

YANSHU



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YANSHU: GENERAL OVERVIEW

GAME OVERVIEW

SPECIFICATIONS

Genre(s): CRPG, single-player, story-rich

Camera: Overhead perspective

Avatar(s): Party of 5 adventurers (one main character)

Platform: PC

Themes: mature (violence, drugs, horror, politics)

CHARACTER CREATION

The player creates the **main character** by customizing his appearance, choosing one of 8 starting **classes** and one of 8 **backgrounds**. Background and ethnicity have an impact on how other characters interact with the main character.

MAIN QUEST & NARRATIVE

Sent to **investigate** cases of smuggling and political corruption, the main character will eventually uncover larger **plots of conspiracy**, **dark secrets of history** and the larger truths of the cosmos in a grand journey spanning 3 continents. In his quest he will **recruit party**

members to help him, each with their unique plot and personality.

PROGRESSION

While **killing enemies** and monsters and progressing the story through **dialogue and scripted events**, characters will **level up** and spend points to **customize their abilities**. Items can be found that further empower party members when equipped.

RICH CUSTOMIZATION

A unique **skill tree**, **multiclassing** and **impactful items** allow for a wide diversity of flexible builds to play around with and encourage experimentation.

INSPIRATIONS

Inspirations for the game include:

- ❖ **Divinity Original Sin 2**, for its camera.
- ❖ **Pillars of Eternity 2**, for its real-time combat with pause.
- ❖ **Diablo 3**, for its playstyle-defining items and abilities.

Inspirations for the universe include:

- ❖ **Dune**, for its colonial politics centred around a magical substance and its themes of cycles and messianism.
- ❖ **The Lovecraft Mythos**, for its cosmic horror elements and the sense that things exist beyond our understanding.
- ❖ **The late 19th century**, for its technology, politics and theme of nationalism. Inspiration centred mainly on South Asia.



COSMOLOGY

Salt is the structure of the Universe,

The primordial Energy,

The essence of Life.

THE ROOT

At the beginning there was the Root, the one soul from which came everything else, and to which everything will return.

The Root is the **origin and end of all things**. Some could say the Root is a place, or an idea or even a process, some could say the Root is the mother of reality, others could even say that the Root does not exist, and neither does reality.

THE PRIMORDIALS

The first to emerge from the division of the Universe were the Primordials, they are the **driving forces of the Multiverse**, born with a single will and purpose: to return to the Root.



The Primordials exist **beyond time and space**, they are over-present, **encompassing all reality**. They are not themselves conscious, but their will seeps into the consciousness of all lesser beings.

Each of the 5 Primordials personifies an aspect or function of the Universe.

Aamon	Tarask	Tesk	Gamuth	Ra
Void Nothingness	Time Creation	Chaos Change	Inertia Entropy	Light Matter

LEVIATHANS

Fragments of the Primordials' souls have given birth to the Leviathans. They are born with deep understanding of the Multiverse and its future. They do not possess a will, but instead **wander the different realities, driven by raw emotions**.

Their existence is what **shapes the imaginary realities of people**, manipulating their drives and emotions. This influence can sometimes manifest as visions or dreams. All myths, all religions and all actions are influenced by the Leviathans.



The existence of Primordials and Leviathans can be **felt by lesser spawns of the cosmos but not understood**, the realities in which these creatures exist are incomprehensible to mere humans and can only be interpreted to the extent of their senses and imagination.

Leviathans vary greatly in size, from the size of a small planet up to a few billion light-years in length. Leviathans can **exist in multiple planes of space and time simultaneously**.

The emotions embodied by the Leviathans are as varied as they are. The most ancient Leviathans incorporate the most primal feelings and emotions such as hunger, fear, belief...

When Leviathans pass one another, one may absorb the other, or their energy might intertwine to create a third Leviathan. It is in this process that more complex feelings and emotions are born, such as vertigo, thrill, empathy, insanity...

ELEMENTALS

From the “excrements” of Leviathans are created the elementals: **embodiments of matter**: gases, liquids, solids...

Elementals collide with each other in a constant battle of supremacy or dance of love. **Few of them can maintain a consciousness** in this great chaotic **maelstrom of overwhelming sensations**, but those that do become **very powerful**.



The bodily amassments of elementals create planets and stars.

ANIMALS

The residue of the eternal clash between elementals becomes possessed by smaller souls as they come closer to the Root and eventually this process creates animals.

Animals take up the chaotic emotions of their elemental creators and are further **manipulated by the existence of Leviathans**.

SPIRITS

Closer to the Root, fragments of soul become so small as to be able to inhabit microscopic **crystals, bacteria, and the bodily fluids of animals** to give themselves corporeal forms.

Spirits are **shaped by the imaginary realities of people**, they can create **ghosts, structures, or diverse supernatural phenomena** one might call **magic**. As beliefs become shared and more

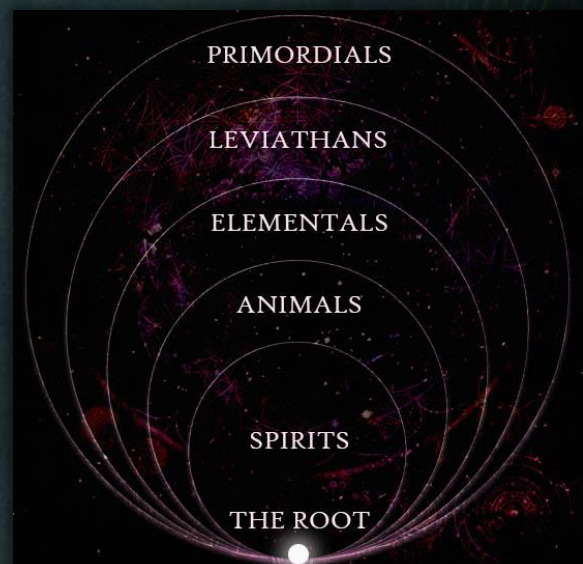
powerful, so in turn spirits become better defined and more powerful.

High spirit realm

The high spirit realm is the **closest realm to the Root** and is a **mess of spiritual energy**, where the gathering of all the Multiverse's beliefs take shape to incarnate the many cultures' gods and imagined realities.

Most **planets are destroyed** upon entering the high spirit-realm due to elementals losing their minds or because of the sheer amount of external cosmic power being exerted on them, or simply because of the whim of a passing spirit deity.

Over time the fragments of soul left behind through this process make their way to the Root, coming back to their original creator to achieve their role in a cosmic design far beyond their understanding.



Fragments of soul become smaller and smaller the closer one gets to the Root.

Spirit leviathans

Because Leviathans shape the imaginary reality of people and in turn the imaginary reality of people shapes spirits, “spirit leviathans” are born, inspired by what can be felt of the cosmic wanderers and the beliefs they inspire.



THE WORLD OF YANSHU

PASSAGE IN THE SPIRIT REALM

The planet of Yanshu arrived in the **lower spirit realm** a few million years ago, at which time the sudden appearance of spirits completely transformed the it and the lifeforms inhabiting it.

Humans arrived on Yanshu less than 100 000 years ago from dimensional portals leading to other worlds. They have long since forgotten their own origins. Since then, they have become the **most dominant lifeform on the planet**.

OF SALT AND DEMONS

Soul energy, called **Salt**, exists on Yanshu in the form of **small crystals and bacteria** which makes it **easily manipulated**. People use and consume salt to their own ends as a form of **magic or technology**.

Such thin Salt as can be found on Yanshu, defined as **spirits**, can also create **spontaneous supernatural events**, such as animating the bodies of the dead or of plants, creating unnatural weather phenomena, extra-planar portals, visions, objects coming to life or even shaping the DNA of creatures in ways that transform mythology into reality.

Pathways to the Root make all worlds connected in a great cosmic arborescence. Being situated on a **cosmic hub**, new inhabitants are constantly being brought to Yanshu through random occurrence. Humans call these non-natives **demons**, though they do not understand that by their own definition, they themselves should be called demons as well.



THE CASE OF INTELLIGENT DEMONS

Humans have varying views on demons. Some like to **summon demons** to serve them, others abhor them. Sometimes, intelligent demons come to Yanshu, but they are rare, and **few cultures tolerate them**. Most of them are hunted like other dangerous demons.



Intelligent demons for the most part are considered dangerous and killed on sight.

VISIONS, PROPHECIES & LICHs

People who consume Salt are gifted **visions and dreams** of other worlds, of the past and future, or of higher beings such as Leviathans. Making sense of those visions is an art and has been **very important to many cultures and religions**.

People say that eventually, all who consume salt start having the same dream: **The Red Dream**. This dream manifests in various ways though it often is a precursory sign of developing madness.

Those who would consume Salt endlessly eventually have their **bodies and mind mutated**, they no longer are human and are instead called **lich**. Such beings are sometimes employed as **powerful mages and oracles**, they can live for very long and do not require any sustenance other than Salt.



Consuming too much Salt transforms the mind and the body

THE SALT COAST OF ANGHARA

Salt is consumed by all: poor and rich, young and old, serf and scholar. It is a prized source of power and energy, and nowhere in the world can more Salt be found than the Salt coast of Anghara.

This region is a rich, **diverse and magical environment** that is often the **theatre of many wars and conflicts** between humans, and where some of the most **terrifying creatures** in the world reside, as well as where some of the **strangest phenomena** occur.



The more transparent the salt, the less potent

THE MODERN ERA

A SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

After thousands of years of civilization, a scientific revolution swept the world a few centuries ago, forever changing people's understanding of reality.

Today the **production and consumption of salt is greater than ever before**. People summon the souls of demons to trap them in objects and create **automatons**, they use similar methods to power machinery for industry and warfare. Revolutions in transportation and communication have brought the continents closer than ever before, ushering in a new age of **colonialism and nationalism**.



Humans are now trying to conquer their environment, but they may soon realise that some things lie beyond their understanding and power.

THE POWERS THAT BE

The 3 powers that would contest control over the Angharan salt coast are the following:

1. **Thara**, an archipelago of volcanic islands and a **young colonial empire** with an aggressive mindset. It has been the centre of **new scientific ideas and liberal ideologies** for the past few decades but now its power menaces to crumble from **overreaching and internal political strife** between its shadowy organizations.
2. **Anghara** itself: a very diverse and divided continent of jungles and mountains along the Salt coast and a **colony of Thara** for the past half century. Anghara is in the middle of a **national identity crisis** and is trying to gain more independence from the empire while suffering from **smuggling, terrorism and foreign interference**.
3. **Biasarah**: The newest member of the powerful **H.A.D.O.C. confederation**, The pearl of the desert as it is surnamed has just undergone a massive

political and social revolution. Coming into the modern era with **very fast industrialization**, it is a small but **ambitious country**, trying to play a very high-risk, high-reward political game.

Other neighbouring powers such as **Gataca** and **Aksum** are carefully considering the balance of power. The world's eyes are on the Salt coast, everyone agrees that a big war powered by new technologies is coming, and that if it comes, it will start here.

THE ISHANI CRISIS

Soon after its great revolution and while in the last stages of it joining the H.A.D.O.C., **Biasarah annexed one of its smaller neighbours** without proper cause. Thara had been supporting and negotiating with this country for a few years, and it was expected that it would soon become a protectorate of the empire.

The country of **Ishan** had just recently been discovered to have **mines of blue salt** (the most potent kind of salt) in its territory. Thara expressed its outrage.



Fearing a large international war between Thara and the H.A.D.O.C. the likes of which the world had never yet seen, an **international summit** was held to diffuse the situation.

In the end Thara lost support due to arrogant and aggressive demands. However, with this incident, Biasarah has also now revealed its true ambitions and partially lost the trust of its new allies.

MAGIC

THE USES OF MAGIC

Salt exists in all living things. By using or consuming large quantities of it, one gains abundant power.

Magic is simple to use in the world of Yanshu but few exert the **dedication** necessary to master it.

Recently, new methods of **metal production** have allowed for the development of **more potent enchantments** and the creation of **automatons**. An example of this process would be the binding of a powerful soul to a locomotive to power a train.

Magic is **used in all aspects of life**: from industry to warfare and from farming to divination.

SCHOOLS OF MAGIC

There are **8 main expressions of magic**:

Elementalists manipulate small elemental bodies living in the air, earth and other elements that surround us.

Demonologists manipulate animal-sized souls, mainly used to **summon and bind demons**. A skilled demonologist eventually becomes able to fuse with his summon temporarily and gain supernatural powers.



A Demonologist in fusion with his summon

Shamanists manipulate spirit-sized souls. Most commonly, they **enchant weapons and tools**, infusing them with supernatural properties or create "totems": objects that cast spells on their location for a certain duration.

Machinists use salt as an energy source to power **machines and puppets** and create tools capable of unleashing spells like a grenade.

ForceMasters can use salt to create **electric and magnetic fields**. They are great protectors and good at controlling the battlefield.

Duellists can **mark the soul of an enemy** and form a pact with it. Upon fulfilling the conditions of the pact, the mark activates and unleashes a powerful spell.

Illusionists can communicate with the minds of others and **create tangible illusions** that can have harmful or beneficial effects. They are great at augmenting the capabilities of their allies.

Torans are people able to channel the large quantities of salt they consume into a **supernatural trance** that augments their physical abilities. During trance, torans completely ignore pain and the effects of magic feel weaker to them.

SATURATION

Using magic increases the saturation of Salt in the blood. This can cause **internal injury, wild and spontaneous spellcasting, coma or even death**.

People can build a tolerance to salt and cast greater and greater spells without feeling the effects. However, this comes at the price of slowly turning into a lich.



Early signs of lich transformation include the iris turning a red or amber colour.

ANGHARA: JEWEL OF THE WORLD



CHARACTERISTICS

Governance: Semi-independent constitutional colony headed by a Viceroy
 Level of technology: Low, unequal access to technology
 Attitude towards Magic: Embrace
 General Environment: Jungles, mountains, sub-tropical grassland

Vast and coveted by all for its **abundance of Salt** transported by eastern oceanic currents, Anghara has always been a **centre of war and conflict**. It was united under the rule of Thara, making it a **colony** 50 years ago, after 17 years of **civil war**.



HABITAT

THE SUMA DELTA

The Suma delta is a **critical site of Salt harvest**. It is in the delta that **smuggling** is at its worse.

Mudflats

The shores of the delta are covered by **kilometres of mud**. Inside this mud, rare shells produce the coveted **Salt pearl**.

Teaming with life: bugs, mudfish, eels, crustaceans and salt-absorbing bacteria are deposited in the mud from the ocean and go on to feed a much larger ecosystem. All this wildlife attracts a great quantity of migratory birds during the winter, including a race of 2-headed fire-and-cold-breathing demon flamingo.



Great quantities of Salt in the mud cause **unpredictable and spontaneous phenomena** to occur: explosions, tornadoes, cetacean stranding, water turning bright or red, killer winds, hail, and extra-planar portals among others. There are also tales of **weird constructs** suddenly appearing in the distance on misty nights.

Sometimes, major heat waves will lower the water-level in some places and uncover **long-lost cities** and ruins.

Only the most desperate dare work here. Many die from **salt-related cancer or skin-disease** when it is not because of demons, the weather, or getting absorbed by the **quicksand-like mud**. Workers absorbed by the mud will sometimes resurface under people's feet as **possessed corpses** prone to explode.

Jungles

One of the **longest rivers in the world** empties into the Suma delta, it is surrounded by dense jungles, filled with dangerous creatures such as tigers, crocodiles, scorpions, hypos, gorillas, elephants and nagas.



Notable animals and monsters living in the delta:

- ❖ **The Vishna:** a mythical giant horned eel. It lives in the large rivers and lakes of the delta and spews corrosive poison.
- ❖ **Pacua:** an aggressive kind of porcupine-boar. It is extremely aggressive and lives in packs lead by an alpha male.

Notable sights:

- ❖ **The wandering tower of Aeth,** ghostly appearance of a tall building that may appear or disappear at any moment. None can claim to have reached it and come back alive.
- ❖ **The crystal caves of Nimayah:** constructs of a multicoloured glass-like material on the shores near the fishing village of Nimayah. There is a large concentration there of Nagas and treasure they collect from the boats they attack.

SHUMA RUINS

Deep inside the northern jungles and into the adjacent great salt desert lie the ruins of one of the **oldest civilizations in the world**. Mines of **blue Salt** have started to be found near these types of ruins which makes them a centre of attention.

The ruins contain untold **knowledge and treasures**, protected by **ancient guardians:** mummies, liches, all kinds of demons and powerful

abominations beyond human understanding, some of them long dead, others not so.

The **Blood Cult of Thara** has taken special interest in these ruins, groups of them can be seen investigating around.



Notable monsters found in the ruins:

- ❖ **Rashtr**: invisible flesh-eating humanoid demons that use laughter-like noises and tongue clicking to locate themselves and communicate with their peers.
- ❖ **Maashna**: an ancient scorpion goddess, it is uncertain whether she was born or fabricated by beliefs.

SALT-MIST PEAKS

Where the clouds meet one of the **tallest chain of mountains in the world** lie the Salt-mist peaks.

There, **concentration of Salt in the atmosphere** is so dense that one can taste it with his tongue. Magic becomes more potent but also more dangerous for the body.

People who wander there receive very powerful **hallucinations and visions**. It is both a place of pilgrimage and asylum. Many who come back from the Peaks claim to have reached enlightenment, more have clearly gone insane.

Storms of extra-planar portals frequently occur, responsible for the high concentration of **exotic demons and elementals**.



Eldritch abominations can be seen roaming the scenery

The jungle, rivers and mountains are said to move by themselves. When coming here, one never knows what one might see, or where one might end up.

Notable creatures and monsters of the Peaks:

- ❖ **Famir**: Demonologists who have lost their minds and are stuck in their animal forms.
- ❖ **The lost swamp**: it roams endlessly and is home to animated trees and spirits.

Notable sights:

- ❖ **Upward-flowing rivers of Yashtra**.
- ❖ **Hidden dimensions**: Some of the portals that appear in the Peaks are rumoured to lead to the private dimensions of Gods.



THE UNDERCITY

The capital Baku was built on top of the old city. Connected to the sewers, slums and old temples, it is an important **pathway for criminals**.

The monkeys of Baku wandering the undercity are often devoured by **gelatinous sewer elementals** or **colonies of giant naked-mole-rats**.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population of Anghara: **216 million**

Population of Baku: **5.2 million**

Disposition: Mostly rural

A DIVERSE PEOPLE

There is a **great divide** between **North and South Anghara**. This divide can be seen clearly from physical differentiation.

- ❖ **Northern characteristics:** lighter skin tone, blue/grey eyes, brown/dark hair.
- ❖ **Southern characteristics:** darker skin tone, golden eyes, black hair.
- ❖ **Rare genes:** maroon/red/orange hair, green eyes.

CLANS AND CASTES

The biggest social differentiation between people is that of **clans and former caste**, before Thara abolished the caste system 50 years ago.

The **5 clans** said to be descended from the sons of the mythical sacrificial mother are:

Vani, Pandra, Mewhi, Bumbani and Shutu.

The caste system **favoured the Pandra above all others**. This privilege carries over into the new era. Today, a Pandra people are **over-represented in politics, banking, land-ownership and governmental relationships** compared to other clans. The situation further accentuates the North/South divide, with the North being richer and more urban than the South due to the natural distribution of Salt.

There is **built-up resentment against the Pandra** from the other clans. Others say about them that they are arrogant and selfish, dogs of Thara who would lick the boots of their masters for crumbs of food even if it were their own mother that was cooked (both comparing one to a dog and insulting one's filial piety are deeply disrespectful in Angharan society).

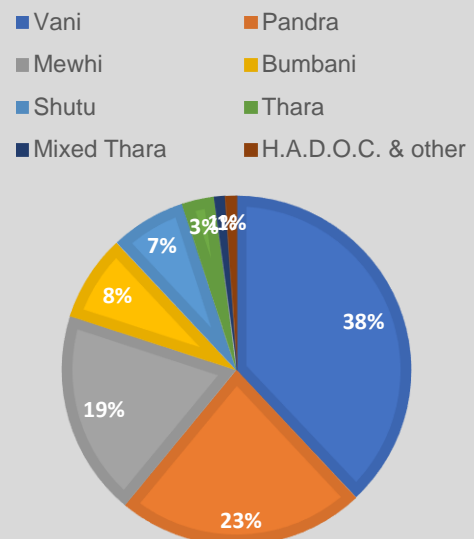


You can identify one's clan from several factors: physical features, especially colour of skin, accent and dialect, family name, hairstyle, dress style (choice of colours, patterns and accessories).

After centuries of inter-mingling and the abolition of the caste system, the **barrier between clans has started to fade**. However, the Pandra elite have been more protecting than others of their distinct identity, especially since a non-negligible amount of them have started **being influenced by Tharan customs, religion and dress**.

BAKU

POPULATION OF BAKU (CAPITAL)



Baku hosts the **largest Tharanese population outside Thara**, racial mixing has started occurring after 2 generations of colons, creating new social issues of law and identity.

HISTORY

SHUMA CIVILIZATION

Basin of civilization North of Anghara. Very little is known about it. It has piqued the interest of the newly formed field of archaeology and of the powerful organizations who would want access to its secrets.



WANPAL RULE AND PETTY STATES

The oldest known civilization of the region to have kept written records was a Wanpal city-state. It governed over a **loose confederation of Angharan petty states warring between themselves** for the control of the northern salt coast in the absence of a common foe.

YM KINGDOM

The first civilization to have created a sense of common identity over the Angharan sub-continent around **700 years ago** was the kingdom of Ym. It was at this time that the 2 foremost **modern religions** spread over Anghara.

King **Ym Sha** and his son **Ym Tut** are immortalized as warriors in legend. They supposedly **fought off multiple invasions of giants** originating from the Sunyab archipelago and their established kingdom on the salt coast (where today the city of Suni-Ba resides).

JEVA AND KUVA DYNASTIES

The **North-South modern cleavage** dates back mostly to the times of the Jeva and Kuva dynasties. At this time, from **400 to 100 years ago**, Anghara was governed by **weak states** who often found themselves paying tribute to invaders.

The North and South warred relentlessly due to a great **religious divide** and a chain of **honour-bond revenge between noble families and clans**. Dynastic rule gradually lost power until the continent was **governed by competing warlords**.

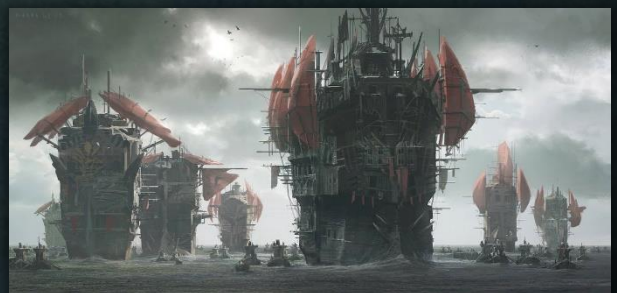
YUMAN REBELLION AND THARAN CONQUEST

The Yuman rebellion started in the South county of Yuman **67 years ago**. It was led by the self-proclaimed reincarnation of the ancient prophet **Varu Prana**.

The rebellion happened in response of the **Yuman massacre** following a famine-protest. The movement quickly escalated and gained momentum under promises of **abolishing the caste system and redistributing the land under new principles**. It aimed at finally putting an end to the age of petty kingdoms and reunite Anghara under a new **sacred nation**.

The civil war was the **deadliest conflict of the century**, lasting **17 years** until an Angharan king asked the new emperor of Thara for help.

Thara arrived, took the king hostage, **wiped out the rebellion** and unified the continent under a **new colonial state**, abolishing castes and reforming the land distribution system under new liberal principles.



BELIEFS

THE SACRIFICIAL MOTHER

At the beginning of creation, there was a woman named Yunsha. Yunsha got **pregnant from the seeds of the cosmos with 5 sons**.

The sons of Yunsha would not be born, so one of them **tricked their mother** into eating a cosmic fruit. The fruit made Yunsha sick, and the 5 sons **took apart the body of their mother to create the world we know today**. Her womb became the sky, her bones became the mountains, her blood became the sacred sea of the Salt coast.



The body of the Sacrificial mother became the world we live in now

It is said the 5 sons went on to form the 5 Angharan clans and that the one who tricked his mother was Pandra.

REINCARNATION

Angharans believe in a cycle of reincarnation. The children of the sacrificial mother are given **new bodies to defend her from the harm of demons**. This body might be that of a human, or that of an elemental or spirit. In that way, your ancestors live on in the earth and as spirits so that you may call on their powers.

Angharan priests perform rituals in **the hope that one day the Sacrificial Mother will come back to life** and save the world from evil.

Bodies are generally cremated to prevent them being possessed by evil spirits. The process supposedly helps with the cycle of reincarnation.

VITRA AND THE 9-FOLD PATH

The Cosmos exists within each one, and each one exists within the Cosmos. This concept is captured in the word Vitra.

To reach one's true essence and true feelings, one must **commune with the Cosmos**. The 9-fold path of Vitra promotes **cleanliness of mind and body**: meditation, selflessness, generosity, mindfulness, humility, openness through honesty and sharing, teaching, washing one's body with sacred water and revering one's ancestors.

Religious sacrifices are performed, usually of food or small animals, and sometimes of a drop of **blood**. Willingly sharing blood is said to allow the Cosmos through one's wound and better understand its flow.

THE SIMA FAITH

Simas believe we live in a **fake world**, with fake feelings and fake perception, leading us to a life of **sin and meaningless hedonism**. Only through achieving wisdom and the guidance of the hundred honoured prophets will we be able to **navigate the planet through the Cosmos and reach Truth**.

Contrary to the main Shakasta faith, Sima believers think demons are the reincarnated souls of the strayed and should be pitied.

Salt is heavily used by both faiths in rituals to induce trance and receive visions.

SHARED DREAMS

Guided by a shaman, multiple people consume large amounts of salt and bathe themselves in sacred water before sharing their dream realities. It is a very deep experience and most people do it at least once in their life.

Through high-level shared dreams, one can **tap into another's abilities and insights**.

SOCIETY

CLASH OF CULTURES

At the top of the social order are the **Tharanese colons of 1st and 2nd generation**. They live in the resort-like special districts of Baku and enjoy many Tharanese-only **benefits of access, opportunity and ownership**.

They see themselves as bringing culture and wealth to the continent of Anghara and expect to be treated with such a point of view.



Tharanese-exclusive clubs are where the elite gather to enjoy company, culture, excess and exotic delights

Below them are the **wealthy Angharans** who grew fat and rich from Tharanese business. Many of them are from the **former upper castes**. The divide between them and the rest of the Angharan populace has only grown larger since colonization. They wield tremendous power in the rural areas.

The great majority of Angharans still lives life as **rural farmers**. They are no longer self-sufficient because of the export-oriented agricultural policy forced on them by land owners.

In **slums** surrounding the main cities, urban poor are forced to take on hazardous jobs such as Salt collecting and refining or the building of railroads conducted by the Tharan Machine Cult.

Wealthy Angharans have started being **influenced by Tharanese culture, dress and religion**. A lot of them even make their children undergo a

Tharanese education. They compete with one another based on their governmental relationships and how Tharanese they seem.

This happens while the **average population tries to maintain their traditions and culture**. Most of them are shamed by the growing contrast between rich and poor and by how Thara makes them tear each other down.



The slums of Baku are a bed of filth and resentment

IDENTITY CRISIS

For the past decade, cities have been plagued with **acts of terrorism**. Both Tharanese colons and average Angharans are **petitioning for reinforced sovereignty or straight-out independence** from the archipelago, but no-one seems to be able to agree on the shape this should take.

Issues of mixed race have created new problems of law and identity while the general frustration directed towards Thara has shaped a **new sense of nationalism** among Angharans, where before there was none.

THE MARSHKITA

The Marshkita are **hailed as an example of successful Tharanese integration**. Young boys given a Tharanese education at a military school are later engaged in the prestigious Marshkita order, separate from the colonial army. They are respected by their communities and villages.

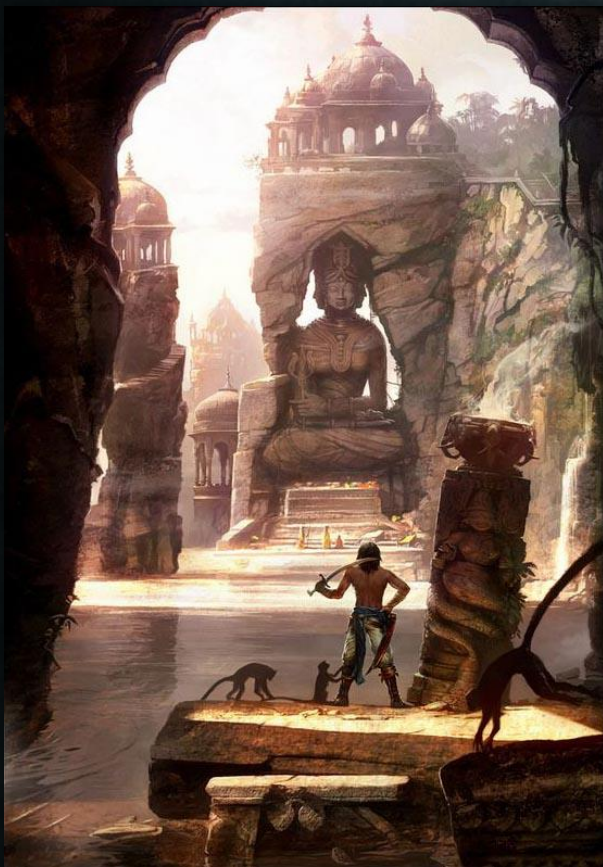
Despite general frustration, **many Angharans hold a positive image of the empire**, praising them for the peace and technological advancement they have provided, contrasting with the times of warlords and civil war.



AFFAIRS

ALL KINDS OF JUSTICE

Despite Tharan efforts, Anghara was so large and diverse that imposing its own laws proved impossible. **In the rural areas, regional overseers and religious leaders are the ones administering judgement**, Tharan influence being weaker the farther you venture from the cities and the coast. There, disputes between families are often solved by the **traditional law** of an eye for an eye, a son for a son.



Some rural areas of Anghara feel just like they did before colonization, untamed wildlands and cultures

In cities, **the colonial army is the one keeping rule** but does not care to venture in the poorer areas where most crime is left unchecked. There is an effort to wipe out the presence of smugglers in the ghettos who use orphans to avoid patrols.

One of the most serious crimes in Anghara is that of stealing produce from your employer, especially

in the case of rare Salts which fetch a great price in the black markets. These offences are often met with **corporal punishment, forced labour on the building of railways or the death penalty**. For other crimes, sentences are kept light to keep the population healthy and working.

Unlawful traditional customs such as genital mutilation, mutilation as punishment and blood feuds are being fought against by Thara.

TAXES AND CORRUPTION

Taxes in Anghara are hard to collect in remote areas and ghettos. Most of the revenue is used to build railways and Tharan-overseen schools for the youth. Such schools are seen by Angharans as imperial-indoctrination of their children.



Some old temples and public baths have fallen into disrepair since their upkeep fell into the hands of government

There is **very high corruption in rural areas**, especially from rich Angharan officials.

DESTABILIZATION FROM WITHOUT

Anghara, as a colony, **does not have sovereign international representation**, but Anghara being special, the Viceroy has been granted the rights to mobilize the colonial army outside its borders and negotiate trade deals with outside private entities.

The biggest international issues for Anghara are **rare-Salt smuggling and piracy** from the Sunyab archipelago. Many outside forces try to destabilize the region and weaken Thara, and hopefully get a hold on the salt coast for themselves.

This influence is felt through outside sponsoring of opposition, independentist movements, terrorist groups and secret organisations as well as all other kinds of political plays including assassination, collusion and manipulation.

ECONOMY

Currency: Naj (backed by silver) & Tharan Jian

Economic system: State Capitalism

Main Employment: Farming and Salt-related fields of work



EXPORT AGRICULTURE

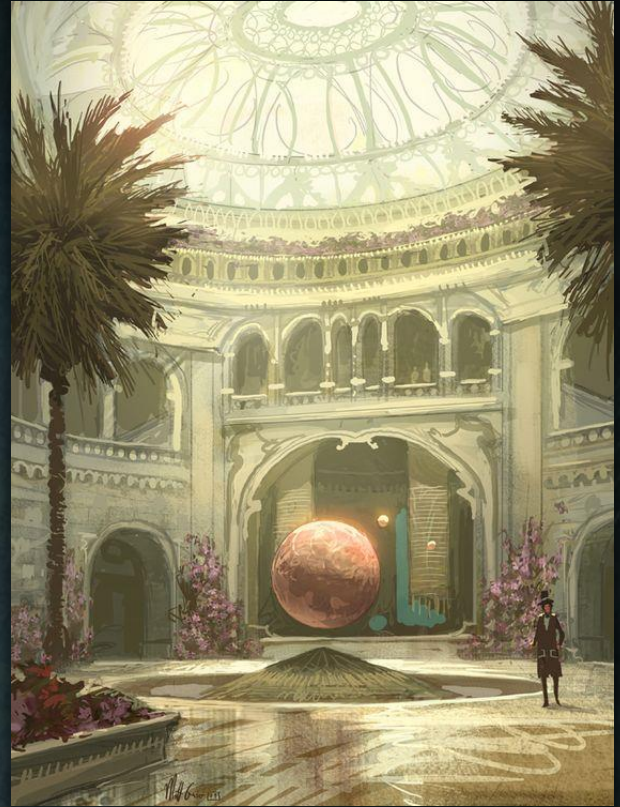
The typical Angharan diet is mostly plant-based. The agricultural heartland is in the central south, where it is hot and the weather more predictable. Tharan cuisine is most well-known for its **pastry and fruit-based sugary delicacies**.

A mostly subsistence agriculture before colonization has now turned into a maximized export agriculture. Farmers export **cotton, sugar and coffee** as raw produce and are **dependent on Tharanese imports of manufactured and industrial goods**. They rent the land they farm and have no authority on how things are run.

CONTROLLED ECONOMY

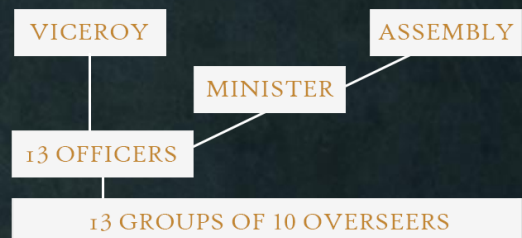
Most large companies and ventures and especially the entire Salt business are **overseen by the state to maximize Anghara's exports** towards the archipelago and feed its insatiable need for Salt and exotic produce.

Anghara's economy knows **very little growth**. Opportunities for the common worker are few and conditions of living do not improve for the **87% rural population**.



A small governmental elite enjoys exotic magical marvels in their palaces while the wider populace ploughs the field powerless

SALT ADMINISTRATION



Anghara is divided into **13 administrative zones** for Salt exploitation: 12 coastal zones and 1 zone regrouping all the in-land mines. Each zone is governed by an **officer** (Tharanese) and a **group of 10 overseers** (Angharans). Each overseer leads his own company and manages his own **territory**. The state buys Salt from them at a fixed price with penalties if quotas are not met.

The Viceroy is responsible for the quantity of Salt produced, and the Colonial Assembly for its distribution. The Imperial Agency of Control enforces regulations and fights-off corruption and smuggling.

TECHNOLOGY

FLYING CARPETS AND CRYSTAL BALLS

One can find many **old and odd curios** in the houses of regular Angharans and people still use tools hundreds of years old in their daily life:

- ❖ **Vision stones** are devices able to peer into one another's surroundings in pairs but need competent handling to work.
- ❖ **Flying carpets** are a relic of old times. How to make them is only known today to a few traditional crafters. They remain an interesting item to unearth from your cellar or pull-out at a party.

Recently, **small intelligent demons** have been in fashion with the middle and upper class, either kept by one's side as a pet or by having their soul trapped in an inanimate small object. They are perfect day-to-day aides to keep track of one's schedule and appointments.

SLOW MODERNIZATION

Some technologies such as locomotives and automatons are deemed dangerous and are **exclusive to Thara's Machine Cult**. It is **illegal** for anyone else to make them.

Angharans have always carried an oral tradition. To this day many are still **illiterate** and the few that do learn to write usually do so in the Tharanese language. Many dialects may soon go extinct.

These factors among others have contributed to the slow modernization of Anghara. Little money is invested by Thara for other things than building railways and the Angharan thinkers and tinkerers must hide in secret or risk confiscation or death.

Automata-driven carriages are imported from Thara but are still a rare sight. Transportation by boat is very risky on the coast due to salt-related phenomena and piracy. A fun way to travel the countryside for tourists is by **hot air balloon**.

SHAMANISM

Anghara is well known for their shamans and the **bizarre and outlandish artefacts** and enchantments they have produced.

By being able to feel the surrounding small fragments of souls in the air, in nature, in Salt, one can manipulate and command **spirits** to create **totems** and **enchant items**: strengthening them, making them levitate, or shine, or produce flames, or do all other kinds of things. With spirits, imagination is your only limitation.

COLONIAL ARMY

Anghara used to have a very war-like tradition and be perpetually engulfed in conflict. Today the bulk of Anghara's forces are that of the **untrained and poorly-equipped colonial army**.



Tharan officers can **levy conscripts** depending on their needs, but a **permanent army** is still kept to maintain the peace and stability of Thara's rule.

An Angharan field soldier usually carries a rifle and a sword with no armour. **The Marshkita order** is the more elite force of Anghara: they are loyal, competent and better-equipped than the colonial army. They are trained in magic and can wear armour for a more close-quarter combat approach.

Before Tharan occupation, Anghara was famous for its **living canons** in which souls of powerful elementals were trapped. Thara was not able to replicate the technology and banned it.

There have been few occasions for activity for the colonial army other than **small-scale conflicts over border-disputes**, but rumours circulate of an impending large-scale invasion of Wanpal-Sikhhar. The colonial army's primary function is to **control and deter dissent and rebellion**.

POLITICS

GOVERNMENT

Anghara as a **semi-independent colony** is modelled after Thara. It is headed by a **Viceroy** appointed by the Tharan regent who holds control of the **executive and military power**. The **colonial assembly** is formed of **82 representants** voted in by single non-transferrable vote by the land-owners in each county. These counties are separated based on their revenue potential from agriculture and Salt production. **Ministers** are appointed by the assembly and under charge of the Viceroy.

A PROBLEMATIC VICEROY



The current Viceroy of Baku has been **in office for 12 years** and has proved **too capable to replace** despite fears he may eventually decide to **take power for himself** over this very profitable land.

The opposition in the assembly has made itself very vocal in recent years over the **martial law** that followed the death of the last Tharan Emperor 7 years ago. The Viceroy has been appointing

many of his extended family members and allies to key position over the past few years. So far, all **assassination attempts** against him have failed.

The Viceroy has recently been receiving the visit of a **Machine Cult delegation** of which's purpose remains unknown. A unit of **living armours** has been keeping guard around the palace during their stay, but no one knows if they are here to protect the Viceroy, or keep him inside...

THE IMPERIAL AGENCY OF CONTROL

The **IAOC** is a **governmental agency of Thara**. It was formed 6 years ago and tasked with enforcing Salt-related regulations and **fighting corruption and smuggling**. They have been created in response to the growing power and influence of the **Machine Cult** in recent years that threatens the balance of power in Thara.

Unfortunately, the **Tharanese Assembly** has not been able to secure enough funding and personnel for the agency to fulfil its duty well as it has been fought against by the pro-chancellor faction. The agency is **being tested in its early years and lacks authority**. One of their focus is to investigate the shadowy connections between the Machine Cult and the Mafias at home.

Just recently, a **representant of the Agency** arrived in Baku to formulate an **investigative report** on the smuggling operations of the Salt coast and the potential irregularities surrounding Salt production. This followed the arrival of a mysterious delegation of the Machine Cult in Baku.

THE YOUNG ANGHARAN LEAGUE

The young Angharan league is a group of **2nd generation Tharan colons** with a foot in politics. The movement was created from a sense of **national-identity crisis**. Many colons are treated as second-class citizens when going back to the archipelago while at the same time the colony is not able to govern itself fully at home.

The League is **voicing its desire for a more sovereign Anghara**, but beliefs differ within on the shape this should take. Opinions range from wanting minor changes to calling for full independence. So far, the League seems like a **noisy but powerless group**, but its rallies are drawing in more and more people each month.

THE BLACK HAND

A **secret society formed by wealthy Angharans**, most of them formerly of the upper castes. They **aim to overturn Tharan rule and form an Angharan state** of their own on the Northern Salt coast based on former ethnical borders.



The Black Hand is more powerful than the Tharans give it credit for. They receive backing from foreign nations and even deal with the anti-viceroy faction in the colonial assembly. They in turn **sponsor terrorist groups** and assassinations while having a heavy hand in the affairs of smuggler groups.

THE OVERSEERS

The Overseers are **regional Angharan lords in charge of Salt operations** on behalf of Thara. They are the most powerful Angharans around, many are famous for their **excess** and the way they **abuse** fellow Angharans for the profit of Thara. To the mind of many, they epitomize everything that is wrong with Tharan occupation.

Secretly, **many of them are part of the Black Hand society**, playing the role of docile servants while they bide their time and ploy a revolution.

A SALT-HOUSE READY TO EXPLODE

Anghara is **on the verge of major chaos**. Everyone agrees to say that if a major international war happens in the next 20 years, it will start here. The nation is extremely politically fragmented, with many agents from within and without, all with their own distinct agenda.

BAKU: URBAN RESORTS AND MEANDERING SLUMS

Baku is known for being a beautiful city to visit, with nice paving and chic cafes on every street. Its foundations are old and its streets maze-like. One would need a guide to not get lost in this city where temples and hotels, boutiques and factories live one next to the other.

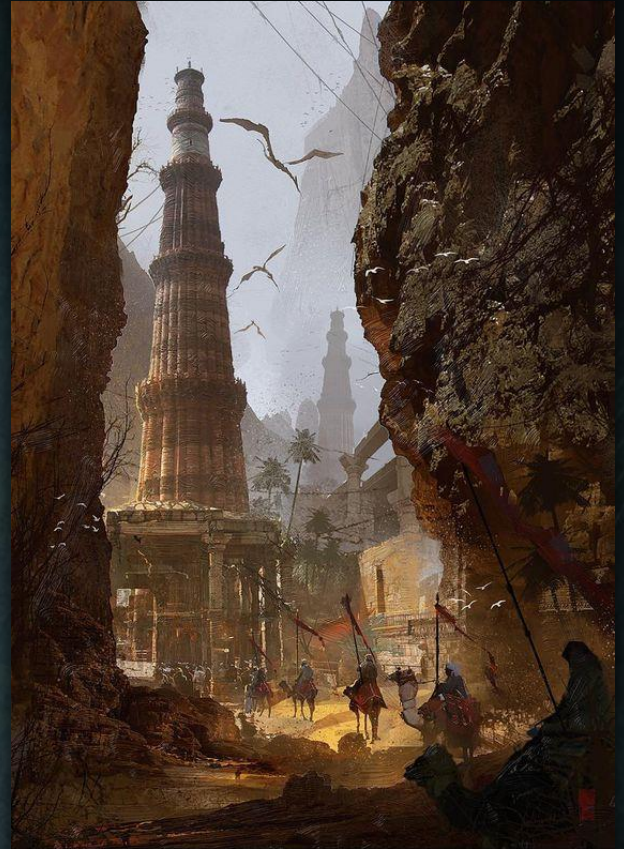
Hidden where Tharans won't look lies the underbelly of the city, the slums, where the people who clean your shoes, collect your Salt and guide you through the streets live. Their habitations of wood built on mud are often flooded or fall apart. These slums sprawl on kilometres since it is impossible to build tall on this terrain.



Notable spots in Baku:

- ❖ **The Viceory's Palace:** A building combining classic and modern styles, distinct from Thara's imperial style.
- ❖ **Awhe's Blue House of Pleasures:** A refined establishment famous for its talking doors, pleasure demons, eccentric owner and of course its samples of rare blue Salt.
- ❖ **The Grand Falma Hotel:** the largest gambling house of the continent. Situated on an island near the shore, it hosts frequent parties where the most influential and opulent gather.

BIASARAH: PEARL OF THE DESERT



Most people agree that Biasarah is a **most beautiful country** despite its **poor resources**. It has been surnamed: "the pearl of the desert".

CHARACTERISTICS

Governance: Civilian dictatorship

Level of technology: Medium, rapidly advancing

Attitude towards Magic: Distrustful, use as a tool

General Environment: Arid desert, mountains

A **desertic peninsula** once great, eager to get back its place as a major power in the modern age. Having **recently joined the H.A.D.O.C. confederation** after a major **political revolution**, Biasarah needs to build its strength before pushing for the prize in sight: the Salt coast of Anghara.

The Biasarahi live under a unified sense of purpose and pride under their reborn nation. Theirs is **one of the fastest growing economies in the region** and is undergoing a complete militaristic and technological transformation, making itself ready to take the world by storm.



HABITAT

Being poor in salt, **few supranatural phenomena and creatures are found in Biasarah**. They tend to manifest more in the forms of spirits and are more humane in nature.

THE GOBARI VALLEY

Dunes of white and pink sand, mysterious caverns and oases, it is the **most populated part of Biasarah** and hosts its capital, Bijistan.

Naturally-forming **water terraces** have drawn-in both farmers and wildlife: camels, ostriches, goats, and their predators: hyenas, winged-foxes and manticores.

When coming to the valley, it is impossible not to be submerged with wonder in the face of **thousands of years of human history**: ruins of unknown kingdoms, ancient battlefields buried centimetres under the sand, and even wall-paintings left by our cave-dwelling ancestors are all commonly found here and fuel a thriving antique market.

Notable creatures living in the valley:

- ❖ **Puntak**: Giant beetles moving in hordes, an aggressive cousin to the domesticated Mumbak milk-beetle. They roll down the sand dunes to attack caravans when they are desperate for food.
- ❖ **Animats**: Forgotten items in the desert or the dark alleys of cities become possessed with spirits and gain consciousness. They take the shape and personality of folklore legends.

Notable sights:

- ❖ **The Pools of Himara**: Large pools of water amidst the sand dunes. They become dangerous when Salt-heavy winds from Anghara are transported here. Reflections from the pools create living mirages, and show you things you deeply desire, for you reach for them and drown.



- ❖ **The secret library of Hemeth**: Legend exists of a secret dimension in which slumbers the dark knowledge and research of the legendary lich-mage Hemeth. The library is supposedly guarded by 2 eternal sentinels.

THE ASHNAAN HIGH PLATEAU



A dangerous place populated by all manners of **demon-descended beasts**, home to semi-intelligent demons and to the king of beasts, the mighty **Roc**: a bird of prey so large it can fly over the ocean and back in a few hours. High in altitude, people coming here say they can hear the sky scream. The plateau contains ancient **holy sites to nomadic minority ethnic groups**.

THE SALT DESERT



The great desert is covered with **white Salt**, meaning its magical potential is quasi-null. However, deposits of rare **blue Salt** have started being discovered near ancient ruins which have reinvigorated interest in the region. It is now a **site of dispute between major powers**.

The surface of the desert harbours **few but powerful spirits and elementals** such as djinns, Salt elementals and malignant clouds that send maddening visions altering the spatial perception of travellers, making them believe they are in free-fall, or on the verge of an infinite abyss, that the sky is upside-down or that the horizon itself is bending.



After storms of malevolent illusion-clouds pass, a thin layer of water covers the surface of the desert and act as a mirror to the sky, a very disorienting and surreal experience.

Shuma ruins

Similar to the ones of Anghara, the ruins of the Salt desert are guarded by myriads of **undead monstrosities and demons**. However, these ones appear much **more dangerous and mystifying**, almost as if they were laboratories of inter-dimensional horror that time itself forgot.

Notable creatures living in the desert:

- ❖ **Shriek-runners**: Alien-looking beasts that can detect any prey from kilometres away

and will shriek while tailing them to attract others of their kin, sometimes for days.

- ❖ **Yoteth**: A lich-transformed eldritch abomination whose domain is accessible through portals in the Shuma ruins.

THE SUNYAB ARCHIPELAGO



A group of **contested islands between Biasarah and Anghara** and home to powerful **tribes of giants**. Led by witches, the giants worship the **supernatural lightning** that regularly strikes the archipelago.

Biasarah has recently created an outpost on the archipelago, hoping to make it a permanent settlement and increase its production of Salt. The Sunyab is also a **refuge to smugglers and pirates** who gather in the infamous city of Rhim.

Notable creatures of the Sunyab:

- ❖ **Minotaurs**: Persecuted by the giants, they have tamed the island-manticore and the lion-maned spotted dog to hunt for them.
- ❖ **The Maha Yashu**: A sacred beast to the giants, a rare stripped goat capable of firing burning beams from its mouth.

Notable sights:

- ❖ **The Pemaha Yashu**: A towering, colossal statue of a Maha Yashu carved in the side of a mountain.
- ❖ **The Sepan Cove**: A cemetery of much wreckage and lost lives. Boats seem magically driven here during storms, the few survivors tell tales too big to be believed, of a light coming from the heavens, of aliens devouring their crew.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population of Biasarah: **16 million**

Population of Bijistan: **0.3 million**

Disposition: Mostly rural, with rapid urbanisation

ACHIEVING HEGEMONY

- ❖ **Typical Biasarih characteristics:**
Somewhat dark skin. Dark hair, can tend to yellow. Dark eyes, can be green.
- ❖ **Minority groups characteristics:** purple eyes, brown hair, lighter skin.



Bisarah's urban demographic has been rapidly increasing in the past 15 years, **most people have abandoned nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles**, the differences between tribes and their territories have disappeared with them.

Ethnic minority groups are not treated equally and are forced to embrace the new revolutionary ways or suffer persecution. Births have been booming with imports of H.A.D.O.C. food making urban lifestyles more reliable.

A sentiment of hope and optimism for the future has swept the nation, alongside more connected people and cities and a **lower emphasis on traditional principles**.



The largest cities besides Bijistan are: Kaljit, Begna, Setif and Munabi. There is a 74% rural population, a number in rapid decline.



Minority ethnic groups in Biasarah are treated as second-class citizens and forced out of their traditional ways.

HISTORY

KINGDOM OF SUN AND MOON

In the old empire, the King and Queen, or Sun and Moon as per their title, would govern alternatively from one solstice to the other. The role was very ritualistic, and the country run mostly by the court.

Eventually, the **Celestial consul**, or supreme leader of the armies, built the palace of Dawn and Twilight, above the palace of the Sun and the palace of the Moon, thus instigating **400 years of dictatorial military rule**. 2000 years later, the 3 palaces can still be seen standing in the renamed capital of Bijistan.

SAFANID DYNASTY

The first large empire and a **golden age** for many: it is at that time that Biasarah had the most international radiation and that the **borders were extended up to the salt desert**, imposing the same language upon the Biasarih peninsula.

King Safanid II is known to be the greatest king of Biasarah's history, wise and benevolent, although he had his brothers, his 2nd wife, 3 of his sons and all his in-laws killed to protect his father's (King Safanid I) legacy from being destroyed by quarrels and coups.

During his rule, he greatly **diminished the power of the aristocracy**, a major source of conflict with his in-laws and sons, **promoted men of talent**, reformed the military, civil and penal codes as well as the system of writing.



Most remembered heroes and generals of Biasarah lived during this period, but eventually, a tradition of inbreeding and wars of successions destroyed the empire.

AGE OF TURMOILS

With the disintegration of the Safanid dynasty came **400 years of infighting**, inbred and incompetent kings, civil and religious wars, wars of successions. This is an age when cousins fought in war against one another, when brothers assassinated one another, when romance and treachery ruled the court.

It is also an **age of great poetry and a major setting of the book of Jordan**. Many major scientific discoveries were made in mathematics, medicine and engineering during that time.

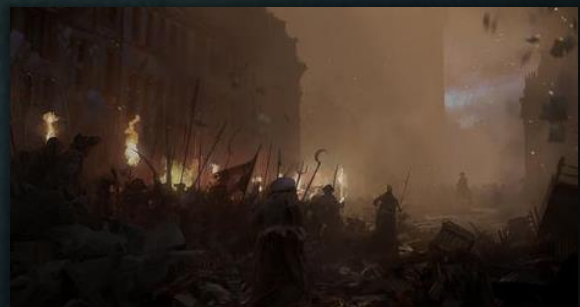
SAFANID REVIVAL

Built around a scion of the house of Safanid, a **dysfunctional attempt at reinstating strong monarchic rule**. After only the 2nd generation, the palace had already turned into a house of depravity and revelry, the king preferring to indulge himself in women, music and liquor over the affairs of the state.

THE GWANAN REVOLUTION, THE ENLIGHTENED SAHANI STATE AND THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF GREATER BIASARAH

The Gwanan revolution started on the eve of the Gwanan festival which celebrates the birthday of the King. From it came the Enlightened Sahani State of Biasarah, governed by **priests and scholars** with the previous king's son and daughter made to marry and serve as puppets.

2 years later, a **military coup and short war** led to the creation of the United Republic of Greater Biasarah, which took advantage of the chaos to absorb some of its smaller neighbours that were still sympathetic with the old monarchy. Today the Republic governs over more than 70% of the Biasarih peninsula. It **joined the H.A.D.O.C. confederation 3 years ago**.



BELIEFS

THE COSMIC GAME OF SUMPOK

The God of Good, **Aramayu**, and the God of Evil, **Amun'Te**, are locked in a game of Sumpok to **battle for the control of the Universe**.

Sumpok is a game of strategy in which two opposing generals try to capture each other's pieces. Each time the two gods play a game, **a world is created and then destroyed**, and the living of that world are the pieces being contested. It is said **the world has thus been created and destroyed 5 times** and that we currently live in the 6th world. When the 9th and final game begins, the two gods will use the pieces they have accumulated in the previous 8 battles for one final showdown to determine the winner.

Sumpok is a very old game and **popular across all classes in Biasarah**. Once every 4 years, a quasi-ritual game is played between the current Grandmaster and a challenger to mimic the cosmic myth. The event lasts for 9 days and is so important to Biasarahi people that even Kings attend it.

DUALISM OF GOOD AND EVIL



Angels and devils are very present in Biasarahi myth. There is an idea in the Biasarahi faith that **what is material is good while what is immaterial is evil**. Thus, a virtuous man is a man who satisfies himself with eating well, having shelter, having land, and having wife and children. A sinful man is one who seeks importance and

hedonistic pleasures, one who speaks but does not act.

It comes to no surprise then that the common Biasarahi have forever held **contempt for the countless incompetent kings and politicians that made their country suffer**.

In myth, angels are traditionally depicted as protective warriors while devils are portrayed as tempting figures who use promises and dreams to turn a man to sin.

- ❖ **Examples of things good:** food, gold, material labour (farmers, builders, engineers...), earth, reptiles, physical power.
- ❖ **Examples of things evil:** pride, visions, immaterial labour (politicians, lawyers, merchants...), wind, birds, influential power (manipulation, bribes, promises...).

THE A'ARAN

The A'aran is the **Grand Design of God**. Biasarahi do not believe themselves to have special importance in the world created by God, they believe they are equal to other animals and nature. A common saying in Biasarah is "Who do you think you are?" regarding some people's opinions that the world revolves around themselves and what they do. The only thing people can do is to **endure and follow their sense of what is good** so that their soul will reach heaven when they die.

The A'aran also justifies why kings are born kings and peasants are born peasants, it is all part of God's carefully ordained plan and it would be presumptuous to go against it.

People of Biasarah see oracles and people who try to gain vision of the future as evil. One should not hear of his own fate because it is arrogant to believe that one could understand the plans of God.

There are many instances in myth of kings hiring oracles and of mages performing rituals to reveal their own future. Each time, what happens to them in the myth would be the worst way of interpreting what was revealed to them: a punishment for trying to know the future.

The Biasarahi do not suffer messiahs and prophets and are wary of all charismatic leaders and of their empty words.

THE DYNASTIES



The most holy scriptures written in the form of poems, verses and prayers. They cover the creation myth, stories of the 5 worlds that came before and the myth of destruction. In other words, The Dynasties is a book that covers the entirety of the history of the Universe.

There is a **very deep connection between priests and the scriptures**, and it is not a responsibility of the common Biasarih to study the Book. The most sacred texts are only accessible to the highest priests.

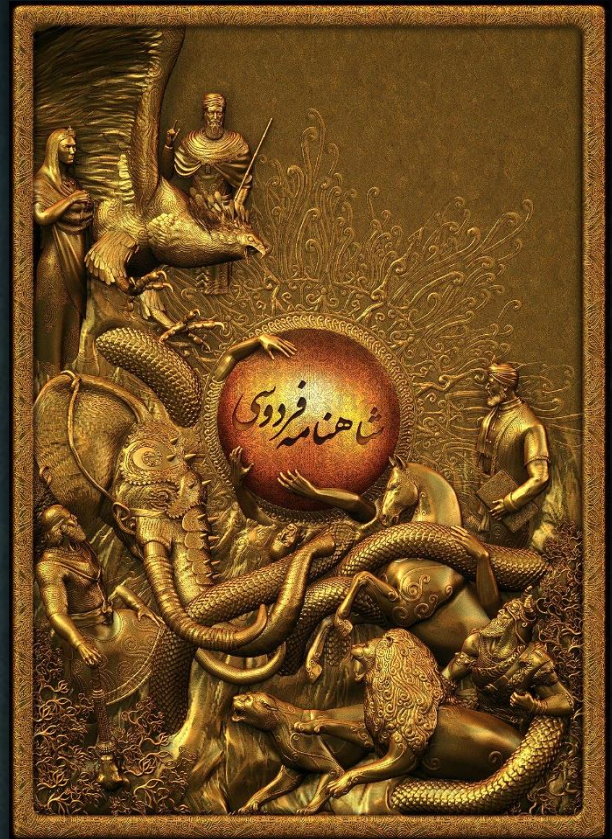
The oldest known copy of The Dynasties is tightly guarded in a temple. It was damaged during the revolution and several pages went missing.

THE BOOK OF JORDAN

The most significant cultural work of Biasarah, The Book of Jordan is a **collection of tales depicting mythical heroes and their adventures**, all of them descendants of a common ancestor: Jordan.

The work serves as a **eulogy to heroism and virtue**. Some of Jordan's descendants were kings,

some were farmers, some were heroes and others were thieves. **The book of Jordan places equal importance on people from all walks of life**, a big reason as to why it became so popular.



The main message of the work is to not trust prophecies because no human can interpret them correctly. **Do not trust prophets and dream-readers, forge your own destiny by following your sense of good instead.**

Sentient objects appear often in the stories of the book, many of them turn out to be devils trying to lead the protagonist astray.

DREAM FORTRESSES

Dreams are dangerous, they open the soul to invading devils and lies. It is believed that dreams can cause physical and mental illness and trap the soul in fictitious realities.

Dream guardians teach (mostly to the affluent and wealthy) to navigate one's own dreams and protect oneself from those dangers. **Invading the dream of one with such mental protections can hurt the intruder's soul.**

SOCIETY

GLORY LIES IN THE REVOLUTION

The elites of society are the government and those working for it. The high prestige of the military is leading many wide-eyed nationalists to enrol. **Military dress is a mark of the elite**, and even among politicians, many dress militaristically or in the more western fashion of the H.A.D.O.C. to show that Biasarah is becoming a modern nation and is to be considered as such.

Conditions of living for the average Biasarih are steadily improving thanks to industrialization, automation and trade with the H.A.D.O.C.



National sentiment is strong even in the rural regions where traditional power figures such as priests are losing importance.

DENUNCIATION OF COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES

One's own social status is directly correlated to one's importance to the state. Even wealthy or learned men are considered poorly when they are believed to hold anti-nationalist or anti-revolutionary sentiments. Sometimes, young nationalists drag such people to the streets to be **publicly shamed and have their property damaged**.

One such incident recently became a hot topic of conversation as it happened to a former palace official who used to be universally held in high esteem. Like him, the **last symbols of the former power and institutions are starting to vanish**.

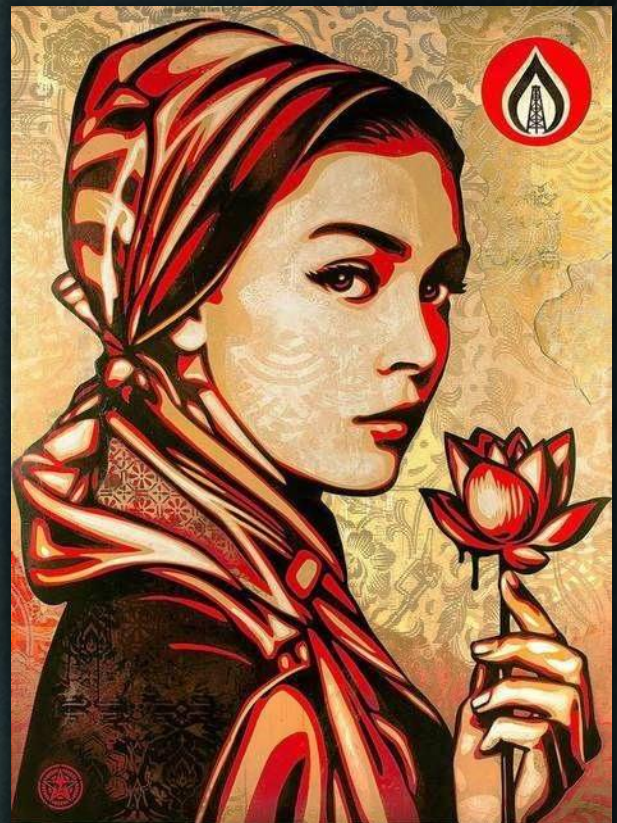
Countries recently absorbed by Biasarah have a harder time accepting their cultural heritage being torn apart and there is a **great divide in opinion between the traditional older generation and their children who hail the revolution**.

CHANGE OF PRACTICES

The **last king of Biasarah**, despite his unpopularity, was a **progressist ruler**. Biasarah had become more open to foreigners, to minority religions and ethnic groups and sexual practices.

Such things are being **fought against since the revolution**. They are considered to be signs of a decadent former cultural elite. **The current sentiment lies towards building hegemony**.

On the other hand, the revolution and industrialization have opened a door **for women labour movements**, encouraging women to come out of the family farm and home to be employed.



The streets and temples of the old city are now covered with revolutionary messages and graffiti. It is regarded badly to go against the revolution.

AFFAIRS

THE NEW LAW

People accused of holding counter-revolutionary sentiments are sometimes faced with **spontaneous mob-justice** which the government is neither reprimanding nor directly encouraging. Technically, political opposition is still legal, but the reality is that **the Party holds supreme power** and has been very efficient at shutting it down.

One of the chief goals of the new government is to **make justice more centralized and equal across all regions and social classes**. The most common punishments are fines, imprisonment and confiscation of property. The state uses deterrence to deal with crimes, promising **harsh punishments**. Its authority is uncontested.



The judges of Biasarah hold tremendous power. They serve the bureau by confiscating the assets of the rich and incarcerating political opponents under bogus charges.

A major recent event was the **6-year-long trials of the former officials of the Enlightened Sahani State** under charges of corruption, betrayal of the nation, collusion with foreign powers, and unjust incarceration of people (to legitimize freeing revolutionary leaders from prison).

THE COST OF REVOLUTIONS

All incomes and productions are controlled and taxed by the state at a high tariff. Most of the revenue is spent **into modernizing the army, recruiting civil servants** through a nationwide test every 6 months, and bringing electricity into the major cities which is proving to be a very costly endeavour with limited benefits so far. There is little funding for transports and education.

INTERNATIONAL AMBITIONS

The recent case of the **Ishani crisis**, wherein Biasarah annexed one of its smaller neighbours without proper cause, showed to the world the **international ambitions of Biasarah and its political savviness**. It came however at the price of eroding the trust of its allies and making Thara an enemy.



Biasarah is a small country, knowing this, its leaders have chosen to play a very **high-level, high-risk political game**.

It is the first nation to make **extensive use of foreign agents and spies** during times of peace. They use tactics such as bribes, blackmail, assassination and the secret backing of opposition and terrorist groups in foreign nations to further their own ends. They even support smugglers in the Sunyab, hoping they will prove more troublesome for Thara than for them.

Their sights are set on **the ultimate prize: the Salt coast of Anghara**. The country is currently lying low, building up its military and infrastructure while waiting for the inevitable chaos to erupt.

Today, Biasarah is treated as a buffer with Thara by its own allies in the H.A.D.O.C. who have little esteem for them. Other nations pay little attention to them, but experts are ringing the first warning bells, not to underestimate the waking phoenix.

ECONOMY

Currency: Rimya (backed by gold)

Economic system: Dirigiste

Main Employment: Farming and herding

EMERGING INDUSTRY

Most of the country still lives in rural areas and is dependent on **self-sustaining agriculture**.

- ❖ **The typical Biasarh diet consists of:** fermented food, lamb, root vegetables, beetle-milk and fermented beetle-milk.
- ❖ **Delicacies enjoyed by the elite include:** dates, honey, pheasant and phoenix meat, spiced wine.

In cities, the reliability of **import food and modern medicine from the H.A.D.O.C.** have helped to severely reduce infant mortality.

After successive revolutions, many Biasarh are still **unemployed or in grave poverty**. Despite that, there is great faith in the state and optimism for the future. The state has a heavy hand in guiding the country's economic direction and is very active in trying to make Biasarah a modern country. **Great attention is given to the rural areas** with the installations of water pumps, factories and rural hospitals.



Despite general quality of life improvements, **few opportunities are available for the workers**, with

private banking being underdeveloped and resources being controlled by the government.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO SALT

Joining the H.A.D.O.C. was instrumental to Biasarah's quick industrialization. Technologies from the H.A.D.O.C. propose an alternate source of power to Salt, as well as **hybrid systems that do not rely on demonology** but instead on making use of heat and pressure to extract energy from the Salt. From its unique geographical position, Biasarah can find advantages in developing both fields.

ARTISTIC MANUFACTURE

Biasarh artisans are renowned for the quality and artistry of their products. The country produces and exports brass, has access to gold, copper, other metals, precious stones and dies.

With those, they **make jewellery, clockwork, and artistic metallurgy** for everyday goods and small automata. Biasarah cannot produce strong enough alloys, does not have access to enough Salt nor possesses enough expertise in demonology to rival Thara's living armours and other feared automata, but **Biasarh artisans are creative and meticulous**.

Many wondrous and beautiful creations come out every day of the **Brass Street** in Bijistan, where amateur and professional automata-makers gather to create, tinker and experiment.



Biasarh engineers and artisans are gaining fame and recognition very rapidly despite the field of automata-making being very young in Biasarah.

TECHNOLOGY

CARAVANS AND DEMON COMPASSES

Travel in Biasarah remains difficult and dangerous. People stick with slow caravans to travel safely between cities. Railroads have proved challenging to construct due to the difficult terrain and dangerous wildlife.

The military has developed its own motorized equipment with help from the H.A.D.O.C. but cannot rival that of Thara.



- ❖ **Demon compasses:** Able to detect the presence of Salt, these magical devices can warn caravans of nearby dangers.
- ❖ **Cyphers:** Small animats used in the military, they can play a recorded message when given the proper password.

ENCHANTED PROSPHETICS

In the Brass Street of Bijistan, engineers have developed a way to **enchant prosthetic limbs and give them life**. Users describe it as like having a second person in your body, sometimes the limb can have a mind of its own. However, the technology is rapidly advancing and there is already an **enthusiastic community behind it**. Some of them take it very far and modify their entire bodies.

ELEMENTAL WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION

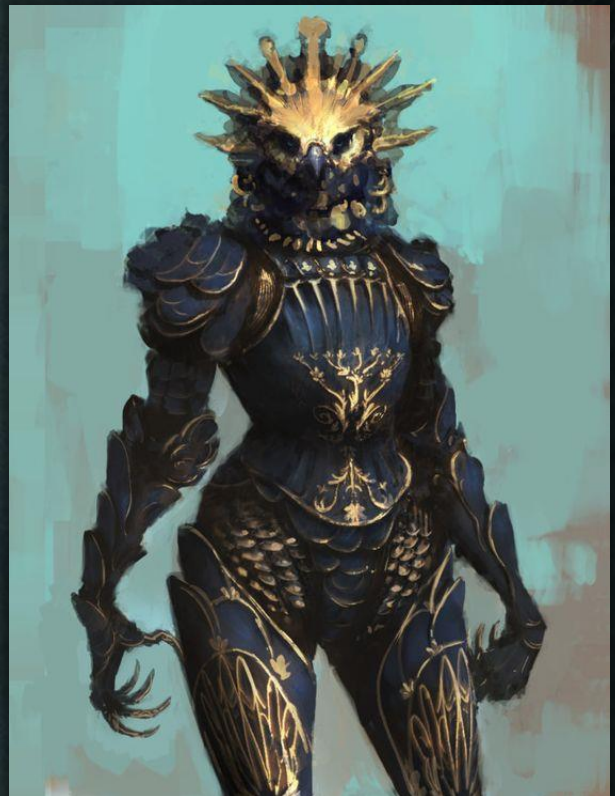
The Bureau knows fully well that their military will never rival that of Thara. They have thus decided to **secretly lead a research program to harness the power of great elementals**. If successfully developed, such weapons could very well have the potential to **ravage entire regions**.

ARMY OF SPIES AND ELITES

Biasarah's military is quickly becoming **one of the most modern armies in the region**. Above the inexperienced young men who join for the glory of the revolution are groups of **disciplined veterans with decades of war experience**.

Biasarah uses **modern and innovative tactics** of guerrilla warfare, tactical strikes and long-range artillery capable of firing from kilometres away.

Biasarah uses guns, canons, and an extensive network of spies. It is developing a modern navy to compete for the control of the Sunyab.



Famed military groups of Biasarah:

- ❖ **The Eagle Guard:** The most elite force of Biasarah. Heavily armoured tactical squadrons, they are the remnants of an illustrious mercenary order charged with the protection of the King.
- ❖ **The Mirages:** Terrors of the desert, a company of elementalists and illusionists used for stealth operations. They once were able to lock down an entire enemy division with an illusionary ambush while they were away attacking their main camp.

POLITICS

THE BUREAU

The bureau is the **executive council at the head of Biasarah's government**. The **Premier and 10 other members** dictate the line of the Party in all affairs. Elections are held every 8 years to appoint the premier. The first such election will happen very soon, on the 8th anniversary of the revolution. Many eyes are on this election as the way it unfolds will have **heavy repercussions for the direction in which Biasarah is heading**. Some in the educated class fear the current Premier will not tolerate opposition and use his power to control the results.

THE CONGRESS

152 congressmen, selected within the Party, gather periodically in the **Garmin Assembly** to discuss and vote on regional matters. Pressure on congressmen is very high as they may be revoked from office at any moment by order of the Bureau.

There is a very **cutthroat and ultra-competitive atmosphere** in congress as each member battles to produce better results than others for the region they oversee.

The **General Secretary** is in charge of distributing jobs between congressmen. The position is highly corrupt, as the nature of a job can make or break a congressman's career.

INWARD SUSPICIONS

The **secret police** and the **ethics committee** control freedom of speech and the image of the Party in the press.

In reality, they are responsible for the **assassinations** of many political dissidents, for planting evidence to accuse rich and powerful figures to benefit the Party, and for the disappearances of a great number of people that were, in one way or another, a hindrance to Party policy. It is suspected the ethics committee **is responsible for more than 40 000 deaths and disappearances** over the course of the past 8 years. It strikes terror even in the Congress and the Bureau.

The ethics committee was very efficient in getting rid of the iconography, symbols and even people

that represented the former regimes. The only thread still alive of a counter-revolutionary movement is the **Sahani government in exile** in Aksum, and their supporters in Biasarah are becoming rarer by the day.



BIJISTAN: OLD MAN OF THE DESERT

The old capital of Biasarah has been renamed many times. More than 2000 years of history can be felt in this city. The buildings of white sandstone are painted with dies and are a mark of Biasarih artistry.



New regulations and materials are slowly changing the cityscape which was damaged during the recent successive revolutions. Eventually, the **government would like to build a new capital**.

Notable spots in Bijistan:

- ❖ **The covered lantern market:** which gave birth to the Brass Street. Thousands of lanterns pave the road like a constellation.
- ❖ **The palaces of the Sun, Moon, and Dawn and Twilight:** referred in literature and art throughout the ages.
- ❖ **The Garmin Assembly:** Construction of this building started in the Sahani period and ended after the second revolution. It is a mix of styles and ideas that oscillate between grotesque and splendid.

THARA: EMPIRE OF THE SEA



CHARACTERISTICS

Governance: **Constitutional monarchy**

Level of technology: **High**

Attitude towards Magic: **Covet. Weaponize**

General Environment: **Volcanic archipelago.**

A young empire that descended on the world 80 years ago with the **superior technology of the Machine Cult**. Now at the head of a vast **colonial empire**, the Salt Coast of Anghara is its most prized possession as well as its biggest headache, rife with political instability.

At home, the nation's **ultra-liberal and meritocratic ideology** have waned the power of

the emperor and aristocracy, while that of the **Machine Cult and Mafias** have grown to dangerous levels. The empire's **aggressive ambitions** and the many disputes between its shadowy organizations menace to tear it apart in the near future.



HABITAT

ASHEN LANDS

Part of the **northern Lundra island** is constantly covered in the ash of the **Fuma volcano**. The Ashen Lands is where people do not go. Strong superstitions have made it a **bed for spirits**, and demonic activity is mostly left unchecked.

The Ashen Lands are known for supposedly being the **final resting place of the Source**: Thara's mythical creator deity. Tall ashen giants called **mourners** wander the land, believed to grieve the loss of their creator for eternity. They are extremely rare and powerful; most people do not even believe they truly exist.



Streaks of lava scar the land, sometimes the unique source of light during heavy ash storms. These are known as the blood of the Source.

Notable creatures living in the Ashen Lands:

- ❖ **Tekopa slug**: A giant slug able to reach into your mind and create doppelganger illusions of people you know. Its skin is a powerful hallucinogen and medicine.

- ❖ **Ash crabs**: Once a year, a colossal migration of crabs happens here. They lay their eggs in the ash. Male crabs become big through social competition, some even mutate to become the size of a house.

Notable sights:

- ❖ **Ash storms**: During the violent ash storms, all life goes in hiding waiting for it to pass. The mourners start wailing and can be heard from kilometres away.
- ❖ **The tears of Fuma**: At night during spring, small creatures in the ash shine blue during full moons; a quite beautiful and common theme of poetry in the region.

FAE LANDS

In their own local language, Thara literally means "Land of the Fae". This island is the **most populated** of the archipelago and gave its name to it. While most of Thara's nature has been claimed by the islanders, the series of small islands surrounding it and the inner **dense jungles** are still teeming with wildlife, including species of raptors, giant land sloths, manticores and fireflies.

Lake Massapi

At the heart of Thara lies Lake Massapi, historically **forbidden to most**, it is where the winter palace of the emperor was built in the tradition of other rulers of the past. It is most famous for the giant lotus and the tribes of mushroom-humanoids that live nearby.



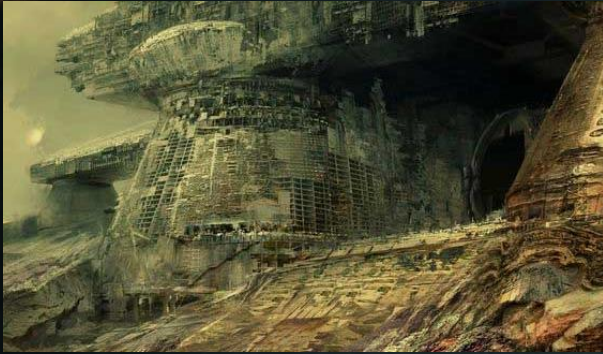
Notable creatures of the Fae Land:

- ❖ **The axolotl**: They live in the many grottos of Thara. Hunted for traditional medicine.
- ❖ **The phase-ape**: Able to travel between physical dimensions at the blink of an eye, they can prove very annoying when stealing from you.

LUMANG

Large but **scarcely inhabited**, Lumang is used by the Machine Cult to conduct **experiments** and for Thara' own **production of Salt**. The lowlands of Lumang are a **wasteland of volcanic sulfuric activity**. Geysers sprinkle the landscape and eject the wanted yellow Salt. The few beasts that dare live here include: giant cockroaches, snap-jaw turtles and giant toxic toads.

The Pranapeshwe laboratory



A 40km radius around the now unoccupied Pranapeshwe laboratory is now **covered with an unbreathable yellow miasma**, following an experiment turned wrong of the Machine Cult 9 years ago.

Dangerous **mutant creatures** sometimes come out of this area and rumours abound that the miasma is in fact a cover-up from the Cult to hide even darker secrets.

Indeed, inside the laboratory itself, **research continues**, performed by a skeleton crew of mutated and mechanized scientists on the former workers of the facility, on a quest to unlock the human potential.



Pamir Kan, former chief scientist of the lab

Volcanoes

Higher in altitude, the active volcanoes of Lumang perpetually scorch the land, in few other places in the world can a battle between powerful elementals be seen as clearly as here. Master demonologists come here to tame dragons, and the Machine Cult uses the hot magma to produce the strongest of steels.

High plateaux



The **highest spot in the archipelago** is home to a **powerful tribe of demons**. They never come out of their **sacred land**, choosing to hunt and worship in their own territory. Intrepid warriors have in the past tried to challenge their strength against them and failed, building for them a reputation of godlike prowess. Theirs is a **martial society led by warrior-priests**. They worship the **Great Mouth of Gamon**, a gigantic fleshy pit at the highest peak of Lumang, with food and sacrifice.



DEMOGRAPHICS

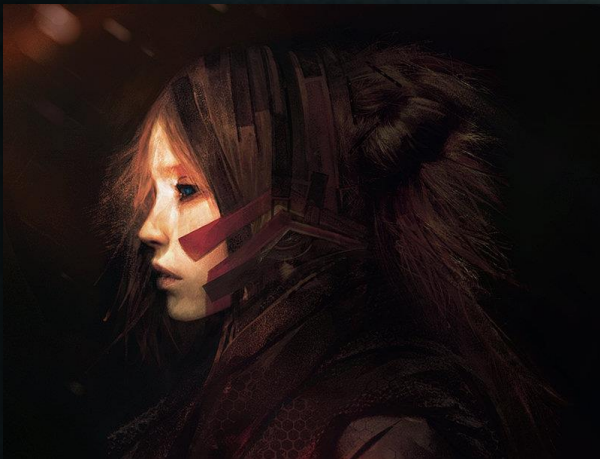
Thara Archipellago: **67 million**

Anghara Colony: **216 million**

Other Colonies Combined: **87 million**

PEOPLE OF A THOUSAND ISLANDS

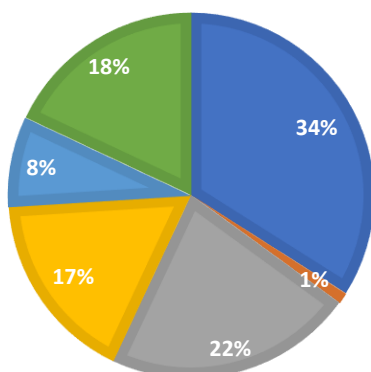
- ❖ **Typical Tharanese characteristics:** Slightly smaller in size than people of the continent, black, dark blue, white or red hair, black eyes, somewhat light skin.



There are roughly 12 370 islands in the Tharanese archipelago, 820 of which are inhabited by more than 30 people. The 5 largest islands in size are: Thara, Lundra, Pwera, Julindra and Lumang. They are collectively referred to as “**Lanra**” (Major land). The other minor islands are grouped together and commonly referred to as “**Minra**” (Shallow land).

POPULATION PER ISLAND

■ Thara ■ Lumang ■ Pwera
■ Julindra ■ Lundra ■ Minra



GREAT URBANISATION

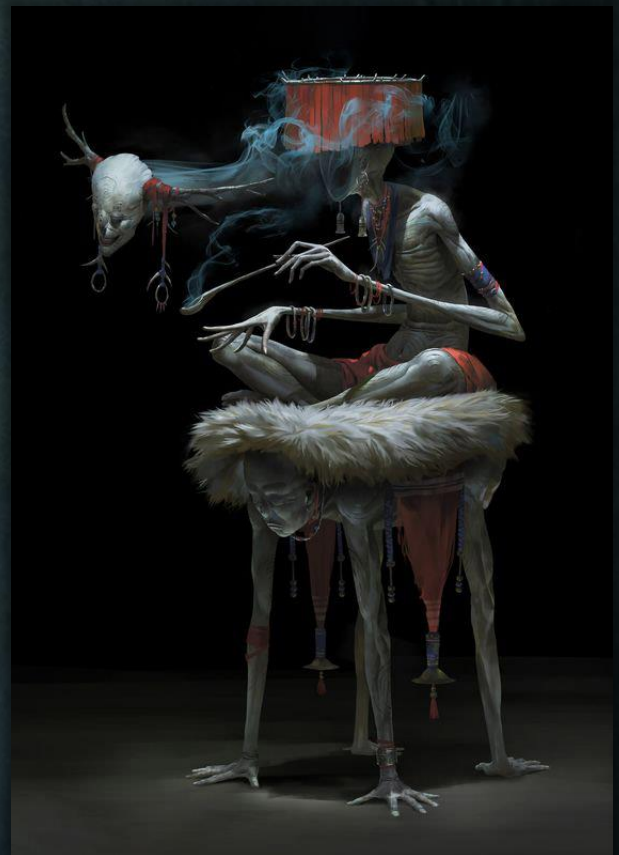
The modern age has seen a **great increase in the total and urban populations** of the archipelago.

Because of this large urbanization, many of the smaller islands are becoming deserted. On the other side, Pwera has become the most densely populated island of the archipelago, benefiting from **prime access to colonial imports of food and common Salt**. It is now the economic centre of the empire and where the highest concentration of migrants resides.

Thara itself, while still the most populated island, is now regarded primarily as the political centre of the empire.

INTELLIGENT DEMONS LIVING IN THARA

Thara prides itself in its liberal ideals. **Some intelligent demons are tolerated to live among the populace**, although they are required to have a guardian responsible for them. This can make Thara an eerie and otherworldly place to visit for the unprepared.



In Thara, some demons live alongside humans

HISTORY

AGE OF DISCOVERY

Legendary explorer Fu Sempe is famous in history for having led one of the largest mercantile fleets the world has ever seen on one of the longest sea voyages of the time. During that period, Thara was ruled by a **coalition of princedoms** loosely tied together under a powerless court of eunuchs and emperor (the divine son). **Its regional power was weak but its international prestige high.**

AGE OF ISOLATION

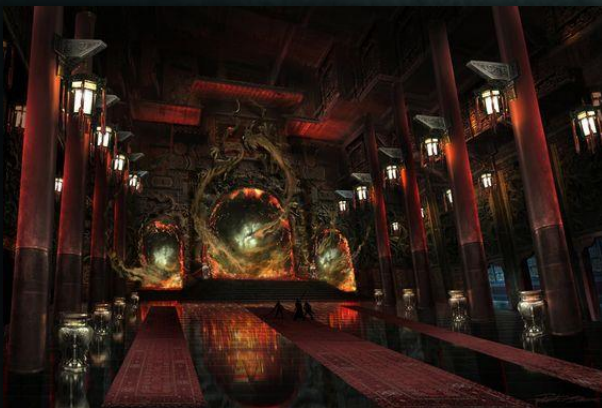
Following successive failed military campaigns, a general of the army orchestrated a coup and changed the dynasty, imposing on the kingdom a strong policy of isolationism and **traditional military rule.**

Towards the end of that period, Thara was a **land of mystery** to the outer world. The imperial court was shrouded in secrecy, with tales of crazy rulers, vampirism and demon worshipping.

PSUNKYUNG DYNASTY

Eventually, rebellions and outside powers forced the Kingdom into **reopening its frontiers and becoming a vassal to a more powerful neighbour.** A court of corrupt eunuchs and a puppet emperor were installed to serve that nation's interests.

Despite that, Thara was entering an **age of enlightenment**, with great advances in science and technology: gunpowder, a greater understanding of anatomy and demonology.



START OF A MODERN EMPIRE

On the day that was fated to him by a dream-reader more than a decade ago, **Duke Sha Sunge** finally betrayed the occupying force while it was at war with another nation. His carefully prepared plan of action comprised of a simultaneous attack on 6 different fronts while he himself went and took the emperor hostage. In the span of three days, he forced all the other dukes into submission and together they **booted the occupying force out of the country.**

Following that came a **15-year long conquest of the entirety of Thara and its neighbouring islands**, in the process of which he crowned himself emperor. He died prematurely under mysterious circumstances, short of fulfilling his ambitions. His eldest son ascended the throne, only to be contested by his 4 other brothers.

In a war that turned out very surprising both in its result and very short duration, the 4th son of the former emperor secured a decisive victory and became emperor after executing his brothers.

Emperor Sha Yi would continue to rule for another 44 years and was the **first ruler to ever bring hegemony to the entire archipelago.** Under his reign came unprecedented technological innovation and the **rise to power of the Machine Cult**, alongside rapid expansionism and the conquest of Anghara.



With the archipelago for the first time united, Thara was now able to project the might of its fearsome navy outwards

8 years ago, Sha Yi mysteriously disappeared. His son had committed suicide a few years ago, leaving only his 8-year-old grandson to take the throne, at which point the current chancellor became the new regent. Sha Yi was 68 years old.

BELIEFS

THE SOURCE

The first being. Everything that the Source touched came to life, everything that his breath, his sweat, his urine, his tears and other bodily fluids touched also came to life. **All life in the world comes from the Source.** The Tharanese believe they trace their origin from the Source's own blood, that they are its **purest descendance**.

THE BLOOD CULT



Purity of blood is a very important concept to Thara's ancient religions and still holds a lot of importance today. The recent and misunderstood scientific discoveries in genetics serve as an umbrella for the **revitalization of extreme traditional views** around which gather the more secular politicians and scholars. Such movements who try to "protect the purity of the empire" create

a rise in homophobia and xenophobia, especially against the rapidly expanding migrant populations.

The Blood Cult is the **religious organization who worships the emperor as the purest descendant of the Source**. The eunuchs who formed the court of the empire for millennia and still occupy the palace today are part of the Cult.

HUMANITARIAN LIBERALISM

While traditional customs are still practiced today, especially in the yet rural areas, **there never was an organized Church to lead the people**. Temples were reserved to monks and the rest would practice their faith in the confines of their own home.

Today, the faith leading the empire is humanitarian liberalism: the belief that one should follow not the advice of a scripture or a priest but instead of **one's own feelings** to determine what he should do in life. **Being unique is encouraged**, and there is no shortage of eccentric characters in Thara, whether in the rich or poor populations.

All intelligent life is respected as an individual, which means even intelligent demons are tolerated to live in the empire to an extent.



Some demons of Thara live inside puppets to give themselves a human appearance

DREAM DIVINATION

It is a common thing to want to know one's own fate. Prying into another's dreams, an oneiromancer may try **to interpret those dreams to predict the future**. The practice works best when the subject is emotionally open and relaxed, so the divination often serves as an extra service for prostitutes. It is not uncommon for friends to talk about their dreams with one another and try to make their own interpretation of them together.

SOCIETY

OLD POWER, NEW POWER

There is **great social mobility** in Thara, especially through joining the army or receiving education at the Imperial university of Thara which creates many scholars and researchers as well as top executives. However, most of the **top positions are still locked behind noble titles or great wealth** in a power dynamic that balances both the stability of traditional institutions and the energy of a meritocratic society.



Those in high society love to consume exotic produce from the colonies such as sugar, coffee, and of course rare salt. They often hold social gatherings for degustation, getting high, and discourse on political, scientific and social issues, inviting the leaders in these fields to partake. Between noble families, it is not uncommon to inter-marry between cousins.

LIBERAL INDIVIDUALISM

The nation is seen as a vehicle for personal greatness. People of Thara are not overly nationalistic and keep pride in regional cultural identities, from before Thara was united. What unites the people is the strength of their empire. **Strength is considered to be the foremost**

virtue to Tharanese people. So long as the empire is strong, its people will remain united. The empire has practiced a policy of cultural laissez-faire regarding the colonies, **encouraging integration but not forcing it.** This created a great diversity of culture in Thara itself through migration.

People are free to voice their opinions and practice whichever talent or custom they wish. Eccentricity seems to be a national sport among all social classes. Whether it be in dress, discourse, sexual orientation or other things, **individuality is respected.**



POLITICAL INSTABILITY

The Assembly, army and Machine Cult are the 3 pillars of the nation, and tensions between them have recently started to get high.

Recent hot topics of conversation include stories of migrants committing crimes and profiting at the expense of Tharan workers, rising violent right-wing movements, and the invisible war between the Assembly and the Machine Cult and the powerful mafias that influence them both.

In response to traditionalist right-wing movements, some in the empire express their worry that Thara's aggressive expansionism may be unsustainable and that soon the nation may find itself without allies when it needs them. 8 years after the fact, people are still gossiping about **conspiracy theories** surrounding the mysterious disappearance of the last emperor.

AFFAIRS

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

The attitude of Thara towards justice is fairly lax, it trusts its citizens to deal with conflict by themselves if able. **The legal system is but one way to approach matters.** Other means of settling things include financial compensation and **honour duels** (rarely to the death). The mafia and recently-established police department make sure that everything stays fair and orderly.

Common punishments involve **finest and incarceration.** Migrants and people from rural areas or outer provinces may not benefit from the same kind of rights or level of attention as the urban worker. In the same way, **powerful and rich people are expected by everyone to be treated with preference.**

OPERATION TAX AND AWE

Thara has made great efforts in improving the lives of its citizens through public transportation, education and services including running water and electricity. **The tax system is well-documented and efficient,** allowing for the maintenance of a strong army and the development of **great urban projects** in the imperial style to maximize efficiency and inspire awe towards the empire.



AN OUTSTRETCHED EMPIRE

Tharanese diplomats are famous for being arrogant and unfair in their dealings, which makes it all the more frustrating when having to deal with their military. After such a long campaign of expansionism, other nations have started feeling exhausted at the idea of having to deal with Thara.



Tharanese diplomats are treated with great fear and respect, and also great aggravation

The empire has led a campaign of aggressive expansionism for over half a century now, creating **many overseas territories and many enemies.** The expansion has been slowing down severely for the last decade now and many claim it was being unsustainable long before that. **Tensions are starting to rise between the mainland and the colonies and between Tharanese people and migrants.**

The prime worry lies with the Angharan Salt Coast, politically unstable and ogled by many foreign powers, it menaces to plunge into chaos.

Leadership concerning foreign policy is currently indecisive with the growing instability between the 3 powers of the military, the Assembly and the Machine Cult. Many fear drastic things may happen at the approaching end of the Chancellor's mandate of 16 years.

Despite its unpopularity with foreign governments, Thara has played a large role in the spread of liberal humanism and the push towards modernity. It benefits from a **large international cultural influence** because of that.

ECONOMY

Currency: Jian (backed by silver)

Economic system: Liberal

Main Employment: Industrial production & manufacture

FOOD REVOLUTION

People used to live on a very tight diet of rice and fish. Now they have access to more **varied and bountiful food**, as well as canned and industrial goods. Food and cuisine have gained a lot more importance since the country gained access to exotic foods from its overseas colonies and revolutions in **cold storage** management.

There is a craze for sugar and coffee. Very high-end cuisine has started to emerge, trying a modern take on food using exotic produce and high-quality Salts as condiments.

Very few people die of hunger anymore although poverty still exists in and around the cities, with **child labour** continuing despite its ban a few decades ago.

STEEL AND SALT

Automation through demonology was a great boon to manufacture, allowed by the creation of stronger alloys and a great influx of Salt to the archipelago. **Manufacture and services** have become the main form of employment in an ever-more **urban** Thara.

The main production of industry is in steel and industrial food. Large brands have started to appear and gain a lot of adoption with great competition, taking over smaller businesses.

Revolutions in the **division of labour and specialized tools** have greatly increased productivity and Thara now exports a large amount of its manufactured steel products. However, Tharanese companies do not care much for making very high-quality products, preferring **quantity over quality**, the industry is mainly fuelled by executive greed.

VELVET TIGERS

A new social class of **wealthy investors** has risen, surnamed the Velvet Tigers. Such wealthy clans and families have gathered in **politically-oriented**

circles and form a large part of the third head of the Machine-Cult: private investment. They are also known for running a large part of the **money-lending business**.



Sama Ya Ape, "Velvet Tiger", leader of the Ape syndicate

The power of Velvet Tigers is kept well within the family and top executives often take **blood-oaths of brotherhood and loyalty to the main family**. Such organizations have a lot of importance in the rules of business and city management (construction, loaning, public services...). Many of them are **tied to the mafias** when they are not downright leading them.

The Machine Cult has ownership over certain technologies and makes them illegal for others to make. The mafias were initially created as a response to this situation. Thanks to them, great innovations and banned technologies are available on the black market. The mafias control one of the 3 heads of the machine cult: the private investment sector, making them hard to deal with.

TECHNOLOGY

THE POWER OF MAGITECH

With the production of **stronger alloys**, binding powerful demons to objects became possible, giving birth to innovations like the locomotive, motorized boats, zeppelins and automata-driven carriages among others.



Travel inland and between islands is safe within the archipelago. Banditry is high-inexistent and there is **free movement of people and goods**. A current experiment ongoing at the Imperial academy is trying to make warp-travel possible, so far with no positive results. The telegraph is a good way to communicate between islands through a network of submarine cables.



DEMONOLOGY

Demonology is the process of **summoning a demon or tying a demon's soul to an object**: this is how things like locomotives and automatons are powered in Thara. Such magical technologies are heavily controlled by the Machine Cult and many of them rendered **illegal** for anyone else to make, such as living armours.

Demonology requires large consumption of energy; reason why **rare Salts are favoured** as they make the process more stable. Once a demon has been summoned or a soul affixed it will remain so forever. The more powerful the will of a demon, the more difficult he is to control or

summon. Such rituals can be applied on animals too but doing so on humans has been strictly prohibited throughout all civilization.

Elemental demonology: Summoning elementals is an experimental and little practiced field. Elementals are impossible to control and extremely powerful and dangerous. Tharan demonologists have been experimenting in using elementals for generators and weapons of mass destruction but seem to have abandoned research after multiple failures.

ARMY OF STEEL

Thara's military is the **most modern and experienced in the world**. Their navy is unmatched, but they lack infantry power when compared to large land nations. They prefer instead to experiment with new forms of technology and tactics, creating **many exotic units and regiments**. Tharanese soldiers are all professionals. It is required for all adult males to serve a **3-year military service**. Some governmental positions are locked behind even further military service. Thara likes to wage short wars and the use of shock troops.

Ground:

The standard Tharan soldier is a rifleman. Tactical units use mortars, flamethrowers, toxic gas or repeating heavy-rifles. Artillery and mechanical units include: Proto-tanks: heavy-gun mounted on an armoured carriage drownd by a demon-infused wheel. Salt-powered cannons, salt rail-guns. The fleuron of Thara's military is the Machine Cult's **living armours**, equipped with heavy weaponry, seemingly immortal and immune to fear, they are the ultimate soldiers. One unit of them is enough to wipe out an entire infantry battalion with ease.



Thara's automata are feared throughout the world

Most technology used by the military belongs to the Machine Cult and many special units are under their direct supervision, limiting the military's use of them to important situations. As such, **the army has become more and more dependent on the machine cult in recent years.**



Famed groups:

- ❖ **Death Wardens:** soldiers deployed inside living armours, they benefit from the qualities of both machine and human. There are less than 40 in the entire army.
- ❖ **Blight ghosts:** an expert battalion of shock infantry and raptor grenade-cavalry, specialized to attack the enemy immediately after the use of toxic gas. They earned their fame when defeating a force 40 times their size which had been lying in ambush in a mountain pass.
- ❖ **The forcemasters, 186th infantry regiment:** they once were able to maintain a forcefield around an entire fortress over 3 weeks, protecting it from enemy artillery long enough for reinforcements to come and submerge the enemy.

Air:

Thara is the first nation to have developed an air-force, mainly used for reconnaissance and the dropping of tactical troops, twice used to summon powerful elementals deep in enemy territory (both instances caused the death of hundreds of thousands, including that of the summoners).

The dropping of living armour units over enemy lines has proved very effective and has become a classic tactic in the Tharan general's handbook. The low altitude airships are yet able to fly at makes them still of small use.

Navy:

Thara's navy is formed of many large and powerful Salt-powered boats mounted with cannons and thousands of troops, **most of Thara's soldiers are part of the navy.** They are always the first to engage at the start of a new war.



Famed groups:

- ❖ **The 44th island regiment:** amphibian units able to attack boats from underneath and land on beaches undetected. They are most effective during night attacks.
- ❖ **The 6th technological regiment:** experts in the use of marine mines and radar technology, they are dispatched over many theatres to aid where their expertise can come in use.
- ❖ **The 3rd Eastern fleet:** Led by general Zhan Pien, the oldest and most decorated living Tharan general, this fleet is famous for its heavy use of overseas troops. It has been a leader by example of successful integration of conquered populations.

POLITICS

DIVISION OF POWERS

There are **5 political powers** in Thara: The Imperial Assembly (legislative), the imperial government ruled by a chancellor (executive), the Imperial Courts (judicial). The Machine Cult (academia and technology). The imperial agency of control (establishes sanctions and controls the flow of salt).

The **358 imperial assemblymen** are elected through a party-list proportional representation system, the **chancellor** (head of government) is recommended within the majority party and appointed by the emperor. He is supposed to represent the interests of the emperor and appoints his ministers. The chancellor receives a renewable mandate of 8 years. The current chancellor has been at his position for 15 years and served as regent for the past 8 years for the emperor is still 16. Many fear what could happen at the end of his mandate with him being too old to continue. The imperial courts form a self-governing body headed by **7 chief justices**.

THE MACHINE CULT



The machine cult is said to have **3 heads**:

1. **The Blood Cult**: the crown and the eunuchs who oversee the research and development branch of the machine cult and parts of academia. Decide what is ethic and what is not.
2. **The Steel Cult**: enforces the cult's exclusive right to certain technologies and oversees their uses. Forms a branch of the army.
3. **Private investment**, governed by a board of shareholders, influences the direction the cult is going and its governance.

Each branch is independent from the other and self-governing. The Cult, in addition to private investment, is funded by the state depending on a budget agreed to by the assembly. **The assembly holds the responsibility of keeping the Machine Cult's power and influence in check** through deciding its budget in both money and Salt as well as imposing regulations through the imperial agency of control which it supervises.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DISSIDENTS

The liberal economy of Thara has left some among the urban workers unable to compete with cheap migrant or colonial labour. **Movements rise to promote the rights of the proletariat and challenge the current status quo** between what they believe to be an inapt Assembly and a corrupt Machine Cult. Some **violent groups** even go so far as to train fighters in the deep jungle and its grottos to one day orchestrate a revolution.

THAJUNA: CITY OF GLASS AND IRON

Thara's traditional architecture is built mostly with **volcanic stone and bamboo**, using motifs of waves and the moon. Modern imperial style contrasts this with **multi-coloured glass and cast-iron**, a squarish architecture that tends to be tall, bulky and awe-inspiring. The imperial style is centred around being able to gather large amounts of people at key places and an efficient urban layout for transportation and circulation. The capital is a **port city**, extremely crowded and sprawling. Part of it is traversed by a large river that feeds into multiple canals and serves as a main road of circulation for goods and people.



- ❖ **Famous buildings include**: the Imperial University of Magic and Science, the Star-bathed Plaza and its Gates of Heaven, the Imperial Museum of Human Arts and the Northbright Thajuna Station among others.