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Khentós

World Bible

A WORLD OF MAGIC, MACHINES,
AND MALEVOLENT MONSTERS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

World Introduction.....	4
Concept Type.....	4
High Concept.....	4
Planetary Conditions.....	4
Primary Cultures.....	6
World Presentation	10
Genre.....	10
Mood	12
Tone.....	12
Themes.....	12
Maps.....	14
World of Tyashír	14
Byàvesh Map.....	17
Historical Timeline - Byàvesh.....	20
Early Monarchies Era [500 – 325 years ago]	21
Tholhyós Empire Era [325 – 250 years ago].....	21
Warring States Era [250 – 125 years ago].....	21
Reformation and Unity Era [125 – 50 years ago].....	22
Magical Revolution Era [50 years ago – Current]	23
Cultures.....	24
Byàvesh Culture	24
Pktanni Culture.....	32
Zhǐròm Culture.....	38
Cultural Interaction Matrix.....	44
Tholhyós Culture [Fallen].....	45
Factions.....	49
Faction: Church of the Five Divinities	49
Faction: Thaumaturges Guild	54

Faction: Yéingho Adherents	58
Faction: Sèingzho Apostates	62
Organization: Tsyilyav Army	66
Organization: Knights of the Five Divinities	70
Faction Interaction Matrix	74
Ecology	77
Byàvesh Biome (Greenlands)	77
Pktanni Biome (Northlands)	83
Zhǐròm Biome (Drylands)	89
Magic	95
Overview	95
Magical Formulae	96
Spellcasting	96
Mana Engines	97
Demons	97
Languages	99
Byàvesh Language Continuum	99
Pktanni Language	101
Zhǐròm Language	103
Credits	104

WORLD INTRODUCTION

CONCEPT TYPE

World: Khentós

Type of World: Imaginary World

Genre: Aetherpunk / Heroic Fantasy

HIGH CONCEPT

What if a net-zero quantity of magic must always exist within the world, meaning that whenever magic is produced, an equal amount of negative ‘anti-magic’ is produced in turn to preserve the equilibrium; when enough anti-magic is produced, it consolidates and mutates into monsters that threaten humanity. Rather than reject magic, most societies chose to embrace it anyway, advancing towards an industrialized era of magic-fueled technology. As magic advances humanity forward, so too does it advance the power of the monstrosities created by it in an endless cycle.



PLANETARY CONDITIONS

Biomes

The continent of Khentós (/kʰɛnˈtɔs/) is typically divided into three major regions from north to south: the Northlands, the Greenlands, and the Drylands.

The Northlands

The Northlands are composed primarily of boreal forest and tundra biomes. It is a cold but livable region, though conditions are extremely harsh in the northern tundra biome. These tundras were formerly inhospitable outside of small communities; however, modern magical aid can handle the conditions well enough for larger cities to form. Conversely, the milder boreal region sees four separate seasons, although variation between them is nowhere near as pronounced as in the Greenlands.

The Northlands are very mountainous, with every major river in Khentós originating from the mountain range on the southern edge of the region.

The Greenlands

The Greenlands are composed primarily of temperate forest and grassland biomes. This is the largest and most diverse region of Khentós, with vast and fertile lands ideal for agriculture. The region experiences four complete seasons, allowing for significant agricultural variety.

The Drylands

The Drylands are composed primarily of savannah and, further inland, desert biomes. This is a relatively hot region with two distinct seasons: a short wet season (rainy and humid) and a long dry season (little precipitation and arid). Conditions are less severe closer to the Greenlands (which borders the Drylands to the north).

Due to the use of magic to modify the land, oases are extremely plentiful, even in the less dry areas. Almost all settlements in the Drylands, even small villages, feature at least a small oasis.

Climate/Weather

Khentós does not experience any notable extreme weather outside of the expected climate and weather of its biomes (as detailed above).

Physical Geography

Land

The continent stretches from the far north to around the equator and is thickest in the middle (the Greenlands).

Water

The continent is surrounded by oceans on all sides. Other continents exist and are in contact with Khentós, but they are distant enough that it still takes months to move between them, even with the current level of technology. A handful of islands dot the edge of the mainland, and they are generally considered ‘part’ of Khentós.

All major rivers originate from the mountainous Northlands and feed into the surrounding oceans. As for other water sources, oases (most artificial but some natural) are extremely common in the Drylands.

Earth

A vast network of natural and artificial cave systems exists under Khentós known as the ‘Underlands’. This is primarily the domain of demons (see ‘Fauna’), and it lacks any of the necessary components for humans to live. Whenever possible, openings connecting the Underlands and the surface are closed by humans.

Flora

Flora is predominately standard for each biome; for example, different varieties of trees stretch across the whole continent (conifers in the Northlands, deciduous trees in the Greenlands, and sparser water-conserving species in the Drylands).

Fauna

Familiar Eurasian animal species are spread across Khentós, and domesticated species are similar as well.

Demons

The creatures dubbed ‘demons’ by humans are the notable exception. While demons are technically artificial and a byproduct of magic, the use of magic has been so widespread for centuries that the presence of demons is no more unnatural than that of deer or horses.

Demons are not true biological creatures, and they do not reproduce; rather, they form via the accumulation of anti-magic in the environment. Anti-magic is an invisible, dense material that sinks into the ground post-production. As a result, demons almost always form underground, and the creation of the Underlands is a consequence of demons carving themselves out of the earth.



Demons do not need to eat to survive; however, being the literal antithesis or positive magical energy, they exist solely to destroy any traces of magic—which in almost all cases means hunting humans. In this way, they effectively ‘prey’ on humanity despite not needing to do so for sustenance.

The capabilities of a demon depend almost entirely on the amount of anti-magic that composes their being. While a vast majority are no more intelligent than rodents, very rarely (every few decades on average), one will be born with so much anti-magic that it possesses a human level of intelligence. These abnormally capable demons are usually called ‘devils’, and they are typically viewed by the average person as a natural disaster of sorts. By organizing and leading armies of demons, a devil could end entire civilizations if left unchecked.

Demons themselves do not form civilizations and cultures like humans, but the appearance of a devil may form a pseudo-culture until it is slain, at which point the demons in its ranks will revert to their typical chaotic states.

PRIMARY CULTURES

While Khentós can be subdivided into much narrower cultural groups, the three major regions are a product of sociopolitical relations as much as they are geography, so cultures can be broadly split by region.

Byàvesh (People of the Greenlands)

Overview

The Byàvesh (/ˈbʲavɛʃ/) rely less heavily on individual magic than the Pktanni; however, they use industrial magical technology no less frequently. They typically view magic more as a tool for inventors and engineers than a common skill everyone utilizes, and despite adopting the practice later, they are at the forefront of magical technology in the current age.

The Byàvesh are the largest and most influential cultural group in Khentós, though they are also the least culturally united due to the size of the region (and thus the spread of their communities). Byàvesh nations fall into conflict with each other far more often than the nations of other regions do with each other.

Influence of Planetary Conditions

The mild climate conditions make thriving in the Grasslands comparatively easy compared to the Northlands and Drylands.

Its vast size originally made traveling around the Greenlands slow, as most major rivers cut through the region rather than across it. However, the invention of trains and wide-scale installation of railways in the past few decades has almost mitigated this problem entirely.

Influence of Flora

Plentiful access to natural resources has been a great boon to the advancement of Byàvesh culture, but it has also led to overconsumption. Deforestation is a mounting issue, and over-farming has had negative consequences on the land.

Influence of Fauna

Like in the Northlands, the Byàvesh are used to fighting the demons that their way of life spawns. The use of tons of magically expensive machinery, however, makes the demon problem particularly bad in the Greenlands. A sort of arms race currently exists, where the Byàvesh constantly try to invent new magical weaponry capable of defeating demons more effectively, which in turn causes more powerful demons to be born.

Pktanni (People of the Northlands)

Overview

The Pktanni (/ˈpk(ə)tan:i/) were the original embracers of magic, sparking the so-called ‘Magical Revolution’ across the continent. As such, magic is deeply embedded into Pktanni culture, as is the eternal struggle against demons. Basic magical education is nearly universal across Pktanni nations, and the fear of magic seen in some subcultures of other areas is practically non-existent here.

Influence of Planetary Conditions

Most Pktanni settlements rely on magic to survive the cold conditions of the Northlands, even in the milder areas of the southern edge where it would not be strictly necessary to do so. This includes creating great magical engines that heat the entire settlement and conjuring localized climate-controlled areas capable of enhanced agricultural output.



Influence of Flora

The Pktanni civilization still relies on wood as their primary building material, as they've perfectly the art of supplementing it with magic to create structures as hardy as those made of brick or concrete. A large number of medicinal herbs also grow naturally in this region, and they are a popular commodity traded to the other regions.

Influence of Fauna

As considerable magic use is often necessary for farming to thrive, many Pktanni settlements rely heavily on hunting as a secondary (or even sometimes primary) food source.

Due to the prevalence of magic across much of Pktanni history, the battle against demons is extremely normalized. Two of the most respected professions in Pktanni society are the 'Guardians'—those who patrol settlements and defend them from demons—and 'Sealers'—those who venture out to permanently close openings from the Underlands. Both of these roles fall into the wider category of 'Paladins'—demon hunters—that are revered across Pktanni society.



Zhǐròm (People of the Drylands)

Overview

The Zhǐròm (/ʒiːɹòm/) are the most skeptical of magic, and many are divided on the matter of its usage. Though its influence is escapable—most Zhǐròm settlements, after all, center around magically formed oases, and imports of magical technology from the Greenlands are prevalent—each individual has their own opinions on the matter. Many communities ban the practice outright, while many urban centers embrace it just as much as the Byàvesh or Pktanni.

Originally, the term ‘Drylands’ referred specifically to the dry deserts in this region, but the term eventually expanded to encompass the entire area the Zhǐròm inhabited. As a result, even the savannah areas—which have a distinct wet season—are a part of the Drylands, contrary to what the name might imply.

Influence of Planetary Conditions

Even the harsh desert conditions in the interior of the Drylands are largely mitigated due to magically produced water. Even then, however, mass agriculture is not easy in this environment, and only major cities can produce food at a notable surplus.

Influence of Flora

Though flora is less frequent in the Drylands, that only enhances the degree it is treasured by the Zhǐròm. Techniques to extract resources from plants without killing them have been cultivated and passed down through the centuries, creating a unique relationship between humans and plant life in the region.

Influence of Fauna

The Zhǐròm are the least prepared for demons, especially in small settlements; however, they cannot simply escape the issue. A longstanding tradition in most Zhǐròm communities (aside from major cities, which openly make use of magical technology) is that individuals are never to fight demons using magic, given the inherent hypocrisy. While this tradition has notable effectiveness at reducing the number of demons, it also makes the job of fighting them several times more dangerous, and it is thus viewed as a much less glamorous job than it is to the Byàvesh or Pktanni. Fighting demons is often offered as an option to prisoners to lessen their sentences, adding to the stigma this job holds.

WORLD PRESENTATION

GENRE

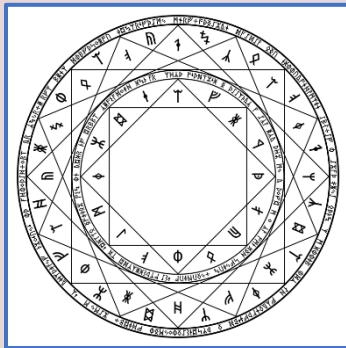
The target genre of Khentós is heroic fantasy with an aetherpunk flavor.

Khentós is a relatively isolated continent currently undergoing a period of industrialization utilizing magic-powered technology; however, the use of magic has unavoidable consequences. All magic follows one universal law of equivalence: for every unit of ‘positive’ mana produced, an equal amount of ‘negative’ anti-mana is also produced. This toxic material sinks into the earth and coalesces into ‘demons’, non-biological monsters which exist for the sole purpose of eradicating positive mana and the sources of its production—in other words, people.

Humanity’s battle against demons has waged on for centuries, but the severity of the problem has grown rapidly as magical industrialization progresses. While the exacerbation of the problem is largely a result of the unchecked ambitions of power-hungry political elites and capitalists, it is by the heroism of individual warriors—those who dedicate their lives to the protection of humanity—that the demons are kept at bay.

Genre Tropes Leveraged

Each trope header is a link to a corresponding TVTropes page discussing the relevant trope.



[Magic A is Magic A](#)

Magic is internally consistent within the Khentós, so much so that it serves as a complete stand-in for other forms of power such as steam or electricity in technology. While the existence of magic may throw into question many real-world laws of physics with its fantastical capabilities, in Khentós, the laws of magic *are* the laws of science, and vice-versa.

[Magitek](#)

From trains to radio, streetlamps to printing presses, magic-powered technology has become so commonplace throughout the world that even someone who has never personally studied magic in their life makes use of it on a daily basis. While not yet as advanced as some portrayals, this trope is played relatively straight.

[Ideal Heroes](#)

While Khentós at large does not operate under a wholly black-and-white system of morality, the heroes who defend humanity from the consequences of its own rampant overconsumption are (generally) heroes in the truest sense. While most are still driven by personal motivations on an



individual level, as a whole, demon hunters are meant to symbolize heroism, hope, and the struggle for a better future—not the avarice and pride that led to the demon problem in the first place.

Genre Tropes Twisted

Mana

While the magic of Khentós runs on a mystical yet measurable energy source—as is very common in certain flavors of fantasy—this particular energy source deviates from the norm by coming in both positive and negative varieties, and one cannot exist without the other. Rather than mana simply being a resource to consume, it is a resource to *produce*, and that production comes with consequences.

Medieval Stasis

Khentós has thoroughly advanced past a ‘medieval’ state, with technology slowly evolving over time and, eventually, a wave of progress erupting from an industrial revolution. On the other hand, many medieval (and fantasy) staples remain; to a magically-gifted demon hunter, medieval weaponry like swords, bows, polearms, etc. can easily match or exceed the capabilities of a magical firearm or similar post-medieval technology, and, consequently, their use remains common.

Demons/Monsters

Functionally, the demons of Khentós are very traditional for fantasy monsters: beings of pure evil (for all intents and purposes) with no desires or morality beyond destruction and slaughter. Despite this, their origin is unique, being born as a product of human activity. Metaphorically, they can be seen as a tangible manifestation of humanity’s pride and avarice; they can at best be stalled by the actions of individuals, but the root cause must be eliminated to truly overcome them, lest humanity crumble under the weight of their transgressions.

Genre Tropes Avoided

Science is Bad

Although technology and magic are the technical cause of the existential threat in Khentós, they are far from the true root of the problem, and neither is progress as a whole. Advancements in technology have vastly improved the lives of countless people across Khentós; rather, it is greed, overconsumption, and a lack of care for the future that has put Khentós on its path.

Common Tongue

Fantasy often assumes that all people somehow speak a single ‘common’ language, neglecting the role language plays in history and cultural identity. A large and diverse continent such as Khentós necessitates linguistic diversity, lest each culture appear simply as a different flavor of the others. Consequently, each culture and region of Khentós has a distinct-sounding (and, even when romanized, distinct-looking) language.

Fantasy Races

Despite its common fantasy flavor, Khentós lacks any of the common humanoid races of fantasy—aside from humans, that is. Rather than relying on common racial stereotypes to differentiate them, the cultures of Khentós are defined wholly by their own unique ideals and customs.

MOOD

Stories set in Khentós should, most often, emphasize the drama of the personal and emotional ordeals faced by individuals (probably demon hunters) struggling through—and typically succeeding against—oppressive odds beyond themselves. Typically, then, the mood should neither feel like a low-stakes, fun adventure nor a grim and tragic journey.

Though the balance would vary depending on the characters and plot specifically focused on, moments of levity between friends and allies are as important as tense, life-or-death conflicts. Likewise, personal growth, camaraderie, and perseverance should be the primary keys to overcoming the harsh trials a hero must face.

While the tone emphasizes growth on a broad scale, the mood feels more personal, focusing on the effort and growth of individuals and small groups. A single tale may not singlehandedly solve the grand-scale crises facing Khentós, but each should feel like a tiny step towards that eventual end.

TONE

Tone-wise, the world is crafted to emphasize both the light and dark aspects of humanity, using both to promote a self-reflective but optimistic view towards people and progress. The fruits of progress are a blessing, yet the greed-fueled scramble to consume and profit endlessly from them on a systemic level exposes the flaws of humanity—manifested quite literally in Khentós in the form of demons. Likewise, the heroes who choose to fight against the demons—and, by extension, the sins of humanity—are meant to be indicative of a belief that, despite their endless flaws, humanity has the potential to grow and become better. The world will never be wholly good or bad, but people can always strive to make it *better*.

THEMES

Dual Nature of Humanity

Humanity may be greatly flawed, but it is not irredeemable. While corruption and greed underlie the core conflicts of the world, the continual striving of individuals to bring humanity down a better path is reflective of this duality.

Flawed People, Flawless Ideals

To the kinds of heroes that would likely appear in stories set in Khentós, selflessness, altruism, courage, and protecting the weak are the pinnacle of virtue. That is not to say any hero could

possibly tick all of these boxes flawlessly, but rather that grandiose, ‘perfect’ ideals are valuable goalposts to chase after, even if they can never be reached. Individuals will always be flawed, but that does not prevent them from growing as they endlessly seek their flawless ideals. Khentós aims to be a setting where that journey can be showcased.

Stronger Together

A person, even a hero, can only get so far alone, and without others to support them, they will inevitably falter. This theme is meant to be expressed on multiple scales: in an individual story, companionship can serve to push characters to grow and to support them when they inevitably struggle; on the world scale, the societal issues of Khentós can only be tackled by societal movements and collective action.

Avarice and Annihilation

Like the real world, the industrialization of Khentós came with amazing boons and crippling consequences that will remain for a very long time after the revolution ends. Progress itself is not demonized, but reckless overconsumption, worker exploitation, lack of foresight, and systemic corruption are. Left unchecked, greed is an existential killer—and this truth is baked deeply into the very concept of the world.



MAPS

WORLD OF TYASHÍR

Time Period: Late Industrial/Machine Age (Khentós); Enlightenment/Early Industrial (elsewhere)



Unlabeled Version



Sky

Tyashír has one sun and one moon, and it has day and year cycles aligning with Earth's. It is the second planet from its sun, and there are four other planets in the solar system. Though many constellations are observed by various cultures across the world, the observation of other planets is a more common astrological pastime.

Land & Water

People live on three primary continents: Khentós to the northeast, Namanose to the west, and Ölteff to the southeast. An additional uninhabited continent exists in the far south called Svátha, and another large landmass (yet undiscovered by the people of Khentós) exists in the far north. These two landmasses are too harsh to support permanent settlements, and contact has been limited to just expeditions. Several islands of various sizes also dot the oceans between the main continents.

The surface of the planet is approximately 70% water, and it is typically divided into three oceans: the Yanadé Ocean (to the west of Khentós and east of Namanose), the Gústith Ocean (east of Khentós and west of Namanose), and the Jemö Ocean (south of Khentós and north of Ölteff).

Weather

Areas away from the equator, such as the regions populated by the Byàvesh and Pktanni cultures in Khentós as well as the southern part of Namanose, experience four complete seasons. The savannah regions near the equator tend to experience two seasons, one hot and one dry. The far north and south of the planet, as well as the desert regions in the center, experience little seasonal variation. Temperatures tend to range between 0°C to 30°C for most of the year in the regions where most people live, but humans can be found living in extreme temperatures on both sides of the spectrum.

The small rainforest regions in Namanose and Khentós experience the most rainfall, followed by the coastal savannah regions during the wet season. The east edge of the Greenlands in Khentós also receives considerable precipitation due to the warm current brushing up against it.

Population

Khentós has a population of approximately 200 million, though it is rapidly growing. Due to minimal contact between continents, the people of Khentós do not have an estimate of the population of Namanose or Ölteff, though they expect the former likely has a similarly sized population.

In Khentós, about half of the total population lives in the Greenlands, the central region dominated by the Byàvesh culture. The population here is concentrated in the grassland and forest biomes where agriculture flourishes. The Northlands (belonging to the Duchies of Pktanni) have about a third of the total continental population at ~60 million, and a majority of that population lives within the bottommost strip of the region to avoid the frozen tundras of the far north. Finally, the



Zhǐròm population of the Drylands numbers approximately 36 million, and they are spread fairly evenly across the entire region. Due to the practice of magically creating permanent oases, the population density does not decrease in the desert areas (although people are heavily concentrated within major settlements there). In all regions, urban populations are rising and rural populations are falling as industrialization progresses.

Connectivity

Although most people live their whole lives in their birth nation, travel and trade from one end of Khentós to the other has occurred for centuries. Likewise, the invention of railways has made this travel extremely easy in the modern era.

Conversely, however, contact between continents has always been rare. While Khentós and Namanose have been in light contact for over a thousand years, a robust trade network has yet to be established across the Yanadé Ocean. The average person in Khentós is aware of the existence of Namanose and Ölteff, but they know very little about them or their people, and vice versa. Recent advancements in naval technology, however, have made global transportation on a wide scale a possibility.

Unusual Features

Human magic has historically shaped the planet in various ways. A prominent example is the artificial oases of Zhǐròm, or the great furnaces in Pktanni which manipulate the climate to be more livable. While insignificant on an individual level, wide application of certain magical practices like these can have (and have had) drastic impacts on the geography and climate of the planet.



BYÀVESH MAP



World Location

The Byàvesh people live in the Greenlands, the central region of the eastern continent of Khentós. The Greenlands stretch vertically from approximately 15°N to 45°N, and they extend from one coast to the other. The region is largely flat, but it rises drastically in elevation towards the north where it borders the Vodyáv mountains.

The two major rivers cutting through the region—the Lyephè River and Fyarùn River—were historically vital transport routes. Westward and eastward trade was historically slow, but with the introduction of a vast railway network, numerous trade routes have been established across the Greenlands. This technological evolution has mitigated many of the geographic barriers once hampering transportation across the region.

Types of Biomes

The biomes (major and minor) of the Greenlands are as follows: temperate forest, grasslands, boreal forest, tropical savannah, desert, and tropical rainforest.

Byàvesh Forests (Temperate Forest)

One of two major biomes in the Greenlands, the temperate forests can generally be divided into three chunks: one in the west, one in the east, and another in the center. A majority of the Byàvesh population lives in or near the temperate forest regions, and most major cities lie within them.

Byàvesh Plains (Grassland)

As the second major biome in the region, the Byàvesh Plains are fertile and vast, allowing for efficient agriculture. Likewise, the region experiences four complete seasons, allowing for significant agricultural variety. Most agriculture-based settlements are located in the grasslands, and they are especially concentrated to surround the forest biomes.

Vodyáv Forests (Boreal Forest)

A smaller taiga biome exists in the far north of the Greenlands at the base of the Vodyáv mountains. Agriculture is more difficult in this biome due to the lower temperatures, but it makes up for that with its logging industry.

Dry Plains (Tropical Savannah)

The south of the Greenlands is composed predominately of a tropical savannah biome. These lands are less fertile than the grassland plains to their north, so the overall population and settlement density are smaller here. Many settlements still thrive in this biome, however, especially on the coasts and near major rivers. The term ‘dry’ used in the name of this region refers to its comparatively weaker agricultural capabilities rather than actual precipitation (of which there is a lot on the eastern coast).

Jamòkh Desert (Desert)

A desert biome located in the south of the Greenlands. Unlike the Zhǐròm, who have adapted to thrive in deserts, the Byàvesh have not, and the dry, harsh Jamòkh Desert is practically uninhabited.

Zhǐròm Great Forest (Tropical Rainforest)

A small section of a rainforest extends into Byàvesh territory in the southeast of the Greenlands. Since the area is so small, few Byàvesh people live here. It receives a massive amount of rainfall every year.

Climate/Weather Patterns

The Greenlands have a largely temperate climate, and they experience four distinct seasons across the year. The western edge receives a considerable amount of precipitation, though a majority of the region receives at least mild rainfall across much of the year—the one notable exception being the Jamòkh Desert in the south. Temperatures and conditions become more severe closer to the north and south borders, but most of the region features a mild climate where a wide variety of crops and animals thrive.

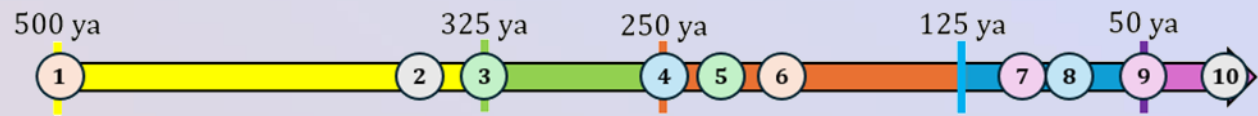
Physical Geography

The Vodyáv mountain range in the north is the only notable stretch of mountains in the Greenlands; however, they extend the entire width of the continent and serve as a natural border between Byàvesh and Pktanni. The three major rivers cutting through the Greenlands—the Ámin River in the west, Lyephè River in the center-west, and the Fyarùn River in the east—all originate from these mountains. The Lyephè River empties into the huge Fenlyarí Lake sitting on the border between Byàvesh and Zhǐròm territory.

The Byàvesh people have utilized the forests of Greenlands for centuries, both to harvest resources and for protection (as the flat, open grassland plains are naturally far less defensible). The complex political borders that divide up the many Byàvesh states are often marked by various physical features—from rivers to hills to random notable landmarks.



HISTORICAL TIMELINE - BYÀVESH



	Politics	Religion	Military	Economy	Environment
Early Monarchies Era <i>500–325 ya</i>		[1] (500 ya) Formation of the Churches			
					[2] (350 ya) Great Eastern Famine
Tholhyós Empire Era <i>325–250 ya</i>			[3] (325 ya) Tholhyós Conquests		
	[4] (250 ya) Collapse of the Empire				
Warring States Era <i>250–125 ya</i>			[5] (225 ya) War and Instability		
		[6] (200 ya) Expansion of the Tholhyós Church			
Reformation and Unity Era <i>125–50 ya</i>				[7] (100 ya) Stability and Trade	
	[8] (80 ya) Democratization				
Magical Revolution Era <i>50 ya+</i>				[9] (50 ya) Industrialization	
					[10] (15 ya) Demon Crisis



EARLY MONARCHIES ERA [500 – 325 YEARS AGO]

The Early Monarchies Era was a period of feudalistic rule characterized by several dozen independent states holding small-scale local power. Although the people of the Greenlands shared some traditions and values—such as an old ethnic religion and, to some degree, a single language—there was not a strong, unified cultural identity binding states together.

This era is considered to have begun 500 years ago with the organization of religion and the **formation of the churches (1)** which would go on to become the six major churches in later eras. These churches were originally formed as a result of the leaders of each minor kingdom adopting a primary deity to establish a sense of national identity. Over the centuries, these churches would evolve and merge to become the six recognized in the modern day.

Near the end of this era, approximately 350 years ago, an event known as the **Great Eastern Famine (2)** occurred as a result of an unprecedented drought in the eastern Greenlands. The drought heavily destabilized the region, and many states collapsed entirely. Only certain states situated in convenient locations—such as the city-state of Tholhyós nestled between two rivers—managed to persist through the famine intact.

THOLHYÓS EMPIRE ERA [325 – 250 YEARS AGO]

The destabilization caused by the Great Eastern Famine created the perfect opportunity for the Tholhyós Empire to form. As the drought receded and precipitation returned to its normal levels, much of the region was left defenseless as it slowly recovered from the aftermath of the famine. Exploiting this weakness, the **Tholhyós conquests (3)** began around 325 years ago. For the next 70 years, the empire continued to expand and conquer vast swathes of the Greenlands. At its height, it covered a majority of the area belonging to the modern-day Holy Alliance and Akyéviz Confederacy.

Due to a series of military blunders and a failure to prepare for the long-term governance of the empire, the **empire collapsed (4)** around 250 years ago. Once resources from the empire ran dry, the former military generals began to consolidate their power and hoard their supplies, fracturing the empire into several individual militarist states vying for power. Given many of the older kingdoms and royal lines in the east had been destroyed during the empire's expansion, these warlords sought to establish new 'royal' dynasties.

WARRING STATES ERA [250 – 125 YEARS AGO]

The Warring States Era is characterized by constant **war and instability (5)** in the east. From around 225 years ago until the beginning of the next era, the states arising from the corpse of the Tholhyós Empire fought one another for supremacy. This constant push-and-pull would significantly alter political borders every few years, and the lifespan of nations could typically be measured on the scale of years, not decades or centuries. After nearly a century of constant warfare,



the most powerful and well-managed states ended up coming out on top. Most of these became the countries that make up the eastern Greenlands in the modern day.

While the region was heavily politically and militaristically divided in this era, it also brought about an emerging sense of cultural unity through religion. Although the empire collapsed politically, the Tholhyós Church was largely unaffected; after all, the splinter states of the empire were still culturally tied to it. As the only remaining cross-state force wielding considerable influence, the **Tholhyós Church expanded (6)** further, even making use of the constant wartime conditions to convert desperate commoners in need of hope. Eventually, the Tholhyós Church became known as the Church of the Five Divinities, its name deriving from its doctrinal quirks. The church became crucial in forging a unified cultural identity amongst the people of the Greenlands who would eventually recognize themselves as a single culture—Byàvesh—despite their political divisions.

REFORMATION AND UNITY ERA [125 – 50 YEARS AGO]

As power concentrated in the hands of a just few kingdoms instead of dozens, stability returned to the eastern Greenlands. Around 100 years ago, an unprecedented period of **stability and trade (7)** hit the Greenlands. This exchange was not between just the eastern nations, either, as many east-west trade routes were established as well. Extensive cultural exchange occurred as a result of trade, and many western nations began adopting traditions and practices common in the east. It was during this period that the Byàvesh began to view themselves as such.

Influenced by major political upheavals in Pktanni, the states of Byàvesh experienced a period of **reformation and democratization (8)** around 80 years ago. In the early years, a few states with particularly oppressive governments experienced full revolutions; witnessing



this chaos, many other states began to gradually introduce democratic systems into their governments before anything like that would occur, hoping to safely remain in power. Several revolutions and reforms ultimately failed, but by the end of this era, around two-thirds of Byàvesh states had democratic or semi-democratic governments.

MAGICAL REVOLUTION ERA [50 YEARS AGO – CURRENT]

With the invention of the mana engine in Pktanni 50 years ago, all of Khentós experienced an **industrial revolution (9)**, with the Byàvesh feeling the effects the most. The Byàvesh pioneered the advancement of magical technology, and they quickly became the leading manufacturers and distributors on the continent. The early adoption of new modes of transport—primarily trains—only exacerbated their economic lead in this era.

While slowly brewing in the background since the start of the Magical Revolution, the emergence of a **demon crisis (10)** in Byàvesh became unmistakable around 15 years ago. As most states and industrialists refuse to curb their use of mana engines (or invest in more efficient methods of production), the problem has only gotten worse by the present day. As a natural consequence, demon-hunting organizations like the Knights of the Five Divinities are rising in power and influence across the continent as the services they offer become increasingly valuable.

CULTURES

BYÀVESH CULTURE

Biome: Greenlands (spread of temperate forest and grasslands)

Development Age: Machine Age

Society

Social Roles

In an era of change where any crackpot invention could be the next thing that will change the world, engineering is widely regarded as one of the most desirable jobs to hold as magical technology continues to grow and expand. While this lofty goal is held by many, most end up trapped in rote assembly-line manufacturing, a fact that is sparking unrest amongst the lower classes.

Mages have lost much of their social prestige throughout Byàvesh unless they have already pivoted to inventing, as many view magic specifically as a tool of engineering rather than a general, widely applicable skill. Mages who practice neither engineering nor demon hunting aren't necessarily looked down upon, but they are seen as oddities.

High-ranking members of the six Byàvesh churches—each dedicated to a separate deity of the shared Byàvesh pantheon—still hold significant social influence within their church's sphere of influence, especially in the east. As a result, these churches tend to be the most powerful non-government organizations in Byàvesh (barring the eastern theocracies, where they *are* the government).

While demon hunters in Byàvesh do not share the same borderline religious reverence that paladins do in the north, they are typically respected to some degree by most in Byàvesh. Dozens of separate groups of demon hunters exist across the Greenlands, most of which operate directly under a governmental or church authority.

Rule

The Greenlands are divided into a large number of small, independent states, which themselves can be grouped into three confederacies: the Tyída Confederacy in the west, the Akyéviz Confederacy in the south, and the Holy Alliance in the east. While each state governs itself, states allied under the same confederacy tend to be close allies, typically allowing free travel between their borders and arranging military actions as a group. Conflicts between the three confederacies are common, and, while less frequent, conflicts between members of a single confederacy are not unheard of.

Most Byàvesh state government structures fall into one of three categories. The first is absolute monarchies, as a small handful of states retain their old ruling families in the modern age. These states tend to have powerful aristocratic classes that are driving their industrialization.

Conversely, a majority of states have adopted a republic or parliamentary democracy by either deposing their historical ruling families or developing a democratic system beneath them. While the old aristocracy has lost most of its power in these states, a rising class of industrial entrepreneurs is quickly replacing them, and most of the democratic states are struggling to keep these individuals in check.

The third and least common system is theocratic rule, with a couple of states in the Holy Alliance being ruled entirely by their local church. These states tend to be very small and contained to a single city; however, they hold a huge amount of influence even outside of their borders, even to the point of swaying the actions of states in rival confederacies.

Family

While the Byàvesh used to highly value family lines among the upper class, much of that was rejected with the widespread collapse of the aristocracies in the past one to two centuries. While traditionally, multi-generation households were the norm, it is becoming increasingly common for young adults to leave their family homes and migrate to cities, shrinking household sizes considerably.

This has also led to consequences in how new families are formed. In the past, parents arranging their children's marriages and families was expected, but as young adults are beginning to live more independent lives from their parents, a new culture of courtship and pre-marital relationships is arising, though these practices are often looked down on by older generations and some churches.

Religion

The Byàvesh religion has a pantheon of five primary deities: Syèlyen, Prùch, Phamyò, Tsyéthon, and Rugeó. Additionally, one 'evil' deity, Dyìvish, is present in scripture and is not worshipped as a member of the core pantheon except in fringe sects. Each of the five deities has a major church dedicated to it, and an additional sixth church exists which worships all five roughly equally rather than prioritizing one. While most of these churches have one chief deity, they all still see the other deities as equally divine. That said, canonical beliefs vary by church, and significant differences exist between some.



While all six churches are technically of the same faith, the churches are as much political entities as religious ones, and as such they often are at odds with one another. Almost all Byàvesh states recognize one of the six churches as their official religion, and tolerance of the other churches can vary from reluctant acceptance to blatant persecution depending on how much power their official church has over the state government. The Church of the Five Divinities, the sixth church which

does not have a chief deity, has the strongest relationship with the other five and often acts as a mediator between them.

Economy & Currency

The Byàvesh use silver coins (much of which comes from the Northlands) as their primary currency, although paper cash has recently grown in popularity, evolving out of the frequent use of promissory notes at the start of the Magical Revolution.

Byàvesh states trade with both the Pktanni and Zhǐròm; however, most trade occurs between fellow Byàvesh states, especially those belonging to the same confederacy. In the states that have struggled to keep new industrialists in check, unregulated laissez-faire capitalism has dominated the economy.

Education

In unregulated economies, child labor is relatively common in urban areas, and these children typically receive no education. Most Byàvesh states, however, haven't reached this point, and the average child receives an education up until they are 15 or 16. Magic is not a regular skill taught to children in Byàvesh, and the practice is instead typically passed on via direct apprenticeship.

Resources

Food

The mild climate of the Greenlands allows for a wide variety of crops to be grown, such as grains like wheat and rice, a variety of vegetables, and all but the most tropical fruits. While the Byàvesh also raise plenty of livestock for food as well, meat is typically the side dish of meals rather than the main course. In coastal states, especially in the east, fishing reduces meat consumption even more.

Domesticated Animals

Pigs, sheep, and cattle are the most common livestock throughout the Greenlands, and horses, dogs, and cats are popular as pets (horses used to be used frequently for transportation, but vast railways across the continent have lessened the importance of their role).

Common Materials

Iron is extremely common across the Greenlands. Consequently, high-quality steel has been produced throughout Byàvesh states for centuries, and modern machinery can process iron even faster than before.

Wood is likewise plentiful and generally useful, to the point that deforestation is becoming a problem. While enough remains across the Greenlands that lumber has yet to become scarce, if deforestation rates are not decreased, the material could rapidly rise in rarity within a few decades.

Restricted Materials

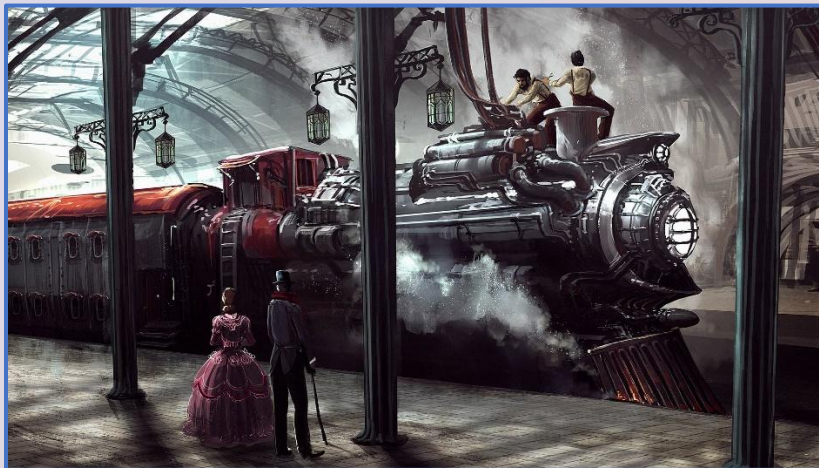
Expensive Metals such as gold and silver are not common in the Greenlands, which is exactly what gives them immense value. Lining objects and clothing with silver or gold is a sign of status and a common practice for the upper classes.

High-quality animal skins are hard to find outside of the Northlands, and they are valuable for use in armor (as lightweight, supplementary protection) and for clothing in the northern edge of the Greenlands, where temperatures are low in the winter. Most need to be imported from the Northlands.

Tools

Mana engines are easily the most important tool the Byàvesh possess in the modern era. Even more so than in the magic-loving Pktanni, mana engines are crucial to the Byàvesh, where individual spellcasters are rare and most magic comes in the form of technology. While mana engines were originally invented by the Pktanni, they have been heavily improved by the Byàvesh since the start of the Magical Revolution, and most mana engines now in use are imported from Byàvesh states.

The Byàvesh have further adopted advances in magical technology for military purposes. Medieval siege weapons like ballistas have been transformed into fierce, rapid-firing magical cannons, and every Byàvesh foot soldier is now equipped with a magical rifle capable of firing several shots per minute. Military weaponry is also employed against demons by some demon hunter groups, as the incessant use of mana engines in Byàvesh states has led to an unprecedented demon problem.



Finally, trains serve as the beating heart of modern Byàvesh civilization. Railways have been established all across Khentós, but the network present in the Greenlands is astounding. While there is no single intercontinental line, hundreds of small lines connect various cities and states to each other,

enough so that an individual could feasibly travel from any urban center in the continent to another within a few weeks at most.

Attitudes

Beliefs

Two core religious beliefs of the Byàvesh regard the beginning and the end of the world. Dyìvish, the creator of the earth and humanity, is actually viewed as the ‘evil’ god of the religion. According to tradition, Dyìvish grew bored of the paradise he shared with the other gods, and he created humans to be his playthings. By intentionally making humanity an imperfect imitation of the gods, he sought to torment them for his amusement. After discovering what Dyìvish had done, the other gods were furious and banished him, but they decided that annihilating the creation would be wrong. Instead, as the creation story goes, they chose to guide humanity through the hardships Dyìvish forced upon them, hoping that one day humans can cure their imperfections and join the gods in paradise as fellow perfect beings. Each church varies in its view of (or lack of belief in) an afterlife for all, although they all believe in the ultimate purification and ascension of the last humans.

Most Byàvesh are at least somewhat religious due to the influence of the churches throughout the culture. In less religiously dominated areas, however, it is common for individuals and local congregations to combine aspects of multiple doctrines into their faith rather than following just one. This practice is what birthed the Church of the Five Divinities, which is the most powerful church in the modern era.

Demons are considered by all but one church to be the spawn of Dyìvish, who, after being banished from paradise, supposedly still seeks to torment humanity by less direct means.

Cultural Values

On a large scale, nationalism is often ingrained into children from a young age. While the Byàvesh share a general cultural identity, loyalty to one’s state is a strong belief passed on through generations. With the introduction of railways, however, travel across the continent is easier than ever, and as many young people emigrate from their home state, nationalism is (slowly) weakening across the board.

On an individual level, the Byàvesh are suffering from something of an identity crisis. The old elite are being replaced by new oligarchs, and the everyday life of commoners has changed so drastically since the Magical Revolution that young people are living a life fundamentally different from any previous generations.

Conflict

States often war with one another, and it would be shocking to see a political map of the Greenlands look the same across a 50-year period. With the militarization of magical technology, tension between enemy states is higher than ever, and many fear the potential of a continent-wide war across the Greenlands. This militarization is also putting Pktanni and Zhǐròm on edge.

Beyond military conflict, the battle against demons is worst in the Greenlands due to the prevalence of magical technology. The threat has gotten so bad that many states rely on mana-expensive magical weaponry to fight off demons, which only exacerbates the problem. Devils—extremely rare and powerful demons with a high level of intelligence and the ability to command common demons—have appeared in unprecedented numbers recently, and this existential threat could ultimately prove far more significant than the squabbles between enemy states.

View of Science/Magic

The Byàvesh view magic positively; they do not religiously revere it, but their rapid adoption and expansion of magical technology is proof of their overall disposition. As Byàvesh religion outlines a vague, relatively undefined endpoint for civilization and humanity, most view advancements in science and magic as naturally coinciding with the march towards perfecting humanity.

The Byàvesh understand the connection between magic and demons, but they choose to advance technology anyway. Though they see demons as servants of Dyìvish, they also believe overcoming them is a requirement for their purification anyway, so magic accelerating their appearance isn't a problem. Many individuals naturally disagree with that sentiment, but the overall belief throughout society is that demons are an inevitable evil that must be overcome anyway, so progress should be embraced.

View of Others

The Byàvesh are more often pitted against each other than other cultures, so their view of the Pktanni and Zhǐròm is relatively positive. The more religiously fervent may see other cultures as heretics, but this sentiment is not shared by any of the six major churches, which instead view the 'false' religions of others to be incorrect but still suitable paths towards humanity's perfection.

Traditions

Each Byàvesh church practices biweekly services, of which every individual is expected to attend at least one. This practice is so common that even those with weak faith typically attend services for social reasons. Most worshippers also perform daily morning prayers to their chief god, and forgetting or skipping this prayer is considered extremely bad luck.

Cultural Artifacts

Architecture

While historically wood buildings were common, brick and concrete structures have begun to edge them out in frequency. Most major cities were originally built around castles and forts, and many of these huge structures still stand today (although few are still used as living spaces).

Fashion

Fashion has always been the most diverse in the Greenlands, as the mild climate and distinct seasons allowed for a wide variety of clothing styles to be viable.

Mass production of clothing has also become possible since the invention of the mana engine, and as a result, urban centers are flooded with constantly changing commercial styles. Finally becoming accessible to the lower classes of society, sophisticated fashion is becoming a popular way to outwardly present one's identity among the young.

Knowledge

Currently, technological prowess is Byàvesh's greatest strength. Great minds are rapidly advancing the capabilities of magical technology, and although general magic education is not widespread, magical engineering is one of the most highly valued skills in society.

The prevalence of magical technology has also resulted in a relatively high level of mastery of this technology amongst the public, despite the lack of magical knowledge. An everyday Byàvesh worker with zero spellcasting experience could likely diagnose and fix a problem with the mana engine powering their house's lights with ease, whereas an experienced Pktanni spellcaster might struggle with the same task.

Arts

Religious literature has historically been extremely popular, and in the times before widespread literacy, it was as common for a priest to read a fictional religious-themed novel to children as it was for them to read out canonical scripture. Since advancements in printing due to the Magical Revolution (and an overall huge increase in literacy in the past century), secular literature is also becoming very popular across Byàvesh.

Leisure

Locations for social leisure, such as taverns, theatres, restaurants, and even marketplaces, have grown in frequency in recent years, and leisure is often characterized less by the activity conducted than by the people it is done with. Especially as courtship practices resembling dating grow more common among young people, spending leisure time with friends or romantic partners rather than staying at home is becoming preferred. Older individuals may still prefer solo activities (such as reading, knitting, cooking, praying, etc.), but the shift towards social leisure has affected these age groups as well, just to a lesser extent.

Byàvesh Origin Myth

Byàvesh mythology begins with the deity Dyìvish creating the world, humanity, and suffering. According to tradition, Dyìvish grew bored of the paradise he shared with the other gods (Syèlyen, Prùch, Phamyò, Tsyéthon, and Rugeó), and he created humans to be his playthings. By intentionally



making humanity an imperfect imitation of the gods, he sought to torment them for his amusement. After discovering what Dyivish had done, the other gods were furious and banished him, but they decided that annihilating the creation would be wrong. Instead, as the creation story goes, they chose to guide humanity through the hardships Dyivish forced upon them, hoping that one day humans can cure their imperfections and join the gods in paradise as fellow perfect beings. Each Byàvesh church varies in their view of (or lack of belief in) an afterlife for all, although they all believe in the ultimate purification and ascension of the last humans. Human progress and advancement, then, is viewed by the Byàvesh as fulfilling a divine plan.



PKTANNI CULTURE

Biome: Northlands (majority boreal forest; tundra farther north)

Development Age: Late Industrial/Early Machine Age

Society

Social Roles

Individual use of magic is so common to the Pktanni that it is not the mark of a specific caste or profession; rather, magic is utilized often by all roles within society to some degree. The recent Magical Revolution of the past 50 years, which originated in the Northlands, has led to a rapid diversification of professions. Traditional agricultural and manual production jobs, which formerly dominated the lower classes, are shrinking rapidly as efficiency increases from technology. Inventors, scholars, and factory workers are the three roles inflating the most in recent years.

Unlike the Byàvesh and Zhǐròm peoples, Pktanni has a distinct and revered warrior class referred to as the ‘Paladins’, a social class made up entirely of demon hunters. Among them, there are ‘Guardians’—those who patrol settlements and defend them from demons—and ‘Sealers’—those who venture out to permanently close openings from the Underlands. Paladins belong to many different organizations and authorities, but regardless of their different origins, they are collectively regarded highly in Pktanni society.

Rule

Pktanni (officially, “The Unified Duchies of Pktanni”) only came out of its old feudalistic system around a century ago, and remnants of it still remain. The Northlands are divided into eight duchies which are each technically owned and governed by a hereditary line of dukes/duchesses, who themselves are subject to the authority of a single imperial family. In practice, however, these titles are purely ceremonial, and all eight territories actually answer to a national parliament of elected officials.

While their titles may be nothing more than just that, the aristocracy still holds immense influence on politics through wealth and ownership of industry, though the old nobles often find themselves at odds with ‘new money’ tycoons—entrepreneurs and businesspeople who have rapidly acquired wealth from industrialization. While not wholly corrupt, the Pktanni democracy is heavily undermined by the wealthy.



Family

Close family units are important to the relatively individualistic Pktanni, and especially as urban migration becomes more common, one's larger home community/clan is an increasingly diminishing aspect of an individual's identity.

It is typical for Pktanni parents to only have 2–3 children, as historical food scarcity due to the climate encouraged having fewer mouths to feed. Although these issues have greatly diminished in the industrial era, the tradition remains. Consequently, the Pktanni are seeing a much smaller population boom compared to the other cultures across Khentós.

Religion

The Pktanni religion is heavily centered around magic and demons. Even before the Magical Revolution, magic had been commonplace in Pktanni communities for centuries. While still not quite as common as it is now, even small villages usually had a local mage family or two that lent their services to fellow villagers. Consequently, demons have always been a common threat to the Pktanni, and the correlation between magic and demons has been understood for centuries.

Mirroring this relationship, the Pktanni have a dualistic faith of two deities: Tsau, the god of good, and Mmanbguu, the god of evil. Positive mana is, in traditional faith, considered the literal blood of Tsau, and negative mana is conversely the blood of Mmanbgu. The use of magic, then, is seen as a holy act, as is the destruction of demons.

Economy & Currency

The Pktanni have used silver to mint their coins for hundreds of years, as it is abundant in the Northlands. While for most of history, the average commoner dealt infrequently with national coins—instead preferring to trade goods or use local currencies—use of the official currency became very common throughout all levels of society following the Magical Revolution.

The Pktanni have solid trade relations with the Byàvesh to the south. Especially with the establishment of railways connecting each Pktanni territory to the Greenlands, imports and exports from both sides have exploded.

Education

In all but the most rural regions of the Northlands, education up until a child becomes a teenager is mandatory, and those who can afford it (the upper and emerging middle classes) typically continue beyond that. Basic magic education and spellcasting ability are requirements for all children, and it is considered as important as literacy in schooling.

Resources

Food

Hardy, cold-weather crops are grown throughout Pktanni, such as barley, rye, root vegetables, etc. Hunting still plays a major role in the Pktanni food supply, as just livestock is typically not sufficient in years with poor crop yields. Moose, deer, rabbits, and pheasants are commonly hunted game animals.

Rather than serve the main and side dishes of a meal separately, traditional Pktanni recipes always involve combining all dishes and ingredients into one thing, and most families will end up having at least one odd hybrid recipe unique to them.

Domesticated Animals

Many animals native to the Greenlands were brought over to the Northlands by humans hundreds of years ago. Pigs, sheep, cattle, and horses are all common livestock, with the latter two serving important roles as draft and/or transport animals in addition to being used as meat. Rather than use hounds, the Pktanni prefer falconry to assist with hunting. Aside from hunting, this tradition has led birds to be by far the most common household pets.

Common Materials

Wood is extremely common and valuable to the Pktanni. With the use of magic, wood structures can be as sturdy and reliable as more expensive materials.

Animal products, such as furs, leather, and wool are plentiful, as they can be collected from both livestock and hunting.

Silver is also an extremely common metal in the Northlands. While less valuable to the Pktanni than iron due to its abundance, it is treasured highly throughout the rest of the continent, where it is rare. As such, silver was historically the most common material used by the Pktanni in trading, and it is the reason silver is the material used in currency.

Restricted Materials

Iron (and, by extension, steel), while not incredibly scarce, appears far less frequently throughout the Northlands compared to how widely useful it is. In fact, five of the eight great noble families of Pktanni can trace their riches to the iron trade, their families monopolizing the few major deposits that were found in the region. In the modern era, the importation of foreign steel from the south has lessened its rarity significantly, but weaker alloys are still often used in its place to save costs.

As the Pktanni are limited in the kinds of crops they can grow, fruits, vegetables, and grains outside of these limits are considered luxury goods. While formerly limited to the nobility who could afford the exorbitant costs, an increased rate of exports and improved methods of preservation have lowered prices drastically.

Tools

Perhaps the most significant invention in the history of Khentós, mana engines—which were first created in Pktanni—were the spark of the Magical Revolution. These devices are the first and only known way to produce mana without a human manually doing so, and they serve as the power source of all industrial technology. While they ultimately fell behind Byàvesh in terms of industrialization, the Pktanni still make extensive use of mana engines in everyday life.

Likewise, great furnaces are a revolutionary modern invention which have fundamentally changed Pktanni society. These large devices, powered by mana engines, are capable of producing and dispersing an immense amount of heat across a fixed distance. In practice, great furnaces serve as village-wide heaters that protect individuals, livestock, and crops from the worst of the Northland's climate. In just two decades, great furnaces have spared thousands of human and livestock lives from harsh winters, and they have increased crop yields considerably by making conditions more hospitable. All except the most remote villages have installed a great furnace of some kind, and large cities can host as many as a dozen.

Attitudes

Beliefs

While their faith is over a thousand years old and has extensive scripture and history, the average modern Pktanni no longer practices the orthodox faith, and only about a quarter of the population properly worship Tsau as a deity. However, most remain generally spiritual, still viewing positive mana as a holy substance even if they do not believe it to be the essence of a god. Most Pktanni holidays have religious origins, and they are widely celebrated regardless of how orthodox one's faith is.

Additionally, since anti-mana and demons are considered a literal manifestation of evil in the Pktanni faith (orthodox or not), paladins are sometimes viewed as something of a priest class, and great paladins are revered like saints long after their deaths.

Cultural Values

The Pktanni value individualism, even in their long feudalistic era. Possessing exceptional talent and ability was often the only means of upward mobility in society, and it wouldn't be uncommon for a commoner to be allowed to marry into a noble family for possessing extraordinary aptitude.

Conflict

Pktanni has remained relatively peaceful since the last conflict between duchies concluded nearly two hundred years ago, though this is more due to a focus on a defensive military rather than a pacifist ideology.

Unlike how they've been operating militaristically, physical conflict is not shunned in general society. Paladins are revered warriors, naturally, but even physical conflict between two humans is not necessarily looked down on. Reflecting on its promotion of individualism, duels, while growing less common over time, are a frequent means of resolving strong disagreements, though traditional Pktanni duels are not to the death.

View of Science/Magic

Magic is considered holy in Pktanni culture, even knowing the consequences. The massive increase in demons since the Magical Revolution and the spread of mana engines has soured many on the idea of widespread magic use in technology, but very few disprove of small-scale spellcasting conducted by humans. Plus, with the invention of great furnaces, most settlements in the Northlands have grown completely reliant on magical technology to sustain their livelihoods.

View of Others

The Pktanni have a generally neutral view of the other cultures of Khentós, though many are growing increasingly skeptical of the Byàvesh's rapid militarization of magic technology. Still, trade relations with them are strong, and the Pktanni and Byàvesh have not fought a large war against each other in centuries. Migration into the Northlands isn't particularly common given the harsh conditions, but the Pktanni are generally accepting of others into their culture as long as they abide by their customs and traditions (for example, all immigrants are required to undergo a reanointment when they become legal citizens of any Pktanni territory).

Traditions

An extremely important tradition within Pktanni culture is 'reanointment', or the formal process of renaming oneself. Children are given a name by their parents at birth, but at the age of 10, the child is required to choose a new name for themselves. These names are meant to reflect who they are as a person, something that only they can declare for themselves. At any point in time after this, a person can choose to reanoint themselves again, and the average person typically does so 2 or 3 times throughout their life.

Also complementing their individualism, the Pktanni love to hold large-scale competitions and tournaments of all sorts, encompassing everything from academics to combat to sports.

Cultural Artifacts

Architecture

Most buildings are still made of wood, though they are almost always supplemented with magic when constructed to increase their lasting power and insulation from the cold.

Great furnaces, now a staple piece of architecture in nearly all settlements, are typically tower-like buildings constructed of a black, stone-like mixture akin to concrete. This 'tower' is covered in small

openings which heat escapes from. The inside contains a complex system of mana engines and magical formulae that produce the controlled heating effect.



Fashion

Due to cold conditions, traditional Pktanni clothing is heavy and warm, usually made of wool and animal furs that prioritize function over fashion. However, with the invention of great furnaces, taste in clothing is slowly shifting; clothing styles from the Byàvesh, and occasionally Zhǐròm, are growing in popularity, especially among young people. While historically, it would be far too cold to wear loose clothing or anything exposing much skin, great furnaces make these kinds of impractical ‘foreign’ styles a possibility, at least while within the confines of a settlement.

Knowledge

In terms of general magical knowledge, the Pktanni are unmatched. While their expertise with mana engines and developing magic technology has fallen behind the Byàvesh, Pktanni is still *the* place to research magic, and aspiring mages from all across Khentós will travel to Pktanni’s prestigious magic universities to study the craft. Likewise, they are also the best at applying their magical knowledge to practical effect; for example, methods of using magic to help stave off the cold and diseases from farms have been used for centuries.

Arts

Pktanni art often highlights great individuals and their great deeds. Most often, this means paladins, but exceptional individuals of all kinds have art made about them. Traditionally, the Pktanni were known for their exceptional statues and tapestries, but the demand and production of literature and plays have grown in recent years.

Leisure

Competitions are extremely popular, not just for the best of the best, but also between amateurs, and this applies to all levels of society. Likewise, watching or judging competitions is a common social pastime. A local group of writers, for example, may organize an annual writing contest between members; meanwhile, a group of teens aspiring to be paladins may hold a small dueling tournament between them. In both cases, these rather small-scale, informal competitions will often draw many local spectators, either because they’re interested in the subject of competition, know the competitors, or simply because their friends want to spectate, and doing so is a common social activity.

ZHĪRÒM CULTURE

Biome: Drylands (mostly savannah, some patches of desert inland)

Development Age: Industrial Age (urban) / Middle to Enlightenment Age (rural)

Society

Social Roles

Zhĭròm society is divided into a strict meritocratic class system based on one's profession. Practically all jobs in society are sorted into a hierarchy determining how 'valuable' they are. Rather than inheriting a family profession or deciding for oneself, Zhĭròm employs an ancient, complex process of tests and evaluations—called the Yéingho system—to sort children into the professions best suited to them, and they then undergo training to fulfill that role.

This societal structure is not so strict as to disallow a person from pursuing a path 'unsuited' for them, but given the deep cultural roots of this system, a person will struggle greatly in a role that they were not selected for, as they must compete with others who have received specialized training since childhood to excel at it.

Rule

The Kingdom of Zhĭròm has, despite the name, not been ruled by a hereditary monarch for hundreds of years. Instead, when a monarch dies or abdicates, a new monarch is selected via the same meritocratic Yéingho system as the rest of society, wherein the most apt politicians are assessed to find the best candidate.

While Zhĭròm certainly employs a meritocratic system across society as a whole, it would be more accurate to describe the overarching government as closer to a gerontocracy; politicians serve for life, and those in power have the means of adjusting the Yéingho system as they see fit, allowing them to manipulate the types of people who will become the next generation of politicians.

Family

Traditional family units do not really exist in Zhĭròm culture. While parents are expected to raise their children for the first few years of their lives, once they are old enough to be assessed and sorted into a path at the age of 5 or 6, they typically must migrate from their hometown to somewhere serving the specialized education they were assigned. From that point forward, a child's instructors are in charge of raising them. As a result, most parents choose to have children due to economic incentives offered by the government rather than a desire for family.

Most children never reunite with their birth parents after reaching adulthood, as the concept of parent-child bonds hardly exists. However, many children develop comparable relationships with their professional instructors, given they spend a longer period of their life in required schooling than they do with their birth parents.

Most adults are relatively socially isolated to just within their profession, so a majority marry fellow colleagues. While parent-child relationships differ heavily, spousal relationships in Zhǐròm are comparable to those from the other cultures across Khentós, although, unlike in Pktanni and Byàvesh, plural marriage is an accepted practice in Zhǐròm.

Religion

Rather than follow strict doctrine or scripture, Zhǐròm religion centers around philosophical ideals rather than specific deities or worship practices. Destiny and determinism are crucial parts of Zhǐròm belief, a reflection of the Yéingho system which has existed in various forms for well over a millennium. Rather than believing in a lack of free will, the Zhǐròm believe that people *can* willingly (and easily) deviate from their destined path, but that doing so is sinful and throws reality off balance, pushing others to deviate from their paths as well. While suffocating to some, many find fulfillment in the belief that, by following the mundane role they are destined to fill, they contribute to the balance of the world.

Economy & Currency

Traditionally, workers were paid with food, water, and other necessities via a carefully structured system of production and distribution, with coinage restricted to only certain contexts. However, with the introduction of industrial technology (especially in transportation), cultural influence from Byàvesh has led to the general adoption of currency by common workers.

The carefully maintained systems within Zhǐròm society meant that, historically, importing foreign goods was unnecessary, but since the Magical Revolution, the demand for mass-produced goods from Byàvesh has exploded, threatening to topple the economic structure of the country.

Education

Education is a government-mandated practice, as it is a core aspect of the Yéingho system. While most children will receive basic general education (such as how to read, write, and do arithmetic), most education is centered around training them to excel at their assigned profession. Schooling usually lasts from the ages of 6 to 16 (sometimes longer for worse-performing students), and the completion of schooling (and thus entering the workforce) is used as the legal definition of adulthood in the country.

Resources

Food

Corn, wheat, and tropical fruits such as dates, citrus fruits, and figs are grown in large numbers around the countless oases in Zhǐròm, and these crops serve as people's primary food source. Meat from cattle and goats is also consumed, but the primary product sought from these farm animals is milk rather than meat. Foraging from plants is also common, though this is not viable in the desert parts of the Drylands.

Domesticated Animals

Goats, cattle, horses, and camels are the most important domesticated animals to the Zhǐròm. In the savannah regions, horses are preferred to camels for transportation, and vice-versa in the desert regions. Cats are popular pets, but dogs are very rare.

Common Materials

The only place in Khentós where tropical crops (especially tropical fruits) can be grown is Zhǐròm, and while they are simply a staple food for the masses domestically, they can be quite valuable when sold in foreign markets.

Contrary to what one might expect from an arid savannah and desert region, water is actually plentiful in the Drylands, at least when close to settlements. Effectively every settlement in the region is built around an oasis (most of which were artificially created with magic), so water for drinking and irrigation is easily available where people actually live.

Restricted Materials

While trees dot the vast savannah areas of the Drylands, their density is far too small to be a reliable material. Without wood, many basic tools must be made of metal instead, which has historically led to countless shortages over the years.

Additionally, gemstones, which have common application in spellcasting, are rare in Zhǐròm. While magic use is also far less common in the country, it still means they must rely on imports to continue constructing oases.

Tools

A key magical tool of the modern age is the 'lifebreather', an implement powered by mana engines that is capable of replicating the once expensive and time-consuming manual process of artificial oasis formation. While many condemn the use of such a mana-expensive tool (and for challenging the status quo), it has allowed unprecedented expansion in the past decade.

Mundane weaponry is also commonly used in Zhǐròm. Unlike in Pktanni and Byàvesh, where magical weaponry or magically trained warriors are used in the fight against demons, the Zhǐròm try to avoid the use of magic against demons to prevent the feedback loop the other nations are facing. This means warriors are expected to rely entirely upon regular weapons to fight back, and smithing strong weapons is thus an important task.

Attitudes

Beliefs

The concept of a destined path is important to the Zhǐròm, and while this fact is certainly abused by some in power to perpetuate an unfair, corrupt system, that does not lessen the importance of this idea to individuals. In the Zhǐròm belief system, a morally good choice is not determined by a deity

or even a set of values; moral good is defined wholly as following one's predetermined destiny. Paradoxically, of course, no one can actually *know* what their destiny is, but cultural practices like the Yéingho system are meant to guide individuals to understand what their destined path might be.

Cultural Values

Due to its strict societal structure and belief systems, Zhǐròm culture is significantly more collectivist in nature than the other cultures of Khentós, which tend towards individualism. People have a role to fill in society, and failure to do that role can disrupt the entire system. Increased contact with and influence from Byàvesh, however, is beginning to uproot this traditional structure, as seeing alternative ways of life is causing some to view their society's structure as suffocating in comparison.

Conflict

Violent conflict is less common in Zhǐròm, and the country is relatively pacifist in this regard. However, the elite of Zhǐròm hold immense power, and they will not hesitate to utilize violence to quell disruptions to the system. The invention of lifebreathers in particular has raised tensions significantly, as the rulers of society now have less control over the careful development and management of new settlements.

View of Science/Magic

Magic has a complicated history in Zhǐròm. Mages were once respected in ancient times, and much of Zhǐròm society was built by the great water mages who first began the practice of creating artificial oases to sustain life.

As the connection between demons and magic became widespread knowledge a couple of centuries ago, however, mages became heavily persecuted, and their once high position in the Yéingho caste system fell drastically. Skilled water mages were still required to construct new settlements, but aside from this one niche, alterations made to the Yéingho system stopped producing mages of any other variety.

With the Magical Revolution, things quickly took a turn again. While mages themselves still faced persecution, large Zhǐròm cities quickly adopted mana-powered technology so as not to fall behind the other nations of Khentós. While those living in cities have largely embraced magic, those in rural settlements often fear and revile it, as they are suffering the brunt of the consequences.

The decline in magic use for such a long time has led Zhǐròm to be unprepared for the significant rise in demons due to the use of mana engines, and no formal system exists to combat them in rural areas. Instead, ordinary people are usually forced to take up arms to defend their homes, a practice which often has deadly consequences.

View of Others

The Zhǐròm typically view themselves as more advanced than the cultures of Pktanni and Byàvesh, as they consider their complex, strict societal structure to be an evolution of the more fluid structures the others possess. Likewise, their religions, which feature deities, monsters, and complex doctrine, are often seen as more primitive than the philosophically driven religion of Zhǐròm.

Increased contact with Byàvesh since the Magical Revolution has affected this traditional view, however, as actual exposure to foreign cultures is causing many to rethink the nationalist ideology they were taught as children.

Traditions

Because family lineage does not play a role in Zhǐròm society, family names do not exist. Instead, people are typically given one or more titles which are used to differentiate them from others. Short phrases are preferred over single words, and in formal contexts, referring to someone by a title is preferred to using their name. This gives a distinctive speech pattern to the Zhǐròm which is often preserved even when they speak in other tongues.

Cultural Artifacts

Architecture

Without access to wood, structures in Zhǐròm are built with bricks of sandstone and clay. While sturdy, they naturally trap heat very well; consequently, these structures are typically full of vent-like holes to allow for heat to escape during the hot season. At the same time, these vents are designed to be easily and effectively plugged up during the wet season in the savannahs.



Fashion

Due to the generally high heat and less access to materials for making clothes, Zhǐròm clothing is typically light, loose, and minimal. Among the upper castes, more elaborate robes are common, but most people wear simple two-piece garments. Due to the alternation between wet and dry seasons in the savannahs, many people possess better protective clothing for going out in storms, but since temperatures are still hot even during the rainy season, most prefer to simply avoid going outside than to wear heavier clothing.

Knowledge

The Zhǐròm possess a vast amount of knowledge in a vast number of subjects and professions, but individuals tend to only ever possess a very narrow fraction of that. Likewise, the Yéingho system often stagnates scientific and technological research, which can put the Zhǐròm behind the rest of Khentós when it comes to major advancements.

Arts

Artists fit in among the lower castes of society due to their role often being viewed as non-essential. To fill this void, art tends to be more common as a hobby rather than a profession. Poetry is extremely popular, and non-poetic literature was practically nonexistent in the country until imports from Byàvesh introduced it. Poetry recitation is just as popular as poetry writing, and many practice only the former. Likewise, music is popular, with most people learning to either play an instrument or sing (as musicians are not a profession bound by the Yéingho system, anyone can do it freely).

Leisure

Exploration of the arts, primarily poetry and music, is the most common leisure activity conducted by the average citizen of Zhǐròm. Socializing across professions is not very common, so most only socialize and share art amongst work colleagues.

CULTURAL INTERACTION MATRIX

	Pktanni	Byàvesh	Zhìròm
Pktanni view of...	We are unrivaled when it comes to knowledge—and we shall always be the spark that pushes the world forward. Our people are the best across Khentós: resilient, intelligent, and self-determined.	While they often behave as overly fanatical zealots, the Byàvesh are generally good folk, and their technology—while derivative of ours— is praiseworthy. Their inclination for warfare, however, means you can never fully trust them.	A wicked society more akin to a prison than a nation. To have one's destiny stolen by the elite is the cruelest fate imaginable. Its people can be redeemed, but Khentós would be better off without the tyranny of that kingdom.
Byàvesh view of...	Though their faith is corrupted, the Pktanni walk a righteous path. Their tenacity and cleverness are not to be underestimated, for our own sake.	We have the most advanced civilization in the history of Khentós, and we shall be the ones to lead the world into the next age and, eventually, paradise. Our sole weakness is our division.	Godless folk, with a somewhat oppressive society. If nothing else, their unity is admirable; the states of Byàvesh could learn a thing or two from them.
Zhìròm view of...	An archaic society practically run by anarchists. Their blind reverence of magic could very well be the death of Khentós itself.	A primitive, war-obsessed culture that cannot even keep itself in one piece. When they're not stabbing one another, they're preaching spiritual nonsense.	We have followed our destiny and forged a near-perfect society, overcoming our environment and eliminating disorder from within. When the other civilizations inevitably collapse, we shall establish true order across all of Khentós.



THOLHYÓS CULTURE [FALLEN]

Biome: Predominately the Greenlands (spread of temperate forest and grasslands)

Development Age: Imperial Age. The Tholhyós Empire is something of a precursor to Byàvesh culture, emerging before the people of the Greenlands considered themselves to have a united cultural identity.

Society

Social Roles

The Tholhyós Empire was primarily driven by two things: conquest and religion. Consequently, its most prominent societal roles are related to these two motives.

The military was the most notable fixture of Tholhyós society, with a massive portion of the male population serving for at least a few years at the empire's height. While Tholhyós society was relatively patriarchal, women also often served in the military, just in smaller numbers than men. Soldiers who participated in conquests were awarded land in the newly acquired areas (as settling down as landowners was the end goal for most), making war the easiest path for social mobility.

The other path was via religion, as the city of Tholhyós' native church—which later became the Church of the Five Divinities—possessed the most power within the empire after the high-ranking militarists.

Conquered peoples often had their land stripped from them and were typically treated as lower-class citizens unless they joined the Church or military. This further funneled individuals into one of these two paths.

Rule

The empire, originating from the city-state of Tholhyós in the eastern Greenlands, was ruled by the Tholhyós royal family. Given the militaristic nature of the empire, the royal line consisted largely of skilled military generals who directly led the empire's conquests across the Greenlands. Directly beneath the emperor were high-ranking military generals. After conquering a new region, these generals were awarded the right to govern it as they saw fit.

After expanding beyond its city-state, the empire only ruled for a short period of ~75 years, but it expanded rapidly during that time under the rule of the four 'Great Emperors' of the royal line. The fifth emperor—dubbed 'Ígyov the Fool' after his reign—was more passive and less militaristically inclined, resulting in infighting amongst high-ranking generals and the eventual fracturing of the empire into many small states, each claimed by rival warlords who formerly served the empire.



Family

Family was framed as something that had to be ‘earned’ in Tholhyós society, a result of military propaganda that encouraged young people to participate in the expansion of the empire. In return, they would be given the land and status necessary to start a respectable family. Likewise, even those who did not join the military themselves were encouraged to marry into the families of those who did; otherwise, they had no means of escaping poverty as serfs under local lords. This cycle produced a unique situation where, in general, each generation would move to an area further out from the previous generation instead of remaining in one location over several generations. Even after the collapse of the empire and the end of this spread, it established the idea of single-generation households being standard in the later Byàvesh culture that developed out of Tholhyós culture.

Religion

The Tholhyós religion is very similar to modern Byàvesh religion, albeit with far less standardization. The main doctrinal principles of the Church of the Five Divinities that differentiate it from the other churches were developed during the imperial period, however, as the original Tholhyós church was quick to adapt itself to fit better into newly conquered areas. This adaptability led to it being widely adopted (and preserved after the collapse) across the empire.

Economy & Currency

The economy was perhaps the weakest link of the Tholhyós empire. As long as it could continually expand, it could acquire new resources to fuel itself, but its intense focus on expansion came at the expense of establishing industry and well-maintained supply chains. Once conquest stalled—

namely when the fifth emperor attempted a failed invasion of the Pktanni to the north—resources quickly drained, and generals could no longer properly feed or equip their armies. The halting of expansion quickly led to the collapse of the empire, as each general began to hoard their resources and lands from each other. The empire never developed a centralized currency, and trade was conducted either using local currencies or through barter.

Education

Education in the Tholhyós Empire was inconsistent. The militaristic side of the culture typically didn't care about education beyond training soldiers in combat ability, but the religious side heavily promoted general education and literacy. Depending on which of these two forces was dominant in a person's hometown was the biggest determiner of how much education they received.

Cultural Artifacts

Architecture

Although wooden structures were the most common—given the abundance of timber in the Greenlands and the need for quick, simple constructions on a rapidly advancing military front—brick and stone-based structures were still common closer to the heart of the empire, especially in the city of Tholhyós itself. This studier construction style slowly expanded outwards a few years behind military expansion as former soldiers settled down and built permanent structures. Although the adoption of non-wood-based structures declined after the empire's collapse, the practice rose to prominence again a few hundred years later in the modern era.

Fashion

Wool was the primary material used in clothing, often supplemented by animal furs for warmth. Given the seasonal variation of the Greenlands, it was common for people to wear seasonal clothing—namely looser garments in the summer and thicker garments (often made with water-resistant furs) in the cold, wet winter.

The upper classes—especially in the religious sector—tended to wear more lavish clothing, especially robes and coats dyed expensive colors like red and purple. The clothing of the lower classes, conversely, emphasized function over form.

Knowledge

Unlike in the modern day, magical knowledge was meager in the Tholhyós Empire. Mages existed, but they were rare and secretive, only passing on their knowledge to a select few disciples.

In the time before advanced military technology, battles were won by strategy, numbers, and experience. Consequently, the imperial armies were known for these three things. Despite recruiting heavily from the untrained masses, the perpetually-at-war empire had no lack of highly experienced warriors available to train recruits. Great generals had a wealth of knowledge to pass

down to budding tacticians, and talented fighters had a wealth of experience to pass down to new recruits. The art of warfare was honed and perfected throughout the three to four generations the Tholhyós Empire flourished.

Arts

Although the empire is most remembered for war, art flourished in the religious sector. As remains true in modern-day Byàvesh, writings were the most popular form of art produced, though as literacy rates were comparatively low in this era, public readings of literature were a frequent occurrence. Epic poems centering on mythical heroes were especially common, and it was during the time of the empire that many ancient oral tales were recorded in writing.

Leisure

As the expansion of the empire coincided with the birth of countless new communities springing up across the Greenlands, leisure activities were often developed communally and without a strong tie to past traditions. The average village, for example, typically had festivals and holidays drastically different from anywhere else, as they had been recently developed and were unique to the local micro-culture that appeared there. Individuals—not civilization on a broad scale—had the biggest influence on what a community did for leisure.



FACTIONS

FACTION: CHURCH OF THE FIVE DIVINITIES

Culture: Byàvesh (Dominant)

Power Base: Primarily a religious authority, it also directly governs the eastern theocratic city-state of Tholhyós and exerts heavy influence across all the states of the Holy Alliance. In other Byàvesh states recognizing it as their official church (a decent chunk of the Akyéviz Confederacy), they possess minor to moderate political influence. Some of its autonomous sub-groups, such as the Knights of the Five Divinities, operate across the entire continent.

Size: ~35 million members including adherents (around a third of the Byàvesh population of ~100 million); ~1 million directly working for the church

Background

The Church of the Five Divinities, despite being the youngest of the six major churches branching out of the ancient Byàvesh religion, is the largest and most powerful. Originally borne out of the syncretism of the other churches, its acceptance of a wider variety of beliefs allowed it to gain prominence over the centuries.

It formally cemented itself as the largest church following the conquests of the Tholhyós Empire three hundred years ago, which recognized the young Church of the Five Divinities as its official religion. Though the rule of the empire was brief, it covered nearly half of the Greenlands at its height, and in that time the church had thoroughly planted its roots across the territory, surviving the empire's collapse.

Though it only officially controls the city of Tholhyós, the church has immense influence on the many states of Byàvesh which recognize it as their official church. Due to the high level of religiosity amongst the Byàvesh populace, this influence is largely cultural and indirect, though attempts at the direct manipulation of politics by high-ranking church officials are far from uncommon.

Organization

The Church of the Five Divinities features a complex hierarchical structure:

- **Holy Prophets:** The heads of the church are known as the Holy Prophets. There are always five Prophets, one for each of the five deities worshipped by the church. The words of the prophets are considered divinely inspired, and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that these five individuals are amongst the most powerful people on the entire continent. Prophets serve for life and always begin their role as children. It is believed that a new Prophet is born the moment an old one dies; thus, following the death of a Prophet, the High Prelates of the church, guided by the visions of the remaining Prophets, search for children fulfilling the correct conditions. After 'verifying' which of the candidates truly possesses a direct connection to one of the gods (according to them), the child is installed as a new Prophet.



- **High Prelates:** Being the highest rank in the church one can achieve without being divinely selected, the High Prelates manage the administrative affairs of the church. There are always exactly 60 High Prelates, split into 12 groups (each with a separate duty) consisting of 5 members each—though members can move to different groups by trading roles with others. When slots become vacated, the remaining High Prelates elect new members from amongst the Archpriests.
- **Prelates/Archpriests:** The archpriests, also known as prelates, are each assigned to manage a specific region and allocate resources to individual churches (the buildings, not the organization).
- **Priests:** A priest is the head of a local church, and they are typically in charge of leading services and managing all local church activities.
- **Clerics:** The lowest rank of clergy member. They include anyone who works for the church in any official capacity, whether they be a monk, nun, or simply an accountant managing the church's spending.

Societal Role

Religion is a major—and perhaps the biggest—cultural unifier to the Byàvesh. While they have been politically divided for centuries, a shared religion (even if they adhere to different branch churches) has always given a general sense of unity to the Byàvesh people. The Church of the Five Divinities in particular excels at this, boasting a wider reach than any of the other churches have ever managed in history. Religion plays such an important role throughout Byàvesh that separating ‘society’ from it is impossible; even those without personal religious faith cannot escape the cultural influence of the church.

Objectives

Philosophically, the church aims to realize the prophesized end goal of humanity as outlined in scripture—that is, the purification of their imperfections and their subsequent ascension to paradise. To this end, preaching to the faithful, proselytizing to potential converts, condemning sin, and praising virtue are pursued as paths towards paradise.

This view, however, neglects to recognize the Church of the Five Divinities as a political entity, which it most certainly is. The church is always seeking ways to expand its influence and control across the states of Byàvesh, and even Khentós as a whole. This is not wholly unrelated to their spiritual objectives (if they believe their faith to be wholly good and just, forcing the world to adhere could be considered righteous, after all), but many high-ranking members of the church are more interested in personal grabs for power than spreading their faith.

Worldview

The church views itself as the center of the world. From a spiritual perspective, this is a natural consequence of following the gods rather than a conceited claim to the world. Complementing this view, they see it as their duty to exert social and cultural control over the masses as a means of guiding common folk towards spiritual purity.

Despite all of this, the Church of the Five Divinities is relatively tolerant of other religious entities; they are on relatively amicable terms with the other Byàvesh churches (though they would still prefer if the competition didn't exist), and they view the dualistic religion of the Pktanni to be a doctrinally incorrect but functionally acceptable faith. This tolerance, ultimately, is one of the main reasons this church has managed to stay ahead of the other five.

Locations

Tholhyós Citadel

Description

The Tholhyós Citadel serves as the central seat of power for the Church of the Five Divinities. A gargantuan structure, its roles are numerous and varied. One section holds the lodgings of the most powerful members of the church, including the Prophets and High Prelates (although most of the latter choose to live in their personal estates most of the time); another section is a grand auditorium where the High Prelates meet to make decisions; another section, adjacent to the main building, is a grand, public cathedral where church services for Tholhyós citizens are held. Research facilities, barracks (for the personal guards of the church elite, as well as for sub-organizations such as the Knights of the Five Divinities), and more are also spread across the vast area.



Important Characters

The most important individuals at the Citadel are the five Holy Prophets: Myóstyos of Syèlyen, Khére of Prùch, Vedá of Phamyò, Jìnshu of Tsyéthon, and Thenyákh of Rugeó. As the mortal representatives of each of the five Byàvesh gods, they hold absolute power over the church (although given they are installed and largely raised by the High Prelates, the Prophets' absolute power is, at the very least, heavily influenced by them).

Physical Location

The Tholhyós Citadel sits in the very center of the Tholhyós city-state in the heart of the Holy Alliance. Originally a castle belonging to the Tholhyós royal family, the church inherited the structure and surrounding lands following the collapse of that empire.

Lokyèvyà

Description

A sacred ground in the Byàvesh faith said to be where the five gods forged their pact with humanity to undo the corruption of the evil deity Dyìvish. Likewise, it is a staple in Byàvesh mythology (and literary tradition as a whole) for heroes to receive great blessings at Lokyèvyà before facing their final trial.

Physically, Lokyèvyà is a large but rather inconspicuous clearing in the Thàsyi Forests of the eastern Greenlands—one which would be largely unremarkable if it weren't for its religious significance. While it is doubtful the area considered Lokyèvyà in the modern day is actually the same as it was in ancient times (given the location is inherently unassuming and plain), the church officially proclaims them to be one and the same.

While considered sacred to all six churches, it lies firmly within the territory of the Church of the Five Divinities. Pilgrimages to the holy site are common, and pilgrims from all churches are accepted (largely because the Five Divinities church profits significantly from masses of pilgrims visiting their territory). Additionally, new Holy Prophets must undergo a special ritual at Lokyèvyà to be formally admitted as a new head of the church.

Important Characters

None live at Lokyèvyà itself, though some minor clergy members live in nearby cabins to keep watch over the area and oversee pilgrims. One could technically consider the five High Prophets to be closely tied to Lokyèvyà given the ritual they must undergo there, but the Prophets typically do not visit the grounds directly more than once or twice in their lives.

Physical Location

Lokyèvyà is a large but rather inconspicuous clearing in the Thàsyi Forests of the eastern Greenlands, about an eight-day trip from Tholhyós by cart (the primary method pilgrims use). Plans have been considered to construct a railway connecting the city and the holy site; however, given the difficulty of clearing the dense forest and concerns over industrializing near a sacred ground, no such plans have been put into motion.

Údenyuf Cathedral

Description

The Údenyuf Cathedral is the largest Five Divinities Church on the west end of the Greenlands, where the Church of the Five Divinities is not dominant. Surrounded on one side by the Church of Tsyéthon and by the Church of Phamyò on the other, the cathedral serves as a key strategic location for the Church of the Five Divinities to extend their influence in a region where they are a minority power. The biweekly services held at the cathedral regularly draw thousands of attendants, as there are no other major Five Divinities churches in the region to split attendance. Given its location, the

cathedral is well-defended by a personal militia of highly trained warriors, and violent skirmishes between Údenyuf and nearby nations have historically occurred, albeit infrequently.

Important Characters

Unlike most individual churches of the religion which are run by priests, the Údenyuf Cathedral is run by an archpriest—Rahfyó Òphen. Without any competing individuals of his own church to contend with, Rahfyó holds virtually absolute power over the church in this region. Alongside him, the captain of Údenyuf's mini-army, Fyùr Tsash, singlehandedly commands nearly a hundred highly trained soldiers to defend the cathedral.

Physical Location

Údenyuf Cathedral is located in the western Greenlands at the heart of the Tyída Confederacy.



FACTION: THAUMATURGES GUILD

Culture: Pktanni (Dominant)

Power Base: Given the importance of magic and mages to Pktanni culture, the Thaumaturges Guild wields influence in politics, religion, industry/economy, and education

Size: ~1,250,000 (approximately 2% of the Pktanni population of ~60 million)

Background

The Thaumaturges Guild is a network of skilled mages that operates as a cross between an academic research collective and a traditional guild uniting the people of a shared profession. Specifically, the guild is centered on the art of magic done manually by humans (often called ‘spellcasting’) rather than on magical technology, though a significant overlap exists.

Entry into the guild requires passing an intensive exam, so formal membership is considered a great honor that carries significant social weight—in addition to granting someone access to the guild’s resources and vast network of connections. Despite membership being so difficult to acquire, its large membership numbers reflect just how valued magic is to the Pktanni.

Many non-Pktanni mages acquire membership as well, but outside of academia, the faction’s cultural influence is predominantly concentrated in just the Northlands.

Organization

The guild is relatively unstructured. The administrative roles that do exist are assigned based on seniority, but most matters are hashed out through public forums open to all members. Where hierarchical structures do exist, they are informal, such as a junior researcher deciding to join a project being run by a senior mage. In this scenario, the hierarchy is determined purely by mutual agreement rather than a strict set of rules outlined by the guild. Social standing, seniority, and connections take the place of any formal structure. A notable chunk of members do not even participate in guild matters, purely joining because of the social value of possessing membership.

Societal Role

The guild’s greatest boon is its social influence, as it is respected by the mages and non-mages of Pktanni alike. Though it is not a government entity, it can easily leverage its power to influence policy or convince the public to support or reject certain ideas. Its power in modern society is approximately equivalent to that of the old Pktanni aristocracy, though it comes in the form of social power rather than deriving from wealth or loyalty.

Additionally, it was a member of the Thaumaturges Guild that invented the mana engine and began the Magical Revolution, changing the course of Khentós’ history forever. While the guild itself does not focus on magical engineering, many of the great magical engineers of modern society are members regardless.

Objectives

The Thaumaturges Guild aims to advance the art of magic however possible, whether that comes in the form of conducting magical research, lobbying the government on behalf of mages (especially when it comes to promoting magical education), or generally using their magical prowess to benefit society as a whole. As the guild is relatively unstructured, the specific objectives of the guild at any given time depend on the whims of individual members.

Worldview

To generalize, the single guiding principle underlying every action of the guild and its members is that magic is the past, present, and future of Khentós—and pursuing its secrets is the purpose of humanity. Some of the Pktanni faith believe this for religious reasons, but many are driven by this ideal purely secularly. While the methods of pursuing this belief are highly varied, the shared pursuit of it is what unites people under the banner of the Thaumaturges Guild.

Locations

Thaumaturges Guild Hall

Description

The headquarters of the guild. The building is quite large, though it is typically only staffed by a dozen or so individuals at a time—that is until an important guild meeting is held, which can draw anywhere between a few hundred to a few thousand guild members at a time. In addition to administrative matters being decided here, the exams for entry are always held at the guild hall.

Important Characters

Although the guild does not have a complex administrative structure, administrative roles do exist and are typically filled by the seniormost members of the guild. The current guild master, Yurrtsi Chaa'i, has been serving in this role for over thirty years, and, consequently, his power in Pktanni society is roughly comparable to holding several seats in the national parliament. Alongside him, the guild treasurer, Duunaraa Hiu, and famed magical researcher Raimm Tkat are practically household names that operate within the guild hall on a daily basis.

Physical Location

The guild hall is located in the business district of the capital city of Pktanni, ligminn.

Tksaann University

Description

While not officially associated with the Thaumaturges Guild, the Tksaann University is *the* school that aspiring guild members—and mages in general—dream of attending. A very close informal connection exists between the guild and the university to the point that many confuse them for being one and the same. A vast majority of its instructors are guild members, and nearly all

graduating students seek to join as well (though since these two are separate institutions, students must still pass the guild's exams).

Important Characters

Dean Hsigg Bua—while being a high-profile member of the Thaumaturges Guild herself—also leads the university as a whole. As her vision for the university will heavily guide the next generation of mages entering the guild, she arguably has more influence over its future than the guild master does.

Physical Location

The university sits on the outskirts of the city of Tksaann (from which it derives its name). Tksaann is regarded widely across the continent as the 'city of magic', a title it gladly embraces. This reputation is influenced in no small part by the university itself.



Yidginn Research Facility

Description

Some of the most groundbreaking magical research is conducted at the Yidginn Research Facility (YRF), and it serves as a key meeting place for many mages to pitch research to find collaborators and funding. For example, it was at the YRF that Rarki Yudd researched and developed the magical formulae that now power mana engines, and it was only by making use of the vast network of minds and resources available at the facility that he was able to do so. The YRF has stood as the leading magical research facility in Pktanni for nearly 60 years.



Important Characters

Dozens of legendary mages have worked at the YRF over the decades, from Rarki Yudd (inventor of the mana engine), his successor Aarmis Tsuu who expanded on that research to develop the formulae powering great furnaces, and completely unrelated researchers such as Uinna Nni, who currently pioneers the research into wide-scale anti-demon magic.

Physical Location

The YRF sits a short distance away from the city of Tksaann where the small settlement of Yidginn used to be. It was originally founded there by a mage who grew up in Yidginn, but over many decades, its rapid expansion slowly drove away the villagers until none were left. Now, its only inhabitants are researchers living in temporary abodes.



FACTION: YÉINGHO ADHERENTS

Culture: Zhǐròm (Dominant)

Power Base: The Yéingho system is deeply ingrained within Zhǐròm culture and is further reinforced politically in a feedback loop

Size: ~25 million (approximately 70% of the Zhǐròm population of ~36 million)

Background

In the Zhǐròm language, 'Yéingho' means something akin to 'true path', a name reflective of its role in society. While the Yéingho system has existed in some form for centuries, it has varied wildly in its strictness and perceived authority depending on the era. Its modern incarnation is the strictest it's ever been, heavily restricting social mobility and isolating individuals to small, curated social circles of peers. Since the system itself is responsible for creating the politicians who then control it, it is highly unlikely things will change ever from the inside.

Children are taught to see the Yéingho system as an absolute, objective authority from birth. While many have dissenting thoughts, most repress or dismiss them to fit in. Most are raised to believe that 'belonging' within Zhǐròm culture requires faithfully adhering to the Yéingho system. Thus, Yéingho adherence is the dominant ideology in the culture, and it defines the lives of most citizens.

Organization

Yéingho defines a hierarchical system, although not necessarily in the sense of higher ranks controlling lower ranks; rather, people are ranked in a class system based on their assigned profession, with those deemed more 'valuable' to society being ranked higher. While the system does not cleanly define the tiers of this hierarchy, the general shape is as follows:

1. **Rulers:** The 'politicians' of Zhǐròm are its absolute rulers, as the Yéingho system governs society, and they govern the Yéingho system. They have a complete say in the valuations made for each profession, so by their whims, one's social standing could unexpectedly plummet (or rise) overnight.
2. **Educators:** Teachers play a critical role in keeping the Yéingho system functional, and they are consequently valued as such. Additionally, teachers are also in charge of raising children rather than parents, giving them a second essential role to fill.
3. **Academics:** Academia is highly valued in Zhǐròm; however, academics are highly specialized and isolated, meaning cross-discipline research is often poor or non-existent.
4. **Artisans:** Builders and crafters are essential in both urban and rural areas, and these professions are viewed as high-skill labor, hence their position.
5. **Agriculturalists:** Agriculture is also essential to keeping society stable, but this labor is considered lower skill than that of artisans, so they are viewed as a lower social class.
6. **Merchants:** As the rulers have primary control of the Zhǐròm economy, the most important role of merchants is to trade with other countries, which was not considered particularly essential for a long time. Since the Magical Revolution and the massive increase of valuable products produced by foreign nations, however, merchants are gradually being valued higher.

7. **Warriors:** While the Zhǐròm historically avoided war, fighters are still necessary to keep order within the nation and to enforce the will of the rulers. Despite this, being a warrior is considered an inglorious role, and many assigned to this profession are looked down on as brutes.
8. **Mages:** Mages were once revered, but they are shunned in the modern system. If it weren't for skilled water mages being crucial to creating new oases and settlements, mages likely would have been formally erased from the system entirely. Even post-Magical Revolution, their standing has not improved drastically, despite the gradual adoption of magical technology in urban centers.
9. **Artists:** While art was once cherished by the Zhǐròm, it is heavily condemned under the modern system, which sees it as purely nonessential (though in truth, the role of art was purposefully diminished by leaders in order to minimize its influence on public thought). Art still exists in society, but it lives through hobbyists rather than as a respected profession.

Societal Role

Though Yéingho certainly is *not* one and the same as Zhǐròm culture, most citizens are conditioned into believing this. As such, most see the system as the sole thing sustaining societal harmony, and adherence to it is essential to keep that harmony.

Objectives

For the elite, the main objective of the Yéingho system is simply to continue preserving itself. As long as the system holds, their power will hold. Furthermore, the more powerful the system is, the more power it has over the autonomy of commoners—and thus, the more powerful the elites are as individuals. Since the leaders of society are assigned to the role as young children, they are raised to be power-hungry and are given a skewed sense of personal importance, perpetuating the cycle.

For most of the Zhǐròm people, adhering to the system is done to preserve harmony in their lives and keep society out of chaos. Many see the complex politics and conflicts of Byàvesh and fear that a change to Zhǐròm's status quo will lead straight to that. Having known nothing else, such vast change is something to fear rather than embrace.

Worldview

At least to the elite, the Yéingho system is seen as an advanced form of human civilization, fundamentally superior to the less structured societies seen elsewhere in Khentós. Given how children are raised and indoctrinated, many commoners would agree with this view—though it does not describe *everyone's* perspective. Even many who willingly adhere to the system see it as no more advanced than any other societal structure, and increased contact with Byàvesh since the Magical Revolution is giving many a more cynical view of their strict society.

Locations

Jěngfé Council Building

Description

The Jěngfé Council Building is the seat of power in the Zhǐròm government. It is where the rulers of society gather to make policy decisions, and immediately outside of the building itself are where these decisions are decreed to the populace (events typically drawing massive crowds).

Important Characters

The most important individual at Jěngfé—and, consequently, in Zhǐròm politics—is the current Zhǐròm Queen (an appointed, non-hereditary role), Shìkǎ “Queen of Discipline and Order”/“Great Orator of Méizhóz” (Zhǐròm people carry unique titles in addition to their given name). She holds the most authority in the government, though many other politicians are not close behind.

Physical Location

The Council Building is located on the east end of Zhǐròm’s capital city of Krohǐr.

Kòrzem School of Mages

Description

The Kòrzem School of Mages is the only formal school of magic under Yéingho. They exclusively train water mages, and only for the specific purpose of oasis creation. Given the position of mages in society, however, the school almost acts as a containment zone for them, and almost all water mages are forced to live near the school even after completing their education (until they are dispatched to an uninhabited zone for a few months to create a new oasis). While the Yéingho system is strict to all, it places an especially careful watch over the small number of mages it produces.

Important Characters

The legendary water mage Lúnfén “Frozen Commander of Kòrzem”/“Blessed Apostate of Storms” is the head teacher of the school, in addition to being one of the most skilled and powerful mages of the current age. Although he has never shown any outright resistance to the Zhǐròm government, they greatly fear what he could be capable of if he turned against them, and they have developed over a dozen different assassination strategies just in case—something they have so far refrained from doing because of how valuable he is to them when obedient.

Physical Location

The Kòrzem School of Mages is located in the small town of Kòrzem in the southeast region of the Drylands. The school is the only notable institution in the town, and it is unknown whether the school’s name derives from the town’s or vice versa.

Pláizh

Description

Pláizh is a small settlement with a population comparable to a village but urban development comparable to a city. It plays a huge role in Zhǐròm society under Yéingho, being the highest traffic ‘sorting city’ in the entire Kingdom, with tens of thousands of children being brought over every year to have their abilities assessed and roles in society assigned.

Important Characters

While many government officials work in Pláizh on assessments and assigning, they are headed by two close aides of Queen Shikǎ: twins Gázh “Fate weaver of Her Majesty’s Kingdom” and Lǔsbel “Great Chief of Pláizh”. Given the rarity of any blood-related family staying together in Zhǐròm society, this pair of fraternal twins, united by pure chance, stands out significantly.

Physical Location

Pláizh is located near the center of the western half of the Drylands, and all people living to its west (and in the region surrounding it) are sent there to be given their Yéingho roles.



FACTION: SÈINGZHO APOSTATES

Culture: Zhǐròm (Opposition)

Power Base: Commoners dissatisfied with Zhǐròm society, though they hold no political or economic power and are heavily oppressed by the Zhǐròm government

Size: ~10 million (approximately 30% of the Zhǐròm population of ~36 million), though the number that would actively consider themselves such is significantly lower

Background

In the Zhǐròm language, 'Sèingzho' means something akin to 'corrupted path', and it is the term used to describe societal dissenters who do not embrace the 'true path' of Yéingho. This term is applied to anyone who deviates from the Yéingho system in any way, minor or major. As a result, there is a large grey area between Yéingho and Sèingzho consisting of individuals who technically defy Yéingho in small ways but do not recognize their rebellion as significant enough to be considered Sèingzho. If the elite were to learn of their actions, however, they would still be punished as followers of the Sèingzho ideology. The term 'Sèingzho Apostates' is used to refer to all such people ('apostates' here meaning apostates/opposers of Yéingho).

Most Sèingzho Apostates make only minor transgressions, like refusing their Yéingho assigned occupation or choosing to raise their children as a traditional family—as is done elsewhere in Khentós—instead of giving them away to be trained. These actions, while considered to be deviating from Yéingho, are not technically criminalized, but individuals will likely be publicly shunned for doing them. Other transgressions, however, are considered crimes, such as publicly speaking out against Yéingho or learning magic if your assigned occupation is not being a mage.

As such, being a Sèingzho Apostate is usually an affiliation others assign to you rather than something you choose for yourself, though plenty of individuals radically opposed to the Yéingho system willingly align themselves with this faction knowing the consequences. Whether their rebellion is tiny or massive, the will to defy Yéingho at all is a rejection of the dominating ideology of the nation.

Organization

Since most Sèingzho Apostates are simply social outcasts or criminals, they are not an organized group—at least, as a whole. Radical Sèingzho followers have been known to band together in an attempt to fight the status quo, though to little success under the currently very powerful Yéingho system. Most apostates become so under the influence of other apostates, as most need to see a strong counter-perspective to break free of the illusions of the Yéingho system that were drilled into them as children.

Societal Role

Sèingzho Apostates are shunned by society, but in return, they have many freedoms that those who follow the Yéingho system do not. Even if only in minor ways, dissent slowly draws society closer to disrupting the status quo; over a long period, the Sèingzho Apostates certainly have the potential to make great changes within Zhǐròm society. As contact with foreigners increases, too, the freedoms enjoyed by the Byàvesh and Pktanni are increasingly desired among many in Zhǐròm.

Objectives

The objectives of each apostate can vary wildly. Some simply seek general freedom from the oppressive system, with most only having one or two minor desires that the system does not permit. A smaller subset of the Sèingzho Apostates is far beyond seeking personal freedom, however, and desire to dismantle the entire Yéingho system. The Zhǐròm government cracks down even on minor transgressions primarily in an attempt to quell defiance long before it reaches the point of outright rebellion, but in many cases, doing so only exacerbates an individual's desire for freedom and distaste for the current system.

Worldview

Whether in a big or small way, every apostate believes that at least one aspect of the Yéingho system—and of modern Zhǐròm society—is wrong and should be reformed. Though most apostates differ in which freedoms they desire, it is this singular view that unites them. Most still love their homeland and its people—hence why they remain—but they do not accept it in its totality.

Locations

Tǔmfòu

Description

Tǔmfòu is a major city known for its citizen's general sense of rebellion towards Yéingho. While a city this large is certainly not entirely ideologically aligned on this matter, it is the only major city to have this reputation.

In particular, families rarely split apart, with parents usually either going with their children to where their assigned school is or rejecting the Yéingho assignment altogether if it cannot be obliged locally. Likewise, Tǔmfòu is one of the few places in Zhǐròm where heritage and family ties are valued. Unlike in the rest of the nation, most citizens in Tǔmfòu inherit and carry family names, borrowing the tradition from other Khentós cultures.

Important Characters

The local leader of the city, Dzáu Feshì “Renegade Baron of Tǔmfòu”, despite being the Yéingho assigned ruler, is a notable participant in the light apostasy common in Tǔmfòu (which was also his birth home). The Zhǐròm government is relatively tolerant of him, however, as Dzáu is ultimately loyal to them and is effective at keeping the Sèingzho practiced in Tǔmfòu in check, even if it cannot

be erased entirely. The people of Tǔmfòu see Dzáu as one of their own, and by being tolerant of their minor transgressions, he steers the populace away from radical Sèingzho beliefs.

Physical Location

Tǔmfòu is located near the northern border of Zhǐròm, and it is the northmost major city in the nation. Its close proximity to Byàvesh—and the cultural interaction occurring as a result—is often cited as the reason behind Tǔmfòu’s stronger tendency towards Sèingzho.

Dzích Academy

Description

Dzích Academy is the largest Sèingzho school in Zhǐròm. It is an institution that gives education to students who refused their Yéingho assigned schooling or whose parents refused to give them up. Since neither of these actions is strictly illegal, these informal private schools are technically permitted to exist, but most struggle severely due to a lack of resources and refusal from the government to support them. The Dzích Academy is one of the few schools that has managed to survive and grow for a considerable amount of time.

Important Characters

Being the headmaster of the Dzích Academy is a dangerous role; there have been numerous cases over the years of the more radical leaders disappearing or dying mysterious, sudden deaths—occurrences that the Zhǐròm government always denies having any involvement in. The current headmaster, Gùngfǒ Fous “Great Scholarly Sage”, leans far enough into Sèingzho ideology that he would normally be a target, but he is ‘protected’ due to his close relationship with the leader of Tǔmfòu, Dzáu Feshì.

Physical Location

The academy is located a few kilometers south of Tǔmfòu, where a majority of its student body lives. Since Tǔmfòu is a major city, it has begun to industrialize, and the transport network between the urban center and the academy has been streamlined in recent years.

Gíchau Caverns

Description

The Gíchau Caverns is a vast cave network beneath central Zhǐròm. These caverns are a well-known meeting place for apostates—especially radicals—as its complex network can be traversed quickly and easily by experienced local navigators but poorly by government soldiers sent in to crack down on illegal activity.

While the Zhǐròm government would love to patrol the caverns and capture criminals, militant Sèingzho Apostates have repeatedly used their knowledge of the caverns to ambush and easily eliminate those sent to hunt them down. Eventually, the government decided to cut its losses and let the caverns be, carefully watching them but rarely entering themselves.

Important Characters

Radical Sèingzho Apostate Jèzhi “Nocturnal Slaughterer” leads a small, militant group of fellow apostates that operate heavily within the Gíchau Caverns. Knowing the caverns extremely well, she has singlehandedly claimed the lives of nearly a hundred Zhǐròm soldiers sent to raid the caverns, and she is indirectly responsible for killing countless more by organizing ambushes carried out by her subordinates. She is perhaps the highest profile criminal in all of Zhǐròm, but with the natural protection of the caverns, the government hasn’t gotten close to ever capturing or killing her.

Physical Location

The cave network covers a vast area beneath central Zhǐròm and is nearly 150 kilometers in length when accounting for all of its branches. Dozens of opens exist—some less known than others—which is one of the reasons it is so effective as a hiding place, since someone always has many escape routes available.

ORGANIZATION: TSYÍLYAV ARMY

Cultures: Byàvesh, but an oppositional organization in both Byàvesh and Pktanni

Power Base: As a grassroots organization growing out of a general unrest amongst commoners, the Tsyílyav Army is supported only from below (if they are at all) and generally scorned from above by political entities.

Size: ~250,000 active members (~0.15% of the combined populations of Byàvesh and Pktanni)

Objectives

The Tsyílyav Army is a countercultural movement of commoners that opposes the use of magical technology. Though not all of their actions are violent or destructive, they are usually considered a terrorist organization (and some members would even proudly label themselves as such).

Members of the Tsyílyav Army are motivated to join for a variety of reasons: many believe the immense demon threat created by technological advancement will be the end of humanity, but others are driven by economic or social reasons, such as a desire to return to a more traditional way of life or a disdain for the toxic working conditions of industrial jobs. Regardless of their reasons, they wish to drive society away from magic—especially magical technology—putting them at odds with the current course of Byàvesh and Pktanni.

Methods

The main method the Tsyílyav Army is known for is destructive acts of terrorism. Usually, these attacks are directed strictly at unoccupied factories or machinery, but some of the more radical members do not shy away from claiming casualties in order to bring attention to their cause.



Despite terrorism being what they're most often *known* for, most actions of the Army are tamer in nature, such as organizing protests or worker strikes. Since the group as a whole is viewed as a terrorist group by governments, however, the members who help organize and execute these events usually keep their association with the Army hidden for personal safety. Consequently, the public tends to not attribute these actions to the Army, instead seeing them only for their violent actions.

While many are somewhat sympathetic to the ideals of the Army, most people within Byàvesh and Pktanni have a generally positive view of magical technology, despite the consequences. Compounded by the poor public image of the Tsyílyav Army, the average person is more likely to fear the organization than support it.

Structure

The Tsyílyav Army is highly disorganized and informal. Most attacks or protests are organized by small, local cells, with no contact being made with members beyond one's personal circle.

Recruitment usually occurs covertly and informally. This loose and personal structure is often the organization's greatest weakness, as it means their actions tend to be small scale and their groups are susceptible to being infiltrated by undercover law enforcement or military personnel.

Assets

As the Tsyílyav Army consists essentially entirely of commoners, they do not have good access to many resources or assets. Small groups must often rely on pooling individual's meager resources together to enact plans. Given the objectives of the group, they rarely use magic, which further complicates matters.

Secrets

Members of the Tsyílyav Army almost always keep their membership a secret for their own safety. Aside from membership, the organization does not possess any secret knowledge. Even the information that motivates the group—such as knowledge of the rapidly worsening demon threat since the Magical Revolution—is widely known by the public; most have simply chosen to accept it.

Locations

Nyórun

Description

The Byàvesh city of Nyórun was one of the first to heavily industrialize and one of the first to greatly suffer the consequences. With practically no government oversight over industry, environmental and worker conditions grew so bad so rapidly that the city practically ceased to function under a group of early entrepreneurs who squeezed every ounce of wealth they could out of the city.

Following a huge demon attack that killed over two hundred workers, the Evìon government (to which Nyórun belongs) finally took action in an attempt to quell the borderline rebellion brewing amongst the working class. Even after a series of drastic reforms—which many other Byàvesh states adopted themselves in order to avoid the exact fate that befell Nyórun—the consequences of what occurred in Nyórun caused the birth of the Tsyílyav Army itself.

Important Characters

The most important Nyórun figure to the Army is Tsyílyav Jakhí, from whom the organization's name derives. He was an outspoken critic of industrialization, and following the disastrous demon attack, he garnered a huge following—at which point he was promptly assassinated. The uproar caused by these events was the spark that birthed the Tsyílyav Army. Over a decade later, Tsyílyav

Jakhí's younger brother, Dyùzye Jakhí, is currently a prominent figure in the Tsyílyav Army movement in Nyórun.

Physical Location

Nyórun is a large city in the Kingdom of Evìon (itself a member state of the Tyída Confederacy), a state located in the northwest region of the Greenlands. Nyórun lies on the northern edge of the state's territory, and it closely borders the Northlands.

Nation of Byùtsya

Description

Byùtsya is a small community of highly anti-industrialist Byàvesh people. Though they claim sovereignty over themselves and their lands, they are unrecognized by any of the major Byàvesh states and are generally considered to still be a part of the Kingdom of Gyasthò. The people of Byùtsya are highly religious and have woven their anti-industry ideals into their faith. The use of mana engines is outlawed completely in their 'territory', enforced by the punishment of death. Many members of the Tsyílyav Army look to Byùtsya as a semi-utopian ideal for society.

Important Characters

The self-proclaimed 'Minister of the Great Nation of Byùtsya', Rofyúh Hyozín, governs the community, although administrative authorities in Gyasthò would contest that proclamation.

Physical Location

Byùtsya lies on the far southern edge of the Kingdom of Gyasthò, itself the southernmost state of the Holy Alliance on the eastern side of Khentós. As it lies on the fringes of the kingdom (and is not a particularly economically important location), Gyasthò has yet to enforce its sovereignty over the area.

Tsuddunn Manor

Description

The Tsuddunn manor is a grand mansion belonging to the Tsudd noble family of Pktanni. The Tsudd family made their fortune for centuries by selling the services of its mages to desperate villages, but since the Magical Revolution, their role has been largely supplanted by magical technology, which can do the same thing but cheaper and more reliably. At the same time, a disdain for 'new money' industrial tycoons led the Tsudd family to detest magical technology and push against its adoption in society.

Although the Tsudd family's motivation for rejecting the Magical Revolution differs greatly from the average members of the Tsyílyav Army, their shared end goal has united them. The Tsudd manor has been a well-known meeting place for anti-industrialists, and even the rather elitist Tsudd family has become willing to cooperate with commoners of the Tsyílyav Army if it means achieving their desired ends.

Important Characters

The current head of the Tsudd family, Tpiiri Tsudd, is the primary organizer of the gatherings at his manor. He seeks to forge connections with local Army leaders, funding them to do the dirty work that pushes their agenda forward. The most significant of these frequent guests is Ktach Ggi'a, an influential member of the anti-industry movement in this region of Pktanni.

Physical Location

The Tsuddunn manor is located west of Pktanni's capital city, ligminn, albeit on the opposite end of the duchy.



ORGANIZATION: KNIGHTS OF THE FIVE DIVINITIES

Cultures: Byàvesh, but they operate across all nations of Khentós

Power Base: Technically, the Knights of the Five Divinities is a religious organization, but in practice, it is political entities that give them power by allowing them to operate freely. They are also supported by the general public across almost the entire continent, so they wield social influence as well.

Size: 50–100



Objectives

The Knights of the Five Divinities are one of many demon-hunting groups across Khentós. What makes the Knights unique, however, is their unparalleled level of expertise in their combat abilities against demons, which far exceed that of the average demon hunter. It is the duty of the Knights to protect civilians and slay demons, and their strict code forbids them from acting as a military force against other humans.

Most often, they are deployed to kill devils, which regular demon hunters would never have a chance against. While normal demons predominately pose a threat only to isolated villages, devils—and the legions of regular demons they can lead—can be city or even country-level threats, giving the Knights a critical role to fulfill.

Though they are a sub-organization of the Church of the Five Divinities, they operate mostly autonomously and across the entire continent. Since few demon-hunting organizations are capable of combating devils, nations all across Khentós—including those with no relation to the church—will request the aid of the Knights if a demon threat arises that they cannot deal with themselves.

Methods

The Knights devote their lives to mastering their demon-hunting abilities. Consequently, every Knight is, at minimum, an expert in combat magic, and most are skilled in martial combat as well. Most Knights work in small groups, but some operate solo.

Knights do not live regular lives; while the threats they need to combat are rare, they must always be prepared to respond to requests for aid. Historically, they were only dispatched a few times a year, but since the Magical Revolution, their rate of deployment has increased nearly tenfold.

Structure

Each Knight has more or less complete autonomy of themselves, and the organization only possesses a weak hierarchy. New recruits are assigned to senior members for their first couple of years of service to ensure they are properly acclimated and looked after, but once this period of supervision ends, they hold the same amount of power as any other member of the group. Members can be expelled for violating the group's code of ethics by vote, but they cannot be directly dismissed by individuals.

As the Knights of the Five Divinities are composed only of elite warriors, joining is extremely difficult. Yearly assessments are held to evaluate potential recruits, but only an average of 2–3 new members are admitted every year. Given the high requirements for entry, most individuals only have a chance if they were personally trained by an existing Knight; likewise, most Knights who survive a decade or two retire and become mentors for the next generation.

Assets

The Knights receive support both from the Church of the Five Divinities and local governments when they're called in for support. Most Knights are outfitted with the best equipment money can buy, and they can usually draw upon their sponsors to acquire the materials needed for their advanced and powerful combat magic.

Secrets

While not exactly a secret, no one is more aware of the unsustainability of modern technology than the Knights of the Five Divinities. Having to personally deal with the consequences of excess has made the problem clear to them, and many Knights attempt to use their influence to spread this truth. Despite that influence, however, they cannot compete with the wealthy and powerful who perpetuate this cycle of endless greed, and their words often fall on deaf ears.

Locations

Tholhyós Citadel

Description

The massive Tholhyós Citadel, with its countless facilities, also serves as the headquarters for the Knights. It doubly serves as the primary headquarters for the organization as a whole and as the national outpost for those stationed in Byàvesh. The Citadel features rather high-quality personal barracks for the Knights, with many members not bothering to own personal residences in favor of living purely within the Citadel. The assessments for new recruits are also held on Citadel grounds in the dedicated training area allocated to the Knights.

Important Characters

Although the Knights do not possess formal leadership or ranks, certain members stand out above others for their talent, leadership qualities, or seniority. Among those stationed at the Citadel

include Lyovv́é Thóm, a young but brilliant tactician who develops many battle strategies, Sòso Kyorffín, a former Archpriest turned Knight whose radiant charisma often places him as the public face of the Knights in Tholhyós, and Hanna Dbii, a Pktanni immigrant who is currently the oldest actively serving member of the Knights at 44.

Physical Location

The Tholhyós Citadel sits in the very center of the Tholhyós city-state in the heart of the Holy Alliance. Originally a castle belonging to the Tholhyós royal family, the church inherited the structure and surrounding lands following the collapse of that empire. The facilities belonging to the Knights are located on the outskirts of the Citadel.

Mojé Outpost

Description

The Mojé Outpost (Mozhé in the Zhǐròm language) serves as a sub-headquarters for the Knights in the Drylands. Most Knights stationed in Zhǐròm live here while they're on standby.

Though the Zhǐròm do not hold a favorable opinion of mages and magic—and the Knights are no exception—this garrison is permitted as a precaution in the event of major emergencies, as Zhǐròm's very disdain of magic makes it nearly impossible for them to effectively counter overwhelming demon threats.

Knights operating from the Mojé Outpost are only permitted to act under the explicit orders of the Zhǐròm government, though many Knights opt to blatantly ignore this rule and respond to crises as they see fit.

Important Characters

Given their persecution of magic use, Zhǐròm citizens simply cannot become Knights (as practicing magic is illegal outside of one specific case, so the government would simply arrest them). However, there are a few cases of Zhǐròm families immigrating to Byàvesh or Pktanni and raising Knights, who then later chose to return to their family's homeland to protect it from demons. Currently, two Zhǐròm Knights serve at the Mojé Outpost: Mènga Juh, a world-class archer, and Söryń Syóf, a skilled earth mage.

Physical Location

The Mojé Outpost is located just outside of the capital city of Zhǐròm, Krohǐr (Khrohyír in the Byàvesh language). It was constructed here both because of the centralized location and so that the government could keep a close watch over its operations.

Hyétachan Outpost

Description

The Hyétachan Outpost (Xtaachann in the Pktanni language) serves as the sub-headquarters for the Knights in the Northlands. Unlike in Zhǐròm, the Pktanni are more than inviting of the Knight's presence, and despite being a foreign organization, the members are respected as paladins regardless of their nationality.

This outpost is just one of many spread across Pktanni (there is at least one per duchy), but it is by far the biggest one. Knights stationed here have a decent degree of autonomy; they naturally are not above the law, but they have roughly equivalent freedoms to local Pktanni demon hunters.

Important Characters

It is the dream of many Pktanni paladins to one day join the Knights of the Five Divinities, extending the scope of their fight to a continental scale. Local Pktanni citizens turned Knights that operate from the Hyétachan Outpost include Ksutki Ummri, the only current Knight highly trained in the use of magical rifles (which are a recent invention), and Xptich Rusu, talented at both forging and wielding magical weapons.

Physical Location

The Hyétachan Outpost is located in the Pktanni 'city of magic', Tksaann (Téksan in the Byàvesh language). Due to its location, some Knights even give guest lectures at the nearby Tksaann University.

FACTION INTERACTION MATRIX

Church of the Five Divinities' view of...	Church of the Five Divinities	Thaumaturges Guild	Yéingho Adherents
	The one true faith, and the architects of humanity's ascension.	Though they lack holy zeal, these academics do great work for the prosperity to Khentós.	The most oppressed people of Khentós. At the same time, their unity is impressive.
	Sèingzho Apostates	Tsyilyav Army	Knights of the Five Divinities
	Admirable individuals with the courage to free themselves from oppression.	Dangerous anarchists and servants of Dyivish who fear humanity's progress towards perfection.	Chosen by the gods themselves, these champions of humanity are living heroes of the modern era.

Thaumaturges Guild's view of...	Church of the Five Divinities	Thaumaturges Guild	Yéingho Adherents
	An amicable, if not overly obsessive, group. In our eyes, they represent the heart of the Byàvesh people.	A gathering of the greatest magical minds in Khentós and the forefront of human progress.	The brainwashed masses of a fundamentally immoral system. To be free is to live, and Yéingho is the antithesis of freedom.
	Sèingzho Apostates	Tsyilyav Army	Knights of the Five Divinities
	To free oneself from the shackles of Yéingho is undoubtedly worthy of respect.	Mindless terrorists who live in the past and fear the future.	The most admirable paladins in Khentós. Each would be a worthy member of the guild.



Yéingho Adherents' view of...	Church of the Five Divinities	Thaumaturges Guild	Yéingho Adherents
	A squabbling bureaucracy far too concerned with supernatural doctrine to run a proper society.	A poison to the world. These 'scholars' are strangling Khentós alive with their wanton worship of magic.	We are the most advanced society in Khentós. Yéingho is the inevitable end point of all civilizations.
	Sèingzho Apostates	Tsyfilyav Army	Knights of the Five Divinities
	More despicable than any other. They were given everything and knowingly rejected it.	Though their disorganization leaves much to be desired, their objectives are reasonable.	These practitioners of forbidden arts are not to be revered, but they do fulfill a valuable role.

Sèingzho Apostates' view of...	Church of the Five Divinities	Thaumaturges Guild	Yéingho Adherents
	A system of oppression, even if looser than Yéingho; they simply replace monarchs and ministers with gods and prophets.	Their obsession with magic goes a little too far, but we envy their freedom and fiery will.	Prisoners oblivious of their imprisonment. Most of us would rather perish than return to Yéingho.
	Sèingzho Apostates	Tsyfilyav Army	Knights of the Five Divinities
	We've seen through the lies of our society and fight for the freedom of all Zhǐròm citizens.	In a way, they resemble us. While we dissent against the authority of Zhǐròm under Yéingho, they dissent against the authorities of Pktanni and Byàvesh.	These warriors embody both freedom and heroism in equal measure.

Tsyfilyav Army's view of...	Church of the Five Divinities	Thaumaturges Guild	Yéingho Adherents
	The faith has become a slave to industry. Until they are dealt with, corruption will continue to run rampant here.	The creation of the mana engine is the ultimate source of our woes; thus, they are one of our greatest enemies.	Though we certainly do not envy their strictness, their stance on industry is respectable.
	Sèingzho Apostates	Tsyfilyav Army	Knights of the Five Divinities
	Though they dissent against the corruption of their rulers, their perspective on industrialization is concerning.	We fight to return society to how it should be. One day, we shall rid the world of the accursed mana engine and thrive once again.	Merely a bandage to a wound that their masters inflicted. It is baffling why they do not defect to our cause in droves.

Knights of the Five Divinities' view of...	Church of the Five Divinities	Thaumaturges Guild	Yéingho Adherents
	While not all of our members adhere to the faith, the church is our primary benefactor.	Like us, these scholars are at the height of their field, and they are worthy of respect.	Hypocrites. They decry magic but covertly industrialize their cities, all while calling upon us for aid in the same breath that they condemn us.
	Sèingzho Apostates	Tsyfilyav Army	Knights of the Five Divinities
	While many in Zhǐròm despise us, the kindly Sèingzho welcome us.	Though their cause is not necessarily unjust, their methods are. As protectors, we cannot support their violent means to this end.	We fight and die for those who cannot defend themselves. As long as we draw breath, demons shall not defeat humanity.



ECOLOGY

BYÀVESH BIOME (GREENLANDS)

Environment

Day/Night Cycle

Daytime typically lasts between 9–15 hours of the 24-hour day depending on the season. Day length tends to go into further extremes on the northern edge of the Greenlands, and, conversely, it tends to become more uniform in the south closer to the equator.

Climate

The Greenlands receive moderate precipitation, especially on the western coast. The northern half is colder but still quite mild in temperature, typically ranging from 0°C in the winter to 25°C in the summer. In the southern half, temperatures are warmer year-round, with a more typical range of 10°C to 30°C. Certain small biomes, such as the Jamòkh Desert, can get much hotter.

Weather by Seasons

While the weather is usually mild year-round compared to other regions on the continent, spring and autumn tend to be the mildest seasons by most metrics aside from average rainfall, which peaks during these periods. Winters are more extreme in the north and summers are worse in the south, but the central strip of the Greenlands tends to not receive any extreme weather from these seasons.

Water Cycle

The three major rivers cutting through the Greenlands all originate from the Vodyáv mountain range in the north. Alongside the moderate precipitation the region receives, this is where a majority of water enters the Greenlands before traveling south and joining the oceans on both sides of the continent. Eventually, it will evaporate back into clouds to begin the cycle anew.

Soil & Rock Characteristics

The soil of the Greenlands is very fertile, particularly in the grasslands but also to a slightly lesser extent in the temperate forests. Combined with the mild climate, this region excels at the mass production of crops. Granite and limestone are common types of rock used in construction, though most buildings are made with wood or brick instead.



Flora

Description

The lush temperate forests contain a huge amount of biodiversity. Further north, many coniferous tree species dominate, while even more deciduous species populate the forests closer to the center of the region. Countless herbs, bushes, flowers, vines, and more fill the forests, thriving in the mild climate. The grasslands, while less diverse, are covered in various types of grass—at least, in the places humans haven't cleared and filled with crops.

Important Plant

Name: Kyatin Mushroom

Flavor Text: *"Poison is a fickle thing. It is a weapon to induce death, of course, yet in the strangest fashion, it is none other than poison—in the form of an unassuming white cap—that keeps our civilization running."*

Type of Plant: Fungi

Category: Native/Agriculture



Description

Kyatin mushrooms are a species of mushroom native to the temperate forests of the Greenlands. They tend to be tall (for a mushroom) and have small white caps. They pop up in clusters, usually at the base of trees or wherever is shady and wet. While mostly scentless and flavorless, they can be consumed by humans and other mammals without any adverse effects. Conversely, however, they are extremely toxic to many species of insects.

Habitat

In the environment, kyatin mushrooms spread by releasing spores. They thrive in dense forests, appearing most commonly in the central latitudes of the Greenlands. Kyatin mushrooms are also artificially grown by humans, and they are one of the few species grown exclusively in the forests (as opposed to the grasslands).

Life Cycle

Spores develop into their full form over the course of several days, and then rapidly expand by absorbing water. This can result in a cluster of mushrooms suddenly appearing overnight where none had been seen the day before. Given the need for moisture, their growth correlates heavily with rain patterns.

Uses

The kyatin mushrooms are extremely useful to Byàvesh agriculture. While they are not usually consumed by people, they are ground up and used as natural pesticides in the farming of edible crops, including grain, vegetables, and fruit. Since these mushrooms are not dangerous to humans but are extremely deadly to many insects, they are extremely effective at protecting crops without

reducing their quality. Recent advancements in magical technology have allowed kyatin-based solutions to be applied to fields far more efficiently than in the past, further increasing the demand for these mushrooms among farmers.

Cultural Significance

Kyatin mushrooms are not particularly revered or appreciated by the average person despite the pivotal role they play in Byàvesh agriculture. People outside of the agriculture industry are typically aware of the mushroom and its uses, but to them, it is little more than a useless fact they were taught in school. Farmers, however, are well aware of the critical role kyatin mushrooms play in increasing their yields. The symbol of a kyatin mushroom is the official emblem of farmers in the Tyída Confederacy (used by all, not merely those who grow the mushrooms themselves), and it is used as an informal symbol elsewhere too.

Fauna

Description

The Greenlands are a very biodiverse location given the mild climate and range of biomes contained within. Mammals, ranging from small rodents like squirrels and mice to bigger ones like deer and bison, can be found across this region in abundance. Countless bird species dot the skies, especially in the colder seasons when many migrate in from the north.

Important Creature

Name: Windwisp

Flavor Text: *"Though far more corporeal and mundane than their name might suggest, windwisps are still remarkable creatures in their own right. Where dogs have lost their craving for the hunt under the thumb of humanity, the windwisps have refused to let the tradition die."*

Type of Animal: Bird (Falcon)

Category: Consumer (sometimes Scavenger)/Predator



Description

Windwisps are a domesticated species of white falcon native to the Greenlands. Named for their immense speed, they can sometimes appear as nothing more than a white streak when diving towards prey. They are average-sized for birds, and females are noticeably (although not drastically) larger than males. They possess sharp beaks used to hunt prey, although it is believed that they used to be far sharper (a trait that was bred out by thousands of years of domestication and selective breeding to make the creatures safer to be around).

Habitat

Though native to the Greenlands, there are very few wild windwisps remaining, as a majority of the population is under human domestication. They can navigate the Byàvesh forests with their flight, resting on trees when necessary. Although they can traverse the grasslands too, they tend not to, as resting there makes them easy prey for larger animals. Wild windwisps undergo a small migration period during the winter, concentrating in the southern forests before spreading out again when spring comes.

Diet

Windwisps are carnivores, primarily preying on the many small rodents that populate the Byàvesh forests. While they typically hunt living prey, they will also consume recently deceased prey, as long as it remains fresh. As they are domesticated, most windwisps are used to eating meats prepared by humans—that is, those that have already been cut and harvested from animals. As such, owners typically feed their windwisps extra scraps of meat they have on hand if the birds are unable to gather enough food on their own.

Life Cycle

The reproduction cycle of windwisps is more similar to chickens than other types of birds, which is one of the primary reasons why humans have domesticated them. Females lay eggs frequently and over a long period of time, and while most remain unfertilized and are taken to be eaten by humans, fertilized eggs will hatch into chicks.

Domestication

The majority of windwisps in the modern day are domesticated farm animals. Unlike other farm animals, however, owners will often set them free regularly, allowing them to hunt and sustain themselves. Windwisps have excellent navigation skills, and over a long period of human domestication, they have developed a strong loyalty to their owners, consistently returning home after a few days. This allows them to be somewhat self-sufficient (as farmers need to feed them less than other highly dependent livestock), though the extra freedom also makes them harder to control.

Uses

Windwisps are utilized very similarly to chickens. The biggest product related to them is their eggs, which are produced and sold in large numbers. Likewise, they are sometimes consumed themselves as meat. Windwisps are raised in much smaller numbers than chickens (as their carnivorous nature is harder to manage than animals who consume food that can be grown), but their products are still widespread throughout Byàvesh.

Cultural Significance

The windwisps hold a similar reputation to other key farm animals in Byàvesh, like chickens or cattle. However, whereas those other animals are also raised in other areas, windwisps are unique to Byàvesh, making them and their products a unique fixture of Byàvesh society. In the past, windwisps were primarily utilized as hunting companions rather than as farm animals, hence their rather impressive-sounding name.

Biome Ecology

Producers

The abundant plant life that gives the Greenlands their name makes up the primary producers in the region. This includes the many species of coniferous and deciduous trees in the temperate forests, the shrubs and other small plants in the forests, and the endless grasses covering the grassland plains. Likewise, the Byàvesh produce the most crops on the continent, adding yet another huge source of producer species into the ecology.

Consumers

Many species consume plants, especially in the forests. This includes deer, rodents, birds, horses, bison, etc. Predators like wolves, foxes, badgers, windwisps, and more in turn consume the herbivores. The apex predators of the Greenlands would include black bears and cougars.

Decomposers/Scavengers

Most decomposition is performed by fungi, bacteria, and insects. Certain species like windwisps may consume the meat of dead animals, but only if it is very fresh; as such, they do not particularly serve the role of scavengers.



PKTANNI BIOME (NORTHLANDS)

Environment

Day/Night Cycle

Given how far north Pktanni is, the length of days and nights can vary drastically depending on the season. In summer, the daytime can last 16–19 hours, but in winter, it can drop to as low as 6 hours per day.

Climate

Temperatures are comparatively low in the Northlands, with its main taiga biome usually reaching no higher than 15°C at the hottest and dropping to as low as -20°C at the coldest. Farther north in the tundras (where very few people live), temperatures plummet even lower. The taiga region receives low to moderate precipitation, with less rainfall the further inland you go.

Weather by Seasons

The most obvious markings of the seasons come from the shift in temperature and daylight hours. Summers are usually below room temperature, but they are still considerably warmer than the other seasons. Winters, conversely, are harsh and cold, especially in the colder inland. Spring and autumn are typically viewed as transition periods between these two extremes.

Water Cycle

Pktanni has a relatively ordinary water cycle. Water comes in predominately from the Vodyáv mountains on the southern edge of the Northlands (which receive high amounts of precipitation due to their location and elevation), with several large rivers cutting through the mainland and feeding into the oceans on each side of the continent.

Soil & Rock Characteristics

The soil quality of the Northlands is relatively low compared to the rest of Khentós (though not completely useless), which is one of the reasons why magic has been used to aid agriculture for centuries. The soil is even worse further north in the tundra region, where the ground is often far too frozen to grow anything. The abundance of tough granite in the environment makes it useful as a construction material when timber is insufficient.

Flora

Description

Flora diversity is much lower in the Northlands than in the Greenlands. Plant species need to be tougher and more resistant to the cold to survive. Various species of coniferous trees and shrubs cover the taiga region despite this, but they vary far less than elsewhere.

Important Plant

Name: Yinnitspaadb (literally ‘mana flower’)

Flavor Text: *“An exception amongst exceptions, a culmination of the world’s beauty and holiness. For all our excellence, this one flower—a mere flower—brings into question the very identity of humanity.”*

Type of Plant: Perennial Herbaceous Flower

Category: Native/Horticulture



Description

Yinnitspaadb—a direct compound of the Pktanni words for ‘mana’ (yinnits) and ‘flower’ (paadb)—are sweet-scented blue flowers that bloom in the Northlands. What makes these flowers extremely unusual is that they naturally produce mana (and anti-mana) in small quantities while flowering. While modern science has revealed that a small number of other plant and animal species are also capable of mana production, it was believed for well over a thousand years that mana flowers were the only thing outside of humans capable of this feat. Even now, this reputation makes mana flowers one of the most recognizable plants on the entire continent despite its rather small habitat.

Habitat

Mana flowers thrive in the taiga portion of the Northlands, predominantly closer to the coasts where rainfall is increased and temperatures are milder. They are relatively hardy and cold-resistant, able to survive in snowy conditions. They tend to grow in dense clusters.

Life Cycle

Mana flowers bloom in the spring and summer seasons and enter a state of dormancy as temperatures fall in the autumn and winter. It is often theorized that the flowers produce mana to attract pollinators, although it is not fully verified if insects or birds can even detect mana. Most flowers live 2–3 years, reflowering each spring.

Uses

Mana flowers do not have many practical uses, as the amount of mana they can produce is negligible compared to humans. However, they are revered as a symbol, and it is a popular tradition to add them to meals (despite their lack of flavor and nutritional content) under the superstitious belief that they have magical healing properties, or that they can enhance a mage’s ability.

Cultural Significance

Although the veracity of the legend is uncertain, it is a common belief that humans first discovered magic from mana flowers and developed their own techniques of mana production by copying the processes of the flowers. Given the importance of magic to Pktanni society, it is not surprising that they consequently value these flowers greatly, despite their lack of practical use.

Though traditional scripture does not directly reference mana flowers, it is very common for religious Pktanni to consider these flowers to be sacred. The symbol of a yinnitspaadb is itself one of the most common informal symbols identifying the Pktanni religion.



Fauna

Description

The fauna of the Northlands tends to include creatures with thick fur coats or other insulation from the cold. Moose, reindeer, bears, and wolves are common throughout the taiga region. Many carnivorous species hibernate during the cold winters.

Important Creature

Name: Arrabi

Flavor Text: *“Fools will cry that man is the greatest beast in our world. Evidently, they’ve never traveled to the Northlands and seen an arrabi.”*

Type of Animal: Mammal (Bear)

Category: Consumer/Predator



Description

Arrabi are gigantic bears that roam the Northlands. At least twice the size of other species of bears found in Khentós, they are undoubtedly the apex predator of the region. Their fur is extremely thick and tough, and it can range in color from brown to gray. They typically hibernate in winter, but they are known to skip hibernation if the winter is warm enough.

Habitat

The arrabi thrive in the taiga region of the Northlands, as the northern tundras are too cold. Arrabi tend to live most of their lives in a single area, ‘claiming’ the territory from other arrabi and making it their permanent hunting ground. They typically only leave these areas for mating, before returning once again.

Diet

Arrabi are technically omnivorous, but they mostly eat the meat of animals like moose and deer. Depending on their location, they may also consume fish in nearby rivers or, further north, seals. While not their preferred prey, they will consume carnivores like wolves and other bears if needed. Though they typically avoid humans in general, an arrabi will not hesitate to kill and consume a human if it is hungry.

Life Cycle

Due to their incredible size, arrabi must consume a huge amount of food to sustain themselves. Consequently, their population is relatively small, and each ‘controls’ its own hunting zone. During the breeding season, males will venture out of their territory to seek mates, returning to their original area once this period ends. Cubs are raised by their mothers for upwards of 5 years before dispersing. Often, if no unclaimed area can be found that is big enough to sustain it, an arrabi will



fight others to claim more territory. Arrabi can live for as long as 40 years if they have enough food to sustain themselves.

Domestication

Arrabi have never been domesticated, but they have grown used to humans. They are intelligent enough to understand that humans are one of the few creatures capable of killing them, and as such, they try to avoid them when possible. Since arrabi tend to live in the same area for most of their lives and can live for several decades, many communities are well aware of every arrabi in their local area, and sometimes they are even given names (though this is done less out of affection and mostly to warn others about where it roams).

Uses

Usually, it's safest for people to avoid arrabi rather than engage with them in any way, but they do have some uses. Their fur is extremely tough and warm, making it amongst the most valuable furs in the country for both its rarity and usefulness. Arrabi meat is also consumed if one is hunted, although this typically only happens in extreme circumstances where something necessitates killing one, such as if it attacks humans. Otherwise, the danger and cost of killing one far exceed its value dead.

Cultural Significance

In ancient times, arrabi were thought to have been demons due to their incredible power and ferocity. While this belief faded away once it became clear these creatures were animals like any other, Pktanni children are often taught about arrabi in the same way they are demons: monsters that must be avoided at all costs. Still, given the mutual caution that humans and arrabi both show towards each other, conflicts are surprisingly uncommon.

Biome Ecology

Producers

Trees, shrubs, and grasses make up a bulk of natural producers in the Northlands. Human crops supplement them.

Consumers

Herbivores such as moose and deer are important consumers of plants. They are hunted by carnivorous species like wolves, wolverines, and bears. The undisputed apex predators of the environment—barring humans—are the arrabi, which will hunt and eat herbivores and carnivores alike.

Decomposers/Scavengers

Fungi and bacteria are the primary decomposers. Certain insects adapted to the environment also contribute to decomposition, although insects in general are less plentiful and diverse in this region.



ZHĪRÒM BIOME (DRYLANDS)

Environment

Day/Night Cycle

The lengths of daytime and nighttime do not vary significantly across the year in the Drylands, with both typically taking 12 hours. Fluctuation increases further from the equator, but this holds true for a majority of the region.

Climate

Temperatures tend to be quite warm in the Drylands. In the savannah, temperatures tend to range from 20°C to 30°C year-round, without significant seasonal variation. The deserts are much more volatile, reaching as high as 50°C during the day but dropping as low as 0°C at night.

Weather by Seasons

The savannahs of the Drylands generally experience two seasons: a short wet season, where the region is hit with a lot of precipitation, and a long dry season. The deserts, conversely, do not have a wet season and are dry year-round. Temperature is not massively affected by the season.

Water Cycle

Barring the wet season and a couple of major rivers, the Drylands do not receive a huge influx of water from the outside. Instead, they rely on artificial (and a few natural) oases for water, constructed using a magical technique passed down for centuries. These oases tap into underground water sources, many of which are so deep they would be completely inaccessible without magic. Thus, the Drylands create a fairly closed system for water recycling itself back into the region.

Soil & Rock Characteristics

The soil in the Drylands—both in the savannahs and deserts—is of relatively poor quality, as it is highly acidic and holds onto water poorly. Around oases, however, the ground is significantly more fertile, and crops can be grown in these areas (hence how common the creation of artificial oases is). Sandstone is common in the region, and it is used in many constructions.



Flora

Description

Given its hotter conditions and poor soil quality, the flora is far less pronounced in the Drylands. Certain grasses, shrubs, and trees that are capable of retaining lots of water populate the region, though they are found in much higher numbers in the savannah portions. An exception to this rule is found around oases, as the hospitable conditions allow plant life to survive far easier. Outside of these, the flora typically thrives during the rainy season and then goes practically dormant for the rest of the year.

Important Plant

Name: Dzéijär

Flavor Text: *"Nature loves to hide the sweetest nectar behind the sharpest barbs."*

Type of Plant: Succulent (Cactus)

Category: Native/Horticulture



Description

Dzéijär are small, round cacti that grow throughout the Drylands, even in the deserts. These green and yellow-hued plants appear to be ordinary cacti from the outside, but they contain a sweet-smelling and tasting juice on the inside, behind their tough and spiky exteriors. They may sprout in clusters if the soil is rich enough to support them; usually, this only occurs near oases, but clusters will sometimes spring up elsewhere.

Habitat

Dzéijär grow all across the region. They are excellent at retaining water; sometimes, they can survive multi-year-long droughts. While they would spread if not actively cultivated, they survive best when manually spread by humans.

Life Cycle

Their flowers are pollinated by many creatures, such as insects and birds. New sprouts typically grow quickly after receiving enough water, and they can remain in their grown state for several years before dying.

Uses

While the sweet liquid held within dzéijär does not have a practical use, it is considered a common treat in Zhǐròm. The liquid—typically called ‘nectar’—can be extracted from the plant without killing it using specialized techniques, allowing a large amount to be taken from a single plant over its lifetime. Consequently, dzéijär nectar is plentiful and cheap, making it a popular substitute for more expensive sweet products like fruit or sugar.

Cultural Significance

While not revered, the nectar of dzéijär is a common household good to the Zhǐròm, who use it for cooking, sweetening, and sometimes simply as a drink. Though not particularly remarkable, foreigners traveling to Zhǐròm often seek to taste it given its ubiquity.



Fauna

Description

The savannah contains some degree of biodiversity amongst its fauna, featuring creatures from zebras to elephants to lions. Scavengers like vultures and hyenas also dot the region. While the desert areas lack the same amount of life, some species, like camels and certain varieties of birds, can live within it.

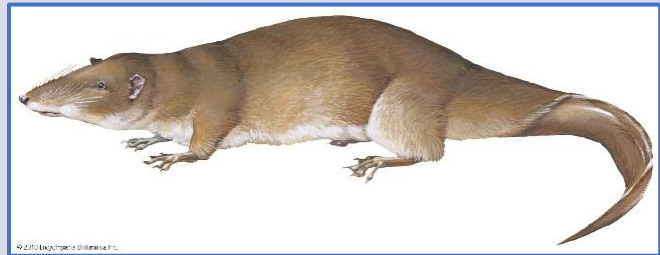
Important Creature

Name: Sharkshrew

Flavor Text: *“Beware of the desert sands on a windless day—picking up on the slight shifting of the ground could be the difference between life and death.”*

Type of Animal: Mammal (very distantly related to shrews)

Category: Consumer/Predator



Description

Sharkshrews are a shrew-like species native to the deserts of the Drylands. Having evolutionarily diverged from shrews long ago, sharkshrews are ferocious predators. Around the size of a medium-sized dog, these creatures spend the majority of their time burrowing beneath the desert sands hunting for prey. By reading vibrations in the sand, they approach prey from beneath and suddenly erupt from below, digging their sharp fangs into their target to kill it. These attacks resemble shark breaching, hence their name. Sharkshrews can range in color from sandy yellow to dark brown.

Habitat

To avoid the daytime heat and nighttime cold of the Zhìròm deserts, sharkshrews spend the majority of their time underground, typically only surfacing to hunt prey. When food becomes scarce, sharkshrews will migrate a considerable distance to search for more. When the situation becomes especially dire, they can enter a hibernation-like state called torpor for upwards of several weeks; in this state, their bodily functions slow down or cease entirely to conserve energy until new food sources arrive.

Diet

Sharkshrews will eat just about any living meat they can find. They require a huge amount of food due to their high metabolism—often as much as their body weight per day—so they are constantly hunting for anything to consume. They will also consume certain plants in order to extract water from them, but their digestive system cannot get any further nutrients from plants.

Sharkshrews prefer to go after smaller prey they can instantly kill from an ambush, but they will attack larger animals if necessary. For larger prey, they often heavily damage their target’s legs to

disable them, then hide to wait for them to bleed out. They will usually avoid adult humans due to the difficulty of killing them, but sharkshrews are known to attack small children with some frequency.

Life Cycle

Sharkshrews operate alone except to raise their young or to mate, which they do year-round. Female sharkshrews will often give birth several times a year, and gestation only takes about a month. Baby sharkshrews typically become independent after around three months, so there are many cases where a mother raises multiple litters at once. Females are highly protective of their own young, but they will not hesitate to hunt unrelated sharkshrews; males will hunt other sharkshrews regardless of relation. Sharkshrew males live for around a year, and females tend to live around two.

Domestication

Sharkshrews have not been domesticated nor tamed. In fact, most in Zhǐròm would prefer for them to be hunted to extinction given the danger they pose to untrained desert travelers.

Uses

Sharkshrew hides are moderately valuable. The material itself is not that useful or unique, but many local governments will pay hunters to kill sharkshrews, requiring their hide as proof. These hides are often repurposed and used in clothing or other implements.

Cultural Significance

While sharkshrews are more of a hated predator than anything else, there are old historical accounts of sharkshrews being captured, starved, and released by a retreating army to prevent their enemies from chasing them. The effectiveness of this tactic is dubious, but it and similar applications have been recorded on a handful of occasions.

Biome Ecology

Producers

The meager plant life of the Drylands—grasses, shrubs, succulents, and, on occasion, trees—are the primary producers of the region. In oases, certain aquatic plants are added to this pool.

Consumers

Many herbivores like rodents, zebras, and elephants consume the primary producers and are in turn consumed by predators like lions, hyenas, sharkshrew, and more. Lions can be considered the apex predators of the savannah regions, but sharkshrews hold that title in the deserts.

Decomposers/Scavengers

Fungi, bacteria, and insects are the main decomposers in the Drylands; however, they are heavily supplemented by scavenger species like vultures and hyenas.



MAGIC

OVERVIEW

Rifting

Mana is not a natural resource that exists in the world normally; rather, it must be actively created in a process known as ‘rifting’. The name derives from the mythical view that mana originates from a separate world overlapping this one, and that mana is drawn into this world by temporarily opening a rift between the two. From a scientific perspective, the true origin of mana is unknown, but it is generally considered to be a fundamental aspect of the universe like matter, energy, or gravity.

Rifting is a fundamental capability of humans and a small number of other living creatures. For humans, it is a largely psychological process manually controlled by the brain. Although some individuals have a natural aptitude for rifting, it is a skill anyone can learn with enough training. Rifting takes a physical toll on a person, often causing headaches or pain if done too frequently without rest.

Whenever ‘positive’ mana is produced, an equal amount of ‘negative’ anti-mana is also produced. While a person can channel positive mana to wherever they like with mental discipline, they cannot control the flow of anti-mana.

Mana

Mana is an invisible substance that behaves closer to energy than matter yet is distinct from both. While it does nothing on its own, the properties of mana can be modified by channeling it into physical materials. The resulting ‘modifications’ are determined by the composition and structure of said materials. By carefully arranging multiple materials in a specific pattern, these modifications can be chained together to produce practical, tangible effects. These ‘effects’ are what is known as magic.

The effects of magic can range from the simple production of a candle-sized flame to hurling a house-sized fireball. The only differences between these two are the amount of mana that must be rifted and the ‘magical formulae’ used to produce them; that is, the physical elements used and how they were arranged. The more complex or powerful the magic, the more complex and precise the corresponding formula must be.

Anti-Mana

Anti-mana is normally invisible to humans except in extreme quantities. It is naturally dense and will quickly sink deep into the earth after rifting occurs. While inert on its own, over several years, independent masses of anti-mana may converge and coagulate beneath the earth to create a demon.



At the density required to form a demon, anti-mana becomes visible to the naked eye, taking on a dark grey or black shade.

MAGICAL FORMULAE

A magical formula is the basis of any magical effect. While they could be formed by arranging a series of independent objects, the standard method of casting in Khentós involves melting down the materials and using them like ink to ‘draw’ formulae. Formulae created with this method often look like something halfway between a written language and a geometric mass of shapes. While any material can theoretically be used in formulae, the most reliable and widely used are raw metals, alloys, and gemstones.



Each stroke of a formula—the ordering, thickness, length, curvature, and material used in the ‘ink’—will impact the result. As such, formula writing takes a lot of skill and practice. Likewise, understanding the fundamentals is extremely important. A truly skilled mage understands the purpose behind each stroke, and they can understand how altering the formula will change its effects.

Formula size is always relative, so they can be scaled up or down and function the same as long as the scaling is consistently applied. New formulae are often developed in a large size that is easy to manage and iterate on, and then replicated at a much smaller scale once the final composition is found.

While any novice mage can copy a simple formula and rift mana into it, it takes years of training and knowledge to develop novel formulae from scratch. Complex spells can involve hundreds or even thousands of strokes, and they can often use dozens of different materials as inks. Given the precision required, formulae writing is a major industry. Many individuals—even capable spellcasters—prefer to pay experts to write formulae for them rather than do it themselves.

SPELLCASTING

‘Spellcasting’ is a term that refers to any manual magic performed by humans. While this term was originally synonymous with magic use in general, its definition became narrower after mana engines were invented, as not all magic was strictly performed by humans anymore.

People rarely write out formulae on the fly, as doing so is almost always impractical due to the precision and materials required. Most often, they will carry a collection of premade formulae on

them, usually written on paper. Common formats of storing formulae include binding them into a book, storing them on small, separate sheets akin to a deck of playing cards, or keeping the whole collection on a single large, rolled-up tapestry. Warriors who use magic in combat will often store formulae on their weaponry and armor for quick access, though this runs the risk of those formulae being damaged from fighting and rendered useless.

Activating a magical formula does not expend any of the materials it's made out of; however, even once spent, mana will often remain in the materials of the formula for several hours before dissipating. This phenomenon is known as 'saturation'. To re-activate a formula saturated with spent mana, a caster must rift extra mana to flush the old mana out, making it inefficient to reuse the same formula multiple times in a short period. Spellcasters who find themselves using a specific formula over and over will often carry multiple copies of it with them to mitigate this issue.

MANA ENGINES

Fundamentally, the core of a mana engine is a magical formula that, when activated, causes rifting. Some of the produced mana is siphoned into other formulae that produce the main function of the machine, while the rest is recycled back into the same rifting formula to recursively repeat the process. Thus, by manually activating the formula of a mana engine once, it will continue to sustain itself for some time. Likewise, by utilizing multiple, chained rifting formulae in a single engine, engineers have largely overcome the hurdle of mana saturation.

With technology powered by mana engines, people no longer need to even learn the basics of rifting to make use of magical formulae. Instead, they can purchase pre-activated devices with simple mechanical switches and buttons that can connect or disconnect formulae to turn the device on or off.

DEMONS

Despite the presence of demons throughout all of known history, they are not well understood by humans. The primary theory behind their behavior and aggression towards humans is that, as the physical antithesis of mana, they exist to destroy and erase any trace of it. Humans, with their natural rifting capabilities, are thus the primary targets.

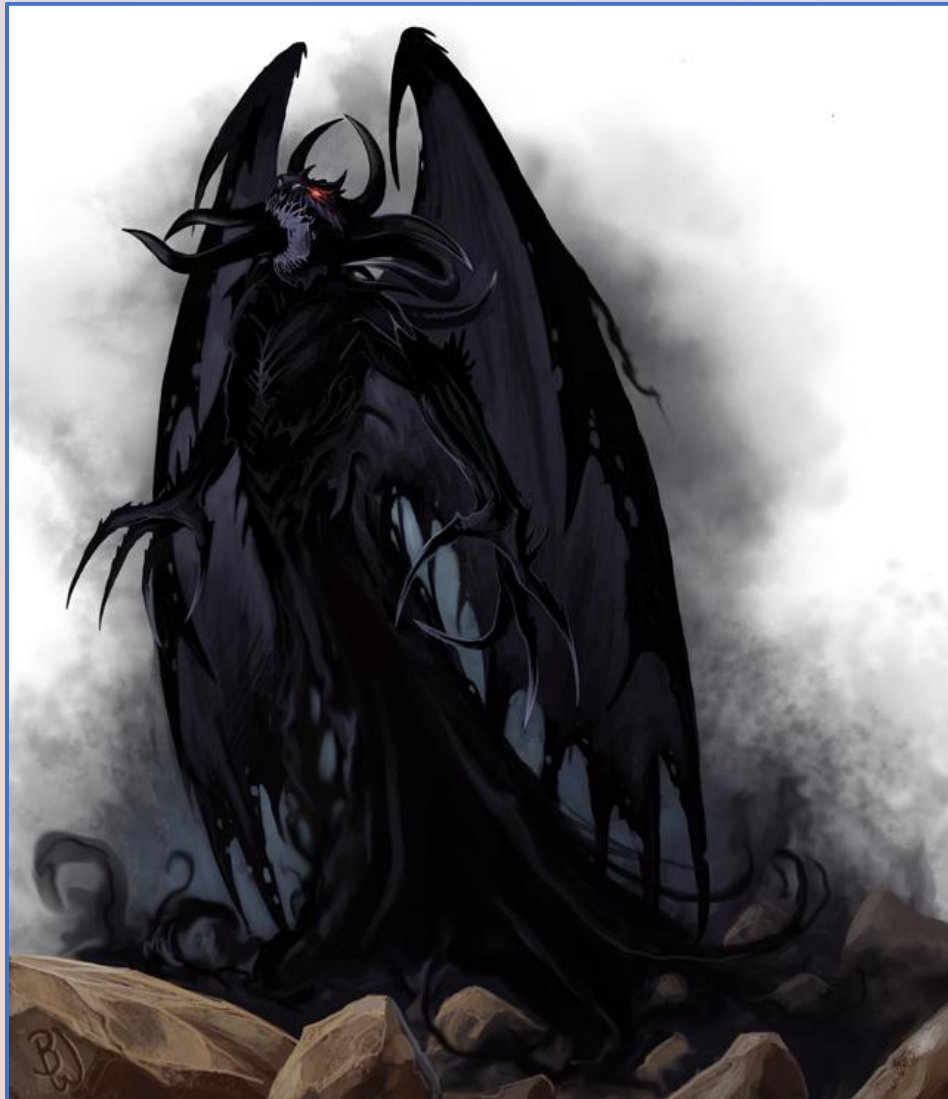
While indeed physical, demons are somewhat amorphous and ethereal. Starting their existence as a shapeless black mass, demons tend to copy the shape of the first creature they encounter after being 'born'. The reason behind this phenomenon is unknown, but the result is that their form is typically that of a human or common animal in the region. Despite taking these shapes, their distinctly dark shade and unnatural atmosphere make it impossible for a demon to be confused for the genuine thing.



A demon's intelligence and strength are directly proportional to the amount of anti-mana they possess. Most demons have very little intelligence and will simply wander around alone or in groups, attacking any humans they encounter until they're eventually slain.

In rare circumstances, enough anti-mana will amass in a single entity that it achieves intelligence and reasoning comparable to that of a human. These demons are called 'devils', and they can bring strategy and order to legions of normally disorganized demons. In the worst-case scenarios, devils can raze entire cities before they're stopped. Since the start of the Magical Revolution—and thus the huge increase in the amount of rifting performed across Khentós—devils have become far more common and dangerous than at any point before in history.

The correlation between anti-mana density and intelligence has led many to theorize that anti-mana (and perhaps positive mana as well) may possess some form of sentience or primal will. The veracity of this theory is entirely unknown.



LANGUAGES

In this chapter, phonologies are written in IPA ([Internation Phonetic Alphabet](#)) notation. The romanization for each phoneme is indicated with ⟨angular brackets⟩; if no romanized character is provided, the romanization uses the IPA symbol. The romanizations shown here were used for all names throughout the world bible.

BYÀVESH LANGUAGE CONTINUUM

Although most Byàvesh people consider the entire region to share one language, it would be more accurate to describe it as a dialect continuum, where nearby dialects are closely related but diverge further by distance. In the modern day, the eastern and western dialects are practically unintelligible. For sociopolitical reasons, however, they are considered to just be variants of a single language instead of separate daughter languages.

This section will provide an overview of the eastern dialect, which is spoken by the largest number of people. It is the dominant dialect in the Holy Alliance and portions of the Akyéviz Confederacy.

Phonology

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i, ɨ ⟨i⟩		u
Mid	e, ɛ ⟨e⟩		o, ɔ ⟨o⟩
Open		a	

- All stressed vowels have either an up or down pitch in Byàvesh. These are marked by an acute (up) or grave (down) accent—e.g., “á” is phonemically distinct from “à” and “a”.
- The phonemes ⟨i, e, o⟩ each have two allophonic forms in complementary distribution. They are realized as /i, e, o/ following soft consonants and /ɨ, ɛ, ɔ/ elsewhere.
- The language has no diphthongs; however, hiatus occasionally occurs.

Consonants

		Labial		Alveolar		Palatal	Velar	
		Hard	Soft	Hard	Soft	Soft	Hard	Soft
Nasal		m	m ^j ⟨my⟩	n	n ^j ⟨ny⟩			
Plosive	Voiceless	p	p ^j ⟨py⟩	t	t ^j ⟨ty⟩		k	k ^j ⟨ky⟩
	Aspirated	p ^h ⟨ph⟩		t ^h ⟨th⟩			k ^h ⟨kh⟩	
	Voiced	b	b ^j ⟨by⟩	d	d ^j ⟨dy⟩		g ⟨g⟩	g ^j ⟨gy⟩
Affricate				ts	ts ^j ⟨tsy⟩	tɕ ⟨ch⟩		
Fricative	Voiceless	f	f ^j ⟨fy⟩	s	s ^j ⟨sy⟩	ɕ ⟨sh⟩	x ⟨h⟩	x ^j ⟨hy⟩
	Voiced	v	v ^j ⟨vy⟩	z	z ^j ⟨zy⟩	ʒ ⟨j⟩		
Approximant				l	l ^j ⟨ly⟩	j ⟨y⟩		
Trill					r ^j ⟨r⟩			

- Almost all consonants come in soft (palatalized) and hard (unpalatalized) pairs.
- Plosives feature a five-way distinction between plain voiceless, aspirated voiceless, palatalized voiceless, plain voiced, and palatalized voiced.

Grammar

Byàvesh is largely fusional, with complex inflection paradigms for nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

It has relatively loose phonotactic rules. All hard consonants are valid codas, while most soft consonants are not (with /r, tɕ, ɕ, ʒ/ being the only exceptions). Certain plosive + fricative clusters are allowed in codas, though these are uncommon.

The language features a partial pitch-accent system, with pitch changes always occurring in stress syllables. Words that have an up-pitch begin low, rise at the stressed syllable, then remain high. Conversely, words with a down-pitch begin high, lower at the stressed syllable, then remain low until the end of the word. When romanized, pitch changes are marked on the stressed vowel using acute (for up-pitch) and grave (for down-pitch) accents.

PKTANNI LANGUAGE

Phonology

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i i:		u u:
Mid		(ə)	
Open		a a:	
Diphthongs	ia, iu, ai, au, ui, ua		

- Vowels feature length distinction. In the romanization, this is indicated by a simple doubling of the vowel: ⟨ii⟩, ⟨uu⟩, or ⟨aa⟩.
- /ə/ is unwritten and only semi-phonemic, but it is often pronounced to break up complex consonant clusters.

Consonants

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal		m(:)	n(:)			
Plosive	Voiceless	p	t		k	ʔ ⟨'⟩
	Voiced	b(:)	d(:)		g(:) ⟨g⟩	
Affricate			ts	tʃ ⟨ch⟩		
Fricative			s		x	h
Approximant				j ⟨y⟩		
Tap			r(:) ⟨r⟩			

- Certain consonants can be geminated (doubled). Romanized, these are marked by simply doubling the consonant: ⟨mm⟩, ⟨nn⟩, ⟨bb⟩, ⟨dd⟩, ⟨gg⟩, or ⟨rr⟩.

Grammar

Pktanni is a highly agglutinative language, compounding multiple affixes onto words to alter their meaning. This often results in very long words.

The language stands out for its odd phonotactics and complex clusters. Onsets are allowed to have up to three consecutive obstruents as long as they share voicing and alternate in direction. For example, /p/ + /k/ + /t/ involves the tongue moving backwards then forwards, and this alternation makes it valid; /p/ + /t/ + /k/ involves the tongue moving backwards twice with no alternation, making that cluster invalid. Codas can have up to two obstruents cluster in the same manner.

Pktanni suffixes are subject to front/back vowel harmony, where a suffix vowel becomes /i/ if the preceding vowel is /i/ and /u/ if it is /u/. If the preceding vowel is /a/, no harmony is triggered, and the suffix vowels retain their base quality. This harmony chains through all suffixes from left to right. The following examples take the theoretical roots *si*, *su*, and *sa* and append the suffixes *-ann* and *-i*:

- *si + ann + i > si + inn + i > siinni*
- *su + ann + i > su + unn + i > su + unn + u > suunnu*

- *sa + ann + i > saanni*

The Pktanni language also features a system of grammatical gender. Depending on how it is analyzed, it could either be considered a two-gender masculine/feminine system that applies to animate nouns, or a three-gender system of masculine animate/feminine animate/inanimate. Adjectives and determiners inflect for gender, as do most verbs (a consequence of the way most modern Pktanni verbs evolved out of verbal nouns). Animacy is determined largely semantically rather than morphologically, but it is also affected by grammar. For example, a majority of suffixes turn a noun grammatically inanimate regardless of whether it still refers to a living thing.



ZHĪRÒM LANGUAGE

Phonology

Vowels

	Front	Back
Close	i	u
Mid	e	o
Open		ɒ ⟨a⟩
Diphthongs	ei, ɔi, ou, ɒu	
Syllabic	m̩, n̩, ŋ̩, l̩	

- Syllable nuclei feature a 4-tone system that applies to both vowels and syllabic consonants. For diphthongs, the tone is marked on the first character but applies to both. These tones are:
 - Neutral: ⟨o⟩ > /o/
 - Rising: ⟨é⟩ > /e˥/
 - Falling-Rising: ⟨ĩ⟩ > /i˨˥/
 - Falling: ⟨ù⟩ > /u˨/

Consonants

		Labial	Alveolar	Post-Alveolar	Dorsal
Nasal		m	n		ŋ ⟨ng⟩
Plosive	Aspirated	pʰ ⟨p⟩	tʰ ⟨t⟩		kʰ ⟨k⟩
	Unaspirated	p ⟨b⟩	t ⟨d⟩		k ⟨g⟩
Affricate	Voiceless		ts	tʃ ⟨ch⟩	
	Voiced		dz	dʒ ⟨j⟩	
Fricative	Voiceless	f	s	ʃ ⟨sh⟩	x ⟨h⟩
	Voiced		z	ʒ ⟨zh⟩	ʁ ⟨r⟩
Approximant			l	j ⟨y⟩	

- Post-alveolar obstruents /tʃ, dʒ, ʃ, ʒ/ are realized as retroflex /tʂ, dʂ, ʂ, ʐ/ in most rural dialects.

Grammar

Zhīròm is an analytic language, featuring very few suffixes and little inflection. Most root words are one syllable, with longer words typically being a compound of two single-syllable roots. Very few individual words exceed two syllables.

The most defining trait of the language is its tone system. Despite developing tones, single consonant codas are not uncommon in the language. Most often, they are nasals or approximants, but any consonant can appear in a syllable coda.

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