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The Daro

Chapters From

A Campaign Sourcebook

By Doug Morrison-Cleary

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Chapter 2: Culture

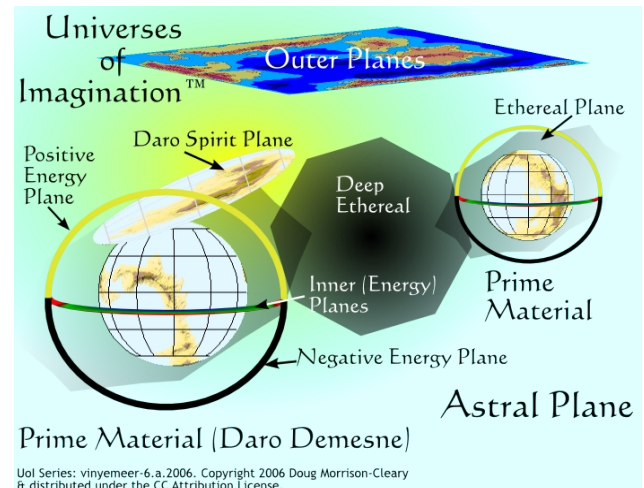


As already indicated in the history section, Daro culture is the creation of the Sword crew in the first century or so of their existence on the astral plane. It was profoundly formed by the ancient traditions of the various Sword crew members and by their experiences on their, now destroyed, home world. It was shaped by a series of principles through the application of a wealth of knowledge in the areas of anthropology, sociology and psychology. And it finally coalesced into its essential core at the beginning of the war between the Sword Folk, as they were then, and the Ardrak. There have been countless generations since then of Sword Folk/Daro and many of the details have changed over those millennia, but the outlines of Daro culture have remained intact for this entire time. These outlines of Daro culture and some of the specific adaptations in particular circumstances are detailed in this section. The clans and the totems have their own chapters following this one.

Cosmology

By necessity and by choice the Daro are profoundly nomadic. Even at those times and in those places where they have established cities only a minority of the people have ever chosen to live in them. And even then, ownership structures and city administration has always favoured the continued nomadic life of the city dwellers. This nomadic nature structures all areas of Daro life and belief.

The totems are animal spirits who wander the Daro 'heaven'; knowledge of, access to and use of all the planes is standard during almost all of Daro history; family and lodge are mobile; the clans are organised in marching order; and the most basic relationships of a Dare are those of the 'unit'—whether military unit or workgroup, this is the ultimate in a flexible and autonomous support structure for nomadic living.



The Daro have never abandoned their basic scientific worldview. As a people, they encounter the multiverse as an 'infinite' number of universes much like their original home. Each universe consisting of countless billions of stars and other phenomena with sometimes just a few, other times many, planets with intelligent life. Just as the astral and null planes pervade the entire multiverse, so the ethereal plane pervades the entire universe. Once one has access to this ethereal plane, or to higher dimensional physics, then one has 'easy' access to much of the rest of the universe. While it seems as though it is not possible for a world to be detached from the astral and null planes, it is possible for a world to be detached from the ethereal plane. Indeed, there seems to be some correlation between the life of a world and its attachment to the ethereal plane,

though scholars argue this point incessantly.

Spirit Plane

This is an extensive, perhaps infinite, plane of endless steppes, incredible mountains, the deepest blue lakes and oceans, rushing streams and lazy rivers. It is the Daro 'heaven' and home to the Daro totems. It is also the primary access route to the Daro Outer Planes.

Afterlife

The afterlife for the Daro is profoundly connected to the worlds upon which Daro have lived, and more importantly, died. When a Dare dies, say for example on a planet upon which the Daro have never died before, and her life is judged particularly good by the Daro gods, her totem may allow her spirit to take two or three forms¹. The first of those forms is always a totemic form, and the person shall then run free with the herds, prides, or flocks of similar totemic spirits in heaven for eternity. The other forms will be geographic! The person will be invited to become the spirit of a place, or more than one place. Within the Daro heaven, the Spirit Plane, there will then appear, somewhere, a replica of that place with the characteristics of the place that were most important to the person. And the spirit will also inhabit that place in the material world! In essence, what happens is that a spiritual conduit between the material world and the Daro afterlife or Spirit Plane is created and will remain whilst ever the feature in the afterlife and some part of the feature in the material world remain intact. Not surprisingly,

1 From planets with large Daro populations, a Daro will usually be granted just one form (a totemic form) unless they have been judged to have lived the Daro ideals particularly well. Conversely, some are exceptionally granted multiple forms, even four or five!

Daro often choose mountains as one of their spirit forms!

With this conduit in place, the spirit world of the Daro then becomes one of the planes of that material world. The spirit world, in the common parlance of the cosmologers, is a transitive plane and is coterminous with those material planes that are a part of the Daro spiritual demesne.

It is not uncommon throughout the history of the Daro for an older Dare who has lived a full life in obedience to the ethos of the Daro, to be one of the first Daro to enter a new world and then to set out on a quest². At the end of the quest he will give his life to this new land and will take a spirit form in the afterlife of one of the geographic features seen during the quest. In this way that world becomes incorporated into the Daro cosmology for many millennia to come!

While the conduit is easy for totems and gods (or their avatars) and spirits to travel, the conduit is not easy for material beings to travel. On many worlds, a small shrine will be made at or on the spirit place, both to honour the spirit, and to provide a way of concentrating the essence of the conduit enough to make it easier to open the conduit for material access.

On a world that is not yet connected to the afterlife of the Daro, it is very difficult to open the first conduit to Daro heaven. That is one reason you will almost never see a lone Dare anywhere in the multiverse. The company of lodge kin is, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, essential for opening up that very first conduit. The few cases of Daro undead are almost entirely Daro who died alone on new worlds and who are looking for lodge kin to help them open a conduit to the afterlife.

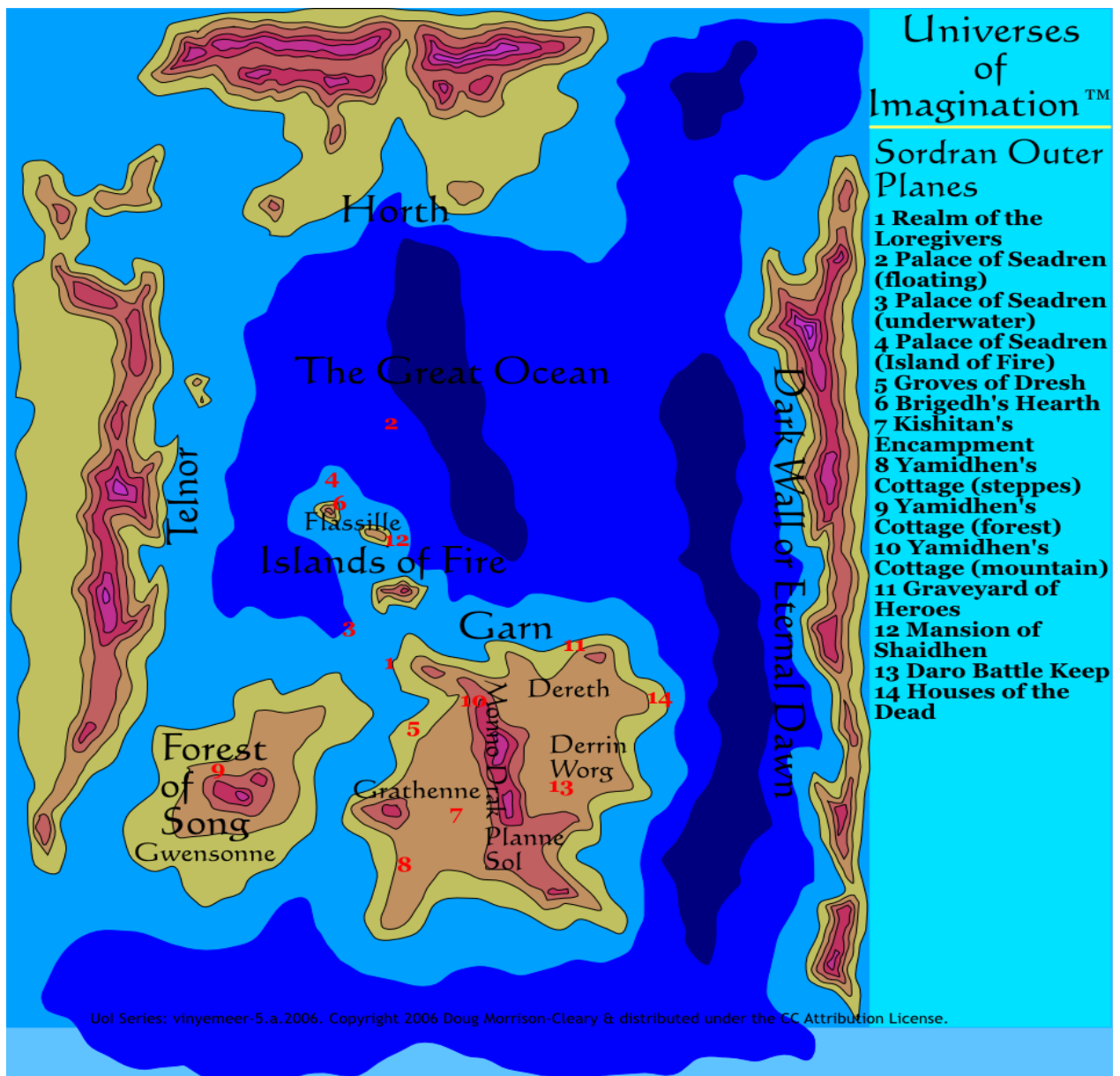
Daro who die in a state of 'ungrace', shall we say, are doomed to enter the

2 Always with a few lodge companions.

afterlife in their human form and spend time as servants to the gods (they become **petitioners**). Those Daro who have not lived well as Daro are not permitted to take totemic form (let alone any other spirit forms) until they have served the Daro gods well. Exceptionally, a servant may perform her duties so well that she is then permitted to take more than one spirit form when released from service.

Outer Planes

On the Daro spirit plane are the entrances to the Daro outer planes where the Daro gods dwell. From the Daro outer planes one can exit to either the spirit plane or the astral plane! The Daro outer planes are also the outer planes of the Meneltarma faith and of several other faiths found in different areas of the multiverse. These planes also have connections to many of the outer planes of their neighbours and allies. The religion of the Daro, the Sordran faith, is detailed in [chapter 5](#) below.



Inner Planes

Daro cosmology has no particular place for the so-called elemental planes and the shadow plane. Coming from a primarily scientific worldview, the whole concept of basic elements never became a feature of their cosmology. However, in the best agnostic tradition, they don't reject the concept either and their cosmology has a place for small 'energy planes' of almost infinite variety squashed between the great domes of the positive and negative energy planes. Like the small inner energy planes, these energy planes also seem to have crept into Daro cosmology at a later time from other cosmologies. Note, however, that

the positive energy plane intersects the Spirit Plane.

The Dare

The life of an adult of the Daro is lived almost constantly with the companionship of three lodgemates, or else within the tents of one's family. It is profoundly proscribed by ritual and tradition and faith. Some outsiders see the life of a Dare as being almost oppressive. Yet few ever encounter a Dare who is sullen or downcast, or who expresses any dissatisfaction with their life.

Rank

All adults among the Daro have a certain rank, granted by their clan, usually upon the recommendation of either the military or the lodge. Rank is also gained *de facto* by appointment to various clan responsibilities, as well as family, house and lodge leadership. Service or recognition at the Daro level may also grant rank.

This rank determines the bonus allowance paid directly to a Dare by her lodge; her place within certain clan rituals and activities; and several rights such as having a personal banner and having the service of pages. Rank also brings responsibilities of service and of maintaining the honour of family, clan and totem.

The ranks are:

- **Adult** All Dare are, by definition, adults. This is the first rank after childhood and uhlani training is completed.
- **Officer** Most Dari reach the rank of officer at some point during their lifetime. These are Daro who are lesser military commanders and masters of their trades.
- **Corporal** The first of the ranks of leadership within the clans, the corporal is the rank of most senior military commanders and bureaucracy heads. Also, the head of each family ranks as a corporal.
- **Master** Generally only the most senior bureaucracy and military leaders are masters. In addition, the two leaders of each lodge, the totemmaster and the lodgemaster, are of this rank as is the head of a house.
- **Lord** Only a few have this rank due to particular responsibilities or jobs. Clan earls and sub-earls, peacelords and warlords, plus several military ranks are lords. Most remaining lords are honoured with this rank for their services to the clan.

Those honoured by the clan for their service to the clan or the Daro are called 'banner *rank*' (corporal, master or lord). At the level of the Daro as a people or state, honours are granted through a series of 'orders' and medals.

Of course, it would be almost churlish to denigrate a life that provides such security, fame and prestige throughout much of the multiverse! But even this does not explain the exuberance with which almost all Dari embrace their life.

Dari are adventurous, empathetic, quiet, honourable, just, and joyful. They are nomadic by temperament and enjoy performing and showing off.

While almost all Dari have extensive military experience and are efficient killers when they need to be, they neither revel in bloodshed nor stand by in the face of injustice. They are also thoughtful, and have both a sense of humour and good common sense.

Yes, their lives are closely bound about with family and lodge. Their traditions are millennia old, but they are also a flexible people. The Dare who needs to spend time by herself is given plenty of space to do so and the Dare whose body cannot hold a sword is honoured for his skill in perhaps languages or diplomacy.

So what are the responsibilities and obligations of the average Dare?

At their most basic these are:

- owning no more than can be carried on one's body and one's horse, all else—especially land—is owned by the family;
- reasoned obedience to one's family and lodge leaders, and to clan, military and Daro leaders as appropriate;
- striving for the honour and glory the Daro and of one's family and lodge, and seeking justice and peace for all;
- working for family, lodge and the Daro—including 3 months work for the family each year and 1 year of work for clan and Daro per rank per five years, with all other income going directly to the lodge; and
- fulfilling the other responsibilities of family and lodge, especially the totemic taboos and ritual responsibilities.

The family and the lodge, then, have their own clear obligations and responsibilities to their members. These include paying each adult member an allowance, arranging suitable work for each adult member, and providing for basic needs of their members—clothes, weapons and harness, torc, and horse, usually a light warhorse or war pony. The family provides both the first and last of these, though the lodge pays the family for 'borrowing' the lodge member, and the lodge organises the work responsibilities.

Family

The Daro family is that formal structure of Daro life that provides the primary support for individuals from birth, through adolescence, and into adulthood. The members of a family are genetically related to one another or have been adopted into the family. In general, a family is formed by taking all the living descendants of an individual, or two or more blood-siblings, for 5 generations, or so. Once a family has grown to around 130 individuals, it will be split into two families. A family that falls to 60 or fewer members will probably be combined with a family descended from a blood-sibling of their own founder. A family that has been decimated by disease or military action or other causes may be allowed to die out with the remaining members being adopted by related families.

The average family has about 90 members of all ages, including, in the winter, one or more units of uhlani. It is headed by the Head of the Family who ranks as a corporal, and is governed by the head of the family and the Family Cabinet which consists of 4 of the 'grandparents' of the family.

Generally, a family will specialise in one particular trade or occupation, perhaps goat breeding or crafting

magical backpacks or diplomatic staffing. While most of the members of the family will be expected to participate in this trade, family members also have their own trades and interests which will take them far from the family tents.

A family is also expected to be able to field a strike of soldiers if the Daro as a people, or their clan was under attack. Most families, when a general mobilisation of this sort occurs, field a strike of 4 units and have 4 or more individual family members serving in specialist units like the scouts or one of the navies.

Families are taxed by their clan on the basis of the number of adult family members and the income of the family. Those families that find themselves in financial difficulties will be assisted by their clan until they can regain their economic footing.

Competition between families, houses and clans can be very intense. There are rivalries and vendettas between some families that stretch over dozens of generations. These often manifest in disparities in wealth, competition for Head of House or even clan Earl or privy councillor positions, and the number of members of high rank. Such competition is never resolved through armed combat.

Relationships

Dari have a complex set of relationships. These relationships are divided into three types: kin, spouse and kith.

Kin

Kin relationships include parents, siblings and children. The parental relationships exhibit some of the complexity of Daro relationships.

Children, when born, usually belong to the family and clan of one of their

parents. This parent is both a blood parent and a custodial parent. In general, custodial parents are the most significant amongst the Daro. The other blood parent, if named, has certain rights with regard to the child. These rights are based on Daro tradition and the terms of the spousal contract in which the child was conceived. The rights often include living in the same family tents as the custodial parent and child for the first 3 years of a child's life, some responsibility for ensuring the health and welfare of the child until he becomes a uhlan, and the right to have the child spend one uhlan winter in the family tents of the blood parent. Surrogacy is not uncommon amongst the Daro, and so it is quite possible for neither blood parent to be a custodial parent.

In addition to both blood parents and custodial parents, there are sibling parents and grandparents. The sibling parents are the brothers and sisters of both blood and custodial parents. Sibling parents have the right and responsibility to bring custodial parents before a shaman if there is some question as to how the child is being brought up. When a child is discovered to have been abused, it is very common for all the sibling parents to be convicted of failing to look out for the health of their sibling child.

Grandparents are all those adults who are of the same families and of the same cohorts and older of the parents (blood and custodial) of the child's blood and custodial parents. Children usually have a couple of dozen grandparents, including the heads of 2, 3 or more families.

The siblings of a person include all those who share a blood parent, all those who share a custodial parent, and all those of the same age cohort and the same blood and custodial families of the person. These are blood-siblings, full-siblings and half-siblings respectively.

Spouse

Every sexual relationship is covered by an explicit or implicit spousal contract. At its simplest, a 'one night stand' is an implicit contract that excludes the birthing of children and any obligations of continued relationship. These contracts are unusual among the Daro.

More common are explicit contracts that commit the Dari to a relationship which may be exclusive or not and which may include children or not. Any contract that includes children must also be approved by the heads of the families as it will specify to which family the child will belong. (Usually the family of the lesser clan or lesser house, with child maintenance paid annually by the family in the more senior clan. Otherwise the senior family must pay a large lump sum payment to the junior family.) Lodgemates and family members cannot enter any spousal contract with another lodgemate or family member.

Long term, even life-long, exclusive contracts are not uncommon though all such contracts include reviews of the contract after certain periods of time. The contracts requiring the greatest commitment are called covenants and can only be entered into after the individuals have gained the age of 27. Covenants are entered into in a religious rite and the spouses can only leave such a covenant for the most serious of reasons and after extensive counselling.

There are no taboos amongst the Daro against same-gendered relationships, and, depending upon the wording of the contracts, a person may be in multiple contracts—spousal relationships—at once. Though quite rare, there are occasionally spousal contracts entered into by more than two people. Uhlani are forbidden to enter a spousal contract while they remain uhlani.

Kith

Formal kith relationships are relationships between unrelated persons for non-sexual reasons. These relationships often use the term 'mates' to describe them. These kith relationships are the equivalent of sibling or spousal relationships and include a variety of legal rights and responsibilities.

The most common of these kith relationships is with the other members of a Dare's lodge. Lodgemates are accounted as siblings once removed or one category further out than half-siblings. The lodgemates chosen to accompany a person during their 'free-time' on some adventure are bound by an implicit contract that grants each Dare the status (though not the contractual relationship) of spouse to the others for the duration of the adventure. That means that the other unitmates automatically inherit the disposable income of a Dare who dies while on such an expedition.

Many Dari enter long-term or life-long and deeply committed kith relationships (the equivalent to blood-siblings) and never enter an equivalent spousal relationship.

Children and Youth

While children are of the Daro, they are not Dari. A *Dare* is an adult of the Daro. Instead, children are *Darres*. Children have few responsibilities and many privileges amongst the Daro. Given the origins of the Daro and much of their history, children are extraordinarily precious and are very spoiled. Children have their own deity, Sheld, whom they worship with garlands of flowers and with and in their play. And it is this play that children are 'expected' to do.

In the tents of the Daro, children are permitted anywhere on the family side,

while the war side is completely out of bounds. A child may not enter a tent on the war side or even be in the area of those tents. One of the only times a child will be punished is if she is found on the war side.

Children are encouraged to spend as much time as possible with the family horses. Most Darres can ride as soon as they can walk, if not sooner, and one of their only responsibilities is to share in the care of the horses.

Uhlani

Around age 10 a Darres makes the transition from being a child to being a Dare-in-training, a *uhlan*. Generally, a family will enrol a group of 9 through 11 year olds as uhlani once every 3 years. The enrolment of uhlani happens at the spring equinox during the clan's Thannok and is accompanied by a series of rituals leading up to the enrolment and for the week following. At enrolment, a child formally separates from their family and becomes a uhlani—no longer carefree and responsibility free, but bound into about 6 years of intense and structured formation and training.

A uhlani does not return to her family for the first eighteen months after enrolment. The first 6 months are spent with hundreds of other uhlani at a clan training camp where reading, writing, mathematics and history, as well as time for adjustment and ritual are emphasized.

The next 6 months, over the first winter away from the family, are spent with 3 other uhlani in a foster family. The next winter will be spent back with their own family—but now living in the dormitory tents of the single Daro on the war side. Each of the remaining winters of uhlani training will be spent with a different foster family, and in a different unit of uhlani, giving the uhlani the opportunity to meet other peers and learn the trades

and skills of a number of different families.

The summers are spent in a training camp learning both the intellectual and practical skills needed for living as an adult of the Daro and the military skills that will prepare them for the other side of adult life.

Vision Quest

Generally around 15 years of age, a uhlani will take her vision quest. This begins with 4 uhlani heading off into a wilderness area for one week with only the most basic supplies. They must gather their own food and survive in the harsh conditions chosen for them. Although one of the critical elements of the vision quest is for the uhlani to learn to aid each other in the most difficult of circumstances, they are also expected to spend time apart. During the middle of the week, this must include 3 days of fasting and sharing only the evening ritual together before separating again. It is these three days, longer if necessary, during which a uhlani will discover her totem. Often, the uhlani will not be sure she knows her totem as the uhlani leave the wilderness, but each one is carefully debriefed by a shaman afterwards and the dream images or other signs will be interpreted then.

Knowing her totem allows the uhlani to enter her final year of training. This includes time spent in other clans, in intense religious training, and with people from a variety of lodges of her newly discovered totem. Once the uhlani has chosen a lodge, passed both the military and the academic tests, and been debriefed one last time by a shaman, she is ready to be initiated at the following Dennok of her totem. The Darress-then uhlani is now an adult, a Dare, and ready to take on all the responsibilities and privileges of Daro life.

The Daro

Dari as individuals and their families, clans, totems and the Sordran faith are all dealt with elsewhere, but what about the Daro as a people and nation?

The Daro are firstly a people before they are a nation. As a people they are a nomadic confederation of clans drawn together through a shared history and ethos. The Daro may own or control land for a time. On that land they will graze their herds and grow their crops and craft their possessions, but the land is not the Daro and at some time in the future, the Daro will move on, leaving that land for others. Of course, that land will remain part of the Daro demesne with its connections to the Spirit Plane.

At the same time, the Daro, as a people, have a government and all the functions of a state are exercised by the Daro. They are a nation, just one where the land on which they dwell is not the definition of their statehood, but the people themselves.

Land

This complex relationship between the Daro and land is expressed in a number of different ways. The land upon which the Daro, as a people, currently dwell is considered the property of the people. Within that land, families will choose to dwell in certain places and travel along certain routes, usually under the oversight of their house. When disputes occur, they will be mediated by their clan, if internal, or by the Interclan Office of Mediation of the Council of the Clans.

The Daro often also establish several cities on the land or lands that serve as permanent settlements. These are often places where the more complex crafting needs of the people are worked on, where embassies of other nations will be based, and where families can rest from the stresses of the nomadic life for a time.

The cities are directly under the administration of the Daro, rather than a particular clan or clans. The Daro prince will appoint a Duke to have executive responsibility for each city. The ducal title and responsibility are hereditary within a family while both the city and the family exist.

At certain times in Daro history, the Daro, as a people, have established or taken possession of other lands. These may be colonies, other planets or nations, or extensions to the Daro demesne. These additional lands, if separate from the primary territory currently held by the Daro, will also be governed by Dukes and sometimes High Dukes and are called duchies. These additional lands may also have large non-Daro populations. These non-Daro residents are citizens of that Duchy. The duchies then have a complex bureaucratic, taxation and legal system to ensure the general equality of all residents of the duchy while also incorporating the equivalent systems of the Daro and the clans. These duchies can even enter into limited diplomatic arrangements with neighbouring or other significant states and even establish permanent missions of the rank of legations. The appointment of diplomats and staff is made by the pendragon of the Daro.

And finally, individual families may own lands, even titles, anywhere in the multiverse. Though not common, there are Daro families who are the rulers of independent states on one planet or another. These other lands, even states, are not part of the Daro demesne (though they are almost always part of the spiritual demesne). The citizens of these other places have no direct call upon the Daro as either a people or a state unless they are also Dari themselves. Of course, the individual families will pay taxes to their clan for their assets and income, including these external lands and states, and will submit to oversight from their

clan and the Daro government for their 'management' of these lands.

The Daro State

The Daro state is headed by the Prince of the Daro who is always the Earl of the Clan Dar'ren. The prince is assisted by a privy council and by the Daro bureaucracy.

The prince has substantial authority to make war and peace and to establish relationships with other nations. She also, as executive of the Daro bureaucracy, has various responsibilities for regulation of inter-clan organisations, keeping histories and lore of the people, and the promotion of the Daro, especially through trade and tourism, throughout the multiverse.

The privy council of the Daro state includes:

- **Prince;**
- **Herald:** the head of the Daro military and the Department of War;
- **Pendragon:** the diplomatic head of the Daro and head of the Department of Foreign Affairs;
- **Councillor-Superior:** the councillor to the Council of the Clans elected as chair of that Council;
- **Totemlords:** two shamans of the rank of lord are chosen by each clan Council of Lodges to serve on the Daro Council of Review, the Council of Review then chooses three of these totemlords to sit on the privy council for 5 year terms such that every totem is evenly represented;
- **Protonotary:** the head of the Daro bureaucracy, in particular, of the Departments of Trade and Tourism and of Home Affairs;
- **Colour Knights:** the champions of the Daro;
- **Lodgemaster:** the lodgemaster of the prince's lodge serves as the shaman to the privy council and *de facto* representative of the lodges;

- **Dukes:** each duke of the Daro cities serves, in turn, a 5 year term on the privy council, as does each High Duke in turn;
- **Privy Councillors:** the prince may appoint up to 4 privy councillors;
- **Councillors:** 4 councillors of the Council of the Clans are appointed to the privy council.

At the beginning of the New Age on Vinyemeer, the Prince institutes an additional privy council member named the Gatelord. With the agreement of the clans, the Gatelord is given responsibility for all off-world possessions of the Daro. The gatelord, therefore, provides direct oversight for all the off-Vinyemeer dukes and high dukes.

The bureaucracy of the Daro state includes the Departments of Foreign Affairs, War, Trade and Tourism, and Home Affairs. Each department is headed by a notary, procurators head divisions, curators head offices and sub-curators head sections.

The government of the Daro state consists of the Council of the Clans of the Daro and the Prince in Council. The Council of the Clans is the legislative unit of government and consists of all the clan earls with voice and vote, the gatelord (New Age on Vinyemeer and later) with voice and vote, the two councillors and one banner lord elected from each clan and one councillor elected from each sub-clan and each high duchy with voice and vote and, with voice only, the herald and the pendragon, sub-earls, and the dukes of the Daro territorial cities and any high dukes. In the event of a vacancy in the Earlship of the clan Dar'ren, the herald and pendragon gain vote until the new earl is affirmed by the Council.

The Council of the Clans is also responsible for the Interclan Office of Mediation which mediates disputes between clans over clan rights. The office functions as an administrative court before which the tentmasters of opposing

clans will appear to argue their case. As well as the procurator of the office, two totemlords from the Council of Review, and not of the opposing clans, will sit on the court. Appeal from this office is to the Council of the Clans.

The Prince in Council functions as a senate, or house of review and veto, for the legislative Council of the Clans. The prince and privy council cannot themselves legislate but can veto legislation proposed by the Council. The prince and privy council cannot veto other decisions of the Council of the Clans.

The privy council is also the final court of appeal for criminal cases and most civil cases that do not involve constitutional challenges or disputes between clans. When sitting as a court of appeal, often only the totemlords serve as

the privy council. One of the totemlords always presides at these times.

The final part of the Daro state is the Daro Council of Review. This is the judicial body which is the final court of appeal for constitutional issues and receives, and acts upon, the audits and inspections of the Provosts. Each clan Council of Lodges appoints a totemmaster to serve a 3 year term on this Council. Each totemmaster is assisted by an alcalde and a unit of provosts.

The Military

No discussion of Daro culture can ignore the central place that the military has within the Daro. Every Dare has received military training and is, in theory, a 'reservist'. And the vast majority of Dari will spend some time in

Daro Mercenaries

You hire Daro as mercenaries to train your own troops, protect a particularly sensitive asset, or to give your own armies an edge over your opponent's. This last is the most typical usage of Daro mercenaries and is well demonstrated by the force sent to Draff.

That force consisted of 12 strikes and was led by a Force Leader.

- Strike 1 Force Leader & 3 clerks, 1 unit of Provosts, 1 unit of siege engineers, 1 unit of psiguards, 1 unit of battle magi
- Strikes 2-3 Strike Leader & healer adepts and a master psion or two, 4 units with three scouts and one planar scout per unit
- Strike 4 Force Corporal & 3 clerks, 4 regular units
- Strikes 5-12 Strike Leader & 1 psiguard, 1 clerk and 1 scout, 4 regular units

Each regular unit consisted of one totem champion and three clan serjeants, or four holy warriors. The members of such a unit also share the following abilities: a healer, a psionist, a cook, and a shaman or battle adept or battle mage.

This is a fairly typical mercenary force. Every member of such a force will have a minimum character level of 7 and minimum ranks in Knowledge (war) of 7. They will all have undergone a one month mercenary training course sometime in the previous year and their ranks in Knowledge (war) give all Daro mercenaries some knowledge of strategy and different forms of warfare.

Of course, Daro mercenaries do not come cheap. This force costs about 650g (1.4lbs) of gold per day per person! You also cannot contract for anything less than one strike of Daro mercenaries. The only maximum limit is the number of trained and available Daro and your gold reserves.

active military units at some point in their lives.

This military culture developed out of the earliest interaction between the Sword Folk and the Ardrak. Already firmly committed to social justice and peace, the Sword Folk could not ignore the threat the Ardrak posed to both. The Ardrak were tearing the multiverse apart—destroying many and enslaving the rest while whole universes were being devastated.

In the daring rescue of the prisoners during what became known as the Battle of Dragon Hill, the Daro commitment to intervening on the side of peace and justice had its origins. The basic elements of Daro military structure also had their origins in that encounter. Since that time, the commitment has never wavered and the structure has not changed at its most basic.

The Unit

The basic element of the Daro military system is the ‘unit’ of four warriors. One of the lessons of that first encounter with an Ardraken was the need for both flexibility and a minimum structure of support. The actions of the four young Sword Folk as they defeated the Ardraken demonstrated the power of a basic unit of 4 warriors, and so the unit was born.

In early times, each house was responsible for providing a certain number of units for active service at any one time. Originally these units would serve under the leadership of the clan’s warlord.

In time, some units became specialized to provide those functions that require additional training. Examples of these units include scouts and guards. These units remained under the command of the clan warlord until a more structured military was developed later in the Ardrak Age. Even then, all the members

of a unit (except provost units) are drawn from the same house or, later, lodge.

The unit also began to feature in Daro life outside the military. In time, any Dare when outside her family would live and work within a unit. Exceptions from this are relatively rare. Family and house/lodge leadership permit a Dare to engage in activities alone only after evaluation by a shaman and only for a certain period of time. Loners are simply not common within the genetic makeup of the Daro. However, the reality of human nature is such that most Dari will ask for and receive permission to take ‘alonetime’ at least once or twice during a lifetime.

It is more common for a formally married couple to take some time each year away from family, lodge and unit. This vacation time will always be taken somewhere within the Daro Demesne, as will ‘alonetime’.

Although a unit is very egalitarian in structure, for military purposes, a ‘unit leader’ is still appointed. For most units the unit leader will rotate so that all unit members have the opportunity to gain leadership experience.

Military Structure

While the clan provided all the higher level structure needed in the early years, a variety of middle level structures were tried. Over time the ‘strike’ level became standard for almost all combat units.

The strike consists of 5 units with the command structure contained within the unit structure. This is one of the more unique parts of Daro military structure—every commander remains a member of one of the units within his command. So every strike consists of exactly 20 members, whatever its command structure.

Each strike is headed by a strike leader assisted by one or more strike corporals. A mercenary strike

independent of any other command structure will have several strike corporals to cover the various logistic and tactical needs of an independent strike, while a strike in a battle cohort will have just one strike corporal ready to take over command if the strike leader is struck down.

Strikes may be organised into further structures based on military needs. The most common are forces (fifty units) and cohorts (five hundred units). Units and/or strikes are also often combined into 'bureaus' which are of varying size, though smaller than a cohort, and which fulfil particular functions. So the scouts may have a Bureau of Planar Exploration with numerous units of planar scouts plus several strikes of traditional troops to provide emergency support for the planar scouts.

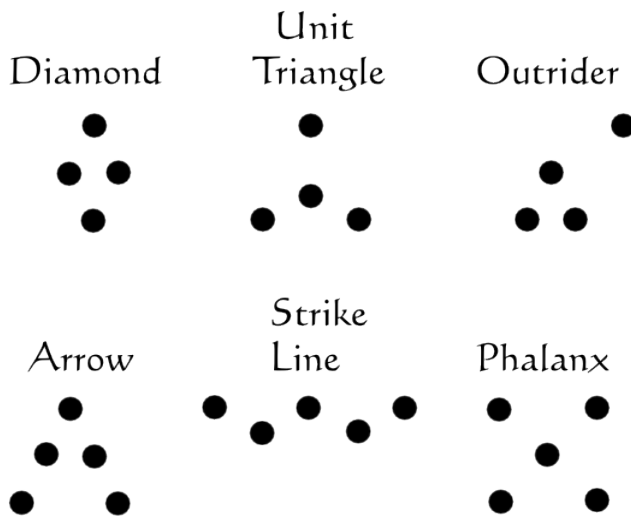
Naval organisation retains the unit as the basic organising structure. Obviously, above the unit the organisation is based

upon the ship and its size rather than strikes, forces and cohorts. At different times groups of ships have been structured in different ways—though the squadron and the fleet are very common in Daro history.

As time passed, much of the active military structure passed from clan control to Daro control as the need increased for better coordination. Clans retain overall control of the military, especially when the whole people are on the move. The clan warlords also must approve the appointment of the Daro Herald and of all appointments of general rank. They can also censure and even remove an Herald, although the ex-Herald may remain the warlord of the Clan Dar'ren. If necessary, the Council of Warlords can take the role of the Herald, though, for obvious reasons, this is rarely done.

Once the military was restructured as a Daro-wide entity, the Herald and the generals became the core of the high level military structure. Although the full structure has varied considerably over the millennia, the basic structure remains the Herald assisted by at least one lieutenant-general and a General Staff. The General Staff includes the generals of each of the core marching sections of vanguard, rearguard, and centre, plus specialist generals of, at least, the scouts and the provosts. One or more naval admirals round out the core General Staff. Other specialist generals and admirals, plus various lieutenant-generals and vice-admirals assisting the generals and admirals expands this core high level structure when the numbers warrant.

Daro Formations



In a strike, the units are usually in a Triangle formation though a Diamond formation is sometimes used. Formations of troops larger than a strike will always be variants of the strike formations adapted for the number of units available.

These formations are used whether the Daro are mounted or not. The formations can also enlarge or contract based upon the needs of the moment.

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Diplomacy

While the military service of the Daro is, perhaps, the most well known aspect of the Daro throughout the multiverse,

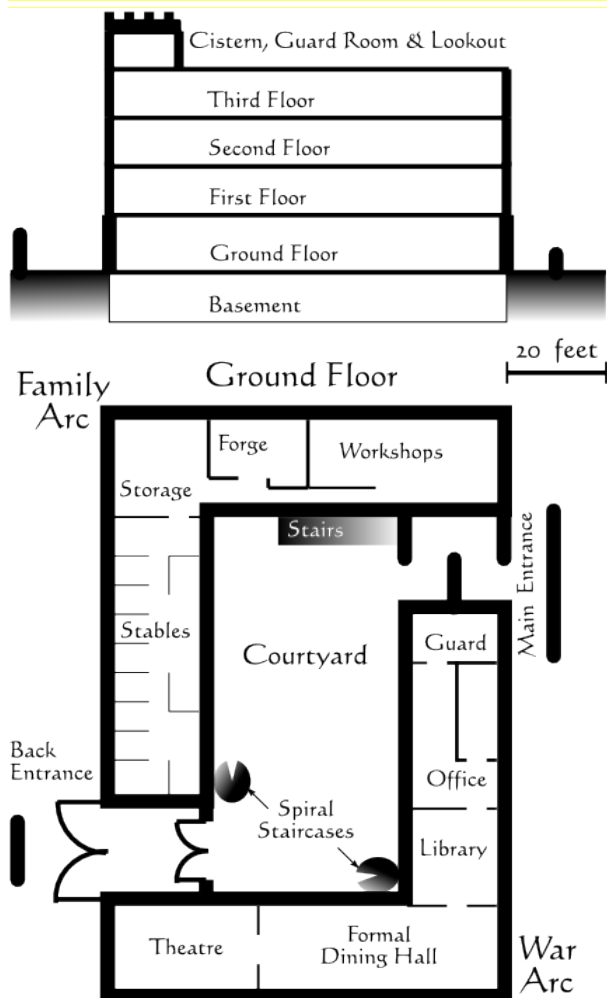
their diplomatic work is arguably the more important. The commitment of the Daro to peace may, at first glance, seem paradoxical. However, the Daro see both military strength and diplomatic prowess as being vital to their own future and to the future of the multiverse.

At the same time, the diplomatic side of Daro life appears to be complicated as both individual clans and the Daro 'state' have extensive diplomatic corps and enter into treaties and other diplomatic agreements with other states throughout the multiverse. Any clan may enter into a diplomatic agreement with another state without the approval of the Daro state apparatus as long as the agreement does not materially damage the Daro as a people.

At the same time, any diplomatic agreement by an individual clan may be signed onto by other clans without further negotiation—so sharing the benefits of one clan's treaty with all. Also, the treaty made by an individual clan is superseded by contradictory or amending language in any later agreement made by the Daro as a people.

Structure

There are 3 ranks of permanent diplomatic missions in international law. These are embassies headed by ambassadors, legations headed by legates and residentiaries headed by ministers resident. In practice, the last is used almost exclusively by large and



Daro Embassy or Legation

This is the standard form of a small Daro permanent mission. It is identical to a normal family house in a Daro city. It is, of course, very defensible.

The embassy or legation is staffed by a single family—between 80 and 100 individuals, including children. The family serves the embassy for three years before being replaced by another family. In addition to the family staffing the mission, there is always a unit of provosts who serve for one year as the independent inspectorate for the mission. Of course, the other inhabitants of the mission are the head of the mission and her unitmates. A permanent mission this size is normally headed by a Nuncio or Legate.

	War Arc	Family Arc
Third Floor	Barracks Cistern	Bedrooms Cistern Workshops Uhlani Quarters
Second Floor	Guest Rooms Head of Mission Rooms Provost Quarters	Bedrooms Family Office
First Floor	Gatehouse (over main entrance) Guest Bedrooms	Gatehouse (over back entrance) Bedrooms Chapel
Basement	Dining Hall Kitchen Storage	Laundry Common Area Storage

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powerful nations for the permanent missions to small neighbours. The other two ranks of permanent missions reflect the importance the two states place on their relationship. For nations that have very vital relationships, they will exchange ambassadors. For all the rest that are important enough to have a permanent mission, the nations will exchange legates.

The Daro clans may establish legations with other states, while the Daro state (technically, the Daro people) may establish legations and embassies. Note that duchies, Daro territories that are not connected with the formal homeland, also have limited authority to establish missions of the rank of legations only.

Amongst the Daro, the diplomatic ranks are:

- **Pronuncio** an ambassador with full plenipotentiary power;
- **Nuncio** a resident ambassador or ambassador at large without plenipotentiary power;
- **Internuncio** a legate, with or without plenipotentiary power;
- **Ablegate** a legate at large or envoy;
- **sub-Nuncio** the Deputy Head of a Mission of any rank is a sub-nuncio—this person is not formally a representative of the head of state but, rather, of the pendragon.

The Daro do not have Ministers Resident or permanent missions of that rank.

The sub-nuncio or deputy head of a permanent mission is usually a member of the family which staffs the embassy or legation. The curator or procurator of the mission and the various sub-curators are all members of that family, as are the mission's guards. All members of the family have some degree of diplomatic immunity.

Also, the Daro military has a small diplomatic service which is exclusively involved in negotiating mercenary

contracts and the peace treaties between the combatants in wars in which the Daro have served as mercenaries. Almost every mercenary contract includes the right and responsibility of the Daro to try and achieve peace in the conflict covered by the contract. The military diplomats are called harbingers and rank as nuncios or ambassadors and are never the heads of permanent missions.

Work and Recreation

Daro often find the boundaries between work and recreation rather blurred. Many Dari will continue to hone their physical prowess and military skills even when their work is in the clan bureaucracy or with the family herds. Others will adventure far from home with three lodgemates in their 'off' time between family work and clan responsibilities.

At the same time, while adventuring far from home, the member of a family that herds goats will be on the lookout for new breeds, new tools and the wisdom of other goatherders throughout the multiverse. Another adventurer may come from a trading family and will come home with a contract to trade a local delicacy for Daro weapons, perhaps.

Work

Most Dari have one or more occupations which they pursue during their lifetime. They may be blacksmiths, priests, singers, bureaucrats, soldiers, diplomats, veterinarians, jewellers or any of a thousand other professions. Sometimes, a Dare's profession will be needed directly by their own family and so their family service will be to continue pursuing their normal occupation.

At other times their occupations will have no relevance to the particular needs of the family at that time. However, the

income of the family member may be more important. So, again, the Dare may pursue his own occupation during his family service. On another occasion the family may need goatherders up in the hills and have no need for either jewellers or the income they produce. So on that occasion, a Dare jeweller may head up into the hills for three months of goatherding for his family service.

Recreation

It might seem as though the Daro are a very serious and even dull race. Nothing could be further from the truth. From horse races and gambling to family word puzzles and sports, Daro enjoy a variety of leisure pursuits and recreational activities. Indeed, as long as a Dare does not bring dishonour to her family and lodge, and fulfills her ritual and service obligations to family and lodge, her time is her own.

Horse Racing

Horse racing is a national pastime for the Daro and begins when still children. The Daro horses and ponies are amongst the best in the multiverse and their riding skills are legendary. One kilometre ($\frac{2}{3}$

mile), 1.5 kilometre (1 mile), 3 kilometre (2 mile) and one league (5 km/3 mile) races are most common with children usually racing in only the shortest races. There are oval race tracks in the cities and oval tracks will often be set up during dennoks and thannoks. At other times the races will be the less formal 'from here to there and back again'.

Those who win major horse races at dennoks and thannoks and in the cities can often achieve considerable fame and prestige. The prize money alone can often be more than 50kg of gold in some of the most famous races.

When determining the winner of a horse race, all riders make a Ride check. Each rider of a faster mount adds to his result a bonus equal to his increased speed over the slowest horse. The rider with the highest ride check wins. The difference in scores equals the difference in yards from the nose of one horse to the nose of the next horse.

The race can be divided in stages for dramatic effect. In this case, each rider not in first place subtracts their result from the first place rider's result to get a penalty on the next check.

Any rider who rolls a natural 1 either has his mount balk and refuse to continue racing (70%) or falls off the horse (10%)

Daro Income

Each Dare is paid a monthly stipend by his family. Although the amount varies by time and place, it often averages about 250g ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb) of gold per month. Each lodge also pays its members an annual bonus based upon rank.

Apart from any income a Dare earns while fulfilling his obligation of service to his family, all other income the Dare receives during the year goes directly to the lodge. However, the Dare may keep 25% of the value of that income for his own use.

What is this income? It includes his pay from the military, both as a mercenary and in regular military service, his pay from working in the clan or Daro bureaucracies, any professional income (as a blacksmith, performer, cook, priest, etc), and any treasure or other income from adventuring, trading and so on. Normally, a Dare is expected to earn at least 500g (1lb) of gold a month. An average mercenary contract may provide a Dare with income closer to 8.4kg (18.5lbs) of gold per month.

The lodge then disperses half of the income to the families of its members, and, after covering costs, the rest is dispersed as the annual bonus.

or has his mount fall (20%). In the case of a fall, the rider must make a successful Ride check for a soft fall (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of falling damage and 1d6 points of non-lethal damage for every 60 feet over the base speed of the horse. The horse must also make a successful Dexterity check (DC 10 +1 per 60 feet or part thereof of the horse's speed over its base speed) or break its leg doing 1d8 + 6 points of damage in the process.

Four children race over a one kilometre oval course. A check is made at 500m and Andren is first with a result of 21, Josheer is coming second 3 yards further back (check result of 18). Rodhan is 3rd with a check result of 12 and Trander is 4th with a result of 11.

At the finish line Andren will not adjust her check result, Josheer will take a penalty of -3 on his, Rodhan a penalty of -9 and Trander -10.

"Andren wins with Rodhan putting on a burst of speed at the end to come in second, nosing out Josheer who comes in third. Trander, who will, I'm sure, do better in next year's race, comes in last."

Steeplechase

The cross-country horse race is also very common. These races are never run over prepared tracks, except for the possible inclusion of some jumps. A consistent winner of these races always has greater prestige than the winner of a normal horse race, though the prize money is usually a lot less.

In this race, a ride check must be made every 200m ($\frac{1}{8}$ mile) for shorter races of up to 3km and every 500m ($\frac{1}{3}$ mile) for longer races—1 league or more. This check is first made against a DC of 15 by each rider. On a natural 1 the mount balks or falls, or the rider falls as for a normal horse race. Otherwise, a failed check results in a time penalty to the race equal to 15 - the check result. This time penalty is then taken off the result when comparing the check results

from rider to rider to determine who is in the lead. The time penalty is also taken off the result for the comparison at the next check. Also take the penalties on the next check for coming in after 1st place as for a normal horse race when done in stages.

Card Games

Card decks are small and portable and almost every Dare carries at least one deck with him. The decks the Daro use are a 27 card deck, a 52 card deck and an 100 card deck.

The 27 card deck has two suits called Week 1 (blue) and Week 2 (red). Each card is named for a month of the year. There are then 3 extra cards which are yellow and named for the three intercalary days. These yellow cards are wild cards. The games played with this deck tend to be very fast games and will be based around events during the months.

For instance, soldiers often play a game with this deck called 'wern' which is somewhat similar to a two suit euchre with the cards for the 'battle months', Janor, Irpra, Yanin and Mardhe, having the highest value in ascending order. The other months are valued in order beginning with Arpra as the lowest valued card. In this game, the yellow cards are equal in value and fall between the regular months and the battle months.

The 52 card deck has 4 suits—the 2 red suits are cups and diamonds and the 2 blue suits are swords and clubs. There are 13 cards in each suit beginning with the 'darres' card 1, then the 'uhlan' cards 2 through 9, and then the 'face' cards, adult, officer, master and lord. In some games the darres card is the highest valued card and in many games the face cards are all valued at 10.

The 100 card deck has 5 suits—Red Strike 1 (circles), Red Strike 2 (hearts), Blue Strike 1 (sticks), Blue Strike 2

(swords), Yellow Strike (runes). In each suit there are 1 strike leader, 1 strike corporal, 5 unit leaders and 13 soldiers numbered 1 through 13. In games using this deck, 1 soldier card is always turned up at the beginning of the game and it is called the force leader. The other 4 soldier cards of the same number are then called force corporals and they become the highest valued cards in the game.

A variety of pegging games also exist that accompany the various decks with the most common using the 52 card deck and resembling cribbage.

Gambling

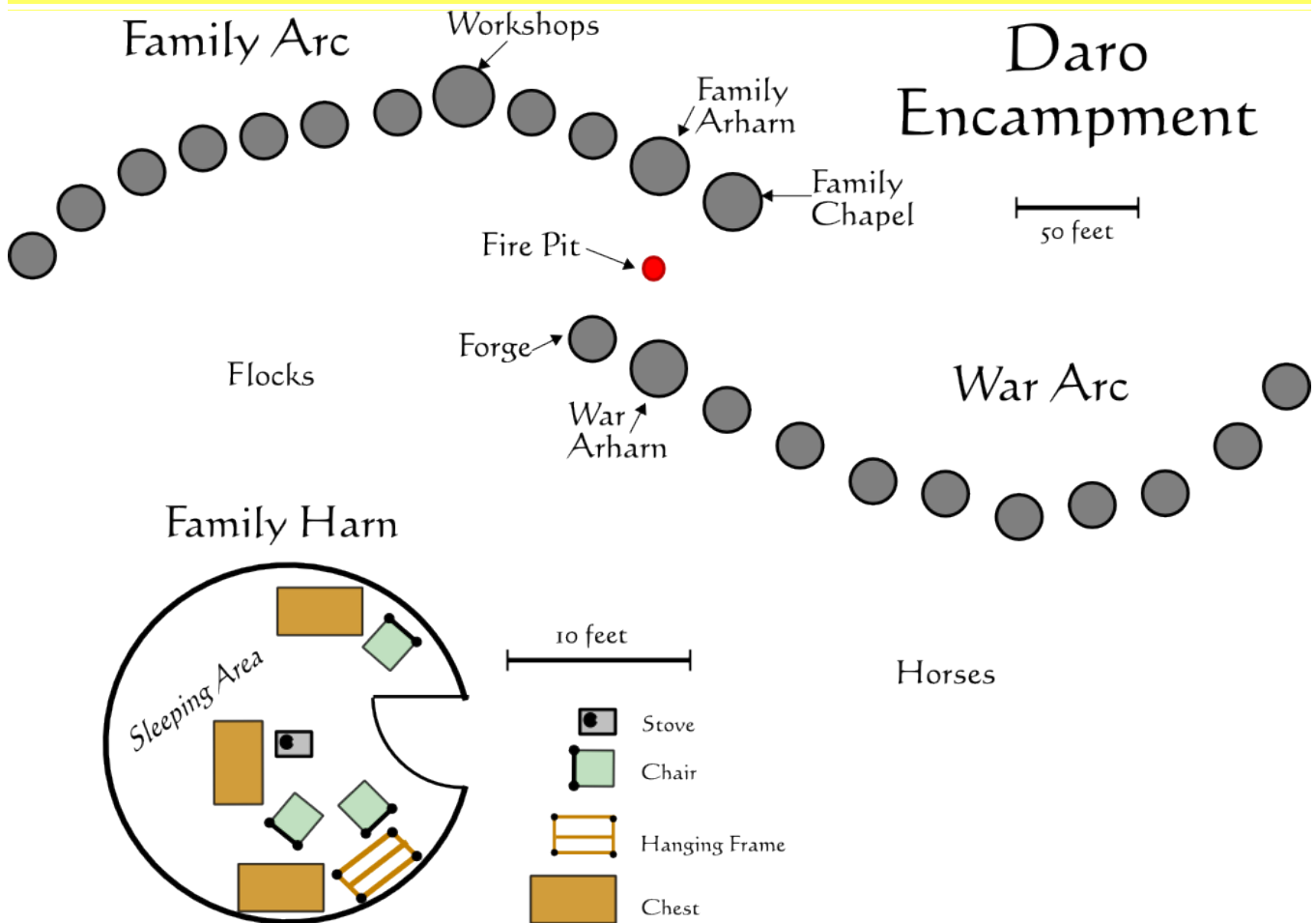
Daro love to gamble though they will very rarely gamble for more than a month's stipend or a pretty piece of jewellery. Obviously horse races and card

games are favourite events on which to gamble, though almost any activity could have a small wager placed upon its outcome. However, anything that involves the fate of human lives, like battles, are never wagered upon.

Priests and devoted followers of Kishitan are the most regular gamblers and those who worship Shaidhen almost never do. Children are never allowed to gamble except for chores or flowers or other 'renewable' resources.

Home

The average Daro family lives in an encampment of tents. These tents resemble 'gurs' or 'yurts' and are always arranged in 2 arcs that face in opposite directions and overlap. One arc is the



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'war' arc and the other is the 'family' arc. A large fire pit will sit in the middle of the overlap with a large tent on each arc facing the pit. The war side tent is the family's war room—part tactical, planning space and part armoury. On the family side, this large tent is the family meeting tent.

The family arc also includes tents for the head of the family and for each group of parents and children (*darres*), plus the family chapel. On the war arc are the tents for uhlán and currently childless adults.

The average tent, *harn*, of the Daro is a circle with a diameter of 6 metres (four squares or 20 feet). On the family side there might be 2 or 3 adults and 4 or 5 children in a single *harn*. On the war arc, the average *harn* might have a unit of Dari or uhlán. In the latter case a chaperone also lives in the *harn*.

An average family has between 20 and 24 *harn* total in a single encampment. This encampment is often kept in place for about half a year. The family will then move somewhere else for the other half a year. Some families will spend one half of the year in one of the Daro cities, sharing a house with another family in a 'timeshare' fashion. Very few families live permanently in one place for more than a few years at a time.

Daro cities have streets and streets of identical houses, each one easily defensible, and all of them made unique with paintings and mosaics on their outside surfaces. Only the buildings which house the families of clan leaders, lodges and parts of the Daro bureaucracy, plus buildings like warehouses and embassies are different. Most inns for visiting Daro and foreigners are identical to family homes.

The *harn* or city home will be furnished with several small trunks and furniture on which items can be hung. Scattered around will be several comfortable chairs that fold easily. The beds are mattresses

that are rolled up and stacked to one side each morning. On the floor will be carpets and rugs of fantastic colours and designs. The walls will have similar tapestries, often portraying famous moments in the family's history.

In the encampment or building will be a small forge and workshops of various kinds. Of course, stables for the horses are integral to the city buildings, though most of the family's stock will be stabled and pastured at the edge of the city. In the encampment, the horses are always pastured on the 'back' side of the war arc.

Clothing

After centuries of largely following High Kingdom fashions in clothing, the return of the Daro to their homeland brought with it an almost universal return to more traditional Daro fashions at the beginning of the New Age. These particular fashions reoccur regularly throughout Daro history from the earliest days. Variants are more commonly found in particular styles, cuts and decorations, rather than in the clothes themselves.

Men

Generally men will wear a cloth loincloth or kilt with the belt of a weapons' harness around the waist. Leather chaps are often worn when riding or heavy cotton or linen trousers may be worn.

Most men will wear nothing on their torso beyond the rest of the leather straps of the weapons' harness. A cloak may be attached to the harness and will often be of wool or fur lined leather, though shorter and dressier cloaks of linen or silk may also be worn. For formal occasions, either a sleeveless vest, opened at the front, or a side-less long silk or linen smock may be worn. The vest

or the smock will be heavily decorated with traditional designs in coloured and metallic threads, along with fringes and tassels.

Men wear their hair long and gathered in a queue or a number of braids. Various parts of their head may be shaved, either for fashion or to meet the taboos of their totem. Men rarely have much, if any, facial or body hair though the clans Rryn and Erhad are known for producing some spectacularly bearded Dari!

Footwear can include leather boots or sandals, although many Dari go barefoot much of the time.

Jewellery is very common on hands, arms, legs, and as piercings all over the body. Much of an average Dare's portable wealth may be worn! This will extend to scabbards and quivers and the whole weapons' harness. However, the torc is the only item worn around the neck and the scabbard of the ancestral dirk is always beautifully tooled leather but otherwise plain of jewels and precious metals.

Women

Women's clothes are not significantly different to mens. Women are more likely to wear kilts than loincloths and trousers are also quite popular. Most woman also wear a breastcloth either over or binding their breasts.

Short hair is more common amongst Daro women than amongst men, though long, braided hair is the most common hair style. Women also often wear jewelled hair decorations and nets, though hats are virtually unknown among the Dari. Boots are also somewhat more commonly worn by women, though sandals are also worn and barefeet are more common than not.

Formal wear tends to be lightweight silk or linen trousers, breastcloth and cloak. The vest of Daro men is never

worn by women though the smock is sometimes.

Specialist Clothes

Specialist tasks may call for specialist clothes, including the heavy leather apron of the smith and the cotton or linen apron of the agricultural worker. Shipboard clothing rarely includes a full weapons' harness so that there is less danger of becoming caught in the rigging. Instead, a leather belt only might be worn over a loincloth or trousers. Barefeet are standard shipboard.

Nudity is not uncommon amongst the Daro, especially in connection with their ritual life. Certain jobs also tend to be done naked. However, it is more commonly children, rather than adults, who are regularly naked.

Calendars

The Daro calendar uses a standard year divided into 363 standard days. This is then further divided into 12 months of 30 days each month plus a New Year's Day, a Mid Year's Day, and a New Year's Eve. Each month is divided into two 15 day weeks.

Each planet within the Daro Demesne will use its own time (though with a fifteen day week standard). Generally, official documents will seek to keep track of both times.

The Daro year begins one week and one day after the Spring equinox on New Year's Day which is intercalary. The whole calendar follows:

New Year's Day

Arpra

Irpra

First firstday: Summer begins

Janor

First thirteenthday: Summer solstice

Friidhe

Darna

First firstday: Autumn begins

Yanin

First lastday: Autumnal equinox

Mid Year's Day

Ogodhe**Novrin**

First firstday: Winter begins

Dakwinda

First lastday: Winter solstice

Vennin**Fedhe**

First firstday: Spring begins

Mardhe

Second firstday: Spring equinox

New Year's Eve

Note that the months are in bold.

On Vinyemeer, leap years occur every 8 years with the doubling of Mid Year's Day (called First and Second Mid Year's Days). The leap year occurs on those years directly divisible by eight, for instance 2792HA. Every 336 years the leap day is not added. The last time being 2786HA.

Each month is divided into two weeks of 15 days and the days of the month are described as follows:

First Firstday

First Secondday

First Thirdday

First Fourthday

First Fifthday

First Sixthday

First Seventhday

First Middleday

First Eighthday...

First Thirteenthday

First Lastday

Second Firstday

Second Seconday...

Second Lastday

The intercalary days and the Middledays of the week are public holidays, while Firstdays and Lastdays are religious holidays.

Currency and Finance

There are several banks amongst the Daro and each family does its banking with a particular bank. Each family member has a sub-account into which their normal income is automatically deposited and which they can access at any time.

These banks use an elaborate system of magical devices to ensure that individuals and families can access their monies almost anywhere. Once trade relationships have been established with other nations, the Daro banks quickly establish subsidiaries in these places also. This allows Dari far from the Daro homelands to still access their accounts. These non-Daro subsidiaries are also a major source of income for the families that own the parent banks.

Dari, therefore, rarely need to carry much currency with them. Within the Daro homelands, most sales are done through automatic deductions from the person's account. However, some currency is usually carried and all Dari tend to carry some of their wealth in the form of jewellery. This jewellery can always be cashed in for either Daro currency or the currency of other nations when travelling. Indeed, in addition to the jewellery and a small amount of Daro currency, most Dari when they travel will carry bullion coins of gold that can be sold for currency at their destination.

Currency

Daro coinage is made of 22carat gold or of bronze. Bullion coinage is pure gold.

**Coin D & D Weight Weight Dimen-
equiv. of Coin of Gold sions**

a senior Dare during their time as an uhlan is called a “uhlannes”.

Coin Gold (22 carat gold)

dragon	10gp	
half	5gp	
dragon		
double	2gp	
sword		
sword	1gp	8.316g
half	0.5gp	
sword		

Electrum (18 carat gold)

bit	2sp	
sword		
shilling	1sp	
half	0.5sp	
shilling		

Coin gold is 91.6% of gold and 8.4% copper. The electrum coins are 75% gold, 16% silver and 9% copper.

Language

The Daro have both an ordinary plural form and a collective plural form in their languages. In general, any noun ending in an “-(d)i” is a plural and in an “-(d)o” is a collective plural. So “Dare” is an individual member of this people, “Dari” is more than one Dare, and “Daro” is the whole people, the nation (though that term is an anachronism when speaking of the Daro!)

The diminutive form is usually formed by adding “-res” to a noun. So Daro children (anyone not initiated as an adult) are “Darres”.

Likewise, Daro youth who are undergoing training in preparation for adult initiation are “uhlan” (literally, “not yet”). The plural is “uhlani” and all the uhlani in a single year (or in a single age cohort) are the “uhlano”. A page serving



Chapter 5: Religion



The religion of the Daro, the Sordran faith, is structured around those basic characteristics of the Daro as embodied in their gods. Lore, creativity, the warrior, death and life, nature and so on are those essences that manifest as the deities. Each deity represents a part of the total Daro heritage and together the pantheon manifests the full breadth of who the Daro are. Indeed, it is not truly possible to understand the Daro unless one has explored

the Sordran faith. The faith of the Daro is more fundamental to manifesting who they are than totems and clans and earls and warriors and all the other facets that are more commonly seen as being 'the Daro'.

Of particular interest is the deity, Sheld, who is the wide-eyed child deity. She has no formal power or portfolio in the normal sense. Indeed, it is only children who worship her directly. Yet no Dare will ever enter a Daro shrine without honouring Sheld with a flower or toy or something completely whimsical. In this way the adult continues to nurture the child within.

Few outside the Daro know much about the Sordran faith and there are few temples and monasteries that people can point to as significant signs of religion within the Daro demesne. But, obviously, religion has a profound role in the life of the individual Dare. Few go through life without a patron deity and the family ritual at the start of every day honours all the gods. The responsibilities to one's patron deity include feast and fast-days,

sacrifices and the regular ritual life of the family and lodge shrines.

At the same time, the Sordran faith does not play a direct role in Daro governance. There are no priests who are *ex officio* members of clan or Daro government structures. Indeed, the faith has no real hierarchy. Priests of the Loregivers are given honour as the first amongst equals and specialty priests wield great power through their devotion, but no one speaks with formal authority for a particular deity or the whole faith.

Priests and Devotees

While all Dari are followers of the Sordran faith and all participate in rituals calling upon the aid of particular deities at particular times, many also will choose a patron deity. This patron will be served ritually during the evening, or family, ritual and in other rituals unique to that deity.

Priests

Becoming a priest amongst the Daro is quite common and most military units will have one or more priests among the four members of the unit. Priests serve both the common rituals of the Sordran faith and the particular rituals of their own patron.

Priests are those who embody the faithful aspect of the Daro and have either taken levels in the priest class or have taken the god-touched multiclass feat. Whether by taking the priest class or multiclassing as a priest, it is only when a priest is ordained during a major ritual of the patron deity that the priest begins to gain power to express his faith with the power of ritual and divine energy. This ordination only occurs after receiving training in religion and the rituals of the Sordran faith. After ordination, the priest is expected to

participate regularly in the ritual life of his faith. Unlike other professions, a priest is not paid for his work. However, he receives a bonus to his regular stipend from his family. This bonus increases as he devotes more time and effort to his role of priest.

Those who wish to take their devotion a step further may choose to become a specialty priest.

Specialty Priests

While priests are common among the Daro, only a few of those become

specialty priests or votaries. Those who do become powerful agents of the divine energies of the Daro and their deities. They embody the ethos and portfolios of their patron and so express in their life and power something of the core ethos of the Daro, themselves. At the same time, while they wield great power, they have no more authority amongst their colleagues than does an ordinary priest with the same length of service to their patron deity.

Each of the votary prestige classes is unique to the ethos of the particular deity. However, each votary shares some characteristics with other votaries. They

Daro Deities					
Name	Rank	Favoured Weapon	Domains	Worshippers	Specialty Priests
The Loregivers	19	Quarterstaff	Community, creation, knowledge	Shamans, judges, midwives, singers, weavers, seers, wrestlers	Votaries of the Loom
Seadren	19	Dragon's head club	Air, travel, water	Travelers, explorers, scouts, sailors, surfers, fisherpeople, inventors, thinkers, researchers	Blue votaries
Dresh	17	Ja-dagna	Dream, liberation, trickery	Visionaries, inventors, uhlani, seers, psychologists, those seeking a better world, the poor	Votaries of the Dream
Brigedh	16	Kotiate	Charm, creation, fire, magic	Poets, artists, risk-takers, candle-makers, fire-fighters, inventors, mages, lovers	Fire Votaries
Kishitan	16	none	Chaos, liberation, luck	Gamblers, risk-takers, the bold, those 'saved' at the last moment, the Daro as a people	Votaries of the Dice
Yamidhen	13	Quarterstaff	Animal, earth, healing, plant	The sick and troubled, those who work with animals and tend plants, medics and healers, veterinarians	Votaries of the Green
Harn	12	Ja-dagna	Darkness, protection, repose	The grieving and the dying, planar travellers, ethicists, assassins	Grey Votaries

all gain additional domains, including the cleric domain, and they gain metamagic abilities to empower and maximise their domain spellcasting. They also gain a special mount at 3rd level.

Votary's Mount

The votary's special mount is superior to a normal mount of its kind and has special powers, as described below. It is gained beginning at 3rd votary class level.

The mount is treated as a magical beast, not an animal, for the purpose of all effects that depend on its type (though it retains an animal's HD, base attack bonus, saves, skill points, and feats).

Use the base statistics for a creature of the mount's kind, but make changes to take into account the attributes and characteristics summarized on the table and described below.

Bonus HD Extra eight-sided (d8) Hit Dice, each of which gains a Constitution modifier, as normal. Extra Hit Dice improve the mount's base attack and base save bonuses. A special mount's base attack bonus is equal to that of a cleric of a level equal to the mount's HD. A mount has good Fortitude and Reflex saves (treat it as a character whose level equals the animal's HD). The mount gains additional skill points or feats for bonus

HD as normal for advancing a monster's Hit Dice.

Natural Armor Adj. The number on the table is an improvement to the mount's existing natural armor bonus.

Str Adj. Add this figure to the mount's Strength score.

Int The mount's Intelligence score.

Empathic Link (Su) The votary has an empathic link with her mount out to a distance of up to 1 mile. The votary cannot see through the mount's eyes, but they can communicate empathically.

Note that even intelligent mounts see the world differently from humans, so misunderstandings are always possible.

Because of this empathic link, the votary has the same connection to an item or place that her mount does, just as with a master and his familiar.

Improved Evasion (Ex) When subjected to an attack that normally allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, a mount takes no damage if it makes a successful saving throw and half damage if the saving throw fails.

Share Spells At the votary's option, she may have any spell (but not any spell-like ability) she casts on herself also affect her mount. The mount must be within 5 feet at the time of casting to receive the benefit. If the spell or effect has a duration other than instantaneous,

Daro Deities					
Name	Rank	Favoured Weapon	Domains	Worshippers	Specialty Priests
Shaidhen	11	Goupillon	Artifice, community, law	Smiths, police, vengeance seekers, those needing endurance, judges, teachers, mages	White Votaries
Khatan	8	Dragon's head club	Glory, protection, war	Warriors	War Votaries
Blede	8	Kotiate	Darkness, repose, liberation, war	The dying, assassins	Votaries of Death
Sheld	20	none	none	Children	none

it stops affecting the mount if it moves farther than 5 feet away and will not affect the mount again even if it returns to the votary before the duration expires. Additionally, the votary may cast a spell with a target of "You" on her mount (as a touch range spell) instead of on herself. A votary and her mount can share spells even if the spells normally do not affect creatures of the mount's type (magical beast).

Share Saving Throws For each of its saving throws, the mount uses its own base save bonus or the votary's, whichever is higher. The mount applies its own ability modifiers to saves, and it doesn't share any other bonuses on saves that the master might have.

Improved Speed (Ex) The mount's speed increases by 10 feet.

Command (Sp) Five times per day, a mount can use this ability to command other any normal animal of approximately the same kind as itself (this category includes donkeys, mules, and ponies), as long as the target creature has fewer Hit Dice than the mount. This ability functions like the command spell, but the mount must make a DC 21 Concentration check to succeed if it's being ridden at the time. If the check fails, the ability does not work that time, but it still counts against the mount's daily uses. Each target may attempt a Will save (DC 10 + votary's level + votary's Cha modifier) to negate the effect.

Spell Resistance (Ex) A mount's spell resistance equals its master's votary level

+ 5. To affect the mount with a spell, a spellcaster must get a result on a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) that equals or exceeds the mount's spell resistance.

The Loregivers

The Loregivers are three women, usually depicted as being old and weaving together at a single loom. One of the women is eternally pregnant and is the mother of Sheld, the Child God. She is also the fighter. One is a harper and songsmith and is the peacemaker. The third has a wrestler's physique and never uses weapons. They are never depicted on their own, always together, and they are not separately named. If they respond to a summons or otherwise appear, all three will be together, although only one is likely to speak. The Loregivers are the founders of the Daro, and are the deities of compassionate justice (never legalism), structure, story, creativity and balance.



They are worshipped on the first day of the week, during pregnancy and birth, when arriving at a new place, at all sorts of beginnings, at marriages and when other agreements and covenants are

Votary's Mount					
Votary's Character Level	Bonus HD	Natural Armor Adj.	Str Adj.	Int	Special
13 th -16 th	+2	+4	+1	6	Empathic link, improved evasion, share spells, share saving throws
17 th -20 th	+4	+6	+2	7	Improved speed
21 st -24 th	+6	+8	+3	8	Command creatures of its kind
25 th -	+8	+10	+4	9	Spell resistance

made, during initiation, and when stories are told. Worship is often centred around the braiding together of three threads.

Alternate Names and Titles The Lawgivers, The Three Weavers.

Ethos The Loregivers' vision is one of structure, beauty, peace and tradition. It is a vision of unity, knowledge and balance where all are joined as one as the Daro.

Virtues Storytelling, balance, peacemaking, standing up for the least, justice, compassion, grace and creativity.

Rank 19 (Greater God)

Symbols Three braided threads, weaving loom

Favoured Weapon Quarterstaff

Favoured Colour Gold and blue

Domains Community, creation, healing knowledge, law

Class Skills Heal, Knowledge (history), Sense Motive

Channel Abilities Bodily Restoration, Divine Avatar, Divine Sanctuary, Divine Space, Divine Weapon, Healing Hands, Truthseeker, Visioning

Shrines Sordran shrines have the Chair of The Loregivers just past the centre stove. There is often a shrine to The Loregivers at the place where the Daro first landed on a new home planet.

Holy Days Firstday

Sacrifices A braid of three threads, woven cloth, a story, the telling of one of the great sagas, the confession of wrongdoing.

Primary Ritual The *Life Weaving* ritual begins with an invocation of The Loregivers which takes about 10 minutes. The ritual continues with a priest weaving various threads on his ritual loom. When the ritual is served on Firstday after the evening family ritual, these threads include hair from each participant seeking a boon. It takes 10 minutes to weave a boon and the recipient must also make a suitable sacrifice. When a specialty priest serves

this ritual at another time, the particular threads used, including possibly hair, have particular effects.

Specialty Priests Votaries of the Loom
Worshippers All shamans view the Loregivers as a patron deity, as do judges, midwives, singers, weavers, wrestlers and seers.

Raiment All priests wear a kilt of blue silk or wool trimmed in gold. Specialty priests' kilts are woven from thread which includes one strand of gold thread for every two strands of blue.

Realm Halfway up the tallest mountain in the Daro Spirit Plane is a grove of trees that are taller than all others. To one side of the grove is a small dwelling in earth and stone. If you enter that dwelling you find yourself in a small palace set in the midst of a beautiful forest on an island that connects at low tide to the mainland. This island is the realm of the Loregivers, and is on the border of the Ocean and the Eternal Steppes.

Portfolio Law, lore, weaving, birth, joining, covenants and agreements, vision, justice, creativity

Seadren

A man in the prime of life, though older than younger, who is vital, vibrant, and full of life. He is sometimes bearded and sometimes not, but always has waist-length black hair bound into a ponytail. He has a powerful swimmer's physique and is always naked. Seadren is the diety of oceans and outer space and the planes, of chaos and creativity, of life and death together, of waterfalls and dark pools and deep lakes, and of journeys, especially into the unknown.

He is worshipped on the last day of the week and at the winter solstice; also when beginning a journey or initiation, at births and deaths, during great turmoil



and storms, and when launching a ship of any kind.

At its most basic, worship involves filling a bowl with water and all those present then drinking from it after a prayer has been said. At the solstice, a valuable object will be thrown down a well or into a lake or ocean and uhlani will attempt to retrieve the item (DC 20). The one who does keeps the item and is god-touched by Seadren.

Alternate Names and Titles The Ocean Lord

Ethos Seadren's vision spans the multiverse and is filled with both life and death. It is a vision of deep wisdom and sacrifice leading to creative living, unity and the greatness of the Daro.

Virtues Wildness, standing up for the least, wisdom, creativity, compassion, grace and sacrifice.

Rank 19 (Greater God)

Symbols bowl of water, dolphin

Favoured Weapon Dragon's head club

Favoured Colour Black, green and blue

Domains Air, chaos, liberation, travel, water

Class Skills Diplomacy, Knowledge (geography), Survival

Channel Abilities Divine Avatar, Divine Battle-melee, Divine Sacrifice, Divine Sanctuary, Divine Space, Divine Weapon, Planeswalker, Wayfinder

Shrines Sordran shrines have an altar with a bowl of water or have a well just inside the door or on the outer side. There is often a shrine to Seadren at important wells or other water sources.

Holy Days Lastday and the winter solstice

Sacrifices Water, a coin, blood

Primary Ritual The *Living Waters* ritual of Seadren is performed sometime after the dusk ritual at the beginning of Lastday each week. After a well or other deep pool of water is blessed by the presiding priest, which takes about one half hour, each Dare present who desires a boon from Seadren strips naked, sacrifices a drop of blood and a coin into the Bowl of Blessing and is then blessed by the presiding priest. The priest then throws the coin into the water and the person dives in after the coin. If the person catches the coin (Swim check with a DC of 10) then a boon is granted after returning the coin to the Bowl of Blessing.

Specialty Priests Blue Votaries

Worshippers Travelers, explorers and adventurers, scouts, sailors, surfers, and fisherpeople, inventors, thinkers, and researchers.

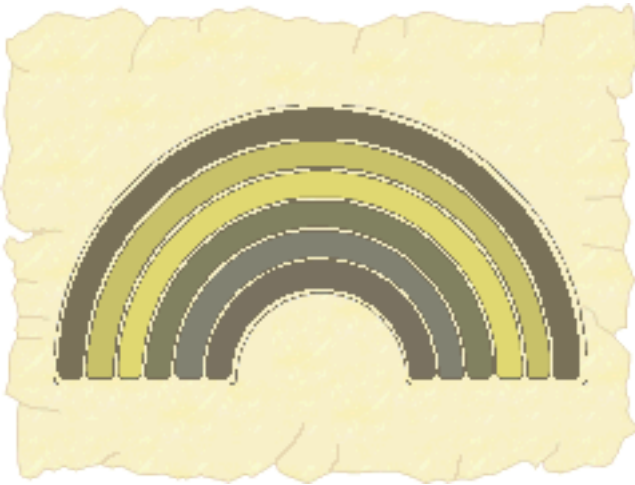
Raiment When participating in any ritual, a priest of Seadren is always naked. Specialty priests wear, at all other times, loincloth, breastcloth, weapons harness, boots and cloak of blue (either dark ocean blue or aqua or both) trimmed in black or green.

Realm If you dive to the bottom of any well on the Spirit Plane you will come up in the Ocean near one of the three palaces of Seadren. One is in the centre of a huge floating mat of seaweed in the middle of the Ocean (d6, 1-2); one is on the edge of the continental shelf at about 400' deep and extending also all the way to the ocean bottom not far from the Loregivers' island (d6, 3-5); and the last is on one of the Islands of Fire (d6, 6).

Portfolio Water and the ocean, ritual, life & death, journeys, space, the planes.

Dresh

Dresh appears as a naked and hairless young man. His skin is constantly shifting colours and he often seems indistinct or is visible only out of the corner of one's eye. He is the deity of the night, the stars and moons, sleeping and dreaming, nakedness and sensuality, self-awareness, and of the poor and hard-pressed.



Dresh is worshipped at the spring equinox, at full moons and at midnight, and whenever a rainbow or halo is in the sky. He is also invoked when going to sleep, if hard-pressed, after vivid dreams and visions, during a uhlan's time off, and during the party after a marriage ritual.

Alternate Names and Titles The Dreamer

Ethos Dresh's vision begins in the darkness of the night and brings hope and possibilities in even the darkest moments. It is a vision of beauty, sensuality and light for a people often surrounded by death.

Virtues Sensuality, dreaming, youthfulness, creative chaos, hopefulness, life-giving, spirituality.

Rank 17 (Greater God)

Symbols rainbow, bed

Favoured Weapon Ja-dagna

Favoured Colour All the colours of the rainbow

Domains Dream, healing, liberation, madness, trickery

Class Skills Bluff, Knowledge (planes), Sense Motive

Channel Abilities Divine Avatar, Divine Madness, Divine Sight, Divine Space, Dreamshaper, Healing Hands, Mental Restoration, Visioning

Shrines Sordran shrines have a low altar on the inner side. There are no other permanent shrines to Dresh.

Holy Days Spring equinox, full moon, and in the dark hours after midnight

Sacrifices Uncut gemstones, secrets and sleep

Primary Ritual The *Dance of Dreams* ritual is a trance inducing whirling dance accompanied by drums and chanting involving at least 2 of Dresh's priests—one dancing and the other drumming. It lasts 30+3d12 minutes and must begin after midnight. For the ritual to have any effect, both the dancer and the drummer must succeed at Perform checks (DC 15). All those seeking boons and the participating priests will fall asleep within 1d6 minutes of the end of the ritual. Boons will be received within 1d4 hours while the participants are sleeping. If awakened before receiving the boon, the boon is lost.

Specialty Priests Votaries of the Dream
Worshippers Visionaries, inventors, youth and especially uhlan, seers, psychologists, those seeking a better world, and the poor.

Raiment Naked when participating in rituals but covered in multicoloured swirls of body paint. It takes 5d6+20 minutes to apply the paint before a ritual. The paint wears off after 6d4+8 hours. Only then can a priest re-clothe himself.

Realm At night on the Spirit Plane, any who dream will find themselves in Dresh's realm. His realm is a slowly

morphing land lit only by a myriad of ever changing stars. His realm is on the Eternal Steppes near the coast and consists of many beautiful groves of trees and low-walled, roofless buildings.

Portfolio Dreams, the mind (especially the unconscious mind), vision, youth, light and dark.

Brigedh

Brigedh is an older woman with a wrestler's physique, a mature beauty that radiates life, sexuality, and comfort. She is not aloof but almost homely in a vibrant and tingly way.

She is worshipped at the fall equinox, at dusk as lamps, candles and fires are being kindled, and especially at dusk between the last and the first days of the week. Brigedh is also invoked during poetry and song contests and performances, when creating something, during sex, at birth and at each life-stage, when beginning a risky venture and when dancing.



There are several poetic prayers and songs which will be sung while lighting a candle or other fire as the most basic form of worship. While the Loregivers have given the great odes that are regularly recited, Brigedh's poems and songs will begin and end the recitation of

one of the odes and will form a kind of refrain during its recitation.

Alternate Names and Titles The Fire Lord

Ethos Brigedh's vision is of hearth and home, the family gathered, young couples falling in love, and songs and dances that draw all together in joy by the flickering light of a fire.

Virtues Singing and dancing, beauty, risktaking, homeliness, sexuality, being fired up, creativity, warmth

Rank 16 (Greater God)

Symbols candle, fire, cut rubies

Favoured Weapon Kotiate

Favoured Colour Red

Domains Charm, community, creation, fire, magic

Class Skills Linguistics, Perform, Sense Motive

Channel Abilities Charmer, Divine Avatar, Divine Home, Divine Space, Divine Weapon, Fireshaper, Shielding, Skald

Shrines Sordran shrines have a stove or firepit in the centre which is the altar to Brigedh. There are sometimes permanent shrines to Brigedh on the flanks or in the cones of volcanoes and near hotspots.

Holy Days Fall equinox, dusk at the end of the evening ritual as the lights are lit for the evening

Sacrifices Candles, fire, rubies, obsidian and pumice

Primary Ritual The *Holy Flame* ritual of Brigedh is performed at dusk during the family ritual each day. At the beginning of the family ritual the hearth is prepared and lit as usual. At the end of the family ritual and after 15 minutes of further meditation, the priest steps into the embers of the hearth wearing only her kilt and either walks through them or stands in them for 1 round. She must succeed at a Concentration check (DC 12) or suffer d4+1 hp of fire damage. After stepping out of the hearth, she will take a holy candle and light it from the

embers of the hearth. This holy candle lasts for 24 hours.

Each participant seeking a boon must pass their hand through the flame of the holy candle, make a suitable sacrifice and then the priest drips wax from the holy candle onto the palms of the participant. If this is not done immediately after the *Holy Flame* ritual, then the person seeking the boon must spend at least 30 minutes in ritual prayer with the priest before receiving the boon.

Specialty Priests Fire Votaries

Worshippers Poets, artists, risk-takers, candle-makers, fire-fighters, inventors, mages and lovers.

Raiment All priests wear a red kilt.

Realm To step into a fire on the Spirit Plane is to step into Brigidh's realm on the Islands of Fire plane. Several islands in the island chain of volcanoes off the coast of the great continent-plane of the Forest of Songs is her realm.

Portfolio Fire, creativity, music and song, dance, art, sex, risk, poetry, magecraft, beauty.

Kishitan

Kishitan is sometimes statuesque, sometimes plump, and certainly never quite the same twice. Yet the twinkle in her eye gives her away every time! She never fights and repudiates those who, in losing, lash out at those who won. She is lady luck, especially of the luck that avoids death or doom at the last possible moment, the unusual chance, the bold move, but never the cunning luck or trickery.

She is worshipped at midday, and whenever games of chance are happening. She is also invoked before elections of all kinds, and whenever the tide has turned or luck is running out, or oppression and pain look to be winning out.

The simplest form of worship involves rolling dice with a gold coin on the line, a high roll indicates that the coin belongs to Kishitan and the worshipper must donate it as soon as possible to her priests; a low roll indicates that the coin belongs to the community and is usually spent immediately on food and drink for everyone.



Alternate Names and Titles Luck

Ethos Kishitan's vision is of hope even in the midst of circumstances that are dark or desperate. It includes the certainty that the Daro will always find a new home when the old one has become untenable due to oppression or danger.

Virtues Gambling, hopefulness, laughter, openness, joy, trickery

Rank 16 (Greater God)

Symbols dice

Favoured Weapon none

Favoured Colour White

Domains Chaos, liberation, luck, trickery, travel

Class Skills Bluff, Sense Motive, Sleight of Hand

Channel Abilities Augmented Divine Sight, Chaosshaper, Divine Avatar, Divine Luck, Divine Sight, Divine Space, Visioning, Wayfinder

Shrines Sordran shrines have a table on the outer side which is the altar to Kishitan. There are no permanent shrines to Kishitan.

Holy Days Midday

Sacrifices A gold coin.

Primary Ritual The *Dice of Destiny* ritual is served at midday. After suitable invocations, the participants in this rite each take turns to make a sacrifice to Kishitan and then roll dice. Priests roll a single 8 sided die, while other worshippers roll 2 six-sided dice. One extra die may be added if a suitably large sacrifice is made (generally greater than 10% of the participant's previous week's gross income).

Any roll of 1 through 3 indicates that the worshipper does not have Kishitan's favour that day. Sometime before the next midday, the GM shall give a -4 penalty on any one roll of that participant.

A roll of 4 through 7 or 9 and higher indicates that Kishitan will grant a boon or the votary's ritual abilities.

On a roll of 8, a participant is especially favoured by Kishitan that day. In addition to gaining a boon, a participant will gain a luck bonus of +4 that can be used on any one roll before the next midday. The participant must announce that he is using the bonus before making the roll. The votary gains his ritual abilities and one additional use of one of these abilities during the next day.

At least one quarter of the total sacrifices made for this rite must be spent immediately in food and drink for everyone present, whether participants or not.

Specialty Priests Votaries of the Dice
Worshippers Gamblers, risk-takers, the bold, those 'saved' at the last moment over incredible odds, and the Daro as a people.

Raiment Kilt and a mask

Realm Her realm can be entered from the Spirit Plane through any number of doors that appear in odd, out of the way places that are always 'just around the corner' from somewhere else. Kishitan's realm is a large Daro encampment

somewhere in the middle of the Eternal Steppes.

Portfolio Luck, death, risk

Yamidhen

Yamidhen is a young gentle woman always surrounded by animals and with a basket filled with herbs and flowers. (Anyone able to smell the herbs and flowers is immediately cured of all disease and injury.) Her hair is brown and long and her feet are also stained with dirt and mud and plants.

She is especially worshipped during the fall as food is harvested and all is made ready for the winter. Dawn is another time when she is worshipped. Hospitals and clinics always have a chapel or altar dedicated to her.



Worship is always a quiet affair with her and involves much silence and quiet prayer. Anointing with oil, laying on of hands, washing and bandaging are also common elements of worship.

Alternate Names and Titles The Healing Balm

Ethos Yamidhen's vision is of the coexistence of all creation in harmony, peace and hope. It is a vision of healing and wholeness.

Virtues Hopefulness, quietness, love of nature, empathy, healing, fullness

Rank 13 (Intermediate God)

Symbols Silk bandage, bouquet of flowers, shade tree

Favoured Weapon Quarterstaff

Favoured Colour Brown and green

Domains Animal, earth, healing, plant, protection

Class Skills Heal, Knowledge (nature), Perception

Channel Abilities Bodily Restoration, Commonweal, Divine Avatar, Divine Companion, Divine Sanctuary, Divine Space, Healing Hands, Shielding

Shrines Sordran shrines have an altar on the inner side which is the altar to Yamidhen. There are sometimes permanent shrines to Yamidhen in great groves of trees or in deep and almost inaccessible glens, waterfalls and similar natural places.

Holy Days Harvest, dawn either just before or just after the dawn ritual

Sacrifices Herbs, first fruits of harvest, blood

Primary Ritual The *Greenforce* ritual of Yamidhen is served either immediately before or after the dawn totem ritual. The participants in the ritual gather outside. When possible, they will gather around a natural formation with access to the earth and water. If this is not possible, then they will gather around two bowls—one containing earth, the other water. After invoking Yamidhen, they will sing together an appropriate seasonal hymn to the deity. Each participant will then offer some herbs or flowers and a few drops of their blood to Yamidhen. These will be added to both the earth and the water. Earth and water will also each be added to the other element. Each participant will then eat of the earth and drink of the water. Oil is then blessed and a priest will anoint each participant who desires the anointing. After final prayers and seasonal hymns the ritual ends. The ritual takes about 45 minutes.

At the end of the ritual, each participant who was anointed receives the immediate

benefit of a *cure light wounds* spell in addition to any granted boon or votary abilities. The remaining oil, if rubbed into the bandages and around the wounds and on the forehead and chest of a wounded person anytime during that day, will grant the same benefit to the wounded person. There is usually enough oil left over to anoint 1d4+2 people.

Specialty Priests Votaries of the Green

Worshippers The sick and troubled, those who work with animals and tend plants, and medics and healers of all kinds, including veterinarians.

Raiment Apron

Realm Yamidhen has several small cottages on the Spirit Plane where she spends much of her time. The back door of each cottage is the portal to a part of her realm on the outer planes. There her realm consists of a small cottage and its surrounding gardens and fields on each of the Eternal Steppes, the Forests of Song, the Mountains of Draagan, and the Islands of Fire.

Portfolio Healing, good health and sanitation, empathy, animals and plants

Harn

An androgynous person of indistinct form and always shadowed. Harn is the diety of the grey between black and white, of ethics and the inner self, and of dying, losing and grieving.

Harn is rarely worshipped though s/he is invoked all the time. When worship does happen it is usually at the new moon and the dark of the night and involves candlelit processions to cemeteries and particular graves where quiet chanting, prayers, tears, and meals that are strong on sustenance but not on taste will take place. These are not joyless occasions, there is often a lot of quiet joy and peace in the release of these times of worship, but they are solemn, peaceful, and gentle.

Harn is also invoked whenever there is loss and grief, when it is hard to decide the ethical way forward, and whenever a person becomes aware of new dimensions, positive or negative, of their self.



Alternate Names and Titles The Shadow

Ethos Harn's vision is a subtle and quiet vision where death is a friend and life is enriched by solitude and quiet. It is the 'shadow', if you like, of the normal vision of the Daro.

Virtues Quietness, hope, seeing the grey, avoiding black and white, joy

Rank 12 (Intermediate God)

Symbols Grey veil

Favoured Weapon Ja-dagna

Favoured Colour Grey

Domains Darkness, liberation, protection, repose, travel

Class Skills Heal, Knowledge (planes), Sense Motive

Channel Abilities Divine Avatar, Divine Sacrifice, Divine Sanctuary, Mental Restoration, Shielding, Skald, Turn Undead, Wayfinder

Shrines Sordran shrines do not have an altar to Harn. Instead, the places where Daro are buried and the shrines that mark the conduits to the Spirit Plane are the places where Harn is worshipped.

Holy Days New moon

Sacrifices Unbleached cloth, earth

Primary Ritual The *Shadows of the Grave* ritual is served just before midnight on the day of the new moon. The participants gather at a graveyard or at a conduit shrine. Several dirges are sung and prayers are offered while a gruel made from grain and blood and ground bone from a previously sacrificed animal is cooked. A small sprinkling of earth from the graveyard is added to the gruel. Once the gruel is ready, silence descends. All those who seek a boon or are priests of Harn will eat a small bowl of the gruel in the silence. Then ash from the cooking fire is rubbed onto the head, chest and genitals of those present as a reminder of the presence of death in the midst of life. A bowl of water from a nearby source is then passed around and all drink as a reminder of the presence of life in the midst of death. The chanting then resumes and the rite ends as a candlelit procession leaves the graveyard or shrine towards the homes of the participants.

The holy candles are made from a mixture of beeswax, animal fat from the sacrificed animal and ash from a ritual cooking fire. Each candle will last only a short time—about 20 minutes for a lay worshippers candle. At any time before the next new moon, the worshipper may light the candle outdoors when the moon is not visible and after 10 minutes of chants and prayers will receive a boon.

Specialty Priests Grey Votaries

Worshippers The grieving and the dying, those on the ethereal plane, ethicists, thieves, and assassins.

Raiment Grey veil

Realm There are no direct portals from the Spirit Plane to Harn's realm. His/her realm can be found on the edge of the Plains of Death, right by the coast of the Ocean. Her/his realm is a low building in the midst of what seems like a graveyard of all the greatest Daro heroes.

Portfolio Shadow, ethereal plane, inner self, ethics, grieving, old age.

Shaidhen

Shaidhen is an impeccably groomed and clothed man of indeterminate age. His hair is cropped short and is almost all white and his skin is coal black. He rarely smiles and treats life with great seriousness. He is sometimes found in the forge where his strength and endurance becomes obvious. Shaidhen often appears aloof and says little but listens intently to everything that is said. His is one of the three gods whose symbols appear on the talking stick used in all meetings among the Daro (along with the Loregivers and Dresh.

He is worshipped on the first day of the month and is invoked whenever a law court is convened, when the smith goes to work and when she completes a piece, when the uhlan are tested prior to their vision quest, and during all of the councils of the Daro.



Worship involves naming those who are present and a threefold or sevenfold invocation of Shaidhen's name. Other prayers and invocations are also involved as is some form of test—mental, physical or magical.

He also enters the Blede's Houses of the Dead to judge the spirits there. Those who have lived well the ideals of the Daro are immediately released to their totem to take a spirit form or two or more for

ever. And those who have not lived those ideals well are sent to the realm of a suitable member of the pantheon for them to serve as petitioners and servants until they gain their release to their totem.

Alternate Names and Titles The Judge
Ethos Shaidhen's vision is somewhat black and white—the Daro have an ideal to live into and so they shall and the whole multiverse will be the beneficiaries of the peace and balance that the Daro bring. Anything that gets in the way of that vision should be cast aside.

Virtues Strength, craft, justice, goodness, balance, testing, improving
Rank 11 (Intermediate God)

Symbols T-square

Favoured Weapon Goupillon

Favoured Colour White

Domains Artifice, community, law, magic, vengeance

Class Skills Craft, Knowledge (arcana), Use Magic Device

Channel Abilities Augmented Divine Sight, Divine Avatar, Divine Sanctuary, Divine Sight, Divine Space, Divine Weapon, Mageshaping, Shielding

Shrines At the foot of the Chair of the Loregivers is an altar to Shaidhen. Most forges also have a small altar to him and a portable altar is always set up in a Tent of Law.

Holy Days First firstday each month

Sacrifices Confession of wrongdoing, self-crafted item, the uhlan's hair that is cut off prior to the vision quest.

Primary Ritual Each month, on the first firstday, the *Test of Faith* ritual is served. After the dawn ritual each participant in the Test of Faith goes to the altar of Shaidhen. After a threefold invocation of Shaidhen's name and making a sacrifice, the priest will give each participant a test. The test will be one of the following

- recite a full stanza, chosen by the priest at random, of the Saga of the Dragons;

- hold a saddle in one hand held out level with the shoulder for 5 minutes (Str check each minute with a DC starting at 10 and increasing by 5 each minute after the first);
- complete a tangram; or
- engage in a brief debate with the priest about a legal or cultural topic of the participants choosing.

A votary is given a test of magic. See the votary details for further information about this test.

The priest judges the success of the participant in relation to their character and their sacrifice. The priest is always very fair and her decision is final.

After the tests are completed, all those present sing the Paeon of the Judge and finish the rite with prayer and the sevenfold invocation of Shaidhen's name.

Specialty Priests White Votaries

Worshippers Smiths, police, vengeance seekers, those needing endurance, judges, teachers, and mages.

Raiment White robe or white trousers and vest.

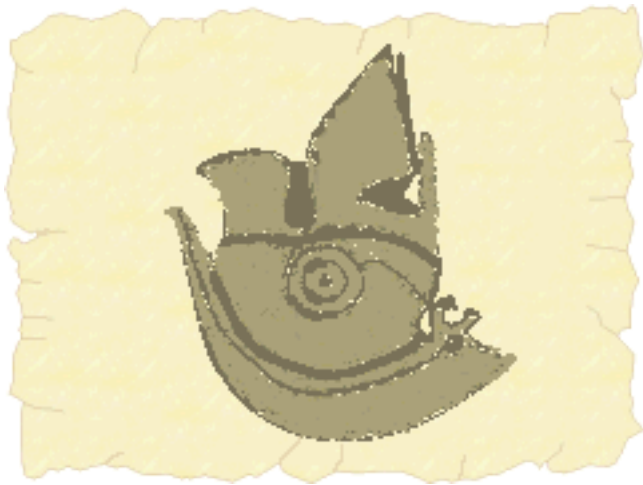
Realm In the only large building on the Spirit Plane, near the base of the largest mountain, is the portal from the Spirit Plane to Shaidhen's outer plane realm. This realm is an island of the Islands of Fire with an identical building at the base of the volcano and a forge in the heart of the crater.

Portfolio Technology, testing, justice, judgement, vengeance, endurance.

Khatan

Khatan is a young woman with weapons in hand, a chain mail kilt, and short brown hair. She looks strong, competent, and deadly, but always has a smile on her face. She is the deity of honour and glory, endurance and heroism and she visibly embodies all these virtues. It is almost as if the very sun is shining from within her.

She is worshipped on the anniversaries of several ancient battles and before any battle begins. Warriors sing martial songs in her honour as they march and train and head off to war. When a warrior is promoted Khatan is invoked as the warrior's helmet is filled with wine and passed around her new command. Every military honour has her symbol on its back.



Alternate Names and Titles The Warrior

Ethos Khatan's vision is simple—fight hard, live honourably, seek glory and the Daro will live forever.

Virtues Strength, honour, glory, working hard, training hard, living fully

Rank 8 (Lesser God)

Symbols An ancient helmet

Favoured Weapon Dragon's head club

Favoured Colour Gold

Domains Glory, liberation, protection, sun, war

Class Skills Intimidate, Perception, Survival

Channel Abilities Divine Avatar, Divine Battle-melee, Divine Battle-ranged, Divine Sight, Divine Weapon, Healing Hands, Shielding, Wayfinder

Shrines Khatan's altar is on the outer side of a Sordran shrine. Every commander's tent also has a small portable altar and the gonfalon of a

military group also serves as a shrine to Khatan.

Holy Days The anniversaries of the battles of Dragon Hill, the Plains of Agony, Grelflahn River, the Sun of Blood, and the Longest Day.

Sacrifices Wine, a strand of hair, blood, something precious from a defeated opponent.

Primary Ritual The *Remembrance of Glory* is the ritual served on the anniversaries of 5 of the greatest Daro battles. Three of these battles ended in Daro victory and two in defeat. After the dawn ritual on the morning of the anniversary, each unit present will march before the others present. A ritualized combat between two Dari will follow. The Dari are naked except for the ancient helmets upon their heads and they use only their ancestral daggers. This combat finishes when the first blood is drawn.

A smudge of the blood of the defeated warrior is then daubed upon the breast of every warrior present and then a priest will take the dagger of the victor and prick the other breast of each warrior, drawing blood. The helmet of the defeated warrior is then filled with wine and all the warriors present drink from the helmet. Each warrior then receives his boon. The helmet of the victor is also filled, often several times, with wine. Into this wine a drop of the defeated warriors blood is added. That wine is distributed to the priests for the ongoing rites during the year.

Specialty Priests War Votaries

Worshippers Warriors.

Raiment Weapons harness

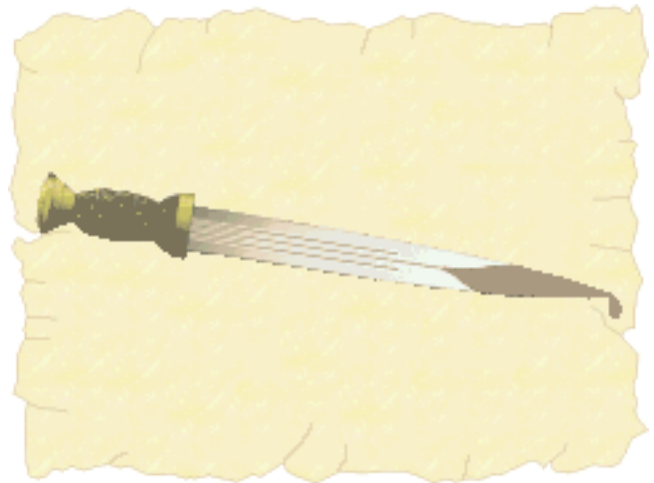
Realm Khatan has no direct portals to her realm from the Spirit Plane. Her realm is a series of traditional Daro buildings in the centre of a number of great battlefields in the heart of the Desert of Battle.

Portfolio War, justice, heroism and endurance, strength, battle.

Blede

Khatan's twin, Blede is a young man with short brown hair but for a long grey lock that partially covers his face. He is pale, sometimes sickly looking, but other times full of strength. He is usually clothed in warrior's gear but done in greys and blacks and pale whites, with a long cloak that seems to shift and shimmer in greys and blacks, obscuring more than protecting or covering.

Blede is only sometimes worshipped directly. More often he is invoked with the request to welcome the newly dead into his house for their testing. As warriors enter battle they will invoke his name in a battle chant that calls him to bring a swift death to all those whose time it is. And at the end of a battle, as the warriors leave, another low, solemn chant farewells friends left behind and prays that the doors of his house have been opened wide to gather them in.



Alternate Names and Titles Death

Ethos Blede's vision is essentially that even in death there is life and the darkest moments often reveal the most profound lessons or manifest the deepest examples of life and living.

Virtues Dying well, living fully, being open to the lessons of the dark, embracing all, endurance, grace in adversity, hope

Rank 8 (Lesser God)

Symbols A bloodied dirk

Favoured Weapon Dirk

Favoured Colour Black

Domains Darkness, repose, liberation, strength, war

Class Skills Heal, Sense Motive, Stealth

Channel Abilities Augmented Divine Sight, Augmented Divine Weapon, Divine Avatar, Divine Sacrifice, Divine Sight, Divine Weapon, Truthseeker, Turn Undead

Shrines Blede's altar is on the inner side of a Sordran shrine opposite his twin's. There are no permanent shrines to Blede.

Holy Days Before a battle and at death.

Sacrifices Life, sometimes even a human life

Primary Ritual The *Dagger of Death* is a ritual served by the priests of Blede after a battle. While the chants for the dead are being sung, the bloodied ancestral dagger of one of the dead is taken in turn by each priest who pricks her own skin with it. The mingled blood is then daubed upon the breast of each living warrior (or, in very large battles, a representative unit from each strike available for this service).

The dagger is then ritually washed in a bowl of water into which has been added a drop of the holy wine of Khatan. This holy water is then used by the priests of Blede in their ongoing rites.

After the chants of the dead are complete, the dagger is returned to the body so that they both may be returned to their family. The daggers used in this rite become prized heirlooms of their family.

Specialty Priests Votaries of Death

Worshippers The dying and assassins.

Raiment Weapons harness

Realm Blede's realm is the Houses of the Dead on the Planes of Death and not far from both the Ocean and the Desert of Battle. All Daro dead (and many others also) come to the Houses where they are judged by Shaidhen (or others) before

being sent either to the Spirit Plane or to one of the outer planes.

Portfolio Death, darkness, battle, night.

Sheld

Sheld is an exuberant and strong willed child. She is tolerant and playful, but a constant learner and honourable. She is sometimes tricky, often wise beyond her years and rarely angry. She is always, though, a child.

She is also the soul of the Daro. She is honourable and creative, fair and strong, just and wise and always laughing. Whatever face the Daro may show the world—mercenary, trader, diplomat, explorer—Sheld is the heart that allows that face to live.

She is technically not worshipped by the Daro in any individual sense, though the children of the Daro are her companions and friends, and honour her in all they do. She grants no spells or domains, she has no portfolio, no weapons, and no realm. In many ways she is a rank 0 deity! And yet she is the very heart of the Daro pantheon and without her there would be no gods and no people. Those who honour her do so with flowers.



Alternate Names and Titles The Child, Flowerchild

Ethos Sheld's vision is that of the child—safety, joy, peace and play.

Virtues Playfulness, joy, peacemaking, being safe, chaos, boundaries, structure

Rank 20 (Greater God)

Symbols Garland of flowers

Favoured Weapon none
Favoured Colour All
Domains none
Shrines Sheld's altar is on the inner side of a Sordran shrine just inside the door
Holy Days All and none!
Sacrifices flowers, love
Specialty Priests none
Worshippers Children
Raiment none
Realm none
Portfolio none

Holy Order of Silence

Only one religious order exists amongst the Daro. The Holy Order of Silence began in the very earliest days of the Daro as a 'family' for those religious Daro who are so devoted to their faith that they feel separated from their traditional family.

Since the earliest days, the Holy Order has had a focus on silence. This is the space in the constant noise of a Daro encampment to which some feel intensely drawn. It is the almost impossible silence that strips away all that surrounds a Dare from morning to night, leaving just the core of Daro life and faith.

As such it is a silence that by example, rather than words, speaks loudly of justice. It is the silence that, through prayer and ritual, seeks always peace. It is the silence that, through action, rids the world of what corrupts and destroys. These three aspects of the life and work of the Holy Order find expression in a number of ways.

The order will often send members into a nation that is on the receiving end of Daro mercenaries. Like Jonah from the Jewish scriptures, but with a silent witness of care for the least and the last, they witness to the judgement that has been declared against the nation and seek its redemption. At the same time, members of the order will also travel

through the state that has employed the Daro mercenaries. No nation is perfect and all stand in need of judgement against injustice. There have been occasions when the silent witness of the Holy Order has led to changes in societies that has activated those clauses in every Daro mercenary contract that cause the withdrawal of the Daro mercenaries. States have changed and so the mercenaries have refused to continue battling against that state. Others that have employed mercenaries have been discovered to be far more unjust than originally thought and so the mercenaries have been withdrawn.

The prayer and ritual life of the Holy Order is very focused on peace. A member of the order will often participate in the signing of major peace treaties and will lead the Daro ritual response to such occasions.

On other occasions, the members of the Holy Order can be found far from their encampments searching for the most evil and destructive artifacts and legendary items. When these are found, they are either removed from the world or are destroyed.

Members

Daro who wish to join the Holy Order serve a aspirancy of up to 3 years. During this time they spend 6 months or more each year in one of the order's encampments. They then spend an entire year as a novice in an encampment. If the Dare still wishes to enter the order, they will be accepted as a First Yearer and will spend a year working with a variety of mentors in all the areas of the order's work.

At the end of that year, the Dare may join the order permanently. To do this, she will begin taking levels in one of the prestige classes of the order right after making her final vows. If she is a priest, she will take levels as a Contemplative of

Holy Silence. If she is not a priest, then she will take levels as a Devotee of Holy Silence.

Hermits

Occasionally a member may be called to a life of more complete silence. These long-time members may choose to become hermits and will begin taking levels as Hermits of Holy Silence. These hermits, four at a time, will leave the encampment and will find a place far from the normal distractions of life. They will then form a hermitage with a central meeting place and their individual cells.

The *arharn* is used by the hermits together as a worship and meeting space on Firstday and Lastday. It is also the place where visitors to the hermitage gather. Each hermit will take it in turns to visit the hermitage once or twice a week to meet with visitors—bring the healing strength and wisdom of their silence to the visitors.

The cells of the individual hermits are always some distance from the central meeting tent and from each other. The cells will be tucked away out of sight and a visitor who trespasses near a cell or attempts to find or communicate with a hermit outside the meeting tent will be shunned by all the hermits.

Encampment

An encampment of the order looks much like an average family encampment with two exceptions. The first is the lack of animals around the encampment. The order does not maintain flocks or even herds of horses. Many encampments do not have a single horse, except those of visitors.

The second difference from an average family

encampment is that the 'war' arc has many more tents than the 'family' arc. It is in the war arc that the full members of the community dwell and this arc is one of almost total silence. This silence is broken at dusk and dawn by the rituals of Daro life and for one hour before the evening ritual by a community gathering in the war arc's gathering tent.

The family arc is home to visitors, aspirants and novices, and is the side where the noisy work of the community is done. Although the expectation is that there will be as little noise as possible on this side, talking is permitted between the dawn and dusk rituals.

Structure

Each encampment is headed by an abbot—always a Devotee. The abbot is assisted by several other members, including the cantor who is the senior Contemplative and hospitaller who is in charge of the tents and visitors. There is also a Council of Elders responsible for reviewing the work of the abbot, preparing aspirants and novices, and providing counsel to those in need.

Hermits from a particular encampment are visited annually by their Council of Elders. However, the abbot of the encampment has no authority over the hermits.

Although abbots will occasionally meet together to share concerns and make joint plans, there is no formal organisation above the individual encampment. Each encampment is independent. However, on two occasions, other encampments have demanded the submission of an encampment because it had become 'confused and dangerous to the spiritual health of its members and visitors'.



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