

# The World You Live In

## *A brief guide to Mereval*

### The world in general

Mereval is an Earth-like world, with similar climate, but far less land mass. Some forgotten disaster around a thousand years ago has triggered a slow but accelerating process whereby the land is sinking below the surface of the oceans.

Five hundred years ago, there were two continents, **Dorlan** and **Vadorn**. Now there are seven principal island nations, slowly shrinking as the waters rise, each preparing for the final struggle for the last habitable land.

You are citizens of one of the most powerful of the nations, **Cormar**. The others are **Helmar** and **Dormar** (which make up the remnants of **Vadorn** and are called the **Vadornisti Isles**), and **Marmark**, **Neudorn**, **Volhowe** and **Vermar**, the **Dorlanisti Isles**.

### Races

The vast majority of people are human, of three basic stocks - **Dorlan**, generally tall and fair, **Vadorn**, shorter and darker, and the forest-dwelling **Meryan**, somewhere between but producing occasional green-haired individuals.

The only nonhuman sentients on Mereval are the **Khyle**. Now very rare, the Khyle are regarded as a fey, uncanny, dangerous people, with unholy powers of black magic and no human morals. In some places they are tolerated, but in others they are shunned, discriminated against and in extreme cases hunted like beasts. Many now hide their species if they can. Taller than humans, they have white-blond hair, sharp and beautiful features and pale grey eyes.

There are two primary languages, **Dorlan** and **Vadorn**, each spoken on the islands that remain of those nations; the Meryan speak their own language, and the few remaining Khyle speak their inhuman, ancient, fluid, tongue.

### History

Ancient tales hold that the Khyle once ruled Mereval, holding the humans of the day as slaves. No record or tale tells what happened, but as this is clearly no longer the case, at some stage the Khylar rulers were thrown down and humans took control of the world. By all accounts they flourished and prospered.

Around a thousand years ago, the process of submergence began, and the great cultures and civilizations that had sprung up in the wake of the Khylar empire slowly collapsed into the squabbling survivors of the present day.

The last significant war was a hundred and ten years ago, when Cormar conquered her neighbor Velmar, with the aid (it is rumoured) of black magic.

Slightly under a hundred years ago the population of Vermar rebelled against their despotic ruler, the sorcerer Ethandar, and overthrew him. Since then the island's culture has collapsed and its' people sunk into barbarism.

### Magic and Power

The Three Forms all existed on Mereval at one stage, but only Spirit Magic (sometimes called Battle Magic) is now generally practiced.

Faith in the old Gods guttered and died in the face of their inability to reverse the death sentence facing the world, and no user of Divine power now lives in Mereval.

Sorcery was the art magic of the Khyle; it came naturally to them after millennia of use. Its use was barred to humans – it was used in fact to oppress and torment them - during the Khylar Empire. Some learned its' ways afterwards, sometimes with catastrophic results, always at heavy cost. Almost all humans regard sorcery as black evil, and will turn on its practitioners where they're found. Since the common opinion holds (incorrectly) that all Khyle are sorcerers, this doesn't make their lives any easier. A few sorcerers practice today, mostly in secret, and none with anything like the power of the Khyle of old. Many ancient Khylar artifacts and sites remain, and most are reputed to be invested with vast slumbering powers, dangerous to wielder and target alike. Many probably are.

### Technology

Tales of the lost realms indicate a greater knowledge of the laws of science and nature than remains today. The culture of Mereval currently resembles that of Europe in around the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Century.

A lot of regional variation depends on resource. Cormar has the best remaining reserves of coal and iron, and so produces the best armour and weapons. It also is the only nation able to make crossbows. Marmark has the highest population and largest (though perhaps not best) army. Volhowe produces the fastest ships, and so on.

All the major cities on Mereval were originally built by the Khyle, using materials and techniques now lost to knowledge. Humans live in them, because they're too good to waste, but many prefer to forget their origins.

### **Rulership, Politics and War**

All the nations except Vermar are ruled by a King. With the pressures of survival, the phenomenon of politics has largely disappeared, except in Marmark.

While there is currently no war, everyone knows that, as the dry land diminishes, war over room and resources will be inevitable. The island nations will war until only one remains, winning the longest stay of execution by force of arms.