

The MAYAN Ochlocracy

The home of dragonkind
Wealth unmatched, power untrammelled



Welcome, mortal, to Maya, the home of the exalted dragonkind. Put aside your inane tales of blasphemy; we may not worship the Gods but we do acknowledge their existence. Let that be enough. Many mortals come to Maya; some seek to witness the glory of Sarakhian, others to view the majesty of the dragons for themselves. Some come looking for gold, some come looking for longevity. Humility will see you safe, initiative will see you profit. But have a care where you travel and what you say. This is not a land of foolish laws designed to protect the weak; this is a land of power and of beings unafraid to wield it. Do not offend them.

A Brief History

Nearly a millennium and a half ago, these lands were the home of the Renian Empire, the greatest power that is remembered in the Known World. The Renians had expanded across most of Sentoris and Murland, conquering and subjugating all other lands. At the height of its power, the Empire was ruled by an elite senate appointed by the Renian citizens. These senators had every luxury the Renian Empire could provide and possessed fabulous wealth, as ordinary citizens sought to buy their favours.

The arrival of the dragons is well-recorded in the records that remain from the destruction of the Renian Empire. Where they came from is not specified and remains a contentious subject amongst scholastic dragons to this day. But they arrived and were soon welcomed in Renius, becoming a part of the fabric of the city. The obvious superiority of the dragons, their immortality, their physical strength and their extraordinary intellect gave them many advantages in Renian society that they were quick to exploit. Villas were bought and the dragons managed their burgeoning estates from there.

The discovery of blooding, the ability for humans to share in the power and majesty of a dragon's heritage by drinking their blood, tipped the balance of power in the Renian Empire. For the greedy senators, their mortality was the one ill their power and wealth could not cure. But the dragons provided the means to defer their impending dotage and within a generation their influence on Renian politics had grown out of all proportion.

Sadly, many of the inhabitants of the Renian Empire could not tolerate the thought of the inevitable dominance of the dragons, and those senators who had wisely chosen to become dracoscions were lambasted, accused of corruption and decadence and of selling out the empire for immortality. The situation continued to worsen, but when riots developed outside the home of one prominent dragon, the loyal senators moved to impose public order. Senators who resented the influence of the dragons saw an opportunity to seize power and tried to get the senate dissolved. The army was split and fighting broke out on the streets of Renius.

After weeks of fighting, a loose peace was called, but this proved to be a false reprieve for the Empire. Armies stationed across the Empire were recalled by senators to bolster their own positions. Anarchy followed as outlying regions revolted, leading to food shortages in the capital as supplies were disrupted. Some attempt was made to restore order in the provinces, but it was too late. Amid bitter recriminations and accusations of treachery, the Renian Empire collapsed. Renian forces fought each other in an attempt to gain control of regions and the Empire continued to bleed itself to death, gorging on its own flesh.

Many dragons were killed by the ungrateful and hostile Renians, but those that had managed to preserve some of the power of the shattered empire were able to protect themselves. Over time a new state was forged out of the shattered remnants of Renius. Maya, the domain of the dragons was born from the ruins of the old empire and began the slow but steady process of picking up the pieces. Cities were rebuilt, roads restored, slaves recaptured and mines reopened. In the lands claimed by a dragon, law and order flowed and the humans flocked to them, desperate to escape the anarchy.

Maya Today

Maya is not a state like any other, no dragon will acknowledge any authority but their own, so the land is divided into hundreds of independent fiefs. In the early years these domains were contiguous but the constant exchanges of land and wealth mean that the land is now divided into a patchwork of territories controlled by different dragons. The only authority dragons recognize is power and strength; alliances are formed between equals, or those that fancy themselves as equals. Weaker dragons are driven to cooperate with stronger dragons who act as patrons in the continuous power struggles that take place.

Only the foolish say that a dragon is immortal. While other races die from many things there are just two things that will kill a dragon, strength and weakness. In this politically charged atmosphere, those that show weakness are ruthlessly exploited

and this can often lead to their eventual demise. Those that show too much strength will often provoke a reaction from an impromptu alliance of several other dragons designed to bring them down. It is this ruthlessness and cunning that leads to the shifting sands game of bluff and double bluff that is Mayan politics today. At heart, each dragon is seeking to secretly work towards a position where their dominance over all other dragons is assured.

Unwilling to enter into open displays of military aggression until assured of victory, the dragons of Maya engage in prestigious civic projects, ostentatious military displays and other forms of competition that have no direct military application but from which inferences of strength can be drawn. If an architect can make a magnificent palace, he can also make a defensible fortress. A parade of soldiers is designed to show the strength, depth and discipline of a dragon's force. No aspect of Mayan society is immune from this form of psychological warfare.

Being immortal, dragons have a tendency to keep grudges against those who have crossed them. The Mayan heraldry shows a dragon clutching a tally stick in his claws. Tally sticks were widely used during the Renian Empire by merchants, where notches marked debts owed. Today the tally stick is as much to indicate that dragons do not forget and do not forgive as it is to illustrate the heritage the dragons have assumed. Dragons demand absolute loyalty from the dracoscions in their brood and they punish disloyalty very harshly. Treachery is expected from other dragons, but it is still meticulously noted and the memory of it preserved when it does occur.

The fabric of society is supported by the immortal dracoscions, some of whom are almost as old as the dragons they serve. They travel abroad carrying out their masters' wishes, seeking new members for the broods and new slaves for the estates. Perhaps a third of the population of Maya are slaves, toiling in fields to provide food or in mines to produce gold and silver for the dragons' treasuries and iron to equip their armies.

Current Politics

Ancestry is considered important in Mayan society, although this is rarely traced back more than three generations because of the timescales involved. There are several amongst the longer-lived bloodlines who claim that their grandfathers' great-grandfathers, (or in one case, father) ruled more land than just the lands of Maya. They claim that they lived on a continent beyond the Maelstrom barrier where they ruled as gods over all things. They claim that they were driven out by an alliance of lesser gods into the northern lands.

The recent discovery of a passage through the Maelstrom has added some substance to these claims which were hitherto widely regarded as myths by many. Members of these draconic houses have claimed that if the dragons journey south and reclaim their historic homelands then the world will soon be forced to recognize their rightful place as rulers of the whole world. Other dragons are more sceptical (there is an expression in Maya, 'Age does not grant wisdom, it merely weeds out the unwise'), the entire story could be a fabrication designed to lure unwary dragons into expending their resources in dangerous and uncertain expedition.

Still, the opinion that the New World represents the lost home of dragonkind is gaining favour, and while few are willing to risk the journey themselves, an increasing number are agitating that someone must be sent. The rich wealth the New World offers, to say nothing of the powers of magic, are a temptation most dragons are struggling to resist. Of course, any dragon who does make the journey is unlikely to find his estates in good order should he return. It is very much a one-way journey and the ones with the courage to move first will be the ones who gain the most, or die the soonest.