

MAZARIUM



LORE COMPENDIUM

THE GEOMETRY OF SCARS

MAZARIUM PUBLISHING

Mazariim

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The Geometry of Scars

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Introduction

The first volume of the lore for Mazariim, the Gazetteer, covered the world in broad strokes — its races, its gods, its continents, its history from the birth of the universe to the fragile peace that followed the War to End All Wars. This second loredump narrows the focus. It concerns itself primarily with the Inner Kingdoms, the most powerful and technologically advanced region of the continent of Nigal, and with the places, people, and secrets that a reader of *The Geometry of Scars* and its companion novels may wish to understand more deeply.

Where the first volume was a scholar's survey of the known world, this one is closer to a traveler's guide — the kind of document an educated merchant, a curious mage, or an Emerald Shields operative might carry in an oilskin pouch. It describes what the cities look like, how the governments function, what ruins lie hidden in the highlands, and what organizations move quietly through the corridors of power. It also expands on subjects the first volume could only touch: the alien nature of the oldest gods, the practical experience of witnessing magic, the lost civilizations whose ruins still shape the landscape, and the ley-lines — those invisible roads of magical power that once connected a continent and whose scars still mark the earth.

Nothing here contradicts the first volume. Everything here deepens it.

Welcome back to Mazariim. The roads go further than you think.

Callum Ashvane 2026

The Inner Kingdoms

Overview of Nations

The Inner Kingdoms occupy the northwestern corner of the continent of Nigal, a region blessed by geography and defended by politics. Mountains shield the east and south. The Crescent Sea curves along the western and northern coasts. Dozens of nations, city-states, and territories fill the land between, connected by well-patrolled roads, rail lines, and a near-total absence of the roaming monsters that plague less civilized regions.

The people here are predominantly Madronian — the human subrace whose name derives from the ancient wizard-king Madron, ruler of the brutal mageocracy of Yrugas some four thousand years before the present day. Their regional dialect is Madra, a flowing language featuring over fifteen vowels and many silent letters, though Common is spoken universally due to Federation standardization.

The climate is temperate. The landscape ranges from rolling farmland and ancient forests to steep hills and dramatic coastline. Cultural analogs for Western and some Eastern European countries can be found throughout the region, adapted and shaped by the unique forces of Mazariim: a world where magic is one of the fundamental forces of the universe, where gods are mortal entities that can be banished or destroyed, and where the scars of lost civilizations still mark the land in ways most people cannot see.

Hundreds of thousands of people live in the Inner Kingdoms. The vast majority are Madronian humans, but meaningful populations of dwarves, gnomes, halflings, elves, and Sabonaar humans call the region home. This diversity is a direct legacy of the War to End All Wars, which forced every race to fight side by side and, in the peace that followed, to build something new together.

The technology of the Inner Kingdoms is roughly equivalent to that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of our own world, supplemented by gnomish innovations and the persistent influence of magic. Steam-powered infrastructure, gas lighting, the printing press, indoor plumbing, telescopes, bicycles, rail systems, and even gnomish-designed blimp airports can be found in the wealthier cities. The gap between the

most advanced metropolis and the most isolated village is enormous, but the roads between them are safe enough that the gap is slowly closing.

The Federation of Man

"United we stood against the darkness. United we shall remain." — Inscription above the gates of Fort Hope

The Federation of Man is not a nation. It is a confederation — a political alliance binding the major nations and city-states of the Inner Kingdoms into a unified body for mutual defense, trade, and governance. Founded in the first year after the War to End All Wars, it transformed the wartime Concord of Unity into a permanent institution and stands today as the dominant human political entity on Mazariim and the single most powerful government on the continent of Nigal.

The Federation is governed by three branches. The Praetorian Council serves as the legislative body, a senate seated at Fort Hope where representatives from major cities, the five largest nations, and recognized guilds vote on regional laws, taxation, troop distribution, infrastructure projects, and trade policy. The number of seats each nation holds is based on its population, creating a system where the largest nations carry proportionally greater influence. The High Court serves as the judiciary, its members appointed for life and required to renounce citizenship in their parent nation in order to serve the Federation directly. The Court adjudicates disputes between member states, interprets Federation law, and hears appeals from national courts. The Federation Military maintains border forts, road patrols, and naval forces, funded through Federation taxation and coordinating with national armies during crises.

Before the Federation, the Inner Kingdoms were a violent and dangerous place. City-states squabbled over territory, religion, and resources. Wars with the dwarves flared every few generations. Monsters roamed the trails between cities, and dark cults threatened what little peace the average farmer could find. The War to End All Wars changed everything. The threat of extinction forced a unity between races and peoples that had never existed before, and the structures built in that desperate hour proved durable enough to survive the peace.

Key moments in the Federation's history include the Steam-Pump Revolution of 12 AW, when gnomish refugees in Pragos perfected steam-driven water pumps and launched the region's industrial transformation. The founding of Saerrus around 45 AW from the ruins of nations destroyed in the War. The formation of the Grand Confederacy of Pragos around 88 AW. The Saerrus Revolution of 209 AW, when the monarchy fell and was replaced by a democracy, with the Federation mediating peace on the borders during the transition. The Charter of Rights, ratified in the following decade, which outlined basic rights for life and liberty. The Stone-Steel Treaty of 376 AW, which opened formal trade and commerce with the Dwarven Empire. The laying of rail lines toward the Dwarven Nations and between Federation forts around 400 AW. And the Federation Expansion Attempt of the early 600s AW, when nationalistic pressure to absorb the Merchant Nations led to trade blockades and skirmishes before being voted down by the Praetorian Council itself — a testament to the Federation's capacity for self-correction.

The Federation is imperfect. Its member states pursue their own interests. Its wealthiest nations exert disproportionate influence. Its military sometimes acts as an instrument of policy rather than defense. But it has kept the peace for eight centuries, and in a world that remembers what happened the last time civilization was divided against itself, that counts for a great deal.

Beneshire

"Honor. Charity. Duty." — Motto of House Thoman

Beneshire is the oldest continuous nation in the Inner Kingdoms, a hereditary monarchy founded around 1,650 BW and ruled since the War by the Thoman dynasty. It is a land of rolling farmland, ancient forests, gentle hills, and dramatic coastline along the Crescent Sea, governed by a feudal system of noble houses that administer its major cities under the authority of the crown.

The kingdom is known for three things: its technological advancement, its charitable institutions, and its genuine decency. Beneshire was the first unified nation to join the Federation in 1 AW, and its armies fought at Fort Hope during the War, suffering tremendous casualties but emerging with their institutions intact. That combination of sacrifice and

survival created a national character that values duty and generosity in roughly equal measure.

Of all the Inner Kingdoms, Beneshire may be the most technologically advanced. Magic, steam power, the printing press, and other innovations have made it a prosperous and relatively peaceful land. The gap between wealthy and poor, while real, is smaller here than in most nations — a consequence of the Thoman dynasty's longstanding emphasis on charity and public investment.

Eleven noble houses administer Beneshire's major cities, each with its own character and specialty. House Thoman rules from the capital of Wyebuff and has held the throne since the War. House Ravenwood of Thaeewood controls much of the kingdom's trade. House Silvermane of Seton maintains the strongest military tradition. House Cromwell of Baefeld is known for religious devotion and clerical influence. House Hargenfeld of Anheath produces explorers and adventurers. House Sussefry of Castow crafts magical items and has a darker reputation for espionage. House Renoalt of Vinshire is a family of wizards and arcane scholars. House Bahn of Clahill drives industry and manufacturing. House Halycon of Cabrook oversees the kingdom's agricultural heartland. House Kohler of Magrove breeds the finest horses in Beneshire. And House Tanishire of Chaythorp serves as neutral negotiators and diplomats, mediating disputes that other houses cannot resolve without bias.

The current ruler is King Francent Thoman, a lawful and good man known as both a capable fighter and a just administrator. Under his rule, Beneshire continues to balance tradition with progress, maintaining the feudal structures that have governed the kingdom for millennia while embracing the innovations that make it one of the most comfortable places to live in all of Mazariim.

Saerrus

"Reason. Liberty. Progress." — Unofficial motto

Independent and free-thinking, the people of Saerrus pride themselves on open-mindedness and their many universities and schools of thought. Located near the middle of the Inner Kingdoms, Saerrus is one of the only democracies in the world, a distinction that gives its people a sense of superiority and smugness that

neighboring nations find alternately admirable and insufferable.

Saerrus was not always a democracy. Founded around 45 AW from the ruins of three Madronian nations destroyed during the War, it spent its first century and a half as a monarchy within the Federation. In 209 AW, revolutionaries toppled the crown. The Federation mediated peace on the borders while the nation transitioned into what it is today: an intellectual democracy where governance is earned through debate and merit rather than bloodline.

The nation is ruled by elected councils with numerous checks and balances. Representatives from towns and villages bring issues to regional assemblies, which send delegates to the national Senate. The Prime Minister is elected by the Senate and serves as head of state. The judiciary is independent. The current Prime Minister is Alais Senseau, a woman of good character and sharp political instincts.

Saerrus is a peaceful nation seemingly obsessed with art, music, culture, and all things intellectual. Numerous galleries, theaters, and opera houses grace its largest cities. The landscape is gentle and cultivated — rolling countryside, manicured estates, and elegant cities connected by tree-lined boulevards. Coffee houses, originally a dwarven innovation exported through Saerran culture, have become fixtures of the academic social landscape across the Inner Kingdoms. The Saerran sense of cultural superiority is both their greatest strength and most annoying trait.

Grand Confederacy of Pragos

"Progress demands sacrifice." — Attributed to Grand Artificer Zebulon Grath

Of all the Inner Kingdoms, Pragos presents the sharpest contrasts. Its cities contain some of the most advanced infrastructure in the world alongside the largest disparity between wealthy and poor. Focused on the creation of minor magical items and societal technologies, the Pragosians are led by powerful spellcasters in a magocratic confederacy — more than a dozen states, each run by a powerful mage, creating complex networks of alliances within the government structure.

Many citizens are wealthy due to the nation's focus on exports, while many more live in abject poverty, performing menial jobs ranging from farming to working in smoke-filled factories. This stark inequality is Pragos's greatest shame and most persistent political vulnerability within the Federation.

The current leader is Grand Artificer Zebulon Grath, who claims lineage tracing back to Madron himself — the wizard-king who ruled the Yrugas mageocracy for nine hundred years. Whether the claim is true is debatable. What is not debatable is that under Grath's leadership, Pragos has pursued aggressive magical industrialization with little concern for the human cost.

Pragos also maintains the Dark Whispers, one of the most feared organizations in the Inner Kingdoms — a secret police that does the Confederacy's bidding in shadows and darkness. They leave no evidence of their methods and hope to have their very existence doubted by common people. A journey to the secret prisons of the Dark Whispers is said to be always a one-way trip.

The relationship between Pragos and the Federation is one of mutual dependence and mutual suspicion. Pragos needs the Federation's markets. The Federation needs Pragos's magical innovations. Neither fully trusts the other, and both are probably right not to.

Arogror

"Blood of the Hills. Steel of the Forge." — Arogrorian clan saying

Arogror occupies the northern reaches of the Inner Kingdoms, a hilly and unforgiving landscape populated by rugged hillfolk known for weapons, armor, and raw materials. The people feel a deep sense of nationalism not dissimilar to dwarven clan pride, and for good reason: the dwarven minority here is larger than in any other Inner Kingdom nation, and their influence runs deep.

Dwarven techniques shape Arogrorian metalworking, brewing, and construction. Worship of Mordrion, Dirgin, and Gyru alongside Tiovin reflects the cultural blending that centuries of proximity have produced. Arogrorian ale, brewed with dwarven methods, is renowned across the Federation. Family is valued above most other considerations, and the hill tribes of the

north maintain strong autonomy even as they acknowledge the authority of the Chancellor.

The Chancellorship is nominally hereditary but succession often follows lines of merit and acclaim rather than strict bloodline. The current Chancellor is Antioch Krichtiefels, a ranger and hunter who earned his position through competence rather than birth — a fact that endears him to the common people and occasionally irritates the old noble families.

Xeque

"Gold opens every door." — Xeque merchant proverb

Xeque is a hedonistic trading nation ruled by a merchant council, where gold and power determine which rules one needs to follow. Its cities are beautiful, decadent, and morally flexible. A healthy following of Xannith — the entity of greed, desire, and wealth — adds to the nation's character. Temples to Xannith stand among the bathhouses, festhalls, and gentlemen's establishments that line the grand canals and boulevards.

The nation is governed by a Merchant Council composed of representatives from the most powerful noble and merchant houses. The Prefect serves as the Council's presiding officer but holds limited executive power. Real authority rests with the wealthiest houses, whose votes carry weight proportional to their economic contributions. Gold literally determines political influence.

Xeque is known for manufactured luxury goods, spices, perfumes, textiles, and glassworks. Its lensmakers produce the finest telescopes in the Inner Kingdoms. Its silk is traded as far as the Dwarven Empire. The current Prefect, Ethbeorht Tizomber, is a pragmatic man who understands that Xeque's wealth depends on stability and is therefore a reliable, if self-interested, partner within the Federation.

The Merchant Nations

South of the Inner Kingdoms lie the Merchant Nations, a collection of independent states along the southern coast that have resisted Federation incorporation while maintaining complex trade relationships with it.

Naarlam is a nation of seafaring explorers, governed by seven noble houses whose lineages stretch back over two thousand years. Their ships range farther than any others, and it was Naarlam explorers who founded the colonial outpost of New Sabonaa on distant Akovar.

Cecastaa split from Naarlam in 412 BW and achieved full independence in 99 AW. It is a land of rebellious horsebreeders whose people value freedom above order and regard the Federation with deep suspicion.

Tentigo is a warmongering theocracy centered on an aggressive interpretation of Tiovin's faith. Its capital, Tiovesh, was renamed in 472 BW to reflect the church's dominance, and the nation has launched crusades in 172 AW, 219 AW, and 397 AW — each one extending Tentigo's influence and earning the wariness of its neighbors.

Instar fell under the control of its Thaumaturgic Council in 689 AW, becoming a magocracy where spellcasting ability determines political power. It is smaller than Pragos but in some ways more focused, its mages less concerned with industry and more concerned with pure arcane research.

The Free City of Amara was founded in 692 AW after the collapse of the Empire of Simir. It is a mercantile autocracy — a single city governing itself through trade, cunning, and a fierce independence that has kept it free of both Federation and Merchant Nation control for over a century.

Locations

Wyubluff

Wyubluff is the capital of Beneshire and one of the great cities of the Inner Kingdoms. It announces itself before a traveler sees it — first through sound, as steam engines thud in the industrial yards, then through smell, as coal smoke mingles with river water, bakery yeast, and the metallic tang of gas lighting infrastructure. Only then does the road crest the final hill and reveal the city itself, spread across both banks of a river crossed by seven bridges.

The Royal Palace occupies the western bluff, its pale stone calculated to catch the morning light. The Grand Cathedral of Tiovin soars above the Cathedral Quarter, its spires visible from miles away. The University Quarter sprawls across the southern bank in comfortable, centuries-darkened buildings. And at the blimp airport north of the city, a gnomish dirigible sits in its berth, its gasbag painted in cheerful yellows and reds.

The city is organized into six districts. The Royal Quarter houses the palace, government offices, and noble residences. The Cathedral Quarter contains religious institutions, hospitals, and charity houses. The University Quarter is home to academies, libraries, and student housing — a slower-paced world of bookshops in former warehouses, coffee houses that serve as gathering places for scholars, and printing presses producing broadsheets. The Market Quarter is the commercial heart, with its grand bazaar, merchant offices, and guild halls. The Harbor District holds the docks, warehouses, shipyards, and sailor's taverns. And the Commons is where the working population lives, in modest but well-maintained neighborhoods that reflect Beneshire's commitment to reducing the gap between rich and poor.

Steam trams run on iron rails through the broader avenues, carrying workers between districts. Gas lamps with etched glass housings line the streets. Cobblestones, worn smooth by centuries of foot traffic, give the older quarters a comfortable, lived-in feeling. The city smells of coal and bread and river water, and at night the gas lamps cast pools of warm light that make the streets feel almost safe enough to forget that the world was nearly destroyed eight centuries ago.

The University of Wyubluff

The University of Wyubluff is the premier academic institution in Beneshire and one of the most respected in the Inner Kingdoms. Founded in the early centuries after the War, it occupies a campus in the University Quarter and offers instruction in history, languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, and arcane theory.

The Department of Arcane Theory maintains a faculty of approximately twenty mages and scholars who study the principles underlying magical phenomena. Their work is generally conventional, focusing on well-established frameworks for understanding mana behavior, spell construction, and magical interaction. The University is a place of competent, steady scholarship — not the cutting edge of arcane research, but a reliable foundation upon which more adventurous minds can build.

The University also plays an important role in the chain of knowledge that connects the Inner Kingdoms to the wider world. When rare or unusual texts arrive in the region — recovered from colonial outposts, unearthed from ruins, or acquired through trade — the University is often among the first institutions to examine them. When a text exceeds the University's linguistic capabilities, it is forwarded to more specialized institutions, such as the Library of the Ages. This collaborative chain ensures that no piece of knowledge is lost simply because the first pair of eyes to see it lacked the training to understand it.

The Library of the Ages

High in the mountains of Beneshire, accessible only by a single maintained road that climbs through narrow passes, stands one of the greatest collections of knowledge anywhere in the world. The Library of the Ages was founded just after the War to preserve humanity's knowledge against further world-shaking events. It houses over ten thousand books, including a significant number of pre-War texts and documents — rarities after the devastation of eight centuries ago.

The Library occupies a complex of interconnected stone buildings carved into and built upon a mountain peak. The location was chosen for defensibility and isolation, and the mountain's altitude creates a cool, dry climate

ideal for document preservation. Inside, silver threading in the walls serves as preservation wards, and candelabra flames kindle at a spoken word or a Watcher's touch.

The Library is organized around several primary spaces. The Translation Chamber occupies the eastern wing — a long hall of pale stone with arched windows and slanted reading desks where scholars work with texts requiring linguistic analysis. Iron candelabras wrought in the shape of Mau's eye symbol line the walls. The Sealed Archives lie beneath the main structure, climate-controlled vaults where materials deemed too speculative, too dangerous, or too fragile for general access are stored. Individual translating cells serve as private workspaces for senior scholars, each containing a desk, shelving, and a window.

The Library is watched over by the clergy of Mau — the Watchers — who serve as both scholars and guardians. The Archivist-General holds the senior administrative position, responsible for the Library's direction, external relationships, and decisions regarding preservation and access. The Archive-Master manages the physical organization and maintenance of the collection. Senior and Junior Watchers perform the daily work of translation, research, and document handling.

The Library maintains quiet alliances with the Astral Circle and the Emerald Shields. It can call upon powerful support and provide those groups with rare and useful information in return. Communication between the Library and its allies is conducted through coded letters carried by trusted couriers rather than magical means, as both organizations prefer methods that cannot be intercepted by divination.

The Library's defenses are formidable but understated: a location that is difficult to reach by ordinary means, numerous magical wards, and defenders whose capabilities are not advertised. Those who seek the Library's knowledge with honest intent are welcomed. Those who do not are encouraged to reconsider.

The Misty Forest

The Misty Forest is a vast woodland dominating Beneshire's northern interior. Dense, ancient, and poorly mapped in its deeper reaches, the forest earns its name from the persistent ground-level mist that forms

in the valleys and hollows between its hills, created by the interaction of cold mountain air from the east and warmer lowland moisture from the west. Visibility on the forest floor is frequently reduced, particularly at dawn and dusk, and the mist creates an atmosphere of perpetual twilight that has inspired centuries of folklore about spirits, wandering lights, and hidden places.

The forest is patrolled by the Protectors of the Shire, a mixed company of rangers and paladins, many of them elven, all sworn to protect the remaining forests and lands from harm. Their coverage is limited by the forest's sheer size, but their presence keeps the major trails safe and discourages the kind of organized banditry that plagues less-patrolled woodlands.

The Misty Forest contains numerous remnants of the Yrugas mageocracy — collapsed towers, overgrown foundations, and more substantial structures that have survived three millennia through magical preservation or simple durability of construction. Most of these ruins are minor and generally considered harmless, though local folklore attaches superstitious significance to many of them.

Scattered elven communities also exist within the forest, established by elves who chose to remain on Nigal after the War to End All Wars. These communities are small, insular, and maintain limited contact with human settlements. They are protected by the Protectors of the Shire and generally left to their own governance.

Littlebridge

Littlebridge is a small agricultural village on the northern edge of the Misty Forest, home to perhaps five hundred people. It is ruled by the Bakerson family, can call upon at least twenty-five militia in an emergency, and possesses the modest infrastructure of a settlement that has existed peacefully for generations without attracting much attention from the wider world.

The village centers on the Misty Dawn Inn, the primary inn and gathering place, where woodsmoke mingles with the smell of barley soup and the fire casts orange light across a room full of farmers, woodcutters, and the occasional traveler. The innkeeper, a Laveri woman named Tanya, is protective of her patrons and direct in her speech. A small shop called Pragos Magical Wares sells basic potions and scrolls, operated by an awkward middle-aged wizard named Roldolpho. The local Tiovin

congregation meets in a modest chapel tended by an elderly priest known as Old Man Joseph, who combines genuine wisdom with an unexpectedly sharp sense of humor.

Littlebridge is the kind of place that history usually overlooks. The people here farm, raise families, and live quietly. When strange things happen in the forest — symbols carved on trees, people disappearing from nearby settlements — they notice, and they worry, but they lack the resources to do much about it. They rely on the Protectors of the Shire, the distant Federation, and the hope that whatever darkness moves in the deeper woods will pass them by.

New Sabonaa

New Sabonaa is the only permanent settlement of Inner Kingdom or Merchant Nation origin on the continent of Akovar. Established by Sabonaar explorers from Naarlam approximately sixty years before the present day, it clings to the western coast of the Akovarian archipelago like a barnacle on the hull of a ship that has sailed too far from home.

The settlement consists of a fortified harbor, a trading post, a small chapel of Tiovin, warehouses for storing recovered artifacts and trade goods, and a cluster of timber-and-stone buildings housing a colonial population of roughly eight hundred to twelve hundred people, fluctuating with the shipping seasons. A wooden palisade surrounds the settlement's landward perimeter — necessary protection against the jungle wildlife and the occasional territorial incursion by dragonborn clans who regard the colonists as trespassers on ancestral ground.

The journey from the Crescent Coast to New Sabonaa takes approximately three to four months under favorable conditions, crossing open ocean that no reliable charts fully document. Ships sail perhaps twice a year, timed to avoid the worst storm seasons. The route passes through waters claimed by the Pirates of the Crescent Coast and requires navigation skills that few captains possess. An estimated one in five ships that attempt the voyage fail to arrive.

Beyond New Sabonaa's palisade walls, Akovar is a continent that has spent over seven thousand years returning to wilderness. Jungle canopy covers the ruins of pyramid-temples and geometric city grids. The

descendants of Akovarians who survived the ley-line detonation have evolved into distinct peoples: dragonborn clans mutated by draconic energy during the catastrophe, genasi tribes infused with elemental forces released by the network's collapse, and scattered human communities who retain fragmented oral traditions of their ancestors' achievements but possess none of their knowledge or power.

Expeditions into the interior are dangerous, expensive, and frequently fatal. Nevertheless, the artifacts and texts recovered from these expeditions represent the only primary sources of Akovarian knowledge available to modern scholars, making New Sabonaa — for all its fragility — one of the most important settlements in the world for those who study the ancient past.

The Hollow Sepulcher

Around 2,700 BW, the mageocracy of Yrugan collapsed in a catastrophic combination of magical disaster and slave revolts. Vast numbers died in a matter of weeks. The concentrated death created a phenomenon unlike anything seen before or since.

The Hollow Sepulcher is not a building. It is a place — a region where the boundary between the Material Plane and the Negative Energy Plane has worn thin, where death magic flows freely, where undead arise spontaneously from the accumulated weight of ancient suffering. This is Zebulba's greatest temple, formed not by construction but by the metaphysical imprint of mass death.

For centuries after Yrugan's fall, undead armies poured from the ruins, threatening neighboring civilizations. Eventually, a coalition of druids, clerics of Tiovin, and paladins of Mordrion managed to seal the breach with powerful wards. But the sealing was incomplete.

The Void-Touched — a desperate order of warriors and mages — maintain these wards from inside the temple itself, a perpetual sacrifice to prevent something worse from emerging. They serve simultaneously as priests of Zebulba and gatekeepers against full catastrophe. These guardians live short, haunted lives, knowing they will likely die battling undead horrors in the darkness. New volunteers arrive regularly, driven by duty, desperation, or penance, to replace those who have fallen.

Ruins and Lost Places

The Athenaeum of Echoes

In the rocky highlands of eastern Beneshire, about ninety miles northeast of Wyebuff, lie the ruins of one of the Yrugas mageocracy's most unusual institutions. The Athenaeum of Echoes was not a weapon forge, a slave pen, or a battle academy. It was a research complex — founded around 3,600 BW by a consortium of wizard-lords who recognized that their civilization, for all its power, was built on incomplete foundations.

The Athenaeum was dedicated to understanding. Its founders were not altruists; they believed that recovering lost magical knowledge would grant them advantages over their rivals. But their methods were scholarly rather than purely exploitative, making the institution unusual among Yrugas facilities. Over nine centuries, the complex grew from a single tower into a sprawling campus of interconnected buildings, underground vaults, and specialized research chambers, employing over two hundred mages, scribes, translators, and support staff.

The Athenaeum organized its research into three divisions. The Resonance Observatory occupied the eastern wing, built around a central tower that rose two hundred feet above the highlands. This division studied locations where magic behaved differently — where spells were stronger or weaker, where the fabric of reality seemed thin. They did not understand that they were observing the remnants of ley-lines; they simply cataloged the effects and sought patterns. Their primary instrument was the Oculus Terra, a massive magical apparatus that allowed mages to perceive magical geography across vast distances.

The Translation Chamber occupied the western wing, devoted to linguistic and historical research. Its scholars worked to decipher texts from pre-Yrugas civilizations, including seventeen fragments of Akovarian text — written in a language no living person could read — that obsessed generations of translators. The Conjunction Archive occupied the underground levels, a vast library containing every text, map, and theoretical treatise the Athenaeum produced, along with anomalous artifacts recovered from the same "resonance zones" the Observatory studied.

The Athenaeum's location was not arbitrary. Early surveyors had identified the highland site as a place of persistent magical resonance. What the founders did not know was that they had built atop a minor ley-line nexus — an intersection of three dormant channels that retained a shadow of their former nature. This nexus made the Athenaeum ideal for magical research, but it also made it dangerous. Researchers reported vivid dreams, moments of disorientation, and glimpses of places that did not exist. Several went mad. Others simply vanished.

Over its nine centuries, the Athenaeum produced several findings of lasting importance. The Resonance Atlas was a comprehensive map documenting over three hundred locations where magic behaved anomalously — in retrospect, a map of ley-line scars. The Seventeen Fragments yielded partial translations that referenced "geometric patterns of power" and "the flow between sacred points." A scholar named Meridax the Listener proposed around 3,100 BW that the resonance zones were remnants of an artificial system — "echoes of a structure that no longer exists." He was ridiculed by his contemporaries and died in obscurity, but his hypothesis was essentially correct. The Conjunction Stones, crystalline artifacts recovered from resonance zones, exhibited unusual properties: warming near other resonance zones, humming at frequencies below hearing, and occasionally projecting brief images. They were Akovarian ley-line monitoring devices, long since depleted but still faintly active.

When Yrugas fell around 2,700 BW, the slave revolt that swept the Inner Kingdoms reached the Athenaeum. The surface buildings burned. The great Oculus Terra was toppled and shattered. But the underground levels survived — the Archive's vault doors, designed to protect priceless knowledge from magical attack, proved equally effective against mundane assault. The slaves could not breach them and eventually moved on.

For over three thousand years, the Archive has waited — sealed, largely undisturbed, containing the original Akovarian fragments, the Resonance Atlas, the Conjunction Stones, and centuries of research notes that no living person has read.

Today, the surface ruins are a maze of collapsed walls, fire-blackened stone, and encroaching vegetation. The Observatory tower's lower forty feet remain standing — a hollow cylinder open to the sky, surrounded by debris that occasionally sparks with residual magic. The

underground levels extend three stories below: the Processing Halls on the first level, partially flooded; the Primary Archive on the second, preserved by enchantments that still maintain cool, dry air; and the Secured Vault on the third, where the most valuable materials were kept behind wards that remain partially active. The nearest settlement, the village of Thornwick twelve miles to the west, has avoided the ruins for generations, calling them cursed.

The nexus has grown increasingly erratic without maintenance. Reality is thin in the deeper chambers. Time occasionally skips or loops. Sounds echo from events that happened centuries ago — conversations, screams, the mundane clatter of a working institution that died in violence. This is why the locals call it the Athenaeum of Echoes. The knowledge is still there, waiting for someone with the skill to find it and the courage to endure the finding.

The Geometrist's Tower

Approximately sixty miles east of the Athenaeum, in the remote highlands near the Arogror border, stands a seven-story tower with a distinctive twisted silhouette — each level rotated slightly from the one below, creating a subtle spiral that is barely perceptible from a distance but deeply disorienting up close. The nearest settlement is over thirty miles away. The area is considered cursed. Animals avoid it. Plants grow stunted and twisted. The sky seems darker here, even on clear days.

The tower was built around 2,850 BW by a Yrugas scholar named Vorthax, a mage whose magical talent manifested not as raw power but as an unusual sensitivity to magical patterns. He studied at the Athenaeum of Echoes for thirty years, contributing to the Resonance Atlas before becoming increasingly obsessed with explaining the phenomena his colleagues merely cataloged.

Vorthax's theory proposed that the resonance zones were not natural features but remnants of an artificial network created by a pre-Yrugas civilization. This theory was not well received. The Yrugas establishment had little patience for suggestions that their predecessors had been more advanced. His funding was cut, his access restricted, and he found himself marginalized.

In 2,855 BW, Vorthax left the Athenaeum and used his family's remaining wealth to build his tower on a remote tract of highland territory. The location sat at the intersection of five major ley-line scars — the most complex nexus he had ever identified. The tower's geometry was based on patterns extracted from his research, incorporating angles and proportions he believed would resonate with the underlying magical structure. Construction was difficult and dangerous. Workers reported disorientation and nightmares. Several died in improbable accidents.

For one hundred and fifty-five years, Vorthax pursued his research in isolation, building theoretical models, conducting practical experiments, and searching for evidence of the civilization that had built the original network. Seventy years into his research, he discovered something remarkable beneath his tower — a portal, older than Yrugas itself, connecting to the ruins of a pyramid-temple on the distant continent of Akovar. Over the next fifty years, he made dozens of expeditions through the portal, recovering texts and artifacts that validated his theories. He learned that the channels were called ley-lines, that they had been powered by an entity called Asti, and that the network had been destroyed when that entity was imprisoned.

But Vorthax also discovered a limitation he could not overcome. Ley-lines required a catalyst of divine or draconic power to initiate. He had neither. His theories were complete, his understanding was comprehensive, but he could not create what he had spent his life studying.

When Yrugas fell, the magical catastrophe that created the Hollow Sepulcher sent necrotic energy surging through every ley-line scar on the continent. The nexus beneath the tower channeled enormous forces directly into the structure at the exact moment Vorthax was conducting an experiment. He did not die. He did not live. He became something else — a greater wraith, incorporeal and intelligent, his consciousness bound to the ley-line scars themselves, unable to leave the nexus but extending his awareness along every branch and intersection.

For approximately three thousand five hundred years, Vorthax has existed in this state — aware, intelligent, and utterly alone. His research continues in a form. His sanity has not survived fully intact. But his knowledge endures, stored in the thousands of volumes that line his library, the notebooks that fill his laboratories, and the equations carved into the walls of his highest chamber.

The tower's interior is as disorienting as its exterior suggests. Rooms are wrong sizes. Corridors run longer than the structure should allow. The central staircase has a different number of steps each time it is climbed. The lower floors housed storage and slave quarters. The middle floors contain Vorthax's living quarters and a library of thousands of volumes. The upper floors hold his research laboratories. And below ground, three basement levels descend to the portal chamber, where a sphere of shimmering energy still opens onto the ruins of an Akovarian temple.

Vorthax's fate serves as both a warning and a promise. It demonstrates what happens when the forces underlying ley-lines interact catastrophically with living beings. It also demonstrates that a mortal mind, given sufficient time and dedication, can understand the fundamental principles of ley-line mechanics. His knowledge exists. His tower stands. And the portal still shimmers in the darkness below.

The Temple of the Seventh Convergence

On the other side of Vorthax's portal lies another world.

The Temple of the Seventh Convergence was one of seven great pyramid-temples that anchored the Akovarian ley-line network — the most sophisticated magical infrastructure ever created on Mazariim. Built around 8,100 BW on a large island in the center of the Akovarian archipelago, the temple served as a major nexus point, receiving energy from the capital and distributing it to the southern islands.

At its height, the pyramid rose three hundred feet above the jungle floor, its limestone casing blazing white in the tropical sun. Seven smaller pyramids surrounded the main structure, each aligned with a secondary ley-line. The complex housed over two thousand permanent residents and served as a pilgrimage site for tens of thousands more.

The temple was served by three orders of priests. The Luminaries were the religious leaders — healers, teachers, and intermediaries between the common people and Asti's divine presence. The Geometers were the technical specialists — engineers, mathematicians, and artificers who understood how the ley-line network actually functioned. The Archivists were the record-keepers — scholars who documented the

network's operation and preserved knowledge for future generations.

The temple was attacked early in the Dragon War, around 6,850 BW, by chromatic dragons intent on destroying the nexus. Though the defenders repelled the first assault, the dragons returned in greater numbers over the next twenty years. When the final catastrophe came — when Asti's essence was transferred to the Mask of the Pharaoh and the ley-lines detonated — the temple's upper levels were simply erased. The middle levels collapsed. Only the deepest chambers, carved from bedrock and shielded by the earth itself, survived.

Some of the priests who were in those deepest chambers when the detonation occurred chose a terrible adaptation. The wild magic flooding the chambers offered a form of preservation — suspension between life and death that required no food, no water, no hope. They became guardians of the knowledge they could not bear to see lost, waiting in silence for visitors who would not come for over seven thousand years.

Today, the temple is a green hill on a tropical island. Jungle canopy covers the ruins. The air is thick, humid, and warm. Bioluminescent fungi provide faint blue-green light in the surviving underground chambers, pulsing in slow rhythms that suggest something between biology and magic. The Engineering Core, where the ley-line infrastructure was managed, remains largely intact. The Flow Chamber still contains its crystalline matrix — a fifty-foot structure of interlocking geometric shapes that once focused and distributed ley-line energy. The Archive Vault, sealed behind a combination lock whose key is the mathematical relationships of the ley-line network itself, still holds the engineering specifications and theoretical foundations that explain how the greatest magical infrastructure in history was designed, built, and maintained.

The temple waits. The knowledge it preserves is the most comprehensive record of ley-line engineering in existence. Its guardians, if they can be reached, are the last surviving witnesses to a civilization that achieved wonders the modern world cannot yet replicate. And the portal in Vorthax's tower is — so far as anyone knows — the only way to reach it.

Organizations

The Astral Circle

Peering into the vast depths of the extra dimensions of the universe, the Astral Circle is a cabal of spellcasting scholars and explorers who quietly study the multiverse from towers and strongholds scattered across the Inner Kingdoms. Their research into planar magic, ley-lines, and dimensional travel has proven invaluable during periods of escalating supernatural threats, though most of the world has no idea the Circle exists.

The Astral Circle operates as a decentralized network of research towers, each functioning semi-independently under a Castellan — an administrative leader responsible for the facility's operations, security, and external relationships. The Circle does not maintain a formal academic hierarchy. Researchers are recruited based on talent, dedication, and the nature of their work, and they are given broad latitude to pursue their own lines of inquiry. This freedom is balanced by an expectation of discretion: the Circle's research touches on subjects that could attract unwanted attention from political bodies, religious institutions, or hostile organizations.

The Circle maintains towers in several locations across the Inner Kingdoms. Its Beneshire facility is a slender structure of grey stone south of Wyeb bluff that most passersby mistake for a disused watchtower — a deliberate anonymity characteristic of the Circle's approach. A larger and more actively staffed tower operates in Saerrus, reflecting that nation's supportive attitude toward arcane research.

The Astral Circle is not a secret organization in the strictest sense. Its existence is known to the Federation's Praetorian Council, to senior members of major academic institutions, and to allied organizations like the Library of the Ages and the Emerald Shields. What remains discreet is the specific nature of the Circle's research, the identities of most of its members, and the locations of its facilities. This reflects not paranoia but pragmatism: research into planar magic and dormant magical systems can be politically sensitive, and the Circle has found that it works most effectively when it is left alone.

The Emerald Shields

Based in Saerrus, the Emerald Shields are a group of intellectual operatives dedicated to protecting regional stability. They focus on ferreting out threats to the Inner Kingdoms — dark cults, foreign incursions, destabilizing plots — using unorthodox methods that occasionally cross ethical lines. Their ranks include a disproportionate number of bards, whose performance skills provide natural cover identities and whose magical abilities complement intelligence work. Druids and sorcerers are also well represented, as their magic derives from sources less easily detected than formal arcane training.

Shield agents operate primarily through intelligence gathering, infiltration, and discreet intervention rather than direct military action. Their agents maintain cover identities that provide plausible reasons to travel, ask questions, and speak with people from all social strata — traveling merchants, entertainers, scholars, minor clergy. A communication network operates through selected innkeepers, merchants, and minor officials along the major roads, with messages encoded in standard cipher.

The Shields' relationship with the Federation of Man is complex. Both organizations serve the stability of the Inner Kingdoms, but they occasionally disagree about methods. The Federation operates through official channels. The Shields operate through unofficial ones. This tension is productive more often than it is destructive, but it means that Shield agents cannot rely on Federation support and may sometimes find themselves working at cross-purposes with official authorities.

The Shields maintain an alliance with the Library of the Ages, exchanging intelligence support for access to rare information. The Library can request specific Shield operatives through the alliance's communication channels when operational overlap is identified.

The Umbral Hand

The Umbral Hand is a cult of fanatical Zebulba worshipers who seek nothing short of the annihilation of the universe. Led by a shadowy figure known as Noctuminalis, the ranks of the Umbral Hand are filled with clerics and oathbreaker paladins as well as all

manner of undead. They constantly seek ways to bring down governments, destroy opposing religions, and help the arrow of time continue its path toward disorder and entropy.

The Umbral Hand operates as a fragmented network of cells, each pursuing its own interpretation of Zebulba's will. Individual cells may range from a handful of desperate nihilists to sophisticated operations led by pragmatic strategists who view entropy as physics rather than mysticism. This decentralization makes the cult difficult to eradicate — destroying one cell does nothing to compromise others — but it also limits their effectiveness, as cells rarely coordinate and sometimes work at cross-purposes.

The cult's theology holds that entropy is the only certainty in the universe. All things end. Undeath liberates the soul from mortality's immediate touch. Prolonging life is cruelty; granting swift passage to the void is mercy. These beliefs, combined with the practical application of necromancy, make the Umbral Hand one of the most feared organizations in the Inner Kingdoms. Their symbol — a skull consumed by black flames — is carved in hidden places across the continent, each mark consecrated with a chill that clings to the wood or stone and follows nearby observers like something reluctantly letting go.

Other Organizations

The Protectors of the Shire patrol the woodland areas of Beneshire — a group of rangers and paladins, many of them elven, sworn to protect the forests and the people who live near them. They work alongside the Federation's military and Beneshire's royal guard, known for their generosity in peacetime and their fury in battle.

The Dark Whispers serve as Pragos's secret police. One of the most feared groups of the Inner Kingdoms, they are purported to not even exist. They do the Pragos arcanists' bidding in shadows and darkness, leaving no evidence of their methods. A journey to their secret prisons is said to be a one-way trip.

The Pirates of the Crescent Coast pose one of the biggest challenges to the Federation's naval power — a large organized force under a mysterious leader known as the Chimera. Enormous Federation resources are

spent fighting them, and merchants lose incredible amounts of gold and goods to their raids every year.

The Circle of the Eastern Watch, based at Fort Stoneshaper, is a council of twelve specialists — six powerful mages and six veteran warriors — that coordinates the Federation's response to supernatural threats in the eastern territories. These experts meet weekly, sharing intelligence and adjusting bounties for adventurers brave enough to venture into dangerous lands.

The Church of Tiovin in the Inner Kingdoms differs from its more aggressive southern counterpart. Here, the Church emphasizes charity, community service, and moral guidance rather than crusades. Major churches can be found in almost every significant city, ministering to the spiritual needs of followers while assisting the sick, the hungry, and the poor.

Dozens of smaller cults operate across the region as well — Taovanian cults that tempt mortals with gifts in exchange for souls, cabals of warlocks dedicated to strange fey entities or maddening creatures from the Far Realm, elemental entity worshipers with plans to spread discord, and minor entities that gather followers in hopes of ascending to greater power.

Entities

Mau the Oracle

Mau is the oldest entity in existence, the first consciousness to awaken in the universe of Mazariim approximately two billion years ago. Unlike other entities, Mau did not form from a star, a planet, or an elemental force. Mau simply was — coalescing from the fundamental fabric of reality itself as the universe matured enough to support sentient magical energy.

For roughly one and a half billion years, Mau existed in utter solitude — the only consciousness in existence. Through Mau's awakening and observation, the Astral Plane was created, a vast expanse of pure thought and potential connecting all realities. And through an interaction between Mau's observation and the magical force — similar in principle to quantum experiments in our own world, where the act of observation collapses a probability into a quantifiable result — the concept of the soul was established: the magical-energy imprint of consciousness that separates from biological bodies upon death and migrates toward higher-dimensional destinations.

Mau does not speak. Mau does not act. Mau watches. Mau knows. The Oracle's nature is utterly alien and incomprehensible to mortals. Mau perceives not just the present but past and future, not just this reality but alternate timelines and parallel universes. Every possible outcome, every choice unmade, every secret whispered in darkness — all are known to Mau. Yet Mau remains silent, observing without judgment, recording without interference.

Mau's clergy are called the Watchers. They wear simple robes of midnight blue or deep purple, often adorned with eye symbols and star patterns. Many shave their heads and practice ascetic lifestyles. They serve as diviners, lorekeepers, and planar guides, and among them, knowledge determines standing rather than formal hierarchy.

Temples to Mau are rare and hidden, often built as observatories or libraries in remote locations — high altitudes, remote islands, deep underground chambers — places where the barrier between planes is thin. The Library of the Ages is one such place. Ancient temples contain star charts tracking celestial movements across millennia, prophecies carved in stone, and meditation

chambers aligned with celestial events that occur only once per century.

The Watchers greet each other with "I see you" — an acknowledgment of another's existence without presuming to know their state or intentions. The greeting is also spoken to inanimate objects, natural phenomena, or abstract concepts as an act of observation. Their holy days include the Longest Night at the winter solstice, when Watchers meditate from sunset to sunrise; the Star Alignment every nineteen years, when celestial bodies align and prophecies are recorded; the annual Day of Silence, twenty-four hours without speaking, eating, or sleeping; and the Revelation, an unpredictable event when a Watcher experiences a spontaneous vision of such clarity it must be shared.

The Watchers' dogma is built on six principles: observe the world with clear eyes, without judgment or desire. Seek all knowledge relentlessly, for all knowledge is sacred. Embrace mystery, accepting that some truths are beyond mortal comprehension. Live with awareness that existence is witnessed and recorded. Guard dangerous truths, for knowledge is power. And transcend the self, recognizing that individual existence is temporary while the soul is eternal.

Mau has no true allies among the entities. The Oracle observes all beings equally and is neutral toward all, even sworn enemies. Some entities seem unsettled by Mau's all-seeing gaze.

Zebulba the Entropic Void

Zebulba is entropy given consciousness — the inevitable heat death of the universe, the final darkness, the silence after the last heartbeat. Unlike death gods of other traditions who guide souls or maintain balance, Zebulba is pure negation: the end of energy, the cessation of being, the cold void that waits beyond all light.

To encounter Zebulba is to feel existence itself draining away. Not the clean finality of Mau's observation, but something far worse — unmaking. Where Zebulba's attention falls, heat bleeds from reality, light dims, and the fundamental forces holding matter together begin to fail.

The Old God does not hate life, for hatred implies emotion. Zebulba simply is — the mathematical certainty that all systems decay, all energy dissipates, all things end. Zebulba formed within and absorbed a black hole, drawing a tiny but maniacal following of zealots dedicated to death and destruction.

Zebulba's priests are called the Void-Touched. They have no formal hierarchy — leaders are those closest to entropy, typically undead or necromancers who have opened breaches to the Negative Energy Plane. They wear black robes stained with ashes and graveyard soil, incorporating bones into their garments. Temples form spontaneously where death accumulates — mass graves, plague pits, battlefields, crypts sealed for millennia. The most infamous is the Hollow Sepulcher.

The faith's holy days include the Night of Unmaking on the last day of the year, when the Void-Touched perform mass necromantic rituals during the longest night. The three Silent Days that follow the new year involve absolute silence, fasting, and meditation simulating death. Plague Moons occur whenever disease spreads, viewed as Zebulba's natural manifestation. And the Commemoration of Madron marks the fall of Yrugas and the creation of the Hollow Sepulcher.

Zebulba's dogma is stark. Entropy is certain; all things end, and embracing this truth is the first step toward understanding. Undeath liberates the soul from mortality's immediate touch. And mercy is death — prolonging life is cruel, while granting swift passage to the void is kindness.

The Negative Energy Plane, where Zebulba resides, is one of the most hostile planes of existence — a dark and empty pit where the plane itself steals away all light and life. Zebulba shares this realm with the entity Khan and is served by undead and the terrible beings known as Umbral Titans.

Asti the Pyramid

Among the Old Gods, Asti is unique. Where other primordial entities formed from elemental forces, Asti emerged from the order and creationism of a white hole, a rare cosmic event created through a connection to a black hole in another universe. This origin granted Asti a perspective no other entity possesses: Asti perceives reality through geometric patterns and is driven by

something approaching morality — a sense of purpose and compassion alien to the other Old Gods.

Asti established the ley-line network, a continental infrastructure of invisible channels where magical energy flows according to geometric rules. Around 13,000 BW, Asti settled on the continent of Akovar and began guiding the primitive human inhabitants toward civilization. Over millennia, Asti's influence enhanced their health, longevity, intelligence, and magical sensitivity, and by 8,200 BW the Akovarians had energized the first ley-lines between their pyramid cities — achieving a golden age free of disease and rich in magical understanding.

Around 6,830 BW, during the Dragon War, chromatic dragons attacked Akovar. In a desperate final act, Akovarian priests transferred Asti's essence into an artifact called the Mask of the Pharaoh, and the ley-lines — suddenly deprived of their stabilizing intelligence — surged wildly and detonated. The catastrophe destroyed Akovarian civilization. Asti remained imprisoned within the Mask for over seven thousand years, and the ley-line network fell silent across the world.

Asti's clergy are called Line-Watchers and are organized into three orders. Apex-Keepers can perceive ley-lines without magical assistance. Convergence-Wardens maintain temples at ley-line intersections. And Line-Walkers travel ley-line routes, checking for corruption and maintaining the network's integrity.

Asti's symbol is a pyramid with ley-lines intersecting it, and its portfolio encompasses healing, light, and the ley-lines themselves. The entity resides in the Positive Energy Plane alongside the lesser entity Ashura.

In the present day, mortal knowledge of Asti is extremely limited. Scattered references in pre-War texts describe an entity connected to "lines of power" or "paths of light," associated with Akovar. Most scholars consider the subject too fragmentary for meaningful conclusions. But the scars of the ley-line network still mark the earth, visible to those rare few who possess the gift to perceive them, and the knowledge of how those lines were built still exists — sealed in ruins, guarded by ancient dead, waiting to be found.

Magic

How Spellcasting Looks and Feels

Magic on Mazariim is not subtle. Even minor workings announce themselves to anyone nearby through a combination of spoken words, hand movements, and sensory effects that scale with the spell's power.

All spellcasting involves speaking words of Draconic — the oldest language in the world, taught to the first human arcanists by dragons. The complexity of the incantation scales directly with the spell's power. The simplest workings require a single syllable or a shaped exhalation carrying intent. Moderate workings require a spoken sentence, deliberate and measured. The most powerful spells demand sustained invocations that resonate in the chest and can be felt by nearby observers as a vibration in the air itself. The syllables are not arbitrary — they are precise phonetic keys that shape how mana responds to the caster's will.

Mispronunciation does not merely weaken a spell; it changes what the spell does, sometimes dangerously. Trained casters describe the words as having a physical quality on the tongue: minor workings taste of metal or ozone, moderate invocations produce a buzzing in the teeth and jaw, and major incantations resonate through the bones.

Most spells also require hand movements that complement the verbal component, ranging from a single finger-trace for the simplest cantrip to elaborate geometric gestures for powerful workings. These movements help the caster visualize and direct the geometric patterns through which mana flows. A caster whose hands are bound or restrained cannot perform most spells.

Observers experience spellcasting through multiple senses simultaneously. Visually, minor spells produce subtle disturbances — a flicker of light, a shimmer in the air, a glow at the caster's fingertips. Moderate spells generate unmistakable phenomena: colored light, visible geometric patterns forming briefly in the air, luminous traces following hand movements. Powerful spells produce dramatic displays: sustained light, visible mana currents, and environmental shifts such as shadows deepening or colors changing in the surrounding area.

Beyond sight, spells produce characteristic sounds (hums, chimes, harmonic resonances), scents (ozone,

copper, warm stone, or other signatures tied to the spell's nature), and physical sensations felt by nearby observers (pressure changes, temperature shifts, tingling). The stronger the spell, the more intense and widespread these effects become.

Because spellcasting is so observable, casting in public or in the presence of others is rarely discreet. Specialized techniques exist for reducing a spell's sensory footprint, but they are uncommon, difficult to master, and imperfect — they reduce rather than eliminate the observable effects.

Different magical traditions produce distinct sensory signatures. Divine magic associated with gods of good and knowledge tends toward cool whites, silvers, and lunar qualities, with scents of copper and clean air. Arcane magic produces warm golds, crisp syllables, and scents of ozone and warm copper. Entropic divine magic associated with death gods generates violet-black light, cold temperatures, and the smell of dry earth and sealed tombs. Observers with experience can often identify a spell's tradition — and sometimes its specific deity — by its sensory signature alone.

Ley Lines

Crisscrossing the lands of ancient Mazariim are (well, were as of this novel) lines of raw magical energy, most often invisible to the naked eye. It is thought that dragons created most of the lines and that others were made from natural phenomena, powerful divine spellcasters, or the gods themselves. Where these lines intersect, they form a nexus — a place of even greater magical power.

Ley lines do not grant spells to the untrained. Instead, they change how mana behaves and how easily it can be shaped. A practiced caster working near a line, or standing within a nexus, often finds that familiar workings become strangely pliable — a spell might strike harder or resist being unraveled, not because the caster has improved, but because the local field holds the pattern more firmly.

Duration is the second common surprise. Near certain lines, effects that should fade can linger far beyond safe expectations. Veteran arcanists treat this as a mixed blessing: sustained wards become easier to maintain,

but mistakes and curses persist with equal stubbornness.

Many lines also impress a signature upon magic — a secondary behavior aligned to the line's temperament: heat or frost, shadow or radiance, growth, corrosion, storm, dream, and other recurring motifs. Practitioners learn to read a line's character by its byproducts: metallic tastes in the air, harmless luminous motes, persistent echoes, unseasonal winds, odd animal behavior, or recurring dreams among those who sleep nearby. Different lines behave like different schools or types of magic in practice. None of the classification systems is perfect, but each is good enough to keep apprentices alive.

Prolonged exposure to ley-line energy can produce ley-sickness — headaches, vertigo, compulsive casting, warped perception of time, or spells that continue to hum faintly after they should have ended.

The ley-line network that once connected the continent of Akovar was destroyed over seven thousand years ago when the entity Asti was imprisoned. The lines fell silent. But they left scars — remnants of the channels that once carried magical energy. These scars are invisible to almost everyone, but those rare individuals with the gift to perceive them describe faded lines of luminescence burned into the landscape, their edges blurred and wavering like heat distortion rising from sun-warmed stone. Vegetation grows taller along scar paths. Water flows differently where scars cross streams. Animals occasionally exhibit unusual behavior near intersection points. The scars follow precise geometric relationships, intersecting at consistent angles and forming network structures that are mathematically regular — evidence of an engineered system rather than natural phenomena.

The question of whether these scars can be reactivated, or whether entirely new lines must be created, remains one of the great unanswered questions of magical theory.

Ancient History

The Continent of Akovar

Akovar was the first advanced human civilization, rising approximately 13,000 BW on an isolated continent far from Nigal. Guided by the entity Asti, the Akovarians developed sophisticated mathematics, astronomy, and engineering while other races remained primitive. Around 9,000 BW, dragons began teaching the Akovarians arcane magic to supplement the divine magic Asti provided. By 8,200 BW, the civilization had achieved its golden age: great pyramid-temples completed, the first ley-lines energized between cities, and society freed from disease by the healing energy that flowed through the network.

The ley-line network was the crowning achievement — a continental infrastructure of magical channels connecting major population centers, powered by Asti's avatar and maintained by a specialized priesthood. Seven great lines connected the seven largest cities directly to the capital. The network provided healing, enhanced magic, and bound society together in ways both practical and spiritual.

The civilization's fall came from jealousy. Chromatic dragons, resentful of the metallic dragons' favored relationship with Asti and covetous of the ley-line knowledge, launched a coordinated campaign around 6,900 BW. What began as targeted strikes escalated into the Dragon War, as dragon flights from around Mazariim converged on Akovar, drawn by the power of the network.

In the war's final hours, the priests at the capital made a desperate choice. They transferred Asti's essence into the Mask of the Pharaoh — a legendary artifact of priceless jewels and exotic metals — and wove a massive transportation spell to evacuate the population. The ley-lines, suddenly deprived of Asti's stabilizing presence, surged wildly and detonated. The explosions killed most of the attacking dragons, destroyed the capital and other major cities, and mutated survivors — some were infused with dragon blood, creating the first dragonborn, while others merged with animals, spawning hybrid races.

Asti remained imprisoned within the Mask, unconscious. The ley-line network was destroyed. Akovarian civilization collapsed immediately, as its

people had been entirely dependent on the network for healing, agriculture, and defense. The transported population arrived in the Ancient South but lost their memories, eventually founding the Varkonan culture and guarding the Mask as a sacred but poorly understood relic.

Akovar itself spent over seven thousand years returning to wilderness. The pyramid-temples became green hills. The geometric city grids vanished under jungle canopy. The survivors' descendants evolved into new peoples — dragonborn, genasi, and scattered human communities — none of whom retained their ancestors' knowledge or power.

Yrugas

The time before the arrival of Minerva is often thought of as prehistory, a time of scant records or knowledge. Yet it was during this era that the foundations of human arcane magic were laid, in a confederacy of villages and towns that would one day give its name to an entire people and language.

Yrugas was first settled around 4,000 BW, in the region that would become the Inner Kingdoms. Its founding was catalyzed by dragons who began teaching humans how to wield arcane magic. A number of these students — including a fledgling wizard named Madron — developed quickly into capable spellcasters who challenged the traditional social structures that had placed elemental cult leaders and Mauian oracles as village elders.

Before long, arcanists controlled everything. The rule of the human mages was barbaric and inhumane. Many of the monstrosities that still terrorize the darkest parts of the world are thought to be experiments from this era. Many of the wizard spells used throughout the world today also date back to this time. Madron himself ruled for approximately nine hundred years, his name eventually becoming the basis for the Madronian people and their language.

While Yrugas did not explicitly worship Zebulba, its extensive practice of death magic drew the Old God's attention. Every corpse animated, every soul consumed in necromantic rituals, every mass execution strengthened Zebulba's connection to the Material Plane.

The fall came around 2,700 BW. The exact sequence remains debated — some accounts describe a failed ritual that opened a portal to the Negative Energy Plane, while others speak of a coordinated slave uprising. What is certain is that vast numbers died in a matter of weeks, and the concentrated death created the Hollow Sepulcher.

The scattered ruins of Yrugas can still be found across the Inner Kingdoms, particularly in Beneshire, which was densely settled during the mageocracy's height. Most are minor — collapsed towers, overgrown foundations, fragments of the road network that once connected settlements. Underground chambers and magically preserved vaults occasionally survive intact, and new discoveries continue to surface as agricultural expansion or natural erosion exposes previously hidden structures. The greater ruins, like the Athenaeum of Echoes, hold knowledge that the mageocracy's scholars accumulated over centuries — imperfect, incomplete, but systematic enough to be valuable to anyone willing to brave the dangers of searching for it.

Dragons in Mazariim

The dragons of Mazariim are not native to the planet. Around two million years before the present, on a moon called Lystra orbiting a gas giant named Intiago, an advanced species called the Drakaii faced destruction. Their civilization had flourished for approximately ten thousand years. When catastrophe struck, survivors scattered across dimensions, planes, and universes. A small group arrived on Mazariim, where they would eventually evolve into the dragons known today.

Dragons played crucial — and contradictory — roles in teaching magic to mortals. In Akovar, beginning around 9,000 BW, metallic dragons served as guardians of ley-line intersections, protectors of Akovarian cities, and intermediaries between mortals and Asti. Their relationship with the Akovarians was collaborative and healing-focused. In Yrugas, around 4,000 BW, a different group of dragons — a mix of ambitious metallic and ruthless chromatic individuals — offered power without wisdom, teaching humans arcane magic that led to the brutal mageocracy. The same species, the same knowledge, producing vastly different results depending on the wisdom — or lack of wisdom — with which it was shared.

The Dragon War of around 6,830 BW was the defining catastrophe of the ancient world. Chromatic dragons — reds, blues, greens, blacks, and whites — had long resented the metallic dragons' favored relationship with Asti. Their coordinated campaign to destroy the ley-line network and seize its power for themselves drew dragon flights from around the world. The resulting ley-line detonation killed most of the attackers and transformed survivors, but it also destroyed the most advanced magical infrastructure in history and imprisoned the entity that had created it.

The Draconic language, derived from the speech of the Drakaii civilization over two million years ago, remains the oldest language in Mazariim. All arcane magic is written in Draconic, and spellcasters speak Draconic words to shape mana into effect. This is not arbitrary tradition — it is functional necessity. The Draconic syllables are the phonetic keys that make magic respond to mortal will. Without them, the mana remains inert.

Society

Technology in the Inner Kingdoms

The Inner Kingdoms operate at a technology level roughly equivalent to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of our own world, supplemented by gnomish innovations and the persistent influence of magic. This creates a civilization that is recognizable but distinct — familiar enough to orient a reader, strange enough to remind them that this is not Earth.

Common technologies include the printing press, bifocal eyeglasses, indoor plumbing, the cotton gin, bicycles, telescopes, gas lighting, and advanced clockwork mechanisms. Steam-engine technology, originally a gnomish invention, has been adopted in limited fashion — steam-powered infrastructure, rail systems connecting major cities, and even gnomish-designed blimp airports can be found in the wealthiest regions. Steam trams run on iron rails through the streets of cities like Wyeb bluff.

These advances are not evenly distributed. The Inner Kingdoms and the Northern Dwarven Nations represent the peak of technological development, with the Gnomish Realms maintaining their own unique innovations. The Merchant Nations operate at a somewhat lower level generally but excel in shipbuilding and maritime technology. More distant regions — the Horselands, the Lands of Chaos, parts of the Ancient South — operate at levels closer to the Bronze Age or early Middle Ages, though some possess advanced knowledge in specific areas such as engineering, astronomy, or military technology.

It is important to note that the magical force of the Mazariim universe overpowers certain other forces, preventing the existence of technologies that function on electricity or nanotechnology. This is why the world has developed steam power and clockwork rather than electrical systems — the fundamental physics simply do not support it. Magic fills the gap, providing capabilities that technology cannot, but magic is rare, expensive, and unreliable compared to the consistent output of a well-maintained steam engine or a properly calibrated clockwork mechanism.

The following table provides a general overview of technology levels across the major regions:

Region	Base Level	Advanced Areas
Inner Kingdoms	Renaissance	Magic, steam technology
Merchant Nations	Medieval	Shipbuilding, maritime
Northern Dwarven Nations	Renaissance	Steam, engineering
Southern Dwarven Nations	Medieval	Weapons, armor
Gnomish Realms	Medieval	Gadgets, steam, clockwork
Elven Lands	Renaissance	—
Halfling Homeland	Medieval	Herbalism, agriculture
Horselands	Bronze Age	Horses, weapons
Ancient South	Bronze	Engineering, cosmology, magic
Lands of Honor	Medieval	Government, paper, mathematics
Frozen Isles	Medieval	Shipbuilding, maritime
Lands of Chaos	Medieval	—
Akovar	Bronze	Magic (fragmentary)

Languages of the Inner Kingdoms

The Common tongue is the universal language of the Inner Kingdoms, evolved from the Trade language that developed during and after the War to End All Wars. It is spoken by virtually everyone in the region, from the poorest farmer to the wealthiest noble, and serves as the lingua franca for commerce, government, and daily life.

Beneath Common, however, the region supports a rich linguistic landscape. Madra is the regional Madronian dialect — a flowing language featuring over fifteen vowels and many silent letters, used in formal settings, literature, and among those who wish to signal education and cultural refinement. Sabo, the practical and phonetic language of the Sabonaar, is common in port cities and trading houses.

Draconic, the oldest language in the world, is essential for anyone involved in arcane magic. All arcane spells are written in Draconic, all spellcasting involves Draconic syllables, and all scholarly work on magical theory references Draconic texts. It is not a conversational language for most people, but any educated mage reads it fluently.

Dwarven — both the common form Rhundawi and the older Dal'rhundawi — is spoken in Arogor and wherever dwarven communities have settled in the Inner Kingdoms. The trade dialect Rhunurbar, which mixes dwarven with gnomish and Chak'tian elements, facilitates commerce between the Dwarven Nations and the human lands. Gnomish, or Rhungnom, uses the dwarven alphabet and is spoken in gnomish communities throughout the region.

Elven languages are rarer in the Inner Kingdoms. Elda'lam, the common form of Elven, and Yav'lam, the trade dialect, are spoken by the small elven diaspora communities and by scholars who work with elven texts. The ancient High Elven — Tarquesta — is a scholarly language used primarily in historical and religious contexts.

Shalaz, the halfling language, uses the elven alphabet and is spoken by halfling communities. Druidic remains a secret language known only to practitioners of the druidic tradition. Celestial, Infernal, and Abyssal — the languages of angels, devils, and demons respectively — are known to scholars and clergy who deal with extraplanar matters.

Divine spells are written in forms that combine the language of the specific faith with Draconic: a prayer book of Tiovin combines Celestial and Draconic, druidic spells are notated in Druidic and Draconic, and so on. This blending of languages reflects the dual nature of divine magic — power that comes from entities but is shaped through the same fundamental force that governs all magic in the universe.

Timeline for The Inner Kingdoms

Date	Event
~13,000 BW	Akovar civilization begins under Asti's guidance
~8,200 BW	First Akovarian ley-lines energized
~6,830 BW	Dragon War; ley-lines destroyed; Asti imprisoned
~4,000 BW	Yrugas rises; dragons teach humans arcane magic
~2,700 BW	Yrugas falls; Hollow Sepulcher created
~1,650 BW	Beneshire founded
~750 BW	Arogor founded
~650 BW	Xeque founded
4–1 BW	War to End All Wars
1 AW	Federation of Man founded
~45 AW	Saerrus founded
~88 AW	Grand Confederacy of Pragos formed
209 AW	Saerrus Revolution; democracy established
~400 AW	Rail lines laid; canal begun to Fort Hope
~600–620 AW	Federation Expansion Attempt; voted down
~740 AW	New Sabonaa founded on Akovar

This gazetteer is offered as a free companion to the novels set in the world of Mazariim. It is not a rulebook, and the secrets it contains are the kind that most people in the world do not know. Handle them accordingly.