

A History of the Dragon Empire

1st Age: The Age of the Great Earthquake

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

Conventional chronicles of the Dragon Empire tell the story of its legions, added to by successive Emperors and Empresses down the Ages until they became the mighty fighting force that they are today. Or perhaps the story of how the wizards of Horizon learned to tame the wild magic of this world and create the powerful wards that protect us all. But the Dragon Empire has always been more than just the arenas of Axis and the colleges of Horizon. For the legions and the wizards depend upon the goods and services provided by farmers, traders and craftspeople - and they too have a story to tell.

There have always been peasants working the lands near the Bronze River. Life for them has never been easy - the Wizard King sent undead overseers with whips and torched the land with dragons when he was annoyed - but the First Age was a particular low point. Freed from their former master's control, many monsters roamed the land. Sahuagin, driven from their traditional haunts by the pacification of the Midland Sea, colonised the Fangs and launched raids to the south and west, sowing the land with salt so that crops could not be raised. From her palace in Axis, The First Empress sent out her legions to pacify the surrounding area and a group of sun-worshipping paladins built the citadel of Sunrock to defend against the sahuagin, but their activities came at a price - the armies had to be fed, leaving nothing for the peasants' own families. The final straw came when demons attacked through the Knee Deep. Facing starvation, a group of peasants packed up their few remaining possessions and began their long journey in search of a new home.

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

For us the First Age was a glorious time - under The Emerald Queen, the Dragon Wood extended right up to Hammer Falls and wood elves could travel freely. But then hordes of barbarians emerged out of the wastes of Moonwreck under that fierce leader of theirs and started felling trees for their great fortress. Inevitably there was war, which led to terrible losses on both sides. "Moonwreck" is a curse word in our tongue to this day.

Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

In retrospect, cutting down the trees in an elven forest was probably a bad idea. But we needed the space for hunting and riding, and we thought they wouldn't miss a few. Our midwinter festival celebrates the depth of cold and the burning of trees; great fires are lit by Moonwreck barbarians everywhere. But we don't use elf-trees any more.

Igrizh, Vat-born Historian:

The First Age was a terrible time for the Vat-born. The First Empress declared all necromantic practices to be illegal, and zealous clerics and paladins hunted us down and destroyed our quickening yards. The secret of our making was lost. And all because the Wizard King found our

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singing to be pleasing. Fortunately, The Hooded Woman, who had long been our protector, sowed the seeds of our revival in the minds and libraries of scholars.



Anessa Roseheart, Battle Captain of the Golden Order:

Ah, Sunrock. Our magnificent gold and marble city, built on a headland overlooking The Fangs. So many great souls trained there, so many victories won against the sea-folk and the demons from the west. And all destroyed in the huge earthquake that ended the First Age, shook our fair city to rubble, and killed the First Empress. We remember you, Sunrock. We carry you with us always.

Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

Look, it wasn't our fault, okay? The Mountain Sage made us do it. He said we could go back and change things, and everything would be better. How were we to know that time travel would make the earth angry?

2nd Age: The Age of the Grave-robbing Undead

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

The wandering peasants travelled far to the north, skirting the battlegrounds of the wood elves and the Moonwreck barbarians and crossing the path of the koru behemoths. Somewhere beyond Imp and Balor they found a great gash in the ground, lit by green glowing rocks and rife with the all-too-familiar stench of demons. The peasants made to move past it, but then they heard roaring and the sound of running feet. A lithe young woman dressed in leggings and robes was being chased by a shambling mass of misshapen monstrosities, all teeth, claws, tentacles and green ichor. She turned to her nearest attacker, and, to the peasants' astonishment, leapt feet first into its approximation of a face, even though she was completely unarmed. As the creature went sprawling, she jumped high into the air and landed on the body of another, which she pummelled with a series of rapid jabs and punches with her bare fists. That one too went down, but many more monstrosities were coming. The peasants looked at one another, drew their sickles, scythes and pitchforks, and charged into the fray. It was a hard fight, but eventually the demons were defeated and driven back.

And thus did the wandering peasants meet their Icon, the Grand Master of Flowers. She showed them secret ways through chill foothills and treacherous ravines to a high plateau in the Icefall Mountains north of Starport, where a small village called Commandule huddled beneath a cliff from which rose the many red-peaked roofs of the Monastery of Flowers. There the peasants settled. They learnt how to grow crops in the thin soil and milk the mountain goats, and the Grand Master taught them martial arts to protect themselves. Commandule grew and prospered, cut off from the outside world.

Anessa Roseheart, Battle Captain of the Golden Order:

At first, all seemed hopeless. The paladins who had survived the ruin of Sunrock wandered aimlessly along the Empire's new roads and the tracks of the forests. They prayed to the Gods of Light to show them a new place that they could call home, but, as always, the Gods did not respond. Or perhaps they did, for there arose among them The Road Warden, who taught that travellers were to be helped and protected. Her teachings gave our Order a purpose. Even today, when we meet travellers on the road, no matter how urgent our journey may be, we greet them in the name of the Road Warden and offer to help them with their difficulties. Often we are rewarded with food and friendship.

The Second Age was not without its dangers. An army of grave-robbing undead arose in the south and threatened the growing settlements around Axis. We joined with the Emperor's Second Legion and together we pushed towards their citadel in Dire Wood, destroying their spawning grounds as we went.

Igrizh, Vat-born Historian:

The plans of The Hooded Woman came to fruition in the Second Age, when the gnomish alchemists Imras Ferosian and Gremelda Ironrock, acting on hints found in ancient tomes from the Wizard King's library in Necropolis, located a hidden laboratory in the Underworld belonging to the Arcanites, a long-dead serpent-headed people. Thinking that they were converting dead matter into gold, they placed bones and decaying flesh into the pit at its centre and activated it through half-understood magical rituals. The results were not as they had hoped, but they were happy with the aesthetically unpleasing but biddable servants that they had inadvertently created. And thus we were reborn.

Alas, Imras and Gremelda were not trained necromancers, and failed to follow the first law of necromancy - *do not raise up that which you cannot put down*. Instructed to repair ourselves, we dug new quickening pits and sought out more corpses. The graveyard of the nearby gnome village of Vostruk seemed a good start, and when the corpses there had all been dug up, the obvious thing to do was to make new ones. Eventually Imras and Gremelda noticed that some of their servants had the faces and other features of their friends and neighbours and realised that things had got out of hand. They tried to destroy their creations by blowing them up, but the remaining pieces crawled over to the pit, flopped in, and regenerated themselves. The next battle did not go so well for Imras and Gremelda. They had hoped to be immortalised for their discoveries, but probably not as ever-regenerating constructions of bones and flesh.

At this time, the Vat-born were still creations of necromancy. Seeking more corpses, we found our way to the surface, emerging from a limestone cavern beneath Dire Wood. The Hooded Woman

came to us and taught us the rudiments of civilisation; we built a citadel called Gravefort and ranged the land, seeking out corpses to recycle. Inevitably, when we encountered the villages around Axis, there was conflict. The Emperor created a new legion of cleric-fighters who specialised in turning the undead, and the wandering paladins of the Golden Order allied with them. We were pushed back to the Dire Wood and Gravefort was razed to the ground by the dragons of Wyrmblessed.

Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

Again, NOT OUR FAULT. In any case, there were no gnomes in the Second Age. Any tales of gnomish villages, artificers, temporal visitors or survivors of the Great Earthquake are hearsay and speculation.

3rd Age: The Age of the Mad and Shining Tower

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

In the ruins of Gravefort, the Second Legion and the paladins of the Golden Order found a path down to the Underworld. Despite unending waves of attacks by shambling creatures of rotting flesh and bone, they pushed forward until they discovered an ancient temple containing their birthing pits. The ensuing battle was brought to an end by the legion's battle-wizards, who cast a ritual that summoned a swarm of meteors, bringing down the temple's roof and burying everyone and everything inside. Thus, with great loss, the empire of the grave-robbing undead was ended forever.

The remainder of the Third Age was a quiet time for the Dragon Empire. The Third Empress expanded the realm with new settlements in Sword Point, the wizards of Horizon placed additional wards against demonic intrusions and living dungeons, and a diplomatic alliance was forged with The Elf Queen beyond the Fangs. The remaining peasants of the Bronze River were able to farm in peace.

The only matter of concern was the frequent reports of the Mad and Shining Tower, a strange translucent column of great twisted and jagged plates of glowing star metal that would appear and hover over settlements, occasionally lurching from side to side like a drunken farmer coming home from the pub. Sometimes this artefact would stay for an hour or two and disappear as mysteriously as it had arrived; at others, a shimmering pattern of light would emerge from it that spoke in a chorus of musical voices which no-one could understand. Later on, it seems that this mysterious icon learnt the common tongue; it called itself The Speaker in Light and said that it was from the stars, where the Gods still walked. It claimed to be all-knowing and could answer any riddle, but its answers were oracular and caused much disagreement over their meaning. The wizards of Horizon would often send deputations to speak with it, for it expressed great interest in them and their doings. However, they refused its offers of wondrous star-treasures in return for their brains.

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The Mad and Shining Tower and the Speaker in Light were not seen again after the great explosion in Giantwalk that triggered the mass emigration of giants and ended the peace of the Third Age. Given the lack of control that The Speaker in Light appeared to have over its own vessel, the obvious conclusion is that it crashed.

Igrizh, Vat-born Historian:

With the destruction of the Temple of the Arcanites by the Empire, the secret of our making was lost for a second time. The Hooded Woman planted secrets in tomes and sent dreams to scholars as she had done before, but it would take many Ages for her hints to be heeded.

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

The Third Age was a time of change for the wood elves. The Emerald Queen disappeared from Dragon Wood, never to be seen again. Some believe that she was kidnapped by the denizens of the Mad and Shining Tower and perished when it crashed. Others say that she went travelling among the stars and will return when the time is right.

With her disappearance, the power of The Elf Queen grew; we lost our innocence and united into a single empire with our high elf and drow brethren. The silver, gold, green and indigo trees of the Queen's Wood expanded to fill half the Land. Many wood elves continued to follow the Emerald Path - non-violence and plant-eating - but others adopted the customs and habits of our new neighbours.

Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

Those Dragon Empire fools know nothing. The Mad and Shining Tower was The Mountain Sage's time machine, cobbled together from the fragments of his starship. And everyone knows that gnomes are descended from the giants that he found when he arrived. When they attacked him, he used a transforming ray that shrank them and turned them into us. And we've followed him ever since. Don't listen to those other gnomes, the ones who say that we were created by The Gods along with all the other ancestries and have always lived in the Underworld. They don't know what they're talking about.

4th Age: The Age of the Elves

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

The Fourth Age was the high point of the Elven Empire. Radiating out from the Court of Stars, the Queen's Wood extended to Hammer Falls in the west, across the Koru Straits, and all the way to the plains of Eld in the south. Elven forces helped our human neighbours in their wars against the giants, winning great honour thereby. Many elven towns were built in that time - the Grey Towers havens, the treetop city of Khalune, the dancing stages of Filathion - but the fairest of all was the many-tiered mountain city of Eleth Arinel, close to the western border, our greatest achievement - and the cause of our downfall.



The leader of that city, a dwarf named Tolmor Talinbar, determined to build a great palace as a suitable residence for The Elf Queen when she came to visit. Or so he said. In truth, it was a monument to his own pride. He ordered his wood elf serfs to dig the deep quarries that supplied stone to the city to find the finest marble for his folly. When the serfs replied that all the good stone had been used, he told them to dig still deeper. And so they did. But they dug too deep, and one day a wood elf broke through a wall, revealing a vast cavern in which a group of strange humanoids, short and thick-set, were living a squalid existence. And thus were dwarves revealed to the world.

Ketlen Firekin, Dwarf Tablet-carver:

Oi! It wasn't squalid! We'd been working on Forge for centuries and had an Underworld empire of our own. You just found us at a bad time.

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

The dwarves were strong and stupid, but good miners, so we set them to working. Under our tutelage they prospered and grew numerous.

Ketlen Firekin, Dwarf Tablet-carver:

Enslaved us, more like. And who are you calling stupid? Remember what happened later...

Anessa Roseheart, Battle Captain of the Golden Order:

The Golden Order still sought a place to rebuild our citadel, and meanwhile we continued to follow the Road Warden's teachings. But not always wisely. When we met refugees fleeing demonic invaders near the shores of Lake Calamity, our leader, Icona Eaglebrow, declared that the Order would make a stand on the north bank of the Racing River, a sequence of rapids and waterfalls that connected that body of water to the Midland Sea, while the refugees made for the safety of the Queen's Wood beyond the Fangs. "This far, and no further", she proclaimed. The order built pallisades along the shore and waited for the demons to arrive.

At first, the fighting was easy. The enemy, misshapen beasts, came to the river's edge and attempted to swim across. Those that were not swept away by the rapidly flowing waters ended up impaled on the spikes we had set up, and were quickly dispatched. But it soon became clear that the demons were not a mindless horde. In the distance, groups of robed figures bearing the mark of the The Diabolist constructed summoning circles, miniature hellholes from which new and nastier forms emerged. The first wave had flippers and long sinuous tails that allowed them to glide easily through the water, but which were fortunately susceptible to bolts of holy energy. Then came large green serpent-like beings with too many eyes that spat venom. Then huge floating balls of writhing tentacles that sprayed acidic ichor in all directions. Those we could not defeat.



The paladins begged Icona to sound the retreat, but she refused, repeating her mantra "They shall not pass!". Meanwhile the floating tentacle creatures, out of reach of our swords and immune to our arrows and spears, decimated the land. At length, exhausted and terrified, some of the order fled into the Fangs; it is well that they did, for otherwise we would have been completely destroyed. Icona and her followers all perished in the hopeless fight. To this day we call the Racing River "Icona's Folly" in memory of our devout but over-zealous leader.

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

The Diabolist's cultists also caused trouble for the Dragon Empire. After the Emperor's Fourth Legion had finally driven the giants from our land with the help of a drow army sent by our great ally, The Elf Queen, rumours began to spread amongst the peasants that their farms would be given to the drow as a reward. This was nonsense, of course - drow are well-known for preferring to live in underground communities - but a firebrand peasant called Elbet Sanghold organised a

rebellion that was shamefully supported by the Emperor's enemies among the great families of Axis, and the Second Legion. Thus the Fourth Age ended in the blood and chaos of a civil war. Elbet was later found to have been a secret member of the Diabolist's cult.

5th Age: The Age of the Blazing Meteor

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

Barely had the peasant uprising been suppressed when a new calamity was visited on the Empire. It started, harmlessly enough, with the appearance of a new star in the heavens. It grew steadily brighter over the next few months until it filled the night sky with a multi-coloured radiant glow.

Then the star fell to earth. As it passed through the Overworld it broke apart. Star metal fell all over the Empire, but three especially large fragments landed on the Owl Barrens, the mountain that eventually became Starport, and Omen. In other circumstances, the fall of the star was a cataclysm that might have ended the age; the star-shards brought with them poisonous vapours, earthquakes, tsunamis and other upheavals. Most worryingly of all, the fall of the star disrupted the natural flow of magic; The Archmage's wards failed, the Koru Behemoths left their usual migration path, and dragons and other magical creatures fell sick.

Strange star-creatures stalked the land. Some were monstrous aberrations that came to be known as star jellies; others were metal golems of curious designs. One such was a mysterious giant clad in impenetrable silver armour that strode out of the Midland Sea. It never spoke and there are conflicting accounts of its actions - some report that it fought the other star-creatures and thereby helped the Empire, while others say that it gathered and protected the star metal fragments, and had to be driven away from Omen by the band of heroes who restored the balance of magic. The accounts agree that at the end of the Age, it stopped moving and became the Northern Colossus.

A group of hobgoblins close to the Owl Barrows learned to make weapons out of star metal. Their Icon, The Hobgoblin Warlord, united all the hobgoblin tribes, creating the largest humanoid army the world had yet seen. Giants, goblins and ogres rallied to his banner and their combined forces conquered much of the Empire, laying siege to Axis. The imperial legions, out-manoeuvred and without support from the elves who had retreated into their forest fastnesses, were forced onto the defensive.

At length a mysterious Icon calling himself The Mountain Sage made contact with the imperial forces. He claimed to have knowledge of the fallen star and its occupants, and taught them a ritual that would restore magic to the world. A band of heroes travelled to the heart of Omen and performed the ritual within the star-fragment there, destroying its alien sorcery and restoring the natural magic of the Dragon Empire. The hobgoblin host was defeated at the Battle of the Burning Ford and for a while, order was restored.

Alas, it was not to last. The star fragment on Omen was destroyed in a huge explosion, emitting a toxic green miasma that covered the lands of the Empire. Most people - humans, Folk and elves - were debilitated by a wasting sickness that no cleric spell or healing potion could cure. Only the dwarves were immune, a fact that the elves would come to regret. The cause of the explosion is a mystery; historians suspect that a relic-hunting expedition sent by some group - perhaps the drow, or the gnomes - meddled catastrophically with a device in the crashed star fragment.

Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

Once again, these Dragon Empire fools show their ignorance. The meteor was a ship carrying the Mountain Sage across the space between the stars. He tricked them into performing the dangerous job of disabling the protection field that was preventing access to the control systems. Okay, so the attempt to repair the engines didn't go so well.

6th Age: The Age of the Dwarven Uprising

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

The sickness that marked the end of the Age of the Blazing Meteor also signalled the ending of the golden age of the Elven Empire. Our dwarven subjects took advantage of the indisposition of their superiors to plot an uprising. They secretly hollowed out the foundations of the palace of Eleth Arinel, leaving but a single column. One terrible day, when The Elf Queen was holding court, a dwarven rebel took an axe to this support and brought the entire palace crashing down. The Elf Queen teleported herself to safety, but many members of the Great Families were killed. Armed dwarves, The Dwarf King at their head, erupted from the mines and laid waste to the city, killing any elves who got in their way. The entire population of Eleth Arinel was forced to flee. They were never to return.

Ketlen Firekin, Dwarf Tablet-carver:

Ha! Not so stupid now, eh? And the sickness had nothing to do with it, by the way. We planned it for years - as we like to say, *never turn your back on a dwarf with a grudge*. To this day, we drink to Arabella Horngrog the Liberator, the heroine whose self-sacrifice won us our freedom.

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

After the catastrophe of Eleth Arinel, a Grand Conclave was held at the Court of Stars to decide how to respond. But for the first time in our history, the Great Families could not agree. The drow favoured a strong military response, invading and razing Forge from below. The high elves proposed recruiting our human allies to help us retake Eleth Arinel. We wood elves favoured a peaceful, negotiated solution, accepting that the dwarves had a genuine grievance. The Elf Queen mediated between the factions, as she always has, but her unifying power was diminished. After several days of fruitless arguing, the Grand Conclave broke up without agreement.

The factions went their separate ways. The drow retreated to their fortresses in the Underworld and the high elves to their cities in the Queen's Wood (it was at this time that the travelling charm was laid upon the Court of Stars, making its location knowable only to those whom The Elf Queen permits). We wood elves were left exposed to the vengeful dwarf bands that roamed the northern forests, looking for elf-made things to destroy, and many of us were killed in the years that followed. And to this day, our once-beautiful city of Eleth Arinel remains a ruin, shunned by the living and haunted by the ghosts of those who died there.

Ketlen Firekin, Dwarf Tablet-carver:

Well, we didn't have it all our own way. The Age ended with the Long Darkness, when the moon ate the sun for a whole month. The forces of The Orc Lord used the cover of darkness to attack Forge. We fought them off, but The Dwarf King was killed.

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

The orcs attacked us too. It was a hard time for us.

7th Age: The Age of Frost and Fire

Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

To us, the Long Darkness was a sign that the moon goddess Anahid was angry. We sought to placate her by seeking the Relics of the Moonglance. At the beginning of the world, when the moon struck and gouged the area that we still call home, we believe that the strike created the nearby mountains known as the Frost Range. Our belief is that relics of a lunar civilisation are to be found there.

An itinerant traveller brought a mysterious fragment of twisted metal - one unknown to us - that they had found in the Frost Range mountains. They said that they had stolen it from the Frost Giants. Our leader The Barbarian King led a crusade into the Frost Range to look for other relics, culminating in a great battle against the frost giants, in which they were vanquished. The Barbarians of Moonwreck ruled over the mountains and the plains, perpetually searching for relics of the court of the Moon Goddess Anahid.

It was a glorious time for us, brought to an end when the twin volcanoes of Imp and Balor erupted together, sending out a cloud of ash and a sea of lava that covered the northern plains. For a time we were forced to retreat to Moonwreck.

Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

Ha! Another cunning plan by the Mountain Sage. Trick a bunch of dumb barbarians into finding more pieces of his crashed ship. Worked a treat. At least until he went to collect them at the end of the Age, and everything exploded again.

8th Age: The Age of the Rainbow Dragon

Anessa Roseheart, Battle Captain of the Golden Order:

As Imp and Balor belched fire into the heavens, dragons emerged from the ash clouds. These were the Rainbow Dragon and her brood, a trio of huge red, blue and black dragons that became known as The Three. They swept east and then south; The Three attacked the city of Highrock which they destroyed and took for themselves, making its ruins their new lair, which became known as Drakkenhall. The survivors fled across the Midland Sea and founded the city of New Port. The Rainbow Dragon remained in the vicinity of the wood that bears her name, setting fire to the forests of the elves and feasting on any person or animal foolish enough to break cover. She was a mighty opponent, for she combined the powers of all of her offspring and her wingspan could have

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covered a small village. Nothing was safe - she even attacked the koru behemoths on their migration route.

The Elf Queen sent emissaries to The Emperor and to the Golden Order asking for help. We accepted with alacrity, and battle was joined. The Eighth Legion advanced into Dragon Wood and tempted the creature out of her lair on Starport. As we had hoped, she took to the air to burn the invaders. She must have been vastly surprised when Golden Order paladins on great wings made of wood and cloth descended on her from the clouds above (this was an idea of The Archmage, who also provided the cloud island base from which the attack was launched). Of course, many paladins missed their target and unable to properly control their descent, fell to their deaths, but half a dozen succeeded in landing on the dragon's back and wounded it sufficiently to bring it to the ground. Even then, the creature fought back fiercely, belching fire and acid and lightning at the approaching legions, but finally Orran Nightshade threw himself into its maw with a barrel of mephit oil strapped to his back. The resulting explosion blew the dragon's head apart. In honour of his sacrifice, which brought the Golden Order much renown with both the high elves and the Dragon Empire, every graduate paladin of the Golden Order wears a fragment of the Rainbow Dragon's skull on a chain round their neck, along with the fragment from Sunrock.



Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

The Dragon Wars were a disaster for us. Yes, the Rainbow Dragon was a problem, but we could live with her, just as we could with owlbears or wyverns. Then the paladins and the legions chose our home as their battleground. The forests burnt for months after they were gone and many of our homes were destroyed. The paladins thought we should be grateful, but we were not.

Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

The wood elves' misfortune was good news for us. We multiplied in numbers, secure in the Frost Range and the Moonwreck plain. As our empire grew and new relics were found, our leader became more ambitious. Border conflicts with the orcs begin to escalate, culminating in the Battle of Windblast Valley. The Barbarian King's cavalry, with fighting clerics in the vanguard, swept all before them; Orc Lord Jakrak was slain and the surviving orcs scattered into the western wilds and

the Icefall Mountains. The Barbarian King ruled all the lands of Moonwreck and the Frost Range, which became known as the Moonwreck Kingdom.

9th Age: The Age of the Ascent

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

For several centuries, the peasants of Commandule had lived quietly, practicing the arts of cultivation and unarmed combat and growing in number. After the arrival of refugee orcs from the battle of Windblast Valley in the Icefall Mountains, The Grand Master of Flowers declared that the time of isolation had come to an end, and it was time for the peasants to rejoin their long-lost brethren in the Dragon Empire. So the Commandule peasants picked up their hoes and mattocks, loaded their few possessions onto tough and shaggy yaks, and headed south. They passed through the blackened ruins of Dragon Wood and said hello to the villagers living on the koru behemoth Highclan, who was passing by. Near the ruins of Eleth Arinel they encountered the dwarves, and bargained with them for passage through the Undermarch from Forge to Anvil, avoiding the still toxic lands around Icona's Folly. At length they arrived in the lands of their ancestors.

It is well that they did, for the people of the Dragon Empire were starving. The lands around the Bronze River had never recovered their fertility after the miasma at the end of the Age of the Blazing Meteor, and as the populations of Axis, Glitterhaegen and Horizon continued to grow, the peasants had foolishly tilled the land until it had nothing more to give. But the peasants of Commandule had been farming poor soils for centuries, and they knew what to do. Their leader, Xara yan Draber, had an audience with The Emperor and struck a deal - they would fix the fields, but all administrative control of food production must be given to her. The Emperor's bureaucrats were not to interfere and the new arrivals were to be allowed to settle where they liked and not pay taxes. Thus the peasants of Commandule saved the Empire, as gradually, the fields recovered.



Anessa Roseheart, Battle Captain of the Golden Order:

The paladins of the Golden Order continued to patrol the roads of the Empire, but dispirited by the failure to find a place to re-establish the Golden Citadel, some started to question the teachings of the Road Warden. "What is the point of our existence?" they cried. "We saved the elves from the Rainbow Dragon - but the elves have not given us a home. For centuries we have assisted travellers

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on the Empire's roads, but now they will not help us. What more must we do?" While travelling in near the Dire Wood, some of our order met The Oracle, who proposed a different approach. "Stop serving others," he said. "Take your fate into your own hands." And for much of the Ninth Age, there was strife between the followers of The Road Warden and the followers of the Oracle.

At length The Road Warden decided to act. She organised a convocation at the ruins of Sunrock. There she made a circular clearing in the rubble and incised it with holy symbols. She arranged the paladins from both factions around the edge and had them pray and chant, while she and The Oracle walked to the centre. "An alliance," she said, "sealed with our bodies." "This I have foreseen," said The Oracle, and held out his hand.

The records here become a little confused. Some say that the The Road Warden and The Oracle merged in a miraculous outpouring of holy energy. Others declare that they brought forth a child and then left the Three Realms. What we do know is that a new Icon came into existence - The Map Maker, who taught that we should chart our own path while continuing to help others on the road. They created the Precepts under which our order has operated ever since.

Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

Towards the end of the age, The Barbarian King decided on a new quest; to ascend the highest peak in the world, with the hope of conducting a ritual to summon the Moon Goddess Anahid to earth. The Barbarian name for the peak is Bulan. Situated in the northernmost part of the Frost Range, it stands at over five miles high and is home to huge and hostile air elementals that keep it wreathed in perpetual storms. Expeditions had been sent there in previous Ages, but none had never returned.



Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

They could have just sailed there on a cloud island. Typical of barbarians to do things the hard way...

Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

An expedition led by The Barbarian King, with the mightiest priests and warriors, successfully ascended Bulan and conducted the ritual, using the collected Relics of the Moonglance. And it

worked. The moon, which had been waning, became full, and a bright moonbeam stretched down to the mountain's flat top. Anahid came floating along it in the form of a tall, dark woman with glowing eyes and a crescent on her forehead. She ignored her prostrate worshippers and set off to inspect her new domain. The bright moon followed her wherever she went.

10th Age: The Age of the Full Moon

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

The 10th Age was a mostly peaceful one for the Dragon Empire, despite the constant presence of a full moon in the sky – a result of the Icon that my learned colleague Orsan calls Anahid and we call The Moonwalker. The peasants of Commandule extended their economic control, introducing laws over the trading of metal and wooden goods as well as food. Their ordinances extended to buildings; peasant dwellings began to replace the great palaces in Axis and the grand townhouses of Glitterhaegen, while the Great Families retreated to their country estates. Among the military and merchant institutions there was great disquiet as the traditions of previous Ages were overturned, but under The Peasant Empress there was little they could do.

Not all was well, however. The constant full moon increased the activities of the undead and made the Old Kingdom of The Lich King more solid. The Wild also stirred; the forests of Dire Wood and Cairnwood became dangerous at night, the haunts of shambling constructs of bones and flesh entwined in ivy and vines, and the northern reaches became infested with Moonbears, who violently attacked anyone they encountered.



Then, late in the Age, The Abyss opened in the wilds near Santa Cora. It is not known what triggered this event – whether a long-fledged plan of The Diabolist, a magical disjunction caused by the ever-shining moon, a Living Dungeon that got out of hand, or Underworld denizens digging too deep – but the effect was to release thousands of demons whose presence rapidly expanded it to its current 200 mile length. Demon armies spread across the land and harried the inhabitants of New Port and Santa Cora, despite the brave actions of the paladins of the Golden Order. Events came to a head when the vast demon Gorogan started to emerge from the earth near the Abyss' northern edge. In an act of supreme self-sacrifice, The Great Gold Wyrms flung itself into the depths of the Abyss and sealed the portal there with its own body. Meanwhile a brave combination of Icons and

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heroes petrified Gorogan in place with only its head showing, where it remains to this day as Gorogan's Maw.

Varish Coppernose, Gnome Tinkerer:

I'm not saying that the Abyss opened as a result of an underground appearance of The Mountain Sage in the Mad and Shining Tower. But I'm not not saying that.

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

The Age ended with the departure of The Moonwalker, who returned to her former abode. In sorrow, the moon was dark for a whole year, which at least suppressed the undead for a time.

Anessa Roseheart, Battle Captain of the Golden Order:

The Golden Order was in the vanguard of the war against the demons, and there were many sacrifices – not least the phalanx of paladins that protected The Great Gold Wyrn in its journey down to the source of the Abyss, and who perished every one. In gratitude and recognition, the Empire gave us what we had so long desired – some land that we could call our own. The Golden Citadel was re-founded at last, a fortress surmounted by a shining dome where paladins could train and go out to do good. The Great Gold Wyrn invited us to join with the clerics and paladins who were fortifying the Abyss, but we elected to retain our allegiance to The Map Maker.

Igrizh, Vat-born Historian:

At long last, after many ages, the hints and clues left by The Hooded Woman were eventually unearthed. But by a rather surprising group. A group of druids who opposed The High Druid's alliance with The Moonwalker went delving into the deep places of the Underworld in search of a ritual that could return the moon to its normal phases, and discovered another ancient temple of the Arcanites. Once again, through misunderstanding, they quickened dead matter, but they infused it with the power of the Wild. The result was us, the Vat-born – creations of life and death, bones and flesh bound by ivy and vines. More importantly, however, we were no longer mindless slaves, but had wills and purpose of our own. The druids were still our masters, but not for long.



Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

The return of Anahid, instead of being the triumph that we had expected, instead turned into a curse that was to be the end of the Moonwreck Kingdom. The constant presence of the full moon triggered a latent lycanthropy that had long existed among us. Victims became Moonbears, fierce, violent and cunning creatures that rampaged through the kingdom and beyond. Our cavalry bravely fought them but were no match for their Wild-infused strength. We sought help from The Barbarian King, but he had become fat and lazy and remained in the Last Citadel, our refuge in the Moonwreck plain.

Our clerics determined that the only solution to the Moonbear menace was to restore the moon's phases by sending Anahid home. So another expedition set out for Mount Bulan, led by The Last Great Hero. With a battalion of clerics, he climbed the mountain and stained the ritual area with his blood, revoking the spell that had brought Anahid to the Three Realms. Anahid was sent back to whence she came, and the moon turned dark.

11th Age: The Age of the Vat-born

Avalynne Coltsfoot, Wood Elf Talekeeper:

With the retreat of Anahid, The High Druid became a power in her own right. She took control of Wild Wood, severing it from the elven empire. Many wood elf serfs saw her as a protector of the woods and flocked to her banner, joining pastoral communes. The way of The Emerald Queen was forgotten by most.

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

The rise of the High Druid also increased the power of the Vat-born, making them the most dangerous military force in the Dragon Empire. They were intelligent, self-repairing and didn't need to eat, and clerics could not turn them. The Foolish Emperor sent the 11th Legion against them, but it was defeated.

Igrizh, Vat-born Historian:

However, we had also re-learnt the rudiments of civilisation. We sought peace with the Empire, and realising that we no longer needed them, arrested and handed over our non-Vat-born leaders, governing ourselves thereafter.

We built a new centre in Cairnwood called Quickenhome and placed our quickening yards there, which in retrospect was an error, for it brought us close to the influence of The Diabolist. Demons and quickening yards in the same general area proved to be a bad mix. The pits became infected by a demonic plague, giving rise to shambling Aberrations that hated Vat-born and Woman-born alike. A wave of these creatures arose and attacked the Empire, despite our efforts to prevent them.

Orsan Thronespiller, Loremaster of the Clerics of Moonwreck:

Riven by war between the Moonbears and the 'normals', and the widening influence and invasion of the Vat-born, the Moonwreck Kingdom descended into civil war. As the borders weakened, the frost giants and the orcs returned to their old territories, driving the barbarians away. The non-moonbear faction retreated to the Last Citadel, an inhospitable fortress on a high plateau above

the Moonwreck plains. Here The Barbarian King resided, as scholars argued about what went wrong and where the faith should go now. A new set of rituals emerged, centering around the worship of the moon and its phases, as opposed to the moon goddess herself. Questing clerics were sent out to gain a deeper understanding of The Gods and the wider world. And so that we do not forget, it is an article of our faith that we attempt the ascent of Bulan once in our lives and see the stained circle there.

12th Age: The Age of Traders

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

The struggle against the Vat-born and the failure of the 11th Legion led to unhappiness with the peasant leaders of the Empire, exacerbated by the loss of Proudfort in an attack by the Three. This was reflected in disquiet among the leaders themselves. They had become tired of the constant bickering with the legions and the merchants and several wished to return to the simpler ways of The Grand Master of Flowers. Many peasants left for Commandule while others joined a voluntary diaspora, leaving a power vacuum that was filled by the merchants of Glitterhaegen and the Legions. Bargaining, free trade and travelling once again became a major feature of the Empire. The legacy of the peasants of Commandule is still remembered, however, in the great stone grain silos that can be found in all corners of the Empire.

In this age The Crusader began his campaign against demons and the Hellholes they live in. There was some concern about his professed allegiance to the Dark Gods and the rituals that he forced his followers to undergo, but few could argue with his conquest of the hellhole that is now First Triumph. which had been threatening Axis.

Igrizh, Vat-born Historian:

The struggle against Aberrations descended into civil war, but with the help of The Priestess, the plague-ridden vats were finally cleansed, and the Aberrations were driven away. But we had also realised that we would have to change ourselves if the cycle of over-extension and extinction were not to repeat once more. So we rejected The Hooded Woman and created a treaty with the Empire against The Diabolist and her cult. A new icon arose, that we follow to this day - The Unborn.

Ketlen Firekin, Dwarf Tablet-carver:

And what had we dwarves been up to all this time? Helping the Empire, that's what, building and rebuilding the Sea Wall, fighting off orcs from the north and Aberrations from the west, and keeping the peace in the Underworld.

Then it all went to pieces. The Three raided Forge, causing enormous destruction and killing The Dwarf King. Even worse, many of our treasures went missing, though we think that The Prince of Shadows was responsible for that. Our call for help was answered by The Blue Sorceress, who captured the Black and the Red and killed the Blue, but it seems that she had a secret agenda, what with the heart-eating and the occupation of Drakkenhall. Did our so-called allies in the Dragon Empire help at all? No, they did not.



13th Age: The present day

Lazlo Carac, Chronicler of the Dragon Empire:

Today the Dragon Empire is as peaceful and prosperous as it has ever been. Demonic activity has been low thanks to The Crusader, and the alliance with our erstwhile enemies the Vat-born has led to them being accepted as citizens, albeit with some reluctance. Relations with the dwarves have been strained since the attack on Forge, particularly after the current Emperor, Benecisimus IV, sent diplomats to Drakkenhall and accepted The Blue Sorceress' claim to ownership of that city - some think that The Priestess may have too much influence over him. Our relations with the Court of Stars remain cordial. As always, Living Dungeons remain a concern, and sea monsters continue to sporadically attack the Sea Wall, but there have been no new threats from the Underworld, and the wards of The Archmage hold firm. Attacks by orcs have become more common after a new Orc Lord arose in the Frost Range, but we are confident that the Legions will be able to contain them. Perhaps this will be first age to end without a calamity?