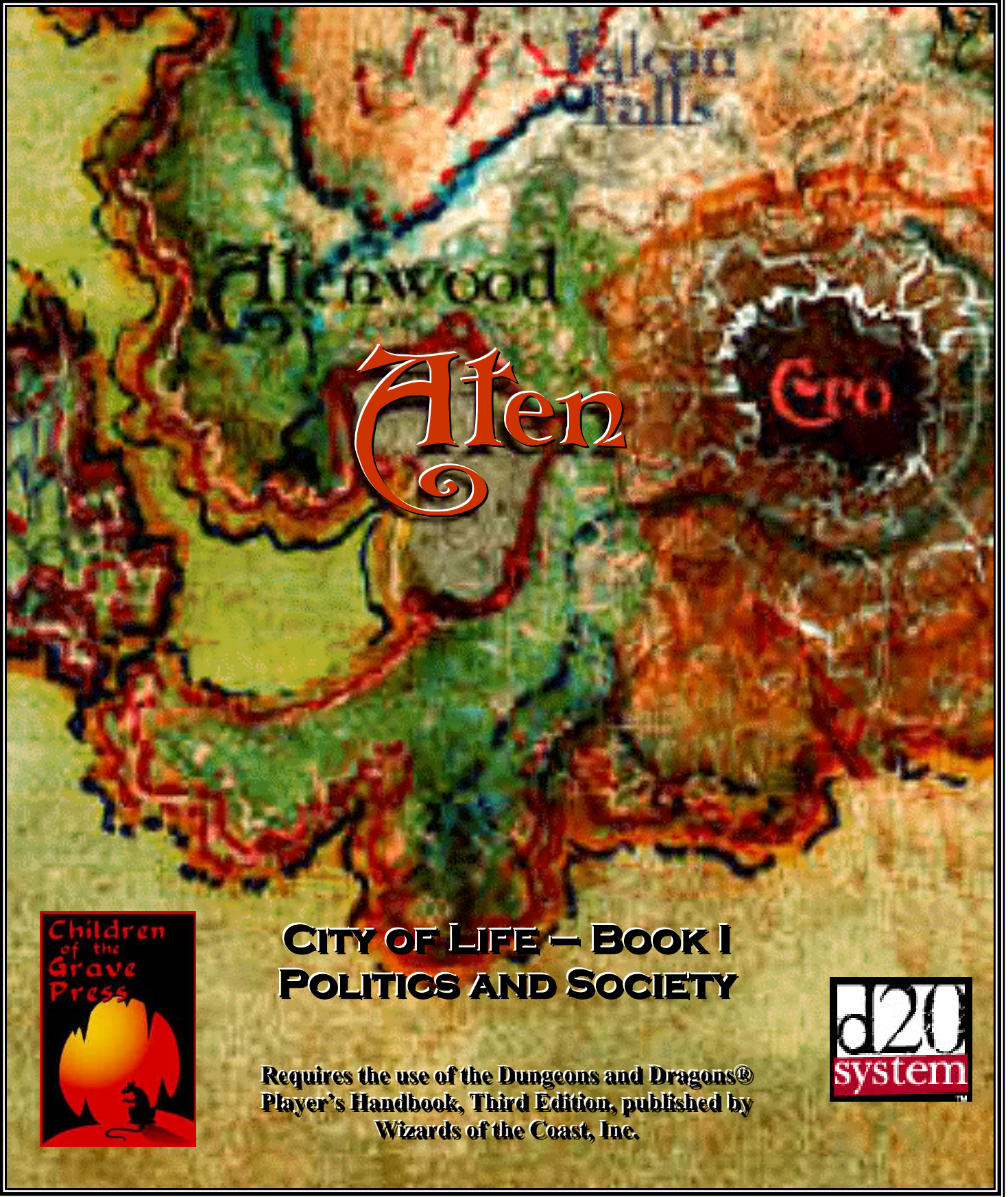




## **CITY OF LIFE — BOOK I POLITICS AND SOCIETY**

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# City of Life

## Book I – *Politics and Society*

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# Aten





## Aten: City of Life

### Independent City-State

**Who Rules:** The Congress of Aten (21 delegates), an elected delegation chosen from the various racial elements and trade districts. Representatives are chosen every two winters in a citywide election. The Congress is responsible for organizing trade with the surrounding regions in and out of the urban warehouses, the dispersal of foodstuffs to the population at large, zoning of the election districts, the organization of municipalities, determining the needs of the city as a whole, and keeping open communication between all the sectors of society. This does not include the noble council, who are generally granted a wide berth by the Congress.

**Who Really Rules:** The nobles of Aten, backed by their militias, are chiefly responsible for keeping law and order in Aten, and also lay claim to the most lavish residences in their districts. They run protection rackets throughout the city, taxing the citizens and businesses. Their rule is not overtly questioned, and though the Congress handles matters of treaties, trade, and foreign affairs, the nobles meet in council to discuss matters of property, allocating wealth, and the prevention of turf wars. The nobles manage a makeshift relationship with each other with dependence upon allies and through bribery, extortion, coercion, threats, and treachery to the populace at large. They are also responsible for running fine liquors, wines, and brews in and out of the city through black market channels, and each family has a venerable network of agents, deviants, and thugs. Overall, these activities are kept secret from the innocents of the city, whose view is that the nobles serve their role of policing the city rather well, and they share a reputation for being both fair and swift in dealing with murder, theft, rape, adultery, and vandalism. They use intimidation to acquire information

from those that are apprehended and will usually let lesser perpetrators and accomplices off for cooperating with the authorities. Offenders and fugitives of common law will often be sent to the Arena to prove their innocence on the Sands of Battle.

**Population:** 75,000 (estimated permanent residents). The population rises to about 95,000 during the summer, including merchant traffic, slaves, pilgrims, assassins, mercenaries, prostitutes, and the inevitable adventurers. The estimated racial breakdown reflects the overall makeup of the populace: 60% human, 20% halfling, 8% elf/half-elf, 8% dwarf, 2% minotaur, 1% gnome, and 1% half-orc.

### Major Products and Imports:

Atenians are known for their fine clay, bronze, steel, and iron crafts, and their artistic talents flourish high above the rest of the known world. Aten is decoratively adorned with various frescoes and statues that serve as an attraction for travelers, which translates into profits for the craftspeople. The magic sector is renowned for its production of arcane items, scrolls, potions, components, and books. Those who travel from Atenwood often cultivate various herbs, hems, papyrus, and even grapes in abundance that keeps the woods folk rather wealthy. Animals, iron-ore, foodstuffs, tools, weapons, and other goods are imported from around the region of the Fiorenan Peninsula and Nappol's Sea, as well as the Dragon Kingdoms and Thet. Within the Nyanatzian Highlands, miners have recently discovered an abundance of marble, which is now being incorporated into the ever-sprawling architecture of the city. The marble is a lush combination of pale greens, reds, whites, and violets. There is now a growing trade in marble crafts, especially during the summer months when the population swells.

**Armed Forces:** The loyal followers of Atinus, The Wardrake, undertake the protection of Aten in times of war. The clergy, and a standing army of 3,000 (F1-F3s) are led by the Knights of Atinus, an order which dates its tradition back through antiquity, famous for their deeds of both glory and honor. These comrades consist of mostly humans, though all are embraced in the common cause of defending the city from peril. Currently, the army can be found throughout the peninsula, consisting of allies from Aten, Atenwood, Greywood, the Highlands, and the scattered villages of the peninsula. Recently, the Knights of Atinus were credited with liberating the fortress-state, Rocky Point, from the clutches of Aten's rival city-state, Prakis. Within Aten itself, the army takes a less functional role, though they are known to pursue war criminals. For law enforcement, there are twenty-four noble families, each with militias, guards, mercenaries, and hired networks of spies, thieves, and assassins. The average family will employ a militia of 500 standing guards and officers, though powerful families can afford up to 1,500 swords if a turf war heats up. Two churches, the Temple of Urthur and the Temple of Atricles also patrol the streets for crime, usually in opposition to the noble families. Aten also maintains a venerable navy that was developed by both the humans and minotaurs of the realm and numbers 20 galleys, 50 warships, and is supported by 150 keel-boats.

### Notable Spellcasters:

~ Toutalis the Bright (LG human male Wiz13), adorned with gold and white robes, a fiery wisdom can be seen in his piercing, brown eyes, and he is considered the model citizen of Aten. A widower for some years now, he is viewed kindly by his neighbors, who all know his name quite well. He is

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famous for being the schoolmaster of a recently built magical academy founded to teach the arcane arts to the common folk and thus laying the foundation for a bright, magical future in Aten. At the age of 46 winters, Toutalis is well traveled and every three summers sails to his magical homeland, Ereditia.

~ Mithuul the Red (N half-elf male Wiz11), easily recognized by his red robe and cape that are always about his person. The head of a sizeable merchant cartel that deals specifically with gemstones imported from throughout Nappol's Sea, he is looking to expand into the trade of marble crafts, and is taking the time to gather and craftsmen into his organization.

~ Thilda (NG human female Sor4/Wiz3) is a relative newcomer to Aten, though this has not stopped her from gathering young magelings around her with the common goal of forming the Mages' Guild of Aten, which currently numbers about forty. Mostly, the guild is dedicated to sharing arcane knowledge, though they have a strong streak of benevolence led by Thilda, who commonly seeks out citizens in distress who need aid or comfort. She also runs a soup kitchen when not otherwise occupied with the guild.

~ Gabriel the Dark (N human male Necr9), is hardly ever seen in public. He resides in his magically locked tower in the Magic District working on unknown designs. When he does venture out his violet-black cloak and his overall pale complexion will complement his dark gaze. However misunderstood by the commoners, Gabriel helps to run an orphanage where he grew up. He seeks a quiet existence away from the politics that dominate Aten. It is thought that he once believed in a cause, but that a fall from grace led him to a darker path.

~ Deminora (NG human female Witch5) is a member of Aten's witches' coven, known as the Keepers. She adores the animals of Ravenwood and Atenwood, and has befriended their gentle natures. She is often found wandering the streets of the city, or the wood paths of Atenwood, greeting strangers, proclaiming the divinity of Dyanetzia and her children, and also offers divinations free of charge. She is interested in discovering what she views as new "talents" for the art of the Craft.

~ Eldon the Red (male halfling Wiz8/Clr7) is the High Mage for the Temple of Eredine. Eldon has led the church for 15 years and is easily recognized by his bright red hair and deep purple robes. Under his tenure the congregation has increased three-fold swelling to over 1000 members, some become spell casters or clerics, others support the church financially. Eldon has worked closely with other spell casters in Aten, including Toutalis and Thilda, helping them to set up their schools and encourage the teaching of magic. He has connections with Mithuul the Red who has used his connections among the merchants to provide outlets for the Temple's sale of books and scrolls. Eldon has attempted to reach out to Gabriel the Dark without success. He supports Gabriel's orphanage in concept, but also must contend with members of his congregation who distrust Gabriel. Eldon's overall goal is to spread the word of Eredine and to make magic and the powers of Eredine available to the general population of Aten.

**Notable Temples and Shrines:** Temples dedicated to Atinus, Poena, Eredine, Mortacia, Atricles, and Urthur, all exist within Aten, though Dyanetzia is by far the most commonly worshipped deity. Shrines bearing her essence and symbols adorn

the city's walls, buildings, trees, and streets. As the seasons progress throughout the year so do the festivals of Aten. There are a number of witches' covens that operate within the walls of the city, carrying on ancient rites in Ravenwood. Within the forums of the acropolis, shrines and worshippers can be found of most of the other deities as well, who gather to discuss the ways of divinity, the promise of rebirth, the essence of love, the ideology of philosophy, the inevitability of death, the glory of holy battle, and the joy of life. Religious freedom is exercised in Aten, and the city is often considered a melting pot of divinity.

**Notable Rogues' Guilds and Networks:** The Guild of the Greycloak, founded by the halflings who live in abundance on the shores of Aten, was originally a band of halfling adventurers who served to protect the original settlement of the Fiorenan Peninsula, Rhytin. After the halflings migrated from the north, the various tribes of humans, orcs, dwarves, and more recently, elves followed them. Aten was founded right on top of Rhytin and the halflings quickly adapted into human society. The Greycloaks still play a part within the society, and they remain to protect the halflings, but in a new way: by making a large profit! As such, the guild itself operates with the front of legitimacy, and they cover their deceptive tracks very well. Overall, they are a group of entertainers, bards, thieves, and merchants who carry on their work by day, and lay claim to untold fortunes by night. The guild's treasury is overseen by its guildmaster, Jenniotto (NG halfling female Rogue5/Bard4). She is fun to talk to, and uses her wit and humor to conduct diplomacy with the city's nobles, who are none the wiser about her group's activities. She is careful, cunning, and brave when she needs to be, and she informs her agents precisely, to which tasks need to be appropriated without drawing

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suspicion from the guards or worse, the noble militias. These wandering minstrels are often considered heroic in the eyes of the halfling populace, and they are known to be very generous in helping out families struggling to make ends meet.

Recently, Gregos the Quick (N human male Rogue5/Bard3) founded a new rogue's guild in the Arts Sector, operating out of the Flying Dragon Theater. Gregos is balancing the legitimate theater with his rogue activities, and is seeking out members for the guild's unique talents in acrobatics to spy, steal, or commit other crimes. Wealthy members of town are known to hire this often half-witted band for particular jobs that may require a stealthy approach.

**Equipment Shops:** Beginning in the year 223 SR, after the great warlord Nappolic died without heir and his empire was flattened, when the barbarian hordes began migrating out of the mountains, they brought iron weapons and tools throughout the fallen empire and are the first humans known to have forged iron. This discovery changed warfare forever, and massive swells of iron-ore were discovered in various regions of Danaa. Until the barbarians had dispersed this new metal to the humans, the dwarves of both Irgathe and Greymyth had always closely guarded what they considered to be the "secrets of Mordicar." However, in the years since, humans and dwarves began to work together in exchanging information. In its two hundred year history, the smithies of Aten have combined the methods of the races for forging iron to produce the newest discovery of the races: steel. Harder than its contemporary, steel is also lighter, making soldiers more agile in both their armor and

with their weapons. In a short amount of time, fueled by the wealth of the city's nobility, this process has been refined and streamlined as iron is shipped from all across Danaa to produce these wonderful, deadly weapons. They have effectively become the envy of the world at large, and other powers (like Prakis) are currently working to duplicate the steel-creation process.

~ The Gauntlet, All-Purpose Goods, is run by an aging husk of a man, Janitus. He oversees a major smithy guild in the city known only as the Steel Fist. The most precious of weapons can be found here, hosting a selection that cannot be found anywhere else.

~ The Magical Bazaar, located in the Magic District, offers an assortment of magical and non-magical items, from finely crafted weapons, potions, magical elixirs, to spell components, vestments and clothing, and writing material. The Bazaar is a maze-like open-air market with individual tents and booths. Booth space can also be rented by adventurers in search of fast coinage for the items recently liberated from tombs or dungeons.

**Adventurers' Quarters:** Visitors to Aten weary from a long journey at sea or across the peninsula are comforted in the arms of the city's noteworthy hospitality. From afar the call has been heard that Aten is a breeding ground of ideas, arts, and culture to prosper. Inns and taverns dot Dockside and the blocks surrounding the Arena, and each major district offers some form of tavern or inn, all overflowing with hearty brew and those seeking adventure.

~ The Widow's Solace (excellent/expensive): Named by the woman who built this three story white cottage that operates to both citizens and travelers with beds and sustenance. Her great granddaughter, Melda (CN human female F2), owns and operates the current establishment. She takes a hands-off

approach to running things, and leaves most of the chores to her numerous, well-paid servants. She has an interest in politics, and often diplomats and officials from afar take solace in her warm and hospitable establishment. She also carefully watches the local nobles, and she is afraid of certain groups who may be plotting a play for power in Aten. She hires adventurers to carry out appointed tasks, including delivering secret messages, gathering intelligence, and making a list of potential threats to the city-state.

~ The Dreamer's Den (good/moderate), and the Hideaway (average/moderate) are typical adventurer haunts, with common rooms, plenty to drink, and upper lodgings which can house both individuals and entire groups.

~ The Blue Boar Inn (excellent/expensive), is kept by Litzera (LN elf female Bard3). It is noted for its musical acts and live open stage events. This is a terrific venue for those lazy nights that adventurers crave, with good company and a host of interesting gossip.

~ Northgate Inn & Tavern (good/moderate) is owned by Jack Longarm (male, human Exp5) and is a regular stopping point for anyone who wants information about happenings in the rest of the Fiorenan Peninsula.

~ Wild Mages Tavern & Inn (excellent/high) serves the many visitors to Aten's Magic District. Brenner Aylmann (male, half-elf Exp8) runs the Inn and provides a gathering place for those seeking entertainment and a place to gather and discuss the finer points of the arcane arts.

**Important Character(s):** These characters are notable persons within

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Aten. Other notable characters can be found in each district. Those listed here are not generally associated with any one district but can be found throughout the city or on the open waters around the port.

~ Katzaer (NE minotaur male Rogue8). The "Bane of Nappol's Sea," Katzaer and his small fleet of twenty vessels pursue large cargoes due for Aten and often capture numerous slaves to be put on the market upon arrival in Aten itself. Warehouses are indifferent to products that these brigands bring to port, since it usually runs cheaper than the legitimate merchants are offering. Katzaer keeps a sturdy relationship with the port officials and through bribes manages to keep them tight-lipped about his group's activity.

### Important Features of the Town:

A massive 400-foot high wall composed of limestone and mortar quarried from the nearby highlands dominates Aten. Five gigantic watchtowers rise from the wall and offer spectacular views of the entire city and most of the southern tip of the peninsula. The walls and towers cast shadows across the city long into the morning and early in the afternoon. The city is often being improved upon as the population swells. Aten was literally built on top of and around the village of Rhytin the original settlement of the halflings where Dockside and the Common District presently stand. Despite the presence of other human tribes in the area (the Dartotians, Fratenics, etc.), it was not until the arrival of the Nyanesians that the infrastructure began to grow and the dream that is Aten became a reality. The Nyanesians brought with them from the Nyanatzian Empire an extensive knowledge of mathematics and architecture. Elaborate structures

such as the Acropolis and the Arena stand as testaments to their ingenuity and craftsmanship. These buildings incorporate the use of arches and vaults, elements that have proven to be essential to the monumental style of the Atenians. It was also through the influence of the forward-thinking Nyanesians that the current form of congressional government was founded to balance the powers of the influential, property-owning nobility. The walls were built for the purpose of a common defense. Dockside was recently expanded to compensate for growing naval and merchant traffic, and tradesmen and craftspeople from all over the known world flock to the Aten to take advantage of the city's current trade surplus.

Besides its active commercial life, Aten offers a busy entertainment and social scene. The town has several theaters located in the arts sector and taverns and inns across the city offer musicians, jugglers, poets, and other artists. Arguably the most popular entertainment in the city occurs at the Arena, where gladiatorial combat between slaves and criminals takes place. A large park, Ravenwood, offers the citizens a chance to experience the wildness and natural beauty of the peninsula without a large risk of attack from brigands or rogues. Ravenwood also offers many of the covens and worshippers of Dyanetzia a place to connect with Her in the natural setting.

**Local Lore and History:** In its short and proud history, Aten has grown to become the preeminent trading capital of the peninsula, but its roots lie in a legend born many miles to the north. Predating the city-state's existence is the long and violent history of a conflict between two empires: one ancient, and one nascent. Historically, the Nyanatzian Empire dates its existence through antiquity when the first Suzerain rose from the ranks of the original human tribes. Unity was brought to the divided land by the strength of the imperial forces, led by the Knights of

Atinus, and order was tempered to its citizenry by the swift but fair implementation of justice, led by the Knights of Atricles, and the formation of an interactive, representative republic. Over the course of thousands of years, the Empire had never fallen and had come to adopt a federal form of governing. Power flows to the imperial regime centered in Nyanaxis, the Empire's capital. The Empire never exceeded its bounds, and its long succession of emperors has always been aware of the danger of spreading one's domain too thin. As a result, the Empire developed a concrete relationship with its varied neighbors: the peaceful, nomadic Dyanesians to the north, the inventive and resourceful gnomes to the east, and the mountain dwelling barbarians to the southeast. The centuries of peace are credited to the wisdom of the emperors, but it all came to an end in 198 SR when a young demagogue rose from the ranks of the Dartotian nobility in the island kingdom of Dracontage. Originally ruled through council, the warlord Nappolic convinced that body to first pursue an expansionist policy driven by the weight of the rash noble's undisputed popularity with the commoners, who viewed him as the ideological head of state. The kingdom expanded its naval fleet in a short amount of time, and much of Dracontage's once lush forests were decimated. By 210 SR, Nappolic's vast forces had laid claim to several colonies throughout his marine empire that became known as Nappol's Sea, ranging from the shores of Cataclymn to the southern edge of Thracedonia. With the aid of red dragons indigenous to Dracontage in the air, and the extent of his navy, Nappolic quickly commanded complete supremacy of the entire region. This initially sparked conflict with the Kingdom of Two Bronzes, and the warlord laid siege to the two islands for seven years, nearly wiping out the population of metallic dragons. In the

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process, the Dartotians began rapidly migrating throughout the continent of Nyanesius and the island kingdoms of the sea. In the short period of twelve years, Nappolic stood poised to further expand his conquests north into the ancient Nyanatzian Empire.

From the first days of the war, the Nyanesians foresaw a bloody series of conflicts the likes of which would undoubtedly wage heavy casualties on both sides. And so, for thirteen years, the war wore on, with the gray dragons of the Empire inevitably triumphing over the reds of Dracontage. Both navies were decimated, and several cities, towns, and villages were pulverized by the monumental land battles between Nappolic's siege forces and

the defending armies led by the Knights of Atinus. In the aftermath, two empires lay in ruins, but the Nyanesians resolved to rebuild from the ashes, and took steps to ensure a more stable world in the future. During the war, the Nyanesians were afforded the opportunity to travel to new lands, exotic realms that fueled their desire to explore. The Empire set about reconstructing its ports and shipyards, and by 650 SR, the Nyanesians had migrated throughout the world, in the process building city-states, developing trade routes, forging new relationships abroad, and educating the peasantry. It was with these ideals that the Nyanesians laid the groundwork for the city-state of Aten. In 652 SR the tribe first landed in Rhytin to meet the halfling fishers, who were more than eager to help the humans develop a new trading port on the Fiorenan Peninsula.

Far beyond their expectations, in a short 73 years the population of the village swelled from 4,000 to 15,000 and soon the settlement was renamed in honor of the Wardrake, Atinus. Without any prejudice, the city of Aten grew, welcoming noble and peasant, wizard and cleric, knight and rogue, witch and barbarian to this newly established meeting ground between the races. More recently in history, Aten has become embroiled in a conflict with its rival, Prakis. This follows the liberation of the fortress-state, Rocky Point, by the Knights of Atinus from Prakis the previous year. In the present year, 899 SR, with acquiesce of the Congress, Aten has signed the declaration of war and has pledged to defend the fortress (and the peninsula) at all costs.

