

# ORD

## INTRODUCTION

The kingdom of Ord has stood stalwart for centuries despite recurring threats from wealthier nations. Its people are proud of their heritage and the courage of their soldiers and sailors despite the poverty and hardship so many endure. Every difficulty they have overcome has made them more resolute and implacable, and adds to the way they savor the simpler joys in life. In recent decades while the rest of the Iron Kingdoms have become embroiled in escalating war, Ord has maintained neutrality. Ruled by a clever king, Ord survives and has even prospered at a time when rival nations have suffered or fallen.

King Baird Cathor II rules his nation with cunning and guile, having earned a reputation as an unconventional king whose actions his adversaries can never predict. Eschewing the capital to spend his time in ports of ill repute like Five Fingers, King Baird has spies everywhere and his influence is as pervasive as it is subtle. He keenly understands that maintaining power in Ord requires a careful balancing act between the land-owning Tordoran castellans who dominate the aristocracy and the often overshadowed Thurian nobles who grease the gears of trade. The king has secured his position by appealing to the common man while turning the rivalries of his enemies to his advantage, setting them at one another's throats.

The common people of Ord must eke what living they can from the kingdom's bogs, fishing villages, difficult farms or labor at grueling jobs on cattle ranches owned by their betters. The interior of Ord is a moody, fog-shrouded land of rolling hills, rugged heaths, haunted moors, and the dangerous Olgunholt forest. It is a frugal land that has no bounty of resources beyond the peat used locally for fuel and the grazing land for its scattered herds of livestock. Despite this its people are proud of being Ordic and feel strong attachment to the rustic villages and towns of their birth.

Ord is rightfully famed for its people's deep relationship with the sea, and life is generally better for those who make their living along the coast or on the water. Those people who are fortunate enough to live on the coasts rely on the ocean for their livelihood,

whether that involves fishing, serving as a deck hand on a merchant or privateer's ship, or joining the navy. Even those who stay on land know that much of Ord's wealth and its strength rests in its ports and the navy that protects them. Each city along Ord's western coast has its own unique character and appeal, and each thrives on its own industry, whether legal or illegal. Often the lines between criminal organizations and legitimate merchant houses becomes blurry in Ord. However, both offer solid employment for the clever and courageous.

## HISTORY

Ord was created by the Corvis Treaties in 203 AR, but the history of the region's people stretches back to the early Thousand Cities Era. Ord's people came from two kingdoms that once dominated the myriad townships of the central western coast of Immoren—Thuria and Tordor. Though established first, Thuria was eventually eclipsed and then conquered by Tordor. The peoples descended from those ancient kingdoms later united as Ord but have remained distinct.

## ORD FACTS

**Ruler:** King Baird Cathor II, The Bandit King

**Government Type:** Absolute Monarchy

**Capital:** Merin

**Ethnic Groups & Approx. Population:** 2,100,000 Tordoran; 1,240,000 Thurian; 100,000 Midlunder; 50,000 Caspian; 40,000 gobbers; 25,000 Ryn; 23,000 Rhulfolk; 20,000 bogrin; 18,000 Sharde; 12,000 Khard; 12,000 trollkin; 4,000 Morridane; 4,000 Umbreans; 3,000 Kossite; 3,000 Skirov; 500 Iosan

**Languages:** Ordic (primary), Cygnaran, Khadoran, Scharde

**Climate:** Temperate; cool and rainy in the north, warmer and drier in the south though the summers are typically cool, moist, and consistently humid; overcast about half the time.

**Terrain:** Rugged hills north of the Rohannor River; rolling plains, lowlands, and marshes in the south and central areas; thick woodlands and peat bogs north of the Dragon's Tongue River; sea cliffs along the west coast.

**Natural Resources:** Fish, deepwater ports, forests (mainly cork), amber, peat deposits, lignite, limestone, marble, with some copper, coal, and arable land.

## RISE AND FALL OF THURIA

During the Thousand Cities Era independent city-states were scattered across western Immoren, the successors of the fiefdoms established by the great warlords of the previous era. The struggles and wars between these civilizations resulted in their gradual consolidation as the mightier sought to conquer the weaker.

Some historians believe no other great kingdom could have risen to prominence in the central region of western Immoren as long as the kingdom of Morrddh retained its strength. Caspia and Khard were the first kingdoms to emerge from the dark time of the Warlord Era, bolstered by their priest-kings' leadership. As Morrddh declined, its weakness allowed additional outlying communities to band together and thrive. One of the earliest was the collective townships that became Midar, south of Morrddh. These two powers became locked in deadly strife. Thuria rose next when a number of western clans holding lands around the Bay of Stone united under a single banner in 1612 BR.

While treated as a single kingdom, Thuria was a land of numerous proud city-states, each of which prospered thanks to the cooperation of their ruling moorgraves and armies led by battle-ready thanes. By establishing strong borders and a fleet of galleys to protect its harbors, Thuria fostered a great civilization that embraced freedom of thought inspired by the message of the Twins. Its urban centers eclipsed all others north of Caspia. Undermined by internal division, Morrddh suffered its final defeat at the hands of the Midar in 1500 BR. With the dark and hated kingdom vanquished, Thuria and Midar entered a golden era.

Though well defended, Thuria was less noted for its army than for its philosophers, artists, writers, architects, and engineers. It sought to dominate not by conquest but by spreading its culture, which persuaded many settlements west of the Gnarls to give up autonomy and swear fealty to the Thurian king, who made moorgraves and thanes of their leaders. Some Thurian philosophers suggested that oration itself would replace warfare in statecraft. This optimism was reinforced when a Thurian fisherman and sailor named Doleth ascended in 1411 BR, seen as proof the benevolent hand of Morrow guided the people of the coastal townships.

Thuria experienced a time of extended peace despite the savagery elsewhere during the Thousand Cities Era. For two centuries after Thuria's founding, no substantial power rose to threaten its security. By contrast, the surrounding region was embroiled in conflict and petty wars, and farther north the Kingdom of Khard advanced its bloody conquests against the Kossites and Skirov.

## EMERGENCE OF TORDOR

The greatest warlords of the townships near Lake Vannogear, along the Rohannor River, in the Murata Hills, and along the coastline north of Thuria came together in 1370 BR to establish Tordor. Within this land of a hundred castellans, each a lord of his own castle, the people did not quickly embrace a single king. Only after decades of internal conflicts were the Tordorans truly unified.

Records from ancient Thuria suggest it initially dismissed its northern neighbor as inconsequential. Not having been seriously challenged in hundreds of years and possessing a civilization that was the envy of the western seaboard, the Thurians did not believe Tordor could imperil their great cities. The threat of Tordor came not by land but by sea: in 1322 BR Thuria was forced to reckon with an invasion of Tordoran warships, each a great war galley powered by sail and oar and manned by hundreds of archers. These mighty ships drove back the smaller, antiquated Thurian fleet, whose ships they captured, torched, or sent to the depths. Thuria's greatest port cities were exposed to attack and plunder.

This became known as the Tordoran Conquest. However, despite its early losses, Thuria did not fall quickly. The Thurian cities could sustain sieges but lacked forces sufficient to muster effective counteroffensives. After nine long years of difficult battle, King Ian Dergeral V surrendered during the siege of Ceryl, the Thurian capital. Given the generous terms offered to Thuria, historians believe King Montador Corazo of Tordor admired Thuria's cities and hoped to enrich his nation by preserving them largely intact. Thuria became a vassal state of Tordor, its king abdicating and its nobility swearing fealty to the Tordoran king and his castellans.

The Thurians became an underclass in a new Tordoran empire. Tordor stripped uncooperative nobles of their lands while requiring heavy taxes of those who swore oaths to their new masters. The Thurians learned to live with their secondary status over time but never entirely forgot their proud history.

## THE TORDORAN ARMADA

Following the annexation of Thuria, Tordor's influence in western Immoren grew. Tordor eventually vied with the other great powers of the Thousand Cities Era, including Caspia and the Khardic Empire. Drawing on Thuria's resources, Tordor established the greatest ports on the western seaboard and with these created an even more formidable navy and by it cemented its preeminence at sea.

In this era the Tordoran galley was still in heavy use, but the nation's shipwrights were mastering more refined vessels by integrating extensive sails and complex rigging and relying more on wind than oar. Most of their ships still hugged the coasts for safety, but increasingly ships supplemented with sails proved they could brave deeper ocean voyages and extend Tordoran power over the seas.

Though their land conquests were modest following the domination of Thuria, Tordor's ships terrorized coastal waters, challenged the pirate kings of the Scharde Islands and preyed upon the ships of the Khardic Empire. Until the arrival of the Orgoth, the Dirgenmast Fleet of Tordor was the mightiest force on the Meredius.

While droughts and food shortages were common in the Thousand Cities Era, the Time of the Long Sun that began in 822 BR was worse than all others. The rainless years produced a famine that left no inhabitants of western Immoren unaffected, from the Idrians of the eastern Marches to the citizens of the Khardic Empire. Tens of thousands died from starvation.



# ORD

- CAPITOL
- CITY
- FORTRESS
- FEATURE OF INTEREST
- RAILROAD
- ROAD

- GRAYS
- MOUNTAINS
- HILLS
- FOREST (temperate)
- FOREST (boreal)
- SWAMP

