

So Saith Ed 2010-2016

Compiled from Questions for Ed Greenwood, Candlekeep (<http://forum.candlekeep.com>)

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Answers have in some places been clipped down to the answer to the question rather than posting the full reply. If a post had more than one bit of Realmslore in it, it may be spread across multiple entries here. I've tried to include all Realmslore posted, but it's possible that small bits here and there were missed – so if you spot any, let me know.

Kanzen

Many thanks to Ed Greenwood and The Hooded One for providing this Realmslore.

ANIMALS

Earth-animals

- THO 2/9/10, responding to query if most animals found in the Realms that we're familiar with on Earth were brought from Earth by travellers through gates

"Brought from" in some cases (mounts ridden through gates, pack animals and herds driven, etc.) but Ed has always told me that most "Earth-and-Realms" animals wandered freely through long-unattended, "open" gates/portals.

Important postscript:

Some of which still exist and are "operating" to this day.

Foxes

- Ed 2/1/16, responding to query about where foxes in the Realms came from, and why hin call a fox a "rennard"

Why, from the same places foxes came from, of course: Earth. Which tells you the long, long ago world-hopping hin explorer/trader Altho Minstrelwish probably got the foxes he imported into the Realms from France (where "renard" is a fox). Yes, he brought the first foxes, hoping to get rich by harvesting their fur (brushes [[that's tails, folks]] especially) for hin fashion purposes. When relatively few hin, thanks to the er, sharp scent of foxes, proved interested in this, and even fewer liked roasted or stewed fox for the table, Altho let the foxes go, and they spread wild, largely displacing the native Faerunian lynx. (This'd be around 12 DR, for those keeping count.)

Stardrifters (whale sharks)

- Ed 30/12/13

Whale Sharks are known as "sharks of stars" or just "stardrifters" in the Realms (names obviously derived from the spots that adorn the dark flanks and uppersides of their skins), and have always been present in small numbers in the western Sea of Fallen Stars (around Presper and the Pirate Isles, where the waters are rich in schools of small fish, spawning grounds, and tiny seaborne life, so the whale

sharks can readily find plentiful food). On rare occasions, usually in the wake of severe storms that disrupt shallow ocean bed life, they may cruise into more easterly areas of the Inner Sea, though they seldom remain there for long. There's something about the water in the Bay of Chessenta that they dislike, so they avoid the area entirely.

In and around Faerûn, stardrifters are most numerous in the eastern Shining Sea (between Tharsult and the mainland near Ormpur and Sheirtalar), and a second area they frequent is among the Nelanther and between those islands and the mainland. At spawning times for tiny fish they augment their diet with, they are apt to cruise near the mouths of the many watercourses that flow south out of Thindol and Mhair, to gorge themselves on the runs of fish coming to spawn. The stardrifters of the Sea of Swords tend to have a purplish cast to the darker areas of their skin.

Merfolk and aquatic elves in the Sea of Fallen Stars on occasion "hitch rides" on the docile stardrifters by catching hold of a fin (never the tail) and being towed. Stardrifters are regarded as benign, friendly sea beings.

The tritons of the depths, however, attach more importance to stardrifters; they believe that the spirits of wise and important tritons (elders who have done great things during their lives, and seen much) pass into a nearby stardrifter when they die, and so "the elders watch" when a stardrifter is nigh. Moreover, at moments of great importance to a triton, when guidance is desired and a decision must be made, that triton should seek out and watch a stardrifter, for a sign. Something the shark does, or where it swims to or tarries at, will have relevant meaning to the decision at hand.

To morkoth, stardrifters are cattle: easy but boring, merely palatable food, to be harvested when the need arises and ignored at other times, except as guides in murky water who can lead to spawning areas or schools of small fish, where other prey may be found.

Dryland clergy of Oghma respect stardrifters as "wise ones," echoing the belief of the tritons that they retain memories and the accumulated wisdom of others, and this has had a curious side-effect: sharks of stars are one of the few aquatic creatures that clergy of Umberlee don't value.

Tressym

Breeding

- Blueblade referencing Ed, Qs for Ed 5/5/11

Obviously I'm not Ed or THO, but I happened to be eavesdropping (hanging out with and listening to) Ed at a Phantasm (the annual tiny Peterborough, Ontario gaming con) years back when someone asked him about tressym breeds and breeding.

According to my notes, Ed said they like dwelling with and near and being around people [humans, halflings, gnomes, elves, half-elves] but don't seem to want to breed if caged or kept from flying [e.g. wings clipped]. Some people have tried to breed for specific markings, hues of fur, etc. with fair success by just putting specific tressym together, but it's up to the tressym. Yes, there are breeds that have some different body features, but they're very rare, wild, and seldom seen.

Origin

- THO 20/4/10

In the Realms, they were around long before the Time of Troubles; centuries...they were "known" to humans when Cormyr was being first explored, and were of course around before that.

Whales

Whalesong

- THO 31/10/11

I can recall Ed talking about whalesong in the Sea of Swords being used for long-distance communication among whales, and for joint magical workings, including teleports of individual whales over great distances from one underwater locale to another, and for short-term shapechanges for whales that enabled them to hide/escape foes.

For more than this, we'll have to wait for Ed.

Except for one tidbit: SOME whales and certain dragons are related in some way. Again, I don't know more; Ed does.

It's some other form of magic that most land-dwellers know nothing about.

Storage of Divine Power

- THO 31/10/11

According to Ed, most of the aquatic deities AND other deities treat whales with kid gloves, so to speak, because whales have long, deep memories and so can "store" divine power/legitimacy. They are therefore mightily valuable.

However, I've never known the details of this.

Daerasluke Whale

- Ed, quoted 23/4/14

"The Daerasluke

This fast, agile, whale likes to play (leaping clear of the water, chasing each other around ships, islands, and undersea obstacles) in pairs or small groups. Daerasluke are slender, 50 to 70 feet long when full-grown, have large front fins and heads like very large flat arrowheads, and are sandy-hued. Under their hides is a thin layer of spongy yellow skin that leaks a yellow oil that can be burned as lamp oil just "as is" (so stabbing a beached [Sage-emphasised for relevance] or dead daerasluke causes an outflow of oil that barrels and lamps can be filled from). Under this is white, fibrous, "whitefish"-like flesh that's very oily, but edible; it can be squeezed to "drive out" the oil and the less-oily flesh then eaten (it "fries itself" when cooked), or it can be cooked down or boiled down to separate out a lot more oil if the flesh isn't wanted for eating. Daerasluke are plentiful, and females usually give birth to six or seven frisky young at once; they may produce two such families in a season if conditions are favourable."

Wild Dogs

- THO 29/12/15

Q: Wild dog packs ever become problems anywhere in Faerun especially small settlements or do the higher predators keep such creatures in check? Just thinking if dogs ever get their day?

A: packs of wild dogs are everpresent around the Rat Hills (and to a lesser extent NW of Waterdeep), and in westernmost coastal Sembia/eastern coastal Cormyr. Everywhere else, coyotes and wolves and worse keep the numbers of wild dogs down...so you encounter stray individuals or a family at most, not packs. In the Dales in particular, dogs learn to stay out of the trees...or it's rapidly too late for that particular dog to learn anything, ever again.

CHARACTERS

Elminster Aumar

Abilities

Creating Projected Images of Self

- THO 11/11/11

Elminster can definitely send multiple projected images of himself to different locations at the same time, and see, hear, speak, and transmit a few specific magics through them, one of which is a "grasping hand" magic akin to Bigby's but not the same casting at all, which enables Elminster to touch, handle, carry, move, and so on "at a remove" (i.e. if you shake hands with Elminster, you're not REALLY touching "him," so to speak). So El can PERCEIVE as if he could generate avatars.

Looking at my notes, I think El could easily do just what you propose at various times when he was a Chosen, but for some reason not known to me, didn't like to. After discussing the most recent published Elminster novels with Ed, I don't think he can now (if "now" means circa 1479 DR/The Year of the Ageless One).

Lhaeo

Writings about Elminster

- Ed 31/12/12 (2013 thread)

As a matter of fact, Lhaeo DID pen a short, thoughtful chapbook entitled: Life Lessons From The Leaning Tower, but it was a series of comments on the philosophies behind comments and replies Elminster made in Lhaeo's hearing, while he was living and serving at Elminster's Tower. And Elminster did nothing bad to Lhaeo, merely complimenting him on "a book full of superior writing that I heartily recommend to all."

Second Lhaeo

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 3/2/10, remembering Ed talk about the Lhaeo who replaced the Tethyrian noble

As for the "replacement Lhaeo," I remember a GenCon seminar in which it was said (by Ed, with TSR/WotC staffers sitting right beside him who nodded rather than contradicting him), that it was a young female mage, on the run from something and needing to hide just as the "first Lhaeo" had needed to hide, who stepped into impersonating Lhaeo, magically altering her appearance to do so.

Relationship with Cormyr

Authority in Cormyr

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), confirmed as accurate source by THO, Qs for Ed 13/7/10

Elminster's rank inside Cormyr is murky at best. While Storm Silverhand (for example) is the Marchioness Immerdusk, and holds the appropriate privileges thereof, Elminster holds a place of honor without being called by a particular title (at least, none that I can recall without re-checking sources I haven't read in some time)--in fact, the Prince of Athalanter might have rank, but he doesn't 'outrank' anyone at court. His authority over Caladnei is not absolute, or even mostly complete; it's more of the

fact of his experience, his mastership over the Harpers, and his rank in service to Mystra. In Cormyr, the Mage Royal answers only to the Crown.

Potential Founder of Cormyr?

- Markustay quoting "Elminster's Daughter"? in rebuttal to above, claiming El has rank and may be a founder of Cormyr as far as trying to build a better Athalanthar, canonicity unclear, not confirmed

"Moreover, if ye examine no less then six royal decrees and two binding treaties that I know of, preserved in the royal records of Cormyr, I - though not the ruler of Aglarond I'll grant - have the freedom of the realm and a court rank, by the way, that outstrips your own."

Only the royals out-rank the Mage Royal...

I am also not saying he is part of the royal family, but I would hazard to guess he is related to them several times over. I am not saying he is an obarskyr, or secretly 'the first Obarskyr' - that would be silly and far-fetched.

There is one 'great thing' that Elminster has always been remorseful over, more so then the thousand other things he is sorry for. Something he wishes he could go back, and 'make right'.

This is the point I am aiming at - the lynchpin that a lot of lore revolves around.

And not JUST Elminster and Cormyr - there is the 'deeper layer' I alluded to. In fact, now that I see it, I feel silly that I hadn't really noticed it before, because Ed has flat-out said it time and again, when discussing Elminster and the Chosen.

- THO 16/7/10

Elminster has watched over and covertly meddled in Cormyrean matters for a long time, that he does personally compare it with Athalantar from time to time, and that Vangey's work allowed Elminster to pay less attention to Cormyr's passing politics than he had to do before Vangey hit his stride.

- Ed 17/7/10

Elminster is NOT the "father of Cormyr." The truth is this: both Mystra and several of her Chosen observed Cormyr down the passing centuries and came to see that, as part of fostering magic use, a realm in which wizards were tolerated, accepted, and to some extent controlled and made part of the lawkeepers SO AS TO BECOME MORE TOLERATED AND ACCEPTED (if not loved) was A Good Thing (as far as furthering Mystra's aims was concerned).

Cormyr could be such a place . . . and perhaps SHOULD become such a place.

So (fairly recently, as centuries are counted) Elminster, Storm, Dove, and to some extent Khelben (with Laeral) and Alustriel became "involved" in watching over Cormyr to make sure the Wizards of War didn't go "off the rails" into oppressing other users of the Art too much, or to become feared and hated not as an arm of the Dragon Throne but a rival to it, and so ruin Cormyr as a cradle of more magic use.

Through the Harpers, without ever making any Cormyrean conscious of it (though Vangerdahast and Laspeera came to see it well enough, and Caladnei strongly suspect it, and they weren't prevented from doing so), the Crown of Cormyr and its mages were covertly aided and supported by Elminster and others. VERY lightly, trying not to interfere one whit more in the politics of Cormyr than was necessary -

- and mainly acting to prevent or inhibit Zhent, Thayan, Sembian, or other "wizard infiltrators" from gaining any real power inside the government of Cormyr.

Filfaeril and others came to know Elminster as a friend and confidant, but more as a "wise and powerful old archwizard who has an interest in Cormyr AS A HARPER" rather than a Chosen of Mystra steering or trying to manipulate the Forest Kingdom. Fee and others mainly used him as someone they could get a true, insightful answer to something from, in secret (and one of the things I can confirm that Fee AND Azoun IV asked Elminster, separately, was if he would counter Vangerdahast if it ever became necessary, in "preserving Cormyr;" El said yes to both of them, but please note that "preserving Cormyr" is NOT the same as guarding or promoting the aims of a particular Obarskyr, ruling or not - - and that, despite all the aid he's given Azoun IV over the years, Vangey has also always been dedicated to "preserving Cormyr" without necessarily guarding or promoting the aims of any particular Obarskyr.

Source of Authority

- Ed replying to Longtime Lurker, Qs for Ed 14/7/10, itself a reply to the quote by Markustay above

Q: I have always thought - - perhaps entirely wrongly - - that when Elminster said that to Caladnei about his rank outstripping her own, he was referring to having at some time in the past been called in, and recognized by the monarch of the time, as some sort of "Royal Investigator" into the War Wizards, who could give orders to the Royal Magician, Court Wizard, and any War Wizard, to do his investigations. A post that's probably forgotten by the time of Caladnei, except by Vangey (who doesn't want anyone to remember it) but that was confirmed by five later Cormyrean monarchs (those "six decrees") and in return for which El wrung a concession out of Cormyr: don't walk in and de facto conquer Shadowdale (and perhaps other dales), which would be the "treaties" mentioned.

This is all speculation on my part, but it sure fits what El said. He was the "top" alarphon at some time, and because he outlived everyone, never formally relinquished that post. Later kings saw him as a convenient bogeyman to warn off Vangey or any other over-ambitious War Wizard with, if they stepped too far into "running things without remembering to even inform the Obarskyrs about what orders they were giving" territory, and "reconfirmed" him in that post, perhaps pointedly at Court.

A: You are DEAD-ON CORRECT in your post about Elminster. That's exactly where his rank comes from. In American terms, he's somewhat like a Secret Service man: although no one amongst the general population or local police may know his face or name, he has the authority to give orders - - but may run into resistance from those who dispute his authority because they just don't know (or accept) what he is. The average Cormyrean has no idea that the legendary Elminster has any formal or legal connection to Cormyr, and would be slow to believe it.

Keeping Cormyr magic-friendly

- Ed 15/7/10, see also section on Authority in Cormyr above

Elminster is happy to dwell in the Dales, and from the 1350s onward to the Spellplague, his primary focus is on the Dales (to keep the Zhents and Hillsfar and Sembia AND Cormyr from conquering them, because they have an intrinsic value in and of themselves that he highly prizes, because they buffer the ruins of Myth Drannor and prevent any of those four local powers from seizing them, and because their continued existence helps to "hold those four apart" and prevent them from warring with each other directly, ruining the lives of thousands and bringing down a kingdom that is unintentionally doing much to foster widespread use of magic: Cormyr.

Through the Harpers but also working on their own, various Chosen of Mystra are trying to keep Cormyr "magic friendly."

- THO confirming Baleful Avatar, Qs for Ed 15/7/10

Q: So the Chosen are working to keep Cormyr a breeding ground for wizards and sorcerers, without letting the War Wizards oppress non-member mages and ever get out of hand enough for them to be hated by the commonfolk, right?

A: Right!

Post-Myth Drannor restoration

- Ed 15/7/10

Q: "So with the restoration of Myth Drannor, how much of this would change? Would El feel he needs to guard the Dales less, since Myth Drannor is no longer in danger and can also protect the Dales?"

A: Yes, it would change. El would no longer feel he had to guard the Dales in the manner he has been doing. However, there's a bigger change involved, too. To see what it is, you'll have to read ELMINSTER MUST DIE! (Sorry.)

Relations

Aumar the Lion

- Ed 5/1/14

Q: Was Aumar "the Lion" (a guard captain of Silverymoon, father of Elsurra Dauniir) descended from the Aumar family... or perhaps from servants of the family?"

A: YES, he's descended from the Aumar family. From Elminster, in fact. A story I hope to get around to someday.

Killing Family

- Ed 5/1/14

Q: Has Elminster ever had to 'put down' (however you want to interpret that) someone he was related to?"

Ed saith: Oh, yes. More than once.

Lashan "of Scardale" Aumersair (once ruler of Scardale)

- Ed 5/1/14

Q: Hi Ed, Just been reading over various books and came across Lashan's surname; Aumersair, which I have come across many times before but then I had an epiphany. It struck me that when pronounced out loud, Aumersair is a corruption of Aumer's heir. Which in turn could be a corruption of Aumar's heir (as in Elminster Aumar). I'm sure this is just me reading something of nothing but is there any familial connection with Lashan's and Elminster's family tree (although given Elminster's age and fecundity he is probably related to half of Faerun by now). Oh and I apologise if this has already been asked but it is the first time I have ever had anything to ask Ed so I was pretty damn excited...If only it was one of the last

open secrets staring everyone in the face in the OGB. That would make my decade, and it would mean I could stop looking for it in that book."

Ed saith: A tip of the hat, indeed. Consider your decade made. You HAVE stumbled across one of the last open secrets sitting on the pages of the OGB for everyone to find. Well done! Lashan IS distantly related to Elminster, and Aumersairs before him have served as Harpers, have fought as Purple Dragons for earlier Kings of Cormyr, and have been adventurers who retired to Waterdeep to run taverns and inns friendly to adventurers. Oh, and one of them wed an elf and their descendants dwelt happily in Semberholme for nigh a century (before the Time of Troubles warfare caused some elven migrations from that haven).

- THO 7/1/14, answering dazzlerdal

1 - that the Aumersair's are the descendants of Elminsters eldest male child from a time not too distant of Athalanter. (yes)

2 - Elminster probably had a hand in Lashan's downfall even though i bet it was a bitter course of action for him to take. (yes)

- THO 11/10/13

Lashan had a hunger for intrigue and power (not BEING a ruler with the high profile, good clothes and food, and the like, but thinking situations through and giving orders that manipulated people and affected things, changing the way things are in the world) that drove him above all else. He HAD to be a "power player," one way or another.

He also saw the Dales as a largely-untapped source of natural resources that could, united, eventually grow wealthier and more powerful than either Sembia or Zhentil Keep. He planned to use Zhentil Keep and then doublecross them with the aid of Sembian interests, but of course was used by them "first and hardest." He wasn't a coward, or afraid of playing dangerous games with himself as a pawn; he was a cool-headed gambler who lost his biggest gamble. He also misjudged some Dalefolk, thinking they'd rally to him once a charismatic leader offered himself, whereas most of them mistrusted all "grand big kings" and preferred local rule, by someone who could be cornered and yelled at if you thought he was being a fool or dishonest.

Not to Midnight/Ariel Manx

- THO 16/7/10

No, Elminster was not blood-related at all to Midnight/Ariel Manx, as far as either of them or the gods involved are aware.

Cormyrrian "Daughters"

- The Sage quoting Ed, Qs for Ed 13/7/10

"Narnra is a "direct" daughter of Elminster; Laspeera and Filfaeril were bending the truth a little to make her feel better when they spoke thus: they're among Elminster's many grand and great-grand, and great-great-grand (and so on) -children."

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), Qs for Ed 13/7/10

Not all, or even most, of Elminster's Daughters reside in Cormyr. The Old Mage has a few of them and more to spare, and Narnra, Laspeera and Filfaeril account for only three of them. At the time of Elminster's Daughter, you can be assured that there were more illegitimate daughters of Azoun IV inside of Cormyr than descendants of Elminster (or at least, who knew that they were).

[Amarune Whitewave](#)

- Ed 27/1/12, replying to query about how much gold it takes to "ride" her

Amarune is a mask dancer, her performances paid for "by the house," though patrons may tip her (e.g. a copper more for a lap dance). If you want something more intimate, you have to negotiate with her (so her "price," if any, varies), and said negotiations may not be easy; you might recall the scene in *ELMINSTER MUST DIE!* where Arclath was waiting for her in her change room, and how furious she was.

[Nephew running the Shadowdale Flour Pot bakery](#)

- THO 11/1/14 (referred to in Elminster's Ecologies)

Elminster has a lot of relatives that he largely doesn't acknowledge, because becoming known as "of the blood of Aumar" (i.e. related to Elminster) is like wearing a target on your back. And front. And the top of your head. And so on.

["Ruler of Two Realms" in past](#)

- THO 12/9/10, responding to query about what these realms are, and a guess at one being in the Sunset Vale

Athalantar "doesn't count" as a place Elminster has ruled...but neither does the place he's thinking of, in his post. Which means, yep, "it could be two places we've never even heard of - places long-gone - who knows?"

[Link to Amedahast](#)

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), Qs for Ed 13/7/10, replying to Markustay assertion that Amedahast learnt under Elminster, confirmed by Ed

Perhaps it was not Amedahast that learned from Elminster, but the other way round.

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), Qs for Ed 14/7/10, clarifying the above, confirmed by Ed

Amedahast was raised and studied in Myth Drannor before her tenure under Baerauble, so it's not really necessary that she have learned its spells from Elminster.

What I'm suggesting isn't that El learned magical abilities or secrets from Amedahast (he is among the most talented spellcasters of his or any generation, after all), but that he may have adopted her tactics and observed her behavior. Although Baerauble was the first of Cormyr's high mages, and its second longest-serving (Thanderahast beats him by a couple of years), Amedahast was by far the most magically talented and far-sighted (although the latter, it could be said, is a title worthy of Vangerdahast, too). It was she who created the War Wizards--yes, even before the Harpers--and the meddling of great mages in Cormyr owes its tradition to her as much as anyone else.

A powerful young Chosen of Mystra, capable in spells but still looking to find a place and a method in

the world beyond hurling fireballs at fell villains, could learn much from a woman like that, even one that is younger than himself...

Mating with dragons

- Ed 28/7/11

Elminster DID mate with more than one shapechanged dragon (unaware of the true nature of his lover), mated at least once with a dragon when he did know his partner was a dragon in human form, and at least once himself took dragon form to mate with a dragon in dragonshape. The reasons for his doing so are covered by the NDA, but the "rueing" involves certain resulting offspring, and the lives they have thus far led. More than that, I can't yet say (thanks to many a dread NDA!).

True Appearance

- Tbeholder, Qs for Ed 27/4/12 (confirmed by Ed)

My take on this is that the archetypical robed figure with everstinkin' pipe in that old mill tower is but one more mask - "a good example" Elminster presents to the wizards still looking up at him. He's still both "prince of thieves" and the one told to learn from mages without taking the accompanying title or habits... among the other faces. Conversely, when he's out for some quiet meddling anybody would be lucky to recognize Elminster as a living thing at all.

To put it in another way, he's the sort of a man who wears perfect formal clothes and demonstratively plays by all the rules while in an official role... privately not even for a moment believing in them being anything more than generally useful guidelines, because he saw too much to cling to such illusions.

Time as a female

- THO 10/11/11

The only canon Realmslore about El's time as a woman is that section of ELMINSTER: THE MAKING OF A MAGE that had to be pruned so drastically to concentrate on other aspects of El's progression through the character classes (which is what the books' editor, Brian Thomsen, then head of TSR's Books Department, wanted the book to be about). El's female time was spent adventuring and in service to Mystra, and didn't last all that long; further details (especially anything romantic) will have to come from Ed, of course. But as for the "Would he do it again?" the answer has to be a definite "yes," given the many, many times El has unhesitatingly shapechanged (via spells) into various female shapes to trick people, attend events unidentified as the infamous Old Mage, infiltrate places and groups to learn things without violence or coercion, and so on.

- Ed 10/12/11

Elminster can indeed take female form more or less at will (though not during the dire straits we see him in, in the years leading up to and through ELMINSTER MUST DIE! and BURY ELMINSTER DEEP) by the use of various spells. He might or might not wear feminine shape while training (or for part of the time while training) a female apprentice; that depends on what he deems best for "training and tempering" her. El doesn't hesitate to "go she," but does so mainly to escape being identified or to set particular individuals at ease. (He's not vain, and so isn't trying to escape his own familiar wrinkles by altering his shape.)

Research into Lichdom

- Ed 8/12/10

Thick NDAs looming all around on this one, but I can go far enough to say: Elminster is well aware of (and possesses the notes, spells, and necessary "ingredients"/apparatus for) many methods of attaining lichness status, that he's acquired and studied over the years. Thus far he has actively dabbled in none of them, and that's due in part to the silver fire and active Weave flows and use not mixing well with lichdom. Which is where I'd best stop spilling beans for now . . .

"Retirement"

- THO 12/12/11

Elminster's "retirement" was always a wry fiction. A signal to be misinterpreted so he can take advantage of what certain ne'er-do-wells do, in light of his "retirement."

Reasons for being in Shadowdale

- THO 12/12/11

Elminster settled in Shadowdale for a variety of reasons, not all of them as yet revealed. One was to bolster Storm's and Syluné's attempt to "hold" Shadowdale against Zhent expansionism, one was to hamper the drow in their restless attempts to conquer Shadowdale as a surface outpost rather than just a surface trade link through Grimstead, and one was to guard the Celestial Stair from the likes of Manshoon - - but there are others we Knights are still trying to identify.

Calling Card

- Ed 22/8/11, responding to query about mixture of letters he uses as a mark

That is indeed one of El's wizard marks, little used these days in favor of later, more powerful ones (it's not, and has never been, his sigil). It actually combines several letters: "e" for Elminster, "j" for Jannathra (a word of incantation that could be translated "X [in this case Elminster] does this" or "X has spoken" or "X makes it so"), "t" for Tannaeth (a word of incantation meaning "sealing" or "bound to" or "marked as belonging to" or "the work of" [so this latter meaning has meant that you'll sometimes see pots and other handcrafted items of the Realms marked on the base with "Tannaeth" and then a name or personal symbol, the item and the maker having nothing to do with magic at all]), and "c" for Cahlethra (a non-Art word meaning "done with good intentions" or "done to true purpose" or "done as the god wills" or "this represents a noble cause" or the like). Obviously, all of the letters are overlapped into the symbol you see, and in the past (DR 1200s and earlier) Elminster did do so with incantations to make this a wizard mark that anchored many wards, alarm- and identification-spells, and similar magics. By the 1300s, it served him as a recognition-rune that gave others no power over him at all. By the way: the Weave enables all Chosen, plus Mystra and Azuth, to be instantly aware when someone who is not Elminster draws this sign while in any location the Weave reaches (they learn the locale, the someone, and a glimpse of the intent and the nature of any magic involved). Hope this helps.

Relationship with Manshoon

Reasons for not killing all clones

- Ed 8/12/11

As for not killing off all of Manshoon's clones (and, yes, his manipulations in that story of mine you cite), that was indeed at Mystra's behest, to keep Manshoon around. El operates under many such guidelines and restrictions, that we seldom know about. (When you're playing a very longterm game, it's in no one's interest to permanently remove useful pieces from the board when they can be manipulated off to the side, to see use again later.)

[Link to Halnsor Family](#)

- THO 23/8/11, responding to query about tale of Heralds lining up at Elminster's home to discuss the family

The heralds all represented city-states or realms where various Halnsors had acquired title to expensive central urban properties by marriage (sometimes using aliases), adoption, and by being willed the lands - - or put forward claims after an unrelated occupant of such a property died. As Elminster was known to have hunted down three Halnsors who'd fled from justice, some decades earlier, he was considered something of an expert on the reclusive family, so his "word" was desired on disentangling which Halnsor was married to who, which one had been impersonating which other one (or impersonating someone else entirely, or merely falsing claiming rights to these properties).

Lhaeo was locally famous for pranking these heralds by dressing up as a grand mage, using the assistance of one of El's apprentices to temporarily get taller, and storming out to order the heralds: "Hoy! Ye children! Get off my lawn!"

[Visits to Secomber](#)

- THO 16/12/12

El does indeed visit Secomber, without apparent remorse/upset. Not often, mind you . . . but then again, Secomber isn't quite the hotbed of sedition/magical misuse/intrigue/slithering evil that some other places in the Realms (that command more of El's attention) are.

[Visits to Undermountain](#)

- Ed 16/3/11

Elminster has visited Undermountain literally thousands of times. On a few occasions, these were to recover something or someone, or hunt down a particular being (to find out what they were up to, NOT kill them), but most of his visits were in service to Mystra in the endless task of "seeding" the Realms with magic (spell scrolls, usually, but sometimes magic items) for others to find, that the use of magic might be spread most widely throughout Faerûn. (Elminster has briefly appeared in the uppermost level of Undermountain to come to the rescue of a young, inexperienced mage in peril about a hundred times, and visited Skullport to stymie one magic-collecting villain or other dozens of times.) I would love to say more, but let's just say there are some secrets I'll leave to the (hopefully near) future to reveal...

[Fzoul Chembryl](#)

[Favoured Entertainments](#)

- THO 6/10/10

I know Fzoul enjoys plays that involve deceptions ("comedy of manners" of the Noel Coward and Oscar Wilde sorts) from Realmsplay with Ed as DM, and (same source for my knowledge) Zhentil Keep at the time you've mentioned had both strip shows ("pleasure queen revels") and about a dozen theatres of

various sorts, which were all popular/packed (by various sorts, I mean venues that customarily offered the same SORT of play each night, specializing in either variety of the sort that Americans might term vaudeville and British might call music hall, or what we could call opera (serious plays involving tragedy, love [usually doomed], and high adventure, that had songs), or what we might term snide comedy/satire of current politics and life "protest plays." Manshoon loved these latter entertainments, and let them continue even when they became highly critical of his growing power and the tightening Zhentarim grip on the city.

Rise of Fzoul, "Fall" of Manshoon, High Imperceptor of Bane

- Ed 10/2/11

I created all three of these individuals, but never saw Fzoul as subtle enough to rise above being Manshoon's sidekick unless he got lucky - - and he did. The High Imperceptor was a jaded, decadent, doomed man from the start (the start being my conception of him), but it remained to be seen if the ever-ambitious Manshoon would either overreach himself (as he did), or foresee that it might be wiser to let Fzoul "beat him" and leave one of his lesser clones as Fzoul's subservient, non-trusted underling while he operated undercover from outside the Zhentarim (which he also did).

Halaster/Hilather the Mad Mage

Other Identities

- Ed 1/2/12

Halaster has used many likenesses, both genders, and quite a few names down the years. Most of the elder mages were in the habit of adopting guises to do risky, unpopular, or "against their established image" things.

Halaster in Undermountain

- WR, confirmed by THO, 7/2/15

There have also been hints that at least some part of Halaster is still in Undermountain and is, at the least, cognizant of what is going on around him.

Soul Shards

- BRJ (Flamsterd article in General Forgotten Realms Chat)

1376 DR (Year of the Bent Blade): The High One charges his pupil Flamsterd with retrieving Halaster's soul-shards, scattered throughout Toril and beyond

Ilsevele and Fflar (Myth Drannor)

- Ed 29/12/15

The last we saw of Ilsevele and Fflar, they had made it to Semberholme from the "last battle" in the heart of Myth Drannor. They ARE still leading the refugees, and are once again adopting a low-public-profile for "their" elves, in this part of the world, for the time being. In other words, NOT openly challenging humans or anyone else for territory, and devoting themselves to rebuilding families and daily jobs and prosperity, settling the elves into a stable society once more. And establishing frequent and secure routes of trade and communication between Semberholme, Tangletrees, Evereska, and other elf communities...including a "secret" small one that dwells in the heart of Myth Drannor,

clustered around some of the tomb-tunnels and baelnorn. Much of the surrounding forest is still wild/ruined/monster-roamed, and the elves are leaving it that way, "roving" and patrolling rather than rebuffing intruders with set borders and a "this land is ours" mentality...because they see that as a mistake, and are embracing of human ways rather than living in more harmony with the land (i.e. the elven way). Yes, they guard the Tree of Souls as "ours" and keep anyone with fire (and all goblinkin [orcs, hobgoblins, goblins, etc.]) away from it...and yes, "slips" from the Tree have been secretly taken and replanted in Semberholme, Evereska, and Tangletrees, so the Tree can be "moved" by magical means in future, if need be.

On a daily basis, Fflar is reorganizing and training a militia and self-reliant local patrols, establishing esprit de corps and personal connections so trust will rise and lead to cooperation when NEXT the elves have to work together in battle, or fall. Ilsevele is doing the same "building relationships" work among elders and families, encouraging family ties through intermarriages between powerful families, and cooperative "projects" that get rivals and longtime opposite sides in feuds working together and deepening friendships.

Larloch

Title of Shadow King

- Ed 9/9/11

Q: Why is Larloch known as The Shadow King?

A: Big Shiny NDA.

Q: Does he also dabble with shadow magic?

A: Smaller, quieter NDA.

Q: Was he Telamont's apprentice before Netheril's Fall?

A: No, not at all. Larloch was far less powerful then than he is now, but Telamont was much, much weaker and socially less important back then, too. (Trust me. I created both of them.)

Q: Or is it simply because he works in the shadows [behind the scenes], pulling the strings of his puppet-servitors?

A: No, but that habit has probably led to much later folk continuing to use/reviving the sobriquet.

Q: Who started calling him that? Adventurers? Enemies who learned their folly of messing with him?

A: NDA for now. Which means There Are Plans, But It's Way Too Early To Say Anything More. Because Plans Are Masterpieces Written On Sand, On A Stormy Beach, With The Tide Coming In. :}

Silver Fire & Chosen of Mysteryl

- THO 3/7/14

Larloch, as a lich, will be destroyed by the silver fire (a "tiny touch" might burn a hand or arm away, but prolonged or "all over" contact will disintegrate him, sentience and all, preventing him "escaping into the Weave." Back when he was a living man and not undead, silver fire would not have been deadly to him, though Mysteryl's version of silver fire, which was "electric blue" in hue, worked slightly differently - and in lich form, he dare not even use that. If Larloch ever got the opportunity to slowly and painstakingly "attune himself" to the Weave - - which actually consists of calling on the Weave to power

a long and exacting sequence of enchantments that alter his lichnee body step by step [[if you're familiar with Zelazny's Amber series, the way in which scions of Amber travel through shadows by adding conditions they want and subtracting conditions they don't want, to get closer and closer to a desired destination, is pretty close to the process I'm clumsily describing here]] -- he could overcome this peril and master and wield silver fire.

The problem is, he'll be vulnerable to attack (from his own liches, is his personal greatest fear) throughout this long process, so he thus far hasn't dared even attempt it.

Oh, and one more thing. I'm glad you used the phrase "claimed to be the last chosen of Mystryl," because Ed did caution me that we have only Larloch's word that he is; there could well be others, some of them perhaps "hiding in plain sight."

Interest in other planes, gates

- Infamous quoting unknown source, Qs for Ed 8/10/12

"Larloch was interested in creating and controlling a network of portals linking many planes and crystal spheres. Like all of his endeavors, this network would have been used to advance his research, as the portals would be designed to relieve their users of powerful magic items, and record any arcane secrets contained in their minds. Though the portals themselves were simple enough to create (Larloch personally visited more planes than almost anyone on Toril), the special enchantments were still proving problematic, even after various centuries of research. Never one to give up, Larloch planned to continue working on this problem until he perfected the process."

Dragon rode out of Jiksidur to escape enclave's fall

- Ed 30/12/13

Though the wyrm in question disappeared out of Faerûn, flying south and east, in the spring of 14 DR, and hasn't been seen since.

The gargantuan elder blue wyrm Aungahlaumitor was an ally of Larloch, and they traded spells and worked together on creating new magics for three or four decades before the fall of Jiksidur, the dragon reportedly mastering magic far beyond what most of its kind ever do.

"Ongall," as the wyrm was known to most in Jiksidur, was at the time reputed to be the spellcasting equal of any senior Netherese arcanist (archwizard), and to have spent its treasure in crafting and augmenting many magic items that it grafted onto its body and magically linked in a network that made it a magical powerhouse in battle. It reportedly flew through the heart of the wildest lightning storms with gleeful enjoyment, the electrical discharges being captured as augmenting energy by many of its worn magic items.

Whenever Aungahlaumitor encountered other dragons, it would use its magical might to destroy them, force information about lair and treasure out of the dying mind of its victim, then add the lair to its steadily-expanding holdings (dozens of lairs, all guarded by servitor creatures magically bonded to those lairs, to ensure their guardianship until death).

Aungahlaumitor was also said to have carried Larloch's phylactery on its back from time to time to keep it beyond the reach of the lich's foes, though this may be mere wild rumor that has been repeated enough down the many, many years since the height of Jiksidur's power as to seem more tenable lore.

Aungahlaumitor's fate is unknown, though nothing at all has been heard of it for more than fourteen centuries now, suggesting that it has perished or departed Toril.

If the wyrm still survives, and looks enough like it did back then for ancient accounts to be useful, then "Ongall" is the largest blue dragon one has ever seen, with a large barb at the end of its long and slender tail, a wingspan wider than is proportional for almost all blue dragons, and a blue-black head with maliciously-glittering eyes that stare out of large black pits (as if it has what a modern real-world human would call "two proper black eyes" or "real shiners") and a unique crest or spiny fin rising from its snout to rear up between its ears.

Its heritage and offspring, if any, are unknown, but it was clearly a standout among blue dragons; its like is not seen in Faerûn today.

Deals with Szass Tam

- THO 15/2/14 (referencing the Runes of Chaos adventure in 2e Spellbound)

Q: As I was saying above, we're told, early in the adventure's setting, that Szass Tam made some "unspecified deals" with Larloch. Now, aside from you possibly being able to channel into designer Anthony Pryor's mind, I'm curious about what your thoughts would/could be about the nature of these "unspecified deals" made between Tam and Larloch? What do you think may have been agreed upon/exchanged/provided between these two great archmages? Could Tam have possibly [and unknowingly, from his own perspective] figured into one of Larloch grand and far-reaching plans for the Realms?

A: I've never known any details (because after dealings with a certain Tharchioness, we Knights avoided Thay like the plague), but when you post this: "Could Tam have possibly [and unknowingly, from his own perspective] figured into one of Larloch grand and far-reaching plans for the Realms?" I know you're right in this speculation, because we did on two occasions eavesdrop on Larloch (he knew it, BTW, and was allowing it so as to "leak" certain information via us, as we figured out later), and I know Szass Tam was Larloch's unwitting tool in this. I believe it had to do with curbing some zulkirs' tendencies to send Red Wizards out across the Realms to seize magic and magical lore and then destroy the owners they'd just taken it from (Larloch didn't want such wholesale slaughter of wielders-of-the-Art).

Anthony Pryor did work from Ed's (not very extensive) notes on Thay to write this product, and I know that little notation was among them (from seeing some of said notes, myself).

Role in The Herald & Tears so White

- Ed 1/7/14

Q: Did Larloch successfully bluff the Chosens by telling them the outcome of Tears so White wasn't one of his plans while he was instead "playing the long game" anticipating events more than a century in advance by weakening the Myth Drannor's mythal structure just enough so his Weave-force wrestling match (much much) later would have been easier?

A: Yes, Larloch did successfully deceive the Chosen, and he was "playing the long game," but he did not at that time anticipate doing something so bold and dangerous as he tried during THE HERALD. What he wanted to do was shift precise control of the mythal out of the hands of the elves, whom he mistrusted (seeing their past arrogance and underestimation of other races as a fatal flaw), to a state where he ALONE would have the greatest measure of control over it - - because whatever happened in the future, he trusted himself most of all, as the surviving Chosen of Mystryl, to understand Weave and Weave magic (arcane magic, or the "wizard's spells" of the game rulebooks) more than any other entity. He sees himself as the greatest guardian of Toril.

What happened in THE HERALD is that Larloch didn't think the shadovar would manage to seize the power of the wards of Candlekeep. He saw them as far lazier, more arrogant, and less accomplished and wise than the elves (in other words, far more flawed), and having only achieved much of their success thanks to the backing of Shar, which they scarcely admit to themselves, and so are even more overconfident than they should be. From Larloch's point of view, the younger Tanthuls are spoilt children, and the older Princes are irresponsible overachievers who will inevitably overreach themselves and fall. When he saw how far they'd got and what Elminster was up to, he succumbed to the temptation of having all that power and "setting Toril to rights at last" by becoming Mystra's wiser, more far-sighted, and less sentiment replacement - - and he leaped at the chance, trusting to his great accumulated power and years of wisdom to see it through. (He hadn't reckoned on the Srinsee foreseeing this possibility and having the self-discipline to largely hold aloof from the defense of Myth Drannor to remain ready to thwart him, or Telamont Tanthul, or for that matter Elminster or another waiting, lurking archwizard, who might try to seize the power of the mythal and do something drastic, dangerous, or stupid. The Srinsee sacrificed many elves in the bloody short term to save her race and salvage what she could of the people [not the real estate] of Myth Drannor in the long term, and smote Larloch at just the right moment to overload him and prevent his successful subsumption of all that magical power, into an ascension or whatever mad fate might have awaited him (Karsus, anyone?).

Chronomancy lack of interest

- Ed 17/11/11

Larloch leaves chronomancy alone. That entire school of casting endangers many of his binding spells (that bind his lichs to him, that bind cast and "hanging" [[ready to deal damage]] spells to him, and that bind magic items (used like machine gun emplacements in his site defenses) to him. It's perilous exploration for no great gain that he can see, at very high risk. And Larloch got where he now is by being very cool-headed, patient, and calculating. No good ratio of return vs. risk? Then avoid. There are many, many other projects to pursue that he KNOWS will be more successful.

Relationship to Telamont

- Ed 9/9/11

Q: Was he Telamont's apprentice before Netheril's Fall?

A: No, not at all. Larloch was far less powerful then than he is now, but Telamont was much, much weaker and socially less important back then, too. (Trust me. I created both of them.)

Larloch's Liches

Role in Tears so White

- Ed 5/7/14

So it was a plan pursued by some of Larloch's lichs, that Larloch was watching (so it WAS, from his viewpoint, an "experiment gone wrong") to make sure it played out to his advantage and not disaster. He let the plan proceed because he saw that its results would ultimately be to his benefit. So, yes, this lich does deserve more lore detailed shared with all scribes in the fullness of time.

Lords of Waterdeep

Piergeron Paladinson

Life Extension

- THO 25/5/13, replying to query about life extension in City of Splendors novel

Q: "Has Piergeron extensively had his life extended in this fashion?"

A: Yes.

Friendship with Madeiron Sunderstone

- THO 25/5/13

Deep friendship. Best friends, absolute trust.

Mirt the Moneylender

Moneylender yet a "nice guy"

- THO 15/9/12

Although there are times when Mirt has been decidedly "not nice," he has prospered in recent years through a "new wrinkle" he developed: he gets debtors to work for him, or agree to things, and thereby engineers increased profits for himself through land deals and trade arrangements that wouldn't be possible without their "cooperation."

- THO quoting Ed's notes 15/9/12

Mirt doesn't like being menacing. For one thing, it worked well when he was a youngish mercenary general, but folk are less afraid of his elderly, paunchy, wheezing, lurching self.

He much prefers to be jovial or kindly, playing the elder statesman who regrets having to "close" or "collect" on someone who can't (or won't) pay him.

Mirt assembles a few witnesses (preferably Piergeiron or another "known" lord like Texter or Kitten) with the debtor, and in front of them negotiates something like this: can't pay? Well, then, extension to this later date in return for agreeing to/not opposing this ("this" being a guild vote or business proposal regarding shipping or bulk good purchases that Mirt will benefit from). Failing that, Mirt agrees to "forget" a large debt in return for acquiring land or a building (usually in Waterdeep) or the contents of a warehouse or a share in a business that's nominally worth less (but that Mirt can parlay into a large profit by combining it with other acquisitions for a controlling interest or larger parcel of land or room enough to knock down smaller buildings and build larger, new, better ones on the same site to get higher rents or sales).

Or Mirt forces the debtor to sell something (property, business share, even an entire business), in order to pay Mirt out of the coin they get for selling. Mirt gets repaid, and removes a competitor or "bad" debtor by putting them out of (that) business. Mirt often softens this latter "road to ruin" by giving them a paid job to do (like accompany a shipboard cargo to a destination in another port), thereby getting them off the stage in Waterdeep, giving them an opportunity for a fresh start elsewhere, and sometimes even gaining an ally in the process. (Many of Mirt's former debtors see him as a friend and valuable trading partner.)

This very "shrewd kindness" is what makes Mirt stand out from among the many "sharks of Waterdeep,"

both as an intriguing "quirky" man and a spectacular business success.
He's a gruff, good-natured, humorous old guy known to be a good friend -- and a bad foe.

- THO 15/9/12

Oh, yes, Mirt has a "small army" of down-on-their-luck individuals and families he "forgets" to collect rent from. And even delivers hot cooked food (left over from nobles' revels and "prepared in excess" [[deliberately]] for Palace functions/dinners with envoys and embassies) to. In return, they deliver messages and items for Mirt to certain people (rarely) and spy for him (frequently).

In addition to Mirt's kindness, certain nobles treat certain "low friends" similarly, as do a HANDFUL of wealthy, socially-rising "wannabe nobles," and most of the guilds (though the guilds tend to restrict their generosity to the families of members and the families of deceased members).

Piergeiron also seeks out and gives food and shelter to street folk (and sometimes steady employment to them, too), particularly in winter months. He also holds "open feasts" at the Palace in which the cold and hungry can warm and feed themselves in the colder months. (However, Piergeiron is not above using these occasions for law and order purposes: twice, when serial murderers were at work in the city, these open feasts included drugs added to drinkables to induce gentle slumber, and the Watch and attending priests magically interrogated certain feasters as they awakened (at different times), to try to learn the identity of/more about the killers. In one case, successfully, in the other not.

What is Under His Bed

- Ed 26/7/12

I know very well what's there, because I already featured said things in a long-ago short story: a large, wicker-bound glass bottle of "klathliss," potent amber-hued pear-and-berries liqueur from Rauvin; a spare sheathed longsword, a large black towel, and two unsheathed, pommels-foremost throwing knives. Mirt once, late at night, whipped the towel over an intruder's head and brained the man with the bottle -- which did not break.

"Kitten" / Nymara Scheiron

Poems

- THO 8/8/12

Betimes I've sung praises of the southerly-roving tongue
Loudly, lord, to say nothing of lewdly
But having oft in love been deep-stung
I choose now my tonguelashers more shrewdly

Most Likely place of recital

- THO 9/8/12

If the time is the 1350s to 1370s, the place in Waterdeep you'll most often hear that ditty (and many other verses, most of them similarly bawdy) is a womens' (well, females, because "shes" of the elves, half-elves, halflings, dwarves, gnomes, and some other races are among the regular patrons) dining and drinking club known as THE LACE HARP, which meets in rentable upper rooms in Castle Ward, on the third floor of Hammarak's Fine Laces And Adornments, a shop that sells, alters, and adorns fine feminine garments. It's the third building west of Tchozal's Race, on the south side of Calamastyr Lane. Yes, Kitten is a member.

- Ed 9/8/12

The Lace Harp becomes a crossdressing club dominated by prissy noble and wannabe-noble men by the late 1370s, and although Kitten's poem is still heard uttered there occasionally, it is heard more often in the 1380s and 1390s at The Blue Baldric, a nightclub that doubles as a cosmetics and "pampering" (offering scented baths with wine served to those being bathed, more than anything else) shop by day. The Baldric is the middle building of south front Bazaar Street, in the block bounded by Bazaar Street, The Street of the Sword, Lamp Street, and Warriors' Way, in Castle Ward.

Asper

- THO 5/7/12

Asper's Lordship WAS a brief one. She was made a Lord in place of someone ailing, to try to track down a traitor within the ranks of the Lords (this was a storyline/subplot in Ed's home Realms campaign that almost made it into printed Realmslore early on, that we called, "Who Is Killing the Lords of Waterdeep?" vice "Who Is Killing The Great Chefs of Europe?"), and managed to hunt down and kill the guilty lord, but in so doing grew to loathe many of the sitting Lords [who in turn loathed her], and she decided to remain a Lord so as to have the powers and privileges and be able to step in and deal with future traitors and misbehaving Lords, but to stay quiet and low-profile. This suited the rest of the Lords just fine; aside from Mirt and his personal friends within the Lords, who remained Asper's friend, the rest of the Lords just ignored her. Some of them referred to her as "the Sword At Our Back" or "the Lurking Sword," so if you run across those phrases in Realmslore, that's who's meant. Published rosters of the Lords are notoriously incomplete and inaccurate, so the lone mention means little.

Magisters

Dorgon "Stonecloak" Heamiilothtar

- GK, Qs for Ed 14/9/11

The Magister featured in "Making of a Mage" was Dorgon "Stonecloak" Heamiilothtar who reigned from 177DR to 241DR - the longest Magister reign (at that time) since Azuth himself.

Lauthdryn "Hurler of Stars"

- Ed 10/6/13, referring to two contradictory references in City of Raven's Bluff and Secrets of the Magister

Quite a bit more of interest still to be revealed, but to reassure scribes for the nonce, it is the same Lauthdryn fighting in both, there was a trap, others as yet unrevealed were involved, and there were TWO staves to provide burnt remnants in two places - - because Lauthdryn's ace-up-his-sleeve was bending the Weave to provide him with the equivalent of a Bag of Holding that "couldn't go wrong" that was accessible everywhere [it was actually a closet stuffed full of dry changes of clothes and boots, food and drink, and various useful everyday items (kettle, cauldron, hook, rope and pulley, chamberpot, kindling, etc.) AND various spellbooks and magic items, including two staves, several rods, etc.]. It's still "out there," somewhere, but beware the peg that holds the door-hasps shut: it's a wand of wonder triggered to go off in not handled by someone who says the right word of (de-) activation...

Taline Talgara, Former Magister

- Ed 2/1/12

Q: Is Taline Telgara, Magister from 902-946 DR with the nom-de-plume of The Flame of the North, the same Flame of the North that is a sword found in the tomb of High King Arthangh of Emberden in the Halls of Undermountain? I realise there is 500 years between Emberden forming and Taline's reign as Magister, but the similarities between her spirit and the sword's description and further lore about her going to Deepwater Harbour to see/tutor Ahghairon make a very strong link for me? Is she a Magister that chose to take Mystra Fate and become a (partially sentient) sword?

A: Yes, those two Flames of the North are the same person: Taline. Yes, she chose to become a partially sentient sword.

Manshoon

Female Form

- THO, 31/12/13 (start of 2014 scroll)

Long before there were multiple Manshoons running around all at once, the then-one-and-only Manshoon used magic to give himself a female body for about a month, to practice a certain deception on some Zhents and some rich men of Athkatla. Manshoon hoped would sponsor a little business concern he wanted to start (as part of taking over Zhentil Keep, his first time). He made quite a fetching, darkly beautiful, coldly alluring woman and got courted by any number of interested nobles (and young rakes). During this time, he went by the name of Apheirlarra "the Lady Sinister," and tales are still told of the Lady Sinister around the Moonsea (many of them insisting she was Manshoon's lover rather than Manshoon, and at least one of them claiming she was one of Manshoon's dragon mounts shapechanged so as to serve as his bedmate).

El has been known to tease Manshoon by murmuring something along the lines of "I liked ye better as Apheira" (which irks Manshoon because it implies that some of the men Apheirlarra romanced or bedded were themselves rivals or foes in disguise, using Manshoon when he thought he was using them).

Author of "Filfaeril, Bound and Willing"

- Xaeyruudh and THO PM exchange, posted to Qs for Ed 25/1/14

Xaeyruudh : I was assaulted a few minutes ago by a sudden mental image of Manshoon, as Snape, pining for the Filfaeril/Lily he can't have... hating Azoun and Cormyr not because Cormyr opposes his dreams of world domination but because Azoun is everything Manshoon never was... loved, bright-faced, trustworthy, royal, strong of arm, and ludicrously successful with every other lady he meets in addition to the only one that ever mattered.

What if Manshoon originally took the Shadowsil in as an apprentice and lover because she resembled Filfaeril? And then he fell in love with her as she (being so brilliant and intuitive that she captured Elminster's heart as well) watched him and molded her mannerisms to match Manshoon's unspoken-but-clear-to-her desires? That, of course, was her downfall. If not for her love for Manshoon, she might have stayed with Elminster long enough to model herself after *his* fantasies. Does the Simbul ever get "catty" about other women in Elminster's life? :P

Bah. Azoun had all the good things in life, most particularly Filfaeril, handed to him, while Manshoon had to "work his ass off" for everything and deal with being hounded incessantly by Elminster and his bloody do-gooder Knights and Harpers. All Azoun has to deal with is a rambunctious daughter -- those uppity nobles could be silenced easily enough if Azoun weren't such a glowing paragon of (insert sounds of revulsion here). So at some point, probably shortly after the royal wedding in Suzail and the resulting drinking-til-blackout session in Zhentil Keep, Manshoon realizes that it's never going to happen, and puts pen to paper... recording and embellishing his dreams as they come to him.

Of course, he wouldn't publish it... or would he? It would certainly cause a stir. There's no reference in the book to Manshoon himself, although there might be dalliances with unnamed Zhentarim officers. The scandal could potentially rock the throne and tarnish Azoun's sparkly coat. No loyal Cormyrean would think poorly of the Queen... for one thing, most/all of the tales are probably told to transpire before she became the Queen. For another, the only reason a noble lady resorts to the sort of thing dirty books are written about is that the legitimate man/men in her life are utterly failing to satisfy her. Of course, Manshoon is probably brighter than I am, but perhaps someone else is brighter than he gave them credit for (maybe that Harper-ally-mole in Spellfire, with the name I can't remember that starts with S) and found it and made a copy of it, and then someone else found it (maybe after the first thief's demise) and printed it quietly in Hillsfar or Mistedale, and then arranged for a small crate of them to be dropped on a minor street of Suzail.

Anyway. Yea. Manshoon and Filfaeril, up in a tree... or so he wishes.

THO: You are right, Manshoon is the author of Filfaeril, Bound and Willing.

And this message you've sent to me is, according to Ed, "spot on" in your depiction of Manshoon.

Please, PLEASE publish it in Ed's thread, with your announcement of your win. Some scribes have been waiting a long time!!

- THO 25/1/14

"Is the chapbook known elsewhere, besides Cormyr, or besides Suzail in particular?"

Oh, yes, it's been spreading around the Realms, via the caravan trade route, as salacious material is wont to do.

"Does Manshoon know that she enjoyed the book, or parts of it at least?"

Yes. He has spies in Suzail, and occasionally does some spying himself, magically disguised (attending nobles' feasts and revels, usually), so as to hear all the Suzailan highnose gossip.

"Did Filfaeril ever temper Azoun's initial response to Zhentarim provocations?"

Oh, yes. Filfaeril was Azoun's chief confidant. He discussed everything with her, and deferred to her as "my better thinking rein on my temper." He followed Fee's advice over Vangey's, and deliberately turned to her, as a matter of habit, to curb his own responses.

[Shoon Heritage](#)

- GK quoted by the Sage 17/1/13

Manshoon's family was originally from those parts, but Manshoon's personal history is almost purely Moonsea. What he did after he became Manshoon of the Zhentarim, well I'm guessing he may have visited the ancestral home ... in Shoonach ... once or twice. He certainly had a spell cache there as I understand and "Cloak & Dagger" alludes to him getting stuff from there after the clones ran amok.

- Ed quoted by GK, Qs for GK 9/7/09

Manshoon's family name is "Shoon," and all members of his family use a single name, derived by adding a prefix to "Shoon" (usually an established family one, such as Brar/Brarrara; Caul/Caulra; Dusk/Duskra; Farl/Farla; Gul/Gularra; Harl/Harla; Kul/Kuldra; Man/Mana; Pel/Pelra; Sarr/Sarrra; Tarl/Tarla; Vorl/Vorlarra [the male form first, female form second]). So, no first name and surname, just a single name. This is a naming convention once very popular in southerly coastal lands (of the coast known, in its more northerly reaches, as the Sword Coast), but now dying out because most of the peoples who used it were conquered or made slaves, and gradually died out or intermarried and in any case adopted the naming conventions of those "over" them (so as to "belong" and escape inferior status).

This of course, tells you where Manshoon's family originally came from. Don't forget he had an older brother; as far as we know in print thus far, he killed off all of his kin, but the Knights have been searching for an elusive sister of his (Duskrashoon) AND a niece (Tarlashoon) for years, without success - because they've been hiding from Manshoon, and know his finding them will mean their deaths; they are of course far from Zhentil Keep and don't use their original names.

Leadership Style

- THO 9/9/10

I agree with you that Manshoon would seem to be more the calculating, careful, "lead from the rear" sort. However, Ed and I have talked about this (after events in Realmsplay in the "home" campaign), and he pointed out that part of keeping the wizards (not the priests) of the Zhentarim in line was showing that he could personally take down mighty foes when he had to...hence the toe-to-toe moments. His repeated problem has been underestimating those mighty foes.

Working with Cult of the Dragon

- THO 4/12/12, responding to query if Manshoon got his black dragon from them

It's possible, Dalor, but as Manshoon's special area of interest as a mage was working with, taming, and augmenting the powers of dragonkind, and he had that black dragon steed VERY early on (before the Zhentarim were founded, and before Manshoon came to any sort of power and prominence in Zhentil Keep), I rather think Manshoon's acquisition of a black dragon predates his contact with the Cult.

Clones

Lower Levels

- THO quoted by the Sage 10/6/12 in Qs for Ed

The lower levels of various Manshoon clones aren't "mistakes." Manshoon's clones aren't created by the PHB clone spell, but rather by Manshoon's stasis clone spell (which has been detailed by Ed in 2nd Ed sources, and remember: FR lore isn't trumped by rules edition changes, so just because 3e and 3.5e have come along since then, it DOESN'T mean there isn't still a "stasis clone" spell used by Manshoon.

Several scenes in Ed's novels detail the "awakening" of Manshoon's clones, which normally occurred only when the "previous" Manshoon died. The multiple clones, hidden all over the Realms (El has threatened Manshoon in published Realmslore that he knows where they all are), each have the levels, memories, etc. they had when created . . . so some of them are of FAR less power than 'more modern' Manshoons (so killing Manshoon DOES harm him). Manshoon adds new clones from time to time, but what happened with the Manshoon Wars was that all (or almost all) of the clones were awakened at once. Hence all the different levels, etc. To reiterate: there is no "transfer" of existing spells, memories, etc. to a newly awakened clone.

And yes, Manshoon IS the ultimate puppet master among non-liches and non-zulkirs, although there's something going on with Hesperdan that Ed hasn't revealed to us all, yet.

Not trying to rain on the parade here, just to correct things before too many assumptions in reasoning are made based on the wrong clone spell.

In Ombraldar and far Shanooth

- THO 13/3/14 (About Bury Elminster Deep, set in 1479 DR)

Q: In Ed's novel Bury Elminster Deep, there is a passage where Elminster is talking about the "Many Manshoons" with Arclath Delcastle. He makes mention of two places: Ombraldar and far Shanooth. I'm guessing these are two cities that a Manshoon clone rules or is active in? Is there anything that can be said about these places or their locations?

A: You've guessed right about Ombraldar and far Shanooth: they are indeed two cities that a Manshoon clone rules.

Both are walled port cities, beyond the Utter East (that is, south and east of what's been detailed on the maps). Ombraldar is a center for pottery and metal exports (i.e. the outlet and trading center for a region of mines), and there are many inhabited islands, large and small, near it. Shanooth is described as "far" because it's distant indeed (perhaps on another continent; Ed wouldn't say). What he did tell me of it was this:

Picture a city of high walls that often has clear night skies, and basks under the moon. Many of its inhabitants go about robed and cowled, and it is a city of learning and study of the stars and the world "outside" Toril (and spelljamming). All that most in Faerûn know of it is a phrase in an old poem: "The seers of Shanooth shun him, nor seek what he seeks." Those magically mighty of Shanooth at present dislike and work against chronomancy and attempts at time travel, preferring instead travel among worlds (worlds, not planes), and the energies that can be tapped across distances by those who know the right spells - - energies that are threatened by "reckless" attempts at movement through time.

Maraunth Torr

- THO 28/3/10, responding to query about character mentioned in "Hand of Fire" that is put on par with Larloch, Szass Tam, and Shaaan

I also know Maraunth Torr wasn't mentioned before HAND OF FIRE, and suspect Ed is saving him for a sometime-to-be-revealed purpose.

So there you go. We know Maraunth Torr is male and very powerful at the Art, but nothing more.

Princes of Shade

Survival post "The Herald"

- THO, 16/1/15

Ed has hinted that some Princes survived, not just the three characters we saw at the end of THE HERALD, but I strongly suspect their arrogant world-view has been rocked, and they may be far more wary and low profile for a while.

Seven Sisters

Name Changes

- THO 14/1/10, replying to query about why Alassra is the Simbul, Ethena Astorma is Storm, etc

As it happens, I've discussed the names of the Seven Sisters with Ed a time or sixteen over the years, and it's not necessarily that they changed them, or disliked those they were given...it's a matter of settling, for a wide variety of reasons, on the names they felt most comfortable using, for the wider public, over all the centuries they've been alive. For some it may have started as dislike of their names (or the nicknames derived from them), for others it was just a preference for one name, or a variant of it ("Storm" for "Astorma"), over the other, and several of the Seven became associated with a particular kingdom under one name, and later wanted to disappear for a time and "die" offstage, so as not to attract attention as long-lived, or perhaps immortal . . . so they switched to using another name. The names they appear in published Realmslore under are the names they've settled on, and are known by, in the 1300s DR.

Cooking ability

- Ed 28/10/11

All of the Chosen have become at least "solid, decent" cooks, purely through the accumulated experience of living for centuries. Some have a flair for it but little time to enjoy cooking (Alustriel, Laeral), one has the time AND occasionally indulges herself (Storm), and some (Dove, Qilue, Alassra) enjoy good cooking when served it or when they have time and opportunity to do it, but are also happy eating raw or burnt meals, or things others might find disgusting (i.e. they value it as "necessary fuel" rather than an end in itself).

I can add this much: Dove loves roast moose (and to a lesser extent, venison if roasted in a wine bath so it doesn't get too dry), and Qilue has a weakness for a certain sort of glowworm found in the Underdark, eaten raw or dipped raw in particular rock salts, munched, then dipped again.

Lack of Familiars

- THO 30/4/10

Most of the Chosen have had familiars, but lost them (the hard way) early in their careers (i.e. centuries before the time of most FR products). Mentions of them are in Ed's turnover lore, but were edited out by TSR because they were trying to cram LOTS of lore into every product, and that particular sort of background detail wasn't as "adventure-relevant" as other lore.

- THO 1/5/10

When it comes to the Chosen, at the time setting of the Realms upthrough D&D 3.5, they no longer need familiars - - because they can call on Mystra's other servitors if need be, and use the Weave.

Relationships with Elminster

- THO 1/5/10, responding to moral assertions of strangeness in relationship

In the case of El and the Seven, he was not their father, but was a "courtesy uncle" who raised some of them (at Mystra's command) when they were toddlers to teens. They were Chosen, and all VERY independent . . . and literally centuries later, after almost all the people they knew when they were young are long dead, and kingdoms have risen and fallen (including places they ruled and they determined or influenced or altered the laws of), their friendships and working relationships with El (as fellow Chosen) briefly become romantic.

They are all human, and desperately trying to remain so, they are all less than sane, and they are all LONELY. Yes, they have Mystra and each other, but they lose everyone else to the cold hand of time . . . so they seek refuge in each other.

It's hardly surprising that they end up having affairs (and in a few instances, such as Khelben and Laeral, formally marrying each other).

Alustriel

Sexual "Promiscuity"

- THO 1/1/11

Alustriel is promiscuous FROM A MODERN REAL-WORLD NORTH AMERICAN VIEW (one not shared by all North Americans; witness the various polygamist sects and families to be found in North America today). She binds folk to her as friends and lovers by her warm love and friendship, preferring to achieve political results through love rather than war, whenever possible, and tries to assuage her personal loneliness at the same time.

She is NOT undiscerning, and although she would unhesitatingly have bedded battalions of orcs to secure peace between humans and orcs in the North, she's just not that stupid (to think that having half-orc offspring could have much of an effect at all on human/orc relationships, and to secure any sort of peace between them).

Dove

Children

- THO 19/3/10

Dove did not have any children before Azalar. Full stop.

Follower of Mielikki

- Ed 16/5/11, following on from a discussion about polytheism

Dove Falconhand is indeed a worshipper of Mielikki. She's a ranger, and Mielikki (in her place and time) is the primary deity for rangers.

She is also a daughter of Mystra (who possessed her mortal human mother), AND a "Chosen" servant of Mystra, who has some of Mystra's divine essence ("silver fire") inside her. She has also worshipped Mystra, from birth. (And Eldath, and Silvanus, and . . .)

So, yes, she DOES worship both Mielikki and Mystra (and this is considered logical and normal by most

folk in the Realms), and she has never “changed deities” to do so.

As Jarlaxle pointed out, Dove’s younger sister Qilué worshipped two deities (Mystra and Eilistraee) and was a Chosen of both (her individual situation is different than Dove’s, but that’s a whole other topic). BEAST is correct to point out that Dove was “secretly” a Chosen. Dove prefers the sword to spells, and being a ranger (and a loner) to being part of the clergy of Mystra, so her status was kept largely secret for years, by mutual choice (that is, hers and Mystra’s) so she could operate more effectively (low-level Zhents, for example, thought of her as a meddling Harper, NOT a Chosen of Mystra who might meddle in what Zhent wizards were up to). It’s not a matter of shame or keeping up appearances or lack of acceptance by anyone’s clergy (Mystra’s Chosen don’t have to obey Mystra’s clergy or even the goddess herself, as seen in the cases of Sammaster and . . . well, let’s just say there are two minor revelations about that in the Elminster book I just turned in.)

Laeral

Mind-Affected

- Ed 31/3/10, responding to query as how she could “forget” she was a Chosen in the novel “Blackstaff”

Laeral's mind was affected by several "attacks" over the years (the best-known being the Crown of Horns/the mind of the god Myrkul; others remain as yet unrevealed, but were part of the endless proxy-battles between various deities; many gods of the Realms were strongly opposed to other gods having Chosen or the equivalents) that caused her to forget her status as a Chosen at various times.

BLACKSTAFF shows us one of her "reawakenings;" there were others.

And yes, Dove, Storm, and Laeral were aware of their "special" status (though not everything it entailed, as that changed over the passing years) in childhood, as shown in DARK TALONS FORBEAR THEE.

Chronomancy history

- GK (confirmed by Ed as “more than correct”), Qs for Ed 21/11/11

I've long postulated that Laeral of the Seven Sisters spent a year in Myth Drannor. That would explain how the spell "Laeral's Dancing Dweomer" is found in The Workbook, one of the spellbooks of the Seven Wizards that introduced such worthies as Tulrun of the Tent and Caligarde.

She likely even met a very young, unnamed Khelben Arunsun there ... but that's a story for another day.

Work on forcecage for wild magic

- Ed 3/1/10, referring to events in “Cloak of Shadows”

Laeral and her apprentices did resume experimentations along the lines of creating dynamic "forcecages" of moving bolts to contain and drain wild magic, the bolts drinking magical energy and disrupting magical effects when they "struck," so as to both diminish local amounts of wild magic and shatter specific wild magic effects. The technique works, in theory, but the problem is one of competence: without several veteran Chosen or other REAL experts in magic (accomplished multitaskers like Larloch, Szass Tam, or Manshoon, for instance) overseeing and directing the forcebolt casting, the cage never forms for long enough to do anything more than "steer" the wild magic in one direction or another, before spectacularly collapsing. So it could be used to, for example, shove an oncoming wild magic field away from a fortress or settlement...but that's about where the success would end, and it tends to be very costly in terms of lives of spellcasters. Making them understandably reluctant to

attempt it. All of which meant the experiments haven't been duplicated or taken up by anyone else since, in any determined or ongoing manner.

Storm

Immerdusk Family

- THO 17/2/1

The Immerdusks have never been numerous or very high-profile. I THINK Storm either married into the title (in a union obviously not previously recorded in published Realmslore; I vaguely remember something Ed saying about her once wedding a dying widower so as to become the legal mother/guardian of his infant offspring, and Lord Immerdusk MIGHT be the guy) . . . or she was named to a family by elderly and infirm family members to prevent their name going extinct and their lands and holdings reverting to the Crown, to make her a thorn in the side of the reigning Obarskyr of the day (because I remember Ed mentioning something like this happening in the past, before the lifetimes of any of our Knights characters - - though what I'm remembering might not be Cormyr at all).

Woodstock

- Ed 3/10/10

This is something that has been pondered before, by me and Jeff Grubb and Karen Boomgaarden over drinks at a long-ago GenCon, and a definitive answer was agreed upon: only three folk of the Realms briefly attended (parts of) Woodstock, and they were Storm Silverhand, Dove, and a masked lady they brought along: Queen Filfaeril of Cormyr.

Sylune

Witch of Shadowdale

- Aysen quoting Elaine Cunningham novel "Windwalker"

There was some background lore to be found in Elaine Cunningham's book, *Windwalker*, the third in the *Starlight and Shadows Trilogy*. Sylune received magical training from the Witches of Rashemen in her travels east. In the book, the witches refer to Sylune as a "witch" so she might have earned the rank of "hathran", but the book makes clear that as an outsider she was privy to only some of their secrets and privileges of membership. While in Rashemen, Sylune wore a mask of disguise, but its unclear whether she earned it, or was assigned it out of necessity, being an outsider sorceress.

- THO 19/2/1

Sylune's "Witch of Shadowdale" title has nothing to do with her time in Rashemen; it was bestowed on her by Zhents seeking to turn the people against her/make others hate, fear, and shun her/discredit her in the regard of those in Deepingdale and Sembia who'd heard of her helping ways and begun to come seeking her in a steady stream.

After Lord Aumry was dead and Jyordhan was installed as Lord, Zhent attempts were made to destroy or oust both Sylune and Storm from Shadowdale (so the dale could fall fully under their sway, and become one more link in their overland trade route chain). These attempts backfired; not only did neither Sylune nor Storm budge, but they got Khelben interested in the dale (as we saw briefly in Ed's *Knights trilogy*), and convinced Elminster to not just maintain an occasionally-visited residence there, but settle in Shadowdale and spend a lot of time strolling about, observing things . . . and doing things about the

things he saw that he disliked. All of which in turn meant that Shadowdale tended to be a-crawl with Harpers, and a frequent destination for passing Chosen.

Reason for no Resurrection Occuring

- The Sage quoting Ed, Qs for Ed 19/11/12

We mortals don't know.

Sylune very much did want to be resurrected at the time of her death, though she now seems content with her lot (as a spectral harpist, able to possess the bodies of the living or manifest in ghostly form within a certain distance from any fragment of stone taken from the floor of her hut in Shadowdale [such fragments being carried by all of the Chosen, and also carefully placed in strategic places elsewhere]).

However, Sylune's desires and the powers her sisters wield lead to the inevitable conclusion that there IS some sort of reason that prevents her from being resurrected.

The nature of that reason is where the debate rages. Strongest among the current theories is the thinking that Mystra (not yet Midnight, but she who was mother to the Seven) didn't want her resurrected, or that Ao or some circumstances involving her silver fire prevented that resurrection.

Azuth and Elminster believe something else, however: that Sylune, in some ways the wisest of the Seven, was 'ready' for another step in the progression or 'life-cycle' of a Chosen of Mystra, ascending to another form of existence more closely bound to the Weave.

And that the Weave itself, or Mystra's innermost self, or Ao or some greater power or intellect, was aware of this, and saw Sylune's transformation as necessary.

Perhaps we'll all know more someday. Perhaps I can seize the chance to write a novel about it, a few years from now. The debate will doubtless continue. What we do know for sure is that Sylune's abilities continue to change and grow, that she is now almost an intelligent, mutable mass of silver fire more closely attuned to the Weave than any mortal, and that she knows only a little more of what she can now do than the rest of the Chosen do.

I'm thinking she's going to surprise us all..."

- The Sage quoting later Ed

"I'm not planning on restoring Syluné to "full life" because that wouldn't be in keeping with Mystra's Chosen, Syluné's own character, or leaving some dramatic impact to her death in the first place. If everything can be magically undone with no cost, then there's no lasting weight of meaning to any achievement or event."

- WR, confirmed by Ed, Qs for Ed 22/11/12

"I'm inclined to think that she knew she'd lose her physical body in that blast, but that she also knew it wouldn't be the end of her existence -- and she was willing to make that sacrifice."

Children

- THO 19/3/10

Yes, Sylune had children. Full stop.

- Ed 20/3/10

No, Aumry was not their father. They are much older than that. (The Seven have existed, and been of childbearing age - - determined by Mystra as much as by natural biology - - for literally centuries.)

The Simbul

Romances with zulkirs

- THO 26/12/11, replying to query about "The Simbul's Gift" novel

Q: "It wasn't really clear if she had romantic relationship with Lauzoril."

A: Ahem, are you SURE you read it? Because Lynn's story is quite clear about the relationship. No sex scenes in the foreground or bald statements or anything of that sort, but it WAS the entire thrust of the novel. (I suppose your response might be tied to the narrowest interpretation of "romantic relationship." ?)

I might add that an attentive reading of Ed's novels, the root and core of the Realms for us all whatever your personal opinions of them, make it clear that Alassra has had multiple relationships with various zulkirs (not to mention others), over the centuries.

Vow that Thay will be destroyed

- Ed 27/6/10, responding to misread of quote in "The Seven Sisters"

The Simbul has never vowed to destroy Thay.

The sentence you're referencing begins: "One day, she vows, Thay WILL be destroyed, and she will call together..." and goes on to outline what The Simbul has vowed to do, which is remake the Thayan lands into a new forest, with the cooperation of Rashemen and other neighbours. Her vow is to (try to) create a new woodland realm for elves, after Thay finally falls, NOT to destroy Thay herself.

The Simbul (correctly) views the government and social structure of Thay as one that cannot last (it eats away at itself), and that their aims and behaviour will inevitably lead them into conflict with more and more powerful foes...until they come up against someone (Larloch, if no one else; Halruaa, still very much part of the Realms at the time The Simbul said this) who WILL destroy them. After all, Rashemen has fought them to a standstill, and so has The Simbul herself, both successfully preserving their smaller, less populous realms against Thayan invasions.

The Simbul lashes out murderously against individual Red Wizards because of her uncontrollable (remember, she's less than sane) anger against them for their repeated attacks on Aglarond and other realms, their enslaving of others, and their continuing attacks on non-Red Wizard wizards and sorcerers everywhere. However, she's simply too busy carrying out the tasks Mystra sets for her to do much more than rush home to defend Aglarond, race off again, rush back again, and so on. The mundane business of ruling frankly bores her, and she has utterly no interest in becoming a tyrant, expanding Aglarond, or conquering Thay.

Mystra has expressly ordered The Simbul NOT to lead invasions of Thay or frontal attacks on Red Wizards within Thay (except when they get in her way while she's trying to carry out an assignment as a Chosen), and specifically forbidden her to kill various Thayan individuals (including most of the Zulkirs,

Szass Tam included); hints of this have appeared in published Realmslore, though they've been downplayed in recent years to allow novel authors a "freer" hand when writing about Thay and Szass. Alassra isn't pleased about this, but she's a Chosen first and a Queen second and a free agent very much third. :}

As to WHY Mystra is pursuing this policy regarding Thay: that's something apparently only She and Azuth know, and her Chosen only suspect (though they correctly deduce that the encouragement of the Art [=magic] is bound up with it). I can't say more on this last matter, due to the NDAs I've signed.

Now, I certainly grant that it's easy to interpret what I wrote in THE SEVEN SISTERS as The Simbul saying SHE would destroy Thay. My original text read: "One day, she vows, after Thay has fallen, she will . . ." but the editor changed it deliberately to give DMs more leeway in playing The Simbul THIS way or THAT way in their own campaign (and that IS what we're doing in these sourcebooks; giving DMs and players maximum choices and options, and minimum "thou shalt do it this way" dictation), and as a jesting reference to the historical "Carthage must be destroyed!" speeches (you'll remember that the orator who made those speeches never took personal direct part in fighting against Carthage, according to the historical record).

Yes, she IS capable of razing Thay. In doing so, however, she would destroy herself, bring down the Weave in that immediate area and cause deadly wild magic all around the dead magic zone thus created, weaken Mystra, and damage many lives and psyches (probably including those of other Chosen), allowing others (Larloch, et al) to rise up into the power vacuum or upset balance of power. It's like having a nuclear bomb: you CAN use it, but the consequences are usually so disastrous that you DON'T use it.

Yes, Alassra is insane. Yet she's not THAT insane, because Mystra and Azuth DO watch over their Chosen and hurl other Chosen at them if they go seriously off the rails (see: Sammaster, some of the argument scenes between Elminster and Khelben I've written into my novels, and so on).

Qilué

Shaaan the Serpent Queen

Power

- GK quoting Ed 28/3/10, after query mentioned in "Hand of Fire" as a figure on par with Larloch, Szass Tam, and Maraunth Torr

I did a write-up of her in one of the Candlekeep Compendiums. ED had a read before it got published and noted that I had made her "powerful" which he then said, was "as she should be".

Srinshee

Fate post the Herald

- THO 1/7/14

Ed deliberately left the Srinshee's fate vague. Faerûn has probably seen the last of her for awhile, and she knew she was courting death when she sacrificed herself, but Ed tells me there are "hidden wheels within wheels" here, so WE might not have seen the last of her, forever. Her soul, at this moment in Realmstime, is AWOL.

Knowledge of existence

- Ed 28/3/10, responding to quote of reference to existence in "Farthest Reach"

It was simply that THAT PARTICULAR Dale lord is privy to such information, and that although all elves of that time and surface region of the Realms "know of" the Srinsee, THAT PARTICULAR high elf lord knows a little of her current existence and doings (whereas to many elves she's no more than a name from the past, of someone long unseen and presumably "gone").

Taern Hornblade

Long Life

- Ed 30/8/12

Taern did indeed found the Spellguard in 1255 DR. He was formalizing an impromptu gang of "friendly" wizards and sorcerers (of whom he was a member) who worked "for" Silverymoon and the notion of an alliance with Everlund and policing the hinterlands of the two settlements, against the marauding monsters (and brigands, and orc, goblin, gnoll, and hobgoblin warbands) that plagued the vicinity - - not to mention recurring cabals of evil merchants and others who desired to undermine law and order in Silverymoon, and make it a "might makes right" frontier settlement where they could operate as they pleased.

Taern has been hopelessly in love with Alustriel for most of his adult life. Almost all who met him agree he is (or was) a grave, quiet-spoken, and fair man whose manner concealed great creative abilities with the Art. He experimented with improving the dangerous (because they can backfire, and age someone greatly or even to death, rather than extending life and vigor) potions of longevity of his early days, and made great strides in improving the stability and long-term efficacy of the mixtures. Naturally (for a man of his ethics) he did some of this experimentation on himself, and when inevitably reverses afflicted him, Alustriel worked to eradicate them when he was sleeping (with Mystra's full approval). So it was that Taern, although outwardly aging, gained nigh a vigorous extra century of life (he was aware he'd extended his own natural span, but unaware Alustriel had aided him in living even longer). Taern is the epitome of the kind but just "good" mage, and such individuals (who instinctively resist the entrapments and corruption of wielding great power) are so rare as to be treasures to be guarded and maintained. There are conflicting stories about the manner and dating of Taern's end (some say he's a "Weaveghost" or other servitor of Mystra, others that he survives to this day, though some claim he "lives on" in an enchanted item, not in his own body) and about his birth (1206 DR is a dating given in several records, but others say 1202, 1204, or as late as 1214). I'm afraid NDAs prevent me from clearing this matter up entirely.

Court of Cormyr

Alusair the Steel Regent

Life as a teen

- Ed 8/7/10, in reply to query about her activities in "Pool of Radiance" hunting rakshasas in Myth Drannor at the age of 15

Alusair was a VERY rebellious teen; what we saw of her in my KNIGHTS OF MYTH DRANNOR trilogy (in 1348 DR, when she was 13) was just the beginning of her really "busting out" into defying Vangerdahast, her father the king, and just about everyone else short of her mother Filfaeril (whom she avoided, so as to escape being given specific orders and prohibitions she might feel the need to break). Alusair is the ultimate "tomboy." Reckless and foolhardy, yes, but unlike her older sister Tanalasta, who was largely sheltered from the world, Alusair really LEARNED about Cormyr and surrounding lands and "the way the

world really is" (just as her father Azoun had done, with Vangerdahast, as seen briefly in CORMYR: A NOVEL). Remember: Tanalasta was the heir; Alusair was the "spare," and was allowed to develop into a different sort of asset to the kingdom: a war-leader who soon romanced the younger sons of most of the noble houses, binding them to herself in a personal loyalty that largely overcame their parents' traditional resistance to the royal house.

I would strongly disagree with a view that she went "down hill." That's like looking back on your worst teenaged mistakes and judging the course of your life from them and only them. She made blunders, yes, and endangered herself (and by extension, the realm), yes - - but Azoun did worse, and the great majority of his subjects LOVED him for it.

I believe that if you read the novel CRUSADE by James Lowder, you'll form a somewhat different view of the young Alusair than you seem to hold.

The young Alusair could definitely have gone hunting in foreign lands, particularly wilderlands not governed by a strong rulership that is a rival of Cormyr, and would have been accompanied by as many Purple Dragons as the Highknights and War Wizards assigned to protect her hide could have managed to send along.

However, she wouldn't have been "sent" on any such foray, and no, she wouldn't have been allowed to go anywhere as risky and as politically sensitive as Myth Drannor at the time, much less hunt rakshasas. However, she might well have twisted an "allowed" expedition to see the dales (avoiding Archendale and places under Zhent influence, like Daggerdale and Voonlar) into such a foray, yes - - but that's more "Alusair at 17 or 19" behaviour, rather than what her 15-year-old self would have dared.

And I'd be very careful about judging any of those two generations of royals except Azoun by what relatively little we have seen of them, thus far. It's somewhat akin to trying to judge, say, JFK by seeing footage of two of his public speeches and then his assassination, without ever learning anything else (about his childhood, family background, schooling, the private character of the man that only his friends saw, etc.).

Swords

- Ed 5/1/07

She uses several, but was presented with a beautiful +2 keen longsword by her father upon her twenty-second birthday, that she calls "Royal Kiss." It has an everbright silvered blade and bears her name and the Purple Dragon of Cormyr on both sides, just below the hilt. There is also a rune on the pommel placed there by Vangerdahast, that alerts the Royal Magician of Cormyr (Caladnei, now) of the precise location of the blade whenever any living creature other than Alusair touches it.

Alusair customarily leaves Royal Kiss hanging in her bedchamber wardrobe (a walk-in room), or under her bed (hidden by its skirts) or atop its canopy (where about a dozen healing potions, in unlabelled stainless steel vials, also live), and uses a far more utilitarian (and battered) +1 mighty cleaving longsword that she privately refers to as "Wartusk" or "Old Tusk." It does not bear this name or any engraving at all.

As Steel Regent, she can, of course, use any of the thousands of swords in the royal vaults and Obarskyr family armory (including many magical blades), but it's rare for her to do so. She DOES keep two swords scabbarded and ready, with matching sheathed daggers, one hidden in the Palace and one in the Royal Court (hung where she can easily reach them, on wall-pegs behind hangings in particular passages).

- Ed 30/12/10

As aforementioned, the Princess Alusair has favored quite an array of personal blades throughout her life, from the short, curved Blue Dragon naval cutlass she adopted in an early flash of rebellious independence, at age eleven, through a succession of rapiers and long swords, to the two swords she usually wears on a daily basis today (1370s DR): a superbly-made but complete non-magical shortsword she calls “My Kiss” and a +2 lucky longsword of illusion theft, impedance, and vanishing named “Brightedge.” (This dragonhoard weapon was a gift to her, in the summer of 1369 DR, from a certain veteran Harper after she saved his life; a story kept secret from everyone except her parents, though Vangerdahast has tried all manner of underhanded means to learn it, and pieced together much of it.) That first cutlass and most of her other swords, including the two pieces of the bastard sword she broke over the head of the rebel noble Raldrand Hargryphon in a nasty little brawl in the King’s Forest in the fall of 1362 DR, when he tried to ambush and slay her, hang on the long, windowless inner wall of the outer “receiving room” of her Royal Palace bedchamber suite, in Suzail.

They include:

- “Viper” (the non-magical, plain, rather battered secondhand cutlass)
- “Daunt-Don’t” (a non-magical “light little toy” [Alusair’s words] of a splendid-looking rapier that was made for her by Urnstul Hallowlar, a smith from Arabel who hoped to win favor and many orders from Court and nobility; Alusair found it gorgeous to look at but too short, light and “whippy” for real battle use—even before Hallowlar was murdered by certain merchants of Arabel who didn’t want the smith to have any royal favor or connections)
- “Bloodfee” (a workaday +1 longsword of superb make that was a gift from her mother, Queen Filfaeril; it bears an everbright enchantment, can feather fall [affecting any creatures grasping it or impaled on it, to a weight limit of 700 lbs.] upon command, glows with blue faerie fire upon command, and vibrates gently and silently when within 40 feet of undeath)
- “Defendress” (a massive, rather crude long sword that’s badly balanced and much too heavy for Alusair, but that she’s very proud of, because she had a hand in forging it, contributing some of her blood [yes, literally], and her sweat from a lot of hammer-work and more than one turn at the forge-bellows)
- “Royal Fury” (the “monsterslaying” bastard sword she broke over Raldrand Hargryphon’s head, rendering him mindless, as she singlehandedly defeated him and the four slayers he’d hired; its hilt retains one of its enchantments: when grasped and willed, it glows with blue faerie fire, and can be instantly turned on or off, without limit)
- “Challenge” (a non-magical, splendidly-made, and very battered two-handed sword that’s far too large and heavy for Alusair to want to use in battle, but that her father gave her, insisting she practice with it, fighting him as he wielded a leather-shod metal quarterstaff against her, to give her strength of arm, shoulders, and back; she grew to love those sessions, and still “shadow-feints” alone with the sword from time to time, before retiring to a bath and then bed)

These are by no means the only swords Alusair has wielded, or even hidden away in various caches all over the realm for her own use. She customarily carries at least four daggers (a visible one on her belt, spares sheathed down the insides of both boots, and one sheathed down her back that’s drawn from a nape-of-the-neck sheath, under her hair; the sheath rides the throat-strap of her gorget).

What is Under Her Bed

- Ed 26/7/12

Under Alusair's bed, as a child, she kept a dainty little dagger, a carved wooden warhorse toy, and an old, rusty scrap of armor (a shoulder-plate scavenged from the Palace armories).

As a tween, she'd replaced that scrap with a full-sized knight's gauntlet (just one), and added an old metal sword ground down to take off the rust until it had no sharp edges left. Way too heavy for her, but at night, when moonlight came through her window, she'd toss her bed-furs (or in summer, the heavy overcoverlet) on the floor to dull sounds, and try to swing the sword while wearing the gauntlet, imagining she was fighting foes of the realm. Over the years, she built up her wrists, forearms, and shoulders to be stronger than most males of her age.

By the time Alusair was a teenager, she had a proper, sharp longsword, a dagger, and as much real armor as she could scavenge (so, all mismatched and lacking the proper underpadding), and she would dress up in it (naked and barefoot under the armor, and so taking lots of minor cuts and weals from the armor itself, as she moved in it), and shadow-fight until exhausted. Which in turn made her stronger still, took out all her frustrations and aggressions, and earned her sleep no matter how upset she might have been. (Her late-night swordplay was discovered early on, but her mother Filfaeril forbade anyone to interrupt or try to stop her.)

Arguments with her father Azoun

- Baleful Avatar, Qs for Ed 17/2/10, quoting an overhearing of Ed

Part of it was that Alusair (who "rode with" a lot of the younger male nobles, as their commander in patrols on the northern and northeastern borders of the kingdom, and as their lover, and got to trust them just as they learned to trust her [part of a deliberate strategy Azoun, Filfaeril, and Vangey all agreed to, to win the loyalty of the younger generation of nobles]) wanted the Crown (that is, her parents and Vangey as their mouthpiece) to be more candid, open, and honest with the nobles, instead of the King and Queen letting Vangey lie to them, manipulate them, and play them off against each other. Azoun didn't like everything Vangey did, by a long shot, but trusted him because of the training Vangey had given him in his rip-roaring youth (that we get just a tiny glimpse of, in Jeff and Ed's novel).

Sexuality

- THO 22/5/10

Alusair, like her father, enjoyed sex. Lots of sex, often. Filfaeril loved sex in private, not so often. Tanalasta liked sex in private, seldom. Most people in the Realms, as in our real world, want lots of sex in their teenaged years, and then their lusts taper off - - but the Azouns and Alusairs are rarer than the Tanalastas. Ed's Realms have the full variety of human tastes and experiences, NOT a global nonstop orgy.

Relationships with soldiers

Was privacy a concern?

- THO 22/5/10 (see section on Brace Skatterhawk for more)

I've talked to Ed a time or two about this (we Knights, in hiding at night, witnessed one of these encampments), and the answer is: It depended. As in, Alusair wasn't shy, but some of her partners were.

Amedahast

Youth, Lineage

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), Qs for Ed 14/7/10

Amedahast was rather young when she came to Cormyr, but I'm not entirely sure what gives you the impression that she was "fully human." In game terms, she's certainly human, but she absolutely has elven blood. And, as has been shown over and over in the various sources, aging works differently for the -dahast mages than it does for others.

I won't comment on whether or not Amedahast ever met Alea (because it's a story question too rich to spoil), but this young woman was a descendant of at least one wizard that helped raise the mythal over Cormanthor (and who was known as the High Lady of Art), and another who was so respected by the elven court that he was given wardship over Cormyr alongside Faerlthann. She was tutored in magic from a very young age.

As for the meeting of Alea and Baerauble (depicted in *Cormyr: A Novel*), it is not a happy story. At its core, an erudite mage is captured by savage humans, who are slain by grieving, borderline genocidal elves in retaliation for the killing of their own people. It's not like grandma and grandpa meeting at a dance and getting married three weeks later. There's nothing romantic about it.

Amedahast came to Cormyr knowing very little of the Forest Kingdom's history and lore--and certainly less of its legends. Recall the catechism of rulers that she endured from Baerauble when we first meet her in *Cormyr: A Novel*; even the most rudimentary of facts are still being drilled into her. Other, more weighty matters are learned later.

Crowned heads and Royal Magicians in Cormyr learn about certain things (such as the events on Solider's/Jester's Green--both those involving Keolan Dracohorn and the Bleth massacre, as well as Ander Obarskyr's folly and countless other things) once their succession is assured and they've been judged capable of handling the knowledge and the wisdom it's meant to convey.

So yes, Baerauble told her about these and many other things... later.

Azoun IV

Forward Thinker

- Ed 2/10/12

He was. Azoun was as rebellious a youth as any, and so inclined to fight with Vangerdahast (his main tutor). However, zoun was very bright, and always open to new ideas -- increasingly open-minded as the years passed, and always willing to listen to new ideas from any source (particularly as he saw the increasing ossification of the senior nobility of the realm). Vangey and Azoun's wife, Queen Filfaeril, saw this, and brought various purveyors of new ideas (and insightful "intelligence" about the wider world) into contact with Azoun, so he received a steady flow of new ideas, and developed a very broadminded attitude.

Although non-human gentry and nobility were uncommon (Azoun wasn't in the business of forcibly marrying anyone to anyone else), they did appear in Cormyr's military in increasing numbers, on merit - and that very merit eventually, in the widest sense rather than on the individual attitude to another individual level, made them accepted.

More Sons than Daughters?

- Ed 18/7/10, responding to queries about minimal Azoun daughters being mentioned, but many sons, following discussion about genetics

Well, now we're getting down to the REAL secrets. The way I crafted matters when creating these particular characters: when Azoun and Filfaeril have children, they're usually (I'm thinking a little better than three out of four) going to be female, but Azoun's genes are going to make about the same percentage of his offspring when dallying with other women male.

Leaving out stillbirths, contraception, and all of the other complicating factors, that means that yes, there are quite a few female "bastards" of Azoun you haven't yet heard about, in published Realmslore. Which, after all, tends to avoid sex and associated topics, in part because of the intended audience for the D&D game down the years.

Inheritance in SOME Cormyrean families is matrilineal, so it does "matter" in some cases. One complicating factor that can't be ignored here is that during most of Azoun's lifetime, being "of the blood of the King" was a badge of honour, not shame, in Cormyr. However, not all women, especially if they're noble or adventurers or coinlasses (i.e. tend to promiscuity, in the non-judgemental definition of that word to mean "have multiple sexual partners") may be aware, or certain, that Azoun sired this child and not someone else (husband, boyfriend, etc.)

The consequences of Azoun's pleasuring (and -making) is something I will probably revisit in future Realms fiction, being as it can make usurpers and pretenders possible. However, the "short answer" to this is that Azoun has fathered a lot of so-called "bastards," that it isn't a big deal unless the Obarskyr line is threatened with extinction, that about 77 percent or so of his "gets" will be male, and therefore there are other female offspring of Azoun (at least thirty) you haven't heard/read about yet. Now, I'm not going to start listing them, because (with a few exceptions, involving inheritance and adventures/stories that can be built around that) I'm more interested in what people do and become, as opposed to who produced them.

Response to flattery

- THO 14/12/10

Not necessary "arrogant" enough to expect it, more like "cynical" enough to expect it. And so used to it that it NEVER works on him; he's ALWAYS looking for the "why" behind it. That much of Vangey's teachings stuck very well.

Womanizing encouraged

- THO 8/9/10

Azoun WAS encouraged to be a womanizer, by Vangey (not that other War Wizards haven't toyed with the idea regarding other Obarskyrs, in the past [[yes, this directly according to Ed, not me speculating]]), in the wake of their son's (firstborn's) death, as a way of bringing some male "blood offspring" into being, well removed in strength of throne-claim from Azoun and Fee's legitimate children, but "in case" (for one thing, to have "another string to the bow" if the daughters turned out to be weak of character, and unscrupulous nobles thought of marrying them to a dominating male).

Vangey came to see this as less necessary when the daughters turned out to be strong, and Alusair almost "another Azoun" with her own way of bonding with and inculcating loyalty in the next generation of male nobles.

Then, later, Vangey saw it as more necessary again, after - - in the scene in CORMYR: A NOVEL - - the

"disaster" was discovered in the royal vault. It should be noted that this was a tendency in Azoun that Vangey, as the young Azoun's tutor and companion (again, see CORMYR: A NOVEL) had become well aware of, not something Vangey had to force or magically influence Azoun into.

There are of course obvious drawbacks to Azoun womanizing with nobility (personal hatreds of him on the part of some noble husbands), but Vangey weighed two things: the personal popularity of Azoun among many male nobles (and commoners), both as a war leader and ruler, and as a likeable guy - - and the fact that the Crown's relationship with certain nobles couldn't get any worse; they are already behaving like active, if sly rather than open, traitors, so . . .

And of course this cut both ways: there were families who sought to increase their prestige, or chances at getting Court positions or contracts, or just their profile locally or among War Wizards or the Purple Dragons or at Court, by "being close with the King" and ending up with "a get of Azoun's" in their families. There were also some women who wanted this on their own, family notwithstanding. Plus the "old battle companions" of Azoun, like Tessaril Winter, whom he sought out as friends and comforting bedmates rather than as mothers for his children (but whom he'd be delighted that they were having his children IF they wanted to).

This happens to be something Ed and I (and a few others) have discussed extensively, if privately, down the years, so what I say here isn't me inventing, it's Ed's take on this.

One postscript, upon reflection: Azoun was/is no dunderhead or easily-manipulated dupe, and neither is Filfaeril. It's important not to overemphasize "Vangey as Machiavelli" here, and to avoid seeing Azoun or his queen as weak, enspelled, or oblivious. They, too, play the game of "balancing bastards and heirs" off against each other, for the good of the realm (i.e. to keep the throne strong and the Obarskyr bloodlines very much in existence, but also to prevent civil war/their own assassinations/overmuch feuding amongst the nobles).

Caladnei

Relationship with Laspeera

- THO 1/4/10

Caladnei is almost identical to Laspeera in attitude, though (being an outlander) she's a trifle less patient than Laspeera with folk who try to use long-standing Cormyrean tradition against her (as opposed to laws).

She and Laspeera have fallen into trusting each other absolutely, a trust begun because Laspeera was perfectly willing to accept Caladnei being more ruthless and less lawful than she herself was, recognizing that the Royal Magician sometimes has to be (as the "last defender of the Dragon Throne").

Their trust has deepened because the two women have used magic to "meet" minds extensively on several occasions, sharing thoughts and seeing for themselves what the other person's mind is really like (and what they really think). It's more naked than most people ever care to get with another individual, and they've done it enough to really KNOW each other. So their trust really has become absolute.

Ganrahast

- Garen Thal 23/7/12, replying to query if Ganrahast is the son of Vangerdahast

Yes, Ganrahast is Mreen and Vangey's son. He was born on the Winter solstice in the Year of Rogue Dragons (1373). He was premature, and born quite late in the year, but that's his birthday. As of 1479,

he's 105 or 106, depending on when in the year you're playing, but he doesn't look a day over 60. Okay, 65, maybe...

Laspeera, War Wizard of Cormyr

Relationship with Vangerdahast

- Ed 31/3/10

Laspeera is the motherly second-in-command of the War Wizards, strict but just, and loved and respected by most War Wizards and many courtiers. She is NOT Vangey's lover nor Azoun's, and never has been, though she has "mothered" them both (held them, kissed them, comforted them, talked to them on many occasions and kept their secrets, even seen to their wounds). Vangey has covertly tested Laspeera's loyalty on a number of occasions, and never found it lacking; he regards her as one of the few truly competent Wizards of War, whose judgement he can trust absolutely.

Laspeera, however, DOESN'T trust Vangey absolutely, because of two things: she can see how his long use of near-absolute power is corrupting him (he increasingly sees his opinions and desires for Cormyr as being THE ONLY RIGHT ways and future for the realm, and is less and less willing to entertain the views of others, and he increasingly sees the end as justifying the means: he can trample on ALL rights, laws, and personal feelings and aspirations as he manipulates everyone within reach to get his own way), and because she knows his loyalty is to the Dragon Throne and the stability of the kingdom, NOT to the Obarskys or a particular monarch (such as Azoun IV).

Laspeera believes that the Wizards of War must serve the ruling monarch of the day first and foremost, curbing him/her only when they trample on laws and rights (or avoid trampling only by passing new laws that "go too far") and that no one person can or should decide the best future for the realm, or run roughshod over what is rightful getting there. Nobles and commoners may break what laws they can get away with to get what they want, but the government, with its vast rights and military and magical muscle, MUST hold itself to a higher standard.

In other words, Vangey is a "do anything to keep the realm strong" bad cop, and Laspeera is a "we are villains, not cops at all, whenever we break the rules, even if we do it to catch bad guys." Laspeera thinks (rightly, from the point of view of a long line of monarchs and some of Vangey's predecessors) that the Highknights or other personal agents of the reigning monarch are the only legitimate "outside the law" ways of keeping the Dragon Throne strong, and the far more powerful Wizards of War must stay lawful and act as a balance against the Highknights and other personal agents. She sees the Harpers as another useful part of this balance, whereas Vangey sees them as meddling enemies of the realm who should be frustrated, driven out, or even slain whenever it's convenient to do so.

King Galaghard III of Cormyr

- Ed 30/12/13

Q: In Cormyr: A Novel, Aosinir Truesilver is described as the cousin of King Galaghard III. In regards to this kinship, does this mean Galaghard's mother is a Truesilver?

A: Bryntharth I of Cormyr took to wife Ravrella Truesilver, a raven-haired beauty of short stature, quiet public persona, and utter self-control of her voice and features. Few, even servants who spent much time with her, family, and her (very small handful of close) friends knew many of her thoughts, views, and emotional reactions to things. She was a master of self-control, and decided to remain in the background and publicly mute as much as possible—and so is nigh-forgotten today, having left no mark

at all at Court and in Cormyrean society.

Before becoming queen, it's known that Ravrella Truesilver was a superb rider (and even spearhunter, from horseback), that she enjoyed card games with women of her family and friendly noblewomen, and that she enjoyed reading poetry and fiction of all sorts. She was born in 856 DR, wed Bryntarth in 872 DR, bore him a son, the future Galaghard III, in 873 DR, and thereafter produced two stillborn daughters, Emaerilla in 875 DR (before becoming Queen) and Princess Yestrelle in 879 DR. Ravrella became Queen of Cormyr when her husband ascended to the throne in 875 DR, and died of a winter chill and resulting "multiple fevers or maladies" in 894 DR.

Obscure Court records (of the questioning of one of Queen Ravrella's friends, Muratha Emmarask, who was briefly suspected of involvement in the hunting death of a popular courtier, Andranras Owlhond) preserve Muratha's opinion—which is presumably truth, as neither High Wizard Thanderahast nor anyone else disputed it—that Bryntarth and Ravrella first noticed each other as avid and naturally-skilled equestrians, and that they often rode together in the forest, "laughing at play" together.

The royal couple was urbane and controlled in public, but in private were said to be very affectionate with each other and with their son, though neither of them were talkative people. The Queen was observed to spend much daily time watering and arranging flowers in the Royal Palace, and seeing to it that the Court kept track of the births and deaths and birthdays and anniversaries of nobility, and that "suitably gracious and beautiful notes and flowers were sent."

Ravrella quietly assembled quite a library of chapbooks of poetry during her royal years, and although this was not regarded with respect by later Obarskyrs, and was scattered about the Royal Palace, with many tomes being lost or given away, occasional tomes still turn up in private hands in Suzail or tucked inside some of the "book-hides" (books that contain storage niches for small items, such as keys, gems, rings, and—obviously—small and slender chapbooks of poetry). A few of these finds have annotations in the margins, in Ravrella's tiny, beautiful handwriting, usually additional lines she composed while inspired by what she was reading, but sometimes cryptic notes such as "Bryn won't let me forget" and "Hidden in the usual place" or "Wear the mauve mask."

Some of these notes have led later personages, including Royal Magician Vangerdahast and the Highknight Glarasteer Rhauligan, to suspect that Ravrella's quiet public exterior hid a naughty or at least avidly-pursuing-intrigues mind. In Elminster's opinion, "There's a mystery about Ravrella that's still to be unraveled, but I doubt it concerns love affairs, treason, magic, or any endangerment of the realm. More likely she and Bryntarth founded their own horse-cult and worshipped in secret, or some such."

Korvan, Cook of the Rising Moon

- Ed 7/12/10, responding to query about why he was banned from Cormyr, and if it had to do with a princess or lady

Korvan is the sort of man who always wants what he can't have (what's beyond his reach). He's lusty, and beauty and sophistication (such as a well-dressed, "on public show" noblewoman) smite him hard. As a lowly Palace cook in Cormyr, he "fell" for several noblewomen attending Palace functions and revels, that he glimpsed from afar. He wanted them. He HAD to have them. And he wanted to be seen with them, to make it into that small circle of laughing, chattering "favorites" among the Palace staff and commoners whom they kept brief social company with, in their busy social mostly-spent-with-other-nobles lives. That is, the favored fashion designers, hairdressers, wits and bon vivants, and so on. Roles he entirely lacked the looks, manners, and smarts to ever attain or keep.

So he sought to conquer them covertly, by working "love potions" into the food he was preparing,

herbal concoctions and liquids he could introduce into particular servings, to affect the eaters thereof. Unfortunately for Korvan, one of the backstreets sources he contacted for these illicit concoctions (in Cormyr, by caselaw and decree, neither food nor wine can be "doctored" with other substances that aren't "only" flavourings or part of standard food preparation, except by priests for holy reasons and herbalists working under the supervision of a recognized healer, or by courtiers obeying certain senior courtiers, like the Royal Magician, Royal Sage, etc.) was both a "trader in shadies" AND a paid informant of the Crown, with very firm instructions to rat out EVERY person, high or low, who so much as hinted at wanting to purchase poisons or mind-altering or harmful substances [[including tamer stuff that "only" induces nausea, poor balance, vomiting or the runs, because all of these can be employed to aid thieves, gamblers, and those seeking to win trade negotiations]]. Korvan was watched, and observed to try to taint some servings with what he later confessed (under War Wizard spell-aided questioning) were "love potions."

The substances he was sold didn't work for the purpose he thought they did, so he didn't actually affect anyone's feelings towards him, or do any harm except subtly alter the tastes of some food. However, the INTENT was there, and members of the Obarskyr family MIGHT have been affected secondhand (e.g. by kissing, or even sharing the food of, someone Korvan had targeted), so Korvan got "a thorough scare" from the War Wizards, plus exile.

Which is how he ended up in Sembia, at various short-lived cooking jobs (the man had a temper, plus a newfound paranoia: thinking undercover Cormyrean agents were watching him), and eventually made his way to Highmoon in Deepingdale.

An unlovely man (lazy, mean to cruel, rude and bullying, and unable to control his lusts), but a good all-around cook.

Queen Filfaeril

Harper Links

- Ed 9/9/10

I can say that Fee works with the Harpers, sometimes deliberately against Vangerdahast, but her relationship to Those Who Harp (Dove and Storm are involved, remember) is a little more complicated than "she's a Harper agent." I have to tread carefully here because of NDAs, so I think I'll leave it at that for now. Other than to say you're on to something, and Fee is, yes, far deeper than she's been depicted in canon Realmslore thus far.

Player of the Game

- Brian Cortijo, Qs for Ed 16/9/10

Filfaeril is far more intelligent than anyone gives her credit for--Alaphondar, Vangey, and her own husband all included, to say nothing of overreaching nobles. They've all learned the hard way that to underestimate just how shrewd the Dragon Queen* is can be a dangerous proposition.

As has been revealed in snippets of Hand of Fire, Death of the Dragon, and elsewhere, Filfaeril knows far more than Vangerdahast or Azoun usually expect, and she acts on that knowledge for the good of her family and that of the realm... even if that means going against either of those two men's express wishes. That means that she plots and cajoles and--yes--even steers Azoun towards couplings of which she approves, or can monitor, or which are between him and loyal servants of the Crown, that she can demand their cessation or the elimination of a traitorous paramour.

*And, as Alaphondar will remind anyone who asks, 'Dragon Queen' is not an epithet Fee earned simply by marrying Azoun.

Fee is a beautiful, charming, insightful woman, who can be at once inviting and stand-offish. When she wants, she falls easily and comfortably into the trophy wife role, and this puts people who ought to be on their guard around her at ease. Few people think her stupid, but it took the Court--save for a few veterans--a long, long time to figure out that Filfaeril wasn't just arm candy. She's as politically astute as her husband, if not more so. She's smart as a whip (and as biting as one, when she chooses to be). And when Azoun is off hunting or cavorting, Filfaeril is studying and reading and watching.

Eventually, all those I listed above, and Elminster, too, learned just how sharp Filfaeril was. And again, none of them thought her stupid to begin with (Azoun did not marry her simply for her looks). But almost no one, including the vast majority of readers, realizes how intelligent Filfaeril is until it's too late to do anything about it.

Which is why Azoun loves her so deeply, and why Vangerdahast and Alaphondar, each in their own way, held secret longings for the Dragon Queen before the Purple Dragon's death.

Maiden Name

- THO 16/7/10

Filfaeril's maiden name is indeed Selzair.

Secret time as an adventurer

- Ed 22/3/14

Before she married Azoun IV and became Queen of Cormyr, Filfaeril spent almost a month, one summer, as an adventurer, under an assumed name, to "see the world." With the full though covert approval of her family elders (though they sent along a hired adventurer-mage to try to see that she came to no harm).

Harpers also watched over her, unbeknownst to her, and as it happened, she didn't come to any harm. Though for the rest of her life she had a deep terror of beholders and illithids, for very good reasons . . . not to mention a tendency to blush whenever she saw Elminster.

This escapade caused Vangey a few moments of consternation later, because he assumed that when a young and beautiful unwed female noble drops out of a sight for a month, she's quietly having a baby - - and if it survived, such a child would be very much an "unwanted complication" for a Queen of Cormyr. Filfaeril also had more than a few moments of adventure after she became Queen, of the scrambling along eavesdropping on Suzailan rooftops with a knife in her teeth and a backup knife in her garters . . . moments that enraged Vangerdahast but delighted Azoun. And then there was the duel between two noble matriarchs that she interrupted, stopped, and then had to best (at arms) BOTH mortified and infuriated matriarchs to truly put an end to . . . oh, there's much more about our Queen Fee I could tell, but won't yet, because it would be SO much better to tell at the right place, time, and manner.

Funeral

- Ed 1/4/14

Q: I would like to know more about what happened after Fee's death. We know that Azoun had a mighty send off and the public (generally) mourned the loss of their King (to the point of taking it out on an unfortunate Sembite merchant) - would Fee's death have had the same effect on the general populace? Similarly what did the nobles think? good riddance? weeping and sobbing, or lets start to get our hooks into the new Azoun? (I suspect a bit of all three). Am wondering how the court carried on with Fee to keep them all in check etc

A: Hi, Damian. Your suspicion as to "a bit of all three" is correct, but I can say the genuine mourning was stronger than other reactions, because Filfaeril represented calm stability and was beloved of the commoners, so she made the royal house and nobility look good, and "set the rules" so to speak. So courtiers, nobles, and just plain citizens all worried about what sort of powder keg might immediately erupt re. the cohesiveness of the Realm without her presence on the scene. However, in the interests of buying time for your campaign, I can tell you that after the state funeral (and genuine widespread grief, of the "profound sadness" sort), there followed a period of quiet, wherein everyone wondered when the realm would erupt in strife...and nothing happened.

Thauglor the Purple Dragon

- THO 16/2/15

"First and foremost among the questions for me is what is the current status of the purple dragon. I realise history records him as being killed but i am wondering if that is the entire story."

THO: So far as I understand, this is still NDA.

"Second, has Thauglor ever been involved with any tinkering in the weave around Cormyr (like Embrurshaille in Thar)."

THO: Yes. several of the Royal Magicians of Cormyr have come to believe that the dragons worked covertly with the Weave before both elves and humans were "allowed" to come into the area that is now Cormyr, possibly as something of an experiment. (The ability of certain dragons to work with the Weave akin to the way the veteran Chosen of Mystra do is one of the great unexplored areas of Realmslore.

"Sources indicate that the Obarskyr family are linked in some way to the Weave and this may have been inherited (not in a genetic sense but perhaps through knowledge or manipulation) from the elves. Is this linkage and malleability of the Weave in Cormyr in any way linked to Thauglor and have any other groups or peoples discovered and exploited this link (such as the Sword Heralds or Nalavarothe the Devil Dragon who Jeremy informs me could direct teleporting mages within Cormyr into her mouth). [Jeremy: "Oops! I meant to say she could redirect already teleporting wizards away from their destination directly into her maw."]"

THO: BIG NDA here. Beyond hints Ed has given me in the past that several individual dragons know some secrets of the Weave, and exploit them, and that this is the source of much "dragon magic" that doesn't fit the casting of known arcane magic spells.

"Third, what is the legacy of Thauglor, does he have any children, does he survive in some fashion, where is his lair and has it been discovered yet, how did he shape Cormyr after its beginnings (when he allowed the realm to be settled) apart from the purple dragon imagery which i understand started with Prince/King Duar."

THO: NDAs, yes, but I do know Thauglor had children. How many and their fates and/or present dispositions, I don't know - - but I can tell you that in the home Realms campaign, years ago, we encountered a beautiful human woman who escaped us in dragonshape (and so was a weredragon or song dragon or something else able to shapechange into a dragon and back) who used the name "Tharaela Blood-Of-Thauglor." And I'm afraid that's ALL I know about her, except that we Knights saw her watching us, just for an instant, years later.

And of course that means that Ed, as our DM, probably isn't going to say much more about this mysterious Tharaela.

However, when it comes to spilling about Thauglorimorgorus (who of course Ed created and named, though Jeff Grubb first brought him to life onstage in fiction, in CORMYR: A Novel; that is, Jeff wrote the first draft of the Thauglor scenes), we'll see . . .

Vangerdahast

Mage Sigil

- Ed 29/10/10, replying to query about the three triangles in his mage sigil

The triangles represent Vangey's three masters/three life foci:

Mystra (and the Art = magic), Jorunhast (Vangey's tutor and predecessor as Royal Magician), and Cormyr (the Obarskyrs, the Dragon Throne; the realm to be guarded so it will survive and flourish, and that guarding to be done with magic and to preserve a realm in which magic is important and prized).

- THO 31/10/10, replying to query about his relationship with Azuth vs Mystra, why Azuth isn't in the sigil

I can tell you quickly that Vangey not only worships Azuth, he has a close relationship with him, and the choice of triangles as a shape used in his sigil actually has something to do with that [[Ed hasn't yet revealed more than that in play, so I'm as much in the dark as you are]]. The triangles are the same size to denote being in balance with each other (or Vangey striving to keep them in balance, throughout his life), yes.

Spell Modification/Creation

- THO 31/10/10

Vangey isn't a prolific spell-creator. For one thing, he's always been too busy, and for another, he's always been the sort of caster who uses a spell created by someone else, sees its shortcomings, and sets about "improving" it for his own purposes, more than he sits down to create something new or has magical inspiration strike him out of the blue.

Yet he has indeed created some spells, and Ed will, I hope, soon tell you more . . .

A memory just struck me, related to your question about Vangerdahast's spells, Damian. I think one HAS appeared in print, in Realmslore, but wasn't identified as his creation at the time, and isn't named for him, but that in later Realmsplay Vangey said it was "one of his" creations (with Ed, of course, as DM, speaking for Vangey the NPC). What I can't for the life of me remember right now is just which spell . . .

Writings

- Ed 28/3/15

Vangerdahast never wrote anything down for his own purposes (too paranoid). The War Wizards kept many written records in their "intelligence" work, but Vangey never contributed to them. Yes, he had spies working for him - - and spies spying on the spies. So, yes, he required the services of "information gatherers."

Abilities

- THO 31/10/13

Q. Ed, was Vangerdahast capable of moving a sentient mind from a broken body into a healthy body whose mind has been ruined (by mind-reaming, psychic blasts or the like)?

Q. If yes, did he ever actually do it?"

A: Ed tells me the answers are both "yes," and that he'll elaborate when he can.

Other Characters

Aerilee

- Ed 31/3/10, responding to query about character in "Swords of Dragonfire"

Aerilee was an envoy from Silverymoon: by definition, an envoy is an "ambassador on a short state visit," representing that city-state to Cormyr.

Alaundo of Candlekeep

- Crazyadventurers quoting GK remembering contact with Steven Schend, Qs for Ed 7/1/12

The history of Alaundo of Candlekeep is pretty much a blank - all we know is that he supposedly created the Roll of Years (as we know it now), lived in Candlekeep, and was a worshipper of Savras. In off-List discussions with Steven Schend re this individual Steven notes that year names for the Realms pre-date the time of Alaundo (this was shown in LOI which for the first time gave year names for earlier than -200 DR or so, and also in Cormanthyr).

Steven has hinted that Alaundo was just the most famous of a series of prophets (some of the earlier ones might have been elves) who scribed and prophesied the Years of the Realms. We do not officially know the extent of the Roll of Years (i.e. when it began and when it finishes) but Alaundo is not the sole author of it - despite the narrow-minded view of the present monks of Candlekeep.:) Oh, IIRC there is a mention of Alaundo in one of Eric Boyd's city write-ups in DDGttU - the illithid city of Oryndoll I believe...

Alea Dahast

- Ed 12/4/10, replying to query about character portrayed as a warrior, but is a mage, in "Cormyr: A Novel"

Alea was leading a military force in the scenes we see her in, in CORMYR: A NOVEL. She was, thus, "being a warrior." A high mage is what she became in elven society; all high mages serve many roles in their communities as they proceed through life.

Ander, Netherese Archwizard

- Qs for Ed 2/1/16 (recollection of Ed's answer related by GK), regarding character from Elminster: Making of a Mage

Mharrander Dorolkh is the full and proper name of this Netherese archwizard, who was born in -1546 DR in Tzindylspar, to a lowborn merchant family of Netheril who traveled tirelessly fetching mundane supplies and items for various arcanists. He was one of some forty children, and his father, Surrane Dorolk, eventually sold Mharrander (who'd exhibited a natural aptitude to 'feel' the presence and strength of magic) to an archwizard, one Kazindrol - - a cruel, bald, bearded arcanist who exulted in taking beast-shape and hunting, rending, and devouring other creatures. Kazindrol sought immortality through the ability to send his mind intact into beast body after beast body, possessing and controlling all he entered, and prided himself on being able to inhabit and command two bodies at once (he saw this not only as essential to avoid dying in a slain body, but as a demonstration of his superior force of intellect).

Kazindrol had need of many assistants, but slew or transformed those he saw as growing into threats to himself. Mharrander never achieved this status, being always too obedient, eagerly obliging, and paltry in training-at-Art, and so was on hand when six of Kazindrol's apprentices all attacked their master at once. The spellbattle was swift, spectacular, and deadly, ending with the top of Kazindrol's tower shattered and Kazindrol and four of his apprentices reduced to ashes, a fifth caught in a spell-cycle that kept him helplessly transforming into a bewilderingly rapid sequence of different creatures (all of them wounded and pinned under rubble), and a sixth triumphant but ravaged by pain, and lashing out at everything in sight - - including Mharrander, who slew this sixth, snatched all the magical tomes and portable items he could find, and fled (leaving the wounded fifth apprentice to be blamed for everything, when neighbouring arcanists arrived to plunder Kazindrol's magic).

Mharrander took himself far from Netheril, into high mountain caverns, somewhere to the south, where dragons laired. There he studied, soon finding a magic that would allow him to snatch creatures from afar for food, and another that would preserve dead bodies in a stasis field. He soon ringed his caverns with dead, floating beholders (that had perished of natural causes, or been on the verge of doing so, ere his magics plucked them to his presence), to dissuade exploring visitors, and began years of study and mastery. From time to time, as the years passed and the world changed, he emerged to explore and test his magic. First he slew or tamed dragons, and then under cloaks of magical concealment observed what others were up to, concentrating most on fellow Netherese arcanists - - and in particular on those working on longevity magics.

Only the human contacts of his explorations, and "feeling involved in unfolding life" through his spyings, kept Mharrander from going insane from sheer loneliness. He took to calling himself just "Ander," and indulging in mimicry of those he spied upon.

He stole such secrets as he dared from archwizards pursuing longevity or immortality, and kept watch over their abodes and doings; whenever one of them perished, Ander swooped in to gather all he could of their magic and research. He sought his own route to immortality or at least longevity through seeking to master regeneration, and in tinkering with "the stuff of flesh" so that parts that did regenerate would not age, but return with the vigor of youth.

For many of his organs and tissues, he achieved what he sought, but saw no way to destroy and regenerate his increasingly aging head and brain without dying. So he turned to wraithform magics, and his stasis fields, hoping to buy time until he could find a solution - - or someone else did, that he could seize or steal it from.

Such tactics bought him centuries, but no solution offered itself. So at least, reluctantly, he turned to exploring lichdom and its magics, still using the “long sleeps” of stasis fields to buy more time.

Ander has more levels than Szass Tam and Khelben, but fewer than Larloch. Of the “comparison trio,” in a one-on-one combat (no legions of allies for his foe) Ander could most easily defeat Szass Tam. He could “take” Khelben if Khelben were ever cut off from the aid of other Chosen and Mystra and Azuth and Mystra’s other divine servants. Larloch would probably mop the floor with Ander, every time.

Ander has far less influence than any of the trio (not just due to his lack of public reputation, but he has almost no servitors, or neighbours who know enough of him to be scared into obedience by him). In short, he can persuade, order about, or control far fewer people than the other three. He is a low-profile loner, who prefers to keep to himself and pass unnoticed.

Ander has less combat experience than any of the trio, and - - unlike all of them - - no modern (and therefore valid) experience with intrigues and negotiations.

Ander commands more powerful spells than all of the others except Larloch, and is no fool: he is a shrewd judge of others, and very alert (he will notice stealthy readying of weapons, magic items, and spells, shifts in position of groups of foes to give them all “clear fields of fire” against him, and so on). His relative lack of combat experience means he knows less about the unintended effects of hostile spells “running into each other” and unusual uses of spells in fighting situations; it does NOT mean he doesn’t know the nature and precise properties of his spells as thoroughly as it’s possible for a mortal to do, who can’t naturally “see” the Weave and practice working with its naked energies.

Although the Shadow Weave is new to him, his thinking (which is VERY fast) and habitual acute observation of all magic at work around him has already enabled him to understand how to respond to the Shadow Weave used against him.

A DM running Ander should use him as a vehicle for importing spells from non-WotC products, “tinkered-with” homebrew spells, and magical constructions that specialize in two things: deflecting spells cast at Ander onto another target (not necessarily back at the source), and invisibly carrying up to seven already-cast, “hanging” spells Ander has prepared, that he can unleash (up to four per round, although doing so is a full-round action, denying him normal spellcasting; if he casts a spell AND unleashes a “hanging” spell, that’s a full-round multiple attack on his part).

Ander is not a trickster, and is not aggressive; combat is something he resorts to reluctantly, not something he automatically initiates against any creature he doesn’t like the look or behaviour of.

Translocation magics are his specialty; he wears several self-crafted magic items that combine the magical effects of blink and mirror image, that he can cast spells (and unleash hanging spells) without penalty while using, because he’s so practiced in such fighting. He also makes much use of projected images (of himself), especially when meeting beings he’s suspicious of (in other words, those who try to clobber him may well be clobbering nothing, and merely warning him of their true intentions).

- The Hooded One, Qs for EG 12/1/16

The one spell we Knights witnessed (so, yes, he still existed as late as 1358 DR) him cast created a swirling, translucent sickly green amorphous-but-generally-oval "thing" in the air above head height and in front of him, that intercepted and "drank" spells cast at Ander, transforming them into pure spell energy that made the "thing" grow brighter and larger. Unlike raw spellfire, this energy could be called upon by Ander to "juice up" other spells (i.e. when he cast something else, he could boost the damage and area of effect or number of targets affected, by calling on energy from this glowing mass).

Araun Taraunth of Arabel

- Broken helm quoting heraldry, confirmed to this character, an NPC adventurer by THO, Qs for Ed 3/9/11

"tall, pointed maroon shield with a diagonal stripe of black from top right corner to lower level corner, with a white border all around the shield," but this was an actual shield rather than a badge, and the rider was alone.

Augathra

- THO 15/1/10, "Harptos and Augathra" thread

Augathra, from her brief appearances in "Ed home campaign Realmsplay" (in magical scenes of long ago, "recorded" in spell-scenes that survive in various dungeons) could shapeshift among a limited number of alternate forms, dimension door (or short-range teleport, without error and frequently) and could phase through walls or alter her density to walk on water and open vats of oils. We couldn't tell if these abilities were innate or due to magic she carried, but they didn't seem to need castings involving gestures or material components.

Augathra was a burly, rather ugly woman with untidy dark hair, a very large head and hands for her middling height - - though in one of the scenes she appeared much younger, more slender, and blonde, still rather plain in appearance.

- Crazedventurers quoting GK remembering contact with Steven Schend, Qs for Ed 7/1/12

Auguthra is a she. Her 'dates' are found in the Revised FR Boxed Set timeline. I believe she was the first to originally name some of the Years in Alaundo's Roll of Years. Alaundo then greatly expanded her work.

Aumark Lithyl (of Ruathym)

- THO 23/11/10, referring to one of the Knights of Myth Drannor

Aumark was a (2nd ed, Unearthed Arcana) cavalier, as was Mourngrym Amcathra. He was heir to the throne, sent away from home to keep him alive during the brief "war" between Ruathym, Luskan, and other shady interests. He left the Knights when his father was slain, to claim the throne ("High Axe") and lead his country. He was an Ed NPC, not a PC.

Aumry Obarskyr, Lord of Shadowdale

- THO 20/3/10

Aumry was a stay-at-home lord, who traveled undercover to Mistledale to conflag twice and Daggerdale once, and (through the woods, stealthily) visited Voonlar to call on Perendra about a dozen times, but didn't travel openly at all (after he became lord).

Aumvor the Undying

Mythallar Creation

- Ed 9/3/13

Yes, Aumvor knew how to make a mythallar. And did.

Awntrus "Black Glove" Malaver

What is Under His Bed

- Ed 26/7/12, replying to query about Waterdeep investigator mentioned in Dragon #413 article "The Six Horned Crowns"

As for Awntrus "Black Glove" Malaver, under his bed are a candle-lantern with spare candles and a striker stowed inside it, ready to go; a baldric with two sheathed throwing-knives and a "jack-claw" (smallish crowbar); twenty feet of waxed black cord attached to a grapnel hook, and six trophies of failure.

By which I mean relics from cases he didn't solve (or hasn't yet solved): a torn end of a man's cloak, found caught in a door at a murder scene; the hilt of a snapped-off dagger left behind when someone broke open a noble's strongchest, emptied it, and made off with the contents; a burnt end of a human armbone, found in a torched house in Dock Ward where a corpse was likely hidden and burned to prevent recognition; a fist-sized, petrified dun-hued, smooth egg, possibly from a giant snake, but that was sold in Trades Ward as a "dragon egg" by someone who was murdered shortly afterwards; a severed male human finger found in a crypt in the City of the Dead, that bears an unknown enchantment that has thus far defeated attempts to magically learn more about the former owner of the digit; and a fragment of stone bearing part of what looks like a Dethek rune, that was found rammed down the throat of a dead man found floating in Waterdeep's harbour, his face eaten away by fishes and his hands and feet severed and missing.

Awntrus takes them out some nights and handles them, thinking hard. And later, sometimes, dreaming of them.

Behind the headboard of his bed, Awntrus keeps a shapely female mannequin dressed in a high-fashion, expensive gown. (Not for any kinky purposes, but so that he can offer an unwrinkled, ready-to-go gown to anyone of the fairer sex willing to accompany him to a revel or club or other social occasion; from time to time he hires good-looking females to help him spy on persons in places and times [[the ladies' garderobes, for instance]] when and where he can't easily keep an eye on them himself.)

Baalimr Selmarr

- Ed 4/9/14, carpenter of Arabel circa 1357

"Brund" Selmarr (the origins of the childhood nickname are forgotten, but everyone uses it, including his family and the man himself) is an affable six-foot-seven muscled mountain of a man who lives above his shop, along with his wife Rella and his seven daughters. Rella is petite, but the daughters are all tall, muscled echoes of Brund himself, and are expert dyers, polishers, gluers, and finishers of wood. The shop never closes; Brund employs three crews who travel about Arabel (and, in the summer months, the vicinity) doing everything from building homes and barns from the dirt up, to minor repairs and renovations (such as replacing windows and/or shutters, repairing doors, replacing rotting stair treads or railings, etc.). One of the three crews is always in the shop, sorting and cutting wood for the use of the other crews, and making furniture (specializing in sturdy, well-designed stools [designed to be

climbed], chairs, and "tall-narrow-nook" shelving boxes that can be latched together in pairs for easy transport of their contents. The carpentry crews are cheerful, handy local citizens, who are encouraged to bring along their sons and daughters to be "trained up" into replacement crew members. Each crew has a base strength of ten "hands," plus trainees.

Brund is a fair dealer who rushes to rectify any mistakes free of charge, and is well liked in the city and its environs. He doesn't mind his workers "retiring" to set up their own competing firms, but his work is good enough and prices low enough that competitors have a hard time making inroads on his trade (he has cheerfully worked with former staffers on big projects, and welcomed back former staffers who've found pickings slim and want to step back into the steady coin and camaraderie). Brund is a simple soul who likes working with his hands, drinking (he has developed a prodigious capacity, and so seldom seems drunk), and taking long walks with his wife, who often recites ballads or reads racy chapbooks to him when they're alone. (For her part, Rella is an expert "feed forty no sixty no seventy mouths with something simple, hearty, and FAST" cook, and a painter of suggestive [read: "safe for public" erotic] scenes on board that have slowly begun to sell well (many to caravan dealers who take them to Waterdeep to resell at huge markups). Brund's daughters tend to be as affable as their fathers, to be good carpenters and great climbers, and to regularly rebuff suitors [in between taking as lovers the partners they fancy]. They are all good with accounts, and have watched their father boss the crews attentively enough to be very good "stand in" bosses, just by aping what they've seen him do. The two eldest are Lathleira and Maelra, and the youngest (a bit of a scamp) is Teleirla.

Baerm Lamordair, Cambion

- Ed 30/12/13 (one of two cambions known to the Knights of Myth Drannor in their campaign)

The cambion calling himself Baerm Lamordair proclaimed himself High Lord of Fairbanner in 1357 DR, though at that time Fairbanner consisted of just one farm he'd seized by the sword. This proclamation was largely ignored by everyone, though the Grand Duchy the farm was nominally part of took notice of Lamordair's existence in the spring of 1358, when Lamordair violently annexed two neighboring farms to enlarge Fairbanner (to the size THO describes in her reply). He then (the summer of 1358) met with formidable but unsustained resistance from several wizards who (paid by the Duchy to do so, but quite willing in any event) blasted Lamordair's motley army to blood and corpses and moved on.

Lamordair only survived the mages' attack by fleeing headlong and far. It took him until the spring of 1362 DR to assemble a new band of belligerents and retake the same three farms to refound Fairbanner anew. He then decided to try to find allies (in the Barony of Great Oak in particular) to fight at his side in a military shattering of the Grand Duchy of Shantal, but succeeded only in bolstering the ranks of his band with a few dozen land-hungry mercenaries who'd fled some disastrous skirmishes near Ulgarth, and were hoping to soon retire from making war to become idle nobility somewhere.

If what he told them can be believed as reflecting his true and lasting desires (those who knew him best, such as the battered old giant of a mercenary warrior Dethodd, the closest thing Lamordair had to a trusted general, believe any successes would have spurred the cambion on to higher ambitions, so if not destroyed he would have just kept trying to conquer more and more of the Border Kingdoms), Lamordair intended to eventually conquer Sorndorn and however much of Ondeeme and the Barony of Great Oak he needed to, to assault and take Thur, so as to have a port on the Lake of Steam—but that he was quite willing to be "slow and sly" about this, to keep from arousing foes on all sides and having to fight a war on many fronts.

In the late summer of 1362 DR, however, Lamordair crossed paths with the Knights of Myth Drannor,

who were traveling in the Border Kingdoms on a different matter, and they carved his tiny army apart. When he sent Dethodd to try to murder them as they slept, by night, and they responded by spell-hurling the warrior back at him like an aerial missile, Lamordair thought the wizards who'd routed him before had returned, and simply fled, leaving his dreams in the dust of vanishing Fairbanner.

The Knights hunted him for about a tenday, but then went on with their own business. The cambion didn't return to the Border Kingdoms, but made his way south to Sheirtalar, and attempted to find mages who would take him on as a general.

He had concluded that he had to have powerful wizards working with (or preferably for, but to accomplish the latter he would have to find a way to gain a hold over a powerful mage, and the achieving of that baffled him) him to gain power and to conquer anywhere in the Realms, and resolved to get some. What he got instead, of course, was used by powerful wizards, treated as expendable fodder in dangerous "go and get me this magic from that deadly rival mage" missions. Realizing this would lead to swift doom, Lamordair betrayed one of his patrons to the beholder he'd been sent to rob—and ended up working for the beholder, one Xuldelankh, who was then lurking in Ormpur in magical disguise, and needed agents who could operate more easily.

Neither Lamordair nor Xuldelankh were foolish enough to trust each other, but settled into a cordial working relationship, that survived until both cambion and patron were destroyed in an ill-advised attack on a dragon (in the winter of 1377 DR). The dragon, the elder black wyrm Malarmalagoth of the Wyrmbones, left their heads (that of the beholder blinded and shorn of all eyestalks) intact inside protective and preservative glowing magical fields, as warning displays to others—which is how the Knights learned of Lamordair's fate.

Brace Skatterhawk

Illegitimate Son of Azoun IV

- THO 22/5/10

Yes, Brace Skatterhawk is the son of Azoun IV. So is Brace's close and longtime friend, Beliard Cormaeril.

Relationship with Alusair

- THO 22/5/10

As for Brace being Alusair's lover: yes, but please don't interpret "lover" as "longtime bed companion." Brace was one of the many young noblemen whom Alusair "rode with" in military service in the northern parts of the realm, and made love to when camping of nights as she pleased. As in, her bedroll-partner changed from night to night, without anyone getting possessive or vying to be her "favourite." So among that fellowship, Brace was one of some forty-odd lovers (and, yes, it's likely a few others among them were UNWITTINGLY, on her part or perhaps unknown to both of them, her half-brothers).

Brandon Battlemaster

- THO 31/7/10, responding to query about character that killed the lich Tharuighagh

Brandon was an Ed-created ("pre-generated") PC played by a participant in one of Ed's library mini-campaigns (that is, a 13-weekly-session program offered to the public for free at what was then Brookbanks Community Branch of the North York Public Library in North York (now part of Toronto), Ontario, Canada.

And yes, Brandon did destroy the lich in a subterranean lair that the lich had taken over (rather than constructed), near Saerb.

Candlemas (of Delia)

- THO 26/6/11, responding to assertion that he battled the phaerimm lifedrain

Candlemas [that's a handy alias rather than his real name, BTW; "Lady Polaris" is a pseudonym, too] devised a magic that in effect teleported frequent mists of water (from a pond he'd "doctored" with various soluble nutrients) to his plants (to counteract the drying effect of the lifedrain on those plants only). His spell did nothing to fight or lessen or alter the magical effects of the lifedrain itself.

Elaith Craulnober

Ed's stories

- THO quoted by Fellfire, Qs for Ed 23/8/11

Interestingly, in Ed's published Realms, before TSR, Elaith was one of the characters (Mirt was another, as was Tamper Tencoin, and Storm Silverhand) that appeared far more than Elminster, who was most often a narrator or knowing old sage supporting character rather than a protagonist (TSR policies turned him into that).

Ed wrote at least six Saint//Fafhrd & Mouser-ish stories featuring Elaith, of which I've read five. One was a manuscript copy and MIGHT never have been published, but the other four I read in various Canadian publications (well after they came out; I think one of them was a 1969 magazine, but I'd have to track down my copy to make sure of that). Elaith was a fascinating and well-developed character in all of them, long before gamers discovered him (and of course, Elaine first read about him, in FR1/WATERDEEP AND THE NORTH).

- Blueblade quoting names of tales

I have read and can name two of those stories:

"A Serpent In The Streets" (in which Mirt and Durnan foil Elaith)
and

"A Decanter Shattered In Dock Ward" (in which Elaith takes down a cabal of arrogant guildmasters)
((And I read a friend's copy of a third story, title forgotten I'm afraid, involving a love story among young Waterdhavian nobles, with their haughty families opposed, and Elaith exploiting the situation to loot the mansion of one family))

Found out the title of that Ed Elaith story that I don't own, the one with the starcrossed noble lovers. It's called:

Mourning of Passion

and my friend owns ANOTHER one, entitled:

A Serpent In Every Shadow

Eressea Ambergyles

- THO 23/11/10, referring to character mentioned as one of the Knights of Myth Drannor

Eressea was a priestess who came to Shadowdale to found a temple, after the Knights were firmly in control of it. She adventured with the Knights, was invited to join them, and accepted. Her fate is NDA, and she was an Ed NPC. Yes, there are almost a dozen other Knights (some of whom didn't last long at all) that scribes familiar with the published realms don't know about.

Flamsterd

- Ed, (several years ago as of 2013)

Think of him as a (neatly-trimmed beard, cultured Oxonian accent, slender silver-mounted and always unlit and empty pipe in hand or mouth [largely used for gesturing, when speaking, the converse always quiet], expensively dressed in quiet good taste) bookish, retiring, sophisticated 'please just leave me be' wizard. He went to the Moonshaes to escape the bustle and intrigue of mainland Faerûn at the time, and although he recognizes the need to defend his newfound home against both internal strife and external attacks, he most seeks the peace and quiet to research and think deeply. Flamsterd is interested in natural processes of Faerûn, and naturally powerful beings of all sorts (many long forgotten, fallen, hidden from, or misunderstood by, mortals). What is the true nature of godhood? Does power cycle, truly, or flow to and from imbalances? Can it be harnessed or gathered without causing harm elsewhere? Do gates and mythals and wards and other lasting magical constructs cause lasting harm? Or, if not harmful, what effects on natural processes and the natural ongoing transformations of power do they have? Who is meddling with power/natural energies right now? How? Can human lore even record or perceive the true cycles or nature of power, or has power been so meddled with or controlled (all the while humanity was rising to any sort of awareness of it) that there's nothing left of what's "natural" for human lore TO recognize? And out of all this, what power can I as an ethical wizard gather and use? What uses should I be making of it? What beings should I attempt to thwart, to preserve the Moonshaes or the wider Realms that I'm familiar with?

These are the same questions that Khelben, Elminster, and others have grappled with (including all who "came to service" as Chosen, but not those who were born into it, as the Seven were -- because, rebel or not, they've always had Mystra's direct guidance available), but Flamsterd is one of many who went off alone to consider how to grapple with them. Manshoon of the Zhentarim was another, and took a very different road. So, too, were Sammaster, and Malchor Harpell, and Larloch, and scores of others.

Flamsterd has, in short, retreated to his underwater abode to further isolate and defend himself (witness his stated actions in FR2), while he makes forays into various planes and locates various gates (ahem, portals) so as to deepen his understanding of the shadowy power groups at work in the Realms. He has decided that he doesn't like Larloch's growing web of liches, or some of the schemes afoot among some of the most magically powerful elves, either -- nor yet certain Red Wizards or particular Halruaan elders. So he's been trying to figure out how to subtly control power flows so as to limit and confound such meddlers, without himself being noticed by them.

He can't, of course, manage this swiftly -- and can't manage it at all without being noticed by Mystra, who's set Azuth the task of oh-so-subtly guiding Flamsterd (so Flamsterd won't in turn be aware that he's being manipulated). Azuth is still in the process of testing the unwitting Flamsterd to see if Flamsterd's mind and morals are sufficient to allow him to acquire the abilities he craves, to limit the powers of others.

Thus far, I can reveal that Flamsterd has passed with flying colours. Time alone will tell what the final judgement on him is. Oh, yes, one thing more: after deciding to avoid women and romance and all of the trouble and potential weakness that accompanies romantic relationships, Flamsterd has started to notice a particular lass. He hasn't quite realized yet that he's smitten with her, but he is, and Azuth is

watching this, too, with interest.

And I haven't reached the point in my own writings yet that I can reveal her identity (no, it's not a Realms character you've already seen) to you. For one thing, I don't "control" the Realms, and haven't for years. This is a glimpse of my own ongoing "what this character has been up to" notes, and for obvious reasons (given how many writers are at work in the Realms) I can't go merrily along passing you my notes for character after character, or we'll have MORE inconsistencies to argue over on this list! :}

Goldghallow

- THO 12/2/14

Q: Goldghallow (author of the Rebel Prince and The Nymph Said No)...is there any more information about him? His dates, where he was from, any other works by him? One of my players has their character collect various naughty works (we have a running gag about a "bag of holding full of smut" whenever guards ask if they're carrying any contraband) and having some lore on an author would be great. Thanks!

A: Goldghallow dated the beautiful Sarilel of Suzail for a time, then . . . Well, then my lore runs out

Gulthas the Black Mage

- Ed 27/7/16, regarding survival to 5th edition of character mentioned in Dragon #116 article "Rogue Stones and Gemjumping"

Gulthas has survived, has devised a means of moving his sentience intact from monster body to monster body (so, non-good necromantic means of some sort) in order to do so, and now lives in hiding at several undisclosed locations in the Sword Coast lands. He has other dreams these days (so, no treasure hoards, but now, only ancient and powerful magic concerned with longevity and renewal and body transformations).

Harptos of Kaalinth

- THO 15/1/10, "Harptos and Augathra" thread

As far as I know, Ed has only ever written a few paragraphs about Harptos, who was a short, slim, dark-haired, studious and quiet man (a scholar and inventor rather than any sort of leader).

High Mage Ederan Nharimlur of Silverymoon

- Ed 19/4/11, responding to query about reasoning for gold fur post "find familiar mishap"

Nharimlur was a moon elf. Neither he nor the cat had golden or near-golden hair or fur, the spell mishap did that. Most Silvaeren elves are moon elves, though there are at least twenty sun elf families resident in Silverymoon (most of them get along very well with non-elves and other sorts of elves, or they wouldn't reside in the Gem of the North, though certain individuals can be as haughty as sun elves are "all said to be" by many folk in the wider Realms).

Hyldur the Black Blade

- THO 23/11/12

Hyldur the Black Blade: vicious mercenary of eastern Amn, often hired to hunt down debtors and thieves in the wilderlands of Amn and Tethyr. Killed by bodyguards of the merchant Althus Baerond in

Athkatla, spring of 1359 DR. Remembered in Athkatla and Crimmor as a nasty, gleeful torturer and intimidator.

- Ed 24/11/12

Hyldur grew up in the streets of Athkatla, and survived as long as he did because early on he came to a secret agreement with the rulers of Amn: he would lay off person they told him to leave alone, on "lean on" persons they wanted harassed, and in return they would let him operate unmolested by watch officers/lawkeepers throughout Amn (but at his own risk).

Hyldur died as THO has posted, when he got overconfident and "pushed" a fight against a merchant who was prepared for him. In the following year, another merchant of Athkatla, Kalist Salragundrar, started settling debts/coercing business contacts into "seeing things his way" by claiming that Hyldur was still alive, and was secretly working for him. (In other words, "give in or in the middle of the night, no matter where you hide or how you try to defend yourself, Hyldur will pay you a call.")

This wasn't true, as Hyldur was dead and hadn't risen or become undead, but on occasion Salragundrar (a "manygoods" importer and exporter who did a thriving sideline business in stolen goods and contraband [[wares that had eluded duties, fees, and taxes]]) hired another "bullyblade" to do such "dark hours dirty work" in the name of Hyldur, to keep up the deception.

Eventually public opinion in Athkatla reached the view that Hyldur was dead and Salragundrar was deceiving everyone. This happened at about the time Salragundrar hastily relocated to Mintarn, a step ahead of the murderous agents hired by a cabal of merchants he'd imprudently disagreed with.

Salragundrar still survives, as of this writing, but Hyldur's still dead. :}

[Jerlak and Jeerlak of Cormyr](#)

- Ed 15/11/14, referring to names in the 2e Cormyr sourcebook

There isn't actually a misspelling here; Heldrak Jeerahlamakh (known to all in Cormyr as "Jeerlak") is a far-traveled merchant born in the southern Vilhon, who as of the 1340s DR has settled "for good" in Cormyr, where he owns a shady potion/drug/"doctored" wine and spirits trading concern, using a dyes and marinades and sauces vending business as a cover. He also rents out space in his warehouses, which are well-guarded by ex-Purple Dragons and semi-retired adventurers of purchasable morals, including the sturdy old shed in Waymoot (which has a guards' living-loft and attached jakes). Some of the guards sharpen weapons "on the side," which means they also buy and sell tobacco and stolen/no-questions-asked-pasts weapons. Jeerlak isn't so much evil as he is cheerfully amoral and opportunistic. He's wary of attracting too much attention from the authorities or what he calls "the real sharks, in Sembia," so he makes a modest living. His chief weakness is young willing ladies.

The Jerlak family is, so far as I (and all the parties involved, in the Realms) know, no relation to Jeerlak. Honstabul and Rhaemarr Jerlak are burly, placid, slow-to-anger brothers who both have large families - a mingled clan who amicably share the shipping and warehousing business inherited from "Old Gurk," the gruff, hard-nosed, now-deceased Graemurk Jerlak, father of Honstabul and Rhaemarr. In the 1350s DR, there are almost fifty Jerlaks, and they do everything from make, repair, and load shipping crates, coffers, and strong chests, to rent out wagons, draft beasts, and harnesses. The Jerlaks are big in lamp oil and in the sale of hempen (we might say "burlap" or "hessian") sacks used by farmers across Cormyr. There is Jerlak warehousing in Waymoot, but it's rented less-than-an-entire-building space, in two structures that are owned by others. Perhaps the most interesting of the Jerlaks at this time are three spirited sisters (daughters of Rhaemarr), hight Anthrelle, Chantharla, and Jessarra, who are what we

might term tomboys; they roister, love having adventures, and are trying to romance and buy their ways into forming a loyal band of adventurers that they can lead. They have had several skirmishes with patrolling Purple Dragons and Sembian merchants visiting Cormyr, with the result that at least one Highknight now has his eye on them (not all that attentively, but checking in on them from time to time to find out what troubles they might be getting into). Honstabil has two stalwart, unimaginative, trustworthy sons, Lorandur and Harlaen, who are shaping up to be the envoys and "business heads in waiting" of the family businesses.

Kolmin Stagblade

- THO 16/3/14, referring to Kolmin Stagblade, the Cormyr bannerguard to the King in Death of the Dragon

Ed tells me that Kolmin was a phenomenally large human (due to genetics, which MIGHT betoken giant blood in his heritage, way way back, or might not; is it does, it's so far back his family don't know about it). Many bannerguards are chosen for their large size and musculature, but they have to gain fighting skills and have the right temperament, too, to keep the position. Stagblade had the size, the disposition, and the skills.

No, he's not from a prominent Cormyrean family, he's one of the yeomen "just plain folks."

Lord Sardamon Thorland of Cormyr

- THO 3/9/11, responding to quoted heraldry

Lord Sardamon Thorland, one of Cormyr's few mining magnates (he owns at least six rich iron and silver mines in westernmost Cormyr). His blazon, simplified on that badge, commemorates divine defeat of dwarves, centuries ago, that helped one of his ancestors retain one of the first Thorland-dug mines. The Thorlands are reclusive, having a great distaste for Suzail and for politics - - and everything else about them I'll leave to Ed to tell.

Heraldry

- Broken helm, quoting an Ed played game, Qs for Ed 2/9/11

the PCs met a pompous local lord whose retinue all wore badges of "A gold anvil split by a three-zag gold lightning bolt, on a pale blue field."

Lord Phandymm of Zhentil Keep

- THO 31/12/12

A big (burly, broad-shouldered, like a football player with full padding on, except of course in his case, it's all him) man with fat cheeks and a double chin, going bald. Pale white-skinned, green eyes, big fat strong fingers. Says little, speaks in a pleasant, honeyed, deep voice. A landlord and investor in Zhentil Keep, drawing income from almost two hundred small businesses he supports (mainly shopkeepers and crafters, but also a few caravan shipping and warehousing concerns). Deals in spirits, wines, poisons, and unguents (medicinal ointments), habitually evading most taxes by misstating what's in which cask to pay a lower tax rate. Secretly sponsors and supports LOCAL clergy of Bane, hence his siding with Fzoul over the High Imperceptor. Often leery of early Zhent tactics because he thought other cities would arm and ride against Zhentil Keep as a threat perceived to be too grave to let lie, but never a foe of the Network. (He spoke against them at Council because he thought what they were trying was a dangerous, foolish "rocking of the boat" of local power, done out of impatience when it could have been done more slowly

and with subtlety and made fewer enemies/engendered less local fear.) He still believes this, but Manshoon sees him rightly as disagreeing over ways and means, not aims and end goals. He is one of the few Keep inhabitants Manshoon likes, because Phandymm puts himself first, the welfare of the city second, and the Brotherhood (the Zhentarim) third, and is thoughtful and wary (and therefore, to Manshoon, predictable).

Lurkan the Reaver

- THO 11/10/13, referring to character mentioned in OGB

Lurkan the Reaver did indeed make that move in the "home" Realms campaign, but he surprised the Knights and just about everyone else by changing careers. He became the sort of "behind the throne" investor who props up rulers in return for near-monopolies on important local industries or shipping, and got very rich while keeping a low profile. When he wanted to fight, he hired adventuring band after adventuring band to swing swords for him.

Madeiron Sunderstone

- THO, Qs for EG 13/4/16

How did he get the surname Sunderstone? Was it something that was assumed based on life experience or was it a name brought from his homeland of Hartsvale?

A: He was born with it (it's his family name).

Being a direct line descendant of the giant demigod the Hartkiller and the first King of Hartsvale Brun, he possessed the great size but did also he possess the same supernatural strength that manifested in the royal Hartwick line?

A: Madeiron was tremendously strong in our dealings with him. As in, briefly hold up collapsing building while inside it (so others could escape) strong.

Did he and Piergeiron become acquainted before Piergeiron became the Open Lord?

A: Yes.

- THO 25/5/13

Madeiron is slow in speech, and prefers to say little. And he's physically big. This has led to a general impression that he's dim-witted, but he's not. He just uses few words, and as little as possible; a classic "strong, silent type." He's very bright, and a shrewd judge of folk - - and effective in this, because people who dismiss him as "dumb as the nearest post" don't hide their true feelings and opinions as much around him as they would about someone else.

Maerun /Maerim Stoutbold

- THO 6/11/12, responding to query about different names in different sources

The Old Grey Box is in error, citing "Maerim" (the father) in place of "Maerun" (the son). So, later source corrects earlier, and takes precedence. Which is the general, but not exclusive, rule (the reasoning Steven Schend cited holds up in some cases).

Mentor Wintercloak

- Ed quoted by Steven Schend, 20/08/06, in Questions for Steven Schend thread, replying to query about his relationship preferences are

"As for Mentor Wintercloak, I've purposefully kept him as mysterious as possible - - but in my mind he's always been the incredibly charismatic (think Doctor Strange in looks, with those dark, dominating eyes) Svengali figure who attracted scores of magically-talented women as lovers and apprentices. In other words, he's the guy Elminster learned the technique from. :}

Now, I DON'T see Mentor as an exploitive lecher, cold-bloodedly trading magical training for sex and service. I see him as someone who made his wants and desires clear, who dealt honestly, and who was attracted to growing, learning minds whose talent for the Art was blossoming. His personal charisma just made a LOT of people fall for him, male and female, as friends and as lovers."

Narandor the Metal Mage

- Ed quoted by WR 8/2/12, responding to query about Chosen of Mystra "beyond Toril"

Some of what I'd like to say is under several NDAs, but I can mention one such Chosen: Narandor the Metal Mage. An embittered, cynical hermit (think Eeyore in the Pooh tales, for disposition), this archwizard of early Halruaa ended up on the wrong end of a spell-duel and got mangled horribly, in magics that kept him alive to feel the pain as a foe's sequence of minor acid-burst and transforming spells wracked him (envisage, if you will, spells that shield the target from system shock and unconsciousness, and shapeshift them constantly to heal and reform around budding cysts in the interior of which flesh-searing acid is developed; the cysts grow and then burst, showering the surrounding flesh of the victim with agonizing "melting" effects; the cysts have an interior coating that resists and contains the acid until the cyst ruptures).

Debilitated but unable to die, Narandor writhed in helpless pain until some of his former apprentices found him. They tried to quell the spells riding him, but managed only to isolate them in several of his limbs—which they then blasted into oblivion. Narandor lost consciousness, and they debated as to what to do for him; slay him out of mercy, transform him utterly, transfer his sentience into a beast-body, or - - their eventual choice - - replace his missing limbs with flowmetal, something many Halruaans had been working on. This is in effect "living" metal that bonds with an organic body and slowly poisons it, but in the meantime can function as replacement limbs, digits, etc. Flowmetal's poisoning has never been overcome, and its use was later abandoned as spells were developed that could "infect" it swiftly to cause death of someone bonded to it in a handful of breaths, but Narandor received a right arm and shoulder, a right leg, and a left knee, all of replacement flowmetal - - which he has to this day. He counteracted the poisoning by devising a spell that shifts the chemical balance of his remaining organic body constantly, so that it flows in shape, weeps a pus of ceaseless discharges, and can grow functional fingers, breasts, crude press-lungs, false eyes, etc. as he wills.

Narandor was already a master of skyship design, and he sailed one of his ships high into the sky and tethered it to a magically-levitated chunk of rock (all that remained of a blasted-to-dust "skycastle" fortress, that had once belonged to a Netherese archwizard until several rivals decided to destroy him whilst he was in residence).

Then Narandor used his spells to cover the rock with edible mosses, lichens, and mushrooms, and settled down in isolation to devise new spells. His experiments were long and studded with more

failures than successes, but he eventually achieved two things: the ability to ensnare moisture and shield his home from the full heat of the sun, so as to keep that dampness and preserve his plants from baking on the rock - - and the ability to move his home through the skies with fair precision.

Whereupon, of course, he set about traveling around collecting other aerial fragments, and “growing” his home into his own private little jungle, plus bits and pieces of several ruined skyships and aerial abodes.

Mystra imbued him with some of her silver fire (with his enthusiastic agreement) not to have him be a meddling “remake the world” Chosen, but to store some of herself where others were unlikely to come into contact with it. For his part, Narandor gained a permanent freedom from the flowmetal poisoning effect (the silver fire offsets it), Mystra’s love, gratitude, and presence whenever he grows lonely and calls for it, and philosophical debates from time to time with Mystra or various of her servitors, who now act as Narandor’s agents in Faerûn, to bring him back items he desires (mainly substances for spell experimentations).

Narandor is now fairly contented, though he retains his doleful manner, and lives his life making various exotic wines, researching spells, and using his magics to observe events on Faerûn far below.

This is all pre-Spellplague, of course; what befalls him when the Weave fails is up to you; I’d suspect his aerial home would be sent on a wild ride, and eventually crash to earth - - but I’d not count Narandor out as conveniently dying in the crash. I’d suspect he’d survive the Spellplague, as a disfigured, part-metal wandering wizard who keeps to himself and stays hidden as much as possible. Extremely bad news for any arrogant young warlock or wizard who encounters and misjudges him, of course. ;}

Narya Ilunedrel

- Ed 22/2/15

Q: There's a character in The Herald that I'm interested in, and thinking of incorporating in a storyline/campaign I'm developing - Narya Ilunedrel (one of guards of Myth Drannor's Steward of the South Gate). Has she been mentioned in any other published material? Arclath recognizes her, and mentions that his mother had "grudgingly spoken highly" of her. Did she survive the events of The Herald?

A: Narya survived, too, sorely wounded, but is under care in Sembholme and expected to survive; the right spells and treatment should replace the right forearm she lost in the fighting.

Neiroon “the Schemer”

- Ed 2/2/15

Neiroon 'the Schemer' was a hermit (retired adventurer) who was a tutor of one of the Knights of Myth Drannor. He was a character with several classes, including druid and illusionist, and he deliberately remains a mystery. Not to be confused with Neiron the Ranger Knight.

Neiroon already had a habit of vanishing for long periods before the Knights first met him, and this continued. His hut beside the River Lis is nothing more than a small, ramshackle weathered one-room wooden structure with a moss-covered cedar shake roof. The dim interior has a huge wooden bed (four Knights once shared it comfortably, without undue intimacy), a simple trestle table with one good chair and a bench, a chamberpot, and a tiny heart with cauldron-hook. There's no basement, and when Neiroon's away, the chait, chamberpot, and cauldron-hook are all missing, as are the bedcovers (three blankets and a large array of beast-pelt furs). Neiroon has a well-concealed underground storage niche

for all of this about a mile farther from the river: a stone-lined shallow pit with a camouflaged earth-and-vegetation "lid" cover, on higher and drier ground.

Neiroon is absent for long periods because he travels a lot, alone and often employing avian or beast shapes (using his druidic magic). He maintains at least a dozen small, simple residences (and even more hidden storage caches, including at least two on the roofs and in the attics of grand mansions and palaces belonging to others).

Neiroon is an adviser, tutor, and sometime spy for at least six rulers (from petty "robber barons" in the Border Kingdoms and elsewhere to the heads of Chessentan city-states to noble families of Cormyr and Waterdeep who dominate the towns and villages and their countryside retreats. Neiroon makes a living hiding things or finding things and people for such patrons, carrying messages for them, and either training or arranging for the right other person to discreetly train family members and trusted retainers of his patrons. He is something of a soft-voiced, quiet man of few words version of Aragorn, more apt to use illusion and ruse and silently slipping away or misdirecting than he is to draw sword and fight openly, but he has his own moral code, and has been known to dispense "poetic justice" to some he meets, in the manner Elminster has become so notorious for. He's not interested in publicity, reputation, or "the general public" getting to know his face, whereabouts, name, or what he's up to - - but he has been known to show up in Storm's kitchen on rare occasions for a warm bed, a good meal, and to dry out. As a friend, NOT a Harper. And that's probably about as much as I should say, given where events are right now in the home Realms campaign.

4/2/15 - From Ed's original maps in the FR Atlas on the western side of the Lis is a little place called Neiroon's Hut.

[Netherese Archwizards mentioned in "Netheril: Empire of Magic"](#)

- Ed 1/8/11

Halavar, Daedren Cheverandrus ("Chever," and that's pronounced "Shev-vur," BTW) and Algult Laquantoule ("Quantoul") are all definitely still alive, and Ed provided a little more about two other Netherese archwizards:

"Lucke" is Mael Tantarmalucke, a sarcastic, restless dabbler in all sorts of magics; a brilliant but unbalanced individual whose life was a series of schemes and adventures. A dangerous foe who "ALWAYS got more than even," returning from death to life several times through pre-prepared magical means to settle scores with his slayers and other foes. Whimsical and sometimes generous and helpful—and curious to a fault, always craving new experiences (including taking on various beast shapes to have carnal experiences with real creatures of the shapes he took). Slain several times, and finally disappeared - - though it's unknown if he was destroyed, went into hiding or a new life under a new name and in a new shape, or departed the Realms for other planes/worlds.

"Volhm" is Anvolhm Anhaerad, a quiet, polite, rather withdrawn individual intensely interested in weather magic and in breeding/augmenting insects, and in magics concerned with humans temporarily taking insectoid form or acquiring insectoid "growths" (compound eyes, "feelers" [antennae], mandibles, etc.). Believed to be still alive, but hiding (for centuries, now, his life self-prolonged magically) in insect form.

- THO 1/11/11

"Lucke: neogi trade, shapechanging to do so, transforming slaves and apprentices into neogi variants."
So there's one tiny tidbit, of something the Knights heard about, but never saw (so it could be mere rumor, not true).

And of course, "Lucke" is a pseudonym, not the mage's name...

Orm of Melvaunt

- THO 1/12/12

Orm of Melvaunt was a fat, sardonic, hedonistic and VERY wealthy merchant, who bankrolled Manshoon early on in return for contracts/money-making opportunities with Zhentil Keep. I believe Orm became a ruling Lord of Melvaunt (I'll have to ask Ed about the details of Melvaunt's government, and Orm's role in it), and was deposed from this position because of corruption/fraud that became public.

He was NOT killed, but relocated to the Vilhon or Chessenta, and went right on running his crooked but successful, expanding mercantile empire.

My notes have Ed telling us, years back: "Think of him as Greenstreet's the Fat Man, or Kingpin in the Spiderman comics, or Baron Harkonnen as portrayed in the DUNE movie."

Orm was an influential or dominant member of the Council of Lords of Melvaunt in 1349 DR, because he was responsible for a decree issued by the Council in that year (in other words, he could sway the Council to his view).

- Malcolm, 1/12/12, Qs for Ed

Ed played Orm (as a menacing, softly-speaking NPC villainous prime mover) in a long-ago convention Realms adventure he ran, back before TSR had bought the Realms. I was one of the players. Orm was CHILLING. And his flunkies had sleep-poisoned throwing knives that they used without hesitation.

Ottar of "Ottar's Mask" spell

- Ed 31/12/11 (in 2012 thread)

Ed tells me that he still has to "crosscheck" on this one, but that Ottar is a shortening of the name of the human non-Rashemi wizard who taught many of the witches enhanced mastery of magic, long ago (and dwelt with them as a beloved teacher at the time).

- Ed 5/1/12

"Ottar" was really Ilssral Ottamar of Amn, a wizard who fled deadly intrigues in that land to dwell in seclusion in Rashemen. He aided many witches with his magic and his teachings of it, and they came to respect and then (after his death) revere him.

Painters of Suzail

Elros Lazandur, Painter of Suzail

- THO 27/3/10

My notes have yielded up a prominent painter of Suzail, circa 1357 DR: Elros Lazandur, an aging, crotchety, short and stooped man who does portraits and hunt scenes depicting nobility - - but refuses to do nudes or anything "modern." His work is well respected, expensive, and rarely comes on the market because noble buyers don't want to part with it. His house (including a front room shop/studio)

is on Doloph Street ("DOE-loff"), which is one of the streets south of the Promenade and paralleling the Promenade, in the western half of the city.

Emmaera Drounlamm, Painter of Suzail

- THO referencing Ed 29/3/10

Another Suzailan painter of note: Emmaera Drounlamn. This former coin-lass and tavern dancer now paints risqué scenes of unclad ladies (akin to real-world Vargas or Olivia pin-up art) for far lower prices than a top-rank "toast of the nobles" limner. On the other hand, she paints on thin boards (that have a tendency to warp or rot, with the passing years), and many of her paintings are almost identical to many, many of her other paintings.

Radoc "The One" (aka Doc)

- THO 28/9/10

I can tell you that Radoc was Paul Jaquays' character, and he will be the best source of background information on Radoc...

Star Mounts lair

- Ed 7/12/10

Paul told me Doc chose the Star Mounts because they are relatively inaccessible to raiding bands of goblinkin and/or humans, and have almost all sorts of resources (water and fast-flowing water = power, minerals, copious lumber and edible plants, high meadows where captured livestock can be grazed in hiding, etc.) readily at hand.

Ren O' The Blade

Waterdeep Dock Ward hideout

- THO 21/4/14

find the label "Lackpurse Lane" and from the final "e" go east two buildings along Lackpurse Lane, on the south side of that street, to a light beige building that's situated a bit south of the buildings on either side. That red brick (street and floor above, with two now-rickety wooden floors atop that, and no cellars thanks to harbortide flooding) building was Ren O' The Blade's main base of operations (though he temporarily rented some North Ward addresses from time to time for various "operations").

Rilantaver

- Ed 30/12/10, responding to query about elusive trickster and inventor of Rilantaver's Staff mentioned in Dragon #173

As longtime DRAGON readers will recall, Rilantaver had gone missing "long ago" by the time I penned that article. It was popularly believed in the Realms, among folk who knew of him at all, that the widely-traveled wizard was dead, fallen in some unknown "misadventure." (Many would have added the dark sentiments, "And not before he deserved it, either!")

It was at that time Elminster's suspicion that Rilantaver hadn't died, but instead had relocated to another plane of existence where he'd not worn out his welcome so thoroughly. That suspicion has proved correct, because Rilantaver has been seen again in the Realms since, on several fleeting occasions, leading raids to snatch specific magic items (that is, fast-moving bands of all sorts of

“monsters” who are sentient and capable warriors and wizards, who pounce and take this magic item but not that one). Thus far, the victims of these raids have included zulkirs of Thay, Zhentarim in various mansions and fortresses in Zhentil Keep, and—on at least three occasions, all of them successful—Shade Enclave.

Yet I get ahead of myself. DRAGON readers already knew that Rilantaver devised (and made and sold dozens of copies of) the sort of magical staff that bears his name [and that was detailed in that DRAGON #173 article]. A glance at the powers of the staff suggest some of the magical effects that Rilantaver liked to use, and we also know from what Elminster told me then that Rilantaver created some low-level but visually spectacular spells (battle-spells, as it happens, most of the “whooshing-fast moving flamebolt explosions” sorts, augmented by shrapnel flung outward by the blasts; Rilantaver liked horrifying effects like glowing spheres of emerald green flame that APPEARED to have frantically-clawing humans trapped within them, that then became skeletons, and subsequently burst into bone shards when the spheres exploded (in truth, the bone shards were real and a spell component, but the frantic people and their skeletons were an illusory part of his explosive spell).

These spells remain popular because of their ability to impress or terrify, and their availability (Rilantaver sold many scrolls bearing them, and they have since been recopied, improved upon, and widely distributed, throughout the Vilhon, Chessenta, and Sembia.)

We also know from what Elminster shared with me then that Rilantaver had trade connections in Amn, and ran “a business of sorts” in Starmantle to fund his wanderings, spur-of-the-moment investments, and shady activities.

I’ve prevailed upon the Old Mage to reveal more about Rilantaver than he told me back then, and here are the results of those proddings:

Rilantaver (pronounced “Ril-lawn-TAE-vurr,” though his parents pronounce the family name “Ril-LAWN-tah-vurr,” as do many other distantly-related Rilantavers in Tethyr, and “Rilantaver the Notorious” answers to both pronunciations) was born Ansrel Rilantaver to a minor “manygoods” trader and importer of Selgaunt, one Hambrel Rilantaver, and his shrewd wife Draeva, a former coinlass and laundress who after her marriage (and retirement from those professions) became one of the smartest, wealthiest investors in Selgaunt.

Always a rebel against parental discipline and any sort of authority, young Ansrel grew up a thief specializing in cavorting over the rooftops by night, with a band of friends and a lot of grapnels and cords (very like a certain Elminster Aumar in Athalantar, more than a thousand years earlier). Ansrel grew very adroit at establishing very good alibis, fleeing the moment anything started to go wrong, and choosing targets wisely (almost exclusively visiting merchants of little power and fewer connections). From one such he stole some spell-scrolls, was astonished to discover he had a natural talent for the Art; without tutelage, he could read spells of any level and cast them faultlessly! (Note that Rilantaver is a wizard, NOT a sorcerer; he has to study and learn spells, use components, and so on—he’s just naturally gifted at easily and instantly grasping “new to him” written magics.)

From that point on, Ansrel stopped using his first name and went his own way, stealing only magic (and, very occasionally, coin he needed to fund his lifestyle, usually using magic on lone targets to do so).

Rilantaver is glib, handsome, of medium build with jet-black hair and emerald eyes, liked maroon-hued clothing, and has always been a keen observer of people and a fairly good mimic and actor, so over the years he’s gotten away with a lot. He could create magic, and if he’d ever dared take training in the Art, might well have become a mighty mage. Yet he never did, and so had huge gaps in his knowledge for many years (and possibly still has).

When Selgaunt became too “hot” for Rilantaver as a result of his ongoing thefts, he took ship and began a life of traveling around the Inner Sea, from port to port—and vanishing for a season or more into backland villages whenever it seemed prudent to do so.

Rilantaver spent his early winters of wandering doing menial jobs in large kitchens of inns, fine city eateries, or even palaces, where he could readily eat and keep warm. Later, after he’d devised the staff that bears his name, he holed up in remote caves for entire winters of making copy after copy of those staves, for sale in “The Oskrum,” the shop he set up in Starmantle (in Dragon Coast slang, an “oskrum” is an oddity, an item of unknown origins and use or an unexplained enigma that “only the gods know” the truth about).

The Oskrum was shuttered for entire seasons at a time, but was never successfully robbed—because it was home to a beholder, the ghost of a dragon, and a menagerie of small, slinking creatures, from flying snakes to darkmantles and miniature cloakwings. Although Rilantaver posed as the founder and proprietor of the shop, in truth he broke into it one night while being pursued by a merchant he’d robbed (who had several thugs to aid him in hunting down fleeing thieves), and in return for sheltering him, the monsters there demanded he serve betimes as their errand-runner and eyes and ears out in the wider world.

Rilantaver gladly did so, gaining a refuge and a treasure vault and a formidable backup fighting force all at once, not to mention advice that kept him alive many times in the years that followed.

The daring magical thefts of Rilantaver the Notorious brought him to the attention of authorities, the Harpers—and Elminster.

The Old Mage was amused by Rilantaver’s style (it reminded El of his own), and kept a watch over the roving wizard (to keep him alive, at times, and to prevent his doing TOO much damage when especially daring or reckless). Elminster’s covert help aided Rilantaver in escaping many traps that should have snared or slain him, and gained him his “elusive” reputation; the “trickster” part, however, Rilantaver earned all on his own, with honey-tongued swindles, and impostures—not to mention manipulations that pitted one angry creditor against another.

Eventually Rilantaver discovered several “ways between worlds” (gates/portals), and (on Mystra’s orders) Elminster abruptly stopped protecting him—and started manipulating him. That is, keeping Rilantaver an entirely independent force, but steering him (El described it as “nudging an arrow in flight”) into doing this or that, meddling in W and X but not Y, and so avoiding Z.

Rilantaver started to spend less and less time in Faerûn, and more and more time in various “elsewheres” (which Elminster won’t identify), until folk realized, around 1347 to 1349 DR, that he’d seemingly . . . disappeared. (Elminster judges that by 1349 DR, Rilantaver was a CN hm W9 or perhaps 10. If he’s “worked at it,” as the Old Mage put it, he might be a W16, but if not, could well still be a W10 or perhaps a W11.)

Rilantaver was not seen at all in the Realms between then and the night of the 8th of Uktar in 1368 DR, when he was sighted leaping for his life from the balcony of a burning mansion in Saerloon—the home of the wealthy wizard and merchant Gnessur Thauldyn. Rilantaver vanished “in an eerie glow” before he struck the ground (obviously snatched away by magic), but was observed to be clutching a large and well-filled sack. What did land on the ground where he would have was a magical rod that was “winking and glowing” before the authorities seized it and bore it away.

Thauldynposts (the mansion) burned to the ground that night, the flames erupting in dozens of small, spectacular magical explosions, and Gnessur has not been seen since, though his bones were not found in the ashes that nigh-filled the now-exposed cellars of his house. (Though Gnessur has no known kin [his dozen attractive young female apprentices/servants who dwelt in Thauldynposts also vanished,

leaving no bones behind in the ruins], no one has dared build on the site, despite its attractive central wealthy-streets location, though the city elders have several times publicly offered it for sale.) Rilantaver has been seen leading raids, as aforementioned, on several occasions since. Usually he's seen no more than once a year, but on the other hand, most thefts and attempted thefts in Faerûn either go unreported or don't rise to general public notice; Rilantaver may well have struck more often, but at more remote targets, or at victims who are by nature secretive about their personal affairs and holdings. What part Mystra sees Rilantaver playing in the future of the Realms remains unknown to mortals (neither she nor Azuth have shared it with their Chosen), but he remains—even to garrulous old men emptying tankards in their local tavern of evenings—undeniably interesting. As Elminster remarked dryly, "Rilantaver the Notorious is like a tottering, about-to-topple castle tower . . . ye know a disaster is about to happen, but ye find the watching irresistible."

Roldo Thongoliir & Sarintha Thann

- Elaine Cunningham, Qs for Ed 22/1/10

Yes, Roldo is gay. Sarintha is not, but she is pragmatic and the marriage of convenience suits her. They are not the first nobly born couple, in fantasy or in real life, who marry against personal inclinations because it is expected of them. Korvaun's statement does NOT reference sexual preferences or practices; he is speaking only in general terms.

Sabron (Hermit of Gulk Cave, Amn)

- Ed 27/10/10, responding to query about sage mentioned in character sheet of Delthrar Dawnstorm (Ed's Baron's Blades character) as "the true master"

Sabron is the local (northeastern border mountains and hilly farm country of Amn) old and respected "master" of old lore about who farmed and cleared what land, who made this road or trail and when, who dug that well and when, and so on. The "he's the true master" is a comment made by an old woman (the NPC Sharselle Tarmitrar, who spends her days weaving sacks for the miller, at Hardobrand's Mill). Folk near the Mill consider her the local font of remembrances, but she was telling you that the particular features you were asking about (sites in the adventure) are older than her memories, so she knows only old tales and rumors - - but the harpmaker Sabron, the "hermit of Gulk Cave," is old enough to know more than she does.

Interesting guy, Sabron. His tales' never really been told . . .

Seldreene Ammath of Suzail (first referenced in 2005)

- Ed, 10/2/15

Ammath is a moon elven clan (more details about them in the Myth Drannor material, and in Ed's reply back in October 2005

Seldreene Ammath is a once-wild and fiery-tempered adventuress who traveled the Heartlands and the Shining South widely as a member of several ill-fated adventuring bands, including The Beguiling Blades, Torrim's Tempest, and Cold Steel Solutions, but she met the merchant Baereth Rondarl of Suzail at a campfire somewhere in the Border Kingdoms, they hit it off, he hired her as his personal bodyguard, and (ahem) she evidently liked guarding his body so well that eventually they were wed. When increasing age and ill-health forced Rondarl to retire from caravan travel in favor of shrewd investments and owning a fleet of merchant ships to Suzail, where he began buying crumbling buildings, razing them, and

building larger, taller replacements and renting space out as a mixed-use landlord (shops at street level, offices above, living space above that), Seldreene retired there with him, and became his negotiator, envoy, traveling buyer, and head of security. In her spare time, she writes books, including *MARRIED TO A MERCHANT*, a "tell all" account aimed at showing other elves how to flourish (not just co-exist with humans) in the human-dominated culture of Faerun. Rondarl is a limping, ailing oldster these days, but Seldreene is vigorous, beautiful, seemingly much younger, and a dominating, imperious personality - - though she can act very differently if doing so will "win the day" in a particular situation. Seldreene deeply appreciates Lord Delcastle, the Harpers, and others in Suzail who are friendly to the elves, especially those of Semberholme.

Beguiling Blades

The Beguiling Blades is an adventuring band that has risen from the ashes, so to speak, repeatedly. Initially founded and sponsored by Chezkel Ghalaerath, a Chessentan merchant who experienced repeated taxation and seizure-of-property troubles at the hands of various greedy local Chessentan rulers, it began as a way of scaring or slaying such rulers by getting good-looking women into his presence in private, closed-door circumstances . . . who just happened to be deadly-with-swords-and-daggers adventurers working for their sponsor, on the following basis: do my bidding, and give me 20 percent of your spoils, and the rest is yours to keep. The Blades thrice got reduced from a strength of nine or ten down to two wounded survivors, who sometimes prudently decided to retire from adventuring because of the danger, or because they'd landed a partner or husband who could support them in a less-perilous life (such as a merchant they could be head of security for), and then finally got wiped out altogether. Only to be reformed under the same name by Ghalaerath to be his rent collectors for his city rental properties up and down the Vilhon. These days, the Blades (of which Seldreene Ammath is not currently a member) consist of two all-female arms: a more senior and high-profile group who serve Ghalaerath as envoys, rent collectors, enforcers, and bodyguards (and two of them are his frequent bedmates), and a younger group who are more reckless, nearly-independent adventurers who follow their own fortunes, but rely on Ghalaerath's aid and magical healing (purchased potions and hired priests) when they need it, in return for his 20 percent. Both arms are most active around the Sea of Fallen Stars, notably in Chessenta and the Vilhon, but latterly also increasingly northwest of that, along the trade routes, into the Heartlands.

The Blades have all been human, half-elven, halfling, or in one case a half-orc, and were all considered beautiful (at least at the time of their joining); Ghalaerath wanted their looks to be an asset or weapon, and dubbed his group "Beguiling" for the intended exploitation of their beauty.

The leader of the "wild" or younger current arm of the Blades is Rarella "the Raven" Immerglur, notable for her long and tangled black hair and her icy calm and calculation, even in the heat of battle. She eschews helms or shields, but goes to war in full plate armor of ancient make, gained from a tomb while adventuring (and repaired and reinforced constantly since; in her down time, she's a skilled armorer).

TORRIM'S TEMPEST

A swashbuckling, notorious band of vandals and devil-may-care freebooters, all human women except their leader, Davalar Torrim, a womanizer and outrageous rascal who had long, flowing brown hair, flashy good looks, no morals, and a vicious streak that made him the scourge of Tethyr and the trade-roads east of Tethyr for a decade, raiding and robbing and hiring on as bullyblades in the real sense of the term to this or that unpopular and usually unscrupulous merchant. The Tempest were known for their loud, rambunctious antics, swooping attacks, and use of over-the-top misdirection (often flashing

flesh and shamelessly seducing), but they melted away into a handful of scared, fleeing survivors (who never reunited) after Torrim was torn apart by a guardian monster in front of their eyes.

COLD STEEL SOLUTIONS

A short-lived adventurers-for-hire business that operated in several Inner Sea port cities, as bodyguards, "below the law" get-even forces for angry merchants and wealthy patrons of various other professions (including some temples), Cold Steel Solutions lasted only a summer and a half before being ambushed and slaughtered by assassins with poisoned blades, hired by someone the Cold Steelers had been hired to target. Only two members survived that ambush - - because they both managed to recover from the poison, which is veldruth or "black rose," a purple-black tincture of the petals of a wild ground shrub of the Vilhon whose flowers resemble tiny roses.

Symrustar Auglamyr

Symbol on stomach acquiring after becoming Chosen

- Ed 31/3/10

The symbol on Symrustar's tummy is twofold: a personal mage-rune she'd used in the past, augmented by seven silver stars of Mystra.

For the rune, imagine two capital letter "R"s drawn back-to-back, with the one on the left flipped so its tail curves to the 5 o'clock position (instead of the 7 o'clock position of the tail of the unflipped "R"). The backstem or downstem of both Rs is shared, and its top, where the vertical stroke turns to curve outward and form the top of both Rs, is where Symrustar's belly button (a neat, centered, deep "innie") is located. Now extend that shared center vertical downstem twice as long as it should be, and you have the symbol. On her skin, it appears as a very deep blue, almost black.

Add the stars: identical many-pointed stars of silver, with the "long" points being vertical and the second-longest points being horizontal, all the rest of the "rays" being shorter, that overlie (are silver on top of the dark blue of the symbol) the rune. These seven stars are located as follows: one each at the top and bottom of the downstem, one at its intersection (where the lower arcs of the loops of both Rs touch the downstem), one at the end of both tails, and centered in both of the loops: thus, seven in all.

- THO 31/3/10

You're right about Symrustar's symbol, Menelvagor. Ed switched to describing how it looked to HER, looking down at herself, halfway through, when he should have stayed with the viewpoint he started out with (yours and mine, if we were standing in front of Symrustar staring at her somehow bare stomach - - which is VERY flat, by the way - - and somehow surviving).

So, staying with "our" viewpoint: Yes, there are two joined Rs, the curving tail of the "usual" one in the 5 o'clock position, and the curving tail of the flipped one in the 7 o'clock position.

Tattoo

- THO 31/3/10

Symrustar also has a tiny vertical point-down dagger tattoo, entirely "secular" in nature (non-magical), on the nape of her neck, that has a personal origin rather than a political, family, or faith-based one.

Sexuality

- Ed 13/6/10

Symrustar after becoming Chosen is open to both male and female relationships, with elves, humans, and half-elves . . . but not VERY open. Many Chosen, when they first become Chosen, are wary of forming close relationships with anyone other than Mystra, Azuth, and fellow Chosen (plus other servitors of Mystra), because they don't want those they come to love to be endangered by consorting with them. Most Chosen slowly "grow out" of this attitude.

Mystra has become good at nurturing her mortal Chosen so they don't, at least, feel lonely in their first few years as Chosen. They get mothered, befriended by fellow Chosen, and made to feel they belong. (In the past, with the previous Mystra and with Mystyl, this didn't always happen.)

Death

- Ed 31/3/10, responding to query about "one life slipping away, but not all that is Symrustar" in "Elminster in Myth Drannor"

And in ELMINSTER IN MYTH DRANNOR, Symrustar IS dying, and knows it, and says so; Mystra is "rescuing" her soul/sentience/essence for a new existence as of Mystra's servants. In the conversation you mention, Elminster is referring to Symrustar losing her body, but not her essential self, telling her that the death of her body won't be the end of HER.

Things might not always be clear to the reader, but remember that these are instances of crisis, wherein the characters involved are highly emotional, and may not always express themselves as fully and clearly as, say, a teacher instructing students.

Potential survival using Spellfire?

- Ed 22/12/10

Q: Theoretically, could Symrustar Auglamyr use Spellfire, Silver Fire, balance the energies of the Weave and Teleport, thus 'avoid being blown apart' (which suspiciously enough, is how her death/disappearance is described - 'an explosion of fire across the skies')?

A: YES, she very much COULD. There, that wasn't too unsubtle a hint, now, was it?

Thayd

Potential Survival post -1087 execution?

- THO paraphrasing Ed 6/10/10, in reply to query if he could still persist in some form by the official founding of Thay in 922

Thayd survived as an undead sentience (perhaps unique; Ed hasn't said) that could possess living bodies (mammals of all sorts), but "burned them out" rapidly (a matter of two tendays at most). He clung to the company of his lieutenants . . . but eventually vanished, either destroyed by one of them or "lost" when a body burned out "under him" when he couldn't reach another to attack it...or for some other reason or cause, that PERHAPS has him lurking to this day, awaiting a chance to rise again...

The Brothers Six

- THO 25/10/12, responding to query about Calimshan group of merchant-mages mentioned in "Pages From the Mages"

They were all Calishites, but they weren't real brothers, and one of them wasn't even male, though she kept this secret from everyone except the two fellow Brothers she'd had an affair with, and her closest maidservant.

They were involved in many legitimate and illicit (swindles, smuggling, and dealing in stolen goods) business dealings, and one of their most interesting legitimate ones was breeding larger and less bony edible fish, using magic to try to "shift the breed" (genetically modify) their fish stocks (they controlled saltwater pens of fish just offshore in the Lake of Steam near Yeshpek). They also, at one time, owned most of the brothels in Almraiven.

- THO 27/10/12

They controlled (but tried to keep secret their involvement in) a kidnapping-for-hire service operating in Calimshan and Tethyr, whose clients were mainly nobility and ambitious merchants seeking to "get rid of" rivals.

The Five Wizards

- THO 12/1/16 (referring to Wizards mentioned in 1E Sourcebook of the Realms)

Elminster is NOT one of the Five Wizards

Thond Family

- Ed 16/12/12, responding to query about connection between Jhalassan Thond (contact for the Guild of Glassblowers, Glaziers, & Speculum-Makers in Waterdeep) or Srusstakur Thond (Master Mapmaker and author of Know and Vanquish Thy Foe) and Arabel's House of Thond

They all share a surname, and are (probably, way back) related, although the "Thond" surname, derived from shortening "Thongolir" (a place name for a vanished place and the family that dwelt in it), or from "thondal" (an Old Common term for a maker of slings, bowstrings, and leather tie-thongs), or from the ancient Southern explorer-hero Thondar, or from the old Tethyrian family of "Amalathond," arose in several distinct places, borne by different unrelated humans.

The first Thond you list is part of an old Waterdhavian family, that so far as I (and they) know is not related to the second Thond you list (his Thond family is or was scattered throughout Amn, Tethyr, and the Tashalar), nor to the third (the "House of Thond" in Arabel was founded more than a century back by Jamalathar Thond, who fled mercantile disputes in Sembia to settle in Arabel).

Trio Nefarious

- THO referencing a chat between multiple designers with Ed present likely in late 2009-early 2010, quoted by WR in Qs for Ed 21/7/16

I recall overhearing an informal chat in one of the lounges at GenCon, involving Ed and several of the company designers of the time, explaining something about the Trio to a licensee (computer game designer?).

What was said boiled down to this:

The Trio Nefarious were actually FOUR nycaloths who had acquired ancient magic (devised by someone else) that allowed them to "take over" the bodies of other nycaloths for short periods, putting the minds in those bodies into comas. So they could use a borrowed body to fight or do some other dangerous deed, and then discard it for another or for a return to their own. The magic that enabled them to do this also protected their minds from some hostile mind-affecting magics (charms, illusions, and attempts to influence or control), enabling them to withstand some attacks better than a "normal" nycaloth. The three active members of the Trio had overcome the fourth, who was the smartest, leaving the fourth as

a comatose body they could all flee into, or take over permanently, if need be.

All three of them had made some sort of blood pact enforcing their loyalty to each other, and they spent much of their time acquiring all sorts of magic items, so as to be walking arsenals of magic with ready access to several hidden caches of magic, so they could take on most archmages and other nycaloths and expect to prevail.

Aside from this cunning and magical augmentation, they were no different than other nycaloths, but were thought by some human and elven survivors of encounters with them to be a more powerful sort or form of nycaloth (hence the "greater" sobriquet).

I'm not sure if this is canon, or was ever put into print anywhere. Ed mainly listened rather than talking (although he never disagreed or "corrected" any of this), and Steven Schend wasn't there, so this may not be "official" Realmslore . . . but I regard it as so.

Velstrode the Venturer, ?Masked Lord

- GK reported by WR, 6/9/14

Mentioned in City System, Waterdeep & The North, City of Splendors

- THO 6/9/14

I also hope he'll opine in a timely manner about Velstrode, a jovial and energetic investor (merchant shipping and local businesses) and retired adventurer of Waterdeep during the mid 1300s DR. A younger, more polished, and more handsome echo of Mirt.

However, I've only ever known his surface visage, so I'm awaiting Ed's reply as eagerly as all of you.

Velstrode had many irons in many fires, and was not only busy, he was a smooth intriguer, so I want to know a lot more about what he was REALLY up to when we Knights had passing dealings with him (the Crazy Venturers had a lot more).

Whisper (Haunted Halls)

In General

- THO 14/10/12

Ah, Whisper. Such an energetic, nasty man, a low-level mage who punched far above his weight because he was so active in meddling and scheming (rather like Elminster, come to think of it). He was almost the perfect Zhentarim "low-level guy on the ground in this locale" until we came along.

Name and History

- Ed quoted by crazedventurers, Qs for Ed 16/10/12

No, all Zhentarim mages do NOT have a "special Brotherhood name." A few have taken "bolder, cooler" names by personal choice when first attempting to join the ranks of the Zhentarim (usually because they are dissatisfied with their birth name for some reason), but it's not a practice encouraged by the Brotherhood, done all that often, or undertaken to denote being accepted into (or achieving a rank within) the Brotherhood.

In this specific case, Whisper was a long-ago wizard of middling power (9th to 12th level, I believe) who fashioned his own tomb out of a "hidehold" he'd constructed for himself, earlier in life, and was interred there.

This is in the bygone days when few humans dwelt in the area, and elves dominated (Whisper was the "classic" sort of mage who wants to dwell and study in isolation, far from fellow humans who might

pester, and built himself a tower in a desolate, rocky part of the Stonelands that doesn't survive; a dragon tore it apart after his death to take any treasure that might lie therein, and to make of it a roost and perhaps nest for breeding). This "first" Whisper's real name is now forgotten; in life, he used the nickname given to him for his normal speaking voice, which was a hissing, menacing-sounding (even when he wasn't trying to sound menacing) whisper.

His remains had vanished (no one knows where or how; if he became undead, he never returned to "haunt" his tomb) by the time a much later Zhentarim mageling (novice wizard of low power) happened upon them after being ordered to the vicinity of Eveningstar to be the local Zhent spy and "safehold keeper" (host of a place where visiting Zhentarim members could hide in). The mageling took the name (and fell, impressive "villain behind much" reputation in local folklore of the original Whisper, which was probably largely undeserved) of Whisper, and gained much power from the magic items he found in the Crypt.

Whisper's 2nd level status is not a misprint; he gained not just the original Whisper's magic, but the Seven Lost Rings you refer to, and many other tomb-treasures and hidden treasure caches he found in the Stonelands, and used these items to wield Art far above his trained mastery. So, yes, he is using Chain Lightning, but it does come from a magic item (a ring of spell storing, if I remember rightly, but it could also have been from other items in the large pile he amassed).

Yarms, Elduth Yarmmaster's Family

- Ed 6/3/15

Very wealthy Sembians, and have been for a long time. They began as successful grain farmers; in local parlance (the west side of the Dragonreach), a "yarm" is a (usually large) high-yield (and top quality) grain field. Something other farmers wish they had. The Yarmmasters bought up good farmland, shrewdly, sold off farmland for very high prices when cities needed to expand onto it, and invested profits in land holdings all over the Heartlands, both urban and rural (becoming city landlords with a lot of rent coming in, and the owners of farmland rented out to tenant farmers galore). They remained low-profile as they got richer and richer...and when war came to Sembia (the Netherese) simply took their portable wealth and moved to some of their properties in Tethyr and elsewhere, to wait out the troubles until they could return (and they WILL return, to reclaim all of their property).

CLASSES

Bards

Colleges

- Crazyadventurers, presumed canon, Qs for Ed 1/6/12

Fochlucan: The college of Fochlucan once stood on the northeastern edge of Silverymoon. After it closed, the college stood empty for many years before being reopened as Utrumm's Music Conservatory. Utrumm's Music Conservatory has since been moved to Southbank, and Fochlucan has been reborn as the House of the Harp. (See Elfsong, pages 10, 171, and Silver Marches, page __.)

MacFuirmidh: The college of MacFuirmidh once stood on the isle of Alaorn in the Moonshae Isles, south and east of Caer Callidyrr. (See Elfsong, pages 170-171.)

Doss: The college of Doss once stood in the shadow of the High Lady's Castle in the city of Berdusk where Twilight Hall, the base of the western branch of the Harpers, now stands.

Canaith: The college of Canaith now lies in ruins along the northern stretch of the Hillstrail about 70 miles south of Zazesspur, its long-abandoned buildings put to the torch during the Black Days of Eleint in 1347 DR. (See Elfsong, pages 175.)

Cli: The college of Cli once lay within the eastern reaches of Baldur's Gate, but its buildings have long since been torn down and replaced. The only remnant of this school is Elfsong Tavern, an adventurers' drinking-place and hiring house notable for the ghostly elven female voice (once a student at the college) that can be heard from time to time. (See Volo's Guide to the Sword Coast, pages 17-18.)

Anstruth: The college of Anstruth once stood in the heart of Sundabar's trade ward. As recently as 1364 DR, only one building remained, a once-beautiful structure converted into a warehouse. The founding of the Silver Marches confederation and the refounding of Fochlucan in Silvermoon has given renewed energy to efforts by a handful of bards to refound Anstruth. (See Elfsong, pages 154-156, and Silver Marches, page __)

Ollamh: The college of Ollamh once stood on Rivon Street in Waterdeep's Trade Ward, where the House of Song, guildhall of the Council of Musicians, Instrument-Makers, and Choristers, now stands, although many mistakenly believe it lay in Castle Ward, where Halambar Lutes & Harps now stands. In 1366 DR, Danilo Thann and members of the above-mentioned guild refounded the college as New Ollamh, located in Waterdeep's Castle Ward in the old Cliffride villas of Heroes' Rest and Stormwatch. (See Elfsong, pages 217, 243, City of Splendors: Campaign Guide, pages 40-41, 46-47, and City of Splendors: Waterdeep, pages __, and Dragon #__, page __.)

Clerics

Need for Holy Symbols for spell casting

- Ed 24/6/11

Heh. As it happens, Gary Gygax and I talked about this very situation, years back, so here's his official ruling (that I've adopted for the Realms and used twice in convention Realms charity event play, down the years):

The priest must be holding a physical object to serve as the spell focus, and they must believe it is a holy symbol of their deity.

Which means it either must be, or the priest must believe it is (because they are insane/deluded, or because the object is the right size, weight, shape, and texture and it's either too dark to see it or it looks identical to their holy symbol, and they BELIEVE it's their holy symbol).

So a thief can't "depower" a priest by stealing a holy symbol and substituting an unconsecrated duplicate, because so long as the priest believes it's the real thing, the spells will work.

And if the priest discovers such a switch BUT knows that spells cast with the "false" one worked, then the priest will believe that the deity has accepted the false symbol - - and it now IS a holy symbol, just like the "real" one was.

Note that a sufficiently deranged/confused priest might believe that almost ANYTHING (a pebble, a

dagger, a twig) is their holy symbol, if those around them insist loudly enough that it is, regardless of the size, shape, etc. of the "wrong" item.

Also, a priest favored by the deity, who is calling on the deity to cast the spell, might be told/reassured by the deity that the item is indeed a holy symbol -- and if the priest believes it is, the spell works, regardless of the nature of the item (even if it's a holy symbol consecrated to ANOTHER deity, or a cursed item).

Extra Powers

- THO 4/11/11

He has two wrinkles in the "home" Realms campaign that do grant far more spell power to priests (both PCs and NPCs) than their class level would suggest they ever have:

1. Gods sometimes answer the prayers of anyone with extra, or more powerful, spells than normally granted, usually because the supplicant is dedicated to doing something, RIGHT NOW, that the god very much approves of. This can take the form of unusual and unexpected multiples of the spell desired (nine flame strikes instead of one, nine heal spells instead of one), or spells "higher in level" than those usually granted to the supplicant (either a mighty spell given to a novice, or even a spell put in the mind of a non-priest, such as a faithful to the deity woodchopper or farm wife or child. Often, but not always, these are divine responses to worshippers pleading in desperation, with their lives in immediate peril.

2. On home "holy ground" (i.e. inside their temple or close to an altar of the deity or the burial place of a powerful holy worshipper of the deity), any priest gains extra power if they need it. So a novice or young girl with a broom guarding an altar against an orc raiding band could smite them with holy spells she desired but that would normally be far beyond her. (Were this not so, shrines and temples across the Realms would be constantly and casually robbed by brigands, adventurers, and soldiers of the local rulership.) This is a key ingredient in skeptics truly believing in the gods, even if they don't think them worthy of worship. Those intending to vandalize or plunder a temple will often taste fierce and unexpected resistance from opponents who would be puny annoyances elsewhere.

Druids

Druid Eating Restrictions

- THO, Qs for EG 1/1/15

most of them get their protein from nuts and berries, and the bulk of their diet is vegetarian, but druids are allowed to eat the flesh of any predator that attacked them and subsequently met its death (whether they killed it, helped slay it, or just watched), and there are some exemptions from refraining from killing that have to do with druidic festivals, quests, and undertakings on behalf of Silvanus, Mielikki, or Eldath. (Clergy of Malar can of course hunt and slay at will.)

- THO 9/1/13

Many druids are vegetarians, as well as poor dwellers in the wilds (by necessity).

Monks

Vestments

- THO 3/11/11

Yes, monastic orders have "formal" vestments worn during certain rituals, and rules (usually tied to religious rank, which is not necessarily the same as class level) about dress.

However, most monastic COMMUNITIES (an abbey, for instance, or a temple farm) have practical everyday exceptions/exemptions to these dress codes, associated with daily work (e.g. if you're a monk mucking out a pigsty or the abbey privies, you wouldn't be expected to do so in your formal vestments). Some faiths are very practical, others very formal...and it even varies from presiding priest to presiding priest, as well as from order/sect to order/sect...

Rules about life

- Ed 28/11/12

The rules governing the lives of monks vary from faith to faith and even from holy order to holy order, but in general, monks aren't celibate, and are allowed to have long-term relationships (both formal [[marriage]] and informal). However, they often aren't allowed to marry until they have fulfilled a personal quest, holy task, "degree of enlightenment" or other spiritual training or attainment.

In theory, decisions as to sexual conduct of monks are made by the deity; in practice, the abbot or prior or heirophar or (insert title of head of monastery here) makes the decision, and if a deity disagrees, dream- or altar-visions are sent to both the superior and the monk concerned, and the decision is altered. In general, an order will have "teachings" that outline rules that postulants (would-be monks) agree to accept as a condition of joining. In the Realms, all sane deities accept that mortals grow and change throughout life, so no choices or decisions are necessarily "final" and irrevocable. Circumstances change, and so do people.

Almost all monastic communities (except for the most remote mountain and cavern ones) have nearby or even surrounding settlements full of "lay" folk, and these include the families of monks - - and yes, indeed, the children of clergy (including monks) are seen as "the first and most fertile of ground" for finding future clergy (including monks).

Some orders take vows of chastity or seclusion from the secular world or the company of other genders, but it should be noted that such faiths almost always observe annual holy festivals during which these vows are relaxed or specifically set aside (so there can be fraternization, lovemaking, "unwinding" of cares, and so on).

CRYSTAL SPHERES, PLANETS

Bringing Food From Earth

- Ed 2/1/12

Portals sometimes, randomly, do strange things to food brought through them (e.g. chocolates or ice cream vaporized or melted into exploding clouds of hot mist), and how much is made depends not just on reliable supply, but demand (that is, popularity in the Realms). Some things will catch on, some won't . . .

Concurrent Earth Time

Time on Earth

- Markustay, Qs for EG 9/3/16

It has been theorized that the (D&D)Earth's 'present' is actual in the 1800's (there's a portal leading to it and that time) during the 1e/2e/3e period.

Thus when Elminster 'visits' the (D&D) Ed Greenwood, he is actually visiting him at some future point in time, telling him stories of 'Realms past'. When the OGB was released, that period was already part of Toril's history by over a century.

Thus, the newer timeline (4e/5e) should be the 'now', or close to it, and that explains why Ed is still alive and getting info from Elminster (otherwise, 4e/5e would be taking place one hundred years in OUR future, which would make it very hard to keep continuity with the setting's primary premise - that El visits Ed and tells him about the Realms... and then we get published books about it).

I know most die-hard fans won't like that, because it means the 4e/5e time has always been the 'now', and everything we fell in love with is the distant past, but its the only thing that makes everything fit together nicely.

EDIT: Oh, and as for their (Paizo's) other crossover to Earth in which you meet Rasputin, that would have all occurred around or soon after (a couple of decades) when the 1e/2e period was introduced to us (does someone have a precise date for that Toril/Earth portal?), so maybe right around the 3e/pre-4e era. I'd like to think Elminster was there... somewhere... perhaps having tea (or Vodka) in in a cafe in Saint Petersburg, watching those events unfold. Who knows... maybe HE was Rasputin's father. There is a familial look about them. 😊

EDIT2: And taking this whole 'multiversal' thing a step further, the D&D product Gothic Earth Gazetteer would have been THE D&D Earth to which that portal lead, which means all those BBG's and what-not exist in the D&D version of Earth, lurking in the shadows (and gels rather nicely with the Cthulhu mythos and anything 'candlelight' from the WW/WoD lines).

[Ed Greenwood's Home](#)

- THO 17/12/11, replying to query regarding travelling to Earth

The house Ed has lived in for the last more-than-twenty years has a "new" addition (added by Ed about six years back), and an older part that is 1912 in some areas and 1923 in others, with various small renovations by divers owners over the decades since.

I just got another e-mail from Ed, who asked me to add that his (former farm)house stands on the site of an older farmhouse, that might date from as early as the 1760s or 1780s.

[Earth Distress Calls](#)

- Ed 13/3/14

Q: In times of 'great distress', when large numbers of people are on the verge of dying (Titanic sinking, Vesuvius exploding, etc), has there ever been an occurrence of a deity (Earth, FR, or whatever) answering the pleas of the doomed and dying and shunting at least some of them into The Realms?

A: YES! This has indeed happened, and there are three or four paragraphs about this in some of the screeds I turned over to TSR back in 1986, describing various instances (who opened gates between

Earth and the Realms, when, and why). This was, of course, due to the negative "Satanist/witchcraft/make your children disappear" publicity D&D was getting in some quarters at the time, was something firmly sat upon and left out of the published Realms, even as hints, and I'm fine with that decision. But yes, the notion you raise was part of my conception of the Realms (and its links with our real world) from the beginning (as were thoughts about murderers "escaping" into the Realms with the intent of frustrating Earth justice and popping back into our world to steal and then "vanish" into the Realms again, and so on).

"Earth Pantheons"

Viking gods

- Markustay, affirmed by Ed as "right on", Qs for Ed 11/8/11

The deities of the Vikings (along with the social structure and other 'Norse things') should not be thought of as 'Earth Gods', but rather as multi-spheric deities with interests in many worlds. Of course, the Aesir probably originated on a specific world, but not necessarily on our world. The Vanir, on the other hand, are probably from Faerie/The Feywild and possibly related to the Celtic Pantheon. Going back to Gyax's model of the universe, and Planescape in all it's 2e glory, we can see that the 'Earth' pantheons are predominant, which is why I feel that they are NOT really 'Earth Gods', but rather something more universal. I'm sure at least one pantheon is actually native to our world (just as the Faerûnian Pantheon is to Toril), but you can leave which one up to the individual DM/Campaign (in other words, take your pick).

So the Norse gods and their culture could have emigrated to BOTH Earth and Toril, from the Great Wheel, and from wherever those beings may have originated.

If Earth is special in the 'great scheme of things' for anything, it would be that so many pantheons were able to get a foothold here (from a D&D, not RW, perspective).

Eberron Link

- Sleyvas, hashimashadoo, 17/1/15

Q: Please forgive my lack of research on this point. I didn't get into 4e at all and I don't play DDO. However, from what I'm reading, it sounds like after the Sundering, Eberron and FR become linked. Its also noted that the big linkage has to do with Lolth and her demonweb pits. We know that during Lolth's whole "move to her own domain" she left behind the OLD demonweb pits. Just wondering, did Lolth have some kind of "inkling" that the old demonweb pits might be "cycling" into connectivity with Eberron. By this, to make it more clear, I'm kind of wondering.... was Eberron in "phase" with Abeir..... (as in Toril/Abeir are in the same crystal sphere but usually out of phase with one another)..... and did some of the godly domains that disappeared actually become in phase with Eberron. Hmmm, and now I'm left with an odd thought even further Eberron.... Abeir.... could there be a third "dimension" / "phased world" within Toril's crystal sphere that's some kind of in-between between Toril and Eberron. Might it even be that we find that SOME of the places that we've all assumed transferred to Abeir actually went to Eberron?

A: (hashimashadoo) As far as I can tell (I don't play DDO any more either and I'm not enthused about having to pay for the expansion that facilitates the move to Faerun) there was a female drider-like creature called the 'Spinner of Shadows' - one of Eberron's thirty or so overlords (primordial fiendish creatures about as powerful as gods) trapped in a prison in Eberron's Khyber (that setting's equivalent of

the Underdark) beneath the city of Stormreach. The wards to her prison were failing but, upon their restoration, a rift opened within her prison leading directly to the Demonweb Pits (if you have the expansion). The rift was a threat to Eberron itself and players are encouraged to find out how to stop it from doing too much damage. Elminster shows up to guide players out of the Demonweb, into Cormyr's Underdark and then into Eveningstar where they can get involved with the whole Darkening, Demon Weave thing. The game does explain how the rift was created and I've seen people make positive comments on this story aspect but not owning the game itself, I find it sooper difficult to describe.

In short, I believe Eberron became linked with the Demonweb Pits (which is not a plane in Eberron's cosmology), not Toril. The trip to Cormyr was made afterward.

Electricity & Modern Tech

- Wooly Rupert, 13/4/15

It's not that electricity itself doesn't work in Realmspace, it's that electronics themselves don't work.

My theory is that it's like the Dresden Files: magic is a kind of energy field, and that energy field disrupts electronics, likely by overwhelming them and shorting them out. The amount of magic in the Realms is just too much for electronics, which often have very specific tolerances for electricity.

Living beings are better able to handle that energy, sort of filtering it out.

Also, keep in mind that the electrical processes in electronic devices are not the same as within living bodies. In electronics, once the electricity is flowing, it's a constant stream flowing from the source to all the components and back. In a living creature, electricity flows from one end of a nerve to the next, where it causes the creation of particular chemicals. Those chemicals hit the next nerve, and cause it to fire -- and then it does the same thing, causing chemicals to be created which excite the next nerve. So it's an electro-chemical reaction, which is why electricity can travel at close to light speed (186,282 miles per second) in an electrical circuit, but nerve impulses in a human move at something like 300 feet per second, at max.

- 1E DM's Sourcebook of the Realms

The physics of the Realms are slightly out of sync with the rest of the planes, so that gunpowder and many technological devices which operate on electronics do not function. Equivalent devices may be developed by player-characters. DM's judgment is advised as to what may be allowed into the world.

- Ed, 16/4/15

Our bodies, and our tools, work ESSENTIALLY the same on Earth and on Toril. The difference is the presence of magic -- the Weave, the fluctuating and varying "background" magic of place (the faerzress, nodes, et al) on Toril that by and large doesn't exist on Earth. What that means for our electronics is: they go haywire.

Imagine, for the sake of clumsy metaphor, localized centers of gravity (or magnetism, if that's easier to visualize), so that "down" is the nearest fire hydrant or lamppost, and there's another, stronger "down" eight mailboxes away. And another, and another, and so on, and some of these centers of gravity/magnetism move around, and many of them fluctuate in strength/power/attraction.

All of that causes most of our electrical devices to short out or just not work, because the flows of electricity they depend on are warped (bent) and disrupted, EVEN WITHIN A TINY INTEGRATED CIRCUIT. If you never turn a device on/trigger it, and carry it around on Toril and then bring it back to Earth, it may be entirely unaffected. If you try to use it on Toril, it might work (briefly), simply not function ("dead"), or short out (sparks, brief hum or whirr or shriek, then permanently dead).

But a club is still a club, electricity still conducts through our bodies in the way we are familiar with on Earth, and so on. It's just that magic (especially spells cast, or already operating like an extant field) can cause ANYTHING to happen - - but not necessarily reliably, when in combination with "Earth-tech."

By and large, complicate devices from Earth won't function correctly. Substances that normally ignite (gunpowder) usually don't (but an equivalent can be developed, and was, so the Realms has "smokepowder"). Magical potions usually work the same on Earth and Toril, but non-magical concoctions may or may not work (and there's only one way to find out). Usually a poison in one place is also a poison in the other. But not always...

Yep, clear as mud. Sorry.

(But not too sorry. I want someone planning to invade Toril with a high-tech-armed Earth army to worry, not be rightfully confident.)

Faiths From Other Worlds

- Ed 8/9/12, responding to query about if faiths from other primes send through priests into the Realms to further their gods work (and get to the 100 worshippers required to cast higher level spells according to Spelljammer rules)

Faiths do indeed send clerics into Faerûn to found worship of this or that deity in the Realms.

Ao has made it clear that gods aren't supposed to take direct action against mortal clergy of other faiths (though exceptions are ignored when the particular mortal has been despoiling their altars, murdering their clergy, and so on), but rather to work through their own mortal clergy and lay worshippers (and by manipulating the unwitting). So they do take indirect action against interlopers, and do "grant spells to priests of similar ethoi to short-circuit lots of similar competing faiths popping up."

What usually happens is that established clergy pass off news of a "new" deity as an aspect of an established god, or a heresy/misunderstanding of the deeds of a servitor or exarch, and things get confused as all rumors and spreading news do, and it's rare that new faiths soar into general popularity and widespread recognition. Rather, new faiths remain small and localized and sometimes "underground"/secretive (giving a DM lots of leeway in creating "secret societies" and "local cults," or reinterpreting such things as the Beast Cults).

Groups on Earth aware of gates

- THO 17/12/11

Q: In your opinion, do you think there might be covert groups here on Earth that are aware of this sort of activity, and try to monitor it (everything from clandestine groups to world governments)? Could there be exiles from magical worlds/planes living on Earth?"

A: I can tell you, from play with Ed: yes, very much so, to both of those questions.

Mists of Ravenloft

- THO 19/2/13

When Ravenloft was being created, Jeff Grubb asked Ed to prepare a list of notable Realms individuals who could have "disappeared" from the Realms (and wound up in Ravenloft). The one that was used in published lore was Gondregal, the "Lost King" who fought to end up on the throne of Cormyr, but Ed prepared quite a few, with the background stories of "who knew what" (or what gossip said, more often) about their disappearances.

I read what Ed wrote (all of us Knights discussed it, yes with TSR's approval), and not just El and his fellow Chosen knew about the mists (and Ravenloft at the other end of them), quite a few wizards and high-ranking priests across the Realms did.

That was TSR's official position at the time, though I don't think it was ever outlined explicitly in print.

One CAN return from Ravenloft, and in fact there have been quite a few "returns" to the Realms, including of adventuring bands deliberately sent in to bring someone back.

So it's not surprising that high-ranking priests and certain wizards (who have means of finding out more about the Mists than the legends and wild tavern tales most folk in the Realms have) know a little about Ravenloft. Just as they know a little (however wrong, distorted, or incomplete) about various other planes.

Setting Crossovers

- Ed 2/4/14

The original Realms has always been a crossroads (that DRAGON 37 article on gates was no accident), with gates hidden here, there, and everywhere, and upper-PC-level play always getting caught up in the power groups that try to control gates and work from world to world, usually behind the scenes.

It was the "teenage mothers from heck"/James Egbert real-world problems of the day that caused that aspect of the Realms to be downplayed almost out of existence in the published Realms.

Rest assured that in the "home" Realms campaign, shadowy power groups like the Twisted Rune and its ilk are major background PC foes - - just maddeningly hard for them to come to grips with. :}

Spelljammers

Knights of Myth Drannor experience

- THO 20/6/12

Yes, the Knights experienced spelljamming twice (once on an elven vessel, sailing the skies out of Evermeet), and not only saw but were aboard a "space ship" briefly on one of our otherplanar jaunts.

Time Travel, Chronomancy

- THO 21/9/11

Q: Is time travel restricted in the Realms? If yes, who or what restricts it?

A: Yes, it certainly is. Back in the late 1980s, there was a deliberate TSR-imposed designers' restriction on time travel in the Realms (just as psionics was de-emphasized in the Realms because "that's Dark Sun," and heraldry was de-emphasized in the Realms "because that's Greyhawk").

And when you write: "Or did Mysteryl impose the new restrictions after Karsus ferried the star?" the answer is definitely "Yes."

- Ed 15/2/13

Q: "I have an unusual question - been percolating in the back of my mind for a while. From a sales / real world perspective I understand why this wouldn't have happened. But from an in-world perspective, particularly Elminster's, I'm curious why he never went this route:

After Mystra's murder, which led to the spellplague and so forth, why did Elminster never use one of the known time-gates to go back in time and stop it from happening? Elminster had to know of these gates, and with Mystra dead (or functionally so) there was no god or goddess to enforce the "policy" on time travel. Or is this a kind of catch-22 thing, where even if El had gone back in time, the Mystra or Mysteryl alive in that past would have been deaf or unresponsive to the future Elminster's warnings? As goddess of time, I'd find it hard to believe she'd plug her ears to such a warning.

Or did Elminster try it - and it failed for some reason? If so, what might that be?

Perhaps more importantly, is there some reason or temporal magic issue that might prevent a group of post-Spellplague adventurers from utilizing a time gate and attempting to create an alternate timeline? Do Mysteryl's chronomancy travel rules apply whether a god or goddess of magic exists?"

Ed replies:

A: Ah, a good question indeed.

First, I'd like to say to Markustay (re. "Or it could just be that post-plague the time portals all 'went on the fritz'.") that although many gates/portals "went wild" or only functioned intermittently or even faded away or blew up as the Spellplague raged, they didn't all go awry. All "time portals" DID stop functioning, and attempts to use them by spell resulted in deadly "wild" magic rebounding on the casters, so people stopped trying, and therefore it's unknown if they are all still "gone." (I would suspect that they are.)

Second, the short answer to your second-last question, Laeknir, is that if a group of post-Spellplague adventurers can find a functioning time gate and use it without destroying themselves, an alternate timeline is all they could create, no matter what they do (in other words, they can't affect the "prime Realms" they departed from, regardless of what they do). (In other words, Markustay was right, in what he said in his post.)

Third, to answer your last question, Mysteryl's rules of chronomancy apply so long as a Weave (in any form: decaying, Shadow Weave [as it's not independent, but depends on the Weave to "hold it up/together," no matter what condition the Weave itself is in]) exists. As we've seen in the Spellplague, the Weave persisted (badly damaged) with Mystra gone. Chronomancy (as a profession/skill) itself is only possible within Realmspace with the Weave to anchor it; without a Weave time travel is truly random and no "returns" are possible; it's a one-way trip to an unknown destination date. So you can't have time travel in the Realms without a Weave, and the "rules" are of the Weave, just expressed formally by Mysteryl (she didn't make them, she merely described them for mortals) -- but you don't actually need a god/goddess of magic (or chronomancy) for the rules to pertain. Or perhaps it would be better to say the rules are of Ao and the (essential nature of the) Realms, not at the level of mere divinity.

Elminster didn't attempt what you suggest because he knew it wouldn't work, and because all Chosen are expressly forbidden to engage in attempts at chronomancy -- because all such attempts strain/stress/endanger the Weave. Keeping the Weave stable and flourishing is one of the primary tasks of the Chosen; El would never try to harm the Weave. The prohibition may be "policy" but the reasons for it are something anyone attuned to the Weave (as all Chosen are) know, FEEL (harming the nearby Weave causes actual pain and nausea to a Chosen), and would never offend against.

Neither the Time of Troubles nor the events that led to the Spellplague would have happened (or been necessary) if deities or anyone else could just go back in time and arrange things to their liking/advantage. Nor would the leapfrogging of rival deities to get back in time before or after other deities who've already done so to meddle (so the rivals could out-meddle them) ever cease. Ao knows this, and so the Weave itself prevents chronomancy that affects the Weave. (Certain mortals may think differently or honestly believe differently due to their own experiences, but that usually means they've been deceived, gone insane, or created their own new timeline without realizing it.) Mind-numbing and circular, yes, but . . . you asked. :) Many priests in the Realms have pondered such things, and ended up with headaches.

Toril's Size, Latitudes etc

Time Zones

- The Sage quoting Ed, possibly from the REALMS-L mailing list, Qs for Ed 15/5/10

Ed: I must admit that in running the Realms, I've just used the "mental map" comparison of the continental United States silhouette Jeff Grubb put into the Old Gray Box versus the Sword Coast Heartlands, and applied the (politically distorted) time zone differential, because I "know without thinking" how many hours "behind" TSR in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and WotC in Renton, Washington, were from me in Ontario, Canada, and most of the portal jumps or teleports in the 'home' Realms have either been relatively short (from point to point within the Dales or within Cormyr, for instance), or between Cormyr or the Dales and Waterdeep or its immediate environs (often atop Maiden's Tomb Tor)."

Trent Raley:

Toril

- * Circumference = 23,400 approx
- * 24 time zones
- * Axial tilt is ~ 19-25 degrees
- * Prime Meridian is Myth Drannor
- * Other time zones are based on meridian lines of globe function in Forgotten Realms Interactive Atlas (two per square).
- * Time zones are 975 miles wide.

Nit-pick -- that is 975 miles wide at the equator of course. This will dwindle down to zero as you approach the poles.

Bryon Wischstadt:

You should have been a Luka's Bar during GenCon when we worked this out! (I took notes :) Something Trent didn't mention (we're co-DMs) is that with gates transporting the user instantly (as ::ahem:: *most* do) we got to thinking about adding another bit of realism to the game. We wanted to know what time of day it was when the party arrived in their new destination halfway across Faerun. From the player's perspective, they step through a gate mid-morning and arrive at a place that is still dark... this is a nice cue to the players that they have moved quite a distance. (They don't know the destinations of the gates) As you can see it's quick and relatively simple--add 2 hrs per grid on the atlas--and you'll end up with something kinda cool from both the DM and players' perspectives. As Trent said "Hope this helps"... Enjoy!

On the Meridian

- Ed 18/5/10, on the choosing of a prime meridian to use

When the "system" was disseminated widely among the intelligent surface-dwelling races, Myth Drannor was used because it was a common reference point for most of those races (that is, a city they all dwelt in or traded with, and thus "knew" where it was). The city was PROPOSED because it represented a shining example of cooperation among the races, yes.

Why it is the "Forgotten Realms" from Earth perspective

- Ed 28/10/11

Passage between our world and the Realms became harder and harder as some gates (4e portals) were destroyed, others became controlled by power groups (think of the Bellers in Philip Jose Farmer's tales of Kickaha the Trickster), and still others were simply forgotten, as those who knew their secrets died off without passing what they knew on (or passing on only parts of it).

- THO 28/10/11

In earlier times, "common folk" could and did use the gates, which often were just "paths in the forest" that function as gates only when used in the right manner or at the right time or under the right conditions (e.g. when THAT stone is bathed in moonlight)...as did vampires, dragons, etc.

Ed postulated (and has written about this, often) that this traffic (and its more recent decline) is the reason for our many real-world legends of dragons, vampires, et al but the relative lack of daily meeting such things in our world, nowadays.

NDAs get in the way of really in-depth answers to you, but I know that a major theme in Ed's home campaign and in his unpublished lore has been the rise of power groups (in more recent times) that seek to control, hide, or destroy various gates, to control traffic. They are collectively one of the major reasons such traffic has declined, and our access to the Realms has been increasingly "Forgotten."

Worlds Knights of MD Visited

- Ed 9/9/12

In "home" Realmsplay, over the years, the Knights of Myth Drannor have visited the "Otherwhen" of H. Beam Piper's Lord Kalvan tales, Christopher Stasheff's Gramayre, Andrew Offut's Zhuvastou, and a few Shadows of Roger Zelazny's Amber. They have met wayfarers from all of those settings and some other places, too. However, as their adventures unfolded, they weren't always aware they were doing so. Yes, they've visited us, too. There's even a long-ago DRAGON article by me describing some of the details of Realms adventurers blundering about in our own real (modern) world.

One of the ideas put forward by Philip José Farmer in his World of Tiers books (that partly inspired, Roger Zelazny told me as he told others, the Amber books) was that any such system of gates/portals linking various worlds would inevitably end up controlled or dominated by a power group (or rival, warring power groups) who benefit from such control.

I have long thought that this was an ideal direction for a mature Realms campaign to head in, as the PCs reached powerful character levels: that they would inevitably get drawn into conflict with such power groups, and defending people and places they held dear from the behind-the-scenes control of said power groups.

This is a field many fantasy and sf novelists have explored, and one that continues to fascinate me.

DEITIES & CHURCHES

People & Clergy

Church Income

- THO 29/8/11, responding to query about how churches fund building their large temples

Almost all clergies accept (and expect) offerings from worshippers in return for certain prayers (and almost all spellcastings) and services (burials, consecrations, blessings of a new business, etc.). Almost all clergies combine these funds to buy land and build properties, and become landlords, taking in a constant stream of rents from tenants, tenant farmers, and "rental" farmers.

Many clergies serve as banks/safe deposits, securely storing all manner of things for commoners (from legal documents to Great-Grandma's mummified fingers), especially for poor commoners who may be homeless or fear for the security of their "stuff" when they're off working or trying to scrounge food...and for those who travel for work, like drovers, caravan guards, wagon merchants, etc. Temples also do the moneylending/moneychanging/valuables storage functions of real-world banks, and of course charge fees for doing so. And like real-world banks, they invest such funds, and the money they earn from offerings and rents, in livestock and farm crops and cargo ships and businesses, charging interest on such loans. So most urban and "verdant breadbasket rural" temples are wealthy, not poor. (This all comes from Ed's notes.)

- Ed 30/8/11

There are of course many more sources of clerical income, such as the sale of holy relics and their lesser cousins, "favours of the god" (meant to bring good luck to the bearer or household), "tokens of the god" (holy symbols of recognition and veneration for the common/lay worshipper rather than the "holy symbol" a priest carries; i.e. the equivalent of a real-world Catholic crucifix worn by an "ordinary" man or woman), but you missed the BIG one: priesthoods delivering verbal and written messages, documents, and small valuables over vast distances, from one individual to another [e.g. to relatives or family members], "altar-sworn" for safe delivery (i.e. the priests swear before the deity to deliver whatever it is faithfully, without altering or distorting it, pilfering from it, or violating its privacy if possible [obviously, the contents of a verbal message are known to the bearer, but a written message will NOT be unsealed or read by any member of the priesthood, nor will they allow a third party to read it], upon pain of losing the favour of the deity = being expelled from the church), for fees. In other words, almost all faiths in the Realms offer a FedEx-like service, and derive cumulatively great amounts of income from doing so.

(There's an interesting sideline to this: someone in possession of something unique that will get him or her killed, such as stolen royal regalia, may well in desperation deliver it into the hands of temple priests with a fee to deliver it to a fictitious person or one the sender, but few or no others, know to be dead . . . so the priesthood will now keep and conceal the item(s) "forever" as they seek to deliver them to the proper person . . . whom they will never be able to find.)

Temple Prostitution

- THO 23/5/10

Q: How common is temple prostitution? I imagine that it's fairly common, and is of two varieties: 1) The faiths which encourage sexual rapture (the word ecstasy DOES mean 'out of stasis') who have willing,

eager, and giving priests and priestesses (in this category I can easily see Sune, Hanali, Chaumtea, Kelemvor, Eldath, and Lliira) and 2) Those faiths which capitalize on sexual excess (I imagine Shar and Loviatar's churches to be the biggest of these) to blackmail/tempt/dominate parishioners in order to further temple goals. Is this an accurate view?

A: It is indeed very common, and your view is accurate. I would of course add Sharess to your first list of faiths.

However, this doesn't mean that temples usually run overt brothels, or try to compete with (or stamp out) free-enterprise prostitution. Sex is used in rituals in specific (narrow) ways, for worship of the deity and "improvement of self to make the self a better servant of the deity as well as more pleasing to the deity and therefore more favored by the deity."

[Soldiers: Tempus v Torm v Helm Worship](#)

- THO 15/4/11

Ed has been asked this before (not here, but at convention seminars, both at GenCon and elsewhere) within my hearing, and his answer usually runs something like this (I'm selectively quoting Ed here):

To venerate Tempus is to glory in victory, to exult in battle, and to see honour in excelling at the necessity of war (with acceptance of war as necessary).

To venerate Torm is to protect the weak and promote justice and truth and order through armed vigilance, seeing paladinhood as great and chivalry as high, noble, and improving. Civilization is founded, strengthened, and allowed to flourish through just use of military might and lawkeeping.

To venerate Helm is to dedicate oneself to armed guardianship. Life is made better when certain people, places, things, ideas, and ideals are guarded and kept safe, through force of arms and unfailing vigilance. The guardian will pay any price to protect and preserve that which is guarded, because what is deemed precious enough to be guarded must be protected, at all costs.

Or to drop out of Ed-quotation for a moment to interpret, as I've heard Ed do . . .

The worshipper of Tempus believes everything is decided on the battlefield so one should excel at battle, and loves war and excellence in it, somewhat like a rabid sports fan likes or is interested in nigh everything to do with the sport.

Whereas the worshipper of Torm doesn't glory in battle, but sees victory as necessary to preserve law and order, and society and the greater good being served, for the betterment of all, by good and strong laws and stern enforcement of justice.

. . . And the worshipper of Helm doesn't glory in battle or necessarily care much about laws or rules and strict adherence to them, but that certain things should be fought for and defended, at all costs and by all means.

So a Helmite would break a law or rule in an instant to protect what is to be guarded, whereas a Tormite would not, because in breaking the law or rule one becomes a foe who must be fought. Some Temptars/Temprans/Temmurans (all terms have been used, and more, over time and place to place in the Realms) would think it dishonorable to win a battle by trickery, or to poison foes or fell them in created avalanches (whereas a Helmite would do these things if necessary; whatever it took to protect that which is to be protected), and some Temptars/etc. would start a brawl or charge into someone

else's fight for the fun of it, whereas a Tormite would see that as lawless hooliganism or the work of a vigilante (= UNAUTHORIZED lawkeeper).

- Ed 16/4/11

a beloved of a warrior departing for war or away at war would pray to all the deities of war: Tempus that the fighting went well, Torm that the "right" cause or side (always, of course, the one the beloved's warrior is part of) prevailed thus far and will continue to prevail, and Helm that the warrior (and any he or she is charged to protect) survived unharmed, or in wounded, as lightly as possible. There would also be prayers to Lathander (renewal), Chauntea (natural vitality/cycle, therefore auspicious healing and endurance of diseases/taints that cause wounds to fester), Eldath (that water be pure, and free from disease, and that it cleanse, etc.) and so on (including to patron dieties of the clan/family/dwelling-place of the warrior, for the reasons you outlined: to bring the warrior back home [alive and unharmed if possible; failing that, as alive and as lightly harmed as possible; failing that, last message or token; failing that, honourable/meaningful death - - and above all, death - - that is, freedom from undeath, and a horrible undead existence])).

Venerations, for almost all beings in the Realms, is always a tapestry of pantheism, not monotheism. Aside from priests and paladins, very few individuals in the Realms are dedicated to a lone deity.

Common War Prayer

There is a very short popular "common prayer" made by those (even "civilians" forced to fight by circumstances) going to war/at war:

All divinity protect us,
Our own wits deliver us,
Our own strength defend us,
Our cause prevail!

There is also a very short popular 'common prayer' made by others on behalf of those going to war/at war:

May the sun and the moon see (him/her/them) whole
May the strife go well
May it soon be ended
May all endings be bright in the long passage of years

Knowledge of Gods, Cosmology

- Ed 25/2/11

The short answer to all of your questions, I'm afraid, is that "no one knows." Mortals in the Realms only know what priests, seers, sages, and various mad-wits tell them about matters cosmological, and as I've said before: even the gods lie.

We don't KNOW the origin of Ao or any of the "elder" gods, or what they did or didn't do or create. We have been TOLD some things, a few of them contradictory and none of them verified by any measure that doesn't involve (at some point) faith.

What's more, wise mortals have long ago realized that they can never know the truth. That is, they have

no way of learning more except by trusting a tale told by someone, at some point.

To underline this:

There are sages of Faerûn who believe that the Inner and Outer Planes were around long before any of the gods (and uber-beings, like Ao) we have heard of.

There are Faerûnian scholars of matters divine who believe Shar is a relatively "young" or recent deity, and much of what is now said of her "dawn doings" are more or less flattering falsehoods put about by her priests to make her seem more powerful, or somehow "essential."

There are sages of Faerûn who believe that all deities create stars or moons or other celestial bodies, because they define godhood as the enacted ability to successfully carry off such creations (working alone). There are other sages who dismiss this notion as pure fantasy, and assert divinity has nothing (necessarily) to do with such activities at all.

Similar disputes mar almost every tale of the deeds of gods, particularly when interacting with other gods. The priests of Lathander see this event far differently than the clergy of Shar do, while the priests of Umberlee offer as "gospel truth" a tale about a particular storm that contradicts entirely a similar "gospel truth" tale told by the clergy of Talos . . . and so on, for literally hundreds of instances.

So we simply don't know.

Naming People After Deities, Deities hearing prayers

- Ed quoted by blueblade, 23/5/15

Ed said that many, many mortals in the Realms are named after gods - -but that to Dispel Confusion, TSR cut back on "same names" in the published Realms (Ed's original Realms had both a demon and a devil named Ashtaroth, so if you were VERY careful in wording your summoning, the "wrong" one would show up, NOT under your control!).

Torm was one of the few exceptions because the character was a member of the Knights.

So it would follow that many parents do name their children after deities.

- Ed, 30/3/05

A deity hears whenever anyone addresses a namesake mortal by name (and, yes, both Selûne and Shar would hear when the lass named Seluneshar was named), but this babble goes on ALL the time (prayers, remember), for the vast majority of deities, in a ceaseless thunder. They learn to tune it out, or quickly go mad (Cyril, anyone?). So they're aware of all these "callings" in the background, and will notice peaks, breaks, and changes in the frequency, tone, and amount of mortal utterances of their name - - but will only 'zero in' on a particular voice when they want to.

If, say, Torm the god took an interest in Torm the smart-mouthed Knight of Myth Drannor (as entertainment, perhaps), Torm the god could 'set his feelers' to 'listen properly' to utterances of his name addressed to this mortal (or to any particular mortal not directly protected by another deity; that is, not including clergy or champions of another god, but very much including his own priests), and pay heed to those conversations only, using his other powers to "listen in" on lengthy conversations once he's detected them.

Most deities ignore mortal callings unless or until they're bored, upset, interested in learning something or regard a situation as a crisis that MUST be responded to. If someone named for them blasphemes them often, they might just send a manifestation of their power to chastise, make a public example of, or destroy the mocking mortal. Most mature deities don't bother, but merely make note of such mortals with an eye to 'using' them for a greater or more useful purpose in time to come.

Distance of Gods Post-Sundering

- Ed 17/4/15

Now, as to whether they'll appear face to face with a given mortal in a given location in the Realms, that's a far different matter. The gods in general seem more "distant" post-Sundering, more "heard from" than "personally seen."

Trust in Deities and Churches

- Ed 23/12/14

There have been many schisms, sects, and heated religious debates in the past (pre-Spellplague), and they continue. There have also been a few monotheistic movements, then and now, but these rarely gain much traction because war or strife among the gods is so plainly evident; for it all to be the work of one god, most "average folk" in the Realms believe that god would have to be less than sane, by mortal standards.

And finally, there's a problem with dispelling doubt among followers: one either believes, or one doesn't; there's now a very widespread opinion abroad in the Realms that the gods lie, or are mistaken, or that priests who represent them tell falsehoods or get it wrong or have their own propaganda aims. Most individuals tend to mistrust what priests or rumors tell them, but believe dream-visions (thinking these come directly from a deity to them). One change since the Spellplague is that many deities do seem more distant (that is, less eager to try to convince mortals of anything, and more wrapped in their own affairs, addressing themselves mostly to priests, paladins, and Chosen).

Religious Conversion

- Ed 6/9/12, responding to query about being "converted" to another deity

I suppose it's inevitable that many folks will continue to "see" the Realms in terms of real-world competing montheistic religions. To reiterate: in the Realms, everyone (with rare exceptions who are seen as less than sane) "believes in" (and worships) ALL the gods. A small handful of the populace (less than five percent) dedicates themselves to one god above all others. (Because the game has clerics/priests and paladins as character classes, and healing is a power of such individuals and is incredibly useful, and because organized faiths have wide social effects in the Realms, we pay more attention to zealots/one-deity-above-all persons than we otherwise would.)

So there's not really such a thing as "conversion" in the Realms, as we speak and think of it in the real world. No one has to be convinced of the existence, "rightness," or viability of any deity. There is much debate and differing belief over precedence (in portfolio overlaps) and who's more powerful, and so on, but that debate extends to the gods themselves, and the truths behind such debate and conjecture changes over time (the gods shift in power, portfolio, and even presence).

It is NORMAL for a given individual to shift in their interest, veneration, and dedication to every deity as their lives unfold. Many folks discuss the gods with others - - and others regard faith as a private, personal thing NOT to be discussed outside family or guild (or in some cases, with anyone else).

- Ed, 25/1/15

("when a dedicated-to-one-deity individual marries someone without a clear patron deity, are they expected (by some Churches) to try and convert their spouse?"): Although there have been instances (involving evil deities such as Bane, Asmodeus, and Lolth) of this happening when the new spouse is

desired to play a part in a specific task to further the power and influence of the deity, it's not so for the vast majority of both deities and marriages in the Realms. "Conversion" is largely a foreign concept to thinking in the Realms, where everyone knows all the deities exist and believes in all of them. It's considered much better form among the gods to manipulate mortals so they they do X, believing to advance the aims of Deity A, when it will actually also accomplish something Deity B wants, without the mortals involved realizing it. And all of this holds true only for relatively rare dedicated-to-one-deity mortals; most mortals never think of themselves as "belonging to" any one deity. (I know this is a hard concept for some Realms fans and gamers to grasp, who come from a monotheistic faith background or monotheistic-dominated society, but it bears repeating once more that the Realms is NOT Earth.)

Orphans and Churches

- THO paraphrasing Ed, 23/1/13

Most temples in the Realms, of most faiths, take in orphans and foundlings (babies left on their doorstep, or brought to them because a single-parent mother has died in childbirth but the babe has survived); it's their chief source of new priests, because they can be "reared in the faith" from birth or childhood. So even if they don't run formal orphanages, they will take in orphans as novices, usually into monasteries or temple-farms or abbeys (rather than city temples, just because there's usually more room at countryside holy sites).

Clergy Marrying

- THO 16/9/13, responding to query if clergy, specifically of Amaunator, Sune, and Torm can marry

Yes, with a few faith-related, conditional exceptions (the three deities you list not, so far as I know, being among them).

Worshipping other Pantheons

- THO 20/1/14

Q: Would humans worship non-human deities (I imagine that some would) and would that deity grant them spells? For instance, a human priest of Labelas Enoreth? Is it more common for say an elf or dwarf to worship one of the non-elven or non-dwarven gods than humans to worship non-human gods? Would an elf ever worship a dwarven or halfling god or vice-versa?

A: All sentient mortals believe in all of the gods, and actively worship any and all gods that may help or guide them in a given situation (i.e. farmers worship Chauntea, but also Talos to keep his storms away, Auril to not send frosts before crops are gathered in, etc.). Many humans "cleave to" a few gods, or even just one god, according to their personal situation or inclination. However, in your question you seem to be using "worship" in the narrower sense of "become a priest of." The answer to that is: yes. Some deities are racially-centric (Lolth, for example), but that doesn't mean they won't accept the dedicated service of individuals of other races, AND grant them spells.

So all of the possibilities you ask about are possible. They'll just be relatively rare. And as for "more common," that's hard to say, because no one stands back to take any overall surveys of such things, but humans TEND to be more versatile/try anything than any of the other races except halflings, so it's probably more common for humans to venerate a non-human deity.

Seeking Sanctuary from law

- THO 24/10/12

"And what if a worshipper of a deity commits a crime and tries to take sanctuary in a temple?"
Heh. EVERYONE'S a worshipper of multiple deities, remember. The concept of sanctuary in a temple applies only to some faiths and some places, not universally across the Realms. I'd say it doesn't hold sway in most places, rather than does.

Gods Blessing Priests

- Ed 17/2/12

Everyone in the Realms "believes in" and knows the portfolio and basic tenets of all the gods, so from "common folk" to kings, individuals may not know details of the faith or internal schisms and debates, but they "get" who every god is and what they're about. Many large religious communities (monasteries, abbeys, important temples) receive a steady stream of "foundlings" (babies and children left at the temple by parents who can't support them or are afraid they'll be slain (thanks to feuds, war, inheritance battles within families, etc.), or who are directed to temples when they become orphaned (or in some cases, are brought to the temple by local lawkeepers, who expect the temple to then care for them). As every monastery/abbey/temple has lots of work to do (farming and cooking, sanitation, cleaning and building repair, etc.), many children grow up as hard-working "lay worshippers" and temple staff, and may be inducted into the priesthood if they show interest AND THE GOD DOES, TOO.

This last bit is also the "way in" to the clergy for people who haven't grown up working at a temple, but just show up on its doorstep one day "feeling a calling" (real or feigned).

The deity shows interest by visions sent to priests, or visions that hover above the altar for all to see, during prayers, that depict that young lay worshipper or this lad who's just shown up at the door asking to be a priest, as a robed and vested priest of the faith, doing something. In other words, the deity signals that they want a particular person or persons accepted into their clergy (and sometimes shows a role or deed they are "destined" to do, too).

The existing clergy wouldn't dream of denying the god's wishes, so . . .

That gets a character into the ranks of the novices/postulants, but of course they will likely be trained, tested, sent on tasks, etc. like any other underpriest of the faith.

There is no age or gender or race requirement for the clergy of most deities, no application form or set of skills (priests tend to wind up well educated, but can start as illiterate and ignorant of the world beyond their town or village) . . . it all comes down to divine approval.

For instance, in one of my library Realms campaigns, the Company of the Ardrake happened upon a village that had been raided by orcs. It was largely deserted (human inhabitants slain and carried off, presumably to be eaten), but they found two dazed children buried under an outhouse that had been tipped over on top of them. As they were debating what to do about these hungry, half-aware, wounded mites, at nightfall as the darkness grew ever-deeper, a bright rosy glow suddenly kindled around them.

Obviously, a manifestation of Lathander, claiming these two children. So the PC adventurers tended and fed them, kept them warm as they slept in the adventurers' camp that night, and in the morning took them some thirty miles to the nearest shrine of Lathander, and gave them into the keeping of the priests there, mentioning the manifestation. THEN they turned back to find the trail of the raiding orcs, to pursue the adventure they'd been planning.

So there are many "ways in," but they all boil down to the god's wishes, that override any obstacles mortal priests may raise to entry. An abbot may be looking for just human males of a certain age, and want them to be hale and handsome, too - - but if the god wants a passing drow female child be

accepted into the abbey, that acceptance will happen (though the abbot may have some strong protests and bewildered questions for the god, the next time he prays privately).

Alignment

- Ed 15/6/11

Be careful in all assumptions re. the alignment of deities. Not only can alignments shift over time, the notion of alignments applies poorly to many deities - - because divine beings can be partially beyond the comprehension of mortals (who are, after all, almost always sharply limited in what they really know about a god or goddess).

Chosen (General)

Power

- Ed 6/12/11, responding to query all if Chosen are "Divine Rank 0", or exarch-status

SOME Chosen are. Most aren't. There's a whole range of servitor beings, from near-classical-depiction-of-angels down to ordinary mortal who has one "wild talent" inner power, thanks to divine meddling. Most Chosen aren't anywhere near as powerful as Mystra's were.

After Death

- Ed 11/4/10

Your question re. the Chosen's fates upon death attempts to derive a "general rule" answer, but sorry; Chosen are by their nature unique, and the answer is "each case is different." Some Chosen are "rescued" by this deity or that to continue to serve in another form (given another sort of life, or even resurrected as mortal). This is largely kept mysterious to other mortals, even priests of that deity.

Death of Gods, Dead Gods

Possible to Kill Them?

- THO 11/9/11

Your question is one that TSR and later WotC designers and editors working on/in the Realms (including, of course, Ed) have discussed many times. The general consensus is: theoretically, yes. However, it's so difficult to do (in large part because a deity clings to some sort of existence, however "scattered and unconscious," able to rise again if conditions are right, even thousands of years later, so long as ONE MORTAL WORSHIPPER "believes" in them), that in practical terms, the answer has to be: no.

Surviving without clergy

- Ed 16/6/11

YES, most deities who wind up without clergy at a particular time CAN survive until they can send visions enough to/cause "miracles" enough witnessed by their intended new clerical recruits, to refound a clergy.

The ways in which they survive are NDA'd in at least 2 cases, and I'll have to check on some of the other ways, but here's the obvious one that I don't need to "clear" with Wizards: in a world where mortal belief is enough to sustain a god as an entity (even if no longer "divine" in powers or prominence), it's very difficult to entirely eradicate a divine being, because there's always SOMEONE who "believes" in them. And a fading deity will zero in on those someones, and "appear to them" and give guidance and

boons and aid, to bolster such belief, with an eye to rekindling their faith.

Note that in some cases, this rebuilding takes centuries or more. So a mortal PC adventurer can bask in "destroying an evil god forever" . . . and go to their grave never knowing that the god will rise again, centuries later.

Mortal Knowledge

- The Sage quoting Ed c25/1/05, Qs for Ed 11/3/11

Regarding dead gods: mortals of Faerûn don't know the true "current body count," or where the residue of the divine essence of a dead god lies.

In part, this is because it's very hard for a god to truly die unless very carefully destroyed by another god: otherwise, if some mortal of Faerûn still worships them or discovers them and starts worshipping them, later (even centuries later), they 'rise' again, albeit as almost powerless ghostly awarenesses (at their weakest).

The arguments among churches (about what god did what to which other god) confuse the average inhabitant of the Realms (who to believe?), but I'd say that among humans, most are aware that Bhaal, Iyachtu Xvim, Leira, and Myrkul are 'dead.' Only sages and some priests and wizards have even heard of, say, Karsus, and most folk accept that there are countless 'godlings' worshipped by various 'cultists' here and there across the Realms (from Savras and other half-remembered names to the beast-cults to "those dangerous folk who worship the skeletons of DRAGONS if ye can believe it, aye?").

So some of them are dead and gone 'forever' (although one can then debate just how long 'forever' is, of course :)), but most are, as you say, "just dead, ready to be revived thru some epic act or worship."

- THO 17/1/11, responding to query about how death of many gods was dealt with

He has always, from the beginning (while understanding that gamers always have a hunger to know more about deities and the overarching "way things work"), taken the position that mortals simply can't know the truth about many things divine, because none of their sources of information (church doctrines, what priests say, rumors, even what they themselves witness or receive as visions) can be trusted.

Even the gods deceive, and when interpreting "what really went on/is going on," most mortals are in the position of seeing only a glimpse of a confrontation between folk they've never seen before, and then having to extrapolate the lives, aims, and back stories of everyone involved, and somehow, by sheer luck, getting it all correct.

You may have noticed, in Ed's novels, some characters using the expression "the Watching Gods." From the very outset of the Realms, before TSR ever published one word about it in long-ago DRAGON articles, Ed has murmured to players (through Elminster [[himself an "unreliable narrator," always remember]], Khelben, various sages, and manifestations of Mystra, your namesake, and Mielikki, not to mention PC-overheard conversations among sages and archwizards) the notion that a LOT of what we "know" about the gods is spurious, that some gods have always masqueraded as others, that what priests and therefore believers see as several separate deities and demigods may well all be aspects of one entity . . . and so on.

So no one in the Realms can be certain that many gods perished. They've been TOLD that this happened,

and may have seen events explained as being part of this or that god's destruction, BUT . . .

(Note that Ed built this into the Realms from the very beginning for two very good reasons. One was not to offend the personal religious beliefs of individual DMs and players, by offering them a measure of "plausible deniability" so they could accept the Realms as published and happily play in it, "knowing" that the truth was other than as presented. The second was to give DMs full freedom to have "the truth" be different in their Realms, without feeling that they were "breaking canon." Other commentators and designers have taken other approaches since, but this is Ed's, because he has always looked ahead down the road to see implications.)

All of which is to say that perhaps not all the gods died, or this particular one, or that particular one. Did any of us SEE Azuth destroyed by Asmodeus? No. Nor did we see Mystra go down. All we "know" for certain is that the Weave collapsed - - and the Chosen of Mystra also know that they abruptly lost all contact with Mystra and Azuth, receiving instead only . . . silence.

Prayers to Forgotten/Dead Gods

- WR quoted Ed, Qs for Ed 12/9/11

"So there's constant worship going on for almost every divine being, rumored-to-be-divine being, half-forgotten and misremembered godlings... and even slain divine beings linger on as demigods or divine sparks that can "come back" if the right conditions occur. It's hard to fall from the ranks of demigodhood, once attained: one simply becomes a weaker demigod. Mortals in the Realms are always whispering prayers to "forgotten" gods, in hopes that the grateful deity will give them a lot of aid, swiftly, either out of eagerness to have a new mortal worshipper to command, or simply because they hear and heed the prayer (where a more popular deity may miss or have scant regard for that one prayer, amid the deafening chorus of so many)."

Destiny

- Ed 18/2/12

In the Realms, "destiny" is a fiction. A fiction put forward as fact by many priests and a few gods, but at best, someone is likely to do something because of manipulation of the sort Elminster is constantly busy with: trying to steer politics, matings and bloodlines, and so on to bring about a future happening. Things MUST be this way.

If things are "predestined," then no one is heroic (because, unwittingly or not, they're just following a script) and there's no point in striving for something or going adventuring, because your own personal efforts mean nothing.

Takes all the fun out of everything, really . . .

So the best the gods can do is become darned good predictors (like "good" weather forecasters) by using their superior-to-mortals knowledge and powers to try to influence things or anticipate things (they may CALL it "foreseeing," but it's closer to betting and wishful thinking than really seeing the future).

Divine Magic

Dark Flame

- THO 16/4/13

Q: 1) Is this [dark flame] an effectively unique ritual devised by Cyric and/or his priesthood?
2) Do other priesthoods have (or are they developing) similar rituals? I could see Selune and Lathander (and possibly Mystra) all possibly using ones based around positive energy instead of negative, for example.

A: Dark flame in the Realms predates Cyric's ascension to godhood, so the answer to #1 must be no, and the answer to #2 must be yes.

Resurrection

Waterdeep Record

- WR, Qs for Ed 18/3/13 (not sourced but believed to be canon)

We know Nain Keenwhistler has the record in Waterdeep, for the most resurrections...

Performance by non-clerics/priests

- THO 3/8/10, responding to query about possibility of wizards and theurges bringing people back to life

A VERY rare few can do so (in the Realms, literally a handful of individuals, outside of those who are servitors of deities [of the power level of Chosen of Mystra, or above]). In the vast majority of cases, a wizard is helpless to bring back the dead, except as undead through necromancy. Priests are where most grieving folk will turn to, to get a dead person "back".

Effect of Mortal Worship

- Ed 19/7/10

All deities are strengthened by increasing numbers of worshippers, and weakened by decreasing numbers of worshippers, some far more than others (according to their nature and "other aspects" and divine alliances) in both directions. All deities are informed by the thoughts, memories, and experiences of their worshippers, more than they are by the thoughts, memories, and experiences of those who know of but never worship them, those few who are ignorant of them, and those who worship them only to appease, and not with "dedication."

Mortals can never know the truth about gods, and so are warned not to trust the above statement as a tried-and-true 'mechanism' that can be relied upon for predicting the behaviour of, coercing, or influencing any deity.

Godly Spite

- THO 21/9/11

Q: Was there an instance when a god violently reacted to a random citizen's joke? Say, a pirate shouted, "Talos is such a deaf, retarded god that even if you scream that he sucks you'll walk away unscathed." Then suddenly he's struck by lightning.

A: Oh, yes. More than a few instances.

- THO 27/11/12

"If a god really hates some mortal, what can they do, and what do they do? Considering Ao's rules; plus whether other gods are willing to protect the mortal; and so on."

A: They CAN do just about anything, but they very seldom act directly against any mortal (instead, they

direct their own mortal agents to act against that mortal). This is where Ao's rules come in, and mutual deterrence. Whenever a god acts directly, it's carte blanche for another deity to act directly against THEM. So it's very much a last resort, because unless a god is so insane that they don't wish to survive, they "won't go there."

"Could we know a little more about clerics who change divine allegiance? If a cleric of Ghaunadaur becomes a cleric of Eilistraee (a rather different deity), how hard would it be for him to adapt and learn the proper rites and liturgy? Also, if instead a cleric of Lolth converted to Eilistraee, how far would the mother Goddess' seething go in seeking revenge against her former servant? Finally, how rare are priests who convert?"

A: Full converts are rare, there should be no direct revenge (Ao-forbidden, though arranged "accidents" have been known to happen), and difficulty of adoption depends on the individual. Old habits and ways of doing things die hard; Ed describes this by describing a painter who must abandon painting and be only a sculptor, henceforth. It's "start over and stumble" time, but how long and hard the awkward patch will be varies with individuals. Ed always stresses that it's NOT the world-view-shaking matter most gamers envisage it as, because mortals in the Realms are polytheists who "believe in" and "know about" ALL the gods, not "my God is the only real one" monotheists (in the Realms, those individuals are thought to be mad fanatics).

"The Baldur's Gate series had an interesting character who learned to worship two gods of different pantheons who were in good terms, and supposedly received her spells from either one. Are there rules against this other than divine envy?"

A: There are no Ao rules against this, but most deities frown on it purely for control reasons. Wise deities (Mystra, for example) know that mortals work best, and better the Realms for all, when left as independent as possible (and so are more likely to "share" a mortal, even clergy, than other deities); this is why Bane and other harsh-controlling deities often achieve so little, even with so much military buildup.

Gods Impersonating Gods

- THO 10/2/11

The gods care VERY MUCH about anyone impersonating them. It's almost "the ultimate sin," something that any god will understand as "rightfully" enraging another god. It's almost "Not Done" (Ed says "almost" because of course some gods have done it, but it's the best way to get yourself quickly mistrusted, feared, hated, or shunned by your fellow deities. Who will soon refuse to play with you, or as Mr. Lowder used to (beautifully) put it, "join in their reindeer games."

Polytheism

- Ed 16/5/11

From the very beginning, the Realms was (and is!) polytheistic. Every intelligent creature "believed in" ALL of the gods, goddesses, demigods, and various divine servitors (exarches, "Chosen," et al), and ALMOST every intelligent creature worshipped MANY of the deities (the exceptions being "fanatics," including priests and sometimes paladins dedicated to a single deity).

So your typical merchant sailor would worship Tymora (for good luck), Waukeen (for prosperous voyages), Talos (so as to keep storms at bay, and provide "good" winds), Valkur or Shaundakul (for safe

navigation), and Umberlee (to keep the sea “friendly, keep from being drowned or shipwrecked or attacked by sea monsters, etc.). Some offerings/prayers were positive (“Tymora, be with me now!”) and some were to mollify/turn aside the wrath of deities (“please don’t drown me, Umberlee!”). This applied to the entire Realms. All sentient races and individuals.

As Thauramarth correctly pointed out, most individuals in the Realms will logically have a “patron deity,” which is simply the deity that they pray most often to/pay most heed to the priestly dictates of, USUALLY as a result of their profession (Chauntea for farmers, Tempus for warriors, etc.). That’s NOT the same as saying “Person X ONLY believes in, obeys, and worships their patron deity.”

Now, from the outset, some designers/writers and some fans/gamers didn’t understand this, or didn’t want to (cleaving instead to “there’s only one god” thinking), so some Realms canon reflects such an attitude.

When it applies to an individual character/creature, this approach is fine, and it’s perfectly okay to have a “state religion” for a country or city-state, if you prefer. The conflicts between various racial pantheons, and between deities (and their followers) are an integral part of the game; no one has to accept one set of beliefs as “true” and others as “false.”

However, to understand the entire tapestry of the Realms, as I created it at the outset and have gone on “filling it in” ever since, it’s important to accept that people IN THE REALMS “know” that there are lots of deities, that they’re ALL “real,” and that they fight among themselves but are all “greater” than mortals. People in the Realms don’t believe that one priest or priesthood is telling the truth and that all others are wrong - - and most people in the Realms, if they were told that, say, Landurl the Potter only worships Gond (or any particular deity), would think that Landurl was either crazy, or at least “odd,” or that Landurl must have had a personal vision from Gond that’s making Landrul act in this strange way (that’s the “accepted wisdom” for why someone is a priest: they got a person altar vision, or dream vision when sleeping, in which the deity spoke to them personally, requesting their service - - and they accepted). Worshipping all relevant deities is the accepted norm.

When Lord Karsus comments on the “fuzziness” of these concepts, that’s true for published Realms products, but not for my original and ongoing concept of the Realms. Gamers who’ve attended my GenCon seminars from the beginning of the published Realms, and designers who’ve seen my original 1986 mammoth Realms turnover to TSR, know that this general polytheism, AND details of “who prays to whom” regarding specific characters of my devising, haven’t changed from 1967 on. It’s a case of “development” only in print, not in thinking. Or to put it another way, of what’s revealed out of what has been there all along.

Priesthoods

- Ed 16/5/11

Now, PRIESTHOODS in the Realms DO tend to be exclusive. Dennis was right when he pointed out that “One can’t expect a priestess to worship both Shar and Selune at the same time.”

However, one COULD expect that a lawless anarchist smuggler who makes night “light boat” runs between Westgate and Sembia, and is a woman wanting either to get pregnant or avoid pregnancy, might very well actively pray to both Shar (evil, overthrow of authority and lawkeeping, triumph over lawkeepers) and Selune (safe night navigation, control over menses) at the same time.

Some priesthoods (Helm, Tyr, Torm . . . and Silvanus/Eldath/Mielikki) do tend to cooperate, and their clergy can often freely venerate more than one deity. Higher-level clerics tend not to, and often discourage other clergy from doing so, on very mortal ("human nature") loyalty/power grounds.

Portfolios

- Ed 15/6/11, responding to assertion that evil magic creates destruction and chaos, so Mystra should share these portfolios

True, but EVERY god shares every portfolio in this particular "way" you refer to (gods fight each other, so that supports Tempus, and if one kills another, that supports one or all death deities, and so on).

When I first introduced the concept of divine portfolios into the D&D game (the idea was ages-old, but I'm afraid that using the word "portfolios" and putting it formally into D&D was my fault), it was a mortal shorthand to describe the MAJOR interest(s) and dominance over a particular field or element of life of a deity. In other words, Tempus is Lord of Battles, but many deities concern themselves with warfare in more minor ways...and to a particular mortal, on the ground in the middle of a particular fight, the involvement of, say, Chauntea in that fight (say, over a boundary between farms, or over shared use of a watering-hole or well) might seem a whole lot stronger and more present than that of Tempus.

So, yes, "in a way" Mystra DOES share the portfolios of Destruction and Chaos with Talos and Lolth/Lloth - - BUT almost every deity shares in almost every portfolio in this manner, and so for purposes of discussion such involvement "cancels out" and isn't usually mentioned by mortals (except in theological debates among sages and within temples). A portfolio is meant to describe, for mortals, the primary (or one of a few main) goal, interest, or aim of a deity. Mystra's portfolio, however expressed, is centered on magic, and its ever-wider use, NOT on Destruction and Chaos. As I said earlier in my reply to Saer Cormaeril, Mystra prefers peace and prosperity as conditions for encouraging/fostering more widespread and frequent magic use (and development of magic, which in turn will make it more useful in a daily sense and hence better used), not destruction or chaos. Destruction is often caused by magic use, and may in some cases be necessary as a step in settling disputes/creating future peace, but that doesn't make it a goal for Mystra or a portfolio she meaningfully shares in.

Overlap enough to survive

- Ed 16/6/11

No, the portfolio overlap/unofficial sharing isn't enough to ensure a deity's survival without clergy. However, several other factors are.

Sex and Gender

- Ed 5/12/11

The gods of the Realms are all (and have always been) sexual beings, because I created the Realms that way, though the needs of TSR and later Wizards (Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct, "appropriate for target audiences," et al) have often led to this being downplayed, not mentioned, or obfuscated in the published Realms.

Life and creation are essentially sexual acts, and all of the deities of the Realms are potentially pansexual but in practice tend to cleave to one gender or another - - and "have sex" very seldom (when doing so with other deities, there are obvious issues of safety for self [attack from other deities when vulnerable], and ongoing implications [offspring/power loss]). Sex for deities may involve the physical (and shapeshifting), but is primarily an energy melding and transfer ("mingling of divine fire") and involves

intense sensations of pleasure for the participants. Deities engaging in sex can choose to "leave behind" tiny amounts of their essence to give them instant mental communications/control links, though if they try this with another deity it must be by permission (unless there's a huge power imbalance between the two beings), or it will simply be rejected/expelled. Often two allied deities will engage in this deliberately - - and they can, if they wish, do so swiftly without any great energy exchange or enjoyment.

Truenames

- Ed 11/9/11

Yes, the deities of the Realms have "true," somewhat-secret names. I created them that way before there was a D&D game, and of course the early editions of D&D and AD&D had "truename" as a spell and a concept, both of which remain in Realmslore (as per the Realms agreement: changing a game rule, or edition, DOESN'T change "what happened already" [lore, history] in the Realms setting, though it may change how we see it/our understanding of what was previously reported).

Knowing a deity's truename gives you the power to instantly attract the deity's attention. In some very rare cases, in conjunction with you possessing particular artifacts ("the Univeral Nullifier, in the hands of a mortal!") and/or doing particular deeds/rituals ("Yes, Zeus, I'm burning your toenails in the Flame of Truth! Bwoohahahahah!") it gives you a limited measure of power over the deity or the ability to send the deity away/get them to honour a pre-existing pact or informal agreement.

Dennis, this doesn't mean they're compelled to answer, just that they've noticed the utterer of their name (among the ceaseless chorus of all worshippers uttering their various names, all the time). They may well choose to manifest, or speak, or send visions or dreams. Nor (except for the rare instances I've alluded to, above) does it give a mortal any "binding" of or over the god.

Yes, Ayrik, attentive thoughtful devotion to, and active worship of, the god leads a devout mortal ever-closer, over time, to "knowing" the true name of the deity (and knowing the deity's true nature and character, along with the name, which is the way an overwhelmed mortal mind manages to focus, to express and concentrate all they know of a deity's nature).

Now, you might well be able to convince me that someone who knows ALL the names a deity has ever been known by (a la Sir Arthur's classic NINE BILLION NAMES OF GOD) might gain some measure of control over the god . . .

But no, deities are essentially different in this respect from devils and demons, in which a Prime Material Plane summoner (who doesn't screw up!) can "control" such a creature for a certain time or number of acts.

Use of "Backup Vessels"

- Ed 6/12/11, responding to query about using Chosen as backup vessels for divinity

Most deities have a backup vessel, yes, but most prefer to have this being be unwitting of their status, and well hidden, NOT an active Chosen. Many Realms deities are, or have been, what we would call more than a little paranoid.

Wall of the Faithless, the False

- Ed 8/9/12

The Wall of the Faithless and the False are for those who repudiate some or all of the gods, or seek to defy "the system" (usually because they have become insane) by denying that the gods and faith have any usefulness or validity at all - - or who assert that EVERYTHING mortals know about the gods is utterly wrong because the gods deceive mortals habitually, all the time, about all matters. It is more of a threat to living mortals than a popular, heavily-populated destination, and in the past the ranks of the tortured entities there have been raided by deities and mighty-in-magic individuals (such as certain archwizards, dragons, and others) for "raw materials" (sentiences) to empower new creature creations.

Ao

Fiction or Truth

- THO 24/3/12, responding to query about the overdeity who was not created by Ed

Very, very few people in the Realms have ever heard of Ao - - and many of those who have are priests or sages who hold widely differing views of who or what Ao is, who argue with others "in the know" about Ao all the time.

We real-world scribes know a lot more about Ao (or THINK we do; again, whose words about Ao can we trust? All deities have a built-in bias about what they tell their priests) than folk in the Realms do . . . and if you check back over the published Realmslore about ao, it should strike you that even we actually know very little about Ao.

Perhaps he's a convenient fiction to "explain way" the unexplainable (when it comes the divine "deaths" and doings of the gods...or perhaps there is an Overgod, but "ao" is merely an alias, and what we've been told about Ao is all wrong.

We just don't know.

(I ran this reply of mine past Ed, and he responded, "Well said. As valid as anything I've heard on the matter thus far.")

Abeir Gods

- Ed on Twitter, related by Zeromaru X, Qs for EG 19/4/16

If gods doesn't exist in Abeir, why they use Io creation myth for dragonborn in SCAG?

Answer: "gods doesn't exist in Abeir"? Since when???

My answer: Reading 4e FRCS, Ao gave Toril to the gods, and the twin planet, Abeir to the primordials (I know, 4e messed up things)

Ed's answer: Yes, but part of the definition of godhood is the power to perceive AND and answer prayers (bestow divine spells) across worlds.

Amaunator

Etymology of name

- THO 31/5/16

So far as I and Ed know, "Amaunator" was coined by Eric Boyd, so he would be the man to answer re. its etymology.

Auril

Restrictions Against Fire

- THO 7/1/14

Q: Since Auril demands her clergy to "quench fire wherever it is found", is it forbidden to them to light a fire in any circumstances? Are they permitted to consume only raw or fresh food? Also, are they permitted to use fire as light source?

A: I recall two instances of clergy of Auril cooking, from play with Ed as DM, that involved the sun (cut and dressed meat placed between shiny metal plates on a sunbaked roof, and cooking on stones that had been heated all day in the same way, then brought inside into a "warm-pit" or stone-lined hole in the floor with an insulated wooden lid - - both of which mean there's no prohibition on cooked food.

- Blueblade 8/1/14

as a guy who once went arctic camping in, yes, the Arctic, above the treeline in biting cold, I can tell you that the "metal plates on sunbaked roof" trick THO mentioned works just fine in polar cold regions, at all times of the year, not just summer - - if you have full sun and not overcast or a snowstorm/windstorm blowing around already fallen snow.

Dark (as in black, or rust-brown) plates work better than shiny, because they absorb heat rather than reflecting it. The reflecting works better when combined with lenses (the magnifying glass Markustay mentioned).

Azuth

God of Spellcasting

- THO 14/1/10, responding to query about who someone would pray to, to ensure an unpredictable spell went off correctly – Azuth, Mystra, or Tymora

Ed's in-campaign rule (and he created Azuth and Mystra) is that in all situations of "casting prowess" for spellcasters. if they're human, Azuth is THE guy.

Bane

Interaction with Szass Tam

- Ed 30/7/10

Q: How is it possible that a god (a greater deity, that is) would succumb to a threat of a mere lich? In Richard's "Undead," Szass Tam had the guts to threaten Bane that he would use all magic left to him (and I wonder how much, since the SP weakened him considerably) to bind and give the said god utter inconvenience if Bane denied him his request. Bane was even surprised that a mere lich dared threaten him. Yet he granted Tam what he wanted. Did Bane realize the value of Tam's soul that he agreed to the bargain? Even so, is it that to summon and explicitly threaten a lawfully wicked god is a grave transgression that no evil god will leave unpunished?

A: Gods are vulnerable, but you are misreading the particular situation: Bane did not "succumb" to a threat made to him by a mortal/lesser being, though Szass Tam THOUGHT he did. Gods are BORED by most interactions with mortals/lesser beings, and Szass Tam's boldness intrigued Bane and entertained Bane. He reconsidered the capabilities of Szass Tam on the spot, wondered if he could make use of Tam's strivings, and eventual achievements, and decided to go along with this, to see what might happen.

Some (by no means all) gods are given to the habit of looking ahead, plotting, planning, and trying to anticipate how things will turn out. Others, like real-world mortals who read mystery novels but DON'T

want to try to solve the puzzles or peek at the back of the book to see how it turns out, just like to enjoy the ride and "live in the moment" or plan ahead only a little way. Bane is one of the deities who does both: he schemes and plots, but likes to pay no attention to some matters until they unfold and surprise/amuse/entertain him. As for WHAT Tam achieves, and WHY Bane appeared to "give in" (what he expects to eventually get out of the situation), we'll all just have to wait and see . .

Pre-TSR Lord of Nightmares

- THO 10/2/11

In Ed's original gods writeups, Bane was (also, that is, as well as the titles that made it into print) "Lord of Nightmares." Someone at TSR made that disappear right at the beginning, I seem to recall because at one point there was discussion of doing a fantasy adventure game for a young audience that involved a struggle between a good "Lord of Dreams" and an evil "Lord of Nightmares."

Cyric

Nature of Imprisonment

- THO 26/7/10

I do know that Cyric is unable to travel directly/in person to Toril, or manifest any avatar there, but does still answer prayers and confer spells and guiding visions and guiding utterances...but that's all I know.

Drow Pantheon

Return of Eilistraee & Vhaeraun

- Ed 17/4/15

Communications being what they are in the Realms, with caravans bringing news and gossip and inevitable distortions as things get told and retold, most mortals can't be certain of much; they always have to trust (or not trust) retellings from afar.

However, the word spreading about the return of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun comes from excited reports of mortal worshippers personally meeting MANIFESTATIONS and AVATARS of the deities; i.e. yes,

Vhaeraun and Eilistraee are both "back."

Eilistraee

The Masked Lady

- Ed, 14/12/15

Mortals in the Realms can rarely know the doings and specifics of the gods with certainty, because clergies and even the gods themselves sometimes avoid the truth, or the whole truth, or slant what they say so much. So it is with the "deaths" of Eilistraee and Vhaeraun. Vhaeraun entered Eilistraee's realm and sought to destroy her, but perished there by her hand, and she subsumed his portfolios—or so the story spread among drow. Most assumed that meant she became the drow deity of thievery, but in truth, Eilistraee (who pronounces her own name "AISLE-iss-try-ee," by the way) defeated Vhaeraun with Mystra's indirect aid [Mystra IS the Weave, and it was the Weave that frustrated and drank Vhaeraun's magics, but augmented those of Eilistraee] but did not slay her brother. Rather, she trapped his sentience within the Weave, leaving him in an "endless dream" engineered by Mystra, who enfolded him. In this dream, Mystra slowly convinced Vhaeraun to cooperate in a pact with herself and Eilistraee

so that they could all survive what was to come: the Sundering, wherein both Eilistraee and Mystra would be “slain,” magic would go wild, and the worlds of Abeir and Toril would pass through each other and then be sundered.

Eilistraee emerged from her battle with her brother as The Masked Lady, and fulfilled her own portfolios of song, beauty, dance, swordwork, hunting, moonlight, and those of her brother, too: thievery, trickery, drow poisoners and poisons, drow males, and evil doings in the surface world. The death of Qilué Veladorn robbed her of some of her divine essence for a time (it leaked into the Weave, and only returned to her when Mystra herself recovered and could direct it back to its rightful home), but Eilistraee wasn’t slain, merely reduced to manifestations.

So from the end of 1375 to the summer of 1379, The Masked Lady has her “full” powers, and from late Flamerule of 1379 to the same month in 1489 DR, she is much reduced, being seen by mortals almost exclusively as her manifestation of a moving black mask outlined in a silver radiance and with two eyes of silver flame, that appears and silently guides (by pointing and touching and by imparting visions). After Flamerule 1489, Vhaeraun and Eilistraee are separate deities with the same powers and portfolios they had before 1375, but a new understanding, respect, and even friendship for each other. Some of their followers still war with each other, but the two deities do not. Thus far, Eilistraee’s teachings after the Sundering are the same as before the Sundering.

The Masked Lady: a 9-foot-tall long-legged, graceful, and dancing drow female surrounded by her constantly-swirling long tresses and a swirling black ankle-length cloak, her face always covered by a full-face mask. She has all the abilities, powers, and avatar specifics given in the 3e sourcebook FAITHS AND PANTHEONS, except that what she’s borrowed from Vhaeraun means her avatar does not lose her Extra Domain salient ability, and so retains all the things listed as being lost to her avatar on p25 of F&P. She carries the Moonsword, as noted, and the black cloak she gained from Vhaeraun acts as a second Moonsword (it can transform itself into one, and fly about to attack or aid her or others, as she wills, with her own movement rate and the best possible maneuverability) and can emit magical darkness as she wills, in extent and specifics, up to 90-foot-sphere about itself limits.

The Mask: an always-silent black full-face (brow to chin) mask that can absorb the energy of all spells into itself (including dispel magic) and be augmented thereby, and can heal or impart spells to mortals by touch. The mask can vary in size from as large as an adult drow’s fingernail to as large as huge castle gates, but is usually about double the size of a full-face mask a mortal adult drow might wear. It varies in visibility as Eilistraee wills, its silver radiance waxing or waning as she wills, and also in tangibility, from “not there” to velvety-soft to as hard as adamantite. As the Mask, Eilistraee never speaks, but can write words of fire in the mind of a mortal within 90 feet, and impart vivid and detailed mental visions (still images or “movies”) with the same range.

Visions to Drow

- Qs for EG, 5/11/16

It is true that for some decades in the Realms (the time covered by the Realms boxed sets of both the 1st and 2nd Edition) there were apparently no male clerics of Lolth and no male clerics of Eilistraee, and no non-drow clergy of either goddess.

However, matters have changed.

Some (not all!) priestesses of Eilistraee believe the Dancer is worried about something dark she's foreseen. Others disagree - - but all admit the Goddess has, for reasons she's not divulged, changed the directives she gives her clergy and lay worshippers, to become far more inclusive.

For one thing, the "dream visions" she's sent to senior established clergy have begun to direct them to accept both males and individuals of many races into the ranks of her clergy. (So, yes, Kentinal, a goblin priestess, gnome priestess, silver dragon, hill giants, and male priests of all stripes now ARE possible. We still don't know [not being able to personally quiz Eilistraee] if there are any races that remain unacceptable as her clergy, but whereas before the answer was: all of them except drow, and female drow at that, the answer now is: possibly; all certainty is gone.) There are even apparently lycanthropes and shapechanging races among the clergy of Eilistraee.

Yes, you heard me right: there now ARE a few males among her church, but to enter it they have all "Danced The ChANGEDANCE" and spent time as female, just as Mystra caused Elminster to spend time as Elmara - - and for the same reasons: greater understanding and sensitivity of "the life of the other gender." One cannot truly feel the Divine Dance of Eilistraee PROPERLY except as a female, and so her (still very rare, few, and generally secretive about it) male priests must spend some time as a female (not just for the duration of a ritual, but they must do some everyday living as a female). The most accomplished drow, elf, half-elf, and human male priests seem to feel the need to take female form for some days every few years or so (if they wish to "cleave more fully to the Goddess" and thus rise in levels), and most spend longer and longer times in female form. Not all female priests of the Goddess fully trust the males, and they don't tend to rise much in the church hierarchy (no matter what character levels they achieve).

More than that, many drow priestesses of Eilistraee are unhappy about this, and may prove hostile (not to the point of violence or refusal to accept or aid, but with a coldness in manner and a wary "always watching over" any males, until they achieve acceptance on a personal level [e.g. "I still don't hold with allowing males - - males! - - to join the dances, but Elorand can be trusted; he's proven himself over and over, and don't think we haven't tested him. Other males, I still don't trust!"]). Eilistraee has always had enough personal contact with her clergy that none of them would think of disbelieving that she truly means this "new way" to occur and to be followed - - and no established priestess of Eilistraee will renounce this new order, either. ("Reluctantly accepting and unhappily coping" is a good description of their state; "defying the goddess and rejecting males or trying to trick or lead them into fatal mishaps so we can be rid of them" would NOT be an accurate characterization.)

There wasn't a single date or clear moment when the acceptance of males and non-drow began; it seems to have been slowly and almost secretly occurring over a decade or so. However, as of 1373 DR, "everyone" among the clergy of Eilistraee now seems to be aware of it.

Zandilar, Eilistraee has always gained converts and made herself known to drow through dream-visions and personal appearances (usually dancing in moonlit woods). Many, many drow long to return to the surface and live among trees (it's a race instinct, that some recognize for what it is - - whereas other drow just feel always unsettled and edgy, and usually turn this into fighting amongst themselves, and family and/or trading rivalries), and Eilistraee has far more worshippers than the drow who dwell under the firm influence of Vhaeraun or Lolth (who is by far the most powerful of drow deities) would have one believe. I'd say a little more than 22% or so of all drow in Faerûn worship Eilistraee - - although I must again remind scribes to set aside any modern monotheistic thinking: in the Realms, the vast majority of intelligent beings worship many or at least several gods, NOT just one. It's not easy to truly

believe in and worship Lolth and any other drow deity, but a particular drow individual COULD venerate both Eilistraee and Vhaeraun (though they'd serve neither well, in trying to follow or honour both). Drow who ONLY worship Eilistraee are almost entirely her clergy, and are probably between 10 and 12 percent of all drow.

(I would echo Zanan in ranking the "popularity" of drow deities as: Lolth by a long shot, then Vhaeraun, but thereafter I would put Eilistraee ahead of Selvetarm, and Ghaundaur last of all. As of this moment, that is; faiths and their deities rise and fall over time, and right now Lolth is the only one I would bet on being around in the far future, if one purely considers divine power. Faraer is quite correct, however, to remind us that "worship isn't the sole determinant of godly might, or Waukeen would be far greater than Mystra and Shar." Woolly Rupert is also dead-on when he observed "If Lolth had her way, there would be no drow pantheon -- just her.")

Every drow who sets out on an expedition to the surface, to raid, gets "tempted by Eilistraee in their dreams" (visions sent into their minds, whether they're asleep, in Reverie, lying wounded or bored, singing or otherwise concentrating on something, or daydreaming alone or working on some repetitive task like painting or weaving). She also sends visions, in exactly the same manner, to drow who never go near the surface.

Many drow literally don't understand the visions; they feel but don't "feel" the Goddess. Others find Her troubling, or reject Her -- but about a quarter of all drow yearn for what she shows them. They may never do anything about it, or may never seek Her or Her worship, but they certainly feel Her.

So almost all drow learn of Eilistraee's existence, and even receive a true picture of what it is (Lolth can't stop that, because she too uses the dream-vision approach, and to try to block others from using it would rob her lay worshippers of much sanity, her priestesses of much daily control over those lay worshippers, and herself of much control over her priestesses). Not all that many reject Lolth and cleave to Eilistraee, but many secretly yearn (meaning they might spare a stricken worshipper of Eilistraee if they think no priestess is watching, or fail to pass on to other drow something they may have seen of the activities of faithful of Eilistraee, or stop to watch a dance of Eilistraee worshippers rather than disrupting it).

As for which pantheon Eilistraee belongs to: pantheons are a purely mortal frame of reference, or way of classifying and speaking of divine beings they can never wholly understand. Eilistraee clearly began as, and primarily remains, a drow deity -- but has exiled herself from the formal company of all other deities (though she's friendly to Selune and Mielikki, and at least polite to all of the major surface elven deities).

No mortal can be certain why Eilistraee is now embracing males and non-drow as worshippers, but we do know it's been going on for some time, and is now openly Her policy (NO clergy of Eilistraee can fool themselves into passing this off as an idea promoted by this or that high-ranking priestess; they KNOW the Goddess Herself is promoting this). There are still certain church "offices" (Sword Dancers and other prestige classes) that seem restricted to females only, but this may only appear to be the case because no males have yet attained those offices -- we literally no longer know if there's a divine prohibition.

- THO, 14/12/15

(And BTW, all, the fact that Eilistraee herself pronounces her name that way doesn't mean that others across the Realms don't say it differently, and she still answers to all the variants. Qilué and the Seven and El always pronounced it "Isle-ISS-tree," even when addressing the goddess face to face, in the "home" Realms campaign.)

Clergy and Proselytizing

- Ed 13/3/14

Worshippers of the Dark Dancer vary just as the worshippers of all other deities do when considered en masse, but in general, no, those who venerate Eilistraee most (i.e. before all the other deities they believe in) do NOT proselytize. Theirs is a personal and private belief far more than it is a public, bold, involved-in-politics worship.

In Home Campaign

- Ed 9/8/14 (quoted by Irennan)

Yes, Eilistraee is part of the "home" Realms campaign and has appeared "onstage" and by dream-vision and manifestation in Realmsplay. At the writing of (the first) DROW OF THE UNDERDARK, I was asked to create a deity for "good" drow for the game, and used the opportunity to make official the Dark Dancer female drow goddess I'd already created for my own use.

And, oh yes: Eilistraee lives!

Marriages / Love-Binding

- Ed 31/12/10

This answer applies to situations where both partners who desire to wed venerate the Dark Dancer before other deities. For "mixed marriages," the priestess of Eilistraee they find will consult with clergy of deities the non-Eilistraee-first partner venerates above others, and craft a modified ceremony accordingly.

So here we go, assuming that someone has found a priest or priestess of Eilistraee and asked them to perform a "love-binding" (which is what the faith of the Dark Dancer calls marriage) . . .

Such a request cannot be refused for reasons of personal inclination (i.e. the clergy not wanting to), only for reasons of "unworthiness," as revealed hereafter.

A priest of Eilistraee will only love-bind when no priestess is available, and junior priestesses will defer to priestesses who have performed more wedding ceremonies (this is "the will of Eilistraee," and mortals have not been told why she prefers matters this way).

By way of preparation, the priestess who will perform the wedding meets separately with the individuals to be wed ("supplicants"). Supplicants need not both be drow, or of the same race, or of differing genders, but MUST reveal their true natures to the priestess (i.e. the union is invalid, and the priestess will be made aware of this by the power of the goddess during the ritual, if one or both of the partners is using illusions or shapeshifting to appear to the world around as something other than what they are, or is not wholly who they claim to be [examples of this: a doppelganger impersonating someone, someone with a tsochar inside them, etc.]). When the priestess is alone with the supplicant, she casts a spell on them to ascertain when truth is told, then questions them as to their love for their partner, their motives in seeking to be united, their willingness to serve Eilistraee faithfully and venerate her "in truth."

If satisfied with what she learns, the priestess prays with the individual to "call down Eilistraee's regard" upon them both. She will know if she gains this attention, and the supplicant will usually see her eyes turn to bright, pupilless glows of silver (she goes "moon-eyed").

When this happens, both priestess and supplicant disrobe, embrace (wrap arms around each other and press their bodies together, almost always face to face; this is NOT a sexual uniting), and dance together, the priestess "leading" the movements and silently praying to Eilistraee for a sign of blessing

(for the binding), or a sign of warning or denial. The Dark Dancer will unerringly spot any treachery the priestess may have missed, but in all other cases will eagerly bless the union—which after both supplicants are “danced and found worthy,” can take place immediately, or at any future time.

A love-binding (wedding) will always take place at night, under the moon (i.e. a non-overcast, moonlit night). The most favourable spot is a forest glade where Eilistraee is often worshipped with dance; failing that, a bare hilltop or rocky height will serve; lacking that, any level ground that’s not covered by manmade construction (or other creature-built things, altars to Eilistraee being the sole exception) and is bathed in full moonlight will do. Favoured above all others is any spot where Eilistraee herself has been seen or has manifested.

The ritual can begin whenever the moonlight first touches the chosen spot, and the supplicants are present. If there are well-wishers/an audience/a congregation present (and there should be at least two witnesses, one a dedicated, active worshipper of Eilistraee and one not), they stand at the edges of the place of the ritual; if they are sufficient in number, the presiding priestess will ask them to form a ring around the supplicants, as far back as the boundaries of the spot (e.g. standing trees) permit.

If circumstances permit (i.e. safety of the participants, even in cold winter weather), the supplicants will have disrobed before entering the spot of the ceremony, and been dressed in ankle-length overrobes by the priestess, who will be similarly clad (barefoot, robes only). When the ceremony begins, the priestess disrobes, works a minor spell that causes moonglow to manifest around her (and the altar, if there is one), then calls on Eilistraee to “watch this binding, and make it firm” and then upon the witnesses (and the other watching audience members, if any) to “witness this union of love.”

The priestess will then produce a large “loving cup” full of wine—a black, sweet, smoky-tasting vintage consecrated to the goddess and prepared by clergy of Eilistraee—and direct the two supplicants to face each other and drink from it simultaneously. She then takes it from them, bids them kiss, and while they are doing so, removes their robes, touching each of them in the small of the back while doing so and causing moonglow to manifest around them (a glowing white aura).

She then parts them, clasps their hands together, and bids them ask Eilistraee for Her blessing “with all their hearts.” After they have both done so (usually female first, but it’s up to the supplicants; if they can’t swiftly decide, the priestess will direct one of them to speak first), the priestess declares them “bound before the Goddess,” claps her hands, and the festivities begin.

These festivities vary with the circumstances (a need to be stealthy due to wartime or personal danger, fierce cold or winter weather, etc.). If there are other clergy of Eilistraee (or other deities) present, they at this time move to form a circle at the edges of the place where the ceremony is held, in a ring facing outwards, weapons drawn, to defend the “Bound” (the wedded couple) and the celebrants during the dancing (this may be a very real service, or merely a ceremonial duty, depending on the where and when of the wedding).

The presiding priestess then begins a rhythmic chant to the goddess (which will be echoed by any other Eilistraean clergy present, and often by other worshippers who’ve attended such a ceremony before; it’s simple, repetitive, and rather haunting [imagine the “sunrise, sunset” refrain from FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, that rises and falls twice, then on its third descent becomes a syncopated staccato five-note fall, and from then on sweeps into the same rise, but always has the five-note descent]) and casts a minor spell that will carry this music on without anyone having to sing (though typically she and other priestesses will keep a harmony “above it” from time to time, as the dancing continues).

Dancing then begins, led by the presiding priestess. The Bound must dance, with each other and then

with the witnesses, though the form this dancing takes can be whatever is comfortable or physically possible for those involved (wild leaps down to elders with canes merely swaying and murmuring, or an agile dancer gyrating around a not-very-mobile one).

Usually the priestess leads the Bound into an initial dance while the celebrants watch, then stops dancing and lets them dance amorously together while she (the priestess) murmurs a prayer to Eilistraee for her boon upon the couple. Then general dancing begins, the priestess drawing celebrants to join the Bound.

Sometimes all or some of the celebrants disrobe for the dancing, sometimes the Bound consummate the marriage there and then amid the dancers, and sometimes the ceremony turns into a general orgy, with many or all of the dancers plunging into lovemaking. Food and drink may or may not be served, as the participants desire.

The moonglow around the body of the priestess is "given" (conferred, more faintly and lasting a shorter time) to all she touches—and most priestesses will embrace all celebrants and dance with them.

It's customary for the dancing to go on until the moonglow fades from the body of the priestess or dawn comes (whichever happens first); the spell used by most priestesses causes their glow to last for a little over an hour [yes, of our real-world time], and any conferred glows to die with hers or a little earlier).

She will usually end the musical spell at this time, and lead the Bound, the celebrants, and any guardian clergy away to where they will spend the rest of the night (an inn, temple accommodations, private homes, or a single large dwelling). Sometimes, however, the musical magic is left alone, to sound in the spot of the ceremony until it fades entirely, half a day later. On rare occasions, in warm summer weather, slumber may occur on the spot, within the guardian clergy, until morning.

Ghaunadaur

Origin of name

- THO 31/5/16

Ed created "Ghaunadaur," and the name was a purely original creation (applied to Gary Gygax's unnamed "Elder Elemental God," or rather its manifestation in the Realms).

Lolth

Surface Elves worshipping Lolth

- Ed 23/1/13

Yes, it's certainly possible; all inhabitants of the Realms "believe in" all of the gods, and though elves of the surface venerating Lolth will be rare, Lolth would indeed enjoy corrupting elves of all sorts and welcoming them to her service. She'll have most success in subverting elves who are consumed with rage or grief because of events in their lives -- and those aching for power.

Vhaeraun

Vhaeraun's ethos

- THO 14/12/15

Vhaeraun is back to being himself, with the same portfolios. His ethos is SUBTLY changed; he is now advocating drow dwelling in the World Above (the surface world) be good citizens where doing so will enhance their chances of staying alive and being accepted, and do their evil deeds as covertly as possible. In other words, do good when and where it profits them to do so.

Vhaerun Worshipper Alignment

- THO 27/9/14

I know that Vhaeraun has drow worshippers who aren't evil.

Eldath

Clergy

- THO 29/12/15

In the "home" Realms campaign, most of the clergy of Eldath we met were pacifists who patiently "restored nature" after depredations of "civilized"/landclearing folk, and who did tireless diplomacy (sometimes working with clergy of Chauntea) to encourage agriculture in one place, with the price being to "leave alone" other, wilder areas.

Gond

Gond's Church

- THO paraphrasing Ed, 22/2/15, referring to reference in Elminster's Guide to the Realms

Gond and his highest priests mistrusting magic and trusting in devices and tools and processes that can be fashioned and used without any Art at all. But seeing that magic is "the big hammer" in the world, and they're just going to have to live with that, seeking to have influence through wealth and ruling or more often being "powers behind thrones" instead.

Until the Spellplague hits, they see it as proof positive how dangerous magic is and how much damage over-reliance on the Art can do to everyone, and in the power grab among the deities of the Sundering (with new Tablets of Fate to be written, reflecting the "new current" status, portfolios, and power levels of the deities), the same thing that caused all sorts of Chosen to be created by many gods, they see that it's time, or should be, to move actively against arcane spellcasters. NOT in an open "kill the dirty wizards!" confrontation, because that isn't Gond's way, but to resist and thwart and crowd out and hamper, because it's better for everyone (not just Gond and his faithful) if magic is rare and special and restricted.

Helm

Ethos

- Ed 8/5/10

Helm has always been one of my favourites among the deities of the Realms. I created him to be staunch and steadfast and true, one of the very few who "stood unshakeably for one thing" rather than an intriguer or liar or dabbler in many portfolios and mortal doings. In this, he's similar to, say, Eldath and the other nature deities, but essentially different in that they are tied to living things that grow and change (and change in where and how they are found within the Realms), whereas Helm stands unmoved, because his "thing" is a principle.

Helm is the ultimate loner, and THE "hardass." He won't back down, even if it means his obvious destruction. He's the guy in the movie EXCALIBUR who says flatly, "I saw what I saw. The boy drew the sword."

I admire Helm greatly, and yet see him as a tragic figure, BECAUSE he's so dedicated. Where other deities can trick, make love, woo, get drunk, enjoy experiences, and so on, Helm is ever-vigilant, always

"on the job."

So I designed him deliberately to have a softer, more affectionate side (that other designers like Eric Boyd and Julia Martin have picked up and expanded on) to make Helm less one-dimensional and therefore more resilient.

By his nature, Helm will never be a "mover," a force to start conflicts or grand plans or adventures. He's an obstacle; the closed door, the gate that must be won past, the ultimate sentinel. If you're not among the very strongest gods or haven't cobbled together a fighting alliance of strong gods, you CAN'T force your way past him. You can only win past by trickery (VERY hard to do) or by reasoning with Helm and truly presenting your cause as "more just" or the like.

All of which, in a real world full of deceit, half-truths, "spin," and outright misrepresentation, makes me admire Helm all the more. I thought it was important to separate the vigilant guardian from justice (Tyr) and other, similar gods (Torm, Tempus), and as time passes, I'm ever more convinced that I was right. Yeah, I look up to the guy, fictional creation though he is. And isn't that success in itself, giving me (and, I hope, others) a "touchstone anchor" in life?

Ilmater

Ed tidbits

- Ed 7/7/11

Ilmater's always been a lesser deity because he's an essentially personal, private deity rather than one with big aims, driving ambitions, and a forceful daily presence in society/politics. He's a quiet refuge.

Ilmater's priests usually heal and tend for free, but charge modest fees (temple offerings) for artificial limbs/crutches/other aids, and disease medicines/rash-and-infection-and-wound ointments. Some Ilmatari priests function like traveling doctors in rural areas.

Creed and stories

- THO 6/7/11, quoting Ed's notes to players initially before sharing own experience

ILMATER is the god of compassion, the Sharer of Sufferings. Pain, grief, mental anguish, and loss are all lessened when shared, and the righteous path for all sentient beings is to aid those who suffer by offering understanding, support, and physical aid (feed and shelter those in shock, give them silent company and someone to talk to/with if they desire it, bring them to holy clergy of Ilmater if they seem inconsolable, suicidal, despairing, or dazed).

Comfort the upset, speak to and walk with the lonely, the outcast, and the unpopular, and above all understand and offer compassion.

That's the basic creed. I know there are stories about Ilmater offering himself to undergo torture, and those in pain (battle wounds, sickness, surgery, or torture) can recite or mentally frame certain prayers to "bring the god to them" to alleviate their pain by "embracing it with Ilmater," but these are memories from play preserved in my notes, as opposed to the creed, which I've quoted from Ed's handouts.

Issek of the Jug

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 1/7/11, canonicity unclear

It's no secret that Ilmater is the Realms version of Issek of the Jug, the god on the rack from Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd & Mouser tales (the world of Nehwon), that got AD&D treatment in the first edition of DEITIES &

DEMIGODS (for legal reasons, the mythos of Nehwon and the Melnibonaeen mythos, from Moorcock's Elric stories, got left out of later DDG editions).

- Faraer, Qs for Ed 6/7/11, affirmed by THO

Worth bearing in mind too that Issek of the Jug was a satire on religious crazes and charismatic mystery cults of the Christ/Mithras sort. He shares something of Christ's radical inversion of the usual pagan association of virtue and worldly success. In our world, most such cults stayed small, like Ilmater's; Christianity's extraordinary growth depended on a very specific social context.

Jergal

ELB Theories

- The Sage quoting ELB, Qs for Ed 16/5/10

Eric Boyd once suggested that Jergal was most likely a Spellweaver god of death that originated around the Lake of Steam area.

Additionally, Eric also said:-

I do like the idea of Jergal being a spellweaver death god, as I think it really fits the original picture of Jergal in "Prince of Lies." That said, I'm not sure when I'd have a chance to address the question in an upcoming Realms product one way or the other. Also, I'm not sure whether it would do Jergal justice to mention his origin without an associated plot exploiting it.

I guess my answer is ... I don't know for now, but I'll certainly consider it if I get the opportunity in the future. This will probably depend in large part on fan reaction on the various boards I read.

And here's another bit he posted on the Wizards boards several years ago:-

It has been speculated by more than a few Realms fans that the image of Jergal in Powers and Pantheons makes him look like an evolved or ascended thri-kreen. As such, several theories which try to explain this supposed connection have arisen here, and on other boards.

Spellweaver/Thri-Kreen Connection

- Ed 16/5/10

Much has yet to be revealed about the spellweaver race and about the racial past/development of the thri-kreen. Both of which have a connection to Jergal (in one case to his mortal self AND his divine self, and in the other only to his divine self).

Kossuth

Source of Name

- THO 27/7/16, regarding potential link to Canadian town of Kossuth

The short answer re. Kossuth is: Ed and I both don't know. Kossuth comes from the core game rules, and was named by someone at TSR, rather than being "from the Realms, and named by Ed."

In the Realms, the being is pronounced "Koss-OOTH," BTW.

Lurue

Pre-Canon History

- Ed quoted by crazedventurers in Qs for Ed, 12/12/13

Originally, Lurue WAS magic—before Julia Martin added the name “Weave” to my GenCon explanations of ‘the great web of magic that’s everywhere in Toril, binds Toril together, and IS Toril,’ Lurue was the embodiment of the Weave. As such, she could teleport without error or limit, through all barriers and spells, was immune to all known magical [and psionic] effects, could raise dead, heal, regenerate and restore with the touch of her horn—and also spew silver fire from it—and so on. Her very proximity dispels illusions and curses, purifies and neutralizes poisons and taints, and purges diseases. And on and on. [To the usual chorus of “Look, yet another all-powerful Greenwood munchkin!” I reply: Yes. Of course. This is THE all-powerful goddess, and she’s also whimsical. We can’t understand why she does what she does, so she can’t be controlled, or act like any sort of tyrannical munchkin, any more than a mountain range or an ocean can be.] She tended to be as curious as a newborn babe, utterly fearless, and kind to injured creatures. And yes, I tucked in the “patron of virgins, but can also make barren wombs bear” folklore, too. Only virgins could ride her, and those who did got that silver hair the Chosen who are Mystra’s daughters all share, and ‘wild talent’ innate magical abilities, and were marked for special tasks and achievements all their lives.

The TSR designers quite rightly (given the humanocentric core of that version of AD&D, with its level and power limits on non-humans) wanted human gods to be front and center and of the greatest power and importance, so Mystra (most important to intelligent creatures trying to USE magic) became also the Guardian or Mother of the Weave, and Lurue sort of . . . danced sideways. To become the awe-inspiring mystery she is now.

Gond/Mystra Rivalry, Dead Magic Zones

- Ed 13/7/13, referring to a Gond-made magic-resistant armour in Prince of Lies novel

Q: I would like to ask if there is a conflict between arcane magic and technology in the Realms, in the sense that the latter weakens the former. I ask this because I read in a Realms novel about Cyric that Gond created a construct that could not be hurt by Mystra's magic, and I have been told that some followers of Gond oppose Mystra. How is this opposition? Can they create dead magic zones?

A: No technology or construct he knows of can create, or even influence, a dead magic zone. He also says some Gondites oppose the works and worship of Mystra because they believe that greater veneration of arcane magic means less respect for technology. In theory, Mystra might become less powerful over time if use of magic, and veneration of her, lessened because more beings venerated Gond more often - - but only in this abstract, hypothetical, eventual sense could "technology weaken magic." It's not an either/or situation in the polytheistic Realms - - i.e. it's wrong to think of faith in the Realms as being struggles between deities for the belief of monotheistic worshippers. All intelligent creatures believe in all the gods. Gods strive against other gods for more power and influence than other gods by being respected, obeyed, and worshipped more than other gods, yes, but Mystra is not the only deity of magic, and magic is so far "ahead" of technology that it will take centuries of cleaving to the latter to lessen the overall pervasiveness of the former.

- Ed 14/7/13

Gond created utterly magic resistant armor by putting part of himself into it; the armor is a part of his divine essence. So he can only make a few suits of armor before he himself is seriously weakened (and if that armor is damaged or destroyed away from his direct presence as an avatar, the divine power will dissipate or be captured by others and lost to him). So that armor was more of a "let's see if I can do this" experiment than it was a "from now on, everyone in the Realms I favor will be walking around in magic-proof armor, and the days of magic ruling the battlefield are done!"

Mielikki

Druid Rituals & Duties

- THO 2/11/10

Ed has told us often (and we've roleplayed it, being as Florin Falconhand venerates Mielikki and has a close, special relationship with her) that travelling druids of Mielikki are duty-bound to call out dryads and aid them in small daily needs (i.e. perform simple tasks that the dryad by her nature cannot, to ease her life, remove sources of her irritation, etc.), and to do the same for small forest-dwelling creatures. Often this is something as simple as hampering uncaring woodcutters (such as those who seek to burn off underbrush to permanently clear forested areas, or to make their felling easier, as opposed to selecting individual trees and taking them down and out with a minimal disturbance of surroundings) by spell-creating boggy conditions and an incredible growth of tangled brambles and thornbushes, to force said cutters to clear all of this new, wet, won't burn well growth before they continue to cut back the forest. Treants are also to be aided, and unicorns and dryads defended by all means (i.e. full hurling of offensive druidic spells, mustering allies against foes of unicorns or dryads, etc.).

This reply comes from my play experience with Ed as DM, and from notes I made during play and talks with Ed, of what Ed said. He'll add more when he can . . .

Mystra

Mystra's Return

- THO 7/2/15

"Is the Mystra who returned Midnight? Or is it perhaps an older Mystra?"

A: This one I can be certain about. Yes, it's Midnight, older and wiser AND with a greater measure of the older Mystra within her - - because she was able to return from death before all the other deities because of the many scattered suppressed echoes and remnants of the older Mystra that survived for her to drift through the Weave to, gather, and reassemble, as well as the silver fire she could take from various Chosen and other mortals (Ed tells me we may learn who a few of those mortals were, in another year or so).

Mystra's Ban

Why didn't it end with her death?

- Ed 30/7/10

The short answer: Mortals (that includes all of us :)) just don't know.

The longer answer: The Ban SHOULD have ended with Mystra's death - - but did not. Which means either that its nature is misunderstood by mortals (possibly because Mystra misled them) or (far more likely) Ao or another divine entity "took over" and maintained the Ban (for as yet unknown reasons, but probably having to do with the stability of magic, with the Weave gone).

What if it ended

- Ed 30/7/10

As Mystra's Ban just cuts off spellcasters' access to some of the outcomes of natural forces (seals off part of the lattice without destroying it, because the natural forces are still there, and still "operating"), its removal will make Weave USERS more powerful, but affect the Weave's own "power" not at all. And its removal won't affect the Shadow Weave itself either, only allow Shadow Weave USERS access to some dark spaces they couldn't reach before.

Does Epic Magic (3.5ed) contradict the Ban?

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 31/7/10, responding to assertion that epic magic must contradict the ban?

It only seems to contradict Ed's words if you think of the Ban as an absolute. We already know from Ed and others that it's not. It has many, many little-known exceptions. Mystra and Azuth and their servitors and Chosen aren't bound by it, except to the extent that Mystra wants them to be. It only governs the Weave, so other magical systems (some of which we know to have spells and spell-like powers) can in effect bypass it. And so on. So a spell EFFECT that would have been a Weave arcane spell of higher than 9th level can be achieved by other magical means, and entirely avoids the Ban.

(And if unknown other deities or a divine entity are now upholding the Ban with Mystra gone, we have no idea at all just how "they" now define the Ban. They could have a long list of exempt spells that the Ban doesn't apply to, and we would never know...until someone tried casting one.

Just my two coppers, but based on things Ed has said both here at the Keep and in many GencOn seminars I've attended over the years.

Death affecting Earth's Weave

- Ed 17/11/10

Each "death" of any deity related in a major way to magic (so, Savras or Azuth as well as Mystra or Mysteryl) causes a period of magical chaos, where "things don't necessarily work the way they're supposed to/usually do." Like real-world hurricanes, this varies in intensity, duration, and effects wildly from place to place and spot to spot (example from the real world: two large structures utterly destroyed, with the building between them left entirely untouched). So Earth's Weave would have had a sudden onset of magical weirdness, probably lasting a few days at most, and then a few "aftershocks" (invisible traveling pockets of wand of wonder-like effects) at random places and times for a month or so thereafter, with a few rare and localized flareups of "random magic" here and there for as much as two years after.

Of course, as DM, you should feel free to change this to suit your purposes. Because magic is harnessing flows of natural energy/potential energy, it's always somewhat unpredictable, by its very nature.

Wizards – Priests of Mystra?

- Crazyadventurers quoting Ed from REALMS-L mailing list, Qs for Ed 22/9/10

Wizards may be priests of Mystra, something we haven't yet gone into, in print. things were complicated enough when I was hurling god entries to Julia for F&A; Jeff Grubb and I, back in the early days, had already decided to leave that one on the back burner for a while, but careful Realms readers can find hints of it in the early products

Dying & Rebirth - effect on magic study, faiths and churches

- Ed 2/1/16

In the Realms, cults and schisms, and "splinter groups" among clergy rise and fall and come and go, constantly. Think of our modern real-world Christian "flavors of the faith," where there are many "Reformed Church of" and "Church of the Witnesses of the Saints" and "Chapel of the Congregationalist Zionist" whatever; believers adjust their own rituals to engage with deities if they dislike or encounter difficulties with, the established on-the-scene clergy. Before the Time of Troubles and the Sundering, the established churches held a lot of social power and influence because their deities backed them strongly. For a short time during and post the ToT, and for about a century after the onset of the Spellplague, as the Sundering was SLOWLY (from a human POV) happening, things were fluid. SOME deity backed a lot of spells that were prayed for, and some clergies questioned and explored alternatives and invented their own new rituals and prayers...and arcane spellcasters found new ways of crafting and casting spells that were "different" from "the Weave through Mystra," often (like we real-world modern folks do when driving cars that we sort-of understand the mechanics of, but couldn't fix personally) not fully understanding HOW things work, just doing what DOES work through experimentation, observation of others, and what we are taught.

The returned Mystra will "back" their new spells AND old ones, gleaned from old spellbooks, so wizards would gain "new" (the old) ways of getting the same or nearly-the-same spell effects...and could continue on as before.

Priests face the same fluid situation and personal decisions, and most of them will be guided by prayer (or rather, the divine responses to it). And as DM, you of course provide those responses. ;} Have at it!

Emphasis on Peace and Prosperity

- Ed 15/6/11

Mystra CERTAINLY prefers that the Art is used to in the long run, help generate peace and prosperity in Faerûn.

Not only does She firmly believe that stable social conditions with a goodly amount of personal freedom, bolstered and made possible by peace and prosperity, make for the best environment in which the maximum number of beings can further their personal mastery of magic, use magic in a daily breadwinning sense (and so enhance possibilities for development of non-battle-magic as opposed to more and more "blasting" spells), and have the time, opportunity, and relatively unfettered (as opposed to wartime) access to resources/ingredients/components/apparatus with which to experiment and be creative in developing new spells and magical processes . . . she also believes that more individuals who hate or fear the Art because they have no gift for working with it and see those who do as potential/actual oppressors, will soften into support of the Art, however grudging, if they see magic (in the hands of many, as opposed to a few tyrants) as bolstering, causing, or maintaining peace and prosperity. (For one thing, if the average saer in the street sees a personal benefit from cheap and plentiful spellcasting, and gets a lot more daily exposure to magic and its casters, familiarity will allay some of the fears, and quell some of the wilder rumours, about magic.)

In other words, magic-aided peace and prosperity creates conditions for a snowballing effect of deepening itself, leading to more peace and prosperity and more magic, AND increases a "buy in" from others who see the benefits of peace and prosperity.

More than this, Mystra sees peace and prosperity as a natural human desire, a goal to be fought for, and

a clear reward for embracing her chief aim of "more magic for all."

The different Mystras have approached this goal in different ways, down the years, although there is increasing evidence that "being Mystra" does, over time, shape each wearer of that particular divine mantle to behave and think in certain ways (some of which are seen by some mortals as "divine hubris"). I must caution again that mortals cannot clearly see the entirety of any divine being's nature, thoughts, and condition, and one must be VERY cautious about saying things along the lines of "this particular act or speech doesn't fit with that stated alignment," or some such. As any librarian knows, classification systems are all imperfect at best. For gods, they define observed tendencies and self-proclaimed adherences, more than any consistent reality.

Seven or Nine Stars

- THO 23/1/10

Mystra was more recently associated with seven stars, but in more ancient times, by nine stars (and the reasons behind that are yet another of the as-yet-unrevealed mysteries of Realmslore; Ed has written about this but his writings are in the hands of Wizards/TSR, and not yet shared with the rest of us).

Neutral Alignment

- Ed 16/7/10, responding to Markustay assertion about neutrality

Markustay: First, I never said Mystra was a 'force for good' - she isn't.

She is a force to promote Arcane magic, and she uses the weave to that end. Technically, I think of Mystra as more of an immensely powerful, sentient artifact. She was created by gods, and is the self-aware consciousness of the weave. At that level of power, the difference between such an artifact and a 'true god' is negligible; merely a matter of semantics. She's like an overly-complex computer program that keeps needing to be rebooted every so often.

Anyhow, the spread of Ubral (shadow) magic is what she is trying to prevent - its natural connections to death would have a devastating effect on the Realms (look at Anauroch). That may make it seem like she is a force for good, but technically 'Good vs Evil' don't enter into it - magic is merely a means to an end, and can be used for either. It is the type of magic she is most concerned with.

While the 'free use of magic' is best-promoted by a free, democratic society, it is not necessary. She obviously had no problem with Aryvandaar and the Vyshann Empire (although it is questionable how much control she can exert over elves). Tyranny tends to lend itself to those in power being the only ones allowed to hold power, and that is the only reason why Mystra opposes those types of cultures."

A: Markustay, every word of this is correct, and is superbly expressed. Right on, in every detail.

- Ed 18/6/11

THO: Ed sees Mystra, on balance, as neutral, as follows (here follow the words of Ed himself):

Ed: Mystra doesn't seek to shut out or favour entire races or kingdoms or regions or particular power groups in their access to ever-greater magic. She doesn't "play favourites." (Those who protest that the Chosen are her favourites have missed the point: they are her AGENTS rather than a "side" among conflicting mortal power groups.)

Mystra does tend to foment rivalries between ambitious or evil mages, because it causes them to work harder at the creative side of magic, and she does tend to more freely disseminate magic among good-

aligned casters who cooperate with others (because they will tend to spread magic more swiftly and freely).

Mystra wants all races using more and more magic; to her, this is a desirable goal. So is peace, purely because it causes the deaths of fewer magic-using creatures than war. (Others may see these as "good" goals and they may well be...or may not. Even a kind, benevolent Mystra may be weakening or even dooming races by causing them to rely increasingly on magic and not, say, their thews. Only time will tell.

It is tempting for a given mortal (both beings in the Realms and scribes here at the Keep) to view individual acts of Mystra in the light of their own personal definitions of good or evil and try to label Mystra in terms of alignment (or say that she's mislabeled in her official alignments, or defies the alignment system). However, this is short-sighted; her impact and pattern of activity can only be viewed over the long run, and HER OWN view of what she's trying to do is even-handed and neutral (and alignment is a description of a particular being's world-view and approach to life, the reasons behind a pattern of acts rather than a list of "dos" and "don'ts". . . at least it was according to Gary Gygax, who created alignment as part of the D&D game, because he and I and some other 'old hand' grognards had a long discussion about this, years and years ago).

If I was a Knight of Myth Drannor, I would probably describe Mystra as "neutral with good tendencies" - but if I was a Zhentarim, I'd probably say she was "neutral tempered with ruthless dislike of some," and if I was a priest of Torm or Helm, I'd say she was "neutral; for if she favoured good, she'd not have suffered the Zhents or Red Wizards to flourish as they did; and if she favoured evil, competing renegade magelords would rule most of the Realms, mustering dragons and worse as allies in an endless struggle to rule us all."

Mortals seeking to judge a particular divine act as "in character" or "right" for a deity are playing themselves for fools from the start, because it's very rare (to unheard of) for any mortal to understand the deity, the various motivations and factors weighing into the deity's decisions, and the situation in which the act is being performed sufficiently well to properly judge the act. Or to put it more simply, "most gods are beyond the understanding of most mortals, almost all of the time." (Which is why, after all, some mortals suffer others to carry on careers as priests.)

Voluntary limiting of power

- Ed 16/7/10, responding to Hoondatha's assertion that her power has been limited

Hoondatha: I remember from somewhere (and I can't remember where despite ten minutes of cudgeling my brains) that that hypothesis of Mystra intentionally weakening herself through Chosen had actually been confirmed. Or at least, as confirmed as anything related to the gods ever is. The worry, IIRC, was to keep Mystra from becoming an all-powerful weapon that gods could take control of and then use against other gods. Which explains why Bane devoted essentially his entire existence to trying to do just that.

Mystra, and especially Mysteryl, had the capability to be the most powerful diety in FR space by a fairly large margin. This was considered bad (again, I think you're right that it was Ao who handed that down), and so deliberate action was taken to weaken her. Remember, Chosen hold the silver fire, and can block Mystra from accessing it if they deem it necessary. I think at their core, the Chosen are a fire-break against Mystra becoming an all-consuming raging inferno, and any other good that they can do, either for Mystra or for the world at large, is a happy byproduct.

Ed: Mystra is indeed an Overgod in waiting - - and could have become THE supreme Realms god had it been in her nature. However, as Hoondatha pointed out, she has voluntarily limited her power. Gods should NOT be seen as all-hungry entities obsessed with (or unable to stop themselves from) gathering ever more power. Their natures, portfolios and all, determine whether or not they are interested in power-gathering, or indifferent, or able to "turn away from it" from time to time, or likely to sacrifice themselves or their gains for what they see as a greater good or achievement or necessity.

Mystra's Chosen

Evil Chosen

- Ed 15/6/11

She has had many. Including some familiar-to-many Realms characters that "no one yet knows" (except, in some cases, WotC staffers or TSR ex-staffers who read my 1986 Realms turnovers or players in my "home" Realms campaign) are Chosen.

Evil self-interest vs propagating magic

- GK, confirmed by THO Qs for Ed 19/7/10

Whilst Mystra may have eventually settled on "basically good" Chosen as the most effective means of spreading magic use, she was likely also not averse to harnessing the "striving for greater Art" compulsion in ambitious mages who wanted to best/match/overmaster other wizards of renown or infamy. If she made Larathgael "the Accursed" a Chosen knowing that he happened to have a host of wizardly enemies and the uncanny knack of making plenty more, it was clear that the Art benefited by those enemy mages doing everything in their power to craft ever greater and more puissant Art to best Larathgael - and the fact that he was a Chosen with all the powers and benefits that go with that, just made the cycle perpetuate for a longer period. Everyone wants to be the "fastest wand in the West" and will practice, practice, practice (and craft and shape magic all the while) until they are just that or die trying.

I see aspects of this theory in Ed's handling of Larloch as well as nuances in the "Secrets of the Magister" sourcebook.

Mystryl's Chosen

- THO 18/4/10

Q: Did Mystryl always have "Chosen", as in repositories for her energy, and therefore an extension of her, not as in "guy or gal given some cool powers"?"

A: Yes.

- Ed 8/9/12

Mystryl had Chosen.

"Eventually go insane"

- THO 15/6/10, responding to query about why this occurs

Ed and I have talked about this, and it's more the stresses of the Weave wearing out both bodies and minds of mortals - - accentuated by, yes, their loss of every person they held dear, over and over again, plus (eventually) even the cities and countries they loved and knew.

So they lose what they're fighting for, and carry ever-more grief plus their loneliness, plus the Weave searing their brains, more and more...

Would this happen to a dragon Chosen?

- THO 16/6/10

Yes, there have been dragons who, according to Ed, "worked with" Mystra, but I don't know if they were Chosen or not.

In theory, being a Chosen burns EVERY mortal out, if they go on long enough, but that "long enough" or rather "too long" varies greatly from individual to individual. Remember the elves who "burned out" fairly quickly, versus, say, Elminster who held out for a long time?

In the SECRETS OF THE MAGISTER 2e Realms sourcebook, Ed hinted pretty strongly at what he's told some his players (such as, ahem, me) straight out: that a Chosen who starts to "lose it" is always given the choice by Mystra or Azuth of "retiring" to be some other sort of servitor, continuing to serve Mystra but with less ravaging daily contact with the rushing energies of the Weave.

Ed has confirmed that some Chosen have gone into retirement to prolong their existences, then come back out of retirement to serve as Chosen again much later, when a particular crisis arose (often one involving the survival or defense of a land, city, site, or family/clan/tribe they held dear).

Mage Sigils

- THO quoting Ed's notes 3/4/10

All of the Chosen who were "chosen" by Mystra (and agreed to serve her) rather than being bred by her (e.g. the Seven Sisters) have two sigils: their own, and a new one given to them after they became her Chosen.

Dead and Wild Magic Exceptions

- Ed quoted by WR, Qs for Ed 8/3/11, regarding exceptions to Mystra's Chosen from normal rules

1. Spending Silver Fire.

For 'brute force' magics (energy blasts, the creation of magical barriers, healing, and so on) Chosen of Mystra can expend silver fire to manage almost normal effects (and probabilities of effects, though there's almost always echoing wild-effect 'leakage' around their operating spells). Translocation spells (teleportation) are still chancy (though in a wild magic area, silver fire can be burned to create a line intersecting with a nearby 'strand of the Weave,' and the Weave then 'ridden' out of the wild magic area, in a strange 'slow teleport' that third parties see beginning as a fading and shifting of the teleporter, so that, say, Elminster briefly has three heads blended and blurred into one another before he 'snaps out of sight'), and detection and divination spells nigh-impossible.

2. Feeding Magic With Magic.

Chosen of Mystra have the inherent ability to 'feed' one magic into another, draining part of the stored energy of a held or worn item or the entire energy of a memorized spell into another spell, to 'power it up.' Because this tends to make magic 'go wild,' it's never done in normal circumstances, but often succeeds in causing a spell to have pretty much normal effect in a wild magic or dead magic area, if a more powerful spell is fed into a lesser one.

For example, Elminster casts a lightning bolt and feels it start to 'tug wild,' so he uses his ability as a

Chosen to make it 'hang fire' until the next round, and during that next round feeds a flesh to stone spell he's memorized into the lightning bolt. Because of the difference in levels, the lightning bolt is highly likely to 'go off' as a lightning bolt, at the end of that second round, though its aim and discharged energy (damage done) may still vary wildly. If El instead burns a ninth-level memorized spell to feed the lightning bolt, it will probably function almost normally. Note that this does NOT appreciably alter the surroundings from being a wild or dead magic area, though doing this thirty times or more would weaken a dead magic area into something much smaller.

3. Feeling Flows, and Familiarity

Chosen of Mystra can sense movements, build-ups, and changes in nature (for example, from a build-up into a discharge) of magical force. This can give them small tactical advantages in a wild magic zone that other beings lack. Also, in a locale VERY familiar to the particular Chosen (such as their usual abode, or a spot where they've previously spent a lot of time or cast many magics), their own magical efforts will be at least slightly better than any attempts by mortal spellcasters to battle dead or wild magic because of their familiarity with the presence, precise location, and nature of existing magics, usual local flows of magic, and so on.

Of course, Chosen can call on the Weave to destroy wild and dead magic areas (and planar rifts, too), though this is a long and exhausting process involving the casting of many spells, and ideally the cooperation of several Chosen or powerful spellcasters working together (something akin to several people trying to gather, bunch up, and carry away a gigantic collapsed hot air balloon or fallen field tent or huge parachute, it's something best accomplished by people who aim their efforts accurately, know what to do, and work together well). It's not something they can expect to accomplish if lacking many memorized (or otherwise stored) magics, if under attack, or in a hurry.

So most Chosen who find themselves in a wild or dead magic zone will first attempt to get out of the zone, unless there's some compelling reason for remaining there.

Silver Fire as life-prolonging

- THO 27/10/12, answering query about why the Chosen don't still age in Spellplague times

The Chosen carry some of Mystra's silver fire within them (part of her divine power). She cannot wrest it from them, nor can anyone else, directly, though a damaged/dying Chosen will "leak" it out, to return to the Weave (Mystra) if it isn't captured by someone else.

So the short, simplified, stickhandling around NDAs answer is that silver fire within them prevents Chosen from aging.

As for El feeling "on his last legs" while Storm doesn't: Storm casts very little magic, relative to all the other Chosen except Dove. So she "wears out" her body, and depletes her silver fire, FAR less than el, one of the most magically active of the Chosen. Storm is in such good shape at the time of ELMINSTER MUST DIE! that she can act as an "anchor" for El during spellcasting that would otherwise leave him raving-insane.

And yes, being in contact with silver fire (even if it's just in an item carried on the character's body or that is daily near to the character - - such as under their bed or on the mantel) would enable even an entirely unwitting mortal to survive long years, beyond their normal lifespan...

[[This has been Ed's favourite way of having long-lived NPCs: wizards, sages, and others who possess rings or other items that trap tiny amounts of silver fire, and so keep them alive for decades longer than usual, because they age very, very slowly...]]

Choosing Chosen

- THO 24/1/10

It was always Ed's intention that MYSTRA ALONE "chooses" her Chosen; it's not something any mortal can become, unless she wants them to. We players in Ed's campaign have no idea how many "hidden Chosen" there may be, but we have all gained the distinct impression that if there are any, they are probably very few. There are some ex-Chosen, and not just because they "fell from favor with the goddess" like Sammaster. Some elves just couldn't physically take the pounding of the Weave-flows, begged to stand back from their service before their bodies were entirely destroyed . . . and these desires were granted.

(Yes, I know the published rules have included various ways of PCs advancing into the ranks of the Chosen by their own achievements, but it doesn't work like that in Ed's campaign.)

- Ed 12/8/12

Mortals are usually going to be unaware of the specific situations in which someone can become a Chosen of Mystra until Mystra Chooses someone. To mortals, it's almost always going to be "out of the blue," and her choices may (and have) seemed strange to some. (So a DM can have Mystra in his/her campaign make an offer to ANYONE, from a beholder to a PC adventurer thief who's never so much as witnessed magic in his life.) However, Mystra doesn't Choose often, and usually chooses people who do wield arcane magic, and are loners/outcasts/those who've seen some hardship, and are intelligent and sensitive. THO was right to tell you that Mystra doesn't have a "set" number of Chosen. Being Chosen is a hard road that literally wears out most mortals fast, so Mystra has "gone through" a lot of Chosen over the years. A few have been corrupted or turned to suicide, many have collapsed and been gently retired, and a VERY few have doggedly survived, Elminster and the Seven (whom Mystra had a hand in creating, to "make" suitable mortals when she could find so few suitable mortals that had developed by themselves) being most prominent among them.

In general, if a PC seeks to become a Chosen, they never will. Mystra is suspicious of mortals who want to become a Chosen (and of course can possess someone either forcibly or as they sleep, and read their every thought and ambition). She prefers mortals who are reluctant to become a Chosen - - because such individuals have "worked out" better, over the years.

There have been times when deities have wanted to have lots of Chosen, and Mystra among them, but she (the first deity to have Chosen, back in her first incarnation) alone among the gods (that mortals "know," at least), is FORCED to have Chosen, to divide up her divine essence among mortals. Mystra is unique among the gods in this regard. Other deities may decide to have Chosen as mortal champions or for other reasons, but Mystra MUST have Chosen - - and has a far less "boss to servitor" relationship with her Chosen than is possible for other deities. Her Chosen can, in large and small ways, defy her if they desire to, and survive for longer than, say, A Chosen of Asmodeus or Bane who dared to defy their master. So she chooses her Chosen VERY carefully. Yes, she can strip Chosen of their status and powers, but doing so is something akin to trying to substantially alter, with needle, thread, and knife, a sail that's in use on a yacht sailing before strong wind, with the sail being the Weave, so it's not something done casually.

As for specifically how Mystra chooses her Chosen, we know she observes possible candidates secretly, trying to discern their true natures and characters, particularly under stress. She's looking for those with insight, foresight, kindness, understanding, patience, and a natural "feel" for the Art (arcane magic). But as far as individual specifics and Mystra's personal decision-making: mysteries to mortals (except, in small glimpses, to some of her most trusted Chosen), and always will be.

The First Chosen

- THO 29/12/11, replying to assertion that Queen Laranla-Embrae Aloevan is the earliest known Chosen of Mystra

...correctly highlighted the earliest Chosen explicitly identified as such in print thus far . . . she's not the first. Who is? NDA, yet to be revealed (but, Ed hints broadly, already onstage in the published Realms).

- GK, Qs for Ed 31/12/11

And just so we are clear, the word "Laranla" is Aloevan's title, not her name. Editing lumped the 'queen' and 'Laranla' words together rather than as alternatives.

Role of Chosen in Published Realms

- Ed 24/4/14

The published Realms have focused on Elminster and the Chosen of Mystra FAR more than my "home" Realms campaign ever has, even with Elminster literally living next door to the Knights, in Shadowdale, for a lot of campaign time.

This is due to the popularity of these characters, resulting in requests by both publishers (TSR and Wizards) for me to write Elminster novels that often feature the other Chosen, from the Seven to Khelben and for that matter the goddess of magic herself. In my own Realms campaign, Elminster is far more of "the old storyteller" who drops hints or recollections about someone or something, then frustratingly vanishes on his own business, leaving the Player Characters on their own.

So the short answer to your question is that you are very much mistaken that Elminster is "the most powerful being in the world." Far from it. Nor is he infallible, and he's not interested in saving the world from its "greatest threats" - - rather, he's interested in being the best servant Mystra has. (That is, furthering her aims, of protecting the Weave and of promoting magic so it's as widely used as possible by the maximum number of creatures, not concentrated in the hands of a few who use it to rule or tyrannize others.) His greatest achievement may just be doggedly keeping at this, refusing to go away and refusing to give up.

Elminster DOES "successfully manipulates many events in the world," but they are events large and small, most of them hidden from public view or what we modern real-worlders might term "geopolitics," and he and the other Chosen are by no means dealing "with the worst menaces." They are doing what Mystra wants him to do, which usually consists of stealthily leaving scrolls and spellbooks where adventurers and "just plain folks" can find them, steering those who have a talent for the Art into places and meetings where they'll have a chance to learn more about the Art, and so on.

When you state that "most mysterious and powerful beings are Chosen of Mystra and allegedly good-aligned," I'm afraid you're simply wrong. There are perhaps twenty active Chosen at any one time, and they serve Mystra in many different ways - - by which I mean they are by no means all "magical fighters" or "meddlers" or "adventurers." Some of them are literally scribes who write down magic and hide from the world.

[[Nor are these Chosen what everyone would call "good." Khelben was a law-and-order type, but Elminster and Storm delight in breaking laws and rules, particularly where they see such laws and rules as protecting the corrupt or promoting good at the expense of personal freedoms.]]

With Khelben off the scene, and acknowledging that Manshoon and Halaster have personal relationships with Mystra but are NOT Chosen, and the Srinshree largely keeps away from human affairs, that leaves Elminster and the Seven as the sort of 'active' Chosen you're probably envisaging. Right now (I'm assuming you haven't yet read THE HERALD) not all of the Seven are still alive, one of them (Dove) almost entirely avoids using magic, and one (Qilué) is shared between Mystra and Eilistraee, and the result is a mere handful of Chosen of Mystra (four or five beings, in the entire world) who MIGHT conceivably compete with Player Character adventurers in some situations.

And they usually won't compete with adventurers, because they're usually busy doing something else (recall the scene I put into SPELLFIRE, with Elminster and Florin strolling right through a battle, Elminster's attention entirely on other things than what Shandril and her companions were involved in, and facing).

Contrary to what you state, there are MANY "more powerful evil beings" AND "non-Chosen of Mystra more powerful mysterious beings" than there are Chosen of Mystra. Larloch and Shaaan the Serpent Queen, just to name two of a long, long, LONG list (and right now I'm only considering those characters I created for the Realms, not those others have added to the setting). From the first, there have been more "nasty bad guys" (and gals, and nonhuman critters) in the Realms than good guys. I know, because I put them there, from Fzoul and Szass Tam to Klauth and the many Malaugrym and even more beholders.

Whether or not Elminster and the Chosen have a "romantic feel" is, of course, a personal view and if you find them non-romantic, so be it. I think some of the Seven are quite romantic, but I find Elminster more gruff and comical (and forbidding underneath) than romantic. However, I find his dedication, and his love of the Realms, romantic indeed.

When you state: "non-wizards and gods different from Mystra and agents of other deities have no real chance," I'm afraid I flatly disagree. My fiction and the existing published history of the Realms (see the Grand History of the Realms) describe many mistakes, defeats, reverses, and outwittings of Mystryl and the two Mystras and their servants and agents - - and these defeats continue right up to the "present day" of the published Realms.

This sentence puzzles me: "While Mystra has been defeated in the past, this may have been a decision of WotC rather than El's." Elminster doesn't get to decide Mystra's fate; it's far more the other way around. If you meant to write "rather than Ed's," you're partly correct; Wizards is the copyright holder of the Realms now, and control the creative direction of the Realms - - but in the past, I had more of a free hand in what I wrote (not the actual prose, which always got attentively edited, but the content) and so Mystra's defeats were matters I created.

"Lastly, villains are depicted as foolish or significantly weaker, e.g. Manshoon (in fiction at least)." Here you are spot-on correct, but that was due to TSR's infamous Code of Conduct (evil cannot be seen to win or benefit in any lasting manner from their achievements, evil cannot be portrayed as more successful or more competent than good, villains must always be more clearly flawed than heroes), and Realms designers railed against this so much that you should be able to spot passages in both my fiction and in Realms game products where the "Keystone Kops" incompetence of the Zhents was lampooned or where we attempted to provide rational in-game explanations for it.

About twenty years ago, I ran eleven short (13 session) mini-campaigns in a public library (the Player

Characters were members of chartered adventuring bands in Cormyr, given charters that had a built in "starter mission"/adventure), and I don't think Elminster or the other Chosen were so much as mentioned, let alone ever appeared, in ten of them. In the eleventh, Storm Silverhand led some Harpers right through the PCs' forest campsite in the middle of the night, scaring the er-whatsis out of them. The view of El and the Chosen as getting in the "game way" of Player Characters adventuring in the Realms, and so limiting their adventures, that you set forth in your post is one I've heard many times, but it's not a view I've ever heard from any player I have Dungeon Mastered. I can only conclude that a lot of DMs must use El and the Chosen as giant hammers to batter down uppity players and their characters, which is horrible DMing behaviour. El and the Chosen are part of the rich background tapestry of the Realms, and should be used sparingly - - just as the gods themselves should be used even more sparingly.

Inevitably the published Realms fiction focuses on heroes, and about five years before the end of TSR's tenure as custodian of the Realms, it was decided that authors should have "signature characters" and that mine should be Elminster, and I've been asked to write Elminster, more Elminster, and still more Elminster books ever since - - but I've never heard anyone say that because Sherlock Holmes is an immortal character of lasting popularity, they can't set games in London, even Victorian London, because he's somehow "in the way." Nor do the writers of murder mysteries shun London because there was once a mysterious butcher named Jack the Ripper.

Now with all of this said, your (and yes, it is very respectful, and I thank you for that) post doesn't anger me, because I welcome the chance to try to increase your enjoyment of the Realms and to "set the record straight" for others who might share the interpretation of El and the Chosen that you have posted about.

Elminster isn't even my favorite Realms character, nor are any of the other Chosen. I've always had a softer spot for Mirt the Moneylender, myself.

I find it sad when gamers turn away from the Realms because of this skewed notion of the role of the Chosen of Mystra. The setting is SO much larger and richer than that. (I've worked on it for not much less than fifty years now, trying to make it ever richer.) I hope you can come to see that, paladinnicolas - - and more than that, start to enjoy playing in the Realms.

Paladins of Mystra

- Ed and THO paraphrasing Ed, 2/10/12

"2) What are common oaths a Paladin of Mystra takes?"

A: Ed says one of them is to defend all who use arcane magic from persecution because of their magic use. Another is to destroy no enchanted item, no matter what.

"3) How would the established churches of Mystra react to a Paladin of their goddess that does not integrate with their organizations?"

Ed: Quite well, because many of the relatively few paladins of Mystra act more or less as solo agents, assisting Mystran clergy when they are 'on the scene,' but otherwise following directives Mystra or Mystra's servitors (beings of the Weave) have personally given them. It doesn't matter whether or not individual priests of Mystra like this state of affairs; it's become the norm.

"4) What exactly happens in a typical 15th of Marpenoth (Reference: 3.5ed's Mystra's ascension) celebration? Are they big groups, or on a smaller, personal level?"

A: Ed says they're almost all small personal celebrations (in temples, individual prayer vigils), not revels.

"6) What actions would a Paladin have to take for Mystra to strip him/her of his powers? How forgiving of mistakes is she (I.E., a Paladin is tricked into something, etc.)?"

A: Ed says very forgiving. Second chances, accepts human fallibility (so few or no consequences if tricked into something).

"8) What colors are Paladins of Mystra required to wear... and in the same vein as the above question, is it Mystra that requires them to wear those colors, or the religious order?"

Ed: The religious order demands paladins of Mystra wear such colors if they want to be recognized as paladins in good standing BY CLERGY OF MYSTRA. Mystra demands nothing in this regard. The colors are blue-white and silver, or failing that, royal blue and white. Best of all: a circle of seven or nine white stars or dots on a blue field (sash, surcoat, or cloak).

Nobanion

- THO 29/5/12

If a sage Elminster spoke well of can be trusted, Nobanion became known in the Realms sometime between 940 DR and 960 DR.

Oghma

Fate of Grand Patriarch

- THO 9/6/11, responding to query about disappeared character that led to church schism

The Grand Patriarch wasn't replaced by Oghma because he is still alive, and still Grand Patriarch (yes, even with all those years passing!) - - and that's all I can say (A) because of the NDA, and (B) because that's as much as I remember about this, and Ed will have to fill in the rest for us both.

Church Knowledge of this

- Ed 11/6/11

The church of Oghma DOESN'T know what happened to their Grand Patriarch, other than "he stands in the favor of Oghma." Which has been interpreted by some to mean he died heroically in service to the deity, by others that he was rewarded by being taken to another plane or into another body to continue to serve the god, and has led to a wild variety of other interpretations by yet other Oghmanites/Oghmanytes/Oghrann. All the priests alive today know is that their Grand Patriarch disappeared, and that the god does not desire them to appoint a new one. When some of the more ambitious upperpriests of the faith prayed to the deity for personal guidance re. running the church, one of them used the wording "tell us WHY we should not replace our Grand Patriarch who has fallen" and received a thunderous divine reply/rebuke: "Who hath told thee the Grand Patriarch is fallen?!?"

Red Knight

Pegasus Mount

- Ed 20/5/10

The name of Red Knight's pegasus mount seen in THE GRAND HISTORY OF THE REALMS is Valorvyr.

Relationship with Torm

- THO 20/5/10

Yes, Red Knight and Torm ARE close friends, and often work together. (I can't go so far as to venture opinions on romance. By "close" friends, I mean deep and many-times-proven mutual trust, the ease of being completely open and candid, and caring for each other's feelings, aims, views, and preferences.)

Shar

"Special" Deity?

- Ed 30/7/10

As for Shar, she is indeed special, though no mortal yet knows (and I can't say; NDAs, you know) exactly why or how. More may well be revealed, some day, but mortals probably won't enjoy that revelation. (And I say this as the guy who created the Realms, Shar, and Mask

Sharess

Burials

- Ed 24/10/2005, quoted 6/1/13

Sharess: no crypts or embalming. Priests embrace the dead in a 'last intimacy' (that need not be more intimate than a kiss while the living cleric's arms are wrapped around the corpse), and the corpses are then animated in a Firedance spell, to cavort in air above a pyre, which is then lit to consume them (so they dance as they crumble into ash, "dancing on air" no matter how much they've crumbled, rather than collapsing as a Dance of Death spell allows)

Silvanus

Clergy Burials

- THO 5/1/13

The bodies of clergy of Silvanus are left to rot "in the open" (after a consecrating prayer).

The corpses of druids are laid to rest amid/beneath the roots of an oak tree, if possible, or a "forest giant" (huge old tree), preferably of duskwood or blueleaf varieties (but the "big and old" trumps species, every time), if no oak is available.

Other clergy of Silvanus (i.e. priests who are not druids) are often laid to rest in glades (small clearings in the depths of forests), or may even be placed in crotches/clefts in trees or "up" in trees, where large boughs branch off the trunk (any sort of tree, oak preferred).

Lay worshippers of Silvanus, unless zealots dedicated to the god, are of course worshippers of all the deities (no monotheism in the Realms), and are usually buried in the shade of a tree or trees.

- Ed 6/1/13

The key feature, for any burial of a creature dedicated to Silvanus, is that an acorn be placed in the mouth of the deceased (or introduced into a body cavity if the head is missing). In many cases, the body really does feed a new oak sapling.

Sune

Definition of Love

- THO 24/4/14 (referring to in The Sentinel, her focus on magically charmed crazed love)

Sune is about ALL love, including murderous passion, the sort of tragic misunderstandings that Shakespeare's Hamlet and Othello both turn on, and obsession/stalking, not just the light and pleasant bits. The light and pleasant bits are what her priests concentrate on publicly, for obvious reasons of making the faith welcoming to all. Ed also added that everything was chaotic and on the gods' part desperate (hence all the "everyone has huge hosts of Chosen" stuff) in a last-minute struggle for power, during the Sundering, so many over-the-line uncharacteristic things were done and attempted. (And on a personal note, I think if Ed has been writing THE SENTINEL, you'd never have seen such scenes or plot threads on the page.)

Beauty Contest Sponsoring

- Ed 28/3/10

The clergy of Sune sponsor beauty contests wherever they have temples (and they train contestants in dancing, singing, graceful movement and speech, and assist them with dress, scents, and cosmetics). The "prizes" consist of taking part in public rituals of worship to Sune (and a share in the offerings given to the temple during such rituals). In addition, many folk of both genders who desire beautiful mates or models for hire attend such rituals, with an eye to "acquiring the services" of such groomed beauties (as bedmates, spouses, prostitutes, or well-paid and unmolested models or "decorative" household servants).

Tiamat

Tiamat Pre-Hoard of the Dragon Queen

- Ed 12/2/15

Tiamat's physical body, like those of the Chosen of Mystra, had been slowly failing over (much passing) time; regenerating ever more slowly, and afflicting her with internal aches and pains.

Tapping into the power of her growing ("growing" in part because of disaffected members of the Cult of the Dragon who turned to her as "the True One" or "the True Hope") worship in Faerûn (as she did in 1371 DR, from the point of view of inhabitants of Toril) renewed and strengthened Tiamat, and allowed her to truly become "The Dragon Queen" as her clergy on Toril revered her.

Yet this very experience of ailing and aging made Tiamat, until then a creature of bold fury and reckless, aggressive attacks (a "to think is to act" creature) suddenly more paranoid. So she misinformed her clergy—who were in no position to see through her lie and "know" differently—as to her celestial whereabouts (and wealth, and servitors, and vast ruled dominion). She also became more scheming and patient, and determined to spread "parts of" herself into several places, so as to survive the ravages of time and attacks of foes.

Her great kingdoms on Heliopolis and later Dragon Eyrie were both largely fictitious; she "changed locations" from one to the other because intrepid wizards adventuring from the Realms (ambitious members of the Twisted Rune seeking allies or sources of power they could plunder or compel) actually reached Heliopolis—and discovered Tiamat had no "realm" there at all.

What she did have in Heliopolis was a lone spellbound, shriveled lichnee half-mad Netherese archwizard, magically confined in a cave, who was the Listener of the Fiveheaded (he heard the words of

prayers made to Tiamat, and “saw” offerings, and yielded up that information when Tiamat mentally visited his mind). If need be, Tiamat’s sentience could “move into” the Listener’s mind and so “be on” Heliopolis, and even use the Listener’s lich body as her own (and survive if her five-headed form was ever destroyed). She apparently used the Listener at least twice to attack foes from behind when they had no idea Tiamat was anything other than in front of them, and alone. (She could also manifest an aspect of herself through him, although if she ever did so in earnest rather than in mere brief experimentation, no one of Toril is aware of it.)

When the Twisted Rune explorers found the Listener and tried to mindscour him for magical lore, they uncovered Tiamat’s secret. Enraged, she entered into the Listener, managed to mentally dominate the Twisted Rune mages, and compelled them to assist her in “relocating” her to Dragon Eyrie by assisting her in mentally destroying and subsuming the draconic deity Azharul (whom she’d long been spying upon as a scheming rival she should someday destroy) and took over his body and rulership, renaming his gigantic and labyrinthine cavern lair as the Cave of Greed (to others in Dragon Eyrie and to priests and sages, it remained “the Dragonspawn Pits of Azharul,” and they merely assumed old Azharul—a fearsome, bad-tempered draconic deity of many long, sharp projecting body-barbs and a mighty mastery of magic—had hit upon a new name for his home). She then used Azharul, assisted by what was left of the Listener and the controlled Twisted Rune wizards, very much as she had done the Listener back on Heliopolis. (The “soft borders” connecting Dragon Eyrie with Avernus allowed Tiamat to visit the Cave of Greed whenever she wanted to, but she apparently did so only once, to convince dragons, both living and spirits, and some abishai, to accompany her to Avernus and fight for her there.)

For all of this time, the “real” Tiamat was in Avernus in the Nine Hells, rebuilding an ever-larger kingdom in the most inhospitable mountains (and rift-like alpine valleys) of that layer (she had long ago been demoted from rulership of that largely-lawless layer because she was so ineffective in preventing the various outcast devils there from repeatedly attempting coups that threatened the dominion of Asmodeus—though the Supreme delved deep into her mind and saw no disloyalty, so he didn’t destroy or otherwise punish her, merely left her to her own devices, reasoning that in building her own power, she would fight against the outcasts and any other intruders far more effectively than she would otherwise—and he also left her with the notion that she could “earn” her “return to rule” if she pleased him enough with her performance; formally, she was given by Asmodeus the duty of guarding the largest and best-known way between Avernus and Dis—the route by which “dumb beasts,” lesser and least devils, and armies gated in from elsewhere would have to pass through, and she fulfilled this duty faithfully by stationing an aspect of herself there that never departed nor neglected this duty).

When the Spellplague struck, it didn’t just affect Toril (and Abeir); its ripples tore through the multiverse, wreaking havoc large and small. Dragon Eyrie disintegrated, and although the plane of the great “Dragon Mountain” was linked to Avernus (and other planes), in the tumult of destruction a stunned and half-crushed Azharul (“physically torn open like a fowl spatchcocked or butterflied for the grill,” as described by one who saw his violent arrival in the Barrens) was hurled violently into Gehenna (Banehold), where an opportunistic Bane pounced on the dazed and physically ruined draconic deity to enslave it—and discovered Tiamat’s presence. And immediately sought to compel and rule her.

Tiamat was furious, of course, but her true self was still in Avernus, and she was wise enough to see that considering the challenges she was facing at the time from various ambitious outcast devils, she could not hope to survive a battle on two fronts—and she would have to exert her full power to defeat Bane in Banehold. So she allowed Bane to “enslave” the part of her that was Azharul, and even served him faithfully, learning his secrets (and relaying them wholly and accurately to Asmodeus as she learned

them, which pleased the Overlord of Hell very much). For his part, Bane exults in tyranny and rule, not slaughter and destruction, and so gloated in harassing his new slave in every way he could. And Tiamat suffered all of these indignities and bided her time, learning all she could of Bane's nature and powers, awaiting her chance.

And when it came—the details aren't known—she struck ruthlessly, not only freeing herself from Bane's tyranny and snatching her Azharul body out of Banehold and into Avernus, she drained much of Bane's power to do so, passing all that she didn't need to mend the Azharul body and fully link it with her own—so that in Avernus, she has her “true” body, an aspect guarding the Way To Dis, and a “battle body” or fighting body (Azharul) she uses to meet with all others, keeping her true self safe and hidden (so an adventurer encounter, such as can happen in the Rise of Tiamat™ adventure, will be with this body, enabling Tiamat herself to survive unscathed any adventurer attack).

Delighted by the gift of divine power torn from Bane (who survived, lessened in might but not in essentials), Asmodeus offered her the rulership of Avernus once more. Whereupon Tiamat surprised (and touched him) by saying she didn't want it because she wouldn't be good at it, that Bel would do a better job and that Asmodeus shouldn't spurn him and so make him a foe, and that Avernus needed to remain a largely-wild “safety valve” for the Nine Hells, to keep his rule strong—but that she would willingly and devotedly be “his champion” on Avernus, smiting all who worked against him whenever she became aware of their “treason.” So Asmodeus held a great ceremony in which he named Tiamat formally “Guardian to the Gate of the Second Layer,” and his “Latest Vassal.”

He also privately urged her to provide covert magical aid to the imprisoned Zariel, behind Bel's back, to make sure that Bel didn't siphon all of Zariel's power and “become a problem.”

When she did so, she came under Bel's compulsion, and through their hostile meeting of minds saw that Asmodeus had forewarned and prepared Bel to deal with her, so as to establish firm control over her—imprisoning her in her kingdom in Avernus, so that she “doesn't get above herself” and kindle personal ambitions.

Tiamat was enraged anew, though she hid her ire from both Bel and Asmodeus, and now believes that all the archdevils of the Nine Hells see her as a “lesser being,” a “mere monster” to be duped and exploited. Determined to be caged nowhere and by no one, she reaches out to her mortal worshippers in the Realms, and conceives of a way to manipulate them into bringing her—or at least an aspect of her—into Toril.

- Ed, 13/2/15

Tiamat's life is mainly battling archdevils and cowing lesser devils to continuously expand her mountain kingdom.

Any notable political manouverings with other devils (besides Bel and Zariel)?

Ed: Just minor conspiracies to conceal from Asmodeus and other ruling archdevils (of the other layers of Hell) that various intruders from other planes have fallen into her hands, for short periods, until she can learn all she can from them, and follow up on such knowledge via her mortal worshippers on various other planes (in the Realms, the Cult of the Dragon) to try to gain all the magic she can before others find out about it and go looking.

How involved with the Blood War has she been? Purely defensive? A frequently targeted asset? Or has she taken a commanding role alongside devilish armies?

Ed: Mainly defensive, but yes, she's (unwillingly, of course) been "a frequently targeted asset." She only commands her own forces, to defend her kingdom, and otherwise tries to avoid getting caught up in the endless fray—which is, after all, to her a no-win ongoing drain of power (fighting servitors) she can't replenish.

Finally, what was Tiamat doing during the events of Elminster in Hell?

Ed: There's a tiny NDA involved here, so I'll try to skate around it and get back to you. For now, let us just say: obviously not directly involved with Mystra's foray.

Tiamat, Nergal, Arcane Brotherhood

- THO, 13/2/15, from the home Realms campaign

It concerns the Arcane Brotherhood, some members of whom came across in old wizards' grimoires (not spellbooks, but the diary-like writings of names and power words and hints and details of incantations and magical lore that their writers assembled, as their lives unfolded) mentions of gems that stored many spells, that had been hidden on Avernus by fleeing Imaskari renegades, who did not survive to return and reclaim their own.

The Brotherhood mounted a "snatch and grab" expedition that went disastrously wrong, falling into the hands of Nergal - - but within the borders of Tiamat's realm. She bargained with him: his life, and a half-share of whatever magic she gained, for yielding up the intruders to her, AND fomenting trouble elsewhere in Avernus (confounding devil commanders of an army Asmodeus had sent, as part of the ongoing Blood War) to distract the Supreme's attention from what Tiamat was up to, which was magically interrogating the Brotherhood mages and then sending them back to Faerûn to fetch magic for her, and yield it up to her. She kept her end of the bargain, but the magic gained was paltry, and Nergal demanded use of her magical hold on one Brotherhood wizard - - to see through his eyes, and learn as much as possible about the Realms, for later use. Tiamat gave in to that demand, judging Nergal's future potential usefulness worth it.

Torm

Softening stance

- Ed 10/9/13

Torm these days is tending more and more towards merciful rather than inflexible. So, he's less "strict" from a mortal point of view. Why? Mortals can only speculate...

Tyr

Example Divine Quest for PC

- Ed 1/3/11

Pick a corrupt district or city in a corrupt country, or a corrupt city-state (e.g. Athkatla, or Westgate, or a Sembian city, or a coastal city in Tethyr; wherever you want to set a goodly amount of roleplaying time). The deity, via priests and altar-visions and dream-visions, assigns to the PCs the task of rooting out corruption, cronyism, and bad laws and law enforcement, and building a FAIR and open system of "justice" in that jurisdiction, so the populace will trust that even-handed justice WILL be done, and prevail. Yes, it's a lifelong task, but if the deity just wants them to establish (rather than maintain) such a system, they may be able to manage it in as little as three or four years. Probably making themselves

hated-by-the-ruler outlaws in the process. ;} Widespread civil strife should be minimal, though deaths may be unavoidable.

Paladins of Tyr after his death

- Ed 16/4/15

Q: After Tyr's abdication and death, what did the famous Paladins of Waterdeep such as Piergeiron, Madieron, and Texter do? Did they convert to followers of Torm? What happened to the political structure and the church of Tyr in Waterdeep?

A: They continued on, renewing their dedication to what Tyr stood for: justice, law and order, equal treatment under the law, peace for the greatest good for all. The Church believed that what happened to Tyr -- and of course there was some debate about what actually HAD happened to Tyr; how reliable was what mortals heard -- happened for good reasons embraced by Tyr. The task of the Church was to pray for guidance and seek mortal and divine wisdom to try to understand what had truly happened, why (as in: why did Tyr behave as he had? What was His ultimate aim?), and therefore what the mortal followers of Tyr should do.

And now, post-Sundering, Tyr has returned, and their staunch and steadfast loyalty has either borne fruit or been seen as passing Tyr's test -- or both.

Tyr pre-Procession of Justice

- Ed 13/3/14

Tyr (known variously as "Achanatyr," "the Sword of Justice," "Arrtyr Judge Of All," and several other names (including Anachtyr), was indeed in the Jhaamdathi pantheon. And existed before that (so he's been around for at least FIVE thousand years). One small, secretive underground Tyrran cult that has existed down all those centuries (with some beholder worshippers as well as humans, and a sprinkling of elves who cleaved to rigid order) is veneration of Ityr, the Blind But All-Seeing Eye (a huge weeping black [all pupil, no iris or sclera] eye that floats and flies about, trailing a small prehensile tail, and "speaks" booming in the minds of those near to it, discerning rights and intent and making judgements; very popular with individuals who desire a guide in life telling them precisely what the right thing to do is, whenever they seek moral guidance; there are secret worshippers of Ityr among the nobility of Waterdeep and of Cormyr to this day, so if you ever find a curtained-off alcove in a nobles' mansion with a wall painting inside it that has any image that includes large, staring eyes that confront the viewer [or just one eye], you've found a private family chapel to Ityr, something that's often explained away as "the only portrait we have of [[this or that illustrious ancestor]], but that very direct stare is disconcerting to everyone, so we keep it hidden away, just for us").

Waukeen

New Coin Minting

- THO 5/12/13, replying to a query about coin-washing

The clergy of Waukeen in Waterdeep don't (publicly) wash coins, they exchange worn coins worshippers offer for shiny new ones (blessed in the temple to the greater glory of Waukeen, of course). I gather from hints Ed dropped (as DM, but speaking in-character as an NPC) that in some times and places clergy of Waukeen melted down and reminted suspect or counterfeit or degraded [i.e. shaved] coinage,

and that most local rulers didn't mind/deliberately overlooked this because it made locally-available coins more trusted and so attracted more business, yielding them more taxes.

FOOD & DRINK

Ales

Popular Ales

- THO 7/5/10, referencing those mentioned in Aurora's Whole Realms Catalog

In published Realms canon, pages 127 through the first item on page 129 of AURORA'S WHOLE REALMS CATALOG describes popular ales of the Realms (covering Bitter Black, Dragon's Breath Beer, Elminster's Choice, Golden Sands Brews (a collective heading; three main types are noted: Basic, Gold, and Orange), Iriaeboran North Brew, Luiren's Best, Old One Eye, Shadowdark Ale, and "Suzale." However, this roster is FAR from comprehensive.

In the Dales/Moonsea/Cormyr/Sembia

- THO 7/5/10

I've found a few beer mentions in the notes I took from things Ed's said in play in recent years (this is FAR from all of Ed's beer lore, just a sampling).

All of these were ordered and drunk at taverns in the Dales, Cormyr, Sembia, and around the Moonsea:

- Railur's Red (a "red" amber ale made in the coastal lands of Cormyr and Sembia with three roast barleys, citrus rinds, and spices, and drunk throughout eastern Cormyr, Sembia, and the Dales).
- Old Black Goblin (a porter that contains cherrywood ash and licorice root, and really IS black; expensive, hard to find, and offered with haughty pride by expensive clubs in the cities of Cormyr and Sembia; it is brewed in secret backcountry locations, and the recipe and brewing are rumored to be controlled by a noble family that in recent decades has been much enriched by sales of its distinctive "hunched-black-stick-figure" branded kegs).
- Sarmsark (a bitter, strong-tasting, but light on the stomach ale much favoured by cheap taverns because patrons can drink a lot of it before feeling ill; tastes of orange rind [[real-world: not-very-sweet marmalade]], is made by many brewers using a widely-known method, and is plentiful and found throughout the Inner Sea lands.)
- Firesword (an amber ale traditionally made in Hillsfar, Yulash, and Zhentil Keep, and now found throughout the Moonsea and Dragonreach lands; with so many brewers in different places making similar beers, "firesword" now varies widely in taste and quality, but has long been an "inn standard" because it keeps well in a keg, and can be "revived" in taste if very old by warming it and dissolving honey into it).
- Battledale Dark (a thick, almost chewy stout made in Battledale a century ago, and recently revived by an enterprising Sembian brewer who settled in Battledale).

Blackroot

- THO 13/8/10

"Blackroot" is akin to licorice (REAL licorice, that is), and beer made from it (so, a dark, thick, almost syrupy brew with a unique taste that has just the tiniest hint of sweetness) is also called "blackroot."

Blue Lethe

- Ed 13/2/12

More about underdark drinks and foods will have to wait until I can grab some more time from all the backed-up lore projects on my platter at the moment (comic issue, Eye columns, and more I can't talk about yet), but "Blue lethe" is the dwarf name for this Netherese drink, because it's blue, and because it causes short-term memory blackouts in dwarves who overindulge in it, hence the reference to Lethe, the River of Forgetfulness in the Planes). The secret of making blue lethe is now forgotten, except for a few elves of "the old" Myth Drannor who experimented until they managed to duplicate it; the Netherese who knew of its making all perished in the crash of their flying cities.

It's a vivid blue, that seems to "glow" in the presence of light it can refract, is opaque rather than translucent, is made from the juices of at least three berries, one of them fermented, and mixed with certain forest plant saps and then magically treated; it is sweet but not cloying, is richly nourishing (can be a food substitute for a tenday or more without ill effects or loss of energies), and most who taste it rave about it and will pay anything for it (so adventurers can resell it to nobles and other wealthy sorts for LOTS of coin). It keeps seemingly forever (thousands of years, anyway :}), and these days is almost always found as "burial adornments"/offerings in Netherese tombs (the elves who can still make it keep this VERY secret, and don't openly hawk their wares anywhere, always passing them off, through layers of intermediaries, as "tomb-found, genuine" blue lethe.

Cooking Competitions

- Ed 8/9/12, responding to query about Iron Chef like competitions

Yes, there are competitions like the American version of Iron Chef from time to time in the Realms, usually when a ruler (or sufficiently wealthy noble) wants to replace a cook. By which I mean, a timed challenge competition of various dishes prepared using key common ingredients, not a television show with public judging. :}

The Realmsian competitions are more like this: the judging of dishes is done initially by a hired spellcaster or other "taster" to guard against poisonings, then samples handed to the patron putting on the competition/doing the hiring for their delectation and decision, then what's left is served to the household/favoured guests of the patron, for their enjoyment.

Most of the festivals around the year are occasions for feasting, and some of them, particularly when they coincide with local market days, are used as a pretext for local cooking competitions, with judging and sometimes prizes (the REAL rewards are orders from customers or local rulers/authorities for supplies of whatever the foodstuff is; savory pies and sausages have long been favourite sorts of "food bought in bulk from an outside supplier" for inns, eateries, "high households," and barracks/fortresses). Yes, nobles in Suzail, Waterdeep, and Amn, and self-styled or wannabe "nobles" of Sembia, from time to time engage in heated bidding wars/underhanded feuds/brinksmanship to try to "hire away" or keep outstanding cooks. This sort of thing waxes and wanes with the wealth and enthusiasm of the nobles involved, because being "foremost in food" is a fashion, whereas good cooks are plentiful in Cormyr, and

“solid, good, FRESH food from one’s own land or hunt” is usually prized over “the latest exotic foodstuff from far.” A FEW nobles lend out their cooks for events, but this “few” becomes “most” when their royalty requests such loans. It’s a way of showing off and looking good/generous/benevolent, and many nobles don’t want to miss a chance to improve their reputations.

Halflings, kenku, and loxo tend to be thought of as “good cooks” in the human mind in most areas of the Realms, but this is a generalization as accurate as all stereotypes, just as halflings, gnomes, and dwarves are thought of as great brewers and distillers and prodigious drinkers - - but this image may break down when applied to specific individuals.

- Ed 10/9/12, follow-up about loxo, kenku, and Sembians as “foodies”

I’ve been trying to build up the loxo and kenku into more multi-dimensional creatures, to bolster the reasons why they’re accepted as part of society (because going just by their initial write-ups for the game, it was slightly puzzling why they wouldn’t be shunned or attacked on sight, so I thought they HAD to have more facets to them).

And as for the Sembians: the average merchant, shopkeeper, and laborer just want cheap, readily-available food as fuel (think of them as fast food restaurant customers), and thanks to the verdant farms and ranches of Sembia and the nearby Dales and Cormyr, they’ve always had that. However, as Sembia soars in wealth and power, its self-styled nobles and untitled “merchant princes” want to share in the luxuries (and airs) they’ve seen the nobility of Cormyr, Waterdeep, and Amn indulge in for years. Taking an interest in wines and expensive, elaborate food (as opposed to the sturdy, cheap, and rustic fare - - washed down with beer - - they’ve long been used to) is one way of using all that coin to “better themselves,” or at least pretend they’re better and take pride in doing so.

Cormyrean Noble vs Servant, Waterdhavian Food

- Ed in 1987 quoted by THO 21/2/13

THO: Nobles have the money to eat meat and exotic (that is, from afar) food more often than commoners, but all in all, everyone eats everything. Yes, nobles put on a show when they have guests, but otherwise eat their favorite foods if they can get them (and they usually can, being the owners of lands that may have tenant farmers or are suitable for hunting).

Here's Ed from 1987, on the difference between what's on a Cormyrean nobleman's platter on a typical no-guests/no-big-feast night, versus what his own servants are eating:

Ed: The lord will have three sorts of wines with the various "removes" (courses) of his meal, and will begin with soup (turtle or chicken broth with dumplings) and savoury tarts, probably fish or chicken livers cooked with wine and spices, then move on to game birds or roast boar or venison (marinated overnight, and then stuffed with a strong savoury stuffing of mushrooms, herbs, spices, and a contrasting-in-flavour meat [goose, perhaps]), and then end with a fantastic fruits-cooked-in-sugar-syrup open-topped pie, or small pastries making heavy use of cherries and citrus peel.

His servants will have the same soup, augmented with more dumplings and leftover gravies and table vegetables from the night before, to make a thicker stew, then a "brandinage" (= loose mess on the plate) of all the ingredients that went into the stuffed roast or game birds, and then biscuits. Dessert, if any, will be biscuits drenched in honey or smeared with the "bowl leftovers" of the fruits and peels mix of the pie.

THO: Of course, commoners working in city streets, shops, and workshops will have more "hand pies," pastries, and sausages (portable foods), and undoubtedly Waterdhavian nobles and commoners will have more seafood (eel pies for commoners and buttered snails for nobles are common Waterdhavian dishes, I know), but I'll have to nudge Ed for the Waterdhavian equivalent of the "typical wuiet night at home" noble meal vs. the meal for the servants, for you.

Corn

Presence pre-Maztica contact

- Ed 14/10/11

Corn was known in mainland Faerûn before the relatively recent contact with Maztica, but the varieties of corn were stunted plants prone to "powdery mildew" and worse blights and what farmers call "smut" (weird fungal growths). So corn had to be carefully picked over, kernel by kernel. It was then usually roasted and ground into cornmeal for travel and trade purposes. Corn on the cob was a local delicacy, eaten fresh or hung up from the kitchen rafters and dried for winter use, NOT a high-yield crop. Most corn was fed to livestock/draft animals.

What was "new" from Maztica was abundant "golden corn" (large, fat cobs on big, flourishing plants beyond number) that changed mainland perceptions of how to use corn and that a huge dependable supply could be locally grown, so it could be relied upon. Cornbreads (pan-fried) became favourites overnight, followed by breadings on vegetables, and corn as a "platter" (plate) vegetable on its own.

Import of Maztican corn before Spellplague disappearance of Maztica

- Ed 16/10/11

Yes, Maztican corn strains were imported into Faerûn in abundance, both living plants and seeds, and some are flourishing. Insects and blights and molds made the trip from Maztica, too, and their effects remain to be seen.

Unexpected places Maztican crops have flourished

- Ed 26/10/11

Yes, many small, scattered plantings literally "all over the place," due to: thefts from farmers and traders that were replanted, traders and others trying a little experimental planting of their own in various backland plots and farms, and dragons and other beasts plundering corn deliberately or unintentionally whilst "grabbing" other prey, and defecating corn in various spots (or in the air, to fall on random locales). Of course, wild corn doesn't last long where climate and other growing conditions aren't friendly, but elsewhere...

Donut Equivalents, Name for ring shape

- Ed 5/7/10

The Realms does have sweet and sugared pastries of various sorts (mainly tarts), but "donuts" in the real-world North American sense are unknown there, and so is the term "donut." There ARE ring-shaped loaves of bread made in the Lake of Steam area and Lapaliiya, Estagund, and Murghom, that have been slowly spreading in popularity along trade-routes. They're basically round, coarse rye loaves (that harden to a gray crust, and keep well, though you can break a tooth on an old loaf that hasn't been softened in broth, wine, or water) that are baked in ring-shaped molds, and transported on, and sold

from, sticks (that sit on rests in a wagon, to keep the ring-shaped loaves from damage by resting on the wagonbed).

They are known as "ring-loaves," because their shape resembles a ring from a coat of mail. (In Lapaliiya, some traders have taken to calling them "klarvels" (singular: "klarvel," but this hasn't yet caught on, outside that country.)

Some bakers in Estagund add molasses and walnuts to their ring-loaves, and they can approach the taste of a not-very-sweet real-world modern North American "walnut cruller," but that's as close as these loaves normally get to being sweet. They can be EATEN as a sweet, but this is usually done by soaking them overnight or longer in mead, or honey, or wine. In the Vilhon Reach, some nobles like to do this with strong spirits, for a month; the thoroughly-soaked ring-loaf is then put on a platter, and its "hole" filled up with cream, or with berries or sliced mangoes mixed with cream. Yum.

Ring-loaves vary widely in size, but most are about the size of a real-world dinner plate (i.e. 10-12 inches across), and about six inches thick. Some are MUCH larger, particularly those baked to be "communal" loaves in barracks and the like, set in the center of a dining table for diners to share, but they're rarely much smaller than the average I've given (i.e. very few, except perhaps from gnome and halfling bakers for household use in their own communities only, would be anything approaching the small size of real-world donuts).

Eggfry Bread

- THO reporting Ed 10/2/11

French Toast IS known and eaten in the Realms, but called "eggfry bread." He further notes that it is NEVER a sweet (a dessert), and certainly is never made with cinammon as in many American kitchens, but is a savory, eaten with gravy, panfry drippings, and spicy sauces like tamarind sauces (the Realmsian equivalents of real-world steak sauces, barbeque sauces, and ketchup). Wayfarers on the road, and caravan merchants, have been known to eat eggfry bread with molasses, and even enjoy it, but it's regarded as "roughing it" or "desperation fare," not a preferred or "proper" way to consume eggfrybread. The "classic" Realmsian way to enjoy eggfrybread is to make it in the fat of, and eat it with, thin slices of pork or salt pork or pork hocks or "cracklings" (rendered-down pork fat or, in modern real-world parlance, "pork rind").

Elminster's Favourite Food & Drink

- Ed 16/3/11

Elminster's favorite dishes and drinks have changed over time, as with most of us. A lot of our exotic Earth foods ("poppers" a.k.a. deep-fried breaded jalapeno peppers with cream cheese, for instance) and drinks (cocktails such as Pina Coladas and Tequila Sunrises), not to mention all sorts of ice creams, catch his eye and tongue when he visits.

At home in the Realms, when it comes to daily fare (as opposed to special dishes usually found only at royal wedding banquets), Elminster is partial to "sarsauce fowl," which is a baked dish of cream, sautéed mushrooms, and poultry (a close real-world equivalent would be cream of mushroom chicken casserole) but will brush that aside for fresh fire-seared barbfin when he can get it (the closest real-world equivalent would be pan-fried, fresh-caught wild salmon). When it comes to trail food, he prefers smoked barbfin (smoked salmon; dry-smoked in a smokehouse, that is, not modern "lox" that's bathed in chemicals to give it a smoked flavour).

In terms of drinkables, Elminster likes halatha tea ("green tea" would be the closest real-world equivalent) for daily thirst-slaking, and zzar (almond liqueur, somewhat akin to real-world Amaretto) and semi-dry to dry white wines if he's consuming alcohol. However, "favourite" is a loaded term when it comes to someone who's been alive for well over a thousand years, because inevitably Elminster compares what he consumes now unfavourably with remembered meals and tipples from long ago (memories inevitably coloured by who he dined with, where, and why). Really press him as to his most memorable and prized taste, and he'll reply simply: "Mystra." (And decline to give further details.) ;}

Evermead

- THO 16/3/13

"Evermead is a rhodomel (honey with attar [[distillate of rose petals]])"

- THO reporting a friend of Ed, 16/3/13

Ed once told me evermead is a sweet (but not cloyingly sweet) mead "spiced up" with cherry juice, vanilla beans, and rose petals - - actual rose petals.

- Ed 23/3/13

There is no "official" recipe for Evermead, and I will bow to anything Lady Elaine Cunningham, the reigning expert on this, can provide.

However, here's the closest equivalent I have devised (a rhodomel):

Needed:

1.5 gal blackberry honey

1 pkg Montrachet yeast

1/2 gal rose petals

8 oz rosewater

3 gal water (avoid chlorinated and fluorinated tap water)

1 gal cherry juice (can be from concentrate, but avoid sugar-augmented "cherry cocktail")

1 vanilla bean

2 cloves

Bring 2 gallons of water to the boil, then remove from heat and stir in honey, keeping stirring until it dissolves.

Pour remaining water into main fermenting vessel, stirring in cherry juice.

Add hot must to main fermenting vessel, and stir. Check temp, and stir in yeast when temp gets below 80 degrees (F).

Do the usual fermenting thing. :}

Shake/swirl to oxygenate, then rack onto mesh bag containing rose petal, cloves, and vanilla bean (slice bean open down length, first).

Makes 5.5 gal

As with all meads, tinker with this until you like the result.

So saith Ed. Who emphasizes that he hasn't made mead often, although he HAS had success.

Exotic Fruits

- Ed 29/12/13

Belarbrith

Imagine an apple pie that's like a carrot in shape and durability—that is, a root vegetable that tastes like apple pie (American scribes please note: an apple pie not laced with cinammon, but baked without that highly-pleasing spice). It has the chewy, almost woody texture of a large and mature carrot, is chestnut brown mottled with ash-gray in outer hue, is “hairy” with rootlets, and is customarily washed clean and eaten bite by bite, though it may be peeled and sliced into medallions if served at a formal feast or highbrow eatery. The flesh is a translucent ale-brown flecked with darker red and brown knots or nodes. Belarbrith naturally thickens broths and soups it's added to, and is sometimes added to pork stews to contrast the flavor of the pork in the same way applesauce is used in some modern real-world recipes, or boiled into a sweet dessert soup to warm and nourish cold wayfarers in winter.

Belarbrith grows wild throughout the Heartlands, though it has been so overharvested in the wild as to become scarce near human settlements and well-used trade-roads, and its finding its way into every garden in the Dales, Cormyr, upland Sembia, and increasingly the Sword Coast North; it can tolerate cold winters (i.e. the root can survive being frozen), though north of Everlund and Silverymoon it grows very slowly, and is typically found as spindly, human-palm-sized rootlets, whereas in warmer climes (it is found as far south as Faerûn extends) it can grow to the length and thickness of a human forearm.

Marlikkon

This fruit grows on thorny wild bushes in the Heartlands, being particularly plentiful in the Starmantle area and south and southwest of Evereska. Readily identifiable due to its chestnut-brown, prickly, irregularly-seamed outer shell (picture a bush that has branches ending in polished brown chestnuts bristling with tiny thorns, nuts that look as if they have been cracked open, and the fragments then glued together again inexpertly enough to clearly show all the wandering edges of the joined pieces). Inside this inedible shell (that can be boiled to derive a mahogany-hued dye, or the “prickles” lopped off to serve as crude needles) is a translucent, jelly-like purplish-gray ovoid mass of flesh that resembles a human brain or certain corals in that its outer shape is that of ropy lengths of pasta or an oval clump of earthworms fused together.

This flesh is sweet and citrus acidic, tasting rather like a ripe tangerine or Clementine. It dries and withers in a day or two after being shelled, but will keep indefinitely if left in its prickly shell (it's commonly stored in sacks in cellars all over the Realms for a year or more). Marlikkon flesh, if shelled in an intact lump, floats in most liquids, and so sees use as a garnish in all manner of ornate desserts, but it is commonly just handed out as a nut, with a cracking tool (in a roadside inn, usually a small wooden mallet), and eaten “raw.”

Salusk

This is a melon that has the beige flesh and sweet taste of a perfectly ripe pear when it is ripe. Ripeness can be reliably discerned from the outside because the rind or skin turns emerald green.

When not yet ripe, its rind is pale green, thick, and oily, and the flesh inside is green and hard and tart, rather like eating orange peel; it's perfectly edible but not beloved by all that many.

When overripe, the flesh turns brown and mushy and very tart (like spiced plum sauce), and the rind or skin goes maroon and eventually splits, whereupon swarms of wasps and hornets descend to eat it.

Not yet ripe or ripe salusk can be fried, and soaks up the flavor of whatever it's fried in, so it's a popular

way to "make meat go farther" by giving a large number of diners something hot that tastes like meat. Raw or cooked, the rind is edible but rather tasteless, has the texture of boiled leather, and has very little nutritional value, though it will encourage regularity.

Salusk grows wild everywhere in Faerûn from the latitude of northern Calimshan south. It grows on creeping vines, most melons the size of a small human head when full-grown, dozens per plant, and having a spindle shape: an ovoid with two "horns" thrusting out of opposing sides of the ovoid, the vine attached to one and the flowers of the salusk-vine sprouting from the other. It is cultivated by encouraging it to grow over and along fences or bent-over scrub trees, and fertilized with livestock dung. Salusks and horsetails tend to naturally grow together.

The salusk is a popular fruit for its hardness (resistance to bruising, or being damaged by bruising), durability (if picked just under-ripe or ripe, it typically doesn't go overripe for two tendays, if kept out of hot direct sun), and its aforementioned companionability to meat.

"Gross" Foods

- THO 20/7/12

I can think of two things off the top of my head (from Ed's unpublished Realmslore), that halflings and gnomes regarded as delicacies: "thalimvur," which is maggots fried in maple syrup or maple sap . . . and "bhaerulb," which is mealworms-and-onions (or, in a pinch, mealworms-and-leeks) curry.

P.S. And of course, hobgoblins and "royal" orcs loved such things as halfling brains stewed in the skulls of their owners, and the like. A Calishite delicacy: vipers' tongues (I can imagine you'd need to gather a LOT of snakes to yield proper portions for most diners...)

Meat Taste for Vegetarians

- THO 1/9/13

Some young dragon meat can be "faked" by roasting and crushing sesame seeds to derive sesame oil, then cooking green (bell) peppers in it, then taking the flavored oil and roasting almonds in it. That gets the taste, but of course not the texture.

Moonsea North Trail Food

- THO reporting Ed, 6/8/14

Popular "prepared" foods (as opposed to foraging for wild game and plants) in the Moonsea North are sausages and "hardloaves" (small round buns, about the size of a large male human's palm), plus "belths" (singular: belth), which is basically a large pickle baked into a Cornish-pasty-style crust (all-around pastry jacket) to keep it from leaking or spoiling. As drinkable water (or in winter, snow) is plentiful, foods can be heavily salted to preserve them. Add to this dried, flattened fruit (figs, apricots, dates), and you have what a lot of wayfarers use for travel food.

Names for Meals

- THO paraphrasing Ed, 9/3/10

Language in the Realms is varied and ever-changing (deliberately so, to make it seem more like the real world, and therefore more real).

So, SOME speakers don't use either "dawnfry" or "morningfeast" at all, some use just one or the other, some use them interchangeably (even if they only use one, themselves, they UNDERSTAND them to

mean precisely the same thing), and some distinguish: "dawnfry" is a camp meal, literally a skillet fry-up of some sort (fish or leftovers from the day before, eggs, sliced meat cooked in its own juices, the ubiquitous trail-food sausages, etc.), and morningfeast is a later in the morning (so, not necessarily at dawn), indoors, more expansive "first household meal of the day" meal (usually centered around something fried, but also including fruits, vegetables, and side-dishes).

"-feast" and "fest" are used according to the STYLE of speaking of the speaker (the dialect plus any tutoring plus speed of uttering words), because formally, it's ALWAYS "feast," but in many places and out of many mouths, the shorter, faster "fest" is what actually comes out.

So, formally, the early meal of the day is "morningfeast" with the more colloquial (or specific) "dawnfry" equivalent.

The midday meal is "highsunfeast" and the most popular equivalent term is "highbite"

The evening meal is "eveningfeast" with "evenfeast" a VERY popular variant, and "longtable" (for formal meals) or "latebite" (for informal ones) as popular equivalents

However, there are dozens of other local/regional terms, and names for meals taken at other times that often "drift" into use for the main three mealtimes, particularly in monasteries, mines, and other settings where those precise mealtimes may never be used.

Pick-Me-Ups

- THO 6/8/12

There's the "bracer" for the hungover, the cold, and the sick: "beef tea." Which in the Realms consists of a trace of brandy, sherry, or zzar (often the dregs) added to hit broth that's also had the hot drippings from overnight kitchen roasts stirred into it. Kills your heart over time, but warms and nourishes in the short term.

It's called "beef tea" regardless of what sort of meat is roasting, and thus supplied the drippings. Most likely in Cormyr and the Dalelands, is probably venison, then old tough oxen, then boar, then moose, then cattle, then domesticated hogs, then other sorts of "wildkill" such as bears, raccoons, and so on.

Pickling

- THO 9/8/14

Most pickling in the North is brining, but some of the Southern pickling is in edible oils.

Preserving Meat, Refrigerating Vegetables

- THO 23/9/11

Meat is driven, live, on the hoof with some caravans, and slaughtered/butchered wherever sold.

Meat is made into sausages, and carried that way, wrapped in certain leaves and then coarse cloaks, to keep the air from it (unwrapped just to sell or eat).

Meat is smoked and or dried, then carried in chests wrapped to keep air/flies away, and kept from sunlight.

Meat is butchered, cooked, and then the small cooked cuts are sealed in barrels of oil to keep the air from them. (This method is very popular with long-haul costers, and sailors.)

Meat is minced, then made into patties, which are packed in ice and put into chests (for short runs to market). Where runs involve overnight camps, the caravans either stop at their own paddocks (which have "cold rooms" or stone-lined cellars dug deep into the earth), or bury their chests in loose earth at

encampments they have used before/use regularly.

Note: many market buildings in important trading towns hire priests or wizards (or the building is owned by a temple that takes a cut of all sales, and provides its priests) to cast cooling spells, to retard decay.

Salt

- THO 22/9/10

I think Ed has answered queries about salt before. From Realmsplay I do recall, off the top of my aging head, that salt is a valuable food preservative as it was in the real-world European Middle Ages, but that it's not as expensive in the Realms as in the real world back then, because it's not as scarce and as difficult to get.

- THO 30/9/10

I ran down one of my notes from play: there's abundant salt to be had in the northern Shaar, in surface mines in Estagund (ancient sea deposits), and in a tidal bay in Unther, among other places. So salt is (relatively) plentiful, and carried via caravans throughout the Heartlands. It's about as expensive as good meat is, in real-world North American supermarkets, today: expensive, but not wildly so.

Tea

- THO 30/9/10, following on from discussion of salt availability

Another real-world onetime-expensive consumable, tea, is also far more abundant and therefore cheaper in the Realms.

Waterdeep Food

- Ed 21/7/12

Waterdeep is a cosmopolitan crossroads, with quite a few wealthy inhabitants, so almost every practical and good-tasting culinary dish or knack or new wrinkle tends to get adopted by someone, and persist somewhere in the city.

Local delicacies tend to have either largely died out over the years as the city has grown and stocks have been depleted (e.g. eel pie, gull pie, and the just-as-revolting-as-it-sounds fish sausage) or to be tavern and lower-class daily staples enjoyed by many, but celebrated by few.

These latter include:

- "melverfew," a dish of diced eels, fleshy dark mushrooms, flounder, and harbor catfish, simmered in oxen-and-onion gravy until everything is soft. All bones are then strained out, and stale bread is shredded and then stirred in, with a handful of grapes or gooseberries (or in winter, or whenever no grapes can be had) raisins added and cooked soft. Typically this is very cheap: 1 cp for a large bowl, sometimes 1 cp for a bowl AND a mug of small beer.
- Whelks in butter (the yellow-brown-shelled edible marine snails still plentiful along the shore of the Sea of Swords from about Port Llast down to Baldur's Gate; these are unshelled by shattering their shells with a wooden peg or maul, dropping them in water (the shell fragments rise or float, and can be skimmed off, then steamed or boiled in water or old soap leavings, then drained and served in a dish with melted butter and a garnish of fresh parsley and/or chives). This is a dish children can prepare, and tends to go for 1 to 3 cp a platter, depending on the size of the platter and the hauteur of the establishment.

- Tharval-and-dleem (tharval are hand-length or smaller, silver, smelt-like fish much used for bait, or mashed into a paste and eaten on toast as many enjoy real-world sardines or kippers, their bones being so small and soft that they can readily be chewed and eaten without discomfort; dleem is a olive-green, stringy seaweed that grows in starfish-shaped clumps, partly clinging to rocks and partly “adrift” in the passing water; if dleem is boiled long and hard, it loses its tough, chewy consistency AND takes on the flavor of whatever it was boiled with, and so is used to bulk up many soups, stews, and other dishes; if mated with mashed tharval, the result has an incredibly rich, “full” taste and texture, so diners feel even ravenous hunger has been thoroughly sated). This is low-end to shopkeeper-class fare, and a daily staple at 3 cp a dish. Garnished with a few oysters and redubbed “Harbor Favor” or “Harbor Fancy,” it goes for 1 sp in middling to higher end establishments, for a generous dish plus handrolls of bread and usually a wedge of sharp cheese to provide a contrasting taste.

- Sarrulk Stag (Imbram Sarrulk was a glutton of astonishing obesity who died of a surfeit of boar, suffering a fatal rupture after singlemouthedly devouring no less than five whole spit-roasted boar back in 1312 DR; he is credited with devising this recipe, which took High Forest venison and divers rodents [city rats and mice], oxen, old mules, and whatever other handy cheap meat could be had, marinating them for two days and nights and then roasting them, all in the recipe’s long list of herbs and sauces, plus drippings and beer - - and somehow making it all taste like the venison; so only nobles and the very wealthy ever have actual stag in their Sarrulk Stag, but everyone can dine hearty . . . hopefully not quite as heart as Sarrulk did). The time needed for preparation and the popularity have always made this stew pricey, so a bowl, garnished with fresh greens, typically costs 2 sp in a cheap eatery, and climbs up to 8 sp in a haughty club (with most places charging 4 sp or so). Outside the city, cut these prices in half.

Yes, it’s reasonable to have raw fish (never served whole, but always filleted/deboned and washed in fresh water that’s been “minted” with a few sprigs of fresh mint) available in a decent, respectable “middling” tavern.

By the way, high-end Sword Coast elven fish fare would include:

- rare delicacies of the seadeeps (giant spearfish, rock reef crab) served raw (but of course “gleaned,” that is: just the flesh, washed in steaming-hot spring water) but with berry- and sherry- and zzar-based “laving sauces” (we might call them “dipping sauces”) on the side.
- Bluehulk (giant tuna) poached in blended wines

And lower-end but respectable Sword Coast elven fish fare would include:

- oysters steamed in beer but served in a cream sauce (dill, leek, chives, but not onions or garlic, because most elven palates find these two overpoweringly strong - - and in fact they are elven “wayfaring staples” for use with rancid/bad food in emergencies, to entirely cover the taste).
- Dlarkult, which is diced small shrimp and crab, simmered in a mixture of melted butter and a light white wine (almost like a real-world risotto)

Wine

Lythton Wine

- THO 1/11/12, replying to query about wine in “Elminster’s Forgotten Realms”

"A dry white," but that's literally all I have, and must stress that was overheard gossip among merchants.

GATES & PORTALS

Crafting Portals

- THO 18/3/10, responding to quote in "Swords of Dragonfire" from Laspeera that "all sufficiently gifted folk can craft portals"

I pounced on that same thing, and Ed explained with a grin that Laspeera meant "has the ability to," not "knows how to, automatically, if the Art is strong enough within them."

Note the context in which Laspeera is speaking; to whom (and why she may have chosen the precise words she did, to manipulate/nudge that person).

It was more of a "you can't count any suspect out" inference than an observation that "everyone's doing it."

Gates to Cynosure

- Ed 9/11/10, in reply to query if they're active or passive, with regards to letting Chosen in (who pass the "divine rank 0" requirement technically, but can't use that divine power)

Most of the gates are passive, but a few are active (i.e. to pass through them, something specific must be done). Almost all of them are hidden, little-known, and/or not easily accessible (e.g. on a remote mountaintop, or at the bottom of a dangerous, deep region of an Underdark).

Portals Chessenta to Lake of Steam

- Ed, 25/1/15

There are several (portals connecting the Lake of Steam to Chessenta), but they are hidden, lost, or forgotten (i.e. adventurers will have to go seeking them; they are not "known highways" for trade or invasion or any other use). The most easily found is a stone archway somewhere not far underground in the northwestern Border Kingdoms, but it's the infamous "Beast Portal;" those using it have an apparently-random chance of having one of their limbs altered into that of a monstrous beast (e.g. a scaled and clawed arm), an alteration that only can be undone by magic - - or by traversing the gate again, which may restore the limb to its original state, or change it to yet another bestial form, and possibly turn another limb to a monstrous shape that doesn't match the first limb.

Tabaxi Gates (Halls of the Beast Tamers)

- Ed, 8/1/15

The gates lead to:

- the middle of a very long corridor on the uppermost "main level" of Undermountain (the level that the shaft in the taproom of The Yawning Portal drops down into). The corridor isn't all that far from the Hall of Sleeping Kings.
- Several places, depending on whether or not whoever is using the gate is bearing a magic item or not, or is a pureblood elf or not, or is bearing a moonblade, or is carrying a specific gate token or "key" (enchanted palm-sized stone bearing a particular rune).

Bearing a magic item not a moonblade: A wilderland dell (grasslands) just north of Secomber (within sight of it), very near the edge of the High Forest.

Pureblood elf (overrides above): A garden in easternmost Evereska, beside a pond.

Bearing a moonblade (overrides above, so this result includes a non-elf carrying a moonblade): a

guarded (by elves, warriors AND high mages) clearing in Evermeet, far from main settlements, and unmapped (referred to by the elves as "Threshold").

Gate token: a rundown warehouse cellar in northeasternmost Scornubel (which, unbeknownst to the warehouse owners, was once a dwarf hiding-cache, which was when the gate was established).

And the tabaxi was magically snatched by a slaver working with a wizard, and left bewildered (not knowing where she was or how she got there) when a spell laid on her wore off, after the slaver and wizard were both murdered (in separate feuds). (In game design terms, she functions to broaden horizons (lure PCs in many possible directions, depending on their reactions to her).

Thinned Veils to Other Worlds

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 10/12/13, reporting a play experience with Ed

The PCs visited a location (an outdoors ruin somewhere in the Stonelands) where there were several large side-by-side gates (portals) into the same location on another Prime Material Plane.

So the always-open gates acted like a row of doors or windows you could look through into that "otherwhere" (which is what Ed called it, because the players knew it wasn't in the Realms, every opening being surrounded by that blue-white tinge Ed uses a lot to signal "magic at work."

- THO 11/12/13, responding to query about places you can see through to other Primes

There are eight or nine such places that I know of from my play experience. That spot in the northeastern Stonelands is known as Brendur's Pool, thanks to the fine-to-drink spring-fed pool at the bottom of the same little valley that holds the row of gates.

Use For Shipping

- THO 17/9/12

Ed built a "bugger factor" into portals (mentioned in one of his more recent novels) that prevent them from being used as a shipping system by everyone: they "vanish" items randomly that individuals take through them. If you desperately need to get from Waterdeep to Suzail overnight, or vice versa, you can if you know how to use certain portals...but you might arrive naked. Or just missing your weapons, or a vital magic item.

So yes, networks have been built, but not used effectively. In part because of this, and in part due to mysterious power groups who move to violently control access to, and use of, gates/portals. A long-running theme in Ed's Realms that predates the D&D game, BTW.

What Can Pass Through

- Ed (1986), quoted by THO 2/9/10

From Ed's original Realms turnover (1986):

Some gates "work" only for living creatures, others for living creatures plus organic matter carried by them (in direct skin contact), some for living creatures plus organic matter in close contact (i.e. carried in satchels, packs, strong chests) or indirect contact (on wagon or automaton/enchanted item/mechanical/undead mount that is in contact with living creature), and some for inorganic material in various of the aforementioned relationships with living creatures.

Others are "open" to everything (items, breezes, precipitation, etc.) passing freely in one direction or

both directions.

A particular gate may exhibit any or all of these properties at particular times or when particular conditions/circumstances occur. Experimentation is often necessary to avoid disaster for wayfarers.

GOODS & SERVICES

Banks

- Ed, 13/5/15

All temples in the Realms, and in Waterdeep that includes The Plinth and the new Temple of Waukeen in particular, have always functioned as banks. There are also independent (non-guilded) moneylenders (Mirt was the most famous of them, but he's been away from Waterdeep for nigh a century, or not, depending on when your Realms campaign is set) in the city, who also function as moneychangers and money storers (in other words, as bankers). So does the Palace, using Castle Waterdeep as their treasury vaults (and many people trust them more than any other source). Certain landlords in the city also "play banker," because it helps with cash flow problems.

Blackstick and Scrip

- THO 18/5/10, referring to items referenced in "Realmslore: Moon Doors of Silverymoon, Part 2"

A blackstick is indeed a sharpened-and-charred-one-end stick that works rather like a grease pencil (due to the nature of the Realmsian wood used, the branches of the juniper-like ground shrub thordren, which is very resinous/"oily")...it can be-charred and re-used easily and swiftly until all "used up."

BTW, there are TWO meanings of scrip (both echoed in real-world archaic English): a pouch or satchel depending from the belt, used like a purse to hold various items, and (the one here) a writing surface, usually a "scrap" or of irregular size, usually parchment, but sometimes linen or boiled treebark or other substances (like rag pulp "paper").

Bodysnatchers

- THO 8/4/10

Yes, there are lots of bodysnatchers active in the Realms wherever lawkeeping is corrupt, lax, or just inadequate, AND there's a market for bodies (those experimenting in necromancy and the creation of constructs). In the 1350s through 1370s in the Realms, important locations for this are: Lashan, Waterdeep (VERY secretive and careful, but happening, using Undermountain and Skullport), Scornubel, Westgate, Tantras, Telflamm, Myratma, Unthalass, and all small settlements within reach of Thay. It also happens from time to time everywhere, as those working for individual priests and necromancers "snatch" bodies, or even living foes or criminals, of select individuals.

Books

Common Books

- Ed 9/7/13

Q: Are there such things as commonplace books and Zibaldone (i.e. hodgepodge books) in the Realms?

A: Yes. They form the bulk of books available for open sale in market stalls or from caravan merchants.

On War and Leadership

- Ed 31/8/13, referring to books other than Erlo Erlaedan's "The Blood Drenched Throne", referenced in Elminster's Forgotten Realms

There are several "classic" and long-popular works on warfare, ruling, and administration. Here are the most widely-known and available handful:

The Rule of the Sword by Anamaskrus Blackhael (published in Amn, circa 1377 DR, and in print ever since; Blackhael was a cynical sage, and the book is about maintaining law and order through threats, patrols, spying, and "judicious" uses of violence)

Gormanther's Battlemastery by Uldro Gormanther (published in Tethyr in 1356 DR; forgotten for some sixty years and then rediscovered and printed in small "pouch-sized" form by various caravan traders; Gormanther was a capable mercenary and this chatty, rambling book is a treasure-trove of tactics, snares, ruses, attack plans, feeding-troops logistics, and battlefield advice)

Tyranny by Esklyn Sarsark (translated by anonymous printers in Selgaunt, circa 1394 DR; Sarsark was a successful half-orc mercenary commander who survived more than a dozen raiding expeditions down into the Underdark, became a highly-paid bodyguard and "covert fist" [private strike force commander] among the nobility of Sembia, and when things grew too hot for him, "retired" to the Border Kingdoms and there set up a tiny realm of his own, Sarsarkhal, where he ruled "with iron thews and blade," carving out good lives for his few subjects and ever-increasing harem; the book describes ruthless ploys for winning skirmishes and for deceiving rivals in social intrigues and exposing them to ridicule or attack)

On How to Be A Noble

- Ed 29/12/12

Most of the lost books sought by noble families are diaries or for-public-consumption (usually to bring disgrace) tell-all scandalous accounts, and they tend to be sought not to suppress them but in hopes of finding lost family treasures by spotting and solving clues written into them (the seekers hope).

Tanistolph Illance, for instance, published his An Illance Errant, a humorous (sometimes viciously so) account of his incestuous wenching, feuds, and within-the-family bickering in 1399 DR, and family members have been reading and re-reading it constantly since, in hopes that some of its passages (notably dialogue that Tanistolph presents as verbatim but that many of the purported speakers swear are his inventions entirely) conceal hints or even clear directions as to where several enchanted swords and chests of gems (family treasures Tanistolph is rumored to have hid) may now be found.

Books written about how to "be noble" are abundant, but many of them are worthless, boring drivel about obedience to elders and (inevitably dated) etiquette, or try to set forth a "style" of how one should act to seem noble (which can make for amusing reading, but is seldom useful in a real-world sense except to expose someone seeking to follow such directions as a reader of a particular "how-to-feign-nobility" tome). Typical titles of these sorts of books are Deservedly First: The Life And Art of True Nobility, Destined For Graceful Greatness: The Nobles' Way, and Solsaere ("solsaere" being a Faerûnian Common word akin to "panache").

There are, however, a handful of useful and highly regarded tomes on nobility: Being Superior (which despite its dreadful title is a thoughtful work on the philosophy behind nobility, its uses and duties and

the best way to aid one's country through one's conduct), Madaeragand's Little Book (Madaeragand Dauntinghorn was a master of the deft phrase and "manipulation by eloquence," and his work is full of useful phrases one can use in moments usually socially awkward, such as telling your aunt that a closer female relative of hers has been discovered to be pregnant, or that her favorite beau has just been slain in a duel (Madaeragand provides two sets of wordings, one for that slayer being a beloved relative, and the other for the successful duelist being you yourself), and Eskarych On Nobility (Eskarych Huntsilver was a master of how to "present" yourself in different ways to different audiences to achieve desired effects - - such as sympathy from commoners or the respect, envy, or even fear of fellow nobles or courtiers or royalty - - and of how to subtly test the loyalty of servants, befriended nobles, or courtiers).

A Wise Maid's Words

- Ed 29/12/12, on the works of Volo under a pseudonym

Volo HAS penned such a book, actually - - but was wise enough to do it under the entirely fictitious penname "Lyra Maerilee." It was called A WISE MAID'S WORDS, was a slender tome compiling salacious gossip of the amorous goings-on of many Sembian and Cormyrean nobility and wannabe-nobility, and sold VERY well. Pirate copies of the work are now being made and resold in various Inner Sea ports, and Volo is contemplating a sequel. Elminster found the book "An amusing read. So long as he stays away from printing wild lies about magic and Our Lady of All Mysteries, fine."

Emmer's Book of the Passing Years

- Ed 4/9/13, referring to a book written by Emmer of Tharsult in 1272 DR (Dragon magazine #424)

Emmer wasn't a sage, but rather a well-traveled merchant trader who thrived because he kept his eyes open and "his ears to the wind" (as the Faerunian saying has it), collecting and remembering gossip by writing it down, but tempering it by listening to many different sources and separating the truth and probable truth from the entertaining but obviously fanciful.

Emmer's Book of the Passing Years wasn't much different from the detailed year entries near the back of The Grand History of the Realms in content; Emmer tossed in little mentions of everything from changing fads and fashions to important battles and shifts in bulk foodstuffs purchasing (plus bumper crops and near-famines).

The book consists of annual chapbooks (like almanacs) that if gathered together provide a good overview of unfolding "popular" Realms history. Where a sage might write about trends and motives, and speculate as to the reasons behind decisions of rulers and trading alliances, Emmer was concerned about recording what he heard and saw of "the passing parade" of everyday life: popular jests and songs, changing folk beliefs and the attitudes of "just plain folks," new art and design and small everyday innovations (replacement handles for pots, for instance). He mentions various adventurers and their deeds here and there in passing, often, but the Book of the Passing Years is in no sense a comprehensive overview of adventuring bans, chartered or otherwise, and their doings.

- Ed 9/9/13

1. Have any of Emmer's chapbooks made it into Candlekeep's collection?

A: Yes. One officially, one brought in by a monk traveling on Candlekeep business. (An early volume and one from two years later.)

2. If yes, does Candlekeep have the whole set?

A: No, just the two.

3. Have Emmer's writings ever gotten him turned away from a place of business or a settlement?

A: Not that I know of.

4. Were the goods that Emmer traded in as varied as the facts he wrote down?

A: Yes. Emmer was a "buy low, sell high" sundries dealer. As in, he dealt in literally all sorts of stuff, from suits of armor to meat pies, and thread to rocking chairs. Four constant in-stock specialties: ink, quill pens, footstools, and sharpening stones (for knives and other bladed weapons or tools).

5. Did Emmer's business include selling information?

A: Not that I know of. Delivering sealed letters and contracts and other messages, yes, but these were strictly "take sealed missive from A, KEEP IT SEALED and don't look at it or try to guess its contents in any way, and deliver it discreetly to B" acts, not "for X coins I'll tell you Y" practices.

- Ed 16/9/13

1. That he's called "Emmer of Tharsult" leads me to ask: was Emmer as much an ocean going trader as a land based trader?

Ed: Yes.

2. Did Emmer make a point of returning (home?) to Tharsult once a year?

Ed: He tried to, and usually succeeded (wintering over in Tharsult).

3. Did the winter months afford Emmer an opportunity to sit down and write? Or was Emmer more of a write-as-you-go type?

Ed: Yes, but he was indeed more of a write-as-you-go type.

Oh, and "Jharakphred" is an in-joke. "Jack Fred" was the pseudonym used by TSR artists when they had to do a painting in a day or two days, and hated the result and didn't want their names on it. (There's more to the "Jack Fred" story, but I'll leave that to Ed to tell, some other time . . . other than to mention the irony that "Jack Fred" occasionally won art awards, to the chagrin of the real artists employing the moniker.)

[Misdeeds in Marsember: The Cruel Traitors and Tyrants of the Wet Port's So-Called Nobility \(by "An Embittered Servant"\)](#)

- THO 31/12/15 (2013 thread)

Anonymously penned by a longtime housejack (butler) who served in three noble mansions and was privy to a lot of the feuding and hijinks of local nobility: how nastily they treated each other, their habitual tax swindles and deceit whenever dealing with the Court in Suzail (fitting the fact that they didn't feel any real loyalty to the Dragon Throne or Cormyr as a country), and especially how nastily they treated servants and fellow (commoner) citizens of Marsember. As the author put it: "It's clear from what I've personally seen that none of these nobles are fit to rule or even wield influence, were the city of Marsember ever to regain its independence. They are selfish to a fault, and have no sense that civic obligation or fairness should apply at all to themselves, only to others."

The book is full of little secrets about various nobles of Marsember, and three lengthy, juicy accounts of wild sexual goings on at revels, as well as the usual "Lady X prefers to entertain male strangers in a tub of rotting fish" stuff.

Fallen From Grace: A Cormyrean Noble's Tale

- THO 18/6/13, reporting on the writer Malivur Stonecastle (book mentioned in Hands of Fire novel)

The Stonecastles are a minor Cormyrean noble family, ennobled in the reign of Duar (so presumably a Stonecastle aided that king in the civil war) and so long-established, and mainly resident in the southern coastal part of the Forest Kingdom. Their arms are a white-with-gray-detailings crenellated stone castle tower (like a chess rook) with two arrow-slit windows visible at differing heights, on an emerald green field (with a white border, on a shield of the shape sometimes called "elegant" in heraldry, and often in the USA referred to as a "police shield" because it's the shape of some classic police badges). Duke Bhereu (of the ruling family in the time of Azoun IV) was romantically linked to Ashlaelra Stonecastle in his youth, but she died tragically (and he was reportedly heartbroken).

Broadsheets

- Ed 19/2/15

When and where they first appeared is lost to faulty memories ("the mists of time"), but despite some recent claims to the contrary, it was NOT in Kara-Tur, where the very concept of "written rumors, gossip, and dissemination of reports about events" didn't fit with society.

Among humans, written news/entertainment that could be purchased by just anyone in the general public (and from the start, there was a strong element of both sensational fiction and cryptic "personals" in such publications) first arose in Calimshan sometime in the 100s DR and was immediately and viciously stamped out by the pashas, though peddlers and other traveling (and "shady") merchants continued to make broadsheets as wrappings for goods they sold, and distributed these around the Lake of Steam sporadically for the next three hundred years or so (and from then on, publications of independent, extremely-low circulation broadsheets, with "print runs" of sixty copies or less, have been a feature of the Border Kingdoms).

Although this sort of sporadic and localized publication, most often as a handbill advertising a fair or other event, with the back surface used for brief news reports, jokes, lyrics, and almanac-like musings on future weather, popped up here and there along the Heartlands trade routes and especially the Sword Coast, with Scornubel being the location of perennial "printing services" in the form of swift hand-copying scribes who literally wrote multiple duplicates in a sort of assembly line on various rag papers throughout the 400s to 1200s DR, "modern" broadsheets began in earnest in the 1320s DR, in Waterdeep.

They were a brief fad, then dwindled under guild pressure -- until the late 1340s DR, when some guilds saw them as an advertising and image-buffing public relations boon, and stopped trying to hamper and sabotage broadsheet makers. Public "cryers for hire" in the streets became broadsheet-selling "broadcryers" overnight, and the popularity took off, becoming all-pervasive by the end of the 1350s DR. Although the Spellplague and wars and other disasters have temporarily made publications falter, broadsheets have been popular in Waterdeep ever since, and to a much smaller extent have appeared regularly (independents with small print runs, often published by iconoclasts who publicly feud with rival broadsheet-makers) in Neverwinter and Baldur's Gate.

Brothels

Signage

- Ed 1/12/12

Brothels and festhalls that cater to the unusual often have a discreet plaque (carved wooden shield) affixed to the door that has either three horizontal feathers (owl feathers, or painted depictions of barred brown, beige, and white owl-like feathers), quills to the sinister and feather-ends to the dexter, or the same thing but with the center feather replaced by a horizontal painted dagger pointing the other way (that is, point to the dexter, hilt to the sinister). Why these two competing/different badges developed is forgotten, but they signal that the proprietors within are tolerant/will discuss anything, and provide a wider range of "diversions" than competing establishments. It is NOT a guarantee of any specific service being offered within.

For "male-on-male-only" services (especially when the building itself is otherwise nondescript/looks like a private dwelling), some festhall/brothel doorposts in the Vilhon, Border Kingdoms, and Tashalar display two parallel diagonal daggers (lower left to upper right, points at upper right). For "female-on-female-only" services, this symbol is changed to two parallel diagonal daggers, as for males (above), but with the points "broken and hanging down" (from upper right towards lower right).

City Cleaners

- THO 9/1/13

There are guilds (see the Dungsweepers, in Waterdeep) in every major city who collect horse- and ox- and mule-dung (valuable fertilizer as well as street nuisance).

Coins, Private Mints

- Ed and THO 23/12/14

THO: I can't recall any instances of a country officially adopting any private currency as its own, but in the Realms as I've experienced them, playing with Ed as my DM, merchants all over the Realms accept coins from just about everywhere based on what metal they're made of, their condition, and their size (i.e. how MUCH metal a given coin is). There are "respected mintings" like Waterdeep, Amn, Cormyr, and Sembia, but every country's mintings vary over time, dynasty, and so on; everyone EXPECTS coins to vary.

Ed: Yes, it became common after the Spellplague for costers and mercenary companies and adventuring bands, not to mention certain guilds in cities of wealth and stability, to mint their own coins. You basically need access to the "face" metal, a base metal if any, and some stamps/dies (often seized or found; to dwarves, such things are highly-prized treasure), and you're in business. Melting down stolen bracelets and pectorals and tiaras into coins was a popular pursuit.

Fortune Tellers

- THO 31/7/12

The popularity of fortune-tellers across the Realms varies, because:

Some (many, if they have the coin for offerings) people prefer to consult priests for divination about their lives.

Some prefer to consult local "wise women" (or traveling ones), and some prefer to do their own (personal prayer, or using the Realmsian equivalents of tarot decks, or other methods of divination often involving local sites and superstitions of the "dance twice widdershins around the Old Gnarl Tree, then rush home; what you next dream of will be..." sort).

Fuels

- THO 1/8/10

Q: Oil...black/brown crude type. Where can it be found easily in the Realms?

I know pitch can be made from plants...I've done it myself as a child with my grandfather (though I don't recall the process now); but what of oil based pitch? This would of course include tar (usually made of pine product)...

But can these also be made from coal (by process of Coke production) in the Realms? Is coal widely used, or is it primarily only used in certain areas...by certain races?

Where might be found Bitumen...or "surface oil tar" like those found in the La Brea Tar Pits (which are actually asphalt...but I'm looking for any links to oil...soooooo)?

A: Easily? The Underdark. Deep down, in those parts of the Underdark that underlie the Eastern Shaar, and areas east and southeast of there.

The presence of the extensive Underdark subterranean caverns prevents the oil "gushers" of the real world; oil can't well to the surface under pressure if it can easily expand to flood large cavities - - whereupon it, being heavy, will flow to the lowest point, draining down into the region I've mentioned above.

On the surface? ("Tar pits") Far east of Var the Golden, over the first range of mountains (i.e. off the main "Faerun" maps).

"Pitch" to most folk of the Realms is pine tar (and the saps of other coniferous trees) plus the carbon ashes of all large, hot fires. They don't associate it with what we call "oil" at all; to folk in the Realms, "oils" are the boiled-down derivatives of various plants and animal fats. And "natural resources" are shoals of fish, beds of shellfish, abundant herds of wild animals, trees, other harvestable plants, and metals/ores of various sorts. Lamp oil is either derived from trees, or from whales and fish (as in the olden-days real-world, when some small fish were so high in oil that they could be lit on fire and used as lamps all by themselves...which is why they are nearly extinct, or actually extinct, depending on the species, now).

Coal is used in dwarven and gnome forges in the Underdark, and for cooking fires down there, but only used in a few rare spots on the surface world, where veins of soft coal are readily worked from the surface. Charcoal, which anyone can get and make (cover your fire with turf so that it chars the wood slowly, and you have charcoal), is used instead.

Petroleum is only valuable in our world because it is a great fuel, and was formerly abundant and easily "harvested" in many places (which is no longer the case). To folk of the surface Realms, oil (petroleum), if they know about it at all, is a thick, deadly-fumes muck that's a deadly explosive when sparks and flames are nearby...not fuel, of which they have many others, readily available.

(As you might guess, this is something Ed has discussed with me and with TSR/WotC designers. Whom he was once forced to educate, when one of them couldn't see why the Realms wouldn't have diesel engines and military machinery that used them; the guy hadn't thought about all of the necessary support system (refining oil, storing it, shipping it, and so on).

Gemstones

Orl

- THO 19/10/16

"Whaeloon" is the archaic spelling and pronunciation of "Wheloon," and yes, there are "blue caves" there, but their entrances have partially collapsed (due to magical blasting), and the remaining ones are much harder to find...

Orl is found there as per FR Adventures

Glassblowing

worth >1,000 gp

- Ed, 16/2/15

I would probably go for blown glass altar lamps of designs specific for any faith, or the small locket-like reliquaries used to enclose the hair or nails of saints (who are rare in the Realms, remember; we're basically talking the faith of Ilmater here, though with more secrecy the churches of Loviatar, Lurue, and Sharess, too).

Yet the altar lamps -- either beautifully-shaped glass chimneys for candles, or transparent glass oil lamps that use wicks -- would be by far the more numerous and likely pieces. "Genuine" ones, that is, meaning those blown under the supervision of, and with the blessing of, priests, or by priests themselves, and marked to denote that, not "knockoffs" made to look like the real thing by someone else. (They would be a little more than a tenth the price of the genuines.)

Honor Daggers

- THO 31/3/10, replying to query if Symrustar's tattoo resembled one

Her nape-of-neck dagger has nothing to do with honor daggers, which are a way of defending a woman's honor by giving her a deadly little dagger with which to defend herself against rape, that's normally hidden under clothing but handy if anything gets torn away. (Yes, such a weapon can be used against a woman by an attacker who gets to one first, but part of the "art" of honor daggers is concealing their true nature, and sheathing them in places where they won't be immediately spotted or recognized, such as making their hilts garter-buckles, and their blades hidden behind the garters.) This information comes from Ed's notes AND campaign experience (we Knights have examined the corpses of more than a few murder victims, down in-game years of play).

Inns

- Blueblade quoting an Ed witnessed session, Qs for Ed 17/12/13

Adventurers staying at a roadside inn in a dangerous area of the Sword Coast North paid 6 gp/head/night for basic lodging (stew and bread and "plain ale" and cold wash water included), it went up to 8 gp for a private room to sleep in, for 1 gp more a really good hot meat meal, and for 1 gp more unlimited good beer and sherry and zzar (patron's choice; can switch choices from tankard to tankard), and stabling was 2 gp on top of that (includes food, water, rubdown, blanket in winter, but it's 1 gp extra for horse doctoring and/or tack repairs).

I wrote it all down because I was interested in this for my campaign. If I remember rightly, the PC band negotiated a rate of 12 gp each that included it all: all you can eat and drink of the best wine and beer and food available, doctoring and pampering of their mounts -- which meant they all got roast fowl on skewers for the night, and a whole roast pig done overnight that got carved up so they could dine on it for morningfeast and then take it with them.

- THO 20/12/13

To confirm that Blueblade wrote down everything correctly, all those years ago: the inn rates and terms are what I have in my notes, too (obviously, prices vary from place to place, competition and location being the main factors, but the "model" Blueblade set forth is correct).

Investigators

Sword Coast Cities

- THO 22/5/11

So I can tell you that many of the largest cities along the Sword Coast, in the 1350s DR, have "investigators" who try to solve crimes and murders. Some of them are members of the local lawkeepers (usually "the Watch") and some are private, for hire, "truthdelvers." Ed has told me that, as of this time, private investigators who had no spellcasting skills (beyond, in some cases, some minor sorcerous "wild talents" or psionics) include:

Waterdeep: Laraskran "the Lucky" of Castle Ward; Belzidar "Eagle Eyed" Tanthar of North Ward; and the young, agile, defiant prostitute and thief Garlatha Nightcowl, of Dock Ward.

Suzail: the old, infirm, "forget nothing" Elmurt the Wise; Harrigo Tallowhar (often hired by the Palace, and eventually viewed by some as their undercover agent); and Maelra Evenbird (a pretty, sophisticated socialite who ferrets secrets and underlying truths out of the gossip and posturings of the wealthy, noble, and Court-connected).

Silverymoon: Faeldrin "Flameharp" Oxlardryn, a minstrel of more charm than musicianship; Tarharla "Mooneyes" Draekyn, a half-elf whose eyes are unusually large and dark, but glow at her emotional extremes; and "Old Rakh" Mresker Rakhrilyon, a gruff, short, hairy dung-carter and handyman and roofer with shady connections and a large reckless streak.

Athkatla: Morold Dreen, a nondescript, middle-aged reformed swindler who (it's said) can "smell hidden coin;" Redrantha Vaulheron, a tall, gaunt former prostitute turned large-holdings landlord, who watches the doings of her tenants very closely; and Mundrigo Stlanlathur, a glib master actor of a coin-runner and clerk (whose day job is collecting fees and payments and taking contracts and agreements to be signed, but whose sideline is learning and seeing things, for fees).

These come from Ed's notes, confirmed with a chat with him, but they are by NO means comprehensive. These are just a few of the most notorious/best known individuals.

Lawyers

- THO quoted by the Sage, 14/11/13 Qs for Ed

The role of adjudicating legal agreements is carried out by at least four groups, depending on where you are in the Realms:

1. heralds (who concern themselves most with definitions and identifications, such as whether you are the "Hrundar the Potter" named on the parchment, and what is meant by "my best wagon")
2. courtiers

3. local Black Robes (magistrates)

4. clerics of many deities (such as Tyr)

Now, if you're looking for "independent of government" representatives, their role is filled in larger cities (all capitals along the Sword Coast, for example, and in Sembia) by the hired "advocates" Ed has mentioned in the past. Courtiers and Black Robes tend to make rulings strongly supportive of what rulers tell them to say, or in "lock step" support of existing government policy . . . but then, that's the real-world situation, too, almost everywhere.

- Ed 24/12/13, responding to query about information in Power of Faerun

Q: In the Realms licensed lawyers do not exist but that sometimes there are unprofessional and not necessarily law-expert advocates. I just wanted to ask him if according to him this has changed in the Realms since the date covered in the product after all the time advances.

A: Nothing has changed regarding licensing (in that a few city rulers have tried to establish laws regarding who can and who cannot speak as advocates in legal matters besides plaintiffs, the accused, and the local authorities, but these laws have been ignored or rejected, and so haven't "taken hold," and attempts by lawyers to establish guilds exclusive to such legal advocates have been rejected by local authorities [[though in several cases local scribes' guilds have "added" legal advocates as members, and are getting away with it]].

However, the numbers, influence, and general level of expertise in details of local laws of legal advocates is rising swiftly and shows no signs of abating. So there are now many lawyers, though they may not be called that, and they are generally still NOT regulated.

Land Purchasing

- Ed 26/4/14

Q: are there any countries in Faerun which would say prohibit non-citizens from owning property? I'm betting the answer is no, as citizenship is harder to track in the realms, but smaller countries might do this to inhibit outside influence (say Halruua where the towns are all notably small)."

A: Not that I know of, except perhaps Rashemen, but there are some cities (and city-states) that require citizenship or on-site residency that do, for "within-the-walls" urban buildings (in Chessenta, Turlagol, and Telflamm). Even in those cases, however, that doesn't mean the owner must reside on each specific property; there are landlords that live in one place in the city and own rental properties elsewhere in the city.

Note: I said "perhaps" above because it depends on a DM, being as we've hinted at property ownership restrictions but not explicitly stated it in print, yet.

Letter sending

- THO 19/5/11

Letters are primarily carried by caravans. You pay a fee (typically 1 sp to 5 gp, depending on size and fragility/care of handling needed) to the "master" of a passing caravan, who typically has it in "his" wagon, in the keeping of his/her amanuensis (clerk/paymaster), who travels with him/her and may in some cases be his/her spouse, son, or daughter. If the master is part of trading coster or priakos, the entire organization assumes responsibility for delivery (and letter-writers sending messages they know will likely have to go by sea by part of the trip, to arrive in a timely way, will choose masters who are

officially part of the coster or priakos they favor).

There are no guarantees of delivery, and it's EXPECTED that others (like the caravan staff) will read the missive along the way. So, no enclosing valuables (that's handled with the far more expensive shipping sealed "handcoffers" method, and sometimes notes or letters get put in handcoffers, of course), and much use of cryptic or semi-coded speech ("Samran says the olive crop will be bad, but your new plantings are flourishing" - - which of course doesn't mean anything to do with olives or growing things being planted, at all).

Many local waterproofing remedies (waxing or other paper treatments, special inks, etc,) are employed. Heralds and minstrels and bards also take payment to deliver coded messages (often slipped inside a lute or yarting, and accessed by removing the strings and reaching in through the sound-hole) and verbal-only messages. As do Harpers, for their friends and members, and traveling clergy and peddlers. Waukeen's clerics deliver messages (for pickup) from temple to temple, for regular fees.

Lip Balms, Dyes, Glosses

- Ed 21/3/10

In the "home" Realms, northern travellers of all races used bacon fat, plant saps, and anything else available (the jelly-like innards of the white cragberry, for instance; a juniper-like berry that grows on tiny evergreen tuft plants in mountain crevices) as lip balms in severe cold weather, to keep skin from freezing and cracking. Prostitutes (and sometimes, priestesses of Loviatar, Chauntea, and other faiths, or "just plain folks" who could afford it and wanted to do so, on wedding nights or festival nights) used various substances to dye the lips, flavour the lips, scent the lips, or impart sensations (i.e. the "glosses" - - which are called "mrathaera" by elves in the Realms, by the way, and "mrathaera" or the simpler corruption "thaira" by humans - - imparted drug effects to kissed creatures).

Among humans, mrathaera are well-known in Rashemen and in the Tashalar and Var the Golden, but few other humans know how to make more than one simple concoction. Any lasting gloss (that is, anything intended to do more than temporarily dye the lips and momentarily freshen breath or impart a scent or taste lasting more than, say, half an hour) consists of active ingredients and a waxier "base" substance.

Active ingredients consist of the juices of berries, essences (boiled down mixtures) of various herbs, and plant saps; the waxier bases are usually derived from certain evergreens, some berries, or even fats derived from crushing certain insects (such as the "layedur," a species of large blue-green dragonfly abundant in Turmish, the Vilhon, and the Tashalar; carefully-dried layedurs are also sometimes worn as jewelry, pinned to hats or garments).

Most lip glosses can "take up" the tastes and scents of certain powdered herbs and spices (among prostitutes, a favourite is cinammon; mint is very popular among "just plain lasses" desiring to please lovers; lavender is very popular among elves); a mrathaera intended to make breath sweeter and lips tastier but not have a strong scent or taste of its own would utilize parsley or a similar herb.

Among known mrathaera drug sensations are the following: deadening the lips of the mrathaera wearer (against heat or bitterness, for instance), making a kissed person very sleepy (drowsy, slowed, or unconscious), or very excited (adrenaline rush) or very alert (all senses hyper alert; this can be useful going into battle, or when conducting stealthy forays in the dark), or bringing on hallucinations or pronounced dizziness, or imparting actual physical harm (poisons; hallucination, dizziness, and physical-harm effects almost always also affect the mrathaera wearer unless they have previously built up a tolerance to the particular substance).

Among elves, family elders are usually taught mrathaera-lore, and pass it on to younger family members (usually females and usually loners or plainer, more thoughtful individuals) slowly and secretively. Gnomes, halflings, pixies, and other woodland folk usually know much of this lore as part of wider passed-down family knowledge of herbs, spices, cooking, and physics (medicine). Among humans and half-elves, herbalists/apothecaries and various clergies (druidic in particular) specialize in such lore, and there are even a few assassins and courtesans (usually beautiful females) who use the more harmful mrathaera effects in their work. Knowledge tends to spread in times of war, when armies travel outside their "home" realms, and the camp-followers (prostitutes and healers) share information with their fellows and with those they press into training as needed.

Oils, Their Uses

Oil Sources

- THO 30/10/10, responding to query about sources of oil since petroleum is not used

Ed has answered all sorts of questions about various oils as lubricants, cooking ingredients, and fuels down the years, here and in many places in published Realmslore. Tallow (sheep fat) and its equivalents (other animal fats, not to mention fish fats) are often used for all three purposes, and there are many plant-derived oils that are used for various of those three purposes.

Oil Lamps

- THO 24/10/10, responding to query about possibility oil lamps being used as bombs

As far as I can recall from play, oil lamps are of three main types: cheap, small clay table-lamps (open flames), more elegant brass or other cast metal table-lamps (also open flames) and metal lanterns, with shutters and sometimes internal cages (the sturdy "adventurers' lanterns" of various styles). Those lanterns can be dropped or hurled without breakage, and can splash or spill and get VERY hot, but will seldom spew flaming oil, and never explode unless they come into contact with dust or violently combustible fuel (i.e. a big vat of flammable oil) or a gunpowder equivalent (remember, the Realms needs "special" powder, "smokepowder") or something enchanted to explode. Both sorts of table-lamps can often splash flaming oil, but the metal ones (unless they strike sparks against something) usually go out when hurled, and so splash oil, not flaming oil. Clay lamps can readily shatter when they hit a wall, but most of those Ed has described in play are pretty sturdy (thick clay construction), so they usually crack and leak, and less often shatter. In either case, they spill oil, and it may or may not be flaming. However, Torm of the Knights specialized in "doctoring" clay lamps with readily available perfumes, furniture finishes, and wines that were very high in alcohol, so they would explode when shattered (small stoppered glass vial of the high-alcohol "rush" put into the lamp oil, and breaks into it when the lamp strikes something hard and immobile, like a wall). We Knights first learned such tactics the hard way, when flaming lamps were used on us.

- THO 24/10/10, clarifying the perfume bomb method

I'm talking tiny, thin-walled glass vials (fit in a lady's palm, and remember the Realmsian ones are handblown and hence usually have "thin" areas) full of high-alcohol scent, put inside a clay oil lamp full of oil. Lamp is lit, thrown and shattered, causing the tiny vial to break inside the clay lamp, flooding the flaming oil with a rush of flammable alcohol: the "whoosh" effect. Torm used it to ignite tapestries, draperies, rugs, bedding, cushions, and the like - - not explosions, but jets of burning fuel that splashed

widely and got fires going that couldn't be ignored (in other words, whoever the Knights were fighting couldn't just "chase and fight the Knights, and deal with the flames afterwards," because the flames were spreading FAST, and the smoke even faster (leading those nearby to think the fire was worse than it really was, and react appropriately).

Not that this was Torm's favourite tactic. He wasn't usually interested in destroying goods that could be confiscated and resold to his own advantage. He much preferred "glass beads and marbles flooded underfoot" fun.

Patents of Nobility

- THO 22/1/14

For the wording of a Patent of Nobility, we'll have to wait for Ed, but I can say this much, from playing in the Realms with Ed as DM: they are single sheets of polished electrum alloy (other metals have been used, but these days it's a non-rusting alloy, and that's usually electrum, so thin silvery-hued, treated so it has a blue sheen), stamped with individual letters to spell out a grant, which confirms "X and all the heirs of his/her body" (or whatever the specific wording/conditions of the title are), the specific titles, in the name of the granting monarch or Open Lord, who appends their [stamped] seal or personal badge, and then a herald stamps THEIR personal badge [only if this is all worked out ahead of time will the patent also have the blazon, if any, approved by the Heralds]. Written personal copies are also given to all persons receiving titles by the patent, and a copy of the patent is filed by courtiers serving the grantor, and quite separately by the herald, with the High Heralds.

"Playelf"/The Hunting Horn

- THO 19/7/10, in response to query about her semi-joking mention of such a magazine

In the Realms, "Playelf" is known as "The Hunting Horn," and is a series of bi-monthly to quarterly chapbooks put out by an Athkatlan printer under the sponsorship of local clergy of Sharess, and sold in the thousands of copies to caravan-masters in Athkatla and Crimmor, who took the copies with them on their trading runs, selling a few here and a few there to festhalls and discerning shopkeepers and individual patrons. The chapbooks contain erotic fiction and sketches, mainly featuring humans, elves, half-elves, and, ahem, "minglings" of those three sorts of partners in various combinations. Rarely, there are also short advice columns on techniques and oils and bindings and aphrodisiac foods, snacks, and drinkables. All fetishes and inclinations are covered, but it's safe to say that most readers of the Horn are male.

Temples of Sune and Sharess may well contain individual copies of "the Horn," bought and brought in for personal pleasure of clergy or even brought as offerings, but those temples typically create and sell their own chapbooks of goddess-oriented erotica.

- THO 19/7/10

Ed was delicately phrasing the lore that the Horn caters to lesbian, shemales, bondage, interspecies...the whole gamut. Of course, there are also small-circulation, lesser-known "specific" competing publications.

Pornography

- Ed 14/7/13

In general, there are few laws banning pornography in the Realms, in large part because the Realms has never had a prudish Christianity holding sway to come up with the concept of "pornography," per se. Nor do most places in the Realms really have "the innocent" (except individuals so very young that they can't speak and therefore discuss what they see). Quite young individuals know all about various sexual acts (how performed, why done, etc.) without necessarily having participated.

All of the depictions of sex you list, for both amusement purposes and for erotic arousal, exist in the Realms. There are quite strict laws regarding rape and what we would call "zoning laws" governing festhalls (brothels), but sexual activity is distinguished from "display" (drawn, written, dramatic [plays and performed ballads and even tableaux] and sculpted) in a way that modern real-world North American authorities (lawmakers and police) would never do. In other words, many modern real-world policemen would pounce on someone for possessing a depiction of a nude human or humans, or the depiction of a sex act, and that pouncing would be behaviour bewildering to most people in the Realms. (Where doing something sexual is considered a very different thing from looking at or contemplating something sexual.)

That DOESN'T mean every village high street or every kitchen in the Realms is awash in dirty drawings or fornicating couples (trios, sextets, whatever), because it's understood that much of the allure comes from being hidden, and sharing with friends or lovers - - so if you want to sell or enjoy such material, it is kept in a back room or cabinet until the "right time."

So, yes, what you saw in Italy (most often preserved in the buildings or gardens of the wealthy) would be present in many places in the Realms, but not remarked or dwelt upon (i.e. the folk in the Realms don't have the "hangups" that faiths instilled in much of our societies), just as most people don't remark or dwell upon the presence of ladders or watering-cans . . . until they need one and find them lacking. For obvious reasons, the published Realms has largely avoided this topic, and that's fine. We all choose what level of detail and what specific elements go into our games, and what gets left out or downplayed - - and we all should have that choice.

Prices and Haggling

- THO 5/3/14

when playing with Ed as DM, EVERYTHING is roleplayed, so aside from "paying the posted price" in the few shops where prices are posted, everything is haggled for, and there's more barter than coin-buying in rural areas...and prices fluctuate wildly with shortages, seasonal demand, and overhead (an item in a high-end North Ward shop in Waterdeep costs a LOT more than the exact same item bought in a rundown stall in Dock Ward). Most prices in the PHB reflect a "have to have it" TOP price, not a daily or buy in bulk price (always buy your swords in bulk; great barter item!).

Sex Workers

- Ed 27/1/12, responding to query about prevalence and euphemisms

No more so than in our real world. There are a lot of euphemisms for the same reasons (social embarrassment) as in our real modern world. The "polite" term for prostitutes is "escorts" - - and you should be aware that there are some escorts who merely ESCORT (that is, accompany as "arm candy") those who hire them, to plays and dining-halls and revels, and never engage in sex with them.

Ship-based rocket harpoons

- THO 30/9/11

I know some Gondsmen fitted (for a stiff price, of course) some Sword Coast merchant ships with swivel-mounted batteries of rocket-launched oversized lances/harpoons. For anti-pirate defense...and of course pirates got hold of them, too.

The inevitable result was shipboard explosions and fires as the sailors who possessed these tried to turn the lances into fiery attacking weapons...something that always seems to go very wrong.

Steam Engines

- Ed 2004 quoted by The Sage in Qs for Ed 31/7/13

..."steam engines (monstrous "rolling-beam" stationary types, akin to those found in Cornish tin mines and elsewhere AND tiny 'using a fire one builds in a bowl' sorts) are in common use all over Lantan, but remain "dangerous" curiosities elsewhere (although many Faerunians know about harnessing the hot gas from a fire collected through a hood-and-pipe apparatus). As several posters have mentioned, Gond rules such pursuits, and copious prayers to him will be a part of any steam-work. What the Realms DOESN'T yet have is reliable steam propulsion (locomotives, that is -- although miners'-sweatwork and donkey- or mule-drawn mining railways, with little 'tip' ore cars, ARE used here and there, and are known to all dwarves and gnomes). Distillation and other simple steam-related procedures are widely known if not widely understood."

Talent Scouts

- THO 7/12/10

According to my notes taken during Realmsplay with Ed (because we Knights have met more than one of these individuals, over the years) such a headhunter/talent scout is called either a "wiseeye" or a "finding eye" in the Heartlands of the Realms.

Ed confirms this, and adds that the "wiseeye" term is older and Sword Coast-based, and the "finding eye" is newer and most popular in Amn, Westgate, and Sembia. More formally, when such a job description becomes a title (as in a "type" of courtier), the role of talent scout is known as a "lorntavar."

Wine

- THO 9/3/15

"Valgrath" is a person who first devised Valgrath Wine, and her family who still makes it generations later (current head is a rather haughty fellow named Hamalrym Valgrath). It's a deep emerald green, not glow in the dark, thanks to the grapes that go into it, and yes, it'd be a "white" to our real-world palates. Ed describes it as a step on the "sour apple" side of a dry Riesling.

HISTORY

1351 DR Events (Year of the Crown)

- Ed 30/11/14

The plague that afflicted Baldur's Gate was thankfully short-lived (i.e. it killed less than fifteen percent of the populace and didn't spread far on the trade routes). It was known as "The Rotting From Within" (soon colloquially shortened to just "the Rotting") because the internal organs of victims rotted and liquefied within them, causing a horrifying death (the afflicted felt nauseous, and their senses came and went [smell, hearing, sight], and then everything failed very rapidly, they collapsed, and exuded black-

green "ick" from every orifice (what the organs broke down into).

Other events of that year include:

The Banner War: a feud between the rival Sembian-based costers of the Manygems Banner and the Strongchest Banner (both firms founded in the late 1340s) becomes a full-blown armed conflict, with assassinations and arson leading to both sides hiring mercenaries and seeking to exterminate each other not in Sembia but along the Heartlands trade-roads. Opportunistic bandits frame the warring Banners for their own depredations. "Stalking undead" (formidable zombies of unusual abilities) arise from some of the battle dead; foul necromancy is suspected.

The Tun Tombs: in Tunland, more than two dozen stone-lined underground rooms are discovered. In each is a lone human burial, sewn into a simple shroud; a magic item lies above the head of each corpse, and a small box containing a gem of unusually large size and value is on the breast of all of the fallen. If the gems are left in the boxes and the boxes not removed from the tombs, all remains well --but every time a gem is removed from a tomb, a monster (often a wyvern or something many-tentacle) is awakened from stasis elsewhere in the Realms and begins to hunt the gem, with an eye to slaughtering whoever has it, seizing the stone, and returning it to the tomb. No one yet knows who the dead are, who buried them in this manner, or why.

Sylvan Enchantment: Several valleys among rolling grassland hills south of Berdusk suddenly sprout a vigorous, tangled mixed forest (appropriate for the climate, but of a sort long-vanished from the vicinity due to a century of traveling traders cutting timber as a "free cargo" in passing, plus travelers' needs for firewood). The cause of this nigh-instant woodland is magical, but the perpetrators and their motives are unknown. The trees continue to spread, and to grow in size with an utter disregard for their youthful age, for three years -- and then cease their growth, as mysteriously as they started.

Rise of the Stags: Seemingly out of nowhere and with no discernible point of origin, the mountainous vales of the remote eastern Sword Coast North are suddenly overrun with deer . . . and a disproportionately large number of them are large stags with impressive antlers. Deepspawn or other "unnatural" causes are suspected, and several mages hire adventurering bands as protective escorts to "hunt the deepspawn" in hopes of capturing and relocating them for profit, but no deepspawn are ever found, and most of the wizards go missing. Prompting some sages to recall other "wizardly lures" of the past in the area, that drew lots of mages to the area who then vanished.

Aryvandaar

Culture

- Ed 3/10/12

What I can recall off the top of my head is that there was distinctive jewelry made from still-living plants, that Aryvandaar did have elven metal-working (alloys such as electrum, castings of smoothly flowing shapes), that magical radiances (of controlled intensity and hues) were cast on weapons and the ceilings of rooms, and that there was distinctive clothing: a particular style of cloak, and "varade" (jerkens) of a V-shape, narrow at the waist but flaring to broad at the shoulders, with horns or spires sticking up from the outer points of the shoulders.

Oh, and much use of longswords, slightly curved (think lightly-made sabres) longswords, and daggers that surrounded the knuckles with a guard ("brass-knuckles"-like arc of protective metal) from which three dagger blades thrust out, at angles (45, 90, and 45-degree, or horizontal in both directions plus a third blade at 90-degrees).

Bronze Age?

- THO 5/7/10, responding to query if one existed

I and many others have discussed this with Ed, over the years, and in general, Ed sees the Realms like this:

We don't know "who rose first" into civilized might, because it's lost in the distant past, but it's clear that dragons, giants, elves, and to a lesser extent dwarves and illithids and beholders and hobgoblins have all had powerful civilizations that dominated large areas of the world . . . and don't, today. Magic has been more powerful and widespread in the past than it is now, and there have been human civilizations (e.g. Netheril) in the past that surpass any human empires in existence today. Humans, halflings, orcs, gnomes, and others have been servitor or slave races in some of these former powerhouses, and "what came first" is impossible to now be certain of (for one thing, the gods themselves can't be trusted to tell the truth; some humans have always suspected - - correctly - - that some deities masqueraded as others, so that some of the "Watching Gods" were aspects of others).

Gates ("portals," if you prefer, but gates was Ed's original term, and see issue 37 of THE DRAGON for his lengthy article on the use of gates) between many parallel worlds were part of Ed's world-view from the beginning, including many gates linking "the Realms" with "our real world" and other quasi-medieval fantasy worlds (in which magic worked, in various forms).

So there have been migrations, invasions, cross-pollinations, trade, and so on through these gates, from world to world (the Realms very much included) for thousands upon thousands of years, and "waves" of elves and humans have departed and arrived in the Realms, bringing their technology with them.

As a result, we now can't tell very much about primitive human (and other racial) societies and development in the Realms. We don't even know if the Realms went through the same stages as the real world, given the presence of magic, abundance of metallic ores unknown on our "real" Earth, and so on. We can only guess, or extrapolate from the most "primitive" (and that, of course, is itself a value judgement) societies left in remote corners of the Realms these days.

Ed's method of game designing and worldbuilding has always involved leaving a maximum number of "loose ends" for DM or future Ed or designer development, while at the same time avoiding leaving all questors frustrated by lack of information. It's a delicate tightrope to walk, moves constantly, and there are instances of falling off it. Yet it's the dance that Ed continues with, decade after decade, come what may.

Braceldaur

- Ed 2/4/10

Braceldaur is partially NDA, but I can say that it was a city-state, that patrolled outwards from its walls to a ring of tiny forts (little more than fortified stables, where the patrols could "turn around" and shelter from rain under a roof), protecting a few farms thereby. So, one city and not a realm, though some wanted it to be more and others feared it would become (or had become) more.

Dwarven Realm Thunderholme

- THO 14/10/14

Its badge (not full blazon or coat-of-arms, just the badge) was an upright side-on hammer (pick end to the viewer's left, bludgeoning end to the viewer's right), with a three-zigzag lightning bolt running down the shaft or handle, superimposed on an open scroll (curled-over ends down both sides, paralleling the hammer shaft, no lettering visible on the scroll, the curled-over ends curling "toward" the viewer). This was simplified, when scratched on hard rock, to a vertical lightning bolt with a pick end protruding from viewer's-left side of its top, and hammer end protruding from the viewer's-right side.

Dwarven Realm Tethyamar

- Ed 14/9/12

Tethyamar's mines went deep, following thin, high-vertical veins of ore, and usually took the form of descending "chains" of chambers (stairs and rooms located "on the veins" and being long and narrow). A central, largest chain would be for travel (and reaching the current "working face") and a second developed to carry ore up and out of the mines; the two chains would be cross-connected wherever practical. After an area was worked out, these chains would be evaluated for use as dwellings, storage, work areas [[forges, workshops]] or tombs (dwellings and storage should be close together, but tombs don't need to be as close to daily dwelling areas). Forges are the hardest to locate because they need good chimneys (air in and smoke out) or room for bellows and adequate chimneys.

Accomplishing all of this resulted in Tethyamar being more scattered/widespread than many dwarven "holds," which was both a strength and a weakness: the farflung character made it much harder to defend against foes, who could attack many small, isolated, weak areas, but its decentralized character made it home to hardy, self-reliant dwarves who didn't expect others to fight for them or "rescue" them, and helped themselves before looking to (or obeying) a central authority.

Moreover, the dwarves of Tethyamar placed far more importance on personal behaviour and less on heritage/bloodlines/what clan you were born into, in a deliberate attempt to avoid clan feuds and rivalries that had so plagued other dwarven communities. Dwarves of different families lived and worked together, in a rough and cheerfully informal "style" of "everybody must get along." To be a Tethyamar dwarf was far more important than to be an Ironshoulder, or a Shaleshield, or a Deepstone.

Jhaamdath

Alternate History

- Ed, 16/6/13

Q: "I have a hypothetical question for Ed. If he had chose to do it instead, how would he had Jhaamdath been if it was to continue as a war machine instead of having it wiped out into undeath?"

Ed replies:

A: I have always thought that if Jhaamdath had avoided the fate that befell it, that culture would have made the Napoleonic/Hitlerian mistake of expanding too fast by violent means, taking on too many foes at once, ending up beset on too many fronts at once - - and collapsing. I have in the past dropped some

very subtle hints in this regard, by noting who their inevitable foes would be, if they expanded far enough (and as a game designer, I always want a setting to have a variety of opposed powers, purely because it makes for more interesting and varied adventure opportunities).

Pre-Ice Age & Creator Races

- Ed 19/12/12

The problem with asking about prehistoric history is, ahem, the lack of history. In that there aren't a lot of beings around now who were around then, to ask, and little or nothing in the way of records. About all we know about the time before that ice age is that some sages back in the time of what we now refer to as the Coming of the Creator Races referred to that nebulous "pre-dawn time" as the Time of the Rauth.

Who or what the Rauth were, or are (or was or is), is a matter of debate and speculation.

Elminster is of the opinion that the Rauth were a race that are still around in the Realms today, albeit altered and under a different name. Yet he wants it stressed that this IS an opinion.

Many sages believe "Rauth" is a contraction ("worn down over passing time") of "Andorauth" or another longer, more complex word.

Interestingly, those long-ago sages (despite violent disagreements among them as to who or what "ruled" Faerun and what life and the landscape were like) almost universally thought of The Time Before The Ice as a time of verdant natural abundance, with farming and civilization and burgeoning advances in arts and culture.

Recent Wars

- THO 26/5/14, referring to a query about recent wars

- * the Luskan/Ruathym war;
- * ongoing cold-war-style espionage between Amn and Waterdeep, and between Cormyr and Sembia;
- * the Horde invasion (the Tuigan horde fighting west through Rashemen, etc. to Cormyr);
- * dwarf vs. human spying within the Silver Marches (opposed leaders)
- * the Amnian civil war, the Tethyrian civil war, and the eastern Amnian cities that left Amn to join Tethyr;
- * the wars and spying and ongoing skirmishing among the various city-states of the Vilhon Reach (and the Emerald Enclave);
- * the struggles for power within Marsember (in Cormyr);
- * the struggles for power within Baldur's Gate, throughout the 1300s and 1400s

... and there are a lot more.

The Searing (Dalelands, Dragon Coast)

- Ed quoted by dazzlerdal and GK, 12/5/15

In the days so forgotten and long ago that they've become known to some sages as "the Dawn Days" (others call them "the Dawn Age" or "the Time of Dragons"), a time so distant that present-day Realmslore preserves no reliable written records and scant known facts from them (so that what follows is largely drawn from old ballads), most of the lands around the Sea of Fallen Stars were one vast, deep forest.

This great woodland was home to many creatures, of whom perhaps the proudest and the most

advanced in Art, craftings, and courtesies were the elves. Their time of might and great realms and mastery of magic were soon to come, but were then more the stuff of excited dreams than reality. In the Dalereckoning of today, the years of the events recounted hereafter would have been -24,600 DR and the three decades or so that followed.

Dragons ruled the peaks and skies in those days, and betimes set forests afire to flush forth food from the dim green depths. Inside the mountains, the power of the dwarves was quietly rising as the pride and ruling vigor of the giants was sapped by endless wars with orcs, hobgoblins, goblins, and their kindred. One region where orcs were strong and dwarves gaining power (in part because ongoing strife with the rising might of ogres to the immediate north, in what was to become known as Thar, had weakened local giants) was the Lhaurokh, later known as the Dragonreach. Wood elves dwelt in small treehome communities near present-day Ravens Bluff, and moon elves lived in small clan hunting territories in what is now Featherdale, Battledale, Harrowdale, and Deepingdale.

There arose among the wood elves an ambitious war-leader known as Aubron Halavanthlarr, who chafed against the gentle, peaceful ways of his kin (who lived in harmony with the forest, clearing nothing, building as little as possible, and tending the beasts they hunted with the same patient care as they gardened herbs and leafy edibles---notably the fleshy-leafed sarrauva vine---in the high boughs of the forest). This young elf met with little approval from his elders. At length Halavanthlarr gathered a handful of his friends who shared his restlessness and eagerness for adventure, and set forth into the forest to seek power and better things.

Somewhere near present-day Tsurlagol, he found a small realm of gold elves who'd mastered magic enough to slay wyverns, cage some edible forest monsters, and even to fight off dragons who espied these morsels and descended for an easy meal (but who soon turned their attentions to easier dining elsewhere, when met by spells that most of them assumed were the work of a hidden dragon who'd set out the caged creatures as a lure for dragonkind). Halavanthlarr seized what magic he could, first by stealth and then through bloodshed, and happened upon Ulesse Chamaranthe, an unhappy young 'she' of the gold elves who was smitten by his strangeness and daring. He spirited her away, and--- hunted by a few of her kin--- made his way back to his people.

There Halavanthlarr's new-found magic, boldness, and cunning soon won him followers. Although most of the wood elves remained horrified at his ways, Halavanthlarr took the most restless of his kin with him---away from the treehomes and across the Lhaurr (the waters of the Reach) to the 'far forests' on the other side...in other words, to the western shores where, unbeknownst to the wood elves, dwelt the Oronthaebur.

The Oronthaebur, or 'Moon Clans,' built but little, and changed the woods they called home little more than the wood elves across the sundering Lhaurr. There were at least three eight-counts of these moon peoples, and though rivalries between them were often fierce, they avoided each other's lands, and so passed the years in relative peace.

When Halavanthlarr came, the Oronthaebur merely 'faded away into the forest' before his advance. Calling themselves the Hlarr in an echo of their revered leader's name, Halavanthlarr's wood elves began to mount hunts of their own: cage-captures to breed beasts for food as well as food-slayings. They sought out the best springs and beast-colonies, faring ever farther inland, and slew Moon Clan elves upon sight.

As self-styled lord over the Hlarr, Halavanthlarr hewed ever to two things: keeping his folk in readiness for war, with arms and patrols and sentries; and mastering ever-greater magic, with spell experimentations and sharing. The Oronthaebur watched him in their turn, and knew fear. 'Madlord'

they named him, and gave way before his ever-farther forays, until at length they were driven to meet among themselves in uneasy, unaccustomed alliance against him, and whelm their magical might, and make ready for war. They took the name 'Yhendorn' after the wise elder who convened the council, and bound his own mind to that of a nearby green wrym to make their greatest weapon: a dragon the moon elves could control, to wage war for them.

Thus emboldened, they struck back at the wood elves in strength, working slaughter upon three patrols with their arms and spells alone. Enraged, Halavanthlarr hurled other patrols against the Yhendorn; only a few ragged survivors fled back to him. Mastering his temper into a cold fury, Halavanthlarr ordered the Hlarr back to their coastal holds, to gather all the magic and arms they could. "Hold nothing back," he's reputed to have said, "for there is no sunrise for the defeated."

In one host, some seventy or eighty strong, they went hunting the Yhendorn---and were skillfully harried and led to the forested height that is today known as Hunters' Down, in Deepingdale. There the dragon swept down upon them, and their spells raged, and in a day-long, bloody fray the dragon perished, along with the elder who guided it...and almost all of the Hlarr. A few Yhendorn survived. So also did Ulelesse Chamaranthe, who'd led a handful of young shes aside from the final fray---and Halavanthlarr, who fled, alone and wounded, back east towards the coast. Ere he reached it, he was met by three grim Chamaranthe gold elves, who slew him, the ballads insist, with their bare hands.

Ulelesse led her handful of shes to the dragon-torn battlefield, and on the height gathered the dead and comforted the surviving Yhendorn. There the three warriors of her kin who'd hunted and slain her Halavanthlarr found her.

She refused to return to her homeland with them, choosing to remain with the Yhendorn, and in time a few---a very few---moon and gold elves made traffic and friendship between what is now Deepingdale and the coast nigh what is now Tsurlagol. Under the guidance of Ulelesse Chamaranthe, who became known as 'Old Mother' (this is the same "Old Mother" that many Fair Folk of the three dryland elven races tell moral tales to their young about, and sometimes, when astonished or facing doom, startle themselves by swearing by) the handful of Yhendorn grew great in magic. They and she raised the earthen barrow-tomb atop the hill that holds the dead of the Searing, and became the baelnorn who guarded it down the passing ages, and still guard it today.

Some folk in Deepingdale say that certain of the baelnorn walk the Dales, in disguise and cloaked in concealing magic, and watch unfolding events. This they have always done, sometimes aiding or giving warnings, and often covertly stealing magic. For some years, in the early days of the Elven Court (and among the Heralds soon after their founding), it was the custom of certain reverent elves (and heralds) to journey to Hunters' Down and converse with the baelnorn, trading enchanted items, spell scrolls, and news of events across the Realms for specific lore answers. Some say most of the Chosen of Mystra have also made this journey---and Elminster has confirmed that pacts have been made that will bring the aid of present-day wizards to baelnorn of Hunters' Down who request it.

Tsornyl, Moander Binding

Survival Despite Moander

- Ed 31/12/10

In 75 DR the Cormanthan elves of House Tsornyl became tainted by Moander's rot whilst destroying the Creeping Evil he sent to afflict them. Most Tsornan elves died swiftly and horribly inside the wards thrown up around Tsornyl to contain the Foul God's corruption. Sick and starting to decay, a handful of the most magically powerful elders of the family managed to create a gate (portal) to bypass the wards

and take themselves elsewhere—far across the Realms, to Luernla (“refuge-place of mine”) an isolated island in the Beacon Rocks that Nueltrara Tsornyl had come across years earlier, and used for illicit trysts with a lover (Iyrindym Oordraekur, who was the married [to Jhaeress “Wyrmgoad” Oordraekur, a fiery-tempered elf sorceress famous as a hunter and tamer of dragons in her reckless youth] head of House Oordraekur) until both tired of the perils of their lusting, and saw each other no more.

Back in her greener days, Nueltrara had cached some personally precious mementoes and some magic items on the tiny wooded isle. Upon reaching Luernla through the gate, the Tsornyl matriarch destroyed the gate in a ritual that involved the murder of her detested wastrel nephew Alavaer Tsornyl. She then sacrificed most of her magic items—and her own life—in a great working of magic that purged her Tsornyl kin of Moander’s corruption but also gave them undeath in the process.

All sixteen of the surviving members of House Tsornyl fled the island via various spellworkings. Fourteen of them survive to this day (1370s DR). They are all now a unique sort of elven undead, retaining the spellcasting abilities they had in life (almost all of the Tsornyl elders were either sorcerers or wizards) and having all the powers and abilities of a vampire lord except the ability to create vampire spawn. They can also gain additional second winds whenever they sacrifice a spell—or permanently drain a magic item, which must be in their grasp—to do so.

Fearing attack by any servants of Moander or Cormanthan elves who identified them (for House Tsornyl had some bitter rivals, many of whom had eagerly advocated the obliteration of the city of Tsornyl and all in it, to “purge the taint that will otherwise destroy us all, wood and root and leaf and elf,” within the hearing of the House Tsornyl elves trapped within the wards), all of the House Tsornyl elves met together after their flight from Luernla to work common magics to alter their appearances—and take a new family name.

They have since gone their separate ways, and now inhabit Secomber, Riatavin, Zazesspur, and Velen (among other places up and down the Sword Coast, almost always close to a large wild wood such as the High Forest or the Wealdath). All of them now resemble pale-skinned, graceful and slender humans (with fine bones, suggesting elven blood), who have light blue hair and indigo-hued eyes, and now use the family name of “Marthram.” The story they will tell (only if asked) is that they are a “very old” and now scattered human family whose origins “have been lost to memory, over time,” but that they have always been “honorable, if quiet” folk.

(This is pure fiction; the fourteen House Tsornyl survivors are all very proud, ambitious individuals, who nurse grudges and thirst for wealth and behind-the-scenes power. They work together from time to time, and take care never to cross or work against each other, but otherwise live independent lives. They will give each other shelter or minor aid without hesitation, if asked. Most of them care not a whit for laws or principles, so long as they get their own way, but they are all capable of patience and superb acting, if need be.)

Some of the younger, less principled, more active “Marthrams” are (to give the human first names they now go by, reserving their real elven names for recognition-signals among the family, if encountered in magical disguises or unexpected places or circumstances) the males Alandor, Baerlyn, Cadreth, and Doamurl and the females Anathys, Evendra, Fildrara, Ghaele, and Jarathma. Alandor plays a handsome gallant who loves to sing and entertain ladies, and to “faciliate” trade possibilities for others (profiting himself thereby). Cadreth is a ruthless, accomplished killer. Anathys and Ghaele are “pure poison” when they unleash their icy, get-more-than-even disapproval of any who don’t agree with them or fall in with their plans, but Jarathma is always sweet, always gentle, and always three or four steps ahead of any other master of manipulation; she almost always gets her own way and makes coins from the way

things are done, wherever she is and whatever she's involved in (which for some years was gem-trading and the design and sale of expensive gowns worn by the richest and haughtiest human ladies in Amn and Tethyr).

The most senior surviving female of the family is the malicious, reclusive Tlurendra (her real, elf name is Tlaethe), and the most senior surviving male is Olondor (elf name Ondoreand), who is a master manipulator and financial strategist who has very quietly become one of the wealthiest investors and landlords in Zazesspur, profiting from the hard work of literally hundreds of small merchants—and taking ruthless revenges on any who cheat him.

Elves outside wards

- Ed 4/1/11

There were Tsornyl elves "well off elsewhere" (traveling/visiting others) at the time of Moander's attack, and there were a handful on the spot but just outside the wards.

LANGUAGE

Alzhedo

- THO 24/5/13

"tongueless" I can answer, because cutting off the tongues of those who blasphemed or said bad things about pashas was once a common punishment:

nuth-zimalu (literally, "without-tongue")

Chondathan

- Ed 28/1/13

tahorst (=tinder-dry); behruin (= swift-burning/good fuel); haelhar (=welcome wind or breeze or needed air); glorlukh (=foul); naeglorlukh (=not-foul, nor harmful, not unpleasant)

- Ed 28/11/12

1. "Sward-feast" is spreading via trade-routes all over the Realms, but "hathlarr" is an older and more formal term throughout the Sword Coast and Heartlands, and "tlench" (from the halfling tongue, in which "tlench" is a swift, portable meal) is widely used in the Inner Sea lands. In the Tashalar and all the coasts of The Shining Sea, "nlanpur" is any meal eaten in the open, at a place not equipped for dining (i.e. if you eat on an outdoor terrace with chairs and tables, the meal isn't a nlanpur, but if you eat in a stables or out back in a field, it is).

2. Leeks are called "shuss" in the Inner Sea lands, "whitebolts" along the Sword Coast, and "dlunlaer" in the Shining South. Whitebolts and throus are widely understood, thanks to traders, even in places where the local name for leeks is different.

3. Drusk is a widespread name for brown or mottled brownish catfish of the flatheaded variety. Those of the Alandor are larger than most found elsewhere, and of course most places have local names for their specific varieties (such as "amaulings" or "amaul" in the coastal rivers of Tethyr, and "sarl" in the Dalelands, Cormyr, and Sembia), but as with leeks, the word "drusk" (for a bottom-feeding fish with

barbels around a large mouth) is widely understood in the Realms thanks to traders, even in places where local names are different.

Common

Terms

- Ed 4/7/10

Q: Ed, I "simply" require confirmations and/or additional definitions of the following 'Realmspeak':

"bladesharp" – Common:- a feeling of unease (Crown of Fire by Ed Greenwood)

"blurf" – Common:- "nonsense"

"low-coin" – Common:- the opposite of "high-coin"?

"painquench" – Common:- any substance with an analgesic effect (Hand of Fire by Ed Greenwood)

"seamaster" – Common:- a ship's captain (Prayers from the Faithful by Ed Greenwood)

"short name" – Common:- a short form of a personal name, used as a nickname (The Temptation of Elminster by Ed Greenwood)

"slayknife" – Common:- a killer-for-hire

A: Re. your glossary queries: bladesharp, blurf, short name, and slayknife are all correct.

"low-coin" isn't an exact opposite of "high-coin" because low-coin can mean: cheap/tawdry, or poor, or priced inexpensively (sometimes with the inference that the goods are a bargain, and sometimes that they're spartan/bare basics/no frills

"painquench" isn't ANY substance with an analgesic effect; it formerly meant a specific spell applied to quell pain, and then to a particular enchanted herbal ointment that quelled pain, and then widened to mean a small handful of such ointments and unguents

a "seamaster" is indeed a ship's captain, but it specifically means either an owner/operator (i.e. the captain owns his/her ship), or a part owner of the ship or of the shipping line (who is also captain of the vessel)

- Ed 28/7/10

Q: "merenthe" – Common:- "to bring sleep whate'er the pain"; a substance with a soporific effect? (Hand of Fire by Ed Greenwood)

"sarsson" – Common:- "After various body parts have been removed, stabbed, or sliced open, the firenewt is treated with sarsson, an herb that giant striders find irresistible, and fed alive to his own mount." (Serpent Kingdoms by Eric L. Boyd, Darrin Drader, Ed Greenwood)

"tangle moss" – Common:- "The streets (of Loudwater) are planted in tangle moss[, though they give way to bare earth in busy areas]." (The North by Ed Greenwood, Jeff Grubb, Julia Martin, Steven E. Schend, Paul Jaquays, Steve Perrin; Volo's Guide to the North by Ed Greenwood)

"glow moss" – Common:- "Lit by cages of glow moss, the rooms are crammed with a wide variety of furniture and other items made by local craftsfolk." (Volo's Guide to Cormyr by Ed Greenwood)

"sword-she" – Common:- ". . . and unshakable loyalty of Enda Quellinghunter, the Captain of the Cudgels. This fearless fire genasi "sword-she" isn't just a shrewd battle-commander. . ." (Realmslore: Uthmere, Part Eight by Ed Greenwood)

A: All five terms are, of course, confirmed, and here's something small and swift about each:

MERENTHE:

This purple-black, opaque watery liquid tastes something like raw avocados or eggplant, and when ingested or insinuated, is a potent sleep-inducing drug that can bring "easy slumber" regardless of pain or nausea. It has no known side-effects except entirely quelling snoring, teeth-gnashing, and body movements during sleep, is effective on all known intelligent mammals, and the amount of the dose directly affects the length of slumber. It works very swiftly, and when "passing off" causes swift awakening with little or no drowsiness.

Merenthe is much used in healing, to keep wounded persons immobile, but also serves to more easily "govern" or "master" prisoners, flight risks, and formidable foes, and to disable sentinels without harming them.

The secrets of its making are widely-known in Calimshan, known to a few in the Vilhon, the Tashalar, Amn, and Waterdeep, and little known elsewhere (where prices are high; typically 60 to 80 gp for a standard-sized potion vial, which if entirely imbibed at one sitting by an average-sized adult human male will cause about 5-and-a-half days of slumber).

Merenthe first became popular as the main thing sold by the Calishite "witch" Merenthe Iydril, some three centuries ago. It is known to be a distillate of at least three ingredients, one of which is a powdered low-value (fairly common) gemstone, and two of which are plants; for one of those, merenthe uses the crushed and boiled leaves.

Merenthe is effective when mixed with some alcoholic beverages, but not all. It works in combination with all other beverages (though dilution of course alters the length of its efficacy). Cooking beyond certain temperatures destroys its effects, so it can only be hidden in some foods.

SARSSON:

This common, little-known herb has broad, short yellow leaves. It grows very close to the ground, as a "carpet" ground cover, in wet tropical regions (jungle, riverbanks, marshes, bogs) aboveground, and damp warm (near volcanic) caverns underground. It has a strong peppery, lemony taste, and can be used to make foul water palatable (not safe, just more pleasant in taste) and to complement meat; it "enlivens" uncoagulated blood on contact to bring forth a vivid, strong taste that some creatures (such as giant striders and certain carrion birds, like gorcrows) find irresistible.

TANGLEMOSS:

This lush, soft, green ground-covering moss resembles miniature pine boughs in configuration (needles sprouting from a stem), but is soft and delicate, sometimes being visually mistaken for dill and other "lacy frond" herbs and plants. Its name comes from its natural tendency to twine around ("entangle") other vines, roots, and plants without strangling (killing) them, but firmly anchoring itself. It doesn't "tangle" creatures, however small; its name is derived from its firm adherence to underlying rock or earth, and hence its usefulness, and tendency to flourish, in high-traffic areas such as paths, roads, and drainage spillways.

Tanglemoss is found everywhere north of the southern border of Tethyr, though it is rare in Amn outside of mountainous areas, and the Vilhon and everywhere north of that; the warmer prevalent climate of more southerly lands causes it to grow only in small, sickly brown clumps that soon wither and die. Dried tanglemoss is used as packing and insulation, because it doesn't crumble and disintegrate for more than a season after death, but it has no other known uses. An old Moonsea North saying refers

to someone in poverty as being “down to dining on tangle moss soup.”

GLOWMOSS:

This once-common, but now increasingly rare due to over-harvesting moss absorbs heat and light energy, and glows softly in dim or dark conditions.

Its soft radiance is usually an amber-white or greenish-white hue (the exact colour is influenced by the mix of minerals the growing moss is in contact with), and it can be “fed” to keep it alive with moisture, salt (so, sea-breezes make it flourish) and light (torchlight and “cold magical glows” benefit it as readily as sunlight). Formerly much used as a light source in dark interior rooms by being hung in clumps in cages, its increasing rarity has led to this custom falling out of popularity.

Owners of glowmoss who understand its needs can readily illuminate a dwelling or structure by moving clumps of glowmoss from interior ceiling “light cages” to sunlit outdoor “reviving” locations, and back again, on a cycle that involves at least two tendays at a stretch of normal daytime periods of sunlight, and some water. Glowmoss need not be anchored on anything to grow or flourish. No known creatures find it edible, which has led some insects to lay eggs in it; to keep their homes from being infested by larvae falling out of glowmoss, most glowmoss users simply soak the glowmoss in buckets of water, agitate the moss vigorously by hand, and then hang it to drip dry before indoor, “in the cage” use.

SWORD-SHE: Female mercenary. This term is generally applied to individuals who make their living as hireswords and advertise this fact, and tends to be most often used by humans, when speaking of good-looking female humans, or females of forceful personality.

- THO 29/7/10, clarifying above

Tangle moss doesn't do well in more southerly lands than Tethyr because of climate, but can be found in all more northerly areas (though it's rare east of The Sea of Fallen Stars, where other plant varieties crowd it out, and is sparse in Amn for unspecified reasons).

And yes, merenthe is a drug in the sense that it's a substance deliberately taken to alter bodily processes and/or symptoms. It isn't addictive, however, so there's no “withdrawal” or craving or addiction, or behaviours associated with such.

- Ed 31/7/10

Q: “hidestone” – Common:- “. . .best buy a cellar, and search for the little movable “hidestones” in the walls of most of them.” (My Slice of Silverymoon, Part One by Ed Greenwood)

“lackcoin” – Common:- “. . .cellar-guards (often sons or lackcoin kin of the owners of the buildings. . .” (My Slice of Silverymoon, Part Two by Ed Greenwood)

“lowgown” – Common:- “. . .the highnoses and lowgowns who throw revels. . .” (My Slice of Silverymoon, Part Two by Ed Greenwood)

“roundskull” – Common:- “Any roundskull can think of outlander wagons bringing food and goods. . .” (My Slice of Silverymoon, Part One by Ed Greenwood)

“smallkeg” – Common:- “. . .cracked earthen vessel about the size of a “smallkeg” set on end. . .” (My Slice of Silverymoon, Part One by Ed Greenwood)

A: HIDESTONE:

A stone in a wall (usually of a cellar or other subterranean room, but more rarely in interior walls of above-ground structures such as keeps) deliberately left unmortared so it can be removed by those who

know about it to access a hiding-place (cavity) behind it.

LACKCOIN:

A poor person. This everyday, non-derogatory term is usually used to denote long-lasting poverty rather than a temporary lack of funds.

LOWGOWN: A debauched or lewd person, given to public flirtations and displays of intimate areas of their own flesh. The term suggests females, but is applied to both genders: a lowgown woman is one who displays herself, and a lowgown man is one who tries to “get down the gowns” of women, or who crossdresses or readily dons costumes for wanton purposes.

ROUNDSKULL: A dullard; a person who thinks shallowly, or prefers not to think much at all. One who never sees consequences or likely future conditions or outcomes - - or cares to look for them. Unlike a “dolt,” who CANNOT (hasn’t the necessary wits to) think, a roundskull is one who prefers not to. Often applied to local folk who sit drinking in their tavern displaying prejudices and repeating the words of their parents and grandparents, rather than making their own judgements about changing conditions around them, and new concepts, items, and customs. (A real-world policeman who decides that a dead wife automatically means the husband did the murder and sets out to arrest the husband without doing any investigation would be a classic roundskull.)

SMALLKEG: A smallkeg is a smallish, easily-handled wooden keg used for the transportation and storage of spirits, wines, oils, and other liquids. Like everything else in the hand-produced, non-mechanized Realms, the size of smallkegs varies from specimen to specimen, but in terms of usage, it’s the equivalent of the 2-litre “bomb” pop bottle. Think of the keg carried by the legendary St. Bernard around its neck, to give succor to those lost in the alpine snows. In the Realms, a smallkeg is an imprecise but commonly used unit of sale; the keg is sold along with its contents. Smallkegs are often sealed with clay or pitch, and frequently have metal bands around their centers, or a fitted metal-strap cage around them for strength, sometimes with solid “cap” ends fitted with rings so the kegs can be strung on chains or ropes, hung up on tavern or larder walls, and stored in warehouses or wagons (often among hammocks that carry the next larger size of kegs, the “boltran” or “falaerkyn,” which is about double the size of a smallkeg; most merchants recognize three sizes of kegs, the largest being the size of the real-world North American barrel many of us have seen; anything larger than that is a “cask” and not a “keg”).

Spelldoom

- Ed 11/7/10

An unleashing of magic intended to bring about the deaths of multiple entities. Usually this term is used when the magics are both deadly and dangerous to handle (and so would normally not be unleashed in this manner, or so profusely, or in such a reckless way), and their wielder either doesn't expect to survive their unleashing, or doesn't care if they survive doing so.

So a wild hurling of several highly-destructive spells in a confined or crowded-with-people area would be one sort of spelldoom. So would starting a spell duel in a wild magic area, or an armory in which many easily-awakened magic items are stored.

There WAS a wizard who earned himself the nickname "Saer Spelldoom" for his habit of starting deadly spell-brawls in public places (and slipping away from them, so that others paid the price).

Jacks and Maids

- THO 5/4/12

I think "doorjacks" is derived from "jacks" ("jacks" being everyday Heartlands Common for "male servants" (or sometimes more widely, "male labourers/employees").

So from "jacks" we get: "chamberjacks," "stablejacks," "doorjacks," and so on. Even "nightjacks" for the night shift, in some usages.

(The female equivalent is usually "maid," but in some less formal professions, like picking produce, it's "lasses.")

Draconic

Hardest word in Realms to translate

- Ed 21/11/11

It would probably be the Draconic word "rlin'd'kraukh"

. . . which means, in Common: "small and somewhat intelligent mammal that is not a transformed dragon nor the favored of a dragon nor carrying a dragon egg or seed or other dragon relic, wittingly or unwittingly, that is, so far as I know, not openly and formally an ally, servant, slave, or worker-in-common-cause with a dragon, but that is a coerced or unwitting pawn I believe I can manipulate, whose behavior I can predict with fair confidence, because of its observed prior behavior under duress or manipulation of myself or other dragonkind." (This is further colored by usage: a dragon would not use this word of someone they weren't eager to manipulate because they considered the creature to be manipulated relatively weak, unsuitable, or distasteful. They use it for ideal or useful pawns they anticipate using in successful ways.)

Note: by "small and somewhat intelligent," what is meant is a creature habitually of smaller size than an older-than-newborn-hatchling dragon of my sort, that is intelligent enough to speak, remember messages and individual creatures met in the past, and master at least one articulate language. In other words, humans (and all of the demi-human and humanoid races).

There are certainly many more baffling words in the Realms, that have to do with faith-specific religious concepts or school-specific magical details . . . but they are specialized jargon, not difficult to translate at all for those who have the proper frames of reference (are of the right faith with the proper inner teachings, or have the right magical mastery and knowledge).

For instance, it's hard to describe the color green to someone who's been blind from birth - - and it's hard to describe the feel of the Weave when working with it in certain manners under particular conditions, to someone who's never "felt the Weave" because they have no aptitude for the Art at all. But for someone who has shared experiences or guild initiations or technical training with the speaker, word meanings come more easily.

Dwarven

- THO 19/11/10, responding to query about words for stone, mountain, fort, turn, compass directions

duin = stone, pebble, fragment (natural, or rather, not chipped off or sculpted by a dwarf)
druin = boulder, large standing stone (again, natural, not a cairn or monument or sculpted-in-place object), an erratic (boulder sitting in a spot that doesn't "fit" with surrounding terrain), small crag or tor
druir = mountain (there are other words for specific sorts of mountains, inhabited-by-dwarves mountains, dragonlair mountains, etc such as "-tar" being the mountain suffix that referred to the great mountain north of the Moonsea, Ghaethluntar, inhabited by the flind.)
grym = one of the archaic suffixes for a (subterranean, of course) dwarven city (as seen in Ed's creation "Gauntulgrym" or "Gauntlgrym" . . . in this case, a trademoot city not just suited to dwarves and smaller inhabitants)

I recall that some named mountains had their names just prefixed to "druir" (such as "Ardrentdruir" in the Sword Coast North, the mountain that was once home to the small Ardrentrar clan of the dwarves, that I don't think has made it into the published Realms yet)

Ed does have notes for the Realmsian Dwarven terms for up (higher), down (deeper into the Underdark), and the compass directions, but I can't find my scribbles right now. From hazy memory, North is "thald" or "tahl/tal," I think, but that's really all I can recall at the moment.

There are LOTS of words for stone, just as the real-life Inuit have many words for various sorts of snow and ice, describing utility, condition, and location.

Earth Languages

- THO 23/10/10, specifically responding to query about presence of French language in the Realms

Wherever Elminster is in the Realms, when he's with apprentices or former apprentices, one might hear a smattering of French spoken (because El's speaking it, as a sort of personal code, to those he's taught it to). Otherwise, only a handful of individuals have "passed through gates" from our world to the Realms, who speak French, so they'll have no one to speak it with/to, EXCEPT in the same way El is using it (and none of those individuals are recorded in official printed Realmslore, because TSR wanted no "real-world connection" between the Realms and our world, though they later asked Ed to write the Wizards Three series of articles in DRAGON, and allowed him to re-establish that connection). The Realms MIGHT have had ancient Egyptian and/or Babylonian migration from our world (see Unther and Mulhorand, pre-4th edition), but otherwise, there are NO direct real-world analogues in the Realms (no lands, cultures, or languages). For intelligibility, we collectively "pretend" that Common can be rendered into English, but it's a hand-wave . . .

Elven

- THO 30/1/13

if by "raven" you mean the bird, it's "thimril" in elder days, and "thimron" nowadays in the Realms, according to Ed. "Raven" as despoil, ravage, and plunder is "urlril."

Halfling / Gerult

Name of language

- Ed 8/6/11

The tongue of halflings is commonly called "Halfling" by other races, and this isn't considered impolite by anyone. Sages and sticklers among humans will sometimes prefer "Hin" or "Hinspeech," but halflings find that amusingly outdated and pedantic. Among themselves, they refer to their language as "Gerult"

(which means "The Talk"), and consider "Lurienal" the proper name of formal, 'correct' [as in: non-slang] Gerult. Not a dialect, but "proper English" (what Commonwealth real-world speakers sometimes call "the King's English" or "the Queen's English," meaning formal, polite, correct in all points of grammar and etiquette, with sentences structured to avoid possible misunderstandings. The language of treaties, in other words. (As well as being the form of halfling-speech used in the land of Lurien.)

Regional Dialects

- Ed 8/6/11

There ARE regional dialectics among halflings, including Blaethur (spoken in Waterdeep and other cities up and down the Sword Coast, a rapidly-changing, "current" speech larded with human words and adopted expressions from many languages, that has many contractions and shortform substitute words [e.g. "draego" for "the day after this one if we're lucky, but probably later"]); Norarra (a soft, fluid, very-slowly-changing rural speech of the Heartlands and Moonsea, that can be contrasted with Luirenal as real-world Welsh can be contrasted to BBC English); and Haroor (a sharp, fast, staccato-delivery form of halfling known in Calimshan, the Tashalar, and the Border Kingdoms, that incorporates words from other languages, such as Common, with 'inverted commas' inflections around them).

- THO 8/6/11

Ed tells me the dialects are readily understandable to all halflings, and all speakers of them also understand "general Halfling."

In other words, a hin traveling far from home will miss local allusions only (references to purely local events, people, jokes, and past events). Even unfamiliar words will 85% of the time be understandable by context.

So it would be more missing nuances than meanings.

Larach

Similarity to Gaelic

- Ed 18/3/11

Larach, the human dialect used of old in The Great Dale and Telflamm, shares many shibboleths (by which in this case I mean "word sound elements" rather than shared words) with Scottish Gaelic (and the form of it I've heard most often, which is Canadian or Cape Breton Gaelic), rather than the softer and more "like Irish" Gaelic dialects.

In the Realms, Larach survives only in a few phrases and in inscriptions among humans, but is very close in sounds AND casual everyday vocabulary to gnome and halfling dialects of the Inner Sea east (that is, anything east of the Dragonreach and the Vilhon Reach).

So if you're up on your Gaelic (i.e. hearing and speaking it often enough to be able to "catch" what's mumbled and said quickly, as in "normal" everyday casual speech), you would get about two words in ten of halfling and gnome chatter.

Loross

- Ed 28/1/13

rehleld (=easily ignited or ready to burn fuel); eldarra (=danger of fire, overcooking, or scorching); summluth (=breathable, not stinking, pleasant aroma or welcome breeze)

Magic

- Ed circa 2008 quoted by WR in Qs for Ed 24/7/16

Spells are written in an everchanging "pidgin" language derived from Auld Wyrn/Auld Wyrnish (sometimes called "Auld High Wyrnish" or "Old Draconic"), words augmented by runes/sigils that carry their own magical charges AND have a meaning in an incantation, akin to modern real-world picto-symbols for access, washrooms, this or that banned, et al (though they usually mean something like "that phrase [of the incantation, just spoken] is validated and empowered thus" or "empowered and comined with [the next phrase of the incantation]") which is why "read magic" was a different spell than "comprehend languages."

An incantation is "read" by enunciating the words of the incantation, and visualizing (or touching) each rune/sigil AS the name of the rune/sigil is uttered, as they occur in the written spell (which releases their "trigger" magic to affect ("steer and shape") the building power of the natural forces of the world that is being raised and combined by the incantation into an eventual effect.

The language of the incantation (not counting these rune/sigil names) consists of verbs and articles mainly of elder draconic origin, plus a vocabulary of nouns (and a few verbs and articles) added by many workers-in-magic down the years. Some of these added words are elvish, some are human, and a very few (gems, mainly) are dwarven or from the gnome tongue. This language, like all languages, changes over time, as many new words are added, a few are forgotten, and a few fall out of favour. Many of the newer words are "nonsense" words coined by individual human mages, that get taken up and used by others; if someone used to wielding the Art ("arcane magic spellcaster") reads a spell scroll or written spell without actually casting it, the meanings of the words are conveyed faintly to them, unfolding in their brains (which is how someone can trigger not just explosive runes, but a harmful or beneficial glyph).

The point is that the spell CRAFTER (not caster, if they are different beings) must know/feel/be able to visualize what each word represents, be it a thing, a force, a transformation, or a desired result (for instance, the incantation phrase "aumma drood hethtarl [barrander] khehk'tal" literally means: ruby (the gem), melt it, to produce only a red vapor and heat, [name of rune, that means: applying the flesh-affecting ability this derived chemical possesses, to all of the energies of the building spell], unchanged in effects). So it's quite possible for a drow caster to use drow words in an incantation, or a dwarf to replace some words with dwarven runes (different from the "power runes"/sigils of the spell), or any spellcaster to use a family or personal nonsense word that THEY know the meaning of, when writing down spells.

So the answer is: there's no one "language of magic," but there's a jargon for incanting that's perhaps 40 percent nonsense words ("nonsense" to non-workers-in-magic, as in: invented, not part of any merely spoken language), 30 percent human, 12 percent elder draconic, 8 percent elven (various dialects, usually old word forms), and 10 percent drawn from all other tongues.

A speaker of any of these tongues who does not have the gift of handling the Art could "sort of" understand "their" words in an incantation, but only partially (for instance, an old drow word for "violent fall" of a stalactite [the equivalent of "crash down on whatever's below"] might be used in an incantation to mean "dash down" [that is, I want this my spell to violently and damagingly smash something down on what's below]; the meaning is similar but not identical, and could be misunderstood out of context).

In the "good old days," game designers actually sat down (often over drinks), and discussed all of this, so we'd be on the same page when writing, even though the early publishing codes prevented anything

really specific being printed about "casting spells/working witchcraft." This has ALWAYS been "how it's worked in the Realms," with Ruathlek being an illusionist's "code" version of wizards' magical lingo, and I got TSR staff designers to agree to this back in 1986, but . . . personnel change, companies change, agreements get forgotten and new people never even know they exist, and so on . . .

Numerals

Roman Numerals in published lore

- Ed 27/12/10

Where a published Realms product might refer to "Azoun IV," the Roman numeral is unknown in the Realms. The same person is actually referred to, by heralds or sages in the Realms, as "Azoun of Cormyr, fourth reigning Obarskyr of that name" but we render it into a Roman numeral for ease of understanding and to save space (long ago, I came up with the 2e character stat contractions [example: "NG hm W14" rather than writing out "Neutral Good human male fourteenth level Wizard"] purely to save space when writing FORGOTTEN REALMS ADVENTURES).

Thorass

Letter Case

- THO from Ed 18/4/12

Thorass does indeed have upper and lower case letters, but uppers are usually used to begin names, NOT to begin sentences (there's a vertical stroke to do that). There are also no question marks; a query is signaled by turning the last letter (that in written English would precede a question mark) from vertical to horizontal.

Written Idiosyncracies

- Ed 25/7/13

If we think of Thorass (the main written alphabet of the Common Tongue) as real-world written (cursive) English, there are letters that have "tails" (descenders) dipping below the main horizontal line of script, ascenders that thrust well above it, loops formed by letters (in modern-real world parlance, counters, formed by bowls), and some letters that have dots above them (such as the lowercase "i" and "j"). On the southern shores of the Inner Sea, in the TEMPTATION OF ELMINSTER example Pasta Fzoul cited, bowls are squared rather than rounded (so the letter "o" looks like a box, rather than a circle). This style is found in Turmish, the Vilhon, and some of the Lake of Steam cities and easternmost Calishite lands. In Waterdeep, all loops are rounded, and all arms or legs of letters are curved (descenders back below and behind the preceding letter, and ascenders forward to hang above the following letter). In Athkatla and especially in Calimshan, those dots I mentioned become horizontal slashes (often "wavy," like the tilde symbol), but this is found nowhere else except in older writings of Dambrath.

LIFE & THE SOCIAL WORLD

Armour Differences

Fashion & Fads

- THO 12/9/12

I can clearly recall a sudden fad among adventurers in the Moonsea North, Dales, Sembia, Cormyr, and Lake of Dragons area, in 1357 DR, for using bucklers (the small, round, hand-sized shields). Great in unexpected duels or close-quarters tavern brawls, but of less utility against orcs or barbarians whaling away at you with huge axes or two-handed swords.

That fad was followed by a fashion that lasted for four years (and in some cases clung for another decade or so) for wearing a huge plate-armored "battle arm" (sleeve, fastened at shoulder and wrist, and covering one arm in a properly-jointed but massively armored [[and adorned]] assembly of overlapping and sliding armor plates that covered one arm from shoulder to wrist. Worn even with festive clothing, not just "when armored and ready for war."

Battle Arms

- Ed quoted by WR, Qs for Ed 21/9/12

Ah, yes, battle arms. Remember that they are great places to wear hidden keys, lockpicks, pionards and "knitting needle daggers," and for a dwarf to latch a detachable drinking-cup to . . . :}

Copperbright

- Ed paraphrased by THO, 11/12/12

It's more decorative than MOST normal plate armor, because it conforms more to body shapes and/or can be draped/take "curves." It is SLIGHTLY lighter than most plate armor - - and is considered plate armor rather than chainmail because it's really three overlapping, staggered layers of discs, all connected (at each and every disc) by fine wires. Unlike chainmail, which is interlaced rings, these wires are long enough to permit flexibility among three staggered layers of discs. One way to view copperbright is to think of it as three chainmail shirts made of oversized American pennies, worn together and attached to each other in many, many places.

Same AC as normal plate armor, slightly lighter and more supple so 1 point "better" for the wearer than normal plate for dex bonus, AC penalties, etc.

Copperbright was originally popular in Ulgarth, Var the Golden and the neighbouring lands, then it spread to Dambrath, then a decade or so later it came to the Tashalar and up around the coast to the Border Kingdoms.

- Ed 14/12/12

Copperbright takes thrice as long to make as plate armor, but this can be cut to twice as long if and only if it's being made to fit a particular individual, and that individual is available without long delays for several "fitting" sessions.

Copperbright material is the same cost as for plate armor (supple, non-brittle WIRE tends to be more expensive than even the most expensive plates, though some gnome and dwarf "family firms" [[i.e. with lots of skilled workers acting together]] make wire and plates for about the same price), but for most armorers, the labor for a copperbright "suit" will be a third or more more expensive than for a coat-of-plate full suit.

(BTW, the reason why copperbright goes faster with fittings is that regular plate can be made to fit an over-burly wooden "dummy" figure, if the end buyer isn't available or isn't known, and any resulting

"roominess" taken up with properly-augmented leather underpadding -- so long as the length of armor for the limbs is more or less [[bracers/graves being extended or shortened as necessary]] correct.)

Elven armour differences over time

- THO 1/9/11

In general, elder elven chainmail had a lot more flutings (plates of armor curved for ornamental purposes) and spires (long sharp points of armor, on the reinforcing plates worn over chain at elbows, shoulders, surrounding the neck as an upstanding ruff or wall, and on the helm) than more modern elven chain. The same goes for elven platemail; the older stuff has more flutings and spires.

It's one of the ways we Knights, and all other adventurers, had some inkling of the value of what we'd found in dungeons and tombs and dragon treasure hoards: the older stuff is considered better, and fetches higher prices, than the newer.

Axioms & Sayings

Military Axioms

- THO 18/2/11

I recall a LOT of sayings being tossed around by various tutors of our PCs, such as "Expect a foe to attack when you're least prepared!" and "Avoid war at all costs -- but be ready for it, always, at all costs." (This of course is all Ed, roleplaying these NPCs, and probably paraphrasing real-world military sayings, particularly the British ones that precede American ones by a century or more, such as the Realmsian saying: "Most of our battles are fought where our maps fail," which is a paraphrase of the British in Africa during the Zulu War: "Our forces always seem to engage the enemy in blinding weather, on a hillside, where two maps meet" [and I'm paraphrasing THAT from memory, too].)

- Ed 30/7/11

- The best attack is not the mightiest, but the one that strikes when the time is right.
- The cost of war is ALWAYS too high. Consider when the cost of not going to war gets higher.
- Die not for the throne. Make the throne's foe die instead.
- Sharp swords speak louder than pretty words.
- We all die, but make every warrior's death count.
- Tales of glory change with each telling, but graves are forever.
- Fight for good reason only; deathless causes share a habit of dying.
- I fight for friends, family, and hearth, not flag.
- A banner is only a strip of cloth, a map is only a scrap of hide. Victories are won and held in hearts and minds.

"Beware Greeks Baring Gifts"

- THO 15/1/10

There are several similar Realms sayings, but the most applicable is probably:

"A Sembian has a heart of grasping gold."

Which has many regional variants, and 'began life' as the still-popular "An Amnian has a heart of grasping gold."

It's actually a shortening of a literary quotation, from an anonymous chapbook of the early 1300s, that

contained the line: "A man of Amn has a heart that grasps and thirsts for gold, and eyes that can see nothing else."

This lore comes from some very old (circa 1969) Ed notes, that I once read in his paper-heaped study.

- Ed 24/1/10

That chapbook is still in circulation (there are many, many copies to be had, up and down the Sword Coast, usually in states of well-worn disrepair), and is entitled:

"KNOW THY LANDS And the Trails That Traverse Them/A Treatise of Worldly Wisdom By A Veteran Wayfarer"

(The originally-beige-hued chapbook cover bears no illustration, but only this title, in large characters at the top and then smaller with each succeeding line, on down to the bottom.)

Bathhavens / Spas

- Ed 3/10/11

Q: "Are there spas or beauty salons in the Realms? What do they call it?"

Ed: Yes, many. Some in temples, as a revenue source, if compatible with the deity's aims and interests, and many more small, private shops. They have many different names, depending on the location/culture they're found in, but any well-travelled merchant will know what you mean if you refer to a "house of beauty" or a "bathhaven."

Children

"Bugaboos"

- THO 11/2/08

There are LOTS of local "bugaboos," plus faith-related ones. Ed will furnish you with a proper lore reply in the fullness of time, but I can recall The Haunted Helm (empty, floating/flying helm) in Cormyr, and the ghost of a dead local ruler, the Baron of Blacksaddle, in the Border Kingdoms (see p 134 and 135 of POWER OF FAERUN)."

- Ed 31/12/10

Ed tells me he dare not delve into the faith-related bugaboos, or he'll still be typing a year from now, but would like to add to The Haunted Helm, the ghost of the dead baron, and some others hinted at since, these:

- In Waterdeep, "Drowned Jack" rises, dripping, from the harbor, to slither like an eel along the alleys, sewers, and streets (up walls if he must), to reach the sleeping-places of bad boys and girls and strangle them, or sometimes just warn them by sticking his long, slimy, rotting fingers up their noses or in their ears or down their throats, until they rouse from sleep in pain and alarm. He's the faceless, slimy, black-rotting-flesh-over agile, strong, and FLEXIBLE bones undead remains of a sailor who drowned in the harbor long ago, with his bad deeds unatoned for; he's determined to scare others into not sharing his fate.
- In Amn (and, in recent years, in Sembia, though there he's sometimes called the Thief-Wraith), the Coin Shadow drifts through walls, a cowed and hooded wraith of incorporeal blackness, to steal a coin from a bad child—and "taint" that child with its chill (by passing through the child's sleeping body, typically causing instant, painful wakefulness) and so confer bad luck that will keep that child far poorer

than good children, this taint building up with its every visit . . . for every bad deed.

- In Tethyr, the flesh-less (but drenched with sticky red-black blood that drips endlessly) skeletons of knights and guards slain in long-ago regicides will come, rusting swords and daggers in hand, to “mark” every bad child, for every deed. Minor deeds will bring one skeleton (that can pass through walls and doors), but major ones will bring three or more to surround the child and glare silently at him or her as they thrust their bone-chilling blades forward to touch and “mark” the bad child. And with every mark, a year of your life fades away, and you feel a little colder . . .

- In Cormyr, Guthtarl will come for you! A fat, white-fleshed bastard son of an oldblood noble family who became a War Wizard but betrayed his country and was blinded and exiled for it (this is all true, except for the blinding, which is an embellishment; the real Guthtarl temporarily went blind after his exile, when a spell he was experimenting with “blew up” in his face), Guthtarl appears as a white, slime-glistening worm, a bulbously fat man from the waist up, and a giant dew-worm (in shape) from the waist down, though all of him can stretch out of shape to get through (sometimes very) thin places, like the opening under a door. He crawls along, blindly groping his way, somehow SMELLING bad children. He can cling to ceilings if need be, and cast silent spells that create deep shadow, to avoid detection by grownups, and WILL find bad children, and will grope for them with his cold, slimy, soft and deformed fingers . . . His touch brings on illnesses (usually nasty colds), and he can smell bad thoughts in the mind of someone he’s already visited, and will come back if they say or do anything bad, to grope again, every visit bringing something worse (usually warts or rashes, then witherings and reeking breath and explosively-voiding bowels . . .)

- In the Dales, Old Reth, with his axe, comes for the false, the bad, and the unworthy. Tall and gaunt, his footfalls always silent because his boots actually float about a fingerwidth above the ground, this long-dead woodcutter has burning eyes and wears rotten homespun, with a large, shapeless hat shading his face—all but his two enraged, burning eyes. He says nothing, but merely points reprovingly at bad ones—then reaches forward and lets fall his axe. Which passes right through you, reaching you no matter how distant he may seem to be, making no visible wound and spilling no blood, but actually slices a little life out of you, every time . . . usually a year of your life for a very bad deed, ten years if you cause the death of someone else who was not attacking you, but only a tenday or a month for more minor misdeeds (like minor thefts or lies that only do a little harm). Some elder folk of the Dales can see “the Mark of Reth” on those he’s visited, and know at a glance exactly how bad you have been, by how much he’s marked you. They’ll know whether or not to trust your word, do business with you, let you marry into their family, or tell you a secret . . .

- All around the Moonsea, the skulls will rise up. Up out of the grave of someone who died violently, long ago, gray and staring, usually human but for very grave evils, stag-horned. They will silently drift toward evil children, able to fly and pass through solid walls, doors, and window-shutters. Children who see them coming will usually see half a dozen or more, all heading for different miscreants, all with jaws hanging open, empty dark eyesockets somehow unerringly SEEING the one they come for, no matter how that one hides or flees. They pass through you and give you nightmares [bad dreams, not the black horse-like infernal steed] for many nights afterwards, the severity of these terrors tied to the darkness of your misdeed. And they remember you, and come for you again and again, silent in their cold, increasingly contemptuous disapproval. They did not fight and die so insolent children could misbehave . . .

- Around the Shining Sea (Calimshan, Lapaliiya, the Tashalar, Tharsult, etc.), Ogluth comes for those who commit evil acts. Ogluth is the sickly blue-white, translucent ghost of a yawning-jawed, mad-eyed

beholder, huge and slow and silent, who drifts with patient ponderousness after evildoers. Adults can't see him, but can't avoid him; he passes through them and they collapse unconscious, as he steals from them one important memory (where treasure or something precious is hidden, or the names of distant kin, or the route to somewhere important and familiar [that will now seem unfamiliar as they get lost on the way to it], or something else they would dearly love NOT to forget) and drifts on. Bad children can see him coming, but can't escape him either, for he can pass through anything, and even drift into your dreams . . .

Always, he steals a memory of something precious. And if ever you lose all your memories to him, you'll be no smarter than a worm, unable to think or speak, a drooling prisoner of your own silent, witless body . . .

Childbirth Rituals

- THO 25/7/13, referring to general Heartlands rituals

The ritual I can recall offhand (and find in the notes I've made during years of play with Ed) is the lighting of a candle in the birthing area just before/during birth, to "burn away all foulness/lurking spirits/Beshaba's malice."

Status of Children

- Ed 14/7/13

Heh. You're going to get tired of me saying 'It depends,' but an answer about the status of children does. On the race, society, location, and time you're speaking of, in the Realms.

In most human societies in the Realms "today" (1300s and 1400s), children are raised by their families (grandparents, usually, if parents are lost, because grandparents often live with the parents; more distant relatives if parents or grandparents are lacking). Older siblings are expected to care for siblings, there is no concept of "child labour" being bad (everyone is expected to pitch in with housework and "earn coin" work from the beginning, doing what they can considering their age, build, strength, etc.). Yes, children are bought and sold as slaves in some parts of the Realms (Thay, in particular), but this is generally regarded as bad everywhere else. Orphans are usually raised by priests and lay staff at temples, and either work the temple-farms (and kitchens, and laundries) in return for bed and board, or are "apprenticed out" (an apprentice usually works for bed, board, and a small allowance for "pouch coin" [=spending money]) to local craftsmen. Yes, some children sell their bodies - - but they themselves do it; pimping is illegal in many places, and illegal everywhere when children are involved.

Ultimately, children are their own persons, and considered so at a much younger age than we modern real-world folk might (remember that in earlier centuries in Europe and elsewhere, children could join guilds, sign contracts, and take part in adult society at much younger ages than we trust them to do today); so a 9 or 10 year old might be making their own way in the world and treated as such. An orphan is a ward of the Crown in Cormyr and most other places, unless or until they are accepted by a temple as a ward of the faith (and of course, this does NOT mean the child is bound to that and only that faith; it means that faith is assuming responsibility for their upbringing, usually in the hopes that they'll gain a priest or dedicated lay follower in the future). You are dead-on correct in saying, ". . . all faiths would see children as hugely important, no matter how evil they may ostensibly be. They're the future, after all." With all of that said, in the circumstances you've described for your own campaign, everything sounds realistic to me.

A priestess of Myrkul or any other faith would offer to take an orphaned "baby to her church for

guardianship, education and ultimately, a life" -- - and a paladin of another faith would very likely object, for the reason he cited.

What it comes down to is who prevails (the "easy" choice is another temple, of a neutral faith, and often that faith is Chauntea, because farm work is very labour-intensive and the benefits flow, in a mundane but vital daily way, to all). In most cases, adventurers would object to a babe in arms being brought along on adventures or even wilderland travels, because they're a vulnerable burden being placed in harm's way for no good reason, and would prefer temple fostering if there isn't a family or household linked to one of the adventurers who could rear the child as their own. (And don't forget parents of adventurers; many grandparents in most human societies in the Realms of "today" are used to having infants around and caring for them; as everyone ages, those infants will become vigorous younglings who will become the eyes and hands of the failing, aging grandfolk.)

So in most such cases, the babe will be placed with a temple for rearing; what has to be roleplayed out among the PCs is which temple . . . (bearing in mind we may be talking about a future "replacement PC adventurer" here).

Clothing

Keyhole necklines / Gracetels

- Ed 2/4/10, responding to query about their existence and if there are locations they're not allowed

Yes, such fashions exist, are common, and are usually called "gracetels." They can be found anywhere along trade routes in the Heartlands, and along the Tashalar and Golden Gulf coasts. "Not allow" is a strong term for the Realms; except for temple, "livery" (servant uniforms) and palace/civil service/military "uniforms," styles of clothing are varied throughout the Realms, rather than following any prevalent or governing code of fashion. Among the nobility and wannabe-nobles (ambitious, socially climbing "new money" merchants) across the Realms, there are fashions that change constantly and are used to differentiate between those who are "fashionable" or "in" and those who are not (just as in our real world), but the great bulk of middle-class ("citizen shopkeepers") and labourers (lower-class, including quite wealthy "crofters" or long-established farmers) regard such chasings after fashion with amusement or even ridicule. What a woman chooses to expose or not of herself is HER affair; the "modesty" of some real-world cultures is present but not a widely-accepted or -followed norm anywhere. So no one would "not allow" the wearing of a low-cut or revealing garment, though some might privately disapprove (or think it "not fitting for the occasion").

"Gracetal" was originally an elven term, it's thought, though its origin has been lost with passing time. Humans definitely had such garment styles in long-ago Netheril, and even earlier. Alternative terms have included "heartbare/heartbaring" and "splendor-glance" (the latter being used in Waterdeep "today" [[1350s through 1370s DR]]).

Short Skirts

- THO 8/9/10, responding to query as to their existence

Yes, there are definitely above-the-knee fashions in various locales in the Realms (bear in mind that much published Realmslore has concerned colder northerly regions, where more covering would tend to be favoured).

- Ed 18/9/10

Yes. "In fashion" is correct, though, in that usage and social acceptability come and go with passing time, each phase lasting one or two decades. Above-the-knee open-bottomed garments have been in fashion for both genders in Unther, for females in the Tashalar and Var the Golden, and for both genders in Estagund. And many other places, for short periods, as well -- but the places I've named have had those fashions return, more than once. The garments go by many names depending on where, when, and their precise style.

Undergarments

- EG related by WR 11/2/16

Hi, David. Well, how much spice to include in your game should be up to your players. Discuss it with them first. My players have on occasion roleplayed some VERY erotic moments "in the flesh" (er, so to speak -- sorry, couldn't resist that one), but on other occasions didn't want to. [It of course helps to have a mixed-gender group of great maturity and a strong love of roleplaying and very close friendships; my group happens to include two stable-long term couples, and some er, adventuresome folks from generations before AIDS.] As DM, my job is keep them happy, so it's their call. The older in age your players are, the less possibility exists of unintentionally upsetting anyone (as long as everyone agrees on 'the ground rules' beforehand).

For instance, I'd never dream of deliberately making a homophobic person uncomfortable when I (a rather stout, pepper-and-salt-bearded man) roleplay a prostitute and go and sit in a male player's lap caressing his chin and face and breathily making propositions in a feminine voice -- but I don't have to worry about that, because I know my players and they know me. We have "warning words" (we simply say: "Steady!" or "Simmer!") for anyone to signal if they're becoming uncomfortable or think an observer (i.e. someone who's not a regular player) might be misinterpreting or becoming uncomfortable.

So your first step has to be discussing this with your players, even if it's going to rob a future erotic situation or scene of its surprise/shock value.

I don't want to leave anyone reading this with the impression that our play sessions are orgies. Far from it: sex comes up in play (ahem) less and less frequently as players age and a campaign acquires a deep history (and playing style) of its own. It's just that when it does, we're all comfortable with it -- in the same way, just to give an example, two "straight" actors of the same gender can climb into bed with each other and pretend to be carrying out a homosexual sex act when they're performing a scene for a play or movie. I suppose you could say we're all mature professionals about it.

Our player characters are not ourselves. What we do as characters doesn't directly reflect our personal views and actions -- in the same way I create characters in my novels who disagree with each other to the point of killing each other, so obviously they can't all be reflections of my own personal views (something a lot of critics, academics, and real-world clergy seem to be too simpleminded to understand, but that's another issue).

I think all of my players are used to my craziness, and can enjoy the entertainment without fearing I'm going to use the game as an excuse to jump them carnally -- but I can certainly see that other players unfamiliar with me might acquire that fear -- and I'd never want to make someone that uncomfortable. As they say: hey, it's just a game.

On the other hand, I once played D&D at GenCon with a beautiful stranger who unconcernedly dropped her jeans and everything else to proudly show us all her latest tattoo. It was very nice, as I recall. :) Yet more than the view, I admired her casual confidence, her being comfortable in her own skin. THAT'S

what I remember, not the exposed flesh.

Which brings us to lingerie. First, utilitarian underwear for men and women: women with large breasts that get in the way, or when doing activities that are going to cause chafing or discomfort (crawling on rock while mining, rowing, etc.) often wear a tight cloth breast-binding or sling (the equivalent of a modern sports bra, although instead of stretchy fabric covering a lot of skin, the Realms version is more like a trough or shelf of tightly-stretched cloth sewn to cords (precisely because elastic fabric is largely unknown in the Realms). In colder climates, soft hide bras are worn most of the time.

For the lower half of the body, both men and women wear clouts: a very tight leather, cloth, or cord (listed here in descending order of perceived quality and durability) belt worn around the hips, and usually held tight by multiple hooks (like a modern bra) at the front. Then a long, diaper-like strip of rectangular cloth (usually cotton) is passed between the legs, up through the front of the belt to dangle down, and up through the back of the belt to dangle down. In other words, the "breechclout" of some native American tribes. In many cases, the dangling front and back ends are designed to be tied together, and the cloth may be folded in on itself for extra absorbency or padding (especially when the wearer expects to be riding a mount). Menstruating women usually place another layer or two of red-hued cloth inside the clout and change this as necessary, and yes, clouts can be purchased that are decorative and 'made to be seen.' Freshly-perfumed clouts are often sold in Waterdeep and other large cities.

Among simple backcountry folk in cold climates, women often wear leggings, leather skirts, long hide shirts (tunics), and fur cloaks -- and a woman wanting to signal her willingness for some hanky-panky either aggressively tells her chosen partner so, or hikes up her skirts briefly to reveal that she, ahem, seems to have forgotten to put on her clout! (Prostitutes trolling for strangers often expose their breasts and hold up a lantern to spotlight this fact -- and probably also to keep the bared skin a little warmer.)

Okay, on to the alluring stuff. The concept of wire for breast support and shaping is unknown in the Realms, but corsets (laced-up, tight boiled hide, not whalebone or any sort of stiffeners) and stomachers that cinch the waist tight are popular, and many of them have shaped panels for the hips and a top 'shelf' to thrust out and support the breasts. Low-cut peasant blouses and even lace trimmings (as one can see from examining the covers of Volo's Guides and much Realms interior artwork) are widely used. In hot climates, panties and translucent silk pantaloons, vests, and the like are often worn by women (Hollywood "harem" wear), also as established by some Realms artwork.

So black lace, black leather, and red (the other erotic hue) straps can be worn. Black lace dresses, garments that expose the crotch and nipples, and what we might call 'bondage gear' (such as tassel-adorned nipple clamps) are okay, on festhall dancers and in private, among couples. Prostitutes dress in whatever garb is allowed locally; in more conservative places, they are usually fully dressed, but in garments that show a strip of bare flesh all the way up the outside of the leg and torso (i.e. held together with a series of rings). This signals to would-be clients that this particular woman wants to be approached, rather than being someone who'll offer instant violence AND scream for the Watch if propositioned.

Men trying to signal their interest in sex or courtship will often wear an artificial flower perched on one shoulder: a red rose for "I'm looking for courtship," a black rose for "I'm looking for sex," and a steel rose to signal homosexual interest (a device also used by lesbians). In 'my' Realms, there's no stigma attached to homosexual relationships, only to any sexual behaviour that involves exploiting children, and any sexual behaviour that involves force or coercion (please note: WILLINGLY undergoing pain or bondage doesn't count).

Fops or boisterous types (such as Mirt the Moneylender) might wear four or more such roses to signal that they're interested in multiple partners for the night, but except in the right sort of festhall, such displays can often cause mirth or ridicule.

Other than the rose, men seldom wear "lingerie" per se, but may shave, perfume themselves, or wear a single black legging (usually on the right leg) decorated with scenes of heroic prowess (usually depicted in red). Tiny bells on nipple-rings are sometimes worn by individuals of either gender to 'appear sexy,' and some priests are reportedly excited by sexual partners who tattoo symbols of their deity on the palms of their hands.

And a glance at the published Realms should make it obvious that erotic dancing is a big part of foreplay and sexual entertainment. Elaborately-decorated (with bells, etc.) garters (we're talking here not the modern straps between belt and silk stockings, but rather the slender belt worn around a single leg with ends a-dangle) are often worn by dancers, both professionals and housewives wanting to excite their husbands, and undone and thrown aside during the dance.

In warmer climes, both genders often signal their desire for sex by walking naked in moonlit gardens, or naked except for finely-made, 'show' high boots, headgear (often with face veils), and to-the-elbow gloves (an overcloak is usually worn to reach the gardens -- and if the gardens aren't private, kept on until a desired partner is met).

Foreplay among elves and half-elves (particularly strangers) often includes the wearing of full-face masks or hoods that leave bare only the ears -- and caressing, kissing, or licking of ears (plus throat, backs of knees, and palms of hands) for and by both partners leads to more ardent activities.

Edible Undergarments

- THO 7/12/10

Of COURSE there are edible undies in the Realms. Popular "private revel" wear among certain nobles (or the wealthy elite, in Amn's case) and wealthy social climbers who aspire to nobility, in Waterdeep, Amn, Tethyr, Calimshan, and probably many other places I'm unaware of (as for my preceding post, I'm aware of them because of Realmsplay as a Knight, not formal Ed-writings, published or unpublished). Details, however, are going to have to come from Ed.

Monster parts

- THO 5/4/12

There are lots of exotic "made from monster stuff" feminine clothing articles in Ed's Realms (this is the sort of stuff that TSR and WotC habitually censor).

I know this because Torm of the Knights of Myth Drannor bought his way into a tiny chain of shops that sold such wares (alongside scents), so as to use it for a smuggling front. Ed kept us entertained with scores of such items.

Commerce

In General

- THO quoting Ed's player pack 17/9/12

The Realms is entering an era of increasing trade and prosperity. Orc hordes have been fewer in the North and winters less harsh, so the longer growing season and greater survival of foraging animals has led to more food for all.

Where once rulers and their patrols dictated trade-flows, merchants are now dominant; the ruler who

closes his borders or restricts trade loses out, while neighbours prosper. Merchants have found or developed alternate routes to most places, and those "connected" areas are experiencing a common quickening in trade, a rise in the overall standard of living, and folk indulging long-pent-up desires to own the latest fashions or better equipment or explore hobbies and reading or widen what they dare to eat and drink. The Sword Coast ports, the traditional mercantile powerhouses such as Amn and Sembia, and the traditional producers such as Tethyr and Calimshan are all "booming." Rulers can't mint coins fast enough, and trade-bars and gems are seeing common use as ways to make large payments and convey large amounts of wealth in a swift, portable manner. Where once mints might produce one gold coin for every hundred silver and thousand copper, they are now shifting to ratios closer to 1:10:20 -- because copper coins are already plentiful, but increased orders (not just rising prices) are leading to a fierce demand for more gold. In some places (notably Amn, Tethyr, Westgate, and eastern Sembia), the wealthy are being urged by courtiers to use their hoarded gold to buy properties so as to release more coins into general circulation. Although there is inflation, the energetic competition among far-faring merchants is breaking local guild monopolies and keeping prices lower than might be expected.

Taxes

Tax Collectors

- THO 7/8/12

For centuries tax collectors have been known as "claws," from another famous line from a play: "Keep clear of the claws of the grasping dragon." (Obviously, the state is the "grasping dragon," a phrase seen in print (in broadsheets and sages' histories) more than heard spoken.

Crime and Punishment

Prisons

- THO 24/5/13, replying to a query about potential Faerun-wide prisons

There's no one prison in the Realms where the "most dangerous criminals" are sent, because every realm has its own justice, lawkeepers, and sentencings (including incarceration). Prisoners are sometimes handed over or swapped after delicate diplomatic negotiations (often kept from the public), but most rulers of every stripe don't trust anyone else (especially not rival rulers) to imprison individuals they deem undesirable.

There are many attempts at peaceful trade, border, and other negotiations between realms, and these succeed surprisingly often (as in: there are far fewer wars than one might expect, although the game and published Realms products focus on the conflicts and it may well seem otherwise). These are almost always on a diplomatic level between rulers (via envoys), and not through some sort of "above the ruling level" standing organization -- though the history of the Realms has a lot of such organizations at a regional level (e.g. the Lords' Alliance in the northwest, the Dales Council in the Dales, the various moots that cobbled together the Silver Marches in the North). The priesthoods of many deities are constantly busy, diplomatically, all across the Realms, as a parallel diplomacy to courtiers and the decisions of border-patrolling defenders.

And finally, remember the Calendar of Harptos and those summer "holidays" (and, specifically, what happens at Shieldmeets).

However, if you're looking for something Realmsian akin to the real-world United Nations or the International Court at The Hague -- no, there are no "official standing bodies" in particular buildings that

anyone can go to at any time. Everything's more ad hoc.

There are prisons (dungeons) everywhere in the Realms, but they tend to be small-scale and local, because feeding and watering prisoners is expensive (and it makes more sense, if you don't want to prisoners to be idle and therefore ripe for mischief or violence, to keep them busy growing their own food, and therefore existing in smaller groups, at a subsistence level, or even incarcerated as individuals, scattered through the dungeons of many castles and fortresses across a land, where they can easily be fed by the kitchens of those fortresses as just "one more mouth," and where they are scattered and "who is where" is more secret, so rescues and prison-breaks are kept to a minimum). Many Realmsian rulers prefer work-gangs, so their prisoners continually improve local roads, bridges, public lighting and signalling systems (beacons and flags) and irrigation.

Crimes on Temple Grounds

- THO 24/10/12

". . .how is it handled when a crime happens on temple grounds? Is it handled by civic authorities, the priesthood, or both?"

I can speak only for Waterdeep, Suzail, and the Dales. For crimes only against the conduct of the faith (a priest doing something wrong vis-a-vis temple doctrine), the clergy usually tries to handle it internally. For anything else, they call in the local authorities - - and except in rare instances, can't keep them out if the crime is known outside the temple walls to have occurred (and the authorities don't want to leave it up to the clergy).

Death

Death Masks

- THO 30/6/13

There are indeed death masks in the Realms, and we Knights have found some on the corpses of buried wizards in "dungeons," over the years. Most of those, legend has it, bear curses - - but all I can tell you for sure is that some of them bore written messages on their inside (face-side) surfaces, that when touched emitted the voice of the deceased, saying something memorable or important (Torm always hoped the little speeches would be detailed directions to cached treasure, but the ones we came across were always "quotable quotes" about life, the Realms, and . . .).

Effigy Mounds

- THO 2/8/13

Yes, there are effigy mounds in the Realms. In play, we came across mounds in the eastern Sword Coast North (near the edge of Anauroch), in Tunland, and near the Spiderhaunt Wood, and heard of some south of Starmantle (i.e. up in the foothills) and outside the Great Dale, near its eastern end, as well as near Veldorn.

Drug Use

Cannabis-like herb availability

- THO 22/5/10

Most cities and "market towns" in the Realms have alchemists or herbalists or both (shops, that is), and of course most farmers (crofters) and rural villages have ample supplies of grown-right-there herbs as

well as "harvested from hedgerows and woodlots or the wild" herbs. However, the Realms DOESN'T have laws against soft or hard recreational herbal drugs (the very concept is unknown, because herbs and other plants have always been used for home medicines, and for trance-inducing, hallucinogenic, and mood-altering purposes IN TEMPLES, by the priests of the Realms (of almost all faiths).

As a result, there's no market need in the Realms for what's sometimes called in our real world a "head shop" or a "funk shop" or any "counter-culture" gathering place or vendor of drugs and associated items ("bongs", music, T-shirts, etc.).

No drug trade, no drug laws and police enforcement of them...none of that. If an idiot "drives" a wagon or chariot when stoned or drunk and does damage, citizens mete out rough justice on the spot, or the Watch in a city comes and arrests and takes the miscreant to justice for the damage done and for the reckless endangerment of the behavior that caused said damage...NOT for the drugs. (Again, in a setting where EVERYONE "believes" in all of the gods without necessarily having to take anything on faith, and priests habitually make use of drugs in holy rituals involving themselves and lay worshippers, the very concept of "drugs being illegal" is unknown.)

The one exception I know of is: military discipline. In many of the armies and local lawkeeping forces (i.e. City Watches) of the Realms, it's an offense to be drunk or stoned on duty.

Now, a note to all scribes reading this: please DO NOT misinterpret this post as advocating drug use in the real world, or describing the Realms as a place where everyone (or a majority of folk) are stoned all or part of the time. Nothing could be further from the truth. In some thirty-two years or so of Realmsplay, Ed has only ever described ANY evidence of drugs in the Realms twice, that I recall.

Once was a ritual in which priests had undertaken a vigil in which they drank sacred wine and inhaled vapors from specific herbs burned on an altar, in order to receive visions that would guide them (that they believed came from the deity).

The other occasion was PCs invading a temple of Bane to try to recover kidnapped persons. As they descended into lower levels of the temple (subterranean dungeons), Ed described acrid scents in the air, as if certain plants were being burned...and then the visions started. (This wasn't a defense of the temple, it was priests down on those lower levels engaged in a ritual, and the PCs inhaling the results from the air currents that normally exhaust the air of those lower temple levels.)

Education & Academies

Academies In General

- THO 24/11/13, responding to query about existence on non-magic academies

There are academies in almost all large cities (and many smaller places within easy reach of a critical mass of nobility) that teach a variety of worldly knowledge, of everything from the latest smelting and alloying techniques to poetry that reflects the sweep of civilized history. As mentioned previously in this thread, local temples provide the same service to citizens of lesser means - - and informally, with in some cases a lot less accuracy, so do local "hedge wizards" (who don't only teach magic), "wise elders," and traveling minstrels and bards. There are also traveling festive shows in the Realms (circuses) that usually include "Old Sage" characters who impart surprisingly good and thorough knowledge, of everything from languages and mathematics to herbal remedies and current world politics.

Sage Collaboration

- Ed 4/6/12

In the Realms, MOST sages are stay-at-homes; how isolated they are depends on where they live (most are on trade routes or, if they make a living as sages, in cities). They infrequently visit colleges and friends, yes. A FEW dare to exchange books (most have COPIES of writings made, and exchange those, thinking that a book lent is a book never to be seen again), and most do write letters to each other, both cordial and feuding -- some of the long-running disagreements are legendary.

A small minority are members of guilds (such as the Guild of Naturalists mentioned in my earlier Candlekeep replies and my much earlier "Ecology of" articles in DRAGON) that do meet every five or ten years or so, in what we would call conventions but are known in the Realms either as "conclaves" or "moots" (the former term if they're large, important, and will decide things extra-judicial, such as treaties/internal rules/punishments, and the latter term if they're smaller and won't/don't decide major policy matters), but this is the exception, not the norm.

Basic Maths & Literacy

- THO 29/5/12

The rise of mercantile trade/travel and guilds has led to a rise in making younglings literate and competent in "trading mathematics," throughout the "civilized" Realms.

Ed has mentioned some of the topflight academies in previous years in this very thread, but perhaps I should reiterate the other sources of learning he's touched on over the years, too: guilds school their members, guildmembers school their children, "retired" warriors train younglings for fees, and so on, and temples train almost everyone who's willing, in small ways. (It also bears repeating that the Realms is unfolding differently than our real-world history.)

- THO 31/5/12

Many folk can do "tally math," but in the Realms, advanced theory is more a matter of sages and of magic (arcane [spell cracting] and divine [priesthoods and religious philosophy], not maths, and that inevitably affects math development.

Art Schools

- THO 24/3/10

I don't recall Ed ever mentioning an art school in Cormyr (Sembia, yes), but I DO remember him talking about artists taking apprentices, particularly as their eyesight and manual dexterity started to fail with advancing age.

- Ed 30/12/13

There were literally thousands of art schools in the Realms in the 1370s and 1380s DR, with Sembia awash in wealth and desiring to demonstrate its sophistication and heights of culture—and such traditional centers of wealth as Athkatla, Waterdeep, and Sheirtalar continuing to foster lively art scenes (Athkatla and especially Sheirtalar prizing sculptures and architectural adornments over paintings, and Sembia increasingly prizing blown glass). The widespread tumult and troubles of the Spellplague dealt a blow to both the vast existing stores of objets d'art across Faerûn and the schools and artistic communities where rising artists were encouraged and supported, but recovery has occurred in fits and starts ever since the first chaos of the Spellplague, and much of this recovery, of course, uses more handcraft and less magic in the creation of the art than formerly.

The nobles of Waterdeep, and the new-coin self-styled nobles of Sembia, have always had a taste for

erotic art, both buying what catches their eye and commissioning “to order” pieces; aside from the really raunchy, hidden in back bedroom pieces, there’s a tradition of painting both members of a marriage, unclad and posed to advantage, when young and beautiful, to have as treasured keepsakes as a spouse gets older and more weatherbeaten, and especially after a spouse dies.

As the clergy of Sune promote beauty, anywhere there are clients for erotic art, they will find a side-market in selling non-commission sculptures and paintings (often dozens or scores of very similar images) to Sunite temples, for the temples to resell to worshippers. This helps artists in the same way real-world publishers are supposed to help writers: the author is freed from much of the business of hawking wares to devote his or her time to creating, with lessened worries about how their purse is going to get filled with coins.

Throughout the 1300s DR, patronage for and appreciation of art was on the rise, and by the 1360s DR, the most influential art schools in Faerûn are Ilygelther’s House in Waterdeep (North Ward), the Hlaroameum in Athkatla (Center District), and Gemcrown Hall in westernmost Yhaunn.

Arspeiridou Ilygelther was a fussy, energetic scarecrow of a man who financed, fed, and took lovers among artists of all races and both genders, so long as they produced art, art, and more art to delight him. He was all about the art, and the excitement of its creation and rubbing shoulders (and often, ahem, other body parts) with the creators. A (short, gaunt, untidily-clad-in-black, with “wild” uncombed hair and bright, avid eyes) man who hummed and rubbed his hands together with glee as he scuttled from studio to studio, Ilygelther wanted the chaos of art, and stood against juries, critics, guilds, and any means of approving or licensing or categorizing art. “Let the buyer decide!” was his constant refrain, and he didn’t have formal ties to anyone. He did, however, value all clerics as purchasers of art, in particular the Waterdhavian priests of Sune, Sharess, Deneir, and Oghma (and increasingly but covertly, Loviatar). Ilygelther owned and occupied—and stuffed full of an everchanging colony of struggling artists—no less than six buildings on either side of the north end of Brondar’s Way.

The Hlaroameum is a sprawling building created by joining seven formerly independent buildings, of all sizes and architectural styles, in the central heart of Athkatla’s Center District. It is home to eighty-odd live-in students who are admitted because they have demonstrated superb artistic talent, and they live in as regimented a daily style as some monasteries, with a communal morning rising to gongs when the water in the baths is sufficiently warmed (the baths are large brick-and-stucco bathing pools in the lowest interior rooms, heated by stones brought from the kitchen hearths in metal carry-cages), breaks at set times (though the kitchens are always working, and meals can be taken whenever), and the expectation that students shall spend the first half of their every working day assisting the masters in whatever projects the masters are engaged in (most often, gigantic wall-filling portraits of wealthy patrons, in which those patrons are idealized and portrayed as heroes, wealthy and learned and far more comely than they in fact are), and are then free to spend the evenings on their own works. The Hlaroameum is known for teaching all students (with plenty of opportunities for hands-on practice) various established styles of painting and sculpting, not just nurturing their own tastes, so anyone who attends long enough and has the will and the skill departs the school able to emulate established masters and styles. (More than a few former Hlaroameum students have become superb forgers and counterfeiters.)

Local Sunite clergy are frequent patrons, because they know they can work with the right masters (who

in turn enlist the skills of the right dozens or scores of students) to produce just what the priests want (usually duplicates of something they've acquired elsewhere, but now want forty copies of, all of them larger and grander than the original).

The masters of the Hlaroameum have mastered hauteur, and proclaim their school the blessed-by-the-gods pinnacle that all other artists and art teachers can only hope to miserably imitate, never worthily challenge. Most of Faerûn smilingly ignores this view, seeing it for what it is: self-aggrandizing horse dung.

Gemcrown Hall stands on a knoll on the western edge of Yhaunn, on one of the highest points in that city, in a grandiose, soaring-spined mansion acquired for a song when its builder went bankrupt with the place half-finished. A glass ceiling was installed to cover the gaps where the intended marble-clad dome had been completed, and the ambitious art-loving new owners, a couple named Artress and Rhaumontra Haeverhar, set about making sure they didn't go bankrupt by founding an art school and taking in ninety paying students.

Surprisingly, riots and troubles have been few, despite the fact that so many temperamental artistic types are crowded into a mansion that would more comfortably sleep sixty than ninety—and that's fast becoming more crowded, as finished sculptures crowd every passageway and disused corner. To get rid of these, and to pay bills, the students have taken to having "promenades" (open houses) to attract buyers. The good folk of Yhaunn took to these very well, but their purchases have died to a trickle, as most locals with coin enough for art have now purchased what they want (or at least, what they can afford) and are no longer in a buying mood. However, every so often, a ship calls in that has aboard someone who is in a bulk buying mood, particularly merchants from the Vilhon, and lots of sculptures (almost all of them realistic, beautiful depictions of humans or beasts, or humans with beasts) depart Gemcrown Hall for new lives elsewhere. Local Sunites and commissioned pieces ("I want my ancestor on the back of a rearing horse, in a heroic pose, to put up on a plinth in my forecourt—only make him look handsome and large, not the way he really looked") provide a more steady source of income that keeps the students fed and able to pay their fees to the Haeverhars. Who are growing sleekly fat and satisfied indeed, and are now buying up houses in Cormyr, Westgate, and rural Sembia, and hiring adventurers as their own private bodyguards, security force for all of these farflung properties, and errand-running agents.

shield.

Falconry

- THO 14/7/11, reply refers to scene that was not edited out of "City of Splendors" novel

Falconry, too, has been discussed before, and most real-world raptors can be found in the Realms (the problem is the real-world name overlaps: names like kestrel, merlin, gyrfalcon, sparrowhawk, etc. get applied to different birds in different countries). The nobility love to fly falcons in Waterdeep (unless it got edited out, there was a brief falconry scene in CITY OF SPLENDORS, the novel by Elaine and Ed), Tethyr, Cormyr, and elsewhere, but falconry is nowhere restricted to the nobility - only to those with the coin and facilities (mews, a hunting ground) to train and hunt falcons. Many rural steads (rough near-wilderness farmers) use falcons to down game birds for their own tables (falcons and humans share the kills).

Games

Chasing the Leucrotta

- Baleful Avatar, Qs for Ed 24/6/10, referencing a game mentioned by Ed

Is "Swordsman At The Bridge" similar to Ed's "Chasing the Leucrotta"? That one was moving pegs, with two forces involved...

Shirestone

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 24/6/10, referencing games mentioned by Ed at several gencons

Shirestone is a "track" game of strategic movement where the moves are earned by winning "tricks" at cards, if I remember it rightly.

Swordsman At The Bridge

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 24/6/10, referencing games mentioned by Ed at several gencons

Swordsman At The Bridge is one of those games played by moving pegs stuck into a pattern of holes drilled in a small square piece of wood, where the "bottleneck" in the hole-pattern is the bridge, and one side is numerically superior (the "Wolves" or "Goblins") to the other (the "Swordsman"), but the Swordsman is a stronger "piece" than any of its foes.

Three-Level Chess-Like Game

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 21/6/10

While I suffer from the permanent misfortune of being neither Ed nor THO, I did "sit and observe" a charity Realms D&D adventure Ed ran at a Milwaukee-era GenCon, wherein the PCs visited Elminster's tower . . . and Elminster and Lhaeo were playing a chess-like game (of two opposing armies of "same powers as foe's piece of the same name" carved pieces) that had a 3-level board (Underdark, surface, aerial) and movement between the three levels, plus "spaces" on each board that weren't featureless squares, but areas of different sizes, shapes, and facings to adjacent areas (and so, some spaces were strategic, like bridges or central glades or intersections of routes).

Tlacrism

- THO 2/5/11 (referring to game presumably mainly played in Cormyr)

Tlacrism is a composer's name, AND it's a game. The folk in that burgled house were playing a game that's named for a long-dead Cormyrean prominent composer, Rellard Tlacrism, because of his habit of inventing irreverent lyrics to "go with" existing ones. (Yes, Ed invented this, years ago.)

The (parlor, not betting) game goes like this: someone recites a line or couplet of well-known verse or lyric, such as:

(to use a real-world example, from Robert Frost):

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

Now, most of us familiar with North American poetry know the next two lines very well. If we were playing Tlacrism, however, we'd have to invent replacements on the spot, incorporating a single word provided right then by another player (usually shouted out, but in older versions of the game, words were written on cards before play began, put face down in a random array, and turned up one by one during play; some families or clubs developed "favourite" groups of words that they used for years, in

game after game).

So in our example, the other player calls out: "backside!"

That's the word that must appear in the next line or couplet, so our player improvises:

And many a backside now to reap

My lash makes all the maidens weep

... And as our example demonstrates, much Tlacrist play tends to be mildly naughty, and fueled by drinking. However, we could just as well have played a more innocent game, answering instead:

And so for home I'll softly creep

Backside warm, snores to peep

... Or something equally clumsy of the sort.

Interestingly, according to Ed, Tlacrist composed some marching songs and patriotic songs for the Cormyrean Court, and taught the Court scribes of the day to play this game as a way of adding new and appropriate lyrics, line by line to form new verses, to his patriotic songs (so they could readily be updated, for instance, to reflect new battle-victories or civic achievements, and new monarchs coming to the throne).

Grooming

Shaving

- Qs for EG, sometime in 2006 (related by WR 11/2/16)

First, the body hair. In a world with many races dwelling and working (or at least trading) together, there's a great tolerance for variety. So no one "looks down on" someone for being different (i.e. having heavy body hair or not). However, there are practical reasons for being hairless in warm climates (and for wrestlers and those who make coin by means of sex, too), and in the warmer countries of the Realms almost all adult folk do remove their body (not head) hair (by plucking—the mild pain of this technique is often used in prayer, in monastic communities; by shaving with sharp CURVED [crescentiform, sharp edge on inside of curve, but with a short, marked arc of sharpened outside edge at the end for doing armpits] blades; and—most popularly, by far—by the application of herbal depilatory ointments, of which there are many, widely known everywhere in the Realms). This is less common in cold areas such as the North, and men everywhere often leave chest and head hair alone, and merely trim other hair short (or shave just their cheeks, and trim moustache, sideburn, and beard hair). The majority of men DON'T shave their heads, unless they have head rashes or wounds that need treatment, and men and women aren't vain about hair that goes gray or white (they may dye hair for all sorts of effects or reasons, but pretending to not age isn't one of them).

As humans biologically have hair to catch and intensify natural body scent, and strong-smelling human odours aren't considered pleasant in most of the Realms, the great majority of humans do "wash their hairy areas" daily or even more often, and use scented oils when they can't wash properly, or before engaging in activities they know will be sweaty and during or after which they want to impress or be welcoming to others.

Many who do remove armpit and genital-area hair may leave small shaped areas of hair for adornment (e.g. a lightning bolt zigzagging down to a clitoris), and for adornment, when going nude or wearing garments that leave strategic areas bare, body paint (and dyes like henna), or even more permanent

tattoos (usually blue or green) are sometimes used to “replace” genital hair.

It should be remembered that warriors and wrestlers also have practical reasons for minimizing hair, and anyone who’s ridden a lot will know that hair literally “wears off” stress areas like the inner thighs. Nor does hair always grow back on scar tissue.

One last note: shaving your naughty bits with a straight razor isn’t easy, but having someone else (who’s skilled, in good light and with room to work, and not in a hurry) is just fine, if you aren’t embarrassed and don’t flinch). Just ask THO.

Five o’clock shadow

- THO reporting Ed 26/2/13

Five o'clock shadow is known by several words and terms around the Realms, but in the Heartlands, "bluechin" is the most popular one. "Sarth" (which actually means "stubble," and also applies to fields of crops in a post-harvest but pre-ploughed condition) is the most common older and politer term.

Heirs

- THO 30/6/13

There are noble families in the Realms (in both Waterdeep and Cormyr) where the eldest born becomes heir regardless of gender, and there have even been nobility that descends through the female line, NOT the male line, but I'm not sure if any of those families have survived past the early 1300s DR.

- Garen Thal, 3/7/13, quoting the above

Indeed, 'tis true. Alazne Inthré (daughter of Laspeera Naerinth and Aundable Inthré) was her mother's only child, but inherited her title as Lady Eveningspire based on a grant that guaranteed that the title would descend along the female line only.

I'm not certain that any other published families credit inheritance along these lines, however.

Heraldry

- Ed 2/3/10

In general, city heraldry in the Realms is simple, so it can readily be used in badges (used on the doors of city offices and conveyances, the breasts and backs of surcoats worn by some city workers and officials, and so on).

As a result, civic blazons VERY rarely have mottoes or supporters; they tend to be a few charges on a

House mottos

- THO 2/8/10

Almost all noble houses in the Realms have a motto as part of their blazon. They've been largely omitted in published Realmslore because in the early Greyhawk products heraldry (needed for painting up the tabletop armies then dominant in gaming) was emphasized, and at the time the company was trying to clearly differentiate the Realms and Greyhawk.

Lathander-Sponsored Athletics & Artistic Competitions

- THO 23/7/10

I can recall from Realmsplay observations and from talking with him that the Lathanderite athletic and artistic competitions are almost entirely individual rather than team-oriented, that they are to be conducted alone as a competition with oneself more than compared to others, and that athletics are to be as artistic as possible (example: don't just run faster or jump higher or longer than another, do it with graceful STYLE). Although results are displayed to others as inspiration (clergy of the Morninglord have some sort of "movie" or "record moving images as holograph-like life-sized moving images" spells with which to preserve athletic strivings for others to see), both athletic feats and artistic endeavours are seen and treated as offerings to the god, not as nasty or aggressive head-to-head competitions with other mortals.

The rewards are given by the clergy and have more to do with holy boons and minor magic than with titles or ribbons, though I believe there are practical (clergy help athletes train and artists get materials/sales opportunities) sides to the rewards as well.

The clergy officially proclaims these achievements as "inspired by Lathander" through prayer to Lathander, and that individuals should take personal pride in them and see them as made possible through Lathander but still their own achievements, not those of the deity.

Measurements

Distance

- Broken Helm referencing Ed, Qs for Ed 11/5/10

I recall Ed at last year's GenCon mentioning a "bowshot" being used as a short-distance measurement in Cormyr, Sembia, the Dales, and the Moonsea. Yes, some sort of "standard" length that an arrow can be sent, with a particular weight-draw of bow. Someone pointed out that such a measurement would inevitably vary, and Ed grinned and replied that, guess what? ALL measurements varied (the cubit, et al) until an actual physical standard got created, in very modern times, and he figured that they would all vary in the Realms, too.

- The Sage, Qs for Ed 26/5/10

Re: lengths and distances:- the fingerwidth/finger, handwidth/hand, handspan, and pace are well-established Realms measures. Foot, yard and mile may or may not be translations or conversions of the appropriate Faerûnian terms; I'd personally tend to do without feet, generally avoid 'yard' in favour of 'pace,' but keep 'mile' as it's so common in the published lore. Of course, heights are often given comparatively rather than by units: as high as four men, more than a bowshot distant, and so on.

Land Area

- Ed 10/5/10, replying to query about cost of an "acre" of land

The "acre" is a term still slowly creeping into the Realms, thanks to Elminster ("hectare" is still unknown), and most properties in Cormyr would officially be measured in "chains" or "chainsquares" (the surveyor's chain being a linear measurement, and the "chainsquare" being a square area measurement consisting of one chain per side; chains rather than rigid "ruler"-like measures are used so as to be able to handle irregular shapes).

Music

Overview

- Ed 6/7/12

Music is either made personally (family gatherings, individuals in pray or "making offering" to the gods, sometimes in the presence of clergy, at altars) or publicly. The latter tends to daily be temple music, or tavern songs (late in the evening and led by tavern staff or local good musicians/storytellers or traveling minstrels or bards [the former paid with room, board, and perhaps a coin or two, and the latter paid more properly]), and musicians hired by the wealthy to play in their homes, often as entertainment at dinners for select guests, or as entertainment at larger revels. Rulers and the richest nobles may have "staff" musicians (court musicians), who provide suitable music for all occasions.

The more "special" occasions for musicmaking are: busking at weekly market-moots, and playing at weddings, festivals and other special occasions (coronations, etc. -- not just the formal ceremonies themselves, but before and after, to all the gathered pilgrims or citizens or sightseers).

Ed's Favourite Instruments

- THO 14/10/10

The glinklarr, which is a tiny metal (or carved wood) mouth organ with two inner vibrating reeds (for sound output, think: kazoo) and a projecting "snout" (narrowing output rather than a flaring horn) over which are strung four to six fine strings, played one-handed with the fingers of the hand that's holding the horn to the player's lips, that subtly modify the sound with harp glissandos, guitar-like plucks and chords, or a subtle "warbling" tremelo.

I don't think this has made it into print in TSR or WotC products; I have it from Ed's "campaign starter" player notes, circa 1979. Heh; so there you go; new Realmslore!

For eerie loud long-distance stuff: a properly-played mournful warhorn, echoing down mountain valleys.

National Anthems

- THO 2/8/10

Realms in the Realms don't have "official anthems" per se, but do have "battle songs" that serve the same purpose: long after the wars in which they sprang up are done, they are still sung for patriotic reasons, in taverns as well as at official ceremonies.

"Rock" music

- Ed 27/6/12

There are many rhythmic "work songs" or "rowing songs" in the Realms, most of them akin to the "Boomshakalaka" chorus from the movie MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND (that is, a chanted chorus, a building volume and quickening rhythm, a bass melodic line plus drumbeat) but occasionally with a soloist who carries the song by singing "against" or "through" deep-pitched instrumental and percussive accompaniment (think Gowan's "Criminal Mind").

As for stadium performances, these happen at religious festivals, coronations and royal burials of the rare beloved rulers, and among elves of certain cultures (and humans who've trained with them) resolving spell-duels: rather than vicious fights to the death, the duels become contests of moving audiences emotionally by using magic to tell visually- and audibly-glorious tales in the Cirque du Soleil tradition (two mages face off successively, telling stories with illusions and music). In Chessenta of old, there were also swordfights between singing knights that are a little like the "anything you can sing I can sing louder" school of opera, done before audiences gathered to see the bloodshed, but that custom died out (heh, along with its participants) long ago.

- Ed 6/7/12

The closest thing to our real-world rock concerts are "masques" put on by wealthy patrons (usually nobles or rulers or big city guilds) as entertainments: after nightfall, a short musical play is performed on a lighted stage, utilizing "echoing" or "answering" musicians on nearby hilltops or battlements, who blow warhorns or play music or even launch mounted gallops down at the stage, to help tell a story (usually of past, locally relevant martial heroics). These are rare but mythologized (talked about, until their reputation grows) out of love and awe. Even rarer are masques done mainly by magic (illusion spells) to provide flying dragons and other monsters for stories.

"Death metal" analogues

- Ed 28/3/11

There's no such thing as electrically amplified music in the Realms, but magic is sometimes used to augment both thudding drum rhythms and "singing" or "wailing" wind-instrument music that can sound like a "weeping" or "searing" electric guitar. In terms of chanted or howled lyrics, loud choruses, "dark" chords, and a driving bass beat, the songs used by some orc shamans to inspire ("inflammate," some would say) orc hordes before battle is probably closest to heavy metal.

In Waterdeep and Amn, in the 1360s and 1370s, there's a rise in a style of dance music performed in festhalls, clubs, and at revels that uses multiple yartings (guitars) played swiftly in harmony, plus high-pitched sung choruses and a driving beat, that sounds something like the Blue Oyster Cult hit "(Don't Fear The) Reaper," and for a score of years before that there have been "minstrel bands" performing for nobles and the wealthy up and down the Sword Coast that centered on dominant male singers that sounded rather like Ian Anderson of mid-period (War Child and onwards) Jethro Tull, but if you're thinking "louder and heavier," it's orcs or nothing. :}

As for other real-world genres of music, or too-close soundalikes, be wary: the Realms is a medieval to Renaissance –level DIFFERENT WORLD than our Earth, so although you could probably point to specific Realms music and say "that sounds sorta like" ancient, or chant, or baroque, or "Celtic folk," that's just what it is: "sorta sounding like."

"Longest musical composition"

- Ed 28/11/11

So far as I know, the longest musical composition would be the windsong of the High Ice, an ongoing improvised melodic and sometimes harmonized and chorded drone created by certain mysterious windwraith-like beings that have served Chauntea as messengers for aeons. (Or so her priests say.) The beings rush and chase each other through wind-sculpted passages and holes in ice peaks, creating the ongoing music.

So the instruments are their incorporeal bodies/essences, and the real-world genre would be New Age/ambient, I suppose.

- Ed 28/11/11, following up

Q: Would the amount of in-corporeality result in alternate sounds being produced as the beings moved through the passages?

A: Indeed it would. Not to mention the windsong-crafters discovering what speed and shape they used

resulted in a pitch that caused surrounding ice to resonate and reinforce the sound they made (a pitch different for each ice passage, of course, and everchanging as the ice itself changed). Happy composing!

Male bands replicating female voice

- Ed 28/11/11

If bards rise high enough in training before they lose too much vocal cord elasticity (i.e. their upper and lower ranges start to "go" due to age), and can make arrangements with the proper tutors (usually master bards), part of the training they can master is not just to mimic the "sound" of the singing voice of the opposite gender, but to achieve vocal timbre enough to sustain a consistent singing voice that really does sound like singer of the other gender. Note that I said "a" singer, not "a particular" singer. Females don't gain a thunderous male bass voice (except through the magical assistance of a third party), nor males gain a soaring soprano. What they can achieve is the ability to maintain a falsetto voice for long periods of time without straining their speech or normal singing, a falsetto that can fool almost all listeners into thinking they are hearing a singer of the opposite gender. This includes dead-on knowledge of one's personal voice, so a male bard "sounding like" a female knows what notes he dare not attempt without risking the illusion, and vice versa.

And of course, everyone is different, and success in this is NOT automatic with level and training. Nor does it remain lifelong.

To provide a real-world personal example, I am now a baritone, having lost my Paul Robeson-like deepest two base octaves as I aged, as most basses do. I have also lost the high, clear gentle soprano I could manage WITHOUT sounding like a trained opera singer using full voice, that I could do in my teens and twenties. However, I can still mimic, for short snatches, singing voices VERY different from my own (such as Kathleen Ferrier's "Blow The Wind Sutherly" or Tom Waits doing "In My Neighborhood"). You can probably mimic singers with voices different than your own for a few lines - - well, master bards with the right training can manage it for an entire song, with full range and control.

Naming -on endings

- Ed 15/11/14

Q: "Is there any link between the origins of names with similar roots/endings? For example, Piergeiron, Madeiron, and the Odesseiron family."

A: Sometimes there are links, but in the case of the three names you cite, they are so tenuous and ancient as to be, for practical purposes, non-existent. We know that in the days before Athalantar, some humans dwelling around the shores of the Sea of Fallen Stars acquired "eir" [pronounced EE-ARR, or over time simplified into EAR] and "on" sounds in their names, from intermarriage with elves and half-elves (and names with such sounds spread simply because some humans liked the names; such given names as Deiron and Heiral (supplanting in popularity the earlier, human-only "Hyril" [pronounced H-EYE-rah] became popular, with Neiron and Madeiron and many other variants developing. "Piergeiron" is still a rarity, except in Waterdeep among LG citizens naming their children after the Paladinson. The Odesseiron family name may or may not have such origins; when it began is lost in time.

Pseudonyms / Alljacks

- Ed quoted by the Sage, Qs for Ed 14/8/10

... contain an “alljack” name (a modern American might say a “John Doe pseudonym”) that any new or trial member assumes so that they’re covered; typical Faerûnian ones include “Jack-of-Blades” and “Harl Amendall”].

Retirement

- Ed 14/7/13

Q: “How does retirement work in the Realms? Historic standards saw people working until death or being kept by their families once work wasn’t an option, but do some armies across the Realms (and indeed organisational employers, even the secretive ones such as the Harpers and the Zhents), offer pensions? How does this affect different regions of the Realms, and are there certain locales that the elderly migrate to in order to live in a more sustained and comfortable retirement, where wealth affords it?”

A: This is one of those “it depends” replies. As in, the answer depends on the society and the location. For instance, many orcs and goblin kin put their disabled and “useless” elderly into the communal stewpots/cooking fires, so orc crones help with the cooking (peeling, washing, gathering, water-fetching, and chewing hide to make it supple for use in garments), orc “greybacks” (aging males) fetch wood and fuel, tend fires, and make, repair, and sharpen weapons (and when youngsters are needed for more strenuous tasks, stand sentinel), and this is a general pattern of roles among ogres, flind, gnolls, and bugbears, too. (Matriarchal hobgoblin groups value the wisdom of their elders and of communal handed-down lore, and put them to work as teachers.)

In all of these humanoid societies and some human ones, aging old folk commit suicide by going out in harsh weather into the wilderlands, and fending for themselves until they die - - or just walk off cliffs, or fight doomed rearguard actions to buy younger members of the group time to flee formidable foes. Human societies across the Realms exhibit a wide range of respect and roles for the elderly. In general, families in most human societies are expected to look after their elders - - and those elders do what they can (peeling, sorting, painting, cooking prep, whittling toys and clothespegs and kindling) to help family life.

Temples look after faithful who lack families, lepers, and those whose families can’t look after them (for example, a sick senior needing a lot of care who loses their adult children to misadventure, and has as family only babes or infants [grandchildren or great-grandchildren] too young to care for them).

Most rural temple-farms are worked by the simple, the deranged (wildnesses controlled by herbal medicines given in their food), the homeless, the maimed, and orphans - - and orphans provide every faith with their chief source of future priests.

Most soldiers and civil servants receive a small monthly pension when they retire (this holds true for Waterdeep, Amn, Cormyr, Impiltur, Turmish, and most parts of Tethyr), and high-ranking courtiers are often given an estate (home with working farmlands sufficient to support them) upon retirement. The ongoing spending of these pensions provides a stable stimulus to the economies of such places.

The Harpers offer no pensions, but active members take care to give retired members paid work as often as they can, and all Harpers whose homes get used as “safe houses” get paid for such usages. The Zhentarim have always been rather harsh; those who retire get land and a lump sum, and are then left on their own.

In contrast, Cormyr’s Purple (and Blue) Dragons get land and a pension; if disabled, they get no land and a smaller pension, but get housed and fed in the Cormyrean equivalent of the Chelsea Pensioners

hospital, the large fortress and farm of Daunthers, which stands off the north side of the Way of the Manticore, due east of Gladehap, at about where the Way makes its pronounced curve to the eastsoutheast. The diseased are housed in Thulser's Lodge, in the King's Forest a little east of Mouth O'Gargoyles, on the same trail.

The truly wealthy elderly can retire to palatial care in certain Sea Ward (more lively, but damp) and North Ward (quieter and drier) mansions of Waterdeep. Of old, they often bought their own villas on the Sea of Fallen Stars, where they were supplied by pirates, in return for allowing the pirates to hide contraband in their cellars, make claims and alibis on behalf of the pirates, and even allow pirates to hide in their homes (in pre-prepared "hidden rooms" or "hideholds"), but this fashion has dwindled along with the pirates.

Road Traffic

Cormyr to Daerlun road

- Ed 11/4/12, responding to query about road out of Cormyr to Daerlun, Sembia

Well, it DOES depend. :}

Especially on whether or not it's daylight, and what the weather is like (lashing rain or freezing temperatures aren't just hard on drovers and animals, they ruin some cargoes). Also on the time of year (the spring and fall mud and the winter snows can sometimes close down that road linking Cormyr and Sembia through Daerlun, and there's always heavy traffic just after harvests, and during the spring "opening up" and just before the winter "drawing down" of roads).

However, let's assume that it's an average summer day, not near any special occasion, it's peacetime, and you are spending the day traveling along that road at an average speed (overtaking few and being overtaken by few).

So here we go . . .

You would almost NEVER be out of sight of pilgrims or a family walking, and a peddler/messenger (on horse, leading a mule, or just shouldering two balanced satchels, and walking).

You would seldom be out of sight of a farmer (with assistant), on a wagon or cart, usually moving hay or feed, but sometimes straw or manure.

Your "lone merchant, perhaps with a few pack animals, maybe one wagon" will almost always have an assistant or his wife - - or if lacking that, will "pair up" with another lone merchant for such overland treks (so if a wagon wheel or someone's leg breaks, someone else can go for help or aid the injured). You'll see one of them about every five minutes, and pass them about every ten minutes (i.e. they'll be in sight before and after you actual pass them).

Your "small family or band (2-3 merchants) with 1-2 wagons and guards" will be in view about every twelve minutes apart.

Your "large caravan, with 4+ merchants and multiple wagons and guards," from two to five an hour. Larger caravans, of 20 wagons or more, perhaps eight a day. Wartime or harvest-tide or "buildup of goods" caravans of any sort can be as large as sixty wagons (and in dangerous overland areas in the Sword Coast North, forty-odd wagons is the prudent minimum for caravans), but the Cormyr-Sembia coast road is busy, with large caravans more unwieldy than needed for safety, so big caravans tend to be large "single shipper movements," like a coster racing a fish catch in a dozen wagons.

An average day might see ten to fourteen of these sorts of 8-16 wagon "runs." As I said, it's a busy road.

Scornubel to Waterdeep & North

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 12/4/12

Ed wrote an entire novel (Hand of Fire, the last of the Spellfire/Shandril trilogy) centered on caravans operating out of Scornubel to Waterdeep, Elturel, Silverymoon, and points north.

"Seven Wonders"

- Ed, quoted 13/2/14

The short, simple reply is that no Faerûnian creature would have any "Seven Wonders" list. It's not something they'd ordinarily think about or speak of, certainly never in terms of a ranking of rival "wonders." Folk in the Realms DO speak of wonders they've seen in distant lands, in taverns (usually when explorers or other far-traveled wayfarers are vying with each other to entertain the locals for some drinks or to seem important or to manipulate someone into investing in a venture). If you asked a particular Faerûnian, his reply would depend on him: if he was a farmer or rural person who's never traveled far from his home village, he'd probably say so, and disqualify himself from relevant comment on the grounds that "they talk of many wondrous things, but I've not been and seen enough to tell you anything useful. I saw a melon as big as a cow once, in yon market, but then I've heard tell of bigger melons'n' that, in bigger markets, see?"

Even alert, informed merchants or soldiers would say some variation on this, recognizing that they've hardly seen enough to venture a useful opinion. Priests and devout worshippers of one god above others would list the wonders associated with their deity ("the little stone stop Tharun's Mount that bears the shape of Eldath's hand, where she touched it when weeping over the death of a flower"), and that points at the key to Faerûnian attitudes towards wonders, and the reason my answer is taking the shape it is: in the Realms, everything's slanted by the fact that EVERYONE knows the gods are real, and respects their power even when considering gods they fear, hate, or shun worship of; the knowledge that the gods walk the world (from time to time) and make changes to it colours everything. So various individuals might give you wildly different "seven wonders" lists, if you asked them to pick seven (and why seven? the concept has no significance to them, of course), UNLESS they were stay-at-homes from the same village, and so shared the same life experiences ("well, we've both been to Suzail once, and there were some pretty wondrous mansions THERE, let me tell you!"). So, yes, the Waterdhavian and the Thayan would probably give different lists based on different life experiences, NOT on nationalistic (or even cultural) grounds. (By "cultural," I mean that unless they were more stupid or self-centered than most folk, both would recognize and say that they've not seen enough in their travels to be sure they weren't missing important "wonders," as a preeminent factor over seeing things as exemplifying a slave-based culture [as good or bad] or a mercantile, cosmopolitan crossroads trading center [as good or bad].)

"The Faerûnian sensibility" is "in general more inclined to be impressed by a natural wonder" than a magical construction, with one caveat: the most awe is evoked by natural wonders for which no explanations are generally known, or no god is directly and clearly attributed as the cause of (so the waterfall or the natural arch NOT "known" to have been created by the god is generally more impressive than the one this or that god altered or created -- except to a devout worshipper of that god, of course. Everyone is impressed by major magical constructions like walking colossi or flying cities, but not as "wonders" UNLESS the means of making them is now unknown or forgotten (i.e. unless they're now unattainable or mysterious). Yet this sort of "gosh wow" admiration is a step down and to one side of

"the great wonders." It's more a "How did they DO that?" marveling (which is, to resurrect some very old Realmslore, why folk differentiate between "Marvels" and "Wonders," the former being man- [or rather, sentient-being-] made items and magics and processes, and the latter being things that occurred naturally or mysteriously.

Sexuality

Views on sexual practices

- Ed 7/11/10

As in our real world, attitudes towards sex, sexual mores and expression, and sexual "orientation" (for want of a better term) vary widely from place to place and person to person. In general, tolerance of a wide variety of sexual practices (including interracial sex, which of course doesn't in the Realms mean unions or dalliances among humans of different skin hues, but literally between different species, from lizardfolk to pixies, and elves to hobgoblins (not to mention all the shapeshifters, such as dragons and doppelgangers) is greater in large "crossroads" urban centers such as Waterdeep, less in smaller ports (Waterdeep, Suzail), a little less in inland trade-moots such as Crimmor and Scornubel, a little less in market-towns, then a shade less along busy trade-routes that caravans ply, and the least in rural communities (in true wilderness, anything goes, because it's reduced to the level of individuals). Certain faiths in the pantheistic Realms (where everyone "believes" in ALL gods, and most folk actively worship more than one deity, daily) have various rules about sexual practices, and where those faiths are locally dominant, their doctrines influence local mores. However, wide-open tolerance and absolute taboos are rare, anywhere.

The game leaves sexual matters largely unspoken-of both to avoid offending customers (some gamers, and their parents) and to allow a DM and players to tailor "their" D&D games and "their" Realms to styles of play they most enjoy and are comfortable with. In short, if everyone around the gaming table is an adult feeling randy, the game can reflect that - - but if children or embarrassed and impressionable young adults are present, sex can be utterly absent from game play. (I'll avoid the inevitable moral debate about slaughtering monsters being okay and at the heart of the game, but sex, including tender and loving lovemaking, being omitted.)

So the short answer is: there are no hard-and-fast, Realms-wide rules or attitudes. As in real life, everything's complicated, and everything requires interaction (okay, roleplaying) between individuals. One female's rough enjoyable sex is another woman's rape. One person's loving and beloved by the gods multiple marriages are another person's blasphemy. And so on. I WILL say that in the Realms, most folk live far more in touch with life (birth, death, dirt, more "things" than money, more chores to stay alive with shelter and food and less "freedom to pursue careers"), and sex is less "not talked about" and hidden than it is in our modern real-world North American societies.

Sports

Hurlball

- THO 12/12/10, replying to query about Realmsian equivalents of American Football, "hurlball" named remembered by Blueblade from GenCon seminar where it was played in eastern Heartlands

What I can remember from Realmsplay (Knights watching a match and wagering, not participating) was that there are three goals spaced down the center of the playing field, all of them being pairs of stout upright wooden posts about five feet apart, and that points were scored by running or passing a ball

through them (no scoring by kicking in the game, though there is punting).

The centerfield "goal" isn't for scoring points, but balls have to pass through it to be valid, for some plays (wish my memory was better).

Like football, two teams of equal sizes, flattish playing field with marked bounds, plays from a line of scrimmage to capture territory, but different from football in some ways: no helmets, both sexes can play, THREE balls in play at the same time (different balls, different points, all snapped from scrimmage simultaneously), and each side can only have a ball for seven plays before turning it over (unless it's turned over by fumble or interception before seven plays can be run). NO magic can be used, of course. I hope Ed will be able to sort out my confused recollections. I can't even remember the NAME of this Realmsian game ("wideball"? or am I confusing it with something else Torm said he'd cheated while wagering at?).

The game IS timed, magically in pre-Spellplague days and mechanically in post-Spellplague times, but it's a constantly-running time: there's no "stopping the clock." Or halftime. Play stops for injuries, when a player can't get off the field unaided, but the clock keeps going.

Oh, and I don't ever recall that there was any mention of such things as "illegal formations" or "ineligible receivers" or such niceties.

- Ed 1984 player-pack, quoted by THO 14/12/10

The game seen being played on the village green is hurlball, something akin to real-world football or "Australian-rules football." Three goals (pairs of uprights), no scoring by kicking, adopted from an orc game known as "hurlheads" because it's traditionally played with the severed heads of slain foes/captives . . . which ironically was taken by the orcs from an old gnome game, "hurlstone," that was adopted by some dwarves and halflings. You've vaguely heard of this sport, but know no more of it than this - - and what you'll pick up by watching and/or participating.

Social Interaction

Treatment of Bastards

- Ed 29/12/11

In the Realms, bastards are handled in a wide variety of ways (not just from realm to realm, but from noble family to noble family, within a realm). Some are taken in to the family as if they were fullblood legitimates (especially if "blood heirs" are few or sickly - - or if the philandering was on the part of the noble LADIES and not their lords), most are financially supported by their sires (usually on the understanding that they "stay away" from the family and not try to publicly claim kinship) and do take new surnames of their own invention (if too close to the family name, the family complains to the Heralds, and the Heralds step in to force a name- and/or heraldic change), and a few are sent away/taken away to other lands (sometimes literally thanks to a well-paid passing caravan merchant) to be reared ignorant of their true heritage, far from home. BTW, I have used this last situation thrice now for PC backgrounds (not among the Knights, but in the short-duration library campaigns I used to run), to initiate adventuring careers with a sudden summons from kin they were hitherto unaware of, when other kin have been slain in feuds or misadventures, and the few elderly survivors "call in" the unwitting bastards to "represent the house" henceforth.

Discrimination

- Hashimashadoo relating EG, Qs for EG 6/4/16

Ed has said in the past that the GENERAL attitude is that all aspects of sexuality are tolerated pretty much everywhere - they are neither encouraged nor discouraged. On the other hand, local prejudices vary widely, especially in human dominated areas as, unfortunately, prejudice is a very human thing.

Factors are usually religious in nature, based upon the doctrine of the church that has dominance in that area, yet the priesthoods of practically every god actively avoid discrimination.

Out in the wilderness, anything goes, conversely, the bigger the settlement, the more accepting/willingly uncaring the residents are, meaning one would only have to worry about adhering to an intolerant status quo in small communities. Even in small, religious communities, matters like this are rarely a big deal due to the nature of worship in the Realms (i.e. practically everybody on a basic level is polytheistic) and the fact that there are much bigger things to worry about such as rampaging orc hordes and the like.

"Casanovas" & "Einsteins"

- Ed 14/8/11, replying to query about who in the Realms would inspire romancers to be called "Casanovas"

If your Realmsplay is set in the 1360s to 1380s DR, just before the Spellplague really cuts loose, the most popular such term is "Rhallowgar," after Rhallowgar the Rampant, a tireless wencher and bon vivant of the Inner Sea, Vilhon, and Tashalar regions, who travelled often to keep ahead of furious husbands and the like, and made a living as a courier of small valuable items and documents, a messenger, and a smuggler of drug-laced wines. He was infamous for romancing (and satisfying) three noble ladies during one feast, then carrying off a maidservant "for a nightcap" (on horseback, galloping ahead of pursuers, and accomplishing a no-doubt-painful coupling in the saddle during that flight). His name spread into general use rather rapidly, but the real Rhallowgar was forced to change names and adopt magical disguises to change his face, to avoid repeated assassination attempts. His eventual fate is unknown (as he probably finished his days out under other names and with other faces).

Sexuality Attitudes

- Ed 28/11/12

As to sexual attitudes in the Realms, there is indeed local prejudice against individuals who have "different" or "unusual" sexuality—bigotry and a dislike of change and "what's not usual" is everywhere and is (unfortunately) part of being human.

Specific religions often invoke temporary abstinence as punishments for transgressions against the creed of the faith, but other matters sexual are usually ignored in doctrine, rather than policed by doctrine (consecration or baptism of willing, old-enough-to-choose offspring being an important exception; this is urged and promoted by almost all Faerûnian faiths).

Yet in a polytheistic setting in which everyone "believes in" and worships (in some fashion, even if it's only "Here's a prayer, now please don't bother me today") ALL of the gods, clergy avoid endorsing discrimination against someone because of sex. Which doesn't mean they won't severely speak to someone they think does something inappropriate, like trying to fornicate with grieving individuals at a

funeral, or anyone forcing their attentions on someone except a recipient receiving such attentions as part of a ritual to Loviatar or Sharess or Sune or Shiallia the recipient has agreed beforehand to take part in, and knows what this will mean [[in other words, self-chosen submission is acceptable, but being on the receiving end of forced and unwanted sex is not]].

Shiallia wants all creatures to reproduce and multiply, which means fertile females should engage in sex with partners of their choice, regardless of their marital state (and all devout worshippers of the goddess should help in the feeding and rearing of said offspring); it does NOT mean those fertile females have to accept the advances of every passing creature.

In general, "anything goes" in the wilderness, the settled status quo is most valued (and adhered to) in small villages and towns, and as places get larger and have more contact with the wider Realms (market towns, being on caravan routes), the more tolerant and varied sexuality can be found and is tolerated/ignored. Bisexual characters exist in the Realms and always have done, as have "out" homosexual characters, May/December partnerships, polygamy, and just about everything else.

Yet matters sexual are seldom the "big deal" in the Realms that it is in any real-world area dominated by one faith, where clerics of that faith presume to tell others "how to behave." The polytheistic nature of the Realms is one reason for this, and another is the D&D® game itself, that with its array of sentient races, presents what some would call "bestiality" or other terms for "coupling with other races" as a fait accompli (otherwise, there would be no "half-elves" or "half-orcs").

Yes, this has all been discussed before, but that's okay. The computerized search-fu in the Keep is frail, but the minds of its scribes are sharp, quick, and apt to dredge up old lines from older scrolls when the need arises.

The beauty of fantasy roleplaying, and the Realms, is that anyone playing in it can include or leave out or ignore or gloss over what they want to or are most comfortable with. The darkness creeps in when one player or group tries to impose their preferences on everyone else.

Some festhalls, brothels, and clubs signal whom or what they cater to, but most don't; locals just "know" (and tavernmasters and innkeepers will discreetly answer queries as to "where to go" without misleading or reacting with hostility to such questions; correctly guiding guests without making judgments is just part of their livelihood). Carved signboards are the most common advertisement (depicting entwined, kissing couples or triads or quartets, usually in no more detail than heads, arms, shoulders, and bared breasts, with the participants indicating what "goes" inside: for example, two men together, or a lizard man and a human female, with a free hand raised to hold a glass if it's also a drinking club, or holding a hand of cards or a platter of food to indicate a gambling establishment or that food is served, and so on).

[Infidelity, Swinging](#)

- THO 15/7/13

Yes, the nobility of Amn, Cormyr, Sembia, and Waterdeep ALL engage in what the Sixties real world called "swinging," and the expectations of monogamy are lower than among commoners. If you define infidelity as sex outside a marriage without the approval of the married partners involved, it's higher among commoner than among the upper monied classes/nobility (because they expect it and either consent and participate, or tacitly consent by turning a blind eye and not minding).

These are, of course, generalizing statements, and often break down when it comes to specific individuals, who may well NOT approve. Among nobles and "wannabe noble" social climbers, there have always been a strong cohort of those who gossip deliciously about such things, publicly disapproving - - but in private enthusiastically participate, if they get the chance.

Incest

- Ed 27/8/06, quoted by Joran Nobleheart in Qs for Ed 23/5/10

Inbreeding: as royalty sets the laws in almost every place in the Realms that has royalty (except in a few city-states, not yet detailed, where priesthoods have strong influences), there's nothing illegal about inbreeding. It's rare, and when it does happen is usually mothers marrying sons because the father (the king) has been slain, and the mother wants THAT son (often a bastard) to rule, or fathers (kings) marrying daughters. Sometimes brothers hitch up with sisters - - and uncle/niece and aunt/nephew pairings are quite common and aren't even thought of (in the Realms) as inbreeding.

Yes, there are inevitable genetic problems. When they become obvious is usually when rules start to get forced into place (and the drooling idiots get locked up and never spoken of again, or killed in "accidents" if they don't have to be kept around for possible backup breeding purposes).

It's important to remember that many of the Realms deities encourage "sex for fun" (or even "sex for religious rapture") and their priests have magical and pharmaceutical means of preventing contraception, so "it's only incest if the female partner gets pregnant." This, by the way, usually means family members satisfy their curiosity and indulge feelings of mutual affection, and then go looking for less "safe and familiar" but far more exciting partners, elsewhere.

- THO 22/5/10, responding to query about Alusair's relationship with possible Azoun bastards

Partners contemplating such relationships in the Realms will be fully aware of how it might harm friendships and family relationships, the complications it might cause regarding inheritances, and so on. The Obarskys, most nobles, and many other Cormyreans have access to magical contraception, and almost all Cormyreans (and Dalefolk, and Sembians, and...) to herbal contraception. Some want to use it, some don't (and remember, some faiths in the Realms have a very different position on incest than the Judeo-Christian one).

This is something Ed and I have talked about, too, and he has made it very clear that the female Obarskys (some of whom married into the clan, of course, rather than being born into it) would behave very differently if contraception wasn't available. Also, the existence of magical contraception has saved many noble women from rape, because it takes away the danger of it being done cold-bloodedly to get a tie to a family's inheritance or wealth.

Meetings, Fairs

- Ed 4/1/10, replying to query about meetings at the Realms equivalent of a grange

There are lots of such meetings held annually in the Dales, the Sword Coast North, and the Heartlands, down through Tethyr in the west and the Vilhon in the east (the farming-relevant "special days" of the calendar, such as Greengrass), and others are faith-based (Chauntean priests holding fairs around religious observances), but additional, secular ones would be "tradesmoots" or "marketmoots" if NOT dominated by agriculture, and a "ploughmoot" if agriculturally dominated, because agricultural fairs are always dominated by plowing competitions (and trick-riding exhibitions, tilting at suspended-ring targets, etc.) as well as having a large trade-fair and many public and private business meetings. The sort

of gathering you describe would indeed be a ploughmoot, and Deeping Stream (spilling over into the "fallow fields" of adjacent farms, to gain the necessary space; the farmers are always compensated by a share of takings) would be a fine place to hold one.

Addressing People

- THO 16/11/14

"Lady Shopmatron" is a polite honorific of speech that carries no true rank or status. It's like addressing a middle-aged woman unknown to you but who by her dress and circumstances (i.e. holding the hands of children) is probably a housewife (or perhaps a nanny) as "Esteemed Madam."

The rarely-used male equivalent, BTW, is "Trading Master," as in "Trading Master of Lethro's Simples Shop." It means Lethro owns his own shop, and is not a member of a guild.

Strength Training

Weight Lifting

- Ed 19/2/11, responding to getting muscles outside of battle-training, working the forge, etc

The apparatus used in our modern real world is unheard-of in the Realms, though. Training in the Sword Coast lands and Heartlands tends to be either "Lifting the Log" (pick up and carry heavy lengths of log, for set distances in short times), or the "armor on shield" carry (pile armor on a large shield, carry the whole lot at a trot somewhere), and pulling a plough (plow, to our American scribes; the simple single-furrow sort).

Most folk seeking to build strength chop wood or work the forge (plying the bellows of a forge or hearth, as well as swinging the hammer). Only the most idle monied urban sorts tend to indulge in exercise that doesn't have a practical daily use.

Hoondatha is correct in saying many dwarves lift weights to build strength, particularly as younglings (protecting themselves from injury by working on levers, so that the weights can't fall on them).

Unsurprisingly, they lift stone (uniform-volume blocks of stone, assembled so as to "make up" known amounts of weights).

And Markustay is right on in suggesting the "lift a calf every day" training regimen, used by many in the Realms as well as in our own real world in olden times (and in some areas even today; young lads being trained to be shepherds carry sheep daily as they grow to adulthood, so they'll have some hope of carrying a sheep that's broken a leg to where it can be tended in shelter).

- Ed 1/10/11

In rural areas, those in training tend to carry weights about, usually while dressed in heavy armor, to build up their muscles AND skill in moving about/accomplishing exacting tasks whilst under encumbrance. The "carry weights about" is rarely abstract exertion, but rather useful tasks: carrying containers of water from a well, pool, or river to troughs or house cisterns, and carrying firewood (sometimes firewood that must be cut and split by the trainee, whilst in armor) from its place of preparation to a handy-to-place-of-use woodpile.

Steroid Use

- Ed 19/2/11

No, there aren't any known steroids per se, nor are there laws or rules or sanctions against athletes using herbs and "physics" (drugs), which in the Realms come in a bewildering variety for athletes (thanks to generations of miners, farmers, woodcutters, rowers, and soldiers needing to train and strengthen replacements/assistants), and tend to be of three useful-to-athletes sorts: painkillers, muscle relaxants, and water retention or purgative "remedies."

Weather

Impact of weather

- THO 18/4/13

Ed does keep track of weather "fronts" and systems moving through regions in which play is taking place, so rainstorms, snowstorms, and overall temperature feature regularly in play. Ed seldom hits us with severe weather or other natural events without warning (I think he doesn't consider it quite "fair"), but does forewarn us when such things occur, so it can become part of our tactical planning. Country folk in the Realms live "closer to nature" than in our modern real world, and pay a lot of attention to local signs of upcoming weather. Adventurers travel more than a lot of people, and get "caught in the open" often because of their activities, but...that's just part of the life. Yes, severe winter weather often causes wolf pack and goblin raids and the like...

Being Snowed In

- Ed 9/2/13

Snowbound folk in the Realms mostly just sit such severe weather out, in as secure shelter as they can find (remember, packs of wolves and other predators will get hungry in such conditions, and venture out as soon as they can). That's what all the drying, preserving, cutting firewood, et al is for. Folk in Cormyr and other heavy-snow regions have snowshoes (mainly of the "bearpaw" style that lack long "tails" that can get caught in rocks and tree trunks) and sledges (for towing loads atop/"over" snow).

Silverymoon has wards that keep the temperature comfortably high (avoiding ice but creating fog), and that can be "set" to repel falling snow like a giant dome -- so most of it will end up in/on the river, and be carried away. Usually a light snowfall is "allowed in" to wash down the streets, water plants, etc., but once more than an inch or two has fallen, the warming (and wind-slowng) wards are "tightened" by one of the mages serving the city to shed anything more falling from the sky.

Suzail has no such protections, but the War Wizards do use spells to clear major streets by literally blowing deep-piled snow out into the harbor, and frequently temporarily raise temperature to melt treacherous ice underfoot (though used rushes, "out" cinders, and the like are used as traction aids). Note that many cities, Suzail included, are ports that enjoy the moderating effects of the large bodies of water they are adjacent to. One of the reasons that Waterdeep developed into such a populous city is the seaward protection of Mount Waterdeep, that shields much of the oldest part of the city from gales blowing onshore. "Ice rime" forms on seaward faces of many Waterdhavian buildings in the winter, but the Watchful Order magists magically melt dangerous roofloads (that might plummet down on the heads of pedestrians below).

However, most Faerunians just hunker down and wait.

Please bear in mind that most inhabited areas of the Realms where snow is a prevalent problem retain far more trees and bushes than most heavily-populated real-world areas; they trap and steer drifts and falling snow, and enable locals who know the terrain to move about in limited ways. Severe weather

doesn't hamper your commute - - it usually prohibits EVERYONE'S commute, is expected to, and so has no negative social/employment implications.

MAGIC

Antimagic

Detectable by Detect Magic?

- GK, Qs for Ed 14/11/10

Yes. Antimagic is magic, otherwise it would collapse on itself in the casting.

Becoming Immortal

- Ed 20/6/10, responding to query about using magic to become immortal without divine influence or becoming undead

In most magical theorizing, it is possible, and for some tens of centuries, various powerful spellcasters of many races have tried to achieve this (rather like the real-world alchemical quest for transforming things into gold, or finding the Philosopher's Stone). No one has yet achieved it. The reason is this: if you try to stay mortal, but use spells to "keep going," it's like circulating your energies faster and faster without renewing them. That is, even if you use magic to heal this declining organ or that failing sinew, on an ongoing basis, the precise understanding of how the body ages, and therefore how its energies SHOULD change to either "match" with its aging or stop its aging, hasn't been attained yet. (I suspect it never will be, because more than most mortal lifespans are necessary to accumulate the necessary experimentation and research to reach the understanding.) So, no, immortality requires bodily transformation (ascension into divinity, undeath by various means, and so on. Some mages have sought to slow aging by spending a lot of time in gaseous or other incorporeal forms, theorizing that physical aging doesn't occur while they're in such forms, but it turns out that's not true: the act of turning "solid" or "insubstantial," in either direction, works its own minute aging/degradation on the body. However, I doubt any of this will keep ambitious spellcasters from working on it.

The "best" approach thus far (I use quotation marks because the "best" is very much a matter of opinion) is to jump from borrowed/stolen/compelled body to body (either all sentient slaves/thralls, or eagles, horses, etc.) and live in a succession of them...but even then, the mind starts to fade and fail from all the stresses, over time.

This is a topic I've been exploring in my fiction over the years, and continue to do so in the forthcoming Elminster novels - - because it's endlessly fascinating, both the strivings and the prices to be paid.

Blackflame

Handling of Use in Realms

- Ed 12/8/12, responding to query about importing "The Five Shires" (created by Ed) into the Realms

I put Blackflame into the Realms as I was designing THE FIVE SHIRES, to try it out. My players weren't all that amused, as I recall. :}

I left its origins mysterious, but PC investigations pointed at connections to Silvanus and the Balance, to Talos, to Auril, and even to Moander (Entropy never really blossomed in the "home" Realms). Sages

scorned all of these as mistaken - - and therein lies the delight of roleplaying; taking literal years of game play to slowly nibble away at underlying mysteries, large and small.

In short, they're still at it (in the background, behind a lot of other intrigues), and I don't want to ruin it for them.

Casters in Stasis during Spellplague

- Ed 1/7/14

if a caster remained in unbroken stasis during the Spellplague, they weren't affected by it (no insanity or other damage). They awaken at the same power level, and the renewed Weave "works the same way" for them as it always did, though some of the spells they were used to using might not work any more, or will have different effects, or they'll have to tinker with HOW they cast them to get them to work now, etc. (in metagame terms: spells with familiar names may be different than their 4e and 3e/3.5e namesakes). In Ed's campaign, such things get roleplayed out.

"Colour" of Magic

- Ed 5/12/11

Magic need not emit any visible radiation, of any hue, but often planar-intersection and outsider magic is purple, or purple-blue, or purple-black, divine magic is white or rosy if necromantic or creation-oriented, and arcane magic is blue-white to an intense blue. These are aesthetic choices of the crafters, or random results if the caster spares no thought for such things, not "natural absolutes" determined by alignment or nature of magic.

(And in my fiction, I often use magical colors to hint or foreshadow.)

Dead Magic Zones

Use for breeding/sexual coupling

- Ed 2/5/10

Let me just say this: certain mages (and priests, too) covertly used dead magic zones deliberately for various spellcasting and beast/monster-breeding purposes. So unusual couplings did indeed occur in dead magic zones. There are also lore instances of persons who know or suspect they are being magically traced or watched, having romantic liaisons in dead-magic zones free of spying or repercussions (often with members of families or nationalities or races that are sworn foes; the Romeo & Juliet situation).

Divining Magic Prevalence

- Ed 23/12/14

Q: "With all the intrigue, deceit, and manipulation going on everywhere in the Realms, there are certain spells and other magicks that foil many of these plots from succeeding to begin with. Spells like Detect Thoughts, True Seeing, Mind Blank and more. There's a spell that transforms a gold coin into a listening device, for example. A Zone of Truth would make sense to use in a courtroom trial, for example. Yes, there are spells to block such intrusion and magic items, as well, but in the Realms what prevents those in power from forcing another to strip down their gear and magic and allow a Zone of Truth and True Seeing spell to discern all falsehoods? If someone detects alignment or attempts to read thoughts, and they find it blocked, that would seem to only further raise suspicion. Are there any sort of traditions

and/or laws that prevent invasion of privacy? Are there a lot of lead-lined rooms in every seat of office? What sort of magic blocks such intrusion? And what prevents a growing cycle of counter-magic, counter-counter-magic, counter-counter-counter magic and so on? The beguiler creature from Halruaa, for example, has True Seeing naturally, so what lone or gang of doppelgangers (or any shapechanger or illusionist), for example, could hope to ever infiltrate an organization if all it takes is someone to have such a creature hanging around pointing falsehoods instantly? (Or someone with a talented diviner or powerful divination item to do the same?) What sort of advice could Ed give for someone truly wishing to play the part of a "master spy" or "super agent" where simple and mediocre magic can easily betray anyone attempting deceit?"

A: the Weave is tangled but interconnected, so disruptions cause ripples, and in the wake of the Spellplague, many of the prying magics you mention have "gone wrong" or returned obviously false results so many times that they have fallen out of public trust. In other words, courts and rulers and lawkeepers generally no longer rely on them or allow them as evidence or consider them credible . . . and neither should adventurers trusting their lives to them. They have become more like Augury in utility, imparting an inclination or likelihood or partial revelation rather than certainties. Magic is wild or dead or randomly chaotic in many small and very localized areas (part of a corridor or room in a castle, for instance), and if a magic is used in or partially in or aimed "through" such an area, anything can happen. Spells that affect items tend to be a trifle more stable than magics that affect an area, and spells that affect the caster tend to be more reliable than either, and more reliable than spells that affect other beings. So I would play up that unreliability (the Watch captain shaking his head and declaring, "Sorry -- just don't trust magic, and for very good reasons") and run your campaign in that light.

Doom Pits

Creatability

- Ed 30/12/10, responding to query about magical quicksand mentioned in Magic of Faerun

In theory they can be created by wizards of sufficient power, who have the right components (these include a magic item retaining its enchantment/still functioning, that is absorbed in creating the pit, and certain rare sorts of enchanted gems, also absorbed to make the pit; it becomes the center of the pit, to serve as the focus for the pit-creation spell). As with moving a spark, a minimum of three mages, to surround the desired pit site, are necessary.

Elminster says "in theory" because so far as he knows, no one still alive knows how to create a doom pit, though at least one Netherese cabal of archwizards and at least one long-extinct Halruaan family (the Spiryerards) did (Orndoumar Spiyrerard even knew how to destroy or move doom pits, both his own and those he found). Mystra is not pleased with those who do create (or try to enlarge or use, as traps for foes) doom pits. Azuth taught some of his favored worshippers how to destroy doom pits, and this lore may well have been handed down.

It should be noted that doom pits are VERY rare; most are found in remote areas or ruins where great spell-battles or other magical cataclysms occurred (in at least two instances, the sites of "crashed" Netherese sky-cities that were destroyed upon falling, when many magics went wild).

Identifying Magic Across Cultures

- THO 12/12/13

Details of verbal, somatic, and material components spells do vary widely from region to region in the Realms, but there are indeed "universal" elements that enable MOST castings to be partly-identified by an observer, akin to the way someone who vaguely knows a little of another language can interpret more than they actually know, by examining context. (This comes from discussions with Ed over the years, not right out of my behind.)

Incantatrix

First Recognition

- Ed 18/6/12, referring to the Testing mentioned in "The Enchanting Incantatrix" article in Dragon #90

These 'Testings' were quasi-trials, in which the Council used spells in interrogations to make sure the person they were Testing wasn't under the magical/psionic mental influence of an unseen third party.

Light, Sun and Moon Energy

- Ed 30/3/11

Okay. Light comes from energy, either unleashed or "ready" (as in, awake but not necessarily activated yet magic).

When that magic is the distilled "raw" or root energy of the world (distilled through a deity, such as Mystra) it is silver. When the energies are shaped by mortal castings and the use of material components in a process (a ritual, or spell), they shine forth as blue. When they draw on destructive forces, they can "glow" black; when they draw on life energy in a ravaging, consuming way, or access planar energy to destroy, they are red; if they access planar energy in a non-destructive way, they will be more amethyst (purple).

However, that's the "simple" spectrum, for the Realms. In a case by case basis, the hues are usually blended.

There is always ambient energy, everywhere in the world setting (except dead-magic zones), so there can always be light. Moonlight is, as you've described it, the haunting/naughty/delicious/fearful "twilight," less "sure" and straightforwardly understood than the "sun magic" of a priest casting a healing or smiting with a flame strike or otherwise manifesting the righteous power of a deity.

Moonlight persists, for good or ill, as part of the natural life of the world. One can dance in moonlight, or fear "dangerous moonlight." Moonbeams can guide just as sunbeams can.

Sun radiance need not be understood; one can have the priests understand it for you. It is the straight-ahead power harnessed by the gods. It is law, and order, orthodoxy and obedience.

Ah, but moonlight . . .

Moonlight is wild and raw and ancient, unquenchable and recurring. To use it without understanding it is to court peril. It just "is" more than it manifests in service to others. To wield it well, one must master it (by oneself, or through teaching; in either case, a personal and intimate mastery, rather than a follow-the-rules orthodoxy).

Moonlight is sexy. Really. Ask any elf. Or dryad. Or harpist on a hilltop, clad or unclad.

Moonlight lures. It speaks of ancient power, of wild energy skulking and never truly slumbering.

Mage Sigil Uses

- THO 13/12/14

Q: But how the wizards' sigils can be used, other than basic signature with divinely enforced "unique identifier"?

A: "Other forms of authentication ("signing" spells, "lock" triggers that works only for this wizard)?"
Yes to both of those uses.

"Or detect the sigil's rightful owner (i.e. discern from impostors without that wizard's own act)?"
No. Doesn't seem to be a magical ability yet be known and developed, from what Ed says.

Magic-Hating Societies

- Ed 12/8/12, replying to query about a Dragon-Age like society with Circles of Magi

Arcane-magic-hostile societies in the Realms, yes? Yes, many, but almost all of them small and of local reach rather than large realms (it's hard to deny yourself something powerful and useful, no matter how much you may fear or detest it, that neighbours have and use daily). From barbarian and orc clans (and the southern, almost-extinct dwarven clans of Halthro and Jhairant) to the land of Murlaum east of Ulgarth, there are societies who shun arcane magic and cast out or slay those who wield it. Very little of this has made it into published Realmslore. Yet.

Mantles

- Ed 18/5/13, referring to the Coronal's mantle, which "could even tap into the power of his thrones (the Living Seat on the Isle of Estel and the Throne of the Coronal in the Chamber of the Court) and certain other sources of ancient power in the realm, such as the Vault of Ages, if these were nearby."

There are NDAs here, so I can't go into proper detail, but here are the basics: the Coronal's mantle is attuned to those two thrones by means of complex additional enchantments [in theory, any mantle could be altered in this manner, but there's no way it could be done without the elves knowing and permitting it, because the crafting of those enchantments is such a long and painstaking process, requiring access to a throne and the mantle while it's going on].

This attunement means that while the Coronal is close to a particular throne (more or less within sight of it, though it can be hidden by walls or barriers but just as close, and the attunement still "works"), his mantle can call on the thrones as a power source (giant battery), AND channel some of their specific magical powers and properties and "cast" or express these out of the mantle. For example, both thrones have the ability to prevent rain (or any liquid or mist/vapor) from falling on or reaching someone sitting on the throne, and for a small area all around/above/below the throne - - from simple rain or fog right up to a dragon's acid breath weapon. The Coronal's mantle automatically acquires the same property (always functioning, unless the Coronal wills it otherwise) while the Coronal is sufficiently close to one of his thrones.

Other throne abilities, particularly evocations and other attacks (such as flame strikes), must be deliberately willed by the Coronal to manifest out of his mantle.

Moving Mind into Construct

- THO 27/6/10, responding to query if any mages have managed this

Yes. More than a few that I know of, from play in the "home" Realms campaign.

The moving-your-mind-into-constructs lore that I know about was something Ed wrote for VOLO'S GUIDE TO ALL THINGS MAGICAL and then dropped from his turnover to make proper space for all the magic items Eric Boyd was doing such a superb job of detailing and updating. Like becoming a lich, the various methods were all procedurtes involving several new spells (in the same way that Nulathoe's Ninemen is a "special" spell for preparing undead).

Mythals

Spellfire user's involvement in creation

- Ed 5/3/13

Elminster is one spellfire user who was involved in the raising of several Mythals, including Myth Drannor's. Let me check to see how much more I can reveal... (might take a while)...

Mythallars

Existence after the Fall

- Ed 9/3/13

More than a dozen mythallars have survived that I know of, though some of them are very small and low-power (size of a small room/closet).

Phaerimm Lifedrain

Evereska's Mythal, counters

- Ed 26/6/11

Hi, Ed! We have this discussion in a different thread about the phaerimm's lifedrain and the Evereskan mythal...

We learned from The Return of the Archwizards trilogy that one of the factors that weakened Evereska's mythal was the phaerimm's lifedrain. Other than the Sharn Wall, has there been a known counterspell to it ever since? Did the High Mages of Evereska even attempt to create it? Some might think that given that several archwizards, including Lady Polaris and Karsus himself, and most probably Ioulaum and Larloch, too, had tried to unravel the secrets of the lifedrain---and failed, what chances did the High Mages have at success? But I say it's still worth the try, considering that it was their city which was at stake. Then again, mayhap they couldn't have spared even a single wizard researching on a counterspell when every one of them was direly needed to foil the attacks of the phaerimm armies...

Candlemas was able to create a spell that countered the lifedrain's effects to his crops. But it was unknown whether such spell was effective only to specific plants or to all kinds, since he died before he could fully make use of it. Also, as far as I can recall, it didn't counter the lifedrain's effects on the land itself.

Serreg, an archwizard featured in King's First Flight from the Realms of the Arcane anthology, after decades of doggedly researching on the "blight" that ruined Netherese lands, finally "detected" its cause. However, he was stopped by three phaerimm, depriving us of seeing whatever counter-spell he must have invented. Given that he alone was not enough to fight three of the many phaerimm that cast the lifedrain, it's safe to say that whatever it was he invented to dispel the lifedrain would have been useless after all."

Here's Ed's response:

Hi, Dennis. A lot of questions, so for clarity, let me take them one at a time, as they appear:

Q: "Other than the Sharn Wall, has there been a known counterspell to it ever since?"

A: If you mean known to me and a handful of TSR or WotC designers and editors and fiction writers, and known to a very few individuals in the Realms, the answer is "yes."

If you mean known to most spellcasters in the Realms, the answer is "no" (but then, most spellcasters in the Realms know of the lifedrain magic, as opposed to its desert effects, only from legend and hearsay, not specifics).

NDA's, thanks to not-yet-told tales and Realmslore, constrain me from a full answer here, but I can go this far: there are several known counterspells, both divine and arcane.

One of the arcane countermagics is a necromantic spell that attacks the lifedrain effect itself by overloading it with unlife; this spell consumes undead, usually zombies and skeletons, to derive sufficient power to manage the overloading. This spell was crafted by a known Realms NPC who shared it with others, whereas most of the alternative counters to lifedrain are known by a lone creator or a pair or trio of individuals who worked together to develop that counter.

Q: "Did the High Mages of Evereska even attempt to create it?"

A: Yes, but their initial attempts failed because they misunderstood the precise nature of the threat. The phaerimm were using the lifedrain spell (yep, the same one I wrote, that was published in only slightly simplified form; wordcount considerations always trim my careful, lawyer-like, long-because-exhaustive spell descriptions into much shorter writeups that unfortunately allow for misunderstandings, confusion, and misinterpretations) under the direction of a wise senior phaerimm who'd developed a second spell that drew on the power of Evereska's mythal to prolong and extend each lifedrain cast, AND used the mythal itself to try to conceal that power drain. This was successful in misleading the Evereskans about the mythal connection for too long for them to rescue it, once realization dawned.

Q: "Some might think that given that several archwizards, including Lady Polaris and Karsus himself, and most probably Ioulaum and Larloch, too, had tried to unravel the secrets of the lifedrain---and failed, what chances did the High Mages have at success?"

A common misapprehension to modern real-world thinkers: if this great government or that great corporation couldn't do X, what chance does Johnny in his basement have? The truth is that it's almost ALWAYS Johnnies in their basements who make the big breakthroughs; the corporate staff techs and scientists (and for that matter, staff game designers) are best at developing or redeveloping new or old ideas, and bringing them to market. The High Mages had little chance of success because they recognized the true nature of the threat too late, were already too busy with other concerns and threats to deal with it properly, and were too few to counteract the phaerimm's responses to their counter magics.

Now, an ignorant commentator (even, perhaps, a sage) in the Realms might well think and voice the sentence you've posted here, illustrating the "if the mighty couldn't do it, what chance do these lessers have"? thinking that this usually holds true in non-magical military confrontations (note the Serreg situation Rob King created in his short story: Serreg alone against three phaerimm; it's no coincidence that many military strategists strive to get three units against one unit of an enemy, to "ensure" victory). However, in this case, said reasoning is based on ignorance of all relevant details of the situation. No,

Ioulaum and Larloch DIDN'T try to understand or counter the lifedrain, and it's erroneous to think that they "probably" would try, because it's based on an incorrect view that the unified phaerimm faced a unified foe. The whole point I was driving home in my creation of Netheril and Cormanthyr and their histories was that civilizations (elven and dwarven, not just human) invariably fall when they become groups of arrogant "me first" individuals pursuing their own selfish goals or interests or passing whims, rather than placing a primary value in living and working together, as a team/cohesive society. Netheril was doomed to its fall because of its decadent squabbling and internal power battles, and (with a few exceptions) its survivors have largely flourished since then by learning the lessons of unbridled hubris. Even the self-styled Princes of Shade have learned caution and to work behind the scenes to make victory likely, before open confrontations.

Back then, Ioulaum and Larloch weren't so wise. They saw Evereska as doomed and not worth aiding, preferring to pursue their own plans and interests, and simply withdrew and abandoned Evereska.

Q: "But I say it's still worth the try, considering that it was their city which was at stake. Then again, mayhap they couldn't have spared even a single wizard researching on a counterspell when every one of them was direly needed to foil the attacks of the phaerimm armies..."

Ed: Almost all Evereskans of the time would agree with you that developing countermagic to then lifedrain was worth the effort, to rescue their city. And yes, by the time they really started to tackle the problem (by starting to understand it, after their initial spell-efforts yielded very puzzling results), they were too busy fighting a war on their doorsteps to have time and spellcasting power (numbers of mages working countermagics) to succeed. However, your second sentence reveals ("they couldn't have spared") your view of the Evereskans as operating under a unified command, which certainly wasn't the case.

It's nearer the truth to see the situation at the time as akin to a man running down a street full of mansions in a gated modern real-world community shouting that "There's a forest fire, right over the fence! It'll be here in minutes! Get out! Get out while you still can!" . . . and some of the people in those houses can't even hear him through their walls and the movies on the big-screen TVs they're dozing in front of, some ignore him as "some crazy shouting in the street outside" or phone the police to "come get the shouting madman who somehow got into our community," others say, "Another forest fire? Well, the last one came nowhere near here, so pfffft!" and only a few heed - - and of those few, some start to argue about the judgment of the shouting man, because they know more about forest fires than he ever will, others take the view that just staying in their modern mansions and waiting it out is the safest thing to do because their mansions are new and big and specially built, and the relative handful who DO take the shouting man seriously disagree as to what to do, but in any case find most of their neighbors will ignore or dispute any orders they give.

And whereas a forest fire's fuel and driving factors can be clearly understood and are fairly simple, the phaerimm were numerous, well-prepared to counter resistance, and had a huge head start in multiple attacking magics. The walls of a strong castle can hold back a handful of unarmed men, but can fall swiftly before an army of armed, experienced titans.

Q: "Candlemas was able to create a spell that countered the lifedrain's effects to his crops. But it was unknown whether such spell was effective only to specific plants or to all kinds, since he died before he could fully make use of it. Also, as far as I can recall, it didn't counter the lifedrain's effects on the land itself.

Ed: You recall correctly; Candrelmaskur's spell doesn't inhibit or stop or fight the effects of lifedrain on any area.

Candrelmaskur saw that the lifedrain was leaching moisture from the land, and that it was some sort of massive, ongoing magical effect. He decided that investigating the cause of the lifedrain and determining its specifics so as to develop a counter to it would take far too long to rescue his crops, and was therefore a project for later, after his crops had been rescued. So he crafted a spell that translocated waters from a small lake he'd augmented with compost and minerals he knew the plants needed, aerated this water into mists, and delivered them to his crops. The spell is effective in aiding almost all sorts of plants, because almost all sorts of plants benefit from getting oxygen to their roots (fungi crops won't be aided much by this spell).

Q: "Serreg, an archwizard featured in King's First Flight from the Realms of the Arcane anthology, after decades of doggedly researching on the "blight" that ruined Netherese lands, finally "detected" its cause. However, he was stopped by three phaerimm, depriving us of seeing whatever counter-spell he must have invented. Given that he alone was not enough to fight three of the many phaerimm that cast the lifedrain, it's safe to say that whatever it was he invented to dispel the lifedrain would have been useless after all."

Ed: No, it's not safe to say that at all. :}

Serreg's crafted magic was ultimately useless because he didn't survive to pass it on to others to use, not because it wasn't effective. THO was quite correct to decry your logic here. You are correctly underlining that the phaerimm were numerous and concerted enough to effectively deal with those who resisted them, but that says nothing at all about what or how puissant that resistance might have been, if had been properly mounted. If you'd said "As it turned out, Serreg's counter-spell was lost and had no effect," that would be correct. But your wording is "would have been useless after all," meaning his counter-spell would have been ineffective no matter what happened, which is untrue. If Serreg had lived and freely and swiftly distributed his counter-spell, it would have been VERY effective if cast widely, reversing lifedrains and ending this particular phaerimm threat almost as swiftly as the threat struck.

The phaerimm succeeded because of discipline in maintaining stealth during their massive "overkill" of lifedrain spellcasting, and linking the prolongation of those magics to the various wards, mythals, and mythallars of their target locations, so the impact of the draining was unstoppable by the time it was noticed - - whereupon the phaerimm were ready in numbers to kill or foil the relative few (like Serreg) who tried to stop the lifedrain effect.

Prevalence of Wizards

- Ed 9/9/13, replying to a challenge that wizards overpower everyone else

I can understand why one could get that feeling from the published Realms, because there's so much emphasis on powerful mages. In the same way that New York seen in movies is always being blown up or threatened with doomsday devices or the setting of all-out gang street warfare, but the real New York is rather different. Arcane magic DOES permeate the setting (in the form of the Weave), but it is by no means "commonplace" or ordinary. I would say that perhaps one in every 290 or so people has some talent for the Art (magic), but usually this is a "wild talent," a very limited, lone minor power like an itching sensation when a powerful magic item is very close, or a mighty spell has just been cast in a locale, or is "hanging fire" awaiting activation in a spot the wild talent is standing in. Wild talents are

rarely reliable, are usually kept secret, and VERY rarely can be developed, over time, into something a little stronger and more specific.

Perhaps one person in every 400 or so has some limited immunity to some form of magic (lessened damage from fire or cold magic, or increased resistance to mind-contacting magic, for example); unless it's genetic and older family members tell them of it, they may never ever discover they have this immunity.

Perhaps one person in every 900 or so has some ability to wield magic (i.e. become a wizard or sorcerer or other sort of arcane spellcaster). Again, they may never discover this - - and if they need training to develop it (i.e. become a wizard), they may never get the opportunity or the funds to be trained (nor might they WANT to; a lot of folk in the Realms fear magic). My estimate of how many people become wizards would be around thirty percent of those who could become wizards (i.e. 3 in 10 of those talented in the Art ever develop that talent). And of course, once you are a wizard, you are also a target. The vast majority of wizards get killed when they are low in power (such as Manshoon's "magelings," the novice Zhents he sacrificed ruthlessly in great numbers), and the great bulk of those who do survive become "hedge-wizards" (that is, they get a little training and do a little experimentation beyond that, or buy a scroll or two, and settle down in a small community to make a living casting the six or seven "everyday useful" spells they know, never wanting nor trying to either go adventuring or try ruling anyone or anywhere).

And yes, aside from the risks of everyone else trying to kill you or capture you and use you as a spellhurling slave, you as a wizard face the inherent risks of magic itself; it's like playing with live electricity at the best of times, and experimentations or any situations where one active spell comes into contact with another (i.e. any duel or fight) are especially perilous.

And finally, in the Realms there are many, many individuals powerful enough to rule, dominate, and even oppress wizards. If you look the root Realms products, such as the Old Gray Box, most rulers are NOT wizards. (It's just that the evil wizards' groups, such as the Zhentarim and the Red Wizards, get all the attention.)

Magic is an inherent part of the Realms - - LOTS of magic. Some of it is divine, some arcane, and most of it is unharnessed, or controlled by beings we don't think of as potential Player Characters. The PC users of magic are few and far between; don't let what adventures focus on give you the wrong view of their real reach and stature. Their REPUTATIONS are huge, but even an active band of them (e.g. the War Wizards of Cormyr) can't adequately control a generally law-abiding kingdom - - and one of the few wizards who COULD rule the world, Larloch, is utterly uninterested in doing so; like many ultra-powerful archwizards, he has become obsessed with the pursuit and perfection of magic, rather than worldly power. (Though you may in future Realms fiction see him dabble a bit in the unfolding affairs of the world.) Finally, like real-world superpowers and "detente," the most powerful mages often develop feuds and rivalries, and serve as checks and balances on each other by opposing whatever rivals try to do.

Psionics / The Invisible Art

Awakening post-attacks

- Ed 13/7/12

Yes, someone who has latent psionic powers quite often finds them "awakened" after a psionic attack they survive. So (especially among those who have no inkling they have such abilities, and so haven't been trying to unlock/stimulate them), it is one of the most common ways of "becoming mindful," as

the folk saying puts it. THE most common is being mind-touched by arcane or divine magic (i.e. having a priest try to detect alignment or a lie, or a wizard read thoughts). These gentler mental invasions can still prompt psionic awakenings, and tend to happen more often, overall.

Names for mixed casters

- Ed 3/10/11

The word "psionics" is not directly known in the Realms. Some sages and arcane scholars call someone who has developed some power in both spellcasting and mental workings a "panurge" but this is by no means a universally-accepted and widely-used term. And there's no collective term for a cleric who can use psionics, because most churches have a church rank or title they already apply to that individual, and because most faiths firmly believe that psionics are granted by the gods, and so aren't all that "different" from divine magic, being rather a "gift" or "mark of favor" of the deity on the gifted individual.

Schools of Magic

Undiscovered Schools

- THO 11/11/11

Your question to Ed about schools of magic is definitely a "yes" in Ed's Realms. As for the published Realms, we'll have to see - - though even there, there's a known but as yet unrevealed school of magic: table magic.

Silver Fire

What It Is

- THO 20/9/10

As best I can recall from my increasingly faulty memory; age, you know), the silver fire is the (channeled) raw energy of the world, whereas the Weave (Mystra herself) is the "collector grid" harnessing that energy, and arcane magic spells are recipes for channeling specific energies from the Weave to achieve specific effects.

So, yes, silver fire IS unusual, but it also "burns through everything" (except carefully counter-hurled silver fire or, for very short periods [because magics can't stand against fire that dissolves their energies and effects into itself], shielding spells) and prevails. Wielding silver fire in a focussed manner, as a weapon or to achieve a healing/recharging effect, is an aptitude, NOT a learned spell (thus, a class or prestige class or kit or character ability [depending on edition] in the game, rather than a spell that can be devised, borrowed, stolen, bartered, or otherwise transferred).

Outside Realmspace, silver fire may not manifest at all; inside Realmspace, it is the paramount, destroying-all-else force. Some deities may withstand it by their innate abilities or perhaps by magic mortals haven't learned from them, but it is not, in itself, magic that can be countered by magic.

To use a clumsy analogy, silver fire is the water blasting from a pressure washer, whereas spells are either heavy paper bags (to carry water) or heavy paper sheets (spell barriers), that can manipulate water for short periods, but can't withstand such a blast.

You seem to be thinking of silver fire as some sort of "super magic" that can be thwarted or countered by a "more powerful" spell than those already in the rulebooks (except older edition rulebooks that have WISH or LIMITED WISH in them). This has also been the view of some designers over the years who

haven't bothered to discuss this with Ed, or refer to the "Realms bible" he wrote for internal staff use at TSR years ago, that all Realms designers are supposed to (actually, are contractually obligated to) follow. (That's how we end up with spells in print that purport to duplicate the silver fire).

However, thinking of silver fire in this way leaves the thinker puzzled as to all the inconsistencies with published fiction and certain lore they encounter, arising from this view. It also leads to the incorrect "silver fire is a game imbalance" view, and the similarly incorrect "silver fire is mighty magic; why hasn't someone countered it with a mightier magic? Surely someone has; why isn't this in print?" view.

We know that the aptitude for handling silver fire is due to Mystra's divine essence, infused (in however small amounts) in a mortal, who may or may not be aware that it's there. The limited number of mortals she has infused with her ability to tap the Weave (herself) in this manner is the solution to the game balance problem: silver fire, in Ed's realms, is NOT something every wizard, sorcerer, warlock, or just plain (classless, non-adventuring) Joe can choose to "take for themselves" and use, though the way the game rulebooks express the world for players of the game can lead a player to think that it is "an option available to all." Remember, all PCs are supposed to be "exceptional" individuals in a world.

Perhaps a better question to ask is: if my character - - or any other PC or NPC under discussion - - has the ability to wield spellfire or the silver fire, WHY do they have a part of Mystra's divine essence in them? Did Mystra put it there deliberately, and if so, why? Are there Sinister Grand Hidden Plans being laid and worked on, and unfolding? (and if so, to what desired ends????) Or do I have the silver fire (or spellfire) by the mischance of being bitten by a radioactive spider? Or is it something in between (we know that the essence can be transferred by birth, because we know it's hereditary in some families)?

And of course, the BIGGEST mistake of all would be to think that Ed hasn't planned all of this, perhaps as long as 1967 or so (before the D&D game).

Relation to Mystra

- THO 23/12/10

Silver fire is NOT controlled by Mystra, nor can she monitor it. Rather, she can't even "see" silver fire, and so can't locate those who have it by that means (she CAN locate her Chosen by other means).

How it is tied to Chosen

- Ed 18/7/11

Living bodies act as batteries (rechargeable storage chambers) for silver fire (which is how Elminster and others can absorb "extra" silver fire from others), if the mind inhabiting that body has the gift/ability to drain/skim/accumulate raw energy from the Weave (or from the raw/natural energy flows of the world [convection currents, flows of water, winds, temperature gradients, gravity, tides, etc.] that the Weave harnesses).

So both mind and body are involved.

If a Chosen takes over the body of someone else for a long time and has the ability, means, skills, and knowledge to alter that body to become a "silver fire chamber," then yes, they could transfer silver fire, or the silver fire collection ability, from body to body.

You'll see quite a bit of bodyhopping in my current Elminster novels, but they also illustrate why it's unusual for a Chosen to "add" to the total of silver fire-capable bodies in existence, as opposed to departing a destroyed/dying/failing body permanently for a new one.

There ARE silver fire collectors/wielders who have no connection at all to Mystra, but they are VERY rare and she destroys those who "misbehave" (in regards to their treatment of the Weave, other

spellcasters, natural processes and balances, etc.), acting through intermediaries rather than directly confronting . . . and sending a Chosen to drain/gather the silver fire so it won't be lost.

Lycanthrope reaction

- Ed 30/4/13

Silver fire does indeed 'burn lycanthropy out of' anyone who becomes a Chosen, or who is a Chosen and gets into circumstances wherein they would become a lycanthrope if they didn't have silver fire. A Chosen can choose to use their silver fire to 'burn lycanthropy out of' a non-Chosen they can reach with their silver fire, and doing so is almost instinctual/obvious (it doesn't need specialized training or knowledge) - - but they must discern that the non-Chosen being is a lycanthrope, and want to change that status; it won't happen automatically or unwittingly.

Use in "Scourge of Shadowdale"

- Ed 6/12/11

Q: Relating to the Scourge of Shadowdale adventure path (in which Sylune "canonically" so-to-speak passes on, though I'm planning to change that in my own campaign if/when I get up to that point), she bestows a gift upon the player characters of a small amount of non-replenishing silver fire that they can use (cast a spell unaffected by an antimagic field/dead magic zone or immediately heal the user of several afflictions) three times in their lives before it's used up...Am I right in guessing that other Chosen of Mystra would also be able to employ the silver fire in such a fashion either on themselves (except without a 3-use limit, since they're the source of it and could if nothing else just "bestow the blessing on themselves") or as a blessing in the same fashion as Sylune does for the PCs in that adventure path?"

A: Yes, indeed.

Q: "So, for example, Elminster could do the same thing for another group of PCs, or the Simbul, or Khelben, or Laeral, or really any Chosen of Mystra past and present?"

A: Theoretically any Chosen could do so, but they have to be sufficient versed in the use of the silver fire to know how to, and there have been Chosen who weren't. (All of those you name here could of course do so swiftly and with ease.)

Sparks

Moveability

- Ed 30/12/10, responding to query about sites where magic is heightened mentioned in Magic of Faerun

Most sparks are stationary; they will fade if overused and can be destroyed if meddled with magically in the wrong way. A rare few sparks move about, but if any wizard knows how to move a spark, or influence or control the movements of a moving spark, they're not admitting to knowing how. Elminster says a minimum of three Chosen working together with the Weave, who surround the spark, can move a spark short distances by using the Weave like a net, but this is tiring, dangerous, usually results in destroying the spark in a soundless flashing explosion of wild magic that's hurled away in all directions (that is, small, fast-moving "tattered" areas of wild magic), and very much NOT recommended. It's most often done to move a spark into a rift (they destroy each other), recharge a gate/portal by moving the spark into it (the spark will be absorbed), or to destroy/burn a hole through a magical barrier or warding-spell or other effect, by overloading it.

A VERY few sorcerers in the past have had the “wild talent” to move sparks by touch and will, but all of these, so far as Elminster knows, are long dead now.

Spellfire

Existence of users

- Ed 21/5/13, replying to query about users other than Shandril

There are other spellfire wielders in the Realms right now (meaning: at any time from 1340 to 14XX whenever DR). They're just keeping VERY quiet about it, and using their abilities as little as possible and as privately as possible - - because they've seen or more often heard what happened to Shandril.)

Link to Energy/Life

- THO 23/12/10

Q: "So is a Spellfire user functionally immortal, since they carry in themselves life?"

A: No. It's not that simple. They carry ENERGY, which can wear out as well as sustain life.

Q: "Can anyone wielding Spellfire/Silver Fire immediately heal themselves, thus preventing death from any wound?"

A: No. You have to know how to heal, or experiment in doing so successfully, and there are limitations, even if you succeed.

Threat to Undead

- THO 23/12/10

Yes, sentient undead sane and smart enough to think in long-term ways (e.g. all liches, most vampires, etc.) DO see spellfire as their greatest threat, or among their greatest threats, yes.

Spellplague

Effect on Mythals

- THO 21/5/10, responding to query about how mythals were affected

The answer to your last question about mythals (template re. Spellplague effects, or completely random) is: completely random. Ed and I have talked about this, and the Spellplague (although it definitely brought down the Weave) had "utterly random" effects, leaving some spells, magic items, and people untouched, destroying others, and "affecting" most of both (that is: changing them in varying ways).

Myth Drannor's mythal was already decaying, and Ed has said that the Spellplague affected various "spots" (locations in the city) and properties (powers of the mythal) differently than it affected other spots or properties of the same mythal.

Surviving a spellplague blast of magical force

- Ed 29/12/12

Of COURSE they could survive. Death is most likely, but the whole character of the Spellplague was that it was random, fitful, and strange (like a wand of wonder firing here and there across the landscape). So someone caught up in a wild Plague “blast” or discharge could have been plane shifted, teleported to darn near anywhere on Toril (or intersecting Abeir), physically transformed into a new shape - - or all three!

Readers of my most recent Elminster books are familiar with how certain beings got "caught inside" artifacts or magic items and kept alive without aging as the years passed, and are then released by various means/happenings having missed almost all of the 1400s DR without aging. Well, given the weirdness of the Spellplague, almost any magic item could have picked up a willing or unwilling passenger, particularly if a Sleep of Ages or Stasis or similar spell was used, cast nearby, or the character and the item ended up blundering through an area affected by such a magic. Though I understand your desire for the credible, the Spellplague is an explanation that covers a whole lot of weirdness observed by folk in the Realms, and can stretch to cover a lot more . . .

Spellwebs

- THO 25/5/12

Spellwebs are basically stronger wards rather than mythals (if a mythal affects every inch of space in an area, or is a "field," a ward-spell is far more limited, affecting a door or threshold or small passage/room -- or "trigger areas" for spells linked magically to other trigger areas, which is where the "webs" term comes from).

So a middling-range spellcaster could set up a very simple spellweb (intruder entering this spot without doing X causes minor offensive spell to go off, and if that spell goes off, a spell-link causes an alarm [[either audible or silent, like magical radiance "coming on" in an area]] to be triggered elsewhere).

A more powerful spellcaster could set up a more powerful spellweb, with layers of spells, contingencies in case anti-magic/dispelling is used against the spellweb, and so on.

A REALLY powerful spellcaster could set up a spellweb that rivaled a simple mythal in properties, but a spellweb is always inherently more unstable than (and won't last as long as) a mythal.

Tardis Like "Bigger on Inside" Creations

- Ed 27/2/13

It's been tried many times, in many different ways, but aside from SMALL dimensional warpings (think: Bag of Holding, or the space at the top of a Rope Trick spell), the problem with tesseract and other "bigger inside than out" magics is that they tend to be unstable in the presence of the Weave.

That is, they don't last long, or even collapse (spilling anyone and anything inside them into random dimensional destinations), unless bolstered by wards or mythal-like webs of multiple wards (which have to be adjusted and augmented fairly often).

So it can be done, but longterm successes are always going to be limited to wielders of magic who have power, skill, and time to spare for the upkeep of such creations.

Targeting Spells

- Ed 12/8/11, responding to query if spells could be cast without recognizing the target was themselves

Only a foolish or inattentive caster could fail to notice the target of the spell he or she is casting, because it's either visualized by the caster or built into the incantation (and successful casting by uttering an incantation that one doesn't understand is rare indeed, due to the necessity of focussing the will "thus" and "so" at various points during the incantation [[i.e. you'd only get the spell off correctly by slim-chance good fortune if mouthing a non-understood incantation]]). In almost all cases where a spell has no incantation, targets must be visualized or otherwise will-chosen by the caster, or preselected by a

physical link/sympathetic association with the target [[e.g. using hair or spittle or clothing from the target]].

Tears of Selune

- THO 30/3/11

The Tears represent "that which she has lost," and a lot of them have fallen over the years.

Effect on Magic

- THO 30/3/11

The Tears of Selune have a variety of strong effects on magic (and affect lycanthropy, too).

Teleporting

Displacement of Material Present

- Ed 5/12/11, responding to query about what happens to water when someone teleports into it

The teleport magic itself displaces/consumes/transfers air, water, mud, jelly (as in ochre or equivalent!), soup, etc. equal in volume to the arriving teleporter, so there's no killing (or other impact), no sonic boom or other loud noise, no discharge of energy, no wounding of the teleporter. Doesn't work on discrete solids (like solid rock) but does on mobile collections of solids (like loose sand, a vat full of dried grain or marbles or beads, etc.).

- Ed 6/12/11

A teleport is NOT a "straight swap," or gale-force winds (due to temperature imbalances from one end of the translocation to the other) would often be created. It's a "three-way," using one of the relatively empty extra-dimensional spaces whose folding makes possible the teleport in the first place. So, no, a rock wouldn't be "falling on top of their heads." Same with mass teleport, which is why you can't teleport thick smoke or poisonous gas at a foe or someone you're besieging. (Otherwise, there would be no fair fights, races, or contests, anywhere in the Realms, unless no wizard was involved or wanted to wager on them.)

There's a thickness-of-the-average-human-thumb "aura" or "nimbus" around a teleported being that moves with them. If you were touching someone who was teleported (but you weren't), you'd get a skin "rash" (like a "carpet burn") as the air around them raced in a whirl against you, for just an instant. The Simbul often hurt those she kissed, this way, and as for the men she was actually entertaining at the time she "took herself elsewhere" . . . wince for a moment at THAT tenderness.

Tellsong

- Ed 24/5/12 (mentioned in Bury Elminster Deep p303)

A tellsong is an alarm spell, triggered under specific conditions (like those governing a magic mouth), that is invisible, and its "alarm" is a chiming tune, audible only to the caster (unless the caster desires otherwise and sets it so during casting), that sounds whenever the caster comes within range.

It either chimes one way, to signal its continued presence and active status, or another way, to tell the caster whatever it was set to detect has happened.

If touched by detection magic or by any powerful unleashed magical effect, the tellsong is instantly and tracelessly destroyed (i.e. the person detecting magic wouldn't detect it, because their attempt to

detect it would destroy it).

Meaning, in this particular case, the Lord Warder knows that someone or something destroyed this tellsong of his, without "setting it off." Which in turn usually means a spellcaster of some skills, who was alert for traps or alarms, has been in a tellsong-guarded area.

The name of the spell came from its earliest form, devised long ago, when Myth Drannan casters (usually elves, but this was the [[first]]time of the City of Song open to all races) sang something or magically "recorded" someone else singing something, and used it as the audible alarm part of the spell.

The Weave

Overview

- THO 20/6/10, responding to assertion that magic is life

Magic isn't life, it's the ENERGIES of life, and the Weave is a way of understanding and harnessing those energies.

To hand all of you a simplified analogy that Ed's find of using: if the energies of life are a raging torrent of falling water, the Weave is a waterwheel and sluice, or way of drawing on and directing some of those energies.

It's not that Toril has a "magical field," it's that it's teeming with life, and therefore life energies. Various forms of "magic" are just ways of concentrating those energies (in the same way as electricity can be drawn from chemical reactions [lemon batteries, anyone?] to provide "sheer power" to do other things. The Weave is one way of understanding how to use and devise your own arcane spells, but after it "falls" (Mystra dies, for she IS the Weave), life still exists, life energies therefore still exist, and therefore there is still magic (just not Weave magic).

- THO paraphrasing Ed 9/5/12

The Weave is ONE way of harnessing all of the innate energies of the world: wind, tidal, solar, kinetic, convection/heat, gravity, combustion, waterflow, magnetic, et al. It is powered and renewed by all of these energies continually flowing through it. A constant huge stream of them, so vast that it seems endless/inexhaustible. The Weave itself is a network of usually-invisible linkages, made up of Mystra/Azuth/Savras/Lurue/elven deities of magic/Velsharoon? (the divine fire, akin to silver fire), and "anchored" by beings (the Chosen) who have silver fire within them, and servitors of Mystra who are bound to places ("place spirits") that are centers ("nodes") of the same energies that make up the silver fire. The simplified metaphor for the Weave is a gigantic invisible silver net or irregular mesh, but it's far more complex than that. (However, just as many drivers couldn't fix most problems with their cars, and have varying degrees of "general ideas" of how their car works, most spellcasters can think of the Weave as a net and cast spells and never need to delve deeper.)

There. So saith me, channeling Ed. That's the quick-n-dirty (my favourite style) version of the Weave. So yes, Mystra is the Weave, and yes, all that energy is always there; the Weave is a way of channeling its flows (not "containing" it, until you're speaking of spells, which do snatch a bottleful of Weave energy and allow it to be transported and then unleashed later as a specific effect).

- THO 17/1/11

Remember that the Weave is NOT "all magic" or even "all the natural world forces harnessed by magic" but rather a way (and for eons, THE most popular, refined, and best understood way) of harnessing

those forces. There are other systems of magic, and always have been, from Ed's initial creation of the Realms.

Demon Weave

- EG, Qs for EG 1/1/15

Q: The Rise of the Underdark products (Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue and the three DnD Encounters seasons dealing with the drow) repeatedly state that the Demon Weave is supposed to replace Mystra's 'torn' Weave and that its creation was begun in 1480 DR then, in War of Everlasting Darkness, it says that the Demon Weave will be used to "restore her[Mystra's] tattered Weave". The Sundering series establishes that Mystra's Weave is restored in 1479 DR, but WoED says that Lolth is defeated six years later in 1485 DR.

So I guess my question is: Did the Demon Weave and the Weave exist concurrently and what kind of state was Mystra's Weave in during those six and a half years?

A: Lolth intended the Demon Weave to replace Mystra's damaged Weave, and allow her to become the goddess of magic and therefore the greatest deity of all (excepting Ao the Overgod). However, Lolth has a problem shared by many, many deities: her hubris doth outstrip her performance. In her case, by a long shot: she's wanted a certain Drizzt Do'Urden dead for years, and hasn't yet managed it, and he's just a lone mortal. Yes, the Demon Weave and the Weave did co-exist for years; the Demon Weave was Lolth's creation, and for the most part worked very reliably for those mortals she wanted to be able to access it, but it was never self-supporting or self-sustaining—from the outset it fed on (drained energy from) Mystra's Weave, and if the Weave had ever utterly failed (which it might have done, given the fate of Azuth, if Elminster and Storm and the Srinshes and many, many others hadn't worked so hard to anchor it and prop it up and mend its rents), the Demon Weave would have collapsed and faded away with it, because -- like the Shadow Weave before it -- the Demon Weave was tapping the Weave for energy AND stability. Lolth just lacks the skills to properly understand the complex flows and balances; all she's mastered is the taking of power and its unleashing in various forms (i.e. magical effects), not how to keep the entire house of cards from collapsing.

So one of the greatest ironies in all of this is that -- to save the Weave and therefore protect most of the Realms from the ravages of utter magical chaos -- Elminster and Storm and the others did work that allowed the Demon Weave to persist and function for years longer than it would have, otherwise.

Magic Without The Weave

- Ed 17/7/10, on magic in weaveless settings

Although "magic" may work very differently from setting to setting, and understanding of it may vary widely (and diverge markedly from the truth) from place to place and wielder to wielder, the truth USUALLY is, underneath all the trappings, that casters ALWAYS draw on the planet's life-force.

One way or another, that is (it may be by drawing on stored energy in magic items, or "charging" receptacles with lightning or lifeblood, or calling on the energies of a living being, or any number of other variations).

The Weave isn't a power source, it's a way of understanding and harnessing the natural forces of the world (heat, wind, water flows and tides, gravity, sunlight, magnetic fields, etc. etc.). Even when the Weave "dies"/collapses/is lost, those forces remain, and can be called upon in other ways, within the

same setting (the Shadow Weave, table magic, and all of the other competing means of working magic, large/important/well-known and small/little-known).

Or to put it another way: in a dead-magic zone fires still burn and you can feel their heat, gravity and waterflows/tides and winds all still function, the sun still shines, etc. You may no longer be able to INFLUENCE those forces, using your Weave-based spells, but that's a different matter.

Only One Way of Accessing Magic

- THO 9/5/10

The Weave was only ever one way of accessing the nature forces and energies of the world, and there were other, less popular magical systems that functioned as well as the Weave. To arcane spellcasters, the Weave IS magic, but it's really a way of understanding (and therefore accessing) the infinitely complex weave of interacting energies. There are other ways.

So, yes, warlocks and sorcerers and others wouldn't "lose their powers" if the Weave was refounded.

Shadow Weave

Power, Effect of the Weave going

- Ed 30/7/10, responding to query if the Shadow Weave was stronger than the Weave "because of the lack of Mystra's ban"

The Weave is more powerful than the Shadow Weave, because although both of them are different ways of accessing the natural forces (heat, light, kinetic, tidal, wind, gravitational, photosynthesis and other natural chemical reactions, etc.) of the world, the Weave is a structured, focused manner of doing so, whereas the Shadow Weave is a "back door" method that depends on the existence of the Weave for a lot of its own focus (the metaphor most useful to mortals is: the Shadow Weave is the dark spaces between the luminous lattice of the Weave).

With the Weave gone, the Shadow Weave is a lot wilder/less controlled by its users; it's the difference between using a shaped rigid tool to manipulate something you dare not touch, and trying to use a length of rope or vine as your tool to do the same thing: a lot of the time your attempts will collapse or slither around or require much more effort on your part, thrusting or flailing, to accomplish the same thing. With the "lattice" of the Weave in place, you can thrust your rope or vine along a narrow channel to reach what you desire; without the lattice, your rope or vine can wiggle all over the place.

Weave Anchors, Weave Taps

- THO 8/5/14 (Anchors in "The Herald", Taps in Paul Kemp's novels)

They are related magi-tech. The taps are a way of releasing a lot of Weave energy (like, yes, turning on a tap so water flows), and the anchors are magical bindings that secure the Weave to Toril, in thousands upon thousands of specific spots, tiny local nodes that tack it down, like nails securing an intricate piece of string-weaving to a board. One of the duties of El and other Chosen is to maintain Weave anchors, and in the wake of the Spellplague's destruction and great tears in the Weave and other weakenings of it (some of them deliberate, on the orders of the Most High, to make it easier to drain Weave power), this duty changes from "boring maintenance" to "crucial and thanks to Shadovar attacks, all too 'not boring' maintenance."

- THO 26/5/14, replying to a comment by sleyvas that anchors are holding in "ley lines"

(In theory, the weave anchors ARE hammering in the ley lines of Faerun.) Though Ed tells me it's slightly more complicated than that, for very good future-plot-related reasons that he obviously can't share yet.

Weave Healing

- Ed 3/8/14

Weave-healing is learning how to use the Weave to heal (in other words, instead of casting a spell to harness the Weave to manipulate the natural energies of the world to create a healing effect, you harness the Weave directly).

Learning how to do this requires lots of experience in working with the Weave, and is done slightly differently by everyone who learns how to do it (which is why it's never been a formal put-into-game-rules power). Elminster is the only real Weavemaster alive and active in the Realms today, according to Mystra (who IS the Weave, so she should know), but Azuth and the Srinshie would have greater mastery of the Weave than old El, and most of the other Chosen of Mystra are well on the way to becoming Weavemasters. Most of the "Chosen" of other deities are merely champions or favored mortals of those gods, given the title "Chosen," rather than working closely with the Weave all the time, as the Chosen of Mystra do - - so while some of them may have learned how to work directly with the Weave in small ways, any claims to "Weave mastery" on their part are just that: claims. Not reality. With that said, veteran priests of high level of any faith, who have done lots of healing, may understand HOW Weave-healing is done, and may well be able to accomplish it with the favor of their deity, by calling through prayer while the being to be healed is on an altar, or touched by something sacred to the god. In all cases, I have handled this as a DM as something to be roleplayed, not "another spell in my toolbox that I the player announce my character is casting."

Weave without a Guiding Sentence

- Ed 3/2/12

A rebooted Weave without a guiding sentence would be like the restless waters rippling endlessly in a tiny pool that has a spring gushing into it: echoing and re-echoing all disturbances . . . and ripe for any sentence that has the means (or more likely, a lot of them, in a tug-of-war that could shatter some of the minds involved, once it turned nasty), to guide or try to control or dominate.

- Ed 4/2/12, clarifying above

Ed tells me he meant ANY sentence, but that a mind that isn't near-godlike (e.g. an archwizard used to intense concentration) would be overwhelmed and driven mad very swiftly, even if there was no competing mind in the Weave at that moment...and even accomplished wizards burst into sweat, quickly get exhausted...and manage to influence the Weave in an area no larger than a good-sized dining hall.

So, yes, we're talking demigods/exarchs or the like, or stronger, to "master" the Weave in a large area, for a short period of time. Then practice, practice, and practice (assuming you don't get mentally hurt or strained, trying).

Effect of Earthquakes

- THO 14/3/11

I don't believe anyone measures earthquakes in the Realms. Makes note of them, particularly priests looking to interpret signs sent by deities, yes, but measure, no. And yes, the Weave is definitely affected

by large and violent natural events. During a nearby, sudden volcanic eruption, I remember a minor (NPC, played by Ed as DM) local wizard commenting to some of the Knights, "Ripples in the Weave, ripples in the Weave." (In a context that definitely implied that the eruption would cause such ripples.)

Use Shortening Lifespan

- THO 20/6/10, responding to proposal that use of magic directly, not through the Weave during the Spellplague years, was the reason for shortened elven lifespans by the 4e rules (see also p9 of "Cormanthyr: Empire of Elves") for more on lifespan connection to Weave

Yes, all mortal bodies wear out, over time, due to the stresses of living (in the real world and in the Realms). Too much magic (life energies, focused and intensified) pouring through a body can overload cells and burn them out, shortening the lifespan of that body or ending it, sometimes very swiftly and abruptly (recall various Ed-penned descriptions of smoke issuing from the eyeballs, mouths, noses, and ears of mages struck by hostile spells).

- THO 21/6/10, clarifying above

Casting an anti-aging magic on yourself, as a spell, would indeed be a zero-sum game. However, imbibing a potion of longevity (crafted by someone else or by yourself) would not be a zero-sum game, because this sort of potion exponentially augments the magic put into it.

And no, the wearing out of the body due to handling magical energies doesn't preclude old mages at all. It precludes reckless (or unlucky, or foolishly misinformed about the specifics of magic they're experimenting with) old mages.

Or to put it another way, handling lots of magic doesn't wear out most humans before the end of their normal lifespans, if they do it judiciously. It's the idiots who overload themselves by trying to handle magic beyond their capabilities, or create "super" spells beyond the usual level and school limits by juicing spells by drawing on lightning storms or magic items (intended for other magical purposes) as additional power sources that "scorch" or even "burn out" themselves.

So a human who is careful or plodding or "follows the rules" of taught magic can easily survive for a century or so, more if potions of longevity and vitality or other "fixing the body" magics are available...but they will then, if they want to go on living and have the means to do so, begin to seek a means of lengthening their existences (such as lichdom). A Chosen of Mystra, servitor of Mystra or Azuth (or Savras, or . . .) can last a thousand years or more because of their attunement to the Weave and assistance in their use of it to "fix" their slowly failing bodies.

Yet the aging is inescapably continuing, and is hastened slightly by handling magical energies (or hastened quickly and a lot by MIShandling energies; "overloading"), and eventually the spellcaster (wizard or sorcerer) will die . . . unless they alter their mortal state to something else (again, such as lichdom).

Sorry if I gave the impression that the wearing out is so rapid that only the young can hurl magic, and trade their youth and/or vigor and/or lifespans for doing so. Nuh-uh; it shouldn't happen that fast.

Wild Talents

- THO 14/1/13

Q: In my head, I have a rogue who was born with the ability to actually see things normally hidden without the use of a True Seeing spell, and interact with them as well. For me, these include creatures that are normally in the astral plane, whether they have to be summoned from an object, or just freshly

dead and on their way to crossing over. For the character I thought up, one of the things he constantly sees and interacts with is a blue spirit phoenix that's been helping him out as a rogue by showing him where to go, where traps are hidden, and where the target for theft is.

A: This is certainly possible in the Realms, because Ed has had several NPCs over the years (that we players know of), and some PCs that various people have played with Ed as DM, who have "wild talents" similar to the rogue you describe.

So sure, it's possible, it's something Ed goes in for, and it's certainly something that "fits" with, and works within, the Realms.

Incarnum system

- Ed 20/2/13

Yes, incarnum is certainly suitable for the Realms. I have always envisaged the Realms as having many, many systems of magic (including "wild talents" that eventually made it into the game as the sorcerer class, so-called wild magic, table magic, circle magic and spellcasting [both of which have also entered the rules, albeit in altered form from my originals], mantles, mythals, and so on; I created literally DOZENS of magic systems for the Realms). Just as I posited countless variant versions of the "known" spells.

The root idea is to keep things on a roleplaying level, so players won't be able to use their metagame knowledge to unerringly discern things about every magical foe because they've memorized the PHB and the DMG; they will be confronted with magic as something they have to observe on the spot, make guesses about, and act accordingly.

Yes, it's confusing, and yes, all gamers will need to tinker with rules to make sure things aren't unbalanced (or that they've considered what will happen when magical effect X runs full-tilt into magical effect Y), but the more the merrier, I say. Keeps things lively, spurs constant new plot ideas, and restores some of the mystery and therefore respect to magic (rather than the "See that fireball? He CAN'T be more than xth level, so his max hit points have to be Z or less, so HIT HIM, everybody!" thinking that so often replaces the "Try not to attract his notice; he's a WIZARD!" thinking that should prevail, more often).

So, yes, go right ahead and use incarnum. I have.

Wild Magic

Presence in Realms, Mystra

- Ed quoted by WR, Qs for Ed 8/3/11

Q: "How do you feel about wild mages, and how would Mystra feel about such casters, who deliberately play fast and loose with the Weave?"

A: Wild mages have indeed returned in the new Complete Arcane. I make no apologies for introducing wild and dead magic into the Realms in the first place, but when they became a 2nd Ed character class, Jeff Grubb and I both responded with "Uh-oh."

Why? Well, in short, like spellfire, wild mages can be a campaign-wrecker. Great fun for an encounter or two, but the implications of their presence are far-reaching, so "wild mages" are usually best confined to a rare handful of NPCs - - unless the campaign is a lone wandering PC wild mage adventuring one-on-

one with a DM. Consider the presence of wild mages with 'regular' arcane spellcasters or priests of any sort in the same party of adventurers. Many accidents waiting to happen. I'm not saying "don't go there," I'm saying 'consider carefully what the character of your D&D play may change into, before you embark on this.'

As for Mystra: The 'old' Mystra (LN) was less than pleased with this road of dweomercraeft because of the damage wild mages can do to fellow spellcasters, the Weave, and most importantly to the reputation of arcane spellcasters with others (and therefore, the general attitude [fear] of most intelligent beings of Faerun towards magic and its use).

The 'new' Mystra, however, was more than a bit of a rebel as a young mortal woman. Like the keeper of a china shop glumly observing an approaching bull, she's against wantonly destructive uses of magic, and her alignment gives her a distaste not just for destructive magic but also for deliberately cruel uses of magic. However, Mystra has seen much reckless use of magic by divine spellcasters serving other deities and by selfish mages of various stripes, noted that many of these uses have been both effective and have garnered much respect among the wider populace, and more or less shrugged.

She may be 'waiting and seeing,' and she (or Azuth) may well send some of their powerful servants (including Chosen) to curb individual wild mages who seem to turn wholly insane or who "throw their weight around too much." For now, however, the rare wild mages in the Realms seem free to follow the path they've chosen.

Witches

- THO 24/6/12

There are lots of witches in the Realms. However, many of them keep their true natures as hidden as possible, because of the negative views SOME local folk everywhere have towards witches. So when someone is referred to as a "witch" or a "hedge-wizard," they may or may not have any aptitude for the Art (casting magic). Some "witches" are local herbalists/Wild Talent healers or just crones who know a lot of lore ("wise women"), just as some "hedge-wizards" are really old retired adventurers or sages who have accumulated a few magic items which they use to defend themselves against robbers from time to time, and acquire a "don't mess with HIM; he knows magic!" reputation. In other words, with both "witch" and "hedge-wizard," there's a pejorative use of the word and the sloppy misuse of it by the ignorant and various more precise usages, and thye often get mixed up together.

Some witches are really sorceresses or incantatrixes, some are priestesses of Selûne or Eilistraee or Chauntea (or even Malar or Loviatar or Moander) who get labelled witches; and some are members of various nature (star worshippers, forest place-spirit worshippers) and beast cults. And yes, there are male and female witches of all of these sorts, despite my female terminology (though use of the word "witch" by others often arises from witnessing female leadership or female-wielded power).

Their "practices" vary depending on what they really are, and who (as people) they really are; nasty, or insane, or hurt by events in their lives, and their personal world-views and aims.

How they get treated depends a lot on their behaviour; someone who heals the sick or at least eases pain and death will be regarded far more favorably than someone who uses magic to bully or harm. The overall society tends to view "witches" with wariness, if not suspicion and fear, in part because some

clergy encourage such views because they see "witches" as "unregulated competitors" (i.e. spellcasters not closely regimented by an organized church). This view may or may not be true, of course, depending on the witch.

Almost all "witches" are to some extent Wild Talents, whose innate, born aptitudes for magic or herbalism or attunement to nature blossom or awaken as they grow up (sometimes triggered by a traumatic event). Most worship a widely-known deity or a locally-known "place spirit," or take counsel with druids, to acquire some guidance in the use and development of their powers, and in moral life decisions. (And some such guides grant or "turn on" increasing powers within a witch, in return for "doing the right things.")

Unpublished Spells

From Ed's Fiction

- THO 31/5/16

Every single spell, magic item, and magical process ("ritual") in Ed's Realms fiction gets written up by him in game terms, and added to the lore. It rarely gets published, and even more rarely still unaltered and in close enough proximity to the fiction appearance and with Ed's name still on it for the connection to be obvious...but it all gets written up in game terms. Ed doesn't deem matters "fair," otherwise.

Disassembly / Touch of Revelation

- Ed 29/10/10, in reply to query about a spell of Gond that could help a character (Kevin) escape capture

Is it your intent that Gond is aiding "Kevin"?

If so, I'd have that spell be "Touch of Revelation" (better known as "Disassembly"). It's one of my Gond magics from the original campaign that's never been published, and works as follows: all mechanical devices (however simple, but magic items are immune, as are normal items bearing a temporary dweomer because of spells previously cast on them) within 20-foot radius area of effect come apart. That is: the saddles, stirrups, bits and bridles, and armor fastenings of the Purple Dragons would all fall into their separate component parts. Spilling them out of their saddles, rapidly leaving them half-naked and encumbered by their heaps of fallen armor, and so on. Crossbows would be useless scattered parts, etc.

Here are the limitations: the caster mentally chooses the center of the area of effect, which he/she must be able to see, and that's no more distant than thirty feet plus ten feet per level PLUS ten feet per point of intelligence. The spell takes effect on EVERYTHING within that area of effect that fails an item saving throw (so the caster's friends could be affected, and this or that Purple Dragon could escape having his or her sword-scabbard fall from its belt and the buckle around his waist part from its leather, or even have all his armor stay on), and works within 1 round. After that, nothing else is affected. The caster and all of his/her gear (worn or carried items, and anything on a mount he/she is riding), if in the area of effect, are automatically immune unless the caster wants them not to be.

So the Purple Dragons could endure a wild minute of everything falling apart on them. It will be up to the PCs to take advantage by fleeing like fury (seizing the Dragons' horses and riding bareback, pell-mell) or attacking and trying to render the Dragons unconscious or incapacitated.

Note that once the spell "goes off," that's it; it doesn't keep working. So if a Dragon's harness of weapons falls off and a PC slugs him silly, the PC could use the various detached bits of leather belting to bind the Dragon, without the spell "undoing" those bindings - - once it takes effect, that's it.

- THO 30/10/10

A note from Ed re. the Touch of Revelation spell, two posts above: it doesn't disassemble items made entirely of the same substance (so a woven basket or garment won't be shredded or turned back into a heap of loose threads), but only affects assemblies of dissimilar materials (such as a belt of leather with a metal buckle; a "tied-fastening" belt all of leather would be unaffected). A whittled wooden "chain" would be unaffected, and ALL HOLY SYMBOLS are unaffected, regardless of whether or not they bear an enchantment.

- Ed 31/10/10, clarifying effect on chain shirts, swords

A chainmail shirt would remain intact, because it's all of the same material. (The links are all of hammered metal, not of metal and wood and glass . . .)

It depends on the sword's construction. Many swords have a blade with a "tang," around which hide strips are wrapped to give a grip, and onto the end of which a pommel is affixed. So the wrapping and pommel might well go, but that still leaves a usable blade (and if the wielder is grasping the blade at the time the spell takes effect, the wrappings would still stay wrapped around the tang [held there by the wielder's own grip], and not fly apart; they would be loose, causing slippage at every strike of the sword, but not necessarily rendering the sword unusable.

Writeup by Ashe

- Ashe, Qs for Ed 30/10/10 (non-canon)

And, for those of you using 3.5/Pathfinder rules, I figured I'd stat this out (please tell me if I'm off-base here, THO/Ed!)

Touch of Revelation/Disassembly

Transmutation

Level: Clr 2

Components: S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close

Target: All non-magical, mechanical/"made" items within 20' radius burst, centered on target.

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates (object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

All items withing the spell's area of effect come apart into their individual components. Rivets holding armor together fall out, stitching in leather/cloth pulls apart, crossbows and weapons fall into their individual pieces.

- Ed 31/10/10

The spell description is a LITTLE too sweeping: leather armor or clothing sewn together with leather thongs wouldn't be affected by the spell, only leather armor or clothing sewn together with a material other than leather. Otherwise, the spell writeup looks good. Each object has to make a save, so in many cases the spell won't be as wide-ranging as it sounds at first blush.

Crawling Subsumption

- THO 31/12/13

Q: I write hoping that Ed can spare a few words for the unnamed spell in Cloak of Shadows which the "Masked One" (Velsharoon?) used to "dissolve [] pe[ople] and subsume [their] powers". Having used this power before, the Masked One expected to gain the "memories and mastery" of the interloping Elminster had he succeeded striking El with it. The Masked One intended to use it on Hoar's avatar to seize Hoar's power had Ao not interfered.

A: It's called "Crawling Subsumption," and it won't work against a Chosen or anyone else attuned to the Weave who's conscious and able to access the Weave, as they can dissipate it. It requires the caster to have more mental "fierceness" and powers of concentration than the target, so it's unlikely that a low-level mage could use it to overcome a foe of much higher level.

MAGICAL ITEMS

Backstories

- Ed 24/6/12

The ONLY magic items in my home campaign Realms that didn't have backstories, the only "bog standard" items that were alike, if you will, were these:

- glowstones (the stones or gemstones that emitted a radiance when someone holding it willed them to do so, and controlled the intensity of the light; sometimes radiance could also be controlled, or was linked to the holder's emotions, but usually the hue was "set" in the original enchantment)
- daggers that had glowstone properties
- bladed weapons that had (only) blueshine, everbright, and eversharp properties, or had them plus one or both additional properties: steelsilence (wouldn't clang, ring, or shriek when landing after a fall, or while striking other metal) and invisibility (that "winked out" when they struck something, anyway)

Everything else had maker's marks, or an owner's rune, or a story or two attached to it, or funky side-powers, or additional powers that awakened only in specific locales or while within a certain distance of ANOTHER magic item . . . and many of them had limited or full sentience, with personalities (often cynical or sarcastic or both) to match. I want to have FUN with my magic. :}

Bags of Holding

- Ed 5/11/11

Being a "hard" rules question, this would be better put to staff designers at Wizards, but here's how I have always ruled as a DM:

If an observer is entirely inside a bag of holding, they can see all that it's holding, but 'properly' see (as in: look at and be able to examine, beyond just seeing overall shape and size) only things that they touch.

So if you already knew your bag contained six scrolls and a chamberpot, you could readily find them all and tell them apart, but NOT read or identify individual scrolls unless they were all contained in clearly different-shaped (NOT color-coded) containers - - or unless you touched and held them for direct examination.

Most folk in the Realms would (correctly) be wary of kindling a fire, casting a spell or discharging a magic item that "fires" anything (even if it's using a ray with surgical precision, in a non-violent manner), or waving about anything with a sharp point or edge (as opposed to CAREFULLY drawing a blade to carry out a small-scale scraping or slitting task) inside a bag of holding - - or activating/using anything that accesses extra-dimensional space while within a bag (e.g. opening one bag of holding that is inside another). None of these actions are likely to "end well." Items that gently alter temperature (not to extremes, and no involving open sparks or flames) can be used, but users are warned that air exchange within a bag of holding is SLOW, and that for practical purposes the inside of a bag of holding can/should be treated like a small, enclosed, apt to get stuffy room (so releases of dusts and gases can be bad).

As a DM, I like to cultivate thinking amongst players that bags of holding are delicate, apt-to-be-dangerous things, NOT handy "oh, I can shove an army in there, and they can cook, sharpen their blades, spar with each other, and wave their weapons around while doing warchants, until I need them to burst forth" carryalls.

Dhauzimmer the Bright Blade

- Ed 22/7/14, referring to sword in Eye of the Beholder 3 video game

Dhauzimmer the Bright Blade is canon (I created it, way back when, before the computer game, though its powers/properties got gussied up for the game), and still exists in the Realms. In the "home" Realms campaign, it vanished in a rosy glow manifestation of Lathander after a wielder died fighting for the greater glory of the Morninglord, and visions of it have appeared over several altars in temples of Lathander, suggesting it remains to be found by someone who explores in the right place and does the right (according to Lathander's lights, of course) things.

Halavar's universal pantograph

- THO 8/1/14, referring to item in "Netheril: Empire of Magic"

The pantograph itself IS an Ed creation, and that its use was fraught with problems. As in: the duplicating living things worked properly only with seeds, slime, and mold. Small and simple non-living things work best - - and the pantograph needs fuel. Usually copious amounts of rocks and mud, but more than once, someone tried to dispose of a dead body they wanted to just "vanish" by feeding it to the pantograph (which has very separate places for fuel and "things to be duplicated"). It was always a case of PR claims for the thing being far from operating reality.

Kiira & Selu'kira

- Ed 5/5/12

V: "When a kiira or selu'kiira is worn, does it automatically copy its bearer's memories, or is this a gradual process? If its gradual, how long does it tend to take?"

Ed: No, it's neither automatic nor swift. It is slow and random, being driven/fueled mostly by emotions of the bearer (longing, wistfulness, love, and rage being the strongest drivers). It can take years, depending on the level of mental activity, acuity, and depth of stored memories of the bearer. For your average "wise old wizard who's dabbled in spell creation or magic item creation or spell alteration," probably ten years for the stone to "record" everything.

A bearer who knows how to spur/goad/"aim" such a stone can successfully direct it to search for and acquire all memories of a particular person, place, or event, but NOT a concept or group of beings or sequence of events (to garner such a collection, they'll have to methodically direct the stone to recover and record memories and knowledge of this person, and then that one, and then the next one, one after another. The stone can't recover a memory of an entire adventuring band or wizards' cabal and then hunt for memories of all members, at once, on its own.

Recovery and recording can take much longer if a bearer has certain forms of insanity, or certain magical safeguards, or is of a particular nature (for example, the usual mental processes of mind flayers confuse the stones, and they literally record random and extremely truncated fragments of thought and memory images, not a coherent record . . . and Chosen of Mystra, Azuth, Savras, Lurue, and quite possibly other deities have by the nature of the divine influence they carry a natural defense against the stones - - that safeguard everything they want kept from a stone, in situations where unprotected minds would yield up memories [[e.g. "I order you not to think of the house you grew up in" would goad an unprotected mind into thinking of it, whereas a Chosen could without psionics easily achieve a "mind blank"]]. Psionics, properly wielded, can frustrate the recording abilities of a stone. The silver fire can "burn out" sections or all of a stone.)

V: "Did the kiira Elminster wore in 'Elminster in Myth Drannor' copy his memories? If so, were those memories available to subsequent wearers of the kiira? Or did his Chosen of Mystra abilities prevent his memories from being recorded?"

Ed: It copied a few of his memories, and yes, subsequent wearers could access those memories (and did, to ascertain that his claims as to how he acquired the kiira were true). His abilities as a Chosen certainly could have prevented memories from being recorded, or "fogged" those memories forever, irrevocably, by using silver fire to damage the stone, but that would only result from a deliberate use of those memories or an uncontrolled release of silver fire due to a spell battle or other calamity, not "by accident" or automatically. And no, Elminster's kiira didn't merrily record memories from his past, only memories he made while bearing the stone.

V: "The Ruler's Blade has three selu'kiira in 650 DR, (2 black, 1 red, representing presumably at least 5,000 years of combined memories). Does the Ruler's Blade selu'kiira store the memories of the elves who wielded it?"

Ed: It stores many of them.

V: "The Srinshree drew the blade and kept it in her possession for centuries. Some time ago, you (Ed) mentioned that your estimate of the Srinshree's power, in 2e/3e game terms, was around 54th level. Was that a result of her combined knowledge and power and that of the selu'kiira in Ar'Cor'Kerym, or did she attain that on her own."

Ed: Almost entirely on her own, though the selu'kiira and other items she possesses helped in minor ways.

V: "Is the Srinshree's knowledge stored in those selu'kiira now?"

Ed: NDA. Sorry.

V: "Finally, assuming, hypothetically, that some character could safely drain and absorb all the memories

from Ar'cor'kerym's selu'kiira, without going insane or be otherwise destroyed, feeblewitted, or impaired what would you his mage/high mage level to be in 2e/3e game terms. Conceptually (not in game terms) how would his power compare to your conception of Larloch, the Srinsee, Ioulaum, or the Terraseer?"

Ed: Hoo boy. First of all, no one knows how to "drain" anything like "all" the memories from a selu'kiira. No matter what powerful wizards or even deities my claim.

Yet for hypothetical purposes, let's assume one can.

Okay, nothing in memories gained or shared enables a character to wield the Art if they lack the aptitude. In other words, a random person who lacks the ability to cast spells doesn't gain it by gaining the memories of a spellcaster.

So we're also going to have to assume the character who safely drains and absorbs all the memories is an arcane spellcaster or has the innate "talent" to become one.

With all that assumed, the answer is still going to be -- wait for it -- "it depends." :}

Yep. People vary in their capabilities, development, and achievements. Have a track meet with individuals who start with the same training, diet, height, and weight -- and there will still be winners and losers, not endless ties. What the memories provide is SUPERB training (because it shifts from someone telling and showing you, to you directly sharing the experience of doing it yourself, so you gain experience and not just "book learning"), that could in theory boost you by twelve levels or more.

However. :}

You still have to "go out and do it," to mesh the memories of others with your own reflexes, deftness, mental focus, and powers of concentration. Much of the training of a mage is PRACTICE in concentration, for which there is no substitute, and PRACTICE in judgment, on the spot and within the instant, rather than retrieving and considering the accumulated judgments of others.

So calling on all of those gained memories doesn't make you an accomplished spellcaster of twelve levels higher than you were before swallowing the memories. For one thing, "ordering" those memories within your own mind for retrieval, also known as "subsuming," is going to take a fair while (one to three months, most likely). For another, most D&D players who have played in tournaments or at conventions or otherwise with more than a lone, fairly "set" group of players, are familiar with differences in, say, a fourth level wizard as played by one person, and the same character as run by another. One character "knows" their standard spells fairly well, and uses them. The other knows them in deeper detail, and can readily use them in unusual or innovative ways -- and dares to do so.

That corresponds to the difference between acquired-in-a-lump memories and truly "earned" levels.

So draining those stones DOESN'T equate to cleanly and instantly gaining 12 levels. It may, with study and preparation (for example, a carefully-planned assault or sequence of round-by-round attacks), allow the memory-gainer to properly cast and wield a spell or spells 6 or 7 levels above his former capability, and start to become experienced in the use of those spells. (In other words, I'd handle it this way if I were the DM, so it becomes a roleplayed-through series of attempts and gains on the part of the character.)

As for how such an augmented character would stack up against my conceptions of Larloch, the Srinsee, Ioulaum, or the Terraseer, I'm afraid those conceptions are currently NDA (and I can't even say why), but I would remind you that all of those characters have traveled widely and experimented with other systems of magic than just the Weave, and that at least two of those characters have experience with, and a special status in regard to, deities. They all have a LOT of world experience, so in a battle between the augmented character and any of them, a lot would depend on the circumstances of the

fray. If it's a "raw power" comparison, please bear in mind that we're comparing unknown capabilities on both sides of the comparison: we don't know if our augmented character can deftly handle all that they have so abruptly gained - - and we DON'T know the true powers and capabilities of any of those four named characters. We have various (conflicting) "rules snapshots" of their partial powers, and a lot of fan and designer and author opinions and depictions that are in turn subject to a lot of reinterpretation.

As creator of most of them, I "know" who's most powerful in a given situation, but I mean just that: a given situation. Hence my frequent use of "it depends." It's very difficult to reduce many variables to simple cut-and-dried answers or comparisons, without oversimplifying or leaving out things that matter. For example, how much has been written of the psionic capabilities of Larloch, the Srinsee, Ioulaum, or the Terraseer? They all have some psionic mastery. What do we really know of their spell rosters? They have all created new spells and modified existing spells. What do we really know of their "readiness" for battle? We "know" that Larloch surrounds himself with so many servitor liches that he can afford to sacrifice them like candy, but have we ever examined in detail the nature of his control, and the spells those liches can command and hurl, to say nothing of the tactics of battlefield cooperation they have developed and use? Here at Candlekeep, in seminars and panels at conventions, and at many other sites on the Net where gamers discuss in-game lore, there are often ferocious disagreements over such details. Most of them based on the opinions individual fans have of fictional characters, places, events, and things, extrapolated from scanty or even contradictory in-print lore.

All of which means I can't tell you how such an augmented character would stack up against Larloch, et al, other than the short answer of "probably rather poorly." Is the doctor specializing in the sciences of peak athlete development likely to be able to enter an Olympic event and beat all the trained-to-peak athletes competing in it?

"Roughly, from a lore (rather than mechanical) perspective, how long from your perspective would it take a highly gifted elf spellcaster to integrate that knowledge?"

Ed: It depends. :} Seriously, if the highly gifted elf spellcaster dropped almost everything else to concentrate on integrating that knowledge (including practice spellcastings): almost nothing useful for the first tenday, then a surge of mastery throughout the second tenday, then much slower accomplishments for the next three tendays, with the first of those three yielding the most results. In other words, three tendays of continuous concentration would result in mastery of most of it. Interruptions, or doing other things beyond mere subsistence living (eat, sleep, bathe, dress and defecate, cook, then repeat the cycle), will slow mastery - - and three accumulated tendays of work will yield FAR less results than three consecutive tendays. Full mastery depends on use; if the spellcaster spends a month in hard study and work, but then goes back to their former pursuits, additional mastery will come very slowly, but if they use their new knowledge/powers regularly, additional mastery will slowly and steadily be theirs.

Magic Item Creation Rules

- Ed 18/9/10, responding to query about how his home game has dealt with it over edition changes

In the "home" Realms campaign, which is pretty much 2nd edition by now, with some remaining 1st edition elements (remember: players and DM VOTE on all rules matters, the DM having a double vote but still easily outnumbered by the players if they vote as a bloc, or even any three players voting

together without any other opposition; in practise, we rarely vote, and usually just discuss and reach a decision by consensus), magic item creation, and any working with magic more complex than a simple casting of a "standard" (as per rulebook) spell or the scribing of a simple scroll GETS ROLEPLAYED THROUGH...which means that whether or not every last detail of the rules I created, that got published in VOLO'S GUIDE TO ALL THINGS MAGICAL, get followed, that PROCESS gets adhered to, with large amounts of game time elapsing, experimentation, spell ink formulae being concocted or decided upon (using from existing stores on hand, or that can be purchased or bartered for), and so on.

Changes in published rules really don't matter to my players, except inasmuch as they are provided with new ways of handling game situations that they may find attractive, and propose we adopt (bringing on a vote).

Again, in practise, this rarely happens. NOT because we're all brilliant game designers who can do better than the salaried staffers and contracted freelancers working for WotC, but because our style of gaming suits us (the group of "home" Realms players) and therefore we see little reason to change. We're creating ongoing stories together, not competing in convention D&D tournaments or advancing in the RPGA or any other organization; we're discovering the Realms together as our characters live out their lives in it.

Magic item creation should always take time (usually gobs of it!), being interesting and sometimes dangerous and involving that sense of awe and wonder at various points (prayers to Mystra, Oghma, Deneir, Savras, and Azuth, anyone?), and making arcane spellcasters be constantly on the lookout for potential ingredients and focal items, discarded or long-hidden magic and written spell lore, and so on. It makes a campaign so much richer (and sometimes enrages fighters and thieves who want hostile magic blown away RIGHT NOW by "their" wizard...who instead wants to watch and study it for awhile, first).

Magic Potions

Mixing with alcohol

- THO 26/6/10

I recall listening to a Gyga and Lakofka GenCon seminar in which they said alcohol ruined the magic in magical potions, on contact. Which in those days, with essentially only two loud voices in D&D (TSR and Judges Guild), was instant canon.

Magic Shops

- THO 1/7/14

What Faraer described in the other thread about shops is on the mark. Glowstones (everlasting lanterns that are basically handsized rocks that give off faerie fire glows) are common sales items, potions of healing and +1 daggers or everbright (non-rusting) tools are the pricey "prizes" in most shops, the bulk of wares are ingredients for spell inks and ritual concoctions and "home potions," and a common defense is: coffers with poisonous biting spiders [[or snakes]] inside, that have two locks and two "ways in" (i.e. obvious hinged lid with spider inside, or hidden sliding bottom that avoids the spider). More to come when Ed can, of course... Many magic shops mainly sell herbs and info: the proprietor knows the names and locations of magic "experts" to send you to...

- Faraer 23/1/08, "Magical Item Stores" thread

-

- Originally posted by Slaygrim
What is your feeling on having "Magical Item Stores"?
-
- They're a nonsense. Remember that the place in Leiber's 'The Bazaar of the Bizarre' is a joke based on incongruity. It's as incongruous in the Realms as it is in Lankhmar.
- quote:
-
- The players I game with like to ask (while in Waterdeep for instance) if they can stop by a store like the Xoblob Shop and see if there are magical items for sale. Would you allow this?
-
- Only if the characters had heard of the place, which is unlikely. It's a secret to discover and build plot threads around, not a well-known magic item source.
- quote:
-
- If so what kind of items would you say the store has?
-
- Plot hooks along the lines of Ed's "Treasures rare and wondrous" in Dragon #80, and whatever catches your fancy.
- quote:
-
- In addition, what about hiring a wizard to enchant your items? How difficult should this be, or should this even be an option?
-
- An option, yes, but it should be more difficult than finding magic the traditional way, unless you want to motivate your players to go shopping for commodities rather than adventuring, and focus on customizing their characters' arsenals over who they are and what they do. For instance, such an artificer wouldn't have all the needed components to hand: the PCs would have to find some of them.

Magic Sword Creation Prevalence

- THO 7/11/11

"Is magical sword crafting prevalent in the late 14th century DR reckoning, (before the 'Thayvian Magical Shoppes' from 3E arrive).

If so, who in the Realms is well known as a crafter and enchanter of magical swords and is willing to create bespoke magical swords in return for payment and/or quests?"

I can say this much, from consulting Ed's notes:

Probably not "prevalent," but there are known, public makers of magical swords, including Brian the Swordmaster in Waterdeep (who even has a city street named after him), and several in Amn, Calimshan, and the Tashalar - - not to mention dwarven makers in Mirabar.

Message Plates

- THO 11/1/11, referring to a magical plate which could record a message mentioned in "Cormyr" novel and AD&D comic

All I can recall Ed saying about these, other than their rarity, was that they simply CANNOT be used to communicate incantations, command words, spells . . . and any spell symbols, glyphs, explosive runes, runes in general, or the like. Attempts to "record" such things simply fail. If a message was prepared for a message plate that said, "When you reach the inner door, touch it and say "GREAT GOOGLY-MOONGLIES" to get it to open without blowing you up," (obviously, I'm inventing this example) what the plate would record would be:

"When you reach the inner door, touch it and say ". . . [silence] . . ." to get it to open without blowing you up."

Nether Scrolls

Reading Them

- Ed 4/6/11

Here are the most important game considerations regarding the Nether Scrolls (in addition to what the existing rulebooks/sourcebooks say):

It is impossible for mortal minds to encompass (remember) ALL of the information in the Scrolls. Yes, reading all of a scroll grants you a level. But a PC CANNOT read all 50 of them and thereby gain fifty levels. They will go mad long before that (usually around the middle of the eighth scroll, if strong-minded, but sometimes as soon as early in the fifth scroll). This can't be varied by waiting between scrolls, even for years, or by choosing only particular scrolls or in a particular order; it's a function of mental capacity and strength. The Chosen, with their constant exposure to flows of the Weave, and any being who has possessed and ridden the mind of another being for long, while that being was still alive, sentient, and "awake and aware," are mentally stronger than other creatures, but even they can't "stroll through the Scrolls."

So any character who claims to have done so is obviously mad. (And any player of a character asserting as much is deluded.) ;}

An insane being of sufficient mental drive and determination can "keep going" through the scrolls, IF the scrolls are immediately to hand and no searching, movement out of a particular place, or retrieval is necessary to "get the next scroll," but no level or other benefit will accrue, thanks to deepening madness. Later magical attempts to heal such insanity almost always succeed - - but at the cost of severely limiting that being's capacity to wield the Art, typically lowering the level they can ever after operate at, despite experience gained, to lower than when they first opened a Nether Scroll. In many cases, ALL capacity for the Art (magic and its wielding) is lost.

Only direct divine aid (i.e. a god of the right nature [[magical aptitude plus caring-for-mortals temperament]]) taking a mortal by the hand and "accompanying" them mentally through the scrolls) will prevent insanity. As one might expect, such aid is rare.

Mystra's Chosen

- Ed 4/6/11

Any of the Chosen of Mystra in the 1360s DR who desired to read the Nether Scrolls have done so. This includes Elminster and all of the Seven except Qilué.

However, all of the Chosen perused them rather as a lifelong resident of a city reads an account of that city written by a visitor: to see what others may think or see or believe of what is already familiar (expressed in another manner, and approached in other ways). Most of the Chosen thought of particular

interests they held, asked Mystra to tell them which scroll dealt with that, and read (only) that particular section, out of curiosity's sake. (In all cases, Mystra assisted them and their curiosity was satisfied.)

The Chosen, during the time of Mystra's Weave, have no real need to read the Scrolls. Unless they try to learn things magical beyond the Weave itself, or something that Mystra and Azuth forbade them to try to find out (very few topics, but among them: killing a divine being or a fellow Chosen and the implications; the essence of refining raw magical power or darkfire [[note: yes, this IS canon, thanks to Mystara and some early TSR design decisions; it fulfills the function of magically-shrouded "antimatter" in the Realms]] into silver fire; and inquiring too closely into the nature of the Sharn [[being as some Sharn are former Chosen, Magisters, others of Mystra's servitors, or other beings Mystra and Azuth aided in "hiding" in Sharn form indefinitely or permanently]]), they can learn what they need to know through their own research, or observation, or through the Weave, or by asking Azuth or Mystra or fellow Chosen directly (there's no compulsion on any of those sources for obedient direct answering, mind you; in many matters, Azuth and Mystra believe that "learning things yourself" is the best way, because it makes their Chosen wiser and stronger than just being told answers).

Not Linked to the Weave

- Ed 4/6/11

Note: the Nether Scrolls are not part of the Weave or linked to it. Mystra IS the Weave, and the Weave was the most flexible and accessible to most mortals system of accessing the natural powers of the world; in other words, it was the most popular system of magic but not the only system of magic; after Mystra's fall, a new and different but superficially similar (because its developers so often desired to replicate identical or very similar magical effects) Weave developed, which is what pertains at the time of the Year of the Ageless One. However, the Nether Scrolls do store so much magical knowledge that they can be seen as a "backup" copy of the Art, in case all Art is sundered or all its practitioners eliminated. As both Azuth and Mystra "worked with" the Scrolls in private, it is highly likely that they bonded themselves to particular scrolls, and so can eventually "come back" from utter destruction (probably as past versions of themselves, just as Manshoon's awakened clones are copies of his younger selves), through some as-yet-unknown-to-mortals process.

Other Readers

- Ed 5/6/11

Q: "... when Ecamane Truesilver studied the Quess'Ar'Teranthvar in Windsong Tower (my copy of GHotR places it in 580 DR), reportedly a complete set of fifty scrolls (all five chapters), which chapters of the scrolls did he study?"

Ed: All of them. He had Azuth assisting him in a complete walkthrough. Keeping him from insanity and overload, but leaving him like your average university student cramming through a difficult course: read everything, understood most of it - - but a year later, only a few "high points" stuck in his memory. The lasting benefits were breakthrough insights regarding those high points, and a half-remembered "ah, THIS way will probably work better . . . I seem to remember . . ." for the rest of it, when doing magical innovation.

Q: "He spent ten months studying them and had his hair "aged white" from the magic and wisdom gained, but unless he had divine aid, he would have gone quite insane, no?"

Ed: Yes. Without divine aid, he would have gone quite insane. (For most mages, drooling, barking, wild behavior OBVIOUSLY insane. A rare few can still function, hiding their insanity from others for long periods - - and they of course become the most dangerous.)

Q: "Additionally, it was mentioned that with the assistance from a deity, all the Nether Scrolls could be "walked through" by an individual, and that while such aid was rare, it is not unheard of. Can Ed say anything about individuals who have read the entire set of Nether Scrolls? If the Chosen haven't, then who has? I would imagine that Larloch or Ioulaum might be among that number, for example, but can't really think of any others off the top of my head other than particular Netherese Archwizards way back when Netheril was at its height (Karsus?)."

Ed: Larloch and Ioulaum have read the entire Nether Scrolls. Both are those 'most dangerous' functioning insane sorts I mentioned (rare, yes). For that matter, Elminster is another dangerous functioning insane individual.

Karsus has NOT read the entire Nether Scrolls. He is driven by his overweening pride/arrogance, to such an extent that if he hasn't created it on his own, it's worth nothing. If someone else has devised a clever magic, he must duplicate it ON HIS OWN (and, in his mind by definition do it 'better'). He has perused them on several occasions when 'stuck' with something he couldn't intuit or understand or develop, but is suspicious of them because he views them as an attempt by the Sarrukh to control the minds of those who read them (yes, he believes the Scrolls contain sarrukh sentience - - and may very well be correct in this belief). Karsus is all about "I am the best ever, I do it myself, I am self-made and supreme and this validates my dominance." (He's wrong, but nothing shakes this belief . . . and now, trapped forever at the moment of his death, nothing ever will. He knows he's failed, but can't move beyond the moment of that realization.)

More Questions

- Ed 7/6/11

"Would it be plausible to guess that the key to open them would be a deity such as Azuth or Mystra (or Savras, or even Velsharoon post-ascension?) showing them to you? Or can they be opened without divine aid, and the key is just something that Azuth showed Ecamane when he helped him through the Scrolls?"

Ed: It would be plausible to guess that, but no, they CAN be opened without divine aid. Azuth didn't need the key, so Ecamane doesn't even know what the key is, but there IS a key (whose form and use I'm going to leave mysterious - - so if you have a pressing DMing need to feature it, make something up, because it HAS on occasion taken different forms).

"Additionally, though it supposedly takes as much as an entire month to review a single scroll of the fifty, Ecamane managed (with Azuth helping) to get through them all in just ten months (almost five scrolls each month!). Was this also a result of Azuth taking him through them, and the increased speed leading to a "cramming" effect? Would taking more time to study them at a slower pace have led to a greater ability to retain the knowledge gained from the Scrolls?"

Ed: Yes, the speed was due to Azuth's assistance, just as Ecamane getting through them all and staying sane was. Studying them at a slower pace WOULD have led to a greater ability to retain knowledge, but

it would have been less knowledge before creeping insanity made retention and proper memorization chancy/dangerously unreliable.

"Second, do there exist ways of artificially increasing your, I suppose, "capacity" to handle the information contained within the Scrolls, but without divine aid (so to speak)?"

Ed: Yes. ;}

"This relates to another artifact that I noticed when perusing Serpent Kingdoms, the Naja Fountain. It enhances the "spellcasting power" (for lack of a better term - 3rd edition game rules have it as a permanent +3 bonus to the arcane spellcaster's caster level for spells) of any wizard, sorcerer or similar who bathes in it, presumably by altering and improving their ability to wield magic to a greater level. Is this an example of increasing mental capacity, or would it actually be like the Scrolls in that if you've gone through the Naja Fountain, then you're going to be pushed closer to overload and your ability to comprehend the power/knowledge in the Nether Scrolls would actually decrease?"

Ed: Yes, this is one example of increasing capacity by "artificial" means. There are several others (most of them items, and at least one of them a process), but for now I'm going to leave them mysterious/up to a DM.

"Did the Sarrukh ever manage to gain a complete understanding of the information within the Scrolls? It was the Bae'tith who first wrote them, though given what Ed has mentioned, I'd also guess that they had some help along the way (either asked for or given without their knowledge), contributing to the end result, perhaps without their even being aware of it until they went back over the finished product."

Ed: Bingo. Aid given unaware, indeed. Collectively, the Sarrukh probably gained a working (rather than complete, akin to the guy who can do simple repairs and maintenance on his car, and diagnose problems pretty well, without being any sort of skilled mechanic) understanding of the lore contained in the scrolls . . . but that doesn't mean that INDIVIDUAL Sarrukh were walking geniuses (or even sages) of Art. They were more like a university faculty: put their experience, research, reasoning, and learning together, and you have an impressive total. Consider them in isolation, singly . . . not so much.

"Lastly, the Quess'Ar'Teranthvar is in the form of a tree. With the normal Scrolls, the letters appear in silvery writing that swims and moves to form each "page" of the text. How does the Quess'Ar'Teranthvar differ from the scrolls in the way that it imparts its knowledge? Where does the "writing" appear from?"

Ed: The writing (in long, swirling, smoothly-curved characters) appears as glows on the bark of the tree, radiances that arise and move just as the scroll writing "swims." It fades and curls into random, abstract swirls when the reader's attention turns away from beholding the trunk of the tree (and it doesn't "write itself" up boughs, onto leaves, around the back of the trunk, or in other ways make itself difficult to read or force the reader to move or change position to read all of a "page;" it's more like a page is projected out of the tree onto its bark on one side, in a readily defined area).

Weaveshear (sword)

- THO 29/12/10, responding to query about the sword of Erevis Cale fitting Alaundo's prophecy

Red Walker: In Alaundo's spellfire phrophecy, he mentions spellfire shall arise , but also mentions a Sword of Power that will cleave shadow and evil and master Art.

Ashe Ravenheart: That sounds an awful lot like Weaveshear, the sword wielded by Erevis Cale in the Twilight War trilogy.

THO: It does, doesn't it? (Hint, hint...)

As for "mastered art" and a certain blade, that obviously means controlling or overriding or destroying powerful magic . . . but as to what magic, in which circumstances, and how, that is NDA right now, because it hasn't happened yet, but very well might, before the reading eyes of Realms fans/scribes. Which is more or less all I can say, thus far.

Wigs & Merkins (Enchanted)

- THO 11/8/10

Q: "Are there enchanted wigs with mystical powers?"

A: This much I can say, without Ed's help: Yes indeed. One of my characters owns one. (Head wig, not merkin, though I can confirm that both sorts of wigs exist in enchanted versions in the Realms. How can I confirm? Ah, that would be telling, wouldn't it?

MEDICINE & HEALTH

Achilles Tendon

- THO 6/8/12

The Achilles tendon is known as a "garruth" to healers, and a "backblade" to the general public, and slicing it deliberately is "backblading" someone (as opposed to "hamstringing" them at the back of the knee).

Allergies

- Ed 4/10/11

Some allergic reactions are seen as "touches of the gods" (and even retribution by a god), some are seen as curses or other "dark magic" cast by enemies, some are seen as signs particular monsters (known in the area, at least in legend) are returning and are close/have touched the afflicted, some are seen as diseases, some as unintended contact with "fell plants" or small defensive magics left active by the fey or other "unseen place spirits," and so on.

The short answer is: what the reaction is seen as being varies widely by location, person afflicted, who's seeing that affliction, the past history of a family or group the afflicted belongs to, what else may have recently happened locally (temple catching fire, spell-duel between mages, etc.), and other factors.

And yes, there are magical diseases. I've revealed some in the past, but a lot more are NDA right now due to future publishing plans.

Allergy to Magic

- Ed 4/10/11

There are MANY cases of individuals being allergic to magic, but none of them, so far as I know, have been allergic to ALL magic. Rather, they are allergic to specific types of spells (e.g. translocation) or to

magics in combination with something (drunkenness, proximity to particular plants, etc.), or to combinations of magic (e.g. protective magic cast on person, they are then struck by another spell, and the combination causes a reaction). When such things are clearly the result of magical contact, they are sometimes called "the curse of Mystra" or "the disfavor of Mystra," but it's often a mystery as to how the "cursed" person earned that curse/disfavor - particularly as such reactions tend to be rare, and sometimes one-time things (i.e. the same person doesn't react in the same way again, because the combination of magics, or the circumstances of magical exposure [proximity, strength of effect, etc.] aren't precisely the same as the earlier incident).

Anti-Contraceptives

- THO 23/5/10

There are herbal, alchemical, and magical "anti-contraceptives," but I've never known the details.

Asthma / Lackwind

- Ed 3/10/11

In this reply, I have carefully avoided all real, real-world medicine. What follows is all pure fantasy, and applies to the Realms only . . .

Asthma has many local names in the Realms ("roren" is an old, widespread but now nigh-forgotten one, that's still used in Rashemen, Aglarond, Impiltur, and the ?Great Dale), but is most often and most widely called "lackwind" these days.

The treatments are varied, from curative clerical spells to cantrips that oxygenate the blood without curing the condition, to local wisefolk remedies like inhaling the steam from a kettle (using clothing to hood the head so moisture can't escape), to three or four herbal remedies that work (and dozens more that don't). New remedies are discovered from time to time by herbalists, druids, alchemists, and priests (though monastery and temple "cures" tend to be closely-guarded secrets for as long as possible, rather than swiftly shared and spreading).

The effective remedies consist of:

1. Chewing the prickly, dark leaves and/or tiny yellow-white "flag" or "wisp" flower of a certain wild Heartlands and more northerly-growing weed (called "hammerwind" for its effects), that's abundant but short and often overlooked (the darker-than-most-plants green leaves are the best way to spot it). They cause the lungs to pump rapidly, but the heart rate is also increased, skin goes bright red in the face, breast, and shoulders, and eyes sometimes bulge. The condition is alleviated for 1d2 days, but immediately after ingestion (and the first made rush of lung-pumping), the asthmatic may feel worn out and even weary-clumsy ("stumbling or fumbling exhaustion").

2. Putting a single leaf of some little-known mountain flower on the tongue of the asthmatic. This works fast, but brings on euphoria (and for some, orgasm). The leaf must have been treated properly to be effective, and the plant and this "proper treatment" is apparently plentiful but little-known (except among some northern Harpers and dwarves, and the Witches of Rashemen). The leaves are small and almost perfectly triangular, and some say the plant is called "arritches," while others refer to it as "storndown."

3. The green, unripe "flower" (it actually looks very much like the harvested fruit of the hops plant) of the wild tortendrill vine, crushed and brewed into a tea and drunk, gently and slowly alleviates asthma symptoms. It may take an hour or more for breathing to be comfortable, but if the tea is sipped (even cold and old), relief can last for days, even during exertion such as travel and moderate lifting and climbing.

4. "Auglauken" (pronounced "Aww-GLOCK-enn") is the dried berry of a certain wild vine, that goes so brown and hard that some folk believe it is a nut. (Think: ovoid and smooth unpopped popcorn kernels.) This vine literally grows all over the known surface Realms that isn't desert or frozen, but doesn't produce berries all that often. Ingesting a raw, moist auglauken berry (enclosed in a slender pod often unnoticed among the side-tendrils and leaves of the vine) is as effective as hammerwind, but without some of the flushing/blushing and fierceness of the lung-pumping . . . and eating a dried one brings a gentle, lasting relief (stretching for most of the waking hours of a typical day). As a result, these berries are a staple of most healers' and herbalists' shops, and are not inexpensive (1 sp a berry in cities, 2 or 3 berries for 1 sp in rural areas where many folk know where and how they can be harvested). They travel and last well (often for years) if kept from the damp, or sundried within a day or two of every time they do get wet.

Bedsore

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 22/4/10, quoting Ed session

I'd say prevention of them is fairly common knowledge in the Realms, among "ordinary folk," because years ago I watched a charity Realms game at GenCon DM'd by Ed, where the PCs encountered a farming family in their cottage, and they were turning a bedridden elderly relative to prevent bedsores.

Birth Defects

Divine magic healing

- THO 18/5/10, replying to Zandilar comment that perhaps congenital blindness could be cured with the Cure Blindness spell, but it would have to be specific like that

I concur with Zandilar re. curing conditions a character was born with, IF the right spell (or the right wording of the incantation) is used. This comes from Realmsplay experience with Ed as DM.

Cancer

- Ed 13/3/14

Ed says that yes, there is indeed cancer in the Realms.

Dentistry

- THO 9/10/12

People's teeth fare fairly well, thanks to, yes, herbs and magic (and temple dental services; providing this is a sideline business in many temples).

Drug Use

- THO 23/12/10

Ed has compiled a LOT of lore on real-world and imaginary drugs/herbal remedies/magical concoctions for medicinal and mood-altering purposes over the years, and very little of this has ever been published because of TSR's Code of Ethics and Wizards applying the same cautious approach to anything that might be construed as support/encouragement for drug use.

These threads here at the Keep contain hints (most recently, mentions of temple rituals that involve such substances, and temple healing ditto) of some of the lore...and most of the rest of it can't be posted here because it has been requested and paid for by the publishers, so they own it (and can choose not to release it).

Ed has also detailed many poisons (concocted) and venoms (natural creature poisons, that can be "captured" and used by others), some of which (the imaginary ones) have been partially published.

Female Genitalia

Euphemisms

- THO 7/8/12

The polite-in-all-company euphemism for the female genitalia: "the Heartland."

As in (from Realms plays we Knights have "seen" performed in play), "Imperil not my Heartland, my lord" or "I must confess that when he smiles, my Heartland stands interested."

Obviously not something likely to appear in official in-print Realmslore, but widespread and VERY mild/socially acceptable. A "dignified naughty" expression, if you will.

Genetic Disorders

- Ed 30/12/13, responding to query about disorders due to crossbreeding between races

In the Realms, it seems as if life overrules non-life, or to put it another way: when races interbreed, it's far more likely that there will be successful issue versus infertility or consistent stillbirths. So there are lots of "half-something" individuals alive in the Realms.

Of these, half-elves and half-orcs are numerous and often "breed true" down later generations to produce more half-elves and half-orcs, not just offspring that are visually very similar to one parent race or the other. That makes them well-known sub-races to all.

Yet there are many, many crossbreeds, and few or no commentators labeling specific individuals among those crossbreeds as "different in this precise way because of their heritage" (as opposed to racial purists who say simpler things like "Argrath is not a pure orc! So Argrath is LESS than us!").

In other words, few individuals think about inherited conditions except as defects, and fewer still think hard about the details of such conditions. Genetics is well-known (as "breeding") because many livestock owners deliberately breed their horses or oxen or boar or cattle deliberately to get more of this trait and less of that one, and although anyone who thinks about such matters for a few moments will grasp that humans and other intelligent creatures can be selectively bred, too, and in some cases "should be" (to guard a royal lineage from interbreeding but at the same time keep it "of the realm" and not "weakened or tainted" by undesirable bloodlines), most intelligent beings balk at the notion of letting most unions and births be determined by some breeder or other, as opposed to family, clan, local, friend, or temple influences.

All of which means understanding of genetic disorders may be very limited, hotly disputed, and poorly understood.

None of which makes them not real.

The published Realms reflects real-world considerations of wide commercial acceptability and even desirability, so published coverage of such matters as genetic disorders will probably remain limited. So as to avoid upsetting some gaming consumers, while at the same time affording individual DMs (and fiction writers) the maximum freedom to create traits or outcomes that best suit their stories at hand. Drow crossbreeds (with other sorts of elves or with humans, to identify the most likely couplings) do have a genetic disorder involving skin conditions and vision problems related to prevalent daily exposure to sunlight, just as their drow heritage will tend to show up in their pointed ears, fine features, agile and slender build, and skin that won't be coal-black or purple-black, but that will hint at parentage that had such skin hues.

The notorious trader in Scornubel who deals in bladed weapons of all sorts (weapons that conceal their blades a specialty) and blade poisons, Murlaerlath Jethurrla, has pale white skin with a black tinge "beneath" it. His pointed ears, aquiline nose, and high cheekbones say "elf" to anyone who sees him, and many suspect him (correctly) of having drow blood in his ancestry. He stays indoors in gloomy chambers by day, and is out on the streets only by night, because bright sunlight hurts his eyes. He had a drow mother (an escaped slave, not a matron of Lolth) and a moon elf father.

His vision problems (and a "skin wasting" or cracking and shriveling of the dermis that we in the modern real world would call a skin cancer, that afflicts many drow crossbreeds who are forced into frequent contact with full sunlight) are prevalent enough to be genetic disorders to any real-world observer who could see enough of the Realms to form any proper judgment.

Yet general acceptance of an outcome can be just that: general acceptance of it, rather than goading anyone into a search for "cures" or treatments. Often this is bolstered by cultural or religious disapproval ("That's what the gods do to fools who breed with drow" or "That there is Lolth's curse on anyone trying to breed their way out of her clutches.")

More often, genetic disorders aren't so obvious. For instance, there's a reason dwarf-human, dwarf-elf, and dwarf-orc crossbreeds are so rare as to be almost underheard-of. The reason is that the disorders tend to kill potential offspring very early on in the womb, so the material that would have become a child is reabsorbed and life for the parents goes on without issue. The same disorders cause the hardest dwarf-human and dwarf-orc breedings—that is, the ones that do survive—to grow to human or orc height (so that although they almost always inherit dwarven hirsuteness, and love and "feel for" stone [and lust for trade-metals and gems], they can pass for a member of their non-dwarf heritage race).

All of which means that treatment for a disorder is rare indeed, and is almost always in the form of hired arcane spells applied to individuals who can afford them, as treatments. Usually this isn't for "my disorder" but rather "to fight my curse," the origins of the curse being unknown or misunderstood as an attack by a foe.

All of which leaves a DM or storyteller free to introduce exceptions, throwbacks, and new understanding (or misunderstandings) to the Realms or their version of it. I want to tread carefully here not because genetic disorders are a ticklish subject for me, but because I'm wary of pruning away possibilities and options too enthusiastically, just to add to lore.

Herbs (also see Plants)

Causing Defects, Innovations

- Ed 30/7/10, responding to query about herbs for increasing pregnancy chances causing potential defects

There are no "guarantees" about anything medical or medicinal in the Realms, by anyone who's sane, unless they're deliberately setting out to deceive. None of the herbal remedies and treatments popular from the 1320s onward in the Realms (the mapped and "known" part of the Realms explored thus far in the published canon, at least) are widely suspected of causing mutations or defects; there are some older herbal concoctions that did, or were thought to, and they fell out of favour as a result. As magical experimentation (under the urging of Mystra's clergy, Chosen, and other servitors) has picked up in the 1300s, purely "by hand" herblore experimentation has waned, and as a result no new "big innovations" in herblore have become known from the 1320s onwards (that's not saying there haven't been any, rather that they haven't become widely known, with all the attention on either magic spells and potions, or "philtres" and other drinkable medicines peddled by the caravan merchants (most of which would in real-world terms be deemed "snake oil" more than truly efficacious).

Menstrual Cycle

- Qs for EG, sometime in 2006 (related by WR 11/2/16)

Menstrual cycles and their treatment. Social and practical. Social: Selune, Chauntea, and many other deities keep "closeness to natural cycles" strong in the minds of all Faerûnians; there's no religious or societal stigma about menstruation. Women aren't regarded as "unclean" at any time, menses are no bar to sexual activity, and any embarrassment is purely of the "Oh, now I've stained a nice [or borrowed] garment" variety. Menstruation is never called "the curse" or anything of the sort in the Realms; in Faerûn, it's "lifeblood" or "moonblood" or even "Selune's kiss" or "under the moon" (as in: "I'm under the moon just now, so pack extra redcloths").

Time for the practical. Please see my reply on page 21 of my 2004 replies, here at Candlekeep, for information about undergarments (specifically clouts and redcloths).

Blood-stained "redcloths" will be washed or at least rinsed out daily, often in scented water. To avoid being tracked by beasts following scent, wilderland-travelling women often discard (by burying them) redcloths as they go; if they can find dew or any sort of water in which to wash the cloths (including stagnant swampwater), they'll do so, often dousing the cloth with perfume beforehand to minimize any odours the water causes. The most popular "travelling wash" for redcloths (practiced, for example, by women stopping at a rustic inn) is cheap wine followed by rinsing with rainbarrel water. Please bear in mind that there's no embarrassment or stigma attached to this, even for young females experiencing their first menses; no one will be trying to do this "on the sly," and inns high and low will anticipate this need and have facilities for it (that's why there are ewers of water sitting in washbasins in most inn rooms, AND spare washbasins underneath beds, alongside the chamberpots). Most inns and taverns do a busy daily trade in buying new redcloths and disposing of old ones (they become scrubbing rags).

Priest medical training

- THO 25/9/13

Almost all organized faiths in the Realms make sure their priests get basic "physicking" training (herbs, poultices, healing and soothing draughts, "meatball" surgery and wound treatment), both for maintaining the health of the clergy and faithful without needing to go to other faiths, and as a source of minor temple income/goodwill-earning. And yes, there are common, widely-known plant preparation medicines and poultices for widespread afflictions (rashes, infections, minor illnesses, allergic reactions to insect stings, etc.)...but I'll leave it to Ed to tackle a proper reply re. this.

Tetanus / Lockjaw

- THO 20/6/10

Yes, there's lockjaw in the Realms. It's rarer than in our real world, though.

Water & Sloshtomach

- Ed 31/3/10, responding to query about reference in "Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue – Wines and Ales" that mentions water consumption is dangerous to health outside Vaasa, the High Moor, and Evermeet

"Sloshtomach" is a bloated, faintly nauseous condition of long-term and cumulative water retention, wherein repeated drinking of water makes the stomach increasingly distended. The term is "dwarven Common;" that is, created by dwarves and added to the Common tongue through persistent usage. The condition is quite rare, and is caused by tiny mold spores in some water sources that affect no creature native to the area (they grow up "used to them"), no one who drinks boiled water or water that's been carried in leather skins or oaken barrels for long (the spores react with wood and hide enough to neutralize these effects), and no one who consumes oils of any sort (including those still in raw vegetables) at the same occasion of consumption. Even among those who aren't protected by any of these factors, sloshtomach occurs rarely - - but dwarves and gnomes ARE more susceptible to it than other races, and consuming certain alcoholic drinkables seem to exasperate it, so lots of dwarves "fear" it more than they really should, and tend to avoid drinking water whenever they can have treated water (ale) or stronger liquor instead. (Hence the mention of a widely-shared dwarven attitude in AURORA's.) It should be noted that this is almost never debilitating or seriously damaging; it affects mood more than anything else, as a dwarf who feels vaguely ill also tends to be more than vaguely irritated with the world around.

META

Canonicity of "Baldur's Gate", "Neverwinter Nights"

- The Sage, Qs for Ed 29/6/10

WotC lists the novels as taking place in 1368 DR and 1369 DR. Jim Butler has also told us the events are canon in 2000 on the FR Mailing List. And finally, Rich Baker, Ed Greenwood and Ed Bonny have all confirmed this as well. For me, that grounds the novels, and only the novels, into the firm bedrock of Realms canon.

Re: the subject of FR canon for the Neverwinter Nights games... Undrentide was marked on one of the maps in Grand History. And the Wailing Death is canon now, given it's reference in Grand History also, under the 1372 DR entry. I don't recall there being an entry for "Hordes of the Underdark." And I remember Brian James suggesting that may be due to the ending of the expansion being difficult to canonise.

Current Home Campaign Activity

- THO 11/7/10

Ed's "home" campaign doesn't see all that much action, any more. His players all have busy professional lives and are scattered all over the globe at times. For over a decade, the pattern was: New Year's Day, a

full day of Realmsplay, and the Civic Holiday weekend in Canada (first August weekend) up at Ed's cottage: several days of intense game play, with at least two Realmsplay sessions wrapped around all sorts of favourite games, from Mille Bornes and Arkham Horror to Empires of the Middle Ages and Squad Leader. However, since GenCon's move to Indy, increasingly it (or its "travel shadow") has wandered into that weekend.

However, we all still "play" by e-mail with Ed, when the spirit moves us. We don't really use a ruleset, these days (though we began with 1e, then adopted 2e by vote, and have over the years adopted various new classes, new rules, and events [the Time of Troubles we nixed, for "our" campaign], all by voting). For us, it's all about roleplaying, not competitive gaming; we're sharing in a grand, intricate [many subplots], endless unfolding story, not gaming to improve our characters or to "beat" anyone (either monsters or other PCs).

I have played several characters, and, yes, there have been deaths (and raisings). As for memorable, crowning, or funniest, I've answered all of those before, here at the Keep, and have found that my answers change, over time, and it gets increasingly difficult to single out lone examples of such highpoints; it's becoming an ever-richer tapestry. I've been playing with Ed now for thirty-two years straight (however sporadically), after all. Let me think a bit, and see if my answers have changed enough to post new "funniest," most memorable, and so on . . .

D&D System used by Ed

- Ed 14/8/11

My "stated preference" for AD&D second edition rules for the 'home campaign' comes from my players and I voting on what rules to use. Frankly, we all prefer roleplaying to rollplaying, and so rules hardly matter; we moved from 1st to 2nd and then just settled there, rather than ever debating this edition over that one.

Example Ed Session Notes

- Ed 10/8/05, quoted by crazedventurers 8/11/11

For example, to select a time at random, let's pick a particular play session not long after the Knights are settled in Shadowdale, and the senior Knights have foisted the lordship onto Mourngrym. (Cormyr hasn't yet sent Shaerl Rowanmantle to Shadowdale.) A quick glance at my notes tells me the following subplots were unfolding at the beginning of that play session (which began with my players roleplaying a Knights' council-of-war, in which they sat down together to decide what they wanted to do):

Three envoys to the Tower of Ashaba:

1. Merchant coster from Hillsfar wants free land to establish waystables with warehousing (walled compound), pointing out employment and tax income Shadowdale will get; Maalthiir intends to use it for spying, of course, subverting local youths and oldsters with drugs (but doesn't know one of his envoys is a Zhent agent).

2. Envoy from the Church of Torm (sent from the temple in Tantras), asking for free dale land and perpetual immunity from taxes, in return for establishing a large temple on the granted land, and agreeing to provide therein shelter (with granaries), arms, and training in vigilance and war to all folk of Shadowdale, and establishing temple patrols to watch for attacking forces approaching Shadowdale.

Will further offer to provide caravans with armed escorts from Shadowdale to next settlement on every route, if Mournngrym seems unwilling.

3. Envoy from the Crown of Cormyr to Mournngrym, asking permission to establish an official trade factor (agent) of Cormyr in the dale (office and residence), entirely at Cormyr's own expense (staffed in part by War Wizards; envoys also War Wizards). Legitimate offer, but trading office would also become local spying base for Cormyr; envoys making same offer to Mistedale at same time.

Lanseril seeking senior druid dwelling somewhere nigh Semberholme, for guidance, training, and to share information about spreading monsters.

Individual merchants coming to town to buy some of the empty cottages of folk killed in the last Zhent attack, and establish themselves away from the feuds and expense of Sembia; are really sponsored spies of ambitious Sembian merchants seeking to establish way-caches for drugs, stolen goods, and kidnapped rivals well outside Sembia yet within reach of Sembia.

One of these (Imbur Taerazalan) works for the Gemfingers merchant cabal of Ordulin, who intend to covertly conquer the Dales one by one, establishing their own "shadow territories" that can be "sold off" to Sembia (surrendered to become officially part of Sembia, in return for large cash payments).

Jhessail trying to decipher the coded pages of the Dark Tome without Elminster discovering she has it (assisted by Islif and the Harper mage Aundas [a War Wizard spy], who are trying to keep her alive; some of the runes are magical traps, others are gates to strongholds all across the Realms, now disused and dangerous monster- and undead-roamed "dungeons").

The cabal of local Shadowdale merchants running the mill (since the Knights uncovered and slew the Zhent agents who formerly ran it) have begun to die, one after another, under mysterious circumstances. The Knights are trying to protect them and discover who's doing the killings. The Zhents, of course, but: by means of magic from afar? Agents hidden in Shadowdale or [planted years ago] among the folk of Shadowdale, attacking the merchants by stealth, when they can catch one alone? Or is one of the cabal of merchants doing the killings? [yes!] If so, just to gain control of the mill himself, or become the senior and dominant member if Mournngrym "appoints" replacement merchants? [no] Or is the killer an undercover Zhent agent? [yes]

The mysterious "noble lady of Tethyr" who's just arrived in town with large entourage and tried to rent the disused farm north of Fox Ridge for "a tenday of relaxation" (and came to Mournngrym's attention because of her steward's attempts to arrange this accommodation, and so got invited to evenfeast at the Tower so he could give her the once-over) isn't a noble lady of Tethyr at all, but rather a noblewoman of Waterdeep AND a former flame of Mournngrym's, sent here by her parents to learn if Mournngrym is the Amcathra who knows where the best friend of his youth [this lady's oldest brother] hid the family magic before he died (he died in Mournngrym's arms, while off on an "adventure"). She'll try to seduce Mournngrym, and if she likes it in Shadowdale, ride the situation for all she's worth, sending the information she gains back to her kin via her steward.

The visiting dancer Florin sought to seduce so as to get alone to (with Jhessail's help) mind-ream, thinking her a Zhent agent, who turned out instead to be a doppelganger or some other sort of tentacled shapechanger (ere she got away), has openly returned to the dale with her troupe. But is this the "real" dancer, having nothing to do with the shapechanger? [yes] Or the shapechanger back again, for a rematch? [no: the shapechanger has already returned to Shadowdale as short-coin farmworker, and is watching the Knights from afar, awaiting the right chance to slay and impersonate a Tower guard. Shapechanger is an agent for Tharlton, the wizard of Saerlooon who wants to take over Shadowdale, and has orders to slay and impersonate Mourngrym, and then begin manipulating the Knights, singly, into situations where they can be killed]. This "real" dancer is a spy for a Witch of Rashemen, and will flee the Knights in a suspicious manner (fearing they'll discover her secret), perhaps leading them into the clutches of the Fang.

The Fang [band of six assassins who always work together] are lurking in Shadowdale, posing as painters and roofers (slate shingles; they do good work, are pricing themselves very cheaply, and so are winning work up and down the dale roads, fixing too-long-neglected cottages) as they await a good chance to fulfill their commission from Rauthur of the Cult of the Dragon to kill Florin Falconhand. [Remember: all magically protected against farscrying and thought-reading.] One of them will ask audience with Mourngrym, boldly trying to get a commission to work on the Tower of Ashaba - - really to see as much as he can of its layout, even if work offer rejected. Will try to befriend chambermaids, just to try to get an eventual 'in' at the Tower.

Jonczer of Scardale will make another appeal to Shadowdale to use the Knights to establish regular 'swift and silent' trade runs between the two dales. He wants to have a way to spirit his wealth out of the dale without trying to carry it himself, to have a reason for entry into the Tower of Ashaba, and (eventually) to frame the Knights for the murders he's going to try to accomplish, to weaken all outlander agents in Scardale except the Zhents.

Phaerlarra [fat old Tower maidservant, suggested by Jhaele when the Knights first arrived] will make another play for Doust, hinting that she's of noble birth (the Troehands are actually descended from two bastard royal heirs who married commoners, though a female Huntsilver did marry into the family much later) and her "family secrets" could enrich all of the Knights, if they learn everything. She knows she really has nothing to offer, but the royal connection (though not its precise nature) has always been a deep family secret, and she'd love to somehow get the Knights to track down the truth. Why can't they see her true worth?

Merith's investments in Sembia are turning sour - - and someone is trying to trace him through them! He'll get the second "bad news" note this week, from a Harper telling him it was found after Dathjathra was found murdered, and her murderer was interrupted (but managed to escape) while busily copying out all of her missives! Who's trying to track down elves investing in Sembian trade, and why?

Jhessail's tracing spell will find just one thing out of all that was stolen from Jhaele's office: stashed in a hollow tree at the east end of Fox Ridge is a single sheet of her parchment, rolled into a bone tube and with fresh writing on it (Jhaele's stolen ink, but very recent writing - - and the ink and quills are gone, along with everything else, carried far beyond the range of Jhessail's spell, well out of the dale), listing

sixteen villagers ["the Mirrorman list"]. Why are these Dalefolk listed (what's the link between them)? Who wrote the list, and why was it stashed in the tree? Who was intended to find and presumably act on it, and why? Questions for the Knights to ponder...

Introduction of Ao and Time of Troubles

- James Lowder (FR author), Qs for Ed 17/12/11

Ao was created by the team who came up with the Time of Troubles concept, which was intended to explain the changes in the Realms caused by the move from first to second edition. As I recall, that initial concept team included Jim Ward, Mary Kirchoff, and Jeff Grubb, though I could be mistaken about Jeff, and there could have been others.

The core concepts handed down from the group were: Ao, the Tablets of Fate, the gods wandering around in avatars, four central protagonists roughly representing the four main character classes, and the quest for the tablets plot and eventual ascension of one, possibly two of the characters to god/demigod status. As the changes required by 2E were firmed up, we were given those details to work into the story.

It's possible that the original novel authors (Scott Ciencin, Troy Denning, and, at the time, John Deakins) had a hand in creating the Ao plot, but I don't think so. I believe that the core concepts were set and then the authors were hired. However, I was not part of either the initial meetings or the first team meeting of the novel authors in Lake Geneva, which took place shortly after they'd been contracted. I was introduced to the authors on the last day of those meetings and then assigned to be series editor.

There was still not a lot to the Avatar circus when I was handed the ringmaster hat. Basically the core as outlined above and some suggested character names. My first job was to work with the authors to flesh out the story. Meanwhile, Scott Ciencin and I scrambled to write backstories for the main characters, which needed to be established for use in Hall of Heroes.

Jeff Grubb or Mary Kirchoff would likely be the most authoritative sources on who participated, and who created what, in the initial Time of Troubles meetings.

Introduction of Vaasa and Damara

- THO 17/12/11

Marc, you'll have to ask TSR folks where "Damara" came from, because they added it to the Realms (rolling back one of Ed's glaciers to do so). "Vaasa" was also added, as were the "Galena Mountains." The mountains were named for a real place, Galena, where some TSR brass went "on retreat." Vaasa may or may not have come from the real-life Scandinavian place of the same name, and Damara may or may not have come from Robin McKinley's fantasy tales of a land of the same name. (Oh, and "Volo" came from the real-life place (and Volo Bog) south of Lake Geneva.

Knights of Myth Drannor Origin

- THO 3/6/10

Although some of the Knights are played by some of Ed's original players (of Company of Crazy Adventurers fame), the group of PCs (and their players) that later called themselves the Knights of Myth Drannor began play at the Don Mills Library all those years ago, with Ed's wife Jenny playing Jhessail for a few sessions (Jenny worked at that library branch at the time) before bowing out to, yes, WORK (she'd been using her supper hours to play, and her bosses rescheduled her suppers to make that impossible, bless their hard hearts).

Map Accuracy

- THO 22/5/11, referring to accuracy of maps in the Forgotten Realms Interactive Atlas

Aside from Ed's own maps (which are almost all small in scope, covering small locales), Karen Wynn Fonstad's maps are the "most accurate." Not that certain things don't change over time, mind you.

Miscellaneous Ed FR Works

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 26/1/10

Don't forget the issue of GAMEPLAY magazine that contained Ed's "Heralds, All Bright And Shining" Realms article, or the issue of ANOTHER WORLD (I think that's the title) that contained his discussion of Anchorome...or for that matter the Ed short stories in the computer games manuals (one of which has never been reprinted elsewhere, because Broderbund/The Learning Company [[again, I THINK this is the company involved]] wouldn't agree to it).

Note-Taking in Ed's Games

- THO 22/1/08 (quoted by crazedventurers 8/11/11)

As for our playing habits: we all use clipboards and make notes. Brief, occasional notes, because we all value the roleplaying (acting) over mentally "stepping out of the game" to keep records. All of us recall things from memory (more realistic, yes? In the middle of a dungeon, our characters would have to rely on their memories and perhaps a hand-drawn map, and not a failing cabinet full of notes, after all), but Andrew Dewar and Ian Hunter were the best at actually putting names, times, and other specifics onto everyone else's "We've seen this guy before, I KNOW we have" recollections.

Player Packs

- THO 6/6/16

Ed traditionally gave each player in one of his "library" campaigns a player pack consisting of this:

A crude "here's what your character knows" map of the starting country or city.

A crude "here's what your character knows" map of the wider Realms.

Here are the shrines, temples, and local priests your character knows and frequents, and any daily prayers, do's and don'ts, faith-related gossip/recent local events.

A list of contacts (businesses/crafters/gossips) your character knows and uses.

Notes on your character's "day jobs" and past/current employers and acquired skills.

Local individuals/families your character likes, hates, is feuding with, owes coin to, is owed coin by, plus outstanding promises/obligations.

Some heraldry/local message-symbols your character will recognize, plus what your character "knows" of local government/who rules/the daily "laws" (and who are the local "lawkeepers"/enforcers).

Where your character would go if hurt.

What wealth or valuables (if anything) your character has stored (and if hidden or in someone else's safekeeping, where and how).

A short list of useful character belongings (horse? Cart? tent? rented field? tools? whetstone? outdoor cook-oven?) and rights to use communal things (like ovens, wells, paddocks).

Anything unusual your character has (disguises? toys and puppets? dug-up relics of unknown heritage/uses?).

Family trees, of character and relatives and neighbours.

...There, that's about it. I may have forgotten some things. The idea was, after a player had enjoyed their first play session (which Ed tried to end on a cliffhanger), they had reading for home that gave them all sorts of ideas for when the party escaped froxxx ahem, finished that first adventure. ;}

Uthgardt replacement of Ed's barbarians

- THO 18/3/10

The Uthgardt were substituted for Ed's barbarians (which he sent VERY little in to TSR about) by, I believe, Paul Jaquays. In play, we encountered individuals from Ed's Sword Coast barbarian tribes, and here's the skinny: they were hardy, black-haired, brown-skinned, burly nomads who had a culture centered on: place-spirits, moving around the landscape to stay near herds of "oroths" (musk oxen), "garauthae" (rothe) and "halagar" (stags, caribou, reindeer; the barbarians knew there were different sorts of hooved and antlered beasts, but didn't have different names for them) and to choose the times and places for fights with numerically-far-superior orcs (and hobgoblins, whom they hated especially and fought an ongoing war of extermination with), and whose clothing was, yes, hides and fur. Young males did "go wandering" down into warmer areas, often showing up in Silverymoon or Waterdeep, as part of their "coming of age" in barbarian culture, and Ed portrayed them as cunning, wary, tremendously strong and stubborn "Breckenridge Elkins" types (q.v. Robert E. Howard's A GENT FROM BEAR CREEK): innocent, amiable, sticking to a personal moral code, but easily duped by "city folk." Centuries of warfare with the orcs, trolls, and hill giants of the North had pruned their numbers so that although Ed's barbarians did have rival tribes, they were far more apt to stand together against common foes than fight each other (barbarian-on-barbarian fights were unarmed and to first blood, not armed and to the death). Affairs were decided by elders, there were shamens but they advised and deferred to elders rather than trying to rule them, and all barbarians were omnivores skilled at living off the land. They were used to extreme cold, and would snowbathe naked in weather that left other humans, from warmer climes, huddling to keep warm inside shelter. They were used to long daily travels on foot, fighting with spears and rolled boulders and slung stones, and had stone daggers and axes if they hadn't won better (metal) weapons by scavenging them from the fallen. Dwarves often paid barbarians with metal weapons or tools in exchange for guiding across country on surface jaunts, and/or providing "large meat meals" for dwarves by hunting.

One of the Sword Coast North barbarian tribes were known as the Dahareen (pronounced "Dah-har-EENE"). I know this was a name they themselves recognized and accepted without anger or demur, but I don't know if it began as a barbarian name, or a name by which non-barbarians called them.

MONSTERS

Overview

It's A Dangerous World

- Xaeyruudh, approved of by THO, Qs for Ed 22/6/12

without presuming to speak for Ed or THO, or anyone else, if you have access to the old gray box, you'll find a Realms that's much different than the one in 3.5 and 4e published stuff. i know "points of light" is a recent catchphrase, and probably has negative connotations for a lot of people, but I think it's a valid metaphor once you separate it from 4e's misguided priorities/execution. from what i've read, from THO and others who've watched Ed at play (because i really doubt he considers it work, when he's DMing his Realms) that's one way in which Ed's Realms is in fact "darker" than WotC's Realms... in the sense that the non-player points of light are fewer and dimmer. populations are smaller, levels are lower, and every sword and spell counts, because the bad guys are not the bumbling buffoons that they turn out to be in published books due to the perhaps-well-meaning butchery of editors who don't share Ed's (or our) passion, or at least who bow to such piddly gods as Pagecount and Deadline. players can make a much bigger difference in a world like that, where the npcs' power level is lower... where heroes are actually needed and thoroughly appreciated, in every hamlet you walk through, every single day. why do Elminster and Storm live in that dinky little hick town called Shadowdale? because they're needed there, in Ed's Realms. but in the published Realms, it looks silly for high-level NPCs to live in small towns, because half the commoners are flashlights, practically every town has a floodlight (a wizard of some power), and a party of PCs is like game night at a stadium. to (kinda) balance that, the bad guys have to get ever-more-powerful in each new book (especially given the moneygrubbing decision to keep advancing the official timeline), until eventually someone throws their hands up and says okay, that's it, we're going back to the level caps from first edition... at level 30, everybody will start an epic destiny whatchamacallit... because PCs and NPCs alike are getting so powerful that we can't figure out how to balance their game mechanics anymore.

Rarity

- THO 5/5/14

Novels and adventures inevitably focus on heroes or adventurers who come into far more contact with "monsters" than average citizens do.

Unless you use the wider definition of "monster" that really means "critter that tried to harm me" and might include swarms of normal rats, spiders, a harmless but frightening snake, and so on.

Caravans coming to a country hamlet or village will bring news of the latest sensational dragonslaying or undead rising to strange the living, or fearsome flying heads that have driven folk away from their homes, or the like. And bold or gruesome (or both) battles against monsters are a staple of tavern talk, after weather and politics and brewing war or coming shortages of ale.

So it may SEEM at times, even to folk in the Realms, that Faerun is teeming with countless monsters . . . but if you trim things back to just what beasts this old merchant or that old fishwife has actually seen, with their own eyes, in life: monsters are very rare in settled areas. In the wilderness, if you're frightened and the beasts you see are unfamiliar, of course, EVERYTHING becomes a monster.

Which is part of the reason they get gossiped about so much, and so many wild rumors grow around them in the process.

(The above viewpoint comes from playing in the Realms for years and listening to Ed talk about the Realms with "his" players, with interested gamers at conventions, and in seminars and panels.)

Use of Monster Parts

- THO 18/9/10

For one thing, acquiring monster "parts" (even something as mundane as orc blood, or human hair or fingernails, but ranging right up to beholder eyeballs and the hearts of dragons) to sell or barter gives even down-and-out adventurers a way of earning their daily bread, if not their fortunes (and a REASON for going adventuring, other than being lawless free spirits who love to kill).

- THO 18/4/12

one "critter part" use I recall from early Realmsplay with Ed as DM is that catoblepas skulls, cleaned out and inverted, make perfect hard, durable bowls that can take almost any sort of abuse (freezing, being whacked by really enthusiastic mixing and stirring activities, even turned the other way up to serve as stepstools or to raise furniture) without cracking, leaking, etc. Morkoth stomach linings make self-sealing bladders for liquid storage and transport, that last for years if kept out of the sun.

Beholders

Language

- Ed 28/1/13, referring to "High Priest of Beholders" Eye on the Realms article

The beholders of Faerûn formally call that older language Uibilaqthraxx, "the True Tongue." Their swifter and simpler language of today is Quevquel, or "Speech" (distinguishing it from mental communication). "Daeth Haeromm" is in a name in Uibilaqthraxx.

More Qs of High Priest of Beholders article

- Ed 28/1/13

JG: Would a Xraunran be likely to know the etymology of words like Daeth, Haera and Haeromm?
Ed: Yes.

JG: Does the beholder word "sarruin" come from a modern beholder language?
Ed: Yes, it's a word in Quevquel, but like many words in Quevquel, is descended or borrowed from a similar word in Uibilaqthraxx: "lurl'uk'lok'lahassarruin."

JG: The beholder cult known as the Faithful of Xarlhoun seem like they're right in the Daeth Haeromm's back yard. Are you at liberty to confirm whether this cult is fronted by a Daethan beholder?
Ed: Yes, I am - - and yes it is. :}

JG: If it isn't, does Ulchaice have any plans to visit this group or its leader in the future (assuming he's aware of the cult)?
Ed: See above. (Yes, Ulchaice is aware of it.)

Thralls of Xaerogleth (Forging the Realms)

- Ed 24/4/14

Q: Why would beholders submit to being "guardians" for the dragon Althiunthlahlurmm's hoard? Superior as they consider themselves to be, what would make them take up this role?

A: there are things in the hoard that beholders hunger to be near.

Deepspawn

- Ed 9/7/13

Q: When a deepspawn creates a spawn, is there an odor to go along with the birth of the spawn?

A: Yes. Think ozone tinged with cinammon. Not intense, and short-range; clings to surroundings of the deepspawn, NOT to spawn who depart that area.

Devils

Alastor the Grim, Pit Fiend, Gargoth

- THO responding to a query about a pit fiend mentioned in Dragon #91

Alastor lurked as a behind-the-scenes "manipulator/kingpin/prime mover" villain in the home Realms campaign for years. So do most greater devils (because the more they show themselves openly, the more likely they are to get fiercely opposed or even knocked off by OTHER powerful evildoers trying to "run the Realms" from the shadows). for that same low-profile reasons, I'm not certain which other archdevils and greater devils have been "active" in the home Realms campaign, although we've met Gargoth/Gargauth twice that I know of, and possibly more times when we didn't see through his disguise.

And the spelling change came from Gargoth himself, trying to weed out some mortal spellcastings that used his name written down as part of the castings, to compel him.

Nergal, Archdevil

- Ed 4/10/12, responding to query about archdevil in "Elminster in Hell"

It would be a grave mistake to believe that Nergal is finally, irrevocably, forever dead. As an outcast archdevil who's been around for quite some time and has made preparations for "coming back from death," he's hard indeed to forever eliminate.

Dinosaurs

Presence in Home Realms

- THO 27/6/13

Dinosaurs haven't played a large part in our home Realms games because of the locales we Knights maraudedXXX er, flourished in, but several Waterdhavian nobles have individual dinosaurs imprisoned in their in-mansion, heated menageries. YES, dinosaurs in the Realms have the sort of names James mentions, not the real-world scientific or general-use colloquial names. After all, how would someone from Faerûn know this is a "Tyrannosaurus Rex" and that is a "Stegosaurus"?

The only dinosaurs I recall us fighting in the wild were Pterosaurs and several aggressive Triceratops . . .

Velociraptors in Stonelands

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 16/6/10, replying to a query about the "Realmsian" name of the dinosaur

The beast, with the name "Fleshrazer" attached, was used in a Realms adventure run at a GenCon with a WotC staffer DMing.

Dracoliches

Rauglothgor

Lair

- THO reporting Ed, 10/2/11 (regarding red dracolich eventually destroyed by Shandrill)

Rauglothgor retained the same lair as a dracolich as he did in life, and his usual "hunting grounds" when alive were up the Thunder Peaks into the Border Forest and then beyond, in a circle east over Thar and thence home again, and down the Thunder Peaks to coastal western rural Sembia and across the Neck (narrows between the Lake of Dragons and the rest of the Sea of Fallen Stars) to Starmantle and the hills and mountains south of that.

Destroyed by Shandrill

- THO, Qs for EG, 5/5/16

did any of the dracoliches destroyed by Shandrill survive into the current 5e realms date (1480s DR I believe?). I know they all survived in that there phylacteries were not destroyed but not sure of what happened past the references in 2ed where they were trying to regrow their bodies. Thanks in advance.

you happen to have asked something that was asked by one of us (Ed's players in the "home" campaign), and although he usually doesn't answer us (for fear of harming future play possibilities), in this case, at the end of a long night of chatting and working creatively together and drinXXXX ahem, sampling, he merely grinned evilly and said, "Yes."

Archdracoliches

- Ed 7/4/13

Yes, there are indeed archdracoliches (usually called "elder dracoliches" by undiscerning humans, and therefore in general parlance) in the Realms.

Dragons

Scale Composition

- THO 15/3/11

Although I'm not certain about the most recent edition of the game, earlier editions certainly never suggested that dragonscales (which have several magical and armor uses) were pure metals corresponding to the type of metallic dragon producing them. Ed and many staff designers and freelancers did much detailed work on dragon anatomy, ecology, and physiology over the years, and Ed (who created many dragon types for the game, such as fang dragons and deep dragons, not to mention variants such as dracoliches) has long advocated a system of "roleplaying" alchemical and magical researches (see Volo's Guide To All Things Magical) to promote individual PC discoveries rather than a laid-out-for-all-to-see "rules system" approach. As dragons are living things and subspecies are still evolving (the famous Cinammon Dragon, for one), the complex elemental composition of scales (which begin as living things, underscales, before hardening into outer sheaths like real-world human fingernails) may vary widely from individual dragon to individual dragon.

Were-Dragons

Creation

- THO 6/6/11

Weredragons were created by Ed before there was a D&D game, and were written up by him for 2e (in the pages of The DRAGON, I believe, but I might be misremembering). The were- writeups in the original Hall of Heroes weren't done by Ed (John Nephew, subsequently of Atlas Games/Ars Magica fame, did the Knights writeups from Ed's original character sheets and copious notes, but lots of TSR staffers did various bits of that sourcebook).

Sex/Gender

- THO 5/6/11, responding to assertion that Raumarth is a song dragon and a male, but song dragons can only be female

As for Raumarth being a male, weredragons can be both male and female. 3e highlighted just the particular sort of weredragons known as Song Dragons, that take the form of female humans and female dragons, but the male weredragons who sire them still exist. They're just VERY rare now, thanks to being hunted by the Zhents AND the Cult of the Dragon for dragon-steed-breeding purposes (another largely untold tale of the Realms, though we Knights have seen quite a bit of it in play). Probably rare enough (like maedar, the male medusae) that a staff designer figured they didn't rate a writeup.

Time Dragons

- Ed 6/12/11

Q: "Given the issues with chronomancy, do time dragons exist in any great number within the Realms?"
A: No.

Q: "Additionally, have they been studied in any great number by particular archmages for their abilities, assuming that anybody has actually gotten access to them for study purposes?"

A: Not in any great number. A few time dragons have been studied in passing to investigate the (bad) effects of their proximity to gates, mythals, wards, and certain other longterm enchantments. They tend to make such enchantments unstable, and trigger certain built-in reactions within the magics to events/situations that haven't in fact occurred. This is unintentional on the part of the time dragons, not something done deliberately. Time dragons seem to shun the Realms, for as yet unknown reasons.

Mixed-chromatic & metallic

- THO 9/10/12

There are quite a few mixed-blood dragon offspring, but we haven't yet seen much about them in published Realmslore. Note that "yet."

Affecting the world

- THO 9/10/12, responding to challenge that dragons don't seem to affect the world much

To quote you: "they SEEM to seldom affect the Realms." They work through humans and other creatures more than almost everyone (except elminster and other overly inquisitive individuals) thinks.

Do They Eat Their Young?

- THO 24/11/11

Certain dragon types (chromatic, mainly) will always seek to eliminate potential future rivals, and scorn the weak. However, I strongly suspect that Ed's answer to you is going to in part state that dragons are as intelligent and varied as humans, so generalized answers for their behaviour (re. killing/eating deformed/abnormal young) are going to be shaky at best.

Araunthroun, Lhammaruntosz, & Skarlthoon

- Ed 4/8/12, replying to query about dragons mentioned in Dragon magazine #245

Once there was a green dragon named Skarlthoondarammarus, "Skarlthoon" to all (including herself) in her latter centuries, but even better known as Snarljaws for her quick temper and nasty, vindictive nature (she would chase and repeatedly try to destroy humans who'd escaped her, where other dragons would shrug and seek better prey). She had three lairs, one of them a classic mountain cavern stuffed full of treasure, that's almost impossible for a non-flying creature to get to—and Skarlthoon found it cold and inhospitable. So she used it only for treasure storage. She had a lair in the northwest reaches of the High Forest, a snug cavern atop a ridge southwest of the Lost Peaks, in heavily-forested terrain that bears repeatedly claimed—so she would breathe each time she descended into it, to "reclaim" it from these interlopers. It was where she would retreat to, to heal and sleep.

Skarlthoon's third lair was her open-to-the-skies "resting lair," a hollow in the jagged rocks atop the northeasternmost spur of the Kryptgarden peaks, where she would land and nap (between dives to snatch up cattle, deer, wagon-pulling oxen, and other ready meals, in the open country of the Dessarin valley).

Skarlthoon contracted an unknown disease from an unknown source (Elminster thinks it was probably from infected prey she devoured) sometime in the 1330s. By the end of that decade it had eaten away her scales, making her very fearful of other dragons. She took to furtive flights by night, and stopped using her resting-lair entirely. The disease continued to eat at her flesh, eroding muscle and strength. She became more reclusive, weaker, and far less active, moss grew on her, and she died in 1348 DR, perishing in a crash landing near Westbridge as she sought to fly one last time, and her strength gave out in the air.

Lhammaruntosz, the Claws of the Coast, was well aware of Skarlthoon's territory, and despite being a younger and more vigorous dragon, still didn't want to be bothered with a feud with such a nasty older rival. So Lhammaruntosz avoided Skarlthoon's usual hunting grounds until word spread of her death (as her demise and remains were so public, word got around, as opposed to the more usual "Dragon such-and-such just hasn't been seen, lately").

However, Lhammaruntosz saw Skarlthoon's passing as an ideal opportunity to claim a rich territory to be her own—and took it. She started by using the exposed-to-the-elements "resting lair," in 1349 DR, and from it cautiously exploring east and south into the High Forest, where she "knew" (from spying on Skarlthoon for years) Skarlthoon must have a "proper" lair, somewhere.

However, Lhammaruntosz wasn't the only dragon seeking to claim Skarlthoon's domain. Aside from several of the wide-ranging dragons described in my other "Wyrms of the North" articles, whose demesnes overlapped parts of Skarlthoon's, there was yet another dragon lurking in the area, an elder wyrm whispered of in lore as Araunthroun "the Shapechanger." (References often thought to refer to a Netherese or other ancient human mage, not a dragon at all.)

This blue dragon is truly ancient (almost three thousand years old), and magically prolonged his life not by going lichnee, but through a self-devised process that drained magic from items. The drawback was that his physical form slowly but inexorably faded into translucent, ghostly intangibility. He could regain physical solidity for a time by making his body smaller, and that's what he did, calling on powers of magic items he hadn't drained to transform his outward likeness into that of a human so as to dwell among (hide among) humans. Where he tried to work with various human mages to master more magic to prolong his body.

These human mages were self-interested, and their progress towards what Araunthroun craved was slow, so Araunthroun (who had lairs of his own in the Fallen Lands, formerly stuffed with Netherese magic items gained when many of its cities crashed and some archwizards went mad, but now depleted thanks to years of draining magic from them) went seeking Skarlthoon's hoard, that must lie hidden somewhere in the High Forest.

Inevitably Lhammaruntosz and Araunthroun came into conflict (circa the summer of 1353 DR). They fought several skirmishes as both continued to explore the High Forest for dragon lairs—as Lhammaruntosz grew stronger, into her prime, and Araunthroun became ever more ghostly (and gained the nickname “the Ghost Dragon” from some humans who'd seen him) and intangible. Not wanting to risk discovery of the best of his remaining magic if Lhammaruntosz magically spied on him from afar, Araunthroun took to using an old, long-abandoned dragon-hold in his territory (the “hidden hold” that did indeed lie south and east of Secomber, in the broken land along the northern edge of the High Moor; its entrance is a narrow crack between the jagged rocks of a knife-edged ridge, that descends into sizeable caverns beneath) as the base from which to continue exploring the High Forest. He moved what he deemed the “least useful” magic items from his hoard, those he intended to drain, to it—and would replenish his fading self from them whenever necessary.

In the spring of 1358 DR, after a vicious battle above the trees of the southern High Forest, Araunthroun fled to this lair, and Lhammaruntosz pursued him there and “slew” him, taking the lair for her own. With it she gained a score or so of magic items, and the security she sought. She went on exploring the High Forest, and in the fullness of time found Skarlthoon's magic-filled lair in the northwest—and relocated there, because it was far more remote and sheltered and to her liking. Taking the magic items with her, and abandoning the “hidden hold.”

However, Araunthroun wasn't dead. Rather, weak and unable to harm his foe because of his intangibility, he had “gone ghost” completely, and sunk into one of the items, biding his time to re-emerge.

He has since done so, stealing away from the High Forest lair of Lhammaruntosz with just two magic items in his claws, while she was out hunting in the high summer of 1374 DR.

He hid those items in one of his old Fallen Lands lairs, and then hid himself in another, where legends and rumors are slowly drawing ambitious humans into his grasp (he has already easily overcome two of the overconfident mages of Shade, who seem utterly unprepared for someone patiently and subtly invading their minds—as opposed to challenging them and waging a duel) and making him stronger. Araunthroun is still lurking in hiding in the Fallen Lands to this day. He drains the lives and wits of some victims, and merely spies out of the eyes of others, or by subtle manipulations causes them to spread fresh rumors of treasure that will bring more adventurers within his reach. He intends, above all, to regain solidity and fresh vigor, and “truly live again,” but is ruled now by prudent patience, and can wait. A long, long time, if need be. Before he returns to crush and devour Lhammaruntosz—and every other being that has ever crossed, belittled, or bested him.

Aumrathar

- Ed 12/8/12, replying to query about dragon in "Ruins of Myth Drannor" boxed set

Aumrathar was an elder male gold dragon to whom something "happened" that his worshippers believe was ascension to divinity (but might have been empowerment by literally stumbling into ancient magic that transformed him, as some sages suggest, or the meddlings of Bahamut, Tiamat, or another draconic deity or dragon-interested god, as yet other sages have postulated).

To put it simply, it seems Aumrathar gained the ability to become any dragon type and age or either gender at will, shapeshifting as often as desired and gaining all powers and abilities of "his" assumed form (except perhaps - - mortals debate this - - not being able to gain the powers of ancient wyrms older than Aumrathar was when he "Changed"), while retaining the powers, memories, and capabilities he had before his Change. Aumrathar became a wanderer, hidden in many forms, visiting other dragons for the apparent aim of making lots of dragon babies and repopulating the Realms with dragons (of all sorts).

Some sages think this is mere meddling, or intended to break the power of human civilizations, while others think some dark deity is behind this, desiring to gain dragons as steeds, attack forces, and long-term servitors. Still others believe Aumrathar is the herald of a new age (or cycle) among dragons, and that this has nothing to do with other beings in the Realms at all (except as they're inevitably affected by there being more hungry, power- and wealth-seeking dragons around).

Aumrathar's cult in Myth Drannor is small, controversial, and something many don't even want to think about, because they need to think about more immediate threats to the status quo.

The truth behind all this? Yet to be revealed, and I'd say up to individual DMs, because I can't see the published Realms getting to addressing this anytime soon.

Balagos, the Creeping Doom (Wyrms of the North)

- Ed 22/7/14

Balagos and the Creeping Doom both still exist in the home Realms campaign, and both are quietly "up to things" (intrigues). Balagos wants to influence mercantile doings to yield up plentiful regular food supplies for, ahem, Balagos . . . and the Creeping Doom wants to subvert all Cult of the Dragon members who have misgivings about the central goal of Tyranny into working for, yep, the Creeping Doom, on a more subtle/low-profile/slower-paced scheme to enrich the Cult members through investments and illicit (undercutting guilds and not honoring guild rules or local near-monopolies) trade (which will please the Cult members) and then ensuring that the Cult members further the will of the Creeping Doom, which is to covertly rule/influence political matters...hope this helps.

Hamairathgauradon

- THO 20/6/12 (dragon mentioned in a blurb in Hand on Fire)

We Knights came across a human cult among shepherds and miners dwelling on the northside slopes of the northern boundary mountains of Amn - - a cult that worshipped "the High Wurm of the Crag," who would come to their aid when certain rituals were performed, and despoil the crops and devour the herds of their foes, even routing "armies" if need be.

The High Wurm had not been seen for generations, but in the past had policed Loudwater and the lands north and east of it, down southwest to Amn, even "fighting other dragons in the sky." And have given advice/commands to humans re. borders and peace treaties and the like.

So this would have been Hamairathgauraundon -- but as for the dragon's fate and proper details, we'll have to see what Ed says.

Cult

- THO 20/6/12

They are/were nothing at all to do with the Cult of the Dragon.

Zundaerazylym, the Laughing Wyrmling

- Ed 26/10/11, regarding fate of the ancient steel dragon who previously hid in Neverwinter, post-Spellplague

I'm sorry, but that is indeed NDA. However, if I was a hinting man, I'd hint: survival but drastic change/relocation. ;}

Driders

- Qs for EG, 20/1/16 (hashimashadoo, not EG)

Being a drider is a punishment because Lolth places value on physical beauty, something only the most fanatical of priestesses would consider a drider still to possess. Secondly, until the mid 14th century DR, driders had no social standing. The best they could hope to be was a slave. It was only when a new generation of young drow began to consider the power of driders, that they began to gain some social standing in drow society, and not until the founding of Q'Xorlarrin that they became even close to equals with most drow.

Driders are sexless. They only keep their memories of gender and lust. This is not the same as castration - they literally have no genitalia (though a few images show them having secondary sexual characteristics) and were designed by Lolth to have absolutely no way to breed with anything.

Driver communities exist too. There was one not far from Menzoberranzan which the Matron Mothers used to dispose of drow who had offended them and I've seen other, slightly more pleasant ones mentioned elsewhere.

Fey

Presence

- THO 15/6/11

Yes, there are many minor fey present in the Realms. They are entreated/appeased (and rarely, fought) by humans on a purely local level, their presence usually being kept almost secret from "outlanders" and even folk from villages beyond a day's ride away. Or to put it another way, they are considered "spirits of this place"/"the land" rather than a race or unified citizenry/power group (unlike the orcs or even treants).

Gith

Use in Home Realms

- THO 31/12/10 (2011 scroll)

At least two Githyanki warbands/raiding forces that we fought. Not to mention some sort of weird undead floating Gith wraith, that watched what we did from various aerial locations out of our reach for a while.

Goblinoids

Origins

- THO 21/3/11

The origins of the goblinkin and other humanoid races are always going to be "shadowy, too much truth being lost in the mists of passing time." Like a lot of the early doings and rises of gods, information is scanty and suspect, with no trustworthy sources, and a lot of conjecture and wholly fictional shaman and priest tales commenting on the matter.

(In other words, we're never going to be certain about such things, because proper, widely-accepted records were never made, even the gods tell lies, and just too much time has passed. It's like asking for the precise location where the first horsetail fern grew, in our real world; there's no one alive today who was there to see, back then, and thousands (perhaps millions) of years have passed.

I know this is going to be the general tenor of Ed's answer because I'm drawing on several discussions with him, some overheard talks between Ed and TSR designers back in the day, and Ed's notes (that "shadowy" quote up there is Ed writing, from those notes).

- Ed 8/7/11

The short answer is: different tribes and different priesthoods among all three of these races in the Realms embrace different and competing "in the beginning" tales, but there are "most popular" tales for each race.

Bugbear Creation Myth

- Ed 8/7/11

Here's the bare-bones version of the story about The Beginning Time of the Bugbears (most recountings of it will be dressed up with many details of names, fights, dread portents, elders' advice, etc.):

In the endless Dawn Forest, of much peril and good hunting, a star fell into the cooking fire of the wisest, boldest of the Haree [note: "Haree" means "WeThePeople," and is the bugbears' name for themselves], and all who gazed into that fire beheld a fair and vast land of rolling hills, plains, mountains, forests, lakes beyond counting, and sea. A land that teemed with life, yet had no Haree. A land for us to roam at will, to lord over, to grow greater in.

So the wise Haree followed that star when it rose from their fire. It led them into the deepest, darkest fastnesses of the forest, many Haree being lost in the jaws of lurking spiders the size of the trees themselves, and worse hunters. Long was the way, bloody the trail, and it ended in a cave, so dark that all the Haree could do was follow the twinkling light ahead. It led them to a glowing ring or doorway of light in the darkness, and vanished when it passed through that ring. Those Haree brave enough to follow fell through blue mists, to land on their feet gently in this place. These Realms. Our rightful kingdom, when one day we rise to our proper might. Which shall be when we slay the last dragon.

- THO 8/7/11, clarifying the above

It means the Haree (Bugbears) can't rule the Realms (the new world they entered via the gate, LEAVING the Dawn Forest to do so) until they slay every last dragon (in the Realms).

The tale doesn't apply to hobgoblins, and so far as I and Ed know, there were no dragons in the Dawn Forest.

The Haree believe they are destined to rule the new land they found (the Realms), but see the dragons as the impediment to that.

Goblin Creation Myths

- Ed 9/7/11

Here's by far the most popular of many competing Goblin creation tales [note: "Nloun" means "We," and was what goblins called themselves in the Foretime]:

Life was good and meat plentiful, in sun-drenched and happy times, Nloun always numerous and clever enough to bring down any foe (war our pride, war our pleasure), until god fought god (not our gods, and none of our affair) and the dying gods' bodies crashed down in flames. A great fire arose from their dying and swept across the land, driving all before its fury, devouring to ashes all who fled not or too slowly.

Fire ended the Foretime and brought the Scorching, when our gods fell silent and many Nloun died. The rest learned to run, to flee far and fast, to go deep.

Down into the greatest depths of the earth, where great blind worms gnaw and the walls are hot and slick with sweat. There the Deep Ones met us, taught us, and led us, the Nloun of the Deep. Gobbelyn was their king, Gobbelyn their giant and champion, the largest Nloun ever. Gobbelyn tamed a gnaw-worm and forced it to tunnel deeper, until we came to burning rivers and the mists of foul death. Then Gobbelyn led us on, and up, the cooked worm dying as it gnawed.

When it died, Gobbelyn tore it apart and dug onwards, upwards, spending his life in the doing so that Nloun—we gobbelyns—could survive. He delivered us up into a new place.

This place.

And though many here are larger and more formidable than any Nloun, and these are not lands ruled by goblins, our gods spoke to us again, and still speak to us here, and here we shall abide and flourish, for burning rivers of rock have risen in the deeps, and there is no going back.

We shall breed, and outnumber, and outlast. One day, this Long Time shall become Triumph Time, when Goblins rule all.

Hobgoblins

Any Widespread Organization

- Ed 17/3/11

No, it's wrong to think of the hobgoblin race as monolithic. Just as it's HIGHLY unlikely you'd ever get all real-world humans to agree to work together for the same goals and in the same manner, accepting the same command hierarchy, it's darned near impossible to get even the great majority of hobgoblins to work closely together (even with the cajoling of their priests purporting to speak the intent of deities). They're just too competitive/distrustful, in the broadest sense of those words.

However, yes also. By which I mean the wisest, most veteran "operatives" among hobgoblins, those interested in long-term achievements and macropolitics (I'm using real-world terms here, no words or phrases ever known in the Realms), do exchange information and provide covert aid (hiding individuals

on the run, providing shelter and medical care and food to hobgoblin individuals or small groups of hobgoblins [though these intruders will be constantly watched, both openly and spied upon by a second set of observers, working from a distance and/or in hiding] with others of their species. The thought is that whatever strengthens/aids hobgoblins is good/desirable, and whatever can be done against foes/obstacles of hobgoblins, without rousing foes and neutrals to action against hobgoblins, should be done.

Reasons for joining Amn invasion

- Ed 10/10/12, responding to query regarding hobgoblins usually preferring to stay hidden

Religion happened.

Or to be slightly more verbose, hobgoblins joined in that invasion because their gods told them to. And once fighting in Amn (against largely capable human mercenaries), the invading forces fractured, started to fight each other (and even allied briefly, in particular times and places, with various human "defending" forces) because the invaders' goals started to shift, and some elements of that mustered force began to believe they'd been tricked into participating.

Whereupon their gods spoke to the hobgoblins again . . .

Sythilisian Empire Involvement

- Ed 17/3/11

Q) i.e. Hobgoblins being responsible for the huge amount of troops mobilized by the Sythilisian empire, also organizing much of the logistics etc. necessary to maintain and train a host of over 65.000 fighting individuals - and more important, stay undiscovered.

Ed: Consider that to be the work of one hobgoblin tribe, plus hobgoblin allies, who saw personal gain in the rise of that empire (wealth, food, weapons, wagons, etc. could somehow end up in their personal possession, sent off on "missions" and "lost in battle"), and a greater gain in human dominance of the Sword Coast being lessened by "giving the rest of us a lasting claw-hold."

Yet they feared an alliance of human realms, like the one Azoun led to fight the Horde, coming together to obliterate the "monster empire" if it grew too large and powerful too fast, and considered that if such an alliance formed, the empire would be defeated and ALL monsters would be "scoured" (hunted to extinction, wherever found) up and down the Sword Coast lands. They did NOT want a general attitude to spread among humans, whatever happened, of "Watch those hobgoblins! They're not just big orcs, they're real trouble! They were behind it all - - hrast, they're probably behind all the orc hordes, too! So if we hunt down every last one, we'll be a lot better off! Let's start that hunt NOW!"

That, plus pride in being able to accomplish what they did with as low a profile as possible (which again, made the stealing of material easier), plus an ingrained instinct of preferring to work covertly, all contributed to working behind the scenes. After all, they see humans do this successfully all the time - - and watch those who become "too loud and too proud" get dragged down by angered fellow humans.

Hobgoblin Kingdom Existence

- Ed 17/3/11

Oh, yes. Here's the thing: humans think of a kingdom as a patrolled, usually settled territory with borders and fortresses and law enforcement. Hobgoblins are wandering hunter/gatherers who are habitually on the move, either in warbands patrolling an area or tribes moving from stronghold to

stronghold and following wild animal migrations. Hobgoblin "kingdoms" don't appear on maps, they don't build roads or formal borders, and hobgoblins pride themselves on "lurking among" others. Hobgoblins know which hobgoblin tribes dominate which areas, and erect boundary "markers" (usually gruesomely-displayed corpses, with markings) to warn each other to stay away from "protected areas," but aside from cavern-labyrinth warren strongholds (and sometimes captured/occupied former giant or human castles), hobgoblin realms don't "look like" human territories - - so the two can overlap, often without (most local) humans really being aware of it. So yes, there are hobgoblin holdings all over Faerûn. They are less numerous and more disciplined than orcs or goblins, and thus their powerful local presence is more likely to go unnoticed for longer (whereas orcs raid in force, and pillage and burn, and can't be ignored).

Sourcing Evil Humanoids for Villians

- Ed 17/3/11, responding to query if villains often acquire their troops from hobgoblin sources

SOME hobgoblins operate this way, and it's far more accurate to say that they are PARTIALLY responsible. Yes, hobgoblins usually manipulate, coerce, and even breed goblins and orcs "like cattle" when they want to. However, it's a lot of work (like, say, you suddenly acquiring several hundred pets), and so is done only for a clear purpose (except on an individual level, where one to three hobgoblins try or enjoy dominating a dozen or less orcs or hobgoblins as their servants/slaves/"gang" . . . which goes on everywhere, all the time).

Peace vs Antagonism of Human Realms

- Ed 17/3/11

Ed: Most hobgoblins have achieved what they want: to live more or less as they please among or around humans without being bothered overmuch.

Eliminating the human realms would be difficult and very costly (possibly costing most hobgoblins their lives), and would destroy the bounty of agricultural food, wealth, wares, and so on that "comes free" with the presence of a human kingdom, to a good (disciplined, discerning) raider. Hobgoblins take what they need, and worry about taking extra only after that; some of them can be VERY patient and long-seeing (which is what makes them such formidable foes).

However, there are a FEW hobgoblin individuals who want more, and are slowly, carefully (not getting caught at this is paramount) working towards those goals - - which DO include a lessening of human power and numbers (spreading diseases might be best, some hobgoblins are thinking, but they fear widespread diseases might eventually start claiming hobgoblins) and control or decimation of other races seeking to rise into the power vacuum thus created (and guess who most hobgoblins fear most? Halflings, that's who!). Some hobgoblins are adventuring (or manipulating/hiring human adventurers to do this for them) to try to find possibly-mythical magical items and processes that will enable hobgoblins to control dragons (as steeds, weapons of war, and guardians).

Remember, I'm speaking here in very general terms, because when it comes down to individuals and specific locales, hobgoblins are as varied as humans in opinions, approaches, aims, and prejudices.

Females

- Ed 16/12/12

There is no "allow," because the elders of any hobgoblin tribe that hasn't been reduced to a handful of individuals by war, disease, or other mishap are at least half female, and usually more (60 percent or so).

They discuss and advise any hobgoblin chieftan - - and although that chief (almost always male) has the final word, a chief who scorns, ignores, or disagrees with his elders repeatedly doesn't last long.

Or to put it another way, hobgoblin females decide for themselves if they'll be in the forefront of any fighting, unless the head of their family, or the ranking battle leader, orders otherwise.

Usually, the females keep back, because protecting the children (and hobgoblin children can be quite willful, easily stirred to rage, battle-fury, and pride, and want to join in fighting themselves) and by extension the race is their prime concern, so females more often defend a camp, stronghold, saethren (hospital for the wounded), dwelling, or moving group of the aged and children.

Most groups of hobgoblin elders see such service as more sensible and valuable than front-rank fighting. Whereas the males are seen as more expendable/replaceable, so their proper place is in the front ranks of battle.

So among most hobgoblins, the thinking is not "females are inferior" but rather "females are more valuable to the tribe/clan/family/group in these other roles" (protecting the children, tending the wounded, and defending the food supply and defensible refuges).

Some humans view hobgoblins as brutish beasts, with rutting males being reckless, unthinking nodes of "runaway destruction" - - but then, many hobgoblins view humans as deceitful and far too numerous and pervasive vandals who pry into every corner, and think themselves the rightful owners of everything not nailed down, not to mention every last stretch of ground not claimed by a more formidable human - - or in other words, insane vermin upon the land. :}

- THO and Ed 14/4/13

THO: In many hobgoblin societies, females are the matriarchs (heads of families and yes, homekeepers and financial and nursing carekeepers), while males hunt, patrol, and fight, but these are stereotypes that often break down in individual cases.

Let me quote Ed here:

Many hobgoblin females are veteran scouts and battlefield leaders (the equivalent of real-world NCOs and higher officers), and serve in these roles AND as they get older become the trainers of younger male and female hobgoblins to succeed them in these same roles.

Matriarchs (and patriarchs) are constantly making decisions as to which males and females of the tribe shall be withdrawn from risk (sent elsewhere, left as garrison or escorts of younglings away from danger) so as to make the survival of the tribe most likely. Overcoming the urge to fight in favor of skulking away to fight another day is one of the chief skills wiser and older hobgoblins master (i.e. "overcoming urges").

[Reasons they haven't taken over](#)

- THO 24/7/10

Herewith, an answer from me based on discussions with Ed and Gary Gyax.

Gary envisaged D&D as a humanocentric roleplaying game (most players would play human characters or crossbred part-human characters), and humans would predominate in the "assumed base" fantasy setting for the game (your own campaign world could be anything you wanted, but the baseline world, which was Greyhawk at first and later the Realms) would be dominated by human culture and settlements.

Ed pointed out to Gary that he'd made the orcs (and goblins), per Tolkien, both aggressive/experienced

fighters, and fecund/numerous, so how could the humans predominate? Hobgoblins were fewer but mightier, so they were a "how come?" problem, too.

Obviously, something had to kill the orcs off, to logically end up with Gary's world view (which WAS D&D at the time; there were few or no direct competitors in the marketplace, and canon was ALL, to the comparatively few gamers). Some of the orc deaths could be due to harsh environment (orcs and goblins lairing in the Underdark and mountain caverns, where they would be prey for many things, considering the huge array of hungry monsters in the game).

And just as obviously, they war on each other (something picked up and exaggerated in the Warhammer fantasy line), and eat their dead, which takes care of reducing their numbers and keeping their building/infrastructure/cultural dominance to a minimum (orcs aren't busy building roads or palaces or irrigation viaducts if they're always raiding, fighting, or preparing/training for war).

In the Realms, Ed envisaged fallen orc kingdoms of the past (as humans and elves pushed the orcs out of forested, verdant lowlands), but orcs clinging to mountain and Underdark areas. In the latter, they were subject to many predators, and the drow kept them from establishing dominant civilizations. In the former, well, in the Realms, mountains are where most DRAGONS lair, so orcs in the open were . . . dinner.

This is "how it has to be" to match Gary's wants at the time, which WERE the game. In the Realms, Ed came up with the wrinkle that in the Sword Coast North, although small and far-ranging raiding bands of flind, gnolls, goblins, hobgoblins, orcs, and rarer "goblinkin" (norkers, et al) were frequent, large-scale orc threats weren't.

However, the fecund orcs built up numbers in the northern mountain caverns until there was no more room, and fighting among orcs was frequent, and the race was boiling-restless...whereupon elders would speak of the rich plunder in the human cities of the warmer south, and if a charismatic leader arose, the young would follow him and an orc horde would form (about every twenty to forty years, but NOT on a strict and predictable timetable) and sweep south, attacking everything in its path, until shattered and slaughtered (some orcs always surviving to lair in the south or even return home with tales of what befell).

So orcs are seen as too innately aggressive to form lasting power structures above the tribal level, except when charismatic individuals (Obould is a current example) weld stronger aggregations together. These seldom outlast the death of the charismatic leaders, unless they can found a strong dynasty. Goblins are seen as too small and weak to be mighty warriors, but to be very vicious, agile, tough, enduring/cunning, and numerous; they succeed like halflings, but are offset in successes by the many races that "are a match for them" (like humans), and achieve more success by hiding and skulking, remaining near-to-surface underground and emerging for raids. They are everywhere, they are endless, but their "kingdoms" are only known and recognized by other goblins, being as they overlap the surface lands held by others, and the goblins maintain this low profile.

Lastly, the hobgoblins really ARE formidable, and successful. So successful that most folk in the Realms haven't realized it. Too smart to make the mistakes of their orc cousins, and having too much wisdom to trust in the loyalty of orcs (though many hobgoblins have led orcs and tried to instill such loyalty, only to see it fail time and time again), hobgoblins have opted for keeping a low profile, too. They dwell in hiding, usually underground in remote or difficult-terrain areas (such as the cave-riddled, all-ravine-and-knife-edged-ridges Stonelands north of Cormyr, that no force can ride into, and maintain any sort of formation in), and emerge to raid in small warbands, usually drawn from the members of four families at most.

The wider Realms doesn't "see" hobgoblins because they're SO good. They go to raid specific places to achieve specific goals (loot, food, and the elimination of anyone who knows much about hobgoblins/has seen them/has fought them with any success), and then return into hiding. They see "success" as staying unnoticed and getting what they want, not conquering large tracts of land and wasting time defending this territory/engaging in trade/having to try to negotiate with others; they just aren't interested in the "big famous kingdom" thing.

The wording of your question seems to suggest you're seeing success only in "uniting" in large numbers to found human-like kingdoms. The secret to understanding the Realms is to go beyond human prejudices and see that the other races (elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, treants, dragons, etc.) ARE TRULY DIFFERENT from humans, and don't want the same things humans want.

Orcs love to fight, plunder, rape, pillage, burn, and cause suffering. They don't want to sit on thrones and pass or obey boring laws, or go out to plant crops. They want ready food, yes, but they don't want to have to oversee slaves for long - - just long enough to sell them, or keep a few to beat and dominate, which usually means weak and small creatures like human children. Yes, I'm stereotyping and generalizing here, so there are MANY exceptions, that you as a DM can build stories around, but I'm trying to make the point that judging the goblin by human standards will always lead you to seeing them as failures, and being baffled as to why they're failures.

Agree? Disagree? This is the skinny, anyway!

Illithids / Mind Flayers

Forsaking Brain-Eating & Benevolence

- Ed 8/9/12

Yes, many illithids over the years have forsaken eating human brains in favour of other diets, and working with human thoughts and memories in other ways. As it happens, I wrote about one such example of this VERY recently, but NDAs prevent me from sharing. Yet.

A few illithids have gained enough experience and been mentally flexible enough (as opposed to iron-hard and unwavering, which also means unlikely to shift world-views and see things differently) to come to view the position of themselves and their race in the Realms differently from the view held by most mind flayers (that other beings are lesser cattle, to be "used" at will).

A few alhoon (illithiliches) come to such a mind-shift after attaining lichdom, as the inevitable chemical shifts in their brains bring about mental changes - - but more alhoon simply go insane, rather than achieving a new world-view.

Yes, there are some benevolent illithids, though these tend to be reclusive and well-hidden, or magically disguised into other shapes they "wear" almost all the time, just to avoid constant attacks or hostility from others who see their mind flayer bodies and react accordingly. At least one longterm-in-print "human" NPC of the Realms is actually one of these disguised illithids.

On Targeting Dragons

- Ed 8/9/12

Yes, illithids have taken over the minds of (and in some cases shared the bodies of, having lost or abandoned their own) all sorts of creatures, from the comical wingless wonder and flumph to the mightiest dragons, but I'm going to be coy about just which ones are favourites/repeatedly popular, or work best, other than to say: mind flayers take pleasure in defeating and dominating strong minds (it's a

challenge, whereas controlling a sheep is so easy that there's almost no satisfaction in doing so), but strong-minded creatures seldom make the best long-term thralls, because the illithid must either "break" such a mind to conquer it, or continually battle it, risking it rebelling whenever the illithid is busy with other matters. Many illithids instigate or take over breeding programs among other races (including humans) to manipulate the affairs and society of those other races, and to provide themselves with ample future stock for thralls.

Fears and Allergies

- Ed 13/7/12

Yes, all illithids have some deep-rooted fears, and the chief one is a fear of going insane. They loathe creatures that are immune or highly resistant to their mind-powers, and beings they regard as possibly mentally stronger than they are. Contact with a powerful insane mind, or with multiple mind-recording or -broadcasting magics at once causes them discomfort ranging up to pain if the thoughts being broadcast are laced with strong emotion.

Any generalization about a race is just that: a generalization that breaks down when applied to individuals. However, in general, mind flayers have what might be glibly described as a "brittle superiority complex." That is, their confidence in the superiority of their race carries them through life - - and whenever it is shattered, they become enraged because they are frightened, and see any challenge to their "proper and natural, innate" superiority as a threat to their entire race.

When it comes to allergies, we are again speaking in racial generalizations that apply with greater or lesser effectiveness when it comes to individuals, but most illithids are allergic to the weed yellowstrap (a tall grass that grows widely in temperate wilds, such as grasslands throughout the Heartlands) and the herbs vammaerth (a brown lichen with a "nutty, smoky" taste that is usually dried and powdered, but can be added raw, fresh, and whole to soups and stews), borage, and rue (the latter externally as well as internally). In an illithid, these cause nausea and revulsion (strong desire to withdraw), plus debilitatingly painful internal cramps and convulsions if large amounts are ingested. Vammaerth in sufficiently high doses (which can only be masked by very hot, peppery spices) can cause brief dazedness and mental confusion.

In addition, SOME illithids feel intense pain and nausea when in contact with electrum that is charged (i.e. that has lightning or electrical magic "running through it" at the time). This causes them additional damage, destroys their concentration, and makes them want to get away, right now and at all costs.

Undead near illithids

- Ed 13/7/12

While any large gathering of undead (i.e. more than a score of zombies, skeletons, or the like, and more than a dozen of more powerful undead) near an illithid community would be met with a "destroy" response if they were noticed, they are not always noticed or considered a threat. This is due to the overweening self-confidence of most mind flayers, and the tendency of many of them to dismiss or belittle the judgment of their fellows ("If *I* deem a threat grave, it is of course grave, but Quxorl's notion of grave has always been sadly deficient").

Yes, using thralls or manipulating dupes (such as handy nearby unwitting adventurers) to "deal with" the undead would indeed be a general response. As for your query: "Are very powerful undead near illithid communities constantly harassed or once a number of thralls are lost will community move itself?" . . .

the answer must be that Realms standard: it depends. On the nature of the undead, the size and characters of the illithids involved, and why the community is located where it is in the first place (i.e. is it situated in a place or near a resource the illithids will be loath to give up?).

As for this: "I've always wondered if illithids have developed a certain warrior class to combat undead and constructs in particular."

My answer has to be: no. Rather, individual illithids, as the need arises, have developed experience in dealing with undead and constructs, and in some cases developed this into almost a profession (just as we call a plumber or an electrician, certain illithid individuals become known as good at dealing with such nuisances, and get called upon to do so).

Lycanthropes

"Were-Creatures"

- THO 21/7/10, on whether, for example, "were-beholders" would be true lycanthropes

Remember that there's a difference between what WE know as readers of game rulebooks, and folk in the Realms know. Whilst scholars and sages may adhere to rules for which particular creatures they call "weres," simple crofters, shopkeepers, and ranchers will be apt to dub any shapechanger or suspected shapechanger a "were-creature."

Were-Beavers

Do They Exist?

- THO 27/5/11

The answer is a definite "yes," because Don Sutherland, one of the earliest TSR artists (who later became a mapper for TSR), played a werebeaver character at one of Ed's Realms adventures at a Milwaukee GenCon (Gary Gygax's character kept trying to "accidentally" kill it, ahem).

Were-Tressym

Do They Exist?

- Ed 20/7/10

Oh, yes indeed. :}

THO: So saith Ed. Heh. Who has written about one (but it probably won't see print for years)

Malaugrym

Different Individuals

- Ed quoted by THO 26/2/11

The Malaugrym are a family, remember . . . so just like members of a human family, they can be very different from each other, hold very different views, argue and dispute and work towards very different aims.

Medusae

Preserving "stoning" ability after death

- Ed 26/12/11

It depends on precisely HOW the medusa's head is preserved (pickling and turning to stone end the petrification power, but certain complicated magic-aided preservation processes preserve it; if it head starts to rot, the "stoning" ability definitely fails)

Orcs

Treatment of wounded fellow orcs

- Ed 24/6/10

Well, the answer really is "it depends." On the circumstances (or perceived circumstances) in which the warrior became comatose, and on the personal character of the shaman or leader, and the traditions and prevalent views of the orc clan, family, or community they both belong to.

In some cases, it would be seen as a sign of the gods consigning the comatose warrior "to themselves" (so he should be left to them, i.e. abandoned but not otherwise harmed), in others, that the orc should be gently conveyed to an altar, temple, or sacred spot and left there for tending or "to the mercies of the gods," and in still others that he should be forthwith "sent to the gods" (i.e. executed, promptly, as is), either as punishment or reward.

My underlying point here is that orcs are as complex and varied in their views as humans, so there is no single "right" or "will almost always do thus" answer.

Otyughs

Reproduction

- Ed, Dragon 96, Ecology of the Gulgrutha, as quoted by Faraer

Otyughs, it seems, produce a jellylike eggmass and regurgitate it at underground gathering places, where the mass is fertilized by another of their kind and develops into a single new otyugh.

Phaerimm

Hunted by Mystra's Chosen

- Ed 7/7/10, in reply to query about why Mystra withdrew her support for the magic-using beings

Mystra wants her servants to encourage ever-wider use of magic, and the development of the Art. Which includes working AGAINST magic-using individuals who oppress others with magic (i.e. wizards who kill off many other wizards and apprentices to "remove competition" - as opposed to a wizard who slays a lone rival mage in a war or feud). The phaerimm became the ultimate example of "those who kill off others" with their lifedrains: they were killing all life that came within reach, indiscriminately, and ultimately endangering the world itself (if not stopped). So Mystra wanted them stopped. Not exterminated, so a few surviving phaerimm who never use lifedrain magics will be tolerated . . . but yes, Mystra withdrew her favour and kindly regard from the phaerimm.

Magic Absorption

- Ed 18/8/11, responding to query about events in "Sword Play" novel

The Phaerimm absorb magic consciously, not involuntarily (i.e. it's not automatic, and won't occur if they're "not ready" for it). Moreover, all Phaerimm have a maximum capacity, beyond which excess magic harms them, just as Shandril is/was harmed by excess spellfire. That's what happened in SWORD PLAY; individual goit overloaded so badly that the spillover magic was enough to slay them.

Multiple Groups

- Ed 13/10/11, responding cryptically to query about encounters of the Imaskari with phaerimm, and if they were the same group the sarrukh and the Netherese encountered

There's STILL more than one group of Phaerimm operating on Toril.

Place-Spirits

- THO 19/3/10

Spirits powerful enough to really affect or communicate with humans were relatively rare (and non-existent in long-settled, "civilized" areas because the presence of many intelligent life forms tends to make them dwindle and then fade away. If you've ever read the sf classic WITCHES OF KARRES by James Schmitz, think of them as akin to the "vatches" therein. They are indeed tied to nature and elemental deities, and in some cases to some of the beast cults, but the nature of those relationships is ever-changing and varies widely. (We Knights have encountered place-spirits functioning as guardians for both Eldath and Mielikki, and a beholder-worshipping beast cult.)

- THO 20/3/10, responding to assertion that the Water Weird could be a manifestation of a lesser water spirit

Full agreement re. place-spirits being an ideal deployment for the more offbeat "natural/elemental" creatures like the Water Weird. All of Ed's place-spirits can: speak and hear, communicate telepathically/sneakily read surface thoughts of other creatures (VERY limited range), and become visible/invisible at will.

They can be strengthened by several means, more linked to augmenting the places they are linked to (tending an old and ailing tree, cleaning up a refuse-choked pond or rill, planting new "right sort of" plants to replace withered or harvested ones, etc.) than by direct worship.

Even in places where place-spirits are gone or long silent, they are respected (either feared on a superstitious level: "Don't go doing X at Y, or the Whispering One will get you!" or consulted for advice ("sleep a night on the bridge or atop the slaptail [[beaver]] dam, and heed your dreams") or thought to bring direct good luck if honoured in a specific way ("lie with your new love in the pond, and you'll be blessed with hardy twins who will never drown").

In Shadowdale as of the 1360s, there are still thought to be place-spirits associated with the Old Skull and with Harpers' Hill, and both road-bridges (west out of the dale hard by the Twisted Tower, and south that carries the north-south road across the river; the road that becomes the trail to Mistedale. The Old Skull gives advice in the form of dream-visions to those who sleep atop the height, and curses anyone (and their kin) who leaps from it (so, no suicides except to bring down your own family), Harpers' Hill is a strong healer (including afflictions of the mind) and provider of guidance through dream-visions (but one must sleep there for several nights, when the moon is full or waxing to reach full the next night) AND keeps evil-aligned creatures and undead away from the Hill, and the two bridge-spirits are both associated with good monetary fortune and learning a truth.

There's also a rumor of a dell deep in the forest (where few folk of Shadowdale dare to go) that is scared to Mielikki, and guarded by unicorns and an unseen place-spirit, who wards against fire and keeps goblin, trolls, demons, and devils away.

Rakshasa

Presence

- Markustay (non-canon), Qs for Ed 12/8/12

IIRC, most of them were in the Old Empires region. We assumed they came from the southern portion of Kara-Tur, and were 'brought in' (culturally) by the Mar (who we assumed were refugees from fallen Tempat Larang, from the other side of the mountains). This is all homebrew, but based on our findings with official (although not always canonical) lore.

- THO 12/8/12

Markustay is right, but I can add: a few rakshasa are lurking in Turmish and the Vilhon (VERY low profiles), a handful surviving in Calimshan (where they've mainly been hunted down and ruthlessly eliminated), an even smaller handful in the cities of Amn (where they never reveal their true natures), some in the Lake of Steam cities, and LOTS of them in the Tashalar.

Satyrs

Dwellings

- THO quoting Ed's 1985 notes, Qs for Ed 7/7/12

Satyrs dwell in a variety of ways depending on the local climate, but their homes are always in wooded areas and centered around clearings/glades (linked by webworks of trails) where satyrs gather (in a given community, one glade will be the equivalent of a common "living room," another a common kitchen/dining area, another a nursery, another a marketplace, and another a tavern, as well as "play" areas for restless teens). Negotiations and private converse are held away from such areas.

Satyr dwellings may on rare occasions be caverns, but are usually sheltered "rooms" roofed with interwoven living vines and broadleaf plants, strung between close-growing trees. These are lined with non-living material (and edible hay and herbs) inside the living exterior, and in winter may be (in human terms) knee- or even waist-deep in such bedding, for sleeping warmth. Some satyrs migrate south to avoid the worst cold and stay within reach of living plants for forage; frogs and dewworms and lemmings are delicacies enjoyed by some satyrs, who move seasonally as good hunting dictates.

- THO 7/7/12

In the High Forest, we Knights encountered some satyrs who dwelt on massive horizontal tree boughs, among the eldest "forest giant" trees, with curtains and roofs of thick living moss.

Sharn

Knowledge of them

- THO 22/10/11

The problem is: what do we really KNOW about the Sharn? And how reliable is our knowledge? In other words, how much of what we do "know" is propaganda? Or mistaken/misinterpreted lore, reworded overtime to become "established fact"?

Tarrasque

Last appearance

- WR in Qs for Ed 30/7/13, quoting source believed to be canon

There was one in the Forgotten Realms comic series, in the Dragonreach Saga arc (5-8, I believe). I don't remember the in-setting date, but Scothgar Amcathra was born to Mourngrym and Shaerl during that arc. I think it was around 1357, shortly before the ToT.

- Steven Schend quoted by the Sage

"As the guy who used to be the liaison and approvals guy for TSR and the AD&D comic with Kim Yale (may she rest in peace) at DC, I can say unequivocally that the events and characters are all canonical.

Treants

- Ed 31/12/12 (2013 thread)

Treants appear as a modest variety of trees, but the majority of them looking like old, large, going gray (from brown) many-branched oaks. Many young Heartlands treants look like duskwoods, and many "adolescent" (as in, at their most rebellious, reckless, energetic stage) choose to look like bluewoods. I say "choose to" because a treant that roots itself for at least an entire year in a stand that contains a particular sort of tree can then, over a tenday or so, alter itself to appear as (and BE, in terms of physical properties) that sort of tree. Certain elder treants can change at will, and a little faster (within half a tenday).

Turlang

- THO quoting Ed's notes, 31/10/13

Turlang has appeared as various sorts of tree (always deciduous, and usually a shadowtop, though apparently he formerly favored "being" a blueleaf; he can shapechange fairly rapidly, apparently). He is always tall and "sturdy" of build. His speech is grave but he has a wry sense of humor, he's a very good listener and VERY patient and self-controlled (it's hard to tell if he ever gets furious, because he doesn't betray it by looks, voice, or choice of words), and he likes to study particular humans so he understands what they want, fear, and are motivated by (those who might have some impact on the High Forest, that is; he doesn't ask about, or go seek out, humans far away who will probably never come near his beloved woodlands or affect them).

Turlang often "hides" for long periods by going immobile in the thick forest as "just one more tree," and can apparently commune with many trees over great distances during such periods, to gather their observations and opinions over intrusions into the forest, observed magic, etc.

Turlang is in no sense a coward, but is very pragmatic; if he can see no gain (or more loss than overall eventual gain, if he reveals himself) in thwarting someone setting a fire, he won't do so - - but he seldom forgives and NEVER forgets and will strike when a foe is sleeping, wounded, distracted by other matters, or otherwise vulnerable. He never gloats, he just gets even, leaving no "out" for an enemy and "making VERY sure."

He has long-term projects of rebuilding and extending woodlands, by outstripping woodcutters and the effects of fires, not by trying to fight the causes of tree loss directly. Most elves and druids regard him as a firm, reliable friend and ally, because you know exactly where you stand with Turlang.

Undead

Liches

Multiple phylacteries?

- THO 3/8/10, responding to query about if they could have more than one phylactery (other responses also pointed to Aumvor the Undying and Champions of Ruin)

A lich CAN have multiple phylacteries. As you surmised, only one is "active" at a time (which can make detecting/identifying the others challenging).

Also, such liches are the rare exceptions, because this "wrinkle" in preparations for lichdom is very seldom written down by those who've devised it, and so must be thought of, and successfully achieved through experimentation, by each and every mage going lichnee.

Mass Hauntings

- Ed 11/7/11

MOST undead manifest in (or lurk in and near) the area of their deaths/rise as undead/traumatic event/so on, so yes, they are tied to an area (though in the case of a ship or ghost ship [or wagon, etc.], it might be a mobile "spot"), but there are many mobile undead (liches, vampires, revenants, etc.) and in the Realms, there are a FEW mobile forces of spectral/ghostly undead, including the Howling Hunt of Tethyr (a hunting party that was chased and slaughtered by hobgoblins, and now in ghostly form gallops wildly through moonlit locales up and down the Sword Coast, fleeing frantically - - and attacking all living beings they see - - as unseen slayers hack bits of them off); the Hurrying Harpers (rangers and bards running hard through the High Forest in an endless, doomed attempt to get young children away from murderous nobles; they all perished, but won time and distance enough for kindly satyrs to take the children on; the Harpers still manifest to this day, to snatch infants and youngsters away from beset or wounded parents trying to get them away from peril, and take them far through forests, all over the Sword Coast North); and Relegarde's Blades, a pirate crew who fell to fighting among themselves on the way back to shore from covertly burying treasure, slaughtered everyone except their magically-protected captain, Velmur Relegarde - - and now, as spectral undead, still trot and rush on foot through coastal lands from Tethyr northwards, hacking at each other and any living beings they see. There are also half a dozen or so "ghost" warbands, elven and human and dwarven, fleeing from or hurrying to join battles fought long ago, that can be seen in various places in the Heartlands (usually on moonlit nights, and usually not in large cities).

Some such manifestations have been "dealt with" by clergy or adventurers seeking to end their cause, by redressing a past wrong or finding the fallen and burying them with proper rites in consecrated graves, and the like . . . but most have not been ended or lessened in this manner, and still return to frighten or endanger the living.

Vampires

Freeing Vampire Spawn

- Ed 26/12/11, responding to query about ways to free spawn without destroying master or master releasing them

Certain combinations of magical wards, proactive spellcastings (e.g. involving hallow effects), and innate powers of greater unique undead and archdevils and divine servitors can end a master vampire's domination of a spawn without (necessarily) destroying either master vampire or spawn. More often,

the master spawn is severely harmed to sever the link between it and any of its spawn.

Yes, there are temporary magical (and ward-field) means of freeing a spawn, but they must be VERY carefully worded or configured (and these include lesser spells than a wish, though a properly-worded wish will indeed work, for temporary or permanent freedom).

And yes, VERY rarely a master vampire can be impaired so as to be unaware that spawn freedom has occurred. (Again, arranging this is not easy.)

Sorry to be so vague/careful in my wording, but that's the inescapable nature of weighing in on "rules" matters...

Yuan-Ti

Mating abomination & were-serpent

- Ed 22/4/10, responding to query if it would create a sarrukh (perhaps because of looks?)

The short answer is: No. Sarrukh are one sort of reptilian race, yuan-ti abominations are just that:

"abominations" to the pureblood yuan-ti ideal; it's best to think of them as mutants or unique "weird" individuals, rarely alike but merely lumped together; they could just as well be called "the misfits."

(Some being truly monstrous in shape and size; think chimaerae with all sorts of "extra" strange heads and limbs.) Wereserpents, on the other hand, can change form between a particular sort of serpent and another racial form (almost always human). So a mating between an abomination and a wereserpent would (70%) achieve nothing (the abomination would be sterile, or no conception would occur because of chemical mismatches), the developing offspring would kill the mother and be stillborn another 20% of the time, and the remainder would be 9% an abomination that could shapechange, and 1% something else (weird reptilian unique creature of DM's creation or choice). It's (not very slightly) POSSIBLE some of those 1% might be visually mistaken for sarrukh, but they would not BE sarrukh.

ORGANIZATIONS

Circle of Flames

Activity in Myth Drannor

- Ed quoted by THO 28/2/12, talking about wizard group referenced in "Ruins of Myth Drannor" & other sources

The Circle of Flames cabal had two bases in Myth Drannor: a public meeting-place, and (as they acquired rivals) a secret one located in a tower in someone's mansion (palatial private home).

Company of Crazy Venturers

Nain Keenwhistler

- Ed 23/6/11

I gave the character his first name and back story, and he was played by Ken Woods (who added the "Keenwhistler" and who now runs a microbrewery in Oakville, Ontario, Canada, called Black Oak; he has a Facebook group for it). Ken is a quiet, polite, very brainy, good-natured, determined guy, and played Nain the same way. He was a supporter rather than a noisy leader sort, but stepped forward fearlessly when things went wrong -- JUST the sort of person you'd want to have as a loyal friend. That's why he so often died, yes; when things got grim, he stepped forward and took the brunt of it. When they used to say of men at funerals: "When he saw what the right thing to do was, he went right ahead and did

it" . . . that's Nain, and that's Ken. I hope Ken makes millions with his award-winning beers, and I hope Nain Keenwhistler prospers and flourishes in Silverymoon. He should; he's one of the few mages that elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and umans would all trust, without hesitation - - and without their trust ever being betrayed.

Resurrections

- THO 14/1/10

I believe it's over 20 (the number of Nain's resurrections). The character, played by Ken Woods (co-founder and -owner of the increasingly famous Black Oak microbrewery, of Oakville, Ontario), had an unfortunate habit of getting killed in company adventures. A lot.

Cult of the Dragon

Many Cults

- THO 20/6/12

The Cult gets all the press, but in Ed's Realms there are actually half a dozen smaller, sometimes confined to one village, cults linked to dragons...

Defunct Knightly Orders

- Ed 2/11/10, responding to query about such orders (in addition to the Order of the One, see Chessenta section), notes that many others are NDA

- The Order of Mount Waterdeep (1342 DR to 1354 DR?): a handful of undercover maverick nobles, both defiant "younger sons" and "old wastrel uncles," who wanted to keep the nobles firmly part of the government of Waterdeep (and curb the growing power of the guilds), plus "cherry pick" non-noble entrepreneurs and rising social powers in the city, individuals whom they admired the wits, skills, and achievements of, to invite them into the ranks of nobility through marriage, to keep the nobles "capable and formidable." The Order acted as undercover matchmakers and busy "social networkers" at the clubs and revels of the nobility, and as vandals against guild activities that sought to sap or usurp the power and rights of nobles, as well as hampering undesirable "wannabe" nobles seeking to join the ranks of nobility by any means.

They were never numerous, and were opposed by some nobles who resented the idea of anyone at all seeking to influence who became noble and who did not, and by guilds. They were also infiltrated by Calguth's Claw, an alhoon (illithilich)-led cabal that sought to gain influence over particular noble houses, to have them sponsor and hide Claw slaving activities. Piergeiron set Mirt, Asper, and certain other agents upon the Order, to shatter it, and they succeeded . . . though some members survive, and at least one of them hopes to refound the Order, if he ever manages to get free of a curse, and a certain shapeshifting dragon stops hunting him . . .

- The Order of Velen's Heart (1357 DR to 1359 DR?): a handful of proud members of disposed wealthy Tethyrian families who sought to found a new kingdom in Velen. They fell afoul not only of the nobles who held sway over the peninsula, but of several organized groups of monsters who used the wilder areas of Velen as bases, and were gathering their own strength at the same time, seeking to reach out from their lairs to raid into the rest of Tethyr. The Order was swiftly riven and scattered, the few survivors fleeing into the Wealdath and from there trying to further their dream of founding a new

realm. There were less than seven Order members by the winter of 1359, too few to have much hope of carving out a kingdom, but at least five of them are still alive, and may yet turn again to try to found a new realm . . .

Harpers

Activity post-Spellplague

- THO 3/2/12 (much more in Neverwinter Campaign Setting)

Certain Harpers (such as Storm) have survived and gone on working throughout the 1300s and 1400s, so the Harpers weren't quite "extinct." However, they were no longer a Faerûn-wide organization, more like a 20-strong adventuring band that got scattered into loners, pairs, and trios all over the Realms, and didn't communicate much between each other.

Covert Group Behind Them

- Blueblade quoting Ed, Qs for Ed 12/9/10

Q: Was there yet another covert group, even more secret, behind the Harpers?

A: Yes.

I asked Ed that same question at The Great Canadian Baycon convention in Hamilton, Ontario some years back, and he replied with just a "Yes" and that he wasn't going to say ANYTHING more on it, until "certain things get published."

Founding

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), Qs for Ed 14/7/10

The Harpers at Twilight met in 324DR. The modern Harpers weren't formed until 720DR.

Relationship to Governments

- THO 2/1/14

As they work against all "too powerful" (in their view) governments, they are quite often seen as foes or at least trouble by those who place law and order above goodness (or who have a different definition of "good" than the rather libertarian Harper view). Added to that, is the internal dilemma, that is waged within the ranks of the Harpers as well as outside their ranks, of the end justifying the means - - or not. If Elminster tricks people, tells lies, and does violence to arrive at a good outcome, was he justified, or not?

I'm not choosing the right answer in such arguments, just underlining that there are always opposing viewpoints, shifting viewpoints, and "shades of gray" (more than fifty, believe me).

Requirement to create compositions/poems once per year

Does Elminster fulfill this?

- Ed 4/5/10, referring to condition to membership mentioned in "Code of the Harpers"

Although no one was ever going to boot El (a founding member) from the Harpers for lack of creative output, the Old Mage did (and still does!) scribble chapbook potboilers (very good for their type, which we real-world types might term "overblown pulp fiction derring-do adventure") and poetry (most of which is TERRIBLE). El does have a knack for satirical parody poetry, however, which because of its

meter lends itself to use as replacement song lyrics, and some of those efforts on his part are quite good (and have seen lasting popularity in the Realms, though almost no one knows who composed them). One example: the Cormyrean song "Our King Azoun," which has such lyrics as "Our King Azoun is a bold bold soul..." but got transformed into "Our King Azoun is a randy dandy goat..." El has also composed a handful of tunes, some of them pleasant but generally uninspired - - and he's been doing it for long enough that he's produced thousands of poems, a play or two (again, vicious satires are his forte), about a dozen tunes, and forty or fifty sets of parody lyrics, all told. Not to mention some sixty chapbooks, ranging from tender romances to action epics, but predominantly there aforesaid pulp adventure.

Potential Abuses

- THO 19/6/13

Harpers work against governments they consider too large and too powerful, and against those who they see as being overly aggressive to others (e.g. by destroying habitat [burning forests] to drive creatures out of an area so it can be settled [and farmed]). So, libertarians - - but libertarians who believe in a code all can trust in. They always work against abusive authority, too, so they can seem like Greenpeace or various real-world protestors at times.

So Harpers often break laws, but view those making and enforcing those laws as unjust aggressors abusing power - - or even claiming rulership over lands not theirs. What, then, is a "wrongful act"? As for causing harm, Harpers fight. So there's bloodshed and death, which is causing harm . . . but then again, they would argue that to not resist aggression would have resulted in a lot more death and harm to many more folk.

So . . . it's complicated. Ed has never written a black-and-white, clear-cut Realms. He has always put in layers of meaning, nuances, complexity, and so on, because he believes that a vital part of roleplaying is making moral choices. That are truly choices, not "this is the shining side of good, and that is the dark-hearted side of ultimate evil. Choose between them." situations, but harder and messier choices.

As Wooly posted, Zhentarim (real law-and-order, might makes right types) would see Harpers as bad. If the word existed in the Realms, they might claim that "all Harpers are terrorists, or abettors of terrorists, whereas WE obey laws." But then, many in the Realms would see the Zhents as akin to Hitler's stormtroops (to use another real-world analogy), so it's back to "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter."

In the games I've played in, many Harpers have made MISTAKES, yes, but always with the best of intentions. I'd never seen a "false Harper." If you read Ed's novels, Elminster makes mistakes all the time. And yet, most see him as a force for good. A meddler who drives a lot of them nuts, yet in the end, over the centuries, a force for good.

So...complicated. (Remember, the Realms posits lots of opposed gods, so deciding whose judgment is "right" regarding harm and "wrongful acts" isn't easy, either.)

Heralds

Area of Control

- Ed 21/2/13

Officially the Heralds "have dominion over" the entire world. In daily practice, they are respected and consulted to JUST east of Thay and to Ulgarth (so, not in Kara-Tur or Zakhara - - but for folk of the Sword Coast and Heartlands and Shining South and Inner Sea lands, who travel elsewhere (e.g. Maztica, or Returned Abeir when sailing there is possible), the "writ" of the High Heralds accompanies and governs

them; i.e. just because you leave mainland Faerûn doesn't mean you can now ignore the rules and decrees of the Heralds.

Heraldry

- Ed 23/2/13

“Will non-human eg. dwarven, elven etc heraldry be recognised by human heralds?”

Ed: Yes.

“Vice versa?”

Ed: Yes, the High Heralds are recognized by all “civilized” races (this includes hobgoblins and orcs) as “THE” keepers of blazons and grants of arms. Where non-human races differ from human is the extent to which they’ll strictly and precisely obey the heralds - - or to put it another way, a human brigand or most orcs and hobgoblins would use the blazons of a rival tribe or clan (or coster or other organization they don’t belong to) for battlefield trickery, whereas a human noble or royalty or shopkeeping or guilded commoner wouldn’t dare.

“Would they (heralds) consider it legal to incorporate dwarven/elven/etc arms into a human crest and arms (because the requester thinks its 'cool' for example) or would there be some regulation over this?”

Ed: There are regulations (which aren’t published; they boil down to the High Heralds’ judgment, which tends to be strict and narrow in this regard). ELEMENTS (i.e. a “charge”) of elven or dwarven symbols can be incorporated into human arms to signify battle victories over a race (or far more often, specific clan or city or house or family), or more often to signify intermarriages, or even more often to signify alliances or trade joint-ventures.

“How about an ancient coat of arms (bloodline presumed extinct)- 1)from existing nation or 2)extinct nation - being resurrected by someone:

Because it looks good?”

Ed: No. Again, individual charges can be used, but in ways sufficiently different from former usages as to deny confusion (in the heralds’ judgment).

“Or because they believe themselves to be a remote descendant?”

Ed: They would have to prove the descent to the heralds (who are obligated to help them in research, not hinder or casually dismiss them). Mere belief (and even a name or names shared with the possible ancestors) isn’t sufficient. Failure to satisfy the heralds means denial of use of the arms.

“Or they are trying to create a claim of legitimacy to an area?”

Ed: Again, they would have to prove legitimate descent or inheritance (the heralds guard against this very tendency to claim rights to an area loudly enough and long enough that eventually it becomes unquestioned). If someone with the rights to grant land, such as a ruler, grants such land to someone who has a title or who is given a title by the ruler, the heralds step in to craft a blazon, badge, motto, colors, and so on for the land/title recipient.

“Is it considered legal to adopt such symbology if Heralds find no other current genuine claimant? Or would such heraldry be considered forever retired?”

Ed: Vacant titles and lands don't come with arms, in the same way as in our real world, having the same surname as someone who was once granted arms doesn't entitle you to use those arms, if you aren't related to the armigerous individual(s). So, no, a person in the Realms who knows or assumes a title is vacant can't just adopt it and the blazon used by the last known holder (or an earlier one). The heralds grant arms to individuals, and confirm descendants in the use of blazons that are inherited (some blazons go with offices, some descend through the generations of titled noble houses, some die with their original holders).

The heraldry of a particular title, office, or family that MAY have died out is held in abeyance by the Heralds in case a "long lost" heir surfaces, so for practical purposes it is retired. If no such heir ever appears, that retirement in effect becomes permanent.

"Permanent retirements" become official when rulers officially dissolve or transfer titles or offices from one bloodline to another.

Things get complicated (and decided on a case-by-case basis) when it comes to rulers trying to strip armigerous noble families of their status, but in general the heralds prevent/deny individual monarchs from stripping noble houses of their heraldry. If a king hates a particular noble, that noble can be exiled and stripped of their lands and titles in a kingdom, but in exile can still style themselves as noble and use their blazons (in fact, should they invade the kingdom and try to overthrow the king, the heralds would expect them to openly use their rightful blazons, not try trickery such as using the blazons of others).

Far Eastern Heraldry

- Ed 23/2/13

Yes, the High Heralds try to keep track of ALL heraldry that comes to their attention, however crude (i.e. only simple badges, or simple colors) and however much it contradicts established human-Heartlands-heraldry as administered by the High Heralds for centuries. They do this in their travels, and from reports made to them by local and court heralds (and explorers and far-faring costers and individual merchant traders) everywhere.

Relationship with Harpers

Source of Information

- THO 23/2/13

The Harpers have always been a source of information for the High Heralds, and continue to be, though for the last century-and-a-bit it's been "unofficial" rather than formal, as it once was.

Relationship with Candlekeep

- Ed 24/7/11

So far as I know, there's no animosity between the Heralds and Candlekeep, but there is a professional distance (largely "keeping out of each other's hair"). So, yes, I would say it's a mutual respect. Records are freely shared between the two in a literal sense (no fees), but not in a daily sense (as in, they VERY rarely exchange or share records). What usually happens is that Candlekeep gives free room, board, and records access to any traveling Herald who stops over - - and in return, get that Herald's free expertise (questions answered, badges and blazons designed, heraldic disputes settled, identifications made, etc.).

Rogue Heralds

- Ed 21/2/13

Heralds who make too many mistakes, or who engage in "dishonesty of office" (such as twisting blazons or who can use them in return for covert payments) get dismissed and imprisoned for a year or two or even three (so they can't sow discord or confusion while their replacement settles into the office they formerly held). The High Herald's see to this, in cooperation with various rulers (and no, there is VERY rarely dishonesty among the High Herald's, though there are respectful disputes). Local heralds (and especially the ruler-appointed "court heralds") are the sources of such backsliding. Local heralds dismissed in disgrace during the time period you mention were almost all in Sembia, and took bribes to style various wealthy Sembian non-nobles as full nobility WITH FAKED CONNECTIONS TO real, established nobility from elsewhere in the Realms. The heralds holding the offices of Bronzetreer, Gelgorget, Hardragonet, and Elmaer were all removed and replaced.

In Cormyr, Lord Helstallion was exiled and lost his title (though the rest of his family were unaffected) because he imprisoned a local herald for a short period so he could forge grants of arms and letters purporting to be from that herald, so assassins he'd hired could be passed off as visiting nobility from the Shining South, and so gain access to a rival noble he wanted slain (the scheme was seen through by War Wizards before any killing could be attempted; Helstallion's punishment was purely for impersonating a herald).

Knights of Myth Drannor

Activities between *The Sword Never Sleeps* (1348 DR) and *Spellfire* (1357 DR)

- THO 3/5/10

In the years between the end of *THE SWORD NEVER SLEEPS* and the beginning of *SPELLFIRE*, the Knights arrived at the Old Skull Inn, chatted with the staff, got jumped by Zhent undercover agents (who'd been in the taproom) that night in their rooms, survived, claimed the Twisted Tower (which involved fighting Zhents and drow through it, and cleansing it, then delving into the cellars and down into the drow-infested caverns and tunnels connected to the cellars), and tried to settle down to ruling Shadowdale. Which meant winning over a frightened, Zhent-harrassed, surly populace, fighting off three Zhent armed forays from Voonlar (and then carrying the fight to the Zhents in Voonlar), establishing laws and local constables and a militia, doing a census (results of which are in the original "Old Grey Box" Realms boxed set), uncovering a were-creature that was murdering villagers as part of that census, then having all sorts of adventures (including fighting drow at Castle Grimstead, battling local Zhent agents like Erech the Alchemist [who was using both poison and bombs against Harpers and anyone else hampering Zhent plots], going up against The Temple In The Sky after fighting the giants in the nearby Tower, and finally deciding that Doust should rule as Lord while the rest of the Knights went adventuring, both to curb growing demon and devil troubles emanating from Myth Drannor [where we finally succeeded in closing a gate to the "darker planes" that was letting devils flood into the Realms], and to act as Shadowdale's envoys throughout the Dales. The attempt was to cooperate with Mistedale (successful) and other dales (less successful) in fighting off the Zhents. The Zhents were busy (in Yulash and other places) fighting off Hillsfar's growing ambitions, and the Dales were also being pressured by Sembia; interests there were "buying up and moving in" all over the Dales, conquering without armed invasion...and the Knights ended up caught in the middle trying to finesse all of these competing interests.

Luvon Greencloak & Alok Silverspear

- THO 23/11/10, replying to query if they were members of the Knights

No, Luvon and Alok were never Knights, but they were allies and friends of the Knights.

Morals and Aims

- THO 22/4/11

We have had moments of weakness, to be sure. Torm and sometimes Lanseril sometimes advocate exploiting what's easy pickings, especially from the Zhents or Red Wizards or other "bad" targets/potential victims. We tend to let Torm pilfer from evildoers. Yet here's the double key: some of our players run their characters as genuinely altruistic (Florin, Doust, Jhessail), and we ROLEPLAY all "war council" discussions within the party, always (and Ed encourages this). The Knights don't often "dungeon crawl" so much as we navigate subplots and endless intrigues, so we usually go into a situation with aims held high, rather than reacting to monster attacks and traps.

So we genuinely DO "stand up for good" (though we can be wrong about consequences and other individuals as often as the next guy), and doing so makes us feel better, and we enjoy that sort of play. In Ed's hands, the Realms is a fascinating place, and being as we can call on Harpers for food and shelter if we ever get really destitute, money is secondary to DOING things. Adventurers tend not to have much social status anyway, we aren't interested in bigger houses and kidney-shaped swimming pools because we're always on the move and because we tend to see them as stationary targets where we "know" a rich corrupt merchant can be found (lounging in HIS pool, I mean), so we're not all that interested in material things, except as means to ends. It doesn't hurt that we found some rich treasures early on and hid them well, and so can call on them if we have to . . .

Reason for Name

- THO 22/3/11

The Knights moved to Shadowdale from Cormyr (see Ed's Knights trilogy for why). After they tired of ruling there (as opposed to being adventurers), they gave the lordship of the dale their junior member Mourngrym and dedicated themselves to preventing "the wrong sort of folk" (demons and devils) from overrunning Myth Drannor (by closing gates therein), and then preventing "the wrong sort of folk" plundering the ruins in the "gold rush to gain elven magic and wealth" that followed. All of this is outlined or illustrated in published Realms products (see Ed's novel Spellfire for a glimpse of how dangerous the ruins were, or his boxed set the Ruins of Myth Drannor for what it was like to go adventuring there; some earlier adventures mention the closing of the gates [which I roleplayed through, with Ed as DM, and so had a part in "building history"]). The Knights gave themselves their title, to signify their dedication to guarding Myth Drannor (from rapacious plunderers from Zhentil Keep, Sembia, Hillsfar, and even Red Wizards and Cult of the Dragon agents, not to mention various mercenary adventurer bands) until the elves returned.

Destruction of Nine Hells gate in the Burial Glen

- THO 2/1/12, responding to query about "Ruins of Myth Drannor"

Yes, that encounter DID take place at the gaming table. Florin wore and used his flying shield, Dove fought with us, most of us were 7th to 9th level and brought and used all of our magic items, and one of the devils fighting us tried something that got magically twisted by the gate into a terrific explosion that wounded many of our foes. Another wrested a magic item from Illistyl, tried to use it - - and succeeded in alerting The Simbul and calling her to the battle. Where she fought VERY effectively on our side. At the end, most of us were reeling, down to our last few hit points, with our large arsenal of magic items darned near exhausted (a very effective way of lightening our magical armory, BTW).

Looking for trouble vs the opposite

- Ed 20/1/12

A bit of both. The Knights are adventurers who hold war councils among themselves and choose what they're going to go out and do, so they do go looking for trouble. But a lot of trouble comes looking for them (bwoohahaha, and so forth).

Mane's Band

- THO 20/5/13

Mane's Band were in the Earthspurs (both aboveground and in subterranean caverns therein).

Red Wizards

Training Program

- THO 24/6/13

Although the process for attaining the training and experience necessary for being deemed a Red Wizard has varied from zulkir to zulkir over time, and from school to school of magic, in general it starts like this: existing Red Wizards take apprentices, and when either the apprentice or the "master" thinks the apprentice is ready, the apprentice takes service with ANOTHER Red Wizard of a different background and outlook. When that tutor (NOT the apprentice) thinks the apprentice is ready for 'advanced' training, they inform a higher-ranking, veteran Red Wizard, who tests the apprentice -- and decides on what service (as in, mission out across Faerun) or further training the apprentice needs. After the mission or training has been accomplished, a different high-ranking, veteran Red Wizard tests the apprentice, and informs the zulkir if they believe the apprentice is ready to be admitted into the school as a Red Wizard (or, in the case of "troublesome" apprentices, given another mission, quietly eliminated, or sent to another school of magic/zulkirate as an apprentice (either highly placed, or put at the bottom with novices of the new school)).

At least, this is how Ed once explained it to we Knights, speaking in character as several NPCs, back in the days when the Realms hadn't yet been published as a setting (i.e. long before the original boxed set or FR6 Dreams of the Red Wizards had ever been written).

Greater Power pre ToT

- THO 21/10/12, responding to query about artifact giving them more power pre-ToT referenced in FR Adventures p127

I recall a long evening of discussion about that artifact, Eilserus, and as I recall (consulting notes I made, back then) it aided Red Wizards in at least three ways:

A Red Wizard could "blow" all the magic they had left, one spell or a dozen, to power a teleport of themselves (only; they could bring along non-living items they were wearing or holding or that were strapped to them, of a total less than their own body mass) back to the artifact. In other words, a "word of recall"-like escape.

A Red Wizard could call on the artifact to heal them; it would drain the Red Wizard's choice of his/her own memorized spells, instantly giving them hit points equal to twice spell level (so a fireball, 3rd level, gave a wounded Red Wizard back 6 hp). The involvement of the artifact made certain that healing was absolute (wounds and organs knit perfectly with no scars, severed digits that were held in place during healing would reattach, etc.).

A Red Wizard could when memorizing spells (in the usual 2nd edition manner) memorize an extra spell of each spell level they could use, from the roster of spells in their books, and "hang" this spell in the artifact, ready for them to cast later (by silent act of will, no V,S, or M components necessary but taking an entire round of concentration). So they could "go to war" confident they could use a full roster of memorized spells, plus one extra per level.

That's just what my notes have, along with this cryptic note: "powered by a Tharchioness who can channel its greater powers out through a remote Red Wizard but will burn that wizard internally doing so, fatally if too much channeled, or deny any Red Wizard access to the artifact, at will; zulkirs forbidden to go near" (that would be near the artifact). We'll have to wait for Ed to provide more, and it MIGHT still be NDA, being as it's part of the history of the Red Wizards (Ed's creation, along with Thay, the zulkirs, tharches and their rulers, and so on) that an author might try to resurrect and use.

Sword Heralds

"Heralds"

- THO 25/2/10

The mysterious Sword Heralds are NOT Heralds, they just swiped the word "herald" for use in their name, to foster confusion and to claim a legitimacy they have no rightful claim to.

Talonmists

- GK quoting Ed, Qs for Ed 31/5/11, in reference to query about group mentioned in "Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark"

For the Talonmists: originally Tahlaunmiiz of Calimshan, fled north from Calimport from the plague of - 990 DR into the lands that are now Amn. Dwelt for some centuries as a reclusive, low-profile family of traders who slowly gathered magical lore (there were always wild talents [3e sorcerers] among them) as they bred and scattered across the Sword Coast North. (Magic was shared within the family, but its use was kept as hidden as possible.) Talonmists dwelt in the cities of Elturel and Iriaebor, and later Secomber, Neverwinter, Waterdeep, moving and changing their names often, but cooperating with each other in trade (I have something cheap and abundant here that's rarer and pricier your end, Uncle, and we need spiny speckled xoblobs here, so let's swap).

What we see in Westbridge is a branch of the family that's simply decided to come out of the shadows (something viewed darkly by other kin in other places, who are having to hide even more thoroughly as a result). So the Talonmists aren't new, they're just one of my "sleeper" power groups that I decided to reveal. A new dynasty to play with, as it were. As Azuth once said to Elminster: "You're still far indeed from plumbing the dark depths of my cunning. Years yet of entertainment for us both."

"Think Tanks"

- Ed 23/3/13

Yes, there are "think tanks" in the Realms, but there's no overall term for them, because they tend to get called different things depending on who assembled them and why (temples host local and interfaith "councils" or "conclaves" to discuss local controversies, border disputes, rules for developing industries, guild clashes, and so on; rulers call the same things "alliances" or "councils;" and smaller private meetings are often just called "cabals" or "moots" or "meets").

I would tend to say a "think tank" has to be more than a single meeting - - or a big moot for discussion followed by a vote/sign things/settle things followup. It should mean a group, however amorphous in membership, that meets or communicates via magic or written messages over a number of years to discuss some continuing themes as well as "problems of the moment."

These sort of groups form and dissolve (often silently "fading away" rather than acrimoniously breaking up) all the time. Here are four long-lived ones:

The Dalethnar (named for Daleth, the very successful and wealthy caravan company owner of eastern Amn and Tethyr), a merchants' group that meets, usually twice a year, in various strategic Heartlands trading centers to discuss matters of shipping (such as tariffs, inspections by the authorities of various governments, remounts and provisioning, and collective response to brigandry, weights/measures and standardized containers, attempted bans/trade controls by rulers or priesthods, and so on). Formerly dominated by Amnians, but the Sembians are muscling in.

The Ravens (this is what everyone calls the Conclave of Ravens except its members), a gathering every two years, at a different independent and usually isolated (but with multiple routes in and out, and not a lot of nearby cover) settlement in Faerun, of mercenaries. The Ravens discuss rules of conduct, which patrons (often rulers) will "go under the ban" or be limited in how many members they can hire or what conditions will be imposed on their hirings, by member "swords," thanks to their treatment of members in the recent past (for example, scapegoating and executing mercenaries after said hireswords were put in militarily impossible situations, or framed for things they did not do). Mirt of Waterdeep was briefly a member, back in his days as Mirt the Merciless, mercenary swordcaptain.

The Starflame, a "court of conduct" for independent mages that meets in Scornubel at least once a year (but more often if crises arise) to debate laws and treatment of independent arcane spellcasters by various rulers (and priesthods, and costers, and guilds). This cabal (as most non-members refer to it) has fallen silent, or retired into secrecy, several times over four centuries or so, but risen to public prominence time and again. Famous/infamous members have briefly included the Blackstaff (Khelben Arunsun), Sememmon of the Zhentarim, and Lauraud, one of the Sceptanars (city rulers in Chessenta).

Athaenul's Seat, a gathering of livestock breeders large and small (dominated by "large") that usually assembles somewhere along the Heartlands "Throat" trade routes (linking the Sword Coast with The Sea of Fallen Stars, through Berdusk, Iriaebor, Priapurl, and other nearby settlements) to discuss prices, breeding, diseases, laws enacted by various rulers, feed crops - - and, detractors of this group insist, ways of arranging shortages so as to keep prices higher than they should be. Many noble houses of Cormyr have taken to quietly attending the Seat, not to mention Waterdhavian noble houses such as the Roaringhorns.

[More on the Starflame](#)

- Ed 30/3/13

Q: "Does it have the collective authority to punish deliberately abusive mages who shirk the laws of various rulers and such? Do any cities/rulers actively support the Starflame within their areas of influence?"

A: Punishment only consists of expelling individuals from Starflame deliberations and banning them from joining or rejoining (until specific redresses made), and warning Starflame members of bad conduct so they know to be wary of certain individuals. Rulers who have cited Starflame information and decisions publicly include those of Telflamm, Westgate, and Memnon, but the public doesn't know if "support" in any of these places extends any farther than that.

Twisted Rune

Elder Rune

- THO 28/8/14

The "Elder Rune" is what the most senior members of the Twisted Rune call themselves, meaning "we who possess the most self-discipline and actually stick to very long term goals, rather than indulging in some of the excesses and short-term, 'grabby' pursuits of more junior members."

Zhentarim

Trade Routes

Plans Regarding Routes

- THO 28/12/10

Manshoon and Fzoul wanted to establish the SHORTEST (and therefore cheapest) trade route between Zhentil Keep and the Sword Coast ports - - and they wanted it to be a trade route they controlled every inch of. So, having taken over the Citadel of the Raven and conquered the valley of the Tesh, subduing Daggerdale was next (as they established Darkhold, far to the west, to serve as a base for dominating the wilderness area and preventing Cormyr "riding out to block" Zhent trade once the route became established. Then subvert Llorkh and Loudwater, giving them ports on the navigable River Delimbiyr, establish a covert presence in Scornubel, put a route through the Stonelands via Yellow Snake Pass, and start taking over waystops on the trade-roads near Boareskyr (as seen in HAND OF FIRE). Then work on Shadowdale, Voonlar, and Yulash.

The Stonelands bit of the route is always troublesome, but it's now a flanking alternative as the Bedine are subverted (despite the pesky Harper Lander, and the Bedine "witch" Ruha, that Troy Denning wrote about in THE PARCHED SEA and its subsequent sequel) and that shorter route across Anauroch (remote enough that very few countries [Cormyr and Sembia, I'm looking at you] can easily reach to harass Zhent caravans there).

It's all about having the shortest trade-route, that you control every stretch of, so you can REALLY undercut other merchants, and still make a very handsome profit (whereas your competitors are a chain of traders ["middlemen" in modern parlance] who each have to make profit on their transactions. You can get there first with the fresh, just-coming-into-season fruit that will command the highest prices of the season. You can respond to fads and fashions by selling just what's "hot" right now. You get richer and richer . . .

These are my words, but I'm heavily paraphrasing Ed here, covering ground he's explained many times over the years (often to TSR designers - - which is where some of them got the later idea to create Red Wizard trade enclaves). The Zhents aren't foolish enough to think that slinging the fastest spells and hurling armies at every foe will make you victorious conquerors AND KEEP YOU ON TOP. They want to be the "tolerated evil" lifeline that supplies the goods everyone needs, and so daren't be messed with in

a muster-armies manner. They want to become essential, so Waterdeep and other places will grudgingly support the Zhents in any dispute...because they need them.

Secrecy, Control of Routes

- THO 11/6/16

While the Zhents don't advertise their trade roads (which are intended to be shorter, cheaper routes than competitors, so the Zhents can either undercut rivals or realize more profits than rivals when selling at the same price), they don't hide them. They just don't (usually) ask permission from any local authorities/rulers (preferring assassination or bribery for persuasion when necessary), and they DO patrol and guard their routes, so only they (and approved-by-them others) can use said routes. And they create them by guile, work, and brute force; it's not about not getting noticed, it's about "might makes mine, do you REALLY want to tangle with me? I'll make it very much not worth your while..."

Working with the Cult of the Dragon

- THO 4/12/12

We Knights tried hard to lay bare how the Zhentarim and the Cult were working together, because although they largely weren't (at the "grunt" level), there was clearly some degree of cooperation (or at least "staying out of each other's way") at the higher levels, meaning Manshoon, Sememmon, Sarthor and the like at the Zhentarim end were involved.

Cover-stories for mercenaries

- THO 9/8/14

The Zhents have a whole list of cover names as mercenaries, and I can scare up six of them just from the Ed's notes I have handy: Galadaer's Griffonhouse [[Galadaer was a famous fat, jovial, heavy-drinking mercenary captain of a century ago; the Zhents took over his company after his death]]; the Boldblood Banners; the Bronze Glaive; Hallowhand Solutions; Markalhar's Blades; and Hondur's Banners.

Lord Chess

- Ed 5/1/14

Q: In one place in the Ruins of Zhentil Keep box (p 61 of the Campaign Book) Chess is named Chess Calkontor. Elsewhere he's noted as the son of Calkontor, but no last name is given. Did he in fact use his father's name as a last name, and is it typical/acceptable for Zhents (or Moonsea folk, or a larger group) to take the father's given name as a last name without any sort of "son of" prefix or other such designation?"

Ed saith: No, it's not typical/acceptable for Zhents or others to just take a father's given name as a surname without a "son of" designation. However, Lord Chess is an unusual case. His father was the founder of the Zhent "noble house" (as, in his father was one of the Zhents who called themselves "lords" for the first time, and were accepted in this by the populace), so Chess's father, Malanxh Calkontor Chess Dorrim, wanting to distinguish himself from the many related Dorrim families of Zhentil Keep and the surrounding lands, became "Lord Calkontor." Chess, the son, became Lord Calkontor in turn, but wanted to distinguish himself from his murderous, much-hated, now-dead father, and so called himself "Lord Chess," although formally he was Lord Chess Calkontor, and sometimes admitted to

being "Chess son of Calkontor" when discussing what rights and powers he should have as a noble (being as his claim to those rights and powers arose out of his parentage).

Hesperdan (Old Man of the Zhentarim) & Eirhaun Sooundaeril (The Maimed Wizard)

- THO 19/10/15

Hesperdan and Eirhaun both still survive, as do other (well-hidden) Zhents of power, most of whom think the days of powerful wizards among the Zhentarim maintaining a high profile are over (they want little or nothing to do with the current Zhentarim).

Merchants from Zhentil Keep

- THO 23/1/13

It's fine to be from Zhentil Keep when trading normally in various places (though bear in mind merchants from the Keep don't go around wearing uniforms or signs that proclaim where they're from). There's no stigma. Some folk view all folk from the Keep with suspicion, because they don't know if a given individual is a spy for the Zhentarim - - but it's the Zhentarim they hate and fear: armed, armored, and uniformed Zhentilar troops or wizards or priests flying on foulwings or armed caravans in the wild (remember: Zhent caravans won't be moving through populated Cormyr, because the entire early goal of the Zhentarim was to establish their own exclusive short caravan route from the mines of the Moonsea to the Sword Coast that DIDN'T go through Cormyr or the Heartlands "run" of Berdusk, Iriaebor, Scornubel, and so on, but rather cut through conquered Teshendale and Daggerdale, across Anauroch or the Stonelands, and through (conquered) Llorkh or Loudwater . . . so such caravans won't be encountered in a town in Cormyr. The only Cormyreans to see such caravans would be adventurers or Purple Dragons or Highknights on forays up into the "wild" Stonelands. A trader from Zhentil Keep is just . . . a trader from Zhentil Keep. Unless he peers too closely or asks too many questions or wanders where he'd have no reason to. Then, he might be a spy.

Troop Units 1374 DR

- Ed 29/12/10, responding to query about units in Bane-era Zhentarim

As of 1374 DR: A "march" of Zhentilar are ten warriors, a Zhentarim wizard, and a priest of Bane. The commander of this standard infantry unit is whoever's been named as commander.

In very rare cases, this will be one of the warriors (such rare cases include a warrior of senior command rank, or a battlefield observer sent out by Fzoul or a senior priest, Manshoon or other senior Zhentarim mage, or the Zhentilar battlefield command for the army or the area).

In uncommon cases, it will be the wizard (either when the wizard has 4 levels or more greater than the priest AND the highest-ranking warrior, or when the wizard is a battlefield observer or "battlespell specialist" [i.e. on a specific mission to take out a specific foe or cast a "hanging" spell in a specific spot or set a trap or place/recover a particular item] sent out by higher command).

Usually, the commander is the cleric. This is the norm under Fzoul; previously, under Manshoon (early 1373 and before that) the wizard always commanded unless the priest was very senior or on a special mission.

So, the class that "rules" in 1373/74 is whatever class Fzoul SAYS rules, in a specific unit (which is almost always going to be the priest). So the "default" commander of a given unit is the highest-ranking (in Church hierarchy, not necessarily in class levels) cleric, "default" meaning whenever another sort of commander isn't specified.

PLACES

Waterdeep

Population

Proportion not born there

- Ed 1/9/12

"It depends." Both on the time of year, and the date in question. Every summer the population of Waterdeep swells as folk arrive to trade, look for work, look to prey off citizens and visitors, and so on. Every winter it shrinks as some folk head for warmer, more southerly locales.

Yet at any given time, Waterdeep's population is probably a minimum of one-third "outlanders who arrived within the last two decades." That's a very rough estimate, though, and no one's doing a proper census. (The tax collectors try, but . . .)

- THO 1/9/12

I'd just like to underscore that many folk who call themselves "Waterdhavians" are, at any give time, "on the road" elsewhere because they make their livings moving trade goods (by caravan, ship, or handful-of-mules peddling), and so aren't in the city to be counted, making the visitors or recent arrivals about a third.

Area around the City

- Blueblade referencing Ed, Qs for Ed 5/5/10

Several lore sources speak of the land immediately around the city being kept as open meadows for caravans to camp/assemble/disassemble, and for the nobles to hawk in, and citizens to walk and eat (picnic) lunches in (see the CITY OF SPLENDORS novel, the Environs of Waterdeep DRAGON article, VOLO'S GUIDE TO THE SWORD COAST, and Ed's "New Adventures of Volo" column in DRAGON, specifically the instalment about the maid they chase).

We know that a day's ride out from the walls that there are villages and hamlets on the roads (with stables for Waterdeep's patrols to secure remounts in) and that from there outwards there are indeed noble "country holds," usually centered around a walled mansion or keep. And yes, it's verdant farmland/grassland (ranching land).

I very much doubt Waterdeep is going to welcome strangers arriving and building full-sized castles anywhere near the city, though...and castles take a LONG time to build, so they'll have ample opportunity to halt construction or just have Watchful Order magists blast the a-building stonework to rubble (again and again, until the builder gets the message).

I'm not trying to horn in and speak for THO or Ed here, it's just that this is a topic that came up repeatedly at GenCon seminars (I'm thinking a lot of players wanted to establish "adventurers' bases" for their PCs outside the city's reach, for Waterdeep-focused campaigns), and I've heard Ed give answers to it many a time...hence all the stuff I've said above.

Watch, Guard, Navy, Cavalry

1,200 City Guard?

- Ed 19/4/10

The 1,200 strength of the City Guard is its mandated-by-the-Open-Lord BARE MINIMUM (it's never supposed to fall below that without triggering standing orders to hire replacements from the militia trainees drilled at Castle Waterdeep. That 1,200 figure is the publicly-announced strength of fully-armored veteran Guardsmen (not to be confused with the Watch; by the 1400s, they are combined), not the true strength. The Lords want to keep the true muscle of the Guard secret, so as to be able to deliver "nasty surprises" to anyone contemplating armed insurrection, invasion, etc.

The garrison of the Castle, the inhabitants of the griffon-rider base inside upper Mount Waterdeep, and the Skullport forces are all NOT included in this figure. At any one time, there tend to be 600-700 partly-trained "sword-ready" trainees who can be pressed into Guard service in a trice (and will be quite effective, assuming some existing Guardsmen survive to be their officers).

City Navy

- Ed 19/4/10

The Navy is largely NDA'd, but as published lore (KNIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD) reminds us all, there is a harbor defense force of merfolk, and as RUINS OF UNDERMOUNTAIN mentions, the navy makes use of the Seacaves and the shaft to move vessels to and from Skullport just as traders do.

Oversight by Wizards

- Ed 19/4/10

One hinted-at but not "spelled out" factor is Khelben, Laeral, and Piergeiron's trusted personal mages all policing the Guard, Watch, and Navy to keep them free of corruption, and doing the same to the Watchful Order, who in turn are used to openly watch over and assist the Guard and the Watch (patrolling with both). This guards against Palace coups and against any infiltrator or noble faction managing to subvert, blackmail, or replace and impersonate more of any of the services than a handful of specific individuals.

Watch & Guard Reactions to PC actions

- Ed 30/8/12

Reactions of the Watch and Guard differ from situation to situation, depending on how wary they are at the time regarding city crimes and security, the reputation and manner of the PCs and adventurers involved (some adventurers have developed pretty cozy "we're your special secret agents" relationship with the Watch and Guard, who know/are under orders to allow adventurers a little leeway), and who else is involved (whether or not any prisoners are guildmasters or nobles, for instance).

However, I can give you some "general" or "usual" procedures and reactions, as follows:

If adventurers turn up with prisoners and a story, they'll get politely but thoroughly questioned by the Watch or Guard (and if they depart before this questioning is done, a "general watch, to arrest and detain" will be issued among the Guard and Watch, to hold them until questioning is done). This questioning will be augmented, in secret, by spells cast by the "duty mages" (currently on-duty with the Watch and Guard members) of the Watchful Order of Magists & Protectors, plus priests of Torm, Helm, and Oghma, seeking to ascertain the truth among what's said.

The questioning will be even more exhaustive (with witnesses sought out and questioned separately, for verification) if deaths are involved.

The Watch and Guard (and the Black Robes/magistrates) have a lot of leeway in sentencing, from dismissing charges outright to imposing exiles and confiscations stop normal sentences, in cases

involving adventurers starting fires, destroying or taking property, and murdering/"justifiably slaying." A "lot of dead bodies" would trigger a thorough investigation, with the adventurers charged not to leave the city (and either imprisoned or given a Watch every-moment escort) until the investigation was done. Adventurers could well end up charged with slayings that were deemed "willful and unprovoked" (and it's not enough to dislike someone, or to judge they've cheated you or wounded you in the past, to have justification for slaying them now - - defending your own life against their intended-murderous attack, when you have not goaded them, is all right, but when witnesses are sought and testimony taken, the "not goading" or who started it can be disputed and a matter of finings or imprisonment or worse. Adventurers are seen as "necessary evils" and "rowdies to be watched closely" by the Watch and Guard, many of whom see them as "walking trouble waiting to happen," so adventurers shouldn't be surprised, if trouble does erupt, to discover they've been spied upon for some time by street urchins or female shopkeepers who are, in fact, "eyes of the Watch."

Treasure gained by PCs in a private dispute is theirs, considered "fair spoils," unless some part of it is needed as evidence in a criminal or political dispute (whereupon it will be confiscated and "fair credit," fairness/value judged solely by the Palace, given in lieu to the adventurers).

Treasure gained through crime (i.e. the adventurers are judged to have forcibly taken, stolen, or done murder to get or keep goods that would otherwise have belonged to someone else) are forfeit to the Palace, and are to be returned to rightful owners or heirs (or failing, that, retained in the Palace coffers).

In commercial disputes or criminal proceedings, the Black Robe often officially shares out treasure among plaintiffs/victims, in accordance with the Black Robe's notion of justice (so adventurers could be given back a part or even all of their treasure, or see it go to victims or the families of victims).

As standing policy, the Guard and Watch keep a close but covert eye on known adventurers in the city. Resident nobles and agents working for them can "buy their way" out of minor trouble, but everyone else should beware. The Guard and Watch have limited patience with troublemakers, and have been known to manipulate and lead outlander adventurers into brawls and thefts so the adventurers can face the drawn-swords danger AND take the blame. In other words, the authorities aren't above using adventurers as both unofficial strike forces AND scapegoats. (Some adventurers are paid enforcers for the Guard and Watch, who wade into drunken sailors or guild disputes when asked to by the Guard and Watch, and are given limited immunity from prosecution for what they do in such strife, by the authorities "turning a blind eye" to what obviously went on.)

Blackstaff Tower

Ready-Staves

- THO 3/6/11, responding to query about staves mentioned in "Cloak of Shadows" novel

These are magical staves ("staves" in recent D&D game editions) that Khelben and Laeral (sometimes with assistance) have crafted and put in racks inside Blackstaff Tower, near entrances, so that whoever is guarding that entrance has them "ready" to hand, if they need to fight an intruder. Ready-staves can be any sorts of magical staves, and I recall that most of them seemed to be "standard" magical staves from various (2nd Edition) sourcebooks, that had been augmented with minor magical powers (they could levitate, glow on command, fly to a wielder's hand if the right command word was spoken by someone attuned to the staff, reflect specific magical attacks or damage types (like lightning) back at their sources, and things of that sort).

An apprentice or anyone else trained on doorwarden duty would know the major powers of the ready-staves at their post, but might not know all powers of the staves. Most of them had a few common

powers, one of which was unlimited back-and-forth message speech (and silent telepathic communication) between everyone simultaneously holding ready-staves (I have no idea if this worked outside the immediate vicinity of Blackstaff Tower, because in play I never saw any ready-staves taken farther away from the Tower).

Wards/Mythals

[Link to Song Dragons](#)

- THO 5/6/11

If I remember rightly, there's some sort of ongoing link between song dragons and Waterdeep's wards (or the older underlying mythals). (Wards aiding the song dragons in healing when needed? Don't quote me on that one, because I can't really recall . . .)

Harbour

[Defenses](#)

- THO 20/4/10, responding to suggestions for ways to improve harbor defense

Waterdeep only exists as the flourishing trading port it is because of its good harbour (not a superb natural harbour, but by far the best one north of Tethyr). The tides, scouring currents, and onshore winds make both ridges and any sort of fixed, non-porous-to-water wall totally impractical: the presence of either would make the harbour tricky for navigation at best and frequently deadly at worst.

For another thing, Waterdeep's harbour is silty (thanks to those currents) over a rock bottom, and warmed and constantly filled by effluent from its sewers. Put ridges or a wall in to block the scouring-out that the currents and tides together do, and the harbour would very quickly fill up with stinking, disease-causing excrement-mud that would ground ships for good and kill off many city inhabitants (before most of the rest evacuated; the city south of Castle Waterdeep would rapidly become untenable).

No offense, Riverwind, but Ed thought through all of this back in 1968 and 1969, before there even was a D&D game. You're not the first person to want to add many defenses to Waterdeep's harbour: the mapmakers at TSR have added towers and walls with each map they've drawn, and Ed has patiently pruned them back when he's had the chance (which isn't always).

Oh, and a postscript that's partially NDA'd:

Those harbour chains aren't JUST chains. Think wizards and magic again.

[Depth](#)

- THO 25/4/10

My notes record a depth of eighty feet right off one of the docks in southern Dock Ward (a coffer of gems plunged off the dock when the man carrying it was slain in a swordfight, and one of the Knights sent someone down on a line to recover it), but I KNOW the harbor bottom is both silty (constantly being bathed in sewer-muck) and NOT flat, so obviously depth will vary from place to place.

My memory is that it slopes away from Mount Waterdeep, getting deeper as one moves south across the harbor.

Closing of City Gates

- THO 6/10/10, replying to query about if gates are closed at night or open 24/7

I'm afraid the answer to your question is: it depends.

On when (era) your Realms campaign is set, and what time of year it is, and what the current situation is (wartime or peacetime for Waterdeep, orc horde expected or not, etc.)

Or to put matters another way:

Up through the 1380s, the gates were always closed at night. The HARBOUR remained open (unless storms or threat of attack caused its closing [[raising of the harbor chains]]) around the proverbial clock (meaning: even before there were clocks ;}), but the gates closed at nightfall and were opened at "full dawn." Exceptions being: when City Guard commanders of certain high ranks, or the Open Lord of Waterdeep, ordered them opened during night hours for a specific purpose (usually just long enough to let someone specific in or out).

After the Spellplague effects and aftereffects settled down, Waterdeep tried keeping the gates open clock-round during the trading season (meaning: not during winter, but all the rest of any year UNLESS there was threat of war, raids, orc hordes, plague or disease epidemics, etc.) for several long periods (decades).

Then some trouble - - usually brigands - - would erupt that would cause them to close the gates at nightfall again, for a bit, until demands by local guilds, caravan companies, and independent outland traders caused them to try opening the gates again.

(This lore comes from Ed, who discussed this topic with Susan Morris as part of editing the ED GREENWOOD PRESENTS WATERDEEP series. I know about it because he discussed it with me, too.)

Waterdeep Common Surnames

- Ed 5/1/15 – related to 3E Waterdeep News

The Watch officer in question (Estrar Thongolyr) isn't a member of the noble family, and so far as he (and everyone in Waterdeep) knows, the Thongolirs and the Thongolys aren't directly related (though if one goes back far enough - - beyond 303 DR, in this case - - who knows?). And yes, Thongolyr is a surname shared by about twenty families in the City of Splendors, which makes it by no means common. (Common human surnames in Waterdeep as the 1400s draw to a close are Blount, Maerammon, Telfeather, and Wintertal; families bearing these names have been resident in the city for at least four centuries, but have been more fecund than most since the mid-1460s DR.)

Maereska Thongolir (of, yes, the noble house), a young and spirited daughter, recently caused a scandal in the city when she was revealed to be the mistress of no less than THREE older heads of other Waterdhavian noble houses. And a guildmaster, for good measure.

Lords of Waterdeep

Disappearances

- THO 9/9/12, responding to query if any have permanently disappeared

Yes.

Honours

- THO quoting Ed's 1978 notes, 10/3/10

Various Open Lords of the city have honored citizens with a variety of "decorations" down the years, but Piergeiron seems to have thus far settled on three:

* The Bright Sleeve: literally a sleeve of cloth-of-gold, embroidered with the name of the person it is awarded to; fits long human arms from wrist to upflared shoulder "flame," having a pleated "accordion" section at the elbow allowing it to be shortened for wear by shorter arms. Awarded to outlanders, citizens, and employees of the city (Guard, Watch, courtiers, hirelings) for "acts of bravery above and beyond expected conduct or paid duties." Example: rescuing someone at the risk of one's own life.

* The Shield of the City: a large golden shield-shaped chest badge (pin), backed by everbright battle-steel (so, can be an effective breast protection). Awarded for "outstanding acts of military service contributing to the protection of Waterdeep and its inhabitants," and so generally given to the Guard and Watch only (but sometimes given to nobles for jumping in to fight alongside city defenders). Examples of deeds that will win it: capturing a dangerous escaped fugitive or known murderer; spotting or helping to prevent someone poisoning food or water or drink in the city; or spotting an attack on the city in time for defenders to get ready to repel it.

The Valorstar: a "curve-sided diamond" badge (pin) of adamantine, set with a single large cabochon-cut (smooth ovoid) thumb-sized sapphire. Strikingly beautiful. Awarded for "long and meritorious service to the city" (such as many acts of tending the sick without pay, giving shelter or aid to the homeless or the destitute or visitors) or "outstanding civic service" (such as designing and contributing funds to the repair or expansion or erection of a needed building such as a "hospital" [[which means, as it meant in the real world in medieval times, homes for the poor, NOT a medical facility]]. Note that temples and religious building of any kind is never recognized by bestowal of this honour; it's expected that the faiths involved will confer their own marks of thanks and esteem.) The Valorstar has in the past been awarded for such "outstanding civic service" as tracking down serial murderers, uncovering plots against the city government and schemes to identify and murder Masked Lords, identifying those who vandalized and despoiled tombs, and settling feuds between nobles or among guilds.

Embassies

- THO 9/1/10

Waterdeep in the 1360s or earlier actually has very few embassies as we real-world moderns know the term. Instead, it has lots of "envoys" from other realms and city-states, who buy or rent mansions in North Ward and Sea Ward. They hold revels and trade meetings in these homes, and entertain delegations from various guilds and individual Waterdhavians there, though they go to Piergeiron's Palace for most "official" negotiations and discussions. Like any wealthy mansion, these homes have walls and servants and guards (and may have traps to deter intruders), but they are NOT like our real-world embassies where the land inside the walls is considered the sovereign soil of the foreign country, and Waterdhavians can't enter there, operate there, or have any authority there. In some cases, due to political sensitivities, some Lords of Waterdeep may order "hands off" treatment akin to that, but that's very far from having legal rights that the outlanders can trust in, or anyone can claim the protect of. These comments I've made come from playing in Ed's campaign, seeing some of his notes, and on one occasion hearing him explain these differences to a TSR designer who couldn't seem to mentally separate the Realms from our modern real world (or even understand that American norms aren't considered the norms everywhere, or that things have changed over the centuries, in our real world). By the way, these official "envoys" resident in Waterdeep are often quite separate from the "factors" (trade agents) of various countries operating in Waterdeep, and may not even know when large

numbers of people, or specific individuals, from "their" country arrive in, or take up residence in, Waterdeep.

Laws

Family Disputes

- Ed 8/3/10, responding to extensive scenario

Q: Recently, my players rescued a half-elven girl (about 15 years old) from a pirate ship south of Thindol. She's been taken in as a sort of ward/apprentice by them, which means I need a background for her. Since the party is eventually going to end up in Waterdeep, I want her to have some connection with that city.

I know you've mentioned several times before that many nobles in both Waterdeep and Cormyr aren't above quietly doing away with members of their own family if said members are sufficiently embarrassing/buck the will of the family's head too often. So I think I'd like to make this half-elf a victim of that.

What I'm thinking is this: the girl's mother was a younger daughter of one of Waterdeep's noble matriarchs. Instead of marrying the man her mother had arranged for, she fell in love and married a wandering elf, and had a daughter by him. This turned her mother against her. It took more than a decade for the matriarch's rage to boil over, but when it did, the matriarch strangled her daughter with her own hands, in front of the half-elven girl. She then secretly sold the girl to some smugglers and pirates she knew, enjoying the thought of her bane living the rest of her short life servicing the crew before they eventually killed her.

My question is three-fold. First, is this plausible? Second, if so, can you give me a prospective matriarch or two who might be the culprit? And third, what would likely happen if the girl confronted and accused her grandmother in a large, public setting (say a formal audience before Piergeiron)? Thanks, as always, for sharing your wisdom.

edit: Whoops, forgot the timeframe: late 1360's to very early 1370's.

A: Possible matriarchs would be the likes of Laentra Manthar (successor to Churylle, misspelled "Churyl" in the CITY OF SPLENDORS boxed set "Who's Who" booklet), Carina Phull, or Pera Sultlue. Piergeiron would certainly hear the granddaughter out, and promise to "consider the matter." The lass and her grandmother would separately be interviewed in private by senior Watch "justisars" (the clerks and interrogators who collate information gleaned from prisoners) with Piergeiron's Palace wizards (one of whom appears in the CITY OF SPLENDORS novel, but there are others) using spells to mind-read them both.

If the granddaughter claims her mother was murdered by her grandmother, or the murder is "seen" in the grandmother's mind, a full investigation (i.e. family disgrace) will take place, and the grandmother will almost certainly be sentenced for that deed. Piergeiron will seize upon this as the paramount concern, to avoid the "she said but SHE said" messiness of the grandmother's treatment of her granddaughter; if there was no murder, the selling into slavery would of course be the main concern. As any punishment for murder will involve (at the least) exile and loss of personal standing, it would mean the granddaughter will see her grandmother eventually "removed" from the scene (which is why

such deeds are almost always done by hirelings working through several layers of "X hires Y, Y then hires Z" so no link can be proven back to the source).

The danger of younger family members disposing of older ones by false accusations is always borne in mind by the Palace (hence the "full investigation" part), and the Palace would provide secure lodgings and protection for the granddaughter during the investigation if she agrees to it, and covert watch over her and undercover-agent protection of her if she doesn't agree to it, to keep agents directed by anyone from "offing" the family members involved to silence them.

"Neutral" nobles are always called in to witness the trials of other nobles, both as object lessons and to prevent anyone in the Palace being accused of "framing or hunting nobles" for their own gain or satisfaction.

Yes, this could all get very sticky and stir up a lot of intrigue, but then, that sort of thing makes campaigns sparkle.

Invasion of Privacy

- THO 1/5/10 (probably more in Waterdeep's army thread)

Seeing Waterdhavian authorities bursting into a citizen's home as an invasion of privacy or over the legal line or something of the sort. Quite so, in the modern real-world United States. Not so at all, in Waterdeep in the Realms.

Marrying Wards

- THO 1/5/10

There was nothing against Waterdhavian law in Mirt marrying his ward, once she was an adult (and as it happens, SHE seduced him and decided she wanted to spend her life with him and no other partner)

Rude Gestures

- THO 23/6/16, in reply to query about gesture made in "Death Masks" that is described as one of the lewder hand-gestures in vogue in Waterdeep in 1491 DR

That lewd gesture is made with one free hand: fingers together, point horizontal, make a circle in the air with all of them, and then "thrust through the circle" by jabbing the hand forward through the same space in the air. To make it more emphatic/rude: do the same movements, but point straight up, towards the sky.

Coinage

- THO 3/3/10

A nib is a copper piece and a shard is a silver piece, in Waterdeep throughout the 1300s (see under "Coinage" in the 3rd Edition FRCS baseline tome, and many earlier sources).

Water System

- THO 24/4/14

The various published versions of Waterdeep have largely avoided detailing the interior of Mount Waterdeep (the "citadel" dungeon level controlled by the thieves and assassins inside it, for example), and part of that detail is the spring of fresh water that shoots up inside the heart of Mount Waterdeep, and used to spew out down its seaward rocks into the sea, but for centuries now has been directed into

large cistern-caverns inside the upper mountain, from which it flows down pipes into the various wards of the city. Ed's original city maps also had public pumps and wells marked, all over the city.

Wintering to the south

- Ed 3/5/12

The "winter run" is simply the desire of those who can afford to do so (the idle rich, the REALLY wealthy traders, crafters who spend the winter making things to sell in the warmer months, and would rather do it somewhere warm enough that feeding fires won't take up much time and money, and many others for a myriad of different reasons) to "overwinter" in places warmer (i.e. more southerly) than Waterdeep. For a few, this just means moving to Athkatla before mud closes the roads in fall (or harbor icing interrupts cheap ship travel), but for most, it means moving to cities or owned or rented properties throughout Tethyr and the Tashalar.

As for who goes, that "depends," of course. As in, a Waterdhavian noble family will leave trade factors (agents who are paid staff/servants) and at least one family member who has the authority to sign documents/make mercantile decisions in Waterdeep, and "the household" (children plus their tutors and nurses, plus elderly family members who "feel the cold") will relocate. A few noble families who are "above trade" themselves ALL head south to avoid the winter ice and bitter cold winds and storms that bedevil "the Deep," but most years, an everchanging crew of "skeleton shieldbearers" represent each family in the City of Splendors. For those who brave the cold, the city is certainly less crowded, so access to good clubs and eateries is faster and they are less crowded. Mages of minor powers (and local temples and independent clerics) who winter over do a brisk trade in magically sending messages between family members (and coster staff and guildmembers) in the City and those who've "gone sutherly."

So a DM can literally pick and choose individuals to be in Waterdeep or elsewhere in the spring, fall, and winter months. There's no "this family always ALL go south" unless you want there to be, in your campaign. (There are also increasing numbers of citizens who "hole up" close to warm hearths for the cold months, staying in the city but rarely venturing outside, employing others to "freeze their teeth" for them.)

Buying Land

- Ed 26/4/14

oh, yes, I've written about taxes (try "The Rise And Fall Of The Window Tax" on the Wizards website, among other things). Anyone can buy and own land in Waterdeep (there's no residency requirement), and except in times of war or for out-and-out "monsters" (orcs and drow are NOT considered out-and-out monsters, these days) no one there or in most cities will require travelling papers or deny entry: Waterdeep is a highly tolerant crossroads trading city, and has been for centuries.

Nobility

Becoming a Noble

- GK 23/9/14

The process for becoming ennobled in Waterdeep is set out in "Ed Greenwood presents Elminster's Forgotten Realms" at pgs.50-53.

- THO 1/1/13

For Waterdeep: it's hard to ascend into the nobility, but given money and toadying and time enough, it's certainly possible. (And by definition, a new noble family would be a minor one.) Note what happened in THE CITY OF THE DEAD novel, re. the buying of noble titles; if this happens in your Realms (at the time your play is unfolding), a new family might hardly be noticed.

Once noble, no one will care about elven parentage, with two minor exceptions: some older noble INDIVIDUALS (not families, as a group) will sneer ("Elves, now, is it? I suppose just ANYONE can lead the city, these days...sigh..."), and others (individuals again) will be fascinated ("Oooh, dear, you MUST tell me! Is it true what they say about elves? YOU know -- in bed? Hmmm?").

House Amcathra

Lord Challas and Miri

- THO 29/7/12

At the time the 2nd Edition Waterdeep box was current, Lord Challas Amcathra was 97 years old, and his wife Miri was 92. They had been married for 72 years. Miri IS "Jhynn" (her full name is Mirilel Parelle Jhynnanther Ommurth, and she's from the oldcoin, nearly-extinct Tethyrian noble family of Ommurth; she hates her full first name and her second name, because they were also the names of a hated, bullying great-aunt, and so is known as "Miri" formally and "Jhynn" to her family).

In the 2nd Edition Waterdeep box, the head of a noble family is noted as "Matriarch" or more often "Patriarch," and "Consort" is the term given to their partner, married or not (so it shouldn't be read as having the implications it might have in our modern real world). In the instances where someone other than the titular head of a family controls the family (as for the Eirontalars, on page 13), that's noted.

Yes, Miri is the mother of all nine children Challas sired, and in order from eldest to youngest, they are:

Arilos (son, heir)

Brantavran (son)

Faraele (daughter)

Clathyldra (daughter)

Hulgrym (son)

Dourdarra (daughter)

Dannath (son)

Ildark (son)

Mourngrym (youngest son)

(Note that Regnet is the second son of Arilos; i.e. one of the 19 grandchildren, whose roster we'll have to ask Ed about, because it's not in my notes; all I have is that Arilos has -- or then had -- four children, and one of them is Regnet's elder sister Syndrove).

House Raventree 1368

Nobles

- Ed 21/1/13

In the year 1368 DR, House Raventree of Waterdeep consists of Lord Nandos Thornyn Mralabrar Raventree, head of the family, his wife Lady Perryn Klathra Alandra Raventree (née Nesher; don't be misled by the catch-all word "consort" used in the CoS box; she is indeed the formally-wed wife of Nandos), and their two children: Lord Surakh Valandros Thornyn Raventree (the eldest and heir) and Galinda Nimune Alandra Raventree.

There is also a cousin, Dorophin Raventree (CG male Tethyrian human aristocrat7/expert4/fighter2), the only son of Galaskor Raventree, the deceased younger (and only) brother of Lord Nandos. Dorophin grew up in Athkatla, visiting Waterdeep rarely with his parents, and since both of them perished (his Athkatlan-born mother Lalrune in 1356 DR, of winterchill, and his father in 1360 DR, of a massive infection following beast-bites suffered during a forest hunt) he hasn't been seen in Waterdeep, nor had any contact with his Waterdhavian kin. (Dorophin has never been "close" to the Raventrees of Waterdeep, but there is no hatred - - nor any friction or break, ever - - between him and them, nor was there between Galaskor and the Waterdhavian Raventrees. Galaskor simply chose Athkatla and his wife's family over Waterdeep and his kin, and they drifted out of each other's lives.)

Lord Nandos (LG male Tethyrian human aristocrat14/expert8) is a grave, firm, dignified nobleman, energetic in business and willing to do his civic duty but of the belief that Waterdeep's nobles should neither run the city nor suffer guilds, priesthoods, or "commoners banded together to feign importance they have not earned" to do so; rather, the nobility should support Piergeiron and his officials to resist change and uphold order and authority - - for the "daily seawind" (status quo) is good, and should be maintained for the city to continue to flourish - - and to be an example to commoners of what they can achieve in time, by financial success, "nobility of action and purpose," and long service to their city (by which is meant: act noble but not haughty, keep your nose clean, and perhaps, eight or nine generations from now, you may be ennobled, if the city needs more nobles).

Lord Nandos inherited the family shipbuilding business from his flamboyant and strikingly successful father Ehrendarr and his stern and austere grandfather Thaland, and although both are long dead and gone, he secretly believes they still watch over his life and performance. He conducts himself and the family business concerns so as to please and impress them (that is, he does what he believes they would have approved of), and otherwise does what he thinks is "proper" for a "proper noble" to do - - that is, a dignified, socially responsible noble, not a loudly flamboyant "misbehaving" noble. If the "proper" thing is to attend this revel or that gathering or ceremony, that's what he does; if at a social gathering things get out of hand (nobles misbehave), Lord Nandos fades into the background or withdraws into another room to keep company with other "proper" nobles, or if need be departs altogether. As he puts it, "A lord is never discomfited, nor betrays his station - - because a lord never indulges in behaviour that betrays, nor that he feels embarrassed about."

Lord Nandos does not see success or striving in business as improper for a noble. He considers idle nobles "wastrels" (if young) and "deadwood and dross" (if old enough to know better). As he says, "To deserve your golden charger and the food you eat off it daily, you must seek diligently to advance both the lives of commoners and your own achievements and worth. If Waterdeep is no better as a result of your life, when you die, than you do not deserve to have lived at all, let alone enjoyed the privileges of nobility."

It should be noted that Lord Nandos is not the sort of autocrat or prig given to making such observations publicly or often; he does so only in response to questions or the stated opinions of others, and believes in a style of briefly-murmured guidance (of look and private comment) when dealing with family, servants, and business employees.

Lady Perryn (NG female Tethyrian human aristocrat 12/expert6) is one of the quieter and more dignified, "proper" sort of noblewomen, not given to flamboyant behaviour, public rudeness, nor loud or firm speech. She is darkly beautiful, with long, blue-black hair, a slender and rangy figure, graceful

movement, large dark blue eyes, and high cheekbones; the passing years have scarcely aged her visibly at all, and she still draws the gaze of many a man upon entering a room, or at first glimpse.

The uninformed often conclude that she is a doormat, her husband's meek servant, but in truth she "rules him with a glance" when she feels the need -- which isn't often. Lady Perryn is very tolerant, slow to anger, and firmly believes that being noble is to have much personal freedom, and she must and should respect the freedom of others to speak, act, and pursue follies as they please -- until they go too far.

She feels she has the final word (or veto) over family decisions, whereas her husband has the freedom to make all the smaller, daily decisions, and conduct himself as if he has absolute freedom, until she reminds him of a boundary or gives him a flat "no."

Lady Perryn also believes her children must and should be free to make their own mistakes, so they can grow freely and "become themselves" (rather than their parents' puppets, or worse yet, two-faced, wearing behavioural masks when under their parents' eyes and acting as quite different people when on their own).

However, when they were younger, she reared them strictly and took a large hand in their tutelage rather than leaving much of it to nurses or tutors (as many other Waterdhavian nobles do). She still chides or even gives them orders in public without hesitation when she thinks they've been discourteous, and holds a curious double standard: she's less liable to judge their actions, as she is the style in which they carry those actions out ("bed three at once in front of us all if you must, dear, but there's no need to be impertinent while doing so"). She is also capable of working harder than the burliest servant, day and night for several days and nights on end, when the need arises (every year as the annual costume ball nears, and preparations start to go awry, for instance), and behind her quiet courtesy is a steely resolve. Where Lord Nandos might shrug and abandon some slight or swindle against the Raventrees as "the knocks of business," Lady Perryn will neither forgive nor forget, and will set herself with unflinching patience to get even.

Lord Surakh (LG male Tethyrian human aristocrat6/fighter3) spent his rebellious youth being a haughty prig, the sort of stiff, sneering noble that commoners loathe, loudly claiming his precedence and privileges, and challenging his peers to "confrontations of honor" (unarmed duels that are usually loud public debates that tend to slide swiftly into tradings of florid insults; many older nobles describe them as "the younglings parading their immaturity before all").

He has mellowed somewhat since, and has largely set aside his public airs and rudenesses, but still has a short temper with fools and the dishonest, and will speak sharply to anyone he considers wrong, acting improperly, or "being a fool" (which unfortunately often just means they hold an opinion contrary to his own). Yet he is ashamed of his former self, and working hard on his patience and curbing his tongue -- so he's both slower to explode and more liable to bite back words better left unsaid.

Trained to the sword, armored combat, and "riding to the lance," Surakh is a hopeless archer and dislikes hawking (both thanks to his unadmitted poor long-distance eyesight).

The building and outfitting of ships has always bored him, but he no longer flings his boredom in his father's face. He is increasingly interested in merchant shipping (what one can do with ships, rather than the making of them); expanding the family trading in rare foods (into spirits); and new ways of combining and packaging foods to snare the interest of Waterdhavians and so increase sales, and his father has seen this and stopped trying to force Surakh into being his daily understudy, and started encouraging him, in small ways (i.e. with limited funds), to try his hand at ship cargoes and trading in

new food and drink wares.

Surakh also seems to be gaining a sense of humour, and discovering a gift for mocking mimicry, as much to his own surprise as the astonishment of others.

Lady Galinda (CG female Tethyrian human aristocrat5/expert2) is at this time a leading, desirable socialite (her marriage to Regnet Amcathra is still some years off; my notes have the wedding on 11th Marpenoth, 1371 DR, and of course your campaign need not follow published Realmslore, which tells us that by the time of the City of Splendors: Waterdeep sourcebook, she has borne Regnet two sons). She is bold, flirtatious, and at the forefront of fashion and local social "style," hosting Waterdeep's annual costume ball, indulging in much gossip and rumormongering, and waging an ongoing social war with her despised rival Myrna Cassalanter.

Galinda is husky-voiced, apt to be dressed in the latest expensive fashions, and is proud of her body, hesitating not at all to display it to best advantage. She has her mother's slender build, grace, large eyes and high cheekbones, though her figure is slightly more lush than Lady Perryn's.

Like almost all Waterdhavian nobles of her generation and circle at this time, romance and sex are casual everyday pursuits to Galinda; in matters of the heart (or loins) she knows little loyalty nor stable relationships (this casual approach means bitter breakups are few; the same circle of young nobles hook up, swap partners, drift apart, come together for a brief fling again, and so on, with no shunning and few hard feelings). This doesn't mean individual nobles don't pine for other individual nobles; in 1368 DR, Alroy Adarbrent (heir of House Adarbrent) is smitten with Galinda, though Lord Royus Adarbrent (head of that house) disapproves of the Raventrees and doesn't want his son to ever wed Galinda (because, in the elder Lord Adarbrent's view, the Raventrees are a "junior" noble family, who are "jumped up, once-wealthy commoners, not true nobility," and because they don't behave like "proper" nobles right now - meaning that the Raventrees are active in business, rather than being so rich that they can live in idleness, their factors and servants administering the rents from their vst holdings, and avoiding handling and concerning themselves with "low, common coin and the dealings done to grasp ever more of it;" to Adarbrent, "proper" nobles don't concern themselves with money, and don't have to because they're so wealthy - whereas the Raventrees are clearly, albeit successfully, still directly involved in their longtime business concerns of shipbuilding and purveying rare foods ["exotic foodstuffs" is the Waterdhavian mercantile term]). Regnet Amcathra and Bedelder Margaster are also seriously interested in Galinda, and dozens of their fellow "young bucks" [or more politely, "young blades"] among the nobility are more than casually interested in her; she's considered a prize, the best - or, if your tastes vary, among the best three or four - of the young and unattached female nobles).

Like her older brother, Galinda has "settled down" somewhat from her wildest younger days, shifting from CN to CG and mellowing from headstrong, dawn-to-dusk catty fighting with rival young female nobles and seducing every young male noble who came within reach to more self-confident, drawling, at ease conquests and social trouncings. Thanks to human nature, this has made her more desirable to other nobles, not less (and she's now catching the eyes of older male nobles, who hitherto dismissed her as "yet another emptyheaded, burstingly-full-of-herself young brat").

So as the Year of the Banner (1368 DR) begins, the relationships within the Raventree family are as follows:

Nandos is growing more affectionate toward, and in love with, his wife, rather than less, and wants to spend more time with her. He even hopes to have more children with her - or at least spend a lot of

pleasant time trying. He believes she is one of the wisest women in Waterdeep or anywhere, and thinks that for years he didn't fully appreciate the depths of her wisdom, not to mention her deft manipulation of him and other nobles they have dealings with.

Nandos is increasingly pleased with both of his children (Surakh more than Galinda, because he views Surakh has "achieved more in this wise" and Surakh will enrich the family coffers more by doing so, whereas Galinda seems to be perfecting spending more from them) because they are both, in his eyes, improving so much from their wilder, younger selves. "Maturing, but not matured."

They both, of course, have a long way to go -- and the sooner Galinda stops soiling herself by sleeping with half the city, or acting as if she is, the better. For the Raventree name as well as for herself. Still, all younglings have to go through their wild days, and if their parents clamp down too hard or in the wrong ways, things will get worse, not better. Surakh at least can be spoken to man-to-man, with plenty of "this is what worked for me" and "when you're in charge of this, son, you'll need to know" -- but Nandos is at something of a loss as to how to even speak to his daughter. It all too easily slides into the sort of banter, as she teases him, that will sound like flirtation to any eavesdropper! And, damn, she's a lovely girl, though still an emptyheaded little chit not worth a ninth of her mother. Why do women have to be so silly, so different? He himself has never dreamed of measuring his own worth by the number of people he can bed, or verbally trounce in public; why do such things matter to the womenfolk?

Perryn loves her husband deeply, and is grateful that he seems to be warming to her increasingly in recent months, not concentrating wholly on business and the pride and wealth of the Raventrees whilst taking his wife for granted, as part of the furniture. She has always admired his intellect, his morals, his successes, and his private tenderness, and is thrilled that he now seems to see her worth.

There has been some stiff awkwardness between Perryn and her son in recent years, particularly when she tried to discipline or influence him when she considered (by the gods, all Waterdeep considered) he was being the worst sort of conceited, rude prig, and he still exasperates her all too often with his "I'm a man and the heir, so all should bow before me, because soon I'll be head of the house, and in the meantime I'm a younger, better version of my father, so bow down accordingly" act -- but he's finally growing up and learning some sense and at least heading in the right direction. There's hope for him yet, and at last she can dare to gently jest with him and show him love and tenderness, where before he seemingly had no sense of humour, and loudly dismissed all tendernesses as "womens' foolishness" and "manipulative embraces and tears and honeyed false words." She'll work hard at forging a warmer relationship between them, and still try to gently steer him into being the truly noble man he can be.

Perryn's daughter has always exasperated her, too, but their relationship has been far more complicated than her dealings with her son, because although Perryn despairs of Galinda's more wanton ways and "overconfident rudenesses and frivolities," they have always been close, have giggled together and shared confidences on the rare occasions when they have both dared to let down their guards and masks sufficiently -- and because Perryn has always secretly admired her daughter for openly and publicly doing all the wild things Perryn had wanted to, but that she "just couldn't" because a "proper noble doesn't do such things." Perryn genuinely admires the hard work that Galinda puts in hosting the costume ball, and even more, admires the name and importance her daughter has built for herself among noble circles (and, through the echoes of that, in the wider city). Folk high and low respect Galinda's fashion sense and style, gossip about her latest put-down or amorous frolic, and pay attention to her. Whereas her mother is left in shadow, ignored or taken for granted. Now, perhaps Galinda will someday start to put that influence to use in truly making Waterdeep a better place, and fulfill her

bright promise. In the meantime, Perryn wants to get closer to her daughter - - to vicariously enjoy all the sheer fun of Galinda's social whirl, to keep and cherish someone who is becoming a real friend at last, and to deepen whatever influence she has over her daughter, so as to be able to steer her through the inevitable shoals ahead (of rising too high and getting entangled in serious feuds or in politics far over her head, and of dealing with the wooing that is daily coming her way, some of it calculated and uncaring for her personally, but only for the family wealth and reputation).

Surakh used to consider his father a stodgy, overbearing, humourless fool, and his mother a doormat who lost her temper behind closed doors and tyrannized his father when she did, but otherwise cared what other nobles thought above all else, and so played the "perfect dutiful noble wife" role to the hilt. In other words, his father deserved any bad treatment he got, but his mother was a "weak woman" incapable of holding her own in public. He now realizes he was very wrong about both of them, and admires his father's drive (and forbearance with both of his children) and his mother's iron determination and yet manner of hiding it, manipulating rather than using her tongue like a lash and her deeds like a brutal gauntlet.

Surakh formerly despised his sister as a wanton fool who disgraced the family name and was overly familiar with "just anyone, no matter how lowly." She was family and so he was duty bound to rescue her from her worst scrapes and follies, but she was by no means an ornament of the Raventrees or even competent to do much of anything, let alone represent the family or handle any of its affairs. She was less emptyheaded and frivolous than some of their circle of nobles, but that wasn't saying much. Now, Surakh is grudgingly acknowledging to himself (never explicitly to Galinda, though his manner towards her has become far more polite, easygoing, and supportive, and she can obviously tell his attitude has changed) that his sister does very well for herself socially, sways the opinions and fashions of other nobles, and even treats some matriarchs and patriarchs as equals—and gets treated by them as an equal. In other words, these others see her as formidable and mature, but her older brother Surakh as immature and foolish. Something he's determined to change by watching his sister and learning from her, and at the same time getting closer to her and showing that to others.

Galinda likes to hide the fact that she's a shrewd judge of people from the world (and especially her family), but she knows full well - - and with complete accuracy - - what her parents and her brother think of her, and how they're trying to deal with her.

For her part, she thinks her father is inevitably as hidebound and self-limited as all nobles of his generation, but is the finest man she knows. His obvious fears that she'll settle on someone truly unsuitable are unfounded, because there is no way before all the Watching Gods that she will settle for anyone not as fine as her father - - and although she enjoys friendships and more with both sexes, she needs men, and wants a husband. Someday. On her terms. She admires Nandos as a businessman, as the head of a noble house, and as a person. He works harder than any two guild members, and probably harder than any random group of five or six. She can't resist teasing him, though, and therefore this makes him uncomfortable, the more it goads her to do more of it.

Her mother is the woman she can never be - - the perfect "old school" noble wife (quiet, dutiful, forever proper and "doing the right thing"). Yet her mother is no monster, because Galinda can see she achieves this by being almost the perfect actress, not because it's who her mother really is. Perryn is a master manipulator of her family and the servants because she understands people so well, and can say and do what will move them in the direction she wants them moved, and make them ever more loyal to the

Raventrees and to her own aims. Galinda despairs of ever being that effective, that good a noble -- because she herself just doesn't have the patience for the whole act, and doesn't want to be the quiet dutiful overlooked consort, when she can be the center of attention and have people eager to be with her, and fall in with her plans. Deep down, she knows her mother sees right through her -- and yet, Perryn loves her and is still working hard to steer her without trying to boss her . . . and Galinda loves and cherishes her for that. Someday soon, her mother just might unwind enough, or consider that Galinda has grown up enough, that the two of them can fall into the warm, close, easy friendship Perryn so obviously yearns for. Then they can at last be bosom friends, enjoying the unfolding world together. Ah, it will be good when her mother finally puts away her disapproval!

Surakh, now, isn't as detestable and constantly exasperating as he used to be. He's actually starting to have a little self-confidence and humour, and is trying to mend fences with his little sister and cultivate a real friendship. He now wants to be seen in her company, supports her views and deeds, and is generally trying to be a decent brother. Which makes him tolerable, at least, though he left it very, very late to start trying to become a human being rather than the thespians' caricature of a rude and overbearing high-nosed noble. Yet much of "the new Surakh" is still an act, not the true man himself. He still thinks boys are superior to girls, the heir and eldest can and should lord it over younger siblings (lifelong), and that others should leap to defer to nobles or expect "rightfully scornful" treatment. He's not loudly saying such things the way he used to, but hasn't privately let go of the beliefs yet, and until he does, she'll be as friendly as she can (so as to try to change him), but dare not trust him.

Servants

- Ed 19/1/13

Coverage of the most prominent Raventree servants, circa 1368 DR. They are nine in number:

- Redleigh Ambrynrald (steward: head of household purchasing and security, and stables)
- Tloster Maerimmon (head of house guards)
- Baerelve Storn (bodyguard)
- Albrus "Old Knight" Khlendryn (stablemaster)
- Braelyn Lindlorn (factor: traveling trade agent)
- Shelaerra Blundfeather (chatelaine: head of cooks and maids)
- Bardretha Gullwind (mistress of kitchens: head cook)
- Vesmra Andalakh (personal maid/dresser to Galinda)
- Gahladar Dreth (house shipwright)

Redleigh Ambrynrald is a raven-haired, immaculate man with a goatee, daggerboard sideburns, and a receding hairline he tries to conceal by oiling his hair and combing it over his forehead. He is exacting, but avoids being prissy by using disapproving glares and silent pointing rather than tirades. He's by no means mute, but among the household staff never uses five words when four will do; for example, should he enter a room that is to be readied for a guest and finds its fire unlit or too small, so the room is cold, he will ring for a servant [in Raventowers, the "bells" are actually old wooden shields hung on a wall in the servants' dining room/ready room, that are struck by wooden mallets when bellpulls rooms away are pulled, so rather than a ringing or a gong sound, what results is inaudible two rooms away from the ready room, and a hollow "thlock" within that range] or say to the servant already at hand: "Fire." (or "Fires.") Then add, "warmer" or "much warmer" or "warmer, the night through" or "warmer

until X bells." Then he will either turn on his heel and depart, or point wordlessly at some smaller flaw or fault, such as a chair out of place, and leave.

Ambrynrald can be quite eloquent when addressing Raventrees, guests, or wider Waterdeep when out on family business. He merely detests noisy households where the staff gossip loudly, call to each other, or—horrors!—sing or hum at their work.

Ambrynrald is fair to the household servants under him, scrupulously honest with Raventree coin, and if he has any hobbies, no one knows about them (in truth, he pens lurid chapbooks of lusty romance set in a fantastical version of Waterdeep in which all noblewomen yearn for the embraces of their older male servants, hiding these behind paneling in Raventowers and arranging for their printing when he's out on family business; they are quite popular and earn him fair coin). He maintains social distance from the household servants, has served as the trusted confidant of Lord Nandos Raventree for decades, and keeps himself well aware of everything going on in Raventowers, especially servant romances and dealings with outsiders that might lead to thefts or worse from the household. He is respected by both the Raventrees and the staff under him. As Lord Nandos once said, "If he has a fault, we have not found it."

Tloster Maerimmon is a burly, large-headed and even larger-handed man who shaves his head and chin, but has bristling eyebrows and vertical-stripe (from temple to jaw) sideburns. He is never unarmed and seldom out of armor; when he must wear "mere cloth" he puts on gleaming metal forearm bracers and wears a thick leather cummerbund-style "stomacher" to give his gut some protection against daggers. He's not paranoid, but merely thinks a competent man in his profession should always be ready (for trouble). As a result, if he's awake, he's alert and observant, always looking for trouble brewing or weaknesses that might allow intruders into Raventowers; he's the sort of a man who "marks" (notices and remembers) all the exits when he walks into a tavern.

Maerimmon can be quite menacing, but this is an act; he long ago discovered how much he could manipulate folk with this manner, without actually having to do or say anything regrettable. His official title is "Master of Sword," and he is responsible for training, discipline, and deployment of the twelve house guards (he's the thirteenth, and there's also a young novice being trained to guard duty, Arlan Trallows, son of one of the maids, who serves as Tloster's errand- and message-runner, and "keeps the steel honed and oiled").

Tloster has been dubbed "Helmhead" by some other nobles because of his shaved head, but he keeps the contempt he feels for those who belittle others well hidden. A professional house guard does his work eagerly and diligently, keeps his mouth shut, and betrays nothing that can be used against him; his opinions and feelings are his own, not to be shown to anyone with eyes.

Tloster is unambitious and steadfastly loyal to Lord Nandos Raventree, and after him, the other Raventrees in order of seniority (Lady Perryn over Surakh, and Surakh over Galinda). He regards it as his duty to root out any disloyalty among the house guards or the servants—and personally train or scare it out of the guards under his command.

Tloster's hobbies are watching dramatic plays of all sorts, and keeping up with all developments in arms and armor. His weaknesses are sweets and strong cheeses. He has a firm rule for himself that he will never indulge in the slightest romance or lust within Raventowers or with anyone of Raventowers, but on his rare days off—when Baerelve Storn takes over command of the guard—he has been known to visit several coin-lasses in swift succession (and tries to patronize favourites until they become old friends).

Baerelve Storn is a swift, silent, watchful man, always laden with concealed weapons and expecting trouble. The personal bodyguard of Lord Nandos Raventree, he is often assigned by Nandos to guard other members of the family when they are outside the gates of Raventowers. Storn (no one uses his first name, not even its owner) has a pointed, outthrust chin, and a nose to match; in profile, he looks like an open-beaked bird of prey, and was dubbed “the Raven of the Raventrees” by a noble years ago. He is a master swordsman and streetfighter, who practices catching hurled daggers and who often gives himself small doses of dozens of poisons, so as to build up his resistance to them over time. He has memorized the layout of the sewers beneath Raventowers and the streets immediately around it, as well as the mansion itself, and in his off hours often practices dashing about Raventowers or its walled grounds blindfolded or carrying a dummy weighted to be as heavy as Lord Nandos—or both. Storn is the sort of fighter who anticipates trouble and prepares for it, and never stops anticipating, even in the midst of a fight. He will unhesitatingly do what is best to ensure the survival of whichever Raventree(s) he’s currently protecting, regardless of personal cost. He seems to have no pride or dignity, nor to know fear (attempts to intimidate him are among the few things he finds funny). Storn has no hobbies, submerging himself in fanatical devotion to his job, but in his youth he bred and trained horses, and takes pleasure in long or fast rides when he gets the chance. He scares most of the younger women in Raventowers, but Shelaerra Blundfeather and Bardretha Gullwind have both secretly sought him out as a lover, and go to him when they get the chance—which isn’t often, as Storn is rarely off duty (officially, Tloster Maerimmon spells him in shifts for all guardianship inside Raventowers, but in practice Storn prefers to do it all himself, seeing Tloster as a well-meaning administrator who’s a fair fighting man but “not enough” to protect the Raventrees as “they should be protected.”

Albrus “Old Knight” Khlendryn is an elderly, kindly, sharp-witted man who has in the past been a hiresword, member of the City Guard of Waterdeep, horsebreeder, horse trainer, and sailor (some say pirate, but his nautical career was so brief that most—correctly—take this claim as wild rumor). A badly-broken leg ended his days in the saddle, and Lord Nandos Raventree took him on as a groom, where his competence and courtly manners earned him eventual promotion to stablemaster, and the immediate nickname of “Old Knight” because his treatment of noble guests had many of them thinking he was a gallant knight in earlier days.

Albrus loves horses, Lord Nandos, the rest of the Raventrees, and whittling balls-within-chains and other little toys and thumb-coffers (tiny boxes, often used to hold jewelry, that are about as long as a man’s thumb, or thereabouts). Where some smoke or hum or whistle as they work and in moments of waiting, Albrus whittles—and gives away the results to anyone in Raventowers who’s interested (there’s a growing fad among noblewomen who socialize with the Raventrees to “have an Albrus” to house one of their most prized pieces of jewelry).

Albrus is a contented man who feels he’s lived a good, full life; his ambitions are to keep the Raventree stables, horses, and coaches in superb condition, cleanliness, readiness, and order. He brews small beer for the servants, trades some of his whittling for apples for the horses (the apple barrel in a corner of the stables often functions as a message- and item-drop for the Raventree servants, as they have a plausible reason—wanting an apple—to go there), and spends the rest of the time working. He needs little sleep, is a light sleeper awakened by any entry into the stables by night (he sleeps in a stall or the hayloft), and only leaves Raventowers on rare occasions (to shop or seek the companionship of a few longtime female friends of his age).

- Ed 20/1/13

Braelyn Lindlorn is young, energetic, and ambitious. Like most factors, he's a glib "wheeler-dealer," but is more honest and scrupulously loyal to his employer (Lord Nandos) than most factors, and can rightly be trusted with Raventree funds, cargoes, and chattels. (Most factors don't dare misuse their employers' coin, but do conduct side business of their own while traveling or trading on behalf of their employer, and habitually seek preferential prices and terms for their side businesses by combining orders and negotiations for their sidelines with the business of their employers; Lindlorn would never act in this manner, and carries on no side business.)

His hobby, encouraged by the Raventree business interests, is in enjoying rare, new, and exotic foods, of being a gourmand both publicly and privately. He'll try anything (and has tried some truly disgusting things, over the years), and is forever battling a paunch earned and sustained by his love of food and drink.

He is otherwise a pleasant-looking brown-haired and blue-eyed man of average height and build, who dresses well but never expensively or impractically, and whose entertainment is continually learning more about the world and how he can make "the great ship that is House Raventree" more profitable and important within it—without necessarily gaining an ever-larger public profile along the way, because he's noticed that those who get noticed too much by too many become targets, and their fates darken.

Lindlorn is given "travel coin" enough to see to his needs, including paid bedmates (Lord Nandos knows and approves of such expenditures, almost certainly because he believes it keeps Lindlorn out of greater mischief), and is quite content with his remuneration and his lifestyle. He regards the Raventrees as his family and the Raventowers servants as friends, but has little daily contact with them, because he's so often outside the walls or even far away on business journeys. He believes having any romantic moments with any Raventree servant (or, for that matter, any Raventree) would be a gross professional error that could not end well.

- Ed 21/1/13

Shelaerra Blundfeather runs the household servants, seeing to the cleaning and washing, running repairs, and waiting upon the Raventrees and their guests. She oversees the deployment of staff (their shifts) and arranges their training, and is the go-between (between the steward and the head cook) to make certain the larders, pantries, and wine cellars are properly stocked at all times. Formerly the personal maid/dresser to Lady Perryn, she still serves in those roles when the need arises, but unless emergencies arise, is seldom to be seen by guests, preferring to bustle up and down the back stairs, pitching in with her maids briefly here and then rushing there. She is strict (though she doesn't mind staff amusing themselves in idleness so long as the work is done before a need arises or is noticed), but is respected by those who work under her for her fairness and understanding. She's no martinet, but can act like one to cow someone if need be (and is in fact an accomplished mimic who can do devastatingly good parodies of guests and others she's met).

Shelaerra has tired eyes and the decaying remains of formerly striking beauty, her long (but usually gathered in a filigree net, or in a bun under a bonnet) raven-black hair almost all gone to gray -- and to white in an eye-catching lock down her left temple.

She can keep track of a dozen things in her head at once (and the times these things must be done, or the next step in something must be seen to), is calm under pressure, knows where everything in Raventowers is (so, for example, if a chair breaks, she knows without any search being necessary if

there's a matching chair or equivalent in the mansion, and exactly where it is).

Her hobbies include reading truly dirty salacious chapbooks (which she shares with her fellow servants if she judges this book or that one will entertain rather than disgusting or horrifying them), gambling on horse races, harbor boat races, and falconry competitions (which she keeps to strict "smallcoin" bets that she doesn't mind losing, and so never runs into financial trouble over her betting), and daydreaming about how she'll redecorate and renew Raventowers, room by room, tapestry by tapestry, and gewgaw by gewgaw.

Lady Perryn respects Shelaerra's attentiveness so much that she sets aside funds, on an ongoing basis, to pay for Shelaerra's continual recovering and refurbishing of all of the mansion furnishings, knowing that this keeps Raventowers looking up-to-date and splendid, with none of the "shabbiness in the far and darkest corners" that afflicts many noble mansions and villas in the city.

For her part, Shelaerra is well content with her position, her pay, and her life. She has seen enough of noble guests to know that she'd be less than happy working for most of them, and has no desire to depart Raventowers, or give any Raventree any pretext to "put her out" (the current city phrase "below stairs" in high households for being fired). She takes pride in keeping Raventowers a showpiece, the servants' quarters as well as the great rooms, and although some of the servants jestingly call her "the Tempest" for her whirlwind entrances and the temper she can display when she thinks someone has blundered and so made a mess or extra work, and not owned up to it immediately and tried to clean up, she has their respect. The Raventrees all know they are lucky to have her because it entirely frees them from having to worry about the running or state of their homes - - and Lady Perryn, who regards Shelaerra as an old and true friend she can confide in, frankly loves her chatelaine (Shelaerra does indeed always wear a chatelaine: a girdle of keys, scissors, a hammer, pouches of nails and hooks, a sewing kit, hand scrub-brushes, a "tidy bag" for carrying trash, and other useful odds and ends).

Bardretha Gullwind is fatter than she'd like to be, because she's one of those cooks who tastes constantly. She prides herself on her sauces, both savory and sweet, that make dishes departing the Raventowers kitchens (by hastening servant or by means of the dumbwaiter shaft that climbs the tallest tower to the Raventree bedchambers) really stand out.

"Barda," as she's usually called, hates getting hot, but kitchen work is hot work, so she's a short-tempered, sharp-tongued head cook that the undercooks and scullery maids fear far more than they like. Usually to be found with a kerchief bound about her head to keep her sweat from dripping into the food, Bardretha is plump, has a long nose, stringy blonde hair that she used to dye but no longer dares to (because the dye started to run, and she was afraid it would get into food), and has a large bosom; she keeps handkerchiefs down her cleavage, but the kitchen staff tell all sorts of stories about what else she keeps down there.

Bardretha is a workaholic whose life is devoted to her work; she sometimes has to be coaxed to seek her bed, even when she's swaying on her feet with weariness after working from one dawn right around to the next.

Bardretha has three big secrets: she loves gossip and watching men fight with swords, and she loves the embraces of both genders. On very rare occasions (twice or thrice a year at most) she and Shelaerra Blundfeather take to a bed together, for mutual comfort (because neither of them wants to take the time and trouble to seek other partners, outside Raventowers), but they take great care not to get caught doing this by anyone. Lady Perryn knows of their liaisons, but keeps their secret.

Bardretha doesn't have to share her love of gossip with anyone to daily overhear all the chatter she

wants to -- she long ago acted disinterested in gossip, but told her staff that if they wanted to talk in the kitchens, that was fine with her, so long as there was "no screaming or singing." So she hears her fill while pretending not to hear or heed.

As for watching swordplay, she can indulge that in two ways: finding the right window to unobtrusively observe Lord Surakh at practice with his tutors, and at the right time of year, insisting on personally going and buying particular spices and mushrooms -- from shops that just happen to command a view of one of the practice terraces (outside the Castle, on the slopes of Mount Waterdeep) used by the City Watch and the City Guard to spar. She has by sheer luck witnessed two duels in the streets of Waterdeep, and they were thrills that she committed to memory, and can recall in vivid detail. She is fascinated by swords and the wielding of them, experiencing an almost sexual thrill when watching them -- and so, of course, she personally sees to the sharpening of all kitchen knives and other blades.

Vesmra Andalakh is a young, ambitious, spirited woman who has a beautiful body but a face disfigured by an overlong nose "as sharp as a swordblade" (to quote the chatelaine Shelaerra Blundfeather), and a prominent and cleft chin. She is very conscious of these "marrings" (as she calls them, though she was born with them, rather than receiving them as injuries), and when she accompanies Galinda on trips or to revels, insists on going masked or wearing a half-veil (over the lower half of her face, in the Calishite and Tashalan style). She and Galinda are "as thick as two giggling thieves" (as Lady Perryn once put it), and she tries to always have Galinda's back, foreseeing trouble and preparing for it -- even to the extent of hiring some street muscle as short-term guards, on some occasions.

Vesmra has a hot temper, but also iron control; if she's anywhere near any of the Raventrees when she loses her temper (unless alone with Galinda), the only outwardly visible mark of her ire will be her eyes flashing (Vesmra has emerald green eyes, red hair that's a rich orange, and milk-white skin, and often dresses in emerald or dark green because she knows she looks superb in that hue; when angry, her emerald eyes literally turn the color of her hair).

Vesmra is very interested in so-called (by male nobles) "womanly things" such as fashion, hairdos, dancing, clothes, and adornments (filigree hair-sheaths, jewelry, cosmetics, and so on). She's interested for their own sake, not just because she has to be good at such things to attend Galinda properly. Over the years, Vesmra has become very skilled at applying cosmetics (to the point where she can conceal the blemishes of sickness, rashes, and insect bites) and as an emergency seamstress; the Raventrees proudly tell the tale of a long-ago revel where Galinda's gown got trodden on by a clumsy male noble dance partner, and Vesmra whisked her behind a pillar, tore off her own gown, cut it to ribbons to create a row of panels descending the dress visible through the tear, sewed it all up in a trice, and sent Galinda back out onto the dance floor triumphantly establishing a new fashion on the spot. Vesmra loves the company and attentions of men, but insists on going masked when she seeks companionship, and to take lovers in the lower wards of the city far from where the nobles and their servants might see and recognize her; Galinda has taken to privately hiring certain adventurers to tail or even accompany Vesmra, to see that she comes to no harm (their presence, coupled with Vesmra's mask, has led some in Dock Ward to think Vesmra herself is a "young noble lass come slumming"). Vesmra has no ambitions beyond carrying on this life with Galinda "forever," and is a happy, contented person who feels no need for possessions or coin, because her position furnishes her with all she wants and needs.

(When Galinda marries Regnet Amcathra, Vesmra will accompany Galinda to dwell with the Amcathras.)

Gahladar Dreth is a garrulous, weatherbeaten old retired ship captain who holds strong opinions about the declining quality of shipbuilding and the “best ways” to make yards, sails, hulls, and many nautical items large and small. He is among the best shipwrights in the Deep and widely respected; many have tried to hire him away from the Raventrees, but he likes his noble employers, and refuses to budge. Dreth is short, thin, and has a battered, scarred face and “wild” gray-white (formerly brown), thin hair. He’s missing some teeth and so keeps his mouth shut most of the time, smiling and chuckling rather than laughing, and is a tireless worker who checks and rechecks everything done by the wrights who labor under his direction. Only the sturdiest and best-built ships leave his ways, and he’s a peerless master at judging what repairs an aging vessel needs (which masts, spars, ribs, and planks should be replaced, even if they look sound; he just “knows” what is inwardly weak).

Dreth has a very minor “wild talent.” He can smell magic (to him, it has a distinctive “sharp cheese” odour), both active enchantments and recent castings in an area, though he knows nothing more about magic—and doesn’t much want to. (He can smell a magic sword worn by someone passing him, even in a noisome Dock Ward street.)

“Dreth,” as he’s known to all, treats Surakh and Galinda more or less as his grandchildren, no matter how old they get, and he’s the one they run to for comfort and advice (as they always have). He is blunt and salty in his speech, but believes “honesty and plain speech are the best catches to land, now and forever.” His hobby is whittling, he likes a drink but never gets drunk, and his weakness is half-elven women of high agility and low morals (“ladies” or paid escorts, he treats them with equal respect). He has never married, and doesn’t want to.

[Use in a Downton Abbey Style Game](#)

- Ed 22/1/13

In this case, it depends on the constraints/atmosphere you'd like to establish. If you use the Raventrees or any Waterdhavian noble family IN WATERDEEP (or a Suzail-based Cormyrean noble family in Suzail) you've got the bustle of the city, can drag in all manner of commoners and their doings and scores of other nobles, and so on - - but it's a different dynamic than the essentially country house-based action of Downton Abbey.

So you MIGHT want to have the Raventrees at their country estate (which is entirely undetailed in published lore, so feel free to swipe any map/plan/description of any English castle or stately home, extant or vanished, to use), having retreated there because disease is sweeping the city, or they've gone into seclusion to deal with a family crisis (a claim on the family property from Dorophin Raventree, say, which MUST be false because Dorophin has contacted them in different handwriting, from a different address, to say he's coming to visit - - but when "Dorophin" arrives, is it really him? Or an impostor? Or for quite another crisis: Lord Nandos accused of fathering the children of another noble, and challenged to a duel - - but also, assassination attempts on him begin, so to escape them he hustles the family out of the Deep [[or do both, if you're feeling especially cruel/lively]]). The crisis situation has two major drawbacks: it forces change on family relationships, if not family members, and it works against the great fun we see in so many English Country House murder mysteries: the romances, bickerings, jewel (or snuffbox, ahem) robberies, and all of that associated with having a country estate full of an odd assortment of guests (most or all of them also noble) as well as the family.

The house itself can have secrets that lead to a treasure hunt or even a dungeon underneath it - - elements a little harder to pull off in Waterdeep, with its established sewer system and infamous vast dungeon under it. You can also have eccentric "rustics," the country servants, poachers, and

villager/neighboring farmers, who can be almost anyone (from the inevitable doppelgangers in disguise and former pirates, adventurers, and outlaws living under assumed names, to undercover agents for various sinister organizations such as the Zhents, Red Wizards, and so on).

Or you can stay in the city and play up the revels, social whirl, and sword-duels in taverns and private clubs . . . Just don't forget the possibilities of a Lady Bracknell.

House Ruldegost

- Ed 29/3/13

Lord Dethnar died early on in the time period covered by published Realmslore, and Lord Bly is indeed his younger (and only) brother, and stepped in to serve as Regent to Dethnar's son (and the heir of the house), Detan.

Dethnar's wife, Essemra, predeceased him by half a year (she died of an "internal illness" that real-world doctors would probably have deemed cancer, and the grieving and embittered Dethnar set about settling scores with old foes, and died in a sword duel in a dark alley, one night, in Dock Ward).

The widowed (Lord Alaerik Ruldegost died in 1353 DR, poisoned by an unknown intruder probably hired by a noble or guild trade rival) Lady Kara Ruldegost is Dethnar's mother, and is in her late nineties as of 1370 DR. She never leaves her upper room, and is withered and shrunk and largely confined to a massive highbacked chair, but has sharp wits and a tongue like a razor, and rules the household.

Lord Bly is increasingly absent from the Ruldegost manor in Waterdeep, and from family matters, his interests lying elsewhere (sleyvas has pointed the way to most of that "elsewhere").

Leaving the heir's upbringing in the hands of devoted longtime family servants overseen from a distance by Lady Kara.

The sixteen other living Ruldegosts are the sons and daughters of Lady Kara's now-dead younger brother, Alauvin. Who went through three wives, all much younger than he was, in swift succession (the last two within a decade). So Alauvin and his three wives are all dead by the mid-1360s DR, but all of their offspring are still alive in 1370 DR.

The first wife, Parlarla Imbrivviyn of Athkatla, bore Alauvin two daughters, Nauvneene and Orlaethra (both tall, saturnine, and withdrawn sorceresses who prefer the company of women to that of men, and study and devouring fiction to dealing with the real world outside the Ruldegost walls; Nauvneene thinks like Lady Kara and could replace her in a trice if Kara died).

The second wife, Imra Dragonbellow of Lyrabar, bore Alauvin three sets of twin boys and two daughters: Geldor and Parbrym; Naint and Corvor; Telneth and Burdeth; Hammalarra; and Shelaenne.

Alauvin's third wife, the wild and wanton Lorlethra Tarmahael of Saerlool, gave him a son, the dashing young rake Ramphaer, followed by five daughters: Lethlill (she and Ramphaer share a love that's a little deeper than mere fond sibling bonds), the triplets Zorsra, Ambedaelia, and "Dethur" Dethurra (once described by Mirt as "three brainless little dolls"); and last, the impish and beautiful Trethma (whose looks and manner attract much attention at revels and other public functions in Waterdeep).

Of old, the Ruldegosts were a clan of red-faced, burly, hard-living swordsmen who married a motley array of long-suffering wives who mostly outlived them, or stayed single and rakish, and became another of the infamous "randy old Ruldegost uncles," but by the time Alaerik became head of the house upon the death of his father Norond, all of these uncles had died out.

These older Ruldegosts were the epitome of what some guildmasters and wealthy Waterdhavian merchants derided as "idiot nobles, unfit to lead any society, governed as they are by hot tempers, selfishness, debauchery, and a life of destructive-to-others idleness." What saved the Ruldegosts for

years was their loyalty to their servants, who in turn were very loyal to them, and very competently ran family affairs.

Laws on Bigamy

- Ed 16/6/13

Yes. Bigamy is legally a no-no. Nobles can have any number of lovers, mistresses/prettyboys and "kept partners" and so on, but they can only legally have one spouse at a time, and any offspring they produce with that one spouse are their legal heirs, in order of birth (and in most noble houses, regardless of gender, though there are a few that count only males AND a few that count only females, in lines of inheritance/precedence). You can divorce a spouse or lose one to death, and be free to remarry; the new spouse has all the legal standing of a previous one, but such a change in spouses doesn't make any difference to the legitimacy of offspring had with a previous spouse. Neither does marrying a lover make any offspring you had with them before marriage "retroactively legitimate," such bastards remain illegitimate and can't gain legitimacy unless they become the last living family relatives (i.e. all legitimate family members are dead). Note that bastards can be named heirs of real estate and chattels in a will or deathbed proclamation, and even appointed "regents" to legitimate children - - this may make them effectively noble in their daily duties, wealth, and social doings, but they still aren't "legitimate." Dead nobles who rise as undead have lost their legitimacy, though in rare cases they have been socially reaccepted as themselves (i.e. they still can't inherit or take over as heads of houses, but may act as the head of a house or a parental-style advisor; some style themselves as house "champions," and act as bodyguards for family members, or fight duels for them/represent them in places and situations of danger).

Finally, the Open Lord of Waterdeep has on several occasions throughout history been forced to rule on legitimacy in situations (usually thanks to shipwrecks or kidnapping brigands) where a spouse has gone missing for years and been presumed dead, so a funeral has been held and their partner has subsequently remarried, only to have the original later turn up. In all but one of these rulings (wherein there was a strong suspicion that the noble involved tried to have the first spouse murdered so they could take a second one - - in that case, the first one was affirmed and the second one "set aside," which was relatively easy to do because there were offspring of the first, but none from the second), the Open Lord has confirmed BOTH first and second spouses as legitimate. So yes, in these limited cases [I've created two of them, out of six cases of Open Lord judgments, but can't recall if other writers have introduced or strongly hinted at any], bigamy is possible among nobles in Waterdeep. As a freely-tolerated custom initiated by the nobles involved, though, bigamy is still prohibited.

However, taking lovers of other nobles' spouses while everyone looks the other way or even makes sport of it, is frequent among certain nobles and calmly ignored by many others. I hope this has been of help; as I was typing it, quite a few plot hooks I'd built in over the years rose to mind, so perhaps it will similarly spur ideas among DMs.

Schools of Noble Graces

- THO 13/3/15

Q: Besides the 1 academy mentioned in Elminster's Forgotten Realms (Mother Tamra's House of Graces in Castle Ward), are there other "schools" in Waterdeep where a person can learn manners, caring for one's self (including keeping clothing looking good and personal care), social maneuvers (dancing,

etiquette, etc.), and other necessary skills for the upper classes or those who wish to emulate the nobles?

A: the nobility prefer live-in tutors and seldom grace the halls of any academy except (in rare instances) "houses of the sword" (weapons training/practice), but that wealthy "wannabe noble" families use such establishments heavily. They come and go in Waterdeep, but there tend to be twenty to forty at any given time, teaching everything from etiquette and fashion sense to the intricacies of fine print in trade treaties.

Villas

- THO 12/10/12

There are many, many Waterdhavian noble villas (meaning: walled compounds, with home, stables, guesthouse, and gardens), not to mention tallhouses and standalone mansions, now occupied by other nobles than the family that built them initially (most new occupants do a makeover/expansion), or by wealthy wannabe-nobles.

The oldest, proudest families like to stay on the same site (and often buy up properties around it, and rent them out, so as to control potential neighbours [[landlords have absolute rights to kick any tenant out, for any reason]]). However, other nobles like to "move up" in properties as they gather wealth and social prestige (and want to appear even more powerful, in hopes of gaining even more).

The superb recent-era Realms novel CITY OF THE DEAD by Rosemary Jones describes many, many nobles selling their properties and even their titles to get out of debt.

So, yes, in almost any era of Waterdeep, nobles are "building grander," moving, and leaving behind slightly less grand digs that others either rent or buy. Some temples and guilds, after the fall of the warlords, built and sold luxurious lodgings in Waterdeep as an income-generating ongoing industry (though this faded away as land prices rose and ate into the profits).

Buildings, Land, Districts

Racial Districts, Ghettos

- Ed 2/9/12

Waterdeep truly is a tolerant "melting pot" where all folk dwell and work together (motivated by common greed, many say). The social divisions in the City of Splendors are economic, rather than human sub-racial/cultural/"national" - in general, the wealthier you are, the farther north you live (and the closer to either Mount Waterdeep or the sea).

This is a very rough rule, because wealthy folk who prize solitude or quiet over social high profile prefer to dwell in North Ward and closer to the inland city wall, and folk who live and breathe trade like to live closer to the Market.

Visibly non-human individuals, and poor/unemployed newcomers to the city tend to end up in Dock Ward or South Ward (Dock Ward is more dangerous for females, scholars, and children, and lacks the amount of available accommodations, whereas many warehouse owners in South Ward don't mind building "rafter rooms" above their storage space and making extra coin off rents).

So there are no "ghettos" based on human origins (all the Calishites clustering here, the folk from Turmish or the Tashalar there), but half-orcs, and half-breeds that look "slightly" serpent-like or otherwise monstrous, will likely dwell in Dock Ward.

Half-elves, gnomes, dwarves, and halflings dwell wherever their wealth and desires dictate, and can be

found everywhere in the city, but dwarves active in foundry-work are most likely to be in Dock Ward, and many gnomes and halflings dwell in Trades Ward and Castle Ward.

The natural human tendencies to seek out someone of your own culture/background (unless you're trying to hide from such people, of course) lead to a Calishite seeking a Calishite landlord or patron, but due to the bustling nature of Waterdeep, that doesn't often translate into clusters of Calishite-occupied houses; aside from the oldest landowning nobles, landlords tend to own properties scattered all over the city rather than in "blocks."

Coffee Shops

Opening a coffee shop

- Ed 15/1/11

There are over a dozen such shops in Waterdeep already, circa the 1370s, and over thirty circa 1479 DR. The hurdles would mainly be competition. Any such shop stands and falls on two things: the price/quality of their hot food (tarts, both sweet and savory [[meat pies and fish rolls]], and pastries, including eggbread buns with sugar melted over the top of them, and bacon-fried apple fritters ditto: literally, slices of apple coated in batter and fried in bacon fat, alongside bacon), and the variety and quality of their hot drinks (hot chocolate and hot fruit-pulp drinks and teas as well as coffees). So, get good suppliers, keep the place clean, have a serving window for the street pass-through traffic and some cozy corners and/or booths for those who want to linger and do deals/talk semi-privately...and you're golden. As in coins. Miss out on these...and you'll miss out on riches, too. BTW: no problems re "protection" rackets and the like, because the guilds as well as the Watch want more places like these to frequent, and will fiercely defend them if welcomed/made to feel at home.

Elminster's Holdings

- THO 31/12/13

Elminster secretly owns dozens of buildings in the city, and has three residences, from a lowly garret in Dock Ward to a hidden apartment in a noble villa whose owners have no idea they're hosting a secret way in, a secret stair, and no less than four secret rooms at the top of those steps, with their own chimney and firehearth and larder.

Temples, Chapterhouses

Most Noble Order of the Radiant Heart

- Ed 1/5/10

Yes, the order does have a modest chapterhouse in Waterdeep. It's a small but impressive three-floors-above-the-street, one-cellar-below stone building (with stout stone pillars supporting a "porch roof" over the double-doors entrance) in North Ward.

Specifically, it's located on the east side of Whaelgond Way, two doors south of the Jardeth noble family villa.

Taverns & Inns

Inn of the Dripping Dagger

Dweomer on bar

- Ed 8/12/11, responding to story about time Company of Crazy Adventurers used a wish to teleport "into the bar" – expanded on in "Volo's Guide to Waterdeep" p114

The dweomer on the bar was shattered, but has since been replaced by others.

[The Crawling Spider](#)

- THO 23/6/11, responding to query about tavern mentioned in Volo's Guide to Waterdeep

I can make a start about the "why" of the Crawling Spider: at this time, in Waterdeep, there was a fad in the city for flirting with danger that had young wealthies of both genders, noble or not, "dressing up like drow" (and other Underdark "beasts and monsters") and going out partying..

[Adventurers Clubs](#)

- Ed 31/12/13

The City of Splendors has, over the years, been home to dozens of short-lived adventurers' clubs. Mostly they burn down or go bankrupt, some of them after being damaged often and thoroughly in armed and bloody brawls. This has led to a local reputation for danger, which usually means "I don't want one located anywhere near where I live, thank you VERY much."

However, many of these clubs, and most of this fell reputation, comes from the sort of adventurers' club, now outlawed by the Lords of Waterdeep, that's really just a tavern run on the cheap and offering cheap wine and ale, because it subsists on joining fees and dues paid by members (and everyone drinking in the place is either a member or a guest—"guests" being a lone individual brought in by a member, once only, because if they return for a second time, they must join or be ejected). These sort of rowdy establishments are all gone now; the best remembered ones are the oldest and longest-lived, The Proud Sword (westfront The High Road, Castle Ward), and the notorious Red Blades High (westfront Slut Street, Dock Ward).

The adventurers' clubs that survive are akin to real-world London gentlemen's clubs of the Victorian and Edwardian eras; that is, large buildings that provide meals, laundry and tailor (garment and boot repair) facilities, lounge areas, meeting rooms, and the equivalent of private hotel rooms for their members. The better clubs also provide libraries of maps, journals of adventures, and general reference works (such as taxes, fees, licenses, and laws regarding adventurers in various Faerûnian locales). The very best employ errand-runners and trade agents, who can go and fetch or buy replacement weapons, clothing, and needed gear from various Waterdhavian establishments, on behalf of members.

In short, the Waterdhavian adventurers' clubs of today function as a shared home for adventurers visiting the city—a first-class hotel in which they are part owners, and so are treated with real respect by the staff, not given supercilious or bad service.

The foremost clubs at present are:

[Rahorinjak's House](#)

- Ed 31/12/13

Staffed by retired adventurers who have grown old, wise, and full of stories (not to mention magically prepared to cope with almost anything a member or guest can throw at them, including deadly monsters getting out of cages to rampage), Rahoringjak's is the oldest and shabbiest, but most relaxed and comfortable, of all Waterdhavian adventurers' clubs. It has some six hundred members, a magnificent trophy room adorned with all sorts of alarming and disgusting preserved monster heads on the walls, a secret back way in and out (that emerges, by means of rather damp tunnels, several streets away in the back service stair of a tavern that has no business affiliation with the club), twenty sleepover

rooms that members can rent for a copper/night, and a secret armory in the cellar that members can raid for replacement weapons for free. Rahoringjak himself died some years ago, and is said to have been stuffed and locked into a closet somewhere on the premises. The kitchens run to hearty stews and roasts, not fancy cuisine, and the stuffed, magically-floating human-head-sized beholder just inside the entry doors is rumored (correctly) to be more than just an adornment (it contains some miniature wands that can be made to discharge their magical effects by someone who knows how, from quite a distance).

Rahoringjak's is located in Dock Ward. It's housed in a rambling old gray stone building of several balconies and turrets, that's actually three old buildings knocked together (which is why most of its roof is purple-to-maroon tiles, but one wing has a dark green tiled roof). These connected buildings stand in a cluster in the interior of a city block bounded on the north by Shesstra's Street, on the west by Snail Street, on the east by Book Street, and (a long way to the south) on the south by the Street of Curtains. The club is "a stone's throw" south of Shesstra's, through the alley gap.

The House of Honor

- Ed 31/12/13

The newest and grandest of adventurers' clubs, this establishment was founded by Sargrath's Folly, an adventuring band of elves and half-elves led by the elf swordsman and rogue Tansaryn Sargrath, after a disastrous battle with a dragon left most of them maimed beyond adventuring—and quite lacking in any thirst to resume adventuring careers once they got healed. The eleven members of the Folly still own and run the club, employing two dozen former servants of various Waterdhavian noble houses.

Their skills mean that the large, spacious, well-lit club (its entrance hall and ballroom—more familiar to members for its daytime use as a venue for casual dining or chatter, the many round tables being numerous enough that small groups can assemble far enough from others to keep low-voiced converse private—being clad in shining white marble) can feature the style, hauteur, and graces of a grand noble house, from the elaborately-presented dishes served forth on platters to the etiquette of preparing a room [small hearth-fire lit save on the hottest summer days, bed turned back and scented, drinks left decanted and ready, and so on].

The House is expensive to belong to (original members pay 2,000 gp at the beginning of every year, and newer ones pay up to 4,000, as the joining fee has risen steadily, in 200 gp increments, since the club's opening), but provides by far the most luxurious venue for adventurers to mingle and inhabit. Every member gets lockable storage; a walk-in closet in every room, and a larger locked room in the cellars. The wine cellar at the House rivals that of the finest dining establishments in Waterdeep, and there are weapons-practice chambers, a room of small heated pools (we real-world moderns might call them "sunken hot tubs"), and a full stables with covered storage for a dozen coaches and wagons (in this case, "full" means harness and tack secure storage and repair, and a stable staff expected and able not only to feed, water, and curry horses, mules, and oxen, but to "doctor" most equine and bovine ailments).

Like many a noble mansion, the House features grand, lofty-ceilinged "grand rooms" on the ground floor, two sweeping staircases that have railings adorned with life-sized bronzes of adventurers in heroic poses that lead to upper floors with wide, high passages, the first floor up housing a library, an armory (weapons repair as well as secure storage), and a dozen meeting rooms, and the three floors above that being devoted to suites of rooms where members can stay (at a cost of one copper piece per head per night, or 2 cp to "secure the room" as one's own for a day and night through). Many "members of Honor" who winter over in Waterdeep make the House their home for the cold months, using the time

and proximity to other adventurers to plan forays, forge alliances, and prepare all that's needed in the way of gear. Wintering over in Waterdeep, with the shifting fashions among the real nobility (fewer of them relocating to warmer climes for the winter) and the prevalence among wealthy non-nobles to never adopt the habit of wintering in warmer places, means residents of the House have ready winter access to possible sponsors; many of them make good use of this.

It amuses the seldom-seen Tansaryn to employ a ridiculously fluting and whimsical elf, a seven-foot-tall and rail-thin sun elf named Relevandrel Vornreth (and better known as "Relevandrel the Ridiculous" around Waterdeep) as "chamberlain" of the club. This always dark-and-impeccably-clad personage can be as haughtily sneering as the most overblown noble, but is playacting, and usually can't resist making a jest or mincingly and eye-rollingly acting out mimicry of either an individual or a type of person. His stage sighs and grand verbiage amuse many, and most members of Honor love him and regard him as a staunch ally (Need to get a bleeding body out of your rooms unseen at highsun? Relevandrel's your man. Have to procure JUST the right wine to fill goblets, right now in the dead of night? Relevandrel's your man. Can't remember the name of the highcoin-lass you so enjoyed last time, but need her right here and right now? Relevandrel's your . . .). Many adventurers can do their own devastating impersonations of Relevandrel, but usually choose to do them outside Waterdeep.

The House is located in Sea Ward, occupying the center of the block bounded on the north by Rough Road (always "Raruph" to Sea Warders, by the way, because the older name for the street is Raruph's Ride), on the west by Feather Street and The Sutherlane, on the east by Mendever Street, and on the south by Zarimtar Street (misabeled "Zarimtar" on some maps and street signs). Its size and grandeur make it look like what it formerly was: the grand mansion of a noble family (the Neshers built it to be their new home, but sold it without ever moving in when family fortunes took a sharp dip, and the older family members voiced their preference for their older digs over the "large, soulless, overbright" new ones).

Stag Swords House

- Ed 2/1/14

This now-well-regarded adventurers' club began as the place for the outcasts and misfits who couldn't afford the fees for Rahoringjak's or the other (now-defunct) Waterdhavian adventurers' clubs of the time, or who were expelled from those clubs for their behavior, or who were "shunned" (blackballed, or not allowed to join) because they were disliked by key established members of those clubs. Yet over the years, the hard-working staff of the Stag Swords have made this club beloved by its members. The staff see themselves as the personal servants of members, so everything from delivering messages and items in-town to washing the feet and dressing the bunions of an exhausted member who trudges in gets done without hesitation, without charge, and without criticism of the member. The Stag Sworders regularly fetch drunken members from other establishments across the city, and even see to it that non-member strangers and adventurers who belong to other clubs get delivered to the right place when brought to their doors. If something is broken and needs repairs or replacements, clothes or boots need washing (even really tough washing jobs, like getting rid of skunk- or trogolodyte-stink, or city sewage), it gets seen too, right away (often while a member sleeps). Wounded and filthy members have been privately undressed, washed, and put to bed by staffers, sick members have been tended, and so on. Stag Sworders think nothing of kneeling to lace up or unlace the boots of a member who is merely fat or weary; as one guest once put it, "They're BETTER than the best servants nobles can hire in this city!" All of this makes up for the nondescript looks and spartan furnishings of the club (it's located amid

warehouses and stables on westfront Carter's Way in South Ward, south of the Way's moot with Coachlamp Lane (BTW: some civic officials and maps mention a "Southern Ward," but no inhabitant of that area EVER calls it anything but "South Ward"), has walls painted in mismatched hues and is furnished with similarly mismatching used furniture from hundreds of sources.

The staffers today are led by the three founders (the large, strong, and jovial Ildevvur Murmrask; the small, petite, and tart-tongued Sharlassa Tilturr, whose eyes and memory miss NOTHING; and the one-eyed, taciturn Garleth Khalastym, who is a master horse-doctor and a rough-and-ready sewer-up of wounded humans, too), and number twenty-nine, young cooks and maids included (that is, children of the older staffers).

The name of this club comes from the stag-headed party masks, picked up for free from a long-ago hunting-themed noble revel, worn by the staff in early years to confer some degree of anonymity in their dealings with the authorities and with rival clubs. These masks cover the nose, upper half of the face, and the rest of the head like a war-helm, and sport two small, upswept antlers. They still exist, are displayed behind the bar, and get worn from time to time—these days, usually by club members wanting to do something shady, risky, or outright illicit.

The Stag Swords membership is now slightly more than four-and-a-half-hundred (and is growing). It is only that low because this club has always been the city home of a lot of very active adventurers, so its roster of members has suffered heavy losses over the years thanks to the perils of adventuring.

The House remains a cheap and cheerful place, with its own adjacent stables and warehouse (where members can store things that aren't flammable or alive, without question or comment). Thanks to its location, it does hire discreet armed guards (often wounded, recuperating member-adventurers) to watch over the stables, warehouse, and its own entrances and passages.

[The Lightning Targe](#)

- Ed 2/1/14

The Lightning Targe: This newest and smallest adventurers' club consists of two adjacent houses (joined only by a covered bridge built between two facing third-storey windows) on eastfront Blackmul Street in Castle Ward. A former haunt of smugglers, the interior of both houses is a warren of dimly-lit steps, tiny rooms built over other rooms, closets that have sliding panels for their back walls that let into short secret passages, and so on. There are dumbwaiters of all sizes, including large enough for five friendly or non-shy people to cram together in the "traveling box," and the houses bristle with gables, balconies, swing-down fire escape ladders, ladders affixed to the upper exterior walls that allow for easy travel between windows and roofs and upper balconies to lower-down windows and balconies, and multiple chimneys that have projecting iron spars to serve as hand- and foot-holds. The club also has a "pet gargoyle" who's actually a mimic who captures intruders but doesn't harm them, blowing a foghorn that it long ago took into its guts to warn staffers once it's attached itself to an intruder and held them in place. (Most of the time this mimic, who's referred to as "Lararve" [Lar-AR-vuhh] by members, looks like an immobile stone griffon-like sculpture, attached to the front top of one of the gables.) If lots of intruders swarm, Lararve blows its horn without first trying a capture; it defines "intruders" as anyone trying to climb into the houses rather than using a door, but not if they exit from a window or balcony of the houses first, only if they come from the ground or atop a passing coach or wagon.

The Targe has about eighty members, and many of them are half-breeds or out-and-out monsters; half-orcs and drow are prominent among the membership, and orcs, hobgoblins, kenku, bugbears, and loxo are frequently seen inside the club. As a result, the club has two firm rules: all members get treated

equally, and don't "rat out" fellow members to the authorities (if the Watch asks, "Did you see an orc come in here?" the usual response is something akin to a laconic, "Don't think so; what color was it?"). Non-members aren't permitted beyond the front entry rooms of either club house except when they're guests assisting, and vouched for by, a member (i.e. persons helping a wounded member reach the club, and then reach a particular room inside the club).

The Targe has over twenty "swift disguises" handy in a walk-in longcloset beside the bar that faces the entry door in one of the club houses, for the use of members; these consist of clothes, head-swathing bandages, false casts that can be slid on to cover limbs, crutches, and various full-head masks, including some that, with the attached wigs, look like very realistic human faces.

The Targe is run by seven large, strong, striking rather than beautiful Northern women, of Uthgardt barbarian heritage but fiercely determined to never return to their home regions or culture; they are led by the two oldest and largest, who go by the names Kelelty ("Kel-EL-tea") and Morragh ("MORE-rag"), though these are both assumed names. They dole out rooms to members as needed; there's no limits to stays, but most members stay for short periods, are active in the city mainly by night, and are as secretive as possible.

Waterdhavian rumor, among those few citizens who've heard of this club at all, hints that mixed-species "monster" orgies are frequent and rampant at the Targe. This is far from true, though mixed races of different genders often crowd into the same room to conduct private negotiations or to sleep, or both. The name "Lightning Targe" came from a shield Kelelty once sheltered behind, that got split by a wizard's lightning bolt in an alley brawl hard by where the club is now located, but that kept her alive and deflected the bolts into allies of the wizard, who then fled. She took this lucky deliverance as a sign of the favor of the gods, and chose this location for the club (though it took some years to "persuade" the smugglers to part with the buildings; as Elminster put it, "it was the rather bloody sort of persuasion").

The Targe is said to be haunted by a poltergeist, and it certainly has a staff member able to invisibly move things around, though this may be telekinesis and personal invisibility; Elminster hasn't yet investigated. This haunting seems to awaken to counter hostile intruders or drunken or belligerent members causing trouble in the club, and otherwise to remain unseen. The Targe is known to have a decidedly mildewy tunnel connection to city sewers, affording a "back way out" (and, of course, in, too).

[The High House of Heroes](#)

- Ed 2/1/14

The High House of Heroes: This grandiosely named adventurers' club usually gets politely nicknamed "Heroes High" in everyday converse, and is less politely referred to as "Low Heroes" or just "the Low." This club is located in a rundown but formerly grand mansion in North Ward, on eastfront Nindabar Street four doors north of Suldown Street (formerly known as "Suldoun," and older citizens and one or two older signs preserve the older name; BTW, street signs in Waterdeep are posted on the sides of corner buildings [[or their walls, if they stand inside walled compounds, as many nobles' villas do]] above the level of street-level awnings or window and door rain-dormer roofs). It has a staff of just over thirty, and a membership of almost six hundred, and is the closest thing to a "soulless hotel" among Waterdhavian adventurers' clubs, with a professionally polite and distant staff, bare-bones amenities, and an accent on privacy (as in, "I don't want to know why you're dragging that dead body up to your room, or carrying that severed head; none of my business, and if I don't know I can't tell, so eyes right and remember nothing and the shift will unfold just fine and I'll get my pay").

With that said, every room has an ensuite bathing tub and jakes, a small cooking-hearth with chimney (the shared flues of these chimneys soar up through the club to emerge from the roof and soar above it like a cluster of slender stone towers, giving the mansion the appearance of a gigantic stone high-spined crown), a sturdy table, good beds and linens, and three stout bolts that can be slid across the inside of the door (all door hinges can be removed from the outside, so the bolts are a delaying tactic, not true security).

The club is run by a council (we real-world moderns might use the term “board of directors,” because that’s exactly how it functions, with voting, rules of order at meetings, and so on) that’s largely composed of retired- or semi-retired adventurers who’ve invested in the club. The High House is run by the charismatic, diplomatic Waterdhavian wine merchant and landlord Morivel “Hartmantle” Hartimantur, a middle-aged and somewhat portly man who possesses rugged good looks, white daggerboard sideburns, and a dizzyingly long list of lovers (from tough Dock Ward tavernmaids to bored noble ladies of Sea Ward, and everything in between). He smooths over the worst disputes and “troubles” among the High House clients, often by fetching forth good wine and cheese from his private cellars (and sometimes by persuading one of his lady friends to “comfort” someone), and generally keeps things moving along in his charmingly sleazy way.

As a longtime member told Elminster: “No one exactly loves the Low, but many adventurers find it useful.”

Six Horned Crowns (Dragon #413)

Various Questions

- Ed 15/7/12

Q:

- 1) Could you please tell me in which Ward and on what street(s) Mrayvren’s Superior Castings can be found in Waterdeep?
- 2) The name for the room on the fifth floor of Mrayvrens’ Bountiful Rest caught my attention. Does “Gryphonshar” mean anything in particular? Is it a name used at other inns in Waterdeep?
- 3) Will future articles feature Awntrus “Black Glove” Malaver? This character is growing on me and I’m starting to hope WotC will ask you to write a short story featuring this character.
- 4) Can you shed any light on what Elminster (if it was him) was doing in Waterdeep when he interrupted the private council involving Awntrus and Sparrantar? (I’d thought Elminster was in Cormyr at that time.) Does his presence have anything to do with the comment in Bury Elminster Deep (page 287) about Elminster and Storm both being Lords of Waterdeep?
- 5) The 7th footnote talks about blood being used to bind gold to iron. Is that...possible? I’ve never heard of anything like that so was just wondering if the idea came from a real-world example. Either way its pretty cool.

A:

1. Mrayvren’s Superior Castings is located on the south/west side of Tower Trail, in Dock Ward. If you have access to the fold-out maps from the 2e “City of Splendors: boxed set, it’s the T-shaped building immediately above/north of Dock Ward feature “50” (Telethar Leatherworks, a tannery). Mrayvren’s is the source of constant hammerings (to free recalcitrant castings from molds), and the tannery reeks, so Tower Trail (which is also where some of the nightsoil wagons are parked when being inspected and hitched up for their next runs) is a good place to avoid if one can.

2. Gryphonshar was the name of a wealthy, successful, ethical, and much-loved Waterdhavian merchant who was a sometime sponsor, patron, and eventually business partner of Haelddar Mrayvren. Andremon Gryphonsar died in the autumn of 1454 DR, but is remembered with fond nostalgia by many traders, and several rooms and features around Waterdeep have been named for him (all since his death). His six daughters survive him; one (Tlarleene) is an adventurer, one (Alathea) disappeared in 1466 DR, and the other four are bright, strong-willed, rather plain women who have married well or started their own businesses (notably the Brightboots cleaning service, run by Rhavilra Gryphonshar, whose teams clean many lodgings and polish many boots for laboring and shopkeeping Waterdhavians).

3. Future Eye On the Realms articles as in “soon”? No, because I write a year’s worth of them in advance. Do I have future plans for Malaver? You bet! Can I say anything more about them at this time? Not at all. Can I confirm anything will ever come of them? Even less than not at all! :) But boy, would I like to show you more of the Black Glove!

4. It was indeed Elminster. He often uses one of several portals he knows of that link Cormyr and Waterdeep (one of which is seen early in ELMINSTER’S DAUGHTER) to move back and forth between the two places (he doesn’t need to cast spells to use them, just know how to traverse them; they operate through their own magic). He was there to meet someone and give them advice, spy on someone else at a particular meeting, and retrieve a certain (non-magical item) he’d stashed in for a Cormyrean who now needed it. On this occasion, it didn’t happen to be because he was there as a Lord (a status even few Lords know about).

5. It’s possible in the Realms. :) Fantasy, remember? Actually, various exotic-creature bloods were historically part of some smiths’ (claimed or rumored) alloys and forge-slakes (liquids, usually oils, that hot hammered work was “quenched” in). In the Realms, orcs, dwarves, and gnomes have all used heated mixtures involving the blood of various creatures (legendarily dragons and wyverns, but more often the blood of their foes and of vigorous wild creatures they hunted, such as elk, or fought, such as bear and wolverines) as “bindings” for coatings of one metal with another. These mixtures are collectively known as “cauldron-blood,” and as with cooking, everyone has their own recipes. If you’re a Faerûnian novice at this sort of thing, be aware that very few human smiths and armorers (or forgers who happen to be orcs, dwarves, gnomes, and so on) will surrender such secrets to you willingly, unless they’re dying and desperate to pass such lore on. Alchemists, however, traditionally sell such “thaethar” (forgebrew recipes), and although alchemist-sold thaethar are traditionally disparaged by smiths, those same smiths swift destroy any written ones they acquire, suggesting most thaethar aren’t useless or incorrect.

[Lost Dragon of Waterdeep \(Dragon #414\)](#)

- Ed 11/9/12

J: Ghelmer’s ability to enter other paintings that have human blood mixed into the paint...can Ghelmer sense such things in paintings? Or is his ability a function of prior knowledge of paintings made in part from human blood (thanks to his days as an artist)?

E: No, he can’t sense paintings that have human blood mixed with their pigments from afar, but if he comes into contact with them (in “wisp”) form, he knows at a touch whether or not he can enter into

them. He largely relies on knowledge of suitable paintings from his “prior life,” yes.

J: If the sage Elaerla Raelingdorn was first plied with Sembian Soft Sharpnip and plenty of coin, then asked whether or not Ghelmer mixed his own blood into his paintings, how might she respond?

E: She would admit the truth: which is yes, he did. Creating quite a few hiding-places and homes for his current self, most of them scattered across North Ward and Sea Ward in Waterdeep, but extending into Castle Ward and Trades Ward as well. Not to mention Piergeiron’s Palace and Castle Waterdeep.

J: Has Elminster speculated on whether Ghelmer’s own blood is in the painting found in the Eagleshield Mansion (Highroost)?

E: No, because he has no need to speculate. El knows Ghelmer’s blood is in that painting, because he’s examined it. The Old Mage doesn’t admit all he knows, even to me in my role as scribe of these Eye screeds.

J: During his imprisonment has Ghelmer ever knowingly encountered any of his descendants (assuming he had any) from his dalliances when he was still living?

E: Yes, there were a handful of descendants, mostly female children born to noble ladies and passed off by them as legitimate offspring, sired by the noble husbands of the ladies (aside from a lock of curly hair among otherwise straight hair, Ghelmer leaves no visible mark of his bloodline (recessive genes), so his daughters tend to look like their mothers, not as a group of related women with a mysterious (or obvious) father. Elminster tells me Ghelmer knows who almost all of them are, has met some of them while in the painting, and wants their identities kept secret so as not to harm their lives and noble standing. Elminster is thus far honouring those wishes.

J: Can you please describe onslers eels and tonthur nuts and where can they be found in the Realms?

E: Certainly. Onslers are pale, mottled dun-white freshwater eels found in shallow streams and deep rivers alike, throughout the Heartlands (they sicken and die if the waters are too cold or too hot for too long, and so cannot survive the worst winters in the North, or the waters of the tropics or around the Lake of Steam). Onslers are plant eaters, devouring more algae and aquatic mosses and lichens than anything else. They are placid and slow-moving, with soft, sucking mouths and darker backs than bellies, and if undisturbed live longer than humans and grow quite long and broad (big adults having flatter bodies than cylindrical thinner, younger specimens). Onslers flesh has a pleasant “rare but well-marinated steak” texture but is rather tasteless, and so is either doused in sauce or heavily seasoned (usually roasted with berries, or slit and dressed with cloves of garlic or spices thrust into the slits). If boiled or steamed in the drippings of pork, goat, lamb, or beef roasts, it will take on the taste of the dripping—and so is often used to “make the meat go farther” by innkeepers and in the kitchens of poor folk.

Tonthur nuts look like brown, wrinkled, spiky-all-over walnuts (the inner nut we real-world moderns are used to eating, that is, not the shell-covered entire nut actually produced by nature), and grow on raspberry-cane-like wandering ground thorn-vines that grow profusely in hilly and mountainous areas in Amn, Tethyr, and the interior area bounded by Starmantle, Turmish, and the Vilhon. Some goats graze on tonthur-vines, but nothing else does, so the nuts are plentiful. They are full of fat and have a rich, “heavy” (due to that fat) taste that’s rather like nutty mushrooms sprinkled with black pepper. If one has plenty of water (or broth) to douse the fiery thirst they cause, they can be eaten readily raw, in the

field, and a bowl of them has made a hearty meal for many a wayfarer, drover, or caravan merchant—but when sold in the Sword Coast lands, the Tashalar, and wherever Calishite merchants travel, they are usually crushed and boiled with a dozen or so spices into fiery brown tonthur-nut sauce, used as a condiment to give bland food (like potatoes) a strong taste, but often also to cover the unpleasant taste of foodstuffs starting to go bad, or a “cook’s mistake.” Tonthur-nut sauce is sold in small, sealed clay jugs with lids, that are often reused to store lantern or cooking oils and other substances not harmed by the strong scent tonthur-nut sauce leaves behind.

J: The radiance that emanated from Lady Eagleshield’s eyes as her organs were melted—is that a common side effect of the food concoction that slew her?

E: It is if you happen to have particular magic items within your body, as Lady Eagleshield did, and they vaporize as the internal organs melt, and release their stored magical energies. The paranoid, seeing-enemies-everywhere Lady Eagleshield had swallowed no less than three enchanted gems to protect herself against foes (a gem that conferred feather fall properties on her, another that guarded against many sorts of poison, and a third that emitted a partial spell reflection effect). Otherwise, someone suffering “organ melt” will have the bright purple-green glow in their eyes, but nothing else—unless they spit or drool forth purple-green, glowing “spew” of their innards, as they die.

J: Sort of a longshot: do the Xraunrarr know about this organ melting effect? If yes, have they expanded on it? (I’m imagining a Xraun preparing some human stock for a meal and deciding it might be fun to turn dinner into a light show before consuming it, then discovering that fried-from-the-inside human tastes pretty good).

E: They do indeed, but don’t yet know all of what causes it, and are seeking to investigate (through agents), with an eye to turning this organ-melting ability to their own uses. Soon.

- THO 15/9/12

That telltale lock of curly hair Ghelmer passed on to his offspring (with various noble ladies) appears near the left “temple” of their heads, or on the side of their heads just “behind” the temple, and is a shade or so lighter than the rest of their hair, but otherwise of the same general hue as the rest of their hair. If the rest of their hair is also curly, due to the genes of the mother, so is Ghelmer’s lock, but it still “shows” lighter than the rest of the hair.

[Locations of Streets and Sites](#)

[Grain Gate of Castle Waterdeep](#)

- Ed 29/12/15

Q: On page 14 of volo’s guide to waterdeep there is a reference to a grain gate near Gem street, does that lead into the mountain or is there a trail up...it does not appear on any other waterdeep map.

A: The gate in the exterior walls of Castle Waterdeep that opens out onto the Foregate lane that links to Gem Street (the throat of that lane is where the arrow is, on the Volo’s Guide map) is known as Grain Gate, because it’s the gate that leads not just inside the castle, but (most directly, of all the castle gates) to the wagon-ramp leading down into its granaries (the huge chambers where emergency “feed all Waterdeep in case of siege or prolonged horrid weather or influx of refugees from an orc horde or other Sword Coast North disaster” stores of grain are kept (and rotated out into the city’s regular food

supplies by the relevant guilds, under City Guard [later: City Watch] supervision. So "Grain Gate" is a gate in the castle wall. Yes, some of the granaries "turn west" on their below-ground level to be partly under Mount Waterdeep. No, they deliberately have no direct connection to Undermountain.

Pressbow Alley, Dock Ward

- THO quoting Ed's notes, 21/9/12

A "pressbow" is a crude factory machine based on an oversized stationary crossbow, its force used not to fire quarrels/bolts but to operate sharp metal stamps to cut leather or soft metals or wax or even cheese. Pressbows were invented (or refined, depending on whom you believe) by a gnome leatherworker named Albryn Telnhand in a workshop along Pressbow Alley around 1226 DR or so. They are still used today, though largely superseded by "stamping mills" that use cranked weights (descending atop a long cutting bar like a guillotine fashioned for lopping off a dozen heads in a row at once) to drive multiple cutters in a single descent.

Dretch Lane

- Ed 4/9/12

Ed tells me Dretch Lane is named for a long-ago slaughter of nine dretch (the diabolical creatures) that were released there when a wagon containing them (as imprisoned cargo, secretly bound for a noble villa in the city) overturned. Several citizens got involved in the fight/butchery, and the incident became briefly famous in city lore and the laneway was named for it.

Brondar's Way

- Ed 2/1/14

Q: "no less than six buildings on either side of the north end of Brondar's Way" you say.

I see (on the 1109 map) five buildings on the east side of Brondar's Way, north of the Nandar villa -- "westfront" is the word, right? Then there are four on the other side, between the Ulbrinter and Maerklos villas. And of course there are several on the north side of Delzorin Street, which could serve as well. Which of these should I note as being filled with hipsters? (all grins, no offense to anyone!)

And while I have you, my wordsmith of ineffable awesomeness, what are the names of the alleys in these two blocks?

goes northward from the Nandar villa to Delzorin Street goes east-west between Vhezor Street and Brondar's Way and southward to the Maerklos villa makes a "driveway" for the Maerklos and Nandar villas, beginning at Sulmor Street, running north and quickly east to end at Whaelgond Way

A: Those five buildings you refer to are eastfront (that is, fronting on the east side of Brondar's Way), not westfront. The four buildings between the Ulbrinter and Maerklos villas are westfront.

Yes? So, Ilygelther's House at its height took in the northernmost pair of the westfront quartet, and the southernmost trio (closest to the Nandar villa) of the eastfront quintet.

Now, alley names:

North from the back gate of the Nandar villa to Delzorin Street: Nandar's Ride

East-west between Vhezor Street and Brondar's Way with a "tee" south to the Maerklos villa back gate: Mhaershimmer Mews

(named for a long-ago wizard who dwelt in a now-vanished shack that stood on the eastfront of the southward leg of this alley)

The curving lane between Sulmor Street and Whaelgond Way, that crosses Brondar's Way and hosts the front gates of both the Maerklos and Nandar villas:

Thalambur's Trot

(Thalaumbur is a long-dead wealthy merchant who once owned most of the "block" of buildings enclosed by the Trot and Sulmor Street; BTW, Sulmor is pronounced "Sul-MOOR," and Sedmond Sulmor was once a very wealthy merchant wannabe-noble who tried to get ennobled several times but was shunned; a cold, calculating villain of a man, he attempted to purchase lichdom for himself, and likely succeeded, though his fate is unknown, and he hasn't been seen in Waterdeep for almost three centuries)

Song Dragon Presence

- Ed 6/6/11, responding to query about reasons song dragons are attracted to Waterdeep

I'm afraid the heart of a proper reply to your question is going to be missing because of a Realms-fiction-related NDA. (As in, there's a told but not yet published story here.)

But I can hint like crazy, so here we go . . .

Dragons are magical creatures.

Waterdeep has some integral magics of some age and complexity, some of which I know you've been recently discussing here at the Keep.

Dragons are attracted to those magics.

Song Dragons (and a few other dragon subtypes, all of whom can shapechange into human form, and so "hide among" humanity) like to dwell among humans. They are fascinated by the energy, creativity, variety, and industry of humankind, and find humans easy to manipulate and fun to be around. In other words, dragons can immerse themselves in the human "game" and enjoy it, being endlessly entertained. Humans also offer the most versatile and surprising pawns in the contests played between dragons (see Erin's novel THE GOD CATCHER for a glimpse of these).

Waterdeep has always been a bustling hive of human commerce, a crossroads where a great variety of humans (and other sentient races) congregate, then go off all over the Realms trading. Offering a dragon hiding in human shape ready transport elsewhere AND the greatest variety of humans to interact with.

"Important" and "exciting" things (in the affairs of humans) are constantly happening in Waterdeep, and tolerance for variety and social climbing and mercantile striving and invention are high.

There have always been quite a few shapechanging dragons dwelling in, or frequently visiting, Waterdeep, from its earliest human year-round-permanently-settled days. Some dragons don't like to be around other dragons, or jealously defend their turf (see a lot of my Wyrms of the North), yet inevitably draconic dominions overlap. Shapechanging dragons DO like to be around others of their kind, reveling in the rivalries that develop as much as they enjoy the friendships. So, over time, more and more of these dragons congregate in Waterdeep . . . and more come because they hear that other dragons are there (and haven't been exposed and slain for what they are), and it becomes a self-fulfilling thing.

Draconic families develop, and feuds, too, and inevitably certain strong-willed dragons want to dominate and control Waterdeep, and others are just as determined to deny these rivals of theirs the chance of gaining control...

Undermountain

Discrepancy between Atlas & Undermountain Map

- THO 23/5/10, responding to assertion that there are areas in the Atlas that aren't seen in other products

You've noticed one of the simplifications that had to happen to squeeze even a little bit of Undermountain into that first box.

Much of the interior of Mount Waterdeep, "above" Undermountain, is honeycombed with rooms and passages. The uppermost of these are occupied by Waterdeep's City Guard, who even have griffon "flight decks" opening out of the sides of Mount Waterdeep (as well as the associated stables, armories, et al).

The oldest and most self-contained part of this fortress, which can't be "collapsed" or magically assaulted with any ease, being as it's the location of some of the ancient spells that keep much of the central city of Waterdeep (all of Castle Ward, and parts of Dock Ward, Sea Ward, and North Ward) from collapsing down into the sewers and thence into Undermountain, got captured by The Black Hand, an assassin's/thieve's cabal. Who are holed up in there (circa the 1360s DR), besieged by the Guard and Watch, and periodically assaulted by secretly-hired adventuring bands, and can't be dislodged. On the other hand, they can't operate freely down into the city any longer, either.

That "upper sub-level" (the Citadel of the Black Hand) and the ways up to it weren't detailed in the boxed set, because describing all of the assassins (some of whom are doppelgangers, who have infiltrated the ranks of the Guard, Palace courtiers, nobles, guildmasters, and even the Lords; they are the sole means by which the Black Hand can still reach the "world outside the mountain").

I privately suspect that all of this may have been left out to avoid troubles with Kenzer and Co. (Jolly Blackburn also has a "Black Hand" in the Knights of the Dinner Table strip; Ed's came first, by almost a decade, but Jolly's got published first); the need to change the name was an easy reason to just edit out the entire idea, because there was already far too little space in the boxed set to even detail the "core area around the Yawning Portal entry shaft."

Ed's Black Hand wanted to become the TRUE rulers of Waterdeep, and the power struggle between them, various factions of Lords, and Piergeiron is an ongoing thread in Ed's home campaign. With all sides searching for some ancient magics of Ahghairon that could tip the balance of power on behalf of the wielders of those magics.

Locations below Waterdeep

- THO 18/8/10

re. Undermountain "first level" features matching up with surface Waterdeep locations: the Falling Stair doesn't ascend into Castle Waterdeep, but into the Citadel of the Black Hand, a (mini-level) stronghold carved out of the solid rock of Mount Waterdeep (either the main mount or a spur; you'll recall that a shoulder of the mountain separates Mirt's Mansion and adjacent buildings from much of the rest of Castle Ward, and that Castle Waterdeep stands "further out/down" on this spur...).

Melairkyn Dwarves

- Ed 20/1/12

Clan rune

The actual rune is two diagonally crossed stone-headed hammers (crossed in the usual "X" shape of diagonals, like piratical crossbones or the Wilkinson swords, with the heads uppermost), and just above them is an arc (ends down, center up) of three floating crowns, the crowns being represented by flat horizontal lines with three triangles jutting up from them; two shorter smaller ones at each end, and a taller larger one in the middle.

Skullport

Travelling there from Waterdeep

- THO 12/8/10

The vast majority of traffic (cargoes and people) between Waterdeep and Skullport is by way of ships that use the Seacaves and the magical "elevator shaft" therein to move between the two places (with the Lords of Waterdeep and their enforcement arms [Watch and Guard] looking the other way, unless these routes are misused to aid in armed invasions or hurling harmful area-effect magics).

However, there's also a steady stream of passages between the two using secret or not-so-secret gates/portals located in various spots in Undermountain, that link to various spots in Waterdeep's sewers, alleyways, tombs in The city of the Dead, and cellars/attics/rooms/rooftops in specific city buildings. Careful reading of the original RUINS OF UNDERMOUNTAIN boxed set will reveal several of these, even in the portion of the uppermost level partially detailed therein.

So as long as one varies one's route through the "little bit of" Undermountain between subterranean gate and Skullport proper, "battling" should seldom be necessary.

Sea Trade

- THO 12/12/12, responding to query about how guards know what's on ships going into caves

The Guard has a few of its own sorcerers (wild-talent spellcasters) and wizards (non of whom reveal their power publicly and willingly), AND at all times it has two or more "on duty" members of the Watchful Order of Magists & Protectors working with it (I'm just speaking of the Guard here, not the Watch).

There are "telltale" hanging ropes attached to alarm-gongs, merfolk sentinels, city wards (magical fields) and other, still secret ways of detecting the passage of anything larger than a lone man swimming, that passes into or out of the "elevator" waters. The wards detect all artifacts and other magic items of considerable and lasting power, too.

When a ship is detected, the on-duty wizard does a swift ESP-type "thought reading from afar" spell, and "sweeps" the minds aboard, concentrating on the captain or helmsman, if possible. If anything arouses the suspicions of the mage (including the presence of cloaking magics, or any reaction to/detection of the scan), the wizard calls in reinforcements from the Order and alerts the Guard officers. Yes, there are searches and seizures if need be - - but in general, the Guard (and the Watch) ignore cargo and shipments if they don't perceive a real threat to the surface city (any mind flayers, drow, beholders, lots of explosives, or powerful magic would be seen as a "real threat"). Otherwise, they watch from afar rather than stepping in openly. The usual procedure for "incoming trouble" is to alert the spies they have in Skullport to watch and see what happens/what is done with the dangerous individuals or

material.

Slaves in or out don't attract much attention unless a city noble or official has been kidnapped and the authorities are looking for him or her, or unless the breed/nature of the slaves points at coming trouble (battle-equipped and -trained large brute monsters, etc.) or the slavers (neogi, for example), hints at impending trouble.

- Ed 30/12/13, responding to query about how ships going in are unnoticed

The short answer is: Ships AREN'T passing unnoticed by the Guard.

Ships are descending through the sea cave "elevator" as part of Waterdeep's "ghost fleet" of secret naval protectors, as far as the Guard is concerned. That is, ships that tirelessly patrol the Sword Coast near-Waterdhavian harbors to deter tireless pirates and smugglers, who for centuries have awaited the slightest breakdown in this vigilance, so as to pounce on Waterdhavian shipping and bring about the starvation and begging of the great City of Splendors. Or so the story goes.

At the highest ranks, some individuals know what's going on, and maintain either a "nudge nudge wink wink" attitude or grim gritted teeth, but everyone else in the Guard believes that Skullport is kept from boiling up into the city above in a relentless tide of pillaging and murderous mayhem by the very presence of a Waterdhavian naval base down there, "right on top" of Skullport, inhibiting and deterring day and night.

Most ships make the ascent or descent cloaked in disguising spells that give the ship insignia and an overall "look" (of decks, rigging, and crew) that will prevent any vessel from being individually recognized by someone who's seen it recently. Moreover, the journey you describe (from harbor straight to sea caves) almost never occurs.

What does happen is this:

Vessels with Skullport-bound cargo anchor in the calmest seas they can find off Port Llast (or elsewhere; increasingly, fears of piracy or aquatic monster attack have led individual seacaptains to find their own different favored rendezvous spots, at sea) and transfer cargo (by, yes, the Faerûnian equivalent of modern real-world cargo containers; in the Realms, these take the form not of long metal boxes that fit on transport trucks, but are large rectangular wooden crates of massive build, with inset holes "around" a short section of exposed framing-beam at each corner, for hooks, ropes or chains to be fastened or run through; these crates, known as "fastnesses," will JUST fit two to a large wagon, if the wagon is cleared to a flatbed) into small "coaster" boats that meet them, then make the trip into the sea caves (and the at-sea transfer is usually two-way; these coasters usually "give back" cargoes from Skullport or Waterdeep for the vessels to take aboard), and the vessels then sail away or come into Waterdeep's harbor legitimately, and never go near the sea caves. In some cases, this fiddle is absolutely necessary, because the seagoing vessels are too long to fit down the shaft.

Note that this also allows non-contraband cargoes from Skullport to arrive on the docks in Waterdeep as legitimate wares. The ships that unload said cargoes of course provide paperwork that says the cargo comes from shippers in other ports (for centuries certain Athkatlan shippers have made good side incomes by providing papers but no wares at all from their dockside warehouses).

Increasingly, ocean freighters operating up and down the Sword Coast have cranes aboard to facilitate swift unloading at wharves (but also to make possible the transfer of cargoes at sea).

A transfer on the waves is always dangerous, but usually works like this: one or both ships involved has a mast-boom crane—that is, a diagonal spare mast affixed into a rotating collar around the base of the vertical in-use sailing mast. A chain links the two masts, to hold the diagonal mast in position, as a boom,

and the diagonal mast has a pulley at its top end, with a chain or strong cable and hook depending from this.

Almost all transfers, even in calm seas (and most salts will tell you there's really no such thing; even calm Sword Coast waters have a breeze blowing east or southeast, onto the land, and an everpresent swell), occur by means of the fastnesses slung from these booms but also enclosed in thick (multi-layered) bags of fishing nets (even small amounts of crates and barrels will be put inside a fastness, and padded with spare nets, for such transfers).

Some ships also have "tongues" (think of the proverbial pirates' gangplank, only thrice as long and wide, so thick that it can take a huge amount of weight, and secured right across the width or beam of the owning ship by means of many guy-cables) that a cargo can be placed upon by the transferring ships' crane. Scampering crew members affix multiple hooks to the net bag, and by means of lines attached to these hooks, the crew of the receiving ship drags the fastness onto the deck.

Waterdhavian Knowledge

- Ed 23/1/13

As for Skullport, EVERYONE in Waterdeep "knows" about it. But what they know, for most individuals, is a wild mix of speculation and fanciful stories about some dark subterranean hellhole where beholders float above drow and mind flayers who are busy flogging human slaves plucked from Waterdeep in the dead of night - - and in many cases flaying the skin right off those slaves so they can be eaten alive. While dragons hatch and liches collect skulls to craft winegoblets from (and collect blood to make wine from). And so on.

A few traders, adventurers, Masked Lords, Palace officials, and nobles know more - - and more than a few City Guard and City Watch members know more.

The trick will be finding someone who knows a direct way down into Skullport without running afoul of those in Waterdeep who get VERY interested (in a bad way) in anyone asking about Skullport...

Mythal

- THO 26/5/11

Skullport has a mythal. Ed should know; he created the place and first detailed it.

(It may also have a mythallar, but note: if the two are contiguous or overlap at all, they CANNOT be independent, because the field of the one latches onto the anchor points of the other. It's like trying to pour a stream of water out of a watering can into a fast-running stream, and somehow keep the two water flows separate; can't be done.

Books about Skullport

- Ed 24/1/13

There are very few formal books about Skullport, but there are all manner of cheap, swiftly-produced, lurid, sold-on-the-streets chapbooks about Skullport, usually colorful accounts of this or that adventuring band's exploits. A few purport to impart partial maps, warnings about traps, and so on, and these swiftly disappear - - but the Yawning Portal and at least two "adventurers' clubs" in the city have collections of them that can be perused for a fee.

The PUBLIC libraries of Waterdeep (deposit collections endowed by the Palace and by wealthy benefactors, usually nobles who like to place books that show nobility in a good light) contain nothing useful on Skullport, because any tomes with anything more than a passing reference get stolen. Fast.

Silver Marches

Silverymoon

Defenders

- THO 13/3/14

The Knights In Silver and the Spellguard are the elite "heavy hitters" of Silverymoon's defenders and expeditionary forces; the daily guards (of gates, walls, civic building entrances) and street police are in addition to the Knights, and beneath them in rank (not formally, but in terms of authority; any of the Silverwatch or the Moon Garrison who are given an order by a Knight or a member of the Spellguard will obey it unhesitatingly).

However, the Knights in Silver can and do "muck in" on mundane guarding work, on a regular rota; they're not haughty sorts. They do provide the fast cavalry, and patrol Everlund and the environs of Silverymoon on horseback regularly.

Snowed In

- Ed 9/2/13, as part of wider post about being snowed in (see "Social Life", "Snowed In")

Silverymoon has wards that keep the temperature comfortably high (avoiding ice but creating fog), and that can be "set" to repel falling snow like a giant dome - - so most of it will end up in/on the river, and be carried away. Usually a light snowfall is "allowed in" to wash down the streets, water plants, etc., but once more than an inch or two has fallen, the warming (and wind-slowng) wards are "tightened" by one of the mages serving the city to shed anything more falling from the sky.

Scribe of Silverymoon

- Ed 22/11/14

Imdlar Glarthlyn (almost no one knows his first name) is a half-elf of Silverymoon who has for many decades published his own verses and light comedic fiction, and collected and published or republished the diverse writings of many others pertaining to the city and its environs, with his own press, Glarthlyn's Door (commonly known as just "Glarthyn's"). Taern "Thunderspells" Hornblade dubbed him "the Scribe of Silverymoon," and although this title has never been made official, everyone within the city has adopted it and uses it casually. Glarthlyn's "Why Silverymoon Is Special" remains a popular seller up and down the Sword Coast and along the Heartlands trade-routes, has seen sales in the tens of thousands in various (all chapbook) editions, and is beloved by folk of Silverymoon.

Nesme

- THO, Qs for EG 20/2/16

Still exists, changed

Everlund

Heraldry

- Ed 2/3/10 (see Berdusk entry for that city's heraldry)

Same as Berdusk, except that the main charge is a thin crescent moon, points to the viewer's right (instead of a harp), the cityscape at the bottom is instead a black silhouette of the continuous random canopies of leafy trees, two conifer points amid a general deciduous mass, the dark sky is dark blue

rather than dark purple, and the (wider, extending down on either side of the moon as well as above it) band of random stars are fourteen in all, seven large and seven small.

Presence after War of Silver Marches

- THO, Qs for EG 20/2/16

Still exists, changed

Wand-wood supplier

- THO 19/2/11, replying to a query about people that provide wood suitable for wands

Being as we Knights once briefly hid in a hedge-walled back garden in Everlund that was set up to do just that.

The proprietress was the wealthy retired Waterdhavian merchant's widow Evranseea Arklingstride, a truly formidable woman. (Think a female version of Alistair Sim as Scrooge, pre-spirits, in the famous movie version of A CHRISTMAS CAROL.)

Oh, and come to think of it, apropos of some of the discussions going on at the Keep currently, she was an openly lesbian Realms character, devoted to the six or seven women of various (but all younger than her) ages she dwelt with. Despite her usually surly manner, they were all devoted to her, too; she saved her poison for almost everyone ELSE she met. (She was quite taken with Sharantyr and Illistyl, however.) Hmm; that's probably why she's never even been mentioned in printed Realmslore.

I seem to recall her complaining about "imitators competing with her" in Amn, which argues she wasn't the only one to cultivate such a "wand garden" (or "wand farm," if you prefer).

Dress

- THO 19/2/11

Waterdhavian sea-breeches and floppy boots like Mirt's, with a half-thigh-length tunic worn over them.

The North

Holiday Destinations

- THO 25/2/10

Most folk in the Sword Coast North would vacation in Neverwinter for quiet "bookish" pursuits or trysts they want to keep more private than otherwise, or in Silverymoon for more public revelry, "swinging," and everything else. Silverymoon is by FAR the most popular vacation destination in the region. Giving rise to the expressions: "Going to shine a little silver, aye?" and "Not quite shining silver, but 'twill do" and "As bright as shining silver, that was!" and so on.

Gauntlgrym

Gauntlgrym vs Gauntulgrym

- THO 14/3/10

Regarding the location of Gauntulgrym/Gauntlgrym (either is correct, being as it's a human rendering of a name in which the "tul" ot "tl" is a glottal stop but some later speakers are enunciating it as if it isn't), its location is perfectly clear on MY Realms maps.

- PM from THO to BEAST, quoted by BEAST in Qs for Ed 1/12/10

Here's the truth: "Gauntulgrym" was a dwarven-built subterranean city constructed to human scale, for humans, JUST under the surface (and connected to the surface by several cavern "caravan-ramp" routes, and an air shaft up the heart of an extinct volcano, later taken over by a dragon as its lair). This city was intended as a trading-moot for humans, gnomes, and dwarves in the region (coastal Sword Coast lands) before Mirabar's rise, and was built ABOVE "Gauntlgrym," a much older dwarven city.

All of this was written up, not in all that much detail, by Ed, who precisely located (and mapped, for D&D play use) the upper city, circa 1979.

(In other words, long before Bob was writing Realms fiction.)

Ed never detailed the deeper city, but the uppermost one's map was purchased by TSR, and the "discovery" of the city was an in-play event for us Knights around 1982, echoed by later library Ed-DM play (the Company of the Gryphon), and then MUCH later RPGA D&D players, who used a tiny corner of the uppermost level of the upper city of Gauntulgrym (you may recall my post earlier in this thread about the disgusting dragon remains).

So, yes, the news about the discovery is correct, monsters and all; the news-spreaders are simply unaware (as are, frankly, MOST "alive-now" dwarves in the Realms) that there are two places, one linked to the other (note: Ed tells me my "above" refers more to their depth into the Underdark, not necessarily that the two places are EXACTLY above each other).

So from the first, Ed's lore allows for both the confusion and Bob's freedom to detail a "new" (or "the original") Gauntlgrym, and has always done so (the dwarven name is "Gauntlgrym," the Common Tongue mispronunciation of it is "Gauntulgrym"). It's one of the many, many little complexities of Ed's Realms that TSR has smoothed away or ignored, to banish confusion (like both a demon and a devil being called "Ashtaroth," much to the chagrin of careless PC summoners), over the years.

Ed doesn't mind Bob doing a different Gauntlgrym in the slightest, BTW. He and Bob are old and good friends, and Ed believes that writers tell better tales when given maximum freedom to spin stories.

Dragon lair above

- THO 1/4/10, describing the worst smell the Knights have encountered

In Ed's "home" Realms campaign, we found the dragon's lair "atop" Gauntulgrym (accessed from a crevasse high in the crag, and descending down into the dungeon). The dragon lairing there had died from poisoned weapon attacks launched by another band of adventurers. It had suffered dragon diarrhea, then vomited helplessly and copiously...and then died, its body slowly rotting, putreying, and sagging down into the chamber beneath its lair...along with its spew and wastes.

We slid down a dwarven drainage chute into that room....

I gag, just remembering Ed's description of it...

Greycloak Hills

Elves of the Greycloak Hills

- Dragon 267 referred to by GK

The hills were a sacred moon elven burial ground and have become the barracks and training ground for a group of elven warriors who use empty tombs and warrens dug into the hillsides for their lodgings. They live there to protect the hills from "plunderers" but there is more to their presence there.

High Forest

Trees

- THO 7/7/12, responding to query if High Forest is more rainforest or Redwood

It's big enough to have both, and more.

I think of the High Forest this way: that mossy Hoh rainforest shot is like some of the forest around the Unicorn Run (in other places, it looks more like the "rainforest autumn 15" pic a few clicks on the left arrow away from the Hoh shot). The western border of the forest is like Sherwood Forest (big old oaks, dense bush, saplings growing where big trees have fallen), but shifts to redwood-like [but NOT redwoods; see the trees of the Realms in the gold box Realms boxed set] "tall trees" in the northwestern corner (Woods of Turlang"). As you head east across the top of the High Forest, you get more and more conifers - - and more and more exposed rock and hilly terrain (think Canadian Shield "cottage country" forest). The eastern border of the High Forest is dominated by conifers, but as the verges turn southwest along the Delimbiyr, more and more hardwoods mix in.

Most of the center of the High Forest is wooded ridge-type mountains like the Blue Ridge Mountains or the Appalachians in Pennsylvania, but here and there some sharp, bare peaks (the Star Mounts) thrust up out of the "endless" trees.

Lothen

- Ed 24/1/11

Lothen, City of Silver Spires, circa 1370 DR, Part 1

The city is small, barely a quarter of a mile across at its widest point. Picture, on a broad hilltop in deep woods, a cluster of tall, thin stone towers with flaring bases (familiar with a Staunton-pattern chess set? look at a bishop, with its base sweeping up to a ring surmounted with a stylized mitre—yes? Okay, replace the mitre with a tall, slowly-tapering-thinner cylinder (like a candle), topped with a conical point (roof) and flagstaff, not crenellated battlements around a flat roof . . . and you have the “look” of Lothen’s towers, which are studded irregularly [that is, at various heights, some of them on the interior spiral stairs, not just at each floor, and adjacent towers seldom have floors at the same height as each other] with tall, narrow windows up and down the length of their upper “rises” [the soaring cylinder above the ring, and yes, the towers have the rings like the chess pieces; several Amnians who’ve seen the towers of Lothen have described them as “a lot of giant candlesticks, with fresh candles in them”]). A few of these towers were built without internal stairs, but rather had a central open shaft and an “elevator” akin to a Tenser’s floating disc that rose up and down the shaft; of these, only two discs still function, and one unreliably; most have been replaced by pulley-cage elevators enspelled with feather fall for safety reasons.

None of the towers have external doors above ground level; rather, their uppermost cellars “let out” into “the ways” of the city (its network of streets, wagonyards, and stables), which rise to the surface in seven “gatehouses.”

The gatehouses are defensible stone structures sharing a uniform architecture: a circular stone-roofed “house” that covers the ramp up from the ways, and has a broad, flexible log portcullis resembling a real-world “roll-up-into-the-ceiling” garage door, moved by ropes and pulleys (and that can be locked in the down position with wooden crossbeams dropped into sockets at the bottom and midway up, on the inside of the door, that the door is then latched to with swiveling “hands” of stout wood that pivot down

from the inside the door to clamp onto the beams, trapping them between hand and door.

Around each gatehouse are stone walls planted with thorn-vines and “strangling vines” (carnivorous vines that clutch at creatures who get too close) along their outsides only; viewed from directly above, they take the shape of elongated ovals (like many real-world pharmaceutical capsules), with the long axis holding the “road approaching the gatehouse.”

Along the tops of the walls are set ballistae that can fire down into the interior of the oval, out into the forest around, or “along” the oval to menace the approach when the outer gates are open.

So the gatehouse “proper” (the entrance to the underground “ways”) is at the inside end of the oval, and the outer gates (formerly pairs of “swing outwards” elaborate enspelled lattices of structure entwined with growing plants, but now merely pairs of stout wooden vertical-log doors that swing outwards, rolling on wooden wheels; like the gatehouse doors, they can be braced with massive inner tree-trunk crossbeams if the city is under attack).

Viewed from the air, Lothen covers an area the shape of a closed-in (that is, no holes) numeral eight (or if you prefer, a large oval that overlaps a smaller oval, the smaller oval directly northeast of the larger one). There are seven gatehouses, six spaced evenly around the arc of the larger oval, and one at the “head” or midpoint (away from the larger oval) of the smaller oval.

Above ground, Lothen is unwallled and a riot of food-garden plants, many of them gigantic vines that have been trained up lines affixed to windows in the towers, down which young and nimble inhabitants clamber to harvest vegetables, seeds, and herbs.

Not all of Lothen’s “spires” are of the same height or radius. Twelve “great towers” are about ninety feet across and taller than the rest, but another thirty-two towers are much smaller and shorter—and two additional great towers and six smaller ones lie in ruins, blasted and fallen (in long-ago spellbattle, elves fighting elves) long ago to leave their exposed stone “roots” (which were shunned by elven inhabitants and have become thickly overgrown).

The towers of Lothen are all of “silvery stone” for the same reason the surviving ones remain sturdy to this today: they were built of quarried stone blocks that were fused together by spells that provided great heat and pressure, and at the same time allowed elven spell-artificers to sculpt and smooth the stone, to form solid one-piece but intricate masses of stone (think “vitreous” or “glass,” but not transparent glass). Some tower windows have sheets of “clarified” and even in some cases tinted mica fused into place across the window openings, but most were fitted with translucent plant membranes (like giant, see-through leaves), made to grow over window-openings and open only when gently and properly manipulated (and braced with wooden hoop-and-stick assemblies, when it’s desired that they stay open). These membranes usually remain closed, permitting air currents to pass through them, but absorbing moisture (so it never “rains in”). In winter, when the membranes curl up and wither (new ones will grow in spring) interior shutters are slid into channels around a window, rather like a sliding real-world chalkboard is slid into guide-channels that support and hold it in place, to cover the windows (these may be of wood, slate, or sheets of spell-fused stone).

Below ground, Lothen is a labyrinth of broad, sweeping stone-lined tunnels (walls and floors made of smooth blocks of fitted stone holding up shaped “overarch” blocks that form a ceiling, everything unmortared to let water seep freely through) that form “the ways” of the city (about forty to sixty feet below grade). The “ways” go around the “roots” of towers, not under or through them.

Doors in the walls of the “ways”, defended and enspelled in various ways (and it’s rare for such a door to not have, at the very least, an inner “lip” that makes it impossible a door can be forced inwards without destroying the door, and a “chime” doorbell/alarm that signals elsewhere whenever a door is moved

into or out of its frame [i.e. opened]), open into the subterranean entrance halls of the city towers, or into storage chambers (daenen, or pantries/larders) that slope downwards. Most of these doors are small (wide enough for two elves to pass through at once, hip to hip), and most of them open out of alcoves in the walls of the ways that were built as stopping-places for wagons, or out of "wagonyards" (side-caverns opening off the ways, in which wagons are stored, parked, and worked on).

Most daenen and other storage chambers are accessed from tower entrance halls, not directly from the ways, and there are also secret passages leading down from towers into family vaults (almost always "treasure safe-storage," not burial, though tales of undead lurking in some of them argue that tombs were hidden in at least a handful of these "secret ways") and occasionally to deeper chambers that are either natural caverns (usually maintained as water-collection cisterns, their walls carpeted in carefully-tended plants that absorb "taints" [waterborne pollutants and poisons]) or secret meeting-places (like the "forgotten conjuring chambers" used by House Dlardrageth).

Lothen was built where it is because of "sweetwater" (pure, clean water) filtering up into some natural caverns here in the form of a "seeping spring" that made for lush plant growth and provided ample drinking and agricultural water.

Sanitation in Lothen consists of "throne" toilets that have a woven (think wicker, but with living, still-flexible broadleaf rushes, not dried and hardened fibers) basket of harlmusk beneath. "Harlmusk" is a plant that looks like a thick ground-lichen rising into eruptions that look like irregularly-planted Brussels sprouts, and it feeds on the excrement of humans, elves, dwarves, halflings, gnomes, orcs, and most omnivorous mammals. So the smells and disease of raw sewage is unknown in Lothen; when a harlmusk threatens to outgrow its basket, the basket is simply carted off into the forest and dumped, some of the harlmusk and a little forest loam being put back into the bottom of the basket (or a new basket, if the living-rush-weave is too worn or "open" to hold weight any longer), and put back under a throne.

As a result of years upon years of this practice, the forest around Lothen is lush indeed, attracting many birds and small furry forest creatures, and the elven inhabitants got very good at "gardening" the forest, with many trails, encouraging the most daily useful (and valuable) edible plants and herbal-source plants to grow amid their towers, and hardier and less often used plants farther away.

As a result, edible woodland animals have always been plentiful around Lothen - - and as a result, foraging orcs, hobgoblins, and marauding monsters (such as owlbeats) have been frequent visitors, so the young of the city were led by veterans on frequent patrols (often traveling largely aloft, along networks of tree-boughs, for the local elves could "garden" trees like anything else, and so, over time, shape such networks as desired) to drive away or eliminate such dangers.

However, Lothen was a city of scholars, who largely turned their back on overt and devout worship of the elven gods (the "temples" of Lothen are "groves" in the gardens amid the towers, little open spaces with altars that are walled and roofed by elf-reshaped living trees) and sought instead to understand and tame all life and natural forces through experiment and research (what we would term botany, zoology, climatology, alchemy, and the study of magic). The acquisition of knowledge, practical and otherwise, consumed the days and attention of the elders of this city, not defense or conquest of territory or military readiness.

It was largely abandoned in the end because someone (intentionally or more likely inadvertently, not knowing the properties of what they were dabbling in) unleashed two local "scourges" (plague-like diseases of minor power, that exhausted themselves before even reaching the boundaries of Lothen).

One consumed paper, including the plant weaves many Siluvaneden were experimenting with. The other ate away, or "twisted," dweomers: that is, the substance and effects of already-cast magic (either

“permanent” operating enchantments, or “hanging” magics that were awaiting future triggers to go into effect). The Lothren elves could find no escape from these scourges, nor solutions: paper records melted away with horrifying speed, and their spells (excepting only those that took immediate, non-lasting effect when cast, like battle magics) started to fail, fade away, or do unintended things. So eventually they all fled, save for a handful of the younger ones who had little personal use for either magic or paper.

When orcs next came marauding (on a regular forage raid, in strength and well-armed because bands of orcs that ventured into the vicinity of Lothen so often vanished), that handful didn’t last long.

Discovering a city that was theirs for the taking, with abundant food animals, the orcs decided to stay rather than pillaging and moving on. Some of the band went “home” to fetch the rest of their tribe (the Tanglethorns), and the subsequent disappearance of this tribe from its usual haunts didn’t go unnoticed by their traditional foes, the neighboring Sharpstakes, who sent scouts after them.

The result was a nasty little summer-long war for control of Lothen, that ended when Horned Lord orcs, led by orc druids of Malar, showed up in force to take the city from the other two (by-then-battleworn) tribes. House Dlardrageth welcomed all of this as cover for their own activities and a deterrent to anyone else showing up to contest the silver spires, who might discover them, and as entertainment. However, elves of Eaelann were horrified to discover what had happened to Lothen, and some of them launched a raid of their own, hurling many spells at the orcs. Most of those magics went awry, causing the elves to retreat in consternation, deeming the city “cursed” or “tainted” (and therefore “lost” for the time being to some mysterious evil greater than “a few grunting orcs”). Yet the elven spells took a fearsome toll on the orcs, reducing the Tanglethorns to a few dozen and the Sharpstakes to even fewer, shattering their tribal pride and reducing them to lurking, skulking hand-to-maw survivors. The Horned Lord orcs were more numerous, so more of them survived, ninety-odd in all. However, with many elders and war-leaders among the dead, they fell deeper under the sway of their druids of Malar, who instituted “purity hunts” of “disloyal” Horned Lord orcs to cement their own power. These hunts have made the druids feared and hated (but instantly obeyed), and reduced the Horned Lord orcs to around seventy - - even before a power struggle among the druids pitted Horned Lord orc against Horned Lord orc, in a vicious war that’s still going on and has brought their numbers down to around forty.

Human druids of Mielikki and Silvanus concerned with the western High Forest saw a chance to weaken, drive out, or even eliminate the orcs, and “raised the forest against them,” sending in all manner of wild woodland beasts (including many of what most humans deem “monsters”) to overrun Lothen.

The orcs fought (and ate) as orcs do, withstanding the onslaught but taking heavy losses—so that by the time the spring of 1370 DR begins, only a few dozen of them (in all, including all three tribes) survive, at about the subsistence/roaming foraging bands level. They have fortified nothing, improved nothing, and are now too few to transform the towers and ruins much even if they wanted to; even starting forest fires won’t do much in damp, misty Lothen, with so much stone (and some fauna that will react to fire by seeking to extinguish the fire, as opposed to fleeing).

All of which leaves Lothen lush, full of abundant wildlife (and I do mean WILD life), and ripe for the taking.

As Hoondatha has said in another thread: easy to take, not so easy to hold (not only will another horde eventually come Lothen’s way, there are orcs - - and others - - who know that “Lothen’s a battleground” right now, and some of them listen to wild rumors and think it must be a battleground because there’s something valuable there to find.

Which of course, if you DM anything like I DM, there is. :}

Lots of valuables, in fact, even if all of them might not SEEM valuable, at first glance, or might (rightly) seem just the first part of something greater that must be found and pieced together, piece by piece (like the Rod of Seven Parts), to make something greater.

Star Mounts

- ELB, Grandfather Tree Minitiper's Chapbook piece on WotC website, quoted by GK in Qs for Ed 23/6/15

To the Fair Folk of Aryvandaar and the lesser elven realms that succeeded it, seven of the most prominent stars were Y'tellarien (the Far Star), Y'landrothiel (Traveler's Star), N'landroshien (Darkness in Light), Y'norvaekiir (the Singing Star), Y'maerythien (Star of Dreams), Y'cervarkiir (Stagcrown Star), and Y'angarothien (Heavenfire). These names are now echoed in the names of the tallest peaks of the Star Mounts, as Far Peak, Mount Journey, Shadowpeak, Bard's Hill, Mount Vision, Hunterhorn, and Mount Angaroth, respectively.

- Arcanamach, 23/6/15

The human translations are Bard's Hill, Mount Vision, Hunterhorn. There are Elven names for some of them though: Y'tellarien (The Far Star; aka Far Peak), Y'landrothiel (Traveler's Star; aka Mount Journey) and N'landroshien (Darkness in Light; aka Shadowpeak).

Ice Lakes

- THO 20/1/13

Q: What are the names of the Ice Lakes shown on a few maps north of Luskan and west of the Black Raven river?

A: All I have in my notes are that one of them is called "Antaerth" and another (possibly the largest, but it may just have SEEMED to largest to we Knights, while hastening past, hiking overland out of the area) is "Ondran's Grave."

- Ed 21/1/13

The Fonstad Atlas of the Realms is the best source I have access to (I can't look at the later e-Atlas at the moment), and reproduces my original maps pretty well. None of the maps, including my "overall" map, show the tiniest, pond-sized lakes, only the five largest ones, so feel free to add as many of these smaller sort as you need in play. All of them will of course have frigid waters and beautiful "blue" hues.

All of the Ice Lakes have both local names (used by the barbarians and goblin, and of great antiquity - and so, linguistic origins lost to us) and "outlander" names bestowed by prospectors from warmer, more southerly lands.

The westernmost of the two smallest and most northerly of the five lakes is Derthym, and its outland name is Longknife Lake (after Longknife, a long-ago human trapper who dwelt on its shores).

The easternmost of the small northerly pair is Belardym, known to outlanders as Tynkur's Fist (after a halving adventurer who won a fistfight here over battle-spoils centuries back, but who was later slain for that same loot; his spirit is said to haunt the shores of the lake).

Below this pair of lakes is the largest of the Ice Lakes. Locally, it is Rarghraum, and is called Ondran's Grave by outlanders, after the warrior-adventurer Ondran, who died in a heroic last stand fighting orcs here centuries ago, drowning (and taking an orc with him, in a death-grip) after being wounded

repeatedly by the warband of orcs he almost singlehandedly wiped out.

To the west of the largest Ice Lake is a round-ish lake (with a small tongue or arm of water jutting south from the western end of its southern shore) . It has several islands, BTW, and is known as Loroloth locally, and Daern's Copper Camp to outlanders (Daern was a long-ago miner, who found copper on the surface west of the lake; the fortunate can still find it today, but are called "the fortunate" if they survive the many monsters that lair and prowl in the area).

Southeast of Loroloth and southwest of Rarghraum is the most southerly of the Ice Lakes. It is known locally as Antaerth, and its outland name is Saeriphahra's Mirror (after a beautiful half-elf pirate who buried her treasure within sight of it, and was known to use it as her looking-glass).

Loudwater

Layout

- THO 22/8/10

Q: In a word: Loudwater.

Specifically Loudwater @1367 DR and forward to a point just prior to *uncomfortable cough* 4E. So far as I know - and I've looked rather strenuously - there has never been a full map produced for the town that properly matched the brief summary in Volo's Guide to the North and the various older campaign guides.

Without wishing to hurt any feelings: I feel I must reject the map put forth in the new 4E FR guide as inaccurate, when compared to Ed's previous canon descriptions. Perhaps that is accounted a casualty of Spellplague chaos. If so, I am specifically inquiring about 'Old Loudwater', not 'New Loudwater'. Perhaps that even helps fend off NDAs? ;)

So I am left with the need, desire and ability to create an accurate @1367 DR map of the town myself, but lacking in some basic facts to start me off in the right direction. Here's what I believe I know:

Given the Volo description of encircling earthworks, I suspect that the town has a generally circular/oval footprint, unevenly bisected on the east-west axis by the Delimbyr: a segment on the southern bank of the river and a segment on the northern bank, with the Stoneshoulder bridge connecting the two sections and the pool/harbor dredged out of the southern bank to bypass the rapids - presumably with docks/wharves, warehouses and whatnot surrounding it.

The Volo's guide states that all the described places of note except the Enchanter's Ecstasy are situated in the 'south bank' section of the town. The High Lord's Hall and The Risen Moon market are described as occupying the center of town. That would put them right in the middle of the Delmibyr if the town were perfectly bisected by the river, which suggests my assumption of an uneven distribution of the town's footprint with regard to the bisecting river.

This all leads me to suspect that the 'south bank' has the larger footprint, comprising most of the common folk, local government and businesses, and the 'north bank' is the smaller, wealthier (older?) district - possibly dominated by the estates of the Phelaniityr sun elf family, the eight moon elven families, and the Velti'Enorethal temple-library (details from Green Regent that I assume at least passed a brief 'stink test' from Ed).

I don't know how much bigger, though. 60% south and 40% north? 70/30? So, questions:

1) Macro: What is the general size and shape of the town? How thick are the earthworks around that perimeter? Are my general assumptions about the layout accurate, or in need of correction? What is the width of the Delimbyr as it passes through the town? What percentage of the footprint is north of the river and what percentage south?

2) General features: What are the names and routes of the primary roads/paths through the town? Where are the breaches in the earthworks for entering and leaving the town? Roughly how many structures are there in the town? Average size? What percentage of the town's footprint is made up of gardens, parks, bowers and riverside grottoes? These answers are intended to give me a general density of construction, given the overall size of the town.

3) Specifics: How do the pool-harbor, Lord's Hall and the other specific locations from Volo lay out in relation to those main thoroughfares and to each other? Ditto with the elven family villas and the Velti'Enorethal? Does the bridge cross the Delimbyr nearer to the east end of the town, or the west? Where are ' the grassy elven burial mounds on which the oldest part of Loudwater is built'?

A: you're spot-on correct about the uneven distribution of Loudwater circa 1350s-1380s vis-a-vis the river, and about the elves and their "many trees, few structures" settlement predominating to the north (there's also an inn, right beside the north end of the bridge, on the east side of the road).

The best way to picture things is to think of an old-style running shoe (the sort with a black canvas upper and a white rubber sole, toe, and a little round circle stitched onto the upper in such a way that it covers the ankle bone of the wearer).

Okay, now think of this shoe as seen side-on, in a perfect "side view" with a wearer's ankle coming up out of it. Now alter that to a silhouette. Place the silhouette, toe pointing east, on your mental map of the Delimbiyr at Loudwater's location, and position it so that the top of the shoe touches the south/east side of the riverbank. Distort the shoe upwards to cling to the river's edge more than a real canvas sneaker would, and consider the ankle, upright (90-degree angle to shoe), to cross the river, the bridge running along its center. On the north bank of the river, the elven holdings are large, but the built-up area of Loudwater is very small, just a cluster of buildings around the north end of the bridges, along the sides of the roads (that split apart into three roads as they leave the bridge, heading north, one road going NE, one just west of N, and one curving W).

So the great majority of the built-up area of Loudwater is on the south/east bank. The Hall and Market are exactly halfway along the shoe, and halfway between the riverbank and the "sole" (which is a straight line formed by a steep earthen bank with wooden palisade atop it, pierced by many roads and causing a defensive barrier really effective only against cavalry).

- THO 23/8/10

The Merry Mer-She is two buildings "in" (south) from the riverbank, three buildings upstream/north/east from the southern foot of the Stoneshoulder bridge. It's by far the least clean, respectable, and orderly such establishment in Loudwater.

Aside from what's already canon, harken to word of these two competitors of the Mer-She: Hardbottle's Haven (run by the Hardbottle halfling family), in the southernmost part of the "toe of the shoe" (in the

analogy I outlined in my last post) is far tamer, better lit, and more family-friendly than the Mer-She, and there's an almost upscale "see and be seen at" establishment halfway up the heel of the shoe, known as Glarleer's, where "sophisticated" coinlasses, fences, and go-betweens can be encountered, dancing to music can be indulged in (on the main floor; the upper floor is divided into more private booths), and "lightplatters" (appetizers) are served.

(This lore comes directly from Ed's notes.)

A major east-west street in the southern part of Loudwater is Windserpent Street, which winds quite a bit. Somewhere near the east end of town (I'm thinking the "upper toe" of the shoe, from memory), it crosses Harlgund's Way, which runs NE/SW. Larpentur Lane runs NW/SE across both, forming a triangular block in which stands Stelprur's Smithy, a busy, noisy place of crude, everyday blacksmithing (chain-making, tool making and repair, fastenings and fittings), and across Windserpent Street to the south of the triangle is Rundreth's, the largest wagonmaker (and repairer, and seller and reseller) in town. Many of Loudwater's poorer inhabitants live in small, dingy rooms located in the three-floor-or-less buildings crammed between the streets and alleys NE of this triangle, downwind of the smithy (and of several stables and slaughterhouses and a tanner that are near the Smithy, to the north and northeast, fronting on Larpentur Lane).

This is the only Loudwater neighborhood I took detailed notes on, being as we slept there (on a roof, not paying anyone) and hunted (and fought) several Zhents through it.

Oh, a postscript: this would have been around 1358 or 1359 DR (the time of our visit to Loudwater).

Torm visited the neighborhood again in 1361, and it hadn't changed much, to my (admittedly VERY fuzzy) recollection of what was said at the time between Ed and Victor (Torm's player).

Further questions on size

Q: Question: roughly how large is the southern half of the town, from 'heel to toe' and 'sole to laces' (palisade to river)? I can get the size of the north bank from that, by deduction.

A: Roughly just under a mile, east to west (the palisade doesn't enclose it all, by any means; Loudwater straggles along the riverbank on both sides of it for a bit, with lots of woodlots, tilled fields, pastureland/camping ground/unclaimed ground involved), and about a fifth to a quarter of that, north to south (it varies from a fifth at the west end, to a wider built-up area as one moves east - - and the river curves northeast; of course, the flow of the river is in the other direction, so from the river's point of view it comes south, curves to the southwest and then more west as it "passes through" Loudwater, which gains its name from the sound of its rapids, BTW).

Luskan

Luskar vs Luskanite

- Ed 4/3/10

Both are correct. Formerly, "Luskar" meant "person of Luskan" and "Luskanite" meant "item or good from Luskan." However, the darkness of the High Captains and the Hosttower of the Arcane gave Luskan a certain fell reputation, and "Luskar" (associated with this) fell out of fashion.

It's still used, and is still correct, but "Luskanite" has become steadily more prevalent.

Southwood

- ELB, 11/10/14

I always figured the Southwood was part of the High Forest.

Spine of the World

Composition

- THO quoting Ed's 1982 notes, 15/7/13

The Spine of the World is a soaring, jagged mountain range honeycombed with caverns, ancient phreatic tubes, and melt-channels. Volcanic when it was upthrust tens of thousands of years in the past, it has been inactive and frozen for all of living memory in the Realms. Ice-filled caverns in its heart lead down into a frigid area of the upper Underdark.

The northern flanks of the Spine range are largely what we would call granite and gneissose rocks (known as "hardstone" and "koegalk" in the Realms respectively), while the southern slopes are granite flanked by layers of limestone -- that over the years break off or wash away, leaving much "wash till" downslope, and creating narrow "stacks" or knife-edged side-peaks, in front of the massive central granite peaks of the range.

(In many ways, the Spine resembles the real-world Pyrenees range in Europe.)

Large lakes are few, passes are rare, of high elevation, and mainly hidden under ice (deep, permanent ice cloaks most of the northern slopes of the Spine), and what water does flow is under the ice sheets, crushed into liquidity by the great weight of the icepack, to burst forth from many mountainsides as spectacularly high, but small-volume waterfalls. Many of which over time cause "plunge valleys" (the Faerûnian Sword Coast human term for what our real-world French call "cirques;" that is, valleys whose upper ends are semicircles of precipitous cliffs.

Veins of the ores of most valuable metals (iron and copper being most common, but silver is abundant at the eastern end of the range), and coal, are found in the Spine, but what can be easily reached and worked by dwarves has been worked out long ago, leaving behind a warren of mines now infested with orcs and a wide array of monsters, with rich veins now found only inside the loftiest peaks, and along the ice-entombed northern slopes of the eastern end of the range.

What remains undiscovered is, however, rich enough that panning for gold in the various streams and rivers that flow south from the Spine has always yielded up abundant metal -- though the local inhabitants have always made such prospecting perilous in the extreme. To this day, large new iron deposits are being found in the hill country south of the Spine.

Frostspire

- THO 25/1/14

Q: In Elminster's Guide to the Forgotten Realms, the aurilian fortress known as Frostspire was said to have been carved out of ice northeast of Citadel Adbar. Eric Boyd first mentioned this castle in an article he wrote for the WotC website but said it was located northeast of Mirabar. I take it mister Boyd was mistaken?

A: I'm afraid you're mixing up the venerable fortified abbey of Frostspire Towers (created by Ed around 1986 or so, and first mentioned in published Realms canon in PRAYERS FROM THE FAITHFUL; the Wizards website of course didn't exist back then) with the much more recently constructed (built in the 1340s DR) Frostspire (no "Towers).

Frostspire (the newer one) is carved from solid ice, and was built to be the new heart/center of the Church of Auril; Frostspire Towers (the older one) is a stone fortress functioning as a n abbey for Aurilian

clergy, that "grows" additional walls and towers of ice every winter as a result of spells worked by the resident clergy.

So, no, Eric wasn't mistaken. (I don't think that amiable and supremely competent man MAKES mistakes.)

- THO 25/1/14

Raerele "Redtresses" Aronthan, self-styled High Icemaideen in the clergy of Auril, had plans for an aggressive recruitment and testing regime intended to bolster the ranks of the priestesses of the Cold Goddess with "battle-worthy" individuals trained by, and loyal to, Aronthan herself. Although this scheme died with her, she had written notes regarding her intended training, and these have recently vanished, with a set of rather useless, vague replacements substituted for them. Senior clergy of Auril are in something of a quiet uproar, seeking to learn who stole the notes, and more importantly why. Is someone intending to train a private cult dedicated to Auril? Or augment the ranks of the existing clergy with warlike priestesses bound to and beholden to them? Are the notes to be used purely for covert testing of the existing clergy? Or even to "break" existing clergy and bring the current Church of Auril down into ruin?

Senior clerics of the Cold Goddess want answers - - very quickly and very much. They won't hesitate to torture possible sources to death, to get them.

Yartar

Illithid slaying of Alahar Khaumfros

- THO 23/7/12, responding to query about out-of-character action mentioned in Volo's Guide to the North, possibly expanded on by ELB in Cloak & Dagger (unsure)

It does sound out-of-character, doesn't it? I thought so, too. We Knights poked around a bit, and came to the conclusion that Khaumfros was framed. As in, those four illithids wanted to very publicly kill him, and did so, and blamed it on the Kraken Society (AND announced that Khaumfros was "the" leader of the society, so that's what the gullible Volo duly reported).

Western Heartlands

Berdusk

Heraldry

- Ed 2/3/10

Black point (bottom) of shield with an upper edge drawn to suggest the silhouette skyline of the city (towers, many roofs, and two turreted and balconied tall buildings a little taller than the surrounding roofs). Above that, a dark purple sky, with a large silver harp (for the "look" of this instrument, see the 2nd Ed Harpers' logo) floating in the midst of it (the largest charge on the shield, and spang in the center of the shield) with a random (that is, forming no discernable pattern or "real-Realms" constellation) scattering of eleven stars (four large and seven small) above it, in a band across the top fifth of the shield.

Beregost

- THO, Qs for EG 20/2/16

Still exists, changed

Candlekeep

Coat of Arms

- Ed 17/7/11

Over the years, Candlekeep has used two badges at various times (falling out of favor and being revived, overlapping each other, several times):

- a vertical flat-white-hued human right hand, fingers towards the viewer, clutching a rolled-up, horizontal white scroll, the scroll being outlined all around with blue (what we in the real world sometimes call "electric blue")
- two flat-white long fingered human or elven left hands, the uppermost at top left and the lower one at bottom right, passing a book (in the center) between them. The book is rectangular, dun brown, and oriented with top at upper right, open side down the lower right side, and bottom at lower left. It is plain (no title or illustration on its covers)

Candlekeep also has a formal coat-of-arms, consisting of:

An midnight blue (darker than royal blue, but with a lighter blue "edge" as if moonlight is lighting it "from behind," all around) shield. The shield has straight sides and top, a symmetrical center-point curved bottom, and is "taller" (longer, vertically) than the normal heraldic shield dimensions. It has a border of cream-hued books, all around, each one unique in dimensions and appearance, none bearing titles or visible writing, and each one touching the next.

On the shield is a motto (yes, ON the shield, winding across it just above the bottom point, not wrapped around the shield or beneath/below it) on a scarlet ribbon, that reads: "Write and share the written, and so cheat time."

Above this is a large, unfurled scroll, cream-hued and blank, and crossed atop it are a quill pen (point at lower left, feather-plume at upper right, quill being black and feather being blue with a white tip and black bars, rather like a real-world blue jay feather) and a plain steel-gray sword (hilt at upper left and point at lower right).

The sword is broken into two pieces, with jagged edges that would visibly mesh to form a whole if pushed together, but they are separated by the quill pen, which lies "across" the path of the sword in its own cleared channel (yep, the pen is mightier than the sword).

At certain times in the past, these arms have displayed certain lone runes in red on the scroll, but Candlekeep does not use them at this time, and does not explain what they were/are or why they were used and are not used now (magic is obviously suspected, but there are fierce debates about it being linked to Mystra, Oghma, Deneir, or other deities or non-divine forces or writings or individuals).

- THO 18/7/11, referring to heraldry seen in Baldur's Gate game & "Volo's Guide to the Sword Coast"

The computer game Candlekeep heraldry is yet another blazon briefly used by Candlekeep in the "home" Realms (and is also canon). Ed tells me some monks make a hobby of designing new badges, blazons, and letterhead for the Keep, and often these efforts either creep into use or are formally adopted for a time . . . so there yet MORE efforts out there, some of them graven onto the lids of stone coffins of dead monks in the labyrinth of caverns beneath the Keep.

Opinion of the Heralds of changes

- Ed 24/7/11

It could get confusing, yes, and it would certainly irk the Heralds if nobility or guilds did this (royalty is granted a bit more leeway, and it seems Candlekeep is granted even more, as they haven't [publicly, at least] said a word about it).

Recovery post-The Herald disrepair

- THO, Qs for Ed 28/4/16

Ed tells me that the surviving monks of Candlekeep moved very quickly to restore things to as close to normalcy as they could. Heavily damaged chambers were walled or cordoned off, precious tomes moved away from where weather could get at them, etc. ...and monk-respected sages were actively recruited from all over the Realms (want a cushy life with room and board covered? free to come and go as you please [only not carrying books ;]]? come to Candlekeep). Because it's expensive to live in cities and harder and harder to live unassisted as one grows older, many sages accepted. So now there are monks, and there are lay "monks" and the Keep is back to "trying to behave as if nothing happened." The Harpers and certain servitors of Mystra (some of them spectral) have made sure that undercover agents of anyone evil or destructive or inclined to thievery have been rooted out...so the Keep "is back."

Prefects of Candlekeep

- GK 3/7/14 (querying about the prophecy in Cloak and Dagger, connection to the Herald)

The Herald states that the "Prefects" is an old, forgotten term for the hierarchy of Candlekeep, namely the Great Reader and those just below him.

- Dazzlerdal 3/7/14 (replying, non-canon)

So Larloch is one of the 3 Threats Who Wait in Darkness, the Prefects are the heads of Candlekeep, and Ourselves is obvious.

Possessions

Multiple Qs

- Ed 11/7/13

1. Does Candlekeep possess any books that have to be fed in a manner like you'd feed your cat or water a plant?
2. Does Candlekeep possess any books that are best stored by keeping them submerged underwater?
3. Does Candlekeep possess any books that eat spells or absorb spell energy with the express purpose of using that energy to create new copies of that book?
4. Are any paintings a part of Candlekeep's collection?
5. Are any skeletons with writing on them a part of Candlekeep's collection?
6. Does Candlekeep possess any written works by mortals who later ascended to divinity?

A: 2 is NDA, the rest are yes.

Books that come to life

- Ed 9/7/13

Q: Within the walls of Candlekeep are there any books that have the property of making the characters, scenes, objects or places in adjacent books come to life for a brief time?

A: Yes. More than one such volume, all of them kept either in the innermost rooms or walled-away and hidden, by themselves (if they're especially "active").

Books from Laerakond/Returned Abeir

- Ed 10/7/13

Q: Have any books from Laerakond/Returned Abeir made their way into Candlekeep's collection?

A: Yes, a handful.

Visitors

- Ed 10/7/13

Q: Has a king of Cormyr ever set foot within Candlekeep?

A: Yes, several, but only two of them that I know of, while they were king. These were unofficial/undercover visits, not heralded "state visits" or anything of that sort.

Q: Has Vangerdahast ever set foot within Candlekeep?

A: Yes, several times. Again, unofficially. (I'm not saying the monks didn't know who he was; I'm saying no one made any sort of public point about it.)

Q: Has a vampire (or vampires) ever taken up residence at Candlekeep?

A: Not that I know of. Visited, at least three, but briefly and trying to conceal their true nature.

Q: Has a lich ever tried to store its phylactery within Candlekeep?

A: Yes. More than one. Success/failure NDA.

Relationship with Cormyr

- Ed 10/7/13

Q: Has Cormyr ever formally entered into any agreements or treaties with Candlekeep?

A: Yes, but minor; Cormyr agreeing to provide free of charge certain books published within the realm to Candlekeep, not high-level diplomatic anything (no recognition of sanctuary status, or anything of that sort).

Q: If yes, does anyone in present-day (1479 DR) Cormyr remember such agreements, much less abide by them?

A: Vangerdahast and Caladnei and successors knew and know and abide, but the vast majority of courtiers and citizenry probably don't even know of them.

Chionthar River

Settlements along it between Baldur's Gate and Elturel

- THO 29/4/10

The river has barge traffic, and docks, but not much in the way of permanent settlements due to the river often extensively flooding its banks in spring. The settlements (smallish: hamlets, villages, a few towns, walls or earthen banks are common) crown every height of land near the river, and the terrain is gently rolling hills that are farmed and ranched (riverbank areas being unfenced grazing meadows).

There are oval paddocks for livestock. And darn it, I wish I could remember some of the settlement names, but I can't.

Daggerford Region

Between Lizard Marsh & Trollbark Forest

Hag Presence

- Ed 29/7/11

Yes, you assume rightly: many hag eyes throughout the region. The hags would not resist developments of towns, expansions of existing settlements, but would indeed try to manipulate things so those loyal to them end up enriched and in important positions of authority.

Striking at all coveys at once or in swift succession is pretty much the only likely way of exterminating all the hags, yes. Unlikely to succeed, of course, which is why destroying individual hags or just a few linked ones is what's happened thus far. The hags procreate in settlements along the Trade Way, choosing widely, rather than all favoring one locale.

Elturel

Heraldry

- Ed 2/3/10

A sky-blue shield with a thick purple border all around. Extending up the center of the shield is a black castle tower, with a white arch-topped window centered in it just below its crenelated top (five merlons, which stand two-thirds up the shield in height).

Sage of Elturel

- THO 9/4/13, referring to Sebryn Korthyn, author of "The Realm of the Dragon: Cormyr in the Time of Vangerdahast (Volume I)", as quoted in *Swords of Dragonfire*

Sebryn Korthyn is a stay-at-home, academic sort of sage, who studies as many primary sources as he can get, combines their data, writes careful and conservative (= bland) accounts from those combinations, and then does just as you have done here: poses lists of questions to those he thinks will know, and from what answers he gets, rewrite his accounts before he publishes (with notes and warnings where he thinks his lore is "quite" incomplete). So he's reliable, boring, "safe," and tends to say less (and less interesting stuff) than other writers. But tries to be neutral/objective (whereas some other sages can be very slanted in their coverage, but might not admit to that).

So far as I know, he's never been to Cormyr.

Iriaebor

Scribe of Iriaebor

- Ed 22/11/14

Glasgert Himlothrith rose to local fame as a writer of chapbooks on the history of Iriaebor, and on local politics (philosophies and policies rather than individuals), and the printing press that published him (House of Arstult, on Blaeve Street, run by the wily and gruff Guthbert Arstult, who has fourteen children who all work at the press) started styling him "Scribe of Iriaebor," and the unofficial "title" has stuck.

Orlumbor

Ownership of wharves

- Ed 3/1/10

Orlumbor's docks and warehouses are almost all locally owned, but many outside interests (including all of those you list!) rent warehouse space and try to buy influence over local trading companies and "dockers" (what we in the real world tend to call "longshoremen," to wit, the local loaders and unloaders who work the docks - in the Realms, such work is almost always done WITH the crews of the ships). Amnians in particular have tried to buy control of the local traders of Orlumbor, or failing that become their creditors and try to dominate so much of their cash flow and other business as to be able to dictate to them - but of course these attempts haven't gone unnoticed, and are countered by OTHER Amnians, and other trade interests entirely, including several Waterdhavian noble families who have long had merchant interests in Orlumbor.

Scornubel

Heraldry

- Ed 2/3/10

A dun/beige/tawny shield with a thin scarlet border all around. A vertical rich blue line bisects the shield, down its center, and on either side of it, in the lower third of the shield, are two black eight-spoke wagon wheels (seen side-on).

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 2/3/10, confirmed by THO

So Scornubel's arms clearly depict caravans, and the city spanning the river (carrying wagon-trade across the water).

Zirta

- THO 29/8/12

Zirta was what is now "southbank" Scornubel, and stayed lawless but less under the thumb of the various thieving cabals and costers for much longer than the older, northbank part of Scornubel. For about three centuries it had something of the air of Lankhmar circa "Thieves' House," and we Knights have heard some of the local legends about various feuds, swindles, and hijinks.

Reason now Scornubel?

- THO 23/10/10

Zirta was absorbed by Scornubel. The name is still used locally (as a neighbourhood), just not for the now much larger city.

Golem Maker

- THO 8/4/10, replying to query about possibility of golems in Scornubel

In Scornubel, there was at least one successful golem maker.

The Starflame meeting site

- Ed

See "Think Tanks" section of Organizations

Trollbark Forest

Many questions

- Ed 3/10/11

Q: Trollbark Forest....Have elves or fey ever ruled this region?

Ed: Dwelt there, yes. Ruled, no.

Q: Have the trolls always been here?

Ed: Presumably, but if that's true or not is unknown to the civilized Realms.

Q: The forest's dense underbrush, thick twisting stands of ash, and many bogs make it a perfect hunting ground for monsters that can crash through thorny barriers and nests of poisonous snakes without taking permanent damage. Is this what has prevented the trolls being removed from here?

Ed: It sure helps, but there's also been lack of inclination. There are fewer forces in the Realms bent on colonizing, "taming," and clearing areas than in our real world under the most recent centuries of human dominance.

Q: Is there another a "power/presence" beneath/within the forest that uses the Trolls as cover for and protects them from extermination?

Ed: Yes. Am I going to tell you more about it right now? No. ;}

Q: Does something ward against scrying into the depths of the forest?

Ed: Yes. What is it? Unknown; it may well be a natural wild magic effect, or leakage from long-lost artifacts or ruins, rather than a deliberate ward or some vigilant defender. (Such are the opinions of some adventurers, anyway.)

Q: Is the cliff edge of the forest rugged difficult terrain to traverse? Any details would be greatly appreciated.

Ed: Yes. Not only are the cliffs tall, but they are unstable/crumbling, with frequent rockfalls, avalanches, and sliding collapses triggered by climbing attempts (of all sorts of wild creatures, not just men).

Q: Does something other than trolls guard the cliff edge of forest or consider it domain.

Ed: Yes. :}

Q: Do occupants of Warlock's Crypt have any influence in not allowing Trollbark Forest to be reclaimed by "good forces"?

Ed: Unknown. They obviously benefit from its existence as a dangerous, untamed area. Again, what is this "reclaimed" you speak of? Who are these "good forces" going around the Realms scouring out large/significant/noticed parts of it?

Q: Has anyone tried to exterminate the trolls in forest during 1300's?

Ed: Not to my knowledge.

Q: Are there portals beneath the forest?

Ed: Quite possibly. Several Harpers and explorers suspect so.

Q: Are there portals within the forest?

Ed: Possibly. There are tales (that may be no more than embroidered rumors, or may be rooted in something more factual) that would suggest so.

Q: Are there crossroads within the forest?

Ed: Of what humans usually call "game trails," yes. Of roads as in routes that wagons can traverse, no, because there are no such roads within the forest.

Q: Are there any draconic beings within the forest?

Ed: Quite possibly. There is a small PETRIFIED dragon right at one edge of the forest, a landmark for some centuries.

Q: Any draconic beings of huge or greater size?

Ed: In the forest? I doubt it.

Q: Are there any extraplanar beings that call forest home?

Ed: Not that I know of, but . . .

Q: Are there unknown breeds of trolls within the forest, mutations?

Ed: Oh, yes. Four-armed trolls, and trolls with prehensile, weapon-wielding (usually large maces) tails have frequently been reported. Some explorers report seeing trolls of unusual size, as tall as many saplings. And so on . . .

Q: Is there magical leakage of any kind in forest?

Ed: Oh, yes. See my "ward against scrying?" reply, above.

Q: Does a non-troll rule the trolls?

Ed: Unknown. I'm not sure a majority of the trolls are well organized enough to be ruled by anything or anyone.

Q: Are there Ogres within the forest?

Ed: Possibly. Ogres tend to roam, and dwell opportunistically where conditions are favourable. I doubt you'll find any deep in the forest, though; too dangerous. They like to be where they can dominate potential prey rather than spending overmuch time running, hiding, and fighting for their lives.

Q: Are there precious resources magic or not being guarded and farmed in forest?

Ed: Certainly. Timber and forest and bog herbs and abundant edibles, for sure - - and quite possibly (those magical leakages again) magic, too.

Q: Has anything ever tried to destroy the forest entirely?

Ed: Not that I know of. There have been fires that destroyed large areas, but these were more often caused by storm lightning strikes than by dragon flame or other creature causes - - and the dragon-caused fires are far more often uncaring/unintentional side-effects of dragon battles or hunting fights

than they are deliberate attempts to destroy woodlands or “smoke out” prey.

Q: Do various forces work together in protecting the forest?

Ed: Unknown.

Q: Would various forces/factions prevent the forest from being destroyed via magic or mundane means?

Ed: Again, unknown. There would seem to be only one way of finding out.

Q: Is there something/somethings very very valuable within forest that would draw attention from either other cities or races or classes (mages for example)?

Ed: Quite possibly. Right now, it’s still in the “far too little known, and so still needs to be explored to see if there’s anything in there that can make me/us rich” category, for opportunistic merchants in such places as Waterdeep, Athkatla, and Sembia.

Q: In your homebrew have anyone sought to expel the trolls from forest and were they successful?

Ed: In the home Realms campaign (which I suppose can be called a “homebrew” to distinguish it from the published Realms, though I see things more as my campaign being the “testbed” Realms, and the published Realms as a variant echo of it), no one that I know of - - which means no one, since the 1320s DR - - has yet sought to expel or exterminate the trolls in any large-scale, concerted manner. Some small armed groups have temporarily sought to drive the trolls away from certain locations in the forest (and routes from the edge of the forest to those spots) so they could explore and hopefully plunder, but that’s a very different thing - - and has usually resulted in the trolls driving other, more fearsome monsters into contact with such foes, and responding themselves by gathering to trap, surround, and defeat such foes (not necessarily to overwhelm them, but to inflict maximum casualties as the foes are forced to fight their ways out, to deter future intrusions).

Wood of Sharp Teeth

- Dragon 222

Recently, a small group of green elves (about 50) has broken off from the tribe in the Misty Forest and headed into the Wood of Sharp Teeth near Baldur’s Gate. It seems there was an argument between Speaker Eamond and Derdryl, an older and much sterner elf, about courting the favors of humans. The last report from the Derdryl’s group said that they had made a temporary pact with a tribe of satyrs and were continuing to forage deep into the woods. Derdryl, it seems, is obsessed in finding the ancient elven empire of Anauria [[should this actually be Askavar*]] . He has used the argument between himself and Eamond to gather a group to explore the unknown reaches of the Sharp Teeth. What he expects to find is up to speculation. The ruins of that fabled empire are old even by elven standards, and it would appear that Derdryl is leading his group on a wild, and very dangerous, goose chase.'

High Moor

Temples to Eilistraee

- Ed 29/12/15

Q: The High Moor was the direct result of the Dark Disaster in the elven Crown wars. As I found in some other sources, in the dark-/green elven nation of Miyeratar, Eilistraee was one of the major worshipped powers. At that time (so 12 000 years back in time) her temples were supposedly above ground, but where would you set such a sanctuary "nowadays" (1353DR in my campaign). Would they still be above grounds? or have they drifted into the Undermoor?

A: Yes, temples to Eilistraee in the High Moor would still be above ground, and located where there are plentiful trees. Which, on the moor, tends to be in the relatively few large ravines that cut down into the rock below the windswept "surface" of the moor. Note that such a temple is really a dancing-place (open grove) more than a building.

High Moor Barbarians

- Ed 29/12/15

Q: The High Moor barbarians preferred weapons are described as being the short bow and spear for hunting and war. My question revolves around the third weapon mentioned: "fine two-handed swords". Are these really supposed to be those immensely large weapons, or rather like the classic barbarian bastard swords. The reason on why I'm asking this is because I picture these folk a bit like the the pict's or gael's from the scotland area, whose iconic weapon was the claymore.

A: Important barbarians (leaders and war-captains) bear, and are handed down, large "real" two-handed swords of fine make, some of them so long that when stood vertically, they are almost the height of an average barbarian. Which means only rare individuals are large and strong enough to actually wield them in battle, as opposed to using them for ceremonial or justice purposes. So, yes, the huge blades that can be windmilled to lift their wielder off his or her feet and carry them in this or that direction, rather than hand-and-a-half "bastard" swords. (The term "claymore," by the way, has ended up being applied to everything from long knives with basket hilts up to two-handed boar swords, and so is so broad as to be nigh-useless; it's like saying "pop music" and discovering that a classical music conductor uses that term to mean rock, jazz, country & western, Gilbert & Sullivan light opera, punk, r & b, hip hop, and rap.)

Cormyr

Adventuring Charters

- Garen Thal 16/12/13 Qs for Ed

1. Groups lose and recruit new members, do the new members have to be declared?

Yes, new members must be declared, in the presence of a local lord or lord commander (such as the Lord Commander of High Horn), or other high officers of the realm.

2. As the original group goes into retirement, are other members allowed to retain the charter? In other words, would the charter be allowed to continue in perpetuity?

Yes, in certain circumstances. Generally, "new" members not on the original charter must have already been presented and declared before they are permitted to present and declare new members, so there's no joining up on the road, having the entire company killed off by a dragon, and having the lone newbie

trudge back and restart the adventuring band. Only established members can carry on a charter.

3. Or, would the charter effectively be void once the final founding member is dead? And, if so, would the charter be renewable by the other members.

No. See #2, above. However, a defunct company (that is, a chartered company with no surviving members) can have its name repurposed for a future company. This is the name only; even if the Court will allow the re-use of a name, the Heralds (these being the High Heralds) will not allow the re-use of any badge or heraldry to confuse the two companies with the same name. [See Chapter 9 of Swords of Eveningstar for an example of this phenomenon, when the future Knights of Myth Drannor could not choose for their name the 'Swords of Espar,' because members of that band still lived.]

4. What are the limits to the charter? Such as limits on number of members or limitations on races allowed.

Officially, the limit on membership is capped at 30 (30 is considered the dividing line between "huge adventuring company" and "mercenary company"). Unofficially, the Crown is uncomfortable with adventurers in groups larger than a dozen or so unless they register as mercenaries, because it knows full well the difference between the specialized strike-force nature of a group of adventurers and the masterless army that is a group of mercenaries.

5. What are their duties (aside from alerting the Crown to possible threats)? Are they REQUIRED, as a stipulation of the charter, to make themselves available for service to the Crown in times of crisis (either with or without pay)?

Chartered adventurers must report hazards to the Crown, and are considered agents of the Crown when it comes to apprehending unchartered adventurers and unregistered mages. While no one can be pressed into service to the military except in an all-able-bodied-adults situation (like the war with Nalavara), the Crown can draft the charter--and, by extension, anyone named in it. Failure to appear won't result in revocation of the charter, but will prevent those named in the charter from being chartered again. The Crown does this very rarely, primarily with mercenary companies rather than adventuring bands, and always for pay.

6. Does the Crown have any obligations to the charter. For instance, would the charter members be allowed certain courtesies (such as the custom of lodging for knights during Medieval times).

Basically, the charter allows members to walk about the realm armed and armored, liveried, exploring ruins and facing down monsters without fear of reprisal or subjection to the common laws of salvage and recovery--which is to say: an adventuring band permitted to explore a ruin and coming out with an ancestral crown of a noble can sell that crown back to that noble's family for a hefty fee; a commoner who stumbles upon it can expect to have it demanded back and a small pouch of copper and silver tossed at his feet.

Destinations

Suzail

"Lord" Titles

- Ed 20/1/15

The Lord Magister of Suzail is the Palace official in charge of keeping straight the registrations (and reportings-in, and whereabouts) of all independent, non-Wizards of War arcane spellcasters resident in Suzail or visiting the city. (The War Wizards spy on all such individuals when they can spare the manpower, and doing so is ongoing training for their novices and junior members - - and something of "punishment duty" for veterans.)

The Lord Magistrate of Suzail is head of the courts in which legal disputes in the city are adjudged. Cases involving nobles are an exception; they are heard in the Royal Court by senior courtiers, an Obarskyr, and usually also by a jury of peers (i.e. other nobles), treason being an exception often handled in near-secrecy by the Court Wizard and the reigning monarch. For matters large and small involving commoners, in which nobles and royalty are only involved as property owners, will be heard by the Lord Magistrate or magistrates ("magisters," a term which often causes confusion with the "Lord Magister") reporting to him.

The Lord Master of Suzail is an office that could in real-world terms probably best be described as "Manager of Public Works/Civic Works/Roads, Streets, and Sewers (also: Water and Drainage)." This "lord" can be a commoner (it's an office awarded by the Crown, sometimes as a reward), and oversees the actual city workers.

The Lord Magister of Suzail advises the Crown on regulations and laws regarding the use of magic (so do the War Wizards, so the Lord Magister usually ends up championing the interests of visitors and "just plain citizens" as opposed to lawkeeping and state interests).

The Lord Magistrate of Suzail is responsible for the written records of all sentences. When records are incomplete or unclear, he acts as an appeals court of sorts, because he can change sentences in such cases.

The Lord Master of Suzail recently (1358) hired some Suzailan beggars, idle street youths, the lame, and the elderly, to go about the city peering up at all buildings and noting crumbling stonework, roofing in need of repair, rickety outside stairs, and other "weathering that needs attention," so civic officials can talk about such things with property owners before collapses or really major repairs come about precipitously.

[Malthulk's House](#)

- THO 11/11/15

Malthulk's House stood in Suzail in the 1350s and right up until the present day; Ed tells me so far as he knows it's had a new roof and new doors, but no other outward changes during that time. He's away from his Suzail street map right now, but will have an answer for you on Taumurt's when he can...(I'm recalling east end, not far from the Promenade, myself, but may be confusing it with a similarly-named street, from Realmsplay years and years ago).

[Snowed in](#)

- Ed 9/2/13, as part of wider post about being snowed in, see "Social Life", "Snowed In"

Suzail has no such protections [such as Silverymoon's temperature wards], but the War Wizards do use spells to clear major streets by literally blowing deep-piled snow out into the harbor, and frequently temporarily raise temperature to melt treacherous ice underfoot (though used rushes, "out" cinders, and the like are used as traction aids). Note that many cities, Suzail included, are ports that enjoy the moderating effects of the large bodies of water they are adjacent to. One of the reasons that Waterdeep developed into such a populous city is the seaward protection of Mount Waterdeep, that shields much of the oldest part of the city from gales blowing onshore. "Ice rime" forms on seaward faces of many

Waterdhavian buildings in the winter, but the Watchful Order magists magically melt dangerous roofloads (that might plummet down on the heads of pedestrians below).

Temples

Reason for location of most on east side

- THO 18/12/10

Ed tells me it's not a law (or city zoning; no such thing exists, beyond the absolute power of the Crown to expropriate land and structures for particular, usually wartime, purposes) or curse that caused this.

It was the result of clergy buying large but decaying warehouses, paddocks, and smithies on the eastern side of the city (as the former and latter shut down, and the paddocks were relocated outside the walls), razing them, and building newer, grander, and larger temples and shrines there (relocating from older, more modest, and more cramped central city premises).

There ARE shrines to other deities in the central city blocks (often "upstairs" or "downcellar" in buildings that have other uses [shops, usually] on their ground floors).

In general, the dockside areas are warehousing and fish-packing and drydock facilities rather than housing; the nobles and the rich live in northernmost Suzail, north of the Promenade if possible and close to the Palace if you're wealthy enough and highest and haughty amongst the nobility, westwards as your wealth and power go down; the poor live in westernmost Suzail (slums along the inside the southwestern end of the city wall); military along the easternmost wall, particularly closest to the harbor; and everyone else lives in the middle, the most expensive (and grandest) properties being either easterly, or close to the Promenade (or both).

Royal Palace

Dalestride Portal

- THO 23/9/10, in reply to query about portal reinforced by Caladnei before the Spellplague, as mentioned in "Elminster Must Die"

We Knights know a LITTLE about that portal from the "home" Realms campaign. It long predates Caladnei's arrival in Cormyr, and is a two-way portal that was often used by Vangerdahast to send War Wizards swiftly to the Dales, and get them back to report to him quickly, too.

Before the Time of Troubles, its very existence was a very well kept state secret of Cormyr, known to most War Wizards, a few senior courtiers, the royal family, Vangey, and a handful of Harper spies - - NOT to most folks around the Palace, and thus, many citizens of Suzail.

Florin formed the opinion, confirmed by Elminster with a silent nod at one point (at least, all of us who were present are pretty sure that's what the Old Mage was confirming), that the portal ("gate" to us, remember; all of this lore predates the game edition change that introduced the term "portal" to widespread use in D&D) was created as an "escape route" for Obarskyrs in the case of assassination or usurpation: a fast way out of the realm that royals could take, hopefully with War Wizard or other loyal bodyguards, to go into hiding and survive for a later attempt to reclaim the Dragon Throne.

Yes, it's a two-way portal, but the reason for its creation was to create a way to get out, not to establish a permanent vulnerability for invasion into the heart of the Royal Palace of Suzail (THAT was an unavoidable cost).

Or so we believe.

Libraries

- Ed 24/1/10

In Suzail, two vast and sprawling buildings stand facing each other, across a courtyard: the Royal Court and the Royal Palace. The former is crammed full of courtiers and their offices, and is like, well, most of the state buildings in Canberra. It's where most of the day-to-day, boring parchment-pushing goes on. The Royal Palace, on the other hand, is the home of the royal family, and the seat of ceremonial government; the place where there are many great rooms of state and smaller audience chambers, and almost every room on the main floors has a name and history (see many of many books). It has extensive dungeons below, the Royal Stables immediately behind (north of) it, and, yes, has seven libraries (not including the private bookshelves in the royal apartments, the documents kept in the Royal Crypt and the adjacent vaults, whatever the servants are reading and have lying around their quarters, and so on. Unlike the dozen-some libraries of the Royal Court, which are no-nonsense storage areas for meticulously-ordered records and government documents and ledgers, the libraries of the Palace are for reading.

They contain fiction (in the form of collected folktales, fanciful accounts of the doings of long-ago kings, and collections of family anecdotes from noble families and less-than-noble-but-OLD families, too), plus heralds' registers of Cormyrean arms, atlases, and accounts of travels throughout the rest of the world. There are also a few "translation books," that set forth written phrases in various alphabets and explain their meanings in Common, and compare phrases directly (in a variety of languages) on the same page. Secret libraries (and books) tend to be separate, and kept behind sliding bookcases or secret doors, often opening off secret passages linking royal bedchambers with "back ways out," rather than being part of any library at all.

No one who is a visitor to the Palace (and no servant or courtier who isn't a Highknight, Wizard of War, Purple Dragon assigned to guard duty, or Palace servant whose habitual work involves the library) can expect to visit any Palace library unescorted; books are valuable things, and good places to hide clandestine messages in the form of little notes, for others to pick up later.

If you're not one of those persons, or a member of the royal family or in the willing company of a royal, a War Wizard, a Highknight, or certain senior courtiers like the Steward or Understeward, you would need to obtain permission to gain access to any of the Palace libraries.

Or you would need to overcome a guard very quietly and without using magic (which would be detected by the Palace wards, raising an alarm), and get the guard's body inside the library quickly so it can't be spotted down the passage outside, and then work very quickly; a guard not at his post will soon be noticed, and guards are inspected every few minutes, on a random rotation, by superior officers walking past to make sure they aren't asleep, distracted, or that there's nothing amiss.

That's the short answer; by all means ask followups if you'd like to explore this further. (Oh, of the Palace libraries: the Blue Library has the most fiction and best lounging facilities, and food is served there upon request; the Red Library has the most atlases and impressive tomes, and is the most visually spectacular and formal; Othrar's Library has the most atlases; and Standrar's Reading Room is the least formal, and has a huge central table always littered with books, and usually has someone reading for pleasure, with their feet up, at all hours.) Hope this is of help.

- THO 25/1/10, on things within of great value

There are some valuable atlases (cut them apart, sell the maps separately) and some other valuable tomes, too, though no magical ones that Ed's told me about (though he did say that many have

protective/preservative enchantments on them that will make them radiate magic) in various of the libraries, but in general, I'd say there's nothing in any of the libraries to make it worth the consequences of killing a guard.

The warning about not using magic is a general one, extending to most of the "great rooms of state" of the Palace (ground floor and floor immediately above), because wards built up over the centuries by various Royal Magicians and Wizards of War raise alarms when magic is used, everywhere on these floors (i.e. it's not a "special protection" for the libraries). Nor are "doorjacks" (servants stationed at doors) or Purple Dragon guards unusual at any room of state. Yes, you should expect to see guards ranged along passages in front of most doors, as a general rule, all the time, in the Royal Palace.

How do I know all this? Well, we Knights have trudged through that Palace scores of times. Usually with heavy escorts, and watchful Dragons and War Wizards "following up behind," too.

Haunted Wing (Royal Palace of Cormyr?)

- Ed 18/2/15

Q: I was also wondering if any of the undead in the Haunted Wing have been successfully quelled, or at least subdued, by song alone?"

A: Yes. Several of the "sad queens" (sad-eyed gliding court ladies, not actually queens or princesses, but the public gave them this nickname nonetheless) seem comforted by skilled harping of the style popular several centuries back, and will smile and nod and withdraw. And there are at least two minstrels among the ghosts, who can be driven away in rage by bad playing, or playing certain loud and uptempo modern dances. Legend holds that playing just the right tune will make one of them your friend, guide, and nightly confidant (if, ahem, you consider that a reward), but no one seems to have yet hit upon just what that "right tune" is.

Some Rooms of Palace

- Ed 10/9/14

Armral's Pumproom (the apparatus in this room, devised by the now-deceased Palace handyman Ingur Armral, can pump-flush many of the garderobes and their chutes, if manually "pumped up")

Imdauth's Retiring Room (a room of mirrors, wardrobes, steam-kettle presses, sewing tables, and chairs, for the use of ladies needing repairs to their garments, named for the fussy and long-dead Palace dresser who devised and first equipped it)

Javohndur's Butlery (a kitchen and relaxation room for the underservants, grooms, equerries, et al of visitors to the Royal Palace; named for a long-ago steward who created the first such butlery, a smaller and long-demolished chamber elsewhere in the Palace)

Quessarium Hall (a glass-roofed conservatory/greenhouse on the upper floor of the Palace, at the western end, farthest from the gardens, where flowers are grown for Palace table arrangements sheltered from rains and other severe weather; named for a stunningly beautiful young lady-in-waiting of the Palace very early in Azoun IV's reign, who covertly entertained an astonishing number of manservants within it, including the gardeners who tended it)

Xantorth Hall (a little-used royal trophy room of sorts that houses preserved monster relics in glass cases, including tentacles and the much-shrunken central eye of the beholder for which it is named - - who like all the monsters whose parts are displayed here, was slain by an Obarskyr in the past; there are persistent rumors that this room is haunted, or that something valuable is hidden in it, tales reinforced by the standing order [from before the ascent of Azoun IV to the Dragon Throne] that the room be kept locked except for specific, approved-by-the-Crown [that is, King, Queen, or Royal Magician {plus Court Wizard, when this is a separate post}} entries)

Zhonder's Study (named for a Court Sage who perished in the reign of King Duar protecting royal records during the "troubles;" this room had been his workplace)

- THO 10/9/14

Omlath's Stair

This is a back staircase linking two floors of the Palace, that has little "open" (doorless) rooms at top and bottom, furnished with ovals of seating and sidetables. Often used by Palace staff and courtiers for brief, hushed conversations/consultations.

- THO 27/9/14, giving more info on Zhonder's Study

"Two entry doors and several secret doors amid the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves that line the room, revealed when Varandros [[note: the courtier we met with]] arrived through one and later departed through another. Tidy, formal place rather than working environment, central table with four chairs, was warned not to peruse books but looked to be varied volumes in best of condition, only item of note: brazen (human male; not recognized as likeness of anyone we knew) head on small marble stand, center of table."

Royal Gardener

- Ed 3/11/14

Upon the ascension of Azoun IV, he confirmed the continuance of the head Gardener Royal in office: the elderly, increasingly absent-minded (later became full-blown dementia) Gordroun Palonder, a kindly old expert who increasingly relied on younger and stronger assistants. Palonder secretly kept a "poison garden" on the roof of the Royal Stables, but evidently as a hobby rather than for sinister purposes, though Alaphondar and Vangerdahast both kept a close eye on him because of it. Palonder died in office, though for the last year of his service (1352 DR) he was bedridden. His successor was Relvarra Lionwinter, his best-trained assistant, a wise and clever but homely woman of a longtime Palace family. She eventually married a Purple Dragon officer, but refused to retire from her position. (And that's where my notes end.)

Eveningstar

Founding

- THO 11/11/15

Eveningstar was founded several centuries before the current Realmsdate

House of Morning

- THO 26/6/15

First of all: the clergy of the temple leave tending sheep and goats to the citizen farmers of Eveningstar, and confine themselves to growing herbs and vegetables, making "physics" and "cordials" (medicines), and doctoring. They make steady amounts by the sale of bulk vegetables (including wares stored under straw in shallow caves they've dug in the cliff face to the west of the stream valley) to passing caravan merchants (the locals, of course, grow their own), and make the main temple income from the selling of bottled sauces and jarred preserved herbs, plus some of the aforementioned medicinal cordials (they blow their own glass bottles, BTW).

The temple maintains "offices" of prayer (somewhat akin to a real-world Benedictine monastery) around the clock, and much of the daily work of the temple is farming, by hand, in the fields, and by visiting the people of Eveningstar and wayfarers stopping at local inns (in the Knights' time, the Lonesome Tankard). These visitations are to help, advise, and encourage new ventures, inventions, and innovations both large and small among the general populace.

The basement of the temple consists of low-ceiling cellars full of kegs of ale (the main drink of the clergy; this is watered-down ale, more "treated water" than "stuff to get drunk on"), hanging meat (the clergy have their own smokehouse on the west side of the mouth of the stream gorge), and stored root vegetables, plus the "underkitchens" where pickling occurs, vegetables are chopped and boiled, and so on (spit roasting occurs outdoors, even in severe winter weather).

The upstairs of the temple consists of several "cells" (quiet rooms) for solitary prayer and contemplation (farthest from those stairs), three large dormitory rooms (two-decker bunk beds for the clergy to sleep in), a row of garderobes and a bathroom (meaning: room with copper sit-baths; water is pumped by hand from cisterns), several meeting rooms, and then, closest to the stair you had the priests descend, a robing room (cloakroom, with outerwear boots, sandals, cloaks, hoods, and wintercloaks all stored, with benches for getting dressed and undressed), plus a toolroom and workshop.

As for memories...hoo boy; much consultation and doctoring of wounded Knights, an adventuresome interlude involving Torm trying to find a private spot for some hanky-panky with a willing lass but being continually interrupted by oh-so-genuinely-helpful priests, and at least one instance in which the clergy hid a runaway outlaw from Purple Dragons searching for him, because they disagreed with the policing methods. Oh, and Lord Tessaril stood up for them doing so, when it finally got found out. Tessaril and Charisbonde were staunch friends, and worked together covertly quite a bit. (And there is - - correctly - - rumored to be vast wealth hidden in or around the temple, but the individual priests of today haven't the faintest where it is or how to access it, no matter how much they get enchanted or tortured by someone wanting to find it.) The temple coffers are banked in Suzail; they can buy and sell all of Eveningstar several times over, and are rumored (again, correctly, though they won't admit which ones) to have part ownership in several trading costers.

Haunted Halls

Knights memories

- THO 7/2/12

from what I recall of the original Haunted Halls, it had the main level you see (with a little more "dungeon dressing," in particular the decaying remnants of a ward that had JUST been broken by a previous adventuring band whose remains were scattered around the dungeon - - that ward being why no one had reached Miior before the PCs), then the upper level citadel with the kobolds (I can't remember how much of that made it into the published module), then a lower level that was smaller than the main level but covered a larger area (I know that sounds contradictory, but what I mean was: it

was a few rooms, then a L-o-o-o-n-g ([[miles]]) passage to Whisper's Crypt), plus a separate lower level that may or may not have made it into the published module, consisting of a natural rift/long but narrow crack in the solid rock that linked all levels, but went nowhere else: the kobolds had a privy, their dung fell down a shaft into the rift, and the rift accessed the main level and was its own lower level, with some hidden items, remains of murdered kobolds that had been hurriedly stuffed down the privy-shaft [[long ago]] with minor treasure such as coins and items "on" them, and one important something hidden there long ago.

- Ed 9/2/12, regarding queries about what was in the privy

Lots of bones, coins, daggers, and little tools etc. from dead bodies (kobolds murdered by other kobolds) dumped down the privy shaft in a hurry to avoid having the murder discovered . . . and the "bigger thing." Think: minor magic item, old, Cormyr-royalty-related, and not something yet mentioned in published Realmslore.

Walls and Floors

- Ed 13/2/12

The Halls were built by hired dwarves, with some human and gnome assistance (mainly for sculpting - - gnomes - - and rubble-hauling-away - - humans). yes. The upper (kobold-occupied, in the 1350s DR) level, the privy rift, and the lower (unpublished level) are smooth-hewn from solid rock. The "main" level (where PCs enter, etc.) and the cubbies depending down off it in that long, angled pillared hall - - but not the small privy near the entrance, which is another crack in the solid rock - - are smooth-fitted flagstone floor and smooth-fitted stone block walls. The flagstones are smoothed and leveled, and the walls are of all sizes of dressed stone blocks, dry-fitted and flanged to hold each other, looking a lot more like a "dry stone" wall than rows of concrete blocks. This was done because there's a twelve-foot-thick layer of very soft "cheese rock" (as halflings and dwarves call it in the cliff that made hollowing out the Halls at that particular location very easy - - but also meant trusting the stone left behind not to collapse was a foolish idea, hence the fitted stone blocks (and buttresses and columns, especially within the walls on either side of wide doorways).

Redhand Pool

- THO 23/6/16

I recall that Redhand Pool is named for a local adventurer whose surname was Redhand (he's dead, and wasn't particularly successful/widely known outside the area, but the Redhand family is still a farming family in the dale; he fought and killed a monster or monsters by night on the shore of that pool [a troll? trolls? can't be sure; will ask Ed]).

- THO 11/7/16, clarifying above and commenting on potential link to Baron Cromm Redhand of Cromm's Hold near Daggerford, mentioned in "Under Illefarn"

Ed tells me that yes, it was 3 trolls slain by Raladar Redhand, and the two Redhand families are related, but VERY distantly and most living members today don't even know of the connection...only the Heralds do, with their careful genealogy-keeping (and then only because there are barons involved).

Troll-thick area

- THO 11/7/16, replying specifically to trolls fought at Redhand Pool and at Caverns of the Claws just east of Eveningstar (a trollhold held by trolls from the Stonelands)

Trolls have "always" been, and remain, a persistent problem in that part of the Stonelands, because it is VERY hard to "scour them out," given the terrain. So the Stonelands remain dangerous...

Arabel

Range of Merchant Houses

- Ed 16/12/12

Arabel's merchant houses do indeed have agents dwelling in such places as Hillsfar, Yhaunn, Procampur, Lyrabar, and various other Inner Sea ports, as well as traveling traders. They usually range as far west as Berdusk, as far north as Melvaunt, as far east as Aglarond, and as far south as the Vilhon - - but the bulk of their trade is centered on the Moonsea and providing an alternative (to Sembia) route west (halfway to the Sword Coast, i.e. Berdusk) for Moonsea lumber, furs, ores, and especially refined metals and cast metal goods (in return for various preserved foodstuffs, such as spiced alcoholic jams, that dwellers in the Moonsea North can use to vary and improve the taste of meats, turnips, and other locally-sourced food.

Merchant House Titles

- Ed 16/12/12

The energetic, far-traveled merchant Ilmer Melthanton, a member of the House of Thond much seen passing through the Dales, is colloquially "Melthanton of Thond" and more formally "Saer Melthanton of the House of Thond."

Four Roads, Three Gates

- THO 25/11/14, Markustay

there are graveled dirt wagon-tracks encircling Arabel, with hardpacked-through-much-use "pads" or fenced areas used for caravan paddocks (assembly, camping, etc.) and livestock droving (beasts brought to the city for sale, and sold from these outdoor, outside-the-walls enclosures, being brought inside the walls only for slaughter or if purchased for draft use by residents of Arabel).

- Markustay (canon as per THO)

due to the way most cities are laid-out (both real and imagined) is that there is a road (or series of roads) that encircle the city, so you can leave by any gate, and travel in any direction. These days, those roads are made to ease traffic-flow, but in 'olden times', they would have been used by the many farmers who worked the fields surrounding the city. If there is one thing I've found by studying maps (both real and imagined) is that there are always many more 'roads' (paths, trails, etc) leading to and from everywhere than maps ever illustrate.

Main Road from East Gate to High Horn Gate

- THO 11/1/11

The streets in Arabel have been named and renamed many times over the years, as the city has broken free of Cormyr, been reconquered, local personages have risen and fallen out of favour, and so on.

However, that main central avenue you speak of is quite clearly labeled on my 1979-era Ed-drawn "home Realms campaign" map of Arabel as:

Thalonder's Ride

(known in daily usage merely as "the Ride" to local citizens)

Thalonder

- Ed 12/1/11

Ustrin Thalonder was the long-ago rebuildier of Arabel's city walls. He insisted on tearing down buildings in the heart of the city to make a direct path through Arabel, so defenders could move quickly if the city was attacked. (This was something city merchants had long resisted, in favor of keeping the maze of streets that slowed through caravan traffic and encouraged stopovers and local trading.)

Snowing

- Garen Thal, 28/8/14 (Ed says take as canon)

-Snows in Arabel aren't heavy enough to dump four or five feet of snow on the ground. A foot or two, though, is more than possible. Let's go with that assumption.

-Snow removal in heavy winter is performed by two primary groups: soldiers and convicts sentenced to heavy labor (other duties can include breaking rocks, dredging rivers, and--for those that can be trusted--clearing sewers). They are usually sufficient to the tasks.

-Barrels already exist for collecting rainwater, but pure (upper layer) snow is also dumped into wells and used for washing.

-The Dragons drill, patrol the walls and streets more heavily, clear snow (first from city streets, then from roofs and eaves, then again from the streets, and then roads out of the city, etc.), and basically work to do two things: make the city passable, and make it defensible.

-Many local Purple Dragons are truly local, rather than living in the Citadel, and their homes are spread out enough to accommodate for the need. But the Crown also keeps some locations spread out around the city, as well.

- Ed 28/8/14

First off, there have been no significant recent changes to either the weather or how it's locally handled, nor did the Spellplague do much more in this regard than give Arabel an unusually wet winter when it first hit.

Some warehouses in Arabel get used as living quarters by merchant costers that own them, and others are rented out (room by room) to anyone wintering over in Arabel by their owners. Note that costers like to have live-in staffers throughout the winters so that these inhabitants deter thieves, vandals, and arsonists somewhat by their very presence.

There's no buying rush, because Arabel has always been "the granary of the North" for the common folk of Cormyr (the Purple Dragons and other government arms use the fortified Dragon bases and local lords' dwellings/compounds for granary purposes), so its cellars and attics (as opposed to mercantile warehouses) have always been used for constant storage, turning over the oldest wares to make room for the new.

The only "rush" is to bring in and pile up aged (dried for a season to three) firewood inside the walls

(literally, along the insides of the city walls) before the deepest snows accumulate; one way to keep warm in winter, when the wolves and blizzards aren't bad, is to fell and split the "green" firewood for later winters).

So there are no local festivals, beyond the widely-observed High Harvesttide and every-tenday special prayers led by the clergy of Chauntea and Silvanus, which go by the collective title of "the Gathering In."

Thanks to the effects of drunken carousing (i.e. brawls, lechery, and even the occasional fire) inns and taverns in Arabel prefer to host lone minstrels or bardic trios at most, and leave plays and pageants and what we might term "concerts" or "variety shows/vaudeville/music hall" night-long sequences of many acts (comedians, clowns, singers, actors, orators) to other venues, which are almost always repurposed warehouses (many of which are owned by inn and tavern owners).

Several local merchants, including (in the later 1400s DR) the ever-smiling, slender, neatly-bearded Maerammus Arkithral, serve as panderers in winter, acquiring bed-talented lads and lasses (or good singers, or artists skilled at limning portraits) during their fall runs and employing them in Arabel throughout the winter (this goes on in Suzail, too, but costs there are higher and therefore profits lower). The artists often, when not doing portraits, paint endless variations of striking landscapes, bold dragons, and what we might term "good girl art" ranging to outright porn, for sale elsewhere, after the winter, on merchant runs throughout the Heartlands.

And yes, some merchants and other warehouse owners decamp for warmer climes, renting out their properties in Arabel until their return in spring.

Hope these answers help. On rare occasions, there are deep snows in Arabel, but strong winds are far more common winter nuisances/perils.

Lomdath's (Tailor)

- THO 7/9/14, tailor owned by Mulkaer Lomdath

Ah, Lomdath's. Its front room, walled in mirrors and full of elegant gowns on headless dummies, is one of the glittering "places to be seen" for social climbers and the upper crust among females in Arabel. On a dare, Torm once bought a red frilly backless and plunge-front number that was more or less (mainly less 😊) his size off one of those dummies, put it on, and went for a walk to visit six or seven of the priciest shops in Arabel. Casing all of them for later middle-of-the-night visits, of course.

Marsember

The Drenched Elders

- Blueblade and Baleful Avatar, confirmed by THO, Qs for Ed 3/9/11

Blueblade: this one about a "drinking club" get-together in Marsember where business owners/important citizens discussed and decided things, made deals, etc. (not a tavern or club, but a roving-location monthly meeting). What is it called, when did it start, and who dominates it and/or "fronts" for it (i.e. deciding where the next meeting will be, and telling members)? For that matter, is it a front for any group or cause or faction? Has the Crown infiltrated it?

Baleful Avatar: If it's the same group I once literally fell into the midst of in an Ed-run game, it's called "the Drenched Elders" formally, and just "the Elders" most of the time Marsembans talk about it. They've all heard of it, but like the Lords of Waterdeep, no one in the streets of the city knows who the

members are. They all have their strong suspicions about this fellow citizen or that one, but no certainty . . .

THO: Correct. Ed will of course add more.

Kingdom of Esparin (absorbed)

History, Heraldry, Link to Espar

- Ed 8/5/10

Q: "I had always assumed that Espar was the capital of/or named after the now absorbed Kingdom of Esparin (re: the Enchara lore from the Haunted Halls module). Obviously given what is written in 'The Sword that Never Sleeps' novel this appears not to be the case?"

A: Espar is named after the vanished kingdom, yes, but it wasn't always its capital (see next answer).

Q: "So is Espar named after Esparin and if so why is it on the western reaches of Cormyr rather than the northeast where the Kingdom of Esparin was based? (The only theory I can come up with is that this is a deliberate choice by the Crown/Court Wizard to throw folks who are looking for Lost Esparin into the wrong area and therefore conceal the Lost Palace?)."

A: Yerespar began as a marketmoot around the westernmost fortress (which stood hard by the hilltop "Stronghold" seen in SWORDS OF EVENINGSTAR, that the young future Knights played in; the Stronghold of today is actually the stone foundations of a cottage outbuilding of the royal mansion of Esparin, the keep that guarded that mansion having been entirely torn apart by Cormyrean fortresses, and the stones carried off for use in building the later Cormyrean cottages of Espar and elsewhere) of Esparin.

In the early years of Esparin's existence, its seat of power was to the east, and it was then that what's known today as "the Lost Palace" was built.

Later, as the Esparrin came to increasingly to depend on covert supplies of arms, mercenaries, mounts, food, and coin from certain nobles of Cormyr, the capital of the realm was moved to Yerespar, and it was renamed "Espar," and the royal mansion and "Sword Keep" were built there.

The mansion was torched and utterly destroyed, along with Sword Keep, but the cottage had been blasted to bits by a wizard's spell earlier in the conflicts between Esparin and Cormyr (in a failed attempt to slay royal Esparrin), and had been forgotten and never rebuilt, so its overgrown foundations survived. After Palaghard wed Enchara and Esparin fell to Cormyr, the inhabitants of Esparin who were willing to swear loyalty to Cormyr's Crown were allowed to remain in Espar (many retiring Purple Dragons were given land to settle on in and around Espar for decades thereafter, to "anchor" it in loyal hands). The other Esparrin had either been slain in battle with Cormyr, or were driven off, or had fled (most of them into the Dales and northern, backcountry Sembia, where there's a distaste for Cormyr that lingers to this day).

So as not to "poke the sleeping dragon" of local anger against the Court in Suzail, the name "Espar" was tolerated and allowed to stand, rather than being replaced - - and yes, a factor in that decision was its location as the westernmost fringe of the conquered kingdom, rather than its heart (so, indeed, rebels and others seeking "Lost Esparin" were misdirected into the wrong area).

Q: "Can you say anything more about Esparin? Was it a breakaway kingdom that came back into the

fold? From printed lore its history revolves around Enchara and her marrying Palaghard I in the 12th century after he conquered it. So we have plenty of time for it to 'pop up' in the history of Cormyr before especially as it is based near Arabel and Cormyr 'proper' - it would seem to me therefore to be a short lived Kingdom?"

A: Esparin was a relatively short-lived kingdom, but rather than being a breakaway, it was more of a separately-founded place, in the northern wilderlands of the area between the Thunder Peaks and the Stormhorns, that the Purple Dragon lost to the elves, and the elves faded away before the ever-expanding human settlements of. In other words, the elves had already decided to give up the futile bloodshed of resisting the humans, and quietly surrender the territory west of the Thunder Peaks, retreating to the Elven Court (though some of them lingered in the Hullack). There were many dissatisfied humans from other lands who sought new lands where they could dwell in less oppression and more prosperity. Esparin was founded by one such (circa 1020 DR, though there are disputes as to the exact date and founder) and resisted the "authority" of exploring bands and monster-scouring patrols from Cormyr, eventually becoming raiders of Cormyr and being seen as "outlaw rebels" by Cormyr.

Esparin always considered themselves owners and citizens of their own land, that had as much right to exist as "that other kingdom" of Cormyr to the south, and although they first mistrusted exiles from Cormyr and fugitives from Cormyrean justice as "spies sent among us," over time they became proud to welcome "fellow oppressed" from Cormyr, to swell their ranks.

When Proster was king of Cormyr, he ignored Esparin's rise, but his more famous son Baerovus saw Esparin as a threat when he came to the throne, and gave battle to its forces whenever he saw good opportunity. In the seemingly eternal struggle between House Obarskyr and the nobles of Cormyr who weren't on the Dragon Throne, Esparin was secretly supported by some of those noble families to weaken the Obarskyrs (in hopes that they could be supplanted on the throne) and by wealthy merchants of Marsember who hoped to win independence for Marsember from a Cormyr weakened and embroiled in a war with Esparin.

Q: "Re. the heraldry of Esparin with the Unicorn - made up as new or derived from a rebel family that broke from Cormyr? Or does the unicorn and trees have any link with the Hullack forest and/or Hullack himself? I ask because of the timeframe:

- From Pages from the Mages VI we learn that Hullack led the druids of the Wyvernwater 200 years ago (say 1100DR or so) about the same time Esparin was in force? We also know that the druids were slain by beholders who were served by gargoyles, bugbears, and quicklings. The eye tyrants sought to establish a realm in the area.

- Furthermore the 'Men in Green' used the Crystum of Tranquility to slay the Beholder King sometime after 1112DR when they recived the Crystrum from Shalgreth of the Wings (a member of the Hullack Circle given the preceding lore in the 2E Prayers from the Faithful writeup?)

Three pieces of Realmslore within a similar timeframe and similar location - just wondering if there is a connection between Esparin and Hullack?"

A: The only real connection (though local tales speak darkly of many more) is that one (the beholders) sought to take advantage of the distraction afforded by another (Esparin) in their battles with Cormyr. The rise of the beholders certainly pushed more of the elves out of the Hullack and east the mountains, right out of what became Cormyr. Hullack himself, and the druids, were on friendly-to-neutral terms

with Esparin because the Esparrin were wise enough not to make foes of them, whereas Hullack's relationship with expanding Cormyr was NOT friendly.

Hullack and the Esparrin were never, so far as is known by later loremasters, battle-allies.

The unicorn-and-trees heraldry of Esparin is related to the trees of the Hullack and King's Forest, and the wilderlands north of both and between both (which were then largely uncleared for farming and still heavily wooded). Unicorns were legendarily numerous in those now-vanished "in between" forests, and one of the noble families of Cormyr that secretly supported Esparin, House Ulmair, used the unicorn as its badge and the chief charge of its blazon.

However, two prominent families of Esparin, the Darlreths and the Melmanes, also had unicorn badges and blazons.

(The Ulmairs are extinct as a noble house of Cormyr, but have numerous descendants in Westgate, and the Darlreths and Melmanes are widely believed to have been exterminated in Palaghard's conquest of Esparin, but in fact numerous descendants survive scattered across Sembia.)

Prominent Families

- THO 9/5/10

I know that there were a dozen or so prominent families of Esparin, that eight or nine of them named themselves "lords and ladies" and that Sembia recognized and used such titles (largely to ingratiate themselves with those families on a face-to-face trading level, and secondly to anger Cormyr). My notes have the surnames of six of those families (all of whom still survive, scattered throughout the Fallen Stars lands, though most of those who dwell in Sembia changed their names generations ago to avoid Cormyrean attention), but I know nothing at all about them; we'll have to wait for Ed to put flesh on these bones, so to speak.

The names are: Baerungar, Bracegauntlet, Hasgram, Mornim, Naerbold, and Rook (that last one is pronounced to rhyme with "hook").

One of them (I know not which one) used a curved hunting horn (horizontal, with ends curving upwards, mouthpiece to the dexter) as its badge, but I don't know which one.

Bracegauntlets in later Cormyr

- THO 10/5/10

The Bracegauntlets are the Esparin noble family that "made the jump" to the Cormyrean noble ranks (my addition: very probably for service to Cormyr's kings during the battles with Esparin, i.e. siding with Cormyr).

Tilverton

- THO 14/12/15

Tilverton's water came from deep Underdark wells, pumping from a subterranean lake just north of the settlement and its sewers drained to a higher/shallower level of the Underdark well to the southeast, where there was a "fungus kingdom" of interconnected caverns crowded with all manner of molds and toadstools and lichens and, yes, myconids.

Rallyhorn / Hultail

Rallyhorn

- Ed 16/6/12

This hamlet “just grew” around the base of Rallyhorn Castle, the ancestral castle of the old Cormyrean noble family of Rallyhorn. That fortress stands atop the tor known as Rallyhorn Ho, overlooking Hultail (“the Ho” is southeast of built-up Hultail). When Rallyhorn was renamed Hultail in 98 DR, as the first formal Cormyrean “naming laws” were drafted (as opposed to the earlier practice of altering names when royal displeasure was expressed), “Rallyhorn” became just the oldest neighborhood in Hultail (a handful of streets immediately around Rallyhorn Foregate, the steep street connecting the castle gates with the former grazing meadows below (now built up, covered with the buildings of Hultail)).

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, the builder of Rallyhorn Castle, was Steward of the Court in Cormyr, a fabulously wealthy and able courtier whom the wizard Baerauble once described as “the right hand of the throne.” Lord Theldrin assisted the kings Daravvan, Dorglor, Embrold, and Irbruin. The Rallyhorns have never been quite as powerful since Lord Theldrin’s passing, but are very much still around—and respected—in the Forest Kingdom. Rallyhorn Castle remains their country seat, though most Rallyhorns are resident in Suzail, much of the time, and use the Castle only as a summer gathering-place and a waystop on hunting trips and other travel into the eastern reaches of the Realm.

The neighborhood of Rallyhorn was once the noisome site of two rival tanneries and their attendant sheds and workers’ huts, but as the Hullack Forest was pushed back leaving the tanneries farther and farther from the source of wild hides (being as livestock hides can be processed almost anywhere), the tanneries relocated eastwards up the Wyvernwater, leaving Rallyhorn to be what it is today: a poor neighborhood where weavers and garment-makers and dyers dwell and work, at the foot of the tor still crowned by Rallyhorn Castle.

Rallyhorn Founding

- THO 17/6/12

Yes, the Rallyhorns were there at the beginnings of human Cormyr.

The early nobles were certainly encouraged to settle, govern, and “improve” (roads, bridges, permanent farming population, founding local industries) frontier lands to extend and strengthen the kingdom, and the early kings (aided by Baerauble) “sold” it to any reluctant nobility as the chance to make themselves really rich by arranging everything in “their lands” in their own favor. As this was really, demonstrably true, it worked!

Glemmora of Rallyhorn

- Ed 18/6/12, responding to query about character mentioned in Dragon #116

Rallyhorn as a community was long gone (except to locals in Hultail) by the time Glemmora was imprisoned. (Note how overblown the title of “King of Dulgund” was, too.)

Glemmora was “of” Rallyhorn because she and family not only lived in Rallyhorn Castle, as senior retainers (for generations) to the Rallyhorns AND as part of the Rallyhorn travelling household (retainers who travel with the families they serve are said to be “of” their families, thus: “of Rallyhorn).

- Ed 23/6/12

Glemmora and her fellow “servants of the household” haven’t dropped their surnames, they just avoid using them when on their masters’ business. It’s an established way of transferring responsibility/consequences to the noble families they serve. In other words, Glemmora is saying: “Don’t blame me, Glemmora Dornalhand - - blame Glemmora, the hand of Rallyhorn’s will.”

BTW, Glemmora's surname is "Dornalhand," but she has cousins in Suzail AND Daerlun who spell it "Dornalhond."

Naming of Hultail

- THO 17/6/12

I know Hultail was named after a family of fisherfolk and netmakers resident in the area who did "good service" to the Crown, and were rewarded. Presumably a land grant went with the name. Hultail was actually a separate settlement (coastal fishing hamlet on the Wyvernwater) that grew to meet Rallyhorn.

High Road

- Ed 8/5/14

The High Road is used by woodcutters/foresters and their carts, herb- and mushroom-gatherers (in groups in the vicinity you're interested in, thanks to the relative peril of the area), peddlers (usually with a single wagon drawn by mules, or a "pack train" of three mules or less), and most often by caravans (three to forty wagons, but usually 12-15 wagons) with outriders (armed riders on horseback) who serve as guards and scouts, before and behind. After caravans, Purple Dragon road-patrols (a dozen strong: ten mounted soldiers, with an officer and a low-level War Wizard - - unless "trouble is expected," whereupon the patrols get larger, with priests and a second War Wizard added to twenty-one Purple Dragons) are most frequently encountered.

King's Forest

Stagmaster

- THO quoting Ed 17/2/12

In the early days of Cormyr, the King's Forest was a royal hunting preserve, to which the King granted nobles (and in rare instances, visiting envoys and Cormyrean commoners) access to "hunt with him" (and later, to hunt with other members of the royal family). The King's foresters (staff) hunted the vermin, such as stirges, foxes, wolves, etc. Adventurers and some intrepid royals (think Bhereu and Thomdor, in Azoun IV's time) hunted, with formal permission, owlbears and other "monsters" of the forest. Commoners weren't allowed to hunt in the forest, but from time to time would be given low-level local permission (as in: king's lords, forester commanders) to "take deer" (usually when the deer population was exploding, to prevent an inevitable "starvation crash").

Yet only royalty and nobility could hunt wild boar and stags (the "cream" quarry).

Over time, various noble families were given permission to build their own hunting lodges in the King's Forest (usually in return for having supported or mightily pleasing the royal family in some way). So inevitably, they took to occasionally hunting without royal presence or express permission.

Also over many passing decades and centuries, commoners hunting deer along the verges became more frequent and less "special" and requiring special permission. The waystop inns and forester's hamlets within the forest grew over time, becoming villages with more folk in them who sought food and water in the nearby forests. Many village youths hunted "tree cats" (the local equivalent of squirrels), and rabbits.

Over time, public attitude shifted from "the forest and everything in it belongs to the King" to "the forest and everything in it belongs to Cormyr, and that's us." So from being an exclusive royal hunting preserve, the King's Forest by the start of the 1360s DR is "a dangerous place in deep, but a resource for

all along the verges, just keep out of the way of the hunting parties because they get proper blazing if you interfere with their hunts."

Inevitably, some of the wealthiest social-climbing "wannabe noble" merchants took to hunting (hiring their own huntsmen, assembling their own hunting parties with all the gear, etc.) -- and going after boars and stags, not just deer, to "show that they were as good as a noble" and practically WERE nobles. So by the time of Azoun IV's death, Vangey was itching to find some way to control this, and hit upon the notion that the reigning monarch would formally be "the Stagmaster of the Realms," reasserting royal control over who could hunt stags. In effect, formally designating the monarch as the "chief forester" of all Cormyr,

Hunting Stag

- Ed 18/2/12

Q: what penalty might be incurred if a hunter is caught by a Kings forester hunting stag when they have already been told that they can't? And how much would a licence cost to buy the right to hunt a great stag? (several hundred or several thousand gold? or is it how much can we think we can charge?

A: Trial by War Wizards using mind-magic to ascertain guilt (and who else is involved, etc.) Upon conviction:

First punishment: lifetime ban (by public proclamation) from ever hunting ANYTHING, ANYWHERE in Cormyr, ever again, upon pain of a hand being severed PLUS exile, if caught. Second punishment: Immediate imprisonment in a labor camp near High Horn for five years, time that will be spent breeding, rearing, and doctoring deer (if you take a stag, you must help replace it, tenfold).

You get both punishments for a stag-killing; I do NOT mean that the first time you get the "first punishment," and the second time you get the second.

As for the licence: the sky's the limit. You want them to be so expensive that even a rich merchant or noble will wince. (After all, if someone has pleased or aided the monarch, so that the monarch feels they owe a favor, they'll just invite that "someone" along to hunt with them, for free -- so licences are to earn a LOT of coin for the treasury and to discourage people from seeking those licences.

So, yes, several thousand and up, to whatever you think you can charge. If an adventurer is sitting on loot, demand 12,000 gp per hunter per stag. If they're sitting on a lot of loot, make it 20,000 gp. (Inflationary pressures are very different in the Realms than in our real world; just go for it!)

Roads

- Ed 24/9/14

One or two of the King's Forest roads began as hunting trails from the days when the elves "ruled" the land that is now Cormyr -- meaning, they were "drive the large game" (some of it monstrous by human standards) routes through the forest. Expanded/linked up, widened, and drainage-improved many times since. Including linking up with clearings that began as places where dragons were fought and a small area of forest ruined in the process. And were, much later, later "maintained" as human woodcutters' cutting-places.

(However, so far as I know, none of the roads began from magical calamities or rampaging monsters in human-ruled times. None of which would prevent erroneous local legends of wild spell-battles or monster-fights from springing up; there is, for example, one such tale of two dragons fighting to the death in midair above the forest, in the days when elf rule was waning and humans were moving in.)

Waymoot

Brimstone

- Ed 23/11/14 (referred to in 2e Cormyr sourcebook)

Brimstone has the same meaning in Cormyr (and the Realms) as it does here in the real world, and the Dulea family home is named Brimstone because chiseling out its foundations (with picks and prybars and hammered metal wedges) broke open a large vein of very pure sulphur...so the home ended up with much larger cellars than originally intended.

The Dulea family unfortunately lost five of six sons and two of three daughters in the Devil Dragon War, and is now rather small and financially struggling. The cellars still sit atop sulphur, which makes their well water foul to drink, cook, or wash with (so they are among the local families that dip buckets from the streams), but the current Dulea [it's pronounced "DOO-lay," by the way, and of old was pronounced "DOO-lay-uh"] family heads, Trathren and Jilrarra, are both apothecaries who make extensive use of sulphur in the compounds and concoctions they sell.

Storm Horns

Dwarf Settlement and River Barges

- THO 14/4/13

I believe there IS a small and well-hidden dwarf hold in the Stormhorns, and as they want to remain hidden, they travel underground to emerge on the surface near the Bridge of Fallen Men, and journey openly overland on the trade-roads from there, so as to pose as dwarves who've come from elsewhere via surface routes.

As for barging...Ed will of course furnish a proper answer, but as a longtime player in a campaign with Ed as the DM, yes, barges do travel upriver as far north as the east-west traderoad bridge across the river in Eveningstar...but they have to be very SMALL barges because the channel is both shallow and narrow/sharp-bending in places (moved more with poles than with oars, the King's Forest making towing with draft beasts nigh-impossible until much farther south). Ed described such barges in play.

Everyday Life

Art Market

- THO quoting Ed's notes, 24/3/10

Nobles always want portraits of themselves and of "important moments" in family history. Which they commission from popular-with-nobles artists.

"Everyone Cormyrean" wants paintings of great kings, usually warriors (Dhalmass, Duar, increasingly Azoun IV), and retired Purple Dragons want paintings of Queen Fee or whoever was queen when they served, plus any victory battle they fought in. Commoners buy prints or the daubs of travelling artists (usually good, but very much the same as innumerable copies done by that artist and competitors), but nobles want DIFFERENT, original paintings of the same things (bigger and better).

Merchants and artists (including musicians, actors) often purchase paintings that catch their eye to inspire them (popular examples are paintings of beautiful men or women, clad or unclad). The wealthiest commission artists to paint lovers or models (club dancers, courtesans, even lowcoin lasses) specifically for them...and there's an increasing trend of artists who paint such subjects doing regular "tours" of settlements all over Cormyr and rural Sembia, selling their wares in markets (usually from a wagon).

. . . Only nobles collect sculptures (usually statuettes), and "art" to the Realms in this time period is realistic artwork, NOT abstract.

A popular subject in "daring" or "oldcoin noble" households is THE Purple Dragon (the beast, not a king) in flight or routing elves or invading human armies or orc hordes or tearing apart castles.

- THO 25/3/10

It is an offense to copy an offending piece of art and show the copy "in public," so if a painting is deemed "banned," selling or displaying all copies of it, however inferior, is also a crime. (Note that as all paintings, as opposed to prints, are hand-painted, the copies need not be exact; if the offending elements are reproduced, no matter how badly, changing the setting, colour palette, or other details doesn't make the copy "acceptable.")

Controversial Depictions of Royalty

- Ed 25/3/10

Yes, there have been artists murdered because of their work (though it's rare). Being shunned by most noble patrons is a more common fate. I'll do a proper reply on this as soon as I can snatch the time (embarking on taxes right now).

Re. paintings of royalty: a nude of a current queen, or a scene depicting any current royalty or the immediate parents of current royalty doing something humiliating (unclad, on their knees, being flogged or engaging in sexual acts in which they are the recipient rather than the dominant, for instance) would be considered in the worst of taste, and either kept hidden for private viewing (by the commissioning noble and perhaps one or two trusted friends whom he knows beforehand hold the same views on the royal personage in question) - - or would suffer arrest, fining, and public disgrace (plus burning of the offending painting) at the hands of local, loyal Purple Dragons, even without the royalty ever personally knowing about it. War Wizards and the heralds all act quickly on matters like this, to prevent disparagement of the royal family becoming an everyday, widespread affair.

Azoun IV, however, is a special case. If he's shown casually or wholly clad, talking with women, reading with women, arranging flowers with women, hunting with women, etc., that's all "just fine." If he or they are partially unclad, it's only okay if the scene is him fighting to protect them against a foe (who is NOT an angry husband, it should be pointed out). Nudes or partial nudes of past queens (before Filfaeril) are all right, so long as they are tasteful rather than caricatures or depicted in demeaning poses. (It has been slyly argued that as painters ALWAYS put crowns on the heads of females so the viewer will know they are queens, they are, in fact, never completely nude . . . but heralds and courtiers take the flat view of: showing breasts and/or crotch is a concern, showing legs, "half a haunch," bare arms and shoulders, "the swell of the bosom," and so on, is NOT a matter of concern.

In all cases, if a painter attempts an accurate (to the facts, as much as they are known) depiction of an actual event, this is a partially-mitigating defense against any complaints of "lewd" or "treasonous" art. So if Lady Delnwood fled naked from her bedchamber into the arms of the waiting King Azoun when her drunken sons burst in to wreck the room, that's "okay" as the subject of a painting. Because the King was in reality accompanied by a War Wizard, three courtiers, and a bodyguard of four Purple Dragons, and he and they were all fully clothed, it would NOT be okay for the artist to depict the waiting King, his arms outstretched to Lady Delnwood, as being alone and naked at the time.

Child becoming a Paladin reaction

- Ed 16/5/10

Q: How would parents in Cormyr view their child becoming a paladin? And how would parents of the nobility (especially a father that was a retired Purple Dragon Knight and a mother that's a cleric of Torm) view the fact they have a son that's a paladin? Would they be upset, or is it something to be proud of and celebrate?"

A: Well, it depends on human nature first and foremost. That is, the characters of the parents and of the child. Parents who are anti-violence and don't want their offspring to travel, or not be able to stay in touch with friends or the local community, or who hold different faiths "first" than the child wants to devote his/her life to, as a paladin, would probably be against it. Those with other views will have more positive reactions.

In the specific example you give, the father (unless he personally had bad experiences in the past with paladins, plural) would almost certainly be proud of the son's choice. Most PDKs believe that good lives for people come through armed vigilance establishing, maintaining, and respecting law and order . . . and a paladin is seen as the ultimate vigilant warrior. Again, a PDK who encountered only fanatical, close-minded, "do anything to achieve the goal" paladins would be wary, but most PDKs encounter paladins who are wise, just, and open-minded (i.e. fully aware of the responsibilities as well as the power of being judge, jury, and executioner, and ready to observe conditions and individuals first, and ride right in and carve up evil second...so they can be absolutely certain that their own actions will ultimately be for the best).

As for the mother, her reaction will depend very much on whether or not her son wants to be a paladin of Torm or an allied god. She would have a hard time continuing a close and loving relationship with a dedicated servant of a dramatically opposed deity. Otherwise, she, too would tend to be proud. She might weep in private for fear of his hastened death and almost certain suffering, but like her husband would consider it "an honourable road in life" and be proud her son was "one of the few, the forthright few" to take it up.

If the parents considered their son hot-tempered, headstrong, or intolerant, they might have grave misgivings, though ("Agh. He's just the sort to want to be a paladin - - and to make a bad one!"). Also, both of the specific sorts of parents you mention would take a VERY dim view of a son who (even in earnest) announced his intention to become a paladin to "skip out" of a marriage or even a formally-promised, not-yet-consummated marriage, or run from debts or other major obligations. They might even try to insist that these entanglements be resolved first, if necessary by contacting priests of the faith to insist on it as part of becoming a paladin.

So nothing's necessarily simple, here.

However, in Cormyr seeking paladinhood is a career choice that is respected as well as feared, and is considered a life and status to be proud of and celebrated more widely than just by doting parents.

Church/Inn Creation in the Hullack

- Ed 30/10/11, responding to query about stained window sourcing, and used a "hawk" insignia

The nearest crafters of stained glass scenes are in Arabel (three rival families: the Arnthaun [long-established, haughty, expensive, and very good]; the Caulmurs [fast workers, hard bargainers, and more than a little shady]; and the Raulns [small husband-and-wife team, slow but cheaper than the others]). All of them will make windows in small rectangular sections that will be fitted into larger frames to form

the scene. Be aware that stained glass windows in that climate will make for a very COLD church/inn in winter, unless covered with stout shutters. :}

Yes, the Crown will forbid (and destroy, if made behind their backs or in defiance) any window scene that "offends against the Dragon." This includes local Crown heralds (who work with the "local lords" appointed by the Crown).

The independent heralds (the High Heralds and their ilk) will only take an interest in the new stained glass windows if there's misuse of heraldry involved (using someone else's badge or motto or arms). They have absolute authority, regardless of what priests might say, on visible-from-the-exterior church/temple/shrine symbols, but will ignore temple interiors, leaving that to priests.

In the particular case you raise, here's the pertinent lore: the hawk is a very popular heraldic charge in the Heartlands and both the Sword Coast and the Moonsea North. So using a hawk isn't the issue if it's an established family merchant badge known and used in Cormyr already; the Crown has enough ongoing fights with its nobles and with everpresent desires for independence in Arabel and Marsember not to go "borrowing trouble" by forcing a confrontation over a few stained glass windows.

However, creating them will bring the player character "under the eye" of local Crown agents, who will henceforth pay attention to everything he/she does, watching for possible treason.

And, yes, if the building really does become a rallying point for folk desiring a new "Kingdom of Hullack," there WILL be trouble. The player character and his/her allies and habitual companions will be under immediate suspicion of treason, will be covertly investigated (spied upon), and depending on what those investigations uncover, may be publicly named traitors and arrested, their lands and property forfeit to the Crown. Or more likely, if they aren't actively plotting or working towards rebellion/founding a new kingdom, just get watched . . . for the rest of their lives.

Doll Houses

- Ed 5/5/12

Ed, what can you tell us about doll houses in Cormyr? Do they exist? Are or were they ever popular? Are or were there any merchants or crafters of surpassing skill (in or out of Cormyr) who took on noble or Royal patrons and made doll houses and/or lifelike miniatures for the noble's children?"

Ed: Yes to all of those. "Houses" (as in: mansions, or little three-room "archaels" [one-open-sided fanciful buildings representing three linked rooms for dressup dolls representing royalty or nobility or wealthy fashionplate women, and their servants) were popular only among nobility and the highcoin-wealthy "wannabe noble" wealthy merchants. For everyone else, toy or dollhouse farms or castles (or "waykeeps," which might best be described as lone turret fanciful cut-down castles) were popular.

Jeremy: "Did any of these craftsmen use magic to animate their creations, create magical constructs or create clockwork versions of maids, doorjacks and so on that move about in the dollhouse and/or can respond to commands of the child as though the child were the head of the family?"

Ed: Yes, but now you're talking the rarest and most expensive examples, more talked-of than ever seen, for most of the populace.

Many crafters used concealed pull-rods, levers, and even buttons to be depressed, to operate mechanically-opening doors, little water cisterns that poured real water, and so on, in the miniature houses they built and sold, but magically-animated are REAL luxuries.

Jeremy: "I have an idea for an NPC noble, who is head of his house and was shrunk down via magical calamity, for whom his wife is forced to find doll house-like accommodations while she looks for a cure and tries to hide his condition from rivals, war wizards, maybe the house wizard (during King Foril's reign, must all house wizards be war wizards?) and even the children, so any info you can provide would be most appreciated."

Ed: That's a GREAT idea. There are wizards and disloyal servants and even one noble I know of who got shrunk and "frozen" into chessmen, still in use around the Royal Palace in Suzail by the unwitting.

Keeping of Monsters & Rare Beasts

- Ed 28/11/12

Yes, there are collectors of unusual/exotic creatures AND monsters in Cormyr. A few wizards keep a monster or two for fending off intruders, and Marsember and the northwestern shore of the Wyvernwater both have rich merchants with a thing for prowling predators (in the walled grounds of their estates), but there are at least a dozen nobles - - of COURSE it's the nobles ;} - - who have menageries of dangerous as well as exotic pets. They show them off to noble guests (and sometimes to non-nobles they're trying to impress/frighten).

Yes, there are rules re. beasts in Suzail: they must be on leash (one to a handler, so no "one poor guy holding three tigers hecan't possibly control") or (if used to pull a conveyance) in harness. Other than that, no publicly-known "blanket" rules (or laws) yet; it seems the Royal Court is meeting with individual owners to work out individual agreements on such matters. (It is of course understood that the Royal Magician has an overriding decree on everyone except Obarskyr royalty re. keeping any beast, using "public safety" as a rationale. In practice, if you're liked at the Royal Palace and can give good reasons for having a critter, you're okay; if not and not: no. :))

Dress

Socks and Hosiery

- Ed 29/3/13

Yes, Cormyreans do have socks. And hose, for men as well as ladies, that consist of either full-foot leggings that run up to a garter belt, or ditto that lack a full foot, and just end at the ankle but have an "instep strap" that goes under the foot to keep the legging from riding up, but leaving the heel and toes bare. In winter, sometimes worn together (socks over hose), and yes, both socks and hose may be worn inside boots.

Feast of the Moon, Remembering Dead

- THO 11/11/10

The morning of the Feast of the Moon is devoted to last-minute preparations, around highsun there's a Call (warhorns, from battlements) and then a march (to slow music) for the war fallen (civilian casualties as well as soldiery) from a fortress or waypost through a village/town/city to a monument (or lacking that, temple, or lacking THAT, a market square or known war grave). There's a ceremony there, then usually an inspiaraional speech about the realm being strong and a bright future for Cormyr, then the feast begins, and goes well into the night, being eating and drinking and spoken remembrances of the

dead (everybody's dead, that is; all the ancestors and their tales and toasts and salutes and thanks to them).

Milling

Who Owns the Mill?

- THO 31/10/10

Although the miller is sometimes a tenant, in a mill owned by a local noble family (usually because they were a creditor to a miller who went bust), most Cormyrean millers own their own mills. Important note: millers hold a royal licence that allows them to dam/constrict the free flow of the watercourse, and it can be revoked if they misbehave (under-report their milling to evade taxes, refuse to mill anyone's grain, steal from those who bring them grain to be milled by taking more than their share of the milled result, etc.). Meaning their mill is shut down, its grindstones removed. They can then either pay fines and plead to have it reopened, or sell it to someone else to run. Long ago, one miller refused to recognize the authority of the crown over him, and burned down his mill after it was shut down. A member of the royal family was on hand to witness the defiance, and with his permission, a local War Wizard shut the miller inside his own privy, which became the man's pyre when the flames from the mill reached it.

(This mill lore is all paraphrased from Ed's notes, by me.)

Other Races – everyday experience

- Ed 3/12/11

A human "pre-adventuring-travels" adventurer from a small village in Cormyr, pre-Spellplague, might not have spoken to anyone non-human, if they weren't bold enough to approach them (at the roadside or in shops by day, or at taverns, eateries and inns of an evening), but they would certainly have often seen dwarves and elves (plenty of whom travel with caravans, trading), and probably had halflings, gnomes, and half-elves as neighbours. Perhaps even a half-orc or two (and in the remote northern, eastern, or western verges of the realm, they might well have seen orc or goblin raiders from a distance). So elves they really spoke to would be highly memorable, but not more. No, they'd not recoil in open disgust upon seeing a half-orc, but they would probably have a good stare (and then covertly watch out of the corners of their eyes, "just in case").

They would have heard rumors and "temple talk" (sermons and replies of priests to various local questioners) about Planetouched, but the truth and comprehensiveness of such information would vary widely with the faith and individual priest. So they might well have incomplete/slanted "knowledge" of what a Planetouched is.

BTW, although there is certainly racism (and snobbery, and class distinctions, and rivalry from place to place [even with Cormyr, which has intense rivalries between Marsember and Suzail, and Arabel and Suzail, and Marsember and Arabel, and "upcountry" and "the Coast" (south), and urban versus rural]) in the Realms, it's different than in our real world thanks to daily contact between races and the existence of various half-breeds; people grow up "knowing more" about other races and thus having less "fear of the unknown" about them. ("Detestation of the known" certainly still exists, of course.) Just as religion in the Realms, with everybody "believing in" an array of gods that many have seen avatars and/or manifestations of, tends to differ from real-world monotheistic "take on faith" situations.

This doesn't mean, BTW, that our starting-out adventurer wouldn't be gullible enough to believe misinformation about half-orcs and Planetouched and even dwarves and elves. But it DOES mean that

he or she wouldn't be awed or frightened by the mere sight of a "different" individual. (And halflings and gnomes dwell and work everywhere as shopkeepers and craftworkers, throughout Cormyr.)

Retirement Homes

for Officials

- Ed 24/1/13

Some of the inhabitants are wandering in their wits and can be quite talkative but not all they say can be trusted, others know Secrets that could shake the realm, more than a few pay younger relatives very well to keep them supplied with news and to handle investments for them (all over the realm, and beyond), and the cellars of the house, which store large amounts of food (including pickled preserves) and medicines, are rumored to also store something else (the tales vary, but the truth is: a large armoury, ever since the war with the dragon in which Azoun IV perished).

Daunthers

- THO 26/11/13

there ARE guards at all times, known colloquially as "watchers."

I can also help with these two queries: "Has an extensive graveyard grown up around Daunthers over time? Or perhaps something underground?" and "Lastly, are old Dragons allowed to make burial wishes in terms of transport of their corpse? I.e., "Bury me north of Arabel. Bury me not at Daunthers.""

The answer to the first is: yes, in the ground, in underground crypts entered through small stone houses located in the burial ground, and cremated and interred as ashes (with stone nameplate-blocks) in the walls that surround the graveyard (which is large, rambling, and has trees and paths).

The answer to the second is: yes, of course, and desires to be buried elsewhere are both common and almost always followed; the exceptions are impossibilities, like requested burial in a building that no longer exists, and farfetched, such as: bury me in a coffer placed under the bed of the monarch (of Cormyr).

Servants

- Ed 28/12/12

JG: In Cormyr, if multiple generations of the same family have worked as servants at one location/for one noble family, is it common for them to act as lorekeepers of a sort? As in they carefully share only amongst themselves the truths about what the noble family does and has done in the past, what dark deeds they want hidden, what lies are accepted as truths in the family, what secrets of or for the Crown are kept by the noble family, which local town's people are really bastards of the family and what is and isn't safe to talk about openly, all to keep themselves alive and the noble family they serve from ruin, where possible?

Ed: Yes, it is indeed common for long-established, loyal families of retainers ("servants of the house" = household) to act as lorekeepers in precisely the manner you describe.

JG: If yes, have divine beings, sages greedy for knowledge or noble families seeking to discredit their rivals ever inspired/cajoled/magically compelled these servants to set down the "truth of things" in books?

Ed: On rare occasions, sages have set down in writing the verbal accounts of rebellious or disgruntled servants, and compiled such accounts into chapbooks or longer books, but most such accounts are

unverified and hotly disputed by the nobles being written about (of course) and sometimes by other servants. So “sages greedy for knowledge” have definitely been involved, and we know of several incidents of noble rivals sponsoring “stain the cloak” (= darken the reputation, or “blot the escutcheon”) books, again repositories of rumors and wildly exaggerated tales as well as truths. Elminster knows of some priests of Cyric sewing discord by freely distributing “lying chapbooks” intended to discredit rulers, local civic authorities, and nobility, but cautions that it’s hard for mortals to discern the truth regarding divine involvement (which in his wise opinion is far more often ignoring or “turning a blind eye” than it is actively taking part in, commanding, or personally inspiring such behavior).

JG: Could you give us a few long-lived servant family names or the titles of any servant-written books that might have seen print?

Ed: Certainly. :}

The numerous and well-reared Longland family has members among the courtiers of the Royal Palace in Suzail, and in the households of the “city houses” of many nobles there, including the Armelds, the Dauntinghorns, the Steelaens, and the Warblades.

The Pennert family have long formed the bulk of the loyal retainers of the House of Hawklin, the Yancels stand in the same position for House Illance, and the Mertrym family are the staunch retainers of the Crownsilvers.

Some of the most notorious (thanks to their candid and widely verified tales of cruelty, sexual antics, feuds, and pranks) servant-penned books are:

- Maids Forlorn: Lives of the Despoiled in the “Great” Households of Amn (by “A Servant Spurned”)
- Beneath the Serpent’s Belly: A Life In Service to the Mountroyals of Saerloon (by Annaethe “Old Biddy” Tarcet)
- Misdeeds In Marsember: The Cruel Traitors and Tyrants of the Wet Port’s So-Called Nobility (by “An Embittered Servant”)

and:

- The Shattered Heart: The Disillusionment of A Loyal Retainer (by Berenthros Harhallow)

JG: Have any elder servants who've managed to find enough free time ever penned books on how to properly manage noble families, complete with embarrassing details of how the servant outwitted his masters or tricked them into a right course of action in order to save the noble from his/her own stupidity?

Ed: Oh, yes, though these sorts of books tend to be suppressed by nobles seizing or buying and then destroying as many copies as they can get their hands on -- with the result that the tomes become rare, expensive, and highly sought-after, of course. Cheap chapbook copies (often edited down severely) circulate via caravan merchants more than originals. However, two books have become well-regarded standards because they focus on the care of garments, furniture, and household items more than anything else (guarding against stains and tarnishes, repairing or hiding scratches and scars, and so on). They are:

- His Armor Bright And Shining: How I Tend My Master’s Worldly Goods (by Athimew Elestus, Senior Manservant to Lord Mrylder of Athkatla; a short manual of household tips and tricks from long ago, when Athkatla was an independent city-state of many lords)
- The Quiet Servant Sees All (by Lorimar Naerdruth, Masterservant; a book about how servants should behave, dress, speak, and anticipate the needs of the family they serve and guests, by a servant hired

away from several Waterdhavian noble households in the later 1200s DR by other Waterdhavian nobles; in the end, he'd served twelve noble families, and contrasts their foibles without identifying any guilty parties)

- Ed 29/12/12

JG: Are there any long-lived servant families in Cormyr that have quietly risen to become de facto controllers of a noble family or who otherwise "manage" a noble family more than the family actually manages itself?

Ed: Yes. This happens quite often when matriarchs or patriarchs live into their dotage, and blood heirs (often grandchildren, the intervening members of the family being lost to wars, disease, hunting and riding accidents, and exile) are very young at the time. Only two servant families in Cormyr have managed to remain de facto controllers of a noble house for more than two generations of the noble line:

- the Helscabbards, who came to run House Goldfeather absolutely in the 1380s DR, and were only driven out in 1436 DR (having during their tenure turned the Goldfeathers from arrogant, evil to amoral fops and wastrels into a haughty-with-cause family of achievers in trade, military service, and farflung investments); this ambitious, cunning clan has scattered across Faerûn, infiltrating wealthy or noble households from Waterdeep and Athkatla to Telflamm and Ormpur.
- the Jalambreks, who rose to control House Aunkspear from behind the scenes in 1392 DR, and made their noble masters their hard-working agents across the Inner Sea until 1449 DR.

What is far more prevalent than a servant family controlling their masters is a really competent and efficient steward, chamberlain, chatelaine, amanuensis, or factor (trade agent) who is so good at his or her job that real daily power is left in his or her hands by grateful or aware-of-their-own-failings or even fearful nobility. Competent women can manage this with more deft manipulation and less notice of what's going on by outsiders (such as other nobles), but some of the men have been frighteningly good at swaying nobles to this or that stance, action, or purchase.

Here's the best-known example of many masterful servants (if one doesn't count Vangerdahast as the servant who largely ruled the Obarskys):

Orlbert Thaylaine, Steward of House Emmarask, was legendary for his swift thinking, cunning forethought, and impeccable courtesy. He was, it slowly became apparent, a consummate actor—who by his manipulations of the family he served made them richer and more respected in a scant decade, as well as restoring their standing at Court. Oh, and making them significant landlords in Sembia and Westgate, too. Almost every Emmarask confided in him and sought his personal guidance, trusting him absolutely. Luckily for them, Thaylaine was utterly loyal, exploiting his position only to place his sisters in well-paid posts in the family's most remote Sembian holdings (where their shallow, lazy, petty natures wouldn't soon be discovered).

Use of Gnomes as Spies

- Ed 23/2/13, responding to query following the Forging the Realms article "Melve's Way"

Both the Crown of Cormyr and many nobles have made use of gnomes, more as "passive eyes" (spies) and smugglers of small, vital items to particular endangered individuals (such as other agents) than as assassins or James-Bond-like violent field agents. Naturally, such usages are kept as secret as possible. A

future Forging column will have more to say about the useful-to-adventurers behaviour of particular gnomes.

What would happen if a half-dragon Thauglor heir showed up to claim the throne?

- Ed 8/12/10

I have to be careful what I say here, due to two outstanding NDAs (which, yes, should lead everyone to suspect that this is a topic that has already been considered amongst Realms creatives). The short answer to all four of these queries is that reactions would be 'all over the map,' so to speak.

Vangey (or his successors) are primarily concerned with the stability of the Dragon Throne. HOW they will guard the throne depends on who it is doing the guarding (Vangey or Caladnei or . . .), what the situation is in the kingdom, and what events unfold.

There will always be nobles who will fiercely oppose any non-pureblood-human vying for the throne, and fight one who seizes it. Then again, there will always be nobles who seize on any pretender, potential usurper, or rival claimant to the current holder of the throne, and advance this challenge to the reigning monarch or regent, for reasons of personal gain, or to "reform" the realm, or for other reasons specific to them.

Individual Obarskyrs will have a wide variety of reactions to any rival/newcomer (but will tend to resist "bastards" in favor of the kin they know, except as pawns/allies against specific kin they hate or fear, because there are SO many bastards around already, and they would rather support and work with bastards they know well, and personally like. War Wizards and many senior-in-years nobles will react in the same way, and for the same reasons . . . but it's important to remember that there are no "class-wide" reactions to claimants, half-dragon or otherwise.

Or to put it another way, not all commoners will think X, all nobles think X or Y, and all royals think X or Y or Z. Everyone will react individually.

If any stereotypes about Cormyreans can be advanced, there will be general prejudices like this: we prefer humans we know, and know to be Cormyrean born and bred and resident, over humans who "come out of nowhere" or are known to have been far away from Cormyr for some time. We will prefer humans over non-humans (such as elves; many oldblood families, noble or common, believe "Cormyr" is a human land wrested from elves who should never be allowed to return to anything resembling power, locally) and we will prefer human-like, "civilized" non-humans (elves, halflings, gnomes, dwarves) over known-to-be-dangerous races (half-orcs, orcs and goblins, etc.), and those "evil folk" over "monstrous half-breeds" (shapechangers, lizardfolk-like half-dragons with scales and tails and other obvious "this ain't a human" features).

That isn't to say that certain nobles and wizards of Cormyr (including War Wizards) won't be fascinated by a half-dragon, and their potential power, or with elves of the lineage of Iliphar (and more than one such individual is known to exist, in Cormyr, though the Royal Court isn't certain of all of their identities or whereabouts) . . . but the general bulk of the populace is going to want a human king or queen, preferably of the House of Obarskyr or failing that bastard offspring of the traceable blood of the Obarskyrs or perhaps Baerauble, and failing that of one of the oldblood families (and at this point, of course, the fierce struggle over WHICH ruling family would erupt, probably into open civil war).

Yet Cormyr will always be a place where bastards and other throne claimants wait in the wings, supported by this or that cabal of nobles and watched by the War Wizards and various Crown agents. A half-dragon claimant who can claim AND PROVE (to most who care) descent from both Thauglor and Azoun IV would have a stronger claim (and public support) than any other half-dragon, but by no means

more than the scores to hundreds of human Cormyreans who can claim and prove Azoun IV's involvement in their ancestry, or Obarskyr blood from other monarchs (or princes, who at the time of the dalliances hadn't yet come to the throne).

In fact, what keeps Cormyr from erupting in civil strife often is the counterbalance between SO MANY possible (weak) claimants. Eliminate all fullblood Obarskyrs, and all of those claimants come into play, yes, but then it becomes a game of "who can stay alive?" among the claimants.

And remember: a half-dragon would probably still have a claim that was weaker in public support than, say, a certain ghazneth with the last name Cormaeril . . .

Laws & Taxes

General Tax

- Ed 27/1/12, responding to query about taxing the sex trade

The King of Cormyr doesn't collect taxes from anyone. The "Crown" (Palace bureaucrats) collect taxes from building owners (who pass it on to renters, who may include pimps and madames) in return for civic services such as policing, road repairs, etc.

The taxes vary depending on the size of the building or rather the land it occupies (so a stables pays for the dirt stableyard, not just the buildings).

The Crown of Cormyr doesn't make a single copper coin per year, directly, from "the sex trade" (an unknown term in the Realms, BTW). Indirectly, it makes taxes from building owners, as above, some of whom may be engaged in prostitution. In times of war, short-term "levies" (income taxes) may be forced upon the populace, and indirectly net some coins from prostitutes.

Inheritance Laws

- Brian Cortijo, Qs for Ed 24/8/10, responding to query about making wills to give away estate after death to person of choice

This depends entirely on the land grant and its language. Most lands in Cormyr default back to the Crown if there is no one to inherit it, unless that land is specifically enumerated in a will or testament by the owner.

There are, of course, nuances to the various applicable laws. If, for example, the person is not merely landed but titled, the land (or some portion of it) may or may not be attached or associated with the knightly or noble title the character possesses--which, in turn, means that if the noble title reverts to the Crown on his death, the lands will as well.

Of course, any and all Cormyrean lands can be seized by the Crown for crimes real or imagined, or some arcane technicality built into nearly all royal land grants. Depending on the size of the property, the nature of the faith to which its been left, and the value of the particular location, they may or may not exercise that right. Although the Dragon Throne doesn't make a habit of nabbing shrines or other holy places, they're certainly willing, when the need or desire arises, to take adjacent or associate lands, or chip away at holdings to lessen the influence of a local shrine or temple.

Lawbreakers

Prisons

- Ed 20/1/15

Irlingstar was instituted for imprisoning male nobles when rebellions resulted in a high number of inmates at once, and their wealth and connections meant geographical isolation was wisest, to prevent bribery and to make their imprisonment "hurt," as opposed to becoming a country club stay whereat they could still make investments, carry on businesses, and affect politics during their incarceration (which a number of nobles managed to do while locked up in cells in Suzail, years earlier).

Female prisoners have been far fewer in number (the nature of their offenses tends to be more fines and property - - or in rare cases, title - - forfeitures than imprisonments), and are usually housed in cells at High Horn, or even individually at various state-owned fortresses and hunting lodges.

Chain Gangs

- THO 13/5/13

In Cormyr, the equivalent of "off to the salt mines!" is: "sent to do roadwork in the Stonelands." That's the common saying and belief, that is, but it isn't true. What actually happens is chain-gang roadwork in the West Reach (that is, along the road west of High Horn, that eventually finds its way down to the bridge at Fallen Men). There are constant small rockslides and erosion damage, and an ongoing tree planting and grass planting program, to try to anchor the thin soils and build them up. There's also a slow effort to make timber trestles and bridges smaller, by making more use of rock fill and culverts, so arsonists from an invading force can't so easily "cut" the road in so many places. There are also some slate quarries along this road, that prisoners and debtors are occasionally put to work in.

Naming Laws, Taxes, other things

- Ed quoted by crazedventurers 14/7/08, in "Looking for all about Cormyr" thread [Much Ed in thread, may need later review]

Yes, there is a Crown law (brought into being about ten years before the death of King Azoun IV, when Vangerdahast and Alaphondar had an idle month and agreed on some things, this being one of them) banning businesses of all sorts (including inns, taverns, and private clubs) from using royal names, nicknames, heraldry, and "decrying the Crown" (which means you can't name your tavern Azoun's Codpiece or Duar's Head or the Steel Regent's Backrest, just to invent some examples). Local Purple Dragons would be offended, and might wreck such an establishment, even if there was no law; some veterans take a VERY dim view of anything that pokes fun at the Crown. They have a fierce loyalty to their "companions in harness" (comrades in arms) and the Obarskys who lead them (though not necessarily to some of the nobility serving as military officers). Such a naming would also, as you say, be seen as an attitude tempting misfortune, and might well be avoided by many potential customers as a result. Sometimes upstairs, undercover "drinking clubs" in Marsember get names that are a mockery of the Crown - - but never 'real,' taxable businesses.

In memory, Azoun IV is revered (and jovially celebrated in taverns everywhere as "our stallion," with increasingly overblown accounts of his sexual prowess [lovemaking on the back of a galloping steed that's leaping fallen trees and creeks as it tears through the forest, for example, something that sounds rather bruising for all parties involved]), but honoring him takes the form of remembrance festivals on the date of his birthday, and the naming of meals or ales as "Azoun's Preferred" or "Azoun's Chosen" (claims that everyone smiles at and does nothing to refute, this "everyone" including Crown agents), rather than dubbing buildings and businesses after him.

The naming law also prevents directly naming any business after a specific battle (even a victory), and any noble, noble family, local lord, and any specific heraldic blazon. So you could dub your tavern "The Rearing Stag" even though certain arms use a rearing stag as a device, but you could not duplicate the specific depiction of the rearing stag that appears in the Staghunt noble family blazon, nor adopt the heraldic description of that stag: "a full-antlered scarlet stag rampant to the dexter, its silver rack entwined with the branches of an oak tree" (heralds in the Realms do not use real-world French heraldic terms, though I have sometimes rendered their blazons into such, for clarity - - and ironically, now usually avoiding doing so, for the very same reason). There's no rule against duplicating the name of a Cormyrean naval ship, simply because there were a few unintended duplications when Vangey and Alaph were drafting the law, and because neither of them considered that any confusion of association could ever arise.

You CAN name your tavern, inn, or stables (but not any other sort of business) directly after the place it is located in (so "The Arms of Arabel" is an illegal name, but "the Pride of Arabel" is not). Tailors can't set themselves up as "the Flashing Needle of Arabel," even if their customers give them that nickname, and Crown agents (the same guys who show up to collect taxes) will force a name change on the newer business in any case where they think a second business has been established with a name too similar to an existing one (for one thing, they never want the tax rolls to get confused). So if "the Pride of Arabel" is flourishing, you can't legally open "the Promenade of Arabel" across the street or at the far end of the city).

No business can name itself after a place it isn't located in (i.e. no inns in Espar calling themselves "High Horn Rest"). There ARE a few old, 'grandfathered' businesses that break both of the rules I'm addressing in this paragraph, and the right to go on breaking it can be bought and sold (but never increased; so the "Wyvernwater Inn" can continue to exist, but if it's sold and continues operating under the same name, the seller can't open a new inn called "the Old Wyvernwater House," and if "Wheloon House" burns down, it can be rebuilt, but it can't be expanded to two locations, "Old Wheloon House" and "Wheloon Castle").

Mythical nobles (so long as they can't be mistaken for members of a real noble family) CAN serve as the names of establishments, so "the Drunken Lord" or "Old Lord Roaringsides" are all right, but "Lord Old Roaringsides" would NOT be allowed in combination with a depiction, badge, or anything else (such as the black stallions famously bred by the Roaringhorn family) that would make a traveler think there was an association with the Roaringhorns.

Cormyr, like every other long-settled place, has several folk equivalents to our world's Baron Munchausen, Casanova, and Squire Allworthy. These include Old Lord Roaringsides (a hunting, brawling, tirelessly-enduring lover of every female within reach, slayer of animals who devours them raw in the forest where he spears them or eats like sixteen men at a feast, belches loudly enough to knock nearby folk over, and so on), Lady Doom (an icily-sneering haunt of a gowned, gliding woman who sails through walls and locked doors without hindrance, says nothing to most but whispers of doom to a few, and whose appearance presages misfortune or death), and Lord "Firetongue" Haubrynton (based on a non-noble knight of a different name who fought alongside King Duar, long ago, and had the same fiery speech; Lord Firetongue is a solemn, dignified noble of senior years who has fits in which he swears like a sailor, punches objectionable people, chases maids, plays pranks . . . and then reverts, apparently

forgetting everything he's done; whereas the real knight apparently really had no remembrance, the fictional Lord Firetongue is always depicted as slyly winking when he claims to have no knowledge of his "wild deeds").

As for signage, inns, public stables, and taverns are required by law to have signs (lit by lanterns or some other means, such as magic, so as to be readable by night, except during instances where local authorities specifically decree otherwise, such as during a war) clearly visible thrusting out into the street.

Other businesses may choose to have such signs (and may be governed by local guild rules or trade agreements), and almost all do have signs, though not all businesses use out-thrust signboards; some, particularly crafters, have flush-to-the-wall signs mounted over their doors.

In all cases, the Crown (acting through local lords, or Purple Dragon commanders in rural areas where there is no local lord) has instant and final say over the size, shape, content, and location of all such signage ("location" in this usage really meaning "how much the sign thrusts out into or over the road, creating a hazard for high-loaded wagons and coaches").

Yes, local heralds have a duty to inspect and order any necessary changes to all such signage (on the grounds of infringing on heraldry or misleading the public as to the nature of the business, NOT on grounds of "good taste"). The Herald can override local heralds, who can in turn override the tastes of a local lord or his agents (so citizens have a route of appeal if their lord just doesn't like giant carved wooden boots or candles hanging from chains out over the street he rides down, for instance). It would be foolish for most shopkeepers to pick a fight with their local lord (who has many ways of getting back at them, if he chooses), but there is a strict prohibition on local lords harming businesses or crafters by denying them one sign after another, and in the past, local lords have been removed and publicly disgraced for doing so (notably Onslur Gelnwood of Wheloon in the last few years of the reign of Rhigaerd I, and Caltath Malurt of Waymoot in the second year of Azoun IV's rule).

The tax collectors and all traveling Crown officials and courtiers have clear, easy, and confidential channels through which to complain about bad beer and similar shortcomings in inns and taverns. (They can speak to any Purple Dragon barracks commander, any local lord or bailiff of a local lord, any War Wizard, or to the Desk of Justice in the Royal Court of Suzail. Everyone of these "complain to" persons can also make complaints from their own observations, or on behalf of any citizen.) All complaints are routed to the Desk of Justice, which is really a room rather than a desk, and has nothing at all to do with Black Robes or judicial proceedings.

Rather, it is a small band of undercover inspectors run by a Highknight (and escorted for safety by War Wizards and Highknights when it seems necessary) who have the power to close a kitchen or taps on the spot, and to confiscate or destroy food, yank Crown licenses, and effectively shut down a business for good, or for as long as it takes to fix it. They rarely have to do so, these days; their mere appearance awes many patrons and frightens most hostelry owners bone-white.

However, there aren't specific amounts or qualities set down in laws; what the Desk is trying to prevent is poisonings, the serving of food or drink that will spread disease or make folk ill, and (on a daily basis, the most important and prevalent part of their work) DECEPTION.

If you are promised a tankard of ale, there is an expectation that the tankard will be large enough to have a handle you can fit all of the fingers of your hand through, and that the tankard will descend at least two fingers below that handle and at least one finger above, in terms of the depth of interior space

in the tankard that can be filled with drink, AND that said space is wide enough that all of fingers of your hand, squeezed together tightly, can be thrust down into that "hole." (YES, that means that drinkers with huge hands should be given larger tankards, or given more ale in other containers, per drink paid for. For everyone, it means no miniature "toy tankards," and no mugs that are only two inches deep, from lip to the "bell" [inside bottom].)

Similarly, if you are promised "mutton" or "goose eggs" or "ale from Arabel," what you are served should be just that, and not something else passed off as what was promised.

In the ports of Suzail and Marsember, guilds are now forming or already exist to insist on, and try to enforce, strict labelling and precise identification of goods, so "Malaxan's Best Brew" won't be barrels of whatever Sembia sends labeled as such, but will always be beer actually brewed by the same guy called Malaxan, in the same place and to more or less the same recipe, and really be what he considers his "best," and not "the mixed-bottom-barrel dregs slop Sembians won't drink, so we'll ship it to Cormyr, where all they can taste is horse-dung, so they'll never know the difference." (Which is why you can now buy really cheap, bitter, horrible ale called "Sembian Odds" at some dockside taverns; it really is mixed "odds and ends" from barrels, which is perfectly fine because it is identified as such.)

And finally, no direct taxes are levied on the sale of ale, wine and spirits to patrons in a tavern, but the businesses that produce such drinkables are taxed, both as businesses and a 1cp/barrel (up to 1 sp for the largest "tuns," so making the barrel larger doesn't allow a brewer to escape "the Crown's take"). Small beer made at home is never taxed, and "local brews" are never taxed if they are drunk only by the owners or neighbors who may buy a tankard or pitcher. However, if drink is ever put into a barrel that is transported elsewhere (outside of town, as opposed to one street over in the same place), the "barrel tax" applies.

In Arabel, Marsember, and Suzail, ALL producers of "strong drink" (alcoholic beverages or "physics" and "cordials" [medicines]) are taxed, except for what they consume in their own house (i.e. the drinkers are their own family or guests). Individuals who try to elude tax by just running taverns or drinking clubs in their own homes quickly get visited by the Desk of Justice, the tax collectors, the Watch and everyone else (including War Wizards mind-reading them to determine their true intent and extent of their activities, because there's an everpresent "wary watch" for smuggling), to tax them as businesses and hassle them out of such behaviour back into serving just themselves, family members, and a handful of dinner guests or overnight visitors.

Nobility

Obarskyr Naming Conventions

- Ed 31/1/13

Fendarl and Daerthra Illance (Fendarl is a cousin of the current heir, and his wife Daerthra a Huntinglance by birth) recently had a son, usually known formally as Darvyn, and within the family as "Dar."

His full, formal name is Andemarl Daryn Trevilar Hothon Baerilym Dathmur Illance.

Andemarl is his paternal grandfather's name, Daryn was a "new" name for the family when it was borne by Dar's paternal great-great-grandfather, Trevilar is the name of Dar's maternal father, Hothon an old and oft-used Huntinglance name, Baerilym the name of a long-ago "war hero" Illance remembered for his distinguished battlefield service, and Dathmur is a common name in Cormyr (and so, much used by lower and middle class citizens) that's new to the Illances, so far as their written records go back.

Obarskyr Private Spots

Meeting Places

- THO 30/10/10

One "emergency meeting place" that the Obarskyrs have used when they wanted to argue/family fight/mete out family discipline in private: the Crystal Grot.

I know this, because one of my characters once saw a "memory" (think of it as a short movie clip, recorded and retained by a magic item) of a tearful young Tanalasta storming away alone, shortly after she'd departed the Grot, after having been spanked by Filfaeril.

Picnic Spots

- Blueblade quoting Ed, 27/10/10

I remember Ed mentioning that they could picnic in the Royal Gardens, right beside the Royal Palace in Suzail; War Wizards and Purple Dragons just clear the gardens of everyone else and keep them out until the dining's done.

Legitimacy of Obarskyrs

- Ed 16/6/13

Q: "Today's forging the Realms article was quite interesting. Based on it I'd like to ask if any family or line can have persuasive arguments to challenge the rule of the Obarskyrs in Cormyr, and if there have been successful revolts therein that have managed to circumvent the control of the war wizards. On the other hand, have there been abusive war wizards who falsely accuse innocents they dislike?"

Heeere's Ed:

A: The answer to your first question depends on who the audience is. To many nobles, the argument that they have just as much right to sit on the Dragon Throne as "those lucky Obarskyrs" is quite persuasive; to most others in Cormyr, far less so. For one thing, certain families (such as the now-exiled Bleths) have definitely "been around" in the region now known as Cormyr for as long as the Obarskyrs have, but some of the other families making such claims have not, and are either making them in ignorance of the realm's earliest days, or depending on like ignorance on the part of their audience. There have indeed been successful revolts, and revolts done with the connivance of some War Wizards, AND revolts that managed to elude the vigilance of the War Wizards.

There have also been War Wizards who have falsely accused the innocent of various treasons and seditious acts, though the "mind-reaming" that had become common usage in the organization prior to the "mind-reaming will drive the reamer mad" peril that the Spellplague brought on, made such accusations difficult and foolish.

See the novel Jeff Grubb and I co-wrote, CORMYR: A NOVEL, for examples of all of these.

The majority of "oldblood" nobles do privately see the Obarskyrs as "first among equals," but tend to thank the gods that the Obarskyrs got saddled with all the headaches, danger, and time-devouring duties of rulership, while they themselves have time to pursue all their whims and hobbies, and can snipe about how badly the kingdom is being ruled to their hearts' content. So they may be firmly against this or that policy or decree, but staunch supporters of the Obarskyrs holding the Crown - - for the very good reason that they don't want the job themselves (young hotheads usually excluded from this point of view), and REALLY don't trust most of their noble rivals as alternatives; the Obarskyrs are seen as the

least bad of all the available evils.

Most nobles' claims to the throne aren't based on "my family has a better claim than the Obarskyrs," but rather, "this Obarskyr fathered this ancestor of mine in these circumstances, which I can clearly see gives me a closer/better claim to the Dragon Throne than the current occupants who have Obarskyr surnames." The problem is that their personal clarity of sight differs markedly from that of other observers. ;}

Illegitimate Obarskyrs

- THO 20/5/10

The "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" label is entirely a political thing, that heralds and nobles pay great attention to, courtiers seek advice about, and everyone else pretty much ignores. It's purely "is this offspring in the line of succession to the Dragon Throne, and if so, where?" (So if the immediate Obarskyr royal family are all killed or held captive, and someone is looking to put a replacement on the throne, where does this person "stand" in the eyes of the nobles and heralds (older bastards before younger, of course, but my point is, that's the game being played here . . . and NOT by Azoun or Filfaeril. Tanalasta might well play it, but not Alusair.

As for "nothing to do with their upbringing," that's not always true. Azoun has some offspring he doesn't even know of the existence of, and therefore, yes, he has nothing to do with their upbringing except in the distant sense of being the "guy who sets the laws and tone of the country they're born and raised in" (there's no evidence at all of Azoun tomcatting outside Cormyr).

However, Ed has during Realmsplay featured many, many illegitimate offspring of Azoun that he knows about, has quietly sponsored as apprentices or given jobs to, introduced to possible employers, sent rescuers after when they got into trouble in Sembia and the Dales, and so on. He DOES (through agents and courtiers) keep an eye on his offspring, but "is a part of their lives" only as much as they want him to be (or, when they're young, their mothers/parents want him to be). There ARE bastards who are happily employed as courtiers in the Royal Court or the Royal Palace, that Azoun sees either daily or often (at least, in Ed's "home" realms there are, and except when stated otherwise in print, the published Realms match Ed's Realms).

Pre-Cormyr Obarskyrs

- Ed 6/3/12

Of course the Obarskyr lineage extends back into the past. However, the recorded lineage (that hasn't been published yet) doesn't cover much about those elder ancestors. I hope we'll someday learn more about them, yes, but I honestly haven't the faintest when or how, right now. Other fish are frying . . . What Garen Thal posted about their eligibility for the Dragon Throne is (of course) in every sense correct. While farflung relations (who are far, far fewer than some scribes have been speculating) may even be Obarskyr by surname, they're not "our royal family" to Cormyreans.

Obarskyr Weddings

- THO 25/4/11

"Yes" to pomp, rings, and honeymoon (always in a secret locale that standing legend insists is always far from Cormyr, but many Cormyreans suspect is usually/always closer to home).

Yes, it's a national holiday, and the King's lords lay on feasts in their various locales at which a Crown

herald and a local War Wizard declaim the unfolding distant ceremony (the wizard working a large "farscry illusion" in the air above their platform, that shows the vows and royal kiss at the height/culmination of the ceremony).

I seem to remember that the venue and the "approach" (arrivals of bridal party and groom) can vary with each wedding, and approaches have included groom galloping up on horseback.

I definitely recall that multiple Wizards of War cast wards on the participants and all royals (and visiting heads of state, though these are rare) present, to prevent magical and archery attacks on them, and that they are also spell-protected against poison and with ironguard.

Yes, there are some private rituals that are part of the ceremony, but I can't recall anything at all about them, and don't think Ed has ever revealed much about them to us.

Becoming Nobility

- Ed 31/12/12 (2013 thread)

It's quite feasible; monarchs of the Dragon Throne ennoble people all the time, giving them a title and a minor land grant (with a house or two on it, not always grand) all the time.

If it truly is a minor noble house, not someone who's already socially prominent or a determined member of the wealthy "wannabe nobles" who dwell in Suzail (successful merchants and investors desperate to "join the club" of the titled and privileged), the existing nobles wouldn't care if the heir of the house had a half-elven daughter - - other than to sneer about "just ANYBODY being allowed to use a title, these days." They're going to sneer at any created nobility who haven't been titled for at least three generations, anyway, even if the new family is full of charming individuals who genuinely befriend many existing nobles.

No, assassination attempts would not be likely. The most rabidly anti-elven houses are the older Illances, the Goldfeathers, and the older Wintersuns. Not to mention the Bleths, earlier on in Cormyr's history. They will "cut dead" members of this new noble family in public, and oppose them for holding any paid offices of the realm, but not go farther than that.

I don't know of any elven groups in the Forest Kingdom who'd be less than pleased at an elf/human marriage, but there are a few elven individuals, such as Ilpreslur Mooncloak (a crafter of elegant bottles who lives and has his business in Suzail) and Thaelrae Silverleaf of Gladehap (a proud sorceress who makes a living putting minor enchantments on coffers and clothing to make them last long and look good all that time; she believes the elves will pass away as a race if they don't "keep to themselves," and that half-elves are "necessarily coarser and inferior to truebloods"). They might be rude to this new noble family, but probably not if not treated with rudeness by the new nobles.

Noble Names

- THO 5/1/14

Q: "The recently-noted tendency of Cormyrean nobles to re-use old names makes me think that perhaps, over centuries, a "lost" family name might be used by descendants as a given name."

A: I can tell you that this has definitely happened. Several extinct Cormyrean noble families live on as given names within the nobility (many of whom, particularly elder sons, have three or four given names).

Huntsilver, Crownsilver, Truesilver families

Heraldry

- Ed 22/2/10

I'm afraid that thanks to a recent basement flood, I'm away from my detailed heraldry notes right now, which include full, formal blazons for some of the senior Cormyrean noble families, but let me describe the circa-1350s-1360s arms of those three families informally, from memory.

HUNTSILVER: shield of forest green, with a face-on wide and splendid rack of stag's antlers, in silver, centered right across the upper third of the shield. The point of the shield is crimson to denote blood, with the upper "edge" of this hue, where it meets the forest green, being an irregular spattering.

CROWNSILVER: shield of deep royal blue, with a slender silver border ("edge") all around, and a circle of six silver edge-on simple crowns in the center of the shield. The edge-on crowns are a side-view of a horizontal piece of brow-metal with an upper edge scalloped into five points: two flaring endpoints, a central point, and a point in between the center and each end point. (In other words, the crowns don't appear as circlets, or as having detailed ornamentation.)

TRUESILVER: shield of scarlet, with a slender purple border ("edge") all around. Diagonally across the shield from the lower left corner (hilt) to upper right (point) is a stylized silver sword: it has a small handgrip and quillons, an extremely wide blade like a chef's cleaver that is curved like a scimitar.

Note: All of the three families' arms have changed over time. Huntsilver used to have varying arrays of brown thorns and silver hoofprints in its field; Crownsilver has had a single large crown surrounded by a dozen tiny ones, later replaced by a regular pattern of twoscore tiny edge-on crowns, and still later superceded by the current arms; and Truesilver was formerly a shield of royal blue (without a border) displaying two diagonal lines, upper left to lower right, of three plain silver shields each. I can't recall the times of the changes right now, but they're all in the 1200s or earlier, not in the 1300-1350s range.

The simple badges of the three families are as follows: Huntsilver: silver rack of antlers on a forest green oval field. Crownsilver: a single silver edge-on crown on a royal blue oval field. Truesilver: a plain silver diagonal band, lower left to upper right, across a crimson oval field.

Changes and Heraldry discussion

- Ed 24/2/10

1. Change is normally made to mark some important event in family history, that changed their status or self-image (example: member of minor nobility from the borders achieving an important Court position such as Warden or military command, or member of a noble family rescuing royalty or marrying into royalty). I'm not going to reveal they "whys" of the changes for these three "royal houses" because of NDAs relating to not-yet-published Cormyrean history (that I don't want to encumber or endanger the future publication of).

2. Any change to arms (except normal differencing for gender and family positions) must be approved by the Heralds. Unless deliberate intent to confuse was suspected, or confusion with the arms of others results (in the sober judgement of the Heralds, not in the mind of a rival noble or foe of the arms-altering family), such approval will never be denied. Changes in badges can be made freely (though Heralds will step in to ban if confusion with other badges results).

3. Yes, to avoid confusion, rights to the old arms remain with the family and can be reverted to (again,

with permission of the Heralds, who want to avoid situations where individual members of a family use one blazon or another, and change them often for "fashion" reasons). A common reason for reversion is if a disgraced line of a family dies out, the survivors may revert to an old blazon to disassociate themselves from the disgraced ones. Branches of families who have specific legal and heraldic disputes with each other may end up, thanks to the judgements of Heralds, bearing different blazons, which may be "old" and "new" or variants thereof.

4. So, no, family members can't use old blazons on a whim or freely, and the user of a discarded or Herald-banned blazon will face: Court censure (rights of a noble temporarily withheld); "turnface" (they get ignored in meetings, not recognized to speak or replied to, and not allowed to speak in legal proceedings; even if present and shouting, they are treated as if they have "failed to appear"); Heralds order local heralds and their hired agents, and the authorities of a realm, to seize and burn documents, clothing, coach side-panels, banners, and other items bearing the "false" blazon.

Please note that these treatments are applied to those who defiantly continue to use false blazons, not to someone who does it once, in ignorance, and promptly complies with the demand of a Herald to "do off" (remove and surrender to the Herald, and cease using) the blazon.

Example: A Herald will let you scrape a false blazon off your coach panel if you agree to do so, not tear the panel off and depart with it. If you "forget" to remove it for longer than two sunsets after his order to remove it, he will attempt to remove the blazon, and if this is impossible or you try to prevent him, he'll return with an armed bodyguard to remove and bear away the offending panel.

Heh. hope this helps. These are long-established customs now; centuries ago, "defiances" were commonplace, but these days, most nobles would never DREAM of crossing or defying a Herald; to do so is "not noble," and brands YOU as unworthy.

Announcing Royal Births

- THO 22/7/13

Royal births involve courtiers (royal messengers, on horseback) racing to post proclamations (gender, full name and titles) on the doors of royal palaces/castles in Suzail, Marsember, and Arabel, and on the market cross wayposts in smaller places such as Waymoot, Immersea, and so on. When the proclamations go up (literally nailed up), guards are posted flanking them to prevent thefts or defacements until they're taken down, four mornings later, and royal fanfares are blown (as the proclamation posting is finished).

Local heralds then make themselves available to anyone who wants to know the "new" order of succession.

Homosexual Royals

- Garen Thal, 5/8/13

Yes, here have been gay male royals. Yes, they have been "allowed" to take the Dragon Throne (although "allowing" doesn't much come into it). A royal's willingness or ability to produce an heir does not qualify or disqualify that prince's right to wear the crown. Any monarch that fails to produce an heir for whatever reason usually has heirs waiting in the wings: siblings, nephews and nieces, etc.

Specific names and dates, I'm afraid, are NDA, except to say that Vangerdahast tries to manipulate all events. That's what he does, and what he is.

House Wizards

- THO 17/7/10, regarding presence of house wizards in noble houses

Ed has confirmed that Mystra (through her Chosen) was behind the notion (and gained popularity) of "house wizards" for the noble families of Cormyr.

Royal corpses and burials

- THO 30/4/14

The great majority of Cormyr's monarchs are buried in the royal crypts, but at least one is buried in Marsember, and several have empty coffins in the crypts, because their bodies have never been found.

- THO 10/2/13

The Wizards of War, from Vangerdahast's rise to power onwards, are formally charged with recovering (every last bit of) every royal corpse (and known royal bastards) -- and that Vangey's predecessors made sure that royal remains were brought to the royal crypt whenever possible, so although there are indeed both lost Obarskyr graves and legends of such (the legends outstripping the reality), they are few -- and none of those remaining will be easily found.

And yes, the Vast Swamp received many remains, although the combined efforts of its denizens usually devour the dead utterly (yes, including bones), so it isn't a large stew of nascent undead and candidates for resurrection.

Spurbright Noble Family

- THO 13/10/13, referring to holdings north of Espar mentioned in Volo's Guide to Cormyr

"Stonebolt Fields" is the collective name that has stuck to the Spurbright Steads (much to the annoyance of several of the elder Spurbright females, though younger family members tend to like the sound of it, and use it themselves). To wider Cormyr, "Spurbright Steads" is a name for documents and formal negotiations; "Stonebolt Fields" is what everyone uses in daily speech.

Known Horsebreeders

- THO 12/7/10

Traditionally the Huntsilvers and the Cormaerils sold horses, but this is just what I can remember off of the top of my head

Ending of a noble house

Reversion of land

- THO 28/4/10

Whenever a noble family is "extinguished" in Cormyr (by dying off, or by being stripped of noble title), its lands and holdings are forfeit to the crown or "return to the realm." That is, they pass back into the hands of the Obarskyrs, who may retain them -- or more often dole them out again, to someone newly ennobled for service to Cormyr, later.

A keep thus changing hands may well be renamed, but from my experience playing in the Realms, old names tend to "cling" in Cormyr for generations, regardless of renamings.

Reasons for Prosperity

- THO 16/2/10

Cormyr has survived and known longterm stability partially by having a fairly good (wise, pragmatic, "Cormyr first") ruling family, partly by having Royal Magicians who were VERY good (in various ways, some of them underhanded or ruthless) at keeping the kingdom strong, and partly the offsetting balance between nobles, Crown, commoners, and underground forces (like the Harpers, Elminster, certain adventuring bands, and some darker power groups, too [who see a benefit in having a land that is prosperous and fairly law-abiding and stable) who work to maintain that balance.

Scribes of Cormyr

Royal Scribes

- Ed 24/1/13, referring to reference in Swords of Eveningstar

Both Blaunel and Lathlan are indeed scribes employed at the Royal Palace in Suzail. Further, they are "royal" scribes, in that they have signed a pledge to work lifelong for the Crown (so Markustay is right: because of the secrets they are privy to, they can never really "retire" and take employment elsewhere in Cormyr, though they can of course covertly depart the realm and start new lives elsewhere - - please note that if a scribe does this, Highknights will seek him or her, spy on them, and relieve them of any records they took with them; they may even kill them if they start to work with traitors to the Crown against Cormyr, for example aiding for pay an exiled noble family in treasonous activities). This is a two-way street: the "not retiring" means they have good food, good clothes, and comfortable shelter all their days, being relocated to what is in truth a nursing home (though it's actually called Thornthar, on the north/east bank of the Starwater, due south of Gray Oaks; a sprawling, many-winged mansion owned by the Crown) when they can no longer perform their paid duties; they stop getting paid, but become full wards of the Crown (and can keep or spend any wealth they already have).

In the service of the Crown, in Cormyr, there are underscribes, employed temporarily or on probation and not given sensitive work to do, and above them are the "lifers," the pledged "Royal Scribes." When Blaunel and Lathlan called each other "Royal Scribe," they were being jokingly formal, about the equivalent in tone of a real world citizen respectfully saying, "Mister Policeman, Sir" to a policeman. It's the formal way of verbally addressing a full royal scribe, and would be used by a citizen, visitor, or envoy of another realm when dealing with a scribe at the Palace. However, both Blaunel and Lathlan have formal titles: their current position, and an honorific denoting their rank, which is "Scribe Royal." If a herald was announcing them or a document mentions them, they will be described as "Scribe Royal." They would sign documents with their signature, underneath it their name, underneath that their position, and underneath THAT, "Scribe Royal."

Blaunel's current position is "Undermaster of the Rolls." This means he works on maintaining the "rolls" (official lists) of either citizens (their locations/addresses, properties they own, jobs they have and affiliations (such as guild memberships or pledges to the Crown, including notations of past or current military service or Crown employment), plus notes on which other citizens they're related to, and how - or the tax payments of citizens. Blaunel is the former; the OTHER (tax) "Undermaster of the Rolls" at this time is a woman hight Amaundra Duthwood, a fat, homely, sharp-tongued (to capture her manner, think of the attorney Caroline Julian [played by Patricia Belcher] on the TV series BONES) and VERY capable administrator who always remembers when and where she's seen a name or face before, and who's usually colloquially called "Undercoin" around the Palace to avoid confusing her with Blaunel

(because she's "Undermaster of the (Coin) Rolls," the inertia of etiquette leaving her title "Undermaster" regardless of the gender of whoever's currently filling the position).

An "undermaster" is simply the second-in-command in charge of maintaining the rolls in question, under a "Master of the Rolls" (both Blaunel and Amaundra have direct bosses, whom they understudy for two reasons: the Palace works around the clock, so when the Master is at home and asleep, the Undermaster is on duty; and if anything happens to the Master, the Undermaster takes over as the acting Master, usually until confirmed in the position formally as the new Master).

Lathlan's current position is "Privy Amaneunsis To The Queen." This means he is the personal letter-writer, decree- and document-preparer, and correspondence facilitator/archivist to Queen Filfaeril. Some of his predecessors in such roles have been the close confidants, message-runners, panderers, and even lovers of the royals they serve, but Queen Fee has ladies-in-waiting and a royal husband (and, secretly, particular Harpers) who are her confidants; she's friendly with Lathlan and he gets to know a LOT more about her than, say, a Palace guard - - but they're not intimate in any sense.

Neither Blaunel nor Lathlan ever ascended to Royal Overscribe ("Royal High Scribe" would be a verbal equivalent, like "Royal Scribe," above). For much of their careers, that was held by Dlara Highshield, rumored (correctly) to be a bastard child of Rhigaerd II (the father of Azoun IV), a quiet, polite, self-controlled and exactly correct and diligent woman devoted to the Obarskys.

And yes, nobles constantly try to entice away all sorts of capable Court officials to their own service. For years, the "big dodge" has been to install such individuals in rich apartments in Sembia (formerly in Westgate, too, but the popularity of that city has declined steadily as life there became more perilous, and Cormyr's attitude to it has hardened), within reach but outside the Forest Kingdom - - but over the years, the truly capable have become harder and harder to entice, because nobles are notoriously fickle in their attitudes, whereas a good Palace job is seen as a sinecure.

Royal High Scribe

- Ed 24/1/13, referring to a Forging the Realms article in Dragon 406 about Aldegrand Tallfyre

By Aldegrand's time [he's the third successor of Dlara, who BTW had children, one more example of all the illegitimate royal-blood folk running around Cormyr that recorded history tends to overlook], the title of the office has changed from "Royal Overscribe" to "Royal High Scribe."

Aldegrand would sign formal documents "Aldegrand Tallfyre/Royal High Scribe of Cormyr" and informal Palace "dailyscrip" (memos) simply as "Tallfyre."

Except as passing references in my novels (and some of my past articles on the Wizards website), published Realmslore seldom delves into the endless nuances and complications of how the Royal Palace operates daily, and the constant intrigues woven through that life. I have run mini-campaigns for middle-aged women (and a few of their young daughters), who wanted nothing at all to do with killing monsters, stealing, seizing treasure, running afoul of traps, or open brawling of any sort, that were set in the Royal Palace and centered on the veiled threats, inferences, accusations, and deceptions of the endless jockeying for power among the courtiers. They loved it, because they'd seen so many television historical dramas about Henry VIII and his court and succession of wives that they felt at home - - and because that sort of warfare can be just as gripping as the sword and the spell, if done right.

- Ed 26/1/13

Aldegrand and Dlara have ALMOST the same job. The only difference was that by Dlara's time, a new role, Keeper of the Royal Purse, has been created to take care of paying Crown officials and the military,

and the Keeper signed the "Crown writs" (employment contracts) for each individual on the payroll - - whereas in Aldegrand's time, he had to sign them all.

General Scribes

- THO 20/3/14

When "Scribe of Cormyr" is used as a title or identifier, Ed tells me it refers to "a class of professional and/or public-sector jobs (like "administrative assistant" in our world" who have managed to write and publish works that have been "accepted" by the Court (Cormyr's civil servants) as accurate enough to be kept on record - - usually because the writer is a Court scribe, and because they reference clashing opinions, not just "one side" of any dispute.

- Xaeyruudh 17/3/14 and 20/3/14, list of Scribes of Cormyr

Chelm Vador

Kastor

Kirkabey

Lodevin Parkar

Magus Firewand

Zatan Arrowswift, Herald of Athkatla" is the author of *Magics of the South*, circa 1038 DR

Shieldwall Barons

- THO 4/9/10

I get the sense from Ed that there are at least two dozen Shieldwall barons as of the 1350s and 1360s. As far as typical dwellings: just about anything, from caves with fortified front entrances through wooden forts with palisades, fortified stone manor houses, and, yes, the "ruins of a previous baron patched up" you mention. Not much stone castle building goes on, but a lot of repair work (winters are hard, so lots of ice "shoving" that forces walls apart occurs) happens with all stone structures.

Any baron fortunate enough to find ore deposits (or an abandoned mine, according to Ed's notes, though I've never heard of one in that area) in "their" territory is entitled to exclusively work it, and keep 80 percent of the proceeds, 20 percent going to the Crown.

There's no "claim," because the Crown owns everything. Yes, there's a LOT of mineral wealth in western Cormyr, but very little of it is easily found/worked (small veins and deposits, buried under a LOT of rock that must be removed, in monster-haunted dangerous territory with severe weather).

The Court heralds (i.e. the Crown) name all baronies; if a newly ennobled Baron is being given a "new" territory rather than taking over an existing barony (the name of which will be retained unless, in rare instances such as a noble family being exiled and stripped of their titles, the Crown doesn't want it to), that baron gets to suggest/cajole the heralds, but the Crown always has the final say, not the baron.

to dispel confusion: Shieldwall barons have territories, usually centered on whatever home they dwell in (which is almost always fortified or at least "defensible"), and these are known as "baronies" out of convenience. They aren't "baronies" (chunks of land) in the European real-world sense, but are really "your part of the frontier to try to hold for Cormyr" if you're a Shieldwall baron. Although there are feuds and stony disagreements, wise barons work with their neighbouring barons for mutual survival. A handful of Shieldwall baron names from Ed's notes, as of 1362 DR: Jalaskar Mueryn is Baron Snowshar,

Bereld Rethammur is Baron Blackmount, and Larandarr Tathond is Baron Hawkril. All prime-of-life, burly warrior sorts installed in their "baronies" by Azoun IV after predecessors (to whom they were not related) fell in battle.

Inheritance of Barony

- Markustay, confirmed as precisely correct by THO, Qs for Ed 4/9/10

Considering these barons occupy much the same place in lore as 'frontier Forts', I would assume the decision by the crown would be based more upon an aspirant's ability to defend Cormyr's border adequately, unlike interior titles (and lands) that could be more 'casually' doled-out (for political favors and what-not).

What this means is that IF a Baron wanted his son (OR daughter - this is the Realms) to 'inherit' his parcel of land, he would have to make damn sure his progeny was ready to uphold its requirements, and be well-trained in several areas. In that case, if the child is then considered a worthy successor, he/she would move to the forefront of the list.

Bare-in-mind that this is no light matter, and some of these holds are held in a state of constant readiness - many barons *mat* NOT want their children to hold this office. They may have chosen this in order to win favor with the crown, in hopes of a more permanent title and land grant on the interior for their heirs.

These are also just the sort of positions and titles held by adventurers that have 'carved-out' their own niche on Cormyr's frontier. These are not your typical slothful nobles, but rather rugged warriors and frontiersmen all. It is canon that Cormyr operates in just this fashion - using adventurers to expand its marches - so as not to overly jeopardize its own soldiers and nobility while still remaining a growing and prosperous power.

This is why Cormyr embraces adventurers -something most nations frown upon as 'trouble makers' - and gives-out those adventuring charters. You get them out of the interior where they could cause problems, and have them do your dirty work for you.

Ship Graveyards

- Ed 2/11/14

there have been two naval "crown ship" graveyards in existence since before Azoun IV ascended the throne: a certain canal and turning basin in eastern Marsember for ships intended for salvage and reuse, that in most cases they never got and sank at their moorings, to the extent that in some spots three or more hulks are piled up atop each other, under the murky waters . . . and Margrath's Rest, a rocky "beach" well west of Suzail where ships were run ashore to be stripped of fittings, if they carried too much to simply be set afire and left to burn to the waterline, out on the waves, to sink and be disposed of in that manner. This beach hasn't been used for decades, now, but the rotten remnants of some large vessels can still be seen. (Margrath was an old retired naval captain whose last years were spent in a hut on the beach, fishing and smoking pipes and telling old tales.)

Trade

Desired Imports

- THO 9/1/11

Two consistent profitable cargoes to import into Suzail are:

1. Textiles (woven cloth of superior make and attractive hues/patterns, for Cormyrean tailors and seamstresses to fashion into garments). Importing finished garments can be much more profitable but is always riskier, because Cormyreans prefer local sizings and styles to "outland strangeness," abandoning this preference only for fairly rare fads (one or two instances a decade) and fashions (a fashion as defined here just being a long-lasting fad).

2. Good wines. Cormyr makes its own wines, but not enough to meet local demands, and some of it is poor (beer is far more often made in the Forest Kingdom). Some of that poor wine makes it into fortified wines (like sherry), but nobles and rising or wealthy merchants and others who have the coin and opportunity to become connoisseurs (take the time to "educate their palates") vastly prefer robust wines of superior quality, and fortified wines made with good wines, not poorer vintages. So such "slakes" as firewine are consistent bulk sellers in Cormyr; an importer can't go wrong.

More on cloth

- Ed 11/1/11

Cormyr produces cloth (and finished clothing) of above-average to excellent quality, but their usual mix of livestock (wool) and crops (with so many mouths to feed; the naval traders sailing around the Inner Sea, and Sembia next door, have seemingly BOTTOMLESS appetites; Sembia has far too little agricultural land to feed itself, and the Moonsea has poor growing conditions, so the Dales can't feed everyone) makes local Cormyrean cloth expensive . . . versus cheaper, just as good or better, and fashionably exotic "outland" fabrics. Cormyrean peasants usually make all their own clothes, but prize scarves, gowns, and blouses of "flashy" foreign make. Almost all Cormyreans have a prejudice in favour of their own, Cormyr-made weathercloaks and winter woollen wear (leather gloves and aprons, too), but otherwise prize - - and usually pounce on - - "outland stuff" for most other garments.

With Sembia

- THO 12/4/12

Q: Awhile back THO said that food went to Sembia and wines and good cloth came back into Cormyr. Is there any more 'bread and butter' trade goods that pass between those two countries, am trying to build up a picture of trade goods for my nosy players to stick their noses into."

A: I've sent your post to Ed for a proper reply, of course, but we've spoken about this very topic recently, in our own campaign, and the short reply re. trade goods passing along that road is: EVERYTHING.

As in: anything that isn't really bulky yet not harmed by damp (because heavy bulk cargoes like charcoal and lumber and stone often go by ship, along the Dragon Coast - - but everything else goes by wagon). Cormyr is the source for a lot of "raw materials" (pigment for paintings and frames, finishes for furniture AND the wood for that same furniture, metal ingots for use in making wire and fine castings, etc.) that Sembian firms and crafters use in making "finished goods").

Ed will provide proper details, of course, but those wagons could have just about EVERYTHING: raw or

refined materials/ingredients, and horse-related finished goods like tack and harness, going from Cormyr to Sembia - - and all the "finished" goods made from them, going from Sembia to Cormyr (and, via the caravans overland through the Heartlands, on to the Sword Coast).

With Hulburg, Moonsea

- Ed 19/7/12

Imports from the Forest Kingdom: textiles and "current fashion" clothing, scents, medicines, oils, fine wines, tools, and leatherwear (belts, baldrics, pouches, and boots).

Exports to the Forest Kingdom: forgebars of smelted metals (which can be mined in the Moonsea North more cheaply and in purer form than the deposits still remaining and easily accessed in Cormyr, given centuries of mining and local drow population changes). Other Moonsea cities also produce tin and bulk furs (which could be shipped to Cormyr through Hulburg).

Travelling

Roads

- THO 6/4/10

For Cormyr, in general, roads are as follows: corduroy in swampy bits, and carried across watercourses by truss wooden bridges, but in general surfaced with gravel, over high-banked (thus, ditches for draining) earth. The earth is "rammed hard" by running stone-loaded wagons over it and then by War Wizard spell, and the gravel surface is then "half-fused" into glassy slag by spell, and loose gravel tossed over it while still soft, to render a rough "good-traction" surface. Winter frost heaves and cracks this constantly, of course, and spring floods tear out or destroy bridges, so constant maintenance is required, especially in spring...but mud (on main roads) isn't the great problem you'd think it would be. On "lanes" (muddy cart-tracks), of course, mud IS a huge problem...

- THO 7/4/10

Over the exposed rocks, a THIN layer of straw mixed with mud would be laid, to spare the horses' hooves...

Stone Way Markers

- THO 9/1/13

The way-symbol for Arabel is a six-spoked, side-on wagon wheel, the way-symbol for Eveningstar is a horizontal-but-curving-down-to-the-right arc of three eight-pointed stars (vertical "rays" longer than the rest), and the way-symbol for Dhedluk is an anvil (side-on, point to the viewer's left). I'll have to nudge Ed for Tyrluk's, but I THINK it's a horsehead.

- Waterdeep Avatar module (FRE3)

Small, faded white symbols of wyverns painted on rocks at crossroads indicate the direction to Wheloon. Symbols in the shape of a crown show the way to Suzail; anchor symbols represent Marsember.

- Ed 10/1/13

Tyrluk's way-symbol is a side-on horsehead with a plaited mane (bound into a border, not flowing free) and a flat bottom across the base of the neck (think the way knights are printed in many books showing chess games with views of the board), and with its nose pointing to the viewer's left.

Waymoot's is a three simplified-to-elongated-triangles pine trees, standing side by side.

Espar's is a plough (prow dug into the ground, and its handle) facing the viewer's left (plowing in that direction).

Hilp's is a side-on arched wooden bridge (simple, rail-less).

Warriors, Wizards, Priests

Royal Magicians

Training

- Brian Cortijo (Garen Thal), Qs for Ed 13/7/10

1) Baerauble was trained in magic before taking on the job, and also studied under Alea Dahast (his future bride).

2) Amedahast studied under Baerauble

3) Thanderahast studied under Amedahast

4) Jorunhast studied under Thanderhast

5) Vangerdahast studied under Elminster, among other tutors, in large part because Jorunhast was exiled, and therefore could not train his successor directly (at least, not fully)--because such training involves being inside of Cormyr.

6) Caladnei was not a wizard, but a sorcerer, which altered the whole nature of 'training.' What training she did receive for the post of Royal Magician, however, was done under Vangerdahast.

I won't get into Caladnei's successor, because that's 'current Realms time,' and therefore might step on future lore.

Nicknames

- THO 2/8/10

All of the previous Royal Magicians and Court Wizards (the offices have not always been combined) have had nicknames, both cruel/disparaging/behind their backs AND affectionate/used by friends.

Caladnei, for instance, was jokingly called "Nay" (a shortening of her name AND a dig at her frequent need, as she was tested by most of the realm as an outlander and a woman who was now filling the shoes of the VERY formidable Vangey, to say "no" to various people). This name was used both as a biting insult and as an affectionate, friendly term. Only a few close friends (such as Alusair) used "Cala," and it was definitely friendly/affectionate/intimate. "Duskcloak" was a politely formal disparaging reference to Caladnei's skin hue, which wasn't so much racist (remember, Cormyr is home to native-born folk of all sorts of skin hues) as it was xenophobic ("getting at" the fact she was an outlander) . . . but it got turned into a friendly Court nickname by those who remade it into "Lady Duskcloak" and used it only in a favourable manner.

And so on. I know she has other nicknames, but Ed (and/or perhaps Garen Thal) will have to fill you in on them.

Riders of Cormyr

- THO 24/12/12

In the 1380s, notably, the forty-some-strong Steel Regent's Riders of Cormyr, a mixed band of nobility and common-born Purple Dragons trained by adventurers personally loyal to Alusair. Their mounts could "go down" in swift and tidy unison without breaking their riders' legs to minimize the damage of hostile arrow volleys, and to allow their riders (who weren't good horse archers) to themselves use longbows or crossbows against foes.

The horses were also trained to circle back (if separated in battle from their riders) to look for their usual riders, to accept other riders from the unit on their backs, to accept riders arriving on their backs with sudden violence (i.e. leaping, in the heart of a wild fray), to "stand" when confronted with bursts of flame and/or loud noises, and to "return to camp" (riderless or bearing a slumped, non-guiding rider) when a certain brief (five-note) tune was sung, shouted, or whistled.

It was later revealed that the horses were largely trained by one of the adventurers, who was, yes, a werehorse, and led them (providing a patiently-repetitious, communicative example) through most training exercises.

The Riders departed the service of the Crown when the Steel Regent disappeared, and their fate isn't publicly known (inevitably, a belief has arisen in Cormyr that they will ride out of hiding to the aid of the realm someday, when they are sorely needed).

Knighthoods

- Ed 1/10/12

The likelihood depends entirely on character performance, of course - - meaning: knighthoods are handed out to mark outstanding actions of benefit to the Crown, hoping for ongoing loyalty/service to the Crown. Titles mean either being settled with land or marrying into royalty or senior nobility, and in either case assuming what we would call an ongoing "job" for the realm. Being a half-orc makes it less likely to get a title, but performance and loyalty overrides all.

Highknights

Harper Infiltration

- Blueblade recalling Ed, Qs for Ed 14/7/10

I remember Ed saying not all Highknights are Harpers, but the Harpers were trying to covertly "vet" all Highknights, AND infiltrate them. So no way would Ed be using "Harper" and "Highknight" interchangeably in a novel.

- Ed 15/7/10

No, all Highknights are NOT Harpers, and Azoun would react with suspicion (and Cormyr's courtiers, nobles, and War Wizards would all react with horror) if they thought Harpers were trying to infiltrate or even influence the Highknights, the Court, or the War Wizards.

The Harpers ARE trying to get some of their number into the Highknights, and to watch the Highknights closely to make sure Sembia, the Zhentarm, and others (Thay, Amn, etc.) aren't succeeding in getting agents of their own into the Highknights.

- THO 16/7/10

When it comes to equating Harpers and Highknights, EVERYONE should bear in mind when the author is speaking or thinking, and when characters are speaking or thinking - - and the tendency of many courtiers, lawkeepers, and other authorities in most kingdoms of the Realms to "see Harpers lurking in

every shadow." Harpers are a convenient scapegoat, the same way that real-world individuals during the Cold War saw "Communists" everywhere, and some see "left-wing socialists" everywhere today . . . and so, by Wizards of War in Cormyr (Vangey and Laspeera excepted), Harpers have almost always been mentally accorded greater numbers and influence than they truly have.

Most Senior

- THO 5/6/12

Q: Ed, can you tell us who the senior most/head Highknight of Cormyr was when the Steel Regent took power?

Crazedventurerers kindly forwarded to me a list of highknights serving Queen Fee (Jostlyn Huntsilver, Asbras Orthwood, Baeryn Dauntinghorn, Albryn Emmarask, Ilbreth Truesilver, Indyn Thundersword) and Glarasteer Rhauligan as possible candidates.

A: There is no "official" top-ranking or senior Highknight, but there are very much, on a daily acting basis, "top, most-trusted veterans" among them. None of those you mention were of this sort (except to Queen Fee), because there was a generation of older, more experienced agents above them (or rather, a handful of the survivors of that generation), including one grizzled old man called "the Hawk" (not his real name, obviously), and a thin, wrinkled, homely old woman whose name I never learned, who was referred to as "the Seller of Cloaks."

A postscript to the above: over time, Glarasteer Rhauligan rose steadily in daily influence within the Highknights, but he was always a James Bond-like maverick (more whimsical/jolly than the grim Bond ever was, mind you). In other words, he liked to break and ignore rules, and thus was respected for his results, but not as a team player.

- THO 12/6/12

In addition to the two I already mentioned, there were at least two more "top level veterans." One was code-named "Blackblade" and was an accomplished killer for the Crown, and the other was a high-ranking noble secretly working for the Crown.

Female Highknights in Azoun's time

- Ed 31/3/10

The number of Highknights was never very high, though it varies from date to date (because it's a dangerous job with a high mortality rate; they're the James Bond-style "not-so-secret agents" of the Crown), and therefore the strength of female Highknights also varies. At times, there were less than a dozen. The percentage of female to male Highknights was usually 5 to 10 percent female (usually closer to 5). It seems as if the two seen in the trilogy have both slept with Azoun because they HAVE slept with Azoun. It's one way of getting noticed or better-known to the King, and increasing his trust in you, after all - - and you don't become a Highknight at all if you don't deeply love Cormyr and its ruling family. As far as my records have it, only two other female Highknights have slept with Azoun, out of them all (and Azoun reigned for a long time, and during his lengthy reign there were over 120 female Highknights). No, he DOESN'T sleep with them as some sort of initiation ritual or test!

War Wizards

Exiles

- THO 10/12/10, replying to query if the Knights had run into any exiles.

Yes, we twice ran into exiled War Wizards.

Note that these weren't individuals who'd been thrown out of the kingdom. They'd fled before they could be caught (or their treachery uncovered) and exiled in absentia (that is, forbidden to return, and informed of that sentence by factors [[noble family trade agents]] from Cormyr who encountered them outside the realm).

Heraldry

- Blueblade, Qs for Ed 21/1/10, confirmed by THO

Re. the War Wizards' symbol: yes, the dragon is Cormyr, and just as obviously, the nine stars represent Mystra (magic).

From what Ed's said at GenCon seminars in the past, an unbroken chain denotes rulership/policing/defending/guardianship (and in this case, its position/location ties the guardianship to Cormyr and magic), whereas a broken chain means escape from servitude/slavery/dominance by someone/something else (such as orcs).

So this would represent the Wizards of War as defending Cormyr with magic.

Prominent Bumpers

- Ed 5/12/10

From the early years of the War Wizards, one "Forndel Leshingbroke" was a notorious bumbler.

A far more recent bungler, who often caused Vangerdahast to erupt in seething rages, was "Vorn Nuskarm."

THE legendary/infamous paramount War Wizard accident-prone incompetent, known to all Cormyreans thanks to expressions like "a real Doraunk, he was" and "worthy of Doraunk himself!" that are daily applied to pratfalls and screwups by citizens the realm over (who may not know who Doraunk was) is Phelndur Doraunk, who flourished, if that's the right term, chronologically between Leshingbroke and Nuskarm.

Tissue Samples

- THO 5/11/10

All War Wizards give vials of blood as part of their initiation or shortly before or after. I'll leave it to Ed about hair, etc. because I'm not certain of the details.

Histories of Deeds

- THO 5/11/10

War Wizard writings are secret, scattered and hidden, coded, and sparse: forbidden about most topics, though all of the things you mention are recorded somewhere, somehow (Alaphondar and his predecessors are one place to ask for them, as is the current Court Wizard, which from Vangerdahast onwards has been a post held by the Royal Magician rather than, as formerly, a separate one).

No, there's no "instant recall" in any Royal Magician's head. There ARE some "magically-recorded remembrances" captured in items that can be accessed by anyone with sufficient skill-at-Art, who knows

where the items are and how to handle them. "Some," I said, not a lot. There's no such thing as an existing coherent and comprehensive history of the War Wizards, so if the Crown for some reason wanted such a thing, they'd have to try to cobble it together by asking all sorts of people. Vangerdahast is really the font of knowledge for the "modern" Wizards of War, and he's still around, but getting to speak to him, and even more importantly convincing him to give truthful answers, is going to be VERY difficult for anyone but the reigning monarch . . . and even they will have no way of knowing, most of the time, if he's lying or omitting important details of the truth.

Habit of not explaining themselves

- THO 5/11/10

The novels depict the War Wizards dashing about not giving reasons largely because the novels tend to highlight crises/moments of peril/combat and confrontation. However, the War Wizards are NOT in the habit of explaining themselves, just as real-world police and government agents will only reveal or share the information they want to, not submit to on the street interrogations by any average citizen they may speak with. Journal writing by active (not retired) War Wizards is forbidden unless it's kept coded and hidden, and even retired War Wizards risk reprisals if they reveal state secrets (under some Royal Magicians and some monarchs, that also seems to extend to "relating anything embarrassing about us").

Sashes

Sevensash Team of Investigators

- THO 17/2/11, responding to query about pronunciation of Sevensash team title in "Stormlight"

It's definitely "Seven-sash," and the title refers to accomplishments; major successful missions completed superbly, I believe (Vangey awarded "sashes" as internal War Wizard awards; not many of them [so they garnered great respect from other War Wizards] and without a word to anyone outside the Wizards of War except Azoun, Filfaeril, and Alusair).

Potential Continuation Post Stormlight

- THO 17/2/1

Probably retired. All teams suffer losses (sometimes due to retirements or reassignments), and continue on, but after that sort of blowout, a "revuild" would in effect be a new team, and Vangey would always prefer new teams have their own names and not be trying to outdo, live up to, or "live down" the achievements of a previous namesake team.

Alarphon

- THO 13/1/10

Origin of Word

"alarphon" originated as an elven word, already in use before Myth Drannor was opened to other races than elves. Back then, it meant something like "those who keep discipline within families" and was an expression of role, not a formal rank or a title.

After Myth Drannor was opened to all races, there were many cases of elves exploiting these non-elf newcomers by magically prying and eavesdropping - - and a few cases of human spellcasters doing the same to elves.

So "alarphon" became the unofficial title of a few spellcasters (led and appointed by the Srinsee) to police magical abuses, "undercover" and "behind the scenes."

Corpse in Elminster Must Die

- THO reporting Ed 10/2/13, referring to dessicated War Wizard corpse found by Elminster in novel

He did once tell me that dessicated wizard was from before Vangey's time.

Ghosts Haunting

- THO 15/1/11

"Are there any persistent, lurking ghosts of War Wizards that haunt the Royal Court or where the War Wizards reside in Suzail?"

A: Oh, yes. Many.

"Of these, are any like those from the Harry Potter books? The sort to jaunt around a specific area, dispensing good advice or being a pest, as befits their nature when they were alive?"

A: Yes, most of them.

"Are any like watchghosts that guard a specific area, room or individual (like the ghost I [vaguely] remember reading about that lurks near Mirt's abode in Waterdeep)?"

A: Yes. A few.

"Or are such hauntings more of the "we just learned to deal with the ghostly presence of the long-dead War Wizard and got on with our business as best we could" type?"

A: Yes, this describes the attitude of many of the circa-1479 DR Wizards of War and courtiers fairly well. Note that hauntings are among the matters 'not generally discussed' with the wider public.

"Have the priesthoods of various deities ever been tasked with eradicating, hemming in or bringing to heel persistent, hard-to-kill-once-and-for-all type ghosts (and not just ghosts of War Wizards) around the Royal Court?"

A: Yes.

"Seems like with all the intrigue in Cormyr there ought to be a menacing ghost or two in the great sprawl of the Royal Court that can't rest until some foul wrong is made right."

A: Oh, yes

Extra Scrutiny if Noble

- THO 5/1/11

Noble-born War Wizards face special covert scrutiny when they are first accepted into the Wizards of War (and start to operate as official War Wizards).

House Wizards during King Foril's reign

- Ed 5/5/12

In theory house wizards are hired wholly independently of the Crown, by their patrons.

In practice, during Foril's reign, they are either Wizards of War or under the thumb of the War Wizards

in some way or being spied upon attentively by the War Wizards. Caladnei and her successor Ganrahast are both far more rule-abiding than Vangerdahast when it comes to the rights of citizens (Vangey might privately say that non-Obarskyrs don't have any rights, just whatever privileges I allow them), but such things as wizards needing official Crown permission to work magic within the kingdom allows them to prevent Cormyreans hiring outlanders (unless the Crown allows them to; most don't even try). When you are thus at a stroke reduced to hiring Cormyrean wizards, it's nigh impossible to find someone of any accomplishment-in-Art (i.e. 5th level or higher) who isn't either playing ball with the War Wizards, or deep in their suspicion and being attentively watched (and the War Wizards PREFER to gently blackmail someone's good behavior, if they can "get the goods" to do so).

All of which means any house wizard must be considered a spy for the War Wizards, if not an active agent (most who aren't actually War Wizards themselves will refuse to "act for" the Wizards of War beyond passing on warnings, suggestions, and other messages, and reminding patrons of relevant laws, on the grounds that doing more than that for the Crown would be betraying the people who are paying them, which would also be lawbreaking and would also ruin their reputations for any employment elsewhere).

Skill at Ferreting out Traitors

- THO 31/7/10

Not good at all.

Priests

Royal knowledge of individuals

- THO 16/12/12, responding to a query about Azoun IV calling priests by their titles in "Cormyr"

Those are in-faith titles, and Azoun would know those priests because he reigned for a good stretch of years and all upperpriests of any faith publicly tolerated in Cormyr would be formally presented at court, then have a private "let's sit and talk and get to know each other" audience with the King, and from time to time be expected to attend court for certain ceremonies and consultations. So Azoun would know who they were, even if he didn't know them well.

Purple Dragons

Suspicion of adventurers

- THO 17/12/10, responding to query about if the Purple Dragons were as suspicious of all adventurers as they were of the Knights

The Purple Dragons are predisposed to be suspicious of adventurers who have a personal "in" with the royals (where did they come from, how did they get this tie, how will they [mis]use it in future?), and Vangey sharpened that suspicion to a cutting edge with HIS attitude towards us.

Some courtiers liked us and some didn't, some War Wizards ditto, and some Purple Dragons ditto (but Purple Dragon officers were of two sorts: commoners who'd risen from merit and experience and kept an eye on us as adventurers but weren't automatically hostile towards us...and nobles who were jealous of us or disliked us because of our close association with the royals.

None of which was helped by the habit some Obarskyrs fell into of using us as a strike force of not-so-secret "outside normal channels" agents, when it suited them.

Female representation

- Ed 6/3/12

Many women in Cormyr have joined the Purple Dragons, taken employment as armed guards, and so on. Less than an average of, say, fifteen percent or so in peacetime, but that percentage doubles if you include (volunteer) militia membership. And rises sharply if the realm is actively at war. It comes down to more women than men being better at craftwork, and so needed not just "in the home," but to keep making and repairing things and keeping foodstuffs moving to supply garrisons and armies on the move. (And more men than women having the strength and interest to drill with polearms and swing swords.) Aside from the skilled "making of things," women have always excelled and predominated in Cormyr at horsebreeding and horse training (and the breeding and training of oxen and mules, too).

So female warriors are by no means unknown, but are certainly less common than male warriors.

- THO 6/3/12, clarifying above

I should note in his reply above that when Ed says "craftwork," he means in the Realms sense (making of items sold in shops, a.k.a. "goods guildwork"), not in the modern North American "arts and crafts" meaning of the word.

Wealth

Coins

Relative worth of Sembian coins

- THO 2/4/12

The "quickie" version is: in everyday Cormyrean situations, for common folk, they're accepted as the same.

Qs about coins – In Pouch, Exchange, Trademoots

- THO quoting Ed's notes, 2/4/12

"If you looked in your money-pouch, and you're upper middle class (not a penniless wretch), what variety of coins are you most likely to have in there?"

If you're in Cormyr, most of the mintings would be of Cormyr, followed by Sembia, followed by Westgate, followed by Amnian and a smattering of Sword Coast, Vilhon, and Moonsea mintings.

"Also, for Cormyr, are there certain trademoots (or whatnot) that see an infusion of non-realm coinage?"

Yes, Arabel and Marsemer and Suzail, lots daily, and Waymoot, Hultail, and Wheloon (until its transformation into a prison), a trickle daily.

"And how quickly can one get currency "exchanged" for coinage of the Realm?"

In the above "lots daily" places, right away if you go to a moneylender (and pay a changing fee). Elsewhere, AND in the three cities, right away if you make a purchase with outland currency; your change is likely to be mainly in Cormyrean coinage (with a smattering of Sembian and Westgate).

"Are there certain purchases (or certain goods) that absolutely require Cormyrean-made coinage (or Cormyrean-made trade bars) because of local laws?"

Yes. Certain royal licenses (hunting, land deed and marriage document and other Court scrivener services) specify "coin of the realm." However, almost all casual daily transactions and royal/Court/civic tolls and fees can be paid in any currency, if the coins aren't obviously fakes or deeply "shaved" or marred, or otherwise obviously "not worth their facings."

Merendil Gold

Alathea Merendil

- Ed 15/3/12, referring to Eye on the Realms article "The Merendil Gold" (Dragon mag #409)

Alathea Merendil had quite a few children early on in her life, and they in turn had quite a few descendants.

Purchasing Land from the Crown

- Ed 10/5/10

Ed says that most Crown land in Cormyr is given as a royal gift. The exceptions are urban properties no noble would want (i.e. a rotting warehouse near the docks) and places that the Crown wants settled (on the borders of the realm, i.e. along the border with Sembia, around the Bridge of Fallen Men, and [ahem] near the Stonelands, specifically from the overland trade-roads north to the Stonelands, to more heavily settle [and therefore secure] the lands north and northeast of the Hullack Forest as part of Cormyr). There is no "set price;" it varies by who's trying to buy, how much they're trying to buy, what the quality of that land is, for farming, and the location of the land (urban, close to good roads, close to large settlements versus remote) - - and of course the price has increased over time.

Splitting Wealth Found

- Ed 20/1/12

Q: What are the rules on dividing loot between the Kings Local Lord and the Purple Dragon troops if they uncover a bandit/smuggling ring and break it up, kill the bandits and end up with loot (weapons, armour, money, horses, wagons, trade goods etc).

Do the rules change if the loot found is magical? (i.e. the bandit leader has a +1 sword).

Also is there a difference between how spoils might be divided in a major town like Wheloon and an up county village on the edge of the Hullack?

And lastly the crux of the issue, if an adventuring group have been paid by the Local Kings Lord to support the Purple Dragons in dealing with said bandits do they get a share of any loot or as they have already been paid do they get nowt?

A: The Purple Dragons will take EVERYTHING back to the King's Lord for him to examine, and there's a strict rule that everything magical will be handed over to the Wizards of War (as you'll see a side-glimpse of in ELMINSTER ENRAGED, every King's Lord has two teams of War Wizards assigned to him, and they keep watch over him as well as working "for" him). In theory, if it's a simple +1 weapon, it might be returned to a "finder," but that's rare; War Wizards like to control magic items inside the realm, by keeping them out of the hands of just about everyone.

The King's Lord (in the presence of the Purple Dragon commander and a War Wizard, not secretly, on his own) decides how all "seized goods" get reallocated, for the good of the realm - - so horses and their tack, armor, and the like might very well get handed to the Purple Dragons, the coins go into "holding" (general Crown revenues), and so on.

First of all, everything gets examined, particularly if crimes are involved (these were bandits), so as to try to learn all that can be learned (about Sembian or Zhent incursions and operations inside the kingdom's borders, etc.). If War Wizards suspect anything is enchanted, they'll cast spells to try to investigate, etc. Then every Purple Dragon involved gets separately debriefed (questioned), the War Wizards and the King's Lord taking part, to try to piece together the most complete and accurate account of what happened.

Only after that's done, and it's all written down with recommendations about further action/investigation, will any seized things be doled out/taken away/etc.

It is customary for a King's Lord to give "nominal" rewards to Purple Dragons for things brought in, but they ARE small token items, because the soldiers were doing the jobs they have trained, taken an oath, and are being paid for.

Where all of this is taking place should make no difference at all, except in the speed of the examination (in Suzail, High Horn, and Arabel, there are LOTS of War Wizards and other skilled individuals such as Highknights and sages who can pitch in, if need be).

Lastly, what rewards/reallocation a hired adventuring band gets depends on their contract (and there MUST be one, or everyone could hire adventurers as their own private slaughter-armies, then deny later they did so, and have the absent-or-conveniently-slain adventurers be the scapegoats; after all, if I slay the King's Lord and make myself Acting King's Lord, AFTER taking care of any on-the-spot War Wizards, I may have several days to do things in, before . . . y'see? So Vangerdahast decreed long ago that there would be written, signed, attested-by-War Wizards and/or Heralds contracts) with the King's Lord. If he "forgot" to write one up, he's in BIG trouble, and will likely give them generous rewards atop their pay, in order to secure their agreement to backdating the contract so it looks as if he "did the right thing" regarding the adventurers before the bandits got taken down.

- THO 21/1/12

Ed didn't say WHY Purple Dragons have to show "everything" to a King's Lord.

It's thanks to Vangerdahast, who established what we might call "scene of the crime" investigations.

Because non-War Wizards might not know the significance of something they find - - and no one might, until later - - Purple Dragons have to report (with a second Dragon as a witness, whenever possible) EXACTLY where they find everything, at the scene, and even draw diagrams if they can.

Xraunrarr

Qs from Xraunrarr Shall Triumph

- Ed 7/2/12

JG: Were they searching for Nalavarra's lair directly or through adventurer intermediaries? Or did they discourage searches for the lair, fearing this might spark another war with the goblins of Grodd that Cormyr wasn't ready for?

Ed: Hi, Jeremy! Yes, the latter; they discouraged searches for the lair, for the reason you've hit upon.

JG: Did the Xraunrans throttle back on encouraging nobles to war with each other? Or did they use their influence to ramp up the hostilities in the immediate aftermath of the war so families with few surviving heirs could be wiped out and new nobility created that might be better controlled by Xraunrans?

Ed: They ramped up for a season (in this case, I mean half a year, counting the seasons as "summer" and "winter" rather than including spring and fall) to see how many noble families they could get rid of to

bring new nobility onstage that, yes, they could more easily influence . . . and then decided to throttle back in the wake of the disastrous Council, because they judged a full-blown civil war would lose them most of their influence right away, and for a long time to come (and markedly weaken the kingdom, and therefore their potential gains).

JG: I ask the later because it seems like there are lots of new-to-me noble families in the Elminster Must Die books and I'm wondering if they were mostly created post-war?

Ed: About half are new, but the most pompous are of course older; the new ones haven't had time to get that way. :) I'd love to do more lore on Cormyr's noble families, but have thus far only dabbled (in my Eye on the Realms DDI articles, last year) so as not to hamper any chances of a future Cormyr sourcebook. (And no, I don't know of any plans to do one; I'm just hoping!)

JG: Did the Xraunran use its influence in Sembia to keep Cormyr's neighbor from pouncing on it?

Ed: Yes, decidedly. And very effectively undercut the agents of Shade pushing hard for an invasion.

JG: Last question: Did the Xraunrans dare to try and influence any of the Steel Regent's most influential advisers (those mentioned in Brian Cortijo's Cormyr Royale article: Caladnei, Laspeera, Filfaeril and Myrmeen Lhal)?

Ed: No. They were (wisely) VERY wary of the War Wizards and any magical means of intercommunication/booby traps/warning alarms they might have missed, that would awaken if they "moved in" on any of those minds. In part because Storm and Dove of the Seven had close contact with Queen Fee, and infrequent contacts with Laspeera, Caladnei, and Myrmeen Lhal (before her draconic dealings with Vangerdahast), too.

JG: Or did they view the human's time of rebuilding as a time for the Xraunran to slowly rebuild its control over its stable of tasty human breeding stock?

Ed: In general, yes. The Xraun are far more patient than most humans; think the "long view" taken by many elves; well, these beings have it, too. Better to feed well for centuries than to gorge now, and ruin this breeding stock that we like so much, and have to relocate (with all the headaches that accompany moves in the Underdark, and so on).

Human Prisoners

- Ed 15/3/12

YES, they keep and have kept human prisoners, and yes, some of them have been in magical stasis.

Stonelands

Monsters, Raiders, Smugglers

- THO 2/1/15

Two main sorts of things: illegal trade substances (certain poisons, kidnap victims, cadavers or body parts and organs both fresh and preserved of sentient races, identifiable stolen goods like nobles' rings and royal regalia and paintings or statuettes snatched from Cormyrean collections) and contraband = trade goods that the smugglers are avoiding import and export limits and more often duties on, like weapons, armor, certain wines and spirits, minor magic items ("glowing globes" that serve as hovering light sources, for example).

The proximity of the warehouses of Arabel (and also the "handy highway" of the valley north of Eveningstar that the Haunted Halls open into) means that various caves and ravines in the Stonelands can be used as way-storage for goods to be "beyond the reach and scrutiny" of Cormyrean authorities most of the time, and moved into Arabel at just the right moment to be bought or sold when the right caravan-traders are stopping over (and to manipulate prices by affecting local supply, either producing a glut out of seemingly nowhere or a sudden dire shortage).

The Caverns of the Claws and the front room of the Haunted Halls themselves, not to mention that hollow in the rock pillar outside the Halls in the valley, all provide handy storage for small amounts of cargo.

We Knights (back when we were the Swords) saw this sort of shady shuttling going on all the time, and got caught up in skirmishes involving it fairly often (smugglers dislike witnesses). It was a way of life for some folk in Eveningstar, and this business, plus the legitimate overland mercantile trade, plus the Purple Dragon road patrols (notably out of High Horn and Arabel), all made the Lonesome Tankard a far busier and more profitable place than it would otherwise have been.

I hope this is of help. (Ed remains wildly busy right now).

Anauroch

Ascore

Pyramids

Present at time of city's founding?

- Ed 14/4/10

No.

Changed by the Spellplague?

- THO 2/4/10

The Spellplague hasn't changed anything about those notoriously mysterious pyramids nigh Ascore.

Home Game Anauroch

- THO 10/2/14

Remember the lifedrainning Phaerimm, and the Sharn who kept them confined? Well, the Phaerimm were confined under Anauroch, and the surface above them was a vast dry desert (rock ice waste or "cold desert" in the north, but hotter and sandy just north of the Stonelands) roamed by monsters that could tolerate those conditions.

During the mid-1300s, the Zhentarim repeatedly tried to establish a short trade route between the mineral-rich Moonsea and Waterdeep, through the Dales and Cormyr, then through the Dales and the Stonelands, then through Teshendale and straight across Anauroch; they wanted the shortest and cheapest trade route, so they could undercut the prices and "get there first," beating all competitors and alternate routes, and they wanted to control the entire route (so, conquer the Dales and Cormyr, or avoid them) to prevent any other authority from charging taxes or tolls, and/or controlling the flow of goods.

There just weren't D'tareg and Bedine in the mix; the only humans Ed had were brigands living on the edges of the desert.

Bedine

Culture

- THO 10/2/14, hashimashadoo 9/2/14

Q: I just re-read The Parched Sea and the 2nd edition sourcebook on Anauroch; Bedine culture is very interesting. I was curious to know Ed's stance on the Bedine treatment of women, as it seems so contradictory to the way women are portrayed in the majority of the Realms. Aside from the drow matriarchy, it seems like gender equality in the most of Faerun and Ed is very gender neutral in his writings/lore. Was the Bedine treatment of women something Ed envisioned in his Realms or was that from Troy Denning/Wizards? I guess women are treated differently in a harsh environment like Anauroch because survival depends on keeping the women and children safe, to the point of treating them like valuable property.

Hashimashadoo: the Bedine are a transplanted culture from Zakhara. Zakharan culture is heavily based upon traditional arabic culture and therefore would naturally be abnormal compared to the regions surrounding Anauroch that developed without Zakharan influence.

THO: The Bedine (the name drawn from Bedouin; their rival tribe's name is also derived from a real-world tribal name) were created by Troy for that novel, and weren't what Ed originally had in Anauroch at all. Once they were canon, Ed stepped in to round them out in game detail in the Anauroch "FR" book. When Jeff Grubb was developing Al-Qadim, he talked over with Ed which Bedine spells (that Ed had created for the FR Anauroch product) could be used "straight," what extra "wouldn't fit" unpublished spells Ed had created for the Anauroch book could be picked up for use (because Ed always does some extra, to cover for possible shifts in font size, artwork, etc.), and so on. So Troy's Bedine came first, before Zakhara was created - - but hashimashadoo is quite correct: In-game, the Bedine came from Zakhara, which Jeff deliberately based closely on Arabian culture as per the design plans for that product line.

(It bears repeating: Ed NEVER based any part of the Realms closely or directly on real-world historical cultures beyond a general "Hollywood European medieval" feel, but many TSR designers did, for various reasons.)

However, Ed wants a variety of societal norms in the Realms, so once the Bedine were there, he rolled up his sleeves and started weaving them into the wider tapestry of the world. It's what he does

Giant's Plain

Trials at Settlement

- THO 6/6/11, responding to query if Cormyr, Amn, or nearby free cities have tried

Not that I know of. All of the candidates for settlement you mention have ample grazing lands closer to home. The Giant's Plain is open, seemingly endless grassland, and that's the problem: anyone dwelling there (as opposed to passing through, like caravans) is a sitting duck for hungry dragons on the wing (or any other formidable aerial predator or flock of predators), gnolls and other bipedal predators roaming in warbands, and so on. Trees and therefore usable wood is sparse, easily-reached water isn't abundant, and one must go to the mountains to get minerals. Yes, it can support vast herds (and does: of wild beasts, who of course come with "fast great cat" predators, leucrotta, and other such nuisances).

Amn has plenty of ranchland of its own, Cormyr ditto, and the various free cities nearby all exist because of overland trade (and sometimes, its intersection with along-river trade). They can use handy

grasslands without occupying them, so . . . no one stays. Thus far, at least.

Now, a plague or flooding or other devastation that caused Cormyr or Amn or another realm's population to flee en masse, looking for a new place to settle, might change that...

I can say all of this because settling the Heartland central wilderlands is something Ed and his players (including me) have discussed more than once, and I know Ed talked it over with TSR designers a time or two, as well.

Sembia

Prestigious Artists of 1372

- Ed 1/1/13

Well, in "new money" Sembia, with its swelling hubris, there is, of course, controversy over who's the best, or most important, or most successful, or most highly regarded.

So I'm going to ignore the "opinion in the Sembian street" AND "the opinions in the Sembian towers," and go with the choices of an, ahem, somewhat reliable narrator: Elminster.

Who stuck strictly to your "most prestigious" and came up with these:

Painter: The aging and eccentric Erelgus Mistmrone of Yhaunn (known for barn-door-sized paintings of Sembian seacoasts, of waves crashing on purplish rocks that are surmounted by splendid castles and pergolas [small-town American bandshell-like structures with spires and railings] populated by pining gowned figures)

Musician: The very young, enormous-eyed half-elven harpist Shree Winterwood of Saerb (known for her slow, soft, delicate melodies, played as she slowly traverses the limbs of large trees)

Composer: The white-chin-tuft-bearded, dashing and womanizing Baerann Kordeemur of Mulhessen (known for his grand "court dances" of swelling phrases that stop dead for a beat, then resume, then stop dead, then build to a swirling magnificence, then stop dead again; much beloved by refined [noble and high society] dancers all over the Heartlands)

Sculptor: The surly, lushly bearded, scuttling and swarming [she climbs her works as she carves them, and is rarely to be found anywhere but around or atop her work, even sleeping there], thick-lens-spectacled she-dwarf Orgelna Highshield of Selgaunt, patronized regularly by the wealthy, self-styled noble human merchant Selgauntan families of Bowsuntide and Orwindsea.

Saerloon

Strong Mystra/Azuth Church presence

- Ed 23/3/13

For years, Saerloon was the "forgotten" large, wealthy, and bustling Sembian port, overshadowed by its neighbor and rival, Selgaunt. Naturally, the "static" traders (shopkeepers, as opposed to great mercantile houses that have investments everywhere, fleets and caravan companies, and so on) of Saerloon wanted local attractions to build up Saerloon's brisk trade to outstrip Selgaunt's even brisker daily business (in the face of the built-in handicap of Selgaunt's location and better harbor - - and after the fall of Ordulin, the movement of much governance and administration to Selgaunt).

So those in power in Saerloon set about differentiating themselves from Selgaunt. Any growing, wealthy trading and social powerhouse will have shrines to all deities and minor temples to most gods, not always mentioned in canon products (because we never had enough wordcount to include everything),

and Selgaunt and Saerlooon are no exception - - but Saerlooon decided to court several faiths that had a light presence locally, by providing free land, tax breaks, and limited exemptions to some local laws (i.e. within the walls of the temple, "holy law" governs, rather than secular, allowing priests to shelter taxable goods, provide refuge to fugitives [often in return for "donations"] and so on).

Two of these faiths were those of Mystra and Azuth, because Sembia also wanted to attract more resident wizards, to counter the perceived growing threats of the Zhentarim, the Red Wizards, and others (both unscrupulous mages of Westgate, and what turned out to be Shadovar agents), who often "marauded" in Sembian cities, unhampered by feeble local mages, to get at the wealth there (i.e. ruthless local Sembians would hire them to counter foes or smite trade rivals, and the hired wizards would do so but also do their own "on the side" activities to gain even more wealth, almost always in defiance of local laws).

So the city elders of Saerlooon, sponsored by the wealthiest self-styled "noble" families, invited in clerics of Mystra and Azuth, to be both a cover for their own wizard-hiring and to "police" marauding mages. (And no, none of the Chosen visit the Sembian temples or shrines of either Mystra or Azuth all that often. They don't neglect them, but they don't have cause to frequent them.)

Ordulin

Road Names

- THO 13/12/14

Q: Who are Taela and Tildaryn, for whom Taela's Trail and Tildaryn's Ride (roads into Ordulin) are named?

A: I can from my notes (which means, of course, from Ed) tell you that Taela was the beloved of the builder of the Trail, the merchant Rorl Ossmran of Ordulin, and Tildaryn was the builder of the Ride (Antur Tildaryn, an investor and many-businesses-owner who began from humble beginnings in Yhaunn).

Yhaunn water and streets

- THO 14/12/15

Yhaunn is a gigantic bowl that's well watered because the prevalent winds blow onshore up its mouth, and bring thick, clinging morning mists (rooftop cisterns collect wash-water). Drinking water comes in carts from wells in the heights inland, and a cask "fillup" costs 1 cp (so, no creeks); other wagons taking the nightsoil away at 1 cp for a large bucket dumped. Tidal inundations aren't common, but storm surges are, blown ashore, which is why dockside warehouses have "high-crib" pallets (waist high on most adult humans), with the goods stacked atop those, and why certain cargoes are brought from storage higher up straight to loading or from ship-hold unloading. The Stiltways began as ways of moving things dryshod from upper level of warehouse A to upper level of warehouse B, and they now snake everywhere among dockside buildings and for two to three streets back from the docks. And yes, flooding sometimes reaches five or six streets back from the docks, but folks just move upstairs; the ground floors are used for cooking, and all good stored there are in boxes, casks, or sacks so they can readily be "hauled up" stairs, or put on a trapdoor platform let down from the ceiling and winched back up, to the floor above; most dockside buildings that aren't warehouses are businesses on the ground floor (fish markets and packers, coopers, carpenters, etc.) and have two or three floors of inhabited space above, each with its own trapdoor-winch-hoist connecting with adjacent floors.

As for the street differences you noticed, explanations are fairly simple: Urmlaspyr and Yhaunn "just grew" (Yhaunn in a crowded bowl) in a country where coin is king and there's little overall planning and authority, whereas Westgate, Myratma, and Zazesspur all had far more authoritarian local government at various times, that have the power and inclination to demolish unwanted buildings and enforce wider streets and a simpler street layout. Alleyways breed disease and crime and lack of accountability, and so should be eliminated. (Many capitol cities in our own real world bear evidence of large-scale past clearances and "improvements" of this sort.)

Dragon Coast

Carting Company, Harnheer's of Saerloon

- Ed 15/3/10

One of the largest and most successful carters that does coach runs (carries passengers) as well as swift small-cargo deliveries in the Dragon Coast region circa 1360s-1370s (the time setting of your campaign, if I recall correctly from earlier posts here) is Harnheer's of Saerloon, founded and run by the portly, worldly, terse, wily, and keen-witted entrepreneur Astigal Harnheer. He pays well, and employs both many family members and all the competent, trustworthy drovers and hire-guards he can find, managing to keep between 60 and 80 wagons and coaches on the road at any one time (a typical coach can hold six passengers and their belongings, sheltered from the weather, and more—but in far less comfort and shelter—in emergencies).

Harnheer's has offices in Suzail, Marsember, Arabel, Daerlun, Saerloon, Selgaunt, Ordulin, and Yhaunn, and the office staff in all of those places is responsible for placing ads in broadsheets, posting handbill notices wherever they can (and think the posting is in a place where it'll garner any business), distributing handbills in taverns and inns, and "talking up" the company in regular rounds of inns, taverns, warehouses, and markets. (This is typical of all such "fastcoach" companies.)

Fastcoach companies tend to have more irregular/flexible schedules than regular caravan costers, and to charge higher rates (but provide more personal service by deviating from a fixed route to make pickups and drop-offs, whereas the typical coster runs from their offices/yards/paddocks in one city or waystop to another, and passengers or clients have to arrange their own transport from those "set termini" (to use a real-world term; in the Realms, they would say "house to house" meaning the coster's home bases at both ends, NOT a client's home).

Harnheer's runs some unidentified coaches (often at the request of clients wishing to remain discreet/transact shady business/relocate without alerting authorities or creditors). However, most of their conveyances are painted with the company blazon and motto (a horizontal, forked-ends banner bearing the words in Common: "Faster And Safer").

The Harnheer blazon is a white circle with a horizontal red arrow entering its left edge halfway down, that runs to the center of the circle and ends there with its point at the exact center of the circle. From that point, three smaller arrows radiate out (one horizontal like the arriving arrow, one 45 degrees above this horizontal arrow, and one 45 degrees below this horizontal arrow). All three begin at the center of the circle as very thin lines, and broaden as they run to the right-hand edge of the circle, where they end in identical arrow-points.

On some of the Harnheer coaches, this circle isn't just painted on the doors; on one or both sides of the coach, it's an actual buckler or circular shield (removable if there's a need for defense), with the blazon painted on it.

Rardolphus Harnheer

- THO 15/3/10, responding to query about possible relation Rardolphus Harnheer, a drunk with a huge long nose

Yes, the coaching company owner is his younger brother. Rardolphus is still stumbling his way from noble household to handy Suzailan feast, around Cormyr. One of Ed's cozy comic NPCs. I'm quite fond of Rardolphus, actually.

Climate

The Dragon Coast is cool temperate, so...warm-ish during the three months following Mirtul, cool the rest of the year, and ice that ships can't readily break through freezes up the ports from sometime in December (when depends on severity of that winter) to very early Mirtul (again, varies) every year. It is always breezy and damp, which means morning and night fogs, frequent but brief storms, and occasional brief hard-blowing gales ("line squalls," in nautical parlance). Suzail, Saerloon, Selgaunt, Marsember, and Westgate, for example, all get snow in winter and frequent fogs or ice fogs. Marsember happens to get rain a LOT of the time, whereas Suzail and Westgate and Selgaunt tend to get very short rains, especially in mid-afternoon and in mornings before dawn or over "dawntime," but the windy weather means the clouds "blow through" and the rain ends and is replaced by moving cloud cover that often clears just before sunset and affords a clear sky evening, that then fogs in again after midnight and so allows frosts on rooftops and spires, but protects plants at ground level from killing frosts. Most coastal settlements have cobbled streets just to minimize what would otherwise be nigh-constant mud. Marsember is an always-damp place, dominated by mildew and with a non-windy localized microclimate, but all of the other coastal settlements in the area are breezy at the best of times, and windy much of the time (no one in Suzail wears silly hats that don't come with chin-straps or ties). Hope this is of help.

Reddansyr

Temple of Oghma

- THO 5/9/14

The temple of Oghma in Reddansyr is the Halls of the Binder. My notes add just this: "Grander title than the structure deserves."

Elversult

Guild Presence

- Ed 27/12/14

Elversult is a place where both Westgate-based criminal organizations and various local "startup" thieves' guilds have tried to establish dominance many times, and been crushed, largely because both various "good guys" AND undercover Zhentarim didn't want them to. In the process, local guilds have been corrupted and wrecked several times over (by the shady sorts co-opting guilds and using them as fronts), until the merchants of Elversult lost patience and managed to get local laws passed that ban guilds.

Which means merchants form small unofficial cabals, and the intercity costers provide a lot of investment and services-for-hire, but no one gains the local legal rights and near-monopolies and "trade

policing" that guilds do. So the short answer is: Elversult no longer has guilds and will be hostile to their refounding for quite some time.

Cormanthor

Flooded Forest

Site of lost elven kingdom (Lisenar?)

What happened?

- THO 19/5/10

I just unearthed this, from my campaign notes (derived from playing as a Knight, with Ed as DM):

Ralinthus says Aerlothlan was a family that fled from lost Lisenar after strife with other Lisen families that involved an infamous aerial spellbattle; a magic item exploded in midair when its wielder was hit by a spell, and rained down fire and wild magic that harmed many others; all the families involved were cast out.

"Ralinthus" was a sage in Elventree, but some of what he told us on various occasions was later discovered to be not just inaccurate, but either fabrications on his part or lies he repeated when he must have known they were falsehoods. "Some," I said, so what he said to us about the Aerlothlans may be true . . . or not. We DID manage to corroborate with other sources about the aerial spellbattle with the midair explosion, but those other sources were very vague about who was involved, why the battle took place, and what the aftermath was.

Myth Drannor

Inspiration (meta)

- Ed 9/5/10

I saw the elves of the Realms as a sophisticated, advanced race, now jaded and fading before the vigor and exploding population numbers of humans, and early on wanted to have a "lost city" of the elves, fabled for its abandoned treasure (gems, magic, and tools/everyday objects) that had remained unplundered for centuries because of the dangers of its ruins deep in the forest (the demons and devils, AND some everpresent magical effects that altered the local "way things work" [[i.e. prevented wizards just teleporting into the ruins, snatching something, and teleporting out again]]).

I wanted this city to be a fallen, tragic place, what was left of a brief shining example of elves, humans, dwarves, and others all dwelling, working, loving, and achieving together (and then I wanted to do what I did in ELMINSTER IN MYTH DRANNOR: show that the elves weren't "holier" than humans, but subject to the same rages, pettinesses, prejudices, and so on that humans are).

The concept of a field of magical effects (a "super-ward," or better put, a web of hundreds of wards) that had outlasted all of its casters but was now decaying in interesting (sometimes deadly) ways was too juicy NOT to use (it was a development of an old idea in fantasy and sf that I recall being very vividly brought to life in one of James H. Schmitz's Hub tales of Dasinger's agency, where a crashed spaceship has a still-operating fear projector aboard that killed the crew and prevents later visitors from getting any of the valuable gem cargo).

I cast around for a name for this concept, and my mind threw up the word "mythal" (yep, I made it up, and yes, the word "myth" is obviously the root source), and from that immediately came the idea that lots of cities would be called "Myth this" or "Myth that" to denote that they had a mythal; it would be a

source of pride. A mythal could keep inhabitants comfortably warm without burning firewood, for instance, in deep arctic winter, so people could come to live and trade knowing the time, effort, and expense of just keeping from freezing could be avoided.

For my own campaign purposes (I was playing D&D by this time, though the published Realms was still in the future), I wanted the "big danger" to suddenly go away, to create a "gold rush" amongst adventurers, to make the ruined city one vast run-and-gun fighting playground that my players could send their characters to, whenever they wanted, to fight a few more monsters, grab a little more treasure, and so on. However, I had superb players, and they immediately thought of the larger issue of keeping the most powerful magic out of the hands of grubby adventurers (and local tyrants or would-be tyrants in Zhentil Keep, Hillsfar, Mulmaster, Calaunt, and Sembia), and preserving the ruins for wiser folk (like the elves) to enter and refound the once-great City of Song.

That first city became "Myth Drannor" (DRANN-NOR, by the way, not "DRAIN-or"), again, because my mind just tossed it up (I can name things easily). Then came "Myth Rhynn," though I had no idea what city that name would be attached to . . . and then everybody got into the act, Steven Schend and Eric Boyd naming many "Myth cities" and detailing them, and coming up with detailed cities to go with other "Myth" names that my mind had so casually spewed out.

So there you are; the hitherto-partly-untold tale of the naming of Myth Drannor. Essential Realmslore. Enjoy. ;}

Use of name pre-mythal

- THO 13/2/10

The term was around, as a CONCEPT of glory to come, and therefore as a term of endearment for the city among many elves - - and a "safe" nickname that could readily be used in front of non-elves.

Tree of Souls post-Herald

- Ed 5/6/14

When the POSSIBLE danger of Thultanthar crashing became apparent (i.e. when the city started flying towards Myth Drannor, not when what El did became obvious) the Srinshree contacted all the Myth Drannan baelnorn she could and commanded them to get to the Tree of Souls and magically shield and defend it, warping the Weave to form a protective barrier around it (so when Thultanthar came crashing down, it would punch through the city like a spike, and protect the Tree). This was done, and the Tree has survived. There has been some consternation among certain readers about Myth Drannor being entirely in ruins, but not so. Like any city that's been fought through, a big cleanup is in order, but Thultanthar is a pretty small city, and Myth Drannor, being "at one with the forest" [growing trees as dwellings, trees and moss and open forest terrain everywhere, not human-habit "pave over everything" architecture, is a very large (in footprint) city. So a relatively small area of Myth Drannor was pancaked under the shattered remnants of Shade.

Windsong Tower

- Rhewtani quoting blueblade quoting Ed, Qs for Ed 12/1/11, referencing tower leaving during Weeping War then reappearing in Anauroch adventure

"Yes, it certainly seems as if it's back, or perhaps in two places at once, doesn't it?"
Which sure suggests that there's something "set up" here, that's not yet revealed...

Population After Thultanthar Crash

- Ed 5/6/14

Ed: The 4e population figures (10,000) are ROUGHLY correct, but the siege took some time to develop (mercenary armies being mustered in Sembia and then marched north), so the elves had warning, so many of their skilled artisans, pregnant shes, young children and families with young children, ailing elderly, wounded, and so on, GOT OUT (to Semberholme first and foremost, and to Evereska and elsewhere, too). Anyone who wanted to relocate rather than fight was given that option, without shame or recrimination.

In other words, the city was down to 6,400 or so “determined and able defenders” before the siege started, and they took heavy losses in the fighting by being worn down under the weight of sheer numbers; although they were inflicting very heavy losses on the attacking mercenaries, they were slowly beaten back - - and the very “open” nature of the city made it very hard to defend. The Coronal sent some vital individuals out of the fighting by making them envoys that she sent to elven communities all over the Realms to try to get volunteer reinforcements (few of which arrived on time). So in that way she saved another hundred or so.

However, the defenders died rather than surrender or flee, so the elves still in the city were reduced to around 1000 when it became apparent that the city couldn't be held, and the children, wounded, and elders still in the city were rushed out through the gates (as seen near the end of THE HERALD). The Coronal and Fflar were literally fighting back to back at the end, with a handful of defenders still standing, when Thultanthar came down - - and almost all of that last handful made it out to Semberholme.

So at the end of THE HERALD, a few blocks of central Myth Drannor are rubble, under the shattered remnants of Thultanthar. Scavengers (monsters) are roaming the corpse-littered vicinity, and there's minor damage to the outlying city, which is abandoned - - probably not for long. The surviving mercenaries are foraging/pillaging/behaving like brigands, and Sembia is in such disarray that there's no chance of Sembia (or for that matter, any other realm) “reaching in” to annex or occupy the ruins. Perhaps 5,000 elves perished defending Myth Drannor - - and yes, the Tree of Souls survives. All indications are that the Srinshree did not; she sacrificed herself to save her people and smash Larloch (did HE survive? Unknown, but my bet would be that he did). Did Dove? Doubtful; she was “out of” silver fire, and wanted to die (to be with her beloved Florin), but may end up surviving as “a voice in the Weave” (the same fate as some of the Tanthul princes, and possibly The Simbul).

Weakened Mythal

- Ed 1/7/14

Q: Am i wrong in assuming that the events in Tears so White have greatly influenced the outcome of The Herald battle for Myth Drannor by disrupting beyond repair the mythal and/or the interface/control room through which the Ssrinshree and the baelnorns operated/maintained it?

A: No, you're not wrong in assuming that, at all. :) The events of “Tears So White” did indeed disrupt the mythal into an instability that made it beyond repair without the concerted work of a large number of skilled mages, working together, to “take down” the mythal and then raise it again in stages. Very disruptive, and something none of the elves involved trusted non-elf wielders of the Art to take part in. So, the baelnorn tinker with it daily, and the Srinshree works on it “from above and outside,” when she

can, in very much the same long-term, tiny-steps way that Elminster and Storm were repairing Weave anchors.

Srinshee Protecting the Mythal

- THO reporting Ed, 1/7/14, answering why the Srinshee thought protecting the mythal from Shade was protecting her race

Ed did indeed mean "save her race," because if Telamont (or Shar!), when using the mythal power to take over the Weave, EXAMINES the mythal-work in detail, there is something of the mental signatures/bloodlines of all those who helped raise the mythal in the first place, or worked to restore it later, "written into" the mythal. To put things in a cruder metaphor, the mythal contains DNA from those who've created it or renovated it. Which means anyone with sufficient power (i.e. command of the Weave, or just archwizard-level mastery of the Art) who is also armed with this knowledge, can readily craft spells that easily AFFECT ALL ELVES, making it easy for them to selectively enslave/sicken/influence/harm elves, or elves and half-elves, out of mixed populations (i.e. kill all the elves in Waterdeep, but leave the humans alone). THAT is what the Srinshee knew and was fighting against.

I agree that without knowing this, her actions could seem heartless, and/or you could easily conclude Ed was confusing the elves of Myth Drannor for "all elves left in the Realms."

House Auglamyr

Survival post Weeping War

- THO 1/4/10

Ed says House Auglamyr did survive the Weeping War.

House Starym

Overview

- Ed 18/6/11

House Starym has always been a proud, influential, "let's DO things" family who believed that elves are best suited to rule the Realms as they please because they are the most versatile, creative, artistic, far-sighted, intelligent race, and not "corrupted by gold and the earth itself" (as dwarves are) or "governed by bloodlust and selfishness and the glee of wanton destruction" (as humans are). Individual Starym have been very wise, wealthy, diplomatic, and competent as leaders in battle, but the stereotype of the family that's developed among other elves (and leaked to other races) is of overweening pride, haughtiness that overrides all else.

Views on other races

- Ed 19/6/11

Like all families, the Starym aren't monolithic in their outlook, and each younger generation repudiates some of what their elders teach them and believe in (while at the same time being heavily influenced by it). However, in general (like all stereotypes, these may fall down entirely when applied to specific Starym individuals, and specific members of the races I mention here), the Starym think of dragons as noble but flawed, worthy of study to learn from their failings and their might and magical nature. The Starym consider half-elves to be the undesirable, degenerate result of "elven weakness" who are best used as expendable pawns, and not encouraged to breed or persist as a "people." They will work with

them, but never willingly breed with them.

Gnomes and halflings are seen by the Starym as very much alike: half-witted but useful (as engineers, crafters-of-gadgets, and agile, good-at-climbing-and-baking, and for nasty, dirty jobs) potential servants, who have their place in the Realms, but should not be trusted underfoot in matters of true import (i.e. trade with them, use them as servants, but they should dwell apart from us). Otherworldly beings are similarly mistrusted but also viewed as interesting for their potential powers and connections (some Starym even advocate deliberate breeding of captive or servant beings, to exploit the resulting offspring as "purpose-made" servants/slaves).

Again, I stress that this is a stereotype; individual Starym may not hold such views. House Starym are often seen as the very "worst" sort of racist, elitist, sneering-down-at-all-others elves, and SOME Starym play this role to the hilt, but only a VERY FEW don't recognize that it is a role they are choosing to adopt, as opposed to "the truth, the rightful way of things." A few younger Starym are disgusted by this role and family members who promote it; most such individuals depart the family and take other names.

Heraldry

- Ed 18/6/11

Down the years, House Starym has used a great variety of blazons, both personal and family, but the two most popular House badges (worn by retainers and warriors attached to the House) are as follows:

- "The Glory" : silver field or shield, with a horns-down dark purple or black crescent moon in its upper third, bisected by a slender, hilt-down and point-up slender vertical black swordblade (edged with a thin line of silver), the hilt extending well below the crescent and the point reaching just above it, with nineteen small silver "longpoint" (that is, longest rays are vertical, second-longest are horizontal, other rays smaller) stars scattered randomly across the crescent. (Nineteen representing the nineteen brothers and cousins of the family at the self-proclaimed time of House Starym rising to "rightfully" dominate elven affairs.)
- "The Gard": black crescent moon, horns-down and with a line of six equal-sized longpoint stars (representing the six major branches of the family in later centuries) along its uppermost curve, three on either side of the "gard" itself, which is a vertical silver double-bladed dagger bisecting the crescent. The gard has a point at the bottom and another at the top, and flares slowly from both of them to form an elongated diamond - - except that where the widest part of the diamond should be (in the center of its crossing of the crescent), two opposed, back-to-back semicircular "bites" cut into the diamond, representing the hilt of this mythic weapon (which represents the vigilance of the Starym against foes anywhere, within its ranks and race and without).

Black, silver, stars, and crescent moons are recurring devices in Starym blazonry, but individual arms and simplified badges may be far different from these two most popular examples. However, almost all elves of any community the Starym have dwelt in, and ALL Starym, will recognize the Glory and the Gard for what they are, even if they've never used either badge themselves.

Uvaeren

Library of Uvaeren

Keeper after death of Ualair the Silent

- Steven Schend, Qs for Ed 1/1/10, responding to query about fate of library after Ualair dies raising Rhymanthiin

Remember that Ualair was partnered with someone in the Fall of Myth Drannor and the novel Blackstaff, so it stands to reason that such a person might know and be the new keeper of said lore. And given his fate in the novel, I suspect he's still the hale and hearty librarian within Rhymanthiin (at least as far as I've heard, seen, or assumed).

Yeah, I had to get up and check my works to find the name that was escaping me: Rhymallos the gnome (disguised as a mezzoloth during the Fall of Myth Drannor and restored to health and gnomekind with Rhymanthiin).

Of course, official WotC lore can and may supercede this, but 'twas my intent that said lore was to be contained in the City of Hope.

Dalelands

Dalesfolk vs Dalefolk

- THO 16/3/10

They are used interchangeably. "Dalesfolk" is slightly more scholarly (sages, courtiers) and "Dalefolk" slightly more colloquial (a guy at an inn talking), but these are shades and tendencies rather than hard-and-fast.

River Lis Crossing

- THO 16/1/14 (in response to a request about a possible crossing of the Lis)

The place you refer to is "Lisen" (called by some "Lisenar"). No settlement, but a mutable arrangement of a few tents, on the east side of the Lisen only, where rafts are built, repaired, and loaded, replacement poles are cut, and rafts are poled through the quicksands/across the evershifting river channel, either down the Lis or more often across it but tugged a little downstream during the crossing. Unloaded rafts are usually winched (pulled on ropes, using large treetrunks as pulleys) back upriver, and secured there until needed for a return crossing, often by someone else entirely.

The horrid clouds of stinging insects, reek of the mud, and lack of ready food keeps Lisen deserted when not in use for crossings, rather than being settled by any permanent residents. Who tend to get hunted by monsters preying on anyone who lingers in the area anyway.

Battledale

Mosstrunks

- THO 19/9/12, referring to reference in Polyhedron #64

"The Mosstrunks" is a VERY thick tangle of very old trees (hence the name; there's lots of moss growing on their very thick trunks) just west of the Ghost Holds. It's where the forest grew so thickly it was more trouble than it was worth for humans to carve farther west, so instead they cleared forest to north and south, lengthening the Ghost Holds and Battledale along a north-south axis.

Daggerdale

Nearby Place-spirit

- Ed 22/3/10

Orraun is the name (not widely known, even locally) of a place-spirit that guards (against evil-aligned creatures and "despoilers that belch fire") a tiny ravine (deep but narrow gorge or gulley) sacred to Mielikki, in the northwestern wild woods of Daggerdale (in rocky, rising untilled ground, but not so far

west that these foothills are rising into the cliffs and rock faces of the mountains that border Daggerdale on the west).

Deepingdale

Lord Terms

- THO 4/1/13, replying to query about Lord Ulath Theremen's long tenure

Deepingdale has six-year terms for their lords, and that Thereman (grave, just, gentle, and so well-respected) has won three in a row, the middle one uncontested/"acclaimed."

Politics, Lord, Sembia Relations

- Ed 6/1/13

Deepingdale thrives most on two things: being the "gateway to the Dales" for Sembians who don't want to risk the hardships of long, dreary, dangerous forays into "the howling northern wilderness" where any sort of monster could be lurking behind every tree - - and being a shopping window for the Dales, into the splendors and variety of shining goods available in Sembia.

Or to put it another way, the dale thrives on trade, as peddlers and Dale carters and farmers and caravan coster buyers and Sembian "smallcoiners" (family or individual entrepreneurs) all congregate to buy and sell in the warehouses and shops and the wagonworks of Highmoon. That wagonworks is an important repair depot not just for wagons, but for all manner of broken or worn-out goods (plough needs new blades? Anything [sleighs, sledges] needs new runners or wheels?

Fresh fruit (mainly apples, but also gooseberries and the like) and vegetables, trained horses and oxen and mules, lumber and tree oils, all from the Dales, and almost everything else (notably lanterns and lamp oils, fine tools and pots and pans, fine textiles and finished garments, fine footwear and hats and cloaks) from Sembia, or at least from the traders of Sembia (who bring in goods from all over the world for Sembia, the smallcoiners seeing the Dales as the "forgotten market" on the way to the Moonsea that's theirs to exploit).

All of which means Deepingdale balances on the proverbial swordblade between thriving as the place it is because of its proximity to Sembia, and trying to avoid being swallowed up by Sembia and losing its independence. This loss of sovereignty is a very real fear, considering the number of Sembians resident in Highmoon, the propensity for Sembia to hire mercenaries whenever the Zhentarim or anyone else is rumored to be on a war footing and send them on regular patrols along the trade road that's the spine and lifeblood of Deepingdale (not to mention taking over local inns to house them, which is a garrison in all but name), and the Sembian habit, every few generations, of buying land, erecting a grand and fortified mansion on it, and installing a "governor" therein, unheralded to locals before his first proclamation, to "rightfully govern" the place.

So although the folk of Deepingdale have many family ties and daily trade relations with Sembia, and owe their (relative to other Dalesfolk) wealth and lifestyle to their proximity to Sembia, they tend to see themselves as Dalefolk under "friendly siege" from Sembia, rather than Sembians-in-waiting or different from the folk of neighboring Dales (with the exception of Archendale, but then most Dalefolk consider the Arkhen a "difficult, amoral-at-best warrior breed different from the rest of us").

Deepingdale wants to keep its independence without being as difficult or warlike as the Arkhen, so they need a strong leader who is a reasonable and just diplomat, a "do something" (rule locally, capably and well, giving no Sembian any reasonable pretext for sending in Sembian-paid troops to keep the peace or administer Sembian law in a Sembian style) rather than a "do nothing" person.

In other words, they don't want or need a warcaptain or a blusterer -- and greatly fear getting someone Sembia can bribe (the primary reason they long ago decided they would have an elected lord, not a hereditary ruling line they could do nothing lawful about, the moment Sembians buried every member of it in gold coins and corrupted them utterly). In short, the folk of Deepingdale need something just shy of a living saint.

And in Ulath Thereman, they just might have found it.

His mother was an elf who ranged through the woods in the first half of the 1300s to keep anyone from occupying ruined Myth Drannor, and his father, Korond Thereman, was a local miller and carriage-builder, grave and thoughtful, who sold maps as a sideline (and was quite likely a Harper friend). Ulath grew up in a household where a certain quiet, lone sort of traveler was always welcome -- the sort who brought new maps for the Theremans to copy, and news from all over the Realms. Ulath grew up listening well and seeing master "gentle manipulators" at work, and became one himself. He has two younger sisters who left Deepingdale with elves to range the forests, but has no desire to travel the Realms himself: he sees his place as being the rock that holds Deepingdale steady, as the rest of the Realms travels through it. Because he has always discussed matters with his neighbours, over maps of the world, most of the non-Sembian-import elders and business owners in Highmoon see him as having an "insider's understanding of what's going on, all over the world" of the sort they believe great kings must have. They have heard how he sees things and reasons, and so they KNOW he has the interests of Deepingdale at heart and that he fiercely defends its independence and that it must do its own policing and have its own laws . . . so they trust him.

Therefore, he keeps getting re-elected lord of the dale. He beat a blustering old local farmer who championed joining Sembia "for all the money" to gain his first term, ran unopposed for a second six-year term, and ran against a hotheaded local youth openly sponsored by Sembian interests the third time around. (Popular local entertainment in Highmoon these days is watching for signs of Sembia preparing to covertly sponsor a candidate in Thereman's fourth election, and how they'll try to go about it without getting caught at it.)

Ulath serves as Deepingdale's judge and chief administrator, the man who hires and fires its lawkeepers and the man who makes spending decisions. In all of this, he discusses matters openly with any citizen who cares to arrive in the room with the table strewn with maps, and talk about anything with him. The folk of Deepingdale respect him, and many of them love him: he has become one of the foundation-stones of their world.

None of which means Deepingdale isn't a simmering cauldron of plots and counterplots, as every last smallcoiner seeks to gain more local influence and "an edge" over rivals, and more distant and powerful Sembian interests look to take over Deepingdale without their control becoming known in Cormyr or the rest of the Dales (various high-ranking Sembians have in the past tried to take over almost all of the Dales, in various one-at-a-time schemes . . . and various Dales have shipped the bodies of the agents sent by those high-ranking Sembians back to those high-ranking employers, sometimes accompanied by mocking bills for the butchery and cleanup -- and these years of attempted expansion have brought blunter warnings from Cormyr, Hillsfar, and Zhentil Keep of what will happen if Sembia is ever foolish enough to openly annex anything more than it's already taken (in the words of one of Azoun IV's warnings: "Sembia's drive, prosperity, and mercantile successes are shining examples to us all. These achievements have been largely possible because Sembia has in the main avoided costly warfare. An avoidance that cannot continue if Sembia's expansionist ambitions overcome its vaunted good sense. Just as Sembia itself cannot continue to exist if ever its neighbours feel overly threatened by Sembia's

attempts to expand, and decide to do something about it.”)

Most of Ulath Thereman’s time is spent ruling Deepingdale well to give its citizens the feeling of living in a relatively safe, pleasant, bustling place; in other words, to make being of Deepingdale worth something, and so worth preserving. The rest of his time is spent blunting and frustrating various Sembian plots (often with the covert aid of Harpers, some local adventurers and energetic merchants, a handful of genuinely “friendly” Sembians who don’t want Deepingdale’s independence to ever end or its character to be overwhelmed so it becomes a part of Sembia in fact if not in name, and a few Cormyrean Highknights and other agents).

Thereman has been so successful in his rule that much of the daily plotting and scheming in Deepingdale these days is directed at getting the best deals and having the most influence within the ever-shifting cabals of merchants, within local trade - - NOT in trying to bring down or subvert Deepingdale’s government, any more. Those who want the dale conquered are waiting for Thereman’s death.

For his part, Thereman sees his best insurance against assassination in the same thing that will lead to the brightest future for Deepingdale: a strong group of successors, all friends and all born and bred locals, who will carry on after him (and his mother, who remains behind the scenes but his most trusted confidant, advisor, and lurking bodyguard). As he once put it: “If there are too many quality folk dedicated to a bright future for Deepingdale for foes to kill them all without killing all Deepingdale, my work will have borne fruit. Deepingdale is its folk, and a common dream they will fight for - - not fences, fields, houses, and road signs.”

(BTW, Deepingdale’s borders are marked by two stone cairns beside the trade road, each graven simply with the Dale’s name. Highmoon itself is heralded by no signs at all.)

Featherdale

Established families (1350s-70s)

- Ed 23/3/10

Featherdale had a LOT of long-established families until the disruptions of the mid- to later 1300s and onward (the refugees fleeing the plague that hit Scardale, the various wars, etc.), but I can name two human families of note, one of them very prolific and thus numerous (intermarried everywhere), and the other wealthy, powerful, and skilled at increasing their influence without making enemies of everyone by acting too superior/misusing their power too often.

The first (numerous) family is the Orthren clan, and the second (influential and wealthy) is the Flarindor family. The Orthrens have no real matriarch or patriarch, lacking a strict family hierarchy or “centre,” but the Flarindors have an aging, sophisticated, even jaded patriarch (Elscan), a hard-as-nails matriarch (Elscan’s wife Myrlindra), and an up-and-coming patriarch-in-waiting: their jovial, florid, but mean and calculating underneath eldest son, Belmoar.

The badge of the Orthrens is a winged bird, end-on (thus, a simple gray “V” of wings) superimposed on a moon (circle of silver); this symbolizes a family legend of an early Orthren being carried off by a great bird, that came especially to bear him away to an unknown grave, after he died.

The badge of the Flarindors is a blazing banner: the upper part of a staff, on a slight diagonal (from the viewer’s lower right to upper left) with a slender flag or standard streaming off to the viewer’s right, entirely engulfed in orange flames (no device can be seen on the flag thanks to the fire).

Mistledale

Captain Baergil of the Riders of Mistledale

- Ed 1/9/11

As it happens, several "Captain Baergils" have led the Riders of Mistledale down the years.

The most famous is a local legend who died heroically during the Time of Troubles. This Baergil was a former Captain of the Riders at the time of his death, having resigned from the Riders to pursue a holy life as a priest of Tempus. As a Warpriest resident in Mistledale, he sacrificed himself in a mighty magic that called up a ring of skulls that did much to help the sorely-outnumbered defenders of Mistledale defeat the invading Sword of the South army (Sembian mercenaries led by the Zhentarim).

There were two Captain Baergils before the famous one, and one since; all are blood-related. The first, Ellusk Baergil, was Captain of the Riders from 1156 DR to 1180 DR, and is remembered as a good, just, and capable man; the second, Horarn Baergil, was Captain for only a few months in 1242 DR before dying in battle against brigands in the forests of eastern Mistledale, and is recalled as a large, blustering, reckless hothead of a man.

The fourth and most recent Captain Baergil (if your campaign is set as the Spellplague is fading), is Emrius Baergil, a young, swift-witted, widely-liked man who never forgets a face or name, and is a mediocre soldier but a "natural" as a diplomat and investigator of crimes. He became Captain of the Riders in 1477 DR (when almost twenty-three years of age), and has covertly been training young boys and girls of the dale to be "eyes and ears" who report suspicious sights to the Riders, and keep watch over certain residents and visitors. He is a descendant of Darrask Baergil's older brother Athror (a florid, successful and therefore wealthy, rather pompous man who owned several mills in northern Sembia; born 1301 DR, died 1391 DR).

The famous Captain Baergil was born Darrask Baergil on a farm in Mistledale, just southwest of Ashabenford, in 1302 DR (his parents, Angram and Baelaetha Baergil, were part owners of the farm, and dwelt there for the rest of their lives after they had their family, Angram dying of winter-fever in 1333 DR and Baelaetha of heartstop in 1337 DR; they had seven children, Darrask being the second, and the second of three boys). A good rider and forester from his earliest years, with a love of strategy and an even stronger love of Mistledale, Darrask joined the militia young, and became a Rider of Mistledale in 1321 DR, a year when eleven Riders retired (some of them thanks to debilitating wounds, others from the aches and failings of advancing age).

Darrask Baergil rose to become Swordar (then the sole second-in-command of the Riders; in the years since, there have been as many as three Swordars at once, the title shifting to mean something akin to "senior patrol leader") of the Riders in 1332 DR, upon the death of Swordar Galaerak Darrowman (of an infection after being severely wounded in a winter fight with wolves). In 1335 DR, Darrask Baergil succeeded Ranthorn Hawkhar as Captain of the Riders of Mistledale (after Hawkhar lost his legs, home, and family to murderous house-burning raiders, and was taken by his kin to northern Sembia to live out his last years in their care), a rank Baergil resigned in Mirtul of 1352 DR.

As Captain, Darrask Baergil is remembered as a worldly-wise, weatherbeaten man who faced danger calmly, and was customarily polite. He had steel-gray eyes, hair, and moustache (formerly brown), was of average height, had very hairy forearms, and walked in his later years with a slight limp thanks to his right thigh being gored by a boar and subsequently pierced by brigand AND Zhentilar weapons. He ate and dressed simply, having interest in practicality and none at all in fashion, never married but was known to be fast friends with no less than five women of Mistledale and two travelling Harpers who often visited the dale, and if he fathered any children, the folk of Mistledale never learned of them.

He liked roast boar drenched in a red wine mushroom sauce, gnome-brewed mint ale from western Sembia, and firewine, but lived simply and customarily ate and drank almost everything. He was never without a sharp belt knife, and loved to whittle small lengths of chain and attached figurines to pass the time (these he gave away to children or acquaintances). He collected maps and scraps of the lore of Mistledale (that he wrote down in small chapbooks). The dancing of elves enthralled him, and he collected fine swords but never used them; long after his death, his kin discovered a Cormanthurian elfblade (+1 keen longsword) among them.

Most who had dealings with Captain Darrask Baergil found him to be a fearless but kindly veteran, a shrewd judge of character and a peerless defender of the dale always alert and prepared for trouble and treachery. As a strategist he was the equal of many a king, but otherwise he was a simple man who loved simple things, that could be summed up (as he once did) as "Mistledale safe, prosperous, and happy." He was friendly to all but had few close friends. Darrask Baergil could be stern and ruthless when he had to be, and in game terms began as a LN (and drifted to NG, later CG) human male fighter, probably F2 when a junior Rider, F4 when he was Swordar, and up to F7 or F8 by the time he resigned as Captain.

After several vivid dreams in which Tempus appeared to him and called upon him, Darrask Baergil retired from the Riders in 1352 DR to apply to Dale-based Warpriests of Tempus to become a priest of Tempus. He was accepted, served with eager diligence despite no longer being young, and rose swiftly in rank and regard among the holy devout of the Wargod. At the time of his death, he was probably (in game terms) a 7th level cleric. (In both his holy and Rider careers, Darrask Baergil's swift advancement was due to his personal prowess, energy, and character, and the general "busy nonstop adventuring" nature of both lives he led.)

- THO 1/9/11

One clarification/amplification, from Ed: Baergil collected maps of everywhere, not just Mistledale, but collected lore (usually verbal accounts that he then wrote down) only pertaining to Mistledale.

Shadowdale

At Time of Knights' Arrival

- THO 21/4/11

There was an air of tension, and deep cynicism, among the folk of the dale, who were expecting to be overrun sometime soon by huge Zhentilar armies. For some seasons (after the death of Lord Aumry), the Zhents had made forays into the dale (including proclaiming Jyordhan as "Lord") but been kept from conquering it because the drow trading with certain unscrupulous human traders (in Sembia and Hillsfar and Cormyr) through their surface connection at (the ruins of) Castle Grimstead, just west of the dale, were occupying the Twisted Tower.

Whenever Zhents entered the Tower, the drow butchered them. Whenever Zhents tarried in Shadowdale overnight, drow emerged from the Underdark and slaughtered them.

In the midst of all this, Syluné and Elminster and Storm (plus the Harpers from all over the Realms shuttling to and from Storm's farm, and also at times to Syluné's Hut and Elminster's tower) did their best to keep as many folk of Shadowdale alive as possible, and to eliminate any REALLY bold/strong drow AND Zhent forces.

Into this uneasy cauldron of beautiful forest and lurking death we Knights stepped, and had to fight our way into the "abandoned" (in truth, drow-infested) Tower and fight to hold it, while the folk of the dale

watched us rather suspiciously. We befriended Jhaele and were made welcome at the Old Skull Inn, but everyone else held back warily. In part that was because of the behaviour of the Zhent "Lord of the Tower" who'd preceded us, in part that was due to the anticipation that our arrival would provoke the long-expected Zhent army attack (eventually, it did), and in part that was because the Dalefolk had a local problem: a werewolf in their midst (Lune Lyrohar; see the census in the Old Grey Box) that they were hoping we'd take care of; it was their "little test for us," and when we did eliminate her, but with regret and respect, we rose in the regard of the locals, and they STARTED to accept us. Florin attracted a lot of interest from local females (and didn't exploit that - - but Torm DID exploit that, as you suspected).

When we Knights first arrived in Shadowdale, there was "officially" (according to the Zhents, anyway) a (Zhent) Lord of Shadowdale, but in daily truth and practice, Jhaele had the most influence and her inn was the meeting-place and "court of public opinion" for local social matters, Sylune was the local "doctor," Storm and her Harpers were the local law enforcement, and Elminster was the "backup threat" they could reference but who hardly ever appeared.

So WE became the local law enforcement, being watched like hawks and judged by all. Right away. There was no "just use it as a stop-over" until much, much later, when Mourngrym was Lord, after Doust's retirement.

- THO 3/6/11

The folk of the dale viewed the Twisted Tower as "haunted," and shunned it. They sometimes saw drow "lurking" in the woods (along with other "strange" and "terrible" creatures, though the Harpers fought to keep such critters from local raiding, patrolling in the trees where few locals saw them), but there was no general knowledge that drow were infesting the Tower . . . just that folk who explored it, or tried to live in it, always disappeared.

Word was spread locally (by certain traders from Mistedale who were secretly working with the drow) that the Tower wasn't just haunted, it was cursed, and anyone who went into it, or the woods west of the River Ashaba and north of the overland trade road (i.e. where the overgrown foundations of Castle Grimstead were known to be, and the drow tunnels emerged onto the surface), would either die right away or acquire the curse and die slowly and horribly later. The drow sentries, with their poisoned crossbow bolts, were both ruthless and very efficient at killing EVERYONE they saw (yes, playing children included), to reinforce this (and to keep anyone from seeing the caves/tunnel mouths and surviving)...so local Dalefolk just "didn't go into the Tower" or into the trees north of the road. Not even adventuresome youths. Too many people had disappeared.

So there wasn't talk of abandoning the dale, just "don't go near there" (meaning the western center of the dale).

The social center of the dale was the Old Skull Inn, and locals just didn't go west of it, except on the trade road in bright daylight, or south of the road (to the smithy, wagonworks, etc.).

When we arrived, the locals were more edgy/upset about the killings done by the werewolf, and worried about the "inevitable" coming invasion of the Zhents (which was seen as an inevitable conquest, being as the Dalefolk really hadn't the numbers to effectively fight them; Storm's visiting Harpers were seen as "wandering outlanders" rather than local residents who could be trusted to stay and fight).

It was an interesting time. By then, we'd settled into our "acting" style of roleplaying, and Ed was VERY good at playing all the NPCs and describing the mood of the dale, a physically beautiful but often "tense of atmosphere" place.

Zhent Lord at this time

- THO 22/4/11

Heh. They sent dozens (perhaps scores) of Zhent-appointed "Lords" riding into the dale. Long before we arrived, the folk of Shadowdale took grim satisfaction in slaying those who didn't flee (a handful bolted on into Cormyr, seeing their doom but knowing they also had to leave the Brotherhood, change their names and appearances, and start new lives far from the Keep), and caravan-sending parts of them back to the Keep. It was their way of defying Manshoon's presumptuous "I'll conquer you soon, so I'll pretend I've conquered you already" behaviour.

Manshoon was apparently amused, and started using Shadowdale as a testing-ground for overly-ambitious Zhentilar.

"Time of No Lords"

- THO 22/4/11

It's a period of time in Shadowdale, and from the POV of the folk of Shadowdale THEY had no lords (a "rightful" Lord of Shadowdale being someone who holds the Pendant of Ashaba, lives in the Tower of Ashaba, and fulfills all the duties of lordship, including governing the dale, serving as "justicar" [magistrate], organizing Dalefolk in all sorts of local everyday activities, providing aid and shelter when the need arises, etc.), they naturally call it the "Time of No Lords."

The Zhents don't refer to it at all.

Geography

- Ed 22/6/15

the Old Skull (the big rocky knob that juts up in the center of Shadowdale) is volcanic in origin. The underground lake also feeds the River Ashaba, by means of a tiny stream that rises to the surface elsewhere in Shadowdale.

Old Skull

Place-Spirit

- THO 22/3/10

In the case of the Old Skull spirit, I'd say it has very little power, that it's not mobile at all and has no "reach" (so it can't affect ANYTHING beyond the Old Skull except perhaps for how far rocks it dislodges can roll/tumble), and that it cares very little about what sentient or lesser-intelligence creatures are around it, EXCEPT as they harm or change the Old Skull itself (so it's the reason there's been no mining or quarrying on/in the Old Skull, but on the other hand it does nothing against guards who regularly burn signal-fires atop the Old Skull and keep a huge "beacon" there, ready to light).

- Ed 22/3/10

The name of the Old Skull place-spirit, these days, is usually just "THE Old Skull," but to the elves and past generations of human dwellers in Shadowdale, it was known as "Duskul" or "Daelithaen." (The "-aen" suffix is frequent in place-spirit names.)

Name of path leading to Elminster's Tower

- THO 22/8/11

The folk of Shadowdale named the little flagstone footpath that leads from the caravan road (the Northride) to Elminster's Tower. It was originally a jesting name bestowed incredulously by locals who'd wandered out of the Old Skull with tankards in hand to gawk at the sight of six heralds (not High Heralds, but court envoys from Cormyr, Hillsfar, various Sembian cities, and elsewhere) lined up to get to speak to Elminster (as a sage; they wanted his "definitive" opinion on disentangling inheritance disputes regarding the lands held by a probably extinct noble family, the Halnsors, in all of their various territories) . . . but later the folk of Shadowdale became quite proud of it. The path is a "lane" only in the most generous use of the term.

Dealing with garbage

- Blueblade referencing Ed session, Qs for Ed 14/5/10

I remember an early Milwaukee GenCon Ed-as-DM Realms charity game set in Shadowdale, where some minor NPCs were "out back" burning trash. If PCs were alert enough to notice WHAT they were burning, it went a long way toward the PCs solving the central mystery of the adventure.

Which I can't remember. I didn't play in the game, I just got to "sit in" and observe, which Ed allowed (for one thing, when players had to leave due to other events, real-life commitments or even just to go to the bathroom, an observer sometimes got to take over their character, even for just a few minutes). So at least SOME folk of Shadowdale burn garbage.

The Flour Pot Bakery (referring to a reference in Elminster's Ecologies)

- THO 11/1/14

In Shadowdale, almost everyone does their own baking (in outdoor "backyard" ovens; I put the backyard in quotes because it's not a term that anyone in the Realms would recognize except in cases of inns or castles that have multiple courtyards/stableyards, so one of them could be termed a "back" yard). So in fact the dale has only one bakery that's a standalone business.

So not only is The Flour Pot Shadowdale's finest bakery - - it's Shadowdale's ONLY bakery. (At the time being written about.)

Sea of Fallen Stars

Starmantle Reach

- THO 1/11/12, replying to query about unnamed reach that becomes Dragonmere to west

You have stumbled upon a reach that has several competing names: "Starmantle Reach" is the oldest, most poetic, and most widespread, but Westgate has always vastly preferred either "West Reach" or "Westgate Reach," and of course to Sembians, it's "the Sembian Sea" or "sea of Sembia."

So most maps just leave it blank.

Amn

Athkatla

Heraldry

- Ed 14/3/10

A circular shield of rich purple, upon which is a scarlet equilateral triangle, single point uppermost, filling the shield so all three points touch its edges. In the center of the shield is a white diamond, long axis horizontal; around the edge of the shield, but just a little inward from the actual edge, is a ring of twelve

gold coins, all identical circular featureless discs. The purple represents wealth and refinement, the red textiles and luxury, the diamond supreme wealth, and the coins the wealth of all the Realms, flowing into Athkatla. (Not a subtle blazon, I must say.)

Crimmor

Heraldry

- Ed 11/3/10

A white, borderless shield crossed horizontally at its midpoint by a blue band (bar), representing the river. Centered on this band are three golden identical eight-spoked wagon wheels, the central one overlapping the edges of the outer two (representing caravan trade).

Ironshar Family

- Baleful Avatar overhearing Ed, Qs for Ed 12/7/10, at one of his long-ago GenCon talks

Ironshar family. Important in trading ointments, physics (medicines), addictive drugs, weapons. Amn, Scornubel, "respectable" in Cormyr, Sembia. Now hunted by Zhents.

The Artel

- THO referencing Ed, referring to a tyrant in Dragon #106 article "Open Them, If You Dare"

By "northern Amn," Ed here means the mountains that define the northern borders of Amn, and the foothills between them and just south of them within Amn, where outlaws have long lurked and the rule of Amn has long been ignored or tested (Ed's long-running convention adventures featuring the Baron's Blades, of the Barony of Hawkhill in northeasternmost Amn, represent the enforcement arm of one of the rulers installed to tame these wild backland "high country" ranches and farms.

I don't have anything in my notes on the Artel, but there was a recurring stream of outlaw leaders, petty tyrants, and more powerful tyrants who held sway over these areas whenever Amn's back was turned, so to speak. The Artel would be a "more powerful tyrant."

Moonshaes

Callidyr

Heraldry

- THO 16/8/11

The silver bear on black banner is a "battle banner" or simplified badge used in battle (has to be simple, easily recognized from a distance, etc.). The blazon of Callidyr is, if I recall long-ago Realmsplay correctly, a castle keep [single tower]. The ruling family and other city-resident nobles, including the royal family, will all have their own blazons (AND simplified badges).

Toaridge-At-The-Suns-Setting

Location

- GK, Qs for Ed 24/5/10

Toaridge is the small cluster of islands just north of the Nelanther and south and east of the Moonshaes.

Nelanther Isles

Dardolphin Isle

- Ed 21/1/13

It's one of the smaller, hitherto-unnamed-in-published-lore islands of the Nelanther (in the southeastern most cluster of islets).

Drelvross / Dragonpeak Rock

- Ed 16/6/12

Dulgund

Named for the dwarf who first began mining here (circa 1108 DR), Dulgund Greatanvil, this small, spartan stone settlement was once an important Sword Coast island port because of its rich iron mines (very pure veins of iron ore, easily accessed through mountainside caverns that had formerly been dragon lairs).

Dulgund stood on the east or landward side of the mountains that covered (or comprised, if one prefers) all of the isle of Drelvros, around the seabird-haunted, rocky island's sole small inlet (natural harbor).

Drelvros was a legendarily fearless seacaptain who perished (with his ship, and all hands on it) somewhere near the island when he sailed onto jagged rocks during a blinding storm in 994 DR.

One of The Nelanther or "Pirate Isles," Drelvros is less about the shape of a cashew nut ("krail" nuts in the Realms, BTW), with the long curving back being its west side. Less than a mile long and about a third of that wide at its widest point, it is essentially, these days, a bare rock outcrop, though one freshwater creek spills down out of its interior on the northern landward side, and supports a handful of windswept trees and shrubs. Drelvros can be found north and west of the Sea Tower of Irphong (it's the next island out from where the Sea Tower stands).

Dulgund was largely washed away in a terrific storm early in the winter of 1163 DR, that also flooded the iron workings (and drowned Dulgund Greatanvil and his fellow delvers, who by that time had dug down into the Underdark, and were beset by its fiercer inhabitants and battling daily to retain possession of their tunnels). Attempts to refound the mines failed in the face of the seawater that has claimed the mines seemingly forever—and the return of young but vicious dragons, who come seeking suitable lairs, and try to use the mountain caverns. They seldom stay throughout a winter, but every spring brings new lair seekers. The roofless stone ruins of Dulgund's few huts have served many pirates as a temporary encampment, and there are the inevitable rumors of pirate treasure being hidden here or there on Drelvros or under Dulgund, but these days, Drelvros is uninhabited and little visited.

Dungeon of Torment

- Ed 17/6/12

The Dungeons of Torment are in a failed, dry mine working elsewhere on the same isle, where a dwarf working with Dulgund thought a vein of iron ore SHOULD be accessible (from his experience of how such veins are usually located within bedrock), but in this case was mistaken: no vein was found, despite energetic delving, and the diggings were eventually abandoned. A gate/portal was created (by an unknown spellcaster) in these workings, leading to subterranean tunnels somewhere under mainland Faerûn, so the main part of the Dungeons of Torment isn't on Drelvros (which is known to some pirates today as "Dragonpeak Rock," BTW).

Evermeet

Refuge From World

- THO 25/2/12

Evermeet was Ed's creation, and it was always supposed to be a "refuge" for elves, away from the human- (and orc-, and drow- [[no drow under Evermeet in Ed's original Realms]]) dominated mainland. With a few xenophobic elves dwelling in Evermeet and VERY formidable defenses to detect, intercept, and fight invaders before they reached the island itself (when Jeff Grubb started designing Spelljammer, he and Ed both immediately - - and independently - -reached the same thought: that Evermeet would have a vigilant, always-patrolling defensive aerial fleet).

So (knowing these defenses are in place) in Ed's original Evermeet, a handful of the population might resent the presence of humans or half-elves, but the vast majority of the elves who dwell there who saw a small group of lightly-armed, unarmored humans would assume they were "friendlies," there by invitation, and would not be hostile. Curious, perhaps, but not hostile.

Blade Dancers

- Ed 14/3/10, responding to query about reference in "Elves of Evermeet"

"Blade dancers" in this context means bladesingers, bladesingers in training, elves who follow the tradition of circle magic involving swords laid in a circle (points pointing inwards, to focus energies at the center of the circle, that are danced around by multiple dancers in a collective working), and elves who follow the tradition of recording and "playing back" the history of an elven family, community, or realm through dance and song, using drawn swords they hold as props.

In the setting described in that source, at the time covered by the source, these activities are usually practiced together.

Trackless Sea

Pirates using Luskan wizard created winds

- Malcoming quoting TSR staffer quoting Ed, Qs for Ed 24/6/10

...recounting Ed telling them about pirates sailing NE across The Sea of Swords to Luskan, trading and dumping cargoes and reprovisioning and so on in that port, then slipping south along the coast using conjured winds in their sails (they would hire wizards in Luskan to provide the spells, which were small-scale so as to affect just one ship, not have wider effects that would anger other sailors). The wizard would get transport down to Tharsult, and the pirate ship would then slip away to do piracy in the southerly waters...

Anchorome

Location, Sea Routes

- Ed 23/6/10

Q: Anyways, I got a doozy of a question for Ed, concerning his L-List post about his original Anchorome (I'm currently mapping that chain). Just 2 things that I'm a little confused with - when he says go SW diagonally one panel, and continue one full panel over - does that mean two panels to the left of Evermeet total? (and down one - I got that part)

Then the Anchorome chain (starting with Sarambril) starts in the 3rd panel from there - two 'blank' sea

panels between that and Evermeet (same as whats between Evermeet and the Moonshaes). So just to clarify, the Islands begin at about the same distance from Evermeet, as Evermeet is from the Swordcoast, correct? Evermeet being smack-dab right in the middle, as it were?

And secondly, is the scale on the 'Old Grey Box' maps the same as it was on Ed's originals?

That would make it about 2992.5 miles to 'Wash Rock' from the Swordcoast, and about 3825 miles to Evermeet!

I know the planet is plenty big-enough to support that, but we are talking about close to 8K miles from the Swordcoast to those islands, and he mentions the Nelanther Pirates being busy in that region. They are active THAT FAR?

A:Yes, you have matters right: one panel directly south and then two panels west of Evermeet.

And yes, the Old Grey Box maps are close to the scale of my originals; the distances ARE that large.

Here's the thing, though; it's not all that far for the Pirates, because they can ride currents: a southerly one (south of Toaridge-At-The-Sun's-Setting, which serves many as a fresh-water refilling, repair harbor and dry docks, and provisioning point, just by using the flora and fauna and springs of that largely deserted isle, a current sweeps west from mainland Faerun and then curves to the northwest...and well to the north of that, and of Evermeet, another current runs west to east, then northeast [moderating the climate of Waterdeep and Neverwinter, hence the name of the latter city]). So a pirate ship with masts and sails down, steering with its rudder, can reach those parts of the ocean with no particular trouble (remember I talked, long ago, about PCs nursing a storm-damaged ship from isle to isle of the Anchorome chain?). This gives many pirates and others places to run to and sources of lumber, etc. If it wasn't for storms, someone could conceivably use a raft to travel from Anchorome to Faerun...

Mintarn

Two Southern Isles

- Ed quoted by THO 21/1/13

The larger and more northerly island is called Ammargal, and is "part of" Mintarn in that they garrison it and graze a large herd of sheep (to provide wool and meat for the folk of Mintarn) there, slaughtering any predators (short of dragons) that show up to try to dine on them. Ammargal has a very narrow inlet and dock on its southeastern shore, dangerous to use at the best of times, and a good anchorage and beach on its northern shore. Perhaps twenty people dwell on Ammargal, but save during storms and the icy depths of winter, ships from Mintarn visit it almost daily (trawling for fish on both legs of the out-and-back voyage). Ammargal is like a bowl tilted so its northern lip is submerged in the sea, but the rest of the rim thrusts up in continuous rocky ridges, guarding verdant meadows (and even a small forest, running along the inside of the southern run of the ridge) within their ring.

The smaller and more southerly island is a great plug of rock rising out of the sea (it looks like just what it is: the pointed top of a submerged mountain), and is known as Rorn Rock. It shelters Ammargal from the worst - - but rare - - local winds that blow north (as opposed to the prevailing winds that blow out of the northwest). Rorn Rock is pierced by several sea-caves, hollowed out by the waves over centuries (probably breaking through to inner caverns left empty when lava either ebbed back down into the depths, or erupted out of them), and of course there are the usual legends of both morkoth lairing here and pirates stealing into the caves in small skiffs to conceal treasures within. Rorn Rock is uninhabited,

with two exceptions: millions of seabirds have their rookeries atop it, and from time to time kidnapped royalty and other "political prisoners" (individuals certain people want off the scene, but don't want to slay outright because they might come in useful later, so mainly royalty and noble heirs) get marooned there, to live on seabirds and their eggs, eking out a hard existence on the cold and windswept rock. Rorn Rock is named for Thalaumarorn, better known to humans as "Old Rorn," a gigantic dragon of long ago (some say red, some say black), who terrorized the Sword Coast and the seas in this vicinity, fearlessly attacking anything (the tales say he fought and slaughtered dragon turtles, and regularly plunged beneath the waves like a fish-hunting seabird to snatch aquatic prey). Rorn Rock was his lair, and Rorn Rock was where he perished, blown apart by the spells of a fell human wizard who came hunting his treasure, when Rorn was old and enfeebled. That treasure, the tales insist, was never found - and the wizard died that day when Rorn's riven body fell out of the skies and crushed the wizard to red pulp and gore on the rocks.

Rorn's skull was long ago recovered by the folk of Mintarn; it's the one that hangs above the high seat in the great hall there, and alchemists and treasure-hunters have down the years borne away most of the dragon's other bones.

Among the clergy of Umberlee, there is a belief that Rorn Rock hides a great and holy secret - - but just what that secret is, none can say; of it, the Wet Goddess will not speak, coldly rebuking all who dare ask.

Small Northern Island

- THO 21/1/13

I just came across one of my own notes, and the small northernmost island on that FRIA detail map you linked to is called "Windstorm Isle."

Lantan

Heraldry

- THO 19/8/11, responding to query about what the steam engines on the heraldry look like

From my notes (which came from Ed), these exploding engines are described thus:

Ball (cloud) of steam with leaning smokestack protruding out of it on upper right, pistons and their linkages flying apart and out of it lower left and center left, pinwheel of flames in the center of the cloud.

- Ed 7/9/11

The arms of Lantan have varied over the years, depending on the dominance of the faith of Gond at the time, but for a long time in the later 1300s, they were:

A steel-silver shield with a vertical row of three devices down its center line. The upper most device is a steam engine, represented by a complex knot of continuous pipes and valves overlying a circular boiler, and surrounded by a scalloped circle of orange, representing steam lit by the flames of the engine's (unseen) firebox (that heats the boiler).

The center device is the symbol of Gond.

The lowest device is the exploding steam engine that THO described earlier (a fluffy ball of gray steam with a leaning smokestack protruding out of it on upper right, pistons and their linkages flying apart and out of the cloud lower left and center left, and a wild pinwheel of orange flames in the center of the cloud).

The banner of Lantan has three “endless” horizontal stripes: silver above, silver below, and white (representing steam) in the middle, with a symbol of Gond in gold “in its pride” (that is, nicely spaced away from the head of the banner, so it’s almost always visible when the banner is moving, and being affected by wind) superimposed atop the white stripe.

Gnome Population

- GK 13/2/14

It's one of the great misconceptions of the Realms that Lantan has a sizable population of gnomes. During the ToT, an avatar of Gond in the guise of a gnome washed up on the island's shore. This did lead to an influx of gnomes for a time to the island - not sure the Lantari would have been too happy about that - but there shouldn't be an instant association between Lantan and gnomes.

Lantanese vs Lantanna

- THO 25/10/14

So, here we go. If one is being as proper and pedantic as a sage, "Lantanna" are the people, and "Lantanese" is something made in Lantan or recognizably from Lantan, such as a garment or sort of wine or cheese. However, over time, sloppiness in everyday speech on the part of folk from elsewhere in the Realms has made the two terms both mean the collective "people of Lantan" or that an individual is from Lantan, and the term "Lantar" has begun to be used for "things from/of Lantan." Such shifts and changes happen in all living languages, the Common Tongue in the Realms very much so.

Ayrorch

- THO 25/10/14

And the names of 1357 DR-era Ayrorch members are like real-world popes or English monarchs: they have their own longer names, but choose to serve or reign under a single name that may or may not have anything directly to do with their "usual" names.

Vilhon Reach

Aralent

High Valley of Osparkur

- Ed 4/6/12

It's the High Valley of Osparkur, in a tiny "kingdom" known as Aralent, ruled by "the Lords of Aralent" (a six-strong retired adventuring band; four human males and two human females, all of whom use the title "Lord") in the name of Aralent, who is locally known as the Ghost King (because Aralent walks as a seldom-seen phantom that gives advice to the living).

It is the same Aralent, and Osparkur is the site of the tomb reputed to contain his tomb - - and it does contain his tomb.

His full name was Prince Rovandurr Heltlast Aralent, Rightful Lord of Qluelantyr (a now-destroyed inland city of Chessenta), and the grieving lover who buried him was Luerenna "Flamehair" Jhalhoemir, who was once, briefly, an apprentice of The Simbul. She was a mage of some power, but a moody loner much given to shapechanging, and her present whereabouts (if she still lives) are unknown. (Some say she dwells with doppelgangers, and leads them in attempts to found and strengthen hidden "kingdoms" that overlap the lands of men.)

Impiltur

Origin of name

- GK, Qs for Ed 17/12/11, quoting his article in Dragon #357

The first leader of the people that would in time form the kingdom of "old" Impiltur was a Jhaamdathi refugee named Impil who built a keep on the site of a ruined dwarven delve (now the site of present-day Lyrabar which may or may not have ties name-wise with the ancient dwarf site) on a small hillock which people came to call Impil's Tor. Over time usage shortened the place to Impiltur and that was the name adopted by his descendants when the kingdom of the same name was founded before the raising of the Standing Stone.

Arms of Impiltur

- Ed 3/2/14

Sword crosses over wand.

Wand: gold shaft, with white light (star-rayed) at business end; handle is VERY dark blue [almost black], with gold pommel, and gem-adorned at both "guard" end and pommel end.

Sword: blade is gray (so, in heraldic blazons, silver) with a VERY dark blue [almost black] grip, gold quillons and pommel.

Thar

Glister

- Ed 9/12/15

Glister HAS moved several times, due to being built on permafrost; when smithing activity or fireball-flinging warm things too much, and everything gets muddily flooded, folk WANT to move. Add that to persistent flind, ogre, or hobgoblin raids, and the smiths/weapons dealers (whose guards double as the closest thing to a Watch/police) move...so only well-armed trading bands dare stay...and Glister moves. It has always been WELL north of the Moonsea, but has moved from east (near the north-south mountains) to well west of that, its "new" site of the day depending on raids down out of the mountains (a mini-orc horde, in one case) and what's going on in Vaasa. Glister is always at the northerly end of the long ore/smelted raw metal ingots trade-route, providing a supplies base and trading hub for the human-dominated "civilized" miners, so its precise location doesn't matter as much as it being SOMEwhere. The marked eastern location was where it stood for the last two decades of the 1200s DR and first three decades of the 1300s DR.

- Ed 29/12/15

Yes, Glister moves whenever shifting mining patterns, increasing raids because the various predators (flind, ogres, orcs, hobgoblins, etc.) have become sufficiently familiar with it, and its own mess (melting the permafrost with the smelting/smithing activities, so it turns from hard ground to endless wet mud) drive the mainstay smiths of the community to decide to move.

And yes, the Glister that was once the capitol of Thar is now a ruin, east and south of the more recent locations of Glister (as lodes closer to the Moonsea get worked out, the "big" mines of the day get farther and farther north). However, "ruin" is a rather grand term for a few tumbled stone walls and a lot of mud.

Snow People

- Ed 29/8/10

The Snow People are a blond, white-skinned, stockily-built nomadic hunting human people who hunt the elk and rothe and "highsnows deer" of Thar, having moved into the area after the fall of the "beast-men" (ogre) kingdom there (although the Snow People and various marauding monsters, such as hungry dragons swooping to devour, routed the last ogre tribes and reduced ogres to the rare few hardened raiding bands still encountered in the area today, the power of the ogres was broken by continuous internal feuding and dragonfeeding raids (plus similar raiding by wyverns, perytons, etc.) coupled with the slow but mighty rise in local power of the flind and orcs in the mountains, that ended in vicious wars of mutual extermination). The Snow People have "high" (mountain) and "low" (rolling hills/open country) villages that they move between, along favored routes of encampments where they may tarry for as long as a month or as little as overnight, depending on weather and how good the hunting is. Fur-wearing but hardened to the cold and wise in the ways of the Moonsea North wilderlands, they are considered "barbarians" by more southerly folk (think of a smallish race of blond Conan the Barbarians). As much as any stereotype or overall characterization can be correct, they are a lusty, brawling, cheerful, hardy people, of simple pleasures and past-times are great fear/respect of undead and arcane magic, who tend to see priests as "defenders of mortals by appeasing/tricking/steering the gods."

They are of Illuskan blood (thus, predominantly fair-skinned and blond-haired) and came from more westerly areas (in the Sword Coast North, notably the northern High Forest), fleeing to the Tortured Lands through magical gates when an orc horde overwhelmed their lands, long ago.

The gates, most of which have now been destroyed or magically "closed and hidden" (a few by Zhents seeking to control or eliminate them, but most by Harpers and independent mages seeking to keep them out of the hands of the Zhents), are thought to have been part of an early Netherese network created by Netherese working against the rising power and arrogance of the Netherese "sorcerer-kings." Elminster and Khelben both believe they are the gates through (and over) which the "Manygates War" was fought (by wizards and sorcerers of that day).

Highsnows Deer

- THO 29/8/10, responding to query if they're correct highsnows deer are the Realmsian equivalent of caribou

You would indeed!

Moonsea

River Lis

- Ed 28/12/10

THE RIVER LIS

The River Lis sluggishly empties the Moonsea south into the Dragonreach (or "Dragon Reach") arm of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

"Lis" is a human contraction of the elven name "Nuathlis" (= "Nuatha's Way," Nuatha [itself a contraction of "Ileiyranautha"] being a fabled long-ago elven warrior princess of the early days of Cormanthyr {an adventurous, fiery-tempered spitfire who met a tragic end after a long career of daring exploits, monster-slayings, and successful duels to the death against more powerful elven foes}, and

“lis” referring only to the sort of “way” that is a water route; when translating “lis,” some sages prefer to use the Common Tongue word “flow” rather than “way,” though to most elves, “lath” is more properly “flow” {there are about a dozen similar words for routes, but among the most mundane and popular are “norn” for “fate” or “path of destiny” or “path chosen through life” and “lir” or “lyr” for “trail” or “track” or “obvious/marked route”}.

The northern end of the Lis is often called “Lisenmouth,” and of old was the site of Eueurarlor (pronounced “EEE-ewe-eee-arr-lor”), a small, unwall’d, “tall-spired” elven city of magically-melted, fused, and largely opaque glass structures (almost all of them soaring towers that flared out at their bases like giant forest trees). This enclave of magical researches and experimentation was inhabited by the minor Cormanthor elven Houses of Alavaunt, Eyril, Imbran, Jalant, Lauryth, and Tarsyrymbar. The date of its establishment is not recorded, but elves have dwelt at the mouths of the Nuathlis since Cormanthor was founded.

Eueurarlor was ruled by its most powerful mages. They worked amicably together, albeit with the usual petty jealousies and some ongoing friendly rivalries, seeing the wider world (even, for some Eueurarlans at some times, the rest of Cormanthor) as foes to make common cause against. The mages of the city worked many ward-spells that hid the city in mists, cloaked it from prying magics, and kept wandering human wayfarers and explorers, and even determined intruders, at bay. (Many human vessels, and even wayfarers on foot, treading the riverbanks, managed to pass along the Lis but never saw the hidden city; others wandered, led astray by the wardings, or were turned back.)

House Jalant specialized in watching over particular formidable local “monsters,” magically aiding and abetting them from afar (so that their presence remained as much as possibly undetected) to keep these creatures alive and to make most of their battles and enterprises successful. In particular, the Jalant mages helped Raorlykh, a mighty morkoth that laired in the descending undersea banks of the Moonsea just east of Lisenmouth (though it had several “backup” tunnel networks west of the mouth of the Lis, and elsewhere), flourish for decades, becoming widely feared and a lurid staple of Moonsea tavern tales.

Eueurarlan spells also shielded the fang dragon Aehraundrel (who laired in the mountains east and south of Lisenmouth) against the magics of Mulmaster and other would-be slayers, including the numerous black dragons of the Lisen swamps (who were themselves bred, watched over, and protected by Eueurarlan mages). Aehraundrel laired with Maroareies, a gigantic gorynych that possessed—and used in battle—some ancient enchanted rods and scepters.

Yet as human settlement and magical strength in the Vast and Moonsea increased with the passing years (and the Jalantan-championed monsters were one by one slain), the Eueurarlans couldn’t elude detection forever. Ever-stronger and more persistent probes were hurled at the Lisenmouth area—and it’s thought that the mysterious inhabitants of Ironfang Keep (who had long found a city that made travel down the Lis difficult, hampered the spread of Mulmaster’s influence, and gave Melvaunt, Thentia, and Zhentil Keep a “problem” to hurl probe after strike against, to be a useful thing indeed) decided, for still-unknown reasons, to stop covertly aiding the Eueurarlans, and shatter the wardings of Eueurarlor.

However its foes learned of its true nature and defenses, Eueurarlor was attacked repeatedly by mage-led human forces from various Moonsea cities from 1241 DR onwards. It easily repulsed these forays, but was hurled down and scattered—utterly destroyed—in a spell battle in early Mirtul of 1244 DR, when a force of “many ravening beasts” (various sorts of marauding monsters, including dragons) led by

unidentified powerful elven and human mages (some tales say daemonfey were involved, others insist the host's commanders were House Starym elves of Cormanthyr, drow, or even the infamous human Malaug—or some alliance of these fell beings) stormed and conquered Eueurlor, slaughtering all of its inhabitants. (Two tales claim not all of the city's mages perished, but that a handful of Eueurlans were captured and magically enslaved, either imprisoned for interrogation and later uses, or bound into magic items where they presumably still abide.)

The southern mouth of the Lis was of old called Tarakt, after an infamous orc warleader slain on its banks (along with all his army), by elves of Cormanthyr in 667 DR. It empties the river waters into Mirrormoss Bay (to the elves, Neirthoura, "Stars-In-The-Water"), the northernmost end of the Dragon Reach. Today, some humans call this spot "Southmouth," whereas elves familiar with it are more likely to refer to it as Neirlath ("Stars-flow").

The waters of the Moonsea are deeper, colder, and darker than those of Mirrormoss Bay, and in the vicinity of Lisenmouth hold several gates (portals) linking Faerun with watery "otherwheres," both other undersea locations on Toril and other worlds. These gates are seldom used, and presumably largely secret and/or forgotten at both ends, but "fellbarbs" (tsochari) have been known to occasionally issue from them, and either make for the Moonsea ports (presumably to "possess" citizens thereof) or hurriedly enter the Lis and make for the Flooded Forest.

Few surface-dwellers know that Mirrormoss Bay is the breeding-place and abode of thousands upon thousands of sentient octopi-like creatures, "darkdrifters" (the same creatures known as "tako" in more easterly areas of the Realms; those of the Bay have hides varying in hue from inky black to a dark, mottled bark-brown) and countless fungi they farm in the Bay (carpeting it in a "spore forest" of treelike spired growths, about which vines are trained to create nets for yet more fungal growth, in layers upon layers that form amorphous-walled "rooms" in which darkdrifters can readily hide, and charge forth from to ambush intruders), as food.

Water temperatures and nutrient conditions are ideal in the Bay for the darkdrifters, and they are magically dominated by the Wet Lisen in the same way that the Eueurlans enspelled local monsters of old, to keep the darkdrifters from internal strife and from departing the Bay.

So numerous are the darkdrifters that the Selu'Maraar sea elves of the Dragonreach largely avoid the Bay, venturing into it rarely—and only in large, well-armed warbands. Their nearest "deep" (seabottom fortress, a warren of largely-concealed caverns in an undersea ridge) is Lararrlal, some distance to the south of Mirrormoss Bay (it's actually due west of Ylraphon).

The darkdrifters (by natural inclination, reinforced by Wet Lisen control) also prevent aquatic Moonsea denizens from migrating into the Sea of Fallen Stars, or carrying on underwater trade between the Moonsea and the Sea of Fallen Stars.

The waters of the Lis mingle with those of the Flooded Forest to the east for the southernmost fifth or sixth of its flow. The Flooded Forest, also referred to as "the Lisen swamps," is a vast swamp of standing dead trees smothered with vines and swampy overgrowth, that's fed by the Lis and by another river to the east, flowing from the Moonsea down into the Flooded Forest, that goes by many names, including the Mulmaea and the River Staur (after Ingrur Anastaur, a long-ago human wayfarer who explored this area; the river name is now pronounced "store-uh"). All of the descriptions of the Lis herein apply to this second river, too.

Much of the vast swamp, the banks of the Lis all along its length, and both of the mouths of the Lis tend

to be a soup of pudding-like, water-saturated sand and clumps of earth and stone knit together by the gelid waste secretions of the Wet Lisen, which the monsters use to bind materials into barriers, weirs, and lairs, floating atop water in evershifting, trackless bogs known collectively as “the Lisen Sands.” The Lis is fed by scores of tiny freshwater streams emptying into its western verges, and by the brackish (mix of fresh and salt water) Flooded Forest swamp (itself fed by many freshwater streams emptying into it from the east and south). This makes the saltwater Lis brackish along its banks; though it carries salt water from the Moonsea, what it empties into the (salt water) Dragon Reach is brackish.

The River Lis itself is navigable, but not all that easily. It is broad, shallow, and very silty, its winding channel changing often. Its waters usually move slowly, generating lots of oxbows (“oxbow” or half-moon lakes that were once river loops, but have become cut-off backwaters), side-channels, and quicksand.

The waters of the Lis are always opaque with suspended mud, and its wide channel is usually twelve to fifteen feet deep (with a soft-chocolate-mud bottom that will allow solid objects—such as the keels of ships, or poles used to move vessels along—to readily pass or sink through it for about another six feet or so).

So ships of even deep draft can usually sail the Lis, but getting lost in the shifting channels or mired in shallow-draft bogs is a constant problem. Barges, “leaf-needle” scudders (or just “leaf-needles;” this is the Common Tongue term for canoes or kayaks; some sages prefer the more formal name “bowshotkeels,” but in daily use, that word is seldom heard) and tiny skiffs can usually pass freely along the main channel, but seagoing cogs, caravels, and the like must usually be poled with all sails down, and a skiff venturing ahead with sounding lines to cautiously “sound out the way” onward. Sometimes such tiny open boats try to set marker poles, but this practice is usually an exercise in futility.

Sail is sometimes of aid when traveling the Lis, but current (for southbound vessels) is more reliable, if much slower. Ships navigating in either direction will need long fending-poles, paddles or oars, and the very long oars (usually worked by three men or more, not by lone rowers) known as “sweeps.” Fending poles and sweeps are usually made of two or more green, still-flexible treetrunks, lashed or pegged or spell-fused together. Due to the everchanging sandbars and channels, sailing or drifting ships need such aids for steerage purposes, and northbound ships of course need paddles or oars, and poles, just to move along against the current.

Sometimes the Lis becomes impassable to deep-keeled ships, and hundreds of them have become temporarily stuck while sailing it; scores of these have gone missing, sunken by “pirates” (who tend to be swamp-dwelling outlaws, or raiders sent out by Mulmaster, Hillsfar, or Calaunt to harry merchant shipping not their own) or misadventure, or “dragged down” by the Wet Lisen. (It follows that many, many cargoes have been lost along the Lis, or even deliberately hidden by folk ignorant of the truly mutable nature of local terrain, and so usually subsequently lost, so inevitably there are many tales of “treasure” awaiting lucky seekers in the Lisen Sands or along the river bottom.)

However, the Lis has never become so choked that water cannot pass from the Moonsea to the Dragonreach. Fierce winds blowing down from the north (and hurling up racing waves in the Moonsea) often generate “Scourings” of the Lis that briefly give it depths of more than forty feet and a (relatively) clear, straight channel. Such storms can arise at any time, but are frequent every spring.

A “roarer” blowing down the Lis can be successfully “raced” (ridden end to end) by a ship, but often vessels caught in such a storm will have their seams opened and “go under,” or be driven aground, swamped, and covered by the swamp sands (the Lisen Sands form dunes that unlike ‘desert dunes’

change only by water action, not wind, as they're well-anchored with vegetation, and tend to accumulate around, and cling to, ships and other solid objects). These sandbars change constantly; in some conditions and spots, they literally form, move, and disappear daily.

Tidal surges are locally mild and affect the Lis little, because the vast swamplands adjoining it act as a sink for inflows. So whirlpools and undertows are rare, but quicksand and changing eddies (of the slow, lazy sort) are everywhere. Surge waters usually just alter submerged sandbars, in a ceaseless process of silent underwater change that is the bane of pilots seeking to steer ships through the area.

The Flooded Forest, the Lisen Sands, and much of the Lis itself is a desolate, reeking landscape of muck, standing dead 'drowned' trees, lots of choking vines and stunted wetland living trees (in short, large marshes with lots of ground cover for lurking outlaws and critters) . . . and except during downpours or heavy mists (which make visibility short range indeed) thick and endless clouds of stinging insects.

Down the years, much blood has been spilled over control of the Lis, both in difficult overland skirmishes, and in naval battles along it and at both of its mouths (the Moonsea more than the Dragonreach, but that's because ships out of Calaunt, Sembia, and Ravens Bluff long ago reached a truce in the Reach after losses became too heavy for any of those powers to bear, and threats were made by Sembia and the Bluff to entirely blockade—and "starve"—Calaunt if hostilities went on, and to "sink any ship leaving a Sembian port" and "hurl down Sembian towers with the spells of our wizards" if Sembia tried to retaliate against the Bluff . . . and everyone saw the wisdom of just ignoring each other, and sailing past—except when Mulmaster, Hillsfar, or Zhentil Keep sent attacking ships south, whereupon Calaunt, Sembia, and Ravens Bluff (forcibly using Scrardale's harbor as a naval base) made common cause against these threats).

The soupy terrain itself has defeated any longterm control beyond the "as far as the point of my blade/reach of my spells extends" sort. Since the destruction of Eueurlor, no stone structure or fortification built along the Lis has lasted more than a day or so; the Wet Lisen see to that, no matter what mages and spells are used to defend the building.

There are scores of sunken buildings beneath the bogs and "backwaters" (bayous) of the Flooded Forest, including some temples and wizards' abodes that retain enchanted items—but these are hard to find, and are almost always inhabited by the Wet Lisen and their various guardian creatures (all sorts of aquatic predators that can be kept alive in a temperate-cold swamp environment, and controlled, by the use of spells).

The Wet Lisen (also called "the True Lisen" by some sages) are evil, intelligent water nagas, twisted long ago by Netherese experimentations into creatures made evil by their hunger for ever more magic and power, and who were bred to have a ring of four long, delicate human-like arms and hands that protrude from their snake-like bodies (in two pairs; one just beneath their heads, and a second, slightly longer pair halfway down their serpentine bodies). These "Wet Lisen" can function as well on land, breathing air, as they can underwater, and tolerate a wide variety of temperatures. Their tails are both prehensile and powerful, able to "slap" or impale foes in battle or enable the nagas to swim swiftly and powerfully. Wet Lisen can speak and write many languages (both magical and mundane), can cast and devise spells, and employ magic items, as the most capable human wizards do, and are particularly practiced at mind-influencing magics of all sorts. They can fall silent and immobile for long, patient periods, and in daily life strive to become very aware of politics and events around them, and the details of lives of other creatures, so as to know how best and most effectively to personally sway or deftly influence such creatures.

Long native to the Lisen swamps, they have tried to always remain hidden yet at the same time continuously influence cities around them (notably Mulmaster and Calaunt). They are now increasingly possessed by fellbarbs (tsochari), though almost all the remaining “untainted” Lisen (about a third or so of all Wet Lisen) are unaware of the tsochari, believing instead that certain of their brethren are forming secret societies and cabals. The few Wet Lisen who suspect what’s going on are targeted by the fellbarbs for possession or destruction, to silence them before they can persuade their untainted fellows to do something about this silent menace. (For their part, the fellbarbs regard the Wet Lisen as nigh-perfect host creatures, with one exception: they regard the nagas’ innate love of remaining hidden as a drawback, and are now driving their possessed Wet Lisen to either magically transform themselves to be able to fly, or to breed black dragons of the Flooded Forest into loyal, effective aerial steeds physically suited to carrying entwined Wet Lisen, and eager to serve such masters to the death.)

The princes of Shade must be aware of the Wet Lisen and their attempts to influence nearby cities, but have thus far ignored and avoided them. According to Elminster (our only source of information on these matters, as he is on most lore of the Realms), this is not due to overlooking or belittling the nagas, or intending to spare rather than ultimately conquer or destroy them, but because of some great, pulsing drowned magic beneath the Flooded Forest, that is inimical to the very nature of a shade. When within a dozen miles or so of it, shades are always aware of its presence (as a “soundless thunder” in their heads), become wracked with pain or nausea if they venture too near, and actually melt away to nothingness if brought too close (individual limbs will slump into liquidity, as the shade writhes in shrieking agony, at a slightly greater remove from the destructive magic). Just what this magic is, Elminster isn’t certain, but it’s been there since before his birth, has nothing to do with the Weave or (so far as he knows) with Mystra or her works, and is of godlike power/intensity—so it may well be a god, or Primordial. Or not.

Elminster tells us the Wet Lisen live for four to six centuries, if not slain earlier, and are descended from nagas that the reclusive Netherese archwizard Ragruular magically augmented and altered, to be his servants and guardians. Eventually they became his apprentices, he shared all of his magic with them, and they avenged him after his death in a spell-duel with a rival archwizard, Ommanaunth Vraer. Vraer’s kin initially thought that various Netherese were taking the shapes of four-armed nagas to hide amongst “Ragruular’s slave-beasts” and so conceal their identities, and started hunting down all nagas they saw, but earned the enmity of another archwizard, Durlarion, who was breeding and spell-taming nagas (without arms) for very different purposes, when they mistakenly slew some of Durlarion’s creatures. In the war that followed, a handful of Ragruular’s naga’s outlasted Vraer’s kin and apprentices, but learned that all Netherese would consider them potential slaves or worse.

So they fled Netheril to the Lisen swamps (then much smaller than they are now, for the land around them has slowly sunk over the years due to collapsing caverns in the Underdark beneath, flooding and drowning much elven-ruled woodlands and creating the Flooded Forest) because of the presence of the great hidden magic that melts shades. The nagas can feel this magic, too, but it harms them not, nor causes them discomfort. They know not what it is, and disturb it not for fear of destroying or lessening it out of ignorance, but know that where they can see and touch it (in certain deep-drowned caverns, ruins, and muddy deeps of the Lisen swamps), it appears as a vast, pulsing, living gelid mass that can grow eyes and tentacles and great toothless met maws, and swallow anything or anyone that touches it. The Wet Lisen of today consist of a few elders and scores of younger nagas, all of them wizards of varying powers. The young hide deep in the swamps and never attack intruders; all who do hurl spells

against, say, a PC adventurer will be a wizard of 16th or higher level (most will be W22s to W24s), and any formidable band of invaders will soon face the scrutiny, mustering of swamp monsters, and spells hurled from afar of several W26s and higher. Elminster believes that the tsochari only augment the magical knowledge and capabilities of Wet Lisen they inhabit, hampering them not at all.

The misty, boggy, everchanging, monster-haunted conditions of the Lis and the Flooded Forest make the area a haven for the most desperate outlaws and those pirates who foolishly dismiss the many tales of deadly swamp monsters. The Wet Lisen are wise enough to let many of these “drenched fools” flourish, sometimes for several seasons, to give more organized intruders (such as military forces sent by Zhentil Keep, Hillsfar, or Sembia) one more foe to deal with.

Most outlaws lead a hand-to-mouth existence, but the pirates usually trade some of their booty, and with their assistance (usually as guides and guards, in return for stiff fees or “a third-share of the take”) stolen or illicit goods (the former often being gems or metal tradebars, but sometimes furs or even enchanted items, and the latter usually being slaves) are smuggled down or across the Lis, or hidden in the Flooded Forest for a time, until scouring searches die down.

The biting, stinging, bloodsucking insects and small, “mundane” monsters (giant wasps and stirges, zairtails and spiders and snakes, not to mention all manner of carnivorous plants) bedevil most humans who venture into the Lisen Sands or the Flooded Forest, even if they never see anything more sinister. For one thing, falling asleep is usually a death sentence given all the hungry hunting creatures, and for another, the outlaws and pirates usually lurk along the verges of the swamps, stalking and then ambushing all intruders. Lighting a fire creates a beacon that will draw endless attackers down on anyone near the flames, tracking by scent (or even eating without nausea) is difficult to impossible amid the overpowering reek of decay, and the everpresent mists make keeping anything dry for long a doomed aim, as well as reducing visibility to two spearlengths at times (making navigation hard, and spotting approaching monsters harder). Watchful Wet Lisen often cast spells from afar to make small boats founder and reduce those in them to frightened, struggling intruders rather than wayfarers of confident purpose . . . and angering a Wet Lisen with the wrong sort of response can goad it into forcing monster after monster—up to and including young, small black dragons—to attack the offending intruders, who typically can never find the lurking sentience directing these attacks, before they are harried into headlong flight . . . or slaughtered to the last terrified man.

- Ed 28/12/10

The glass-spired elven city was on the eastern side of Lisenmouth.

Naval Battle of Lisen Sands (1346 DR)

- Blueblade remembering Ed, quoted by Asharak in Qs for Ed 18/12/10, confirmed as dead-on correct by Ed

I have vague memories of this being discussed in a hallway at a Milwaukee-era GenCon (vague because I didn't take notes, darn it), and Ed saying then it was part of the struggle between Mulmaster and the other Moonsea ports (e.g. Zhentil Keep, Melvaunt, etc.) for control of the River Lis, but that both swamp monsters AND elves were involved in the fighting, because both of those groups quite rightly (Ed's opinion) were of the opinion that the Lis and its swamps were THEIR territory, not human. Barges and shallow-draft ships went up and down the Lis, aided by magic and sometimes hampered by magic (e.g. cast by the elves).

- Ed 28/12/10

The Battle of the Lisen Sands

In early Eleint of 1346 DR, scattered battles on the waves of the Moonsea had been going on for almost six summers, not to mention assassinations and attempted winter arson on ships in drydock in several Moonsea ports. City rulers all around the ice-rimed sea spent the cold months muttering thoughts of war, and sending agents south to try to hire battle-ready mages for the skirmishes of next spring. Mulmaster and Zhentil Keep were the strongest of these city-state combatants, but both had separately hit upon the notion of trying to force the other Moonsea ports (primarily Melvaunt, Thentia, and Hulberg), who'd proven to be untrustworthy allies and rash in warfare, to make war on each other, letting them eliminate or at least weaken each other and buying Mulmaster and Zhentil Keep time to build more ships, equip and train real armies, and gird themselves with battle-ready mages, for the real struggle to come.

Hillsfar was showing signs of wanting to join in the struggle, as were the ambitious merchants of Scardale and the ruthless tyrants of Calaunt—and merchants from Sembia and Raven's Bluff were quietly lining up to sponsor this or that ruler (or waiting rival) or city, to protect their business interests regardless of who emerged victorious.

Mulmaster's High Blade hit upon the idea of blockading the Lis throughout the summer, drawing attacking ships into a variety of traps (floating catapults designed to sink overloaded cogs and caravels, spells ready to swamp vessels, storm spells and the like) while at the same time guarding and guiding gems and trade-bars of smelted metal south to Raven's Bluff along mountain trails and the roads of the Vast. Victories over Calaunt in several small, vicious battles in the northern Vast had emboldened Mulmaster in such thinking, and the moment they murmured these plans into certain ears in "the Bluff," merchants of that city poured coins into hiring mercenaries and sending them north to Mulmaster. Certain Zhentarim got word of these plans (probably from merchants of Ravens Bluff they'd already bought, or established covert holds over), raged for a day or so, and decided that enough was enough: Mulmaster was to be shattered again, as it had been shattered before (at the end of the Moonsea War, some forty summers earlier).

They decided to hurl all of their magelings (lesser wizards) and every seaworthy naval ship they had or could seize from the merchant vessels docked in Zhentil Keep, and set sail without delay.

The clash occurred off Lisenmouth, and raged for a tenday, interrupted by a series of small (but spell-assisted) storms that scattered ships repeatedly. Melvaunt and Hulburg got wind of the battle (literally, from ships blown into their harbors) and joined in, with reckless enthusiasm.

Mulmaster's traps and its fighting crews took a high toll of attacking foes, but when Zhentil Keep reassembled their fleet, the maroon-sailed ships of Mulmaster were outnumbered and beset.

A few were blown apart by spells, or set ablaze, and a surviving handful fled for their home harbor. Others were cut off from that escape, and instead set sail down the Lis, hotly pursued by Zhent ships following orders to "destroy Mulmaster's sails, once and for all."

The Battle of the Lisen Sands was about to begin.

Swollen by the spring waters that followed a wet, heavy-snows winter, the Lis and the Flooded Forest were one vast mist-shrouded, tree-studded lake, and the vessels of Mulmaster scattered and fled in all directions across the swamp—where most promptly ran aground, or were holed by standing dead trees, and took on water.

The Zhents followed, and a swimming, splashing, scrambling battle of utter chaos ensued; the forces

involved could barely find each other, let alone organize or communicate effectively. Melvauntan warriors fell upon the Zhents from behind, spells were hurled—and the Wet Lisen roused the swamp against all of the invaders, keying on anyone who used magic (which primarily meant the Zhentarim magelings and their personal Zhentilar bodyguards).

Late-arriving ships from Melvaunt and Thentia, and a few straggling Zhent vessels, were attacked and then boarded on the Lis by Cormanthan elves—because, like the Wet Lisen who'd mustered all of their dominated or controlled monsters against the intruders, the elves considered the Lisen Sands their own territory; large warbands of humans were to be resisted and either eliminated or sent fleeing.

Traditionally, the Cormanthan elves were well-practiced in spying upon (and betimes using magic to hamper) shipping on the Lis, but avoided the heart of the Flooded Forest because the reeking decay of the drowned land upset them too much—all those dead dryads and trees, and muck where lush greenery should be growing—and because of the fell swamp monsters. However, enraged, they now pursued the intruding humans everywhere.

As the darkness of the first night of the battle fell, shivering humans who lit fires swiftly discovered what a fatal mistake this was, as it let everyone else in the swamps—and black dragons summoned by the Wet Lisen, swooping out of the night—readily find them.

The next day, most of the surviving humans had no stomach left for battle; they just wanted to fight their way out of the swamps. So they tried doing that. It proved to be a long day for some of them, and a very short one for others. As the humans dwindled into scattered individuals rather than military forces, elves became the primary targets of the Wet Lisen. Savaged, the Fair Folk soon fell back to the west bank of the Lis, withdrawing from the fray, leaving the swamp monsters to their deadly hunt, chase, and slaughter of humans . . . and a second night came.

By the dawn of the third day, a few sailors of Mulmaster stumbled up out of the swamps, onto higher ground, and started the long and dragon-harried trek home through the forested hills and ridges. Perhaps a dozen men—no more—returned to their city, and perhaps half that many sailors from other cities survived somehow, to tell their tales of the disastrous battle. Almost a score of Zhentarim escaped by using teleport rings, to report fearfully back to Manshoon and other senior Zhents.

Though those accounts were received icily, the senior Zhents took secret comfort in the fact that Mulmaster couldn't conquer the Lis or even turn their backs on the Lisen lands with any confidence—so Zhentil Keep's forces could engage Mulmaster's at times and places of their choosing, knowing their overland caravans could win the mundane daily "getting richer and more influential" battle over Mulmaster's precarious mountain routes (already imperiled by orcs, and about to become far more threatened by Zhent magelings sent to cause avalanches, cave-ins, and orc- and monster-rousings with their spells).

The Battle of the Lisen Sands was remembered as an infamous disaster in cities across the Moonsea, establishing the firm belief that the Flooded Forest was a place to avoid at all costs, and the Lis itself a route only for large and well-armed warships to use, in the best of weather and in full readiness for battle. The swamp, it was said, "spawned monsters galore, beyond counting" and "evil elves" smote all humans with arrows or with "fell magic." The elves were blamed for everything, even for "calling up" the swamp monsters with their magic.

Only the handful of surviving Zhentarim magelings knew better—and those they reported to. Manshoon's interest in covertly conquering or cowing dale after dale, and plotting to subvert the nobles of Cormyr (especially in Arabel, Marsember, and the Hullack), took fire at this time. (His plans to infiltrate the leaders of Sembia, was already well under way, but hampered by the many ambitious

independent trading cabals of that land, who paid little or no attention to the will and decrees of their rulers.)

Pirates

Drift between Sea of Fallen Stars

- THO 19/4/11

There is SOME pirate "drift back and forth between the Moonsea and the Sea of Fallen Stars," but see Ed's posts about the River Lis to see a hampering factor.

Hillsfar

Human Supremacy

- THO 15/7/13

Q: I vaguely recall Hillsfar and the Red Plumes being somewhat human-supremacist. Do we know what caused this prejudicial outlook and whether there are any notable spokespersons in the Martin Luther King (and even Malcolm X) style who fight for the rights of their people, peacefully or violently?"

A: I can answer the first part of this query. The cause is the elven rule of Hillsfar for many years, and the human faction that rebelled against this (even spreading rumors that certain elves were in cahoots with the "beast men" [ogres] of Thar to "keep humans down," so as to turn the opinion of other local humans against the elves.

Hulberg

At Different Times

- THO 19/4/11

The very first Hulberg was a small, simple port and careening area (tidal sandy beach). Severe storms wiped it out, whereupon the second Hulberg was built a little way up a river (as some of the published maps have it). Attacked repeatedly over the years by orcs and raiding hobgoblins and "beast-men" (ogres), that was eventually abandoned and fell into ruins (as mentioned in canon lore).

A third Hulberg was more recently built as a (small and rather poor, for ship-shelter-in-storm purposes) port, and was rebuilt (see Rich Baker's recent trilogy) when circumstances made a better port possible.

Mulmaster

Reigns of Aurbraunt & Nesker

- Ed 7/9/10, in reply to query about Nesker of Mulmaster, Sorcerer-King as relevant to the sword Adjatha the Drinker (clipped quote from old notes)

... This merchant council was riven by corruption and feuding, and was easily overthrown (its members butchered) by the ruthless mercenary Aurbraunt, who'd recently settled in the city. Intending to enrich himself by providing armed escorts for mining caravans coming south to the Moonsea in return for a share of their takings, Aurbraunt became a bold warlord whose increasing reach angered other inhabitants of the region. However, before they could slay him, a visiting merchant, the soft-spoken but utterly ruthless Rurlyskam "the Calishite," took care of that murder for them, taking over as ruler of Mulmaster for less than a season before he was magically controlled, and then destroyed, by the sorcerer Nesker, who proclaimed himself "king" of the city, and began a long and brutal rule by rounding up and slaughtering anyone within his reach who had any aptitude for the Art at all.

Lost Ways in hills

- Ed 29/12/13

There are many competing tales about the origins and nature of the Lost Ways, and new rumors arise from time to time to twist and embellish them or add to their number. Most learned sages and longtime resident families of Mulmaster “know” that the Lost Ways are disused copper and silver mines, tunnels that slope down into the hills and that were dug and expanded into a labyrinth for centuries, and then disused for centuries longer when the veins of ore ran out - - only to become the haunts of monsters, desperate outlaws, smugglers, and handy body hiding places for murderers.

All of this is true, but what complicates matters is that these mines, which rarely went deeper than about eighty feet down (because they encountered a layer of very hard green-black igneous rock that seemed to “go on forever” and is in fact about forty feet thick, with very few fissures, natural breaks, or sinkholes piercing it), did eventually intersect with two things:

- A small network-of-defensible-tunnels dwarven fortress, Harr’s Hold, hewn out of solid rock (a cache and way-hold dwarves mining in the area could scurry to when the beast-men [ogres] of Thar grew too numerous, rather than a stronghold belonging to, and owned by, one dwarf clan. It has more recently seen use as a bandit-hold; the lair of an illithid and its servitors, both human and monstrous; and a base for rebels from Mulmaster desiring to overthrow the cruel government of their city.
- Natural caverns connecting with deeper “ways” of the Underdark - - ways up through which have come many fearsome monsters to infest the mines, over the years, their numbers and nature making it perilous to approach certain areas in the hills. These monsters have included such cunning predators as fomorian blinders, razor hydrae, tomb spiders, and a gigantic cloaker lord known as Eeeyrith, that commands many slave creatures, both lesser cloakers and a wide array of beasts. The more insatiable and predatory creatures from below, such as the fomorians and hydrae, have ranged out over the countryside, far and wide, but have tended to survive and thrive if they fared east and northeast, keeping to the mountains and preying upon the everpresent orcs and prospectors (human, dwarven, and gnome) who enter these areas nigh-constantly. The tomb spiders and Eeeyrith have remained in the labyrinthine Lost Ways, tending them almost as a gigantic “garden,” to keep a wide array of monsters lairing and roaming in the Ways, and fairly constant streams of food arriving for these beasts to survive - - however hungrily - - on.

Certain Blades of Mulmaster have from time to time made cautious efforts to explore the Lost Ways (often through proxies such as hired adventurers). Upon learning how dangerous the tunnels and caverns have become, they have done two things: made very sure that no accurate maps of the old mines survive in Mulmaster, but that maps to known entrances, and a few rooms or passages “just inside” those entrances, are readily available for shady backstreet purchase; and to spread rumors in the city of new veins of ore, rich cached treasures of coins or gems or even magic items being found in the Lost Ways. They then work through intermediaries (such as local thieves, moneylenders, and smugglers) to subtly encourage their rival Blades, particularly malcontents dissatisfied with the policies of the rulers of Mulmaster, to seek their luck in the Lost Ways (as, of course, a way of getting rid of said rivals). All of which keeps the Lost Ways in the backs of Mulmasterite minds, leads to many ill-fated forays into the Ways, and fosters confusion with other rumors of hidden delves in the hills, fortresses in the hills, and even magically-hidden wizard’s abodes in the hills - - all of which exist.

Elminster adds two elements to this rich mix of danger, associated lore, and misinformation that he personally knows to be true:

1. For decades, opportunistic doppelgangers have dwelt in human form in some hill ranches between the city and the Lost Ways, kept an eye on who "went forth" into the Lost Ways, and taken advantage of those Mulmasterites being in the Lost Ways or dying there to temporarily impersonate them back in the city, skulking about doing thefts, kidnappings, and even murders that bring immediate troubles onto the "real" Mulmasterites upon their return (in some cases, the doppelgangers enjoyed being the humans they ere impersonating, and sought to swiftly murder "themselves" so they could continue in their new roles).

2. One real treasure that was taken into the Lost Ways and presumably remains there are the Tlaenblades, a matched set of four longswords crafted by the elven smith Tlaenreth Taltarr in 1216 DR in the Deep Cave beneath Sembholme. These blades are light in weight, beautifully made, and have the following properties: +2 vampiric (as in: the hp damage they do are stored in them, and the wielder can choose to call on this pool at any time to heal their own damage, or by pommel contact heal other beings; the pool can't be used as "extra" hit points by undamaged wielders) that store two spells that can each be used twice in every 24 hours, but only for four minutes or less at a time: fly and passwall (as the spells). Anyone grasping a Tlaenblade by its grip is considered a wielder, and while doing so is constantly mentally aware of the direction and general distance away of the other three Tlaenblades.

Phlan

Banites allegiance at time of Ruins of Adventure

- Ed 10/10/13

Like all "devout" Banites of the time, those in Phlan take orders and direction, and diligently report to, the High Imperceptor.

In reality, like many Banites of the time, they are increasingly scornful of his inactivity and decadence, and tailor their reports with half-truths and their obedience with hollow "letter of the word, and no more" performance. So increasingly, they're independent, though trying to appear not to be. They are wary of Fzoul (and disgusted at his increasingly open defiance of the High Imperceptor, as something "me first" that selfishly damages the entire faith), and are avoiding cooperating with him, and misleading the most obvious of his spies.

Sulasspryn

- THO 2/2/10

In the 1370s, Sulasspryn is still a ruin, sporadically inhabited by salvagers and hunters "camping out" in the ruins. Not to mention monsters and brigands preying on them, and the occasional caravan or prospectors' packtrain sheltering from fierce storms.

Tel Verinal

- Ed 23/8/10

Tel Verinal is a small "waymoot" drow trading city deep beneath the eastern end of the Moonsea. Through a network of caverns rising up into the mountains east of the Moonsea, it trades with surface traders (notably ogres, hobgoblins, and bugbears, plus a few renegade independent humans of swift

wits and ruthless ways), and has in the past successfully fought off several attacks from mind flayers and thaalud, driving both out of its vicinity.

Like most trading cities, Tel Verinal is dominated by no religion, and attracts the outcasts and oppressed/former slaves from other drow communities, making the bulk of its populace fierce opponents of drow (or other) clergy who desire to give orders to others in the name of any faith. Nor is Tel Verinal dominated by warring families or clans, or split down gender lines or even racial lines (drow holding themselves superior to other races). Rather, it is a rather lawless place of rough justice and wary tolerance [[think the Star Wars cantina]] ruled lightly by a Morym, or mayor (an elder drow of patience and tolerance), on behalf of all of the major cavern-owners.

The Morym keeps the peace by means of several hired mages (some human, some not) who ride driders whom they befriend and work with closely; they wield wands (notably some that can cause brief, small-area-effect blade barriers) that make them formidable in battle, and some of their driders command small packs of obedient spiders (deathjump and blade spiders).

The current Morym is an aging, feeble female drow with a prodigious memory for faces, names, and events, who can "read" folk almost unerringly, and anticipate what they'll try to do. She often deploys her "Morymdar" (the aforementioned police forces) before trouble erupts, so they're ready and waiting for what's about to unfold. Verinden (= inhabitants of Tel Verinal) both respect and fear her, as a result. So petty crime is frequent in and near the city, lone idiots can expect to be ambushed if they venture into the wrong place at the wrong time, and brawls erupt in taverns . . . but in general, life proceeds fairly peacefully. This is a place for trading, not righting wrongs or avenging slights.

Those activities often take place in the passages rising up into the mountains beside the Moonsea, or even on the surface itself.

North of Tortured Land

Bluestone

- Markustay 1/8/13, "Location of Bluestone?" thread

I don't think I ever placed it (I don't have my original maps anymore), but I would say that crossroads is a good spot - where the northern road you found (leading to Mount Gaethluntar) goes past that road traveling west off of the glacier (I like to put towns at crossroads, always - it makes sense). There doesn't seem to be much other reason for that road (the one leading from the Glacier to the northern road).

- Ed 2/8/13, Qs for Ed

Markustay has the location of Bluestone correct, at that crossroads.

He also says the dotted lines are indeed roads. Ancient, elevated [as in, on embankments that rise up from the surrounding landscape, giving high-vantage views and a "lee slope" that travelers can camp on]; I don't mean they're like bridges, up on piers], stone roads from now-gone civilizations, so the current conditions (the flind inhabiting Mount Gathluntar, the glaciers where they are, the beast-men [ogres] of Thar flourishing and then dwindling again, and so on) indeed "don't fit" with these grand - - and sparsely used, but very useful for moving heavily-laden carts of crudely-smelted mined metals - - "roads to nowhere").

Mount Gaethluntar

- Ed 9/4/14, referring to a dragon cult mentioned in the Gray Box

The passage you cite ("...and the Dragon Cult among those evil mages beyond Thar.") does indeed refer to a dragon cult that is NOT the Cult of the Dragon, but rather a relatively short-lived [some 70 years or so, starting around 1306 DR] way in which a handful of dragons, through the service of about a dozen evil wizards who gained quite a good lifestyle thereby, ruled over the flind of Mount Gaethluntar. The red dragons laired in various lofty caverns of the mountain (and all had personal "bolthole" refuge-lairs in the mountain range to the south and east), and sought to control certain rich mines and so amass great wealth that they could use (acting through the wizards) to manipulate various Sembian families to carry out their plans, which increasingly hinged on curbing the rise of Zhentarim power north of the Moonsea.

Thay

1991 Handout

- THO quoting an Ed 1991 GenCon handout given to the public about the Red Wizards

As promised, Ed has unearthed that handout from GenCon back in 1991 in response to Thauramarth's query about the zulkirs of Thay. Here (Copyright © 1991 by TSR, Inc. but handed out to a seminar audience with verbal permission given by Ed and TSR staffers that it could be reproduced and disseminated freely for use in home Realms campaigns, and this post is precisely that sort of "reproduction") is the text of "what the public can see" (those were Jim Ward's words, I believe) about the rulers of Thay:

TIYARRA ZULKIRATE (= Of the History/Lore of the Zulkirs)
{Ed Greenwood, 1991}

The zulkirs began as Thayd's inner circle of trusted "loyals" (in their hearts, most of them were anything but, but only one—Illkrim Hlannadar, better known to Thayan folklore as "the Dragondevoured," thanks to Thayd's swift and ruthless reaction to his treachery—ever dared defy him openly). These "loyals" served the founder of Thay as his personal lieutenants, who led Thayan warbands, acted as his messengers, enforcers, and assassins, and helped keep Thayd the dominant wizard in the northern lands wrested from Mulhorand and Unther, and home to many independent mages of power, until the realm of Thay was consolidated.

Originally there were seven zulkirs, then six and five through battle losses. It was only after the death of Thayd that their numbers became set, and linked to specific "schools" of wizardry.

When Thayd fell, a bitter struggle for power followed, in which scores of ambitious wizards perished. Eventually the survivors, brought to reluctant obedience by threat of being trapped in the "Escalthar's Everlasting Curse" spell that would shapechange them every few breaths, uncontrollably, for the rest of their lives, met with the wizard Escalthar (who had devised that spell, and cast it upon most of those survivors) atop Laltharr, a bare crag (later blasted to rubble in a spell-duel) in southwestern Thay.

This moot later became known as the Council of the Black Star (after the black star mage-sigil used by Escalthar). At the Council it was agreed that there would be eight zulkirs, each of them a master of a school of wizardry: Abjuration, Conjuraction, Enchantment, Evocation, Illusion, Necromancy, and Transmutation. (Over the years, the zulkirs of Thay have been almost exclusively Thayan, and male humans, but no zulkirate has any formal requirements of residency, race, or gender.)

Outsiders have been told different wild tales about this or that zulkir, or how the ruling structure of Thay came about, but this is—so far as Mystra has confirmed—the truth.

Elminster and Khelben believe they have uncovered evidence that Escalthar—who mysteriously vanished, shortly after the Council, and has never been seen since (though there are many rumors and fear-whispered tales, down the years since, of his being seen by dying Red Wizards or watching crucial events in the unfolding governance of Thay) was either the god Azuth in disguise, or a pawn of Azuth at the time of the Council, but neither Azuth nor Mystra will confirm this. According to the Old Mage, the two deities, whenever asked about such matters, “merely smile.”

Only Szass Tam has held office (formally, “zulkirate,” though this term has been rarely used in the last two centuries) among the zulkirs in any consistent manner since 1300.

The “First Zulkirate” or initial eight zulkirs, appointed at the Council in the autumn of 1030 DR, were:

Hahlomede Teeos (Abjuration): known as “Blackwyrn” for his everpresent tattered black robes and cloaks, that rendered him immune to dragon attacks and made dragons actively avoid him, Teeos loved to act mysterious and to track down lost treasures, old magics, and deceptions, this last sort of hunting quickly making him very unpopular with many Thayans; he became the feared, tireless, and increasingly hated “investigator” of the First Zulkirate

Tlantros Tulhoond (Conjuration): an aloof, private man who feared attack at all times, and was therefore always ready for battle, with schemes and “hanging” spells galore ready as both defenses and deterrents, in addition to the monsters he could magically whisk from elsewhere to his side; a sophisticated lover of music, wines, subtle behaviour, and “refinement” who opposed Thay’s ever-greater reliance on slavery and the plundering of its resources at the expense of rejuvenating the land (he hated mines and quarries, preferring that Thay take what it needed from other lands by conquest or magical seizure and transportation)

Zarhandro Laeluth (Enchantment): a fat, jovial man who deceived his fellow zulkirs—and everyone else he had any contact with, in life—as much as possible; made frequent use of doubles to make it appear that he was in one place while he was busy in another; often bubbled with gleeful laughter as he tricked or slew or took cruel revenges; trusted by very few, and feared by many, especially tharchions (whom he was known to have personally slain scores of, over the unfolding years, many by torture); a hedonist who loved exotic foods and long, gluttonous feasts

Blueae Sharshyndree (Evocation): the first female zulkir, Blueae [pronounced “Dul-LOO-ay”] was a curvaceous woman with a melodious voice and alluring walk—who also had a coarse-featured and mannish face; she “had to shave like a man” and had acquired several disfiguring facial scars in her youthful adventuring career, and as a result customarily hid her face behind full head masks, which she sometimes augmented with a warrior’s battle-helm; a bold and calm battle-leader and a good tactician, she served Thay well in warfare and built ever-increasing influence over her fellow zulkirs, both by taking them as lovers and befriending them with aid and assistance for their personal projects, and by often stating and refining successful policies for Thay that she got her fellow zulkirs to support (and that they therefore took pride in); a mediator and peacemaker among her fellow zulkirs

Yaerind Mahl (Illusion): an inscrutable man of few words and fewer direct answers, stances, or clear statements, who customarily cloaked his true appearance with magical disguises, and preferred to spend much time roaming Thay appearing as various creatures, to spy and learn (and sometimes strike

down treachery—which he widely defined as “anything he disliked”—where and when he found it); was the first zulkir to force many apprentices and dupes to pretend to be him, so they perished in attacks meant to slay him, so he could strike down those who’d thought they’d killed the Zulkir of Illusion; possessed a pair of golden lions (figurines of wondrous power) that hunted and slew at his command

Tarabbas Mroound (Necromancy): a tall, sardonic, cadaver-thin man who “disappeared into bones” at will, and apparently did so permanently, soon after being named zulkir, apparently of his own volition and not due to any attack launched by a rival or would-be successor; many Thayan night-rumors insist he lives on, still, watching over Thay and covertly bringing misfortune to those he dislikes, whilst aiding those he favors

Kulvur Naraelond (Transmutation): a sly, witty, smart-mouthed trickster of a man, handsome and acrobatic, who was trusted by few; most men loathed him, and most women found him irresistible; a hedonist who seemingly cared more for enjoyment of food, drink, lovemaking, and diversions—even elaborate pranks—more than anything else in life; made many foes very quickly, and did not last long in office (or life)

The only complete roster of the zulkirate known to outlanders (non-Thayans) after the First Zulkirate but before the 1350s DR, comes from an anonymous slave’s account, TWELVE WINTERS UNDER THE LASH, that was smuggled out of Thay in late 1300 DR. It gives a partial roster of the zulkirate, as follows:

Eldryn Lammaraster (Abjuration): an old, bitter, grim pessimist who saw treachery and would-be successors around every corner, in every shadow, and behind every door—and prepared himself accordingly, between manyfold layers of defensive magics; his specialty was spells—many of which died with him—that had nasty counter-attacks built into them, triggered by their defensive activation and not by the caster having to trigger them

Balineth Skroun (Conjuration): a toad-faced, forbidding man who used intimidation and prepared “stage tricks” of magic to cow many a rival or defiant underling, Skroun hid well his deep love of Thay and his real loyalty to his fellow zulkirs; over time, became as trusted by his fellow zulkirs as any holder of a zulkirate has ever been, and with good reason; a true “team player” who looked ahead and acted for the betterment of Thay, beneath a surly public mask

Iyrith Telgahlagar (Enchantment): described as a darkly handsome, bearded man who was urbane, soft-spoken, and a master strategist and diplomat, the most dominant of the zulkirs through his skilled forging of alliances with his fellow zulkirs and among the tharchions and tharchionesses; ruthless in slaying rivals who act against him, often through spells delivered by bats that fly under his direction; once described by a Red Wizard as “Asmodeus among us,” and probably the closest of any individual to being the true ruler of Thay, at the time

Uldreth Korroth (Evocation): a grossly fat, lewd, aggressive man known for having layer upon layer of backup spells and schemes, and for being a jovial friend to all zulkirs, and a cruel, ruthless trickster to tharchions, tharchionesses, and all Thayans of lower station whom he had contact with; enjoyed frequent personal slayings of the “spectacular butchery” sort

Mahlind Yarr (Transmutation): a short, dark-haired, slender man of very few words, who always dressed in crimson robes and was very efficient and a master of foreseeing or anticipating events, treacheries against him, and likely outcomes, and preparing for them; almost always on the "winning side" in policy disputes among the zulkirs, who made few fierce foes and enriched himself greatly with trade outside Thay involving manipulated agents and dupes, in sales of drugs and gems, and prostitution

So saith Ed. His mention of the 1350s DR of course refers to all the published Realmslore (FR6/DREAMS OF THE RED WIZARDS, RED MAGIC, and everything since) that has made the identities, activities, aims, and roster changes of the zulkirs of that era clear to all interested scribes.

Thayan vs Thayvian

- THO 16/2/10

"Thayvian" has the same meaning as "Thayan," but is an older way of identifying something or someone of Thay. It's still heard today, especially among scholars and pedants, but "Thayan" has in recent centuries become far more popular.

Past Zulkirs

- GK 12/7/14, in addition to Pharazeen, Zulkir of Invocation (GK's Covenant writeup)

In my "Soargar's Legacy" article in Dragon #277 I mentioned Elzarr of the Crimson Eye, the Zulkir of Divination.

In his "Everwinking Eye" article in Polyhedron #109 (p.8), Ed mentioned the Zulkir Thalomeade (no school noted).

In "Volo's Guide to the Dalelands" Ed notes that Rhauntides of Highmoon slew an unnamed Zulkir of Thay.

In the "Spellbound" boxed set there are references to Narvonna Kren the Zulkir of Evocation (Campaign Guide, p.5), Nymor Thrul the Zulkir of Illusion (Campaign Guide, p.5), Nyressa Flass, the "Vampire Zulkir" (Campaign Guide, p.8) and Sabass the Zulkir of Conjuraction (Campaign Guide, p.113)

The novel "Red Magic" by Jean Rabe featured Maligor, the Zulkir of Transmutation.

Ed's posts here at Candlekeep reveal that the first Zulkirs were:

Hahlomede Teeos (Abjuration)

Tlantros Tulhoond (Conjuraction)

Zarhandro Laeluth (Enchantment)

Dlueae Sharshyndree (Evocation)

Yaerind Mahl (Illusion)

Tarabbas Mroound (Necromancy)

Kulvur Naraelond (Transmutation)

He then notes that after that initial roster but before the list set out in the "Spellbound" boxed set, there were the following zulkirs:

Eldryn Lammaraster (Abjuration)

Ballneth Skroun (Conjuraction)

Iyrith Telgahlagar (Enchantment)

Uldreth Korroth (Evocation)

Mahlind Yarr (Transmutation)

I'd love it if Ed had anything more for us, but that's all the references I've found over the years. Most likely I've missed some, so more than happy for anyone else to chime in.

- Sleyvas & THO 13/7/14 (mentioned in Dragon 427)

Talaskos Murthrond is a handsome, purring voiced former Zulkir of Thay who long ago foresaw Szass Tam's rise, faked his own demise, and departed his homeland for a skulking existence spent hiding in remote places of Faerûn amid magical mists.

Talaskos Murthrond was the Zulkir of Transmutation at one time.

Zulkir Regalia of Office

- Ed 13/12/12

There are indeed inherited "regalia of office" that the Zulkir of each order inherits along with the position (though some have been lost or destroyed over the years, and Szass Tam isn't the first to tinker with them, disabling or "twisting" some of their greater powers).

Yes, some of the regalia is comparable in power to what Vangerdahast wielded in Cormyr. And some of it is as mundane as confirming that a magical communication really came from a particular Zulkir.

Larloch made thrones

- THO 5/2/14 (non canonical answer) – Simbul's Gift is set in 1368

Q: Reading The Simbul's Gift by Lynn Abbey I discovered the Thayan offices of Chairmaster and Chairkeepers and the existence of the eight Larloch-made thrones used by the zulkirs during the Convocations, this prompted the following questions: anything more about the offices you can share? Who was the Chairmaster in the novel, of whom it's said that Szass Tam challenged him in the 1260s and lost? Anything more that you can share about the eight thrones? Were they really made by Larloch? Does this mean that Larloch had a hand in the establishment of the Zulkirate if not on the independence of Thay?

A: I've always thought the Larloch-made thrones were Larloch's way of eavesdropping on the zulkirs or even subtly controlling them (or reaching through them to magically aid someone sitting on one against an attack, e.g. Chairmaster helped against Szass Tam). We'll see what Ed says...

Thayan soldier weapons

- Ed 22/6/15

Belt dagger, second dagger (sometimes paralyzing-venom-poisoned) sheathed in tops of greaves (even the lowliest Thayan soldiery wear boots and metal greaves). Double-ended spear (javelin), on which are carried furled signal flags (sewn in sleeves around spearshaft). Officers wear gauntlets, right gauntlet has knuckle-dagger-blades, sheathed on forearm-flare-cuff of gauntlet, that can be slid into back-of-hand sockets and locked into place. Some soldiery wear small round shields, strapped to arms, that have dagger-sheaths on their inner surfaces, and some have sharpened edges and can get hurled in battle like Frisbees.

Vesparin/The Vast

Calaunt

Merchant Dukes

Alignments, tensions within group

- THO 2/6/10, responding to query about alignments mentioned in FR Adventures, conflicting with Calaunt's reputation

Ed confirms that those alignments are correct and that there is conflict among the Merchant Dukes.

Tantras

Heraldry

- Ed 3/5/10

A long-ago merchant fleet banner of Tantras was a steel-gray four-bar-by-four-bar portcullis (points at bottom ends of all vertical bars) on a scarlet field. This was a mast-top pennant. The fleet that popularized it is long gone, but the same device has recently been adopted by other ships based in Tantras, that have various owners. So it's becoming an unofficial but widely recognized recognition symbol for Tantran ownership.

Fate of Nobles following ToT

- THO 28/1/13

From my notes I can tell you the names (nothing else, I'm afraid) of those three "missing" families: they are the houses of Blackdolphyn, Dlarembur, and Klaethyn.

And so far as I know, none of the major families of Tantras was exterminated during the Godswar, or since. Oh, and yes, there are other major merchant families who aren't noble -- increasing numbers of them as the 1400s unfold, but with the same tensions Waterdeep has: the existing noble families don't want anyone new recognized as "noble," regardless of wealth and real mercantile and local social power.

Procampur

Common Gems

- THO 4/6/11

Garnets are plentifully traded in (and from) Procampur. That's "abundant" rather than "renowned," however...

Nobility

Estates

- THO 4/9/12, responding to query about noble houses which was redirected to "City of Raven's Bluff" and a Polyhedron article on the Vast

All the nobles of the Vast have "city mansions" AND country estates (large working farms from which they derive most of their dependable ongoing wealth, their investments in shipping being more speculative).

Great Dale

Coinage

- THO 7/1/13

We Knights rescued a drunken merchant in Telflamm who was from the Great Dale, and Torm found a lot of triangular (arrowhead-elongated, not equilateral) beaten copper coins with trade-symbols stamped in them.

Rashemen

Dajemma and World Journeys

- Ed 2/1/12

Q: When they go on their walkabout, are they typically alone? Are they given any special equipment, specific imperatives, ritual tools, or a rough schedule of when to return? How do the youths (and elders) know when a dajemma / journey has been satisfactorily completed? And what kind of ceremony or traditions take place upon return?

A: I haven't time right now to properly delve into describing those rites of passage, but yes, other than to be provided with names of persons abroad who may be if help if they find themselves in need of it, those undertaking them are typically alone (though they may begin walking with others undertaking the same rite). It's considered the height of rude bad taste to give someone going on such a rite specific expectations of what they should/must do/go see, or a schedule of return (though the person going on the rite can freely ask advice, or for maps or directions, or suggest when they'll return). It is generally agreed that a person undergoing such a rite will "know" when they are ready to return. When they return, a feast is usually held (family and friends will always try to be present, but anyone can attend), and at it the returned person will tell some tales of their journey (but aren't required to "reveal all"). Some walkers are given family good luck tokens (walking sticks, etc.), but not all. It's fine to start off with, or meet up with, or do a lot of travelling with fellow walkers in the same rite, but it's generally considered that to perform it properly, some of it must be done alone (to be YOUR journey and learning, not someone else's).

Chondath

Chessenta

Ed's Description

- THO 16/3/11

As I recall, he thought of it far more like the lands that are now Tuscany, Piedmont, and the northern Italian peninsula and southern French Med shore, only in the times of the condotterie and Doyle's Hawkwood and The White Company. At least, those were the tags he reached for when describing it to us (knowing our interests, education, and backgrounds).

I do know that (Paul Kidd's Council of Blades and other published depictions aside) Chessenta has always been a verdant land of gently-rolling hills and much agriculture and horsemanship, dominated by rich port cities, but that it has otherwise, in Ed's conception, changed a lot with recently-passing decades and centuries in the Realms (warring city-states, various short-lived "kingdoms" or unions of cities, etc.).

Order of the One

- THO 12/2/10, describing defunct knighthood orders

I can provide one defunct knightly order from the early 1300s DR: the Order of the One, who wanted to unify the city-states of Chessenta into one kingdom. They were few, undercover, never achieved much (they tried to slay certain city rulers and their [[regarded by Order members as unsuitable for rule, anywhere]] heirs, in duels or skirmishes during hunts, and managed a few severe woundings and one slaying), and were either slain, imprisoned, or hounded into exile, achieving more as an idea or symbol of resistance to bad rulers than anything else.

The descendants of some founders of the Order are or could be still alive, scattered across the Realms, with at least a few living in Chessenta and keeping their heritage VERY secret, so as to stay alive.

Grand Tourney

- THO 16/3/11

That there "Olympics" was known as "the Grand Tourney" and was held every fourth autumn, rotating in venue from (a campground just outside) one city to another. It featured long-distance running; a running/swimming/bareback riding/archery event; "spear the ring with your lance at full gallop;" non-lethal gladiatorial combats, blindfolded and regular and four-way; mock battles; jousting; and an "acrobatics run" involving leaps from the top of a (wooden, temporary) tower through the lower-down window of an adjacent (wooden temporary) tower, running along oiled ropes over water-filled pits, and the like.

Tethyr

Velen (independent realm by 1424)

Kaalinth

- THO 24/8/10, responding to query about home of Harptos

Kaalinth (pronounced KAY-linth) is a now-vanished coastal fortress keep, a small city of folk inhabiting one sprawling stone castle dominated by a huge tower. It was blasted down by a dragon, who laired in the ruins, only to later be defeated by a cabal of dragon-riding wizards. In the battle, the ruined keep was almost obliterated.

It has since vanished.

Some controversy about its site, Amn or Tethyr (Velen?) most likely.

From the surrounding notations I made, it's clear my character heard this from a garrulous caravan merchant who had been liberally supplied with drink (by my character). We never followed this up, so its veracity is (as they say) untested . . .

- Ed 22/2/12

Kaalinth was on the north coast of Velen, a little more two-thirds of the way out along that peninsula from the mainland. The land under the ruin heaved and then sank years ago, when an underground cavern (part of the uppermost Underdark that was accessible through nearby surface connections, had seen use by smugglers, and would be considered a "dungeon" by many adventurers) collapsed after a spellblast happened within it). So the ruins of Kaalinth, much tumbled, are still there, underwater, JUST offshore.

Mosstone

Matriarch Maerele Oromanche

- Ed 28/1/13, referring to a Eye on the Realms article (Awakener of Golems)

In descending order of age, Maerele's sisters are Olora, Emruelle, and Haladeira. She has two female cousins: Jhassala and Nurimbrue.

Trade Prominent Families

- Ed 28/1/13, referring to a Eye on the Realms article (Awakener of Golems)

Q: Can you tell us anything about what the Oromanche and Alkaether families trade in primarily that's allowed them to rise in prominence? Perhaps something unique to their locations (Mosstone and Velen, respectively) that they've monopolized or capitalized on?

A: Nothing unique. Both families have prospered by importing a wide array of quality wares from Baldur's Gate and Waterdeep that were hitherto available only in their locales rarely, and at ruinous prices. In other words, they've become discerning couriers of "the good life from afar" where their neighbors previously only had access to a handful of overpriced goods brought by peddlers and a few caravan merchants (the latter are usually in haste to get past or through Mosstone or Velen, on their way to make fairer coin in larger markets). The Oromanches have made their biggest profits and most steady trade on good wines and liqueurs, good cheese, and scents, whereas the Alkaethers have done best importing superior tools and architectural adornments (from door locks and handles to fancy windows) long common in Waterdhavian building, but unknown in the Velen peninsula.

Forest of Mir

The Wellspring Endless

- Ed 16/5/10, responding to query about any "Fountain of Youth" type places

The Wellspring Endless is what you're looking for.

To the lore he outlined ("Legends tell of a crystal-blue spring that surfaces amid a ring of white stones, and this is the Wellspring Endless. To drink from the pool is to live forever, regain one's youth, or forever relive nightmares while your body remains in a stupor. The pool remains undiscovered.") I'll add this: The pool is in the Forest of Mir and has been discovered any number of times; it remains UNMAPPED and properly located, thanks to divine influence (that continually "shifts" forest features for about a mile all around it).

Whose influence? Well, here's a hint: clergy of Eldath believe it is where the goddess herself bathes, and that for any of them to try to bathe in it is blasphemous -- but among a temple's greatest treasures (if they can procure it, and a priest of the temple must do so personally; no buying such a thing from adventurers or merchants) is a vial or two of the pool's water, that can serve as the ultimate healing/restorative (brings back from the dead, restores entire body from even a few ashes or bone shards, banishes curses and even divine geas and effects, eradicates plague and green slime, and so on. I can reveal all of this because it's been part of a long-ago RPGA for-charity adventure I ran, that participants got copies of, so this has been published (and is canon, for those keeping score ;}).

Calimshan

Satrap

- THO 23/5/10

I know that "satrap" in Calimshan has two meanings: the official, hierarchical one, and the looser, wider one (what outsiders think of, and as it's used by those frontier bandit lords we referred to: "lawful/legitimate ruler of an area"). Note that what more northerly areas would call a "robber baron" would be a "satrap" in the Calishite lands in this looser parlance: in other words, it's those who lack legitimacy who try to claim or proclaim it.

Slaves

Branding

- Ed 16/6/11

SOME slaves are branded, but usually only those who are ugly/disfigured upon capture/purchase, because there's a premium price for unblemished, good-looking slaves (and in certain end markets, buyers prefer slaves who can be passed off as free citizens "helping out" because they revere or owe those they're helping, or as employees, rather than slaves). So only a few slaves would be known on sight (brands are usually on the just-rear -of-side left thigh for slaves who'll customarily be unclad, on the front left shoulder, or - - for slaves whose appearance doesn't matter, or who are considered expendable, such as those intended to fight beasts for sport, on the forehead. A VERY few slaves are obvious from their mutilations, such as slaves who escaped in Calaunt but were recaptured, because they have often had their noses cut off.

Slavers don't as a rule pursue escaped slaves all that far and go to much trouble over them, as a matter of simple economics. They DO go to great lengths to kill or enslave persons known to have assisted or hidden escaped slaves, or anyone trying to resell stolen slaves within a city, market, or other relatively small area, to discourage general "resistance" to the current code of behaviour within the slaving industry. But a handful of slaves who escape while being marched in coffles or "long-lines" (both secured around the neck, BTW) in dangerous or wilderland-with-much-cover territory or difficult terrain would usually NOT be chased; it just isn't worth it, and some "shrinkage of cargo" is expected and allowed for (i.e. they "take" extra slaves, knowing some will die or be injured and have to be left behind to fend for themselves, on any long journey to markets.

This, as you allude, differs from cases where slaves get away from rulers and other authorities, and must be "made an example of" to preserve reputation or deter general defiance.

The Haunted Battlement (Dragon #415)

- Ed 13/9/12

- 1) The word Naeth: is this from the Alzhedo language? Is it correct to interpret this word as meaning "the first level below the ground floor of a dwelling?" Or does the word mean something like "cellar" or "dungeon"?
- 2) The tower called the Eiyaerat at the Phelhelra: is that tower name also a word in Alzhedo or Common (or another language)? If yes, what does it mean?
- 3) The word "durthdra" (dumbwater): is that Alzhedo?
- 4) The blades found by adventurers within the Phelhelra that are capable of vaporizing creatures of elemental nature: can you tell us if the adventurers have given a name to these blades or if they've since been examined by wizards or sages? Also, can you tell us anything about those adventurers (adventuring company name, personal names, interests, enemies, fates)?
- 5) The article mentions a place called Karamhond, which is now part of Athkatla. I take it this was a nearby town that Athkatla grew and overtook? If yes, is Karamhond still known as a neighborhood in

Athkatla?

I enjoyed this article, particularly the information about elralenth stone and its use as a coating for metal armor. Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer all these questions."

Ed replies:

1. "Naeth" is a word found in various Southern tongues (as is the related word "naed," which means "sh*t" . . . in much of the South, outside of cities that have sewage systems or dung-wagons, excrement is usually shallow-buried by turning over the topsoil and putting it beneath).

In Alzhedo, "naeth" literally means "below," but is actually used to mean "just below" or "shallow below" (whereas "naelal" means "deep"), and is usually employed as the name of a shallow cellar level (where we real-world moderns would say "basement") or to refer to something (a corpse, treasure, hidden or stolen goods) that is shallow-buried. So, yes, one of the meanings of naeth is indeed "the first level below the ground floor of a dwelling." In Calishite palaces and mansions, "the Naeth" refers to a JUST-below-the-ground-floor level of rooms, passages, and stairs that the servants use to scurry around from "room above" to "room above" without intruding on their employers (and guests) in those ground-floor rooms. ("Naeth" is never used to refer to deep cellars, but some Calishite shopkeepers use the word to refer to a lone storeroom dug out of the earth, and usually accessed from under the stairs.

2. "Eiyaerat" is a name, made up of the word "erat" in Alzhedo, meaning a tower, peak, or isolated height (such as a horn-shaped tor or fang of rock; the latter are often being used as landmarks) and the name "Eiyar," who is the Calishite man "built" (in this case that means designed or engineered) it. So the name means "Eiyar's tower" (or more properly, as Calishites speak, "tower of Eiyar." Eiyar's rank, life story, and the like are (thus far, until I or someone else writes something) unknown.

3. "Durthdra" is another invented compound word, made up of two words found in Alzhedo and other tongues of the south: "durth" (level or rude/simple floor or platform or landing) and "uldra" (the apparatus for lifting something up and down a shaft; almost always, this refers to a rope, pulley, pulley stand/hoist, and bucket, used to reach up water from a well). So although many speakers of Alzhedo would never have seen a dumbwaiter or elevator, or heard the word "durthdra," if it was said to them, the very word "durthdra" would tell them a platform that could be raised and lowered by some mechanical means was being spoken of. So, yes, it is a little-known word in Alzhedo that may or may not persist and spread.

4. Those dozen-some magical blades were dubbed "smokesteel" swords, because they turned the flesh of genasi to thick swirling vapor (like smoke, but called "bloodmist" by some sages). Their origins remain unknown—and all of the swords and the adventurers who wielded them have since disappeared. So far as Elminster knows, no sage or "mage of accomplishment" got a chance to examine the swords. A few names of the adventurers involved survive, perhaps distorted by rumor and retellings: the debonair rogues (and married couple) Shandreth and Immyira of Tashluta; the Jadorn Blades adventuring company from Sheirtalar, and the thief Brel Onstryng of Athkatla, deadly foe of the hidden rulers of Amn.

5. Yes, Karamhond was indeed a nearby town that Athkatla grew and overtook. It's now "hidden in plain sight" as part of southeastern Athkatla, specifically the southernmost part of the Bridge District. This neighborhood is known as Hamhaeldra (or "Streets of Haeldra," after a fondly-remembered "good" civic

leader named Haldra who was born and raised there), the “Karamhond” name surviving only as the major street known as the Karamahar, the Karamhdhyn inn, and the Arjelelkaram tavern.

By the way, elralenth stone is a deadly poison if ingested in powdered form or dissolved in strong spirits (certain liquors can dissolve it, and sages—Elminster among them—are reluctant to say which ones, for fear of precipitating a new rash of poisonings). Elralenth smells strongly, like vanilla, while dissolving. The wizard Horlaung of Tharsult knew how to magically combine elralenth with other substances to create an unguent that purged rust from metal, transforming it back into “like new” metal, but the secret of making this remedy may have died with him.

Border Kingdoms

Animal Game

- THO 19/12/12

The Border Kingdoms seem to be where wild turkeys, ruffed grouse, giant hedgehogs, and muskrats are all most abundant in Faerun today . . . not to mention edible snakes and giant wading birds. In the southern and eastern fringes of the region, young children with stones (and sometimes slings) can easily kill and bring back “wild meat” dinners in an idle afternoon.

Old tomes preserved at Goldenfields say game was last that abundant in the open country east of Waterdeep more than six hundred summers ago.

Lalambril and Barrowhill

- Ed, 8/1/15

Both of these places (Lalambril, Barrowhill) are in the Border Kingdoms.

The first is a short-lived (and small) realm, and the second a “new” name for an old hill with a tomb in it that has had other names over the years.

Lalambril is on the Lake of Steam coast, nigh the eastern end of the Border Kingdoms, and Barrowhill just south of Applegarth.

Confusingly, many humans give the name “Barrowhill” to a local hill that has a tomb or underground chamber(s) or entrance in it - - or is just rumored to. And there are lots of candidate places, so you’ll find locals calling hills “Barrowhill” or “the Barrowhill” all over the Sword Coast North, eastern Tethyr, and the Dragon Sea coast near Starmantle.

Whoops! Forgot that the Border Kingdoms realm isn't the only “Lalambril” place-name in the Realms. But the other one is, I'm afraid, NDA right now.

Grand Duchy of Shantal

Principality of Fairbanner (extinct)

- THO 28/5/12, responding to a query about the cambion Baerm Lamordair

it was the now-extinct Principality of Fairbanner, which occupied a tiny bite out of The Grand Duchy of Shantal (a strip roughly 2 miles long by half that wide, along the Duchy's eastern border [[north end]]). The cambion in question, who styled himself “High Lord” Baerm Lamordair (names we later learned he'd taken from wealthy Vilhon Reach merchants he'd murdered, to seize their wealth), was trying to make Fairbanner much larger at the time we tangled with him. He fled after we took down most of his band of

misfits (human/monster crossbreeds who were mostly "shunned outlaws" and brigands) - - and Fairbanner collapsed with him.

Lake of Steam

Firesteap Mountains

- THO 8/10/13, paraphrasing Ed's notes

The name "Firesteap Mountains" was bestowed by a long-ago human explorer/pro prospector/adventurer observing a phenomenon that had been seen from afar by many, every few years for more than a century (which is why the name stuck).

The phenomenon was flames and a lot of steam (white smoke rather than the black smoke of burning), boiling up along much of the mountain range. Hence: fire and something (tea or a cauldron of broth, stew, or whatever) "steaping."

The cause of this were now-vanished local hill giants (around a hundred, though their numbers rose and fell over time, from between 40-odd up to almost 300) who'd hit upon the idea of periodically "burning off" the brush on the mountainsides (a lot of thorny brambles and clinging vines; hard work to hew trails through) to not just clear the land and stimulate berry growth (which always happened in profusion two years or so after a burn), but to force out kobolds who dwelt among the cover and plagued the giants with night "swarming" attacks, but also to drive out a lot of tree-dwelling food animals that the giants (gathered in lines) clubbed to death, cooked in the flames, dried, and then buried in larders as "chewmeat."

The Shaar

- THO 10/7/11, responding to a query I couldn't find, referring to an unknown time period

There were many skirmishes on the Shaar at this time (raids and battles between wandering warbands and nomadic tribal groups that encountered each other, as opposed to ongoing, all-out wars. The loxo fought the yuan-ti bitterly, countless times and in at least three large-scale frays, and giants battled the yuan-ti in a pitched battle at the Lorrift that's sometimes called "the Rain of Flying Snakes" because yuan-ti spellcasters sent thousands of flying snakes down onto the heads of some of the giants, out of an empty sky - - and the survivors of this force of flying snakes who were still alive when the spell ended turned on the yuan-ti, and helped the battered giants "win the field" that day.

(Back then, the Shaar had more water, more trees, and a lot more wildlife than the Shaar of the 1350s-1370s DR. The Lorrift was one of three small, but landmark for travellers, northwest-southeast rifts in the more northerly region of the eastern Shaar.)

Halruaa

Heraldry

- THO 20/8/11

The airship badge (i.e. simplified blazon painted on airships) I have in my notes is: oval shield, sky blue background, on it three silver stars joined by a silver ribbon in the shape of a horseshoe, curve up; center star, highest (on the "top" of the ribbon's arc), is twice as big as the two flanking stars (at the ends of the ribbon/ends of the horseshoe).

So this might be Halruaa's "battle badge," or might denote only its aerial navy, or...?

Magic Throughout Society

- THO 30/6/10

Halruaa wasn't just a "land with a lot of wizards, ruled by wizards" as most of the rest of the Realms would probably judge it, it was a land in which most of the small routines of daily life (washing, cooking, movement around the house of household sundries such as clothing, laundry, lighting, heating and cooling, even airflows) were "done by magic." Imagine the "automated house" of many sf stories; well, a fully-enchanted Halruaan domicile would work the same way, with "keyed" (attuned) inhabitants affecting the house around them with either command words or thoughts or both as they move about, live their domestic lives, etc. They also had spell-slates (iBook, anyone? Ed's slates were about the same size and shape) in most every household, onto which distant Halruaans could send brief written messages.

Halruaa didn't have large conventional armies, because it didn't need them. They could magically use wind as a weapon (in addition to skyships, puissant battle-spells, and battle automatons [which can be blown up from afar by their directors, and so can serve as "walking bombs"]).

And yes, of COURSE they had weather control, and hence very abundant crop yields.

Automatons

- THO 2/7/10 (expanding on the above)

The automaton we Knights saw (about a dozen identical examples of, plus another three small but otherwise identical specimens), during play, were metal "rolling/walking spiders" consisting of five telescoping (limited-retractible due to successive overlapping metal rings), spider-kneed legs swivel-attached to a common platform 'body.' The legs had rolling spheres at the bottoms for locomotion, but also multiple "traction daggers" for walking on ice, etc, that could be thrust down "past" the ball to lift it out of contact with the ground and make the thing walk on the daggers (fiver per leg). Atop the platform could be multiple things, from a cabin with telefactoring magical gloves to move two fully-articulated, extendable "fighting arms" that could wield blades, spikes, nets, power-slugs, and clubs . . . and upsized versions of all of those, plus carry-platforms with lashdown straps and cover-nets, for cargo moving, that lacked a cabin and operator, but could be spell-controlled from afar.

That's the short version. There was also at least one much taller and larger humanoid-form metal "walker," usage unknown, that we saw only from a great distance.

Involvement in outside affairs

- THO, 15/1/15

Halruaa does have spies outside its borders (pre-Spellplague), and a tiny handful of "active agents" (who might engage in more than passive watching and reporting back, when they deem it necessary). The elders of Halruaa frown upon "young firebrands" doing things that might draw attention back to Halruaa, so they tend to act accordingly. Any active agents tend to be veterans and to be very low-key, not "blast dragons out of the sky bwoohahah!" sorts.

I don't think many folks could stop Halruaa, if they really got going -- which is one of the reasons Thay (both before and during Szass Tam) and the Zhents and, yes, the Shadovar didn't race around the Realms blasting kings off thrones and murdering all powerful mages. The Halruaans, like Larloch, act as something of "inhibitors merely because we know they're there and how they tend to react, so . . ." to such behavior.

Note that I said "really got going." The thing is, the Halruaans really don't want to get embroiled in matters beyond their mountainous borders. It will take much to get them to do more than call in favours and use others to eliminate threats or annoyances for them, or - - in a pinch, when "it absolutely must be done right, and in a hurry" - - send a strike force of their own.

Ed and I talked about this, once, and he said that although Halruaa was largely "gone" from Faerûn in the Sundering, with many of its archwizards snuffed out or gone crazy or very busy trying to magically repair what they could, a last-ditch Halruaan strike force would wipe the floor with, say, Telamont and the Princes of Shade - - because they had been developing their magic far more cooperatively for centuries, and in far broader ways, than Telamont had seen the need to or had the time for (Telamont, for much of that time, was securing his own rule and ruthlessly eliminating or taming potential rivals within Thultanthar, and then dealing with his own fractious offspring).

Halruaa was literally the sleeping elephant in the room full of fragile china. You don NOT want to wake it up!

I did mean "Sundering", as in, there were times as Abeir and Toril passed through each other that Halruaa was "gone"/incommunicado vis-a-vis the rest of Faerûn, though when I wrote of the deaths and mental damage to Halruaan archwizards, I did indeed mean the ravages of the Spellplague.

And here's where I extrapolate, after a brief e-conflab with Ed to make sure I'm communicating his views properly...

Most of the watchers would be "deep cover" in governments or important groups (like city guilds and large, farflung costers), but a few would live as just plain folks, in strategic locations. And aside from subtle magical mental protections, many of these latter watchers wouldn't have or use much magic at all.

The planted spies are chosen for their alertness, shrewd judgment, and strong loyalty to Halruaa. The active agents tend to be the restless "wanna DO things and travel and see the Realms and hurl my magic!" sorts in Halruaan houses, who are tried out as agents to see how disciplined they can be and how much they can benefit Halruaa. Some flame out, and some develop into good agents. Most of these active agents are by definition strong in their wizardry.

Halruaa During Spellplague

- Malcolm repeating Ed, approved by THO, 15/1/15

Halruaan magical shields went up, making teleportation and scrying impossible and clouding most divination magic into chaotic uselessness . . . and when the Spellplague hit, many Halruaans died went magic briefly "went wild" and structures collapsed, in-flight effects failed and gravity took over, active magics turned chaotic, and so on. At the same time, many wizards went insane or got brain-burned or were killed when caught in their own spells going chaotic . . . and a lot of the surviving Halruaans assumed the realm was under attack and cast or activated all of their appropriate "rainy day" defenses - - so MORE shields went up, many of them twisted or going wild as time passed . . . so Halruaa was effectively cut off from the rest of Faerûn. And caught in mid-dimensional segueing between Abeir and Toril (and not the entire country as a neat whole unit, but bits and pieces of it in a very localized fashion). Which in turn meant more wild magic and the leakage of other magics from elsewhere through it, and MORE defensive spellcasting, and . . . an increasing "no go zone" from the POV of those nearby in Toril. So it doesn't so much "blink" as it disappears into/behind impenetrable mists of tangled magic (old comics readers, think of all of those weird panels drawn in elder Doctor Strange issues), for a time.

To emerge with many structures devastated (think of many World War II cities after heavy bombing), the populace scattered, weary, and wary . . . and even more determined to be isolationist.

Or more succinctly: Utter chaos and you couldn't see in or out. Not that it was safe to go looking, when all the raging magic was at its height.

- Ed 7/2/15

Malcolm relayed what I said very accurately. Yes, all the magical chaos has shattered Halruaan society, in that their "usual ways" and attitudes have been swept away, and every family is questioning their status quo (laws, customs, reliance on magic, assumptions about their place in the world). There was much loss of life, a lot of fear and paranoia, and so as the result of the return of the Weave, a lot of hard work went into variants and "improvements" on the guards and wards spell, placing it permanently in various dwellings (most new Halruaan dwellings look like fortresses, and are readily defensible) and in "rings" around the land (food gardens, ponds, orchards, etc.) immediately surrounding those dwellings. A favorite Halruaan tactic is to have prowling guardian creatures hiding inside thick conjured fogs/mists, so intruders can't see what's approaching and/or watching them. Halruaa no longer has any formal contact with the outside world, so many folk elsewhere in Faerûn may think it is a fallen, abandoned land. And it does have numerous wild magic "zones" along its borders, moved and kept there by the strongest surviving Halruaan spellcasters, as a deterrent to outsiders. Right now, Halruaa is definitely in "leave us alone, nothing to see here, so move along, right away" mode.

Relationship with Thay

On who would win

- THO 28/6/10

Yes, Ed definitely thinks Halruaa would win (I know this from discussions about where Thay DIDN'T DARE put trade enclaves). Yes, they're numerically inferior to Thay, but (from my peeks at Ed's private, never-published notes) the Halruaans have far more magic (spells and accomplished practitioners of the Art who are used to experimenting rather than "casting under orders"), far more magic items, and far more Netherese battle-magic (large-scale spellwebs and flying constructs and "blast-globes" [I don't know precisely what Ed meant by blast-globes, but that's what he had written down in what I did see]) long hidden away and "secured" by family patriarchs and matriarchs), that they could hurl at any serious threat to Halruaa.

In short, once Halruaa was alert, the Thayans wouldn't know what hit them.

Negotiating an enclave

- THO 15/7/13

I personally would say there's nothing Thay could offer Halruaa, who have mastered a broader and richer mastery of magic than Thay achieved (Szass Tam and certain zulkirs personally achieved more, but didn't share). Thay tried to establish a trading enclave more or less by force, and were effortlessly rebuffed and rebuked. (This comes from Ed, because it was something staff designers asked.) I would think that most Halruaan elders view Thay as a stellar example of magic gone wrong or misused.

Halruaan Roads

- THO 13/6/15

Long ago we Knights asked Ed that very same thing about Halruaa, and he informed us that Halruaa has no main arterial roads, but is crisscrossed by a titanic webwork of unsignposted, meandering cart-track lanes, all of them with wide grass verges (and usually drainage ditches), except at the foothills of the mountains in the northern parts of the country, where Halruaa is truly "trackless" (open meadows, everyone rides or leads their pack animals or guides their wagon or cart wherever they please, fording the many small (and also unmarked, on maps) rills (tiny, shallow streams)).

So, yes, Halruaa has no roads. Drives visitors (especially spies and would-be invaders) nuts.

Dambrath

Tharsult

The Ship Elcathra

- THO referencing Ed 18/6/12, referring to a ship mentioned in "Ecology of the Leucrotta", Dragon #91

Elcathra was a ship that sailed the Sword Coast, owned by merchants of Tharsult who declared it to be a realm in its own right (that is, a floating, mobile kingdom). This was, of course, scorned by all coastal rulers, as it was seen as an attempt to declare the laws of the ship paramount over the laws of whatever harbour it was docked in (and the ship did seem pretty lawless, if not an outright pirate vessel)...and the whole dispute was rendered moot when the ship and all aboard were blown to sky-high smithereens by spells hurled in 1379 DR, not far off Mintarn. Who hurled that magic, and why, remains a mystery.

Lapaliiya

Southern Roads

- THO 11/12/12

Q: Most maps show a major road going from Sammaresh on the western boundry of Lapaliiya all the way east through all of Lapaliiya and continuing on to the east to meet up with The Golden Road.

In a previous reply to someone, you mentioned that there is a good coastal road that parallels the coast pretty close that links Tashluta on the eastern edge of Tashalar with Narbubel on the western boundry of Tashalar, that for some reason seldom appears on published maps.

Is there now or did there used to be a trade/coast road between Tashluta and Procalith and/or between Sammaresh and Procalith, before Procalith was more then a ruin, some two hundred years ago?

A: Yes, all of those coastal roads exist.

One of the reasons they don't show up on maps often (aside from the obvious real-world fact that TSR/WotC have never done an "up close" regional sourcebook that would have shown this area in detail) is that Ed tells me those coastal roads, for most of their runs, are split up into parallel routes running between "bands" of land: i.e. the coast is occupied by a series of walled, turreted mansions of wealthy persons (occasionally interrupted by small public harbor). If you went straight inland along one of the outside walls of a mansion, you would cross a roughly parallel-to-the-coast trade road, about three wagons wide in most places, with drainage ditches on either side.

If you kept on walking in a straight line, heading inland, you would cross that ditch and come to more private land (in some places, a walled compound of settlement or for livestock or orchards or even another walled dwelling [plus gardens] of a wealthy family or personage). If you continued straight inland, crossing this private land, you would eventually cross ANOTHER parallel-to-the-coast trade road,

complete with ditches, then another stretch of private land (farms or orchards, in most places), and then, yes, ANOTHER parallel-to-the-coast trade road.

These are all considered "the same road" but of course are hard to show on maps unless they cover a small area close up, which is precisely the sort of maps we haven't yet seen in print. To a rural Canadian (or someone from, say, the plains of Indiana), these parallel roads would seem familiar, as either sideroads or concession roads (depending on which compass heading in which such a rural real person was heading).

Sheirtalar

- THO 9/3/15

Please bear in mind that all sorts of designers over the years have altered population figures apparently on whims, without ever consulting Ed about it. Sometimes apparently without even reading the printed canon words of Ed about, say, Waterdeep and its seasonal shifts in population. (According to Ed, Sheirtalar had a population of 77,000 to 79,000 for most of the 1360s DR. And stood amid a populous hinterland.)

- THO 10/3/15

According to Ed, Sheirtalar (a place of slender towers, most 5-6 storeys high, and white-walled [stucco] buildings, with many awnings, some of them stretching across streets to provide plentiful shade) became more and more crowded throughout the 1360s, and diseases started to spread. Several gangs of wealthy officials and merchants started poisoning each other, rumor linked these deaths to the diseases, and wealthy citizens decided to decamp to build their own compounds in the surrounding countryside of Lapaliya (of which Sheirtalar is the capitol). Their servants and many of their clients followed them, dispersing a lot of the city's population into Lapaliya around the city (many to the northeast because streams were more plentiful there and several aging farmers were happy to sell their farms and retire rich). They serviced Sheirtalar from their new country homes, hence the city's population dropping to 52,135 by the time of Serpent Kingdoms.

Sulmarin

- Ed 16/6/12

This former trading-port on The Shining Sea was long ago swallowed by the ever-expanding port city of Sheirtalar. "Sulmarin" is now the name of a slum in Sheirtalar, where the wharves rot and sag into the water, and the poorest fisherfolk and smugglers eke out rather perilous livings rowing and drifting their boats in and out during the dawn mists and the hours of darkness, importing and exporting kidnap victims, wines and jewels and other small, portable cargoes that wealthier Sheirtalans desire to avoid paying taxes on, and ostensibly eel-fishing in the muddy coastal shallows south of the port.

Sulmarin was formerly more prosperous, and the home of skilled gemcutters and finemetal casters who made many palm-sized filigreed candle-lamps, cane "skorbels" (cap-knobs), metal "feet" for wooden furniture of all sorts (in the South, most stools, benches, tables, and anything else that has legs has the lower legs shod in decorative leggings fused with feet, to guard against the feet rotting due to damp or the boring tsarngeel worm), notably the families of Arlyng and Elkazhad (gems) and Brorlythynd, Calchauncz, and Yurzrel (castings).

Today, the fell necromancer Ieirith ("EAR-rith") Sprydurszace ("Spry-DUR-say-ss"), better known as "Spiderface," dwells in Sulmarin, and rules it through fear. He has devised a method of mating crawling

claws and some spiders with undead human eyeballs he can use spells to see out of, from afar, and has more formidable servants, both undead and living, to enforce his will. Spiderface wants to be left alone to experiment, and to be able to reach out at will into the wider Realms for supplies he needs for his necromantic experimentations, and won't trouble anyone who doesn't intrude into Sulmarin or hamper his dark existence. He's known to be fond of the sticky, opaque, salty black local wine known as "klelthlor"—and human flesh.

Netheril

Reason for not appearing in early references

- Ed 21/3/11

It's my opinion that Netheril wasn't detailed earlier purely because of the design approach of the time, which was to delve into history only as it was necessary to explain ruins or dungeons or lost/buried magic or whatever "at hand." An unspecified "lost Netheril" remains mysterious and romantic -- and a catch-all that a DM can use to explain the presence of anything from laser rifles and floating robots to genetically-engineered living dragons and dinosaurs (as long as Netheril itself remains vague).

Not really a concrete "civilization"

- Ed 7/11/11

As I've said before, at the Keep and elsewhere, the various archwizards were far more individuals pursuing their own personal interests than they were a cohesive 'empire.' A FEW of them wanted to explore and travel, and a few wanted to conquer or expand their influence, but the Netherese in general did not consider themselves a 'civilization' in conflict or rivalry with other 'civilizations.' It's simply wrong to think of them as a group that cooperated often on much of anything, let alone cultural conquest. (For instance, there was never any such thing as a "Netherese army.")

And what later humans, looking back, call "the Netherese empire" was anything but. It's our later way of mentally collecting together scores of completely independent city-states and flying cities.

Reason for creating flying cities

- Ed 7/11/11

In the past I've explained that floating cities developed initially as a way of creating environments under the complete control of their creating archwizard, but still being near to the "underlings" (also Netherese) who gathered foodstuffs or hunted for them or farmed them, and mined (etc.) for various other things the archwizards needed. It had to do with dominance of each other (and beasts that happened to be handy), not other peoples. When you post: "the simple fact that they wanted to stand literally above all the other civilizations," there's a problem: it's not a simple fact, or even a fact at all. A few individual Netherese, notably Karsus and some of the inhabitants of Shade, wanted to be "above" all others -- but that's not true of the Netherese as a race, collectively. Any more than it would be correct to say, for example, "All Americans play football and baseball, and do all their cooking on barbecues." Certainly SOME Americans may do all three of these, but...

Many flying cities were built by workers forced to build them by archwizards who wanted to "keep up with" rival archwizards, or who were fascinated by the idea of building an environment whose physical laws were spell-controlled and -determined, and wanted to benefit by having one of their own.

Land Based Empire

- Ed 21/3/11

And Netheril always WAS a land-based empire: the "Low Netherese" went right on farming and hunting in the forests beneath the soaring towers and later floating castles and cities of the archwizards, just as they'd always done. Being exploited/enslaved by the powerful mages, just as had always happened. The land base became less important once those floating cities became mobile, but it was always there - - and because almost all of the archwizards had neither the interest nor the developed magic to grow lots of their own food, always necessary.

Netherese Diaspora vs Shade

- THO 27/2/15

The former Netherese scattered all over Toril have continued to change, culturally, since the diaspora. In most places they went, they CREATED the local culture (e.g. Halruaa) by swamping in numbers/wealth/power the relatively few humans already there, or becoming the first humans in a locale. So they differ from each other.

Almost all of them would been hostile to the Shadovar who treated them with hostility or aggression, which tended to be the way the arcanists of Shade acted when making forays out from Thultanthar: they were looking to conquer, or to seize resources without paying for them, and so rubbed the people they were encountering, former Netherese or not, the wrong way.

Names in Netheril: Empire of Magic

- THO 21/1/11

Most of those names are corrupt hand-me-downs/nicknames, BTW, not the actual names of the people being discussed.

Selune / The Moon

Landscape

- THO 19/4/11

In Ed's campaign, the moonscape is very much like a largely-unspoiled elven forest (save that moonlight is blue-ish, daylight has a silver sheen, and reflections shimmer), and there's abundant forest wildlife (accent on the "wild"), with settlement taking the form of meandering roads linking small "clearing" farms and hamlets.

Other Continents

Kara-Tur

Shou Lung

Silk Trade (& Sembia)

- Ed 21/3/12

The Shou empire does indeed export silk to the westerly lands detailed in most Realms products, and yes, the demand is great—because Shou silk is by far the best, making other silk garments (those of Var the Golden and the Utter East in the mid 1300s DR, for instance, and the small silk production in Murghom at the same time) seem coarse by comparison.

However, it's (as usual) wrong to so closely compare the Realms to our real world. Silk making is not and never has been a Shou "secret," and no one has to "steal" silkworms from anywhere—though some merchants have tried, following the mistaken thinking that the Shou worms are somehow superior. What IS superior is the proper climate for silkworms to flourish; certain damp, warm southerly regions in the vast Shou lands are ideal for silkworms, just as a few damp, warm areas of western Faerûn are ideal (and the vast majority of territory in both places is unsuitable). In Sembia and most of the Heartlands and all of the Sword Coast and Moonsea North, it's too cold in winter for silkworms to survive—and most attempts to keep them alive in heated dwellings and warehouses fail because the heating makes the microclimate in the rooms where the silkworms are kept too dry. Also, tiny mites that eat and sicken and ultimately kill silkworms are present in quantities in any home that has dogs, cats, and a lot of traffic (particularly children, at play) with the outdoors and farm animals.

What certain individuals in Sembia (concerned with shipping of fruits and fine textiles without much mold growth and ruination) thought of was that light, moisture, temperature, and other things need to be "right" for silkworms to produce superior silk. So they started tinkering—and their "best conditions" are their secrets, if they can be said to have any. Their output is still small and uneven in quality, so the Shou silk remains highly prized (and in fact, folk wisdom up and down the Sword Coast makes Sembian silk command higher prices and be bought more quickly and avidly if it's passed off as Shou silk).

The Yarnmaster family rose to wealth and importance by perfecting faster, larger looms for the weaving of everyday bulk textiles. Silk was a small, high-end portion of the field they worked in, never their daily bread-and-butter—but over the years, they have been increasingly active in sourcing the cheapest raw materials for all weaving, manipulating market prices, and "playing" rulers, merchant groups, and rival trade cabals to keep supplies ample and prices low to feed their looms. So, yes, Yarnmasters were traveling all over the known Realms, trading (and manipulating) energetically. In recent years, the Yarnmasters are very much involved in the Sembian silk business.

There are at least seven Sembian merchant family cartels involved in silk-making within Sembia; the families are the Arrandamars (a large lusty, jovial, rip-roaring clan), the Brethrens (dignified, discreet, secretive, conservative; owning much city properties and avoiding publicity), the Calathnars (haughty, arrogant, and swift to violence and the use of poison), the Marynters (fashion-setters and seekers of the new and the innovative and fads that can be exploited), the Ondremmeths (a physically large and strong family who are hard bargainers, armed enforcers of contract details, miserly and governed by greed), the Pendrels (seafaring merchant fleet owners and old-guard "swap this for that" dockside manygoods traders), and the Yarnmasters.

Returned Abeir

Tarmalune

Common Names

- Ed 24/10/10

...common first names for human males and females of that city.

In these lists, a name after a comma is a frequent/popular variant, and a name in parentheses is a usual short-form that is now often bestowed as a proper name, rather than its longer root name.

MALES:

Blayn

Devur

Fornsel (Fors)

Galasz (Gask)
Jalark (Jark)
Loran (Lorn)
Maerac, Jaerac
Nyndar (Nyn)
Ontur (Ond)
Rornsar (Rorn)
Tamarl (Tarl)
Vaemdar (Vaem, Vaen)
Vornyn (Vorn)

FEMALES:

Asmure, Asmura
Dacenele (Dace)
Evoene (Evoe)
Glara (in elder days: Torglara, but the longer form is NEVER bestowed in this generation)
Indrue
Jalassa (Jassa)
Lalyra (Lyra)
Mindele
Rorelle (Relle)
Sarande (Sande)
Tlusteema (Teema)
Velvaele (Vaele)
Yarindra (Yindra)

Zakhara

Uncharted South – Ed's imaginings of where Zakhara is

- Ed, 12/1/15

Beyond Ulgarth, heading south, there was a low, worn-down (Appalachians-style) mountain range (so: wooded, plenty of habitable high valleys, "gaps," and passes), then a jutting-eastwards arm of the sea with city-states and small kingdoms all around its coasts (a "mini-Mediterranean," if you will), fed by a long, winding, major river that emptied into its easternmost end.

To the south of that was a range of hills, followed by a gigantic swamp (jungle-ish river delta, with quicksand, back "oxbow" lakes, etc., largely trackless and insect-swarm-infested and little settled by humans).

Sailing south from that large-kingdom-sized swampland, a wayfarer traversing the coast would come to another range of hills, the land rising and getting hotter and drier, and beyond that settled lands (my regional name for which was: Cimbarra) very like the published Zakhara.

And beyond that, another mountain range and then a region of sea choked with many, many islands, large and small, so navigating the waters between them would seem almost like threading through a maze. These islands would eventually give way to a long, curving, horizontal east-west continent, and beyond that open sea studded by only a few islands (mainly the tops of extinct volcanoes), the waters getting colder and iceberg-studded, and then finally a polar ice cap.

And there you have it: a potted tour of the coast. (Large continents stretching away to the east of all of this north of that maze of islands.)

Original Realms

- THO 25/10/14

In Ed's original Realms, there were huge landmasses east of Thay (Sossal, Raurin, Durpar, and the trade roads, just as in the published Realms), and mountain ranges and unmapped lands beyond the Utter East (east and south). Zakhara did exist, as an Arabian-like hot desert with oases and verdant mountain valleys region, though not under that name, and Anchorome, the archipelago one could go island-hopping through, was Ed's creation and was in the original Realms (it was used in a 1979-era campaign run by Ed). A landmass would be found where Maztica is, just not an overtly Mayan/etc. real-world one, and the continent Ed added as Laerakond existed in somewhat different form, that included jungles of the sort found in Katashka.

Circumnavigation Possibility

- THO 7/11/11

The answer has to be "yes," because we know it's been done, more than once, in the past (not often, but then the need and interest to do so would be rare, given that most folk in the Realms don't even think of themselves as dwelling on a round planet, and live lives that wouldn't be concerned with exploring the unknown and certainly not with "trying to do something no one has done before").

Underdark Connections

- THO 16/7/13

Q: Does the Underdark connect to the other continents of Faerun under the seas?

A: Emphatic YES.

PLANES BEYOND

Celestial Staircases

- THO 24/3/11

Each Celestial Stair is separate from all others, and leads to a specific destination (or not, if damaged), not to any sort of common nexus...though the destinations some stairs reach are usually connected to other planes, etc.

No, there's no map of them that mortals know of, and their very invisible-to-most nature makes them mysterious and little known (except in legend).

Here's the thing: they vary. In visibility/perception by "ordinary" mortals, in guardian creatures or magics or lack of same, in destination - - and (wildly) in how they were affected by the Spellplague.

Nine Hells

Exiled archdevils

- Ed 9/3/13, responding to query about archdevils exiled "before Asmodeus"

"Prior to Asmodeus's ascension"? Mortals in the Realms don't know of a time before Asmodeus was the ruler of the Nine Hells. It's he who's done the exiling, so yes, he knows their names and (vaguely;

archdevils grow and develop over time, just as humans do) powers. In terms of relative numbers, outcast devils are very few - - but if you had to face them all as an army, you'd be facing seventy-odd formidable foes. Most of them are in hiding, and will avoid confrontation except on their terms (i.e. they would never form an army). Six or seven of them are "persistent troublemakers" in the eyes of Asmodeus.

Prior Presence of More "Heavenly Bodies" in Realspace

- Ed 20/12/11

Yes, there were. All details currently NDA.

Ships capable of teleporting

- Ed 18/5/13

Yes, Woolly quite rightly pointed out that such ships do exist. However, they're rare, and ANY teleportation of large conglomerations of disparate elements (a ship with all its fittings, its hold full of cargo in various containers, the crew and all of their belongings and weapons, even the rats stowing away) is fraught with danger and difficulty, the least of which is the various individual elements ending up in different end spots. So it's definitely NOT a reliable, worthwhile method of bulk trade shipping. Long, long ago (1979), I ran a Realms adventure in which a flying ship tried to teleport - - and reached its destination as a cloud of tumbling, flown-apart elements. That should be the result for any vessel not constructed for teleportation and magically prepared for teleportation (with lots of ward-spells or a mantle/mythal to contain and dimensionally anchor small portable elements to the main hull). A magically-warded container should keep its contents safely inside, but imagine a toolroom full of loose nails, pegs, tools, and so on as being a big collection of things that will fly in all directions at all velocities, upon arrival at a teleport "destination" (so, yes, potentially a lethal cloud of shrapnel).

Weave, Magic on other Planes, Cynosure

- Ed 17/2/11

Q: "In Elminster in Hell it's made clear that Elminster will be cut off from the Weave and Mystra when he seals the portal between the two planes (Chapter 1 or prologue, I believe). Does this mean that all spellcasters are somewhat impotent beyond Faerûn? I just wonder how this works with the demiplane of Shadows (Malaugrym), et cetera. Conversely, would a Chosen or worshipper of Mystra have extra potency in her home in Nirvana?"

Ed: All spellcasters whose sole method of working magic is the Weave have lessened powers when "away from" Faerûn, yes. The precise lessening depends on the nature of where they are (astral, etc.). Demiplanes can be seen, in one sense, as echoes of, or very closely linked to, a given Prime Material Plane, so any lessening of magical ability, and changes in spell effects, will be minimal rather than great. In the case of the Realms, the demiplane of Shadows is closely linked to it, so most magic effective in the Realms will remain (almost as) effective in the home of the Malaugrym.

In theory, a Chosen or worshipper of Mystra would have extra potency in Nirvana, IF SHE WISHED THEM TO. Just how much "extra potency," and how it works, remains to be discovered (the hard way ;)).

Q: "It seems that Cynosure is an area that is connected to the Weave yet separate from the other planes. I just assume that there's some tendril of the Weave that reaches to it as Mystra has power

there. It is implied in Crucible and Prince of Lies that Mystra can not only cut off other deities' power from the Weave, but that they maintain their powers on other planes. I'm just trying to reconcile this (if that's possible) with Elminster losing his powers when "cut off" from Faerûn. Is this because he's not a deity? Or linked to his status as a Chosen, perhaps? I know that non-Ed authors draw upon their own interpretations of how things work, but insight from Ed is always most appreciated."

Ed: Cynosure is connected to the Weave, but we don't clearly know or see just how, yet. Yes, your assumption about the reach of the Weave would indeed seem to be correct, because Mystra demonstrably does have power there.

Yes, Mystra can cut off access to the Weave, because in one sense she IS the Weave. Elminster is not a deity, and loses much when "cut off" from Faerûn. Mystra could reach him in, say, the Nine Hells, and fight for him, but as we saw in Elminster In Hell, she dared not use her full power in Hell (NOT because Asmodeus or anyone else could "prevent her" or punished her for doing so, but rather because to do so would have over-strained the Weave AND torn asunder the planar fabric, risking creating uncontrollable, ever-enlarging rifts that might have destroyed Faerûn and "leaked" the Nine Hells into adjacent planes. It was a matter of responsibility, of refraining from destroying everything just to get her own way in one thing).

El didn't lose his powers. He lost all the benefits of a direct connection to the Weave (like replenishing spells, conferring with Mystra, effortlessly calling on the aid of fellow Chosen, Mystra, Azuth, the servitors of those two deities, and using the Weave itself). He didn't lose his inherent Chosen abilities, the silver fire within him, and so on - - but realized right away, like a good Boy Scout, that he instantly had to start conserving what little he had left for when he might REALLY need it, and not reveal to any watching devil what powers (and importance) he did retain.

PLANTS

Bluewood

- THO, 2/1/14

"Bluewoods" is the term given to young shoots and saplings, that are the height of bushes, because these young trees don't develop full leaves (the famous "blueleafs") but just half-curved leaflets.

Female-Libido-Affectors, Contraceptives

- Ed 30/8/11

As stated, thaerefoil has no effect on human female libido at all, but there are seven known plants that do. Some of these are Hathran or other secrets, so I'll deal here only with the four widely-known ones (part of elven, gnome, and halfling lore, and known to many human herbalists, sages, rangers, and druids, as well quite a few cooks):

- barljotrûn ("BARL-joe-trûn"): a scabrous mottled brown-beige bark mold that resembles certain forest moths or the barred brown wing feathers of woodcocks or some ducks; this nutty, woody, chewy material inhibits pain and sensitivity (numbing the genital area and all extremities), and quells all lust, for short periods (a matter of hours, depending on how much barljotrûn is consumed; the mold is potent, so small amounts are quite effective). Barljotrûn doesn't prevent any of the gross physical effects of drunkenness, such as slurred speech, loss of balance or motor control - - but it does help keep

judgment clear, and keeps memory perfect (no forgetting, “blackouts,” or anything of the sort). So a “blasted and plastered” young lass at a revel will remember perfectly all that she sees, hears, or does - - or that is done to her.

Found throughout the known forested Realms.

- delcammask (“dell-CAM-ask”): a small, thin temperate forest vine that coils around living and dead matter alike, and brings forth clusters of flowers that distinguish it from other vines by their appearance; the flowers remain green, and take the shape of long, cylindrical “fingers,” four or five in a bunch, that hang down curling slightly inwards, like a human hand relaxed in the midst of trying to grip something. The vine is edible but tasteless (though it contains a lot of moisture, and can help sustain travelers who can’t find water), and has no effects on the body. However, the fingerlike flowers act not only as potent slayers of the female libido (one “finger” of mature size, which is five inches long or more, quelling all lust for 1d4+1 days), but as contraceptives (preventing pregnancy for the same period). The fingers taste bitter when immature (libido and contraceptive effects weak and variable), but very salty and nutty when mature.

Found throughout forests of the Heartlands, Sword Coast North, and Moonsea North; not found in the wild south of the latitude of mid-Calimshan.

- qulcoun (“kull-KOON”): a tall, fernlike forest “weed” consisting of a stem with long, narrow leaves growing in pairs along it, that “uncurls” from a coiled-over top or tip as it grows. Plucking and chewing the raw top stops the plant growing immediately (though it will survive in its stopped state until hard winter frosts kill all the qulcoun; any surviving frozen still-curved tips retain their libido-quelling properties until they wither entirely in the spring thaws), but the raw tops quell lustful thoughts and bodily reactions instantly and for about half a day per top (so a handful of four tops means four days of not wanting sex). Eating six tops or more at once also makes pregnancy unlikely (pregnancy becomes less and less likely, the more eaten), but eating qulcoun causes immediate cleansing of the uterus (vaginal bleeding, sometimes quite copious; other than the effects of usual menstrual blood loss, no additional damage is done). Raw qulcoun tastes strong and not all that pleasant (rather like eating raw cedar greenery); cooked qulcoun is a slimy mass, but tastes the same as raw - - but cooking it destroys all libido- and pregnancy-affecting properties.

Found in all forested areas of the Realms that don’t receive many salty onshore winds (seacoasts) or that aren’t too dry.

- surgaerel (“SURR-gare-rell”): a nut-like woody growth found inside the hips (joint-like buds, as roses have) of a certain thorny shrub of light forest (dappled sunlight, not deep and permanent shade) undergrowth. Brown, fibrous, and about the size of a (shelled) hazelnut. Incredibly bitter. Effective from when it forms. Kills all thoughts of lust, and all bodily responses/awakenings, for days. Just a pinch (as much powder as can be trapped between the fingertip pads of a small adult human forefinger and thumb) works for 1-2 days. Dries the internal genitals (making penetration without lubrication extremely painful, and pregnancy very unlikely), and this property is sometimes deliberately and willingly used by fervent worshippers of Loviatar on each other.

The surgaer shrub is plentiful in the northern Heartlands and in lightly wooded areas everywhere north of that, but the growths (surgaerels) are rarer (found in perhaps one in forty shrubs), except in areas where the forest has regrown after a recent fire (for some years, the incidence rises to almost every shrub).

Increasing Pregnancy Chance

- Ed 29/7/10

Yes, there are many, many herbs, potions, and even diets and thorras ("teas" or more properly tissaness made by boiling the leaves of various plants; a "thorra" is the Realmsian term for purely medical-use drinks that aren't primarily sustaining or pleasant to the taste) used across the Realms to try to increase chances of, or "ensure," pregnancy. I don't have time just now to delve into all of the old wives' tales/wrong or exaggerated-efficacy means, or the poisonous ones, but I can tell you about one of the most popular effective ones: the (fictitious, not real-world) Realmsian herb "halvalondur," which is a once-common, now uncommon and increasing in rarity (due to overpicking, for this use) little clover-like groundcover plant found in most Northern grasslands. By "northern," I mean roughly the same range as for tangle moss: halvalondur is found in Tethyr and anywhere north of that, from islands off the Sword Coast as far east as the Vilhon and Chessenta, in usually-fully-sunlit open grasslands only. It is used by harvesting the blossoms, and females then eat them raw (they need not be fresh, so they can be harvested in Mirtul and the two months after that, kept in glass or clay jars sealed from the air with pitch or clay). This apparently makes females more likely to conceive, if they are at the right stage of their cycle. However, neither milk nor dairy products (such as cheese) nor alcohol should be ingested just before, with, or after the halvalondur blossoms, or they nullify the fertility effect.

Gender Selection

- Ed 30/7/10

Many of the herbal fertility treatments are thought to favor this gender or that, but the wisest sages (and elves who have studied the forest herbs more closely than anyone else) are almost all of the opinion that such thinking is either wishful or empty claims, rather than fact.

Mushrooms

Myconology Study

- Ed 2/1/13, replying to a query about Balaera Chrintavimm of Yhaunn, Sembia

Myconology, the study of fungi, arose in the Realms for the same root reason it did in our real world: are these particular mushrooms/toadstools/shelf-like growths safe to eat? :) however, Faerunian myconology has gone beyond classification to recipes, growing as crops, and of course the study of the sentient fungi, both myconids and the "monster" fungi: their breeding, habits, social lives (wars, feuds, migrations, territories). Adventurers usually get hired to make in-the-field observations on the sentient fungi, because they tend to flourish in remote/wild areas, far from human cities, which is also where monsters and brigands are most dangerous.

Balaera is becoming something of an authority on myconids (she can understand much of their language) and although very few humans beyond her servants know this, three of them actually now dwell in her home. Her (internal, open to the sky but enclosed by her five-story house) courtyard is a fungi garden they can hide in, among other fungi, and that is tailored to the warm damp and heavy fungi growth on rotting wood and heaped loam/rotting plants they like best. Her cellars are largely given over to growing edible mushrooms for her kitchens; she eats a lot of what we would call mushroom souffles, that in Yhaunn are known as "flalege" (Fuh-lal-LEDGE), mushroom teas, and "harbert" (gravy-soaked rolls of beef, rolled around sauteed, sliced mushrooms).

Myconology in the Realms is less interested in classifying fungi and determining how species are related, and more interested in the varying uses of edible and poisonous mushrooms (a distillate of one mushroom is the base for a potent liquor, and raw slices of another oil-polish wooden furniture, "eating"/absorbing dust).

Rustcap Mushrooms

Causing Hallucinations

- Ed 24/10/12

Most Realmsfolk know not to ingest mushrooms or toadstools unless they are very, very certain of what sort they are. However, the Wealdath and the forests of Turmish and Starmantle (plus a scattering of woodlands in between, notably in southwesternmost Cormyr and south of Tunland) harbor a small brown mushroom that grows in clumps (about the size of long, slender human fingers, topped by narrow, pointed rust-brown caps), and is known, imaginatively enough, as "rustcaps." If ingested, these can induce comas, always bring on drowsiness accompanied by drunken-like imbalance, slurred speech, and blurred vision, and sometimes trigger already-carried illnesses. However, mere skin contact with healthy individuals, in brief passing, can cause sporadic hallucinations for about half a day thereafter, such images being drawn from the brain's memories rather than surroundings (so an afflicted might see someone loved or hated from their past, or someone who intrigued them or whom they fear, from a distant place). These hallucinations are vivid and prolonged (so a hallucinated person might appear to move through a landscape or the rooms of a building, rather than just being glimpsed briefly), but "wink out" abruptly when done.

Shanut Wood

- THO 18/12/12

There is no "light shanut wood," just raw (that is, growing or just cut or untreated) shanut wood, and dark shanut wood.

Shanut wood dries quickly, once cut, and splits into woody splinters (good for kindling, but not much else). Think of overdone roast beef: has a definite grain, and falls apart in rough cylinders.

So to keep the wood useful (and intact for shipping, so it isn't all lost by falling apart along the way), the cut ends of shanut are stood in buckets or pools of oil (almost any oil will do), which the wood absorbs and keeps from drying out. In the process, it turns dark (readily obvious to the eye), and so is known as "dark shanut wood." A trade/vendor's term to assure buyers that what they'll be getting isn't useless.

- THO 19/12/12

The dark shanut wood retains the oil it has sucked up for decades (and so remains supple and durable for carving). When it starts to dry out (gets light in weight and goes light in hue), it can be set in oil to absorb some again.

So, choose oil carefully, or the carving will be either highly flammable or smell rancid - - or both.

Thaerefoil

Use as erection preventer

- Ed 22/8/11, responding to guessed uses as preventing animals breeding, dulling a husband's unwanted affection, and helping to maintain a vow of chastity

Thaerefoil grows right across the Realms in temperate forests at the general latitude (climate zone) of central Cormyr, wherever conditions aren't too swampy or acidic (so, not where conifers dominate). It's a small plant, that grows about six to eight inches high when mature, consisting of three broad, pointed green leaves (think "mother-in-law's-tongue" or iris leaves) growing up in a cluster. Mottled green, turn gray from the tips downward as they mature (gain full effects), then start to turn brown and wither ere

frosts end them.

Thaerefoil has no effects on libido, it simply prevents erections (and other blood congestive effects within a mammalian body, such as nipples stiffening, etc.).

Ed will have to answer re. how it smells and tastes, and whether or not it can be introduced to someone's food or drink without them realising. I know that it does have a distinctive, fairly strong and recognizeable taste.

Obviously, it doesn't affect the female libido at all, but I think there are several plants that do (again, Ed will have to provide lore).

Yes, it works on horses, etc. and all three of your suggested common uses are indeed common uses in the Realms (I know this from Realmsplay).

If I remember rightly (I'll ask Ed to confirm or deny), Florin was gathering them because one of the duties of a ranger (and Florin was a young, keen, very dedicated ranger at this point) was to gather (carefully, with an eye to sustainable harvesting, not "taking it all") forest herbs, roots, berries, leaves and bark for free provision to local elders ("wise women" and wise-in-the-uses-of-these-things seniors not as mobile as they once were), the rangers' temple or local priests/druids, and (for sale) to others. Florin wouldn't have been selling thaerefoil, he'd have been selling only herbs (and roots to be ground into spices). He was probably gathering thaerefoil because a local priestess of Mielikki had asked him to get her some, if he saw any.

(Note: seniors who have circulation problems and end up with blood pooling in their feet because they sit for hours often use thaerefoil to prevent such effects.)

Seeing his opportunity to accompany the noblewoman, Florin chewed a very large dose of the leaves to make sure he couldn't get an erection for a long time. It wouldn't remove temptation, but it would prevent performance. He did NOT want to misbehave, whatever happened.

- Ed 30/8/11

Hi, Lady Shadowflame. Everything THO told you is of course correct, so I'll merely "fill in the blanks" here:

Growing in the wild, thaerefoil has a VERY faint smell that's midway between minty and earthy, a smell that intensifies if the leaves are crushed. Its root tastes very much like a radish, and is usually washed and eaten raw; it has the same (prevention-of-blood-congestive-effects in the body) property as the leaves do, only milder. Raw thaerefoil tastes like mildewed garlic; it's a strong, distinctive taste that someone unfamiliar with it might not recognize as thaerefoil - - but there's no way in the world that it could be introduced into even the strongest-flavored food or drink (including alcoholic beverages) without being noticed. Dried (and dried and ground into powder) thaerefoil, ditto. Cooked thaerefoil loses both its blood-congestion-affecting ability and the mildewy side of its taste, the taste altering to "strong garlic but with a tang of iron, like spinach."

RACES

Dragonborn

Dragonborn of Bahamut relation

- Twitter EG, related by Zeromaru X, Qs for EG 19/4/16

Hi, Ed, how're you doing? I want to know if dragonborn of bahamut and abeiran ones are related in some way. Thanks in advance.

Answer: I'm fine! Yes, they are. No, no one human or dragonborn remembers how. Just a few VERY old dragons. The trick? Getting themToTalk

Dwarves

Accents & Stereotypes

- THO referencing Ed, 31/5/16

According to Ed, most dwarves have deep voices due to their physiology; many dwarves have gruff voices due to breathing in so much rock dust over the years. They only have Scottish accents if your DM and players want them to (they don't in the "home" Realms; Ed avoids all close real-world analogues because it leads to erroneous roleplaying assumptions [player thinks they know X about real-world folk, place, or history, and applies X to the Realms]). Grim and stern are human and elven judgments of dwarven mannerisms that apply to all dwarves if the judger thinks they do; all Ed will say is that dwarves tend to be less talkative/more emphatic than most other races. Gold dwarves are indeed more "aristocratic"/xenophobic than other dwarves, though this is a stereotype; hauteur is, yes, their general stereotypical behavior in the eyes of many across the Realms. Gold dwarves from the South (especially around the Great Rift) do have a distinct accent, though this fades over time for individuals who travel widely and live in places distant from the warm Southlands, and/or among non-dwarves.

Bardic Instruments

- Ed 3/11/10, responding to query about instruments a dwarven bard would use

Hand-drums (like a real-world tomtom), glaur (pipes), and a klarra (bowed seven-metal-stringed "short dulcimer" instrument).

Klarra Instrument

- THO 3/11/10, responding to query if it can mournful and dirgelike sounds

Yes, the klarra can sound mournful (lone chanter at a distance) and like a dirge, but it can also snarl (Ed once described it as: "that last guitar wail JUST before the slow, penultimate climactic chords of the chorus, in the movie soundtrack of JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR [in the overture, the chords being the "Jesus Christ, JE-sus Christ" motif])." For those not familiar with that music, I'll try to get him to provide some other musical examples.

In short, the dwarves use it for mournful sounds, but also for defiant "we shall endure" musical effects.

Calendar System

- Ed 24/12/13

Almost all dwarves use Dalereckoning for daily convenience when dealing with the outside world, but also maintain either one or two alternate dating systems: a "clan count" numbering years from the founding of their clan (or the CLAIMED founding of the clan, as some of these systems assume the clan is older than all others, and date accordingly, though clans founded in the last six centuries never "cheat" in this manner), and a calendar that begins with the day of the founding of a specific hold/fortress/settlement, and measures years from that day.

So your Undermountain settlement would probably have stone-etched records with double dating: a Melairbode clan date, and a date based on the founding of that particular settlement.

High Moot

- Ed 1/8/12, referring to meeting mentioned in Dwarves Deep

The High Moot is a trademoot, but it's something more - - primarily something more. It's a get-together for dwarves of different clans to exchange information, discuss issues of importance to all (common threats, appropriate justice for dwarven fugitives or non-dwarf offenders against several clans, etc.), formulate common policy/shared laws or how to make clan rules in one place jibe with those in another [or if not, to let traveling dwarves know how they differ], and getting to know each other better (so, for one thing, dwarves have some hope of finding mates they're not already closely blood-related to . . . but also so dwarves of different clans can establish friendships/working relationships with dwarves of other clans, for purposes of trade, working together on security or information-sharing over great distances, keeping each other informed of changing conditions in the Underdark, and so on). Yes, there's also a trade component [[I have purer copper but you have beter flints, so...]]. It's also where treaties, alliances, and agreements are actually made/sealed/signed.

Settling "mineral-poor" areas that actually aren't

- THO 7/3/11

In elder days on the southeastern edge of Anauria, a small dwarf clan dwelt in a small peak known as "the Hollow Mountain." They told humans they lived there because it was sacred to the founding of their clan (mortal dwarves meeting dwarven deities in a cavern at its heart). That may or may not have been true, but MOST of the clan had moved there less than sixty years before, to begin hollowing out the mountain in earnest, because it was a working mine with rich veins of ore (nickel and iron, I seem to recall, but my the second sheet of my notes seems to have wandered, so I can't be certain).

Dwarven word for dwarves & races

- Ed 13/5/15

Dwarvenhome was known to the dwarves as Ahrrune.

(from: runedar = haven, home for all and ahrraem = all-kin, meaning the race of dwarves)

. . . and it follows that dwarves referred to themselves formally (as a race) as Ahrraem.

A less formal, daily "we" or "dwarves" (meaning: a group of dwarves that wasn't all one clan or family, or a group assembled for a specific purpose like a warband or a shift in a mine) is "Ahra" (as in, "ahra always drink from the higher spring," or "ahra prefer that ale to the weak human stuff")

Clan: ddin

Dwarf: arl

Elf: elgon

Elves (group): elgonnyn

Elves (race): gonnynd

Gnome: del

Gnomes (group): deldal

Gnomes (race): delvar

Halfling: thim

Halflings (group): thimdal
Halflings (race): orthim
Human: tahl
Humans (group): tahl
Humans (race): oumtahl
Ruling House: ostoan
Non-dwarves: thaelwi

Hand signal for "friend of the dwarves"

- THO quoting Ed, 2/6/13, mentioned in Crown of Fire novel

The gesture is made by holding up one hand (which one doesn't matter/has no hidden meaning, because it is so often made by someone whose other hand is busy holding or carrying something, or opening a door) vertically, and moving fingers and thumb as if to grasp the upright cylindrical handle of something, then immediately shifting the fingers and thumb to form a fist, knuckles horizontal. This denotes holding the handle of . . . a hammer, meaning the working tool (and weapon) most favored by dwarves (yes, despite axes and pickhammers). So the hammer signifies the dwarves, and the making of the gesture signifies friendship and/or common cause with the dwarves.

Dwarven Museums

- THO 15/3/15

We Knights once, while underground, stumbled on a carved dwarf face in a cavern wall. Torm (the thief of the party, not the deity he was named for) fiddled with it, it did indeed prove to be a door we could open, and the small, spherical chamber (carved-out-by-dwarves cavern) behind it was a dwarf museum of sorts: fragments of broken weapons mounted in stone bases which were graven with the name of the dwarf who wielded that weapon, and brief accounts of their battle deeds.

I wrote down one of them:

Hadrorn of Clan Frundyn
Third of that name
Tuskbeard, Thaela's brother
Bold in battle, leaper onto the heads of dragons
His doom in the end, after six wyrms vanquished
Follower of Stormaxe, trusted shield
Another light lost. Worthy of mourning.

(Ed translated the Dethek for us, and of course wrote it in the first place. A curved shard of axeblade was mounted in the top of Hadrorn's stone.)

That dwarf museum cavern was in a labyrinth of apparently natural caverns under the eastern and of the northern arc of the Greypeak Mountains, about a day's walk west of Weathercote Wood. We have since discovered a similar small and better-hidden "memorial" cavern in an extensive Underdark-connected series of worked caverns and passages (natural caverns enlarged by mining in the past) under the Desertmouth Mountains (specifically, under the peak that juts out eastwards the most,

just south of the headwaters of the Ashaba).

Both caverns have stones remembering dwarves of many clans, not one clan exclusively.

Clan names from Desertsmouth cave: Brightstone, Coldaxe, Halurkh, Morthiir, Rathstone

Clan names from Greypeak cavern: Frundyn, Thundren, one other

Stronghold Entrances

- Ed 18/5/13

Dwarves often hide the entrances to their strongholds and mines in natural fissures or caves: side-clefts closed by apparently-natural stones, often where water trickles or gushes down a rock-face to hide the "bright scratches" created by stone grating on stone. Dwarves are very good at shaping stones to move easily in greased grooves or with the aid of counterweights, or both, so a lone dwarf can readily shift a large rock. There are always stone pegs or "chocks" to hold moving rocks closed (akin to the way a bar keeps a door fastened) available.

The most common "safeguard" inside such an entrance is a secondary "drop-door" or "falling block" that can be released to crash down like a portcullis and either crush intruders trapped in a well-like area they must move through, or block the way entirely, so explosive spells or days of hard pick-work will be required to remove the obstacle (because the means of raising it again are "hidden" from the intruders above/behind its bulk).

It's the norm for defensible entrances, no matter how large and grand, to be tunneled with tight dogleg turns or bends, and ramps going up as one goes in, because both features allow relatively small numbers of defenders to inflict heavy losses on attacking intruders. For instance, a heavy cart full of rocks and flammables can be fastened at the head of a ramp, then released to crash down the ramp to crush intruders against the "back wall" of the abrupt turn at the bottom of the ramp, where the cart is wedged in place. Drop-logs attached to the cart's rear wheels are then released (usually by chopping through cords with an axe) to fall against the wheels and act as brakes, to prevent them turning (so intruders can't easily shove the cart back up the ramp). Finally, fuses are lighted to ignite the flammables on the downside end of the cart, that have been selected and arranged to create a very smoky fire. The defenders retreat from the entry passage, usually closing yet another inner door, to get away from the smoke - - which has nowhere else to go except down the passage, suffocating or forcing out the intruders.

Finally, dwarves are VERY good at constructing arrow slits, spyholes, and doors so that they aren't easily visible, or even have overlapping "plugs" of stone that cover them on the outside face (plugs that can be shoved sufficiently far out of the way on long batons of stone or wooden spars, so the dwarves can see around the plugs).

Views on Sexuality

- THO 23/5/10, specifically asked about homosexuality and sex before marriage

I know Ed held the view that in some places, EVERYTHING broke down for dwarves in the Realms in recent centuries, as holds fell, clans got decimated or entirely wiped out, and births dwindled to a trickle. So ANY social norms (including taboos and strict rules) may well have been abandoned, as the desperate, wandering dwarven survivors did whatever was necessary, lost their traditions, and so on.

Vulnerability to Multiple Personality Disorder

Can dwarves suffer from multiple personality disorder (or something similar to it)?

A: Yes, but very rare; there's a good reason dwarves are generally thought to be "hard-headed" [disciplined, steadfast, grudge-holding, deep-memoried, patient]

Maps

- Ed 29/12/10, responding to query about why dwarves wouldn't have maps of old Delzoun

Dwarves DO make maps, by scorch-marking leather usually, but they are used only as memorization aids: a dwarf makes one from memory to teach other dwarfs (usually children or younger kin, or younger dwarves of his/her clan that he/she is training), and once all of them have repeatedly shown that they can correctly draw the same map from memory, the original is destroyed.

This custom arose out of dwarven paranoia that foes (orcs, in particular) could find and/or effectively assault dwarven strongholds if they captured or found a map. So at any one time, "dwarven map libraries" are the brains of elder dwarves -- and any actual physical maps will show small detailed areas, with symbols for keys rather than written legends, as opposed to showing the layout of an entire fortress or city or series of defenses.

Note that dwarves are taught from childhood to envisage in three dimensions, knowing the depth and tilt (if any) of subterranean spaces and constructions.

Dwarven Mining

- Ed, 14/1/15

Umber hulk claws or anything other body part from a dead creature would need to be properly preserved (pickling or magic or most likely both) to retain resiliency, or it'll dry out and shatter with continued high-stress use (and tunneling through rock IS, yes, high-stress use).

As for shoring up: one of the great skills of dwarves is "knowing" rock, so they can tell when rock is hard enough not to need any shoring/framing, and when it does (experts train younglings in the taste, feel, smell, and look of rock). Some gadgets include: thin, high-sided "trough" rubble-carts (picture a short dugout canoe fitted with many rope-handles) for passing mined rock back out of the way to a side-cavern, plentiful water in skins (brought to the workplace in those same carrycarts) used to keep down dust and to cool the chisels, and many, many shaped and hard-forged chisels, used as a woodcutter employs splitting wedges on logs, hammered into rock with mallets in patterns that exploit natural cleavage-planes in the rock, so pickaxes have their blows magnified into breaking off large pieces of rock, fracturing large amounts in a short time period so the chunks can be broken up with hammer blows from all sides, the rubble scooped into carrycarts with deep-sided scoops (like some real-world fireplace ash-shovels in shape, but much sturdier).

And finally, dwarves will use wood if they have to, and if the stone is dry enough. Otherwise, it's temporary work at best, soon replaced by "arch-collars" of stone carved out of the right "really durable" sorts of rock in one place, and stored and transported to where needed. Often these collars won't "fit" along tunnels if left in one piece, and are constructed as two half-arches with a keystone/capstone (think of the old Pennsylvania railway logo) that gets hammered into place where it is needed. The capstones aren't simple blocks, they're long rectangular slabs, that when set up will run from one arch to the next, to form a "ceiling" inside the tunnel.

Elves

Physical Maturity

- GK 31/12/15

Elves reach physical maturity at 25, so whilst Filarion Filvenderson was still a "youth" at 15 it is conceivable that he was a child adventurer.

Ascetics

- THO 12/2/11

Almost ALL elven finery, sculpture, and even architecture is about smooth, flowing lines, like the roots of living trees, the way wind and water sculpt rock and beach sand, etc.

So almost all elven gems are cabochon-cut (smooth and rounded rather than faceted), and the bands and circlets of rings, tiaras, etc. will have flowing, rounded, smooth finishes rather than dagged points, squared corners, sharp edges, etc.

Building Materials

Potential use of coral and shell

- THO 24/2/12 (see Elves of Evermeet for more)

I recall from my notes of Realmsplay with Ed as DM (this is back before the launch of the Realms as a full-fledged published game setting, and so, long before Elaine's EVERMEET novel) that on our brief (collective Knights, as opposed to Florin and Dove) visit to Evermeet, we met with certain elves in a chamber formed of growing trees, that had windows of translucent, polished-to-incredible-thinness shell. (I don't recall any mention of coral, though.)

Jewelry made from metal

- Ed 29/9/11

Most elven jewelry is of a silver or silvery-blue metal. They are almost always alloys, involving silver or being variants of electrum, as the elves strive to create a "living metal" (that is, a metal that responds to the body temperature and changes of its wearer, as plants/trees can) that can be pliable rather than brittle, soft rather than hard (yet still strong), AND accept and retain enchantments. Usually in secrecy, but sometimes with the aid of hired half-elves, gnomes, halflings, humans, and even dwarves, elves keep trying to create new and better (that is, having more of the properties mentioned above) alloys for their jewelry. Elves prefer to sculpt molds and cast jewelry-metals, rather than forging them, but have tried - - and continue to try - - almost anything to derive "better" alloys.

Drow

Skin colour

- THO quoting Ed circa 1990, Qs for Ed 24/5/12

Obsidian-black skin. However, youth, disease, bruises, areas of healing and scars, and overexposure to the sunlight of the Realms Above (that is, the surface world, and "overexposure" varies from individual to individual, on a genetic basis) will cause obsidian-black skin to go velvety black (go soft and dull rather than deep jet black), and such drow skin will look black with either a deep purple tint or a deep blue tint when it reflects back bright lights. So, black with dark purple or dark, rich blue ("royal blue") highlights

(not dark purple skin with black areas, or dark blue with black areas, but black with hued highlights. Pickled drow skin preserved by alchemists (pickled, in bottles), goes slowly more and more purple, just as the scales of the Purple Dragon of Cormyr went from black to purple with age.

Males and Females

- THO 23/12/10, responding to query if males are always second class citizens

When you post "some priestess look on males like second class citizens and some priestess don't tend to know much about their fathers," you are correct, but when describing Lolth-dominated drow society, both uses of "some" would better be replaced by "almost all," and when applying your sentence to Eilistraean drow society, both uses of "some" should probably read "a handful of."

In other words, males are NOT lesser beings/pushed aside/dominated by females in most Eilistraean drow society, though they are in drow cities and lands that worship Lolth above other deities.

Male Priests of Lolth

- THO 4/7/10

There have always been male priests of Lolth, because not all drow cities are matriarchally dominated, or house dominated, the way Menzo is.

Treatment in Waterdeep

- Ed 25/6/11, following on from discussion about "The Crawling Spider" Waterdeep tavern

In Waterdeep, circa 1372 DR, drow are NOT welcome in Waterdeep, and are likely to be detained (arrested or fought by the City Watch or the City Guard, and reported/fled from by other citizens, except perhaps adventurers or young nobles wanting adventure or members of the Watchful Order, who may well challenge them) on sight. This "general rule" is tempered with increasing hesitation at this time because of what THO alluded to in her earlier post: the increasingly-popular habit of some nobles and other wealthy Waterdhavians who can afford good disguises or appearance-altering magic, to "play at being drow" because of the spread of stories about the drow that make some see them as "alluring evil" [= "cool" bad guys]. By 1372, there have been several well-publicized incidents of powerful noble lords being mistreated by the Watch or Guard due to being mistaken for drow, and of those lords complaining that they have every right to walk "their city" looking like whatever they choose to look like, and the onus is on public defenders and lawkeepers to make sure of their foes/targets before aggressively attacking anyone.

Most REAL drow know all about how they'll be treated in any human-dominated (or elven, or dwarven, or gnome, or for that matter illithid) surface city, and don't visit such places without disguises that make them look like something else (human clergy of dark gods like Shar and Loviatar are favorite disguises). Thanks to Skullport, many Waterdhavians are familiar with other Underdark denizens, and although anything with tentacles (including mind flayers) or that looks beholderish or that has very large claws or fangs is likely to be decried (and attacked) as a "monster!" . . . non-drow Underdark inhabitants aren't specifically banned from the city, and do (usually by night, and heavily cloaked/hooded/disguised) trade in Dock Ward and to a lesser extent in South Ward, Castle Ward, and Trades Ward, and congregate in the Crawling Spider as part of this doing deals or to celebrate afterwards. Innkeepers, tavernmasters, and shopkeepers south of an east-west line drawn through Castle Waterdeep generally accept guests/clients of all sorts who behave, don't threaten, and pay (some coin up front is a rule in ALL cases of masters' unease or mistrust of guests, and many Dock Warders demand it of ALL clientele, even

known Waterdhavian nobles out on a lark); those north of there will often turn away heavily-covered visitors who refuse to show themselves.

Drow are similarly unwelcome in Neverwinter (though note the lack of a city wall and gates circa 1372 DR to stop most unwanted visitors except on the doorsteps of individual establishments), and in most parts of Baldur's Gate (though that city's cleanliness, order, and respect for law go downhill swiftly as it expands, in the late 1370s and thereafter). To reiterate: drow know this, and generally travel the surface world in disguise, sometimes among large groups of coster/caravan guards they serve in, making use of full-helm uniforms and cosmetics.

For example, in the "home" Realms campaign, four outcast female drow lived and worked on the surface for decades as caravan guards (their nature known to their fellow guards, of course) posing as dusky-skinned human females from remote eastern or southern lands, concealing their lower faces behind veils of linked coins and wearing harem-style silks under their armor; they were generally assumed by those who saw them to be human sex-servants of the caravan masters, rather than drow, and this supposition was aided by the "casually familiar, as longtime comrades" way their fellow caravan guards treated them.

Treatment of discovered drow slave

- THO 15/8/11

The answer is "it depends" (on who finds them, and the reaction of the drow slave). Many Waterdhavians would scream and run to find the Watch; Watch officers might draw weapons and use them overhastily if the drow actively offered violence to anyone nearby, but Lords and senior courtiers and Guard officers will almost always try to maintain Waterdeep's "open trading" reputation by feeding and arming the drow and escorting them down to Skullport to "freedom in the Underdark."

How to Free Menzo Slaves

- Ed 21/12/11, responding to a query about how adventurers could accomplish this

I'd say what chiefly determines tactics here are the beliefs of the band - - will they willingly impersonate high-ranking holy servants of Lolth? If the answer is yes, that's the best "cover guise" for collecting or recruiting drow, captive or otherwise: purport to be on a holy mission from Lolth. Of course, this may well lead to vicious armed conflict with local priestesses, but that's a likelihood anyway, and the fear most drow have for offending Lolth will lead them to be slow to act against anyone claiming Lolth's special favor or guidance. One thing to bear in mind: the novels give a false impression that Lolth herself is everywhere among the drow, paying constant attention to everything they do (so falsely claiming to be representing her interests would bring about her furious personal arrival, on the spot). Not so. She's very busy riding herd on important individual drow she wants to influence, furthering her own schemes, and deriving much personal amusement from many drow activities, some undertaken in her name and some not.

A riskier fallback tactic would be to use shapechange magics to try to impersonate yochlol, to accomplish the same ends. Yet risk is unavoidable in this mission, no matter how it's undertaken. Those desiring to avoid the Lolth angle are going to have to either do the "lightning commndo raid" or try the much slower and just as risky approach of trying to infiltrate drow house after drow house, gain a magical mental hold over its Matron or another high-ranker, and have the captives freed/transferred to the band "on their orders."

Inter-House Wars

- THO 4/5/12

In general, the hardest thing for a drow house to conceal in an attack on a rival house in the same city is the military buildup. So a lot of misdirection and guerilla stuff goes on, including secretly mustering way out in the "wild" Underdark and then ambushing the rival house's patrols to weaken them, for some months before the all-out assault.

In all cases where the attacker doesn't have the brute-force or magical muscle to "crash right in," the assault usually involves trying to find defensive weaknesses and gaining access hard and fast through those weak points (which usually means an assault using magic or drop-lines from cavern ceilings or both, to gain access to upper-level windows or floors and so bypassing entry doors and heavily-defended areas), and deception (coming in concealed in food wagons, or posing as members of the house returning from a patrol or business trip, etc.).

Attackers often employ "trick" wagons loaded with timber frames that can be unfolded to jam doors open, or bombs (so as to blow up front gates or firing-port defenses), and smokepot/fiery bombs to force defenders out of certain areas with thick smoke, etc.

It is almost always against local civic rules to "wholesale poison" large numbers of fellow drow (i.e. by tainting a well or common water supply or incoming food or drinkables), though poisoned weapons can be used. Usually a house that does this will be punished by the rest of the community in the same manner as if their assault had failed.

So the magically-capable members of smaller drow houses engaged in warfare would do things like cast fly spells on key warriors of their house to mount these upper-storey assaults, and then provide "fighting support" (the fireballs, the webs) to assault teams once things get underway.

Lastly, diversions and disruptions. Such as an arranged stampede of pack lizards or Underdark monsters to occupy defenders in one or more locations before the real attackers arrive in other locations. Hired or manipulated driders (outcasts, not part of the attacking house) who stage a timely/untimely raid.

Avalanches or stalactite falls (magically or physically triggered), and so on.

- Ed 4/5/12

As for troop strength...well, as much as Candlekeep scribes are growing weary of my saying "it depends," I'm going to do it again anyway: It depends. :}

But yes, 20 to 50 warriors sounds good (less than twenty is either just a patrol raid or a suicidal attack, unless it's one unit of several involved in an all-out assault, and much above fifty isn't a smaller house unless the entire city is small or ravaged by war). The only such attack I've ever roleplayed through in detail, in a TSR playtest years back, had a main force of 45 (three priestesses and two wizards leading forty warriors) and a secondary "sneak attack from the rear" force of six veteran fighters, four veteran wizards, and two novice wizards.

Prevalence of Incest

- THO 21/1/11

It depends on the society; like humans, drow aren't monolithic in their societal norms - - even within Lolth-and-only-Lolth worshippers. In a city like Menzo as we saw it first in Bob's novels, incest isn't taboo because preservation, promotion, and dominance of the family is paramount; if you might lose territory or wealth by a marriage tie but can keep it by marrying in the family, incestuous formal unions won't be banned. They'd be more of a last resort than preferred, because you aren't swelling the family ranks and

gaining bloodties with incestuous formal unions, but not abhorrent to the society. Informal incest (as in, not marriage but daily sex practices) with females as aggressors is probably widespread in some Lolth-dominated matriarchies, as a way of establishing and reinforcing dominance as well as the powerful having fun at the expense of the less powerful, but actual top-of-the-family matriarchs would usually be too paranoid (my sex partner could attack me!) to indulge much, even though they might well have when younger.

And in all such discussions, it's important to remember two things: those gamers offended or uncomfortable with such matters are encouraged to leave it all out of their games, but no one should be reasoning or making points in discussions on such matters by applying modern real-world attitudes, or what they know of historical real-world customs and attitudes, because (it should hardly need be said) the Realms isn't real, and isn't based on our real world more than as a setting for human imaginary goings-on.

For what it's worth, both Gary and I (how do I know this? we talked about it, over beer, at an early GenCon) envisaged the drow of the Vault (our first glimpse of them) as enjoying, not just tolerating, incest and murder and rape and all the rest. They were supposed to be depraved and EVIL, above all else. (And of course, that gets glossed over rather than highlighted in anything official published about them.)

Views on homosexuality

- Ed 7/11/10, as part of larger post on views Realms-wide

Among drow, specifically, the various drow cities are sharply independent of each other (except in cases where a strong city dominates nearby neighbors), and have widely different forms of government and laws (for instance, the matriarchal Lolth-worshipping rival-noble-houses society we see in Menzo is frequent and widespread, but not universal; in some drow societies, the open rivalries we see in, say, Bob's trilogy of Drizzt's youth would be seen as treason to the entire city, and would NOT be tolerated). So again, I can't give any hard-and-fast rules about sexual rules and attitudes, beyond saying that in the matriarchal drow societies, female priests can generally do as they please (have sexual relationships with each other, and all handy males) and males can't generally do as they please, sexually.

Sewer Systems

- Ed 7/9/11, responding to query if drow cities use them

Some do, some don't; it depends on how much flowing water there is in/through/near the drow city. If water is abundant (large lake, fast-flowing river) AND there's fairly easy access to a lower level of the Underdark (for a sewer to drain away into), a drow city might simply take drinking/cooking/washing/daily life uses water out of the river upstream, and dump polluted water/sewage outflow back into the river downstream...handing the filth on to downstream creatures. SMART drow communities plant fungus beds/forests that feed on offal/sewage, and either use nightsoil (dung) carts (often hoppers harnessed to the backs of pack lizards) to move the filth well outside the city to the fungus beds . . . or they have sewers flowing into fungus beds, or downriver riverbank fungus beds, tended (by slaves and drow being punished, or sometimes even driders). These strain/clean the water and turn the sewage into food for the fungi, which can be phosphorescent (light sources), edible (food for drow and their pets and workbeasts), and sources of fiber for weaving, various medicines, and oils (for lubrication/protective coatings), or some combination of these uses, depending on the type of fungi (there are literally thousands of different sorts).

Bear in mind that drow sewers are unlikely to be extensive unless they're simple shafts down into the deeper Underdark (whereupon every drow residence might have its own), and also unlikely to be large (as in, tunnels large enough for armed foes, such as enemy drow or human adventurers, to creep through. Drow are paranoid suspicious about such things, and are VERY unlikely to stupidly create large networks that can be traveled through to sidestep their defenses or allow easy escapes.

Eyes

- THO 11/8/12

I can confirm that Ed's "gold-flecked elven eyes" have genuine little spots of golden hue that gleam/shine/glint differently than the rest of the eye -- so, yes, very much as if the elf has tiny stars in their eyes.

Erogenous Zones

- THO 11/8/12

Ed's elves, male and female, have the following additional "hot" erogenous zones: the backs of the knees, the palms of the hands, and the tips of the ears.

Ed does indeed have flavored (and of course coloured) eartip paint in the "home" Realms campaign. Though it's painted on, it's actually a water/saliva soluble vegetable-sap gel. Intended for removal during foreplay (or fiveplay, or . . .)

Lack of interest in trade

- Blueblade paraphrasing Ed, Qs for Ed 28/12/10, responding to query about why elves didn't set up trading cities on the coast

Referencing Ed's long-ago GenCon seminars: the elves aren't all that interested in trade (except insofar as it gains them needed items/substances to keep inroads into their forests at bay, and renew the forests). The Cormanthor elves are primarily interested in living in harmony with the forest, and tending/continually improving the forest around them to make it vibrant, balanced, lush -- and (aside perhaps from boundary "sacrificial" groves of "cut these AND ONLY THESE trees") woodcutter-free.

Sacred Sites

- Ed 3/6/13

To the elves (and half-elves), "estarra" means "small holy place," meaning not a divine site where a deity is known to have done something (that's a "haellarra") or a formal temple or worship site, but rather a personal place where an individual, or a family, or an individual plus those s/he are mentoring or have as friends, and have guided there, go to pray or meditate or just think -- and hope to receive divine guidance. It can simply be a spot under a tree in a forest, with absolutely nothing to hint to anyone else what it is/has been used for.

(It's an insult among elves to say that someone's "estarra reeks of uld" (meaning, "uld" being excrement, that the someone only sits and 'thinks' when relieving themselves, or that their thoughts can never leave basic earthly matters.)

Smiths

- Ed 23/3/13

The elves are by no means monolithic in their approaches to forging, and over the years have tried various methods of forging (including travel to mountain or Underdark caverns to do their work). However, over the years, most elves have refined two things used far more by elves (and half-elves) than by dwarves, gnomes, humans, and other smiths: surrounding the forge, anvil, and quenching-baths in sphere-of-force-like spells that contain (and therefore concentrate, so smaller heat sources can be used) flame, sparks, and heat (to protect flammable surroundings, of course), and enspelled quenching oils that contribute to tempering and therefore cut down on repeated heatings, hammerings, and quenchings to strengthen and layer blades.

So most elves use traditional forges, fueled by charcoal and/or specific culled creepers and thorn-vines, and augmented by fire retention spells, encircled by the shielding spells that protect forest greenery and the flammable forest loam "ground" (and so allow them to locate smithies in the depths of sylvan homelands).

Singing

On Whether Singing Groups are multi-elven races

- Ed 22/11/12

I'm thinking USUALLY the elves will all be of one "sort," just because family and within-a-settlement gatherings to sing will be far more frequent than singing occasions in cities, market-moots, and other "lots of different flavours of elves together" events. But yes, elves will intuitively/naturally specialize according to the timbre of their own voices (BTW, elves can hear their own voices far better than humans can; i.e. hear them as others hear them, thanks to the internal shape and chambers of their ears), when they're singing in a group, unless being led or "taught" otherwise, so someone with a low, rich voice will use it to fill out the lowest notes, someone who can soar will do so, and so on. Think of the overdubbed Enya "self-chorus" songs (not to mention many similar "blended medieval/folk voices" vocal efforts, such as Anonymous 4), and you'll know the effect I'm trying to describe.

Tattoos

- THO 1/4/10

Among elves, tattoos vary widely in how they're done. The "classic" old method among most elves was: berry-based dyes, burned into the skin with fire (on the fire-heated/half-melted needles of certain forest conifers). In more recent centuries, far more precise minor magics (cantrip level "hand fire" or "finger fire") replaced the physically-generated fires, and augmented the berry-based dyes ("inks"). Some elves even used modified spell inks. In the last few centuries, all sorts of elves have used all sorts of techniques.

Which DOESN'T mean that lots of elves have tattoos. Elven tattoos tend to be rare to unusual, small, and of flowing adornment in design, not "I love X" messages or large pictures - - and NEVER appear as multiple "skin as canvas" large-coverage art on an elven individual. I asked Ed to give me a better idea of the "look" of elven tattoos, and he referenced the "around one eye" adornments of the American boxer Mike Tyson. (And Ed has met Von D of HIGH VOLTAGE TATTOO fame, and so is visually familiar with all sorts of tattoos.)

House Vyshaan

- Ed August 2012

"Yes, there are survivors of House Vyshaan. There are gold elves of the line of Vyshaan alive in the Realms today who know their heritage - - and there are gold elves of the line of Vyshaan alive in the Realms today who do not."

"High" Elves – Sun and Moon

Original Conception

- THO 21/3/11

In Ed's original conception, gold elves were powerful, aloof, shunned the company of humans (and other races), were wealthy and magically powerful, used fortifications, and worked against human expansion. Moon elves lived more simply ("closer to the land"), tended to travel more, and had lots more to do with other races on a daily basis. Moon elves tended to be more independent, openly merry (or otherwise emotional), and whimsical. They loved trees and admired adventurers, and so inevitably had more contact with non-elves. They were also less "clannish" (and a lot less proud) than gold elves. A stereotypical gold elf believed in the superiority of his race over others; a stereotypical silver elf thought the very notion of inherent superiority was silly.

Star Elves

Reason for pretending to be Moon Elves before Yuireshanyaar founding

- THO 25/2/11

They did so because they were trying to hide from others (from outside the Realms) who were hunting for them.

When I asked Ed who was hunting them, and why, I got a "Sorry: NDA" answer.

Views on necromancy

- Ed 25/6/11, following on from discussion about all elves abhorring necromancy

Yes, among Star Elves, necromancy would indeed still be considered taboo. However, I mean that "among" quite literally: it would be a no-no for a Star Elf to use vampiric touch or any other necromantic spell on ANOTHER STAR ELF, except in some rare instances where it was requested/commanded (i.e. dying father or mother insists one of their children, or a longtime family friend or other relative, take the last of their life-energy so as to do some task, or be in better shape to go on aiding the family, or something of the sort).

When dealing with non-elves, all Star Elves would see nothing wrong with using necromancy (such as casting vampiric touch on clearly identified/known foes). Adventurers, such as your PC, would collectively have moved beyond this to the "do what you have to do" viewpoint, using vampiric touch or other necromancy on anybody if they deemed the need sufficient or the cause good enough.

The "gray area" for non-adventurer Star Elves would be how Star Elves treat other (non-Star-Elf) elves; some would see them as fitting targets for necromancy, but most would not. In the case of beleaguered, long-isolated groups of Star Elves whose numbers are dwindling and who seem themselves under clear and imminent threat from the world around, certain Star Elf individuals might even redefine "fitting targets for necromancy" to include other Star Elves not of their own bloodline/clan/immediate family. So I'd say your adventurer is in the clear/greenlighted to use vampiric touch on known foes by all Star Elves so long as those foes aren't elves (and fellow Star Elf adventurers would tolerate/accept even elven targets if they have been acting as foes to your PC). As with all generalizations/stereotypes, this judgement of mine may fall down when applied to specific individuals (I could see some priests having

great trouble with it, many elders having misgivings but not being hostile about it - - and on the other hand some loner "Aragorn types" and younger adventuring Star Elves having no trouble with it at all).

Aquatic Elves

- GK 17/10/14

"Sea of Fallen Stars" by Steven Schend gives information about how a host of elves transformed themselves into aquatic elves after the Crown Wars. Aquatic elves existed prior to that however.

The novel "Evermeet" (hardcover, pgs.95-96) is the first mention of aquatic elves that I have found in the lore. It implies that the aquatic elves were resident in Faerun before the arrival of the moon and gold elves from Tintageer in Faerie, and to my mind, not from there.

Views on Sexuality

- THO 23/5/10

The elder elven cultures in the Realms have less social constraints (from the perspective of humans), but they DO have rules. In fact, various elven cultures vary far more widely than any human "norms." The drow tend to be relaxed regarding homosexuality, sex without marriage, and polygamy (I say "tend to be" because drow social organization varies widely from city to city, and from dominant faith to dominant faith) - - but the Lolth-dominated drow have a strict matrilinear (even "femdom," in real-world parlance) and gender-based roles within their societies.

Then, of course, social mores are always shifting as time passes, in all of these races and locations. Ed has even written (back in the early 1980s) about the importance of PC adventurers as trend-setters, and bold changers of society.

Relations with other races

- Various, 27/8/15

Q: Which, if any, Human cultures still have a problematic relationship with Elves due to the 'lesser species' hunting events held by various Elven realms in ancient times?

A: I'm gonna but in and say Chondathans (with the exception of Cormyr and the Dales) they don't really like elves. And they appear to have had trouble with them since before all the troubles between Jhaamdath and Nikerymath started (the soon to be corrupted dark elves were prominent in the region there, that could explain a lot).

"Swordplay" the first novel in the Netheril trilogy mentions that the Elves hunted humans for sport so as to "welcome them in their emergence as a civilized people".

Also the Mulan from Mulhorand and Unther really have it for the LeShay (not elves but close enough), since it was the LeShay that helped the Imaskari develop the magic that allowed them to abduct them and then seal them away from their gods. Sembians and elves don't get along, but that's more a case of Sembia saying "hey, we want to clearcut these forests!" and the elves having a bit of an objection to that.

Calimshan, and all its successor/splinter states (current an fallen). Amn and Tethyr have managed to some-what repair the bad feelings from 'the early days', but Calimshan is probably still despised by Elves.

Think about it - In the Lands of Intrigue, orcs, for the most part, were treated fairly well, and many settlements in those lands have large half-orc populations which are treated nearly as equals (on a case-by-case basis). Elves, on the other hand, were hunted like animals.

Gnomes

Dethek usage as script

- Ed 9/1/13

Yes, Dethek indeed. With the usual "dialect" differences.

In the case of the gnomes, they do numbers differently. Picture a single staple or the bars of a soccer net: a squared-off arch, or upside-down "U." Now picture the viewer's-right-hand "leg" of that arch being thrice as long as the left one. A "zero" is that arch. Numbers from 1-9 are a vertical row of dots (two dots for two, nine dots for nine) running down the "inside" (arch side) of that right-hand leg, from the crossbar for one and on down for more.

"Tens" are short horizontal lines jutting out from the "outside" of the right-hand leg, starting from just above its bottom point for ten and teens, and going up (two bars) for twenty, thirty (three bars) and so on.

So the number 26 would be an arch with six dots running down the inside of its long leg, and two jutting tails running out horizontally from the outside of the long leg.

Svirfneblin

Music

- Ed 24/1/11

The haraun ("Hah-RAWN"), a svirfneblin-sized horn played (rarely) by some deep gnomes, made by slow-firing clay through which a treated rope has been wound (folded back and forth upon itself), to create a many-chambered (when the rope burns away), lot-of-lung-wind-needed "horn" that produces a deep, multi-toned (when several are blown together, to form chords) sound. Used for alarms, war-rousings, and sometimes for triumphal or recognition-beckoning tunes.

- THO 25/1/11

By "svirfneblin-sized" Ed didn't mean "small enough to be easily toted around and played by your average deep gnome." He meant "as big as your average deep gnome" (so they aren't portable or marching instruments, but usually stationary ones).

Halflings

The Fire Shires

- Ed quoted by WR, referring to "The Five Shires" he created for Mystara and their portability to FR

Sure. Superimpose the Luiren cities and government structure, shift places "just a little" to make room for them, and, yes, it works admirably for that. Almost as if someone designed it that way. ;}

Luiric Vocabulary

- Ed 29/12/15

In Luiric:

"duthsnout" is a badger

"glarmawl" is a wolverine

"gluth" is a glutton or ravenous

"harlhar" is aggressive, spoiling for a fight, or "out-of-control enraged"

"hin" is "a halfling" or "one of us" or "good folk"

"lauly" (pronounced "law-lee") is fat

"luth" is big or larger than normal

"oroth" is a large and fierce bear

"rennard" is a fox

Lack of known wizards

- Ed 1/7/14

Waterdeep and Selgaunt are both home to powerful halfling wizards who take great care to conceal their power and even existence from non-halflings.

Half-Orcs

Treatment in Cormyr

- THO 20/5/13, responding to query about potential lynching of half-orc based on race alone

Shot by arrows from hiding, perhaps, reported to the local authorities just on suspicion, very likely, but lynched, highly unlikely. Cormyreans seldom run to lynchings, whatever's afoot.

Humans

Black Skinned Nobility

- Ed 18/5/13

RACES OF FAERUN is the master guide to such matters, but there are many black nobles in Calimshan and in the lands near the Utter East. BTW, "dusky-skinned" means just that: light brown (not "black") - - and there are nobles of this "coffee-with-cream/manila envelope" skin hue aplenty in Turmish, the Tashalar, and the Vilhon.

In Cormyr, black nobility are few, and all of them are descended from individuals ennobled for service to the Crown (usually battlefield bravery as Purple Dragons defending various Obarskyrs, down the years). Nobles marry other nobles and wealthy folk (in the case of Cormyrean nobles, these wealthy sorts are most often Sembians), not along color lines, so over time everything gets racially mixed. By the mid-1300s, the visibly black noble houses of Cormyr (all of them minor) are the houses of Domrith, Hartel, Hethemer, Kallowsar, Lornsar, Sundever, and Torith. The Master Surgeon of the Realm (senior Court surgeon; one Andor Velantur; styled "Lord" but a life peer rather than a title that will outlive him) is black. BTW, the polite Inner Sea term for black is "nightskin." (Many of the rude terms allude to crossbreeding with drow.)

Northmen / Illuskans / Northlanders

Origin

- Ed 27/12/10

...gate/portal travel from elsewhere on Toril. To the rugged, rolling mountains/valleys/foothills country north and east of Luskan and Mirabar, and south of the Spine of the World.

Where the "Northmen" appeared, wandered in search of seas like those they were used to (in the same latitude, but on the other side of the planet), "discovered" the Sword Coast, and then the islands (notably the archipelago of the northeast Moonshaes, that was once explored in a long-ago TSR module, from which they spread to the other northern Sea of Swords isles, conquering as they went).

UNDERDARK

GK Idea for Drow City (non-canon)

- GK, Qs for EG, 12/12/15

How about a drow city ruled by a council of drider? The "Orborthae" (sacred spiders) enslaved the matron mothers of their city centuries ago and control them by means of a venom that each female is exposed to at birth and which is only kept in abeyance by an antidote known only to the driders (and involving their blood). Drider form is not seen as a curse, but rather a blessing of Lolth, and all males strive to attain drider form and join the ruling elite. The Orborthae dictate who is to be transformed and when and use the Ustilhar (as the female clerics of the city are known) to effect the transformation.

The "House" system has been debased to reflect groupings surrounding one or more drider, and as is traditional, there is much vicious infighting. Each drider or group of drider have their stable of female priestesses of Lolth and every female is examined for that talent. However the city is not as sophisticated as a traditional Lolthite drow city, and there are open challenges between drider and constant warring and assassinations. Because the drow females do not control the city, there is no check or control on breeding and each drider group fosters and promotes key male drow (who hope to be elevated) as one would use stud cattle.

Lolth revels in the unabashed chaos of the city, provides spells for the females (and even some rare males!) and has "blessed" the city with occasional drider variants of greater power (like Jarlaere "the Twice-Fanged": a massive two headed drider or Arblis "of the Blades": a devilishly swift four-armed drider who wields two swords and two axes and has armoured blades attached to his legs).

Layout

- THO 11/9/12

Most of the Underdark is a series of interconnected natural caverns and "tunnels" (water channels) carved out by water (water percolating through limestone and other rocks containing particular water-soluble minerals creates the familiar-to-us stalactites, stalgmities, and "pillars" where stalacts and stalags have "grown together"), some of them later enlarged by the diggings and minings of various creatures. Just as market-moots that grow into towns "happen" in the surface Realms, cities develop in the Underdark at trade-route-junctions, as well as at other strategic places (controlling travel, or where rivers/lakes and caverns meet) and sources of resources (rich gem-lodes and ore deposits). So, yes, most

Underdark cities are on major trade routes.

The Underdark varies widely in composition from place to place, with the rocks and amount of water. Some parts of it are a few passages and caverns, in long, long linkages, and others ARE bewildering labyrinths of many-leveled interconnected caverns and shafts and passages.

The parts of it under the Old Skull are a mix of a few natural caverns and stream-passages, and a lot of deliberately-carved-out passages built under drow direction for defense and facilitating trade-caravan-movements between the surface (at Castle Grimstead) and the underground lake that's just north of the Old Skull knoll itself. The lake itself is a major obstacle to invaders from the surface, and is used deliberately by the drow (who can readily control and search boats and barges crossing the lake) to control the flows of goods, people sneaking in and out and slaves trying to escape, etc.

Music Differences with Surface

- Ed 25/1/11

The first thing I think an Underdark musician would be struck by is the lack of reverberation and resonance in the Great Above because in most places there's sky and moving air around, not a rock envelope of walls, floor, and ceiling (plus, in underdark lakes, a water surface to 'bounce' sound off of, for great distances). Echoes are far fewer/short range/nonexistent, in many places, as is delayed bounceback.

All of which would mean instruments would perform differently, rock-tapping would be a tiny dull thing as opposed to something that might in some places carry for miles, and so on.

A small enclosed room and a small corner of a cavern might not be that different, but move out of the room to the outdoors, and your stringed or blown music-making device loses a lot of volume and bass thunder, as well as actually changing in timbre.

- THO 30/9/11

In a play session in the wee hours this morning/last night, something touching on this arose: a drow harpist (NPC played by Ed, the DM) commented on the increased sustain and deepened timbre of the sound made by plucked strings in deeper caverns, versus the comparatively feeble sound she heard from her own music in a cavern that opened into the Realms Above. She said her harping sounded "puny" and "lost."

Underdark Food

- THO 17/1/15 (on food sources)

All I can recall, without checking with him (your queries are winging their way through the Net right now, to do just that), is that there are blind fish in the Underdark lakes and streams, there's plentiful edible fungi that thrives on the moisture and energy provided by the faerzress radiation (which in the Underdark is a sunlight equivalent), and I do remember large, glistening white worms (as long as adult human arms, and thicker, that Ed described as having flesh and taste "somewhat like real-world shrimp") gracing drow plates (which are usually oval, and have raised sides, so they're like flat-bottomed bowls). There was also a vivid emerald-green soup, snail soup I think, but Ed will have to step in and provide you with proper answers . . .

- THO 5/2/15 (on fuel for cooking fires)

Fuel is very seldom needed for heating, thanks to the natural temperature levels underground and all subterranean-native races being naturally suited to those conditions. For cooking, there are site-specific heat sources (volcanic flows, steam from heated-by-volcanism underground water) and, yes, dung (lizard dung in particular, i.e. the pack lizards used by drow), plus crude oil (combined with sand and lit by flame to derive cooking flames like the real-world "desert stoves" used by troops fighting on the Desert Front in World War II), plus some fungi that burn in flame, particular other fungi that chemically react when combined with specific other fungi varieties to combust with intense heat, and ways known to duergar, drow, svirfneblin, and drow of coating surface-world fuels (mainly trees and "brush" from woody ground shrubs) with crude oil to derive the equivalent of charcoal: small lumps of wood that burn to ash slowly and with much heat but little smoke, that can be used easily for travel-cooking.

Water Transport

- THO 7/2/12

Underdark river freight traffic goes on "snakes" and "skimmers."

A snake is a series of log-like hollowed-out giant Underdark beetle carapaces, joined end to end by giant-spiderweb ropes to form a flexible sequence of cylinders that hold cargo (like a toy snake made of wooden cylinders joined end to end). They are paddled and poled by "steerers" at the head end -- and if they're long, the middle, too -- a dangerous job if the river runs fast.

A skimmer is like a kayak (long and narrow), but has a wider deck atop it that supports hinged "rise and fall" outrigger pods made of insect chitin (bodies of large beetles, sealed to be made watertight), that can spread out where the watercourse is wide or be folded over top of the deck where it gets narrow. Cargo goes in the kayak body under the deck, and atop the deck (shrouded against wet), not in the pods, which are for flotation only.

YEARS & SEASONS

Higharvestide

- EG, Qs for EG 1/1/15

Or to put matters more formally, Higharvestide (also rendered in some places in the Realms as "High Harvesttide") is an annual day-long festival of thanksgiving, in which feasts are held in all communities of more than three families, and any passersby is to be freely fed and given drink.

Before the festival day, folk gather (sometimes for as long as a tenday) to cook and prepare food for the feast, and to preserve (by pickling, salt-crocking, smoking, drying, jarring in oil, and so on) provender for larders and cellars (i.e. to keep it from spoiling in storage as it's rationed out over the colder months ahead).

In some communities, races and contests (especially food-related) are held, prizes are given, "queen of the feast" or "king of pickles" or "lord of the roasts" or whatever applicable mock titles are conferred, and priests bless larders and racked vintages and prepared foodstuffs. By tradition, clergy of some faiths give out sweets (of their own making, or that came from a temple-farm or monastery of their faith).

In various countries, Higharvestide is used as an anniversary for secular events to befall, too—such as being a deadline for paying certain taxes (and a day for tax collection for those who haven't yet paid). Oaths of fealty are publicly performed, "open courts" (when rulers hear complaints, suggestions, pleas, and deputations from citizens) are held (many of which continue for days after Higharvestide itself, if

citizens are still waiting to be heard), and troops march to new duty stations. In some cities, guilds meet to set prices or rates for their wares or services, to take effect either immediately or on one of the feast days later in the calendar (usually Greengrass).

By tradition (though fewer and fewer individuals actually adhere to these tenets, in the 1300s and 1400s DR), dwarves drink only water at Highharvestide, and elves drink only dew.

Highharvestide is also when the Stag King is sometimes seen in the air above the flames of bonfires—a towering human figure with a stag's eyeless skull as its head, complete with a massive rack of antlers. Those who see the Stag King are destined to know adventure in the year ahead, though that may mean anything from getting lost in a fog for a few hours or straying into someone else's bedchamber to going on quests or exploring dungeons and fighting monsters.

Children born on Highharvestide are said to be favored by Tymora (have good luck) lifelong, and to have wanderlust. Human females born on Highharvestide get pregnant only when they want to (i.e. have birth control over themselves by force of will alone), and a side-effect of this ability is that they can instantly sense when they have poison or venom (though not disease) in their bloodstream.

And finally, wild herds move at Highharvestide, as if infected by restlessness. They may return to their former grazing grounds later, but they will travel on the day itself.

It should be noted that Highharvestide isn't quite the same thing as the Chauntean High Prayers of the Harvest, which celebrate the bounty Chauntea has given a community and are held at different times in each community to coincide with the actual harvest of crops, rather than precisely at Highharvestide.

New Year

- Ed, 5/1/15

There are CUSTOMS observed by many at the start of a new year, yes: over a meal, tales are told of departed family members, and toasts made to them (if the meal is a traveler's meal, taken far from family, everyone there tells of one deceased person dear to them). The most devout individuals in the Realms (and all clergy), pray to one deity/"their" deity and make them a promise of something they'll strive to do in the year ahead. (So, the equivalent of a single New Year's resolution. Usually a concrete deed or achievement rather than a self-denial or general goal.)

Otherwise, the turn of one year into the next isn't a big thing, in most places in the Realms.

Year of Splendors Burning

- Ed, 7/1/15

All of the year names "mean something" in the Realms, but sometimes it's something minor and local, and might not even receive coverage in the published Realms.

The "splendors" that burned in 1469 DR are NDA for at least a short time more, but let me say this: you should not worry about major destruction in Waterdeep at that time.