

Ae'ar, City of a 1,000 Cults

Outline: This city lies on the east bank of the Nephen River. It is surrounded on the other three sides by the Quarn desert. The city is composed of hundreds of sandstone buildings, and is dominated by the royal palace, a broad compound that squats upon the only high point in the city.

It is ruled by the Wasani royal line, the current ruler being Prince Safan. They have ruled the city for over three hundred years at this point. They take a firm stance on not being religious, and their main duty is maintaining trade with the outside world, and keeping up the markets and docks. So long as they do that, and do not interfere with the constant squabbling of the cults, they are free to collect taxes and grow fabulously wealthy.

No metal weapons are allowed in the city, save in the market outside town. To be found in possession of one outside of that market is an instant death sentence. This was imposed by the Wasani's in the early days of their rule, to try to keep the death toll down. It hasn't really helped much.

There is a constantly fluctuating number of cults within the city, ranging from ones with just a dozen members, to large ones like that of Oleg Vo which has hundreds. There are also hundreds of prophets, madmen, and would be gods.

The real power in the city lies with the cults. The largest tend to take on roles in governing of the city.

The Fallen Cathedral

Across the river from Ae'ar are the shattered remains of a cathedral. A thousand years ago there was a holy crusade held against the original inhabitants of the region, worshippers of a truly dark god. The city was razed to the ground, and their god was cut down. Atop his corpse was

built a cathedral to celebrate the victory over evil, as well as to keep his lingering power entombed. Unfortunately an earthquake several hundred years ago broke a number of the wards, and a tunnel into the world below was revealed.

This is the source of the cults. Men gather in groups to brave the ever changing madness beneath the cathedral. Those who survive come back with either great wealth, or totally insane, driven mad by the terrors they have encountered. Some few, very few, however come back with the tiniest sliver of the dead god's power, making them minor powers of their own. In their wake a cult springs up.

A Selection of Cults:

The Cult of Oleg Vo, He Who Shall Devour the World. This cult, the fourth largest in Ae'ar has assumed the role of police force in the city. Their warpriests walk the streets keeping the peace as best they can. They often eat their victims, or at least a part. If ever given a chance to devour a god, they take it, no matter what.

The Cult of Fraed Nau, Hoarder of Secret Whisperings. This cult have become the bureaucrats for the city. They also run a library, and several book shops in the market, all in attempts to procure as much information as possible, especially secrets. Very little happens in the city without them knowing it.

The Cult of Bulg Har, Wallower of Filth. These folks keep the city clean, taking all manner of filth and waste to their temples which they give up in offering to their god.

Followers of the Tattered Man. Who they worship is unclear, though the leading theory is some sort of rag demon. They follow their prophet though, the Tattered Man, wandering the city at night gathering up scraps of rags and cloth with which they make their clothes. They also claim they do this so they can 'patch the holes in the sky,' whatever that means.