In those days, the Chain was in service to the Lord Marshall of Farrow.

The Lieutenant walked in. Everyone shut up. Behind him Slick and Candle dragged a heavy chest. They deposited it with a loud *thunk* and, exhausted, slumped into two chairs in the inn.

The rest of the Chain was standing now. Looking at the chest. Dreaming about its contents.

“Well,” the Lieutenant said, “we got paid.” He pointed to the chest.

The Captain nodded at me and I opened it. It was full of silver thrones. Some gold crowns. It was a lot more than what we were owed. I threw the Lieutenant a look. Stealing this much meant someone would come after us. None of us like loose ends.

He shrugged. “That’s what they gave us. Didn’t even count it. After the last three days, I think they’re eager to get rid of us.”


“He’s probably stopped kickin’ by now,” Slick said. He drained a mug of ale.

“Hanged?” The Captain asked.

The Lieutenant nodded. “The Castellan’s running the city,” he said. “He’s already put down one riot. Seems like a capable man.”

“He can have this place.”

“Don’t think he wants it. Seems happy to be chief thieftaker. He’ll let the city council pick some mark. Put him in charge. Run him until someone kills him.”

“We’ll be long gone,” the Captain said. “Come on, we leave at dawn.”

With money in our pockets, a contract complete, and permission to roll from the Man Himself, the party got seriously underway.

I managed to get the Captain’s attention.

“What?” he asked, his voice flat. He wanted to relax as much as anyone.

“Where we headed?”

Captain washed some duck down with wine, and sneered at me. “Blackbottom,” he said.

“And then where?” I asked. Ships went everywhere from Blackbottom.


I looked at the officers assembled in the Dancing Dog. “I think the crew were hoping for a straight-up fight, sir.”
The Captain shrugged. “We’ve earned a reputation for street-fighting. Listen Annalist, I don’t know what the job is yet. It’s hush-hush. I just want to get the hell outta here. When I know, you’ll know.”

I had to accept this. “Fair enough,” I said. “We got a new recruit. Maybe officer material.”

The Captain looked at me out of the side of his face. “Yeah? I’ll be the judge of that.”

I summoned the applicant.

“I remember you,” the Captain said. “You helped us out with the guild.”

The recruit nodded. Smart. Captain didn’t ask a question, so keep your mouth shut.

“Good in a fight, too,” I said. Captain seemed to accept this.

“Alright,” Captain said. “Lemme see. Where you from?”

“Phaedros.”

“Phaedros?! You a philosopher?”

“A soldier.”

“Thought only madmen and wisemen came from Phaedros,” the Captain sneered.

“Ajax is a Phaedran.”

The Captain nodded, impressed. “Good answer. Someone told me you folk did away with kings and emperors.”

“They were right.”

“So who rules you?”

“Trial,” the new officer said, “and error.”
The Commonwealth is a peninsula south of Rioja. The climate is warm and temperate year round and the land is rich with resources. Because only a narrow land-bridge connects the peninsula with the rest of the continent, the Commonwealth is easily defended, and enjoyed hundreds of years of freedom from wars and foreign invaders.

Phaedrans dress in sandals and simple white robes, often decorated with gold, in the style of the Moon Elves who once called the area home. The buildings and culture of the Moon Elves, though largely ruined, is in some places still well-preserved and the men of the Commonwealth actively seek to adopt the manners and culture of the Lunar Celestials, who they believe to be superior in learning and society to Men.

The Caelian Empire, which ruled Orden for
1,300 years, was founded in Phaedros. The 5th Emperor instituted a decades-long program of repatriation, stealing an entire generation's children from their parents and resettling them with new parents in different parts of the world.

His goal was to break the individual cultures of each region, and create a Caelian culture with one language and one way of life.

It was a bloody and violent program. Now, 500 years after the fall of that great empire, each region has once again developed its own culture. But almost everyone, everywhere, speaks the Caelian language, and there's no way to tell where someone was born from the color of their skin, or facial features.

Since the fall of the empire, the men of the Commonwealth have known peace and prosperity which they attribute to a new form of government still a secret outside their lands.

Also known as the Iom, Phaedrans know religion and magic and train for war to defend the Heikos Pass against the Thaumocracy of Qartoum. But the major focus of Phaedros is Philosophy.

Philosophies are scientific models and personal belief systems. Peasants eschew philosophy, but most city dwellers and educated folk adhere to one of the Six Schools.

**Stoicism** - Virtue through strength of will.


**Materialism** - Only this world is real. Death is the end of the body and the soul.

**Idealism** - This world is a shadow of the world of ideals.

**Skepticism** - Knowledge is illusory, nothing is ultimately knowable.

**Mysticism** - Reality can only be known by participating in its contradictions.
"I come from the west, from the deserts past the Myr mountains. From a land of Djinns and Effreets, of golden towers and flying carpets. I come from Quorsir, where magic rules. We were only recently a tribal people, but the Thaumocracy united the warring tribes. I enjoyed many freedoms, freedom to work as I pleased, love whom I wished, and even own property. I was a free man...until the Overlord came."

The Thaumocracy of Khorsir

The Khoursir are a newly civilized people who dominate the long, thin desert that abuts the western
slopes of the Myr Mountains, from frozen desert wastes in the north to heat blasted sand in the south. Known across Orden as "the land of magic and demons," Khorsir is this, and more. And as with many things in a desert prone to mirages, neither magic nor demons are all they appear.

Also known as the Hazar, they were a nomadic people only 300 years ago, relying on domesticated camels to cross the desert. They raided nearby cultures, and it is from the Khoursir that the Tevas word *Corsair* arises. Then the Iron Wizards united the nomadic tribes and set about building a new civilization. Now, the Thaumocracy are among the most advanced human societies in the world, possessing sophisticated mathematics, astronomy, and a devotion to experimentation verging on the scientific. The Khorsarians understand optics and anatomy, making their telescopes and medicine the best in the world. In Khorsir, mathematics is considered another branch of magic and now very fashionable.

The deserts of the Thaumocracy are popularly thought of as a "land of demons" and the Hazar agree, but they do not ascribe the same negative connotations to this term. Their native term is Djinn and they believe all of nature is populated by Djinns, who are responsible for most natural phenomenon. Wind, rain, thunder. The Hazar pantheon is populated by thousands of Djinn as well as the Sun, the father god; the High Moon, the bride of god; and the two Sons of God, the Dawn Moon and the Dusk Moon. The Hazar believe these gods created the world but are absent from it, the Djinns are like demigods, overseeing life on Orden.

When a man is born, he is "adopted" by one of the nine most powerful Djinn based on what natural phenomenon were manifest at the moment of his birth. Any character from the Thaumocracy who takes the *Guided by Demons* feat may select a Demon/Djinn and gain the benefit thereof.

**Mih** The Demon of Fog. Fog makes it easy to sneak around. Mih allows you to lie, deceive, hide your meaning, or sneak. This is not a pejorative. In the Deserts of Khorsir, a man is considered wise who does not reveal all. Only the fool says whatever he thinks.

**Abhromliha**, The Demon of High Clouds. Considered a good omen at birth, a character watched over by the Demon of High Clouds will have unusually good luck.
Abhrapizaca, The Demon of Blue Sky. Specifically meaning "the clear blue sky of a cool, fair day," those watched over by the Demon of Blue Sky have special destinies. Fated to be leaders, influential, powerful men.

Durokam Demon of Hot Wind. The hot wind is not as apparently dangerous as the burning sand or the sandstorm, and so more people die to it than any other condition. It parches, it drains the water and salt out of a man, and saps his strength. Those born under Durkoam will face difficult times, but are born with the strength to weather them.

Zitalavata, The Demon of Cool Breeze. A cool breeze is a blessing, bringing aid and comfort to all touched by it. Those watched over by Zitalavata are healers and diplomats, healing wounds and conflicts with equal ease.

Abhivarsa, The Demon of Rain. Rain can be a blessing and a curse. It causes plants to grow and flower, but it washes away roads and floods towns. A man under Abhivarsa is strong, but quick to anger. Smart, but careless.

Daha Marupatha, The Demon of the Burning Sand. Under the heat of the sun, the sand itself becomes your worst enemy, burning anything it touches. Those born under Daha Maruptha are considered power, terrible enemies.

Marupatha Pavaka, The Demon of the Sand Storm.

Akta, The Demon of Night.

Races From The Thaumocracy

Nyar - An intelligent, bipedal cat-people native to the desert sands. Known for their stealth and swiftness, they are powerful fighting dervishes.
"You ask where I am from? Can you not see? Is it not written on my face? I am Riojan, from the land across the Bale Sea. Where men laugh at danger and the pen is as oft-used for revenge as the rapier. Each man is expected to be poet and playwright, acrobat and duelist. We are a hot-blooded people, but full of mirth and zest for life. As quick to take offense as we are to laugh at our own bluster. We are the world's best sailors and our wine is the most highly prized in Orden. And for us, the stage contains the entire world, and every performance is a battle."

Rioja

Dominated by scrubland, Rioja is a hardy land that birthed a hardy and adventurous people. Their sailors are the great explorers of the world, bringing trade and culture to all the regions of Orden. They are outgoing, theatrical and dress flamboyantly. They value quickness of reflex and of wit, as well as reading and writing. They are the most literate people in Orden, only the Iom come close. But for the Riojan, philosophy is useless. Morality, ethics, logic, theology, all exist in the poem, song, and above all, the stage.

The men of Rioja are amongst the most multi-talented in the world, considering it each man's responsibility to master writing, reading, oratory, music, cooking, dancing, duelling, sailing. Lofty goals, and only a few men achieve the ideal. But all Riojans aspire to it.
Capital

Rioja is also home to Capital, the City of the Great Game. The largest city in the world, Capital is divided into five distinct districts. Once ruled by the Prince of Castigano with the aid of a council of five lords, the last prince died over 100 years ago, and the Lords of Capital have been locked in a cold war ever since. Each district has its own Lord, its own army, its own laws. There is trade, commerce, citizens with their papers in good standing can usually expect to move freely between the districts. But anyone caught and accused of being a Spy for a rival Lord can expect to be quickly tried without jury and hung without witnesses. You can buy anything in Capital, but information is the most valuable product.

The Guilds

In Rioja, the Nobility wars against the newly powerful Guilds. Each man is expected to join a guild. Those who remain unguilded are suspicious. "Cousin" is now open code for "fellow guildsman."

Any character from Rioja can belong to one of the seven Great Guilds gaining the benefit thereof.

Each guild employs many different classes. The Thieves Guild needs Wizards, a Wizard's Order needs Fighters, the Guild of Watchmen needs Priests, and even a Church has need of Assassins. There are, in
fact, dozens of Guilds in Rioja, but all of them are in some way patronized or protected by the seven.

The Pocket - Thieves Guild. One of the oldest, largest, and most powerful guilds in Rioja, the Pocket wages a constant war with The Gold Seal. It is oft remarked that the waning power of the nobility in Rioja is measured by the death rate in the war between the two guilds. A war that constantly escalates and which the official government is powerless to stop.

Nine Silver - Assassin's Guild. Not to be confused with the Thieves Guild, the Assassin's Guild is Rioja's pre-eminent spy school and sponsors the finest college in all of Orden. They also, of course, kill people for money. But they do not steal, they do not rob and they never kill out of passion or revenge.

Sword & Shield - Gladiator Guild. Like many cultures that thrive after the collapse of the Third Empire, Rioja has a long tradition of arena battles between professional fighting men. The Sword & Shield protects all forms of gambling and wagering, protects all those who engage in professional sport.

The Gold Seal - Guild of Watchmen. Named after the stamped ring of gold around the grip of every watchman's truncheon, the Gold Seal represents the Law in Rioja. More powerful than the courts, the judges, and the nobility, the Seal has more to do with a man's guild or innocence than the law.

Fulcrum - Merchants Guild. At the fulcrum of the assayer's scale, the value of the goods on one side of the balance is converted into the gold on the other side. So the Fulcrum likes to describe itself. having recently absorbed the Sailing Guild, the Fulcrum is now the richest guild in Rioja and one of the richest organizations of any kind anywhere in Orden. They tend to stay neutral in any guild disputes because all guilds rely on them to protect trade.

The Gloss - Guild of Scribes. Most people in Orden can write, writing is not a secret of any kind, but the Gloss protects all forms of official writing. They are required for any kind of official documentation and are also, therefore, involved in a great deal of information. Both the keeping of it and the hiding of it. One of the newest guilds, the rest of Rioja is still coming to grips with the notion that knowledge is power,

The Leaf - Player's Guild. The least of the seven great guilds, the Leaf is nonetheless the most popular in the imaginations of the people, because of the popularity of actors, performers, and playwrights. Players and playwrights, the dashing and daring cultural heroes of Rioja are incredibly popular and wield some little power, mostly through the act of parody and satire. Fortunes can quickly run sour when popular prejudice turns against someone, and The Leaf has the greatest influence over popular thought.

Riojans favor light armor and light weapons for maximum maneuverability, and they have a long tradition of thief-heroes, being only one of two races in Orden to have a God of Thieves. Yet while Rioja produces the best thieves they do not produce the best spies. For that, you need a sophisticated political environment and that means Vosloria.
Where am I from? Here. I was born three days north of here in a small town under the rule of Good King Omund.

Before the Overlord came, Vaslorians ruled themselves. The King secured the rule of law and his Dukes, Counts, and Barons governed the people, Knights enforced the law, and the Churches watched after the people's immortal souls. Minstrels sang songs of courtly love, while Knights tilted for fair maiden's hand. It was a splendid land, and the Law of Chivalry gave every man something to aspire to. But then Ajax came, and everything changed.

Vasloria

The largest in area of the 8 Regions of Orden, Vasloria is a land of rolling, hilly plains once covered with forest primeval. Many forests still remain and some are still called by the ancient name: Wode. The Wodes are places of high magic where the immortal Fairy Elves await the return of their creators, the Celestials.

The men of Vasloria value plain speaking and hard work. The people are called the Tevas-Gol, ancestors of the ancient, bronze-age, Gol and the more advanced Tevas who conquered them. The culture is strictly feudal, and most people aspire to follow the Code of Chivalry.

Any character from Vasloria may choose one of the following pillars of chivalry and gain the benefit thereof.

- Faith
- Justice
- Loyalty
- Defense
- Courage
- Truth
- Generosity
- Chastity
- Humility
- Perseverance
These words are hard for me, your tongue is strange. But I am a Vanirman, from the north. Beyond this forest. A land of ice and arctic woods. Though this forest is harsh, our land is harsher still...yet I love it. And miss it. I do not know why you and your kin are small, and we are large. You have many fine talents, this I can see. You can write, your people know Steel, and you have wizards. These things we fear, for they are the weapons of the Enclave.

Our people have no great cities, we do not build with stone except to bury our kings, and we prefer weapons of iron or bronze to steel. We do not have...nations, or countries. Your words. We have the Ten Clans. All my life, I knew of nothing but our northern land, I did not know there were other kinds of men. Then the Overlord came. Now I do. Though you are not as strong as we, nor as brave, I can see you have no desire to meet death here. I will not die at the hands of these creatures. It is not my wyrd.

Vanigar, The Uttermost North

An arctic land surrounding a massive bay, the Uttermost North lies to the north of the Iron Forest. The men of the Uttermost north are called The Vanir. They are barbarians by any normal definition of the word. 1,000 years ago, the Gol invaded their lands when the Vanir were still hunter-gatherers. Slowly, Vanir culture and Gol culture merged as the Gol slowly died out.

While some Gol wizards can still be found in secluded towers, the Vanir are once again the dominant people of the North. Eight clans, originally created by the Gol after the Vanir lost the last war between the two peoples. Each clan is led by a Jarl, who once paid tribute to the Gol king, and the structure of the Clans mimics the structure of the family. The Vanir do not respect land, or property, but they do respect family.

Vanirmen are the physically largest in Orden. they value strength and bravery, and seek an honorable death in battle. They also believe strongly in the notion of Fate, which they call Wyrd. Any character from the Uttermost North may chose one of the following clans and gain the benefit thereof.

**Hellseeker** - The Hellseeker clan have a long tradition of fighting demons and the undead. They are a wild, fierce clan, used to spending long periods of time in the Iron Forest or on the ice of the White Lands. They traditionally do not mix well with other clans. The Hellseekers have seen things that would harrow a normal man, and willingly accept the burden of protecting the clans from the terrors of the north. This experiences changes the Hellseekers and makes them strangers in their own lands.

**Dawnrunner** - The Dawnrunners pride themselves on their geographic knowledge of the Uttermost North. They are fleet of foot with a reputation for being good-natured and friendly. They make it a point
to know who is coming and going through the barbarian lands. They are the closest thing the barbarians have to diplomats.

**Skywhisper** - The Skywhisperers are a deeply spiritual clan. Legends claim the Skywhisperers know the secrets of moving into the Ghost World, where the ancestors live. Skywhisperers are known for being in tune with nature, and deeply meditative. They smoke Starvine, the moss that alters consciousness.

**Earthshaker** - "Earthshaker" is an ancient Gol word for mammoth. The Earthshaker clan once domesticated and rode mammoths, but that was long ago. Now they ride the massive, fur-hooved Kien. The mammoth rarely come south now and the Earthshakers have lost the lore of taming and riding the giant beasts.

**Nighthunter** - The Nighthunters are the only nocturnal clan among the Ten. In the summer, they spend
their days sleeping in caves. In the winter, they re-inhabit their longhouses, built to prevent light from coming in. At night, they waken, and begin their patrol of the forest and coastlines. They hunt and guard the other Clans while they sleep. Many of the dangers and terrors of the North live by night, and often the only thing standing between a prowling nightcreature and a sleeping family of Vanirmen is the Nighthunter Clan.

**Hawkriders** - The Hawkriders are the only clan to live permanently in the Iron Forest. They make the mountain peaks their home and rarely make settlements on the ground. Their communities are called Aeries. Like the other clans who share their homes with wolves, and the Earthshakers who do the same with horses, the Hawkriders are bound to the Great Hawks of the North. Unlike the Earthshakers, who all ride, only the Olmen and the Jarl of the Hawkriender clan are allowed to ride the great winged beasts. Though they cannot speak, the Great Hawks are intelligent. They fight for and with the Hawkriders, but consider allowing another to ride on their backs a great privilege. Only in times of great strife will the Hawks allow common warriors on their backs, and even then, only warriors of the Hawkriender clan.

**Stoneshaper** - The Stoneshapers are the master masons of the Vanir. They are responsible for carving the hill-tombs of the Jarls, as well as erecting the megalith standing stones which the Vanir use as calendars and centers of worship.

**Oakhammer** - The great forest-warriors of the Clans, the Oakhammers guard and serve the forest that provides so much of the Vanirmen's livelihood. The animals and intelligent denizens of the forest respect the Oakhammer Clan more than the other Vanir. Each Oakhammer settlement is centered around a large, living Oak from which the family gains its strength.

**Races of the Uttermost North**

**Half-giants/Goliaths**

**Ruk**
The Ruk are intelligent, bipedal polar bear men inhabiting the northernmost reaches of the Great Bay.
In the past, I would not have given you my name. You are a low-caste. But now...things are different. I traveled far to escape the war between the Pharaoh and the Overlord. This place is different. The stars...the stars are strange here. But in spite of this distance...the war with the Overlord follows me.

I come from the deserts east of the Granite Mountains. A vast sea of sand. My people were devoted to a pantheon of gods who looked like men with the heads of beasts. Then Pharaoh said there was but one god, and abolished worship of the gods of my fathers. The Innumerable Gods are all I've known, but Pharaoh is divine and cannot err. Now I do not know what to think.

Khemhara, The Infinite Desert

The Infinite Desert is the second-largest region in Orden. Bounded on the west by the Granite mountains and the east by the green forests of the Opal Empire, the desert is virtually uncrossable and considered by many impassable. In spite of this, the Khem-hor have mastered the moving sands and built a mighty empire there.
Bronze skinned and currently hairless as a fashion, the men of the Infinite desert are on the cusp of exiting the Bronze Age. They have advanced mathematics, though not as advanced as the Hazar, and are the best stonemasons in the world. Their cities, made of stone, are extremely complex, dominated by pyramids and obelisks, and elaborate geometric design. When asked by outsiders why their build their cities along such mathematically precise designs, they answer enigmatically "to reach eternity."

Their traditions are based on their desert culture and the pantheon of One Thousand Gods. But recently the new Pharaoh formally abolished the priestly caste, assuming all powers thereof, and declaring Atum, a formerly obscure sun god, as the only true god thereby instituting the only known monotheistic human culture on Orden.

Though his subjects initially resisted, the Pharaoh used his nearly unlimited power to banish the priestly caste, liberate the slaves they used as currency, and brought justice to the people. As a result, when the Overlord came, the people rose up to defend the Pharaoh, their country, and their newfound way of life.

But the former priests have their own ideas about who should be running the empire.

**Star-born**

Their magic derives from their study of the heavens, upon which they have mapped a detailed and elaborate map of constellations. Theirs are the most advanced star-maps in the world. They divide the sky into 9 Houses, each dominated by a major constellation. These have significant affect on a person over the course of their life, depending on when they were born. Any character from the Infinite Desert may chose which constellation was dominant when they were born and gain the benefit thereof.

- **Depet A'a**, The Great Ship - Travel
- **Hemta Iteru**, The Three Rivers - Home
- **Atum**, The Rays of The Sun - Health
Sekhet - The Hunter - Valor and persistence
Sehkem - The Scepter - Justice and righteousness
Mew - The Cat - Secrets and loyalty
Nen - The Infant - life
Pharaoh - The King - leadership
Kehpesh - The Sword - wisdom
Apep - The Sea Dragon - Fate, destiny
Deshret Nedjem - The Desert Rose, beauty and clarity of thought. Physical beauty and/or intelligence.

Races of the Desert

The Werejackal

Shapeshifting dog-men.
"I will serve under you, though others say honor means nothing to the Chain. But I watched you fight and your men die, all to complete the Contract. This is honor.

"I come from the greatest land in Orden. The Opal Empire. It is civilized, we are a civilized people. Moreso, certainly, than any others I have met here. We are stoic, meditative. We strive for perfection of form in all things. I sometimes think the philosopher there, from the Commonwealth is most like me. His mind is highly ordered and he constantly challenges his own thoughts. Then I think the Vaslorian Knight is most like me, striving to fulfill his code. He calls it Chivalry. We call it Bushido. But there is no one truly like me. None who seek balance in thought and action in all things. Just as the Five Elements are in balance with each other.

"Before I came here, I knew nothing of the lands beyond the great desert to the west. I was told that all who live there are barbarians. Savages. I have seen many things here, at first I thought the stories I heard were correct. But now I know they are wrong. There are men with honor in the Infinite Desert, and beyond."

Higara, The Opal Empire

The Opal Empire is a temperate sliver of land on the easternmost edge of Orden. To the west lies the
Infinite Desert. To the east, the Great Sea.

The men of the Opal Empire are known as the Jō-yoi. Theirs is a highly feudal society in many ways a mirror of Vasloria. Their society is more rigid and more highly caste-based than any other in Orden. The noblemen never giving the peasants even a glance.

They dress ornately in long flowing robes, and take as much care and practice in waging war, as writing poetry, as forging steel. As a result, theirs is the strongest steel in Orden. They have the greatest duelists in Orden, and because their land is so narrow, and their livelihood as a people intertwined with the sea, they are the second best sailors, after the Riojans.

Their queen is the Immortal Empress who rules the Seven Great Houses across the centuries. Under her palace, the source of her power; the Emperor Naga, progenitor and sleeping god of all Naga. She is anointed by its acolytes and their ministrations give her immortality. She keeps the great houses scheming and plotting against each other.

In meditation, each man attempts to embody one of the five elements of Jō-yoi philosophy. Any character from the Opal Empire may choose one of the following elements and gain the benefit thereof (Earth, Air, Fire, Water)

"And a fifth element, I know no word for it in your tongue. Ukiyo. It is what makes things alive. And at the same time, it is the fact that in each living thing, is death. Its own death, and all life feeds on death. It is living, and the destiny of the living. Your language lacks poetry. It has no term..."

"Wyrd," the Vanirman says.

The Jō-yoi casts a sharp glance at the Vanirman, and a moment later...nods.
"Tetecutine! Caltica nitlacua titlacuazque, conetz telpochtli. Yehuan nicochi pochtecatl."

"He understands us." I told the Captain. Translating the Annals from and into other languages kept me up at night. "But I don’t think he can speak it. Or if he can, he’s too smart to let us know.

‘He’s from Ix, big jungle island southwest of Vasloria. Rumor says his people are cannibals. Probably bullshit. Might have ritual human sacrifice but that’s...lots of people do. Or did. They’re savage, quick to fight. Nastier than our friend the Barbarian Vanirman there. They have some primitive form of writing, but most amazing is his understanding of the sky. He seems as knowledgeable about it as the Khem-hor. It's remarkable.

"They say Ix is so thick with jungle that a man can travel the length and breadth of its largest island walking from tree branch to tree branch, never touching the ground. You wouldn’t want to touch the ground. The land is ruled, not by men, but by the Terror Lizards, some over 40 feet tall."

“Yes,” the Phaedran said. “We have the bones of one at the Library of Leiceum in the Commonwealth. It could swallow a man whole and it's said they can run faster than any other land animal.

"His people have gods,” the philosopher continued, “like yours, and also some form of totem animal which I do not fully comprehend. Once his people built large stone cities and massive step-pyramids, but that empire died so long ago there is no record of it in any history book.

“His people also have...a secret which he trusted to me and which I will not reveal here. Should you gain his trust, maybe he will tell it to you.”

The Jungles of Ix
An island chain south of the Bale Sea, the people of Ix are known as the Uaxatlal (pron. wah-HOT-lal). Closely related to the Gol, they are a primitive people, denizens of the islands across many Ages with little change. Untouched by the various human empires that have come and gone over the history of Orden, they remain primitive, with most of their industry going toward maintaining the massive ziggurats that mark the centers of their cities.

While their cities are large, the largest built in the middle of a volcanic lake, they have little influence over the surrounding land. They know something of farming, especially surrounding their major cities, but the jungles are so rich that foraging remains a viable means of collecting food.

They know little of working metal, having no natural metal deposits on the island, depending instead on obsidian or chert. As a result, the Uaxatlal rely on their natural stealth and dexterity, as well as extensive poison use to defeat their enemies.

They have one of the largest pantheons in Orden, and each man is ‘adopted’ by a totem animal as part of his coming of age ceremony. Any man from Ix t may chose one of the following spirit animals and gain the benefit thereof (TBD).
In Those Days, the Chain Was In Service To The Queen of Brass

“Black gods it’s got tentacles!”

The tall, thin, hairless, violet-colored humanoid arched an eyebrow. A voice echoed in their heads. “Far stranger that you do not.”

“Urg,” the Captain said holding his head in his hands. “Does he have to do that?”

“Infinitely preferable to flapping slabs of meat together. Is there no other way for you to project your thoughts?”

“He’s from the World Below,” I explained. “We picked him up back in Alloy. He’s an exile, I think.”

The Captain gave him a look, and then surveyed the rest of the company. No one in the tavern seemed to give the mind flayer a second glance. They’d all seen it fight.

“You on the run from something?” The Captain asked.

The mind flayer repeated the Captain’s survey off the inn, looking at the senior officers of the Chain enjoying their reward and the brief respite from battle. Then it turned its baleful gaze back on our fearless leader.

“Isn’t everyone?”

The Captain shook his head. Took a step forward and confronted the alien thing. “I don’t care what you are or where you’re from, but any enemies you got, you leave behind. Any grudges, any slimy things or horned devils got a beef with you? They come after us? We cut you loose.”

“I have no enemies.”

“None?” The Captain didn’t believe it.

The standard bearer slumped down at the table next to us. The mind flayer deftly picked up the bottle of wine in front of the passed out soldier and took a long drink straight from the bottle, its tentacles writhing down the neck.

It put the empty bottle down, its tentacles reflexively cleaning each other.

“None alive.”
The Chain of Acheron is a mercenary company, last of the Helltroopers, and as such has been to almost every other World in its history, at least so the Chronicle says. Most recently the Chain served as the Royal Guard for the Queen of Fire in the City of Brass, before her exile.

The City of Brass on the Plane of Quintessence is home to the flotsam and jetsam of the multiverse, intelligent beings from every world find themselves there and from there, some join the Chain.

The men and women of the Chain have no past, no country.

Their only nation, battle.

Their only language, steel.
Crazy, But Not Too Crazy

You can play a weird, alien, or non-standard PCs, but there are limits. I, personally, want to be able to relate to the Chain and if they end up all aliens it’s gonna be too weird for me.

1: At least two PCs must be human.

2: Only one PC can be from another plane.

3: Only two PCs can be from species shorter than dwarves.

4: Only two PCs can be from species taller than humans.