



APPENDICES

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THE WORLD OF PELLINOR

1. A note on pronunciation

Most Annaren proper nouns derive from the Speech, and generally share its pronunciation. In words of three or more syllables, the stress is usually laid on the second syllable: in words of two syllables, (eg, lembel, invisible) stress is always on the first. There are some exceptions in proper names; the name Pellinor and Annar, for example, are pronounced with the stress on the first syllable.

Spellings are phonetic.

a - as in *flat*. *ar* rhymes with *bar*

ae - a long sound, as in *ice*. *Maerad* is pronounced My - rad.

aë - two syllables pronounced separately, to sound eye-ee. *Maninaë* is pronounced Man-in-eye-ee

ai - rhymes with *hay*. *Innail* rhymes with *nail*.

au - ow. *Raur* rhymes with *sour*.

e - as in *get*. Always pronounced at the end of a word: for example, *remane*, to walk, has three syllables. Sometimes this is indicated with *ë*, which indicates also the stress of the word lies on the vowel (for example, *ilë*, we, is sometimes pronounced almost to lose the *i* sound.)

ea - the two vowel sounds are pronounced separately, to make the sound *ay-uh*.
inasfrea, to walk, thus sounds: in-ass-fray-uh.

eu - *oi* sound, as in *boy*

i - as in *hit*

ia - two vowels pronounced separately, as in the name *Ian*.

y - *uh* sound, as in *much*

c - always a hard *c*, as in *crust*, not *circle*.

ch - soft, as in the German *ach* or *loch*, not *church*.

dh - a consonantal sound halfway between a hard *d* and a hard *th*, as in *the*, not *thought*. There is no equivalent in English: it is best approximated by hard *th*:
Medhyl can be said *Meth'l*.

s - always soft, as in *soft*, not *noise*

Note: Dén Raven does not derive from the Speech, but from the Southern tongues. It is pronounced *Don Rah-ven*.

2. A brief history of Edil-Amarandh

The difficulties of dating the extraordinary civilisation of Edil-Amarandh, or even of pinpointing its exact geographic location, are well known. Estimates vary wildly, dating its mysterious disappearance from 10,000 to 150,000 years before the beginning of the last Ice Age. Initial theories which saw the Annar Scripts as confirmation of the persistent accounts in Plato, the Mabinogion and elsewhere of an Atlantean nation overwhelmed by flood have generally been discredited, since Edil-Amarandh appears to be far older than these texts suggest and has sharply divergent cultural differences. Some people, however, have suggested that the continent of Edil-Amarandh may be sunk beneath the Atlantic, West of the African and European coasts, as was theorised of Atlantis. **1** However, despite these arguments, the voluminous records available make it possible to elucidate a detailed history of Annar and the Seven Kingdoms. **2**

The Bards used two principle calenders - the reckoning of Afinil (indicated with A) and the Annaren or Norloch Calender (indicated with N). These calenders were in general use throughout Edil-Amarandh. The events recounted in *The Gift* took place in the Year N945, which is to say 945 years after the Restoration of the Light under Maninaë.

The histories of Annar and the Seven Kingdoms were divided into three Ages (the Great Silence is not regarded as an Age), according to the *Chronicles* of Istar of Norloch (N398), from which this account is mainly taken. **3**

The Age of the Elementals

The Age of the Elementals ended approximately a thousand years before the founding of Afinil, that is, about 5000 years before the time of this story. Thus by the Restoration much of its history was lost, and the little which remained was partial and fragmentary. However, after the founding of Afinil, the Elementals who remained recounted many of the events of that Age, **4** and so many stories and songs were preserved in the Bardic tradition, although again only scraps of that lore were preserved after Afinil was razed by the Nameless.

Elementals (or the Elidhu) were immortals and were so called because they bore affinities with natural forces such as fire, water, earth, air, the Sun, the Moon and the Tides. They were often associated with particular places or regions, such as rivers or mountains. After the Elemental Wars, many of the Elidhu retreated into their pure forms and were not seen again as sentient beings, although some still remained as visible spirits. They could take different forms at will, and in the days of Afinil often visited that city in the guise of humans and learned from the Dhyllin the arts of speech, song and music, in which they especially delighted. The Lady Ardina was the most celebrated of those Elidhu who became part of the human world. After the dominion of humans and the estrangement between the two races, for which the Nameless was in large part responsible, most withdrew into their elemental forms and were rarely seen. Their number was not known.

The Age of the Elementals was marked by the dominion of the Ice Witch, Arkan, who came from the North and covered Edil-Amarandh with a perpetual winter. At this time the Elementals threw up some of the mountain ranges of Edil-Amarandh, the Osidh Elanor (the Mountains of the Dawn) and the Osidh Annova, in an attempt to bar Arkan's approach. All living things at this time suffered greatly, and it was said that humans at this point almost disappeared from the face of the earth. The Ice Witch was resisted and finally overthrown by an alliance between some of the Elementals and the peoples of Edil-Amarandh, led by the Elidhu Ardina and the King Ardhor. The final war against Arkan convulsed the entire continent: "the sea poured in over what had been land, and lands rose where had before been sea" . 5 When the war ended the coastline was entirely different, and became the shape presently mapped.

Human history and songs are recorded from that time - the legend of Mercan, for example, which were preserved in the Scrolls of Lir at the Library of Lirigon - but the years were not logged. Small communities of men lived in settlements East of the Osidh Annova, and there were a strong and proud people who lived near what is now the Lir River, the descendants of whom later became the Dhyllin.

The Dawn Age

After the wars, the Dhyllin settled the areas to the North later called Lirion and Imbral, and it is said in this time the Dhillarearë first appeared in Edil-Amarandh, but little is recorded until Afinil was first founded. This time is called the pre-Dawn, or Inela.

The Dawn Age dates from the Founding of Afinil, about a thousand years after the end of the Elemental Wars. Afinil was the first city founded and settled by the Dhillarearë, although they were by no means the only peoples who lived there. The City was founded by the great Bard Nelsor, who among other things invented letters, and was the first to write down and formalise the Speech. The script he invented was still the one most commonly used by Bards more than four thousand years later. **6**

Afinil was never a city of Kings, but of Bards, and it was built between Lirimal and Inchan, the major cities of the realms of Lirion and Imbral. Its site was long lost, but it was on the shores of a mere which was said to be so deep the stars were reflected there even in the daytime, the Ilimican, or Mirrormere. Afinil was reputed to be the most beautiful city ever to have been built in Edil-Amarandh and it became a centre of high learning and culture. There were established great singing halls and libraries, and it was famous for its gardens and terraces, which were said to perfume the air for miles around.

This was the first great flowering of the Light. Afinil prospered for many years, and as it prospered, so did its surrounding lands. Bards began to travel widely, and found their kin in many places: most notably in Turbansk to the South, an ancient city founded before the end of the Age of Elementals, and also in the lands to the East, along the coast of Edil-Amarandh. People also moved East over the Osidh Annova and established the Kingdom of Indurain in the fertile lands they found there.

The first sign of trouble occurred in A1567, when Sharma, the King of Dén Raven, a small mountainous realm to the South, travelled to Afinil and demanded tuition, offering gifts of gold and jewels. The Bards, who valued such things only for what beauty they found in them, laughed and gave him tuition for nothing. "What is the cold light of a gem next to the living Light?" asked Gel-Idhor, First Bard of Afinil, when Sharma approached him. "Nay, keep thy jewels." Sharma, who was proud and quick tempered, was deeply offended by the Bards' gentle mockery; but he concealed his anger and bent his mind to study. **7**

Very soon it was apparent that Sharma was the most precociously talented Bard seen in Afinil since the days of Nelsor. He studied in particular the making of things of power, and also the mysteries of binding, and he was very curious about Arkan, the Ice Witch, and spent much time speaking with the Elidhu who came to Afinil of the history of those wars; but he concealed his intent. It only became clear later that Sharma was interested in making himself immortal and

powerful as the Elidhu, who could not be killed. There were those in Afinil, including the Lady Ardina, who were disturbed by Sharma's questionings, and did not trust his ambition, and who counselled against his education; but the Bards did not see why their Lore should be kept from such an apt pupil, and such disquiet was brushed aside.

When Sharma had made himself the most powerful Bard in Edil-Amarandh, he returned to his own kingdom; and it was then he made the Spell of Binding which cast aside his Name and ensured that he would never pass through the Gates to the Uncircled Open of Death. **8** This was a great blasphemy: for a Bard to so challenge the Laws of Balance was unprecedented. The casting away of his name and his abjuration of Death signalled the beginning of the grievous wars which ended, five hundred years later, in the overthrow of Afinil and the utter defeat and destruction of Lirion and Imbral and all the Lore and beauty that had been made there.

After he cast out his Secret Name, Sharma was called the Nameless One. He attracted followers, to whom he promised unending life and absolute power, and many Bards went to his side, betraying the Light; and these became black sorcerers, and were known as Hulls, for they were but the shells of Bards. The Nameless also made alliances with the remnants of the Elidhu who hated and feared the Light, most notably the Elidhu Karak, who held dominion over the realm of Indurain, east of the Osidh Annova, after the armies of the Nameless had destroyed it and slaughtered or enslaved those of the Dhyllin who had lived there.

The campaign of the Nameless One to overthrow the Light in Annar succeeded in A2041, when his forces overwhelmed the last desperate alliance of Lirion and Imbral on the Firman Plains near the Findol River. That defeat was the end of the Dawn Age, and the beginning of the Great Silence.

The Great Silence

The Great Silence lasted from A2041 to A3234. At this time the Light retreated in hiding to the areas which later became known as the Seven Kingdoms: along the coast of Edil Amarandh, and to the South. The Bards did not build cities or towns, and lived in great hardship, working always against the Dark; but they did not succeed in overthrowing the Nameless until the coming of Maninaë, heir of Laurelin, in A3157. Maninaë, a Bard, united the resistance in the Seven

Kingdoms and after many years - a story too complex to even begin to relate here - he succeeded in casting the Nameless off his throne and restoring the Light to Annar. He then became the first King in Norloch, and the first to rule over all Annar.

A new yearcount, the Annaren Calender, was then introduced. It was also called the Norloch Reckoning.

The Restoration

When peace was restored, Maninaë founded the citadel of Norloch and the system of Schools. Twenty five Schools were founded across Annar and the Seven Kingdoms, and roads were built across the country to allow free movement between all of them. At this time more areas of Annar were settled, although there were large regions of wilderness in the centre of the land, and Edil-Amarandh was always a continent more thickly populated about its coast than at its centre.

Once again there was a great flowering of Bardic culture, and the tenets of Afinil were restored. But Maninaë also gave thought to martial strategies, and the culture of Norloch was warlike, unlike that of Afinil. For Afinil had never been a city of Kings, and although all Bards were routinely trained in the arts of the sword, they never gave them especially high honour.

The Restoration lasted for 300 years. After that came a period of consolidation, called the Middle Years, in which all the arts flourished in peace and harmony. At about the year N720 came the first promptings of disquiet, and also the last King; for the Monarchs made war on each other in an argument about succession, and in the strife the ruling line of Norloch was destroyed. The Seven Kingdoms at this time revised their alliances with Norloch and restated their autonomies.

After this, the Bards ruled alone in Afinil, incorporating into the authority of the White Flame the triple sceptre of the Kings of the Norloch; and after the destruction caused by the rivalries of kings, it seemed to some this was better, and that the Bards, constrained by their vows to the Light and the Balance, would rule more wisely. But there were others who said this was a distortion of the Balance; and they also pointed out that women were no longer placed in

authority in Norloch, as they continued to be in most other Schools, and saw this as another symptom of imbalance.

Gradually, over the next two hundred years, it became clear that things were amiss in Annar. The fortresses in Dén Raven were rebuilt, and the sorcerer Imank made war on the Suderain, although he was fiercely resisted. There were other signs of imbalance: the White Sickness, never seen before, began to ravage parts of Annar, and some Schools began to be estranged from their peoples, demanding high tithes and grudging their services, which caused an enormous loss of the Bards' prestige in many parts of Annar, and sometimes outright and violent resentment. There were more frequent sightings of Wers and other servants of the Dark, and for the first time since the Restoration Hulls were seen in Annar. More disturbingly, some Bards began to report a disturbance in the Speech itself, which they found impossible to express, but which troubled them deeply; they said that it seemed to them the Speech was losing its ancient virtue. However, it was not until the School of Pellinor was sacked and burned to the ground in N935, followed by Baladh and Jerr-Niken in the South within the next four years, that a few Bards began to suggest that the Nameless One had at last returned.

3. Of Annar and the Seven Kingdoms

Annar, sometimes called the Inner Kingdom, was the greater part of the continent of Edil-Amarandh, and was generally held to be that land South of the Lir River, West of the Osidh Annova (the Mountains of the Earth) and North of the Southern Deserts.

The Seven Kingdoms were smaller, situated in a loose ring around Annar along the Western coast: from the North, they were Lirhan, Culain, Ileadh, Lanorial, the Isle of Thorold, Amdrith and Suderain. Suderain was close to the realm of Dén Raven (sometimes called the Lost Kingdom), a poisoned country which was the stronghold of the Nameless One, and which continued to be the bidding place of Hulls and his surviving servants even after his defeat by Maninaë the Great and the Restoration of the Light in Annar. **9**

Maninaë united all the Seven Kingdoms under one rule for the first time after the Nameless One was thrown down, ushering in a long peace. Maninaë was unusual in that he was both a King and a Bard, although in him the Barding was not strong and he forswore Barding when he became King. With one other exception, the Kings and Queens of Norloch have never been Bards; and this was considered a crucial element of the Balance.

The Monarch's authority over the Seven Kingdoms was extremely limited, and was freely given than asserted by force: the situation parallels more closely to an alliance of City States and loose autonomous regions surrounding them. It is telling that the only name for the whole continent was the extremely archaic Edil-Amarandh, which dated from before the Dawn Age, and that this name was seldom used. The unity of Edil-Amarandh was a result of the influence of Barding, rather than from any enforcement under kings. The Bards were also a source of the relatively loose hierarchies in Edil-Amarandh: since a Bard might come from anywhere, even the poorest of communities, it was entirely conceivable (and commonly happened, especially in the first centuries after the Restoration) that the lowest might hold sway over the Wise. **10**

The regions were called Kingdoms, but they were not strictly Kingdoms or Principalities in the generally accepted sense. This was because of the dual authorities of Barding and ruling authorities, both of which shared governance of their various peoples, and which by their complex nature mitigated against absolute rule. Over many years this evolved into a complex political and social system, differing in each region, of mutually interdependent autonomous

structures. It appears that in many Fesses (the regions around the Schools) and other regions there operated a variation of democracy: Stewards were elected by popular vote, and all adults over twenty five, no matter what their social status, had the right to vote. Only the Monarchy operated on a system of hereditary rule, and many Bards saw this as a primitive system, tracing from this "original sin" the subsequent demise of the Monarchy . **11** However, it has to be admitted that the Monarchy, within its limited powers, governed over a peaceful kingdom for several centuries before it degenerated into civil war.

The dual system - which only roughly parallels the mediaeval division of secular and religious power between Church and State, although it is a tempting syllogism - was considered to be at its most ideal in the community of the Dhyllin, where Bards and the Peoples lived and worked closely together, to their mutual increase and pleasure. It was not in practise always ideal, and at times disagreements or rivalries led to bickerings and even war, sometimes between Bards and Monarchs, sometimes between rival regions. All such occurrences were regarded by the Wise as a corruption of the Light. **12**

4. The Speech: some general notes

The Speech, the defining attribute of a Bard and the central mystery of the Knowing, is a topic which exercised many Bardic thinkers over many centuries. **13** Much therefore might be written about it, of which can be given only the barest sketch here.

The Speech behaved like a language, with certain crucial differences, and could in fact be learned; it was, for example, spoken by the Dhyllin people as their first tongue. But in the mouths of those who learned it, rather than in those with the Gift, it had no Bardic virtue.

Bards used it when speaking of matters of gravity and importance, because it was considered impossible to lie in the Speech. This was, in fact, not strictly accurate: Hulls used the Speech and were able to lie, although this usage was not considered to be the Speech proper, and was sometimes called Dark or Black Speech. There was also the question of those who attained the Speech but were never taught the Knowings of the Light and, more crucially, never came into their Bardic or Secret Name (also known as their Truename). This was a circumstance which usually had tragic consequences, since such people were unable to properly understand or channel their powers, and were never able to enter their full Gift. This, generally, was rare, if more common as the Schools fell into disrepute after the demise of the Monarchs of Annar. There were also the cases of those who had only a slight Gift. Such people might have been village witches (hence the expression "witchspeak"), and they generally spoke a truncated and bastard version of the Speech, no more than a few words of potency, although sometimes they could attain considerable, if limited, power; but they were not considered to be Bards, since they did not attain the whole of the Speech, nor did they know their Names. Consequently, they were sometimes referred to as the Unnamed, which is to be distinguished from the Nameless, who had rejected his Name.

This clearly makes possession of the Speech less straightforward than it might at first appear. The fact that the Speech could be learned by those without the Gift suggests that the virtue of the Speech did not inhere in the words themselves, as was argued by many Bards in the Middle Years, but expressed the mysteries of the cosmos itself within its syntactic relationships and the vibrations of its utterance, from which were drawn its unique powers. **14** The chief reason given for the potency inhering in the words themselves was in the priority and

importance given to Names in the Speech, and to Bardic Names. The truth quite possibly resides in an amalgamation of both arguments, as was pointed out by other Bards.

Bards were the only people who bore secret Names, and a Bard's Name was and remains a central mystery which can only be partially discerned and puzzled over. The only complete written record of an Instatement and Naming ceremony occurs in *The Riddle of the Treesong*, 15 which confirms rather than negates the ritual's crucial importance. Other writings indicate that the most important mysteries were not written down but kept in the "rings of living memory", and in the *Treesong* text the authors felt compelled to defend their choice to record it, remarking that since entire forests of knowledge had been hewn down by the Dark, "it is necessary to preserve, even in such a crude way, such Secrets as are known to us, in case all living Knowings vanish from the earth". 16

It appears that a Bard's Name was much more than a mere appellation or signifier of status or origin: it was a Bard's being, and its achievement was a sign of a Bard's maturation into full power. One who knew a Bard's secret or true Name had power over him or her, and thus Names were guarded closely and given only to intimates as a sign of ultimate trust. Rejecting one's Name was unheard of until Sharma's Spell of Binding, and was regarded as the ultimate blasphemy. Sharma of Dén Raven however remained the only Bard to successfully do so. Hulls did not use their Names, but were unable to reject them completely, and those who possessed the Names of Hulls could still destroy them.

Because the Speech was not learnt in the normal way, and so was not subject to the same forces of change or cultural variety, it remained more constant than other human languages. Bards from vastly differing regions had no difficulty understanding each other if they used the Speech, despite the gulfs in tradition and culture which separated them. Nevertheless, the fact remains that there were variations in the Speech; that although it sprouted, as it were, always from the same stem, different environments encouraged its growth in differing ways. There was, for example, a noticeable, if slight, difference between the Speech of Afinil and the Speech of Maerad's day, and to Maerad's ear Saliman's Speech, being from far South of her region, would have had the equivalent of an accent.

Those with the Gift used the Speech for all the Arts of the Knowings: the use of the Speech was central to healing, to song (which was held high as an art of wisdom), and to all spells, as well as to investigations (such as astronomy or natural science) we would be accustomed to thinking of as scientific. The Bards made no distinctions, as we do, between arts and sciences, considering them parts of a single Knowing. The Speech also enabled those with the Gift to

converse with animals and, less frequently, plants. The Speech did not need to be physically spoken to be potent; Bards could use it effectively merely as a mode of thought. This raises the most important and difficult difference between the Speech and other languages, which are the subtleties of its registrations as a mode of mental communication. These, crucial as they are, cannot be explained, and here must be glanced over by reference to the Bardic paradox that the "centre of the Speech is Silence". It is also why, despite the fact that Bards had a very sophisticated written culture, orality, and the mnemonic arts which go with it, still held precedence.

5. Of the Bards

History 17

It was generally considered that those with the Gift, known as the Starpeople (the Dhillarearë) or the Singers first appeared in the Inner Kingdom at the end of the Age of Elementals, some five thousand years before the events recorded in *The Gift*. Records or even a count of years were not kept until the founding of Afinil during the Dawn Age, more than a thousand years after the end of the Age of Elementals. There was a tradition that as the Elementals withdrew into their natural forms, "somewhat of their power dispersed from them and was taken up in human form; and so there appeared, in all places where the Elementals had dwelt, the Starpeople. And they were so named because their eyes held a distant fire, as if they had themselves come from the stars, and they delighted in the fire of the stars and so, unlike other peoples who feared and cursed the Darkness, they loved the Night, and called it sacred." 18

There were, of course, other traditions, including a durable theory that Bards arrived from the West shortly after the disastrous Wars of the Elementals reshaped the lands of Edil-Amarandh. Another account had it that the Bards appeared first in the North, being forced South from the lands now inhabited by the nomad peoples of Zmarkan. The truth behind these competing theories, which became popular after the Restoration, might well be that many Bards of Annar found their linking with the Elementals, however far back, to be disreputable; for the Elementals had been held in mistrust by Annarens since the alliance of the Winterking with the Nameless One. It was this alliance which led to the defeat of Recabarra, Queen of Lirion, and Laurelin, last King of Afinil, and the evils which followed: the slaughter of the Dhyllin, the razing of Lirion and Imbral, and the tyranny over the Inner Kingdom which came to be known as the Great Silence.

The Restoration of the Monarchy and the Bards was chronicled many times. "The story of the downfall of the Nameless One is long and hard and desperate, and many parts of that tale never returned from darkness," wrote Ghoran of Desor. "I have often thought of those who fought him, lonely and afraid and hopeless, knowing no whisper of their courage would meet any new dawn. For many generations the land was in thrall, and the Keepers of the Light fled and hid in far places, keeping secret the Knowing, the Lore, the Singing, the Speech.

And in time a King appeared from the West, where the bloodline of Laurelin, last King of Imbral, had been kept alive in hiding. Maninaë, helmed with Light out of the deeps of time, took up his fell inheritance, and through great suffering the powers of the Nameless were turned against him, and at last the realm of Annar was released from slavery and the Balance restored. That was a time of great joy." **19**

Maninaë is credited with the establishment of the Schools (*Libridha*) around Annar, and decentralising the influence of the Bards. "And at that time Maninaë determined to make his seat in Norloch, Southwards in Annar at the mouth of the Aleph River, and built a great and fair city, and appointed the Circle of the High Bards, and there he and the Queen Marva dwelt in peace. But neither did he wish that the Lore and the Singing should become hidden and secret, the knowledge only of a select priesthood. He decided the Lore would be more safely kept in many centres, and so across Annar he established the Schools," said Ghoran of Desor. **20** Twenty five Schools were established in every region of Edil-Amarandh and became centres of learning and culture. To an extent this was merely a formalisation of a situation which had already occurred: communities of Bards existed in all the Seven Kingdoms, where they had been driven during the Great Silence, and had been instrumental in the defeat of the Nameless One.

Norloch flourished as the centre of the Light in Annar, being both the seat of government and the highest School of the Light, which two authorities were at this stage formally separated by Manianaë's relinquishment of his Bard status.

Society

It is not only the origin of the Bards which remain shrouded in mystery, but the reason for the appearance of the Gift in any individual. Bloodlines were no guarantee of a Gift, which could die out in a family in which it was previously strong and appear in a family in which it was previously unknown. This characteristic had a profound effect on the social and political organisations of Annar and the Seven Kingdoms. **21**

Bardic communities, partly for this reason and also by reason of Bards' longevity, sometimes more than three times the lifespan of an ordinary human being, were remarkably tolerant. Bigotries of sex or race were unknown in Afinil, as prejudice of any kind was thought to cloud judgement and abjured as a sign of

corruption of the Mystery of Barding. The Bards also venerated what they called "The Way of the Heart", which was considered a major component of understanding the Silence of the White Flame (there were mystics who wrote long poems on this subject, the most famous being *The Birds of Anakatin* by Lorica of Turbansk). The Bards had a sophisticated culture of erotic art, although the Western idea of the libertine was unknown, and romantic love was considered a central mystery. Bearing children and childrearing were also honoured, and were interestingly related to eroticism in a way which again is unknown in the West, though some vestige of that might be discerned in the Archaic Greek child-god Eros. The long life of Bards, which meant that childrearing occupied a relatively small proportion of their lives, meant that women were never considered merely procreators of children, as they were in traditional Christian dogmas, and it appears that childcare was considered a responsibility not only of both parents but of all adults socially connected to a child: the family was a much broader concept than the contemporary nuclear family, or even the older extended family. Homosexual love was not considered aberrant, and was never persecuted as it was in some less civilised regions of Edil-Amarandh. It was celebrated in many popular lays, such as the *Lay of Lamark and Colun*, just as the lays of Andomian and Beruldh or Ardina and Ardhor celebrated the love between man and woman, or man and Elidhu.

This ethos of tolerance lasted better in the Seven Kingdoms than it did in Annar, where the machinations of the First Circle during the Middle Years began certain imbalances, including the appointment of fewer and fewer women to the Circle. **22** By N945, no women had been appointed as Bards of the First or Second Circle within living memory: and this in itself became the justification for appointing no more. This tendency was strongly resisted in the Schools of the Seven Kingdoms, and was often condemned as a distortion of the Balance. **23** Nevertheless, from circa N500 on, a patristic ideology was aggressively argued by successive Bards. Studies of Bard lists in the various Schools revealed some fascinating figures. They show that by N700, every member of Norloch's First and Second Circle was male, and there were only three female Bards in the entire School. This contrasts sharply with Schools such as Baladh, Pellinor and Innail, where the instatement of Minor Bards and appointment of Bards to the Circle largely reflected the demographics of the surrounding population: the proportion of women instated and appointed to positions of authority was generally about 52 per cent, and Bards came from all social classes. **24** Moreover, in Norloch the lists reveal that the Bards instated were for the most part from more powerful and wealthy families, and there is evidence that minor Bards from low-status families, such as Pilanel, and women, were sent to try their luck at other Schools; actions which were explicitly against the Charter of Schools set down by Manianaë. **25** This shift, which progressed slowly but inexorably over the centuries, began with the incorporation of the Triple Sceptre of the

Monarchy into the authority of the White Flame, until under Enkir of Norloch at the time of the events of *The Gift*, the writings and teaching of women began to be actively suppressed, and women were at first forbidden to be taught the arts of self defence or warfare, and, finally, any of the Arts at all. **26**

Culture

The Bards created an extraordinarily sophisticated culture. It is still almost impossible to comprehend the extent of the rich trove of the Annar Scripts, which is believed to consist of almost the entire Library of Norloch, itself a repository of many scripts from all the other Schools. Translation of the scripts has so far barely scraped the surface of what is available and here I can give only the most schematic outline of Bardic achievements. While some scholars have wished to compare the Bardic culture with Mediaeval Europe, citing its relative technological backwardness, its culture was much closer to the humanistic Renaissance in its scientific curiosity and complexity. The truth is that neither comparison applies: both obscure the essential strangeness of the Bards.

They did not distinguish, as we do, between arts and sciences: the alienation of these branches of knowledge in contemporary society would have baffled a Bard, who was accustomed to thinking of all knowledge as part of a single Knowing. A major reason for this was that their system of representation was not based, as Western knowledge is, on Aristotelian notions of categorisation, but on systems of relationship. **27** This profound difference accounts, perhaps, for the very sophisticated understanding the Bards had of what are now known as sciences of complexity (the biological sciences, for example). A science which depended on laboratory experimentation, for example, simply didn't exist, although it is known that the Schools of the Suderain included extremely advanced mathematicians and that the Bards of Baladh formulated and used physical laws in their astronomical observations. They were aware of atoms and sub-atomic particles, and theorised matter and energy as musical vibratory forces, anticipating quantum physics and String Theory, and the Bard Thorkon of Turbansk proposed something which looked very like the Theory of Relativity. **28**

More astonishing discoveries include the fact that the Bards had a working theory of evolution and natural selection, which becomes very clear in the many texts written around the game of Gis, which was very popular in Bardic culture. Many Bards wrote about the game, but it was Intathen of Gent who first

theorised Gis as a model of competing populations of species, and even of evolutionary tendencies within a single psyche. 29 Malikil of Jerr-Niken theorised genetic inheritance in N755 in *The Loom of Light*, which recorded her meticulous observations of breeding and cross-pollinating ikil plants. It is even possible, given the prevalence of the symbol of the double helix in Bardic writing, that the Bards knew about DNA.

Unsurprisingly, their medical skills were highly advanced, although many practices also depended on the powers which were associated with the Speech, and so remain mysterious. The Speech, which the Bards considered to be the basis of their magical powers, is something of which we still know and understand very little. Most experts believe that Bards knew about bacteria and viruses, and some argue it is likely they observed them - there is evidence from astronomical observations that the science and practice of optics was highly developed, and it is possible they may have invented microscopes, although there is as yet no proof of that. Be that as it may, it is known that medical practice stressed the importance of hygiene to prevent infection and that Bards practised inoculation against disease. There even exist instructions for producing antibiotic potions to "extinguish the invading disease-spores" 30 .

Bardic literature and arts are astonishing in their variety and profusion, and include great masterpieces of music, poetry and painting. They had developed a complex system of notating music, which they venerated as the art closest to the Light, and much of the music so far deciphered sounds very "modern" to the listening ear. Bards delighted in metrical and linguistic inventiveness and employed a wide range of forms in their poetic literature; their aesthetic abhorred dogmatism of any kind as a "dimming of the Light". Only the beautiful illuminations of the scripts now remain to us as reminders of their visual art, although the writings tell of extraordinary architecture and signal the widespread prevalence of murals and sculpture in all Bardic communities. The most complete picture of Bardic culture yet discovered is in *The Riddle of the Treesong*, and it is widely speculated that this book was written to combat misinformation about Bards then widespread in Annar. 31

Unfortunately the central spiritual tenets of Barding - what was meant by the Light, for example, or much beyond general and extremely ambiguous notes about their idea of the afterlife - remain beyond our understanding at present. In part this was because of the Bardic practice of communicating the most important mysteries orally: it is crucial to remember that in Bardic culture orality and literacy ran side by side, as occurred in Classical Greece during the few centuries of its greatest achievements. It is also critical to understand that pivotal concepts like the Light and the Balance did not imply an anthropomorphic notion of God. Without disputing the spiritual significance

given to the Light and the strong moral imperatives contained in the Balance, it seems fair to say that they were much closer to forces of nature than to monotheistic notions of a punishing and rewarding Creator. **32** It is tempting, if perhaps anachronistic, to speculate that, despite their magery, the Bards may have created one of the most genuinely secular societies ever known.

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