

NORTHERN CROWN

NEW WORLD ADVENTURES



BY DOUG ANDERSON

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Onen tsi ne'i nakkara. This is my tale.
Call me Okwabo — that is "Wolf" in the language of my people, the Keepers of the Eastern Door. I am a rakarota, a master storyteller. Give me a seat by the hearth, and fill my cup with pine needle tea, and I will tell you a tale of heroes.

We have been here since the Uncounted Time. We are the People of the Place of Flint. We live by the grace of the earth, of our sacred crops, of the thunder that brings the rain. We take what we need and no more, and we are grateful for the gifts of wood, bone, hide, food, and water. Preserving the balance of all things and returning thanks to that which sustains us are the two hallmarks of a good life.

When the balance fails, heroes must rise to restore it. A hero defeated the stone giants and monsters of old. By the grace of Sky Woman, a hero saved the world from the great flood. Heroes composed the hymn of peace and combed the snakes from the hair of the enemy of peace and straightened his crooked form. A hero buried our weapons of war beneath the peace tree, and so ended the conflicts that threatened to tear us apart.

Now the balance is again threatened. Newcomers have arrived from the sea. Forests fall. Villages burn. Evil beings stalk the land, bringing strife and sickness. The weapons of war are wielded against our kin. It is a time for heroes.

This is their tale.



OVERVIEW

Imagine a world where the legends of North America come alive — a place of high adventure, magic, and monsters, where history and myth intertwine.

Brawl with Mike Fink or swing an axe with Paul Bunyan. Brave the dangers of the polar sea in search of the legendary northwest passage. Trudge through steaming swamps in pursuit of the fountain of youth. Prowl the misty streets of Boston on the trail of hell-spawned fiends. Take flight with a coven of witches upon a midnight ride. Shiver at the call of the wendigo as you traverse a frozen wasteland. Carry the banner of liberty into battle against the forces of tyranny ...

Northern Crown: New World Adventures is a campaign world set in North America's legendary past, in an age of frontier adventure, political intrigue, and supernatural horror. Inspired by history and infused with myth, it is a place where heroes fight for freedom, chart a vast wilderness, and battle unknown evils.

The possibilities for adventure in the *New World Adventures* setting are many. You might find yourself searching the wilderness for a lost Moundraiser city, or aiming a silver bullet at the heart of an elegant vampire beneath the Dueling Oak at Nouvelle Orleans. At risk could be something as personal as your own honor, or as epic as the birth of a new nation.

Your character might be a hardy Coureur scout from the northern woods, a stylish rake from the court of Carolingia, a Witchling agent, or a Mohawk bard like Okwabo, whose words you just read. Your foes could be axe-wielding Vinlander raiders, the automaton soldiers of a deranged evil genius, or a lich who once ruled as sorcerer-king of a now-vanished native civilization. Along the way, you might find an ally in Jonny Appleseed or the prophet Tenskatawa. And you may just join them as a legend in your own right!

To help in your quest, you may possess a psionic knack that lets you work wonders as a hex or a firebug, or even wield the dreaded evil eye. Perhaps you practice sorcery, daring to defy the edicts of church and state. Or you could be a witch, wresting your arcane powers from a fiendish imp at the risk of losing your soul. A degree in natural philosophy can imbue you with the knowledge to construct anything from a flying machine to an earthquake generator, and let you use the power of science to produce impressive effects rivaling the spells of magic-users. But if all else fails, then you'd better also know how to fire a matchlock musket or hurl a tomahawk.

It's a dangerous world, after all. The New World seethes with conflict, as the strifes and plagues of vying Uropan (yoo-ROPE-ahn) nations take root in fertile ground. Witches struggle against Puritan firebrands; royal agents play games of murder and deception for the glory of their monarch; and soldiers take to the field of battle where dragoons and musketeers clash amid the roar of cannon

and shot. Patriots stake their lives to overthrow the old order and establish a new freedom, unfettered by the evils of slavery and persecution. Natural philosophers compete to create clever inventions that could shape the course of the future, while wizards and sorcerers seek to preserve the arcane arts of the past. And in the deep forests, druids create standing stones and earthen mounds to focus the healing power of the land, and gather animal allies to defy the encroachment of civilization.

GETTING STARTED

If you're a player, you'll want to read Chiron Franklyn's overview of the continent that appears later in this chapter, to get a feel for Northern Crown's history, cultures, and conflicts before you make your character. You'll then follow the adventures of Franklyn and Okwabo as you read this book — their narratives provide vivid first-person accounts of the campaign world, and suggest possibilities for your own adventures.

If you're the Game Moderator (GM), first read the Cultures chapter and pick three or four cultures to offer as possible backgrounds for your players' first characters; opening their choices up to every culture at once would be a little overwhelming, after all. The mechanics of character creation will feel very familiar to anyone

who has played a d20 System game, but a selection of new classes, feats, spells, and equipment have been added to fit the setting, and may take some time for you to assimilate. Don't panic — many of the standard core classes are still available, while others have been replaced by new ones more appropriate to the campaign world. You'll also find a wide array of new game material, including rules for guns, fencing, artillery, and explosives, special guidelines for inventions, First Ones and Uropan spells and magic items, and psionic knacks. GMs will find the companion book, the *Northern Crown: Gazetteer*, to be an essential reference. It includes non-player character (NPC) stats, setting maps, adventure ideas, a menagerie of new monsters and animals, and a complete gazetteer of the campaign world.

SOURCES AND SCOPE

New World Adventures was inspired by the history, culture, folklore, and religion of several Native American, African, and European cultures of the early colonial period, re-imagined as a setting for fantasy adventure. Although presented as part of a fictional world, the names of these cultures have been left largely unchanged, to give them due acknowledgement as the source of inspiration for the campaign. This book does not accurately describe present-day groups, religions, or political entities that may share the same names. Similarly, NPCs in this book who possess the names of well-known persons are not meant to represent actual historical figures, but fictional versions of them based on the aura of myth that they have accrued over time in the public imagination, fiction, and film.

The enslavement of Africans by Europeans in our own past is explicitly reflected in the fictional history of Northern Crown, as are the religious and ethnic persecutions and wars that ravaged the landscape of the early modern era. Echoes of crimes committed by Europeans against Native Americans during this period are also part of the campaign world's background. These evils, rather than the dragons and orcs of many fantasy role-playing settings, are often the most insidious foes faced by the heroes of a *New World Adventures* campaign. No fic-

tional evocation of America's past can be considered complete without addressing these themes directly.

The First Ones of this campaign setting are inspired by some of the native cultures living in the eastern half of North America at the time of European contact. The legendary past of the First Ones, represented by the Makers and Moundraisers, corresponds very roughly to the Adena and Hopewell cultures of more ancient times.

This book is compatible with *Nyambe: African Adventures* by Chris Dolunt (Atlas Games, 2002). The Cimarrons of Northern Crown are descended from the Nyambans of Dolunt's fantasy Africa. Information on Nyamban character classes, religion, magic, creatures, and peoples can be found in his book, and further opportunities for crossover adventures between Northern Crown and Nyambe are encouraged.

THE CONTINENT

A report to the Uropan Society of Natural Philosophy concerning the continent of Northern Crown, delivered at the Society's biennial congress in the city of Paris upon the first of October, 1666, by Lord Chiron Franklyn, First Magus of the Republic of Sophia. Presiding, His Most Royal Majesty Louis XIV, President of the Society.

Your Majesty, Members of the Society, and Dear Guests,

At your monarch's request I have been bidden to stand here before you and deliver a report upon the history, nature, and peoples of the northern continent west of the Atlantic Sea, lately called Northern Crown. We meet here not as men and women of various nations, but as citizens of the Kingdom of Science, united in our pursuit of Truth and Reason. As her foremost natural philosopher, I feel I can give an account as well as anyone of this most remarkable land. After establishing her place upon the terrestrial sphere, her peoples, and her natural resources, I shall lay out a mere sketch of the continent's past ages and her current state, in the form of a narrative which I have culled together from many sources, including both material evidence and the spoken lore of the continent's native inhabitants.

LANDS

The continent of Northern Crown — also known in the Latin as *Septentrionalis* — is named for the constellation that dominates its skies. It is located west of the Atlantic Sea, spanning the subtropical, temperate, and polar latitudes of the northern hemisphere, and is connected to the continent of Southern Cross by a narrow isthmus. Only the eastern half of Northern Crown has been mapped by our cartographers; it is not known whether the western half of the continent is contiguous with the lands of Cathay in the Far East, or whether a narrow strait separates the two. Occupying several climatic zones, the known area of the continent includes humid swamps, warm pine forests, rugged mountains, temperate woodlands, boreal forests, open prairie, freshwater inland seas, bogs, cold tundra, and polar sea. Native people have ingeniously adapted to life in all of these terrains, but their numbers remain relatively low, and well within the capacity of the land's natural bounty to sustain them. Newcomers from the continent of Uropa have yet to match their skill in surviving this often-harsh land.

PEOPLES

Nearly two centuries have passed since Uropan first began arriving in numbers on the shores of Northern Crown, and after many wars, plagues, and migrations, the continent is home to Uropan, Nyambans, and native First Ones. Generally, Uropan and Nyambans occupy the coast and offshore islands, while the First Ones remain populous in the interior.

THE FIRST ONES

Having dwelled on the continent since the age of ice, thousands of years ago, the First Ones are divided into dozens of nations. Many of them share a common social organization and traditions, including hereditary rule by chiefs and the division of each nation into several clans that each descend from a different animal ancestor. Two major First Ones political entities exert regional power in the east: the Five Nations and the Woodland Confederacy.

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Among the dozens of First Ones peoples, I have included in this volume detailed descriptions of the following four cultures:

- *Cherokee* are people of the deep, fertile vales west of the Mountains of Smoke. They live by a code of individual freedom, tempered by group consensus. Among their foremost adventurers are diplomats, clerics, and witches.
- *Mohawk* are the easternmost members of the Five Nations, dwelling beside the cold Mohawk River that flows through the northern woods. Their geographical position has thrust them into conflict with Uropan newcomers. Their adventuring folk include raiders, bards, and political leaders of great skill.
- *Ojibwa* dwell on the shores of Lac Superieur and the surrounding north-

ern forests. Adept at long journeys by land or water, and living in small, mobile bands, they produce skilled scouts, guardians of lore, and spiritual leaders.

- *Shawnee* dwell in the hardwood forests of the interior, where the natural power of the land is strong and few Uropan have yet tread. Shawnee adventurers are said to be wanderers at heart, traveling far from their homeland to live as traders, warriors, and protectors of the living earth.

THE NYAMBANS

The continent of Nyambe-tanda, located south of Uropa and east of the Atlantic Sea, is a place still little known to our natural philosophers. Nyamban peoples have become part of the tale of Northern Crown largely

through the practice of Uropan slavery, an evil that is still practiced in Uropan plantations and mines throughout the continent. Although people of Nyamban descent can be found among all cultures of Northern Crown, one Nyamban-influenced culture in particular — the Cimarrons — have arisen to challenge the scourge of slavery and those who seek to perpetuate it.

- *Cimarrons* are the descendants of captive Nyambans who were forced to labor in the mines and plantations of Northern Crown. Having fought to win their freedom, they live in independent communities throughout the Carib Sea and the southern coasts, where they maintain Nyamban traditions and send adventurers against evil tyrants to defend their people and secure liberty for others.

THE UROPANS

Since first contact with the First Ones, thousands of Uropan have crossed the Atlantic Sea to establish a foothold in Northern Crown. They include agents of Uropan kingdoms, private enterprises, and religious separatists seeking a new life far from persecution and worldly temptation. The most populous and influential groups include the following:

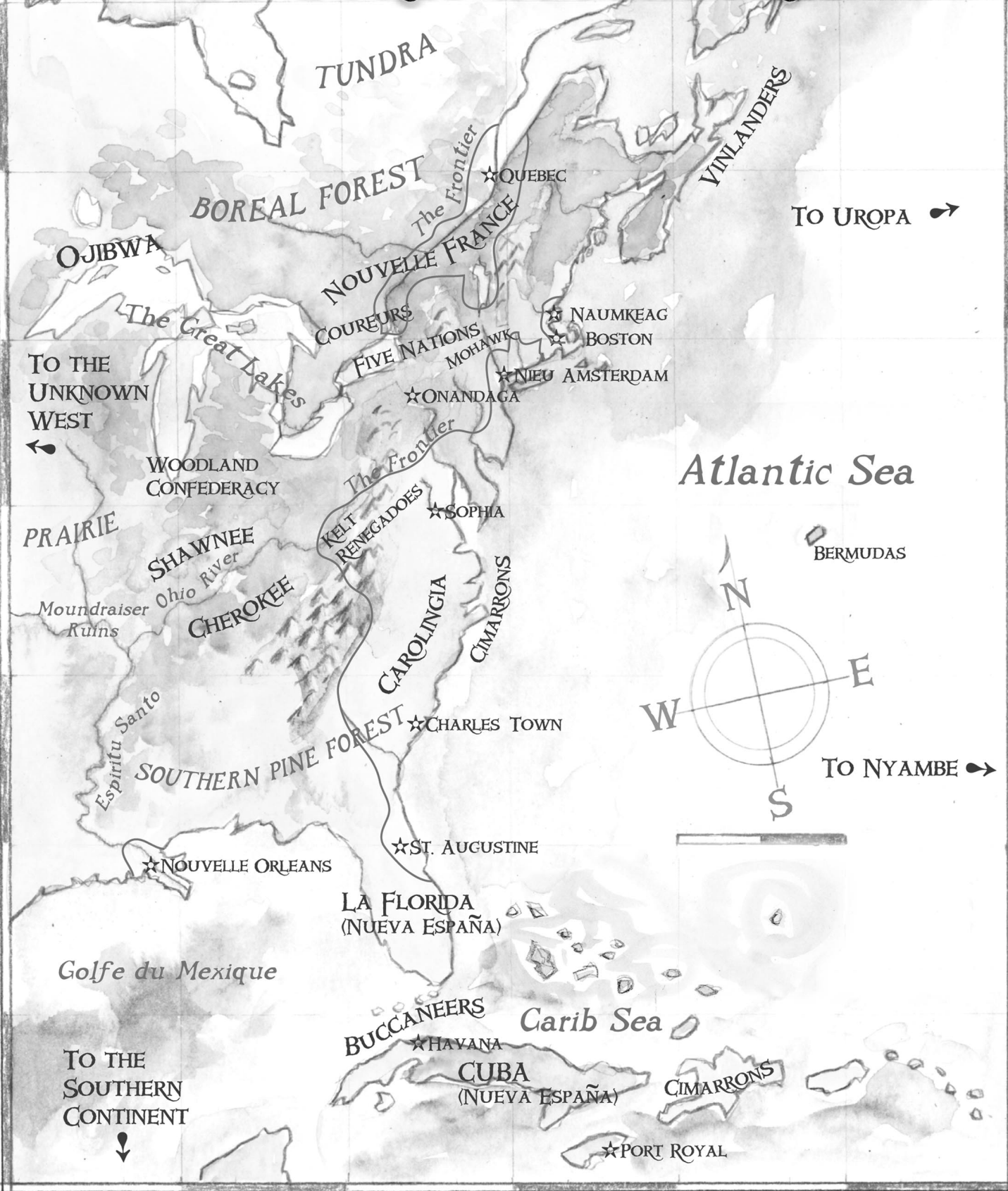
- *Albians* are the dashing, witty subjects of Gloriana, the half-fey queen of the land once known as England. They claim little territory in Northern Crown, but nonetheless are among the foremost Uropan soldiers and seafarers of the age.
- *Buccaneers* are colorful sea-going pirates and scoundrels, culled from the exiles, rogues, and misfits of many nations. Capricious and violent, but not without honor, they prowl the seas in search of plunder and the freedom to live under no law but their own.
- *Carolingians* are the exquisitely attired and well-mannered cavaliers of the English king in exile, Charles II, who now presides over the Kingdom of Carolingia in Northern Crown. Skilled at riding, hunting, and maintaining their reputation for honor and courage, they defend their kingdom with style and steel.
- *Commonwealthers* are Puritan soldiers of God, raising a holy fortress in the wilderness as a bulwark against the Evil One and his many servants, both human and monstrous. Grim and determined, they rely upon their faith and conviction in their relent-



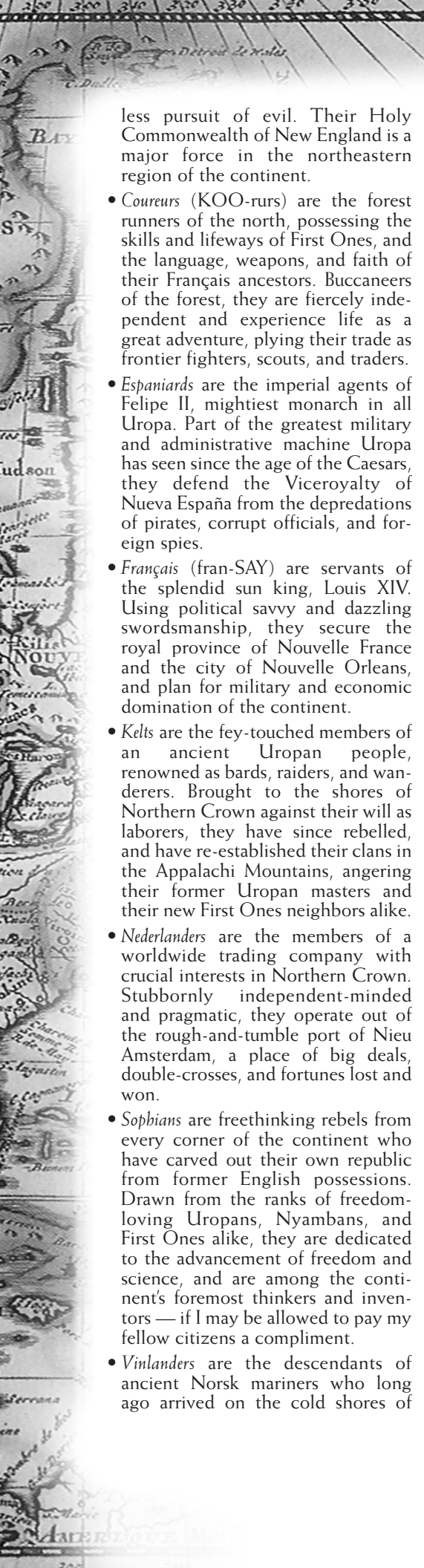
HUDSON'S BAY

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less pursuit of evil. Their Holy Commonwealth of New England is a major force in the northeastern region of the continent.

- **Coureurs** (KOO-rurs) are the forest runners of the north, possessing the skills and lifeways of First Ones, and the language, weapons, and faith of their Français ancestors. Buccaneers of the forest, they are fiercely independent and experience life as a great adventure, plying their trade as frontier fighters, scouts, and traders.
- **Espaniards** are the imperial agents of Felipe II, mightiest monarch in all Uropa. Part of the greatest military and administrative machine Uropa has seen since the age of the Caesars, they defend the Viceroyalty of Nueva España from the depredations of pirates, corrupt officials, and foreign spies.
- **Français** (fran-SAY) are servants of the splendid sun king, Louis XIV. Using political savvy and dazzling swordsmanship, they secure the royal province of Nouvelle France and the city of Nouvelle Orleans, and plan for military and economic domination of the continent.
- **Kelts** are the fey-touched members of an ancient Uropan people, renowned as bards, raiders, and wanderers. Brought to the shores of Northern Crown against their will as laborers, they have since rebelled, and have re-established their clans in the Appalachi Mountains, angering their former Uropan masters and their new First Ones neighbors alike.
- **Nederlanders** are the members of a worldwide trading company with crucial interests in Northern Crown. Stubbornly independent-minded and pragmatic, they operate out of the rough-and-tumble port of Nieu Amsterdam, a place of big deals, double-crosses, and fortunes lost and won.
- **Sophians** are freethinking rebels from every corner of the continent who have carved out their own republic from former English possessions. Drawn from the ranks of freedom-loving Uropan, Nyambans, and First Ones alike, they are dedicated to the advancement of freedom and science, and are among the continent's foremost thinkers and inventors — if I may be allowed to pay my fellow citizens a compliment.
- **Vinlanders** are the descendants of ancient Norsk mariners who long ago arrived on the cold shores of

northeastern Northern Crown. Seven centuries later, they remain a warrior people, whose raiding ships are the terror of the coast.

- **Witchblings** are followers of the Old Ways, people of magic and shadows, who keep a precarious balance between redirecting the power of evil for lawful ends and succumbing to it. From their coven on the rocky cape of Naumkeag, they fight to keep their independence from the Commonwealthers who seek to destroy them as servants of the infernal realm.

ANIMALS

Northern Crown is rich in animal life. Its seas swarm with whales of every known species and shimmering shoals of fish, while its skies are filled with game birds, eagles, ravens, and hawks. In the rivers are huge catfish and sturgeon, while the Great Lakes hold pike and other freshwater game fish. To the economy of the north, the most important water-dweller is not a fish, but a mammal — the humble beaver, whose soft fur is so much in demand on the streets of Your Majesty's city of Paris, for the hatter's and clothier's trade.

The forests are alive with white-tailed deer; on the frontier, buckskins are so plentiful that they are even used as currency. Common predators of the woodlands include wolves, panthers, and foxes; in the north, fierce wolverines and magnificent lynxes are found; and the polar sea is the kingdom of the great white bear. Her lesser relatives, the brown and black bears, are the largest omnivores of the woodlands. In the west, where the forest yields to open prairie, one finds huge herds of shaggy, horned bison; other than the skilled First Ones hunters of that region, the bison fear only the prairie wolves, who hunt in well-coordinated packs.

VEGETATION

The first Uropan to reach the continent, the Norsk, came in search of timber, not gold or silver. And they found it in abundance. If not for the towering white pines of the northern forests, it is doubtful that the world's navies would have tall masts upon which to spread their sails. Such trees

are as valuable to the timber trade as the beaver is to the fur trade; blood has been spilled contesting a single tree's ownership.

Besides the white pine, the woodlands abound with many useful trees, including oak, elm, maple, and walnut. They supply lumber for a thriving cabinetry industry from Carolingia to the Commonwealth. The maple is tapped by the First Ones to produce a sweet syrup which can be rendered into edible sugar by the application of steady heat. Other naturally occurring food plants of note include strawberries, blueberries, and wild rice.

The most useful food plant, though, is maize, or corn, which feeds both human and cattle. It is doubtful that the early Uropan settlers could have survived without acquiring this giant native grain. Squash, beans, sunflowers, goosefoot, potatoes, and pumpkins are also grown, in addition to the Uropan staples of wheat, barley, oats, and many vegetables. Nyambans have brought with them the staple crop of rice, which is grown extensively in the wet soils of the southern coast.

MINERALS

Although Uropan have spent centuries searching for gold and silver, Northern Crown has so far yielded no major lodes of these precious metals, while the southern continent has proved rich in both. Copper and iron are abundant in mountainous areas of the north, but only Uropan have the technology to refine these metals from ore; the First Ones use native copper nuggets and the rare prize of meteoric iron, which is said to have magical properties.

The land is poor in gemstones, lacking significant deposits of diamonds, emeralds, or rubies, but rich in semiprecious stones, especially tourmaline, quartz, jasper, and garnet. These too are believed to have magical or divine powers; the Uropan use them in the creation of protective rings, amulets, and for scrying, while the First Ones keep them as charms to ward off evil.

Flint is a strategically important mineral both for First Ones tools and weapons, and for the firing mechanisms of advanced Uropan gun designs. Several sources are known to exist in the Appalachi Mountains.

MONSTERS

Like Uropa, the continent has its own collection of abnormal creatures, which the uneducated call monsters. Some seem to be survivors of another time, perhaps the age of ice which native legends speak of; while others are likely the product of ancient magics or the embodiment of powerful supernatural entities. I present a brief summary, arranged by type:

- *Elementals*: The sanauk are a species of earth elemental associated with rich deposits of flint. They are most unfriendly to human beings.
- *Fey*: Just as Uropans do, the First Ones have their own species of fey, including the pukwudgee, little mischievous gnome-like beings of the forest, and the nunne'hi, a race of noble fey bards. In addition, the fey of Uropa have begun to appear, following their human allies such as the Kelts and Albians across the sea.
- *Giants*: Former masters of the continent, the giants of Northern Crown include stone giants, hill giants, and the fearsome wendigo of the far north. Many hags haunt the mountains and caves of the continent, including the spear-fingered u'tlun'ta. Towering over all others are the gargantuan amphibious giants known as gougou, which live in the Great Lakes of the interior.
- *Magical Beasts*: Few if any Uropan magical beasts can be found on the continent except as exotic pets or guard animals, but there are many native varieties. They include the panther-like catamount, the dread rattler, the sly and greedy kawkont-wawk, and the awesome thunderbird. Other notable magical beasts are the serpentine okanangan, which dwells in cold lakes, the gargantuan, bearish nyah-gwaheh, and the razor-back hogge, a monstrous form of swine that lives in the southern pine forests.
- *Monstrous Humanoids*: The evil deeds of early Uropan invaders have bred a corrupted ilk of monstrous humanoids called haints. These creatures, also called bogeymen, are the ruined, insane forms of foul criminals. They leave their hiding places at night to stalk innocent victims.
- *Outsiders*: Few outsiders dwell in Northern Crown, aside from those summoned by sorcery. They include the mountain guardian — or pomola — and the bog guardian — the moos-

soogit. Both are said to be celestial servants of the creator god of the First Ones.

- *Shapechangers*: In addition to lycanthropy among humans, we know of a native race of shapechangers called tricksters, who prey upon unsuspecting travelers in the wilderness.
- *Undead*: Northern Crown has more than its share of undead, both Uropan and native. The same haunted scarecrows, lanternjacks, and headless riders that plague the streets of France have also been seen there. In addition, there are several terrifying native forms of undead, including the flying skeletons called pauguk, and the undead sorcerers known as bone dancers.
- *Vermin*: Rare in the north of the continent, vermin are more common in the warm, humid south. In the subtropical swamps and on tropical islands, centipedes and spiders grow to alarming size.

RELIGION

First Ones, Nyamban, and Uropan religions share several common elements, including the belief in a supreme deity, in celestial beings that act as intermediaries between the deity and humankind, and in the concept of an eternal soul or spirit that survives the death of the body. Clothed as they are in different names and forms, these common tenets are seldom recognized as such by the three cultures, which has led to much fear, misunderstanding, and even bloodshed between them. Among the Uropans, even minor differences in belief have led to war between followers of different faiths; the Uropan continent has been torn apart by such conflicts for the past century.

Many First Ones religions center around a belief in a benign creator called the Great Mystery. A remote figure, said by some to dwell on a mountaintop beyond the setting sun, the Great Mystery never interferes directly in human affairs. Instead, he may use animal spirits or sacred objects as intermediaries, to teach humans to lead a good life and to protect them from evil. Some First Ones acquire a personal manito at birth, with whom they can converse and petition the Great Mystery for aid and guidance. Others receive a sacred object that serves a similar purpose.

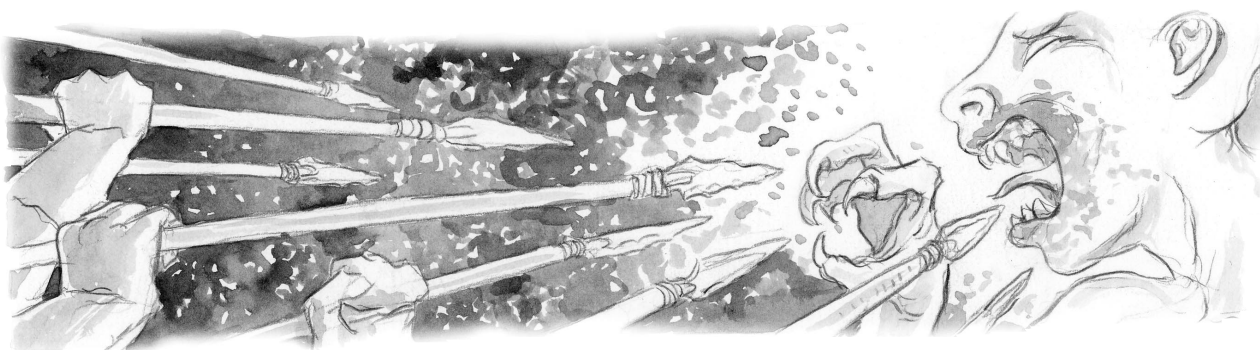
Folk of Nyamban ancestry believe in a benevolent but distant Overpower, who relies on the intercession of divine orisha spirits to maintain a link with humankind. Religious practices involve rituals honoring one or more of these orisha.

Most Uropans believe in a creator god, as well. Among all but the Witchlings and Kelts, this monotheistic faith has replaced the collection of ancient nature religions known as the Old Ways. Although they share a belief in one god, Uropans have historically fought bitter wars against those who disagree on relatively minor matters of faith. Currently, the fiercest dispute is between the long-established Roman Church and a handful of Dissenter faiths that are opposed, among other things, to the Church's hierarchy of priests and bishops. The Dissenters maintain that the salvation of souls is possible only through faith in God, while the Roman Church believes that salvation can also be secured through good works. The resulting wars have devastated much of Uropa, and contribute a major impetus for settlement of Northern Crown by Uropan exiles. While virulent enough, the conflict pales in comparison to the cruelty reserved for followers of the Old Ways and other minority faiths, who are often tried and executed as heretics.

COSMOLOGY

The First Ones, Nyambans, and Uropans differ more strongly in their conception of the universe. For the natives of Northern Crown, the continent is often represented as Turtle Island, recalling the creature that provided a refuge for life amid the waters of a great flood during the long-ago Uncounted Time. Surrounded by the sea, and covered by the dome of the heavens, which may be conceptualized as a blanket or skin thrown across the sky, the world is suffused with a force that I shall call medawaywin (med-ah-WAY-win), the resonance of the living earth, which must be nurtured and sustained if life itself is to endure. This, rather than the business of saving souls, is the purview of First Ones druids.

Nyambans believe in a tripartite universe, comprised of the material world of living creatures; the spirit world, which is coiled like a snake about it, providing an abode for orisha and the



spirits of the dead; and the shadow world, which permeates the material world and provides a medium of travel between it and the spirit world.

The Uropans once thought of the world as a flat disk, but most have yielded to evidence that it is a sphere, many thousands of miles in diameter. Still, a matter of debate is whether the sun or the earth stands at the center of the universe, but most agree that outside the courses of the moon, the sun, and the five planets is a crystal sphere studded with fixed stars. This sphere separates Creation from the celestial realm, which is the abode of the creator and the final destination of good souls. Within the surface of the earth is the immeasurable abyss of Chaos, the location of both the infernal realm, where evil souls are sent for eternal punishment, and Faerie, the abode of the mysterious creatures called the fey who have largely quitted their former domains on earth in the face of human religions antithetical to their presence.

MAGIC

Divine magic is wielded by First Ones and Uropan druids, and by Nyamban and Uropan clerics. The practice of arcane magic is known to all three cultures. Among the First Ones, sorcerers can cast spells without the use of written texts. Mchawi wizards and sei sorcerers are the Nyamban counterparts of Uropan spellcasters. The Uropans distrust sorcerers, who are said to have infernal blood, but some societies allow wizards to practice openly, as long as they do not delve into the unnatural art of necromancy, or use an evil black book to summon outsiders from the infernal realm. The arcane power of the song and speech of bards is widely recognized among First Ones cultures.

TECHNOLOGY

The First Ones are masters of shaping natural materials from their immediate environment into useful technology, including stone-tipped and copper weapons and tools, clothing sewn from fur and hide, clay vessels for storage and cooking, and dwellings and watercraft constructed from wood and bark. These things require much skill to make but a minimum of resources, meaning that even the smallest communities can make what they need for their own survival. Nonetheless, a continental network of trade has existed for thousands of years among the First Ones, transporting copper, shell, flint, and bone across hundreds of miles to eagerly waiting markets. These specialty materials are used for making magic items, sacred objects, and mundane jewelry.

Nyambans preserve their own advanced skills in agriculture, metalwork, and other crafts, with many adaptations from First Ones and Uropan technology. Ironwork is a particular hallmark of Nyamban craft.

The Uropans have brought their own technology to Northern Crown — most notably the military innovations of firearms, horses, and steel weapons and armor, all of which have begun to find their way into the hands of First Ones armies. Horses, oxen, and mules are used as draft animals and power sources. Other Uropan technologies formerly unknown on the continent include glassmaking, printing, metal refining, wheeled transport, sailing vessels, wind- and water-powered mills, and the astonishing inventions of natural philosophy, which show great promise but have so far not been produced in great numbers.

HISTORY OF NORTHERN CROWN

The history of Northern Crown can be divided into two major ages: the Uncounted Time before the arrival of the Uropans, and modern history, which begins with the appearance of Northern Crown upon Uropan maps and extends to the present time. We shall not attempt to separate myth from fact here, for all enduring myths speak to a universal truth about the human condition, even if they are not strictly factual, and facts do not describe the world as it is lived, only as it is observed.

THE UNCOUNTED TIME

What is known of the Uncounted Time is derived from only two sources: the spoken lore of the native peoples of the continent, and the physical artifacts left behind by their ancestors. It is impossible to create an exact chronology for this bygone age, but it certainly stretches back several thousand years, to a time when the world was a much different place. This account is not a definitive version, for each native nation tells the story differently.

THE WENDIGO AND THE AGE OF ICE

It is said that in the distant past, Northern Crown was ruled by the wendigo — the evil spirits of the far north. Whether this is literal truth or mere poetical fancy, it is evident from the geography of Northern Crown that a mantle of ice indeed once covered much of this land. Strange beasts roamed the frozen wastes, whose bones are still unearthed from time to time. It was an age of bitter hardship for all living things — a winter without end.

After many centuries, by some act of chance or providence, several small bands of human wanderers arrived in this cold waste. Some of our natural philosophers say they were Tatars of Asia, while others hold that they had always been here, all but unnoticed amid the vast spaces and mammoth beasts. Still others claim they had been created by the Great Mystery to free the land from the grip of the wendigo. In lore, these early wanderers are known as the First Ones. Tales tell of the epic battles of the First Ones against the wendigo to free the land from eternal winter. The animals of Northern Crown, some of whom had the power of human speech, fought on both sides initially, but eventually became united against the wendigo and drove them to the far north, where they still lurk, coming south only during the depths of winter to exact revenge upon their ancient enemies.

THE FLOOD

No longer chilled by the presence of the wendigo, the ice-mantle began to melt, causing a great flood that threatened to destroy all life in Northern Crown. Most of the beasts and the people of the First Ones drowned in the deluge. Only a single hero and a few of his folk were left,

along with his animal allies, clinging to the back of Turtle, who alone among them could provide a solid handhold. But Turtle's strength was failing. They needed to find solid earth, but around them were only the roiling waters of the flood. At last, Muskrat (some say rather that it was Otter, or Water Bug), who was small in stature but not in courage, bid his friends farewell, and dove beneath the waves. After what seemed an age of waiting, he returned to his friends, only to die of cold and exhaustion. Amid their grief at the loss of their friend, they noticed a clump of mud still held tightly in the grip of Muskrat's tiny paw. Placing the mud on Turtle's back, they called out to Sky Woman, who caused the mud to swell and grow, until it became an island large enough to provide the survivors a place of safety. When the floodwaters retreated, the land was repopulated by these few beasts and people; their descendants now occupy Northern Crown, which they still call Turtle Island.

THE MAKERS

After the flood, many of the savage beasts of the age of the wendigo were not seen again: the great dagger-fanged lions, the towering woolly elephants, and creatures even stranger for which we have no name, but whose bones are still found in farmers' fields and riverbanks. In their absence, the children of the First Ones multiplied, filling nearly all of the lands of Northern Crown, from the cold pine forests of the north to the fertile river valleys of the interior to the warm tidelands of the coast. Their speech and manners of dress changed over time, until there were many nations of people in the land. Footpaths and rivers wove the nations into a web of trade that brought copper from the north, shell from the south, and crystal from the east. Where the great rivers

of trade met — where the Ohio River empties into the Espiritu Santo — makers of wondrous artifacts gathered, crafting ornaments, tools, vessels, pipes, and weapons of great beauty and virtue. The finest pieces were said to have arcane powers, and are highly sought after for this reason, even to this day. It is said that the craft of sorcery was first practiced in Northern Crown during this time, as the Makers learned the secrets of arcane magic from outsiders, used carved and painted glyphs in order to extend their own lives, and delved ever deeper into the secrets of craft and artifice.

And so began an estrangement between them and their animal brethren, who withdrew into remote areas of the wilderness, fearful of the Makers' reckless pursuit of power and denial of the natural order. This estrangement between humans and talking animals continues to this day.

The Makers grew rich on their trade, and made elaborate tombs for themselves, filled with objects of power that they could not bear to part with, even in death. Whether this costly obsession destroyed their pre-eminence in the trading network, or whether they probed too far into the forces of dark magic, one thing is certain: the Makers have vanished, along with many of their secrets, leaving only their burial mounds and objects of power.

THE MOUNDRAISERS

Around the time of the decline of the Makers, the practice of growing maize appeared in Northern Crown, spreading north and east from the great empires of the south beyond the burning deserts of Quivera. The early adapters of maize farming soon found that many more people could be fed by this method than from the old ways of hunting and gathering; it was not long before they began to multiply, and settle in larger and larger commu-





nities. Soon, in imitation of the ways of the south, they began to raise immense flat-topped mounds that dwarfed the burial mounds of the Makers. The veneration of the Great Mystery and his creation was replaced by worship of self-styled god-kings, who exacted tribute from their own subjects and from weaker neighboring states. The arts of sorcery were refined further, and pacts were made with evil outsiders in exchange for even more power. Temples were erected atop the mounds, where offerings were made to the outsiders and to their royal human intermediaries. As the Moundraisers' numbers grew, they began to compete with their neighbors for the best cropland along the riverbanks. Wars broke out; people began to shelter behind wooden palisades and ditches. Diseases that had always been endemic in sparsely settled regions now raged amid the crowded settlements. In the end, these two perils — war and sickness — ended the reign of the god-kings. A few peripheral sites were left intact, especially in the south, but the great walled cities were emptied for good. Their ruins still brood upon the riverbanks, overgrown and silent, and the monstrous servants of these evil gods still lurk in the swamps and deep forests, biding their time until humankind begins to venerate them once again.

THE EFFIGY-MAKERS AND THE GATHERING THREAT

After the fall of the Moundraisers, Northern Crown became once more a place of many small nations, again venerating the Great Mystery. Smaller mounds were built, not as burial monuments or temple platforms, but in the shapes of beasts: snakes, birds, panthers, and bears, covered with green turf. Always these effigy mounds were raised in places where the natural power was strong, to channel the life force of the land so that it might sustain the natural order and protect all living things against evil. It seemed as if the land itself were braced against an unseen threat that would soon make an assault upon the children of the First Ones — a greater danger even than the wendigo lurking in their distant northern fastness beyond the shimmering skirts of Sky Woman.

THE AGE OF STEEL AND HORSES

Far across the Great Water to the east, another world was stirring. Uropa, the land of iron and horses, was stretching forth, sending great ships full of warriors in bright armor

across the sea to claim new lands for crown and cross. The kingdoms of Nyambe — the Land of the Overpower — had repulsed these invaders through the protection of the orisha and the virulence of native diseases against which divine cures had no effect. And so the ships of Uropa sailed west, across the sea, in search of the Spicelands of Cathay and the fabled Isle of Xipangu. Instead, they found a world entirely new to them. They called it Northern Crown after the never-setting constellation that shines brightly in the northern skies. At their first footfall upon the shore, the Uncounted Time came to an end, and the time of written history began.

MODERN HISTORY

The early written history of Northern Crown consists of a few cryptic sources from the centuries following the fall of the Caesars; the historical record does not begin in earnest until the arrival of the mariners of the royal courts of Portugal, Spain, and England some one-and-a-half centuries before the current era. In the subsequent interval, life upon the continent has changed drastically, bringing fortune to a few, and strife to many ...



NORTHERN CROWN



EARLY VOYAGES

Many claims have been made by the nations of Uropa as to who was the first to reach Northern Crown. In the archives of Queen Gloriana at London I have found evidence that an Eirish cleric of the Roman Church named Brendyn made a crossing of the Atlantic Sea in the 8th century, as did a Cymric prince of named Madoc who made the journey in the 12th century. But they left no physical evidence of their visits behind, only written accounts, which are full of obvious fancies and nonsense. The first hard evidence is the presence even to this day of the Norsk upon the peninsula of Vinland, in the extreme northeastern regions of the continent. Their own sagas tell us that they have been there nearly seven hundred years, and although they have brought ruin upon the native states of that area, the impact of the Norsk upon the whole of the continent has been minor compared to that of subsequent Uropan invaders. The certain knowledge that there was a great continent beyond Beothuk and Vinland never reached the great courts of Uropa, even if the Norsk ever knew it themselves. It took the lure of eastern spices to draw the fleets of Uropa westward, only to discover Northern Crown instead.

THE DARK YEARS

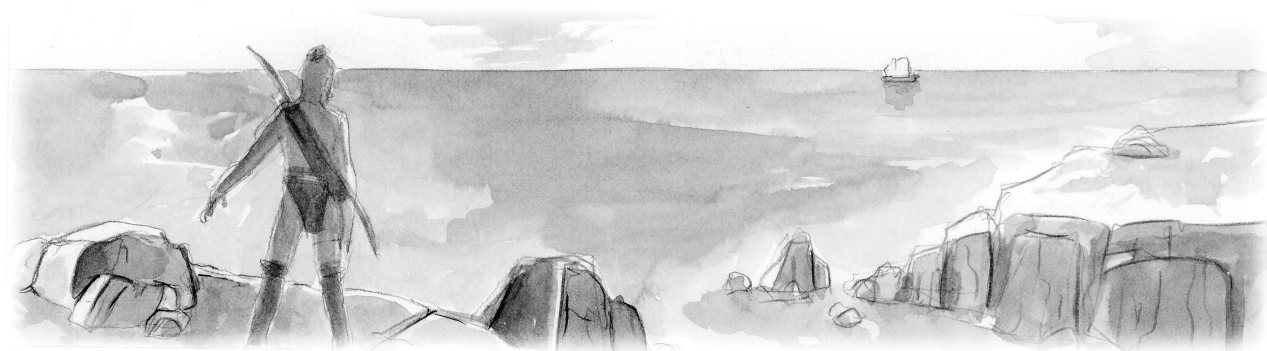
It was Miguel Corte-Real who first brought news of Northern Crown to the courts of Uropa. On a mission to find his brother Gaspar, who had been searching for a way west to Cathay, he made landfall along the eastern coast in 1501. His lord, King Manuel of Portugal, could not conceal this news for long, and soon the Espaniards, the Français, and the English were sending ships across the sea to plant the flags of empire in the soil of Northern Crown.

The Uropan brought horses, firearms, and steel weapons to secure their foothold, but more deadly was the weapon of disease, which sorely afflicted the natives of Northern Crown, many of whom had welcomed the newcomers and helped them survive their first winters there. Some of the native nations of the eastern coast were weakened nearly to the point of eradication, and their lands were soon occupied by Uropan settlements. Fighting to defend themselves, many of the First Ones were killed or made captive, to toil in the fields of the victors.

During this time, foul Uropan raiders often captured Nyambans from the states of Bashar'ka and Taumau-Boha and delivered them to the mines

and plantations of Northern Crown, Southern Cross, and the Carib Sea. This evil trade has since been all but stamped out by the resistance of the Nyambans themselves, but the memory of it hangs like a shadow over the Uropan whose forbears participated in it. The Cimarrons, descendants of captured Nyambans, still fight for their liberty in a climate of persecution and abuse.

This first century of Uropan occupation is often called The Dark Years, for many evil deeds were done in the name of righteous conquest in that time, by fortune-seekers, fanatics, and madmen alike, while the majority looked the other way or counted their profits. There are places in Northern Crown where the echo of these fiendish acts still resonates; I have walked in these abandoned villages, these bone-scattered fields and woods. I have felt a chill to my very soul, and the native peoples say that the medawaywin is silent, as if Nature herself recoils from the memory of the torture and slaughter perpetrated there — acts for which the Uropan who now occupy these lands have yet to atone.



THE PRESENT

There are some who say the Dark Years have yet to end, but even if that is so, clearly the advance of the Uropan has been greatly slowed of late, for reasons of geography, politics, and perhaps, some forces less tangible. First, the great barrier of the Appalachian Mountains has slowed attempts to occupy the interior. Second, much of the Uropan's resources are now spent fighting one another, and defending the colonies they already hold, leaving fewer forces to win new lands. Third, the native nations of the interior are organized into several confederacies, and cannot be destroyed piecemeal as were many of the states of the coast. And last, there are some who say the land itself has organized a resistance to the Uropan advance. Terrible storms beset settlements along the frontier; animals larger and fiercer than normal waylay travelers, and have even been seen fighting alongside native forces; and the power of native magic seems to grow ever mightier the further one pushes westward.

Because of these factors, the eastern shores are occupied by small but prosperous Uropan states and colonies, separated from the native lands by a long, dangerous frontier, behind which brood forces both political and natural that may yet drive the newcomers back into the sea. In the meantime, the unsettling menaces of undead creatures, evil outsiders, and sinister secret societies and cults have begun to stir once more, casting a lengthening shadow over their conquest. A time of great conflict and peril is at hand in Northern Crown, the outcome of which may depend on the actions of a handful of young heroes just now taking their place upon the world's stage.

USURPERS OF THE NORTHERN CROWN

Who among the many Uropan powers now sharing the eastern shores of Northern Crown does not seek mastery over all? *Nederlanders* clash with New Sweden in the Delaware Vale and with Nouvelle France in the north; *Espaniards* and *Carolingians* compete for the favor of the Creek and Cherokee nations to gain an edge in their struggle for control of the south. *Cimarrons* pursue the cause of liberty for all *Nyambans* and other captive peoples. *Commonwealthers* seek mastery of their neighbors' souls,

while my own Republic of Sophia struggles to free their hearts and minds from superstition and tyranny. And the First Ones of the interior are banding together to rebuff these invaders, consolidating their own holdings. Only one head at a time may wear a crown, Your Majesty. Will one of the young captains now fighting upon the battlefields of Northern Crown seize it by force of arms, becoming master over all — an Alexander of the new era?

ARMIES OF DISCOVERY

As you are no doubt aware, Uropan knowledge of Northern Crown ends at the western banks of the great river *Espirtu Santo*, which divides the continent in two from north to south. Beyond, our maps show only *terra incognita* and cartographic conceits: golden cities, burning deserts, and rivers running conveniently to the Pacific Sea. The same lure of the unknown that brought *Corte-Real* and *Cabot* across the Atlantic Sea is now driving my countryfolk into the unknown west. You may have heard that the First Lord of Sophia has organized an Army of Discovery to penetrate the continent's interior. It includes scouts, soldiers, diplomats, and natural philosophers, well trained and well supplied. I understand that Your Majesty has employed priests of the *Ignatian Order* and *Coureur* scouts for the same purpose, and that the emperor *Felipé* of *España* has sent his armored captains into the deserts of *Quivera* and the high, bare lands of *Kansa*. The true objective of these missions — whether knowledge, trade, gold, or empire — can be debated among royal ambassadors from here to *Havana*, but one thing is certain: success or failure will depend upon who among these small companies has the will, the strength, and the favor of *Fortuna* to unlock the key to the western lands.

REASON'S CHILDREN

As we sit beneath the glow of the galvanic lamps that illuminate this chamber — gifts to your majesty from my own laboratory in Sophia — we are keenly aware of the innovations that the divine gift of Reason and the science of natural philosophy have granted us through the unlocking of the secrets of *aeliopilic* power, galvanism, mesmerism, and more. Surely these inventions hold great potential to free humankind from toil and discomfort, but there is a growing aware-

ness among us that they also may sow the seeds of destruction, in the form of ever-deadlier weapons of war, plagues, and lethal engines. The next generation of natural philosophers, our intellectual children, will decide how this Promethean drama will play out: either bringing the light of Reason to the world at large, or beginning a holocaust that will engulf us in miseries undreamed of in earlier eras. Northern Crown — a place of relative freedom, far from the courts of Uropa — could be the place where this question is decided for us all.

WIELDERS OF WITCHCRAFT AND SORCERY

But if you think that the old order will go quietly into the night as the age of reason dawns, I am sorry to say that the practices of sorcery and witchcraft are alive and well in Northern Crown. The *Witchling* enclave of *Naumkeag* sits but a day's ride from the Puritan capital of Boston, ready to unleash the very forces of the infernal realm upon its neighbors. The secret order of sorcerers known as *Le Dragon Rouge* is active in Sophia, and rumors of *L'Ordre du Sang*, that cabal of ancient vampires, have arisen in the foggy streets of *Nouvelle Orleans*. Only a few intrepid clerics and paladins have dared to combat these occult menaces; the actions of these young heroes could determine whether Northern Crown will be spared the evil influence of sorcerers and vampires, or forever fall under their yoke.

The First Ones' sorcerers can cast spells for which we have no name, and produce magical items of great power. Within their lands are ancient ruins that are said to contain lost arcane spells, mighty artifacts, and evil outsiders summoned by long-dead mages. If these things are brought into the light of day by a few bold plunderers, the balance of power over the entire continent could shift overnight.

CONCLUSION

And so, I present to Your Majesty this tome, encompassing our present knowledge concerning Northern Crown — its peoples, creatures, lands, legends, and magic. May it guide Your Majesty's hand in choosing a wise path in your conduct with my countryfolk. As a wise man once said, "The noblest question in the world is, 'What good can I do in it?'"