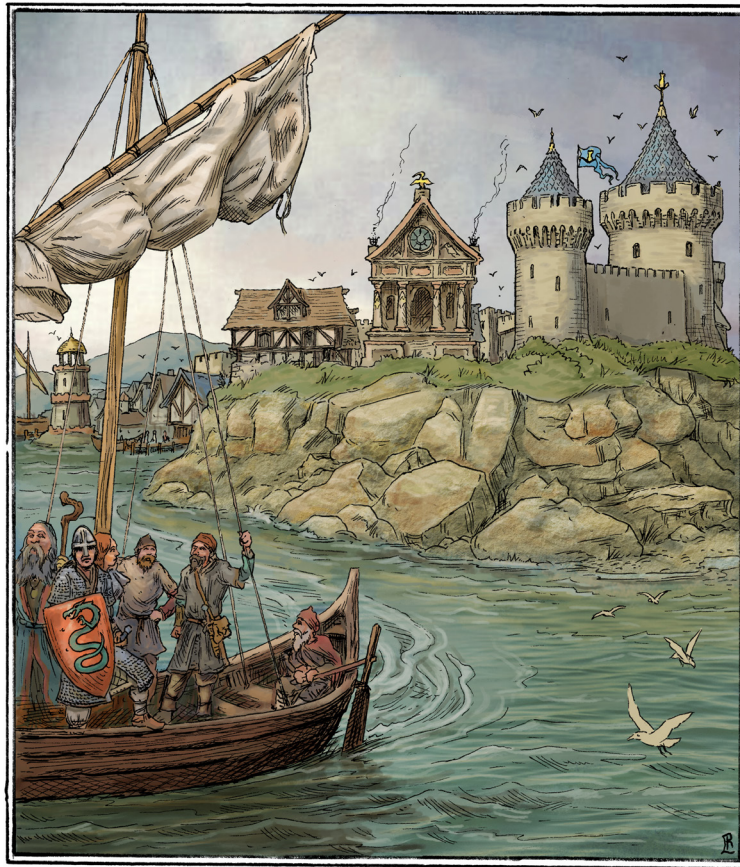


A SETTING SUPPLEMENT
COMPATIBLE WITH
Swords & Wizardry
ALONG WITH
The Majestic Fantasy RPG
AND ALL OTHER EDITIONS BASED ON
THE ORIGINAL 1974 ROLEPLAYING GAME

Into the Majestic Fantasy Realms

The Northern Marches



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Following pages are samples and excerpts from the guidebook so you get a feeling about The Northern Marches, what kind of information is provided, and how is it organised

Northern Marches Preview #2

This is the second in a series of previews showcasing the variety of content in the Into the Majestic Fantasy Realms, the Northern Marches Guidebook. The focus of this preview is an overview of the Southlands and highlighting terrain and locales around the Kubar Steppes.

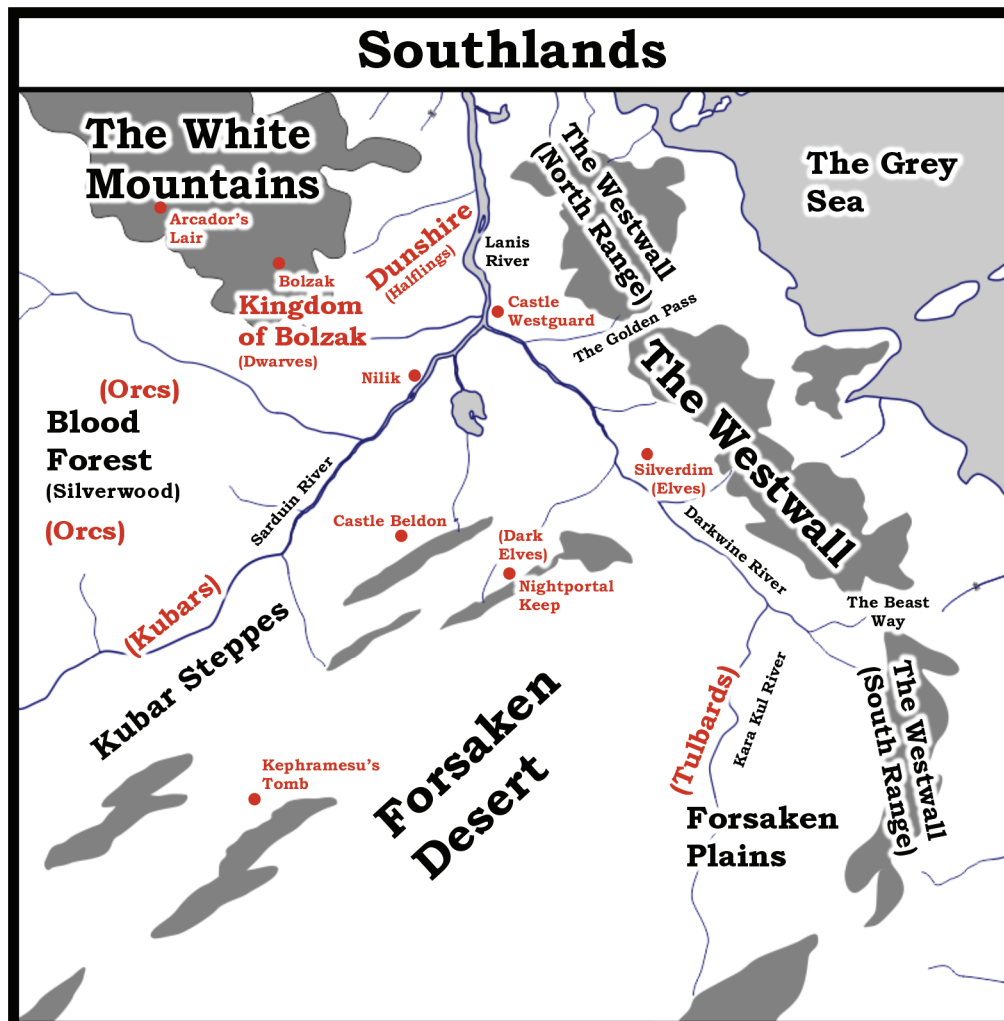
The Southlands

The Southlands is a vast frontier of deserts, plains, forests, and mountains. Here, adventurers struggle to push back the wilderness and move the boundaries of civilization forward. Opposing them are foes ranging from orc hordes to dark elves from the Underrealm. Renegades and traitors from the Grand Kingdom have carved out hidden realms of their own. Yet allies also exist, dwarves, elves, and halflings who stand ready to support those committed to good.

The northern half of the Southlands features wide-open terrain, and its soil is ideal for farming. Where the Sarduin and Darkwine Rivers meet, the Grand Kingdom established its first major settlement: Castle Westguard. Founded in 948 AU by explorers and adventurers crossing the Golden Pass over the Westwall Mountains from Vasa, Castle Westguard quickly became the hub of a thriving trade network with the dwarven Kingdom of Bolzak. Shipments of weapons, iron, and gold move down the Greystone Road to Nilik, the dwarven port. From there, the goods are shipped by barge to Castle Westguard, then carried by caravan over the pass to Vasa and the heart of the Grand Kingdom.

The dwarves of Bolzak have long protected the halflings of Dunshire. In exchange for protection and a few loads of iron, the halflings provide much of the grain and fruit eaten by the dwarves. South of the Golden Pass lies the last elven outpost in the Southlands: Silverdim. Once they ruled from Silverwood, but over two hundred years ago the Bloody Fist and other orc tribes, aided by the great dragon Arcador, laid waste to the forest. The surviving elves regrouped and founded Silverdim. The ruined land became known as The Blood Forest, and to this day remains the domain of the orcs.

Two centuries ago, the Dark Elves of House Ardize established an outpost at Nightportal Keep. Seeking to expand their power beyond the Underrealm, the matriarch of House Ardize placed The Black Lady in charge of the keep's construction and of exploring the region. Her first triumph was Arcador's victory over the elves of Silverwood. She recruited orc tribes to help the dragon exact his revenge. The recent arrival of Baron Beldon has given her an opportunity to counter the growing influence of the Grand Kingdom.



Twenty years ago, Baron Beldon was exposed as the leader of a secret assassin cult devoted to Kalis, the Blood Goddess. Fleeing the Grand Kingdom, he carved out a small domain beneath the Sunset Rim. Now commanding a band of cutthroats and brigands, he rules over the enslaved inhabitants of Westfield and Mistfield. Since then, trade and a loose alliance have formed between his realm and the Dark Elves of Nightportal Keep.

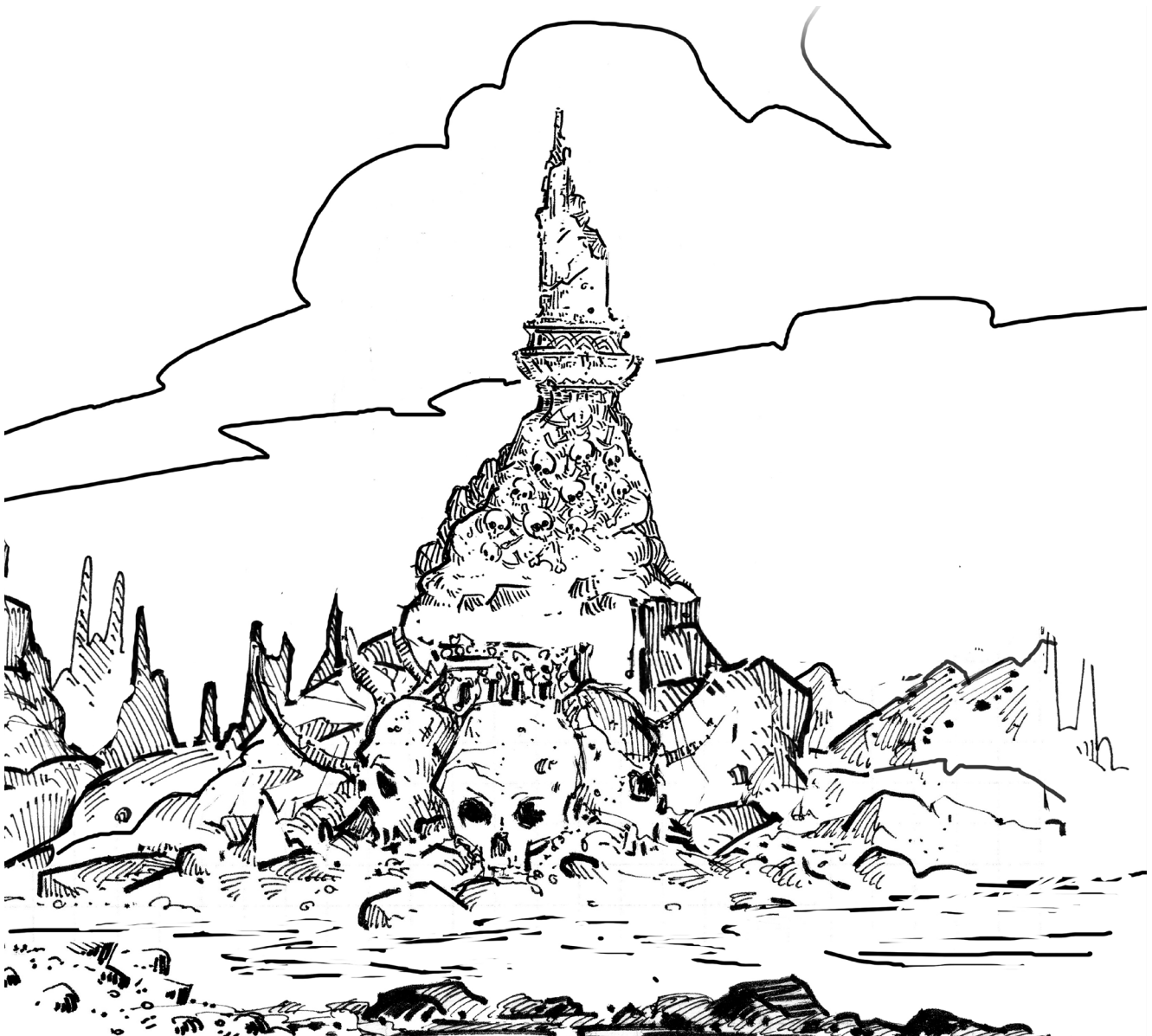
The Forsaken Desert dominates the southern half of the Southlands. It is bordered by arid plains and steppes to the north and south. Two nomadic peoples dwell here: the Kubar in the north and the Tulbards in the south.

The Kubar trace their ancestry to the followers of the Tengeriin Khan, the Sky King. The Khan and his griffin riders once ruled an empire stretching from Silverwood in the west to the Westwall Mountains in the east. He fought against the worshippers of the dragon god Sarrath, who sought to enslave his people.

The Khan was winning, until Sarrath intervened directly and sent his son, Khepramesu, who killed the Sky King. In fury, Mantriv the Sky Father, the Khan's patron god, descended and beheaded Khepramesu, destroying Sarrath's host in an event known as Mantriv's Wrath. The Khan's empire shattered, and his surviving warriors scattered across the Kubar Steppes north of the desert.

The Tulbards are descended from refugees who fled the Gnoll Wars, crossing the Westwall and settling in the Forsaken Plains south of the desert. They adopted a nomadic lifestyle. Skirmishes between the Kubar and Tulbards are not uncommon, but both avoid the monsters and haunted ruins scattered throughout the desert.

The Forsaken Desert itself is a harsh, cold wasteland of towering dunes and craggy ridges. Its floor is split by chasms and canyons, scars from the errant blows of Mantriv's axe during his battle with Khepramesu. Amid the sands roam giant scorpions feasting on the bones of adventurers who came seeking Khepramesu's tomb and other legendary treasures said to lie buried in the deep desert.



Culture & Religion

Kubar

For generations, nomadic tribes roamed the steppes and plains surrounding the Forsaken Desert in the Southlands. In summer, they drove their herds and flocks into the surrounding mountain foothills, returning to the plains in winter. Over time, a kaleidoscope of tribes formed, warred among each other, and broke apart. To keep their herds safe, they prayed to Mantriv, the Sky Father. To protect their families, they prayed to his wife, Dannu, the Mother of Life. In turn, Mantriv taught them how to defend themselves against the monsters born of the Night Hag and taught that a warrior's highest calling was to protect their people.

This way of life changed around 550 AU, following the ruin of the Bright Empire after the Shattering. Followers of the dragon god Sarrath fled across the Westwall Mountains and began preaching his dark creed. In response, Mantriv anointed his champion as the Tengeriin Khan, or Sky King. In the war that followed, the tribes united into an empire that spanned the Southlands. Though the Tengeriin Khan was killed in the final battles against Sarrath's forces, his memory endured. The tribes later renamed themselves the Kubar, in honor of the Sky King's birth name, Kugan.

Today, four major Kubar tribes remain in the Southlands:

- **The Fox Tribe**, renowned as skilled merchants, trade furs with the dwarves of Bolzak.
- **The Wolf Tribe** has recently been weakened after a pitched battle with orcs from the Death Moon Tribe, raiding from the Blood Forest.
- **The Jackal Tribe** roams the northern edge of the Forsaken Desert and is known for taking in outcasts from other tribes. They have abandoned the worship of Mantriv.
- **The Bear Tribe** is the largest of the Kubar tribes. The son of its chief was kidnapped and enslaved by Baron Beldon's men. In response, Chief Yekchin has vowed to destroy Baron Beldon and tear down his castle.

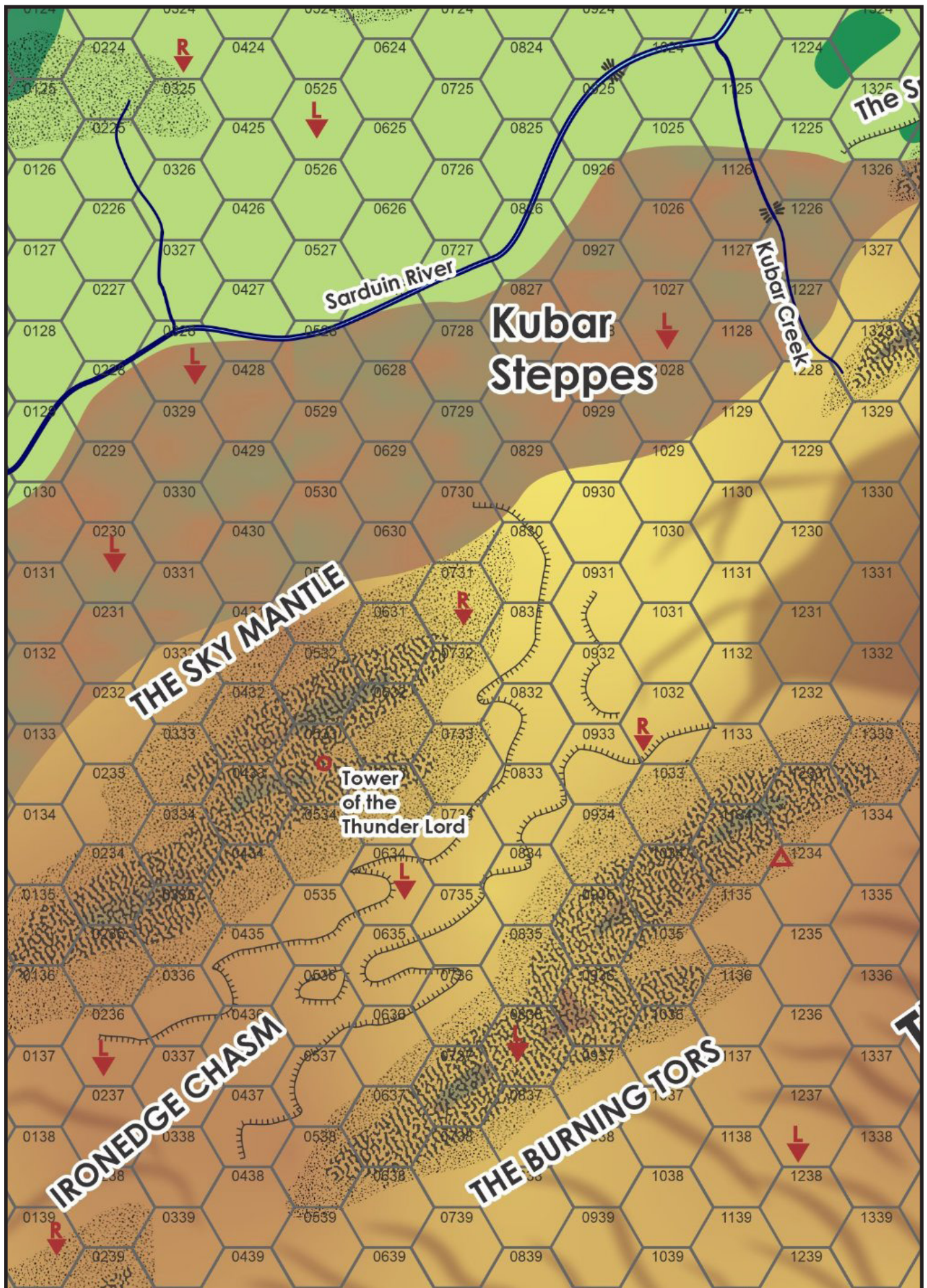
Mantriv the Sky Father

Surrounding the Forsaken Desert in the Southlands lies a vast region of open plains and steppes, home to herds of megafauna and monstrous beasts. The nomadic tribes of the region, including the Kubar and the Tulbards, believe these creatures are born from the Night Hag, Kalis, who seeks to unleash horrors upon the world. In response, the tribes turned to the worship of Mantriv, the Sky Father, and his wife, Dannu, the Earth Mother, to shield them from her spawn. Mantriv is also revered as a god of war, and his followers are expected to hunt and slay any monsters that threaten the safety of their people.

Each year, during the summer solstice, the Kubar and Tulbard gather around the highest hill within their range. The tribal elders, led by druids and priests, ascend the summit and recite epic poems to the rhythm of pounding drums, invoking the blessings of Mantriv and Dannu for the coming year. Afterward, the druids form a circle, lifting copper and wooden chimes to the wind. The sounds that follow are interpreted as omens or messages from the Sky Father and Earth Mother.

At the end of the ceremony, the tribe's warriors climb the hill and stand in a circle to swear the Skyfire Oath, a solemn vow to protect their people and to hunt down any monsters that dare to prey on the tribe in the year ahead.





Terrain

Rob's Note: The sinuous areas of dark brown represent dunes and areas of drifting sand. They are drawn to scale.

Ironedge Chasm (Hex 0337)

Ironedge Chasm is a rift canyon fifty miles long, stretching between The Sky Mantle (*Terrain, 0431*) to the north and The Burning Tors (*Terrain, 0937*) to the south. Legend holds that it was created by an errant swing of Mantriv's axe during his battle with a Son of Sarrath in serpent form.

The chasm is dry and desolate, inhabited primarily by **giant scorpions** (HD 6). Despite the dangers, Ironedge is a rich trove of rare, untapped minerals and ores. Once every decade, the Dark Elves of Nightportal Keep (*Locales, 2024*) send a slave party to prospect for adamantine in its depths.

Kubar Creek (Hex 1227)

This broad stream marks the boundary between the range of the Kubar Nomads and the Forsaken Desert. Slave raiders from Castle Beldon (*Locales, 1632*) and Kubar warriors frequently patrol the area.

Kubar Steppes (Hex 0827)

The steppes stretch over two hundred miles to the southwest, with their northern reaches extending into the Southlands. Here, the Kubar Nomads make their home. They herd cattle and follow seasonal routes from waterhole to waterhole. Each tribe believes that Mantriv, the Sky Father, has granted them the spirit of a unique animal to protect and guide them. This adopted animal serves as the tribe's totem.

Each tribe is led by a chief, usually the tribe's best warrior. The chief is supported by a lieutenant, often the second-best warrior or the chief's heir. These leaders are served by the tribe's finest fighters, a group known as the Batesa, or Brotherhood of the Bond. Worship of the Sky Father is guided by the tribe's soothsayers (clerics), while the seers (magic-users) offer visions and counsel to the chief.

Fox Tribe: 120 Nomads; Chief: Aputsem (Ftr 8); Lieut.: Nenlete (Ftr 6); Batesa: 19 warriors (Ftr 3); 1 Seer (MU 2); 3 Soothsayers (Clr4, Clr2, Clr1);

Military: 62 Horse archers;

Range: Hex 0130 to Hex 0430

Note: This tribe is known to have several excellent traders, mainly dealing in furs.

Wolf Tribe: 190 Nomads; Chief: Sinjar (Ftr 9); Lieut.: None; Batesa: 2 warriors (Ftr 3); 1 Seer (MU 1); 2 Soothsayers (Clr3, Clr1);

Military: 63 Horse archers;

Range: Hex 0528 to Hex 0827

Note: The wolf tribe suffered a devastating loss last year to the Death Moon Orcs raiding out of the Blood Forest (*Terrain, 0419*).

Bear Tribe: 200 Nomads; Chief: Yekchin (Ftr 9); Lieut.: Galtemur (Ftr 6), Soothsayers: Ulron (Clr5) Assistants (Clr3, Clr2); 1 Seer: Shira (MU 4);

Military: Light Foot 10; Med. Foot 5; Slingers 5; Shortbow 5; Lgt. Cavalry 25; Med. Cavalry 12; Horse Archers 15;

Range: Hex 0927 to Hex 1128

Note: See the Encampment of the Bear Tribe (*Locales 1027*)

Jackal Tribe: 80 Nomads; Chief: Treydan (Ftr 7); Lieut.: Aparth (Ftr 5); Batesa: 11 Camel Archers (Ftr 2); No Soothsayers; 2 Seers (MU 3, MU 1);

Military: 32 Light Bowman;

Range: Hex 0930 to Hex 1727

Note: Living in The Forsaken Desert, the Jackals only have a small herd of camels to provide mounts. Their use is reserved for the Chief, the Lieutenant, and the Batesa. The tribe has no soothsayers, having forsaken the worship of The Sky Father.

Malik Crag (Hex 0340)

The crags and cliffs of these desert mountains are teeming with **griffons** (HD 7). Currently, 4d4 griffons can be found here every year, along with 4d10 fledglings. The mountains are riddled with the remnants of ancient stone pathways carved into the slopes to allow the griffon masters of the long-dead Tengeriin Khan (Sky King) access to the griffon rookeries (*Locales, 0139*).

The Burning Tors (Hex 0937)

These sun-blasted mountains lie in the heart of the Forsaken Desert (*Terrain, 1634*). Here, the barrier between the Elemental Plane of Fire and the mortal world is dangerously thin. Several centuries ago, during the time of the Bright Empire, a joint expedition of dwarves and human mages traveled to the Burning Tors to study this weakened barrier. They hoped to harness fire elementals to forge powerful weapons of war and gain deeper insight into the magic of elemental fire.

Something went terribly wrong. The barrier collapsed, unleashing a massive inferno that swept across the mountains from east to west, incinerating all terrestrial life, including the expedition itself.

Today, the Burning Tors are a wasteland of ash and cinder, inhabited only by **fire elementals** and **salamanders**. A few untouched eyries remain, where **griffons** nest and **manticores** make their lairs.

The Sky Mantle (Hex 0431)

The Sky Mantle is a desert mountain range along the northwest border of the Forsaken Desert (*Terrain, 1634*). Legend holds that the Sky Mantle is Mantriv's Cloak, cast to the earth during the battle that created Ironedge Chasm (*Terrain, 0337*). The mountains are known to contain Sky Iron, a rare metal ore highly prized by blacksmiths and weaponcrafters. Sky Iron can be used to craft exceptional armor, tools, and weapons. Items made from this metal reduce the cost and time to create magical versions by 75%.

Mining Sky Iron is no easy task. The mountains are under the watch of the Sky Warden, a storm giant and loyal servant of Mantriv (*Locales, 0533*).

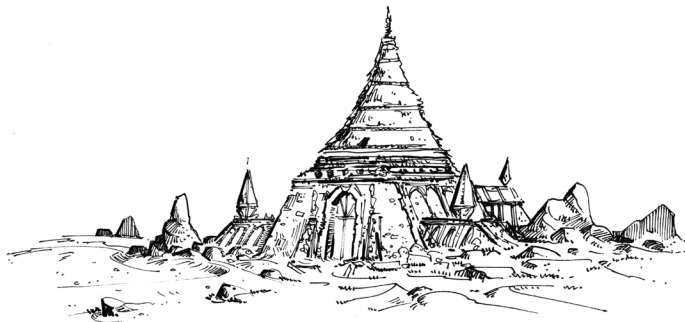
Once every five years, the greatest warriors of the Kubar Nomads (*see Kubar Steppes, Terrain, 0827*) gather for the Running of the Sky Mantle, an arduous thirty-five-mile race along the ridgelines and peaks of the range. The victor receives rich gifts from the Kubar chiefs, along with **Thunderstroke, a +3 spear** said to have been crafted by Mantriv himself.

Locales

0139 The Palace of the Sky King

The top of this thirty-foot-high, one-thousand-foot-diameter limestone outcrop has been built upon to create a magnificent palace and a rookery for griffins. The palace was once the home of the Tengeriin Khan, the Sky King, who ruled a mighty empire several hundred years ago after the fall of the Bright Empire. The key to his power was his griffon riders.

The limestone underneath the gleaming white palace was carved into a rookery large enough to house over one thousand griffins and their riders. There are over two dozen entrances to the rookery along the cliff face that forms the northern and western sides of the outcropping. The palace and rookery have been abandoned for nearly two centuries and are slowly crumbling into ruin.



0230 Encampment of the Sage

This is the temporary encampment of the **Kokkinos Centaur** (HD 4) tribe. They follow and protect the Seer of the Red Mantle, a renowned **Centaur Sage** (MU 8). Currently, they are encamped near the Fox tribe for a fortnight and are available to anyone who wishes to trade in order to consult with the Seer of the Red Mantle.

0236 The Mines of the Azer

This is an adamantine mine currently being worked by a party of 22 **Azers** from the Elemental Plane of Fire (see *Burning Tors*, Hex 0937). Currently, they have managed to harvest 100 lbs. of ore, which can be smelted down to 5 lbs. of adamantine. Unusually, the equipment and structure of the mine appear to have been made by an Elven culture. If the party approaches the mine from the east, they will encounter three miles out the corpses of five Dark Elves and a dozen slaves (humans and halflings) killed by the Azers when they took over the mine. There are tracks of over two dozen survivors leading away in every direction except west toward the mine.



0324 Lonely Treant

A secluded valley nestled in the hills is a well-watered grove of trees with a few rocky outcroppings. Examining further, the whole site is an excellent campsite offering shelter and comfort without any type of construction. This area was created by the Elves of Silverwood (*The Blood Forest*, Terrain, 0419) as a way station and refuge for travelers from the forest to the Kubar Steppes (Terrain, 0827) and Sarduin River (Terrain, 1519) to the south.

The grove is tended by Petramfortis, a young **treant** (HD 7) who was left in charge by the elves centuries ago. Petramfortis is aware of the catastrophe that befallen the Blood Forest, and he resolves to take care of the grove until the Elves return. He is extremely lonely and wishes he had friends to talk to.

0328 Lake of the Giant Beavers

A two-mile stretch of the Sarduin is a small, narrow lake created by a giant beaver dam. There are three **giant beaver** (HD 4) families in the area, each with two adults and 1d6 beaver kits. They are highly territorial, especially if their lodges or the dam is attacked.

0525 Dragonne Pack

This is the hunting range of a pack of six **dragonne** (HD 9). They are known to prey on the herds of the Wolf Tribe roaming the Kubar Steppes (Terrain, 0827).

0533 Tower of the Thunder Lord

Pop: 60 (women); Human (Valkyries);

Ruler: Thrumadrottin, HD 15+5, HP 95, Storm Giant (F);

Resource: Military; **Market Size:** VI;

Military: Pegasus Riders 60;

After his battle with Khepramesu (Terrain, *The Sky Mantle*, 0431), Mantriv charged his servant, Thrumadrottin, with standing guard to make sure Sarrath or one of his sons does not return. The Sky Father also gave Thrumadrottin command of 60 of his **Valkyries**. With their aid, Thrumadrottin built the Tower of the Thunder Lord. When they are not patrolling, the Valkyries are carefully working on a grand mural of Mantriv's victory in the great hall. The mural is meticulously crafted from thousands of grains of sand. Each grain is carefully selected for its unique color. It has been worked on for millennia and remains incomplete.



0634 The Palace of Zulra

This side canyon is filled with an endless sandstorm that fills it from the floor to the rim. At the head of the canyon, there is a pocket of clear air revealing a fantastical palace of white stone carved into the living rock of the canyon wall. This is the home of Zulra (HD 7, HP 46), a powerful **djinn** exiled from her homeland in the Elemental Plane of Air. She is served by a variety of **air elementals** (8 to 12 HD) acting as servants and guards.

0731, The Tombs of the Kubar Nomads

This stretch of the Sky Mantle's foothills (*Terrain, 0431*), where the highlands begin to give way to the Kubar Steppes (*Terrain, 0827*), is marked by dozens of ancient cairns. These wind-scoured stones mark the tombs of Kubar chieftains, elders, and warriors. Over the centuries, the wind and rain have carved the hills into strange shapes. When the wind rises, it weaves through the gullies and hollows, filling the air with low, mournful tones like dirges for the dead.

The most prominent of these tombs belongs to Sky Stalker, a revered chieftain of the Fox Tribe. She was known among the Kubar as a spirit-walker who could speak directly to Mantriv, the Sky Father. Her tomb sits atop the high end of a tilted mesa, the final ascent flanked by two massive stone foxes standing upright on their hind legs, eyes fixed toward the heavens.

Within the tomb lies the **Sky-Voice Horn**, a long, silver-bound instrument carved from the claw of a Roc. When sounded beneath open sky, the horn calls forth a rushing wind and allows the user to ask Mantriv a question. The wind carries back the answer in a whisper only the horn-blower can understand. Treat this as a commune spell, but it may only be used once per week and grants a single question.



0836 Burning Death Fortress

This fortress, made of black obsidian, is built across a blazing crevasse in a valley that lies between two of the highest peaks of the Burning Tors. It is the home of six **Fire Giants** (HD 11), led by their lord, Eldhrymir. Lord Eldhrymir is a servant of Surt, a powerful demonic prince imprisoned in the Abyss. Eldhrymir and his allies are preparing for Brennitiminn, The Burning Time, when fire will sweep the world and burn the portal sealing the entrance to the Abyss. This will release the demons to do battle against the gods for control of creation itself. Eldhrymir is amassing an army of Fire Elementals and Salamanders in the fortress and arming them.

1027 Encampment of the Bear Tribe

The Bear Tribe of the Kubar Nomads has established their encampment near a watering hole. The two hundred members of the tribe are ruled by their chief, Yekchin (Ftr 9). Assisting Yekchin as his strongman is Galtemur (Ftr 6). Galtemur commands 12 elite riders (medium cavalry) that form the vanguard of the tribe when attacking their enemies. The tribe has 90 women and 33 children. Uron (Clr 5) is the tribe's priest who placates The Sky Father's wrath with his two assistants. The tribe's seer, Shira (Mu4), brews poultices and potions for everybody's use.

The encampment sprawls in all directions and is a confusing maze of yurts and carts. Around the encampment are several herds consisting of two hundred horses and four hundred goats. The herds are divided into a dozen groups guarded by at least three nomads. They range anywhere from a mile to three miles away from camp. Four elite riders patrol from herd to herd each day.

Chief Yekchin has sworn to destroy Baron Beldon (*Locales, 1623*) after his slavers kidnapped Galtemur's son. The Bear Tribe has numerous conflicts with slavers out of Castle Beldon and with members of the Jackal Tribe (*see Terrain, Kubar Steppes*) in the Forsaken Desert.

Bear Tribe: 200 Nomads; Chief: Yekchin (Ftr 9); Lieut.: Galtemur (Ftr 6), Soothsayers: Ulron (Clr5) Assistants (Clr3, Clr2); 1 Seer: Shira (MU 4);

Military: Light Foot 10; Med. Foot 5; Slingers 5; Shortbow 5; Lgt. Cavalry 25; Med. Cavalry 12; Horse Archers 15;

Range: Hex 0927 to Hex 1128

1032, Sanctum of the Serpent's Son

Carved out of the living rock of a 200-foot-high cliff along the edge of the Ironedge Chasm is a gigantic mausoleum, half-buried by sand. This is the tomb of Khepramesu, a titan who was a son of Sarrath. He died fighting Mantriv, the Sky Father, ages ago. Buried with Khepramesu are his armaments and treasures, guarded by deadly traps and curses.

1237 The Oasis of the Lamias

In a cul-de-sac amid the shifting dunes of the Forsaken Desert is a small, narrow oasis a mile long and 400 yards wide. The oasis is formed by three small lakes that are fed by water welling up from underground aquifers. This oasis is home to three **lamias**, each claiming the shores of one of the lakes as their domain. Scattered around the lakes are the crude huts of their slaves. Most are Kubar Nomads from the Kubar Steppes (*Terrain, 0827*) and Tulbard Nomads from the Forsaken Plains (*Terrain, 1634*) who have been charmed by the lamias. Each lamia has around two dozen slaves to serve their every need.

