

The Tsardoms

Some information on the four countries known as the Tsardoms, a land full of Cossack style people, a Russian flavor and bear knights.



History of the Tsardoms

Over thirty thousand years ago some of the early, mostly homosapien styled human tribes of Central Al'Akwannon set out in various directions. Over the next ten thousand years core settlement areas began to cement their racial profiles in the north, east and south. In the northwestern portion of the continent the early Norlan race (a generally ruddy or fair skinned complexion, slightly wavy, usually lighter colored hair and light eyes people; effectively Scandinavian) evolved to a more distinct separation. In the far eastern portion of the continent the early Quandin race (a generally dusky, tan skinned, usually dark, course hair and almond shaped, deep colored eye people; effectively Arab/Indian) evolved in equally distinct fashion. From the Quandin of the East rose a powerful force reaching incredible, unstoppable height about a thousand years ago. They were known simply as "the Horde" (in Al'Akwannon, the equivalent of a Mongolian Horde type of scenario originated out of a more Arabid

racial profile.) The Great Khan of the Horde expanded and controlled pretty much everything in the East from the northern to southern coasts.

In a very similar style to that of Genghis Khan, after the Great Khan's death, his children began to break into their own hordes, countries and other coalitions that persisted for the next six hundred years or so. As a game time reference, this persisted for the breadth of the Holocaust period of Al'Akwannon's history. Near the end of this time, powerful Norlan knights from the west leaving the hardships of the western coasts behind and seeking a new land to settle, had made their way east across the northern expanse and encountered weakening Horde powers on the western edge of their former empires. The knights drove personal armies (much like Viking raiders) along with various peasant families and merchants who followed in the wake and they penetrated the Horde powers creating their first foothold in the realm of the east. The first few generations began crafting their kingdoms, but also blended well with the remaining vestiges of the Hordelanders.

As they pressed east, they eventually found themselves stopped by more powerful, well lead and coordinated Horde remainders. Those former hordes would hold a border that would eventually become known as the realm of the Eastern Khanates. To the south the Norlans began to encounter large numbers of orcs, ogres and giants which caused them pause in pushing any further south. Eventually this brief expansion began to settle into a realm which, by the maps, would extend to the areas comprised of the Hringarike and through the four Tsardoms of the north. From these early times of war, four great families would exert their power, while more "ronin-like" warriors would develop a looser band in what would become the Hringarike.

Over the next three hundred years or so, the blending of the Horde descendants, the Norlan rulers and cooperation with orcs and half-ogres from the south has crafted the Tsardoms of the north. For our gaming purposes, a very Russian-like group of countries.

Description of the Cossack Hosts

Through the past three hundred years of the Tsardoms, each of the Tsars and bordering Khans have relied in one part or another on the power of Cossack Hosts to help control their domains. Cossack hosts are a societal group rather than a racial one being made up of humans from a variety of racial descents (Norlan [Scandinavian], Quandin [Arabic/Khanate] and a host of half-breed styles between,) orcs, half-orcs and even half-ogres. In exchange for their mercenary work in aid of the Tsars, the Cossacks were granted land, exemption from paying taxes and other benefits. Cossacks also work their privately owned land, raise animals and train horses and bears as war mounts.

A Cossack Host is effectively a private army along with its extended people and support network. They are an extremely patriarchal society with each clan ruled by a chief known as an ataman. Ataman effectively translates into "supreme commander" and is considered a militaristic title more so than one of lordship. Outwardly, the Cossacks acknowledge the Tsar as their lord (or possibly a Khan in the case of those Cossack hosts that exist in the borders of the Eastern Khanates and Daloch,) but internally are fiercely loyal to their ataman. If one's ataman is against the Tsar, then the Cossack Host is against the Tsar. Thus only a true leader can keep the balance of managing these Cossacks.

Cossack Customs

The word of the Ataman is law. The word of the hetman is law. The word of the eldest man of a family is law. To be a good Cossack is to take full responsibility for one's family. Great belief in discipline and authority. A male baby shall have an arrow put on his gums and his hand shall touch a bow and sabre. On the child's first month, he shall be clothed in mail and given a ceremonial sabre. He shall ride horseback by the age of 3. He shall race the horse, fire a bow and play at war by the age of 5.

A Cossack must serve for the Cossack Host and their ataman faithfully and keep the traditions and customs of the Cossacks always. One must be brave and patiently and bravely endure all manner of adversity. One must keep the Cossack's honor, community and give great respect to one's parents and elders. A Cossack must maintain a healthy lifestyle and adhere to the traditions and laws of the Cossack people. One must be an example in daily life, working to cultivate one's self and one's family in Cossack culture and faith. A Cossack must educate their children to be honest, kind, brave, friendly and yet uncompromising in the struggle against evil. One must be proud to wear their Cossack colors, garments and awards and welcome those of age and rank.

A Cossack should stand when talking to a woman. A Cossack does not interfere with women affairs. Religion is a private affair and belief in such is a gift. However as Cossack traditions are associated with the Lord of Ice, a member of the community should have respect for them. A Cossack may not serve his ataman in half of his strength and any assignment by leaders, elders or Cossack council must be performed flawlessly.

Cossack Weapons

The sabre of the Cossacks is known as a Shashka, a very sharp, single edged and guardless sword with a curved pommel and slightly curved blade (technically between a true sabre and a straight blade.) The favored knife of a Cossack is the kinjal, a roughly 12 inch long knife often with a slight curve, but sometimes straight and single edged. The favored bow of a Cossack is the steppe horn bow, a dual curved composite short bow without an arrow rest (a heavy ring is worn on the finger to provide a rest for an arrow, or both fingers if the archer is skilled enough to fire with either hand) and a relatively basic round grip. The lack of arrow rest allows the bow to be used and fired by either hand. The Cossack lance is the final core weapon of Cossack Hosts, a roughly 10 foot long slender lance with a double edged steel head, thong bound to a darkened wood shaft with an iron socket affixed about 3 feet from the tip to prevent a pierced enemy from sliding up to the Cossack himself. There are other weapons to be sure but these four form the cornerstone of Cossack combat.

Staraya Cossacks

The Staraya Cossack Host is based to the west of Anga-Tyr on the Cold Pine Steppe. They dominate an area which extends north of Anga-Tyr about 50 miles, west to the border of the Tsardom plus a variable few miles into what would be considered the Giantlands, an area about 20 miles south of Anga-Tyr and extending east right up to and somewhat intermingling with the Tsar's border, effectively "royal" lands that surround Anga-Tyr. The entire domain is a bit over 3000 square miles (about halfway between the size of King County [2300 sq mi] and Los Angeles County [4700 sq mi]) has an approximate population of 80k and is run by Ataman Nazar. The Ataman has a handful of trusted advisors; two are "highly important" grand advisors and additionally a variable 8 to 12 hetmans that are called upon for decisions of great importance to the clan. The battle ready army is about 25k and is currently deployed in 10 viyskos (basically a regiment of about 2500 Cossacks; the hetman being the equivalent of a full bird colonel in charge)

The Staraya Host is made up of about 40% Humans, 35% Trace Orc Blood Half-Orcs, 11% Helldogs (favoring orcish trait half-orcs), 10% Full blood Orcs and 3% Half-ogres and 1% random others (handful of other racial types who are generally traders and the like.) Including women, kids, elderly and the sort, the entire population of the host as mentioned above is roughly 80k spread throughout the Staraya realm (on both sides of the official political border, which is not very stringent.) The largest concentration of Staraya Cossack peoples is in Kuznetsk, Nazar's "seat" of power which holds two viyskos and their families and is a trading center as well. Rough population of Kuznetsk is about 12k. This is where the game shall start.

Anga Tyr

Once merely an early Cossack krepost along a bend in the Vanga River, Anga Tyr is literally translated to "a bend in the river Vanga." Its origins are a little over 300 years ago when the earliest of the Norlans established an element of control in the middle of roving Khanate horde remnants. Within the next fifty years, the town grew into a trading post with numbers of a few thousand mostly permanent settlers of the family line of Aerik. Approximately fifty years after that, a fortress was built by a new Aerik cousin who donned the Tsar title and named the new capital moving a few hundred miles to the south from the old capital near the center of the Tsardom. In the next few decades, the population more than doubled and the area became a major hub for the Aerik Tsardom.

At the beginning of his reign nearly one hundred fifty years ago, Tsar Kir's grandfather, Zakhar, the Builder, as the city's population swelled to twenty five thousand commanded that the city be walled. In addition to walling the city, the Tsar's palace was upgraded to a large stone edifice and grounds. By the time of Tsar Kir's reign beginning some sixty years ago, the city was now comprised of a filled inner city and a well populated outer city. During his reign the population soared to over forty thousand and remains this way now even though forces are at work that are picking away at this growth trend.

Novozil

The old capital of the Tsardom is a shadow of its former self, but still a reasonably good sized city of about 18,000 people. It is situated in the midst of fertile farmlands with excellent horse land (in summer) and a good number of people spread throughout the massive plain.

Assuri Cossacks

The Assuri Host is based in the central portion of the Aerik Tsardom (red 8 on the map) and are renowned for their bears. Their lands are primarily in a central forested basin with lots of hills, streams and excellent bear country. Assuri bears generally have the look of a large Kodiak style bear with an average quadruped height of about 5.5ft at the shoulder, 1500lbs and 10.5ft to the head in biped mode. The largest Assuri bear ever recorded was very dark brown, near black furred beast 6.5ft at the shoulder quadruped, 1900lbs and 13ft to head in biped mode. The bear was called Strakh Chernyl (strok-CHAIR-nee) which translates roughly to Dark Terror and was immortalized in a life size carbonized wood statue in the Assuri "capital town."

Ataman Ulev

Ataman of the Assuri Cossack Viysko, it was one of his men who located the Mevlodov (Sky Blade) and the blade is now in his possession. After being led to the Sky Blade by goat herders of his, he has since deemed this a sign from the gods that with all the goofiness happening in Anga Tyr that the time for a new dynasty has come and that Ulev and the Assuri Host are the ones meant to lead such a dynasty. Wielding the Sky Blade, Ulev is mobilizing the Assuri Host to strike out at any who will not ally with them and move on Novozil, the old capital in the Buzaluk lands roughly 50 miles south of the southern Assuri border.

Nalchak Cossacks

The Nalchak Host is based in the fertile river plain east of Anga Tyr in the valleys that fill rolling hills between the Vanga and Mozen Rivers (and dozens of smaller rivers and streams that are part of those two large river's watersheds. The Mozen is the river that creates the official border between the Aerik Tsardom and Vesemia.) The Nalchak are a much more human-centric Cossack Host with about 85% of their overall composition being made up of humans (and mostly human looking half-orcs.) They have performed as an "opposite number" for the Staraya Host for generations, though mostly in a rivalry and mostly non-violent (at least non-deadly) sort of fashion. Roughly 150 years in ago just before the reign of Tsar Zakhar, the Nalchak were actually allied more closely with Vesemia and the lands to the east were considered possibly beholden to Vesemia. Zakhar and his line have impressed the Atamen of the Nalchak and have been solidly in Tsar Kir's corner.