

Temples of Specularum

This chapter describes the churches, temples and shrines of Specularum. It is part of the ongoing development of the *Fantasy Cities: Specularum* book.

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Augrist Temple

(Foreign Quarter)

Due to the historical alliance between Harbortown and Marilenev – the Minrothaddan merchant princes supported the Marilenev in the Traladaran wars – as well as the constant flux of trade between Specularum and the Guilds, there have been Minrothaddan visitors and residents in Specularum for centuries. Several major Traladaran families are also related to Minrothaddan merchant clans. Thus, temples of two of the Minrothaddan religions have been erected outside the old city walls, in the areas frequented by foreign merchants.

The second Minrothaddan temple in Specularum, the Augrist temple, is a much newer and larger structure than the Minrothist shrine. A team of Augrist workaholic dwarves built this octagonal, three story building in a single week -- so they could worship at the new temple during the next

off-work afternoon.

The priests continue the work, always adding new gargoyles, bell towers, statues of Wildeye Auger or of the Twelve Watchers, or sculpting the stone surface of the temple with religious symbols, representations of holy parables from the life of Auger and other decorations.

Thus, the Augrist temple has a permanent work-in-progress look. The interior of the temple is dominated by the vast Hall of the Twelve Watchers on the first floor. This large room is accessed through two side stairways from the foyer on ground level. The second floor is still empty, but the two lower floors are full of small rooms, workshops, monastic cells, kitchens, and so on, with almost no corridors -- each room opens directly on the adjacent rooms (the Augrist priests concentrate so much on their tasks that they don't notice others passing through their rooms anyway). It is also said that extensive underground works exist under the temple, perhaps even connecting with the sewer system below the northern wards of the city.

The current Elder of the temple, *Mason Auger* (Dwarf Cleric 7), is a direct descendant of Auger's first cousin. Not surprisingly, he holds a great reverence for the Stonemason (one of the Twelve Watchers). Six other dwarf and human Clerics help him. The clergy also hire out as architects and sculptors, which allows them to support the temple expenses.

The Augrist clergy is usually quite busy with its construction projects, but on their off-work afternoon, they become eager proselitizers, so that long time residents of the neighborhood avoid the streets around the temple block during the Augrist holiday.

Church of Darokin

(Foreign Quarter)

The so-called Church of Darokin is actually a multi-confessional hall funded by the five largest Lawful Darokinian sects. It consists of a large rectangular hall that gives access to a six smaller chapels on each of the longer sides. Five chapels are reserved for the funding sects, while the other

chapels are open to all Darokinian cults (except those openly Entropic). Priests or other representatives of each cult can rent these chapels for a cheap fare (which helps cover maintenance expenses as well as the upkeep of the resident staff).

The Church of Darokin is appropriately located in the market section of the Foreign Quarter, right on the North Road.

The resident priests are a mixed lot, since they come from five different cults. Each cult sends one to three priests, for a current total of 11 priests. A half dozen of other Darokinian priests regularly uses the building on a rental base as well.

Church of St. Lucor

(North End)

This Traladaran church is typical of its kind, a squat building with an unassuming exterior of dark, reddish brown bricks supported by thick setback buttresses.

The interior is decorated with frescoes in the Traladaran style -- where figures are painted in sizes relative to their importance in the scene as well as in rather rigid postures, at least compared to the more naturalistic modern Thyatian style. The frescoes represent scenes from the life of St. Lucor, the leader of the Thyatian missionary clerics who created the first written version of the Song of Halav back in the V Century AC. The main scenes represent: St. Lucor's arrival at the harbor of Marilenev in AC 400; his meeting with Ban Ivan Marilenev (a grandson of King Bogdan Ivanovic and the founder of the Marilenev dynasty) in that same day; the edification of the Thyatian Shrine in AC 402; the travels of St. Lucor to Halavos and Lugsid (AC 405-412); St. Lucor presenting the scrolls penned with the first written edition of the Song of Halav to Ban Ivan in AC 414; the crowning of Ivan Marilenev as Duke of Marilenev in AC 417; and the return of St. Lucor to Thyatis to spread the knowledge of Halav in AC 421.

In the far end of the church, a human sized statue of St. Lucor -- depicted with tonsured, curly hair

and a short beard, wearing a Thyatian style toga -- stands in front of the much larger statues of the Traladaran Three. The statue is lightened by a *continual light* spell that is periodically renewed by the head priest, *Ivan Svyetlov* (C4, L).

The church was built in the VI Century, at the height of the Duchy of Marilenev, to celebrate the triumphs in the Fourth Traladaran War against the Darokin-backed northern Traladaran clans, so the links to the Marilenev family are very strong -- several Dukes were buried in this church in the following years.

The church is located along the Duke's Road, in the North End near the border with the Merchant District. It is built so that its front can be seen both by those coming from the city gates and by those coming from the Grand Market.

The Church of St. Lucor is also the starting point of the procession held during the Festival of Lucor, when the saint's statue is floated in the bay. The procession itself is a complex affair, with the Torenescu and Radu clans vying for support from the clergy by sponsoring the festival and, in return, having one of their women chosen to lead the procession.

Church of St. Moira the Pure

(Hill District)

Moira was a priest of Petra from the Gorevitch-Woszlany family during the Vampire Wars. As her father turned into a Vampire (the chronicles of the time mention him as an adventurer who was turned into a Vampire during a foray in the Dymrak forest, though later commentators see in these events the hand of the Black Count of the Moor), she became a vampire hunter.

The Patriarch of Halavos gave her a blessed pendant, later known as the *Amulet of Moira the Pure*, which helped her survive the war, which ended with the destruction of Lumm and Moira's family as well. Moira went on to serve in the church, and while the social stigma associated to her family led her to shed her surname and renounce any position of political power within the church hierarchy, she was very active in the following years, helping the Traladarans push

back the humanoids from the Cruth Lowlands – a short lived effort, unfortunately, which ended with Moira's life when she and a company of Traladaran warrior attempted to breach the siege of the dwarven mine of *Kurest Hurgon* in the Black Peaks. The sieging giants, however, were alerted to the Traladarans' arrival by goblinoid scouts, ambushed them tossing large boulder from a vantage position above Three Axe Ford along the Achelos river and crushed the Traladaran to the very last.

The noble families of Western Traladara funded the construction of a church in Specularum to honor Moira and her efforts to secure the region, and in time she was recognized as a St. Moira the Pure, and a statue of her was placed in the Great Church of Traladara.

Meanwhile, the church built in her honor was renamed after her, and became the district church for the Hill. It is a small building – most nobles have their own private chapels, so the congregation is rather small – with few decorations. It is dominated by a large fresco that shows Petra defending Moira from a group of grotesque vampires by reflecting sunlight towards them with her round shield.

Church of Thyatis

(Church District)

While most Thyatians in Karameikos follow the teachings of the Church of Karameikos, the Church of Thyatis still maintains a patriarchal see in Specularum, both for political reasons and to provide services to the Thyatian nationals travelling or living abroad -- as well as to try to bring the Thyatians of Karameikos back to the fold.

The Church of Thyatis in Specularum is located in the Church District. The building, a massive rectangular temple consisting of a single wide, open space dominated by the statues of the six primary Immortals, Ixion, Vanya, Valerias, Tarastia, Protius and Asterius. The six bronze statues as masterworks of Thyatian sculpture, representing the Immortals with powerful, dynamic figures 10' tall.

The clergy is headed by Patriarch *Domitius Messalla* (C9, L), a priest of Tarastia. A dozen of lesser priests of various Immortals help the Patriarch with clerical tasks, diplomatic work, and religious rituals. The church does not include residence areas for the clergy, and most priests live (with their families) in rented houses in the Church District -- though a few lesser priests prefer the less expensive South End.

Great Church of Karameikos

(Church District)

The Great Church of Karameikos is the political and religious center of the Church of Karameikos. It is a new, large construction in a much more modern style than the typical Traladaran church, featuring tall windows and a highly decorated exterior, covered with statues of various Immortals, gargoyles, and other figures.

The interior is equally rich, showing off the power of the Thyatian families that funded its construction.

An associated palace, the residence of the Patriarch, houses not only the Patriarch of Specularum, Lord *Olliver Jowett*, but also a host of attendants, secretaries, and church officers, including Patriarch *Alfrich Oderbry* and *Magdel*, Jowett's personal assistant.

Clerical members of the Order of the Griffon are in charge of the security of the compound, and are a very visible presence here, with their heavy armor, shields and tabards showing the coat of arms of the Order.

Great Church of Traladara

(Old Quarter)

The Great Church of Traladara has been the religious center of Traladara since the last Traladaran War centuries ago.

While the Church of Traladara is not anymore especially focused on religious conformity as it was during the Traladaran Wars era – that was more a side effect of the political disagreements among the Darokin-backed northern Traladaran

princes and the southern city states and clans backed by the Harbortown merchants – it is the only remaining center of power for the Church, as many patriarchates were destroyed either in the Vampire Wars, in the Thyatian conquest, or in Stefan's takeover forty years ago.

The Great Church is a massive, squat building, with low, dark glass windows, and a single large rose window on the front. The exterior, like in most Traladaran churches, is rather simple, showing bricks and other construction elements instead of the marble coverings of Thyatian temples. The interior, on the other side, is much richer, covered in old Traladaran style frescoes showing the scenes from the life of the Traladaran Three, and culminating with the duel between Halav and the Beast King.

While there is no formal residence of the Patriarch, as for the Church of Karameikos – Traladaran priests are expected to live with their family, Patriarch *Aleksyev Nikelnevich* and most of the other priests who tend to the Great Church live in the immediate surroundings.

Minrothist Shrine

(Trader's Corridor)

The Minrothist clergy maintains a single shrine in the Trader's Corridor, outside the city walls. The shrine is usually quite busy during the good season, when Minrothad mariners and merchants are common in Specularum. During winter, though, the shrine is mostly empty, since resident Minrothaddans are few -- basically only the Embassy staff.

Due to the strictures of the Minrothist cult, only a single priest mans the shrine, and the priests change almost yearly. Since communications with Minrothad are blocked during the winter season, the priest must survive on preserved food only, except for a monthly shipping of fresh food and water via teleportation spells.

The need to teleport some food to the shrine's cellar is the reason why the shrine was built outside the city walls, since Specularum, like most cities in the Known World is screened against incoming teleportation magics. The shrine itself is

a very old building, dating before the Thyatian invasion.

The current priest, *Alon Carver* (C3, L), has been in the city only since last Ambyrmont. He speaks only patois and some Thyatian, and is quite reclusive. He is assisted by a pair of laymen who, not being constrained to eat and drink only foods and drinks produced in Minrothad, live outside the shrine, in the Foreign Quarter.

Order of the Griffon Hall

(Church District)

The military order of the Church of Karameikos has its headquarters in the Church District, occupying the entire block between Empire Street and Griffon Street. The Hall itself is connected with the Shrine of Vanya, and houses the Council Hall, where the knights meet to discuss the policies of the Order; the Treasury, that is the administrative office of the Order; and the training hall. Lodgings for the officers of the Order and barracks for the knights and squires that serve guard duty are located on the second floor.

A second, smaller building, houses the stables and workshops employed for small time armor and weapon repairs and horseshoeing. The whole complex is walled up, allowing the courtyard to be used as a training court for the knights.

The Marshal Commander, the second in command after the Patriarch of Specularum and Master of the Order, Olliver Jowett, resides in the Hall. The current Marshal Commander is Sir *Marcus Montanus* (F9, L), a former Lieutenant under Desmond Kelvin I's command during the first years of Duke Stefan's rule.

Sir *Corbula Vespasian*, former Marshal Commander and founding member of the Order, still acts as the Master-at-Arms, or chief trainer. He is still the foremost authority on two-handed swordplay in Karameikos, though he rarely leaves the Order compound anymore.

Ruined Temple of St. Rybich

(Church District)

Standing on the northernmost tip of the Church District, in an area now mostly occupied by granaries and warehouses, is a ruined Traladaran temple, the *new* Church of St. Rybich of the Bay. There was indeed, since before the time of the Traladaran Wars, an *old* Church of St. Rybich of the Bay, which was built on the northernmost point of the coast, where now the outer tower of the River Gate stands and served the fishermen that, at the time, populated three-quarters of what is now the Church District. That construction was, for defense purposes, converted to military use and integrated in the town walls -- part of it can still be accessed, though it is now underground, and is used as a military depot.

A new temple was built within the protection of the city walls, but was later heavily damaged in the Thyatian conquest of Marilenev, as the Thyatian navy bombarded the district with incendiary missiles. As one of the few stone buildings, the church was not completely destroyed. However, given the lack of Traladaran population and the vast tracts of unoccupied estate produced by the almost complete destruction of the rest of the district, the Church of St. Rybich was not repaired, and the area remained mostly untouched by the great building campaigns of General-Governor Flavian Osteropulos first, and Patriarch Olliver Jowett later.

Nowadays, the temple lays in complete disrepair, and only recently there have been any talks of cleaning up the area and re-using the land for a new block of townhouses. Indeed, the Church seems to have never attracted criminals or even vagrants, even though it is known to have a large crypt that could serve as a refuge. Actually, even though the area is much less patrolled than the rest of the Church District, it was never targeted by any of the known gangs, and no local gangs seem to exist as well. The only complaints came after the construction of the new granaries near the ruins, when some abnormally damaging rat infestations were suspected to have originated from there. However, no proof was found, and the cost of cleaning up the ruins was considered too high to be worth the effort -- especially since the rat infestations decreased in time to more usual rates.

Truth is, the old church is connected to the district sewers via its crypt, and the sewers serve as the headquarters of a small and very secretive gang of wererat smugglers from Thyatis, led by one *Publius Musculus* (Thief 7/Greater Wererat 7, Neutral). These wererats are not part of the larger wererat clan led by Decius Andronicus, whose territory lays under the Hill and Market Districts. The Traladaran wererats of Anastasia Rodinos also do not know of Musculus' gang, as they mostly avoid the Church District. Musculus' wererats live in a symbiotic relation with the people of Church District: they keep the district clear of other thieves (especially the Veiled Society), and in return use the district as their base and market for smuggling, as well as supplementing their income with some burglary.

Using the Ruined Church

The Ruined Church of St. Rybich is designed as a dungeon for a short adventure for characters of low Expert level, but can be adjusted for adventurers ranging from Basic to Companion levels.

The Ruined Church dungeon is composed of four levels: the church itself, the crypt, the sewers, and the Nithian fortress. The church is basically empty. Only the outer walls are standing, and the side entrances have been gutted by artillery shots. The wooden roof burned off, leaving the interior exposed and the floor is littered with broken pieces of the columns and statues that once adorned the church. A pair of steep stairs lead to the crypt.

The crypt has a central room, with a fine marble floor and well preserved statues and altars. A wide corridor gives access to various burial chambers and treasure halls. A few doors have been evidently shut with brick and mortar walls, locking off two empty rooms. Breaking down these walls is easy, but will alert the wererats who guard the sewer entrance. Most other chambers contain the tombs of ancient Traladaran patriarchs -- plundered decades ago. A set of secret doors blocks the access to the treasure room in the northwestern corner of the crypt complex. The treasures of the church still lies in a pair of

coffers, guarded by a *Gargoyle* (replace it with a living statue, or golem if appropriate to the level of the characters). A hidden trapdoor forms the final layer of defense.

The sewers level is composed of the sewers and an adjoining cave complex that leads both out of the city and into the lowest level of the dungeon. The wererat lair is also part of the cave complex. A half dozen wererats, Musculus' gang, live in the area (these are lesser wererats of NM level; adjust as appropriate to the level of the adventurers). The sewers are not the most healthy place to stay for non-wererats, though. After a number of hours equal to 1/3 their Constitution score, the heroes will have to pass a ST vs Poison to avoid being infected with a disease of the DM's choice. The saving throw must be repeated every Constitution/3 hours thereafter.

The lowest level of the dungeon is what remains of the ancient fortress established by the first Traldar who settled the region. The fortress was later claimed by a *Hutaakan priest-king*, whose body was laid in a Nithian-style sarcophagus. The Hutaakan priest-king is now a Mummy (change to a Wight for Basic levels, or to a Lich Cleric for Companion levels). The priest-king will generally be hostile to invaders of the fortress level -- he expects them to be tomb raiders -- but is of Neutral alignment and can be reasoned with. However, there is really little that adventurers could offer him besides leaving in peace, unless they know of the Lost Valley of Hutaaka. Information about the history of Hutaaka is, indeed, one of the few things the priest-king may be interested in.

Shrine of the Eternal Truth

(Foreign Quarter)

The Shrine of the Eternal Truth is a single story whitewashed building with a flat roof. A gilded dome was part of the original project, but funds ran short and the dome was never completed. A slender tower rises in the garden a few yards from the main building.

A small group of scholars and preachers lives on the temple ground. These four departed from

Ylaruam as learned sages and profound thinkers, but aging and the lack of interaction with other scholars in the last twenty years have turned them into four bickering old coots, who spend half their time dozing in sunny corners of the garden, and the rest arguing among themselves over not-so-profound issues (like who should cook meal or wash dishes). Thus, it is not surprising that the Eternal Truth is not gaining much ground in the Grand Duchy.

The four scholars are *Ahmed ibn Sabir* (C3, L), *Yousef ibn Hamid min Sulba* (C4, L), *Nasir ben Said* (MU 3, L) and *Waleed ibn Djbril al Jaboori* (Rake 2, L).

Shrine of Vanya

(Church District)

This pentagonal structure serves as the main chapel for the Order of the Griffon. It opens on both the Hall of the Order and on Griffon Street through two tall portals.

The external walls of the structure are covered in stripes of black and white marble, while the roof is covered with bright red brick tiles. Statues of tall knights guard the portal on Griffon Street. Five squires of the Order traditionally keep guard inside the shrine at all times, so the outer portal is always open. The portal opening on the Hall of the Order is usually closed, though, and opened only for formal occasions, like the knighting ceremonies.

The interior was richly decorated, thanks to the donations by many military officers as ex-voto for their success in putting down the Marilenev rebellion. The walls are covered in marble, sculpted with bas-relief showing the life of Vanya as a warrior princess and her ascension among the Immortals, while the wooden ceiling is carved and gilded with scenes describing the philosophy of the "unstained spirit" – the cleansing of sin, the judgement of souls by the Immortals, and so on.

The shrine, like the Hall of the Order, is a recent construction, and was first opened to the public in the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Grand Duchy of Karameikos.

Shrine of Zirchev

(Stronghold District)

This Traladaran temple is rather unusual, being built in old Thyatian style, with a small main building surrounded by a peristasis (a four sided porch supported by a single row of columns).

The interior of the main building is covered with mosaics showing hunting scenes, and dominated by a statue of Zirchev, represented as a powerful male human figure covered in a long robe, with his head masked by a wolf-skin headgear.

Many of the human figures represented in the hunting scenes bring a resemblance to Anton Radu and his relatives and are portrayed dressing in red and black – their ancestor Konstantin Radu, who funded the construction of this temple, requested that the artists inserted him and his family in the various scenes.

The shrine is manned by priests from various merchant families of the Stronghold District, led by *Libor Inexdio* (C2, N). The Merchants' Guild covers all the expenses for the upkeep of the shrine, including a full complement of servants to keep the shrine clean and polished, marking this as the richest Traladaran temple in the whole nation.

St. Kruskiev Monastery

(Old Quarter)

The monastery of St. Kruskiev is an austere building in the heart of the Old Quarter. A small, older church is located on the side of the larger main building, from which newer but smaller wings depart, forming a courtyard. The monastery houses the Order of the Monks of St. Kruskiev, one of the few associated orders of the Church of Traladara. The order itself is composed of three dozens monks, all of whom reside within the monastery. Upkeep for the monks is partially based on funds from the Church, but most of it comes from the tuition fees of the school that the monks maintain for the Old Quarter children, and from their candlemaking, copying and illumination activities.

The monastic order of St. Kruskiev originates in

the Traladaran bard-clerics who kept up the oral traditions of the Song of Halav – St. Kruskiev being one of the legendary bards to whom the Song was attributed. A large part of this tradition would have been lost during the the Traladaran Wars if not for the Kruskievite order. In those times, the Church hierarchies of Marilenev, Selenica, Halavos and Svoga fought each other for political and religious supremacy, until the Thyatian translation was established as the official text, and all the variety of the oral tradition was suppressed to avoid heresies such as those of the Monastery on the Hill near Vaion.

The Kruskievite monks for ages gathered in secret to pass on the old songs, believing that committing them to writing weakened the original truths - and in fact, Thyatian and other influences surely changed many things in the Traladaran lore. The Kruskievite order managed to stay alive during the centuries of schism within the church, as all the sects drew from their teachings. Heresy was never so much an issue of dogma in Traladaran religious life, rather it was part of political alliances and conflicts. As the Kruskievite order never aspired to temporal power, they escaped the sect conflicts. The candlemaking that is integral to the Kruskievite lifestyle was originally developed to symbolize both the renouncing of temporal power and the focus on enlightenment and preservation of ancient lore.

It was only in the last two centuries that the order has began to commit the oral tradition to writing. One of their leaders devised a new form of writing that combined the musical and emotional elements of the songs, so as not to empty them of their true value. It relies partly on sense of touch, as patterns are woven into the scrolls by thread. The meditations of the monks are actually silent recitations of the songs by running their hands over the writings. One of their sacred duties is to make special candles that allow the reader to appreciate the living shadows that form upon the song-writing.

It is said that Patriarch Sergeyevev studied Kruskievite scrolls intensely in the years before slipping into madness and heresy.