



Copyrights

This product has been published under the regulations of the Open Gaming License Version 1.0a d20 System' and the 'd20 System' logo are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and are used according to the terms of the d20 System License version 6.0. A copy of this License can be found at www.wizards.com/d20.

This product requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Players Handbook, published by Wizards of the Coast. Dungeons and Dragons, Wizards of the Coast, and D20 are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast.

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a. The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

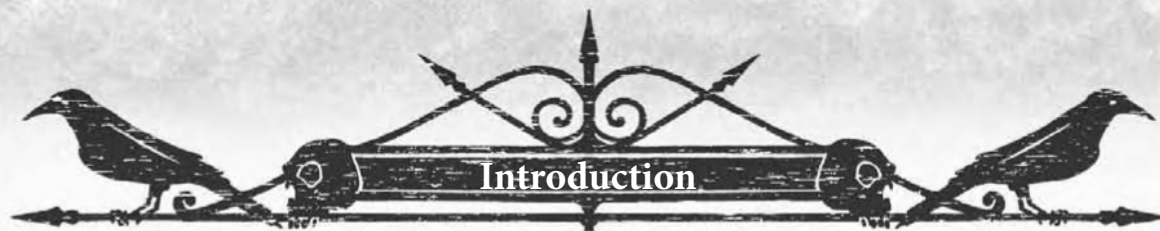
12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast.





First I need to thank some people. Richard Dumont helped with proofreading and a good deal of inspiration. I am thankful for his insight and friendship. I am very thankful to the Fraternity of Shadows, a few of which I have become close to over the years, and their efforts to keep our online home running. Two documents that were written by ex-Kargat proved invaluable to my research. The first was John W. Mangrum's Unofficial Ravenloft Timeline, which I have worn out over the years. The second is Ryan Naylor's Illustrated History of the Core. Naylor's work was so far ahead and shoulders above anything else I had read on the topic (including my own version) that it really made me think about geography and history of our beloved setting.

This project may look like a direct affront to Naylor's version, but I ask the reader to compare the two side by side to answer some of the burning questions that have plagued the setting. Of course I'm talking about FaLsE HiStOrY--the dirty word of the setting. Naylor presents the core domains appearing in the order dictated by the published timelines. Mangrum put tremendous effort into rectifying some of the continuity errors caused by things happening in domains that have yet to form. The obstacle here is not that the domain hasn't formed, but that the land was not there. My theory leans heavily on domains breaking off from larger ones over time. I posit the Core formed in six major conjunctions, with lands populated by folk that shared a language and even part of a culture, and then as time progressed and more wicked inhabitants rose to prominence, they often carved off a piece of a larger domain for themselves. This keeps a history intact and allows the possibility for events to occur in the land that is not yet a domain. Imagine it like the Balkan States; rather than Croatia rising from the Adriatic Sea, it broke off from what was formerly Yugoslavia. I grant it is a strong leap from how we understand things, but I hope I will show that it makes sense as I show each domain's formation--not necessarily its *appearance*. Or vice versa.

Throughout, I've tried to look at the growth of the Core from an economic and cultural standpoint. What would the appearance, rise, and fall of these domains do to the inhabitants of the Core? Who was alive when Arak showed up and what would that mean? Why is the East Timori Road so important? What was Jander Sunstar up to after he failed to thwart Strahd? All of these questions could lead to interesting campaigns, particularly if you wanted to set a campaign before 735 BC. My own campaign took place in Mordent leading up to I:10, so before it was even a part of the Demiplane of Dread.

Lastly, I spent most of 2020 drawing maps. The maps in this document are based off canon sources, beginning with the Black Box poster. Once I got to the end of the canon material, I began pushing my theory of formation forward imagining what the next conjunctions would bring. Islands of Terror forming into Clusters and Vechor being anchored geographically to the Core after being isolated in the Mists lead me to think the demiplane was solidifying. That lead to a collection that would demand its own document, so I only tease at it towards the end, but it is all in an effort to keep a DM from having to wave the magic wand of the Mists to explain everything. Enjoy!

Matt "strahdsbuddy" Doyle, December 2020





The history of the Core begins, as always, in Barovia. While the events of 351 are well documented, a bit of prime material history leads to some of the reasoning on the shape of Barovia when it enters the Mists.

This chunk of land was copied in whole from Barovia's home world. It consists of Balok-speaking lands that had been a part of Old Borjia and lands where Strahd's army would have encountered his Terg enemies while liberating his homeland, and then pushing even further. Towns like Levkarest, Sturben and Lechberg were still small villages at this time and may have been jumping off points or supply depots for Strahd's army. Krezk occupied a key strategic position for crossing the Balinoks, and Strahd failed to break a siege across two rivers that would have given access to the Svalich Road. After the failed siege and decades of skirmishes in the valleys of the Vasha and the Luna rivers, Strahd made a daring march north of Mt. Baratak and cut Dorian's supply chain when he emerged on the south shores of what would become known as Lake Zarovich. The Tergs were defeated, and Borjia knew peace for the first time in a generation.

An important assumption for this genesis theory is that while the land exists, it is not all technically part of Strahd's domain. While more than twice the size of canonical Barovia, the future domains of Borca, Dorvinia, G'Henna & Markovia have very small populations, or none at all. The northern wilderness (future G'Henna) is not a desert at this point, but rather a dense forest like the evergreen-covered Balinoks south of it. Politically, Strahd would not have considered the western portions to be rightfully his; rather they would be a part of Borjia, the land of his father. The great forest west of Levkarest was the county of the Buchvolds, Barov's cousins and loyal allies. Ivan Buchvold, the eldest, was one of Strahd's officers and it was from his father's lands the majority of the supplies for the army would have originated. Strahd won the Barovian lands back for a man that did not live long enough to express any gratitude, and he was content with his county (that may seem a bit out of character, but greed has never been listed among Strahd's vices). More importantly, the manifestations of Tatyana would have only appeared in the southeastern portion of this land, leading Strahd to only focus his will in that area. By the time Borca becomes its own domain in 684, the majority of this land would have actually been ignored by its darklord due to his obsession with the object of his lust.

The failing church of Andral, cut off as it is from the seat of the faith, would still have worshipers in the Luna valley. The Boritsi family would rise to prominence during the two centuries of isolation, and filled the power vacuum left by the death or separation of Borjia's nobility. Another group of people that must have been hanging around somewhere in the western towns would be the descendants of Sturm von Zarovich. It seems unlikely the entire family would be left behind just to be grabbed in whole from the original prime plane eight generations later. Anna, Siska, Holgar and Katarina von Zarovich must have been born somewhere in the Land of Mists in the 630's, and this would indicate their line had persisted, if quietly.







The appearance of tiny Forlorn in 547 seems even more insignificant next to Greater Barovia; however certain clues could lead to the reasoning that the two domains shared a home world. The events at Castle Forfarmax at the same time as Barovia's inception into the Land of Mists may have gotten the attention of the same Dark Powers who had been tempting Strahd. The evil at Castle Tristennoira (its Patterna name; it was known as Castle ApBlanc or the Lord's Tower originally) and the rise of Tristen ApBlanc would be more noticeable to these Powers if they had happened on the same world.

It is possible that Forfar and Borjia not only shared a home world, but that Alek Gwyllim may have actually been from Forfar before becoming Strahd's lieutenant. In I, Strahd, Alek is said to be from a land "so far away its name would have no meaning," to Strahd anyway. If they were from the same world, it is not a tremendous stretch of imagination that the Dark Powers may have had some sort of deal with the gods of that world that permitted them to remove these evil creatures, a pact they would forge with gods of other worlds in the future. In fact, it tells us a bit about the Dark Powers themselves: they are not all-powerful, they have limitations, and this experiment with Barovia could have resulted in the gods of its world tossing them another evil soul they didn't want to deal with. This document focuses on the genesis of the Core, and therefore the Islands of Terror are not included. However, the next three domains to form canonically after Forlorn are Har'Akir, Zherisia and Sebuia. Are these domains also from the same prime as Barovia? The Black Land that spawned Har'Akir and Sebuia could have even existed in Prime Barovia's past, and Zherisia in its future, all simultaneously trapped in this misty prison-plane.

Back to Forlorn, the tiny domain has a wonderfully layered history pre-formation, and although it is small, its lord is no less formidable in his own realm. No natural borders indicate where Barovia ends and Forlorn begins, and politically it is unlikely anyone ever referred to it as a county or duchy or anything other than a spooky old wilderness region. There are two big omissions from the Castles Forlorn boxed set. The first has to do with the native Forfarrians all being turned into goblins when the domain entered the Mists. This is clearly inaccurate, as some were able to flee into Barovia. Perhaps the residents of Birnam were all changed, and the itinerant population was able to get away. For reasons that will make sense later, I expect these Forfarrians to number roughly 1500-2000 souls, which would have significantly inflated the population of isolated Immol (and probably Cuzau as well). The second omission is Castle Forfarmax, which is understandable due to its publication date, but should be explained quite simply with location. The castle is already ruined, and lies so close to the Misty Border that it is probably not even noticed until after the formation of Gundarak or Kartakass. Barovians were not known for their inquisitive nature, and most likely ignored this extra patch of terror that rose up on their edge.

Lastly, while Barovia's land was copied from its prime, Forlorn's was ripped up and dropped down. This is a change of method for the Dark Powers, but they have still not created people out of nothing, only land.







The creation of Arak in 575 is a major event in the formation of the Core. It is actually larger than Barovia since about a quarter of the new domain is wedged beneath northern Barovia. More chinks in the Dark Powers' armor are shown with this domain's entry since Arak the Erlking intentionally breached the planar fabric to escape the Plane of Shadow and the yoke of its immensely powerful demon-lord, Gwydion. The shadow fey poured through the Obsidian Gate to what they considered freedom, Arak holding it open with his will. As the Gwydion crept ever closer, the Dark Powers must have certainly felt his strength and scrambled to counteract this invasion. Arak weakened against the sudden assault from both directions and succumbed to his enemy. With the way back closed, the Dark Powers sealed the way in, and thereby averted the disaster that would have resulted had Gwydion made it into their prison.

The domain of Arak entered with something that is almost entirely lost to history: the Arakites. A thriving society existed on the surface of the domain while the Shadow Fey dwelled beneath. This human population is almost certainly not native to the Plane of Shadow, so the question becomes, where did they come from and what coincidence brought them into the mists at the same time as the Erlking's plan? There must have been another domain forming at the same time and the exodus of the Arak threw off that plan. Whatever darklord was supposed to take possession was usurped by the arrival of Gwydion. The Dark Powers turned their attention to the eldritch horror and let their intended target slip through their fingers.

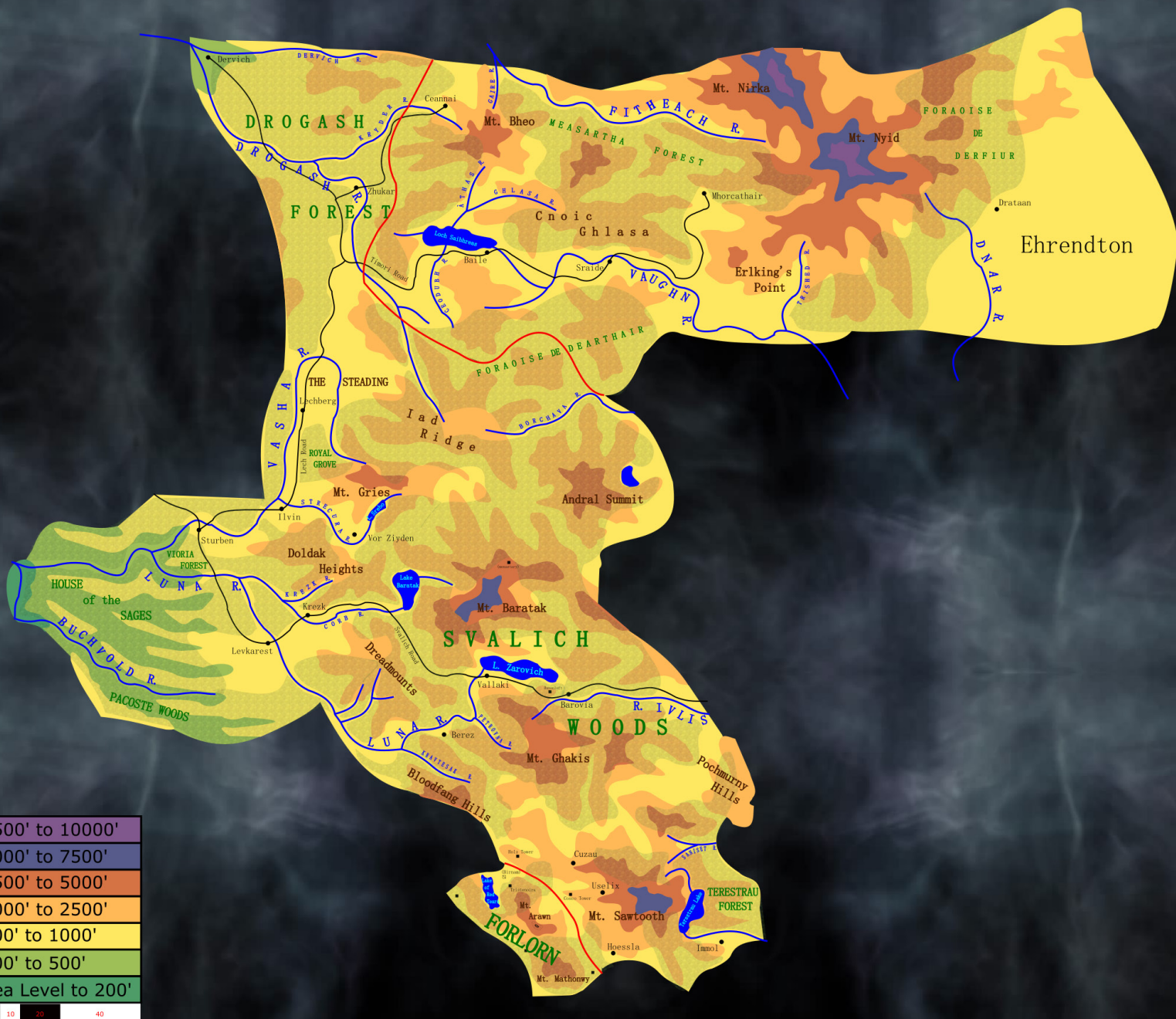
Several cities dotted the Vaughn River valley, a fertile land covered in forests and rich with game. The temporal fugue existed beneath the entire domain, and this made the mines incredibly productive. The great mining city of Mohrcathair in the shadow of the towering peaks, Nyid and Nirka, was a marvel of architecture. Its artisans worked tirelessly to create goods the Barovians had never seen. Cartloads of ore were brought up from beneath the mountains and the city was decorated with fine metal filigree around every archway and atop every wall. Arakite weapons, even those not made of silver, were effective against all manner of creatures, and their availability was hailed as a gift to Barovians who had been huddling in their homes cowering at the nightly baying of wolves and creatures more terrible.

In the west, Creannai was a seat of culture, and scores of Arakites could be found singing beautiful music on the slopes of Mt. Bheo, the Mountain of Life. Artists from Creanni were known for their portraits and realistic painting styles, quickly influencing similar pursuits in Levkarest and Sturben. Magical power seemed to emanate from Mt. Bheo, and Arakite mystics harnessed these powers to enhance their crafts and protect their people.

Baile was a successful fishing village on the shores of Loch Saibhreas. It was home to some of the finest Arakite writers and poets of the age, famous for simple, accessible vocabulary that made the stories easy to recite even if the storyteller could not read, as was often the case with Barovians. The oldest playhouses in Lechberg still display Arakite runes, their meanings now lost, as proof they were built to perform shows from Baile.

Sraide was renowned for distilling fine spirits, as well as alchemical advances in early pharmaceuticals, which benefitted the health of everyone in the demiplane. Science and magic combined in Sraide improving quality of life for what had previously been a beleaguered





population huddling around the Balinoks. Of course, none of this is canon, but I believe the existence of a lost civilization on par with Toril's Myth Drannor is a useful vehicle, particularly when uncovering magical items tied to this time period. Arakite influence on the demiplane was immeasurable, but was also tragically short.

Barovians moved north for the first time, founding the villages of Zhukar and Dervich. The position of Dervich so close to the Mists may at first seem strange, but the Vistani rivermen were making a living taking Arakite riches into the Mists via the Drogash River, to Har'Akir and Zherisia. The mingling of Barovian, Forfarian and Arakite cultures lead to an exchange of ideas unusual to the Barovians. The church of Andral was long dead, but Forfar's gods found an eager audience in the north. Conversely, as posited by Ryan Naylor (see Illustrated History of the Core), the Church of Hala came with the Arakites. Its witches spread south, and are some of the few remaining shreds of Arakite culture. The temple of Zakata would later be built atop the elevated ruins of Hala's greatest temple, which used to be positioned to view Mt. Bheo perfectly at sunrise



on high Halan feast days.

This part of the world will become vital throughout the Core's history because of the temporal fugue and the efforts of the shadow fey. The Seelie Court of Maeve and their changelings began raising animals and growing crops which made feeding the surface humans much easier. A full year's harvest could be brought to the surface every two weeks. As the food supplies stabilized the fey began raising generations of people as well. In the large, hollow realm beneath the surface of Arak, called Vulnara by the shadow fey, large scale breeding programs took place that produced thousands of humans in a short time. Different fey had different ideas on what would make the perfect person, and the surface population of Arak became quite diverse. It is unknown how long these eugenics projects existed, or if they have even ceased. This does explain the patronizing way the fey often treat humans, particularly those who cannot trace lineage to their careful tutelage. Of course, evidence of this rapid breeding was wiped from the minds of the humans before they were given back to the sun after the first few generations went mad.

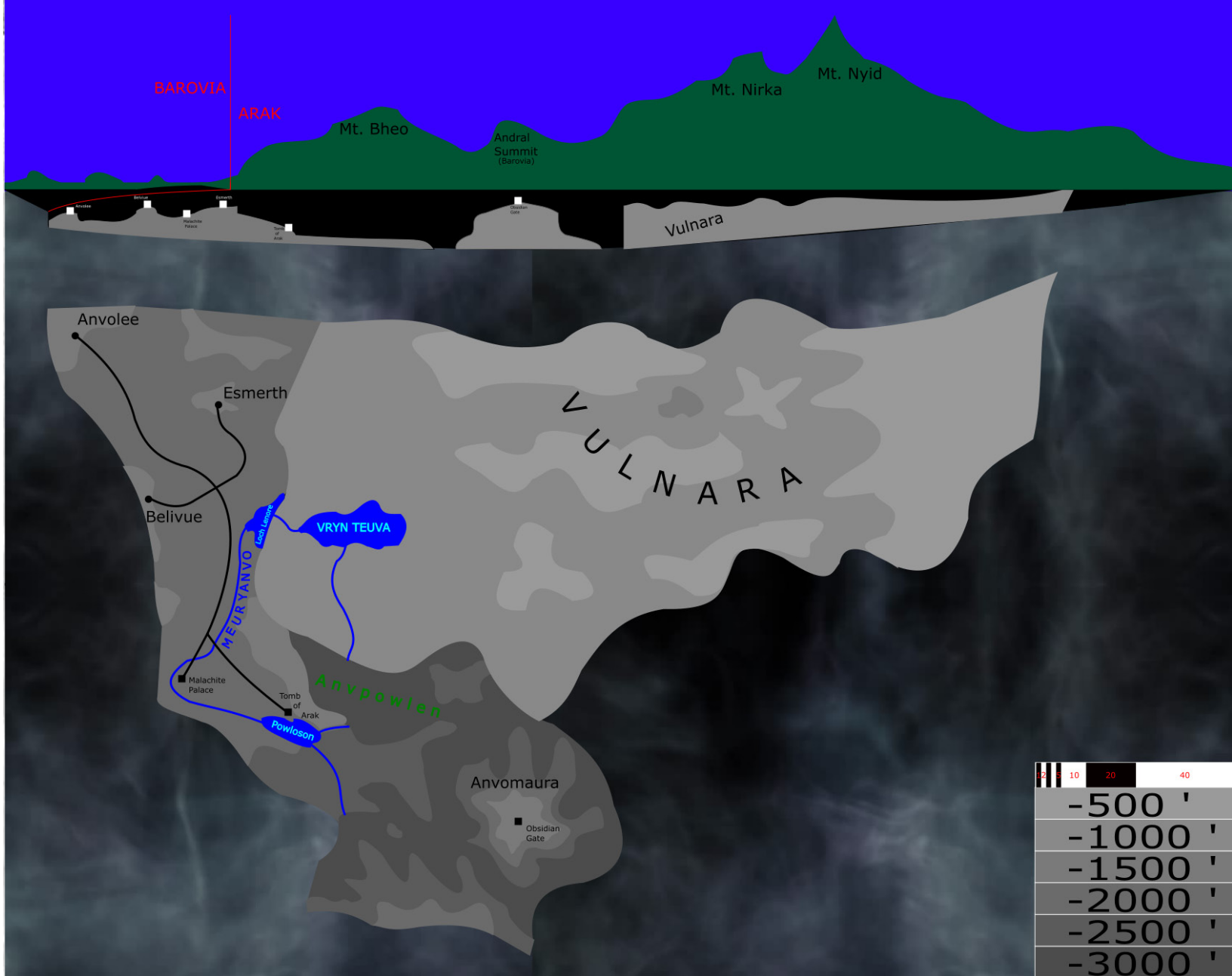
At this point I would like to discuss the scale of the maps. Scale is one of those topics debated by writers of the setting, and I was always in the camp that stated smaller was better. Logistically, however, per canon sources, there is not enough arable land to feed the inhabitants of the demiplane using the Black Box scale. Even the larger scale from *Feast of Goblins* leaves the Core half the size it would need to be to feed the surface population of the Black Box Core, so doubling that scale is what I settled on. The fugue harvests mentioned above would mitigate large scale famines before the emergence of Falkovnia later on.

The temporal fugue made tunneling beneath domains very efficient and it stands to reason that the shadow fey had burrowed beneath their neighbors for decades (or centuries to them). Eventually time would slow back down, but their aversion to sunlight and their immortal lifespan would make digging safe spaces a common pastime. Anvolee, Esmerth and Belivue will change little from the form they see in this period. The concentrated population of shadow fey was mostly under Barovia, not Arak, and the so-called Shadow Rift was just the result of the "roof" being pulled off this area after the Grand Conjunction. Water fell directly down from Loch Saibhreas into the underground pool called the Vryn Teuva. This created the two rivers that flow west, then south and down more than 2000' to form the Anvpowlen marshes on the floor of the world. The Obsidian Gate itself is beneath the small Balinok peak called Andral's Summit (3360 ft).

Politically, the two isolated nations became friendly, although there was very little Arakite migration south of the Vasha. Young Barovians pointed to the Arakties as the pinnacle of human society, to the chagrin of their older relatives. Barovian wool and mohair was highly sought after in Arak due to naturally dark colors that were difficult to replicate underground. The majority of non-food items heading to Barovia were metals and ores, which were brought forth at such amazing rates that tin, pewter and copper ornamentation became common even in the poorest homes. To this day, Arakite metalwork is passed down by Borcan and Barovian families, its beauty unfaded even if its legacy has been lost.

The far eastern portion of Arak was known as Ehrendton. This grassy plain will change hands over the course of history and belong to at least four different domains. The false history





surrounding the Black Duke is feasibly explained away by John W. Mangrum (Unofficial Ravenloft Timeline pg. 18), and while *Van Richten's Guide to Fiends* says the fiend was summoned in 541, that predates even Forlorn, so sometime after the Scourge of Arak in 588 makes sense to me.

Azalin visited Arak soon after its appearance. An account of the Arakite people and their vast cities is suspiciously absent from his report, at least as recounted in I, Strahd II. Since this book is essentially all propaganda, that can be excused, but it is nearly certain that Azalin did not tell Strahd everything. Since the latest reincarnation of Tatyana had been lost to Strahd right before Arak's appearance, he may have been in no mood to hear about exciting new lands he couldn't travel to anyway. It is unlikely Azalin missed the temporal fugue during his study, and the phenomenon was tucked in the back of his memory when he eventually became lord of Darkon. The temporal fugue, Tristenoira's time-hopping, and the Zarovan Vistani being unhinged from time makes one wonder if one of the Dark Powers was a chronomancer. Time is relative.



In the autumn of 579, Strahd and Azalin quite nearly escaped. After years of attempting to break the planar fabric, they finally opened a stable portal to another realm. Misty tendrils followed them through and seeped into the soil of the colony known as Mordent. The events that occurred while Strahd (or part of him) was out of Barovia are hazy, and neither he nor Azalin was able to recount them in any journal yet discovered. After it was all over, they both awoke back in Barovia.

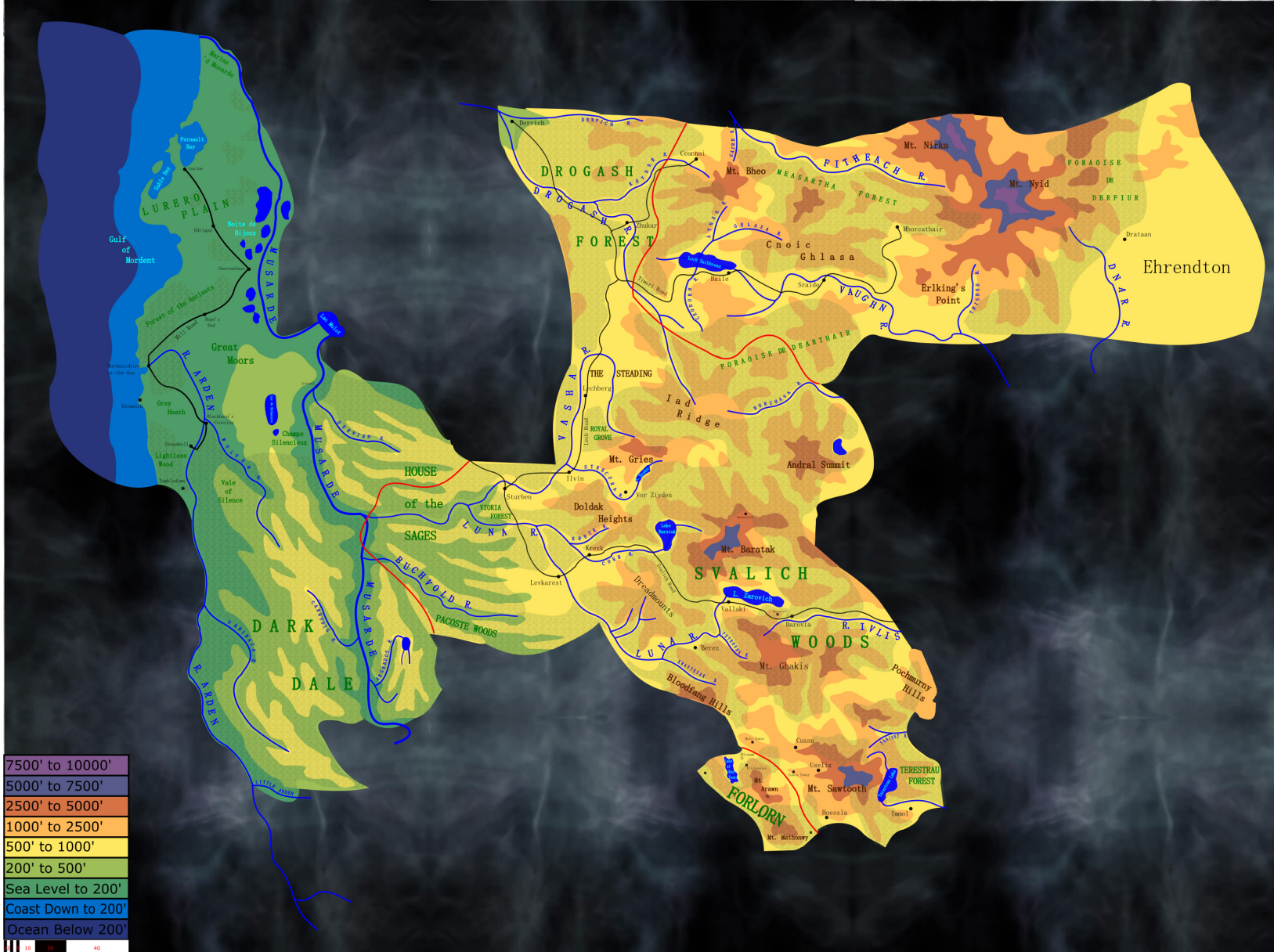
Mordent arrived in the Mists with a de facto darklord, similar to Arak. Wilfred Godefroy might easily have attracted the attention of the Dark Powers eventually, although they may have been unaware of the existence of Mordent's prime. If the previous darklords all came from the same prime, and Arak was created by the Erlking, it is possible the Dark powers hadn't considered (or hadn't been capable of) reaching out extraplanarly until Strahd and Azalin showed them how. We see the Dark Powers growing in strength, possibly even in number, to execute such a large conjunction. Mordent is said to have "entered" the demiplane on the old timelines, and it is the only domain described this way. When the Dark powers pulled their toys back home, it seems they pulled Mordent with them.

Barovia's House of the Sages forest spilled over the border into the new neighbor, and the very wide Musarde River acted as a boundary and initially a barrier to easy trade. Mordentmen had treated its lazy current with distrust since the colony's founding and would be very surprised when the first travelers arrived from what they had always thought was uninhabited land to the East. Superstitious to a man, the citizens of Mordent avoided the forests as well. The region of sharp hills and tall conifers south of Mordent's settlements was known as the Dark Dale, often colloquialized as 'Arkandale. Its fell reputation would leave it mostly unsettled for over a century.

The Musarde was home to several ruined cities that predated the colonists. The cities were built centuries ago by the famed adventurer, Jacques "the Rat" Renier. The northmost of these ruins spanned the river and several stone polders made it easily passable. Despite its wide banks and calm current, the river was not immediately useful for trade to the sea because it bottomed out in a low swamp choked with vegetation before it reached deeper waters. Mordent's coastline was the first appearance of an ocean in the Land of Mists. Its western edge petered out after a few miles into mutable, foggy borders, but the people of Mordentshire and Lucine coaxed a good amount of bounty from beneath its waves. The body of water was referred to only as "the Sea" during this period, although it is often given the added adjective "cold" or "unforgiving" in conversation.

I imagined Mordent's prime as very Earth-like when it came to magic. Supernatural creatures like vampires and goblins were considered just stories. Something awoke ancient energies which allowed for things like ghosts to get trapped and portals to open. The event was most likely Godefroy's murder of his wife and daughter on the site of Renier's original estate a few years before Strahd and Azalin's arrival. The House on Gryphon Hill was built on what Renier believed to be a nexus of what he called the "black energy," a force he had discovered as a young man and had traveled around the world in an attempt to understand. The energy of the House was enough to make Renier flee almost immediately after its completion. His studies into the black energy made him lose his mind and he spent his fortune building vast cities along the Musarde for





people that never arrived. Once the realm entered the Mists, the supernatural became all too real and the noble families began succumbing to horrible fates.

I also imagined the colony to have been in transition, perhaps like New York transferring from Dutch to English control. There was an old aristocratic class left behind, the ones with the High Mordentish (French) names who had remained mostly in the north of the colony. The pragmatic Low Mordentish were working alongside the peasantry, unintentionally inventing the middle class, and making due even as their home was pulled into the Mists.

A final group is the Timothyhs. A low-born family that nonetheless traced its heritage to royalty across the sea. They had become a tribe unto themselves, and the black energy awakened beneath Gryphon Hill had turned them into natural werewolves. They considered the purity of their bloodline to be of the utmost importance. Their name was only ever whispered by gentle folk, and it was rumored they destroyed their old rivals the Gaudemon family and took up their macabre worship of devils and otherworldly horrors. When a child went missing, the Timothy clan was blamed. Hunters knew that any game taken safely out of the Dark Dale was done because the Timothyhs were feeling generous that day. For their part, the Timothyhs considered themselves above their genteel cousins, and now had the claws to defend their position atop the food chain. Who could say what they did under moonlit skies in the forest?



Azalin was exasperated after the failed escape, and although he had no memory of what happened, he blamed Strahd's curse and connection to the land for being unable to break free. Thinking he would be better off without the vampire's help, and being quite tired of his presence, Azalin walked into the Mists, and also into the trap that had been laid by the Dark Powers. Darkon's appearance in the winter of 579 changed the geography considerably, being larger than any other domain to yet join the Core. Azalin is the first darklord that received his domain after already spending time in the demiplane. It is likely the Dark powers had been tailoring a realm specifically for Azalin the moment he entered their misty grasp in 542. Their first try might have even been Arak, although that is purely speculation.

Azalin's confrontation of Darcalus may have happened overnight, over the course of months, or even in his own head. The "war" that occurred between Barovia and Darkon right after the domain's appearance was fought mostly around the Dervich River and the hills that spawned it. Eventually, Azalin gave up on his vendetta against Strahd and turned his attention back to escape, though not before setting in order the house he was so eager to leave behind. Consolidation of power in Darkon happened quickly and may have been unnecessary; Azalin was ever a slave to appearances.

Darkon dwarfed Arak in size, resources, and splendor, its population larger and more diverse. Darkonian cities still had some growing to do, particularly in the West, but the mighty capitol of Il Aluk held no fewer than 20,000 souls. Darkon's appearance introduced demihumans to the Core for the first time. Darkon's ethnic groups mixed freely, although they kept their individual cultures and certain neighborhoods could seem unexpectedly foreign. The Vistani also thrived in the new realm, and Azalin let them operate freely, despite knowing of their loyalty to Strahd. His own spies would be sent to Barovia soon enough. Trade with the south was brisk, and went through either Dervich-Creana-Nartok or Ceannai-Dargal Pass-Tempe Falls. Darkon was quite self-sufficient and trade with Arak was mostly for their famed metal (and weapons). Food was plentiful due to the size of the land and the fugue-harvests coming over the mountains and this led to the rapid growth of Darkon's population. The power center of the Core had certainly shifted north.

The Mists between Darkon and Mordent were particularly mutable. There were days a man could walk from Chateaufaux to Nartok without a Vistani guide, but on others they would wander for a few hours and get dumped out where they had started. The waters around the Jagged Coast on Darkon's west often reached out to touch Mordent's cold sea. The fishing village of Martira Bay would quickly grow as a result of sea trade with Mordentshire and Lucine, which would also benefit from the new trade partner.

Unlike Mordent, magic was a part of life in Darkon. There were schools that took on apprentices, although they were quite selective when it came to admissions. Few religions had a foothold in Darkon at the beginning (Azalin would formalize this later). However, powerful folklore regarding the Grey Realm led to a large number of divine spellcasters. Each ethnicity quietly worshipped their own gods, developed their own magic, and helped support the new superpower that would persist for centuries.



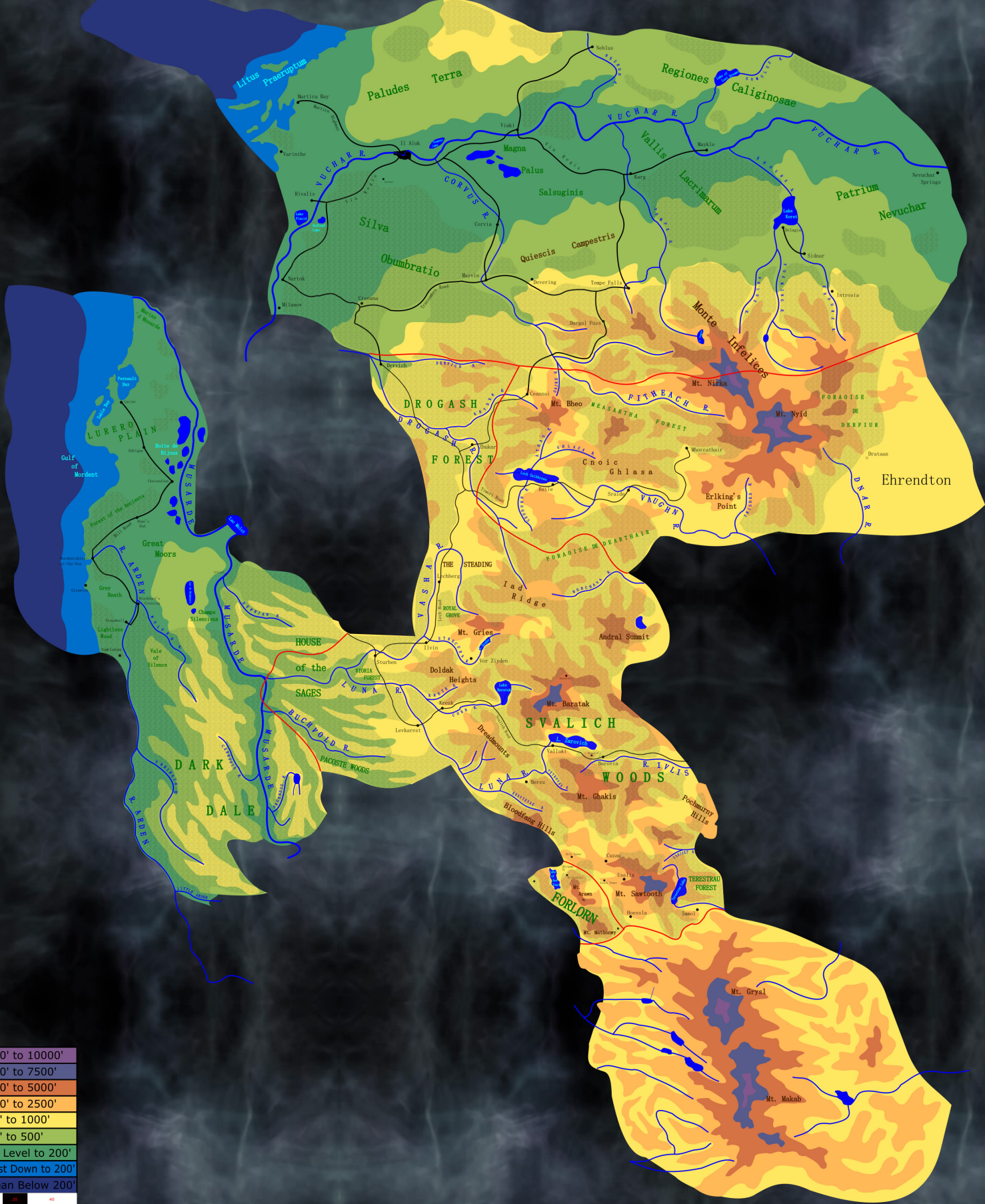


On the published timelines, most domains are said to “appear” or “form.” Bluetspur has a unique term attached to its formation; it is the only domain to have been “spawned.” (Mordent similarly is the only domain said to have “entered” the demiplane, further indication the Dark powers were not orchestrating its inclusion. This is the third domain so far they weren’t planning on.) This could indicate again the intentional creation of the land by creatures that were already in the demiplane. More than once it has been suggested that the Illithid are residents of Ravenloft’s moon. Bluetspur could have been an attempt to manifest their influence on the humans beneath them. In fact, it may even be an actual piece of the moon hurtled toward the surface through some Illithid spelljamming technology.

Wherever it came from, the appearance of Bluetspur on Barovia’s southern border in 581 introduced a powerful non-human population to the Core. It is often asked why the Illithids didn’t just devour all the brains of the Core immediately. For one thing, there’s no telling their numbers. The entire domain may have been home to a few hundred mind flayers and maybe only ten times that many of their Thaani slaves. The people of Thaan were unlike any other humans of the Core, in both appearance and also ability. They escaped in scattered bunches across the border into the relative safety of Immol in Barovia. Relics of Thaan became quite rare as the years went on, but the psychic resonance imbued in them was a formidable weapon when wielded by someone talented. Geographically, Bluetspur added two mighty peaks to the Balinoks in Mts. Grysl and Makab. Both peaks were taller than the Barovian Balinoks, but not quite as high as Arak’s. Unlike the mountains to the north, Bluetspur had little vegetation, and no arable land to speak of. The nameless rivers that twisted out of the rocky soil were choked with sediment and unsuitable for fish or travel. Culturally, Bluetspur added nothing to the Core. It was ignored, outright shunned, by its neighbors until it vanished back into the Mists after the Great Upheaval.

Bluetspur was the first new domain to border Forlorn, which would prove interesting to at least one of its inhabitants. Jander Sunstar emerged from the Mists in Forlorn in 555, which essentially trapped him there, as he dared not cross back into Strahd’s domain. Jander supported the Rowan faction of Druids during his stay and did his best to stem the tide of deforestation by Tristan’s goblins. Bluetspur offered him his first chance at leaving Forlorn, but more than a cursory exploration would be unlikely, and he probably returned quickly. A strong personality like Jander almost certainly came into direct opposition to the Ghost of Tristenoira, particularly with their opposing opinions on vegetation, and this would make for interesting plotlines.

Back to the moon: I love the idea and I wish I could remember the first person that suggested it years ago on the Ravenloft Mailing List because they absolutely deserve the credit. Space travel in the Land of Mists should be in the spirit of Jules Verne. Big, steampunky rockets and creepy Illithid spelljamming cruisers crossing in the starry night sky could be the sort of thing to send an astronomer into a panic, yelling about portends of doom or anything else to raise a ruckus with the farmers. It’s a different kind of horror and I’m glad they wrote this domain out of the Core when they had the chance.





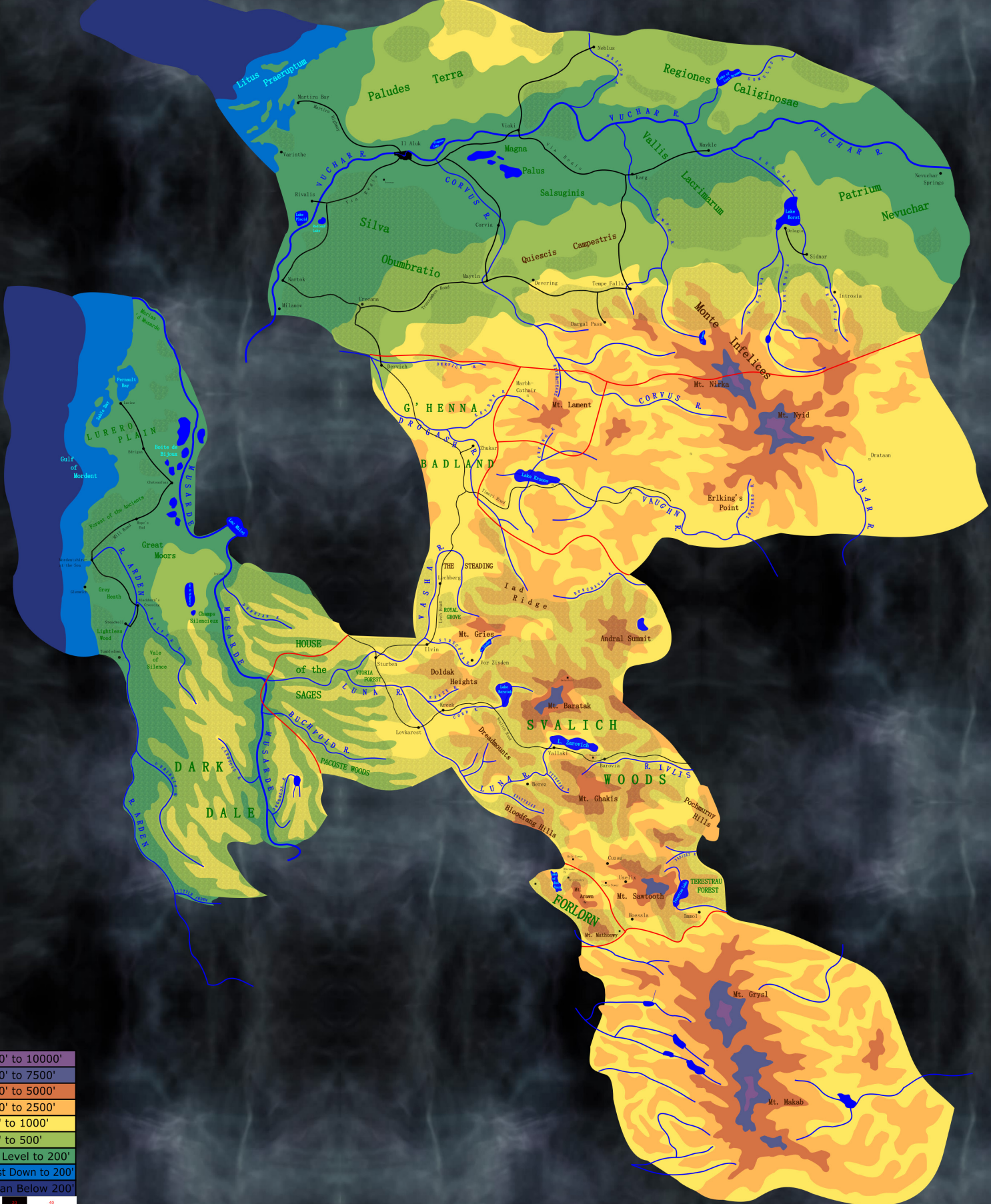
Thirteen years is a short time. In that time the Arakites had left an indelible mark on the culture of the Core. They had been the center for trade in the Core since their appearance. Beneath them, the shadow fey had seen 333 years, although they had not been completely peaceful years. A foreign religion had insinuated itself into the Two Courts: Lloth the Spider Queen. A power struggle had begun between the religion and the Unseelie Court of Loht. After rounding up the leadership of the church, Loht decreed their religion to be heretical. He ordered the death of the church's leader and her blasphemous infant and threatened anyone else who continued the worship of Lloth with the Shunning. Loht ordered his lieutenant Jozell, the princess of the Powrie, to carry out the execution. Staked to the side of Mt. Bheo with her child, the doomed priestess awaited the killing rays of the sun. When the sun peeked between Nirka and Nyid, her flesh began to boil. She withstood the pain with grim silence, however when she looked over and saw her baby suffering the same fate, she screamed with such a terror that her anguish created a sandstorm. This would come to be known as the Scourge of Arak. It slayed every living plant and animal on the surface of the domain instantly. The town of Ceannai was close enough to have its entire population become undead at sunset, and it was renamed Marbh-Cathair, the City of the Dead. The Mountain of Life became known as Mount Lament.

The new domain of Keening was the first to break off from another, although it would have been difficult to tell that since the entire population of the domain next to it had died. The blast wiped out the Drogach Forest in neighboring Barovia, turning it into a hellish badland aptly called G'Henna. Zhukar's trade dried up and northern Barovia went into decline. Darkon was less affected economically, but they did begin manufacturing their own weapons. The Scourge reaffirmed Barovian elders' old biases, and they chastised their children for trusting in foreign powers. Barovia turned inward and the xenophobia they became known for could trace its roots to this event. Mordent did not border Arak, and would not have been affected nearly as much. Bluetspur was completely unaffected, as was Forlorn. Forfarian religion had been accepted by the Arakites, and this would carry over years later when people moved back to the area.

The Scourge of Arak would be considered a global calamity. Zarovan prophecies may have foretold the destruction but were probably denounced as fearmongering. Darkon's magicians would have taken at least some of the blame for the destruction. Fingers were pointed throughout the Balinoks, trust in strangers was low. This disaster would be referenced every time bad weather brewed, or a harvest failed. It would be the proof of the anger of whichever god suited the speaker while trying to warn against any imagined offense. The longer lived Darkonian folk would tell children about the events of the day, but so few actually saw it, and exaggeration would fall short of the real terror.

The shadow fey are said to have gone silent after this event, however as the Breeds are so different it is likely their activity never dropped off at all, and they continued to take humans as changelings and create great works underground as they had for centuries (to them). Careful investigation into the goings on in the history of the realms will uncover the activities of the fey. At least one of Mordent's noble houses was brought down by a fey. With their skill in disguise, however, it is difficult to pin them down exactly.







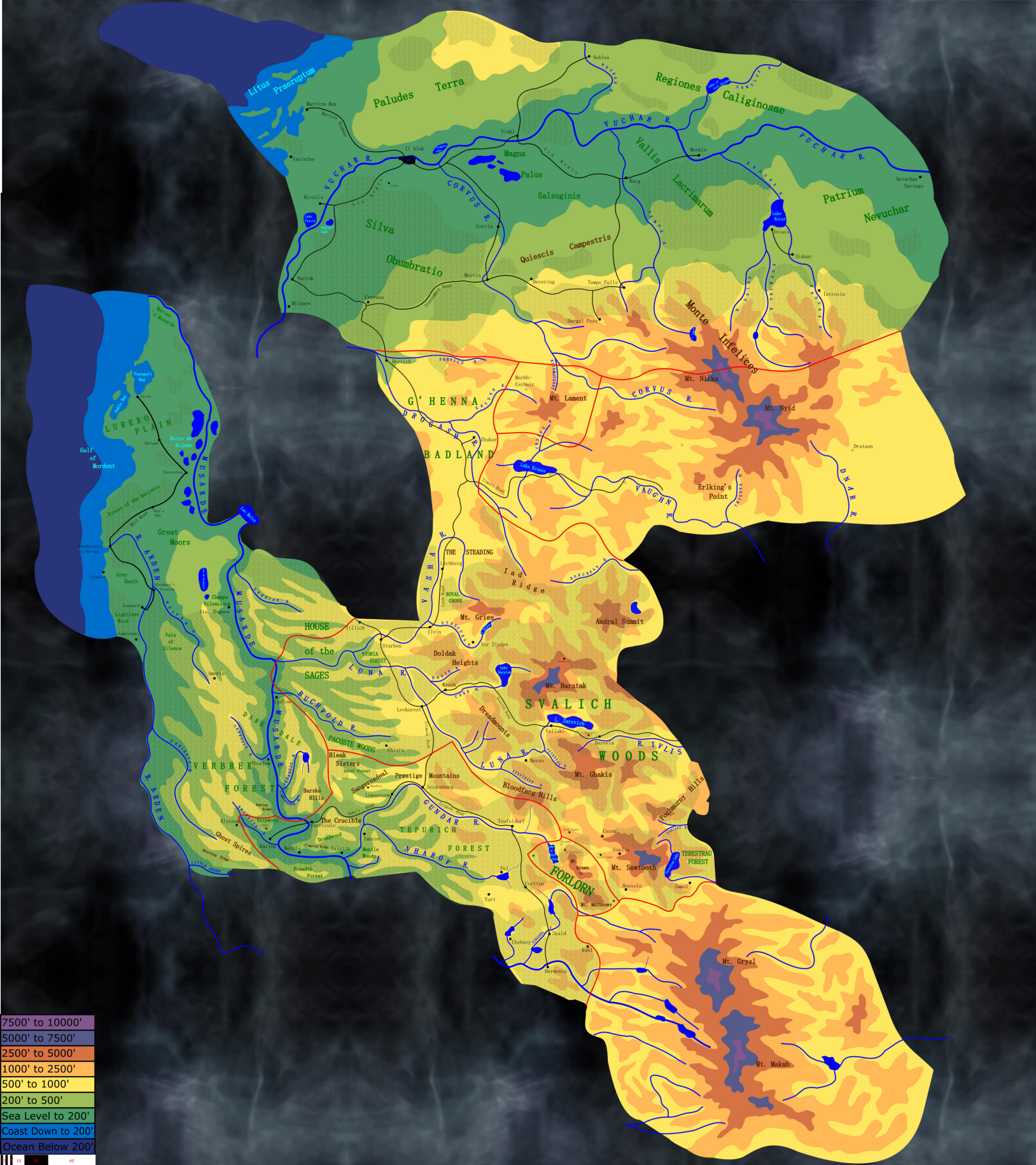
In 593, Duke Nharov Gundar, a vampire, entered Ravenloft from an un-named world near the Barovian village of Krezk. After a brief and terrifying encounter with Strahd, he fled into the Mists and discovered Gundarak. Gundar is described as being older than Strahd, but not as strong willed. He certainly lacked Strahd's gift for subtlety, as rage and violence dictated his actions. Everything about Gundar points to his inadequacy issues. The hills on Barovia's border were named the Prestige Mountains, despite being dwarfed by the Dreadmounts a few miles away, considered mere foothills of the Balinoks. Both rivers in his nation bear Gundar's name.

Gundarak was a powderkeg of unrest when it formed. It was ethnically diverse, but unlike Darkon those ethnicities did not always get along. Residents of the cities of Zeidenburg and Teufeldorf were fiercely nationalistic, singing the praises of their urban advancements and cultural achievements. They supported the Duke extending taxes across the duchy to pay for their lifestyle. Further into the forests and down-river the sentiment changed. These folk were more individualistic, and it would be a challenge for Gundar to rule them all. Still, his ego insisted on expansion. Gundar claimed the haunted hills of Forlorn to be a part of his domain, sending lumberjacks to exploit the forests (despite Gundarak having no shortage of timber). There were also incursions into the uninhabited portions of Mordent to establish a foothold against an "enemy" that had little interest in expelling him. Of course, the Dark Powers did not recognize these borders. Gundar never risked moving against Barovia, except with the use of spies. In fact, espionage was a burgeoning practice, even in quiet Mordent and the ever-growing port of Lucine.

Gundar arrived with most of his closest officers from his prime. Among them was the unique vampire Daclaud Heinfroth, Gundar's closest advisor, whose intellect was often useful when sorting through the Duke's impulsive whims to create laws that would not destroy the entire duchy. Because he did not drink blood, Heinfroth was not susceptible to the debauched habits the other Gundarakite vampires had fallen into. Gundar often overfed out of wasteful practices, and the other vampires were beginning to follow his lead. Between the taxes and the excessive feeding, the vampires were literally bleeding Gundarak dry. Heinfroth's mental powers also made him the perfect spymaster.

Kostadin Bakholis was Gundar's enforcer, a wicked brute of a man that had failed powers checks right alongside Gundar before they ever entered the Mists. His brutality had finally turned him into a werewolf, and he went about infecting several people a month, in strategic places, that would transform at his command. These secret shock troops were often called upon to perform gruesome tasks for the vampires that ruled the duchy, and more and more work was given to them as the vampires fell into their debased and leisurely lifestyle and ignored the needs of the living.

Gundarak was an economically sound domain that exported all manner of beer, wine, and spirits of good quality, as well as salt and sulphur. Mordentmen had finally begun using the Musarde for trade, having founded some villages further into the Dark Dale than they'd ever ventured before. The growing city of Levkarest built the Crimson Road to more easily take advantage of Zeidenburg's markets. The Vistani also traveled freely across Gundarak, from Karina to Harmonia, making the southern Core quite busy as the century drew to an end.





Revolution in Gundarak seemed inevitable and in 603 the first domain broke away. Gundar had dispatched Bakholis to Castle Loupet to oversee Gundarakite incursions down the Musarde and also to quell unrest among the native ethnicities along the river. Bakholis was at least as merciless as Gundar, and his methods went unpunished in this far flung corner of the land. Bakholis liked his autonomy, and his own lycanthrope officers complained about the vampires in the cities, and questioned why they did anything for them at all. The same complaints were heard among the populace of Karina, and the writing was on the wall that Gundar would have a fight on his hands. In 600, one of Gundar's tax collectors was killed by an angry mob. Gundar captured the mob as they stormed Castle Hunadora and hanged them all in the orchards along the Duke's Road. The fuse was lit. In the west the largest ethnic group, the Invidians, declared themselves independent from the Duke. Gundar called on his lieutenant to put down the rebellion, but Bakholis instead sided with the rebels. He took what came to be known as the Ride of the Pack up the Duke's Road, changing his strategically placed werewolves along the way. At the gates of Zeidenburg, Bakholis shocked the town guard when several high-ranking officers suddenly changed shape and turned on their former allies. When the sun set, the vampires of Zeidenburg awoke to find their city aflame, blood running through its streets.

Gundar's response was quick, but his army had still not adapted to fighting in the dense Tepurich Forest. Bakholis's forces roamed freely south of the Gundar River, and cut the Crimson Road east of Teufeldorf, establishing a second headquarters in Skald. The Invidians successfully held the confluence of the Gundar and Nharov Rivers, essentially controlling trade west of Hunadora. The Barovians, amused by their arrogant neighbor's struggles, enacted tariffs on Gundarakite goods headed north.

Invidia officially formed in 603, after Bakholis's jealousy and rage arrived on a more personal level; see Gaz IV for more details. The revolution would rage for over a decade, as the Invidians intended to overthrow all of Gundarak. For his part, Bakholis held many of Gundar's vices, and levied taxes on the people he claimed to be liberating that were at least as oppressive as they had known under the duke. The Invidians grumbled less when they saw their armies outfitted and marching toward their enemy than when their taxes were just used to fatten Gundarakite nobles. These patriotic sentiments would fade within half a generation.

The betrayal of Bakholis would weigh on Gundar. He offered outlandish bounties for the traitor's head, and would often sabotage boats of his own exports headed down river with poison or explosives just to take out a few Invidian inspectors. Gundar considered anyone who supported Bakholis to have offended him personally, and he razed entire villages just because they had fed a wayward Invidian soldier. Unable to defeat the Invidian armies in their forest battlefield, Gundarakite troops often waged the war even more terribly against civilians. Invidians were rounded up and executed by the thousands, which only did more to fan the flames of rebellion. Smaller groups refused to send provisions to the cities, and they were treated in kind. Some ethnic groups were stamped out completely; Invidians saw their population halved. Daclaud Heinfroth continued to advise the duke, although he became inspired by the prospect of overthrowing him as well. He would bide his time.

Bakholis had plenty of enemies himself. The natural werewolves in Mordent hated his cursed line and would support Gundar's human forces against the Invidians. When a vampire arrived, however, the Timothy clan would still tear them to shreds as well. Strahd considered



Bakholis to be little more than a butcher, and when Barovian resources were directed to topple Gundar, it was in spite of Bakholis rather than because of him. Ever mysterious in their ways, the Vistani also seemed to be helping the Invidians, but they avoided the catapult range of Castle Loupet as well. Bakholis had his lycanthrope shock troops and little else to defeat his former master. Invidian independence was eventually won because of the Invidians, and they never let anyone forget it.

Gundar had more success against the eastern Invidian forces once their general was trapped in his own domain. Dargacht Keep was easily defensible across the Kilovan River, but the Invidian occupation was already losing steam. Still, Gundarakite patrols rarely got past Cortton before being set upon by ravenous werewolves and Invidian pikes. The Invidians were no more welcome than the Gundarakites in this portion of the domain, and both armies' stay would be short-lived. Neither Gundar nor Heinfroth understood the deep magic that existed in the east; unlike the blighted and scarred Tepurich forest, these Ostkoven forests were alive with extreme examples of nature's power, particularly in the size and cunning of the animals.

The people who lived in this region called themselves Kartakans and they did not like the Invidians any more than the Gundarakites. The fair-haired, fair-skinned Kartakans fought the revolution for themselves, and would kill the raven-haired Gundarakites and the swarthy Invidians with equal glee. Still, they were unorganized and fading quickly. They were desperate for a hero, someone to prevent Gundar's pogroms from wiping from their beloved forests. A wolf of their own.

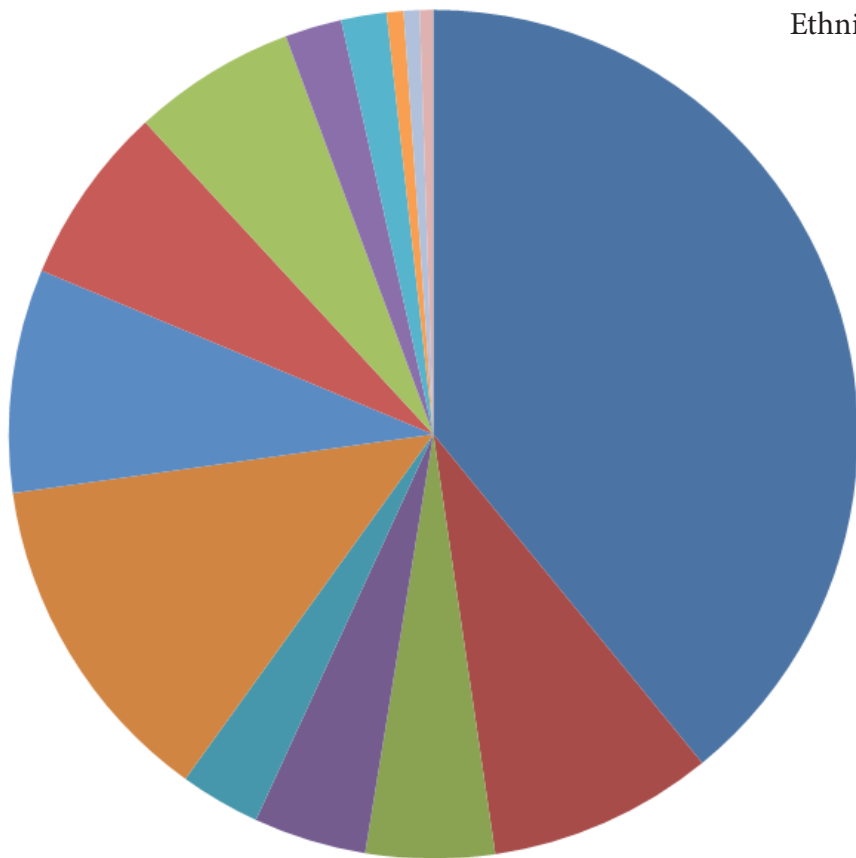
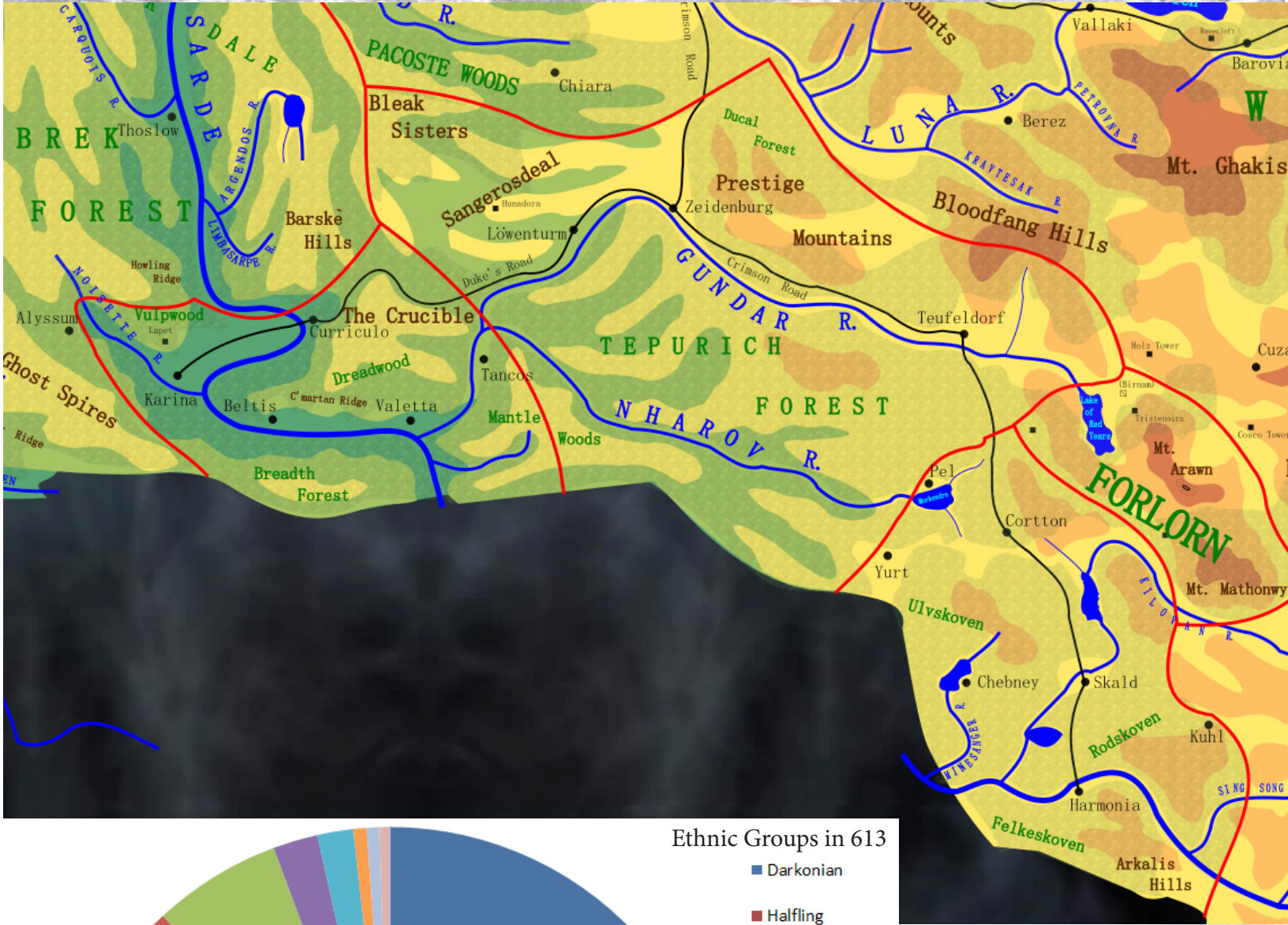


The Southern Core welcomed another powerful personality in 610, the charismatic and wicked wolfwere bard, Harkon Lukas. Lukas arrived in Barovia, and immediately came in contact with Strahd, who chased him off. Lukas crossed into Gundarak, then to Invidia, where he met both darklords and they both immediately despised the foreigner. Lukas wanted to rule great kingdoms of men, but only one such nation existed in the realm, and that was Darkon. Lukas researched this strange land he had been deposited in, interviewing the Vistani, as well as a particularly knowledgeable vampire named Dr. Dominiani (alter ego of Daclaud Heinfroth). Dominiani explained the nature of the Land of Mists as he understood it. Though he had never met Azalin, he had discovered much of his history from before the formation of Darkon.

Dominiani encouraged Lukas to investigate Berez for clues to Azalin's weakness. He also hinted at great artifacts hidden in the catacombs of Castle Ravenloft. Lukas set off to find them, but was waylaid by Strahd once again near the Village of Barovia. Strahd was intrigued by Lukas's plan to eliminate his old enemy, but doubted his ability to succeed. He sent Lukas with a Vistani guide to enter Darkon from the Mists, but he never made it, instead emerging near Skald. Lukas then helped expel the Invidians from Dargacht Keep, and the domain of Kartakass formed around him. This marked the end of the Invidian war against Gundarak, and they settled into an uneasy armistice.

Kartakass, like Invidia, was made up of an ethnically independent group that had balked at Gundarakite rule since its appearance. The dense forests were revered by the Kartakans, and they enjoyed autonomy once the Gundarakites and Invidians had been expelled, occupying a desolate corner of the core that bordered only one inhabited domain. Tiny villages dotted the barony, like Yurt, which took longest to expel the vampires of Gundar, and Kuhl, which though tiny, held the largest free Thanni population outside Barovia. But the twin villages of Skald and Harmonia were the cultural centers of the domain. Lukas settled in Skald, the larger of the two, and the legend of his actions made him a mythic figure of Kartakan nationalism, such as it was.

Kartakass was not a major player economically due to its location. All goods had to be processed through Gundar's oppressive taxes before leaving or arriving, although the Vistani smuggled some goods through the Mists. Still, Kartakan wool was in higher demand than Barovian due to its soft texture. There was one more unintentional, perhaps even imagined export from Kartakass: hope. The Kartakans, who sang at every opportunity, had a reputation for having found happiness in this dark realm, and to appearances they had just thrown off the yoke of an oppressive regime. Not a few immigrants risked the Tepurich or Forlorn forests in search of a better, more simple life. The flock was growing and the wolves were watching. The lack of undead horrors and blatant magic users made Kartakass look like the kind of place a regular person could survive. The "if it bleeds, we can kill it" mentality led to more than a few unlucky souls meeting their end in the jaws of a wolfwere, but overall the sentiment was not far off. Only sleepy Mordent offered a real shot at peace and its towns were quite far from the oppressed southerners laboring beneath vampiric masters.



Ethnic Groups in 613

- Darkonian
- Halfling
- Elf
- Dwarf
- Gnome
- Barovian
- Mordentish
- Borjjan
- Gundarakite
- Kartakan
- Invidian
- Vistani
- Thaani
- Forfarian

60% of the population is actually in Darkon, demi-humans have been split out to show diversity in Darkon. Borjjan occupy western portion of the domain of Barovia, but are really their own nation, and include majority of entire domain's nobility. Invidian and Kartakan numbers have dropped sharply since 593 due to internal civil war and the pogroms of Duke Gundar. Thaani numbers are those above ground only; There's no telling how many are still enslaved in Bluetspur.



Urik von Kharkov has one of the more convoluted backstories among Core darklords. He is an interesting creature, having started life as a panther and been polymorphed into a man as a trap by a jealous Red Wizard of Thay. I was always disappointed they invented a whole other couple of Red Wizards, because I had imagined him being the tool of Hazlik's revenge rather than some random Thayvian that barely entered the demiplane. Regardless, von Kharkov is said to have entered Darkon around 605 after already being used as a murder weapon on Faerun, and intentionally sought out a vampire to be turned undead. He operated as a Kargat agent for about twenty years, then fled into the Mists when his master was killed. von Kharkov is said to have wandered the Mists for some time, killing indiscriminately. There is also the problem of rectifying his age, as he is said to be over 250 years old, which would put his turning at a date that predates Darkon (485) and therefore a Darkonian vampire to turn him. This leads to the possibility of him being detached from time while mistnapped, or perhaps trapped near Arak's temporal fugue. It's a cheap explanation, but when you have that sort of phenomenon in your world, at least one powerful creature would know how to use it, and Azalin fits that bill. He may have even had a Kargat vampire training camp set up beneath the Mountains of Misery to make his troops stronger.

Valachan's appearance in 625 is likewise rife with problems. For one, GazV specifically calls out the domain bordering Kartakass, Invidia, and Gundarak when it appeared. This means either it moved a century later when Sithicus formed, or the land of Valachan and Sithicus arrived at the same time. While this project has been pretty loose with domains forming and getting carved up later, I don't see any connections that would explain Valachan and Sithicus forming this way. There also needs to be Mists on Gundarak's border that Soth can enter, and this would make Valachan physically bordering Gundarak impossible. So, while the Mists may be friendly to travelers occasionally crossing Valachan's northern frontier into familiar land, I chose to leave Valachan in its Black Box position, connected to the Core only by the misty tendrils of the River Arden. Valachan would essentially be an Island of Terror that would later join the Core (like Vechor does in 750). In fact, the other Islands of Terror may be in fixed positions as well, just with trackless and deceptive Mists between them. I don't love the idea of the Mists as an ocean upon which domains are moving around.

The populace of Valachan is similarly problematic. Although it is false history, the Valachani refer to their ancient conquerors as the "Vaasi." This makes sense only inasmuch as von Kharkov is from Toril, but it sticks out particularly because Nova Vaasa will not form for another five decades. It can be thrown away as easily as anything else that doesn't work in your campaign, but I don't see the use for the coincidence. GazV also mentions the Vaasi used to rule in Kartakass, which is another domain with a Torilian darklord. The cold region of Vaasa on Toril bears little resemblance to Thay or Cormyr. It may just be a Valachani word that translates as a descendent of Toril. The Vaasi language, however, is spoken in Valachan, before the appearance of Nova Vaasa or Hazlan. Perhaps the language should have been called Valachani.

It would make sense that someone in Darkon would at least try to take credit for von Kharkov being a Darkonian colonist. The imperial feel of Darkon would make such a venture a point of national pride. Azalin was unlikely to acknowledge it, as his understanding of the realm was too deep by this point, but another noble would probably take credit for sending his agent to establish Darkon's presence in the Mists, and reap the benefit of the strange timber and fruit sent back to the mother country.





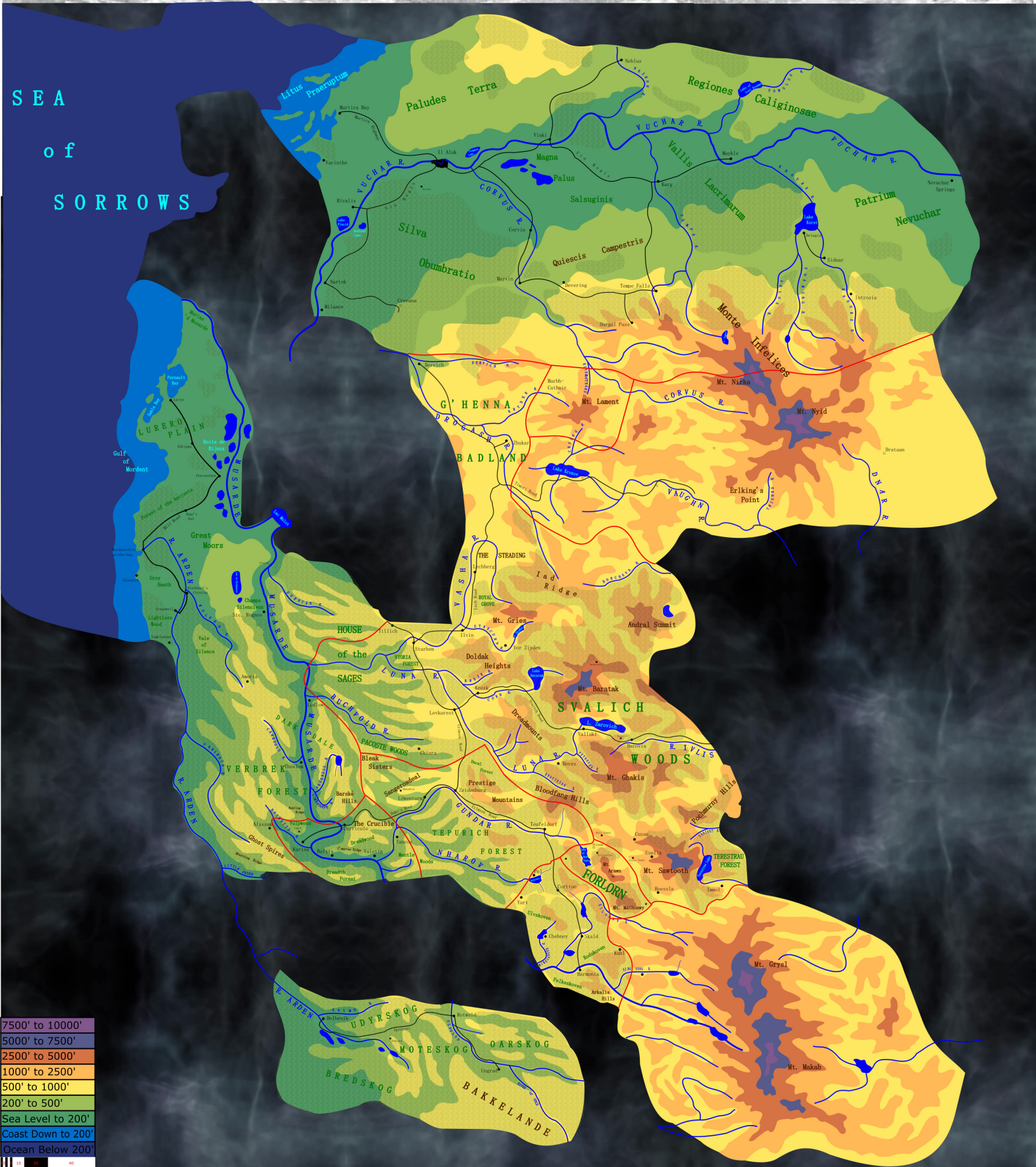
While the coasts of Mordent and Darkon had been plied by fisherman and very brave merchants since their formation, the Sea of Sorrows officially became its own domain in 630. In my own campaign, which took place in prime Mordent before it entered the Land of Mists, Pieter van Riese made a cameo, but there is little tying him to Mordent's prime from any other source. There is the possibility that van Riese was already in the demiplane when the domain formed, like the last five darklords had been. van Riese and his ghost ship are not the sort of darklord that players typically interact with, and the Relentless is mostly used as a plot device. Still, it's an awesome name for a ghost ship.

Even though it had been possible to sail from Mordentshire to Martira Bay prior to the Sea of Sorrows' formation, this domain's formation made that path more reliable. It was still easy to get blown off course, or to sail out of the sight of land and discover any number of domains. Neblightode in particular formed around the same time but navigating to it was most likely the result of a reliable Mistway. The Nocturnal Sea will form around it in the next century. I won't reprint Ryan Naylor's findings from *Illustrated History of the Core*, since I agree with them all. The maritime domains of the demiplane were all easily reachable from these misty waters. They would appear in turn, perhaps after a storm, a Mordentish fisherman would report back on their existence, and by the time another ship was dispatched to meet the new arrivals, the island could have been swallowed up by the Mists again. This led to the reputation for Mordentish sailors being unreliable navigators (or at the least drunks), although no one complained when they delivered their bounty to shore.

Because the borders of the Sea of Sorrows were mutable, sailing upon it was hardly different from navigating the Mists themselves. Rare Vistani boatswains could get your ship to Ghastria or (later) Sri Raji and back, but the majority of new trading partners were discovered by accident. This led to the practice of ships carrying a good amount of treasure on board in case they were to stumble onto one of these one-time trading opportunities. This also led to a lot of treasure sitting on the seafloor when a storm or more sinister enemy would sink these ships.

"Sea of Sorrows" was the name agreed upon by sailors who had been plying the waves for the last fifty years, since neither Mordent nor Darkon arrived with their bodies of water commonly labeled. Connecting these two bodies of water put an end to the mistwalking that had often occurred between northern Mordent and Southwestern Darkon. The best way for each nation to trade was now by ship. Martira Bay benefitted from its proximity to the more advanced ports to the south. Technology crept into Darkon slowly, as magic was in use for many tasks. Martira Bay, however, was growing quickly, and it had already surpassed Corvia in population.

Shipbuilding on the Sea of Sorrows put an emphasis on survivability over speed. Large holds were usually overstocked with provisions in case of an unexpected detour caused by pesky Mists. The distance was relatively short, so most runs could be completed inside a week at the most. Years later, when the Sea of Sorrows encompassed more domains and its Mistways pointed to shores further afield, speed would become a larger concern. It would be some time before three-masted clippers made anchorage in Sable Bay, and at this time the Relentless was probably the largest ship in the demiplane. Most merchants were happy to get by with Caravels and Barques. The idea of an oar-powered galley would have made a Mordentman roll his eyes at the wasted effort, and any such vessels would have been from other worlds.





After half a century of inactivity, the Dark Powers added significantly to the Core, filling in the eastern portion with Nova Vaasa in 682. The history of Nova Vaasa is particularly convoluted, and even S had a difficult time pinning it down in GazV. Nova Vaasa was a very large domain, nearly as large as Darkon—while it lasted. Nova Vaasa's plateau was nearly devoid of the thick vegetation and sharp changes in elevation that marked her neighbors. The wide grassy plain stayed mostly dry because of its proximity to the Balinoks, and this made it difficult to coax more than scarce harvests of cereals from the hard ground beneath. Instead the low shrubs were excellent for steading herds of cattle and horses.

The Vaasi people had already shown up in the history of Valachan, and this only adds to the confusion. Culturally, the newly arrived Vaasi considered themselves conquerors, although their nation had already been brought to heel. Their appearance on Barovia's eastern border would have raised more than a few eyebrows, since the Tergs that had occupied Barovia three centuries ago were also ferocious cavalymen from the East, and all the worst Terg stereotypes were quickly applied to the newcomers. The Vaasi were neither demon-worshippers nor cannibals (and the Tergs probably weren't either), but it took quite some time before relations normalized.

The demographic impact was instant, as there were nearly as many Vaasi as Barovians or Mordentmen. It was unclear whether the Vaasi were modeled after a culture on Toril or if the only connection to the Forgotten Realms was the darklord, Malken, and his host family the Hiregaards. The Balinoks were a cultural barrier and Nova Vaasa was in its own pocket at least until the Timori Road connected to the western Core. The Cycle of Stewards that led Nova Vaasa was already in place, and the Bolshniks were in power.

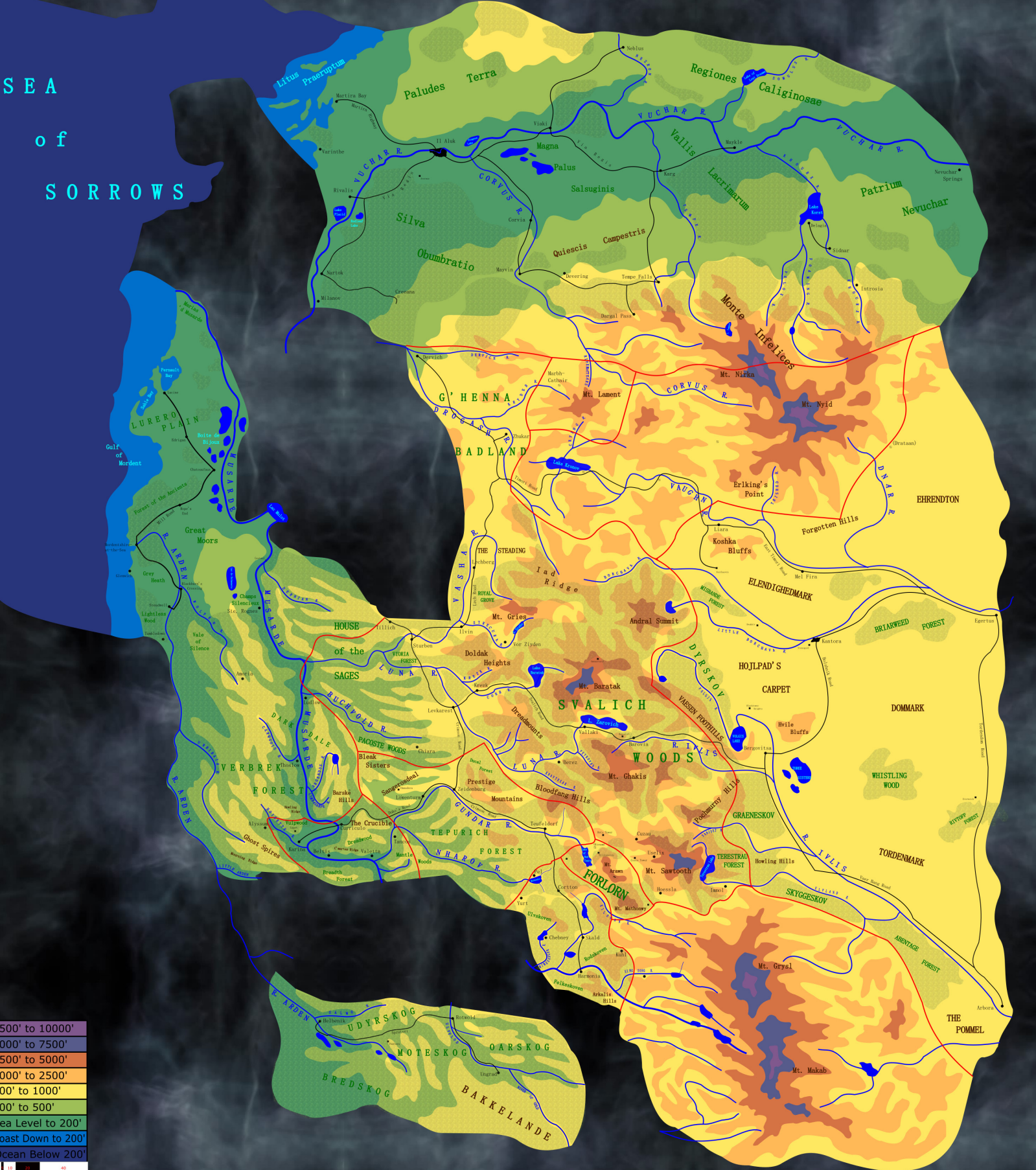
Nova Vaasa also arrived with something the Core had not seen yet: a strong centralized religion. The Church of Ezra had just been revealed sixteen years earlier in Levkarest and was still gaining ground in the West. The Halan witches and followers of the Morninglord had still not found a large audience and could be considered cults at best. Darkon's Eternal Order was nowhere near as powerful and intertwined in the daily life of its adherents as Nova Vaasa's Church of the Lawgiver. The church saturated every aspect of Vaasi life and had its eyes on saturating every aspect of the heretical lives of Nova Vaasa's neighbors. The aggressive proselytizing of the Lawgiver's priests received a chilly response in other lands. The first struggle between the state religion and the state came when trade deals for vital foodstuffs had provisions that banned priests of the Lawgiver from participating in the transactions outside Vaasi lands. The Himmelsk Naeve, basically the "Pope" of the Lawgiver, finally gave in after a month of hunger riots in the streets of Kantora but tightened the grasp of the Church domestically.

Nova Vaasa was populated with horrors that were mostly man-made. The actions of the Vaasi nobility were as terrifying as the predations of any werewolf or vampire. Combined with courtly intrigue and a pervasive religion, as well as ancient cairns buried in the bluffs, the domain always had a potential for more than just the Jekyll/Hyde dichotomy on which it was based. It should play more like Game of Thrones, particularly when the Stewardship is not given up after the Great Upheaval.

A more immediate threat, however, would appear on the Misty Border within the year.



SEA
of
SORROWS



7500' to 10000'
5000' to 7500'
2500' to 5000'
1000' to 2500'
500' to 1000'
200' to 500'
Sea Level to 200'
Coast Down to 200'
Ocean Below 200'



Within months of the appearance of the mighty plateau that made up Nova Vaasa, it came under attack from the Mists. By the end of 683, the Nightmare Lands had usurped the region known as the Pommel and cut most of the plateau from its misty border. Rather than covering them, the weird miasma of the Nightmare Lands had pushed the Vaasi settlements to the West. As the years went on, it was as if Nova Vaasa was being smashed against the unforgiving and immovable Balinok mountains by an unstoppable and incomprehensible force. The entire domain existed as a dreamscape, or an illusion that was impossible to disbelieve. Half of the population of Egertus fled to Kantora when the new domain formed, and Arbora was left on a shrinking peninsula of reality trying to fight off their own dreams. It is unknown how long this domain had existed, but its arrival so soon after Nova Vaasa made other inhabitants of the Core assume it was a terror the Vaasi had brought with them.

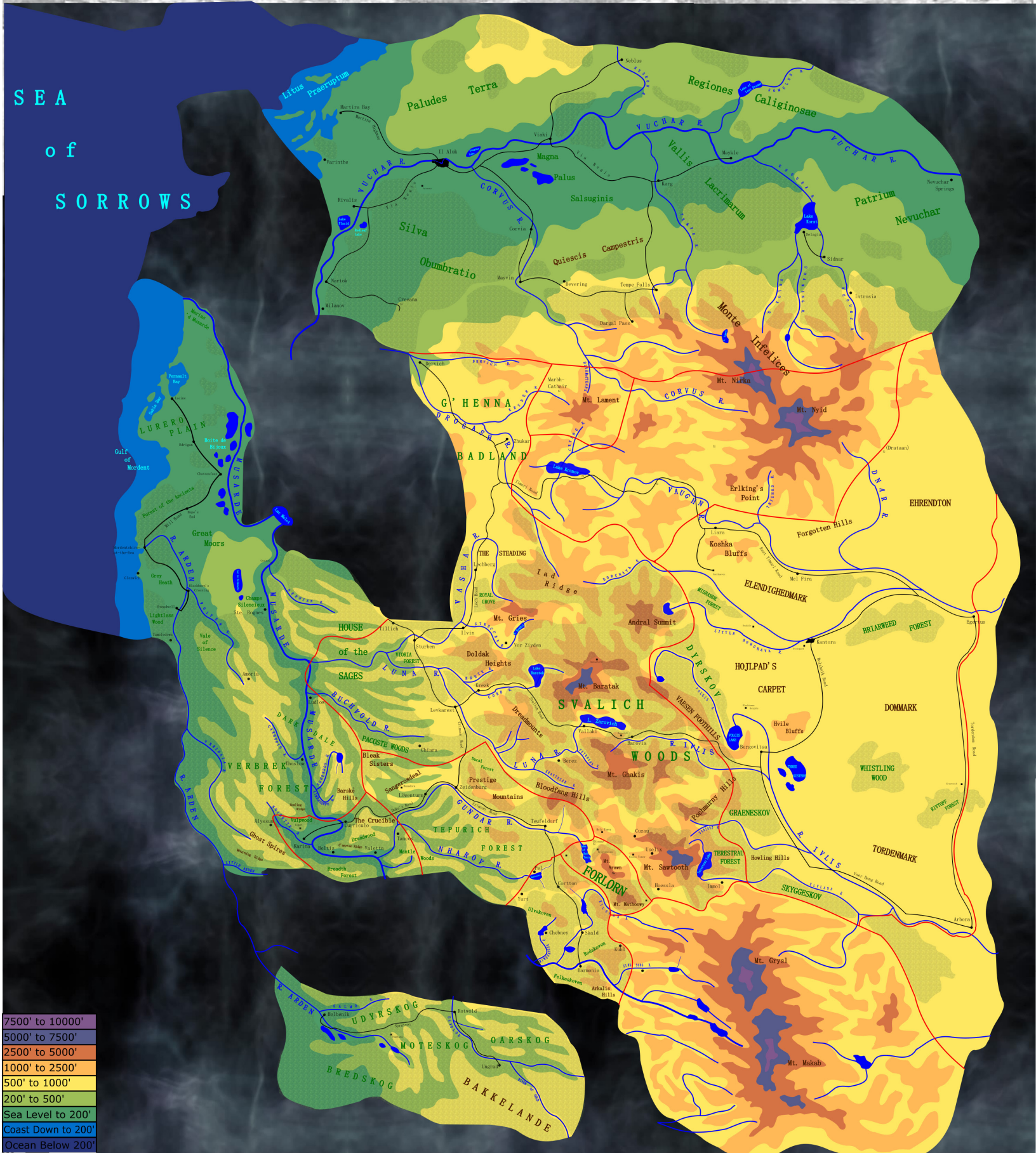
Nova Vaasa found themselves surrounded by inhospitable neighbors. Barren Arak in the north, the suspicious and xenophobic Barovians to their west, the alien and bleak Bluetspur peaks to the south, and their new weird enemy to the east. Their main trading partner, Darkon, was connected by a mere sliver of land that bordered the least populated portions of both domains. The self-sufficient Darkonians were in no hurry to build roads around the Mountains of Misery, and the Vaasi would watch helplessly as this corridor become compressed over time, making the trip less and less viable. That portion of Arak that had been ceded to Nova Vaasa was called Ehrendton, and this would not be the last time it changed hands. It would mostly belong to the Nightmare Lands by the early 700s. The temporal fugue was still active beneath it, although what use the Vaasi ever found for it is unknown, if they ever even discovered it. The Nightmare Lands seemed unaffected by time, so the fugue had little effect on the domain.

The native population of the Nightmare Lands were known as Abber nomads, a people so unique and few in number they have often been considered illusory themselves, or at least a type of fey. They did not build cities, and the creeping advance of the domain was not an invasion. Rather, the Abber were melancholy observers and guides. Some have taken this to mean they were somehow related to the Vistani. Abber nomads adapted to their strange environment first by surrendering the ability to dream, and secondly by adopting a philosophy that only what they can see and feel actually exists. This philosophy infuriated several lost travelers when receiving directions from the nomads that made no sense. The appearance of an Abber nomad outside the Nightmare lands was considered a bad omen and made people familiar with them questioned their own reality, in at least one case driving them mad.

The Nightmare Court ruled this domain. It is possible these were all different aspects of the same being, and—if you like these sorts of theories—that being may have been one of the Dark Powers. The strangeness and transient nature of the domain made it feel like it was a part of the Mists itself. The slow creep of the domain as it devoured its neighbor would have made for a phenomenon that was both terrifying and fascinating. Drs. Illhousen and van Richten both studied it. The Vistani shunned it. Azalin seems to have ignored it, which is telling in itself. Even when it eventually bordered Darkon, Azalin's initial study likely yielded the hypothesis that the entire domain was an elaborate shadow play put on by his captors, a show of force he had already determined to have limits, and which he had already begun planning to destroy.



SEA
of
SORROWS



7500' to 10000'
5000' to 7500'
2500' to 5000'
1000' to 2500'
500' to 1000'
200' to 500'
Sea Level to 200'
Coast Down to 200'
Ocean Below 200'



In 684, after 333 years, the first bite was taken off of Greater Barovia when Borca formed. This is probably the hardest example in this project for hardline Ravenloft purists to accept, imagining a portion of Strahd's domain hewn off to make one for someone else. Keep in mind, Strahd is a prisoner like everyone else, and unlike Azalin, whose goal is escape, Strahd intends to find Tatyana and then escape. To that end, there are portions of this domain he would have mostly ignored because none of her reincarnations were appearing there. Borca would fall into that category. "Borca" is probably a bastardization of Borjia, the original homeland of Strahd's father Barov. After Borca formed as a domain, the last Buchvold scion quietly passed away and the tenuous connection to Barovia's prime was washed away.

The formation story for Borca does not begin in Barovia, however, but Mordent. Camille Dilisnya had been raised in northern Mordent as a noble-in-exile since her family was the sworn enemies of Strahd. Northern Mordent was the home of Mordent's own displaced nobility that had originally founded the colony on Mordent's prime. These families were called the Demented for staying behind as the colony was changing hands, and much of their art, cultural, and classical references persisted in the growing port of Lucine and in the mansions built in the Boite Bijoux. Camille had married and murdered her husband, Sigfried Grymig when she caught him cheating with Maria Diazi. None of these names sound very Mordentish, and its likely more of the monied Borjians had become comfortably displaced down river. Mordentish authorities didn't fall for Camille's story, and she was soon off to hide from justice with more of her father's family in Invidia. She never made it as Borca formed around her. Afterwards, Dilisnya family members from all over the Core returned to the Luna Valley and flourished in defiance of their nemesis.

Once in the domain, Camille married again, this time to the very powerful merchant, Klaus Boritsi. The Boritsi had their fingers in everything and were known for not letting a silly thing like a bank of mists keep them from making a sale. The Boritsi were essentially like the Medici family: rich, cultured, and connected to the art and religion of the era. Levkarest was probably like Earth's Florence, and the Cathedral of Ezra Camille's cousin Yakov had convinced her to build would finish that look. Klaus and Camille had three children, Ivana, Sulo and Anton. The boys stayed close to their father and ran businesses. Camille kept Ivana close to her and poisoned her heart against men. Camille literally poisoned Klaus for infidelity, and half of her own family at his funeral. She would marry twice more, leaving bodies in her wake, but eventually was killed by her own daughter in 711.

Borca rose to prominence with the combined money and influence of the Boritsi and the Dilisnya families. Its central location allowed it to control trade from the Balinoks to the Sea of Sorrows. Seven major rivers' commerce were controlled on the shores of the Borcan Musarde, and the Boritsi funded road construction and maintenance over the Balinoks to keep the flow of goods and coin through their realm. Politically, they formed strong bonds in the west, negotiated tax breaks in the south, and were happily ignored by their cousins in Barovia. Once Sulo came into his majority, the business expanded even further, and the Boritsi Trading Company was one of the primary beneficiaries of the Land of Mists solidifying as it would after the Requiem. It is unknown how the Boritsi reached Islands in the Mists so reliably, but they were rarely left unexploited for long after their appearance. Borcan currency was some of the strongest in the Core, but just a promissory note signed by a Boritsi was enough to finance any endeavor.





Poor Lamordia floats all over the various published timelines. I settled on 685 like in Mangrum's timeline despite what GazII says. Lamordia's appearance finishes the Sea of Sorrows coast and leaves a big donut hole in the middle of the Core. This means the Shadow Rift was not a unique occurrence, however it was the first time the hole in the middle was the result of land being removed rather than the domains forming around it.

Victor Mordenheim and Adam were the darklords of Lamordia. Mordenheim brought an advanced medical tradition to the Core, which was continued in nearby Ludendorf. Along with the advanced science came a philosophy detached from the supernatural. Lamordians were capable of explaining every phenomenon away with science, even when the vampire was standing right in front of them. This actually led to areas of Lamordia suppressing magic, something that would encourage wizards to avoid the domain, which ironically substantiated the Lamordian theory that magic wasn't real.

Lamordia had a mainland and a three-island archipelago that pointed out into the Sea of Sorrows, appropriately called Det Finja (the Finger). The land was colder than its temperate neighbors, and the Sea of Sorrows around Det Finja was downright frigid. Schlaftia, the "Sleeping Beast," practically emanated cold across the domain despite being nearly a mile shorter than the Balinok peaks. The mountainous ridge soared abruptly above the swampy Musarde Delta. The wide, lazy river bottomed out in several directions through an area that spent most of the year frozen and was nearly impossible to navigate without dedicated icebreaking efforts. The efforts were worth it, of course, as the Musarde now drained the vast majority of the continent, including Darkon's Vuchar River, which finally had connected to the Musarde on the leeward side of Schlaftia. Riverboats like the ones being built in Karina could navigate from the sea all the way to Vallaki and Nevuchar Springs—at least until the Requiem.

Technology was a major export of Lamordia. Clockworks and advanced firearms, particularly delicately made pistols, were in demand throughout the Core. Many Darkonians developed little colonies in Lamordia to study the feats of engineering, but the once prestigious medical college in Leidenheim never recovered from its transport into the Land of Mists, robbing Mordenheim of the audience he worked so hard to prove wrong. The Lamordian climate and soil were ill-suited to large scale farming, so most food was imported in exchange for mineral resources coaxed from the ever perilous Schlaftia, as well as what bounty the Sea could provide. Lamordians were the first aggressive whalers in the Core, and several advances in shipbuilding made pursuit of these grim leviathans a profitable business.

The von Aubrecker family ruled Lamordia. Vilhelm, the patriarch, was cursed to rule the domain as it was forming, the result of a poorly worded wish spell cast on his prime plane which trapped him in the Land of Mists. His wife was left behind, which creates a continuity error I have struggled to rectify, since at least one of his children, Rudolph, was born in 694, after Lamordia had already formed. Regardless of the location of Baroness von Aubrecker, if Vilhelm was of child-fathering age when the domain formed, he would be very advanced in age at the time of the Doomsday Gazetteers, most likely his early 90's. There is not a strong aristocracy in the rest of the realm, so von Aubrecker's position has never been challenged, and when his daughter takes over it will likely be met with the fatalistic shrug the Lamordians are known for. Someone has to rule, it may as well be a von Aubrecker.





In 689, the Krynnish mercenary force known as the Talons of the Hawk emerged from the Mists in Darkon. Their leader was a merciless and ambitious 24-year-old captain called Vlad Drakov—the Hawk. Not one to waste time pondering strange new geography or interplanar travel, Drakov razed the first village he came upon and impaled the population on pikes. Drakov was about to engage in his second favorite activity with a few village girls he had spared when his freshly killed victims rose up and attacked the Talons. Taken by surprise and beset on all sides, Drakov led his routed men into the Mists. They emerged in the Silver Kingdoms—an oubliette where the Dark Powers baited Drakov and tested his resolve. He did not disappoint them, and crushed the utopian nation, rebuilding the society into a stratified military dictatorship. In 690 Falkovnia emerged, nearly completing the Core.

Despite the number of Falkovnian citizens exceeding any other ethnic group besides Darkonians, the mighty nation provided an over-abundance of food which was parlayed into a powerhouse economy. The Core's population grudgingly tolerated the new neighbor. Famines were averted thanks to Falkovnian exports, but it was common to refer to meals prepared with their foodstuffs as blutbrot, indicating the meal had been bought with more hardship than the hunger it staved off justified. Falkovnia's position allowed control of river traffic of both the Vuchar and Musarde, and the well-maintained roads kept commerce moving overland as well. The Timori Road was finally complete, connecting Neufurchtenburg in Lamordia to Egertus in Nova Vaasa. Its lonely trundle through the blasted badlands of northern Barovia and Arak inspired the first of many fortified merchant outposts Falkovnia would establish on foreign soil. This practice of economic invasion was the only successful expansion Drakov would enjoy. A dozen military operations against Falkovnia's neighbors all ended the same way: with the Hawk's best troops defeated by superior technology, underhanded tactics, or the risen dead. Drakov was slow to learn the borders of the Land of Mists rarely moved because of the will of men.

In all the horror of the realm, Drakov was a unifying factor. From the snobbiest Borcan stapan to the unwashed Barovian goatherds, Vlad Drakov was despised. He was the reason nations raised armies, the reason treaties were signed, and the reason graveyards were full of young men. Like any universal object of terror, he was also lampooned. Jokes about his failed military endeavors and his many bastard children were sure to bring any tavern to the floor with laughter. The Falkovnian people were similarly skewered, although with slightly more sympathy. Several plays were written about peasants with green teeth toiling away under their wicked and inept king, and a hero rising from their ranks to challenge him.

Falkovnia introduced slavery to the Core. While the nation's serfs got by on a pittance of pay for their backbreaking labor, most of the captured Darkonians from the Dead Man Campaigns were kept as unpaid slaves to be worked, raped, beaten and killed as Drakov saw fit. Azalin never demanded the return of his citizens, but there was an extensive network of liberators operating under the guise of merchants that would smuggle people out of the Hawk's realm.

A final note, I feel the portrayal of Falkovnia in GazII was a bit too heavy-handed with its comparisons to the Third Reich. There was nothing wrong with adopting the German language, but titles like "Falkfuhrer" lack the subtlety I cherish in gothic stories. The Black Box and Requiem series did more than enough to show the domain as a medieval hellscape no one would want to live in. Nazis...I hate these guys.





Falkovnia's appearance created a lot of traffic through the Timori pass and it attracted people back to the area. A few had already trickled back in since the Scourge of Arak decimated the area a century earlier, mostly outlanders and pioneering Vaasi and Darkonians. In 691 the Mindefisk sisters were pulled into the Land of Mists and were made darklords of the newly forested and populated realm of Tepest. The new forests settled like a blanket over the previously barren hills, and the villages of Kellee and Viktal replaced the Arakite ruins. The small nation would enjoy a period of prosperity as Tepest sat on the only pass through the northern Balinoks and there was finally a reason to traverse the northern Balinoks. The Tepestani themselves had few products to contribute to the Core's economy—mostly sheep and barley—but hospitality became the hallmark of the villages on the wagon-worn road. An innkeeper could make a small fortune sheltering merchants, and the markets of the new towns were often used to cut the trip in half. The lack of a centralized government prevented high tariffs on transactions, making trade in the north more attractive than through greedy Borca and Barovia.

Few vestiges of the Arakite culture survived the Scourge, but the Forfarian religion did, having been adopted late in Arak and existing alongside Hala's hospices. Forfarian legends were full of stories about the fey, and now that the fey and the citizens of Tepest shared the land there was a resurgence in their telling. The various gods of the pantheon had created their own versions of the world, which overlapped and layered as they occurred (see *GazV*). Even though the people of Tepest had only recently arrived, their culture was invariably tied to the fey that lived beneath them. The Children of Spring had a complex relationship with humanity (the Children of Summer), as teachers in the beginning, and rivals by the end. The Tepestani agreed they had entered the Autumn of time as they entered the Mists. Surrounded by the Children of Autumn, it was difficult to feel the blessings of the gods. The Tepestani turned to the fey for an alliance but got a lukewarm response.

The people of Tepest were not known for their mining skills, so the temporal fugue beneath them was mostly ignored. The Sisters Mindefisk were aware of it, but could not go deep enough utilize it, as it existed in Arak, which was still wedged beneath Tepest in addition to east of it. It would make sense that Loht and other members of the Unseelie Court were in communication with the hags, though, giving the sisters access to the phenomenon. The hags were the finest diviners in the Core, and despite their monstrous nature it would make sense that they would be sought out for counsel, especially by people who were not welcome among—or did not trust—the Vistani. Chief among this group would be Azalin, who probably met the hags at the border of their domains rather than send agents and risk secrecy. The hags made magical items for Azalin and were most likely the ones who translated Hyskosa's Hexad for him. The list of darklords that would have had a similar relationship with the hags is short. Strahd probably would not have been venturing this far north, Malken's plans and partial control of his own body would make travel difficult, and the two darklords that would arrive in the following century were either too pious (Petrovna) or disconnected from reality (Markov) to consider that sort of diplomacy.

Tepest seemed like a quaint backwater, but the land was ancient, and Arakite trinkets and artifacts would occasionally surface and cause quite a stir. The Tepestani fear of magic was all the more ironic since the nation sat upon the ruins one of the most magically advanced civilizations the Core had ever seen. Anyone willing to brave the forests and the tips of goblin spears could find unclaimed treasures in the realm, but their locations were frustratingly lost to history and illiteracy. The shadow fey would certainly be just as interested in these items as surface dwellers and might even consider them stolen. The three main races of Tepest, human, goblin and fey, were uneasy neighbors at best.



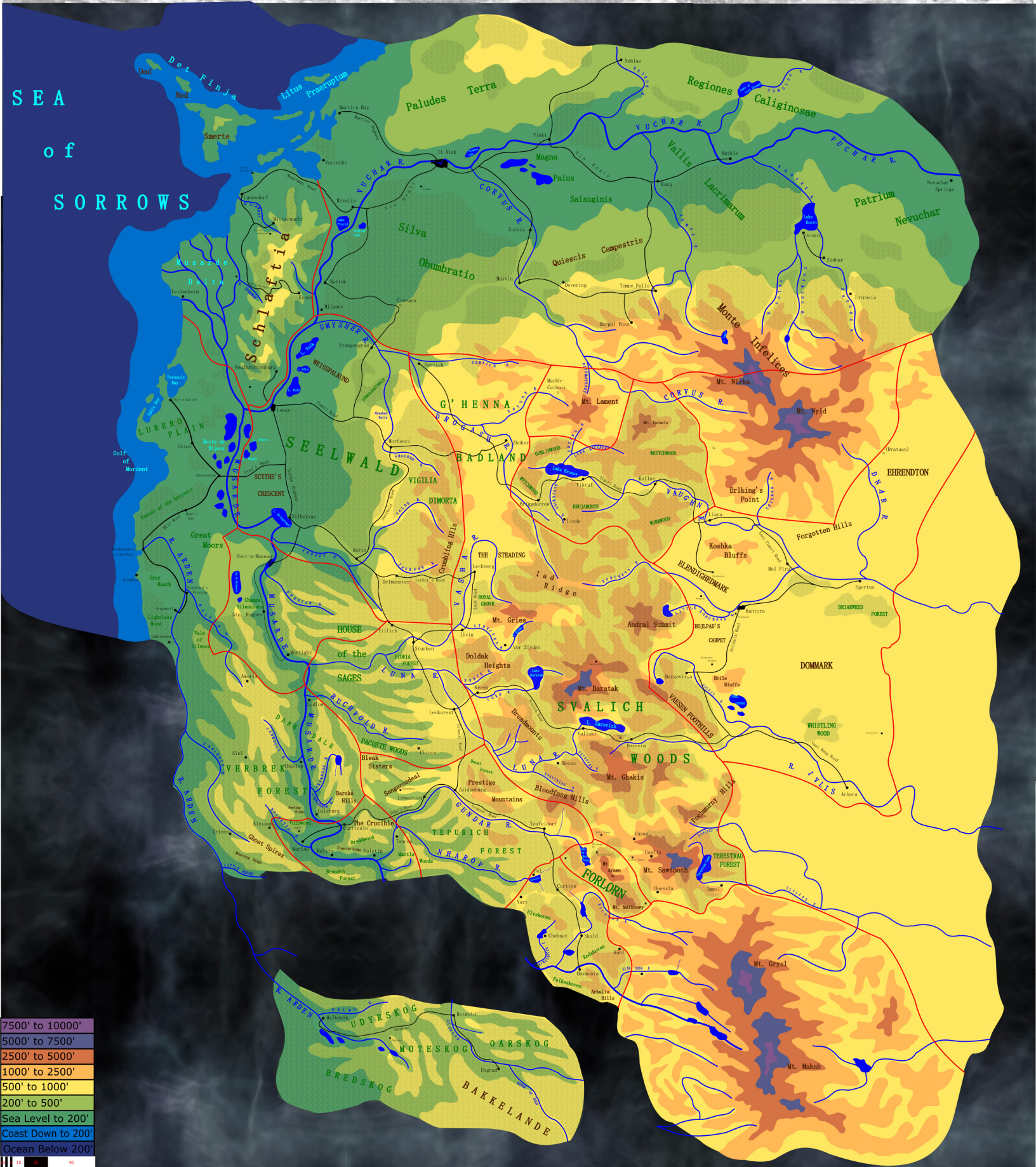
It has been written that Jacques Renier who built the House on Gryphon Hill was not related to Claude Renier, who fought against Vlad Drakov in Falkovnia after its appearance. What a waste of a perfectly good coincidence! Jacques was possessed by the power of Gryphon Hill, and in his madness he squandered his fortune to build cities along the river for a vast population that would not enter them in his lifetime. In 694, Claude Renier led his family south from Falkovnia into a realm his ancestor had prepared for him. The three main cities were vast, and their populations were still not large enough to fill them. Pont-a-Museau was the second most populous city in the Core but had nearly as many buildings as Il Aluk. A dam forced the Musarde to spread out wide at Pont-a-Museau, and a complex system of polders and drawbridges spanned the river. Claude and his family settled in Delanuit, the sprawling estate Jacques had built on the large polder in the middle of the river seven centuries earlier.

Drakov hated the Reniers. He considered them insurgents and rabble-rousers who had attempted to overthrow the city of Silbervas. He was right. Drakov led the battle against the wererats in the undercity himself, earning the enmity of the Reniers and a blood feud that would last another three decades. That his enemies established their capitol just up river from the site of their defeat was not lost on the Hawk, and he tried unsuccessfully to invade Richemulot twice after its formation. For their part the Reniers ignored Falkovnia, going around them when needed. They happily sheltered escaped Falkovnians, however.

The abundance of urban housing made Richemulot a melting pot, welcoming immigrants from as far away as Nova Vaasa. This slightly diluted the High Mordentish culture implied by the way things were named in the domain, and the aristocracy in Port-a-Lucine scoffed at how the word “nobles” was used to describe rich folk up river. The mixing of cultures brought with it a mixing of skills, and the domain was soon known for its crafted goods. Furniture, leatherwork, glassware, boats and carriages were in high demand with the fast growing population, and spilled over into neighboring domains. The fine weapons and armor made in Richemulot were distributed mostly to Falkovnia’s neighbors.

The crossroads of the largest river and the road that would eventually be built to connect to the Svalich pass, as well as the tales told by the domain’s immigrants made Richemulot into a hub of information. Secrets and rumors became as valuable as currency. The Reniers pioneered domestic espionage, harvesting information subtly from weary tavern goers as easily as picking turnips. Compiling this illicit information was a symbol of status in the realm. The Reniers were masters of this practice due to their ability to communicate with normal rodents, some of the most unobtrusive spies of them all.

Jacques Renier’s ancient construction projects ended at the Musarde, but the Richemuloise would set about pushing east over the next several years, building smaller settlements slowly, without the vast resources of the Old Rodent. Ezra’s split sects considered Richemulot’s growing population to be a great target for their teachings, and the religion grew in popularity, even if every edict was not followed to the letter. The Renier’s had given their people too much freedom for them to fall under the sway of the church. By the time Claude died in 726, Richemulot was the fourth most populous domain in the Land of Mists, and a major economic player on the continent. His granddaughter, Jaqueline, would solidify the nation’s strength, particularly as Falkovnia’s staunchest southern enemy.





The year 698 saw another Barovian domain form when Frantisek Markov was suspected of murdering his wife and chased into a bank of Mists. Markov was not a noble, although he likely had a bit of education, as the son of a middle-class farmer. Markov's experiments on animals would turn any sane man's stomach; more so if it had been revealed those experiments may have actually ended up in one's stomach. Regardless, Markov was no mindless butcher; he gleefully carved open living things and took careful notes on the way they worked, and then attempted profane combinations of creatures in his hut that would live a life of agony—when they survived.

The name "Markovia" was likely used by few outside of the Vistani. The realm had been shunned trackless wilderness before, and its reputation continued after becoming its own domain. The odd artifact from Strahd's campaign against the Tergs could occasionally be dug up, but the names of landmarks had long vanished from memory. While part of the Core the domain contributed very little economically, and it was more of an obstacle than anything else. Trade occurred north and south of the realm, but never through it. Anyone who ventured into the forsaken land was mercilessly pursued by Markov's broken ones.

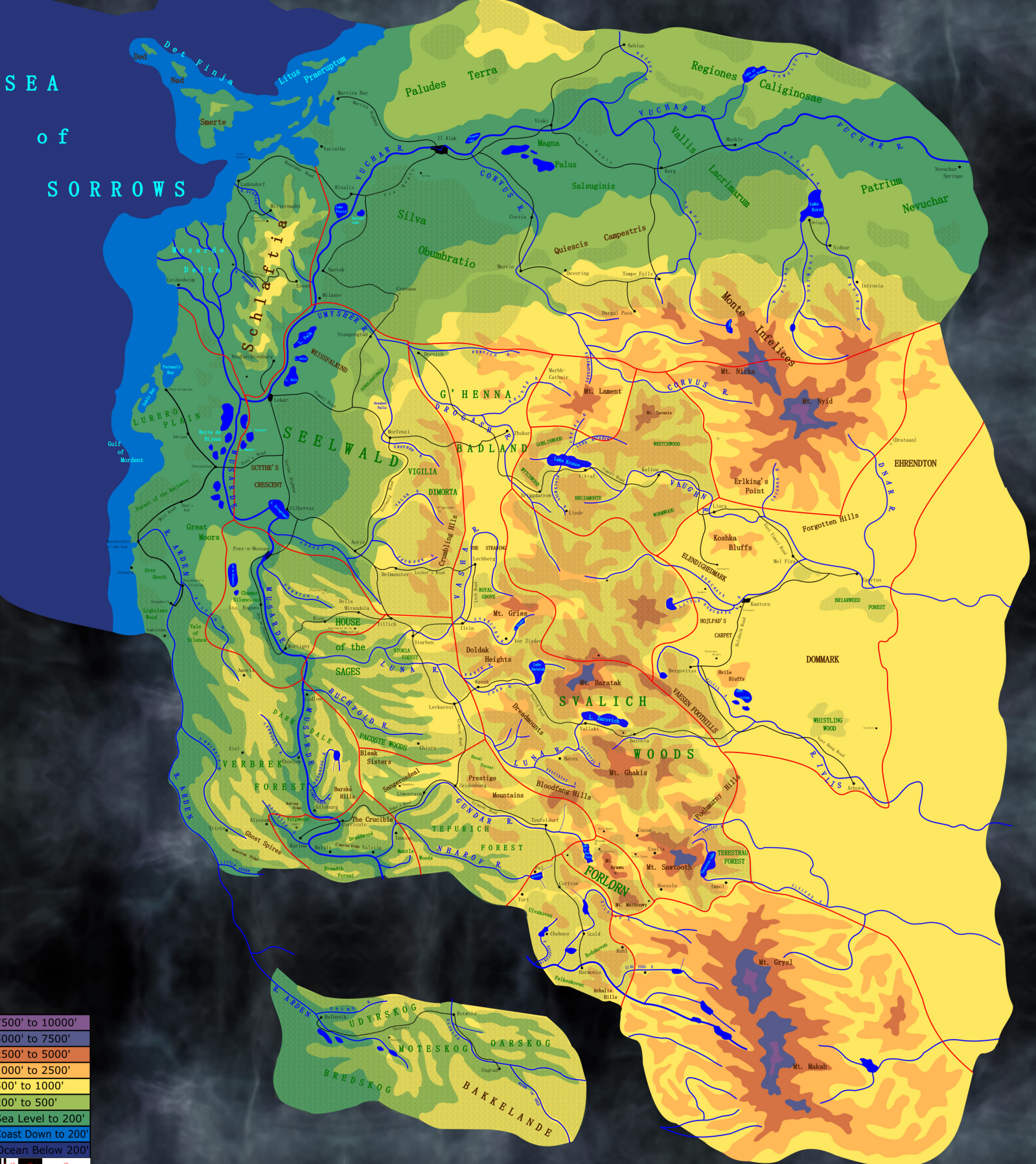
Markovia sat directly atop the Obsidian Gate, its horrific prisoner plotting over three thousand feet below the Markovian Balinoks. The fey used Markovia as a meeting place, as it was devoid of human settlements and mostly avoided. They also stood guard lest some fool Child of Summer thought it might be a good idea to unleash the Twilight upon the land.

Two distinct—though nameless—forests covered Markovia. In the south, the old-growth evergreen forest that climbed Mt. Baratak and Mt. Gries lay undisturbed as it had since the time of Dorian. North of the Borchava River, the area initially blasted by the Scourge of Arak had been reseeded by the Dark Powers in a more mixed evergreen and deciduous forest with oaks, beeches and pines side by side, and hazelnut trees heavy with unharvested produce. Teeming with wildlife, particularly large herbivores like elk and mountain goats, few hunters risked the gibbering aberrations that would chase them when they crossed the border. The game was said to be poisoned by discouraged hunters.

The monastery high on the slopes of Mt. Baratak was the site of Leo Dilisnya's demise at the hands of his old rival, Strahd von Zarovich. Strahd probably did not make many more treks this far north after that night. With his populace miles to the south and not even a glimpse of Tatyana past Krezk, the old woods did not interest him in the slightest. The harrowing terrain over the passes to Vallaki would not have made a few cartloads of hazelnuts worth the effort. There is also the possibility that Strahd was in hibernation. I, Strahd indicates that Rudolph van Richten believed Strahd had been hibernating for fifteen years in 735, but the end of the book shows the vampire was quite awake. Still, had Strahd just woken up, his hibernation would have started in 720 (by the doctor's reckoning). There may have been two "naps" in close proximity, one beginning between 691-695 after losing an incarnation of Tatyana and ending around 714, and the second beginning in the late 710s as Strahd had divined the next incarnation and wanted to be fully rested and at full strength when he found her. In fact, Tara Kolyana's birth in 718 may be exactly what he was waiting for before making preparations to have her watched while he slumbered, emerging in 735 (the date of the Black box, when most campaigns began) to be active in the setting again.



SEA
of
SORROWS





Two domains breaking off from Greater Barovia back to back is what led me to the idea of Strahd's hibernation, although it is perfectly viable to posit he had no control over his domain's borders and the loss of land may have even been meaningless. Regardless, G'Henna formed in 702 after the son of an old Barovian noble family, the Petrovnas, was chased into a bank of Mists when his family discovered him attempting to sacrifice his nephew to a false god.

Yagno Petrovna emerged in what had been at one point the lush Drogach Forest, the site of Barovia's crossroads with the fantastic nation of Arak more than a century earlier. The badlands left by the Scourge of Arak did not support the once bustling cities of Dervich and Zhukar, and the populations had dwindled in the previous three generations. Petrovna's rise reinvigorated the area, and his religion held fast the attention of the population. There were more ethnic Barovians in G'Henna than in Barovia, but their fanatical adherence to the upstart Cult of Zakata made their southern cousins balk. No roads went south into the "homeland" and G'Hennans threw off the trappings of Barovian culture with glee. Physically, the two peoples were still identical.

G'Henna enjoyed the same mild temperature as Falkovnia, and wheat, oats, barley and rye grew easily on the windward plains of the Balinoks. Zakata's tenets demanded such bounty to be sacrificed, however, leaving the entire population in a semi-starved state year round. Its position on the Timori Road gave G'Henna authority over all goods traveling through their realm, and steep tariffs on Falkovnian grain and Vaasi horseflesh were claimed to satisfy Zakata.

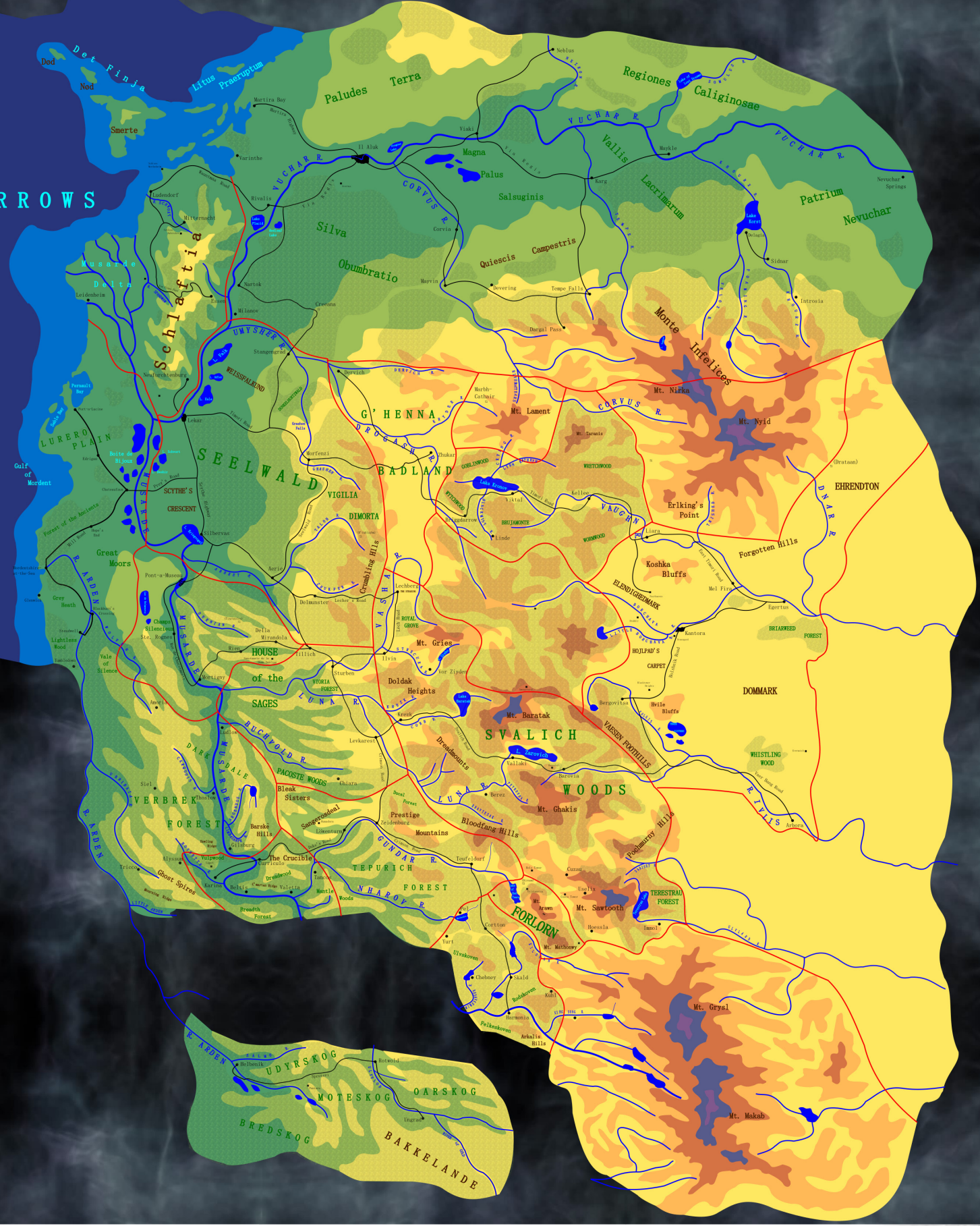
Zakata's priests had a reputation for being every bit as zealous as the Lawgiver's. A rivalry that could have erupted into a holy war kept the two religions on uneasy terms until the Great Upheaval. Even more than in Nova Vaasa, the church dictated every aspect of life in G'Henna. Zhukar was rebuilt as a monument to the god, with earth piled high on the shores of the Drogach so that the altar of Zakata could be seen as soon as one entered the domain. The dual aspects of the god—Zakata the Devourer and Zakata the Provider—created a paradox of orthodoxy the Lawgiver's priests found disgusting. When the Himmelsk Naeve ordered a crusade into the infidel land, Petrovna's priests captured the invaders quickly and turned them into mongrelmen, their tattered robes still clinging to them as they retreated into the wilderness to eke out an existence. Petrovna made an example of any foreign missionaries when he found them, be they Ezrites, Dawnheralds, or tragically Halan witches. G'Henna sat upon several sites that were considered sacred to Hala's faithful, and capture on these pilgrimages contributed to the eradication of many covens. Zakata's followers were named chief enemies of the Weave.

Drakov's men suffered a similar fate when the Hawk invaded G'Henna in 719. Those who did not starve from their rations spoiling and their water evaporating were captured, disarmed, and transformed for the glory of Zakata. G'Hennan society was essentially closed, allowing for travel across their land only after the appropriate sacrifice was made and all local customs were observed. Travel through the domain was considered a necessary evil, and G'Hennans were tolerated at best outside their realm. One side effect was a fitness program for Timori merchants, as no one dared enter the realm overweight for fear of aggressive reeducation and displays of remorseless piety.



SEA
of
SORROWS

7500' to 10000'
5000' to 7500'
2500' to 5000'
1000' to 2500'
500' to 1000'
200' to 500'
Sea Level to 200'
Coast Down to 200'
Ocean Below 200'





To call Dementlieu's secession from Mordent in 707 a "coup" would be an overstatement. The seeds of independent Dementlieu had been planted before Mordent was even drawn into the Land of Mists. Populated by the original aristocracy that stayed behind when Mordent changed hands, Dementlieu translated as the "mad land," referring to anyone who had stayed behind as demented. As Mordent's own noble families began dying off over the century since its arrival, the fops up north were the last vestiges of a true gentry, untouched by hardship or rough labor. Dementlieuese working class were indistinguishable from their Mordentish cousins, but still looked down their nose at the rustic lifestyle that never quite took hold in the north.

Lucine had been a tiny fishing hamlet when Mordent entered, smaller than even Mordentshire. But the efforts of the Dement nobles helped craft it into a fine harbor and a center of culture, especially once Martira Bay and Ludendorf emerged from the Mists. Dubbed Port-a-Lucine in the late 600s, it became the capitol of Dementlieu as well as any artistic pursuit in the Core. Its opera houses in particular became famous and Port-a-Lucine was a destination for all those residents of culture, or those that at least needed to appear cultured. Painters, musicians and sculptors flocked to the city, living a chic sort of poverty in a city that at least appeared to appreciate them. Kartakans found the northern singers boring.

The cathedral at Ste. Mere de Larmes had stood for centuries, but shortly after the formation of Dementlieu relics were found hidden behind false walls which indicated the temple may have at one point been dedicated to a deity that greatly resembled Ezra. Bastion Joan Secousse penned the Third Book of Ezra after studying in the temple's catacombs, indicating the deity was older than most expected. The Ezran church had already suffered a schism, which had only recently been resolved. Secousse took a more academic approach to the church, however, which did not seem to contradict the teachings of either the Borcan or Mordentish sects.

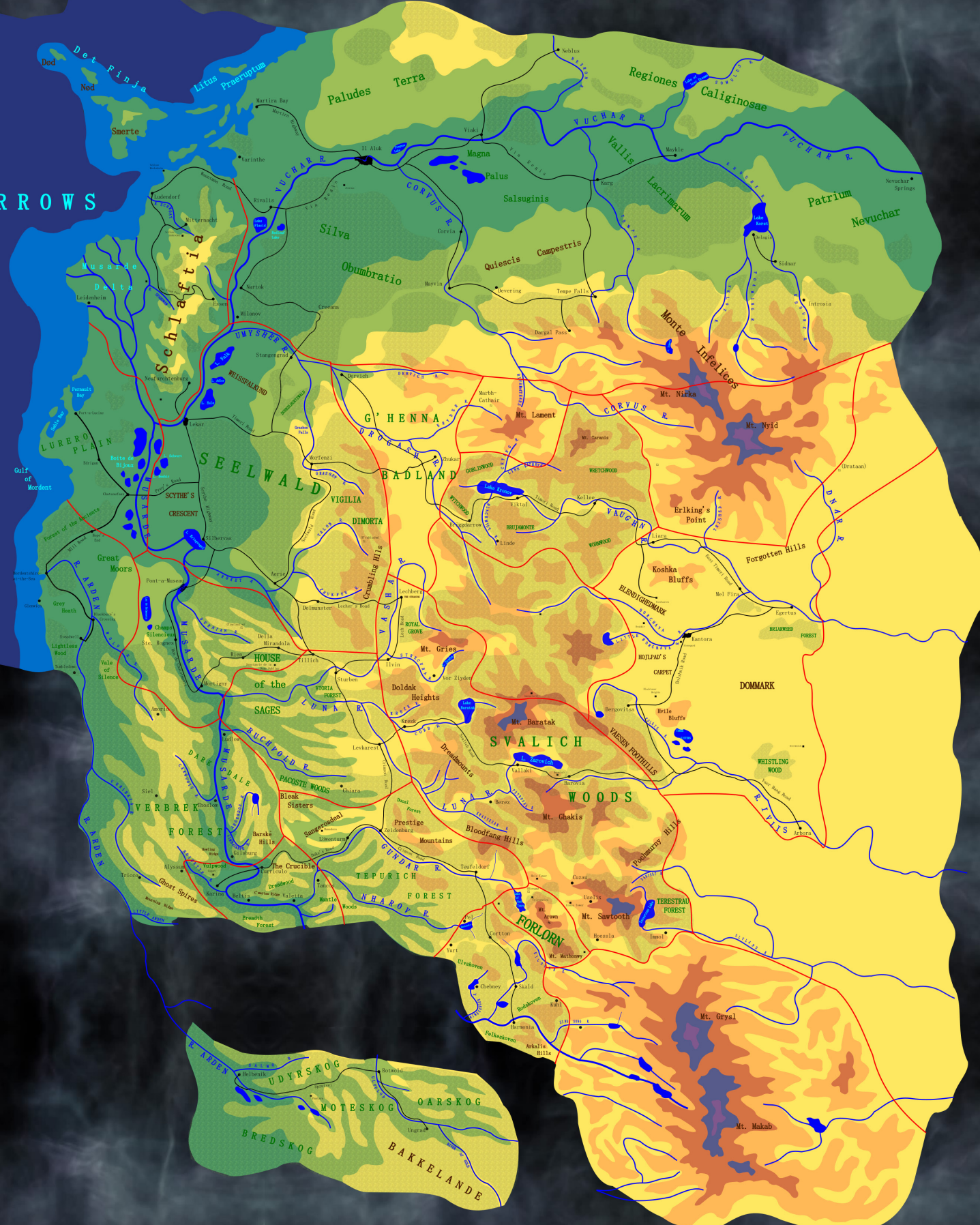
Academics were a celebrated pursuit in Dementlieu. A nobleman's personal library was a point of pride, as was the literacy of the regular populace. Unlike the eastern backwaters, the folk of Dementlieu encouraged their children to learn about their world and the people in it as well as a trade that would help support them. The University of Dementlieu focused on these humanities, as opposed to Il Aluk's or Lamordia's academics who were studying natural science and medicine.

Dementlieu quickly rose to prominence politically. The Lord-Governor wielded culture like a sabre and quickly joined Mordent, Richemulot and Borca in the Treaty of Four Towers against their common enemy in Falkovnia. The city of Chateaufaux kept cannons trained on the Musarde, sending patrols to the eastern shore in case Drakov got greedy and tried to push his borders to the banks again. General Josephine Chantreaux was often just as guilty of incursions into Falkovnia, in particular the region southwest of Lake Kriegvogel, which had been Mordentish territory before the rise of Drakov. This little pocket of land was known as Hawkceller, and Four Tower troops and merchants typically camped there in defiance of the king. Dementlieu exported more than just operas, and the fruit and wine that came from this mild climate were delicacies around the Core. The main fabric exported was linen, and solidly crafted goods like barrels and clothing were in high demand. Eventually a road would be built south to Richemulot, allowing the Dement to more easily avoid dealing with Falkovnia.



SEA
of
SORROWS

7500' to 10000'
5000' to 7500'
2500' to 5000'
1000' to 2500'
500' to 1000'
200' to 500'
Sea Level to 200'
Coast Down to 200'
Ocean Below 200'





Like the two Barovian domains that formed back to back a decade earlier, Mordent's north and south were carved off in consecutive years. Arkandale had long been a wild part of the colony even before Mordent was drawn into the Mists, and a century of Invidian exploration (read: exploitation) had done little to tame it. Nathan Timothy was the scion of an ancient clan of ne'er do wells that had emerged to fill the vacuum of leadership caused by the fall of Mordent's nobles. He, like most of his family, was a natural werewolf, a breed that had considerable life expectancy combined with their shapeshifting abilities. The Timothys considered themselves civilized, marrying into noble families like the Dilisnyas when they came to the quiet Mordentish countryside. They had often clashed with the werewolves of Invidia, those cursed with lycanthropy and who traced their infection to Bakholis. The forested hills between rivers was a battleground for these groups. Nathan Timothy was not interested in leadership; rather he enjoyed the freedom of river travel on his boat Virago. The Musarde was his home, and the rest of his domain was left to their own fate. This would lead to a schism later.

The acreage of Arkandale in this version is more than double its size on the Black Box map of 735. This is due mostly to the nameless strip of land that sat south of Mordent on that map. I have considered everything south of Tumbledown as Arkandale, including this strip, for no other reason than political borders over wilderness can be difficult to define, and are often ignored outright (see Forlorn). That strip was most likely never a part of the plan the Dark Powers had for Nathan Timothy, or later Alfred who will inherit half, but there was no mapmaker who could tell the regions apart.

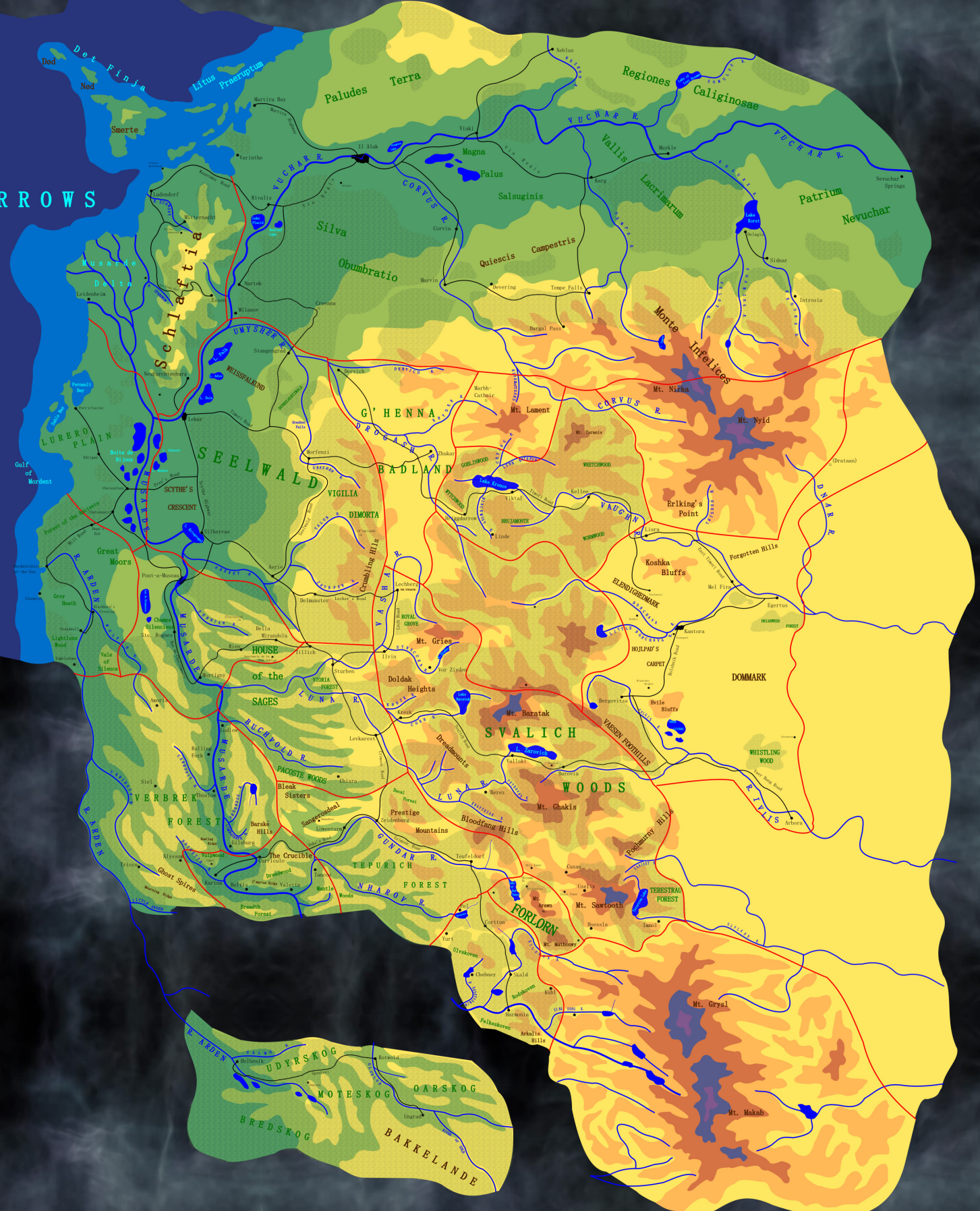
The rich, dark soil of Arkandale yielded large, bulbous root vegetables and hearty grains once it was tamed. The effort required to deforest areas around villages for farming, however, was considerable. This was often the limiting factor to large scale human expansion in the region, and civilization clung to the banks of the Musarde. Still, loggers, herbalists and trappers made a good living off the forests, and they had a reputation as the bravest folk of the Core for their forays into the trees for the good of those villagers who preferred more refined trades. Of course, many of the most successful hunters and lumberjacks were werewolves with little to fear from the woods.

The independent spirit of Arkandale's residents frustrated Timothy, who wanted to establish a city like Levkarest or Karina in his realm. The greedy Invidians and reserved Mordentmen who inhabited Arkandale were not interested in erecting great spires of stone or theatres like cities he had visited in his youth. Content to huddle behind their wooden palisades and fear the night, Arkandale's residents were largely disparaged by the darklord, and as often as not, ignored.

Arkandale was never tamed. Timothy's werewolves ran a violent protection racket on the Musarde that made some Borcan merchants abandon the easy current of the Musarde altogether. The southwestern Core would hold its reputation as wild and unwelcoming well through the Great Upheaval. Nathan Timothy would end up released from his bonds of darklordship after that tumultuous event, but would be bound to the Musarde river system. Canon sources indicate he can also travel the Arden, however the two rivers never meet and it makes little sense that Timothy would be able to travel through the Mists. The Musarde's tributaries still originate high in the southern Balinoks, and that is quite a range. Lake Kriegvogel, or the confluence of Musarde and Vuchar are the most likely borders for Nathan Timothy

SEA
of
SORROWS

7500' to 10000'
5000' to 7500'
2500' to 5000'
1000' to 2500'
500' to 1000'
200' to 500'
Sea Level to 200'
Coast Down to 200'
Ocean Below 200'





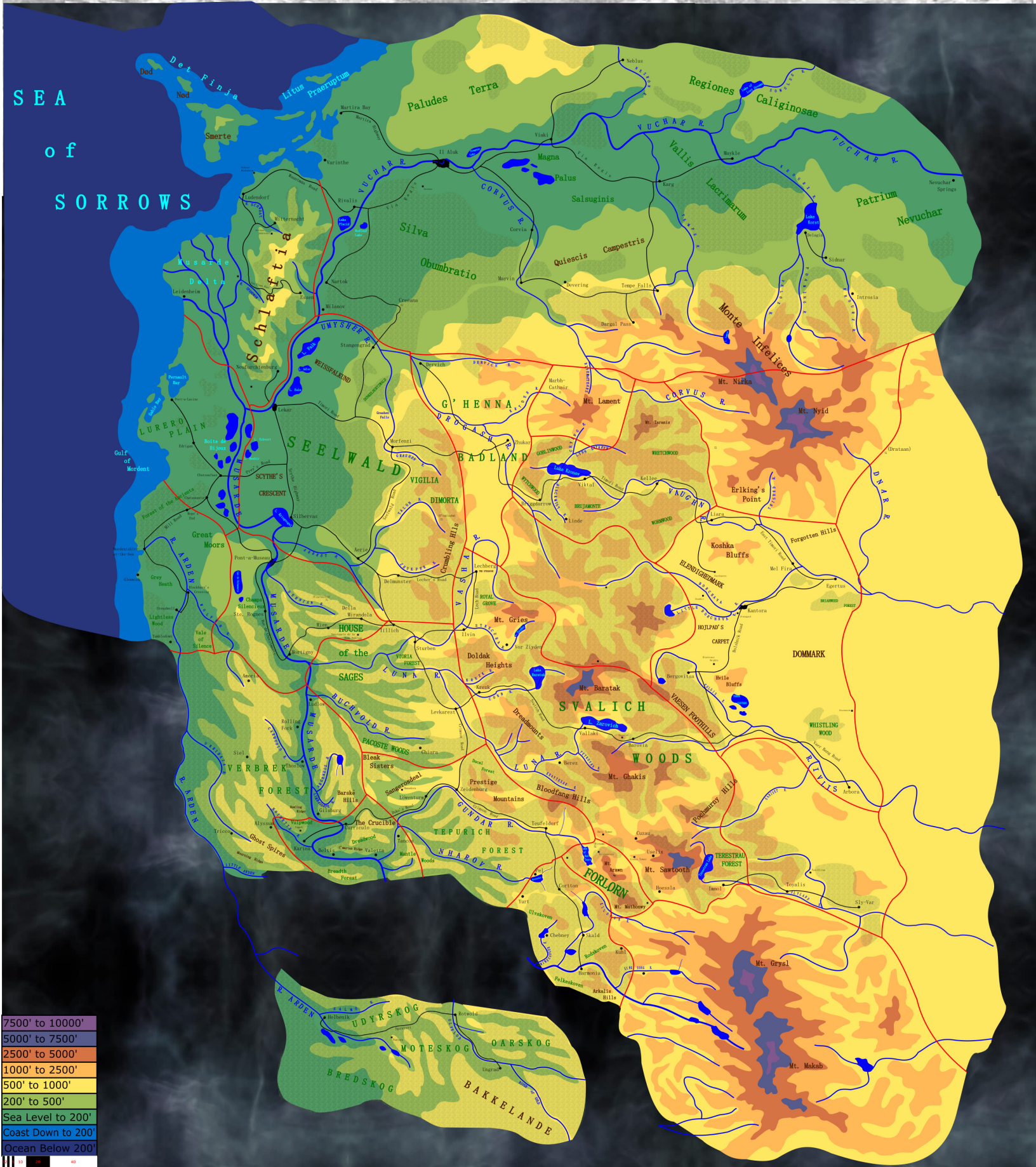
After three decades of hammering against the borders of Nova Vaasa, the Nightmare Lands finally reached the Darkonian border in 714. During this time, the Red Wizard Hazlik had been pulled into the Nightmare Lands. He successfully staved off madness and physical and psychic attacks and pushed back the borders of the Nightmare lands when Hazlan formed around him. Residents of Arbora, who had seen the nightmare nearly envelop them, initially thought the new domain was just another illusion.

The Hazlani had a few things in common with their new neighbors. The two ethnic groups in the domain had hardly anything in common with their Vaasi neighbors, however, and the division between rich and poor was even clearer in Hazlan due to the Mulan keeping Rashemani as slaves. Hazlani spoke the same language as Nova Vaasa and practiced the same religion, despite Hazlik's use of arcane magic being in direct opposition to the teachings of the Lawgiver. Still, Hazlik received some of the credit for "defeating" the Nightmare Court and ending the domain's assault on Nova Vaasa, so his Vaasi reputation as a hero was troubling to the church's leadership; they decided to cast Hazlik as the implement of the Lawgiver's will in the fight against the nightmares. For his part, Hazlik cared little for the opinions of the pious.

Hazlan formed on top of lands that had once been a part of Nova Vaasa, however it would shift south after the Great Upheaval. This led the Vaasi to at least consider the Hazlani cousins despite their differences. The Barovians were not as welcoming and kept Hazlan at arm's length whenever possible. The only road out of Hazlan led to Immol, which was hardly known as a bastion of Barovian culture. Economically, Hazlan brought three commodities that had been previously unknown in the Core. First was cotton, a fiber that was difficult to harvest but immediately saw its demand rise sharply, especially in the west. Second was tea, which a Mordentman would pay handsomely to have readily on hand. The third was opium. It was not uncommon for the residents of the Core to try to escape the horrors of their lives. While the Falkovnian abfalduz leaf was effective, it was considered crass and beneath the gentry. Opium became the reason to cross the Balinoks, the reason to put up with Vaasi or Barovian tariffs, and the reason the Boritsi Trading Company became such a powerhouse. The coffers of Mulan landowners overflowed, and the wealth of Hazlan became legendary.

There was another commodity in Hazlan that was not initially traded outside its borders: magic. While Hazlik was guarding arcane secrets, the Vistani had spread tales of the knowledge hidden in his tower Venificus. A steady stream of thieves died attempting to circumvent the tower's defenses or after capture and torturous experimentation by their host. Hazlik was focused on revenge against his enemies on Toril and would not take on apprentices. Later, once he had seen his enemies thrive in his absence during the Grand Conjunction, Hazlik would reverse this position and built a school of wizardry that made Hazlan a destination for aspiring young mages.

It was an effort to get to Hazlan, even after the Great Upheaval. The roads seemed to go the wrong direction, and the rivers flowed east—away from the trading partners. The Bluetspur Balinoks were major barriers to the south, and the social barriers in Hazlan were no easier to overcome. The Mulan enjoyed their isolation and their growing wealth, separated as they were from the supernatural horrors in neighboring realms. If the Core wanted Hazlani crops, they would need to overcome the obstacles that kept Hazlan safe. And when the merchants got greedy, Hazlik made sure they did not trouble his realm again.



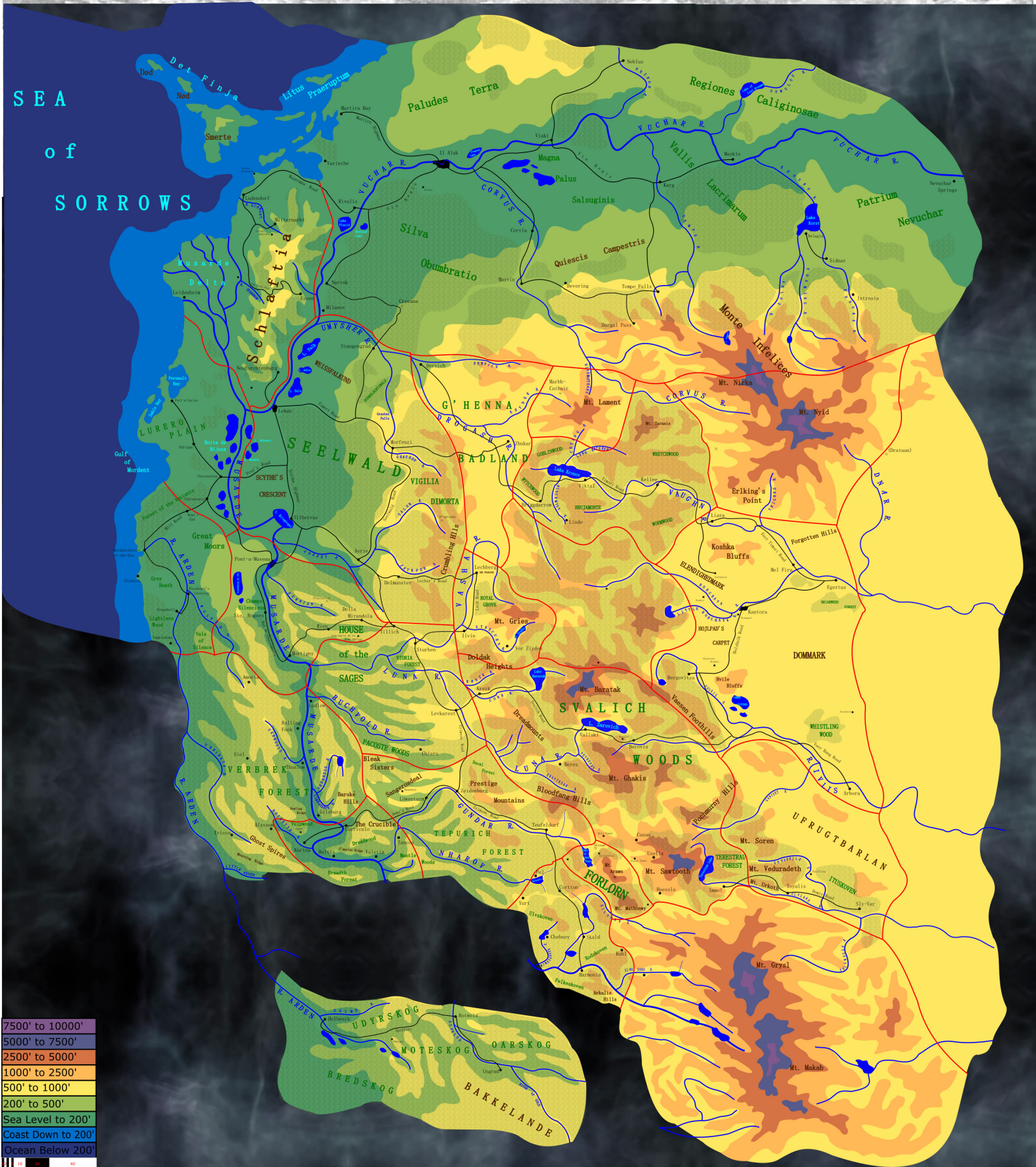


In 715 Dorvinia formed from the domain of Barovia, despite its connection mostly to Borca. The darklord was Ivan Dilisnya, whose ancestor Reinhold had been a loyal retainer of Strahd von Zarovich and was killed by his treacherous half-brother Leo during the seminal event of Barovia. Strahd had dealt with Leo, but not before he had sired a family. The two branches of the Dilisnya family had reconnected after the formation of Borca, well out of reach of Strahd, who hadn't been interested enough in studying their genealogy to determine which ones he still hated. Strahd never moved against the Dilisnyas directly, but they were still not welcome in Barovia. When it was rumored that Strahd had finally passed on after his aforementioned hibernation, a group of Dilisnya kinsmen braved Castle Ravenloft seeking the treasure they had been denied centuries earlier. None returned.

Ivan Dilisnya was every bit a madman. He had grown up with an incestuous fascination for his older sister, and it is implied he held similar feelings for his distant cousin—and “twin”—Ivana Boritsi. He murdered on a whim and spent his money on costumes and idle hobbies. He never really grew up and aged with a stunted emotional range that had a tendency to grate on people who were forced to deal with him. He was often underestimated due to his bizarre personality, like when Vlad Drakov underestimated him in 727 by sacking Lechberg. The Falkovnian victory was short lived, as the invaders had all died of poison before they could return with their spoils. Still, Dilisnya was not a great manager of wealth and land, and the corruption in Dorvinia gave the Boritsi family reason to step in and set things right. Ivana Boritsi actually owned most of the land in Dorvinia by the time the Great Upheaval struck in 740. The two domains merged in the wake of that catastrophe, indication that the Dark Powers recognized who held the deed in both domains. Years later, even the demonym “Dorvinian” would fade out of popular use. They were as Borjian as anyone in Borca, and politically the formation of the domain probably changed very little. (It is even possible Dorvinia broke off from Borca, not Barovia, but that creates an issue in Barovia when Markovia forms.)

Mines beneath Mt. Gries had been providing steady supplies of iron, copper, lead and silver since the middle of the 4th century. Foodstuffs were nearly identical to Borca's, although fruit orchards grew more easily in the more abrupt slopes of Dorvinia than in Borca, and the wheat, corn and rye crops from the Luna valley struggled in rocky Dorvinian soil. Famous Dorvinian wine leaned toward red and dry, compared to the light and floral offerings of the Boite Bijoux. Both varietals were in demand across the Core. Economically, Dorvinia occupied the same role it had since the formation of Barovia: a quiet crossroads on the windward side of the Balinoks connecting Vallaki to G'Henna and realms beyond.

While nowhere near as refined as Dementleiu, art in Dorvinia was supported by the mercurial lord and many “painted ghettos” formed in Lechberg and Ilvin as artists scraped by on the pittance of coins that would be thrown their way for murals and frescoes they placed on the sides of buildings and bridges. Theatre and opera, as well, was heavily supported by the Dilisnyas, but it had a reputation as brutish and unrefined in Port-a-Lucine. To be called an “Upland Troupe” was a tremendous insult to actors. This reputation was likely a result of the actions of Dorvinia's most notable theatre patron, Ivan Dilisnya himself, who was notorious for interrupting plays, or charging onto stage himself. Some of the more daring playwrights even intentionally wrote scenes that goaded the audience, encouraging improvisation once there was an interruption. This avant garde style was rarely welcome further west.





In 719, the South-Central Core received an incredibly powerful visitor in the form of Loren Soth, the Black Rose from Krynn. First in Barovia, then Gundarak, Soth left a path of destruction that pushed both Strahd and Gundar to their limits. Eventually, Strahd anticipated that one more act of selfish violence would trigger Soth's embrace by the Dark Powers and trap him in his own domain, never to besiege Castle Ravenloft again. Strahd released Soth's traitorous steward, Caradoc, and Soth predictably pursued and destroyed him, becoming encircled by the Mists and trapped in Sithicus.

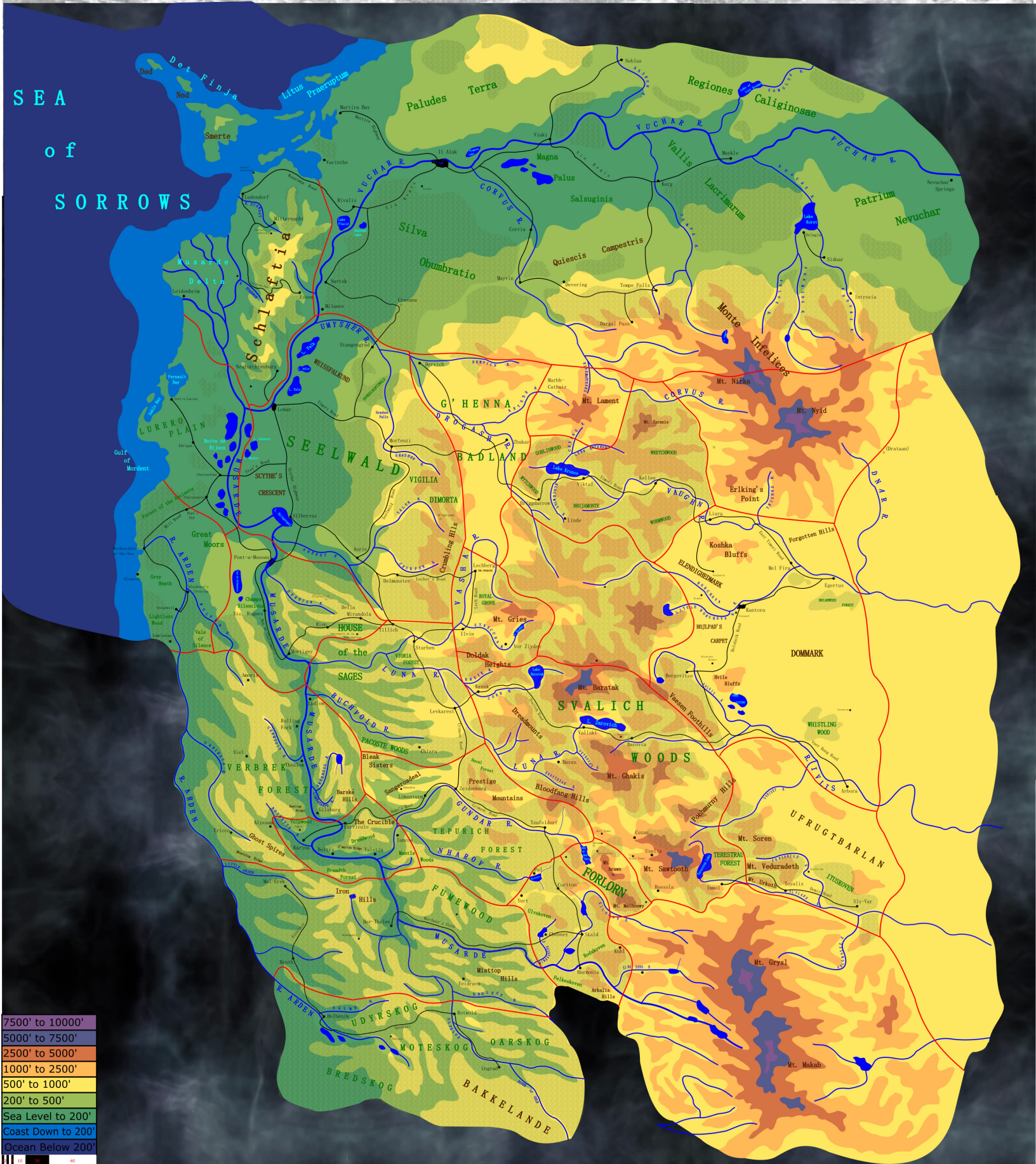
The formation of Sithicus in 720 completed the land of the Core, connecting Valachan as well. The waters of the mighty Musarde were finally complete and it became possible to sail from the Sea of Sorrows to Bluetspur (later Hazlan). Still, Sithicus was a wild and untamed realm, similar to most of its neighbors. The Sithican population was exclusively elven when the domain formed, however it would become more diverse over the years as the river merchants and the bandits that inevitably followed them moved into the new realm. Soth had come to despise elves, due to their treachery on Krynn which caused him to turn from his holy quest and become damned. The elves didn't much like Soth either. A bloody civil war erupted in Sithicus that would last for two decades, with neither the elves nor Soth ever gaining ground.

The timber of Sithicus was of fine quality, but there was no shortage of trees to fell in the southern Core, so the markets for wood were mostly local. Most of the commodities in Sithicus were mineral in nature, particularly salt and crystals mined in the hills. The elves hated mining, and their participation in extracting these resources was uninspired at best. Soth typically sentenced lawbreakers, both Sithican and foreign, to a life of mining in order to fund his war. Sithicus was really a realm commerce traveled through, rather than to.

Soth became introspective as his years in the Mists wore on. He retreated into his own memories—quite literally—when he had the Memory Mirrors created to show him complex illusions of his life on Krynn before the Cataclysm he was tasked with preventing. Essentially neutered of his power and fighting a war against an enemy he felt was beneath him, the Black Rose withdrew from reality and pondered only his memories. This had a profound effect on his domain, as Sithicus began experiencing earthquakes and other signs that the realm was falling apart without the attention of its darklord. This is a serious event if the health of a domain is tied directly to the attention of its darklord, and it is more likely the Dark Powers were trying to shake Soth back to reality and suffer through their tailored prison sentence. They failed and eventually released the Death Knight back to Krynn to face judgement from his own gods.

Soth was one of the most powerful creatures ever ensnared by the Dark Powers, and his release would have long lasting consequences. Sithicus would not flourish in his absence, and when the despot Azrael Dak declared himself King of Sithicus, it was a title stripped of all authority and fear. The realm would draw the greedy attention of Malocchio Aderre and his Falkovnian allies. Soth's long shadow was still being cast over the realm even when the populace believed him to be destroyed. It may be the muttered prayers to the "devil they knew" which caused a shard of Loren Soth's soul to return to Sithicus after the Night of Screaming Shadows as the White Rose, or it may just have been a figment of hopeful imaginations.







The formation of Verbrek in 730 likely went unnoticed by most residents of the Core. Two densely forested domains with small populations of humans side by side, one ruled by a werewolf with a certain point of view, the other by a werewolf with another point of view; it was probably hard to tell them apart. Verbrek's formation was actually the result of events in another domain a few months earlier. Alfred Timothy murdered Gabrielle Aderre's mother Isabella after being rescued by the young woman as they traveled (most likely in Arkandale). Gabrielle and Alfred parted ways and she ended up in Invidia, where she was captured by Bakholis. Gabrielle paralyzed the venerable werewolf with the evil eye and slashed his throat with a silver dagger, ending his reign and taking over the darklordship.

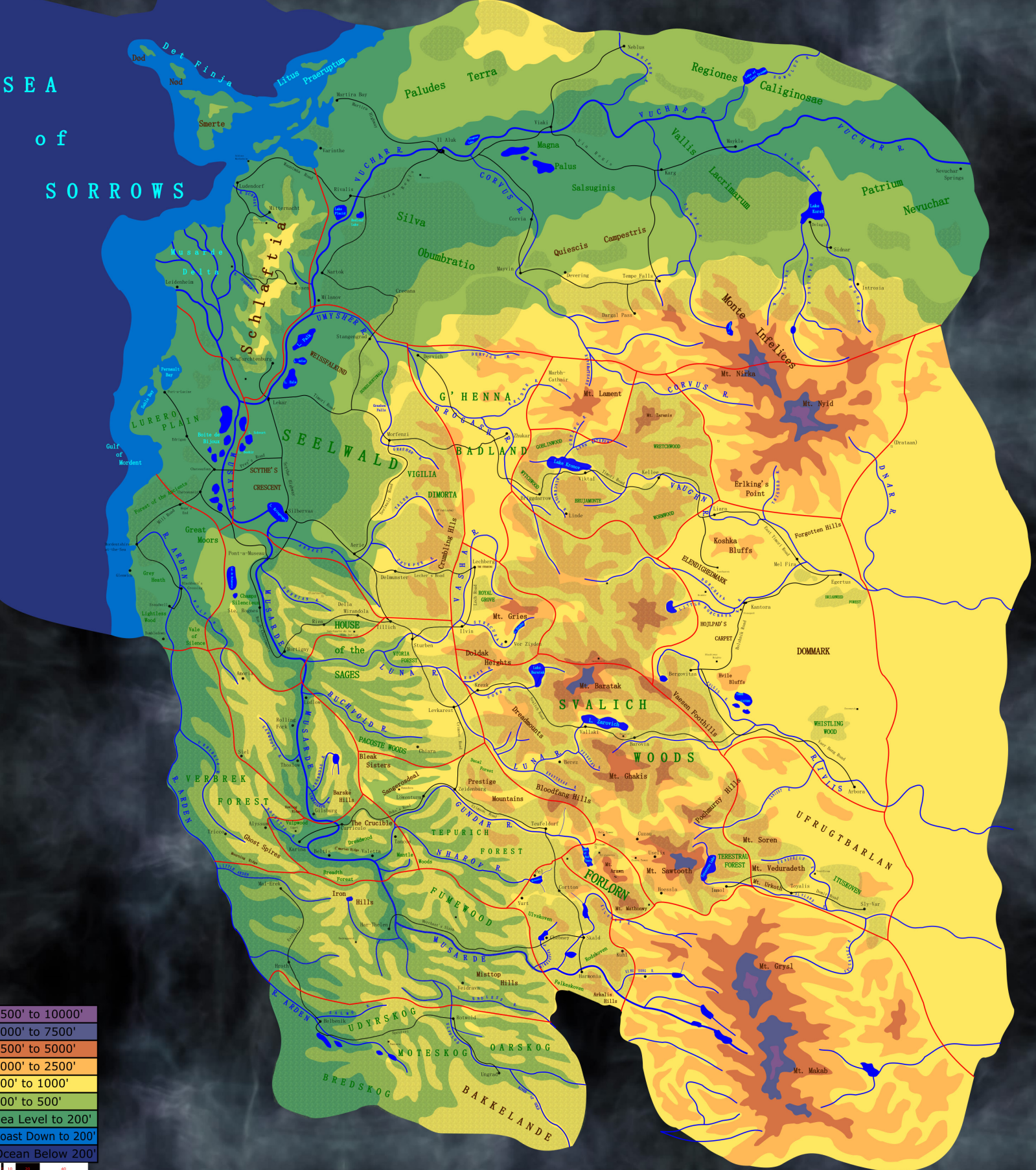
Alfred's murder of Isabella is listed as the event that made him a darklord, yet it must have happened before Gabrielle murdered Bakholis in 729. Verbrek does not form until 730, however, so I believe Alfred's return to Arkandale and his rage toward his father created the domain around him only a few months into 730. The term civil war is probably inappropriate for what was going on between the werewolf clans, but Alfred was definitely pulling werewolves to his cause over the course of the next decade. Alfred would inherit both domains after the Great Upheaval as mentioned before, but not all of Arkandale would end up under Alfred's rule; the southern portion around the Barske Hills would actually become a part of Gabrielle Aderre's domain of Invidia, an indication this may have been the area where her mother was murdered by the two future darklords.

Like the rest of the Southwest Core, Verbrek was wild and untamed, and possibly the most extreme example of both. It was not a place for people, yet they huddled in their walled hamlets hoping to force back the ravenous hunters of their domain. Alfred Timothy despised his human form and did everything he could to distance himself from humanity, quite the opposite of his father.

A brief note on ethnicity: the residents of Mordent, Dementlieu, Richemulot, Arkandale and Verbrek are of the same genetic stock, and they share a language and for the most part a culture. A southern woodsman who hasn't known a warm bed might call himself a "Verbreker" but he is still ethnically Mordentish. The snobbiest opera-goer in Port-a-Lucine is still ethnically Mordentish. This is a departure from some of the other domains that broke apart later, like Gundarak, which was full of warring ethnicities when it formed. Similarly, the residents of Barovia are Barovian, but Strahd von Zarovich himself is Borjian.

In the attached map, Verbrek and Sithicus end at the River Arden rather than the borders represented in the Black Box. Again, this has to do with the Nameless Sliver of land south of Mordent on that map. I drew this map as someone who was in the Core at the time, so since the land had no name, it would be indistinguishable from Verbrek and Sithicus, and would likely be assumed to be a part of those domains. If the Dark Powers didn't want Soth or Alfred Timothy to reach the banks of the Arden for some reason, then the domains probably ended further east like the Black Box indicates.

SEA
of
SORROWS





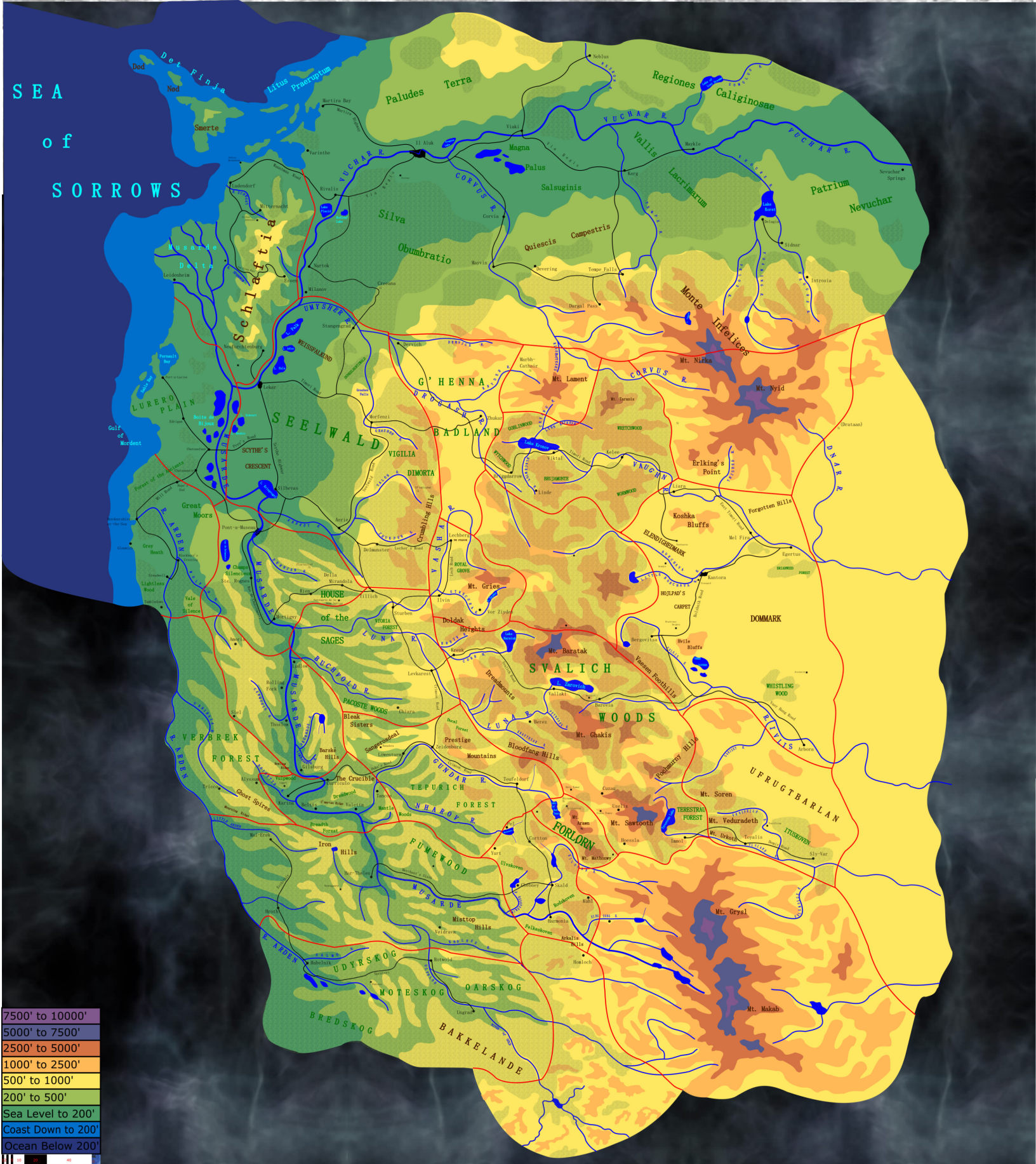
According to canon, the appearance of Daglan in 736 was foretold in Hyskosa's Hexad, which lead up to the Great Upheaval. Its appearance was brief and left little in the way of economic or cultural impact before being swallowed again by the Mists. Ghee bread just never caught on the way some other domains' commodities did, and the fact that a good portion of the population was undead did little to endear Daglaners to their rustic, mistrusting neighbors. While lost in the Mists after the events of Feast of Goblins, Daglan's appearance in the Duskreach Cluster later is positive.

After the formation of Daglan, the final betrayal of Duke Gundar occurred thanks to the machinations of Daclaud Heinfroth. Heinfroth's ability to travel through Core domains and interview people telepathically most likely gave him knowledge of the workings of the Land of Mists at least equal to Azalin and the Vistani. Heinfroth must have been plotting his master's death for some time, and he may have also played a role in the assassination of Bakholis, enhancing Gabrielle Aderre's paralyzing gaze to help destroy his ex-countryman. However, his bid for darklordship was denied when Invidia passed to the murderer rather than the accomplice. This oversight would require him to be extra careful when it came time to dispatch his vampiric master, and Heinfroth would have needed to use his mental powers on Gundar for quite some time to gaslight him into a state where he trusted his minion completely, removing standing orders about preventing his own destruction. Heinfroth had also built a relationship with Harkon Lukas for many years, under the guise of Dr. Dominiani, which would have given him a free hand in Kartakass to recruit help for his traitorous plot. The rule of Gundarak fell to Heinfroth after Gundar's assassination, but it would be stripped from him during the Great Upheaval and divided between Barovia and Invidia in the closest thing to a military annexation the Core had ever seen.

Many arrivals to the demiplane occur around this time. Gondegal arrived in Falkovnia and by 736 his opinion of Drakov's rule had soured, but his attempt at revolution failed. George Weathermay had begun hunting monsters with less focus on understanding them than just destroying them. His nieces the Weathermay-Foxgrove twins had been born, but would clearly not have a major impact until years later. Their hero and mentor, Rudolph van Richten, had begun publishing his guides for monster hunters and was traveling with an adventuring company known as The Hand. Tara Kolyana, the current incarnation of Tatyana who had been spirited out of Barovia as a child, became a very active Anchorite operating in Hazlan.

As for the villains of the setting during this time period, Lyssa von Zarovich had hatched her bizarre plan for the overthrow of Barovia using the monstrous brain-eaters next door in Bluetspur (this ridiculousness may have been enough to make the Dark Powers stick the domain back on the moon where it belonged). Victor Mordenheim successfully restored his wife's body to a working state, but Adam foiled his plans to restore her completely. Harkon Lukas manipulated his son Casimir into eliminating one of his main rivals and started rigging Meistersinger elections. Tindafalus created the Memory Mirrors for Lord Soth, which would have long-reaching repercussions for Sithicus. Of course Azalin was particularly active during this time, causing the hexad verses to occur out of order, which resulted in his escape attempt failing when the Grand Conjunction collapsed around him, bringing all the prisoners back to the Land of Mists and affecting the geography significantly. Interestingly, Strahd was mostly quiet during the decade.







After the Great Upheaval serious changes began occurring in the Core, but former island domains began combining into clusters as well, indicating increased solidity in the demiplane that would continue for the rest of the century. This topic will be revisited later.

The biggest change after the Great Upheaval was clearly the disappearance of G'Henna and Markovia from the middle of the continent and their replacement by the ominous Shadow Rift. This could be the result of Gwydion's failed attempt to escape the Obsidian Gate (directly under Markovia), which blew the roof off the inhabited portions of subterranean Arak. While jarring for the residents of the Core, it is important to remember that the displaced domains really were just the roof over that section of Arak. Because sunlight was deadly to the fey, the mists they created to protect their cities were a magical creation of the two courts, and not the same Mists that bordered the realm. Surface Arak was ceded to Darkon, perhaps due to Azalin's exploration of the domain when it first appeared. G'Henna was mistbound after the Upheaval, and Markovia was flung out into the Sea of Sorrows, with its high Balinok peaks now sheer cliffs rising 500' above the waves.

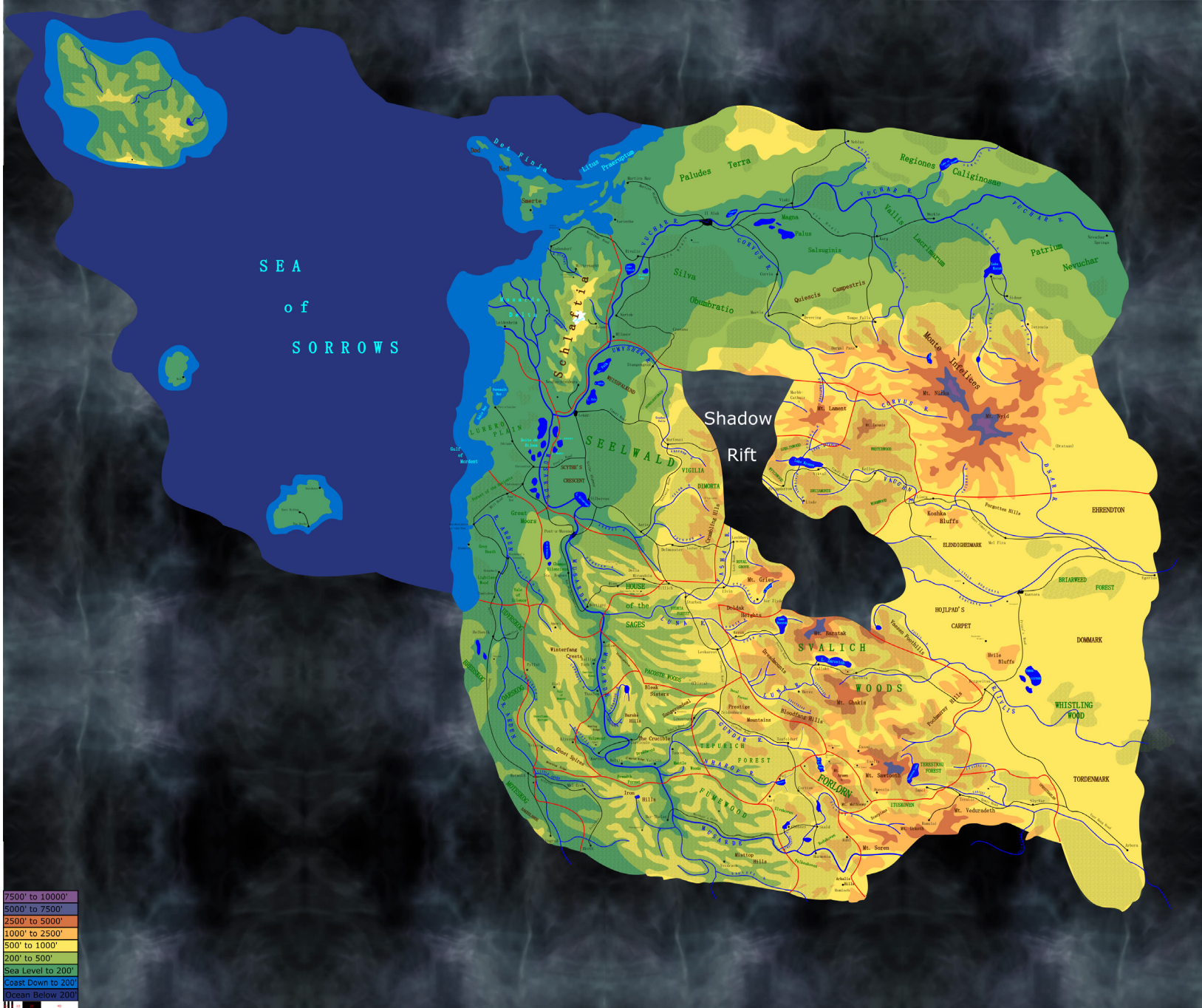
The severance of the Timori Road had a big impact on trade in the Northern Core. What had been a steady train of commerce through G'Henna had instantly evaporated. Those lavish Hazlani products would become much harder to move West, not least because Hazlan had drifted south as well. Now that Hazlan occupied former Bluetspur lands and Kartakass slid east to meet it, however, the easiest way to get goods out of Hazlan became the Musarde, the headwaters of which were now in Hazlan's highlands. The Kilovan River actually led to more settled lands of Hazlan, but the newly raised village of Ramulai was not for merchants, and Hazlik made that very clear with a few dozen public executions.

Most of the major border changes have been mentioned already, but to summarize: Arkandale was absorbed by Verbrek (except for the Invidian Barske Hills). Dorvinia was absorbed by Borca. Gundarak ceased to exist, split between Barovia and Invidia. The Nightmare Lands vanished from the Core completely, its northern tip going to Darkon, but the majority back to Nova Vaasa, whose roads and cities stretched back out to their original 682 positions. This made Nova Vaasa the second largest Core domain. Minor border adjustments occurred in various domains, but the biggest change was Valachan being spun 90 degrees and taking over what had been the Nameless Sliver on the Black Box map.

With Mists or Sithicus in its way previously, Valachan had a very isolated and homogenous culture which was suddenly bordered by the stuffy Mordentmen to the north and a wild wolf-ridden forest to the east. The Valachani blamed the changes on attempted assassination of their beloved Baron von Kharkov during the Upheaval, and their loyalty to him redoubled.

The faiths of the Core scrambled to explain the Great Upheaval, and splinter sects of heretics broke off from the Lawgiver and the Church of Ezra. Some said the lawgiver had perished during the troubled times, but most of the clergy pointed to the event as proof they were not doing enough to convert heretics. The Darkonian sect of Ezra was given official status when Teodorus Raines produced the Shield of Ezra, proof of his doctrine's approval by their goddess. Darkon's Eternal Order suffered a great deal of credibility in the wake of the upheaval, losing followers to Raines' sect of Ezra very rapidly. The Tepestani Church of Belenus was corrupted by the firebrand





Wyan of Viktal, who whipped up a crusade against the Children of Spring and Autumn, saying they would have little need for allies if they could just destroy their enemies. Hala's witches continued to administer healing to whomever stumbled into their hospices, gathering grateful converts along the way. Hala's reaction to the Great Upheaval was rather muted, but they had a tendency to concentrate on things they could control.

In real life, this represents the time from the Red Box. It was a jarring revision for those of us who had been playing since the Black Box, but in hindsight I think they got it right...eventually. Removal of G'Henna from the Core seemed odd, especially since the first adventure set there was released the following year. Markovia as an island seemed logical, if only to be a little closer to its inspiration material in Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. I thought the biggest mistake was leaving the Shadow Rift undefined for so long. By the time the excellent module was released, a lot of die hards had already been ignoring or redefining the place; more's the pity because the introduction of the Shadow Fey is one of the best supernatural layers the setting ever received.



After the Grand Conjunction, The Sea of Sorrows revealed two domains that had previously existed as mist-locked islands. Blaustein was set far enough away from the main shipping lanes to not be found on most charts, but it was quickly established as a pirate haven, which led to a major change in ship construction as personal defense became a priority. A few domains even raised a navy.

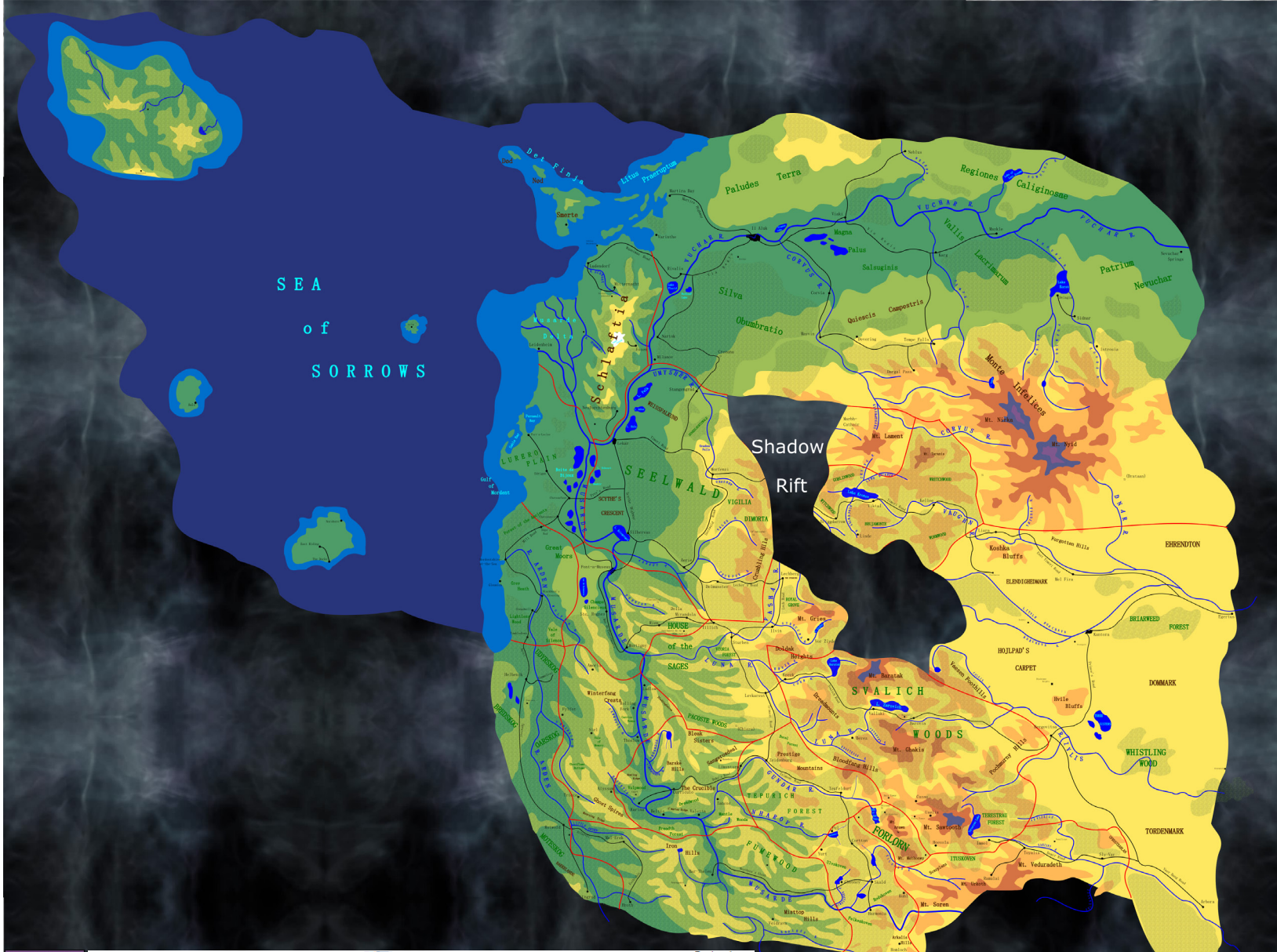
The other newly revealed domain was Ghastria, a tiny island whose main exports were a unique gray pigment and flavorless foodstuffs. These rations were in high demand in Falkovnia, where they were fed to slaves, but the closest friendly port was Ludendorf, so shipping between the two nations took some effort. Ghastrians were ethnically Mordentish which leads to some questions about its time alone in the Mists. Their cousins on the mainland sneered at the steady trade with Drakov's saber-rattling regime, but it was the only way to stave off the madness of a diet without taste. Strangely, Ghastria was a sort of resort destination for Core nobility who were willing to part with the taste of grown food for other relaxing pursuits like massages and sunbathing. The island was treated like an art show, with easels set up along winding pathways for the mainlanders to gaze upon, and ultimately ignore, before sailing home.

In 748, the fate of Dr. Dominiani was finally revealed when the tiny island of Dominia appeared in the Sea of Sorrows, completing maps of the sea from Domains of Dread (751 B.C.). Dominia was small enough that it could have escaped notice so the sudden ability to consistently navigate to it was shrugged off as shoddy cartography. Dominia was barely large enough to hold the sanitarium run by Dr. Dominiani, which had become a popular alternative to Saulbridge Sanatorium in Mordentshire, where the ancient methods of mesmerism were not considered radical enough to be effective. Geographically, Dominia became a convenient place to stash troublesome family members which would be difficult to return from.

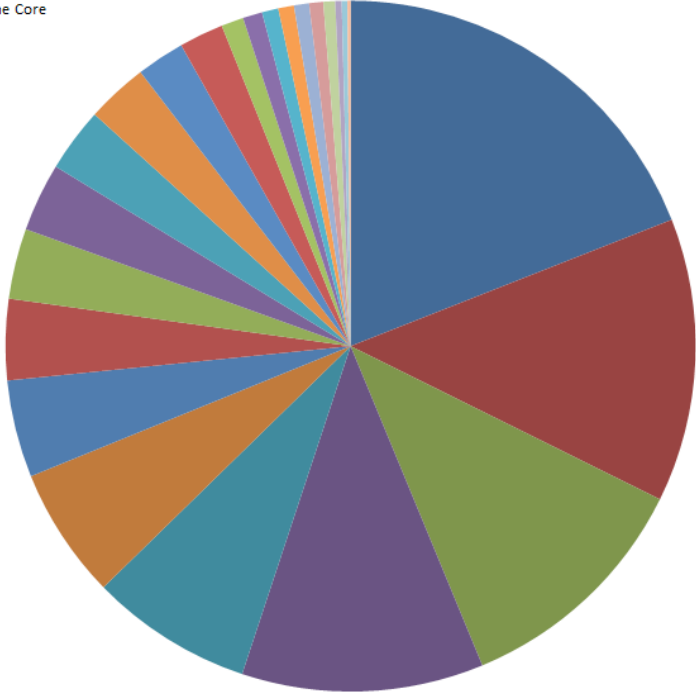
Dr. Dominiani was the traveling alter ego of Daclaud Heinfroth, the Gundarakite traitor and cerebral vampire that had once served Duke Gundar. Heinfroth had left his original name behind, and few outside the southern Core would recognize it anyway. His appetite for knowledge of the workings of the demiplane—and his now much smaller portion of it—had not diminished and he made it a point to collect tomes of knowledge into his possession. The library at Heinfroth's Asylum contained each of Van Richten's Guides and a treatise on Hyskosa's Hexad. The holy books of all of the Core's major religions would also be found there, but one thing which would not be found is a Vistani. The Vistani tired of Heinfroth's telepathic curiosity long ago, and all tribes were at risk of becoming mortu if they were caught dealing with him for any price.

The Sea of Sorrows still reached out to distant shores, and reliable mistways were being mapped throughout the 740s. Sri Raji was a popular port of call for the more adventurous captains, and the exotic fruits brought back had become a status symbol for Core nobility. Nebligtode was still most easily reachable from the Sea of Sorrows, but heavy storms in the Eastern Core would sometimes deposit Grabenite flotsam on the Misty borders around Arbora and Egertus. Although there was no sea there yet, Vassi and Darkonian travelers were known to get their feet wet when standing near the Mists, and the domain known as the Drowning Deep was certainly in existence at this time, although the waves above it had yet to be revealed.





The Core



- Darkonian
- Falkovnian
- Mordentish
- Vaasi
- Borjan
- Halfing
- Rashemari
- Valachani
- Tepestani
- Barovian
- Gundarakte
- Elf
- Gnome
- Dwarf
- Kartakan
- Invidian
- Sithican
- Goblin
- Other
- Lamordian
- Mulan
- Vistani
- Forfaran
- Thanni

Ethnicities/Races of the Core after the Great Upheaval. Darkonians on the chart are human; demihuman populations are listed for the entire Core. One exception: Sithican elves are listed as distinct from those that hail from Darkon. The Barovian population drops considerably after the removal of G'Henna from the continent. Vistani number has been estimated due to their mobile lifestyles and includes giomorgo.



The Requiem was likely the worst loss of life of any single event in the history of the demiplane. Azalin had created a device capable of draining the life energy of thousands of his citizens which would transform him into a demilich, a state he felt would free him from the Dark Powers' ability to hold on to him. When it was activated in 750, the Domsday Machine successfully killed and re-animated the entire population of Il Aluk with a negative energy wave the likes of which had never been seen before, but Azalin was seemingly destroyed. The mighty nation of Darkon divided into six domains as well as Il Aluk itself, renamed Necropolis. The feudal structure of Darkon remained mostly in place, but several high ranking Kargat agents waged a shadow war for control of the domain. With Azalin gone, Drakov mustered his forces and invaded his old enemy, but the dead still rose up to repel the Falkovnian forces, reaffirming Darkonians' belief that the dead were their protectors with or without their king.

After lapping inconsistently on eastern shores for a few years, the Mists pulled back in late 750 to reveal the Nocturnal Sea, a wide, dark body of water under constant cloud cover. The sea was "ruled" by Meredoth, a supremely powerful wizard who studied alone on the island of Todstein far to the southeast. Meredoth, was not interested in visitors, and despite his power, he involved himself very little in events off his island. There were several other islands that were much more interesting which arrived with the new sea. Graben and Liffe had significant populations and became eager traders with Nova Vaasa and Darkon. Liffe was initially known for little other than sheep and their byproducts, but the populace quickly studied the goods traded to them from the Core mainland and copied the methods to create their own versions of such crafts. These crafts were poorly received elsewhere. Graben, despite its unpleasant climate, produced a fair excess of grains and root vegetables which were traded around the coasts. Smaller islands without large populations also breached the dark waves of the Nocturnal Sea, but they had little effect on trade except as obstacles.

Vechor had existed for 150 years already, but the strange land found itself sticking into the Nocturnal Sea, with just the imposing Cliffs of Vesanis on the east of the domain bordering Mists. While the Grand Conjunction became notorious for its removal of domains, like G'Henna, a decade later it appeared the demiplane was actually beginning to congeal, not break down. Vechor was proof of this phenomenon, an Island of Terror which now had a physical connection to the Core. The formation of Clusters in the 740s further showed that despite all the doomsday prophesies that accompanied the Grand Conjunction, the demiplane was stabilizing, not falling apart. More on this later.

Vechor, while an incredibly odd place for mainlanders to visit, became a popular merchant's stop for the collection of exotic fruit and wood which were in high demand in the Core. Vechorites were friendly to foreigners but reluctant to leave their home. Their awe for King Easan was unwavering. His commands were carried out without question and all those who opposed him met horrifying ends. The whims of the mad king often changed plant and animal life as well as the direction of roads and rivers while no one was looking. The phenomenon upset visitors to the land and boggled zoologists. The empirical nature of Lamordian science, which had guided study across the Core, met with little success in explaining anything in Vechor. This gave the realm a sinister reputation that haunted geographers and biologists alike as far away as Ludendorf. Similarly, the Core's more aggressive missionaries left Vechor alone after the first priests of the Lawgiver to visit received a lukewarm greeting swiftly followed by their gruesome executions.



The Arthaus Kargat were smart enough to see that Azalin's departure from the setting was a mistake, and they restored him in their first book. Azalin was a dark reflection of Toril's Elminster, the mover and shaker of events that affect the lives of thousands. His canonical return in the year 755 came with a well-crafted propaganda program that painted him not as the architect of the Requiem, but rather the only being strong enough to keep it from spreading beyond doomed Il Aluk. Azalin publicly claimed he would restore Darkon to greatness, effectively destroying the domains that broke off after the requiem and reinvigorating Darkonian nationalism. This was quite a departure from his usual approach to rulership: slavishly adhering to the duty of his office and engineering espionage and counter-espionage efforts across the Core while happy to burn the entire place to the ground at a moment's notice if it meant his escape.

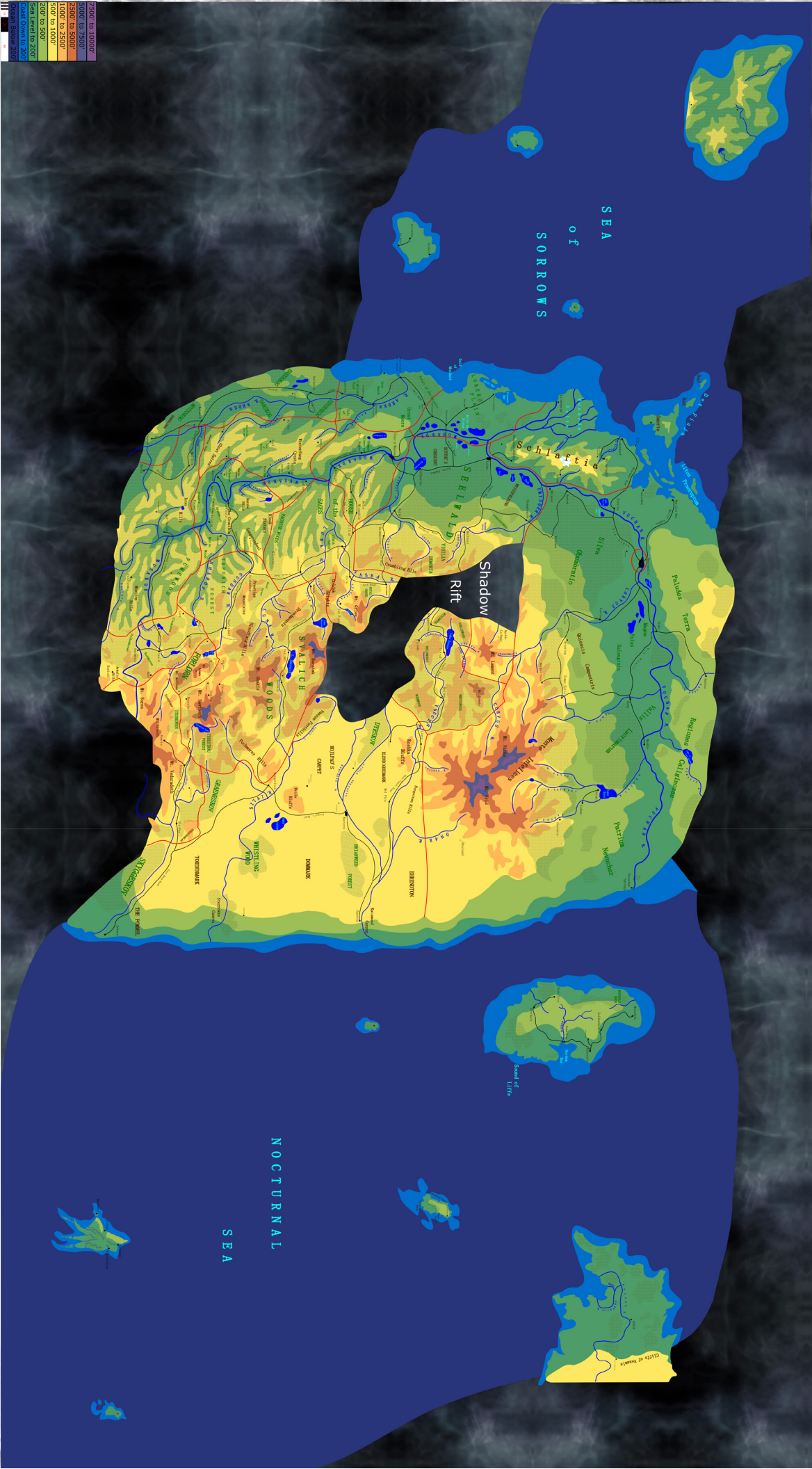
Of course, he still had a scheme. Azalin dispatched one of his most specialized operatives on a fact-finding mission across the Core, ostensibly to bring her king up to speed on the changes during his absence. In truth, Azalin was seeking scions of the Gentleman Caller, which was a ploy to gather powerful outsiders around himself, interrupting the Dark Powers' curse, allowing him to cast new magic to bring his son Irik back from the dead so he could raise him properly and pass his kingdom along with his line secured. And then he would escape. The Gentleman Caller had been siring these children with a similar plan in mind, although he seemed perfectly happy to destroy the Dark Powers altogether. There's no telling what effect this would have on the demiplane, but incubi can be selfish like that.

Darkon was restored except for the Necropolis that existed over Il Aluk. The Slain City was ruled by Death (actually Lowellyn Dachine, a clone of Azalin which had been deluded into thinking he was the manifestation of universal entropy after the Requiem). Canonically, the former capitol had become surrounded by a negative energy field which would instantly kill any living thing that came in contact with it and raise it as an undead creature, like it had to the 26,000 residents of Il Aluk. While terrifying, this is a bit too overt for my tastes. A city populated by thousands of undead is enough of a deterrent to the living without the risk of becoming one of them just by crossing a certain line.

I prefer the Necropolis to be represented like Undercity in World of Warcraft, but even less welcoming. A decade after the Requiem, the negative energy field has faded and a living creature can enter the city without instant destruction. Of course many travelers were still transformed into undead by the ghouls, wights and shadows that populate Necropolis; leading to the belief the field is still intact. It is not a place for the living to be sure.

Azalin enacted a project to create a canal around Necropolis in the late 750's so that the eastern portion of Darkon could still use the Vuchar River as the artery it had been for centuries before his meddling cut the mighty river off. The king's return from the Grey Realm must have certainly cast at least some doubt in Death's mind as far as its absolute authority went. Factions of undead, possibly drawn along the lines of corporeal and incorporeal, might even break off to beg mercy from their original monarch. A war of the dead destroying the dead may erupt at any point, and most of the living would consider this to be the best possible outcome.





2500' to 10000'
5000' to 2500'
2500' to 5000'
1000' to 2500'
500' to 1000'
200' to 500'
50' to 200'
Sea Level to 200'
Coastal Below 200'



In my opinion, Arthaus published some of the most important books of the entire setting. The idea that the Land of Mists would still exist when the sun came up was vital. There was no point risking life and limb against countless darkords if the heroes had no attachment to the world itself. *Domains of Dread* laid the groundwork for this theory, but the gazetteers took it to its logical conclusion. Establishing an economic, historic and social background made the setting feel alive. The fan community had no small part in creating this feeling, and when the setting went out of publication, it was the fans who lovingly continued to develop and expand it.

In the same way the treatment of the setting was changing, the setting was changing as well. The formation of clusters and former islands joining the Core was a sign that the demiplane as a whole was beginning to form together in a unique genesis. While most worlds—even fantasy worlds—were created in one event, the Land of Mists came together one piece at a time over the course of centuries, most appearing with intact populations. Unlike other worlds, this demiplane was not ancient and timeless; it popped up 400 years prior and grew from there.

The period from 755-775 is the continuation of this genesis, a period that has belonged to the fan community as much as any other. At the end of it looms the ominous Time of Unparalleled Darkness, a doom omen prophesized by Teodorus Raines when he founded the Darkonain sect of the Church of Ezra. Despite its name, I believe this is just the limit of Vistani divination; after 775 everything is “dark” because Madame Eva has reached the end of her timeline and can no longer inform other seers. Madame Eva leaves the world for good in 775 and the Dark Powers leave with her. With the puppeteers gone, the realm becomes “real” and begins to spin through the cosmos like any other.

The entries to this point have been inarguably non-canon; the remainder of this document is completely non-canon. Nothing supports the following pages except my own imagination, so if you stop reading now you won't hurt my feelings. Vechor joining the Core was the lit fuse on this idea. The Cliffs of Vesanis looked like a dare that there was something just on the other side of the Mists. If Islands could form into Clusters, then why couldn't Clusters form into continents? And what would those continents look like?

I did not intend to detract from the importance of the Core, but even that may be a bit ethnocentric. By 775, most of the mortal darklords had almost certainly passed away. Drakov, d'Honaire, and Dilisnya will have left significant power vacuums when they shook off their mortal coils. Strahd, now an eminent vampire, would most likely still be one of the most powerful creatures in the demiplane, and if Azalin found a way to escape, the prospect of being able to return to his kingdom of two centuries would probably be too big of a temptation, if just to mess with Strahd.

The 775 map is roughly the size of Brazil, with a population around 3 million. Some portions are more populated than others. As mentioned, vast majority of the fan population have said they didn't like the canon scale of the Core, expanding it maybe ten times in size and population. This is reflected in the scale of the fan-made domains, which have tended towards enormous. It has made the Core look small in the attached map, but I feel like it still works. Also, a lot of lands come from non-Ravenloft sources, like Pathfidner or Magic: the Gathering; their scales were not changed either. Magic settings are referred to as “planes” so to me that meant they should be at least continent sized. Vorostokov, which is canonically 300 miles wide, was my rough comparison to a continent-sized area. I may revisit this topic in a future document if there is interest, but a preview follows.





After all that talk about combining clusters, one of the first things I did was break one up. The Frozen Reaches were introduced in Arthaus 3rd edition books, which made me glad because it brought Sanguinia back, but I hated the map. I also hated the Shadow Rift after the Red Box; it seemed like a really cheap way to move domains around and the fact it was left undefined for years also seemed hacky, in my opinion. Conversely, when the Shadow Rift accessory finally was released, it was one of my favorite books of the entire setting. This led to me loving the inhabitants of the Shadow Rift while still not being in love with it geographically. So I left the Shadow Fey underground, utilizing the temporal fugue to full advantage, and put some of my favorite domains above it.

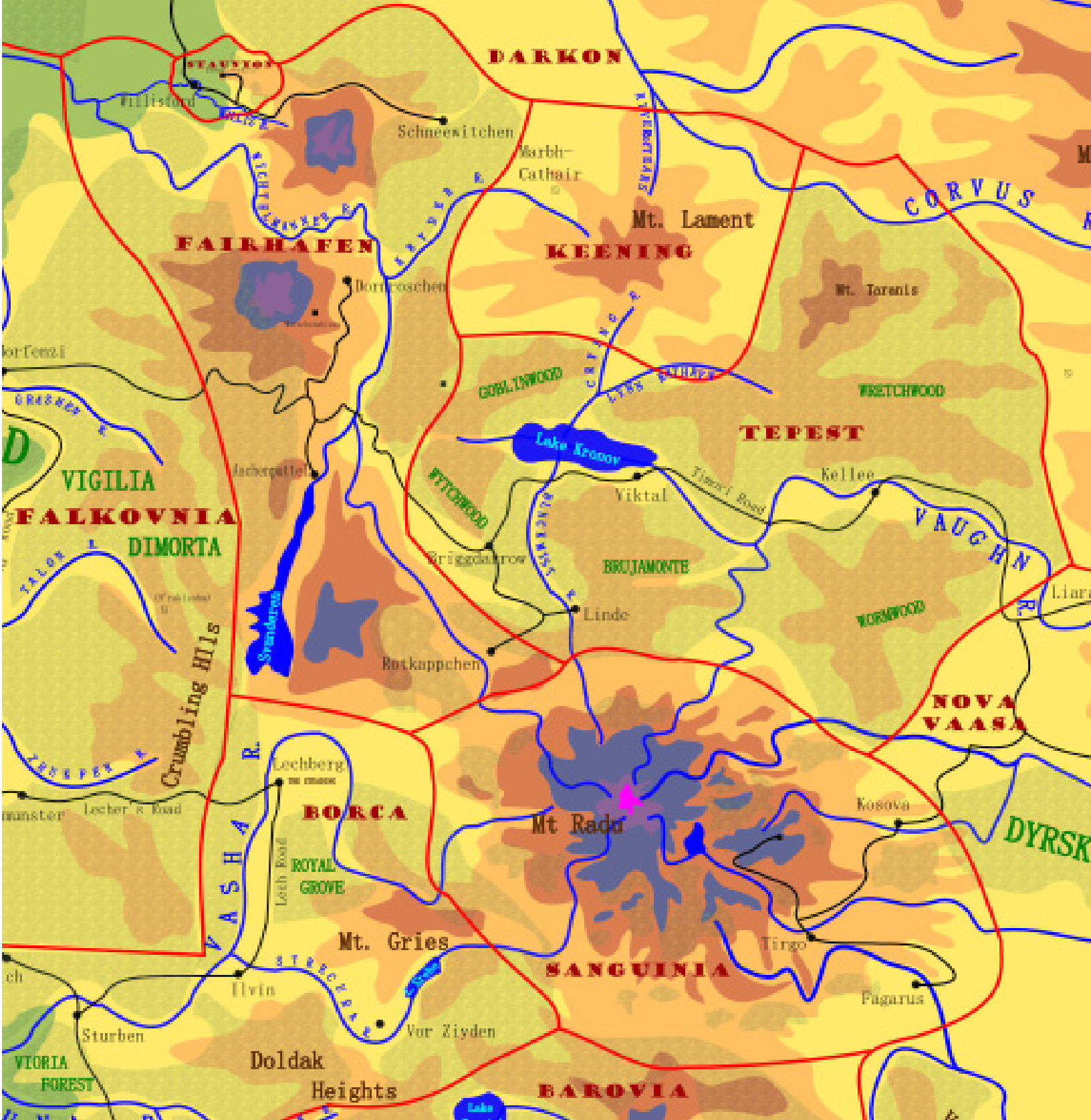
First is Sanguinia. Formed as an island in 607 and included in the original Black Box, Sanguinia even got referenced on one of the cardstocks with a full color drawing of Castle Guirgiu. For some reason, it was never detailed further. On the Mordent Cartographic Society website, the map matched up exactly with my hope that it would join the Core—and not just dangling off the side into some ocean. The rivers in the original Black Box map lined up almost perfectly if Sanguinia was situated over what used to be Markovia. Mt. Radu instantly becomes the tallest peak in the Balinoks. The towns all huddle on the leeward side of the mountain and Sanguinians ship wheat, rye, sugar beets, beef and dairy products down the roads and rivers into Nova Vaasa. Iron and copper get mined from beneath Mt. Radu, and cold river sturgeon produce a lot of caviar. Mt. Radu becomes known colloquially as the “River Knot” because of how many different rivers and streams that find their sources there. The land is incredibly rocky and difficult to navigate. Only the eastern foothills are good for stading cows and goats. Where Radu reaches north is particularly jagged and the Vasha, Blackmist and Wichtelmanner rivers carve canyons and deep gorges through the rocky country on their way out of the domain. Sanguinia’s deformed prince keeps his eye to the south and east, not fearing any advance from the broken terrain around Tepest.

Another Black Box domain that I liked was tiny Staunton Bluffs, which I’ve tucked up where Darkon once met the Shadow Rift. Formed in 630, there still isn’t a lot to say about it, but it seemed innocuous enough to stash near Darkon, which is also feudal, and culturally it probably wouldn’t disrupt anything. The Avregmites quietly farmed their turnips and avoided the scary spur where Sir Bleysmouth haunted.

Lastly, the northern Rift got filled in by Fairhafen (QtR15), the Grimm’s fairy tales come to life. Far more mountainous than G’Henna was, this spur of the Balinoks is called the Ratsels, the highest of which was Sneedroningen, which propped up the castle Marschenshloss. Fairhafen’s alpine landscape doesn’t lend itself to overland travel, but the restoration of the Timori Road was too important to not brave the Ratsels and build a series of switchbacks to connect Falkovnia back to Tepest.

Fairhafeners speak Falkovnian, with an accent. That didn’t stop Falkovnia from invading them, which was almost an obligatory tradition, carried out with less enthusiasm than the embalmed Vlad Drakov I would have liked. The majority of violent conflict actually occurred on the eastern border as tribes of goblins and kobolds in Tepest and Fairhafen form alliances and go to war with one another as well as the humans. The people of each domain get along well, though.





Mount Radu towers more than 10,00 feet, and beneath it the Obsidian Gate's corrupting influence still emanates, watched over by the Shadow Fey as it has been for millennia. The Children of Spring are a large part of life in Fairhafen, where they are not nearly as reviled as in neighboring Tepest. With a solid rock roof over the former Shadow Rift, the fey can focus again on utilizing the temporal fugue to affect surface life without fear of sunlight touching their cities.

