

Map Notes for Helmonte and Aladousis

Helmonte

Helmonte was always an independent entity from the rest of the old Sarapolos Empire (of which the Leondar Imperium and The Irisian City States are descendant polities), and indeed also held hegemony over the Isle of Aladousis. However, 87 years ago, a citizen's revolt against an increasingly cruel and erratic monarchy saw Aladousis gain independence under a Grand Duke, and the rest of Helmonte governed briefly by a chaotic republic. 83 years ago, an energetic man, Meenidas, took the helm of the republic, and by means of cleverly manipulated referenda, became First consul, then Emperor of Helmonte, naming his capital after himself. Mennidas' descendants soon abandoned the Imperial title after 2 disastrous invasions of Aladousis (53 and 50 years ago), and styled themselves as Great King. Indeed the present monarch, Mennidas II, seems to have learned nothing from the original downfall of the Tyrant Kings, and is turning into such a tyrant himself – though not that erratic, and is capable of ruling competently, albeit very harshly. His capital is now Pagouphon, always the larger of Helmonte's 2 cities, and he has spent an enormous sum of money converting the old municipal offices to a sumptuous palace. The nation simmers with unrest, low grade though it is at present. But what the future may hold is anyone's guess – the heir apparent is now Elexios, following the (suspicious) death of his elder brother Mennidas.

Settlements

Cities

Pagouphon (capital) – pop 25,000

This was made the capital by the present monarch 15 years ago. He has spent a lot of money on his new palace, but also on judicious town planning and especially an updated sewer system, though the waste still runs out into the sea – just more efficiently. Here also is the new Royal Library, with many tomes looted from the former capital Mennidas, and also from 'tax fines' levied on most foreign traders, who now learn to take some books and scrolls with them to do business here.

The harbour is extensive, and well protected from the westerly storms – hence its predominant place in Helmonte's economic life. From here, trade departs to Holy Spiros for their manufactured goods (see Spiros Isle notes); to Aladousis, with whom a lively trade has recommenced after the bitter wars fought 5 decades ago; to The smaller islands in the south which Helmonte casts a greedy eye over, and of course both the Irisian City States to the north, and to Malak Almayta in Kumarikandam, the huge landmass to the south.

The harbour entrance is guarded/sheltered by an ever shifting barrier of sandbars to the north-west, giving the only deep water channel to the south of the city. Lighthouses prevent this from being a terrible navigation hazard.

Three temples are present here – one to Ares, one to Aphrodite and one to Zeus. It is mainly the warlike aspect of Ares and Zeus that are stressed. The nation is gearing for war, as evidenced by the busyness of the various armouries and weapon-crafters in the city.

Mennidas – pop 18,000

This was the former capital, and still has many grand buildings – palace (now the residence of the Sheriff, Count Herkule), former Royal Library, City Hall, Stadium and Theatre, Customs House and seven Temples(!). However, up to one third of the dwellings are abandoned since the move of the capital to Pagouphon, and many more are almost derelict; apart from the main streets, the streets are rutted and

barely useable by wheeled vehicles; the sewer works are malfunctioning in many places, and garbage is often left out to rot. The Count is a sadistic sex fiend – no-one's daughters (or sons) are safe, and there is no one to call him to account, as he is the principal support of King Mennidas II (in fact, he is rumoured to be responsible for the King's elder brother's 'unfortunate accident'). The harbour is the only area in good order, apart from the Palace, and still much trade with Arete and the other Irisian City States and the Leondar Imperium takes place.

Villages

Agnenis – pop 1,100

This delightful village looks over Alexmos Sound to the capital of Aladousis, Enthymysia, with whom it engages in a brisk trade, and very competitive fishing rights to the abundant schools of fish in the Sound.

Androuba – pop 800

An inland farming village with an old hermit that covertly keeps up the worship of the Elder Gods in the little known stone circle along the Nine Giant Path. Also close by are mysterious cairns built by the ancient (?now departed) inhabitants of this island.

Daphne – pop 1,200

This isolated village relies on some fishing but mostly lumber for its living. A regular camp is set up in the fringes of the Poseimedes Forest, where the valuable *vekno*s tree is harvested for its use in beautiful as well as aromatic furniture; a valuable export to the nation.

Eleina – pop 750

Very much a fishing and farming village, also responsible for the lighthouse guarding the dangerous rocky shoals below the cliffs. It also specializes in boutique ciders from its small orchards.

Hypnix - Pop 950

A rather unremarkable fishing and farming village, that is, if not for the smuggler families here who smuggle the excellent brandy made here to the Irisian City States without paying the King's excise. And they persist despite several grisly hangings on the gallows permanently erected at the entrance to town – even now 2 corpses sway in the wind.

Iryrna – pop 700

The village rather enjoys the distance and isolation from the rest of the kingdom, as it is situated on an island north of mainland Helmonte. Sheep raising and fishing are its main activities, and some illicit smuggling. Its apples are delicious, and favoured by Count Herkule

Konstanra – pop 1,000

A charming village – pity it supplements its income by the practice of enticing ships onto the treacherous 'Three Witches', plundering the goods as they wash ashore, and often clubbing the survivors to death.

Lakon – pop 850

Another fishing and farming village, with ties to its overlord, Wizard-Lord Filipe, who occupies the tower on the south of the bay. Rumours abound that the youths and maidens are kidnapped and used by the Wizard for nefarious experiments – they are never heard of again. The fens to the north (Bibleon Mere) enclose the abandoned and ruined keep of a former lord.

Medea – pop 1,050

Medea also owes fealty to Wizard-Lord Filipe, and the same rumours abound, and in addition there is the grim feeling among the villagers that not even their dead are safe in their graves.

Stratenos – pop 900

Apart from fishing and farming, the main claim to fame is the nearby King Barrows and the rugged heath they are on. Their grapes are fermented with honey to make a most deliciously intoxicating wine.

Zeunesa – pop 1,000

This lies at the end of the main coastal road, and owes fealty to Exarch Gorgias, head of the Temple of Poseidon.

Other

Klasma Keep – pop 150

Count Alexios holds this from the King. He is about the only decent lord in the land – and probably this is why he is ensconced in such an out of the way place. He has to keep any hostile denizens from the forest and hills from troubling the neighbourhood. The inhabitants of the small hamlet beside the castle adore him, and have put a statue of him in their market square.

Temple to Dionysos – pop 75

Exarch Iohannes runs a very slack and hedonistic group of maenads and satyrs as well as a small fun-loving group of temple men and women, The sex orgies are hardly to be believed.

Temple to Poseidon – pop 50

Exarch Gorgias is a sour humourless man who resents his ‘exile’ to this post ‘at the end of the earth’ He runs a very strict temple group – so much that there have been several who have fled, and now live in the forest with an assorted group of outlaws.

King Barrows

Two rows of three large mounds in a scrubby moor are called King Barrows because the locals believe they are the tombs of ancient kings that ruled Helmonte before the revolution that eventually brought the current Great King’s ancestors to power. However, they really are ,, sorry , that would be telling! In addition a reputedly haunted ruined tower sits at the edge of the moor, and has been this way time out of mind.

Nine Giant Path

Enormous monoliths, carved with enigmatic writing, march from west to east through Poseimedes Forest. Nine in number, no one knows their true purpose, though treasure hunters have dug around them searching for treasure – in vain, though many skeletons have been uncovered. At the halfway mark is a venerable henge, where a small band of worshippers of the Elder Gods gather to worship at night. There are disquieting rumours that human sacrifices take place, but this may be spiteful gossip.

Natural Features

Poseimedes Forest

This huge forest is very varied in vegetation, and contains many valuable trees, and medicinal (and poisonous) plants. Various outlaw bands eke out an existence here, and other more hostile denizens make their lairs here, often in old ruins. There is reputed to be a few Aeifa (Elven) clans here, but no one has ever seen them. By one of the swampy, algae-clad lakes resides a family of Lizardmen (draconians) – Gods help the land if one metamorphoses into a dragon.

Haunted Isle

Supposedly the haunt of an undead Vampyr, though no one is brave enough to investigate. The island is quite deserted (well maybe not!). as well there is an old disused pagan henge to the Elder Gods, not used for centuries ((or perhaps not). The island is surrounded by dangerous reefs and soaring cliffs,

Dionene Rocks

A ridge of rocks, shifting sandbars, and low-lying islands which are inhabited in the fishing season. This are is very rich in sea life – and an immature Kraken also hangs out here – it gets its fill of fish, and the occasional lone fisherman.

Kleothos Reef

Similar to Dionene Rocks, but no Kraken. Instead, there are a group of mischievous merfolk that love luring fishermen to their doom.

Three Witches

These three huge rocks tower out of the sea – and hide the fact hat many submerged rocks abound in the vicinity, ready to tear out the hull of unwary ships, or those unlucky enough to be led astray by false lights set by the wreckers of Konstanra (see above)

Bibleon Mere

An area of stinking marsh and swampy pools, engulfing an old abandoned castle that belonged to the old kings before the revolution, It was torched by the revolutionaries and the whole family slaughtered (they were a rather nasty bunch). They are said to haunt the area, but in fact, it is now the abode of a rather nasty lich – the one who is the real experimenter on those missing persons – see the village of Lakon.

In addition the swamp is home to giant poisonous frogs, snakes and a water horse that drags victims to a watery grave.

There are also a number of lighthouse, towers, ruined fortifications, stone henges, cairns etc scattered around – make your own legends about these!

Aladousis

Aladousis became independent 87 years ago and has remained sturdily so ever since, fighting off two separate invasions by Helmonte's Great Kings. The ruler is a firm, dour man, Grand Duke Relikai. He lost his beloved wife 5 years ago, and has become grimmer since and has lost a lot of interest in governing, leaving much of it to his only child, Helena, who in time will become the first Grand Duchess. However, he is a just man who cares for the welfare of his people. These in turn are a very independent-minded lot, and it sometimes seems the an exasperated Relikai that ruling them is like herding cats.

The nation exports vast quantities of aromatic oil (like olive oil) to the region around, and much wine and fine woollen fleeces. There is also a fish salting operation in the capital, which brings in much needed monies to the nation. There are large deposits of rock salt in the hills outside the capital, where much of the salt comes – another valuable export.

For defence, all men and women are trained in weapons and are expected to serv in the time of war – a total population effort.

Settlements

City (really a large town)

Enthymysia – pop 5,250

The capital of Aladousis, with a bustling harbour, and quaint tall houses hugging the coast and up along the low hill it is set upon. A large fish works and salting factory are here. The Grand Duke lives in an unostentatious palace on the top of the hill.

Villages

Anektyros – pop 1,000

The main centre for the ‘olive’ oil industry, and vineyards.

Dodekar – pop 800

The village is on the island of the same name – mainly goat herding and fishing, especially for the famed blue crayfish that are so sought after by the aristocracy of Artemisia, but which are rarely found outside these waters.

Other

Temple to Ares – pop 35

A small winery is maintained here, but its main purpose is to train the populace in the arts of warfare. The priests and priestesses are a very formidable fighting order. *Wizards’ Tower* – pop 55

This structure houses 10 wizards and their staff. Some engage in rather unusual experiments, but they are left alone in view of the work they did in the first and second Aladousis Invasion Wars. They take on youngsters who show magical promise and study hard. In fact, they are the remains of the original Mage-Kings of Helmonte and Aladousis, and have lived here since the revolution, which was far tougher for them in Helmonte.

Natural Features

Basilik Mere

Basilik Mere with rather poisonous waters lies in the centre of Aladousis. It is surrounded by dead and dying trees. No-one knows why the water is so poisonous, it certainly wasn’t the case up to 15 years ago. Duke Relikai has tried to investigate, but lost interest after the death of his wife. [a deadly water-loving amphibian species is responsible for ‘aquaforming’ the lake into its preferred environment. Unfortunately, they take a great dislike to those seeking to investigate their new home, and so ‘exterminate’ and intruders. They were originally a mutant salamander that escaped for one of the Wizard’s laboratories in Wizards’ Tower]

Alexmos Sound

This stretch of water between Aladousis and Helmonte is usually placid, but can turn dangerous at a moment, and dangerous currents can take boats far out into the western ocean. It is, however, a wonderful fishing ground.

There are a number of ruins, henges, swamps, lighthouses and towers – feel free to elaborate.

Timeline

0 SC (“From the Revolution”): Helmonte revolts, throwing off the yoke of the tyrannical kings. Aladousis declares its independence. The remnants of the Mage-Kings flee to Aladousis and take up residence in Wizards’ Tower.

4 SC: Mennidas I becomes First Consul of the chaotic republic, and restores order.

7 SC: Mennidas declares himself Emperor, and prepares to invade Aladousis.

18 SC: Mennidas dies on the eve of the invasion.

34 SC: First invasion of Aladousis by Helmonte under Elexios I, Mennidas' son. After being wrecked on the rocks, the surviving army makes little headway, and after 6 months, they reach a truce with the Aladousans who let them depart peacefully. Elexios vows revenge.

37 SC: Second invasion of Aladousis – the Wizards of Aladousis are largely instrumental in destroying the invasion fleet even before it landed. The completeness of the rout deters Helmonte from attempting to invade again. Elexios is deposed by his nephew Elexios II, who also abandons the imperial title, styling himself as Great King.

52 SC: The current Helmonte Great King, Mennidas II, succeeds to the throne – peacefully!

72 SC: Basilik Mere in central Aladousis becomes poisonous.

81 SC: The Great King's heir, Dion, is killed in a hunting 'accident'. Thank Count Hercule for that. Prince Elexios becomes heir – Gods help Helmonte!

82 SC: Grand Duke Relikai's wife dies in childbirth.

87 SC: Present day.