

The History of Ashnoor



Note to Reader

This document has been compiled in the year 1255 AE in the Ashnoorian Calendar (or 2021 for observers from that strange alternate reality who are referred to as Earthlings).

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Hall of scholars' historical records

It should be noted that both *The Kingdom of Geldheim* and *The Hadovean Empire*, may, at time differ in what they consider to be a true account of the history of our island. It is not our place to prove or disprove their version of events. Merely we attempt to transcribe the findings of our historical studies free of prejudice, based on the limited historical evidence available to us. Great care should be taken with our findings and as such should be considered for YOUR EYES ONLY unless otherwise approved by the council – Council of scholars).

The Golden Age - approx. 500 BE to 223 AE

Precious little is known of our period of history known as the Golden Age. It is widely considered to be a period of time of great technological advances and prosperity. Sadly, with the rise of *The Erayax Horde* at the conclusion of the *Succession Wars*, and the subsequent need for both *The Kingdom of Geldheim* and *The Hadovean Empire* to rebuild after what was close to their mutual annihilation, the vast majority of artefacts and historical transcripts detailing our pre-*Succession Wars* history is lost in time.

We can say with confidence however, that during the Golden Age, the Enlightenment occurred (Detailed below). This is thought by many to be the most significant moment in our history and signified the coming together of all Races as a truly unified Ashnoor. Whilst the details of the Golden Age somewhat of a mystery, it is clear that in about 223AE or thereabouts, the Golden Age abruptly ceased.

The Enlightenment - 0 AE (After Epiphany)

Today, many mythical races co-inhabit the lands Ashnoor to such an extent that it is considered to norm. Approximately 1,300 years ago however, this was not the case. *The Kingdom of Geldheim* was primarily human. The many races of Ashnoor kept to themselves, mistrusting and often hostile towards each other. Armed conflicts between races were not uncommon.

The Knife Accord, named ironically after the mountainous area of land where the agreement was made, signified the moment in time when the leaders of all the Races in Ashnoor came together and swore an oath before the heavens to join together under one leader and forever more co-exist in peace.

It was decided that from that point forward, all races would come under one rule for the betterment of all. The Queen Ildres (of *The Kingdom of Geldheim*) was the key figure in bringing the races together. Legend has it the Queen Ildres would often meditate for days on end. After one such meditation under an ancient oak, she came to an epiphany. This epiphany led to a seven-year crusade to bring the races of Ashnoor together. It was a crusade that came at great personal cost. Those present at the Knife attributed this epiphany as a message from the Gods. So, it came as no surprise that the leaders of the races of Ashnoor voted unanimously to pledge fealty to *The Kingdom of Geldheim*. Under Queen Ildres benevolent rule. Truly unifying the island of Ashnoor for the first time in history, and transforming the Human *Kingdom of Geldheim* to a Kingdom that represented all races. Future regency over *The Kingdom of Geldheim* would be passed on to the oldest surviving child. Where no such child existed, the will of the Gods would be sought by the Ceremony of the Monarch Rose, allowing only descendants of those leaders present at *The Knife Accord*.

So significant was this moment in history, the Ashnoorian Calendars were reset to zero from the time of Ildres's dream of enlightenment with an "AE" added after the year number. The vast majority of the Ashnoorian's rejoiced and believed this change was necessary and justified. Some instantly, others eventually. But not all...

This was also widely agreed to be the high point of the oft mythologized *Golden Age of Ashnoor*. Curiously, during perhaps Ashnoor's most divided period, the golden age was somehow initiated.

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Many scholarly articles debate the ultimate “gifts” of war through the lens of “Golden Age” legends. It is widely accepted that war is, in some cases, necessary and that some good comes from it.

As an interesting side note. Those loyal to *The Kingdom of Geldheim* often refer to *The Hadovean Empire* as “Oath Breakers”. This is in reference to *The Hadovean Empires* decision to move away from hereditary rule (as agreed to by *The Knife Accord*).

The Succession Wars - 223 AE to 250 AE

Queen Iselda was dead. A few had been heard commenting that it was about time. She was 97 after all and no one rightly lived that long...

She had a few firsts to her name. The first Queen to have succeeded the throne, not simply as her birthright, but by strength of will as well. She was the first person known to have lived as long as she had. Under her reign, the first settlements in the northern wastes (turns out they were not so wasted) had been established... In fact, her reign was considered, by almost any standards, a golden age for Ashnoor. But all things must die, even the great Queen Iselda.

Upon Iselda’s death the crown was passed onto her son, Girardus. Girardus, however, was sickly and old and his reign lasted less than a year before he too passed on. Girardus had left siring children to quite late in his life and as a result, at the time of his death, his children were either young adults or still in their adolescent years.

His two eldest were twins, a son (Daldon) and a daughter (Essandra). By most standards, the next to wear the crown should simply have been one of them. Daldon and Essandra were close, it is believed that between them they resolved the issue with Essandra having chosen to stand aside. This was not an agreement however that their younger siblings supported. One brother demanding Essandra’s claim be recognized, another two brothers made their own claims (although clearly not eligible for succession under traditional rules), and the youngest two (a brother and sister) initially sided with Daldon (later they would go their own ways, disastrously).

Within weeks *The Kingdom of Geldheim* was plunged into an outrageous civil war. Neighbouring towns that had thrived for generations by working together now fought each other. Families were torn apart in a bitter fight to the death, that would see many casualties. Insanity seemingly prevailed. Eventually, Essandra gathered her people and moved to Mirthstone. This did not save her from war however, it became the first stumbling steps of a new Hadovean Empire. So it was, with a murderous civil war as the backdrop, Empress Essandra established a new realm along with a new way of establishing leadership. She was patently aware that her people chose to follow her – this became the basis for succession within the Empire – bloodlines were irrelevant, having the people’s support was all that mattered in Essandra’s view.

Some of the siblings found time to raise families – perhaps it may have been better for all had they not.

Ten years into what was dubbed the Succession War, Daldon was assassinated. The next oldest sibling, Kennod at the age of 27, claimed the Crown through surviving the Monarch Rose ceremony. It is said he did so unopposed – yet the backdrop of civil war demonstrated the untruth to this claim. Kennod was a gifted war time leader though and held the throne until his death in his 53rd year. During this time, the children of his siblings had taken the reigns of leadership (as siblings died off or were killed one way or another) ... *The Kingdom of Geldheim* was by this time in a deplorable state. Despite the citizens being war weary – the war raged on.

Essandra was made aware of forces massing in her old home land. She gathered her forces, called in her bannermen and allies preparing to meet the enemy. Rather than wait and have her own citizens placed at risk, she marched her army hundreds of miles in quick time to the fields of Ashnoor.

The armies that gathered near Bardaga Lake on the first day of hostilities appeared to spread from horizon to horizon, it was as if every able-bodied person from the entire continent had amassed here this day.

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When the battle began, both massive forces crashed together like titans shaking the heavens. The smells of blood, sweat, fear and death hung heavily over the land from day one of the fighting. The fighting simply did not stop, even throughout the night the battle raged. Days into fighting, storms hit, this didn't stop the fighting either. The only pauses in battle were to clear the field, seemingly not so much out of respect for the dead, simply to make fighting easier... The war was bitter and vicious.

Empress Essandra was mortally wounded at the beginning of the third week of battle. A daring stand against seemingly insurmountable odds after having fought through the enemy lines. The battle raged. A new leader rose up seemingly from nowhere. An initially obscure general, Ordan Callingber, led a defensive action on the right flank and broke the enemy line. He was unanimously supported as the new emperor – at the time he grimly shared with his first officer he had doubts as to how long his reign may last.

As it happened, he survived. Many others did not.

There were no clear victors, battle simply petered out due to the massive death toll. It was estimated that the weeks of constant fighting had decimated an entire generation, or almost at least.

Then came *The Erayax Horde* from the northern reaches, led by a ruthless and malevolent Orc by the name of Vorbroth. All those that shared his malevolent vision joined his cause, regardless of race. Those that opposed were pushed south – or simply killed.

Both depleted armies limped to their new homes, while *The Erayax Horde* withdrew slightly to consolidate their newly acquired territory.

It would take several generations to recover.

Meanwhile, the once revered land of Ashnoor, now in disrepair, was now annexed by *The Erayax Horde*. Very few knew for sure, and those who did were loath to speak of their adventures. It was known the place was deadly and only the foolish or those intent on finding their own death ventured there...

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The Rise of The Erayax Horde - 250 AE

Little is known of *The Erayax Horde* however many believe it was born out of dissent over *The Knife Accord*. It is believed that both *The Kingdom of Geldheim* and *The Hadovean Empire* were aware of *The Erayax Horde*, as there are records of minor encounters in the historical documents of both factions. What is believed to be unknown prior to 250 AE, however where the immense numbers that *The Erayax Horde* commanded.

After over 2 decades of fighting, *The Kingdom of Geldheim* and *The Hadovean Empire* were powerless to stop the advance of the Horde and retreated to the relative safety of the south, leaving behind them the lands now known as *Old Ashnoor*. For those unlucky enough not to have made their escape, brutal and savage death awaited them. While both factions have their theories as to why *The Erayax Horde* simply stopped their advance, truth be told no one truly knows for sure. Today little is known about the inner workings of *The Erayax Horde*. The lands controlled by *The Erayax Horde* are widely considered to be a brutal and savage place. Though there are precious few from the factions to have ventured there let alone returned to tell the tale.

The Fall of Aringale - 250 AE

Over the time of the *Succession Wars* there was much civil unrest in the Capital city of Aringale. The belief at the time was that was directly and solely linked to the conflict surrounding the *Succession Wars*. However, recent findings by the Hall of Scholars have shed doubt on this premise. Based on these findings, it would seem that a significant amount of the unrest inside of the capital was instigated and fed by agents of *The Erayax Horde*. In fact, well before even the commencement of the *Succession Wars*, *The Erayax Horde* had been able to successfully integrate undetected into a number of levels of Aringale society.

Truth be known, as the final battle in the *Succession Wars* was commencing, though the majority of the populous of Aringale were unaware, the capital was already under the almost complete control of *The Erayax Horde*. Thankfully though, there were some that were able to identify the threat and although they were fruitless in convincing the population or indeed the warring factions of their peril, they were able to escape the capital with various artifacts and objects of historical significance (although it should be noted that to this day the vast majority of artifacts and historical documents contained in Aringale are considered to be either lost and destroyed as a result of the fall).

As the final battle of the *Succession Wars* drew to its bloody completion, *The Erayax Horde* appeared on the horizon, the faction forces already severely depleted, were powerless to resist in any significant manner. In fact it would seem that both factions quickly identified that their only alternative was to flee south, to escape a brutal and gruesome massacre.

With the majority of the factional remaining fighting forces fleeing south, there was little left to defend the city of Aringale from the wilful destruction at the hand of *the Erayax Horde*. Those few that escaped, tell tales of horrific scenes of death, mutilation and destruction delivered with unquenchable ferocity never before witnessed in the lands of Ashnoor. This moment in history, has led to the pathological fear that both factions have regarding *The Erayax Horde*.

It was a loss of great cultural and spiritual significance to each faction, and a loss they both hold each other responsible for.

The Recovery Age (Survival) - 250 AE to 580 AE

The *Succession Wars* were as good as done, with no clear victor. Extracting a heavy toll with the loss of many Ashnoorian lives from both Kingdom and Empire forces. Both populations were clearly diminished. As *the Erayax Horde* assumed full and brutal control over the lands in the north. Those that survived had no choice but to abandon the northern lands and flee to the safety of the south.

To the South East, *The Kingdom of Geldheim* settled in Bannockthrope making it their Capital. To the south west, *The Hadovean Empire* made Mirthstone theirs. The lands in between both factions and

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The Erayax Horde were left to fend for themselves, many evolving into local, often insular rule. From here, over the first 2 centuries or so, expansion was slow and of minor significance.

The Recovery Age (Expansion) - 580 AE to 750 AE:

From about 600 AE on, both *The Kingdom of Geldheim* and *The Hadovean Empire* war parties (branded as explorers) claimed new territories. They had begun to do so forcibly, as many of the formerly non-aligned territories resisted what they perceived as occupation.

The Hadovean Empire's pointed to its ability to govern well, fairly and effectively to gain support for its expansion efforts in the lands it sought to claim, preferably in a peaceful manner. That being said, when they chose violence, it was implacable and without quarter. As a result of their efforts, *The Hadovean Empire* were able to considerably increase their territories, though no more or less effectively than their long-term adversary.

Simultaneously, *The Kingdom of Geldheim* engaged in their own methods to win the hearts and minds. They openly glorified their overwhelming force strategies when effective in the field. The Kingdom strategy was, in effect, awe inspiring and effective in achieving their expansionist goals.

Although rarely in direct conflict with each other at the time the factions would often refer to their opposing faction as "Kingdom criminals" or "Renegade Empire forces".

Borders in some areas inexorably marched on towards each other. Many a scholarly article from this very time period (600 AE – 800 AE) pondered what the eventual re – encounter would bring

The Recovery Age (Assault on Neutrality) - 700 AE to 750 AE:

These were particularly dangerous for the keepers of knowledge As such scholars, clerks, librarians, to some degree, scribes, often targeted not only to pilfer rarer scrolls, maps, treasures and other artefacts, but to remove them as the very representatives of genuine neutrality.

A dangerous cartel formed between a number of *The Hadovean Empire's* council of 12 (it is unclear how many members of the 'twelve' there actually were during this time) and some Noble houses of *The Kingdom of Geldheim*. Knowledge was their currency and as such, the long-respected neutrality of our scholarly institutions was seen as a threat to their activities.

During this dangerous period, many of the more neutral "professions" also became targeted for "correction". Many had completed loyal service to one or the other faction and, as a matter of survival hired out whatever their skill set is to the highest bidder.

Ultimately the cartel failed in its agenda as recently disparate groups from widely different "skills" began to unite under one banner and push back in a very organised, tactical and precise manner.

It quickly became evident to the leaders of both factions who, despite any other perceived flaws, remained loyal to the principals of knowledge neutrality (as the edict across factions became known).

Records indicate underpinnings of civil strife, unrest and general disquiet all through this period. Word of this had been, at times, brutally suppressed by either faction, presumably because of the potential stain on what they perceive as their good names.

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The Recovery Age (Reformation of Class Guilds) - 750 AE to 910 AE:

The Class Guilds had survived many hurdles during the first few decades of formation. Notably, both *The Kingdom of Geldheim* and *The Hadovean Empire* are widely considered by scholars to be responsible for infamous massacres relating to Class Guilds. Despite of all this, it is broadly accepted by both factions, that the neutrality of class guilds remains integral to the overall keeping of knowledge neutral.

A common edict is delivered by both factions that will, by all the laws across the island of Ashnoor protect the neutrality of knowledge for all time. Although since then, various isolated incidents have occurred that are in conflict with this edict, none of these incidents can be traced back to either faction directly.

By 910 AE, the Class Guilds were running relatively smoothly and keeping faith with individuals from either faction or neutrally gathering in peace to learn and share knowledge in good faith.

The Recovery Age (Early Conflict) - 910 AE to 1006 AE (approx.):

The first genuine border skirmishes between *The Hadovean Empire* and *Kingdom of Geldheim* are recorded since the *Succession Wars*. Over the next two decades or thereabouts, small war parties (between 20 and 50) engaged in border skirmishes, often for little real effect on either faction.

It is the widely held academic view that this was the actual renewal of hostilities between the age old enemies.

It should also be noted that population growth had been steadily increasing. Consequently, as time goes on, more and more able bodies are recruited into this new conflict borne from a centuries old feud.

Pistecos writes his short tales from the border classic (987 AE). Somewhat predicatively describing an eventual escalation of hostilities that, in modern times we are all too aware of. His classic work also rather disturbingly captures with artful eloquence, the absolute beauty, strengths, elegance, creativity, intelligence, horror, deep flaws, clumsy, destructive, wilful, ignorant, manipulative, underhanded, violent and deceptive natures of both factions are capable of.

Corruption is reportedly wide spread throughout *The Hadovean Empire*, all stemming from the council of 12 (there have only been a few rare periods where a stable council consisting of actually twelve members has existed, this period was NOT one of them), consisting of four "elite" citizens. Wide spread civil unrest ensued due to the massive disparity between access to resources.

Simultaneously, *The Kingdom of Geldheim* was having its own period of "unrest". Instability of the throne, in fighting between the "noble" houses and no oversight over managing the business of the kingdom created the perfect storm of internal conflict and unrest.

The unrest escalated in a few major centers to full scale riots with casualties. Leadership of both factions were shaken to their cores as the unrest spread to the very people they wanted protecting them, refusing to attack, even to subdue, the so called rebels.

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The Recovery Age (Escalating Conflict) - 1006 AE to Present (1253 AE):

Although at times presented as a glorious period of peace and collaboration, there is as much evidence to suggest a feeling of disdainful tolerance existed, in some regions at least.

Both factions have similar mixed reactions along their (current borders) from the inhabitants of contested lands. There are pockets more tolerant of one faction over the other, some outwardly hostile to one or both factions.

Of course, peace being short lived, hostilities resumed along virtually all borders.

Queen Ostel was noteworthy during this period. She was particularly active in aggressions in contested lands. In fact, she died in battle in contested territory.

As we come into modern times (current year circa 1253s) things have been relatively settled for the main, although the inescapable feeling of regrouping is undeniable, a side benefit of the temporary peace is the reforging of some trade links, economic regrouping and a somewhat prosperous time ensues.

This broke down entirely in 1253AE and hostilities have been ongoing. It is already clear that the number of larger scale battles and other actions are increasing. Further, the use of paid sell swords has become the norm rather than the barely tolerated practice.

This has gone some way to, in many regions at least, a degree of regard for sell swords somewhat higher than previously held. Especially those who do what they're paid to do. Some are noted as well for refusing to do "distasteful" missions or otherwise objectionable tasks.

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History of Ashnoor According to *The Hadovean Empire*

A FAITHFUL RECORD OF OUR GLORIOUS LEADERS AS RECORDED
BY EXNON THEODORE JEEKS - SENIOR HISTORIAN, THE NEW GREAT LIBRARY - MIRTHSTONE PUBLISHED 88622 AE.

Empress Essandra (Human) - *The Reluctant Ruler*: 223 AE - 250 AE.

Our first Empress. Essandra's history is widely known. She may well have been the legitimate Queen, that part is unclear. What is known and widely accepted is Essandra did NOT want the throne, or power, to lead. She rejected the throne, and some rejected her decision. This led to war.

It is also known that the Kingdom's days were done – the sun was setting on the golden age. The only ones not accepting that, held all of the power in the current structure. Corruption was everywhere, everyone suffered (well, except for the corrupt of course). When Essandra rejected the throne, she made way for her brother, not to undermine or change, simply to have no part. Those who chose to follow her were now at grave risk though, the Kingdom had branded them rebels without cause and quite unreasonably.

It was as Empress that Essandra established the council of 12 (Truth be told, it rarely had exactly twelve members, sometimes more and sometimes less – most records concur the smallest number was 7, so far), to administer Empire's interests. In effect, they advise the Emperor or Empress, manage affairs of day to day matters and, as needed, elect the new Emperor. The council is drawn from the Noble houses that have supported the Empire since its formation (formerly) in 250 AE. Over the centuries a few noble houses have "changed" as new houses gain prominence, and others fading into oblivion. A footnote in the histories.

Throughout the centuries, the pretenders of Geldheim (and their cowardly backers) have attempted to undermine, assassinate, divert, threaten, intimidate, bribe, or overthrow with subterfuge our just and Noble council members. The August body has always remained true, to the people of the Empire, and its leader. All the pretenders of Geldheim have really done is thrown away the lives of their commoners whom they send to do the dirty work.

I digress.

Essandra died in the final battle of the *Succession Wars*.

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Emperor General Ordan Callingber (Half Elf) - Hero of Ashnoor: 250 AE - 270 AE.

The final battle on the Fields of Ashnoor (original) that ended the *Succession Wars*, General Callingber was not famous, influential politically or outstanding....yet.

After weeks of constant battle, the Empire line began to falter (Callingber was unaware that the Empress had been mortally wounded). Callingber led a daring counter flanking manoeuvre catching the enemy completely off guard, crushing their left flank and causing such chaos that pandemonium ensued. His need heroics were not done yet unfortunately. The evil and cowardly, Erayax Horde emerged on the battlefield, led by the despicable Vorbroth. Their number insurmountable. Already seriously depleted from battling Geldheim aggression over 2 decades Callingber knew he had no choice but to retreat. Against all odds and surrounds by aggressor's intent on nothing more than their total destruction, through Callingber's battlefield leadership the people of Hadovean Empire were able to retreat to the relative safety of the south well beyond the reach of *The Erayax Horde*. It is widely assumed that the decision of the Vorboth (and that of subsequent leaders of the Horde) to not pursue *The Hadovean Empire* into the southern lands was the realization that such an attempt against a Leader of this calibre would ultimately lead to defeat.

His daring heroics and leadership won him fame and some regard; his calm measured affect also earned much respect. Essandra having died from battle-wounds, after an appropriate (and short, given the circumstances) morning period, the council elected Callingber as Emperor.

He survived his time as Emperor and stood down after a twenty-year run as leader. Every five years leadership is reviewed by the council – he was successfully re-elected each term. The first five years were consumed with the war and immediate recovery, exodus and resettlement – Callingber had managed exceptionally well in extremely difficult conditions. Those who survived would no doubt unanimously agree with the council in the '21 elections, he was their leader in absolute terms and had protected them.

Under Callingber the Hadovian's settled to the south west, those who lived in that region willingly welcomed the Empire's people and happily became subjects of Emperor General Callingber.

Callingber implemented infrastructure programs that, over time, started to improve travel and communication particularly. Roads were a high priority as evidenced by the speed (and efficiency) with which they were built.

Whilst he got non-combatants busy with building projects (Roads, hospitals, learning centers – from school to university as it were, city/town/village improvements generally), Callingber demonstrated just how keen a military mind he had, shoring up defenses despite limited people power and resources.

Callingber resigned from office in the Autumn of 270 AE to retire and live out his days near Lake Noor.

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Emperor Joran Honmire (Gnome) - The Banker: 270 AE - 324AE

Many a tale is told about Emperor Honmire, not all are flattering, in fact, and arguably most aren't. Also known as the Emperor of Taxation, Honmire did manage to fill the treasury during his time. It is widely assumed he did help himself to treasury funds rather freely, however, to his great credit, he did not drain them dry, or so it is said. This holds true, to this day we have a healthy treasury with minimal management.

It is recorded that Honmire laid the very first foundation stone of this very library. If I may, I personally hold him in high esteem for that alone. But I digress.

Largely peaceful times, given no serious pressure or crisis, The Banker had an unremarkable, ordinary run in office. There is no clear record of how, why or when he left office – or what happened to him from there (of course there are rumours, persistent ones, that he hired some clever folks who could make explosive black powder. Then he hired some other folk who were somewhat adept for using said powder to...get their way with some things – from there they began to recruit, so the rumour goes).

Empress Hally Stormeye (Dwarf) - Justice: 324 AE - 375 AE

Despite no war, at least no threat from any wars, Hally still managed to live in violent and dangerous times. Crime was rife and *The Hadovean Empire* was unsettled because of this.

Empress Stormeye established the first Empire wide sheriff or policing system to address the increasingly brazen attacks, thefts, murders on every road in the empire.

Being an adversarial lot, the sheriff's approach quickly established more people stalking highways for victims rather than less. Violence was now on the increase, whereby previously some almost mischievous stealing; now violence was almost a certainty from either side.

Empress Stormeye had implemented wide spread reforms when she was killed in a roadside incident in 643 AE. *The Hadovean Empire* was plunged into a dark period of chaos for the 12 years following Empress Stormeye's unexpected death. In effect over this period of time *The Hadovean Empire* ceased to exist.

Empress Elyian Torlea (Half Elf)- the Diplomat: 387 AE - 413 AE

Brokered deals with a range of groups some fully behind civil unrest and some merely disgruntled whom could go either way. Ultimately, Empress Torlea restored calm to the Empire with minimal (if any) use of force. A renewed age of building and restoration began.

Empress Torlea also reshaped the council somewhat in order to maintain momentum on beneficial projects that may require attention for longer than an individual Emperor's run. In effect, the council adopted a little more power; however, this body had proven time and again to be absolutely trustworthy.

Many whom had previously hunted on the highways were now on payroll to patrol the very same roads and keep them "safe". *The Hadovean Empire* was about to embark on a period of peace, prosperity for all and rejuvenation.

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Emperor Pab (Goblin) - *The Benevolent*: 413 AE - 457 AE

Little is known of his achievements based on the records that we have. However, it is widely considered true that his compassion for the commoner was unmatched. Often to be found amongst the poorest of the poor distributing bread to the neediest of our empire. Unfortunately, his leadership was cut tragically short, succumbing to an affliction of the mind that eventually drove him into insanity, at which time the Council of 12 had no choice but to remove Pab as Emperor

Emperor Benah Naoy (Human) - *The Indecisive*: 457 AE - 490 AE

History shows us no greater example of the absolute necessity of the Council of 12. Weak and indecisive. Incapacitated by self-doubt. The Council of 12 provided much needed leadership over this time, assisting Emperor Naoy in his daily duties until his death in 490 AE. The result of which saw a time of great harvests and prosperity the common man of *The Hadovean Empire*.

Empress Pingat Ferelly (Gnome) - *The reliable*: 490 AE - 562 AE

"Never doubt bureaucracy" was possibly Pingat's catch cry. She has been attributed with developing the efficient systems for administering and ever-expanding Empire. Of course, the council supported her in this. Despite her notoriety for demanding every box being ticked on the form (as it were), she got things done, very reliably. Hence her epithet. She retired from office in 562 to enjoy her senior years in peace and quiet.

Empress Arlideral Tjymore (Half Elf) - *The builder*: 562 AE - 613 AE

Responsible for significant expansion of Empire territory. Even more significant, this was allegedly achieved without bloodshed. Arlideral was responsible for building major arteries throughout the Empire. Ongoing building healing centers and Colleges were also high on her list of achievements. She died in her sleep whilst still in office.

Emperor Kormath Grig (Orc) - *The Warden*: 613 AE - 670 AE

The council was unanimous that the "people" had become a little to expecting of an easy ride. Kormath ushered in a period that almost bordered on martial law. To be fair, laws were frequently ignored willfully, the system could be slow about this. Kormath built and filled a few prisons in his time.

Eventually Kormath's run came to an end when he was unanimously voted out after threatening to arrest members of the council.

Emperor Aluim Rendil (Human) - *The Pirate*: 670 AE - 725 AE

To date it is still unclear if Aluim was genuinely a pirate or if the name was merely an affectation. Based on uncertainty alone it is often assumed that he was.

However, his time as Emperor was a time of expanding the Empire's wealth. Which of course lends more credence to the possibility of his "other" interests. The Empire's first full time navy was sponsored by Aluim, with council backing. Its main role was ceremonial since they were under no threat from the sea presently. It is widely held that during the Pirate's run in office the majority were generally happy and content.

Emperor Gejora Sporleyfray (Half Elf) - *The ancient*: 725 AE - 809 AE

Ironically came into office fairly young. However, his run was remarkably long. A period of stability and further growth, Gejora was a master and keeping the various "levels" of Empire society generally pleased. Quite unusually, Gejora's run in office survived three different mixes of council. He had outlived two lots. Gejora Sporleyfray retired from office and survived with into the 800s AE.

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Emperor Nerisas Brookekeep (Human) - The Bureaucrat: 809 AE - 868 AE

It was widely rumored that Nerisas never saw the sunlight during his entire run as Emperor. Despite his bookish, office bound ways though; he survived in office for over 50 years (until his death). His personal record keeping was meticulous. This has led many historians to rather brutishly suggest he should have been known as the Penny pincher rather than the Bureaucrat. He accounted for every single copper.

Emperor Glervom Brightsteed (Human) - The brute: 868 AE - 902 AE

Perhaps one of the most interesting Emperorships in that it was full of contradiction. Overall, it seems Glervom was a fairly nasty and vengeful individual. It stands out that his main trick to remaining in office orbited around the number of councilors who “disappeared”, often on or near election time. On the other hand, he seems to have been admired by military and civilian alike for a range of “good deeds”. Glervom Brightsteed died in a tavern brawl, allegedly murdered, no assailant was ever found.

Emperor Meldar Stonehammer (Dwarf) - The Highwayman: 902 AE - 981 AE

Meldar’s epithet alluded both to his illustrious past, but more importantly, to his building of highways throughout Empire lands, many still in use in modern times. Despite his long run, it is widely recorded that his relationship with the council was often fractured. It is said that this is why he spend most of his time away from the capital building roads.

He retired from office at the completion of several significant building projects.

Empress Bellyn Highburrow (Halfling) - The Mother: 981 AE - 1024 AE

Arguably one of the most colourful figures ever to wear the robe. Her run is frequently referred to as a 4-decade moving feast. Everything seemed to fall into place for her run. The council made a good choice, recognising that there had been decades of struggles and the hard work had paid off. The council elected The Mother specifically to “nurture” the Empire. This coincided with record harvests fortunately so Bellyn provided for all, and of course insisted on a few more meals a day. Although not a period of significant growth, Bellyn’s run was all about consolidation of Empire lands and her people. Bellyn retired after a very successful run and was widely celebrated for many years to come.

Empress Jocelynn Radstern (Human) - The Betrayed: 1024 AE - 1050 AE

As with most records of the time, meaningful records of her achievements are hard to find. It is widely thought though that she was a well-loved ruler. Tragically murdered in her bed chamber by her husband in what was sometime later considered to be part of an elaborate Geldheim plot to place Emperor Nobleheart as the next Emperor.

Emperor Gibren Nobleheart (Human) - The Disgraced: 1050 AE - 1089 AE

A dark period in our glorious history. Revealed as a Geldheim spy by the Council of 12, he was charged with high treason. A charge which carried a penalty of death by executioners’ axe. Prior to his trial, Nobleheart was found dead in his cell. It was said to be done by his own hand, wishing to avoid the justice of the people he consumed an unidentified poison (thought to be smuggled in by a sympathizer).

Emperor Saurukan Busaka (Half Orc) - Warchief: 1089 AE - 1124 AE

There had been reports of trouble on borders for some years, the council chose to act. Saurukan was specifically elected to shore up Hadovian border regions. A task he took to with vigour and great enthusiasm. The council, as always, managed the day to day Empire administration efficiently. The Emperor patrolled, raided and led defensive actions, also efficiently.

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The Empire standing army doubled in size during Saurukan's run – it is widely held this was still smaller than the enemy forces.

Busaka was killed along with his guards in an Ambush near whispering lake. The one survivor reported it was a local band of brigands who attacked them.

Empress Selene Bolanche (Human) - The Tyrant: 1124 AE - 1155 AE

Busaka's death gave the council a scare. Not so much that he was dead, but the fact if they realised, they'd killed the Emperor that could lead to further attacks. Elected with some urgency, Selene seemed an excellent choice at face value. A skilled tactician, respected leader of fighters, and a skilled warrior in her own right. The initial response to the former emperor's death was swift and final.

Selene then declared martial law, disbanded the council guard and installed her own loyal elite guard. The council was stymied.

Truth be told, even under her so called "tyrannical" rule, day to day life for ordinary people going about their business was largely unchanged. The council certainly felt the full weight of what they labeled tyranny though. However, the borders were never breached under Selene's guardianship.

Selene fell from a horse reportedly and died from her injuries.

Empress Laurhak Dawnstriker (Goliath) - The recruiter: 1155 AE - 1205 AE

Surviving council members quickly took up the reigns and after much deliberation elected Laurhak to wear the Robe. Laurhak halted martial law and relaxed restrictions. The Empress quickly grasped that threats to the borders were genuine. She set about recruiting and training up forces to further protect their beloved Empire. The last few years of her run were focused though more on northern borders where unaligned groups lived as lawless pagans.

Laurhak resigned to join her family for the battles to come, but not without ensuring Arndan was fully informed of the state of the Empire.

Emperor Arndan (Human): 1205 AE - 1241 AE

Border skirmishers had erupted, it had been widely rumored that Kingdom forces were massing in contested territory and if not doing the raids, were behind them.

Arndan led probably the largest group of fighters and was unanimously elected by the council of 12 to manage hostilities. Highborn, loyal to the Empire flocked to his standard.

This was informally, the renewal of hostilities with *The Kingdom of Geldheim*.

Empress Yal soi Darquin (Human): 1241 AE - present

Empress Darquin was elected leader in 1241 AE after Arndan was stood down.

Yal soi leads our glorious Empire currently as the fight against the unlawful Kingdom picks up pace a new. Her leadership has been supported, not only by the council but by the people.

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History of Ashnoor According to *The Kingdom of Geldheim*

THE ROYAL LINE OF SUCCESSION: (THE STRUCTURE OF THE KINGDOM) A TRUE TELLING BY BELROD HADRIGAN, PERSONAL SCRIBE OF KELTO I (KING 1197 AE - 1227 AE).

The Royal and noble King Kelto the first has consented to me conducting an in-depth study into the line of succession, thus demonstrating his faith in his right to the crown and, as you will see, proving that faith to be well placed.

Following are the results of extensive, thorough and lengthy study into every piece of evidence available today into our noble line of succession.

It should be noted that one outstanding characteristic regarding succession that until now has not been widely known (or accepted in some circles it was known in); the idea of a hereditary line (being of one familial bloodline) is an error. The Gods select who will succeed the throne, whilst the oldest child of a current monarch are accepted, if there is no "heir apparent" then likely candidates (who can display lineage to those present at *The Knife Accord*) drink the tea of the "Monarch Rose" (an iridescent aqua coloured flower) and hopefully a monarch emerges.

Tea of the Monarch Rose is a hallucinogenic that a small percentage of the population are immune (or appear to be) to the effects of. Whilst not generally fatal for those not immune, it can never be taken for granted, as some have died whilst under the effects

The logic goes as follows;

All plants come from the Gods (and animals for that matter). The Gods gave us this particular plant for this very reason, to guide us to a new monarch. It has been recorded that the ceremony has been repeated on occasion as no candidate has succeeded on the first occasion.

King Daldon (Human) - *The Rightful Heir*: 223 AE - 233AE

Daldon and Essandra are twins. An almost unwilling participant in the civil war, the worst that could be said for him was he may have been too weak to stop it.

He was assassinated in 506AE, almost certainly by a family member.

Neither of Daldon's children survived childhood.

King Kennod (Human) - *The General*: 233AE - 260 AE

King Kennod was Daldon's sibling and as such had no direct claim to the throne. He none the less succeeded to the throne through the Monarch Rose ceremony. A gifted leader in times of war, Kennod personally led some remarkable victories during his 27 year reign. He survived what is recorded as the final battle of the war of succession and the subsequent assault of *The Erayax Horde*. The survivors returning to their homes though mostly had to fight at least half the distance home. Kingdom's history records that for Kennod the *Succession Wars* did not end, his journey home tortuously difficult. He fought for 10 more years after the apparent final war. He died in the field in 260 AE aged 53, axe and shield in hand. King Daldon sires no children

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Queen Caisgain (Half Elf) - *The Restorer*: 260AE - 322 AE

Caisgain can trace her blood directly back to her very name sake present at *The Knife Accord* signing. An excellent candidate and immune to the effects of the tea. At her coronation, she was certain of one thing, she was Queen of a very small and fragile Kingdom. She would set about devoting herself to building upon that foundation. By the end of her reign the Kingdom was still relatively small but, it was by no means fragile. Caisgain had made a few alliances in some of the nearby territories that were presently unaligned. They were tentative but promising. Bannockthorpe is established as the Kingdom capital, albeit a small town presently. She produced no heirs.

Queen Mergo (Triton) - *The Tormented*: 322AE - 331 AE

Mergo's heritage was without question; her being immune to the tea is questionable in hind sight. Her lucid moments during her reign were exceptional. She is also credited with establishing (or in her name at least) Blood Bay as a port town.

However, there was a dark side. There is much speculation that she was in fact deeply affected by the Monarch's tea and eventually she went insane. Her dark side initially showed itself with violent but short bursts of rage. She is reported to have seen that which was not there and heard that which was not uttered. It is reported that she drowned in the Bannockthorpe harbour accidentally. She had no children.

Queen Dorella (Half Elf) - *The Tall*: 331AE - 400AE

The long reign of Dorella was marred by famine in some areas. This led to unrest within. Curiously this was at a time when there were no apparent external threats present. What could have been a time of peace was...difficult.

Dorella enlisted the aid of the scholars regarding famine and they proved helpful. Towards the end of her reign, food shortages at least had largely been addressed. Despite her long life, Dorella did not have any children.

King Belron (Human) - *Hollow Man*: 400AE - 445AE

Belron didn't do anything wrong. He just didn't seem to do anything much – just let things tick over. He didn't even bother with having children...

King Orlraxis (Half Orc) - *The Difficult*: 445AE - 510 AE

Territorial disputes did not end in diplomacy under Orlraxis. It was not that he was aggressive or violent per se, he just wasn't diplomatic. Sadly, he was also stubborn, in part due to his youth at the time of him succeeding the throne. The table of lords could not convince him to allow someone trained in the art of diplomacy act as negotiator. He never seemed to grow out of it though.

Despite a few brief, violent distractions though, he mostly represented a prosperous reign, the land was recovering and all bare a few isolated places food was in good supply.

He had several children, most of whom went off to write their own histories. Princess Elerguar succeeded him.

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Queen Elerguar (Half Orc) - *The Bold*: 510 AE - 564AE

The young Elerguar had been an explorer of sorts. At least as much as her protected childhood afforded her. She was aware that her Kingdom whilst sizeable it was sparsely populated. She was also aware of resources so far untapped. She had a plan.

Systematically settle areas near resources and keep agricultural space separate and protected. As resources and food stock increase, she presumed population growth would follow on. During the course of her reign she saw the beginnings of this succeeding.

Unlike her father, Elerguar was a delegator. The majority of her reign, this served her well. She died peacefully in her sleep with no living heirs.

King Esrel (Human) - *The Gifted*: 564AE - 597 AE

By all accounts a powerful figure who was the embodiment of a real Kingdom King. All the good points at least. Generous to a fault and could mix with court with the same ease and connection as he could with townsfolk. He was known for his tavern diplomacy and he did expand the Kingdom territories during his reign significantly. Legend says all of his negotiations were over a bar. The successful ones at least. On the few occasions it proved necessary, he was equally adept in the field.

He found time to marry and have two children, Prince Waldrin and Princess Asfarie. Prince Waldrin died in a hunting accident.

Queen Asfarie (Human) - *The Fair*: 597AE - 656 AE

The start of her reign was difficult. She was grief stricken.

However, once recovered she proved an adept, intuitive and clever ruler. The borders were somewhat in flux. However, under her rule, supported by all the noble houses she eventually stabilised borders and firmed up the Kingdom's territories.

Twice married (her first husband died in a border skirmish) and had four children.

Prince Eldror (Died of infant fever), Princess Maude (drowned in a river crossing), Prince Concal (Killed in a duel), Prince Barage (Crowned King 656 AE)

King Barage (Human) - *The Father*: 656 AE - 727 AE

Barage was believed to be the youngest son of the last of the Queen Asfarie. He sired 17 children with 4 wives (many rumored concubines and unknown bastards) during relatively peaceful times – this led to them all surviving to adulthood. So it was the four eldest remained in the capital with Barage, his heirs apparent and the other thirteen would lead an expansion of Kingdom territory or, rather a reinforcing of it. To this day, descendants of Barage can be found all over existing Kingdom territory.

Barage's children: Princess Ursul (later queen), Prince Reagan, Prince Gerrard, Princess Asfarie (the younger), Princess Caisgain (also the younger), Prince Theobold, Prince Arrad, Prince Trystlin, Princess Ildres, Prince Belfor, Princess Escondida, Prince Talon, Prince Anald, Princess Errmaigne, Princess Gertrayor, Princess Fallon, Prince Sig. Queen Ursul The fragile followed Barage's reign.

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Queen Ursul (Human) - *The Fragile*: 727 AE - 779 AE

Queen Ursul reign heralded the beginning of a time of unrest and at times poor record keeping. Her reign appears to have achieved nothing spectacular.

There are so many conflicting views on what took place from Queen Ursul's rule. Most speculation leans towards a period of widespread civil unrest, initially at least.

First records of the Monarch Rose also appear in recorded texts. They outline the monarchs already selected this way (not that this would not seem obvious to the casual observer).

Ursul left no living heirs and this was a further source of contention for some time.

King Gortain (Half Elf) - *The Doomed*: 779 AE - 828 AE

No significant achievements recorded; however, it seems Gortain was out of favour, particularly with the Lord's Table. No clear indication why though. He was died suddenly in 828 leaving one young heir.

Queen Loreilla (Half Elf) - *Firebrand*: 828 AE - 864 AE

Suspicious of her father's death and this led to some internal friction/unrest. Despite some good decades, food supply is always at risk. Nothing is more distracting from managing food than unrest. Loreilla's final actions were to clear much dead wood (or dangerous people) from the nobles. The purging it was known as. Her final years were spent trying to manage the problems associated with famine that had reared its ugly head again. Loreilla never married nor had children.

King Trystlin Strongbrew (Dwarf) - *Farmer's friend*: 864 AE - 916 AE

It had been sometime since a dwarf had sat the throne. Strongbrew knew what he was doing. He started out organizing farmers into collectives to help each other out. This was supported by nature giving him some excellent seasons in the 880s which led to a significant agricultural boom.

Trystlin Strongbrew ushered in a new period of growth and internal stability. Known as a firm but fair ruler. Although he had two children both abdicated and had no desire to sit the throne.

King Snortzeil (Lizardman) - *The lucky*: 916 AE - 967 AE

Snortzeil ascended the throne at the peak of the Ag Boom (as it was termed). His reign was marked by significant improvements to sanitation, which many scholars of the day point out were long overdue. Snortzeil was skilled at sourcing folk with the right knowledge for the task at hand. Hence, agriculture practices improved, animal husbandry improved and this contributed to improved living conditions across the Kingdom.

Snortzeil also led some challenging battles whilst further expanding Geldheim territories. He set a familiar pattern in place. Expand by conquest if necessary, but improve the lot of those defeated and they're yours. This effectively expanded the northern most region of Geldheim to roughly where it is presently. Snortzeil was a popular King in his day.

Queen Arganay (Lizardman) - *Consolidator*: 967 AE - 1008 AE

Arganay inherited the throne from her beloved father at a fortuitous time for the Kingdom. The constant threat of war from their age-old foes and the as yet unaligned (often untamed thought many) or even *The Erayax Horde*, as rare as that has been, always loomed. Despite this though, Arganay consolidated her existing territories. Often, she would grant generous rewards to those leaving their comfortable city lives to break dirt in a previously unsettled area.

Arganay encountered friendly groups who, whilst not wanting to align were friendly. Thus began the first tentative attempts at trade outside of the Kingdom's immediate influence. A curious time of plenty, yet with ever increasing danger.

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King Allarch (Bugbear) - Mysterious Monarch: 1008 AE - 1048 AE

King Allarch reigned up until 1048 AE, there is no record of his coronation date, it is assumed he ruled for most of the forty-year period, if not the entire time. One obscure document found claims that Allarch and his entire family were killed during an Empire raid on the capital, however, this is not supported by any other records and there are certainly no records of the Hadovian's having capacity to breach Geldheim defenses – the idea is frankly preposterous. Suffice to say, Allarch died and it does not appear he left heirs.

Queen Elyen (Half Elf) - The Unforgiven: 1048 AE - 1050 AE

Elyen was a Monarch Rose selection, if the records are correctly interpreted; however, she was deeply unpopular and was poisoned after a brief reign. No significant achievements recorded.

No Children recorded.

A gap of five years, most likely civil war before the next monarch drank the tea unscathed. It is said three of the other candidates were not so lucky, fatally so.

King Kordath (Gnome) - The hardy: 1055 AE - 1112 AE

Kordath survived the Monarch tea unaffected and had an astonishingly long reign even more so considering how perilous the times were. Plans were afoot for renewed military action against ages old foes. And of course, Kingdom politics was rife with danger; they seemed constantly on the brink of either civil war or outright rebellion.

Kordath is reputedly the King who expanded borders or formerly acquired territories at Hillfort, Sigvollar and crossing the river at Escondida Bay moving the border to its present location. Thus completing the work started long ago. He was not idle. He was also responsible for much restoration and maintenance throughout the land.

Kordath survived no less than six assassination attempts. People often only half joked that the King was immortal. However, one night, out of the blue, he dies peacefully in his sleep.

Kordath had sired a surviving heir.

Children: Prince Montague the elder (Died during assassination attempt on his father 1078), Princess Erial (Died during assassination attempt on his father 1078), Prince Montangue the younger (Eventual King), Princess Arradine.

King Montangue the younger (Gnome) - Father: 1112 AE - 1122 AE

Montangue the younger, Montangue the elder (his sibling) had been killed in one of the many assassinations attempts on his father.

Ironically, Montangue was 58 years old when he was crowned. According to surviving records, his was an unremarkable (and brief) reign. His most significant achievement was to come after his death. His daughter Ostel (his only child) was heir and in her prime when Montangue died of fever.

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Queen Ostel (Gnome) - *The Solver*: 1122 AE - 1153 AE.

Ostel was, among a myriad other things, fascinated with the Monarch rose. Particularly the occasional fatalities caught her attention. Upon looking into the stories surrounding these deaths, Ostel surmised that, for the main part, the deaths were caused by misadventure. Many were falling deaths, some drownings and several could be characterized as accidents almost, even despite knowledge of the ingested drug.

She made changes to the ceremony to ensure those contesting the crown were kept “safe” from their own actions, or as much as possible. It was not fool proof though.

Ostel also continued her father’s good work with keeping up maintenance throughout the kingdom. Whilst no significant changes occurred, she ruled during some significant battles as both our glorious *Kingdom of Geldheim* grew in numbers and so to, the rebellious Empire thieves’ numbers grew.

Her Royal Highness Ostel led many a noble and glorious campaign against our eternal foe. Several expeditions embarked into the forgotten lands, all to disappear without trace. Ostel was felled by an arrow in a skirmish near Moridale (Contested territory). Despite having had six children, none had survived her – she died leaving no heirs.

King Dale (Human) - *of Dry Mire*: 1154 AE - 1179 AE

Between 1153 and 1154 there were no less than seven Monarch Tea rituals performed. No fatalities recorded, however, an unlikely “monarch” turned up from the backwaters of Dry Mire. Dale, first King of his name (as far as records go) drank half a tankard of the tea and showed not a single sign of being “effected”. Two days later, he was crowned as the God’s chosen King.

An unremarkable reign, no conquest to speak of, people could be forgiven for thinking that Dale had either forgotten or was completely unaware of the Empire’s existence. The Kingdom was prosperous during Dale’s reign; this improved a great many areas of life for all. The clearest indicator of the prosperity was the population increased somewhat rapidly during this period.

His third son (and first surviving one) Egar was next in line.

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King Egar (Half Elf) - The Lame: 1179 AE - 1197 AE

Egar had been injured in a fall from a horse as a child. Despite his lame leg, he was known as a skilled fighter, tactician and negotiator.

He had brokered a return of prisoners in 1187 AE. Also of note the battle of Gelsnor crossing (contested territory) where King Egar out-maneuvred superior numbers of Empire forces to lead a resounding victory.

It is widely held the belief that Egar both through military prowess and negotiating skill led one of the most peaceful times in recent history (notwithstanding his father's reign, of course, there were no threats during that time though).

Deeper study of the period though suggests this was another time of re – populating and therefore less inclined to ongoing bloody conflicts.

Political unrest plagued the last two years of Egar's reign, coming to a climax with an attempted coup in 1197 AE. The entire Royal Family was assassinated during the failed uprising; the lords responsible were rounded up and executed.

King Kelto (Human) - Defender: 1197 AE - *1227 AE

In the year 1197 AE, his most Royal Highness Kelto the first ascended the throne and took the crown. His many exploits and acts of daring would be unfair to list here beside other legendary kings. A master at all he turns his hand to. Kelto's divine hand keeps us all safe, long may his reign bless and protect us.

**Note to reader: This is where Hadrigan's telling finishes – it was written in 1223 AE. Both he and King Kelto would be dead within the next five years, Kelto died falling from a horse and left no surviving children and the scribe Hadrigan was stabbed in a tavern brawl some months later. The year of King Kelto death has been recorded above.*

King Allard (Human) - Strongback: 1227 AE - Present

King Allard (Called Strongback in some friendly tribal regions) was the next to ascend the throne (another Monarch tea selected King). With renewed hostilities erupting with our age-old enemy, the traitorous rebels who call themselves "Hadovean Empire", King Allard has wasted no time strengthening vast fortifications on our borders. Our military might is stronger than ever before.

Long Live King Allard.