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The Known World

The great **alchemist** and philosopher Kyamberan has said that places should be judged by two things: their geography, and their culture. In creating this gazetteer I have endeavoured to follow this, and I have found that the two go frequently hand in hand. Thus the great impenetrable mountain range of the **Worldspine**, with its innumerable and unmapped steep-sided valleys and thick forests, becomes home to the equally impenetrable **Outsiders**. In the dry and arid north, the **Realms of Sand and Stone** and **Salt** give rise to peoples who, despite their deep and bitter enmity, are more closely related in traditions and customs than to their late-arriving neighbours in the dusty hills around **Evenspire**. In the more amenable climates south of the **Purple Spur**, a culture of **river-people** has grown up around the vast waterway of the **Fury River**. Near the spur itself, where the **Fury River Gorge** divides the realms in two for those who cannot fly on dragon-back, different peoples from different realms have different customs; further down the river, where it flows broad and sluggish in **Bonjanland** between the **Harvest Throne** and the **River Throne**, towns and villages on either side of the river owe more to each other than to their fellow kinsmen living further west on the edges of the **Raksheh Forest** or east around the **Oordish Moors**. Furthest to the south, the citizens of **Furymouth** have quietly picked up the customs and habits of the **Taiytakei**, their ever-present guests from across the **Endless Sea**, while those just across the water on the isolated **Tyan's Peninsula** have not.

While this gazetteer is not in any way intended as a history of the dragon-realms, a little knowledge is sometimes necessary to understand the culture of a place; even, in locations such as **Tyan's Peninsula**, the geography. Thus we shall touch upon the coming of the **Silver King** and his demise, the rise and fall of both the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** and the **Order of the Dragon**, the foundation of **Evenspire**, the coming of the speakers and the **War of Thorns**. However, I have not engaged with these matters in any depth, and scholars wishing to do so are advised to seek the many alternative and much more penetrating treatises freely available at the **Sand Monastery**. This short compendium, rather, is intended to accompany the **alchemist** on his inevitable travels and offer what little guidance and advice I have learned from my own.

Bellepheros

Senior **alchemist**

The Aardish Caves

The Aardish Caves are an extensive network of caves in the **Yamuna River** valley as it exits the foothills of the **Worldspine**. The caves were discovered at the same time as the **Moonlight Garden** by dragon-riders in the service of Speaker **Voranin** searching for the **Tomb of the Silver King**. Investigation into the **Moonlight Garden** was brought to an abrupt end by the **War of Thorns**; under the subsequent rule of Speaker **Vishmir**, attention turned to the caves themselves. It is said that when **Vishmir** visited the **Moonlight Garden**, he personally observed that a dark reflection of the garden structures could be clearly seen in the waters of the **Yamuna**, and in a moment of divine clarity he understood that this was the mythical **Black Mausoleum**. He remained fascinated with the caves and spent many days participating in their exploration during the early years after his victory.

In the seventh year of **Vishmir**'s reign, all exploration of the caves abruptly ceased following a disaster that claimed the lives of some two hundred souls working at the site. The cause of the disaster is not clear, as no witnesses survived. Those nearby on the bluffs overlooking the caves reported that the ground was shaking and even the dragons stabled there seemed disturbed. The most likely cause of the disaster thus appears to be a cave-in. Upon hearing the news, **Vishmir** visited the site at once; on his return, he immediately issued a decree that the caves were a forbidden place under the guardianship of the King of **Furymouth**. For a decade no one returned – and then, without any warning, **Vishmir** summoned hundreds of architects and craftsmen to the **Adamantine Palace** and had them transported to the caves, there to build him a tomb. Construction took place in great secrecy over the following years, and on **Vishmir**'s death, his body was spirited away and presumably buried there. So secret were **Vishmir**'s plans that the presence of the tomb might have remained wholly unknown if a number of misplaced scrolls had not been found by the **Order of the Scales** in the **Palace of Alchemy** during the reign of Isul Aieha. Even now, the exact location of the tomb remains a carefully guarded secret; fortunately, the Aardish Caves are extremely remote and hard to reach without a dragon, and the caves remain under the watchful guardianship of King Tyan of **Furymouth**.

No evidence exists for later claims that describe (often in horrific detail) the deaths, dismemberments and mutilations which **Vishmir** supposedly inflicted on various architects and craftsmen associated with the tomb. Some stories claim that those involved in construction signed contracts committing themselves to have no part in any similar design. Some other stories claim that all those involved in building the tomb were sold to the **Taiytakei** as slaves, and yet others that they and their families were taken to a secret city across the sea by **Vishmir**'s sons and brothers. Such stories are almost certainly fanciful and have clear parallels with similar stories surrounding the construction of **Vishmir**'s other great project, the **Veid Palace** in **Furymouth**.

No evidence has ever been recorded to indicate there has ever been any connection between the Aardish Caves and the **Silver King**.

The Act of Narammed

The last significant decree of **Narammed** as Speaker of the Realms was to gift his palace and his lands to the realms, on the condition that any who took his gift must be chosen from among the wise and just kings and queens of the realms; they must also forego their dragons, relinquish their gift after ten years and no more, and take upon themselves the solemn duty as adviser and arbiter across the realms. The Act of Narammed signified the coming of the speakers, and their presence is widely thought to have saved the realms from several catastrophic wars.

Adamantine Eagle

This eagle is native to **Gliding Dragon Gorge** and does not live naturally anywhere else in the realms. Although not as large as the desert condors of the northern realms, the Adamantine Eagle is the largest domesticated hunting bird, possessing a wingspan of around one and a half strides. The Adamantine Eagle is highly prized for its silver plumage and commonly seen as a pet among the dragon-lords. In truth, it is a poor and ill-disciplined hunting bird, and those hunters who depend on such things for their livelihood will never be seen with one.

The Adamantine Men

As well as creating the **Order of the Scales**, **Narammed** was responsible for the creation of the Adamantine Men. During his travels across the realms, **Narammed** was followed by a growing band of fanatics who saw themselves as holy soldiers ready to fight and die in the name of the **Order of the Dragon** at a moment's notice. When **Narammed** took power as the Speaker of the Realms and began to build the **Adamantine Palace**, he took these men with him and used them to become the nucleus of what he saw as a holy guard – the Adamantine Men – who would serve and guard the office of speaker. Over the years that followed, the legions of the Adamantine Men grew, going from the handful of legions that served **Narammed** to the twenty legions and more that serve the current speaker. Initially the Adamantine Men were intended as a personal guard, but as the wealth of the **Adamantine Palace** grew and the numbers of the guard grew with it, they became a force to be reckoned with in their own right. The effectiveness of an army of trained soldiers who did nothing else was shown during the **War of Thorns** in the battles of **Watersgate** and **Samir's Crossing**, where legions of the Adamantine Guard annihilated significantly larger forces.

After the war **Vishmir** did not disband the Adamantine Men as many had expected. However, all their ties with the **Order of the Dragon** were systematically severed; the Adamantine Men were then equipped to the man with dragon-scale armour and the best weapons in the realms (bought from the **Taiytakei**, whose craft with metals remains far superior to any within the realms). Most significant of all, **Vishmir** changed the emphasis of the Adamantine Men from fighting against men to fighting against dragons. This included the arming of the guard and the palace with over a thousand scorpions designed by **Prince Lai**.

The commander of the Adamantine Men is commonly referred to as the **Night Watchman**. Rumours also persist of an even more fanatical company of soldiers within the guard known as the Embers, who protect the most secret places of the **Order of the Scales**.

The Adamantine Palace

The first speaker, **Narammed the Magnificent**, took over the site of the Adamantine Palace in 124. It had previously been a property of the **Order of the Dragon**, and remains even now the site of the **Glass Cathedral** and a central focus for the remaining active **dragon-priests**. Over the following seven years, **Narammed** spent lavishly to build the Adamantine Palace into the finest palace in the known world, apparently spending more than two hundred thousand gold crowns on construction and as much again on decoration. **Narammed** rebuilt the existing **Gatehouse** almost as a fortress in its own right, and at the same time constructed the **Tower of Air** to form the nucleus of his palace. Subsequent towers, although more spacious, still do not match the height and vertiginous splendour of **Narammed's** original vision.

Today, much of **Narammed's** building works remain unchanged. The first courtyard – the immense Gateyard, large enough for dragons to land and launch themselves again – was his creation, as was the **Speaker's Tower**, which leads to the Fountain Court (also called the Inner Gateyard). Here, **Narammed's** seal remains visible over the entrance arch of the **Speaker's Tower** which contained his private rooms. The Inner Gateyard also contained one hundred and four lodgings reserved for visiting kings. The third and largest courtyard, the Speaker's Yard (also known as the Cathedral Court) was given over to the **Order of the Dragon**, while the fourth and final court (the Circle Court) contained the very best rooms: the state apartments of the **Tower of Air** (and subsequently the **Azure Tower** and the City Tower) which were reserved for visiting Kings and their families. King Tyan I stayed in the **Tower of Air** as **Narammed's** guest immediately after its completion in 135, and although still a work in progress, the Adamantine Palace was already more magnificent than Tyan's own palace in **Furymouth** – a fact which did not escape his notice.

In building his palace, **Narammed** was attempting to recreate the mythic moon-palaces apparently described to the first **alchemists** by the **Silver King**: tall slender towers, grand apartments and irregular shapes and curves all rendered with intricate silver detailing. It is likely that **Narammed** had been inspired by Arch-Magus **Aeos' De Lunari**; a manual for kings and queens that included advice on palatial architecture and was published in 110, although written more than a hundred years earlier. The simple essential nature of the palace interiors shows the essence of **Narammed**: the plain solemn churchman who made himself arbiter of the **dragon-realms** more with sad regret that such a thing was necessary than with any notion of ambition or avarice. Yet he built and furnished the Adamantine Palace to show his fellow kings that he knew how to live as graciously as any of them.

Whatever the concepts were, the palace is an excellent and rare example of a thirty-year era when architecture was in a harmonious transition from a simplistic style, strongly influenced by the curves so doted on in *De Lunari*, to a more ornamental one. This blending of styles was first realized by a small group of **Taiytakei** craftsmen working at the **Furymouth** court in the first and second decades of the second century. They specialized in the adding of ornament to otherwise straightforward buildings, and their work can still be seen throughout the palaces and civic buildings of that city. It was the apprentice of one of these, Ardin De, who was responsible for many of the details that a keen observer will see upon visiting **Narammed's** palace.

Narammed was only to enjoy his palace for a few years. In 138, knowing that his enemies among the kings were engineering his downfall, he undertook the **Act of Narammed**. The palace and all **Narammed's** works passed to the second speaker, **Mehmeth of Evenspire**. **Narammed** died the following year.

Within six months of coming into ownership, **Mehmeth** began his own rebuilding and expansion. Unlike the spartan **Narammed**, **Mehmeth's** court consisted of over one thousand people, and thus one of the first of the new speaker's building works (in order to transform the Adamantine Palace to a suitable residence) was to construct the vast kitchens. These were quadrupled in size in 139. The

architecture of **Mehmeth**'s reign followed the design precedent set by **Narammed**: perpendicular plain stone, curves, slender towers and restrained ornament. This hybrid architecture was to remain almost unchanged for nearly a century, until **Vishmir** introduced much stronger modern **Taiytakei** influences from **Furymouth** to the palaces of the central and northern realms.

Between 142 and 145 **Mehmeth** added the City Tower and the **Azure Tower** (also known as the Water Tower) and remodelled the **Speaker's Tower** to include the immense **Chamber of Audience**, which has remained the most important room of the palace throughout the two hundred years since it was built. Here, under a spectacular carved hammer-beam roof, the Speaker dines in state seated at a table upon a raised dais. The hall itself took five years to construct; so impatient was the speaker for completion that the masons were compelled to work throughout the night by candlelight. The design of the ornamentation within the Chamber of Audience has changed frequently and is usually one of the first marks a new speaker makes upon the palace. In other, less public places, the ornamentation can be traced back through many speakers, sometimes back to **Narammed** himself.

The gatehouse to the second, inner court was adorned in 150 with an early example of an astronomical clock. When the inner gatehouse was later demolished, the clock was moved to the Tower of Dawn. Still functioning, the clock shows the time of day, the phases of the moon, the month, the quarter of the year, the date, the sun and star sign, and high water in **Furymouth** Harbour. The latter information was of great importance to the early **Taiytakei** visitors to **Furymouth**, as at low water their ships were prone to grounding on sandbanks in the river estuary. Accurate charts and the deepening of the main channels of the river have largely removed this hazard, but at the time the clock was hailed as a great innovation, marking a change in the **Taiytakei** from occasional visitors to regular traders.

During the periods of the early speakers, the palace was the scene of many historic events. In 197 the future Speaker **Vishmir** was born at the palace, and the child's mother died there two weeks later. In 221, while attending a service in the **Glass Cathedral**, the devout Speaker **Voranin** was informed of the adultery of his wife, Queen **Arlan**. Dragged screaming away, she was later impaled on a spike and hung in a cage, still alive, over the **Great Gate**, where her screams kept the **City of Dragons** awake for four days. Her ghost is now said to haunt the palace, but her body vanished from the cage on the fourth night of her torture. This marked the beginning of the **War of Thorns**.

The double-height chapel in the **Azure Tower** was begun by Speaker Hiastamir and completed under Speaker **Voranin**. Its timber and plaster ceiling, a Lunari vault with pendants completed by trumpeting dragons, is considered the 'most magnificent in the realms.' The altar is framed by a massive oak rederos in an unusual style carved by the Grinling during the reign of Speaker **Vishmir**. Opposite the altar, at first floor level, is the Speakers Pew where the speaker and his family would attend services apart from the general congregation seated below. The chapel was very popular during the times of Hiastamir and his successor Speaker **Voranin**, but fell into disuse following the **War of Thorns** and the subsequent decline of the **dragon-priests**.

Speaker **Voranin** was murdered in 222. He was succeeded briefly by his son, the ill-fated Speaker Voian. For this speaker, the Adamantine Palace was to become both his palace and his prison. It was also the setting for his honeymoon with his fifteen year old bride, Hanatta of Sand, in 224. Following Speaker Voian's execution in 226, the palace became the property of the **Order of the Dragon** presided over by High Priest **Anzuine**. Unlike other royal properties that fell into the Order's hands across the realms, the Adamantine Palace escaped relatively unscathed. While the Order auctioned much of the contents, the building was ignored. The Order was eventually ousted in 227 by Speaker **Vishmir**, which marked the end of the **War of Thorns**.

Recent History:

On the death of Speaker **Vishmir** in 249, the **Act of Narammed** was enforced again. The speaker was succeeded by his first cousin twice removed, the River King Havans.

In 254, the palace was the site of the first meeting between a speaker and representatives of the **Taiytakei**, a meeting known as the **Emerald Cascade** Conference because most of the conversations of historical note took place at **Narammed's Bridge** near the **Emerald Cascade**. While agreement with the **Taiytakei** was not reached (they sought to trade dragon hatchlings for sorcery), it established the precedent of a **Taiytakei** ambassador at the palace for some years to come, until the purge of 287.

After the **War of Thorns**, **Vishmir** and his immediate successors visited the Adamantine Palace, but largely preferred to reside elsewhere. By this time, according to current court standards in **Furymouth** and the **Pinnacles**, the Adamantine Palace appeared old-fashioned, and it was in 279 that the palace's antiquated state was finally addressed. The new Speaker **Ayzalmir** embarked on a massive rebuilding project. The intention was to demolish the building a section at a time, while replacing it with a huge modern palace retaining only **Narammed's Tower of Air**. The most eminent architects in the realms were called upon to draw the plans, while the master of works was to be a **Taiytakei**-sponsored sorcerer from across the seas. The plan was for a vast palace constructed around two immense courtyards offset from one another, and the design for the domed central palace bore resemblances to pictures of the mythic Palace of the Sunking. It has been suggested, though, that the plans were abandoned because the resemblance to the Sunking's Palace was too subtle and not strong enough; in the end, only the Towers of Dusk and Dawn were demolished and rebuilt. The resemblances are still there in the stark contrasts of coloured stones. However, The Adamantine Palace is given an extra dimension by the contrast between the dark block-work and the pale quoins, frames and banding. Further diversion is added by the circular and decorated windows of the second floor mezzanines. This theme is repeated in the inner Fountain Court, but the rhythm is faster and the windows, unpedimented on the outer façades, are given pointed pediments in the courtyard; this has led the courtyard to be nicknamed 'Startling Yard'.

During this work, the front half of the palace was replaced and **Narammed's** state rooms in the **Speaker's Tower** were lost; the new wings around the Fountain Court contained new state apartments and private rooms, one set for each of the kings and queens of the realms. Each suite of state rooms was accessed by a state staircase. Unlike the suites in the various towers, the new royal suites were of completely equal value in order to reflect the equality of the nine realms.

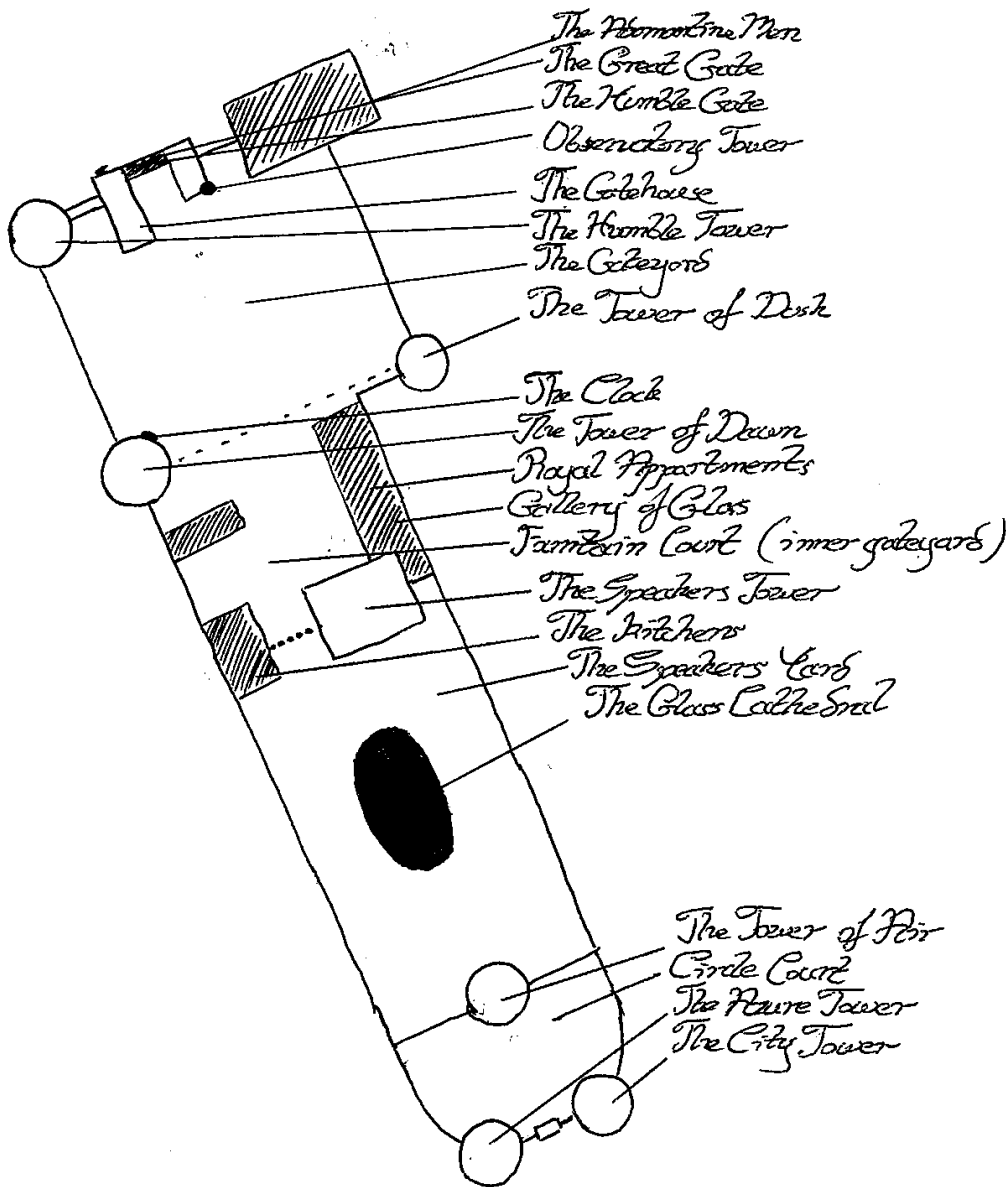
The Royal Apartments face south over the Fountain Court. The suites on either side are linked by a gallery running the length of the façade, a reference to the **Palace of Paths** in **Evenspire**, where the king and queen's apartments are linked by the Gallery of Glass. However, **Ayzalmir's** linking galleries are of more modest proportions and decoration. This ease of access between the apartments was ultimately the downfall of **Ayzalmir's** design; while a boon in times of peace and harmony, the usual tension between the dragon-kings and queens eventually reasserted itself and the apartments were never popular. Later speakers abandoned them for use by lesser guests, returning to hosting their royal visitors in the great towers of the palace.

After the time of **Ayzalmir**, subsequent speakers have lost interest in the renovations. The current speaker-in-waiting Antros of Sand has expressed some desire for further refurbishment, with architects already employed to design new furnishings and décor, including a new grand staircase in the **Speaker's Tower**.

Grounds:

Unusually, the Adamantine Palace has no formal gardens of any sort, nor any attached estate. One principle reason for this is the proximity of the **Purple Spur** and the **Diamond Cascade**, both of which offer unparalleled views over the **City of Dragons**, the **Mirror Lakes** and of course the

palace itself, as well as over much of the southern realms as far as the **Fury River Gorge** and beyond. **Narammed** himself once claimed to have seen as far as the **Pinnacles** on a clear day, although no one else has yet reproduced this feat. Numerous follies and lodges have been built in the spur, accessible only on dragon-back (although the speaker nominally relinquishes all his or her dragons, no speaker has ever lasted long without a few 'on loan' from their former realm). Most of these constructs are abandoned by the next speaker in favour of their own, although the **Banqueting House** has been kept in good repair for some fifty years now.



The following **Calendar of Speakers** lists the occupants of the Adamantine Palace since its foundation. While this is not intended as a history of the realms, certain speakers have scattered their names across the various realms as wilfully as a dragon-rider scattering his seed across the eyrie warehouses of the realms.

Narammed	124 – 138	The first speaker.
Mehmeth	138 – 148	Formerly King of Evenspire
IoShita	148 – 158	Formerly Queen of Sand
Malhir	158 – 168	Formerly King of Stone
Draopraster	168 – 178	Formerly King of the Salt Throne

Yinazhin	178 – 188	Formerly Hill King
Aoraeo	188	Formerly River Queen
Adamir	188 – 193	(of Furymouth)
Aoraeo	193 – 198	Formerly River Queen
Narramir	198 – 199	Formerly King of Furymouth
Eishja	199 – 201	(of Three Rivers)
Tyan	201 – 208	(of Furymouth)
Hiastamir	208 – 218	Formerly Harvest King
Voranin	218 – 222	Formerly King of Evenspire
Voian	222 – 226	Formerly King of Evenspire
Vishmir	227 – 249	Formerly Prince and then King of Furymouth
Havans	249 – 259	Formerly River King
Basimgaija	259 – 269	Formerly King of Sand
Helvanian	269 – 271	Formerly King of Sand
Isul Aieha	271 – 279	Formerly King of Stone
Ayzalmir	279 – 289	Formerly King of the Salt Throne
Sakabia	289 – 299	Formerly Harvest Queen
Inaya	299 – 306	Formerly River Queen
Fellujan	306 – 309	Formerly River King
Vishimir	309 – 319	Formerly Hill King
Iyanza	319 – 329	Formerly King of Evenspire

The next speaker, according to the pacts made among the kings and queens following the Disaster of the **Syuss**, will be:

Antros	329 – 339	King of Sand
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The Adamantine Spear

Two symbols of office mark the speaker. The first is the Speaker's Ring. The second, and of much more historical note, is the Adamantine Spear. The spear was supposedly carried by the **Silver King** on his appearance in the **Pinnacles** and supposedly brought with it many powers; these included the power to call and command dragons, and thus the spear is revered as a holy artefact by the **Order of the Dragons**. Since the time of the **Silver King**, no such power has ever been seen from the spear, yet stories persist that such powers lie dormant and will awaken in the right hands at the realms' time of need. Another myth is that the spear can kill with a scratch; this possibly stems from the stories of **Narammed** slaying a dragon (something which almost certainly did not actually happen) in which his weapon of choice is, in many versions, the spear (while in the most popular version, the spear turns the dragon to stone, thus creating the dragon of **Dragondale**). Alternatively, one might prefer the stories in which the **Silver King** himself was killed by the spear and placed a curse on it so that anyone who carried it to battle was doomed to be defeated (although **Ayzalmir** certainly carried the spear to battle against the **Syuss**). The sad truth is that whether or not the spear carried some ancient power locked away inside it, most stories of the Adamantine Spear are ones for children, not for kings. The spear has had considerable power as a symbol, however, and continues to do so. The rise to power of the **Glass Cathedral**, the **City of Dragons**, the **Adamantine Palace** and even **Narammed** and the speakers themselves have all sat squarely upon the myths of the spear that they carried with them.

Arch-Magus **Aeos**

The last of the **blood-mages** to rule the realms before their overthrow by the **Order of the Dragon**, Aeos escaped the coup along with a good few of his followers and defeated a pursuing force of over two hundred dragons over the **Lake of Ghosts**, only to be killed that very night in a squabble over the spoils. Aeos's name has survived primarily because of a manual for kingship, *De Lunari*, that was published under his name more than a hundred years later (causing many to speculate that he did not die at the **Lake of Ghosts** but lived on and lives on still either in **Sand** or **Bloodsalt**). *De Lunari* is still popular in some parts of the realms and numerous updated versions have been produced; nevertheless, the original remains of particular interest as it is partly based on accounts and writings from the time of the **Silver King**. In part, *De Lunari* reflects a long lost time in which the world was a different place, and this is probably an aspect of its lingering appeal.

The **Alatcazat**

Built during the **Order of the Dragon**'s rule from the **Pinnacles**, the **Alatcazat** is a beautifully designed and decorated monument to everything the Order somehow lost in the rise of the **Great Flame**. The priests here are genuinely dedicated to creating a better life for everyone. Although their influence rarely extends much beyond **Arys Crossing** and the small valley in which it resides, there is a noticeable calm to the region. Unfortunately, the priests do not permit anyone other than initiates of the **Order of the Dragon** to enter the temple. In rather an odd contrast, the gardens around the **Alatcazat** are home to the banded viper, a snake not known to be found anywhere else in the realms and whose venom is considerably more powerful than any other known type of snake. The priests guard their 'pets' with some care.

High Priest **Anzuine** (also known as **Anzuine the Mad**)

High priest of the **Order of the Dragon** from 210 to 227. Anzuine was a follower of the fundamentalist order doctrines that revered the dragons as divine creatures, fallen and imperfect reflections of the **Great Flame**. He actively sought to undermine the powers of the dragon-kings and queens and establish a theocracy, most notably in initiating the dragon-brother uprisings in the eastern realms, and then with his alliance with Speaker **Voranin**. After **Voranin's** death in 222, **Anzuine** ruled in all but name, imprisoning **Voranin's** son Voian, ultimately executing him in 226 and ruling openly until his overthrow by **Vishmir** in 227.

As early as 213, Anzuine started a series of unpopular reforms in an attempt to impose his authority on the Order. His initial attempts to ensure religious uniformity – dismissing non-conformist priests and closing shrines that actively proclaimed views contrary to his own – went largely unnoticed by the dragon-kings and queens. These actions, however, were actively hostile to the more liberal tendencies of many of the dragon monarchs' subjects, and did not go unnoticed by the common man. To enforce and punish those who refused to accept his reforms, Anzuine formed his own holy militia, actively echoing the crusade-like qualities of **Narammed's** early days. Later, as funds ran short and his home-grown armies became embroiled in more and more uprisings and unrest, he began (with the active complicity of Speaker **Voranin**) to use the **Adamantine Men** to support his cause.

To lend authority to his actions, Anzuine re-established the two most feared and arbitrary courts in the realms: the Court of High Regard and the Court of Dragon Judgement. The former could compel individuals to provide self-incriminating testimony, whilst the latter could inflict any punishment whatsoever (with the sole exception of death) on any person. At the height of its powers, the lawlessness of the Court of Dragon Judgement under Anzuine far exceeded that under any of his predecessors. Defendants were regularly hauled before the Court without any process of the law and their testimonies were routinely extracted through torture performed in the tunnels under the **Glass Cathedral**. Both courts were disbanded by **Vishmir** in 227, and the priests who sat on them either fled or were put to death along with Anzuine himself, still proclaiming himself a dragon in human form to his very last breath.

In the central, southern and northern realms, Anzuine is mostly remembered and reviled for his part in the **War of Thorns**. However, in the eastern hills and moors where the **Order of the Dragon** has retained its strength, he is regarded as a saint. Many places still bear his name, and to speak ill of the 'Butcher of Thorns' in these places is an invitation to trouble.

Queen Arlan

Queen Arlan was a Princess of **Sand** and married to Prince (later King and then Speaker) **Voranin** of **Evenspire** as part of a grand pact of alliance that intended to unite the northern realms against the growing power of the River and Sea kings.

The match was a disaster from the start. Raised in the licentious court of **Sand**, Arlan was a lively and vivacious extrovert in a place famed for its prudish conservatism. **Evenspire** palace life did not sit well with her and she was rumoured to have taken a succession of lovers almost as soon as she arrived. It is possible that she was aided and shielded by some elements of the **Evenspire** court, but matters became steadily worse with her move to the **Adamantine Palace**. By then her infidelities were widely known and the parentage of her three sons openly questioned (Speaker **Voranin**, like most other advocates of the Dragon-Blood of Kings, regularly drank the blood of dragons, a ritual usually reserved (and rightly so) for the priests of the **Order of the Dragon**; it is likely that he had been impotent for many years before he became speaker, and possibly even before his marriage).

Voranin was well aware of the rumours concerning his wife and went to considerable lengths to catch her. He never did though, until in 221 a voice that he claimed was the voice of the dragon whispered in his ear while he was at prayer in the **Glass Cathedral**. He raced back to his queen's rooms and found her with a **Furymouth** prince. The lover was killed there and then, and a raging **Voranin** sentenced his queen to immediate torture and execution. Queen Arlan was dragged away, screaming. **Voranin** is reported to have personally supervised both the building of a cage to hold her and her subsequent impalement. She was hung over the **Great Gate**, caged and impaled but still alive, where her screams are said to have kept the **City of Dragons** awake for four days.

Queen Arlan's ghost is said to haunt the **Speaker's Tower**, but her body vanished from the cage on the fourth night of her agony. This marked the formal beginning of the **War of Thorns**.

Arys Crossing

Of all the towns that scattered the banks of the lower reaches of the Fury, Arys Crossing is both the best known and the most magnificent. It was once a religious centre, but much of the town was destroyed in 225 by dragons from **Furymouth** (indeed the firing of Arys Crossing is often cited as the true start to the **War of Thorns**) and what has grown back is a more restrained reflection of the towns of **Hammerford** and **Valleyford** to the north; dull and rural. Nevertheless, the contrast for those coming from the south, still sloughing the **Bonjanland** mud off their boots, is nothing short of spectacular – for here in Arys Crossing stands the **Alatcazat**, the most famous monastery of the **Order of the Dragon**. Sitting peacefully in a surround of green and an almost impossibly vast sky, this quiet temple remains as it has been since before the time of the speakers. That the **Alatcazat** survived **Vishmir**'s attack is seen by those who live here as a sign of the town's luck, and it is true that the place has a certain quiet assurance to its streets that is rarely found elsewhere.

Ashdale

The largest settlement under the rule of the **Ash Throne** after **Evenspire**, Ashdale is a moderately sized town that sits high up on the edge of the **Worldspine** at the lip of the **Ashdale River** valley. Much of the industry of the town is concerned with hunting and trapping, and particularly with catering to the desires of the dragon-riders who come from all across the realms to hunt snapper in the valley here. There is some trade with **Outsiders** from the **Worldspine** who travel the river here; otherwise the town has little to recommend it.

The Ashdale River

The largest of the three rivers that flow through the **Blackwind Dales** is the Ashdale, and the long fertile valley carved by its waters accounts for the bulk of the settlement within the dales. At the western end, the river emerges from the **Worldspine** into a long, wide and surprisingly green valley. The climate here is noticeably cooler than further east into the hills and although the valley sees little rain, periodic floods from the river itself are enough for trees to grow. Many animals are found here and it is a favoured spot for hunters; indeed, the Ashdale valley offers the best snapper-hunting across the realms. At the entrance to this valley lies the town of **Ashdale**, the largest habitation in the **Blackwind Dales** aside from **Evenspire** itself. East of **Ashdale**, the river descends into the **Blackwind Dales** through a series of rapids into the populous **Evenspire** valley before merging with the **Dragon River**, flowing out into the **Desert of Stone** and finally emptying into **Lake Eye-van** in **Ishmar's Valley**. Unlike the **Last River**, few fish live in the Ashdale, and visitors often note that its waters have a unique and slightly unpleasant flavour.

The Ash Throne

The overthrow of the **blood-mages**, their flight to the north and the defeat of the **Order of the Dragon** in battle over the **Lake of Ancestors** created a realm split in two. Although the Order had successfully driven the **blood-mages** from most of the inhabited lands from the **Purple Spur** to the **Endless Sea** and from the **Raksheh Forest** as far east as **Three Rivers**, the **blood-mages** had now established significant strongholds at **Sand**, **Bloodsalt**, **Bazim Crag** and **Gardin's Rock**, each with eyries of more than a hundred dragons. Although the mages were defeated and had fallen to fighting among themselves, the Order considered it a mere matter of time before they would return united and attempt to overthrow the new lords of the **Pinnacles**, thus re-establishing their reign.

While **Bazim Crag** was sufficiently close to **Three Rivers** to be watched and isolated (a largely successful strategy that separated the **blood-mages** there from their potential allies in the north, eventually neutralizing them without a drop of blood being spilt), the Order decided that the mages in the north were too far away and that a new and fortified eyrie should be built beyond the **Purple Spur**. They chose the largely uninhabited **Blackwind Dales** for the site of this, and thus began the construction of the **Palace of Paths**, the largest fortress in the realms. Hundreds of dragons and tens of thousands of men were forcibly moved to what would become the city of **Evenspire**.

However, it was during the construction of this fortress that the Order's own unity began to fail. The lords of **Furymouth**, **Three Rivers** and the **City of Dragons** grew restless of rule from the **Pinnacles**. Feuds and fighting broke out among them. The pacified rulers of **Bazim Crag** seized their opportunity to shake themselves free of influence from the **Pinnacles** and fell to skirmishing with riders from **Bloodsalt**. Many of the dragons guarding the fledgling city of **Evenspire** were withdrawn to their home eyries, and this culminated in the overlord of **Evenspire** seizing the dragons nesting at the **Palace of Paths** and declaring his own realm, independent of the **Pinnacles**. Outraged, the Order demanded the immediate submission of **Evenspire** to its authority, but this was met by a declaration from the dragon-lords of **Sand** that they accepted the right of **Evenspire** to exist as a realm and would offer it their protection. All-out dragon-war was only averted by the coming of **Narammed** and the 'slaying' of the dragon at **Dragondale** which resulted in the Ash Throne being the first realm to accept the new rule of the speakers. Other realms of the north quickly followed, perhaps sensing a permanent end to the power of the **Order of the Dragon** (although this was never **Narammed's** intent; in fact, he desired quite the opposite, but this is nevertheless what finally came to pass years later in the **War of Thorns**). **Narammed** was crowned in the **Adamantine Palace** as the first Speaker of the Realms, and the Ash Throne was recognized as one of the first eight realms.

The territory ruled from **Evenspire** extends to the limits of the **Blackwind Dales** by order of **Narammed** and this has never been contested. In fact, the dales are largely a barren and inhospitable place, with settlements limited to the fertile valleys of the **Blackwind**, the **Ashdale** and the **Dragon** rivers. In strict terms, **Evenspire** does not exert any power over the **Silver River** valley further south, nor over the southern reaches of the **Desert of Stone**. However, as no one else except the **Syuss** lays claim to these lands, the dragons of **Evenspire** have roamed freely over them ever since the Disaster of the **Syuss**.

Evenspire is currently ruled by the young King Valgar. The long standing close alliance with the **Throne of Sand and Stone** is likely to become even stronger when his betrothal to the youngest daughter of King Antros and Queen Shezira of **Sand**. As is the case with the other northern realms, albeit to a lesser extent, the Ash Throne draws its strength almost entirely from its dragons. It is neither populous nor rich; what little wealth it has is drawn from the copper mines of **Scarsdale**.

Ayzalmir

Speaker Ayzalmir's reign, while unremarkable in most respects, oversaw the most recent monumental events to have shaped the realms. In 282, Prince Kazan of the **Syuss** rose up in revolt against the oppressions of his uncle, King Tiernel. He rode with his dragons to attack Tiernel's palace at **Gardin's Rock** in the first and only dragon-war since the **War of Thorns**. The revolt was short-lived. Kazan and most of his riders were killed in the attack. However, King Tiernel's victory was a narrow one. Many of his riders were also killed, and the fighting set the city ablaze. As punishment for allowing dragon-warfare to break out once again, Speaker Ayzalmir decreed that the realm of the **Syuss** should be torn apart. Riders from **Sand**, **Evenspire** and the **Salt Throne** descended on the **Syuss** and largely destroyed them. Their place at the council of Kings and Queens remains but they were stripped of many of their privileges. Most of their territory, barren and useless though it is, fell under the control of the King of **Sand**; hence the Throne of Sand became the **Throne of Sand and Stone**.

Following the Disaster of the **Syuss** as it became known, the realms went through a short period of uncommon unity, reflected in Ayzalmir's construction of the Glass Gallery and the connected royal apartments in the **Adamantine Palace**.

In 285, Ayzalmir launched an effort to purge the realms of all **Taiytakei** influence. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but it seems that Ayzalmir believed that the **Taiytakei** had somehow precipitated the Disaster of the **Syuss** and were complicit in attempts to undermine the stability of the realms. Certainly, it is no secret that they had made repeated overtures to several speakers and also to various southern kings and queens to acquire hatchling dragons, all of which had been wisely refused. Whatever Ayzalmir's reasons, the purge was remarkably successful in the northern and eastern realms, to which few **Taiytakei** venture even to this day. The brutality of his edict was sufficient to drive them away from the **City of Dragons** (and some of those that did not manage to escape were fed to the animals of the menagerie; most were simply fed to dragons), but they have since returned. The edict was less successful in the southern realms and was paid lip service only in **Furymouth**; by 288 the unity of purpose that Ayzalmir had briefly achieved was largely gone, in a large part because of the **Taiytakei** purges. His last major act was to launch a campaign against the **Order of the Finger** which he continued until his abdication a year later. Unfortunately, his campaign was not continued by subsequent speakers and the **Order of the Finger** has spread out of the **Maze** once more.

The Azure Tower / The Water Tower

The Azure Tower (originally the Water Tower) is a work of art, performed in three stages over a period of about a hundred years. Construction of the first floor of the blue and white marble tower began in 142 under Speaker **Mehmeth**. This first floor is surrounded by a colonnade of pillars leaning against blind arches. **Mehmeth** did not entirely share the fascination of his predecessor and the northern courts for Lunari architecture, and the Azure Tower was intended to show the cosmopolitan nature of the new realms. The **Taiytakei** architects used by **Narammed** were commissioned to build something entirely new using the designs from their homeland, and the Azure Tower was the result. The tower is not particularly tall, a mere fifty strides, and consists of seven levels of apartments, none of which are particularly large. However, what the tower lacks in stature is more than made up for in beauty. The blue-veined marble of the tower is not found anywhere else in the realms; the stone was imported by the architects entrusted to build it, but how it reached the palace and where it came from remains something of a mystery. The internal décor of the tower matches the exterior in its exquisite intricacy.

In 220, Speaker **Voranin** gutted the lower floors of the tower as it was and began construction of what was intended to become a private royal chapel. Work was curtailed by the **War of Thorns**; afterwards, **Vishmir** finished the chapel but decorated it instead as a gallery.

The **Banqueting House**

On a raised site overlooking the **Diamond Cascade** valley is a small pavilion: the Banqueting House. Built circa 270, this was intended for informal picnics and entertainments in the **Purple Spur** rather than the larger state dinners which would have taken place inside the **Adamantine Palace** itself. A nearby conservatory houses the 'Great Vine', planted in 269; currently it has a trunk seventy nine inches thick and a length of one hundred and twenty feet. Wine produced from the grapes of the Great Vine carries a considerable premium, although the truth is that this attaches to the rarity of the vintages rather than any particular quality of the wine itself. A menagerie was established at the Banqueting House in 275, possibly stocked with animals from an earlier menagerie started in 225 by Prince (later King and Speaker) Basimgaija at his palace in **Sand**. The menagerie was later moved into the **City of Dragons** in 279.

The **Bay of Still Water**

Sheltered from the **Sea of Storms** by **Tyan's Peninsula**, the Bay of Still Water is home to a small fleet of fishing boats that sail from the **Fishing Coast**. **Taiytakei** ships also often shelter here in preference to the **Fury River** estuary.

Bazim Crag

Also known as the City of Stone, Bazim Crag sits in a cleft in the jagged escarpment that lifts the **Oordish Moors** away from the plains around **Three Rivers**. Originally little more than a **blood-mage** outpost from the **Pinnacles**, Bazim Crag has strongly resisted the influence of the **Order of the Dragon** over the years, retaining a fiercely independent spirit that is immediately apparent in the people who live there, even if not in the political alliances of the dragon-lords who rule them. By the standards of the more civilized southern realms, Bazim Crag is little more than a glorified town and makes even **Three Rivers** seem grand by comparison. Nevertheless, the people here are hospitable, if a little bluff, and value honest and open dealings far more than fine clothes and gold; perhaps this is as well, as the city has little else to impress a visitor.

Although the city has taken the name, Bazim Crag strictly refers to the stony fortress that overlooks it, and the meandering battlements and towers can seem impressive to anyone who hasn't already viewed the **Palace of Paths** at **Evenspire**. The eyrie here is little more than a maze of rocky outcroppings where dragons roost, looking down upon the people they serve. It is a small eyrie; the bulk of the dragons serving the **Throne on the Moors** rest at **Dragon Crag** a few dozen miles to the east. Nevertheless, the sight of dozens of dragons taking to the air and feeding freely on the sheep that graze on the hills behind the city is one to make any man's blood race, and one that is rarely seen in the more cultivated eyries elsewhere in the realms.

Bittersbridge

Although Bittersbridge lies at the foot of the **Oordish Moors**, the town is ruled from **Bazim Crag** rather than **Three Rivers** and marks the principle boundary between these two capitals – a boundary that has, in other times, been one of the most disputed among all realms. Bittersbridge is notable mostly as a crossing point for the **Bitter River** and thus for being a stage and a resting place along **Yinazhin's Way**. Partly because of its status as a border town and partly because of the infestation of outlaws among the **Bitter Falls** (mostly bandits who prey on the trade to and from **Bazim Crag**), Bittersbridge contains a constant garrison of several hundred horse-cavalry and a small temporary eyrie. Indeed, the sight of dragons circling high overhead off to the north in the area of the falls is so common as to be almost mundane. Bittersbridge is also known for its annual singing contest that draws competitors from as far afield as **Bloodsalt**, **Furymouth** and the **City of Dragons**.

The **Bitter Falls**

Marking the descent of the **Bitter River** from the **Oordish Moors** to the plains of the **River Throne** and the **Fury** valley, the Bitter Falls are in fact not one waterfall but a sequence of many small falls and rapids as the river descends the steep slope that marks the rise of the moors. This is a rocky place, rarely travelled and filled with jumbled boulders; a common hideout for bandits, brigands and other undesirables. Although the falls are pleasing to the eye, they are best avoided.

The **Bitter River**

The Bitter River claims its origins somewhere in the eastern moors and hills beyond the reach even of the dragons from **Bazim Crag** where it splits and fractures into hundreds of tiny creeks and streams. Here in these steep rocky valleys, more than anywhere else in the realms, the boundaries between **Outsiders** and those under the protection of the dragon-lord of **Bazim Crag** are blurred. As far as the edge of the **Oordish Moors**, the Bitter River is home to hardy sheep-farming folk who are at home in the cool air and the frequent mists. Yet follow the river on, across the **Bitter Falls** to **Bittersbridge** and beyond to its end at **Three Rivers**, and the air grows warm, the land becoming fertile and flat. Fishing boats ply the now calm river, while the water meadows that reach out across the plains are filled with the sound of farming songs. Now and then it is said that treasures are found along the banks of the Bitter River – several of the dragons that fled **Bazim Crag** to found the first eyrie at **Three Rivers** are said to have fallen from the sky while following the river's course. The bones and scales of these dragons supposedly lie here still, waiting to be found.

The **Black Mausoleum**

According to legend, the **Silver King** predicted his own demise and ordered a mausoleum to be built 'in black marble across the great river from the endless caves.' The mausoleum is almost certainly a myth, but this has not stopped dragon-riders, priests, **blood-mages**, **alchemists** and speakers (most notably **Voranin** and **Vishmir**) from looking for it. The Black Mausoleum allegedly houses the **Tomb of the Silver King** and whatever treasures that entails.

The **Blackwind Dales**

A hundred miles north of the **Purple Spur**, sitting between the **Desert of Stone** and the **Worldspine**, there lie the Blackwind Dales, a range of largely barren hills punctured by three great rivers: the **Ashdale**, the **Blackwind** and the **Dragon River**. This is the territory of the **Ash Throne**, ruled out of the city of **Evenspire**. Although most of this land is as dry and arid as the nearby desert, the soil here is unusually fertile. In the rare rains the hills blossom into furious life, the dark hills turning suddenly green and filling with colour. For most of the year, however, life within the dales is confined to the three river valleys, in particular the upper reaches of the valleys as they emerge from the **Worldspine**. There are lakes here and scattered forest, although snappers are rife in these valleys; the few people who live this far from the dragons of **Evenspire** are mostly **Outsiders** and hunters.

The Blackwind Dales were not always as empty as they are now. In the early years of the **Silver King** when the last wild dragons still flew free, the first dragon-riders from the **Pinnacles** noted an immense range of hills covered in parched forest, much of it already dead. Records found in **Sand** suggest the climate this far north was not always as dry as it is now and that perhaps the dales were indeed once covered by a great forest. However, hundreds of years later when the **blood-mages** begin their conquest of the world following the **Silver King**'s demise, the forests of the Blackwind Dales were gone, burned away in some great conflagration, and all that remained was a thick layer of black ash that gives the hills their characteristic colour. At certain rare times, perhaps when a particular wind blows out of the **Worldspine**, clouds of this ash would be dislodged and carried through the air, and it was this that gave the hills their name. The Black Wind was still seen several times during the construction of **Evenspire**, but has not since returned for more than two hundred years.

The Blackwind Dales have little to offer and are barely able to support their scattered population on top of the modest city of **Evenspire** and its eyrie. Their main source of wealth is copper from the mines of **Scarsdale**.

The **Blackwind River**

Least of the three great rivers that run through the **Blackwind Dales**, the Blackwind River runs for most of its course through craggy hills covered in desert grass and populated by little other than snakes and rodents and a few hardy deer. The valley is almost entirely uninhabited until it merges into the **Dragon River** as they both pass just south of **Evenspire** itself.

Blood-mages

This term strictly refers to practitioners of any form of **blood-magic**, but it is more frequently used to describe those who use **blood-magic** of a type that involves letting blood from some party other than themselves. The practice of elementary **blood-magic** was established long before even the coming of the **Silver King**, but it was during his time and the years immediately following his demise that the art came into its own. During the **Empire of the Blood-Mages**, **blood-magic** was reputedly demonstrated to have the power to bring the dead back to life; on several occasions it was also responsible for mass slaughter, as well as a myriad of more subtle influences.

Blood-magic requires blood as the source of its power. Perhaps most surprisingly, the more powerful the magic, the more blood is generally required, and practitioners have not, historically, preferred to use the blood of others rather than their own. As a result, **blood-magic** is generally considered to be an act of depravity by much of the population of the realms; outside the confines of the **Order of the Dragon** and the **Order of the Scales**, its practice is punishable by death in many realms. Despite this, **blood-mages** are probably active in all the major cities of the realms. Only **Three Rivers** and **Furymouth** are vigorous in rooting out this distasteful practice and meting out due punishment. In **Bloodsalt**, on the other hand, it frequently seems that **blood-mages** may practice their art with impunity.

Blood-magic:

The practices of magic that revolve around the letting of blood as a source of arcane power. Most established principles of magic demand that a small fragment of 'divine power' must be obtained and sacrificed as a source of power; in the case of blood-magic, the 'divine power' becomes a portion of the life force of the practitioner or his victim. However, the use of blood as an arcane focus is not limited to the **blood-mages**, and so the terms blood-magic and **blood-mage** are frequently used to refer to the practice of sacrificing blood from someone other than the magician himself. Blood-magic in this form is forbidden by the law of the **Order of the Dragon**, and the speakers of the realms; how vigorously the law is enforced varies from realm to realm. Blood-magic is most commonly held to be a practice confined to the fringes of the realms (to cities such as **Sand**, **Blood-salt** and **Bazim Crag**, who owe their origins to **blood-mages** fleeing the overthrow of their cult by the **Order of the Dragon**). It should be remembered, however, that their original centre of power was the **Silver City** itself.

Bloodsalt

Bloodsalt was once a giant fortress of the local **Outsiders** known as the Ziran. Following his overthrow by the **Order of the Dragon**, the **blood-mage Aeos** fled from the **Silver City** and was murdered by his own followers after the battle above the **Lake of Ghosts**. The **blood-mages** then fell into dispute and split into three factions; one of these factions travelled east to the **Sapphire River** and then north to what is now Bloodsalt, where they landed by the massive fortress that now serves as the heart of the **Throne of Salt**'s one great eyrie. Despite their strengths and their dragons, the ferocity of the greater numbered Ziran beat the **blood-mages** back into retreat. A year later, the **blood-mages** returned with an army raised from the **Outsider** tribes of the **Oordish Moors**. They pounded the fortress with dragon-fire but the defences held strong – until finally a massive hole was created in the wall, and the moorish **Outsiders** poured in among the now trapped Ziran defenders. Those who claim to descend from the Ziran say that ten thousand of their ancestors were slaughtered in the fortress, while another ten thousand warriors and civilians were massacred in the surrounding plains.

Bloodsalt has little to recommend it. Blisteringly hot even in the shade, it is a dull uniformity of low whitewashed walls. Food is viciously spiced and rarely fresh, and the only water available is the brackish liquid from the city cisterns. The truth is that the city barely survives and would not exist at all were it not for the throne that claims this land and the gold collected from the desert.

The only structures of note in Bloodsalt are the city cisterns, out of necessity the largest in the realms. Mined by dragons, each cathedral-sized cistern is an underground chamber of well over a hundred strides in each dimension, with a roof held up by a forest of more than a thousand stone columns each nine strides high. Every cistern is surrounded by a fire-brick wall with a thickness of several strides and coated with a special mortar for waterproofing. The cisterns' water is provided from the **Sapphire River** close to the mouth of **Bloodsalt Lake** via a covered canal. The city has ten such cisterns, and the bulk of the city's water needs are served by the same covered canals. In particularly hot summers, however, the river can almost run dry, and without these cisterns even a few days absence of water would mean death to most of the city inhabitants.

Despite their history, many of the population of the city are clearly of Ziran origin and many of their **Outsider** traditions have been adopted. It is a tradition here that a man, no matter how poor his family, is expected to get married wearing a costume of jewellery so heavy that he cannot stand up under its weight. This in part originates from the ready supply of gold that can be obtained from the lower reaches of the **Sapphire River**, and the other strange metals that are sometimes found out in the desert. Salt and other desert minerals are sold to trade, but it is gold that gives Bloodsalt its presence within the realms.

Bloodsalt Lake

Follow the **Sapphire River** northwards and the rocky valleys slowly give way to the dry open spaces of the **Desert of Stone**. The river loses its strength and widens into a series of shallow lakes until finally it spends itself in the Bloodsalt Lake, on the edge of the white wasteland that is the **Desert of Salt**. The lake gets its name from the reddish deposits brought down from the **Oordish Moors** by the tributaries of the **Sapphire River** that give the mouth of the lake a slightly bloody tinge. The extent of the lake is vast, changing as the river flow changes. However, despite its size, nearly all of the lake is so shallow that a man could stand upright with his feet on the lake floor and still have his head above the surface. The lake waters are vile and cannot be drunk. No fish or plants live within them.

Bonjanland

Bonjanland refers to a somewhat nebulous region around a hundred miles in width and centred on the **Fury River** that runs from **Purkan** as far as **Tyan's Dike**; in essence, the term can be loosely given to the area of the realms that is liable to flooding when either the **Esta**, the **Fury** or the **Yamuna** burst their banks. This is usual in the spring and summer months and can last for up to half the year; indeed, life in Bonjanland is based around the certainty that floods will happen. Houses are built on stilts, while banks and ditches channel the river waters and tiny shallow-draft boats and rafts litter the countryside; the sight of a field full of little flat-bottomed boats miles away from the nearest river is a sure sign that you are entering Bonjanland.

There are few roads here and few settlements, as both tend to get washed away. Buildings are small and built on elevated platforms. The few larger buildings that do exist are built on man-made hills, although these are frequently part washed away, and many such hillocks are topped by half-tumbled ruins. Perhaps as a result of this, many of the peasant farmers who live here subscribe to a form of mysticism that ascribes a quasi-divine status to the **Fury** itself. Stories of the river's power are rife; many families even keep a vial of water from the **Fury** in their house so that if someone is dying, that person will be able to drink its sacred water and become joined to the river spirits.

Despite the lack of large settlements, Bonjanland is one of the most populous and productive regions of the realms. The land here is fertile and food is plentiful, filling bellies in **Furymouth**, **Three Rivers**, the **Pinnacles** and even as far away as the **City of Dragons**. Bonjanland is nominally divided between three realms: the **Harvest Throne**, the **Sea Throne** and the **River Throne**. However, the people of Bonjanland are largely simple folk with little notion or understanding of any borders drawn between them by distant dragon-lords. What passes for governance of the region is largely centred round its own de facto capital, the sprawling market town of **Farakkan**. As **Farakkan** lies within the domain of the **Harvest Throne** and is governed from there, it is this realm that exerts the most influence over the region.

The Cathedral of the Air

The Cathedral of the Air sits atop the third of the three **Pinnacles** and is the upper entrance to the **Temple of Tranquillity** (although other entrances are rumoured to exist via tunnels deep beneath the stone). Despite being small and isolated, it is officially the second home of the **Order of the Dragon** after the **Glass Cathedral** in the **Adamantine Palace**. The design is unusual and possibly unique throughout the realms in its use of massive flying buttresses, to the extent that from the air, the cathedral appears rather like an enormous ten-legged spider. The cathedral was completed during the early years of the **War of Thorns** and suffered several attacks during the later years. These attacks destroyed all the adjacent buildings and left the cathedral, like the **Glass Cathedral** further north, marked by patches of glassy rock resulting from intense bursts of dragon-fire. The cathedral has one tower on the southern side, originally part of a pair; the northern tower was destroyed in the war and never rebuilt.

The exterior of the cathedral appears plain and is unadorned with any decorative motifs, in stark contrast to the **Fortress of Watchfulness**. The interior is unknown except to the priests who live there.

The Circus of Dragons

The site of the Circus of Dragons was first utilized as a local marketplace to accommodate overspill from the nearby **Glass Cathedral** market and to serve on religious days when the cathedral was closed to traders. Games were staged at the location by the local dragon-lords prior to the rise of the speakers. Somewhat later, the Circus was the site of public games and festivals on a lavish scale. The festival to mark the handing-on of power from Speaker **Narammed** to Speaker **Mehmeth** reputedly accommodated nearly thirty thousand spectators, with many more crowding and lining the adjoining hills.

The growth of the city around the Circus did not put an end to its use for festivals and games, but has reduced the size it can accommodate. In 181, Speaker Yinazhin built a triple arch honouring **Narammed** by the east end and issued a decree (which stands to this day) that no trading should take place in the Circus, in order to preserve its use as a place for public gathering. Enforcement of this rule by the city officials is lax, and the area is frequently haunted by many peddlers and tinkers. The Circus is most famous for its unusual and distinctive statue of the **Unnamed Dragonslayer**.

The City of Dragons

The **City of Dragons** began as an adjunct to the **Glass Cathedral**. Even in the days before the **Silver King**, history hints of small settlements scattered around the edges of the **Purple Spur**; early settlements were almost always built in close proximity to any system of caves capable of providing shelter against dragon attack. Many such caves exist around the edge of the **Purple Spur**, while the tunnels and caves under the **Glass Cathedral** or hidden behind the **Diamond Cascade** are some of the most extensive in the realms.

The coming of the **Silver King** did little to change life north of the **Fury River Gorge**. Dragon attacks were probably fewer – but when they came, they were now ridden by men who could take plunder and slaves from caves as easily as from open plains. However, after the fall of the **Silver King** and the diaspora that followed, the **Glass Cathedral** somehow became the resting place for the **Adamantine Spear**. The spear attracted pilgrims and priests; in addition, the cathedral was close enough to the growing trade routes that branched off the **Fury River** at what would be **Plags Bay** that, as trade began to flourish east-west as well as north-south, it became an economic crossroads. This, and the presence of the cathedral along with the artefact it contained, led to **Narammed** building his palace beside it. **Narammed** also gave the city-in-waiting its name, and so the City of Dragons, the greatest and grandest city of the nine realms, came to be. The city is not the largest in the realms: **Evenspire**, **Three Rivers**, the **Silver City** and **Furymouth** are all demonstrably of greater extent when seen from the air. **Furymouth** may also be a richer city, but the City of Dragons is surely the most glorious, both in its architecture and design, and in its people.

A wide variety of architectural styles can be found, such as the **Taiytakei** Sea Palace (which was quite heavily damaged by fire during **Ayzalmir**'s purges, sadly, but still remains the best example of pure **Taiytakei** construction outside of **Furymouth**). The six dragon towers around the **Circus of Dragons**, by contrast, are pure Lunari in style. Most of the older surviving parts of the city were built following the rise of **Narammed**; however, the city was quite badly damaged during the **War of Thorns** and was extensively rebuilt under **Vishmir**. Much of the best city architecture, such as the **Palace of Alchemy**, dates from this time. An example of more recent yet still unique architecture are the **Watrabos Gardens**, commissioned by Speaker Sakabia after the closure of the menagerie.

Art and culture have a long tradition in the City of Dragons, including theatre, music and fine arts. The **Zar Oratorium** is the best theatre in the realms and the Josen Square Theatre also enjoys a good reputation. There is also a multitude of smaller theatres, sometimes offering quite wild entertainments from knife throwers and fire-eaters to satirical poetry. More than one theatre troupe has been executed to the last man for sedition over the years, and such places routinely become a means for the city to express its discontent with an unpopular speaker. Public music performances are currently common, with players sponsored by the various princes who have chosen to live in the city vying for recognition. Josen Square and the **Circus of Dragons** often play host to these. The City is also home to many of the best painters and sculptors in the realms, drawn by the competitive offers of patronage from the city princes. Perhaps, though, the city is most famous of all for its balls. There are over twenty significant balls per year, some lasting for as many as nine days. Balls are held in the many beautiful palaces in the city. While the Dragon-King's Ball is the best known outside the city, other balls such as the Hunter's Ball, the Sailor's Ball, the Peasant's Ball and the Night of Silver are almost as well known within the city and even better appreciated for their cordial atmosphere. City men of even the lowest class may expect to visit a number of balls in their lifetime.

The City of Dragons is perhaps best known for the variety of its food. Local specialities include a pungent steak of young snapper that is pounded flat and fried in butter. Variations of this are available from street braziers, although the meat in such places is decidedly poor and very unlikely to be snapper – in fact, it is usually horse or dog. Other local dishes include very lean boiled

chicken sliced into fine strips, which is traditionally served with vegetables boiled until soft then mashed and lightly fried. Hot fire-radish sauce is popular and is often served with these dishes, sometimes mixed with cream and apple. The **Taiytakei** tradition of cakes and sweetbreads died out with **Ayzalmir**'s purges, but sausages are extremely popular and available from street vendors throughout the day and into the night. Popular sausages are a coarse beef and pork variety, generally boiled, and a spicy pork variety with small chunks of cheese; but the city inhabitants are inventive and will offer almost any conceivable ingredient. Fire-radish is the again traditional condiment, in various strengths. Typically the cheaper the sausage, the more the sauce has to hide and the stronger it is. Travellers are advised to avoid vendors around the larger market squares and the **Circus of Dragons** and take their custom either to the smaller local markets or the excellent 'Avenue of Sausages' outside the doors of the **Palace of Alchemy**. The extra coin is usually worth it.

Clifftop

High on the cliffs overlooking the **Sea of Storms**, far away from any city and away from the prying eyes of the **Taiytakei**, there stands one of the two great eyries of the realms. Alongside **Outwatch**, Clifftop is a demonstration of just how large an eyrie can be. While other realms scatter their dragons among two or three or even four great eyries (or dozens, in the case of the **King of the Crag**s), the kings of **Furymouth** have only ever needed one. A full days ride from **Furymouth** (allegedly to keep the dragons and the ever avaricious **Taiytakei** well apart), Clifftop is a secret place where few stay for long. Visitors to the **Sea Throne** either fly directly to the **Veid Palace** or stay but briefly within the eyrie before travelling on to the palace by coach and horses. It is an uneasy arrangement (few riders are content to be separated from the dragons by such a distance) that discourages visitors to the far south; those who do make the trip will find themselves guided with swift and firm care around the eyrie itself and kept well away from whatever secrets it holds.

The **Desert of Salt**

To the north and east beyond the lake of **Bloodsalt** lies the Desert of Salt, a trackless waste of salt plains. Here, the heat in the sun is death to almost any creature except a dragon. It is said that the King of **Salt** has at least one eyrie, hidden deep in the desert. There is gold in the desert too, mined by slaves in secret places that can be reached only on the back of a dragon.

The **Desert of Sand**

North of the **Last River**, the **Desert of Stone** sinks beneath a sea of sand that washes up against the jagged barren peaks of the northern reaches of the **Worldspine**. As with the rest of the desert, the Desert of Sand is an empty place, where even the most hardy **Outsider** tribes cannot live. There are no sheltered caverns here, no oases, no remnants of a time before the dragons came; they are all lost now beneath the sand. It is said among those who live in these parts that rain falls in the **Desert of Stone** as often as a new speaker is crowned, but that in the Desert of Sand, the rain stopped when **Narammed** came. There is nothing here for a thousand miles except the huge, bizarre and inexplicable oasis of **Outwatch**. Rumour has it that if one flies far enough across the desert there are other realms. The same, however, is said of the **Endless Sea** and the **Worldspine**. To the knowledge of this author, no dragon-rider has ever succeeded in any of these feats.

The Desert of Stone

Stretching away to the north between the **Blackwind Dales** and the **Sapphire River**, the Desert of Stone is the largest and most empty stretch of land within the realms. The southern portion around the **Plains of Ancestors** and the **Lake of Ghosts** remains the domain of the elusive **Syuss** and the nomad tribes they rule. To the north, the desert falls to the **Throne of Sand and Stone** but is an empty place where even the most hardy **Outsider** tribes cannot live. It is a magnificent barrenness, full of lifeless wonder. Massive monoliths rise vertically out of the pink desert sand that separates one dark mass from another in a scenery of strange and breathtaking beauty. Towering cliffs of weathered stone have been eroded by the sand and wind into faces of men, animals, monsters and dragons.

Scattered among this alien place are the occasional remnants of some civilization that died long before the **Silver King** came to the **Pinnacles**. There are swords and spears whose craftsmanship exceeds even that of the **Taiytakei**, now brittle but carved with runes of a magic long since lost; there are symbols scratched deep into the rocks at the feet of the mountains; and then there are the larger remains such as **Hejel's Bridge**, broken and yet perfectly preserved, as though they had been ripped from some other place and cast a thousand miles into the desert. All around is emptiness and silence. In this immense space, even dragons are dwarfed to insignificance.

And yet, on the rare occasion that a spring rainstorm veers away from its usual course and somehow pierces the gap between the **Purple Spur** and the **Oordish Moors**, the desert explodes in a shower of colour. Red anemones, poppies and the striking black iris all only grow here, and only in the rare spring rains; the prices these precious blooms can fetch in the faraway markets of **Three Rivers** and **Furymouth** can literally buy a palace.

The **Diamond Cascade**

From the top of the **Purple Spur**, three great waterfalls plunge to the **Hungry Mountain Plains** below. Of these, the Diamond Cascade is the smallest, both in terms of height (the **Sapphire Cascade** has this honour) and volume of water (the **Emerald Cascade**). It is, however, by far and away the most famous, as it is situated almost directly above the **City of Dragons**. The height of the cascade (around a thousand strides) is so great that none of the water reaches the ground directly. Instead, the cascade washes both the city and, if the wind is right, the **Adamantine Palace** in a damp mist.

The Diamond Cascade is a common feature in the current fad for fictional romances around the characters of **Narmed** and his contemporaries. It is true that **Narmed** chose the site of his palace not least because of the proximity of the cascade and its 'gentle thunder, intoxicating beauty and the purifying wash of its wind.'

Dragon Crag

A few dozen miles south-east of **Bazim Crag** lies Dragon Crag, the principle eyrie for the **Throne on the Moors**. Few are permitted to visit, and it is said that access to the eyrie can only be achieved through the air; there are no roads or even paths that navigate the tumble of broken cliffs and boulders that litter this part of the moors. While this seems unlikely, it is certainly true that all visitors to Dragon Crag are required to arrive at **Bazim Crag** and are then transported by dragon. Even the **alchemists** who service the beasts there do not know of any other route.

As with the dragons of **Bazim Crag**, the beasts at Dragon Crag feed by foraging from the moors; they can often be seen in the air before vanishing away to the east towards pastures unknown.

Dragondale

Entering the **Blackwind Dales** from the east along the **Evenspire Road**, every traveller will surely stop in awe at the immense life-sized statue of a dragon, wings outstretched and mouth agape, that guards the gate to the lands of the **Ash Throne**. Unlike the bronze **Dragon of Furymouth**, the statue at Dragondale is made of stone and is considerably older.

For such an impressive monument, the origins of the dragon at Dragondale are remarkably uncertain. The dragon appeared during the time of **Narammed**, at the start of his rise to power as the first Speaker of the Realms. The legend is that the statue is nothing less than a real dragon turned to stone by **Narammed** through the power of the **Adamantine Spear** (while other legends also cast **Narammed** as having slain a dragon). Unlikely as this may seem, it is a powerful local myth and not one to be challenged lightly by anyone seeking a warm welcome to the **Blackwind Dales**! Some suggest that the dragon was sculpted by the many stone-masons present in **Evenspire** following the completion of the **Palace of Paths**, with the story of **Narammed** and the spear added as a later convenience (noting that the new king of the **Ash Throne** was one of **Narammed**'s first and most ardent supporters). Nevertheless, it is strange that such a huge feat could be accomplished with such secrecy, and even though centuries of weather have eroded much of the detail, what remains was clearly once exquisite. Most of all, even **Taiytakei** stone-masons cannot explain how the outstretched wings have not long ago shattered under their own immense weight.

Aside from the dragon, the town of Dragondale is little more than perhaps a hundred simple wooden houses; it exists purely as a place where travellers from the **Evenspire Road** can rest and restock their supplies, safe under the watchful eyes of the **Evenspire** dragons.

The **Dragon of Furymouth**

This is one of two life-sized dragon statues in the realms. While the other statue in **Dragondale** is of stone and rumoured to have been a real dragon frozen into place by the **Adamantine Spear**, no such rumour surrounds the Dragon of Furymouth. Instead, this second dragon statue is made of bronze and iron, and was commissioned by **Vishmir** in honour of his strategist **Prince Lai**. The statue resides in the **Field of Gorgutinnin** where it watches over the games and races held in the arena there.

The dragon-realms

The nine dragon-realms, their capitals and monarchs:

The Harvest Throne	The Pinnacles	Queen Aliphera
The Sea Throne	Furymouth	King Tyan
The River Throne	Three Rivers	King Narghon
The Throne on the Moors	Bazim Crag	King Vishimir
The King of the Crag	None	King Valmeyan
The Ash Throne	Evenspire	King Valgar
The Throne of Sand and Stone	Sand	King Antros
The Throne of Salt	Bloodsalt	King Kashin
The Syuss	Gardin's Rock	None

The **Dragon River**

The second great river of the **Blackwind Dales**, the Dragon River has much in common with the **Ashdale**. Both rivers emerge from the **Worldspine** into cool, high and relatively fertile valleys kept green by regular floods from the rivers themselves. Both descend steeply into the hills and run in parallel valleys in some places (such as **Evenspire**, where the **Palace of Paths** overlooks both rivers) only a few miles apart before they finally merge on the edge of the **Desert of Stone**. As with the **Ashdale**, snappers are found in the high valleys.

Drotan's Top

A few hours flight around the south side of the **Purple Spur**, Drotan's Top is a dome-shaped hill with a flat crest big enough to land a whole eyrie full of dragons. Drotan's Top marks the official border of the speaker's domain. To the west lie the foothills of the **Worldspine**, domain of the **Mountain Throne**, and to the south is the **Rakshah Forest**, ruled from the **Pinnacles** by the **Harvest Throne**. North and east of the eyrie lies the **Fury River Gorge** and beyond that the **Maze**. On the south-west corner of the hill is an old fortified stone keep, usually occupied by a company of **Adamantine Men**.

There is no eyrie at Drotan's Top, but the site has become popular for hunting expeditions, offering a unique combination of deep forest, the mountains and the **Maze**. Dragon-riders frequently come to the Top to hunt snappers and also to launch sorties against the **Order of the Finger** in the **Maze**. The **Order of the Scales** has recently petitioned the speaker to build a small stronghold there with some animal pens, and to station an **alchemist** and a few **Scales** at the Top to accommodate the increasing number of hunters who wish to overnight there. It is to be hoped that this request will soon be granted.

The **Emerald Cascade**

The Emerald Cascade is the tallest and the least well known of the three cascades that fall from the **Purple Spur**. The cascade falls through a notch in the **Great Cliff** and is the highest of the three. By volume of water it is also the smallest, and after a few rainless weeks can dry up altogether. The cascade is visible from the **Evenspire Road** which passes close by, but is so high and the mist it forms so dispersed that it is possible to travel past without realizing it is there. A keen observer, however, will note that the plant-life in this region of the road is notably richer, no doubt due to the refreshing effects of the water from the cascade. The Emerald Cascade gets its name from the colour of the strip of lush vegetation that runs down the slope of the **Great Cliff** where the cascade falls.

The Empire of the Blood-Mages

Following the demise of the **Silver King**, the **blood-mages** assumed control of the **Pinnacles** and the dragons that had previously been commanded by the **Silver King**. It is not clear how the **blood-mages** retained control of the dragons and kept them docile, but their method must presumably have been a variant of the method subsequently used by the **Order of the Scales**. A ruling council of mages was formed under the governance of the first Arch-Magus **Pantatyr** and the Empire of the Blood-Mages was declared. The so-called empire was intended to encompass the entire world and did, for a time, exert control over the realms as they were known at the time. The 'empire' lasted for some fifty years before the **blood-mages** were overthrown by the **Order of the Dragon**. During this time, many great and grand projects were begun, in apparent emulation of the legendary glories of the **Silver Kings**. Few of these projects were completed, and the heavily centralized empire slowly collapsed under its own weight.

Many reasons have been debated for the empire's failure: the uprising in **Bazim Crag**, the arrival of the first **Taiytakei** at **Furymouth**, the rise of the **Order of the Dragon** in the **Glass Cathedral**, the decimation of the **Silver City** by the **Statue Plague**. In truth, however, the empire's greatest weakness was at its very core and was more an issue of logistics and infrastructure. Look around the realms of today, at the great eyries of **Clifftop** and **Outwatch** and count the dragons they hold. Then look at the land around them, for miles and miles, serving one purpose and one purpose only: to feed that eyrie. The Empire of the Blood-Mages did not fail because of pressures from its borders; it failed because it tried to keep all the dragons of the realms in one place and found that it could not. It failed because people starved to keep dragon-bellies filled, and because feeding malcontents to dragons was easier than feeding bread to its citizens.

It is worth noting that the fall of the empire and the rise of the **Order of the Dragon** remedied the central problem of the empire more by accident than by design. The original intent of the Order had largely been to curb the excesses of the **blood-mages** but otherwise to maintain the status quo (a policy that, in hindsight, would clearly have failed). However, during the fighting, several **blood-mages** escaped with well over a hundred dragons (these mages flew north and later founded the eyries of **Outwatch** and **Bloodsalt**). A contingent of two hundred dragons and riders was sent in pursuit and did not return; it appears that they engaged with the fleeing **blood-mages** somewhere over the **Plains of Ancestors** and were somehow defeated. Their dragons were taken and added to those of the **blood-mages**, who then planned a swift return to the **Pinnacles** to reverse their recent set-back. However the mages then fell to fighting among themselves over the spoils and split into three factions: one flew north-east to **Bloodsalt**, the second north-west to **Outwatch**, and the intended fiery return never came to pass. A contingent of **blood-mages** with dragons was known to garrison at **Bazim Crag**; a second force was dispatched to remove them which also failed, the **blood-mages** managing to hold off a vastly superior force. Fearing complete defeat and the loss of his dragons to the enemy, the Order commander retreated to **Three Rivers**, set up an eyrie there and never left. Meanwhile, another force of dragons was dispatched to nearby **Furymouth** to face off a feared invasion by the strangers soon to be known as the **Taiytakei**. Thus more than half the dragons of the realms left the **Pinnacles** over the space of a few months and, while each of the new eyries had problems of its own, the crucial difficulty that the empire had faced was removed at a stroke; the Order was able to assume control of the **Pinnacles** and largely achieve its ends.

Of course, the scattering of the dragons created fresh problems. New dragon-lords arose in the north and east who hankered after the old empire and did not accept the authority of the **Order of the Dragon**, while the dragon-lords of **Three Rivers** and **Furymouth** railed against rulership from the **Pinnacles**. The **Silver City** claimed to rule over all of the realms, yet only a third of the dragons were now within its direct control. The series of explosive confrontations and simmering wars typified by the secession from the **Pinnacles** of the **Ash Throne** would doubtless have finally resulted in a dragon-war that would have consumed the realms in flames, were it not for the rise of

Narammed and the time of the speakers.

The Endless Sea

South and east of the **Sea of Storms** stretches the Endless Sea, a vast ocean once thought to have no end at all. This is now known to be false, as the **Taiytakei** regularly cross the sea to our realms. However, none of the dragon-riders to attempt the crossing of this immense emptiness have ever returned, and what lies beyond is known only through the stories of the **Taiytakei**.

Esta River

Running from east to west, the Esta River is the third largest river in the realms after the **Fury** and the **Yamuna** further to the south. Between the **Fury** and **Three Rivers**, the Esta seems tame, placid and easily navigable, surrounded by the pleasant meadows and pastures and gentle woodlands of the **River Throne**'s western lands. To the east of **Three Rivers**, however, the Esta is little travelled. Strong currents make travel up the river difficult, while a large waterfall east of **Feljanford** marks the end of the known river. Much of the landscape here is wild and unsettled, and **Outsider** tribes are known to live near the river banks.

Evenspire

It is said that Evenspire was built in a single day. The story centres on Prince Jahan, the dragon-lord in charge of construction of the **Palace of Paths** in the years as it approached completion; according to legend, he was informed that the colossal brick scaffolds used in the building were so enormous that they would take years to dismantle (the shortage of wood in the **Blackwind Dales** meant that permanent brick scaffolds had been built). The prince's response was to decree that anyone could keep the bricks taken from the enormous scaffolds; it is said that they were then dismantled by the workmen in a single night. By the end of the next day, the city of **Evenspire** had appeared, sprawled across the slopes between the palace and the **Ashdale River**. Thus was born the legend of Evenspire, a city with aspirations to greatness matched only by its failure to achieve them.

The truth of Evenspire's founding is certainly somewhat different. At its peak, a labour force of some ten thousand workers was recruited across the southern realms to work on the **Palace of Paths**; at the time, this was as much as the population of any city in the realms except the **Silver City** itself. While it may be true that some of these workers were not engaged at the construction site itself and many were itinerant, it is surely the case that the first city of Evenspire was nothing more than an enormous worker's camp laid out on the slopes below the embryonic **Palace of Paths**.

Over more than two hundred years, the squalor and poverty of those early days has somehow clung to the city. It may be true that the building scaffolds were dismantled in only a few days, and that workers who had sheltered for months under tents took their chance to build more permanent homes for themselves. Nevertheless, here in the centre of the **Blackwind Dales** food is scarce, resources are few and poverty is rife. This is a realm with very little to offer except the copper mines of **Scarsdale**, and yet which boasts a grand fortress that it patently cannot afford. Indeed, there is a case to be argued that Evenspire is simply one large eyrie.

To hear the lords and princes of the **Ash Throne** speak, one would be forgiven for imagining Evenspire to be a great city, large and thriving and full of marvels. The truth is far removed from this. While the parts of the **Palace of Paths** that have not fallen into disrepair are indeed magnificent, the city is little more than an enormous slum. Yes, it is large, perhaps even as large as **Furymouth**, yet swathes of it are abandoned, parts are fallen to ruin and there are no great temples or monasteries or palaces; everything lies in the shadow of the vast fortress that overlooks this impoverished city. It is telling, perhaps, that the richest men in Evenspire are those who openly deal in **Soul Dust**, which is boated down the **Blackwind River** from the **Outsiders** of the **Worldspine** and smuggled away along the **Evenspire Road** to the realms of the north and south.

The Evenspire Road

This is one of the two great roads of the realms, the other being **Yinazhin's Way**. The Evenspire Road is in fact the shorter of the two, but is often mistakenly assumed to be the longer, running all the way from **Outwatch** in the north to **Furymouth** in the south. This is a misconception, as the Evenspire Road itself stops at **Watersgate**; although other roads do follow the **Fury River** all the way to the sea, they are a mish-mash of dirt tracks and highways, and the main artery of travel from **Watersgate** to the south is the river itself. One might as well claim that **Yinazhin's Way** traverses the realms as far as **Gnashing Snapper Gorge** and beyond.

Nevertheless, a trip along the **Fury** river from **Furymouth** to **Watersgate** and then on along the Evenspire Road is recommended for all journeymen **alchemists**, as it provides glimpses into almost all aspects of life in the realms. From the **Veid Palace** and the **Taiytakei** marvels of **Furymouth**, through the rural quiet of **Bonjanland**, filthy **Farakkan**, mystical **Purkan** and into the **Gliding Dragon Gorge** and the cliffs opposite **Plags Bay**, a traveller can learn much about the southern half of the nine realms.

The Evenspire Road proper starts at **Watersgate** and crosses the **Hungry Mountain Plains** to **Samir's Crossing** and the bridge over the **Sapphire River**. Here the landscape quickly changes, while the road veers west and hugs the **Great Cliff**, passing close to the **Emerald Cascade**. On the other side of the road there is nothing but wilderness, the beginnings of the great **Desert of Stone**. For several hundred miles, the Evenspire Road crosses the wasteland between **Samir's Crossing** and **Dragondale**; travellers here are well advised to journey in large groups and arm themselves against the bandits and brigands of this unclaimed land. Also be warned that there is little water and little to hunt here – you are never far from the emptiness of the **Desert of Stone**.

The line of the **Blackwind Dales** on the horizon is a welcome sight after so many days adrift. **Dragondale** welcomes you to the hills and back to more civilized realms; another day will bring you to **Evenspire**. Here, the weary traveller may be forgiven for wondering briefly if he has not returned to where he started, for on first sight the **Palace of Paths** seems remarkably like the gates of **Furymouth** – although even a moment's glance at the squalor of **Evenspire** itself will quickly dispel any such illusion. All in all, the journey from **Furymouth** to **Evenspire** is reckoned at some forty to fifty days to a man on a horse, and as many as a hundred to a man on foot; contrast this to three days on the back of a dragon!

Excorban's Coast

East of the **Bay of Still Water** and the **Fishing Coast**, the southern extremities of the realms grow wild and unkempt. The **River Throne** has little influence this far south and the jumbled hills of Excorban's Coast have become a haven for **Outsiders** and renegades of all descriptions. There are no towns or cities, as these would quickly succumb to the dragons of the **River Throne**; instead, small bands of raiders infest the hills. It is often suggested that tacit agreements exist between **Three Rivers** and some of these bands; that a certain degree of pillage and plunder will be tolerated in exchange for whatever dark deeds a rumour-monger may wish to lay at the River King's gates. Whatever the truth, the bandits of the coast are a regular nuisance that the dragons of **Three Rivers** and **Valin's Fields** seem unable to fully suppress.

Farakkan

Sitting on the one and only hill in **Bonjanland** is Farakkan, capital of **Bonjanland** and the largest city in the realms not to have an eyrie. Looking down over the confluence of the **Fury** and the **Yamuna**, Farakkan is little more than a huge market on a little hill, but the fact that it rises above the floodwaters of **Bonjanland** (frequently becoming an island for most of the late spring and early summer) and is visible from a very long distance across the flat terrain makes it seem something more. The city has drawn in many of the local farmers and watermen who have become the local craftsmen; however, the city is wet, filthy and muddy and is largely viewed with disdain by the courts of the surrounding realms. Thus the quality of workmanship for most goods available in Farakkan is markedly average, with most craftsmen of any skill seeking their fortunes elsewhere.

Farakkan is governed from the **Pinnacles**, and being posted to the city is universally regarded as a punishment; thus the quality of leadership here can vary wildly from despotic tyranny through listless apathy – the most common attribute – to the occasional unexpected flash of brilliance. The people of Farakkan are used to this and continue regardless, melting back into the flood plains until the worst despots move on. The city has little to interest those whose lives are not dedicated to food, fish or livestock, and has no culture to speak of.

Fardale

Little more than a mark on the map, Fardale marks the northern extent of the **Ash Throne** and any form of civilization within the **Blackwind Dales**. Another day or two to the north, the hills and the **Evenspire Road** finally come to an end at the lush valley of the **Last River**. Here, watched over by the dragons of **Southwatch**, travellers may board boats to **Sand** and **Ishmar's Valley**.

Feljanford

Far to the east of **Three Rivers** lies the small **Outsider** town of Feljanford, the most easterly habitation under the protection of the **River Throne**. The town is of little significance save that it marks the eastern extent of the nine realms, and that it was once home to the Tripod of Feljanford, now known as **Vishmir's Column**.

The Field of Gorgutinnin

Overlooking the **Fury** estuary on the slopes below the **Veid Palace**, you will find the Field of Gorgutinnin, the largest arena for games and horse-racing in the realms. Although the Field is usually associated with **Furymouth** since the reign of **Vishmir**, it actually pre-dates that era. The first racecourse was built before even the time of **Narammed**, back when the city was a provincial town of moderate importance. Then in 103, as part of the construction of the first parts of what would become the **Veid Palace**, King Tyan I began to rebuild other parts of the city and endowed the Field with an arena for chariot races and other entertainments.

In 228, though, following his victory in the **War of Thorns**, **Vishmir the Great** decided to move the seat of the government from the **Adamantine Palace** to **Furymouth**. **Vishmir** greatly enlarged the city over the years that followed, and one of his major undertakings was the renovation of the race track and surrounding arena.

This is what a visitor to the Field of Gorgutinnin will see today: a circuit around five hundred strides long and one hundred wide, surrounded by stands capable of holding fifty thousand spectators. No wonder, then, that **Furymouth** is known by the locals as the city of games. The race-track is U-shaped, and the king's seat – located at the western end of the track – can be accessed directly from the **Veid Palace** through a passage which only the king or other members of the royal family may use. The track is lined with bronze statues of famous horses and chariot drivers, many of whose names are well known among the city populace. Statues of kings and heroes and even a few **Taiytakei** gods also dot the field; among them are some famous works, such as a study of **Narammed** by Lysikkon and a statue of the **Silver King** in pure unblemished silver, one of many gifts to the city from the **Taiytakei**. Of course, everything except the arena and the **Veid Palace** itself remains overshadowed by the monstrous **Dragon of Furymouth**.

Since its construction, the arena in the Field of Gorgutinnin has become the centre of the city's social life. Huge amounts are bet on chariot races in which four teams compete, each one financially sponsored and supported by a different political party within the **Furymouth** Senate: the Blues (bankers and money lenders), the Greens (traders and merchants), the Reds (craftsmen and commoners) and the Whites (dragon-lords and nobles). The royal family of the city traditionally remain aloof from these partisan loyalties and change their backing from season to season to whichever of these teams most needs their support. A total of up to eight chariots (two chariots per team), powered by four horses each, compete on the racing track. The rivalry between teams often becomes mingled with political or religious rivalries, and riots have been known to break out in the city as a result. The most severe of these was in 297, in which many hundreds of people were killed and many buildings destroyed. The introduction of the **Slave Pens** shortly afterwards has largely put an end to the problem, but fighting in the streets after particularly important races is still a common sight.

The races held here are not simple sporting events, but also provide some occasions in which the king and the common citizens can come together in a single venue. Political discussions are often held at the arena on non-racing days. The field is also used for various occasions such as the lavish and days-long midsummer ceremonies and other such festivities.

Aside from the **Veid Palace** and the **Dragon of Furymouth**, three other monuments mark the corners of the field. The first of these monuments is the obelisk in the **Sanquat Square**. Near this obelisk stands **Vishmir's Column**. The remaining third monument is a sculpture of four horses with gold ornamentations. Not surprisingly (even in a city such as **Furymouth**), the gold is frequently stolen, despite the permanent guards set to watch over it.

The **Fishing Coast**

The south-eastern coast of the realms between **Valin's Fields** and **Numenport** is home to many small villages for whom fishing is the primary activity. Small boats can be seen plying the **Bay of Still Water**, never more than a few miles from the shore. The coast here is a quiet place, peaceful and placid, sheltered from the **Sea of Storms** by **Tyan's Peninsula** and from the buccaneers of **Excorban's Coast** by the **River Throne's** dragons.

The Fortress of Watchfulness

‘That was the greatest of our strongholds. Encased within the stone, the dragons could not reach us. We laboured always, day and night, to find a way to tame them. For as long as we could remember, we had failed – and yet we laboured anyway, always to no avail... until the white sorcerer came to us.’

Like the other palaces of the **Pinnacles**, the Fortress of Watchfulness is easily divided into four sections, vertically stacked on top of one another.

The uppermost structures are those protruding up into the air, those physically built onto the mountain rock as opposed to tunnelled within it. This gives the outward appearance of a fairly modest palace, with much of the available space given over to a small eyrie capable of housing a handful of dragons and their keepers. There are a series of highly decorated chambers, but beyond the eyrie and a small barracks the entire upper section is little more than a glorified anteroom to the chambers below. The marble dome that surmounts the welcome hall is the fortress’s most spectacular feature. Its height of around thirty strides is about the same as the length of the base, and is accentuated as it sits on a cylindrical drum about as high as a man. Because of its shape, the dome is often called an onion dome, and the palace has, rather uncharitably, been referred to as the ‘Silver Onion’ by some.

The top of the dome is decorated with a long silver spike which also serves to accentuate its height, while the shape of the dome is further emphasized by four smaller domes placed at its corners, which replicate the onion shape of the main dome. Their columned bases open through the roof of the halls below and provide light to the interior. Low battlements completely surround the top of the mountain; at first glance these appear to offer little protection, but a more careful inspection reveals their sing-minded design to provide cover against dragon-fire. No place is more than a few strides from a fire hole, and huge shields as large as doors (made of dragonscale over hardened leather) lie carelessly unattended around the walls. Scorpions, however, are conspicuous by their absence. An array of tall decorative spires extend from the edges of the base walls, drawing eyes away from the battlements and providing visual emphasis to the height of the dome. These spires may appear as decorative to the untrained eye, but their purpose is far more military: under the ornate clay tile-work, each spire is a solid steel spike embedded deep into the mountain, placed there to deter a dragon from landing.

At the corners of the fortress stand four large towers or minarets, each more than fifty strides tall. The minarets display the designer’s penchant for symmetry. Each minaret is effectively divided into three equal parts by two working balconies that ring the tower. At the top of the tower is a final balcony surmounted by an open-roofed lookout point.

Although the fortress is relatively small, it is the oldest palace in the realms and the exterior decorations are among the finest to be found in. As the surface area changes, the decorations are refined proportionally. The decorative elements were created by applying paint, stone inlays or carvings – or in some cases, all of the above. In line with **blood-mage** superstition surrounding animalistic and anthropomorphic forms following the passing of the **Silver King**, most of the decorative elements can be grouped into either calligraphic sigils of uncertain origin (on the spires and minarets), abstract forms (the inner palace) or vegetative motifs (the outer battlements). The calligraphy is made by jasper inlaid in white marble panels, and the work found on the marble cladding of the four minarets is exquisitely detailed and delicate, far surpassing the work of much more recent sculptors. Hieroglyphs and lettering extend right up the spires and towers to the top. Higher panels are written slightly larger to reduce the skewing effect when viewing from below. Abstract forms are used for the more substantial buildings, largely dark or black inlays on the white marble. Mortared areas of the marble buildings have been stained or painted in a contrasting colour, creating complex geometric patterns over the every surface. Floors and walkways use blocks in tessellated patterns.

On the lower walls and battlements of the fortress are white marble dados that have been sculpted with realistic depictions of flowers and vines. The marble has been polished to emphasize the exquisite detailing of the carvings, and the dado frames and archway spandrels have been decorated with inlays of highly stylized, almost geometric vines, flowers and fruits. The inlay stones are of yellow marble, jasper and jade, polished and levelled to the surface of the walls.

The records of the **blood-mages** relate that most of the superficial elements of the palace were built by the **Silver King** with the use of his considerable power, although this is surely a misinterpretation; the truth is more likely they were built to his order. Between the battlemented eyrie and the inner building of the fortress described above, however, lies one of the great wonders of the realms – one that the Silver King is known to have created from his own power: the **Reflecting Garden**. The lower sections of the fortress (described below) are for the most part much older, although many have been enlarged and embellished over the years.

The second section of the fortress is an intermediate section. All paths and passages between the upper and central levels are funnelled into a single massive central staircase seventy strides across. The structure of the fortress in this section is intricately interleaved and designed for defence, with arrow loops, murder holes and numerous traps and deadfalls awaiting the unwary invader. Any intruders can be quickly and easily attacked, while defenders can only be reached by penetrating beyond the great staircase – an area that is surely trapped. At the very least, large blocks of stone can be dropped into place to prevent egress from the staircase, while it is noted by this author that the tank of the ‘Water of Abundance’ seems to lie almost directly over the staircase, although no connection has ever been admitted. Much of this area dates from the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** and later times.

By far the largest sections of the fortress are the central chambers, an area also known as the ‘Enchanted Palace’. The hundreds of men, women and children who live their lives here refer to their home in terms of caves and tunnels, but the truth could not be further away. While the second section of the fortress is built for defence and to prevent entry by any invader, this section is built largely for comfort. Despite being built underground (or perhaps because), these inner chambers are among the most impressive and luxuriant rooms in the realms. It is, in fact, very easy for the new visitor to this place to forget that they are not in **Furymouth** or the **City of Dragons**. The oppressive nature of many cave and tunnel systems is conspicuously absent. Instead, the ceilings are high, the chambers spacious and well-lit, and the air fresh. It is generally understood that much of the Fortress of Watchfulness is a relic of the time of the **Silver Kings**, one of their lesser palaces that was never quite finished. The walls glow with a life of their own, mimicking the time of day outside; bright in daylight, a dim but luminous twilight in the hours of darkness. As there is no need for fire to provide light, the stink of smoke present in other underground locales is absent; indeed, the stone itself seems to absorb almost any odour.

Numerous other relics of the **Silver Kings** are known to exist within the fortress; supposedly these include underground gardens in a cavern so vast that the whole of the **Adamantine Palace** would fit within it. There are also many stories of ghosts and disappearances and strange noises, and numerous accounts of one of the countless decorative archways that line walls throughout the lower fortress suddenly opening on to some inexplicable scene, sometimes for days on end. The kings and queens of the **Harvest Throne** keep their secrets very much to themselves, however, and even the **Order of the Scales** are not permitted to see any of these mysteries. Indeed, aside from the royal family members themselves, few people gain any admittance to the inner areas of the fortress. Servants here are little better than slaves. They may never leave, and those who attempt an escape are shown no mercy; even those who succeed are ruthlessly hunted down. In the presence of visitors, they are not even permitted to speak.

For those lucky enough to gain entrance at all to this section of the fortress, access is limited to a series of chambers focused around a throne room that is essentially a large multi-chambered cube

with chamfered corners, forming an unequal octagon that is approximately fifty strides on each of the four long sides. On each of these sides a massive or vaulted archway frames the hall, with similar arch-shaped balconies stacked on either side of the main arch. This motif of stacked archways is replicated on the chamfered corner areas. The design is completely symmetrical on all sides of the throne room, and the archway motif is continued throughout the interior of the fortress. The throne room also houses what purports to be the sarcophagus of the **Silver King** (note that the remains of the **Silver King** are also rumoured to be in the **Tomb of the Silver King**, in the **Aardish Caves** and in the caves at the end of the hidden **Valley of Alchemists**, to name but the most famous of his reported resting places).

Even without access to what must surely be even more impressive relics of the **Silver Kings**, the interior chambers of the Fortress of Watchfulness step far beyond traditional decorative elements. In most places the walls are utterly functional and bare, yet these have not been touched by successive occupiers of the fortress because there are simply no craftsmen in the realms who could produce work to match the few places where the **Silver Kings** left their mark.

Privileged visitors are allowed into the Hall of Mirages, an octagonal chamber that appears to allow for entry from each face – although in fact whichever exit you choose, you will still find yourself in the same hall outside. The interior walls are here about twenty strides high leading up to an interior dome decorated with a sun motif. The eight entry arches define the space at ground level and, as with the throne room, each lower arch is crowned by a second arch about midway up the wall. The upper arches form balconies, and each balcony has a false ‘window’ which is in fact an intricate screen cut from marble that radiates a fierce silver light when the moon is above the horizon. In addition, the sun pattern in the roof glows with a softer, more yellow light during daylight hours, tingeing to orange at sunrise and sunset. Every surface has been highly decorated with an exquisite lapidary of precious and semi-precious gemstones forming twining vines, fruits and flowers in a detail so extremely delicate that it is hard to understand what means, short of sorcery, could have made them. It is one of the hardest things for any visitor to come and see this room and then leave, knowing that what they have seen is but a tiny glimpse into the glories that surely lie deeper within this greatest relic of the **Silver Kings**.

Very little is known about the last and lowest section of the fortress. From the fragments of knowledge that have seeped out into the world at large, it seems that miles and miles of unlit tunnels run through the rock. These rough passageways are at least partly mapped, and known paths lead into the **Silver City** and the **Temple of Tranquillity**. Large chambers close to the rooms of the enchanted palace are used as storage, and the fortress likely has sufficient capacity for supplies to withstand a siege of several years. Stories abound of monsters in these lower tunnels, of men found wandering who had been thought lost in the **Aardish Caves** or even more distant places, but these are almost certainly flights of fancy with no basis in truth. The paucity of reliable records regarding this cave system means that any such reports should be treated with a sceptical eye.

Furymouth

Before the coming of the **Silver King**, settlements are reported to have existed around the mouth of the **Fury River** which, at the time, was a sprawling delta that occupied most of what is now **Tyan's Peninsula**. Scattered habitations eked out a meagre living in the swamps around the river channels, sheltering from roaming dragons within the dense cypress groves. With the coming of the **Silver King** and the taming of the dragons, however, more permanent settlement gradually moved out of the **Pinnacles** and the **Rakshah Forest** into the fertile plains of **Bonjanland** and steadily down the river, eventually reaching the swamps around the delta. At this time, a small town named Furymouth grew up near the mouth of the river, a few miles north of the current city's location.

During the time of the **Silver King**, Furymouth remained largely insignificant. No tradition of seamanship existed and the **Sea of Storms** remains a somewhat discouraging place to acquire one. The town is noted in some records for the rot-resistant properties of the nearby cypress wood, but for little else. If it were not for the arrival of the **Taiytakei**, this might have been how Furymouth would have stayed. However, following the demise of the **Silver King**, the traders from across the **Endless Sea** excited a great of interest from the **blood-mages**. It seems the **Taiytakei** had visited the shores of the southern realms regularly in previous years, but they had largely been either ignored or occasionally had their ships burned; nevertheless, their curiosity and interest in the dragons continually brought them back.

In the second decade after the passing of the **Silver King**, the Arch-Magus Tyan claimed the region as his own and moved to Furymouth along with fifty dragons. Over the years that followed, he embarked on a unique project the like of which has never been seen in the realms since. Using dragons themselves as his principle labour force, he constructed **Tyan's Dike**, a huge earth wall a hundred miles long that diverted the flow of the **Fury** around the side of the peninsula. The change in the course of the river flooded the existing settlement of Furymouth, which Tyan rebuilt on its current site. The Arch-Mage then used the dragons to harvest wood from the peninsula, and hired craftsmen from as far away as the **Silver City** itself to cut and prepare it (the expansion and construction of the **Silver City** was petering out at this time, so there were likely to have been plenty of carpenters and the like looking for work). It seems that Tyan's intent was to build a fleet of ships, cross the **Endless Sea** to the home of the **Taiytakei** and embark on a conquering crusade. This never came about, however, as the expertise to build a vessel capable of crossing the **Endless Sea** simply did not (and still does not) exist within the realms. All Tyan's early attempts were lost at sea, most of them sinking only a few days from shore.

After a year, Tyan gave up building ships, but by now he had a different goal. Seeing Tyan's efforts, the **Taiytakei** had expressed an interest in trading for the cypress wood harvested from the peninsula, and had a very great deal to offer in return. Not only did they bring crafted goods and spices that were wildly exotic, they brought knowledge. Most importantly to an Arch-Magus, they showed an occult understanding that is said to have far exceeded the powers of the **blood-mages** themselves, even the Arch-Magus **Pantatyr**, and exhibited a potency similar to that of the **Silver King** himself. Although in the end Tyan never received this power (nor does it seem likely that it ever truly existed), the promise of it was enough to divert him from his pursuit of conquest; while with similar determination, the **Taiytakei**, sought to understand Tyan's power over dragons – a desire that remains equally unconsummated to this day. Driven by these mutual unfulfilled desires, contact between Tyan's retinue and the **Taiytakei** blossomed. Although neither achieved their aim, amid the exchanges and trades of other goods and knowledge, the city of **Furymouth** was born.

From these origins, the city has steadily grown, built on the back of the cypress trees of **Tyan's Peninsula** (now largely gone) and the wealth of trade with the **Taiytakei**. The fall of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** and the rise of the **Order of the Scales** saw dragons return to the city, the establishment of a permanent eyrie and the construction of the **Taiytakei**-inspired **Paratheus**. By

the time of **Narammed**, Furymouth was a thriving city of learning and commerce, second only in the realms to the **Silver City** (although both were later surpassed by the **City of Dragons**).

Throughout the reigns of the speakers, the city continued to grow. **Taiytakei** thinking and philosophy saw a new breed of dragon-riders beginning to distance themselves from their traditional allies in the **Silver City** and from the dogma of the **Order of the Dragon**. The city became a centre for alchemy, drawing our brethren in with the promise of wonders and knowledge from across the seas. The most significant event in the city's history, however, was certainly the **War of Thorns**. **Vishmir**'s victory, coupled with the sacking of the **Silver City** in the last months of the war put Furymouth's star firmly in the ascendant. Although the centre of power for the realms remains with the **Adamantine Palace** and the **City of Dragons**, Furymouth has unquestionably become both the largest and the richest city in the realms.

The most important area in Furymouth is the **Field of Gorgutinnin**, a large open space of public ground overlooking the **Fury** estuary leading up to the **Veid Palace**. From the palace balconies, the dragon-lords can look out over the field and watch the games and races that occur on an almost daily basis during the summer and winter months. Several monuments overlook the field, including the **Dragon of Furymouth**, the obelisk in the **Sanquat Square** and **Vishmir's Column**. Most social and political events of any significance occur here. The **Taiytakei Quarter** that surrounds the harbour is also of intense interest to the journeyman **alchemist** for the compounds and commodities that can be purchased there, even despite the general **Taiytakei** embargo on such trade.

Unlike most other significant settlements of the realms, there are no cave systems in or around Furymouth; the nearest significant system is a full day's ride along the coast at **Clifftop**. In compensation, and instead of wells, the city has numerous aqueducts and water cisterns. **Tyan's Aqueduct** is an impressive if leaky piece of architecture which still supplies water from further upriver to the cisterns under the **Veid Palace** and other parts of the upper city. This aqueduct extends all the way from **Bonjanland** and gathers water from various sources along its route.

The location of Furymouth, straddling both the land and the sea, and the heavy influence of the **Taiytakei Quarter** has led to the city having some of the most diverse and exotic foods in the realms. A banquet here will routinely consist of dishes sourced from the far corners of the realms and beyond, as well as more locally from the sea, the river and the flood-plains of **Bonjanland**. The citizens of Furymouth eat well and frequently flaunt their wealth in their girth. The city is particularly known for its long tradition of cakes and desserts. These include hot fruit pasties and sweet pancakes. Throughout the year, small street stands sell traditional dumplings filled with fruit, minced pickled fish or minced spiced meat. Hot chestnuts and potato fritters are also common in the mild and balmy winters.

The Fury River (Gorge)

By far and away the greatest river in the realms, the Fury effectively divides north from south and (in the southern half) east from west, cutting off any land approach to the **Adamantine Palace** and the **City of Dragons** from the southern realms. Although many small streams comprise the headwaters of the Fury, the largest tributary and nominated 'source' of the Fury is an unnamed ice-lake approximately one hundred miles west of **Drotan's Top**, deep in the mountains of the **Worldspine**. The headwaters of the Fury are formed by snowmelt from such far-off peaks as Mendi Duv, Trisal, and Arrax Top, names known only to the dragon-riders of the **Worldspine**. After flowing through increasingly deep mountain valleys, the Fury emerges into the immensity of the **Gliding Dragon Gorge** which cuts a west-to-east path for hundreds of miles across the **Hungry Mountain Plains**. At the exit of the gorge, the river then turns south towards **Furymouth** and the **Endless Sea**. The river can thus conveniently be divided into four sections: the mountain section, **Gliding Dragon Gorge**, the lower valley, and the great river section.

The mountains section consists of a deep steep-sided valley, with many of the tributary valleys entering the Fury river valley high above the valley floor, rushing down to converge with the great river in a series of waterfalls. The river is not navigable until it passes through the **Gnashing Snapper Gorge**, where the river passes between Dragon Snow Mountain and Habal Pinnacle in a series of rapids under steep cliffs that are at least as tall as the **Great Cliff** itself.

Gliding Dragon Gorge is characterized by sheer cliffs and terraces descending around a mile to the flat river bed. There is no clear transition between the mountains section of the river and the upper gorge; rather, as the mountains ease away on either side, the gorge opens out to a width of several miles (thirty or forty if the valleys and canyons of the **Maze** are accounted for). This whole section is commonly known as **Gliding Dragon Gorge**, although originally this name referred only to the narrows between the end of the **Maze** and **Plags Bay**. The river is navigable; however, the depth and width of the gorge and the absence of any easy routes to ascend or descend make crossing the gorge an insurmountable obstacle to all but winged travellers. Approaching the gorge from downriver, the last easy access to the north bank of the **Fury** occurs at **Plags Bay**, where a road shallow enough for ox-carts and, for the most part, wide enough for two to pass one another runs up to **Watersgate** on the **Hungry Mountain Plains** above. Numerous other access points to the north bank exist, but these are limited to pack-mules or foot trails. Many trails in the **Maze** are unmapped.

The lower valley section refers to the part of the river between **Valleyford** (which marks the end of the **Gliding Dragon Gorge**) and **Arys Crossing**. The river here is wide and with a good current, easily navigable and well settled. In this region the Fury is swollen by several rivers washing out from the **Oordish Moors** in the east. The widespread floods of the lower section are not seen here and many small towns exist; in fact, most of the river bank is cultivated and farmed, with good roads following the river's course on both sides.

Exiting from the lower valley section at **Arys Crossing**, the Fury follows a curving southward course passing through the city of **Purkan** before being joined from the north-west by the **Yamuna** near **Farakkan**. From this point on the Fury is joined by numerous other small rivers washing out from the **Rakshah Forest** on the west. There are no large cities on the banks of the lower Fury due to the periodic floods that can extend for many tens of miles across the plains and be up to ten strides deep. However, the banks of the river are heavily cultivated and countless small settlements are always to be found, except during a flood. The primary means of travel and transport in this region is the river itself. Roads are regularly washed away, and thus are almost non-existent until the river is virtually within sight of **Furymouth**.

The region of the Fury river between **Valleyford** and **Furymouth**, known as **Bonjanland** by those who live there, is the most heavily populated part of the dragon-realms, accounting for somewhere

between a third and a half of the population of the realms. Many of the peasant farmers who live here subscribe to a form of mysticism vastly different from that found in the cultured and civilized cities of the realms. In this quasi-religion, the river itself is accorded divine status. According to these beliefs, the **Silver King** was born from the Fury and was, in fact, a manifestation of the river itself. The river water purged the fire of wickedness from the dragons and forced them to become as slaves. The waters near **Purkan** are apparently particularly holy, as this is reputed to be where the **Silver King** emerged. People travel hundred of miles to scatter ashes of loved ones here, and many who were raised on the banks of the Fury continue to believe that the water has purifying properties. Many families even keep a vial of water from the Fury in their house so that if someone is dying, that person will be able to drink its water. It is this author's observation, however, that when bathing in the most sacred waters around **Purkan**, one is likely to enter the river cleaner than one leaves. Hundreds of tiny shrines are scattered along the banks of the Fury; frequently washed away in floods, they are quickly replaced.

Despite the apparent backwardness of the people who live on the river, the lower reaches of the Fury with its immense flood plain of fertile soil is pivotal to the prosperity of cities like **Fury-mouth**, the **Pinnacles** and the **City of Dragons**. Much of the surplus food needed to feed these cities grows here, in the realms of the **Harvest Queen** and the **River King**. The river also has abundant varieties of fish. The much prized river dolphin, considered one of the greatest delicacies in the cities of the northern desert, is also found here.

Gardin's Rock

Located somewhere within the **Plains of Ancestors** lies the secret eyrie of Gardin's Rock, in a place known only to the **Syuss** and the few of the **Order of the Scales** they permit to tend their last handful of dragons. Stories of this place speak of an incredible ancient city, set within an immense canyon and carved entirely out of the rock walls, filled with forgotten tombs, temples and canyon-top sacrificial stones; all long abandoned before even the **Silver King** came to the **Pinnacles**, and now restored to some semblance of its former existence by the **Syuss**. Whether these stories are true is another matter, and one that only those few who are privileged to travel there can say.

The Gatehouse / The Great Gate

The oldest, largest and most fortified tower in the **Adamantine Palace**, the Gatehouse is where the **alchemists**, the **Night Watchman** and the other senior servants of the realms made their beds. The gates of the Gatehouse are wide and tall enough to admit even the largest war-dragon. Although not commonly recognized as such, the Gatehouse is the largest free-standing fortress in the realms – the **Fortress of Watchfulness**, while considerably larger, is mostly concealed underground, and the **Palace of Paths**, excluding its miles of curtain walls, is in fact slightly smaller. Although it doesn't have the height of either **Outwatch** or the **Speaker's Tower**, the Gatehouse is considerably larger than both when measured by volume.

The first Gatehouse was built in 78 by the priests of the **Glass Cathedral**. A previous wooden fortification had been on the site. This first fort was as much to protect the **dragon-priests** from the people of the **City of Dragons** as to protect the city from outside invaders, but as an outpost of the **Order of the Dragon**, a certain degree of ornamentation was deemed necessary. Fine Orinx stone imported from the **Worldspine** was used for the corners of the building and as door and window dressings, though local ragstone was used for the bulk of the edifice. According to legend the mortar used in its construction was tempered by the blood of beasts, while another tale ascribes the first (wooden) Gatehouse not to the **dragon-priests** but to a secret sect of **blood-mages**. The myth persists around the current Gatehouse that it is somehow cursed with **blood-magic**, although there is not a shred of evidence to support this claim.

The modern Gatehouse is some 50 strides high, and the walls vary from 15 feet thick at the base to around half this in the upper parts. Above the battlements rise four turrets; three of them are square, but the one on the north-west is circular in order to accommodate a spiral staircase. This turret was briefly used as the first royal observatory in the reign of **Voranin**. **Vishmir** later handed over control of the Gatehouse to the **Order of the Scales** and the **Adamantine Men**, and the observatory tower retains its original purpose.

During the **War of Thorns**, **Anzuine** transformed the Tower into the major fortress it is now and had palatial apartments constructed in the eastern section. The tower was substantially reworked again after the war to accommodate the famous Dragon Gates, capable of admitting even the largest war-dragon into the palace. The gates are a marvel of engineering: when prepared, they are sufficiently finely balanced that they can be opened by a single soldier pushing on each gate, even though each gate weighs as much as a small dragon. The effort required in preparing the gates to be opened in this way is a closely guarded secret held by the **Adamantine Men**, although it is clearly the work of an hour or more and requires many strong arms. Usually the gates are locked closed, with much smaller gateways within the Dragon Gates being used to allow entrance and egress from the palace.

A second gate leads directly into the **Gatehouse**. This is often referred to as the Humble Gate or Lowly Gate because **Vishmir** forced all the dragon-riders accused of treason following the **War of Thorns** to pass through it instead of the Dragon Gates. The Humble Gate also leads to a passage that cuts through the outer walls of the palace all the way to the **Humble Tower**.

The Glass Cathedral

Before the rise of the speakers, the **Glass Cathedral** was already the most important building in the realms: it lay on a major north-south east-west crossroads and was an economic centre. Perhaps the most famous landmark of the years before the **Act of Narammed**, the Cathedral's origins reach back much further; this much is clear from the glassy nature of the exterior stone from which it is built, which shows clear evidence of prolonged subjection to dragon-fire. In the time before the speakers, the cathedral functioned sometimes as a marketplace, with different portals selling different items – textiles at the northern end, and fuel, vegetables and meat at the southern one. The **dragon-priests** actively encouraged the life of the markets to enter into the cathedral; traders and merchants were forbidden to sell their wares in the extensive tunnels that lie under the cathedral, but were allowed to do business in the body of the church, sometimes even being permitted to avoid the taxes which they would have to pay if they sold outside. Workers of various professions, such as carpenters and masons, also gathered in the cathedral seeking jobs.

There were four great fairs which coincided with the main elemental feast days. Held in the surrounding area of the cathedral, the fairs were attended by many of the pilgrims who came to the **Diamond Cascade** for the feast days and to see the **Adamantine Spear** (the cathedral was an especially popular pilgrimage destination after the demise of the **Silver King**). Thus, for hundreds of years the **Glass Cathedral** has been, in its own way, the centre of the realms. The **City of Dragons** grew up where it did as much because of the cathedral as for any other reason, and the presence of the cathedral and the artefact it contained led to **Narammed** building his palace around it. Even today, those few who remain faithful to the word of the **dragon-priests** still come from across the realms over to honour the **Adamantine Spear**.

The **Act of Narammed** finally brought the harmony to the realms, but was also ultimately responsible for the downfall of the **dragon-priests**. The balance of power between the **Order of the Dragon** and the kings and queens of the realms waxed and waned until the tensions finally erupted in the **War of Thorns**. Despite the almost complete loss of the order's power under Speaker **Vishmir** and the removal of the **Adamantine Spear** to the **Speaker's Tower**, the Glass Cathedral remains at the heart of the palace, and its priests continue to have the speaker's ear.

In common with many old structures that date back to the **Silver King** and before, beneath the cathedral there is known to lie an extensive network of natural and man-made caves and tunnels, enhanced by centuries of work. The exact extent of these tunnels is known only to the cathedral priests, although various speakers have also been known to make use of them from time to time. The tunnels almost certainly link directly into the deep cellars under the **Gatehouse** and the City Tower as well as numerous locations within the **City of Dragons**. Stories persist that the tunnels reach for many miles, including into a complex of caves behind the **Diamond Cascade** and even right up into the **Purple Spur**. Rumours linking the tunnels under the cathedral to the tunnels within the **Pinnacles** are surely exaggeration, however.

Gliding Dragon Gorge

Gliding Dragon Gorge is a steep-sided gorge carved by the **Fury River** that cuts the western half of the realms neatly in two for hundreds of miles, from the **Worldspine** right across to **Valleyford**. The name of the gorge is attributed to the fact that it is almost impassable to anything that cannot fly across the rift. On the southern side of the gorge, the cliff walls are sheer and almost unbroken all the way to **Valleyford** itself, although the height of the cliffs declines steadily as one passes to the east of **Plags Bay**. The cliffs on the northern side are similar, although generally lower, from **Plags Bay** to **Valleyford**; however, east of **Plags Bay** the northern side of the gorge collapses into a complex vista of mesas, canyons and stone spires, tributary rivers, streams, rapids and waterfalls known as the **Maze** that extends all the way to the **Purple Spur**. The width and depth of the gorge is open to much interpretation in this part, but settles to about a mile deep and four miles across for much of its length. The cliff walls are terraced, for the most part; generally plunging down to the flat river bed in three giant steps on the south side and two on the north.

Close to the **Worldspine** the forested rims are high enough to receive winter snowfall, but down at the level of the **Fury River** itself temperatures are quite noticeably warmer, sometimes becoming as hot as those found in **Sand** and other desert locations in the northern realms. Conditions in the gorge region are generally dry, but occasional heavy rains (which can also grow into dramatic localized thunderstorms) can strike the lower sections of the gorge in winter and in late summer.

There are no roads within the gorge and few settlements, and much of the gorge is arid, rocky and uninhabited (the **Order of the Finger** being a notable exception). However, the Fury itself remains navigable right through the Gliding Dragon Gorge and into the **Worldspine** as far as **Hanzen's Camp** and **Gnashing Snapper Gorge**. Access to the gorge is possible at **Plags Bay** along the northern cliff and at **Valleyford** on both sides of the river. **Valleyford** marks the end of the gorge and the beginning of the lower valley section of the **Fury River**.

Natural seeps and springs percolate out of the canyon walls in many places, particularly on the north side, and numerous cave systems have been recorded by journeymen **alchemists** exploring the river's course; few, however, have been explored. Prior to the coming of the **Silver King** and the taming of the dragons, many of these may have served as places of shelter; although few large animals have been seen in the gorge, the river is a plentiful source of fish, while there are a wide variety of edible frogs, rats, snakes and small birds, together with hawks, vultures and of course the silver-feathered fish-eating **Adamantine Eagle**.

Occasional flash-floods affect the upper reaches of the gorge, sometimes flooding the lowest terrace. However, severe floods from the **Fury** itself are rare here, being much more common in the tributary canyons of the **Maze**.

Gnashing Snapper Gorge

Gnashing Snapper Gorge marks the end (or beginning) of the **Fury River** as a navigable water way. Here the river passes between Dragon Snow Mountain and Habal Pinnacle in a series of rapids under steep cliffs that are at least as tall as the **Great Cliff** itself. Legend says that a **blood-mage** fleeing from his hunters after the overthrow of the **Silver King** was confronted by a snapper on the rim of the gorge. In order to escape, he successfully jumped across the river at the narrowest point (at least twenty-five strides wide), hence the name. The Gnashing Snapper Gorge is the deepest gorge along the course of the **Fury**, deeper even than the **Gliding Dragon Gorge** (although nowhere near as long or as wide). Traversing the length of the gorge on foot or with pack-animals suited for the narrow path is possible; the path is well-maintained and marked, although sometimes very narrow, and is in regular use all the way from **Hanzen's Camp** deep into the **Worldspine**. Nevertheless, the trail is hazardous in poor weather, is crossed by several waterfalls and frequently beset by rockslides. Some portions of the path have been known to disappear into the river below.

The Golden Temple

In the central square at the heart of the **Silver City** lies the Golden Temple, residence of the high priests of the **Order of the Dragon**. The temple was originally begun as a palace for the **blood-mages**, but only the foundations were built. Shortly before the time of **Narammed**, when the Order were at the height of their power, they completed the construction. The result remains a palace in all but name. The temple rises at the hub of a 'wheel' formed by the central streets of the **Silver City**, and its lofty, emerald-coloured dome, some forty strides high, dominates the city's centre. Because of the dome, the temple is also known as the 'Temple of the Green Dome', but its more common name as the Golden Temple dates back to before the **War of Thorns**, when its main portals were encrusted with the precious metal.

The Golden Temple forms a labyrinth of rooms and corridors leading into alcoves, cloisters and courtyards. Surrounding the temple on three sides is an esplanade, beside which run the largest of the **blood-mages'** canals. Three bridges cross the canals to the temple. At their height, the Golden Temple was the centre of the **Order's** power. The gardens were laced with rose bowers, dotted with splashing fountains, and ornamented with strutting peacocks. Deep carpets were underfoot, beautifully decorated cushions lay on every chair and in every corner flashed the sparkle of gold and diamonds. While much of the wealth is now gone, hints of the opulence remain in the heavy velvet drapes that line the walls of the enormous audience chamber, and in the furniture of the palace dining room where a thousand guests can be seated.

The Great Chasm

In those histories that stem from the time of the Silver King and of the **blood-mages** that followed, reference is repeatedly made to the Great Chasm. There is little doubt that the chasm lies somewhere within the monolith of the **Temple of Tranquillity**. It is also clear that the Great Chasm was a matter of significant interest to the **Silver King**, who forbade those around him from even thinking about it and is purported to have disintegrated anyone who disobeyed this order. Several references are made to journeys by the **Silver King** to the Great Chasm where, 'having ventured within the rift, he returned much filled with thought and did not speak or eat for several weeks.' It is separately referred to as a 'gateway', a 'remnant', a 'hole that leads to the realms of the dead' and 'a relic of the power that shattered the world and brought twilight to the dominion of the **Silver Kings**.' After the fall of the **Silver King**, the **blood-mages** apparently conducted extensive research on the chasm. Any records of this that have survived remain a secret, but it is apparent that the **blood-mages** were frustrated in their efforts to tap into something they believed to lie within the chasm, and that lives were lost during their endeavours – possibly a great many. Eventually, after the overthrow of the **blood-mages**, the chasm was reportedly sealed away. Whatever the true nature and properties of the chasm, it is now watched over by the **Order of the Dragon**.

The **Great Cliff**

The Great Cliff is the name given to the cliffs that run along the northern limit of the **Purple Spur**. Unlike the south cliffs, the cliffs here are not, in fact, cliffs, but are nevertheless steep enough slopes that plant-life is patchy and as an obstacle to navigation they are every bit as formidable. The Great Cliff is a single unbroken line of mountains, and is considerably more than a hundred miles long before it begins to fragment towards its junction with the **Worldspine**. Most of the Great Cliff is well over a mile high and in some places is closer to two. The lands at the foot of the Great Cliff are dry and barren, as the mountains steal both rain and light from the lands immediately below. Unlike the south cliff, the Great Cliff is largely unexplored.

The **Great Dragon Hunt**

This refers to the period that lasted for most of **Vishmir**'s reign as Speaker of the Realms during which some two hundred dragons were missing. The hunt lasted for twenty years until the first recognized **King of the Crag**s, Valmeyan the Second, revealed himself and the **Mountain Throne** was established as the ninth dragon realm.

The Great Flame

Certain doctrines within the **Order of the Dragon** speak of a single divine draconic figure as both the creator and destroyer of the world, and even seek to hasten the latter as this will ascend all souls to their proper place in the divine hierarchy. The Great Flame is seen by most of the Order as a heresy, but the doctrine became the Order's principle creed for a while under the direction of High Priest **Anzuine**. Despite (or perhaps because of) the subsequent near-destruction of the Order in the **War of Thorns**, the creed remains quite common within their ranks, albeit without official sanction from the **Glass Cathedral**. The doctrine is an old one, going back to before the time of the **Silver Kings**. It is said to be a commonly held belief among **blood-mages** that it is the power of the Great Flame that they draw on, and not the life force of their hapless victims.

Hammerford

Sat a long day's sail between **Valleyford** and **Arys Crossing**, Hammerford is little more than a set of docks and a convenient resting place for travellers on the **Fury River**. The locals here largely make a living from fishing the **Fury** and from local markets; indeed, while **Valleyford** markets offer goods from the four corners of the realms, those in Hammerford have become the central point for all the closer surrounding areas to come and sell their wares. The location of these markets means a wide variety of produce is available – but the town is most famous for its dried fish, with buyers coming here from as far away as the **City of Dragons**. Hammerford is also known for its local festivals, apparently held on the whim of the market elders, where the local sellers get dressed up in their colourful 'market best' to sell their goods down at the waterfront to the traders on the river. Prices here are noticeably cheaper than in the more cosmopolitan markets further upriver at **Valleyford**.

Hanzen's Camp

Hanzen's Camp is situated near the exit from **Gnashing Snapper Gorge** in a broad-bottomed valley between Habal Pinnacle and Three Horse Peak. The camp is exactly that – a camp with few permanent structures and an itinerant population that fluctuates wildly with the seasons. Hanzen's Camp marks the end of the **Fury** as a navigable river, but trails from Hanzen's Camp lead deep into the **Worldspine**, some for several hundreds of miles. Travellers are warned that remote habitations encountered this deep into the mountains may be **Outsider** villages. Hanzen's Camp itself sits in an ambiguous position between being an **Outsider** settlement and being subject to the laws of the dragon-lords. Much legitimate business occurs here between river traders and the vassals of the **Mountain Throne**, but a great deal that is unsavoury also occurs; in particular, the camp is notorious for the availability of large quantities of **Soul Dust**. Nevertheless, so far its existence has been tolerated.

The Harvest Throne

Of all the **dragon-realms**, the Harvest Throne is perhaps the most important. It is considerably the largest in terms of both population and resources, although not in terms of the size of its eyries (the **King of the Crag**s claims the honour of controlling the most dragons, while the **Sea Throne**, the **Throne of Sand and Stone** and the **Throne of Salt** all have more of the monsters at their beck and call). In terms of wealth the Harvest Throne appears unable to match the opulence of the **Sea Throne**, but this may be misleading; no one quite knows what fortune lies quietly untapped within the hidden chambers beneath the **Pinnacles**.

The Harvest Throne is the oldest of the **dragon-realms**. The **Silver King** ruled from here, as did the **blood-mages** and the **Order of the Dragon** until the time of **Narammed** and the first speakers. Even then, this realm retained huge power and influence for many decades and ruled over more dragons than any two other realms combined. Since the **War of Thorns** this power has been much diminished, both because of the realm's historical association with the **Order of the Dragon** and because of the loss of more than half its dragons to the then-newly founded **Mountain Throne**.

Physically, the realm is bounded on three sides by the **Fury River** (up to **Gliding Dragon Gorge** in the north) and the **Yamuna River**. To the west, the realm lays claim to the entire **Rakshah Forest** up to the **Worldspine**, although the forest itself is largely uninhabited. The realm is very centralized around the **Silver City** and the surrounding peaks of the **Pinnacles**, the only other significant city being **Farakkan**. By a tradition that stems back to the overthrow of the **blood-mages**, the realm is ruled, by preference, by a queen rather than a king – although in practice, over the years the throne has been occupied by an even mix of both.

The realm has had a chequered past; it is still viewed with suspicion by many due to its history as a base of power for the **Order of the Scales**, and this continues to this day – despite the damage done to the **Silver City** in the **War of Thorns** by the high priest **Anzuine**. Since **Vishmir**, the realm has frequently been at odds with the rulers of both the **Adamantine Palace** and of **Furymouth**. There have been several small skirmishes over the years and the Harvest Throne has consistently been on the losing end of them. In more recent times, however, the realm has adopted a more conciliatory approach, seeming to accept its demotion to 'mere equality' with the other realms. The current queen, Aliphera, has ruled from the **Pinnacles** since the recent death of her grandmother, and seems set to continue this trend. Barring misfortune, she will be succeeded by her eldest daughter, the young Princess Zafir.

Hatchling Disease

A disease affecting those who spend time with recently hatched dragons. The disease causes skin to thicken and harden, and consequently to crack and flake. If untreated, the victim slowly loses the ability to control their extremities, which may snap off. Larger and larger portions of the body are affected until the thickening and hardening of the skin is so acute that the victim is no longer able to move. Death from asphyxiation, thirst or starvation then occurs, but in practice most sufferers die before reaching this point. The disease is highly infectious and any person working with a dragon up to several months old will almost invariably succumb. Treatments exist to halt the progress of the disease once exposure ends, and to slow the progress of the disease within those working with hatchling dragons. No treatment exists, however, that can either prevent or reverse the condition. The disease can be spread from human to human and is quite infectious – it is possible that the **Statue Plague** in the **Silver City** during the time of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** was an outbreak of Hatchling Disease. It appears, however, that regular exposure to adult and adolescent dragons confers some sort of immunity to this secondary infection. Outbreaks within dragon eyries are rare and always confined to those who have no regular contact with the dragons there.

The disease in its early stages gives the sufferer's skin a flaking, scaly appearance, hence the name **Scales** given to those whose lives are spent working with dragons. The **Order of the Scales** is named after those who suffer from the disease for the greater good of the realms.

Hejel's Bridge

Far out into the emptiness of the **Desert of Stone**, well over a hundred miles from the nearest habitation in **Ishmar's Valley**, stands Hejel's Bridge. The bridge was first reported by Prince Hejel in the early days of **Vishmir's** reign as speaker and also took its name from him; however, it is likely that the existence of the bridge has been known to the **Syuss** for longer. Indeed, if chroniclers of the desert **Outsiders** are correct, the bridge has existed in its current state since long before even the coming of the last **Silver King** to the **Pinnacles**.

The bridge itself is an impossibility. It is almost a mile long and is reportedly constructed from a single piece of white marble with no joins or seams. Equally impossibly, despite standing exposed in the desert for at least a hundred years and probably much longer, it shows no sign of weathering despite regular sandstorms (if anything, Hejel's Bridge appears to be a focus for such phenomena). Most likely the bridge is a relic of the time of the **Silver Kings**, if such a time truly existed. Whatever river once ran beneath the bridge has long dried to dust and there are no longer any roads from either end. Several expeditions have gone to the bridge looking for treasure, or for knowledge that might show us more of the distant past and the origins of those who created the bridge – but none have returned with any success. Here is just a bridge: immense, timeless and lost.

The **Humble Tower**

The Humble Tower is the least impressive of the towers of the **Adamantine Palace**. The Humble Tower was converted into a prison during the **War of Thorns**. **Ayzalmir** converted it back and, for a time, used it to house the **Taiytakei** ambassadors before the purge following their rumoured involvement in the Disaster of the **Syuss**. The tower is rarely used in current times.

The **Hungry Mountain Plains**

The Hungry Mountain Plains is the common name given to the relatively flat expanse of land that lies between the **Mirror Lakes**, **Gliding Dragon Gorge** and the **Oordish Moors**. The plains are the last relatively productive land before the northern deserts; beyond the banks of the **Sapphire River** the land quickly becomes dry and arid and of little use. Settlements within the plains are small and widespread; there are no cities or even significant towns. Unlike the plains around the **Pinnacles** and further south, the land here is not hugely fertile; much of it is given over to grazing animals, many of which are destined for the eyries of the **Adamantine Palace** and the **Pinnacles**. As the locals say, ‘**Bonjanland** bellies are always full with rice and water. On the Hungry Mountain Plains we may not always eat, but when we do we feast on flesh and blood.’

East of the **Evenspire Road**, the plains are governed from **Bazim Crag**. West of that great highway, the plains are controlled directly from the **Adamantine Palace**.

Ishmar's Valley

Nearly two hundred miles east of **Southwatch**, the desert around the **Last River** gives way to Ishmar's Valley. Here, for a dozen miles to either side of **Lake Taval** and **Lake Eyevan**, the land is a narrow, green strip of vibrant life in the desert – for just at the point when the summer heat begins to grip the land, Ishmar's Valley floods. The industrious settlers of this great oasis take advantage of the regular floods, and covered water-paddies bloom with life and vigour. There are no great towns or cities here, save for the city of **Sand** at the mouth of **Lake Taval**, but every inch of the land is cultivated, and visitors from the south arriving in the valley during the flood often comment on its resemblance to **Bonjanland** a thousand miles away. Even when the waters have receded and the land has baked dry and hard, the waters still teem with fish – indeed, strange as it may seem, dried fish is a staple food out here in the desert.

The people who live here are a strange mixture of folk; mostly descended from desert tribes of **Outsiders** long naturalized to the ways of the dragon-lords, they retain many customs that seem strange to those new to the valley. Nevertheless, despite living under the draconian thumb of a **blood-mage** cabal for nearly a century, they have (unlike their distant relatives in **Bloodsalt**) vigorously embraced the teachings of the **Order of the Dragon**. Since the **War of Thorns** broke the power of the Order in the south, Ishmar's Valley has become a bastion of their remaining strength, as exemplified by **Sand Monastery**. Fortunately it is a milder form of the Order that prospers here, and the people of the valley have little patience for the madness of **Anzuine** and the heresy of the **Great Flame**.

The **King of the Crag**s: (also the **Mountain Throne**)

The Mountain Throne is the youngest and, in some ways, the most mysterious of the **dragon-realms**. The first King of the Crag established himself in the **Worldspine** shortly after the **War of Thorns**, although this was not known until some twenty years later. After the **War of Thorns** and the defeat of the high priest **Anzuine**, some two hundred dragons were found to be missing (mostly from the defeated eyries that had supported the **Order of the Dragon** against **Vishmir**). Many riders and **alchemists** were also found to have gone, along with large stocks of alchemical supplies from the Adamantine Eyries. Almost all the missing riders, dragons and **alchemists** were either natives of the **Silver City** and the **Harvest Throne** or had previously pledged their allegiance there, and all had been led at some stage in the war by Speaker **Voranin**'s favourite general, Prince Valmeyan of the **Pinnacles**. What followed was the **Great Dragon Hunt**, which only ended when the second Valmeyan, now the self-styled King of the Crag, revealed the existence of his new **dragon-realm** within the **Worldspine**.

The reason Prince Valmeyan absconded with half of the dragons from the **Silver City** have never been fully revealed. One can infer that **Anzuine**'s sacking of Valmeyan's home city may have initiated this action, but this is a naïve view; the logistical effort of making such a large number of dragons disappear *and remain tamed* must have required a plan years in the making. Similarly, the early history of the Mountain Throne is shrouded in mystery. By the time the realm revealed itself to Speaker **Vishmir**, the first Prince Valmeyan was dead and had been succeeded by his son, also called Valmeyan. Indeed, all kings of the Mountain Throne take the name of their progenitor, and this merely adds to the confusion.

Unlike other realms, the King of the Crag is known to maintain many small eyries instead of one or two large ones (perhaps an enforced decision due to the dispersed nature of the realm and the lack of any requisite resources for supporting the more traditional large eyries elsewhere). Even now, the Mountain Throne remains something of an enigma, secretive and aloof from the affairs of the other realms. The fact that the Mountain Throne now exerts control over more dragons than any other realm merely adds to the wariness of the other dragon-kings and queens.

Lake Eyevan

Considerably the larger of the two lakes of **Ishmar's Valley**, Lake Eyevan is the beating heart of that great oasis. Although the waters here are colder and the fish not quite so eager, the size and depth of the lake keeps the waters of the whole valley reasonably cool. All the great rivers of the **Worldspine** north of the **Silver River** empty themselves into Lake Eyevan; and at some times of year, when the flow of the **Ashdale** is strong, the **Last River** between Lake Eyevan and **Lake Taval** (a few dozen miles further up the valley) actually flows backwards.

The Lake of Ghosts

At the north-western edge of the **Plains of Ancestors**, as the stone plateau sinks beneath the **Desert of Sand**, you will find the Lake of Ghosts, the shallow expanse of salt water where the **Last River** finally expires. Unlike the **Last River** itself, the water here cannot sustain life. For much of the year nothing lives around the Lake of Ghosts, and the lake sits alone while the waters of the **Last River** finally evaporate to nothing a hundred miles to the north. However, when the spring thaw comes to the **Worldspine** and the waters of the **Last River** rise, fresh water pours into the lake. At this time of year, the shallow valley of the **Last River** springs into life. It is also said that the **Syuss** and the **Outsiders** who live in the **Plains of Ancestors** have mastered the secret of taking water from the lake.

When the Arch-Magus **Aeos** escaped the **Silver City** along with his followers, he was pursued by riders from the **Order of the Dragon**. More than three hundred dragons met in battle over the Lake of Ghosts and many riders perished, their bodies lost forever to the corrosive waters of the lake. Here on the shores, too, it is recorded that **Aeos** himself was murdered on the night after his victory. Among the **Syuss** is it said that the vengeful spirit of the **blood-mage** still haunts the waters, as do the ghosts of all the riders who fell on that day.

Lake Taval

The smaller of the two lakes of **Ishmar's Valley**, Lake Taval is perhaps the more important to those who live here. The warm shallow waters offer up a seemingly endless supply of fish. Despite the hot desert air this shallow lake never dries up, principally because of its connection to the much deeper **Lake Eyevan**.

The Last River

The northernmost of the great rivers to flow out of the **Worldspine**, the Last River emerges from the mountains a hundred miles further north than the **Ashdale**. Framed by the mountains of the **Worldspine** on one side and the great rolling dunes of the **Desert of Sand** on the other, its early course is one of barren and spectacular beauty. As the mountains fall away, however, to be replaced by the **Blackwind Dales**, the river valley widens; for a strip of perhaps a mile on either side, the desert turns green and lush as the river passes the eyrie of **Southwatch**. For another hundred miles the **Desert of Stone** closes in, sometimes pressing right to the river banks, other times broken by small stretches of fertile ground. Life here in the upper reaches of the river seems fierce. Plants cling on to every conceivable foothold, and even when all that surrounds the river are bare baking rocks, tiny lizards still scurry back and forth.

The principle section of the river begins nearly two hundred miles east of **Southwatch**, where the desert gives way to **Ishmar's Valley**, **Lake Taval** and **Lake Eyevan**. The waters here are shallow and teem with fish, while for a dozen miles to either side the land is green and vibrant. All the great rivers of the north save the **Silver River** finally drain into the depths of **Lake Eyevan**, and as the seasonal changes bring rains to the far-off mountains, so the waters of lakes here rise and fall. As the summer heat begins to grip the desert, cooler waters from the **Blackwind Dales** fill the lakes; **Ishmar's Valley** floods, and the Last River has the strength to strike out into the **Desert of Stone** and reach its final destination, the **Lake of Ghosts**. As the waters drop and the late summer heat sets in, the river retreats once more. For much of the year the Last River meanders away into the **Desert of Stone** and simply vanishes into the air.

The Maze

Before the **Fury River** enters **Gliding Dragon Gorge**, at least a dozen (and probably more than twenty) small rivers pour out of the **Worldspine** and the **Purple Spur** into its northern bank. The barren ground is hard rock, sand and dusty earth, and the rivers run through deep valleys and canyons. Towering mesas and pinnacles mingle with narrow slot canyons, rivers, rapids, waterfalls and flash floods. Despite being less than a day on dragon-back from the **City of Dragons**, the Maze is one of the least accessible and most sparsely inhabited areas of the realms.

Due to its remoteness and the difficulty of reaching it on foot, very little is known about the Maze, and this is compounded by the relative barrenness of the land here; for all the rivers that wash through it, the Maze sees no rain. **Ayzalmir** commissioned an aerial map of the region during the last attempt to eliminate the **Order of the Finger**, but this has subsequently been lost. The Maze falls under the direct jurisdiction of the speaker – but in practice it is left to run wild, the only interest ever expressed being an occasional hunting campaign against the remnants of the **Order of the Finger**.

Mehmeth (also Methmeth the Builder)

Although history does not tend to remember the second Speaker of the Realms, Methmeth was arguably the first true speaker. Formerly the King of **Evenspire**, he was the first speaker to be chosen by the other kings and queens according to the **Act of Narammed**, and successfully consolidated **Narammed**'s works. He built the **Azure Tower** and the City Tower and many other works besides. Although the statues you will see as you travel across the realms will be of **Narammed** and **Vishmir**, many of the roads you will use, the lodges where you will rest and even the towns you will visit were built by Methmeth.

The **Mirror Lakes**

Backed against the southern cliffs of the **Purple Spur**, the Mirror Lakes gain their name from their sheltered location and the habitual stillness that gives them a mirror-like appearance. Although the lakes are not particularly big, each one being only a few miles in diameter, they are believed to be bottomless. Those who follow the teachings of **Anzuine** also believe that the lakes mark the spots where the claws of the great dragon held the world while he baked its rocks hard with his breath. Both beliefs are perhaps compounded by the fact that no rivers lead either to or from any of the four lakes, and that there are no waterways at all running from the southern edge of the **Purple Spur** towards the **Fury**, despite the continual rain from the **Diamond Cascade**. The lakes are also very round – one particular myth says that they are perfectly round, but this is quickly disproved by an aerial view of them.

Numerous conflicting stories surround the lakes. Some believe that the waters have magical healing properties (although it is true that the waters are unusually clean and clear by the standards of other lakes and rivers in the realms). Others go so far as to give the waters rejuvenating properties. **Narammed** founded the **Order of the Scales** on the shore of the lake closest to the **Diamond Cascade** in part because of these beliefs. In direct contradiction, some believe the water in the lakes is somehow corrupted, citing the strange absence of any fish or plant-life within the clear water. This myth is again quickly dispelled; wild animals, dragons and half the citizens of the **City of Dragons** all regularly drink the waters with no ill effect.

The lakes are also believed to be inhabited by some monster that rises from time to time to snatch animals from the shore. This seems unlikely, as no such monster has ever been seen. What is true, however, is that within a few fingers depth, the shores of the lake fall vertically away and are as smooth as glass. The **alchemists** have also observed that the height of the lakes does not vary by more than a finger throughout a year, or even across many years of measurement. It seems probable that the lakes are all connected underground and are possibly also linked to much larger reservoirs deep within the **Purple Spur**.

The Moonlight Garden

Atop the stony bluffs overlooking the **Yamuna River** and the **Aardish Caves** lies what has come to be called the Moonlight Garden. Deep within the wilderness of the **Rakshah Forest** and on the edge of the mountain foothills of the **Worldspine**, the Moonlight Garden was discovered by dragon-riders searching for the **Tomb of the Silver King** under the direction of Speaker **Voranin**. Myth had long held that the **Silver King** planned a **Black Mausoleum** to be ‘built in black marble across the great river from the endless caves’; an idea that actually originates from the fanciful writings of one of the earliest **Taiytakei** travellers who visited the **Silver City** before the time of **Narammed**. Nevertheless, **Voranin** sent dragon-riders to scour the great rivers of the realms, and thus the Moonlight Garden was discovered.

The garden is bounded on three sides by marble walls, with the river-facing side left open. The marble appears black but is actually of an unusual colour found nowhere else in the realms – a dark blood red, veined with mustard yellow. The garden-facing inner sides of the wall are fronted by columned arcades, while the wall is interspersed with small domed buildings that may have been viewing areas or watch towers. At the far end, away from the river, there are two grand red sandstone buildings that are open to the sides. Their backs parallel the western and eastern walls, and the two buildings are precise mirror images of each other. The two buildings were once exquisitely decorated, but they have no interior structure and their function is a mystery.

The Moonlight Garden was substantially overgrown when first discovered. However, when what appeared to be ruins of black marble were found nearby, **Voranin**’s riders cleared the ruins using dragon-fire (to this day, the stones in the garden appear black, and it was this blackness that earned the garden its name). However, excavations carried out on behalf of **Vishmir** following the **War of Thorns** found that what had first been seen as black stones nearby were in fact discoloured red and white stones that had been turned black – possibly by the same means as the garden walls! **Vishmir**’s interest moved to the **Aardish Caves** across the river, and the Moonlight Garden has since been left to return to the forest. The garden is still sometimes visited by riders making use of the temporary eyrie above the **Aardish Caves**.

The construction and design of parts of the Moonlight Garden have parallels in the **Pinnacles** and **Outwatch**, possibly indicating a common origin.

Narammed (also Narammed the Magnificent):

Narammed was a priest and an **alchemist**. He came to power within the **Order of the Dragon** at a time when warfare between the realms was particularly fierce, and also when the Order's power had waned to the point that a challenge from an alliance of several kings and queens of the various separate realms seemed inevitable. Narammed became the inadvertent figurehead of a faction within the Order who recognized the inevitable futility of fighting for a central position of authority; this faction saw that the **alchemists** within the Order were responsible for keeping the dragons under control, and yet also understood that the kings and queens who owned and flew the dragons (outside the borders of the **Silver City**) were as irresponsible as children. Above all, Narammed was perhaps the first to recognize that central control of the dragons in a single eyrie (as had been attempted by the **Empire of the Blood-Mages**) was logistically impossible. No single realm could realistically support more than a few hundred dragons; the survival of all realms therefore depended on maintaining a careful balance between them, with dragons distributed across many centres instead of all being controlled from one.

Narammed began moving through the realms, preaching apocalyptic warnings of what he foresaw would come about. As he did, he gathered a following of devoted soldiers who later became the nucleus of the **Adamantine Men**, while on one famous occasion he was supposed to have single-handedly slain a dragon (reputedly the dragon of **Dragondale**). Perhaps because of the emergence of the **Ash Throne** and the crisis it caused, Narammed was successful in uniting the realms around a single idea: replacing the direct (if rather vague and ineffective, and certainly unwelcome) rule by the **Order of the Dragon** from the **Pinnacles** with a single neutral arbiter who would resolve the disputes among the kings and queens, as well as disputes that brought these rulers into conflict with the Order. Although he never quite achieved that ideal in his lifetime, his other achievements – the **Act of Narammed** which sealed his abdication, the creation of the **Adamantine Men**, the end to direct rule by the Order and the severance of the **alchemists** from the priesthood – all contributed to the era of relative peace that has come with the time of the speakers. Narammed founded the **Adamantine Palace** and built the **Tower of Air** and the **Speaker's Tower**. He died in 139, a year after his abdication.

Narammed saw the role of the speaker as a religious one as much as a civic one, and for a time held titles as head of the **Order of the Dragon** as well as Speaker of the Realms. However, the kings and queens of the realms saw matters differently and viewed the **Act of Narammed** as a complete capitulation by the Order that had, until a few years previously, claimed authority over all of them. Despite his initial successes, **Narammed** never quite gripped the realms as history recounts. It is true that he founded the **Adamantine Men**, separated the **Order of the Scales** from the **Order of the Dragon** and moved the centre of power in the realms from the **Pinnacles** to the **City of Dragons** in an attempt to create the illusion of separation between temporal and spiritual power, but that was never his actual intent even though, over the years, the illusion became the reality. The **Act of Narammed** finally brought the harmony he sought, but was also ultimately responsible for the downfall of the Order he sought to preserve and the rise of the enlightened **alchemists**.

Narammed's Bridge

Narammed's Bridge is a small and unassuming bridge that crosses the **Sapphire River** near its source, close to the exit of the **Emerald Cascade** valley. The bridge is a narrow wooden construction, wide enough for men to walk three abreast but too narrow for carts or wagons; the bridge thus sees very little use, with almost all traffic crossing the river at **Samir's Crossing** on the **Evenspire Road**, several miles further downstream. The closest settlement is a small transient hunting community a mile or so upriver on the north bank, right at the entrance to the **Emerald Cascade** valley. Rough dirt roads only suitable for pack animals link the bridge to this settlement and also run from both sides to the **Evenspire Road** at **Samir's Crossing**.

The bridge's main significance is that it (along with the **Sapphire River** during this part of its course) marks the boundary between territory controlled by the speaker from the **Adamantine Palace** and territory under the rule of **Evenspire**. In practice, even this is of little practical significance, as much of the land around the river is barren and of little productive value. The bridge has considerable historical significance, however. It is said that **Narammed** built the bridge himself, unaided. True or not, what certainly *is* true is that the bridge was the site of the first truce between the dragon-kings and queens, from which **Narammed** became the first Speaker of the Realms. The bridge was also the site of the **Act of Narammed** and has historically been used by speakers ever since as a neutral place for parley, when disputes arise between the speaker and the dragon-lords. **Ayzalmir** also called a council to the bridge rather than to the **Adamantine Palace** to declare his purge against the **Taiytakei**. The bridge thus retains an almost spiritual significance among historians of the realms.

There is a temporary eyrie near Narammed's Bridge on the south side of the **Sapphire River**. The eyrie is frequently empty, but occasionally dragons and riders on their way to or from the **City of Dragons** will stop here.

The **Night Watchman**

The common name for the commander of the **Adamantine Guard**. Since the time of **Vishmir** and **Prince Lai**, the Night Watchmen has also sometimes been known as the Scorpion King.

*“I am called what I am called for a reason, rider. When night comes it falls to the **Adamantine Men** to keep watch over the nine realms; and you will not deny that the times are dark.”*

– The Night Watchman

Numenport

A small fishing town at the far end of **Tyan's Dike**. The town owes its existence to the dike and the road that runs along the top of it, which is a much shorter route from the **Bay of Still Water** to **Furymouth** than sailing around the peninsula. The town is primarily known for being the closest settlement to the event known as the **Sacking of Numenport**.

The Oordish Moors

To the east of the realms, stretching away for as far as any dragon can fly, you will find the Oordish Moors. Aside from the sporadic settlements and way stations along **Yinazhin's Way** and the immediate vicinity of **Bazim Crag**, the moors are a wilderness of broken hills and bogs, sparsely populated by primitive tribes of nomadic **Outsiders** who live by herding sheep and sturdy ponies through the hills. The moors are largely unexplored; although dragon-riders have flown far to the east, no one has travelled on foot and returned, and nor is there much reason to do so. Bandits and outlaws flee to the moors and vanish, only to appear years later preying on the travellers of **Yinazhin's Way**.

It is said by some riders that far, far to the east the moors fall away into rolling plains and great forests and as-yet unexplored mountains; a vast empty land ripe for settlement. Thus far, however, the kings and queens of **Bazim Crag** have been content to live as they do, masters of their own domains, roaming and raiding the moors as it pleases them. Other stories speak of ruins among the moors, old and strange; the broken remains of things far out of place that are reminiscent of the tower of **Outwatch** and of **Hejel's Bridge**. Accounts from those few who have travelled by foot into the moors and have learned to live and trade among the **Outsiders** there speak of a rich mythology filled with monsters, unnamed and unspeakable, who dwell in the dark places among the hills and the swamps. Black-scaled, six-legged lizards the size of a horse; gaunt, faceless giants with the power to turn men to stone; white-skinned, bloody-eyed sorcerers of long ago with silver swords and powers over the moon: these are all common stories among the **Outsiders** of the moors. **Hatchling Disease**, perhaps? And could these sorcerers be none other than the **Silver Kings**?

The Order of the Dragon / Dragon-priests:

Like the **blood-mages**, the Order of the Dragon has roots that go far back into history, long before the coming of the **Silver King**. Legend speaks of a time before the coming of the dragons when the world was filled with magic; the time of the **Silver Kings**, if one is inclined to believe in them. The dragons came, though, and in these legends they brought with them a great catastrophe that tore most of the old magic away. This myth appears in different forms around the realms and most likely stems from the common catastrophe that any settlement or community faced when discovered by a wild dragon. It is also clear, however, from the relics in places like **Hejel's Bridge**, the **Moonlight Garden**, **Outwatch** and in particular the **Pinnacles**, that some form of culture with greater insight into the mysteries of the many worlds than our own once flourished in parts of the realms.

The Order of the Dragon started in the **Pinnacles**, long before the coming of the **Silver King**; a time when, according to fragmented historical records, several dragons remained permanently encamped around the **Pinnacles** and dragon attacks were almost a daily routine. In those times, many different sects, cults, individuals, kings and magi all sought any way possible to understand or control the dragons that beset the realms. These many fractured sects most likely came and went, and by the time of the coming of the **Silver King** there were many diverse beliefs that had grown from a hybrid of religious mysticism and scholarly learning.

The arrival of the **Silver King**, however, seems to have polarized these sects into three separate factions: there were those whose interest lay in the greater shape of the cosmos, in the nature of gods and the realms, and who sought an understanding of dragons through their place in the divine order; there were those whose approach was one of learning and understanding, of patiently piecing knowledge together from records and observations of the natural order of things; and finally there were those whose fascination was primarily with the **Silver King** himself and the esoteric powers he exhibited. After the **Silver King** had tamed the last dragon, he effectively created the Order from among these sects, placing within them the secrets needed to keep the dragons from reverting to their wild natures. This then became the central and defining purpose of the Order, and all others were forbidden to have any dealings with the beasts. At a time when dragons were seen as wicked and horrific monsters who might turn at any moment, induction into the Order was seen mostly as a curse. Over the time of the **Silver King** this gradually changed, until the Order of the Dragon were the de facto governors of the realms, subservient only to the will and whimsy of the **Silver King**.

Three substantial schisms have occurred in the order's long history. The first came with the demise of the **Silver King** and the separation of the **blood-mages** from the rest of the Order (although, it must be said, this was by their own hand). At that time the Order had little power or influence outside of its capacity for magic, and with the separation of the **blood-mages** into a cabal of their own, the Order could do little but stand by and watch (or indeed actively support, as many of the Order did in the early years). As the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** grew ever more cruel, however, it was the Order that began to oppose them; it fell to the Order to do this because the secrets of keeping the dragons from reverting to their wild ways from before the **Silver King** were known only to the **alchemists** of the Order and to a handful of the **blood-mages** themselves.

Even at the height of the empire, care for the dragons largely remained in the hands of the Order; thus the overthrow of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** was a simple enough matter when it came. However, rather than marvelling at the popular power and miraculous achievement of the Order as it liberated the people of the **Silver City** from the **blood-mages**, one might wonder instead at the level of disunity that allowed most of the **blood-mages** to escape to the north and the east, along with at least a third of the dragons they used to command. Nevertheless, the removal of the **blood-mages** allowed the Order of the Dragon to rise to the fore as the effective council for leadership for the realms, and endowed it with the considerable popular support that made it the principle force in the realms for another two centuries.

Although the overthrow of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** was the most tumultuous of the three schisms, the second separation was by far the most important. This occurred quietly and peacefully, almost as an act of its own will, under the direction of **Narammed**. As the first speaker of the realms, **Narammed** had promised to give every dragon-lord power and control over their own dragons. He did this by separating the scholars and **alchemists** from the Order and creating a new order: the **Order of the Scales**, who were responsible only to the speaker and not to the high priests of the Order of the Dragon. **Narammed's** intent may have been to create the illusion of separation, but in fact the **alchemists** and scholars within the Order of the Dragon had long chaffed against the strictures imposed by the dominant mysticisms, and the **Order of the Scales** was wildly successful. **Narammed** got his wish; the realms remained at peace, but the effect of what he had done was to remove almost all the alchemical learning and what little knowledge of esoterica and sorcery had not already been lost. It took another hundred years for the realms to understand it, but the power of the Order of the Dragon was broken on that day.

The final schism occurred in the dying days of the Order, and is well documented. With the Order's power in terminal decline, the apocalyptic **Great Flame** faction grew to dominate it (and some would say it still does). The rise of **Anzuine**, the speaker **Voranin**, the **War of Thorns** and the shattering of the Order's remaining influence after their defeat at the hands of **Vishmir** are all well known.

Since the **War of Thorns**, the influence of the Order of the Dragon has been almost extinguished; it now serves purposes that are more ceremonial than practical. The order still wields considerable influence in the **Silver City** and the **Pinnacles**, as well as in **Sand** and **Ishmar's Valley**, but elsewhere it is often seen as little more than a collection of old men who talk to ghosts.

The **Order of the Finger**

Rooted in the **Maze** and **Gliding Dragon Gorge**, the Order of the Finger was a direct result of Speaker **Voranin's** attempts to raise money from the trade carried on between **Furymouth** and the central realms. It is probable that the Order received considerable early support from King Gorin of **Furymouth**. Speaker **Vishmir** later reversed this support and tried to wipe the Order out, thus completing their transition from sponsored smugglers to vicious river pirates.

Today, the **Order of the Finger** continues to haunt the upper reaches of the **Fury River**. They are particularly active amid the canyons and gorges of its tributaries in the **Maze**, where they are almost immune from attack except by a concerted effort by dragon-riders. Speaker **Ayzalmir** was the last speaker to attempt such a purge, and under his attentions pirate attacks in the **Maze** dwindled, falling almost to nothing elsewhere along the river. In more recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of the Order, and sightings have been reported as far downriver as **Arys Crossing**. Encounters with the Order of the Finger tend to be an unpleasant affair. Not content with mere theft of goods and coin, they routinely mutilate their victims by cutting off any fingers carrying a ring. For this reason, any travellers using the more dangerous reaches of the river are advised to remove such items and wear them on chains around their neck.

The **Order of the Scales / Alchemists**:

The Order of the Scales was created by **Narammed** in the early years of his reign as speaker as an offshoot of the **Order of the Dragon**. The primary purpose of the Order of the Scales was to ensure *under all circumstances* that the dragons tamed by the **Silver King** never reverted to their wild nature. The Order answers to the Grand Master Alchemist, who in turn answers only to the Speaker of the Realms.

Narammed's initial purpose with the Order of the Scales was to create what appeared to be an independent order who would be entirely neutral in their dealings with the increasingly powerful dragon-kings and queens, and who would answer only to an independent arbiter (the Speaker of the Realms) for all disputes. Although **Narammed**'s initial belief was that his new order would remain largely subservient to the **Order of the Dragon**, this intent was undermined both from within and from outside. The Order of the Scales eventually became exactly what **Narammed** had declared it would be: an order with no ties to any one realm, whose sole duty was the control and management of dragons both in times of war and in times of peace.

The subsequent success of the Order of the Scales rests on the essential need for co-operation between the **alchemists** of the Order assigned to each eyrie and the dragon-kings and queens: the **alchemists** understand that no matter what else might happen, not one dragon can be allowed to escape their grasp; the dragon-kings and queens, meanwhile, understand that without the **alchemists**' support, the dragons in their eyries will no longer be theirs to command and will most likely destroy them. It is a delicate balance and often fraught, but has survived the test of time, most notably during the **War of Thorns** when dragons on both sides were often kept docile by the same **alchemists**. In return for the freedom to work with every dragon in every eyrie, the Order takes no interest in the politics of the realms, concentrating purely on scholarly pursuits.

The most widely known members of the order are the travelling **alchemists**. These are junior **alchemists** who have not yet been assigned a position within an eyrie or at the **Palace of Alchemy**; they travel the realms in search of knowledge, passing on what teaching they can wherever they go. For the most part, these junior **alchemists** are dispatched by the Order with specific instructions to acquire certain ingredients from certain known parts of the realms. However, it is not uncommon for a junior **alchemist** to be travelling with no particular objective in mind other than to gain a greater understanding of the realms and its peoples – in future, it is to be hoped, with this document as their aid! Junior **alchemists** can spend as long as a decade travelling the realms before being assigned to an eyrie. Once allocated to a specific dragon-lord, an **alchemist** will never leave that realm again without the specific order of the dragon-lord they serve, unless it is to return to the **Palace of Alchemy** to finish their lives in the service of the Order. The same is true of the other servants of the Order, the **Scales**.

The Order is governed from the **Palace of Alchemy** in the **City of Dragons**, under the watchful eye of the Speaker of the Realms.

Outsider

The term Outsider is generally used to refer to people who are not sworn servant to one of the dragon-lords. Outsiders are particularly common in the valleys of the **Worldspine** and the **Raksheh Forest**, but the term applies equally to the nomadic tribes of the northern deserts and the wild men in the far east of the **Oordish Moors**. Despite its current meaning, the term was in use long before the coming of the **Silver King**, having its origins in a time when anyone who arrived from the outside at one of the many hidden settlements was viewed with deep suspicion and the fear that a dragon may have followed them. It is a common (although rather unlikely) story that dragons were once capable of speaking to humans, and could use them in this way to find these hidden places. Once the outsider had gained entrance, the dragon would appear and feast on the hapless inhabitants.

Outwatch

Nothing in the realms quite prepares one for the sight of the oasis of Outwatch. Well over a hundred miles north of **Ishmar's Valley**, a single tower twice as tall again as the **Tower of Air** and many times as massive rises up atop a cliff running across the desert as far as the eye can see. Although deep in the **Desert of Sand**, there is water here: an underground river running all the way from the **Worldspine** emerges from a second fault in the earth a dozen miles to the north. It runs under the surface, feeding the farms and fields that sit atop the bluffs of Outwatch itself before pouring through the system of caves that lie under the great tower, finally breaking the surface at the bottom and emptying itself into a large lake that is always cool and fresh, even in the summer heat of the desert. This oasis was known even in the time of the **blood-mages**, as were several others across the northern reaches of the **Desert of Stone** (perhaps fed by the same underground flow). It was here that one group of **blood-mages** came with their dragons after the fall of **Aeos**. Even though Outwatch is many miles across, everything here is now dedicated to dragons; food for the eyrie's human inhabitants is mostly brought in from **Sand** and other parts of **Ishmar's Valley**. Indeed, it has been known for the farmers of Outwatch to starve at the expense of the cattle they raise to feed the dragons that dwell here, for Outwatch is by some margin the largest single eyrie in all of the realms; capable of supporting more than two hundred dragons, it is the pride of the **Throne of Sand and Stone**. There is little else here: the lake, a huge expanse of fertile grassland sat in the middle of the desert sands, vast herds of grazing buffalo, the men who tend them and, of course, the tower itself.

Much of the function of the eyrie is carried out underground, in the cool damp caves beneath the tower. A single pit descends deep into the ground here with caves and tunnels (both natural and man-made) running in all directions, many of them leading out onto the face of the cliff. The tower itself is reserved for the eyrie-master, his **alchemists** and staff, a small garrison of soldiers and with plenty of space left for visiting royalty (the kings and queens of the desert, it seems, prefer to host their guests here rather than in the city of **Sand**, perhaps to remind them of the power they hold). The tower itself is clearly a relic of another time. Its construction defies understanding, having more in common with **Hejel's Bridge** than with the more mundane **Adamantine Palace**. It is a construct of sinuous curves, of arches and flying buttresses that are reminiscent of some parts of the **Pinnacles**. The lower hall is a cavernous space large enough for a dragon to stand erect (which is impressive, until a visitor comes to understand the number of stairs they must ascend). It is also, as many who come here note, oppressively dark. And here lies the greatest mystery of the tower of Outwatch: for all its impressive appearance, the amenities that render it habitable – stairs and windows and other such trivia – have all been built on since the **blood-mages** first came. What they originally found, it seems, was merely a shell – but a shell of what? It seems that the answer to this enigma died long ago, together with the tower's mysterious architects.

The Palace of Alchemy

The Palace of Alchemy was originally constructed as a fortress in the time of the **Silver King**, along with an enclosure wall to defend the banks of the **Mirror Lakes** against feral tribes from the east. The fortress had at its centre a cylindrical tower set beside a sizeable barracks and arsenal comprising a moated square with round bastions at each corner and at the centre of the south and east walls. Defensive towers flanked narrow gates in the south and east walls, and at the centre of this complex stood a keep – the High Tower (fifteen strides in diameter and thirty strides high). During the time of the **Silver King**, the fortress was little more than an outpost, and several similar structures can be found dotted around the realms.

In the diaspora that came with the death of the **Silver King** and the time of the **blood-mages**, the fortress became a local stronghold, one of several defending the nearby **Glass Cathedral**. After the overthrow of the **blood-mages** and the rise of the **Order of the Dragon**, the palace was renovated and soon gained a dual function; in addition to its protective role, it became residence to a dragon-lord dynasty. In 99, **Narammed** was born in the palace. A few years later, the fortress and the dynasty that inhabited it were largely destroyed by an attack across the **Purple Spur** by dragons from **Gardin's Rock**.

For nearly twenty years the ruin was left abandoned, until **Narammed** returned to the place of his birth in 124, living in part of the fortress until construction of the **Tower of Air** was completed in 127. Over these years the fortress was enlarged and beautified. In 137, as part of the **Act of Narammed** and the creation of the new **Order of the Scales**, the embryonic palace was handed to the new order of **alchemists**. Beginning in 146, the Order began to remove the keep and build what has long now been the foremost palace of learning in the realms. The new plan consisted of a square courtyard, the main wing facing out across the **Mirror Lakes** and separated by a central staircase, with a further two wings – one on each side. In 164, a second small palace was built to the north, and included several large cellars lined with iron bars for housing hatching dragons.

The Palace of Alchemists grew steadily, if erratically, over the next decades; however, it was largely destroyed by fire during the **War of Thorns**, remaining abandoned until **Vishmir** took control of the realms in 227. During his reign the **alchemists** returned, and their new grand master Kyamberan began his grand design: to remove all remnants of the original fortress, to greatly increase the palace area and to create a grand school of alchemy, where promising children from poor families would be schooled to become the next generation of **alchemists**. More than a quarter of a mile long and one hundred feet wide, this huge addition was built along the banks of the **Mirror Lakes**; it remains the longest building of its kind in the realms. Kyamberan, a promoter of the arts, invited hundreds of artists and craftsmen to live and work on the palace's lower floors, and this tradition continues to this day.

In 259, following his return from an extended tour of the realms, the now ageing Kyamberan began a final phase of construction which saw the decoration of the King's Pavilion, the Council Hall, a new gallery to parallel the Small Gallery, and a chapel (although, it should be noted that since its foundation the palace had scrupulously avoided any hint of any religious overtones; the chapel is now the one exception to that, but the art that decorates the rest of the palace is strictly secular). Kyamberan himself redesigned the lake garden in the mountain style and personally oversaw the construction and decoration of the Gallery of **Vishmir**. Kyamberan never saw his project complete; he died suddenly at the age of eighty two during construction of the new northern wing (265-280). Nevertheless, it was completed to his plan: the uncompromising balustrade along its distinctive flat roof along with the rhythmical paired columns (which form a shadowed colonnade with a central pedimented triumphal arch entrance into the eastern wing) are two of the **City of Dragon's** most notable sights.

Despite all this, the remains of the original fortress are still clearly to be found within the palace.

The Palace of Paths

The Palace of Paths is built on a flat-topped hill in the centre of the **Blackwind Dales**, overlooking both the **Ashdale River** to the north and the **Blackwind River** to the south. Unlike other fortresses and palaces across the realms, the Palace of Paths did not grow up around an existing system of caves or tunnels, and neither was it built to rule an existing settlement. Indeed, when construction first began, the **Blackwind Dales** were largely an empty wilderness – a land nominally divided between the lords of **Outwatch** and **Gardin's Rock**, but to all intents and purposes ignored by both. The Palace of Paths was intended as a purpose-built eyrie and fortress that would act as a buffer between the populous realms south of the **Purple Spur** and the powerful (in terms of dragons) but sparse threat from the northern **blood-mage** realms. Some historians allege that the fortress was never even meant to be built; that just the beginnings of it were expected to draw the **blood-mages** out of the desert eyries, precipitating a war that would unite the increasingly discordant voices of the southern realms and eradicate the **blood-mage** menace once and for all. It is not possible to say whether this is truth or speculation – but if it is the truth, it would be hard to find from anywhere else in history a stratagem that backfired more completely and spectacularly.

The Palace of Paths was begun in the year 84, forty years before the crowning of **Narammed** as the first Speaker of the Realms. Thousands of men travelled in great convoys along what is now the **Evenspire Road** escorted by hundreds of dragons. An area of roughly three acres was levelled some fifty strides below the original peak of the hill. Massive trenches were dug and filled with stone and rubble to form the footings of the cascading curtain walls that ultimately gave the Palace of Paths its name. A fifteen kilometre tamped-earth ramp was built to transport marble and materials to the construction site from the valley of the **Blackwind River**, while harnessed dragons pulled the blocks used for the walls on specially constructed wagons and raised the blocks into their desired positions. Water was drawn from both the **Blackwind** and **Ashdale** rivers by a series of rope and bucket mechanisms and piped into three vast cisterns at the top of the hill, from where it was then piped around the complex (these pumps and cisterns still exist and operate today). Laid end to end, the layered curtain walls would stretch for around a dozen miles, and eventually took roughly twelve years to complete.

The remaining parts of the palace (the central fortified palace, barracks, eyrie and gatehouses) took an additional decade, while the tunnel complex dug deep into the hills (believed to reach as low as the level of the **Blackwind**, the higher of the two nearby rivers) took another decade still. Since the Palace of Paths was built in stages, discrepancies exist in completion dates due to differing opinions on 'completion'. For example, the fortress, barracks and eyrie were essentially complete by 101, and were a permanent home to a hundred dragons and a thousand soldiers even while work continued on the rest of the complex. These soldiers were modelled on the palace guards of the **Pinnacles** but were armoured in dragon-scale and trained specifically in techniques for fighting against dragons. It is very likely that these soldiers formed the nucleus of **Narammed's Adamantine Men**, and certainly of **Vishmir's** later re-casting of them (although the **Adamantine Men** do not acknowledge this).

The palace was a great success in one respect; it is certainly the largest and most impressive fortification anywhere within the realms. However, construction of the fortress was disastrous for the **Order of the Dragon** in two ways. The first was the sheer scale of the enterprise: estimates of the cost of construction vary, but the total cost of building the Palace of Paths has been estimated to be equivalent to the current entire annual revenue of **Furymouth**, the **Silver City** and the **City of Dragons** combined. Given the smaller scale of the realms prior to the time of the speakers and the substantially lower population available for taxation, the costs of building the greatest fortress on earth were surely crippling, and this is borne out in the records of the time. However, even this pales beside Prince Jahan's defection from the **Order of the Dragon**, complete with fortress, army and an eyrie full of dragons. By declaring **Evenspire** as a new and independent realm (doubtless heavily

encouraged and supported by the very northern realms against whom he was supposed to guard), Prince Jahan precipitated the crisis that led to **Narammed**, the first speakers, the formation of the **Adamantine Men** and the separation of the **Order of the Scales** and the **Order of the Dragon**. It could also be argued that by doing this, he sowed the seeds of the **War of Thorns** and the complete collapse of the **Order of the Dragon** itself.

The Palace of Paths was constructed using materials from all over the realms, and it is estimated that over one thousand dragons were used to transport building materials, workers, foodstuff and other supplies while also providing a constant watch over its construction. Despite the grim functional nature of most of the palace, Prince Jahan's throne room is a marvel equal to anything south of the **Purple Spur** (and possibly explains some of the colossal expense of the project). There is local translucent white marble, but also jasper from the **Oordish Moors** and jade and crystal from the **Taiytakei** traders of **Furymouth** (including an entire throne carved from a single piece of jade). There is turquoise from the **Rakshah Forest**, lapis lazuli from **Three Rivers**, sapphires from the **Desert of Stone** and carnelian from the **Worldspine**. In all, twenty eight types of precious and semi-precious stones are inlaid into the white marble of the palace royal chambers. To anyone with a knowledge of where these stones can be found, it is clear that much of this wealth was supplied from the northern realms (presumably in secret), and thus one may assume that Prince Jahan's defection was not a moment of impulse but the result of many years of careful manipulations. Particularly magnificent is the Gallery of Glass linking the king and queen's apartments, featuring some of the finest glass in the realms (courtesy of the **Taiytakei**) and later copied by speaker **Ayzalmir** in the **Adamantine Palace**.

Following the rise of **Narammed**, Prince Jahan continued to work on the palace until his death in 145, with construction financed primarily by the succession of his own brother **Mehmeth** as the second speaker following **Narammed**. The principle additions in this time are the two immense watchtowers, one at either end of the palace, which look out over the **Blackwind River** to the south and the **Ashdale** to the north. Following Jahan's death, and devoid of almost any useful incomes, the later kings and queens of the **Ash Throne** struggled to afford the upkeep of such a vast fortress, and several parts have since fallen into disrepair. Works were begun to rectify this under Speaker **Voranin** before the realms were swept into the **War of Thorns**; now, with Iyanza as the third speaker from the **Blackwind Dales**, the fortress is undergoing further renovations.

The Palace of Pleasure

Unlike the **Fortress of Watchfulness**, the tunnels and caves underneath the Palace of Pleasure are purported to be limited in extent and do not reach to the ground below. The Palace of Pleasure is the smallest of the three peaks. It is accessible only by dragon and is the very private inner sanctum of the kings and queens of the **Harvest Throne**. Of the three peaks, it is the only one that does not show any relics of the **Silver King** and his works, or of the other **Silver Kings** before him.

The palace was built by order of the **blood-mages** immediately after the death of the **Silver King**. At this time, the **Pinnacles** were the centre of power within the realms, with all other settlements operating as vassal states. Following the overthrow of the **Silver King**, the **blood-mages** feared a backlash (a fear that was eventually proven to be well-founded) and set about systematically enforcing their domination of all other eyries. In some places, particularly the south and east, their approach was one of wholesale destruction and pillage. A place was needed to store this plunder, particularly that of the human variety, and thus the Palace of Pleasure was born.

The first palace was built in a hurry and with no great concern for aesthetics, being largely a convenient place to store captives. The slaves held here had short and violent lives, typically being forced to serve the pleasure of the **blood-mages** for a few months before being ritually slaughtered in one of the frequent power-rituals conducted here. It is said that the spirits of those murdered men and women haunt the place, that some parts of it are cursed and that in places, the walls still run with fresh blood.

Following the overthrow of the **blood-mages** by the **Order of the Dragon**, the **Pinnacles** remained the centre of power within the realms until the coming of **Narammed** and the first speakers of the **Adamantine Palace**. Even now, the realm of the **Harvest Throne** remains one of the richest, second perhaps to **Furymouth** in terms of wealth, but with a population that may exceed all the other realms put together. Much of this wealth has made its way to the Palace of Pleasure, which also serves as a treasury and repository for the kings and queens of the **Pinnacles**.

Most of the current palace was erected during the early years of the speakers. The exterior design is functional but not exceptional, reflecting the difficulties of building something on the top of a sheer-walled monolith nearly a mile high. During the **War of Thorns**, dragon attacks damaged and destroyed several parts of the palace, and some scars of this time can still be seen.

From the air, three entrance portals are visible, laden with statues and statuettes, many of which date back to the plunderings of the **blood-mages**. The central entrance is surmounted by a rose window, framed in an arch itself decorated with statuary, and depicting the speaker Hiastamir – the only Speaker of the Realms ever to have also ruled the **Pinnacles**. Above the palace rises an elegant lead-covered timber bell tower some sixty strides tall; there are no other features of particular note.

The inside of the palace is largely unknown outside the ruling family of the **Pinnacles**. Many fine tapestries of rare magnificence are known to hang on the walls, but what they depict is not recorded. The treasury, probably the most substantial collection of wealth in the realms, doubtless includes many precious objects that are currently believed lost. Certainly among them is the first dragon-cauldron, a revered relic among the **alchemists**. The cauldron is the predecessor to the current cauldron that contains the oil with which Grand Master **alchemists** are anointed, and its presence in the treasury of the **Pinnacles** is a cause of some friction between the **Order of the Scales** and the **Harvest Throne**. Little else is known of the palace. On rare occasions, visitors to the **Pinnacles** are taken blindfolded across to the palace from the **Fortress of Watchfulness** and escorted inside. Word of what they have found there is scant, feeding wild speculation that ranges from mundane orgies of debauchery and excess, through any number of miraculous relics of the **Silver Kings**, to the discovery that the palace and its treasury are not what they seem and in fact contain nothing at all. The truth, no doubt, is not reflected in any of these myths.

Arch-Magus **Pantatyr**:

The first Arch-Magus of the **blood-mages**, Pantatyr is reputed to be the one who struck the blow that felled the **Silver King**. Whether this is intended to mean a physical blow, an act of sorcery or simply that Pantatyr was the mastermind behind some sort of rebellion is unclear. What is known, however, is that Pantatyr emerged from the **Pinnacles** at the head of a cabal of **blood-mages** to announce that the **Silver King** was no more, and then immediately declared an empire that became known as the **Empire of the Blood-Mages**. Pantatyr seems to have taken great care to remove all traces of the **Silver King** from the **Pinnacles**, and much was destroyed during the first few months of **Pantatyr**'s reign (including many priceless written records that may have shed light on the **Silver King**'s nature). **Pantatyr** even removed the **Adamantine Spear** and had it enshrined in the **Glass Cathedral**, at the time about as far away from the **Pinnacles** as could be.

Under the leadership of their Arch-Magus, the **blood-mages** embarked on a campaign of aggressive expansion and building. Despite the repellent blood-rites that became enshrined within Pantatyr's rule, the first Arch-Magus must be acknowledged some credit for the works carried out in the **Silver City** and the realms at large. Although still embryonic at the time of his demise from natural causes, the first foundations of the realms as we know them were laid under his direction.

The Paratheus

The most significant **Taiytakei** structures found in the realms are often mistaken by those around them for temples. This, however, is not the case. While these so-called temples do serve a quasi-spiritual function, **Taiytakei** religion is a complex affair founded on mathematics, geometry and above all astronomy, and their temples are as much places of learning and science as they are of mysticism. The most magnificent of all of the **Taiytakei** ‘temples’ is the Paratheus of **Furymouth** (in fact, Paratheus is simply the Taiytakei term for a centre of spiritual and scientific learning).

The first Paratheus was originally designed and built in the years before the coming of **Narammed**. The **Taiytakei** themselves demolished the structure in 137 and set about building a much more significant palace in or around 152. This second Paratheus was stripped of everything of value in 187 after the **Sacking of Numenport** and fell into ruin. A third building was erected on the site in 212, but this too was eventually destroyed, this time in **Ayzalmir**’s purge of 285 (it should be noted that aside from this setback, the **Taiytakei** of **Furymouth** escaped **Ayzalmir**’s purge largely unscathed, in stark contrast to those living in the **City of Dragons** and elsewhere).

The construction of the current (fourth) Paratheus was started in 291. Materials were brought from all corners of the realms as well as across the sea to be used in the construction of this magnificent building. The Paratheus was opened five years later, in 296. The Paratheus has a diameter of forty strides, a height of nearly sixty and is covered with a large dome. It is said that an even larger and more magnificent structure was planned, but that this would have overshadowed even the **Veid Palace** and thus met with disapproval from the dragon-lords. If this is true, a visit to the homeland of the **Taiytakei**, if unlikely, remains a mouth-watering prospect for any **alchemist** or student of science.

Besides the astronomical subjects of the mosaics used to decorate the interior surfaces, the lords of **Furymouth** were also used as subjects. One mosaic depicts **Vishmir** with the sun, moon and stars sitting at his sides. Another mosaic shows him sitting on a throne with dragons kneeling before him. There are also mosaic portraits of other members of the ruling family.

The Paratheus serves many purposes, most of which are closed to those not of **Taiytakei** origin. However, the building is open on some days as a centre of knowledge and learning (and, in effect, a diplomatic mission). The experience on simply entering the main room through the Sailor’s Gate is staggering, the heart of the structure immediately presenting itself in full, exposing its width and height up to the vertex of the huge dome. This phenomenon, which the **Taiytakei** say was intended by its architects, is produced by the spatial structure, the apparent way the dome floats above the top of its columns, and by the bewildering direct and indirect lighting effects. It is a common enough event for first-time visitors to the Paratheus to crane their necks so far back in an effort to look up that they topple over; the **Taiytakei** employ sharp-witted ‘Pillow Boys’ to cater for such visitors, although every ‘save’ is expected to be accompanied by a generous tip.

The Pinnacles

Whatever wonders exist within the realms, the greatest is surely the wonder of the Pinnacles. Indeed, if there was one place I would advise every **alchemist** to visit after the **City of Dragons** itself, it would be here (followed by **Outwatch**, **Furymouth**, **Bloodsalt** and **Bazim Crag**). The Pinnacles are, after all, where the **dragon-realms** were born. While men have long lived and even thrived in the deserts, the **Oordish Moors** and the mountains of the **Worldspine**, they have lived there little better than animals in face of the constant threat of dragon-attack. Only in a few places of shelter were we able to live in a way that we would recognize as civilized men: in the **Raksheh Forest** around the **Aardish Caves**, in the **Valley of Alchemists** in the **Worldspine** and here in the Pinnacles, the greatest of our ancient fortresses against the dragons.

Between the monolithic Pinnacles themselves lies the **Silver City**, the oldest city in the realms, grown up under the guidance of the **Silver King** and home to many wonders in its own right. Beside the city lie the sprawling fields of the **Harvest Throne**'s eyrie, filled with dragons, but the real wonders here are the Pinnacles themselves: three monoliths of stone around a mile high, each one riddled with caves and tunnels from top to bottom and capped with its own palace. **The Fortress of Watchfulness**, the **Temple of Tranquillity** and the **Palace of Pleasure** are names known to all across the realms, whoever they may be. It was to these three peaks that the **Silver King** made himself known, and from these spires that the dragons were tamed. It was in the throne room of the **Fortress of Watchfulness** that the **blood-mages** finally turned their knives on the **Silver King** and struck him down; it was in these halls that the first priests of the **Order of the Dragon** hammered out their creed; and it was in these tunnels and corridors that the **blood-mages**, in turn, met their fate at the hands of these new and vibrant holy men.

The **Fortress of Watchfulness** is the most massive of the three peaks, if not quite the tallest, and the palace built on its crown is large enough to hold a very small eyrie. The **Silver King** made this his palace, and this tradition has been carried on by the subsequent kings and queens of the Pinnacles. Visitors to the three mountains will come here first, and most will never see the other peaks. The fortress is riddled with tunnels and chambers and holds many wonders (not the greatest but certainly the best known being the **Reflecting Garden**) that are clearly relics of an age where magicians far greater than any **alchemist** or **blood-mage** walked these lands. The majority of these relics are hidden away, out of sight of even the most prestigious visitor, jealously guarded by the kings and queens that rule over the **Harvest Throne**. This fortress is their palace, their citadel and the seat of their power. It is apparently possible to enter the fortress from tunnels that run under the **Silver City** in several places, and it is also said to be possible to move through these tunnels from the top of the Fortress to the top of the **Temple of Tranquillity** without ever emerging into the open air.

The **Palace of Pleasure** is the smallest of the three peaks. The tunnels and caves underneath the palace are purported to be limited in extent and do not reach to the ground below. The **Palace of Pleasure** is accessible only by dragon and is the very private inner sanctum of the kings and queens of the **Harvest Throne**.

The last and even more mysterious peak is capped by the **Temple of Tranquillity**. Very little exists above the surface on this peak and the chambers underground are relatively limited in extent. The Temple is inhabited and run by priests of the **Order of the Dragon**. While it is not the purpose of this guide to cast aspersions, it is noted that the priests of this temple have on several occasions over the past hundred years been accused of practising **blood-magic**, and were executed to a man by Queen Sakabia during the reign of Speaker **Ayzalmir** (it was a popular time for purges). Tiny unlit tunnels are said to run all the way to the bottom of this peak and under the **Silver City**; however, the temple peak is best known for being home to the **Great Chasm**.

Plags Bay

Plags Bay is a small town nestled beside the **Fury River**. Otherwise unremarkable, it marks the furthest point upriver where the north bank can be reached by road; thus nearly all trade traffic between **Furymouth** and the northern realms travels through Plags Bay. Unfortunately, the town is too small to take much advantage of this due to the constraints of the terrain, and now functions largely as a poor relation to **Watersgate**, built almost directly above on the **Hungry Mountain Plains**.

The Plains of Ancestors

North of the **Sapphire River**, the **Hungry Mountain Plains** quickly turns into desert. Plains-grass and soil give way to pale sand and dark stone. These are the Plains of Ancestors, the beginnings of the **Desert of Stone**. The plains are in fact anything but, having more in common with the dead canyons of the **Maze**. Pillars and cliffs of hard dark rock emerge from a maze of wide sandy valleys to reach heights of as much as a mile until the plateau flattens and sinks below the sand around the shores of the **Lake of Ghosts**. Narrow canyons and fissures cut deep into the stone plateau, many concealing ancient ruins built by the peoples of the desert long before the coming of the **Silver King**. **Outsider** tribes still live among the plains and their large goat-hair tents can often be seen from above.

The Plains of Ancestors were largely unknown during the reign of the **Silver King** (as was everything north of the **Purple Spur**), but the plains acquired a special significance to the **blood-mages** that followed – one that is not clear to those outside their order. It was to here that the **blood-mages** fled after being overthrown, and here that the descendants of one faction, the **Syuss**, remain, jealously guarding the hidden eyrie of **Gardin's Rock**.

Prince Lai

Prince Lai was **Vishmir**'s cousin and marshal of his dragons during the **War of Thorns**. Following **Vishmir**'s victory, Prince Lai wrote the *Principles of Dragon-War*, a lengthy pamphlet describing many different formations for taking dragons into battle, along with their different uses. As a consequence of this and of his association with **Vishmir**, *Principles* is now seen as the foremost authority on dragon warfare; this despite that fact that Lai was repeatedly defeated by **Anzuine**'s own marshal Valmeyan (later the first **King of the Crag**), and that he was not even present for **Vishmir**'s ultimate victory. After the **War of Thorns**, Prince Lai dedicated much of his time to weaponry and to refining his formations. He is credited with being the first to mount scorpions on the backs of dragons themselves (undeniably a significant contribution to **Vishmir**'s success in the war) and with the design of several stone-throwing devices, at least one of which is reputed to have accidentally killed a dragon outright in a single shot. The current mock battles staged on the **Hungry Mountain Plains** as each speaker hands over to the next also have their origins in the 'games' of war Prince Lai used to refine his formations.

Purkan

Sitting on the northern edge of **Bonjanland**, Purkan is one of only two significant settlements in the thousand miles between **Arys Crossing** and **Furymouth** itself (the other being the mud-hole of **Farakkan**). Although governed from **Three Rivers**, Purkan owes most of its character to the culture of the local natives of **Bonjanland**. The town is primarily one large marketplace, exchanging goods from up and down the **Fury** and **Esta** rivers. However, according to local beliefs, the **Silver King** was in fact a manifestation of the divine waters of the **Fury**, and those near **Purkan** are apparently particularly holy since this is where he supposedly emerged. People travel hundred of miles across **Bonjanland** to scatter ashes and, on occasion, the partially embalmed remains of relatives and to bathe in the waters here. Like nearly all of **Bonjanland** the area is one big, flat expanse; when rainstorms hit, flooding is guaranteed, and it is not uncommon after such an event to find the decomposing remains of those consigned to the river lying in the streets. The locals consider these bodies to have been cursed and are extremely reluctant to touch them; this contributes to both the unique smell of the town and probably also to the regular epidemics of disease that afflict Purkan.

Despite these quirks, there is a reason why people come to Purkan: the surrounding region is famous for its date juice and the molasses that is also made from the juice of this fruit. Passing along the **Fury**, one cannot help but notice the local farmers trimming date trees and tending their crops. It is estimated that there are some ten thousand date trees in the district that produce over one hundred tons of molasses a year, much of which is shipped down the river to **Furymouth** and sold on to the **Taiytakei**.

Purkan is the second-largest settlement under the rule of the **River Throne**. It has many similarities to the town of **Farakkan** some two hundred miles further down the **Fury** river valley. However, it is marginally larger and is sufficiently elevated from the flood-plains to the south to have a significant permanent eyrie. There are many temples and shrines in the town dedicated to the river and various supposed river spirits.

The **Purple Spur**

The Purple Spur is generally thought of as an extension of the **Worldspine** mountain range. The spur itself is most well known for the **Great Cliff** on its northern side, the waterfalls of the **Diamond, Sapphire and Emerald Cascades**, and for overlooking the **City of Dragons**, the **Mirror Lakes** and the **Adamantine Palace**. The spur is composed principally of two smaller ranges, the **Great Cliff** and the South Cliff ranges. Both north and south, the spur is bounded by sheer, almost vertical rock faces that are nearly a mile high on the southern side and considerably more on the northern. These walls come together near the **Emerald Cascade** on the eastern side overlooking **Narammed's Bridge**. To the west, the cliffs fall away into a jumble of low crags and deep valleys overlooking the **Maze**. Between the two cliffs and riding above them lie the towering peaks of the Purple Spur. The spur has a marked linear depression in the middle that runs right from the **Emerald Cascade** towards the **Worldspine**. The south and east cliffs of the spur have been quite well explored and contain several large and extensive cave systems.

Very little is known about the interior of the spur. The natural walls around it have inhibited any settlement or even exploration, except by dragon-riders usually more interested in exploration of a different nature. The climate is, as would be expected, cold and similar to that of the southern **Worldspine**. Like the **Worldspine**, the lower valleys are forested. Several ribbon-like lakes have been reported. A recent expedition in 312 reported no sign of large animals of any sort.

According to much older expeditions, the Purple Spur is home to uncivilized giants, dressed in skins and eating raw meat. These giants vary with account, from being half as high again as a man to being as tall as a dragon. Accounts from even earlier times recall that the **Silver King** instructed that no dragon might cross the cliffs of the Purple Spur, and that any who did were turned instantly to dust (along with their rider, if they were unfortunate enough to have one). Whatever curse this may have been is now long gone, apparently taking any giants with it, and the Purple Spur serves now as a playground for the dragon-riders of the **Adamantine Palace**.

The Raksheh Forest

The Raksheh Forest is an expanse of largely unbroken forest that occupies the south-west corner of the realms. The forest stretches over several hundred miles from **Drotan's Top** and the **Gliding Dragon Gorge** in the north to the **Sea of Storms** in the south. Its east-west borders are less sharply defined; in the west, the forest merges with the forested valleys of the **Worldspine**, while in the east the wooded areas peter out more gradually into the plains of the **Harvest Throne** and **Bonjanland**. It is the largest area of surviving forest in the known realms, larger even than the great forests east of the **Oordish Moors**. Altitude and climatic conditions vary widely across the forest, which exhibits several distinct regions. A number of large rivers emerge from the **Worldspine** into the forest; these all ultimately drain into the **Yamuna River** which in turn merges with the **Fury** close to **Farakkan**. In addition, numerous large round lakes dot the more mountainous western fringe of the forest. Several deep gorges and some spectacular waterfalls have been reported by dragon-riders who have ventured to cross the forest, and a small number of known open spaces are regularly used as stopping points by riders wishing to move around the realms without attracting attention. The best known of these temporary eyries are those around the **Aardish Caves**.

The forest mostly consists of pines and firs in the north and west, giving way to more broadleaf trees in the east and south. With the exception of the rather arid northern section close to **Drotan's Top**, the forest also has the distinction of being one of the wettest places in the realms, surpassed only by the southern reaches of the **Worldspine** itself. Before the coming of the **Silver King**, the forest successfully sheltered men from the depredations of the dragons, largely due to its sheer size and damp impenetrability. With the coming of the **Silver King**, most of the population moved away from the forest to the burgeoning **Silver City**. Aside from its eastern fringe, the forest is now largely uninhabited, although rumoured to give shelter to numerous settlements of **Outsiders** and other feral tribes who have reverted to barbarism. Bandits and outlaws also frequent the fringes of the forest, particularly in the north. During the reign of Speaker Havens, the king of **Furymouth** made a concerted attempt to colonize the southern regions of forest. These efforts failed for a number of reasons, but did manage to establish a handful of silver mines close to the coast and within a few hours flight from **Clifftop**.

The forest may be the home of many unique creatures. Earthworms as large as horses have been reported, together with six-legged lizards of various sizes ranging from the minuscule to the giant. Several breeds of venomous snakes and poisonous frogs are known to inhabit the forest. Snappers are also a constant danger, although their numbers are less than in the more northern fringes of the **Worldspine**. More commonly, eagles and owls can frequently be seen at close range as they swoop overhead, and the forest is the main source of hunting birds across the realm (with the exception of the **Adamantine Eagle** and the ubiquitous desert hawk).

The most frequent visitors to the forest are, in fact, the **alchemists** of the **Order of the Scales**. The forest offers a concentration of valuable and unique potion ingredients the like of which can only otherwise be found on the distant **Oordish Moors**. Frogsback, for example, is harvested from the southern fringes of the Raksheh Forest (favoured by the lords and ladies of Furymouth for centuries, it reputedly instils an uncommon sexual stamina, although the venom is also a paralytic and is quickly lethal in larger doses).

The Reflecting Garden

Aside from the silver onion dome, the most striking aspect of the **Fortress of Watchfulness** is its gardens. The inner area of the fortress is set around a unique formal garden; it uses raised pathways that divide each of the four quarters of the garden into sunken flowerbeds. A raised marble water tank lies at the centre of this garden, halfway between the dome and the eyrie landing grounds, and feeds two reflecting pools on axes directed towards the two other pinnacle peaks, reflecting their images. On first observation it is immediately obvious that something is amiss with these pools, but it is not immediately clear what it is. In fact, both surfaces have a shallow gradient and the water in the pools follows this gradient – meaning that from the side, the pools seem to be askew. Arranged in this way, the two pools offer, from a certain point at the foot of the dome, a perfect view across both other peaks.

Between and to either side of the two reflecting pools, the garden is laid out with three avenues of trees and fountains. The water from the garden fountains is collected and allowed to meander around the rim of the garden before disappearing into the tunnels below, where it supplies the more mundane needs of the lower sections of the fortress.

Most formal palace gardens are rectangular with some form of pavilion in the centre. The Fortress of Watchfulness garden is unusual in that it is laid out in an arc and lacks any conventional form of symmetry. With the discovery of the **Moonlight Garden** close to the **Yamuna** and the **Aardish Caves**, and also **Hejel's Bridge**, it is generally believed that the garden is older than the other structures on the mountain top, and it is reputed to be the direct work of the **Silver King**. Certainly no explanation has ever been offered for the sloped water surface in the reflecting pools, nor for the ever-full nature of the raised marble water tank that feeds the garden fountains, the fortress beneath and ultimately the canals of the **Silver City** (and which is called by those who live in the palace the 'Water of Abundance').

The River Throne

With its capital in the city of **Three Rivers**, several large eyries, its second city of **Purkan** and its access to the **Fury** and **Esta** rivers, the River Throne has quietly grown to have a population that must soon challenge the territories of the **Silver City**. The River Throne is one of the older of the **dragon-realms**, established during the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** as one of three significant outposts, along with **Furymouth** and **Bazim Crag**. The realm was little more than a mark on a **blood-mage's** map until a force flown by the **Order of the Dragon** fell back to **Three Rivers** after failing to dislodge the **blood-mages** of **Bazim Crag**. Even then, with its own eyrie of dragons, the realm continued to function largely as a satellite to the **Harvest Throne**; however, with the rise to power of the **Furymouth** kings (culminating with **Vishmir** and the **War of Thorns**) this influence gradually waned, and the River Throne has moved steadily into the orbit of the **Veid Palace** where it now firmly remains.

Physically, the realm is split in two by the **Esta River**. It is bounded on the north by the **Oordish Moors** and on the south by the **Endless Sea**. Its eastward claims extend as far as **Feljanford** and even further, although much of the intervening land is largely uninhabited. Westwards, a vague border exists in **Bonjanland** with the dominions of **Furymouth** while the **Fury River** serves as a border with the **Harvest Throne**. The realm is well-endowed with resources and is largely fertile and prosperous, if a little backward. The bulk of the population, however, reside on the plains west of **Three Rivers**. Elsewhere the realm is sparsely peopled and there are large areas of wilderness to both the east and the south where various tribes of **Outsiders** live. In contrast to other realms, the **River Throne** is tolerant of these savages and is largely content to leave them to their own devices.

The realm is generally viewed with indifference or else dismissed as a satellite of the **Sea Throne**. Its support for the claims of the recently crowned King Tyan of **Furymouth** has done little to alter this view.

The Sacking of Numenport

The **Taiytakei** came closest to their aim of wrecking the **Silk Farms** in the year 187. Nearly all the existing silkworms were destroyed, the wormeries ruined and most of the workers on the farms killed by a small band of **Outsider** mercenaries. The response from the city was immediate and final. Dragons flew and every single **Taiytakei** ship within a hundred miles of **Furymouth** was burned into the sea, including a flotilla of ships in the **Bay of Still Water** near **Numenport**. Although other sinkings have occurred, the Sacking of **Numenport** is the largest and took the longest for the **Taiytakei** to return afterwards (a period of nearly twelve years).

Samir's Crossing

The little town of Samir's Crossing effectively marks the end of the civilized southern realms and the start of the **Desert of Stone**. The town has grown up around the ford where the **Evenspire Road** crosses the **Sapphire River**, a few dozen miles east of **Narammed's Bridge**. The town is well known to traders and merchants; its business is largely that of supplying the necessary food and supplies for wagon trains destined for **Evenspire** and the other northern realms. As armed guards are routinely required, the town is a haven for sell-swords, mercenaries and other undesirable sorts, and has a justified reputation for a certain frontier lawlessness. The town falls under the jurisdiction of the **Adamantine Palace** but in practice is largely left to its own devices, although the presence of a small eyrie and occasional dragons nearby does at least prevent anarchy.

Samir's Crossing was the site of a significant battle during the **War of Thorns** in which several thousand soldiers from the northern realms, having successfully slipped down the **Sapphire River** without detection, were destroyed by a much smaller force of **Adamantine Men** who happened to be posted there. This was the first real test of the **Adamantine Men**; along with the battle of **Watersgate**, it established the reputation they still carry to this day.

Sand

Sand, it surprises many to learn, is an ancient place. Although the city that stands at the head of **Ishmar's Valley** today was founded by the **blood-mages** of **Outwatch** and shaped by the dragon-lords who followed them, parts of the city are much older. Indeed, there are suggestions amid the old ruins that still lie scattered away in the nearby desert that Sand was once the gateway to a route across the desert to some other land. It is only to be assumed that this route is now long lost in the dunes of the **Desert of Sand** and that these apparent ancient travellers have gone much the same way. Nevertheless, tombs and stone carvings and parchments have been found that tell of a functioning settlement here that pre-dates the coming of the **Silver King**; it is possible, perhaps, that the predations of the dragons were largely confined to the southern areas of the realms where food was more plentiful, and there may have been a time when they simply did not venture into these parts of the world.

Whatever settlement once existed, it was destroyed long before the **blood-mages** came to **Outwatch**; it is possible that the coming of the **Silver King** caused the dragons to disperse, and certainly there is evidence of destruction by dragon-fire among some of the ruins. When the **blood-mages** came from **Outwatch**, what they found among the ruins was a seasonal settlement; a meeting point and trading place between various groups of **Outsiders** – some from the desert, some from **Ishmar's Valley** and some from the **Worldspine**. The **Outsiders** were quickly crushed and subdued, while a fortress was built along with an eyrie (the dragons were later moved to **Southwatch**, but the eyrie remains), and from here the **blood-mages** were able to control the whole of **Ishmar's Valley**.

Very quickly the mages of **Outwatch** extended their influence over a wide area. Sand grew to great wealth because of its key role in the trade in gold and salt (flown from **Bloodsalt**), **Soul Dust** (brought down the **Last River** from the **Worldspine**) and slaves, whom the **blood-mages** harvested primarily from the **Blackwind Dales** and the **Plains of Ancestors**. This came to an end shortly before the rise of the first speakers when the influence of the **Order of the Dragon** brought an abrupt and bloody end to the practice of slavery in this realm. However, by this time the realm was established – and although it remains now relatively impoverished, the dragons of **Outwatch** continue to ensure that Sand is a power within the realms instead of the backwater it might otherwise be.

Tales of Sand's ancient past linger in local storytelling and culture. Although it seems highly unlikely, these stories speak of a city of fabulous wealth and influence with territories stretching out as far as the **Worldspine**, **Evenspire** and the **Lake of Ghosts**. Tales of the faraway lands across the **Desert of Sand** are particularly popular, although almost certainly untrue. However, Sand (or somewhere like it) does appear in other ancient accounts recorded in the libraries of the **Pinnacles**. Perhaps most famous among these tales is that by Shaben, one of the many dragon-riders in the later years of the **Silver King** who were tasked with scouring the realms for the hiding places of the last free dragons. Shaben returned with accounts of having found a 'great city at the edge of the desert' with 'three thousand horsemen and a great store of mages, justiciars, priests and other learned men that are maintained at the king's expense.' Shaben's account also speaks of abundant grazing grass, providing plentiful milk and butter, but that there were 'neither gardens nor orchards surrounding the city.' There is nothing in Shaben's text to say exactly where this city was found, but the descriptions of lakes and rivers in the vicinity make Sand the most likely choice. However, other parts of the account are simply strange: 'On the east side of the city there is a large forest, in which are a great many horned and armoured beasts. The timber here is very large. The trees on the outside of the forest are of such a size that the largest cannot be felled by the strength of even a dragon. They bear a kind of berry about the size of a closed fist, in clusters consisting of from ten to twenty.' There is no forest around Sand, no such trees, and no 'horned and armoured beasts' exist here or anywhere else within the realms.

Many of the local stories speak of Sand as once being a place of knowledge and learning; whether or not this is true, the people here take great pride in this heritage and are frequently (and surprisingly) as civilized and cultivated as the more cosmopolitan cities south of the **Purple Spur**. Although much of the city is drab and primitive when compared against the likes of the **Silver City**, **Furymouth** and the **City of Dragons**, the **Sand Monastery** has quietly established itself as one of the premier places of learning in the realms; as a result, an increasingly large number of wealthy young men and women from the south are to be found here.

Sand Monastery

Sand Monastery as it stands now was built in 182 on a much older site, and eventually became the centre of the **Order of the Dragon** in **Sand**. It is composed of several entirely independent schools or colleges, each run by a single master. Initiates associate themselves with a single teacher, with instruction taking place in the open courtyards of the monastery complexes or out in the open (the climate of Sand lends itself to doing things outside, provided one finds some shade and avoids the heat of the early afternoon). The primary focus of these schools is the teaching of the Order, although broader instruction in fields such as logic, astronomy and history also takes place. Scholars here are required to write their own books or theses as part of their qualification and these books become the property of the monastery; it is often said that among the northern realms, the profit made by the buying and selling of books is only second to the gold and salt trade from **Bloodsalt** (although this may legitimately be taken as a comment on how little the rest of the north has to offer). As a consequence of this, Sand Monastery has accumulated what is probably the largest single library in the realms. The librarians here wield enormous power and frequently travel as far afield as the **Pinnacles** and **Furymouth**, looking to acquire **Taiytakei** manuscripts or new histories from the time of the **Silver King**. For a small fee, books on almost every conceivable topic are available to read within the confines of the monastery, covering mathematics, astronomy, music, botany, law, sciences and particularly history (although in this regard the monastery cannot compete with the secret libraries held within the **Pinnacles**).

It is a testament to the traditions exemplified by Sand Monastery that a common desert proverb states: ‘Salt comes from the north, gold from the east and water from the west; but the treasures of wisdom come from Sand.’

Sanquat Square

In this spacious and leafy square, only a short walk from the **Veid Palace** and the **Field of Gorgutinnin**, there stands a unique obelisk. This pink granite stone was brought to **Furymouth** in the year 280 as another gift from the **Taiytakei** (this occurred shortly before the purges of **Ayzalmir**, so whatever effect the **Taiytakei** desired with this gift, it seems to have done them no favours). It is so immense that it lay on the ground for eight years before being erected. The stone is too large to be lifted even by a war-dragon, and the immensity of transporting it across the **Endless Sea** is immediately understood when it is viewed in its upright position. Near this obelisk stands the smaller but better known **Vishmir's Column**.

The **Sapphire Cascade**

In the eastern cliffs of the **Purple Spur** lies a notch valley several miles deep. The valley is half a mile wide and sheer cliffs on either side rise up to a similar height. At the far end of the valley lies the third of the great cascades: the Sapphire Cascade, which takes its name from the bluish tinge to the rocks around it. The Sapphire Cascade valley is reckoned to be one of the great sights of the realms and one of its most beautiful treasures, appearing almost as frequently as the **Diamond Cascade** in current popular romances. The valley is secluded and uninhabited, usually frequented only by amorous dragon-riders and the occasional hunting party. Unlike the other cascades, the waters are confined by the walls of the valley and thus collect into a series of pools and streams, ultimately emptying into the **Sapphire River** which wends its way out of the valley and into the **Hungry Mountain Plains**. The upper regions of the valley are infested with a particularly ferocious breed of dwarf snapper that are prized among the eastern realms for the aphrodisiac and regenerative properties of their organs; thus a thriving (if dangerous) hunting trade exists. A small itinerant community of hunters exists in nearby **Narammed's Bridge**, close to the **Evenspire Road**.

The **Sapphire River**

The **Sapphire River** runs east from the **Sapphire Cascade**, across the **Hungry Mountain Plains** and then turns north into the jumble of boulders and ravines that lie at the edge of the **Oordish Moors**. Although numerous tributaries merge with the **Sapphire River** from the moors, the land around the river is generally arid and few people live on its banks. The **Desert of Stone** stretches away from the west bank as far as the eye can see, while for much of its course, the view from the east bank is of the dry hills and crags that rise up into the **Oordish Moors**. In places, the valley becomes steep and narrow, and there are fierce rapids that are impassable to most river traffic. As the moors above recede, the river widens into a string of shallow and warm ribbon lakes, eventually emptying into **Bloodsalt Lake**. For some, the **Sapphire River** serves as a trading route from the **Hungry Mountain Plains** and **Watersgate** to **Bloodsalt**; however, the difficulties of navigating the river, the inhospitable terrain around it and the common appearance of armed **Outsider** groups mean that most prefer to travel the longer but somewhat safer route of **Yinazhin's Way**.

The Scales

Lesser known with the **Order of the Scales** are the Scales themselves, the men and women from whom the order takes its name. These are the people who have most given themselves into the service of the dragons. It is the Scales who tends to a dragon's needs, ensuring they are fed and watered. It is the Scales who raises and trains a dragon from the egg and ensures that all the preparations of the eyrie **alchemists** are administered correctly. Despite the best efforts of the eyrie **alchemists**, all Scales contract Hatchling Disease, a condition that invariably ends in a slow and painful death even with the best of treatments. Most Scales, however, seem to accept this as the price they pay for working with such monstrous yet magnificent beasts.

Scarsdale

Although the town of **Ashdale** is larger, Scarsdale is by far the most important town within the **Blackwind Dales**, and possibly of greater significance than **Evenspire** itself. The town is small and dusty and dry, kept alive by the waters of the **Dragon River**. Of far more import, though, is what lies in the hills around Scarsdale. Dig beneath the baked-hard ash and you will find seams of stone rich with veins of copper and other metals. Pits up to twenty strides deep and more have been torn from the surrounding hills; the landscape is dotted with miner camps and rings to the sounds of picks and hammers.

The copper mines of Scarsdale are particularly interesting as they are the only example of dragons being systematically put to work since **Tyan's Dike** three hundred years ago. Once sorted and smashed and sorted again, the ores must be roasted (to remove soft impurities) and then smelted. As fuel for burning is in short supply in the **Blackwind Dales**, dragons from **Evenspire** provide the necessary fire and there are always dozens of dragons near the town. **Alchemists** from the **Order of the Scales** are also common visitors, for a variety of reasons.

Unlikely as it may seem, Scarsdale also sees frequent visits from the **Taiytakei**, who seem to have an intense interest in the works here. Indeed, it is said that the **Taiytakei** have shared some of their precious metallurgical knowledge with the smelters of Scarsdale in exchange for being allowed to conduct certain experiments of their own with dragon-fire. The **Taiytakei** visits are invariably short, however, due to their apparent susceptibility to acquiring **Hatchling Disease** even from an adult dragon while in these hostile climes.

The Sea of Storms

The sea off the coast of the **Worldspine**, the **Rakshah Forest** and as far east as **Tyan's Peninsula** is infamous for its stormy weather. Even **Taiyakei** ships heading to and from **Furymouth** generally avoid this region if they can. Rumours persist of vast sea monsters, even bigger than dragons, that live in the ocean here and are supposedly capable of swallowing a small fishing boat whole. Rumours from **Taiyakei** sailors speak of islands in the Sea of Storms, but these have never been found by the few riders brave enough to venture out across the waves.

The Sea Throne

With its capital in the city of **Furymouth** and all the **Taiytakei** trade this entails, the Sea Throne has grown from humble origins as a satellite to the **Silver City** to become perhaps the wealthiest and certainly the most opulent realm of them all. The Sea Throne is one of the oldest of the **dragon-realms**, established during the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** as one of its three significant outposts, along with **Three Rivers** and **Bazim Crag**. The realm continued to function largely as a satellite to the **Harvest Throne** even once it became an independent force with its own eyrie of dragons; however, this all changed with the coming of Speaker **Voranin** and the rise of **Anzuine the Mad** and, in **Furymouth**, of **Vishmir** the Great.

By the time of the **War of Thorns**, **Furymouth** was a rich and sprawling city ruled by an ambitious young king. Internal strife within the **Pinnacles** (still the dominant force within the realms at the start of the conflict) had almost reached the point of open civil war. On the back of these events, **Vishmir** was able to forge an alliance between **Furymouth**, **Three Rivers** and the distant **Throne of Sand**, promising rebellious factions within the **Silver City** his support once he was successful. The rest is history. **Vishmir** successfully deposed the incumbent speaker and ruled the realms for more than twenty years; at the same time, the historical power of both the **Order of the Dragon** and of the **Pinnacles** was shattered as many of the defeated riders and their dragons vanished into the **Worldspine**, triggering the **Great Dragon Hunt**. From the moment **Vishmir** sat on the throne in the **Adamantine Palace**, the centre of power in the south moved irrevocably from the **Pinnacles** to **Furymouth**.

Physically, the realm is split in two by the **Fury River**. Its claims extend as far as the **Yamuna River** and through the **Raksheh Forest** up to the **Worldspine**, although the forest itself is largely uninhabited. In the east, a vague border exists in **Bonjanland** between the dominions of **Furymouth** and **Three Rivers**, although neither realm currently exercises much interest in this area. The realm lays claim to the whole of **Tyan's Peninsula**, the **Bay of Still Water** and a substantial tract of the **Fishing Coast**.

The realm is generally viewed with a mixture of admiration for its opulence and illustrious past (as embodied by **Vishmir**), and envy for its wealth. Since **Vishmir** the realm been the dominant power among the southern realms, and there are those who fear it has ambitions to throw up another **Vishmir** and establish a new empire, this time ruled from the Sea Throne. The recently crowned King Tyan exhibits a clear ambition to become speaker, and has done little to diffuse this alarm.

While the realm is well-endowed with resources and is largely fertile and prosperous, the excessive wealth of the Sea Throne itself comes from the **Taiytakei**.

The Silk Farms

In the year 167, two **Taiytakei** renegades used hollowed-out canes to smuggle silkworms into the realms from across the **Endless Sea**, offering them to the king of **Furymouth** in exchange for riches and protection. Textiles (cotton and linen) were an important city industry in these times and the production of silk soon became quite advanced, although rigidly controlled and carried out in the utmost secrecy; the first silk factory, built just across the river on **Tyan's Peninsula**, was disguised as a barracks and produced silk cloth solely for the clothing of the royal family. More and more factories were built, however, and the use of silk slowly grew, spreading to the rest of the realms from **Furymouth**. Silk played a significant part in the rise of **Furymouth's** wealth and power within the realms, and to this day the city continues to successfully control the export of this cloth to the other realms. Once it became clear that their secret had been stolen, the **Taiytakei** made numerous attempts to sabotage the Silk Farms, resulting in the **Sacking of Numenport**. By the time the **Taiytakei** eventually returned to **Furymouth** after this, the Silk Farms had been spread across **Tyan's Peninsular** and these attempts came to an end.

The **Taiytakei** renegades who first brought the silkworms both died spectacularly. The first apparently had his head cut off by an invisible assassin right in the middle of a busy marketplace, and pieces of the second were found a year later decorating a dozen of the most inaccessible (and, if rumour is to be believed, secret and most closely guarded) spots within the **Veid Palace**. These killings are largely responsible for the **Taiytakei** reputation for employing supernatural assassins, a fearful reputation that they are only too willing to play upon.

The Silver City

The Silver City is the oldest and one of the largest cities in the realms. Before the coming of the **Silver King**, substantial settlements were limited; they could only occur in places where large networks of tunnels and caves existed to provide shelter from the depredations of the dragons, and where there was an easy supply of food and water. Open settlements of any size (such as the Silver City, **Furymouth** and the **City of Dragons**) simply could not exist. The coming of the **Silver King** to the **Pinnacles** brought an end to the terror of the dragons, and so it is no surprise that the first city should have grown up here, or that it carries the **Silver King**'s legacy in its very name. No exact date can be given as to the founding of the city, but it is reasonable to imagine that as word spread of the **Silver King**'s power, and as more and more dragons were brought under his control, people would have flocked to the apparent safety surrounding the **Pinnacles**. By the time of the overthrow of the **Silver King**, the Silver City was already a considerable size, and other settlements had already sprung up in the places we now know of as the great capitals of the **dragon-realms**: **Sand**, **Bloodsalt**, **Bazim Crag**, **Evenspire**, the **City of Dragons**, **Three Rivers**, and **Furymouth**.

Following the passing of the **Silver King**, the **blood-mages** actively encouraged the growth of the city. In the words of the Arch-Magus **Pantatyr**: 'This is indeed the city that I am to found, where I am to live and where my descendants will reign afterward'; a piece of high exaggeration by the Arch-Magus, as the city had clearly founded itself some centuries previously. However, the city's growth was certainly much helped by this attention, as well its location which put much of the course of the **Fury River** within easy reach and all four of the other growing cities (**Furymouth**, **Three Rivers**, **Bazim Crag** and the **City of Dragons**) within a single day on dragon-back, albeit a long one.

With most of the dragons under the control of the city eyries, the **Pinnacles** effectively had control over all strategic and trading routes along the **Fury** to the sea, and east-west from the **Worldspine** to the **Oordish Moors**. Tribute was demanded and received, while monthly trade fairs were also held in this area. It is worth noting that for all their tyrannies, the **blood-mages** were also responsible for directing water from the **Reflecting Garden** at the top of the **Fortress of Watchfulness** down into a series of lakes and canals that surround the city, as well as diverting several nearby small rivers. Plentiful water, the mild and relatively dry climate, the abundance of food and the fertility of the land between the **Raksheh Forest** and the **Fury** valley all contributed to the success of the Silver City.

In its early years, the development of the city was heavily directed by the **blood-mages**, who desired a deliberate and demonstrable new Paradise as an expression of their power and their triumph – both over the dragons and, subsequently, the **Silver King** who had actually broken them. It is perhaps ironic, then, that the Paradise they sought to emulate were in fact the tiny shreds of myth and legend that referred to the first age, and thus to the rule of the first **Silver Kings**. Consequently, although the fall of the **Silver King** saw a decisive ideological break and change in direction for the realms as a whole, the architecture of the Silver City was largely untouched and shows a remarkable continuity.

Four years after the death of the **Silver King**, **Pantatyr** assembled engineers, surveyors, and art constructionists from around the realms to come together and draw up plans for a new city. Over a hundred thousand construction workers reputedly came to survey the plans (although this number seems extremely high for **Pantatyr**'s reign – the records of the **blood-mages** are prone to wild exaggeration, and the real number is probably closer to ten thousand), and many of these workers were distributed salaries to start the rebuilding of a grand city fit to be the capital of the new **Empire of the Blood-Mages**. The framework of the new city itself was to be two large semicircles about eight miles in diameter. Spring was chosen as the starting time because the magus astronomers believed the city should be built under the sign of the water-dragon, symbolizing productiv-

ity, prosperity and growth. Within the city plan there were many parks, gardens, villas and beautiful promenades which were meant to give the city an elegance that reflected the legendary palaces of the **Silver Kings**. There were also many canals and lakes, and the intricate and artful threading of waterways through the Silver City from the apparently endless supplies within the **Fortress of Watchfulness** remains a great achievement of the **blood-mages**; albeit one good among many evils. The new city was designed as a circle bounded by the three peaks of the **Pinnacles**, leading it to be known for a while as the 'Round City'. The original designs show a ring of residential and commercial structures along the outer edges of the city walls, while in the centre of the city was to be a great new palace, as well as headquarters for a new army of guards. A huge open space was also planned, the intended purpose of which is unknown.

In the event, the ambitions of the **blood-mages** exceeded their resources. While the canals and waterways were completed as intended, little else of the construction went ahead as the mages grappled more and more with the problem of feeding and managing nearly two thousand hungry dragons. The **Silver King** had largely allowed his dragons to feed as they pleased beyond a certain distance from the **Pinnacles**, something that the dragons were easily able to do for themselves. The **blood-mages**, ambitious to build an empire, attempted to create an infrastructure that would feed their dragons with domestic cattle. Although their approach was the forerunner of successful large eyries such as **Outwatch** and **Clifftop**, what the **blood-mages** attempted was on a far grander scale and ultimately failed. During the later years of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages**, the city fell into severe decline. Food became increasingly scarce and many of the population simply left for the more prosperous lands on the other side of the **Fury River**. Unrest turned to rioting, and the last year of the empire saw several large sections of the city destroyed by fire.

With the coming of the **Order of the Dragon**, the fortunes of the city changed immediately for the better, largely because the number of dragons that the region was trying to support suddenly halved. Food that was previously in short supply (particularly meat) was suddenly plentiful, and the city underwent a minor golden age. Most of the older sections of the city stem from this time, and for one hundred and twenty four years, between the fall of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages** and coming of **Narammed** and the first speakers, the Silver City prospered as the effective capital of the known world. Even in the latter years of this period of history, the city retained the strength to survive the sporadic dragon-wars that ravaged so many other parts of the realms.

By the time of **Narammed**, the Silver City was a thriving hub of learning and commerce, by far the most significant in the realms and still substantially more important than either **Furymouth** or the **City of Dragons**. Scholars headed to the city from all over the realms, with two notable effects: the first was the spread of **Taiytakei** science, alchemy and culture into the realms as a whole as opposed to being wholly based in **Furymouth**; the second, and less fortunate, was the reintroduction of the practices of **blood-magic** from the desert realms in the north. Even as late as the **War of Thorns**, the Silver City was likely the largest city in the world and certainly the key centre of power for the **Order of the Dragon**.

During the **War of Thorns**, the Silver City occupied a strange and uncomfortable position. The city itself was historically a centre of power for the **Order of the Dragon**, and thus considered by **Anzuine** to be rightfully part of his domain. However, the dragon-king of the **Pinnacles** had allied himself with **Vishmir**, while **Anzuine's** dragon-marshal Valmeyan was also of the Silver City, flying two hundred of the city's dragons in support of the speaker and against his own king. Both sides skirted around the issue of the Silver City for much of the war, until **Anzuine** briefly achieved control of the skies over the **Pinnacles** and drove the Harvest King into his fortresses. Dragon-riders from the **Adamantine Palace** landed around the city, which was then occupied by the **Adamantine Men**. During this brief occupation there were several uprisings, instigated by the defenders still hiding within the **Pinnacles**.

Anzuine, possibly already quite mad, finally lost patience. He unleashed the **Adamantine Men** onto the city and ordered that each of his soldiers bring back six severed human heads to serve as an example. In the fighting that followed, many quarters were ruined by fire or looting. The **Adamantine Men** massacred most of the inhabitants and destroyed large sections of the city. Many of the **blood-mage** canals and dykes that formed the city's irrigation system were also destroyed. **Anzuine** never carried out his threat to let loose his dragons and burn the city to ash (something that Valmey-an would certainly never have agreed to do), but the sacking was a blow from which the city has never recovered.

Although much of the damage was repaired, the city has since fallen into a slow but steady decline. As a centre of trade and wealth, as well as in sheer size, it has been surpassed by **Furymouth**, while as a centre of power and learning and opulence, the **City of Dragons** is the undisputed capital of the realms. For centuries since the **Silver King** first came, the city that bears his name ruled the world; over the last hundred years, that mantle has passed on. Entire districts remain empty, overgrown and derelict. In the backlash that followed **Anzuine's** defeat, most of the great buildings of the **Order of the Dragon** were destroyed. The Silver City of today is but a shadow of what it once was.

Which is not to say that the city has nothing to offer. Even now, it remains perhaps the third greatest dragon-city, and is an agricultural centre with thriving markets that are arguably the largest, if not the most diverse, in the realms. Also, despite its turbulent history, the city has made its peace with the **Order of the Dragon**, and remains home to the **Golden Temple** and many other institutions of the Order.

The Silver King

No figure in the history of the realms is as shrouded in mystery and myth as the Silver King. Was he a god? Was he a man? Was he something else? Was he the last of his race, the mythical **Silver Kings**? Disentangling the truth from the legend would likely be the work of a lifetime, and in fact several recent treatises on this subject exist, of differing lengths and accuracies. It is not the intention of this author to enter into the protracted debate on the essential nature of the Silver King, nor to indulge in philosophical discussions on the merits and flaws of his coming – although it is worthy of note that such debate exists and continues with fearsome vigour. Make what you will of the words of **Pantatyr** himself:

*“He had no name that we could understand, for he was the last of his kind. He wore armour of quicksilver. He carried the **Adamantine Spear**. Where he walked, the dragons obeyed him. He did not ask our consent to rule us. He simply did. His commands were few; but if they were not carried out above all other things, he would turn a hundred men to dust with a flick of his finger and then walk on, as if he had done nothing at all.”*

Before the coming of the Silver King, the masters of the **dragon-realms** were the dragons themselves. They were beasts of destruction who came and went as they pleased, burning what it amused them to burn and eating whatever took their fancy. Despite their presence, some settlements were able to develop and grow, principally in places of shelter (such as the mountain forests, the **Rakshah Forest** and such unusual places as the **Pinnacles**). Nevertheless, even the most sheltered were eventually found, and once a settlement was located by a dragon, that was its end. It seems the dragons were not creatures to take their fill and move on; rather, they would remain nearby until the settlement was entirely dead. This is what the Silver King changed.

It is said that he arrived one day in what is now the throne room of the **Fortress of Watchfulness**. He did not walk across the ground or fly in on the back of a dragon, he was simply there, sat upon a throne of silver that none had seen before (and that subsequently vanished, apparently during the time of the **blood-mages**). It is said that he was clad in silver and carried a silver spear (the **Adamantine Spear**), but that his eyes were like blood and his face and hair as white as winter snow. On the first day of his arrival, all who saw him are said to have died on the spot from the sight of his glory.

There are many stories that follow, describing how the Silver King ruled the **Pinnacles** and the deeds he did. Any one story may be subject to dispute, but several things are beyond argument. The first and most obvious matter is the nature of the Silver King himself. Whatever creature he was, he clearly possessed a power the like of which has not been seen within the realms since his demise. His subjugation of the **Pinnacles** was almost instant and his rule apparently absolute until the uprising that destroyed him. He wielded magics vastly beyond even the greatest of the **blood-mages**, capable (depending on which stories you believe) of turning men to dust in a blink, moving rivers, levelling mountains and even stopping the sun.

The second indisputable fact is that he tamed the dragons. The **blood-mages** will tell you it was done with blood and sacrifice. The **Order of the Dragon** will tell you it was raw power, while the followers of the **Great Flame** will say it was the power within the **Adamantine Spear**, not the Silver King himself. Other stories speak more of guile and trickery, of luring the great monsters to a place where some other ancient power still lurked. Did the Silver King teach his disciples the dragon secrets now guarded by the **Order of the Scales**, or did he guard them jealously and destroy any who threatened to learn them? Whatever the truth, one fact is never argued. The dragons were tamed. They remain tamed. And it was done within a few short years of the Silver King coming to the **Pinnacles**.

A third and final fact is clear. The Silver King thought little of his subjects. In some stories he is brutal, in others uncaring or frequently distant, and in all often absent. He was worshipped, feared,

revered but never loved. His reign lasted, depending on accounts, for between a few score years and several hundred, and yet he never aged, and in almost every account it seems he is searching for something. Even the taming of the dragons, perhaps, was a by-blow of his quest for something else. In any event, it is clear that he thought of his subjects as little more than slaves, or even animals. On occasion he issued demands that were enforced with an iron brutality that would make even a dragon recoil; for the most part, though, it seems that the Silver King remained aloof and left his people to amuse themselves as they pleased.

One of the greatest mysteries of the Silver King, alongside his appearance and the taming of the dragons, lies in his demise. What little histories exist appear to suggest that one day, out of the blue, he was simply murdered by the cabal of **blood-mages** who then took over control of the **Pinnacles** immediately afterwards. Yet there is not one account of how they achieved this feat! One of the more interesting legends is that the Silver King was killed by a single scratch from the **Adamantine Spear**, and that he placed a curse on it as he died. Certainly, following the Silver King's death, the Arch-Magus **Pantatyr** took the **Adamantine Spear** and had it enshrined in the **Glass Cathedral**, at the time about as far away from the **Pinnacles** as could be. Despite its purported power, the **blood-mages** never went near the spear again.

The final mystery, perhaps the one most discussed today among the courts of the dragon-kings and queens, is the last resting place of the Silver King. As with the details surrounding his death, there are no clear stories – but a persistent legend remains that the Silver King predicted his own demise and had built a **Black Mausoleum** in a remote location that lay 'across the great river from the endless caves.' The **Tomb of the Silver King** is reported variously as the **Aardish Caves**, the **Valley of Alchemists**, the tunnels under the **Glass Cathedral**, the **Silver King's Tomb** caves and various parts of the **Pinnacles** (including the **Great Chasm**). Many have searched, however, and none have found what they were looking for; in all likelihood, the body of the Silver King was destroyed immediately following his death, either by dragon-fire or by being eaten – the latter being the usual practice of the time.

Aside from the **Adamantine Spear**, no relics of the Silver King are believed to exist.

The **Silver Kings**

It is speculated that the **Silver King** may in fact have been the last of a race of magical creatures known as the Silver Kings. The source of this speculation is two-fold. Firstly, it comes from the **Silver King** himself and records from that time. While the **Silver King** was notoriously distant and obscure, he did speak to his subjects on occasion, and there remain a few fragments of first-hand accounts of his words. On several occasions he refers to himself in the plural, speaking of the achievements and a glorious world created by 'our' hands and then destroyed in some sorcerous cataclysm. In one passage, it is even hinted that the Silver Kings created the dragons themselves!

The second source of evidence is more circumstantial and yet, at the same time, more compelling. Scattered around the realms are artefacts and places that defy comprehension. From the **Reflecting Garden** and the **Great Chasm**, through the mysterious architecture and origins of the **Pinnacles** themselves and the tower of **Outwatch**, to the oddity of **Hejel's Bridge** and the mute mystery of the **Adamantine Spear**, there are many traces in the realms of a time before the rule of dragons; a time when men were far more than they are now and knew far greater things. Some say these are the works of the Silver Kings, but I say they are the works of men – that the Silver Kings themselves were men. Men before the dragons came.

The **Silver King's Tomb**

It is not uncommon for the rivers of the realms north of the **Purple Spur** to vanish into nothing. The **Sapphire River** and the **Last River** both expire amid the heat of the deserts, while the underground river that feeds the green oasis of **Outwatch** vanishes under the sand as mysteriously as it arrives. However, the fate of the **Silver River** is unique; instead of rushing out into the desert like its more northerly brothers only to be consumed by the sand and the heat, the **Silver River** vanishes abruptly into a gaping hole in the **Great Cliff** known as the Silver King's Tomb. The cavern entrance is approaching a hundred strides high and is equally wide, large enough for a dragon to enter with wings outstretched. The name of the cavern, sadly, is misleading. There is no reason or evidence behind the idea that the **Silver King's** body was brought all this way to be buried; indeed, there is no evidence that the existence of the cave was even known at the time of the Silver King's demise. This has not prevented a number of treasure-seeking expeditions from arriving here, only to be thwarted by the vertiginous descent of the **Silver River** into a fathomless system of caves under the **Purple Spur**.

It is not known where the waters of the **Silver River** emerge. Some postulate they feed the bottomless **Mirror Lakes**.

The **Silver River**

The smallest of the five major rivers that flow out of the **Worldspine** north of the **Purple Spur**, the Silver River runs through a wide valley of its own for many miles out of the mountains before emerging close to the edge of the **Great Cliff**. The river follows the contours of the cliff, never straying far, until about a third of the way along towards the **Emerald Cascade** where it turns abruptly and disappears in the **Silver King's Tomb**.

The Silver River valley is the most luxuriant of the northern valleys. The valley floor and sides are heavily forested and game is plentiful. The valley is known for its particularly dense population of snappers, and this, combined with its general remoteness from either the **Evenspire Road** or **Evenspire** itself, is probably why it has remained unpopulated. Settlements have been reported on occasion by dragon-riders drawn by the excellent snapper-hunting offered by the valley. Such settlements are almost certainly of **Outsiders**.

The Slave Pens

For the most part, the laws and punishments of the realms are easily traced back to the **Silver City** and the laws imposed by the **Order of the Dragon** following their overthrow of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages**. In general, punishments range from the cutting off of hands, feet or ears, to blinding by gouging out the eyes; most of those found guilty are then exiled to the wilderness or banished to a monastery. **Bonjanland** in particular is awash with the mutilated dregs cast out from the **Silver City, Three Rivers** and the **City of Dragons**. For many years, however, capital punishment was not enforced in **Furymouth**. Fines and forced labour were preferred, and this quickly developed into enslavement to the ever-eager **Taiytakei**.

The criminal population of **Furymouth** is extremely low, as the punishment for almost anything is a lifetime chained to a **Taiytakei** slave galley. However, it is not only local criminals that are sold in the slave pens in **Furymouth** these days. Merchants traders have taken to buying the sentences of criminals from other cities and shipping them to **Furymouth** to be sold (and some even go willingly, preferring to remain intact as a slave over mutilation and exile). The largest numbers of all, until recently, have been **Outsiders**, carried for a thousand miles or more in cages swinging beneath flying dragons. Most of these slaves were brought in from the **Worldspine**, with a few coming from the **Oordish Moors**. However, the current King Tyan of **Furymouth** has required that all slaves should be transported by land, effectively ending this trade. Whether this is an expression of concern for the well-being of the **Outsider** folk, for the steady decrease in the prices received for his own slaves or simply a response to a spate of accidents in which such cages have disintegrated in mid-air is not known.

Soul Dust

Soul Dust is the most common of several names given to a powder common to the western reaches of the realms which is unfortunately popular with those who can afford it. The powder is yellowish in nature, and when dissolved in water (or other liquid) and imbibed, it produces a sense of euphoria and heightened sensual awareness, as well as enhancing sexual vigour. Its use is rampant among the dragon-riding classes of the **Blackwind Dales** and is becoming distressingly common among the younger lords and ladies of the **City of Dragons** and **Furymouth**.

Soul Dust comes from the **Worldspine** and is generally thought to be the residue of boiling down certain plants that grow there. It is rumoured that a rogue **alchemist** took the secret of its manufacture to the **Outsiders** of the mountains as far back as the time of **Narammed**, but some stories suggest that it has been produced there far longer, stretching back even before the time of the **Silver King**. The dust was known at the court of the **Adamantine Palace** throughout the time of the speakers, but only as an occasional and amusing novelty. Since the **War of Thorns**, Soul Dust has become much more common, possibly as a result of better and more numerous trade routes into the fringes of the **Worldspine**.

Attitudes to Soul Dust vary from realm to realm. In **Evenspire** and **Furymouth**, where the powder is common, it is used openly and carries little or no punishment. In the eastern realms it is still a rare curiosity and elicits polite interest. The **Throne of Sand and Stone** has outlawed its use, but in practice does little to enforce this edict. In the **Worldspine**, however, the **King of the Crag**s has sworn to eradicate it. **Outsider** settlements found to be involved in its production or even in transporting it have been destroyed, and to carry even a tiny quantity is punishable by death. The fruits of this effort have yet to be seen.

Southwatch

The other great eyrie of the desert, Southwatch is a pale and insignificant shadow of the monumental **Outwatch**. The buildings here are low and squat, typical of the desert lands. Although this is an eyrie of considerable size, most of the dragons of the desert are kept hidden away in **Outwatch**, only being rotated here to feed on the valley cattle of the **Blackwind Dales**. Southwatch is mostly notable for being the entry, for all but dragon-riders, into the realm of the **Throne of Sand and Stone**.

The Speaker's Tower

The first Speaker's Tower was built over the years 130-134 and contained the private rooms of **Narammed the Magnificent**. Although he spent much of his time living in the **Tower of Air**, which he much preferred, the Speaker's Tower was the only part of the palace large enough for him to accommodate a state occasion of any size. Little remains today of the original design, although **Narammed's** seal remains visible over the entrance arch from the Speaker's Yard. Subsequent speakers have substantially reworked this tower, which forms the focal point of the **Adamantine Palace** and thus a symbol of the residing speaker.

Today, the tower is approximately a hundred strides tall, comparable to the length of two hunting dragons from tail-tip to nose. It stands squarely in the colonnades that divide the Speaker's Yard from the Inner Gateyard, and stands directly in line with the front of the **Glass Cathedral**. It has a simple form, the bulk of which is a plain square shaft, two dozen strides a side and some fifty strides tall, above which is the arched Speaker's Balcony, housing five bells. The tower is topped by a pyramid, alternate faces of which show flying dragons and various representations of **Narammed**. The tower is capped by a spire, at the top of which sits a silver weathervane in the form of a crescent moon. The base of the Speaker's Tower is based on the cavernous hall of **Outwatch**, itself an example of Lunari architecture believed by some to be a relic of the **Silver Kings**.

Construction of the first tower was finished in 146, during the reign of Speaker **Mehmeth**. **Mehmeth's** tower was seriously damaged by a fire in 189 that destroyed the wooden upper floors. The Speaker's Tower reached its present form in 237 under Speaker **Vishmir** thanks to the restorations made to repair further damage caused by the earthquake of 231. These works added the distinctive multi-levelled balconies (realized in marble), and the spire. In the following decades, frequent other interventions were made to repair the damage caused by numerous fires (it is claimed that the Speaker's Tower is cursed – and in truth, it has suffered damage of some sort under almost every speaker). More work was done after the tower was struck by lightning, which caused some of the masonry to crack, killing several people as a result of falling stonework. The obvious original feature that now survives is the weathervane, purported to be crafted by **Narammed** himself.

The decorations on the Speaker's Balcony were put in place by the current speaker. A previous structure dating from before the rise of the speakers was used as a watch tower for the **Glass Cathedral**. Nothing remains of this except a sketch made by **Narammed** himself, framed in the Chamber of Audience.

The **Statue Plague**

It is recorded that in the later years of the **Empire of the Blood-Mages**, a strange plague came to the **Silver City** that slowly turned those affected into lifeless statues. It is said that the plague killed all it touched, that only those who fled the city survived and that it was only stopped by burning the affected quarter of the city to the ground with dragon-fire. It is likely that the so-called Statue Plague was in fact an outbreak of Hatchling Disease that burned itself out as the population dispersed, rather than being ended by the more drastic means suggested.

The Syuss

What is there to say about the Syuss? Once a realm as strong as any other in the north until in the reign of Speaker **Ayzalmir** the realm simply fell apart, embroiled in a civil war that destroyed almost everything that had once existed on the **Plains of Ancestors**, and which took the intervention of three neighbouring realms and Speaker **Ayzalmir** to put an end to it. Such was the speaker's fury at the foolishness of the Syuss and their dragon-war that he handed the bulk of their realm to the King of **Sand**; thus the Throne of Sand became the **Throne of Sand and Stone**.

Nevertheless, the destruction of King Tiernel's realm was not entirely complete. One small hidden eyrie and a dozen dragons and their riders survived, and these remain today. They have the recognition of a realm but are laughed at by all; a lesson to the other kings and queens not to let their own petty disputes threaten the realms around them. They are left as nomads, ruling over the tribes of **Outsiders** that eke a living from the **Desert of Stone** from their one eyrie at **Gardin's Rock**. Although they are recognized as a realm and have **alchemists** from the **Order of the Scales** at their eyrie, as far as any other travellers are concerned they are little more than dragon-riding bandits, a threat to anyone who strays into the wasteland between the **Evenspire Road** and the **Sapphire River**.

The Taiytakei

There was a man there too, a strange fellow with uncommonly dark skin. The clothes he wore were tattered and faded, but they'd been rich and ornate once. Any gold and jewels were long gone; only a dazzling rainbow of feathers remained.

It is not clear for how long these strange sailors from across the **Endless Sea** have visited the coasts of the realms. The presence of one of their ships is first recorded thirty years before the fall of the **Silver King** and they were certainly seen regularly in the following years. The Taiytakei themselves claim to have known of our lands for many centuries and to have visited them for much longer. Be that as it may, formal contact with the Taiytakei was not established until Arch-Magus Tyan settled in **Furymouth** and actively sought to trade with them. Tyan's first endeavours were bent more towards conquest than trade, but as the Arch-Magus was unable to construct a sea-faring vessel capable of crossing the **Sea of Storms**, and as the Taiytakei held their maps and their sea routes among their most closely guarded secrets, a trade relationship was established instead. Early exchanges were largely of food and lumber from the nearby **Tyan's Peninsula** for crafted goods from other lands. In time, some of the Taiytakei came to settle in **Furymouth**; now, not only does **Furymouth** have its own **Taiytakei Quarter**, it is not uncommon to see these dark-skinned folk with their bizarrely ornate costumes in other cities, or even on the roads. Trade is in their blood, it seems, and they are most frequently seen as merchants.

Since the rise of the speakers, the Taiytakei have been a constant presence in the waters of the south and it is rare not to see at least one of their ships in the harbour of **Furymouth**. They always have some novelty to trade and it is clear that their skills with metals and the occult arts have long exceeded our own. However, while they freely trade their goods, their knowledge remains inviolate.

He lifted the lid. Inside lay three strips of plain silk, two black and one white, and two tiny golden dragons with ruby eyes. 'Pretty.' He shrugged. He would have said more, but one of the golden dragons turned its head and looked at him.

From Arch-Magus Tyan to the **alchemists** of the present, we have all tried to trick, beg, bribe or buy secrets from the Taiytakei and have only very rarely succeeded. For their own part, while the Taiytakei seem willing to trade for anything and everything, it is clear that they have two great interests. The first is slaves; mostly **Outsiders** shipped in cages from the **Worldspine** or the **Oordish Moors**. The second is dragons. More than anything, the Taiytakei regard our dragons with envious greed. Such are the tensions that result from this between the Taiytakei and the **Order of the Scales** that any **alchemist** found speaking to a Taiytakei in private is either executed, or exiled to **Outwatch** or **Bloodsalt** – places the Taiytakei are forbidden to go. The Taiytakei, meanwhile, faces not only death but the extermination of his entire extended family, or else the destruction of his ship and all who sail on her. Several times, whole flotillas of Taiytakei ships have been burned by the dragons of **Furymouth**; sometimes the Taiytakei have vanished afterwards for a decade or even longer, and it was thought they would never return. But they always do. Our dragons and their greed will always draw them back.

Along with their skill with metals and their penchant for sorcery, one persistent rumour associated with the Taiytakei is their use of supernatural assassins. This stems from the fates reputed to have befallen the two Taiytakei who sold the secret of silk to the king of **Furymouth**.

The **Taiytakei** Quarter

Aside from the **Veid Palace** and the **Field of Gorgutinnin**, **Furymouth** is most widely known for its harbour district; an area inhabited by thousands of permanent and transient **Taiytakei** visitors, and home to both the **Paratheus** and the notorious **Slave Pens**. As **Furymouth** is the only point of access to the realms for the **Taiytakei**, all the trade that has made the city so rich comes through this quarter. It is frequently said that anything that exists in the world can be found in **Furymouth**'s **Taiytakei** Quarter, and this is certainly the impression it gives. Sand orchids, rare enough on the sandy banks of the **Last River**, can nevertheless be found here, along with dragon scales and dragon bone (supposedly the province of dragon-lords alone) and potions whose secrets are known only to the **alchemists** of the **Order of the Scales**.

The adventurous buyer should be wary, however: although the **Taiytakei** appear always friendly and eager, that is the mask that they all wear. They may insist that everything can be had at a price, but if you ask them for the price of their race's secrets – their esoteric knowledge of metalwork and other mysterious arts – they will wilfully misunderstand or simply pretend not to hear. Even with goods they are willing to sell, they are hard and shrewd bargainers. Although it is true that almost anything (at least, from within the realms) can be found in the **Taiytakei** Quarter in **Furymouth**, the **Taiytakei** are fond of deals with many parts and many layers; in the end, the price you pay may make you wish you had gone elsewhere.

The Temple of Tranquillity

Historically, the Temple of Tranquillity has much in common with the **Palace of Pleasure**. Like the palace, the temple was built by order of the **blood-mages** immediately after the death of the **Silver King** and was used for much the same purpose; indeed, the legends of both the palace and the temple – of the deeds that transpired there and the curses they carry – are almost interchangeable. Unlike the **Palace of Pleasure**, however, the tunnels and caves underneath the Temple of Tranquillity are more extensive, allowing egress into both the **Silver City** and the **Fortress of Watchfulness**. Indeed, it is said that the overthrow of the **blood-mages** was the direct action of a group of their own whom they had imprisoned in the temple; this group found a way into the lower chambers and the labyrinth of tiny unlit tunnels beneath, and thus appeared by surprise in the supposedly sealed **Fortress of Watchfulness**. However unlikely this particular story, it does seem that the **blood-mages** believed the temple to be as isolated as the **Palace of Pleasure**, while later generations of Harvest Kings and Queens have clearly thought otherwise (as evidenced by the wholesale relocation of their treasury to the palace during the reign of Speaker **Mehmeth**).

There is little to see of the temple from the exterior. The beginnings of a new palace were erected during the early years of the speakers, but work stalled and was shifted to the **Palace of Pleasure** instead (possibly for the reasons noted previously). King Hiastamir granted the temple to the **Order of the Dragon** on his ascension to the **Adamantine Palace**, and considerable work was then carried out on behalf of the Order. This was never completed, however, and much of what was built was destroyed during the **War of Thorns**. As with the **Palace of Pleasure**, the scars of this time are still clearly visible. The Order retreated underground; many of the ruins were plundered so that their stone could be used elsewhere (particularly in the reconstruction of the **Palace of Pleasure**). Nowadays only one building remains, on the eastern half of the monolith, with its main entrance facing a small open space to the west. The building has no formal name, but is known among the Order as the **Cathedral of the Air**.

The inside of the temple is entirely unknown outside the rulers of the **Pinnacles** and the priests of the **Order of the Dragon** who have been privileged to be assigned there (they are sent for life, too; priests sent to this temple do not return). The Order claim no treasure is held there and that the temple is a place for priests in the twilight of their lives to end their days in isolated peace and contemplation. Naturally, many suspect the Order of more devious ends but there is nothing to substantiate such claims. It is known, however, that the **Silver King** did make use of the chambers within the Temple of Tranquillity, and what scant documents remain from that time do speak of relics and artefacts to be found there, the most notable being the **Great Chasm**. Most likely, the temple offers the Order an opportunity to study such things away from the prying eyes of my own order.

The priests of the temple have not always been so demure. They were accused of practising **blood-magic** and were executed to a man by Queen Sakabia during the reign of Speaker **Ayzalmir**.

Three Rivers

Three Rivers appears initially to have been founded by **Outsiders** from the **Oordish Moors** as a small, fortified village on a hill overlooking the confluence of the **Esta** and **Bitter** rivers at some point during the rule of the **Silver King**. Its early history is not clear. The settlement was known to the **blood-mages**, who demanded occasional tribute but paid it no great attention. All this changed, however, when a flight of well over fifty dragons sent by the **Order of the Dragon** to capture the **blood-mage** stronghold of **Bazim Crag** was repulsed and retreated to this site. The surviving riders of these dragons recognized that Three Rivers' position at the convergence of three navigable rivers gave it considerable strategic value. Instead of returning to the **Silver City**, they remained where they were, founded an eyrie and, eventually, the realm of the **River Throne**. The original **Outsiders** were persecuted for their religion under the reigns of the various dragon-kings; by the time of the first speakers, the town was completely under the control of the **Order of the Dragon**. Indeed, to a very large extent Three Rivers remained a satellite realm, directed from the **Pinnacles** until the **War of Thorns**.

Following the schism of the **Harvest Throne** and the general collapse of the **Order of the Dragon** as the principle authority within the realms, the **River Throne** became closely allied to **Vishmir**'s reign from **Furymouth**. This influence persists today, and in many ways Three Rivers now appears as a dim reflection of **Furymouth**. What is lacking, of course, is the fabulous wealth generated from Sea King's **Silk Farms** and trade with the **Taiytakei**. Like **Furymouth**, Three Rivers was largely untouched by the purges of Speaker **Ayzalmir** and thus retains a small but highly visible population of **Taiytakei** settlers.

The geography of Three Rivers is dominated by the **Esta**, **Bitter** and **Shalik** rivers that converge to the south of the original hill-fort forming a peninsula, with two more large hills – one to the south and one to the north – overlooking the city, while a large plain sprawls westward along the course of the **Esta** towards the **Fury** valley and **Bonjanland**. In practice, the city is best seen as three small towns separated by the rivers, with the hub of the city on the central peninsula. To the north-west is **Bitter Crossing**, also known as 'the hill that sings', the location for an **Order of the Dragon** school and library, and the centre of arts and learning within the city. The south-west quarter, the 'the hill that works', contains the bulk of the city's population and many marketplaces, including the largest **Taiytakei** market outside of **Furymouth**. The original town was built on the north-east peninsula at the foot of the Three Rivers Hill. This remains the centre of the city administration, while the government of the **River Throne** is carried out within buildings leading up the hill to the palace that sits on its crown (typically, the further up the hill one goes, the more wealthy the inhabitants). A small eyrie remains on the rear slopes of the hill, but its resources are limited; under the influence of **Vishmir**, and having acquired a considerable number of additional dragons from the **War of Thorns**, the area to the south-east of the city now supports a much larger eyrie capable of supporting up to a hundred adult dragons.

The city has few features of any note. The palace of the River King is a simple and unassuming affair compared to the palaces of **Furymouth**, **Evenspire** and, of course, the **Adamantine Palace** itself. The architecture and culture here are generally plain and simple, reflecting the basic nature of life in these parts of the realms.

The **Throne of Salt**

With its capital (and only) city beside distant **Bloodsalt Lake**, and with no territory to speak of except the burning valley of the **Sapphire River**, the Throne of Salt is the least populous of all the dragon-realms save for the **Syuss**. The realm was founded (along with the Thrones of Sand and Stone) by the flight of the **blood-mages** of the **Silver City** after their overthrow by the **Order of the Dragon**. After their flight across the **Plains of Ancestors** and the battle above the **Lake of Ghosts**, one faction of the defeated magi flew east to the **Sapphire River** and then north to what is now **Bloodsalt**, where they landed at the massive fortress that now serves as the heart of the realm's one great eyrie. The realm is a desolate one, with no fertile ground and little food save that which can be taken from the **Sapphire Valley**. The riders of **Bloodsalt** are known to roam far, feeding their dragons from wild herds far to the east in day-long orgies of hunting, then returning and allowing their beasts to starve for weeks (the dragons, it seems, cope with this treatment). **Bloodsalt** produces little, but it is said that the realm survives off the knowledge of the **blood-mages** who founded it. Perhaps more significantly, what it does produce is much of the realms' gold, dug out from deep in the **Desert of Salt**.

Unlike other parts of the realms, **blood-mages** are not persecuted here. Despite this, the realm is courted on and off by most of the other realms and has made many alliances, although usually aligns itself with the other realms of the north. Despite its small size, the Throne of Salt commands many dragons and thus demands considerable respect. Antros, the next destined Speaker of the Realms, is a son of **Bloodsalt**.

The **Throne of Sand and Stone**

The Throne of Sand and Stone was once the Throne of Sand, a thin strip of fertile green along the banks of the **Last River** and **Lake Taval** and **Lake Eyevan** in **Ishmar's Valley** and the vast expanse of the empty **Desert of Sand** to the north. After the Disaster of the **Syuss**, much of the **Desert of Stone** fell to this realm and so it became the Throne of Sand and Stone, reaching as far south as the **Lake of Ghosts** and the **Plains of Ancestors**.

The realm was founded (along with the **Throne of Salt**) by the flight of the blood-mages of the **Silver City** and their subsequent disputes, resulting in one faction flying north-west and settling at **Sand** and **Outwatch**. To this day, the realm has much in common with the **Throne of Salt**. Much of the realm is desolate and the dragon-riders here are prone to wander long and far, searching the emptiness for the lost treasures that both the **Desert of Stone** and the **Desert of Sand** will sometimes reveal.

The significant portion of the realm remains **Ishmar's Valley**, with the realm's capital, **Sand**, at the head of **Lake Taval**. In contrast to the rest of the realm, this valley is quite densely populated and reminds a visitor of the dryer parts of **Bonjanland** during the late summer ebb of the **Fury** (although noticeably warmer). The Throne of Sand and Stone has, by careful alliance and breeding, grown to have one of the greatest eyries in the realms at **Outwatch**, and numbers more dragons under its control than any realm save that of the **King of the Crag**s, not least because of its part in the **War of Thorns**. The realm is courted by most of the other realms and has made many alliances, although usually considers itself to be the leader of a northern alliance along with the **Throne of Salt** and the **Ash Throne**. Antros, the next destined Speaker of the Realms, currently sits on the Throne of Sand and Stone.

The **Throne on the Moors**:

The Throne on the Moors lies in the far east of the realm, sitting high on the jumbled bogs of the **Oordish Moors** overlooking the **Sapphire River** and the plains of **Three Rivers**. In extent, the Throne on the Moors is a vast realm, bounded by the **Desert of Salt** in the north and the steep slopes to the **Sapphire River** in the west, but vanishing into the east as far as a dragon can fly.

The realm was founded by the **blood-mages** of the **Silver City** who successfully fought off attempts by the **Order of the Dragon** to dethrone them (resulting, in passing, in the founding of the **Three Rivers** eyrie). Although time has driven the use of **blood-magic** slowly out of public sight, the rulers of **Bazim Crag** (as with the rulers of **Bloodsalt**) are much more tolerant of its practice than elsewhere in the realms. Indeed, these two realms have much in common as a result of their shared heritage. As in **Bloodsalt**, the riders of **Bazim Crag** are generally content to sally forth across the moors and take what they want, as opposed to the more systematic subjugation and integration of **Outsider** tribes seen elsewhere in the realms.

As a result, although the realm is vast, the significant portion of the realm remains in a localized area to the south around the **Bitter River**, the realm's capital **Bazim Crag** and its second great eyrie, **Dragon Crag**. Elsewhere, the population of the moors is sparse, and even those who live there have learned through long hard years the tricks of hiding from passing dragons and their riders. One of the great trade routes of the realms, **Yinazhin's Way** crosses the moors all the way from north to south; most of the permanent settlements on the moors follow this route.

Despite having heritage closest to that of **Bloodsalt** than any other realm, the kings of **Bazim Crag** are frequently at odds with their kin further north and have tied themselves more to the realms of the south. The current dragon lord King Vishimir was the first speaker from **Bazim Crag** since Yinazhin himself. He has brought a great deal of wealth and prosperity to his realm and has forged a close alliance with the **Harvest Throne** through the marriage of his eldest son, Prince Mazam, to Queen Aliphera of the **Pinnacles**.

The **Tomb of the Silver King**

The body of the **Silver King** was never found, leading to much speculation as to his final resting place. As well as the legendary **Black Mausoleum**, the tomb is reported variously as the **Aardish Caves**, the **Valley of Alchemists**, the tunnels under the **Glass Cathedral** and various parts of the **Pinnacles** including the **Great Chasm**. The caves that swallow the **Silver River** into the **Great Cliff** are even called the **Silver King's Tomb** but sadly, no such tomb has ever been found. In all likelihood, the body of the **Silver King** was destroyed immediately following his death, either by dragon-fire or by being consumed, the latter being the usual practice of the time.

The **Tower of Air**:

The tallest tower in the **Adamantine Palace**, the Tower of Air is also one of the oldest. This was the first tower built by **Narammed** following his rise as first speaker, and was intended to be the first of a quartet to be built extrapolating the four cardinal axes of the **Glass Cathedral**. The second tower, the erstwhile Tower of Fire, became the **Speaker's Tower**. The other two were never started, although designs intended for **Narammed's** Towers of Earth and Water were later used for the City Tower and the **Azure Tower**. For much of his reign, **Narammed** lived in the Tower of Air, but later speakers preferred the larger and grander design of the **Speaker's Tower**.

The tower is notable for its slender height, echoing the descriptions of the mythic moon-palaces apparently related to the first **alchemists** by the **Silver King** and recorded in Arch-Magus **Aeos' De Lunari**. The design is impractical for accommodating a household of any size due to the small number of rooms on each level, the scattered nature of the serving quarters and the separation between the main suites and the servant levels. The tower features one single central staircase for both guests and serving staff (all other towers in the palace have one or more separate staircases for servants). The upper stairs are narrow and steep, and congestion has always been a noted problem even in **Narammed's** time; most famously with the death of Prince Adra of **Evenspire** along with several servants in 166. Nevertheless, despite its limitations, the tower remains the tallest in the palace and is noted for its exceptional views across the **City of Dragons** and the **Mirror Lakes**. It is frequently used for honoured guests (provided they come with a sufficiently small retinue), and several speakers have made it their home for short periods of their reign.

Tyan's Aqueduct

Another legacy of the Arch-Magus Tyan's early designs for the city of **Furymouth** is this aqueduct, which brings water from the **Fury River** over a hundred miles on the exact same course as the river itself. The aqueduct was built in stages, diverting various parts of the **Fury** delta as the construction of **Tyan's Dike** progressed. Although the course of the **Fury** is now similar to that of the aqueduct, this was not always the case. The aqueduct originally served a dual purpose and brought water to Tyan's makeshift eyrie on what is now the **Field of Gorgutinnin**. With the diverting of the river, the aqueduct now serves the rather unique purpose of supplying the **Veid Palace** with somewhat cleaner water than the rest of the city receives direct from the **Fury** itself.

Tyan's Dike

It is said that the Arch-Magus Tyan used more than a hundred dragons and ten thousand men to close off the **Fury River** delta and drain what is now **Tyan's Peninsula**. The legacy of this effort is Tyan's Dike, a long straight ridge of land between twenty and thirty feet above the level of the nearby **Fury River**, and in places up to a hundred feet across. The dike runs from the mouth of the **Fury River** at **Furymouth** to **Numenport** in the **Bay of Still Water**. Later kings of **Furymouth** paved the top of the dike, effectively establishing a quick and reliable route from the city across the peninsula to the bay.

Tyan's Peninsula

During the time of the **Silver King**, histories record that the **Fury River** separated into a myriad of channels that flowed through what is now Tyan's Peninsula. In the second decade after the passing of the **Silver King**, the Arch-Magus Tyan claimed the region as his own and moved to what is now **Furymouth** along with fifty dragons. Using dragons themselves as his principle labour force, he constructed **Tyan's Dike**, diverting the flow of the **Fury** around the side of the peninsula. The swamps and channels of the delta slowly drained, resulting in this large low-lying area of land just east of **Furymouth**. Tyan's original interest in the land was harvesting the cypress trees that were once ubiquitous there. These are now largely gone, but the land has proven itself every bit as fertile as **Bonjanland** and now provides the bulk of the food needed to support the city of **Furymouth** and its surrounding settlements. The peninsula is well populated but villages here are exposed and low-lying, regularly being blown or washed away by typhoons blowing in from the **Sea of Storms**. There are no towns of any note on the peninsula, and the inhabitants here live in a semi-nomadic way reminiscent of the people of **Bonjanland** (from whom they descend). The peninsula is also home to the **Silk Farms**.

The Unnamed Dragonslayer

It is recorded in history that Speaker **Narammed** single-handedly slew a dragon, and it was this act that resulted in the dragon-lords bowing their knee to him and the rise of the speakers. Popular folklore is somewhat different, however, and attributes the act to a nameless follower – one of the band of soldiers who were one day to become the **Adamantine Men**. There are many statues throughout the realms depicting the Unnamed Dragonslayer, of which the most famous (and the largest, in that the dragon is half life-sized) is the one in the **Circus of Dragons**. The statue shows a writhing dragon with a naked man standing on its head, both hands raised, poised to plunge a sword into the dragon's head. The statue is unusual in that it depicts the warrior as carrying a sword; most statues of the unnamed dragonslayer depict a soldier with a spear, and the spear was a much more common weapon at the time. The reason for the sword in the **Circus of Dragons** statue is simple and banal – during the **War of Thorns**, the original pure silver spear was stolen. Believing that the statue somehow protected them and that their city would burn if the statue was incomplete, the city fathers could not wait for a new spear to be forged, replacing it by something more easily to hand – a two-handed sword.

'No one knows his name. Whoever he was he certainly didn't kill a dragon by standing on its head and bashing it with a sword. But the point remains.' – **The Night Watchman**

Valin's Fields

Following **Vishmir**'s victory in the **War of Thorns**, the eyries of both **Clifftop** and of the **River Throne** were considerably swollen. The eyrie at **Three Rivers** was no longer able to support the River King's dragons, so a new eyrie was built at Valin's Fields – a previously small and unassuming market village. The location was chosen with some shrewdness; its position allowed much better protection of the **Fishing Coast** from the problem of **Outsider** raiders from **Excorban's Coast**. However, it is notable that the new eyrie was positioned directly in line with the River King's new 'best friends' in the **Veid Palace**, and it may be that the eyrie was built with as much of an eye to **Vishmir** and the dragons of **Furymouth** as to any matters at sea. It is said that the Valin from whom the eyrie takes its name was a pig-farmer, and that the **alchemists**' residence stands where his pigs once foraged – hence its nickname of 'The Sty'.

The Valley of Alchemists

Hidden deep within the **Worldspine** somewhere north of the **Purple Spur** lies a valley surrounded by towering cliff walls. A small river of little consequence emerges from a complex of caves at one end of the valley and meanders through the canyon to its end. There is a little village here, like any other among the mountains – but this village hides a secret. Camped in the trees nearby lives a legion of the speaker's **Adamantine Men**, and in the caves at the back of the valley lies the secret that harnesses the mighty dragon to our will.

Here in these caves are the **alchemists**, the men and women who protect the realms from monsters with skill, knowledge and a power forged over hundreds of years of careful study. Some say that the **Silver King**'s last resting place was here, and not in his 'tomb' under the **Great Cliff**. Others say that the **Silver King** still lives, deep within the mountain tunnels, or that some other beast or monster far more terrible than any dragon dwells within, kept pacified by daily human sacrifice. Some even say that the men given up in offering go willingly, knowing what purpose they serve. None of this is true, of course, but one thing is: the valley is a hidden place known only to a few. It is a place that has sheltered men from the savagery of dragons for a millennium and may one day do so again. It is a place of power and learning, of strength and knowledge, and it shall not fall.

Valleyford

At the mouth of **Gliding Dragon Gorge**, as the terraced cliffs disperse and fall away, you will find the town of Valleyford. Sat on the eastern bank of the **Fury**, this is a trading town; a glorified marketplace where east meets west and north meets south. Goods travelling down the river from the **Worldspine** and from the **Evenspire Road** cross with cargoes sailing up from **Furymouth**, **Farakkan** and **Purkan**. Caravans fresh from the **Pinnacles** cross the river here en route to **Bittersbridge** and **Bazim Crag**, while weary convoys from as far away as **Bloodsalt** finally reach the end of **Yinazhin's Way** here. Only the **Taiytakei** markets in **Furymouth** offer a more diverse range of goods than those of Valleyford. Similarly diverse lodgings and many raucous entertainments can also be found here for those unwilling to wait for the more refined pleasures of one of the larger cities of the realms. A small palace of alchemy has been founded in Valleyford and offers free shelter and lodgings to members of the Order.

The Veid Palace

In 103, in parallel with the ongoing construction in other parts of the city, King Tyan I built a small palace on the current site of the Veid Palace overlooking the **Field of Gorgutinnin**. In 136, following a stay in the **Tower of Air** as **Narammed's** guest immediately after its completion in 135, Tyan I ordered a substantial expansion of the palace. Construction was sporadic due to Tyan's inability to finance his ambition, and was only completed some years after his death. Little remains, however, as much of the palace was demolished almost a hundred years later to make way for the grand vision of **Vishmir the Great**. **Vishmir** also gave the new palace its name, Veid, which is taken from a particular **Taiytakei** dialect rarely encountered in the realms; it literally means 'House of Gods'.

Building began in the years shortly after the **War of Thorns**, starting with a small series of ornamental lakes fed by **Tyan's Aqueduct** and several immense monoliths dragged by dragons all the way from the **Desert of Stone** (it is likely that the lakes were intended to recall the **Mirror Lakes** while the stones echo the cliffs of the **Purple Spur**, but as virtually no records remain of the palace construction, **Vishmir's** true intent is lost). The palace followed, and was finally completed in 235.

The design is unusual, eschewing the traditional series of layered gates, towers and walled yards in favour of a more open structure. There are entrances to the palace on all four sides, allegedly signifying the importance **Vishmir** attached to acceptance and openness; inside the palace complex there are many separate small structures, all linked together by elevated paths and walkways through diverse gardens, generating a multi-level effect that can be quite disorientating to those not used to the palace. Throughout are dragon-trees, each associated with a historical event within the realms. There are many memorial plaques that commemorate past speakers and kings of **Furymouth**. The palace also includes an exquisitely decorated library that used to house the complete writings of **Prince Lai**; unfortunately, much of these were lost in a fire in 298.

The palace has a great reputation for secret places. In part this stems from its size, and the unstructured and multi-levelled layout that tends to mean even regular visitors routinely find themselves in unfamiliar places. However, a network of underground passages is known to exist that allows those who have access to move around the palace unseen; indeed, on close inspection several of the buildings within the palace have no discernible entrance or exit. Most famously one underground passage leads directly to the royal enclosure at the racecourse on the **Field of Gorgutinnin**. The palace is also famous for its many solars – semi-open rooms at the top of tall narrow towers. The towers themselves are hardly impressive compared to those of the **Adamantine Palace** or the **Palace of Paths**, but make up for their relatively small size in their numbers, which probably approach a hundred in total.

As with **Vishmir's** tomb in the **Aardish Caves**, mystery surrounds the fate of those who designed and built the palace. Several were certainly retained by **Vishmir** and had a part in building his tomb. However, stories persist that the architects and craftsmen, together with their families, were rounded up and transported into the **Rakshah Forest** en masse – ostensibly to work on the tomb, but in fact to be slaughtered so that the Veid Palace might keep its secrets. This last part appears to be speculation, but there does seem to be some weight of evidence to suggest that many of those involved did indeed abruptly depart the city. There have also been several second-hand accounts of **Taiytakei** traders arriving in **Furymouth** after **Vishmir's** death and describing slaves they had met from the realms prior to their travels as '**Vishmir's** builders'.

Vishmir / Vishmir the Great:

Born in 197, Vishmir the Great perhaps should have been called ‘Vishmir the Busy’. He was an artisan, artist, armourer, blacksmith, carpenter, Emperor, General, and inventor; a trainer of animals (although he notoriously had no love for his dragons, he had at least a thousand hunting cheetahs that he trained himself), a technologist and a theologian. But that is not why Vishmir is called ‘the Great’ and has his own tomb in the **Aardish Caves**. Vishmir was twenty-four when the **War of Thorns** began and already well known for his many achievements. By the time he was thirty, he had become Speaker of the Realms by force and his enemies were smashed – even though they had both outnumbered him with their dragons and included the **Order of the Dragon** itself. Over the course of his reign, he doubled the size of the realms and at one point controlled over 1000 dragons.

These are the things history speaks of in the stories of Vishmir, yet he was far from being a mere destroyer and conqueror. Vishmir laid the blame for the **War of Thorns** squarely with the **Order of the Dragon** and was ruthless in his oppression of them; yet his lenience to his other enemies was famous, evidenced by the fact that he allowed all the defeated kings and queens to restock their eyries over the course of his reign. He brought art and literature to prominence across the realms, initiated considered debate on religion and actively pursued relations with the **Taiytakei**. His rule as effective emperor of the realms from 227 to 249 left him regarded as the greatest of all the speakers and a man of great courage, tolerance, intelligence and nobility. Remarkably, Vishmir made no attempt to found a dynasty and even had the foresight to have a new speaker chosen according to the **Act of Narammed** shortly before his death. Vishmir presided over the **Great Dragon Hunt**, and it is argued by some that the apparent unity of the realms during his reign had more to do with the dragons missing after the **War of Thorns** than with his abilities as Speaker; but this, however, is a naïve reading of the events of Vishmir’s reign.

Vishmir was as fascinated by the legendary **Tomb of the Silver King** as his predecessor and took a great interest in the **Aardish Caves**. In great secrecy, he designed his own tomb prior to his death and had it built deep within the caves. The exact location is shrouded in secrecy and known only to a few of our order. Two much-repeated stories with no apparent basis in truth persist: the first is that Vishmir did not die, but was made forever young by a **Taiytakei** sorcerer and sailed away on one of their ships; the second is that the true **Adamantine Spear** from the **Silver King** was buried with Vishmir, and the current spear held in the **Speaker’s Tower** is a replica. Neither are true, but that does not mean that you will not find numerous places across the realms claiming to be Vishmir’s tomb or his last resting place before he sailed across the **Endless Sea**, and many other tall tales.

Vishmir's Column

To raise the image of his new capital, **Vishmir** brought works of art from all over the realms to adorn it. The smaller of these monuments were set up in the walled grounds of the newly rebuilt **Veid Palace**, while those deemed too large were scattered around the **Field of Gorgutinnin**. Among these was the Tripod of **Feljanford**, now known as Vishmir's Column and allegedly cast to celebrate the victory of the sun over the moon during the time of the **Silver Kings**.

The top was adorned with a golden bowl supported by three serpent-headed columns. The bowl was destroyed or stolen long before the coming of the **Silver King** (or possibly never existed), and two of the serpent heads were destroyed later, as early pictures from after the taming of the dragons show they were intact at that time. The distance between **Feljanford** and the **Silver City** meant that flights over the area were rare, and by the time **Bazim Crag** had been founded and the new lords there had set to a proper exploration of the moors and uplands, two of the three heads were gone. In 241, **Vishmir** had the last column brought to **Furymouth**. The legend was recast so that the column commemorates the victory of the **alchemists** and speakers and **Vishmir** himself over the dragons.

Voranin

Voranin was Speaker of the Realms from 218 to 222. Like his predecessors in **Evenspire**, Voranin was an advocate of the Dragon-Blood of Kings – the belief that the dragon-kings and queens received their power from the blood of the dragons themselves that flowed in their veins. His father, King Aose, listened to the views of his subjects and favoured compromise and consensus. Voranin, on the other hand, was shy and diffident, but also self-righteous, stubborn, opinionated, determined, confrontational and heavily drawn to the more apocalyptic teachings of the **Great Flame** as championed by the priest **Anzuine**. He believed he had no need to compromise or even to explain his decrees, and also that he was only answerable to the Divine Dragon (he also believed the **Silver King** to be a messenger of the Divine Dragon and launched several efforts to find the **Tomb of the Silver King** before his death). He famously said: ‘Speakers are not bound to give an account of their actions but to the dragons alone.’ Upon his ascension as speaker he was greatly encouraged in these beliefs by the incumbent high priest **Anzuine**, and there were fears as early as 219 that the two of them planned to abolish the **Act of Narammed** and establish a theocracy. This fear, as much as anything, was the cause of the **War of Thorns**.

Distrust of Voranin increased with his support of a wandering priest named Rimatagu. A fanatical **Taiytakei** convert to the **Order of the Dragon**, Rimatagu had argued against the **Act of Narammed** and the separation of the **Order of the Scales** from his own Order. Voranin briefly made the cleric one of his royal chaplains, increasing many suspicions as to where he would lead the realms (Rimatagu was later tried and executed for Voranin’s murder; although he was clearly innocent of this, not a voice of protest was raised, even from within the **Order of Dragons**). These suspicions were further exacerbated by his eagerness to involve the dragon-kings and queens in the growing religious disputes in the eastern realms, disputes that effectively became the **War of Thorns** once the dragon-kings were eventually drawn in.

In early 219, Speaker Voranin called a council of kings and queens, and indicated a desire to levy taxation on all goods travelling through the sphere of control of the **Adamantine Palace**; these monies to be levied for the general good of the realms. Although moderate in his tone, Voranin’s intent to fund the religious uprisings in the east was well understood. Opposition was venomous, particularly from the eastern realms themselves – this despite the fact that the dragon-kings and queens had remained loftily apart from the conflict.

After failing in this, Voranin sought other means to acquire funds in order to maintain his treasury, including the reintroduction of an obsolete tax on traffic on the **Fury River** – but this proved even more unpopular and led directly to the creation of the **Order of the Finger**. Many boats attempted to resist payment, but the **Order of the Dragon** declared that the tax was within the speaker’s prerogative and legions of the **Adamantine Men** were soon dispatched to enforce this. The collection was a major concern to the southern dragon-kings who depended on the **Fury River** trade for their revenues.

Voranin made no secret of his wish to move the realms towards a more traditional theological direction and fully supported High Priest **Anzuine**. However, when he attempted to impose his religious views across the realms he met with furious resistance, particularly from the courts of **Sand** and **Furymouth**. His efforts to raise taxes to fund further dragon-brother uprisings and escape the financial crisis that ensued were equally reviled.

In 212, Voranin had married Princess **Arlan** of **Sand**, nine years his junior. In 221 he finally witnessed her infidelity (which had been allegedly frequent) and had both her and her lover executed. In 222, an unknown assassin gained entrance to the speaker’s apartments. The following morning, Speaker Voranin was found dead. He had been neatly dissected, his limbs removed and his internal organs neatly arranged around his bedchamber. It is commonly thought that the murder was sponsored by **Vishmir** (in direct response to Voranin’s execution of one of **Vishmir**’s cousins for

his liaison with Queen **Arlan**), and that the killer was a paid **Taiytakei** assassin. Although the priest Rimatagu was tried and executed for Voranin's murder, no clues as to the true assassin's identity have been found.

Despite questions over his true parentage, Voranin's son and heir Voian succeeded him after his murder, reigning briefly before his removal by High Priest **Anzuine** forced the **War of Thorns** to its climax.

The War of Thorns

The War of Thorns is commonly thought to have occurred as a direct result of the execution of Queen **Arlan** by Speaker **Voranin** in 221, but this perception is false; the causes were many and had little to do with Queen **Arlan**'s death. The doctrine of the **Great Flame** as espoused by **Anzuine** and Speaker **Voranin** had led to strife in parts of the realms for at least a decade before the dragon-kings and queens were drawn into the conflict. The lords and princes of the **Pinnacles** were involved in their own bitter power struggles for the **Harvest Throne**, and **Voranin** and **Anzuine** were a convenient excuse for actions on both sides. Even then, the involvement of the dragon-lords had more to do with their anger at **Voranin**'s attempts to tax them than with anything else. The execution was, in the end, little more than an excuse for the new King **Vishmir** of **Furymouth** to take up arms – and he was likely more upset by the execution of the queen's lover, who happened to be his cousin.

Vishmir formed an unlikely alliance with the King of **Sand** and the River King, and began to petition for the removal of **Anzuine**. Despite the common belief that **Vishmir** went to war against Speaker **Voranin**, the truth is once again quite different; indeed, it is possible the war may have been averted entirely if **Voranin** hadn't himself been murdered in 222. Control of the **Adamantine Palace** fell to the **Order of the Dragon** who crowned **Voranin**'s son Voian as their puppet and then imprisoned him. The dragon-war began later that year with **Vishmir**'s spectacular yet unsuccessful attack on the **Adamantine Palace** – here, a substantial part of his dragon-riders were brought down by new scorpion weapons wielded with great effect by the **Adamantine Men** (the weapons had been imported by **Anzuine** from the **Taiytakei**). For the next two years, **Vishmir** suffered a series of relatively inconsequential defeats as the war flickered and sputtered, and it wasn't until 225 and the firing of **Arys Crossing** that the war remembered by history truly began.

Over the course of 226 a series of battles across the realms left dozens of towns burned to ash; yet perhaps the most decisive moment was following the sack of the **Silver City** when, on the brink of apparent victory, **Anzuine** executed Speaker Voian and declared divine rule. A year later, the war was over. A substantial portion of **Anzuine**'s dragons had vanished along with his marshal (triggering the **Great Dragon Hunt** and the founding of the **Mountain Throne**), **Prince Lai** had mounted scorpions on the backs of **Vishmir**'s dragons (a practice now common in every other realm, yet rejected as somehow ignoble by the very realm that first put the idea into effect!) and **Vishmir** landed his dragon unopposed in the Gateyard of the **Adamantine Palace**. The **Order of the Dragon** was effectively destroyed.

The idea of trying a high priest was a novel one; previous autarchs had been deposed, murdered or exiled, but had never been brought to trial as priests. **Anzuine**'s trial on charges of high treason and 'other high crimes' began in late 227, but the priest refused to enter a plea, claiming that no one but the **Great Flame** had jurisdiction over a priest of the Order. Over a period of several weeks, whenever **Anzuine** was asked to plead, he refused. The trial proceeded regardless under **Vishmir**'s direction, and reached its inevitable verdict. By unanimous accord, the kings and queens of the realms, who only months ago had been at war, decreed that the **War of Thorns** was the work of the high priest **Anzuine**, and that he must die. After the ruling, he was led from the **Adamantine Palace**, where he had been confined, to the **Circus of Dragons** where an execution scaffold had been erected in front of the statue of the **Unnamed Dragonslayer**. At the execution it is reputed that **Anzuine** wore two cotton shirts so as to prevent the cold weather from causing any noticeable shivers that could be mistaken for fear. He was beheaded with one clean stroke. His body was carried to the **Fury River** gorge and cast off a cliff. Many searched for his remains in the days that followed but the corpse was never found.

Various portents were recorded in relation to the execution – including a beached whale near **Furymouth** that died within an hour of the high priest, a falling star which appeared that night over the

Purple Spur and a man who had said that **Anzuine** deserved to die who then had his eyes pecked out by crows – but when scrutinized, most of them were found to have occurred long before or after the event itself; many have since been found to be complete fictions.

Watersgate

The market town of Watersgate sits on the **Hungry Mountain Plains** at the edge of **Gliding Dragon Gorge**. Since the **War of Thorns** it has grown to be the largest and most important settlement on the plains, and the source of its prosperity is a narrow valley that winds down to meet the Fury River at **Plags Bay** below. Several such routes down to the **Fury** exist between **Plags Bay** and **Valleyford**, cut by small tributary rivers that run out from the **Oordish Moors**; however, the route from Watersgate down to the **Fury** is also the last available route up from **Gliding Dragon Gorge** to the plains above before **Hanzen's Camp**. After the **War of Thorns**, **Vishmir** built a road to make the route passable to wagons. The opening of the road from **Plags Bay** up to Watersgate (a trip of about a day on foot) made Watersgate the town it is now: a bustling marketplace, the start of the **Evenspire Road** and the gateway for most trade between the realms of the north and those of the south. Consequently the old land route to **Valleyford**, some hundred miles further downriver, has fallen into disuse.

The path from Watersgate down to **Plags Bay** has probably been known for centuries. However, the route first came to prominence earlier during the **War of Thorns**, when **Vishmir** attempted to ship thousands of soldiers from the south along the **Fury** to **Plags Bay** and then up to the **Hungry Mountain Plains**. While **Vishmir's** dragons fought with Speaker Voian's riders in the skies above, **Vishmir's** soldiers attempted to fight their way up the valley to Watersgate. Several thousand **Adamantine Men** had already been forced to withdraw by **Vishmir's** dragons, but a half-legion remained in Watersgate. Outnumbered by more than ten to one, they successfully defended the valley and forced the southern soldiers into a retreat. Although **Vishmir** won a marginal victory in the air, his losses there were too great for any assault on the **Adamantine Palace** itself without soldiers on the ground, forcing him to withdraw. The victory of the **Adamantine Men** at Watersgate probably prolonged the **War of Thorns** by two years, and it might also have resulted in defeat for **Vishmir** and his allies had it not been for High Priest **Anzuine's** sacking of the **Silver City** and the execution of Speaker Voian.

The **Watrabos Gardens**

Along the shores of the most easterly of the **Mirror Lakes** lie the Watrabos Gardens; they sit at the edge of the **City of Dragons**, nestled against the cliffs and permanently damp under the spray of the **Diamond Cascade**. Created by the **alchemist** Warzan Watrabos in order to replace the failed menagerie, the gardens contain exhibits from across most of the realms (with the exception of the relatively dry and desolate areas to the north of the **Purple Spur**), and by far the most popular of these are the Pleasure Grounds. Here, you will find an unusual range of romantic structures and unexpected features, all of which are linked by a network of walks lined by a magnificent collection of historic trees and shrubs; these are cunningly planted and arranged to deflect the majority of the damp drifting through from the lowest parts of the **Diamond Cascade**. Further on, in the parts of the garden more directly under the falls, a riot of luxuriant foliage, outstanding trees, exotic plantings and inspiring views is designed to recreate the thick rain-forested valleys of the southern **Worldspine**. Finally, in a steep-sided valley cleft (which is always strangely and noticeably warm) there flourishes an exotic palette of plants brought back from the eastern extents of the realms.

The Worldspine

The Worldspine defines the western edge of the known world. The mountains begin as sharp peaks split apart by wide valleys filled with thick forests, ribbon lakes and fast shallow rivers. The Worldspine is the least known and least explored edge of the realms. It is ruled by the secretive but powerful **Mountain King** and is the dragon-realm that owes least to the edicts and whims of the Speakers of the **Adamantine Palace**.

The eastern edge of the spine appears as a series of jagged spurs of mountain land rising very steeply from the **Raksheh Forest** in the south and the **Blackwind Hills** in the north. The summits of the eastern edge are typically between around ten miles further west and are clearly visible from as far away as **Evenspire** and **Drotan's Top**. In the south, heavy rains are common in the high parts of the spine, producing a very steep and dissected landscape with deep valleys, steep rivers, gorges, and sharp ridges. The high rainfall also favours the growth of dense and continuous forest, which further contributes to the wildness and impenetrability of these mountains; for much of their southern extent, the only distinction between the Worldspine and the **Raksheh Forest** is a topological one and visible only from the air. Deeper into the mountains the rain turns to snow, and large snow-fields, glaciers and ice plateaus can be found.

North of the **Purple Spur**, the mountain rains dwindle rapidly to almost nothing. The peaks here are further apart and formed into bands running from south-west to north-east; these are separated by basins, wide braided river valleys with lakes and extensive moraines and terraces. The rivers here are small compared to those further south but still fast-moving, and the valleys can be subject to sudden flooding following any of the rare rains. North of the **Last River** there is very little vegetation at all, with extensive bare ground and debris, while even in the valley beds there is only meagre foresting to be found. All these contribute to a dry and eroded appearance that extends far beyond the edge of the Worldspine itself, and into the **Desert of Stone**.

The interior of the Worldspine is little known. As one adventures deeper, the valleys become steeper; the peaks more jagged, violent and barren. Snow and ice quickly dominate the landscape. Exploration is limited to flights on dragon-back, and these have been few and far between. As far as anyone knows, the mountains grow ever higher, the ice-fields and glaciers ever deeper, the air ever thinner and ever colder. If there is an 'other side' to the Worldspine, it is a new world, a new realm, a place as yet undiscovered. A place free of dragons, perhaps?

The Yamuna River

Many rivers flow out of the rain-drenched southern mountains of the **Worldspine** and into the **Rakshah Forest**, but such is the geography of the forest that only one river flows out: the mighty Yamuna, which merges with the **Fury** some seventy miles later at **Farakkan**. The Yamuna is one of the three great rivers of the realms (the others being the **Esta** and, of course, the **Fury** itself). However, unlike the others, much of the course of the Yamuna is a mystery. The banks are well populated during its course through **Bonjanland**, but once one reaches the treeline of the **Rakshah Forest**, habitation quickly dwindles to a few scattered villages, the isolated huts and shacks of woodland hunters and trappers – and then nothing. Beyond the first few dozen miles into the forest, the river becomes a wild place, travelled only by **alchemists**, herbalists and the like. The **Aardish Caves**, several hundred miles further up-river, are usually reached on dragon-back.

Travel on the Yamuna River (even in **Bonjanland**) can be a hazard, and precautions must be taken because of the presence in the river of **Yamuna Worm**.

Yamuna Worm

You will see few boats on the waters of the **Yamuna**, and those that ply between the **Rakshah Forest** and **Farakkan** are substantial and sturdy constructions. This is because of the presence in the river of a worm-like creature known as the Yamuna Worm. Yamuna Worm can be found from any size, ranging from the length of a finger to many strides from end to end. The worms live in the deeper waters of the river and prey on whatever they can find there; on occasion, however, they can appear close to the surface and even breach the water (the sight of a large Yamuna Worm breaking the surface is perhaps the source of legends concerning river-dragons). The Yamuna Worm is capable of expanding itself to many times its normal size by explosively sucking huge quantities of water (and whatever else happens to be there) into itself. This is its primary means of hunting for food, but in the case of a large worm this process is quite capable of sucking in a man or even a horse, and of overturning small boats. The worms are also capable of a burst of disturbing speed through a reversal of this process.

In **Bonjanland** they speak of the Yamuna Worm as a single monster that inhabits the river, moving from place to place, but this is incorrect. Killing a young worm is seen by some as an omen of bad luck, but in more enlightened places Yamuna Worm is considered a delicacy: “Yamuna strips” can easily be found for sale in the markets of **Farakkan** and **Furymouth** and even as far as the **Pinnacles** and **Three Rivers**.

Yinazhin's Way

Named after the first Speaker of the Realms to come from **Bazim Crag**, Yinazhin's Way opened up a land route across the **Oordish Moors** and the **Desert of Salt** from **Bazim Crag** to **Bloodsalt**. Travel by land from **Bloodsalt** had previously required navigation of the difficult **Sapphire River** or the **Desert of Stone**, both of which remain home to **Outsider** bands and plagued with banditry to this day.

Yinazhin's Way starts at **Valleyford**, the entry point for the **Fury River** at the mouth of **Gliding Dragon Gorge**, and meanders along the lower edge of the moors to **Bittersbridge** before starting the winding climb to **Bazim Crag**. The bulk of the route, however, traverses the western edge of the **Oordish Moors** before spending a few days crossing the **Desert of Salt**, fording the sluggish **Sapphire River** near the mouth of **Bloodsalt Lake** and arriving at **Bloodsalt** itself. Each end of the route is relatively safe, guarded and patrolled by dragon-riders from **Bloodsalt** and **Bazim Crag**; however, for the great traverse of the moors there are few settlements, and travellers for the most part are obliged to forage for food and shelter. These parts of Yinazhin's Way are wild and unguarded, and raids by bandits and **Outsider** tribes from the moors are a constant threat. Travel along Yinazhin's Way is usually done in large groups and as regular convoys travel which can have as many as a hundred wagons and full company of soldiers riding guard. Lone travellers are advised to join one of these convoys; if this is not possible then they should ensure they have a fast horse, and will doubtless find the heavily fortified settlements and way stations (few though they are) a very welcome break.

Zar Oratorium

A little to the left of the **Diamond Cascade**, as viewed from the **Adamantine Palace**, there can be seen a large step in the cliff face with a natural stone half-bowl behind it. Closer inspection shows that the bowl appears to have been carved into steps. That is in fact the case, as since the reign of **Ayzalmir** the bowl has become the famous Zar Oratorium.

The oratorium was started in 271 and officially completed in 287, although intermittent performances were put on throughout **Ayzalmir**'s reign. It was largely the work of the enigmatic **alchemist** Adrunian Zar, and it was his determination and force of personality that saw the construction through to completion. Using only a handful of skilled stonemasons, Zar cut granite terraces from the natural amphitheatre of the cliff, in-filling with earth, small stones and pebbles shovelled down from the higher ledges and lined with cypress wood. All this work took place on the slope above a sheer drop into the **Mirror Lakes** – the stage stands a hundred and fifty strides above the lakes, and the terraces rise for yet another thirty.

In some ways, the biggest marvel is the oratorium's staircase – a whole stride wide, it is carved into the sheer cliffs beneath the theatre and provides the only means of access. A substantial lift and pulley system also exists for carrying props and performers to the stage, and is freely available to the patrons of the theatre; nevertheless, using the steps is a matter of pride among those who are of sound body, and although the ascent is precipitous, accidents are rare. It is also true that there are numerous stories of dragon-princes successfully landing a dragon on the stage, but none of these has ever been substantiated.

When he started, Zar never intended for the oratorium to be put to use for public entertainments. Instead, what he planned was a place where the great ceremonies of the realms, such as the naming of a speaker, could take place in full view of the **City of Dragons** below. The idea of using the oratorium as a theatre came later, but Zar embraced it with enthusiasm. The first performance was put on in 280 (Zar had intended the oratorium to be complete for the naming of Speaker **Ayzalmir**, but marginally failed in this ambition), although refinements and extensions continued for some years after this. Performances occur at various different times throughout the years except for winter, when the afternoon and evening sun tends to shine too directly behind the stage and makes for unpleasant viewing. The most prestigious performance times are very early summer mornings, when a low sun shines straight across the stage from the east through the haze of the **Diamond Cascade** and creates the most vivid rainbows.