

The Ninth Kingdom

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Geography of Orna

Orna

The Ornic Empire is still in its infancy in many ways, having only been established within the past 70 years. Formed from an alliance between old enemies to face a dark and evil threat from the Cursed North it is made up of the four ancient Dwarfen Kingdoms of the Barrier Mountains, the Elfen Kingdom (or Queendom) in the Feywood and the recently united Three Kingdoms of Man: Onin, Vil and the Southlands. The current ruler is the newly crowned Emperor Lip I. At just 14 years of age there is some anxiety among the Empire that he is too young to rule, with many giving him the nickname the Cub at Sunrise. This is also a crude reference to his mother - currently serving as Empress Dowager - being an outsider from the Eastern continent of Morhum, a source of further discontent. The capital of Orna is the Imperial City, found where the Three Kingdoms of Man intersect.

Onin

The proud, strongly religious and militaristic kingdom of Onin is the oldest and Northernmost of the Three Kingdoms of Man, mostly found in the shadow of the Barrier Mountains. For centuries Onin was in conflict - and often at war - with their neighbours in Vil. The sacking of their capital city and the death of their King Ivel I at the start of the First Cursed War changed all that. The threat quickly led to the formation of the Ornic Empire, with Ivel's son Niell - known as the Great Lion - becoming the first Emperor and forging an alliance by marrying Loreena of Vil. Onin's current King is the Great Lion's grandson Niell V, called the Dragonlord after he seemingly ended the Second Cursed War by slaying the monstrous Black Dragon Tyiedrni. He refused the Imperial throne upon the sudden death of his father and instead passed the position onto his fourteen year old half brother Lip, choosing to remain the King of Onin at the ready for any further incursions from the Cursed North. The Onin capital was traditionally the now ruined Aniell Faah, but has since been moved to the mountain fortress of Dragon Spire.

Vil

Situated to the East of Onin and Northeast of the Southlands, Vil is by far the smallest Kingdom of Man. In contrast to their age old enemies in honorable Onin, Vil's noble history is often filled with tales of backstabbing, plotting and murder. Their proximity to the Feywood and their seemingly unquenchable thirst for power has led to the Vila becoming very strong in the use of magic, a key weapon in their war with both Onin and the Cursed North. They are also the most ingenious and inventive of the Kingdoms of Man, boasting many great libraries as well as mechanical, arcane and alchemical discoveries. Their current King is Aldric II, known as Aldric the Undying. Currently an impossible 93 years of age, many fear his mind has long gone, infected by the madness so often present in the Vil. The running of the kingdom is mostly dealt with by Aldric's eight sons - many of whom are rumoured to have attempted to murder the old man, only to find their plans mysteriously thwarted... The capital of Vil is the sprawling city of Laina's Wake.

The Southlands

The Consolidated Free Cities of the Southern Lands, more commonly known as just the Southlands, is both the largest and technically the youngest Kingdom of Man. When man first settled in Orna centuries ago, it was in the South in forms of tribal farming villages. By the time Onin was founded, the Southlands had become

infested with petty warring tribes and was mostly left to its own chaotic devices. This soon evolved into a commerce and trade-based economy and the villages grew into independent city states. As their neighbours waged war on each other, the many cities of the Southlands formed trade alliances with each other, with the Elves and Dwarves and even extended beyond the sea to the exotic continents of Vaytus and Morhum. The wild and free nature of the Kingdom continues to this day, with many adventurers, mercenaries and criminals finding their fortune there. Instead of the hereditary monarchies favoured by Vil and Onin, the nobility of the Southlands is decided instead by power, influence and - most of all - money. The richest families in each city buys a title then works their way to the position of Merchant Prince. The richest and most powerful of THESE men is then usually crowned the Merchant King and granted a seat at the Imperial Council. The current Merchant King is Rulf of Wutland, elevated to the position after marrying Ariana of Vil - only daughter of Aldric II - and adding her considerable wealth to his own. The capital city of the Southlands is nominally Wymport, though many suspect this was only chosen as it is the most Southerly city in the kingdom and therefore the furthest from the Cursed North.

The Barrier Mountains

Home to the four ancient Dwarf Kingdoms, the Barrier Mountains stretch across almost the entirety of the Northernmost borders of Onin and Vil. The greatest line of defence against the Cursed North, the mountains are vast and treacherous. In ancient times the Dwarves warred with the Elves of Orna, until an unknown event caused both races to retreat to their homes some time before the Dawn of Man. After this, most dwarves rarely strayed from their underground cities and castles, mainly spending the next centuries mining, smithing and fighting off rogue giants and orcs. When the First Cursed War began, three of the four Dwarf Lords voted to not get involved and this decision ultimately cost them one of their ancient capitals, the Greatforge, to a catastrophic assault. Since then the Dwarfen folk have been strong allies and later members of the Ornic Empire. The current four Dwarf Lords are Ahurr of the Iron Tower, Wahurthk of the Frostkeep, Nak'krark of Stormhold and Thlurg formerly of the Greatforge, currently residing at Dragon Spire.

The Feywood

Located on the border of Vil and the Southlands, the Feywood is the huge mystical forest that is home to the Kingdom of the Elves of Orna, as well as Gnomes and assorted other Fey creatures. In ancient times the Elves were the first settlers in Orna, followed shortly by the Dwarves. Many ruins of their incredible cities are still found throughout the land. Noone outside of Elfen culture is quite sure why they retreated to the Feywood before the Dawn of Man but many Elfen bards can be heard singing about a 'Great Darkness' in ancient times. No non-Elf, and very few actual Elves, knows the name or location of the Elfen capital. Their immortal Feyqueen is said to be called Raimana, though very few have ever seen her, with her preferring to send emissaries to the Imperial City. Their involvement in the Ornic Empire often appears perfunctory at best.

The Outlying Lands

Orna is surrounded by three other lesser-known lands. To the South, across the Vapor Sea, are the tropical island lands of Vaytus, home of the adventurous Catfolk and amphibious Grippli races, as well as nomadic barbarian and druidic human tribes. To the East, across the Vila Sea, is the mysterious and vast desert land of Morhum, home to an ancient civilization of insular and monastic humans as well as the inscrutable Kitsune and off-putting Tengu races. To the North, beyond the Barrier Mountains and the Devil's Pass found Northwest of Onin is the ominous Cursed North. Originally thought to be just a hazardous wasteland of beasts, orcs and goblins, recent events have shown that there is some kind of evil and organised force present and ready to

destroy all of Orna...

Races of Orna

Major Races

The three most common races in Orna and also the only three with representation on the Ornic Imperial Council.

Humans

Since the Dawn of Man humans have been by far the most prominent race in all of Orna. Their adaptability, versatility and drive to thrive and survive have made them the strongest and most dominant race, as evidenced by the vast Three Kingdoms of Man. Humans come in all shapes, sizes, alignments and classes. From the soldiers and religious orders of Onin to the magicians and alchemists of Vil to the bards, rogues and druids of the Southlands to the barbarians from Vaytus to the monks and ninja from Mothum - there is seemingly nothing a human can't turn their hands to. As the most numerous of the Ornic peoples, humans suffer very little persecution except - perhaps curiously - internally. Noone hates a human as well as another human from a different land it seems.

Dwarves

The Dwarves of Orna are mainly found in the four ancient Dwarfen Kingdoms of the Barrier Mountains. Traditionally it was there they spent most of their time peacefully mining, building and forging while occasionally fighting off orc hordes and giants or trading with the Kingdoms of Man. Since the fall of the ancestral city of Greatforge, however, they have become far less reclusive and have joined the Ornic Empire. Even before these events, many dwarves had found their way into the Kingdoms of Man, either through exile, a desire to help in the fight or numerous other personal reasons. Because of this it is not uncommon to find dwarves fighting for the armies or churches of Onin, as members of the School of Alchemy in Vil or even just getting drunk and adventuring in the Southlands. As a whole, dwarves respect any Ornic race that acts with honour, though some members of the older dwarf clans have an unshakable dislike of their ancient elfen enemies.

Elves

Even more reclusive than the dwarves, most elves of Orna keep themselves exclusively to the Feywood, or Oa as they know it. That said, there are still a significant number amongst the Kingdoms of Man, especially since Oa officially joined the Ornic Empire. Many elves in the Southlands have taken it upon themselves to protect the forests of the area as rangers, while elves in Vil work with the various Schools of Magic. Elves tend not to venture too far north to Onin due to its proximity to the Barrier Mountains, but there have certainly been a few elfen soldiers, bowmen and cavaliers fighting alongside their human allies. Many people regard elves as a snobbish race and it's hard to argue that they often view other races with disdain, with the oldest elves particularly guilty of this - especially towards their ancient enemies the dwarves and the orcs. However, many elves are curious about these strange young races and can even grow to respect, admire and in many cases fall in love with their neighbours - particularly humans.

Minor Races

While less common than the three major races, these minor races together make up a significant proportion of the Ornic population.

Gnomes

The small statured and fey ancestored gnomes are ostensibly based in the Feywood, but their curious natures and wanderlust mean they can be found in every corner of Orna. While often seen as nuisances by other races, many gnomes have found a welcoming home in Vil. The head of the School of Alchemy is a gnome named Rayt Dehgan, many gnomes become students at the Schools of Magic, while the gnomish invention of the firearm was seen by many as a vital advance for the Vil in their war with Onin. Elsewhere - particularly in the Southlands - gnomes are most usually viewed as a curiosity at best and an annoyance at worst, though even their most hated enemies will admit they make excellent bardic musicians.

Half-Elves

Ever since the Dawn of Man, there have been relations between humans and elves and half-elves are the inevitable result. Usually shunned by elf society and treated with contempt and embarrassment by human society, it can be a tough life for an Ornic half-elf. Living on the fringes of society often compels a half-elf into the life of an adventurer, doing whatever they can to make something of themselves and prove their worth. To this end, half-elves find themselves trying a variety of professions in the hopes of excelling at one. Unfortunately some half-elves have grown bitter and turn to banditry or thievery, furthering the cycle of isolation and distrust.

Half-Orcs

An unfortunate byproduct of the frequent Orc invasions from the Cursed North, half-orcs are usually viewed with either pity or disgust by their human forefathers. Even more oppressed than the similarly half-breed half-elves, many half-orcs make the choice to flee to the Cursed North and try their luck with their orc kin instead of staying in a land that hates and fears them. Half-orcs who stay in Onin will tend to find themselves press-ganged into a special regiment of the Ornic army, who are usually sent into battle first as little more than cannon-fodder. In Vil and the Southlands, half-orcs are hired by unscrupulous aristocrats as bodyguards and intimidating muscle or they take to the forests to try and live peaceful lives away from interaction with other races.

Halflings

Not long after the Dawn of Man there came the halflings. At first many humans thought them to be related to the gnomes, whereas the elves believed them to be nothing more particularly small humans. Eventually they were accepted as a race unto themselves and one humans were happy to live alongside. Mainly found in the Southlands, the present-day halflings make excellent merchants and traders, making full use of their natural gift for talking. More mischievous halflings use their unassuming nature to become expert thieves and pickpockets, which has led to a natural level of suspicion amongst their human cousins. Perhaps most surprisingly, halflings have proven to be adept explorers and sailors and it was the famous halfling Captain Flintbottom who first officially landed on the shores of both Morhum and Vaytus before sailing off to the West, never to be seen again...

Beastkin

Coming to Orna from the exotic lands across the sea, there are a growing number of beast like races making their homes amongst the Kingdoms of Man.

Catfolk

The catfolk of Vaytus actually first travelled to Orna a centuries ago, but found the humans too barbaric and wild at the time so returned home and remained nothing more than a myth until Captain Flintbottom sailed to Vaytus and formally discovered them. Since then relations between the catfolk and the Ornic people have been incredibly friendly, with a large number of catfolk making the Southlands their home. Insatiably curious and adventurous, catfolk are endlessly trying to better themselves and learn new things. This curiosity can sometimes be seen as nosiness by other races and there are many who don't yet trust their neighbours from the south...

Grippli

Also from Vaytus are the much more mysterious frog-like grippli. Not as common or overtly friendly as their catfolk neighbours, the grippli that have come to Orna have established a township of their own in the previously uninhabitable marshlands southwest of the Southlands. Recently they have moved to have Ytzazssa - as they call it - recognised as a Free City, a move which has been met with a mixture of anger and amusement. A few grippli have ventured out of Ytzazssa, travelling up the great river Luon and building huts in the nearby treetops and swamps and serve as either protectors of these natural areas or simply as bandits harrassing the nearby humans. To many in Orna the grippli are a pest that has been allowed to infest their land and there is a growing movment to have them removed...

Kitsune

Coming from the Eastern continent of Morhum are the enigmatic kitsune. These shapeshifting fox folk are regarded as tricksters and not to be trusted by many in Orna, especially due to their seeming relation to Kit the trickster God. It is not unmmcommon to find kitsune bards throughout Orna singing songs of their homeland in fey tongues, while many kitsune have been accepted into the Vil Schools of Magic. Mostly, however, they are shunned as lying foreigners, with there being a growing fear in the more paranoid and discriminatory Ornans that the kitsune are hiding amongst them in human form and may have been doing so for centuries...

Ratfolk

The ratfolk of Orna are something of a mystery. Initially thought of as a children's bedtime story among humans, when other Beastkin started to become more prominent the ratfolk made their presence known. Initially repulsed by them, the humans of Orna soon learned to appreciate the ratfolk's usefulness in trading - particularly in the Southlands - and their mechanical expertise - obviously a plus in Vil. Their underground tunnel system stretches throughout the Empire, reaching right up to some of the Dwarfen mines under the Barrier Mountains. There also appears to be ratfolk in both Morhum and Vaytus, leading to a lot of debate about where their true home lies...

Tengu

The nomadic and unsettling tengu came across to Orna from Morhum on rickety boats not long after Captain Flintbottom's first contact. They initially tried settling in Vil, but their impulsive natures and need to be on the

move has led to them spreading throughout all of Orna. Master swordsmen, tengu often find themselves employed as assassins or sellswords, while their strong inclination towards thievery makes many turn to banditry and piracy. Of all the beastkin to recently start populating Orna, the tengu are easily the least popular, with only the people of Vil extending them any real courtesy. The Vila claim this is due to sheer human compassion, but it seems far more likely that they simply see another asset to be exploited....

Godtouched

The rarest 'races' in Orna are the Godtouched, those humans believed to be blessed by the Gods from birth.

Aasimar

The incredibly rare aasimar are said to be directly descended from the Great Mother herself and are therefore seen as the purest and most powerful of all Godtouched. Treated with almost universal awe and reverence, this can be a great burden on many aasimar who often choose a life of solitude among religious orders. This awe has also been known to easily turn into fear and an especially intimidating aasimar may find themselves shunned or outright attacked by their threatened neighbours. For their part, aasimars talk of a strong sense of destiny and an almost overwhelming connection to Orna itself, whom they say is suffering...

Elementkin (Ifrit, Oread, Sylph, Undine)

The four elementkin are said to be 'blessed' by their corresponding Godhouse, and usually exemplify the typical traits of this House. Ifrit are strong-willed and tenacious warriors, often serving the religious orders of Onin. Oread are practical and cautious folk who commonly serve as guardsmen or builders throughout Orna. Sylph are wild and gossipy, excelling in the roles of spies or druids in the Southlands. Undine are empathic and proud, making great sorcerors and diplomats for the Vila people. Unlike their aasimar cousins, the elementkin are not seen as outsiders, rather just particularly blessed humans. Therefore an individual's reaction to an elementkin is much more likely to be swayed by their personal religious beliefs more than anything else.

Religion in Orna

The people of Orna have a complicated relationship with their gods, but they are still a significant part of Ornic life. The belief is that thousands of years ago - before even the elves - great celestial beings lived in Orna and fought off the darkness from the Cursed North. To this end Yii'foyua, The Great Mother, birthed four children to each head up a Godhouse connected to one of the four elements. These Houses each have a King, a Queen and a Champion and it is these twelve that make up the pantheon of gods most commonly worshipped in Orna. Followers of any of these gods have access to the elemental domain - and any subdomain - related to their house. All gods will also be listed with their individual domains and subdomains. Though these gods are the main gods of Orna, they are also surprisingly followed by the people of Morhum and Vaytos, a connection which Vila scholars are fascinated by.

House Binel (Fire)

House Binel is traditionally seen as the most powerful Godhouse. Their core tenets are strong faith, self-expression and noble heroism. Their King, Aniell, is the Great Mother's second son and is the greatest warrior

amongst the pantheon. His wife Helu is beloved by all her followers for her strength and guiding light. Their Champion is their eldest son Lawyllan, a great hunter who is betrothed to Velsi of House Ain. House Binel is most strongly followed by the people of Onin, indeed the Kingdom's sigil is a lion's head surrounded by a sun which represents their beloved Gods.

Aniell, The Lion of War - Nobility (Leadership), Strength (Ferocity), War (Tactics), Law (Loyalty) - Lawful Good

Helu, The Lady of Light - Glory (Heroism), Sun (Light), Liberation (Revolution), Nobility (Martyr) - Lawful Good

Lawyllan, The Prince of the Hunt - Animal (Fur), Trickery (Ambush), Artifice (Trap), Sun (Revelation) - Lawful Neutral

House Ain (Air)

House Ain's core beliefs are good communication, strong communities and exploration. Their King is Adoan, the youngest son of the Great Mother who is seen as more tempestuous than his brothers, but with the strongest sense of justice. His Queen is Hipna, the great goddess of trade and friendship. Their Champion is their daughter Velsi, the goddess of exploration and love who is betrothed to Lawyllan of House Binel but always finds a way to delay their marriage. House Ain is the main Godhouse followed in the Southlands where wild justice and good trade are necessary parts of life.

Adoan, The Stormbringer - Weather (Storms), Law (Judgment), War (Blood), Destruction (Catastrophe) - Lawful Good

Hipna, The Merchant Queen - Good (Friendship), Community (Cooperation), Rune (Language), Travel (Trade) - Neutral Good

Velsi, The Winged Princess - Animal (Feather), Charm (Love), Void (Starlight), Travel (Exploration) - Chaotic Good

House Faelyn (Water)

House Faelyn is the most complex of the Godhouses, their tenets ostensibly being the use of magic for the greater good and empathy for your fellow man. Their Queen is Lun, the Great Mother's only daughter and the goddess of arcane power and health. She initially took as her King Qilvel who was a great and ambitious leader until - the story goes - he was corrupted by the dark god Ryelan and murdered their newborn son in an insane rage. Qilvel's brother Acvel managed to subdue the now mad god and imprisoned him. Acvel became the House King as the purest of all the gods and installed his treacherous brother as the House Champion as a reminder of the corruptive nature of power. Naturally this complicated House is followed most strongly in the Kingdom of Vil and there is also a growing following in the arid deserts of Morhum.

Acvel, The Honest Knight - Glory (Honor), Protection (Purity), Knowledge (Thought), Magic (Divine) - Neutral Good

Lun, The Weeping Woman - Healing (Restoration), Magic (Arcane), Darkness (Loss), Good (Redemption) - Neutral Good

Qilvel, The Grinning Man - Death (Murder), Destruction (Rage), Madness (Insanity), Chaos (Revelry) - Chaotic Evil

House Elanyr (Earth)

House Elanyr's core beliefs are great caution, pride in practicality and a strong belief in fate. Their King is Vaqni, the Great Mother's oldest son. Unlike his brothers he focuses on protection and never went off to war, preferring to stay on guard at home. His Queen is Yaonol, the goddess of agriculture and they have no children. Instead their Champion is Yaonol's sister Jinwi, the goddess of death. As the oldest House, Elanyr is strongly followed throughout all of Orna as well as amongst the dwarfen kingdoms of the Barrier Mountains and the two nearby continents of Morhum and Vaytos.

Vaqni, The Rock of Orna - Law (Inevitable), Protection (Defense), Strength (Resolve), Artifice (Construct) - Lawful Neutral

Yaonol, The Maiden of the Soil - Artifice (Toil), Community (Home), Knowledge (Memory), Plant (Growth) - True Neutral

Jinwi, The Reaper - Plant (Decay), Chaos (Entropy), Repose (Souls), Luck (Fate) - True Neutral

Unaffiliated

There are hundreds of lesser gods - mostly related to the four Houses - but there are three gods in particular who are worshipped by many in Orna and it's surrounding lands that have no allegiance to any House. Yii'foyua is the Great Mother of all the houses and therefore seen as the goddess of all creation and is worshipped by druids throughout Orna as well as the elves. The trickster god Kit is a very different kind of god. The story goes that he was once just a fox who saw Velsi of house Ain and immediately fell in love. He pursued her, only to be threatened by her betrothed Lawyllan. Thus began a rivalry which has continued for thousands of years, with all the stories following a similar pattern. Each time he is threatened, Kit challenges the proud and vain Lawyllan to a competition, with the Prince of the Hunt betting a portion of his power against the fox's life. Kit wins every time through trickery, cunning or plain luck and is now almost as powerful as Lawyllan himself and has a growing following, particularly in the Southlands and in Morhum. The kitsune people in particular worship and try to emulate the trickster god. Ryelan is the most evil and potentially most powerful of all the gods. The sworn enemy of the Great Mother and all her Godhouses, worship of this dark god is forbidden throughout Orna. His dark practices and cults of followers are seen as the greatest threat to the Ornic empire outside the Cursed North and there is a growing theory that there is an organised Kingdom in the north that worships Ryelan as their main god...

Yii'foyua, The Great Mother - Sun (Day), Healing (Resurrection), Community (Family), Repose (Ancestors), Weather (Seasons) - True Neutral

Kit, The Fox - Trickster (Deception), Luck (Imagination), Liberation (Freedom), Chaos (Whimsy), Charm (Lust) - Chaotic Neutral

Ryelan, The Dweller in Darkness - Darkness (Night), Death (Undead), Destruction (Torture), Law (Tyranny), Evil (Fear), Madness (Nightmare), Void (Dark Tapestry) - Lawful Evil

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