

Worldbook 1 - Vivine

General Information

The world of Vivine is a diverse place with many different cultures. The most striking aspect is that its formerly most advanced continent is steadily losing ground to the dark fey, a race of elven creatures that uses blood rituals to reproduce.

Major Sites

City of Vivine

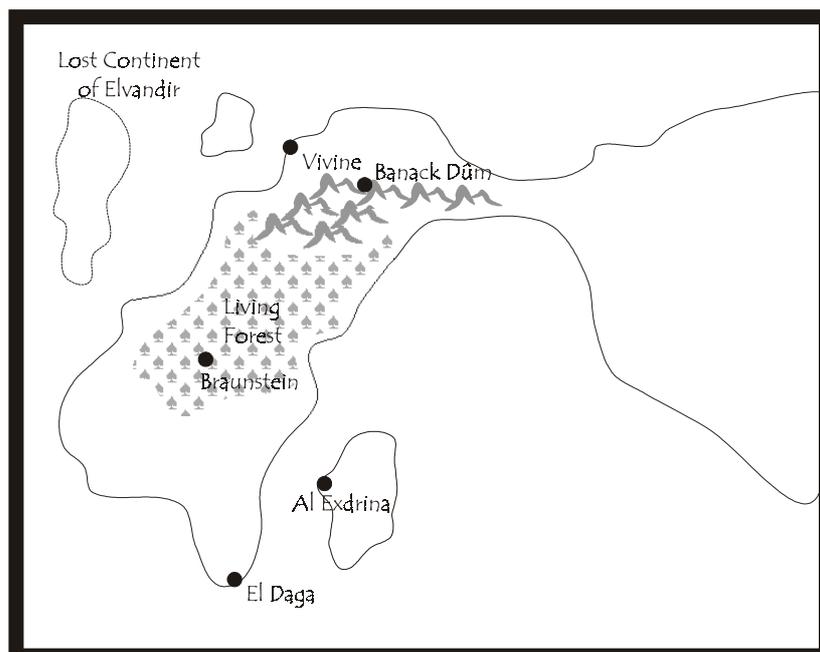


Called the "Jewel of the North", Vivine is a melting pot of humans, dwarves, halflings, and elves, that manages to

hold out against the overwhelming raids of the dark fey thanks to its powerful navy and its *landsknecht* armies.

Vivine is ruled by a decadent king whose large standing army and the loyalty of the noble houses ensure his continued rulership. However, the *real* power in the city is the Red Bishop, Cardinal Richard le Rouge, who uses his soldiers of the Ordo Militans and inquisitors of the Ordo Canis to control the lives of those within the city. Due to the disinterest of the king into other things than the war against the dark fey and his personal pleasure, the cardinal has taken over most aspects of the daily life of non-nobles not affiliated with the rulers.

One important aspect of this church rule is the banning of arcane magic. There was always a strong oppression against wizards but after the rise of the dark fey, this has turned into real witch hunts and only a select few are allowed to pursue the arcane arts under tight supervision and only on the island of the Académie. About 10% of Vivinians are nobles and 15% are military retainers of either the king or a noble house, recognisable by their gaudy uniforms.



The normal citizen of Vivine are evenly distributed between an educated middle class of merchants and craftsmen and a lower class of unskilled workers, hunters, and farmers.

A major problem and source of strife in the city is the fact that the king has sold his taxation rights to crafty merchants who are hated by the general populace. As a result, there are often riots and gangs are abundant in the worse quarters of town. The military is recruited largely from the middle class but gang members are often used as auxiliaries in the times of need.

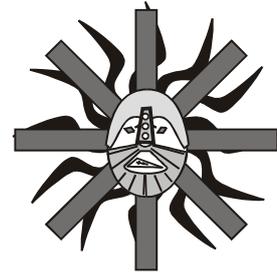
Humans dominate the city but the other races form a sizeable minority. About 10% of the inhabitants are dwarves - due to their shared religious beliefs and worship of Dieunne (under the name of Forgefather) they have been fully integrated into society and are most often craftsmen or soldiers. Elves (5%), refugees from the lost continent, are regarded with suspicion due to their religion (Amorax) and their close resemblance to the dark fey. They have to live in special ghettos, wear yellow goat-head shaped hats, and must not practice their faith in public. Those that convert to the "true church" become equal citizens, although the more conservative elements of society still look down upon them.

Halflings (3%) are mostly refugees from Braunstein and its environs. They have blended in perfectly, due to the services they provide in the culinary sector. Almost all halfling families run a restaurant.

Lost Dwarfhold of Banack Dûm

This dwarfhold was the last great city of the dwarves. It had to be abandoned when it came under attack by dark fey who crossed the mountains flying on

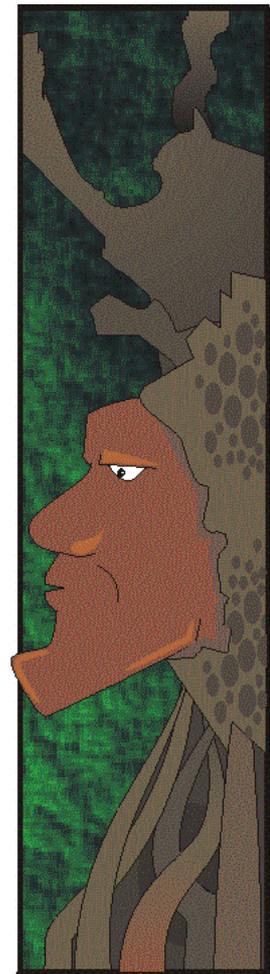
evil intelligent vultures. Many of its inhabitants now live in Vivine.



Living Forest

The living forest became known about 120 years ago. Apparently, its inception was about 200 years ago, when an evil druid, annoyed by the then king of Vivine, vowed to cause the downfall of the might Empire. She created an evil grove protected by *carnivorous trees*¹, *leeching willows*¹, and the odd *fiendish assassin vine* to protect it. In its middle she embedded the sapling of a *bitter tree*¹ with which she merged magically.

Over the years, the grove controlled more and more animals and fey creatures, slowly corrupting them and turning them into *dark fey*. The twisted servants protected and fed the forest, helping it to expand unseen by the civilizations surrounding the massive arboreal landscape. Today, the forest is home to many evil intelligent trees, dark



¹ Creature Collection II

fey, and their corrupted faerie allies. By the time rangers from Vivine noticed this dark place, it was already too late to eradicate it - especially due to the neglect of the arcane arts. First, Braunstein fell to the fey, then Banack Dûm. Only the vigilance of the royal regiments and the prayers of the clergy have kept the city of Vivine alive.

The dark fey are still under the control of the original bitter tree, even though many more have been planted in the meantime. They bring it sacrifice captured during raids. The dark fey forces include many fiendish elves, evil sprites, centaurs and other corrupted wood folk, as well as plant monsters and the odd evil outsider.

Fallen City of Braunstein

The former capital of the halfling empire was renown for its *savoir vivre*, its *cuisine*, and pacifist lifestyle. The halfling king Karl der Friedliche was an expert cook and flower arranger but a poor general and thus the halflings had to flee their beautiful city of stone and wood to live among the humans. Many died during the march through the living forest which had secretly engulfed them over a long time span.

Today Braunstein is hardly recognisable among the many trees now growing there, but ghosts and other restless dead make it a bad place to plunder.

Culture

The culture of Braunstein lives on with the halflings scattered over the continent. Its cornerstones are pacifism, rich food, and the joy of living. One other cornerstone of the halfling culture are the *clubs*, loose associations which share a common interest, be it smoking, politics, or history.

Clothing & Housing

Halflings like to live in tiny houses stuffed with all kinds of pictures,

statuettes, and other trinkets with the focus on craftsmanship rather than precious materials. Their clothing consists of *lederhosen* for the men and simple but beautiful dresses for the women. Halfling officials wear a sash with insignias no matter how unimportant their position.

Things of Note

Halflings are a fallen culture, yet they strife within the city of Vivine, paying lip service to Dieunne and living their simple lives unmolested by the big folk. A few of them, however, have chosen the life of an adventurer, usually with limited success.

Lost Continent of Elvandir

Elvandir was a colony of the Elves from the red moon which cut contact with the home to become a major power on the prime world. For centuries the flying ships of Elvandir ruled the world until Vivine rose to power and defeated the elves in a war 300 years ago. The dark fey are all descendants of elven soldiers stranded on the main continent.

Today Elvandir is occupied by the former slaves of the elves - goblins, orcs, and ogres. The few remaining elves fled to the red moon but were slaughtered upon their arrival as traitors. The cities of Elvandir are still operating as before but every year another enchantment fails due to poor maintenance and the goblinoid inhabitants are far from being a danger to anybody.

City of El Daga

El Daga is built upon the ruins of an ancient elven city which was destroyed in a mighty cataclysm. In fact, the elven city was far greater than El Daga is today and thus the forests and fields around the city still contain the occasional crumbled building. In the

centre of the city is a mighty castle that is said to be home to a five-headed dragon who originally taught magic to the humans.

El Daga is home to a unique culture of swashbuckling humans and lizardfolk that is dominated by powerful matriarchs. The noble caste all have at least a tiny amount of dragon blood and organise along hereditary colour schemes. The lizards are mostly found in the religious caste, worshipping the five-headed dragon. However, as this creature is not a real god, they are unable to use divine magic.

Like Vivine, the city is threatened by the Living Forest. However, there is still a rather big buffer zone of normal forest which is home to Prince Lendir and his elven war band who have been hired by the El Dagians and often get support from them in the form of magic or auxiliary troops.

Culture

El Daga is a city of rogues and swashbucklers, traders and con men. Unlike Vivine, there are few rules which interfere with the private life of people and therefore El Dagians are seen as an immoral lot by those living in Vivine. Personal freedom is very important although political freedom is almost as limited as in Vivine.

El Daga is an aristocracy ruled by a council of noble houses under the leadership of an elected Principal. Only women are allowed to be on the council, although there are sometimes exceptions for extraordinary men. Minimal magical ability is a must among nobles and most important figures have at least basic magical training.

At an equal level (of respect rather than official influence) as the aristocrats exist the priests of the five-headed dragon, mostly lizardfolk sorcerers. The priesthood is one of the few fields where men can rise to higher positions easily.

The priests mingle freely with the populace and their temples are open to all. However, they usually speak Draconic amongst themselves to enjoy at least some privacy. As the dragon (if it even exists) is no real god, it cannot provide divine magic to its followers. In fact divine magic is seen as weak, only good for patching up the wounded. This is the domain of the priests of Amora, who enjoy the status of merchants or crafters rather than that of holy (wo)men.

The rest of El Dagians belong to the class of the common people. There are no real castes here but power is highly correlated to wealth.

The people of El Daga love to hear tall tales and outrageous lies as a form of entertainment. They also enjoy loud rhythmic music and good drink.

Clothing & Housing

Generally speaking the fashion is similar to that of Vivine with a few subtle differences. First of all, nobles tend to dress predominately in the colour of their house (which is based on the colour of their draconic ancestor). Also, white masks are very popular among nobles when outside of their palaces.

Commoner males tend to dress in somewhat tight clothing to attract the favour of powerful females.

Architecture in El Daga is a bit more conservative than in Vivine which seems surprising. Houses have only abstract ornaments in simple patterns and are rather smooth and organically shaped otherwise. Only the ancient castle has a sinister and gothic look to it.

Things of Note

About 20 years ago a new threat has arisen in the form of Gurgan and his beholderkin. These bizarre creatures are apparently mining strange substances around the city from the ancient ruins of the Elven city. Apparently, they came from some otherworldly gate and

currently Prince Lendir and his men are fighting hard to keep that force in check. The El Dagians have meanwhile taken over the task of keeping the Dark Fey at bay.

City of Al Exdrina

Once a bustling city of traders, it has become more and more militaristic after the Imams of Jann'ih took over. Their goal is to eradicate the dark fey living in the forest beyond the protective desert belt. Many of the natives have genie blood and the current sultan (the highest authority for *internal* matters) is master of the djinn.

Nouvelle Pays

Vivine has a few colonies in the lush jungles of the new world. These provide the motherland with raw materials and food which are difficult to obtain within the living forest. Due to the fact that the dark fey have practically no ships, the trade routes are largely safe.

Red Moon

Visible in the sky day and night, the red moon is home to a decaying elven race. Their once-mighty canals, now often filled with red sands, are still visible with the bare eye to careful onlookers.