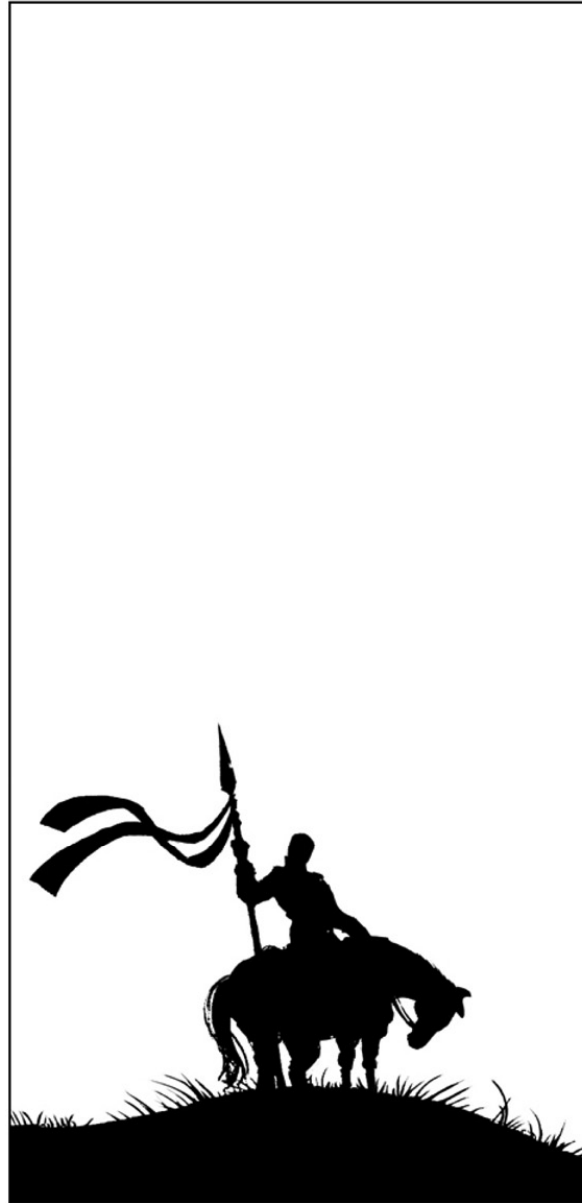


RUNES
OF
GALLION



Artisan's Handbook

August, 2009

version 4.0

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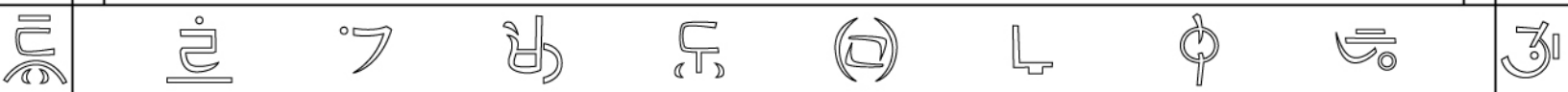
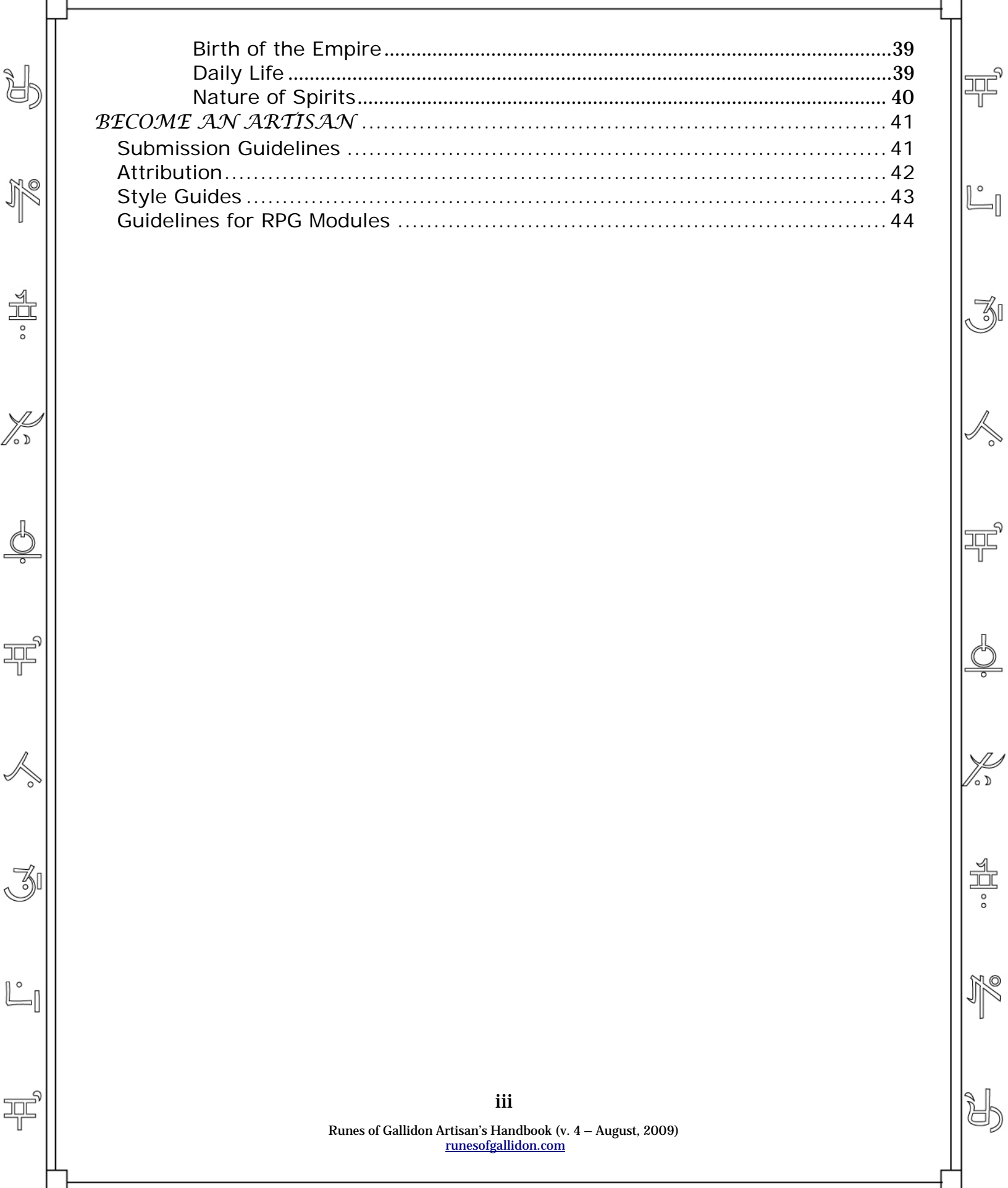
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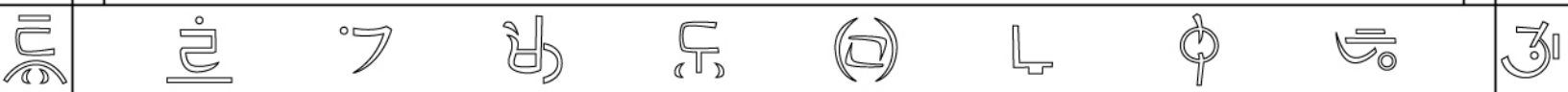
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“The Destruction claimed much: an empire, a family, a just and wise leader. All this I suffer daily, grimly. But the loss of Emperor Gallidon, my friend, my brother in arms...this loss I cannot shoulder. I drag it behind me to my grave and, I fear, beyond.”

From the personal account of Telar Muhnrún, Commander of the Imperial Guard on the destruction of the Imperial City and the disappearance of the Emperor.



Telar Muhnrún

THE STORY SO FAR

Night falls on five millennia of prosperity; dawn awaits those courageous enough to seize power.

It is the 5,108th year of the Age of Gallidon. Seven years have passed since the Destruction claimed the Emperor and the Imperial Isle. The magical forces that protected the Empire are breaking down. The remaining nobility pursue their own agendas, even as unspeakable threats emerge from the shadows. The world enters a new age, its fate unwritten...

WHAT IS RUNES OF GALLIDON?

Runes of Gallidon is a living fantasy world designed for creative collaboration in an online community.

You're invited to set your stories, art, comics, games, etc. in the world of Gallidon. This fantasy world of adventure is shared under a Creative Commons license so you're free to invent your own characters and places or use ones that already exist. Artisans contribute their Ideas to the Gallidon community but retain ownership of their individual Works set in the world of Gallidon. Within the collaborative, social, and creative structure of Runes of Gallidon, Artisans are encouraged to use each other's Ideas as inspirations for new Works and new Ideas.

You own what you create, but we all share the world.

Runes of Gallidon was inspired by many things, but a few examples warrant specific mention:

- The Thieves' World® fantasy series (for collaborative fantasy fiction)
- Baen Books® (for proving that free digital content doesn't mean you can't make money as an artist)
- Creative Commons (for giving creators more options in how they distribute their works and manage the rights over those works)

As you look through Runes Of Gallidon, remember that the world of Gallidon is not finished. Vast areas of the world are not yet explored, questions are not answered, myriad possibilities for characters, creatures, magic, stories, cities, fortresses, ruins, etc. are waiting for you to create them. This is deliberate. This site is designed to open doors to the imagination of the creative community, not close them.

To learn more details about the licensing, revenue sharing, and how Gallidon works, please visit:

<http://runesofgallidon.com>

<http://runesofgallidon.com/welcome-gallidon-videos>

<http://support.creativecommons.org/videos> (we recommend "Get Creative" and "CC+: CC + Commerce")



WORLD MYTHOS

GALLIDON

The Empire of Gallidon was ruled by the Emperor Gallidon, thirteenth of his line, direct descendant of Na'naat. The Emperors Gallidon were not as other men. Each Emperor chose a consort from among the daughters of the seventeen Greater Noble Houses and each had a single son: The Childe of the Isle. No Emperor ever died of old age despite lifespans exceeding 450 years. Each of the previous twelve Emperors was either killed or chose to abdicate in favor of their son, and lay down their life a short time later. Upon ascending the throne, the Childe of the Isle became the Emperor Gallidon.

The Emperor ruled from the Imperial City, while Greater and Lower Noble families ruled in the cities, states and territories. Fealty was seldom enforced by threats of military action. Instead, the Emperor was credited with possessing both the ability and willingness to use powerful ritualistic magic (magic that, it was said, could wipe out crops, summon devastating natural phenomenon, or even visit entire populations with fatal illnesses). While the Emperor did not have a large military force, he did keep an Imperial presence of Administrators and elite Imperial Guardsmen in all regions. Authority over the Noble Houses was sufficient to ensure that they used their own military might to enforce the Emperor's will.

Greater Houses were granted areas to rule over. They and their families were required to spend alternating periods each year at the Imperial City (usually with the head of the house coming to the city while their family stayed home, then reversing the arrangement). Greater and Lower Noble House succession follows a first-born precedent, regardless of gender. Most marriages among the Noble Houses are arranged.

After millennia of peaceful rule, the Emperors and many of the Noble Houses became complacent, retreating within the Imperial City and their individual capitals in an ever-increasing sphere of isolation. As the rulers of the Gallidon Empire turned inward and continued to ignore the Imperial territories, the knives of the Greater and Lower Noble Houses turned against each other. Jealousies, grudges, and past grievances surfaced. Rival houses tested each others' weaknesses, and the former solidarity among the Gallidon Empire ruling class that allowed them to manage such a far-flung empire crumbled.

In the Year 5101 of the Age of Gallidon, the Destruction swept over the Imperial Isle. The Emperor has not been seen or heard of since. The fate of the Childe of the Isle, the

Imperial Consort and the Imperial Court remains a mystery.



TIMELINE OF RUNES OF GALLIDON

BG – Before Gallidon

“After Na’naat, the spirits and mortals did not share the skies and the seas and the land. The spirits became discontent, and the mortals became fearful. The world was no longer beautiful.”

The Age of Disorder, an age of legends. Little remains other than myth and ancient ruins in the wilderness.

AG – Age of Gallidon

“Na’naat called her sisters and brothers together. They wept, and their tears formed a new sea in the middle of the land. They bent their will, and they created an island in the vast sea, and on that island, they built a city, and in that city, they placed the Nobility, and within that Nobility, they named an Emperor to rule over the world.”

This age begins when Gallidon the First founds the Empire.

- Year 167 AG – Gallidon takes the first-born daughter of Kaday as Consort.
- Year 169 AG – The first Childe of the Isle, heir to the Empire, is born.
- Year 261 AG – Gallidon the First dies.
- Year 261 AG – Gallidon the Second takes the throne.
- Year 4849 AG – Gallidon the Thirteenth is born.
- Year 5001 AG – Gallidon the Thirteenth takes the throne.
- Year 5004 AG – Gallidon the Twelfth lays down his life.
- Year 5089 AG – Gallidon the Thirteenth takes a daughter of House Kreal as Consort.
- Year 5093 AG – The Thirteenth Childe of the Isle, heir to the Empire, is born.
- Year 5097 AG – The Emerald Port is swept by a deadly plague. Survivors flee the city.
- Year 5099 AG – The Emerald Port becomes commonly known as Dead Port.

- Year 5099 AG – The Shadow War begins on the Imperial Isle.
- Year 5101 AG – The Destruction. All contact with the Emperor and the Imperial Isle is lost.
- Year 5105 AG – Lord Ishi declares himself “King of the Illuminated Peaks.”
- Year 5106 AG – The Kingdoms of North Realm, High Hills, Sea of Grass, and Isles are declared.
- Year 5107 AG – Former Imperial Administrators and Officials declared Lady Vanth “Queen of the Middle Kingdom.”
- Year 5108 AG – The Present.



RUNES: THE MYSTICAL ARTS

“Know then, Adept, that these are the Runes Major, the Great Runes upon which the Art is built.

Runes Minor, the Lower Runes, like the Lower Noble Houses, are more numerous, more varied in style and form.

The Runes Major are the foundation of sorcery and as such, are not to be trifled with. As scions of Greater or Lower Houses, the noble blood in your veins grants you the potential to wield powerful sorcery. Note, I say potential. Only serious study will bring that potential to fruition.”

Arno Atagoza, Instructions to the Young Noble, Tar Mira University

The Disciplines as Practiced by the Greater Noble Houses

Rune-weaving: The Emperor's Art — permanently binding forces under written runes of power. They can also weave multiple magic disciplines into a single effect and/or enhance the power/effect of an enchantment. The sum of the disciplines involved becomes significantly greater than the parts.

The ONLY discipline that can make a magical effect permanent. Runes bind magical effects to the physical realm of the world of Gallidon.

Imperial Rune-weavers: A single child from each generation of Greater Noble Houses (Lower Noble Houses often send child-candidates also) is sent to the Imperial Isle as a Rune-weaving candidate. These children, if accepted embark on a life of study to master the discipline of Rune-weaving. They are ultimately overseen by the Emperor Gallidon. Very few learn to use the Runes Major to full effect. Only three living Rune-weavers at a time are chosen to learn the great mysteries of the art. They are the Rune-weaving Masters, second only to Gallidon himself in their abilities. These Masters seldom left the Imperial Isle.





Necromancy: Protecting and enforcing the Great Barrier between the Living and the Dead. Their powers deal with the Soul, not Spirits. Easing the passage of the sick and dying to dwell with Na'naat. Communication with the Dead. Command of unbound Souls. Conservation of energy requires that a necromancer must give of their life-force to interact with the dead. Those rogue practitioners who venture down forbidden paths discover life-force is needed to raise or animate the dead. It is not always possible to reclaim all your life-force when the raised dead are destroyed.

— Mastered by House Vanth, rulers of the Middle Kingdom.



Sorcery of the Mind: Knowing and influencing the emotions and thoughts of people. Adepts of Sorcery of the Mind must master their own thoughts and emotions before they can attempt to influence/control others. This discipline can instill loyalty, fear, confusion, passion, etc. into the minds of others. A side effect of intense headaches are common for practitioners. The duration and amount of people influenced at once vary with the skill and will power of the adept.

— Mastered by House Ishi, rulers of the Illuminated Peaks.



The Elements: Alliance with and control of the spirits of Fire, Air, Earth, Water. Typical use involves enhancing or altering existing elements: cause a campfire to become larger, calm stormy winds, enlarge a crack in a stone wall into a crevice, etc.

Adepts generally specialize in one element. Most manipulate elements around them, such as the moisture in the air. Conservation of energy requires that some sample of the element needs be available for any effect involving the element.

— Mastered by House Nuada, rulers of the Isles.

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Shape Changing: Transformation of the self into other living forms. General min/max transformations of mass are based on the skill of the caster. Shape changers must have studied an animal before they can change into it (changing into a deep-sea creature would be almost impossible, since studying it would be very, very difficult). Once a caster has successfully changed form, they will inherit the normal/typical skills/ability of that form (better eyesight as a hawk, better smell as a hound). Many adepts of this discipline view animals as being superior to humans.

The longer one stays in another form, the harder it is to remember prior memories. If shape changed for too long, the adept will completely forget their prior self, much less how to change back.

Shape Changing does not include or affect clothing, items, or anything carried on the body. Clothes will fall off or rip during a change, and when changing back to human form, the changer will emerge completely naked and empty-handed.

Changers normally have a few forms they prefer or are good at changing into. Although it is possible to take the form of another human, it is very rare for anyone in this discipline to do so due to the time and effort needed to study the target.

— Mastered by House Lucan, rulers of the High Hills.

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Constructs: The engineers & builders of the Empire. They use their powers to create structures, roads, bridges, doors that only open for certain people/passwords, etc. At greater proficiency it is possible to create non-autonomous servant/golems.

- Mastered by House Kotar.



Far Sight: To perceive beyond the eye's sight, into the distance, the past and the future. Adepts can see and hear events in the past and the present as if they are silent witnesses.




Seeing into the future is dangerous — like following a tree from the ground up — at each turning point, a new branch of the future is born. It is very dangerous for an adept to look too far into the possible futures; they can see their own deaths, death of loved ones, etc. Sometimes an adept's mind becomes “lost” in a possible future and it becomes extremely difficult for them to find their way back to the present.



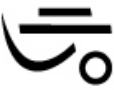

— Mastered by House Vakur, rulers of the North Realm.



Telekinesis: Manipulation of physical objects with sheer force of Will. Size, mass, velocity, accuracy and distance of object manipulation are limited by skill of adept and factors such as friction, wind resistance, gravity, etc. The average adept can perform a “dead-lift” of 25% of their body mass (again, adjusted for fine control needed and other factors).

— Mastered by House Tizqar.

	<p>Spirit Mastery: Recognition, communication with and influence of Spirits (not Souls). Adepts of this discipline do not typically have the ability to kill or banish Spirits.</p> <p>Adepts of Spirit Mastery tend to care greatly about the balance of nature.</p> <p>Most Spirits are indifferent to people. In general, commoners and Lower Nobles barter and/or appease Spirits for their favor or more often, simply to be ignored by the Spirits. Powerful adepts (particularly of the Greater Noble Houses) can often control/force Spirits to do their bidding.</p> <p>— Mastered by House Kaday, rulers of the Sea of Grass.</p>
	<p>Animal Mastery: Recognition, communication and influence of birds, beasts, etc.</p> <p>Adepts of this discipline tend to be fonder of their animals than of other people. It is not unknown for adepts to disappear into the wild, rarely to be seen again.</p> <p>— Mastered by House Corvus, rulers of the High Hills.</p>
	<p>Alchemy: Formulation and transmutation of potions, elixirs, tinctures, etc.</p> <p>Magical chemistry. Once the proper ingredients are obtained, it is possible for someone with no magical ability to create the proper mixture. Adepts of this discipline can transmute ordinary ingredients into enchanted ingredients.</p> <p>— Mastered by House Melanthias, rulers of the Rock.</p>

	<p>Alteration: Enhancing or cursing the abilities and attributes of living things. — Mastered by House Atiron.</p>
	<p>Conjuration: Manipulation and transformation of non-living matter into a different form or state. Conservation of energy requires that mass remains constant. After a conjuration wears off, the item typically reverts back to its natural state. — Mastered by House Dalia.</p>
	<p>Illusion: Creation of sensory inputs (all 5 senses) that have little or no basis in physical reality. The more basis the illusion has in physical reality, the more “real” it will seem to those experiencing it. — Mastered by House Kreal.</p>
	<p>Daimonology: Recognition, summoning, and mastery of Spirits and Souls. Typically unbound Spirits and insane Souls of dead heroes or villains. Adepts of Daimonology specialize in the banishing or destruction of malevolent Spirits and Souls. They are called in when necromancers and spirit masters have failed. — Mastered by House Ravan.</p>



Wards: Magical barriers, protections and warding lockes linking distant locations.

Most wards are typically defensive in nature.

Warding lockes allow adepts to cross vast distances between two fixed points. They are permanent wards created in tandem with a rune-weaver. An adept must be familiar with the destination warding locke in order to open/activate the origin warding locke.

— Mastered by House Morana.



Astral Travel: Leaving the body and journeying in non-corporeal form — the Soul.

The farther you travel from your body, the more taxing it is on your ability.

If the body is disrupted/moved the Soul may lose its way back and be lost forever (necromancy can sometimes help to recover the Soul). If a Soul remains after the body is destroyed, it may go insane or haunt a particular location.

While in non-corporeal form, adepts can communicate with and help other Souls and, depending on the power of the adept, Spirits of this world.

It is said the elite guards of House Ptah are adepts who willingly allow their bodies to be ritualistically destroyed while in non-corporeal form. They dwell permanently as unbound Souls.

— Mastered by House Ptah.



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Celestial Forces: Drawing upon and manipulating the forces of the moon, the stars, and dreams.

Astrologers who can foretell future events and individual fates.

The ability to influence/inflict dreams upon sleepers.

Predicting meteorite falls is a branch of knowledge pursued by one group of practitioners who use the results to forge star-metals.

Adepts of Celestial Forces are the best mid-wives.

— Mastered by House Talire.



THE GREATER NOBLE HOUSES

There were seventeen Greater Nobles who, like Gallidon, possessed strong magical powers having been somehow imbued with divine aid by Na'naat's brothers and sisters. These Greater Nobles had three times the life-span of a common man. Each founded a House.

Being a descendant of one of the seventeen Greater Nobles came with the gift of long life, but was regarded to have little bearing on magical potential. Descendants often had a sorcerous Gift, but what truly set them above others was the training they received for their Gift.

Knowledge of and training for the most powerful sorcery was tightly held by the Greater Noble Houses, each according to their Discipline.

Beginning sometime in the second millennia, a growing tradition dictated members of these Houses marry and have children with members of other Greater Noble Houses to maintain their “magical” Bloodlines. Most marriages among the Noble Houses were arranged. Official succession generally followed the line of the first-born child, regardless of gender. Members of Noble Houses sometimes had children with commoners. The children of these unions often had the potential for magical abilities. These children, acknowledged or not, typically became the founders of Lower Noble Houses.

It was not uncommon for members of the Greater Noble Houses to never have children, losing themselves instead in intellectual interests rather than matters of the flesh. Madness was not uncommon among the members of the Greater Noble Houses.

Some Greater Noble Houses ruled over vast provinces (now kingdoms). They and their families were required to spend alternating periods each year at the Imperial City (usually with the head of the house coming to the city while their family stayed home, then reversing the arrangement). The Emperor did not use a large military force to keep the provinces in line, though it kept an Imperial presence in all regions. Authority over the Nobles Houses was sufficient to ensure that the Houses used their own military might to enforce the Emperor's will.

While loyal to Gallidon, the Greater Noble Houses were not always loyal to each other. Jealousies, grudges, and past grievances frequently surfaced. Rival houses tested each others' weaknesses. Over time, the solidarity among the Noble Houses, that allowed them to manage such a far-flung empire, crumbled.

Some Greater Noble Houses have their own military to oversee their protection and lands, often with their own family members in positions of leadership as well as in the ranks. This gave their military forces the possibility of employing magic.

The Original Seventeen Greater Nobles and their Mastered Discipline

Atiron – [Alteration](#)

Corvus – [Animal Mastery](#)

Dalia – [Conjuration](#)

Ishi – [Sorcery of the Mind](#)

Kaday – [Spirit Mastery](#)

Kotar – [Constructs](#)

Kreal – [Illusion](#)

Lucan – [Shape Changing](#)

Melanthias – [Alchemy](#)

Morana – [Wards](#)

Nuada – [The Elements](#)

Ptah – [Astral Travel](#)

Ravan – [Daimonology](#)

Talire – [Celestial Forces](#)

Tizqar – [Telekinesis](#)

Vakur – [Far Sight](#)

Vanth – [Necromancy](#)



THE LOWER NOBLE HOUSES

The Empire has fallen. The Greater Nobles had become strange, complacent, stagnant. Jealousies, grudges, and past grievances between the Greater Nobles destroyed the solidarity that allowed them to manage the Empire. Only the efforts of the Lower Noble Houses have held the Empire together. Only their energy have kept the Empire strong. Following the Destruction, many Lower Noble Houses feel that now is their time to take up the mantle of leadership and power.

There were seventeen Greater Nobles who, like Gallidon, possessed strong magical powers having been somehow imbued with divine aid by Na'naat's brothers and sisters. These Greater Nobles had three times the life-span of a common man. Each founded a House. Knowledge of and training for the most powerful sorcery was tightly held by the Greater Noble Houses, each according to their Discipline.

Members of Noble Houses sometimes had children with commoners. The children of these unions often had the potential for magical abilities. These children, acknowledged or not, typically became the founders of Lower Noble Houses.

There were hundreds of Lower Noble Houses. They formed the backbone of the Empire, providing key Administrators, leadership in cities and provinces, military leaders, merchant princes, etc. Most members of the Lower Houses possess sorcerous abilities to some degree. It was among the Lower Noble Houses that politics, intrigue, spying, and occasional open warfare could often be found.

The Lower Noble Houses were also the source of new types of sorcery. Their heritage combined with their hunger and vigor encouraged experimentation in the mixing and matching of sorcerous disciplines, resulting in new abilities, strange areas of focus and occasional disasters.

Lower Noble Houses frequently had their own military to oversee their protection and lands, often with family members in positions of leadership as well as in the ranks. This gave their military the possibility of employing magic.

Any person who can cast magic is considered a Noble, but not all nobles are able to cast magic.



THE DESTRUCTION AND AFTERMATH

For centuries, the Gallidonian Empire flourished on many levels: artistic expression, “scientific” advancements, better understanding of the world, greater knowledge of magic and its uses, more efficient economies, better standards of living, etc.

After five millennia of orderly rule, the line of Emperors and many of the Noble Houses became complacent, decadent; retreating within their own domains in an ever-increasing sphere of isolation. As the rulers of the Gallidon Empire turned inward and continued to ignore the provinces and indeed, the world, the jealousies, grudges, and grievances of the past and present gradually rose to the surface. Rival houses tested each others’ weaknesses; and the former solidarity among the Gallidon Empire ruling class, that allowed them to manage such a far-flung empire, crumbled.

The Destruction

In the 5,101st Year of the Age of Gallidon, few were prepared for the suddenness and severity of the internal strife that erupted in the Imperial City.

The Greater House Kreal, masters of the mystical discipline of Illusion, had initiated a plot to eliminate rival Houses from Imperial favor. Standard gossip points to The Imperial Consort, mother of the Childe of the Isle (the Heir) and a daughter of House Kreal, as the mastermind behind the plot. Several theories abound about the motive, leaving many questions about why House Kreal would choose to embark on such a dangerous political game. Whatever the truth, events quickly gained momentum and spurred a polarization of other Noble Houses and the Imperial Court. Some Nobles took sides, some left the Imperial Isle, and many simply tried to hole up in the Imperial City to wait out the confrontation.

Over a two year period, the Imperial City was ripped apart by the subtle conflict started by House Kreal — the Emperor Gallidon was unable or unwilling to intercede. In the end, the summer of 5,101 AG saw the political, shadow infighting emerge into the light as open warfare. The Imperial City and Isle were devastated in an intense, all-out eight-day engagement of open warfare — warriors, assassins and sorcery of such magnitude that it escaped the control of many of its conjurers. It was the Destruction.

Aftermath

Runes of Gallidon unfolds seven years after the Destruction, in the year 5,108 by the Imperial

calendar. Since the Destruction, the Imperial Isle has been unapproachable. It remains constantly under siege by storms so severe that no craft has managed to enter them and return to tell of it. The Empire of Gallidon is fragmenting but has not been destroyed.

Theories and rumors abound: Gallidon resides on the Imperial Isle, planning for his return; Gallidon is dead and the Nobility are greatly weakened as a result of their internal struggle; the Nobles are responsible for the state of the land; the entire story of the nobility's creation was nothing but a grand masquerade and they will now be wiped off the face of the planet by the true deities; Na'naat has grown unhappy with the nobles and is preparing for her return to save the world and its people.

Parts of the continent have completely slipped out from under anyone's rule and some areas are revolting against the nobility. An uneasy stability is emerging — seven major Kingdoms dividing up part of what was once the mighty Empire of Gallidon. However, a good portion of the continent falls outside the seven Kingdoms. These unclaimed lands are devolving into different states: primitive, barbaric tribal lands; desolate wastelands; city-states ruled by Lower Noble Houses, commoners, etc.

Adding to the uncertainty comes numerous stories from these Wastelands and even the Kingdoms, each more fantastic than the last: tales of warriors capable of killing nobles without suffering a death curse, spirits incarnate, creatures never before seen, and — most disturbing to the nobility — commoners wielding magic. Even the authenticity and origins of the nobles come under attack from certain regions. New religious leaders attract groups of followers in areas hard-hit by the fall of the Empire; some are crackpots, others seem as intelligent and resourceful as they are charismatic.

The Noble Houses, Greater and Lower, have not noticed a change in the power or ease of use of their sorcery, but many are growing concerned about what appears to be a shredding of the long-standing rules regarding how their world is supposed to work.

While the influence of the Gallidon Empire has not disappeared overnight (for example, Imperial currency is still recognized in most areas, standards of trade are often consistent across Kingdoms, etc.), it wasn't long before local customs emerged within the territories. Much of the Imperial Order remains in place but more changes each year. The Imperial Isle remains wrapped in a stormy shroud, keeping its secrets for the moment, while the rest of the world moves into a new age...



THE EMPIRE

The Gallidonian Empire has fallen.

The Emperor and his Court vanished. The social order is breaking down. The farther one gets from the great cities, the more chaos one encounters. Some regions, the Wastelands and Empty Lands, have become completely lawless. The rapid fall of this once omnipresent social order reveals the decay that had grown within the Empire for decades before the Destruction.

The Imperial social Order — Emperor, Greater Noble Houses, Lower Noble Houses, Imperial Administrators, Craftsmen, Farmers, Merchants — remains in place within major cities and towns, but now Kings and Queens have begun to take the place of the Emperor.

After five millennia of peaceful rule, the Emperors and many of the Noble Houses became complacent, retreating within the Imperial City in an ever-increasing sphere of isolation. As the rulers of the Gallidon Empire turned inward and continued to ignore the imperial territories, the Noble Houses' knives turned towards each other. Jealousies, grudges, and past grievances surfaced. Rival houses tested each others' weaknesses, and the former solidarity among the Gallidon Empire ruling class, that allowed them to manage such a far-flung empire, crumbled.

Where once it was said a child could safely walk the Emperor's Road from the cold lands of the North to the Southern tip of the Empire, people now travel in groups and those with the means travel with guards. Individual Noble Houses and city-states are building their own armies. Companies of mercenaries sell their services to the highest bidder. Mystical Arts practitioners of the Lower Noble Houses frequently accompany, if not lead, these mercenary bands. Bandits, some in large groups, strike at the very walls of towns and small cities. Once friendly neighbors now jostle for ownership of common lands and resources.

In the summer, heat waves and drought assault the land. In winter, blizzards and freezing cold. In the spring, rivers, once the friend of farmers and travelers, routinely break their banks. In autumn, thunderstorms and lightning scatter livestock. Runes of Gallidon is a world in flux.

The Empire spanned an entire continent, from the cold reaches of the north to the

tropical regions of the south, with the Inner Sea separating the two halves. Some counted the Empire as two continents connected by the Inner Sea.

The Empire That Was

Currency

Imperial coins were minted in various forms, pictures and impressions but valuations remained consistent with the metal used (all gold coins carried the same value, regardless of whether the emperor's seal or a city graced their faces).

Denominations were kept consistent and simple: coins were valued based on the scarcity of the metal and numerically calculated on a base 100 system: 100 copper coins equals 1 silver coin. 100 silver coins equals 1 gold coin. While prices of goods obviously fluctuated across the empire, a gold coin could generally keep a family of four fed for a year. A standard room at a middle-of-the-road inn in a mid-sized city would run between 3 and 5 silver coins.

A **Gold coin** is referred to as an "**Imperial**" in common terminology.

A **Silver coin** is referred to as a "**Noble**" in common terminology.

A **Copper coin** is referred to as a "**Penny**" in common terminology.

Copper coins are often physically cut by merchants & commoners into quarter-pieces, referred to as "**bits**" in common terminology.

4 bits = a penny

100 pennies = a noble

100 nobles = an imperial

An imperial is two inches in diameter. Nobles and pennies are one inch in diameter.

The Emperor

The Empire of Gallidon was ruled by the unbroken line of Gallidon, direct descendant of Na'naat, the Creator. At the time of the Destruction, Emperor Gallidon, thirteenth of his line, was lost along with the Imperial Court. Many of the wise and learned believe the unbroken line of Gallidon was the living embodiment of a powerful Rune set in place by Na'naat. They believe that with Gallidon's disappearance, mystical barriers have fallen. Barriers that protected the Empire from forces both within and without this world.

The Emperor had ruled from the Imperial City, while Noble Houses and Imperial

Administrators ruled in the cities and provinces. Fealty was enforced, when necessary, somewhat by threats of military action but mainly through other techniques. The Emperor was credited with possessing both the ability and willingness to use powerful ritualistic magic (magic that, it is said, can wipe out crops, summon devastating natural phenomenon, or even visit populations with fatal illnesses).

Noble Houses

There are seventeen Greater Noble Houses who, like Gallidon, possess strong magical powers. There are hundreds of Lower Noble Houses.

Greater Houses were granted areas to rule over. They and their families were required to spend alternating periods each year at the Imperial City (usually with the head of the house coming to the city while their family stayed home, then reversing the arrangement). Authority over the Nobles Houses was sufficient to ensure that the Houses used their own military might to enforce the Emperor's will. Over the millennia, many of the Greater Noble Houses lost all interest in governing, abandoning their responsibilities to Administrators and other functionaries.

Most marriages among the Noble Houses were arranged. Official succession generally followed the line of the first-born child, regardless of gender.

Imperial Guard

The Imperial Guard was responsible for the protection of the Emperor, his Empire and its people. The Imperial Guard Commander was in charge of the Guardsmen. He reported only to the Emperor. More than once, a Guardsman entered, uninvited, into a Noble mansion or fortress and arrested a member of the House.

Though relatively few in number, Imperial Guardsmen were feared and respected, it being generally acknowledged that one Guardsman was the equal of four highly skilled warriors. However, this fear extends beyond the physical threat of harm, as Guardsmen were believed to be able to discern the thoughts and desires found in the hearts of others. Runes of power were engraved upon the flesh of Imperial Guardsmen, granting them mysterious protections. While the runes on Guardsmen were magical, Guardsmen themselves were incapable of using/casting magic.

Potential Guardsmen were picked by Imperial officials and current Guardsmen at an early age (9 to 14 years old) strictly from among commoners who showed above-average

athletic and intellectual abilities. Unlike Imperial Rune-weavers, there was no place to apply to become a Guardsmen. They trained extensively on the Imperial Isle for over a decade before seeing their first assignment in the Empire.

No one of Noble Blood was allowed in the Imperial Guard.

Guardsmen traditionally wore black-washed armor and garb, trimmed with the Emperor's rune wrought in gold.

Language

The Empire excelled at making much of the lands it controlled consistent in many aspects, including language. While dialects varied from region to region, there is one and only one language spoken across the continent. Heavy trade and the strict enforcement of the Orders made sure this remained consistent. Other languages pre-existed the Empire, but knowledge of them has been forgotten or lost.

The Orders

The Orders are a collection of laws and rules that span the Age of Gallidon and document a wide range of topics regarding the lives of Imperial Citizens: legal, political, ethical, and societal obligations are covered, as well as historical aspects of the world, the Emperor, the Greater Nobles, and the Empire.

The First Order

Gallidon the Third laid down the first volume to be written. It became known as The First Order, recording the creation of the world, Gallidon and his Empire. Subsequent entries were simply named based on their sequence, although many became known by a more meaningful name or were grouped into logical subsets. Individual Orders are normally referred to as volumes, and groups of related Orders are normally referred to as a collection. For example, The First Order is also referred to as “The Foundation Order,” and a group of dozens of Orders that dictate the consequences of crime is a collection called “The Civil Orders.”

Expansion

While primarily historical in nature to begin with, over five thousand years The Orders expanded to include aspects necessary for the building and maintaining of a sprawling, growing civilization. These included Orders that documented many aspects of life at all levels

of society.

The roles and associated responsibilities for various administrative seats within each Noble House's respective lands are detailed in several Orders collectively referred to as The Administrative Orders.

Two collections of Orders outlined the civil and ethical strictures citizens are expected to follow (and the possible consequences of not doing so): The Civil Orders and The Ethics Orders, respectively.

Summaries of roles citizens should assume in the Empire (e.g., craftsmen, farmers, traders, etc.), as well as the terms by which they should interact: The Profession Orders. The written language, as codified in The Inscription Order, proved a turning point in the Empire, as it provided a standard form of written communication across the continent.

The standards of weights and measures, as codified in The Standards Order, greatly facilitated trade and commerce.

Enforcement

The enforcement of The Orders starts at the local level of government or ruler and works its way up the ladder, ultimately reaching to the Emperor.

Conflicts

The sheer breadth and depth of The Orders has made it a work almost incomprehensible by a single individual, as well as unwieldy. To date, there is no mention of an Order being rescinded or revised. Typically a new Order is written if it becomes necessary to make adjustments to existing Orders, resulting in a series of never-ending amendments.

Legal Disputes

As The Orders became more extensive (and convoluted), the need arose for someone to interpret them and provide insight. Initially, these were local individuals that administrators turned to for help when considering civil disputes or discerning the historical nature of a particular aspect of the Empire. Gallidon the Eighth recognized the value of standardizing a role to interpret The Orders, and he commanded a body of scholars to oversee the education, training, and management of these interpreters across the Empire.

The Society of Orders

The body of scholars set up the Society of Orders and provided that individuals who successfully completed training under the Society's guidance would be called a Scholar of the Orders (there is no gender restriction). The Society has a top-down, command-and-control structure, with formal edicts and rulings being handed down from the ruling body within the Society (a group of ten individuals referred to as "The Council" that resides on the Imperial Isle) to mid-level members across the Empire who, in turn, ensure the communication and enforcement of the edicts at the lower levels of the Society.

Scholar of the Orders

It is common for even small towns to have a resident Scholar of the Orders in residence, and larger cities often have a multitude of them. Noble houses typically have at least one family member receive formal training from the Society of Orders.

Creation Myth

Gallidon is the name of an Emperor and the name of his Empire.

As laid down in The Orders:

"Before the arrival, before the world, before thought, before time, there was Na'naat.

Na'naat opened her mouth. Na'naat breathed. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat split the skies.

Na'naat cut her hand. Na'naat bled. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat formed the seas.

Na'naat reached down. Na'naat stirred the seas. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat formed the land.

Na'naat looked down. Na'naat saw the spirits. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat fashioned the spirits.

Na'naat bent down. Na'naat touched the spirits. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat created mortals.

The world was beautiful, the spirits were happy, and the mortals were prosperous.

Na'naat was pleased. Na'naat looked away. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat was no more.

After Na'naat, the spirits and mortals did not share the skies and the seas and the land. The spirits became discontent, and the mortals became fearful. The world was no longer beautiful.

Na'naat returned. Na'naat viewed her world. Na'naat was no longer pleased.

Na'naat thought. Na'naat motioned. Na'naat bent her will, and Na'naat was no longer

alone.

Na'naat called her sisters and brothers together. They wept, and their tears formed a new sea in the middle of the land. They bent their will, and they created an island in the vast sea, and on that island, they built a city, and in that city, they placed the Nobility, and within that Nobility, they named an Emperor to rule over the world.

After the Emperor, the spirits and mortals shared the skies and the seas and the land. The spirits heard the Nobility, and they became content. The mortals listened to the Nobility, and they became prosperous. The world was beautiful once more.

Na'naat and her sisters and brothers smiled, bent their will, and were no more. Thus did the Nobility come to bring light, hope, and wisdom to the world. And so shall the Emperor and his Nobility protect the world until the return of Na'naat and her sisters and brothers.”

The Orders state Gallidon was imbued with the ability to control the Spirits, though only indirectly. In the Age of Disorder, before Gallidon, the spirits very nearly brought about the extinction of the people before Na'naat returned to set the world in order once again. The commonly held belief is that the Spirits became envious of the people's enjoyment of the world, while the people slowly stopped appreciating all the Spirits did to make their world inhabitable, safe, and satisfying. Na'naat placed Gallidon in charge of the world, and gave him the ability to keep the Spirits in line to ensure the people were able to flourish.

The Orders state that Na'naat had her brothers and sisters place their own agents in the world to assist Gallidon (these agents became the founders of the Greater Noble Houses). The Emperor and the Greater Noble families were given gifts of extended life spans, an increased resistance to death, and an innate and heightened ability to use various schools of magic to enable them to keep the world safe for the people.

The Emperors had five times the life-span of common man. They always chose a wife from among the Greater Noble Houses. Each Emperor had only one son, called the Childe of the Isle until he ascended the throne. The Childe is always named Gallidon. In the 5,108 years of the Empire, there have been thirteen Emperor Gallidons.

Imperial temples and houses of worship exist for the purpose of providing solace, religious instruction/guidance, and places of refuge. In rural areas, citizens often offer prayers not just to the Emperor, but also to the local spirits who inhabit the land. These spirits are said to coexist with and within the land, dwelling in natural structures or areas (rivers, lakes,

mountains, groves, fields, trees, rocks, the sky, rain, etc.).

When people die, their soul returns to dwell with Na'naat. The Orders allow various interpretations of this, provided those interpretations don't endanger or conflict with the status quo. Mortal souls are not the same as spirits.

Rune-weaving

The Emperor's Art. The magical discipline given to Gallidon by Na'naat to make the effects of other mystical disciplines permanent.

A single child from each generation of a Greater Noble Household (Lower Noble Houses often send child-candidates, also) is sent to the Imperial Isle as a Rune-weaving candidate. These children, if accepted, embark on a life of study to master the discipline of Rune-weaving. They are ultimately overseen by Emperor Gallidon. Very few learn to use the Runes Major to full effect. At any given time, there are known to be less than fifty Rune-weavers, with three of them said to have been trained as Rune-weaving Masters, second only to Gallidon himself in their abilities. These Masters seldom leave the Imperial Isle.

Standards of Measure

Standards of measure: distance (inches, feet, yards, miles), weight (ounces, pounds), and time (seconds, minutes, hours).

Technology

Gallidon has evolved to roughly the equivalent of the early European Renaissance. For centuries, the Empire flourished on many levels: artistic expression, "scientific" advancements, better understanding of the world, greater knowledge of magic and its uses, more efficient economies, better standards of living, etc.

There is no gunpowder, dynamite, cannon, steam-powered engine or the like in Gallidon.

Trade/Commerce

Trade and commerce flourished under the Empire, helped in no small part by the fact that the entire continent remained at peace for millennia. Bartering exist in the more remote regions, but Imperial coinage is accepted in even the most backwater areas.



THE KINGDOMS

The High Hills



Government

The High Hills are the domains of House Corvus and House Lucan. Corvus is the master of Animal Mastery: recognition of, communication with, and influence over birds and beasts. Lucan is the master of Shape-Changing: the transformation of self into other living forms. Neither of these Noble Houses have been dedicated to the rule of their realms. Although it is common knowledge that the rulers, sons, and daughters of both Houses inhabit the hills, they are seldom seen and rarely interact with common people except in emergencies.

The High Hills are governed instead by four House Administrators. Each controls a large area since the people are spread far and wide throughout the hills. These four Administrators work together, remaining in contact year round. They are dedicated to the welfare of their people.

Terrain

Thick forests, high cliffs, deep river valleys, waterfalls, and mountain lakes dominate the landscape. Summers are warm, winters cold with snow and ice. Lakes and streams freeze over, but rivers continue to flow. Game is plentiful. Thunderstorms in the spring and fall are a danger to those in high places; lightning kills the unwary.

Culture

The men and women of the High Hills are a hardy, frontier folk. Warm and welcoming to friends; cautious, but not hostile to strangers. Polite behavior is prized, as is stoic endurance of hardship.

The people are largely organized around steadings: six to ten families living in a small unfortified village, sharing communal farmland, storage cellars, smithy, and great hall. These folk are hunters, trappers, loggers, and farmers on a small scale, growing little more than a single stading can eat in a year. Clear water is the common drink, but all steadings brew beer, the type varying with the time of year.

It is the custom among these folk that guests should be welcomed and fed without any discussion of money. A guest is expected to contribute to the stading or provide their host with some small gift - one of lesser value than anything offered by the host.

Like most of the Northern Kingdoms, horses are rare in the High Hills, a sure sign of

wealth or status. Canoes, rafts, dogcarts and feet are the common forms of travel.

The people of the High Hills gather into the towns and forts for market days, fairs, and holidays; including Imperial Festivals, Noble House Festivals, and seasonal celebrations.

Commerce

Barter is more prevalent than exchanges involving coins. Fine furs, cured meats and lumber-based goods are the principle exports. Refined goods are imported in small quantities.

Warfare

In war, the people of the High Hills wear leather armors; soft, hardened, studded, and woven. The bow, long knife and war hatchet are the most common weapons - both knives and hatchets can be thrown with accuracy. Boar spears and maces as weapons are not uncommon among men. Short swords of various types are commonly found amongst the leaders and rangers, along with an occasional great sword. Women of the High Hills are famed as archers, using compound long bows of wood, leather and horn.

A series of forts, constructed of stone and wood, serve as gathering points in times of trouble. Each fort is stocked with provisions to last a season. A levy of six adults is laid on each steading for two months of service per year. This levy of men and women serves in the forts, work as rangers (police) patrolling the trails and training in the art of combat.

The Illuminated Peaks



Government

House Ishi has generally offered a firm, guiding hand to its citizens, whether it be under the name of the Emperor or Lord Ishi. The concept of doing your part for the greater good and glory of Gallidon by gladly meeting the obligations of your particular station in life finds no greater support outside the Illuminated Peaks. Lord Ishi often oversees even minor details of the day-to-day operations of the Illuminated Peaks (some view his curiosity in the minutiae of rule to be a most distasteful soiling of nobility). Still, one can not argue with the efficiency and productivity of the Illuminated Peaks – a level of achievement that cuts across many activities: art, literature, farming, craftsmanship, etc. The miniature sculptures, tiny paintings, and small carvings of the Illuminated Peaks are coveted far and wide, finding a fanatic favor even within the Imperial City.

Terrain

The Illuminated Peaks are a chain of high mountains rising out of the eastern coastline, with flat, arable land being at a premium. The ingenuity of its inhabitants (combined with the insightful leadership of House Ishi) has managed to squeeze an amazing amount from such a challenging landscape. Farms are tucked away in nooks, valleys, and hidden basins. Temples dedicated to Gallidon, Lord Ishi, and local spirits are scattered across the ridge line, even in some of the most hostile altitudes. Winters are generally cold, with heavy snows occurring on a regular basis. Falls and springs are rather short-lived, with summers being hot and punctuated by infrequent but heavy rainfalls. Earthquakes are not uncommon, and architecture tends to incorporate measures that limit damage from these natural occurrences.

Culture

While its inhabitants refer to their homeland as the Illuminated Peaks, the rest of the world often simply calls Lord Ishi's kingdom the "Peaks." Visitors to the Illuminated Peaks are often struck first by the overwhelming sense of orderliness, then by the way in which the inhabitants seem to just "know" how to act in any given situation. Calling attention to one's self, outlandish behavior, even wild gesturing seem out of place in a land blanketed by a feeling of stillness – even in the midst of a bustling city corner. These activities still occur, but they occur with an obvious purpose.

The connection with local spirits has become integrated into daily life in the Illuminated Peaks, elevated and refined to a degree unparalleled elsewhere in the Empire. Inhabitants regularly trek to remote temples to pay homage, give thanks, and offer pleas of help to various spirits responsible for the natural and proper workings of the world.

Lord Ishi encourages people to bring the worship of spirits into their homes, and priests have found that they can make a nice living simply by selling charms, necklaces, bracelets, and other trinkets that have been imbued with magical powers, protections, or wards associated with the spirits. Perhaps taking their cue from the Orders, the Illuminated Peaks emphasizes finding how you fit into your world rather than attempting to bend the world to your needs or desires.

While most Illuminated Peaks inhabitants are initially and outwardly friendly, they can become quickly and bitterly cross if they feel you have broken a social taboo or strayed outside the accepted customs. There are elaborate rituals, habits, traditions, and eccentricities that

most believe could never be mastered by any outsider.

Commerce

In an effort to leverage renewable goods, House Ishi has aggressively promoted the advancement of trade, knowledge, and artistic skills. As a result, the Illuminated Peaks exports primarily crafted goods (swords, earthenware, embroidered clothing, etc.), knowledge (scholars, both secular and religious), and culture (the blind beggars of Gitahn are renown for evoking the most spiritual of reactions from their carvings of local spirits, though none can quite articulate why). Non-indigenous resources such as wine and livestock represent the majority of imports. Although visitors are always welcome and treated courteously, few ever feel at home. Thus, Lord Ishi maintains a fairly homogenous demographic, which helps reinforce the loyalty of his charges.

Warfare

Illuminated Peaks troops are highly disciplined, well trained, and usually very motivated. As a result of the terrain, Lord Ishi's military tends towards strategies that involve small, organized groups of soldiers who are able to break up, regroup, or reorganize without a lot of command-level direction. Tactically, fighting focuses on being effective in both urban and rural settings, but there is no need to worry about warfare in large, open tracts of land due to the terrain. Practically unstoppable in cities, the Illuminated Peaks troops are at a significant disadvantage when fighting in flat, open areas.

Armor is normally cloth, lacquer, or very light metal, since agility and speed in hand-to-hand combat take priority over protection. "The best defense is a good offense" nicely captures the mentality of Illuminated Peaks troops.

Weapons tend towards smaller blades (the equivalent of very long daggers), while polearms are reserved for assignments or areas with enough room to justify the larger weapons. Ranged weapons are always part of combat, but troops prefer hand-to-hand combat when possible. Wielding dual blades is a popular form of combat, and soldiers almost universally eschew shields.

The Isles

Government



The Isles are the domain of House Nuada, masters of Elemental Magic. Water, Air, Earth, and Fire are their tools to summon, manipulate, and command. Scions of House Nuada are usually at sea, captaining their ships. The daily activities of the towns and cities on the Isles are governed by leaders of Lower Houses and Administrators appointed by House Nuada and/or the Emperor.

Terrain

The shallow western coastal sea and a long chain of volcanic islands make up the lands of the Isles. Terrain ranges from lush, green gems to barren mountains of volcanic rock and includes everything in between. Much of the might and wealth of the Kingdom is actually based on the size and skill of their fleet, not the resources of their land.

It is temperate in the Isle, seldom uncomfortably cold or hot. The trade winds are a near constant feature of the region. Only in steep-sided inlets, interior jungle valleys, or near volcanic vents are temperatures unpleasant.

Culture

The people of the Isles are intrepid, ever-curious, and unfailingly bold - the women as well as the men. They are not quick to take offense. Because of their travels, they have a very open culture. They are renowned for adopting new styles, innovations and the best practices from all they encounter.

The culture is organized around the structure of Fleet - Ship - Home Port. While some fleets and ships are family ventures, most are organized around meritocracy. Gender is no consideration for leadership roles.

Ships and boats of all varieties are the mode of transport. Horses are almost unknown in the Isles. Feet, ox-drawn wagons, rickshaws, and dog carts are the dominate forms of travel ashore.

Almost all adults wear a neck torc - a choker of silver, bronze, gold, etc. Most of their personal gear and clothing is heavily decorated (gaudy by most standards) with the reoccurring themes of knotted lines, spirals, waves, and sea creatures.

Their ships are sleek, beautiful vessels, easily identifiable by the multiple sails, almost resembling a cloud from the distance. Instead of figureheads, the ships of the Isles all feature ornate eyes painted or inlaid on the prow so that the ship (regarded by her crew as a living

entity) can “see” where she is going.

Many people regard the folk of the Isles as little more than pirates. They are not. Honest trade and exploration are the first choice of these folk in all encounters. But if cheated or attacked, the People of the Isles do not hesitate to respond with force. A friendly fight is one thing, but a back-stab or unexplained assault is met with stiff, passionate and bloody resistance.

Commerce

Everything is fair game. Barter or coins, the People of the Isles are comfortable with either, and they are famed for striking the most unusual deals imaginable. No one is ever sure where their ships are going or what new port they might be selling their goods in. They are approached with caution by merchants who value pride (of striking the best deal) above profit.

Warfare

If armor is worn, it is of leather. Metal mail is highly unusual. Intricate leather hauberks, bracers and helms are standard and typically highly decorated.

Double edged swords, long and short, are common. Wave-bladed spears and five-foot long pole-axes with a hook on the reverse of the blade for tripping, gathering lines, or gaffing a fish are seen on all the ships of the Isles. Bows and crossbows are not uncommon.

Every adult carries a long, straight-bladed dirk. Some are single edged, some double. These dirks are the symbol of personal honor. Oaths sworn on the personal dirk are considered the most binding. Within the Isles society, to be without a dirk is to be a prisoner at best, an outcast at worst.

As with most things, all combat is organized around Fleet - Ship - Home Port. Anyone facing a fleet of the Isle’s ships would do well to seek refuge on the mainland.

The Middle Kingdom



Government

House Vanth, masters of Necromancy, rule the Middle Kingdom. The leader of the House is always known simply as Vanth. They are the Guardians of the Veil, the barrier between the

living and the dead. They are not to be confused with illicit adepts who attempt to reanimate, or summon the dead.

The current Lady Vanth resides in her fortress-port-city of Vaneth. She dispatches her nieces, nephews, and cousins across the Middle Kingdom, retaining an iron control over its expanse.

An army of Administrators run the day to day activities, settling minor disputes, overseeing the populace, and ensuring the steady flow of the all important trade that is the major livelihood of her population.

Terrain

From sandy beaches to towering cliffs, the Middle Kingdom encompasses the shores and islands of the Inner Sea. Mighty fortresses stand over the major ports, controlling the safe harbors. All of the seasons are mild, made temperate by the vast expanse of water. Large farms, cultivated fields, orchards and vineyards are found in the countryside around the vast port cities.

There is little actual “wilderness” in the Middle Kingdom, save the Sea. The Inner Sea knows no master.

Culture

The Middle Kingdom is the most populous and most heavily trafficked Kingdom of the Empire. People from across the continent travel through it, many finding reasons to stay. It is regarded by its citizens as the most cosmopolitan of the kingdoms.

The Imperial social Order - Emperor, Greater Noble Houses, Lower Houses, Administrators, Craftsmen, Farmers, Merchants - is strongly held here, even after The Destruction.

Horses, oxen-pulled wagons, coaches, ferries, small boats, and palanquins are all common methods of travel. Along well-maintained roads, coaching inns can be found at almost any point within a quarter days travel.

The ships and galleys of the Middle Kingdom are square-sailed and often feature multiple banks of rowers. Most of these rowers are criminals, sentenced to the backbreaking work for life. In recent times, many ships have begun to incorporate the ship designs of the Isles craft. It is not uncommon to see “eyes” painted on the prow of vessels in place of figureheads.

Shrines dedicated to the Emperor, Noble Houses, ancestors, spirits of the sea, the wind,

etc., are found throughout the Kingdom along the roads, in small alcoves of the cities, and atop the stone quays of the harbors.

Commerce

“All trade travels through the Middle Kingdom.”

It is a popular expression and contains a great deal of truth. Situated around the shores of the Inner Sea that separates the Northern and Southern halves of the continent, the Middle Kingdom is the center of Imperial commerce. In its ports can be found the peoples, crafts, cuisines, delicacies, tales, products, and disputes of the entire Empire.

Imperial coinage is used for even the smallest transactions. Prices within the ports and cities of the Middle Kingdom frequently come as a shock to less traveled visitors.

Warfare

A large military force, with officers drawn from the Lower Houses and soldiers drawn from commoners, is maintained with taxes levied on all trade. This standing army is bound by the rules of chivalry, dedicated to justice, the protection of the weak, and peaceful resolution of dispute. But their lofty standards of behavior are not always realized.

Chain mail armor is the standard, with steel breastplates common among officers and nobles. Long, straight swords, heavy short swords, ornate maces and daggers, pikes, and crossbows are common weapons.

Every city and port is dominated by a massive, fortified castle on the highest ground. Since the Destruction, some scholars have begun hinting that the foundations of some of these castles are older than the Empire.

The North Realm



Government

The North Realm is ruled by House Vakur, masters of Farsight: the ability to perceive beyond the eye's sight, into the distance, the past and the future.

House Vakur are few in number and exercise little direct control of their folk. Leaders of the Lower Houses are the Thaners (chieftains) of the many small settlements, towns, and cities of the North Realm. Together with a few Imperial Administrators, these Lower Houses effectively govern the realm. Save for the Emperor himself, House Vakur is the absolute

authority of the realm; they just seldom choose to be involved on a daily basis.

Terrain

Snow-covered forests and hills, icy lakes, and narrow, steep-sided bays form the North Realm. Days are short in the winter, long in the summer. Winters are cold, the world seems frozen to the unlearned. Summers are warm, dry, and mild.

Large herds of caribou and elk travel across the land, always trailed by packs of wolves.

Culture

The folk of the North Realm are infamous for their passions and mood swings, boisterous joy to solemn despair. Typically larger and stronger than the norm, both men and women are feared when they become angered.

North Realm folk make trustworthy friends and are loyal beyond sanity; they take insults to heart and are known to bear a grudge for life. Strength, intelligence, determination, music, and story-telling are highly respected and celebrated. Cleanliness, health, and honesty are a duty.

Perhaps due to House Vakur's sorcerous ability, these folk are firm believers in destiny, maintaining that a person's fate is woven before their birth and cannot be escaped.

Commerce

The North Realm is famed for its axe-wrights, sword, and armor smiths, bee hives and honey, wool and scrimshaw. Each spring, the people of the North Realm are on the move. They trade peacefully when they can; raid mercilessly when they are cheated, insulted or denied access to markets.

Warfare

The axe is supreme, be it long handled or short. Swords are the mark of a proven warrior, thane or rich man. Spears, bows, and shields are common. Most adults carry a seax: a long, heavy, single edged knife worn horizontally across the belly or back. It is both a weapon and a tool. Both leather armors and chain mail are widely used in war.

In warfare, these folk tend to act in small numbers, each warrior acting as their own general once a plan is launched. Their passionate combat style, matched with their size and strength typically make up for their lack of organized, parade tactics.

The Sea of Grass

Government



House Kaday rules the Sea of Grass. Spirit Mastery is their art. Members of the house, the Chieftains, are scattered among the nomadic tribes of horsemen. Lower Noble Houses govern smaller bands. Some leaders of the Lower Houses serve as Administrators in the small towns and few cities of the Kingdom.

Terrain

This kingdom consists of vast, open steppes of grasslands and wide, slow rivers. Hidden folds in the land give lie to the open horizon. If one knows the land, it is possible to hide armies of cavalry in the steppes.

Summers are hot and dry. Thunderstorms, prodigious displays of lightning with no accompanying rain, are common in the summer and fall. The winters are mild. Snow sometimes falls, but quickly melts in the following days. Springs bring a constant west wind and daily rainstorms.

Herds of wild horse, cattle, bison, antelope, and other grazing animals roam the Sea of Grass. Game is plentiful to those who know the land.

Culture

The people of the Sea of Grass are largely nomadic herders. Wealth is counted by the size of a family's herds and the number of warriors they can muster. They are dedicated to their horses, hawks, and tribe.

Those who dwell in towns and the few large, stone cities are largely farmers and craftsmen. These people are not treated with disdain, rather they are regarded with quiet sympathy. They forego the wide open sky for a small patch of dirt, and all the people are richer for their sacrifice.

Bravery, honor, and family loyalty are the keys to understanding the people ruled by House Kaday. Overly polite behavior is viewed as weakness or fear. Highly organized in warfare, in daily life the people of the Kingdom seem unruly and chaotic to outsiders.

Commerce

Among their own people, barter is common. When dealing with outsiders, Imperial coins are always used as the standard of exchange rather than any barter system. Livestock is the key export of the Sea of Grass. Fine finished goods are typically imported.

Warfare

The followers of House Kaday are the supreme cavalry of the Empire. None has ever withstood their charge without high walls. These nomadic warriors are masters of the curved blade, dagger and sword, the lance, and the horse-bow. They wear hardened leather, chain with plate inlays, leather and chain helms, and high horseman's boots.

In times of trouble, they gather at rallying points in the Sea of Grass by families and tribal groups. They sweep out of the steppes without warning, thousands of cavalry moving in martial unison.

The Seventh Kingdom

This Kingdom awaits creation – it is the undiscovered country.



THE REGIONS

Dead Port

“There are forces at work that frown on visitors entering Dead Port and feel even more negatively about people leaving it.”

Once the self-styled gateway of the Southern Empire, the Emerald Port, renowned for gem stones and pearls, exotic spices and foods, and the prevalent stench of the Emerald River. In the 5,097th Year of the Age of Gallidon, a deadly plague sweeps through the Emerald Port. Survivors flee the city, leaving most possessions behind. By the Year 5,099, no cure has been discovered for the plague. Those few hardy souls who enter the city searching for people and things left behind never return. The city becomes commonly known as Dead Port. Despite the lure of the Port's wealth, lying for the taking, very few enter the city.

The Maelstrom

“You're right to fear the Maelstrom. And anyone who wishes to run it. Even at this distance, I can feel it; the vast energy, nature's fury and resentment. I suspect the storm that lies over the Imperial Isle is its brother. They have the same feel.”

An ever-present, dark, forbidding storm that straddles the Eastern straits of the Inner Sea. The Maelstrom is death to all ships that attempts passage to the great Sea beyond. It

defies all efforts to pierce its secrets with even the most powerful sorcery. The storm pre-dates the Empire, a legacy of the Age of Disorder. Rumor persists that it is even more dangerous to those with the Gift of magic than the common sailor. Now, a similar storm guards the Imperial Isle. The wise wonder if the two phenomenon are related in some way.

The Rock

“As your Imperial Highness is, no doubt, aware, the Rock overlooks the only safe passage between the Inner and Outer seas. The fortress atop the Rock stands guard over that strait.”

The Fortress of the Rock is home to the Greater Noble House Melanthias, masters of alchemy. There, they produce wondrous potions, elixirs, ointments, etc. The people of the surrounding area provide the fortress with all it needs to continue. Profitable commissions are not uncommon when the alchemists discover a need for some precious or rare ingredient for their latest experiments. While many claim them mad, all have a desire for what the alchemists create.

Tar Mira

“The threat of Imperial involvement had traditionally held the volatile lower noble houses of Tar Mira in check.”

The city-state of Tar Mira is a prime example of emerging post-Empire governance. The Imperial Administrator still retains authority, but only at the sufferance of the Nobles. The multitude of Lower Noble Houses vie to fill the rapidly expanding vacuum of power while a bureaucracy struggles to maintain the stability of daily life for the inhabitants.

The Wastelands

“Gerin’s failure to stop this attack weighed heavily on him. He had formed The Swordsmen to bring even the smallest hope of justice and civilization to what was left of the Southern coastlands.”

A vast stretch of desert. The Imperial presence withdrew long before the Destruction in gradual stages over several generations. A lawless land ruled by might; the strength of a sword arm or the power of magic. Water is the greatest wealth in this dry expanse.



SPIRITS

Spirits are mysterious beings said to ensure the day-to-day functioning of the world. They direct or influence the various phenomenon necessary for the world to continue operating: the changing of seasons, the growing of crops, the flowing of rivers, the creation of various gems and stones, storms, the tides, etc. Through the actions of the Spirits, the world moves along, providing a viable place for people to exist.

Origins

The origins of Spirits are not known — they pre-existed Gallidon, possibly even the world itself. The Orders do not address this question, and it has served as a stimulus for hours of debate.

Birth of the Empire

The Orders state the Spirits very nearly brought about the extinction of the people before Na'naat returned to set the world in order once again. The commonly held belief is that Spirits became envious of the people's enjoyment of the world, while the people slowly stopped appreciating all the Spirits did to make their world inhabitable, safe, and satisfying.

The Orders state Gallidon was imbued with the ability to control the Spirits, though only indirectly (he relied on Houses Kaday and Ravan to issue his commands to the Spirits). Na'naat placed Gallidon in charge of the Spirits and the world to ensure the people were able to flourish. The Orders state that Na'naat had her brothers and sisters place their own agents in the world to assist Gallidon (these agents became the founders of the Greater Noble Houses).

Daily Life

Commoners, and many nobles, typically interact with Spirits on a more frequent and intimate basis than with Na'naat. Homage is not denied Na'naat so much as people view the Spirits to be Na'naat's agents, and worshiping the Spirits is – by extension – worshiping Na'naat. However, Na'naat is seen to be so removed from the direct, daily life of people that most find themselves turning more to the Spirits for their immediate needs.

Spirits are commonly believed to abide in or near specific objects in nature such as

rivers, fields, mountains, a grove of trees, large rocks, or ponds. Thus, a spirit is usually associated with a finite, particular space in the world. People normally offer appeasement or appeals at these locations, as it's believed the effect will be enhanced by the proximity to the spirit.

Nature of Spirits

Spirits have different personalities, with varying powers and reach. Without over-generalizing, the personalities of Spirits often reflect the nature of their influence on the world. For example, storm Spirits are often capricious, temperamental, and given to extremes. Spirits residing in lakes tend toward predictability, tranquility, and a balanced approach towards people.

Some Spirits have a stronger influence on the world than others, and some are perceived to be "older" than others. For instance, less powerful Spirits can choose to interact with the world in a small, localized area, such as a single tree, while more powerful Spirits can make their presence felt across larger areas, such as a mountain. Attempts to apply humanistic concepts to Spirits are inaccurate at best, folly at worst.

When a Spirit stays in one place long enough, it typically becomes known by a proper name, such as De'nithe. This might take a generation or two to occur. Frequently an adept of Spirit Mastery will aid in the naming of such a Spirit (there is a record of a daughter of the Greater Noble House Kaday correcting the name given to a Spirit by the locals; issues with the village's tainted well-water ceased after the locals began using the new name).

The predominant characteristic of all Spirits is that they are rarely seen but their influence is constantly felt. Their effect on people's lives is evidenced on a frequent basis, but direct interactions (e.g., summoning or corporeal manifestation) are the subject of rumor, gossip, and legend. Spirits are mysterious elements whose actual reality is unknown (and possibly unknowable) by the people.



BECOME AN ARTISAN

Runes of Gallidon is an “open-source” fantasy world built by user-generated content. Artisans own their Work but share their Ideas. You can submit a short story, short film, a drawing or painting, an RPG module, a novel, a digital image, original music, a graphic novel...whatever you like.

Take a moment to review the [Submission Guidelines](#) and [Style Guides](#), then visit the website [Runes of Gallidon](#) to submit your work.

Submission Guidelines

How to get your Work accepted

1. Be respectful of other Artisans. This means play nice with other Artisans' Ideas and be respectful of their creations. Do not kill, humiliate, degrade, or irrevocably damage another Artisan's characters, places, things, etc. without their permission.
2. Tell your part of Gallidon's story one character at a time.
3. Your Work opens more doors than it closes in the larger Gallidon story. Don't try to solve the world's problems — focus on solving your character's problems.
4. Only submit your own original Work — no plagiarism (please!).
5. If possible, have someone else look over your Work before submitting it.
6. Make sure your Work is clearly set in the world of Runes of Gallidon.
7. When in doubt, [send a question](#), proposal or outline to us (select the “Submissions” category).
8. If your Work is long (a novel, comic, etc.) or large in scope, and you'd like some feedback before you get too far down the road, feel free to [send an outline of the story to us](#) (select the “Submissions” category). Please use a subject line starting with “PROPOSAL” followed by the title of your Work.
9. For novels, novellas and comic (or any extended work), please submit a first chapter or installment — that's how we're going to publish these accepted Works to the website.
10. If you're stuck, please check out the resources at the [Artisan's Corner](#).
11. Oh, and no guns (take the cannoli).

How to NOT get your Work accepted

1. This is not Lord of the Rings™, World of Warcraft™, etc. Do not submit stories about characters from previously published fantasy worlds. Gallidon is a human-centric world, please no elves, dwarves, orcs, or gnomes.
2. Attempt to solve every mystery in one Work.
3. Submit the story of the “greatest” wizard/witch/warrior in Gallidon (you would be in error).
4. Include time travel in your Work (we foresee enough problems with continuity as it is).
5. Speak for the gods (your characters can, but the Narrator should avoid it).
6. Submit a Work that affects everyone, everywhere in Gallidon.
7. Submit pornographic Works.
8. Submit digitally altered images of recognizable personalities.
9. Submit images or digitally altered images that you do not own the rights to.
10. Submit a work that includes guns (we *told* you - take the cannoli!).

Attribution

Non-Derivative or Non-Attributing Works

All Works should have, at a minimum, the following attribution, even if they do not feature Ideas from another Artisan's Work (you used all original Ideas):

'This Work set in Runes of Gallidon – runesofgallidon.com.

Available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).'

Fictional Work attributing other Works

If your Work set in Gallidon features Ideas from another Artisan's Work, the following attribution format and information should accompany your Work: “character, location, thing” created by [name of creator] in *title of Work*.

For example, if you wrote a story that involved a character (Mara Talorn) created by Artisan John Smith in his novel, *Darkness Descends*, and you had Mara using a sword (Sword of Justice) which was created by Artisan Amy Jones in her short story, *Empty Footsteps*, the

attribution at the end of your story should look like this:

"Mara Talorn" created by John Smith in *Darkness Descends*.

"Sword of Justice" created by Amy Jones in *Empty Footsteps*.

This Work set in Runes of Gallidon – runesofgallidon.com.

Available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).'

Image Works attributing other Works

If your Work is an image based on one or more Works by other Artisans, you may use the following attribution:

"This Work inspired by [type of original Work] [name of the original Work] by [name of Artisan]"

For example, if you wanted to create a drawing of an action scene from the Flash Fiction Work, *Three Sunsets* by John Miller, the attribution for your image would be:

"This Work inspired by the story *Three Sunsets* by John Miller.

This Work set in Runes of Gallidon – runesofgallidon.com.

Available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).'

Style Guides

Text Works in Gallidon

- Text file formats we accept are .odt, .doc, .rtf, and .txt.
- Single space between sentences within a paragraph.
- Please spell-check and proofread one more time before submitting.

Text Story Length Classifications

Flash Fiction (Short, Short Story) is under 1,000 words in length. A Short Story is 1,000 to 10,000 words in length. A Novella is 10,000 to 40,000 words in length. A Novel is over 40,000 words in length.

Artwork, Images & Comics

Art, Image & Comic file formats we accept are .jpg, .jpeg, .png or .gif. File size should be under 10 MB in size.

Digital Game Files

Digital Games should be included in one file. If not, please [contact us](#) (select the “Submissions” category). File size should be under 10 MB in size.

Podcasts

The audio file format we currently accept is .mp3. File size should be under 10 MB in size and 15 minutes in length. The video file format we currently accept is .mpeg. Question? [Contact us](#) (select the “Submissions” category).

Guidelines for RPG Modules

We strongly encourage you to use whatever rules system you and your group are the most comfortable with. Runes of Gallidon isn't about rules, it is about collaborative story-telling adventures. Don't let rules - ours, yours, theirs - get in the way.

The key to translating Gallidon RPG modules to some popular systems is Skill Mastery.

All Non-Player Characters and Player Characters are rated by Mastery Skill Levels:

Untrained, Skilled, Veteran, Expert, Master, Grand Master.

In a level based system:

Trained averages 1st Level

Skilled averages 4th Level

Veteran averages 8th Level

Expert averages 12th Level

Master averages 16th Level

Grand Master averages 20th Level

In a percentage based system:

Untrained averages a 35% chance of success at a difficult task

Skilled averages a 50% chance of success at a difficult task

Veteran averages a 65% chance of success at a difficult task

Expert averages a 80% chance of success at a difficult task

Master averages a 95% chance of success at a difficult task

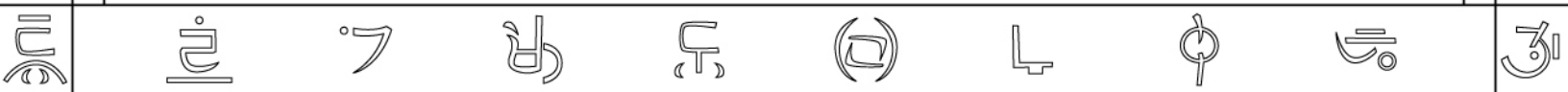
Grand Master averages a 110% chance of success at a difficult task

NOW GO CREATE SOMETHING!

**If you have read this far, it means you care. If you care, contribute.
Go have some fun, and send it in for others to enjoy!**

Lastly, welcome to...





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