

A brief guide to the races and countries in Feudball

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Written by Geoff G Turner © 2016.

Consider the feudball world as an alternative world (yet strangely similar) to the one that we currently live in, in terms of mass, size, natural resources, flora, fauna, etc. with easily recognizable continents. It is the middle of the 19th century, with most of the developed countries, and their overseas satellites, having adopted mass production, transporting their goods by rail across land, but still resorting to sail to take their goods further. Magic still exists and is utilized extensively in communication through devices called scryes, which enables far flung settlements of empire to remain in contact with their motherlands, as well as the transmission of programs, including feudball broadcasts, which entertain the masses.

Even though humans dominate this world, they aren't the only race to occupy it. In many places they live alongside other races, namely elves and dwarves, who are more sociable than most of the other non-human races. It's a delicate balance in some areas. Humans, as aggressive colonizers, have often come to blows with other races in their expansions and still come to blows with each other mostly over territorial disputes. There are still those who would rather see all non-humans eradicated from the planet and have launched extensive campaigns to destroy them, but for the majority, they are prepared to live side by side with those whose existence on the planet can be dated back hundreds if not thousands of years before humankind.

Races

Dwarves: Short, stocky, tough, humanoids, renowned for their industrial and inventive know-how, these people are spread far and wide, often establishing themselves in hilly or mountain areas to mine, though some have been known to settle in coastal areas to fish and trade. They settle in family groups, and will build elaborate fortifications to protect their territory. Dwarves have long been allied with humans, and in the past have often come to their aid when faced with invasions from other races. They have even provided technology that has led to great military and industrial advancements.

Elves: Much like the dwarves, they have spread themselves across the continent. They are gaunt, lean, with very small noses and pointed ears, yet strangely alluring. Unlike dwarves, there are distinctive variations of elves. There are the city elves, who have adapted to living in enclaves in established human cities, or in separate elven townships. Then there's the forest elves, who see themselves as traditional elves, who still live in clans within large wooded areas. Grey elves are very distinctive, with a variety of skin tones from a sickly greyish-yellow to greyish-brown, whilst their city and forest cousins are much fairer. Some of these clans have urbanized, though many still live well away from human settlements. And finally, there are sea elves. They have fair skin as well, and live in coastal areas, sometimes mixing with humans. Some would even say there is a fifth elven race – half-elves, made up of the union between humans and elves. Though they do exist, many don't see themselves as a separate race, rather either as one or the other. The half-breeds are more common amongst the city elves.

Fomori: An aggressive race, living in the islands to the north of Brython. They are mutants, with the basic human structure of head, torso, arms and legs, but that's where the similarity ends. The variation of mutations is wide. There are creatures who have grown horns, others whose hands have mutated into claws, ones who have grown extra limbs, even those who have grown tentacles. As to how they became like this, some say it was unearthly influences – meteorites delivering radiation in heavy doses to effect entire islands. Others claim it was a curse from the gods, who struck down an entire race with a heavy affliction. Dark magic though is often touted though as the major cause, with sorcerers having unlocked planetary secrets that were meant to remain hidden. Whatever the case, these creatures often fight amongst themselves, though pause long enough to raid human and dwarven settlements, abducting women to breed with, and livestock to eat, seeing that they are carnivores. It is also rumoured that some tribes are cannibalistic. Most of the tribes though, have adapted to a rudimentary civilised lifestyle, and trade with

their neighbours rather than attack them.

Goblins: Considered to be a subserviant race to the orcs, though there are clans who live independently, and others who have adopted to living in the larger human cities. These small-ish, green-skinned creatures can be quite vile, and are often seen as annoying, troublesome creatures, who can be quite violent.

Halflings: Though they tend to live in large villages well away from major human cities, they have often sought the company of humans, and many live and work amongst them, especially in hospitality related industries. These short creatures, not as tough or muscular as dwarves, are generally quite cheerful, and agile, are also seen as mischievous as well, though not as troublesome as the goblins.

Humans: Legend has it that humans were the outcome of unions between dwarves and elves. Many feel that there is some truth in that, considering that humans with creative, artistic tempereents have often been considered as to having elven blood in them, whilst being industrious, hard-working, and stubborn was viewed as being dwarven-like. Humans, compared to the other races, breed quickly, and are forced to expand to accommodate their population. This, however, has lead to numerous wars with other races, and amongst themselves. There are many human races on the planet, with many languages, and many cultures. They have expanded across the globe, even settling in places considered inhospitable by other races.

Nausicans: An aggressive race, often colloquially referred to as 'doggies' because they are so hairy. Some of the larger members of their race though are called 'bears' instead. The hair is necessary for these human-like people, considering they mostly live, in scattered groups, along the northwest coast of Aarhus, and on islands to the north, and northeast of Brython, areas well known for being cold and miserable all year round. Nausicans are not noted for farming, manufacturing or trading abilities, even though some do try these non-violent pursuits, but they are feared as pirates, and ply their trade from the eastern shores of Brython to the western coast of Tsarovia. They have been known to raid these coastlines in force as well, carrying off livestock and women as well as gold. Pirating is not limited to these shores – the more adventurous of this race have been known to set sail for the overseas colonies of Brython, Bourbon, Iberia and Guilder and ply their trade there. Some have seen the appeal of becoming mercenaries, with Nausican troops often serving in the vanguard of invading armies, whilst others have taken to the feudball fields, with Nausican teams being quite popular.

Ogres: Living in scattered small tribes across the continent, well away from major human settlements, these large, docile humanoids have often been hunted down and captured, to serve in a menial capacity as labourers, or entertain crowds in circuses, zoos or on the feudball pitch. You'll also find them acting as bodyguards in larger cities, or as assault troops for armies at war. In the wild, they're hunters and gatherers, and generally will only attack if provoked. Have even been known to be bred in captivity and sold.

Orcs: Temperemental creatures, human-like, but ape-like as well. Not fond of the cold, and are found in warmer climates. In the past, have often formed armies and gone to war with humans, their forces augmented by ogres, trolls and goblins. They live in large tribes on the fringes of human civilization, but are more prevalent in the east rather than the west. Not noted for their nautical ability, some have taken to the sea, and even seek peaceful means of making a living, though some have resorted to piracy. Others, not interested in becoming farmers or hunters, like the nausicans, take up arms and become mercenaries, or form feudball teams and play for a living.

Ratmen: Hairy, rat-like humanoids, preferring to live underground, though you will find them above ground in hilly areas, forests, and even the slums of larger human cities. They're agile and fast, and have often been employed by criminal elements as assassins and thieves. Their tribes are formed like armies, with divisions set-up for construction, food production, entertainment (which includes feudball), medical, magical and fighters, and have a clear command structure. They often prefer to stay neutral in time of war, unless directly threatened or duly inspired. They will sell their services to those who can afford them, but can be fickle, and change sides or desert if things are going bad for their paymaster. Have been known to experiment on themselves, creating larger, aggressive ratmen for fighting, or unusual mutants for various

purposes.

Treemen: Generally solitary creatures, they are rarely seen outside dense forests, but have been known to set themselves up as guardians for isolated non-human communities. They are tall, taller than ogres or trolls, but are slow. They're very intelligent and have been known to live for centuries. Younger treemen tend to wander, and have been known to join campaigning armies of elves, ratmen, or dwarves. They like halflings, but despise goblins, and are indifferent to trolls and ogres. Nobody knows for certain as to how they breed, but saplings do take years to develop. There are many varieties of treemen - they're not limited to just a handful of species.

Trolls: These large human-like creatures are quite dumb and can be quite forgetful as well, often needing to be reminded as to what they need to do. Though some live in small isolated clusters, many prefer the security of living amongst orcs and goblins, throwing their weight around when they don't get their way. Despite their size and apparent lack of intelligence, they're actually reasonable hunters and can be quite persistent. They've been known to freeze for hours whilst waiting for their prey. They're noted for their big appetites, eating roughage when meat can't be found. They're not fussy if their meals are still breathing when they go down their throats and can detach their jaws to make way for larger chunks.

Undead: There are a variety of creatures that fit this category – zombies, animated skeletons, wights, ghouls, wraiths, flesh constructs, mummies, ghosts and others. They can be solitary creatures causing distress, random bands of creatures who are masterless and just interested in mindless torment and feeding, or under the control of a necromancer, who can impose his will over them and get them to do his (or hers) bidding. You will find them pretty much in every country on the planet. Strange as it may seem, the undead are truly tolerant of all races. Resurrected elves, humans, dwarves, ratmen, etc. can all be found in the ranks of undead hordes.

Vampires: These blood-sucking humans, noted for their strength and longevity, do not see themselves as undead, rather as humans with unusually long lifespans. They are generally solitary creatures, and live well away from large human settlements, though some form enclaves in large cities, generally to control trade and dominate local politics. There are some amongst them though who prefer to abuse their powers, and attack their human hosts, viewing them as cattle to be slaughtered. Every country or territory on the planet have their own stories about these creatures, that bright sunlight burns them, that they can create zombies and ghouls, that they can transform into bats, crows, wolves and/or rats, and have the power of hypnosis, dominating and controlling mortals through mind power alone.

Intelligent, and semi-intelligent human-like creatures are not just limited to the above. There are many other creatures, such as werewolves, giants and centaurs that live on the planet, but some are more legendary rather than common occurrences.

Countries

The great, developed landmass that takes up the bulk of this map has been known as Thea for the better part of a millennia. To the south of the Tideless Sea lies the continent known as Arabica. The citizens of these two continents are colloquially known as Theans and Arabicans, to most of the non-human races, they are all referred to as Leshans or Leshies.

Aarhus: A large expanse of territory, with most of its north permanently covered in snow and ice, with the south being heavily populated, with plenty of rich, fertile farmland and vineyards. With the latest mining technology though, human industrialists have exploited the frozen areas, removing the mineral wealth at the expense of the local wildlife, and upsetting isolated groups of ogres and trolls who have been living there for thousands of years. Nausicans also live in the country, inhabiting coastal areas in the northwest, and on neighbouring islands. A country that generally prefers to stay out of continental affairs, except when it comes to their equally expansive neighbours Tsarovia, hence their reasoning in coming to Vistula's aid when the region was being invaded by multiple states and races in the 16th century. The two countries have

regularly skirmished along the common border over the last two hundred years. The capital city, Haakon, is a very popular tourist destination, renowned for its yearly ice and opera festivals.

Autonomous Orcan Region: After numerous wars and treaties, an expanse of territory bordering Tsarovia, Vistula and the Vanian Kingdoms was set up, to allow dozens of orcan clans, with their goblin and troll allies, to settle. The territory gave the orcs access to the Walled Sea, which allowed them to follow less violent pursuits in fishing and trade, though piracy is still commonly practiced. Its immediate neighbours warily patrol their borders, constantly on the look out for those who enjoy the cheap thrill of a quick raid and others who like to flex their muscles with a frontier skirmish. All this is tolerated, within reason, but there has been times when punitive attacks have been launched in retaliation. The various tribes live in (mostly) disorganized settlements, but the region does maintain an administrative capital of sorts at Zangle.

Bourbon: A very interracial country, with large clans of dwarves, elves, halflings, ratmen and orcs living openly within its borders. It's even rumoured that a handful of Bourbon's cities are controlled by elder vampiric families. Its capital, Lafayette, has the largest population of city-dwelling elves on the continent, and is a rich, cultural city which attracts tens of thousands of tourists yearly. Generally a peace-loving country, it has had a troubled past, fighting lengthy and costly territorial wars which saw it vastly reduced in size. Some within its borders believe it should return to the glory days of empire, but most are content to stay as they are, firmly sandwiched between the Imperial States and Iberia, and enjoying trade with numerous partners, as well as obtaining valuable resources from its overseas settlements. It is renowned for producing a variety of quality alcoholic beverages, which is its principal trading commodity.

Brython: Fiercely independent, it doesn't like to get involved with continental matters, unless they really have to. It's a nation that prefers to do its fighting away from home, having been stung badly in a lengthy war with the Lowlanders, which saw the capital Lowden attacked in 1800. Currently having internal problems with malcontent northerners (inspired by independence seeking Skots), and occasional problems with nausican pirates and fomorian raiders. Apart from that, it benefits greatly from the revenue generated by dozens of overseas colonies (some taken by force from the Guildans and Iberians), and trade with numerous countries. There are dozen or so dwarven clans in the north, eking an existence as miners, brewers (several Brython breweries are owned by dwarves), traders, fishermen, etc. and elven communities in the west and south as well. There are a couple of areas colloquially known as 'deadlands' under the control of unknown necromancers.

Catania: One of three island states that regained its independence from Estalia in the 18th century. A maritime power that controls trade passing through its waters from the east and west, and is ruthless in hunting down pirates and destroying their bases, employing local magic using elves to give their naval vessels a bit of extra fighting power. Several centuries ago it was controlled by three rival factions, the Sciani (in the east), the Himeri (centre) and Akragi (west). They were never on the best of terms, and when war did break out it was the western group that emerged victorious, their campaign largely bankrolled by neighbouring Estalia. With the debts not being repaid on time, Zingaro, the new capital, was seized in a swift military operation, and looted. Resistance was brutally crushed, and the rest of the island taken over in a short, but bloody war. Three centuries of occupation was to follow, with the locals resorting to an extensive guerilla campaign. The state finally regained its independence as Estalia was broken up by internal strife. Today, the island is a popular tourist destination, for its unique wildlife, ancient ruins, and pristine beaches.

Estalia: Like Bourbon, it too had an empire, but over the centuries it was gradually whittled away. Its first overseas forays were with extensive settlements in unoccupied areas of the Vanian Kingdoms, which, after being established for the better part of a century, were lost one-by-one in local uprisings. It also controlled three neighbouring island states, but with a series of military coups in the early 18th century, all three regained their independence, with the northern region of Tuscon gaining autonomy as well. The country is still licking its wounds over a century later. Still a formidable power in the region, it maintains cordial relations with all of its former possessions, and enjoys trade with very much every nation or state that rims the Tideless Sea. Its capital, Ciano, is considered a cultural rival to Lafayette, and though not as

cosmopolitan as Bourbon, it still has a number of areas well-populated by non-human races. An industrial revival in the country is said to be the work of several rival dwarven clans.

Garamantes: Ideally located in the centre of the southern half of the Tideless Sea, the territory has established trade routes with pretty much every country or state in or bordering that watery mass. The area though was once home to numerous pirates, and it took three extensive campaigns in the late 1600s and early 1700s before they were finally exterminated. It has followed in Naqada's footsteps, borrowing its scientists and agricultural experts to make more land fertile. Education has become a priority, with the capital Numidi now home to several universities and a dozen trade colleges. The civil war in neighbouring Morrunsia has stirred up trouble along that border, with the undead a constant threat to the south. The country is also home to a large enclave of ratmen, colloquially known as the Desert Rats.

Guilder: Often referred to as the Lowlands, with habitable land being created from draining swamps and dumping large amounts of stone, concrete and earth to alter their coastline. It has clashed in the past with its nearest neighbour, the Imperial States, vigourously resisting attempts to be incorporated into the conglomerate, and with Brython as well, mostly over trade routes and claims to overseas territory. They launched an ambitious attack on their cross-channel rival in 1800, almost succeeding in capturing the capital Lowden. It was a costly war, with both sides losing thousands of men, their navies depleted and overseas settlements changing hands, with a negotiated peace securing a fair deal for both sides. Three decades of peace has been good for the country, with trade going strong, and naval agreements reached with Brython, Iberia and Bourbon where the four countries share the burdon in hunting down and eradicating pirates, both locally and overseas. Like Bourbon, it's a pretty liberal country, enjoying the benefits of having clans of elves, dwarves and halflings living within it's borders, the dwarves being quite inventive in their attempts to reclaim territory from the sea. The capital, Cryuff, is a popular tourist destination, especially for Brythonians wanting a weekend getaway across the channel.

Iberia: Once part of Bourbon, four centuries ago it fought a long and bloody war to gain its independence. It then fought another costly war with its former master over the nearby independent city states. Eventually it settled for colonizing overseas, becoming the first of the Thean countries to do so. When Brython followed suite, the two sides clashed, the war seeing the peninsula state losing it's prized possession in the colonies – the prosperous city of Puerto Bella. It has been at peace for over a century now, enjoying the profits of healthy trade, and like Estalia, is undergoing an industrial revival, also lead by dwarves. Orcs, ogres, elves and ratmen also live within it's borders, the latter two with large clans in the capital Scaramanga.

Imperial States: An ambitious nation, priding itself on hard work and devotion to duty. Its capital, Brandenburg, is the second most visited city on the continent, and hosts the largest feudball tournament in the known world every two years, primarily to boast of their superior sporting talent. The Junker race (pronounced Yewn-kerr), had been living in the region for over a thousand years, and once consisted of thirty autonomous tribes, which gradually merged, either violently or peacefully, to make up the twelve fiefdoms that existed in the early 15th century prior to the commencement of the Unification War. When the states were mostly united under one banner, the Junker armies turned their attentions on other 'enemies', namely Guilder in the west, Toberlaron in the southwest, the Vistulan clans in the east and all non-human clans in the region, of which only the dwarves in the mountains near Toberlaron and the sea elves of Hindemith Island survived, with the rest slaughtered or fleeing across whatever border they could. Orcs, from the lands known today as the Vanian Kingdoms and Vistula, in an unusual show of solidarity with the non-human refugees, attacked in large numbers in the early 16th century, forcing the Imperial troops back to their present border in the north, but not making much headway in the south. As a result of one southern siege, the ball game which became known as feudball was played for the first time. Today, the Imperial States dominates continental industry, trade, and politics, and fields the largest standing land army east of Tsarovia.

Independant City States: Several cities that are located on six islands off the eastern coasts of Iberia and Bourbon, amongst an island chain that contains dozens of islands of various sizes. Five of these cities, Ensaimada, Fernández, Flaó, Lorenzo and Sobrassada have their own seperate island, whilst the cities of

Moyá and Nadal share the island of Anagni, the largest island in the chain. On the smaller islands, other communities do exist, including a clan of sea elves, with them under the administration of one of the city states. Originally settled by the Bourbons, Iberians, and Morrunsians later migrated, forming a rather unique cultural mix. The two cities in the southwest, Fernández and Flaó, have a Iberian majority, Sobrassada is predominantly Morrunsian, whilst the other four are mostly Bourbon. All of them, it should be said, were reluctantly taken under Bourbon control in the late 13th century. When Iberia won their independence from Bourbon in the 15th century, the first mandate of the new realm was to take the city states from Bourbon. The subsequent war lasted fifty years, with the cities' ownership changing numerous times. In the end the Morrunsians stepped in and with representatives from Estalia and Brython, their independence was declared and enforced. Today, all the states enjoy trade with their former masters and attract tens of thousands of tourists every year, drawn there by the music, the food, and the scenery.

Ionia: A generally peaceful territory at the eastern end of the Tideless Sea, Ionia is home to a number of sentient races, with orcs, elves, dwarves, even nausicans having established enclaves within its boundary. In the 16th and 17th centuries it was attacked repeatedly by armies from Levant and the Vanian Kingdoms, with orcs launching seaborne invasions, and Kaptaran and Onesilian pirates raiding the coastline at will. All that changed when Göbekli the Magnificent inherited the kingdom, and set about reorganising naval and land forces under his command. Aided by Tsarovian mercenaries, all lost territory from the southeast and northwest was recaptured, and fortified buffer zones created in Vania and Levant to deter attacking forces. The navy won a series of crushing victories against the pirates, effectively wiping out every base in the eastern section of the Tideless Sea. To this day it still maintains a strong navy, and administers the city of Ponti in the Vanian Kingdoms. The capital was renamed in honour of the powerful ruler, who went on to establish the country as an economic powerhouse of trade and manufacturing.

Kaptara: An independent island state in the east of the Tideless Sea. Nicknamed 'The Unconquerable Island' as it has repeatedly driven off attempts by Estalia, Ionia, Levant and three of the Vanian Kingdoms to incorporate it into their realms. Inhabited by a very spirited people renowned for their hospitality, they fiercely defend their sovereignty, with a modern well-trained fleet and numerous forts dotted around the coast. The capital, Girit, is guarded by a large military port, which doesn't deter the thousands of tourists that visit it during the year.

Levant: A territory whose armies were once feared throughout the entire region, but is sadly in decline. The country suffered in the last century through natural disasters and political upheaval, prompting thousands to emigrate to neighbouring countries. Its capital, Akkadia, is a culturally rich city, but with a poor economy and extensive corruption within the city council, the monuments and buildings that were once the pride of the area have fallen into disrepair. With crumbling infrastructure and uninspired security forces, it is no surprise that the locals have often resorted to banditry and piracy to make a living. Failure to curb attacks across its border, Naqadan troops have often stepped in to cleanse neighbouring settlements. With the frequency of the raids, it's only a matter of time before an invasion is launched.

Morrunsia: A large territory on the southern edge of the Tideless Sea, rich in minerals of various types, and home to a mixture of non-human races, including the undead, who mostly live in the desert wastes in the south. Masters of trade in the region, whose ships brave the Turquoise and the Shivering Seas to trade with Aarhus and Vistula, and go east to trade with the orcs along the coast of the Walled Sea, and the Tsarovians in the south. They are formidable fighters, with a powerful navy – even their trading vessels are well armed. The country knew peace for well over a century, until relatively recently when dissidents, calling for a return to the old ways, the eviction of foreigners, and the closing of ports to those ships from north of the Tideless Seas, launched a coup in the capital Lixus which saw the assassination of most of the ruling royal family, sparking a war which has devastated most of the country. Its southern frontiers have also suffered, with the undead taking the opportunity to expand their realms, and bandits from neighbouring countries crossing the border and raiding at will.

Naqada: Often referred to as 'the miracle of the desert', the country, thanks to advanced farming techniques,

have turned vast tracts of arid land into fertile productive regions. Innovative and practical people, with more universities and colleges than any other country with a border on the Tideless Sea, its regular agricultural surpluses have seen its farmers become very well off, attracting large numbers of Levantians to work their fields and create their own farms. Naqadian scientists are often sought (at great cost) by other countries, and its standing army is equipped with the latest weaponry, which it exports as well. Its capital, Psamtik, is home to the largest university and hospital in Arabica.

Onesilus: An island state that had been used as a proverbial punching bag by the Ionians and Levantians in the past, each taking turns in controlling the territory. In the mid 17th century, fed up with being fought over by its larger neighbours, the locals rose up against the masters at the time, the Ionians, and aided by the Kaptarans, forced their occupiers out in a bloody three year campaign for independence. Both neighbours would attempt yet again to take over the island before the century was out, but with continued assistance from Kaptara, and mercenaries from Vania, the island successfully repelled the invaders, and have rarely been bothered since. They repay their former tormentors with occasional 'sanctioned' pirate raids from their capital, Khirokitia. A well-defended island, Onesilus is a popular tourist destination, with numerous trading partners, most of them in the west. It is renowned for its textile industry, and for its dyes, which have made their way across the continent to Aarhus and Brython.

Oristano: Shares a similar history with Catania, having been fought over by four rival clans – the Ozieri (northeast), Nuraghi (southeast), Bithians (southwest) and Sulci (northwest), and then subsequently invaded by the Estalians when the clan that they were backing, the Ozieri, were almost overrun by the Sulci. The hilly terrain made things difficult for the invaders, who took five years to fully conquer the island after much blood was spilt. At the end of the war, they established Tharros, which was to become the principal port of the island, and its capital. Like Catania, it capitalized on Estalia's inner turmoil in the 18th century to launch a campaign of independence, succeeding after a seven year struggle, the invaders rather reluctant to let go of the island that was quite rich in mineral resources. The island state also has a reasonably sized, and modern navy, and enjoys trade and tourism much like its two brothers.

Toberlaron: A scenic, mountainous, land-locked territory that defied all attempts to be absorbed into the Imperial States. They were aided by several dwarven clans, who fortified the border, then marched into enemy territory to come to the aid of their brethren, and take the fight to the invaders. The country's flag and coat of arms bearing a crossed warhammer and axe, a permanent reminder of the great feat which guaranteed their independence. A country which is permanently vigilant, with compulsory military service at 19, with an emphasis on artillery. In fact, pieces made by the Tobers are purchased by various countries, who are happy to pay high prices for the precision weapons. It enjoys healthy trade with its two neighbours, and has earned a reputation for producing quality industrial machinery, precision time-pieces, and scrye sets. It's capital, Unterwalden, is considered the most beautiful on the continent.

Tsarovia: A vast expanse of territory, noted for its extremes in weather, which many military experts claim to be the main reason why it hasn't been successfully invaded in over four hundred years. A country that regularly sways between apathy and belligerence, with large armies that are kept busy skirmishing with the Aarhusians in the north, the Vistulans in the west and the orcs in the south-west as well as with numerous foes in the east. Practically self-sufficient, but has a lot of dissatisfied people, angry with the regime with losses in personal freedom, numerous petty taxes, and hungry bellies. Its capital, Stavka, is more like a large military installation than the cultural hub which was once the pride of the nation. Many take the risk to emigrate as far west as they possibly can, even to Brython. The country is also home to large numbers of non-humans, with ogres and trolls thriving in the far north well away from humans; dozens of dwarven clans selling their technical expertise and their minerals to the highest bidders; and elven clans living peacefully in the large expanses of woodlands dotted around the country. There are even vast 'deadlands' which are home to many varieties of undead creatures.

Tuscon: A rich, fertile farming region, with mountains establishing its border in the north. Was a peaceful and productive region of Estalia until land reforms and an increase in taxes sparked a series of violent protests across the region in the latter half of the 17th century. When outspoken critics of the Estalian

regime were rounded up and executed, the region took up arms, the rebellion starting in the capital Cosimo and spreading rapidly. Tuscon then exported its rebellion across the borders, attacking military outposts, assassinating notable military and political leaders, and launching terrorist attacks further south, ably aided by Zonzian rebels who were seeking independence after centuries of Estalian rule. It was a bitter blow for Estalia, not only losing three profitable satellites but its breadbasket as well. Tuscon wine is quite popular on the mainland, as are their singers, composers and painters, and despite being a land-locked state their merchants (and pirates) travel far and wide, often turning up in unexpected places.

Vanian Kingdoms: A motley collection of states, too many to list here, with some no bigger than your average large city. Not only do they vary in size, they also vary in levels of modernization, functionality, beauty and corruption. Often considered as the place to go to 'really get away from it all', the area is home to many fugitives, dissidents, and religious sect members escaping persecution from other territories. If one has money, they can easily buy their way into Vanian society, and one pays extra, no questions will be asked and you'll be left alone. Several of the kingdoms are ruled by vampiric clans, and some areas are terrorized by wandering bands of the undead. Not all of the kingdoms are corrupt and run down, with some in the south and eastern coasts, especially those cities that were formerly Estalian colonies, are actually quite livable, with plenty of job prospects, culturally pleasant, plenty of public necessities and aren't solely reliant on bribery, theft and/or piracy as sources of income. However, quite a few are rather backwards, and are content to squabble amongst themselves for mineral deposits, being in a state of permanent feuding. The kingdom of Ostoya, in the south-west corner of the area, is considered to be the most prosperous, and the most modern of the kingdoms. It was a former Estalian city-state, and gradually expanded its borders to be roughly equal in size to that of the island of Catania.

Vistula: A country that owes its existence as a result of an orcan invasion. In the late 1500s, early 1600s, with the Imperial States rapidly expanding its borders, orcs launched a counter-invasion from the east, catching the advancing Imperial troops by surprise. Local clans, notably annoyed about being repeatedly invaded in such a short time, united and rose up in defiance, especially when Tsarovia decided to pinch territory in the east as well. With unexpected assistance coming from Aarhus, the Vistulans managed to force back the invading Tsarovians, as well as defeat the orc and Imperial troops in dozens of fierce battles. When the treaties were signed, Vistula had established borders, and the orcs had territory of their own as well. Mieszko was established as the nation's capital, a standing army was formed, and foreign investors invited to help rebuild the country. Currently, the nation is building a national rail network, to link its northern ports to the capital, and to link its capital to the rest of the continent. Rich in natural resources, especially in the south, the country is undergoing an industrial, economic and cultural revival, aided somewhat by the non-human races driven eastwards during the Imperial war of unification.

Zonzo: The smallest of the three island states encircling the Nuraxi Sea. Unlike its two bigger brothers, the island was quite content to live in peace until the Estalians invaded, fresh from their campaigns against the other two islands. Resistance lasted only until the capital Kalliste fell, which held out for barely a week. Guerilla warfare started within a month of their bigger neighbour taking control, the locals quickly earning a reputation for their ruthless and brutal manner of eliminating Estalian soldiers and any local sympathisers. For centuries, Estalian soldiers saw being stationed on the island as a severe punishment, with many returning psychologically scarred for life. Encouraged and supported by Tuscon rebels, Zonzo was the first of the three islands to break the Estalian chains, having taken their campaign to the mainland, launching a series of bloody terrorist attacks and continuing them until independence was gained. Today, Zonzian mercenaries command a high price for their service in foreign armies, and they get it. The island is heavily fortified, has a small, but modern navy, and military service is compulsory for both men and women once they turn 18. Pirates know well enough to leave the islands' merchant ships alone. The island benefits greatly from tourism, many visitors coming from Estalia to visit the outpost that gave their country so much grief.