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# Chapter one, the Core's Crusade

## Dream aspect

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# Introduction



# Short Lexicon

## Key words and local flavor

**Naakinis:** In the Frilin language, "Naakinis" refers to something awakened and immense. In our terms, it could mean "conscious planet." Because it goes completely against their views of the world, however, the Gnaths have banished this word from their language. To the Gnaths, the idea of a large, spherical object floating in orbit for no apparent reason seems a weak theory and to award it a conscience is ludicrous. Gnaths don't understand why something conscious would spin in circles millennia after millennia without ever tiring. Furthermore, while they believe it may be possible to prove the necessity of the planet's movement, to justify its consciousness is a seemingly impossible task. The Frilins, Inaïs and Emovans, plus some Judges and Judicators, however, still maintain a belief in Her, Naakinis. The Frilins, Inaïs and the Emovans can justify their faith in Her because they are emotional characters that need spirituality. The Judges and Judicators, however, believe in Her for a different reason. They recognize that their strength, impressive even among Echoes, must exist for a reason. And they believe that the conscious planet Naakinis has given them these powers, as She is the one who directs and makes sense of the world. It is the Laws of the Judges and the Reincarnation of the Judicators that prevent the Gnaths from discarding this concept entirely.

## Kaïnas

The game takes place on Kaïnas, a circle of light nearly 30,000 miles in diameter. This circle of light is but a small part of the planet called Naakinis, whose size is perhaps best left unknown... Surrounding Kaïnas is an intangible black wall called the Sofe, which rises over 40 miles high. Due to some of Kaïnas' peculiarities, it is assumed that other "areas of light" (circular or not) exist, and that there might be other sentient beings in these areas.

## Pendulum

Light, instead of being provided by a sun, originates from a Pendulum, a blue glowing sphere (which, when seen from the ground, appears to be an inch wide). The Pendulum oscillates as if it were anchored to the center of Naakinis by an invisible cord. The Pendulum waxes and wanes from east to west, then west to east, disappearing behind the Sofe for a few hours. The light shed by the Pendulum does not so much provide luminosity as it provides stability: reality on Kaïnas is a fragile concept. The Sofe is simply a region on which reality cannot get a hold: the Pendulum's light is probably too weak for the Sofe's density.

## The Dream

When the Pendulum disappears behind the Sofe, its light can no longer reach Kaïnas. As less and less light is shed on Kaïnas, a phenomenon called "the Dream" occurs. As the Pendulum wanes in the east, the western cities feel the Dream rise sooner than the eastern cities (and inversely so). As long as a bit of light remains, the Dream lingers faintly. When no light is left, the Dream becomes real. The Dream is the superimposition of the dream world onto reality, which it does not replace or dominate. Instead, the Dream overlaps onto reality (to different extents). Regardless of its effects, the Dream fades away a dawn, leaving no trace at all – other than frightened faces and, perhaps, a few dead bodies...

## The Day

On Kaïnas, daylight lasts twenty hours, calculated from the moment the Dream and the darkness start to fade (because of the high quantity of Kioux, trees miles high, the Pendulum can rarely be seen as the leaves and branches cover the sky almost entirely in most places). Because of the Dream, mornings on Kaïnas are an occasion to revel for a few minutes before reality bites back... Time being more difficult, if not impossible, to measure during the Dream, it is estimated that the Dream lasts ten hours. For this reason, Dream (night) workers' work shifts last "from dusk 'til dawn", meaning that sometimes they may happen to work a little more and other times, a little less – depending on the fluctuations of the Dream. During the twenty hours of daylight, most people work between ten (best situations) and fifteen hours (normal situations). The poorest people, those nearest to slavery in some far flung cities, are sometimes forced to work through the twenty hours of daylight (all races on Kaïnas are much more resilient than humans). On Kaïnas, weeks are five days long (regulated by the people's need for orpee, a vital resource that all but one race must eat weekly or die).

## The era

The majority of the residents of Kaïnas live in a world so dangerous (matching the occult era of the medieval ages to the proletarian revolution of the late 1800's in our history) that anything outside their immediate surroundings is of no concern to them. Those who live on Kioux (huge trees that grow miles high) built platforms at different heights, and thus live in "layered" cites. Those citizens, in safty, are concerned with things outside their immediate world. The

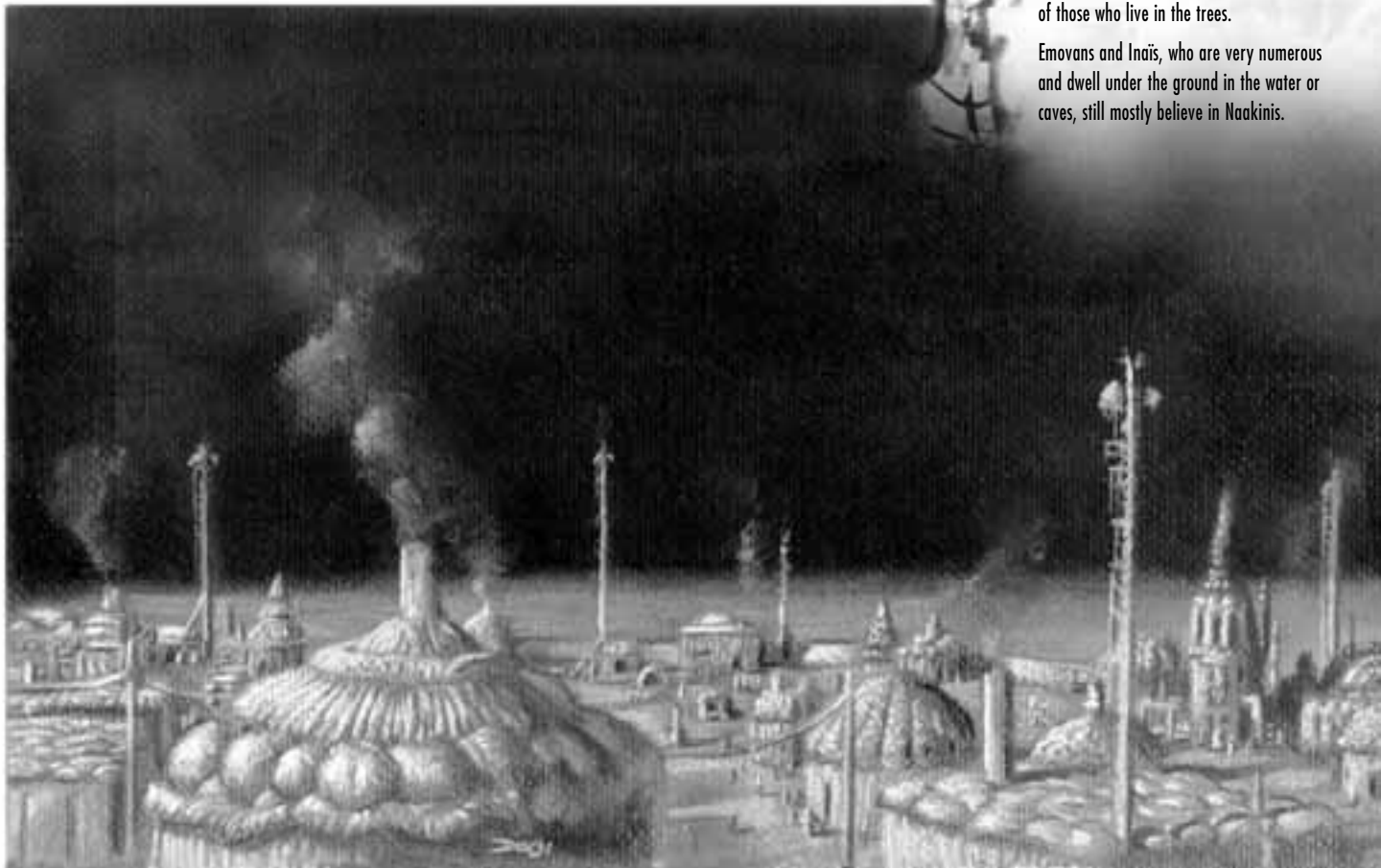
higher the platform and the richer, more civilized and technologically advanced society there is. They rule this world from above and see the masses below as nothing but a workforce. They don't live in a medieval world. Rather, they live in an era of ever evolving science and technology. They don't have to fight for survival with common dangers of everyday life. Instead they are occupied with pursuing scientific research or they quest for power. Of course, these cities have many levels and there are many differences between the first and last platforms. The first platforms are often Renaissance-like. The next few levels are more industrial and some of the highest platforms are, in their own way, very much like our modern world. Therefore, unless people are lucky and rich, they do not dwell on philosophy, science or technology because they are too absorbed in daily survival.

## Sofe

The potential for scientific discovery by the people on Kaïnas is limited by the Sofe; a black, ethereal (but solid) wall that entirely surrounds them. The total surface covered by light averages fifty thousand miles, five times the Earth's surface if it were flat. The fact that the Soleks recently (three hundred years ago) emerged from the Sofe proves that it isn't actually the end of the world. The Soleks are the only race who have been able to survive traveling into the Sofe. When the Soleks returned to Kaïnas, the inhabitants believed that they must have come from another light zone because, although the Soleks share the same language and cultural roots as everyone else, no one remembered them. They must have left a very long time ago and therefore have been forgotten and upon their return, mistaken for people of another light zone. For most, that the Soleks appeared is enough proof that the space "around" is just like the space "above" and that, with the appropriate means of travel, anyone can reach other civilizations in far flung regions of the world. (Note: "Kaïnas" refers to the part of the universe that is light and "world" refers to everything outside this realm of light.)

**Kaïnas:** Created by the Gnaths to replace the word "Naakinis". This word first meant territory, region, frontier or limit. The Gnaths used it to define the circle of light in which they live. Outside the circle of light is the Sofe. They did not believe in a greater whole that had unknown purpose. Because their view was narrower than that of the Frilins, it was quickly accepted by most as a more manageable explanation of their world. After the Gnath's view became prominent, most people forgot the dualistic visions of Naakinis and Kaïnas. Soon, the two words were only used in reference to the differing ecosystems. People presume that they live on Kaïnas and that "Naakinis," the planetary goddess, is a Frilin myth (albeit a well-established one). Those few who realize that everything cannot be explained by the Kaïnasian view of the world believe that the Frilins, in the words of Ekoya, "saw something real, but explained it incorrectly. In order to create a new explanation of the universe, both points of view would necessarily have to be re-interpreted." To sum up, the word "Kaïnas" now refers to both the small ecosystem (the geographic region limited by the Sofe) and the mindset of those who live in the trees.

Emovans and Inaïs, who are very numerous and dwell under the ground in the water or caves, still mostly believe in Naakinis.





**Orpee:** It is the source of life (and power) on Naakinis. Orpee looks like a small fruit and is found deep underground. It contains efflow in small, edible quantities. Its greatest particularity is that no other known resource on Kaïnas contains efflow. Everybody needs efflow to survive, therefore orpee is a very valuable and highly prized. There are ten known sources of orpee on Kaïnas. These sources are all controlled by the Inaïs, the only race able to go deep enough underground to gather orpee.

**Eflow:** Most people do not understand what efflow is or how it keeps them alive. Rather, the masses believe that orpee is the source of their survival. Eflow exists everywhere, but in such small quantities that it is practically impossible to detect. Eflow gives life if it is infused into a body, and causes death if it is completely removed from a body. Whenever the efflow in someone's body becomes scarce, that person panics and will do anything possible to regain his health. Echoes are able to recognize efflow powers and use it for more than just maintaining their existence. Echoes use efflow to activate their Gift's powers, and thus require more orpee (or efflow) than regular people.

**Echoes:** These rare individuals manifest a Gift and a Whisper at some point in their life, identifying them as Echoes and connecting them to a specific type, be it War Engine, Walker or Judge. Many scientists believe that Echoes stand on the edge of two worlds, on the axes of two ecosystems (Naakinis and Kaïnas) because they are all born in the Kaïnas system and slowly evolve towards the Naakinis. Echoes are the most important phenomenon of this universe and are found everywhere in high spheres of power. Echoes have transformed the world with their discoveries, rulings and feats. Because there is only one for every ten thousand people, each time an Echo Awakens he has to hide his nature carefully to avoid jealousy. The Echo phenomenon can be discussed at length, but more details will appear over the course of the book.

## Within This world

In Kaïnas, ten races live together and share the same basic culture, with three exceptions; the Inaïs, the Yakis and the Emovans. Inaïs live in immense underground caves lit by millions of artificial lights. Yakis are nomads living in tribes and Emovans live miles below the surface in underground rivers, lakes, seas and oceans. All ten races share the same two languages: Frilin and Gnath. The source of the Gnath language is Frilin, as they were supposedly the first race on Kaïnas.

Every culture, determined more by geographic location than by race, develops its own dialect. Gnaths, Odwoanes and Volkois are more gregarious than other races and tend to gather in cities. Nayans are scattered wherever there are sentient beings. Upon their return, Soleks created tribes, similar to the Yakis, and they are now gradually re-integrating into society, either by joining "families" or becoming nomads. Zins are extremely rare, and therefore are not a real consideration in Kaïnas.

Each of these races or ethnicities (ethnicity, on Naakinis, is a conglomeration of sedentary people in a given place where location, not race, is the determining factor) provides a piece of the cultural puzzle to this world, be it how they talk, eat, act, mate (for those who do) the morals and ethics they adopt, their thought processes, arts and crafts and the knowledge they value most. Although these factors are strongly influenced by an individual's race, when culture is fairly embedded in a certain location, the nature and race of the individual growing within the culture is clearly affected by it.

*As the dust falls to the ground, the sculptor's creation is nearly complete. Holding our breath, we brush away any leftover dust ...The next part of the introduction will take a closer look at the universe before you actually immerse yourself in it. As we will use some terms specific to the world that are not explained here, we recommend you take a little journey through this book to get familiar with them. Check out the Lexicon, Races and Echoes—save the powers for another time...*

## Binary geography

On Naakinis, there are two kinds of ecosystems cohabiting one surface. First, there's the giant ecosystem that belongs to Naakinis. It's made up of huge trees, the Kioux, which are miles tall and have roots and branches that cover immense surfaces on the ground and in the sky. This ecosystem also has large caverns hundreds of meters deep that shelter millions of Inaïs and beasts. The second ecosystem, the Kaïnas system, is filled with what earthlings consider "normalized" trees growing on the branches of Kioux and on the ground, creating forests that resemble that of earth's. The animals and beasts inhabiting these forests range from the size of a rabbit to that of an elephant. The animals of Kaïnas never grow as large as those of the Naakinis.

Biologists and evolutionary scientists believe that the Naakinis ecosystem came first and then, at some unknown point in time, the Kaïnas ecosystem emerged, overlapping the Naakinis ecosystem without causing its disappearance. To clarify, Kaïnas is a smaller ecosystem that grow faster but has a shorter life span than the Naakinis system. It is a microcosm of a bigger ecosystem that has existed for many years (Kioux can live for about a hundred thousand years).

Walking within these lands will make you feel at ease with the scale of things (Kaïnas) and, at the same time, you'll feel like the tiniest dwarf ever created by Mother Nature (Naakinis). This is probably what led the Gnaths to first climb a

Kioux, clear it of its dangerous fauna and make it hospitable enough to construct cities on. When visualizing this landscape, you must remember all the immense underground rivers and seas, which look like the veins of an incredible giant. The Yakis travel the lands above on huoras, gigantic beasts that can carry entire families and their houses on their backs. There are also northern mountains with incredible peaks. But most important to picture are the Kioux every few miles, their trunk hundreds of meters wide. They are an overwhelming presence, with roots that scar the ground and branches and leaves that hide the sky.

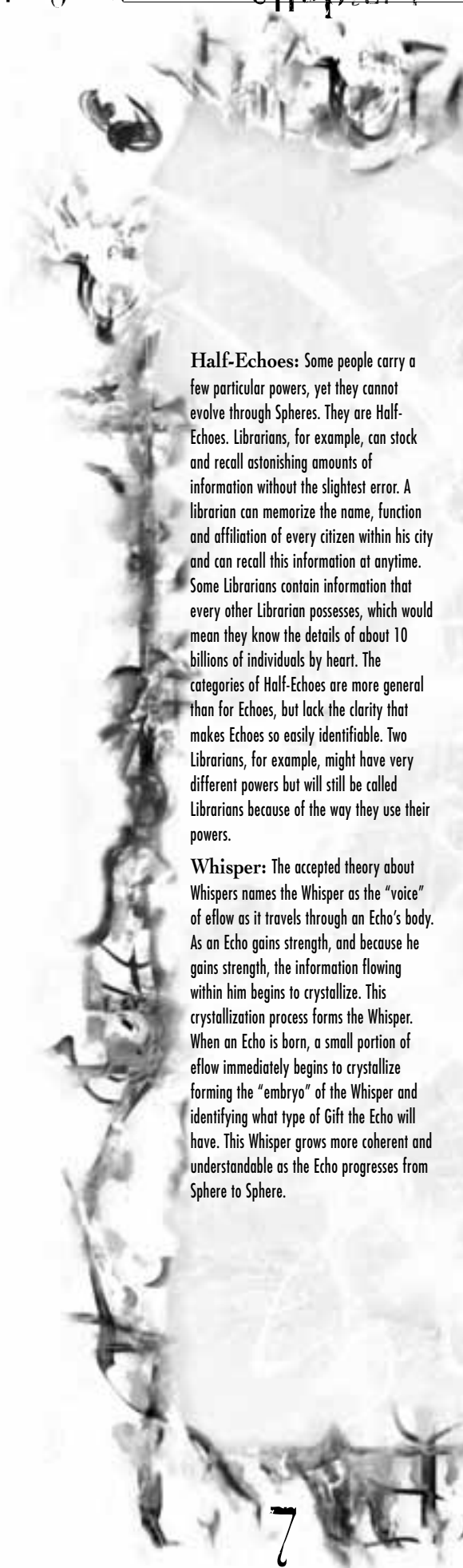
Those who live in Kaïnas constantly feel the Kioux' overshadowing presence and much of their efforts are focused on trying to forget it. If a traveler leaves his city for the first time, for example, he'll leave behind the many years of darkness in which he lived under the shadows of the platforms above, in the slums or perhaps on the first or second platform. When he returns, he'll understand all the pressure the platforms generate and he will realize the clear injustice that hovers above his head.

At first, the difference between earth and Kaïnas might seem trivial. But, despite thousands of years of living in Kaïnas, its inhabitants still feel like small insects on the back of a huge beast from another world. For example, the laws by which the Kioux grow are not the same as other trees; it is not merely a giant species of an ordinary tree. Inaïs accept the fact they live in caves way too big to fit their natural environment, housing millions in each cave. Gnaths, on the other hand, wish to dominate the Kioux because they feel a need to control their environment rather than let it dominate them.

Every time someone sees a Kioux, he gets an uneasy feeling and something tells him "this is not my place". The Core, for example, has built his spiritual strength on this concept. By replacing the Naakinis goddess of the Frilins with a more rational world based on perception and experience, the Core has succeeded in reducing the Naakinisian' environment to a myriad of smaller facets. It is as though the Core Himself had taken an image too big to be observed and traced lines on it to create a mosaic, enabling the image to be viewed one part at a time.

Most of the rich cities and towns are constructed in the trunks of Kioux because they offer great protection from every kind of ground assault. These cities keep active slums beneath them and those that dwell in these slums, unless they are brave and experienced fighters, live in a constant state of fear. Of course, the larger a slum is, the less chance it has of being attacked by beasts. Therefore, old cities with hundreds of thousands of citizens are relatively safe. Newer cities generally have a difficult time for at least fifty years, the time it takes for two generations to grow and for people to come from other places and try their luck within the new city.

Because of these dangers, people get easily paranoid in the slums. They are accustomed to violence and consider it normal. Cruelty is also considered natural, be it only because of everyone's need for orpee. However, since the Core Himself came to power, things have changed because he forces every city within his Domain to build and maintain very solid barriers around their cities. He accomplishes this task by hiring teams of hard-core workers, mostly Volkoïs, to assist the Lords in building fortifications. And while cities are now safer, life is still dangerous for those on the frontiers.



**Half-Echoes:** Some people carry a few particular powers, yet they cannot evolve through Spheres. They are Half-Echoes. Librarians, for example, can stock and recall astonishing amounts of information without the slightest error. A librarian can memorize the name, function and affiliation of every citizen within his city and can recall this information at anytime. Some Librarians contain information that every other Librarian possesses, which would mean they know the details of about 10 billions of individuals by heart. The categories of Half-Echoes are more general than for Echoes, but lack the clarity that makes Echoes so easily identifiable. Two Librarians, for example, might have very different powers but will still be called Librarians because of the way they use their powers.

**Whisper:** The accepted theory about Whispers names the Whisper as the "voice" of efflow as it travels through an Echo's body. As an Echo gains strength, and because he gains strength, the information flowing within him begins to crystallize. This crystallization process forms the Whisper. When an Echo is born, a small portion of efflow immediately begins to crystallize forming the "embryo" of the Whisper and identifying what type of Gift the Echo will have. This Whisper grows more coherent and understandable as the Echo progresses from Sphere to Sphere.

**Spheres, Gifts and Powers:**

The term "Sphere" is used to distinguish between levels of an Echo's evolution. The more strength he gains, the more knowledge he gains about the world around him, his powers and the use of his Gift. When an Echo is born, he starts his life in the first Sphere. Through experience, he evolved to the second Sphere, where certain powers manifest themselves. The more he grows, the more he learns about the eflow that circulates in his veins. There are currently only five known Spheres. Although each Echo is different, the strength of body and mind needed to surpass the second Sphere is too great for many Echoes. Less than 5% of Echoes reach the third level. An Echo reaching the third Sphere does not necessarily manifest the same powers as any other Echo at the same level. Furthermore, although it is not always evident what Sphere an Echo has obtained, a third Sphere Echo's confidence and mannerisms clearly indicate that he is an Echo and very powerful.

**Relics:** Echoes create their own relics.

These relics serve as Eflow containers, carrying extra stores of Eflow for Echoes so they will not risk getting Eflow burns. Although relics are safer to use than Eflow within the body, the Eflow within a relic quickly loses its "freshness" and becomes dormant (Echoes have special cases into which they put orpee that then have their eflow absorbed by the relic). Dormant Eflow is harder to use or, more precisely, less effective, but most Echoes still prefer this method because using their own Eflow is dangerous. A fight can erupt at anytime and Eflow drains out of a wounded body with great speed.

## Geography

Kaīnas is mostly covered by jungle and forest, therefore the most common material is wood. Only in the north can you find mountainous peaks and the single surface ocean of this world is situated in the northeast. Everywhere else the land is flat and filled with trees from both realms. Should you leave the safety of your town or city, you'll find a solid sedimentary ground.

## The Dream and The Day

When the Pendulum disappears it is called the Dream. Physically, we could call it "night" for there is an absence of light for a certain number of hours but, when we look more closely, this analogy crumbles. When the Dream comes, everything changes to resemble a dream-like state. Most of the time (approximately 60%), the changes are subtle and soft and intangible. The outline of things blur, colors fade and sounds become distorted. But occasionally (30%) things become more like real dreams and strange phenomena can occur. During this state, you might see moving shadows, hear screams coming from nowhere or feel texture of something transform (wood feels like bone). In fact, during this part of Dream, many psychotropic hallucinations may occur. In remaining 10% of Dream states, manifestations are strongly physical and can be very dangerous. Corpses can turn into living dead and walk around. Walls become liquid and change shape and screams become physical. Two triggers of (strong) dreams have been found to date: the quantity of people around (likely linked to conscience) and the degree of emotional strength in a given area. Places lacking history, where everything is always normal and quiet, are less likely to suffer the effects of such Dreams than places full of passion such as war fields and arenas. Dreams will be discussed further in another section.

The effect of such abnormal nights makes for a very different night-life... Adventurers who, after rough day, sleep in an unprotected inn will always take turns being on guard, exactly as if they were in the wilderness. With time, many also learn to predict how the Dream will be the next day, similar to elderly people who can predict the weather by their rheumatism. Inhabitants of Kaīnas are resigned to putting up with Dream states out of habit; they have never known another way. For them, to see their fears materialize is something horrible but it does not have the same repercussions as human dreams. When the Dream is strong, the subject is not concerned with panic but with security measures, tension and aggressiveness. The fact that more murders happen during these nights than at any other time reinforces this point.





## The wilderness

No one is innocent to the dangers of this environment. Many things that are taken for granted on earth cannot be in this world. For example, going for a ride in the forest is only possible within a few miles of the cities and only when accompanied by guards to protect you, not necessarily from creatures but from thieves and rogues. If you venture out any further, the creatures you might encounter are often too dangerous to handle unless you are fully trained to fight them (there's no comparison between fighting a sentient being with a head, two legs and two arms, and fighting a raging "gnasher" with a six-foot long jaw and very sharp teeth). The tension emerging from this external environment makes Kaïnas resemble our Jurassic era in way. Imagine what it would be like to take a walk with T-rexes and other flesh-eating dinosaurs in the vicinity. People live in civilized surroundings and are content to do so if only for the protection it affords them. And although they exist, people who live in small villages without the protection of the masses are universally regarded as freaks. For example the Yakis, being nomadic, are regularly exposed to danger and many would not want to risk living the way they do. Those who become members of a Yaki tribe often have to sacrifice comfort for protection, because the armor the Yakis wear help them a lot to survive during their travel, but is very burdensome.

So with the combination of the Dream and the dangers of the surrounding wilderness, people can hardly develop a positive perception of the world in which they live. It seems as though everything is out to get them, be it flesh-eating creatures, the Dream, the leaders on a higher platform or the orpee, which they must constantly seek in order to survive.



**Precepts:** The Judge Precepts are the highest authority on Kaïnas and never doubted or interfered with. They represent the most fundamental and supreme rules and are, quite surprisingly, the laws the Core decided to keep as his government's when he came to power. By retaining these laws, the Core melded Kaïnas and Naakinis law for the first time (since the Judges think of themselves as children of Naakinis).

**The Aran world:** Stranger than the Dream and more distant, Aran does not seem to be connected with Kaïnas reality because its presence can only be felt where the Pendulum's light cannot reach; deep under the water or below the canopy formed by the dense foliage of some forests and jungles (a Kioux can sometimes have such dense foliage at its top that Aran domains exist within.). The creatures that exist in these domains obey different laws than the people of Kaïnas and their functions, actions and goals have not yet been understood by anybody, including the Core. Most noticeably, anyone from Kaïnas who succeeds in reaching this territory automatically must leave all inorganic matter at the entrance. Once inorganic material has entered Aran, it loses its substance and disintegrates into nothing before the bearer's eyes.

## More of a technical matter

**Kioux:** These are the tallest trees found on Kāinas, often reaching heights of fifteen miles and a circumference of about five miles. With so many Kioux at such close proximity, their branches interweave to block out most light, creating a ceiling of sorts. The ground beneath the Kioux is made up of their roots. Their leaves, being almost transparent at the top, create a soft green iridescent sky with thin rays of light that penetrate towards the ground, but rarely reach it in taller Kioux. This is why the cities built on the Kioux live mostly in shadow.

The biggest Kioux on Kāinas is Khaī-Bhek's, which is 20 miles tall and six miles at the trunk's base. Most new cities are constructed on Kioux because they offer shelter from dangerous beasts that lurk on the ground. Each Kioux is home to many different types of creatures, from those who live high in the tree's branches to those who walk up and down the trunk, perpendicular to the ground. One of every hundred Kioux has almost perfectly horizontal branches. When a tree of this type is found, political battles are often waged to determine who should construct new cities on it.

Kioux are also a great source of raw material. The inhabitants of a Kioux can use all the wood, resin, leaves, vines and small critters they find on the tree. The wood can be used for construction purposes while resin is better for carving more specific tools such as swords. Leaves are made into leather armor by taking two layers and weaving them together. They also serve as rainproof rooftops and clothes (the higher in the tree you go, the thinner the leaves). Vines are woven into ropes and used to lash other structures. Critters found on Kioux provide meat, domestic animals beasts of burden to work the fields of crops growing vertically up and down the trees.





Chapter

Races



# Emovans

## Reproduction

Pregnant female Emovans migrate to aquatic cities to lay their eggs deep underwater. Groups of females share tasks including watching over each other's eggs. During this time, each group is guarded over by powerful Emovan, Aran and Dream warriors. Most females can only breed once in their lifetime, so these breeding grounds are as sacred as the Emovan store of orpee. Usually, a female will lay between ten to fifty eggs, with eighty percent of her offspring surviving to maturity. This high survival rate is partially due to the high security and supervision Emovan eggs receive. As a result, the Emovan population has grown dramatically in the last two centuries, and they recently have begun to migrate northwards.

*Ebone, great Emovan weaponsmith, is painted by the famous Gnath artist Nay Xeulor, after his most renowned crafting prowess; a perfect full body plate of perfectly merged "Blood" and sastak !*





# Inaïs

## About their hearths

The Inaïs live in huge caves, 5 to 10 miles underground, about halfway between the Emovans' watery home and above ground. Within these caves are hearths in which the Inaïs make their homes. Each hearth (there are ten) has an entrance to dark, cold caves that lead to orpee mines, thousands of miles below the surface. Only the oldest and most powerful Inaïs can access the orpee supply.

The hearths are faintly lit by tiny particles that filter through the trees, roots, earth and rocks to reach the Inaïs caves. Although the Pendulum is far away, its rays have the ability to penetrate many obstacles and for many millions of miles. This light is supplemented with the reflected red glow of orpee torches that bounce off the shiny bits of sastak embedded in the cave roof and walls. The result is a lounge-like atmosphere where soft red light spreads itself gently around the rooms, leaving darkened corners everywhere.

## The Dream

Inaïs are fit for a serene and comfortable life with the Dream, for the shapes the Dream takes at night are always gossamer and quiet. Because daylight does not shine brightly into their caves, it always seems as though the Dream lingers continuously, making corners blur and echoes reverberate for hours. The Dream is not strong or dangerous in the caves and therefore the Inaïs seem to live at one with it, absorbing its diversity by becoming similar to the Dream in body (an Inaïs is made up of incredibly soft, muted colors and outlines).

## About the strange invulnerability of the Inaïs

### integrity and passion

The Inaïs are almost the complete opposite of the Gnaths in every way. They are the embodiment of well being, peace and harmony. Consuming eflow is absolute bliss for an Inaïs, and it flows through their veins as smoothly as silk. They have a deep-seated source of warmth and energy within themselves that helps them face any obstacle, attain any goal and endure anything without being broken. It is impossible to defeat this inner energy of spirit that the Inaïs possess. If you torture them, for example, they will suffer similar reactions to other races; cry, scream, wish for their death and beg. When the torture is over, however, they will not be scarred or changed in any way. Unlike other races, they do not have to give up part of themselves to imbue themselves with more willpower. This is why they are considered the mightiest of all races.



# Nayans

## Childhood

Nayans are born with a moist, almost liquid skin of the most beautiful deep blue color. Their eyes reflect the soft glow of the Pendulum's shadow on the northern ocean. Young Nayans are "concentrate essence of Nayans"—energetic whirlwinds of activity until they mature and their energies are directed towards some defined direction or goal.

There is no definitive Nayan society since they are dispersed throughout the populated areas of the realm. Instead, they share and accept the culture of the city, town, platform, tribe or village in which they live, raising their children (usually three or four over a 50-year period) by local customs. Although this may contradict the values and attitudes of the parents' education, as long as it is not perceived as harmful, children learn from the culture that surrounds them. The Withered, for example, can never participate in the education of children because they are harmful; they are too depressing too early on in a Nayan's life. But these Withered are not shunned either. Parents do not remove their children from the vicinity of Withered Nayans because it is part of a Nayan's education to learn to be open-minded, to see and understand everything and everyone around them. It is not beneficial to a Nayan to be naive but it is important that they be impartial.



## Soleks

### Out of the Sofe

*In the year 2508, two hundred and fifty years before the Core came to power, a huge tribe emerged from the Sofe. Their bodies were scarred and distorted by wounds, disease and mutations. Their skin was as black as ink and no matter how hard you stared, you could not locate their eyes. They emerged from the Sofe, a million strong, silent and brooding. Their leader marched a hundred or so yards ahead of the immense mob, tall and stoic. She was obviously an Overlord. The armor that covered her body appeared to be made of spines and strange Sofe roots. It moved of its own will as she stood there, silently, glancing neither right nor left.*





# Volkois

## History

1343-01: Scouts return from the frontiers of the Sofe. Invaders from the Sofe are slowly marching, seemingly towards Khaï-Bhek, where the Empress lives and reigns.

1343-02: A ring of Gnath and Frilin Echo scientists offer their services to the Empress. They have created an egg filled with exceptional nutrients and energy so that the creature emerging from it can grow to its full potential in only three months. The manufactured and cloned eggs produce war machines unlike anything seen before. The ethical questions concerning breeding of a new race are ignored because the solution seems so promising.

*Mi'shere, the legendary Fourth Sphere Overlord, standing up a hill and looking toward his opponent's troops. It is said that he saw over 300 battles and is over 450 years old !*



# Echoes

Chapter 3

MIND CHEMIST





## Newborns

Mind Chemists, once they obtain the skill of being able to penetrate a Mind, are overwhelmed by the experience. They are thrust into a completely new and unexplored universe. Some adapt easily to the landscape of the Mind while others become, over a period of years, completely paranoid. Successful Mind Walkers explore the Mind exactly as a Walker explores the territory of Kainas. Their goal is to learn more about the Mind in order to help those who suffer from afflictions of the Mind. These Chemists, who basically become walking scalpels, inspire fear in the entire population.

There are millions of secrets locked within the Mind that we Mind Chemists do not understand and cannot decode. Why and how are Mind Creatures born, for example? We are explorers of a new world; Mind Chemists are a new breed, so there is no history, no documented evidence or a "wise one" who can teach us age-old Mind Walking methods. We are as vulnerable in the Mind of an individual as they are in reality.

Chapter

Echoes



### The Mind and Doubt

The Mind is a fascinating construction. It is home to an individual's memories, ideas, fears and dreams. Amazingly, mental illness manifests itself in various physical forms. Mind Chemists struggle with the paradox of whether the idea of a Mind gives birth to the Mind or is it the Mind that gives birth to the idea of itself?

Uncovering the truth about a Mind's functioning is a tall order. Mind Chemists must learn early on to recognize that in the Mind, everything can be different, even if they seem similar to what we know as "reality." Within the Mind, one is constantly losing touch with "fundamental reality" as it blurs, fades and disappears entirely. All the laws of psychology that we know disappear as well with the discovery of a new reality that shines new light on fundamental reality. Mind Chemist will learn and understand these new realities in order to better explain the workings of the Mind.

### Prismatic

Morals, Ethics, Truth, Objectivity and Subjectivity; these are the structures Mind Chemists have to mold into entirely different shapes in order to begin understanding how the Mind function. If you can figure out how to embrace Truth as a three-dimensional whole without ignoring or being blind to any of its facets, you have succeeded in reaching a Mind Chemist's point of departure.

### Sense

We struggle with trying to make sense of our thoughts, of any Mind's thoughts. How can we tell the difference between a "fake" and real thought? How does one separate himself from the primal, instinctive self that has thoughts rooted in fear? Is it possible to free ourselves from these chains in order to think freely on our own, devoid of baggage?

### Emotions

What makes an emotion true or false, real or fake? If a feeling is evoked by external stimulus feels as real as one that comes from within, is it a false emotion? What tools do we use to judge the validity of an emotion; Mind or instinct? What is the role of conscience in emotion? Is it merely a buffer to your intellect? Do we suffer more than animals and beasts because we have a conscience? Is this conscience meant to "show" us our inner beast?

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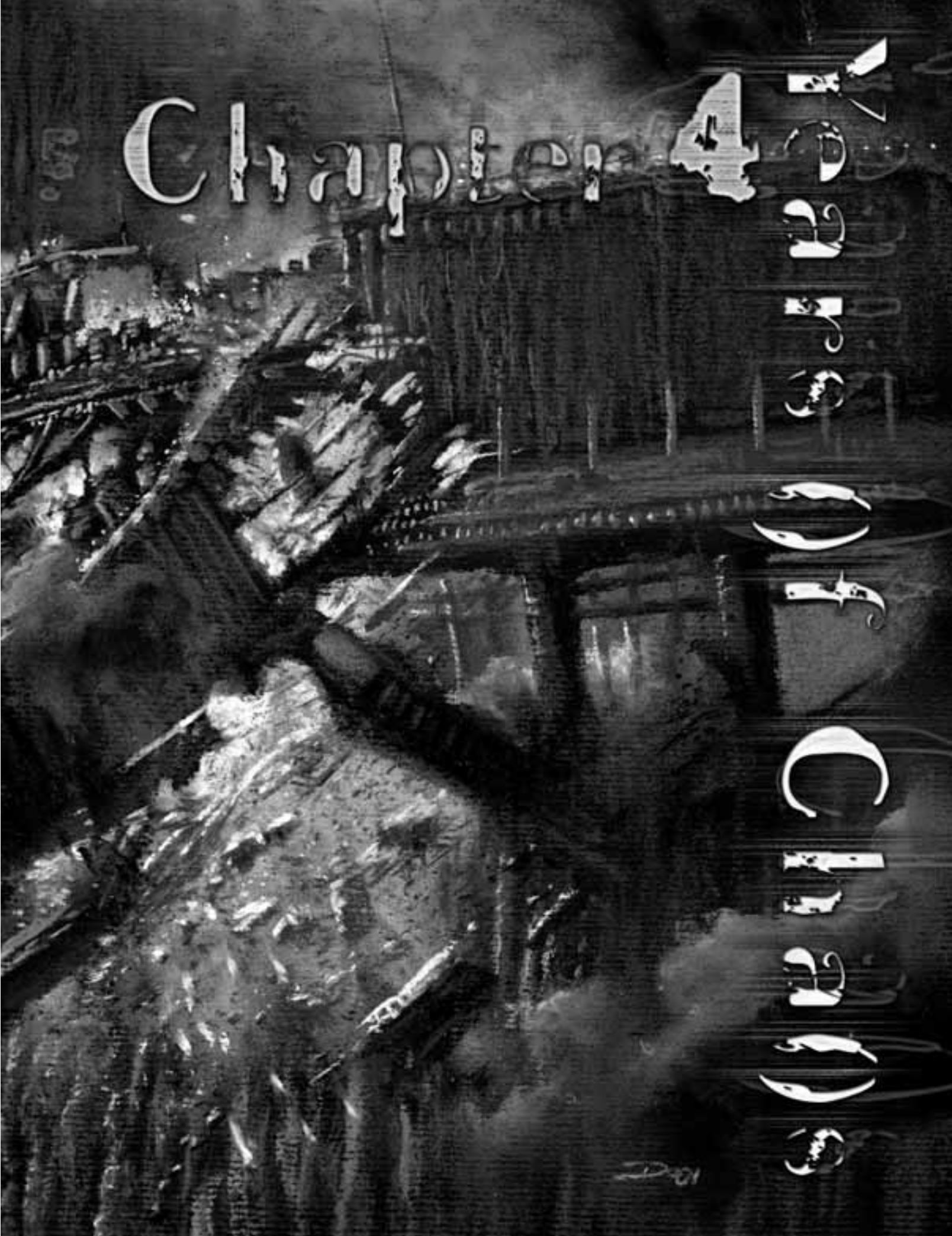
# Chapter 4

THE  
MOUNTAIN

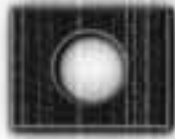
AND  
THE

VALLEY

OF  
THE  
MOUNTAIN



# Introducing the Core



*This introduction is the work of Loka'Jun, Nayan historian.*

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Before Droliath-Estolah came to power, there had been nearly 200 attempts to overthrow the Frilin Council of Twenty. Each of the perpetrators tried and failed to overcome the Council by force. Droliath-Estolah, however, had a different idea about how to gain control of the Empire. Instead of using force, he wisely requested an interview with the Frilin Council. Five days later, negotiations ended as Droliath won the Frilins over. He proudly strode into the Empress's chamber with the entire Council following him submissively. Even the most powerful Frilin, Psykere the Preservator, walked in with his head bowed. Droliath was in control.

The changes that Droliath has brought about in the twenty years since the beginning of his reign are astonishing, even for a quick-moving Gnath. A vast network to secure centralized orpee distribution was organized. What was once a chaotic system now runs smoothly along fortified highways, through Khaï-Bhek to outlying areas. All employees of the Core's Orpee Distribution System (CODS) are 100% loyal and dedicated to their jobs.

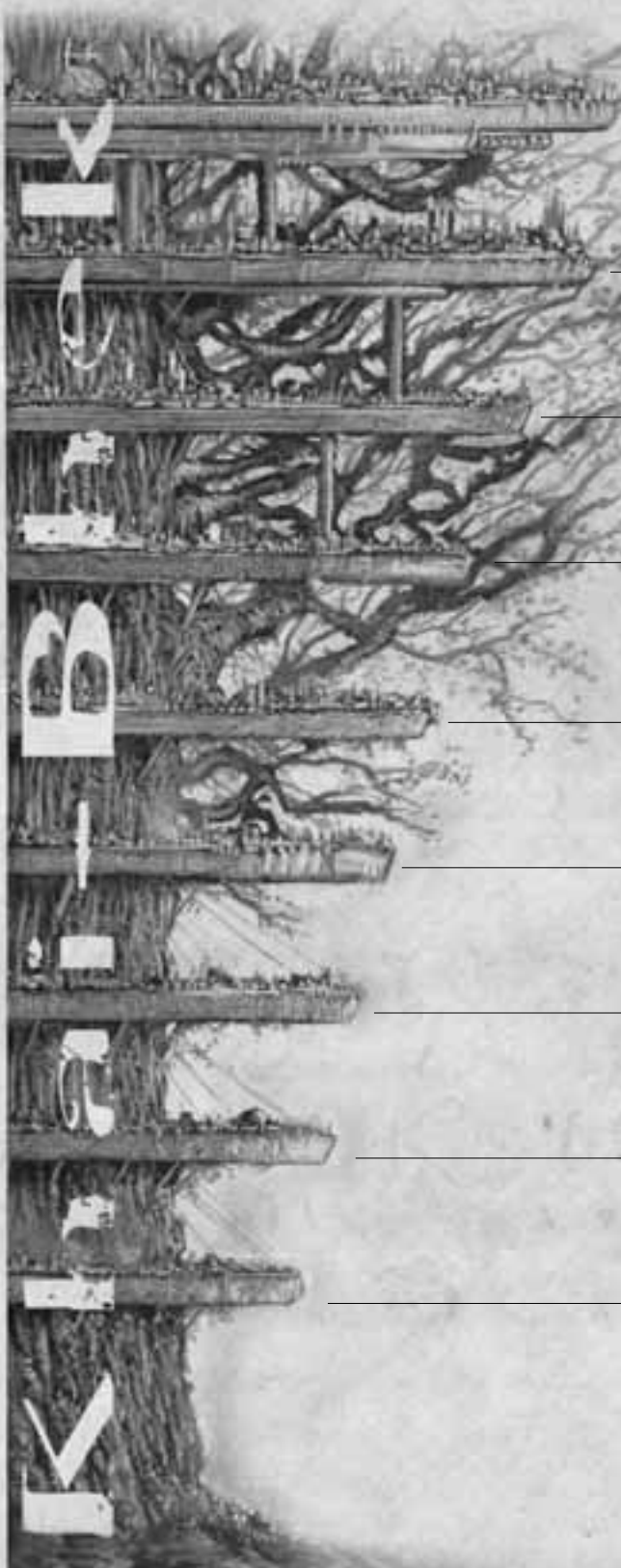
There is no orpee loss and little corruption in this well-oiled system.

With everyone so pleased with new orpee distribution, Droliath took the next step in his grand scheme and declared himself supreme ruler, the Core Himself. People were quick to adapt to the Core's reign, as it was more secure, safer and more stable than that of the Empress. That he wanted to call himself the Core Himself seemed undaunting to his followers. Most easily accepted him and his regime.

The Core Himself instated the Judge's Laws system to synchronize the Naakinis and Kaïnas way of life. All creatures were punishable under the same set of rules. Droliath encouraged the conquered people to listen to his wisdom:

*"Leave everything that can't help build the future behind. What you cannot hold on to, you cannot use. Live by what you know, not what you believe. Let curiosity lead you to learn more. On these foundations will we erect a new society."*





## YEAR 110

The First Century of the Core  
After the Years of chaos

### OFFICIAL FLAGS AND SYMBOLS OF THE CORE

■ Core's Domain

10BP

◊ Core's Army

◊ Core's Bank

⊠ CORE  
Himself  
The CORE Himself

⊠ CERM  
Core's Economical Ressource  
Management

⊠ CPRM  
Core's Political Ressource  
Management

⊠ CSRM  
Core's Social Ressource  
Management

### INDUSTRIES

⊠ BES  
Basic Economic Society

⊠ IAS  
Intermediate Economic Society

⊠ AES  
Advanced Economic Society

⊠ SES  
Superior Economic Society

Ninth Plate  
Population: 5 000 000  
Mortality: 0.1%/year  
Leasure: 10%

Eighth Plate  
Population: 10 000 000  
Mortality: 0.1%/year  
Leasure: 9%

Seventh Plate  
Population: 15 000 000  
Mortality: 0.2%/month  
Leasure: 7%

Sixth Plate  
Population: 20 000 000  
Mortality: 0.3%/month  
Leasure: 5%

Fifth Plate  
Population: 20 000 000  
Mortality: 0.3%/month  
Leisure: 4%

Fourth Plate  
Population: 26 000 000  
Mortality: 0.4%/month  
Leasure: 4%

Third Plate  
Population: 25 000 000  
Mortality: 0.7%/month  
Leasure: 1%

Second Plate  
Population: 12 000 000  
Mortality: 0.6%/month  
Leasure: 0%

First Plate  
Population: 10 000 000  
Mortality: 0.7%/month  
Leasure: 0%

## THE CORE CHRONOLOGY

- 0 Droliath Estolah comes to power.
- 2 Droliath establishes CODS, centralized orpee distribution system.
- 5 Droliath organizes his future government, creates alliances, hires the Scourge to be his First Lieutenant.
- 10 Droliath officially announces the creation of the Core. He becomes known as the Core Himself.
- 15 The Core Himself spends five years promotes the Law of the Judges, setting up communication between his government and his people.
- 20 Order has been restored to the Empire. Political factions spring up either for, against or neutral towards the Core's rule.
- 22 Plans are made to build the Outpost of Kaderun, a stronghold for the south.
- 24 A million workers are hired to build the Skytrain. The Enclave is conceived.
- 26 Oce starts the construction of Vlnaco.
- 30 The zeal of the Scourge has considerably enlarged the territories of the Core (over the past 20 years).
- 45 The independent City-States of Yhrne Llemir blocks the Scourge from going any further eastward.
- 53 New City are born in the North after the Scourge's conquests. Many cities are assimilated.
- 57 Outpost is completed, providing high security in the south on the edges of the Sofe.
- 74 The official opening of Vlnaco creates a massive exodus: four platforms are already built.
- 89 The Skytrain (and Enclave) are finished with unprecedented speed and efficiency.
- 90 The Core announces the construction of platforms 10 to 13 in Khaï-Bhek.
- 109 The Scourge fails to beat a worthy opponent in the Northwest. The reasons remain unclear.
- 110 Today.

## POPULATION

This data is based on studies carried out by the Core Himself in all known regions of Kaïnas over a period of 20 years. During the years of Chaos, the Emovans regained their independence thereby drastically lowering the percentage of active population and solving a lot of management problems.

INSIDE THE CORE: 5.5 billion inhabitants

OUTSIDE THE CORE: 6 billion inhabitants

### GRAPH SHOWING THE POPULATION DENSITY BY RACE.

INSIDE THE CORE / OUTSIDE THE CORE:

EMOVANS: 20 million / 3 billion

FRILINS: 10 million / 30 million

GNATHS: 2 billion / 1 billion

INAÏS: 300 million / 1.5 billion

NAYANS: 500 million / 200 million

ODWOANES: 2 billion / 200 million

VOLKOÏS: 500 million / 50 million

SOLEKS: 20 million / 30 million

YAKIS: 100 million / 150 million

ZÏNS: ~100 000 – no allegiances.





## MONEY

Apart from orpee and occasional barter, the main currency is the Blood piece (Bp) so named because of its color.

The material used to make these coins is found deep in the heart of the biggest Kioux, where the resin crystallizes into a mineral substance. The deep-red colored mineral is harvested from the kioux and forged into coins, one inch in diameter and an eighth of an inch thick. One side marks the coin's value (1, 5, 10, 25 or 100 units) while the other bears a symbol of the Core. One orpee is worth 25 units in most places.

There's also Sastak paper money, ranging from 1,000 to 1,000,000 units. The worth of this money is determined by the thickness of the paper; a paper brick about one foot long, four inches wide and two inches high is worth 100,000 Bps). Obviously these Sastak bills are more common to rich people. They are popular because their value does not fluctuate (except during the years of Chaos). This paper money can be crafted into ornaments, weapons or anything else and its value will not change. Furthermore, Sastak money is recognized outside the Core and two independent cities have equivalent currencies.

## NEWS

### The new platforms of Khaï-Bhek

Many workers engaged in the construction of the Skytrain feared that the period of prosperity would end when the Skytrain was completed. When the Core Himself announced the construction of four additional platforms, everyone was shocked! It meant more work, and higher up. Workers were ecstatic because, for the sake of convenience, they would be permitted to live on the highest platforms ever completed during construction.

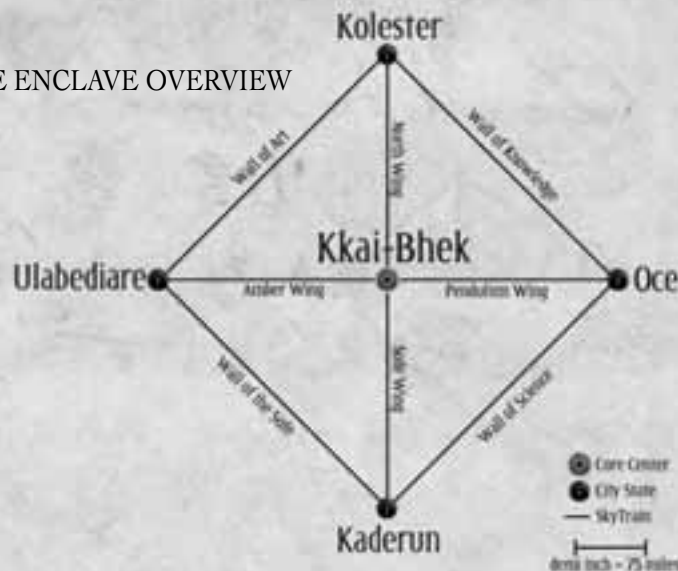
Using strong branches high up in the Kioux, engineers will be able to construct four platforms with a 3, 4, 5 and 7 miles radius respectively. Estimates state that about 500 million individuals can live on these new platforms. The commercial areas will be spacious and there will be public gardens and nature parks on each of these higher spheres.

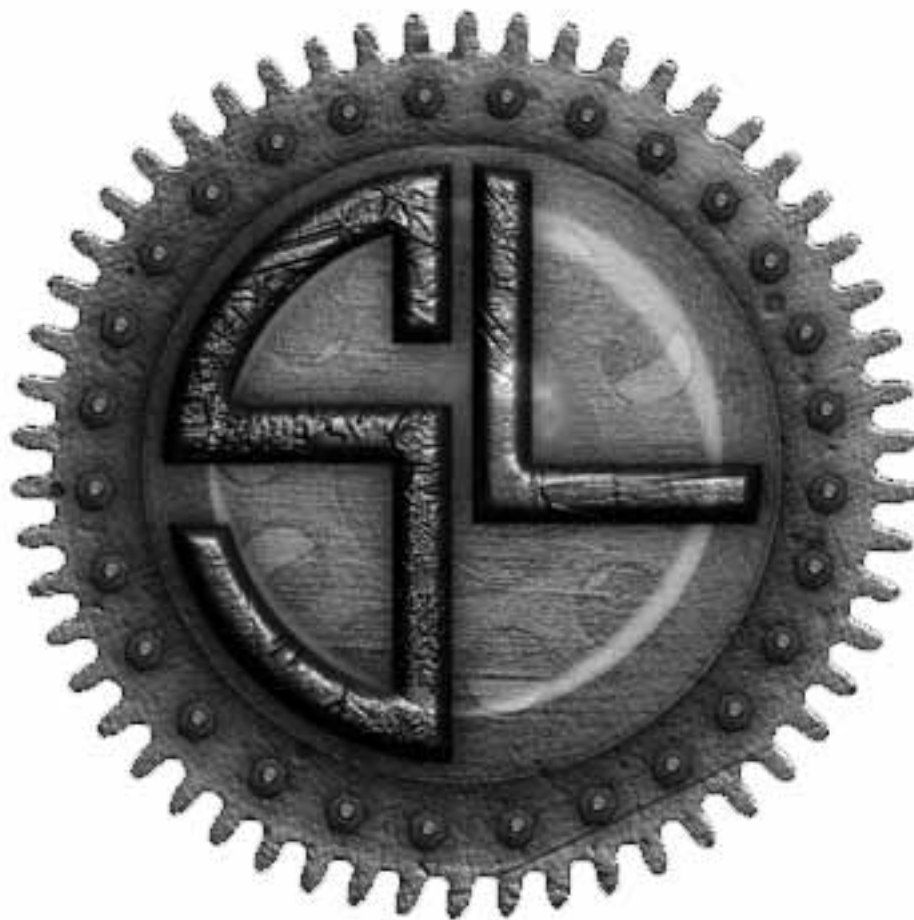


### The Enclave and the Skytrain

Both are complete. Security for Khaï-Bhek is now at an all-time high. A quick, efficient, secure system of transport now exists between five City-States and Khaï-Bhek. The Skytrain is reliable and easily managed. Each city controls its own departures and coordinates with other cities if there is a problem (although there are rarely any problems).

THE ENCLAVE OVERVIEW





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