

A HISTORY OF THE PORPHYRI PENINSULA

The Porphyri peninsula is a place of wonder and mysticism to those of the Inner Sea. Technarcana, blue-skinned machine priests, worshippers of a mysterious deity whose soul is encased in an ancient machine, and a ruler who is tens of thousands of years old. It is a place both far and near - far in that it is 6,000-miles from Khadon, capital of the Korachani empire; near in that the nearby land of Noavatur was colonised long ago, and the empire has had many dealings with the place.

This juxtaposition has led to skewed impressions of the place. If asked to describe the nations of the Porphyri peninsula, most bodies in the Korachani empire would cite what little they remember of the tale of Malichar travelling there following his rebirth as an otherworlder close to 4 millennia ago, where he learnt the secrets of technarcana from the descendants of the irothani, through which he was able to construct the Leaden Throne in which the deity of the empire is now interred, kept alive.

In truth Porphyri is a place of blind ritual, where millennia-old practices are adhered to with scant understanding for their meaning or purpose. Its people are wardens of wondrous technologies designed by a Demiurge whose scion is now its ruler. In many ways it is a mirror to the Korachani empire, but it is in its differences that the true character of its people are revealed.

AN ANCIENT LEGACY

The history of the nations in the Porphyri peninsula - Porphyri itself, as well as Ananthul, Sabaisa, and Serrok - is tied to that of the Porphyri ruler: Teleanyara Apexeide, scion of the Demiurge Nyarloth.

Little is known of her early years, but it is thought that she was born late in the Third Age, perhaps as long ago as fifty or sixty-thousand years, though it is unlikely that even she knows this. Many of Elyden's leaders are famed for their supranatural traits - the Archpotentate Malichar has ruled as an otherworlder for some 3,700-years and ruled as a mortal man for over a century before that; the Old Forest is ruled by the Lady Aegis, herself an otherworlder of likely more venerable age than Malichar; Venthir is ruled by the last of the sphinxes, Hetepheres; Sarastro is ruled by the undying lich king Sathep; and so-on - but it is unlikely that any nation is ruled by a being as wizened as Teleanyra, particularly one who has not died and later been reborn as so many others have.

Teleanyara was born to a world very different to the present. It was a primordial place, with the works of the Demiurges still relatively fresh, on a geological timescale. It was a place populated by a myriad of mortal races, each guided by its Demiurge primogenitor, as well as the many wondrous beings granted life by the Demiurges themselves. Under the guidance of the Demiurges and their scions, great feats of engineering, magic and technarcana were accomplished, the likes of which cannot be dreamed of today.

She was born into the Sept caste amongst the irothani. The Septs were leaders, priests and technologists, and were scion-born, maintaining a strict tradition that dated back many generations, where males practiced celibacy, devoting their lives to the Demiurge Nyarloth, their primogenitor. Females would copulate with Nyarloth, resulting in offspring that were closer in appearance and ability to Nyarloth with each passing generation. This was thought to keep their bloodline pure, capable of leading the irothani. Teleanyara claims that she was amongst one of the last such Septs born this way, making her

the Sept who grew closest to Nyarloth - physically, mentally, as well as in ability.

She was born during a tumultuous time, when the Demiurge Nyarloth's body was succumbing to a mysterious ailment he had thus far been unable to stymie. Despairing, he left the irothani kingdoms of Kathar Byaat behind and travelled across Elyden and beyond, looking for a cure. He conferred with his siblings, who were also unable to help him.

He spent an age away from the irothani, and when he returned their kingdoms had begun to grow apart from each other, links cultivated over century-old alliances fragmenting, as some kingdoms abandoned their old ways after increased contact with other mortals. He dedicated himself to helping them rebuild Kathar Byaat, ignoring his own needs, and his body grew weaker still. He crafted great monuments and machines intended to aid the irothani, but with each new creation, he grew more feeble until he had to turn back to his own fate.

Yet still he could find no solution to the slow death, which even then was laying waste to his body. Finally, he began designing and constructing a revolutionary technarcane machine that the irothani came to refer to as a Soul-Engine. His plan was to sunder his spirit from his vessel, so that the spirit could be placed within the Soul-Engine. His malady was of the body, so he reasoned that to eschew his body would be to end that which was killing him.

The foundations were laid in the plains of Parymesia as he called upon the aid of his brother, Rachanael, who was more skilled with manipulating the Atramenta than he. Rachanael helped him design and build the machine and over centuries they toiled, the irothani aiding them. Teleanyara played a large role in its construction, overseeing the technarcane machinery that was to be used within the sprawling engine.

Yet even she could not help Nyarloth against the betrayal of Rachanael, who killed his Demiurge brother, launching his armies against the irothani.

A great battle ensued, quickly engulfing the irothani kingdoms of Kathar Byaat. The irothani fought savagely,

defending not only their home but the body of the Demiurge father. It was a miracle that they were able to fend off the hordes of plagi attackers, and providence that Teleanyara and the Septs were able to fight off Rachanael, giving them enough time to claim the body of Nyarloth before it perished.

They were able to enter the body of Nyarloth within the Soul-Engine, completing the ritual successfully. Yet still, Rachanael's attack had marred the perfectly-planned act of transference, and though Nyarloth's essence was successfully shorn from its vessel and transmigrated to the Soul-Engine, all was not as planned. He was weak from the attack, barely alive, but still conscious. His vessel was left empty following the transmigration and became hard and shrunken, barely any larger than that of a mortal. It was discarded after the Septs determined it was of no use.

Though their god and father had been saved, the cost had been tremendous. The victory against Rachanael's forces had been a pyrrhic one, and irothani lands and population were decimated. Though Nyarloth could communicate with them, he could no longer directly intervene in their lives - he could no longer shape directly.

Many amongst the irothani despaired and forsook the Soul-Engine, and over time they turned to worship of the false idol that was the discarded vessel of Nyarloth, which they came to call the host. This diminishing in worship weakened Nyarloth further, and the remaining irothani who were still loyal to him suffered as a consequence, propagating a vicious cycle. The weakened irothani served to further cripple their god, who, as a result, found it harder to communicate with the irothani, who became more and more distant from him.

The Septs who maintained the Soul-Engine of Parymesia implored the irothani to turn their faith towards it and to abandon the Host, but the words were largely ignored. Instead, they were branded as traitors by the increasingly fanatical worshippers of the Host, resulting in a civil war that dragged on for many years, toppling their kingdoms.

By the end of the war the Septs had been defeated, with the remnants fleeing to the north.

Though the worshippers of the Host won, their own lands would continue to fragment, eventually crumbling alongside Elyden. This was a time of war, famine and great change, the wane of the age of the Demiurges and their children. Already, humans had spread to encompass most of Elyden, taking over from the other mortals, whose golden ages were ending as their Demiurge forebears fell into obscurity.

This was the Fading, signalling the end of the Third Age and the dawn of the Fourth Age.

THE RISE OF HUMANS

As the wake of a great storm leaves behind silence, wreckage and death, so too did the Fading after the end of the Third Age. The many wars that signalled the end of this age left empires in flames, kingdoms destroyed, and entire peoples dead. Elyden stunk of decay and emptiness. It took many centuries for the people to coalesce once more and for individuals to trust those who they met. Individuals became pairs. Pairs became family groups. Family groups became kindreds. So on until settlements reappeared and mortals were strong-enough to rebuild - searching the ruins of the past age for materials to reuse, and learning lost technologies and knowledge, but without the aid of the Demiurges and scions, most of whom were dead.

In the Porphyri peninsula, Teleanyara was largely alone. By right of her bloodline, she had studied technarcana at the

highest institutes of their kind and studied under the tutelage of master shapers. Though those institutions were gone, their founders and adherents long-since crumbled to dust, the memory remained. She was smart and managed to survive, but she was unable to implement her teachings - there were no foundries, no factories, no means of manufacturing the parts needed to rebuild.

She was still in mourning for the decline of her people, the wasting of her god, the end of their culture. It was all too much to take in. She retreated into obscurity for many centuries, leaving the mortals to their own devices.

Over the years mortals coalesced, separate tribes coming together over many centuries, becoming the empire of Ehlbezun, which would occupy what are today the south-east of Waelmigh, Serrok, and the east of Porphy. It was ruled by the descendants of the Septs who had travelled north in the end of the Third Age, though these were not the Septs of the irothani kingdoms. Their link to Nyarloth had been severed, and their defeat at the hands of the worshippers of the Host had left them disillusioned as to the divinity of their father. They had bred largely amongst themselves and other mortals, even humans, for centuries at this point, ending their old customs, bringing them closer to the mortals and the material world.

Little is known of this empire, but we do know that it lasted for many centuries and that it grew powerful. The Septs used their knowledge to educate the mortals, who recovered and re-learned some old technologies, adapting them in the absence of Nyarloth. The Ehlbezuni could never reach the heights of the ancient irothani kingdoms, but they remained one of the more developed cultures of their time. Like all empires, it had its golden age, and later waned, fracturing into successor states, which later coalesced and formed alliances with outside peoples.

Today, ancient ruins of Ehlbezuni realm pepper the lands of Porphy, Serrok and Waelmigh, and where in most cases they are decayed beyond recognition, some more intact yet remain. In other places, extant cities are built atop the ruin of these millennia-old ruins, to the ignorance of most.

Late in the Fourth Age, Teleanyra is recorded as having travelled to Ehlbezun, bringing with her ancient technarcane knowledge. She studied the languages of the people she met, noting that many still had at their root the ancient tongue of the irothani kingdoms, and shared with them her knowledge. She became a powerful champion, a defender of the ways of Nyarala, which she preached to the people. She also told tales of the exploits of Nyarloth, planting the seeds that would naturally take root over the coming years as an appreciation for the Demiurge.

Late in the Fourth Age, her work was finally rewarded - a group of Septs from the south sought an audience with her with news of the Parymesia. The essence of Nyarloth, which had been slumbering for millennia, had finally stirred. They had spent decades searching the peninsula and beyond, finally finding Teleanyra in what is now the north-east of Porphy. They had learnt of the renewed devotion to Nyarloth before meeting her, and had deduced that this resurgence in worship was the reason for the Demiurge's rebirth, but had not known of her involvement.

She travelled south with them to the Parymesia. It was a ruin, a bitter reminder of the wonder it had once exuded. A rusted mass of forgotten machinery, only a small part of it remained operational. She feared what that meant for the essence of Nyarloth. The Septs confirmed it - though he had

been reborn, the decay of the Soul-Engine corrupted what of his essence remained. His memories were fragmentary, as was his character. He was a genius whose mind was irrevocably broken.

Teleanyra had mourned for Nyarloth's death once before and was not ready for what had happened. No amount of repair could restore him to his full divinity, but she took it upon herself to help maintain it in whatever way she could, and train those mortals who showed an interest in its workings.

The followers of the Septs followed travelled across the Porphyri peninsula, where they became known as itinerant tinkers and metalsmiths, carrying out repairs of minor items in the settlements they travelled to. They also spread the word of Nyarloth and the exploits of Teleanyra to those who would listen. Over generations they would become a common sight across the entire peninsula, many of them proudly displaying their technarcane equipment and orthoses, and their descendants are known today as the Vagant Cohort, an organisation that is far more important than its disparate nomads and tinkers might otherwise convey.

By this time the Ehlbezuni empire had collapsed to decadence, and fractured, leading to chaos across the Porphyri peninsula. Though there were regions of stability, the entire peninsula became a place of chaos, and few had the patience or inclination to worship the ghost of an ancient god that resided in a decayed machine.

As though that were not enough, the Fourth Age brought with it the cataclysmic Shadow War, in which the forces of the Demiurge Rachanael clashed with his sister Allaishada and her allies. This great war lasted for 400 years and engulfed the entirety of Elyden. No race or kingdom was spared its touch and by the time it ended in around -1750 RM Elyden had been reduced to a wasteland, the mortals and their domains annihilated.

The Porphyri peninsula was no different. The irothani, already a shadow of their former numbers, their bloodline diluted by their increased contact with humans, were practically wiped out, as were the nations and people descended from Ehlbezun. A handful of the Septs survived, vowing to dedicate their existence to defending Nyarloth, whose essence had declined to the point of comatose, the land around the Parymesia beginning to warp as he dreamt.

Teleanyra remained with Nyarloth for some time, but found the world at large calling to her. She left, accompanied by a contingent of the Vagant Cohort, searching for survivors to aid.

And so did the Fourth Age end.

THE FIFTH AGE – REBUILDING AMID THE WANE OF ELYDEN

Much like the Fourth Age before it, the Fifth Age dawned upon an empty and lifeless world. Yet this desolation was far greater than even that of the previous age. All traces of civilisation had been erased and memory of what empires and people had come before was slowly lost as the remaining mortals concerned themselves with base survival.

In the Porphyri peninsula the remnants of the Ehlbezuni people eked a living, scavenging for anything of use and value, living nomadic lives, hunting and laying traps. A few settled in areas where ruins were easily reconstructed.

One of the first cultures to emerge were the people of Lahzul; savage ritualists who offered their dead to the spirits of the otherworld, which lay particularly close to the material

realm. Their leaders were shamen and animists who communed with spirits. They grew rapidly, dominating what is today the north-western coast of Porphyri by around -1000 RM. They sent raids against surrounding lands, ambushing nomads and taking them as slaves as they scavenged resources from their defeated foes.

Elsewhere, those survivors who dwelt near the coast were unwittingly subjected to the amnesiac qualities of the Sea of Lethea's waters, leading to a regression of culture and an inability to progress beyond the simplest of tribal or nomadic customs.

Those who lived farther inland were more successful, slowly coming together and founding settlements over old ruins, where resources for plunder were plentiful. Over the centuries four major settled areas emerged in the Porphyri peninsula besides Lahzul: Bustra, in the south; Sarashan, in the centre-west; Zolok, in the east; and Sokattar, in the north. They slowly spread, either defeating or assimilating other cultures until by 0 RM they were the five major cultures in the region. There remained expanses of unclaimed lands between them, populated by inconsequential people and family groups that came and went without being noticed.

In Bustra, the Host was rediscovered and became once again an object of veneration in around -400 - -300 RM. Meanwhile, the Parymesia had become a well-known feature to locals, though it was avoided, with myths emerging around it and the tainted lands that surrounded it, not to mention the disfigured monks that defended it. Unknown to them, those disfigured monks were the Septs, and they continued guarding and tending to the Parymesia as best they could. The Bustrans left the Septs to their own devices and left the warped territories undisturbed, though they would eventually die out to a virulent plague that ravaged their lands, leaving the place largely deserted by around 100 RM. a handful of fanatics took the Host and fled north with it across the Sea of Lethea, eventually settling with it in Waelmigh.

Throughout this time the Vagant Cohort were travelling across the peninsula, finding lost technologies they could salvage or repair, and people who they could aid or teach the story of Nyarloth and Teleanyra to. Many such encounters ended in conflict, and over time members of the Cohort learnt to be capable fighters, using the technarcana they recovered to aid them in their work. Over the years they became respected by the more established cultures, and in some cases they settled down, becoming technologists, helping to guide the growing cultures of the peninsula. This was especially true in Sarashan, where their descendants would go on to rule in 213 RM, starting the Vagant Dynasty, that would rule until its collapse in 823 RM.

In the north, the Sokattari people were ingenious in their rebuilding, and under the guidance of the Vagant Cohort rapidly learnt how to use the recovered technarcane devices they found. They encountered a large Soul-Engine around which they constructed a sprawling pyramid-complex that came to be known as Mathornotal. The pyramid became the centre of a techno-religious cult in which priests communed with the spirit of the entity interred within it (likely an ancient Sept), which became a god to them. Sokattar fragmented in around 320 RM after the techno-priests were deposed by a downtrodden populace, and the Soul-Engine destroyed. The remnants warred amongst themselves, with no group managing to gain the upper-hand for centuries.

In the east, the realm of Zolok spread to the north and south, encompassing the coastal regions to the east of the

expansive Porophossyr mountains, which served as an effective barrier to contact with the west. The people of Zolok were sea-farers, building small skiffs and catamarans with which they plied coastal waters. The Sea of Mirovea became a deity to them as their culture developed. By around 0 RM its waters had become holy and only fishermen could touch it and then only to fish and to pay their respects. They began constructing large pyres in which food and other offerings (perhaps even human sacrifices) were burnt, in honour of the sea. These pyres would develop into large wooden ships, whose intent was never to set sail. In around 200 RM the first so-called Ark of Porphyr was constructed - massive, flat-hulled and miles from the sea, in the city of Zolok. Unlike earlier offerings, these Arks were not burnt, but built, facing east, forever looking at the sea god of Mirovea.

In the north-west Lahzul continued to grow but it met resistance as it approached the borders of Sarashan in around 275 RM. This led to a drawn-out war that saw the technologically-inferior Lahzul whittle down. It would fragment between 280 - 290 RM, with many of its settlements and people being absorbed by Sarashan.

In 331 RM an outsider arrived in the city of Nylar in the north east of Zolok. He called himself the Archpotentate Malichar, and travelled with a retinue of plagi and demiurnes, and sought the secrets of technarcana, specifically the soul-Engines and the application of their technology. He studied for a while under the auspices of the Vagant Cohort, where he learnt all they had to share with him/ rapidly. But his appetite for knowledge was insatiable, and he demanded more. He was a fast learner and demanded far more than they knew or were willing to share. They directed him to the Septs and the Parymesia, where they told him he might learn more. The full details of what happened are unknown, but history states that he earned what he needed and was able to travel west into Kharkharadontis, where he constructed a technarcane engine, upon which was interred the body of the Demiurge Rachanael, irrevocably altering the history of the Inner Sea.

In around 460 RM Sarashan began moving north, claiming territories left behind by the fragmentation of Sokattar over 100-years before, expanding rapidly towards the equator at a rate that was impossible to manage in the long-run.

Zolok continued to expand, reaching as far south as the extant city of Baghan, and as far north as Serrok. It assimilated the city-state of Andrapphala in around 580 RM, and exiled its shaper rulers, who fled south. The city did not resist the expansion of Zolok and willingly became its vassals, having already seen their fate. Zolok continued expanding, and made contact with Sarashan at its western-most expanse in around 400 RM, to the south-west of the Porophossyr mountains. A trade route was established between the two, as they continued in their respective expanses.

By around 450 RM a new culture had developed in lands to the south east of the Bay of Otagia, in the Krathani basin, calling itself Pharth. The Pharthi were in truth an amalgam of diverse cultures and refugees who brought with them fragments of various dead customs, that over the next centuries came together into a rich tapestry that by around spread south towards the Tropic of Maocarhl, as far south as the Sea of Bimaria, where they encountered savage techno-barbarians city-states that stymied their advance. Indeed, not only did they stall the nations' advance south, but they actively began attacking them, sending ships north across the Bimaria, leading to decades of conflict in the south of Pharth.

In c. 600 RM the Korachani explorer Navah Berden sailed south along the Mirovean coast, making contact with the people of Zolok and Pharth. Goods and knowledge were exchanged, before he continued across the sea of Lethea. His discoveries would eventually lead to the establishment of the Korachani colony of Noavatur to the south west a few hundred years later. By around 1000 RM Noavatur was a well-established colony that made periodic contact with the peoples of the Porphyri peninsula to conduct trade. Thus were certain Korachani customs disseminated, including the faith of the Undying Machine, whose missionaries clashed with the various faiths of the peninsula, never managing to take root in the way it had elsewhere. Following its independence in 1304 RM, it increased contact with the Porphyri peninsula and maintains embassies there to this day.

In 823 RM the economy of Sarashan finally collapsed after decades of mismanagement. This led to a rapid decline of its technarchy, which fell in 824 RM, leaving the region in chaos. The region remained lawless for hundreds of years, until three states emerged in around 1000 RM - Kapar in the south east, Menkar in the west, and Sebdra in the north.

The shapers who had been driven out of Andrapphala fled to the south west and settled lands populated by the techno-barbarians, who they tamed, after which they eventually founded the small empire of Sattar Isha. In around 850 RM they founded the city of Bodaragh, which became their capital. By this time they were known as Attestors, and had become powerful shapers, using their Atramental abilities to see into the future, but as time passed they found themselves obsessed with the future, ignoring the present. The empire crumbled between 1300 - 1400 RM following the drying of the r. Andras and the inertia of the Attestors. Many years of conflict would follow the collapse of Sattar Isha, as isolated cities unsuccessfully vied for control of surrounding lands.

By this time the Ark-building culture of Zolok had evolved to become a pervading part of the empire's culture. Given the wealth of ancient technarcana that was available to them, little steps were made to develop their own technology and they simply scavenged what they could, using what the Vagant Cohort had taught them to adapt their discoveries to whatever purposes they saw fit, all the while ignoring the advancement of extant sciences. This led to a culture that became highly ritualised, where most aspects of life were based on ancient traditions, with little change and progression. This became most apparent in the practice of constructing the Arks, which came to supersede all other aspects of its culture. It became a religion, the centre of the empire's industries, its government, and military. All its resources were diverted to the construction of the Arks, which became larger and more elaborate with each passing generation, rivalling settlements in size and scope.

Its military pushed west, taking advantage of the instability caused by the fall of Sarashan, and by around 1200 RM it had subjugated most of the state of Kapar, but already its own culture was in decline. The obsession with the Ark-building had caused the empire to stagnate and its economy to suffer. Its leaders, priests indoctrinated over countless generations in the ritualistic beliefs of the Ark cults, were no true leaders, and they led the empire to its slow demise. Its populace fractured, and by around 1270 RM its western-most territories had slipped away. The Ark-building territories of Hit Phatharloss remained strong, the sheer will and drive of the fanatical Ark-worshippers keeping the lands alive. All territories beyond the

Porophossyr mountains were abandoned, and they were eventually taken by Menkar and Sebdra.

Meanwhile the scion Teleanyra Apexide reappeared in Menkar following centuries of introspection. She had seen mortal empires rise and fall over and over again, seeing their resources and potential squandered. To the south the Septs had continued their thankless vigil over the Parymesia, but their numbers were too few to restore it to its full power. She saw the struggling mortals, waxing and waning in pointless cycles and saw in them a great wasted potential. Untold millions of bodies had come and gone since the wane of Kathar Byaat, all wasted, where they could have been put to use in mending the Soul-Engine.

She travelled to the Parymesia, and demanded an audience Nyarloth, noting how grotesque the lands surrounding him had grown. The Septs acquiesced, and she communed with the Demiurge at length. His thoughts had grown even more polluted since she had last communed with him, and much of what he said was gibberish, but she could still feel a mote of divinity there, clinging to life. If only the Soul-Engine could be restored. She implored the Septs to integrate with the mortals, to teach them the ways of Nyarala, and sharing with them their knowledge of technarcana, as the Vagant Cohort had done. They refused, for despite their intent, they cared little for mortals, least of all humans, who they considered destructive and chaotic. She tried to convince them that their prejudices would cost them their god in the long run, but it was for nothing. Then calling upon the god-given gifts of the blood right, she compelled them to follow. Powerless to resist the word of the closest living being to Nyarloth, they cowered in awe and obeyed her.

The Septs sent acolytes into the mortal lands, mostly Pharth, but also Menkar, teaching the mortals of the Demiurges and Nyarloth, of his gifts to the irothani in the form of technarcana. They shared their knowledge, teaching the mortals to think for themselves rather than to rely on archaic half-understood technologies from forgotten empires. Over the centuries they spread a small but loyal following, and the cult of Nyarala began to grow anew.

Teleanyra herself became a missionary, spreading the word of Nyarloth, though made no mention of her own divine heritage, for fear of what consequences it may bring. Her words were most-heeded in Menkar, and people there took to the teachings of Nyarala, despite cultural familiarity with the Church of the Undying Machine and the Unchanging God from Noavatur, across the Sea of Lethea.

In 1303 RM, as the religion was taking hold and the people were starting to work together under the guidance of the Septs and Teleanyra, a great catastrophe befell the east of Sammaea - a massive earthquake in the north of Uhbataur sent a titanic tidal wave racing across the Sea of Lethea. Worst hit was the coast of Menkar. Though the amnesiac qualities of the Lethea meant there were few sizable cities along the coast, the wave was of such magnitude that it travelled inland for miles, sweeping every sign of civilization it found away.

This was a blow the region could not recover from and Sebdra, eager to expand its territories, moved against the ailing nation, subjugating it in a few months what Teleanyra had fought so hard to accomplish over the past decades. Menkar's territories diminished, becoming restricted to the south east of the Porphyri peninsula, as Sebdra grew to encompass more than the territories of Zolok, Menkar, Pharth, and Sattar Isha combined.

Now, more than ever before, Teleanyra sought to share knowledge of Nyarloth to the people of the Porphyri peninsula. They were desperate and might be more likely to turn to his teachings, making him stronger. Under his renewed aegis, the mortals might recover and be better-equipped to deal with the dangers of the world.

She travelled around the peninsula with her acolytes, recounting the tales of Nyarloth and the irothani and an age of ancient wonder that might yet be restored. Her words found traction in Menkar, the south of which had been devastated by the Upheaval, and whose territories in the north east were struggling against the predations of an increasingly aggressive Sebdra, which had become a major power in the peninsula.

As the Menkari people were slowly indoctrinated to the teachings of Nyarala some amongst them found themselves turning to the sea-deity of the Ark-builders of Zolok, whose missionaries had travelled to their lands years before, though it never found the traction that Nyarala did. Despite this, many settlements in the east begin constructing their own Arks. Meanwhile, Teleanyra guided the people in fortifying their home, and they moved west, taking advantage of resources left behind by Sattar Isha, which had diminished following the Upheaval of Lethea. Indeed, large swathes of its population had been destroyed, with the remnants afflicted by the terribly amnesia brought by the waters of the sea and the region was suffering as a result. Teleanyra and her acolytes aided them and by 1324 RM the two were united under the so-called Twin Sabaisid Banner. They remained independent entities, but were closely allied and worked together to aid each other, rebuilding their lands, fortifying their borders and re-establishing their industries. Travel between the two was common and only increased over time.

News of political upheaval in Pharth drew Teleanyra away from Menkar and Sattar Isha with an army of faithful followers and troops. There she discovered that the entire region had come under the influence of a group of iconoclasts who opposed the Septs and the teachings of Teleanyra and the Vagant Cohort. They looked to the grotesque unnatural terrain that surrounded the Parymesia and in their ignorance blamed the Septs for its slow growth. They had gained a large following by around 1320 RM and their demagogues had inflamed the populace into a frenzy that saw large mobs descend upon Sept enclaves scattered around Pharth, attacking them. A few were able to flee north into Sebdra, but most were killed.

During this time Zolok had continued regressing, its leaders little more than demagogues drunk on the power granted them by the fanaticism of millions. Little progress was made and there was no innovation - with its industries remaining simple exploitation of resources and little else. Ancient machinery and technarcana recovered from Fourth and Third Age ruins became sacrosanct, revered only as religious items, their intended use ignored. A new caste of regional leader emerged, known as the Hieromonks, who oversaw the resource management needed to construct the Arks, and the actual rituals that took place around the Arks once construction was finished. They became wealthy and powerful, and in 1378 RM had become the rulers of Zolok, usurping the ancient monarchy that had stagnated for centuries.

Teleanyra arrived in Sebdra after the worst of the conflict was over. Thousands of Septs had been killed, their bodies smouldering on great pyres constructed by the iconoclasts,

and only a handful remained in Parymesia, which the mobs were scared of approaching the dreamscapes concocted by the torpid Demiurge.

Teleanyara was furious at the wanton death of her kin and marched upon the iconoclasts with her armies in 1378 RM, calling them out. They thought little of this, not knowing who she saw. They attacked her forces, not knowing that she was a Demiurge-born scion. Teleanyara was still weary of showing her powers to the mortals and did not take an active role in the fighting, remaining behind the lines as a general instead. Their armies clashed and a great battle was fought that left both forces devastated, with thousands of troops from the Twin Banners killed.

In the lull after the battle Teleanyara wandered the battleground, looking at the bodies of the dead. Young men on both sides, each with their lives ahead of them. Others, older, leaving behind spouses and children. Amid them she saw whom she recognised. Men and women she had considered family. Loyal followers who had been with her for many years. Finally, she saw the face of her lover, her body broken and filthy, eyes wide in lifeless fear. She saw in those eyes the wasted lives of thousands of mortals who had died because of her indecisiveness. She raged, allowing the blood of a dozen generations of Septs, each one closer to Nyarloth than the one before, to emerge from the prison she'd kept it locked away in.

She marched towards the capital of Panet, with what remained of her army in tow in 1387 RM, and unleashed an attack against it that was so devastating that its citadel toppled, shattering into shards of stone that exploded across the city, killing thousands more than had ever fallen in the battle. She descended upon the ruin of the citadel and fought for a day and a night, killing many more soldiers with her Demiurge-wrought powers. The mortals stood no chance against her and as dawn came, she saw what she had done - the city had been reduced to rubble and blood. She looked down at herself and saw that she was covered in the blood of innocents, already drying. Around her bodies of men, women and children littered the crater that had once been a city. Amongst them were her own soldiers, none of whom remained.

She collapsed, weak from her outburst, and fled. She was no leader. She had led her soldiers to death. She had slaughtered thousands of innocents - amongst them her own troops. She was not fit to lead them. And so, she abandoned the Twin Banners, Pharth, and Parymesia. She forsook her past in that one act of cowardice. She fled, knowing not where she went, until she collapsed out after many weeks of travel, her body feeling weak and hollow.

She lay there for decades, alive but without life, until a group of the Vagant Cohort found her body in the south of Sebdra. They nursed her to health, though she remained weak. When she came to she felt the same hollow sensation that she had felt before fleeing in Pharth. But there was something about the presence of the Vagant Cohort that made her feel better. Whenever they were close to her she felt stronger, even if minutely-so. She remembered then Nyarloth and his siblings the Demiurges, who craved worship and followers, not through a narcissistic need, but out of physical necessity. A curse bestowed upon them by their creator, they could not ignore their mortal children and were forced into being their leaders, treating them well-enough to receive devotion in turn. She realised then that she, being a scion of Nyarloth, was similarly tied to the number of followers she had.

She'd never used the full-extent of the powers she had inherited from Nyarloth before - there simply had never been the need for it, but the emotional response to what she had done had unleashed the full extent of her powers, weakening her.

She woke a changed person. Having lost everything, she no longer cared for the mortals or Nyarloth. She had more experience of the world than most others and was probably second only to the Demiurges in longevity, having seen tens of millennia in her life. And in that time she had seen patterns - mortals killing mortals; empires rising and falling, whether to outside influence, inaction or corruption. In their hearts, mortals were rudderless, slaves to chaos and their darkest desires. With the Demiurges languid, and most of their scions gone, she realised that no amount of pushing them would change their ways. They did not deserve her help. But she did deserve a better life than what she had wrought so-far.

She needed to regain her strength, which meant leaving the safety of her rescuers. She studied the world around her and felt that the fanatical simpletons of Zolok would be the easiest to bend to her will.

She travelled there in around 1450 RM and found a land slowly being consumed by the expanding borders of Sebdra and raiding pirates and chorsairs. Its people were malleable, and would be easily swayed. She travelled there and slowly amassed a following in hinterland settlements who were far removed from the Ark-building culture, posing as a deity. As she gained followers, she grew more confident and stronger, able to alter the world in greater ways which garnered yet more followers in a self-perpetuating cycle. She re-established the Makhanate cults and fostered a cult of personality around her that the Makhanate spread across Zolok.

The Hieromonks opposed the Makhanate, but by then it was too late - they had established themselves in the west, far from the immediate influence of the Ark-builders. Teleanyara had offered her followers knowledge both archaic and modern, bringing them into the modern age, years ahead of the culturally-stunted people of Zolok. She defeated most of the Hieromonks in a display of her power, in view of thousands of Ark-worshippers, most of whom immediately prostrated themselves before her.

The Makhanate was placed in charge of the major Zoloki cities. The remnants of the Hieromonks were converted to her worship, and the Ark-building culture was allowed to continue as people devoted themselves to her.

By 1462 RM Teleanyara was in control of all Zoloki territories, which had been converted to her worship. She had strengthened its borders and founded a well-equipped military to defend against borer attacks. The Makhanate began searching other lands to infiltrate, finding the Auradian Dynasty, far to the north, across the Sea of Mirovea. Over the next decade were able to spread the teachings of Nyarala amongst the ruling Dynasty, which by 1510 became a puppet of the Makhanate. This led to Teleanyara growing even more powerful over the coming centuries. A change in regime in Auradia and waning interest from Zolok led to the withdrawal of the Makhanate and the Auradian Dynasties slipped free of their influence in 1590 RM.

The lack of support from Zolok had been due to a new military campaign being launched by Teleanyara against Sebdra. As her armies occupied their forces, she travelled to the capital and did there what she had done to Pharth - utterly destroying the capital. This threw Sebdra into chaos, and it split into two. The north, which had already been moving

towards independence, rapidly consolidated its position, becoming the empire of Serrok; and the south, which fragmented into various states. By then the Septs who had fled from the persecution on Pharth had established themselves and had been subtly making plans for such a day as when Teleanyara would come. The regions where they were influential were first to supplicate themselves to Zolok, and the rest of the south followed over the coming years.

Following a few years of consolidating and reinforcing the trade-network between southern Sebdra and Zolok, Teleanyara moved the capital from Galamsham to Bettyl in 1607, christening this new land Porphyry.

Meanwhile, to the south, the Twin Banners of Sabaisid had grown closer despite the disappearance of Teleanyara. Following the battle against Pharth in 1387 RM, the Twin Banners had looked inwards, strengthening existing territories and trading with other lands. Their territories prospered and grew closer. With the foundations from Teleanyara's teachings the nations entered the modern age, and began devising their own technarcane machines even as they restored and renovated what relics they found from the Fourth Age. Their ruling families married into each other and in 1598 RM Sattar Isha and Menkar were officially joined as one, becoming known as Sabaisa.

This was a time of change and progress. Though the backwards customs of the Ark-builders remained active in Porphyry, Teleanyara and the Makhnate made strides in bringing their territories into the modern age. New innovations were made and contact was increased with neighbouring nations, including Sabaisa. Though there were some who were angry at Teleanyara for abandoning Sabaisa, so many generations had passed that few were concerned, and the teachings of Nyarala even reached those lands to a generally favourable response.

Following Teleanyara's attack against Pharth in 1378 RM and the utter annihilation of its capital Panet, the region regressed. The coast was abandoned to the amnesic waters of the Lethea and chorsairs, and people settled inland. The influence of the iconoclasts waned after Teleanyara's attack on Panet, and a series of tyrants emerged to fill in the void over the coming decades. By around 1436 RM one region, known as Ananthul, gained the upper hand and began to assimilate surrounding territories. The ruler began calling himself Phaoh, and his offspring would follow in his steps taking on the moniker as a title, starting the Phanot dynasty that survives in the region today. In 1443 RM, the name of Ananthul became officially recognised and used for the first time.

THE MODERN AGE

And so were born four main states of the Porphyry peninsula that we know today - Serrok in the north, Porphyry dominating the centre, and Ananthul and Sabaisa to the south.

Ananthul and Sabaisa established a well-guarded trade-route based around the caravanserai of Cabotesia, which appeared to provide shelter to caravans in around 1500 RM. The routes expanded from there, eventually forming a link with Porphyry within 100-years. This allowed the three nations to share not only goods and resources, but also knowledge and information, and an effective network of couriers was established linking the three capitals.

In Porphyry, Teleanyara took on the title of Praedicate and became reclusive. She had a palace constructed atop a Soul-Engine, construction of which would be completed in 1635 RM. She moved there with a handful of Makhnates and

Septs, and would retreat from public life over the coming centuries, emerging only during important ceremonies, and even then she would be aloof, rarely interacting with the mortals present and always speaking through her Makhnate handmaidens. A simple wave, if so she desired, would put the mortals into a fervour, the emotions from which she would soak up as a plant drank from sunlight, but she derived little pleasure in being amongst them as they reminded her of her mistakes and of a life she wanted little to do with. By the coming of the third millennium she would rarely emerge, only doing so once every few generations or to help her people (and by extension, her interests) during times of need. Such appearances would become cause for great celebration, remembered for years later.

In around 2246 descendants of the Attestors would reveal themselves in the city of Usrut, just to the N of the capital in Andrapphala in Sabaisa. They were powerful seers and would go on to become advisors to the royal family, guiding it through important decisions.

In 2727 RM they made a prophecy, showing a time of darkness during which the royal family would disappear. The then-Queen ignored their premonition, seeing the outcome as unlikely. In 2931 RM the royal family was killed in religious coup during a solar eclipse, fulfilling the prophecy. The attack was devised to rid Sabaisa of its monarchy, giving power back to the people, but the orchestrators of the attack had not planned for the aftermath, and the region collapsed into anarchy. Half-a-dozen groups made attempts for the throne, citing distant lineages that linked them to the royal family, whilst warlords and other opportunists claimed other territories as their own. The region broke down, with the south-western peninsula and the eastern-most lands fragmenting. The north-west, being part of the established trade-route, remained largely under the control of a league of merchant-houses who maintained law in the region.

In 3491 RM the Jahinn Aldebarra was exiled from Abacardat for taking a human wife in 3491 RM, and she later gave birth to his son the next year. After travelling with his family and a handful of followers for a year he reached the S shore of Sabaisa, finding a land in the grip of chaos. Together they formed a small settlement, known as, Baghan, attracting refugees from the area. Together, they fortified the area against opposing warlords and by c. 3505 RM they had one of the more stable settlements in the region. As his son grew older he became a lieutenant and helped to expand their territories. This drew the attention of warlords who attacked them, but they were defeated, leading to a rapid expansion of their lands, which attracted even more settlers.

In 3519 RM three Attestors approached Baghan, seeking an audience with Aldebarra. Tales of his leadership and his sons' exploits had spread to the far territories, and many warlords and tyrants were fearful, readying themselves for war. The Attestors told him of the cultural importance of the old capital in Andrapphala - if the capital could be retaken and restored to greatness, they foresaw Sabaisa uniting under his banner.

In 3524 RM Aldebarra marched against the ruin of Andrapphala, which was occupied by a bandit-lord with a sizeable force under his command. This resulted in a siege that lasted for 2-months, leading to the surrender of the bandit lord. Aldebarra gave him the opportunity to become a soldier in his army, which he refused, leading to his execution. Many of his lieutenants followed, too proud to admit defeat, but a few accepted the offer, and they were treated fairly. This was

to set the tone for Aldebarra's rule - harsh laws from which everyone in Sabaisa prospered.

He crossed Sabaisa and over the next two years vanquished the last resistors. He made allies of the merchant-lords of Cabotesia, who supported his campaign, and in 3526 RM he defeated the last resisting city, Decavaisa, with its ruler's surrender, uniting Sabaisa under his banner.

Aldebarra died in 3586 RM, leaving behind many loved ones and a kingdom who mourned him greatly. His son, Aldebarra II, took over from him, and rules to this day. He founded the order of Proctors in 3591 RM, who became a powerful policing force with the power of judge and jury.

For decades the city of Utiman had been a major producer of gold, supporting the technarcane foundries and manufactories of the west with its output. In 3841 RM all communications from it died down. When messengers arrived many months later they found the city fortified, its mines hidden behind walls. The people of Utiman had defected from Porphy, declaring their independence. Envoys were sent there to find a diplomatic solution, but they were all refused entry, forcing Porphy into action.

The city was well-fortified and the initial attacks against it faltered, even as Utiman was gaining a following along the north of the Porophossyr mountains reaching as far south as Ullagalia by 3842 RM. Eventually Porphy stopped attempting to retake the city as the lengthy sieges were proving more costly than the gold lost in the city. The Makhnate reasoned that the city and its allies would not have enough food to last them another winter.

But years passed, and Utiman and its allies did not falter. It had established a tentative trade route north with Serrok via the coastal city of Cardilagia, where it was able to trade its gold for much-needed goods, despite harassment from Porphyri forces..

The loss of these central territories and the gold quarries led to a schism in Porphy that saw west and east growing apart from one-another. The loss of the Pass of Vair in 3841 RM was a blow to the infrastructure of Porphy, leaving with only one permanent pass across the Porophossyr - in the far south, at the city of Habasham. Though Habasham grew wealthy from the increased traffic, it meant that the east of Porphy, which was primarily made up of the culturally stunted Ark-building people, was left cut off from the heart of the nation and its modern industries.

Over the decades these two regions grew more and more disparate, and rumours abound today of dissent brewing in the east, with its people seeing the technologically superior west as an oppressor that considers it as little more than an embarrassment. The west, by contrast, looks to the east and sees a culture that was obsoleted before even the founding of Porphy, with millions of coins better used elsewhere wasted on constructing its Arks every year. Through this all, the Praedicate Teleanyara, once counted amongst the more fearsome leaders in Elyden, is nowhere to be seen. Most scholars and political commentators predict this instability will erupt in a full-blown schism in the years to come.

