

Demon's Wrest Chronicles

Sviluppo e la Divisione dei Popoli II

(development and division of the peoples)

Benito Castinelli, Servant of Mindanto, Recorder of the last days of common man

I, Benito Castinelli, to all of those that follow us. To common men and to those who share in the Spirit of Mindanto, greetings. It was given to me the task of recording the events of the last days of common man. For in the beginning man was more than he now is. In the day of creation men were without the limitation of a short life. Man, however, fell from the good graces that he held and began his descent into what we now refer to as common man. Howbeit though that in the moment of man's greatest woe against himself that in that moment he gathered unto himself the seed of his return to physical greatness. Then He came forth by the grace of Mindanto. He who transported the remnant of mankind across the vastness of space to this place of destiny. He who formed the Collossi, they which cursed his wisdom, yet did he conquer their wickedness. He who formed the Drakondros and in their forming defeated the wicked intentions of the Collossi. The years before He who made passage for us awakens to behold the fruit of his labor and the might of the Mind of Mindanto. These days which

shall be known as the greatest of all times and the crucible of the Three Races, The Brethren, The Spirits of Life.

For it was given to me, on that day by he who preceded me to transcribe that which shall make up the final chapter of the Blessed Soourt' Baek. As it had been handed down to a man selected by Mindanto from our arrival upon Maenatae it was given to me. It was not for me to understand the events nor was it for me to attempt to surmise the meaning of a given event. Rather it has become my lot to witness a greater portion than a man is offered in that which is considered normal or natural. Many great events have taken place and many greater still have been born, lived and died. Howbeit yet some live still who through direct control or contrivance of means have shaped this world to the betterment of The Three or at the least one of The Brethren.

This book contains the findings which I shall lie down before you direct from my own accounts as a witness. They are truthful and they bear witness to the greatness which has molded the peoples that lived through them. I have not taken part in the direction of these recorded actions, although of a truth I have desired to do so upon many occasion. These actions are pure and just and have been forged by they who are within the crucible. They are the long lived Mae, the hardened Khrrn, and the engaging Humans. Each

shines brightly in their own right yet each has failed themselves in some fashion to their own detriment. It is too great a task to mention these woes as if they were a single event or that anyone might take them in and digest the words of a few sentences. How then to bind such epoch events to a single image within one's mind? It shall take some time to develop the histories of these people and to discuss their hopes and their drives and that which they loved both before and after their own individual sundering.

Concerning the Khrn

Strong, resolute, creative to a fault. These are some of the words used to describe the people known as the Khrn (trilled r). They are a people of vast mechanical and electronic understanding. Where we in our history gave up the mechanical and the artificial life-form and began to rely upon genetics and living constructs to provide for our needs the Khrn continued from that place of understanding and took the design and the creation of mechanisms to a lofty height. Working with a form of love that is displayed by an artist they labored over time to build a society that had near complete automation provided by their mechanical servants and the powerful artificial minds which they made to guide the activities of these machines. They, although parted from much of their advanced mechanical technology, yet maintain an impressive arsenal of weapons and tools by which they mold and shape the world about them.

In form they are slightly shorter than we of humanity standing between four and a half and five feet in height yet typically weighing what an average man would. The males are square jawed and quite strong and they possess easily twice the strength of a normal man and can endure many times the hurt of

our people. The females have a strong quality to them yet have a powerful beauty which encompasses their entire race. Indeed I have never seen a female of their species that was unpleasant to look upon and oddly the females do not outwardly age as it appears the males do. Both males and females have extremely luxurious hair with the males having similarly flowing beards and rarely displaying any form of baldness even to their old age. Often the males grow elaborate beards complete with intricate decorations and jewelry marking station while the females adorn great braided locks of hair often longer than they are tall with fabulous jewels of their ancestors. They have an incredible metabolic recovery rate and simple cuts and abrasions will heal upon their flesh in less than a day.

As a society they behave much as we in that they are slow to trust, having been pained so by the creations which they fashioned, their ability to quickly forge relationships forever injured and tender. That said, once trust has been established they have a very uplifting capacity to look beyond race and see a kindred faction and prefer it to even a kin though that kin may believe along a differing line. So that if one has been adopted into a faction within the Khrn that person is no longer looked upon as whatever they were before rather they are now of that faction and expected to always hold the ideals and the beliefs of their faction above all else. They have

guilds of artisans and engineers which have differing world views which make up the body of their ruling powers which are referred to as the Khrn'naadin. When referring to the whole of their people one refers to them as such: a single male is called a Khr, a single female is referred to as a A'Khr, a child, regardless of its sex is referred to as a Khr'ai, and the race is called the Khrn or Khrnaad depending upon whether one refers to the race of people or to their factions as a whole (note that aliens can be included within the Khrnaad as is our Duke and his sons)

It was near the end of the previously mentioned conjunctivae that the Khrn arrived within the space of Maenatae. Fleeing their own fate they were drawn here by the intense energies of the Rho which lies to the center of the binary of Maenatae and Phae'dor. In that time the powers that the Mae had fled were waning and in so doing sloughing off great waves of pulsating energy into near-space where the great Khrnaad vessels sailed the aether ever careful in the eluding of their nemesis in search of a foretold power which would be capable of destroying the Fahl'Khr or False Khr. The fateful event which binds their destiny to our own and yet to the Mae I shall cover later, once a better understanding is granted for this very special people.

In many ways the Khrn are similar to mankind they possess a definite span to their lives,

albeit longer than our own, of some 240 to 260 years. They have a passion for creativity and exploration and in achieving their ends can, at times, overstep their rights or even their welcome and take over lands or claims which are not theirs to possess. Good nature and a desire to adhere to their “Code of Welq’Lown” tends to keep them from agitating those who have entered into bargaining with. Under their code all members of a trade consortium or those connected via profitable business practice command a means of arbitrating any dispute which financially binds all participants. Clearly they are steeped in legal code and tend to gravitate to arbitration whenever those in dispute possess such connections. However, although rather stoic and pragmatic they will quickly resort to combat with anyone that does not have a binding connection to one of their factions or ruling houses. Indeed this is precisely how the War of Fellows began with The Khrn and the Mae embroiled in a dispute over resources and mankind caught within their “contractual” responsibilities to either Khrn or Mae.

System Fall

While in near space and fleeing from Ah’Khr scout vessels the fleet of the Son’s of Beergaard fell into a negative slipstream and began to spiral out of sync with the time that they were in. If control could

not be regained and their ships returned to near space they would be crushed or expanded out into infinity. Behind them in close pursuit suicidal Ah'Khrin monsters began to fire upon them and yet pursued them into certain doom. The intense negative energy destroyed the smaller Ah'Khrin vessels in a great implosion. As it appeared that all was lost and they too would be destroyed they simply returned to normal space and found themselves stationary at the zenith point of the realms of the giver. Surveying their ships and then their personnel and finally their position they were convinced that they had been saved by a miracle in that not only were their ships intact, but their people safe and their pursuers lost in the slipstream. Certainly the Ah'Khrin command structure would consider them lost and no longer pursue them. So the stellar cartographers began to map the system that they had landed in and passive sensor probes were deployed that they might deactivate the great stellar drives and perform long needed maintenance upon them.

While all of the work was taking place and the many defects that had been endured over the painful years of fleeing one attempt after another upon their lives it was discovered by the science teams mapping the system that there was an anomaly previously unseen. A powerful negative slip-point existed within a shell between the third and fourth planets of the system. The specifics of this

phenomenon could not be determined for all of the low emission scans sent toward it were reflected back from its event horizon. The fact that a slip-point existed in normal space was enough of a find to cause a great swell of curiosity amongst the scientific communities, but the fact that it was self sustaining and shielded by an unknown force sent all but the most stoic of scientist into a frenzy of rampant postulation upon possible causes or scenarios. So it was determined that an expeditionary force should move in and analyze the effect and determine the danger, if any to the fleet. Since such a force had never before been witnessed in normal space and the powerful release of this energy in near space was always fatal the need to determine the danger level was paramount.

A team was assembled to include all of the sciences which were suspected to be needed to analyze this effect and a force of marines large enough to repel any reasonable danger (some 1200 Khrn). The trip to the event proved uneventful and despite the feeling that there soon would be some effect or force felt from this phenomenon there never was any more than a slight pulsing wave of energy that was barely noticeable by the monitoring and tracking systems. After a number of weeks of testing and evaluating the surface it was decided that a manned probe needed to be sent in to determine what, if anything was inside this reflective bubble. A

fighter was equipped with a number of sensors and a means to transmit back to the science vessel and the pilot and a member of the science team sent in to meet whatever fate lie in store for them. Tension mounted as they began the final phase of the entrance to the shell and last was heard the stellar scientist and leader in spatial stresses exclaim, “feed my Gklaevah!” (Khrn beast resembling a large dog), as the ship passed through the bubble.

What they found on the other side was more than they supposed and less than they expected. They found two worlds orbiting a powerful energy suspended in space between them. One of the worlds actually had its own moon and based upon the track of the two planets it was as if they were defying all laws of physics in their path as binaries. For the next 108 days constant studies and analysis were conducted in an effort to understand what they were facing. It was determined that there was a need to scan for life and for the needs of the people so that, if possible, landfall might be made and the people could disembark and enjoy the touch of rock for the first time in many years. Unfortunately using their scans inside the shell set up a resonance that destroyed the first ship to attempt it and nearly destroyed the second. The odd configuration of the space inside the bubble prohibited them from using their active sensors without great calamity and the passive

sensors simply displayed unintelligible noise. So it was decided that missions needed to be made to the surface of the planet with no moon since it was the closest match to their own home world. The smaller planet with the moon would be mapped by remote robot from high altitude and as always they would ensure no mechanization was present.

Now it was impossible to bring the great ships in to the system for their size and the energies that their engines gave off were a danger and harm to the planets and to the ships themselves so close to a gravity well. So a number of battle groups were deployed about the system from each of the 5 great ships in order to setup a combat perimeter and ensure the safety of a landfall to this unknown world. Once the battle groups were in place and confirmed the security of their respective corridors the transports were deployed to the planet in order to reconnoiter and evaluate it for renewal of resources upon the great ships and to allow much needed shore leave for the billions which had been forced to endure life without neither sky nor stone. So it came for them, planet fall. When they stepped from their great ships there on the southern shore of the sea there was a feeling that had not been experienced in a long count of time for the Khrnaad present. They felt that they were at home. Instantly the entire people fell in love with the land and especially with the towering ranges

of mountain which lie about their new port. Word quickly spread as one bit of news after another made it back to the fleet over the com-systems and the global interlink.

Word began to spread that they had indeed located the “Holy World” and that the time of reckoning was at hand. All of prophecies concerning the planet and the resolution of their calamity began to be discussed and time on the interlink became harder and harder to acquire as nearly everyone seemed engrossed in study of the prophecies and a determining as to how they should play out. In the meantime surveying and laboring went forward as 2 shafts were sunken into the mountains adjacent to the newly constructed space port. By the end of the first year fully one third of the population of the great ships had been deposited upon the planet’s surface. The overcrowding of the great ships having been resolved even those forced to await their turns for shore leave experienced a boost in morale.

It was about this time that many in the Khrnaadin began to consider remaining upon the planet indefinitely suggesting that they had come to their foretold destination. What would be the point of striking out from here if this were indeed the place to which they were destined? This position only served to initiate a great debate amongst the leaders of the Khrn and as this was not only a political debate, but a religious one also emotions rode high in a people typically known for their disconnection from such

failings. On the side of dissent were the points that no other races dwelt upon this world and so the two kindred were not in place as had been prophesied. Secondly there were a great many violent and powerful creatures that dwelt upon the planet some of them sentient and quite dangerous. That said none of these creatures fit the description of “the brethren”. On the side of those confirming many of the experiences over the past year had seemed to be divinely managed. The destruction of their pursuers in what had to have been interpreted as an end to the Khrnaad Fleet The escape from the same certain doom to normal space – a feat never before recorded in the history of their travels. The unique environment and the containment of their new home and the plentiful resources prepared before them. Certainly, claimed the proponents of staying, we have simply arrived first.

From a pragmatic sense it was known to the Khrnaadin that the ships were overloaded far beyond their capacity to maintain long term life support. Losses of other shipping, rescue of forces, and new births on board the shipping had placed a great strain upon the ships. It was common for a great ship to be able to contain a full colony of explorers and all of the necessary support ships to ensure their success upon the new world. This compliment would typically be in the neighborhood of 40 to 50 million Khrn per ship. However some of the great ships housed over 70 million at this point and resources

and spirits had been tested greatly. Indeed it would be necessary to start a colony whether or not this new planet were the foretold world in order to ensure a future for those who remained aboard the shipping. So it was determined that in order to give the great ships the best hope of successfully continuing their compliments would need to be reduced to minimum. In order to launch with the minimum compliment of 40 million per ship some one hundred and eighteen million would have to stay on the planet.

This staggering number gave many in the Khrnaadin pause. Such a large number of persons to be left behind, fully one third of those within the ships. What of the accommodations and the building of a society – their current accommodations planet side were only capable of housing some 30 to 35 million persons. It was considered best that the people be located together and not spread all over the surface initially. So the decision was made to construct even deeper dwellings beneath the mountains in order to house the people. Quarters at first were cramped within the great subterranean halls, but no more so than upon the ships. In fact the space available to each family unit, although limited, was much more than that to which most were accustomed. So while hardships and challenges were met daily they were faced and dealt with by a renewed people that had, for the first time since calamity had befallen them, begun to hope. In so doing had begun to plan and to build. Some, such as

Beergaard had even become so bold as to dream and in so doing seek a day when their people could return home, vanquish their oppressors and free their kin in the light of a better day.

First Contact

Much of the history and the telling of the Khrn is accounted from our very close relationship with the house of Beergaard of Haarbrost (Beergaard I) and the Sons of Beergaard. The close relationship that grew between Beergaard and Antoni Scarlotti in the early days of first contact gave rise to optimal relations universally. There were many contacts made with the Khrn by other men of various clans, but none enjoyed the level of trust which the two leaders passed on to their respective people. In fact a close and unbiased examination of our histories shows that both people, Khrn and Humanity sought to secure information or advantages from their counterparts above any other benefit that was present. In many cases the old alliances that were so heartily embraced at that time have slipped into forgotten antiquity, their signers happily forgetful of ever putting pen to paper. Not so with House Scarlotti and the House of Haarbrost. Despite the occasional separation from time to time events that have threatened either house has returned the other to the defense of their

“brotherhood”. Yet to this time of writing there are by far more Khrn dwelling in the reaches of greater Coventry than in any other landhold of humanity.

Now Antoni (Anthony / Antony in differing accounts) was a very intelligent man and he had spent a great deal of time educating himself in not only the languages of men, but also in their lore and social histories. Antoni was capable of speaking 14 languages as if he were born to them and many more was he capable of communicating in if the need were to arise. He was a devout man and one of the few remaining followers of the old world “New Testament Brotherhood”. He had a great command of the Soort’Baek and labored to connect the writings of his faith to that of the Soort’Baek believing that the latter was a divining of events and cultures rather than a religious paradigm as is believed to be the case by so many. He was the eldest of three sons born to the Duke Aldo Calibecce Scarlotti while the family yet lived north of present day Zamostia on the banks of the Northern Wash. In those days Coventry was all to the north of Zamostia and its lands shielded the Zamostian inner circle from attack to the north.

It is significant to consider the political and social state of mankind at the time in order to realize the amount of effort both sides devoted to cooperation. We of clan Scarlotti were refugees, as were all men in Sardist, from the Barjaan overlords.

The difference between we and the rest being that the Colossi had entrusted to us the guardianship of the coasts and in doing so elevated and trained us to be the most cunning of warriors. Our people were poet warriors knowledgeable in not only the history of our fathers, but also in the use of many of their creations. Although they could no longer create the genetic constructs that they brought with them from the Earth they understood their creation process. Of course these arts have been completely lost to antiquity by the time of this writing and no longer more than a whisper of things once great. It was those powers of both mind and of body which placed our people at the fore of any conflict or defense for humanity. Sadly the lack of conflict over the years and the ferocity which we possessed caused to seethe within our hearts a growing desire to meet a foe in battle. I shall not weigh upon the reader this point save to remark that it has been said that of those who possess great ability comes equal desire to use that ability and if not properly channeled calamity shall follow.

When the discovery of the Khrn was made by men in Coventry it was decided by the Duke to have Antoni be their liaison. We were fortunate that it worked out that Beergaard decided to have us as his conduit to humanity. As was stated earlier, there were many Khrnaad leaders that chose representatives of humanity in those days. To the Khrn it was a means by which they might bring the

various clans of humanity within the Sardist Reaches under themselves as vassals. However, to Antoni the choosing was something quite different. Antoni considered his association with Beergaard as directed by God (an ancient name humans used for Mindanto). He felt that messengers from God directed important events in the lives of men that a greater end might come to the race as a whole. His love for his fellows was borne of his servitude to Mindanto. All men which met Antoni Scarlotti knew immediately that he cared for their well being and in this he possessed their hearts from the first instance. Men of all walk and art followed his lead, men that would not otherwise give nod to one another fought along side each other to the death for Antoni. To those which followed him he was father, brother, friend. So it was with Beergaard when they met. There was neither presumption nor expectation within Antoni toward the Khrn. The young prince labored to become a brother to these folk as he had his men. It was his conviction from the beginning that they too must need to embrace Mindanto in order to receive their part of salvation and indeed they must already have a plan for surely God had created all and therefore had a place reserved for they too. This root within religion connected him to Beergaard for to the Khrn Beergaard I was a prophet and the hand of Baermacc (their name for Mindanto). And to Beergaard Baermacc was very real and very special. The elevation of the heart was something that

Baermacc had spoken to Beergaard in his times of communing.

So when the time came for each of the great clans of the Khrn to select a liaison from amongst humanity with which to study and commune Beergaard chose Antoni. He did not do so in the fashion that others of his kind had done merely electing a representative and treating them as a gifted minion rather Beergaard asked Antoni if he should desire to work with him for the betterment of their two peoples. In those days House Scarlotti possessed a working translator gencon (genetic construct) and with it Antoni would learn new languages. Despite the warning of his father to not let the Khrn know of the animation he used to to commune with Beergaard. Beergaard was en awed by the level of advancement and by the capability of the translator. He realized that a tool of such power was a mere shadow of a greatness far in excess of that possessed by his people. Antini confided that his father had forbid him use the animae, but that he felt that an understanding of the two peoples outweighed any dangers to the translator or his people. In his dedication to the beginning of a rapport Beergaard kept the secret of human technology and suggested that their own translators had been used.

To many of the other human leaders and liaison the Khrn were a rather condescending people. The reason for apparent Khrnaad condescension was

not out of hatred nor abusive subjection rather that the sciences of men had been lost to them over the years it being so very complicated and advanced. The Khrn looked at the dwellings of men and the means by which they defended themselves and felt them inferior technically. Beergaard having spoken to Antoni at great length concerning the history of men and the creations that they had wrought realized that men had far surpassed even the wildest dreams of Khrnaad technology and that were they to have met prior to calamity it would be the Khrn which should serve. So the means of selection and the trust displayed by both led to a very close bond between even their respective subjects in that Coventarian soldiers would swing to and defend the soldiers of Clan Haarbrost even over other men to which they were allied. The relationship became so fast that the Khrn actually built the fortress at Merriccia for Antoni when he became the Duke in later years despite the death of Beergaard I.

The Aelves and the Dwarves

Now Antoni holds a very special distinction for both the Mae and the Khrn in that it was he who gave them the names Aelves and Dwarves. Already established was that Antoni was a historian and a linguist, but additionally he spent a great time in literature searching for the soul of mankind. It was his contention and a centerpiece of all Dukes to

follow that in order to rule a people one must understand what drives them. Knowing what is held in another's dreams gives that person with the knowledge a power. So Antoni had spent many hours reading works by ancient writers and had found an ongoing theme of the Aelves being the bringers of wisdom. The fact that the description given in the majority of texts was identical to the Mae only helped to reinforce a belief that all other elements would match up also. And similarly the Khrrn matched in word and in deed that description of the Dwarves. Dwarves came from the same stories in many cases and they tended to be great craftsmen capable of mighty works of technical skill. The weapons which they fashioned were of the highest quality anywhere.

Antoni had not simply invented the names Aelf and Dwarf rather he had resurrected it from the ancient works of a number of, at their time notable, human storytellers and novelists. Once the full description of both races came to light amongst the Mae and the Khrrn the tales were equally embraced and rejected with very few of either group not voicing a strong showing of either favor or dislike for the images placed upon them. The fervor by which one side, either for or against the naming, accepted or rejected the naming varied greatly between the various factions within the Mae and Khrrn'aad. To some the similarities were simple coincidences which should not receive undue attention. The notion that fictional characters and races from an archaic past

would be substituted for a separate and real people was, to some not only foolish, but could become dangerous. To yet others the similarities were tantamount to “whispered prophecies” from the antiquity of human development. Clearly these were not tales at all, but rather they were a means of preparing the humans for the inevitable day of the meeting of the three races. Moreover these writings must have been issued by early prophets preparing for the revelation of the Soort'Baek.

The reaction to the naming, although not given to violent responses did cause a great deal of discussion between the three races. Were these simple stories written by chance to include so many descriptive characteristics of both alien races? Were the stories not stories at all, but elements of a prophetic body of work? Indeed in more than one of these accounts all three of the races had been pitted together, despite their differences, in a cataclysmic encounter that would determine not only what their combined fates might be but if they would have any future at all. In the end the undeniable truth stood out; that we three would meet together upon the field of combat and that we should endure great sorrow and pain in combat against mighty forces bent upon our mutual destruction and ruin. No believer in Mindanto could deny the fragments found within the stories were right out of the Soort'Baek. No one could therefore dispute the validity and foresight of the

Tales which Antoni Scarlotti had given to the Mae and the Khrn.

It might be of import to point out that many of those in favor of this naming taking place appear to have used religion to bend the will of others in their favor. I mention this because based upon our records there was never any action taken by Antoni Scarlotti to encourage or to discourage anyone using their individual religious beliefs.

Antoni had no desire, from what we can tell from the accounts of the time, to vilify nor deify the two races rather to point out the very interesting fact that they two appeared to be contained within some portion of the human psyche. In fact the purpose of introducing this information appears to have had nothing to do with “renaming” the two races at all. His contention was that if we had made some connection to these peoples, Mae and Khrn, in our past even if it was perceived to be a tale rather than the truth the connection remained. In some yet undiscovered way we were connected. For if there might be a path available to we three that would connect us in the quest to destroy our respective oppressors then we must embrace that path. It also had occurred to both Antoni and Beergaard that if the skills of each race had failed against their own foes

then perhaps those skills of another race could play a part in overthrowing another races antagonist. In time success could build an unstoppable alliance. At the very least this line of thinking must be pursued.

Indeed our history shows that after a time persons on both sides of the argument began to refer to the Mae as the Aelves and to the Khrn as the Dwarves. This reference, to the two peoples in question, met with similar debate as was mentioned above concerning the validity of the stories in general. Additional debate and research revolved around the originators of the tales themselves. Whether or not these writers were operating as prophets or simply with gifted insight or perhaps something in between. To some of the Mae it seemed that Humanity had finally accepted that the Mae were an elevated people, a wise people that should be consulted before any rash actions might be taken. To other Mae the comparison of their race to some ancient fable was at best foolish and at worst insulting. Yet others of the Mae, generally those of a more philosophical nature, viewed the literary connection as did the majority of their human counterparts as a prophesy fulfilled.

Not unlike the Mae the Khrn found that the new designation met with varied levels of acceptance and aversion. Some Khrn pointed to the inner strength and unparalleled mastery of the creative arts and of the fashioning of devices of warfare. They suggested that since these areas were so very accurate

with the Dwarves in the stories that the rest must indeed be true. Some have suggested that the dwarves had a greater desire to repackage themselves than did the Mae so it was the Khrn who first embraces the use of the ancient human texts as prophesy. In fact very many of the Khrnaadin began to collect these works and edit them in order to cast themselves in an even better light. Some others took the stories and repackaged them in order to sell their own version of the tales within their respective markets. Others, however, became upset at the rough translation of dwarf in that somehow due to stature the other races considered the Khrn a lesser people.

So in one thing the two races of the Mae and the Khrn shared in that the renaming of their people was not to be allowed. Yet despite such decrees that is exactly what happened and in a rather short period of time they were no longer referred to as Mae nor Khrn rather as Aelf and Dwarf. It seems that this all fell in line some time after the naming of the Glaen'moordis' to the Aelvin Glens

In those early years filled with struggle and a need for rapid expansion and development on the part of both humanity and khrnaad there came bold leadership from the houses of Scarlotti and Baermacc. While many of the alliances between men and khrn were strained for one selfish reason or another the alliance between Baermacc and Scarlotti became known as the Brotherhood to men and fer'sc

Kraa'neer to the khrn. Those within the brotherhood, seeing the example of oneness displayed between Beergaard and Antoni, sought to have such a relationship with their respective counterparts. Working together it seemed that there were no challenges too great that the Brotherhood could not face and surmount. Many great halls were lain out beneath the peaks of Piaria in old Khrnaan with the sweat and at times the blood of men. And no thought was given to sacrifice by the men nor the khrn as all things were considered equal and shared by both. So that the tenacity of men mixed with the techniques of khrn and resulted in the khrn and the men constructing great cities of might in their respective lands.

To humanity the assistance of the khrn granted the ability to prepare a bulwark against the inevitable attack of our oppressors from across the great sea. The fact that Azerbaijan had hidden our people from the view of their foes had not yet revealed itself to us. In those days we men dared not speak his name in fear that some evil might befall him and our fate would draw in about us. Men built great fortifications and many impressive weapons about the land with a fervor that bordered upon obsession. It was whispered that the day would come when the colossi would seek them out that they might own all mankind. Beergaard had great empathy for not only Antoni, but for mankind also so that he used

his formidable influence to the betterment of not only his own race but also to that of mankind. It was not well received amongst many in the Khrnaadin that Khrn technology was being used to build fortifications for the men of clan Scarlotti.

Additionally it was a great shock to them that men had not so long ago possessed technology which far surpassed that of the khrn. Such whispers had not been shared beyond those few within the leadership of the house of Baermaac because it was feared that there would be those that might insist men recreate such wonders. The Duke knew full well that those items which remained to his people were too far advanced to permit either the khrn nor other men to possess, but that perhaps in the future a time might come to be in which such power might be wielded safely and with wisdom.

Beergaard was certain that, based upon his interpretation of the prophesies, each of the brethren would need to defeat their foes before peace would reign amongst all. In this Beergaard encouraged his people to assist humanity and in so doing assist themselves. For him the fight would have to start somewhere so it may as well begin with these overseers of humanity, the Collossi. From what Antoni had told him these were not as powerful as the ones that were on his home world so it made sense to test the capabilities of their alliance upon this foe first. Unknown to either of them in a very short span they would both meet the Daemaah.

The Worship of Technology

To the khrn the display of technology and of power to create was and still is a religion. They seek advancement and understanding and when it is found they worship it almost as if it were not only an idea, but rather an entity. So having discovered that men had conquered the mechanical and very nearly all of their own genome the khrn respected and revered the mention of the achievements of mankind and therefore men also. However, the reverie was only to go so far for although men had risen to lofty heights they had certainly fallen quite far too. Some suggested too far to be trusted with any of the advanced building practices employed throughout Khrn'aad. If men had lost their place and the direction to which they might grow in a technological universe then perhaps giving them any of the Khrn technical improvements might result in further problems. What if they are subjected by these creatures which their own creations have made. What then if these new foes prove to be the match for those which the Khrn themselves had fled upon their home world. No, it would be far better to shore up their own defenses and not those of their new friends, mankind.

It was this perspective that was misunderstood by the men of the day in that they did not understand Khrnaad culture enough to make a

decision as to motives connected to such attitudes. Not having insight into those things which propelled the Khrn kept the human leaders from fully understanding them, The paranoia on both sides caused many to question the sharing of information and resources that they two had agreed upon. If it had not been for the relationship that flowered between Antoni and Beergaard there should not have been the successes that there were. In fact there are things which the clan leaders of both houses share which no one has yet heard tell. Some of these secrets, it has been said, are a prelude to the relieving of woes to come.

Some have suggested that so many men had forgotten religion and begun to rely upon their own abilities that any form of worship confused our people. That we no longer understood what it meant to dedicate ourselves to a creator. Of course, as is the case with any absolute, this was not entirely correct. One need only look to the Caradian 's Clan Sebastian to notice this is simply not the case. Perhaps our people are rather atheistic and self centered. Others of humankind cannot make up their mind over which of many gods they would worship, but humanity is not devoid of a need to worship. Nor could it be said that men are not serious in their drive and capacity to worship. The more accurate account would be that Dwarven religious practices are so very different

from any of the forms used by humanity that we do not recognize them as worship.

When we, of humanity, worship we focus our attentions upon an entity or entities in a reverent and considerate fashion on the hopes of appeasing either commands to worship or demands of penitence. We have many examples in not only the worship of a divine being, as is the case with Mindanto, or in the area of demigod worship, of one of the Sons of Mindanto. Even in worship, as some have done, to Magical beasts or powers manifested through magic or even worship of either of the two alien races. We note that mankind seeks to appease a greater entity or one that is perceived to be capable of eliminating our woes either here in this plane or upon some distant realm in an alternate existence. It is of some import to point out that once an individual human decides to worship a given entity they tend to become rather defensive and protective of that religious bent suggesting that all other forms are either doomed or foolishness. Although most do not feel the need to do so our past does suggest that there have been a great many struggles and even all out wars revolving around the notion of religious “rightness”; that is many have fought to prove their form of worship is correct and that other forms are equally wrong.

The acts of worship are quite unique amongst the dwarves in that their works and their successes are directly tied to their donation to Mindanto. It is as if they feel that their works are required to justify

their continued connection to diety. Whenever they create, whenever they are victorious or even in combat, training or education there are points by which they might improve their standing with Mindanto. The varied levels of effectiveness are considered levels of offering to Mindanto and these levels are controlled and regulated closely by the common clergy of the Khrn. In this they differ from our religious folk in that we tend to consider works secondary to the effort and to them an effort means nothing if the quality does not meet the desired level for the given skill offering.

Acts of worship are metered by the clergy and given titles based on the effort required by the artisan worshipping. A dwarf which simply dies on the battlefield may offer no worship at all if the death brought no victory, no successes or no individual achievements. Likewise one who fails in their creative process does not garnish any credit for their work in the area of worship. To the clergy and the faithful it would be as if the efforts were never made. In fact failed works, lost battles and individuals prone to fail are not ever acknowledge to have happened, occurred or lived. If a dwarf is asked about a project that they are working on and he responds that he knows nothing of such an endeavor then it is a subtle hint to drop the subject and accept that it never happened. This attitude has created some rather difficult challenges in accurately retracing dwarven history.

Now the dwarves have a means for all of their folk to participate in worship. They have created a complex system by which all walks of life and trades might offer their worship and thereby satisfy Mindanto with their efforts. Everyone from warriors to designers to teachers and artisans contribute their individual and on occasion their group efforts in order to be weighed as a valuable, quality offering. It follows then that the offering of a warrior would be successes in combat, successes in their training and so forth. Each and every drill, maneuver or exercise metered and weighed in order to determine its spiritual value to the one offering it up. These offerings to one's superior first as a labor or a task or perhaps even a feat once completed become elements of worship and are treated as such. Students trained by an educator are considered by the educators as offerings and the capabilities later displayed by a student continue to grant worship, over time, to a teacher or trainer.

It was mentioned earlier the tendency that dwarves have to behave as if any project or endeavor which has failed, been abandoned or come to less than impressive ends be forgotten by them as if it never happened. Not only will the individual or individuals involved display such behavior so too will any that were aware that they were involved in the project. This curious treatment of failure on their part is unparalleled in any culture that we have on record. In fact if one were to read through the vast

digital libraries which they maintain one would discover that in their entire history there has never once been a recorded failure of any project. Obviously such failures must take place and indeed do, but one must absolutely avoid mentioning any failed project or offering of worship that was less in value than it was required. In the event that mention is made of such things the target will act as if they have no idea what one is asking them about, as if you have them confused with another dwarf. This is a courtesy which they afford us as they realize that we are ignorant of their culture and that we do not regard our creations as worship. If one presses the issue suggesting that the failure did in fact happen the dwarf is very likely to become agitated at least and murderously violent at the most. Indeed it is best when a dwarf suggests that they do not remember a topic to simply reply with something to the effect of, “Oh I am sorry, I must have that confused with someone else.” and move on. Although they will not make mention of it such an exchange will improve their perception of you by quite a bit.

Although there are a great many forms of creativity and in such many forms of worship all with their respective clients the most intensely “zealous” are those who are what we would refer to as artisans or craftsmen. Those in every walk of life create some product in order to display their worship and in so doing they increase for their clan the level of reverence that clan is displaying as perceived by the

clergy. Those involved in the creation of the various items used by others, whether manufactured or created individually, display behavior bordering on fanatical when it comes to the creation of their varied works. It must be pointed out that unlike the case mentioned earlier if speaking to an artisan do not allow yourself to speak of any of their works unless you are certain that not only has it been completed, but it has been considered a success. Doing so is likely to result in the artisan to go immediately into a rage and either attack you or challenge you to some form of combat. Were you to emerge victorious in such a conflict, which would be viewed as a combat to maintain honor for their clan, then the clan leaders would select a champion to combat you. Hopefully your insult was viewed as foolish and the preceding combat was not to the death. Interestingly those who have been involved in such combat and then ran away from the field of combat, allowing the dwarf to win by forfeit, tend to be forgotten. Such forfeitures are considered humorous by most dwarves while those in a military career will consider the loser to be beneath them and never speak to that fellow again.

In the most general sense all of their society is divided into castes which can direct their particular worship to an art in which they have their talents based; that is people that create are in one group while those that combat are in another and they which maintain the principles of worship are in yet another group. Generally speaking there are three

structured Principle Castes in which dwarves serve, the Artisans, the Combatants and the Solemn. Within each of these casts there exist a number of sub-castes which adhere to the basic elements of the caste yet follow their own efforts more precisely. As a rule those persons in one caste do not associate with those from other castes without good cause. It would be unlikely that those of the Solemn would attend a function with a member of the Artisans unless they were concluding a rather important transaction.

The separation of the castes is varied between clans in that not all clans have the number or type of sub-castes comprising any other clan. This is primarily due to the varied size of the clans, but it can also be attributed to the tendency of clans being comprised predominantly of one caste or another rather than many castes. In a few of the largest clans there will be a representative membership in each of the castes, but even then there will be one caste that is dominant in numbers over the rest. This dominance in the larger clans tends to give the appearance that the entire clan is of that caste. In these cases the caste in greater number takes over the administrative hierarchy having assumed so many of the public roles that outsiders have a difficult time determining which additional castes govern and to what degree they wield power.

In order that we might better understand the various levels to their quality of worship I have taken the liberty of adding the following overview of their religious levels and a few of the practitioners involved in them. These listed professions are in no way completely inclusive, but rather listed in order to provide a frame of reference. It is suggested that the reader will use these examples as a cross section of the community and not a model for the entire society.

In the offering of worship there exist five principle discipline levels which include Daily Worship, Weekly Worship, Artisan Service, Mastery Practices and Servant of Epoch. Each of the five levels of servitude have specific requirements which must be met for the applicant to be considered viable and successful in the worship which they submit. The amount of effort required to meet the dictates of a given level of worship increase exponentially as one goes up from daily to epic. It is common and expected that every member of the faithful participate in the first three levels at some point in their lives. Additionally there will be those who also strive to become a supplicant at the level of artisan and fewer yet who participate in the creation of an offering of epoch proportions.

A supplicant who participates at the level of daily worship is expected to perform some act, work, fabrication or endeavor which prepares the one making the offering to be presentable before their Lord. Daily worship positions the supplicant for

greater things by its very definition. Daily worship is expected to possess a look, presentation, manner and / or work ethic which grants sincere reverence to Mindanto. Some examples of daily worship would include anything created which requires between four and 8 hours to complete, or some activity that can be completed four or more times in a week and demonstrate ethical and disciplined work practices on the part of the supplicant. The wasting of time, joking around with one's fellows or in any way wasting one's work time is considered sacrilegious. Being on time or working overtime are not, however considered to be proper or improper behavior unless the added labor results in completing the process early for a beneficial purpose. It is believed that worship is not to be performed or proven with the sweat of the brow rather with the skill of the supplicant. Our social scientists have suggested they prefer to work smart as to working hard. Lastly the offering of daily worship is just that, a daily pursuit and as such should not require undue amounts of stress in order to complete.

Weekly worship is acceptable if the item created or task performed reflects a level of effort commensurate with twenty to forty hours of devoted labor. Additionally it is expected that the items created be of higher intrinsic value than any item which would be considered a candidate for daily worship. Typically these items will require an entire

work week in order for a person to finish them. As a rule items created from within this class are not capable of being used as weapons against anything except non enhanced foes. Magical creatures or advanced tech would have no trouble defending against such devices. That said these items are still of high quality for their class.

The next step beyond weekly worship is the Artisan Service level from which most items are created within the dwarven realms. Items of the artisan caliber are expected to display not only high quality workmanship, but should display the uniquely creative capacity of their individual creator. Such items have a high intrinsic value and present the artistic fingerprint of their creator. These items or services will require a span of time in the range of nine months to complete. More specifically any items created or undertakings wrought will require between 720 hours and 1440 hours of devoted labor in order to be acceptable as worship at this level. Items of this caliber of worship will be more accurate, resilient and useful than those of the previously mentioned offerings. Tasks undertaken are of a nature that will set aside the worshiper as a heroic character and may indeed threaten life or limb. The amount of time placed into the creation of this particular worship is significantly increased over the previously mentioned disciplines.

Next I mention the Mastery level of worship and in it the difficult and time consuming demands

that an offering of this level presents to a worshiper. Any items of the caliber of creativity and artistry which meet these requirements will require between one and two years of continual commitment to complete. Such offerings although of a higher quality and intrinsic value than any others mentioned previously will take over 1500 hours and less than 3200 hours in order to complete. In order for one to receive credit in worship the offering will meet an extremely rigorous set of requirements and be proof that the applicant is not only more devoted than most worshipers, but is more gifted also. Although not a requirement it is common for a dwarf to undertake such a pursuit at the very least ten to 12 years apart from the last of such efforts. The subject and the act are neither one to be lightly undertaken or considered. Indeed the planning of such an endeavor is quite likely to involve a great deal of time and energy and so long as the applicant does not begin the actual process of creation then they are in now risk of violation the time for creation guidelines

Lastly there remains the Epic or Epoch offering. Unique is the Epoch offering in that very few dwarves have ever undertaken such tasks and unlike all other forms of worship participants and their attempts are remembered in death even if the undertaking is not completed to the desired outcome. In fact it is not uncommon for heroes of a family to attempt to complete a failed Epoch and if successful to name themselves as an accomplice to that family

member. In this act of great testing of self and of personal and clan commitment some who had fallen out of favor have made a triumphant and impressive return to heights once held by their clan and rarely beyond. The Epoch offering is just that and few there will be which begin it nor accept its demands. Such an offering of service is generally one which spans over 40 years of ones life although some have been shorter. An act or creation forged over this span will be spoken of and studied for many years. Those undertaking such aspirations will present an end product that unarguably sets them aside from nearly every other dwarf in their history. An example of such an offering would be the service of Beergaard in his placing his people upon Maenatae and the many works which he wrought to see to their long term security and religious sanctity.

To Dwarves the acts of worship and the level of their value to Mindanto are linked directly to the quality of the work or works in question. Their worship is centered around the quality and value of their works and they do not consider the concepts of forgiveness, acceptance nor inadequacy as elements of any worshiper to a worshipper to deity relationship. These points seem to be the ones which our two people differ the greatest upon. We see our relationship with Mindanto as one of loving Father and compassionate care giver while they see him as an exacting parent which does not put up with less

than perfect works being offered to him. If we do not allow ourselves to overlook these differences then there can become a number of serious threats to our relationship. In the past it was common to discourage any communication with dwarves concerning topics of their religious practices by any empowered leader. As to the perspectives of the rank and file no one has ever been too concerned. In this manner it has been common to discuss dwarven religious perspectives in the back alleys and the port bars but never in the throne room nor the governing halls.