

V

de Vabre, Sir Daniel

Conquistador (c.318-358). De Vabre was a Montese of Vallioran descent who followed Prince Erling into exile and served loyally with him, leading a company of troops in the Restitution. In the dying stages of the Restitution, however, he and his troops left the Prince and crossed to Karakiraz, where they accepted the invitation of Golem, King of the Horsetamer Voors, to occupy the territory then controlled by the troops of Yum Kax. Sir Daniel married the daughter of Golem and was declared his heir. This upset Golem's son Moligok, who was sent into exile.

De Vabre appealed to Prince Erling, offering his fealty and allegiance in return for Montese troops and protection, but with the warning that King William of Valliore would be the next to be offered the deal if it was refused. Erling, however, had given his backing for Vaz's claim to Karakiraz, which encompasses the Horsetamer territory occupied by the mercenaries. De Vabre, a bit of a bigot, refused to swear fealty to any Ghorgandi, so no compromise was possible.

Rumour has it that he received support and supplies from the Shield Brothers based at Rochefort. His forces were small and largely made up of Horsetamer warriors. However, in 355 Yum Kax began operating against the Horsetamers, and in 357 Sir Daniel was forced to flee his kingdom“ after it was overrun by the mercenaries of Karakiraz. He reattached himself to Prince Erling, but was killed at the Battle of Breccourt Manor in 358.”

Vacslav IV

Emperor of Castrovia (347-)

du Valier, Lord Hector

du Valier, Count Hugo

(b.318) Hugo is the son of Hector du Valier, the former Duke of Rossilion, and nephew to Lady Julienne du Valier, (the first wife of Vandrad, set aside in favour of Ekaterina and living in the honourable captivity of the Duke of Aguiliers since the Restitution). The du Valiers supported Simon Garnier against Prince Erling during the Restitution. After the downfall of Garnier, however, Hector fled with Garnier's son Guy and Guy's wife Princess Alice to Atreius, on the Dornite-occupied Isles. Count Hugo surrendered and received pardon from the Prince, retaining his title and estates around Tharkad. Because his title is to a Thestrian dominion, he has much more power and wealth than a Montese counterpart would have, especially since Tharkad is the main port between Shalgreth and Kutarmish. There are reports that he has had some disagreements with Rypien, the King's Vicar of Thestria, over trade tariffs.

There are whispers against Hugo, stating that he must be in some way in league with his father and the Garnier faction. However, he did not join in the large Dornite/Garnier raid of Thestria in 355, although his lands were not badly damaged by the raiders, and he was slow in coming to the Prince-

Regent's aid when the Regent arrived to fight the raiders.

Hugo du Valier is a talented general, widely seen as second in the kingdom behind the Prince-Regent. His quick outflanking and sudden seizure of Sardeth (through, it is whispered, the use of magic) during the Restitution nearly brought victory to the Garnier faction at Harloc when his forces suddenly appeared to support Garnier's troops. Hugo personally slew the son and heir of Raymond of Aguiliers during that battle, for which he has gained the undying enmity of that powerful individual.

Hugo is only rarely seen at court, preferring to spend his time in his domains. He does attend the Great Councils when they are called, but he only supported the first of Erling's taxations, not all three. Hugo is unmarried and has no legitimate children, though there are reports that he has been courting the daughter of Sigismund of Darklairstead. A cousin is his heir.

du Valier, Lady Julienne

Valliore

A Fendal Kingdom to the north of Montour, across the Seska plains. Valliore is a strong kingdom, still in its growing phase. Unlike Montour, Valliore is a land of great noble territories, each ruled as a semi-autonomous state under the overall authority of the King. One of these dominions, the Duchy of Urle, has as its Duke the King of Montour, who pays homage to the King of Valliore for it. It was in Urle that Prince Erling assembled his power before returning to Montour in the recent conflict. Valliore is the headquarters of many religious faiths, as well as the Brotherhood of the Shield.

Vandrad

(b.288) King of Montour (316-)

Vaudry, Sir Wilmot

Known as the Wild Boar from his heraldic device, Sir Wilmot was a creature of Duke Simon Garnier. Appointed as chief magistrate of the kingdom, he was renowned for his sadistic and excessive zeal in imposing punishments. He fled the battlefield of the Ford of Harloc with Sir Roger Clisson, but was found and captured by men loyal to the Prince. Taken back to Montour, Sir Wilmot was hanged.

Vaz

Titular King of Karakiraz (b. 314). Vaz is a nephew of the last King of Karakiraz, and escaped to Montour following the Gel conquest of that state in 341. He is recognized by the Montese crown as the legitimate sovereign of his homeland, and has been promised military support for its reconquest. Vaz's position is bolstered by key numbers of his uncle's retinue now giving him allegiance, but it is weakened by the existence of a rival claimant, his cousin, at the court of Valliore and the recognition of him by William III, and by the existence of Perizada, another claimed cousin, in the household of Sir

Geoffrey Sabatier. Vaz is very close to Prince Erling. His oldest son (b.344) is a junior squire to the Prince, and his oldest daughter (b.339) is married to Lord Rypien, the King's nephew (by Princess Melissa).

Vaz attempted to regain Karakiraz in 346, after the last noyan was overthrown by Yum Kax, but the attempt was unsupported and ended in failure in the western Plains of Tafasztes.

Verdelet

(b.320) Retainer of Prince Erling, from Shalgreth. He is almost always within 20 yards of the Prince, and serves as a bodyguard. Whenever he is away from Erling he is usually disguised and on more nefarious business. He proudly boasts of being Erling's familiar. In court circles he is called the 'grey man'. He is rumoured to be a creature of Trikesia.

Vese

the Dark Lady of Hurt. Goddess of Pain and physical suffering. Niyl is Her mother, and she is the daughter of, and occasional consort to, the Old Man.

Vese is most commonly shown as a beautiful face twisted into a snarl which reveals vampiric teeth.

Vese is not known to have organised temples. Her followers, being few and very secretive, usually work alone. Occasionally some of her followers are discovered by followers of the Old Man, who then take charge of the Dark Lady's worshippers for their own ends.

Vesoul

Vesoul of the Golden Keep, the fabled capital of King Arturo.

Vicar of Thestria, King's

Following the Conquest of Thestria by Michael II the Montese kings inherited the realm of Thestria. However, they continued to rule from Montour. Following the revolt of many Thestrian nobles in 314, King Vandrad decided to institute a closer control over his Thestrian dominion than previously. He built a massive castle on the coast south of Tharkad (the Vicarage) and appointed a Vicar to rule over the Grand Duchy on his behalf. The Vicar has full vice-regal powers in the region, and is provided with a strong garrison of Montese troops to keep any rebellious activities quelled. The vicarship has served as a training ground for several members of the Royal Family, including Prince Erling and the current Vicar, Prince Rypien.

Vicarage, the

Widely considered to be the second-strongest fortification in the Kingdom (after the Ageas Gestefanos), the Vicarage is located on the Thestrian coast about 12 miles away from Tharkad. Designed to be an unassailable foothold of royal authority in the Grand Duchy, the Vicarage has its

own docks for naval supply, and impressive lines of landward defences. It is the seat of the Vicar of Thestria and houses a large royal garrison.

Voor

A backward people living in the western parts of the Kingdom, especially in Voorland - a largely independent badland of rugged hills and scrubby woods. The entire kingdom was once inhabited by Voors, but they were conquered, assimilated or evicted by Castrovian and Fendal.

• Appearance

They have skin-tones ranging from light-tan to golden-bronze (the latter being quite rare). Hair is usually quite light, with blond being most common, but occasionally a darker hue. Eyes are blue, green or brown, with an unusually high frequency of mixed pairs. Build is average to short, and prone to a muscular stoutness. Most clothing is made of wool and leather, furs and hides. Each tribe has a particular pattern of cloth, and all tribal Voors (but not so much those living under foreign rule) can be identified by this. To wear another tribe's cloth is a deadly insult in most cases, assuming it can be stomachied by the wearer in the first place.

• Political Organization

The Voors form a number of tribes or clans, each of which is ruled by an hereditary leader, called variously chief, king, thane or lord. In theory the entire nation is ruled by an hereditary king. In practise the Voorking has little authority, and the tribal leaders act independently. Among the free Voors inter-tribal warfare is quite commonplace, but the Voors under the rule of Montour or the King of Karakiraz are more peaceable.

The kings typically live in old stone brochs, although a few of the richer tribal heads, such as the lords of the Blooddrinkers, have built Montese-style tower keeps. All kings maintain small forces of household guardsmen.

• Voorish Warfare

Kings and their guardsmen are the only organized military forces fielded by the Voors. They are typically mounted and equipped with chainmail hauberks, javelins and broadswords. All tribesmen, however, along with some of the women, are familiar with weapons, and most answer the call of their lords to fight as irregular light infantry. These militias are generally unarmoured save for shields, though some wear hides or leather jerkins. Some old-school traditionalists still fight naked, as they did in the old days, but this practise is literally dying out. Weapons are a motley collection of spears, rough pole arms, long knives (treat as short swords), clubs and hammers. Some few carry broadswords or other sophisticated weapons, usually as plunder captured in earlier fights. Missile weapons other than spears are rarely used, and are generally seen as fit only for the craven and the weak.

Voor armies are quick to assemble, and ferocious in combat, but are also fickle and need strong motivation to stay in the field for more than a week or two. Such motivation could be ample plunder, a serious threat to the existence of the tribe, or a very charismatic leader. Voors are generally undisciplined, and almost impossible to control in battle. They lack both the temperament and equipment for long-term siege work.

• Voor Society

The Voors are a settled people, who live for the most part by sheep-farming and subsistence-level agriculture. The bulk of the population live in small hamlets of a few dozen families each, usually near their king's broch, with the rest of the people living in isolated farms. The bulk of the Voorish population live in primitive sod and thatch cottages, though some live in building sod rough-cut stone blocks. They are a fiercely independent people with more than a streak of xenophobia, which often extends to members of other tribes. They are, in general, particularly inhospitable to the Montese, who of old had many expeditions to subdue the Voorlands. But then so did the Castrovians, and the Voors have little love for them either. Voorish society is broken up into 4 separate groups-

nobles, commoners, slaves and druids. The first group includes the king and his family, and many other "headmen" and their families. These men (it is almost always men) have more authority over their neighbours and in dealings with outsiders, even if their own physical and material circumstances are no different from the commoners they live with. This "noble" authority is usually hereditary, but abuse of the status or gross failure or incompetence can see a noble family fall into the ranks of the commoners.

Slavery is a traditional part of the Voorish culture, though it is diminishing over time through interaction with the Castrovian and Montese foreigners. Typically slaves are members of other tribes captured in war or feud.

Druids are the priests of the Voors. See below.

Voors belong to family first, then tribe, then people. Bloodfeud is common, both between tribes and within them. Such conflicts can come about from disputes over land, livestock, the honour of a daughter, or many other reasons. The smallest dispute between families can quickly escalate beyond control, as cousins, then cousins' cousins, and eventually whole tribes get involved.

On the other hand, there is a pervasive culture of reciprocity in Voorish society. A favour bestowed, which increased the honour and respect due to the donor, requires an eventual favour in return from the original recipient. Trade, when it takes place, is usually conducted through fair exchange and barter. Cash money was not introduced to the Voor until the Castrovians and Montese began encroaching on Voor territories, and even now Voor only use it in dealings with these foreigners.

Most Voors have a deep spiritual attachment to the lands of their tribe

Voors marry, often to more than one spouse (both polygamy and polyandry are practised, often between one individual and two siblings), but their superstition is such that those who are widowed may not remarry, except to another who has been widowed, otherwise the bad luck from the first marriage will follow into the second. They come of age whenever they choose to leave the family hearth. They may not thereafter return to the parents' home. However, to never leave the parents is a sign of cowardice and weakness.

Voors typically have two names, a first name that is given them at birth, and a second, which they pick up later in life, thus Jun Poleaxe or Vityk Breakspear. Sometimes the original name is dropped, thus Muchbled or Golem. A custom which is sometimes adopted, especially for those descended from heroes or leaders, is to have an hereditary cognomen. Some names, such as Dewspite, are very common.

Tribal names are of two sorts. The first is related to a locale or an area in which the tribe dwells, such as the Bare Cliffs tribe. The second relates to a famous individual or exploit of the tribe, such as Dewspite's Children, or the Bloodrinkers of Redmoorr. Of course, many of the names sound much

better in the original Voorish.

Voor religion is based on the worship of nature and elemental forces. Some Montese scholars believe that the Voors worship the Old Ones, who created the world and then departed. Religious affairs are run by the druids, powerful members of society who have great authority over even the kings. The druids rule over everything that is sacred or taboo (and there is a surprising amount of these things), and conduct ceremonies that are rumoured to occasionally involve human sacrifice. Druids are rarely seen by foreigners, but they seem to wear a uniform of black robes.

Many Voor warriors also venerate the legendary hero Graam, who was a famous slayer of Giants. Voor also venerate mysterious "Wild Women" of the mountains, who are seen as minor deities. Some tales call them the "daughters of Graam".

Some major tribes of Voor are-

- Blooddrinker; Horsetamer; Stone Men; Red Faces; Burnt Ears;
- Dewspite's Children; Ravens of Graam; Bare Cliffs; Rugged Hills

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