
the utmost west

AND THE ENDING ISLES

TÁKIWAT OF WHUTOA (19 H/HM)

Takriki Haki VIII, Rangatira Nuatam, Roriki of Kuatoa and Kúre, Master of the Isles.

Lord Admiral Toángen, Shark of Moonsea, Master of the Holy Tamkuára Armada.

Trade: DE, Gúako, Rangkua, Rotkarru, Woangnen

DP: Kitwhu (F)



Takriki Haki VIII left his capital for lands unknown. Meanwhile, his brother Crown Prince Háu went to the far-off island of Kitwhu. Despite wild stories that the headless inhabitants have faces in the middle of their chests, he found them quite normal and friendly, though some of the elder women kept pinching him. One of them remarked that he seemed “very tender”.

The victorious Admiral Toángen and his mighty fleet returned from the war and made port at Moonsea, a city that was so far in arrears in paying its taxes that the city fathers didn't remember where they were supposed to send them. The Admiral took possession of the city (and incidentally the region of Kungi) and created a “holy fleet” charged with protecting and securing trade routes across the Whutoan holdings.

He named them the *Tamkuára Armada* after a kind of fast northern shark that travels in compact groups.

Kiáhik, hero of the Red Death and apprentice of Mágua Mangod of War, visited Hedgecape and firmed up support for the Church in Whutoa. One day while he walked through the market square, an elderly crone approached him for alms. As Kiáhik pressed a silver coin into her hands, she spoke in a loud, clear voice, “behold, the generosity of a true prince! A pity he doesn't even know his true name.” At the time, Kiáhik dismissed her comment as the ravings of a madwoman, but his sleep was troubled for many days after.

Whutoa's Naval quality improved, huzzah!

KINGDOM OF GÚAKO (20 H/HM)

His Serene Majesty, King Róngo VII, Rangatira Wangri, Takriki of Darkford, and Orikei of all Gúako.

Kiriáre the Sinister, Grand Master of the Order of the Serpent's Blood.

Trade: DE, Rangkua, Rotkarru, Whutoa, Woangnen

DP: None.



Gúako founded the double port town of Brighthelm in Tuámmo, along with a new fortress for the Order of the Serpent's Blood there, which they named Rerúawar. Grandmaster Kiriáre the Sinister conducted inspections of the new fortress in 548 and spent several years hammering the new Order into fighting shape.

The venerable King Rúru II died in 549, just after his 71st birthday after a reign of more than forty years. His eldest surviving son, Prince Róngo, smoothly ascended the throne as King Róngo VII.

The Gúakoan people are of decidedly mixed feelings about the ascent of the Dread Emperor. King Róngo, however, is on board.

Following the usual temple sacrifices, the easily impressed chieftain of the tributary island of Whehméto proclaimed an alliance with Gúako.

Infantry quality improved, and the military school at Tengi expanded.

TÁKIWAT OF RANGKUA (9 H/HM)

Takriki Iháka of Rangkua, the Old and Irascible.

Trade: DE, Gúako, Whutoa, Woangnen

DP: Wuátta (A)



Iháka celebrated his 75th birthday in 550, still hale and as irascible as ever. Crown Prince Ikaróto continued to display remarkable patience as he awaited his time on the throne. At this point, there are few alive who remember a time before Iháka's rule.

The mighty Rúru Two-Spears journeyed into the treacherous and mysterious forest of Rengu on a great quest. Sadly, he was never heard from again.

An attempt to colonize the forests of Terénha nearly ended in disaster after a famine in the first year. There were simply not enough people to do all the work needed to make the colony successful. Then, a miracle! Following sacrifices to the New Gods, the fruit trees of the region gave forth their fruit in abundance, both in and out of season, for several years. The fledgling colony succeeded despite its own poor planning (2131)H.

The quaint port town of Orthiad rose in the northwest corner of the jungles of Kuákwhi on the Moána a Whakamutúnga.

Oh, and there was something about a dragon.

Naval quality improved.

TÁKIWIAT OF ROTKARRU (11 H/RD)

Takriki Matiu IV, Rangatira Moptoka, Roriki of Rotkoa, Tongiki of the Island of Rotkarru.

Trade: DE, Gúako, Rangkua, Roátru, Whutoa, Woangnen

DP: Whengo (F)



gain, the haddock returned! The people rejoiced as the annual one-day-only spring rain of fish resumed once more in Jollyport. The Flopping Fish Festival was reinstated, and people came from miles around to gorge themselves on fish and to take home barrels of salted haddock for the rest of the year.

Peace returned to the court at Jollyport, though soon enough came dragon-wrought destruction. Elsewhere Rotkarru's armies fought in the Great War with distinction.

Siege quality improved.

RISE OF THE DREAD EMPIRE



tíri-Moámwhi Whetíri II of the Church of the Red Death stood at the head of his spectral army in Kavihaä, he himself pale as a ghost. He summoned more and more of these warriors, until their numbers stood at 5,000. His acolyte Iriráangi had become increasingly uncomfortable around his master and his new servants, to the point where he had taken to strong drink to dull his ever more frequent bouts of debilitating anxiety.

Finally, in the summer of 546, Whetíri came to him, saying "We are ready. All is prepared. My army marches this very evening to our capital."

A distinctly uncomfortable Iriráangi answered him. "But Master, where are the ships? Surely this vast host is not expected to all fit on our little boat?"

"Oh, Iriráangi! Even now you still do not understand. Learn now the power of the Dark Skye."

With that, the Atíri-Moámwhi turned to the captains of his spectral host and ordered them to march. They relayed the orders, and the entire 5,000-shade horde began marching toward the sea, rank upon rank in perfect columns. As they reached the beach, they continued walking, straight onto the sea, across the tops of the waves.

As Iriráangi watched, gape-mouthed, his Master began to laugh, a triumphant mocking laugh. Then he himself, the Atíri-Moámwhi Whetíri II, joined his army and walked on to the top of the sea.

Iriráangi stood there as the entire ghostly army marched southward, rising and falling with the undulating waves as they walked. When the last of them had left the land, Iriráangi fell down on the beach and continued watching them until they had marched over the horizon.



As the Great War raged across Oratoa, warrior representatives of the Seven Nations continued to gather in Ebonhill. Most were there when the ghostly army arrived in 548. As the shadowy forms entered into the city, rank upon rank in perfect columns, a disembodied voice boomed across the city, summoning the Crimson Marque and the last two survivors of the Partá Ngáku, Aperaháma and Hahóna. When they returned some hours later from the place where the spectral army had set their camp, they asked the warrior representatives of the Seven Nations to gather in the Undercity.

A darkness crowded the small group of warriors. The moonlight glinted through deep cracks and fissures in the ceiling, finding an odd piece of gold set here or there on the armory of the War Lords. The Circle was somber, strangely charged, and defi-

nately uncomfortable. The warriors, many of whom were rulers of their realms waited.

A scribe sat absently in the pale light of an oil wick, positioning the pieces of parchment and inking his pen. In spite of the singular coldness, each of the men and the lone woman there was sweating. The Crimson Marque looked at each of them in the pale moonlight, measuring them for the tasks set in their future. The Voice penetrated the gathering, startling the men, breaking the utter silence. The flame flickered in the abrupt cold breeze blowing through the enclave.

“My Children. Sons and daughter of the Hidden Lords. Loyal siblings of the Holy Red Death. Holy Marque of the Crimson Brotherhood. You honour Me by choosing to be here. I spend such little time with flesh any more that I find it awkward to behold you, as I am sure it is difficult for you to hear and abide with Me.”

Try as they might, the Warlords of the Seven Nations could not put a form on the Voice. The Warrior of the Blood Dragon seemed most at ease with the situation.

“My Children! Take heed of the words of Your Father. Soon enough My word will be set on worldly happenings, and less, perhaps not at all on the workings of the Church that is My truest Love. It is a strange irony to Me, that as I slip into the Void, I would have less to say about those Who are Hidden beyond the Veil.”

A vacant laugh, coughed and echoed about the ruined chamber, and then suddenly stopped leaving a dark silence. The acrid smell of urine filled the stagnant air. One of the warriors had pissed his greaves.

“The burden that I bear is, indeed, heavy, and not without cost. It is as heavy as it is significant. These are My last commands to you. Soon I shall, by My choice, no longer be privy to the workings of the Church, or hear the Voices of Our Hidden Lords, or speak Their Eternal Truths to our peoples. It is a needful sacrifice, though it shall be a hardship for me and a painful travail beyond mortal expressions or understanding.”

The words hung in the cold and damp air like dust in the sunlight.

“It is with a sad and weary Heart that I choose this path. But I ask you, as I have asked myself many times, if not I, then Who? Who shall lead the Nations into this pregnant glory? Who shall answer to the call from beyond the Void? Who shall stand against the Evil One and his poison, or the Witch Queen and her lies, if not me?”

As the Warriors grew accustomed to the darkness and the distorted shadows cast by the scribe’s lamp, the walls of the Chamber crowded them with a multitude of pale lit figures, ghostly apparitions with ancient armours and strange weapons. Though there were hundreds, maybe thousands, the vision evaded focus. The forms paced and flowed about the chamber, always moving, never standing still. The Warriors fought the impulse to dash for the staircase. Only the Marque of the Blood Dragon and the Holy Marque of the Crimson Brothers sat resolute; their eyes flashed with caution and their hands set on their weapons should they be needed.

The Partá Ngáku held between them a great scroll, which vanished from the dim light into the Darkness beyond. The Men noted that a number of scrolls, each were sealed with the black and red wax of the Church. These set atop the scribe’s table. The War Lords began to murmur and speculate, commenting to each other about the nature of the scrolls, and the Fate that awaited them.

The Scribe’s voice rang shrill in the darkness and startled the War Council into silence, “The First Commandment of the Red Death, the Love of the Holy Matriarch.”

After several awkward moments, the Atíri-Moámwhi’s heavy voice broke the silence, cutting it like fear in the dark; several of the warriors, seasoned and not accustomed to starts, jumped at the sound.

“Holy Tongi, as a doting Mother does look after her children”, the distant Voice echoed amongst the rock foundation, “you shall watch over the Crimson Throne, guard its secrets, secure the borders of its embrace, and speak for its Emperor when words escape My Visage. You shall be named from

amongst the eldest sons of the Red Death. Rotkar-ru, Roátru, and Holy Tongi. In time, others of My closest sons shall taste the glory and the bitterness of the Steward's Sword."

The gravity of the proclamation fell on the Warriors and the confusion of what it might mean stunned them into a vacant sort of stupor.

A cold breeze shuffled the scribe's parchment and sent the flame of the oil lamp to dance. The more observant noticed, beyond the chill, that the air blew across the Council from out of the Deep, up the stonework stairs, and into the distant moonlight above. A low hollow moan spoke out of the Dark in words that none could understand. There was a momentary urge to walk into the sound, against the breeze, and into the untold terrors of the Undercity. The Voice of Whetíri II thundered, and it seemed that the very foundations of the Deep shuddered. The temptation was broken, and the Warriors were brought back to rapt attention. Another scroll was removed from the pile.

"The Holy Seal of Justice has been broken and the Second Commandment of the Red Death is Pronounced."

"My beloved flock shall not be left without holy guidance. Resolute and impartial, strong and just, the Sons of the Red Death Rotkarru, Roatru, and Holy Tongi shall immediately call for the Trial of the Blood Path, and the Partá Ngáku shall be consummated. The last shall shed His life blood and the One shall emerge as if born from the very Void that empowers Him."

At this, the two men of the Partá Ngáku started, then looked to each other.

"The Holy Marque of the Crimson Brotherhood shall sustain your Call, and, with all effort, ensure that the Old Ways are kept Holy and that Pattern is brought to Life once more so that Death might make His Choice. A new Atíri-Moámwhi shall wear the Shield of the Hierophant upon His Head. The Gods shall choose. My Time in the Presence of the Hidden Lords has come, I think, too soon to a close."

There was silence for some moments, as this sank into the warriors of the Seven Nations. Suddenly, some breath of the earth echoed through the chamber, and Whetíri spoke.

"And a Groan, as if the very Earth were torn asunder, announces the Third Commandment of Eternal Strength. It is My will that the Land of Woangnen expand into the once and failed Kingdom of Kuroa. Great is the prospect and few shall be able to stand against the Armies of the Dark Skye. Though Pakoa may plot and weave the Witch Queen's poison into the Heart of Oratoa, her spider web shall be put to flame, and her spiderlings shall writhe in the death of its heat. Thus shall the mettle of the Marque of the Blood Dragon be tested. Thus shall their worth be revealed. And thus shall the hand of the Red Death expand its reach. The Soul of the Inquisitor shall be established and long shall its terror be felt by those who serve the deceptions of urda."

The Voice had captured the entire morning. A sound, like a scuffing of rock debris, gave evidence to movement. The shadow warriors moved as if to allow a Presence to pass. A storm brewed to the north over the seascape, and a heavy humidity hung in the air. The warriors were cold and exhausted. They retired to the surface where a feast of fruits and bird egg had been prepared. The Guardians of Secrets stood vigil at the Courtyard passageways. No one was permitted access.

Almost absently, the Council resumed at the sound of the scribe's reading, "The Fourth Seal and the Commandment of the Hanged Man." Several caught the vague image of a tall Man, resolute in His posture, standing in the sunlit splay of dust at the staircase landing. His Voice spoke as they entered the Deep and he moved into the shadow of the stairwell.

And so it continued through the day and into the night, twelve commandments altogether: instructions, exhortations, appointments.



When at last the Commandments were complete, Takríki Erutíri of Roátru stood and asked to be recognized. The Atíri-Moámwhi nodded.

“It is as you say, that you can no longer be righteously bound to the Red Death. If that is so, then we must release you into the Maelstrom, to lead the Matariki to their divine and appointed fate.”

Several of the others nodded and grunted in affirmation. Then, the elderly Prince Haukmanu of Holy Tongi stood, and all fell silent.

The Prince, both dignified and regal, said “Most Holy Whetíri, we stand united, but it is not enough. You are the One who has been reborn. You have taught us and brought to the cusp of greatness, but you say that you can no longer serve us as Atíri-Moámwhi. So be it. It has been more than 400 years since there has been an Emperor in the west of Oratoa. We now call upon you to lead our Holy Union of the Matariki, to take the Crimson Throne built by the warriors and sages of seven armies.”

With that, the other warriors stood, and led by the Tongi Prince, they filed from the chamber where they had received their teaching, into another chamber nearby. There stood the Crimson Throne.

Although its construction was not yet complete, the cunning of the sorcerers and artisans could be plainly seen. Here was a throne for an Emperor of all Oratoa! It sat on a stone platform at the top of five steps and was architectural in its grandeur, with spires and arches that blended with the cavern’s ancient ceiling. The main portion of the chair was intricately carved black obsidian, inlaid with cinnabar and gold. The main decorative motif on the back of the chair, climbing upwards to the ceiling, were the symbols of the twelve primary stellar bodies entwined each within the other. The Sun in the east and the Moon in the west framed the empty seat where a new Emperor would sit.

Prince Haukmanu climbed the five steps and approached the Crimson Throne. He turned to face the parade of warriors and the spectral Whetíri following. The Prince said, “though thousands of slaves have spilled their blood here, their sacrifice

was not their own. To truly consecrate this throne and its Empire for the ages requires the blood of a warrior. It requires the blood of a Prince.”

And with that, he turned to face the throne and carefully drew his knife across his own throat. The spraying fountain of the Prince’s blood splattered across the delicate carvings and glistened crimson in the flickering lamp light.

His body collapsed into a heap on the chair, and Prince Haukmanu’s blood poured from his neck and cascaded down the seat and then the five steps until it pooled before the remaining warriors. A moment later, the limp body tumbled down the steps to land at their feet.

The ghostly figure of Whetíri stepped through the body, climbed the five steps, turned, and sat upon His throne.

THE DREAD EMPIRE (19 H/RD)

Taasyntyä, Dread Emperor of the Great and Terrible Empire of the Matariki, Bringer of Dark Chaos, Scion of the Shadowed World, Ruler of the Lands of Oratóa.

Tawhiri IV, Atíri-Moámwhi of the Church of the Red Death, Speaker to the Gods.

Trade: Gúako, Rangkua, Roátru, Rotkarru, Tongi, Whutoa, Woangnen

DP: None.



With the elevation of Whetíri II to the new Imperial throne under the name of Dread Taasyntyä¹, the two remaining men of the Partá Ngáku feasted together and then entered the deep recesses of the Temple. Only one returned.

The new Atíri-Moámwhi was Hahóna, a native of Hiktino. He is known to be timid in speech, but insightful and cunning. He took the name Tawhiri. His first act as Atíri-Moámwhi was to call for the sacrifice of 5,000 slaves to the Furies. Endless rivers of blood flowed and pooled through the ruins of the Temple of the Red Death as Tawhiri IV proclaimed holy war.

Afterwards, the rebuilding of the Temple began on a truly megalithic scale, just one of the seven

¹ An ancient Eldar word meaning “Self-Born”.



new priories built by the increasingly fanatical hierarchy of the Church of the Red Death.

Thankfully, the government expanded.

HOLY KINGDOM OF TONGI (9 H/RD)

His Majesty King Amokapua I, Rangatira Rawhōri, Takriki and Tongiki of Tongi & Ebonhill, Orikei.

Trade: DE, Roátru

DP: Pehi (F), Huánné (F),
Roári (T, but see below)



While King Amokapua ruled Holy Tongi, his Queen Airíni offered sacrifice to the Celestial Lords at the Cathedral of Moámito. That year, the Kingdom's many apple trees blossomed a deep red, almost the colour of arterial blood. What, if anything, this may signify, none can say.

The King promoted his second son, Prince Amokapua, to the position of Crown Prince. The new Crown Prince's elder brother, Prince Oángo, was infuriated at his father's insult. Harsh words were exchanged, culminating in Oángo leaving the palace, and indeed Highcourt itself, bound for destinations unknown.

Holy Tongi completed the construction of a military academy in Áio in Ranga, and built a priory nearby. Unfortunately, the priory was burnt by the invaders and the town itself is now surrounded by Thacian armies.

TÁKIWAT OF ROÁTRU (9 H/RD)

Takriki Erutiri, Rangatira Wukrung, Tongiki of Roátru. Prince Vartherion the Proud, Master of the Stoneguard.

Trade: DE, Rotkarru, Tongi

DP: Othendar (A)



Roátruan missionaries in Eladan and Othendar converted many Iägnarists, though perhaps not quite enough in Eladan.

Princess Vanya, bereaved wife of the great Típené the Valiant, continued to serve her late husband's realm, though her disconsolate demeanor has led to her being known as "Vanya the Sorrowful". She returned to the Turéhu regions of her early life, to the court of her cousin Prince Gorlim of Othendar.

The deep and tangled Thornwood of her memory had changed much in her absence. Now most of the Turéhu followed the Church of the Red Death, and the Human port town of Treeline was the center of the region's cultural life; Gorlim's ancient woodland palace was all but forgotten.

Nevertheless, Gorlim spoke for all the people of Othendar, Turéhu and Human alike, and he bowed to the wisdom of his "pretty little cousin" and reluctantly accepted an alliance with the Takríki of Roátru.

She was much less successful in Eladan, however. Though she came on the heels of missionaries and other cultural contacts, she walked right into the Uprisings. Indeed similar efforts on the part of Roátru in Yagnarist Avæth were rebuffed as well.

Meanwhile, Princess Vanya's brother Vartherion, also a convert, helped establish a new military order in the deep forests of Tutua. He and his small band of followers – Elven converts all – supervised the construction of the imposing fortress of Stoneguard Keep.

New public works were constructed, and the government expanded. Many armies were observed filing into Arthdhurin, their banners at half-staff to honour the memory of Típené the Valiant.

CENTRAL ORATÓA

BETWEEN DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT

THE GREAT WAR (531 – 550)

THE ALLIANCE OF VALAS

Ancalimë, Orofer, Pouákaitoa

THE EMPIRE OF SAHÛL

Atuburrk, Khurdán (Kommolek), E. Thace, Pakoa,

Various forces commanded by the Warden of the North

THE DREAD EMPIRE AND ITS ALLIES

Dread Empire (CRD), Gúako, MBD, Roátru, Rotkarru,

Holy Tongi, Whutoa, Woangnen

OTHER REALMS UNDER ATTACK BY THE DREAD EMPIRE

Kuroa

(Underlined Realms have declared Holy War against one or more of their enemies. For the sake of clarity, the Eastern Front has been broken out and may be found beginning on page 139.)

546: *Iägnar Rising*

hurdán found Himself vastly disappointed in the Iluvarian holy war. After reading the latest dispatches from the Ancalimë front, he paced around his headquarters tent in Thenimore while His captains waited in silence. In a sudden moment of puerile rage, He swept the stacked papers and maps from the table and shouted.

“These posturing idiots! Self-important, pretentious... *pompous!*”

While Khurdán raged, only the Saurian lich Drogdyr was courageous – or foolish – enough to challenge Him, though she did so with a soothing voice of honey and cream.

“Majesty, surely everything is proceeding as you foresaw? You told us there would be holy war, you told us the Tarotist churl and his stooges would fight our war for us. Why the anger, Majesty? Surely the Iluvarians present no lasting danger to us?”

Khurdán calmed himself. He had maintained his Turéhu form for years, now, and some wondered if it might be affecting His moods.

“A danger? If these Iluvarians were half as clever as they were zealous, then maybe. No, the real danger are the Tarotists. They have attacked every single nation of Oratoa, and if that weren’t enough, they’ve contrived to have the empire declare war on them! Only an idiot would fight a war on two fronts. Only the heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Idiots would fight a war on *twelve* fronts.”

Khurdán was well and truly worked up now, stabbing his arms about and snarling. His Captains kept their peace while he ranted.

“They babble about their honour, which is non-existent. They babble about their just revenge. Revenge? For what? They babble about their ‘blood

line’. Well, fine. I shall show them blood. I will drown Oratoa in blood. Let us show these fools, and the Iluvarians, what unholy war looks like!

Khurdán snapped his fingers and motioned forward one of His kaitawa.

“Gillin, you will compose a song and have it sung throughout the Thornwood. The hour is at hand when we shall reclaim our ancient Thornwood homeland from the Seven Nation Army. Tell the Turéhu that their hour is at hand. Tell them to rise. Sing them a song of unholy war. Sing of the annihilation of all who oppress us, of the Seven Nation Army and of the Iluvarians. Sing of blood. Tell them to rise up! Rise, my children! Rise!”

Then, turning to Curauth of Thenimór, he muttered conspiratorially, “complete the work of dread Hämäj-Goroth, and set him loose. That should get their attention.”



The various naval forces were on the move. Ingazi’s fleets withdrew from their blockade duties, though Atuburrk maintained theirs in the Moána a Waénga. An Ingazi fleet landed a military force at the Thacian town of Retorok to take up garrison duties from the Thacians, who were marching northwest through the forests.

Whutoan Admiral Toángen withdrew his mighty fleet from the Dalig Ulv Stranden for parts unknown, leaving the sea to the Sahúlians.



The Gúakoan military conversion of the Urdan isle of Mekawhéni continued without abatement.

547: *The Year of Fire*

ne day, near Amberwood Priory in Rangkua’s region of Tihéngti, the local peasants were quite taken aback to see a strange cloud appear to coalesce in an apple orchard field. As the cloud solidified into the form of the Dragon Róta, the peasants fled in panic. Rid-

den by the Thacian Prince Basodir in full armour and regalia, including a flashing magical sword, the dragon set about destroying the priory, which it soon accomplished. The local garrison, led only by a few plucky bannerets, charged the dragon in defense of their lands. In fact, the garrison was a respectable 10,000 kura scouts and 7,000 longbowmen. Had they any sort of competent leadership, they very well may have driven off the beast. As it was, they were slaughtered to the man. Once they and the priory were properly aflame, the dragon and her rider simply vanished.



The Iluvarian crusaders struck westward, looking for some Yagnarists they could kill that weren't quite so airbourne as the ones in Telemnar.



Pretty much the instant the Iluvarian crusaders had well and truly cleared out of Telemnar, Atuburrk launched an assault on the region, from both the air and the sea.

Airships poured out of Castle Black and landed Wenemet bowmen as several fire-bolts destroyed the feeble Turéhu garrison. The Demon Narûd actually had very little to do, other than torture the Ancalimë commander to death. He turned out to be Prince Dínenél, younger brother to the Turéhu King. There was little left of him by the time the demon had finished. Rather than pacify the region, Kourbiedes made the decision to force tribute from the Urdans instead.

Prince Dínenél's young son Galathand became heir to Ancalimë.



The Woe of Oánwhi (547)

These days, Tangaróta was given to wandering the long stone corridors of Oánwhi. He was the Eighth Oracle of Iluvar and an old man, now. He had held the Sword of Iluvar since 519, and he clearly saw the day fast approaching when he would

embed the Sword in the Stone of Henáre for his eventual successor to remove. His dreams had been troubled for months, and he could feel shadows and darkness gathering. He turned down a hallway leading to the sunny garden cloisters. Surely that would relieve his mood.

The King had asked Tangaróta to pray for the personal intervention of Iluvar in the holy war. He did so, though with no great hope, for Iluvar would move in His own good time. He raised heroes and true knights for His wars, and unlike Iägnar, He rarely became personally involved in them. Ultimately, of course, they were all required to trust in Iluvar's justice, in the ultimate ends of which this time and place were but a passing battle.

Part of the burden of being Iluvar's Oracle was knowing that he was eternally the champion of a hopeless cause. *Hopeless*, he reminded himself for the thousandth time, did not mean *forever futile*. For the short term, however, it did not look good. He wondered if any of the priests of the Cathedral could feel the shadows rising as he did, or if any of the seminarians had any inkling of what was coming. Probably not. And that was probably for the best.

Tangaróta emerged from the cool, dark corridor into the twilight of the garden cloister. The warmth of the day lingered here, and he breathed in the heady perfume of the summer flowers. Two younger brothers with rakes were tending to the small patch of grass near the central fountain. Long shadows were already falling across the garden as the sun set in the west.

Then he heard the deep gonging of the chapter bell. Time for evensong. But instead of the customary three chimes, the bell continued ringing, insistently and without rhythm or tune. Gradually Tangaróta realized that the bell ringers were sounding an alarm.

Then the elderly Oracle saw the shadows in the garden *congeal* into vaguely man-like shapes, horrid spectres made of the stuff of nightmare and shadow. In an instant, they were flying all through the cloister garden. One flew through one of the

gardeners, and his body shattered into dust. Where his shadow had lain across the grass, a dark insubstantial cloud now rose, to join the other spectres in their wild dance. The other gardener ran, screaming, but a moment later he, too, was run through. His body collapsed into dust, while his shadow joined the unholy dance.

The air was filled with eerie, aspirated shrieks and the panicked shouts of Iluvarian clerics and acolytes. The chapter bell fell silent.

Tangaróta drew the Sword of Iluvar, determined that he, at least, would not so easily succumb to the ghostly horrors overrunning the Cathedral. He slashed though one of the faceless horrors, and it evaporated into nothing more than a cold breeze. He fell back into the corridor, dispelling perhaps half a dozen as he did so.

He heard shouts behind him, but they were no longer shouts of panic. Men were shouting encouragement, and someone was barking orders. The old man continued slashing and slashing with his godly sword as he fell back towards the sound of organized resistance.

They made their last stand in the nave of the main church itself, their backs to the chancel and the great basalt altar, bedecked in cloth of gold. There were perhaps fifty of them: priests, acolytes, simple monks, and a handful of proper knights under religious vows, but the spectral enemy could make no headway against them.

Some of the younger oblates had already escaped from the building with what treasures they could carry, and two boys were hastily pulling the cloth of gold from the altar. The defenders felt, rather than saw, a new presence enter the room. It smelled of death and rot, and the temperature in the vast chamber noticeably dropped. It roared with an unearthly bellow. The moment of distraction claimed the lives of several knights as the spectral enemy redoubled their efforts.

The Iluvarians fell back to the chancel, where they now stood shoulder to shoulder, an impenetrable wall of steel. The old Oracle stood at the now bare altar, at the Stone of Henáre. He clearly

knew what was coming. As the thrust the sword nearly hilt-deep into the basalt, Tangaróta nodded to the last of the young oblates, who then quickly made his escape.

Moments later, the cathedral erupted in an explosion of fire. No one inside the building survived, and the entire complex burned to the ground in short order, lighting up the night sky. In the morning, the only surviving structure was the massive bronze portal doors. Upon them, someone had painted the image of the constellation of stars depicting a Tower, in blood with cinnabar and gold.

The horror was not over. The shadowy horrors were joined by the very stones of the earth, who took the shape of giants. Together, these invaders of night and stone began a systematic campaign of murder and devastation. It was not a conquest, but an extermination, and it continued until the people of Iloa were all shadow and dust.



The Thornwood Uprisings

The Thornwood was convulsed by Iägnarist uprisings as the Turéhu heeded the call of Khurdán.

In the far west, Iägnarist militants in Aurlith, Díssarad, Núrel, and Úamalu rose up against their Tongi garrisons. In most of these, the Iägnarists quickly assumed control. In Aurlith and Núrel, they even seized some Tongi naval vessels, and several Red Death priories were burnt down.

In Úamalu, it was a bit of a different story. A considerable number of Wenuri archers were stationed here, and a great battle broke out between the 6,500-man Tongi force and some 9,000 Turéhu insurgents and jihadists. In the end, the Tongi and their Wenuri allies were destroyed, but at a heavy cost.

The Tongi tributaries of Brégil and Síras simply rebelled, destroying the Red Death priory of Whimwhu.

New Cappargarnia was a complicated story. The regions of Belroth, Cúnin, Denbigh, Orodrin, and Thongam, being Iägnarist, renounced

their tribute. The unholy warriors quickly turned on the Red Death priories in their regions and destroyed them.

The city of Abrahiem in Orodrin and the town of Galek in Denbigh were settled by Sahúlian Tarotists, and they remained loyal. Amlych was convulsed by Iägnarist rebels, but the local Red Death Turéhu dealt with them.

Roátru's tributary of Eladan went its own way. A rebellion in Avæth overthrew the region's garrison.

Ancalimë's Iägnarist regions were a mixed bag. Zirbeth rebelled, and the Iägnarist minority in Aghân plunged that region into bloody civil war. In Hedhu, Iägnarist insurgents cut down the Ancalimë garrison. They then assaulted of the Urdan castle of Harnost. The insurgent kuras painted the fortress walls in their blood.



The Drawing of Maáka and Aátattíue's Glory

In the Pouákaitoan exclave of Dæman, the Iluvarian hero Maáka waited impatiently for his chance at battle. In command of some 32,000 men, he expected a Kommolek invasion of the Mark of Orofer, and he expected to engage the enemy and defeat them.

During dinner one night, Maáka was suddenly snatched up from his seat and into the air, as if he were gripped by a great invisible hand. The nearby men drew their weapons, looking in confusion for something to strike. Maáka shouted to them, "Strike! Strike you fools! I am already dead!"

And indeed, the great hero was suddenly rent asunder, torn limb from limb in a great spray of blood and entrails.

Though most of the men were stupefied, Maáka's rat-faced squire Aátattíue had the presence of mind to grab his master's magic sling *Trollsbane* and let loose a bullet at the invisible attacker.

The invisible attacker roared in pain, an unearthly, horrible roar, and then he suddenly not so invisible. Cerise flame licked close around his immense form, an towering humanoid figure seem-

ingly made of muscle with a goat's legs and hooves, the head of a jackal, and sharply curving horns like those of a bull. The men in the room recognized none of the animals from which this creature appeared stitched together, but they recognized *him* from their ancient legends. The cry was on every man's lips: Túpua – Demon!

The Iluvarians were utterly unprepared for the sudden appearance of an infuriated demon in the midst of their army. For his part, the demon was driven by pain and blind rage to attack.

The Squire Aátattíue immediately began barking orders to the panicky men, and this alone saved the army from certain slaughter. He led the infantry to desperately try to contain the demon's destructive wrath while the cavalry ran to saddle their kura. Although 5,000 spearmen died defending the camp, the demon himself was seriously wounded by the subsequent charge of wave after wave of kura. The real damage, however, was done by Aátattíue and Trollsbane.

After a sharp, short battle, the demon vanished in a puff of acrid smoke, leaving the Iluvarians in command of the camp and the region.

The army hailed the squire Aátattíue a hero, and indeed he was, having led his late master's men to the defeat of one of Iägnar's own.

548: The Dread Empire

 In Ebonhill, the Seven Nation Army reinvented itself as *the Dread Empire of the Matariki* under the rule of their spectral Emperor (see page 117). In addition, the Church of the Red Death declared a holy war against Urdans. All Urdans. Everywhere. This particular move seems to have caught the other Realms of the new Empire by surprise, as no other ruler followed up with declarations of their own.

Nevertheless, in Rotkarru and Tongi, holy warriors gathered to answer the call. Even ordinary people gathered up their fishing spears and their farm implements and gathered at their local villages, towns, and cities.

The Battle of Jollyport (548)

In Rotkarru's capital of Jollyport, the local merchants and burghers were surprised to see a strange cloud coalescing in the city's main plaza. As the cloud solidified into the form of the Dragon Róta, people screamed and fled in panic. Ridden by the Thacian Prince Basodir in full armour and regalia, including a flashing magical sword, the dragon set about destroying the city.

He was opposed by Takríki Matíu iv himself, who led the Royal Army in the defense of his capital. The Takríki had 45,000 men at his command, including some 7,500 holy troops and the elite Black Knives. Prince Basodir had a dragon and a shiny sword. The Thacian's opening volley was a fire-bolt that incinerated a fair number of religious fanatics who appeared to be armed mostly with farm implements. Battle was joined while the city burned around them.

Wave after wave of cavalry charged the dragon, but Prince Basodir seemed to anticipate their every movement. At the end of the first hard-fought day, Takríki Matíu had but 13,000 troops remaining, and half of Jollyport was burning. The dragon had suffered some minor wounds, mostly at the hands of suicidal charioteers.

The next day dawned dim in the smoke of the burning city. Again, the dragon set about destroying Jollyport, and again the Takríki's army attempted to prevent her. By noon, the entire city was engulfed in flame, and a pall of smoke covered the whole of the land. The Rotkarru navy stood off in the middle of the harbour, and the only other survivors were the battered remains of the Black Knives, who fled the fires carrying the wounded, unconscious form of their Takríki.

Days later, when the worst of the smoke had at last cleared, only smoldering ruins remained. Of the dragon, there was no sign.



In Telemnar, the local Ancalimë resistance to Aturburk's forces collapsed, and the flag of Elec-

toral Aturburk flew over the Elvish city of Ringær. No sooner had they planted their flag, than the region was rocked by a mighty earthquake. Much of Ringær was flattened, as well as several Aturburk airships that were in the wrong place.

The hero Ngaíre Whani led 47,000 Rotkarru and Gúako warriors across the Ancalimë border into Whóatar. There was no organized Turéhu defense, and the Gúakoans continued pushing south.

In the west, the Thacian army arrived in Tongian Roúri, where they encountered a small native army, a Tongi garrison, and some local holy troops. All together these defenders numbered about 6,000 men. The Thacians, by contrast, were over 25,000. They made short work of the defenders and annexed the region.

The vast army of Pouákaitoan crusaders occupied Umlor, destorying both the small native army and the local Iägnarist "unholy" troops.

The great Iägnarist flying fortress known as the *Cleansing Storm* floated serenely into Orofer, in the region of Galbreth. Orofer armies in the region tracked the vast rock as it flew overhead.

The Demon of Dæman resurfaced in Dinerol, where he was busily attempting to cause an insurrection and destroy the 15,000 Iluvarian troops there. The hero Aátattíue and his 20,000 kura-riders were not far behind to lend support to their beleaguered countrymen. The demon was certainly not pleased to see that magic sling again, and battle was quickly joined. Although the Iluvarians took heavy casualties, they drove the demon off into the sea.

With the collapse of the Cappargarnian government in Sahúl, Amlych renounced its tribute.

549: The Grand Armada Arrives



Sahúl's Grand Armada arrived in the Jannes Coast with the monsoons. Commanded by the Iägnarist Deputy Warden of the North, Lady Tchazzix, the fleet contained ships

from nine Imperial Realms². The War Council contained no less than seven admirals³ leading some 2,385 ships. The dragon Karn flew overhead, as both a long-range scout and a mascot. They were joined by a small fleet from New Ingazi, adding another hundred ships commanded by Admiral Lord Besar Gorres, son of the Viceroy of New Ingazi. The Grand Armada encountered no hostile vessels.

The fleet did provide some cover for a Kommolek air assault on coastal Brégil. Finding that the region had risen up against Tongi, the entire event was somewhat anti-climatic. Kommolek landed 16,500 cavalry, including cataphraçti and knights, and a similar number of infantry. The local troops (unholy and otherwise) simply joined right up. The airfleet went on to Caladawar.

Just to the east in the hills of Denbigh, the locals reported a mysterious phenomenon: an enormous firestorm obliterated an obscure valley said to be populated by bandits.

Battle of Dúresgal (549)

The Matariki continued their military push into Ancalimë. Gúako's General Kétewhe and the hero Háki Ngenwu led 16,000 men into Dolost with the intention of conquering the region. Near the town of Dúresgal, they encountered a Turéhu army, commanded by King Calmalas and the hero Whéru Rawringe. Numbering 23,000 archers (and a fire-drake), the Elves cheerfully gave battle.

² Araxes, Averno, Chi'tixi, Hyrágec, Ingazi, Taneki, Thace (Electoral), Tokatl, and something called the *Imperial Withidan Fleet*.

³ Admiral Lord Lorth of Episma, Admiral Milski (Averno); Admiral Elenthes (Hyrágec); Admiral Lady Sardira (Ingazi); Admiral Trebodir (Thace); Admiral Namtzar (Taneki); Admiral Tapatua (Tokatl); and Admiral Orrik of the IWF. The fleet also includes Ingazi's Commodore Manandorin, one of the discoverers of Efan. A bluff old naval veteran, he was asked to attend the Admirals' dinners, both as a courtesy to his age and wisdom, and because he told cracking good dinner stories. Deputy Warden Lady Tchazzix (Chi'tixi) and Count Tramandes of Kayew (Araxes) rounded out the Grand Armada's War Council.

Kétewhe began with a lightning bolt which instantly vapourised 3,500 Turéhu, and then in the confusion he ordered his infantry to advance. The Elven archers were momentarily caught off-balance, but then King Calmalas returned the favour with a bolt from the fearsome *Lightning Bow*. Then he drew forth the *Sword of Valas* and led his forces to engage the invaders. The Gúakoans were outnumbered and out-fought, and within a very few hours, they were all laying dead on the field. Háki Ngenwu died in personal combat with Whéru Rawringe and the fire-drake Uánne. As Háki plunged his *Wyrms Dagger* deep into the neck of the fire-drake, he was himself run through by Whéru's blade. The fire-drake bled out, and his former master claimed the *Wyrms Dagger* as just compensation.

General Kétewhe's body was not found.



Meanwhile, in Rotkarru's bleak coastal region of Wangi, the locals were surprised to see a strange cloud coalescing on the beach. As the cloud solidified into the form of the Dragon Róta, people screamed and fled in panic. Ridden by the Thacian Prince Basodir in full armour and regalia, including a flashing magical sword, the dragon set about destroying the Red Death's priory of Tika Tatua. This it accomplished rather quickly, and just for fun the local holy troops were killed too.



The Harrowing of Dínenaur (549)

The great Iägnarist flying fortress known as the *Cleansing Storm* floated serenely over Orofer's region of Dagnîr before slowly turning and making its way into Dínenaur.

In Dínenaur, the fortress disgorged a hundred airships that proved to be the vanguard of an air assault of the region. 11,000 rangers, supported by 4,500 longbowmen quickly reduced the local castles.

Reports began arriving from the outlying villages of another, more horrifying force in the region. These were the walking dead, but they were not zombies. Imbued with fell intelligence, these agile and hungry undead attacked with rending claws and fangs. The locals quickly learned to flee from these rapacious and voracious ghouls who moved with unearthly speed. They killed anything alive – soldiers, peasants, children, farm animals – every living thing was subject to their programme of genocide.

The noble Orofer were not about to allow this to continue, and two Iluvarian armies converged on Dínenaur. From Dagnír came the monster slayer Haki One-Eye and 15,000 warriors; from Cíura came Corualadh Half-Elven himself with 11,000 more⁴. The Iägnarist lich Baroness Drogdyr met them in open battle with 15,000 soldiers, 10,000 ghouls, 100 airships, and 300 gryphons and their riders. Although the Iluvarian leadership easily matched the skills of Baroness Drogdyr, Iägnarist discipline and dominating air power carried the day.

The Iluvarians took about 5,000 casualties and retreated in good order to Cíura. Prince Corualadh Half-Elven was grievously wounded and carried off the field by the Prince's Own Bowmen. He is expected to recover.

The Iägnarists lost a handful of rangers and gryphons, but every ghoul was utterly destroyed.



New Cappargarnia Declares?

Incredibly, forces commanded by Lord Mikah Davin, the Cappargarnian Prefect of Talikhiem, invaded Kommolek. The small force of about 7,500 pikemen, infantry, and archers had crossed the mountains to attack Aeg-Annûn's homeland of Tasæl. They had the run of the place, demanding tribute from the Iägnarists and slaying those that resisted. They reduced the local castles and, in a

⁴ Each of the Orofer leaders wielded a magical weapon; the Half-Elven Prince Corualadh an Eldar sword called Dúrenel, and the hero Haki Hinga a spear known only as "Haki's Spear".

spectacularly one-sided battle, destroyed a force of 7,000 leaderless religious troops.

Meanwhile, Khurdán was said to be off conversing with the Lord of Bargûl.

550: Sahûl's Inexorable Advance



The Sahûlian Grand Armada split up, with the vast majority sailing into the Dalig Ulv Stranden seeking to engage the fleet of Whutoan Admiral Toán-gen. They failed to find him or his fleet. In fact, they met no Oratoan naval vessels whatsoever. A blockade was put in place while Lady Tchazzix and her war council decide on the next course of action, although the Hyrágec and Araxean ships immediately headed east without waiting for instruction.

Commodore Manandorin of Ingazi was particularly disappointed in the no-show of the Whutoan fleet. Not only did he want revenge for the previous sinking of Ingazi ships, he was getting on in years (having turned 78 in 550), and he really wanted to go out in a blaze of glory. Maybe next time.



The great army of Pouákaitoan holy troops, numbering now about 107,000, entered Iägnarist Ondír. They found there a spate of "unholy" troops, perhaps 4,000 all told. They crushed them



Kommolek's armies were moving on every front.

The Count Palatine led a mighty airfleet of nearly 200 airships (and even some gryphons) into the forested coast of Caladawar. The Count met with the local Turéhu leadership, who pronounced their willingness to die for his cause, and for Iägnar.

In Hedhu, the Lich-King Aeg-Annûn and his 42,000 horse cavalry, 32,000 infantry, and more than 400 golems reduced Harnost Castle to obedience by tearing down most of the walls.

Kommolek's ally Curauth of Thenimore, meanwhile, entered Ancalimëan Aghân with 9,000 kura cavalry determined to aid the Iägnarist insurgents who had so far failed to take the Urdan-majority region. By the time Curauth's army arrived, the insurgency had been quashed. This did not stop him from pacifying the region, however.



Battle of Acharrin (550)

The Cappargarnian army in Tasæl itself came under counter-attack by Kommolek, specifically by a Turéhu army led by the Saurian captain Tachg, known as the *Knife of Iägnar*. The Iägnarists numbered 60,000, and they came out of the mountains to the north with blood on their minds. They were determined not so much to drive out the Cappargarnian invaders as to obliterate them.

Battle was joined near the ruins of Acharrin. Even though the Iägnarists outnumbered the Tarotists eight to one, they began by launching a fire-bolt at the enemy, instantly incinerating about 3,000 men and making the odds something like 13 to 1.

The extreme professionalism of the Cappargarnian army meant that even though the battle was bound to be a rout, they were able to send 1,500 of the Kommolek light infantry to their graves. Of the Cappargarnians, not a single one survived.

The remains of the Cappargarnian commander, Lord Mikah Davin, were recovered and preserved.

Meanwhile, Khurdán was said to be off conversing with the Lord of Brégedar.



Ranga: the Assault of Mahmenti (550)

Two Thacian forces converged on Tongi's region of Ranga. From devastated Wangi in the west came the Dragon Róta, ridden by Prince Basodir in full armour and regalia, including his flashing magical sword. From Rouíri in the northeast came

24,000 men led by Captain Vox'll Kat'kax, the Malebolge Military Governor of Retorok.

Against them stood Ietóro the Bald and his young military order, the Most Holy Order of the Companions of the Mace of Sundering (the Bonebreakers). At the moment, they consisted of 3,000 heavy foot plus 2,500 drafted holy troops, an odd mixture of noble kura chariots and peasant rabble. Ietóro, no fool, determined to make his stand from the walls of his castle of Mahmenti.

The Thacian forces quickly occupied the region, putting the newly built Tóaranga Priory to the torch. For the moment they ignored the port town of Áio, concentrating their efforts instead on "destroying the Ranga military order."

Prince Basodir and his dragon led the attack, followed closely by Thacian marines. Ietóro the Bald stood at the wall with his men, and he got one good hit upon the dragon with his mighty mace, Bonebreaker, wounding her terribly. And then things started to go very wrong for the defenders. Wave after wave of well-trained Thacian marines and pikemen assaulted the walls, while their archers peppered the defenders. The defenders were out-matched, out-led, out-battle-magicked, and outnumbered. In the end, despite their bravery and the unflagging, murderous enthusiasm of their leader, they were butchered.

Amid the ruins, Prince Basodir led the storming of the last standing tower of the keep. He came face to face with the wounded Ietóro the Bald, covered in blood and grinning like a shark. The Saurian saluted him with his sword. The Human nodded in recognition. The two old warriors screamed their battle-cries and ran one at the other, swinging their enchanted weapons with fury unmatched since the founding of the world.

The mighty mace *Bonebreaker* met the Prince's sword, flashing with its Tepalis steel and encrusted sapphires, in mid-swing. A crack like thunder split the air, echoing and rumbling for miles. The flash of light burned the image of the two old warriors, their weapons locked in combat, into the eyes of all nearby. And then Basodir riposted. Ietóro par-

ried. Another explosion of sound and light. Back and forth they battled, until at last the Saurian's great sword traced a line in welling blood across the Human's chest.

As Ietóro lay dying, cradled in his enemy's arms, he asked Prince Basodir for an honourable burial for him and his men, and for a púra to be written to their memory and honour. Basodir promised that it would be so, and Ietóro the Bald passed into the lands of his ancestors.



Meanwhile, the rest of the Sahûlian fleets and their associated armies scattered all over Oratoa.

The Taneki and Chi'tixi contingents took up station in the Moána a Waénga, adding to the Atuburrk fleet already there. They were clearly eager to bring their armies to Oratoa, but by 550 they had not quite made shore.

Farther east, however, Hyrágec planted a group of doughty colonists at Ráne. The colonists were amazed at the fecundity of the land, which they named *New Kerneveg*. Their little enterprise succeeded beyond their wildest hopes (2141)w.

Araxean forces occupied Tamwoa.

Averese, Tokatli, and Ingazi ships maintained the blockade in the Dalig Ulv Stranden.



In Thacian Téahik, a spate of assassination attempts by some disgruntled locals found their mark when the Ingazi commandant was discovered dead in his bath. He had numerous sword wounds on his person, including the fatal blow that had gut him like a fish. He apparently took at least one of the assassins with him, however, as a dead Human warrior was found with the commandant's dagger firmly embedded in his neck.

Just a few months later, a great Thacian fleet (and a dragon!) made landfall at Retorok.



With the various storms and blockades, the realms of western Oratoa are increasingly isolated

from each other and from their own detached territories. Trade is down, and the natives of many of the Ending Isles, particularly those in thrall to Holy Tongi, are advocating independence.

THACIAN OUTPOST OF RETOROK (1 SE/UR)

Captain Vox'll Kat'kax, Military Governor of Retorok.

Trade: Kommolek

DP: None.



As Thace redeployed their military from their initial staging area, defensive duties were taken up by Ingazian soldiers.

With Mahmenti Castle in Ranga essentially destroyed, Prince Basodir of Thace ordered its stones to be piled into an enormous barrow to honourably entomb the hero Ietóro the Bald and the fallen men of the now extinct Most Holy Order of the Companions of the Mace of Sundering.

NEW CAPPARGARNIA (51 WSE/TA)

(His Sublime Maješty, Deirn Carberic, Burgrave of Punchega, Electoral Prince of Cappargarnia.)

Trade: None.

DP: None.



New Cappargarnia invaded Kommolek and lost their army and their leader in the process. To this, they added the loss of most of their Oratoan lands to Iägnarist insurgents. It's possible that things could have been worse, but the remaining colonists can't see how.

THE NORTHMARK (39 WE/YG)

Lord Kourbiedes, Firš Marshall of the Northmark. Mæthorchir the Scythe, Mašter of the Kura Riders of Nenalph, Lord of Usk.

Trade: Kommolek

DP: Nope.



tuburrk continued their enthusiastic support of Khurdán, which included a breathtaking aerial assault of Telemnar.

DOMINION OF KHURDÁN (5 WSE/YG)

Khurdán, Son of Iägnar, Regent of Fell Kommolek, Master of the Iron Throne of Angildúath, Suzerain of the Thornwood Turéhu, Dark Lord of Oratoa.

His Fell Excellency, Goesek Derryk II, Count Palatine of Kommolek, First Speaker of the Nine.

Aeg-Annûn, Lich-Lord of Tasel, Steward of Angildúath, Second Speaker of the Nine, Marshal of the Fell Legions.

Trade: New Araxes, New Ingazi, Northmark, Pakoa, ThaceE

DP: Bargûl (F), Brégedar (F), Ondír (A), Annedír (A), Morim (A), Asiéndar (F), Brégil (F), Caladawar (F)



Upon reaching his majority, Count Palatine Derryk II proclaimed that Khurdán would remain Regent of Kommolek for his lifetime. For his part, the Regent exhorted his followers and let loose his fury across the Thornwood.

Iägnar's bonfires of sacrifice continued both day and night through every season. The choking black smoke spread throughout the Thornwood, forming a noxious mist that settled in the vales and raggedly drifted across the muddy meadows. The hypnotic rhythm of ten thousand hammers hitting ten thousand anvils could be felt in the very earth as Kommolek constructed the engines of war. Iägnar's missionaries continued to flood the Thornwood, even as the Turéhu rose up against their oppressors at the sound of their Master's voice.

The town of Ashcapse rose in Zarâni.

On page B-28 of their annual "Where are they now" issue, the *Kommolek Chronicle* noted the death of the thoroughly unlikable Fleabite Shulbkin of a fever in the year 549.

The volcano of Sirrim in Silinaur erupted several times, showering the ruins of Raudgúron in a fine grey ash.

ANCALIMË (10 E/UR)

King Calmalas of the Venerable House of Malvalas.

Trade: Orofer, Pouákaitoa

DP: None.

King Calmalas uncharacteristically dithered, but when the enemy invaded, he met them in battle. While he personally did well, the results from other fronts was decidedly mixed.

MARK OF OROFER (8 EH/IL)

Corualadh Half-Elven, Takriki of Orofer and Warden of the Mark.

Trade: Ancalimë, Pouákaitoa, Pakoa

DP: None.



Orofer made every effort to defend their lands from aerial assault. It didn't go particularly well.

KINGDOM OF POUÁKAITOA (17 H/IL)

His Majesty King Kamwhai III, the Eloquent, Son of Róngo Son of Ihúhah of the House of Ekara, Rangatira Kawhe of the Éiwi of the Eagle, Órieki, Beloved of Iluvar.

Trade: Ancalimë, Orofer

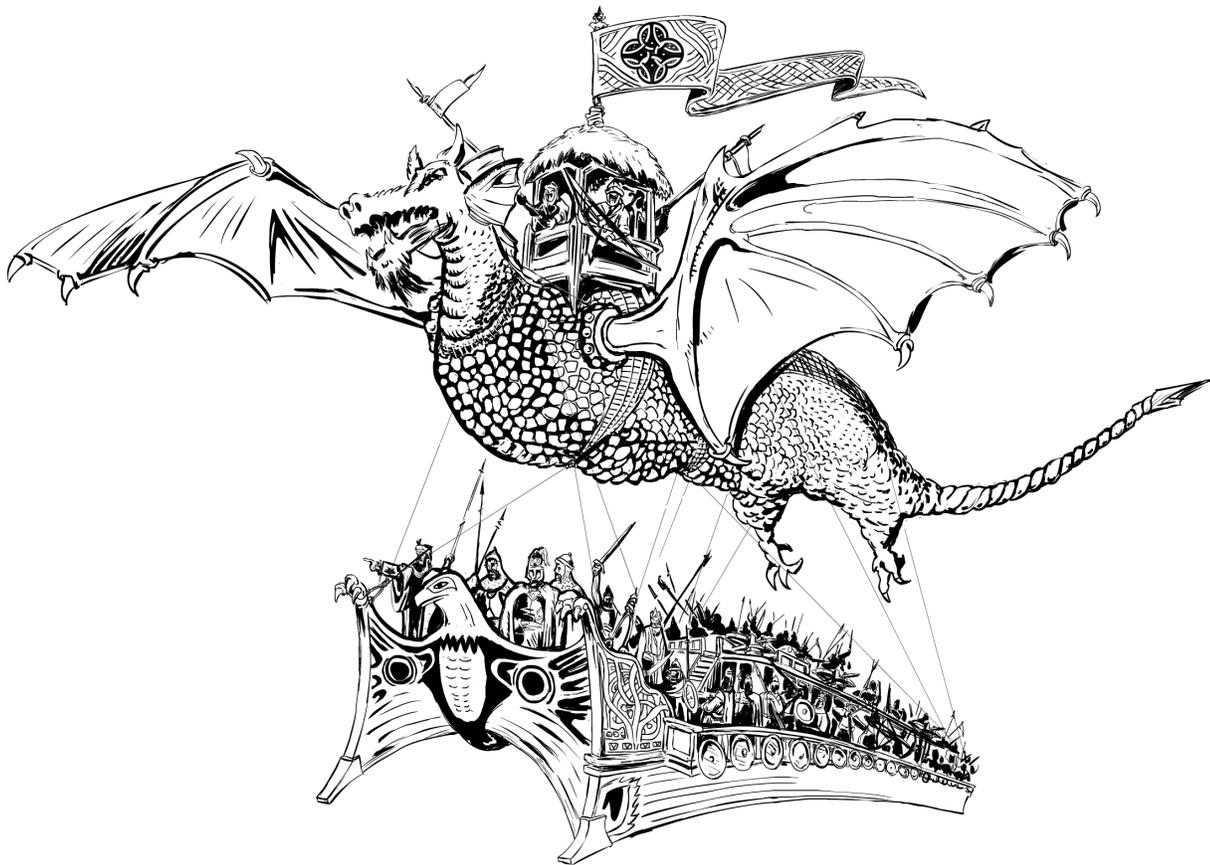
DP: None.



King Róngo personally christened the first of Pouákaitoa's airships in Mimrua. Men flocked to be part of the Kingdom's air fleet, eager for the honour and glory of sailing these great vessels through the skies. Shortly after the launch of the new airships, a small number of older airships of Sahûlian manufacture were burned to their keels in an elaborate and well-attended rite. The following month, the King sent his most trusted messengers to the Oracle of Oánwhi.

What happened afterwards at Oánwhi broke the old king's heart. Shortly after his 70th birthday in 549, King Róngo Fleetfoot fell into his final illness and soon died. Having just returned from a diplomatic mission, King Róngo's son Kamwhai the Eloquent ascended to the throne at the age of 50. Although the new King is well-spoken and extremely popular, his abilities as an administrator are somewhat lacking. His only son, Prince Ihúhah, has been on an heroic quest since shortly after he came of age in 547.

Siege quality improved, and the government expanded.



Lands of the éiwi

EASTERN ORATOA FACING THE DAWN

TÁKIWAT OF WOANGNEN (14 H/ST)

Takríki Amíri the Well Loved of Woangnen.

Trade: DE, Gúako, MBD, Rangkua, Rotkarru, Whutoa

DP: None.

Woangnen transferred control of the wilderland of Herútu to the Marque of the Blood Dragon. Princess Hauóra⁵ called for her brother, Takríki Ihaía of Takwhi, to abdicate in favour of his son, due to his age. Takríki Ihaía, who was but 56 years old, sent a letter back to his “little sister”⁶ in words normally reserved for instructing small children.

⁵ Wife of Takríki Amíri the Well Loved, and a formidable sorceress in her own right.

⁶ She was 48 at the time.

In a word, he refused. He cited “new words you must learn, such as ‘duty’ and ‘endurance’. These are things we call ‘virtues’, and you should ask your tutors about them.” Upon receiving this letter, the Princess flew into a towering rage, terrible to behold. Frustrated beyond endurance, she reportedly beat one of her servants near to death.

The storied General Ikaika was greeted in the capital with parades and accolades. He accepted *his* offer of retirement, as well as the title of “Takríki of Táwe”. Some of the General’s army veterans even colonized Táwe (2123)H.

Three nights after Midsummer of 548, a swarm of tiny falling stars was widely recorded throughout northeastern Oratoa. Many fanciful descriptions of the event have surfaced, and in some rural areas the people were thrown into a panic.

Woangnen’s sorcerers had a bit of a breakthrough.

SHE WHO IS KEEPER OF THE MOUNTAIN FIRE



Arriving individually at the cathedral, the three Woangnen nobles shared puzzled looks. Kamáka, heir to the Roríki of Ónguk, glanced over the two princely descendants of House Rengréngta, hoping that they may have an answer for why they were here. Yet both princess Rére and prince Amíri looked back with the same expression. The high priest of Strength emerged from the cathedral and beckoned the three to follow him.

Reaching the inner prayer cloister, the high priest softly knocked on the chamber door. The door cracked open, giving way for a faint voice that called for the three to enter. The priest withdrew, bowing.

Thick incense filled the room. Candles lined the floor, wall, and chandelier above, illuminating the room with a soft pale glow. To the untrained eye, the pattern in which they were arranged would be pure chaos, bearing no form or pattern. Only if one looked with the eyes of a raven, perched in the loft, did they see the symbol of strength encircling the Woangnen seal of the Lion.

A pile of prayer robes, embossed with the same seal, lay in a heap on the floor as the open flames of the candles threatened to set them ablaze. Suddenly and slowly the robes began to raise, the eyes of the lion meeting those of the three. The lion's head bowed as the hood of the robes were removed; letting flow long full locks of dark black hair. When the head rose again, it was not the face of the mythical beast that looked at them, but that of Princess Hauóra, consort to the Takríki Amíri. She turned to look at the three, smiling at each of them, before falling forward.

Amíri jolted forward to catch his frail mother before she hit the ground. Rére, noticing how little she had eaten, turned to the door to call for the priest, a servant, or anyone to get her mother some help. Caught in the momentary panic, Rére had almost missed the words that Hauóra spoke.

"My child, please, I am well," spoke Hauóra to her daughter.

"Mother! You look as though you haven't eaten in a week."

The queen chuckled. "Two weeks. But I find nourishment in company of the Lord of Strength. It was required to receive the vision."

Amíri, slowly caressing his mother's hair spoke softly. "A vision? Mother, please, with the riddles..."

Hauóra gave her son a sharp glance as she rose from her son's embrace and made her way to a small stool near the wall. Muttering a small prayer, she rested herself against the cool stone and looked at the three before her.

"Rére, Amíri, Kamáka. I have spent much of these past years away from our homeland in search of an answer." Strangely, it seemed that her frame began to slowly fill out. She looked at her two children and continued. "A good portion of your childhood I spent at the Academy of the Red Death, studying fervently. I have achieved some small understanding of the mana that flows through these lands. I had thought that this question of mine had been answered, and my calling complete. Yet, it now appears that there are still many more answers to be found."

Amíri glanced at Kamáka, who looked at the other two questioningly. They only offered their own expressions of confusion.

Hauóra's voice strengthened. "I have called the three of you to come here for a specific purpose. Each of you has shown great aptitude in the ways of the sorcerer, a far greater aptitude than has been shown in Woangnen since the days of the Sage. This is no coincidence, and it has surely been noticed. The time has come for Woangnen to find its strength in this world, and the Lord of Strength is ready to guide this nation on its path to greatness, but great sacrifice will be required."

She stood now, no longer skin and bones, but with strength in her arm and colour in her face. Her voice bellowed. "You three must embark on a journey. I have received a vision of an ancient place of worship; a place long forgotten by our people.

This place exists at the foot of the volcano looming over Hingwhua, and it is there that sacrifices shall be made to the Lord of Strength to begin a great age for Woangnen.”



Kamáka made no secret to his companions of his pride in having been personally selected for such an important quest; he spoke of the great honour that this would bring his family. Rére admired the determination and sheer will that Kamáka possessed.

Amíri, on the other hand, grew sick at the constant babbling of the one he called “glory seeker”. It seemed to him that Kamáka wouldn’t be involved in this endeavor if both the glory and his beautiful sister weren’t there. That disdain, coupled with the fact that Amíri really didn’t want to be on this trip at all added to his distaste for everything. Amíri’s constant grumbling caused the other two to distance themselves from him.

The three finally arrived at the base of the mountain and began to search for the entrance to this long unvisited place of worship. Over a fortnight’s time they searched for it, until finally they stopped after Amíri’s whining had peaked. Kamáka snapped at him, “Why don’t you stop complaining and offer up some sort of solution to help us complete our task? The faster we get done the quicker you can return to your life of luxury.” This nearly was cause enough for Amíri to lunge at the Ongukan heir, and he would have, if his sister did not intervene.

“Maybe we would be granted the knowledge of the entrance if we offered a sacrifice unto the Lord of Strength. We were given a substantial amount of gold to offer up, why not use it now?” With no better option obvious to them, they built a small altar and offered the gold up.

Surprisingly, the gold took to flame before them in a brilliant flash, knocking the three back to the ground. Smoke rose from the blast and began to swirl and dance around in front of them, encircling them and even seemingly moving through them. Suddenly, the smoke took to flight, streaming towards a large outcropping of rock. The three made

haste to follow the smoke, following it until they saw it seeping into cracks surrounding the oddly shaped stone. Kamáka called for the help of the others as he began to push the stone out of the way. Once wrenched free, the stone rolled to the side, revealing a dark passage leading deep into the mountain.

Striking flame to torch, they made their way into the passage. The walls were covered with strange hieroglyphics and images of things long past. One depicted a fleet of ships leaving a burning city, and another showed a warrior standing sword and shield against a drake. As the three went deeper and deeper into the long, smooth passageway, the wall markings progressed in their story. They grew grimmer. Darker. At the same time, the writing itself became simpler and more stylized. And the deeper they went, the more the air grew warmer and thicker. More oppressive.

The images culminated in a picture of the volcano itself, instantly recognizable, with a strange being standing within. Surrounding this central images were a number priests, bowing down in supplication and prayer. On the opposite wall of the corridor was the picture of an altar, with a priest standing above, dagger raised and dripping with blood, the latest human sacrifice strewn across the altar below. As fascinating as these images were, they paled to the sheer wonder of the sight now before them.

The tunnel ended in a great cavern in the mountain’s belly. It was lit by the red ambient glow of the active lava tube that flowed through the chamber. In the very center of the chamber stood a smooth, black altar stone, a perfect cube of onyx. The edges were clad in a delicate filigree of silvery metal. The stone was covered in the peculiar hieroglyphics the three had found near the mouth of the passageway.

On either side of the altar stood a rough-hewn three-sided stone obelisk. Carved words covered each face of the obelisks. One side was carved in a debased form of the older hieroglyphs, one side in the more modern, simpler form of the writing, and one side in something approaching Tánagat characters.

Rére examined the inscription and read aloud, “the fires of the mountain give birth to great strength and purpose. Through sacrifice, the knowledge of the gods will be granted unto their followers”.

Amíri scoffed. “Sacrifice? Too bad we used all the gold we brought with us. I knew that was a stupid idea.

Rére, transfixed by the inscription, replied, “Blood. The sacrifice must be blood. The images outside the room clearly show a human sacrifice, and the altar calls for blood.”

“Blood? Are you crazy? So now we’re going to go back home to find a willing sacrifice? And then come back here? Madness!” Amíri headed back to the passageway. “I’m done with this. Mother came come down and run her own errands if she wants. No longer will I partake in this.”

Now it was Kamáka who was fed up with the murmuring of Amíri. “You spoiled brat, you worthless piece of nothing! Your mother asked us to bring greatness to Woangnen and all you care about is sitting around and eating delicious fruit in your bedchamber. Be gone with you!”

With deftness, Amíri drew his blade and lunged at Kamáka. With the same swiftness, the Ongukan blade came and met that of his adversary. With equally matched skill and surprising agility, the two pitted blow against blow. They taunted and jeered each other, posturing and gesticulating in the accepted manner. It was quite some time before a wound was finally inflicted. By sheer luck, Amíri managed to stick his blade into the leg of Kamáka, causing him to scream out.

Rére screamed in anguish, realizing only at that moment that she was in love with Kamáka.

Amíri spun to the sound of his sister’s scream, dropping his guard for only a moment. Kamáka seized that short moment and drove his blade through Amíri’s heart. Amíri fell upon the altar, his blood pulsing across it into a large pool.

As his blood ran down the sides of the altar, it channeled into the ornate metalwork at the edges.

The instant the blood touched the cavern floor, the room to shake and tremble. Far off, the fires of

the mountain exploded. The chamber flared much brighter as the lava began to overflow its channel. Kamáka and Rére ran, making their way down the passageway as quickly as they could.

With the wound on Kamáka’s leg, it was quickly obvious that the lava would soon overtake them. Rére pushed Kamáka forward. He yelped in pain as he fell to the ground, turning back to see why she had done that. He turned around just in time to see her throw her hands up towards the ceiling. Drawing on her great strength of magic, she pulled the roof down to block the lava from reaching Kamáka. The prince screamed as he watched Rére’s sacrifice before him, and he only moved when the passage began to tremble again from the mountain’s eruption.

The land outside shook from the mountain’s violent eruption. All around the base of the volcano, great rifts opened, exposing pools of fire. The once-hidden lava tubes that flowed below the lands of Hingwúa were now opened up to the sky above.

Kamáka reached the base of the volcano and saw the terrifying landscape before him. He collapsed in pain, a mass of injury and loss. At that moment, a figure stood up in the lava pool before him. A woman, bathed in fire, with hair glowing of embers, walked towards him. In her hand she bore a staff of curious workmanship, with nut wood and onyx woven together as a tailor would weave a dress. At its top it bore a crest, carved of firestone, bearing the image of the mythical lion. His wonder was overshadowed by joy, for the woman’s face was visible. “Rére, my love, you live?”

“Rére. Yes. So was I once named.” She spoke with sound like a landslide. “I am no longer she. I am no longer Rakitána, nor Rorat. I am She who is Keeper of the Mountain Fire. I am of the Dawn.”

KINGDOM OF KÉATOÁ (21 H/UR)

His Majesty King Kíre II the Young, Son of Harápo, Son of Haráre of the House of Kekáta, Rangatíra Tirwhekúu of the Éiwi of the Parrot, Órieki.

Trade: New Araxes, New Ingazi, Pakoa

DP: Tennga (F), Whuánwi (F), Whéti (F)

King Haráre's appeasement with Woangnen over Tawé did not sit well with many of Kéatoa's warriors and nobility. The seizure of Kéatoan merchant ships to the south did not help matters in the slightest. The preaching of the old ragged woman known as the Prophet of the Wýrm further inflamed the Kéatoans. She preached that an apocalyptic war was fast upon the Eíwi.

"Already the servants of darkness walk the earth, preparing the doom of their master. Even the storm will be stilled. Already the Demon's tail sweeps the stars from the sky!" And indeed, just a few days past midsummer's day of 548, a swarm of tiny falling stars was widely recorded throughout the northeast of Oratoa. *The Annals of Tuátngu* record the event as follows:



Some flashes of pale light were first observed on the northern part of the heavens, which seemed to proceed from a roundish luminous body nearly half the size of the moon. This ball at first shone with a faint bluish light, perhaps from being just kindled, or from its appearing through the haziness; but it gradually increased its light, and soon began to move in an oblique direction towards the east. As it moved, its light became prodigious and it lit the ground. Every object appeared very distinct; the whole face of the countryside being instantly illuminated.

After no more than a minute, the ball broke into several smaller bodies immediately following the main mass. In just a few minutes, the whole parade of lights had vanished over the horizon. A rumbling noise, like thunder at a great distance, was heard around ten minutes after the light first appeared.

The kura herd, already awakened by the light, scattered at the sound.

Where in Woangnen the strange falling stars were regarded with curiosity or fear, in Kéatoa, they

were an omen, and not a good one. The crowds in Kiruak called for the King to give account of his dealings with the "western heathens". The Kingdom's nobles demanded that Takríki Ámapo the Feeble of Tawé be released from prison.

Many of the Tawé refugees were settled in Nekan, some in the countryside (3222)H, and some in the new port town of Appleby at the mouth of the River Welau. The remaining refugees were ferried to and settled in Hinik (2121)H and Inwa (3121)H.

King Haráre, meanwhile, wishing to appear magnanimous and just, ordered the release of Ámapo the Feeble. Sadly, Ámapo *was* somewhat feeble, after all, and had died in his prison cell. Ámapo's younger brother Aáta⁷, protested and demanded the King's abdication. He soon gathered a corps of young bucks around him, including even the King's own teenaged grandsons Kíre and Haráre.

The old King asked all the aggrieved parties to meet with him, so that the situation could be settled in consultation with the whole Wírehúa rather than on the field of honour. Aáta agreed.

Meanwhile, the King sent orders to recall the southern army, led by Crown Prince Harápo, to the capital, lest there be any sort of trouble.

Although many were absent, the Kingdom's Wírehúa met with the King in 549. By this time, the King himself was quite ill. The nobles demanding satisfaction for the death of Ámapo of Táwe were led by his brother Aáta, and the King's grandson Kíre. A number of the younger nobles stood with them. At the King's side was a handful of the Kingdom's older nobles, as well as Holy Mother Panía, Atíri-Moámwhi of Pukei.

While the point at issue was the fate of Ámapo, the King's opposition quickly ignited the assembly by tying it back to the treaty with Woangnen, which they called "appeasement and treason". The discussion quickly degenerated into anger and shouting, but this was soon quieted by the unexpected appearance of the ragged old woman known as the Prophet of the Wýrm. She wore only

⁷ Born in 519, he is the only other male of the six children born to Takríki Ata II of Táwe and the Princess Hinekíri.

a patched cloak the colour of an old faded bruise and leaned heavily on a staff of ash.

The old King stood. “Woman! We don’t need your witchery here. Begone with you!”

The old woman stood upright and said, “Haráre, do you not recognize me? Your own kinswoman?”

The King sat in confusion. “Who are you, old woman?”

“I am the blood of your blood and bone of your bone. Oh, son of the Pious Harápo of blessed memory, do you not recognize your own sister? Do you not recognize the Princess Hura whom you yourself dispatched to Culnárlith twenty years ago to learn the wisdom of the dragon?”

The great hall fell to a silence so profound that the King’s laboured breathing sounded like a windstorm.

Finally, with tears in his eyes, the old King rose and embraced his sister. After a long moment, all strength left him, and his sister gently laid him on the stone floor. She whispered to him, and it echoed through the chamber.

“You are tired, my brother. Sleep. Enter now the dreaming and leave this world of tears for your grandsons. Even now the Demon stalks the world, and Urda and her daughter the World Serpent must gather their armies for the final battle. Leave this war to the young. Sleep.”

The King closed his eyes.

Holy Mother Panía leapt forward. “Is he all right?”

The Ragged Princess replied, “No. He is dying. He has borne the pressures of the throne for too many years, like our father. I would be surprised if he lived out the night.” She turned to the young bucks. “Here is your abdication. Pray Urda you make the most of it.”



King Haráre IV of Kéatoa died that night. With the Crown Prince far to the south, the young bucks proclaimed the 17 year old Prince Kíre as Kéatoa’s King. The argument over the Táwe treaty now

threatened to become civil war, a battle of sons against their fathers.

Haeata rebelled, and a similar movement in Mangana was crushed by the large local garrison. The Oratóan Urda Primacy threw its weight against the new order. Likewise, Lord Makúru, commander of the Army of the North and victor of the Táwe Campaign of 536, announced in no uncertain terms that he supported behind Kíre’s father, who was being called “King Harápo III” in some quarters. With most of the other armies supporting Kíre, the young King was feeling pretty good about his chances until he was told that his father’s army was approaching the capital of Kiruak from the south.

With determination, the young King rode out to meet his father’s army. Young King Kíre II led 16,000 kura and 20,000 infantry against his father, King Harápo III, and his 5,000 kura. Harápo was no tactician⁸, but even he could see the odds were hopeless. Truth be told, Harápo had very little desire to be King. He called for a parley – alone – with his son. None know exactly what the two discussed, but father and son announced a truce, and both armies marched back to Kiruak together.

Letters were dispatched from the palace under the Kingdom’s Privy Seal ordering all armies to stand down. The letters were signed by both Harápo and Kíre, with no titles appended. Several months passed, and a kind of wary peace settled over Kéatoa. When Holy Mother Panía died, there was no mechanism in place to replace her. With neither claimant to the throne making any sort of statement on the matter, the administrative machinery of the OUP ground to a halt.

Shortly after the turn of the year 550, father and son summoned the Wírehúa to Kiruak. When the nobles were ushered into the great hall, they each stood on either side of the old stone throne, smiling. Hura the Crone occupied a small wooden stool

⁸ He is, however, an academy-trained wizard of great ability.

nearby. When the nobles had taken their assigned seats, it was she who addressed them.

“Noble Lords of Kéatoa, Éiwi of the Parrot, hearken well to my words. It is our law since the time of the Landing that sons should follow their fathers. Therefore, my noble Lords, I give you King Harápo III, son of King Haráre IV, son of King Harápo the Pious.”

Harápo sat upon the throne, and his own son Kíre set the crown upon his head. Whatever the lords of Kéatoa might have been expecting, it was not this.

Then the wizard-king rose and spoke. “My people. You know as well as I that whatever qualities a King should possess, my qualities lay elsewhere. In these coming days, we need a warrior king. Look around you! On every border Oratoa is engulfed in war. In happier days, in more peaceful days, I might serve you well, but those days are not today. Therefore, in consultation with my beloved aunt”, he gestured to Hura the Crone on the step below him, “I have determined to abdicate in favour of my son Kíre. Long live the King!”

The shout was taken up by the crowd, who jumped to their feet, shouting and stomping, as Kíre sat down upon the throne. His father took the crown from his own head and placed it on the boy’s.

A flurry of decrees were issued from the palace in the next days: amnesty for the rebellious, the recognition of Aáta of Táwe as Takríki of Nekan, the elevation of the King’s younger brother as Crown Prince, and the appointment of ex-King Harápo as Chancellor of the Kiruak Sorcery Academy. Princess Hura was appointed Matriarch of Pukei, but the Oratoan Urdan Primacy was quietly abandoned.

Infantry quality improved and the Kiruak Sorcery Academy took in more students.

THE KUROAN CAMPAIGN (Eastern Front of the Great War)

546: *Infamy!*



The Marque of the Blood Dragon invited the Urdan Realms to trade. While they were apparently expecting Pakoan merchants, only those of Kéatoa arrived in the port of Renwhet. The trade vessels were held in the river, never reaching the docks. The merchant crews were taken by the Blood Dragon port authorities and enslaved. Captains and ships’ officers were hanged and their corpses impaled on spikes all around the harbour.

Sacrifices, human and otherwise, were offered on the Marque’s bloody altars to the “Blood Dragon of the Night Skye”. They were rewarded with a shower of shooting stars that briefly lit up the night.

The lines of spiked corpses and burning pyres formed a charming background when Prince Ihu, only son of Princess Hauóra, married his cousin Queen Ahu in an effort to keep the Dragon bloodline “pure”. They immediately set to having children.

Several genuine spies and rabble-rousers were captured in Renwhet and executed, adding to the decorative motif.

547: *Terror!*



While the Royalist Kuroans maneuvered troops throughout their loyal lands, and an increasingly bloody-minded Queen Ahu delighted in massacring foreigners, a small group of oblivious Ingazi athletes arrived in Renwhet for the *Timpalak* games. They were seized by soldiers of the Marque, who hanged them all as quickly as they could to the adulation of the crowds. The furry Ingazi corpses joined the skeletal remains of the Kéatoan merchants, impaled on spikes all around the harbour.

Queen Ahu of the Marque announced the birth of a son, whom she named Teáda. The little Prince

reportedly manifested his dragonblood within weeks of his birth.

548: Battle!

 King Ataíri of Kuroa, Son of Kiriáre Son of Kaituéra, invaded Timapoa, determined to reunify his realm and to utterly crush the rebels of the Marque. Queen Ahu, being no fool, conceded the countryside and fell back behind the imposing walls of Renwhet.

The Kuroans were prepared, however, for they had brought ships with them to blockade the river port while they put Renwhet to siege.

Siege of Renwhet: Year One (548)

King Ataíri brought with him some 76,000 men, including 5,000 engineers. More than 150 Kuroan ships blockaded the city. He began with a devastating fire-bolt against the city walls.

The Marque was not about to take this lying down. They had 5,000 of their own engineers, not to mention 36,000 additional troops, defending what was left of the city's walls. They also had their own King and Queen, both of whom were extremely adept military leaders.

They were also dragonblood, of course, and in their fire-drake forms, they soon took to the skies in aid of their fighters. The Kuroan King was no slouch either, leading assaults and defending against sorties while in fire-drake form.

The year saw many skirmishes and a considerable loss of life. The besiegers lost about 7,000 men, but the defenders were hard-pressed, losing about 27,000. One of the defending casualties was the new Marque King, Ihu. His untimely death leaves the Queen a widow with an infant son.

Still, the walls remained strong and the defenders vowed to fight to the last.



Meanwhile, Pakoa had been admitted into the Empire of Sahúl. Accordingly, the King and Queen of Pakoa issued a declaration of war against the

Seven Nation Army and against the Marque specifically. While well-heeled Pakoan diplomats sought out King Kiriáre of Kuroa, their armies were on the march.

Queen Réka Pápahu of Pakoa herself led their mighty fleet of 250 ships to make port at the Kuroan provisional capital of Sandlock. There, the Queen supervised the unloading of the troops: 25,000 kura cavalry, 10,000 infantry, and 5,000 engineers.

549: Reinforcements!



The Marque's new allies came to their assistance. Woangnen ships landed troops in Kuroan Wokrua attempting to force tribute from the inhabitants, while Gúako landed armies in Tengkoa and ran right into a Kuroan army.

Battle of Witsend (549)

The invaders were led by Takríki Hataréi of Wihri, whose fathers had been proud and independent monarchs. Hataréi was comfortable serving the King of Gúako, for in him he sensed a higher destiny for his people. His mighty fleet⁹ landed an army numbering more than 25,000 infantry and 12,000 kura scouts.

Standing against him was the puissant Takríki Róngo II of Rengoa, with 19,000 of Kuroa's elite kura cavalry and 7,000 supporting infantry. The two armies met near the fishing village of Witsend as the invaders were coming ashore.

The beach became a killing ground, and the sea ran red with blood. The invaders lost 25,000 men attempting to come ashore, including more than half their kura. The defenders lost most of their infantry, but the vast bulk of their excellent cavalry remained. The Gúakoans wisely withdrew to their ships before the rest of their forces were slaughtered.



⁹ 175 transports, many built and crewed with slaves.

Woangnen had a better time of it in Wokrua. The irascible old Takríki Ihaía of Takwhi, determined to prove his relevance and worth to the “whippersnapper Queen”, landed his 14,000 men without incident and set about to exacting tribute from the region. To do so, he had to reduce the local keeps, and he arranged a mighty war haka before the gates of the city of Cape Watch.

The Urdan cathedral of Runga holds out, but Ihaía was otherwise successful.

Siege of Renwhet: Year Two (549)

Meanwhile, Kuroan siege of the Marque capital continued apace. The Kuroan forces were surprised by the arrival of a 40,000-man army from the east and the simultaneous appearance of 250 ships in the river. There was some panic in the Kuroan ranks as the army and fleet came into view, as most assumed that it was Gúakoan reinforcements for the Marque. It turned out to be the Pakoan army of Queen Réka Pápahu. She was accompanied by a diplomatic aide, who had arrived independently at the head of a wagon-train full of chests, reportedly filled with gold.

A parley was arranged, and King Ataíri of Kuroa met with Queen Réka of Pakoa and her diplomatic aide in a splendid pavilion of cloth of gold. After many hours, the Dragonking emerged from the pavilion and conferred with his captains for several hours. He then returned to the Pakoan pavilion and called for a great feast to be served.

At the feast, Ataíri Dragonking of Kuroa announced that he had pledged his loyalty to Pakoa in the form of an alliance. He raised his drinking horn and called for his captains to toast Queen Réka, which they happily did.

In the morning, the siege was resumed in earnest, with Queen Réka personally leading the Pakoan engineers and infantry against the walls of Renwhet. The Pakoan siege technique and equipment was much more sophisticated than that of either Kuroa or the Marque, and they quickly became the dominant force in the attack. With

battlemagic blazing, the Pakoan infantry and engineers attacked the gates again and again.

As the walls of Renwhet crumbled around them, the Marque defenders tried a last, desperate sortie while Queen Ahu in drake form executed a daring attack on the baggage train behind the attackers’ lines. The Pakoan Queen returned with a company of hand-picked men to deal with the drake, and Queen Réka, who in her youth had been a Shieldmaiden, found herself face to face with the fire-drake. A terrible fight ensued, a single combat between the 54-year old Queen Réka of Pakoa and the fire-drake who was the Marque’s Queen Ahu.

It was a near thing, but the drake at last tore the Pakoan Queen’s head clear from her shoulders. As she did, Ahu found herself peppered with largely ineffective Pakoan arrows. In pain and rage, she threw herself into the sky, dropping the head in the process. Ahu easily escaped, but as she flew back to the city, she saw the Kuroan and Pakoan forces swarming through enormous, rubble-filled gaps in the city walls, overwhelming the few remaining defenders.

With the city lost, Queen Ahu rushed back to the hall where her young son lay.

The Kuroans lost about 3,000 men in the final push, among them Kyuni, disciple of Arari the Blind, while the Pakoans lost but a handful of men. The Marque forces, however, were all but destroyed, fighting fiercely to the very last man to protect their young Prince. When the Kuroan and Pakoan warriors at last gained control of the great hall, they found the Prince already gone.

550: Margins...



From Wokrua, Woangnen’s expeditionary force moved on into Pikhi. Takríki Ihaía of Takwhi led his 14,000 men in the conquest of the region, basically because he wasn’t getting any younger and forcing tribute from the natives was going to take valuable time. Some of his men

burned down Nangi Priory, but they claimed it was an accident.

The Slaughter in Maláo (550)

A ragged Pakoan army of about 12,000 men made it over the mountains and into the jungles of Maláo. There, they immediately came into conflict with the Marque Princess, the Grand Inquisitor Hauóra and her 15,000-man army.

The well-trained and disciplined Marque cavalry ran rings around the stodgy Pakoan infantry, but Pakoa countered with a substantial amount of battle-magic. When Hauóra transformed herself into a fire-drake, however, the scales were tipped, and the battle became a rout.

After the first cavalry and fire-drake charge, the Pakoan infantry broke. About 3,000 Pakoan survivors desperately fled the scene, but the Marque forces hunted them down and slaughtered them without mercy.

MARQUE OF THE BLOOD DRAGON (3 H/BD)

Her Majesty Queen Ahu, Daughter of Kiriáre Son of Kaituéra of the House of Ngeru, Queen of the Dragons.

Trade: Woangnen

DP: None.



The Marque of the Blood Dragon, born in blood, grew strong in blood as battle after battle swept across Old Kuroa. Woangnen transferred control of the wilderland of Herútu to the Marque.

KINGDOM OF KUROA (13 H/UR)

Trade: Kéatoa, New Araxes, New Ingazi, Pakoa

DP: None.

King Ataíri ordered the refugees settled in Sandlock, his provisional capital. War was prosecuted against the rebel “Blood Dragons” even as others of the Seven Nations invaded the north. A desperate alliance was signed with the Kingdom of Pakoa.

With the recovery of Timapoa, King Ataíri noted with sadness that the remaining people there were almost entirely in thrall to the Blood Dragon

heresy. The loyal Kuroans who had become refugees were well settled into Sandlock, and Poháhu became his House’s new homeland.

KINGDOM OF PAKOA (43 H/UR)

His Majesty King Hataréi, Son of Hiríni Son of Hóni of the House of Máki, Lord Tuangua-Whári, Rangatira Tuangua of the Éiwi of the Orca, Órikei.

His Majesty King Kámiter II, Son of Réka Daughter of Kámiter of the House of Pápahu, Rangatira Whári of the Éiwi of the Dolphin, Órikei.

His Majesty King Ataíri III, the Erudite, Son of Kiriáre Son of Kaituéra of the House of Ngeru, Rangatira Kúanowhe of the Éiwi of the Kura, Órikei, Son of the Dragon.

Trade: Kéatoa, Kommolek, New Araxes, New Ingazi

DP: Kingdom of Kuroa (A)



fter many years of petitioning the Empress of Sahûl, King Hataréi and Queen Réka were delighted that the Electors voted to admit Pakoa to the Empire of Sahûl. They immediately set about making war upon the Seven Nation Army led by the Church of the Red Death.

With the death of his beloved Queen Réka Pápahu in battle, King Hataréi went into deep mourning. Their son inherited the Queen’s Aíhetoan titles and Pakoa became a land of two Kings. The addition of the Kuroan alliance made it three.

VICEROYALTY OF NEW INGAZI (37 WH/UR)

Besar Trandes, Second Baron of Saint Ilana, Lord Trouserdale, Viceroy of New Ingazi.

Trade: Kéatoa, Kommolek, New Araxes, Pakoa

DP: None.



New Ingazi continued to send raw materials south to the home country while building up their own infrastructure. The influence of the aging Dolphin cultists continued to fade as the younger generations embraced Urdan orthodoxy. The Viceroy’s son, Lord Besar Gorres, served as a Vice-Admiral in Ingazi’s navy.

Several Kuroan refugees sought shelter in Saint Ilana, including Queen Réka and her children.

NEW ARAXES (1 WH/UR)

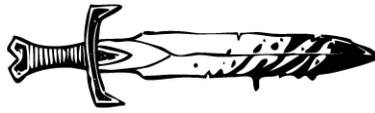
*His Excellency, Count Thiuli Tramandes of Kayew,
Administrator of New Araxes.*

Trade: Kéatoa, Kommolek, New Ingazi, Pakoa

DP: Nope.



The Araxean contingent of the Grand Armada sailed to Tamwoa on the Moána a Waénga in 550 and landed 18,000 Saurian infantry led by the popular Count Tramandes of Kayew. The locals immediately paid tribute to Araxes. In New Kayew, the Administrator signed his command over to Count Tramandes.



imperial strength index

| # | Realm | Player | Forum Name | E-mail | ISI |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | IÄGNAR | Cortlandt Winters | Cortrah | cwinters@notebookmargins.com | 1,123.8 |
| <i>The Great Powers</i> | | | | | |
| 2 | Pouákaitoa | Robert Kalcevic | Dawnwalker | | 850.7 |
| 3 | Pakoa | Michael Blythe | mikeb21 | mblythe21@gmail.com | 842.3 |
| <i>Major Powers</i> | | | | | |
| 4 | Kéatoa | <i>This realm is open for a player</i> | | | 579.9 |
| 5 | Dread Emperor / CRD | Steve Speyer | Crimson Marque | crimsonmarque@gmail.com | 466.6 |
| 6 | Gúako | Tyler Baumgartner | rawhidekid | tylerbaumgartner@gmail.com | 453.5 |
| 7 | Holy Tongi | Dominick Morales | Waiari Amokapua III | morales_dominick@yahoo.com | 433.4 |
| <i>Minor Powers</i> | | | | | |
| 8 | Ancalimë | Christopher Scherrey | JDScherrey | JDScherrey@aol.com | 378.1 |
| 9 | Whutoa | Mark Truman | Hailen | mark.truman@gmail.com | 351.7 |
| 10 | Rotkarru | Ed Allen | Touca Tuki | tgroove@att.net | 346.9 |
| 11 | Orofer | Benjamin Peters | Aileron | benjpeters@hotmail.com | 323.7 |
| 12 | Woangnen | James Kahelawai V | ExLibrisMortis | sciop@cox.net | 320.6 |
| 13 | Roátru | Sam Jacobs | Mad_Prophet | madprophecies@gmail.com | 298.8 |
| 14 | Rangkua | Michael Riggs | Centari | m.riggs60@yahoo.com | 182.3 |
| 15 | Blood Dragon | Matt Sievers | Malleas | fantsigns@gmail.com | 157.6 |
| 16 | New Ingazi (V) | Henry Jago | jago | jagoh@yahoo.com | 154.7 |

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