

Berenur – map notes

I. Theme

Berenur is embedded in an epic high fantasy theme, where magic is generally rare. This, however, does not mean that there are no supernatural phenomena at all. But magic cannot be used by anyone. Instead the ancient magical powers are vested in the hands of only a handful of wise Eldiarian or Erithian Druids, who preserve the knowledge about the gods who elevated Berenur out of the primordial ocean and gave life to the first men (in case of the Eldiarian Druids) or to the Dumnonic tribes (in case of the Erithian Druids).

II. The peoples of Berenur

1. Eldiar

a. History

The four large cities in the north of the continent are inhabited by the Eldiar, an ancient, elvish like people who are close to nature. Originally they all lived in small settlements, the large Rainforest that covers most of northern Berenur. They call the Forest “Azin” which means home in their language.

During time, some of the settlements grow into towns and then, much later, into large cities. Each of those cities had their own king. And as the settlements grew, so did the ambitions of their rulers. This led to centuries of skirmishes in the bush woods of Azin. Five major cities prevailed: Diriall, Rewiar, Turiar, Aeniar and Uldiar. But this was not the end of the story.

For some time, there was a balance of power between the five cities. None of the cities could dominate their neighbors and alliances inevitably led to the formation of counter alliances. But it was Ergall, the King of Uldiar, whose ambition by far outgrew the desire for peace, who destroyed this balance by inviting foreigners into this conflict. He reached out to the Sefyrian Zeyzir (Emperor) of Adill and hired Urtrarian Mercenaries by the thousands. With their help, he sacked Aeniar. As response to this sacrilegious act, the three other cities (Diriall, Rewiar and Turiar) formed an alliance and assembled an enormous army (“the great Army”). At the bank of the river Izur (that leads from Aeniar to Turiar) the two armies met and fought for four days. Ergall suffered losses but managed to retreat with the largest part of his army. The great Army followed them to Aeniar, where the final battle took place. Ergall’s forces were defeated but the already ruined city of Aeniar was destroyed to the ground during the assault. The only building that remained was the temple that was devoted to the Goddess Illyia.

The Eldiar were devastated by the destruction and so they swore to end the wars between fellow Eldiar for good. The four remaining kingdoms entered a treaty, in which they obligated themselves to disband most of their armies. But to keep the remaining cities safe from enemies from the outside, they vowed to defend each other against any foreign enemy. To be able to raise a large army when

needed. The weapons of the disbanded Armies were locked in a dungeon beneath the Temple of Illyia. The four remaining kings also agreed to form a council who would decide when another great army was to be raised. Since four was an even number and none of the kings would have been given greater power than the others, a fifth member was assigned to the council: the mistress of the Illyian Temple. Ever since the treaty was arranged, the council and especially the mistress was given more power. By today, the kings of Diriall, Rewiar, Turiar and Uldiar hold merely a formal position but are in fact just mayors of their cities. The actual power of the combined empires of Diriall, Rewiar, Turiar and Uldiar lies in the hand of the Mistress of the Illyian Temple.

b. Nowadays

Nowadays the Eldiar live mostly peacefully amongst each other but they engage in frequent wars with the Urtrarian Kingdom over the control of the mid Wysa Valley (Wysa is the river that has its source in the Arum Wyr Mountains and flows into the great ocean next to Uldiar).

c. Language

The language of the Eldiar can – as far as I see – not be connected to any existing language. However, it can be noted that place names usually end with “-all” or “-iar”.

2. Dwornish

a. History

The people of Dworn descend from the first men, who are primarily seen as the ancestors of the Eldiar. But there was a small group within the first men, who were not quite happy with their life in Azin. They wanted to discover the world. So, they left Azin and climbed up into the great mountains. But they were not familiar with the weather in the great mountains and got trapped by a thunderstorm. They hid in a cave but during the storm the entrance got barred. And so, the group had to look for another way out. They spent three and a half year searching the labyrinth of caves for another entrance. They found coal, iron and even gold, but only little to eat. During this time, they mostly lived of mushrooms, worms and some rare bats. Many died. When they finally found another way out, that lead to a green valley with three lakes, they settled in proximity to the cave entrance (which was west of the largest lake). They never crossed the mountains again and they only enter the caves to dig for resources and to pray for those who died beneath the great mountains.

b. Nowadays

Today the Dwornish are not as tall as the Eldiar but they are very strong. They are mostly farmers or craftsmen. And in contrast to the Eldiar, the Dwornish never have experienced the concept of Monarchies. They govern themselves by hosting public meetings in which disputes are discussed and settled. The Dwornish rarely have contact to the outside world.

c. Language

The Dwornish language descends from Eldiadic but it is a lot simpler and duller. There are a lot of “dw” sounds in the language. They are not necessarily at the beginning of the word.

3. Sefyrians

a. History

The Sefyrian also descend from the first men and like the Dwornish, they left Azin in the early days of Berenur. They, however, weren't interested in the mountains. No, they crafted small boats and started to discover the shores of Berenur. They sailed south along the eastern coast until they found the mouth of the river Byn, where they settled down. They called their settlement Adill (nowadays: Suruq), which means Liberty. The city grew and its sphere of influence extended along the eastern coast. The Urtrarian People came eventually under the control of the Sefyrians, as they started explore the river Byn and the desert. The Sefyrians eventually even sailed past the southern cape and northern cape and started colonializing the western coast as well. In the process, they founded many trade posts. Some of them are still inhabited by Sefyrians. But they did not only build trading posts, they also conquered the Lands of the Erith, who lived at the foot of the Arum Suth mountains. At some point the whole coastline south of the Uldiarian realm was ruled by the Sefyrian people. But this time of glory and power would not last long.

Their power came to a rough end by the arrival of the Vragr (or Vragrish) in southern Berenur. They quickly gained the support of the local Erithian and ousted the Sefyrian Magistrates from the southern Cities. In the following war, the Sefyrian Empire lost all the land south of Suruq (except Thosan, which is now a free city) to the savage barbarians who came on dragon headed ships (see Vragr). During this war, the Urtrarian took their chance and rebelled against the Sefyrians (See Urtrairans). This eventually led to the collapse of the Sefyrian Empire. Only a few cities along the western Coast (north of Vyrn) and Thosan remained under the control of the Sefyrians, but they were divided into small city states.

b. Nowadays

The Sefyrian People only controls a few cities, especially on the western Coast north of Vyrn. On the eastern coast, only Thosan remained under the control of the Sefyrians. As for today, there is no such thing as the Sefyrian Empire. Sefyrian Cities are free cities, that govern themselves. These cities did however form a trade union in response to the rise of the Vyrn republic.

c. Language

Sefyric descends from Eldiadic but was influenced by a lot of other languages, especially the Urtrarian and Erithian Language. It appears to be lighter than Eldiadic.

4. Urtrarians (Also Utrahrian)

a. History

The Urtrarian see themselves as the descendants of Urah, the god of the sun. They used to live in the desert as nomads, but some of them settled in the valleys east of the Arum Wyr mountains. Other than that, not much is known about the Urtrarian, before the time when they fell under the rule of the Sefyrians. They endured the rule for nearly hundred years. Then, with the arrival of the Vragr, the Sefyrian empire fell into a crisis which eventually lead to its end. The Urtrarian Rebellion not only brought freedom to the Utrarian but also allowed them to conquer cities along the eastern coast. This limited the economic and military power of the Sefyrian Empire in its fight against the Vragr, which in return led to loss of the southern lands to the barbaric invaders.

The Sefyrian Emperor eventually realized that he could not fight and win two wars at the same time. So he bought peace with the Urtrarians, who in return helped the Sefyrian Empire by sending troops to the southern lands. This slowed the advance of the combined forces of the Vragr and the Erith. As the war went on, the Sefyrian Dependency on Urtrarian Mercenaries grew and so did the tributes that had to be paid to the new Urtrarian King, who eventually took over the lead in the war against the Vragr and the Erith. By doing so, the Sefyrian Empire became a mere junior partner of the rising Urtrarian Kingdom. As the downfall of the Sefyrian Empire in the south continued, the Empire slowly turned into a Client State of the Urtrarian Kingdom. As time went on, the Urtrarian Kings effectively ruled over the Sefyrian Capital Adill, but they were not (yet) able to move their seat of government into the beautiful (and well-fortified) City. This would have been recognized as an act of aggression by the Sefyrian Leaders, which would have led to another war. The Urtrarian Kingdom couldn't afford this, because the Sefyrians locally still had a remarkable power and because the Urtrarian Kingdom was not itself caught up in a war with the Vragr and the Erith and wouldn't risk having its supply routes cut off by Sefyrian Raiders. The Urtrarians therefore never conquered Adill. They did, however, still manage to gain control over the city. But this did not happen by military means but by a smart marriage strategy, which inevitably lead to the Urtrarian Inheritance of Adill.

b. Nowadays

The Urtrarian Kingdom controls all the Urtrarian Desert. Although the capital has been moved to Suruq (formerly Adill), the kings are still buried in the upper Wya Valley, as they have been for centuries. The Urtrarian Kingdom engages in wars with the Eldiar and has an ongoing dispute with the Arthennian Earldom about the ownership of the costal lands north of Arthenn.

c. Language

The Urtrarian Language has a loose resemblance to the Persian language.

5. Erith and Vragr

a. History

The Erith are a Celtic people that lived in the eastern hillside of the Arum Suth mountains. They emerged from the woods as the gods, who were wandering through these woods, formed stone sculptures and gave them life. The Dumnonic Tribe was the eldest and all other Erithian tribes descend from it. The Erithian tribes eventually expanded south-eastwards to the sea, where they later encountered the Sefyrians. Since the Erith did not use writings not much is known about them in the time before they encountered the Sefyrians.

The first encounters were quite peaceful and led to a trading relationship between the Sefyrians and the Erith. However, as the Sefyrian ambitions grew, so did the tensions between the people, which eventually led to a war, in which the Erith came under control of the Sefyrians. This lasted almost a hundred years until the dragon headed fleet of the Vragr arrived at the south-eastern shores of Berenur.

It is not known where the Vragr came from but there is at least some evidence that they shared the same ancestors as the people on Ezrute. Also, it must be noted, that it is unclear how they called themselves, because “Vragr” was not their original name but rather a pejorative label given to them by the Sefyrians, which means as much as daemons in the Sefyric Language. The warriors with their dragon headed ships then embraced the name in an ironic manner and started to call themselves Vragr. The reason why they earned this name came from their Viking way of life. They first plundered a Sefyrian Town, but when they wanted to leave, a great storm came up and destroyed most of the fleet. The remaining ships sailed away to look for support, while the others had no choice but to stay. They were sheltered by local Eriths, who in return asked for support for their planned rebellion against the Sefyrian Empire. The Vragr were –of course– glad to accept the deal, because a Vragr rarely misses a good fight.

The sober and disciplined Sefyrian Armies had trouble dealing with the also quite disciplined but passionate Vragr warriors. So, the combined forces of the Erith and the Vragr quickly reconquered the heartlands of the Eriths. The Erith enjoyed their regained freedom and dully compensated the Vragr for their support. But they ceased fighting after they reconquered what was theirs since the beginning of the time. The Vragr who had been granted lands within the Erithian heartlands settled down as well. During this time the Vragr founded quite a few settlements of their own, which bear Scandinavian like names, but they never founded large cities themselves. Therefore, nowadays there are only small towns with Vragric names, while the major cities bear Erithic names. But they soon became restless and started forming warbands that moved north, where they once again encountered Sefyrian Armies. One of these enterprises conquered the city of Arthenn, which led to the foundation of the Arthennian Earldom (ruled by a jarl). Another of these enterprises captured the city of Vyrn. Unlike in the city of Arthenn, the Vragr were not able to set up a persistent Earldom in Vyrn. After only eighty years the city rebelled against its current jarl, which led to a deep reformation of the public administration. The

city eventually became a republic, but unlike other Sefyrian Cities that were at least briefly conquered by the Vragr, Vyrn remained Vragrian even after the jarl was ousted.

One might wonder why this was the case, but the reason is actually not that surprising: No other free Sefyrian trading city could profit from the Vragrian knowledge on shipbuilding as Vyrn did. Under Vragrian rule the city prospered and commercially gained the upper hand over free Sefyrian cities, who did not have access to the same technologies as the Vyrnian Tradesmen. In Vyrn the cultures of the Sefyrian and the Vragr mixed, which lead to a new, progressive culture, that is far ahead of most other cultures or people in Berenur.

b. Nowadays

The Erithian Heartlands are mostly inhabited by Eriths and (fewer) Vragr. They are ruled by a king who resides in Caer Saes. The kingdom is divided into several Earldoms, which all respond to the king. The kingdom is usually called the Erithian Kingdom and it tends to get into conflicts with the Arthennian Earldom, the free city of Thosan and the Republic of Vyrn. But the extend of the conflicts remain limited because a balance of power has been established between the parties, which keeps any party from gaining the upper hand.

The Arthennian Earldom is mostly inhabited by Sefyrians and (fewer) Vragr, but the Vragr occupy all the key positions within the administration. Also, the Sefyrians are clearly citizens of second grade and have less rights than the Vragr. Because of their ongoing conflicts with the Republic of Vyrn, the Earldom of Arthenn and the free city of Thosan have formed an alliance against Vyrn. The alliance also extends to conflicts with the Urtrarian Kingdom that arise over the ownership of the “Horn of Arthenn” as the Arthennians call it (the costal lands north of Arthenn). In return, Arthenn supports Thosan in its conflicts with the Erithian Kingdom in the south.

As already mentioned, the Republic of Vyrn is a progressive state with a great commercial power. It controls the sea route to Port Digby as well as the lands around the Bay of Vyrn. It has a dispute with the Erithian Kingdom about the ownership of the stretch of coast south of the Bay of Vyrn. Because of its historic conflict with the free Sefyrian cities it also engages in frequent wars with those free cities, especially Thosan, which is the strongest of them, and their ally, the Earldom of Arthenn. Even in peace times it is usual that Vyrnian Ships pirate Sefyrian Ships and vice versa.

c. Languages

Erithic is close to the Celtic language, while the language of the Vragr bears a resemblance to the languages spoken in Scandinavia. Keep in mind, however, that the Vragr did not set up larger cities; Vragric place names are therefore only found in small and midsized towns. In the Arthennian Earldom the official language is Vragric but most people speak Sefyric. Newly founded places usually have Vragric names, while old towns and cities bear Sefyric names. Finally, in the Republic of Vyrn a new language has emerged both from Vragric and Sefyric elements.