.

The glory days of the Tallen empire are long since past. Today it is a fragmented collection of rival city-states, each ruled by whatever prince, warlord or political group is able to enforce its will upon a given region.

Kesh

An ancient jungle people, the Kesh never lost the secrets of magic during the Chaos War. They are the oldest surviving civilization known on Caledar, and the only one which successfully withstood the onslaught of the Tallen Empire. A number of cities in Kesh are sacred to Uriahns, who have sworn to drive out the infidels who inhabit them. They have been partially successful, for now...

