

The Chronicles of
Kolanor
Campaign Setting

Wayfarer's
Guide

Mark A. Gunter



www.bardsabode.com/kolanor.html

Contents

An Introduction to Kolanor

A world long in the works, Kolanor began as a small group of unassociated ideas, short stories, poems, and adventure hooks. While in a rather forgettable class in my early college days, the idea of a world centered on bards emerged and I wrote several notes about it in the margins of my notes for that day's lecture. Several years later, while delving back into Dungeons & Dragons for the first time after a three-year hiatus, these notes resurfaced. It took me only a few minutes to toss aside all the other ideas that presented themselves earlier in the day. Kolanor, at long last, was born.

The original notes mentioned that bards were a group of people sworn to protect, lead, and teach the world without assuming direct control of any form of power structures. They would only act through subtle means; a well-timed song, an inspiring poem, or tale of warning; to steer men away from harm and towards a greater prosperity for all. The concept of the bard as a sort of guardian suited my image of this long-favored character class and became the very core of my newly discovered campaign world.

It amazes me still how so many bits and pieces of writing, most of which were done over an eight year period, quickly came together into a singular universe sharing an age-old motif: survival. Hidden amongst the puzzle that would become Kolanor were tales and poems that always bordered on despair and destruction. In the end, however, they all ended with a hopeful lesson or thought. The façade of the day-to-day became a struggle of Creation versus Entropy.

Even more amazing, with much credit due to the original players of the campaign, was how the theology of Kolanor drives the actions of the people of this world. Whether it is a player or a non-player character, they all seem to have the great struggle shaping their motivation and driving the story onward.

That is where I hope this Wayfarer's Guide will lead as well...Onward.

Mark A. Gunter
June 22, 2001

Myths, Legends, and Songs

A collection of
mythological accounts, ancient
manuscripts, and folklore
from the many lands of Kolanor

A Brief History of Kolanor

Kolanor is several millennia old according to all but the most outlandish histories. During this time, the world has passed through several epochs, the last of which was known as the Epoch of Enlightenment and Knowledge. This was as much of a “golden age” as Kolanor has ever seen.

During this age, the bard clans built several large universities in many regions. The bards were so universally respected that they were soon found in nearly every land serving as advisors to kings and lords. Dedicated to the seeking and teaching of knowledge, they finally provoked the anger of the Gramarye.

This ancient council of wizards was alarmed that clan Estor, long privy to the mysteries of magic, would delve ever deeper in search of the basic forces and powers behind mystic energies. Many heated arguments, both public and private, raged until the Gramarye decided that action must be taken. Slowly, they began to undermine the credibility of the bards. These “charlatans and usurpers” threatened the very foundations of Kolanor by ruling diverse lands from behind the scenes. As accusations will do, these spread quickly, further obscured by the machinations of would-be lords and ladies. Thus began the Pogrom.

Beginning around 5990 OC with the passage of laws in numerous realms barring bards from royal courts, the Pogrom became a systematic destruction of the clans. The simple laws quietly became murder and massacre. Clan

Hendrath was the first of the bard clans to be annihilated, the last known member being slain in 6058 OC. The Pogrom would rage for another 180 years.

During the Pogrom, a schism developed that split the Gramarye forever. A large group of wizards found that the blame for this horrible time fell directly at the feet of the Gramarye’s rulership and demanded immediate action. Their arguments were ignored and they broke with the council. Setting out to save the bards, they became known as Recanters. At long last, the Gramarye realized what they had done and, in an effort to save face, exacted punishment on their leadership. The wizard Althencius, once highly respected as their greatest mentor, was put to death. The people of Kolanor, realizing that he was no more than a scapegoat, came to fear and despise this once honored order.

Even after these events, the persecution of the bards continued. In time, there were no remaining bards on Kolanor; they had been utterly destroyed. Following the Pogrom came a dark period of war and strife commonly referred to as the Nocturn. The political upheaval has calmed somewhat although war is still all too common. The Gramarye and Recanters both vie for the lost knowledge of the bard clans. This new era, this Epoch of Shadow finds Kolanor awaiting the unthinkable with great hope for, once again, tales of the bards return are surfacing.

Id Githradyr

Id Githradyr is a Keldish title (pronounced Gith-raw-dir, meaning “the beginning”) given to the most ancient of texts known. It is in the care of the monastery in Gyndra. A huge tome bound in dark leather, the pages are preserved rather well through some spell cast ages ago and renewed during the annual festival, aptly named Githradyr. Within Id Githradyr can be found the basis for the religions, myths, and legends of Kolanor. It is the most sacred of texts with only this single copy known to exist in full. The only other place one can find the text (albiet lacking certain handwritten notes in the margin, etc.) is in Veldia Korai, at the University of the North library. Here, one can find the multi-volume Id Githradyr ad Minrys Vydri (“The Beginning in Minor Books”); of which the university boasts the only five sets known to still exist. This text does not claim to have but scraps of the Id Githradyr, focusing instead on the analysis of the text as it effects the various religious groups. The chapters following; Id Garydra, Id Narsun, and Id Laekyn; contain translations of the more well-known stories found in the original text in all their mythical glory.

Excerpt from Solindin’s *Id Githradyr: An Analysis of the Text*, printed 1053 Pogrom:

“Id Githradyr kel Eakynr, Desanda, yn Aeteris”

With these words: “The Beginning was Echanyr, Dekalla, and Fraeteri”, the Id Githradyr insists that these three great dieties were in existance before the creation of Kolanor. It goes on to say

that this triumvirate laid out the world, making sure that all was in balance (at the insistence of Dekalla). As each was assigned certain duties (creating certain peoples, creatures, locales, etc.), they each used their servants, to become known as the lesser dieties of Kolanor, to handle the details while they concentrated on the strategies involved in the creation process. At this point, we must examine the views of the various followers and how this tale effects their beliefs. Let us first look at the greater dieties.

Echanyr’s followers believe firmly that the world was meant to be a paradise of sorts and that Fraeteri stepped in to create instead a realm of chaos (whether a chaos of evil or not depends on the person in question). Thus, Dekalla was brought into the picture as an arbitrator, to give each an equal say in creating a status quo.

The worshippers of Fraeteri say that anarchy is a paradise, thus saying that Echanyr was only creating a world of enslavement (to laws and other such “useless and trivial questions”). Fraeteri and Dekalla were thus forced to step in to ensure that not all creatures on Kolanor must suffer.

Dekalla’s people, on the other hand, say that it was the bickering of Echanyr and Fraeteri, who thought they could create a world together, that forced her to step in and create a compromise.

As you can see, each person’s diety is the saviour of Kolanor, as is often found in religion. The lesser dieties carry on to much the same extent, with minor differences as outlined by their chief alignments.....

There are numerous variations on the creation story introduced by that ancient text *Id Githradyr*, all keeping with the common theme of a creation from an endless nothing that was transformed into the world of today. Presented below are examples of two of these myths. The first is a common retelling, passed down through oral traditions and based on the teachings of early priests, students of *Id Githradyr*, resulting in a text often referred to as the 'Vulgar Id Githradyr'. The second is an example of the variations found among the barbaric tribes in the plains of northern Setroma. Finally, for those interested in the ancient Keldish, the opening phrases of *Id Githradyr* are accompanied by a translation into the common tongue.

Rebirth

The universe was empty. It was a void without end, without life. There were no lights, no motion, no things. There was only entropy. Entropy, that mysterious force which strives to bring down great mountains, to occupy valuable energy, to create a universe where everything is inert. In this universe, Entropy had won.

Ironically, then, is the telling of the rebirth of this ancient, wasted universe. At the point that Entropy conquered all, it no longer exerted any force, having nothing to wear down or destroy. Entropy began to battle itself. Somehow, the mass of energy that created this Entropy, gave rise to the gods. Like a calm pool, cut off from any water source, it left only the slow evaporation of matter into apparent nothingness. As the pool evaporates, it leaves salt and other mineral sediments in slowly receding rings. As Entropy wasted away the universe, it left matter from which the gods were made. They appeared alone, at the farthest corners of the universe, apparently created by the very lack of motion which Entropy strived so hard to create.

In time, the gods met. Each one had strange and varied personalities, but they all shared a common goal: turn back the evil nothing of Entropy. They realized that if they made no move against Entropy, that they would ultimately fall under its spell; perhaps to rise again in yet another form, but they desired to remain as they were. The question then was

simple. The answer seemed simple also, though the task would prove to be monumental. The best way to combat Entropy, concluded the gods, was to take that which had been eroded, and build it anew.

And so, the multitude of deities which were created from the entropic corners of Entropy itself, set to creating a new universe. They gathered matter and placed the many piles in several places throughout the void and, one by one, set them into motion. In doing this, many deities expended the store of energy which had given them life. So it was, that, with the creation of Kolanor, there were but three of the great deities left.

These three deities, accompanied by the now numbered lesser gods, took this one sphere of matter and gave it life. They built it with the intent that it should be perpetual, recreating what their hands had made through eternity. But even this last alliance of gods could not overcome the ever-present force of Entropy. As they created things of light, Entropy created shadow. They formed beings of good; Entropy predestined evil. Careful of the energy they spent, the deities could do nothing which was not countered by their nemesis. In this way, Kolanor, that ancient world so many have called home, was created as perfect but was doomed to be forever flawed.

Te'emqua Creation Myth

Oldaerisuen wept bitterly. Standing in the black void which was his father, the dying god looked on his kindred. His brothers and sisters had already spent the last of their energies in trying to create that which would ultimately defeat the void. Now, they drifted slowly in the blackness, hovering close to their mother's body.

She, too, had died. The anger in her heart that had built so quickly, ferociously, at seeing her children collapse, one by one, was no longer contained by her once beautiful form. All that remained of Arsuen was the funeral pyre which was sparked by her own will to survive. She had been young and had loved all of her children. She had given her life to offer light to the worlds they had sought to build.

Only Oldaerisuen remained to complete the task. Despite everything his father had tried to do, all was ready. Glaring into the void, he screamed a final curse, vowing that he would be the one to bring new life into being; new life which would chain Etorpaer forever. As the final life energies began to seep from his quickly dying form, Oldaerisuen let himself begin to drift along with his brothers and sisters. Saying a final prayer to his mother, he closed his eyes.

'The Beginning'

Id Githradyr kel Eakynr, Desanda, yn Aeteris. Faelius garydisu ul id vetr ul Laedysini kaldu, kini brasnisu gorsyr ysiln. Patridusyr kino vatrimed kalnesti, kini garydisu Kolanor. An Kolanor, huna kendusi ysiln. Id ysiln roknaseldri patridusyr ub ul Laedysini. Laedysini brasnesi barnesy id ysiln.

The beginning was Echanyr, Dekalla, and Fraeteri. Beings created from the waste of Entropy's work, they sought to bring order. To preserve their eternal existence, they created Kolanor. In Kolanor, there was to be order. The order would be strengthened to preserve it from Entropy. Entropy would seek to weaken the order.