

THE SHADOWLANDS

MAJOR CITIES

Unknown, if any

POPULATION

Unknown; in the tens of millions, at least

MAJOR RACES

Khúl-vehun (Goblin), Hu-khúl-vehun (Hobgoblin), Vargbárh (Bugbear), Úrckh (Orc), Nólh (Gnoll), Khovhúlt (Kobold), Ohl-gähr (Ogre), Drhál (Troll) Yakhte (75%), Dasun (5%), Other Yakhte (20%)

LANGUAGES

Innumerable dialects of Khúl-vehun, Úrckh, Nólh, Dhrákhan, Ohl-gähr Brutakh, Drhál Brutakh; also, likely Infernal and Abyssal

MAJOR RELIGIONS

Unknown; presumed to be Saklas and Makish, as well as animism, ancestor worship, fiend worship, and possibly gods unknown to the civilized world Athrallar, Naillüwé

THE GREAT BLIGHT; WELLSPRING OF EVIL; Hell on Sæmyyr – these are just some of the many terms used to refer to the grim and horrific Shadowlands. Deserts, bogs, salt flats, rubble-strewn wastes, and other such bleak vistas bleed into one another, one after the next, seemingly with no rhyme or reason. Tribes of yakhte, apparently without end, continually creep under the sinister auroras in the skies that mark the borders, entering into Ashkanian, Torán, Airgíallne, and – especially – Mtol Dærask.

Some scholars, most of them with more curiosity than sense, believe that sinkholes and tunnels leading deep into Sæmyyr riddle the Shadowlands, enabling whole clans of yakhte to migrate to other parts of the world. If such passages exist, however, they are well-hidden, likely somewhere in the interior, for no member of an upright, gods-fearing people has ever found them.

Of course, people from outside of the Shadowlands have reasons, beyond merely the depredations of the natives, to remain without. Those who walk for too long under the diseased skies of the Shadowlands tend to... change, and never for the better. Prolonged exposure to the land warps the forms of the natural races in ghastly ways, as though it cannot abide the very presence of a fair shape and must instead remake all into a reflection of its own evil. Neither is the mind spared from these transformations; the reality of the world seems to wear a bit *thin* in the Shadowlands, and the promise of horrors from Outside oppress one's thoughts, chiseling away at sanity.

MAJOR COUNTRIES & CAPITALS

If the yakhte have built anything in the depths of the Shadowlands, such works remain unknown to those who dwell outside its borders. The bold and foolhardy few who've dared to delve into even the outskirts of the Shadowlands and lived to talk of it have seen nothing more than the occasional ramshackle village. However, some of these adventurers – those who speak the uncouth tongues of one of more breeds of yakhte – return with wild tales of towns, fortresses, and even cities of monsters, found many weeks' march into that terrible land. Most who know aught of such things dismiss these fanciful stories as the lies of savages.

Certain members of the Brotherhood of Magus maintain that structures built by the Ancients may still be found within the Shadowlands, and that it would not be surprising to learn that yakhte have taken up residence in the ruins of the world before the Great Blasting. Most tantalizingly, they maintain, the yakhte are unlikely to understand even the most rudimentary workings of these artifacts, meaning that many such relics of the past may still exist in sealed chambers and behind other barriers which defy the simple minds of the Shadowlands' denizens.

IMPORTANT CULTURAL CONCEPTS

Red, in Tooth and Claw: Survival is the highest – indeed, perhaps the *only* – law in the Shadowlands. In a land in which the earth itself has gone mad, nightmarish savagery is the only sane response. This brutal land permits only the strongest to survive, though it recognizes many kinds of strength.

Horror and Desolation: Every beast that walks, swims, or flies, every plant that grows; *everything* that lives in the Shadowlands in the product of a process of selection so vile and merciless that almost nothing from beyond its borders could hope to last there for any length of time. Every day is a battle over too-scarce resources, every moment a continual struggle against a fear so deep that it destroys any heart in which it finds purchase.



SYLVÆNYR

MAJOR CITIES

Ilyióndraethu^p (1,045,000), Èuraith^p (562,700), Qwayraith^p (515,800), Áraethun^p (422,500), Valendian (406,600), Mynorion^p (385,900), Deóuinaeth^p (366,400), Cyniweiryth^p (342,800), Áriannu^p (331,100), Avaliarán (306,700), Anrhaith^p (267,000), Souynyr^p (219,800), Nylandrion (193,400), Cyllidwr (178,200)

POPULATION

150,000,000

MAJOR RACES

Áriannaith (Star), Cúal'wýr (Wild), Èuraith (Sun), Qwayraith (Moon), and Ghoyuqan (Snow) Dætholayn (90%), Pærth (5%), Durinn (Hill) and Svarog (Rock Gnome) Deregetal (5%), Yakhte

LANGUAGES

Èuraith Sylvænar, Qwayraith Sylvænar, Ilyióndraethu Sylvænar, Áraethun Sylvænar, Áriannu Sylvænar, Cúal'wýr Sylvænar, Ghoyuqan Sylvænar

MAJOR RELIGIONS

Nival Seren (Mêtêr), Avaldiár (Septimus), Quelluvánen (Deïmus), Celarúnen (Korybas), Dár Fimbrond (Malak Ta'us), Tyvaard Votar, the Old Faiths, Cwyé Loran, Athrallar, Naillüwé



EMPIRE OF THE ANEURYN OF OLD, Sylvænyr has stood for thousands of years as the center of elven power and culture on Sæmyyr. Certainly, dætholayn reside elsewhere in the world, even in great numbers – the Aniadir in their jungles to the south, for instance, or the vile Khthonoi in the depths of the earth – but their nations cannot begin to compare to the glory and splendor of Sylvænyr.

Very nearly from Anrhaith in the east to Mynorion in the west, Sylvænyr is a land of forests. Coastal plains exist along the shores of Strait of Valais and those of the Salvation Sea, while marshy grasslands stretch along the Valgaard border, and low mountains – wooded peaks of the Caregans – are found in the southwest of the kingdom of Mynyrthannwyn. A few major roads cut through the wilderness between the capitals of the various dætholayn nations, allowing for the movement of goods and travelers, and, when necessary, armies; the overwhelming majority of the land, however, is trackless and uncultivated, navigable only by those who've lived there all their lives, or else those who are exceedingly skilled in woods-lore.

Sylvænyr is utterly unique among the regions of the surface world, in that humans (with the sole exception of the occasional member of the Brotherhood of Magus) are permitted neither to reside within, nor even to visit. Scant handfuls of pærth and dergetal – as compared to the numbers of the dætholayn, anyway – make their homes among the elven nations, but their status is much akin to that of long-term guests, regardless of how many generations of their ancestors lay buried within Sylvænyr soil.

MAJOR COUNTRIES & CAPITALS

Sylvænyr (Ilyióndraethu): Sylvænyr's history stretches back millennia, back to the Second Exodus of the Dætholayn. The dialect spoken in the unearthly beautiful capital of Ilyióndraethu – the tongue of the royal bloodlines of the Aneuryn – is said to be virtually unchanged since the time of the Great Blasting. Ilyióndraethu stands upon an island in the middle of a lake, and has the appearance of a vast banyan tree, shaped from the living earth, with various sections of the trunk and boughs dedicated to members of each dætholayn caste.

Mynyrthannwyn (Qwayraith): Ancestral homeland of the moon elves, the nation of Mynyrthannwyn borders the Salvation Sea in the north and the feuding duchies of Torán in the west. The occasional Valgaardian raiding fleet harries the coast, but the elves' superior military coordination invariably drives them off in short order. The capital of Qwayraith is a place of vibrant magnificence, with styles of art and architecture that would be considered far too experimental for most other dætholayn, as befits the cultural heart of the Sær caste.

Talín Yliáth (Áraethun): Sharing a long stretch of border with the Empire of Tar Sequinus, the nation of Talín Yliáth is one of Sylvænyr's first lines of defense against its aggressively expansionist neighbor. Accordingly, some of the elves' most capable soldiers and battle-trained arcanists reside in and around the capital of Áraethun, ready for war at a moment's notice. Áraethun, itself, is closest thing the dætholayn have to a fortress-city, and it is the spiritual center of the worship of Athrallar Runesword, the divine warrior-magus.

IMPORTANT CULTURAL CONCEPTS

Caste and Class: Unlike in Ashkanian, in which the people need only concern themselves with the duties of caste, dætholayn in Sylvænyr must also marry these obligations to those of social class, and to the traditional responsibilities of their respective elven races. Every elf lives under the burden of multiple levels of social expectation, and is encouraged to excel at all of them.

Out of Many, One: The dætholayn are many social classes, many castes, many races, but always one people. Just as the hand and the eye perform different – but equally vital – tasks, and just as the mind, body, and soul require one another to survive, so, too, are all of the disparate elves of Sylvænyr necessary to constitute a whole and healthy dætholayn empire.

THE DÆTHOLAYN EXODUS – SUNDERING

When those who continued in the Great Exodus reached the forests to the north and south of the Kalmagura Mountains, they determined that they had found the land which was to become their home, forever after. By this time, the races of the elves had become entirely distinct: the Aneuryn comprised the royal line, while the Aniadir were the custodians of high dætholayn culture, the Èuraith the warrior-nobility, the Áriannaith the scholars and advisors, the Cúal'wýr the stewards of the wilderness, and the Qwayraith the artisans and laborers. Each branch of the tree had its place, and all were as one.

The Seven Cities were founded, arising in splendor from the work of dætholayn hands and dætholayn magic. At the center of each stood a great step pyramid, a symbol of the elven ascent out of shadow and into greatness. Peace and prosperity flourished for long years, but they did not last. A radical cult within the Aniadir forged a contract with Makish, the Face of

Flame: in exchange for worship and sacrifice, the dætholayn – the noblest and most advanced culture in the world – would be given dominion over all of Sæmyyr. For many, the promise of a globe-spanning empire was a temptation too great to resist, and whole houses of dætholayn fell to the veneration of Makish.

In disgust, the Aneuryn departed with families of retainers from all castes and classes, and from all of the other elven peoples, save for the Aniadir, most of whom had, by then, been corrupted to the service of Makish. The Second Exodus moved through lands inhabited by warring human tribes, slowly coalescing into the Empire of Tar Sequinus. After crossing into wilderness uninhabited by humans and arriving at an island upon a lake, the Aneuryn declared the journey at an end, raising the city of Ilyióndraethu and proclaiming lordship over the new Kingdom of Sylvænyr.