

THE WORLD OF COLONA

Colona is a world of both variety and deadly extremes. The land was once a wonderland of magic and its effects on the environment are still present to the current day. The world is lush with great beauty and fear inducing darkness. From the breath taking sights of the floating dragon islands to the wonders of the mysterious colossal iron wood trees of the Towering Wood. However, there is a certain majestic quality to the acid lakes and volcanic valleys in the gnome kingdom or the quiet rolling plains of the blood moors. No matter where your journey may take you, the wonders of Colona are vast and undreamed of even by the eldest of sages.

In the almost eternal night sky, one can see the Golden Rapture, a mysterious phenomenon of low orbiting shooting stars that leave a trail of golden dust that seem to lead travelers to the capital city of the human kingdom. Beyond this golden veil, the world's large blue moon can be seen. The moon itself is actually ten times larger than Colona itself. The light reflected by the moon is bright making it easy for travelers on the open roads to see at night. Some worship the giant blue moon as a goddess of creation and light. Because of large moon, Colona's three suns can almost never be seen. Usually only one sun is visible and able to give daylight while the other sun's light is reflected off the extra large moon at night. Some say there is place on Colona where all three suns shine day and night.

Great oceans and vast seas separate the seven known continents of Colona. The heart of civilization and center of the world, at least for mankind, is Tur. Almost any race can be found lurking here along with all the more common races that can be found on any part of the continent. Humans, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings have many homelands here as well as large communities of elves, half-elves, half-orcs, goblins, minotaurs, and other monster nations that have formed after the fall of last empire from the Age of Oblivion.

The continent of Roflenia is Tur's neighbor to the east, a bastion of great evil and mystery. To the north is the enchanted Green Isles, home of the xenophobic elven nations. Directly to the south of Tur lies Urcho, a land comprised of a off shoot of humans that live their lives by a strict code of honor led by an Emperor that they claim is a god made flesh. To the west of Tur is a mysterious land passing sailors have named The Savage Lands, they say the only way past the surrounding coast of jagged mountainous rocks is guarded by a sea creature some say is over a mile long. To the north and east of Tur one can see the floating islands that form the continent home of the dragons called Io, several parts of the continent float higher than the rest forming an impressive sight within the fog laden clouds that surround it. To the south and west of Tur is a mostly unexplored continent that appeared after the Age of Tyranny.

Now it is time to see the world of Colona from the point of view of the people of Tur. The societies of the fair continent, despite the wars and dominance of humans descended from different Kings of opposing nations, is a melting pot of many cultures and beliefs. Tur's nations meld human, elf, dwarf, gnome, halfling, half-elf, half-orc, and a cadre of other races and monster races together that ironically formed something stronger than the sum of the individual parts that once threatened to tear the very lands apart not long ago. The land's mixed heritage, though not without its own wars and conflicts still, also give the people of Tur an advantage over many of the other civilizations and continents because of their diversity.

TIME

The people of Tur mark the passages of time to the standards of the great sages that developed them and also sanctioned the first ruling council of Tur before the first of the great line of kings that threatened to destroy the land well over a millennium ago.

Days are 24 hours long, divided into day and night by a 12 hour period of sunlight. Seven days make up a week, four weeks a month, and twelve months a year. The other two moons are tied to the land by legend, and each moon can be seen clearly on the week that moon is most prominent as the orbit brings it closest to the planet. Legend tells of a time when the large moon in the sky will become black as no sun will be visible in the sky (They all become eclipsed by Colona's other moons), it was said this alignment was known as the void where death will sweep the land and the undead will rule. This eclipse is said to happen once every ten thousand years. The most ancient of creatures and tomes do not mention the last "Void" and often are found to be missing pages about that time.

MARKING THE YEARS

While a particular culture could count the years dating from some significant event in it's past, the common calendar of Tur is the Divine Calendar. This reckoning of years was developed during the birth of the Circle of Nine, guardians of the world turned corrupt by the Mad Lich Zamere. It was during this period seven immortals from the heavens came to Tur to combat the evils of the Nine. It counts from the founding of the first Human kingdom to the present day. The elves even adopted

and use this calendar, as do all the governments and peoples of Tur's nations. The campaign begins in the year 9998 in the Age of Exploration (the 9,998th Year since the first human kingdom was founded).

Days of the Week

Each day of the week is named after one of the angels that fought against the Nine.

First Day Sierra (Angel of Light)
Second Day Malchediel (Angel of Courage)
Third Day Zagzagel (Angel of Wisdom)
Fourth Day Vohu Manah (Angel of Purity)
Fifth Day Zuriel (Angel of Harmony)
Sixth Day Forfax (Angel of Stars)
Seventh Day Shekinah (Angel of Unity)

Months of the Year

Month Season

Zasterintyr Mid-winter
Ioune Late winter
Tharena Early spring
Gygax Mid-spring
Drago Late spring
Nyhm Early summer
Lhenarvion Mid-summer
Bahamut Late summer
Raiden Early autumn
Synn Mid-autumn
Astilryth Late autumn
Volt Early winter

THE PROPHECY OF THE VOID

The time before man or dragon, a race of nomadic beings studied the world around them for signs and meaning. They studied sky, the oceans, even the caverns deep below the grassy plains. They studied everything, trying to learn the secrets of being. What they found were signs of ill omen. The mighty dragons were first learning of this omen from the nomadic beings. The beings showed the patient dragons the patterns and the meaning of the signs they saw all around them. These patterns would play out in a Prophecy, a record of things to come that has been emerging since the creation of the world they live and breathe in. The nomads taught the first of the dragons the secrets of ancient and powerful magic to protect them and the world for then the prophecy would emerge. Since then many of the dragons spent a great deal of effort charting the moons, studying the patterns of events, interpreting omens, watching for signs while mastering this new force called “magic”.

The Prophecy of the Void is very complex and unfathomable to even the most ancient of beings. Rarely a being of a lesser race might stumble upon a snippet of the constantly accumulating text, but only beings as immortal as dragons have the time, patience, and perspective to see the Prophecy for what it truly is. There are traditional texts containing parts of the Prophecy. Instead, the dragons firmly believe the world itself is a living entity that is waiting for something unknown even to the dragons themselves.

Passages appear throughout the world. Signs are revealed in the changing shape of the world itself. Mysterious glyphs appear on the sides of mountains or walls of ancient caverns, though some of these can only be read when certain moons are closest in orbit, or through the application and proximity of powerful magic. Recently, at least as far as the dragons are concerned, a new sign has appeared in the world: lesser races (compared to the power and majesty of dragons), particularly in humans and demi-humans, began to manifest powerful magic at birth. The first to manifest such power was born three thousand years ago.

The appearance of these beings in the lesser races has led to much debate and controversy among the dragon chroniclers. For whatever reason, the Prophecy apparently has decided to reveal itself through the flesh. As always, the dragons continue to study, contemplate, and discuss, as they seek meaning and understanding in the signs that were to spell doom for the world around them.

What is the nature of the Prophecy that occupies so much of the ancient's time? There is, of course, plenty of room for interpretation. Even among the dragons themselves, different factions interpret the signs differently. The Prophecy hints at

events of doom and dread as often as it helps push the world toward exalted events. It is generally believed that the Prophecy points toward transformation, not destruction. But some dragons believe it could be both. Beyond that, the Prophecy remains as alien as the dragon's and elves themselves.

LIFE ACROSS TUR

The Age of War has ended, but the wake of death remains. The nations of Tur, while at peace (technically), continue to vie for political and economic supremacy. New treaties and alliances are formed as often as the seasons change while new weapons and armies are being built, and soon over the horizon, another age of warfare is brewing. Still, that age is years away. In the meantime, an Age of Exploration has begun. This is indeed an exciting era in which to adventure.

During the last Age, not everyone saw action and not every location was a blood soaked battle field. Great portions of every nation never suffered invasion or even a single attack. On the other hand, locations in every nation did suffer throughout the Age of War, and some cities switched hands a dozen times over as the five hundred year long conflict unfolded. Particularly along the borders of nations, bloodshed and violence came on epic scales.

The Treaty of Brothers was signed on the 15th day of Astilryth in 9,996 of the Age of Exploration, thus ending the Age of War. After more than five hundred years of war, death, and suffering soldiers and kings alike must now learn to live in peace. The long struggle and the destruction of the Gnome lands, which occurred in 9,994 of the Age of War, have left deep scars on Tur. There is an wave of despair and doubt, a fear that the fate of gnome lands may herald the doom of Tur itself.

This sense of foreboding doom has provoked many different reactions across Tur. Crime is on the increase in all the major cities of the nations; many question moral standards, as people no longer believe in the security of their old way of life.

Murder and theft are far more common than they used to be before the Age of War. Sinister conspiracies such as the Order of Sierra Fen are using the overall sense of confusion and uncertainty to increase their own power and influence. The elves of the Green Isles have been ignoring the Treaty of Brothers, and elven forces continue to clash with the humans, the halflings, and the half-orcs. Rumors tell of a graft and corruption even within the Church of Light, the traditional bastion of law and order on Tur.

Not everyone gives in to the despair, however. Academic institutions such as the Great Library of Crissanya and Osric University have redoubled their efforts to explore the mysterious continent of Roflenia, seeking knowledge or the rare and powerful metal only found there known as Nak. There are those who fight to make Tur a safer place, battling creatures of the shadow, fighting in the streets, and also the courts of the land.

This is a time of great opportunity and adventure. The lost treasures ancient civilizations are only the beginning to be recovered. Untold wealth and powerful can be gained – assuming once can get past the deadly guardians and cunning traps that protect them. Evil crime lords and corrupt priests clash in the cities. Spies, courtiers, and assassins battle with words and sword in the courts of Tur. Insane wizards, ancient evils, raging demons, and sinister cults pursue deadly schemes that could threaten Colona itself. This is a time when new heroes must arise to replace those slain in the Age of War, to find a way to restore light where there is darkness and hope to the people who despair in Tur.

GOVERNMENT

Most nations are that of a feudal monarchy. In addition to the rural farmers, a middle class of laborers and shop owners has developed in the larger towns and cities. The mercantile barons that control the lands align themselves with no nation, which allows them to operate independently and in all nations, though most can't help but associate more strongly with one nation or another.

BARON HOUSES

There are currently thirteen baron houses that constitute an aristocracy of commerce and industry across Tur. The members of each family are born into wealth and social status that puts them firmly in the middle to upper classes of society. The house nobles and their immediate relatives share the highest status in the land, equivalent to the royal houses and the highest-ranking clergy. Even those who are further removed from the main bloodlines share and take advantage of this status as the nobles allow, but on their own they rank in the middle class.

RURAL LIFE

Farmers dominate the countryside of most of the nations, raising crops and providing food. In some nations, farmers are serfs indentured to the lords that control their lands. In others, farmers are free workers who own or lease their land and pay

taxes for protection and other services they require of the ruling class. Farmers toil through all hours of the night. They live within a mile or so of a trading village, which is guarded in turn by a local lord and his keep or castle. When legal disputes arise, it is the manor lord (or his appointed officer) who settles disagreements and issues rulings.

Some farmers have magic to help them with their chores. This magic might be provided by their lord or purchased from a baron house.

While some farmers in every nation saw firsthand the degradations of the Age of War, most have to worry more about bandits and marauding monsters than the armies of the neighboring nations. The average farmer doesn't wander far from his or her home, but every family has a member that went off to fight the war or seek employment in a city, and everyone knows someone whose brother or sister decided to become an adventurer and leave home in search of fame or fortune.

CITY LIFE

Some townfolk and city-dwellers engage in a craft or trade of some kind, though for every professional there are three or more common laborers working in the city. Merchants and shop owners, smiths, leatherworkers, and artisans of all descriptions live and work in the cities. Many use some magic to ply their craft; magewrights cast magecraft themselves; others hire magewrights to assist them when the funds are available.

People live in close proximity in the cities, shopping in the markets, working, relaxing as the opportunity presents itself. City-dwellers have a bit more access to the conveniences of magic than their rural counterparts do. The baron houses maintain pavilions and emporiums in many good-sized towns and cities, where their services can be purchased on a regular basis. Magewrights are more abundant in the towns and cities, and even the least well-to-do city has everbright lanterns to light at least the major thoroughfares and exchanges.

In a city, law and order prevails- or at least it tries to. A city watch patrols the streets, a local garrison protects the trade roads and caravan routes passing nearby. Courts and councilors hold sway over matters of law, deciding disputes and determining guilt or innocence through something akin to due process.

ECONOMIC MEANS

From the rural communities that dot the countryside to the villages, towns, and cities that rise wherever need and circumstance come together, the people of Tur fall into three economic categories: poor, middle class, and wealthy. There are ranges and degrees of wealth in each category.

Six out of ten people in the all nations are common farmers, unskilled laborers, and tradesfolk who are in the poor economic class, having no more than 40 or 50 silver pieces on hand at any given time, and most having considerably less.

Three out of ten people are in the middle class, including skilled laborers, prosperous traders and shop owners, skilled artisans, most nobility, low-level adventurers, and some members of the baron families who normally have a few hundred gold pieces or more on hand.

One out of ten people fall into the wealthy category, those with access to a few thousand gold pieces at any given time. This class includes merchant lords, barons of commerce, the patriarchs and matriarchs of the baron houses, the most popular and successful artisans, mid-to high-level adventurers, and the ruling royalty.

EDUCATION

Throughout the nations (or at least what's left of them), formal schooling is considered a right and a necessary part of every child's training. Rural manors maintain schools for the sons and daughters of the peasants and laborers. Private tutors provide an education for the children of royal and economic nobility. In towns and cities, schools cater to all who wish to attend. In no case is education mandatory; however, most people understand the advantages offered to them by the remnants of the education system.

Higher education and study is available at a number of colleges and universities, as well as among the religious institutions. For those who don't want to become scholars, apprenticeships and on-the-job training replace higher education. The exception to this system involves magewrights and wizards, who must attend one of the magical colleges for at least some of their training.

ADVENTURERS

The heroes of the world, adventurers often break most of the rules concerning life in Tur and when a rule doesn't exist to cover what they do, they invent one. Adventurers move easily among all walks of life. They can champion the common folk, protect the middle class, or engage in missions for the wealthy.

Adventurers form into groups, knowing that whatever one can do, four can do better. No single adventurer possesses all of the skills and abilities necessary to succeed; the team provides the capabilities and companionship required to get the job done. Groups come together through chance meetings, fortuitous circumstances, open calls, and guild connections. They stay together if they work well as a team and learn to trust each other.

While many adventuring parties operate as freelancers who take up each quest as it comes their way, some acquire patrons who pay their expenses and provide the missions that drive them. Now, any adventuring party can hire itself out for a mission or two. A patron, however, often defines the party's motivation and reason for sticking together. A patron can be a wealthy noble or merchant lord, an organization, or a government. Patrons command allegiance based on gold, an exchange of services, or a common goal. A baron house, a church, a university, the nation's crown, and the Tur Chroniclers are all examples of adventuring party patrons.

Whatever the case, the common folk love to read about or hear stories and ballads concerning champions of good and agents of evil. The Tur Chroniclers, in particular, presents stories that follow adventurers from the twin towers of Angel Falls to the mysterious lands of Roflenia and back again on a regular basis.

LANGUAGE

Due to the widespread influence of the Age of War, each nation has developed its own form of the Common tongue. The baron houses have been trying to get the nations to use a universal Common tongue so that commerce and diplomacy can be communicated on a level basis. It is not prevalent all over and many do not understand the universal Common tongue outside of most capital cities.

Other prominent languages on the continent include Dwarven, Gnome, Elven, Halfling, Goblin, and Orc. These languages are universal among the races regardless of nation. Scholars and arcanists also study Draconic, the ancient language of the powerful dragons and ancient magic.

Races such as the reclusive elves, do use the Universal Common tongue but do not recognize nation common of any human nation.

THE TUR CHRONICLERS

Many towns and cities have long traditions of town criers, news bearers who present important or interesting information in squares, courts, or other public gathering places. It wasn't long before the magical arts allowed for a more permanent method of presentation, and the chroniclers were born. The simplest chroniclers appear as scrolls nailed to public message boards containing the pertinent news of the week. More ambitious chroniclers, including the Black Horse Courier, The Star Ledger, the Turian Scroll, and the Inquisitive Gnome, are presented as folded broadsheets nested together to form simple books. Each edition is collected and stored, eventually being bound as a chronicle of news and information.

By far, the most well known and widely read chronicle is the Tur Chronicler. Thanks to its relentless and mostly unbiased coverage of the Age of War, and through a distribution deal with the baron houses, the Tur Chronicler enjoys a loyal and avid readership throughout Tur.

A typical edition of the Tur Chronicler features news from around all nations, as well as stories of adventurers and exciting expeditions, business solicitations, royal proclamations, and almanac information. While the main offices are located in the capital, the Chronicler employs chroniclers far and wide, and maintains field offices in every major nation. Baron houses distribute each edition (the Chronicler appears three days a week; Malchediel, Vohu Manah, and Forfax) along its mail and steam rail runs, allowing the Chronicler to reach a huge audience. Indeed, almost everyone in all the nations knows the Chroniclers' slogan: "If it happens in the nation, you'll read about it in the Tur Chroniclers."