

Table of Contents

Section 1: The Myrgha	1
Section 2: the Kishai	17
Interlude: Olgan's Pass	27

Section 1: The Myrgha

1st Day of the Red Moon, 807th year of the Age of Iron

This shall be the showing forth of the inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that neither the deeds of be falsely recorded, nor the works great and marvelous, which have been produced across the Seven Eyes of Asherahti, be downplayed, nor the customs of peoples of all lands go falsely remarked upon by Thelomesian scholars. Charipedes of Premos' own accounts are brief in mention of the Seven Eyes, and this Inquiry serves as a greater depiction of these lands. Put in simple, Charipedes' account is boorish, and a true and accurate reckoning is required to update the archives.

This Inquiry, of unknown duration, will depart from New Myrghos and leave northward through the western rim of the Arduus Yauga, before entering the Heibrim and leaving southwardly to the Friyu Yauga. As I speak Fengbushiu, Elosine, and Shinnuk, and have a fair accordance with the cultural customs of the peoples to whose lands I travel, I was selected by the Bureau for this Inquiry.

This Inquiry is a state-sponsored venture, so proudly do the people of New Myrghos of the Soren Rou see their place in the world. The Oligarch of Artisans, Pangobal Merdaa, and the current Higharch of New Myrghos, has herself funded this venture to a sum of several talents for successful conclusion. The details of the Inquiry have been left to the Bureau of Education and myself.

We have paid for transport from New Myrghos aboard an Artisans' Trade Ship leaving northward towards Whitecliff, which leaves tomorrow. Through reasonable negotiation, the Bureau of Measurement has agreed to provide two 3rd Seal Spannai to provide escort and protection should we need it. For proper recording, these two Spannai are Batu of New Myrghos, and Gan of Pangabar.

Our transport leaves tomorrow, and I shall write daily of our Inquiry to maintain a sound record.

2nd Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We left by trade vessel this morning with the dawn, and made our way northward towards Gao Heor, City of the Northern Face. Our departure was attended with little fanfare by a small group of Bureau officials. A Bureaucrat from the Office of Policy provided written official decree signifying my untethering from the New Myrghos Bureau, and giving me a journeyman's writ*. A Bureaucrat from the Bureau of Economy counted off signed talents and we negotiated an export tax for my cost of writ (as all Bureaucrats are owned by the state, I am technically an export good and subject to taxation in accordance with this policy, though such taxes are assigned to the Pangobals for sponsoring the Inquiry*). I was also given an official signatory exempting me from taxation for the duration of my travels – the highest honor that may be awarded to any bureaucrat*. Finally, a member of the Bureau of Religion first inquired as to the success of our mission on behalf of Fengshuan, the Adversary and Custodian of our own God, Gongshuan. Fengshuan provided in fair accordance with the laws of fate a sign that our venture would do well for itself. Thusly, the Bureaucrat blessed our journey in accordance with the five Gods by providing me a small sack with the six natural elements in harmony.

We will arrive in Gao Heor tomorrow. Tonight, we sleep on the shore of a small rocky island in the Sea of Tears.

*For a complete record of my emotions during this event, please see Appendix B.

3rd Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We arrived in Gao Heor around the middle of the afternoon today by ringing the eastern coast of the island of Gao Rou.

Gao Heor juts out into the sea facing northward, and is most notable for the massive carved face in the rock, looking northward, of the son of Gongshuan who is said to have founded the Gaodi dynasty – according to divine tradition, his name is Gao the Sailor.

Gao Heor is a city under the domain of the Oligarchy of the Gaodi, and it is owned and ruled by their patron, Gaodi Long. As the Gaodi house is a mercantile and sailing vessel house, the city is built upon the sturdy construction of a large harbor and dockyard carved of marble from Whitecliff. Myrgha ships clog the harbor, and the dockyard here are famous for their fair rates of repair. Buildings and homes climb up from the harbor along the steep cliff face like an unruly

beard on the face of Gao, and the estate holding for the Gaodi family sits within Gao's mouth, peering out. The city lighthouse has been constructed within one eye, and looks northward to help guide ships through the Grey Strait.

On exceptionally low tides, during years when the High Moon has left, the shoulders and arms of Gao can be seen, reaching out and around the city in an embrace. This forms a small bay, and the people of the city have a festival on the day Gao's thumb first crests the waves – though said festival is still six years out by the reckoning of the local bureau.

I write from the local Bureau of Education offices, which have put us up. We provision here for a journey northward tomorrow towards Whitecliff, though we first cross the Grey Strait to Myr Torel (a journey of three days).

4th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

Today and tomorrow, we traverse the Grey Strait – a wide and infamous body of water that must be sailed or rowed continuously for three days in a northern direction. Each year, the Bureau of Economy estimates no fewer than forty talents of raw marble are lost to the seas in shipwrecks here*. We prayed to Fengshuan for good passing, and hope he is merciful.

As a faithful Inquiry, an accurate depiction of the Soren Rou in full can now be remarked upon.

The Soren Rou is a ringed and rocky atoll of variable width, surrounding the deep, dark grey Sea of Tears. The atoll consists principally of rocky and barren scrublands, and was an uninhabited land when the Myrghos were pushed to these lands from the Immortal Emperor, Fengshuan, and his war against the Myrghos.

The scrublands have little by way of vegetation or crops, and little soil that may be used for agriculture. However, the Sea of Tears produces fish and seaweeds in plenty, and the scrublands are rich in minerals such as iron, tin, silver, and turquoise. For this reasoning, the Myrgha have done well for themselves by way of mercantile practices, mining, and trade, in spite of the sharp tariffs imposed on travelers through the Door of Two Heavens and Fengshuan's domain.

Each region in the domain of the Myrghos is owned and ruled by one of the thirteen Oligarchs, descendants from the lineage of Gongshuan, and protectors of his vision. Most cities and towns are constructed about mineral opportunities and survey sites performed by the Bureau of Measurement.

*For a complete recounting of the economic loss sustained by New Myrghos from dangerous sea passage, please consult your local Bureau of Education. For lives lost, please attend to the Temple of Ancestry.

5th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We are surrounded by grey skies and greyer seas. I write regarding the city of New Myrghos, the most noble and capitol city of the Myrghos culture.

Charipedes describes New Myrghos as 'a small city on a barren island, crusted in black and white marble as if to conceal its labyrinthine bureaucracy. It is a city of little note, save for their capitalization on the cultures of even further western savages for the creation of trade goods... the city is difficult to enjoy, as one is mercilessly swindled everywhere they go.'

I will spare no thought for Charipedes' poor business acumen. The city of New Myrghos is indeed small. Walls bordering the city proper, as well as major streets, are tiled in black and white marble. The large Crymnos Market gives travelers a place to sell and purchase wares from western lands, and the city is looked over by Kovuoja Hill, upon which sits the Checkered Palace and five Bureau Headquarters. The Checkered Palace and the Bureaus are capped in gold-plated domes which shimmer in the morning sun, and the People's forum bustles with merchants and citizens alike – very few of which are swindled.

Westharbour is both the mouth of the city and its shimmering port, and it is full at any given time of day or night with the sails of a hundred lands.

The most notable city event is queuing, a monthly practice during which representatives from each of the thirteen Oligarchic houses accept service and gifts in exchange for patronage. Travelers from across the Soren Rou come to queue (line up along the road to the Oligarchic Houses) in order to provide gifts and knowledge in exchange for patronage from the houses. Perhaps Charipedes would benefit from a Patron, since he appears to lose his coinpurse so commonly!

6th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I shall remark now upon the unique and well-documented Folk Fae of New Myrghos. Three such Fae merit a telling.

The first is Handlers. Handlers live within the Crymnos Market (and indeed, all Myrghos Markets) and appear as disembodied hand crossing alleyways. It is said of the lands that if you attempt to cross the path of a Handler, you must pay it coinage according to the ethereal coinage it holds. If you do not pay, or do not pay enough, it will choke you to death when you try to cross its path.

The second is Tilepaces. Tilepaces are rare, but appear as a gold or silver-bodied crab which is very flat in shape. The top of their carapace, which is a perfect square of the same size as the marbled street tiles of New Myrghos, appears as black or white marble, allowing them to perfectly blend in with the tiles they clean for sustenance. Though difficult to spot, they are more difficult to catch – worth a year’s salary for lower castes, they are nevertheless possessed of the power of teleportation.

The third are coin mimics. Coin mimics have the shape of coinage, but bear improper markings – typically an eye on each side. They eat coins, and may grow golden wings that allow them to fly quickly after feasting upon the unsuspecting coinpurse of foolish merchants from faraway lands. They are a nuisance in the city, and often an issue within the Royal Mint, and so the Bureau of Economy runs a pest control service to prevent an outbreak of the Fae.

7th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

It rained little yesterday – only a light drizzle – and we arrived in Myr Torel in the evening.

Myr Torel is the City of the Lighthouse, and is notable for the largest lighthouse in the Myrgha lands. Because the Grey Strait is so wide, and must be journeyed in a single trip, Myr Torel was constructed originally as a lighthouse alone, with the intent of guiding ships through the strait. Indeed, we saw the light from Myr Torel yesterday late afternoon, and it has guided us northward since.

Myr Torel is a small rocky island, and the lighthouse is built atop a small rocky pillar. It is wide by the standards of building construction, and the city that has cropped up around it is dwarfed by comparison.

Because there are no trees on the island or surrounding area, seaweed is pulled from the seas and dried in great quantities on the plateaus surrounding the lighthouse in order to create fuel for the fires. The seaweed is possessed of a strong and fishy smell, reminiscent of New Myrghos itself, and so the city feels as home.

The seaweed burns a seafoam green instead of warm white, giving the lighthouse a distinctive color and tone from any distance.

After the difficulty of our journey, we have decided to take a single day tomorrow in order to rest before continuing our journey.

8th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We stayed in Myr Torel for the long summer day, and I enjoyed the hospitality of the Bureau of Education here, beginning with a light lecture on the series of Myr Torel, which is one of their regular selections. I learned some details of the city which I shall recount here.

The lighthouse of Myr Torel is built upon a natural cliff face, and situated beneath the lighthouse looking over the west-facing sea is a large cave. This cave sits submerged except at the lowest of tides (every seventeen and a half years).

When at its lowest, the cave provides a slight ingress into its mouth, which may be rowed by boat. The people of Myr Torel, eponymously Myrgha that they are, enter the cave each time to pull clams from the inside of the cave, whose shells are crushed to make a striking red-colored dye which is a principle export of the city (and used in the dying of Bureau of Religion robes).

This forms an exquisite festival day known as 'Clam Day', and is widely celebrated among Myr Torel as the grandest feast of the occupants. Sprouting from this tradition, Myr Torel is also known for its clam bread – a hearty stuffed flatbread filled with clams and seaweed and seasoned in garum, which has a refined taste.

The city thrives as the southernmost tip of Northern Myrgha, and is wealthy in taxation for ships traveling southward to bring marble, chalk, iron, and wood towards the capitol, as well as cultural goods and imports from other lands northward. It is one of the few cities in North Myrgha with a working hourhorn, which it uses to tell time.

My stomach now grows. I shall report tomorrow on the flavors of clam bread, as we head northward ever closer to Whitecliff and the savagelands beyond.

9th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I report from the small island of Tormyr Rou, en route to Horenol. This island has given way to grazing space for goats, which are reared in plenty here, and small towns dot the island. We have taken shelter in a local Bureau of Education office at the largest village on the island (known as Moren).

At this point in my musings, I believe I should speak of how travelers in Myrgha lands may find refuge. The lands of Myrgha are large, but do not observe customs that easterners do regarding

acts of xenia. Among most cities in the Myrgha, travelers find refuge in Bureau of Education offices, each of which provide cheap accommodations to weary travelers for but a pittance.

Travelers may receive this refuge at a further discounted rate in exchange for teaching the Bureau something about their travels, and upon receipt of a lecture from one of the chosen selection.

This practice provides travelers a means of paying for room and board with tales (at least in part), further enriching the Bureau of Education itself. Myrgha (and further, Bureaucrats) receive further discounted rates.

The practice provides several successes to the Myrgha. First, we are kept well apprised of foreign lands, for traveler tales tend to carry word of their homeland. All of these tales are meticulously filed and recorded, and in this way Myrgha learn of other cultures. It also allows the Bureau of Education to keep meticulous records of the movement of all foreigners, which are explicitly tracked to ensure foreigners do not go where they are not allowed (such as the Beast Tower) and keep to a path they have previously described. Finally, it encourages the spread of Myrgha culture, language, and belief to foreign lands – one of the principal goals of the Bureau of Education.

There are other means of securing safe haven, but this is most common and most worthy of description.

Ah! I almost forgot. Clam bread was sweet, and fishy. I enjoyed it with a particularly pungent garum, and a glass of knurd. I will heartily recommend to travelers through Myr Torel. I attended Shen's Clam Hut, and have arranged a discounted rate for travelers. Simply mention this book, and you will receive ten percent of your purchase of clam bread from Shen's clam hut!

10th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We still have yet one more day to Horenol and the White Cuneis. I am particularly enthused about traveling these lands, for reasons that are my own. Still, I hope you will attend to my descriptions.

Today we were unable to find a Bureau of Education office, and we have set up a small beachside camp. I apologize for my unsteady brushstrokes, for I have both had two glasses of knurd and been unable to find steady ground upon which to write.

As we traveled today, we saw from the starboard side of our boat a most peculiar sight – a scouting pod of gray whales from the Six Boss Clan. These remarkable beasts are longer than any boat – a true leviathan of the seas – and travel in one of two known and recorded family

groups, each of a size well into the thousands. These family groups, which the Myrgha call clans, are known as the Six Boss Clan and the Prime Clan.

The Six Boss Clan is said to be led by six individuals which are particularly old. The peoples of North Myrgha (most notably the peoples of the Black Cuneis) have named these whales, and claim their sighting to be a sign of prosperity to come.

The Prime Clan swims the eastern side of the Arduus Yauga, and is to be avoided. The Prime Clan is led by a great beast – a patron hundreds of feet in length - who is known to have swallowed whole ships. The Prime Clan is aggressive towards humans, and is not to be approached by any who value their lives.

The people of Heinol have hunted the whales of the Six Boss Clan before (so much so that the Oligarch's throne in Heinol is carved from a giant whale skull), but today maintain a tenuous peace with the whales after many ships were sunk in a great battle.

11th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We arrived in Horenol today and immediately were made aware that we had arrived in the White Cuneis. The checkered patterns of south Myrgha are gone, replaced by a resplendent and focused celebration of the color white. The majority of buildings are made of white stucco with sloped tile roofs to channel rains which remain common in the region. A golden colored lichen enjoys the porous tiles, and has resulted in the city appearing to be tiled in white and gold (though foreign conquerers would find themselves disappointed in the lack of true gold to be found here).

The city is most known for its temple of Vesku, which is the largest temple of Law among all of the Myrgha. Here, all official laws, policies, and legal records from all of the northern Myrgha lands (called the 'Dustedlands' by most southerners) are kept. The temple, a domed freestanding construction adorned with rectangular, smooth stucco pillars, is arranged around a massive marble statue of the God Vesku, said to be made of the finest marble in the world, holding a scroll of pure gold. Surrounding the statue of Vesku, side chambers are adorned in scroll walls, meticulously maintained by the local Bureau of Policy.

The temple clashes with the exterior city by virtue of its opulence, for the city of Horenol, in spite of its majestic color scheme, makes its primary wealth by virtue of animal husbandry on the White Cuneis. Due to the industrious preparation of fine goats' milk, cheeses, and knurd, goats run rampant through the city in large, barely controlled packs of beats. Scarcely a quiet street corner can be found, and then none maintained, for the sounds of bleating and hoofstomping will surely follow.

12th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We left Horenol towards Whitecliff today on foot. At a brisk pace, it will take us five days. It is sunny and humid, but still somewhat cold. As we are not traveling to the Black Cuneis, I shall describe both, that a proper accounting may be given.

The Cuneises, each a small province within the larger North Myrgha, are separated both geographically and politically. These lands have a longstanding rivalry built upon a misinterpretation of history, whereby each Cuneis claims to be the primary descendants of Cunei Ma, the Gongshuansen of Dyes, and neither are willing to depart with the notion that theirs is the right to rule over the full of the Dustedlands. The ruling houses of both the Black and White Cuneis are cousins, so the primary argument between these houses is the question of whether or not the paternal inheritance of the previous generation should go to the eldest son of the White or Black Cuneis.

In practice, this means that the region engages in minor civil war at the death of the previous oligarch. A well-ordered series of bylaws and long-standing codified customs has established the terms of these battles, and the agreed-upon outcome – that the winner of the battle may lay claim to the soul of the Gongshuansen, and the seat at the Council of Oligarchs to represent both regions.

This has practical implications for the Cuneises. The families of the Cunmel for both regions are inclined to provide preferential treatment in trade and policy to their side of the family. Currently, the title is held by Cunmel Ai, the White Cuneis' Patriarch, and the Black Cuneis withers. Fortunately, all the peoples of the Cuneises have accepted the terms of the agreement, and there is no ill will here.

13th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

Today I shall describe the geography of the Cuneises, as well as their fame among the Myrgha.

The western White Cuneis is a land of marble and chalk. White seaside cliffs ribbon along the sea, and where the ground is soft, it is a pale white. The chinks of the region are abundant and useful in the making of soaps and stucco. In other regions it has become hard marble, and the marble mined in White Cuneis is said to be pure and of great use by the Myrgha. The land is covered in moss and grasses. Though there is little soil here, the grasses that do take root are excellent for the rearing of goats, which dot the countryside in vast quantities, tended to by the people of the White Cuneis. The White Cuneis is the chief export of goats and goat products (such as knurd, the alcoholic fermented goat yogurt), as well as white dyes and marbles.

The eastern Black Cuneis is a land of ash, soot, and black volcanic rock. The region is active in volcanic activity, and the ashy black soils here are capable of growing plentiful crops (though there is insufficient soil here for the Myrgha to make up for the detriments elsewhere in agriculture). It is also the chief exporter of black dyes and black marble, which likewise can be found here. The region is geographically active with regular volcanic activity.

The combined regions produce vast quantities of black and white dyes which are rich and vibrant, to such an extent that they have been used across all Myrgha lands and given rise to the foreign term 'The Checkered Peoples' in referenced use to the Myrgha. Indeed, it is now a matter of policy that all Myrgha vessels sail with black and white checkered sails for greater ease of identification.

14th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

For a fair and complete impression of the Myrgha, one cannot forget the fierce war between Gongshuan and Fengshuan! I will recount it in brief here.

Gongshuan and Fengshuan were divine brothers, sent long ago by the heavens to guide humanity to greatness following the end of the Age of Divinity. They pulled humanity back from the mud, and brought culture and greatness to the peoples of the world, and together united the ancestors of the Myrgha, the Shaugi, and the Sydykos peoples. They built two cities across a wide sea and named them Myrghos and Fengxi. The cities were built to look at one another, and their peoples lived in harmony.

The two brothers loved each other, but they differed. Where Fengshuan is chaotic and sloppy, Gongshuan was orderly and disciplined. Where Fengshuan was calm and stoic, Gongshuan was emotive and easily excited. If there was a ribboning vein of connectivity that held them as brothers, it was their love for material wealth and gold.

Thus it was that when Gongshuan found a vein of pure and unbridled gold running beneath the city of Myrghos, trailing deep beneath the earth, he exalted, and at once called upon his brother to see the gold.

Fengshuan came and saw the gold, and marveled. His greed overflowed his cup. By the customs of their accord, private property was assured – this was Gongshuan's gold, as sure as anything, but Fengshuan could naught but covet it. Overcome by greed, Fengshuan attacked Gongshuan, killing him and sacking the city of Myrghos. He encouraged his people, and taught them that greed made this murder, and pillage, and destruction good, and so they ran through the city, destroying everything in an act of betrayal that outpaced all the love Fengshuan and Gongshuan had once shared. In so doing, Fengshuan became the Adversary to all Myrgha people.

15th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

When Fengshuan destroyed the city of Myrghos and scattered the Myrgha people into the Soren Rou, he did not expect that these people would live. After all, the lands are barren and supported little in the way of crops. But the thirteen sons of Gongshuan – the Gongshuansen – kept the peoples of the Myrgha alive and healthy, and in due time the Myrgha found plentiful resources in the Soren Rou – namely tin, silver, and turquoise. This allowed the Myrgha to trade for the resources they needed, giving them due time to purchase (and later build) ships, fish the plentiful waters of the Soren Rou, and begin to survive the arid climate.

I should speak to the Gongshuansen, the thirteen sons of Gongshuan, and the heroes of the war against the Adversary. The Gongshuansen kept the Myrgha people alive with resilient business acumen, demanding rhetoric, and a focus on family growth and attainment. Their spirits protect the Thirteen Oligarchic Houses to this day, being passed down from generation to generation as a protectorate spirit of these great houses. It is said among the Myrgha that the Spirits of the Gongshuansen embody the wealthiest thirteen souls among the Myrgha, enriching them even further. These thirteen souls, the current Oligarchs, are the living embodiment of the great ancestors. The Oligarchs possessing the souls of the Gongshuansen (and all the powers and attainments associated thusly) are named:

1. Umma Shemal – the Queen of Mining
2. Itthoa Mill – the Queen of Minting and Banking
3. Pangobal Merdaa – the Queen of Artisans
4. Gaodi Long – the King of Shipcraft
5. Mithonfeng Hasdu – The King of Contract Law
6. Elai Yehomai – The Queen of Religious Celebrations
7. Shif Sikar – The Queen of Animal Husbandry (often called the Queen of Goats)
8. Guan Lau – The King of Mercenaries
9. Kai Qongki – The King of Emissaries (often called the King of Spies)
10. Bodashvi Por – The King of Public Works
11. Jibal Kaihilles – The King of Winemaking
12. Cunmel Ai – The Queen of Dyes, Cloths, and Fabrics
13. Taiji Po – The King of Garum

Each is blessed, in the hopes that they may bless us with trickle down economic policies according to the will of their heart.

16th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I am told that we are now two days from Whitecliff, having traveled slower than we would have liked. The roads here are owned and operated by the Cunmel family personally, and naturally the proper economic incentive has not in recent decades been given to the reformation of these roadways. Economics are a mysterious and mystical art, and we do not seek to question the Priests of Policy.

As the Myrgha inhabit both the Soren Rou and the Dustedlands, their reach has spread far, and a proper recounting of our peoples' ancestries should be given.

The Myrgha are predominantly human, though the Gongshuansen imbue our Oligarchic houses with a divine strain of beauty, grace, and age. Indeed, some of the Oligarchs have not aged in over a hundred years, providing a stable lineage for the economic powerhouses of the empire.

We are an urban people, and Hulinari have not appeared since the original routing of the Myrgha to the Soren Rou. However, in that original arrival, the Myrgha were blessed by the Hulinari of the Earless Seals (named Hofu), and we have a blessed lineage of longstanding and Corpulent Curliots of this distinguished spirit. Most of these Curliots are associated with the Taiji family, as Taiji Po (the King of Garum) is himself a seal curliot.

The last distinguished ancestry meriting discussion are the Marble SylInfolk. The spirits of Marble from both the White and Black Cuneises have, at times, chosen to find a human to aid in the carving of their marble (so to speak), and we are now blessed with the Marble SylInfolk – a fine and distinguished ancestry whose skin and hair appear as whorls of marble, and who are possessed with a fine eye for the quality of marble deposits.

17th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

In our last full day on approach to Whitecliff, we have begun to see more and more caravans of goods, carts moving marble out into the Cuneises, and ships dottign the seaward horizon to the west. Whitecliff is said to be the second largest city in all of Myrghos, and I look forward to making her acquaintance.

Today I will speak of the Fae of the Whitecliffs. Although the Dustedlands have Handlers and Coin Mimics, they also have Marblekin and Goat Eaters, and both of these more wild, dangerous spirits deserve a telling.

Marblekin are varied in height but tall (up to twelve feet tall), and appear as massive figures carved of marble. They live in quarries, and defend them – thus, hired hands must be brought to kill Marblekin as they appear in order to keep active stone quarries safe. Marblekin are uniquely capable of swimming through marble, and so they are difficult to fight without first pulling them away from marble onto grass (or, in a pinch, a pre-prepared rug).

Goat eaters are more elusive. These spirits, said to hunt only at night, are said to appear as many things – a hulking, black shadow covered in spines, a gangly humanoid figure with seven eyes and no hair, and a giant pale moth with a thin proboscis. Whatever they actually look like, their devastation to goatherds (and resultant economic growth) is well documented*.

*For a complete recounting of the economic loss sustained by the Dustedlands from goat eaters, please consult your local Bureau of Education. For lives lost, please attend to the Temple of Ancestry.

18th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

Grey skies heralded our final approach to Whitecliff, but the glittering city warmed our weary bones as we arrived. It has been a long journey from Horenol, and in the future I would make it by boat, if given the choice.

Whitecliff is difficult to spot from an exterior approach by land, though I have been told that by sea it is easier to see. From above, on the white cliffs of the Cuneis, we came upon a grassy rise at the very northernmost edge of Myrgha lands. Our road took us to a crossing with a small cairn and simple sign pointing three directions. North, it said, to the Sea of Blades. South, it said, to Horenol. West, it said, to Whitecliff. A quick glance to the left revealed a path to the Cliffside sea – it looked for all the world like there was nothing there but the edge of land. We trusted the sign, and within minutes found ourselves at the edge of a giant bowl carved into the earth.

I had been prepared for this – Whitecliff is carved into a seaside quarry of white marble, and the city itself is cut into a natural cleft into the rock. From the top of the bowl, it looked magnificent. Another city of white, we saw in the center (nearest ourselves) the giant white dome of Whitecliff Hall, the massive indoor market that Whitecliff is known for. Surrounding it and arrayed like ants are tiny buildings, all carved out of the marble itself. The people of Whitecliff say that new constructions are not built, they are found and then carved according to the grain of marble. The resultant city has swirling patterns of construction, as buildings have been carved around natural rock formations like the massive granite arc of Howler's Hill.

The city is beautiful. The Bureau of Education informed us upon our arrival that we have made it just in time – a storm is coming, and we may be stuck in Whitecliff for a few days yet.

19th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

The storm that our hosts had told us about yesterday has hit, and hit hard. The sky has opened up, as the God Dau (lord of the sky and all four cardinal directions) has pronounced his displeasure for the world (or pleasure? I am uncertain. Please consult a local priest for more precise divine meanings, I was never much of an oracle).

I have taken the time to learn what I can of the Kishai – the tribe of peoples to the north of Whitecliff – and have learned perilously little. They sail upon the sea of blades in their ships, speak a variant of Vicildt (which means I will be able to talk to them), and rarely take on passengers. They arrive once per month at a place called Nail, just a two days' ride to the north of Whitecliff, and trade their iron for rare goods supplied by the Cunmel house.

I will need to convince them to take me on as a passenger, and have been told that they are most keen on fruit, which they have none of. This seems odd to me – do they not have farms? I will endeavor to learn, dear reader, and tell you for the nominal fee of your purchase of these records. For now, I must find fruit! And lots of it. Tomorrow I will head to the markets, for we have been told that the storms will not abate by then.

20th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

The storm continues, though just this late afternoon it began to die into a drizzle. I suspect that by the morning we will be able to leave!

Today I went to the markets of Whitecliff, famed for their size and reasonable rates, and was quite impressed! I shall list some finds of my own here.

Firstly, I must speak to fruit, for I spent most of the day trying to purchase an appropriate selection of fine fruits for trade with the Kishai. The selection was astounding. Grapes of a variety of kinds were available, as were preserved cranberries imported from the west. Stonefruits such as white peaches and horels are sold here in great quantity, and muskmelons grow prodigiously. I was able to purchase a large selection of each of these for trade.

Marble figurines and products are sold here. Strangely, black marble products from the Black Cuneis are all but absent, and where they can be found they are quite expensive. But white marble products are incredibly common and beautiful. You can commission a statue of yourself (or your father), or you can purchase from an available selection of statues of all thirteen Oligarchs – a great way to show your own Oligarch that you care!

Iron products (such as weapons, armor, jewelry, and even raw iron) is cheaper here than I have ever seen – a mere pittance of a market rate (nearly 35% reduced in cost when compared to the sale price at New Myrghos). I will strongly recommend travelers take advantage of these low, low rates!

Finally, I should mention that Shen's Clam Hut has a presence here! The stand is bustling with people, and my original deal from Myr Torel is extended to you at any of their locations. Enjoy ten percent off your purchase price of clam bread by mentioning my name, and that of my scrolls!

21st Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

This morning, the sun glittered across the smooth marble homes of Whitecliff, and we made our departure. From the top of the bowl, looking down on the city, we saw ships that had huddled for days in the harbor, clinging to the marble port, finally departing en masse like a migration of whales. The sails, following regulation and hoisting checkered sails, glittered in the dawn.

I left Myrghos today – something I have never done – and furthermore, I left through the northward trail, heading towards routes that have not before been traveled. I do not know what I will find, but as I looked down upon Whitecliff this morning, I felt a churn in my stomach. This is all the land I've ever known – a land of endless opportunity and endless inflation for long-term investments. A land of hope, and of a people on the rise, guided by their entrepreneurial lords. I doubt I shall come upon another land so rich.

I should speak to the policy of exiting Myrghos, for we came this late afternoon to the northernmost outpost of Myrghos, called Outpost 23, and have spent the evening filing our departure paperwork before we reach Nail tomorrow.

There are a number of rote forms that must be filled out by any Myrgha citizen departing. These include the Intent to Departure form, in which one details the reason for departure, expected return date, and expected ports of call. It has been... difficult to fill out due to the uncertainty in our own venture.

These further include the Reaffirmation of Adversarial Despisement, in which I wrote a poem outlining my hopes that the Adversary dies a slow and painful death* as well as affirmed that I would not take action that could support the Adversary.

Finally, we had to pay the departure fee (though once again, thanks to our mission's focus, we did not pay taxes on the fee).

Tomorrow we will depart Outpost 23 and reach the Nail, and from there, we hope to sail the Sea of Blades.

*This poem can be found in Appendix D of this document.

Section 2: the Kishai

The Lands of Kish. 22nd Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

We left Outpost 23 early this morning, and made our way northward away from the White Cuneis. The Outpost sits at the northernmost edge of all Myrghos, and beyond it we entered verdant and wild meadows. Here, deeper grasslands took root, and not once but twice we saw herds of wild deer, unafraid of our passage.

The meadows curved upward as we traveled over a ridgeline - low but what I thought to be a clear delineator between Myrghos and Kish. On the other end of the ridgeline, descent was steeper, and passed down into a low gorge. We followed a small creek through ribboning layers of rock and tall grasses which I have never seen before, with thick seed tails growing right out of the water.

And then we came to the Nail. Where the gorge ends – a cliff at the edge of the Sea of Blades – the Nail juts out into the space around it. It appears to have once been a natural rock formation, but was carved into a thumb (I would suspect during the Age of Heroes). The thumb has weathered away in part, but the thick thumbnail remains. It is a vast plateau, and here the caravans have gathered to await the Kishai.

The Nail juts out over the Sea of Blades, which deserve more space in this scroll than I can give here. Suffice it to say, the Sea of Blades stretches to the horizon, and as I write this, the sun sets at the western edge of its expanse. Tomorrow it will rise from its eastern edge, never having left its domain. The Sea of Blades is not wine dark waters, but verdant green grasses that wave in the wind. I cannot see the ground where they begin from the Nail, but they appear to be deep – one wonders what things inhabit the Sea of Blades, and how the Kishai can sail it.

I shall find out tomorrow, if they arrive as planned.

The Lands of Kish. 23rd Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

The Kishai did not come today, though we have reason to believe they will be here tomorrow.

The caravans which have gathered here are raucous, and come from across Myrghos. Dozens of caravans, merchants who have fought hard for their share of the transport permits necessary to purchase iron from the Kishai, eyed us warily upon initial arrival, and demanded that we present our iron transport permits with Kai signature (Kai Qongki, you will recall, is in charge of

formal diplomatic relations with alien cultures). When they learned that we were there not to trade for iron, but for transport, they called us crazy and brought us in to their fires.

These traders are well-positioned. They are mostly Gongsuanshensen (the loyal and closest house-servants of the descendants of the Gongsuan) and are therefore blessed by an abundance of economic prosperity, and they wear it on their persons proudly. I am told that these twelve caravans have the sole contracts for trading with “Nail House”, the Myrgha name for the Kishai city we will meet tomorrow (named for the plateau upon which we stand).

I am told that these caravans trade exclusively for iron, but bring complicated foreign goods they think the Kishai will desire. The shared proportion of iron gained here will depend utterly on the complex bargaining between Myrgha and Kishai, and in accordance with how greatly the Kishai desire the rare goods brought by the Myrgha relative to other proffered goods.

One trader, a Kaisuan Grivin, has presented only enmity for us all day, and I learn now it is because he brought fresh fruit to trade, and its perceived value to the Kishai will lower when they learn that I will trade it not for iron, but for transport.

The Lands of Kish. 24th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I excitedly brush this letter from my berth on the city of Kuchilaani (Nail House, among my own dear Myrgha). My brushstrokes are not straight, due to the pounding excitement in my heart, though I must brush what I have seen.

Today, I paid for my passage onto Kuchilaani. I do not know what I expected of the so called “city of the Kishai”. I thought, I suppose, that they meant a nomadic caravan of helk-riders moving between the dense grasses. But that is so much *less* than *what is*. Truly, Charipedes is a fool for his lack of interest in these lands.

Kuchilaani is a city mounted upon a giant metal and reed-worked boat. The boat itself is massive – easily the largest city I have ever seen, larger than the flagships of the Higharch and even the Adversary himself.

Kuchilaani is perhaps six hundred feet in length, and nearly a hundred wide. The ship’s frame and construction is made of metal, though it is darker than I would expect, and clearly nothing so simple as ‘iron’. The city itself appears strapped to the top of this construction, and the homes and people of the Kishai live in woven reed and bamboo huts and houses, built vertically atop the frame of the ship. More than a thousand people live in the city, I am told, and they are densely packed more than the peoples of Whitecliff or New Myrghos.

The iron underside of the boat ripples with lightning, captured from the heavens itself, and the grasses beneath the city bend towards it. Lightning crackles between them. I feel as though we

ride upon a chariot of the gods. The mighty Amil, lord of the sky, must ride a chariot such as this when he creates storms.

Kuchilaani has dozens of sails, though they do not appear to be arranged such that they could be used together, and I cannot bring myself to suspect they are the primary means of motion for the boat. This boat can only be moved by the gods themselves, I am sure of it.

The Lands of Kish. 25th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I should describe the process of paying for my boarding. When the Kishai arrived at the Nail, they began unloading their 'cargo', which is to say, they cleaned the underside of their ship and we Myrgha paid for the trappings. Kuchilaani rips iron from the grasses underneath it through its unknowable metal properties (I am told the underside of the ship is lightning-trapped lodestone, though *how* the Kishai trapped lightning in a lodestone is unknown to me). Iron filings that vary in size from fingernail clippings to the size and heft of a man's fist are thereby collected on the underside of the ship, and must occasionally be cleaned.

The Kishai know that the peoples of other lands value these filings greatly, and so clean their ships at the borders of their land in exchange for valuable goods the Kishai cannot themselves acquire. It is the only form of trade employed by the Kishai, and the only kind of cultural interaction they share with their neighbors.

The Kishai spoke a loose dialect of the Vicildt tongue, and I had been warned of their isolationist policies. They clearly did not wish me to board, but I had no other way to gain passage to Olgan's Pass.

I impressed upon them my willingness to take on difficult work, and showed them the fruits I had acquired for trade. They took particular note of the preserved fruits I had purchased (likely putting my claim above that of Grivin), and eventually consented to give me passage alone under the condition that I would be escorted everywhere by a Kishai guard, and that I was to be kept under careful watch. My men protested, but I accepted readily – if this is to be the price of exploration, let me make my way alone and see what comes of it. If I die, it will be in service of Pangobal Merdaa, and the Bureau of Education.

And so I now travel alone into foreign lands.

The Lands of Kish. 26th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

The Kishai have mostly tanned or brown skin, though some of them have a greenish tint to them. Their hair is likely varied. It varies from a golden blonde to an earthy brown, though sometimes it is vibrant green, the color of grasses in every season. They have thin brows, and all of them have green eyes.

There are no curiots or Fixerfolk among the Kishai, though I suspect some of the 'greener' of the Kishai (such as Shoshani, whose hair and eyes are an emerald in color) are in fact Grass Sylfolk. Otherwise, they are all humans.

Their homes require a great deal of vertical travel – they must climb up and down ropes with astonishing regularity – many of them have to climb ropes just to get to their beds or homes. Perhaps for this reason, the Kishai are very fit peoples. They wear woven clothing of grass, and they have furs they leverage liberally in the cool of night.

The Kishai are a suspicious and unfriendly host. I have been placed under the direct watch of two Kishai, Ouril and Shoshani. Ouril watches me like a hawk, and is stern and thin in appearance. Shoshani has emerald eyes and vibrant green hair. She is older than Ouril. When alone, she asks me questions of the Myrgha land which I answer readily. She seems to think our way of life is fantastical (she should perhaps write down her opinions, to be sent to Charipedes. Perhaps he could learn the meaning of the word perspective).

The Lands of Kish. 27th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

The Kishai do not have farms, and they do not have sufficient space for animal rearing, so one can assume they do not have agriculture. However, they have fed me flatbreads and seed porridges for every meal, and I therefore suspect that they have either a means of acquiring wild seed and grain, or somewhere the Kishai have agricultural centers that are not so unmoored from our practical understanding of how people might live.

They also serve game meats, which they catch as the Myrgha catch fish. The Kishai take offal from beasts and birds, and suspend them in traps which they lower on ropes into the Sea of Bladegrass. Carnivorous beasts of all sorts fall into these traps and are captured for eating.

The beasts are different from those in our land, and deserve a telling. The first and most common is a form of snake called a reed python, which blends in with the grassy surroundings. These pythons can grow to more than twenty feet long, and I suspect form the bulk of Kishai meat-catchings.

The second is a form of wolf which has brown fur, and exceptionally long legs like stilts. The Kishai call them Maned Wolves, and they taste completely unlike dog.

The third common capturing the Kishai eat is a form of carnivorous rodent – large and lengthy – called a cluimbra. The cluimbra live in packs, and they pulled a trap up just today with five or six such rodents, chittering and angry. The Kishai poked spears into the traps to kill them before pulling them out and cooking them. They did not taste good, though Ouril told us we were lucky to receive meat, as it is a gift and not a right.

Shoshani told us that the Kishai also catch fish from the rivers and lakes in the Sea of Blades, though I am uncertain how they know where waterways are, unless we have not come upon them. The Sea of Blades obscures everything below it to my untrained eyes. She is entertained by my ignorance, but, like the other Kishai, answers piteously few of my probing questions.

The Lands of Kish. 28th Day of the Red Moon, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

Today we came to a large stone outcrop which rose vertically from the Sea of Blades. It loomed like a mountain ridgeline, and here I disembarked Kuchilaani to wait for another city, called Orchiil, which I am told will arrive tomorrow. In spite of the fact that Orchiil will supposedly arrive tomorrow, I have been left with three days' supplies. Shoshani stayed with me, and stated that she would take me as far as Olgan's Pass. She appears to have warmed to me, though she grows cold and will not speak of the cities of the Kishai and how they move. I suspect I will need her to safeguard my passage onto Orchiil.

And so, today, we wait for Orchiil's arrival to this rocky outcrop. Far below us, we can see the grasses wave and move, and here at the top of the mountain peaks there is an open stone basin, filled with water we can drink, and a small altar to what appears to be a Kishai god.

The altar consists of a concentric ring of cairns around an iron basin, with rope strung between them. Shoshani made a prayer here by weaving a small totem of grasses in a radially symmetric pattern of some significance to her (though unknown to me), and hanging it from the rope between cairns. She explained that it was an offering to the Lord of Lightning, that he might bless the cities with continued motion.

I asked her if the Lord of Lightning ever took away the motion of cities, or if any cities could no longer fly, and she did not answer. I asked her how many cities there were, and she said that there were seven.

Tonight, we wait on this rocky outcrop, exposed to the world. It looks like it will be a fair night, and I hope our luck keeps.

The Lands of Kish. 1st Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I awoke this morning to the month of Yellow Wind, and it seemed appropriate, for our location left us open to the winds of Kish. I made a sacrifice of gold to Amil, the lord of the winds of all four directions, and his son Eyr, Lord of the East Wind, for whom the Month of Yellow Wind is named. Just as last night I watched her weave her grass offering, so too did Shoshani watch me offer gold. She seemed perplexed as I tossed the gold into the wind, and asked why I threw away the most valued of all Myrgha possessions.

I explained that gold was only the second-most valuable of all Myrgha possessions, after rare gemstones, and she laughed (though I was serious). I then told her that one must offer what one loves to gods, and that Amil would be watching our journey.

We wandered the entirety of the ridgeline today. It was a difficult and perilous climb across stone outcrops, and one wrong foothold would have had us plummeting hundreds of feet into the grasses below. My Kishai guide wandered the rocks like they were a marbled street.

We ate lunch at the edge of the world. Grass spread out in every direction, as far as the eye could see but more than a hundred feet below us, and Shoshani asked me about Myrgha culture. Though she expressed great interest in the city, and even expressed interest in one day visiting Myrghos (unheard of from the Kishai, as I understand it), she seems to think us savages when I explained the concept of a fair market economy. I found myself growing annoyed. Eventually, I asked her a pointed question: Did the Kishai build their ships? The ships looked as though they were primordial and ancient, and the Kishai simply used bamboo and reeds to fashion huts atop something far beyond their understanding.

I could tell at once that I had gone too far. My guide grew cold, and refused to speak. She retreated across the stone outcrops, until she was out of sight. Without her guidance, I feared to traverse the mountain peaks, and I am now without shelter alone in my outcrop at the edge of the world.

The City of Orchiil did not come today.

The Lands of Kish. 2nd Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I awoke to a kick from my now perilously angered host. It was barely light, and from the northern horizon I could see a speck of light moving towards us – Orchiil. I gathered my things at once, and began to attempt to ingratiate myself once more upon my guide. She had

reminded me that I am alone without her, and I must take heed of my actions. I do not have my Spannai to get me out of trouble.

We awaited Orchiil at the altar of their God, and had to wait further upon their arrival for their priest to make an offering. Their priest wore a ringlet made of grasses upon his head as well as a woven reed cape, and he made the offering of a live cluimbra in the pool, filling it with blood. Shoshani translated his offering as one requesting the continued good health of (the city? She translated up to here, trailed off, and refused to speak further on the subject).

Then we boarded the city. It is longer than Kuchilaani, but thinner and taller. Perhaps it is seven hundred feet by ninety in size. It also moves faster, and seems to have a greater maneuverability upon the grasses. It also seems to gather less iron beneath its berth than its predecessor city.

Shoshani left me alone with several guards while she descended into the ship to vouch for my travel and submittal to Olgan's Pass. Despite the fact that all the citizens of Kuchilaani speak Vicildt, Shoshani speaks with them in a language wholly unfamiliar to me. It liberally uses the voiceless fricative, though I cannot discern a word of it. As I focused on this, I noticed a more astonishing sight. There are *Sydykos* aboard the city. Though I caught only a glimpse of them moving through a crowd, they were unmistakable in their traditional garb.

When Shoshani returned, she seemed exuberant – her earlier frustrations with me gone. I have been informed that I have the run of the city of Orchiil, and I will do what I can to learn from these people.

[The Lands of Kish. 3rd Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron](#)

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

In spite of the fact that I have been given my reign of the ship, I must speak first to something happening outside of the city. To the far north of our location for the whole day, just at the edge of the horizon, has been the most curious sight, first noticed when I awoke this morning.

Gathering clouds on the northernmost horizon have swirled together like a whirlpool in the sky, where they hung in the air all day, swirling around a spot beyond the horizon and my ability to see it. None of the Kishai will tell me anything about it, and our ship's destination is eastward, not northward, so we do not pull closer. But it appears a most ominous sight – perhaps an omen from Amil?

My hosts seem rather indifferent to the sight, as though it is normal. But the sky itself appears frozen in a great struggle. As I watched, I could see the clouds descending in their spiral path, as though they are being sucked into the earth by this wind pattern.

At sundown, I eyed an even more curious sight (and one upon which the Kishai are even *less* inclined to comment). That is, the light of sunset caught the vortex of clouds in a ray of red and angry light, and cast a shadow upon the vortex. The shadow of a *city*, just at the edge of the vortex, suspended on top of the grass of the surrounding planes.

It is just a speck on the horizon, and I am sure I would have missed it if not for the sunset's ailing light. Yet it was clearly there – a city parked at the edge of that oblivion of angry clouds.

Shoshani will say nothing of it, but I believe I know her well enough now to know when she is hiding something from me. For the sake of my own safety, I will put this sight now from my mind. I cannot afford to frustrate my host (or indeed, any of the Kishai) again.

[The Lands of Kish. 4th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron](#)

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

Today I found the Sydykos of Orchiil, within the great core of the city itself. I had to meander my way through a maze of cavernous chambers of metal in the interior of this ship, used for all sorts of storage and dwelling spaces for what appear to be the more noble or respected Kishai. I had expected to meet the king of Orchiil, but as I am told by Shoshani, foreigners are unfit to witness him, and I will not meet him on my voyage. Instead, I met the Sydykos.

Here the Sydykos work on a blown-glass and metal machine which they (and Shoshani) refer to as the Heart of Orchiil. It is a monstrous contraption, nearly as large as a two-story building, and it is set into a monstrous and ancient cavern within the city. It is the largest chamber within Orchiil, and feast tables line the exterior of the room. Set into the machine itself is a woven throne, where I can assume normally sits the King of Orchiil.

The Sydykos work on this machine. For readers unaware, the Sydykos worship the Fire Titan Sydyk, said by their people to have brought fire to humankind (he was then extinguished deep beneath the sea of their lands for his betrayal of the other gods). The Sydykos therefore have a great reverence for fire, and have stumbled upon to the invention of steam-powered machinery, which they use to power all sorts of contraptions. Sydykos engineers are therefore prized far and wide for their military steamwork contraptions. It is therefore no surprise to see them working on machinery, but moreso how they even *found* their way to the Kishai. They tell me (in Elosine) that they were requested for their knowledge of lodestones, and had come *from Sydyk* upon request to Orchiil.

Their job, they explained to me, is to keep the machine running. I asked how, and they expressed that they are still trying to learn, but that the machine is alive, and requires much care due to its temperament. They say a complex assortment of lodestones works to power a thrumming *something* in its center, which in turn allows the city of Orchiil to float.

It is difficult to understand Sydykos engineers at work. They speak of the machine like a consort, and it is hard to tell what is true and what is false. I do believe them when they told me (privately, away from Shoshani) that the machine is from the Age of the Divine, and that it was created of thought itself. What else could explain this divine ship? I can only wonder at the secrets these Sydykos engineers might unlock.

The Lands of Kish. 5th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

Today I saw a group of Kishai disembark Orchiil. Shoshani told me that they were leaving to find a 'lesser tribe'. After some prying (she becomes less reticent to speak to me of her people over time), I have learned that there are a multitude of tribes living beneath the grasses in great number, within small towns. These lesser tribes trade with the seven great sky-cities of the Kishai.

The Kishai left via a rope, which was lowered into the grasses below at a particularly shallow point in the grasslands. From our vantage point atop the city, I could see the rope drag against the ground. The Kishai simply climbed down the rope, nearly sixty feet, and then came out into a roll as they let go.

A few minutes later, we came out upon the edge of a lake, and several more Kishai jumped from a cliff to grab the rope as it flew past. They climbed up, as though this were a reasonable activity, and are now in Orchiil! Astounding how these people have adapted to these primordial ships.

I had drinks with the Sydykos this evening (along with Shoshani, who is comically weak of constitution when drinks are concerned). The Sydykos asked me if I knew of lands so rich in iron outside of Kish. I thought about it, and expressed that the Alba Valley and the Lands of the Dianni are said to be rich in iron. The Sydykos asked if there were ships, or grasses, like this anywhere else in the world, to which I replied (truthfully) that if there were, I surely would have heard of them. The Sydykos nodded in agreement, and stated firmly that the ships could not have been built for anything but these grasslands, because they are designed to float by charging the iron in the Sea of Blades, and in so doing turn the grasses themselves into lodestones that let the city float.

I asked if the practice could not extend to other grasses, and one of the Sydykos pulled out a piece of grass, which he split open, revealing iron fibers up and down its side. He said that grass does not grow like this anywhere else in the world, and that this form of locomotion would not work.

No one knows how old the grasses of the Sea of Blades are, but could they really be thousands of years old, from the Age of the Divine? Could these ships truly be this old? We began to discuss this, but were interrupted by Shoshani drunkenly asking if I would be traveling alone

through Olgan's Pass. We discussed my future travel plans in brief, but I believe she worries for my safety.

The Lands of Kish. 6th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I am told that we will reach the edge of the Sea of Blades tomorrow, and as predicted, that Orchiil 'will not' leave the sea (or, if the Sydykos are to be believed, 'cannot' leave the sea).

I should comment briefly on the grasses of the Sea of Blades. I mentioned yesterday that the Sea of Blades has iron in its grasses, and a fuller accounting could be given.

The most commonly used grass by the Kishai is a form of bamboo, which grows tall across the Sea of Blades and appears to be the dominant feature. It is particularly strong, and grows quickly to its maximum height.

There is a grain which grows here, too, which I have now seen harvested by Orchiil. The grain is a dry, wheat-like grain, which grows in open plains where it appears too dry for the bamboo to grow. This grain is golden brown, and glimmers in the light with iron.

Of worthy note is also the river reed, which grows massive puffy tails as large as a man's head, and which burst at the slightest touch into an explosion of seeds. Yesterday afternoon, Orchiil came low over a lake *filled* with these reeds, and the ship looked like it gave off a wake of light as these seeds exploded into the air.

Grass seems to be the only thing that grows in this land. There are no blossoming flowers, or trees. I would liken it to a vast savanna, but that seems insufficient. This is a grassland in the truest sense. It smells too strongly of grasses. You cannot see anything but grasses. Even the people are part grass, like the Grass Sylfolk I mentioned earlier. It is as though the idea of grass has brought this land about.

The Lands of Kish. 7th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

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I have inquired again with Shoshani of the seven cities of the Sea of Blades. She remains reticent to tell me about them, though both Orchiil and Kuchilaani are said to be near average in terms of size, and I am told that *most* of the seven cities are approximately the same in size.

Shoshani seems irreverent for a Kishai, in particular for her interest in foreigners. She has seemed as delighted as me to meet the Sydykos, and with me as a translator has peppered them in questions, which I recorded carefully. For her part, Shoshani seems interested in the

spices and foods of Sydykos cuisine, and of their cities. She has, several times now, asked if I am to make the journey eastward on my own. I have realized (perhaps too slowly) that her inquiries are based on more than a fear for my safety.

Shoshani seems to me a natural born scholar of the Bureau of Education. She is capable of explaining complex topics with ease, and has a curious mind. After much deliberation in the past few days, I asked her to attend me beyond the edge of the Sea of Blades and into the east. She agreed, for which I am thankful, though feeling inexplicably foolish afterwards, I retreated to my study to pack.

Late in the afternoon, we reached the edge of the Sea of Blades. Here, a low ridge of normal plains dips off a cliff into the sea of blades, which look like waves crashing against it in the wind. At the edge of this land is a giant green and overgrown sword, which looks like it would have once been held in the hand of a titan, embedded into the earth. If I had not encountered the last weeks of travel across Kish, I would say that this was a most resplendent sight. Instead, it felt positively normal.

A series of handholds have been carved into the side of the sword, and Shoshani and I disembarked at its hilt and climbed down. I am grateful for her company, and further grateful to not be alone as I head towards the Heibrim. We set up camp at the hilt before heading eastward tomorrow, into the unknown lands of Olgan's Pass.

Interlude: Olgan's Pass

Olgan's Pass. 7th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron

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Shoshani says that she has never left the Sea of Blades, and seems to skip as we hike eastward. For my part, I am wary. I have told her that we now enter the lands of Olgan's Pass, into which it is said no one has ever left once they enter. It is said that a giant and primordial titan lives here. I think of the sword from last night, as I write that. Could the titan have once owned this sword? Would it not explain the lack of survivors from this land and previous travels?

I feel stupid for having arranged for this route. I should have retreated through Myrghos and smuggled my way southward towards the Shau Yidong.

We followed the rolling plains eastward, and came to a jagged looking mountain expanse. Between the two was a clear pass, and we have descended downward through the pass. It is a shallow descent, giving us time to look out over a clear lake. It is *exceptionally* clear in fact, allowing one to see right down towards the bottom from the shallow edges. The water here smells of rotten eggs.

We have made camp at the edge of the lake. Two rivers enter the lake from its northern edge, and across the lake to the east, strange rock formations like pillars rising from the earth are covered in moss. They are massive – hundreds of feet tall – and birds gather and swarm at their peaks. They are mostly cormorants, adding to the ominous nature of the scene (cormorants are bad luck among the Myrgha). It is not quiet. Instead, these seabirds screech and shout at one another.

Tomorrow we will follow the river outlet from the lake towards the east, in hopes of finding a route towards the Heibrim. The screeching sounds of cormorants keep me from sleep, like a bad omen.

[Olgan's Pass. 8th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron](#)

EIGHTH DAY NO POST – NO POST FOR A DAY

[Olgan's Pass. 9th Day of the Yellow Wind, 807th Year of the Age of Iron](#)

This is the showing forth of the Inquiry and travel of Khenbor, 6th Seal Scrollmaster of the New Myrghos Bureau of Education, to the end that true deeds, works, and customs be recorded.

I shake still as I write to you. As it turns out, being a scholar does not make one a good survivalist, and in difficult, dangerous, or frightening situations, it is nicer to read about them than live them.

Yesterday, Shoshani and I came across a meandering river, and thought to cross the river to move eastward. It was a wide river – one could barely see one side from the other – but we found a slow point in the river full of marshy reeds, which seemed to put Shoshani at ease (I had not realized my former guide was tense until we came across familiar grasses. How strange that she should be comforted by the presence of something so simple).

We decided to cross here. The journey was slow and we anticipated it taking the better part of an hour. Our machinations collapsed quickly, however. Shoshani and I were nearly at the end of our crossing, and thus far had encountered nothing worse than biting flies, when the cormorants of a nearby rocky outcrop began screeching and clamoring, flying away in a cloud. Almost immediately, giants burst from around the edges of the outcrop and began throwing massive boulders at us.

I am not certain how large the giants were – perhaps nine feet tall – but they had horns on their head, and wide brows. They did not look human, and had grey skin like that of stone. The first rock hit the water near me in a loud splash, throwing me into the marsh. Shoshani screamed, and we both began to run, trying to make it to the eastern edge.

The giants pursued us as we ran. As the giants entered the grassy reeds, Shoshani closed her eyes, pressing her face into a struggling expression. Suddenly the reeds exploded out of the water, wrapping themselves around the giants and restraining them. At once, she collapsed unconscious into the water, and I dove for her*.

We were torn into the river, and I fought to carry her to the shore as the giants fought to free themselves. Without realizing it, we had entered a faster portion of the river, and it carried us quickly away from the giants. Now, we were subject not to the giants, but to the waters themselves, and with Shoshani unconscious I could do little to escape it – instead, I held her to me and tried to keep her head above water.

We were carried downstream a great distance before we deposited to shore, gasping for air. We laid like that for a long time. Shoshani unconscious, and myself too weak to move.

Eventually, I pulled Shoshani to the shore and started a small fire.

I stayed awake all night watching after her, but was worried she would not awaken. When she did, like great floodworks opening up, I began to cry.

This morning, with nothing left to do but to put some distance between ourselves and those strange monsters, we made our way east.

Tonight, I write from the edge of the Babu Mirdus – a mountainous forest stretching from here to the Heibrim. My unused scrolls are damaged from the water that Shoshani and I encountered, and I will be unable to write until I can find a merchant to acquire more paper or slips. I do not know when that will be, but I can only hope that the next leg of our journey is safer than the last few days.

When I am able to find papyrus of some kind, I will endeavor to return this text to an appropriately scholarly one, though I am pleased to describe for the reader the dangers I have lived through. Part of travel in this world *is* to survive danger, and I believe it is not a part of history that should be shown.

Postscript (personal note, for just the copy of this text to be sent to Charipedes): Dear Charipedes, does your story of these lands contain any sort of comparable adventure? No? I thought not.

*As a note, I believe this confirms my suspicion of Grass Sylfolk among the Kishai. I have heard of similar feats performed by other Sylfolk, but never in association with grasses before. To witness it myself was extraordinary.

