WORLDBUILDING
MONTHLY

HISTORY

FEATURING THESE ARTICLES AND MORE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

The fourth issue of Worldbuilding Monthly Magazine is here! Inside the team has provided suggestions in articles revolving around the central theme of "history," we hope you enjoy!

Being a history major this issue could not excite me more. It includes everything from how to make your histories believable to teaching history of your world through unconventional means, such as a deck of cards.

For the next issue the team has decided to cover myths and religions. We want to attack this theme from every angle to make it realistic, fun, and easy to create myths and religions of your own.

As this magazine continues to be published, we will always need more writers, artists, and editors to join the team to inject their youthful energy into the project. If you want to become part of the subreddit's only monthly online publication or write an article about religions in the upcoming issue, feel free to contact us!

Cheers,

u/UNoahGuy

CONTENTS

BOKAI'S SOLET ENUSAN

uNoahGuy   *World Showcase*

Welcome to the world of Solet Enusan! This month's world showcase will look into /u/Bokai's world of Solet Enusan!

When did you start building this world?

I started building it in elementary school as a setting for a D&D game that never happened. So 20 or more years ago.

What is your method of populating the world?

I usually come up with a random idea that sounds good and find an excuse to use it. Now that things are a little more dense that's harder to do, but part of the overall concept of this world is that the creator god spent an entire age doing nothing but coming up with fun ideas to bring into reality, so weirdness can always be explained away with, "Enusan's intentions are beyond our ken."

What are your nations like? And how did you build them?

I start with one region and fill outward until I get bored and jump to a completely different region to start populating again. There are a lot of regions in this world where the local politics have not evolved into nation states, and depend more on pre-modern politics of close alliances between powerful regional players. Magic is an extremely powerful element in this world, so a few strong mages can alter the course of history substantially, which makes political lines very volatile. A small country can exist as a tribute state for decades and then suddenly explode into prominence as an empire, almost completely on the shoulders of a newly risen demigod, which is what happened to the nation of Dragmal. For generations, it existed as a small buffer state between two more powerful nations, but the appearance of their god king and some internal weaknesses on the part of its neighbors gave Dragmal the strength to take control of the entire coast. Politics and nation building rely heavily on the Great Man Theory in this world.

What is the history like in your world?

If you're looking for a concise history of the world, it's not going to fit into a few paragraphs considering there's 20 years of work put into this thing, but I can try to explain the "four age theory" that is used to frame the world's approach to its history.

General consensus in Solet Enusan is that there are four ages of history. The first age was one of pure creation. The entire universe was embodied by a single being, called Enusan. When Enusan became aware of herself, her instinct was to create, and from her came all other things. Eventually she decided to place her creations into a cradle of earth, and to give them physical form. She infused a few of her favored creations with immense power, and they became the gods. All creation, including the gods, are considered children of Enusan.

The second age began when Enusan was betrayed by the goddess Broik, who tricked her, devoured her, and then was ripped into a million pieces by the goddess Brokisa in revenge. This heralded the beginning of the cycle of life. Things began to die, and without Enusan to repopulate the world her creations had to make new life themselves through procreation. During this age many populations were homogenized as they intermarried, and other populations died off when they failed to adapt.

The third age began when the goddess Okreti convinced her three siblings, Sol, Tanet, and Kotas, that Enusan had been working towards an ideal creature, and that the things that they loved best were the closest to that creature. These three gods began to collect their favorite mortals and clear out parts of the world to cultivate these mortals into the perfect beings. The people that were not selected rebelled and grew violent, until they were forced across a river and the river was split into a great, impassable sea. The chosen races continued to develop under the close eye of their gods, whereas the rebellious leftovers were almost completely abandoned. The vast majority of recorded history occurs in this period, because the pace of change increases tremendously for the civilizations that no longer have the leadership of powerful immortals to rely on.

Millennia later, a number of fisherfolk were able to successfully cross the sea and land back on the continent that their ancestors had been driven from, which heralded the beginning of the fourth age. Prophecy dictates that at the end of the fourth age Enusan will return and all of creation will join with her in utopia, but spirited debate exists on what that means, exactly.

Give some examples of the rejected creatures. Are they orcs? Demons? Talking animals?

If you imagine a population that was created one by one from a single creative intellect, with no need for the mechanics of genetics or procreation, you get an idea of how broad the variety of creation can be. After Enusan's death, things settled down a whole lot because new life could now only come from the effort of birth, and all creation was now derivative, so there started to be some normalization of traits. But there were people with four arms, a multitude of skin and hair colors, fur and scales, a variety of sizes, and so forth. The largest population is generally human with a propensity for a variety of mutations. There are a lot of very intelligent animals, incorporeal spirits, and elementals as well.

Are the chosen races also mostly humanoid?

They were originally a relatively diverse group of creatures that shared certain traits that a god preferred. When they were sequestered away and held up as the "ideal" creation, all three races were put on a path of breeding and eugenics that has resulted in a much more homogenous and much less human being. So the people of Tanet are humanoids with a variety of green skin, are strong, lithe, and exist in symbiotic relationships with plant life, the people of Kotas are basically bird people, and the people of Sol are exoskeletal mole creatures.

### It seems like the return trip in the Fourth Age was a little easy.

In one sense it was. In another, it took millennia of effort to pull off. The theology of Misakna (the continent the rebels were driven to) is almost completely focused on the events of the schism, and many attempts were made to return but were foiled by the actions of the gods. The small group of fisherfolk who did make it across only did so because they were part of an abnormally devout culture, and had spent generations working to prove that they were worthy enough to return. On top of that, the god Loinbur, who was responsible for drowning anyone who tried to trespass, had never been fond of the duty, and had finally grown sick enough of it that he refused to kill people who had always treated him with such reverence. He ended up claiming them as his own, which meant the other gods were dissuaded from killing them, and essentially they became the fourth chosen race and began developing in isolation from the rest of Misakna, which was still barred from returning. If the castaways had not been members of a small, religiously extreme community, and Loinbur hadn't finally gotten sick of drowning people, they never would have made it.

The other ages seem to be defined by the actions of the gods, who seem eerily silent here... Wouldn't the gods, the ones who banished these races across an entire sea, have something to say about this invasion? At the very least these gods' followers should have a reaction though, right?

The return to Atunia was a big deal, but it was an event that represented a foundational shift, and didn't come with much fanfare. Less than 50 people made it ashore. No one even realized it had happened besides Loinbur and the castaways for years. There was a lot of unpopulated land in Atunia that the castaways could spread out in without resistance, because the chosen races were more concerned with cultivating their territories than expansion. But first contact between the castaways and the chosen races was violent, and the chosen races remain extremely xenophobic. The newest chosen race remains kill-on-sight to its neighbors.

What happens between the beginning and end of the fourth age that brings back Enusan?
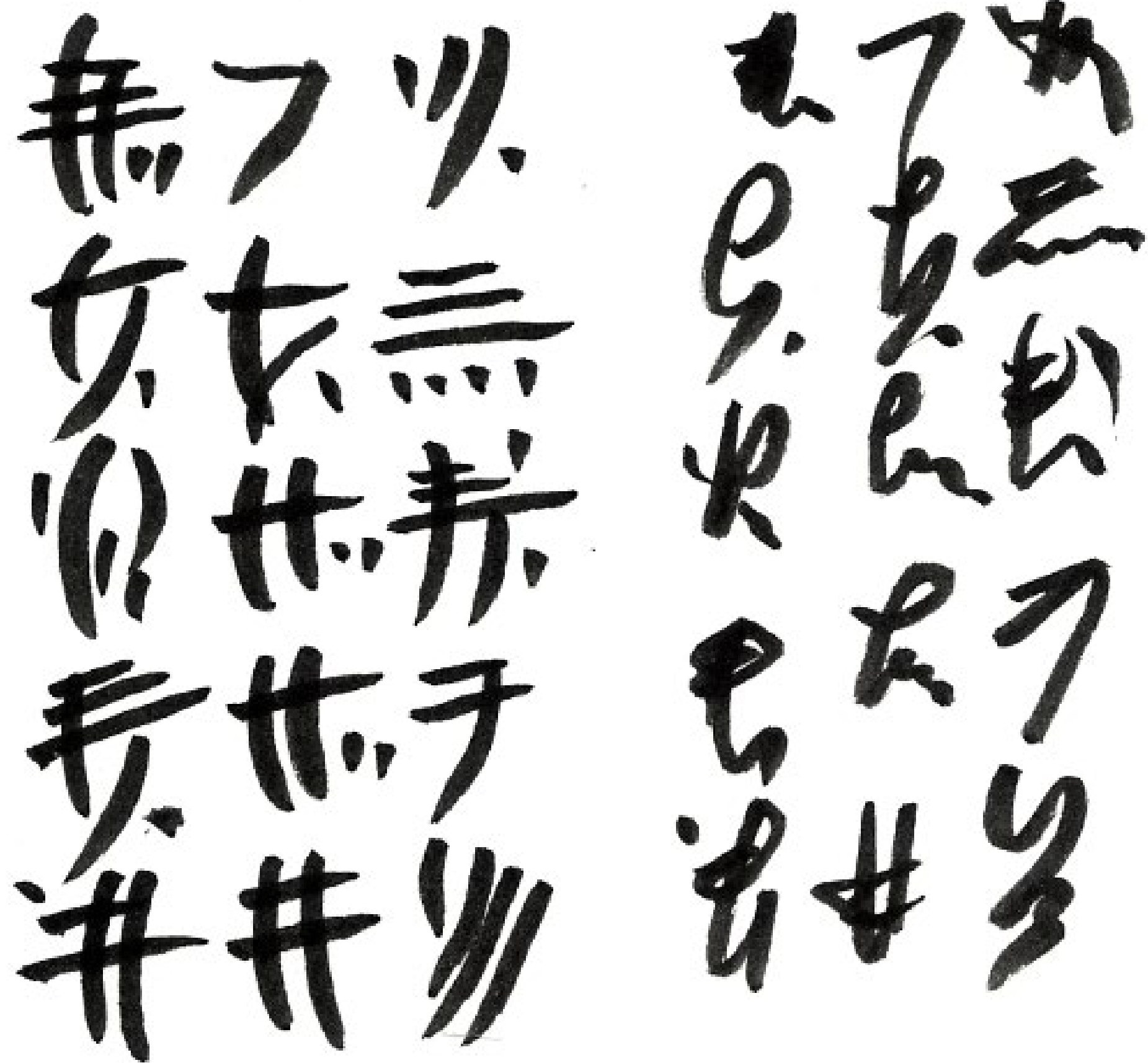
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No one knows. Some people say it will be spontaneous, some people say she'll be summoned, some people say an apocalypse will convince her to return. No one knows what will happen when she comes back either. The prophecy is unfailingly correct, but it is light on detail because the oracle only had so long to recount thousands of years of an entire world's history.

How do you organize history as a worldbuilder?

I'm terrible at keeping scale in my head so exact dates continue to be very flexible. My main reference source for history is an excel sheet. Dates are on the y axis, categories are on the x. I have events tagged for region and for topic, like war, politics, religion, etc. I also spend a lot of time filling out the personal histories of certain rulers. The godking of Dragmar is my lodestone for a lot of things because he is immortal and is the middle of a lot of important political events in northern Misakna. At some point I sat down and had to catalog all his wives and concubines, the children he had, the children they had, and so on. I find that concentrating on one event chain or genealogy is the best way to prevent the common problem of claiming thousands of years of history and having only three or four important historical events within that entire massive span of time.

I also wrote out about 500 prompts that I'm working on answering, which helps fill in a lot of holes.

How do you come up with prompts?

I start with broad categories and then drill down as deep as I can until I get to the individual level. An example of historical prompts would be: What's the course of population movement for a single population group? What events triggered the move? Were there any splits in population, and if so, when and where did they occur? What differences in language/culture resulted from the split? What cultural elements were absorbed from neighboring populations? Who was in charge of this group in this particular moment of time? You can go on forever with that sort of thing. I keep going until the subject exhausts me, ask another broad question, and start digging again. The original list of prompts I made is here.

Favorite part of the world?

The most unapologetically out there part of this world is the Sohil desert. It's a massive desert with some of the highest concentrations of magic in the world, and is so volatile that the entire region will shift violently on the regular. If you're caught out there unprepared you will be consumed by the sands immediately. But because the magic there is so strong it has attracted a lot of mages, who have used their powers to establish what were first travelling enclaves, and then became travelling cities, which ride the sands in erratic patterns. If you live on the border of the desert you can sometimes catch the cities moving around in the sandstorms.

Tell me a story about your world.

There are a lot of good quick stories about the aftermath of Enusan's death. When Brokisa ripped her sister into a million pieces, those pieces were infused with the power of Enusan and scattered all over the world, causing great upheaval on whatever, or whoever, they landed on. One of the recipients of this great power was a man sleeping under a banyan tree. In one minuscule piece of Enusan was the understanding of all that was and all that would be, and when it touched the man sleeping under the banyan he became overwhelmed with this knowledge and began to prophesy. People flocked to him to hear him announce the future, including the god Weioknin. Weioknin recognized the value of what he was hearing, plucked a leaf from the banyan tree, and in that moment invented writing as he began to transcribe the prophet's words with his nails onto the flesh of the leaf.

Who or what act as your inspirations?

Thomas Keightley's *The Fairy Mythology* was a big influence on me. It was the first academic approach to folklore I ever read and has a big effect on the tone and angle of my writing. Toynbee's theories of history were another big influence. I don't think his models get much respect in academia right now, but the way he writes about the arc of history in his books gave me a model with which to think about my work. Aesthetically my study of East Asia and print history have influenced a lot of the little details, as has the time I spent in South Asia, Japan, and Hawaii, so there are a lot of small details drawn from these areas that I use in an attempt to prevent my world from looking like yet another fantasy Europe.

BY THE VICTOR

Campforlife and Strongly_O_Platypus

HISTORY… is written by the Victors!

Actually, not quite.

While this quote is extremely popular and you've no doubt heard it, it's not really true. There's no shortage of examples why: the English monks certainly lost to the raiding Vikings, yet the English wrote the history, because they were more literate and could actually write the story; the story of the Peloponnesian War, which Athens lost, was mostly recorded by Thucydides, an Athenian. Unless the losing side is completely and utterly wiped from existence and memory, there will be people who will oppose the victor's view of history. Even today, past issues are still controversial. Just because the Caesars became emperors of Rome doesn't mean some might not believe the Senate was justified in killing Julius. Just because the Native Americans were utterly displaced and driven from their homes, doesn't mean the American people today don't recognize their plight.

So who does write the history? Simply put, the writers write the history. Throughout time, things have usually been told from the perspective of the literate, since they can actually write down and preserve the facts of history. Whoever won this or that war, or election, or duel doesn't necessarily get to tell the story. They aren't granted some divine right to put their name on a book by virtue of "winning." The person who writes the book is the person with the ability, knowledge, and motivation to put pen to paper and actually write it.

The American Civil War is what most people will call the war between the states, however Antebellum Southern schools in the 1870's on taught the American Civil War as "The War of Northern Aggression." Many of the same facts used to justify war could be used for support against it given the regional politics, and the cultural division persists to this day. For another example, one need only look to the fall of Constantinople, which painted a gruesome picture of the Ottoman Turks to European scholars by fleeing refugees, was used to justify the Crusades, persisting even all the way to World War I and past their defeat and dissolution.

For worldbuilders, they are the author, the creator, and the audience, so when it comes down to the history of that world, it is written by them. However, this is not true within the world's internal continuity. All historical texts, stories, and facts that exist in the world are created by the world's inhabitants, and are therefore subject to the same biases and problems that real "history" is. Some choose to use a "biographical method" to develop a chronicle of events based on a character's life and experiences, similar to cinema when the action focuses on a small group of people while epic events unfold.

History is written by those who lived through it, and those who come after, whether they were victorious or not. I prefer to think of it as the inevitable result of millions of people telling the stories of their childhood. Only some of these tales and facts make it to record as fact, and even fewer are archived in the pages of a peer reviewed and canonical Encyclopedia.

To argue that the historical narrative can be swayed or influenced after a war or major upheaval is not a bold stance. Partisan bias will surely play into which narrative people pass on to their friends and family for decades to come. As can be seen in the United States school system, textbook censorship occurs regularly and private school districts allow schools to teach variations on established curriculum. McGraw-Hill controls the supply of textbooks for more than half of the United States and has had numerous lawsuits filed over the years for their removal of parts of commonly recounted history from the texts allegedly for political reasons.

The aforementioned McGraw-Hill textbooks may not be accurate from a historian's perspective, but young students will gobble up the information nonetheless. This means that until someone can educate them properly, some students will live for years with a biased view of reality, or at least a version of reality closer to the truth. This misinformation will stay in the minds of these students, influencing their worldview, and can even affect their decisions and discourse. When the students turn 18 and enter the voting public, their misinformed opinions will influence the government of a major world power.

While these textbooks in themselves might not have a drastic effect, it is easy to see how through mediums like television, writing, and ever-present misleading slogans, historical falsehoods can spread among huge populations. This might seem unfortunate in reality, but it is a godsend to worldbuilders. Regardless of what actually happened in the world's lore, the world's characters can revise and make up history. These slogans and half-truths which distort reality are how republics fall and dictatorships rise, they are how elections are won and lost, and they are how the daily life and mannerisms of the world's people come to be. Everything from systems of government to little nuances like idioms and references depend on how their creators view history. A phrase like "history is written by the victors" can have immense power in a world, regardless of its truth, and these wide and important effects can make for interesting plots and stories.

The biggest problem with this idea that history is so easily swayed. *People remember what happens in their lives!* We know of the civil war by letters, historians who recorded it, and we had living witnesses survive into the Modern Era. In the last two hundred years, we have started to record everything, and the revisionist histories we can easily proclaim are tested and verified in the court of public opinion. History is no longer something that can be controlled, but its story can still be commandeered.

History can change, it can update, or our understanding can be improved. What was once believed widely can change overnight. For this reason we treat history as a separate discipline from less fact based aspects of our education like philosophy or religion as our views should be objective, based on the most accurate and up to date information. For those of us creating our worlds, consider that in your stories scandal, deception, or revisionist histories all make for excellent and believable developments.

There are some situations where the connection between victory and telling the story is fundamental. These occur when a conflict is primarily ideological. A more accurate statement for these cases would be, "The victor is the person who writes history." One of the most prominent examples of this is the Cold War.

The battles of the Cold War were fought through espionage, propaganda, and power projection, not through territory or the military. It wasn't just a battle between NATO and the USSR, it was a battle between capitalism and socialism. Victory did not lie in the number of tanks you had or the amount of land you controlled, although those were important. During the Cold War, to win was to prove that your system was the best. Victory was to spread your ideology and disparage the other, to put a man on the moon before them, to show which side was more capable of running a successful society. The battle was to write the history.

Space agencies were set up to create historic satellites and moon landings, so that people could point to the Space Race as historical evidence for the merits of their side. The goal was to become the dominant ideology of the world, so that the opposing side would forever be viewed through the lens of your system, histories would be written about why your style of government succeeded and the other failed, and you would be remembered as the ones that defeated communism or capitalism for good.

History isn't just written, it is *lived in, felt, experienced,* and at its core, re-told. We write it in the campfire stories we tell our youth, in the pictures we take, and how we live our lives. Replicating this in you internal worldbuilding will allow you to ask yourself how characters a continent apart would feel about the same event. What is today just a simple skirmish on a border may be seen many years later as the first shots fired that started a war, or a princess might marry for politics and become Queen, starting a whole line of predecessors shaping world events..

While the axiom that history is written by the victors is clearly not an accurate way to describe history, it is a great tool for worldbuilders. The way people perceive events that happened in the past is just as important as what actually happened, and you can glean insights from their present day accounts not available generations later. Generalized, catchy statements like these do not represent the truth of history, but they do represent the truth of what people think about history. And what people think about history, dear reader, makes all the difference.◖

HISTORIANS: KEEPERS OF THE PAST

StronglyOPlatypus and Loreguy

It can be easy for the historian, one of the most important characters of his time, to be lost among the bloody battles, loquacious leaders, and magnificent monuments of history that he records. For every epic last stand, revolutionary discovery, and major event known to man there will be those who bear witness — preserving their knowledge of the past for contemporary purposes. Whether these figures were spectators, scholars, bystanders, or even participants, they will immeasurably influence posterity by recording the past and, intentionally or not, draping it in their particular colors.

But what exactly is a historian and how are they relevant to worldbuilding? While in the general context a historian is thought of as an academic who engages with, studies, or teaches history, in this article we will use a *different* definition: a historian is anyone that preserves or modifies the historical narrative. This definition emphasizes that, prior to the birth of the academic historian, perceptions of the past were heavily influenced by contemporary context. Oftentimes the result, rather than accurately depicting the past, was the spread of false or misleading information about history, influencing future views of it.

In worldbuilding historians themselves are less focused on than the events they retell, as a rule of thumb, but emphasizing them can have very useful applications. By introducing or portraying history through a specific point of view the reader is more likely to unknowingly adopt the historian's biases. When reading a conflicting historical account, on the other hand, the reader might be forced to reexamine what they have been told about the past in light of new information. Emphasizing a historian helps to create nuance and depth in your world's past, and by carefully selecting which accounts or cultures to use as a lens you, the worldbuilder, can illicit calculated responses from your reader.

Sometimes the way that a chronicler affects the narrative is subtle, maybe they have their own personal biases, vendettas, and agendas, or are simply pursuing the agendas of their superiors for their wellbeing. Their opinions on events at hand may leak into their works, intentionally or not, as perhaps they stress one detail more than another. For example, we know a great deal about the life of Julius Agricola specifically because his admiring son-in-law, Tacitus, wrote a posthumous biography of him. Similarly, *De Bello Gallico* is a good source for modern historians on Caesar's Gallic Wars but it is understandably biased, as it was written by Caesar himself. A lot of our knowledge of Sparta comes from the historian Xenophon, who had a notable admiration for the Spartans, so that even if the reader keeps this in mind as they read it can difficult or even impossible to fully separate truth from opinion. Due to these and other factors biased history can survive scrutiny across time and become accepted as fact.

In a similar vein autocratic regimes, fictitious or real, often intentionally distort the lines in between historical fact and propaganda — silencing historians that will not help them redraw the past while supporting those that do. A prominent example of this would be Trajan's Column in Rome, built to commemorate the Dacian Wars. Emperor Trajan himself commissioned the expensive and opulent work, making sure to have it carved with the epic of his glorious victory over the Dacians. While Trajan did certainly win the Dacian Wars in real life, and was an accomplished military leader, a thirty meter column with the Emperor appearing just short of sixty times could hardly be construed as anything but pro-Trajan propaganda.

Even if you know exactly what happened in your world's history, the average person in your world will not. Take into account the contemporary biases present within the setting, expressed within the historian, to craft the history as seen by the world's masses. The greatest legacy of a historian is undoubtedly their aid in the spread and creation of ideas. Historians provide others with the knowledge, inspiration, and raw data to develop their own theories and philosophies. The ideals of the modern republic can be traced back to nations like those of the Romans, Greeks, and Iroquois. The Arabs in the Middle Ages pioneered many of the medical, mathematical, and scientific concepts we enjoy and build off of today while themselves building off of the classical figures and historians whose works they preserved.

A historian allows people to learn about the past, spreading their own personal ideas and influencing the formation of new ones all the while serving as a reflection of the time they live in. In this way an individual, culture, or belief system can define our future understanding of history even long after they have ceased to exist.
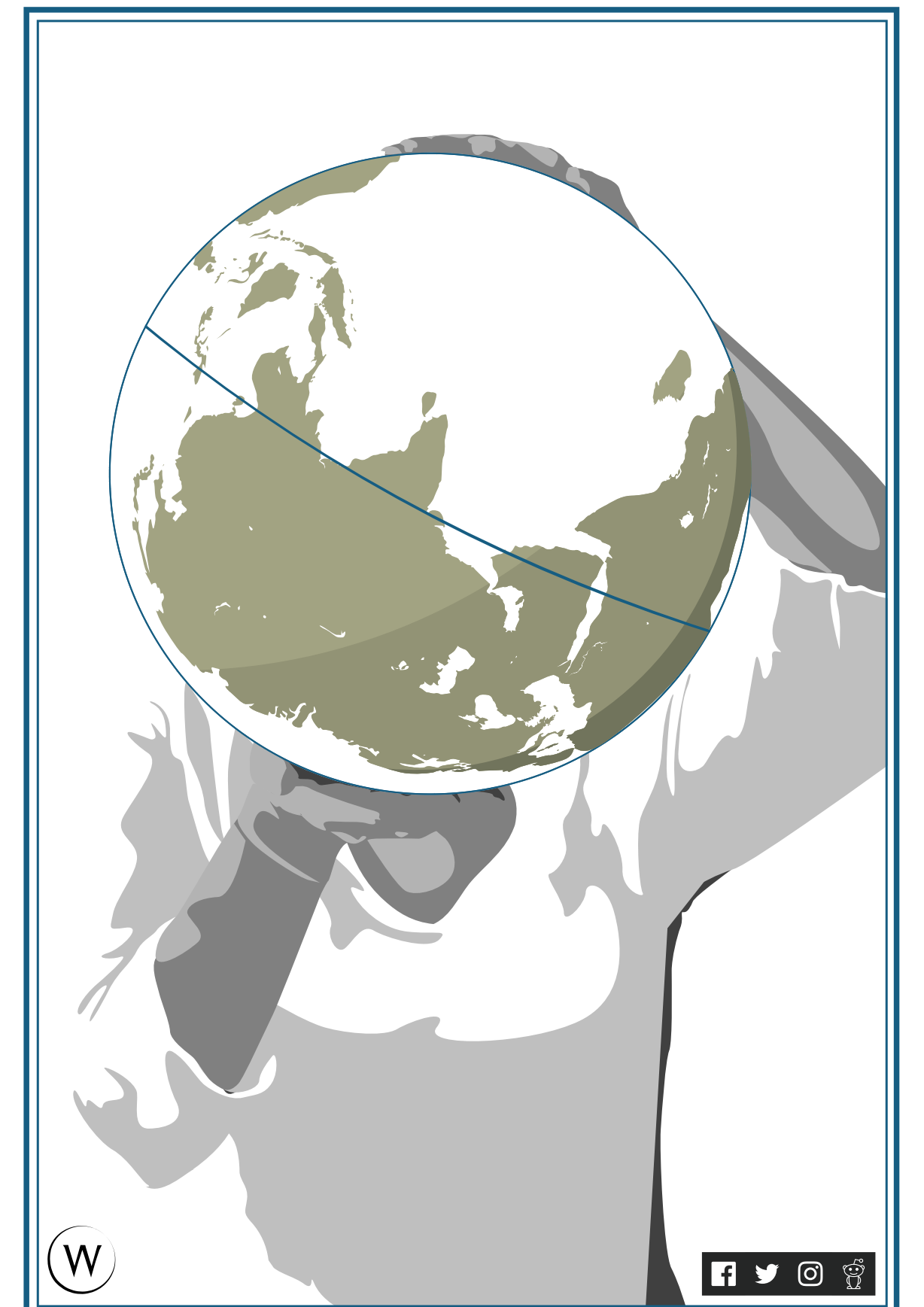
HOW TO MAKE IN-WORLD HISTORIES BELIEVABLE

uNoahGuy

Missing texts, biases, speculations — all this and more is required to create believable in-world histories. In this article, to give a sense of the rigor needed in yours, we will go into how history has been recorded throughout the ages in our own world. There are two types of history in the sense of the word: "big history", that is the sum of everything that has happened until now, and the academic discipline dedicated to studying these events. The first is completely impossible to record simply because of the sheer amount of data, while the second is more than just the cumulative body of facts and dates. First these data have to be interpreted by a historian, who can knowingly or unknowingly add their own biases and narratives to the mix as well.

Imagine standing in a vast and pitch black cave, symbolizing "big history" — all past events. A historian shining a flashlight can focus only on a small portion of the entire cavern, while another historian on the opposite side of the cavern will see vastly different things. The original landscape and history it represents hasn't actually changed, despite the observer's different perspectives.

If you want to tell the history of your world from the point of view of someone inside of it where should you start? This depends on the world you've built, since the role of the historian changes across cultures and time. In ancient Greece the events of the past were explained in terms of gods and demigods; history was composed of tales of monumental figures fighting on a heavenly scale and in turn affecting the lives of human society below. These accounts, while obviously untrue to a modern reader, were believed by people of the time. Herodotus, widely considered the father of the of history, viewed the past as being comprised of tales of men and focused less on the actions of the gods above. He used research in the form of interviews to compile what he considered were reliable first-hand accounts of the events. The deity type of approach to history would be perfect for fantasy worlds that are overseen by a pantheon of gods.

Take Herodotus' example to heart and try to write histories from the perspective of conflicting classes, religions, and viewpoints in your world. All of these represent the different lenses through which the audience will see the past, creating nuance and depth in the setting. Some perspectives will provide a more complete picture of the world than others, while others might even distort the past for ideological purposes. Take the Orwellian society of Airstrip One, where history is lost and rewritten countless times to ensure that the ruling party has always been right.

A good rule of thumb to keep in mind is that when there are periods of stable governance there tend to be better kept historical records. People in large civilizations are specialized enough to become historians, because large and stable bureaucracies need record keepers, clerks, and academics to make life better for the future. These stretches of time are separated by stints of warfare, disorder, and disasters; events which result in gaps in your people's knowledge of history. The worst losses of knowledge occur during the fall of an empire, records could be lost to the ravages of war and never recovered. Foreign armies do not usually show the same respect for the traditions and histories of native peoples, meaning that destruction is often intentional. Historians of the current time will have to sort through the ashes to piece together something coherent, and most of the time their conclusions could be very far off from what actually happened.

In the cave metaphor the refining of the study of history is analogous to improving the luminosity of the flashlight. A historian from a classical era would have much less to work with, say a small candle, to try and illuminate and make sense of the past. Things closer in space and time can be seen easier, but after a certain point the caves becomes dimmer and dimmer. A classical historian would have to interpret these events within their worldview too, with the unexplained often being attributed to supernatural forces. In worlds where the supernatural truly exists even this history could be true.

As the profession gets more advanced and specialized, such as during the renaissance period, historians will have much more working knowledge of the world in addition to the surviving records of their predecessors. The candle might become a torch, casting a brighter light so that the historian can almost see the past clearly

People of this age tend to project themselves and their own cultures onto the people of the past, misrepresenting them in art and history. To historians in your setting this will clearly be a limiting factor in accurately studying the past. If your world has a long history it would be more realistic if current people had some misconceptions of those that came before them. Cultural confusion and the misconceptions that arise from them are the source of myths and conflicts.

When the modern era arrives subdisciplines start to emerge, such as military, economic, political, and marxist history. Each division shines their flashlight on what they think is most important from in the cave. When writing the history of your world it is also important to figure out who the audience will be. A history piece written for academic scholars is inherently different from one meant for the masses as entertainment.

History and the abuse of it can be devastating as well, as 1984 author George Orwell once said: "He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past." In the end history has many purposes; it reminds one of the origins of their culture, provides much needed insight on the nature of one's species, and can even serve as simple entertainment.

In conclusion, to make believable in-world histories one must look at how history is written in our own world and try to replicate it. It is imperative that you do not forget that history is not objective but rather a narrative pieced together by different historians to showcase the past, including biases and all. Now go out there and make history!

POSTANTERA

by The Worldbuilding Monthly Collab Team

POSTANTERA

The Worldbuilding Monthly Collab Team

Intro Piece:

III.

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The generation ships housed thousands of people, technologies, a beautiful new hope for a better humanity, and looking up into the night sky, Timothy could fit all of that between his little fingers. It was a new moon that night, so the dark sky was darker than ever: a perfect canvas for the dawn of a new human age. The blue, yellow, and red lights of the colossal generation ships and their accompanying escort crafts painted beautiful patterns as the small ships formed helices around the slower and much larger ones. As the lights slowly faded further from Timmy's Earth and closer to new beginnings, the winds picked up, rolling across the silent plains of the Eriksons' farm. When the lights of the ships became indistinguishable from the millions of stars above, Timmy slowly rose to his bare feet and turned towards his creaky little farm house. Outside, Father was packing up his canvas, easel, and brushes.

"Come here, Timmy, my son," Father called out, his voice trailing off into a fit of coughing. Timmy's feet padded against the soft earth towards him. As he heard him approach, Father turned the canvas, revealing splashes of shining gold, electrifying blue, and burning orange. The shapes were unidentifiable, but the colors evoked the same excited feelings in Timmy as the flight of the ships did moments ago.

Timmy looked up. Father's grey eyes were fixed on something in the distance and nothing all at once. He had been blind for years, and in that time he had developed an acute sense of hearing, allowing him to distinguish distant sounds and process them as millions of shades of beautiful colors.

"Tonight's ships are well on their galactic journey towards our new home, Timmy." Despite his lack of sight, Father's eyes followed the ships flying in the distance. "And you must get sleep for yours tomorrow."

Father took a heavy breath. "You make me so proud Timmy, and you always will, whether you're by my side, or millions of light years away. " Timmy noticed sadness in Father's smile, but in it was also a warming contentment.

"When I lost my legs and left arm years ago, I knew that my mission wasn't to fight and bring glory to my name," Father's eyes turned towards Timmy. "It was to raise you, my son, to be the strongest and kindest soul humanity has ever seen." A tear rolled from his glazed eyes. "I will miss you, but I will sleep confident in that you will be a leader for humanity, and in that, I find great content." Timmy buried his face in Father's grey work shirt, but he felt no gloom; rather, he felt the warmth of the dawn of a new story, itching to unfold.

"Off to bed now, my son; leaders need every minute of sleep they can get."

History Behind Postantera:

The history behind our decision to colonize Postantera and even leave Earth in the first place is quite interesting. Earth had become overpopulated with both types of humans discussed in prior issues of WBM, Homo sapiens aeternum and Homo sapiens sapiens, the former being biologically immortal due to complications of chemical warfare in the 21st century, and the latter being confined to a few isolated islands first out of necessity and then out of force. The two different species did not entirely get along throughout their coexistence, mostly with aeternums committing unspeakable horrors towards those deemed the "lesser."

With the United States of the World at the height of its solar-system wide power (it was rebranded as United Humanity following Humanity Day during the 51st century), many turned to the stars to expand the future of the human races. The Mass Exodus (ME) started in the height of the 52nd century. Many religious texts pointed to the eventual death of humanity if they did not leave their cradle of civilization of the solar system. Religious supporters pushed public support of the ME through fear mongering and the idea of galactic manifest destiny, until enough people bought into it and a starfleet started to be built for colonization of other stars. Several hundred ships were built, including the Exodus and Genesis classes of generation ships that would harbor up to a million people each.

Of the thousands of ships created, only two served the Homo sapiens sapiens, as they had dwindled in numbers due to hardships. One of those ships was the SFFS Provenance headed to Postantera, a planet in a red dwarf system on another arm of the Milky Way. Postantera was found capable of supporting life with a 99.9% certainty, so the aeternum government sent the Provenance there as a safe harbor for the Homo sapiens sapiens, away from aeternum settlements. The other ship reserved for Homo sapiens sapiens

left in the other direction around the same time the Provenance left Earth, only to be never heard from again.

The SFFS Provenance's journey to Postantera was a long and arduous one, with tensions onboard almost leading to mutinies at several times during the trip. The only thing stopping the ship from destroying itself were the 21 aeternum pilots that had sworn an oath to get to Postantera at all costs.

Having immortal leadership onboard saved millions of hours retraining captains and officers that would die anyways. This aeternums were promised to be the leaders of the new civilization on the planet, and many of them could not wait to leave their mark on galactic history.

With the crash of the ship on the highest mountain range of the planet, the aeternums splintered and fought a massive civil war in the paradise they spent thousands of years waiting to arrive at. With aeternum blood spilled on the Postanti soil for the first time, nothing would be the same.

Recording History During the Early Days:

During the earliest days of settlement on Postantera, recording history was not really the main focus of the aeternums. They just wanted themselves and their followers to stay alive through the hardships of war, migrations, and explorations. Most of the documentation of the early days were either from the aeternums themselves or records of movements and the like. Each and every movement of camps, food levels, population numbers, and other governmental forms were meticulously recorded.

How Being Immortal Might Affect Telling History:

History is often employed in the real world for people to learn about the past generations. How would the institution of history work in a world where there are immortal beings?

Just like you and me, immortal beings called Homo sapiens aeternum have the same brain and memory capacity. Invariably they will forget what has happened over the years, but will have much more time to work with.

There is a split in what people think about the ability of an aeternum to remember past events. Many scholars believe that aeternums begin to lose their reliability after about one hundred years after an event, while some still might think that the aeternum memory is no better than a regular human's' memory. To others, they believe memory varies on a person-to-person basis.

It has become a habit for aeternums to chronicle their daily lives in journals, memoirs, diaries, and the like, all have which help them in jogging their memories thousands of years down the line, if not becoming historical sources in their own right.

However, most scientists concur that an aeternum's memory must always be corroborated with proper historical evidence like any other testimony. The problem with early Postantera is that there are some gaps in the records, so aeternum testimony has to be relied upon for the whole story.

Aeternum Spotlight: Thomas Crane

Thomas Crane was born and raised in the colony of Victoria, Lunar Confederation of Colonies (LCC) - *an administrative unit of the United States (US) and later United Humanity (UH)* - to a merchant pilot family. A giant in stature, like most other lunar colonists, he towered over his Earthling counterparts at six feet eight inches. Due to technology of his day, Thomas was able to raise or lower his bone density depending on the gravity of the planet he was on so he could survive comfortably. His large family was known around the solar system as the fastest and best freighters, so much so that many of his brothers became secret smugglers to make more money.

From a very young age, Thomas learned to fly all types of spacecraft. He joined the Starfleet and was automatically granted the rank of Admiral (the rank given to pilots that head a very large ship or a fleet) due to his family background and test results.

He chose the ship to Postantera believing that he could construct a new civilization on a new planet. But after a long journey, his relationships strained with the other twenty aeternums aboard the ship. This climaxed in him trying to crash land the ship by himself to show that he could do it, but he failed spectacularly.

The argument with Emilia, the second in command, after the crash in Starfall Mountains led to a massive civil war within days of landing on the new planet.◂

"A good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving."

-Lao Tzu

THE FUTURE IS HOW?

Jason DiBlasi

The Third Step: Society (Part 2)

A month ago, we discussed different societies and how to approach building one. This month, we're looking at how many of the inhabitants of your setting, and the citizens of its societies, are informed by their surroundings. However, this is not a one-way relationship, for some individuals will in turn effect change on society, the people around them, the environment, history, and any combination thereof.. Creating people, both as the groups they belong to and as individuals, to populate your world is a complex process, but we're looking for more simple guidelines and allowing you, the reader, to further develop your ideas. Just make note that this guide will be for quick and easy creation of societies, and not a look at societies in the real world.

Creating Agents and Reagents

In my experience, all people within a society fall under these two groups. An agent is a citizen that is free-acting and leads to changes in society and the birth of new ideas. These are the sorts of ideas that the society develops around. Sometimes an agent is going to be a person of some power, but an agent can also be a researcher of some kind who discovers new technology for the society to utilize.

A reagent in chemistry is a substance that reacts with other substances. In societies, reagents are people who just react to or are a result of the actions of agents. A reagent is best defined as a collective group of people with similar power in a society. A reagent may be actively opposing the agent, but they are still classified as a reagent because their actions are only reactions incited by the actions of the agent.

In some cases, a reagent can become an agent, or vice versa. Maybe a noble slips into the crowd, tired of living the high life, or maybe a commoner rises up and causes a rebellion.

Your world will change depending on what the most influential agents want their world to be. Whether they get what they want will depend on other agents and reagents who choose to support or oppose them. Use these characters as tools to build civilizations with histories.

The Cast and Crew

Tribe leaders, rulers, managers, anyone who has the power to influence others: these are the major agents of your society. These individuals will have an impact of some kind on their culture and society at large, be it enduring or only contemporary. If the leader is a king, the society is a monarchy and you can further develop the lineage and history of the ruling family as well as the court. Kings are also trendsetters. King Edward VII popularized the bottom button of a suit being left unbuttoned. If your people are a tribe with a chief, then you can get into detail on how the chief came to be and how they might have united the tribe with enemies. Think of them as ambassadors between your world and the reader in the real world.

Location, location, location

Think about where your people live and how the weather and climate would affect their lifestyle. I don't know many people who would wear shorts in the biting cold of winter, or jackets in the baking heat of summer. Diet is also affected by location. Seafaring people are going to consume more fish whereas people in the tundra may be more likely to eat hardy vegetables and big game animals. Water is a premium; all life that we know of needs fresh water. Civilizations will spring up wherever there is fresh water.

Tying it All Together

So, we explored some basic ideas that are applicable to the entirety of worldbuilding. Now how do we tie it to the theme of our series, building a future society? It's all pretty simple, you need to build a history for your people. Large population centers are still going to be around sources of fresh water. A city doesn't simply move due to the technological advancements, they grow where they are. That said, cities can spring up in the most extreme places due to technological advancements. Las Vegas is a booming city in the middle of a desert because they can supply water to the buildings there. You can build a city on a planet that life would freeze to death on or drown in, and that also allows you to explain what advancements the people made to do so.

There are so many ways to create a cast of civilians for your societies, too. Citizens form ideas and act either in accordance or response to the values of their governing body, which goes back to last month's article. You can have an entire legion of worker bees due to a totalitarian government or you can have a diverse and unique cast of citizens grow from having secured individual liberties and the freedom to have their own thoughts.

Your citizens can even dress in clothing that reflects their technological advancement. The tundra isn't so cold when your people control the weather. Maybe they wear clothing that protects them from concussive damage, maybe they wear body armor. Perhaps your society has evolved beyond the point of clothing, in a weird and possibly shocking twist!

Drones and Clones

Sometimes it just isn't worth making a whole diverse cast of plucky individuals to populate your cities and towns. These individuals are just people who do different tasks. Technically, they are all reagents, with you acting as the agent. They wake up, go to work, have simple interactions, return to their home, and then end the day. A great example is the society of Camazotz in the book *A Wrinkle in Time*. The people behave in a mechanical way, almost as if they are just machines.

LAG, the Three Step Program

Applying the basics can be simple and opens the doors to the time consuming and enjoyable process of creation. I developed this method that I use every time I begin.

The L in LAG is for Location. Where do your people settle, what does the land provide, how did they get there? Draw a map, draw a lot of maps, or just imagine it all!

The A is for Attributes. This covers everything about your people. What do they wear, what do they eat, what jobs are there, anything concerning citizens. It's usually at this point that the first sign of an Agent or Reagent shows up for me. It's totally possible to have a Reagent created before an Agent, sometimes it's necessary. Sometimes I'll sit and design clothing or cuisine and it would give me an idea of where a citizen or group of citizens should be from in a world.

The G is for Governance. Not just the type of government but the laws of the society and the influences on those laws. Take everything about the people and figure out how you want their societies to be ruled. This is the religions that they follow, the functions of the society, and anything that has to do with keeping the people in line with your civilization. If I hadn't created an Agent before, this is where the Agent would show up.

Next month, we're going to take some time to discuss a third facet of society, religion. We'll dig deep into current ideas and see if we can extrapolate the best course for what the future may entail!

AÓB: HISTORY LESSONS THROUGH A GAME OF CARDS

by Adam Bassett

In this article I would like to share with you a world of my own, and with it one of the ways you can tell the history of a few nations through a deck of playing cards, as opposed to tomes or storytellers.

This is the tale of *Aób*, a game, and the playing cards used for it.

In order to discuss these cards I must first introduce to you *Cep* — an empire that holds a couple of once wild and sovereign lands in fiefdom. They took the coasts of *Darijet*, gaining access to the fields and bountiful harvests unique to the region, as well as the coastal cities, themselves excellent trading ports. The empire's wealth multiplied with the acquisition of coastal *Darijet*, and many of the natives learned to accept and work with the *Ceppic* folk. There were, of course, many who were less accepting of their conquerors. However, despite their efforts *Cep* maintained their hold over the coast.

Cep colonized the uninhabited land they called *Averreach*. Despite a few unique furs and some patches of fertile soil it would not come to be a particularly wealthy part the empire, and though *Averreach's* industrial growth moved quickly at first, ultimately it had little that the mother country could not produce itself. *Cep* found a way to profit off the *Averrians* in the end — through taxes rather than goods.

As for *Aób*, the game was invented in *Ceppic Darijet*, by assimilated *Darjiin* natives, and introduced the standard deck of imperial playing cards The natives found that occupying soldiers were prone to gambling and sought profit through this hobby, for this purpose *Aób* was designed to appeal to the empire. There are three suits, each symbolizing one of *Cep's* major land holdings, along with six portrait cards (i.e. kings, queens, jacks...) depicting a famous *Ceppic* figure. An example of this conscious appeal to imperial sensibilities is the strategic choice of casting the Thief as the only non-*Ceppic* native in the deck.

The first two suits, the eagle and the sparrow, are obvious choices to a *Ceppic* native. The empire's national icon is the eagle clutching the world in its talons, and the sparrow was the sigil of the *Averrian* Duke who lived and ruled when the game was created. Duke Alexander Mercy was a kind man, though he grew bitter in his final years, and was generally known as a true *Averrian* — the first Duke of *Averreach* who was not a pawn of *Cep* in the eyes of his people. When Duke Jonathan Courlock, a man whose only accomplishment was being a savvy merchant, was handpicked by the empire to succeed after his death many still let the sparrow fly over their homes and businesses. While the former Duke's daughter and her family were adored for being the last remaining Mercys, rumors of their disappearance spread only a few months after Jonathan Courlock took the Ducal seat.

The third suit, the serpent, represents not just *Darijet* but the nobility that once controlled all of the continent. Whether intentional or not the icon incited rage from *Darjiin* not assimilated into the empire. In traditional native culture the serpent was a symbol not to be used by any but the *Darjiin* nobility, and to do so was seen as a challenge to them. To bear the serpent on your person or on the objects around you — and the suit was nearly identical to this icon — was to declare yourself part of the *Darjiin* nobility to others. Of course, most of the people playing with these cards were not among the nobility.

Ceppic soldiers brought the cards home and from there to *Averreach*, and then the game spread like wildfire. Gambling houses opened for the sole purpose to house card games such as *Aób*, by far the most popular, and provided a place to play. Brothels and taverns incorporated gambling into their establishments and competed over the crowds who came for it.

The Sparrows, a nationalist group of rebels whose name comes from their fond memories of Duke Alexander Mercy, fought against *Cep* during the reign of Mercy's successor. In the end the

AVERREACH

CEP

CEPPIC DARIJET

DARIJET

■ Distribution of Fates
■ Spread of Aób
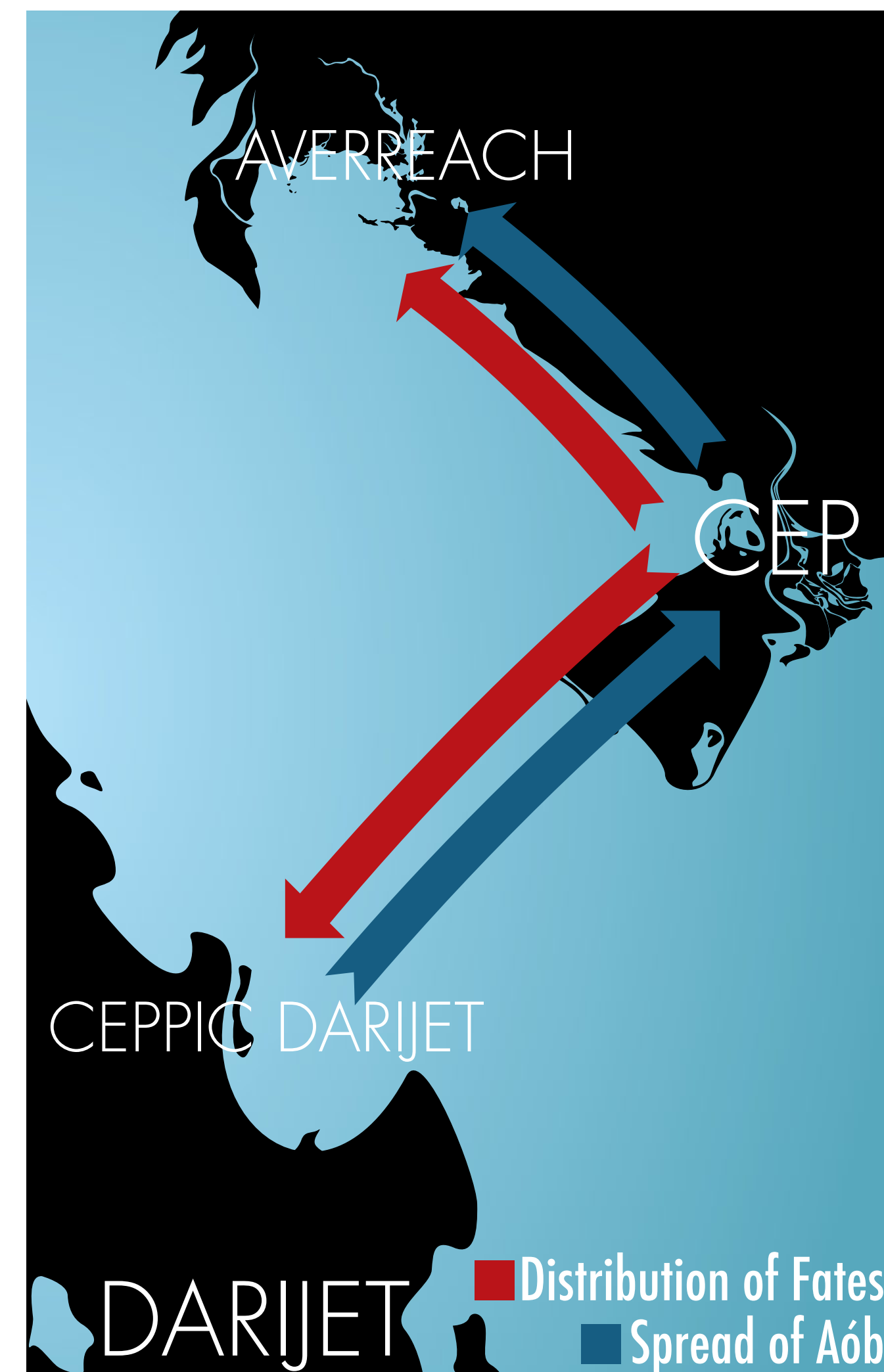
rebellion failed, though all fighters did not perish in the fighting. Their war inspired others to take up arms, causing dozens of splinter groups to meet in tavern cellars to collect and pass along information about the habits of the *Averrian* nobility. Some attempted to gain the favor of the counts while others simply stole from or fought them.

During this time, after many wars against the *Darjiin* nobles and the shock of a major uprising in the northern lands, *Cep* banned the *Darjiin* cards played within the empire. The Empress decided that they were symbols of traitorous thoughts after she and many of her staff became convinced they were being used to send secret messages. Although the cards were confiscated and burnt, the game was still much loved and even the best *Ceppic* citizens continued to play in secret. None of *Cep's*

efforts stopped the people so the crown curbed their efforts asked a few *Ceppic* businessmen to print their own version of the game. The suits of the eagle, sparrow, and serpent became meaningless icons: the sun, flower, and heart. Instead of the iconic people of the *Darjiin* original this new game featured generic titles, such as "the Princess" and "the Admiral". Each was made in the image of current figures from *Cep* — the princess was the queen's niece and the scholar an image of her closest advisor. The Thief was undoubtedly a *Darjiin* man. This new *Ceppic*-printed version would become the new standard deck of cards, and the game *Aób* would be renamed *fates*. Under this new issuing the cards exploded across the empire in a second wave. By the present, an entire generation has grown not knowing the origin of their beloved game, but there are still those among the surviving Sparrows that tell the tale to new recruits. To some they show an old set of *Darjiin Aób* cards, to prove the truth of their tale.

This trick can be expanded through other methods. For example, he Mockingjay of Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games*. While the trilogy may not be what comes immediately to mind when one considers worldbuilding, I do want to touch on one small part of the setting that Suzanne Collins built well. A frequently mentioned part of the world is the Capitol's interest in genetic mutations and fusions of creatures. None are more iconic than the Mockingjay, which becomes a symbol for the book and film's protagonist. For those unaware the Mockingjay is a bird which was not intended to exist, the result of the Capitol releasing another mutated avian — the Jabberjay — into the wild to die off. Instead it mated with mockingbirds and a new species was born. The bird was a mistake, an unforeseen result, and Katniss' Mockingjay pin angered the Capitol for this reason. Thus, through her pin and the established symbolism of the mockingjay, Katniss Everdeen carries on her person a reminder of her purpose through most of the series: to defy the Capitol and to persist.
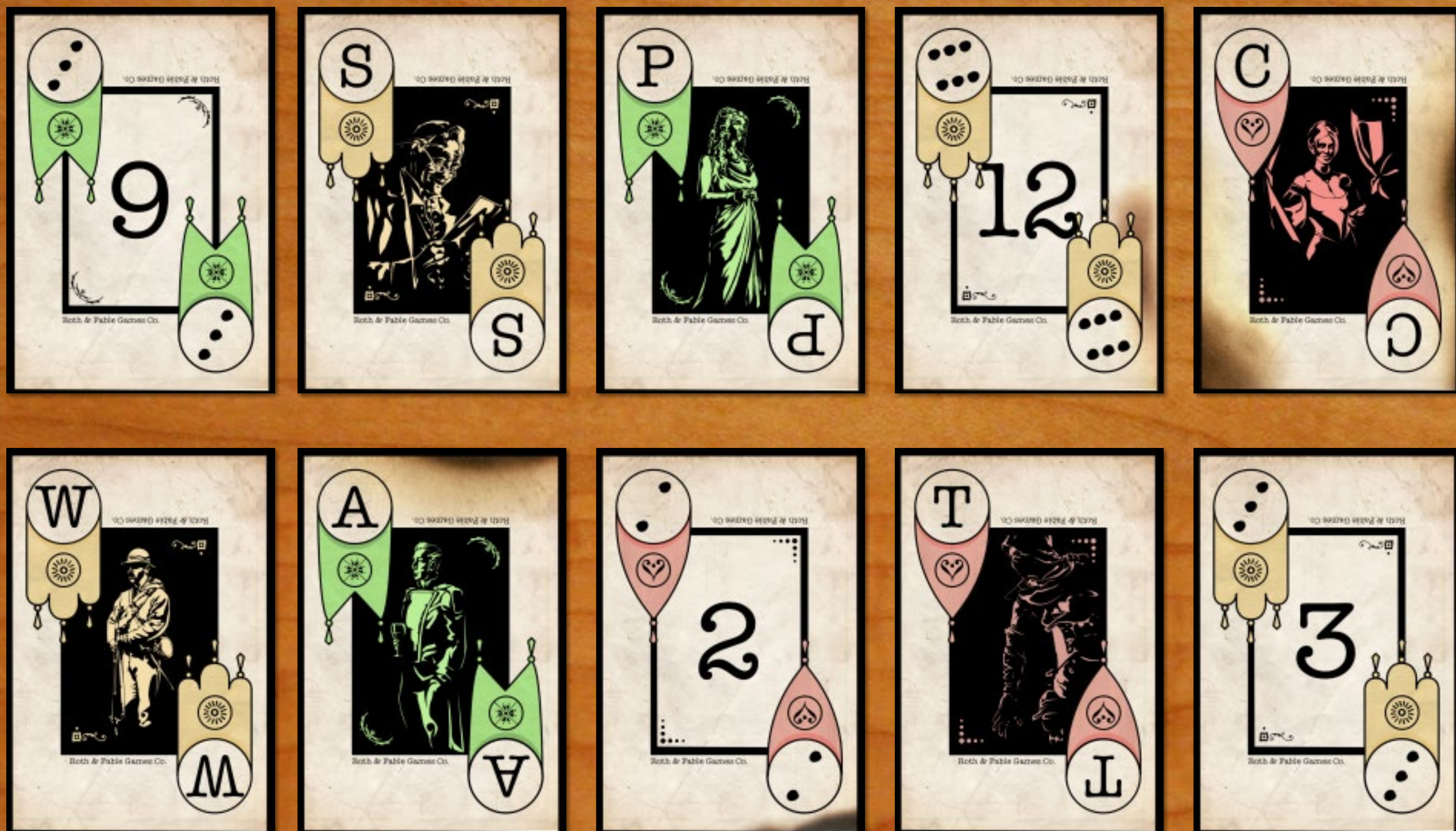
George R. R. Martin, author of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which spawned the HBO Series *A Game of Thrones*, wrote a few songs for Westeros. The one I'll discuss is *The Rains of Castamere*, a song which one of the characters had written for him to remind others of his defeat of House Reyne of Castamere. The song is slow and brooding, commemorating the total annihilation of a family who dared stand up to the vanquishing Lannisters. The lyrics detail this well, and I recommend you give the song a listen. *The Rains of Castamere* is played long after the defeat of the Reynes, most often when trying to intimidate Lannister foes, and anyone who watches the show should remember hearing this tune at the Red Wedding. Those who have read the books likely recall another wedding, one that featured roughly a dozen different singers giving their renditions in an effort to please the Lannisters.

Telling history this way — via a game or another non-traditional history-keeping medium — can make it more real. The people of your world could, no matter what sort of item you decide have historical meaning, hold the history in their hands and explore it through interaction. Playing with this sort of device — in whatever medium one is building history for — gives the world more narrative weight and allows the creator to integrate different cultures, the setting's history, and the people who inhabit it into a tangible object. Whether you are making a political statement through a bird, or spreading the word of conquest through music, consider the weight you give the lore in your world. Books and other literature should exist as well, but items such as these should be present alongside them. After all a world with years, centuries, and eons of history should be in some part influenced and shaped by that same history.

ON THE RISE AND FALL OF CIVILIZATIONS

Dheolos

Nothing lasts forever. That includes civilizations. The nations that populate your worlds will be dissolved or overrun; their cities sacked, razed, and resettled, and golden ages of prosperity will give way to poverty and destitution. At the same time, small meager countries may be at the beginning stages of what could become powerful empires. The very way of life your people enjoy and take for granted will come crashing down someday, being replaced by a different group of people, with different values, ideas, cultures, and ways of life.

The term civilization is a broad term with a somewhat ambiguous definition, but for the purpose of this article, I will define it as a group of people who have a similar, but not identical, way of life. Way of life here could include a shared culture, language, political structure, ethnicity, among other characteristics. A civilization can be a single political entity, such as the Roman Empire, or a series of discrete political entities, such as modern Europe. Civilization can often be synonymous with empire in cases like Rome, the Ottomans, the Persians, and so on. A civilization usually has a lifespan of one to two millennia, but more primitive ones can sometimes last twice as long.

Most civilizations can be seen to follow an overarching pattern of ambitious rise, followed by internal problems, and then a decline, leading to an ultimate collapse. However, all have their own unique lifespans, each declining and falling for different specific reasons. I have abstracted and generalized the lifespan of a civilization into six stages. This is loosely based on real world history, but is mostly a caricature intended as an inspirational starting point for your own histories.

1. Settling

A group of people with a very strong sense of collective identity and values, often (but not always) of a foreign diaspora, settles down somewhere — sometimes on top of a pre existing civilization in its later stages. In your world, consider the implications of any large migration of people within the context of founding new civilizations and empires. Large migrations could be caused for a number of reasons: natural disaster, famine, poverty, colonialism, mass exiles, refugees fleeing war, or a mass exodus fleeing a collapsing civilization. But when these people arrive in a new land, they will usually bring their culture and values with them. Consider the cause of any mass migration, but also the consequences: what the diaspora does in their new land. How they interact with the native people, culture clashes, colonial wars, diseases spread, and ultimately, the new society built by the diaspora.

2. Nation Building and Consolidation

The group of people, having settled a new land, begins erecting their own society overtop of the previous. The settlers develop a unique culture, political system, and their own infrastructure such as roads, agriculture, economies, and so on. The fledgling or otherwise small nations of your world could be the dawn of a mighty empire, containing some remnants of the civilization it originally displaced, as well as remnants of the motherland that they left.

Take a look at all the young, fledgling nations in your world, and after having decided when they were settled, and where the settlers came from, you should begin engineering creative and interesting new characteristics of their civilization. Perhaps their version of a republic is loosely inspired by their motherland, but has some different mechanisms. Perhaps their architecture is more based around practicality for weather and resource availability than the motherland's tradition.

3. Growth and Expansion

The new society goes to war or begins colonizing to expand, expanding their borders farther and wider, forcing conquered peoples into repression, slavery, exile, assimilation, or simply death. The society has a very strong sense of shared culture, identity, and values. There are usually punishments for not obeying the common religion.

The empires most keen on conquest will usually be very monocultural and adherent to their own

culture; consider the correlation between cultural traditionalism, and militarism and imperialism, but if you want to provide an exception, make sure to consider it within the context of the rise and fall of civilization. Civilizations in this stage will have forgotten their motherland, instead considering their capital city (or cities) the motherland, and will have plenty of colonies, occupied territories, vassal states, and otherwise annexed territory.

4. Golden Age and the Beginning of Stagnation

Internally, there's much growth and development; new philosophies, new values, and a lot of culture will come out of this age. However, the society begins to lose their ambition to expand their borders. Wars are fought more for defense than offense, as people's attention turns inwards to this new cultural revolution. New values are adopted, ideas such as liberty and self determination burgeon, while very strict protocols around subjects such as romance, mating, socialising, and religion are relaxed. If your society holds slaves they're probably set free in this era. There's a boom in prosperity and people look back on this as a golden age. Later, the society begins to let its standards slide.

Take a look at the great empires of your world: are they focused on expansion, or on culture? If the latter, consider when they made the shift from an expansionist empire to a cultural one. Many of the great philosophers will come out of this era, who are they, what ideas did they have, and how did those ideas shape the values of the civilization?

5. Decline

The frontiers begin contracting as other empires and foreign civilizations seek conquest. Standards slide and problems arise, but there's not as much willpower to address these problems. Internally, the society begins losing its sense of culture and identity. Individualism and liberty turn into decadence and apathy. Birth rates decline below replacement levels as people stop having children. The social fabric of the society begins unravelling,

society loses its coherence, people stop getting along. There's rioting, civil unrest, and clashing ideologies and values. Drug use skyrockets, as do depression and suicide rates. Governments begin losing control of parts of the cities to street gangs. There are economic problems such as corruption, inflation, the government can no longer manage its funding.

Fascinating urban and political worldbuilding, such as gang wars, loan sharks, bribery, drug smugglers, but also political intrigue such as assassinations and impeachments, party politics such as obstructionism, or cities bogged down under corruption will fit in perfectly into this stage of civilization, but when focusing on these themes, also consider them within the greater context of the decline of civilization.

6. Collapse and Replacement

As the decline in values worsens, so does the society's ability to protect itself and ensure its existence. The civilization will become unable to assert authority over its territory, and if it is not formally dissolved, it will become irrelevant and forgotten about. Accompanying the collapse of a civilization often includes a mass migration: if there's going to be a new society, you need new people to inhabit that society. And thus is the cyclical nature of civilization, as one falls, a new one is erected in its place.

Consider the history of the cycle within your world. What might empires have come and gone, and what stages are the present ones at? Consider the interaction between civilizations at different stages. An early civilization bordering a later civilization will seem very militaristic, even described as primitive, violent, barbaric. A younger civilization may mock the corrupt politics of a declining one, while the latter may dominate when it comes to scientific and technological advancement.

This model I've presented is only a rough guideline, a generalization because all civilizations have their own specific characteristics. Copying this model exactly, or any real world example that

you may research or already know much about, is simplistic worldbuilding, and I would recommend more original ideas and thought for those who want to focus on this theme. This model is simply to help give you ideas and get you started, you must fill in the details yourself. Consider the great empires and civilizations of your world, the societies of lesser peoples, small nations, city-states, and so on. When and why were they settled? What institutions did they build? What was their expansion into foreign lands like and what did they to conquered peoples? Chronicle their stagnation, their golden age, when they began to let their values shift and when they started to become decadent, apathetic. What stages are your civilizations at currently, and more importantly what stages have your civilizations gone through?

Not only do all civilizations experience their rise and fall differently, but there are some bigger anomalies and exceptions to this trend. Sometimes the lines between civilizations blur, as sometimes a civilization in decline morphs into a different one without collapsing. Sometimes there are centuries of rather primitive dark ages, when there's no real civilization, but the politics resembles tribalism and there's heavy balkanisation. What about a civilization that has realised its mortality, and figured a way to reverse its internal decline? All of these ideas deserve to be considered for any worldbuilder interested in a rich and fleshed out history.

REALITY IS UNREALISTIC: A CURIOUS CASE OF REAL-WORLD WORLDBUILDING

LordHenry

There is a planet, a small planet, orbiting a star on the smaller side of average size. On this planet is a race of bipedal organisms whose name for the planet translates to "dirt". That's right, we're talking about Earth. And as "realistic" as its worldbuilding is, occasionally, it sounds like a work of fiction.

Let's look at a major event in this world: the aptly named World War 2, a sequel to the wildly popular World War 1. When you examine the event, it almost looks like a movie. The villains include a country whose economy was destroyed in the end of the previous war, and a country who fought for the good guys in the last war, but got no recognition whatsoever and felt betrayed by the allies: Germany and Japan, respectively.

The good guys include a country who refused to join the war until they were attacked by Japan, who saw them as a possible threat to their expansion, a country that had once ruled much of the world, and a country who disagreed with the first country to the point that their disagreements influenced the entire second half of the 20th century. Those countries are the USA, Great Britain, and the USSR.

So, we've got the bad guys who want revenge on the good guys, and two of the good guys have a huge conflict, one is a shadow of its former self, and one is a reluctant latecomer. It's odd how when you describe it like that, WW2 sounds like an extremely cliched action movie.

That's enough about the cast of characters — er, sorry, the belligerents of WW2. Let's look at some events.

We will start with a look at Japan's defeat. A common trope in Science-Fiction films is a secondary character who develops a weapon that deals a massive blow against the forces of evil in the third act. Let's see now...

Secondary character? Check! The scientists at Los Alamos working on the Manhattan project created the atom bombs that caused Japan to surrender.

Superweapon? Check! The aforementioned Manhattan project; the dreaded atomic bomb.

High stakes? Check! Operation Downfall, America's plan to invade Japan, was predicted to cost millions of American lives. It was intended as a Plan B should the atom bomb fail.

While we're on the topic, let's have a look at another event from WW2: the landing of Normandy. In short, the idea was to have soldiers get out of their boats, swim ashore under German machine gun fire, and scale some cliffs to establish an allied foothold in France. There were more than 425 thousand deaths.

Let's pick it apart, shall we? The part that sticks out is the part where Allied soldiers are swimming, then running, then climbing ashore... all under a hail of bullets. Really? Nobody thought to strafe/shell/bomb the cliffs before sending the soldiers in? I know the idea was to take the Germans by surprise, but shelling the position 30 minutes before might have been a good idea.

Oddly enough, quite a bit of Earth's history sounds like something from a movie. With that squared away, let's have a look at some other types of worldbuilding.

While we're on the topic of countries, last I checked, there were 196 countries on Earth. Slow down, dude, don't you think that's a bit much? I can barely maintain a who's who on *Star Trek.* What's more, a lot of these countries have pretty similar cultures. Granted, usually, countries with similar cultures are close to each other, but the fellow who came up with all these countries could have just made the similar cultures regional variations in a single country. While lots of little countries can be quite cool, the same effect could be achieved with a few big countries with regional variations. Instead, we have countries completely surrounded by other countries (think Vatican City and its relationship with Italy), countries that seem to be unable to figure out whether a piece of land belongs to them or their neighbors, and all sorts of pieces of national silliness that, while entertaining, can be difficult to describe to others.

While planet earth has the most realistic worldbuilding, it turns out... reality is occasionally rather unrealistic. Many things that would seem to make sense are, strangely, nonsensical in nature.

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