



## *Advanced introduction to the universe*

Here is some more advanced material to take another peek in the world of Kerminwoks. This part is far more technical but it contains elements of information which are necessary to play, from life forms and their classification, to magic, to civilizations, to specific laws of nature regarding certain Elements. You even have a spelling guide at the end to know how to pronounce the different names correctly. By the way, the syllables which are underscored the first time a word shows up in the following indicates which ones are stressed. When nothing is underscored, it means there's no identified stress.

The players don't need to know all that follows when they start playing, but it will greatly help them to have this document by their side during the game, to make sense of several pieces of information, like "this person is an Élénéyon", or "this Somatil is not a Malaki but a Safaïdar". Same goes with countries and the description of the main civilizations which can be very useful. This is consequently a document to which you get back regularly during the game to refresh your memories about various aspects. This preview is somewhat like a handbook for the Performer Players (those who role play a character), as it contains no spoilers. But it's also useful for the Narrator Players (who run the game), since it gathers many elements of information which are scattered over dozens of pages in the Universe book.

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*Kerminwoks* is the name of the world. It refers at the same time to the only continent at the center of this world and to everything that surrounds this continent, basically the seas and the skies. Kerminwoks is a flat world, although contained within a sphere cut in two equal halves by this flat plane. The skies are naturally located in the upper hemisphere while the lower one is made of a blend of earth, water and fire. More will be said about the structure of this world near the end of this introduction.

By contrast, *Kerminwoks Délos Nérédar*, usually abbreviated as KDN, refers to the game and means in Amkadun "the world seen

through the eyes of the Nérédar", since the Nérédar are the type of characters played by the Performer Players, and this is obviously through the eyes of their characters that the Performers will see this world.

### **A world of Spirits**

The cosmology of Kerminwoks is based on an animistic premise, which means that in this world Spirits are at the root of everything, and any natural phenomenon until life itself is the result of Spirits and of their interactions (by the way, *Spirit* will always be capitalized to avoid any confusion with the other meanings of the word. Same goes with its adjectival form). The world of matter is not distinct from that of Spirits and is impregnated with the latter. In other words, there are no atoms, no molecules nor any magnetic spectrum. Phenomena like gravity do exist, but as a result of the workings of Spirits. The laws of physics don't apply in this universe. This is the definition of an animistic world.

Careful though, as when Spirits are mentioned, most people think of ethereal entities, distinct from the physical world, like ghosts, floating specters, even projections of nature like elves or faeries. This is not the animism nor the Spirits of Kerminwoks. In this world, Spirits are not distinct from matter, they live within it, sometimes they're completely anchored or alienated to it, and these Spirits are precisely what makes the physical world what it is.

Spirits don't float around and you can't chat with them! Mortals are one sort of Spirits among many others, but Spirits of different kinds cannot directly communicate with each other. The world is made of different Spiritual realms and they don't all have the same languages. Shamans are people who can cross over these realms and manage to communicate mind to mind with Spirits of another kind than their own. Other forms of communication are also possible, like Elemental Connections, as you'll see later in this presentation.

## The Mokaïr

Different Spirits thus belong to different orders in line with their Spiritual properties. And those properties directly pertain to their **Mokaïr** (or *Mokayir*, both spellings equate the same pronunciation here). This is the energy at the root of a Spirit, it's life force. What Spirits can do results from the combustion of their Mokaïr and from its properties. It's the Mokaïr of a Spirit which will determine if its material incarnation is hard or soft, solid or liquid, transparent or shiny, smooth, soft, noisy, or any other property you can think of.

This makes the idea of Spirit unthinkable without the corollary notion of Mokaïr, and conversely. The Mokaïr is figuratively speaking the hardware of a Spirit, the heart of its resources. It defines what this Spirit can do and how long it can live, since the resources of any Mokaïr are not static, and the latter can grow or decline in power, to the point the Spirit dies. This is the particularity of Mortal Spirits. Their Mokaïr will fade totally at some point, killing their Spirit in the process, and down the line, their physical incarnation.

How a Mokaïr evolves depends on the different kinds of Spirits, since they're not all equal on the Mokayiric front, quite the contrary. But this topic won't be addressed in this quick introduction.

## The 10 Elements

The world of Kerminwoks is divided into ten Elements. In lack of atoms or molecules, these ten Elements constitute the bricks from which any part of the world is made (apart from some exceptions, not discussed here). Any matter or object can consequently be classified within each of these ten Elements or as a compound of several of them.

Since Kerminwoks is an animistic universe, each Element is incarnated by Spirits, which are simply called *Elementals*. These Spirits make the different Elements what they are. Each Element therefore has its own Elementals, endowing it with its own physical properties.

Elementals (and thence Elements themselves) first of all split into two main families: *Abiding* and *Kinetic* Elements. There are five Elements in each family. Abiding Elements are so called because they all exist at all times and don't relocate (although they can move), unless displaced by an exterior intervention. By contrast, Kinetic Elements are in constant motion and don't abide in one place. They're produced by something else (usually an Abiding Element or a combination of them) and after a time, they necessarily vanish.

The Elements found in each of the two families are listed below, under the name of their Elemental Spirits. The stressed syllable is underscored for non-English words.

### Abiding Elements

**Gnomes:** stone, metals, gemstones, sand

**Sylvans:** vegetal life, earth, grains, sugar

**Undines:** water, seas, rain, salt

**Sylphs:** the air, clouds

**Somatils:** bodies are also an Element in this universe, thence Somatils stand as one of the five Abiding Elements of the world. Any material from which bodies are likely to be made therefore belongs to the Somatil Element (e.g. flesh, bone, keratin, shell, or materials specific to this world).

### Kinetic Elements

**Lusidils:** light and colors

**Liryads:** sounds

**Ométiklis:** all flavors, odors and tastes

**Pilfirax:** lightning

## **Salamanders:** fire

Note: except for Ométiklis, the final /s/ is the plural marker. Pilfirax is both the singular and plural form.

Elementals make Elements what they are. Therefore, Gnomes make the stone strong, hard, coarse and heavy. But all stones are not the same. Besides, Gnomes also incarnate metals or sand. All Gnome Spirits are consequently not identical and each Elemental realm divides into sub-orders of Elementals with their own Mokayiric stem and therefore, their own Spiritual and physical properties. This is what makes the difference between different timbers, sounds, lights or minerals for instance. Once more, it's all about the Mokaïr of Spirits.

## Somatils

Let's focus on Somatils, since this is what you will role play. As you've seen above, the term *Somatil* simply defines any living being with a body. On top of that, Somatils have the particularity of being mortal, which means their Mokaïr will necessarily wane and entail their death at one time or another, even if it's after several centuries of life.

The overall population of Somatils divides into *Varamas* which in turn divide into *Talamés*. These two key concepts are important to remember, as everything else stems from it.

All the Somatils of the same Varama show more Mokayiric similitude and compatibilities with one another than with individuals of other Varamas. At the level of the Talamé, this Mokayiric proximity between individuals is simply stronger. The Varama for instance defines whether Somatils can make use of magic or not. For those who can, their Talamé inside this Varama specifies things one step further and defines the sort of magic they can use.

Same goes with the issue of how long they can live. A Varama can give hints as to the scale of the Somatils' lifespan, while their Talamé is more specific on the subject and clearly defines averages and limits (like for instance degenerating after the age of 80 but likely to live on until 120).

Most Talamés further divide into Sub-Talamés. The differences between two individuals are even more subtle at this level and not always perceivable. You'll see practical examples of it later on when some Talamés are described.

The diagram in page 3 summarizes in one picture the overall classification of Somatils into Varamas and Talamés, which will help you a great deal figuring out this whole division thing and see practical examples of Varamas and Talamés with their names.

This nomenclature is however incomplete in this short presentation. Besides, scholars also resort to other nomenclatures, and some classifications can conflict with one another. The segmentation of Somatils is thus a sophisticated subject-matter. That's why for the moment you only have a portion of what is referred to as the *Fèntalès nomenclature* among scholars.

It's probably a good time to say there are no humans or animals in this world, or at least nothing called as such. What you would be inclined to call human or animal would only be the result of your own perception. Kerminwoks relies on a different taxonomy of the living because everything is different here, and classifications taken from our reality would confuse more than help in describing this world. What you deem to be equated with human or animal is solely your own call. What you have here are Somatils.

## The Varamas

Here is a short rundown of the Varamas shown in this diagram. Again, stressed syllables are underscored (the stress is not always

placed on the same syllable by all Amkadun speakers as you can see. The first mention is the most common).

#### ♦ **Safaïdar (or Safaïdar)**

The Safaïdar Varama is very broad and is the one which embraces the highest number of Talamés.

A Safaïdar is simply a Somatil without hands and with no ability for magic. This is somewhat the default category of the Fëntalès nomenclature and the reason why other nomenclatures do not resort to this Varama, regrouping the different Talamés found under it into several Varamas instead.

#### ♦ **Malaki (or Malaki)**

The Malaki are simply humanoids or at least, Somatils with hands (by contrast with the Safaïdar) and no ability for magic.

#### ♦ **Amayir (or Amayir)**

This Varama is covered more in-depths in the rest of this presentation and corresponds to humanoids with magical abilities.

The twelve Talamés shown in this chart are the only ones found under this Varama. Contrary to the other ones, the Talamic list is here exhaustive.

#### ♦ **Nérédar**

This Varama is the only one not to distinguish into Talamés, for the Nérédar simply result from the blending of several Amayiric Talamés. All Amayiric Talamés can crossbreed with each other. When they do so, their Mokayiric stems get mixed up and after several generations of mixing, individuals of an altogether new Varama with its own Mokayiric properties comes to life: a Nérédar.

The Nérédar blend the different physical and magical features of their Amayiric ancestors, but they have a stronger Mokaïr and have access to a wider range of magical abilities. Furthermore, their physiology is stronger. They therefore live longer and heal better.

Since the Nérédar are sterile, they don't divide into anything else.

As the name of the game suggests, this is what the Performer Players will role play, but since the Nérédar are rare and they evolve in a mostly Amayiric environment, the Amayir will be given a particular attention.

## **Magic, Elemental Connections and trances**

As you have just seen, Varamas and Talamés determine the access Somatils have to magic. But it's now time to define magic more precisely, and along with it, some other faculties of Mortal Spirits: Elemental Connections and trances. These three faculties are quite different, but their effects can sometimes overlap, this is why the three of them are introduced comparatively here, it makes them easier to understand.

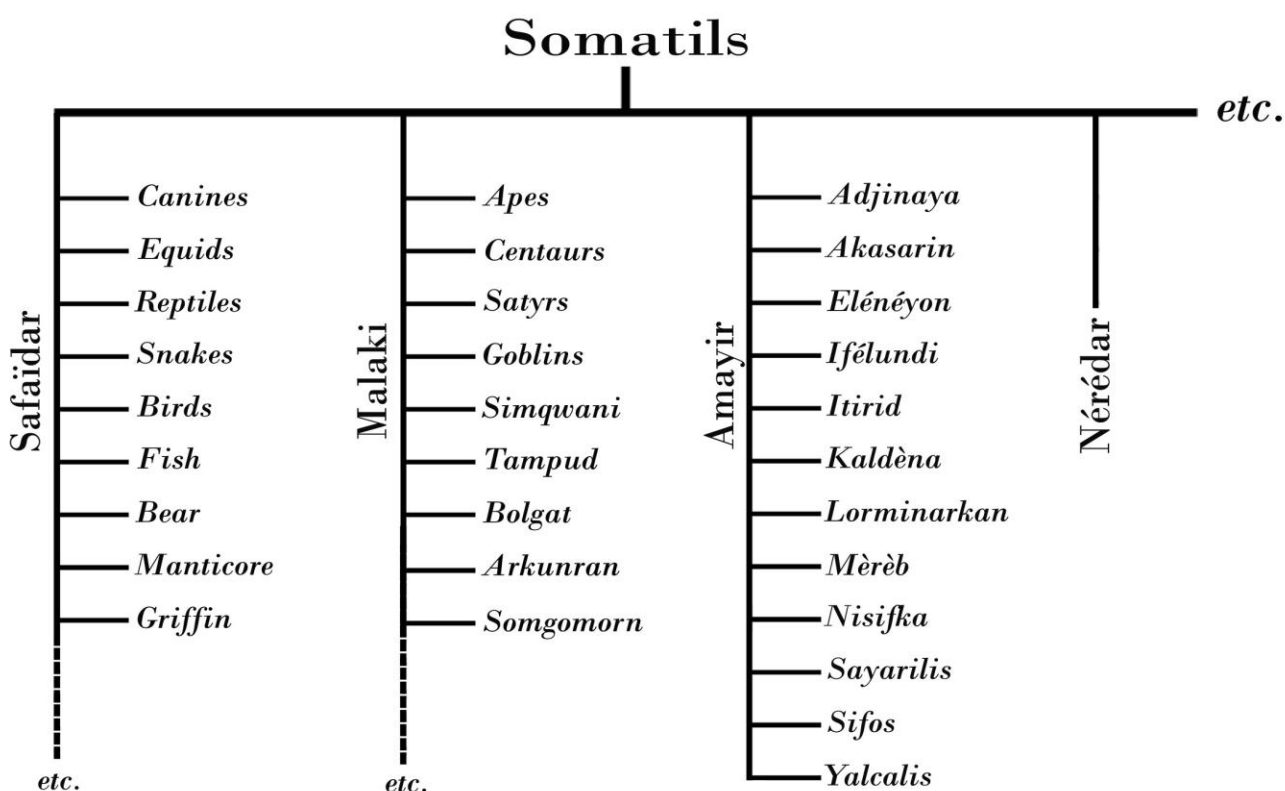
### *Magic*

Magic is a restricted ability among Spirits. Mortals seem the only ones able to use it, and among them, not all Varamas have access to it as you have seen above regarding their classification. You need what's called an active Mokaïr to wield magic.

That's the case for the Amayir and the Nérédar, but not to the same extent. The Nérédar have more possibilities in the realm of magic than the vast majority of the Amayir or than most other Varamas for that matter (although some could be considered as more powerful, even if the comparison is not always that easy). Only some gifted Amayir can match a Nérédar magic-wise, and such people are rare.

Let's however take some time to more precisely define what magic means. Because, in a world where the laws of nature are totally distinct from what we know and obey to different mechanisms, you can't simply go by saying that magic is what bends the laws of nature!

In fact, it doesn't. Magic is here a law of nature in its own right, although it mostly consists in changing the way things normally work, and thence to alter the laws of nature as they're briefly described in the rest of this presentation. But this result is



achieved by understanding how the natural mechanisms of Kerminwoks operate. From there, magic proceeds from the deconstruction of these mechanisms so as to make them work otherwise. It's basically what you do in applied physics in our world, or in genetics. You can change the ordinary functioning of a natural thing or trigger something that wouldn't occur naturally, but you can accomplish this only through the laws of nature themselves. The effects of magic are however mostly temporary by comparison with applied physics, even though the effects of a temporary modification can have very lasting consequences on something else.

All in all, magic is therefore not supernatural, but indeed very natural.

In short, the definition of magic is the ability for a Spirit to act upon the Elements or upon their Mokaïr, without resorting to its own Element. For Somatils, it therefore means affecting or modifying things without using their body. This Spiritual action upon the world must however be achieved through one of the four states of magic to qualify as such.

Magic as a matter of fact divides into four states, in the fashion of the three states of matter in physics. These four states are Physical, Frozen, Transitive and Primal. Apart from the Physical which refers to alchemy and is thus a little different than the others, the three other states correspond to increasing steps of difficulty and potentiality in the nature of magic.

Let's basically say that the two main properties of a state of magic are complexity and power, the two being proportionally related. Not surprisingly, when something is powerful, it's difficult! Magic can potentially be very powerful in this world. It's somewhat like the nuclear power in our universe. When going down to the level of the atom, you handle energies far beyond the scope of any other source of energy. Magic does the same here, and could even be said to be more effective at destroying than at creating, making it all the more dangerous, and consequently socially regulated in all cultures. Besides, as it gains in power, magic becomes proportionally technical to the point of losing in practicality by involving risks outweighing the benefits.

Magic is consequently a dangerous force, and in many instances, resorting to material means is far more reliable, safe and effective than casting a spell. In situations where real-time responses are required for instance, magic only has a limited applicability, since the more effective, the more preparation it requires to be conducted safely. You can always rush a magic maneuver when you're short of time, but you proportionally increase the risk of an accident.

Now, let's see what these four states of magic are all about. Note that a spell can theoretically combine elements from several magic states.

#### ◆ Frozen state

The most accessible use of magic is in the Frozen state. Magic here consists in readymade powers akin to what you typically find among the spell lists of most RPGs.

Such powers of the Frozen state are called *Innate Charms* (for they are innate and depend on the Talamé of one) and have a predefined functionality. For example, the equivalent of the berserk rage in other worlds is here the Charm of an Amayiric Talamé. All the people of that Talamé are born with this dormant power and therefore have access to it, even though it doesn't come to them naturally: they have to practice to reveal this power. Somatils from other Talamés do not have access to this Charm on the contrary, although they can try to emulate it in other states of magic (as explained below).

Some parameters of the Charms are adaptable, but overall, Charms are meant for a certain application, as is the case of a

given spell in a standard list. It does a certain thing and that's it, you can't change it or adapt it to your needs in practice. If this state of magic is called "frozen" that's because Charms were frozen in a given form after centuries of development and can no longer be modified. In other words, no creativity is possible and the functionality, scope or efficiency of a given Charm are only slightly adaptable. This is also why Charms are Talamé-related: they are an inheritance.

Even though the number of Charms and possibilities is strongly limited in this state, these Charms nonetheless address practical situations, since they've been designed by the different Talamés throughout history in order to become an inherent part of themselves and better deal with their environment (either physical or social). The Frozen state thus compensates its lack of openness and variety with Charms of a high level of practical usefulness and readiness. Besides, it offers a greater reliability than the other magical states (except the Physical). Accidents are rare and always limited in their intensity here. The Frozen state corresponds to one of the safest and easiest use of magic, but also to one of the least variable and adaptable.

Note that like the spells of the other states, the Innate Charms are only temporary, but their duration is usually longer than the average spell (it spans from a few minutes to a few hours depending on the Charm).

#### ◆ Transitive state

The Transitive state is much more advanced in possibilities compared to the previous one, but it's also the first state to require an actual work from spell casters. This time, no spell is inherited as part of a Talamé nor found in nature: they all have to be created by the magician thanks to what are called the *minor scales* of magic. You have six minor scales for each order of Elements: i.e. Abiding or Kinetic. There are consequently six Abiding Scales and six Kinetic Scales to learn. Each scale controls some parameters of the Elements, like their size, weight, solidity, heat, intensity (for sounds, lights or smells), etc.

Since bodies stand as an Element too, this is also how you can affect a Somatil's body, like their strength, suppleness or toughness for instance. In this regard, this is how you can try to emulate a berserk rage even though you don't have the Innate Charm.

When you know all of the twelve minor scales, you have access to the full potential of the Transitive state (which doesn't mean a full control over the Elements, the next state is necessary for that).

Casting a spell in this state is thus like pushing the buttons of nature to obtain a certain result. If you push them wrong, you naturally get the wrong result.

This state of magic requires far more work and practice than the Frozen one, but it offers a lot more possibilities in exchange. By the same token, failures are more consequential. You'd better know what you do when playing with magic scales. The knowledge of minor scales is indeed what draws the line between someone who resorts to their Innate Charm from time to time and an actual magician.

#### ◆ Primal state

This is the most advanced state of magic and therefore, the most dangerous. This state is only accessible to those who already master all the minor scales of the Transitive state. In the Primal state they now must learn the seven *major scales* of magic. These scales do not pertain to Elements any longer. Each major scale can affect all Elements, since the Primal state doesn't only affect matter but can also reach the Mokaïr of Spirits.

The boundary between Elements can be bridged in this state, and you can thus turn water into fire or mess up with forces like gravity. This is by far the most powerful and dangerous state of magic

Not all scales are however accessible to the Amayir. Only a handful of them has a powerful enough Mokaïr to be able to play the seven major scales. This is one of the advantage of the Nérédar over the Amayir as far as magic goes, since they have an unrestricted access to the Primal state thanks to their Mokaïr. But they still need years of practice in magic to get there, since nothing's free, and they have to learn the scales one by one, just like any other Somatil who can access this state.

The Primal state of magic is not surprisingly the riskier too, since the difficulty to play a major scale makes it easy to botch a spell when you're not powerful enough. This is for seasoned professionals only!

#### ◆ **Physical state: alchemy**

The Physical state of magic corresponds to a different sort of magic since it doesn't involve the casting of spells. This state is called *physical* for it deals with the embedding of spells into artifacts. That's the very definition of alchemy in this world.

Alchemy is aimed at creating materials which do not exist naturally (in the fashion of plastic in our world for instance) and which Mokaïr is active: that's how it can store "spells".

An alchemic item can physically assume all shapes and qualities. It can be hard, soft or even liquid. There's no way to tell an alchemic item from a regular one just by the look of it. Items which material is uncommon and cannot be guessed at can however be more easily identified with alchemy.

In practice, alchemic items can also assume a wide array of functionalities. One of them is for instance to produce any Kinetic Element. Light and fire are among the favorite as they turn out to be frequently needed. Alchemy can also make an object very hard, or light, or even flexible. One object can even stack all three properties, but that's far more complex to achieve.

The chief advantage of alchemy regarding other states of magic is of course that it requires no specific skills from the user.

The other advantage is that alchemy is free from any collateral damage. Failures are impossible and there's no risk of backfire if the artifact has been devised correctly. Any defect is detected at first use anyway.

The main drawback of alchemy is however its cost. This is a sophisticated knowledge which requires very skilled people to be put to practice and most "spells" require costly ingredients in the making of the object. Besides, alchemy is time-consuming, from several weeks to several years to devise one item.

For all these reasons, alchemy is usually a collective enterprise and is more commonly the result of communities which can muster the knowledge, money and manpower for the task. Those communities are either groups of specialized scholars or governmental entities.

The functions of alchemic devices are very diverse and in the purpose of catering to the needs of those who devised them: they can serve military purposes as well as logistical means (like water transportation), entertainment, craftsmanship, etc.

As a result of these various possibilities, alchemy serves a very practical function in several cultures, and is a natural part of a civilization's technology, along with the wheel or the printing press for instance.

### **Elemental Connection**

Mortals can nurture a Spiritual link with other Elementals, possibly with all of them. This particular link is called a *Connection* (capital C). There is one Connection per Elemental order, and consequently nine different Connections.

When a Mortal has a Connection to an Element, they're Connected to all the Spirits of this Element. This Connection is space-sensitive, which means it only works within certain limits of distance. There are no definite standards on the matter, and the stronger the Connection, the further away it works. But to give a ball park, a Connection can link Elementals to a Somatil in a hundred meter radius. But it's just a rough estimation. The smaller the Element, the closer you need to get to it to "feel" it, and the bigger, the easier it is for the Connection to kick in. Differently put, it's easier to sense a mountain or even a wall when you're Connected to Gnomes, than a mere rock. This is also why someone Connected to Sylphs can feel the weather change some hours or days ahead (because the sky is immense), but is unable to perceive the position or even presence of any individual clouds from the ground.

When a Mortal and an Element are Connected, they share feelings, emotions, and they're aware of each other's presence. Mortals can this way know if the Element is hurt, or disturbed, or on the contrary in good health and content. Because, as Spirits, Elementals have feelings, or at least moods. And these moods largely result from what they experience. If you crush a rock, the rock won't be happy about it. When you're Connected to Gnomes, you therefore feel that the rock is not happy and has been crushed. This may even be a disturbance for the Mortal.

But the purpose of Connections is to benefit from the support of Elementals. The level of support Mortals can get from a given Connection obviously depends on how strong is this Connection, but the general idea is that the Element tries to interact with the Mortal so as to serve them. For instance, a Connection to Sylphs can make the air blow around the Somatil in order for instance to deviate a blow, to soften a fall or to boost a missile propelled by this Somatil. When Connected to Salamanders, flames will move around so as to avoid burning the Mortal, to the point this Somatil can walk through flames when the Connection is strong. When Connected to Sylvans, you can feel a forest around you, as if your own nerves were in a certain way connected to it: you understand the forest, can more easily find you way into it, etc.

Compared to magic (which also affects the Elements), a Connection asks almost no effort and cannot backfire in any way. It's far easier and safer to use than any magic. Its scope of action is way more limited though, and the well being of the supporting Elementals enters into account, since they'll never act in a way that would harm them.

Besides, if the Mortal decide to harm the Element to which they're Connected by themselves, the Elementals will consider it as an aggression. Cutting down trees is never a good idea when you're Connected to Sylvans! Magic can on the contrary be used to destroy, as for breaking a rock for instance.

The control the Mortal exerts on the Elements is also very different in magic and in Connections. In a Connection, there's almost no control, since the support is the decision of the Elementals alone. The Somatil still retains the control of what they do with this support, but to a certain limit. Beyond a certain level of Connection, the Elementals need to take control over some of the Mortal's movements. A very high Connection with Sylphs allows to make giant leaps or jumps, possibly to stay in the air as if flying for a few seconds. But the Mortal cannot exactly decide the direction they're going to in this case, since the Sylphs need to be more proactive to achieve this level of support.

In magic, this is the Mortal who's fully in charge since magic proceeds from control. Magic violates the sanctity of Elemental Spirits to sway their material incarnation and act upon it. There is no consent or support here. This opens plenty of possibilities to the magician (since they don't have to worry about the integrity of the Element anymore and can make all the calls as to what

happens exactly), but it also involves more technicality and proficiency, as they have to handle every aspect of the maneuver from beginning to end. And things can get out of hand pretty quickly in complex maneuvers.

To make it short, a Connection is auto-pilot: you don't have anything to do, it can even operate when you're unconscious. Besides, it's perfectly safe and since it's auto-pilot, Connections are perfectly fit when a real-time response is needed, since the perception of Elementals is on a Spiritual level and thence, very fast. Finally, Connections are easier to develop than magic skills. But the range of possibilities is more restricted and the Element cannot harm itself.

By comparison, magic is hands-on control, and you can decide every parameter. The possibilities are more open, but at the cost of a high expertise, and any mistake is paid in full. Besides, as briefly stated previously, not everything is legal in magic, as this force is tremendously powerful. This is not to be overlooked as it will become an actual concern once you're in the field. Those who cross the line will be considered as extremely dangerous, and an entire nation can turn against them out of fear. Long story short, magic can do a lot, but it implies caution, on all fronts.

## **Trance**

Connections only have an effect on the material level since they deal with Elementals. Magic can access the Mokaïr beyond the material incarnation of a Spirit, but mostly in the Primal state and therefore, at the cost of a high expertise and a good deal of risk as well. This is in the Frozen state that magic reaches the most easily Spirits, but once again, the Frozen state is quite rigid. There's only a short list of Charms and either your Mokaïr has access to the right Charm or it doesn't. Magic is consequently not the best option to target Spirits.

This is on the contrary the specialty of shamanic trances. They directly aim for Spirits, without bothering about any material obstacle or distance. Trances do not meddle with Elemental Spirits this time, since you can achieve this with a mere Connection while a trance is way more complicated. Trances aim for other types of Spirits, among which Mortal ones. The other kinds of Spirits a trance can reach out to won't however be mentioned in this short introduction.

Just like magic, trances are a complex technique which involves a certain level of danger, and reaching another Spirit with a trance is a double-edged sword, since the Spiritual connection which is thusly achieved is a two-way street, and if the shaman can reach out to this other Spirit, it means this very Spirit can get back at the shaman's own mind. From there, the strongest wins.

Like magic, trances therefore require that shamans know what they do or it might seriously go south! Shamanism is like magic a field of expertise which requires years of practice and can't be performed by anyone.

Trances are not as Mokaïr-sensitive as magic is however, and Somatils with a passive Mokaïr can consequently conduct a trance too. The hazard of trances is nonetheless greater in this case. As a rule of thumb, the greater the Mokaïr of the shaman, the safer the trance.

## **Recap**

So, to conclude this rapid comparison between those three Spiritual capabilities, let's first say that Elemental Connections are the most accessible and by far the most widespread ability among Somatils, since they don't require any Mokayiric predispositions. You find them across all Varamas and Talamés. It's very mundane for any Somatil living in the wild to have a Connection to Sylvans or Gnomes (or both). Any aquatic Somatil has a Connection to Undines as well.

Magic and shamanism are far more advanced, but they're not necessarily more convenient. First of all, shamanism doesn't affect matter, while Connections do. Magic is very efficient in the material realm, but it requires a certain amount of skill, especially if you need to be fast. When speed is the key, Connections always best magic. Magic is however far more suited when it comes down to breaking things or to modify them significantly (like twisting an object, strongly modifying the shape of something).

When it comes to affecting Spirits however, you begin to enter shamanism territory. Although magic can affect Spirits or their Mokaïr, trances enjoy a strong head start in this department, because that's what they were designed for.

Magic and shamanism also have that in common that they can be dangerous and exact a backlash on the performer if they're not at the top of their game. In magic as in shamanism, you should never bite more than you can chew.

There's no such problems with Elemental Connections. But since they work in auto-pilot, you can't always get what you want. The Elementals decide, not you. A typical request that can't be satisfied with a Connection is for example to provide help to a friend. If a Somatil Connected to Undines is in water near a friend who's drowning and the Somatil in question asks the Undines to help their buddy, that won't work, for once, because in the lack of Connection with this other Somatil, Undines can't really locate them, but even if they could, they would probably not care enough to do it. So, Connections are easy and fast, and they can even achieve things that are almost impossible with magic (let alone with a trance), but they only act within a restricted field of action.

## **Introduction to some Varamas & Talamés**

### ***The 12 Amayiric Talamés***

The Amayir are Somatils of a humanoid shape (two legs, two arms, opposable thumbs) and who can make use of magic.

As you can see in the Fëntalès tree, the Amayir are made of twelve Talamés. Each Talamé has its own morphology and physiology, and beyond their common humanoid pattern, some of these Talamés distinguish from others by an array of physical traits, like tails, hooves, horns, different colors or different sizes. Their physical capabilities are also diverse. Some Talamés are much stronger or resilient to injuries than others who show greater skills in swiftness for instance. Some are more resistant to certain temperatures and altitudes. Others have a longer lifespan, a better healing factor or greater senses. The respective needs in food and sleep of the twelve Talamés are similarly unequal, just like their magical abilities.

Here follows a description of the twelve Talamés, since this Varama is the one which will the most populate your stories.

The Innate Charms of each Talamé are briefly mentioned in these descriptions, since what a Somatil can do in the Frozen state of magic is solely defined by their Talamé.

Even though the following names do not necessarily bear a stress accent in their own language, some syllables are still underscored to indicate how they should be stressed in English so as to articulate them as closely as possible to their original pronunciation. When nothing is underscored, it either means that all syllables should be equal or that the stress moves with the different accents and you can stress which syllable you like.

### ♦ Adjinaya

This Talamé ranges from 1.6 to 1.75 m in height, with an average build and quite smooth bodies.

Most Adjinaya have a tan skin, but about ten percent of them display a much paler skin tone, basically like that of a human redhead, but without any freckles.

The facial features of the Adjinaya are close to what would be referred to as an Asian pattern in the real world, save for their pointy ears. Adjinaya eyes can be black, red or yellow and their iris becomes larger when they make use of magic. The gaze of this Talamé is furthermore quite intense.

They only have two hair colors: black as jet or platinum, without any in-between (or any correlation to their skin tone). The beard of males is soft and never grows long. Neither gender has hair on their body, except on the pubis.

Additionally, this Talamé has three genders: male, female and a third gender consisting of females with a retractable penis tucked inside their uterus. They stand as a gender of their own since they can use both genitals during an intercourse although both are sterile. This gender is the rarest of the three (around five percent of the Talamé population). Apart from its genitalia, this gender is absolutely identical to females.

The Adjinaya have good senses overall, with an ability to see heat, although they have to train to make this sight efficient. They also enjoy a good healing factor and endure very well the different climates, while

their physical needs in fuel and sleep are average regarding the other Amayir.

The Adjinaya furthermore have a powerful aura, and their Innate Charm is precisely about making them irresistibly attractive or on the contrary very scary. The extent to which they can push this power is of course dependent on their own mastery of magic.

The Adjinaya Mokaïr burns normally until 60 years of age. Beyond that point, the Adjinaya physically decline progressively. They rarely live beyond 90.

### ♦ Akasarin

The most identifiable feature of this Talamé is that the Akasarin have a blue skin. Besides, they have hooves instead of feet and their ankles stand much higher than those hooves, close to the knee, in the manner of a quadruped's hind limbs.

The Akasarin are tall, with an average height of 1.9 m. Their stature is quite stout and rough, as if they had been cut out of stone without any real care for harmony. Muscles are visible but not bulgy, and their strength doesn't necessarily equate their muscle mass as the Akasarin are physically quite rigid. They develop more strength in immobility than in motion. Bones are strong and heavy. The overall weight of an individual is therefore quite important in relation to their height and build.

Except for heavy breasts and a higher pelvis, there's by the way not much difference of anatomy between females and males.

The Akasarin hair is either jet black or white and their eyes are either black, brown or silver-grey. Their facial features tend to give them a stern face. Males can grow a long beard and they display hair on their torso, arms and legs. Females don't display any hair on their

face or on their body, except on their legs from the knee down (like males).

The Akasarin have a keen night vision, the best among the Amayir with the Nisifka. They can additionally develop a heat vision with a lot of training. Their other senses are on the contrary not so good.

The Akasarin are quite resistant to hot temperatures but they're particularly resistant to cold. In fact, they don't really feel it. The temperature has to be below -50° C to affect them. Finally, their physical needs are the lowest of all the Amayir (along with the Élénéyon). They therefore survive better than other Talamés with few food and water.

Even though they're sturdy, the Akasarin heal slowly. They can thus undertake a lot, but they don't regenerate quickly.

The Innate Charm of this Talamé is some sort of mind-shield. It doesn't protect them against magical attacks but works well for emotions (like fear for instance) or against shamanic intrusions, as well as against some mental tricks. The Akasarin can gain a state of total self-control this way. The Charm doesn't reduce physical pain but can nevertheless offset some of its mental effects.

The Akasarin easily get past the century and can even reach 200 years old, which is the longest lifespan possible for any Amayir. Besides, they don't decline much physically with age, except after 150. On the opposite their puberty starts in their late teens and spreads over most of their twenties.

### ♦ Élénéyon

The Élénéyon are tall, ranging between 1.8 and 1.9 m while some of them can get past 2 m. Besides, their build makes them look even taller, as the Élénéyon are very thin and slick. Their dark brown skin added to their skinny silhouette makes them look somewhat like thin walking trees. Their stature can gain in thickness when they develop strength, but they never get bulky and cannot get fat either.

Their head is quite big in comparison with their body, especially since they've got a prominent forehead. They have fiery eyes (either black, blue or yellow) under strong ridges, a triangular nose, a large mouth and a square chin. Their cheekbones are also quite salient. These features sketch out a strong and stern face.

They have hair on their head only, and males also grow a little beard beyond the age of 50. The Élénéyon hair is jet black only, but however turns white with great age, which is unique among the Amayir.

The Élénéyon have the keenest sight of all the Amayir under the light of the sun. Their other senses are average. They're the most resilient to temperature variations (although the Akasarin endure better the cold) and their overall needs in fuel and sleep are just as low as the Akasarin's, making them likely to take a lot of deprivation.

They're less sturdy than the Akasarin while their healing factor is just a little higher, making them quite equal on this front.

The Innate Charm of this Talamé is an ability to walk into the air, as on invisible stairs. It's not like flying though, since it's not as fast and requires their legs to be functional. Besides, the Charm works best when you carry nothing. The more load, the more difficult and limited the Charm.

The lifespan of the Élénéyon can easily get past the century. They however begin to decline physically at this stage. Many can



reach 120 and some can attain 150 years old, depending on the strength of their personal Mokaïr.

#### ◆ Ifélundi

Among all the Amayir, the Ifélundi are probably those who look the most flimsy. Strength is indeed not their best quality. Their overall physical resistance is similarly quite modest. They're on the opposite very gifted with their hands and have fast reaction time.

They're about 1.7 m tall in average, but with a lean build and no apparent muscle or fat. Females never have strong curves either.

The skin of this Talamé always displays two colors: the counterpart of a "white" color among humans and tan. Some of them however combine the human white tone with actual white. Whatever the exact two colors, they always alternate in a pattern unique to each individual. Most of the time they organize in stripes, but any combination is possible, with the arms of one color for instance and the rest of the body of the other.

Except for the pubis, the head is the only part which grows hair, and males have no beard. Ifélundi hair can be of any color, like brown, blond, yellow, white, red, blue, etc. Same goes with their eyes. On top of that, they also display small antennas on their forehead.

The Ifélundi have good senses, except for a weak night vision. One of their other strength is that they heal fast from most injuries. They're however not very strong or resilient and are vulnerable to extreme temperatures. On the plus side, they're not particularly needy in food and water and their sleeping time is average.

This Talamé has two Innate Charms, but some individuals only have access to either one of the two.

One of these Charms is an ability to learn languages very fast, so as to be able to speak a new language in a matter of hours. After about two weeks, the acquired language progressively fades however. The other Charm is to trigger the sympathy of other people (especially of large groups), so as to blend in everywhere they go.

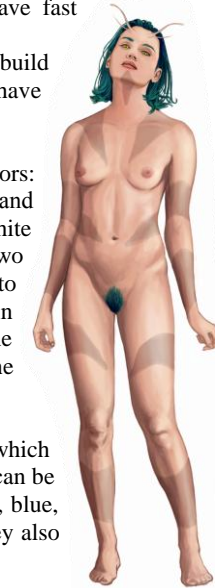
The Ifélundi live around 60 years old, but they show no external or internal sign of ageing and their face and body always look as if they were 25. The Ifélundi are thus young until they die. This is only a few days before it happens that they physically decline.

#### ◆ Itirid

The Itirid Talamé is the smallest of all the Amayir, but is far from being the weakest. The Itirid compensate in stature what they lack in height. Although they usually stand around 1.6 m and rarely reach 1.7, they display an astonishing musculature which gives them an impressively stout and robust look. They're indeed the strongest Amayir in proportion to their size (but not in pure strength, where the Lorminarkan and the Mèrèb outmatch them).

The skin of the Itirid is tan and their overall body is covered with black hair. The Itirid are in fact the hairiest of all the Amayir. In reverse, their head is probably their least hairy spot with their belly. They have a square face with a strong jaw but a smaller forehead in proportion. Their eyes are always black.

The Itirid only have four toes only on each foot and a caudal appendage (in plain words: a tail). This tail extends to their calves, which gives it a



significant length. It's however an appendage more than anything, since although it can move, it's not functional and can neither seize nor hit.

The most singular characteristic of this Talamé is to be exclusively made of males! There's no Itirid females. This Talamé is as a way of consequence not self-reliant in terms of procreation. The Itirid have to mate with other Amayir to reproduce. The offspring of this union is either an Itirid or an individual of the other Talamé, possibly a mixture of both (which is less common). Which one it will be is set at puberty. It's impossible to know in advance what the individual will turn into at that stage.

The Itirid are in the prime of their strength and health for the 20 years following this puberty, they then get old and die in about 15 years after that.

Aside this, the Itirid have an average regeneration but not a very good perception. They're not much affected by heat but are the most vulnerable Amayir to the cold. Their needs in food are average, but they have low needs in water.

The Innate Charm of the Itirid is a combat rage which gets them berserk and turns them into real combat machines, increasing all their physical abilities in the process, whereas it drains their energies.

#### ◆ Kaldèna

The general stature of the Kaldèna is slender, even when they're athletic. Although the overall silhouette is the same for both genders, Kaldèna females are taller, with an average of 1.8 m. Some can even reach 1.9. On the opposite, males are closer to 1.7 m and exceptionally reach 1.8. This height difference also reflects in strength. Kaldèna females are in average more robust and muscular than their male counterparts.

Overall, the Kaldèna are hairless, except on the head, while males also show some light facial hair. This hair is always dark brown or sometimes black. Their eyes can be of two possible colors: black or more commonly silver, while their skin is tan.

Finally, just like the Adjinaya, the Kaldèna have pointy ears.

Despite their silhouette, the Kaldèna are physically quite robust, although raw strength is not their strong suit. They stand as the most resilient Amayir (with the Mèrèb) against heat. The Kaldèna are less adapted to the cold, but only extremely low temperatures can weaken them. Their daily needs in water are quite low while their needs in food and sleep are a little above the Amayiric average. Their healing abilities are a little slow, while their senses are really average among the Amayir.

The Kaldèna Innate Charm is peculiar in the sense that it's not a spell, but an access to the first major scale of magic and therefore to the whole Primal state. It's the only Talamé which can begin the practice of magic with the Primal state. This is their inborn magical ability.

This Talamé only reaches full maturity around 20 years old and most Kaldèna have a lifespan of about 80 years. They however start declining from 60 onwards.



#### ◆ Lorminarkan

This Talamé is by far the most impressive and bulky of all the Amayir. In fact, they seem not even to be on an Amayiric scale considering that most Lorminarkan revolve around 2.5 m and very few are found below 2.2 m. Females are by the way usually slightly taller than males in average. Additionally, the Lorminarkan are also quite large and heavy. These physical features bestow them with astonishing proportions in relation to the rest of their Varama.

Among their other identifying traits, the Lorminarkan feet only have two large toes and their head is garnered with horns. The structure of these horns is peculiar to this Talamé and doesn't look like anything else. They're close to the bull's horns but they sometimes branch in tines. The exact design of a Lorminarkan's horns is by the way personal to each individual. They re-grow when cut off (it takes several months).

For the rest, the Lorminarkan have a skin tone ranging from pinkish to tan, their hair shades from light to dark blond and their eyes are either green or brown. Males are furthermore fairly hairy. They can grow a long beard (down to their belly) while their head's hair can reach their upper arms. They also display hair on their chest and pubis, and – less abundantly – on their belly and forearms. Females are far less hairy. They only display hair on their pubis and head, and their head's hair can grow longer than that of males, down to their waist.

The Lorminarkan's strength and endurance are not surprisingly in line with their unusual stature. It also makes them somewhat slower than the other Amayir, although the difference is not significant. The Lorminarkan are not very agile however. Their healing is slow as well. They have average senses among the Amayir, even though their smell and taste are the best of the Varama. They feel at ease in medium temperatures, but tolerate the cold and the heat. Only the extremes affect them. The real downside of their stature is the physical needs of the Lorminarkan. As could be suspected from their size, they need to eat and drink a lot and they sleep just as much in proportion.

The Innate Charm of the Lorminarkan is to increase even further the strengths and shortcomings of this Talamé. In other words, they can boost their strength and resistance, at the expense of their mobility, which turns them into some sort of living army tanks!

Finally, the Lorminarkan are fully grown around 17 but start slightly declining from 40 years onwards and until 60. After that, they get older much faster and rarely live past 80 years.

#### ◆ Mèrèb

The Mèrèb Talamé towers at an average of 2 m. Sexual dimorphism makes females slightly smaller in average (around 1.95 m). Besides, the Mèrèb are athletic and broad, and their musculature develops easily. This makes them physically impressive among all other Amayir, even though they obviously don't match the Lorminarkan's huge proportions.

The skin of the Mèrèb is brown, with more brightness than the Élényon's. They have the particularity of displaying black stripes similar to those of a zebra or tiger on their thighs. The features of their face is close to those of Africa in our world. Their eyes can be black, blue, green or yellow. Their hair is

always black and of a wooly aspect, although some females also have straight hair naturally. The Mèrèb have few hair overall. The head's hair can grow, but no longer than 20 cm. Even females with straight hair cannot grow it longer than the elbow. On the rest of their body, both genders have few pubic hair and males can grow small beards, but that's it. Besides, Mèrèb hair turns grey with age, but it never turns white.

The Mèrèb are physically strong and enjoy good regeneration abilities. Perception is not their best quality though, since all their senses are slightly below the average of their Varama. Regarding climates, this Talamé is the most resilient to heat but it's quite vulnerable to cold.

They have some physical needs in fuel and sleep, but proportionally to their build, these needs are decent.

The Mèrèb do not only impress by their size, but also out of their mere presence. They're naturally charismatic and just like the Adjinaya Talamé, their Innate Charm is to exert a power on the other's Spirits. They can inspire authority and leadership but they also have the ability to look nice and inspire friendliness.

The Mèrèb begin to get old around 50. From this age onwards, they keep declining steadily for at least 30 years. They regularly reach 90 but few can live longer. Beyond 80, they're physically very diminished and cannot do much anyway.

#### ◆ Nisifka

The Nisifka don't have many distinctive features, except a recognizable pink skin tone. They also display more fat than other Talamés (save for the Lorminarkan).

They're about 1.8 m tall in average (males are usually smaller though). Their build and their silhouette is soft and plump, although not deprived of stoutness. Females have large hips as well as ample breasts, and both genders tend to display a good potbelly.

The hair of the Nisifka is always blue black and it can grow long (about their waist at least). Their eyes are blue, silver or sometimes brown, with a sweet and soft gaze. The Nisifka face is round and remains smooth with age. Just like females, males don't grow any facial or bodily hair, except on the pubis.

The regeneration abilities of the Nisifka are in the top values among the Amayir's, maybe the best. However, they have strong needs: their sleeping time is the highest of the Varama and their needs in food and water are also in the top values.

The Nisifka are quite resistant to injuries and temperatures, at the exception of very hot and dry climates.

Their perception is good, with a strong night vision for the Amayir. They can potentially develop a heat vision, but they have to train hard for it.

Thanks to their Innate Charm, the Nisifka can activate a protective sphere around them. This sphere is physically tangible and very resistant (but usually small, and most of the time they need to crouch inside).

The Nisifka Mokaïr usually burns well until 50 and then declines progressively. Few Nisifka can get past 80 years old.



### ◆ Sayarilis

The Sayarilis have a robust look and their height revolves around 1.8 m in average, commonly reaching 1.9. They however display a slight sexual dimorphy, and females tend to have smaller proportions, although the difference is not important. Males are particularly developed in the chest area, with broad shoulders and salient pectorals. Males and females alike also easily develop their abdominals. Male bodies look smaller from the waist down by comparison with their upper part. Females are more proportionate.

Hair-wise, females have it on their head and pubis, while males furthermore display hair on their chest and grow a thick beard. Both genders can grow their head's hair until mid-arms approximately. The Sayarilis hair spans in the shades of blond to ginger, sometimes auburn. Their eyes can be green, red or yellow, less commonly brown. Finally, their skin is tan, and females can sometimes display freckles in the fashion of a redhead (independently from their own hair color).

The Mokaïr of the Sayarilis makes them quite resilient to injuries and they're above the average in the healing department. They do not tolerate all climates equally and if they adapt well to heat, they turn out particularly vulnerable to the cold. Their diurnal sight is very good, but not their night vision. They're average as far as other senses are concerned. Finally, their physiological needs are average, except their sleep, which is quite high.

The Innate Charm of this Talamé is similar to the Mèrèb's or the Adjinaya's and enhances their charismatic power. For the Sayarilis, it inspires others to either fear them or follow them. And as for the other Talamés with such an Innate Charm, the better the Sayarilis are in magic, the more they can enhance their charisma.

The Mokaïr of the Sayarilis allows them to be fully grown around 16 and they stay in excellent shape until 50. At this stage, they start declining at a significant rate and few Sayarilis ever get past 80 years old. They're already not fit for any physical exercise around 70, sometimes needing a cane to walk.

### ◆ Sifos

Almost mirroring the Itirid Talamé which only has males, the Sifos are an exclusively female Talamé. They're however not confronted to the same reproductive issues as the Itirid, since the Sifos have two Innate Charms, and thanks to one of them, their genitalia and internal organs can morph from one gender to the other and be fully functional for procreation purposes. Any Sifos can therefore be male or female as she chooses (they're grammatically always referred to as feminine, since only their genitalia are affected and all their other features are female). However, depending on the season and the magic potential of the Sifos, switching from one gender to another takes from a single day to about two months.

Physically, the Sifos are thin and rather look fragile. Even strength rarely makes them athletic. Their body never gets muscle-bound and the Sifos silhouette basically spans from slim to slightly plump. Their average height is around 1.7 to 1.8 m and their weight is obviously light. Their face is slender, their eyes can display any color and they cast a lively but mysterious gaze. This Talamé has two skin colors, depending on the individual. The most common is similar to what's labeled as white among humans (basically like the Ifélundi, but clearer and without stripes). The other skin color is in the shades of grey-green.



When they mate among Sifos, the two skin colors never mix. Any Sifos is born with either one and never a blend of the two. It's only when they procreate with another Talamé that the resulting color can be an in-between.

The Sifos only have hair on their head and it can assume absolutely any color, from classical to fancy, even mixing several hues. The most particular aspect of their hair remains its growth. The Sifos hair grows in accordance with skies and seasons (as you'll see later that there are several skies). It therefore evolves depending on where and when the Sifos stand. Their hair is always short and dark in winter, mid-long and in the shades of red-brown in autumn, long and colorful in spring to reach their maximum length in the summer.

This is not the most singular feature of this Talamé though, since the Sifos also have small shiny scales on the outer side of their thighs and shins, while their feet have somewhat the shape of fins.

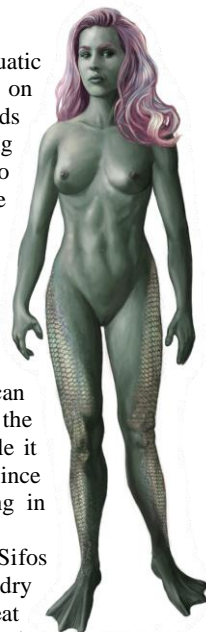
These characteristics are the direct result of the other Innate Charm of the Sifos. This Charm turns their body into some sort of big fish-tail from the waist-down and allows them to freely breathe underwater. The transformation from one state to another only takes from a few seconds to a few minutes, but as for genders, any Sifos can remain in either state indefinitely. The Sifos fins and scales in full humanoid shape are therefore the remnants of their other morphology.

The Sifos are indeed both a terrestrial and an aquatic Talamé and are as much at ease in the seas as on earth, provided they can drink regularly. The needs in water of the Sifos are indeed the highest among the Amayir. Their needs in sleep are also significant. It's only regarding food that they're average.

On the subject of perception, the Sifos have overall very good senses among the Amayir.

On the regeneration front, their healing evolves in accordance with their hair, i.e. in relation with the climate and the sky under which they lie. The different healing rates of the Sifos can therefore largely top anything found among the Amayir in certain environments or seasons while it can be very slow in other contexts. In any case, since the Sifos are partly an aquatic Talamé, staying in water for hours has a healing effect on them.

The corollary of this water sensitivity is that the Sifos are never at ease in hot environments, let alone dry ones. They're the most vulnerable Amayir to heat and drought. On the opposite, they're only second to the Akasarin when it comes to resisting the cold.



The Mokaïr of the Sifos manages to keep them alive for about a century, and they only start declining in the last decade of their life. This decline is however not very significant compared to most other Talamés and doesn't weaken much their faculties. Prior to this decline, it's very hard to even read their age based on their looks.

### ◆ Yalcalis

The Yalcalis are physically quite average in regard to the other Amayiric Talamés and they show no particularly striking feature. This gives them a very standard look, even more so by their average size of 1.7 m for both genders. Individuals above 1.85 or below 1.6 are exceptional.

The Yalcalis have a slender silhouette, although females have large hips and usually ample breasts. Any individual is rarely skinny or fat.

The Yalcalis skin is the counterpart of the human white – although it flushes easily – while their hair is always blond, from

almost platinum to dark blond. It only gets brownish when they reach about 45 years of age.

Their eyes are either yellow, brown or green. Their facial features are slick and their gaze is inclined to induce eye contact but not easy to decipher.

The Yalcalis have a very standard physiology among the Amayir and are quite average in all aspects by comparison with the other Talamés of the Varama: resistance, regeneration, perception, climate adaptation or needs. They consequently have no particular strength or weakness in that area.

Like several other Amayiric Talamés, the Charm of the Yalcalis consists in increasing the power of their aura and therefore to have a direct effect on the Spirits of other Somatils. In the case of the Yalcalis, this power entices others to find them terribly attractive or sociable and nice, and therefore triggers a friendly reaction in others.

The Yalcalis can live as long as a hundred years old, but they begin to feel the effects of age around 60, after which they progressively decline.

#### ◆ **Anadé**

Since several Talamés share the same social environment and any country or nation is made of at least several Talamés, crossbreeding – when Mokayirically possible – happens on a regular basis, giving birth to hybrid people. You would find a certain amount in any society, but in stronger number in some places where crossbreeding is the norm. The details regarding where and how many won't be addressed here.

The important thing to know is that an Amayir cannot necessarily be assigned to either one of the twelve Talamés of this Varama. Some individuals were born in-between. In such a case, they take after one Talamé more than after the other, especially visually. As a matter of fact, the physical mix is rarely equal. Magically, it's always one-sided, and such hybrids inherit the Innate Charm of only one of their parent's Talamé. For scholars, this is this magical inheritance which identifies their Mokaïr and assigns them to one of the twelve Talamés. And indeed, the physiological characteristics of hybrids are those of the Talamé to which their magical abilities descend.

In scholarly language, and now more frequently in everyday speech as well, such people are called *Anadé* followed by the name of their dominant Talamé. For instance, a female born to a Nisifka and a Mèrèb and which inherited the magical Charm of the Mèrèb is called an Anadé-Mèrèb, even if she physically leans more toward the Nisifka (although the physical and the magical tend to align in most cases). Before the development of their magical abilities, the Anadés are simply named after their appearance. The person in the example would have been labeled as an Anadé-Nisifka prior to her use of magic.

When you find up to three Talamés in the ancestry of an Amayir, nothing changes. The offspring of this crossbreeding will always lean more toward one Talamé with the magical abilities of only one of the three, even if physically, the features of the three can show to varying degrees.

All these Amayiric hybrids at large are simply called Anadés, but they're not considered as a Talamé of their own, only as sub-Talamés.

The Anadé-Amayir might constitute about 20% of all the current Amayiric population. In regard to the amount of crossbreeding which has been going on for more than a millennium, this is however quite modest. This percentage is indeed not higher



because when there is only one Anadé in a bloodline and all the following descendants share the same Talamé, the other Mokayiric signatures which entered this bloodline in the past are progressively erased. The effects of crossbreeding are consequently reversible with time among Somatils. Otherwise, Anadés would make up about half the current Amayiric population. This is also why the Nérédar are so rare.

#### **Nérédar**

At one point in the crossbreeding process, the combination of Mokaïrs is so complex that a new form, with the properties of a new Varama, comes to life, and what was formerly categorized as an Anadé-Amayir now becomes a Nérédar.

If the Nérédar stand as a Varama of their own and don't constitute a thirteenth Amayiric Talamé for example, it's because the line running between Varamas is still a matter of Mokaïr. And even though the Nérédar are physically close to the Amayir, to the point some individuals can be mistaken as one of them, Mokaïr-wise, the Nérédar are as much distant to the Amayir as they can be of other Varamas.

As a matter of fact, the Mokaïr of the Nérédar is more powerful than the Amayir's (regardless of their Talamés which are more or less all equal in terms of Mokayiric power), mostly because they combine the resources of several Mokayiric stems (those of the different Amayiric Talamés).

The Mokaïr of Mortals (regardless of their Varama) can however increase with age before waning and dying away for good. Therefore, the difference of power between the Mokaïrs of the two Varamas can evolve and some Amayir can at some point develop a stronger Mokaïr than some Nérédar. The latter always enjoy a considerable head start however.

This is why the lifespan of the Nérédar is beyond that of any Amayir. Any Nérédar can live until 150 years of age, and some can reach 200, possibly more. No Nérédar is however known to have reached 300.

Furthermore, it can be said that the Nérédar have a stronger resilience to death than other Mortals. It sounds weird put this way, but basically, the Nérédar are able to survive a fatal injury or illness once in their lifetime. Unless their head is severed or their body suffered a trauma similarly critical (like being smashed by a boulder), a Nérédar can “resurrect” after having taken a lethal wound. This power is however limited to one occurrence, as it requires a great deal of Mokayiric energies from the Somatil. Doing it twice is therefore too great an effort for most Nérédar. This “resurrection” is not possible when death strikes out of old age, because this death results from an exhaustion of the Mokaïr, making any bounce back impossible.

The magical potential of the Nérédar is by the same token superior to what the Amayir can do. To make it short, the Nérédar stack the Innate Charms of several Amayiric Talamés and have access to all the scales of the Primal state of magic (only a handful of Amayir do).

On the physical front on the other hand, the Nérédar don't have any feature specific to their Varama. They can sometimes be easily recognized as Nérédar though, when they stack several particular traits of Amayir that you can't find in the same Talamé, like for instance the horns of the Lorminarkan added to the tail of the Itirid. Such combinations can also be found in some Anadés but is more commonly typical of the Nérédar. Same goes with skin colors. By blending all the skin tones of their ancestors into one color, the Nérédar can wind up displaying a grey or violet skin (mostly when the Akasarin blue is mixed up with the brown of the Mèrèb or of the Élénéyon).

The appearances can be deceptive though. When an Amayir is born to a Sifos and an Ifélundi and incidentally displays a blue skin as well as antennas on their forehead, the individual can easily be mistaken for a Nérédar, although they can simply be an Anadé. Once more, the real difference between Amayir and Nérédar or another Varama is not physical, but Mokayiric, and this cannot be judged by the naked eye. The only thing that can't be visually mistaken is blood's color. The blood of the Amayir is red (except that of the Sifos) while Nérédar's blood is purple.

Let's conclude this quick presentation of the Nérédar by saying they're not numerous on the surface of Kerminwoks at any given time. The Nérédar are sterile and therefore can't procreate. They only originate when the Amayiric blood has been strongly mixed between at least four of five Talamés, sometimes more, and almost one generation after the other (to sustain the Mokayiric diversity before it reverses), and such an event is not commonplace.

There is consequently no nation or community of Nérédar. They live among the many Amayiric nations (sometimes among some Malaki). The amount of Nérédar found in any one place can greatly vary with the culture and the social heterogeneity of that place, but no matter what, the Nérédar never account for more than 1/10000 in any population.

### ***Introduction to some Malaki***

Only a handful is here introduced, since they're less important to the game than the Amayir, and the list of Talamés displayed in the Fëntalès tree at the beginning of this introduction is incomplete. You'll discover most of them as you play.

Overall, you'll see that the physical might of most Malaki Talamés are superior to those of the Amayir of the same size. This is quite logical since this is an evolutionary necessity for them. The Malaki make up in strength what they lack in magic, otherwise, the Amayir would have wiped them out, especially as the physical and biological proximity of both Varamas has them compete for the same territories and natural resources (contrary to most Safaïdar whose way of life and physical properties are far more diverse).

#### ♦ **Centaur**

There is a Talamé of Centaur in Kerminwoks, looking like classical centaurs who blend a human torso and face on top of an equine body.

Their coats display varying colors and color patterns, but the skin underneath this coat is usually tan or brown. Grey is also a common color, but less frequent. Black or white skins (and really *black* or *white*) are rare but can nonetheless be found in this Talamé.

For morphological reasons, Centaurs usually live apart from other Talamés, whichever the Varama, but Centaur nations however have close relationships with some Amayir or Malaki peoples. Sometimes, these relationships are more cultural in nature, some other times, they have a more economical turn.

Some Centaur communities are on the contrary hostile to most of their neighbors. Each Centaur group has its own diplomacy and alliances and there's no rule that could apply to all communities. By the same token, the interactions that Centaur nations have with each other are sometimes conflicted, and some communities turn out to be closer to some Amayiric peoples than to other Centaurs.

#### ♦ **Satyr**

The look Satyrs have in this world is close to the typical satyr's, except maybe for their horns and skin. The exact shape of their horns vary with each individual, some are akin to the ram's, others to the goat's, but they're always strong and the Satyrs use

them as a weapon in close combat, like their hooves. As per their skin, it displays various hues. Some are tan while others are in the shades of grey, green or brown. These colors constitute a natural camouflage in their forest environment.

Satyrs indeed abide in forests where they constitute a threat for local populations, as they live off plunder and don't produce much. They steal what they need. Besides, they've been firmly settled in some areas for centuries and no one has even been able to drive them out. The close Elemental Connection they share with Sylvan Spirits furthermore give them a strong support from their natural environment.

Since Satyrs antagonize all sorts of peoples, they're seldom found in any other social groupings than their own. They furthermore have a natural solidarity with each other, even though they tend to live in small groups which sometimes rival each other.

#### ♦ **Simqwani**

This Talamé is about as tall and large as the Lorminarkan (2.3 m tops), but is very furry. The Simqwani are entirely covered by a thick fur mixing an orange-brown color with white.

They're very strong and their physical strength and resistance are proportionally higher than the Lorminarkan's. They're consequently not easy to take in close combat. They have little claws at the tip of their fingers and toes, but they usually trim those of their fingers to more easily manipulate objects.

The Simqwani are very adapted to cold and freezing environments thanks to their fur but also to their Mokaïr. This Mokaïr also tolerates temperate or warm environments in spite of the fur. When it gets really hot however, the Simqwani are weakened.

Most Simqwani live in their own nations, in the westernmost part of the continent, but many are found among some Amayiric peoples, as you'll see it below on the subject of Amayiric nations.

#### ♦ **Tampud**

This Talamé is perfectly humanoid in nature, with even five toes on each feet. The skin of the Tampud is tan to brown and their hair is always pitch black and straight. Males have no facial hair. Their bodies are also quite smooth.

The height of the Tampud ranges between 1.9 and 2.1 m for either males or females and their build is similar to the Mèrèb's. Their toughness and strength are however greater by comparison, and the Tampud are as a matter of fact astonishingly strong in regard to their size. They for instance have the endurance and stamina of the Lorminarkan. If their raw strength doesn't match the Lorminarkan's, it nevertheless ranks above the Mèrèb's or that of any other Amayir. The Tampud also heal very quickly, which makes them even harder to kill. They furthermore resist well the effects of age until late in their life (around 80). Finally, they tolerate all climates. The Tampud are consequently tailored for survival.

Socially, the Tampud mainly split into two rival nations, settled amid Amayiric countries. This is where most of the Talamé is found, but other Tampud are nonetheless found in other places, mostly among the Amayir.

#### ♦ **Bolgat**

The Bolgat share the stature of the Tampud and their physical might, but the Bolgat are taller, ranging from 2 to 2.3 m.

Their skin is of a lighter tone than the Tampud's but remains tan. They're overall more hairy on their body, but essentially on their face, since males grow a beard easily. The chief difference between the two Talamés regarding hair is however that the Bolgat hair is exclusively white.

Even though the Bolgat equal the Tampud in strength, resistance and healing, they don't show the climactic tolerance of the latter, and even though the Bolgat can sustain all temperatures in the short run, they have a far better resistance to cold than to heat. In fact, their bodies barely feel the cold, in the manner of the Akasarin.

This is why the Bolgat now abide in the cold regions of the west. They used to live under other skies in the past, but were progressively pushed away. It's however another business to take them in the coldest regions of the world, where they don't suffer from the weather while others do.

This is why the bulk of this Talamé finally settled close to the Simqwani, in the land of Bölgöpal, where snow is all year round. Many other Bolgat nevertheless live scattered over several nations of Amayir or Malaki throughout the world.

#### ♦ **Arkunran**

The Arkunran exhibit the same silhouette than the Itirid Talamé with which they share a common ancestry. Their height is roughly the same as well (around 1.6 m). The Arkunran are however less hairy on their body and their head is even completely bald, except for some individuals who can display some hair on their head, but never on their face. Their skin tone is between tan and orange (compared to the Itirid who are really tan) and their caudal appendage is in general shorter.

Another similarity with the Itirid is that the Arkunran have four toes. This is however where the most identifiable trait of this Talamé lies, as their big toe is a sickle-shaped claw about 20 cm in length, endowing them with an effective natural weapon. Their other toes also have claws, but far shorter and of the regular kind. Their hands don't have any.

The Arkunran are tough, but better adapted to hot climates, and they don't mind the lack of water.

A good deal of them lives among the Amayir (namely the Sulkémé and the Böwadanid, covered later), but most Arkunran however live among themselves, in several tribes dwelling on the eastern limit regarding the part of the continent that's included in the core game.

#### ♦ **Somgomorn**

The Somgomorn are visually the most impressive of all the Talamés that are presented in this introduction. They have the bodily proportions and stoutness of a Lorminarkan or a Simqwani, only bigger! They can indeed tower at 3 meters.

Their stoutness is enhanced by a natural body armor mostly made of keratin and bone in the back and head areas. Sharp blades and pikes of the same composition jut out of this exoskeleton, adding a natural weapon atop the natural armor and giving to the Somgomorn somewhat the look of huge porcupines when they crouch. Finally, they have two big horns on the sides of their head, but they have no functionality.

The Somgomorn exclusively abide in forests. One of the function of their blades is to slash the branches and foliage standing in their way when they advance, thanks to a simple swing of their arm.

Their overall color is similarly adapted to such an environment, and spans in the hues of yellow and green with black stripes to better conceal them. When they crouch and stand still, the Somgomorn are therefore not always visible despite their size. They're luckily quite slow and it's easy to run away from them in case of an unfortunate encounter.

Besides, the Somgomorn are always alone. No risk to come across several of them at the same time. They have no culture or language and live as wild Somatils, mostly on the western side of the continent.

#### ♦ **Goblin**

The Goblins of this game physically resemble the typical goblins found in most games, but even though they're not tall (around 1.5 m), they can be resistant and muscular if they work for it and some Goblins are true warriors. Compared to other Malaki, Goblins are however not stronger than an Amayir of their size, and they're even among the least physical Talamés of Malaki. Their low needs in fuel and a fast healing partly balance out this physical inferiority.

Another difference with archetypical Goblins is that they're mostly forest-dwellers here, and this is partly the shelter of the forest which allowed them to survive this far. This nevertheless compels Goblins to cohabitate with some Satyr populations at their expense, since they have to deal with Satyr raids in their villages from time to time.

Goblins are basically divided into two main locations: one more or less in the center of the continent, the other on its western coast, close to the Tampud and the Bolgat. Those who live close to the sea are the most isolated, but all Goblins live in the shadows of woodlands anyway.

Apart from some occasional trade with neighboring Amayiric or Malaki communities, the relations between Goblins and other nations are usually not good. On an individual level, some Goblins can however be found as rightful members of some Amayiric or Malaki populations. Those are nonetheless an exception.

### **Amayiric peoples & cultures**

Only the main cultures and countries populated with Amayir are summarized below, and consequently, others exist, although they're not mentioned here (but will be in the game). The Amayir are also found as minorities in several Malaki nations.

Note that if the Varama is of importance when social groupings are at stake, this is because Varama distinctions define if people can make use of magic or not, or if they can crossbreed and therefore procreate with one another. Differences of size and morphology can also come into play between different Varamas (or even Talamés). This is why the nature of the Varama is not socially neutral.

For similar reasons, Talamé distinctions can also matter sometimes in the way Somatils make society, as when facing certain climates for instance, or when a given magical ability is required to function normally on a social level, in which case, not having it is similar to a physical handicap.

Each of the cultures described below is given a complete description in the Universe book of the game.

By the way, the words *nation*, *society*, *culture* and *civilization* are considered as almost synonymous in the following. The meaning of civilization is made more specific and explicit in the game, but not for the moment.

Even though some regimes could be equated with democracy, this concept is never used since its definition is blurry (and contrary to popular belief, it doesn't equate election) and is strongly connoted: democracy = good. So, it's never used for more objectivity.

For more simplicity, Safaïdar Talamés are seldom mentioned in the following descriptions. They're sometimes specified when they are actual members of society, but that's all.

Finally, only the western part of the world (which is big enough) is addressed in the core game. When cardinal indications like east and west are given to locate the different countries, they refer to

this western part only. *East* therefore means the eastern part of the west.

#### ♦ **Bardanayin**

The Bardanayin are a people of mountaineers retreated in the mountains of Bardogoran in the north-west of Kerminwoks. From a Talamic perspective, the vast majority of this people is made of Akasarin, who are adapted to this environment, both by their hooves and legs, and because their body easily tolerates the freezing climate of this region.

Thanks to these high mountains, the Bardanayin dwell isolated from the rest of the world, and are to some extent even shielded from it. They're indeed free from any invasions, since it's impossible to get so high in great numbers. Only small companies of prepared travelers can reach Bardanayin settlements.

The social organization of the Bardanayin could hardly be qualified as a regime or a political system, since this organization is rather loose and simply consists in small villages scattered in the mountains. But if a qualification need be applied, it would be that of a technocratic gerontocracy.

The Bardanayin system is technocratic in the sense that rulers owe their status to the knowledge they possess, and it is overall a gerontocracy since the social ladder is split into age grades, and the older, the better.

As the Bardanayin get older, they access new age grades, which grant them less duties and more freedom with each grade. They don't gain in power over others however. The Bardanayin civilization is not based on the principle of power in general, but on knowledge instead. This is why only scholars can be considered to have a certain level of power, but here again, from a very theoretical standpoint.

Bardanayin scholars are also shamans and magicians. This is but one function in the Bardanayin culture. There is always at least one of these scholars and rarely more than four in every village. They make calls for the community when some need to be made, which is uncommon. Bardanayin folks know how to manage themselves and to coordinate their daily activities. These tasks mainly consist in goat husbandry, transhumance from one spot to another, collecting food, mining, crafting tools and building homes. The youngest take in charge the most tedious tasks while others are progressively relieved of this work as they grow older, but they instruct younger ones instead.

The Bardanayin are economically quite self-reliant thanks to the ores harbored in their mountains, the timbers found in their forests and goat husbandry. Since they have more metal than they use, this endows them with a trading tender with foreign merchants, along with some other goods (like cashmere wool). They trade these extras for the only things the Bardanayin really lack in their territory: grains, sugar and salt.

The Bardanayin don't have any coinage as they don't like money. Their domestic economy works based on an exchange of services, distinct from sheer barter. They however barter in foreign trade, but also resort to some foreign currencies.

Literacy holds an important status in the Bardanayin civilization and the scholars at the head of Bardanayin communities compile all their knowledge in books, as a legacy after their passing. Bardogoran is furthermore the library of the Amayiric world, as discussed later regarding the Bortényen.

#### ♦ **Böwadanid**

The Böwadanid are a warrior people where most of the Itirid Talamé is found, as well as a good deal of Mèrèb and Arkunran, and some Yalcalis. They live easternmost of most Amayir, in a quite flat land called Böwadan.

The Böwadanid people is split into hundreds of chiefdoms of very varying sizes, from a few hundred people to several

thousands each. Each chiefdom is under the dominion of a warlord and splits into two social classes: warriors and commoners. Warriors are obviously the ruling class, alongside the warlord, who gained his title by simply outmatching other competitors, until another claims his title. Commoners constitute about two thirds of a chiefdom and include all civilians, i.e. craftspeople mostly, some shamans and a few artists (usually counted among craftspeople). Beast-masters or hunters are part of the warrior class.

By the way, the combat mounts of warriors – large and omnivorous wooly rams – are considered as actual people and they count among the members of the warrior class.

The Böwadanid are semi-sedentary, in the sense that even though they live in small villages of wooden houses, they relocate very frequently, in line with their victories and defeats, and the size of a chiefdom's territory keeps changing over months and years, to the point it can completely disappear. The map of Böwadanid settlements is therefore in constant reformation and new chiefdoms are likely to die or appear everyday.

This makes the Böwadanid a very unstable people, always struggling for survival, between chiefdom rivalries, the search for food and water, and cohabitation with Centaur tribes, in significant number in most of Böwadan.

Culturally, the Böwadanid are strongly sexist, locating masculinity as the source of genuine power. Females are in contrast regarded as weak. However, the Böwadanid consider that true masculinity (distinct from the physical gender) is buried deep down into each Somatil in a dormant state (whichever the Varama or Talamé), and that it can awaken at any time. As a result, any female demonstrating her strength can easily be recognized as a true warrior, but she socially becomes a “male” and is referred to as such, even grammatically. Conversely, males failing to show the attributes of virility are demoted to the status of female. This status prevents one from being a warrior but is in practice not below the station of any other commoner.

The Böwadanid have their own language, common to all chiefdoms, but they don't have any writing system and very few Böwadanid are literate. They however hold those who can read in high esteem, considering they possess a power – the understanding of cryptic signs – which is beyond their reach, especially beyond that of the Itirid Talamé.

Economically, the Böwadanid rely on barter, but also use some foreign currencies when they can, especially the Sulkan coinage, as they trade a lot with the Sulkémé. The Böwadanid are particularly needy in metal, but their country is resourceful in tin while their neighbors have copper. They thus sell their tin in exchange for metal items and weapons, allowing others to forge bronze. They also trade hides and some of their crafted items for food, especially grains, as the Böwadanid don't cultivate the soils. Their constant relocations would spoil the attempt.

#### ♦ **Chalain**

Just like the Bardanayin, the Chalain are seldom mingled with others, and live on their own, as a single people, in the green land of Chalān, on the western side of the continent, mostly consisting of woodlands and thick forests, fencing the Chalain from the outside world. It's indeed not easy to penetrate deep into the country. There's no road, only a handful of trails, and some areas are so thick that they're mostly impenetrable, even for the Chalain.

Originally, their members were almost exclusively of the Nisifka Talamé, but over time, other Talamés joined them, even though the Nisifka remain largely predominant since few of them are found in any other culture. If other Talamés joined the Chalain way of life, the Nisifka never departed from it. One of the main non-Nisifka Talamé to be found among the Chalain is in fact

Safaïdar, it's wolves. Wolves are considered as actual members of the Chalain society and are as numerous as the Nisifka themselves.

The Chalain live scattered in very small communities, not always the size of a village, usually gathering less than a hundred people linked by either kinship or friendship.

Most families are materially independent, hence this absence of real social structure. Chalân has a very rich soil and many watercourses. The Chalain easily find food through horticulture, fishing and trapping, and they craft what they need from what the forest offers them. They obtain what they lack (mostly textiles and metals) from some trade with other civilizations. They trade with most of the countries surrounding them, but always on a local scale and in small quantities, with the merchants they came to know over time. Since the land of Chalân grows a wide variety of plants (from which can for instance be extracted sugar, milk, poisons, medicines, etc.) the Chalain are not short of goods to propose. They're furthermore skilled in leather-making.

The Chalain mostly trade with peoples to which barter is a natural way of dealing, since they do not use money. But they still manage to trade with cultures resorting to coinage.

There is no actual political regime or structure in Chalân, since dwellings are very scattered and isolated. There are in fact four major spots in the country, the size of what could be labeled as towns. They gather several hundreds of families and harbor what's called an Elder House each. They're the closest thing to any form of government in this culture. Most of the time they do nothing. They simply coordinate decisions and actions when things need to be done on a scale of several hundred people at least (like providing food in case of hardship for instance).

Even though the Chalain have no formal government, no written laws and no coinage, they do write, and as a matter of fact, they're quite fond of reading, especially about fabulous stories. Each family has some books in its house, and offering them a book is always a good way to trade advantageously with them.

The Chalain love a quiet and simple life. This is why they fence themselves from the rest of the world. It's also a way to freeze time and to prevent things from changing. Despite their isolation, the Chalain have a tradition of hospitality and don't leave people outside, unless these people prove dangerous.

Females are considered superior and are expected to protect males, children or the elderly. Even though females appear as natural leaders in regard to males, their authority is not seen as a reason to abuse males. Power in general is a very remote conception in the Chalain mindset anyway. This culture is much more about nurturing and caring.

#### ♦ **Dhakahan**

The Dhakahan are originally a culture of Adjinaya people and still remains so today, but they've embraced a lot of other Talamés throughout centuries and now stand as the most diversified culture as far as Talamés (or even Varamas) are concerned. The Lorminarkan Talamé is the only one to remain exceptional.

The Dhakahan are not a people organized in one place and living together. They're scattered in many bands of very various sizes, the smallest numbering a dozen members to the biggest of about two hundred people. These bands are nomadic in nature, but they tend to circumscribe their errands to the western part of Kerminwoks. In theory however, a Dhakahan band can be found anywhere on the continent, but the further away east, the least likely an encounter.

The core around which Dhakahan bands are formed is a philosophy or a lifestyle. This is what defines the Dhakahan as a culture. The Dhakahan define themselves as a people aiming for

achievement, and they search this achievement through different fields, activities and moralities. This is what justifies the existence of several bands and identifies them. They each promote a particular way of life or set of values in which each Dhakahan strives to improve in search for accomplishment. Depending on the bands, this achievement can be sought through hunting, fighting, defending a people or an area, marksmanship, communication with Spirits, riding, traveling the world, taming predators, etc. It must necessarily involve a challenge and somewhat be dangerous, otherwise, the Dhakahan disregard the deed and judge it unworthy of them. They partly seek their true nature in testing their limits.

In practice they live from what they earn from their doings and by trading with local populations, but they never possess more than they can carry, and they craft many things by themselves. The biggest bands however have headquarters and store more material and wealth in the long run.

Barter is of course the first system of trade of the Dhakahan, but most bands also come to use all the currencies found among the Amayir or the Malaki to facilitate their deals with any population.

#### ♦ **Dzandjir**

The Dzandjir are another culture formed around the Adjinaya Talamé, and they share with the Dhakahan the same language, the Nasadjëna, which also refers to the two peoples considered together, for they share a cultural identity and a common history. The Dzandjir civilization predates the Dhakahan in this common history and it has remained essentially Adjinaya in its composition with a decent number of Sifos. Other Talamés are found as minorities: Itirid, Ifélundi, Nisifka, Kaldëna, Akasarin.

Contrary to the Dhakahan, the Dzandjir are sedentary and mostly live underground, as troglodytes, in the volcanic and mountainous region of Najkaméa, west of most Amayiric areas, close to where the Dhakahan roam, for the two Nasadjëna nations still have regular contacts with each other.

The Dzandjir do not live as one group huddled in one region. They're broken down into several communities, constantly relocating in line with the volcanic activity of the region. These communities are fragmented only for logistical concerns and constitute a single Dzandjir people, with members commonly swinging from one community to the other.

The Dzandjir are learned in all sorts of Spirits and their social organization mostly revolves around shamans. The Dzandjir are rumored to have the best shamans in the world. They're also renowned for their knowledge in sexuality and their combat techniques, although they possess no organized army, since it would be of no use where they live. Knowing how to use weapons is nevertheless a prestigious skill in this culture, and warriors are held in high esteem along with scholars. Shamans however remain on top of the social ladder.

The Dzandjir culture is roughly egalitarian – even though females are favored in practice – and people enjoy a good deal of personal freedom. There are no strict rules anyway, as the Dzandjir consider that the community principle lies in Spiritual harmony and in the will to live together, not in power or enforcement. Nothing is however given away freely, and to gain anything, a Dzandjir must prove one's valor.

The Dzandjir civilization has several writing systems and many Dzandjir are literate in at least one, but few have books. Most books or scrolls are owned by scholars.

The Dzandjir produce a large amount of silk and their weapons are praised in many cultures. Their land is also rich in ores and has some rare plants of different uses. This provides the Dzandjir

with many things to trade in exchange for other products, essentially grains and textiles.

They have some sort of coinage, although it's not real money and is more of a token of social value. It's however common for them to resort to alien currencies when trading with foreigners.

#### ◆ **Iloran**

The Iloran culture is mainly constituted of Yalcalis, with a good addition of Sayarilis, Ifélundi and Élényon. Many other Talamés are also found, but in smaller numbers.

The Iloran live in the east, north of Bôwadan, in a land called Linodh-Dèl. This is a land of grassy plains with some woods here and there, and bordered by mountains in the north and by an inner sea in the east. Flax fields cover large surfaces of acreage around most areas of settlements.

These settlements consist most of the time in small cities, akin to large villages. There's also a bunch of major cities, working as administrative centers, and notably connecting the major roads of the country.

The Iloran political structure is organized around a bicameral parliament, conducting the overall management of the country. Local matters are however handled by provinces. Since the Iloran promote equality and solidarity, one of the main function of the national government is to ensure an equal distribution of the resources of the land to the different citizens thanks to a form of bureaucratic structure. Securing the land and issuing the law also falls within the jurisdiction of this parliament.

The Iloran are very much fond of art, especially music and dancing, which are part of every Iloran's social skills. Art is a way for the Iloran to express their identity and uniqueness. It contrasts their inclination to establish social norms and to strongly conform to them, as a form of politeness, or social contract, binding them together and ensuring their unity. Sexuality is another important aspect of the Iloran culture, and seduction is a common behavior for most people. It also counts among basic social skills in this country.

The Iloran have literacy and write books they store in vast libraries, mostly located in the major cities of the country. They sometimes resort to printing, but only to a very limited extent. Most books are therefore unique, as printing is mostly reserved to official publications.

Despite literacy and their bureaucratic organization, the Iloran do not rely on coinage for trade. They barter instead, although they sometimes resort to foreign currencies, mainly when they deal with strangers reluctant to barter. The economical and social solidarity between the Iloran is therefore ensured via services. Part of the country's wealth is based on agriculture, and mostly on linen production and fruits. The Iloran produce very few metals overall, and they rely on foreign trade for their metal supplies. Most of their metal items and weaponry is made of bronze, as iron is rarer in this part of the world.

The Iloran are renowned for their Griffin units of cavalry. They're the only people riding Griffins, and they protect them from harm (either tame or feral) within their borders. Griffins are almost rightful members of the Iloran society.

#### ◆ **Kaldenyès**

The Kaldenyès is a people massively made of Kaldèna. Talamic distinctions are even important in this civilization, and being a Kaldenyès or a Kaldèna is not equivalent. Even though all Kaldenyès are considered as rightful members of society in the end, it remains difficult for a non-Kaldèna to become a Kaldenyès in the first place. Several Talamés are however found as minorities in most places (mostly Adjinaya, Ifélundi and Nisifka).

The Kaldenyès are a very sedentary people living in the country of Kolden, in the western part of the continent, neighboring Najkaméa (the Dzandjir) Chalân and Bardogoran. Kolden consists of 18 city-states which harbor the entire Kaldenyès population. These city-states are linked by a network of paved roads which also partly links them to other countries, like Torüs-Dèl and the two Tampud countries south of Kolden.

The social organization of Kolden is highly stratified with a caste structure. These castes are inherited at birth and determine the function of each individual within the city-state. The more important distinction however remains that of gender. Just like the Bôwadanid, the Kaldenyès culture is strongly based on sexism, although on a different premise. Kolden is a female supremacist civilization where females are free citizens while males, deemed as inferior, are under their tutorship and have limited access to political functions or to most occupations.

The regime of Kolden is parliamentary. There is one parliament in each city-state and a federal parliament addressing national concerns. Delegates are nominated by lottery at all levels, therefore giving an equal chance to all the Kaldenyès to participate in the government, regardless of caste, occupation or even gender. Only wedded males can however be included on lottery lists, since marrying a female restricts the male's freedom by placing him under her direct authority. That's the condition for males to be given any political participation.

Bureaucracy is a key aspect in the social and political organization of the country, with a sophisticated and detailed legislation on many subjects. Literacy has therefore a vital role in the Kaldanic culture and all the Kaldenyès (including males) are provided free education to learn basic skills. This is why in some city-states, school tests replace lottery to appoint members of parliament.

Kolden is even where the printing press was devised and where the highest amount of books is still printed.

Agriculture is the pillar of Kolden's economy and wealth, and the country is the first producer of grains in the west. It's also a leader on the textile market (especially cotton). The Kaldenyès exclusively rely on their own currency for trade, and they refuse barter.

#### ◆ **Sulkémé**

The Sulkémé are the largest Amayiric people, either in terms of population or by land area. They are a sedentary civilization living in the land of Sulkö, in the southern part of the continent, with several oversea provinces in the east and west.

The main Talamé found among the Sulkémé are the Mèrèb, but a great deal of Sifos, Itirid, Sayarilis and Ifélundi are also found in this country, along with some Yalcalis, Élényon and a few Talamés of Malaki (particularly the Arkunran). Sulkö is indeed a very cosmopolitan land and Talamic considerations are of almost no significance in this culture. It is easy for anyone to acquire citizenship and become a rightful Sulkémé.

The political organization of Sulkö is a two-layer structure. One layer consists in some sort of schools, called *dwana*. They are some kinds of associations but with usually a long history behind them, and dedicated to teach skills and philosophies: they exist to instruct the minds as well as the bodies. They act as real political entities in the sense that they provide education, own estates and facilities, and protect their community's interests.

The second layer of the country's political structure is bureaucratic and divides between executive leaders and parliamentary delegates of legislative and judiciary power. Leaders and delegates alike are elected, contrary to *dwana* members or leaders who achieve their status through work and skills. This administrative layer is in charge of everything law-

related and of national scale. The dwana and the bureaucracy each have their own armed forces however, legally vested with the same level of legitimacy on both sides, in the purpose of establishing a status quo and a balance of powers between the two layers of the governmental structure.

A third layer could be added to the mix: this is the federal organization of the land, split into eighteen provinces. Each province is also a political entity with its own delegates, infrastructures and some local laws. Provinces work more as an in-between in the overall structure of the country than as real political entities though.

Morally, the Sulkémé have a universalistic view of the world. They do not think boundaries are meant to last and they try to convince other civilizations to adopt their ways and even to be part of Sulkö. None of these cultures is however ready to be swallowed in an overarching Sulkan civilization.

Concerning equality, the Sulkémé promote it in theory, but they do little to achieve it in practice, considering this is not a government's business. Sulkö is therefore a country with strong discrepancies of rights among all its citizens, either because of where they live or how much money they were born with. Economic inequalities can indeed be fairly sensitive and usually play a major role in anyone's destiny in this country. Except for some dwana, nothing makes up for that or combats poverty.

Sulkö is for its part a wealthy country, with a strong economy. This is by far the first producer of maize in the world, selling it outside the domestic market. It's also a big producer of cotton (second to Kolden) and it is quite self-reliant metal-wise.

Due to its geographical position and its territorial spread, Sulkö is furthermore a trading platform for a vast number of populations.

Sulkö issues its own coinage, but Sulkémé merchants are ready to accept foreign currencies in most situations. Barter is exceptional.

#### ♦ Lorminis

The proximity between the word Lorminis and Lorminarkan is not a coincidence. Exceptionally, the Talamé and the people are here almost synonymous, since the physical dimensions of the Lorminarkan set them apart from all the other Amayir. Conversely, few other Amayir can live among them without struggling with material issues, although customization solves many problems. It's however not applicable on a large scale. This state of things mechanically restricts the number of other Talamés living among the Lorminarkan as Lorminis. The only Talamé found in significant number among the Lorminis are the Simqwani who share their physical dimensions. Some Bolgat can also be found. Other Talamés of Malaki or Amayir are exceptional.

This people is settled in Lorminrèl, occupying a good portion of the north since it is the second largest Amayiric country behind Sulkö, and the country grows ever larger as the Lorminis try to conquer new lands all around them, but particularly in the Dzandjir mountains of Najkaméa and the Maïryökamé mountains of Nachtaka. They're interested in these mountains for their ores, since they border Lorminrèl on its southern and eastern sides respectively, and are by far the largest mountains in the whole region. Lorminrèl has some inland mountains, but nothing of such dimensions. Besides, the Lorminis already exhausted the mineral resources of the mainland.

For the rest, Lorminrèl is a green country, mostly consisting of grasslands and fields, with only few forests. This is a quiet country with very rich soils, yielding huge amounts of crops with few efforts. The earth of this country is renowned for this unique fertility and is even traded for it. Other civilizations relying on agriculture (like Kolden, but also Sulkö) purchase some of this earth to grow their own crops into it. But the Lorminis sell it at a

high price and are now reducing this trade, to prevent the exhaustion of their soils.

The Lorminis are established in several cities scattered all over the surface of Lorminrèl, and they dwell in houses of stone. Industrial cities based on mining are obviously settled on the outskirts, at the feet of the surrounding mountains. Some other cities are hot trading spots, linking Lorminrèl to other countries. The Lorminis primarily trade with the Chalaïn, the Bardanayin, the Kaldenyès and less importantly with the Torain. They maintain commercial relations with Sulkö too, but the distance running between the two countries remains an obstacle.

The natural resources of their land ensures the wealth of the Lorminis. They naturally produce their own food (mainly through agriculture, but they also practice some herding and hunting for meat) and they have a considerable amount of ores thanks to their mining sites. And since they have plenty to sell, they can buy just as much.

The Lorminis by the way trade with money, and their coinage is particularly strong. Barter is not something they like, as they judge it too approximate.

Politically, Lorminrèl could be qualified as an electoral plutocracy. Elections appoint government leaders, but the weight of a given ballot in the box is equated with the amount of land possessed by the voter. Rich landowners have thus more votes than anyone else. Besides, only landowners can be elected.

This system is one of the reason why the Lorminis continuously seek to extend their territory. The more land, the more power, on both the economical and political levels.

The only power of political leaders is however to deal with matters of national scale when they are raised, and they have to take calls collectively. This political level rarely interferes with the lives of regular people, as the decisions of the delegates are in fact rarely meant to change things, but rather to keep them as they are.

Culturally, the Lorminis are hedonistic and indulge themselves in eating, drinking, smoking and sex. These are real social values and a sign of sanity for this people. Hard work is however the other moral pillar of the Lorminis, and they cast a sympathetic look on those who do not enjoy life when it's for the sake of work. The Lorminis don't like lazy people.

Even though there are strong social inequalities among the Lorminis in terms of wealth and the rights stemming from it, they're quite egalitarian on other subjects. People of different ages are given the same level of attention and care; there are no real gender differences, although females are usually better thought of than males, and Talamés are considered equal, whereas the physical dimensions of the Lorminarkan lead them to think of others as less capable, especially effort-wise.

Finally, the Lorminis have a writing system (in common with other peoples) and the vast majority of the Lorminis are literate. Knowing how to count is also important, as the Lorminis pay attention to numbers and quantities.

#### ♦ Maïryökaa

The Maïryökaa constitute a civilization of gatherer-hunters who are obviously nomads. They wander between the plains of Tayöaymach and the mountain range of Nachtaka, northward of most other Amayiric lands (save the Lorminis who stand as the Maïryökaa's western neighbor).

Other Maïryökaa communities are however found much further east, but in a part of the continent that's not covered in the core game, and those communities are consequently left aside for the moment.

The Maïryökaa are organized in tribes which are in constant reformation as people switch from one to the next when these tribes meet along their errands.

The main Talamé found in this civilization is the Élényon, but many others are embraced into it, as the Maïryökaa welcome anyone willing to share their nomadic way of life and forsake materiality. Among the chief Talamés counted among the Maïryökaa are the Ifélundi, the Itirid, the Yalcalis, and some Akasarin. Other Amayiric Talamés can also be found, but in very few numbers. One of the other main Talamés encountered in this people is Malaki this time: it's the Centaur's. Other Malaki are nonetheless found in lesser numbers in the Maïryökaa people, like the Arkunran and the Tampud.

The Maïryökaa believe in the superiority of the Spirit and in the adversity of materiality. However, they have a philosophical dispute on how the Spirit should express its potential. Some advocate the use of magic as the true power of their Spirit while others promote the link to Elementals instead. This issue divides the overall Maïryökaa people into two roughly equal halves, but doesn't prevent them from living in one community, and proponents of either view are found in most tribes.

The Maïryökamé culture stands by the principle of equality, between all people, and of total freedom. No one has any moral attachment to a tribe and can leave as soon as they decide to. Anyone is also accepted inside, but has to acknowledge the rules of the tribe, mainly consisting of not binding others to one's will, either with objects or coercion.

The Maïryökaa reject the principle of property, and all the items owned by a given tribe are equally accessible to all its members at any time. No one owns anything for oneself.

The Maïryökaa consequently do not trade. They have contacts with other cultures and share with them ideas or goods, but they do not trade in the sense that the Maïryökaa do not expect anything in return for what they give and are no more ready to give something away for what they ask. Their cultural relations are therefore restricted to peoples ready to establish dealings on this premise. Namely, the Iloran and some Centaur tribes.

The Maïryökaa are renowned marksmen, using spears, bows and boomerangs, either to hunt or to fight. Missile weapons are the objects most commonly found in any tribe. They also craft other items, but keep to the minimum and have almost no clothing.

The Maïryökaa have an oral civilization which defines literacy as a trap for the mind, freezing words and thence, thought itself. The Maïryökaa believe in live words. Besides, writing would imply to keep records, and this, would alienate the whole community to materiality.

#### ♦ **Torain**

The Torain nation is primarily constituted of Sayarilis. The other Talamés most found there are the Ifélundi, the Yalcalis, the Itirid and some Mèrèb. All the other Amayiric Talamés are also visible from time to time, but in few numbers and mostly as foreigners only coming for economical reasons (a trade or a job).

The Torain live in Tortüs-Dèl, which has quite a central position regarding all the other countries mentioned in this introduction, giving Tortüs-Dèl a role of economic interface.

Tortüs-Dèl consists in stone cities, with a high population density and concentrating most political, economical and military power, with a bunch of villages and isolated dwellings radiating from these cities. The demography of the country is therefore quite even overall, since those cities dot the land in a pretty regular pattern, and the main road network linking the major cities operates as a hub to secondary roads, ensuring that all cities remain connected to the mainland.

Tortüs-Dèl is a monarchy, founded on the distinction between High Nobility, Nobility and Subjects. The High Nobility is of course the one with most power. Subjects have to place themselves under the authority but also protection of simple Nobles, but they choose which Noble they want as their ruler. The most popular Nobles therefore have more Subjects under their protection, while authoritarian rulers are left aside, and can even be removed from Nobility if they are too unpopular.

Honor, popularity and bounty are in fact key values in the Torain culture, and a Noble can only be one if he shows he's cut out for the title. Mere Subjects can conversely be made Nobles after deeds of heroism. The overall social structure of Tortüs-Dèl is consequently not set in stone and people's statuses are likely to change in line with public opinion which turns out to have a certain power in this culture. Only members of the High Nobility can never be removed from their title.

These principles of inequality and prestige extends to matrimony. Males can be polygamous but females cannot. Subjects can have up to two wives and Nobles up to five. Divorcing is however easy for any wife if her husband proves unworthy of her expectations or those of her family. In practice, most Torain are therefore monogamous. It's less expensive and less risky concerning their reputation.

In other aspects of life, females have less rights overall than males. If they accomplish heroic feats, they can however access Nobility just like any male.

The Torain culture is literate but in practice, less than half the Torain are functional in literacy, since the written word is not given much importance, and scholars are even considered as some sort of outcasts. Books are thus hard to find, and mostly belong in the private collections of some enthusiasts.

Tortüs-Dèl issues its own currency and is a wealthy country, trading with all its neighbors (the Lorminis, the Bōwadanid, the Sulkémé, the Chalaïn, the Kaldenyès among others). This is in this diversity of commercial partners that lies the strength of the Tortüs-Dèl economy, since the country is number one in no particular field, and needs to import several goods to cover its domestic needs, be it in food, metals or textiles. The spread of the Torain currency as a common expedient between traders of all origins largely contributes to the economy of the land.

#### ♦ **Bortényen**

Although not technically a culture, the Bortényen deserve a little introduction in this section. They consist in an international community of scholars, dedicated to gather and spread knowledge everywhere they can. They muster experts in a wide array of fields, like history, geography, mathematics, linguistics, smithing, etc. but they particularly focus on shamanism, Spirits, alchemy and magic. There's still a good deal of knowledge to gain in these fields at the time of play and that's what the Bortényen are after.

They embrace people of all Talamés and cultures but are historically closely related to the Bardanayin. In fact, the Bardanayin originated as an outgrowth of the Bortényen. Bardogoran was at some point in history designated as the safe harbor of the Bortényen. In time, as the Bortényen settled in other places, those who lingered in Bardogoran and stopped being involved in Bortényen activities progressively became the Bardanayin. If the Akasarin now account for most of the Bardanayin, it's simply for climactic reasons, since several Talamés dwelled in Bardogoran when it used to be the headquarter of all the Bortényen.

The historical ties between the Bortényen and the Bardanayin were never severed, and they continue up until now, as the two populations share a common set of cultural values, a language

and a writing system. The greatest Bortényen libraries are located in Bardogoran as well. And the presence of the Akasarin is still strong among Bortényen scholars.

Aside Bardogoran, the Bortényen abide in several other locations and headquarters all over the continent and they work in collaboration with many countries. Since they provide knowledge and expertise, several governments offer them asylum and a logistical support (i.e. food and even protection) in exchange for the goods and services they can provide (like potions, alchemic objects, but also a magic or shamanic assistance, or a scholarly outlook).

Nowadays, the nations the most involved with the Bortényen are the Iloran, the Kaldenyès, the Lorminis, the Chalain and the Simqwani. Other cultures (either Amayir or Malaki) collaborate more occasionally with the Bortényen, or even not at all. They are considered as a mundane dwana in Sulkö.

## Some singularities of the Kerminwoks universe

After the world of Somatils, let's now take a look at the world of the other Elementals (although the last paragraph of this section still addresses Somatils). Of course, not all the laws of nature nor the different singularities of Kerminwoks are covered below, only the ones you need to know for your first games. You'll discover the rest as you play.

### *The celestial dome*

Above ground starts what's called the celestial dome. This is the realm of skies until the stellar dome which lies above it.

#### ♦ Skies and climates

There's not only one sky in Kerminwoks, but several, and each of them is characterized by its own colors and climates. Climates and seasons are indeed not the result of the sun or of any astronomical factors, but directly pertain to skies.

The seasons experienced under each sky can therefore vary. Some skies have only two seasons (basically hot and cold), while others have the full span from spring to winter. Some others can even sustain the same weather all year round, and therefore know only one season.

Temperatures and other meteorological events (like winds, storms or rain) are similarly personal to a given sky. Some skies are thus harsher than others, making life more difficult in a given region or at a given time of the year.

Each sky is furthermore identified by a color. The blue sky we know in our world does exist in Kerminwoks too, but is by no means the norm. Of course, a sky's color changes in relation to its luminosity depending on the time of day. The tone of each sky is brighter at noon and is dark at night. A red sky is thus more likely light pink during a bright day and turns to dark crimson at night. And just like in our world, when the sky is clouded, its color is hidden, and all you see is the grey veil of the clouds.

The distribution of these different skies follows no apparent pattern or rational division. Same goes with their climates. A cold sky can either be in the north, east, west or south, and two neighboring skies can be very distinct from each other.

By the same token, all skies don't all cover an equivalent surface of land. Some are thus bigger than others. Besides, some skies mostly stretch over the seas while others cover areas where the Amayir seldom live. The Performer Players thus don't have equal chances to see them all.

Finally, skies also split into three levels of depth, labeled Lower, Higher and Upper levels respectively. The different altitudes at which are found these different levels differ with each sky, but basically, the Higher level starts around at least 2000 m and the Upper level is not found below 5000 m.

Clouds evolve in both the Higher and Upper levels. By the way, clouds are more or less solid on Kerminwoks. It is possible to walk through a clouded area, but you have to push the clouds away as you advance.

Most Somatils have difficulty adjusting to high sky levels and become weaker as they go higher. Again, this is not a matter of atmospheric pressure (as there is no such thing in this world), but the result of the sky's properties. Other Somatils are on the contrary at ease in the Higher or Upper levels. They're in reverse generally less functional in the Lower level.

### *The stellar dome*

Beyond the celestial dome lies the stellar dome. This is the outer layer of the world above ground and where you find the sun and all the stars.

#### ♦ The sun

There is one sun, which turns around the flat plane of the world. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Then, it goes down the earth and resurfaces the next day in the east.

This is this sun which casts the light of the day and therefore draws the limit between days and nights. This means that the diurnal and nocturnal times are the same throughout the world, regardless of the skies. Seasons depend on skies and thus vary with each place, while days result from the sun and are consequently the same everywhere.

Similarly, temperatures do not result from light or the sun, but from skies, as explained before. Daylight and temperatures are therefore totally disconnected phenomena.

On a side note, there still are equinoxes and solstices in this world and the duration of the day is thus not the same throughout the year, but explaining how this works would take too much space in this short introduction.

#### ♦ The year

Although solar rotation and seasons are two unrelated phenomena, they both follow an annual cycle. In other words, the duration of one year is the same for every sky as well as for the sun.

The Kerminwoks year embraces 360 days exactly, and all years are equal in length. Every 360 days, the sun has therefore known two solstices and two equinoxes while each sky has completed its full span of seasons which gets back to its starting point.

The year can be divided into months, but just like weeks these time units are only cultural and are consequently changing from one place to another. Only days and years are objective and natural chronological units.

#### ♦ Stars

The stellar dome is also filled with stars. You find two sorts of stars in Kerminwoks: those which are fixed and those which rotate all around the stellar dome.

Fixed stars look exactly like ours, which means they're not visible by day and shine like small white dots in the dark sky at night.

Moving stars are very different. For once, there's only nine of them. Secondly, they look like globes floating in the sky and are quite big, but their apparent size varies in line with their exact position in the stellar dome.

These stars cast their own light, making them visible either by day or by night. They're much more visible by night however, since the sun rotates below the star level, therefore outshining

them during daytime. Their shapes are still visible most of the day though. Only their color then blends with that of the sky they're seen through. At night however, each star reveals its own color, as it differs for each of them. The color of one star usually changes over the course of a few months and is not always homogeneous at any given time anyway.

One of the moving stars comes ahead of the others, it's what could be called the moon of Kerminwoks. It's bigger than the other moving stars, but its most singular trait is to have rings. And these rings have a changing size. This is why this star is equated with a moon, in the sense it has phases. Although its luminosity is ever the same, its rings get larger and smaller over a cycle of 33 days, independently from the rotation of the moon across the stellar dome.

The phases of the moon are of significance since they have an effect on several Spirits or Mokaïrs, including those of Mortals. The Mokaïr of Somatils is linked to the phases of the moon, to degrees which vary in accordance with the Talamé.

Moon phases are also likely to interfere with the Mokaïr of alchemic objects, to the point of disrupting them for a few seconds or minutes. The occurrence of such disruptions is however very hard to predict and anticipate.

By the way, since the moon is a star, like all other stars it casts its own light, which is of a different kind than the sun's. That's why all Somatils don't see the same by day or by night. It's not because the night is darker than the day, but because the spectrum of light is different (technically, the Lusidils who produce this light are not the same, hence the difference). Therefore, when mention is made of diurnal or nocturnal sights in the description of Talamés, the proper terms are in fact solar and lunar sights respectively. That's why some have a better sight by day, others by night. Some Somatils can even perceive both lights equally.

Note that the moon is far brighter than all the other stars, either moving or fixed, although it's doesn't equal the sun. The brightness of a Kerminwoks night is however not particularly strong compared to ours. In fact, matters of perception are completely relative. Once again, it depends on the sight of one. If you have a bad lunar sight, all the stars and the moon don't shine particularly strong to you. You see them clearly, but the night remains dark. If on the contrary you've got an excellent lunar sight, then the night can be as clear as the day. How well you see under a certain light is all a matter of Talamic capacity.

All nine stars rotate around the stellar dome according to the same pattern, and contrary to skies and the sun, no star revolves in relation to the annual cycle. They each rotate in a conical movement from the horizon to an acme located above the zenith of the sun. They move in ascending and descending spirals along this conical trajectory, each at a different pace. The fastest star is the moon, going up and down back to its starting point in about 10 months, while the slowest star takes several years to achieve one cycle of movement. The seven others have in-between speeds.

It results that the configuration created by the positions of the nine stars at any given time is always unique.

## Fire & Lightning

Fire and lightning (or more generally electricity, but since it manifests primarily as lightning, the latter term is used as an umbrella) each divides into three distinct types. Each type has a color. This color is not just a matter of perception, it identifies the properties of the Element.

The three types of fire are red, green and blue. Red fire is the one you know, the one that exists in our world: it's more orange than red and burns wood, is fueled by air and dies in water. Some

differences remain with our world though, since this is here not the absence of oxygen which kills red fire (since there's no such thing as oxygen in this universe), but literally water. Note that the absence of air (i.e. Sylphs) is also lethal to red fire, but oxygen has got nothing to do with it...

Green fire is in fact immune to water and can even burn underwater. Undines are thus of no use to put out such a fire. Only depriving the flames of air works in this case. For the rest, it's quite similar to red fire.

Finally, blue fire feeds on wood or Somatils like red fire does, but can also burn Gnomes, in other words, minerals. It therefore melts stone or metal. It however dies like red fire when exposed to water.

Note that the red fire remains by far the most common. Other fires are rare, and usually the result of magic. But some natural phenomena like lightning are likely to generate them. On a side note, firelight (whichever the color) is of the same type than the sun and is therefore perceived via the solar sight.

As far as lightning goes, the Pilfirax also divide into three colors: white, blue and red. White lightning generates an impact, like a blow, and can break things. Blue lightning is less violent but has a "freezing" ability on Somatils, in other words, it stuns them for a few seconds. Finally red lightning creates explosions and is the deadliest of the three.

All three colors are relatively common but they depend on the sky. Some skies can only produce certain colors and not others. Some colors are consequently unlikely or impossible in certain regions, but when all skies are considered, all types of lightning are equally common on the surface of Kerminwoks.

Among the peculiarities of this world, the conductivity of metal or water is not equal regarding the three types of lightning. Water only conducts white lightning while all Gnomes conduct blue lightning, but metals remain more conductive than stone. Blue lightning is thus not conducted by water while the blue one is not conducted by metals or stone. Red lightning is conducted by nothing, it simply explodes at the point of impact. The damage you take simply reflect your proximity to this point of impact.

## Metals

The metals found on Kerminwoks are basically the same than on Earth and their properties as well as their rarity are roughly equal. Gold and silver therefore remain precious metals in this universe, only a little more commonplace by comparison.

As stated above concerning lightning, metals only conduct blue lightning and not all types of electricity. That's the only real difference they all show to their Earthly counterparts.

There is however one metal peculiar to the world of Kerminwoks, which habitually goes by the name of *durigoln* or *dorgalan*. *Dorgalan* is the name of the native metal and *durigoln* of the metal once forged, but the two names are often confused.

It is mostly found in the mountains of Najkaméa, Nachtaka and Bardogoran and is seldom found anywhere else. This is consequently a rare metal, and its rarity combined to its properties concur to make it a metal just as precious as gold. Its appreciation is also the result of cultural perceptions and some rate it as the most precious metal while others consider it too unpractical to be of real value.

For the eye, the first property of *durigoln* is a dark color. Contrary to most metals it's not shiny, or only faintly, even when polished. But its main properties are to be particularly sturdy and also heavy. This is the sturdiest metal of all, which also shows a certain resilience to magic. *Durigoln* is not immune to magic manipulations, but the latter are simply made harder against it. It is furthermore far less conductive than other metals.

Durigoln has another particular property: it ages once it's been forged. Contrary to any other alloy, durigoln reflects the passing of time and gets older. As it does, its other properties are strengthened. Its color gets darker (until it becomes totally black), its weight and sturdiness increase, as well as its resistance to magic. All durigoln items are therefore not of equal properties and value. An old item has more value than a young one, but its weight makes it proportionally harder to use. Re-forging a durigoln item however resets its properties to their initial level. The ageing of durigoln is slow. You don't feel any change before a decade, and the object has really evolved into something else after about two centuries.

The downsides are that durigoln requires really high temperatures to be smelted. And blue fire won't help you in this task, since it simply kills Gnomes. Working dorgalan into durigoln is thus not easy. But wielding it is no more handy. The weight of durigoln is also part of its characteristics. Forging weapons or armors with it have the quality of making these items very reliable, but they also require of those who use them to be trained in their use or to be particularly strong and bulky (like a Lorminarkan for instance). This factor alone restricts the use and spread of durigoln items altogether.

## Bodies

Since none of the laws of physics as we know them apply to the Kerminwoks universe, biology and bodies are necessarily different too.

First of all, the metabolism of bodies results from the Mokaïr of the Spirit incarnating this body. Biological processes are therefore strongly Spiritual in nature.

As far as organs go, the differences with our world are less pronounced. Most Somatils have the same organs and organic structures than animals. All Amayir for instance have one heart, one brain, one stomach, veins, etc. Same goes with bones. The exact functioning of these organs remains slightly different from our reality though, since again, physiology and life itself are strongly regulated by Spiritual factors. Blood flows are thus a vehicle for the Mokaïr, and the Spirit of a Mortal doesn't abide in one place (e.g. the brain or the head) but is anchored into several organs, and its energies flow throughout the entire body at all times. A head trauma in Kerminwoks is therefore not as consequential as it is for an animal in our world. All healing processes can also greatly vary from reality standards as they relate to physiology (and thence to Mokayiric factors). Besides, the discrepancies between Talamés can be very significant on this front.

By the same token, the line that runs between endotherms and ectotherms in our world and which bears a primal importance has on the contrary no meaning here. Some Somatils can have a cold blood while most have a warm blood, but this doesn't inform much about how the metabolism of such Somatils work and what are their overall properties.

Finally, and to conclude on the subject of organs and physiology, the varying morphologies of the different Somatils naturally implies mechanical differences with what we're accustomed to in reality. Where is the heart of a Centaur for instance? Or maybe it has more than one? Same goes with its stomach or genitals. Where are they? How do they work? You can see with this simple example that biological and organic matters necessarily differ in a world such as this.

There's another difference with reality concerning bodies, more unexpected this time: there is no decomposition process. Differently put, when bodies die, they don't rot, they simply dry out. Only some illnesses trigger decomposition. When a Somatil dies while being ill (whatever the cause of death), it is consequently subject to decomposition as we know it. Otherwise, bodies simply turn dry, in the manner of mummies in our world.

Colors fade and all flesh (including organs) turn to some sort of leather. This process takes several months.

In fact, when Somatils die in Kerminwoks, they have the aspect of mummified bodies in our world, while mummified bodies in Kerminwoks look like they're still alive. This is why mummification still exists as an embalment ritual in some cultures, to preserve the persons as they were in their living state.

## ♦ Microbes & hygiene

In the continuation of what is said above, microbes or toxins don't exist in Kerminwoks. Illnesses do exist, like poisoning, but they each obey to different mechanisms which won't be covered here (illness won't be a major concern in the core game anyway).

The notion of hygiene however exists in this world, but only as a cultural component. Bodies are normally effected by dust, stains and sweat, and therefore the issue of body care still holds relevancy, but not in relation to sanitation and health. Hygiene is therefore a cultural concept only, primarily related to odors and to how the body is socially taken care of.

Finally, Somatils do defecate and urinate, but not necessarily as much as animals do. The Amayir for instance have overall less needs in that area than most mammals like humans for instance. The issue of sanitary commodities in places where staying is only temporary is consequently given a different treatment than in our world.

## Spelling

The different words and names of the world are not spelled inconsistently or in an esthetic manner, just for the way it looks. Their spelling describes the way they sound, regardless of their language in the Kerminwoks universe. This is a huge help for you in knowing how to pronounce these strange words from a strange land.

The game relies on a phonetic system which rules apply to all non-English words, and thence, when you see how a word is written, you can therefore deduce how it's pronounced, no matter the origin of the word.

Kerminwoks Délos Nérédar relies on its own phonetic system in order to prioritize the rendering of the most common phonemes found in its languages and also in order to be easily typed on a European keyboard. That's why a universal phonetic system like the IPA is not used.

The rules of association between sounds and signs have been summarized in the following chart for three languages of reference. You can easily get back to this chart when you need to check how a given word is pronounced.

Note that this chart only gathers a part of the different graphemes (signs) used, since those which are obvious are omitted.

The correspondences are not exact, especially from one language to another. The goal here is not to be technical but simply to give you pronunciation guidelines.

Except for the cluster of letters referenced in the following table and in its notes, all letters are pronounced individually in the different words you'll find.

## ♦ R phonemes

The /r/ corresponds to an array of rhotic phonemes in general without any more specification. Most of the Kerminwoks languages used in the game only have one rhotic phoneme each, which makes it impossible to confuse such phonemes. The Nasadjéna language contrasts /r/ with /rh/, but the two phonemes

are precisely considered as distinct in this phonetic system. So, depending on the language, an /r/ corresponds alternately to a trill, a flap, a uvular fricative or a retroflex as in English (particularly American English). So, go the way you want about /r/, you can't really be wrong...

Sign	English	French	German
a	bath, father	la patte, classe	Wasser, Haar
e	but, blood, the	je, beurre	ende, heute
é	melee, hit	été	gehen, mehr, Weg
è	spell, let, bed	pelle, sec	fremd, Bär
o	top, hot, not	note, aurore	von, Option
ö	north	chaud, haut	groß, Option
i	speed, speak	ici, lit	mit, Schnitt
u	root, boot, who	jour, cou	gut, Blut
ü	N/A	lune	Psyche, fühlen
ain	N/A	fin, demain	N/A
ân	wand, croissant	temps, croissant	Croissant
ôn	wont	chanson, pont	N/A
c/k/qw	> see note		
ch*	ash, special	champ, chemin	Geschichte
dh	this, there	N/A	N/A
g	go, gear	garage	gehen
gh	> see note		
h	hat, hand, hot	N/A	Hand, heute
j**	déjà vu, vision	jour, je	Garage
kh	N/A	N/A	ich, Geschichte
r	> see note		
rh	Navajo	N/A	Achtung, acht
s	always voiceless as in <i>snake</i> and not voiced as in <i>Isabelle</i>		
th	mouth, thigh	N/A	N/A
w	before a vowel, it sounds as in <i>what</i> , <i>with</i> , <i>wood</i> . After a vowel, it marks a diphthong, as in <i>now</i> (aw) or <i>eew</i> ! (iw)		
x	axis	axe	Achse, Hexe
y	before a vowel, it sounds as in <i>you</i> , <i>year</i> . After a vowel, it works as a diphthong. <i>Ay</i> sounds as in <i>why</i> , <i>buy</i> or as in the French <i>taille</i> ; <i>oy</i> , sounds as in <i>oil</i> , <i>éy</i> sounds as in <i>eight</i> or <i>hate</i> , etc.		
z	zero, asthma, easy	zéro, zoo, hasard	N/A

\* /sh/ doesn't exist as a digraph here. The two graphemes are read separately, as in the word *mishap*. The affricate /ch/ of English (as in *church*), is spelled /tch/

\*\* the affricate as in *John* is always spelled /dj/

#### ♦ c, k & qw

There's no difference between /k/ and /c/. /k/ is the default grapheme. /c/ is only used for some languages, in order to distinguish them. Since languages are not yet introduced, it's not really relevant to tell you which ones are identified by a /c/.

/Qw/ simply corresponds to the sound you find in *quarter* or *quality*. Apart from this cluster *q+w*, the /q/ is never used.

#### ♦ gh

I don't think you'll see this phoneme much in the core game, but it's still included here to be exhaustive. It stands for a voiced velar fricative, which is therefore a voiced version of the [kh].

If you don't know what that means and you want to see what it sounds like, you can simply look it up on Wikipedia under *voiced velar fricative*.

#### ♦ Other

When an /i/ (an *i* with a diaeresis, i.e. two dots on top) follows another vowel, it means the two vowels are pronounced separately, and not as a diphthong. *Äi* is thus almost identical to *ayi* but differs from *ay*.

Some vowels are sometimes doubled. It simply means that it's a long vowel. When consonants are doubled, it's called a germination and means this consonant is accentuated. It's like a stress.

On the subject of stress, stress accents are not expressed in the spelling. They're identified by being underscored in the text the first time that a word shows up.