

Lay of the Land

Countries

High Imaskar – High Imaskar stands on the ruins of ancient Mulhorand, a nation shattered nearly a century ago by the Spellplague, its people destroyed, its gods vanished. In the vast emptiness came the Imaskari, appearing as if they had stepped through millennia of history untouched and unchanged. Beginning with the reemergence of the Palace of the Purple Emperor, the Imaskari extended their influence throughout the vacated lands and even farther. High Imaskar has been careful to break with its more sinister traditions going so far as to abolish slavery in all forms. Yet its natural penchant for magic and adherence to other old customs lead many to question the nations true motives. High Imaskar's only ally is Tymanther.

High Imaskar is ruled by the Empress. Additionally, the empire has three offices that help keep her position in check. The Lord Artificer governs a large group of the areas arcane users, the Lord Planner deals with the day-to-day needs of the rest of the population, and the Lord Apprehender oversees the police force of Vengeance Takers.

A few notes about Ancient Imaskar, Deep Imaskar, and Mulhorand – Ancient Imaskar was formed approximately 9800 years before the present. It saw its greatest height approximately 7900 years ago. It reached from the Great Ice Sea to the Golden Water, and from the Alamber Sea to the Katakoro Plateau in Kara-Tur. Probably one of mightiest human realms the planet has ever seen, the Imaskari didn't worship any gods and were masters of transdimensional magic.

When the Mulan slaves rebelled against their Imaskari masters, the surviving Imaskari fled far underground and established the city of Deep Imaskar. Here they magically sealed themselves off from the rest of the world only to emerge fairly recently. Due to a magical alteration for survival in Deep Imaskar, the Imaskari became pale-skinned with unusual skin striations, not unlike the marbling seen in some stones. They prefer to wear dramatic and elaborate styles of dress with a preference for black cloths and flashy rings.

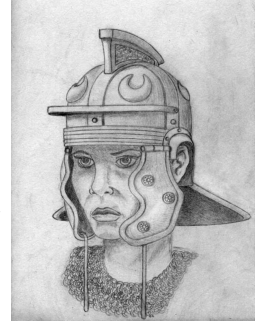
After the defeat of Imaskar, Mulhorand was founded (approximately 3600 years before the present). Mulhorand was a theocratic state that had an obsession with the afterlife (The culture was analogous to Earth's ancient Egyptians). Ruled by the god-kings, this mighty country fell during the Spellplague. Mulhorand society consisted of three different ethnicities; the ruling Mulan (a sallow-skinned people with a penchant for discipline), the dark-skinned Turami (the craftspeople of the ancient empire) and the huge multi-ethnic former slave populations. After the Spellplague, many of the remaining Mulan fled westwards to other lands, including Chessenta. However, even with High Imaskar's rule, all these people can still be found throughout the area, especially in Gheldaneth.



Imaskari

Tymanthar (SW of High Imaskar)— devastation unleashed by the Spellplague ripped a portion of the dragonborn-ruled nation of Tymanchebar from Abeir and deposited it on the dying remnants of Unther, wiping out the region's human population and replacing it with a large population of dragonborn. Under the leadership of the dragonborn army, the new immigrants constructed the citadel city of Djerad Thymar and set about establishing their domination of the surrounding realm. Their new nation, Tymanthar, is ruled by a dragonborn who is elected from the ranks of the military elite to hold the title of Vanquisher.

Chessenta (West of High Imaskar)— Descendants of ancient Imaskari slaves, the people of Chessenta are obsessed with physical conflict. They value their war heroes highly. Chessenta's national enmity is focused mostly on High Imaskar. A group of city states, Chessenta is somewhat united. The people appreciate the arts and are great fans of the theater (analogous to Earth's ancient Greeks). Slavery is still practiced in this area.



Chessentan

Murghom (NE of High Imaskar) – Once a subjugated territory of Mulhorand, the people were known for their skill with horses. Now this country's cities and settlements are ruled by dragons. The Cult of the Dragon has a strong presence here. The city of Zindalankh hosts a Shou Town from eastern Kara-Tur.

Threskel (NW of High Imaskar) – Land of the Bone Wurm, this area has little in the way of national character. They resemble their Chessentan kin in temperament and interests. Most live hardscrabble lives as fishermen or horse ranchers. Mount Thulbane in the north is an active volcano, sending billowing smoke into the air and blanketing the land. The Cult of the Dragon also has a strong presence here.

Beastlands (SE of High Imaskar) – Monsters infest this region. This area exists in a constant state of low-level conflict with undead, dragons, giants and even beholders vying for control. Human slaves & outlaws and kenku also populate many areas.

Thay (North of High Imaskar) – The nation of Thay came about when a malevolent sect, calling itself the Red Wizards, declared its freedom from the god kings of Mulhorand. However, with the defeat of the governing body by the lich Szass Tam, things have gone from bad to worse. Undead roam the land, twitching legions of rotten flesh that wait for the day when the lich-lord sends them forth in the name of conquest. Slavers prowl ruined cities, searching for fresh meat to sell on the auction blocks, while roaming bands of gnolls scour the rugged countryside for sacrifices to offer up to their masters. Just to the north and underground is the drow city of Undrek'Thoz.

Rashemen (Further North of High Imaskar) A place of powerful spirits, this is a rugged land of fiercely independent people. It is said that dwarves, goliaths and gnomes live in the Sunrise Mountains to the east of this country and to the west is the Forest to Lethyr, home to lycanthropes and shifters.

Okoth (South of High Imaskar) – Inconceivably ancient (older than even High Imaskar), Okoth is supposedly a reptilian realm ruled by creatures calling themselves the Serpent Kings. Not much is known about this mysterious area.

Aglarond (Further NW of High Imaskar) – Elves, eladrin, half-elves, and humans populate the coast and portions of the Yuirwood, earning a living from the bountiful natural resources. Some portions of the Yuirwood are shunned, for strange magic lingers in its depths. Aglarond faces threats from beyond

and within its borders.

Akanul (Further West of High Imaskar) – Genasi of Returned Abeir crafted a nation out of the severe geography left in the Spellplague's wake. Many of Faerûn's widely dispersed genasi flocked to Akanul after its formation, but genasi of Abeiran descent make up most of the nation's populace. There is a sizable population of half-orcs in the Akanul capital of Airspur.

Geographic Areas

The Alamber Sea – This body of water is the easternmost part of the **Sea of Fallen Stars**. This former expanse was altered when wide portions of the landscape collapsed. A portion drained into the Underdark, forcing port cities to keep pace with the retreating water by building new dockside facilities. Once-submerged features were exposed to the air, as well as the tops of the various formally drowned ruins. There are many pirates who live in small remote coves hidden along desolate stretches of the coast and sahuagin infest the deeper parts of this sea.

The Plains of Purple Dust – This northwestern region of the **Raurin Desert** is a vast wasteland of purple sand dunes, stony crags, and rocky badlands. The fine purple sand radiates faint magic – a lesser legacy of the magical energies released during the spell-battles that heralded Ancient Imaskar's fall. The desert is riddled with ruins from ages past. Now home to rogue efreet & djinn, purple worms and dragons. Wandering monks from distant Kara-Tur often roam the eastern edges of this desert.

Dragonsword Mountains – Many consider these high mountains impassable due to large number of dangerous sphinxes, griffons, and yrthaks that lair here.

The Shaar Desolation – The Shaar Desolation was once a vast savannah but it is now a desert due to the cutoff of all fresh water to the region. No hospitable settlements remain in this area. Just to the west of this area is the dwarven home of East Rift.

Ganathwood – Once occupied by wild elves, this is a strange and dark place. Bloodthirsty monsters and a savage tribe of former escaped Mulhorand slaves occupy these woods now.

Shalhoond (The Great Wild Wood) – The great forest is unclaimed by any power. Settlers from Murghom take lumber from the forest, and some trappers & hunters venture into the forest for their livelihood. However, this is a dangerous business as it is filled with evil creatures.

Copper Mountains – Named after the hundreds of mines sunk into the region, the reckless mining has scarred the land. Grim mining towns guard themselves from goblins and orcs who also live in the area. Shadar-kai ascend here from the underground city of Ikemmu.

Methwood – This thick forest is home to small tribes of elves and half-elves. Additionally, chimeras and dragons have been known to frequent the area.

Smoking Mountains – The western end of this range has active volcanoes. Watch for salamanders.

Black Ash Plain – Ash from the Smoking Mountains cover this area. It is inhabited by dragons and black-skinned stone giants (known locally as ash giants).

Sky Riders – Actually mostly hills, it is inhabited by bandits on the east side and trolls and duergar on the west. The hills sport ruins from an ancient civilization.

Lake of Salt – In the southeastern reaches of High Imaskar lies the Lake of Salt, a shallow and somewhat salinated body of water. Through the River of Swords its green waters connect the Alamber Sea and the Gulf of Luirien.

The Gbor Nor (Brightstar Lake) – For some reason, creatures in the Gbor Nor grow larger than their common varieties in other bodies of water. Especially renowned is the lake's giant sturgeon, a popular dish in the courts of Semphar and Murghôm alike.

Cities

Gheldaneth – Radically reduced in size from the metropolis it once was, Gheldaneth yet persists, the sole surviving bastion of ancient Mulhorand. Despite its grand history, the city proclaims fealty to High Imaskar. The two rules most at odds with the previous way of life in Gheldaneth are the ban on owning slaves and the ban on the Mulhorandi pantheon. Many citizens shave their heads and paint circles upon their brows. One circle indicates someone of the middle class, two an arcane spellcaster, and three an honored historian of lost traditions. The middle class consists of artisans, craftsmen, traders, mercenaries and scribes. A high concentration of tieflings (and smaller groups of devas) live in this city, many of them claim they are mortal descendants of ancient Mulhorandi deities. Though many believe the tieflings are scions of slaves who made deals with devils in an attempt to escape their bondage. Some former slave populations of halflings (sold to the area by slavers of Thay) also live in the area. The city is composed of relatively modern stone buildings squatting on the ruins of a much larger metropolis. Only a few of the grand structures remain – the rest were buried in the upheaval that obliterated the greater part of Mulhorand. All the buried structures make it a modern-day hub for adventurers and city's economy is booming, mostly serving hopeful salvagers and adventuring companies from all across Faerun.



Mulan

Deep Imaskar – Not actually located in High Imaskar, Deep Imaskar is underneath the Hordelands to the northeast. An independent city-state, this city still persists as an ally of High Imaskar. However, over the last few years, Deep Imaskar has grown darker, paranoid and resentful of its prosperous daughter colony. Only expert diplomacy keeps this alliance in place. The Spellplague was hard on Deep Imaskar and while it was heavily damaged, it still survived only because its wards channeled much of the rampant magic out of the city. The city occupies a vault 3 miles long, 1 mile wide and half a mile high. Magic allows buildings to stand on the curving walls and bridges and walkways are found throughout. Arcane gardens produce most of the food. Other than High Imaskar, Deep Imaskar does not trade or work with any other country or organization.

Skyclave – From High Imaskar’s capital, Skyclave, the Empress Ususi governs her people with the support of the Body of Artificers, Planners, and Apprehenders. Skyclave is essentially a single tower thrusting a mile above the ground. Like the branches of a tree, smaller secondary towers sprout from the neck of the central trunk, and festooned all along its height are staircases, balconies, portals, verandas, and more. Over half of the city’s population resides within the great tower, which (due to a magical effect) is larger inside than out. The rest huddle around it, supporting the city through agriculture, fisheries, and other industries.



Skyclave