

P R I M E V A L

THE

TRAVELER'S GUIDE



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PRIMEVAL THULE

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THULE: THE PRIMEVAL CONTINENT

It is a land of deep jungles and golden seas, mysterious and unexplored.

It is a land of knife-edged mountains and deadly glaciers, trackless and forbidding.

It is an age when humankind is a young race, newly arisen on an ancient and monster-haunted Earth. Mighty cities and sprawling empires rise and fall, weaving a tale of great deeds and epic tragedies that will be lost and forgotten by the peoples who came later. Even the land itself is fated to fall beneath the numbing cloak of endless winter, burying the triumphs and defeats of this vanished age beneath miles of ice.

But for this glittering moment in the slow dream of time, Thule lives—and it is a fierce, cruel, splendid, and marvelous moment indeed.

*Thanks to all our
Kickstarter backers!
Here's an overview of
what Primeval Thule
is all about.*

*(It's remarkably similar
to the first chapter
of the Primeval Thule
Campaign Setting.)*

Salutations, Mighty King! As you have commanded, so have I done; within this codex lies all that I could discover of the lost land of north, the primeval continent of Thule. This manuscript is the summation of the Atlantean scrolls that still remain to be read, the scryings and divinations of your seers, and the accounts and tales of a dozen far-wandering travelers. I must tell you that much that was once known is now forgotten. The libraries of Atlantis lie under the waves, and we live in a darker and more ignorant world than our noble ancestors. I have done what I can; may my unworthy writings prove illuminating and sate your royal curiosity.

At your instruction, I begin with what all know, assuming nothing.

Thule lies far in the northern reaches of the Earth, but these lands are still kissed by the long centuries of summer. It is a wide and wild land, stretching more than two thousand miles from the Shields of Sunset in distant Nar to the shores of the Boreal Sea. North and west from this untamed continent lie the mighty islands of Hellumar and frozen Nimoth, and beyond those, the strange and untraveled isles of the polar seas where no man goes. To the south lies the great Atlantean Ocean, whose distant shores touch on scores of lands, including your own enlightened realm.

It is also a land of mysterious cities, wicked and decadent, home to proud warriors and sly thieves. It is a land of savagery and splendor, grim heroes and prehuman monsters, wonders and terrors enough to fill the ebon scrolls of Katagia or the council-fires of the Narthan tribes with a thousand incredible tales. This is Thule, beautiful and deadly, primal and untamed. And, whatever else it may be, it is above all a land of adventure—and terror.

BOLD HEROES, DEADLY DANGERS

In Thule, deadly peril and glittering opportunity walk hand-in-hand. A brave hunter from a savage tribe goes single-handed to face an evil from beyond the stars that threatens her people; a sly thief from the teeming markets of Quodeth hatches a scheme to pillage the tower of a dread sorcerer; a wandering sellsword stumbles across the ruins of a lost city and battles brutal beast-men for a ruby the size of a man's fist. It is a land of mystery, wonder, and danger, a place where a man or woman with nerves of steel and a strong sword-hand—or perhaps mastery of forbidden lore—can carve his or her name in the annals of fate.

In this grim and brutal setting, some heroes fight for tribe or city, and some fight simply to survive. But it must be said, Majesty, that most adventurers are sellswords and freebooters with no higher ambition than to carve out their fortunes however they can. The prospect of gold and glory is all they need to draw them on, and even though most will die terrible deaths

in far-off places, a few may make themselves princes... or even kings.

SAVAGE WILDERNESS

To find deadly adventure, all a native of Thule need do is strike out into the continent's untamed wilderness. Civilization clings to the edges of the continent in tiny pockets and footholds surrounded by vast unexplored lands. The great majority of Thule is unsettled, and roads or trails are few and far between. A few old Atlantean highways link some of the larger cities in and around the Inner Sea, and swift merchant galleys create tenuous lines of communication across these uncharted waters, but most of Thule's civilized folk never leave the safety of their cities. Even the hardest barbarian tribes are hesitant to wander far from their familiar territory.

You must understand, O king, that the sheer ruggedness of Thule's wild landscape is a daunting obstacle in its own right. The coasts are ringed by towering mountain ranges with few passes. The interior is a steaming basin of jungles and swamps, trackless and home to countless dangerous beasts. And the northern marches of this primeval land are under assault by a deadly and terrible foe, the implacable glaciers that every year creep closer to the verdant jungles and opulent cities of Thule's heartland. Already a quarter of the continent lies in the grasp of unending winter, and an ever-widening band of dying forest and windswept tundra marks the malevolent influence of the merciless ice. Mountains, jungles, swamps, tundra, glaciers—these are hard and dangerous lands, and they swallow many a traveler without a trace.

Terrain and weather are certainly dangerous enough, but the true peril of Thule's wilderness lies in the savagery and bloodthirstiness of the beasts and monsters that roam the wild. Many terrible creatures long since vanished from the gentler lands of the world still linger in Thule: saber-tooth cats, huge vipers, hulking mammoths, and ill-tempered giant sloths. In Thule, nature is most definitely red in tooth and claw...and if savage beasts were not enough, the wilderness is also home to many warlike barbarian tribes. Outside the dubious safety of the city walls, a traveler can expect to find the hands of all other men and women turned against him—along with the fangs and claws of ferocious beasts, ancient horrors, and degenerate half-human savages.

RUINED CITIES AND LOST LANDS

Because Thule is both ancient and largely unexplored, many strange and forgotten things lie hidden in the depths of its wilderness. Dozens of cities have risen in its green hills or deep valleys, flourished and prospered, then fallen into ruin through ages of decay or sudden horrible catastrophe. Remote jungles or isolated mountain valleys are home to all sorts of wonders—and



evils—whose existence is not even guessed at in the wider world. A stretch of trackless jungle might be home to terrible beasts such as chimeras, hydras, or lamias that are supposed to exist only in legends and fables; an unscaled plateau might harbor the ruins of a city whose people died in a plague of vampirism; a forbidden gorge might be the homeland of a degenerate tribe of cannibals ruled over by the bloated spawn of Tsathoggua.

Most Thuleans are happy to let lost cities remain lost, but every now and then a bold barbarian or arrogant sorcerer stumbles across fantastic wealth in the depths of black peril. Treasuries filled with ancient gold, scrolls holding secrets of power, artifacts of magical might—many such things have been recovered from the world's forgotten lands. The most adventurous heroes seek out these places, risking life, limb, and sanity for the chance to strike it rich.

TYRANNY AND CORRUPTION

Given the many dangers and dark secrets of Thule's wilderness, your Supreme Majesty would doubtless deem it wise to remain well within the shelter of the continent's civilized regions. Unfortunately, Thule's cities are all too often wicked places indeed. Decadence, cruelty, tyranny, corruption, slavery, oppression...the ills of civilization

are too many to easily number. At best, Thule's cities are hard, heartless places where the poor lead lives of desperation and want. More often, cities are built on oppression, injustice, and wanton cruelty, celebrating social evils of one sort or another.

Warfare is commonplace—most city-states are intense rivals, and open fighting is never far from breaking out. The sheer distances involved and the difficulty of marching through Thule's wilderness means that conflicts tend to devolve into years of raiding and counter-raiding, with relatively few decisive battles. No great conquering power has arisen to take the place of Atlantis, destroyed centuries ago, although cities such as Katagia and Lomar harbor aspirations of conquest. Thule's cities are also beset by numerous barbarian tribes that resent the city's efforts to control territory they regard as their own, or that see the people of the cities as rich, soft, and ripe for plunder.

While cities are rife with intrigue and murder, they also offer individuals with ambition and talent the opportunity to go far indeed. Politics and power are in constant play in most Thulean cities; one's station is determined by personal wealth and influence, not the accident of high birth. Many high lords and merchant princes began their days as slaves or street thieves—and more than a few monarchs were once wandering sellswords.

Thule's geography can facilitate an episodic campaign of self-contained adventures, where the PCs might battle minions of Set in a lost jungle temple, then solve the mystery of an abandoned village, then return to the city of Quodeth...where things get really dangerous.
—Stephen.

See p. 12 for an overview of Thule's city-states—and the Primeval Thule Campaign Setting explores them in even more detail.

INHUMAN EVILS

As your Supreme Majesty knows, humans are a young and brash race; the oldest human civilizations rose only a few thousand years ago. But some civilizations in Thule are vastly older, predating man's appearance on the planet. Before the first humans found their way to Thule's shores, rude kingdoms of cyclopes and beastmen sprawled over the wild continent, perpetually at war with each other and with the decadent realms of the elves. They in turn found empires of cold-blooded serpentmen and cruel rakshasas dominating much of the continent when they arrived. Before the time of the serpentmen and the rakshasas, primordial races such as elder things, mi-go, moonbeasts, and the monstrous Great Old Ones reigned over this ancient land. Each of these inhuman, sometimes alien, cultures left their own abandoned cities or forgotten strongholds for human scholars to puzzle over in later years.

In general, these survivors of ancient civilizations are slowly passing from the world. The prehuman races are

Serpentmen are a staple of sword and sorcery adventure.
—Rich.

in decline, withdrawing to deeper and more remote sanctuaries or dreaming away the ages in deathlike slumber. They often resent the presence of humankind in their old places of power, and a few (the rakshasas and serpentmen especially) scheme to bring ruin to the human race by whatever means are necessary. Even those that are unconcerned with human encroachment in Thule represent an age-old baleful influence that still poisons the world today, leaving behind terrible ruins haunted by creatures older and stronger than humankind, dreadful secrets of magic and power that harbor the potential for untold destruction, and vile cults worshipping things that should not be.

HEROES OF THULE

Deadly wilderness and wicked foes are only part of what makes Thule savage, O King. The heroes who call this primeval land home are just as distinctive—and dangerous—as the land they live in. This is not a world of chivalrous knights, scholarly wizards, and noble quests. Thule's champions are made of different stuff, and they often have more self-serving motivations than the shining heroes of less savage lands. The typical warrior in Thule is a hot-tempered barbarian roaming the world in search of loot and glory, or perhaps a steely-eyed mercenary constantly searching for a prize worthy of her ambitions; the wizard is a master of forbidden lore for whom commoners and nobles alike step aside, shaking in dread.

The cruel cities and the deadly wilderness have a thousand tales to tell, but they all begin with a character driven to attempt great things. Thule's heroes, like those of any land, are unique individuals who have the right combination of fighting skill, a powerful drive or motivation, and the opportunity to excel. You have specifically commanded me to tell you of the heroes and villains of this lost land, Majesty; what follows is a selection of the narratives I have perused.

Atlantean Noble: Throughout Thule's teeming cities, the oldest and most honored noble houses claim descent from the royalty of vanished Atlantis. Even though the island empire was destroyed more than three hundred years ago, its learning and culture still shape Thulean society today. In fact, nobles without a drop of Atlantean blood often lay claim to this ancient lineage, simply to bask in the respect it brings.

Many Atlantean nobles lead lives of pampered luxury, which would seem to be poor preparation for a life of adventure. But long ago, the people of Atlantis were bold and confident explorers. Those in whom the old blood runs true are often driven to seek out new places and new adventures.

Bearer of the Black Book: Arcane magic is not a simple matter of study and practice in Thule. Humans are born with no supernatural powers, of course, and there is no tradition of arcane scholarship among the human cultures of the continent. To master supernatural powers, a human mage or warlock must turn

25 ADVENTURES IN PRIMEVAL THULE

What sorts of adventures are especially appropriate for the primeval continent? Characters in Thule face a world of savage wilderness, corrupt villains, and things that should not be. In Thule, adventurers might...

- Loot the ruined temple of an elder god.
- Become pirates and prey on merchant galleys.
- Rescue the daughter of a tribal chieftain from a party of beastman raiders.
- Fight in the arena of a decadent city.
- Assault a slaver fortress.
- Steal a ruby of fantastic value from a noble's monster-guarded treasury.
- Explore the ruins of a cursed city.
- Challenge a tyrannical wizard-king.
- Kill the icy heart of a living glacier.
- Hunt mammoths to prove their worth to a barbarian tribe.
- Slay a demon in the tower of a sorcerer.
- Battle star-things preying on human cattle.
- Root out a foul cult threatening to take over a city.
- Sail to strange islands with unknown perils.
- Plunder the tombs of barbarian kings.
- Break the power of a thieves' guild.
- Depose a weak or foolish king and seize the throne for themselves.
- Seek the wisdom of a monstrous oracle.
- Read books of sorcery written by inhuman wizards who lived before mankind existed.
- Search for the lost ruins of an Atlantean city.
- Venture into a frozen monastery claimed by deadly polar cold, then perform a ritual of binding to imprison a demon prince before it escapes to torment the world.
- Defend a village against a beastman horde.
- Steal the secret of iron from a dwarven priest.
- Unmask a rakshasa impersonating a high nobleman.

to non-human traditions, which involves seeking out a suitable tutor or deciphering the occult writings of some earlier race...such as the writings found in the Black Book.

The Black Book is a forbidden grimoire of terrible age, passed down through the years from one adept to another. Some say the Book is alive and aware, a demonic entity with a sinister purpose. Others say that the Book exists in many times and places at the same time. Whatever the truth, the mage who possesses it is well on his or her way to becoming one of the most powerful wizards of Thule.

Beastfriend: Thule's ferocious animals are an everyday threat to a hunter of the tundra or jungle—but for a few warriors with powerful intuition and keen understanding of the natural world, Thule's beasts are allies, not foes. Beastfriends possess an uncanny ability to communicate with beasts both mighty and small, and frequently befriend the most fearsome predators. A warrior jogging along with a dire wolf or a saber-tooth cat at his side is almost certainly a beastfriend. Beastfriends are extremely self-reliant, but they rarely feel comfortable among other people and do not stay in one place for long.

Dhari Hunter: Natives of Thule's deepest and most dangerous jungle, the Dhari people are renowned as warriors, guides, trackers, and hunters. Most Dhari hunters are suspicious of civilized folk and have no interest in a softer life, but others are drawn to see the great cities of the coastlands by curiosity or simple wanderlust. Fighting skills and uncanny stealth honed by lethal tribal warfare provide the typical wandering hunter with all he or she needs to earn a living in the city-states.

The Dhari are only one of Thule's many barbarian tribes, Mighty King, but they are strong, numerous, and respected throughout the continent. They are known to be tough and trustworthy—and fierce enemies when crossed.

Free Blade: Freebooter, mercenary, sellsword—Thule is home to many a bold adventurer looking to earn his fortune with the edge of a sword. The free blade often takes service as an ordinary mercenary if nothing else presents itself, but an adventurer of this stripe is not just a sword for hire. Instead, the true goal of the free blade is to find fame, fortune, or a place in the world, to strike it rich or win a title through some bold masterstroke. Until that opportunity presents itself, the free blade moves from place to place and keeps her nose to the wind.

Golden Sea Corsair: Piracy is all too common in the dangerous waters of Thule. The corsairs of the Kalayan Sea—the great central lake of Thule—are a violent and quarrelsome brotherhood who recognize no law save their own bloody code. It's not unusual for corsairs to serve as seagoing mercenaries, taking the gold of one city-state to plunder the trade of another. Unfortunately, corsairs are notoriously fickle and untrustworthy, and are quick to change their colors. Individual pirates are free to follow any captain they choose or jump ship

when a better opportunity comes along, so a single corsair may over the course of a few months serve as a crewman on half a dozen different galleys; in some ways, the Golden Sea corsairs are a single great horde of marauders who happen to be split up between a score of ships.

Guardian of the Sign: Most people in Thule, both city-dwellers and wilderness tribes, are thankfully ignorant of the alien races and cosmic evils that lurk in the world's hidden places. The society known as the Guardians of the Sign, however, is not. These priests and scholars constantly shore up the world's age-old defenses against forces from beyond the Earth, fighting a secret and never-ending war against unthinkable calamity.

Ice Reaver: The fiercest and most warlike barbarians of Thule's wilderness are those who make their homes in the shadow of the encroaching glaciers. Driven from their once-green homelands by the relentless advance of the ice, these hardy warriors frequently turn to a life of raiding and plunder, pillaging the peoples who live in less harsh climes. The sight of their dragon-prowed longships sweeping down on the coastlands is enough to panic all but the strongest and best fortified cities.

While the northern reavers are feared and hated with good cause, not every barbarian from the icy realms comes to pillage. Individual ice barbarians often seek work as mercenaries or guards in the rich southern cities and are highly valued for their strength and ferocity.

Initiate of Mysteries: The priesthoods of Thule's cities represent a wealthy and powerful social class that jealously guards its prerogatives and secrets—especially the secrets of priestly magic. Those individuals who are initiated into the inner circles of a temple hierarchy gain access to powers that few others understand, but in return they are expected to use their status and their command of magic to advance the interests of the priesthood...and, if possible, the deity they profess to serve.

Jungle Trader: Suspicions run deep between the people of the cities and the tribes of the jungle, but a few intrepid merchants set out to make their fortunes by trading for the ivory, hides, gemstones, and other treasures the jungle offers. Part explorer, part diplomat, and part thief, jungle traders have a reputation as sly, double-dealing cheats and scoundrels, but this notoriety is somewhat undeserved. To survive and thrive in their chosen trade, they must carefully cultivate relationships with dozens of potentially hostile tribes. As a consequence, jungle traders are rumormongers of the first degree, and seem to be the first to hear about anything new in the wilds of Thule.

Katagian Pit Fighter: Most cities in Thule host arenas of one kind or another, but none are so pitiless or bloody as the fighting pits of Katagia. Some pit fighters are free men and women who battle for the rich purses offered by the arena owners, but many more are slaves or convicts doomed to die for the entertainment of the masses. Pit fighters who survive their time in the arena are usually highly sought after as bodyguards and enforcers by various underworld figures—there are few

You'll see that some of these "heroes of Thule" are individuals (like the Bearer of the Black Book) and some represent broader archetypes (like the Ice Reaver). That's intentional, and both options make strong choices for PCs.
—Dave.

The "Overview of Thule" sidebar on page 8 describes some of the places mentioned in this discussion.

The narratives provide not only background material for your character, but also insight, cues, and motivation for your ongoing story—as well as some game system perks.
—Stephen.

people more intimidating than someone who has killed frequently and publicly for sport.

Myrmidon: Loyal soldiers sworn to fight for city or master, myrmidons are the most disciplined and well-trained warriors to be found in Thule. Every city-state (and most noble houses) retains elite formations of myrmidons for defense against the threats of a savage world. Most myrmidons are naturally expected to stay close to their barracks and serve alongside their fellows, but some are trusted with more freedom of action or retained to act as agents or assassins at large for their masters.

Occult Scientist: Thule is a land mired in ignorance and superstition. Most people see magic in the workings of anything they don't understand, which includes both supernatural and scientific phenomena. The occult scientist brings a reasoned and deliberate approach to the study of all sorts of matter and energy, seeking understanding of the deepest secrets of the universe. The occult scientist often enjoys a somewhat better reputation than most arcane spellcasters in Thule, since he seeks out knowledge for its own sake. In fact, the occult scientist may even attract the support of wealthy patrons interested in his research.

Panjandrum: Most cities are governed by a despot of some kind or another, and any effective despot builds a loyal base of civil servants to enforce his or her rule. A panjandrum might be a military commander, a magistrate, a vizier, or some other important bureaucrat who wields power in the name of the sovereign. Low-ranking panjandrums are often used as spies, investigators, and diplomats, traveling widely and looking after their city's interests, while high-ranking panjandrums are usually among the most powerful and wealthy figures in the city.

Quodethi Thief: Thieves' guilds are a fact of life in any major city, but the city of Quodeth is home to guilds numbering hundreds of thieves. These huge organizations are stronger than all but the richest and most powerful noble houses of other cities, and Quodethi guildmasters think nothing of giving orders that will be obeyed by men and women a thousand miles away. To belong to a guild of Quodeth is to belong to an army of vicious, conniving cutthroats, an army in which



one can climb through the ranks by one's wits, daring, and record of success. While guildmembers constantly scheme for influence and position, they are quick to close ranks when some external foe insults the guild or damages its operations.

Sacred Slayer: Temples are rich and politically influential, which means that most priesthoods acquire many powerful enemies. Sacred slayers are the guardians and avengers of Thule's temple hierarchies. Serving as bodyguards, agents, and assassins of the priesthoods, sacred slayers are expected to be fanatically loyal and obey the orders of their priestly masters or die in the attempt. The most capable sacred slayers are given dispensation to work as free agents, spying on behalf of the temple and acting in its interests wherever they find themselves.

Soothsayer: Thuleans see hidden meaning in many things—the movements of the stars, dreams, prophecies, and scores of everyday omens and signs. Soothsayers serve barbarian chiefs or civilized nobles as advisers, interpreting the will of the gods and offering guidance in supernatural matters. Many soothsayers are capable practitioners of magic, but not all; some are simply wise, insightful advisers valued for their counsel alone.

Star-Lore Adept: Wizards of any sort are rare in Thule; each city is home to only a handful of true mages, and these individuals are regarded with awe and fear by the people around them. Wizards who dabble in the lore of the Great Old Ones and the antediluvian races of the primordial earth are rarer still. There is no doubt that the star-lore adept's path to power can be shockingly swift, but the risks they accept would make lesser mages blanch in horror. Few dare to meddle in

THE HERO'S NARRATIVE AT YOUR GAME TABLE

The narratives presented in this section represent only a handful of the stories you might choose to tell with your character. They are uniquely Thulean, chosen for their distinctiveness and rooted in the story of this savage world.

Choosing a heroic narrative is an important part of creating a character for the *Primeval Thule Campaign Setting*, because it anchors your character in the setting much in the same way that choosing a character race or character class does.

Rules and benefits for choosing a heroic narrative are presented in the *Primeval Thule Campaign Setting*.

the business of a wizard who masters such dark and dangerous lore.

Tribal Outcast: Many barbarians leave their native tribes to seek their fortunes in the rich city-states. Naturally, warriors who are held in high honor by their people or who are content with tribal life are not likely to seek their fortunes elsewhere, so a large proportion of the barbarians who find their way to the cities are outcasts of one sort or another. Unable or unwilling to fit in with the tribes of their birth, they are wanderers and exiles in search of a new place in the world.

A SAVAGE WORLD

Perhaps the single most salient feature of Thule, Mighty King, is the brooding, primal wilderness that virtually covers the continent. Even the most urban and domesticated city-states lie no more than an easy day's walk from true wilderness where terrifying beasts and hostile tribes of savages hold sway. The civilized folk of Thule fear the wilderness and do their best to wall it out, huddling within well-defended cities or fortified towns. Barbarians do not fear the jungles and forests the way civilized people do, but they certainly hold a healthy respect for the dangers that surround them, and learn at an early age to remain keenly aware of their surroundings at all times.

WILDERNESS DANGERS

People unfamiliar with the wilderness assume that death in a dozen different forms waits to pounce the instant one leaves the narrow belt of relative safety around a town or city. Like many fears, this is based more on imagination and inexperience than actual threat. Thule's wilderness harbors many dangers, my King, but it is also lush, rich with game and forage, and in many cases spectacularly beautiful. Travelers who exercise some very basic precautions—for example, choosing campsites carefully or hiring experienced guides—rarely run into trouble they can't handle. The problem is that, from time to time, disaster can strike even the largest and best-prepared expeditions. In Thule's wilderness, help is rarely close at hand.

As long as one avoids the glaciated regions of the continent, there are few landscapes in Thule that are innately hostile to life; there are no deserts, climates are moderate, and food and water can usually be found. But the terrain of Thule is extremely rugged—f forbidding mountains, knife-edged ridges, and sheer gorges seem to conspire to delay and divert travel on foot. Physical exhaustion from marching up and down steep hillsides can leave inexperienced travelers too tired to guard themselves properly against hungry beasts or hostile tribes. Only a fool strikes out into Thule's jungles or mountains without a trail to follow or a very knowledgeable guide. Getting lost in the forest is no mere inconvenience—it is a situation with potentially lethal

consequences. The wild lands of Thule are literally trackless, offering travelers few landmarks or references once a party leaves a known trail.

Thule's terrain is rarely lethal, but its animals, on the other hand, pose a very significant danger to travelers. The forests and tundra are home to countless large and aggressive beasts, many of which are dangerous to humans. Predators such as dire wolves, cave bears, crested eagles, and saber-tooth cats are obviously threats to life and limb, but many of Thule's herbivores are equally dangerous, O King. The foul-tempered ground sloth is a monstrous beast the size of an African elephant with foot-long claws that can rip a warrior in half, while the Thulean elk sports antlers that stretch a dozen feet tip to tip. Many of Thule's creatures are simply the most gigantic and fierce examples of their kind to be found in any age, and by quirks of history or climate they happen to be native to this land at this time.

While Thule's giant beasts are impressive, one creature is still indisputably the most dangerous alive: Man. The wilderness is home to tribes of fierce barbarians and bloodthirsty savages who spend their days in a constant state of war against all other people. Blundering into the territory of a hostile tribe is quite often a fatal mistake. Warnings are rare—usually the first sign of impending attack is a volley of poisoned arrows from the shadows, or a wave of screaming berserkers bursting out of the brush. Worse yet, tribes found in especially remote regions are often cannibals, headhunters, or fanatics dedicated to the worship of monstrous or demonic gods. Swift death in battle would be far preferable to the sort of torments that would follow after capture by such degenerates.

A PRIMEVAL LANDSCAPE

Newcomers visiting Thule for the first time soon learn that this is one of the most rugged and inaccessible lands in the world. Steep mountains virtually ring the island continent, creating a daunting barrier against travel to the interior. The great central plain of Thule is much flatter than the mountains and highlands of the coast, but it presents an even more difficult obstacle: Dense, trackless jungles and swamps that are home to countless large, hungry predators.

FJORDLANDS

The first part of Thule that greets new arrivals are its spectacular fjordlands. The great majority of the continent's coastline is mountainous, my King, plunging steeply to meet the sea in a veritable maze of narrow inlets and steep-sided islets. Some of these inlets stretch more than a hundred miles into the interior, ringed by ever-higher peaks.

Fjordlands teem with life. The steep slopes are covered with light forest where game animals abound, while the cold, deep waters are home to dense shoals of fish

It's oversimplifying matters to say that Thule is all jungles and glaciers...but it's not oversimplifying by much.
—Dave.

and beds of shellfish. Fjordlands also offer easy travel by sea, since these waterways and inlets comprise the best roads one could hope for. On the other hand, moving overland from one fjord to another is often impossible. Sometimes two villages on the same island or cape may only be four or five miles apart as the crow flies, but sailing fifty miles around the point is a much easier and faster way to travel from one to the other than trying to climb the mountain ridge separating them.

Given their moderate climate and access to the sea, fjordlands would seem to be ideal for settlement, but they generally lack arable ground. Fjordlands are anything but flat, and only a few ideal spots can support towns or cities of any size.

FORESTS

Between the sweltering jungles of the interior and the bare shoulders of Thule's mountains lie magnificent broadleaf forests. These mixed woodlands are dominated by ancient oaks, beech groves, maples, and

silver-trunked birch trees. As one travels north, the beech and oak forests give way to taiga—the pine forests of the northern world, vast and desolate.

Like the fjordlands of the outer coast, the forests are among Thule's kinder climes, rich with game and forage for those who know them well. The woodlands are also home to a variety of large and aggressive beasts—Thule's forests are dangerous places to wander carelessly. Worse yet, Supreme Majesty, they are the hunting grounds of barbarian tribes, some of which are quite fierce. These hardy folk have little use for intruders and are prone to defend their territory with sudden violence. In the wilderness, one should assume that all other people are enemies until proven otherwise.

INLAND SEA

The central lowlands of Thule are dominated by a chain of vast freshwater lakes. The largest of these is known as the Kalayan Sea, and it stretches almost seven hundred miles from end to end. The Kalayan is often called Kalayan the Golden, or simply "the Golden Sea," for the striking hues of its surface during the long northern dawn and dusk.

The inland seas of Thule offer the best means of traveling any distance across the rugged landscape, but they are far from safe. Storms on the Kalayan can raise waves every bit as large and dangerous as those of the Atlantean Ocean, it is said, and many ships have been wrecked in these waters by sudden squalls. Corsair galleys lurk in the Kalayan's jagged coasts, eager for the opportunity to fall on a passing merchantman. Finally, large and hungry predators swim these waters—the Kalayan (and other sizable lakes) are home to freshwater crocodiles, giant gars and pike, vicious eels, and a few atavistic survivors such as plesiosaurs and mosasaurs. It's not a good idea to swim unarmed, O King!

JUNGLE

The jungle is in many ways the single defining landscape of Thule. Dark, deadly, mysterious, and impenetrable, it forms a vast green world within a world, a place where savage beasts and feral barbarian tribes struggle against one another in a never-ending battle for survival. Here the illusions and pretenses of civilization are stripped away, leaving raw and fierce nature as the ultimate arbiter of whether one lives or dies. Death lurks only a few heartbeats away, ready to claim the careless or unlucky.

True rainforest actually has relatively little undergrowth, as your Supreme Majesty no doubt knows. However, Thule's rugged topography provides lots of hillsides where dense understory growth can develop—the jungles of this primeval land are usually jungle, not just canopy forest. A fecund collection of life in all forms thrives in this lush environment, including an unbelievable number of venomous or predatory beasts that can kill humans. In fact, Thule's jungles are often home to creatures that died out ages ago in other parts of

A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THULE'S TOPOGRAPHY

Thule is a vast, mountainous island-continent that stretches more than fifteen hundred miles end to end. Nearby lie the great islands of Hellumar and Nimoth, with stranger lands yet beyond their shores. All three lie in the northerly reaches of the Atlantean Ocean, but in this age, they are warm and verdant. The ice is only just beginning its relentless advance.

The dominant feature of Thule is the rampart of mountains ringing its coasts. The Shields of Sunset guard the high plains of Nar in the west. To the south, the mighty Starcrowns reach elevations of more than 10,000 feet and shelter a maze of fjords and inlets known as the Claws of Imystrahl. In the east, the volcanic Zinandar Mountains smolder and fume. In northern Thule, the highlands and peaks are covered by the great glacier known as Kang, the Pale Death. This ring of mountains forms a gigantic basin or lowland in the center of Thule. A great lake known as the Kalayan Sea lies here, surrounded by deep jungles and trackless wilderness.

As one might expect from a land of such extremes, each region of Thule has its own rugged beauty. The Claws of Imystrahl are majestic fjordlands, home to Thule's oldest cities—seaports with their faces turned toward the Atlantean Ocean. The mighty Starcrowns virtually wall off these steep islets and peninsulas from the rest of Thule. The Nar Highlands in western Thule are wide, rolling plains and hills where fierce nomads roam. Kalayan the Golden is the region around the inland sea, home to the jungles of Dhar Mesh, the swamps of Phoor, and the richest and most powerful cities of the continent, great powers such as Quodeth and Lomar.

The northern coasts are known as the Thousand Teeth, after the countless rocky islets and spires that dot the Sea of Mists. These are barbarian lands with few cities. Finally, Thule's northeastern reaches are known as the Lands of the Long Shadow. Vast tundra plains and barren, windswept hills mark the creeping onset of everlasting winter, with the grim expanse of the glaciers looming on the northern horizon. Here the secret of Thule's wonders and majesty is made plain: This is a doomed land, and its beauty will not last.

the world; more than a few dinosaurs still lurk in these verdant retreats, it is said.

Naturally, there are no human cities or civilizations to be found in the interior jungles of Thule. There aren't all that many barbarians or savages, for that matter; most people look for less hostile places to make their homes. But the tribes that dwell in this fearsome environment are some of the toughest and most fierce warriors in Thule.

GIANT CAVES

In addition to its spectacular vistas of ice-capped mountains and vast forests, Thule is also home to a number of caves and caverns of tremendous extent. The vast interior basin of the island-continent combines limestone hills with heavy rainfall—the perfect recipe for the formation of truly gigantic cavern systems. The hilly reaches in the Land of Long Shadows and the northerly lands of Hellumar and Nimoth are likewise riddled with caves—even if these regions are now too cold and dry for huge caves to form, they were tropical until just a few centuries ago.

There is no true “underworld” system of continent-spanning caves miles below the surface in Thule, my King, but the natural caverns accessible from the surface are quite impressive in their own right. Some of these include huge chambers hundreds of feet across, while others are sprawling networks of passages and chambers dozens of miles in extent. Strange ecologies of cave-dwelling creatures develop in the larger cave systems—and some hold hidden strongholds of monstrous beings, or dark temples dedicated to the worship of forbidden gods. Unspeakable powers such as Great Cthulhu, Shub-Niggurath, or Yga-Ygo were once strong in these lands, and many of their followers—or possibly the Great Old Ones themselves—may lie dormant in the deepest of these caves.

MOUNTAINS

The story of Thule's mountains is written in fire and ice. Mountain ranges in the northerly portions of the continent (and in the great islands of Hellumar and Nimoth) are desolate, inhospitable places mantled in mighty glaciers and snowfields. Huge icefields fill the valleys and choke the passes, rendering travel nearly impossible. The mighty Starcrowns of Thule's southern coast are so lofty that they, too, have fallen into the grip of endless winter, even though they are many hundreds of miles south of the creeping glaciation that is conquering the northern lands. But the ranges in eastern Thule smolder and smoke with their own subterranean fires, my King, creating a barrier of volcanic heat against the encroaching ice. Lush and verdant compared to the icy ramparts of the other ranges, they are only marginally less impassable—frequent eruptions, constant tremors, and deadly fumes can close off passes with no warning whatsoever.

Between glaciers, volcanoes, or sheer elevation, the

mountain ranges of Thule (and the great islands of Hellumar and Nimoth, which lie close by) form a nearly impassable barrier blocking travel between the coastal fjords and the interior jungles. As one might expect, few people live in these regions. A few hardy tribes of human barbarians make their homes in these high vales, fortifying the narrow passes against intruders, and the Zinandar Mountains are home to the city of Kal-Zinan, where the dwarven masters guard the secrets of iron and steel.

There is one thing more that must be said about Thule's mountains: There are many places in the high peaks where men should not go. Black temples buried in the snows and terrible ruins of prehuman monsters are often found on the higher slopes, and not all of these are abandoned. Star-things and mi-go lurk in the remote heights, blasphemous survivors from an earlier age.

SWAMPS

The coastal plains of Thule's inland seas are home to dense, tangled swamps—huge stretches of flooded forest that can stretch for dozens or hundreds of miles. Gigantic cypress trees mantled with hanging moss loom over the shadowed waterways, and the rare patches of dry ground are overgrown with underbrush covering every hummock or islet. Countless meandering creeks, lakes, and sloughs further impede travel on foot; swamps are almost impossible to navigate without a local guide or an uncanny sense of direction.

Much like jungles, swamps teem with a vast number of large and dangerous beasts. Huge reptiles such as giant vipers, crocodiles, pythons, and monitor lizards seem especially common in these humid areas, and a few dinosaurs that should have gone extinct millions of years ago still lurk in some places. Worse yet, Mighty King, the tribes of the swamps are some of the most primitive and degenerate people to be found anywhere in Thule. The vile headhunters of Phoor are perhaps the best example; masters of stealth, ambush, and poison, these murderous savages are fanatically devoted to the worship of terrible prehuman gods and regard all other humans as potential sacrifices.

TUNDRA

As one travels farther north, the trees grow sparser and more stunted until finally they give out altogether. This is the tundra, a vast arctic plain that lies between the taiga and the advancing glaciers. Sometimes referred to as the Lands of the Long Shadow, the tundra plains of northern Thule are a harsh and forbidding environment—but in summer and fall, they teem with big game. This is the domain of the mammoth, the woolly rhinoceros, the muskox, and the caribou. Vast herds roam these lands, migrating with the seasons.

Like the taiga forests, the tundra is home to tribes of nomadic hunters who follow the great herds. Hunting mammoths or rhinos is no small feat; these giant beasts have thick hides and fight aggressively, trampling any hunter that gets too close. Taking down a mammoth

Several real-world caves of enormous size have been discovered in recent years—for example, Deer Cave, Er Wang Dong, or Son Doong. That's what we mean by “giant caves.”
—Rich.

Looking for a cool mount for your PC? Make friends with the tribes that trek across the Lands of the Long Shadow. They're Thule's preeminent riders.
—Dave.

is a long and dangerous game of luring the beast into charge after charge by hunters who show themselves and suddenly retreat, while dozens of arrows and thrown spears slowly wear down the mighty animal until it can be goaded into a reckless charge against a thicket of grounded spears or lured over a cliff.

GLACIERS

A grim and implacable enemy is at the gates of the northern world. Year by year, the summers grow shorter and the northern glaciers creep steadily closer to the lands of humankind. Already the great island of Nimoth lies trapped in endless winter, the ice thickening over its abandoned cities with each passing winter. In the mountainous spines of Hellumar and Thule, new glaciers are marching on the surrounding lands. Already the glacier known as Kang the Pale Death holds the northeast quarter of Thule in its icy grasp, and lesser icefields are slowly spreading too.

As your Supreme Majesty might expect, Thule's glaciers are cold and inhospitable. Nothing grows here, and few animals can find food on the ice. Without grazing or game, there is nothing to eat unless one is near enough to the sea to get by with sealing or fishing. Even that meager existence is impossible during the months when the seas are frozen over. In addition to the lack of food and the bone-chilling cold, glaciers are treacherous terrain to cross. Crevasses, sometimes hundreds of feet deep, can be completely concealed by a thin crust of snow that gives way when an unfortunate traveler unwittingly walks over it. Avalanches, toppling ice boulders, or outbreaks of meltwater can also threaten life and limb. A few bold caravans cross an arm of a glacier when necessary, but no one lingers in these desolate places.

Worst of all, my King, Thule's glaciers seem to possess an active and malign intelligence. They sometimes exhibit supernatural powers, surging forward to cut off the retreat of trespassers or changing course to climb over and crush towns that should be out of their reach. Some cold and hateful spirit animates these titanic masses of ice, willing them onward to crush the lands of civilization and blanket the world in never-ending winter.

TYRANNY AND WICKEDNESS

The wilderness of Thule may be majestic and deadly, but so too are the continent's civilized regions. Thule's city-states are ancient and often magnificent in their monumental architecture and barbaric splendor. Golden palaces and rich gardens sprawl behind towering walls manned by proud warriors in jeweled harness, while mysterious temples and the minarets of astrologers and sages soar to the sky. Yet for all their wealth and beauty, it must be told that the civilizations of Thule are frequently cruel, warlike, and oppressive. Despotism rules by whim and caprice, showering rich rewards on their favorites and ruthlessly laying low any foes or

rivals who attract their suspicions.

By their very nature, despots come and go swiftly in most places. An influential nobleman, a high captain in the army, or an unscrupulous high priest manages to secretly gather the support needed to topple the old ruler, and takes the throne for a few years—or perhaps a decade or two—until someone else successfully deposes the deposer. The nature of this transition varies from city to city and culture to culture. In martial Lomar, the road to the throne lies in leading legions to victory abroad. In mercantile Quodeth, wealth is the way to power; the queen is a figurehead, and those who seek to rule the city vie to claim the position of High Vizier through bribery, extravagance, and the occasional assassination. Thran, city of the Black Circle, belongs to the most powerful wizard of that dark order, who holds it until a challenger defeats him in a battle of spells. In Thule, my King, might confers legitimacy.

Unfortunately, the brutal politics of power are not the only problems Thulean civilization faces. In this age, the social compact is rough and incomplete. Cities are hard and heartless places where the strong oppress the weak, corruption runs rampant, and the most wicked entertainments and practices are simply routine. Each of Thule's cities seems to harbor its own fatal flaw, an injustice or social ill that cries out for redress. For example, Quodeth is beset with thievery, usury, and fraud, all the problems of a society in which gold reigns unchecked. The crimson-walled city of Marg is little better than a giant slave market where human life is bought and sold for a handful of coins, while the people of Imystrahl are mired in the waking dream of “the black milk” and hardly care whether they live or die.

To put it another way, my King, every city-state in Thule is marked by its own brand of wickedness. Travelers who blunder into strange cities unprepared might soon have reason to wish they had remained in the monster-hunted jungles.

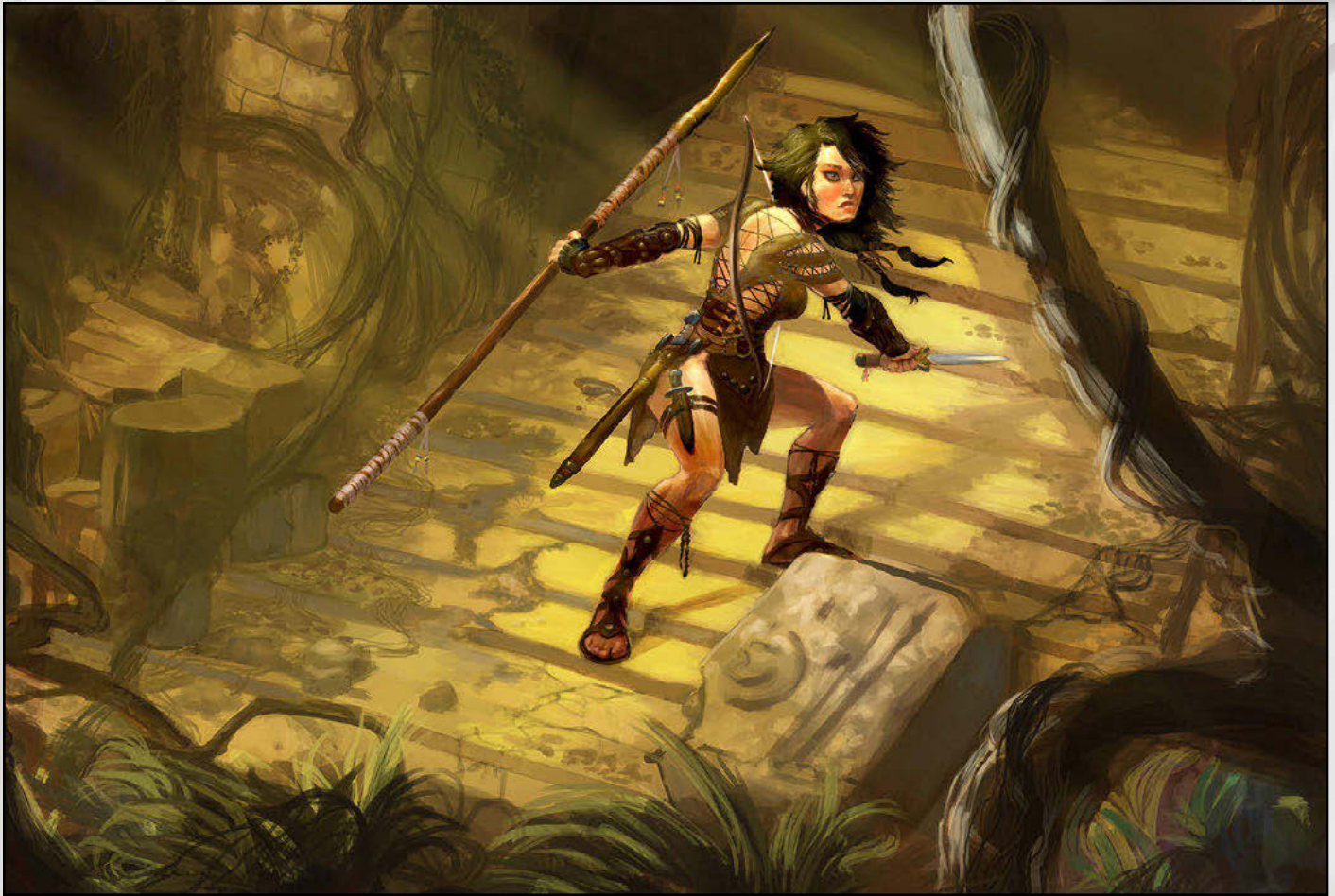
WEALTH AND SOCIAL STATION

In Thule, personal ambition and ability are the final arbiters of how high one might rise. Thulean society can be surprisingly meritocratic, and it offers many chances for upward mobility—if one defines “meritocratic” as permissive of advancement to anyone who can bribe, strong-arm, or assassinate their way into the upper classes. People with ability (and perhaps a little personal ruthlessness) acquire the means by which they can buy their way upward. In fact, many mercenaries and freebooters take up their dangerous profession in the hope of someday winning a high appointment or noble title.

At the top of the social ladder, naturally, stands the monarch, although the exact title might be king, queen, overlord, warlord, or tyrant—your peers, Majesty, in title if not in lineage. There is no such thing as a constitutional monarchy in Thule; the monarch wields power without limit. With a word, the monarch can

I live in fear of my character being trapped underneath a glacier. Thule's glaciers are fearsome antagonists, because who thinks more long-term than a glacier?

—Dave.



sentence any person to execution, send a city to war, strip titles and wealth from a rival, or decree a month-long festival. The only check on the monarch's power is what the city's nobles or officials permit—a monarch who rules capriciously or ineffectively becomes too dangerous to leave on the throne, and therefore ripe for deposing.

Beneath the monarch are the nobles. These families control hereditary offices, monopolize rich trades or commodities, or own vast estates in the surrounding lands. The qualifications of nobility vary from city to city; for example, in Lomar, “nobility” refers to whether one can trace descent from great heroes of old. Nobles have vast reserves of wealth and live in opulent palaces. They command personal armies in the form of their household troops, keep hordes of loyal retainers and advisors, and own hundreds or even thousands of slaves who work their fields, labor in their quarries, or crew their galleys. Nobles often enjoy virtual immunity to the laws of their home cities and need only fear the censure of their peers or the direct action of the city's ruler.

Nobles wield great power, but the monarch who holds the ultimate power in a city does so by maintaining the loyalty of the next social class: The officials. They hold titles such as vizier, magistrate, general, consul, or panjandrum. Your humble scribe would of course be counted among this class, my King. In the

name of the city's ruler, they enforce law, command the army, supervise public works, and regulate taxes and duties of all kinds. High-ranking officials are every bit as powerful and influential as the great nobles of a city, and often vastly wealthy—control of an important office gives an official plenty of opportunities to become rich. Many viziers and panjandrums are, of course, quite corrupt, but others are honorable and forthright civil servants.

Most cities in Thule are also home to large and influential orders of priests. Temples are rich and powerful institutions, O King, and often control estates and troops that rival those of the strongest noble houses. Like noble houses, temples can often be quite jealous of their privileges and position. Cloaked in mystery and ancient traditions, temple hierarchies serve as a balancing force of sorts, countering the most oppressive practices of monarchy or nobility, but also defending the status quo against the resentment of the lower classes.

The merchants are a large middle class in most Thulean cities. In fact, in some cities, there is very little distinction between a wealthy merchant and a wealthy noble, my King, as unfortunate as it is to relate. Merchants include shipowners and caravan masters who engage in trade with distant cities, moneylenders, shopkeepers, and even skilled artisans and craftsmen. Anyone who owns a place of business and practices a

Thule lends itself well to campaigns of brutal intrigue. PCs don't need to start out as nobleborn, since they can buy or lie their way into the upper class.
—Stephen.

trade for himself or herself—even independent land-owners with rich vineyards or orchards—is counted as part of this class.

Soldiers and servants make up the lower classes. They are free men and women, but they work for whoever can pay them. In many cases, the “pay” is simply the privilege of belonging to a household and having room and board provided to them; warriors often take service with a noble house and serve loyally for decades with no expectation of pay beyond a few silver pieces every now and then to gamble away or spend on drink and revelry. The best masters look after servants who grow too old to continue their labors. It’s not unusual for a noble to reward an old and faithful servant or guard with an easy retirement and a gift of enough money to make the servant comfortable. Regrettably, not all who employ servants are so kind-hearted.

As one might expect, slaves are near the bottom of the social ladder—but they are not quite the bottom, my King. The conditions of slavery vary widely from owner to owner. Slaves may be kept in wretchedness and misery, put to hard labor and discarded once they are no longer useful, or they might simply be tenant farmers who live on the land they work for their owner, enjoying lives not all that different from a poor member of the servant class. Beggars are regarded as the lowest of the low, beneath even slaves. After all,

if someone is a slave, it’s because someone else thinks they’re worth owning and feeding. Beggars, on the other hand, are so wretched that no one cares if they starve or not.

Thieves, smugglers, assassins, and other scofflaws occupy a curious position in Thulean society. Thievery is considered a trade of sorts even in the face of the sternest laws against theft and extortion, Mighty King, as unlikely as it may seem. Therefore, guildmasters, and master assassins are generally regarded as members of the merchant class, while the average guildmember holds a position similar to a laborer in an artisan’s workshop and is considered a servant of the guildmaster. Only the most vile murderers and criminals are truly outside Thulean society.

DARK DELIGHTS

These are cruel times, and the entertainments and diversions of Thule’s cities would shock the sensibilities of a different day. Civilized Thuleans think nothing of watching men and women die in arena fights or seeing criminals put to death in spectacular and grisly executions. Gambling dens, brothels, fighting pits, opium houses, and hidden shrines where forbidden deities are worshiped with debauched rituals can all be found in the crowded precincts of the typical city-state.

THE CITIES OF THULE

The island-continent of Thule is mostly wilderness, and cities are few and far between. While there are a great number of small settlements, barbarian villages, and trading posts scattered throughout the land, true cities—or anything that can even claim to be a city—are not common at all. Most scholars would name perhaps thirteen to fifteen cities in Thule and the surrounding lands, depending on whether one would call a place like Ur-Ghom a “city” or not.

The cities of Thule include:

- **Akal-Amo, City of Temples.** A distant and mysterious city on the great island of Hellumar.
- **Droum, City of Tusks.** The people of Droum are abandoning their city in the face of the approaching glaciers, leaving behind a plague of restless dead.
- **Ikath, City of Serpents.** Built upon the ruins of a great serpent-man city, Ikath is the gateway to the Dhari jungles and their rich trade in ivory, gems, and hides.
- **Imystrahl, City of the Black Lotus.** An elven city, Imystrahl is falling into ruin under the influences of the opiate known as the Black Milk and a pernicious cult of Nyarlathotep worshippers.
- **Jomur, Place of Chiefs.** The meeting-place of many tribes in northern Thule, Jomur is virtually abandoned for three-quarters of the year.
- **Kal-Zinan, City of the Iron Gate.** The city of the dwarves, where stern ironmasters jealously guard the secret of iron working.
- **Katagia, Last Bastion of Atlantis.** A strong city of the southern coast where the last vestiges of Atlantean culture and learning are preserved.

- **Lomar, City of Triumphs.** A warlike city in the Kalayan Hills, Lomar’s legions represent the strongest army to be found in Thule.
- **Marg the Crimson, City of Slavers.** Home to the Crimson Slavers, Marg is a cruel and oppressive place whose slave markets are filled with wretched captives.
- **Nim, City of Reavers.** A lawless and brutal harbor on the northern coast, Nim is the refuge of the Reaver Kings of the boreal seas.
- **Orech, City of Mazes.** Cloaked in mystery and madness, Orch is a city under the influence of reclusive priests of Hastur the Unspeakable.
- **Quodeth, City of Merchants.** Largest and richest of Thule’s cities, Quodeth is overrun by thieves’ guilds; in fact, some name it the City of Thieves instead of the City of Merchants.
- **Rime, City of Ice.** A hidden haven under the very snout of Kang, the Pale Death, Rime is a secret pirate haven where the Golden Corsairs of the Kalayan Sea hold power.
- **Thran, City of the Black Circle.** Remote and forbidding, Thran’s black walls conceal the strongest and most wicked cabal of magicians in all of Thule.
- **Ur-Ghom, City of the Beastmen.** Hardly a city at all, Ur-Ghom is the seat of the brutal beastman khur-za-khur, or Chief of Chiefs. Folk of other races enter at their own peril.

There are rumors of hidden cities concealed in Thule’s vast jungles or in the trackless mountains, but these places remain undiscovered for now and have no dealings with the known cities of the continent.

The wantonness and hedonism of the typical city-dweller are one of the primary reasons why the people of the barbaric tribes dislike and distrust civilization. A bloody-handed ice reaver might hurl himself into battle against a hundred foes without a moment's hesitation, but blanches at the wicked displays that are all too common in Thule's cities.

Naturally, the basest forms of entertainment tend to collect in the poorest and most desperate neighborhoods. Some sort of thieves' quarter—a crowded, crime-ridden district of extreme poverty—can be found in almost every city. Some are ghettos walled off from the more prosperous districts nearby, some are bad neighborhoods that anyone might wander into by mistake, and some are actually buried streets built over and forgotten by the city officials, but these impoverished districts are all riddled with crime and thievery, and every city has one.

The thieves' quarter of a Thulean city is a world of its own, a city within a city. Here the city guards do not venture. Vicious gangs of ruffians, bands of slavers, beggar brotherhoods, and of course thieves' guilds rule over each street or block. It's no place that anyone with a better choice would willingly choose to live, but the wretched masses have few other options—a life of poverty and desperation within the city walls seems preferable to a swift and certain death in the wilderness.

LAW AND ORDER

Systems of law and law enforcement are not very well developed in most Thulean civilizations. There are no constables, police, or city watch officers in Thule's cities, Mighty King. Instead, laws are kept by the city's soldiers, who only enforce whatever laws the monarch wishes enforced, and only in those districts the monarch bothers to protect. Justice is often for sale, and a noble or wealthy priest can bribe magistrates or guards to take action against anyone who offers offense, whether the charges are legitimate or not.

In general, simple vices are ignored—peddling exotic drugs or establishing a brothel are not against the law in most places, although trying to avoid the taxes and gratuities city officials and guard-captains collect can bring down the heavy hand of the authorities. City guards only step in when a crime is especially serious or when they catch the perpetrator in the act. Crimes that generally provoke the attention of the city guard include:

- Murder (although dueling or consensual fights do not count as murder).
- Assault or theft (when the victim belongs to the higher classes).
- Arson, rioting, or general mayhem.
- Rebellion or resistance to the monarch's soldiers.
- Practice of dark magic (although few guards would dare hinder a known wizard).
- Worship of forbidden deities.

Punishment for crime tends to be swift and harsh. Prisons are unknown in Thule's cities, although most garrison buildings and magistrate courts have cells for holding accused criminals until the authorities can determine punishment and see it carried out. These punishments include flogging, fines, maiming or marking, enslavement, exile, or death.

WARFARE AND RIVALRY

As your Supreme Majesty can surely appreciate, relations between one city and another are even more tense than the relations of the various factions and powers within a city. Distrust, suspicion, and vicious rivalry is the typical state of affairs between Thule's civilized states. The warriors of Lomar despise Quodeth's naked mercantilism; Quodeth resents Katagia's celebration of Atlantean heritage and superiority; Katagia is repelled by the snake worship of Ikath. The cultural divides are deep and difficult to bridge.

Despite these differences, open warfare between cities is rare, simply because most cities are so far apart that it is nearly impossible to attack one another directly. Lomar lies three hundred miles from Quodeth, with rugged mountains and deep jungles covering most of the intervening terrain—any Lomaran legion that set out for the City of Merchants would be decimated by starvation, disease, and the endless attacks of jungle tribes by the time it arrived. Quodeth's mighty fleets could bring a Quodethi army to Lomar's shores more easily, but they would be outnumbered three to one by Lomar's matchless phalanxes once they landed. For now, these two enemies can only watch each other and wait for some turn of events to change the basic strategic considerations. Similar difficulties challenge most of the other civilizations, and limit their ambitions.

Since long marches across Thule's wilderness are so difficult, cities find other ways to compete with each other. My King, you will find that proxy warfare is quite common in this land; when a city falls into civil warfare or disorder, its neighbors eagerly funnel arms, gold, and mercenaries into the fighting, hoping to pick the winning side and gain influence over their neighbor. Likewise, cities in the same region vie with each other to win the allegiance of the stronger barbarian tribes in the area, in the hopes that they can goad hordes of wilderness warriors into taking the fight to their rivals. Competition between merchants of different cities is absolutely ruthless, as various cities compete to control especially valuable or strategic trades—skirmishing, raiding, and piracy are common mercantile activities.

While Thule's cities spend a good deal of time and effort interfering with each other, they also keep a wary eye on the rise of barbarian tribes in the wilderness. Barbarians have no love for civilization, especially civilizations as corrupt and hedonistic as

*One way Thule differs from most campaign settings: the roads are terrible. Get used to overland travel, and hire a native guide if you can.
—Dave.*



those of many Thulean cities. The combination of rich treasures and decadent ways is an irresistible lure to barbarian hordes, my King. Over the centuries, more than a few cities in the Kalayan or the Lands of the Long Shadow have been laid to waste by waves of berserk warriors. Pragmatic cities simply bribe strong tribes to trouble somebody else, while more hostile cities such as Lomar or Thran viciously punish any incursions in their lands.

LIFE IN THULE

Thule may be a cruel and hard land of many dangers, but it is not a hell on earth. Many people lead decent lives and enjoy their share of ordinary pleasures in their due season—feasts and revels, family and children, the satisfaction of work well done—whether they are illiterate barbarians, simple craftsmen, or great nobles. Adventurers, on the other hand, are far from ordinary. The stories of their lives are written on a broader canvas, Supreme Majesty, for good or for ill. But they arise from the same common clay as all other men and women in Thule, and grew up amid the same traditions and ways as the people around them. The ordinary details of life in Thule are part of who they are.

CITY-DWELLERS, BARBARIANS, AND SAVAGES

People in Thule fall into one of two broad categories: tribesfolk and city-dwellers. In general, these two cultural groups distrust and dislike each other. The uncivilized jungle hunters or tundra nomads regard the people of the cities as corrupt, decadent, untrustworthy, and greedy beyond all reason. In return, the citizens of Thule's city-states think of the barbaric peoples of the continent as ignorant, lawless brutes, all too ready to meet any obstacle or setback with senseless violence.

City-dwellers, naturally enough, are the people of Thule's civilized realms. Only the upper classes are literate, but all are subject to the laws and customs of the city in which they live. A large number of city-dwellers are farmers or frontier-folk who actually live outside the protection of city walls, tending the fields and groves that feed the masses.

Barbarians are not far behind civilized folks in some areas, particularly the crafting of weapons and armor. Some are nomadic or semi-nomadic, moving from place to place to follow food sources such as migrating herds or to seek milder lands for the winter months. Others, Mighty King, are settled, and keep herds and tend fields much like civilized people. The chief differences between these settled barbarian tribes and civilized folk are the lack of written laws and records, and the simplicity of the social hierarchy. In a typical tribe, a barbarian answers only to his or her own conscience, serving no lord or master. Chiefs and elders are respected and listened to, but they do not rule—they lead.

Savages, on the other hand, are significantly less advanced than barbarians. Your Supreme Majesty might naturally think the terms “barbarian” and “savage” interchangeable, but they mean different things. The people of a savage tribe use only those tools and weapons they can find in the world immediately around them; they know nothing of metalworking, writing, or commerce, and very little of magic or other secret lore. Despite the preconceptions of civilized folk, savages aren’t stupid. After all, surviving in Thule’s wilderness with nothing but stone, wood, and fire requires a good deal of planning and inventiveness, and any savage warrior is quick to appreciate the value of a bronze or iron blade. They are simply wary of change and suspicious of different cultures.

The most well-traveled individuals from all three groups (adventurers, for example) soon learn that there are good and bad people wherever one goes. Many tribal wanderers find their fortune in one city or another, and plenty of civilized merchants and mercenaries form fast friendships with people of the tribes they meet.

COIN AND TRADE

Precious metals are relatively common in Thule, my King. Every major city—and a few noble houses, temples, or especially prosperous merchant enterprises—mints coinage in copper, silver, gold, and occasionally bronze, electrum, or platinum as well. In general, the value of the coin is dependent on the weight of its metal; denominations aren’t widely used, simply because the intense rivalry and competition between cities means that coinage marked with a value higher than its physical worth may not be honored outside the boundaries of the city where it was struck.

Some of the more notable coinage that circulates in Thule includes:

- **Atlantean sunburst.** Made from orichalcum, the red gold of Atlantis, a sunburst features a many-rayed sun emblem. It is valued at 20 gold pieces in most large cities.
- **Quodethi double peacock.** A gold coin of twice the normal weight, the double peacock is stamped with the royal emblem of the city. It is worth 5 gold pieces in Quodeth, or 2 in another city.
- **Margish kraken.** These large silver coins are emblazoned with the image of a many-tentacled kraken. In Marg, their value is fixed at one healthy field slave, fifteen to twenty-five years in age, and they can be redeemed for such at any civic auction. For a slaver, the kraken’s value is about 10 common gold pieces.
- **Nesskian fang.** These small, triangular gold coins occasionally turn up in forgotten serpentman hoards and date back to the serpentman empire of Nessk. They are accepted in some cities, but in Quodeth they are known as “snake’s gold” and regarded as bad luck.

While a purse heavy with gold pieces can see to many needs in civilized regions, not all the peoples in Thule care about money. Savages have little use for coins; they can’t be eaten, they aren’t tools, and they can’t be used to make clothing or shelter. No matter how many coins a merchant offers, a savage won’t part with something tangible and useful such as a pelt that might keep one warm or a hunting spear. However, coins are pretty, and many savages are happy to trade pretty things of their

*If you know about axial precession, the calendar gives you a big hint about the astrological age in which Thule is set.
—Rich.*

THE ATLANTEAN CALENDAR AND TIMEKEEPING

The civilizations of Thule use the old Atlantean calendar with which you are familiar, O King, dividing the year into twelve months of 30 or 31 days each. The Atlantean calendar is an observational system based on the transit of the sun against the various constellations of the zodiac. Since these transits may vary by a day or so from year to year, the length of the months is not fixed—priests or official astrologers in each city generally issue an official calendar every year, predicting the length of each month. By tradition, the new year begins on the spring equinox, and the months are named after the sign that “houses” the sun throughout the year.

Naturally, the Atlanteans had their own ideas of what constellations stood for, and in different ages the constellations stood in different parts of the Earth’s sky than they do now. The months of the Atlantean calendar are:

Atlantean Month	Sign	Equivalent
Tebon	The Chariot (Capricorn)	March
Sana	The Slave (Aquarius)	April
Adar	The Dragon (Pisces)	May
Nidon	The Ram (Aries)	June
Taru	The Bull (Taurus)	July
Samon	The Throne (Gemini)	August
Dumet	The Messenger (Cancer)	September
Abron	The Lion (Leo)	October
Ulon	The Warrior (Virgo)	November
Tisra	The Mammoth (Libra)	December
Samnu	The Scorpion (Scorpio)	January
Kislon	The Chimera (Sagittarius)	February

Astrology is taken very seriously in Thule’s civilizations, and the upper classes frequently pay lavish sums to have detailed horoscopes cast to commemorate noteworthy events such as a marriage or the birth of a child. It seems a prudent and commendable practice, my King.

Barbaric peoples lack the ability to do precise observations or calculations, but they can certainly note the length of the day and tell when a new year begins. Likewise, they know their winter stars from their summer stars and can estimate the month with a good deal of accuracy. If a barbarian has to plan a date in the future, he or she is likely to say something such as, “I will meet you here on the first new moon in the month of Adar,” and won’t miss by more than a day or two.

own such as uncut gemstones or ivory carvings. Your Supreme Majesty may find that savages are more than happy to trade their trinkets for civilized goods that are clearly useful, such as bronze spearheads or warm garments.

Barbarians have a better idea of what coins are worth, even if they rarely use them. They are more likely to measure wealth in terms of the livestock they own, the houses and halls they build, or the weapons and tools they craft. Bartering with one's neighbors for goods or services is more common than paying in the coins of the cities. Most barbarian tribes have at least occasional contact with civilized traders or encounter trading posts during their travels, so they tend to save what coins they do collect for the occasions when they'll be useful in trade.

DAYS OF THE WEEK

In addition to the months and days of the Atlantean calendar, Thuleans also count seven-day weeks tied to the phases of the moon. This is only used to provide weekdays and provide a more convenient schedule for regular commerce and observances, which otherwise would have to be fixed to specific dates ahead of time.

The days are named after major deities as follows:

- Asura's Day
- Tarhun's Day
- Kishar's Day
- Nergal's Day
- Tiamat's Day
- Mithra's Day
- Ishtar's Day

The middle of the week is considered inauspicious in some cities, and people avoid beginning new enterprises or conducting important business on Nergal's Day and Tiamat's Day. Thuleans have little notion of a weekend, but in most places Ishtar's Day is a day of light work; many festivals or revels are planned to fall on the last day of the week.

RECORD OF YEARS

Most people in Thule count years from the beginning of their monarch's reign. For example, a merchant might boast that she bought an olive grove "in the third year of Queen Nalyani's reign," or promise to pay a loan "by the eleventh year of the queen's reign." If the queen's reign happens to end before eleven years, people understand that the date means eleven years from the year in which Queen Nalyani assumed the throne. In the course of a

LANGUAGES IN PRIMEVAL THULE

You can assume that all player characters can speak Low Atlantean and their own native language. Characters of Intelligence 9 or less have fairly limited vocabularies in Low Atlantean and may suffer circumstance penalties to interaction skill checks if that is the only language they share with the person they are interacting with (GM's discretion).

Common Language	Spoken by	Script
Atlantean, Low	Most humans, elves, and dwarves	Atlantean
Atlantean, High	Atlanteans, scholars, wizards	Atlantean
Dhari	Humans (Dhari)	Draconic
Dwarven	Dwarves	Dwarven
Elven	Elves, wizards	Elven
Kalayan	Humans (Kalayan)	Elven
Lomari	Humans (Lomari)	Atlantean
Nimothan	Humans (Nimothans)	Dwarven
Urgan	Beastmen, gnolls, winged apes	—
Uncommon Languages	Spoken by	Script
Benthic	Aboleths, deep ones, cultists	Pnakos
Draconic	Serpentmen, troglodytes, kobolds, sorcerers	Draconic
Giant	Cyclopes, giants, minotaurs	Dwarven
Rakshasan	Rakshasas	Infernal
Rare Languages	Spoken by	Script
Abyssal	Demons, ghouls	Abyssal
Celestial	Angels, gods, priests	Celestial
Infernal	Devils, warlocks	Infernal
Mi-Go	Moonbeasts, mi-go, star things	Pnakos

Characters can learn additional languages in the normal manner, although wizards should know at least one of the following languages: Draconic, Elven, or High Atlantean.

single human lifetime there are rarely more than half a dozen rulers to keep track of in any given city, so it is not very confusing. From time to time truly villainous or despised monarchs are stricken from history by their successors, which can introduce some uncertainty for later scholars.

Tribal peoples follow a similar custom, but they tend to date years from notable events—battles, natural disasters, or heroic deeds of great renown. For example, a barbarian might count “the seventh year since we fought the Lomarans at the River Klal,” or “the ninth year after the Great Comet.” On occasion the beginning of the rule of a well-loved (or much-hated) chieftain counts as a notable event, but not often. Finding common references by which two barbarians can agree on when something happened can be challenging at times.

Scholars and sages make use of the Evenoran dating system (or Atlantean Reckoning), which counts years from the foundation of Atlantis by Evenor, the first king of that realm. Since the destruction of that realm, the Evenoran dates have become less and less well known throughout Thule (and your own realm, Supreme Majesty), but no other universal measure exists. In this system, Atlantis was destroyed in 1906 AR, and the current year is 2213 AR.

COMMON LANGUAGES

Most people in Thule are bilingual to a greater or lesser extent. They know the language of their home city or tribe and converse fluently in that tongue. They also know some amount of “Common” or “Low” Atlantean, a simple version of the High Atlantean language. Speakers of Common Atlantean get by with a couple of thousand words and some standard phrases, but can converse well enough for all but the most complicated or nuanced concepts. The more isolated barbarians have little use for a common language, and it’s not unusual to find that particularly reclusive or hostile tribes don’t understand any Atlantean at all.

Languages commonly encountered in Thule and the surrounding lands include:

Low Atlantean: The “common tongue” of Thule and nearby lands.

High Atlantean: When Atlantis reigned as the supreme power in the lands of the Atlantean Sea, its language was known by all but the most isolated and backwards savages. The waning influence of Atlantis in the current day means that Atlantean is slowly falling out of use throughout Thule. It is still a language of scholarship, science, and many occult studies.

Dhari: The language of human tribes and cities of Dhari ethnicity. The written form is based on the language of the serpent-people.

Dwarven: The language of the dwarf race. Its runes are used (rarely) as the basis for writing in Nimothan and Giant.

Elven: The language of the elven people. It is important in arcane studies.

Kalayan: The language of humans of Kalayan ancestry, most notable the city of Quodeh. Kalayan was strongly influenced by Elven and still uses the Elven alphabet.

Lomari: Humans of Lomar speak this tongue. It is unrelated to any other languages in Thule.

Nimothan: Human tribes and cities of Nimothan descent speak this language. The written form is based on dwarven runes.

Urgan: The primitive language of the beastmen, gnolls, and the more intelligent beasts and apes. There is no written form.

Benthic: A prehuman language spoken by the ancient civilizations of the seas. The written form is a fantastically ancient glyph system referred to as Pnakos, known principally for its appearance in the Pnakotic Manuscripts.

Draconic: The language of the serpentmen. Debased forms of this tongue are spoken by troglodytes and kobolds.

Giant: An old and almost forgotten language, rarely encountered in the current day.

Rakshasan: The proud and cruel race of rakshasas do not teach their language to people of lesser races, but a few libraries in Thule hold examples of their writings.

Abyssal and Infernal: Not native to the Earth, and known only because demons, devils, and other creatures from parallel dimensions sometimes find their way into the world.

Celestial: The language of the gods and their servants. The holiest tomes and scrolls in existence contain passages written in Celestial.

Mi-Go: Known to only a handful of scholars and cultists, most of whom are not entirely sane. The strange and sinister mi-go are among the most widely traveled of the extraterrene races that visit the Earth, and their language—generally unpronounceable by humans—serves as a common tongue among the alien races that occasionally visit Thule.

STONE, BRONZE, IRON AND MORE

The Atlanteans were masters of metallurgy and machines, Mighty King, but their influence did not penetrate to the deepest jungles of Thule. In general, the savage peoples of this land make do without metal arms or armor, while the peoples of the city-states are skilled in working copper and bronze. Barbarians who have any regular contact with civilized folk are able to equip themselves with bronze arms and armor too, whether through trade, tribute, or pillage.

People (and intelligent monsters) who have little contact with civilization generally wield weapons of stone, bone, and wood. In many cases, these inferior materials are still quite sufficient to do the job—an arrow with an obsidian point is nearly as lethal as one with a hard metal point, as long as the target isn’t wearing armor made from better materials. Naturally, few

Different gaming groups have different comfort levels with lots of fictional languages. Our default is a strongly multilingual Thule, but don't let a language barrier become a barrier to fun.
—Dave.



We think of Thule armor in a cinematic sense. You won't find a steel-encasing suit of full plate—if it's mostly made of metal plates, then it's plate armor, even if it leaves a spot or two bare.
—Stephen.

adventurers insist on using primitive weapons when better weapons are available, so even the most savage hero usually gets his hands on a bronze spear or sword early in his career once he begins interacting with more civilized folk.

Weapons and armor made from iron are rare. The only people in Thule who know the secret of working iron are the dwarves, and they do not simply sell their prized arms. In fact, most dwarves assume that anyone carrying an iron weapon murdered a dwarf and stole it, and treat the bearer accordingly. When dwarves do make a gift of an iron sword or shield to a worthy recipient, they usually put a “mark of iron” on the recipient—a small tattoo or brand of the smith’s rune, indicating that the bearer has the right to carry that weapon. Of course, many raiders and marauders carry iron weapons looted from dead heroes and don’t have any such mark. But dwarves are

not above hiring thieves or assassins to get these weapons back when they learn of one.

The mages and craftsmen of Atlantis also knew the secret of working iron, of course, and a number of stranger and more mysterious alloys as well—steel, mithral, adamantine, orichalcum, and others. It is possible that these secrets may still survive in some Atlantean ruins, but for the most part this knowledge has vanished from the world. A small amount of Atlantean weapons and suits of armor can be found in the treasures and vaults of Thule, and they are generally regarded as priceless. Only the greatest of princes or kings own such marvels.

GODS AND CULTS

There are many gods in Thule, my King: Protectors of cities, patrons of merchants, spirits of forests or beasts, and dark things remembered only by a few savage tribes or vile cults. This is a superstitious age, and humankind is surrounded by mysterious powers. In such a world, people naturally seek to understand the forces around them by giving them names and seeking to win their favor or avert their displeasure. Whether the gods take note of such things or not, few indeed could say, for the gods of Thule are inscrutable.

Gods and other divine entities of this land fall into one of three broad groups: The Nine Powers, a pantheon

CHARACTER ARMS AND ARMOR IN THULE

Unless stated otherwise, you can assume that any metallic armor your character encounters is made from bronze scales, rings, or plates, and that any metallic weapon your character finds is likewise made of bronze. Since the great majority of Thule’s warriors are armed and armored in bronze, there is no special penalty or bonus in most combat situations.

of mythological figures who are the gods of the civilized peoples; the Forest Gods, myriad spirits of beast, wood, and weather that are worshiped by many of the savage and barbarian tribes; and the Other Gods, dreadful prehuman entities that are venerated only by the most degenerate cultists and tribes.

ASURA

Goddess of Dawn, Messenger of the Gods, Flame of Atlantis

Symbol: A crown or tiara with rays of sunlight

Alignment: Neutral good

Portfolio: Dawn, fire, beginnings, inspiration

Favored Weapon: Spear

The goddess of dawn, Asura is said to begin each new day by kindling the sun with divine fire. She is a figure of glory and hope, dispelling darkness and driving away evil things with her coming. Her holy texts teach that people are meant to live free of oppression and realize their potential, doing good works and aiding those less fortunate than they. She was once considered the special patron of Atlantis, and her radiant glory symbolized the progress and enlightenment of Atlantean civilization.

Temples of Asura commonly greet each sunrise with ringing gongs, and keep a sacred fire burning at the altar all year round. The priests of Asura lost a great deal of wealth and influence when Atlantis was destroyed, but after centuries of decline, Asura's faith is now gaining strength again as her priests champion the cause of Thule's lower classes. The priests of Asura oppose the worst excesses of the slave trade, calling for laws to ensure that slaves are treated well, and a few of the most radical even go so far as to call for the abolition of slavery altogether—a position that puts them at odds with the elites of Thule's cities.

HANUMAN

Lord of Beasts, the Ape-God

Symbol: Broken bones

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Portfolio: Beasts, savagery, rage, destruction

Favored Weapon: Greatclub

An old and brutal god, Hanuman represents the violence and bloodthirstiness that lurks inside the human heart. He was one of the first gods of humankind, a suitable deity for naked savages who were barely more advanced than apes themselves. Hanuman teaches that humans are no more than beasts that can think, and that the true man is one who rids himself of his delusions and false morals, giving himself over to the beast that lurks within.

Few civilized folk still worship Hanuman. His message of primitive rage and brutal impulse repels the more advanced cultures of Thule, and his temples sit forgotten (or shunned) in the older quarters of Thule's ancient cities. But here and there Hanuman's crude altars stand

THE NINE POWERS

Most civilized Thuleans recognize a distinct pantheon of greater powers with wide influence and temples in the more important city-states. This group of major deities is sometimes known as the Nine Powers. Not all of the Nine are known in all cities; different priesthoods wield different amounts of influence from city to city. In fact, many Thuleans would argue about which deities are properly numbered among the Nine Powers, usually substituting a civic patron, a legendary hero, or (in some cases) an anthropomorphized version of one of the Great Old Ones.

The Nine Powers are generally held to include:

Deity	Alignment	Description
Asura	NG	Goddess of dawn, fire
Hanuman	CE	God of beasts, rage
Ishtar	CN	Goddess of love and luck
Kishar	LN	Goddess of the earth, agriculture
Mithra	LG	God of sun, sky, lordship
Nergal	NE	God of war, the underworld
Set	LE	God of night, secrets, snakes
Tarhun	CG	God of storms and battle
Tiamat	CE	Goddess of the sea, chaos

in the wild places of the world in jungle clearings or on windswept hilltops, stained with the blood of the sacrifices the ape-god demands from his worshipers. His worshipers include the most savage warriors, murderers, and lycanthropes.

ISHTAR

Goddess of Love, Luck, and War

Symbol: Eight-pointed star

Alignment: Chaotic neutral

Portfolio: Love, beauty, art, fortune, passion

Favored Weapon: Scimitar

Ishtar is the goddess of love and beauty. She is legendary for fickleness and fits of jealous rage, but this same passionate nature also drives her to fight fearlessly to protect those she loves and boldly confront foes. Ishtar therefore possesses an important aspect as a goddess of war. While Nergal is the god of warmaking and conquest and Tarhun is the god of battle, Ishtar represents war as the ultimate expression of unchecked emotion. Her dogma can be reduced to one simple idea: Live passionately, in all senses of the expression.

Ishtar is one of the most widely worshiped of the Nine, and her temples can be found in almost every city. Consequently her priestesses tend to be rich, powerful, and influential. Many of the rites and festivals associated with Ishtar's temple are orgies of one kind or another, which goes a long way toward explaining Ishtar's popularity with the masses. Clerics of Ishtar are also seekers of beauty, defenders of art, and protectors of their cities.

It's worth noting that Thule's Hanuman is much more savage (and much less clever) than the Hindu Hanuman. They share a name and a connection to primates, but not much else.
—Dave.

The pantheon of Thule is largely based on the old Fertile Crescent deities. The idea is that the Babylonians, Hittites, and others could have derived their deities and myths from the last fading tales of the Age of Thule.
—Rich.

Making a cleric in a hurry? Go with Mithra, and march bravely into the darkness.
—Dave.

KISHAR

Goddess of Grain, Mother of Rivers, Queen of the Gods

Symbol: A sheaf of grain

Alignment: Lawful neutral

Portfolio: Agriculture, the earth, rivers, motherhood

Favored Weapon: Light flail

Goddess of agriculture and growing things, Kishar is the consort of Mithra and the mother figure among the Nine. She is the mother of Tarhun, and held in some reverence by followers of that faith as well as her own. Kishar teaches that all things come in their own season, and that people should give thanks for the bounty of the earth.

Few temples are dedicated specifically to Kishar. She is more commonly worshiped in conjunction with Mithra, and in many places the highest-ranking priestess in a temple of Mithra also serves as the city's high priestess of Kishar. Kishar's clerics observe the seasons of the year, declaring the times for planting and harvest and seeking Kishar's blessings of rain and sunshine in good measure.

MITHRA

God of the Sun, Lord of the Sky, King of the Gods

Symbol: A sunburst and eagle

Alignment: Lawful good

Portfolio: Sun, justice, sky, rulership and dominion

Favored Weapon: Heavy mace

The ruler of the Nine, Mithra is the god of the sun and sky. Kishar is his consort, and headstrong Tarhun is his son. He is a just and benevolent king, ordering all things so that his followers can enjoy justice and prosperity in their lives. Mithra is also a stern and vigilant judge who checks the wicked ambitions of gods such as Set, Nergal, and Tiamat, ensuring that they fulfill their role in the scheme of things without exceeding their lawful authority. He teaches that order and justice are the instruments by which the most good can be done for the most people.

Mithra's temples are often the grandest and most powerful in a city, and his priesthood is rich and influential. They are usually strongly aligned with the city's monarch, and the support of Mithra's priests is often one of the chief pillars on which a city's king or queen bases his or her rule. Few rulers can keep their thrones for long if Mithra's priests determine that Mithra no longer blesses the monarch's reign.

NERGAL

God of the Underworld, Lord of War, King of the Dead

Symbol: A black lion with a mane of flame

Alignment: Neutral evil

Portfolio: War, death, avarice, the underworld

Favored Weapon: Longsword

A grim and implacable figure, Nergal is the god of the underworld, war, and death. He represents war as

the drive for power, dominion, and triumph, the desire to subjugate enemies and claim what is theirs. Nergal is also the stern and final judge of the dead, sentencing souls deserving of punishment to ages of penance in his hell of black flames. Nergal's philosophy teaches that the strong rule over the weak, and people are meant to seize the things they want in life—a creed that often casts the lord of the underworld as a sullen and resentful being who believes Mithra's place as the ruler of the pantheon belongs to him.

While Nergal is a dark and demanding deity, his temples are found in many cities and are firmly established in Thule's civic life. War comes to all lands sooner or later, and warriors seek Nergal's favor in the struggles they face. His priesthood urges a strong hand in dealing with the wretched masses and rival cities, and they also sponsor spectacular (and bloody) games to celebrate the anniversaries of triumphs and conquests from past wars.

SET

God of Night, the Great Serpent

Symbol: Twin serpents

Alignment: Lawful evil

Portfolio: Night, secrets, treachery, poison, snakes

Favored Weapon: Short sword

Set is ancient beyond measure. According to some stories, the lord of snakes actually arose during the long ages when serpentmen ruled over Thule and was first worshiped as a god by that ancient and wicked race. He is the eternal enemy of Mithra, and a bitter rival to Nergal and Tiamat. Set teaches that free will is illusion, and that the only path to understanding is to surrender oneself to him in body, soul, and mind.

While the worship of Set is unwelcome in many cities, none can deny the power and influence of his temples. As much as the priests of Mithra and Asura rail against the sinister machinations of Set's priests, few would dare to move openly to ban Set's worship or desecrate his altars. Over the years, zealous crusaders have tried to do just that in cities such as Katagia and Quodeth, but sudden mysterious deaths and various other disasters invariably ensue, bringing these ill-considered campaigns to an end. Set's worshipers consist largely of the downtrodden and the defeated, people who think so little of themselves that they surrender their all to the Lord of Night in the hope that he will reward faithful devotion with the comforts and power that have eluded them. Many other people simply hope to propitiate the Lord of Serpents and avert the misfortunes and catastrophes at his command.

TARHUN

God of Storms, Lord of Battle

Symbol: A three-forked lightning bolt

Alignment: Chaotic good

Portfolio: Storms, sky, battle

Favored Weapon: Battle axe



Brash and headstrong, Tarhun is a god who confronts his foes and tries his strength against them without hesitation. The son of Mithra and Kishar, Tarhun is a warrior-hero, a figure that battles scores of dreadful monsters in various myths and tales. He celebrates battle as the true test of manhood (or womanhood), the strife in which a warrior can show his or her true merit, and teaches that people with courage and honor can make the world a better place by challenging wickedness and crushing it underfoot.

Tarhun's temples are common in the more martial cities of Thule, especially Lomar, Katagia, and Nim. He is increasingly seen as a god of strength and valor, a war deity who rewards courage (unlike Nergal, who rewards only triumph). Many warriors take Tarhun as their patron and seek his favor before battle. Tarhun's priests frequently sponsor athletic games, tournaments, and gladiatorial contests to celebrate the virtues of physical hardiness and valor.

TIAMAT

Mother of Dragons, Goddess of the Sea, Queen of Chaos

Symbol: A dragon skull with five horns

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Portfolio: Chaos, destruction, monsters, vengeance, the sea

Favored Weapon: Morningstar

Goddess of the sea, Tiamat is a capricious and wrathful deity that supposedly gave birth to many of the more terrible monsters plaguing the world today. Long ago she warred against the other gods and was subdued only with the greatest of difficulty, and she still hates all the others to this day. Tiamat teaches that the world is without order, and that those who serve chaos and beseech her favor will be rewarded with power and riches.

While temples dedicated to Set and Nergal can be found in many Thulean cities, Tiamat's worship is not quite as common. At best, those who have to hazard life and livelihood on the seas—fishermen, sailors, and merchants—are careful to pay their respects to the dragon goddess, hoping to avert her wrath with suitable offerings. People who feel they have been wronged also have been known to seek out Tiamat's shrines and pray for disaster to befall their enemies. Tiamat's priests often seek out monsters wherever they lurk, providing them with treasures and sacrifice to honor the “children of the Queen.”

THE FOREST GODS

The idea of gods with human representations and human concerns is relatively new to the people of Thule, my King. Before the time of Atlantis, no one knew of gods such as Mithra or Asura. Even the old, primal deities—Hanuman, Set, and perhaps

Tiamat, though evil, isn't a “big bad” in most Thule campaigns. For the really, really bad guys, see the next page.
—Dave.

Tiamat—had no priests or houses of worship. In those years, humans worshiped only the unseen spirits of hill and field, beast and tree. The people of the cities may have forgotten their names, but the tribes of the jungles and the plains remember the Forest Gods, and they still pay homage to them.

Those who worship the Forest Gods are not priests or clerics. They are druids, shamans, or totem warriors of one kind or another. Their magic is derived from the spirits of nature, not the power of faith or the divine intercession of the gods. In fact, tribal people are mystified by the rites and doctrines of the city gods; to the typical barbarian, gods don't want anything from humankind—they just are. Honoring the natural spirits is simply good sense, since angering the spirit of the deer by failing to express gratitude for a successful hunt might lead the spirit to keep game away from the hunter in the future, while angering the spirit of the mammoth is a good way to get oneself killed.

Civilized travelers are sometimes inclined to treat druids and shamans with skepticism—after all, they have their own explanations for the mysteries of nature and do not look at the world in the same way more primitive peoples do. But there is no doubt that shamans

and other practitioners of nature magic deal with powers every bit as real and capable as the mystic forces harnessed by a wizard's spells or a cleric's prayers. It seems that for the wilderness tribes, believing is seeing. They perceive a world where every animal, every tree, every rock, and every stream possesses its own living spirit, and for them, it is so.

WORSHIP, BELIEFS, AND DEVOTION

The gods of Thule are more secretive or aloof than those of many places. This is not a land where gods move mortals like chess pieces or appear in shining visions to direct their followers to take on quests or launch crusades. A priest in Thule is generally left to his own devices and determines the nature of his service on his own.

In the beliefs of Thule, gods have little to do with mortal souls or the afterlife. Most city-dwellers are not terribly religious; the idea of seeking eternal salvation through faithful service to a deity simply isn't a part of most cultures. Instead, pious citizens observe rituals and make minor sacrifices more as a matter of participating in civic culture (and perhaps invoking a little good luck) than as a matter of seeking favorable treatment in the hereafter. Piety and moderation are the virtues of good people, and good people need fear nothing that awaits after death.

Some holy texts state that gods can reward their loyal servants or punish the very wicked, but these are usually portrayed as bounded fates—a great traitor may be sentenced to spend an age in Nergal's black hells, or a courageous hero may be chosen to feast at Tarhun's table the day she falls in battle. But if the writings of Thule's priests are to be believed, most souls simply depart the world on death, and the gods have limited power or interest in decreeing otherwise.

CLERICS AND MAGIC

Clerical magic is rarely seen, and is every bit as secretive and mysterious as arcane magic. In Thule, clerics don't pray for spells. Instead, they gain their magical powers when they are initiated into the deeper mysteries of their chosen deity's worship. To put it another way, once a priestess of Ishtar is initiated into the secrets of Ishtar's priesthood and invested with power, she gains the ability to use spells. What she does with those powers after that point is up to her.

Because priests can only be judged by the observable actions they take, it is far from certain that any given cleric is serving his or her deity faithfully. Priests, like all other mortals, are fallible and corruptible, and their magic has no special divine imprimatur that makes it holy or good. Magic in Thule is mysterious and not well understood, and Thule's priesthoods are nothing if not mysterious.

THE GREAT OLD ONES

The Nine Powers are the gods of Thule, but they are not the only gods in Thule. Long before the gods of the human pantheon or even the myriad spirits of the natural world came into existence and assumed their places, primordial powers—evil, ancient, inhuman—came to the young planet and established their alien dominion over land, sky, and sea. Only the most fearless (or foolhardy) of sages study these creatures, but from these scholars a few terrible names are known. These Great Old Ones include:

Deity	Alignment	Description
Cthulhu	CE	The Caller in the Deep
Dhuoth	CE	The Giver of Eyes
Hastur	NE	The King in Yellow
Ithaqua	CE	The Wind-Walker
Lorthnu'un	NE	Lord of the Golden Chalice
Nyarlathept	CE	The Crawling Chaos
Shub-Niggurath	CN	Black Goat of the Woods
Tsathoggua	NE	The Sleeping God
Yga-Ygo	NE	The Dweller in Dreams
Yog-Sothoth	CE	Opener of the Way

Driven into hibernation in the desolate places of the world or exiled to the far reaches of time and space, the Great Old Ones hunger to return and reclaim what was once theirs. Some who bargain with these beings do so in search of power, some are degenerate tribes that cling to their monstrous gods, and some are vile cultists who pray for the end of all existence. Few indeed dare to name these Other Gods aloud, but that does not mean They are not worshipped. It is better not to pry into these matters, Majesty.



SECRET LORE

The great majority of Thule's people, both barbarian and civilized, go about their lives in blissful ignorance of the world's vast age and dark secrets. For them, history is little more than a handful of garbled stories handed down over a handful of centuries from savage ancestors who had barely mastered the making of fire, and the world is as it has always been. This is as true in Thule as it is in your Supreme Majesty's own realm.

Most barbarians and lower-class city folk know only the most basic facts about things they haven't personally experienced—for example, "there was once an empire called Atlantis," or "shamans gain magic powers from spirits of nature." Well-educated people such as the officials or nobles of a city can trace the broad outlines of events or "big picture" truths, such as, "Atlantis reigned from two thousand years ago to just a couple of hundred years ago, and they colonized many lands around the Atlantean Ocean," or "sages say there are five kinds of magic, including animism, the magic of shamans and druids." Only the most dedicated scholars would be able to create a detailed history of Atlantis, or describe each form of magic and its practitioners. Getting them to share that knowledge—and ensuring that it's not colored by a scholarly or sinister agenda—is no easy task.

While there are many things that are forgotten or misunderstood in this superstitious age, the biggest and most important secrets fall into a few broad categories: history, magic, cosmology, and the existence of the Great Old Ones.

HISTORY OF THULE

Most people are familiar with the broad history of their own city or tribe. They know the foundational myths of their culture and the more important events that have taken place during their own lifetimes, and possibly during the lifetimes of their parents and grandparents. Unfortunately, Thulean learning is parochial in the extreme; a Quodethi knows next to nothing about the history of Katagia or the tales of the Dhari people. And it is not unusual for powerful kings or priesthoods to create new versions of old myths in order to cement their own authority and place in history. Only the most diligent and widely traveled of sages possess any real glimmer of historical understanding, and in many cases, they fear to share what they have learned.

Those sages who have pieced together an account of Thule's history begin their tale in the Primordial Age. This is the vast span of time stretching from the beginning of things to the first appearance of human-kind. While humans did not yet exist, the earth was

A TIMELINE FOR THULE

- 100,000 AR? **The Primordial Age.** No human civilizations anywhere in the world.
- 35,000 AR Serpentman empire of Nessk conquers eastern Thule.
- 30,000 AR **Age of Dawn.** The first humans appear and begin to migrate outward.
- 8800 AR Primitive humans arrive on Thule's shores.
- 7500 AR Guardian menhirs erected around Thule by a secret druid order.
- 4200 AR First Dhari tribes begin settling southern Thule. They eventually move westward into Dhar Mesh and Nar.
- 2955 AR **Age of Myth.** Elves arrive in Thule through world gates.
- 2700 AR War breaks out between the elven realms of Imystrahl and Sersidyen and the serpentman empire of Nessk. Intermittent wars continue for centuries.
- 1950 AR Rakshasas of Jhi Anool gate in a demon horde to destroy the elven realm of Mesildyar in northern Thule.
- 1420 AR Elven legions, reinforced by the warriors of their subject human tribes, drive the rakshasas from Thule. The rakshasas retreat to Hellumar.
- 1124 AR Imystrahl's legions besiege and raze the Nesskian fortress of Bhnaal Pruth at the mouth of the River Quosa.
- 655 AR A foul orange rain falls over the Inner Sea; the alien being known as Dhuoth takes root in a remote valley and begins to grow.
- 500 AR The Kalay tribes begin their settling of Thule.
- 240 AR The barbarian chief Jal Dror founds the city of Quodeth.
- 0 AR **Age of Atlantis.** The warlord Evenor unites Atlantis and establishes his capital, creating the Empire of Atlantis.
- 16 AR Quodeth's armies defeat the elven kingdom of Sersidyen.
- 99 AR The cities of Quodeth and Hurhun combine forces to destroy the troglodyte kingdom of Vhaug.
- 307 AR An Atlantean fleet raids Imystrahl, causing great damage.
- 429 AR Dwarves arrive in Thule, migrating from the eastern continent.
- 495 AR Atlanteans found the colony of Katagia.
- 566 AR First Nimothan explorers begin settling northeast Thule and the island of Nimoth.
- 616 AR The Atlantean colony of Orech is established on Thule's northern shores.
- 833 AR Dwarven city of Kal-Zinan is founded in the Zinandar Mountains.
- 1114 AR Vanadar, the Crimson Prince, fails to seize the Atlantean Throne. He is exiled to Thule and founds the city of Marg.
- 1178 AR Vanadar, King of Marg, sacks the elven city of Imystrahl.
- 1215 AR Ghedrar the Necromancer rises to power in Ikath and builds an army of mummy warriors, seizing much of central Thule for his kingdom.
- 1451 AR Atlantean legions conquer Quodeth, adding the city to their empire.
- 1511 AR Dwarven schism leads to civil war and the ruin of Kal-Zinan. The victorious clans vow to rebuild, and the losing clans are exiled.
- 1673 AR Atlantean general Nemruth leads a fleet across the Inner Sea to attack Ikath. He defeats the undead armies of Ghedrar the Necromancer and withdraws after installing a puppet king. Ghedrar's body is never found.
- 1744 AR The Yellow Priests assume power in Orech after a plague of madness ravages the city.
- 1817 AR War breaks out between Atlantis and Lemuria. Most of the fighting takes place in northern Africa.
- 1906 AR Atlantis is destroyed and sinks beneath the waves.
- 1980 AR Invaders from across the sea, a lost tribe of Lemuria, found the city of Lomar.
- 2000 AR Glaciation renders much of the Kingdom of Nimoth uninhabitable. Beginning of the Nimothan migrations.
- 2011 AR Kal Keor the Terrible becomes chief of the Jandar tribes, and crushes Thran.
- 2016 AR The Jandar horde defeats Droum. Kal Keor names himself King of Droum.
- 2022 AR The Jandar hordes attack Quodeth and are repelled.
- 2035 AR Kal Keor is assassinated by sorcery; the Jandar hordes disperse, and Kal Keor's empire crumbles.
- 2040 AR Bayod Naz, the Black Wizard, reveals the existence of the Black Circle and seizes power in Thran.
- 2087 AR Lomar defeats the city of Hurhun in a sudden war. Hurhun is sacked, its people scattered, its walls pulled down, and its fields salted.
- 2096 AR The glacier Kang overruns the small realm of Lendosk in a single winter.
- 2104 AR Beothoe, capital city of Nimoth, is engulfed by glaciers.
- 2112 AR Wandering tribes driven from Nimoth found the city of Nim on Thule's northern coast.
- 2155 AR Legions of Lomar defeat Droum's army. Droum sues for peace and is forced to pay a ruinous tribute.
- 2168 AR Princess Jara Boh is exiled from Lomar. She founds the city of Rime in an abandoned stronghold of Lendosk.
- 2176 AR The Black Milk is introduced in Imystrahl.
- 2183 AR Cult of Great Cthulhu spreads widely and grows dangerously influential as star alignments bring a season of dark dreams and whispers of doom.
- 2209 AR Deyane Hazeda becomes Quodeth's queen at age 15. Grand Vizier Ibland Posk rules as the power behind the throne.
- 2213 AR **Age of Ice/Age of Man.** Current year.

not empty; ancient prehuman races held sway over the world. The stories of their wars and triumphs are mostly lost in time, with only a few cryptic ruins or crumbling scrolls left to record these times. No one knows for certain who or what might have lived upon the Earth in these distant years, but toward the end of this time, Thule was dominated by two prehuman empires: the serpentmen and the rakshasas.

The Age of Dawn marked the coming of mankind. It is difficult to give a precise beginning to this age since no one knows how long primitive men roamed the African plains before wandering out to the rest of the world; it may have been anywhere between 50,000 and 10,000 years before the current age of Thule. Humans were savages, without writing or metal or numbers, but they were a young and vigorous race. Serpentmen and rakshasas regarded these new arrivals as mere pests and wiped out tribes that blundered into their territory—but these elder races were already in decline, and humans found many of their old cities and strongholds empty.

The Age of Dawn gave way to the Age of Myth 5,000 years ago, when a new race arrived in the world: the elves. A proud and warlike people, elves came to Thule from a parallel earth, fleeing through dimensional portals to escape some dire danger in their native world. Armed with learning and magic equal to those of the serpentmen and the rakshasas, the elves carved out kingdoms of their own. Many human tribes swore fealty to elven rulers, serving as warriors in elven armies battling against the remaining serpent kingdoms and rakshasa realms.

The founding of Atlantis, the first and greatest human empire, 2200 years ago marked the turn of a new age. The Age of Atlantis saw humankind equal and then surpass the learning of the older races; armed with powerful sorcery and advanced science, the Atlanteans created many great wonders and brought a vast portion of the world under their sway. Several of Thule's great cities—Katagia, Orech, and Marg, for example—had their beginnings as colonies of Atlantis. Later, as the empire's power grew, the Atlanteans turned to conquest and subjugated lesser cities such as Quodeth and Droum.

Atlantean lords ruled much of Thule for a dozen centuries or more...but at the height of its power, Atlantis was laid low by a terrible cataclysm. The cause of this disaster is not known; some believe the Atlanteans were dabbling with a new and uncontrolled source of energy, some say the gods struck down Atlantis for its overwhelming hubris, and still others familiar with the secrets of the Great Old Ones believe that the some baleful alignment of the stars awoke one of these monstrous powers, which then destroyed the Atlantean civilization. Whatever the cause, most of the island-continent of Atlantis sank beneath the waves 300 years ago, marking the end of an age.

The current age has earned no particular name yet, although some sages refer to it as the Age of Man, while others—taking note of the glaciers slowly devouring the northern world—refer to it as the Age of Ice. In this day, the old races are waning quickly; the serpentmen and

rakshasa empires are long dead, the elves are sliding into decadence and decline, and the few remaining outposts of Atlantis are losing their power and influence over the younger city-states of Thule. Mercantile Quodeth and martial Lomar are the great powers of the northern continent now, even if they wield only a tiny fraction of the power that Atlantis (or the earlier, prehuman empires) once possessed.

SOURCES OF MAGIC

The history of Thule amply illustrates that the world's ancient empires were founded on occult learning and lore. Yet your Supreme Majesty is certainly aware that magic is something humans were not meant to wield. Humans, for all their learning, are creatures of the natural world, and magic in any form is essentially unnatural. Mastering magic requires more than simple study or a natural knack. Those who seek to use magic must first find a suitable source of magic and harness it. Thule's scholars speak of five distinct origins or sources of magical power, and many wonder about several more that have not been confirmed to exist.

The first form of magic mastered by humans after they began to spread throughout the Earth and learn its secrets was animism—primal magic, or spirit magic. From the earliest days of humankind, wise men and women saw the world as a place alive with spirits and forces, and sought the favor of these natural spirits. Civilized Thuleans can barely perceive these spirits, and some openly scoff at “barbaric superstitions”—but shamans, druids, totem warriors, and others who draw magical power from the spirits of nature know better, my King.

As the wandering tribes of humankind began to slowly settle and become civilized, they forgot the ways of their savage forebears. Instead of spirits of beasts and seasons, they began to seek out powers that could teach crafts, knowledge, and secrets of lore. Where once humans raised stone circles, they began to build stone temples, and they named the beings that taught (and sometimes chastised) them. To their most faithful followers, the gods taught the secret art of invocation, or divine magic. Some believe that clerics beseech the gods for miracles that the gods in turn grant, but in truth the gods do not channel this power to their followers—the prayers and forms of cleric spells are designed to unlock the same supernal power the gods themselves employ, although clerics are initiated into only a small portion of this divine secret.

Humans may have discovered the power of animism and invocation on their own, but the secrets of arcane magic originated among older races. Arcana is the science of the occult, the logical study of supernatural principles and effects. It is the wizard's learning and study, an endlessly complex and abstruse science in which the most fundamental secrets of the universe are waiting to be discovered. Humans first studied arcana from stolen scrolls of serpentman mages or under the tutelage of the elves, who hoped to fill the ranks of their

A useful way to think of magic in Thule is: “rare among NPCs, but not necessarily at your table.” Spellcasting characters are special—with all the benefits and drawbacks that entails.
—Dave.

armies with servants powerful in magic. The wizards of Atlantis elevated the arcane arts to terrible and dangerous heights, and paid the price—but the Atlantean lore and its elven origins are still studied today.

Sorcery represents a different approach to power, O King; instead of changing the world with arcane knowledge, the sorcerer uses arcane knowledge to change himself or herself into a being whose nature is now in part magical. Sorcerers begin their careers by finding some rite or ritual and making a sacrifice, giving up some part of their humanity to gain power. In a world where magic use of any kind is seen as dangerous, sorcery is especially feared. In Thule it is said that the art of sorcery was the secret of innately magical races such as rakshasas or genies, who bartered their secrets to human seekers, usually at terrible cost.

There is one last route to power, a road that is dark and dangerous indeed—one can always bargain for the gift from an entity with the powers one seeks. Theurgy is the path of the warlock or the witch. By making a pact with some supernatural patron, the warlock gains the ability to use magic for his or her own purposes. The best of these patrons are fickle and inhuman powers from different realities—sly, mocking devils or bewitching fey. The worst are Great Old Ones, blind and hungry, responding to rituals far older than mankind. Theurgy descended to humankind from beings far more alien than elves or serpentmen, and warlocks are objects of suspicion and terror in all but the most callous of cities. Shun this dark knowledge, my King!

Other forms of magic almost certainly exist, of course. The Earth is ancient, and not even the wisest sage could begin to enumerate all the occult traditions and supernatural laws of its prehuman civilizations. But there are many dead cities and cursed ruins in Thule's jungles, and some of these are the result of dabbling in secrets man was not meant to know.

OTHER WORLDS

If it pleases my lord and sovereign, the Earth is but one world among countless worlds in existence. The infinite depths of space are home to alien planets beyond number, but there are also infinite parallel realities in which different versions of the Earth exist. The most powerful magicians and the most advanced scientists possess techniques to travel to distant stars or into these parallel dimensions. For some reason or another, Thule has had more contact than most lands with these distant spheres.

Some of Thule's sages have attempted to describe these alternate worlds as a "Great Wheel" of metaphysical realms, as elemental planes, or as realms revolving around a universal axis. Most of these philosophical concepts aren't terribly accurate. In Thule's cosmology there are no heavens or hells where souls are given their eternal reward—other worlds can certainly be idyllic or hellish places, but they are every bit as physical as the Earth itself, and subject to physical laws and realities, even if strange and unfamiliar.

DISTANT SPHERES

The Earth is only one planet among many in the universe. Astrologers have studied the movements of nearby planets such as Venus, Mars, and Jupiter, and know them well. What might lie in the sands of Mars or beneath the clouds of Venus no one knows, but one thing is certainly true: Alien races have come to the Earth from distant spheres on many occasions in the past, and some still visit the world from time to time to this day.

Since the denizens of other worlds have left little record of their travels on Earth, and few (if any) humans have traveled to these spheres, very little is known about them. The Moon is said to be home to a vile race of anthropophagic slavers known as the "moon-beasts," although it is possible that these creatures hail from the moon of an alternate Earth, not Thule's own moon. Saturn (or one of its moons, more likely) is supposedly the home of Tsathoggua, a Great Old One whose crude stone altars can still be found in remote caverns. The black world of Yuggoth lies at the outer edge of our sun's domain, and is home to the fungal creatures known as the mi-go.

Other planets are even more distant. The cursed city of Carcosa, dwelling place of Hastur, stands on a world that orbits the star Aldebaran. Nyarlathotep is said to dwell in the World of Seven Suns near the star Fomalhaut; the dhole-gnawed shell of the planet Yaddith is thought to lie near the star Deneb. Nheb, home of the star-things that lurk on Thule's highest peaks, is a vapor-shrouded moon orbiting a vast world near the star Schedar. No doubt there are dozens of other alien races that have taken an interest in the Earth at one time or another, and left their own dimensional gates or transportation mechanisms hidden in Thule's jungles—but it should be noted that very few humans ever leave the Earth, my King, and none of those individuals have ever been known to return.

PARALLEL DIMENSIONS

Learned sages and scientists know that some things exist in a different way than the ordinary matter that makes up the world. Creatures such as ghosts or wraiths are not made of the same stuff that earthly creatures are, Mighty King. A student of science might say that such beings simply vibrate or resonate on a different frequency, and thus interact with the world in strange and unexpected ways.

Ethereal beings and objects are still in the world, but they are somehow out of phase. Unseen and intangible, they pass through the world unnoticed. They can dimly perceive the ordinary world around them, but humans that have attained an ethereal state report that they seem to be moving through dense gray mist. A few (thankfully rare) monsters such as the star-things of Nheb seem to be able to shift to and from an ethereal state of existence at will.

Like ethereal beings, astral or dream beings exist in a different mode than physical beings. To be in astral

A sorcerer's bloodline reflects the type of ritual or sacrifice needed to gain power.
—Rich.

Warlocks are an excellent fit in Thule. This is a world in which magical power is not for the faint of heart.
—Rich.

form is to be pure thought. Astral beings can roam the world as disembodied intelligences, seeing distant places and interacting with others through dreams or visions. Astral beings can also enter dream-worlds, building for themselves astral bodies that mimic their own physical forms even though their own physical bodies lie sleeping or in deep trance somewhere in the real world.

Finally, some sages suggest there may be a supernal dimension or plane, a level of existence on which the gods and their servants dwell. Whether or not this is simply another form of astral existence, only the gods could say, but celestial palaces and heavenly domains do not seem to exist in the physical world.

ALTERNATE EARTHS

In addition to the numberless worlds scattered throughout the infinity of the starry night, Thule's sages have confirmed the existence of many different Earths.

It seems there are many realities in the cosmos, O King, and Earth—or a different version of it—exists in many of these alternate realities. Beings that are apparently terrestrial in nature but clearly came into existence in different worlds may be natives of an alternate Earth, not an alien planet. Devices of powerful magic or advanced science can serve as doors between these different realities, allowing creatures to move from one to another at specific crossing-points.

Of these alternate earths, the most well known is the world of Faerie. It is much like Thule's earth, but innately magical, and peopled by strange creatures and powers that occasionally take an interest in the human world. Crossing points to this alternate world seem positively commonplace, at least in legend—every dark hill or lonely glen might harbor a secret door to the faerie world. Many educated Thuleans laugh at such stories, but there is no doubt that this otherworld exists, since the elves came to Thule from this realm many centuries ago.

The world of Shadow is likewise closely bound to Thule, and is innately magical in a dark and deadly way. By all reports, the shadow-Earth is a cold and gloomy realm, sparsely peopled; life itself is slowly leeching away from those who linger too long. Necromantic energy infuses this reality—things do not stay dead for long in this otherworld, and Thulean mages who wish to meddle with the nature of life and death sometimes draw upon this dark power.

Dozens of additional alternate worlds or realities are known to exist or are hinted at in the oldest and most terrible grimoires. These seem to be more distant from or out of alignment with Thule's Earth, and thus less accessible. Some of these include:

Tanar is a hellish world (or group of worlds) that is home to the swarming hordes of demonkind.

Lanka is the original home of the rakshasas, a place of steaming jungles and titanic fortresses.

Nifhel is a dark and frozen orb ruled by giants or titans with powers of darkness and cold.

THULE'S COSMOLOGY: SOURCE, NOT DESTINATION

Thule exists in a universe that is more scientific and less magical than most fantasy settings. The stars are really stars, and they're sometimes thousands of light-years distant. Metaphysical or elemental planes of existence aren't really a part of the setting. On the rare occasions that Thulean PCs leave the Earth, they're usually physically traveling or teleporting to another planet, or moving to an Earth of an alternate reality. Cosmology is therefore more important as a way of describing where things come from, not where PCs can go.

In general, most extraplanar monsters or races you wish to use in your game just come from alternate Earths. Fire elementals or salamanders come from a version of Earth where volcanism runs amok and fire magic prevails. You can assume that there are Gehenna-like or Tarterus-like versions of the Earth where creatures such as night hags or demodands rule, or "fiendish" versions of beasts and monsters dwell. But in a setting where barbed devils might meet mi-go, it's useful to have a unified explanation of how these things fit in the same multiverse.

Kaf is home to the hidden race of genies. It is said to be a world of deserts, mountains, and ruins.

Your humble scribe wishes that he could relate more than this meager handful of hints and whispers about other worlds, but these things are only recorded in the rarest and most perilous of tomes, my King. There are many more worlds hinted at, but it is hard to say whether two books refer to the same place by different names or use the same name for many different places.

One thing is known: Powerful magic (or advanced science) can sometimes pull natives of these alternate worlds into Thule and bind them to service. Wizards do so at their own peril—the farther into the cosmos one reaches, the less likely it is that what one calls up can actually be controlled. Again, my King, I must urge you not to pry too deeply into these matters.

IN CLOSING

Your humble servant thanks you a thousand times for your kind attention, Mighty King. If some unimportant detail or rumor escapes your keen perception, the fault lies entirely with this unworthy scribe. As you have commanded, all the notes and sources from which this discussion was drawn have been faithfully copied and bound with this tale; you will find them in the following chapters.

In the following pages many of your questions will doubtless find their answers. But as one who has had the privilege to visit the primeval continent in your Supreme Majesty's service, allow me to add this final remark: My words do not do justice to Thule.

Should you choose to voyage to its shores, you shall see wonders—and, possibly, terrors—unimagined in the tamer lands of the Earth. Read on, my King, and learn more of what awaits you in Thule!

Lanka is the legendary home of the rakshasas. It's mentioned in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
—Rich.

Thule also works as a lost continent in an established campaign setting, or a world that PCs of an existing campaign are pulled into via portals or similar plot devices.
—Stephen.

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