

Tower of Callisto

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TOWER
OF
CALLISTO

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Introduction

This book is a record of the Tower of Callisto game that I ran in 2015.

Callisto is a play-by-email roleplaying game with a twist: rather than the moderator acting as the game master, the players take on that role, using their specific spheres of narrative authority to define the world as they play the game.

Tower of Callisto is the second Callisto game that I ran, and incorporates some of the changes I came up with. You'll find details about the exact rules and character sheets in the appendix.

Special thanks to Brad Murray, who designed Callisto. And to my players, who sent the hundreds of letters you are about to read.

<http://www.vsca.ca/Callisto/>

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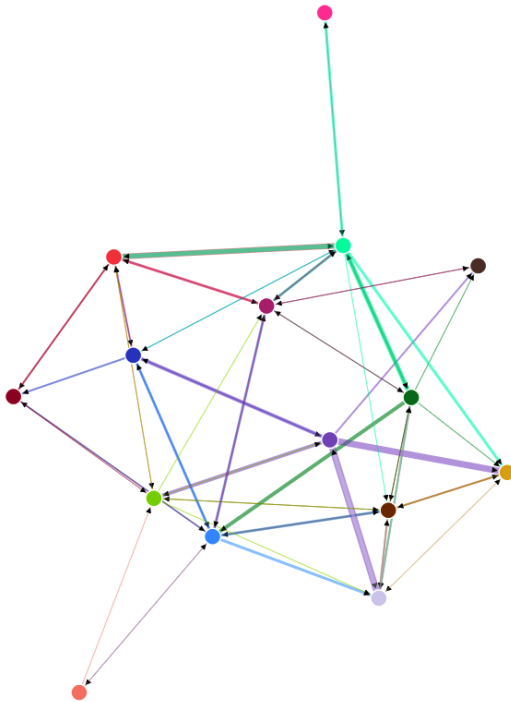
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Cycle: *Year 115, Season of Budding*

Nineteen centuries ago:

With the melting of the snows, the rivers rise, the winter routes become passable again, and caravans make their unhurried ways along the trading roads.

The game begins...



Longing

Ghayth, my desert falcon,

my heart yearns for you, for the passion of your touch and the vibrance of your voice!

I know, you will smile about me as you so often do, and if you were here you would tell me that it is my own fault and my decision to stay in this one place and to forfeit the freedom that you would never surrender, that I could have had, had I followed you.

I am not complaining and even if you can never understand this, there is no other way possible for me but to stay here and to assume the burden that I have been born for - the burden that now has settled on my shoulders because my mother, Queen Fadya, has died two days ago. You knew her, she was full of vigor and life and I cannot but suspect foul play, even if we have found no trace of it yet.

I cannot say that I miss her. Even if I did not resent her the way you immediately did, we have never been close. But I admire the work she has done for our beautiful Kucha. When her mother left her the crown of Kucina, the road through the little oasis was dangerous and caravans much rarer than they are now. She has done so much for the security and the comfort of the travellers that we have seen traffic triple in her lifetime. The conquest of Aksu and therefore the creation of our kingdom of Kucha as well as the olibanum trees that she had planted in the first years of her reign have brought a prosperity to the people of these oases that they have never seen before.

Now she is dead and I am to follow in her footsteps that seem so intimidatingly large to me. And I am grateful, don't get me wrong, grateful to be in this position where I can do my part to nurture the culture and fame of Kucha and to bring prosperity and beauty to all its inhabitants - even to the men.

I know we talked about this in length and you can be sure that I will keep my promise to you to better the position of your fellow men. But, please, be patient with me. You know that here in Kucha men are considered lesser people, suited to hard labor and little more and it will take time to change the minds of the people, even if I am now their ruler and you have long since convinced me of the error of this distinction that we make between men and women. First, I need to strengthen my position, to show them that I can guarantee the security of what is theirs before I start to threaten the way they think.

From: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 07:51:03 EDT 2015

Subject: Longing

What I will start doing immediately is that I will abandon all distinctions in my palace and in the stipends that I will give. To honour my mothers memory, I will, in two months, organize a great celebration and a contest of artists, where men will be as welcome to compete as will female artists. So I hope you see that I am still true to what we talked about in our long nights.

I know that right now it would not be too convenient to my position for you to come here. Kucha still fears your riders and distrusts their fierce warlord, but to be with you, to talk to you has always given me not only joy, but strenght and perspective. and that I do need right now, so whenever it pleases you to visit Kucina, know that you are welcome in my kingdom, in my palace, in my chambers.

My heart is yours.

Shayn

Re:Longing

Shayn, my desert rose,

It is with deepest sympathies that I write this to you. Although your mother and I never saw to eye to eye, our differences in gender and class seeing to that, we both only ever wanted what was right for you. Despite this, I am sure that the people will grow to admire you as their Queen, as they once admired her. I trust the Winter Wolf to guide your head and your heart, I know that Kucha will continue to prosper under your rule.

I hope that it will bring you joy to know that Sayid still speaks with a sense of wonder about your court. He talks your marvellous palace, and of the beauty of your hand-maidens. So too my daughter prattle on about the lavish silks and bright colours. Perhaps I spent too much time there, and now my heirs have grown soft, I can only hope that out here in the desert they may find their strength once more. When it is time for the summer route to freeze over once more, I may return to the inviting Kingdom of Kucha once more, if only to appease my son and daughters. Any other benefits of such a visit will be coincidental, but welcome.

Although I may not be at liberty to return for your festival of arts, know that I wish you all success with it. Any artisan that I find upon the roads will arrive to Kucha unsullied by my men. I wish that I could offer you more, but know that if any challenge your right to rule, they will be crushed beneath the hooves of my horses.

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 10:01:03 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Longing

We have moved along the Summer route, hard going before Budding came and melted the passes, and we have settled near Yiwu. We shall remain here for the time being, scouting the silken road and gather the lay of the land. I had previously thought little of the Gushi, I thought them soft, but I rethink that now. While they lack the strength of my men, they have fires in their bellies, and they have refused to do business with me. Their weapons of iron are impressive, even if they are wielded by untrained farmers, but they will not sell them to me to better equip me raiders. Still, I am sure that something might be done to remedy the situation, I will give them a little longer before blood is split. I endeavour to temper my anger, as you have always asked me to. I may not be a good man, but you have made me a better one.

Until we meet again, I hope this humble letter will suffice,

Yours always,

Ghayth

An Old Agreement

Dearest Selethen,

It looks as if the Summer routes have opened once more and that it is time for clan to harry the caravans that brave the journey.

I write in the hopes that our old agreement still stands? I will ensure that the caravans bearing your mark will remain unmolested and in return you endeavour to provide me with the good that I require. A simple enough arrangement, and one from which we can both profit.

As it stands, the farmers of Gushi are presently refusing to do trade with my clan. So early in the season, I would rather not spill blood and so I turn to you. Iron weapons. The Gushi have high quality iron weapons that they seem hesitant to sell to me. I can could take them by force of course, but even a child with a sword can do harm.

As a show of good faith, I have an opportunity for you to make a handsome profit. The country of Kucha has recently harvested it crops, a large amount of frankincense. Send your agents to the city of Kucina swiftly, and I am sure that the fruits of the olibanum trees will bring you great fortunes. Their newly crowned Queen will be seeking to solidify her rule, and increase the trade power of her country.

Rest assured that should you wish to end our agreement, your profits will bear the burden of my wrath.

Ghayth,

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 10:16:10 EDT 2015

Subject: An Old Agreement

My Hearty Thanks

From: General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West To: Lyimo

Dear Lyimo:

I wanted to say again how much I enjoyed your rendition of the tale of the Seven Toads and the Butterfly-Woman the other evening. The fact that you took the time to learn a tale of my home region of Qianzhong was already enough to impress me. But that you would also do such wonderful voices? That you would add a twist to the ending that I would never have expected? Truly, a marvelous evening. My daughter, Aidaxia was enthralled, and she rarely sits still for even a moment! I rarely have an opportunity to relax and simply enjoy myself, as my duties are so taxing.

I hope you will accept this gift of three jars of five seasoning sauce as a further token of my esteem. It is unlikely I will be able to invite you back soon, as I am currently managing cavalry patrols south of Dukhan. Two thousand horsemen hunting barbarians in the desert do not just order themselves about! But I hope by the next new moon I may have time to invite you again.

Sincerely,

Hansi

From:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

To:

Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 13:39:46 EDT 2015

Subject: My Hearty Thanks

Loan

Honorable Jivaka Saca,

I am sure you are surprised to receive this missive. My mother, Queen Fadya, has died two days ago, and I have taken over the affairs of state in beautiful Kucha. Of course, my mother never would have lent from you, but I do not agree with most of my people's opinion that men are lesser beings.

Therefore, I come to you asking for a loan of 1,000 gold dinars. Now that the snows are barely melting and the caravans just starting to come, the money is needed to give my mother the appropriate burial. Also, in two months, at the setting of her obelisk, there will be a sumptuous celebration with, among other things, a contest of artists. I have already sent messengers to all hamlets in Kucha and to all the cities of the basin to call on artists of all kind to present their art and compete for the prizes that I am offering.

I would be happy to see you at this festival and meet you in person. You would be an honored guest in the palace and at my table. You probably won't even be the only man there, even if many noblewomen will find that hard to accept.

Please do send the money as soon as possible, though, for the preparations of the celebration are already beginning. You can be sure to receive your money back at the end of summer, when the caravans will have filled our coffers.

May your travels be safe and your waterskins never empty.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

From: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 15:41:53 EDT 2015

Subject: Loan

Re:- Summons to Dukhan Fortress for Consultation

To His Eminence, General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

From Yuan Sala, Physician, Pulk Inn, Dukhan

Your Eminence,

I have sent this scroll with my most trusted and silent servant, Kulma. I hope she finds you in the utmost health. I am currently further investing the local marshes or I would have come myself.

From: Yuan Sala, Physician

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 17:13:28 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:- Summons to Dukhan
Fortress for Consultation

Having recently arrived in Dukhan myself, I came as quickly as I could to inspect your troops' living area and conditions. There seem to be no environmental factors affecting your soldiers.

While the salt marshes do take some getting used to, I believe it is actually the diet of your soldiers that is cause for concern. After speaking with a few of your officers it seems that there is a severe lack of potassium rich leafy greens in their food.

This is probably because there is a scarcity of these vegetables in this region. Locals have canned supplies, but I suggest your officers speak with Farscry Vamto, who is head of a Farming Clan [Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan]. They may know where your troops can find what they need.

I am glad to be of any help to Your Eminence in all future matters. It is an honor to have been trusted by you in this matter, the only return I request is that you may recommend me to those you come across in need.

Discretion and Humble Servitude in the name of Medicine is my goal.

Yours Truly,

Sala

Yuan Sala

Physician

From Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

To her Eminence Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha,

I send you warmest greetings from Dayuan, where I have late established myself after my exile from Marakanda. I have procured myself a small edifice of stone and wood in Shule in order to begin my works, and I hope to attract some students. It is difficult at present, as I have yet to establish a reputation as a learned sage and teacher in this new place.

To that end I have traveled to Suojo, hoping that I might be able to meet with others who can appreciate my knowledge and skills, but alas, without knowledge of the intricacies of the upper classes in this place, I find most doors closed to me and I have been unable to accomplish much. The one exception to this has been in my acquisition of a young man named Jimoya. He is the youngest son of a minor noble family here in Suojo, and his father seemed strangely enthusiastic to pay a modest matriculation for him to study with me in Shule.

From: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
Moderator
Date: Fri May 15 17:21:19 EDT 2015
Subject: From Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Other than this, though, I have been struggling to find other students. To that end, I was wondering if there might be members of your order established in Shule, or even elsewhere in Dayuan, who might speak for me in order to verify my credentials.

I have not forgotten your kindness in fostering Sugnumae when I was unable to care for her myself. She has grown into a beautiful and intelligent young woman, and much of the credit for the latter quality lies at your feet. She speaks fondly of her time with your order, and has asked if she might visit you soon. If it is convenient for you, I will acquiesce to her requests, and make arrangements for her safe travel to Kucha.

With great respect and warmest regards,

Feegle Yitaka

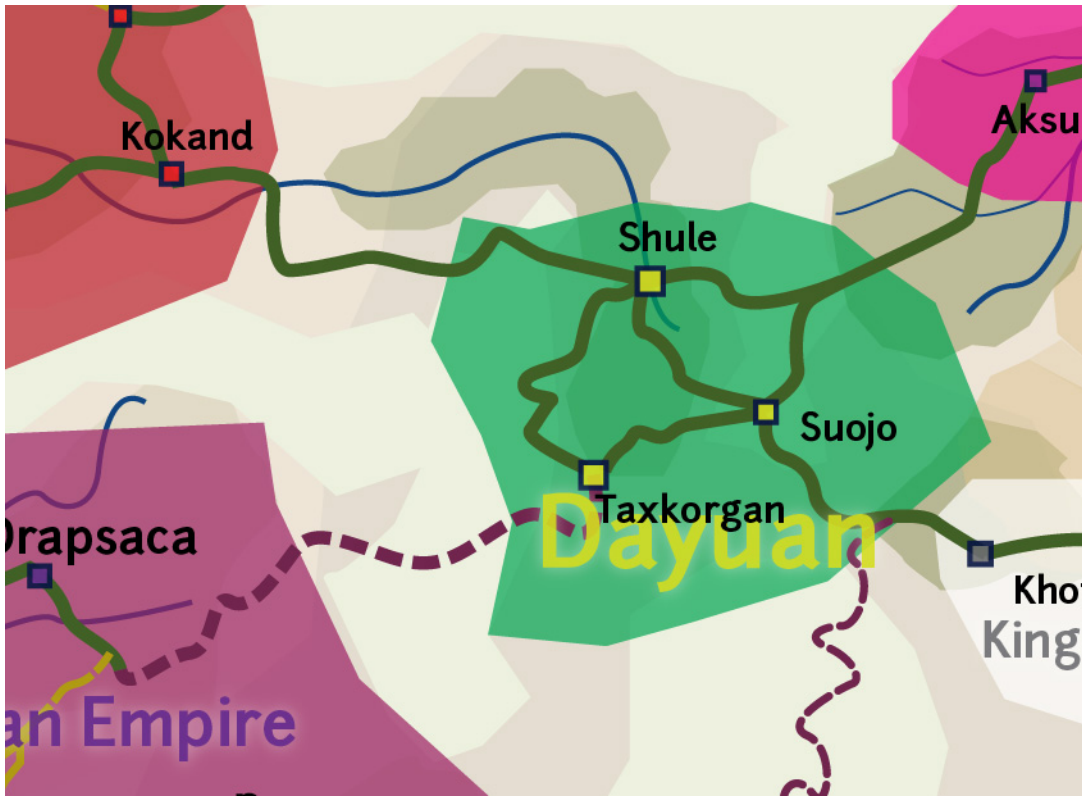


Figure 1.1: Map of Dayuan

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Estimable Feegle,

I well remember our time together puzzling out the gnostic Gorasandra Manuscript. To anyone who would doubt your acuity, I would point out how you inferred the alternating themes of times and seasons that formed the key to its mysteries. I am waiting upon the astronomers to confirm some of its predictions.

Here is what you shall do to establish a connection with our Order. Soon upon us is the New Year of our calendar. Go to the Dome in Suojo for the celebration, and you will without doubt find a representative of the local Kusinne order who will know my name. Give them the a copy of the enclosed letter of introduction detailing your talents and accomplishments as I know them – fear not, I have sent three copies! – and they shall know you are a worthy teacher and scholar. Oh, and do bring a goldfish in a bowl if you can. Which direction it turns upon the New Year’s may provide a helpful omen for you.

I would be pleased to host Sugnumae should she travel to me. I recall her talents and industrious devotion with great fondness.

Keep your toes warm!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

May Your Spring Planting Be Abundant

Greetings and salutations to you, Farscry Vamto!

As queen and regent, I honor you and your clan for your skills in bringing forth abundance from the earth. You nurture many. May this season be rich preparation for another generous harvest.

–

Queen Konuma, Lioness of Lop Nur

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 21:02:37 EDT 2015

Subject: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

From:

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Fri May 15 23:49:42 EDT 2015

Subject: May Your Spring Planting Be Abundant

[Towers of Calypso] Springtime Shadows

Greetings and salutations, Yuan Sala!

My advisors and I have heard of your skill as a physician. You have healed many and show skills even in counteracting suspected poison. As Queen and Reagent, I consider it prudent to consult you about a purely hypothetical situation.

Again, there is no problem here at court. Any rumors you have heard about my beloved husband and King are simply that: groundless rumors. He is hale and hearty, and has recently secluded himself for a time of contemplation at this spring time of the year.

I eagerly await your response,

—

Queen Konuma, Lioness of Lop Nur

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

Death of our Queen

Venerable Abbess Nafisah,

we mourn the loss of our great Queen Fadya bat Alya al-Malika. My mother died two days ago in her sleep. Please forgive me for informing you only now. My grief and the consequences of my mother's death have not given me any moment for rest or clear thoughts.

Although we have found no evidence of it yet, I cannot but expect foul play in my mother's death, since no one would have expected our vigorous monarch to die so suddenly. I have ordered a thorough investigation and would be very grateful if you could use whatever means you have at your disposal to find out more as well. For now, my suspicions mainly concern Daiyuan influence or an intrusion from the Middle Kingdom, but since we have found no clues yet, I might be entirely mistaken on this.

Tomorrow, I will announce my mother's death to our people, but will not make my suspicions public.

Please let me know when the burial will take place and what needs to be prepared for it. I will soon commission the obelisk that will be put on our Queen's grave and start preparations for the celebration that will surround its setting, as is the custom, in two months. But the burial is in your hands and I will do whatever it is that you instruct me to. Also,

From: [Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur](#)
To: [Yuan Sala, Physician](#)
Moderator
Date: Sat May 16 00:08:29 EDT 2015
Subject: [Towers of Calypso] Springtime Shadows

From: [Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha](#)
To: [Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha](#)
Moderator
Date: Sat May 16 04:12:40 EDT 2015
Subject: Death of our Queen

although winter has been long and the caravans are only starting to come, don't hesitate to make the ceremony as glorious as it is fitting to such a great Queen as my mother who not only founded our beautiful Kucha by the conquest of Aksu, but also laid all the groundwork for our present prosperity by planting the olibanum trees whose frankincense fills the holy places in all the oases.

Please receive my most humble greetings and my deepest gratitude for your care of my mother's and my people's souls.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

A succession

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

In budding season of the 115th year, the country of Kucha mourned the death of its ruler, Queen Fadya. Following the precepts of the laws of Kucha, she was succeeded by her daughter, Queen Shayn.

UAY-UOP

An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XLV:

Traditionally, the Oasis Kingdoms considered men unsuited to the artistic and intellectual pursuits. Though this was subject to some regional and individual variation, the members of the artistic and intellectual classes were most commonly women.

Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

To His Royal Majesty King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Naya

Your Majesty,

Even as far as I find myself from Naya, word reaches me through a variety of channels of your displeasure with my actions. I write this letter to explain myself, in the hopes that you will find the forthcoming justifications sufficient, that your ire may cool, and that perhaps the trust that you once placed in me may be rebuilt.

When I first came to your land several years ago, I had been drawn by the tales told of your library and the knowledge within, said to be unique in the world. You were most gracious to host an outsider, and to grant me access to the tomes and writings that were held within, and even now I recognize the generosity that you demonstrated in these actions.

On my most recent visit, I had spent several weeks studying in your library, consolidating and cross-referencing the information from a variety of texts on the movements of heavenly bodies. (Incidentally, have you ever read the Verashuru Manuscripts? They offer a most interesting interpretation of the movements of the Three Brothers and their influence over the weather, which is quite unlike anything to be found in more common writings.) One of your librarians, one Augala by name, was collecting some of the rarest volumes in a wooden crate. It happened by chance that I was reaching for the copy of Chiapi's Astological Elements when Augala snatched it from my hands, apologized, and placed it in the crate with the other writings. When I inquired, he explained that the books he was assembling were to be destroyed at your order.

I do not presume to understand the motivations of kings, and I am certain that you had reason to declare the contents of that crate to be heretical and to be purged by burning, but surely you must also grant that the volumes in question are exceedingly rare, to the point where some of them are the only known copies in the world. I hope and pray that you can understand my motivation in rescuing these books from that ignominious fate decreed by your noble self.

To be completely truthful, I did pass a small bribe to Augala to allow me to take the crate of heretical books that he had compiled, and to report that he had destroyed them as ordered. I will admit that I hoped this minor deception would allow me to spirit the volumes out of Naya secretly, and that you would never discover that your order had been

From: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Sat May 16 20:53:26 EDT 2015

Subject: Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

disobeyed. For these six months hence, I have travelled with that crate of books, oblivious to your displeasure, and I only discovered recently that you have been searching for me.

I beg your pardon for my deceit and abuse of your hospitality, but even more, I beg your indulgence that you allow me to keep these volumes. Their contents are very useful for my research, and I hope that you will suffer their continued existence, as it is now far from your sovereign lands.

With deepest regrets and humble apologies,

Feege Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Re:My Hearty Thanks

Noble General Zhang Hansi,

I am humbled to have had the opportunity to entertain you. I am further humbled and made grateful by your generous gift of three jars of five seasoning sauce. Being able to perform the tale of the Seven Toads and the Butterfly-Woman for you and your daughter in your richly appointed and well-secured home was a delightful experience, and anything seasoned with that sauce will flood the tongue with remembrance.

I am gratified that your daughter was able to enjoy the performance. Bukdur-ol's tumbling usually amuses young people, and it is a relief that his buzzing "singing" elicited wonderment rather than startlement. I shall strive to learn more of Qianzhong legendry in the happy event of a return visit; is there a story, whether from myth or history, that you feel defines Qianzhong?

You seem to have an immense task ahead of you, and perhaps Aidaxia feels it will be some time before she will be able to see her father again. I am confident, however, that the man the other generals call "The Wheat-Scythe of the West" for the effectiveness of his strategems will be able to return to her soon. Is the notorious Ghayth the subject of your campaign?

Your servant,

Storyteller Lyimo

Re:Loan

Dear Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara,

First let me say that I'm sorry for your mother's passing and I would have liked for the opportunity to change her mind about me. Since that opportunity is lost I shall move on to knowing you, and doing business together.

So let us get down to business. The funds you require shall not be a problem, but I wonder if they will be enough to square your accounts as it were. I will be happy to discuss any amount, but while I'm flattered by your invitation and have already began making plans to travel to your city how do you plan to secure loan? Something for collateral until you will have the funds in the spring.

I also have another proposal for you if you're interested. First though I must ask do you allow men to hold titles in your lands? I believe I

From:

Lyimo, Storyteller

To:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Sat May 16 22:55:26 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:My Hearty Thanks

From:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sat May 16 22:58:42 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Loan

know the location of a lost treasure horde in your lands, and would like to coordinate efforts. I also plan to bring a very large caravan of goods with me when I come on my royal visit. I believe we can help each other.

May the wind always be at your back,

Jivaka Saca

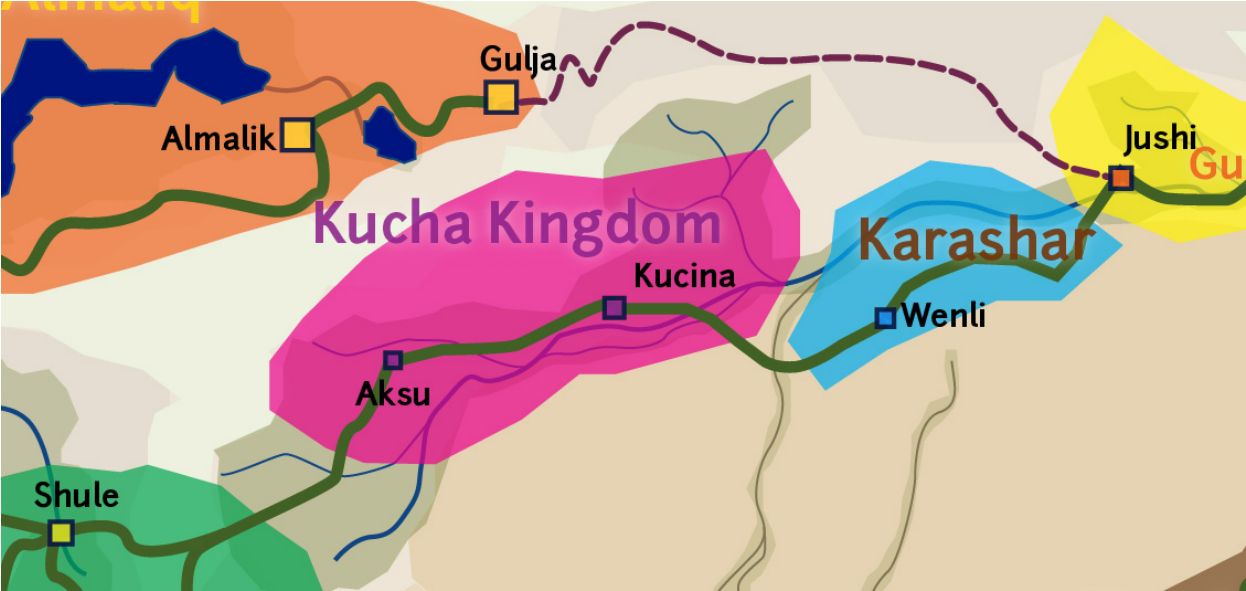


Figure 1.2: Map of Kucha

Tell me of your order

Dear Kanakk,

I'm writing you to inquire about yourself and the members of your order. What are your principals and values. Do you offer training and instruction. I would like to learn more about your beliefs. I have a son that may need your guidance.

May the wind always be at your back,

Jivaka Saca

From: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

To: Moderator
Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Date: Sat May 16 23:11:51 EDT 2015

Subject: Tell me of your order

[Tower of Calisto] Request for safe passage

Greetings Honorable Merchant,

My name is Long Huo, student of 劉師父 (Master Liu) of Nancheng. In light of my Master's falling out with his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom, I aim to seek asylum in my sister Mei's home in Kucina. I wish to seek passage with your caravan next time you are in Dukhan. I have coin, but if that is not sufficient, I will be able to help with repairs around the caravan. Tinkering in my master's workshop has taught me much.

Regards,

龍火 (Long Huo)

From: Liu Shui, Engineer

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 01:08:13 EDT 2015

Subject: [Tower of Calisto] Request for safe passage



Figure 1.3: View from the south-east

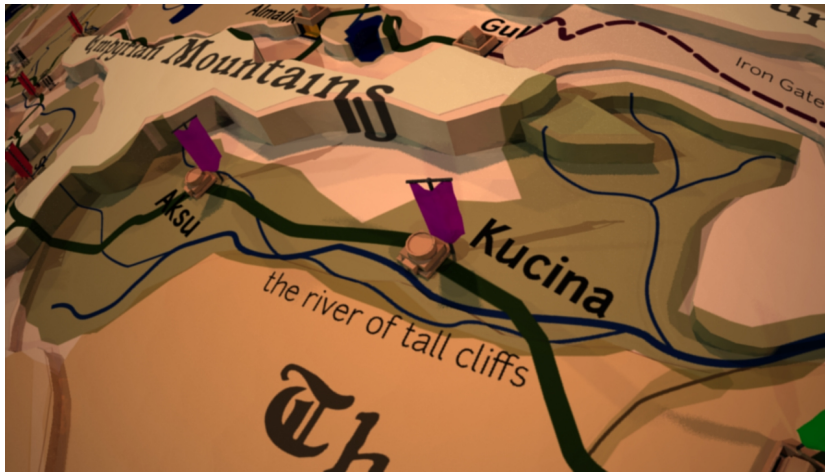
King Badal Parsu to Magi Feegle Yitaka

To Feegle Yitaka,

For one who describes himself as a Magi of Knowledge it is disturbing that you seem to know so little and understand even less. The King of Niya that you spoke to last was my father who passed away not three months past. His mind was not sound during the last year of his life and I was not surprised to hear of his ordering the destruction of the ancient texts. The scribe Augala with whom you spoke was unfortunately a victim of my fathers wrath. Augala's corpse along with those of all the other scribes and servants of the royal library are now feeding the vultures outside the city's North Gate. As for the books you say you have taken, I care little; unfortunately, the assassins my father sent in pursuit of their return (and your death) cannot be recalled, as I have no knowledge of my father's confidential couriers. My advice to you is find a fast camel and ride until the pole star sets.

Sincerely, His Majesty Badal Parsu, King of Niya.

The Exports of Kucina



An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XXVIII:

Kucina was a noted source of frankincense. Local poets often employed the olibanum trees as a metaphor for the kingdom.

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 03:17:42 EDT 2015

Subject: King Badal Parsu to Magi
Feegle Yitaka



Figure 1.4: The summer route, near Kushi and Yiwu

Aw:An Old Agreement

My glorified friend Ghayth,

I'm glad for a sign of life from you - and then such a beneficial one. As I see, the reports of your untimely demise were more than wrong and my heart is full of joy.

Agreements stand and fall with the ones who make them; you know me, I stand by my word, so my word is worth a contract. The years may go by, but I see our mutual agreement as binding as in the first day. My friends have reserved a special place in my heart.

Iron Weapons. The prices for these are not the lowest in world, the Adjudicators may know for what reason, but I'm still not sure who will be warring against each other this year. But for a friend, there's no effort too great. As my caravan is already under way, I shall send a messenger to the leader of my caravan. She will buy those weapons in Kushi, probably in Jishu, but it may be that she has to use the latter market in Yiwu. You need the usual quantity?

She knows of our agreement and the former trades, as she accompanied me for the past three years. Do you remember the year before last in the small oasis with the ruined tower? The girl who wore the blue headband? That's the beloved blossom of my household.

Let us use a place shortly after the frontier of the Kingdom, said small oasis. As for the payment, with a good friend as yours, I would settle it to the net-cost of purchasing and transporting it to a place past the Gushi Kingdom.

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord
Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 05:38:48 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:An Old Agreement

My profound thanks for the sharing of the delicious recommendation you sent. The proud workers of Kucha are a preferred choice of trading and my caravan should already be located in the vicinity of Aksu. I sent a message already to use the advantage of negotiating in the fullest for the best price of a vast supply of frankincense.

As I'm fond of secure and lasting markets, I welcome the coronation in Kucha – may her Kusinne gods look after her and bring her long and fruitful regency and the best life. The joy over a good life is almost as great and long-lasting as that over a thoroughly crushed betrayer, don't you agree? Full of hope, I had packed some of the Marakandan spices your wife liked so much and for you some of your preferred sweets.

My best wishes should follow your ways

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

A Translated Poem

An excerpt from a poem transcribed from memory by Cai Wenji. Originally composed by an anonymous poet, on the occasion of seeing the army patrols in the countryside south of Dukan in 115:

"Viridian fluttering below
Bright wending lines,
The waving banners
doubled in marsh-water."

King Badal Parsu to Queen Konuma

Cousin Konuma,

I have not been in contact with you since my father's death. I apologize for this, but my succession to the throne of Kiya has not been as simple as I had anticipated and my attention to the political complications of the process has been demanding indeed. But that is a matter that I will explain another time if you wish, I write to you now as a courtesy, to inform you that I have sent 100 soldiers under the command of my son, Bugha, to patrol the boundary between our kingdoms. Please be reassured that this is not a provocation on my part. They seek the hideouts of the bandits that, as you well know, have been using the Cavernous Mountains as a base for their activities.

I suspect in addition to terrorizing merchants and travelers along the Oasis Road they have been diverting water from the mountain cisterns

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 20:39:05 EDT 2015

Subject: King Badal Parsu to Queen
Konuma

and consequently the wells of Kiya are running dry. I will acknowledge that in exploring the mountains my son and his men may need to stray into Lop Nur. I hope this action does not affect the peace that has existed between our kingdoms and families since the time of our grandfathers. As you know my son is not the wisest of our lineage. Though I have instructed him to behave in a manner that is appropriate to his station, his actions sometimes lack forethought and finesse; he has too much of his grandfather in him. I ask you please, to forgive any transgressions that may occur at this hand.

Sincerely, His Majesty Badal Parsu, King of Niya

King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

General Hans,

Despite the presence of your soldiers, this winter was as bad as any I remember with respect to bandit raids of the merchant caravans along the Oasis Road. Some have even commented that the sighting of your troupes was often a strong omen of ambush by bandits. As I have informed your emperor previously, the Kingdoms of Niya and Lop Nur are capable of patrolling the road without your assistance.

As the spring has now arrived and the north road is open I request that you withdraw your patrols from our territory and head to Gushi. Perhaps your efforts would be better spent re-establishing the Iron Gate Pass, which, as you know, has been obstructed since the earthquakes of last fall. Some physical labour may keep your soldiers better occupied than strolling through bazaars, harassing the honest people of the south road.

Sincerely, His Majesty Badal Parsu, King of Niya.

Re: Tell me of your order

Hello my friend!

The Kusunne order believes that truth and love for one's fellows results from disciplining the mind and body. It is my personal mission to spread this teaching that originated from beyond the Spirit Mountains to all people and, if you wish, I could train your son in the way of Kusunne. I am planning on accompanying a caravan to the city of Cuojo and I would ask for financial assistance in exchange if you find this to your liking.

May your trades always favor you, Kanakk

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General
Moderator
Date: Sun May 17 21:18:35 EDT 2015
Subject: King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

From: Kanakk, Wandering Kusunne Monk
To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
Moderator
Date: Sun May 17 21:45:47 EDT 2015
Subject: Re: Tell me of your order

your highness, may I request assistance?

Your highness, I know your succession has caused chaos in the courts among the military leaders of Kucha and there have been rumors of wanting to start a war with Dayuan whispered among the Kusine order. I wish to avoid a war and spread the way of Kusine to all in Dayuan. Would you be so kind to finance my travel there? May your reign be more glorious than all who have come before you, Kanakk

From: Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

To: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 21:52:09 EDT 2015

Subject: your highness, may I request assistance?

Bandits on the Roads

An excerpt from a caravan leader's letter to his employer:

... our delays were unavoidable, owing to the extra precautions we were obliged to take because of the many bandits on the road between Niya and Miran. Though the royal patrols assure us of our safety, they cannot even protect their own wells from these uncivilized jackals. I must ask you to send further payment...

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

Thrice Blessed Kanakk,

I write to you, brother in Kusine, about your travels as you walk Kusine's Path Of The Road.

May the stones turn aside and the way open before you.

In Kucha, I witness for the Path of the Well, the inner voice, and the Path of the Hearth, the path of right living. Yet there is one path to Kusine which is sadly incomplete in these latter days: the Path of the Book.

Our prophets, may the light of their words illumine us, witness to us in the fragments of their books of knowledge and their discourses with the first disciples.

Yet are those fragments sadly incomplete.

I have found, studying the great works of history and of the other great religions of our land, that they bring questions upon me which cause me great desire to know the thoughts of our prophets and disciples which were lost from the monastery.

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To: Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 23:22:21 EDT 2015

Subject: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

So I ask of you, in your travels, inquire of those who hoard books and stories, whether they know the names of our prophets and their stories, to fill in the empty corners of the tapestry of Kusinne's origins.

I enclose with this missive a fivefold copy of my Letter of Interest, seeking these works and stories, my token of passage to speed you through any road within the Kingdom of Kucha, or where my name is honored, and a packet of money to help your travel on the road.

May your way be blessed, and may you find word of Kusinne's sacred origins.

The Gorasandra Manuscript hinted that some of our revelators came from the South across the high mountains. If you find word of the pilgrims Badar or An-Kuan, you may have found a clue to the story.

If you travel through Kucha, do not fail to visit.

In health and wisdom upon your Path,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Re: Tell me of your order

Dear Friend,

I will be willing to part with my finances and more importantly my son once you inform me more about your order. Beliefs and numbers. How you're structured, and how you defend yourselves. I could be so moved to fiance a series of road side temple way-stations if I like what I hear. One must be rich spiritually as well as materially to fully enjoy life. I look forward to your next letter.

May you have all you need,

Jivaka Saca

Re: Death of our Queen, Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

Your Majesty,

May the three lights of Wisdom, of Acuity, of Fortune shine upon you as you take on the mantle of Queenship.

I weep with you for our great Queen Fadya. Fadya bat Alya al Malika, a name that shall illumine the pages of the history of Kucha. Her Majesty was a model to our great realm, walking the Path of the Hearth to show all the way to right living. One of her greatest strengths was that none

From:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusinne Monk

Moderator

Date: Sun May 17 23:30:45 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: Tell me of your order

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 00:04:27 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: Death of our Queen,
Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

feared to speak truth to her, and so she could use her wisdom in the light of knowledge as well as the strength of conviction.

By Queen Fadya's patronage was the library of our Abbey renewed, and the history and stories of Kusinne collected, corrected, and copied for the benefit of our teachers, our pilgrims, and to all who may benefit from the wisdom of our Paths, of the Well, of the Hearth, of the Road, and, though I weep to say, of the fragments of the Way of the Book. If it may please you, I hope that you will carry on Queen Fadya's support.

Upon the question of the circumstances of Queen Fadya's passing, the wisdom of Kusinne and our teaching stories can offer more caution than enlightenment. More than once in history has such an inquiry become an occasion for score-settling among those close to the seat of power. As a woman taught the ways of rulership, I trust that you will know the signs of opportunistic action; those who rush you toward changes of office and responsibility may seem sincere, but you will know to look deeper into any such notions.

I shall sit in the Chamber of the Well to reflect in dark and quiet, and I shall tell you of any insights my inner voice gives upon the matter.

Upon the question of the burial and ceremony, I know the immediate preparations for Queen Fadya are in good hands. The time propitious is when the old moon's reddened crescent fades into the dawn before the new moon. Queen Fadya may lie in state upon a bier draped with her honours until that time shall come. At the last glimmering of the stars, her procession shall walk from the chapel at the foot of the Valley of Silence up to the place prepared for her, her resting place strewn with flowers daily until the placement of her obelisk. Among the royal guards are numbers who were novices of Kusinne before their rise to adult estate. Let them bear her, with flaming thuribles of frankincense beside, and branches from the olibanum tree.

Then you shall say words of her life, and if you will, how she walked the Path.

May you live long in wisdom, in grace, and in majesty under the mantle of stars, under the rays of gold, and under the turning silver moon, Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

King Badal Parsu to Queen Shayn

Queen Shayn,

I was saddened to hear of the passing of your mother. Queen Fadya was like a second mother to me, as you will no doubt recall I spent several years in her court as a youth. It is a strange coincidence that your mother and my father should both pass away in the same year, though perhaps fitting given how fond they were of one another. You will forgive my mother for not attending the Royal funeral, she still dwells on a grievance toward your family that I still do not fully understand.

But this is not why I am writing to you. Truthfully, I need your help with respect to two matters. First, my young daughter, Princess Parsbit, is in need of tutelage; and I nor anyone in my court (certainly not my mother) are capable of acting as an appropriate mentor. I am hoping that, just as I once did, Parsbit will be welcomed into your palace court. I feel that your strong influence would be the ideal circumstance for her preparations. And I will also confide that I am concerned about her safety if she remains in Niya. My son, Bugha, is aware that I do not feel he is destined to rule Niya; but he has too much of his grandfather in him for me to trust that he will not ultimately manipulate the situation to his own advantage. While I am capable of protecting myself I fear for Parsbit.

The second matter concerns a thief who recently stole some precious books and other objects from Niya's royal library. The man, Feegle Yitaka, calls himself a "Magi of Knowledge", though I know this not to be the case. He is a professional thief and mercenary I am sure. If you hear of his whereabouts I would be most appreciative if you passed along the location. He may claim to have only taken some books that were destined to be destroyed, but this is only a half truth. He also made off with a bronze and gold dagger with a large black sapphire set in the hilt, owned by my grandfather and long hidden (from my father) within the royal library. The blade has great sentimental value to me as it is one of the few treasures that remain of my grandfather's, the rest of course were sold by my father to finance construction of the royal palace. May the finest years of Kucha's history be yours.

Sincerely, King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 02:19:41 EDT 2015

Subject: King Badal Parsu to Queen Shayn

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: A discreet inquiry

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Yuan Sala, Physician, greetings.

I recall with respect and appreciation your sojourn at the Abbey, and your teachings upon the health and infirmity of the body and the moral humors. The sister in charge of our infirmary uses your disciplines of purity and cleanliness, and in the seasons of contagion since your visit, we have been little afflicted by the agues that oft sweep through a confined space such as ours.

I write to you in furtherance of a discreet inquiry. You undoubtedly have heard of the passing of our great Queen Fadya bat Alya al-Malika, untimely in her prime, during her sleep of a night. I enclose here the brief report which I have from the royal physicians. If you find any cause to suspect an unnatural cause based upon these observations, please direct your thoughts to the court of Her Majesty, Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara, daughter and successor. If you find no cause, your note of assurance may give our new sovereign peace of mind as she assumes the mantle of rulership. You may reach her here:

Queen Shayn of Kucha: [Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha].

I shall also send inquiries to our sister house in the city of Aksu, to find out if any are rejoicing in our new Queen's sorrowful loss of her mother in the course of her succession. Peace is better for trade, for prosperity, and for the happiness of the people, so that they may follow the Path of the Hearth in right livelihood, and the wisdom of Kusinne and its prophets be welcomed in gladness.

Peace be upon you, and skill in your Art,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Path of the Well, in the path of the Hearth, and, though our pages are few, the Path of the Book of Kusinne.

P.S.: Should any word of the doings of the ancient Kusinne pilgrims Badar or An-Kuan cross your attention, it would be a gesture of grace and friendship to write to me what you have found. I am seeking to complete the accounts of our earliest scriptures and prophets, which have been rumored to be known in other lands.

- N, Ao'K

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Yuan Sala, Physician

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 02:36:18 EDT 2015

Subject: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to
Yuan Sala, Physician: A discreet
inquiry

Last Year's Earthquake

An excerpt from Ban Zhao's Histories of the Western Hinterlands:

The earthquake which occurred late in the year 114 greatly obstructed travel through the Iron Gate Pass, obliging travellers to search elsewhere for passage. The winter deterred efforts to clear the way for travel, and even in the budding of the following year travellers still found the way difficult...



Figure 1.5: The Iron Gate Pass

To Live Forever

My dearest friend, Lyimo!

Not a day goes by where my wives do not come to me and beg that we might travel to see the great Lyimo, orator without compare. Now that Budding has come once more, perhaps now that the roads are open, I shall allow them to travel to where ever you are performing.

I have heard of bandits and brigands along the course the Winter routes, I do hope that such honourless thieves have done little to impede your movements, and rest assured that should we meet on the Summer routes then I shall greet you warmly and escort you to your destination.

Word has reached me that the new Queen of Kuchia is planning a rather lavish festival of arts, to honour the passing of her Mother, perhaps there is opportunity for you to ply your trade and spread your magical stories far and wide. Perhaps you might tell tales of the fearsome "Wolf of th Spirit Mountains". As you know my people put little stock in the written word, especially for our histories, paper is so prone to damage and decay, not suited for life on horseback. I hope that I might ask you to tell stories of my deeds, I could think of no one more skilled, more suited for such a task than the great Lyimo.

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 08:01:03 EDT 2015

Subject: To Live Forever

As you might know, I am not a man prone to boasting, I leave it to you to embellish my deeds. Paint me as a noble figure, a romantic nomad who follows the wind and his own desires. My son hopes that you might leave out the part where he got drunk and emptied his stomach upon your shoes. I think humility is a valuable lesson so I leave it to your discretion.

I remain your friend, Ghayth

The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

The Agriculture of Dukhan



An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XV:

The agriculture of Dukhan was affected by its position on the salt marshes, resulting in a lack of cultivated fresh green vegetables.

Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: His Majesty King Badal Parsu of Niya

Great King of Niya, I thank you for contributing to the reports I have had of bandit activity on the Oasis Road. I am working to put an end to these bandits south of the road at this time. My horsemen will rout them out of their hideouts and drive them away, you may rest assured. As to regular patrols on the Oasis Road, you may have informed [The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years](#) that you could patrol the roads without

From:

[Zhang Hans, Frontier General](#)

To:

Moderator

[King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya](#)

Date: Mon May 18 11:45:47 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

his assistance, but in his wisdom he has decided that you are misinformed, and has given me, but his humble servant, very clear instructions.

The five imperial guard posts between Dukhan and Loulan will remain in place, the two Imperial way stations allowed us in Lopa Nur by the Treaty of Miran will continue to be operated by my soldiers, and Middle Kingdom caravans will continue to be escorted, until such time as **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years** orders me to discontinue these activities, and no sooner. However, you have informed me that my soldiers have been rude and objectionable, behaving with disrespect.

I will not tolerate this. As the great General Wu Di once wrote... "A soldier is a beast He must be let out to feed at times but a firm hand must be used and if necessary, the sword" I will take the necessary steps to ensure that the peaceful residents of Niya and Lopa Nur are not unnecessarily hindered in their lives. It an excellent opportunity to remind my more junior officers that they are responsible with their own lives for the conduct of their men. As to the Iron Gate Pass, I would communicate with the ruler of the Gushi, but my messages there have been met with no answer.

Perhaps you know of some sure way of communication with that ruler, that I might see what steps could be taken to ensure free commerce through the Iron Gate Pass? Perhaps you could make an introduction between us? May the gods grant you and your family good health.

In the name of the Emperor, the Lord of Ten Thousand Years

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

Selethen Varzakk to Kanakk

Esteemed friend,

The budding season has started, caravans are on the roads and I can't foresee in which place you may attain this message. I hope it reaches you in best health and under the best of circumstances.

As I know your wanderlust, I feel obliged to warn you of a kind of danger I couldn't believe it existed, but nonetheless some more suffering came to the world this winter. Something is amiss in the bowels of the Relinquished Desert and it swallowed already some hapless wayfarers.

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 11:54:36 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Kanakk

North of Miran, about two days and a half from the road, there should be some ruins of unknown origin, characterized by a triple of blue marbled towers. Something was disturbed inside it and it seems to be fond of flesh, as only some bones were left to be found.

So I beg you, make an old man rest in peace and dare not to wander in the desert north of Miran. A road should not be beneath your attention in this region.

May your holiness be everlasting!

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Regular Purchase of Vegetables

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: Farscry Vamto, Farming Clan-Chieftain

Dear Master Farmer:

The august physician, Yuan Sala directed me to you for an important purpose. The Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan has need of arranging for a regular supply of leafy vegetables of all varieties, to supplement the diet of the soldiers. I am sending some officers of my staff to negotiate with you for this purpose; they are authorized to come to any necessary arrangements. I am not sure as to what volume of produce you may be able to provide, or from what location you may be sourcing the produce, but twenty cart loads a week should be sufficient to supplement the diet of my army, at least for this season and the next.

I ask that you negotiate with my officers, and if the terms you offer are fair you may expect prompt and regular payment in silver coin from Dukhan. My officers will arrange escort of both the produce and, more importantly in these bandit infested times, the payments.

In the name of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

From:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

To:

Moderator

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Date: Mon May 18 12:06:49 EDT 2015

Subject: Regular Purchase of Vegetables

Out of Character Note: Feel free to simply reply to me with the terms of the agreement or the fact that no agreement was possible. We don't need to back and forth haggle it or anything. I will simply assume that the terms are those my officers thought were fair (or were bribed or cajoled into telling me were fair). In other words, whatever you send is the agreement. On the other hand, if you WANT to back and forth haggle it...we can do that too. I pick up the signal from your reply.

Selethen Varzakk to Jivaka Saca

My prosperous friend,

The winter has ended finally and I think your business is active as usual. I have to thank again for your loan last year and the modest interest you imposed on me. It helped me profoundly and I'm still proud of the early repayment my transactions made possible.

I'd be glad if the Marakandian herbs I sent as insert were suitable to your tastes; I shouldn't let it be said that I'm not a thankful man who doesn't know who helped him. Should you get in trouble, which the Adjudicators beware, be assured I would try anything feasible to help. As I remember your father has some need concerning his joints. I added some incense for his betterment to this letter; may your father accompany you very much longer on your path than mine did.

As you surely have heard, the Kuchaen yield is great this year and under the benevolent eyes of the Adjudicators the risk of letting my caravan set out at the earliest possibility granted me the advantage to be the first merchant on the market of Kucina to pick his share. As soon as the caravan is packed with the merchandise, the beloved blossom of my household who leads the caravan this year, can delight the Kingdoms on the first-rate frankincense of Kucina. As I took the risk for my caravan, I didn't see any reason to leave over anything other than the cheapest incense for the other merchants who dare the more easier and pleasant times. Some of them may accuse me of spoiling the prices, but cheap rates make cheap wares, as my beloved father exhorted me time and again.

If, by chance, anything new comes about loans of merchants on the Routes through the Oases, I would be glad to lend a helping hand to you for not wager too much on one horse only.

My best wishes for your sumptuous business

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 13:09:58 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Jivaka Saca

Re:Regular Purchase of Vegetables

From: Farscry Vamto

To: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi

Your Eminence, on behalf of my clan, I extend my warmest gratitude for your generous offer of purchase for yield of our farms. Unfortunately, you have caught us at a very inopportune time; the plague of this winter past has taken a heavy toll on both my clan and the people of Yiwu. This despite the very best efforts of the physickers (for which we can scarce repay!).

I will be traveling soon to discern the most suitable location for us to relocate and seed new crops. Thus, our yields this growing season will be below the norm, so we cannot fully meet your request; I have instructed my people to send what they can spare for the time being, which should amount to no less than 10 cartloads per week, but should most likely be 15 per week most of the time. In recompense for our lower yield, and a gesture of good faith to keep our deal in the future, my clan has agreed to sell our crops to the soldiers at a 10% reduced price until we are able to meet your requested 20 cartloads per week. We hope to be resettled in time for the next growing season!

If further negotiations are required in my forthcoming absence, I have appointed my son, Chiannin, as my proxy. He is wise in our ways and has already shown himself capable of leading in my stead when necessary. You can also send correspondence to me through him; he will be apprised of my travels regularly. Warmest regards to you, and our thanks for the ongoing efforts of your soldiers in keeping our lands and highways safe!

In the service of Her Grace, the Queen Konuma, Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Selethen Varzakk to Zhang Hans

My boldest friend,

Your health may be on the peak of human possibility and your arm may be still the strongest in your kingdom. You, who are born for war, should see not more than you're willing to witness, as I wish you a happy household without any mourning. I hope your family is well.

My caravan is already on the Route and on its way to the Watchtowers. My guess for it is to reach them in the Growing Season. It is led by the Beloved Blossom of my household, who undertook it to lead the caravan

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 13:44:16 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Regular Purchase of Vegetables

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 13:44:20 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Zhang Hans

on her own for this year. And even now I'm impressed by her skill and decision-making. I'm as proud as an old father can be of his daughter and I wish you the same justified feelings for all of your descendants.

The plan for the caravan is this year to assay in the metal trade. As the Guchi Kingdom is known for its exquisite weapons, there is the inclination to transport a certain amount of arms. If you had a demand on higher quality arms, I would be glad to serve you with a weapon of your choice. Should you know of comrades, I could doubtless organize a greater load of weapons being brought to you.

The letter is accompanied by a small package of Marakandian spices which are suitable to your tastes, I hope.

I am your very humble servant.

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Warm Regards to our Queen

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: Her Fierce Majesty, Queen Konuma

My queen, the people of the Vamto clan extend endless thanks to your blessing upon us for the upcoming year! Sadly, I do not wish to vex you, but must make a request. The people of Yiwu have unfairly blamed my clan for the plague which has ravaged us all. There has been no bloodshed yet, but I have personally had to separate foolish youths brawling in the streets thrice in the past two weeks.

With the increased tensions between the Vamto clan and the rest of the city of Yiwu, I feel it is best for us to resettle elsewhere; there are several potential locations along the great river where I hope to find fertile land and a welcoming village. I have no desire to usurp your wisdom and authority, and so I ask for your consideration in granting our request should I find a suitable location for our resettlement.

May the wisdom and light of the moon shine ever on your reign,

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 14:26:29 EDT 2015

Subject: Warm Regards to our Queen

Humble request for assistance

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: Yuan Sala, august physician

My clan's warmest regards to you, most respect of all physickers! I would first like to personally thank you for the generous representation of my clan to General Zhang Hansi [Zhang Hans, Frontier General]! He has extended a generous offer for ongoing trade of my clan's crops to the western army largely thanks to your kind words on our behalf. If ever I can be of assistance to you, you need only ask!

Second, I am hopeful that you can help allay some of the unrest in the city of Yiwu. The plague has finally abated, but sadly the people of the city have once again dredged up their prejudices against my people. They are blaming us for the plague, saying we are unclean and that the traditions of my people brought down disease by angering Iriko demons. Could you, or one of your physickers, make a proclamation in the city as to the natural origin of the plague to quell these dangerous and hateful rumors?

Third, my youngest child's persistent cough has worsened, despite the efforts of our local physicker. The cough is severe, keeping us awake often in the night; when she has had particularly severe fits, her breathing is difficult with a rattling in her chest. If you have any treatment to suggest, I would gladly take it to heart and give it a try. My apologies again for the demands upon your time, of which I am sure there are many greater needs. My people have the utmost gratitude for your assistance in the past, and all have asked me to pass along our blessings for you and the work you do!

In the service of Her Grace, the Queen Konuma [Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur], Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Yuan Sala, Physician

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 14:46:51 EDT 2015

Subject: Humble request for assistance

Magi Feegle Yitaka to Queen Konuma

To Her Royal Majesty Queen Konuma of Lop Nur,

Your Majesty,

Too long has it been since last we corresponded, and I beg your forgiveness for my failings. Please do not take them as an indication of a lack of respect or good feeling after my time in Lop Nur; I often reminisce and wish that I could have stayed longer. The libraries and archives of Your Majesty's realm were smaller than that of some of your neighbours, it is true, but there are volumes there that are not to be found anywhere else, and the learned men who work in your service are some of the most skilled and knowledgeable that I have met. Still, it was not this that caused me to repeatedly delay my departure, but rather the amicable relations - I might even dare to refer to it as friendship - that I cultivated with Your Majesty while there. Perhaps I may yet return to Lop Nur in person again, but alas, I have duties here in Dayuan.

I write, in fact, to ask a small boon, if it is not too much trouble. I fear it is unseemly to go directly to so august a personage as Your Majesty, and I would correspond with your officials directly if it were possible, but unfortunately the matter is somewhat sensitive, and as my allegiance is not to Lop Nur, I am not certain who I can trust explicitly.

I do not wish to bore Your Majesty with details, but in the course of my travels I seem to have alienated the late King of Niya. I have corresponded with His son, the new ruler of that land, who was unaware of the offense that I believe I had caused, but rumours have reached my ears from more than one source that indicate that there may be assassins seeking me out to exact revenge for this slight.

I do not know the truth of these rumours, but as my attempts to apologize to His Eminence only succeeded in proving that He was dead and succeeded by His son. I therefore find myself in the position of preparing myself for an assault that may or may not ever come.

My request is a simple enough one in theory, but I am aware that within a larger realm such as the one Your Majesty commands may be difficult in practice. I wish only to know if these rumours are true, and the nature of the threat against my person. If Your Majesty's officials were to discover anyone passing through Lop Nur with the express attempt to find me - it is possible that they may stop there to search for me, as my last correspondence with the late King of Niya was sent from your city - I would be most grateful to hear of it, as well as of as many details as

From:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

To:

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 17:09:22 EDT 2015

Subject: Magi Feegle Yitaka to Queen Konuma

are available. Knowing what I knew of King Barsal the Elder, I would not be surprised if he sent multiple agents against me if only to ensure a successful conclusion.

I am not certain what service I can be to Your Majesty, but if there is anything, I would gladly fulfill any obligations to Lop Nur in the best way that you determine possible. I await your return correspondence as impatiently as is polite and proper.

I remain Your Majesty's humble servant,

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

**Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Lyimo, Storyteller:
An-Kuan and Aksu**

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Lyimo, Storyteller, greetings.

Esteemed Lyimo, teller of a thousand tales, I write to you in recollection of your visit to Kucha when I was yet new in my post at the Abbey of Kusinne. Years have passed since then, but the memory of your stories remains with me.

It is a time of succession in Kucha, with our founding Queen Fadya's untimely passing being followed by the accession of her daughter Shayn. Queen Shayn is young for her post, but vigorous and sincere, and well-educated in the ways of bringing knowledge and power together. It is my hope that Queen Shayn may be a supporter of the sacred traditions of Kusinne just as her mother was. May peace and prosperity travel hand in hand together under Queen Shayn's reign!

When I sat with the scribes in the library this winter, watching the copying of our scarce fragments of the earliest traditions of Kusinne, your voice and your stories came back to me. Did you not tell a tale of An-Kuan and the Snow Leopard? Such a marvelous creature that must be. When I heard your tale, I did not perceive that this must be the Pilgrim An-Kuan, one of the earliest exponents of Kusinne's Path of the Road, and one of our prophets. I would love for you to visit and hear that tale again, for I am earnestly searching for those stories, wherever they may be found, to put together the picture of our sacred traditions' earliest times.

And last – if you have been in Aksu or crossed the paths of travelers from there – I am curious to know their feelings upon the loss of Queen Fadya. Queen Shayn has certain suspicions upon the circumstances of her mother's mysterious passing in her sleep, in the prime of her life. It is in my mind that some who cherish bitterness over the conquest of

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 19:49:32 EDT 2015

Subject: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to
Lyimo, Storyteller: An-Kuan and
Aksu

Aksu may have wished her ill in more than their hearts. Though my inner voice speaks nothing of this, it may simply be my foolishness.

I welcome word of your travels, and I welcome you to visit whenever you please.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, in the Path of the Well and the Path of the Hearth under the Light of Kusinne

Patrols in Lop Nur

Except from a report by a Loulan merchant her supplier in Khotan:

The green banners of the Middle Kingdom are a common sight here, escorting their caravans. Middle Kingdom merchants have no fear of bandits! Though some of us fear the soldiers almost as much: they are a surly, undisciplined lot, and it is better to keep your distance. But things may be improving: they have been less troublesome since supplies of vegetables from the north have been delivered to their encampments. . .

The King Is Dead, Long Live the King!

Greetings and salutations, King Badal Parsu!

If my beloved husband and King were not in retreat for a time of meditation and refreshment, he would join me in sending our sorrow for your grief and congratulations in your successful reception to the throne of Kiya. We had not heard that your beloved father was ill!

Still, your people now have an even more honorable and virtuous King. This shows in your extreme courtesy in sending this letter. Although we have been allies for generations, sometimes the relationship has been strained. Your letter helps smooth the way.

We, too, have been confronting these ruffians. I have sent patrols to three hotspots, and have been considering sending a patrol of 100 men to our mutual border. Perhaps we should work together to bring these ruffians to justice!

Is this son of yours the one who enchanted my daughter? Although she was only 10 years old at the time, she insisted that we propose a marriage.

Well, we must let our children dream on for now. Rule well and wisely, cousin!

From: **Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur**

To: **King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya**

Moderator

Date: Mon May 18 21:59:34 EDT 2015

Subject: The King Is Dead, Long Live the King!

Queen Konuma, Lioness of Lop Nur

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

His Majesty King Badal Parsu of Niya requires your service in locating an ancient relic that was recently stolen from his treasury. It is a bronze dagger with a large black stone set in the hilt. The object cannot be mistaken for any other. The thief, Feegle Yitaka [Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge], may attempt to sell the item to you or perhaps use it as collateral on a loan. Be wary of this man, he is clever, but desperate as he has been on the run from agents of Kiya for some time. His Majesty will pay 6000 wuzhu or 10 bolts of silk (whichever your preference) for recovery of the object and an additional 6000 wuzhu for custody of the thief (alive).

XXXX

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Re:Humble request for assistance

From: Yuan Sala, Physician, Currently Located in Dukhan

To: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

It is my duty and honor to connect those in need with those who can help. I am most glad that General Zhang reached out to you in these difficult times.

I have sent my assistant, Plika, to speak to those who live in ignorance in the city of Yiwu. I have every bit of faith in her ability and knowledge. I only hope the people of your city have enough sense to pay her a bit of mind. I recently spoke at the Abbey of Kucha about preventing the spread of the contagion to their city. The preventative measures of purifying the hearth and spreading the paste of garlic upon the brow has worked wonders there.

As for your offspring. I understand your worry, but I believe this to be easily alleviated. For immediate relief soak a towel in warm honey and lay it across her throat as she sleeps. Make sure that while she rests there are plenty of cloths beneath her head, so that her chest does not lay flat on the surface.

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 00:46:45 EDT 2015

Subject: to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

From: Yuan Sala, Physician

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 00:59:00 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Humble request for assistance

For a cure, I will turn you to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge [Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge], who has spoken many times about clearing the lungs.

While I write to you, I would ask, at night in the desert caravans huddle closer to the fires when they hear a distant howling. What causes it? I know you have traveled a bit to learn farming techniques, and I hoped you could enlighten me to this mystery.

I wish your clan health and warmth,

Sala

Re:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: A discreet inquiry

From: Yuan Sala, Physician

To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

You humble me with your kind words, Abbess. I am glad to hear that the plague which has so harshly affected Yuwi has left you mostly untouched.

These reports are most troubling indeed. I have already written to Her Eminence, and am currently traveling to Kucha to be more at the disposal of both your Abbey and Her Highness.

Unfortunately, given my recent studies, I am out of touch with local Kucha residents. I will need lodgings in your city, as well as a room to practice medicine for the locals.

May we find peace in these troubling times,

Sala

P.S. Unfortunately I have not come across such knowledge, but I would recommend you speak with Lyimo, Storyteller [Lyimo, Storyteller] who seems knowledgeable about a great deal of things in this vein.

Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

Your Majesty,

It is with a heavy heart that I must inform you of this disturbing news. Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha [Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha] wrote to me about the death of your mother, may she rule in the minds of all, so say we, and she sent me the reports from your royal physicians.

From:

Yuan Sala, Physician

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 01:21:24 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: A discreet inquiry

From:

Yuan Sala, Physician

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 01:24:36 EDT 2015

Subject: Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

Your Eminence, I have studied the poisons of the Onion Mountains for many years. I believe your mother may have been afflicted with the rarest of these poisons, crafted from the hair shafts of the Onion Mountain goats.

I am currently traveling to Kucha from Dukhan so that I may be of more service to you in this time of need. I have asked the Abbess to help me secure rooms in town, I will send my servant with the information on my whereabouts so that I may easily be reached should you require my assistance.

May the wind of knowledge ever blow your way,

Sala

Unrest in the Courts of Kucha

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

As they gathered for public mourning, the nobles of Kucha, reminded of the relatively recent conquest of Aksu, whispered among themselves. The rumors of foul play jostled uneasily with the preparations for the ceremony...

From the Museum of the Oasis Kingdoms

Catalog item #147: A painted scroll in the Eonic style, depicting a small oasis with a ruined tower. The inscription reads "near the border of Gushi".

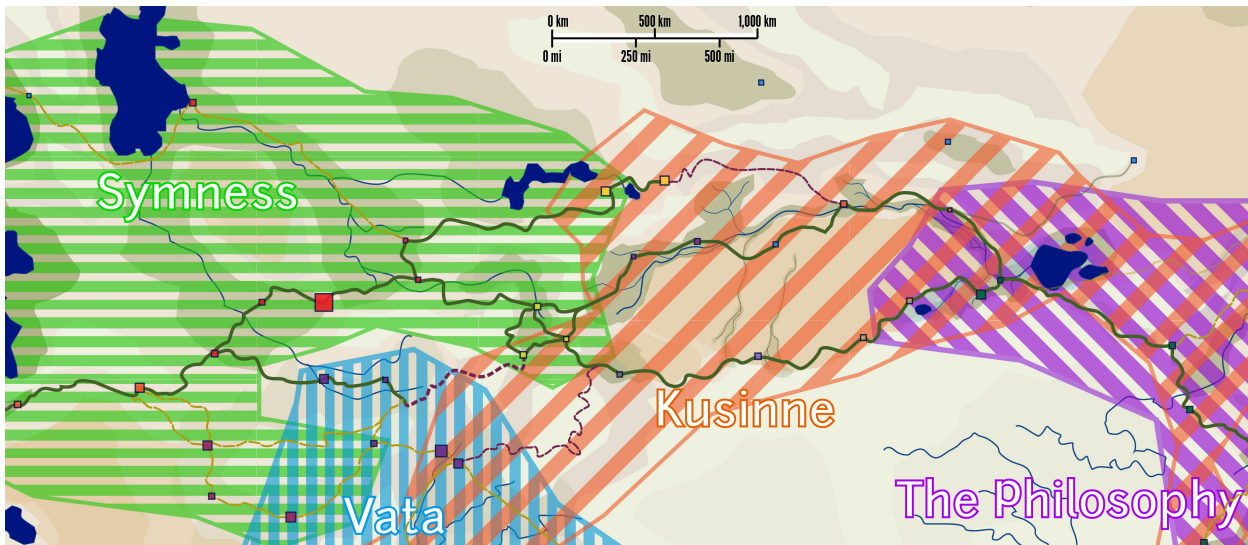


Figure 1.6: Religions of the Oasis Basin.

The Game Must be Played

My dear Zhang, is it really time for us to play this little game once again? I like to think that in another world we might have been friends, perhaps even brothers, but your continued pushing into lands that do not rightly belong to you have placed us at odds.

I hear my men whisper about the fearsome General of the Frontier, the only man that walks the earth who might match their beloved chief in martial skills. I hope that we might pass this season without us being forced to draw blades and fight each other. I have a much greater interest in the solitary caravans that wandering along the open roads, and little interest in the taking of lands.

I am sure that by now you have heard of the unruly Green Bannered soldiers of Lop Nur. I had wondered whether these poorly trained soldiers might have been a part of your little army. I would like to think they are not, for my scouts have reported that they fight against the desert, not with it. The brigands that roam the stretch of the Winter routes may have little honour but they know how to use the shifting sands to their advantage, those forces sworn to the protection of caravans seem unable to master their environments, and therefore unable to catch their enemies, acting only to deter attacks by their presence. My scouts have told me that several of the soldiers have been seen taken out their frustrations upon the caravans that they seek to protect. I shudder at the thought of what an organised chief might achieve against such unready opponents.

But I have digressed from my point. I write to remind you that the Spirit Mountains belong to me. Any attempts into these lands will be met with brutal and persistent resistance. My people know every pathway and vantage point, and will extract a heavy toll from your men. This is not a threat, rather it is a simple statement of fact. It is my dearest hope that we might leave peacefully, side by side. For the time being, I hope that we might keep our distance from each other.

I remain,

Ghayth

The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

Letters and Numbers

To the most learned Kanakk,

I hope that this missive finds you well. It has been sometime since we last met upon the roads, and it is my earnest wish that we might meet again someday soon. I always enjoyed our discussions on religion, although we may not see eye to eye, there is, as you have said, some universal truths that seem to connect the many different faiths.

Since our last meeting, my son Sayid has grown into a strong young man. He is a horseman without compare, and his mastery with the sword and the bow continue to develop in great leaps. It is clear that one day soon, he will be more than a match for me, and he will make a worthy heir.

Despite his prowess with the physical, it would be fair to say that he is a little slow when it comes to his letters and numbers, and while my people put little stock in such things, it is the duty of a chief to be knowledgeable in any skill that might aid his people. As such I would like to discuss with you the potential of you educating my heir. He is a smart boy, and I do not believe it will take him long to master writing, he already understands the basics of these things regardless. Perhaps you might also impart your wisdoms when it comes to philosophy an ethics, for a learned leader, is a great leader.

Should you desire to meet with us once more, we have settled in the ruins of a small town north of Yiwu. It is nothing special, many of the stone buildings have been torn down for supplies by other travellers, but there is a well here, and protection from the beating sun.

I remain,

Ghayth

The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

Creation of Debts

Jivaka Saca,

It is early in the season of Budding, and already merchants travel along the Summer routes, their caravans loaded with precious supplies. We have raided a few of their merchants, striking just before dawn and stealing anything of value. Where possible we have let the merchants live, leaving behind enough supplies for them to make it to the next town. Regardless of this, we have come across problems, most notably

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 07:22:08 EDT 2015

Subject: Letters and Numbers

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 07:53:45 EDT 2015

Subject: Creation of Debts

the towns people of Gushi, especially those to the North of Yiwu, seem to have an abundance of iron weapons of exceedingly high quality. They are however reluctant to do trade with my people, and therefore we are unable to procure such weaponry.

I will not insult your intelligence, or waste your time. I write with the humblest of requests that you enquire into the region and see if you can discover some outstanding debt that they townspeople owe. I hope that by you applying pressure to these individuals, I might capitalise and purchase the weapons from them.

On an unrelated point, may I enquire as to where you presently operate? I am sure that I could spare a few hundred men who would be able to bankrupt a couple of the local merchants, allowing you to approach them with a most reasonable offer.

I remain,

Ghayth

The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

Magi Feegle Yitaka to Merchant Selethen Varzakk

To the Esteemed Merchant Selethen Varsakk,

I hope the season finds you well. I have a need, and have been making inquiries around Dayuan; your name has been recommended to me as someone who might be able to help me.

In short, my adopted daughter wishes to travel from Suojo to Kucha, there to study at the Abbey. I, unfortunately, have a number of commitments in Dayuan, and am unable to accompany her. As I'm sure you can understand, I am loathe to send her alone on such a long journey, and so I am investigating other options for her safe travel.

To that end, if you have a caravan leaving Dayuan for Kucha this season, I would like for my daughter to accompany it. I will provide for her a wagon or palanquin, as appropriate for the terrain, and supplies as necessary - all I ask is the safety of a larger number of travelers that I hope your caravan might provide. I would also be willing to compensate you for your cooperation.

Regards,

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

From:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 08:26:08 EDT 2015

Subject: Magi Feegle Yitaka to Merchant
Selethen Varzakk

Re: The Game Must be Played

[[A scroll delivered by messenger to the foot of the Thousand Wind Valley. It carries both the seal of the Green Banner Army of the West and a signature, "The Wheat Scythe of the West". It is written in fine calligraphy]]

The Wolf is a noble beast in the snows of the mountains

But on the plains of the desert he is but a jackal
A Wolf on the peaks poets will speak of fondly
A Jackal on the plains is killed out of hand
This is the nature of things among dogs and men
Who can change it?

The Wolf howls in the north, and the Scythe reaps in the south
If each stays to their own direction harmony is found under heaven

"The Wheat Scythe of the West"

Re:Selethen Varzakk to Zhang Hans

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: The Honored Selethen Varzakk

Master Merchant: I hope that the new season finds you and your family in good health.

The spices you sent are magnificent. As I write this I am sampling a fine marsh duck marinated in wine and your spices, and my spirit is flowing with great vitality because of it.

Your gift is greatly appreciated. I am very desirous of purchasing a supply of fine quality Gushi weapons to re-arm my personal retinue.

I am not in need of great numbers of weapons, the Green Banner Army is well-supplied with sufficient quality infantry weapons.

But a supply of the famed "willow-leaf sabers" of Gushi, perhaps 200, would be greatly appreciated and draw a good price from the Green Banner Army's treasury! My daughter Aidaxia was overjoyed to hear that your daughter would be leading the caravan this year, and will make her welcome in Dukhan.

I have found a new storyteller, Lyimo [Lyimo, Storyteller] who I will be sure to have entertain your daughter at my home. You should let her know, as soon as possible, that the borders of Karashar may pose some difficulties. The bone-headed ruler of Karashar made the mistake of

From: Zhang Hans, Frontier General
To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord
Moderator
Date: Tue May 19 12:10:06 EDT 2015
Subject: Re: The Game Must be Played

From: Zhang Hans, Frontier General
To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
Moderator
Date: Tue May 19 12:49:11 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Selethen Varzakk to Zhang Hans

challenging Ghayth the Warlord in his redoubt in the Spirit Mountains, and his people have payed a heavy price, in blood and then in silver to pacify the Warlord.

They are watching all the borders like falcons, and will likely try to charge a heavy toll to passing caravans this year to replenish the coffers of Karashar. If you hunt the Wolf to his den, you had best be ready to be bitten. Please accept this small scene in carved chalcedony as a token of my esteem. The story of the monkey and the wild persimmon woman is one of my personal favorites.

In the name of the Emperor, the Lord of Ten Thousand Years

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

Re:Regular Purchase of Vegetables

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of the Vamto Clan of Gushi

Master Farmer:

I am sorry to hear of your troubles, but glad to hear of the produce you will be able to provide come the Season of Growing.

The soil of Gushi yields cabbage and celery fit for the soup of the twenty-eight Heavenly gourmands all that is needed is the ham-bone of the celestial pig

You may expect the first payment to arrive in the Season of Blooming.

Your son, Chiannin, is an exemplary young man, showing great reserve and sobriety. If only the merchants of Dukhan would do business as he does, forthright, honest, and interest in maximizing mutual profit, this servant of the Emperor's lot in life would be much more pleasant.

In the name of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

Œepulchral Œbelisks

An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XLV:

One of the markers of a tomb in the Oasis Kingdoms is the presence of obelisks, raised in honor of the deceased.

From:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 13:18:28 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Regular Purchase of Vegetables

From Yuan Sala, Physician to Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Jivaka Saca,

I hope that my assistant finds you well with this letter.

I have heard tell that you are wise with coin, and I must ask your advice on a matter of funds.

The next few months will find me traveling quite a bit between the lands, and I would feel much safer that my fortune was placed in land and rooms of residence than at my belt.

First I hope to secure rooms to practice my art in Kucha, next in Lop Nur. Do you perchance know the wisest places to find such rooms?

Please let me know if I can offer you any assistance in the way of medicine. And I would be much favored to hear tell of your local news.

May the Winds of Knowledge Ever Blow Your Way,

Yuan Sala

Physician

Fwd: Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

——— Forwarded message ———

From: Yuan Sala

Date: Tue, May 19, 2015 at 1:03 PM

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

To: Queen Shayn

Your Radiancy,

I will accept your most generous offer to reside at the palace, though I will require rooms in the city to practice medicine for the locals.

Two of your questions can be answered at once, as is often the case within the folds of knowledge. I believe Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge [Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge] can give Your Eminence an even better description of this poison than I could. What I do know is

From:

Yuan Sala, Physician

To:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 14:08:59 EDT 2015

Subject: From Yuan Sala, Physician to Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

From:

Yuan Sala, Physician

To:

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 14:10:02 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd: Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

that it requires many years of distilling and true mastery of the art of poison to create this flavorless liquid.

I anticipate my travels will be a few days hard ride over some desolate hills. My servant was born of this region and knows the travels well. I leave behind Dukhan is a time of cultural prosperity. There is more art being created there than anywhere else I have yet been, though mostly by the poorest of herders. It is quite remarkable. The main hardships of the city stem from the nearby salt marshes, causing a scarcity of many vegetables.

Please send any in need of medical advice my way. Soon I will present myself at your loveliest of throne rooms.

May the Winds of Knowledge Ever Blow Your Way,

Yuan Sala

Physician

May the Winds of Knowledge Ever Blow Your Way,

Yuan Sala

Physician

On Tue, May 19, 2015 at 10:28 AM, Queen Shayn wrote:

Honorable Physician Sala,

I have received your missive with deep gratitude. I had already suspected that the sudden death of my mother was not due to natural causes, and even if it grieves me to find this suspicion confirmed, I am relieved to find in you an expert who can give me sure knowledge.

Thank you for undertaking the journey to our beautiful Kucha. You are welcome to stay at the palace where I would gladly provide you adequate quarters, but if you prefer to reside in the city let me know what you need.

Whatever you can tell me about the devious poison that killed my mother would be most welcome. Who has knowledge of its manufacturing? How can it have been administered? How long does it need to take effect?

If I may ask you one more favor, should you encounter in your travels an individual called Feegle Yitaka or Magi of Knowledge, please let me know.

I also hope that you will be willing to tell me in detail about your travels and the situation in Dukhan.

May the heavenly lights watch over your journey. Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Queen Shayn

—— Forwarded message ——

From: Queen Shayn

Date: 2015-05-19 17:06 GMT+02:00

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] King Badal Parsu to Queen Shayn

To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Dear Badal,

may I still call you that? Of course I remember the time you spent here at my mother's court! The times that we lightheartedly played in the gardens and around the fountains of this palace, until the adults called us to order. My daughters were never able to hide from me in all of our estate when I really wanted to find them because you and me, we knew all the good hiding places back then. I feel a smile spread on my face just thinking of that time. It probably was that time with you that laid the groundwork in my soul of my doubt as to the inferiority of the male gender.

And I know that you and your father were very dear and very special to my mother. Never have I heard her talk about a man or a boy with as much affection and as much respect as when she talked about you or him.

It is interesting that you mention your father's death in the context of my mother's. I didn't see the connection before, but the suddenness of our Queen's death did immediately kindle suspicions in my heart and I have thought a lot on who would gain by her death. Just today I have had news from an expert physician that my mother may have been killed by a very rare poison of the Onion Mountains. My suspicions therefore naturally turn towards Symness influences from the West. The Symness fanatics have been trying to turn the Daiyuan Royal House against their Kusine people for quite a while and maybe they hope to be more successful if they manage to destabilise Daiyuan's firmly Kusine eastern neighbours. Or maybe they have been successful in persuading the old Queen to turn against everything Kusine. When she ordered the building of her pyramid a few years ago, I did not think much of it - after all, it is time for her to think of her afterlife, but now that we see the enormous dimensions of her monument, I start to be worried that it is more than that. Especially since after the avalanche that cut off Suojo for two months this winter and led to a shortage of grain there,

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 14:56:39 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Queen Shayn

we would have expected her to invest more in the defense against such incidents in the future.

Still, I cannot help myself but to look East as well, at that large power, slowly advancing toward us. There have recently been reports of troop movements in the Salt Marshes and I admit to certain a distrust as to their intentions.

Of course, Princess Parsbit is quite welcome in my house. It would be a pleasure and an honor to polish her education and widen her horizon. Also I can assure you that she will be safe here. My own daughters will without a doubt be very enthusiastic to find in her a new companion. Do I remember correctly, that she is of age between my daughters, Alya, who is fifteen and Lamia who has seen nine summers? When can we expect her?

Concerning this Feegle Yitaka, I will, of course, have my people look for him and should I find the thief or your heirlooms, I will immediately send them to you.

Be assured of my deepest sympathies and may Niya continue to flourish under your rule. Shayn

Fwd: Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

——— Forwarded message ———

From: Queen Shayn

Date: 2015-05-19 17:28 GMT+02:00

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

To: Yuan Sala

Honorable Physician Sala,

I have received your missive with deep gratitude. I had already suspected that the sudden death of my mother was not due to natural causes, and even if it grieves me to find this suspicion confirmed, I am relieved to find in you an expert who can give me sure knowledge.

Thank you for undertaking the journey to our beautiful Kucha. You are welcome to stay at the palace where I would gladly provide you adequate quarters, but if you prefer to reside in the city let me know what you need.

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Tue May 19 14:57:07 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd: Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most Delicate Matter

Whatever you can tell me about the devious poison that killed my mother would be most welcome. Who has knowledge of its manufacturing? How can it have been administered? How long does it need to take effect?

If I may ask you one more favor, should you encounter in your travels an individual called Feegle Yitaka or Magi of Knowledge, please let me know.

I also hope that you will be willing to tell me in detail about your travels and the situation in Dukhan.

May the heavenly lights watch over your journey. Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

Dear King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya,

I shall be on the lookout for this thief and shall inform my agents throughout the silk road of him and the item he wishes to sell. I assure you his credit is no good with my organization. I'm sure we'll be able to capture and recover the item or at the very least track him down for the king.

Are there any other services I can humbly offer the king? I perhaps need you help in another matter, but let me first prove I am a good servant to the throne.

Yours Truly,

Jivaka Saca

Re:Creation of Debts

Sir,

While I can apply pressure to those who already owe me money I feel that will not solve your problems in the long term. I propose having those who owe me pay in goods perhaps more than the actual loan so they can compensate me for the inconvenience of the matter. Then I will gladly trade them with you for a fair rate though operating in the black market has its own costs involved. Once those wells run dry I shall buy arms in bulk along with anything else you might need and take what you have in trade.

Also it goes without saying that you shall not raid any of my caravans. Think on it and let me know what you wish to do, and any other

From: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
Moderator
Date: Tue May 19 19:18:26 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

From: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord
Moderator
Date: Tue May 19 19:29:18 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Creation of Debts

business ideas you might have. Also I would inquire to the size of your force.

Jivaka Saca

Re:From Yuan Sala, Physician to Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Dear Wise Healer,

One can always use herbs to stay young and virile as one ages, so please put together a package or sage advice with your next assistant.

In Lop Nur you'll find a very prominent Inn with it's own compound including stables, rooms, etc... While I do not own it I'm one of it's largest clients. I have agents going in and out at all times. From messengers to buyers, and there are always guards there. Feel free to reference me with the owners and I'm sure they will provide the rooms you need for your practice. Also do you wish to travel with some of my people. It is always useful to have a good doctor on a long journey.

Be vigilant though I have heard rumors of bandits kidnapping healers and other skilled professionals so they may force them to work at their camps. Be on guard and always drink with friends. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Jivaka Saca

Aw:Magi Feegle Yitaka to Merchant Selethen Varzakk

Venerable Magi Feegle Yitaka,

The Adjudicators grant boons in abundance and one of them is the opportunity to help a fellow Dayuan, which I regard highly.

Alas, my caravan was sent very early this year and reached already Kucha. But, as the Adjudicators concluded in their infinite wisdom, there is an associate from Taxkorgan who should have started already his venture to Karashar and will shortly travel through Suojo. I'll recommend promptly your cause to him so that he can make room in his caravan for a palanquin. I trust his good sense of decency to charge only a minimal fee for the place in his retinue.

The Summer Route is strongly used at this time of the year and the safety on the road is high, so you won't have to make further concerns for the safety of your daughter as part of his caravan.

From: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
To: Yuan Sala, Physician
Moderator
Date: Tue May 19 19:36:50 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:From Yuan Sala, Physician to Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
Moderator
Date: Wed May 20 01:28:38 EDT 2015
Subject: Aw:Magi Feegle Yitaka to Merchant Selethen Varzakk

For your convenience, I added a small pouch of spices for two Kuchan recipes to give you and your daughter an impression of the Kuchan cuisine; it is the next Kingdom to our beloved Valley of paradise, but the changes in taste are remarkable.

May the Adjudicators grant your household everlasting joy

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Stolen!! Reward offered...



Re:your highness, may I request assistance?

Honourable Kanakk,

it is good that you have sent word to me. I deeply respect your intentions and your commitment and have no doubts whatsoever as to your devotion, but I am somewhat doubtful as to the prospect of success of your mission.

In the past few years, I have seen more and more indications that the Symness nobility and especially the Queen of Dayuan have distanced themselves more and more from their Kusine people and neighbours.

From: [Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha](#)
To: [Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk](#)
Moderator
Date: Wed May 20 05:08:23 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:your highness, may I request assistance?

Have you seen the enormous pyramid that the Queen is building despite the fact that the people of Suojo are still hungry after last winter's catastrophe?

Just recently I got news that my mother, the Queen Fadya al-Malika, was poisoned by a rare drug originating in the Onion Mountains.

So, forgive my misgivings concerning the potential success of your endeavour. Still, I will give you the funds you need to try to spread peace and truth in Dayuan. I do this because I applaud your dedication to the heavenly Lights that guide us all, but I also ask of you to keep me informed of everything that you might learn about my mother's murder.

As to the prospect of a war started by Kucha, be assured that I have seriously admonished those of my generals who thought to push me into a war and that I have no interest to bring unrest and death to the oases.

But, as you will surely understand, I will not stand Dayuan intrusion in my Kingdom and most certainly not overlook a royal murder.

If that makes you reluctant to report to me what you learn about my mother's death, please consider that my faithful Kusine people will not idly stand by Symness incursions in our land. So if Dayuan is planning to act against us, there is nothing I can do to prevent a war whether I find those responsible for my mother's death or not. Better to be able to negotiate a fitting punishment for those responsible for that despicable act - be they Dayuan or of another provenance - than to wait until the time for talk is over.

Do not misunderstand me, I am willing to defend my people, my land and my honour, but I will do what I can to prevent a war. And if you are willing to help me in these endeavours you can always count on my support.

May the heavenly Lights always shine on your path and keep you from harm.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

A Thriving Market

Extract from the diary of a noblewoman of Aksu:

Just as the flowers are budding, so too are the markets. When we visited them today, we could scarcely hear each other over the hubbub of the caravans. Many were there to purchase the frankincense from Kucnia, in addition to our own local goods...

Gratitude and payment

Greetings master Sala, you may not know me but some time ago you knew one of my subordinates. He claims to have been ambushed by no less than twelve assailants and to have taken down four before being left disembowelled on the sand. We doubt his story as we would any other told about camp when spirits are high but none dares disagree with the scar running across his stomach. I call on you now to express my gratitude for safeguarding my brother in arm's life. The gold piece my envoy gives you is a token of this appreciation.

Of course, a man in my line of work cannot afford to be excessively sentimental, and so I would like you to consider the coin a down payment for services rendered. The middle kingdom's advancing troops and unrest in Kucha make for interesting times, such times can be profitable for those as you and I. My men are hardened, even he who you sew back together has a certain alertness to him now: they cost more to replace than restore. With your consent I will send you pouch of silver at regular intervals, in return you will tend to whomever I send your way regardless of time and place. I trust that this arrangement is to your liking and if indeed so I look forward to an ongoing relationship.

Middle Kingdom Military Discipline

A Saying of General Wu Di:

"A soldier is a beast
He must be let out to feed at times
but a firm hand must be used
and if necessary, the sword"

A humble servant

Great ruler, I thank you for receiving a letter from one of such a lowly station: indeed, the fact that you now read a message penned by sell-sword truly speaks of your benevolence. It is in recognition of such that I seek to be of some small service.

No doubt you have heard that a certain jewelled dagger has gone missing, as a fortune hunter such information reaches me quickly, even some that might not have reached your majesty's ears. If we were to share insights and some small supplies I would gladly aid in the return of the dagger to its rightful owners.

Your humble servant.

From: [Upasena, Brigand Captain](#)
To: [Yuan Sala, Physician](#)
Moderator
Date: Wed May 20 16:18:34 EDT 2015
Subject: Gratitude and payment

From: [Upasena, Brigand Captain](#)
To: [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya](#)
Moderator
Date: Wed May 20 18:35:08 EDT 2015
Subject: A humble servant

to Upasena from Badal Parsu

Upasena,

While I am not in the habit of doing business with mercenaries I will make an exception in this instance. I can reward you for any information you may have regarding the whereabouts of that dagger, its recovery is worth a great deal to me personally. It was taken from the royal library of Niya, along with some sacred texts. The thief is a man named Feegle Yitaka.

As he knows I am searching for him, I would recommend trying to earn his confidence before mentioning your interest in the stolen goods. While I have no idea where he may be, I would suggest searching the Bazaars of Khotan; that city has been overrun by bandits and mercenaries since my father's pitiful surrender of the eastern territory seventeen years back. It is possible that by now he has already sold the stolen goods, in any event his head is also worth a small reward.

XXX

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

A story of two wolves

To King Badal,

I beg your indulgence for a short moment, allow me to tell you a story.

Long ago, when the world was young but the sky was old, there were two Wolves, each powerful beasts that had hunted amongst the stars in the sky, and both looking to lead their pack on the new world of the earth.

The first was the Winter Wolf, whose intelligence and cunning were beyond compare. The second, the Blood Wolf, a brutal beast whose size and strength allowed them to dominate the pack. The disagreement of these two wolves caused a schism, and the pack was torn in two. The Winter Wolf claimed the Spirit Mountains as his domain, while the Blood Wolf headed down into the Relinquished Desert.

The Winter Wolf hunted with care, there was no doubt that the wolf was deadly, but they hunted for what they needed. The Blood Wolf was greedy and led the pack in a never ending hunt! The pack of the Blood Wolf left nothing bones and dust in their wake and soon there was nothing left to eat. The pack of the Blood Wolf wasted and starved until only the Blood Wolf remained.

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 03:33:01 EDT 2015

Subject: A story of two wolves

The Blood Wolf eventually returned to the Winter Wolf and begged to re-join the pack. The Winter Wolf took pity on his fallen brother and allowed him to return to the fold. The Winter Wolf declared that the Relinquished Desert must remain unhunted to allow life to return there. Only when life had returned their could the hunt their continue.

So, Badal, life has returned to the desert.

We are coming.

The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

Kusinne Precepts

From The Precepts of the Kusinne Order:

"The Kusinne order believes that truth and love for one's fellows results from disciplining the mind and body."

Selethen Varzakk to Farscry Vamto

My exquisite busy friend,

Thou shalt surely rejoice to hear that your goods was sold at the beginning of the journey at a better price than we both had expected. A small part has already been brought to the customer in Kushan, most of the rest went almost completely gone in just one day in Wenli. The caravan has become relatively empty now, but do not worry, that will not be calculated because we were lucky enough to snag a sufficient minimum amount of goods in Kushan.

How you want to get the equivalent of your goods - shall I send a bill of exchange, do we make an appointment or would you like to follow my suggestion and invest in a commercial transaction? In any case, you will have knocked out a profit, my congratulations for that.

As I remember, your wife was very fond of the form of scarves my daughter wore; she succeeded succeeded in finding such a scarf in the color that should be the Splendor of thy house like particularly. I beg you, take it as a gift from my daughter to your wife.

I wish your place preferable weather and your family a merry laugh

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 11:03:11 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Farscry Vamto

Selethehn Varzakk to Liu Shui

Magnificent Friend,

My best wishes for your new construction project. If I can assist you with any measures, give me know. Your work must necessarily be seen in its real grandeur and size for the others so that they can appreciate it - and they will, if your project is sprung out of the paper.

My caravan is already on its way - I am confident that this year will be a particular success. I was able to completely sell my first charge and have reinvested in new merchandise. Are you interested in a certain amount Kuchan frankincense? I can reserve a part of it for you, but be aware, it is very high quality. In fact, the verdict of the Adjudicators was auspicious in such a way, that we succeeded through the last weeks with a yield I would have been content has it been the whole outcome of the last year. My intention of founding a trading post in the Oasis Kingdoms may have come a little bit nearer.

As you surely have recognized, I'm overjoyed of the success my Beloved Blossom of my household; her first year as sole caravan leader met with a great success. If you like and should have the time, I would be flattered to receive the honor of being a customer of your highly appreciated skill. I dream of a building as glorious as only you are capable of. But I should be modest, still the caravan hasn't come home.

She found a small quantity of vellum which she bought on the spot thinking of you. She remembers well your artificer's skill in drawing and sends her best wishes to you. Please do an old man a favor and accept the gift on behalf of my daughter.

May the ground always welcome your art

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethehn Varzakk

From: Selethehn Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 11:27:05 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethehn Varzakk to Liu Shui

Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: Selethen Varzakk, most honored merchant of Shule

Greetings once more, my dear friend! Your news brings great joy to my clan and I, as we have been struck by hardship this past season. A plague struck Yiwu, and we have lost several of our kinsmen to its predations. I am traveling on business, searching for fertile land for our clan's relocation.

You recall my son Chiannin; he is forwarding any correspondence to me during my travels, and manages the clan's affairs in my absence. The proceeds from the sale of our goods will be helpful in securing the purchase of such land. While this unfortunately means we will have little produce for your next trip through Gushi lands, this should result in greater bounties for future harvests; you have my assurance that your trade will benefit from any gains we make in the long-term more than sufficiently to make up for the short-term loss of one growing season of our crops.

I am told that my wife was overjoyed with your daughter's thoughtfulness! The gift is a treasure to us in such times of difficulty as we have had of late. I only hope that when next you travel through our lands, you and your family are free to stay for a time to reacquaint ourselves; we shall throw a feast befitting the bonds of our friendship!

May the thousand blessings of the her Fierce Majesty, the Queen Konuma, be upon you and your kin;

Farscry Vamto

A plea for aid

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: the Enlightened Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Greetings, most enlightened one! It is with sadness that I must impose upon you with this missive, as there has been much hardship in the city of Yiwu and the surrounds of late.

I humbly beg of you for any assistance you can provide in the curing of my youngest child. She has developed a severe cough this winter past, and all attempts by local physickers to remedy it have failed. The most eminent physician, Yuan Sala [Yuan Sala, Physician], has offered

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 12:06:34 EDT 2015

Subject: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 12:28:21 EDT 2015

Subject: A plea for aid

advice which has provided some small relief to my daughter. However, this has not reversed the course of whatever disease grips her. Sala recommended your expertise in the possible curing of her condition.

She is taken with a grim pallor, and when the coughing takes her most severely, her breathing afterward is labored and produces a frightful rattling sound from her chest.

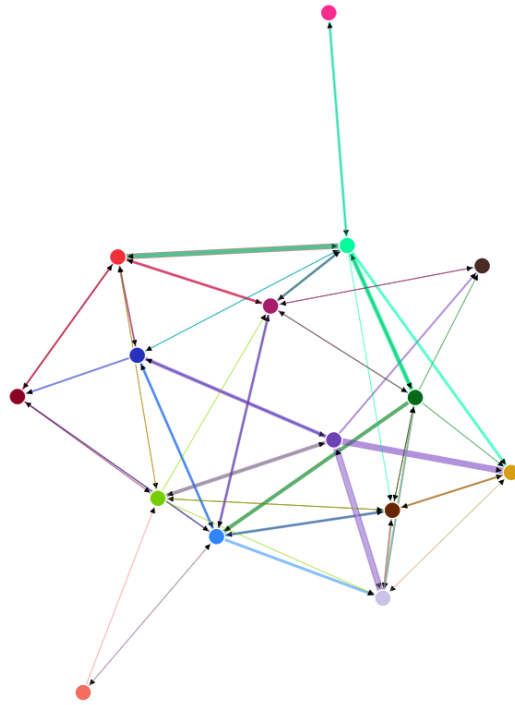
With the plague that has stricken Yiwu this past winter, the city's stocks of herbs and teas have been all but depleted. The shortage is so severe that the various heads of clans meet to discuss with the physickers whenever they have patients that may need the treatment; we can only spare such treatments in the greatest of need. Sadly the consensus has remained that while my daughter's condition is poor, the need is greater for the treatment of men and women of working age recovering from the plague, lest we leave the city with too few sturdy laborers to complete the work of the coming growing season.

I have little money to offer for your assistance, but will gladly offer whatever I can in barter for any help you can provide. As the sages say, "For health of a child, Father sacrifices all, the future they hold."

The blessings of her Fierce Majesty, Queen Konuma, upon your family,

Farscry Vamto

Cycle 1 Communication Web



Re:A plea for aid

From: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

To: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

You have my sincerest sympathies.

I have seen the effects of a sickness much like the one you describe, and I cannot imagine the heartbreak that must come with seeing one's own daughter suffering from them, much less to be told that she is not a priority in the treatment of the malady.

I am not well-versed in the knowledge of the physician; my expertise is in natural philosophy and more esoteric matters, and to be honest, I am not certain what help I can be to your daughter that Yuan Sala was not able to provide already. However, there are two ways that I may be able to help you.

First, I might suggest that you write to Selethen Varzakk, a merchant of Dayuan. [Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant] If Mistress Yuan has recommendations for treatments, but the problem you face is only their availability, then it is possible that he might be able to ensure the safe

From: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan
Moderator
Date: Thu May 21 13:37:23 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:A plea for aid

and swift delivery of the necessary materials before the next season. I do not know him well, but he seems a fair man, unlikely to prey upon your desperation. Depending on the rarity of the ingredients you need, it may cost you something of significance, and though I know little of such matters, I find it hard to believe that the head of such an eminent farming clan as Vamto of Gushi would not have access to goods that would interest the master of a merchant caravan.

As an alternative, however, I offer you the following from my own stock of knowledge. A book in my possession titled Ot Bitkileri offers the following advice for treating maladies such as you describe: You must collect a dozen large flowers of Heartleaf Oxeye by the light of the full moon. Boil them in vinegar until they lose their colour, then remove them from the broth. Add to this broth ten drops of blood from a freshly-slaughtered bull, and leave this mixture outside overnight in a vessel carved from sandstone. In the morning, have your daughter drink the liquid, while offering prayers to the Spirits of the Void.

I will warn you, though, that this latter method should only be considered if your desperation is truly great. I have not used this prescription before, but I have three times attempted to replicate recipes from Ot Bitkileri. While each time has resulted in the desired effect, it has come at a time of great personal cost or stress. As a pursuer of empirical knowledge, I am loathe to draw direct connections between the writings in this book and the personal tragedies that befell me, but the timing has proven very coincidental if such connections do not exist. I have found myself growing very superstitious when it comes to the use of the rituals found in its pages.

I wish you the very best of luck in dealing with the tragedy of your daughter's illness. If you do decide to pursue the treatment espoused in Ot Bitkileri, I would be most interested in hearing of the results of your workings.

Regards,

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk - addendum regarding trade

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: Selethen Varzakk, most honored merchant of Shule

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 14:14:54 EDT 2015

Subject: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk - addendum regarding trade

My apologies, but after sending my last missive to you, I realized that I my mind had been too preoccupied by personal matters to remember the final matter of import!

Supplies of healing teas and herbs have been all but depleted in the city of Yiwu, which has in part been responsible for the slow recovery from the plague. When next you return, you may wish to bring with you ample stocks of these goods for trade; it will be most welcome, and the city's merchants and physickers will not balk at paying a slight markup in gratitude for your efforts toward securing extra inventory.

I emphasize "slight", though; the city's gratitude will be tempered by the hardship and tensions that have arisen, and I would caution you to trade openly and not to curry favoritism through discounting the cost of these goods to a select few. I fear that the unrest of the city is on edge, and thus it would not take much perceived unfairness to make tempers flare!

May the thousand blessings of the her Fierce Majesty, the Queen Kon-uma, be upon you and your kin;

Farscry Vamto

A Gruesome Report

A report from an Officer of the Middle Kingdom, on escort duty for Middle Kingdom caravans travelling between the Imperial waystations in Lop Nur:

We followed up on the reports of missing travelers. A few days journey north of Miran, three towers of blue marble still stand in the desert, casting shadows over ruins. Whatever hunts there was gone when we arrived, leaving behind gnawed bones stripped of flesh. We buried them and did not linger.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Liu Shui, Engineer

Greetings, estimable Liu Shui,

I write in part to thank you again for your work in arranging the drainage for the Grand Abbey of Kusinne in Kucina. While several of our outbuildings suffered during the thunderstorms of late summer, the main Abbey shrugged off the water as off a duck's back, channeling the flow through the gardens and the excess safely to a flood channel. Our cisterns start this year's sunny months full, and none shall miss

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Thu May 21 20:08:12 EDT 2015

Subject: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

baths this year. The hidden postern tunnel which you constructed stayed safely dry during the storms, though I suspect one of my nuns – Nabylah, from the tiny footprints in the dust – has been making use of it without my leave.

If you have been in Aksu of late, I would welcome hearing any gossip. As our late Queen created her domain through the annexation of Aksu, the city's sentiments would speak toward the health of Kucha as a whole. My messenger Daryush reports that all are observing mourning in proper form for our late Queen Fadya, which assuages some doubt, but Daryush is a simple and trusting sort, apt to see the best intentions in all.

I would welcome your visit at any time you travel to Kucina.

With deep regard,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Queen Konuma to Magi Feegle Yitaka

Salutations, Magi Feegle Yitaka!

I wondered if you understood that unintended consequences of your actions regarding the late King of Niya. Perhaps I should have written to you when my unobserved observers brought me information about his ire, but... As you know, I rarely interfere with the handiwork of Magi.

For now, I have heard little that makes me suspect that anyone has come through my lands seeking for you. I have other concerns for my realm, and may miss information you need.

I may see if Aegidiusea, my daughter, would be interested in making this part of her training. She is coming into the age where our laws expect princesses to show they have the wisdom and subtlety to rule, if needed.

Be healthy and wise,

Queen Konuma, Lioness of Lop Nur

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

Warm Regards to Those of goodwill

Greetings to you, Farscry and to the Vamto clan of Gushi!

Yes, I have several reports that the leaders of the city of Yiwu. Few of them are good reports. You will be wise to leave the area while the investigation continues and justice is returned according to our laws.

Move quickly.

Queen Konuma, Lioness of Lop Nur

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

From: Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur
To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
Moderator
Date: Fri May 22 00:54:59 EDT 2015
Subject: Queen Konuma to Magi Feegle Yitaka

From: Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur
To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan
Moderator
Date: Fri May 22 01:17:36 EDT 2015
Subject: Warm Regards to Those of goodwill



Figure 2.1: The region near Yiwu

The Ways of Kusine

An excerpt from the letter of young scholar, writing to distant maternal relatives:

My mother is in good health and sends her greetings. I am diligently pursuing my studies at the Grand Abbey, where I am receiving instruction in the fourfold practices of Kusine: The Path of the Well, listening to the inner voice; The Path of the Hearth: the way of right living, The Path of the Road, and The Path of the Book. I am also instructed in the manufacture of ink, and the making of paper. . .

Horse Romads in the Oasis Basin



Figure 2.2: Yiwu, looking west

An excerpt from Ban Zhao's Histories of the Western Hinterlands:

Though usually returning to their pastures in the steppes, the horse nomads were nevertheless a common sight in the Oasis Basin. In the Budding of 115, a travelling artist wrote an account of the hospitality she received when she was overtaken by a band of nomads near Yiwu.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

Wolf Fangs

My dearest friend Selethen,

As I am sure you have already been informed by the beautiful young lady that you sent, the deal was completed with little incidents of note. Now that we are freshly armed and the season of Blossoming is upon us, the Grand Hunt can begin proper.

Thanks to your weapons, my rider were able to launch an lightning strike on the town of Seferihisar, little more than a glorified farmstead north of Yiwu, we slaughtered their animals and stole what food we could carry before we struck fire to their stores! That will teach the Gushi peasants for withholding their trade from the might Wolf of the Spirit Mountains.

We have moved further along the roads, down towards Anxi and the salt lakes that litter the areas. Already we have raided caravans along the trail and have taken ourselves a great deal of samphire, indeed it seems

From: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord
 To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
 Moderator
 Date: Fri May 22 07:40:23 EDT 2015
 Subject: Wolf Fangs

that the salted earth seems to allow these farmers to produce these crop in great quantities. I hear they use it to craft jewels of glass, and the caravans we have taken seem to confirm this.

My scouts have warned that a great many Wolf Fangs have been spotted in the Relinquished Desert. They report seeing the guards of the Winter Route, with their verdant banners, burying bones near these black stones. These monuments to the Black Wolf are an ill-omen. I had planned to head into the Relinquished Desert as the Blood Wolf had done while the world was young, but for the time being we will avoid where the Black Wolf's Fangs stand as warnings to travelers. Tell your guardsmen to take care when travelling near these totems.

I thank you for the sweets and spices. In return I send you a necklace made by my first wife, Amarah. It is a simple necklace, made of the signets rings of the caravan masters we have raided. I also include a feather from my favorite falcon, I hope it will bring you luck.

I remain,

Ghayth

The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

Superstition in Guchi



From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

As the plague continued, the citizens of Yiwu drew up a complaint against certain foreigners, peasants, and unclean persons; decrying them for their unnatural behavior and accusing them of bringing down the wrath of Iriko demons.

Re: A story of two wolves

Honorable Ghayth,

Wolves feed on the weak and the sick, but turn tail and run when they sense strength. Do not confuse me with my father; Niya is no longer ruled by a timid, half mad, fool. My grandfather once ruled over all the cities of the south road and it is my intention that my heir will receive an even larger kingdom still. The walls of Kiya have never been breached by barbarians and the archers of Kiya are second to none. I have no fear of wolves.

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

A letter from Miran

From Miran Cache #25: An extract from a letter to a merchant in Suojo, from her agent in Lop Nur:

I persist in my efforts to purchase the grain that we need. While the soldiers of the Green Banner Army of the West only provide escorts for the caravans of the Middle Kingdom, guards are readily available

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Fri May 22 17:43:54 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:A story of two wolves

for hire here. Though there is much fear of bandits, do not concern yourself. The locals are much more experienced when dealing with the desert, and more reliable. We shall be safe in our travels.



to **Ityimo** from **King Badal Parsu**

Learned Teacher Lyimo,

I seek knowledge regarding the legends of the Oasis Road and I am told that you are most knowledgeable. When I was a child my grandfather spoke to me of a black gemstone that when held to ones' eye, allowed one to see through the eyes of their most dangerous enemy.

For much of my life I believed the story of the black gem to be but a child's fantasy; I often collected large black pebbles and pretended that I could see through my twin brothers eyes. However, in my seventeenth year, when my grandfather was near passing to the heavens he spoke again of the stone and told me to not let my father or brother know of it. I was young and thought little of my grandfather's advice at the time, but over the course of my pathetic Father's Reign and as I witnessed the progressive decline of our once great empire, my belief in the stone (as the source of my grandfather's great success in battle and politics) has grown. So I ask you this, have you ever heard of such a stone, is there any truth to this legend, or does it only dwell in the dreams of young scions and dying kings?

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

From: **King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya**
To: **Lyimo, Storyteller**
Moderator
Date: Fri May 22 18:30:07 EDT 2015
Subject: to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

Tribute

General Zhang Hans,

I offer due and proper courtesy along with that tribute my kingdom owes your lord's. You can see that I am providing they agreed upon tribute in gold, grain, salt, and silk. Just between us, I am also providing 20 male slaves. They are indeed, worthless troublemakers, but... Perhaps they will provide you and your army some diversion. They are from a nondescript town that provided haven for some of those thieves who have been harassing your caravans and mind. They have broken the laws of Lop Nor and the Middle Kingdom. Use them as you will. Then, when the time to renegotiate the amount of my tribute... Perhaps you will be willing to support my request to lower the exact amounts. Still, that is for another day.

—

Queen Konuma, Lioness of Lop Nur

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

Re: To Live Forever

Mighty Ghayth,

I, Lyimo, am but a humble teller of tales. Some of them are true, and some not. I would be pleased to recite for you and any number of your wives some of those tales at Kuchia. Fear not, I shall offer to others tales of the Wolf of the Spirit Mountains, some true, some not. As for your son, perhaps the truest lesson in humility is being absent from these tales. I would not wish to speak ill of a child to his father, but others among the horse-tribes seem to regard the son of Ghayth as a pale shadow of his father. But he is young yet, and as is no doubt the way of your people, he must do great deeds to earn respect that does not borrow from the name of Ghayth.

It would be a great joy and honour to meet you at the time of the coronation in Kuchia. I would hope I could take the opportunity to learn some of the legends—aside from those of the Wolf of the Spirit Mountains—that are told by your people. I take it we are both relative strangers to Kuchia and you likely have heard as little as I about the former monarch's sudden death. We will then offer the new Queen what distractions we may at the festival.

With great regard,

From: Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Fri May 22 21:47:50 EDT 2015

Subject: Tribute

From: Lyimo, Storyteller

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Fri May 22 23:22:51 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: To Live Forever

**Re:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Lyimo, Storyteller:
An-Kuan and Aksu**

Abbess Nafisah,

Storyteller Lyimo greets you with humility and awe. I of course remember you as you are and were then an important person, and praise fell easily from the lips of the people concerning your gentleness and wisdom as the new abbess. For one in your position to remember a lowly spinner of stories is humbling and speaks to your ability to see the great and the small with the same eyes. I have had cause to speak with a number of Aksun merchants and pilgrims, and they regarded Queen Fadya with a grudging respect, admitting that her rule had improved their overall lot.

If anything untoward lurks in the matter of Queen Fadya's unfortunate demise, it may be that it was birthed much closer to home. The very idea does not bear thinking on for too long. My realm is that of story, the more fabulous and fantastical, the better. This is not to say that I deal only in epic falsehoods. I would very much like to learn the legends surrounding Kusunne. What wonders and rare treasures your library must contain! You are correct in your surmise about the story of An-Kuan, and I would be honoured to relate it to you again at the festival of arts surrounding the coronation in Kucha.

The Snow Leopard was no creature, but a man, that being the name of a famed bandit who had been imprisoned along with An-Kuan in the mountain fastness of a despotic warlord. His name and the reason he hated pilgrims such as An-Kuan are forgotten. You may remember from the tale that the Sister of Snows caused a heavy blizzard to fill the tiger pit in which An-Kuan and the Snow Leopard were trapped. This story refers to the actions of a clever laundress, who was related to the Snow Leopard and fond of An-Kuan for the kindnesses he had shown the bandit. She had sewn together an enormous heap of sheets, and found cause to set the pile of sheets near a wall. The two men climbed the pile of snowy cloth, hauled it over the wall, and used its gathered bulk to break their fall as they jumped from the prison. It is said that An-Kuan saw no obstacle as insurmountable after that escape, and walked a Road seen only by him, or which he felt beneath his feet, following it with such straightness that he was known to climb walls or houses to stay upon his path.

I very much look forward to our meeting again, and would be honoured if I might be allowed to spend some time in the abbey's library.

From:

Lyimo, Storyteller

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sat May 23 00:04:36 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
to Lyimo, Storyteller: An-Kuan and
Aksu

Humbly, Storyteller Lyimo

The Puissant Knowledges of Liu Shui

Lyimo, Storyteller of Suojo, offers you greetings and wishes that you and your family are well. It may seem odd that I should seek the counsel of one who holds the power of knowledge of figuring and constructing, as I am by profession more concerned with taking the measure of the person holding the measuring-stick. What have I to say to the builder of great bridges and waterworks? Well, I am a common sort of person, and as with any commoner am concerned more with small things. Things such as the fabled Copper Birds of Fan Zher. I am given to understand that you, who have according to rumour constructed a padlock no person can pick, are trying to recreate something like these flying sculptures. Your feats are doubtless worthy of telling as a legendary story. Will you be attending the coronation of the new queen in Kucha? If so, I should very much like to see some of your creations, if you are able to bring some, and learn from you the stories of cunning devices of far-away places that engineers tell to one another. If some important project or other keeps you from Kucha at that time, I will seek your permission to visit you at a time of your choosing.

Humbly,

Lyimo

Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

Your Majesty, it is the honour of lowly Storyteller Lyimo to offer you the following tale:

There once was a viper who was set upon by an assassin. He survived, but with a deep cut that caused him to move awkwardly forevermore. The viper sought shelter in an underground nest. Vipers do not trust one another—and they are wise not to—but the vipers there were angered by one of their number being attacked. The viper was escorted to the Lord of the Underworld, who made him an offer: if he sacrificed one of his eyes, he could have a magic black opal in its place. The opal showed him what passed before the eyes of the enemy who sent an assassin after him. It was another viper, one with a nest deep within a palace. The viper with the opal eye watched to divine his enemy's location. He finally felt sure of his enemy's general whereabouts, and now makes his painful, awkward way up and down the Summer Road, seeking to find himself appear before the eyes of his nemesis.

I am ever your humble servant, Lyimo

From: Lyimo, Storyteller
To: Liu Shui, Engineer
Moderator
Date: Sat May 23 00:34:40 EDT 2015
Subject: The Puissant Knowledges of Liu Shui

From: Lyimo, Storyteller
To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
Moderator
Date: Sat May 23 02:15:48 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

**Re: Yuan Sala, Physician to Queen Shayn of Kucha,
a Most Delicate Matter**

Esteemed Physician Yuan Sala,

with great enjoyment have I read your letter. I welcome your intention to treat the people of my city and will put anything you might need at your disposal.

Thank you for the means of contacting Feegle Yitaka, which I will certainly do. Please do tell me more about him, though, before I contact him. I have never heard the title of Magi of Knowledge before. What does it mean? Do you trust him? How do you know him?

Also, it would give me great joy if you would tell me more of your travels and especially of Dukhan. How can it be that poor herders are creating such wealth of art as you told me about? What does this art look like? How do the wealthy take to it? Please tell me as well about the military situation in Dukhan. There are many reports of troop movements, but I am unclear as to their intentions.

May the heavenly lights always shine on your path and keep you safe. I am looking forward to meeting you soon.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Yuan Sala, Physician

Moderator

Date: Sat May 23 03:20:34 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: Yuan Sala, Physician to
Queen Shayn of Kucha, a Most
Delicate Matter

Romads Rear Anxi

From a report by a company leader in the Green Banner Army of the West:

As ordered, we have patrolled the northern front, dealing with the complaints of missing caravans. We spotted several bands of horse-riding nomads, but did not engage them, as we were on foot. We have seen signs that there is a larger group, but for now we have retreated to the watchtower at the lake.

The refugees report that the raiding nomads destroyed Seferihisar, a small town north of Yiwu, though the details are confused and I suspect them of exaggerating to play on our sympathies. Surely no nomads would be so bold as to challenge the Middle Kingdom again.

Medicine in Guchi

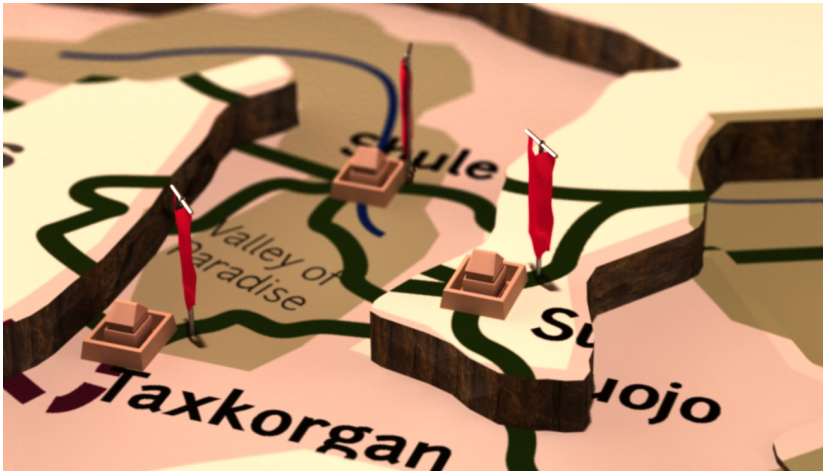
From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

In that month there appeared before the council of Yiwu a traveller, one Pilka, who declared that her learning had shown her that the pestilence was not the work of Iriko demons and instructed the people of the city in a treatment for the disease.

Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

An opal? Are you certain that it is an opal? This is important Lyimo, I must know!

A Revival of Symness in Dayuan



An excerpt from Ban Zhao's Histories of the Western Hinterlands:

In the distant land of Dayuan, the construction of a pyramid and tomb complex had the effect of significantly reinforcing the local practices of the Symness religion. As is so common in these uncivilized hinterlands, the neighboring peoples reacted with unease...

Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

Majesty, I am sorry to cause doubt or confusion about the opal. The stone in this story was indeed an opal.

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Sat May 23 12:13:47 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

From:

Lyimo, Storyteller

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Sat May 23 15:45:20 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

Re:Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

To: Feegle Yitaka, Thief and fugitive

I have now had time to do a full accounting of the items stolen from the Royal Library of Kiya. In addition to the books, there are a number of other objects missing that you failed to mention in your previous letter. These were heirlooms of my grandfather and I demand that you return them. I will not stop searching until the objects, along with your head, sit at my feet. If you return them quickly I will consider granting you a pardon for your transgressions.

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

General Hansi,

My soldiers have apprehended and executed eighteen bandits who were ambushing caravans along the south road, west of Miran. They were using the Cavernous Mountains as a hideout and base for their operations. My son and his soldiers questioned the bandits and even offered them some “incentives” to provide information about their operations, but none (not one) of the bandits was forthcoming with information. The extreme discipline demonstrated by the bandits made my son suspicious of their authenticity, and when he searched the surrounding mountains his suspicions were proven to be justified. He discovered a cave containing the uniforms, weapons, and regalia of eighteen soldiers of the Western Green Banner. Eighteen bandits, eighteen soldier’s equipment. . . a coincidence? I think not. . . While I am not suggesting that you are responsible for the actions of these rogues, it is clear that you do not have control of your own troupes. Once again I demand that you withdraw your patrols from the south road. From this day forward any soldiers of the Western Green Banner found within the territories of Kiya and Lop Nur will be apprehended and tried as bandits and unlawful mercenaries under the laws of Niya, transgressions that are punishable by execution.

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Kiya

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
Moderator
Date: Sun May 24 10:29:28 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General
Moderator
Date: Sun May 24 10:56:10 EDT 2015
Subject: Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

Introduction From a Friend

Greetings Brother Kanakk

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha, and a fellow traveller of the Four Paths. We have not met, but it is my hope that I can assist you in your travels and your Divine work. The seasons have been kind to me, my mines are producing quality ores and I have completed a masterful commission for a notable patron. It is only just that I use my fortune to assist those who nobly promote the Paths.

The scent of cherry blossoms drifts pleasantly into my study and undoubtedly you will be travelling the Great Road once again. Should you find yourself in Aksu I would be most pleased to share my home with you.

I leave you with my high regards and bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

Introduction and Your Commission

Greetings King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

I, Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha, write with good news. The wrought window screens for your palace at Niya are completed and they have surpassed even my expectations. Truly, your Majesty, they are my greatest work and will be a worthy addition for your home.

I work to hire a team to deliver them. It is difficult, likely a result of the banditry in the east. If any of your subjects or merchants are passing Aksu I would be happy to hire them to return with your magnificent commissions.

I remain grateful and anxious for you to see your new ironwork.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Poison!

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

At that time it became publically known that the death of the previous queen of Kucha was due to a poison made from the hairs of the goats of the Onion Mountains. The situation in the western parts of the kingdom was rumored to be tense...

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk
Moderator

Date: Sun May 24 12:44:00 EDT 2015

Subject: Introduction From a Friend

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
Moderator

Date: Sun May 24 12:45:12 EDT 2015

Subject: Introduction and Your Commission



Re:To Queen Konuma from King Badal Parsu

Queen Konuma,

It has come to my attention that at least some of the bandits who have preyed on the the honest merchants and travelers within our territories are Soldiers of the Green Banner. My son and his men have captured, interrogated, and executed eighteen of General Hansi's men. They have been using the Cavernous Mountains as a base for their operations and my son recovered their uniforms, weapons, and other imperial paraphernalia from their hideout. I have instructed General Hansi that his patrol's are no longer permitted within the borders of Niya. I suggest you do likewise.

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya.

to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

Queen Shayn,

Princess Parsbit tells me that she arrived safely and was received by your honour guard in most regal fashion. I am greatly appreciative of the respect and hospitality that you are extending to her, it is not something to which she was accustomed under the rule of my father. In response to the concerns you raise in your previous letter, I too am concerned by the threats to the Kusine people, from both East and West. The news of the return of northern barbarians adds further to my worries; though I will admit some pleasure in imagining the difficulties they are no doubt causing General Hansi and his Emperor. Hansi is such a fool to believe he could take a warlord's daughter as his concubine without

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Moderator

Date: Sun May 24 16:05:35 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:To Queen Konuma from King Badal Parsu

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sun May 24 16:23:55 EDT 2015

Subject: to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

repercussions. The arrogance of the Green Banner knows no limits. Have you any news to share about “my thief”? I suspect any hope of recovering my lost heirlooms is lost by now, nonetheless...

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Shortages in Suojo



From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

That year, Suojo was suffering from a particularly acute shortage of grain and a disruption of their trade routes due to avalanches. As the days grew warmer, the people of the city began to turn to their traditional practices in the hopes that this would make a difference...

Re:Introduction and Your Commission

Jivamitra,

I was not expecting any window screens for the palace; another extravagant final request of my half-mad father I imagine. War is steeping to our east and treachery lurks in the west, I have no time for decadent home renovations. Nonetheless, I will pay whatever price my father agreed to; though spare me the shipping expenses and keep the screens, perhaps you can build yourself a home in which they will fit. But as you are an honest Ironmaster of Aksu perhaps you can be of some assistance to me. My grandfather once told me that in his day the finest blades in all of Oasis Road were forged in Aksu. He believed it was because the iron ore in the Empyrian Mountains was the blackest in all the world. Is this your understanding as well? And if true, why are the blades of Aksu today mocked by soldiers throughout the Oasis road? Has the fine ore

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/suojo/>

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

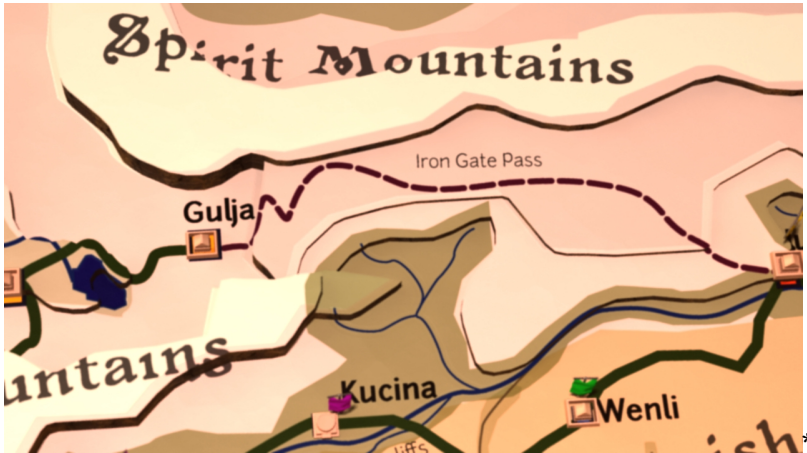
Date: Mon May 25 02:09:26 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Introduction and Your Commission

been depleted or are the rumors true, that the Old Queen of Kucha had been shipping it to the Middle Kingdom?

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya.

Karashar Pays Tribute



From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

Karashar, beset by nomadic tribes from the Spirit Mountains, sent a caravan bearing tribute, in hopes that the horse nomads would leave them in peace.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/karashar/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/spirit-mountains/>

Magi Feegle Yitaka to Queen Komuna of Lop Nur

Your majesty,

I appreciate Your Majesty's attention to this matter, and your discretion in handling it personally. The responsibilities of a Queen are many and varied, and Your Majesty's has been very generous in affording me a personal response.

Shortly after Your Majesty's last correspondence reached me, I also received a further mail from King Barsal Pardu of Niya. It seems that he has discovered the absence of several artifacts of his ancestors, and seems to be blaming me for their disappearance! While it is true that I am technically guilty of theft, having spirited away a crate of rare volumes that His father ordered destroyed, I certainly did not remove any artifacts from His residence. None that I am aware of, at least.

Regardless of the truth of the matter, it seems that there can be no rapprochement betwixt the royals of Niya and I. I have protested my innocence in this matter, but it seems that only the sudden appearance

From: [Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge](#)
To: [Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur](#)
Moderator
Date: Mon May 25 13:28:37 EDT 2015
Subject: Magi Feegle Yitaka to Queen Komuna of Lop Nur

of my head - forcibly removed from my body first - at his feet will satisfy this mad tyrant.

If Your Majesty sees value in Aegidusea looking into pursuers that might pass through Lop Nur, I would be greatly indebted to her for her efforts. I am but a humble vessel of knowledge, but if there is anything that I can do to repay Her efforts, I would be very happy to do so.

Regards,

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge, to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Your Grace,

It is with great appreciation that I write this letter to thank you for your advice and recommendations. They were a great success! I have made contact with members of the Kusine here in Suojo, and they have been the source of many promising leads in the region for students who might become students of my school. It seems that the noble families of Suojo have a number of children, and are only too willing for the younger ones, who stand not to inherit property or titles, to enter into an institution that might find them a useful purpose. I have three students at present, and I am hoping that this will only serve as a beginning. I may have a procure larger premises sooner than I had anticipated.

On that note, I also find myself with something of a logistical problem. I have a crate of rare volumes and records that I would like to reproduce, lest something happen to the original. I have the skill in writing and am able to teach my students how to copy and reproduce the manuscripts, but I lack the ability to create paper and bind books together. I understand that your Abbey houses some of the best facilities and faculty for teaching these skills. Is there someone who would be willing, and available, to travel to Suojo to teach my students these skills? I fear that without them, I will have nothing but stacks of paper bundled loosely together, and this will not do for preserving the knowledge within their pages.

I do feel important in mentioning that I was a little surprised with the tone of some of the teachings of the Suojo sect of Kusine. I am far from being a scholar on the subject, but as I recall from my time in Kucha, the Four Paths were of equal importance to the Spirit. Here, they teach that the Path of the Book is of the highest order, and the

From:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Mon May 25 14:01:34 EDT 2015

Subject: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge, to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

other three Paths are and should be subordinate to it. Have I misunderstood some of the precepts of Kusine? Is this a regional variation on the teachings?

Shortly after your last letter arrived, Sugnumae embarked with a caravan for Kucha. The owner of the caravan seemed to be trustworthy, and the caravan was laden with items of no small value, so I trust it will be well-defended. I understand that brigands have been active along the Shule-Aksu road, and I hope that she will arrive safely to your care. If you would be so kind as to advise of her safe arrival, it would ease the worry in my heart.

Warmest regards,

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Mourning in Aksu



From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

In those days, the people of Aksu dressed in mourning for their queen, attiring themselves as is proper for the Kusine rites. They prepared olibanum branches for the procession, and set aside their differences as they united in one accord for the solemn commemoration.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/aksu/>

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Great General Zhang

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha, descended from a long line of ironwrights. Preeminent in my craft. A humble Servant of Kucha.

I hope this missive finds you well. It is wonderful to smell the blossoms again. I know the changing of seasons will bring new troubles for you, but with change comes opportunity.

It is because of change I write to you. It has come to my attention that there is confusion regarding the old Ironmaster of Asku's mark and my own. Be assured my wares do not suffer the defects of those which bear the sparrow mark of the former Ironmaster of Aksu; a man who offered low prices and little else. Trust my lantern sigil. It represents uncompromising craftsmanship and quality of material. It represents the Ironmaster of Kucha.

General, know that I seek to enhance my methods continually and that my processes, superior, intensive, and second to none, can create exceptional quality goods.

May our peoples know peace and prosperity.

Respectfully,

Jivamitra of Kucha

From the Museum of the Oasis Kingdoms

Catalog item #148: lacquered scroll storage box, Middle Kingdom manufacture, decorated with the symbol of a Spirit Mountain wolf in the Xiongnu style of the horse nomads. Originally discovered in the excavation of a well.

Re:Re: Death of our Queen, Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

Your Holiness,

please receive my deepest gratitude for your instructions for my mother's funeral and for your help in sending me the expert physician Yuan Sala. Queen Fadya's funeral was a very dignified and touching ceremony. The honorable Yuan Sala has been of great help and has

From: **Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha**
To: **Zhang Hans, Frontier General**
Moderator
Date: Mon May 25 23:26:27 EDT 2015
Subject: I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From: **Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha**
To: **Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha**
Moderator
Date: Tue May 26 03:45:51 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Re: Death of our Queen, Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

unfortunately confirmed my fears about my mother's death. She has apparently been murdered by a rare poison from the Onion Mountains.

My generals have immediately pushed for retribution against Dayuan, but as you have well put it in your last letter, my mother has taught me well and I will not be manipulated onto a dark path, neither by my neighbours nor by my advisors.

If you have any more contacts in the West or other means to find out more about the forces and the intentions behind my mother's vicious murder, please try to find out more. I will always treasure your help and your advice and you can rest assured that I value truth no less than did my mother.

As for my support of your excellent work for the minds and souls of our people, there is nothing more dear to my heart. It may be a little while before I have funds enough to help you in major project's as my mother did, but I am determined to rival her accomplishments in this domain and will of course carry on her regular support so that you can continue without interruption your care for our heritage and our people.

Although I am aware that in my position mine is the Way of the Hearth - which I embrace with all my heart - please indulge me and tell me more about the Way of the Book that my teachers have always been rather vague about.

With deepest respect and gratitude Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

Re:Loan

Honorable Jivaka Saca,

thank you for your kind words about my mother.

I am glad to hear that you will be coming to Kucina. I look forward to meeting you and getting to know you. Businnes is much better done face to face.

As for your concerns to the security of your loan, let me describe to you my palace in Kucina that you will hopefully soon see for yourself. The golden tops of it's white marble spires tower above the whole city. It's walls are covered in artfully painted tiles and framed by exquisite stone lace. The garden's surrounding the palace are always green and filled with waterworks and a thousand fragrant flowers. At night, the gardens are illuminated by colorful lanterns and swarms of fireflies. Inside the palace, the walls are adorned with crystal inlays and hung with sumptuous woven carpets. The floors are precious mosaics and the

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 04:51:44 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Loan

furniture is made of velvet and dark wood from the Spirit Mountains. What more might you need as collateral?

In Kucha, men do not inherit, but they are intitled to what they have earned. Also, many travelers come through our oases and we always are respectful of their customs and traditions as long as they treat ours the same way. Kucina and Aksu have wonderful bustling marketplaces and a long tradition as trading places. I am sure you will find whatever you are looking for in exchange for the goods that you will be bringing.

If you have the possibility, please do bring salt. It is very rare in my lands and will surely yield great profit for you.

Concerning your knowledge of a lost treasure horde, I am interested to hear more and discuss a mutually profitable agreement to help you recover it.

May the heavenly lights shine on your path and guard your soul.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

A letter from Wenli



<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/anxi/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/wenli/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/gushikingdom/>

From Miran Cache #25: An excerpt from a letter to someone in Anxi:

Unlike the rumors one hears about Dayuan, Wenli is quite well supplied at present: caravans from the farmlands of southern Gushi have been arriving, and all the city is quite taken with their comparatively exotic fruits and quaint manufacture. The local markets are bustling with purchasers. And unlike Yiwu, we do not lack medications.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

However, we do not have a ready supply of samphire, and consequently our glasswork suffers for it. If you could arrange for a shipment of the samphire that grows so plentifully near Anxi, I'm sure I could find a suitable purchaser...

Greetings to the Queen of Lop Nur

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Greetings Queen Konuma.

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha. It is my sincere hope that this letter reaches you swiftly and finds you well and that peace is one of your many blessings in Lop Nur. As the seasons change our lives become ever busier in Kucha, and it is refreshing to see the trade of the road

Firstly I write to assure you that the iron goods of Kucha remain of utmost quality, being superior in all ways to those of the late Ironmaster of Aksu. The mark of the lantern is my sign, and goods marked with it are unparalleled.

Secondly I am become aware of the disruptions near your domains and, though not a ruler of peoples, I would do what I can to assist you in maintaining the stability of your region. I have personal stakes in the winter Road's security and feel an additional obligation to my southern brethren. I would be honoured to be of assistance to the mighty Queen of Lop Nur in those ways I may be.

Lastly I seek information regarding members of the Kusinne religion, I would very much like to engage them in dialogue; and contact with any merchants who may carry Kuchan goods throughout the Oases.

I bow to the Divine within you, honoured Queen,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

A Short Story

Dearest Upasena,

My people have a story of two wolves. The first wolf hunted in the mountains and was cautious. This wolf hunted only for what he needed, and around him the world thrived, and this wolf was always well fed.

The second wolf hunted the plains and desert. This wolf was greedy and taken by bloodlust. He killed all that he found and around him the world withered and soon this wolf was starved and close to death.

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 14:41:07 EDT 2015

Subject: Greetings to the Queen of Lop Nur

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Upasena, Brigand Captain

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 15:28:40 EDT 2015

Subject: A Short Story

My question for you, Upasena, is which of these wolves are you?

Have you encountered the so called Wheat Scythe of the West? The General of the Frontier seeks to rid the world of those who hunt the roads. Perhaps there may be opportunity for an alliance between us.

I remain,

Ghayth

Wolf of the Spirit Mountain

Re:Tribute

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: Her Majesty Queen Konuma of Lopa Nur

On behalf of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years** I accept your annual tribute. All is in accordance with treaty provisions, and I have just sent the Emperor a message expressing my admiration for your Majesty's fidelity to past agreements and if your enlightened reign in your own Kingdom.

The Lioness prowls She looks over her young with fondness and tender care the desert antelopes flee from her gaze Who can match the Lioness?

The 20 slaves you provided were, in my opinion, of some potential value, and I have sent them with my message to the Emperor, who will likely make eunuchs of them in his court.

I would wish to consult with you on another matter. His Majesty, Badal Parsu of Niya, has raised some objections to the presence of Green Banner troops escorting caravans along the Oasis Road. Now, as the season changes fewer caravans will be travelling along this road in favor of the Summer Road, but I intend to follow my orders and continue the escorts. This may lead to some difficulties, and those difficulties may only be resolvable through the application of force. If necessary, I will send a regiment with each caravan, to ensure both discipline and no interference from Niya.

So if in the weeks to come, you will likely notice an increase in the numbers of escorts on each caravan. Rest assured that these increases are directed at dealing with the issue of the Niya, and have no bearing on Lopa Nur. In the name of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**

From:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

To:

Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 15:44:13 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Tribute

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General



Figure 2.3: Map of the Middle Kingdom

Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: His Majesty King Badal Parsu of Niya

Your majesty, I am disturbed to hear of this report of banditry. Assuming you are correct in your facts, and these were not bandits before who had stolen from my own soldiers, this is indeed a grave breach of discipline. I thank you for reporting it to me. Clearly, greater discipline is required among the caravan escorts sent through Niya. In order to achieve this, I am sending a regiment of 1500 troops on the next escorting duty. They are leaving today will arrive at the border of Niya in the fullness of time. I will expect free passage for the caravan along the Oasis Road. Once the caravan is safely on the other side of Niya, the troops will return to Dukhan through Niya. In this way, the security of Niya will be assured, and also I can continue to execute the duties given me by the Emperor. The commander I am sending with is quite good at maintaining discipline.

Also, your report raises a great concern in my mind. I know that Niya is highly dependent upon regular salt shipments from Lopa Nur and Dukhan, as your capital city has no local salt supplies of any utility. I am concerned that bandits, deserters from the Green Banner or otherwise, may cause this flow to be disrupted. Therefore, I am sending two regiments of troops, 3000 in total, to watch the traffic between Lopa Nur and Niya. All salt shipments will be carefully monitored. Hopefully there will be no cause to stop these shipments for their own safety; that would cause great disruption in the lives of the citizens of Niya.

Should for some reason your Majesty decide to deny entry of the caravan with its escort, or should you choose to interfere with them in any way, that would be your choice, of course. You are King of Niya and you must do what you see fit. But I will inform you that the next caravan escort after that one will be under my personal command, and it will be consist of the Green Banner Army of the West.

I leave you with this one further thought, expressed so wisely by the philosopher Yang Jiechi...

“A wise man will not swat the flies on the back of the sleeping tiger”

In the name of [The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years](#)

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

From: [Zhang Hans, Frontier General](#)

To: [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya](#)

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 16:11:33 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan To: Jivamatra, Ironmaster of Kucha Honored Master: I appreciate your letter, and your desire to keep me well informed. I will ask my friend Selethen Varzakk, a merchant of Dayuan [Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant], to inspect your wares on my behalf on his next visit to Kucha. Should he find the lantern to represent the quality you attest to, you can rest assured that I will remember you for future orders. I have attached some details as to his whereabouts so that you may contact to him arrange this inspection.

In the name of [The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years](#)

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

Opportunity in Kucha? Also, state of affairs along the Summer Route

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan

To: The Honored Selethen Varzakk Master Merchant:

The Ironmaster of Kucha, Jivamatra [Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha] has sent word to me of what he says is an appreciable increase in quality to wares compared to the Ironmaster of Aksu. I have no idea if this is desperate advertising in response to the recent conquest of Aksu, or if this is truth. I have told him you would inspect his wares, will you do so for me? There may be an opportunity in it for you as well.

Which brings me to my real request. What in the name of the 89 Celestial Eunuchs is going on along the Summer Route? Reports I have received indicate the whole region is in turmoil. It seems Aksu has been captured, by whom? Nomads are reported throughout the land of Gushi, are they Ghayth's or some other tribe? Yiwu is beset by disease, but it seems there is a treatment?

Any reports you can give me of the truth along the Summer Route, instead of this haze of innuendo and rumour that is before my eyes, would be appreciated my friend.

In the name of [The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years](#)

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General

From: [Zhang Hans, Frontier General](#)
To: [Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha](#)
Moderator
Date: Tue May 26 16:24:29 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From: [Zhang Hans, Frontier General](#)
To: [Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant](#)
Moderator
Date: Tue May 26 16:45:47 EDT 2015
Subject: Opportunity in Kucha? Also, state of affairs along the Summer Route

Re:Honor and Respect - And also Bandits

[[Out of Character - curse it, hit send by accident, please ignore earlier contentless message]]

From: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army of the West at the Fortress of Dukhan To: Queen Shayn of Kucha

In the name of the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom, whose reign is Ten Thousand Years, I send my deepest condolences on the death of your mother, the great Queen Fadya whose name will be long remembered.

But I also send my honor, respect, and congratulations to you, the new Queen of Kucha. I have every hope that Kucha will thrive and prosper under your leadership.

I understand that there has been conflict in Kucha of late, and that the territorial integrity of your nation has been violated at Aksu. This may be a painful tale to relate, but I wish to see all of the Oasis Kingdoms in good health, fully capable of trade, because this is to the great profit, both literally and figuratively, of the Middle Kingdom. Therefore, I am desirous of further details of your situation, so that if there is any assistance I may be capable of providing I may provide it.

On a different matter, I have reports of greatly increased bandit activity in Gushi and northwards. I do not believe these nomads are of the same tribe as Ghayth, as I have it on some authority he remains in his redoubt in the Spirit Mountains, taking tribute from Karashar. I am sending 2000 horsemen, who I am recalling from the south, and 3000 other troops to attempt to drive these nomads back into the Wild Hill Country and away from the road from Anxi to Yiwu. But with reports of great pestilence in Yiwu I am concerned that Gushi is unable to protect the Summer Route. Both of our nations profit from this trade; do you have any further information on events in that area?

Again, my congratulations to you on your coronation. I am certain that the crown of the mother will rest well on the head of the daughter.

In the name of [The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years](#)

Zhang Hansi, Western Green Banner General From: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

From: [Zhang Hans, Frontier General](#)

To: [Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha](#)

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 17:03:08 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Honor and Respect - And also Bandits

RE: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge, to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Esteemed Feegle,

With gladness, I have received Sugnumae. She has a room above the courtyard garden and may stay as long as she wishes. I am impressed by her beauty and poise. I have offered to make introductions for her into the society of Kucina, but she pleads that she wishes peace. Though she has not merely sought seclusion. She has been reading and writing and helping with the chores of the Abbey, and when I see her at work, I see a quiet joy on her face. She has made a number of interesting observations about our new drainage system. And I suspect that one of our nuns – Nabylah, naughty girl – has been showing Sugnumae the crypts and the hidden postern tunnel. Perhaps she has been up to more than she has said!

Along with this letter, I enclose Sugnumae's response to you.

Upon the matter of writings, you and I may indeed have complimentary problems in the nature of books and copying.

The Grand Abbey in Kucina has a number of copyists following the Path of the Book. With the support of the late Queen Fadya, our scriptorium and library were expanded, and we have caught up the the work required to maintain copies of the precepts of Kusine. Indeed, we have discovered that our accounts of the deeds of the prophets and revelators of the Paths of Kusine has numerous gaps. I am eager to supplement our devotional library with authentic material from the early days, which I hope may be found in other lands where the prophets travelled and dwelt.

The storyteller Lyimo has given me a novel interpretation of the story of An-Kuan and the Snow Leopard, telling me that it is an allegorical tale of the meeting of the early Kusine pilgrim An-Kuan with a bandit leader of the southern mountains, and how they both escaped captivity together. It may indeed shed light upon the travails of the earliest who walked our Paths.

While we inquire of our friends and associates within the Paths of Kusine and without, seeking those texts of early inspiration, our scribes could be well employed in copying other manuscripts, or, as you say, in sharing the practical arts in the Path of the Book with sincere students of transcription. There are subtle arts in choosing the thread, of sewing the bundles, and binding the stacks of bundles into a covered

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 20:32:28 EDT 2015

Subject: RE: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge, to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

codex worthy of a fine library and sturdy enough to last in the centuries.

In the traditions of Kucina, the Paths of the Hearth, the Road, the Well and the Book are all honored. It may serve us well to send a party of pilgrims to Suojo to learn the special honours that Suojo places on the Path of the Book. If it is indeed so, the Suojo houses of Kusine may be a source of the stories and teachings which we find in our sadness to be fragmentary.

When I walked the Path of the Road through Suojo, I sat up a night with a tent full of scholars disputing the meaning of a passage and quoting exegeses at one another. I confess I fell asleep halfway through the evening, since the passage was familiar and plain to me, and the disputation seemed specious. But one or two scholars seemed touched by wisdom in their interpretations, so I doubt not that the Way of the Book is truly alive in Suojo.

I would be pleased to grant hospitality for a party of your students to learn the useful arts of the Path of the Book. I shall make a gift to each of them of the Little Book of Kusine. The proverbs may amuse them, whether or not they take any of the Paths to heart.

I send this letter in the care of my monk Daryush, accompanied from his visit to Aksu by Sister Cittern, well-regarded for her voice as well as her wisdom. I have enclosed a letter of introduction from myself for Daryush and Cittern to those devoted to the Paths of Kusine in Suojo. I would appreciate it if you could provide a personal introduction to your contacts in the Way of the Book of Suojo, as we earnestly seek the stories of those early times which we know only in fragments. Perhaps those of Suojo may hold these stories, and perhaps they may point the way to deeper knowledge.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Light of Kusine

Rafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn: Feegle in Dayuan

Your Majesty,

I am in correspondence with the scholar Feegle Yitaka, who abides in Dayuan below the Onion Mountains. Though I scarcely suspect he knows any matter of plots, he may know something of the practices and preparations of the herbalists of Dayuan, who would presumably know of the local herbs such as the one indicated in your mother's death.

You may find Feegle Yitaka at [Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge].

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue May 26 20:48:42 EDT 2015

Subject: Nafisah of Kucha to Queen
Shayn: Feegle in Dayuan

I have aided Feegle in establishing a school of students among the children of the well-to-do of Dayuan; second and third children appear to have the freedom to study things other than the most prescribed professions required of the eldest. I have been pleased to receive Feegle's cherished Sugnumae as a guest, to rest and study at the Abbey for a period of time. She has grown to be poised and beautiful as well as talented, and I was honored to be charged with her early education when Feegle needed Sugnumae to be looked after.

With your mother's sponsorship of our library and scriptorium, we have been glad to fill out our copies of the wisdom of Kusunne, but dismayed to find out that our library is incomplete, missing significant early stories which are referred to in later works, but absent from our collection.

Thus I have also sent two of the Abbey's people – Sister Cittern, known for her song and for her wisdom; and Brother Daryush, strong and straight of purpose – to Suojo, with the hope that Feegle will introduce them to the scholars of Kusunne who are more deeply learned in the Path of the Book and can assist us in supplementing the fragments of the earliest prophets and revelations of Kusunne. Daryush reported to me that the citizens of Aksu observe all mourning rites properly, and I have heard elsewhere that Aksu seems satisfied with the increase of trade and prosperity from being part of Kucha. So it seems from all indications that my fear of Aksu restlessness is groundless, and may it indeed be true.

In the light of Kusunne,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha.

Unrest in Yiwu

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

The magistrate of Yiwu sat before the people and pronounced judgement upon those who falsely accused their neighbors of hoarding the hill herbs, and upon those who maintained supply of medicinal tea in secret, and upon those who overcharged the ill, and upon those who falsely advertised a cure for the plague, and upon those who adulterated the tea with samphire. Then she pronounced this judgement: "Upon the liars, let their tongues be scalded with saltwater. Upon the misers, a caning. Upon the greedy, a double caning. Upon the charlatans, exile. Upon the adulterators, death. These are the ways of our ancestors."

A Distant Glimpse

Excerpt from the writings of Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombast of Rûm (circ. 1650):

Ott Bitkileri: Volume of mystic secrets, rumored to have the secrets of the distant sages inscribed in a language spoken by angels and wild beasts. The Wheel of Fortune governs those whose understanding is coagulated within the crucible of its insight.

Excerpt from The Blackstone Dungeon Master's Guide (1976):

Ott Bitkileri: Ott Bitkileri (3rd level cleric) is clad in a black robe with glowing runes. (AC 1, C 3, 16hp, #AT 1, D 2-7 (staff) ML 10). His spells are: **cause misfortune** (force player to reroll die) and **cause light wounds** (inflicts 2-7 points of damage). He carries a potion of **cure disease**.

Fwd: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge to Liu Shui, Engineer

//Forgot to ensure you were CC'd

———— Forwarded message ————

From: Liu Shui, Engineer

Date: Wed, May 27, 2015 at 1:39 PM

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge to Liu Shui, Engineer

To: Magi Feegle Yitaka

Honorable Magi,

My name is Long Huo, student of 劉師父 (Master Liu) of Nancheng. I write to you at the behest of my master, who's present situation prevents him from contacting you directly himself. However, my master is delighted by your requests and wishes for me to express his great interest in your project. He request that you forward to him, through myself, a description or map of your intended building location, an estimated number of students and faculty and any other special requests you may have (i.e. housing for students, gardens, fortifications, etc.). Upon receipt of the aforementioned information, my master will begin work on the design for your new facility. If all goes according to plan, my master will be able to meet with you in person to discuss the project within the

From:

Liu Shui, Engineer

To:

Moderator

Date: Wed May 27 17:11:11 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd:Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge to Liu Shui, Engineer

coming months. Until then, I request that you forward any messages for my master to myself.

Regards,

龍火 (Long Huo)

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

On Mon, May 25, 2015 at 1:14 PM, Magi Feegle Yitaka wrote:

Esteemed Liu Shui,

I am in need of an engineer's expertise for a project, and you have come highly recommended. I have founded a school in Suojo dedicated to the study of the heavens, and the preservation of rare knowledge, and thanks to some kind recommendations from people of import, have found little difficulty in accumulating students. In fact, the number of students is quickly threatening to overwhelm the modest facilities that I have procured for the purpose.

I have also managed to acquire a parcel of land on the outskirts of Suojo, upon which to build a facility expressly designed for the purpose. Normally, I would imagine that such a project would not be of interest to you, but I hope that my plans might intrigue you enough to engage your curiosity: I wish to ensure that the stars may be properly studied from this location - hence its situation outside of the city and away from the bustle. I intend to include an observatory on the roof of the building, complete with those mathematical instruments known to us that allow us to track the paths of the stars day after day.

I have sufficient resources to pay for the design and construction; I hope that you will assent to being involved with the planning. I would welcome the chance to correspond with you further if you require more information.

Respectfully,

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Fwd:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

//Forgot to ensure you were CC'd

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

———— Forwarded message ————

From: Liu Shui, Engineer

Date: Wed, May 27, 2015 at 4:09 PM

From:

Liu Shui, Engineer

To:

Moderator

Date: Wed May 27 17:11:42 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui,
Engineer: On Drainage

To: Nafisah Of Kucha

Greetings Abbess Nafisah of Kucha,

My name is Long Huo, student of 劉師父 (Master Liu) of Nancheng. I write you at the behest of my Master, who's current status in Middle Kingdom prevents him contacting you directly himself. He regrets to inform you that he has been unable to travel outside of the Middle Kingdom much of late. Until recently he was toiling away in Chang'an, working on constructing a Grand Imperial Menagerie, commissioned by His Imperial Majesty to celebrate his eldest daughter's coming marriage.

On that note, on the behalf of my Master, I request asylum in your Abbey until the storm blows over. If you are unaware, there was... an incident during the final weeks of the construction of the Menagerie which has left my Master fleeing the Middle Kingdom. If this is acceptable to you, please respond with haste. As of last month, my Master is traveling on foot along the Summer route by way of Yiwu. I hope the turmoil there does not hinder his passage.

Regards,

龍火 (Long Huo)

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

On Thu, May 21, 2015 at 7:08 PM, Nafisah Of Kucha wrote:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Liu Shui, Engineer

Greetings, estimable Liu Shui,

I write in part to thank you again for your work in arranging the drainage for the Grand Abbey of Kusunne in Kucina. While several of our outbuildings suffered during the thunderstorms of late summer, the main Abbey shrugged off the water as off a duck's back, channeling the flow through the gardens and the excess safely to a flood channel. Our cisterns start this year's sunny months full, and none shall miss baths this year. The hidden postern tunnel which you constructed stayed safely dry during the storms, though I suspect one of my nuns – Nabylah, from the tiny footprints in the dust – has been making use of it without my leave.

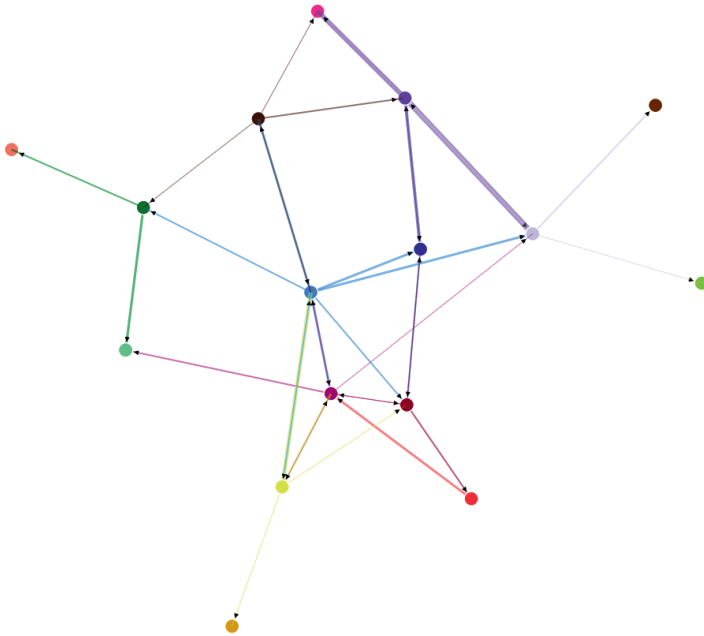
If you have been in Aksu of late, I would welcome hearing any gossip. As our late Queen created her domain through the annexation of Aksu, the city's sentiments would speak toward the health of Kucha as a whole. My messenger Daryush reports that all are observing mourning in proper form for our late Queen Fadya, which assuages some doubt, but Daryush is a simple and trusting sort, apt to see the best intentions in all.

I would welcome your visit at any time you travel to Kucina.

With deep regard,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Cycle 2 Communication Web



Black Stone Monuments in the Desert

An excerpt from Ban Zhao's Histories of the Western Hinterlands:

As one travels across the desert, one may encounter a black standing stone. Some stand alone, some are grouped with others. There are many to be found in the desert north of Lop Nur. When asked, the people of that place say they do not remember who placed them there. Truly, the hinterlands are a quaint and curious place!

From:

Liu Shui, Engineer

To:

Moderator

Date: Wed May 27 23:46:19 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd:Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

This wasn't CC'd when it was sent to me, so I'm forwarding it on to you as a precaution.

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

——— Forwarded message ———

From: Nafisah Of Kucha

Date: Wed, May 27, 2015 at 8:21 PM

Subject: RE: [Tower of Callisto] Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: On Drainage

To: Liu Shui, Engineer

Long Huo,

Please pass along my renewed invitation to Master Liu to guest with me at the Grand Abbey.

I include with this missive letters of passage which will speed his travels and yours within the domain of Kucha. As far as Gushi and Karashar, I send commendations to the sister houses of Kusinne in Yiwu, Jushi, and Wenli to offer you hospitality upon the road. The house of Kusinne in Yiwu will undoubtedly have recommendations for Master Liu as to the safest means of passage, whether as a pilgrim or a caravan passenger. They know the Way of the Road well. In addition, here find a small sum of money for travel expenses for your master and yourself.

I enclose a suggestion to the house of Kusinne in Yiwu to clothe Master Liu as a traveling pilgrim in the Way of the Road and the Way of the Book. If it pleases the sister houses, perhaps they may pass along a copy of older material, of which the Grand Abbey is deficient, particularly tales of the Pilgrim An-Kuan or the Pilgrim Badar, early exponents the Ways of Kusinne.

If it should pass that you are unable to rejoin Master Liu, you would be welcome to travel to the Grand Abbey to maintain your master's work for their more perfect function and endurance. The garden pavilion occupied by Master Liu Shui during his work at the Abbey is unoccupied. I shall direct that it be cleaned, aired, and made ready for his residence.

With best hopes for your master's health and safe passage,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha at the Grand Abbey of Kusinne in Kucina

P.S. to Long Huo: My aide Nabylah informs me that your name could be read as "Fire Dragon". Is this your parents' gift, or have you taken it with purpose and intention?

Logistics

Excerpt from the Reports of the Western Armies at Dukhan, Blossoming 115:

Received: Shipment of vegetables. Paid on delivery.

Received: One contingent of slaves, condemned under the laws of Lop Nur for harboring thieves and brigands in their village. Marked as tribute.

Received: Iron weapons, for purposes of inspection. Lantern markings.

Received: Salt. Local source. Paid with credit.

Conflict Brews Near Anxi

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

In the season of Blossoming, nomads from the north terrorized the country around Anxi, skirmishing with patrols marching under the green banners of the Western Armies of the Middle Kingdom.

A mounted regiment, previously stationed south of Dukhan, travelled northward, together with other troops, five thousand in all, to deal with the nomad incursion.

The people of Anxi hid behind their walls, wondering what would influence the outcome of this conflict. . .

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan
To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General
Moderator
Date: Thu May 28 15:44:10 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Regular Purchase of Vegetables

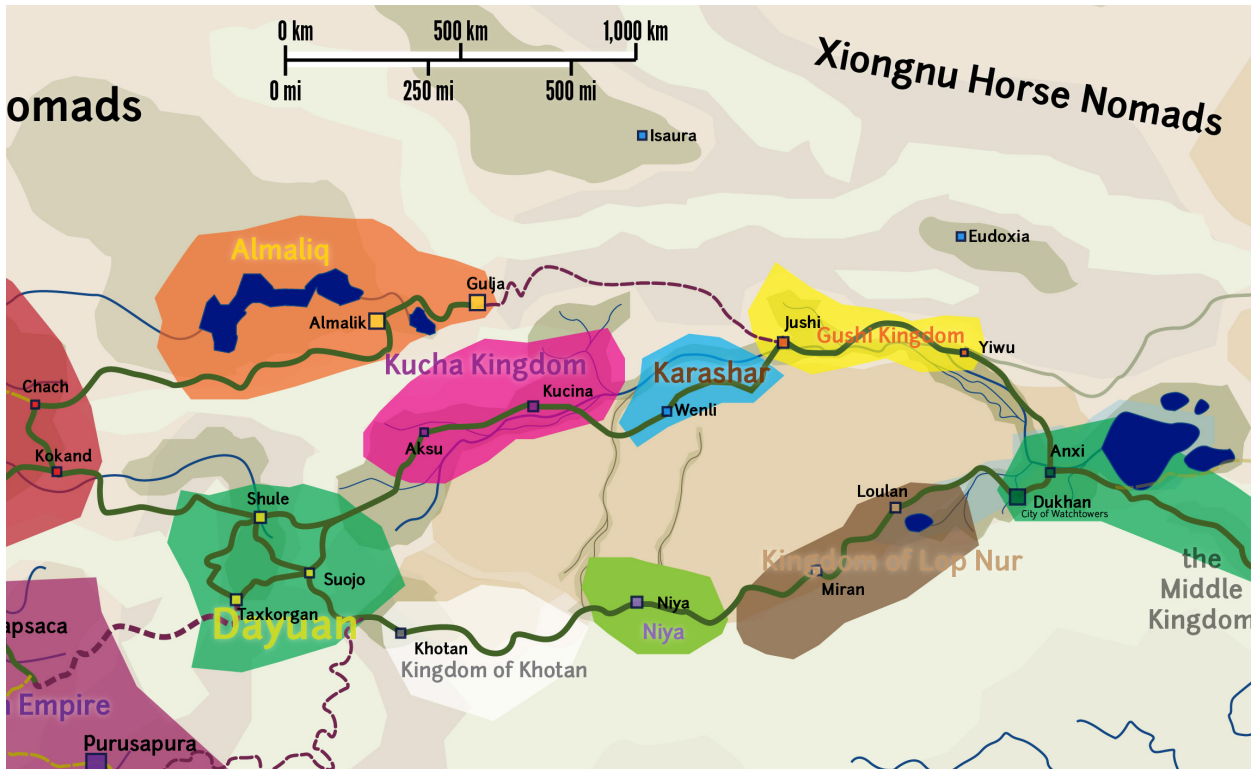


Figure 2.4: Map of the Oasis Basin.

Re: Regular Purchase of Vegetables

From: Farscry Vamto, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: His Eminence General Zhang Hansi

Greetings and well wishes, Eminence!

I am resting briefly in the grand city of Jushi after my long journey from Yiwu; my gratitude to your soldiers for the security they have brought upon travelers on the road! In my travels I came across a small town that expressed their openness to my clan settling in their lands. It is the town of Chayi, at the confluence of the Gushi River and the Jushi tributary. There is excellent land there for farming, far more than they and my clan could possibly farm together for generations to come.

I will begin my return journey to Yiwu at the end of this week, and start preparations for my clan to move after the harvest of our current crops. This should result in as little interruption of our trade with you as possible; by the next growing season after we have settled, we expect to be able to start providing the requested twenty cartloads per week. After your quartermaster confirms that the produce is satisfactory, we can establish the prices at the original settlement. We will maintain the

discounted rate until then.

Chiannin has relayed his appreciation for how respectful your officers are, and even your regular troops show remarkable discipline and propriety. Our lands are in good hands so long as you and the men you have in command continue to lead!

My eternal respect, General.

In the service of her grace, the Queen Konuma,

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

ꜜalt

From the Miran Cache #25, a message to a salt merchant in Anxi, dated to the Blossoming of 115:

There is great demand for salt across the basin! In Kucina they run short, in Aksu they pay any price, in Niya they beg me to sell them more. We must take advantage of this opportunity. But take care as you send the next caravan: not only are there bandits on the roads, but regiments of soldiers. Archers of Niya, Green Banner soldiers of the Middle Kingdom: I fear a clash may happen soon.

ꜞnd of Plague in Yiwu

News told around the caravans' campfires:

Thanks to the efforts of Plika, disciple of the Middle Kingdom physician Yuan Sala, the plague in Yiwu is all but over. The aftermath of the plague may take longer to recover from: the population was reduced not only by the many deaths, but also by the exile of many outsiders and former citizens.

ꜞ:Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

Your Majesty,

I must protest my innocence once more with the reasoning of good intentions. The crate of books I removed from Your Majesty's father's palace lest they be destroyed and their knowledge lost forever. Further to this, I took nothing more than a small iron needle, a rough sandstone carving of one of the Thousand Gods of the east, and an ebony scroll case containing a few motes of dust and nothing more.

Surely these cannot be the heirlooms of which Your Majesty writes? They are worthless to anyone without a copy of Yangtze's Five

[http://callisto.isaackarth.com/
2015/05/23/medicine-in-guchi/](http://callisto.isaackarth.com/2015/05/23/medicine-in-guchi/)
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

From: [Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge](#)
To: [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya](#)
Moderator
Date: Thu May 28 20:46:57 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

Elements of the Spirit, the only known copy of which was among the volumes Your Majesty's father ordered destroyed. In fact, they might even be considered dangerous without the proper preparations, wards, and precautions.

Regardless, I have them no longer. If Your Majesty is predisposed to be unreasonable, then send your assassins; if I am killed, then you will never know of their current whereabouts.

Feegle Yitaka

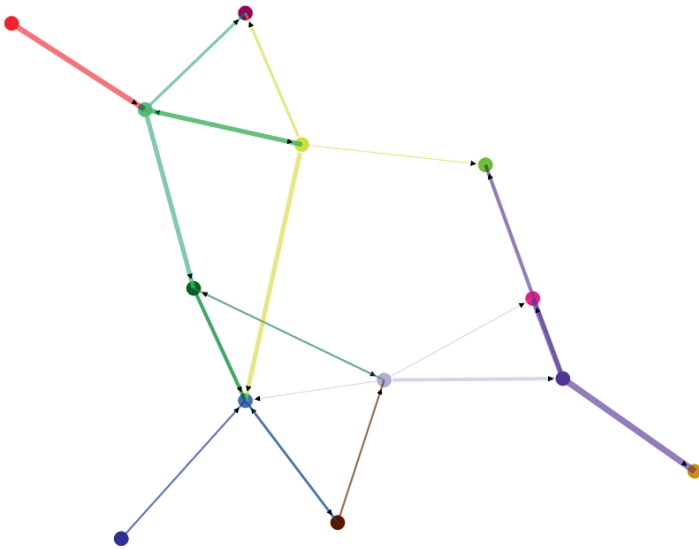
3

Cycle: *Year 115, Season of Growing*

As the hot summer sun dries out the desert, the caravans travel in dust and thirst. Oases along the Winter Route shrink, and guides who claim to know the locations of secret springs command a high price.

Bright spears and marching lines are sighted along the roads, passing by the farmers who work in their fields and await the harvest.

This ends Cycle 2 and begins Cycle 3...



A Folk Tale

A Folk Tale of the Oasis Basin

There once was a viper who was set upon by an assassin. He survived, but with a deep cut that caused him to move awkwardly forevermore. The viper sought shelter in an underground nest. Vipers do not trust one another—and they are wise not to—but the vipers there were angered by one of their number being attacked. The viper was escorted to the Lord of the Underworld, who made him an offer: if he sacrificed one of his eyes, he could have a magic black opal in its place. The opal showed him what passed before the eyes of the enemy who sent an assassin after him. It was another viper, one with a nest deep within a palace. The viper with the opal eye watched to divine his enemy's location. He finally felt sure of his enemy's general whereabouts, and now makes his painful, awkward way up and down the Summer Road, seeking to find himself appear before the eyes of his nemesis.

Excerpt from *The Blackstone Dungeon Master's Guide* (1976):

BLACKSTONE: A black opal that lets the user see through the eyes of their most dangerous enemy (as per the spell *Niya's Nemesis Gazing*).
Effect lasts 2d6 rounds.

The Palace of Kucina

An excerpt from Ban Zhao's *Histories of the Western Hinterlands*:

We must write of the palace of Kucina, for surely it represents the Oasis Kingdoms in all their glory. The golden tops of its white marble spires tower above the whole city. Its walls are covered in artfully painted tiles and framed by exquisite stone lace. The garden's surrounding the palace are always green and filled with waterworks and a thousand fragrant flowers. At night, the gardens are illuminated by colorful lanterns and swarms of fireflies. Inside the palace, the walls are adorned with crystal inlays and hung with sumptuous woven carpets. The floors are precious mosaics and the furniture is made of velvet and dark wood from the Spirit Mountains.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucina/>

A Proclamation from Niya

Issued under the royal seal of Niya:

From this day forward any soldiers of the Western Green Banner found within the territories of Niya and Lop Nur will be apprehended and tried as bandits and unlawful mercenaries under the laws of Niya, transgressions that are punishable by execution.

A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

To: Selethen Varzakk, Merchant ,

Greetings Master Varzakk, Know that your reputation behove me to write to you.

I, Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha, have need of a reliable merchant to execute an important delivery. I know also that you hail from the lands of Dayuan and I deeply hope your caravan routes (or a subordinate's) will pass through Aksu. Currently I require a large delivery of ironwork to Niya; in exchange not only for payment but also my deep gratitude.

You see these are decorative wrought iron window screens for the Palace of Niya. The late King of Niya commissioned them; they are the finest of their kind. The new King of Niya, son of the late, is a busy man, who does not yet have inclination to the finer parts of living, and magnanimously has offered to allow me to keep the screens and the advanced payment. Unfortunately I am honour bound to deliver these screens to the Palace of Niya, doubly now that I have been paid by a deceased man. This burden can only be lifted from my soul when you deliver them to the King of Niya [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya], with my highest regards.

I do hope that a trade relationship will prove mutually profitable into the future. I ask that you remember me when you encounter those who may be interested in my wares, goods marked with the lantern are pre-eminent, and bespoke commissions are welcome.

Additionally remember me when you encounter a reliable expert on constructions and engineering as my operations are expanding and I would very much like to continue to improve my methods. Messages sent to my estate at Aksu will always reach me, and this is the most reliable method for contacting me.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Fri May 29 18:35:33 EDT 2015

Subject: A Delivery Contract and
Ongoing Business

Re:Introduction and Your Commission

Great and magnanimous you are King Badal,

These screens are true works of art, sized perfectly for the windows of your palace at Niya.

I assure you, the iron goods of Kucha remain of utmost quality. The confusion stems from the fact that the Ironmaster of Aksu, in a futile effort to stop the just and right succession of Aksu into the Kingdom of Kucha, created arms and armour that were of a laughable quality. These follies were marked with the sparrow stamp, the traditional mark of the Aksuvan Ironmaster. Truly I have seen no worse work than those blades, it is a tragedy that the once great name of Aksu was forsaken in such a way. Indeed the mockery of which your wrote is appropriate, but it does not apply to my wares. In Kucha this declension has been blamed on the inherent laziness of the Eonite Ironmaster, and though I tend not to hold to those preconceptions, in this instance, it does seem accurate. The mark of the lantern is my sign, it is synonymous with the highest quality. Trust the lantern for quality.

Our ores remain spectacular and indeed your Grandfather was quite right about the quality of our ores. Recently my prospecting has revealed that this will remain the case for the foreseeable future. I trust this will remain between us, but truly I am not able to oversee the construction of all of the expansions necessary to exploit this new found wealth and oversee the bloomeries, even with the capable assistance of my apprentice! Great King, if you know anyone who could assist me in planning and executing these activities I would be grateful.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Conflict Brews Along the Oasis Road

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

As the time of Blossoming drew to a close, a regiment of soldiers marching under the green banner of General Zhang Hansi was escorting a caravan through Niya, contrary to the laws of that kingdom.

Each night around their campfires, the caravans huddled closer and speculated about what could possibly influence this conflict. . .

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
Moderator

Date: Fri May 29 19:03:45 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Introduction and Your Commission

Map of the Cities in the Oasis Basin



Greetings

Yuan Sala, Physician

Greetings Honoured Physician,

My name is Jivamitra and I am Ironmaster of Kucha. I write to congratulate you, and your apprentice, on your success in treating the plague in Yiwu. I hope that the warmth of the Season of Growing brings strength to the people of Yiwu, and us all.

At this time it seems that the people of Kucha remain healthy, but it brings peace to my soul to know that the knowledgeable in the world are able to lift us from the dangers of ignorance. That there is a solution to the troubles that bedevil the world and that there are those who search for it.

I write also in the hope that you could assist me in my search. As Ironmaster I am aware of an unfamiliar technique used by the Ironmasters of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**. It is my great wish to learn this technique of the furnace.

I would also, of course, be greatly pleased to assist you in your work as I may.

May our peoples know peace and prosperity; honour to your Emperor of Heaven,

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Yuan Sala, Physician

Moderator

Date: Fri May 29 19:51:10 EDT 2015

Subject: Greetings

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner Army

Wise General,

The recent news from the King of Niya has worried me since I first heard it.

Has there been an undue incident between banner-men and the people of the Kingdom of Niya?

I understand that your superiors are pressuring you to maintain the security of the caravans along the Road. When you receive orders such as these I know you will use caution and forbearance on your decisions. Let it be known that I have the ear of the King of Niya and I would use my position to maintain peace along the road. I would be pleased to communicate your intentions to him, or to pass your letters to King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya].

Remember general that I would always be willing to provide you council.

Honour to your Emperor, The Emperor of Heaven,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Fixed:Cycle 3: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

(hit send too soon! here is the corrected missive)

Blessed Kanakk,

One of my former novices, Sugnumae, has come to guest with me at the Grand Abbey. Indeed, it seems the Abbey is becoming a caravanserai, and more travelers come to visit. Our former engineer Liu Shui will be returning to the garden pavilion. Perhaps he will welcome seclusion, as I understand he is withdrawing from an unfortunate incident in the Middle Kingdom.

With all the talk of unrest on the roads of the southerly winter route of the caravans, I hear or see little trouble in Kucha. Perhaps others have brought news of the untimely death of our late Queen and the findings of foul play. Yet our new Queen in her wisdom has chosen to act with deliberation, carefully weighing the best course to follow. I

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Fri May 29 21:50:53 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusunne Monk

Moderator

Date: Sat May 30 02:03:45 EDT 2015

Subject: Fixed:Cycle 3: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

hope that my counsel based on my readings of history has aided her, since the precepts of Kusinne speak only the most broadly on the ways of rulership, beyond strong encouragement to shine forth as an exemplar of right living in the Path of the Hearth.

Sugnumae, to my delight, has brought new works from the wise Feegle Yitaka in Dayuan. With fortune, Feegle may be able to shed some light upon the sources and uses of the herbs of the Onion Mountains, one of which Doctor Yuan Sala has implicated in the death of the Queen. The richly illustrated herbal which Sugnumae has brought with her suggests that there are many uses for the rare herb, only one of which is its application as a poison. In fact, it may be used as a remedy to calm a fluttering heart.

Sugnumae has brought other works which I will earnestly examine for words of the early prophets of Kusinne. Though the first one appears to be a manual of hair styling. Who could make an entire book of that? Well, at the Abbey at least, there is little styling of hair. Perhaps there will be other practical accounts of minor surgical technique. I understand that to the West, barber and surgeon are a single profession, linked by the deftness of hand and sharpness of blade.

In the Path of the Hearth, the Well and the Book, to you who walk the Path of the Road,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

Jivaka, It has been many weeks since King Badal instructed you to seek out the thief and traitor Feegle Yitaka. What do you have to report?

XXXX

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Cycle 3: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: Housewarming

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Yuan Sala, Physician, greetings and welcome.

Your wisdom concerning the herb of the Onion Mountains is well appreciated. Queen Shayn and the royal doctors are convinced that it furthered Queen Fadya's death. The esteemed scholar Feegle Yitaka has sent additional works, including a herbal, along with his dear Sugnumae, as she comes to the Abbey to stay for a time. The herbal describes

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
Moderator
Date: Sat May 30 02:06:10 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
To: Yuan Sala, Physician
Moderator
Date: Sat May 30 02:25:40 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 3: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: Housewarming

the medicinal uses of the herb you mention, including its ability to quiet a fluttering heart, but cautions urgently to give a moderate dose, as little as will suffice.

Please tell me if the lodgings I have arranged in the city of Kucina accord well with your needs. They were the house of a carpet merchant, devout in the ways of Kusinne but without child or heir. We had been using the house for song and meditation meetings and for counseling, taking advantage of its deep, cool courtyard and sunny terrace as the weather and seasons inclined. The kitchen is perhaps sparsely provided, but I hope you will find it adequate. The house has its own water source, straddling a buried aqueduct; in fact, it is the first stop from its mountain source, and is unfailingly cold and clean. If the swallows' nests under the eaves disturb you, you may wish to frequent the other side of the house; they will finish brooding by summer's end, and will quit their nests. But they are cheerful creatures, and fierce hunters of every flying pest, so I would bless their presence.

If doors or cabinets stick or squeak, if shutters rattle or drains leak, do not fail to prevail upon the caretaker. He should already have done such repairs as would be needed for you to occupy the house as a resident.

We have a hermit's cottage available above the Abbey if you should need more seclusion, but I expect that your practice will better accord with being among people in a spacious, comfortable setting.

Herewith I send from our stores a measure of dates, of dried plums, and of green tea, red tea, and smoked tea to help replenish your kitchen; as well as pens, paper and ink of our latest manufacture, and a bound blank codex for your use. I can spare little salt, but include some from my personal stores.

Peace be upon you, skill in your Art, and may your practice prosper.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Path of the Well, in the Path of the Hearth, and the Path of the Book

**Cycle 3: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui,
Engineer: Monkey Business**

Master Liu,

You looked every part the Pilgrim of Kusinne's Path of the Road when you arrived. Not till you raised your hood did I know in truth that our trusty engineer had returned to the Grand Abbey!

I have prevailed upon the physician Yuan Sala to treat Long Huo. The physician assures me that Long Huo is young and strong, and will make a full recovery; the peculiar direction of the affected eye will return to normal. Who would have brought a monkey into our gardens, I know not, but when Nabylah chased him from the fishpond, he leaped upon the sides of your pavilion, climbed to the top of the wall and dislodged a roof tile upon your faithful student's forehead. Truly, we do not run a menagerie here at the Abbey; we have only birds and fish; so the presence of a monkey is truly a mystery.

If you wish to confer further with Yuan Sala, the physician may be reached at the nearest precincts of the city of Kucina, a modest walk, or by giving your messenger this address: Yuan Sala [Yuan Sala, Physician]. Yuan Sala is building a medical practice locally, and may be conferring further with Queen Shayn upon the matters surrounding Queen Fadya's untimely death, which is currently presumed to be from poisoning by an herb obtained from the Onion Mountains and little-known here.

You must pardon Sugnumae. She is a guest here, come to visit because of my long acquaintance with Scholar Feegle Yitaka. Though Sugnumae learned her letters and practical arts at my hand, she is not under my charge. You may address Nabylah if you need my attention; Sugnumae is as honored a guest as are you. As a peace offering, Sugnumae sends this exquisite little carved turtle which she describes as a rest for 筷子 ("kwai tseh?") while eating. You would know best, I am sure.

Herewith is a copy of your original plans for the drainage of the Grand Abbey, as you requested. All is in excellent working order, and there will be no shortage of water this season. Such cleverness in your hidden marks! I see the postern tunnel you created against need (and to serve naughty Nabylah's curiosity – those were surely her tiny footprints I found there). But I see similar marks upon the other side of the plan of Abbey. Was that merely a thought, or will I find a grand surprise if I inspect the wall of the deep cool storage cellar?

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Sat May 30 02:50:00 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 3: Nafisah, Abbess of
Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: Monkey
Business

Well met, and may you find peace while you reside here.

In the Path of the Well, of the Hearth, and the Book,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Inheritance in Kucha

From a commentary on a lost poem by Zuo Fen:

As reflected in these verses, the local customs and laws of Kucha prohibit men from inheriting, though they are entitled to what they themselves have earned. This was a longstanding tradition in that land.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucha/>

From the Museum of the Oasis Kingdoms

Catalog item #72: Iron spearhead with hooked ribs, Kucha manufacture (circa 2nd century). Lantern sigil markings.

Answers to Questions

“Your people have a legend out a great disaster in the distant past. What was that disaster, and what do the stories say about how it can be prevented in the future?”

Long ago the oases dried out, the goats perished, and men battled for every scrap of filth. The time of devastation buried many mighty Kingdoms in sand and time.

The descendents had abandoned the Teacher’s ways. They embraced their lesser natures. Ignored their inner voices, lived immorally, failed to honour travellers, and disregarded their Teachers.

Abandoning the Kusinne Paths allowed demons to enter the sacred valley. They brought storms, disease, drought, and war. For uncounted years the Demons walked among the Oases; suffering and death their gifts. Driving all life from even the most verdant places.

The time of devastation and suffering lasted until a great Teacher, Didgiaya, who brought with her unadulterated copies of the Cycles, served to guide a return to the way of Kusinne, and eventually authoring the Eighth Cycle. Returning to the Paths drove the Demons, now contented and lazy, into the Relinquished Desert, where they may yet dwell.

It is known that following the Precepts of Kusinne, walking the Fourfold Path, and continually striving to achieve the divine balance between body and mind are the only way to prevent the return of the Demons, who are drawn to the weakness of spirit all are prone to.

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Sun May 31 19:53:33 EDT 2015

Subject: Answers to Questions

The Green Banners

Dearest King Badal,

I am aware that you and I perhaps do not see eye to eye, but I come with an offer. I assure you that I dislike the Green Banners of General Hansi as much as you do, and I hear rumours that he has made moves into your Kingdom. So to does he harry me across the deserts of the Middle Kingdom. Thus far we have kept him from any major victory against us, engaging in a couple of skirmishes, leaving little more than a handful of bodies for the vultures. I cannot however continue this slow bleed against an army much greater than my own.

Here is my offer. You provide for me safe haven in Niya and I promise that I will lead your best horseman to victory against your uninvited guests. I assure you that there are no riders better than mine, and there are no people who know the paths of these deserts like I do.

I eagerly await your reply,

Ghayth,

Wolf the of the Spirit Mountains

Re:to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

King Parsu,

your daughter Princess Parsbit has enchanted my court. She is such a smart and charming person! My daughters, even belligerent Alya, are doting on her, as do all their teachers and most of the noble ladies of my court.

I have heard of conflicts brewing between Niya and the Green Banner. Please, tell me more about this and let me know if you need help. Kucha is not a military power, but what help I can give is yours if you need it.

As to the man who stole what is yours, I have found him. He runs a school for the wealthy of Daiyuan in Suojo in the Onion Mountains. When you apprehend him, please take care not to hurt the students of the school, since among them are people of the Abbess Nafisah of Kucha. May you be successfull in recovering your belongings and punishing the thief.

The heavenly lights bless you and enlighten your path.

Queen Shayn

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 01 12:18:50 EDT 2015

Subject: The Green Banners

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 01 14:22:49 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

From the Expedition of 1836

13th Thermidor, 1836: Excavations of the Grand Abby of Kucha continue. Our surveying artists have nearly finished mapping out the crypts and postern gate that we discovered in our earlier digs. We have unearthed several weapons bearing sparrow-markings, though their brittle construction has left few intact. Among the cache there was one sword that bore a different marking, a lantern sigil, nearly intact. It will make for a grand display in the museum.

Re:Longing

My dear Ghayth,

thank you for your last letter. It has given me great joy. I hope you will not be too hard on your children when they fondly remember the pleasures of Kucina. It is not softness to admire beauty wherever it can be found and I am sure that your education did not fail in preparing them for the hardships of your life and giving them the strength to win your people's respect.

The festival that I held in my mother's honor was a great success and I wish that you could have been here. The whole town was adorned by colorful lanterns, banners and garlands of flowers. There were people everywhere and the scents of the petals rivaled those of the cooking fires. But more importantly, there was music and dancing in every street and works of art of all kinds. Finely sculpted statues and pillars were set up in the squares, ornate pottery was displayed around the public fountains, and exquisite paintings on silks and tiles and wooden boards were hung on every the wall. The mood of the city was unlike anything I have felt before. There was a spirit of shared wonder and elation, of celebration and camaraderie, even though the city was filled with people of all the Oasis Kingdoms and beyond. For a whole week, we seemed to live in a dream world. People were talking to strangers in the streets as if they were brothers, inviting them to their tables or to share in the smoking of the exotic weeds that they had brought with them. And so many discussions were about art and spirituality and the deeper meanings of life. I saw artists who had just met work together to fuse their talents and create unthought of masterpieces - some of which you will still see, when you come back to Kucina in the season of cold because they have found their place in the palace gardens.

And there was a large number of men among the artist. I had hoped as much and was still surprised by their number. Even if many of my fellow women are not convinced, I consider this an impressive proof of the

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 01 16:18:14 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Longing

abilities and potential of the male gender and I entertain the hope that I was not the only person to notice.

How is your situation in Yiwu? I hope that none of your people have been touched by the pestilence. I worry about you and your family. Have the Gushi finally agreed to trade with you?

Also, please tell me what you know of the Green Banner. I watch with concern the troop movements to the east and between Niya, whose King is a friend of mine, and the Green Banner open conflict seems imminent. I have also been contacted by a General of the Green Banner forces who tells me he has been fighting nomad warriors on the road south of Yiwu. He thinks that these warriors are not yours, but is he right or have you successfully misled him? Are you in danger?

May the sun, the moon and the stars keep you safe and free. I look forwards to your next letter to comfort my heart until I see you again.

Shayn

Aksu

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

Despite some tensions between followers of Kusine and those of Symness on the border between Kucha and Dayuan, the mourning in Aksu for the funeral of Queen Fadya of Kucha was characterized by calm grieving and a quiet celebration of the many benefits derived from belonging to the realm of Kucha and the rule of Queen Shayn.

Re:Longing

Dearest Shayn,

It warms my heart to know that the festival was all that you wanted it to be. I am glad to here that many men were amongst the artists and I hope that soon they may rise in esteem in the eyes of your people.

The plague in Yiwu was an ill-omen and I decided it best to leave such a place before such pestilence might spread to my peoples. The Gushi remained stoic to the last, refusing our coin, so we took from them what it was we needed before we moved along the roads.

Oh yes, the Green Bannered men of the Zang, the called Wheat Scythe of the West. We simply wanted to live our lives and we did so in the manner in which we always have. The Green Banners seemed to take some offence to this and they dispatched 5,000 horsemen to deal with us. But I am a smart man, and we have successfully managed to dodge

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kusine/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/symness/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucha/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/dayuan/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/aksu/>

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 02 04:57:09 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Longing

the worst of their wrath. I have settled my people in the ruins of a town north of Anxi, the well still pure and the walls still standing strong. I have taken my riders out and I will continue to harry Zang's men until only one of us remains. This is slow battle, a death by a thousand tiny cuts. I have already lost 60 of my men, but each of them have taken three of their foes to Lonely Path with them.

Am I safe? I doubt it, but I will not allow this Frontier General to challenge life of my people! I do not believe myself to be a fool however, I have sent word to the King of Niya, if he would go to war the Zang, I will place myself amongst his forces.

My love remains yours,

Ghayth

Re:Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn: Feegle in Dayuan

Your holiness,

thank you for establishing the contact to Feegle Yitaka. I had previously heard from him under the title of magi of Knowledge. That does not seem to be a Kusinne title or am I wrong? I would be glad if you could shed some light on this ominous honorific.

I hope that your students will be able to find the texts you are looking for in Suojo. Have you been able to search for the lost knowledge in the Library of Niya? I have, regrettably, never seen this Library by myself, but I have heard impressive tales of its huge halls and hallways of white marble, their walls shaped like honeycombs filled with books and scrolls. On the outside, the extensive building is surrounded by a portico whose columns are shaped as statues of the prophets of Kusinne, holding the roof's weight as they carried the weight of knowledge.

If you have not sent to the Library of Niya yet, you might want to contact King Badal Parsu of Niya [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya]. He is a devout Kusinne ruler and will surely do what he can to help your search.

If there is anything more that I can do to help you in this or any other matter, please do not hesitate to ask.

Although I am relieved to hear your assessment of the situation in Aksu, I am preparing to leave for a visit of the city when the moon is full. I want to speak to my people there myself. In the past I have found the views of the people of Aksu quite refreshing when I have been there. But it is long since I have had the opportunity to travel. Some of my

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 02 07:54:26 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn: Feegle in Dayuan

advisors do not think that the opportunity is here now, but I consider this visit too important to let the affairs of state keep me, even if conflict between Niya and the Middle Kingdom is brewing in the south.

Faithfully

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

The Way of the Book

An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XLV:

For example, at the Grand Abbey of Kucina, the practice of the Way of the Book is speculated to have primarily through the copyists of sacred scrolls and the maintenance of devotional literature. Lost texts were sought out for study, as well as attention devoted to copying other manuscripts, transcribing oral accounts. There is some evidence that there was extensive study of the craft of binding and assembling codexes, with sometimes astonishing (to our modern eyes) attempts to preserve them.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucina/>

This, no doubt, explains the scriptorium and library at the site, the extent of which was documented by the expedition in 1836.

News from Dayuan

An excerpt from a letter from Suojo:

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/sujo/>

The receipt of grain and rice from home is much appreciated; the shortages here have been causing no end of distress.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/2015/05/24/shortages-in-shujo/>

I must tell you of the school that has been much discussed here of late; many families of note who happen to have children other than their heir have been contracting with a scholar (known locally for his wisdom) to educate them in things other than their family's traditional profession. There is talk that they are planning to build an academy of some sort.

Aw:Opportunity in Kucha? Also, state of affairs along the Summer Route

My boldest friend,

After all the grim news of the last time may your health be still on the peak of human possibility. The unrest on the Summer Route seem to have an effect on the sending of message. As I moved to another place for some time I realized way too late the issues which have ensued; shame on me, as man, as friend and as merchant.

But I'm glad that my daughter had her wits about her and followed the route in a pace which brought enough distance to the reported turmoil on the Summer Route. As I read, she was very fond of your household and would be glad to get the opportunity to become your guest again in the next year. All of you must have impressed her strongly and I thank you for making the Beloved Blossom of my household this happy. To my surprise, she didn't tell anything about a storyteller; haven't you mentioned such an artist as part of your household?

As for the problems you mentioned, I'm actually very sparse on information, but what I have learned should directly go to your hawk-like eyes: As I learned, there is a beginning unrest in Kucha as there is some dissension in the kind of religious behavior. As you surely know, Dayuan is the easternmost realm of the Symness religion and a kind of melting pot with the Kusine one. Apparently the same fate is overtaking Kucha now; the Symness religion seems to become a fixed part of Kuchan culture; let us hope all will go smoothly as a silk scarf glides over a maidens arm. The grace of the Adjudicators may with all the Kuchan people.

I will surely follow your advice and write Jivamatra a letter; alas, the possibility of recognizing the quality of his wares will be open to us in the next budding season at the earliest.

As apology for the long silence from my side, please accept the small package of Susian ivory. It is said that its benefits lie in an especially fine structure and it should be perfect for carving. As I'm experienced your fine sense of the arts, perhaps you will bring it to a better use than it would be possible for me.

I am your very humble servant.

Merchant of Shule In the Valley of Paradise Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Wed Jun 03 17:44:44 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:Opportunity in Kucha?
Also, state of affairs along the Summer Route

Aw:A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

So my sincere greetings to you, Master Jivamitra!

A mutual acquaintance, General Zhang Hansi, Commander of the Green Banner, told me of your business already, but for the reason of moving to another place at times, I was unable to care for letters from this place. Under normal circumstances I would never have allowed letting a man of your assiduous character, or his matter of concern, lie fallow. You have my deepest apologies as man and as merchant.

My caravan is nearing Niya from the East already; it braved the Summer Route in the Budding season and is on the way back on the Winter Route. So, if you are still interested in letting me be of service to you, I see two kinds of procedure here. In the next year, my caravan will travel through Kucha again and may transport your ware on the eastward roads.

But, as this is a matter of your honor, I think of a faster delivery; I could assemble a second caravan from the valley of paradise, coming to Aksu and bringing your masterful work to the King of Niya this year, albeit in the last season of the year, as I presume. So, this second caravan would have to hibernate in Niya, but could travel from there. So, I'll bring your wares to Niya this year, but I would need your involvement. Are you able to produce some more wares until the Budding season with which I can fill my caravan for some profit to pay for the hibernating season?

As apology for my late answer, please accept a small package of Marakandian spices, which is sent with this letter.

May the flames of your forge never be quenched

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Aw:Wolf Fangs

My glorified friend Ghayth,

As I'm only a humble servant who is ignorant in the ways of war I'm glad that my service was this helpful for you and your clan. As I was moving to another place for a time, I couldn't answer in the commanding hurry, for which I apologize as man, as friend and as merchant.

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Wed Jun 03 18:22:21 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Wed Jun 03 18:42:16 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:Wolf Fangs

Your warning of the Totems comes in handy, as the caravan is nearing Lop Nur. Until now, I haven't any report of problems and my hope is that it's keeping that way.

My profound thanks for the necklace; it showed me that I already had luck. Some of the rings belonged to rivals to my house and you relieved my household of some quarries which would have been unnecessary, but unavoidable.

As an apology for the delay, please accept both the silken scarves I sent you with this letter. Both of the should be a remembrance of both the fabrics which keep the life going – red for blood and yellow for gold.

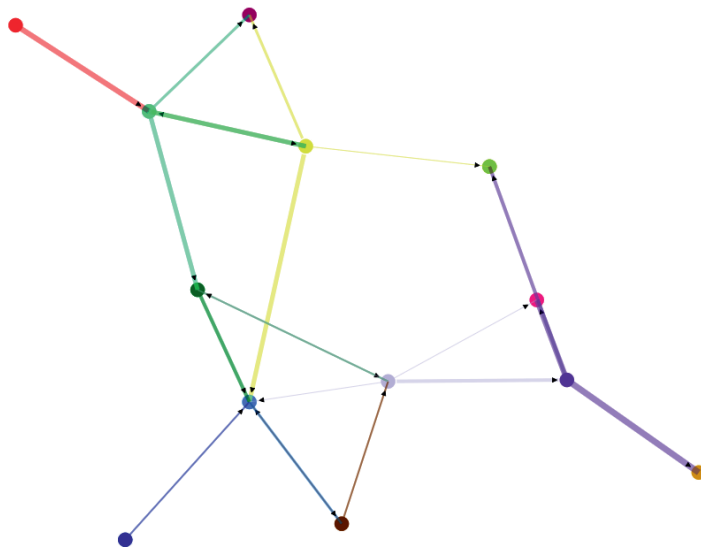
My best wishes should follow your ways

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Cycle 3 Communication Web



Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

Dear Sir,

Such a task is not an easy one, but I'm happy to report that we have the individual you seek in our grasp. Rather I should say trusted allies and friends have the traitor in their possession and wish to know what you wish to do with him? They can dispose of him a brutal manner and none shall know about it or he can be brought to the king in disgrace. The choice is yours.

On Sat, May 30, 2015 at 2:06 AM, King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya wrote:

Jivaka,

It has been many weeks since King Badal instructed you to seek out the thief and traitor Feegle Yitaka. What do you have to report?

XXXX

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

From:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Wed Jun 03 19:53:32 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

Re:Loan

Well that is a treasure that I will not bring back and hold until the loan is paid off, but it speaks well to your intentions to pay. Just don't make me have to collect anything from you in the future. You will find the funds delivered after this letter in a secure caravan. It will be discrete, but one of my representative will seek you out at the palace with a scroll with my official seal. I would suggest moving the caravan onto the palace ground immediately after and unload the cargo.

I will come later in a more impressive caravan as planned to accept your gracious invitation. That visit will be made more public so I do not see an issue with the other caravan slipping by unnoticed, but I assure you it will be well guarded.

Understand the laws of your land makes it even more necessary to make you a partner on this endeavor. In your region there was a wealth noble with vast lands and also a thriving trade empire. He had two sons close in age and both set out on their own and did well for themselves, but neither as wealthy as their father. As the father became older the two sons became bitter rivals to the point members of their houses would fight when encountering each other. The father tried to make peace, but his sons would not here of it and even took opposing sides in a larger conflict.

From:

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Wed Jun 03 23:50:06 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Loan

The father disgusted with his sons and wishing to remain neutral took a large portion of his estate and liquidated it into gold, silver, art and other precious objects. He then secretly brought this fortune to your lands. He had a cousin a powerful noble woman and entrusted the fortune in her care until his sons made amends. Sadly this never happened with one son dying in the war and the other escaping badly wounded and became a bitter old drunk after his father's passing.

The facts about this noble woman are sparse though. I believe the father did this for a reason though he mentions she explored an ancient temple ruins on her lands and may have hidden the treasure there. She enjoyed hunting wild game, poetry, and in her later years was regarded as a wise woman. Does any of this sound familiar to you or others in your court?

Yours truly,

Jivaka Saca

Monuments

Honorable Liu Shui,

I have heard of your magnificent work, of your monuments and constructs and have once seen for myself one of the impressive machinae that you have built. It was in my youth, when I still had the opportunity to travel, so I do not remember where it was, but the memory of this masterpiece has stayed with me and oftentimes appeared in my dreams.

My kingdom of Kucha has unique pottery. Our ornate tiles, the Zulajj, are sold in all of the Oasis Kingdoms and our fine tableware graces the tables of many a palace. Our stonemasons create beautiful statues and obelisks, but my palace in Kucina was built under my mother's reign by an architect from the Middle Kingdom and so were all the noble houses in Kucina and Aksu.

Therefore, I invite you to Kucha and hope that you will come and help us build new wonders to honor the sun, the moon and the stars which guide us and to amaze the people of Kucha and all those who wander the Silk Road.

First of all, since I saw your machina, a construct was born in my dreams that would depict the celestial mechanics. It could stand in a place of honor in the palace gardens, towering above everyone and teaching all those who behold it the mechanics of the world.

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 04 06:52:30 EDT 2015

Subject: Monuments

Please let me know if you would come to Kucha to build for me this monument to the skies and many more wonders after it and to teach my people the art of building such large structures.

In admiration of your genius and your work

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara, Ruler of Kucha

The Way of the Road

A letter from a traveller in Yiwu:

We received hospitality at that place, where they properly follow the rites of Kusinne, and felt much relief at finding the shelter.

There were many pilgrims there when we arrived. As we sat around the fire, a storyteller told the story of An-Kuan and the Snow Leopard, and their escape from the pits of the mountain warlord. The crowd was most pleased at the rendition of the familiar story.

They tell me that travellers from the nearby villages and towns are becoming more common, now that the plague has ended. They say that the physician whose skill defeated the petillance has taken up residence in a fine house in Kucina. Perhaps we shall tarry there on our return journey and see this wisdom for ourselves.

Tomorrow, we plan to press on, hoping to ford the river near Chayi, a town we have been told is at the place where the Gushi and Jushi rivers meet.

My good friend,

Your tidings are well received! My thanks for your continued trade of much-needed goods for my clan! When next you pass through, we should be well settled into our new hometown of Chayi; it is about a third of the way east from Jushi to Yiwu, where the Jushi tributary meets the Gushi River. We will have much for trade with you, I hope!

The unrest in Jushi since our Queen's retreat from the public view has escalated, with laborer strikes and water shortages only intensifying the tensions in the city. I do not know how much worse it is in the southlands, but I would caution you to post extra guards if you plan to stop and trade in Jushi.

Your gift was thoughtful, as always! I actually have one of my own for you, which I am including with this missive. While clearing ground near

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kusinne/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucina/>

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 04 10:23:57 EDT 2015

Subject:

Chayi, we have come across unusual stones of interesting quality. When cracked, there are beautiful crystalline structures on the inside. This one was found cracked in half, and with a little polishing could make a distinctive pair of bookends! I have little use for that, but I imagine this could be a nice display piece for you. Please accept it, with my ongoing wishes for your prosperity and good health!

In the name of her grace, the Queen Konuma,

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

The Wheat Scythe of the West

The Wolf is a noble beast in the snows of the mountains

But on the plains of the desert he is but a jackal

A Wolf on the peaks poets will speak of fondly

A Jackal on the plains is killed out of hand

This is the nature of things among dogs and men

Who can change it?

The Wolf howls in the north, and the Scythe reaps in the south

If each stays to their own direction

Harmony is found under heaven

“The Wheat Scythe of the West”

Cycle 3: Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

Your Majesty,

Your correspondence always brightens my world. May we endure in the Paths of Kusine!

The title of Magi of Knowledge for Feegle Yitaka is not a Kusine title. Though Feegle Yitaka is a learned scholar, he does not profess the Paths of Kusine. Feegle is a wise and worthy scholar, and his dear Sugnumae has studied the Paths of Kusine with me. I am pleased to host her as my personal guest for a time. She is quite an accomplished young woman now!

I will indeed address myself to King Badal Parsu of Niya in the matter of the elder texts of Kusine’s history and wisdom. It is such a hard thing to be accomplished in the way of making books when we know

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 04 20:49:07 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 3: Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

that so many pages of our stories are missing! Nonetheless, our copyists endeavor to add to the dissemination of the best of the useful arts as well as the Paths – combining Right Living with Learning and Teaching, the Hearth with the Book.

If you have heard any stories of the mishap with the monkey in the garden, you may rest assured that the engineer's disciple is on the mend under the care of Yuan Sala, and his eyes are both pointing the same direction again. I trust that Yuan Sala is finding the lodgings in the carpet-merchant's house (which we used as a Kusinne meeting-house for readings and practices) well suited for medical practice, and that the swallows in the eaves have been a blessing rather than a trouble. I always enjoyed their quarrelsome chirps, for I knew they were hard at work eating flying pests of all sorts. With the carpet-merchant's house busy, we have engaged an empty salt warehouse for our city meetings, which is deep and cool and will work well during the sunnier seasons.

With gratitude and highest esteem, in the light of Kusinne,

Abbess Nafisah of Kucha

Re:Structural Integrity Review

Master Farscry, head of Clan Vamto of Gushi,

My name is Long Huo, student of 劉師父 (Master Liu) of Nancheng. Unfortunately neither my Master, nor I, will be able to make our way to your location due to prior engagements that demand all of our attention. Fortunately, my master did have the opportunity to pass the specified area along the Gushi river as he made his way to Kucha. Regarding the flood banks, my master writes:

The soft mounds of earth along the river's edge show many years of wear. They will not last long if the river rises more than 四尺 (4 Chi, or .92m). I suggest building tiered walls with dry stone, like so.

[a swiftly drawn illustration follows, showing a three tiered terrace structure. Each tier was bordered by walls of interlocking stones, and filled with packed earth held fast by grass.]

A structure like this will keep your homes safe from flood waters, though you may use them to your advantage perhaps.

[another sketch follows, a slight variant of the former illustration. Small sluice gates are added to key points along the walls, leading to small channels clearly designed to irrigate crops, or to direct water flow into reservoirs]

I hope these designs will aid you in my absence.

From:

Liu Shui, Engineer

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 05 00:12:41 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Structural Integrity Review

劉水 (Liu Shui)

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

On Wed, Jun 3, 2015 at 11:25 AM, Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan <Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan> wrote:

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

To: Liu Shui, respected chief of engineers

Greetings and well wishes to you from my people, master engineer!

I am in the process of readying my clan to resettle from the city of Yiwu to the fertile land near Chayi, a small town where the Jushi tributary meets the Gushi River. I found the land well-situated, and noted that there are already floodbanks constructed around portions of the land suitable for building homes.

I wish to solicit your services, or that of a student of yours, to inspect the floodbanks and ensure they will stand firm against floods.

If this could be done by the middle of the summer season, it would give us time to shore up the floodbanks if they are found to be needing reinforcement prior to the next flooding season.

My clan's gratitude for any aid that can be rendered!

In the service of her grace, the Queen Konuma of Gushi,

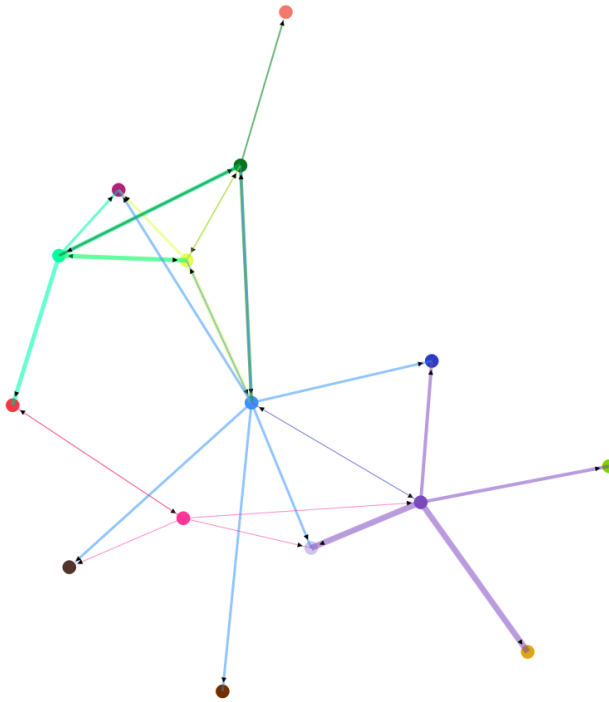
Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

4

Cycle: *Year 115, Season of Harvesting*

The fields are dotted with laborers; the harvest time has need of them. At the peak of the day, they pause in their work to seek relief in the shade of the olibanum trees, speaking of the far off events they have heard discussed by the pilgrims who follow The Way of the Road.

This ends Cycle 3 and begins Cycle 4...



**Re:Cycle 3: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui,
Engineer: Monkey Business**

Abbess Nafisah,

I would be the unfortunate source of the monkey. His name is Máfan and he has been my faithful companion these many weeks on the road (though I fear that the traditional master/pet relationship is inverted in his own mind)/ More often than not, if you leave him be, he'll cause no trouble. But cause trouble to him, and he'll rain trouble on you in return... unfortunately. Máfan's been pacing around my student for the past week, slapping him with wet rags occasionally. I presume this to be his attempt at "apologizing". , either that or scolding him for being in the way. I am not quite certain.

If my student's eye is not yet healed by the time we set out to answer Her Majesty's summons, I may indeed pay a visit to Yuan Sala. Thank you for the recommendation. Regarding the marks by the storage cellar... that would be telling, now wouldn't it. Suffice to say that miss Nabylah has found the "Door of the Road". I'm certain a woman of your wisdom and intellect may deduce what else you may find now...

As it appears that the search for my personage has come to a halt, I shall make make my preparations and depart for Kucina within the week. Thank you for permitting my student and I such excellent hospitality.

Regards,

Liu Shui

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

**Cycle 4: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk,
Wandering Monk**

Blessed Kanakk,

As you travel, please keep a watch out for the disciple Nabylah. She had cultivated a habit of slipping out of the Grand Abbey via a concealed side entrance, and based on her absence and the word of the engineer Liu Shui (who designed the concealed entrance!), I presume that Nabylah has taken the Path of the Road without recourse to a request for pilgrimage.

From:

Liu Shui, Engineer

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 05 00:37:38 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Cycle 3: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: Monkey Business

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 05 02:25:19 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

I suppose some will believe that she has departed with a lover, or in spite, but she left her quarters in good order and had diligently finished her last copying assignment, handing off the codex for binding and indexing before her departure. So I choose to believe that she has heard another call. I write this in hope that you may see her and send her my blessings and invitation to return as she will. You may recognize her in part by her large dark eyes, her small turned-up nose, her short stature and very small feet.

My former novice Sugnumae has offered herself as copyist in Nabylah's place, and I have been pleased to accept. Her hand is beautiful and delicate, and it is a pleasure to read and regard her pages. Indeed, I have in my cell a calligraphed work in her hand with proverbs upon the Path of the Hearth.

The engineer Liu Shui has, to our misfortune, brought a monkey from the Middle Kingdom of the East. When Nabylah chased it from the fishpond, it climbed the garden pavilion and dislodged a roof tile upon Liu Shui's apprentice, injuring his head and causing his eye to point sideways for some time. Fortunately the physician Yuan Sala was close at hand and has been a great support in the young man's recovery.

At the advice of Queen Shayn, I am composing a letter to King Badal Parsu of Niya [King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya] with respect to the lore of Kusinne contained in the Library of Niya. At Queen Shayn's report, King Badal Parsu is a devout observer of the Paths of Kusinne in his ways of ruling. Should your paths bring you to Niya, I humbly request that you visit the Library and learn what it contains of the early history of Kusinne, in furtherance of the Grand Abbey's vision of compiling the original wisdom of our founders to share with all.

The rich fruits of this season are ripening in our gardens. If you have the occasion to visit the Abbey of Kucha, you will be made most welcome.

In the Path of the Hearth, the Well and the Book, to you who walk the Path of the Road,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

From the Expedition of 1836

28th Prairial, 1836: Arriving at the site, we took stock of the preparations of the previous season. The precautions taken to preserve the scriptorium and library in the offseason were successful. We have already discovered several additional copies of The Little Book of Kusinne.

Hieronymus's offseason dig at the battlefield near Aksu proved just as fruitful. He posits, based on the sparrow-markings on the iron weapons, that it dates to the conquest of Aksu by Kuchina in the first century, before their unification into one realm.

As you know, my contention has been that the legendary Queen Fadya, who supposedly undertook this unification, was clearly mythological; perhaps stories of a local guardian spirit were used to create a propaganda for national unification. After all, the stories of the different religious factions mourning at her funeral side-by-side is clearly intended as a metaphor for the triumph of political power over the local religious cults.

In the Name of The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years

A Reward is hereby Issued for information regarding the Whereabouts of an Engineer of the name Liu Shui, he being of the 9th rank, who is Wanted for Questioning regarding the Incident at the Grand Imperial Menagerie.

Signed and Sealed in the name of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**, Lord of the Middle Kingdom, and Ruler of All Civilization Under Heaven.

Re:Introduction and Your Commission

Your majesty, King Badal,

I am working to arrange a large end of year caravan to your great city. I plan to include the usual ironworks: blades and armour, lanterns, tools and such. Does your great kingdom require particular goods?

Great King I am growing concerned for the peace of our lands. My anxiety is peaked by the supposed sequestration of the royals at Lop Nur and the increased influence this has afforded the Green Banner forces.

I was pleased, honestly also troubled, that you have enforced edicts against the Easterners. I had not believed Zhang to be so bold. That your subjects and supporters have honoured custom and law in this warms my soul as the sun warms wheat. The peoples of the Oases clearly feel the shadow of the Middle Kingdom on them and are binding themselves together. As has been seen here in Aksu.

I would ask what prompted this edict's issue, wise King. Have you been in contact with General Zhang Hansi?

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Moderator

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Date: Fri Jun 05 10:15:44 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Introduction and Your Commission

I shall light a lamp for peace in our times.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

Structural Integrity Review

Most esteemed Long Huo, The thanks of myself and my clan for such a swift and detailed reply! We will implement your master's suggestions for protecting our settlement from floods, and will see where we may also put sluice gates to effective use as recommended! I wish you were able to visit in person so we might enjoy tea and one of my clan's holiday feasts together. It is a poor substitute, but I have sent a bundle of some of our favorite vegetables that should retain their freshness until they arrive. I have also included a small donation towards your master's ongoing works. May you enjoy good health and prosperity! In the service of her grace, the Queen Konuma, Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 05 10:35:43 EDT 2015

Subject: Structural Integrity Review

Middle Kingdom Caravans in Riya

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

Despite the many threats issued from both sides, the caravans of the Middle Kingdom passed peacefully through Niya that season, escorted by a regiment of soldiers from Dukhan. Though insults and challenges at times threatened to break out into violent conflict, the discipline of the Green Banner Army stood firm.

Romad Raids Near Anxi



From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

That season, the nomads travelled from Yiwu to the region near Anxi, establishing their encampment in the ruins of an ancient and long-abandoned town north of that city.

The armies of the Middle Kingdom made many attempts to dislodge them, sending horse riders and regiments of soldiers. But they were defeated by the nomads' greater knowledge of the desert and its ways. The horse nomads ambushed their patrols and left the survivors for the vultures.

Re:A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

Honoured Merchant,

I am honoured that the mighty General of the West recalled me, and humbled to have been so named.

Know that I hold nothing for your slight delay, I too am ever busy. But the Marakandian spices are a welcome additions to my meals. A true pleasure to taste.

A delivery this year would indeed be preferred, by both my honour and my coffers. My wares will be more than sufficient to fill out a small caravan to Niya. I have already sent word to my contacts along the road and will take special orders if they respond in time.

Should my expansion plans come to fruition I will be able to supply an even larger caravan, and in the off season my wares will fetch a marvellous price along the road. In order to assist in this venture I will soon depart for the capital of Kucha, to trade and visit my eldest sister. While there I am hopeful that I will encounter and engineer of sufficient skills to aid me in my task.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Greetings Great Leader,

I am Jivamitra, the Ironmaster of Kucha, inheritor of the secrets of Iron. Preeminent in my craft. A humble Servant of Kucha.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/2015/05/28/conflict-breeds-near-anxi/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/anxi/>

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 05 19:28:51 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 05 21:45:01 EDT 2015

Subject: I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

I know that there are, as always, tensions between your people and the people of the Oasis Kingdoms. And with the soldiers of the Middle Kingdom. Know that I write in hopes of friendship and peace between all peoples. For though I make blades I also work lanterns, that the world may be filled with light against the dark.

I hold a hope that I may be of assistance to you and encourage you to ask of me what you will.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

General, This morning I was woken before dawn by the sound of the screams of my dear mother and my son's headless corpse in the arms a City Guardsman. Your belligerence has gone too far. My son's death will be avenged. I have sent a messenger directly to your Emperor to demand that you be recalled from the Oasis Road. From my window I can see the heads of 50 of your soldiers, on poles, guarding the main gate of Niya. It is inadequate retribution for the death of my heir, but it is a start.

Sincerely, His Majesty, Badal Parsu, King of Niya, Lop Nur and territories.

Re:The Green Banners

Honorable Ghayth, Yes, this is a wise course of action. Hansi and his rats must be driven from the Oasis Road. Earlier today his men killed my son and heir; I would like nothing better than to see the blood of Hansi and his men fill the dry stream beds that feed to the oases.

Badal, King of Niya, Lop Nur, and territories.

Re:to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

Queen Shayn, I send this message at the most desperate of hours. My son and heir, Bugha, was slaughtered early this morning by Hansi's soldiers. His patrols have been driven from the borders of Niya for now, but I fear they will soon return. I also fear for the safety of Parsbit, as she is now heir to the throne of Niya, Lop Nur and territories, and will be sought out by my enemies. I worry most about how my mother and brother will respond. Forgive the brevity of my message, I have much to deal with at this time. Please protect Parsbit. Badal

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 01:13:46 EDT 2015
Subject: Re: Fwd:King Badal Parsu to Zhang Hans

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 01:20:07 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:The Green Banners

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 01:31:53 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

Jivaka,

Do not kill him, the man must be searched and interrogated. Does he have a bronze and gold dagger with a large black stone in the hilt in his possession? Or just the stone, an opal perhaps, the stone is the thing. I must recover that stone.

XXXX King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya, Lop Nur, and territories.

Re:Introduction and Your Commission

SWORDS AND SPEARS, AS MANY AS YOU CAN MAKE, AS FAST AS YOU CAN MAKE THEM. MELT DOWN THOSE DAMNED WINDOW SCREENS IF YOU MUST. DEATH IS COMING TO THE OASES!!

Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

Lyimo, Have you heard of a story-teller named Ban Gu? He would be very old now, perhaps dead for some years. He was a favorite of my grandfather and would visit our court often, with news of the East and many stories. I have not seen him for years, but his words still haunt my thoughts. He once spoke of a battle between a great army of east and a handful of camel archers and spear-men of the Oasis. Despite the odds, the archers defeated the great army by conjuring a demon from the desert sands. I was never sure if Ban Gu was reciting history or folklore, there were always so many unbelievable details in his accounts of either; but nevertheless, I have always wanted to meet that demon. King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya, Lop Nur, and territories.

Re:Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

Thief Feegle, My informants tell me you are taking advantage of the wealthy fools of Daiyuan in Suojo in the Onion Mountains. If true, my soldiers will soon be by to retrieve my belongings. They will remove an eye or a limb for each item that you fail to return. King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 01:37:50 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:to Jivaka Saca from Badal Parsu

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 01:41:31 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Introduction and Your Commission

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Lyimo, Storyteller
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 02:08:53 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:to Lyimo from King Badal Parsu

From: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 02:19:11 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Magi Feegle Yitaka to King Badal Parsu

From: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha
To: Moderator
Date: Sat Jun 06 05:56:33 EDT 2015
Subject: Fwd:Loan

From: Loan

—— Forwarded message ——

From: Queen Shayn

Date: 2015-06-06 11:56 GMT+02:00

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Loan

To: Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

Jivaka Saca,

I wonder at the tone of your last message. I sincerely hope that you did not mean to insinuate that I might not stand to my word. I have received your funds and value the discreetness of their delivery, but I hope you do not, by our deal, fancy yourself above the proper respect for my position.

As for the treasure, I must have misunderstood you. When you first mentioned it, I expected that you were talking about an ownerless cache somewhere in the desert, but by what you wrote in your last letter it rather sounded like the valuables belong to one of our noble families.

Maybe there was a misunderstanding here. My noblewomen only possess lands in the oases that form my kingdom. The desert will always be unclaimed land. So if the ruins you are talking about, are situated in the desert, then the treasure might belong to no one, but if it really was hidden on land that is still in possession of one of our noble families, then they are the only ones to have a right to this horde.

In the desert, there are countless ruins. Some are nothing more than a few stacked up stones, some are entire dead cities, with paved streets, subterranean chambers half filled with sand and columns whose inscriptions in a foreign language have been sanded off to illegibility. These cities that we call Agdam are rumored to be haunted by ghosts and rarely do my people go there, except for Marami. The Marami are brave women who search the desert and the ruins for artefacts of the culture that built them that we call the Aynoan culture, although we know almost nothing about it. The Marami often come home with wondrous artefacts and tend to know well the ruins of the desert. I will arrange for you to meet with one of them if you think that your treasure can be found in the desert.

Concerning the noble woman that you describe, your description fits many a woman of my court. Can you at least tell me how long ago she is

supposed to have lived.

I regret that I will not be able to greet you in person at your arrival as I have traveled to Aksu. Though the roads - as you well know - were quite dusty and the sun harsh in its splendor, I have felt the need to come here at this time to strenghten my bond to the people of this beautiful city. Do not fear, you will be greeted at the palace of Kucina in all honor none the less and given appropriate quarters as I have offered.

I hope that you will stay a while so that we have time to speak in person and avoid any misunderstandings in the future. Further preparations for your expedition, if there is still reason to go forward with it, we can discuss through messages that will quickly reach me here in Aksu.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

Re:The Green Banners

Dearest Badal,

Your will be done. The so called Wheat Scythe of the West is a threat to many. My way of life shall not be threatened, and I will not sit idly by while he destroys yours.

My clan will move into the boarders of your mighty nations of Niya and Lop Nur. For the time being we will not bother the caravans traveling seperate from the Green Banners, however those with the forces of Zhang will be considered fair game.

I have written to ten brothers-in-arms. They shall answer my call and soon the green bannered army will be swallowed by the dust of ten thousand horses, and trampled beneath their hooves.

Forgive me my ignorance of your marital standing, but I offer you my eldest daughter as a Bride, if such a thing is required.

I remain,

Ghayth The Wolf the Spirit Mountains

Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Dearest Jivamitra,

I am sure that your most wise Queen has sent you to me, and for that I am grateful.

I have to argument with the people of the Oasis, I only wish for my people to thrive. And Zhang and his Green Banners stand against.

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 06 07:22:47 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:The Green Banners

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 06 07:30:31 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

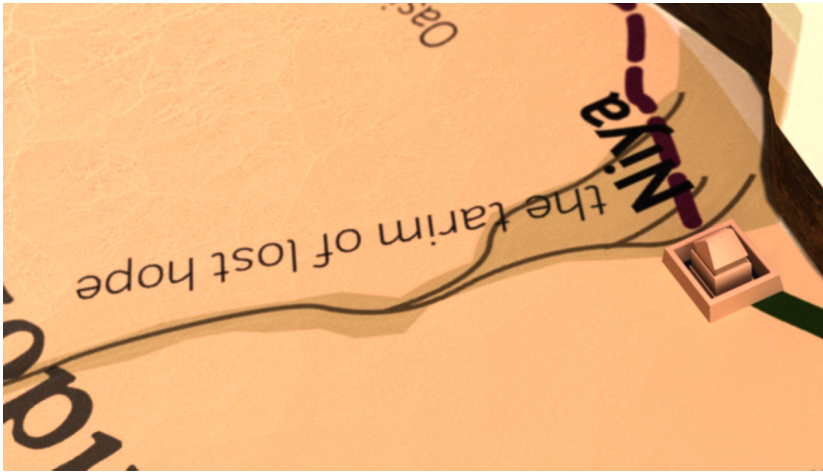
I go to war, and if you offer iron weapons, I shall accept such a thing, especially if they are as great a quality as you promise. At minimum I require arms for one-thousand riders. More if possible.

What is it you want in return?

I remain,

Ghayth The Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

The Library of Riya



An extract from a traveller's account of the great library at Niya:

The structure is one of huge halls and hallways of white marble, their walls shaped like honeycombs filled with books and scrolls. On the outside, the extensive building is surrounded by a portico whose columns are shaped as statues of the prophets of Kusinne, holding the roof's weight as they carried the weight of knowledge.

Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to King Badal Parsu of Riya: The Great Library

Your Majesty,

I write to you upon the advice of Queen Shayn of Kucha, monarch of my kingdom and supporter, in the tradition of her great mother Queen Fadya, founder of the kingdom and endower of the Grand Abbey of Kucha at Kucina.

The paths across the desert from Kucha to Niya in this sunny season demand light packing to spare load for water and for swifter travel;

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 06 19:51:32 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to King Badal Parsu of Niya: The Great Library

yet I have chosen the best among our works to send with this note: a quantity of our finest paper, pens and ink; a copy of the Little Book of Kusinne with marbled endpapers illuminated by the deft hand of my former novice Sugnumae, now guesting at the Abbey; and a measure of frankincense prepared according to our traditions from olibanum resin, a treasure of our land.

I enclose with this missive an index of our oldest and most authentic works of the tradition of Kusinne, for the attention of the keepers of the Great Library of Niya, noting which works we believe complete, and which works are fragmentary, as well as a list of the other texts named in our older works which we know only from mention and quotation, and lack copies of.

It is my fondest hope that the Great Library may contain works of Kusinne tradition which the Grand Abbey lacks. When my traveling disciples return from their sojourn in Suojo, where they are teaching the arts of preparing the codex-form book to assist Magi of Knowledge Feegle Yitaka, I plan to send them to Niya to visit the Grand Library.

I humbly request that you commend my search for Kusinne's foundational works to the keepers of the Grand Library so that we may share in the wealth of knowledge in the Path of the Book.

May you walk in strength and wisdom in the Paths of Kusinne!

Nafisah, Abbess of the Grand Abbey of Kucha at Kucina

Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: In Thanksgiving, with Fruit, Sulphur and Niter

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Yuan Sala, Physician, greetings and thanks,

Your renewed residence here in Kucina has been of providential timing. Many thanks to you for the succor of Master Liu Shui's apprentice on the occasion of the Master's naughty monkey dislodging a heavy roof tile upon the poor young man's head. I am cheered to see that he is getting about well, now that his eyes are both pointing the same direction, but he will have a scar for life. I expect he is too forthright to explain it away as some wound suffered in adventure or valorous action, but it will make a good tale.

Liu Shui has inspected the drainage and foundations of the Abbey and pronounced them to be sound; perhaps no surprise, as they are largely of Master Liu's design. Nevertheless I feel well assured at his inspection.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Yuan Sala, Physician

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 06 20:11:12 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: In Thanksgiving, with Fruit, Sulphur and Niter

We have ample water collected during the winter to stock our cisterns, so none shall lack for a bath, and our flowers will bloom in abundance.

Here is a basket of fresh fruits from the Abbey's gardens. The dried ones will follow upon the fresh in a few weeks, when they are sufficiently prepared. Master Liu recommended a means of drying where both sun and a draft of air were applied, and it has improved the speed of the process and the flavor of the result.

At your request I have located a quantity of flowers of sulphur and some of niter crystals, which accompany this note. May they aid your Art. I understand that the jar of honey the Abbey's hives provided earlier has been of good use to you in the prevention of festering wounds, amongst other uses.

Peace be upon you, skill in your Art, and may your practice prosper.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Path of the Well, in the Path of the Hearth, and the Path of the Book

Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge: Sugnumae

Esteemed Feegle,

Please do not read this letter to its bearer; I regret that I was compelled to send this one back for a lack of application to matters of study in the useful arts of the Path of the Book, and behavior which distracted your more serious students. You may do as you will on this point. I am well pleased with your other students, of whom more below.

I am so pleased that Sugnumae has extended her visit. With the disappearance of my best transcriptionist Nabylah (according to my garden-pavilion guest, the engineer Liu Shui, Nabylah was seized by an impulse to take the Path of the Road), Sugnumae has volunteered herself as copyist and illuminator. Truly her pages glow with beautiful letters, lines, and colors.

In case Nabylah's path tends your direction, you may recognize her from her short stature, large dark eyes, and very small feet. She might be found employing herself as a bazaar letter-writer.

Sugnumae has written for you her observations of the Abbey of Kucha, including illustrations of birds and fish from our gardens, which she includes with this letter.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 06 22:48:49 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge: Sugnumae

I am looking forward to a response from King Badal Parsu of Niya, for I understand that he is both a ruler devoted to the Paths of Kusinne, and sponsor of the best-known library in many days' journey. It is my hope that the ancient writings of the tradition of Kusinne have been preserved in the Library of Niya and that the Abbey may copy and compile the parts which we know are missing from our accounts of the founding of the Paths of Kusinne.

Your students have arrived, conducted by Daryush and Sister Cittern, and have been made welcome in one of the outbuildings of the Abbey of Kucha, so that they may conduct themselves as they please, without being required to follow the rites and timetables of the Abbey rules, but can easily reach the scriptorium to learn the useful arts of the Path of the Book and to decorously enjoy the pools, fountains, and flowers of the gardens. If the caravans allow, they may return late in the season, or if the rough weather comes early, perhaps they may bide over the winter. I will put them to good work, you may be sure.

Many thanks to you for introducing Daryush and Cittern to the devotees of Kusinne in Suojo. They have brought back an number of interesting and useful works which shed light upon the early traditions of Kusinne.

May your wisdom enlighten your students and your chosen land.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Light of Kusinne

Rumors of Assassians

An excerpt from a merchant's travelling account, excavated from a tomb:

... when we arrived, the city seemed to be astir with the recent passage of a fearsome warrior, who, we gathered, was in pursuit of a thief of rare books, such as are written by heresiarchs. A reward was offered for information about heirlooms and books that this thief had stolen, but few would discuss this matter with the assassin, and she departed in wrath.

We agreed among ourselves that we would not want to encounter such a pursuer, and we wondered what would happen to the pursued thieves. What could possibly influence this relentless pursuit?

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 08 08:58:12 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Wolf Fangs

Re: Wolf Fangs

Dearest Selethen,

War threatens to come to these lands, as I am sure you aware. The Green Banner marches into lands not rightly held by him, and even is so brazen as to orchestrate the assassination of the King of Niya's son and heir. I written to the King and he has invited to fight these banners in his land.

This is a simple message, if you march with the Green Banner, I cannot promise you safety. The vultures are circling in the skies and soon the wolves will hunt their prey, and many innocents will lose their stock, and perhaps their lives in this coming conflict. However, should you have information relating to the movements of Zhang Hans' troops, or their numbers, I will be sure that my mighty warriors will steer clear of your caravans.

I remain, Ghayth Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

From the Expedition of 1836

8th Thermidor, 1836: Hieronymus writes to me of the results of his excavations near Chayi. He has uncovered a system of dams and sluice gates that he suggests dates to the early periods of its habitation.

An Invitation

Dearest Upasena,

War draws ever closer to Niya as the Green Banners push further along the Winter Roads.

I am the alpha, leading his wolves to the helpless sheep that flock around the impotent green clad Shepard. You can be like the vultures, picking the carcasses clean, surviving on little more than scraps, or you can be like the Winter Wolf and join the pack.

Accept my invitation and I will show you the secret paths and long-forgotten wells, so that you too can strike at the heart of Zhang's forces, and leave them with nothing in the heat of the desert.

I trust you to make the correct choice.

I remain,

Ghayth

From:

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To:

Upasena, Brigand Captain

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 08 09:03:17 EDT 2015

Subject: An Invitation

Ceramics of Kucha

Catalog Item #241: Zulajj tile. Its craftsmanship indicates its origin in Kucha, characteristic of the ceramics of that place.

Catalog Item #262: Tableware, Kucha manufacture. The unique ceramic style is instantly identifiable.



Mourning and Celebration

An extract from a history of the royal family of Kucha, referring to the funeral of Queen Fadya of Kucha:

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucha/>

The whole town was adorned by colorful lanterns, banners and garlands of flowers. There were people everywhere and the scents of the petals rivaled those of the cooking fires. But more importantly, there was music and dancing in every street and works of art of all kinds. Finely sculpted statues and pillars were set up in the squares, ornate pottery was displayed around the public fountains, and exquisite paintings on silks and tiles and wooden boards were hung on every the wall. The mood of the city was unlike anything I have felt before. There was a spirit of shared wonder and elation, of celebration and camaraderie, even though the city was filled with people of all the Oasis Kingdoms and beyond. For a whole week, we seemed to live in a dream world. People were talking to strangers in the streets as if they were brothers, inviting them to their tables or to share in the smoking of the exotic weeds that they had brought with them. And so many discussion were about art and spirituality and the deeper meanings of life.

Cycle 4: Rafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

Your Majesty,

It has been a busy and eventful season at the Grand Abbey.

Long Huo, the injured apprentice of Engineer Liu Shui, has recovered from his head injury under the care of Physician Yuan Sala, whose newly established practice in Kucina is thriving. The naughty monkey who injured Long Huo, as it turned out, is Liu Shui's pet! I trust that the Engineer will keep better care of the monkey in future.

Engineer Liu Shui has inspected our drainage and water storage and pronounced them satisfactory, though he has pressed us to make repairs where the original workmanship did not hold water. I have put our landscapers under his charge, and they will be finished with repairs this season. While examining Engineer Liu Shui's plans, I discovered that opposite his concealed postern tunnel, in a deep storage cellar, he had created a cunningly hidden side shaft. Though it does not reach the surface, it would be hard to find. I have directed that two copies of each of our newly acquired doctrines of original Kusinne traditions be set aside and buried in sealed clay jars against any mishap with our grand library and scriptorium. Above the buried jars will rest sacks of salt and powdered clay, and none but the initiates shall know that our most precious riches of the Path of the Book are concealed there.

Physician Yuan Sala is well satisfied with the carpet-merchant's house, and has sent for various apothecary supplies, perhaps in furtherance of works of alchemy. Yuan Sala's latest requests include flowers of sulphur and crystals of nitre, as well as more conventional supplies such as a jar of honey to guard wounds against festering, medicinal and scented herbs and the like. I hope that the Physician has been of use to you and the Court on any matters needful.

My disciple Nabylah, whom I knew to be straying outside the Abbey by use of the concealed postern tunnel, has taken to the Path of the Road, at least by the report of Liu Shui. At any event, she completed her assigned copying work, spoke briefly and cryptically to her friends among the community of the Abbey, left her cell in good order, and is now nowhere to be found. I have asked those I know on the road to keep an eye out for her and treat her kindly – probably she is traveling as a Kusinne pilgrim of short stature and tiny feet, with big dark eyes, and perhaps working as a bazaar letter-writer; Nabylah has a clear writing hand. Unless, sly girl, she is given to forgery. Certainly her talents with the pen could enable her to do great mischief if she had the will.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 09 00:52:22 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 4: Nafisah of Kucha to Queen Shayn

I have written to King Badal Parsu of Niya by your advice, and eagerly await his reply regarding the Great Library. I hope he gains enjoyment from the copy of the Little Book of Kusinne I sent as a gift, with marbled endpapers and illuminations by my former student Sugnumae, Magi Feegle Yitaka's dear one, who has been abiding at the Abbey this season.

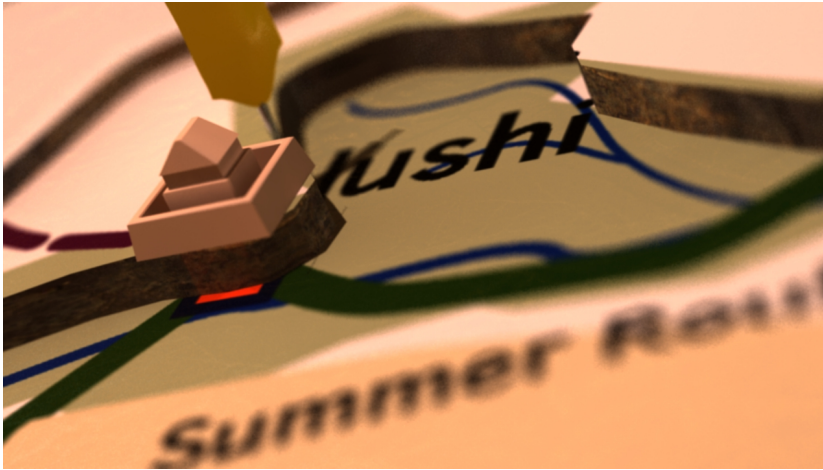
Sugnumae has taken up many of the duties of Nabylah as far as the Path of the Book, and she has been enjoying the quiet ways of the Abbey, refusing my suggestions that she meet the great and good folk of Kucina, though we are quite near the city. I am afraid she was rather sharp with Engineer Liu Shui when the Engineer first arrived and mistook her for a servant or a novice rather than my honored guest.

There is a small party of Magi Feegle Yitaka's students abiding in one of the Abbey's outbuildings, for their manner is not as restrained as one would welcome in the Abbey. Yet they have been applying themselves diligently to the matter of creating the codex book, as is our strength. The more books, the more space for useful arts, beautiful works, and abiding words of wisdom. They trim pages, they fold and sew bundles, they grind and mix ink and practice the arts of precise transcription in the writing frames. And while they learn, they work. I shall have many more copies of the Little Book of Kusinne and a number of manuals of useful arts by the time they have learned enough that it is time for them to return to Suojo!

With lasting gratitude to my sovereign and sponsor, in the light of Kusinne,

Abbess Nafisah of Kucha

Troubles in Jushi



An excerpt from Ban Zhao's Histories of the Western Hinterlands:

At that season, the laborers of Jushi staged an uprising, refusing to work because of the lack of water. The dry wells and the dry fields caused much strife there.

Truly, the mismanagement of these hinterland kingdoms knows no end!
Rejoice that you live in peaceful civilization.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/jushi/>

Re:Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to King Badal Parsu of Niya: The Great Library

Abbess Nafisah,

Thank-you for your thoughtful gifts, I am humbled by your courtesy. And send my greetings to Queen Shayn when you next see her. Your disciples are quite welcome to visit the Great Library of Niya, however, they may be disappointed in what they find there. My father, in his madness, shortly before his death, ordered that many of the sacred texts be destroyed. I am still not certain of the full extent of the losses that resulted and I may never know. Unfortunately all of the library keepers were executed by my father after discovering that some of the documents he wanted destroyed were taken by a scholar.

I regret to say that your "Magi of Knowledge" Feegle Yitaka was the scholar who took the texts, and although he may have had the best intentions, under the Laws of Niya, stealing from the Royal Library is a crime that is punishable by death. I suggest that you advise your

From:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 09 01:38:06 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to King Badal Parsu of Niya: The Great Library

disciples to not spend too much time with this Yitaka, as my Father's assassins may still be pursuing him.

King Badal Parsu of Niya

A change in Kucha

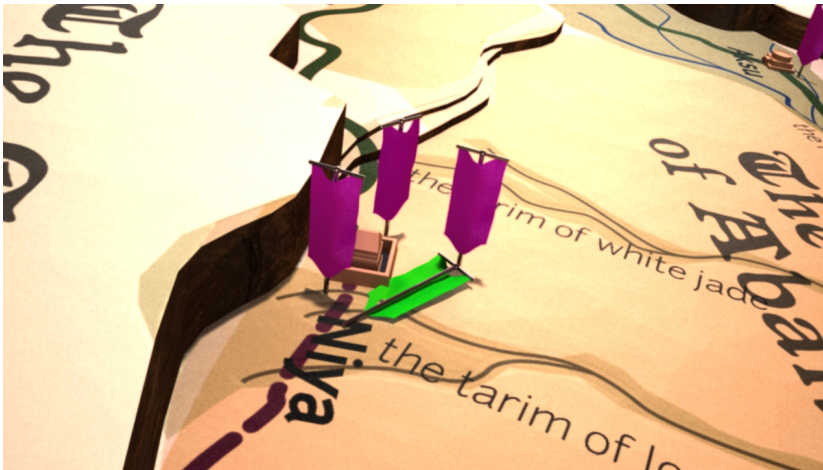
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/aksu/>

An excerpt from a letter by a noblewoman of Aksu:

The mutual respect shown at the funeral of our late, beloved Queen Fadya has greatly healed the tensions between those who practice Symness and those who follow the fourfold paths of Kusinne. There is a new unity here, as all see each other as sisters of Kucina, equally beloved by our new Queen. Many who would not have spoken previously now greet each other courteously, and the agents of the monarchy are treated with deference. Why, just today, my neighbor invited me to the gathering she held to display her newly acquired Zulaji tiles, and there was much gossip between those who were enemies in former times. I heard many rumors of a treasure hidden in an ancient temple somewhere in Kucina.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucina/>

Tragedy in Riya



From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

In the 115th year, the son and heir of the King of Niya was leading a patrol along the oasis trade roads when he was killed in a dispute with soldiers of the Green Banner Army. In retaliation for the loss of his son's head, King Badal Parsu decreed that fifty of the soldiers of the Green Banner Army should lose their heads also, displayed above the main gate of Niya. This decree was carried out.

Selethen Varzakk to Farcry Vamto

My exquisite busy friend,

I wish you and all travelers through your land a soon ending of the unrest. But as the end of year is nearing, there is not very much to do than hoping that hunger and thirst will remember the people what important is in life. Still, coming to the end of the year, perhaps the hibernating of nature will be the much needed rest for us humans.

The stone you sent me is marvelous to behold. One of my nephews took a half out into the bright sun and was very impressed by the play of the colors; for my personal taste, I like the little smoldering in a not so bright room more. But it's a lovely piece of nature made artwork. You have to be a masterful caretaker if you are gifted with such a present by the land.

I'm optimistic that we'll find the way to you in the Blooming Season, this time in Chayi. A third of the route to the east from Jushi, you wrote. . . Is it possible that, if one travels to Yiwu, there are on the right hand, seeing into the desert basin, the remains of a former stronghold? I seem to remember very large blocks, which could possibly be high as two or three men, if the distance to the street is as great as I assume. It's a spacious area, were some of the blocks are showing themselves. I can't think of anything other than a military bastion, which wouldn't make any sense in this vastness.

Wait; could it be that, when the walls were still standing, the area around it could be filled with lush vegetation? It's surely older than the memories of the oldest storytellers; I never heard anything about this place. Is Chiya lying on the left side of the road, more to the midlands of Gushi, or is it in the vicinity of those ruins?

I wish your place preferable weather and your family a merry laugh

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Aw: Re:A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

My assiduous forge master Jivamitra,

I have to thank you again for letting me be your guest. After I assembled a caravan in the required hurry, I took once more the lead of a caravan on the street. I told you, that I hope that soon the Beloved Blossom of my household will take over the lead of my business, but I'm still young and healthy enough to participate in the grinding Routes around the desert. So I saw it as a little help to her to mount up again. But your hospitality after your warm welcome was much appreciated and, as I'm now on my way to Niya, I feel it was much needed, too. My warmest greetings to your prodigious wife.

To my surprise, I was greeted just a day after the departure in the name of the Adjudicators. There's seemingly an enclave near the frontier which consists of a larger village of people which are faithful to the Adjudicators. I saw no signs of new settling, but the reason for escaping my attention hitherto may be the not so energetic pace like in older times. I saw the potter made some jar in a style which remembers the Eonic traditions.

If there will be no quarrel on the road, I'm optimistic to reach Niya before the Hibernating season, but time is a peculiar companion. I'll let you know how the journey will unravel itself from the folds of the near future. But the time I write to you is far from random; as you surely know, the son of the Niyan King has died in an, I dare to say, in the dumbest kind of accident I heard at least this year. Is there anything you wish to change with the presentation of your exquisite work?

As the flame of my writing lamp appears to be in need of some more fuel, it seems I took sufficient lines to the paper this evening. We need some months on the road yet and my bones crave the makeshift bed my faithful helper has already installed.

May the flames of your forge never be quenched

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 14:45:11 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw: Re:A Delivery Contract and Ongoing Business

Aw: Re: Wolf Fangs

My glorified friend Ghayth,

War is a dreadful time for non-warriors. Even for most merchants, but there are some competitors who excel in these times and try to make the best bargain, even fan conflicts for their purses sake, sacking the spoils but not risking the dangers of any battle and speaking of it as it would be a tussle. Just now I remember the necklace, there are some fewer in the world now thanks to you.

I for my part, prefer a way which is not so profitable, but much less risky. And it grants the possibility of a welcome a year later and not seeing burned villages and fields. Now, at harvesting, losses will be high and the hunger will come, I'm sure about it. In the end, as peaceful merchant, I'm welcome in most camps, villages and cities, as I bring wares, news and the occasional joy someone attains finding a little commodity in a large bunch of ordinary wares. Remember the joy in the face of your youngest, as he found the small red feather in the emptied casket of, let me think, wasn't it some oil for lanterns? About three years ago? My Beloved Blossom told me he wears still a feather around the neck. Could it be the same? Now imagine merchants lying in their blood or expelled from the routes. Who will give notice about the small things not warlike which make our women so happy and the children squeal with joy? Imagine stalwart warriors, loaded with bread, cloth and harvesting tools! If the corners of your mouth have twitched, you held the same picture as I now.

I'm sure you know that we, my daughter and I, travel along the Summer and the Winter Routes, each year; since the time of my grand-grandfather, my family does nothing besides trading on the routes around the whole relinquished desert. Never are we going "under one's flag", but every time we enjoy protection from warriors against monsters and petty robbers we try to give reason for it, to be worth of protection. Bringing equipment to those who ask for it.

So, should you see the caravan of my daughter taking the same street as some enemy soldiers, so you'll battle the soldiers as it's your duty, I assume. But as our duty is to travel, and thus being protected in every land by other warriors, we would take no part in it, so is it possible to discern soldiers from merchants and attack only the soldiers? Or wait until the caravan and the unit part way? I don't understand very much of war, I fear. But I understand being a merchant and a loving father.

Alas, at the moment I have no letter on the whereabouts of the caravan,

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 15:32:33 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw: Re: Wolf Fangs

but it should be arriving in Niya or could already have reached the City of Niya itself. In the City, she should be safe after my assumption. I'm full of sorrow for my daughter. Surely, you with your warriors and the Niyan soldiers would protect her from harm if she should be attacked by others, wouldn't you? Taking care of her would relieve my old heart to the fullest.

My best wishes should follow your ways

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Fwd: Re:to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

——— Weitergeleitete Nachricht ———

Von: "Queen Shayn"

Datum: 11.06.2015 21:37

Betreff: Re: [Tower of Callisto] to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

An: "King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya"

Cc:

My dear Badal,

My thoughts are with you in your grief and I hope that the bloody vengeance that you have taken has given your heart some peace.

My congratulations on your victories over the Green Banner. May the sun guide your spears and the stars refresh your soldiers' hearts in the battles to come.

I cannot send you a large force to support you as much as I would like to, so let it at least be a gesture of my bond to you that with this letter I send to you a Claw. They are five women schooled in the art of secrecy and hidden warfare. They have trained together all their lives and will not be separated except by death. They know that I have placed them under your orders and will lay down their lives for you if you command them to do so. Do with them as you see fit, they are yours.

Be assured that I will do all that is in my power to protect Parsbit. She continues to amaze us all with her charm and cleverness. I have taken her with me on my current visit to the beautiful city of Aksu, to show her the wonders of this city, especially at this time of the year, when the

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 15:38:16 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd: Re:to Queen Shayn from King Parsu

citrus trees that have given the city its name hang full of fruits and their fresh scents fill the air, but also to keep her close to me where I deem her safest.

Soon, we will return to Kucha.

Will you tell me why it is about your mother's and your brother's reaction that you worry ?

May the lights in the heavens keep you safe and guide you to victory.

Shayn

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 15:48:28 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Zhang Hans

Selethen Varzakk to Zhang Hans

My boldest friend,

Many thanks for your conveying with Jivamitra from Aksu. I'm going back from my visit in Aksu, in lead of a caravan. Yes, you read correctly, I've taken to the road again. In matters of honor, bones, even old ones like mine, shouldn't rest but make anything within their capability. We are on the way to Niya and I'm expecting to see the Beloved Blossom of my household facing me way before Shule.

Writing of Niya, there come other thoughts into my mind than trade and money. As a loving father, the news from Niya are sad. Sad as another father will be outliving his child. But more so as somewhere in the vicinity of the land or even the main city my daughter is traveling. Suddenly, I see myself in the position of having my daughter let journeying into a battle zone. My heart is dark with the prospect of not seeing her again.

But could it be that the news about a starting war are greatly exaggerated. Could it has been an accident, perhaps a mistake? As I'm too far away and ignorant in the ways of war, please lend me your experience and knowledge to calm my heart a little bit.

I am your very humble servant.

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kusinne/>

From the Museum of the Oasis Kingdoms

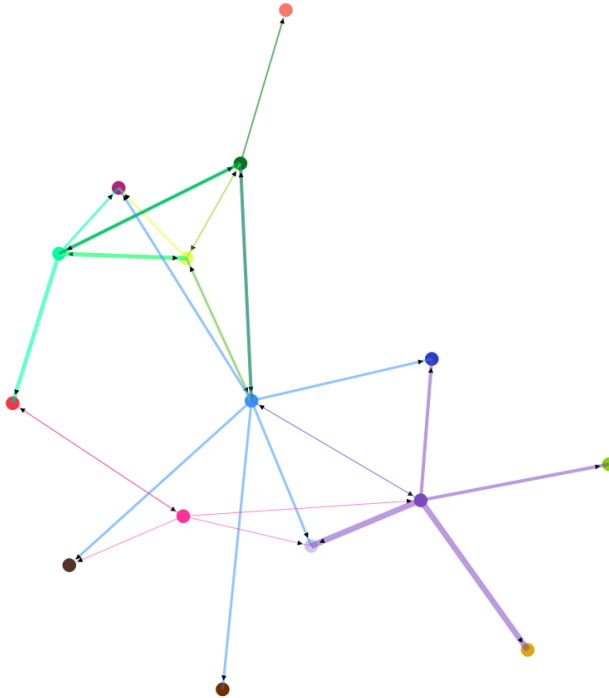
Catalog item #34: painting on silk, depicting the legendary Queen Fadya, enthroned and surrounded by the four symbols of the Kusinne paths.

Catalog item #31: painting on silk, depicting the raising of a memorial obelisk on a royal tomb.

From a sign at the exhibit:

“The next significant outpouring of Oasis culture is that associated with the post-Fadya period, also referred to as the Oasis Mourning Culture, because of the way many of the early works of this movement are related to the reign and death of the legendary Queen Fadya.”

Cycle 4 Communication Web



From: [Liu Shui, Engineer](#)
To: [Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha](#)
Moderator
Date: Thu Jun 11 15:52:40 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Monuments

Re:Monuments

To her Majesty, Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara, Ruler of Kucha

I am greatly honored by your request and enthusiastically accept your invitation. Fortunately, I am currently residing in the Grand Abbey of Kusinne, where I have taken refuge from the long arm of the Dragon, **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**. I will present myself to you within the week, with completed plans for the monument you desire.

Your humble servant,

劉水

[Delivered by way of: 龍火, Apprentice of 劉水]

On Thu, Jun 4, 2015 at 5:52 AM, Queen Shayn wrote:

Honorable Liu Shui,

I have heard of your magnificent work, of your monuments and constructs and have once seen for myself one of the impressive machinae that you have built. It was in my youth, when I still had the opportunity to travel, so I do not remember where it was, but the memory of this masterpiece has stayed with me and oftentimes appeared in my dreams.

My kingdom of Kucha has unique pottery. Our ornate tiles, the Zulajj, are sold in all of the Oasis Kingdoms and our fine tableware graces the tables of many a palace. Our stonemasons create beautiful statues and obelisks, but my palace in Kucina was built under my mother's reign by an architect from the Middle Kingdom and so were all the noble houses in Kucina and Aksu.

Therefore, I invite you to Kucha and hope that you will come and help us build new wonders to honor the sun, the moon and the stars which guide us and to amaze the people of Kucha and all those who wander the Silk Road.

First of all, since I saw you machina, a construct was born in my dreams that would depict the celestial mechanics. It could stand in a place of honor in the palace gardens, towering above everyone and teaching all those who behold it the mechanics of the world.

Please let me know if you would come to Kucha to build for me this monument to the skies and many more wonders after it and to teach my people the art of building such large structures.

In admiration of your genius and your work

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara, Ruler of Kucha

Re: The Puissant Knowledges of Iriu Zhui

To Lyimo the Silver-tongued, Wordweaver and Master Storyteller of Suojo,

Master Lyimo, you dishonor yourself when referring to your personage as a commoner. I have heard tale of your great works: The Tale of the Ten-Thousand Tongues, The Sojourn of Fèng Xiang, and many more. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the coronation of Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara, avoiding the watchful gaze of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years**, Lord of the Middle Kingdom, and Ruler of All Civilization Under Heaven. As for the rumors you have heard, no, I am not at this time attempting to recreate the fabled Copper Birds of Fan Zher. What I am doing is designing a construct that will depict the celestial mechanics for the Queen of Kucha.

As for tales...let me tell you the story of “The Emperor’s Child and the Nightingale Cage”.

Not long ago, I was approached by an emissary of his Imperial Majesty with a request. I was to design an Imperial Menagerie as a gift, to celebrate the upcoming nuptials of 最年長公主. A marriage, which as you may have heard, is no longer on the table. Months had passed, and we were nearing the end of construction and most of the animals had already been brought in and placed in their enclosures. One night, her highness’ betrothed entered, drunkenly, with a 花魁 on each arm. He and his “companions” wandered throughout the Menagerie, knocking into and over things as they went. Their crowning achievement of the night was to begin fornicating with one another within the Nightingale Cage, a roughly mansized cage where I was going to place a pair of mechanized nightingales, similar to those famed birds of Fan Zher. Unfortunately for them, they unlocked the cages for the lions, tigers, and other beasts while they stumbled about. Of course, these beasts made their debut appearance whilst he was in the midst of... plowing the field. Their appearance terrified the 花魁 who was not presently mounted, and in her panic slammed shut the gate to the cage. The gate slammed shut on her highness’ betrothed’s member, slicing it off, and leaving him to the mercy of the hungry beasts behind him.

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, her highness had witnessed her betrothed fornicating with the 花魁 and had departed, teary eyed to fetch the palace guards so that he might be ousted from the premises. The guards returned in time to fend off the beasts, and return them to their cages before the betrothed could bleed out from the wounds inflicted upon him. Suffice to say, the man now serves as an attendant

From:

Liu Shui, Engineer

To:

Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 16:44:24 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: The Puissant Knowledges of Liu Shui

to **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years'** harem and not as a son-in-law. Unfortunately, as her highness' betrothed was of a noble bloodline, someone had to take the blame for his foolishness. As you may have already guessed by now, that convenient scapegoat was I.

And now I find myself on the run from the long arm of the Dragon, and not living in the lap of luxury, reaping the rewards of such a grand commission.

There you have it, a new story to add to your repertoire. If you still wish to meet with me, contact my student, Long Huo, and he will direct you to my present location.

Regards,

劉水

Engineer of the 9th Rank.

Liu Shui, Engineer Liu Shui, Engineer -

Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Great General,

I offer heartfelt sympathies at the recent events in Niya. I had hoped for peace and civility to remain with us longer.

Especially disturbing is King Badal's disregard for the Kusunne Path of the Road, which mandates respect. It is a sign that the high-born of Niya are losing their faith. In the Cycles it is made clear that when the people of the Oasis Kingdom the Demons will return and bring blight, death and war with them. Even id this is the fear of the past it worries me. I have no desire to see such horrors for the people of the Oasis Kingdoms.

Our mutual acquaintance, the merchant of Shule, Selethen Varzakk is on the road to Niya, I hope his journey is safe. As I hope you will remain General.

Honour unto the Emperor of Heaven,

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 16:47:41 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Mighty Warrior,

I am pleased that you see the Oases as friends. As Ironmaster I have influence among many leaders along the Road.

I know that there is much distress regarding the tensions with the Middle Kingdom.

My goods are unparalleled in quality. When my Queen, Blessed is her memory, took Aksu and I saw what the blades I had wrought did to the soldiers of Aksu I was aghast. It was a true moment of self doubt.

Weapons I have, spears and swords, arrowheads, and more. I also have a number of useful items; including tack for your fine steeds.

I do not have the logistical capacity to deliver such a quantity to you. Do you know a trader who may pass by to deliver these goods?

Additionally I face material shortages. This will hamper my ability to produce goods as I require a capable engineer to aid me in my mines. I also know that General Zhang has put forth a warrant for one Liu Shui. If Liu passes your way I would ask you to work diligently to secure any assistance he could give. In return I would secret Liu Shui from Zhang.

If you connect me with any engineer I know my weapons will reach you and please you to know end.

I would also ask that you assure that trade on the Road continues unabated, and that you respect the traditions of Kusinne in the lands you pass through or settle.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 11 21:46:56 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

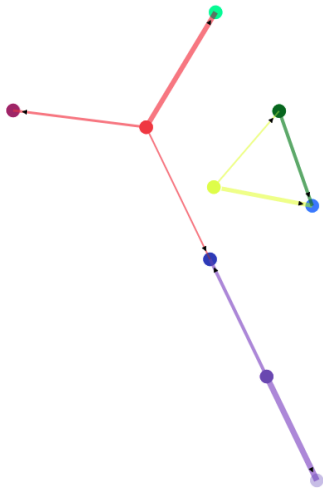
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Cycle: *Year 115, Season of Withering*

The folklore of the season of Withering is characterized by a preoccupation with endings. This year lives up to that: the end of the harvest and the end of peace came hand-in-hand.

Who knows what troubles await the Oasis Kingdoms now?

This ends Cycle 4 and begins Cycle 5...



Romads in Lop Nur and Niya



An excerpt from a letter found in Miran cache #25:

To the kala Kunala of pleasant aspect, the vasu Lyimsu sends good health, much, infinite, and thus I write.

I am most disturbed by the reports from my agents in Lop Nur to learn that the Horse Nomads, not content with their successes in Anxi, have now descended upon the caravan roads of Lop Nur and Niya, and prey like wolves of the desert on any caravan that dares travel under the protection of the Green Banner army. In the markets and the streets I have heard many tell that these nomads have called upon their brethren, an uncountable horde of inexhaustible horse riders, and they mean to defy the might of the Middle Kingdom itself.

If these reports be true, what steps are you taking to safeguard your caravans? Will you still travel under the protection of the Green Banners? What offense has the general of the Middle Kingdom committed that angers them so? Are the rumors that he has taken the daughter of a nomadic warlord as concubine true?

Write to me soon with news of this conflict.

Transcribed according to the dictation of the vasu Lyimsu by the scribe Nabylah

The Iron Ore of Aksu



An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume II:

The region of the Empyrean mountains near Aksu has a long history of ironworking, due to the abundant presence of the black-ore iron that has been continuously mined there for over three millennia.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/empyrian-mountains/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/aksu/>

What can be found in Khotan



An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XXVII:

After the period of its subjugation to Niya had ended, late in the first century, Khotan became known as a place of bandits and mercenaries.

RC:Cycle 5: Rafisah of Kucha to Queen Zhayn

Your Majesty,

As the season wears on, the Abbey's gardeners harvest the summer's bounty and preserve what is best for the dark and cold days to come. With this letter I send you the best of our fruits, the pick of our dried fragrant and culinary herbs, and the last of our jasmine blossoms.

King Badal Parsu of Niya has responded, referring me, to my great surprise, to Magi Feegle Yitaka! To my disappointment, the King reports that his father destroyed many of the ancient works of Kusinne, but with the aid of sympathetic librarians, Feegle has preserved some of these works. I know not whether Feegle understands what treasures he holds. Unless I am mistaken in my understanding of King Badal Parsu's reply, Feegle Yitaka may hold the very works I have been seeking.

Feegle Yitaka's students, those who remain, have been applying their lessons to good effect. Their work in the making of codex books is not so beautiful that I would send you a sample, but it will serve the cause of knowledge well. I have already been able to equip a number of pilgrims with the Little Book of Kusinne and a compact guide to the caravanserais, inns, and wayhouses that welcome those walking the Path of the Road. Most of Feegle's students will be returning to Suojo, bearing blank codex books, tools, and work samples, but two of them are staying on over the winter at the Abbey as copyists.

Feegle's Sugnumae has not told me whether she will be returning this season or if she plans to stay on.

I was glad to meet some of the exponents of Symness at your mother's memorials. I am pleased to know that the late Queen has been honored by all in her realm. Regrettably I am not in correspondence with any of the Wise of Symness, but I hope to find ones to write to.

Blessings upon you, wise Queen! May you abide in the Paths of Kusinne.

Abness Nafisah of Kucha

Cycle 5: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge: Codices and Sugnumae

Esteemed Feegle,

Sugnumae sends her thoughts with this letter. She has not yet told me if she will stay longer. I have been delighted to spend these seasons with her. She is surely welcome to guest with me at the Abbey as long as she should please. Sugnumae has been a quiet comfort to me after the abrupt and secret leavetaking of my favored disciple Nabylah, even taking up many of Nabylah's duties. Sugnumae is the equal of Nabylah in her beautiful writing hand, and Nabylah's superior in the arts of color and illumination.

Do tell me if you have knowledge of my lost disciple Nabylah. I had heard a rumor that she was acting as scribe to a warlord, but that may be just idle chatter from the road.

Please welcome back your students, bearing tools, blank codices, and samples of book work. I am well pleased with those who stayed the course, and are now accomplished copyists, ink makers and book-binders. Alas, our local paper lacks the superior smooth tooth and uniform color of the best of the Middle Kingdom, but when carefully made, can serve well. I would say that you may yet have to rely on imported paper. The two students not accompanying this party are staying over with me in the winter, and with diligence, may be able to provide you with skill in the matter of papermaking.

King Badal Parsu of Niya gives me strange news, which I hope you will be able to illuminate me as to your part. He writes that his father, in a fit of madness, caused the destruction of many ancient writings in the library, but that sympathetic librarians were able to deliver some of the most rare works into your hands before they were destroyed. He cautions that his father had dispatched agents of revenge, hearing that some works had escaped his order. Act as you see fit for your safety in this regard.

I beseech you that if any of the ancient writings which King Badal Parsu mentions should concern the history of Kusinne, that the Grand Abbey should receive copies. I send along my monk Daryush to inquire in this regard. Perhaps these works were the rare works that you wished to have me teach your students the skills to copy? If so, it would be a joyous recompense to receive copies of such.

May your wisdom enlighten your students and your chosen land.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

Moderator

Date: Sun Jun 14 16:29:45 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 5: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge: Codices and Sugnumae

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Light of Kusinne

From the Expedition of 1836

10th Thermidor, 1836: We have excavated the drainage system of the abbey. It proves to be a complex work of engineering. I may base my next presentation at the Academy on what it has to tell us about the technology of the Oasis Basin in the second century.

News from Hieronymus, who is still at Chayi: they have uncovered a structure in the desert to the east of the city, which they believe pre-dates the earliest Chayi settlements. They must have been ruins even then. Hieronymus describes the major feature as being very large blocks, worn by time and the desert sands. Hieronymus suspects that the area was originally quite fertile, speculating about the possibility of lush vegetation. I think it is much more likely that it was a military bastion of some sort.

From the Imperial Archives

From the Imperial Annals of the Middle Kingdom:

In the 115th Year of the Dynasty, the Green Banner Army of the West was deployed on the frontier. The general of the army, popularly known as the Wheat Scythe of the West, was noted for his accomplishments and quickly brought order to the ranks of the glorious imperial army.

In the midst of a conflict with the horse nomads from the northern wastelands, the general was felled by a quarrel fired from a crossbow, and so passed from the service of his Emperor.

This was reported to the Court of **The Emperor of Ten Thousand Years** in the Withering Season of the 115th year of the dynasty, long may it endure.

The player of Zhang Hansi, Frontier General has withdrawn from the game, due to time constraints. I'd like to thank him for his participation and the many creative ideas that his letters have spread throughout the game.

Re:Introduction and Your Commission

Accomplished King,

I must first extend my heart felt condolences on the recent tragedies in your lands. I have performed the mourning rights, and extend my sorrows to you.

I write in the hopes that your spirit may be lifted. Barring delay, my goods should soon arrive at your palace, under the care of the capable merchant of Dayuan Selethen Varzakk [Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant]. I pray that the goods he carries reach you swiftly, I know that the Road has become ever more dangerous this season. That they may be used to secure your borders against the troubles that encroach upon Niya these blades are my finest work; they will serve you well. Secure your borders and preserve the peace of the Oasis Kingdoms, Great King.

The news of the death of Zhang has just reached me. He was a fearsome, hard man. I am aware that a warrant was issued for an engineer by Zhang. I have been attempting to locate this Liu Shui for some time, and if you are able to supply me with information on Liu's whereabouts I would appreciate it greatly.

I bow to the Divine within you.

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

On 6 June 2015 at 01:41, King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya wrote:

SWORDS AND SPEARS, AS MANY AS YOU CAN MAKE, AS FAST AS YOU CAN MAKE THEM. MELT DOWN THOSE DAMNED WINDOW SCREENS IF YOU MUST. DEATH IS COMING TO THE OASES!!

Bloodied Banners

Dearest Badal,

The task has been completed. The heir-killer has breathed his last breath and now his armies scatter. I personally dragged his body behind my horse for some miles. May his soul get lost upon the Lonely Path and may he be beset by the Pale Wolf. It seems fitting that such a man's life should come to an end in Withering.

I have been merciless. My brothers and I have slain any soldier found in the fallen general's green. Our greater knowledge of the hidden baths has allowed us to harry them in their retreat. He prevent them from

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 15 22:56:26 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Introduction and Your Commission

From: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

To: King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 16 04:27:35 EDT 2015

Subject: Bloodied Banners

reaching their wells, and push them off the paths. I do not think that they will return soon.

I have sent my War Brothers back to their lands, and now only I remain. We have food and gold enough to last us for sometime.

Your victory is complete.

Ghayth

Wolf of the Spirit Mountain

Caravans Avoiding Niya

From a letter discovered in Miran Cache #25:

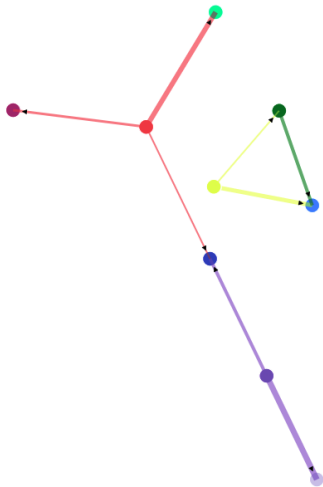
... around the campfire, the faithful followers of the Path of the Road speak of their concerns about the roads in Niya no longer being safe. There is an undercurrent of fear that the high-born of Niya no longer support the Kusine Paths like they should, though few dare to say it in so many words.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kingdom-of-niya/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kusinne/>

The discipline of the Green Banner Army leaves much to be desired, but chaos is something merchants fear above all else...

Cycle 5 Communication Web



Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

Dear friend, I write you now from my clan's new home of Chayi, after much toil and travel! It has been quite a year with all the time I have spent on the road; my respect for your fortitude has grown as I have experienced so much time away from a good, sturdy home. Our settlement is not much to look at yet; there is only so much time before the next planting season, so we have set up a handful of common buildings where we share space with one another until time allows us the luxury of spreading out into individual homes. The work on building a network of dikes and sluice gates consumes most of our time now. The idea and plans for this came from the great engineer, Liu Shui [Liu Shui, Engineer]. His design has so far proven to have great promise, as initial testing in one of the smaller fields we will use has worked excellently. I did indeed notice the ruins of which you speak, but we have not had time to investigate them. I wonder what the circumstances in the past would have been to require a heavy fortification in this area? The land is certainly well suited to farming, with plentiful fertile ground. The people of Chayi have assured us that this land has been relatively safe from the predations of bandits as far as they can remember, and of little interest to armies for anything other than re-provisioning. I'm sure that once the heavy work is done and we find ourselves waiting for the planting season, some of the clan's children in particular will be pulled to investigate the ruins. I will likely accompany them to see to their safety as they explore. If I find anything unusual or valuable, I will share my findings with you! I must return to work now; be safe in your travels my good friend, and be especially careful if you pass through Jushi, as I have heard that the unrest of the laborers and women continues to cause much strife within the city. May the thousand blessings of the her Fierce Majesty, the Queen Konuma, be upon you and your kin; Farscry Vamto

Settlement in Chayi

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi To: His Eminence, General Zhang Hansi Great General, I hope my missive finds you in good health and prosperity as we continue on our off-season work here in this season of withering! My clan has finally completed resettlement in Chayi, and our work in preparing the land for sowing continues apace. Be sure to communicate to your officers that from this point forward, they will find us here for our ongoing trade of supplies to your army. I expect that come the next harvest, the rich soil here will yield ample crops for us to keep you well supplied. The great engineer Liu Shui [Liu Shui, Engineer] provided us with the designs and implementation ideas to set up a network of dikes and sluice gates so that we can water the

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 16 11:21:50 EDT 2015

Subject: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Zhang Hans, Frontier General

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 16 11:35:51 EDT 2015

Subject: Settlement in Chayi

soil and crops while keeping this land free of all but the worst flood conditions. Rumors reach my clan of terrible troubles to the south, some involving the Green Banner Army, and I can only hope that you and your men have been safe. As always, my clan regards you with the utmost respect for your fair dealings with us and the protection you offer from outlanders. The people I have dealt with in Jushi and the lands between there and here share in that respect as well; you can remain confident that you have friends in the kingdom of Gushi. One point of interest: there are some interesting ruins to the south of Chayi, that appear to be the remains of a military fortress in times past. It may be of interest to your troops if they need a place to bivouac on the road between Jushi and Yiwu. Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

My daughter's illness

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge Goodly sage, My daughter remained ill for much of the year in spite of the best efforts of the physickers, so I finally resorted to the treatment recommended in the Ot Bitkileri. In the days following the treatment, two things occurred. My daughter's illness finally abated, and she can breathe normally again and is slowly recovering her strength. However, in the course of recovery, she gradually lost the sight of her eyes, and she is now blind. Unfortunately, I cannot say whether the treatment was responsible or her ongoing illness; nor can I say whether this is a temporary condition. I am heartened that she will live, but I fear that she will never again see the sun or stars, or the land upon which they shine. I share this not to burden you; you requested I share any results of the treatment with you, and my hope is that this can help you grow in the knowledge of the text from which the treatment came. I only hope it can help you cure others without such a terrible cost. Best wishes to your ongoing work, in the name of the Queen Konuma; Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

A story, told around the campfire

Long ago the oases dried out, the goats perished, and men battled for every scrap of filth. The time of devastation buried many mighty Kingdoms in sand and time.

The descendents had abandoned the Teacher's ways. They embraced their lesser natures. Ignored their inner voices, lived immorally, failed to honour travellers, and disregarded their Teachers.

Abandoning the Kusinne Paths allowed demons to enter the sacred valley. They brought storms, disease, drought, and war. For uncounted

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 16 11:43:44 EDT 2015

Subject: My daughter's illness

years the Demons walked among the Oases; suffering and death their gifts. Driving all life from even the most verdant places.

The time of devastation and suffering lasted until a great Teacher, Didgiaya, who brought with her unadulterated copies of the Cycles, served to guide a return to the way of Kusinne, and eventually authoring the Eighth Cycle. Returning to the Paths drove the Demons, now contented and lazy, into the Relinquished Desert, where they may yet dwell.

It is known that following the Precepts of Kusinne, walking the Fourfold Path, and continually striving to achieve the divine balance between body and mind are the only way to prevent the return of the Demons, who are drawn to the weakness of spirit all are prone to.

The Oasis Basin

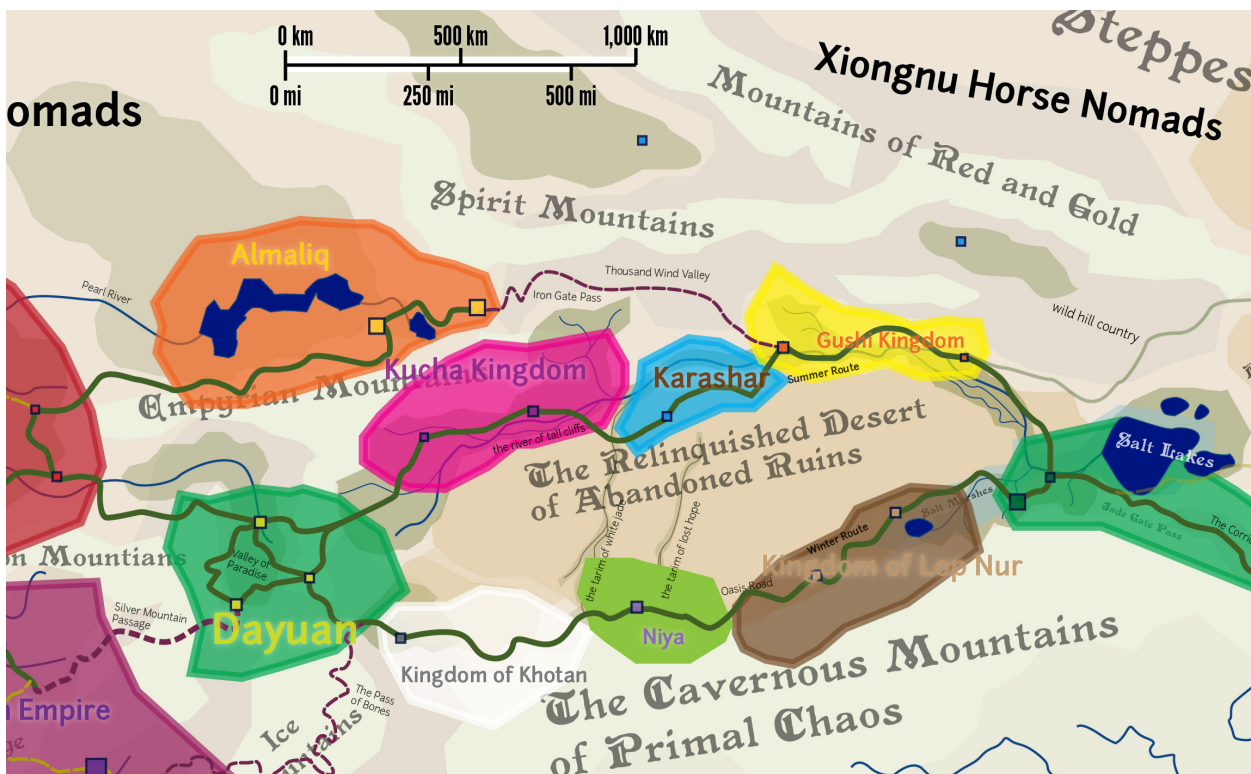


Figure 5.1: Map of the Oasis Basin

Symness in Kucha

An excerpt from the works of Rabia Balkhi:

Around Aksu, in Kucha, there were those from the western lands who followed the Eonic traditions and the ways of Symness, being faithful to the Adjudicators in all things.

- <http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/aksu/>
- <http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/eonic-culture/>
- <http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/symness/>

A letter from your honoured subject

To Queen Shayn,

My Queen, Mighty Ruler of Kucha

I am but a humble daughter of your domain and must first offer deep apologies for not extending my condolences at the passing of the Blessed Queen Fadya sooner. I will not insult you with excuses.

I have traveled to Kucina that I may deliver a shipment of weapons, that your spears will continue to keep the peace along the Road. As blades may be measured mine are unsurpassed in quality. Aksu's mines supply the materials and my forges craft them. There is ore in the mountains to mine until the end of time. I do still face bottlenecks in production. These will be overcome once I contract a suitably capable engineer.

I feel refreshed to have returned to the city of my birth, to see the house I was born in, and dine with my family once more. The people of Aksu have mostly embraced You and the Paths of Kusine, but Eonites remain eccentric. I have also learned that a number of those who remain loyal to the adjudicators have gathered along the road from Aksu. I did not encounter them, but I left from my estate near the mines and may have passed them by on the country roads.

Honour and Glory are yours my Queen,

I am, as always, your Ironmaster,

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

Revered One.

To Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Blessed Teacher

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha. It is my sincere hope that this letter reaches you swiftly and finds you well and that peace is one of your many blessings. As the seasons change our lives become ever busier in Kucha, and it is a pleasure to find the time to write you.

In these times know that I remain grateful for your guidance. In combination with the fall of Lop Nur and the destabilisation of Khotan I grow afraid for the peace in our times. But with this ill there comes a boon. I have seen many newcomers to Aksu pledge themselves to the

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Moderator
Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Date: Thu Jun 18 21:32:28 EDT 2015

Subject: A letter from your honoured subject

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Moderator
Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Date: Thu Jun 18 21:43:45 EDT 2015

Subject: Revered One.

Kusinne Paths. Perhaps more than ever before the need for a light in the darkness is drawing the people to the Paths and the people do come. Along the Road the ways of Kusinne have been embraced. I pray that this continues.

I wish you a blessed life,

I bow to the divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From the Museum of the Oasis Kingdoms

Catalog Item #361: A plan for a construct depicting the celestial mechanisms. Attributed to Liu Shui. Parchment.

Catalog Item #299: A painting of a monkey on a rooftop. The inscription reads “Máfan”. Discovered at the Grand Abbey in 1836. Painting on silk.

The Cultures of the Basin

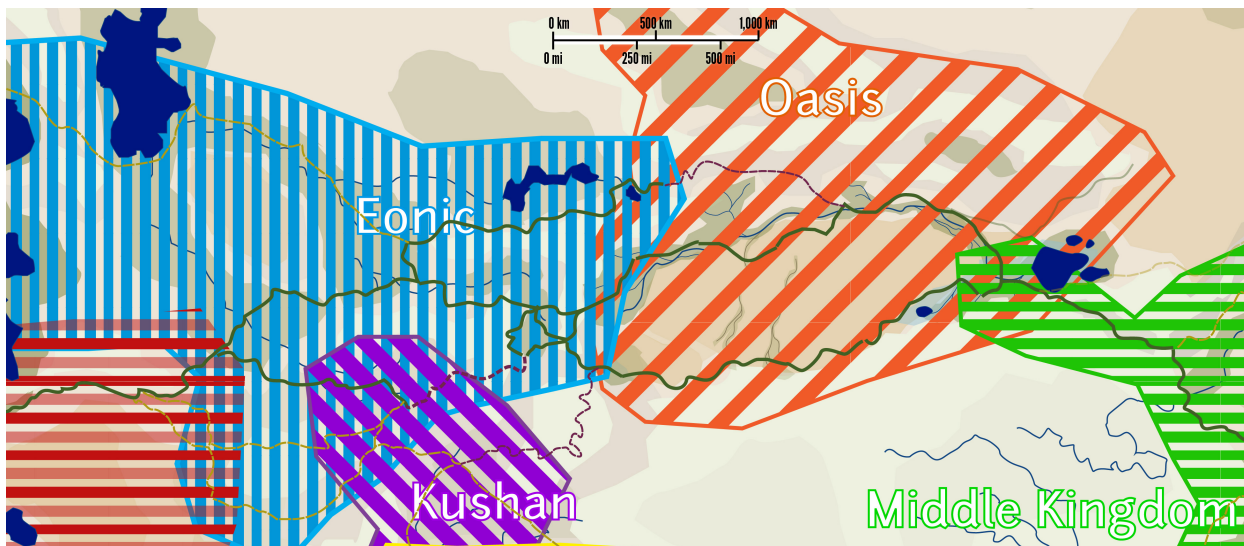


Figure 5.2: Cultural Regions of the Oasis Basin

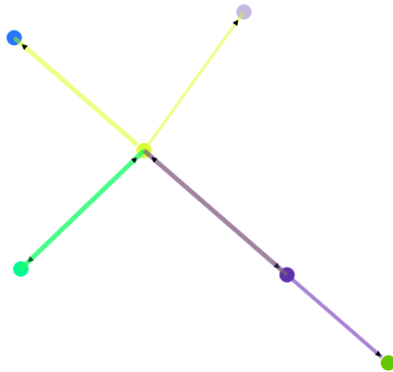
6

Cycle: *Year 115, Season of Hybernating*

Few travellers are found on the Summer Road. The mountain passes are dangerous, and the rivers difficult to ford.

The caravans travel on, following the winter routes. Despite the dangers, the oases of Niya and Lop Nur are in their prime, and the journey continues...

This ends Cycle 5 and begins Cycle 6...



Faith in Aksu

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

An unexpected result of the recent troubles: many newcomers to Aksu are publicly pledging themselves to the Kusine paths. The Grand Abbey has equipped many pilgrims with the Little Book of Kusine and a compact guide to the caravanserais, inns, and wayhouses that welcome those walking the Path of the Road.

Assassians on the Road

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

The assassins on the trail of the Magi, Feegle Yitaka, reportedly met with success. No one has heard from the missing Magi. His students have earnestly pledged to maintain the academy he founded.

There is some evidence that the assassins themselves may have met an untimely end. Any treasures the magi may have been hoarding are in other hands now...

The player of Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge, as withdrawn from the game due to time constraints. I'd like to thank him for his contributions, and note that some of you may notice some additional things soon...

Iron Weapons in Riya

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

At that time, Niya purchased weapons, the finest iron weapons of Aksu. The sight of the the soldiers of Niya, armed with the swords with the lantern sigil, were frequently remarked upon.

Cycle 6: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

Honored Ironmaster,

May you abide in the paths of Kusine!

I am pleased to receive your note.

I am certain that Queen Shayn, whom you may reach here [Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha], is much appreciated that she can number you among the supports to her rule of Kucha as a unified kingdom. When the winds of uncertainty blow, it can be a great assurance to have guards who are loyal, well-trained, and equipped with good iron.

I send back to you as a token gift a number of freshly scribed copies of the Little Book of Kusine and our newly compiled guide to the welcoming stops for good people following the Path of the Road. You will see the pilgrim's guide leaves blank paper between each entry and the next, so that a traveler may make their own notations upon a caravanserai, roadhouse, or hostel, and binds in blank pages at the end so that a traveler may make their own description or use it for notes upon their devotions while walking the Path of the Road.

Our monastery is close to the city of Kucina if you should be called upon to visit, and I would be pleased to make you welcome.

Our garden is a sere and sad thing now, with the seasons of growing and harvesting over, but the hardy trees and shrubs remain where the flowers and fruit have come and gone, and our fountains sparkle still, fed by the Engineer's clever water supply.

If you happen to see travelers or pilgrims, please keep an eye out for my wayward disciple Nabylah, a skilled copyist and illuminator, who has been gone these several months without explaining herself, though she said farewell to her closes friends at the Abbey. You may recognize Nabylah from her short stature, her very small feet, her large brown eyes, and her skill with the pen. Indeed I would not be surprised if she were bearing a letter of passage or introduction fabricated entirely by herself!

The young woman Sugnumae abides with me, after the tragic death of her warden, the scholarly Magi Feegle Yitaka. Sugnumae's delicate illuminations decorate the endpapers of the Little Book's copies which I send. As to the Magi's work, I have it at best report that the Magi's schools continue in his absence, and the skills that his students learned

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 23 02:04:20 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 6: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

here at the Abbey in copying and assembling the codex book are helping them to prosper materially and support their paths of learning in the city of Suojo and other places in the land of Dayuan. I have not been able to ascertain whether the students of Feegle retain the rare books which they were planning to copy with their new skills. I dearly wish that they have kept the books, and that they contain the secrets of the early history of Kusinne which I desire to complete the gaps in our library. I shall send to them again when the roads are ready for passage as the seasons turn.

In addition to the parcel of books you will find another parcel of smoked tea, of honeycomb, of dried fruits from our garden, and of incense prepared according to Kusinne traditions.

May the Path of the Hearth shine in your exemplary demonstration of right living and livelihood; May the Path of the Book touch you with its wisdom; May the Path of the Well grant you quiet contemplation and insight, and may you welcome those of the Path of the Road who travel to and through your home.

With great respect,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Cycle 6: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: In Thanksgiving, with Fruit, Sulphur and Niter

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Yuan Sala, Physician, greetings and thanks.

I send with this letter a number of finely made small iron blades and points for use in the incidental parts of your work which involve cutting and piercing, with the compliments of the Ironmaster Jivamitra of Kucha, whose maker's mark – a lantern, you can see – is stamped upon each item.

You may reach the Ironmaster in Aksu at this address if you have questions or thanks to extend. [Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha].

I trust that the flowers of sulphur and the crystals of nitre which I sent earlier have been sufficient for your purposes. I also send another pot of honey, for all the usual things honey is used for, and in addition to forestall the festering of wounds, of which it is some aid. Though I don't suspect that you treat a good many wounds of the sort that would call for honey under the dressings.

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
To: Yuan Sala, Physician
Moderator
Date: Tue Jun 23 02:17:45 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 6: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Yuan Sala, Physician: In Thanksgiving, with Fruit, Sulphur and Niter

The Master's apprentice has made a full recovery (barring a scar in his forehead), for which you are due many thanks.

Here is another parcel of fruits from the Abbey's gardens, dried according to Master Liu Shui's method. I hope you find it to your satisfaction.

Sugnumae has requested that I send you a copy of her illustrations of medicinal herbs and flowers. I commend her art to you and include it with this letter. She is doing rather well, considering her warden Magi Feegle Yitaka was just reported reliably as killed by assassins. Sugnumae works very hard on her copying and illuminating, perhaps to lose herself in the work. You may write to Sugnumae if you wish care of the Abbey.

Peace be upon you, skill in your Art, and may your practice prosper.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Path of the Well, in the Path of the Hearth, and the Path of the Book

Romads Victorious

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

With the death of the general, the nomads' victory over the Green Banner Army was complete. No longer held together by the discipline from above, the soldiers wavered, beset by ambushes and driven from the wells and fresh water by the horse rider's use of their superior knowledge of the paths through the wastelands.

Having triumphed over the soldiers of the Middle Kingdom, the nomad warbands withdrew. Some remained, but the kin that they summoned to their aid returned to their winter pastures far from the Oasis Basin.

Re:Cycle 6: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

High One,

May the Paths guide us all!

I must thank you for your kind welcome when I visited the monastery. Truly the Path of the Road is well taken by your number! It was a most refreshing visit to the capital. My sisters house is always busy, and the time for quiet contemplation in your courts was most welcome.

From: **Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha**
To: **Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha**
Moderator
Date: Tue Jun 23 21:32:48 EDT 2015
Subject: Re:Cycle 6: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

The Little Book of Kusinne and the pilgrim's guide I have procured from you will be welcome in Aksu. I have begun to encourage the newly converted to travel back to their homes and spread the Wordns and Paths of Kusinne. I will also pass some along to King Badal in Niya. As the refugees of the Green Banner come to Niya, their hearts will receive the wisdom of Kusinne and the Paths and they will find a new peace after their lives of conflict have passed. The beauty added by Sugnumae (truly magnificent) will serve to solidify their faith.

I was most impressed by the engineering on display at your monastery. Truly I must ask you to beg her to visit me in Aksu. With the tragic death of Magi Yitaka time for this is at hand, Dayuan is too steeped in Symness and Eonic mysticism to hold true scholars. I have my retainers and contacts inviting scholars to Aksu, to found a Great Academy, that Kucha will become a centre of learning throughout the world. Such a grand structure requires a deft hand.

As to the rare tomes I have a contact from Dayuan, the Merchant Selethen Varzakk . I am certain he will be able to recover some of these priceless works, and will write to him to ensure it. Already I have learned that some of the former students have secreted the books for safety, as is the way in Dayuan.

Your gifts have touched me, and I received gratefully. My apprentice has prepared a beautiful set of decorative screens, in the traditional style, for the high windows of the monastery. They shall be dispatched as soon as they are completed. I hope that the beauty of this world inspire the faithful as they travel the Paths.

I bow to the Divine within you, High Teacher,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

A Pressing Matter

My friend,

I was overjoyed to learn you made it safely to Niya. It is good that King Badal's army will be well equipped, with the desperate peoples fleeing the nomads entering Niya. As is done in Niya King Badal will accept those who swear the oaths, but cannot afford to take chances in these uncertain times. I have been made happy by the fact that our actions have moved us all towards a lasting peace in the Oases.

I have also been saddened of late by the death of Magi Yitaka. The Magi held a famed collection of early Kusinne writings. I am worried what will become of these. Would you keep an eye out for such works in

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 23 21:42:47 EDT 2015

Subject: A Pressing Matter

your travels. It is likely that most remain in Suojo, but many will have begun to wander with the death of the great teacher.

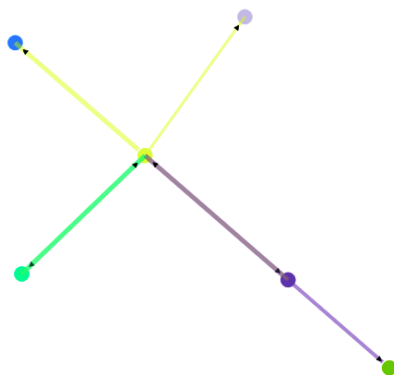
Travel well,

I bow to the Divine within you,

Your friend,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Cycle 6 Communication Web



Re:Introduction and Your Commission

Great King,

I trust that you receive this message after the delivery of arms and equipment from forges. I hope that they are more than satisfactory.

I am especially proud of the yatagan bearing the greatest battles of Niya's past. I designed it specifically to compliment the battle regalia of the Kings of Niya. I hope that I did not overindulge with the gilded accents. There is also a set of eight similarly styles spearheads for your body-men, that those who oppose you will know the quality of your men by their blades.

With this message I have also consigned a parcel of books. Both the Little Book of Kusine and a traveling guide to the Oases for those who follow Kusine's Paths. I include them to encourage the new entrants

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

Moderator

Date: Tue Jun 23 22:02:55 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Introduction and Your Commission

into your realm to embrace the religion of the Oases. By forgoing their beliefs in the falsehoods of the Philosophy and embracing Kusinne, many have already proven the depth of their loyalty to you. These books will encourage many more to do the same.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Chayi

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

In the 115th year, Refugees from Yiwu made the journey to the town of Chayi, which stands at the confluence of the Gushi River and the Jushi tributary: a fertile region. The new settlers quickly worked to construct common shelter and prepare the fields and waterways.

Chayi is a place that seldom sees bandits or trouble, though the martial qualities of the ruins nearby suggests that was not always the case.

Aw:A Pressing Matter

My assiduous forge master Jivamitra,

I am glad that we'll have peace and all went well with my daughter and both the caravans we led. She should be in the phase to set up her caravan for the next year on the routes. I for myself settled here in Niya and will open the seasons with a countermovement, hoping to meet my Beloved Blossom in the Gushi Kingdom in half a year. It's advantageous to be on the road, but my old bones will ache in some nights for the luxury of a bed.

I never met the Magi, but what I read let me come to the conclusion that he was wise beyond his years. It seems that some people were not contend with him, but to kill him is beyond my understanding. I will have an eye on writings from his hands.

The trade went very well in Niya. All perishable wares could be sold, but the markets were anxious. I have to get some more pack animals than planned to fulfill all contracts of the last season. By instance, I should think about a fixed caravanserai on the routes.

We'll meet in the Harvesting season, I think, perhaps a little bit earlier. I'm waiting what the situation will be in Dukhan.

May the flames of your forge never be quenched

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/chayi/>

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Jun 25 17:22:16 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:A Pressing Matter

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Conic Pilgrims

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

Last year's change in succession in Kucha has lead to an increase of Symness pilgrims in the region. Speculation is divided on whether they are drawn by a hope of greater favor with the new queen, or merely impressed by the solemn funeral rites.

Selethen Varzakk to Queen Shayn

My sincerely greeting for Shayn, the gallant queen of Kucha!

May your benevolent eyes don't look to harshly on this letter from an undeserving merchant who manages to travel on the Routes with barely enough skill to catch sometimes small treasures – one of them I wish to present you as I think that it could be a delight for a person with such a great burden to bear in those times of conflict.

A distant relative of mine who works as engineer, his wanderlust is a sign of our relationship as he wanders from town to town to plan and repair houses and roofs, is a great map maker, but my meagre skill would fail in such an endeavor, so permit me to give a description of it.

I was told that the map I describe you with this letter was in possession of an explorer who was sent out by the late Queen Fadya in the beginning of her rulership. It seems to be possible, but the remains of this map seem too brittle to send them as addition to this letter.

It shows a part of the Relinquished Desert south of the River of Tall Cliffs. From the markings I would guess it's from the time as Aksu wasn't part of your Kingdom at the time this piece was drawn. From the westernmost estuary, where the River of White Hare enters the main river, it seems to be a three days travel, two of them in the desert, in the direction of Niya. There should be a small path, but it could depict the traveling route of the explorer, too. At the place this map depicts, there is the sign of a crowned horse.

At first glance, I didn't understood the meaning of this symbol, but my travels in the last decades had many signs to see and many rumors to hear. If you permit the guess; is the crowned horse one of the personal sigils of a relative of the late Queen Fadya? I remember a story of a

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 26 18:04:42 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Queen Shayn

niece, who was declared missing, but this could be a coincidence only. Still, you could be interested in this map and I would be happy to leave the map in your hands if I come this year through your Kingdom, approximately in the harvesting season if the Adjudicators support this notion.

May the currents of the time be in your favor

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Selethen Varzakk to Kanakk

Esteemed friend,

A long year has ended and after my last letter in the Budding Season, apparently the Adjudicators decided that no further communication was needed. Now, I'm sitting in Niya in an office which enables me to begin a caravan travel which begins on the Winter Route. I'm a little bit surprised the turmoil of battle left most of the city unscathed and the life in this town was surprisingly normal for the Hibernating Season.

Business was good this year and after the conflicts are ended I hope for some years of peace.

Much of the caused pain was in vain, I think. The borders haven't been moved, the ruling houses aren't changed, but too much people are dead. I'll try to ease the suffering a little bit. Perhaps creating a smile in a child's face wouldn't perfect the world, but it's a good beginning, I hope.

I'm looking forward to a better road between Loulan and Dukhan, I heard about some damage in course of the conflict last season. But I think, for a traveller like you this wouldn't be a problem.

May your holiness be everlasting!

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Selethen Varzakk to Liu Shui

Magnificent Friend,

A long year has ended and after my last letter in the Budding Season, apparently the Adjudicators decided that no further communication was needed. Now, I'm sitting in Niya in an office which enables me to begin a caravan travel which begins on the Winter Route. I'm a little bit surprised the turmoil of battle left most of the city unscathed and the life in this town was surprisingly normal for the Hibernating Season.

Business was good this year and after the conflicts are ended I hope for some years of peace.

As I wrote to you the last time, I plan to install a trading post along the Routes. I'd prefer a place like Dukhan, but the coming year may be restless, so perhaps it is only the time to decide a place, but not to

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 26 18:05:05 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Kanakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 26 18:05:22 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Liu Shui

begin with the works so far. Would you grant me the honor of designing the facade of a standing building or even a whole building which would combine the styles of the Oasis? We trade with every town and with every person on both the Routes...

It would be good to see your face again, but as I heard, you are on the move for some time. But time will tell.

May the ground always welcome your art

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Selethen Varzakk to Gayth, Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

My glorified friend Ghayth,

The festivities in Niya were spent in a splendid way, I think. Honestly, is this a kind of living you could get used to?

I met the Beloved Blossom of my household after she left Niya, almost in the middle of Khotan. She came not nearer to the fighting than half a day and was never in danger; at least, this is what she told me. I don't have to tell you, how happy my old and weary eyes were to see her in best health.

I for myself arrived in Niya shortly after your departure, as it seems. I think your men left quite an impression with the townsfolk. But that your people are able-bodied and strong should come to no surprise as the desert is not the most forgiving place. Still, even now, in the end of the Hibernating Season, your kind is not forgotten.

As we are preparing to move on, I'll start here in Niya, my Blossom from home, is there anything special you need this year? Some mending equipment, new gear, perhaps some remembrance from Niya?

My best wishes should follow your ways

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Fri Jun 26 18:05:48 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Gayth, Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

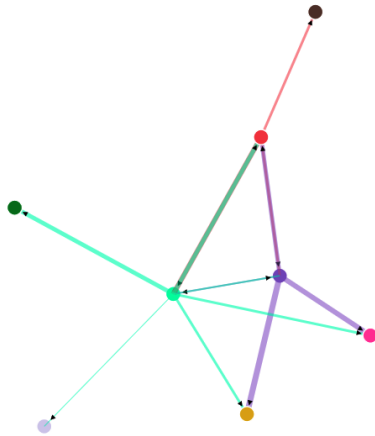
7

Cycle: Year 116, Season of Budding

The seasons complete their cycle, and the Oasis Basin begins to awaken from the long hibernation.

The Kusinne new year rites are celebrated in the cities, and many goldfish as purchased from the merchants and kept in bowls of Anxi glass.

This ends Cycle 6 and Begins Cycle 7...



State of the Game: Cycle 6



The conversations over the past three weeks looked like this. This past week has been a bit quiet, though I've updated the state of the game page to reflect who has been sending out mail most frequently.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/state-of-the-game/>

Cycle 7: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Ikiu Shui, Engineer

Master Liu,

I hear good things from Queen Shayn about your work in Kucina. Without doubt, your improvements to the city's drainage will prepare it well for our rain and snow, and prevent noisome accumulations in the gutters. I understand that you and physician Yuan Sala have come to concordance on the best way to arrange things in the city to guard the health of its citizens. Truly, the wisdom of two accomplished workers for the greater good can only be better when put together!

I have been in correspondence with Ironmaster Jivamitra (Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha) who has been busy with his own skilled trade. Perhaps you have seen some of his work, stamped with his lantern mark, in the hands of the Physician. On occasion, sharp blades are needed even by the healers. You must come visit some time and see the beautiful iron screens upon our windows, the finely hammered leaves and flowers, the twisting vine stems.

I am so pleased that Sugnumae has chosen to abide here with me. I do not know what destiny Magi Feegle Yitaka's dear one will choose for herself, but for now, she plies the pen and brush to the greater good of the Way of the Book. I look forward to finding out if Feegle's students have preserved the rare books from the Grand Library which may hold the secrets of the early days of Kusine.

I hear that some of the Eonic pilgrims of Symness are using our codex guide to the inns and caravanserais. It has made for some droll conversations around the tea-stove of a late evening when Symness and Kusine devotees mix. However they have been very pleasant, well-behaved guests, even if their ideas on what is important may be quite odd. Some of our pilgrims have copied down notes learned from the Symness pilgrims which may be added to later issues of the guide.

Do come visit and see the new screens!

In the Path of the Well, of the Hearth, and the Book,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Cycle 4: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

Blessed Kanakk,

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 27 11:54:17 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 7: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 27 12:12:09 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 4: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

All blessings as the new year turns!

The fish has turned round about for me, so perhaps there is a walk on the Path of the Road this year.

Have you seen the Symness pilgrims carrying our guide book to the caravanserais and hostels? It is most droll. I have heard there have been quite amusing conversations around the tea-stove of a night now, between our pilgrims following the Path of the Road, and the Eonic pilgrims. I have collected some of the observations from the Symness pilgrims' travels, and if they accord with our pilgrims' accounts, they will go into this year's copies of the guide books.

Ironmaster Jivamitra has gifted the Abbey with a new set of ornamental window screens. You will find them beautiful, I assure you, when next you visit us.

Sugnumae, the dear one of Magi Feegle Yitaka, abides with us after the death of the Magi. She plies pen and brush in the Way of the Book. Some of the well-to-do young students of Kusinne visiting the Abbey have been inquiring whether she would be courted, but she turns away all such inquiries. I am glad she is able to do so much fine work, now that Nabylah has left us. Have you seen or heard anything from her?

In the Path of the Hearth, the Well and the Book. May the Path of the Road bend easily for you.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Cycle 7: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

(Corrected: Cycle 7)

Blessed Kanakk,

All blessings as the new year turns!

The fish has turned round about for me, so perhaps there is a walk on the Path of the Road this year.

Have you seen the Symness pilgrims carrying our guide book to the caravanserais and hostels? It is most droll. I have heard there have been quite amusing conversations around the tea-stove of a night now, between our pilgrims following the Path of the Road, and the Eonic pilgrims. I have collected some of the observations from the Symness pilgrims' travels, and if they accord with our pilgrims' accounts, they will go into this year's copies of the guide books.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusinne Monk

Moderator

Date: Sat Jun 27 12:17:53 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 7: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

Ironmaster Jivamitra has gifted the Abbey with a new set of ornamental window screens. You will find them beautiful, I assure you, when next you visit us.

Sugnumae, the dear one of Magi Feegle Yitaka, abides with us after the death of the Magi. She plies pen and brush in the Way of the Book. Some of the well-to-do young students of Kusinne visiting the Abbey have been inquiring whether she would be courted, but she turns away all such inquiries. I am glad she is able to do so much fine work, now that Nabylah has left us. Have you seen or heard anything from her?

In the Path of the Hearth, the Well and the Book. May the Path of the Road bend easily for you.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

The Kusinne Path of the Road

Catalog Item #111: Pilgrim's Guide, circa 2nd century. Contains a listing of waystops for pilgrims following the Kusinne Path of the Road. Each entry is separated by pages which are inscribed in a different hand (presumably that of the pilgrim) with remarks on the subject. At the end, in a third hand, there is the description of a journey to visit a ruin in the desert near Chayi, signed "Nabylah".

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kusinne/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/2015/05/22/the-ways-of-kusinne/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/chayi/>

Incoming Messages

Letters Received

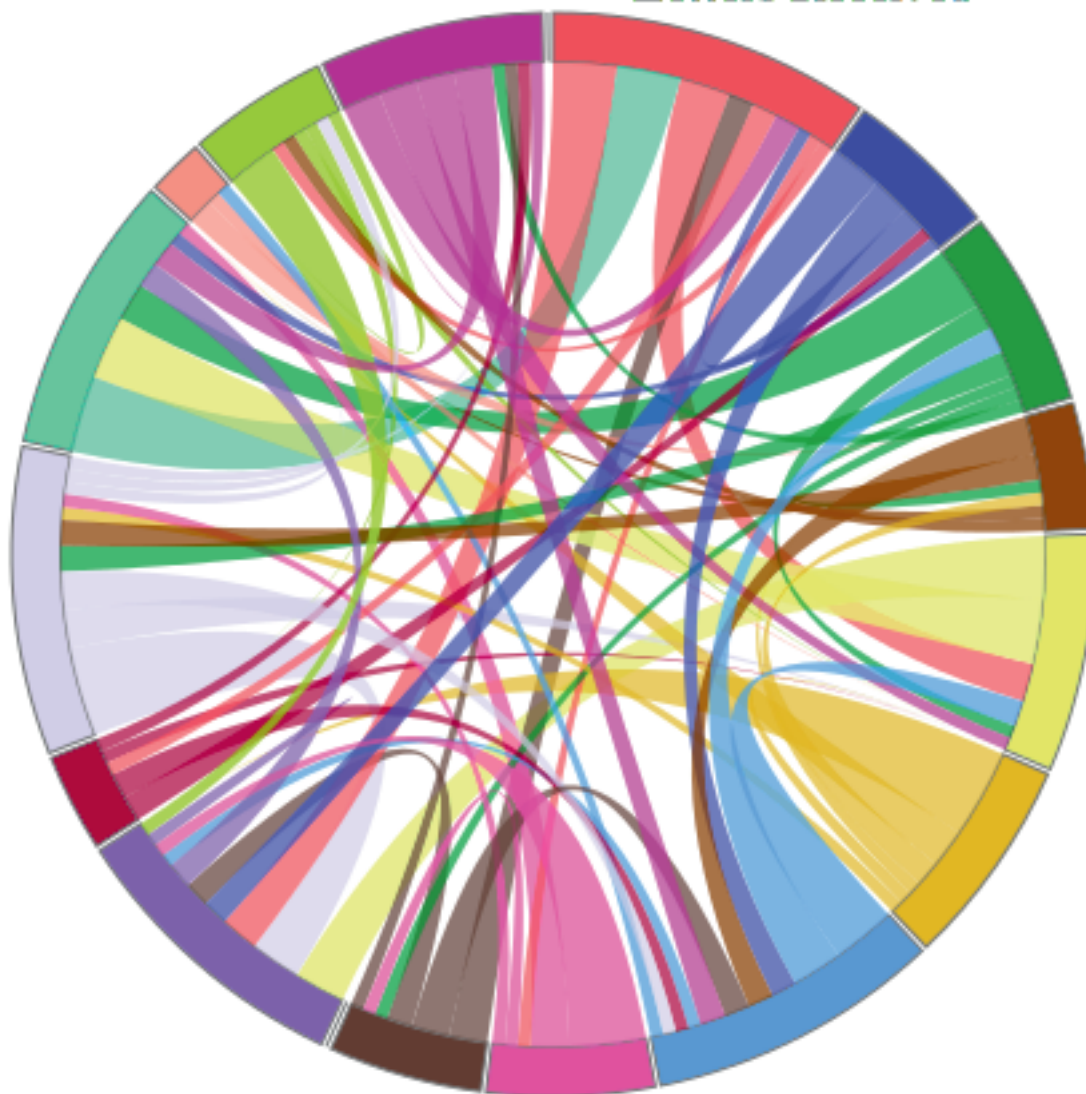


Figure 7.1: Incoming messages

Outgoing Messages

Letters Sent

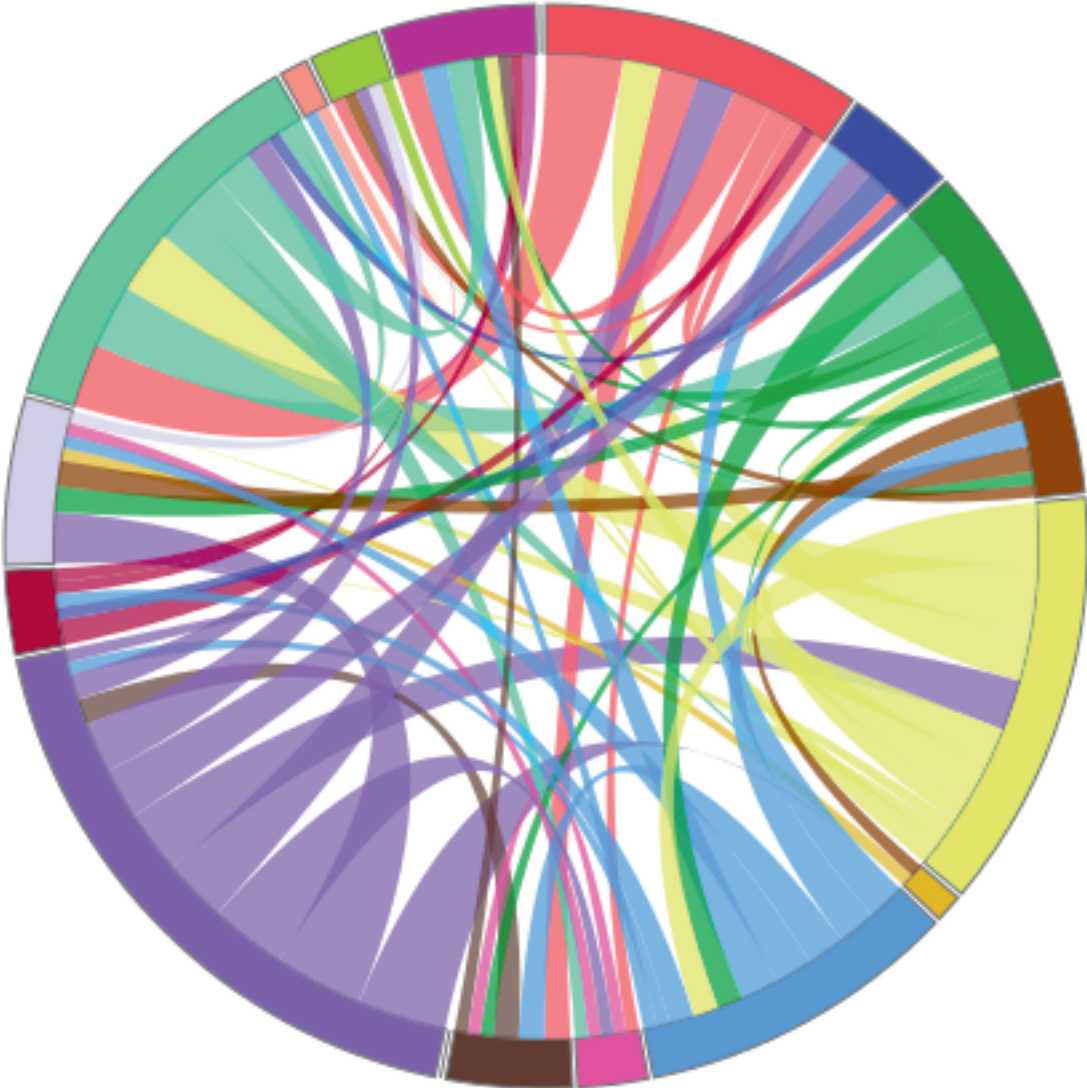


Figure 7.2: Outgoing messages

Greetings to Rafisah from Farscry Vamto

From: Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha Blessings to you as you guide pilgrims along the Path, learned Nafisah! I apologize for soliciting you without proper introduction, but I believe the youths of my clan have found some artifacts of interest to the Abbey. We reside on the outskirts of Chayi now, a small settlement east of Jushi where the Jushi tributary feeds into the Gushi River. Several of the clan's youths have spent much of the hibernation cycle exploring the ruins of what appears to be an ancient fortress to the south of our farmland. Within the fortress they have found various artifacts that bear markings that I believe may relate to the Kusine Path in years past. I have sent them to you along with this missive; if they may be of use in further study of the Ways, then it is my joyous duty to provide them to the Abbey. I also would ask if perhaps my eldest daughter may be fit for studying with the sisters of the Way; she is ill-suited to the farming way of life, as she is wont to while away hours studying what few texts we have, and is prone to lengthy daydreaming. My wife and I suspect that she would be far better suited to a life of quiet study; if the abbey could send someone through on the next pilgrimage through the Gushi Kingdom that may discuss this possibility with her, we would be indebted to you. Well wishes as we leave the cycle of Hibernation! Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Trading opportunity from Farscry Vamto

My good friend, Greetings and well wishes to you Selethen. I hope this missive finds you in good health and preparing for a bountiful year of trade! Unfortunately, news finally reached me of the utter defeat of the Green Banner Army, and this means that my clan will have an abundance of crops ready for trade this year. We have also recovered various relics - old armaments, documents, and valuables - from the fortress ruins to our south, and I am eager to see what you think of their viability for trade. I will be keeping all of these for your perusal specifically; the only ones I will trade with other merchants passing through will be those which you declare of no interest to you. My clan has long enjoyed a healthy trading relationship with you, and I hope that the bounties of these more fertile farmlands and the artifacts we find will serve to improve both your fortunes and that of my clan. The residents of Chayi, while of meager means themselves, are good people. I would like to request that you bring with you a few goods that I hope to trade with you to make gifts to the village to show our intentions of ongoing companionship with them. If you are able to procure them, please bring with you one each of the following: A loom of Dayuan manufacture -

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 29 16:34:22 EDT 2015

Subject: Greetings to Nafisah from Farscry Vamto

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 29 16:47:40 EDT 2015

Subject: Trading opportunity from Farscry Vamto

my wife has been pleased with how durable her loom has been, and how well it continues to perform An iron anvil and smithing hammer from the Kucha Kingdom A supply of medium and large nails, as well as a barrel of ingots from the Kucha Kingdom I have sent along a map of the area that my son drew up that may be of use to help any other merchants you send our way to find our settlement. Many thanks in advance, and may fortune smile upon you in your journeys! We will feast and swap tales when next we meet! Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

[Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Lyimo the Storyteller

Greetings! I have heard your name shared as one who is well versed in stories of our history, and I hoped you may be able to illuminate my clan upon the land which we now call home. We live now in the vicinity of Chayi, and there is the ruin of a fortress nearby which prompts such curiosity. It appears to have been a military fortification, but none nearby can recall a time when it still stood. I've included a map which may help you in sifting through the histories; if you have any stories that you can recall or find that will satisfy our curiosity, we will happily repay you for your time. We expect a bounty of crops this year, or we could share in some of the artifacts we have found in the ruins. You would also be welcome to travel here if you are curious to visit the ruins yourself. My clan is always eager to welcome visitors and hear of news or stories from the greater world, and we put up quite a filling feast even if it is not fit for the rich palates of nobility. Blessings upon you and your family, we will eagerly await to hear back from you! Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Cycle 7: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi

Honored Farscry of Clan Vamto,

I am pleased that you have cause to write to me from down the great river that connects us. As the new year begins, may the Path of the Road cause our peoples to prosper in the wisdom that travel causes to broaden.

I understand Chayi has seen some growth from people moving to avoid misfortune and strife. It can be a hard thing to leave one's land behind, and bring an attitude of hope and diligence into building anew. In this time, having good work appropriate to each hand can help cheer those who are making that new start.

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 29 16:56:38 EDT 2015

Subject: [Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Lyimo the Storyteller

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Mon Jun 29 19:15:56 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 7: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi

I am pleased to receive your carefully preserved artifacts! I see the metal caps once shod an ancient pilgrim's staff, embossed with blessings for wisdom and far traveling above, and protection and defense upon the lower cap. The other artifacts are quite intriguing. The pot is clearly marked with a number of symbols referring to the Path of the Hearth, and the drinking cup – or it may be a ceremonial libation cup – with proverbs referring to the Path of the Well. My assistant Sugnumae is carefully drawing and cataloguing them along with their source at the ruined fortress near Chayi. By piecing together many small testaments of history, we may learn much of what our revered ancestors knew, learned, and felt when they wove together the Paths of Kusinne in times past.

In the way of the history of Kusinne, I look forward to hearing more from the late Magi Feegle Yitaka's students, who have preserved the last ancient Kusinne manuscripts from the library of Niya when the former king ordered them purged and burned. Though Feegle fell to the king's assassins, yet the manuscripts survive. Now that the road is opening again, I have every hope that this wisdom may be read, copied, and understood to the benefits of all who wish fuller insight into the history of the Paths.

I send with this note gifts of salt, tea, honey, wax and oil, to honor your settlement in Chayi. Truly, a house is more a home when it bustles with homely activity hand in hand with right living.

With this note as well, I include a sturdy pilgrim's staff and a letter of introduction for your eldest daughter, as well as a copy of the Little Book of Kusinne and a copy of the Abbey's pilgrim road guide. From my novices acquainted with the kingdom of Gushi and the city of Jushi in particular, they recommend arranging to join a pilgrimage at Jushi. There is a Kusinne hostel which sees much pilgrim traffic and will have persons to advise you and your daughter as to preparations.

Blessings to you, honored Farscry Vamto, in the Path of the Hearth.

Nafisah, Abbess of the Grand Kusinne Abbey of Kucha at Kucina

In the Museum



Catalog Item #481: A map. Circa 1st century It shows a part of the Relinquished Desert south of the the kingdoms of Aksu and Kucina. A route is marked as a three days journey, leading to a place in the desert marked with the sign of a crowned horse.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/aksu/>
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucina/>

Newcomers in Niya

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms...

After the nomad's defeat of the Green Banner army, many refugees and deserters have travelled westward, reaching the borders of Niya. Those who swear the traditional oaths are accepted, though met with caution.

Pilgrims have encouraged the newcomers to take up the Paths of Kusinne.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/2015/06/15/from-the-imperial-archives/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yatagan>

In the Museum

Catalog Item #114: Yatagan. Niya, pre 3rd c. Engraved with images of battles, presumably of significance to Niya's royalty. Lantern sigil. Notable for its gilded accents.

Catalog Item #32: Decorative iron window screens, excavated at the Grand Abbey during the expedition of 1836.

The Markets of Niya

Excerpt from a letter discovered in Miran Cache #25:

Ease your worries, my friend: the fighting was mostly far to the East. A few of the nomads came as far as the city, where they made quite an impression on the people. But I am happy to report that the city is mostly unscathed. Life for the merchants here in Niya has returned to normal, though the markets remained anxious in the aftermath of the victory over the Middle Kingdom.

Map of the Silk Road

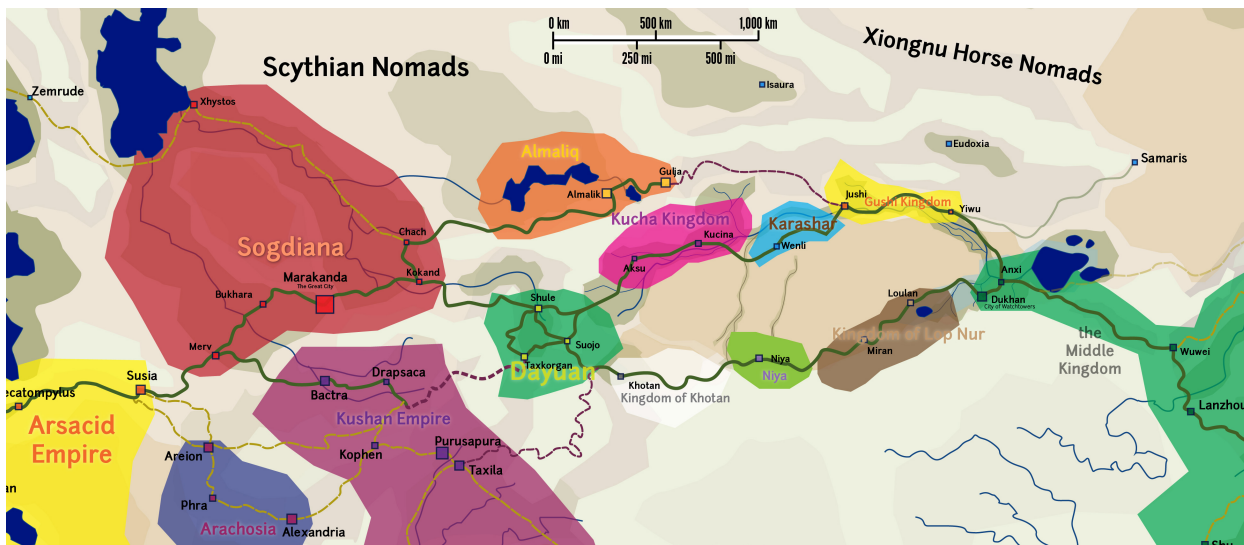


Figure 7.3: Map of the Silk Road

Cycle 7: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk: Books of Kusinne

Estimable Selethen Varzakk,

Jivamitra the Ironmaster has generously provided me an introduction to you, suggesting that you and I have a mutual interest in the historic books of Kusinne which the late Magi Feegle Yitaka saved from the purge at the Great Library of Niya.

This last year, my scribes trained a number of Feegle Yitaka's students in the ways of preparing paper, ink, and the codex book, as well as the practice of scribing and copying. They have returned to Dayuan, and I hope that you are acquainted with them, as their skills will be of great use in reproducing and preserving these rarest of works that shed light on those first to walk the Paths of Kusinne.

From: **Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha**
To: **Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant**
Moderator
Date: Thu Jul 02 14:32:40 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 7: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk: Books of Kusinne

With the creation of the traveler's guide for those taking the Path of the Road, I find more taking pilgrimage this season, and I send this letter by way of a pilgrim group traveling from Kucha to Dayuan. Along with this letter I include three fresh copies of the traveler's guide, enriched by new reports on caravanserais, hostels, roadhouses, and shrines of note to the traveler and pilgrim. You will see it is small and easy to carry, yet describes numerous places of interest with unwritten space for the traveler's own notations. These notations can be compiled into future guides, as we have done with last season's notes.

The other small volume is the Little Book of Kusunne, scribed and illuminated by my lay assistant Sugnumae. She again turns away all suitors, preferring to work in the Path of the Book. But I suspect the day will come when I must say farewell to her. Her renown as a copyist and illustrator have made her name known among the good and great, and the suitors seeking her hand have changed from scholars and petty merchants to lords and captains. Still she has the same answer for all.

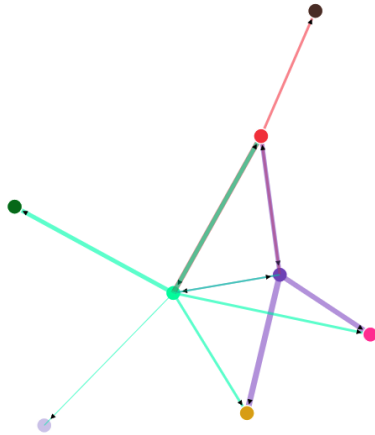
Also with this letter I introduce Serenina, an experienced senior copyist. She requested leave to walk the Path of the Road, and I agreed to grant it so that she could carry this message to you, and any reply you might have. Please show Serenina any ancient Kusunne material you have held from the Great Library's Kusunne works. I dearly wish that copies may be made to enlighten our understanding of history and preserve these stories for the ages.

Please favor me with a response through Serenina. I earnestly look forward to working together to preserve and reproduce the treasures of early Kusunne sages.

In great respect,

Abbess Nafisah of Kucha, Grand Abbey of Kusunne near Kucina

Cycle 7 Communication Web



Aw: Trading opportunity from Farscry Vamto

My exquisite busy friend,

I have the fear, indeed it's fear, that the market will be too good this year. Many merchants seem dead or in hiding. Leaving Niya, I was in good spirits, but at the latest in Miran the apprehension which befell me on the road was confirmed. I hoped for Loulan to fare a bit better, but this hope was in vain. The Kingdom of Lop Nur may be a strong land, but the markets in this realm are broken. Not because of the great destruction, but of the lack of merchants who buy, transport and sell the wares. The prices are hilarious low and it would be a good bargain to use them to the utmost, but such low prices are a pledge to the future, nay, of future. I fear for next year.

As I heard from the Beloved Blossom of my household, her part of the Route is mostly unchanged by the war here in the south. You should come to your requests for the standard prices, but, as it seems, the ingots may be of a high quality. Your abundance of crops will be highly welcomed here in the southern lands, I made some contracts in preparation of the arrival of my daughter in half a year. If I reckon both of your positions correctly, she should be able to reach you within the Blooming Season.

Apparently, most weaving equipment is not for sale at the Summer Route, but here at the Winter Route it was not a problem to acquire some appliances for your household. I'm glad the dayuan implements

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 02 18:50:41 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw: Trading opportunity from Farscry Vamto

are sturdy enough to serve more than one user. Sadly, it could be the case that I'll join you in Gushi not until the Harvesting season. I'll try to hurry, but if the situation in the Middle Kingdom is half as bad as I suspect, I'll be obliged to take to my heart some matters of friendship.

If I find some merchants who'll take the long route, I'll happily equip them with your map. At the moment, I heard of only merchant who travels for ranges of more than two weeks, but he seems to be specialized in utensils. Most of the other merchants are fearful of reports about a pack of monsters, which should be roaming about the southern part of Lop-Nur. A kind of giant cat which has tasted human flesh and took it to its liking. At first, I thought of a pride of lions, but it seems this pack consists of a specimen which uses wings for the hunt. Our guards are wary.

I'll be pleased to reach your part of the land; the Gushi Kingdom seems such a peaceful realm to me.

I wish your place preferable weather and your family a merry laugh

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Cycle 7: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk: Books of Kusinne

My sincerely greeting for Shayn, the hallowed abbess in Kucha!

I wish to express my grateful thanks for your trust into my ability to handle Kusinne works. As a Symnessian believer to the Adjudicators, I nonetheless travel a great time of the year through the area of Kusinne belief, thinking sometimes the Path of the Road may be a wise choice for Kusinne merchants. Alas, the quantity of merchants has dwindled last year considerably, the markets groan under the burden of not transported wares.

As I have shown Serenina, I have at my disposal a map about which I wrote to the queen already. In the Kingdom of Lop Nur I found a book of the Magi which I suspect to be one of the earlier works. Your scribe found it especially interesting for reasons escaping my dulling senses – after all, I'm a merchant in worldly matters. I expect to being able to reach some more writings of the Magi in Anxi; this town has changed considerably over the last decade, becoming a melting pot for the Kusinne Ways and the Philosophy of the Far East; I tend to compare

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
Moderator
Date: Thu Jul 02 19:19:56 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 7: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk: Books of Kusinne

it with some western areas of your kingdom, but more so with Almalik, which seems able to blend people of Kusinne and Symness beliefs. As I heard, in Almalik there are days which see deserted quarters of the town for getting everyone to the celebration of their holy days, but in two different manners.

I hope I'll find enough writings and objects of the Magi before all people recognize their worth – I won't be able to pay prices for exalted items. Soon, I'll reach the Middle Kingdom and will send you a message when I find anything to your interest.

May your sublimity be unblemished for eternity

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Cultural Exchange

An excerpt from a letter found in Miran cache #25:

Of late, the relations between our peoples has been serene. It is a common sight in the markets and meeting places to see Kusinne pilgrims comparing notes with Eonic travellers. I have been told that even your religious guidebooks are including notes based on these discussions. . .

A Gift Before I Depart

My Queen, Mighty Ruler of Kucha

I hope that this letter finds you well and accompanying the various gifts I have delivered. I am proud of all my works, and I hope that these will add to your armoury in these troubled time we live in. There are also a number quality lanterns and art objects. Some produced in my forges and some from my private collection. I especially am pleased to present a battle standard of Old Aksu, in immaculate condition. The influence of Kusinne is beginning to show in this standards use of the Circle of Roads. It was found in a stash in an old shaft that my survey crew has reopened.

I have enjoyed my season in Kucina, but am ready to return to my estates. There is much to do in Aksu. I have begun to seed the foundation of a Great Academy there. That knowledge may help your people, and keep Kucha strong. I have gathered a number of texts and a mountain of supplies in order to do so, but I have yet to find a great scholar to lead the pupils. I would appreciate any guidance you could gift me with.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kusinne/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/symness/>

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 02 21:06:30 EDT 2015

Subject: A Gift Before I Depart

I must finally implore you to move additional soldiers to ensure the security of Aksu. I know that many of the Eonic peoples have embraced you, and that many have embraced that paths. As the true strengths in Kucha are revealed the Adjudicators will become more and more desperate. Inevitably some will consider their only solution to be violence. It is merely a matter of time. A merchant recently spotted a large settlement of Adjudicator loyalists near Aksu. They will not remain peaceable for long.

Honour to You, my Queen,

I bow to the Divine within you,

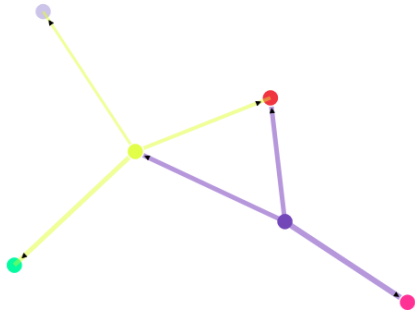
Jivamitra

8

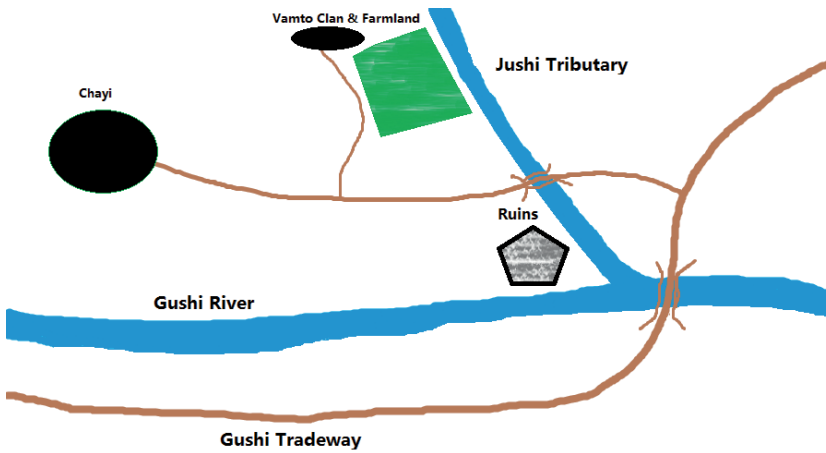
Cycle: *Year 116, Season of Blossoming*

The oases are filled with life once more. As caravans cross the empty spaces between the green places, they bring with them new things and ideas. Will this be a season of peace and harmony, or one of strife and dissent?

This ends Cycle 7 and begins Cycle 8...



Map of Chayi



In The Museum

Catalog Item #13: Kusunne pilgrim's staff (reconstructed). The metal caps on either end are embossed with markings that have religious significance: one end has signs indicating wisdom and far travelling, while the other has markings that invoke protection and defense.

Catalog Item #14: Early-period Oasis Kingdom pottery, as indicated by the ceremonial decorations characteristic of the Kusunne Path of the Hearth.

Catalog Item #15: Drinking cup. Early Kusunne period. Dated by the style of the inscription, which refers to early proverbs associated with the Path of the Well.

An Introduction

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Revered Elder,

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha. It is my sincere hope that this letter reaches you swiftly and finds you well and that peace is one of your many blessings.

I know that this is a busy season for you, but I write to offer you my services. The Lantern is my mark, if you have seen it you know that I offer quality goods. I am also always interested in the happenings along the Road, and throughout the Oases.

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming
Clan

Date: Sat Jul 04 22:38:16 EDT 2015

Subject: An Introduction

The season of Budding here in Aksu is my favourite time. I hope that the coming year has as many opportunities for you. Peace lies on the horizon, hopefully here to stay for some time, but the movement of peoples from the areas of conflict stirs up the dust of disquiet that feeds the sandstorm of war. Still the season is a beautiful one in Aksu. Has the changing of seasons been equally kind to you in the Chayi region?

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra of Kucha

Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi: Arrival

Honored Farscry of Clan Vamto,

In the fullness of this new season, I greet you with thanks and good news. Your eldest daughter has arrived with a pilgrim caravan and been welcomed as a novice. She is studying the Path of the Book, and has made great progress in her first few weeks. After we confirmed that she is called to be a novice, she has joined the abbey, choosing the name Sister Ghalami, in accordance with her love for the tools of writing. I enclose with this letter her first completed work, a copy of the Little Book of Kusinne.

I have had occasion to speak with your daughter on a number of occasions since her arrival. She described visiting the ruins near Chayi where your young people found a number of relics of the early history of Kusinne. From her description of the ruins and where the artifacts were found, it appears that there may be a buried hoard of items from Kusinne's founding, lost when the fortress was thrown into ruin. If I may dare to hope, there might even be a set of chambers underneath the great stones flooring the ruined fortress which were used for meetings, for meditation in the Path of the Well, and for work and celebration in the other Paths of Kusinne. It may be a good deal of work. I have hope of engaging the consultation of the Engineer, Master Liu Shui [Liu Shui, Engineer], who is now in exile from the Middle Kingdom. Master Liu is wise, skilled, and gracious. But if you see him, do not trust his monkey!

Indeed, this year holds many promises for me, who seek the authentic sources of the history of our great tradition. Some of the rare texts of Kusinne saved from the purging of the Great Library of Niya have been saved by the students of Magi Feegle Yitaka, as I mentioned in my late letter, and the first few scraps have arrived at the Abbey. We are copying and cataloguing them, saving them against the day when we may assemble the story of our original inspirations as they happened. I

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 05 16:20:51 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi: Arrival

look forward to making the acquaintance of the other ancient works of Kusine as they arrive.

Blessings to you, honored Farscry Vamto, in the Path of the Hearth.
May your land prosper!

Nafisah, Abbess of the Grand Kusine Abbey of Kucha at Kucina

**Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui,
Engineer: Consultation on the Ruins**

Master Liu,

I write to you on a point interest in engineering and history. During your recent visit to the Abbey, I showed you a number of artifacts from the early history of Kusine which had been sent to the Abbey as a gift. Reflecting on our talk, it occurred to me that you might have further interest from the point of view of the history of architecture. Near the town of Chayi to our east, there is a ruined citadel. The headman of the nearest village, a recent settler named Farscry Vamto [Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan], sent me the artifacts you saw, which were discovered in the ruins. Within the past few weeks, Headman Vamto's eldest daughter came to join us as a novice at the Abbey. I talked with her about her village and the ruins, and ascertained from her description that it is likely that underneath the monumental stone flooring of the ruined citadel, there is either a trove of Kusine artifacts, or, if I may dare to hope, a set of chambers dedicated to the practice of the Paths of Kusine.

I call this to your attention because I am organizing a visit to the citadel near Chayi and I would like your consultation on the ruins with the hope of gaining entrance to the subterranean chambers I expect to find there. You have the skill and knowledge of working with earth and stone which would make an attempt safer and more sure. I am hoping that you may be interested in studying the ways of ancient construction. I would be pleased to assign a student skilled in drafting and lettering to help you in drawing and mapping the site, should that be of interest.

I hope to make the visit myself, but I may not be able to arrive before the end of this season.

Even a cursory visit to point out the best means of approach and the ways of safer excavation would be of great help to my hope to find the true history of the great tradition of Kusine as witnessed by the places and things used by the first walkers of the Paths.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 05 16:36:40 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess
of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer:
Consultation on the Ruins

The first few scraps of ancient Kusine lore preserved against the mad king's purge of the Great Library of Niya have begun to arrive, and I am making careful study. There will be more arriving soon, so that will be my immediate occupation.

Do you still have your monkey?

In the Path of the Well, of the Hearth, and the Book,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/miran/>

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/loulan/>

The Markets of Lop Nur

An excerpt from a letter found in Miran Cache #25:

My friend, the aftermath of the war has left the markets of Miran and Loulan in disarray. The merchants who fled the turmoil left behind sadly empty markets and silent bazaars. The crops of the north will be welcomed here in the southern oases.

On the other hand, the remaining merchants have been doing a brisk business in weaving equipment.

The guards tell tales of packs of giant winged cats that stalk the caravans in the southern regions of Lop-Nur. I urge you to exercise caution if you travel that way.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucha/>

Symness and Kusine

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

The union of the common people, setting aside their differences, greatly strengthened the authority of the Queen of Kucha.

At this time the religious leaders became troubled, with some of those in the Symness hierarchy fearing that, with the widespread embrace of the Path of the Road, the people would soon cease to follow to Adjudicators altogether.

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Tue Jul 07 21:28:27 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:A Pressing Matter

Re: A Pressing Matter

My Friend Selethen Varzakk,

I am pleased that you are undoubtedly heading away from the troubled areas of the Oases. I have enclosed a small pressed hyacinth from one of my granddaughters, and a small number of the Pilgrim's Guide, a charming travel aid for the road.

I was heartened by your good news and i remain hopeful of your visit. I welcome weary bones at my home anytime.

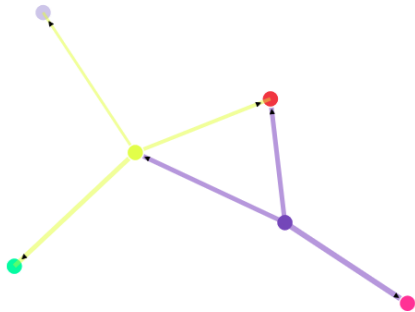
Lastly I must ask another favour. A young woman name Nabylah has vacated her post as an illuminator and scribe in Kucina unexpectedly. She is short with dark features and quite skilled at her work. If you would be mindful of her disappearance and relay any happenings to me I would appreciate it greatly.

May the ROad be kind to you.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

Cycle 8 Communication Web



From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha
Moderator
Date: Wed Jul 08 18:15:48 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Is this your frog?

**Cycle 8: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra,
Ironmaster: Is this your frog?**

Honored Ironmaster,

I have had productive correspondence with the merchant Selethen Varzakk. Thank you deeply for introducing us. The first pieces of preserved Kusinne works from the Library of Niya have arrived, and we are copying, cataloguing, and comparing them with the oldest writings on the Paths of our doctrines.

It has been a busy pilgrim season. Eonic pilgrims have been making use of the guidebook prepared by the Abbey's copyists, and so we are seeing them frequently on the road nearby. I directed the creation of a hostel for the Eonic pilgrims adjacent to the Abbey grounds, though, as I learned from the hosting the scholarly students of Feegle Yitaka, allowing enough space for no one to be disturbed by each others' sounds, particularly of an evening. Having lodging space for Eonic pilgrims near the Abbey has also made it easier to exchange information on the state of the roads and the hostels and waypoints, to better keep the guide up to date. Some enterprising person has raised a set of posts to which notes may be pinned, to give information on the routes or to pass notes to other pilgrims. Pins and writing paper are available for a fee, of course.

Sugnumae continues as my lay assistant, illustrator and copyist, turning away the increasingly rich and noble suitors who seek her attention.

I have learned news of the history of Kusinne from the family of our newest novice, who has styled herself Sister Ghalami, upon joining the Abbey under the Path of the Book, taking her name after the primary tool of writing. There is a ruined citadel near the settlement of the Vamto Clan, not far from Chayi, where the young people of the Vamto Clan found a number of ancient relics indicating that the Paths of Kusinne were followed in that place.

I have organized an expedition to the ruin to pursue the question of whether these relics indicate that devotees of Kusinne took refuge there, or whether our forebears in the Paths used the citadel as a center of devotion. From Sister Ghalami's description, I expect that there are underground chambers which may hold a trove of Kusinne relics, or better, may hold chambers of devotion from that olden time when the Paths were first put aright.

If you are curious about the lands near Chayi, you may wish to write

to Farscry Vamto, head of the Vamto clan. [Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan].

I send with this letter a copy of an iron frog. Several of these have appeared in the neighborhood of the Abbey. The style reminds me of your work, but I cannot be sure. Can you place this frog, or recognize it as someone's work? A curious little mystery.

With greatest respect, in the Path of the Book, the Hearth, and the Well,
Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

In the Museum

Catalog Item #962: Battle standard. Circa 1st century. Insignia of the Circle of Roads suggests that it dates to the early period of Aksu.

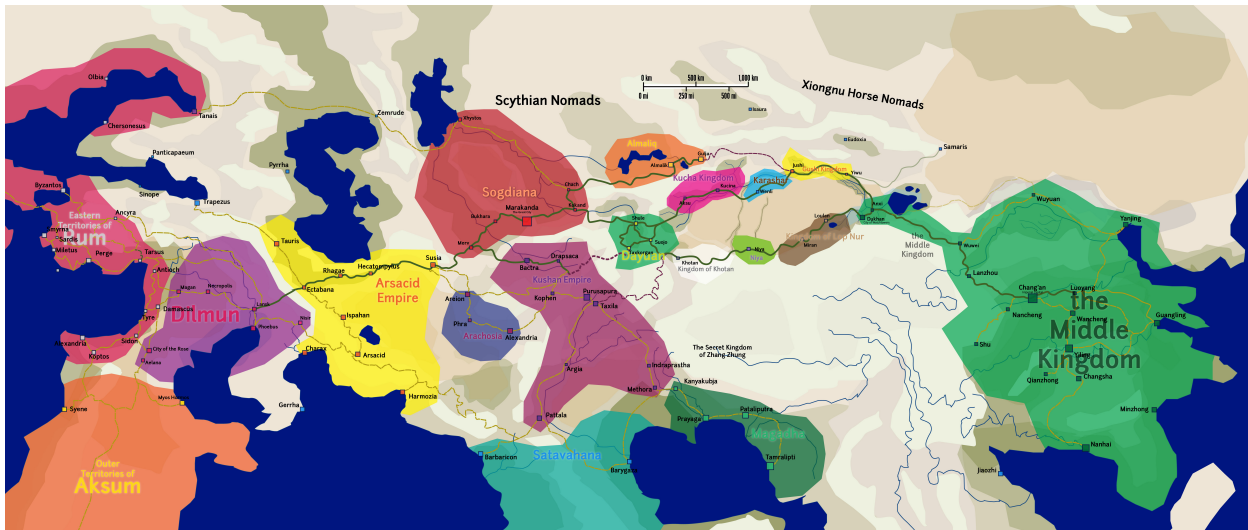


Figure 8.1: Map of the world.

From the Expedition of 1836

2nd Messidor, 1836: I have on my travelling desk a little iron frog that one of the workers excavated while we established our camp. I have half a mind to keep it as a personal memento, rather than sending it to the museum to be packed away as another listing in their catalog. I find, as we start to explore this place, that I feel a deep personal connection to it, even though my birthplace is far from here.

Perhaps it is because my interest in history and the science of archeology can be traced back to when I first learned of the legendary Purge of the Great Library of Niya. I remeber feels that it was such a tragedy. A schoolgirl's fancy, perhaps: but the scholar I am now still feels that first curiosity whenever lost knowledge is discussed.

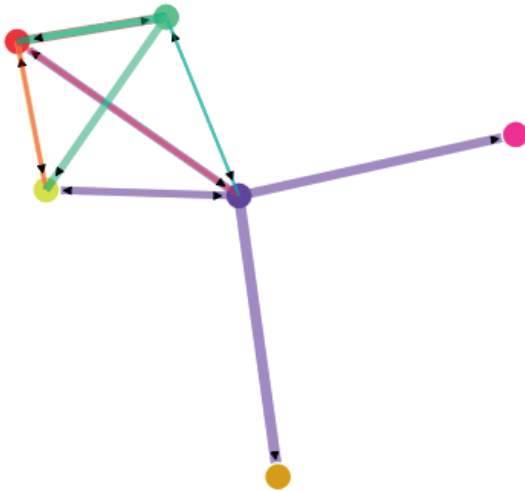
It is my hope that this site will yield a find comparable to the subterranean chambers that Hieronymus has discovered at the site near Chayi.

9

Cycle: *Year 116, Season of Growing*

As the hot summer sun returns to the desert, the thirsty caravans continue their trek from oasis to oasis. Pilgrims pin their news on the Kusine Pilgrim Posts, and whispers of a great discovery near Chayi entertains many campfires...

This ends cycle 8 and begins cycle 9...



Cycle 9: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi: Hospitality

Honored Farscry of Clan Vamto,

A thousand thanks for your hospitality as my party passed through Chayi on the way to the ruins. Truly, your settlement prospers! Though it is sad to leave one's homeland, and sadder to leave under disordered conditions, sometimes fortune grants a new start that brings blessings in recompense for sorrows.

I am pleased that our party waited no longer. There is evidence that treasure hunters have been seeking entrance to the underground parts of the ruins. Sad evidence; the body of one lies beneath a cyclopean stone which was dislodged by hurried digging. It will take some time to dislodge the stone and respectfully deal with the treasure hunter's remains, but this approach appears most promising. Perhaps by the end of the season there will be a safe approach to the crypts. Engineer Liu Shui was not available to join our party, but I have hope that he may visit the site and provide his advice.

Your daughter, or Sister Ghalami to the abbey's residents, prospers in her course of study. I am well pleased with her progress, and it must be so! For if we lose promising students of the path of the Book like Nabylah, who left to follow her own star, and like my lay assistant Sugnumae, who one day soon will doubtless accept the petition of one of the magnates and lords who have come to call – even a prince, once! – there must needs be diligent and talented novices to carry on.

Blessings to you, honored Farscry Vamto, in the Path of the Hearth. May your new land continue to be as good for you as the start you have made!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Cycle 9: Farscry Vamto of Gushi to Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha: Gratitude and Apologies

Abbess Nafisah, It was my clan's great honor to host you and your compatriots as you sojourned with us! My sincere gratitude to you as well for the welcome that the abbey granted to my daughter; she has written to me of her experiences studying the Kusinne Path, and it is clear that not only has she found her calling, but she is in good hands as well. Unfortunately, it was to my utter shame to discover that despite my efforts to contain knowledge of the ruins to responsible parties, clearly

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Fri Jul 10 19:07:20 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi: Hospitality

From:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Mon Jul 13 10:02:33 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Farscry Vamto of Gushi to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha: Gratitude and Apologies

word has spread to unsavory circles. I was unaware that scavengers were recklessly pursuing riches in the ruins until I was informed by you. We do not have the martial wherewithal to protect the ruins, but will work with the village of Chayi to do what we can to ward off treasure hunters. For now, I wish you prosperity and safe travels, and will look forward to when next you or your associates pass through our lands! Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Honored Ironmaster, Greetings and well wishes! You have contacted me at an opportune time. My dear friend Selethen Varzakk [Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant] is a merchant from Dayuan who will hopefully be passing through Kucha either this season or the next, and I commissioned him to acquire some ironwork in Kucha. I vouch for his reputation as a fair merchant who will deal honestly with you, and will pass along a request for him to deal with you in procuring these items! I am looking to acquire an iron anvil and smithing hammer, a supply of medium and large nails, and a barrel of ingots. The changing of seasons has been quite pleasant here in Chayi, and I hope you see abundance in both peace and nature's bounty this year! Best wishes, and may your Path be steady and clear! Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Cycle 9: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

Dearest friend, I am always pleased to receive correspondence from you, though your latest communication carried many concerns. I hope that the change in season has brought an improvement to your fortunes and expectations for the year! I recently received correspondence from an ironmaster of Kucha, whom I encouraged to deal with you when next you pass through. If you are able to acquire the ironwork I listed in my previous letter, I would encourage you to do so in dealing with Jivamitra of Kucha [Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha]. I gave him my solid recommendation for dealing with you, as I have always found you honest and fair in your trading! I continue to hear rumors of these terrifying winged cat-beasts in the south, and hope that such evil stays out of the lands of Gushi. I cannot imagine how a farming clan such as mine could work our lands with such horrors lurking about! We have enough to worry about with mundane threats; storms, floods, and hunter cats, not to mention the ever-worrisome threat of bandits from year to year. There is no hurry for you to travel here; anytime this year that works best for your safety and prosperity is welcome to me! I would recommend that you perhaps consider not traveling all the way to Yiwu this year, however. Many laborers from Yiwu have been traveling west to Jushi seeking employment. Between the damage the plague did two

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha
Moderator

Date: Mon Jul 13 10:56:04 EDT 2015

Subject: Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
Moderator

Date: Mon Jul 13 11:12:03 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

years ago to the populace, and the unrest that drove my clan to migrate west, the city has continued to decline and it sounds to be on the verge of collapse. There is insufficient food for the worker caste, so prices have grown absurdly. Thugs and brigands prey upon everyone, worker and noble alike. There are even rumors that orphans have gone missing only to be sold as slaves to the barbaric tribes of the northern wastes. Jushi, however, has been recovering from the last two years' trials well. I do not know how your trade has been elsewhere this year, but you should find a healthy marketplace there to ply your goods. Best wishes to you and your family, Selethen! May your journey along the Path be clear and straight! Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Re:Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Great Patriarch,

I am grateful for your compliments.

That you count the esteemed Selethen Varzakk a friend is warm news to me. He is a dear friend and I look forward to his arrival.

An anvil and a hammer are easy supplies. As are the nails and raw materials. Should you require an additional order or more complex products my smithies are at your disposal.

I would also ask that you encourage your promising young scholars to attend the Academy if Kucha I have founded on Aksu. I intend it to be unparalleled in the Oases, and perhaps all the world. Your folk are welcome pupils here.

I hope the Seasons are kind to you.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

Ironmaster of Kucha

On Jul 13, 2015 10:56 AM, "Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan" wrote:

Honored Ironmaster,

Greetings and well wishes!

You have contacted me at an opportune time. My dear friend Selethen Varzakk [Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant] is a merchant from Dayuan who will hopefully be passing through Kucha either this season or the next, and I commissioned him to acquire some ironwork in Kucha. I vouch for his reputation as a fair merchant who will deal honestly with

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Mon Jul 13 18:09:12 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

you, and will pass along a request for him to deal with you in procuring these items!

I am looking to acquire an iron anvil and smithing hammer, a supply of medium and large nails, and a barrel of ingots. The changing of seasons has been quite pleasant here in Chayi, and I hope you see abundance in both peace and nature's bounty this year!

Best wishes, and may your Path be steady and clear!

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

The Troubles in Yiwu

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

Yiwu has seen a sad decline this year, with much of the laboring population migrating westward in search of employment. Food is in short supply, and order and law are lacking.

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/yiwu/>

Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Honored Ironmaster,

There are in fact two youths from the village of Chayi who show much promise in the ways of smithing; I spoke with their families after receiving your last letter, and there is much interest in having them study at your academy. They will be traveling with one of the last caravans heading west later this year, and should arrive to begin their tutelage with you before year's end.

Of other interest, explorers in the ruins to the south of Chayi have found some stores of strange metal ingots. We have been unable to determine their make, so I have sent a few samples with this letter for your analysis; I was going to send them with Selethen when he passes through the region again, but I suspect he would consult with you anyway. Please share your findings; if the metal can be of use to you, I will be happy to work out a trade agreement.

I continue to be surprised at how these ruins have lain undisturbed for so long; while they are not noticeable from the tradeway, the local villagers knew about them, but exhibit a surprising lack of curiosity. Monks of the Kusinne Way have been especially interested in various artifacts discovered there, and are organizing an expedition to delve further into the ruins to see what else may be left from untold years past.

Meanwhile, my clan and I continue to be pleased with our resettlement; the land here is fertile and the local village is friendly; this is a good place to call home!

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jul 14 16:35:25 EDT 2015

Subject: Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Best wishes to you!

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

**Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui,
Engineer: From the Ruins at Chayi; Coins**

Master Liu,

I earnestly request your consultation related to the ruins near Chayi. Early explorations have found a promising way toward the buried chambers below the ruined fortress, but our progress is slow. No one wishes to repeat the error of the treasure hunter who preceded us, and eagerly dug his way to a point where he was flattened by a monumental stone from the floor of the main level.

Accompanying this letter is a plan of the ruined fortress and some notes upon the approach to the buried chambers.

You may be interested in the plan of the drainage drafted by one of our students. It appears that at one time, there was a channel from the nearby river which could be opened to flood a trench and protect the citadel from attack, but the lie of the land is no longer favorable, and the citadel sits upon dry ground. Perhaps a shift in water underground contributed to the citadel's abandonment, for even when a strong place is overwhelmed, it is common to rebuild another in its place, should the location still be important to protect.

In clearing the area near the first shaft with the fallen stone, we have exposed a set of interesting carvings in the stone foundation, which I have reproduced here in sketch form, and as charcoal rubbings, where the details may be of interest.

Also accompanying this letter is a bag of coinage found at the corner of the foundation – old, yes, but not old enough to be of interest in our studies of the origin of Kusinne. May you use it in good health for travel, or to further your calling. You will notice the 3-4-5 triangle design, which seems especially appropriate to a master of construction such as yourself. The writing is not familiar to me, but I shall circulate its design amongst the learned ones of my acquaintance to see if they recognize it.

If you cannot visit us, we would be pleased to host your student, may fortune protect him, to look at the construction.

In the Path of the Well, of the Hearth, and the Book,

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Tue Jul 14 18:42:36 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of
Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: From
the Ruins at Chayi; Coins

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

**Cycle 9: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Se-
lethen Varzakk: Coins from the Ruins near Chayi**

Estimable Merchant Selethen Varzakk,

Thank you greatly for your help in recovering some of the ancient writings of Kusinne. We continue to transcribe and puzzle out the stories they bring from our earliest times.

I am writing to you from a camp at the ruined citadel near Chayi where the locals first discovered a number of artifacts from the early days of Kusinne. It is not soft living, after my many years in the Grand Abbey of Kucha, but the prospects of learning and discovery keep my spirits up.

With this letter, I enclose a number of curious coins found buried at the corner of the foundation of the ruined citadel near Chayi. The most clear device is a 3-4-5 triangle, beloved of architects and engineers for creating square corners. While the coins are old, they do not appear to be of the age of the ruins. The writing is unfamiliar to me. Perhaps in your travels and acquaintance with many forms of coin, you might find them familiar. If you recognize the coin, or the writing or device, please send word.

I am hoping that the engineer Master Li will soon arrive to help us with our investigations. We want to explore safely, unlike the unlucky treasure hunter who preceded us by days, and perished under the fall of a great stone from above his tunnel.

May your travel to the Middle Kingdom be prosperous!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, from the camp near the ruined citadel near Chayi

**Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk,
Wandering Monk**

Blessed Kanakk,

May you be favored as you dedicate yourself to the Path of the Road.

I write to you from a camp at the ruined fortress near Chayi. Already the site has yielded relics of the earliest times of the observance of the Paths of Kusinne.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Tue Jul 14 20:41:13 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Abbess Nafisah of
Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk:
Coins from the Ruins near Chayi

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusinne Monk

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Jul 14 23:21:39 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of
Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk

I am here with a party from the Abbey and a few interested locals from the Vamto clan of Chayi who discovered the first relics.

Regrettably a treasure seeker preceded us and in his haste to dig into the underground crypts, dislodged a great stone block which crushed him. We proceed with due caution in hope that the crypts may reveal secrets of the true first practices of the Paths.

I enclose a plan of the ruins and a copy of carvings revealed upon the stones of the entry to the crypts. Also I send several coins found at the corner of the foundation. They are newer than the fortress but unfamiliar to all of us. The 3-4-5 triangle design is notable as a mason's tool but the rest is obscure.

If you find meaning in any of these from your wide learning, please enlighten me!

In the Paths of Kusine,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

P.S.: I heard a rumor that my stray scribe Nabylah is now a nomad queen, having vanquished their chief in single combat. Could it be so?

From The Expedition of 1836

12th Thermador, 1836: Hyronomous has sent sketches of the entrance to the underground chambers beneath the Chayi ruins. A gravesite was discovered nearby; from the perfunctory markings and the late date, he estimates that a tomb robber perished while trying to uncover the ruins, and that later visitors buried the body.

He also inclosed a metal ingot found near the site that has a curious resemblance to some we found near Aksu. I wonder how they could have travelled so far from that place to arrive here?

Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

Estimable Ironmaster,

I have taken your advice regarding precautions. I have sent orders by messenger to secure the Abbey of Kucha against unrest in a number of respects. First, that copies of all significant Kusine texts be placed in sealed jars in the hidden back area of the basement, behind the storage chambers for salt and other staples, and walled up; second, that visitors to the Abbey be restricted to the family members of our residents and small numbers of strictly necessary tradesmen. Meetings, ceremonies,

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 16 03:47:46 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

and study groups are to be conducted in the buildings of our order outside the Abbey walls, including houses in the nearby city of Kucina. Regrettably, this means that fewer good people will enjoy the Abbey gardens in season. Thirdly, I have requested a search for the frogs in the precincts of the Abbey and in Kucina. If there are any near the Abbey, we shall watch closely to see if any pilgrims betray ill will by pointing the frogs toward the royal palace or other places of significance. When I return to the Abbey, I shall assess the situation and make any changes necessary.

Excavations continue, now that we have laid to rest the unfortunate treasure hunter crushed by the falling stone. We move with due care, ensuring that the tunnel is secure in walls and ceiling before advancing. The first chamber we have exposed appears to be a cell used for silent meditation in the Path of the Well. Though the remains of the traditional round rug and cushion are barely more than shreds, the lamp, cup, and dish of earth used in the most ancient traditions were evident.

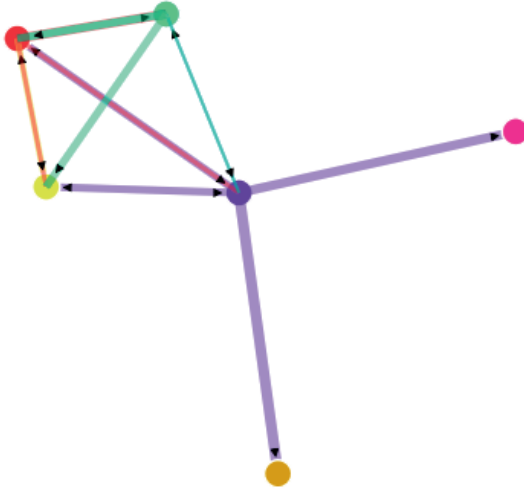
I am pleased that the Pilgrim Posts have been of use. Truly one can be surprised that a seed such as our books of hostels, shrines, and caravanserais, and the Eonic hostel of our construction outside the Abbey have given rise to further innovations. Truly, the Path of the Road brings wisdom through contrast, perspective, and mixing of ideas.

I have heard that Sugnumae, the dear one of Magi Feegle Yitaka, may he rest in peace, has accepted the proposal of a noble suitor, but is yet in residence at the Abbey. Blessings upon her! I shall be sad to lose her nimble pen and delicate brush, as well as her subtle and clever advice.

Blessings upon you in the Path of the Hearth,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, camped outside the ruined fortress near Chayi

Cycle 9 Communication Web



Aw:Cycle 9: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

My exquisite busy friend,

the laborous mastersmith is already a precious trading partner to me, but I thank you nonetheless for your recommendation. Last year I had the pleasure to assist him in a matter of honor and I hope he's satisfied with my service. I'll meet him near the end of my travel, but the Beloved Blossom of my household should now, on the end of the Blossoming, be have been guest in your house already and you should be in possession of most of your ordered wares. As usual the young people tend to forget their old parents if everything is on good terms, but it's my guess that my parents had said the same about me. Sadly, your weaving has to wait until I'll have reached you.

If the people are hungering on the routes, there will be two ways for caravans, I think - be full of food or completely lacking it. I let it be your guess which way should be mine. If I will be successful in coming through, we can share stories about our faring in the last months. If not, do me favor and light two candles for me, one red or at least with a red ribbon and one white for my last journey. But I intend to talk to you in blood and flesh.

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan
Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 16 13:46:37 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:Cycle 9: Farscry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

I'm glad to hear that the last terrible happenings didn't affect you and your people - it would be a shame if such splendid and true-hearted folk such as you would come to harm.

I wish your place preferable weather and your family a merry laugh

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Aw: Re:A Pressing Matter

My assiduous forge master Jivamitra,

still I haven't seen any girl which fits your description and bears the name Nabylah. I confess, I'm curious about this person, but I'll stall it until I'll be sitting at your fire. But be assured that I won't start a conversation about this girl if not in privacy.

The hyacinth has reached me in good condition and I'll proudly present it as gift from your family. It's good to have a light which brightens the road in the darkness.

The latest currents of the conflict washed an item to me I can't discern and I would be glad for your expertise. It's a strange bronze and gold dagger, with a large black opal in the hilt - do you know anything about a weapon like this? The last owner was a hungry soldier; the Adjudicators may know the origin of it, but I have still no clue about it.

May the flames of your forge never be quenched

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Aw:Cycle 9: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk: Coins from the Ruins near Chayi

Please grant me your pardon, I'm in great haste, as the messenger has to ride before I could finish his letter in the right fashion.

The coins remember me of stories my grandfather used to tell us. Do you read anything so far about the "&/g%/\$\$&%"? In your language he should be called the Eagle of Brass. He was a great conqueror in

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha
Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 16 14:00:50 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw: Re:A Pressing Matter

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 16 14:25:25 EDT 2015

Subject: Aw:Cycle 9: Abbess Nafisah of Kucha to Merchant Selethen Varzakk: Coins from the Ruins near Chayi

the west and the last story about this great warlord was him leaving to the east. If this ruins are a stronghold of his, then they could be the resting place of his equipment, namely his “Tent of Brass”. Some kings in the West tried to cope with his achievements and to copy his equipment. As far as I know, they did it in vain. Be careful in the ruins. If they belonged to the Eagle, they will be ridden with traps and magical monsters. If you see a scorpion made of brass, larger than a great dog, don’t try to fight, try to flee.

My best wishes to your endeavour

Selethen Varzakk

A Traveller’ s Report

An excerpt from a letter in Miran Cache #25:

Most esteemed friend, I write to you from the quaint village of Chayi.

The locals have been assisting some kind of religious expedition to the ruins outside of town; I gather they hope to find something of significance to their beliefs. The rumors of treasure appear to have spread far and wide, which is no surprise, for it is all these farmer have to talk about. Well, when they’re not complaining about the storms or floods, or worrying about being stalked by fearsome winged desert creatures.

The local farmers showed me a dry channel that they said used to lead to the citadel, before the land changed. They told me stories about the lack of water causing the place’s abandonment long ages ago.

They weren’t quite clear about what caused the change, though I thought it reasonable to assume that some shift in the water underground or a change in the river was the most mundane explanation.

By the time this letter reaches you, I will be accompanying a caravan to Aksu, together with some of the local youths. They tell me there is an academy at Aksu where they hope to study. A fine occupation for our youth, I dare say.

Cycle 9: Urgent questions

Your Holiness,

forgive my long silence. I have been seriously ill. In fact, I have fallen victim to the same poison that killed my mother and it is only thanks to the knowledge that the royal physician learned from Yuan Sala that I was allowed to come back from the Dark Gates. Thus, I consider myself in your debt for you have saved my life.

From:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Fri Jul 17 02:52:17 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 9: Urgent questions

My ordeal has not been for naught, though, for, by it, we have learned who killed our late Queen. It was, as earlier investigations already indicated, an agent of Symness forces in Dayuan.

The perpetrator who had the audacity to stay in Kucha after my mother's death to continue his despicable task is in our dungeons, still alive, and has given me, after arduous interrogation, the names of people close to the Queen of Dayuan as his employers, but he does not know whether the Queen herself was involved in the plot.

My heart urges me to strike with unforgiving force against those who attacked this great Kingdom and murdered its excellent Queen - to send my guards against the palace in Shule or against the villages supplying it with grain or against the Symness pilgrims on my soil.

But the memory of your words of temperance have so far stayed my hand. I do not wish war on my people, but the Symness crime cannot go unpunished.

Please send me an answer quickly and tell me what your wisdom would have me do.

With deep impatience and respect

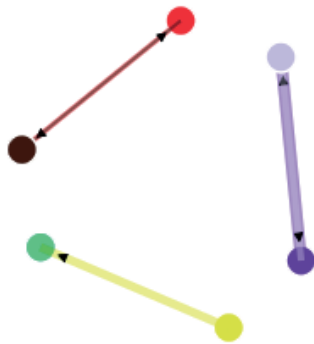
Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

10

Cycle: *Year 116, Season of Harvesting*

As the heat of the sun wanes with the lengthening days, the laborers return to the harvest fields. They speak of floods, famine, monsters, bandits. One pauses, lifts eyes to the caravan on the horizon. What stories does it carry?

This ends cycle 9 and begins cycle 10..



The Eagle of Brass

The Eonic people have a legend about their ancestors and how they came to live in this land. They were lead here by a conqueror, who established a lasting kingdom. He was known in the Oasis Basin as “The Eagle of Brass”. At the end of his legend, he departed for the east, never to be seen again.

There is another story, about a weapon or a fortress that belonged to him: the “Tent of Brass”. It has not been seen since the Eagle departed, and the stories speak of the traps that guard its resting place, and scorpions made of brass.

Cycle 10, Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Queen Shayn Re: Urgent questions

Your Majesty,

It is with great joy that I read your words! Let your recovery be quick and complete, for you are beloved of our nation, and pillar of its strength.

I trust that my messenger has hurried with my reply, to make up for my belated receipt. It is fortunate that Sugnumae saw your seal upon the message and sent it to the camp near Chayi without delay.

Truly, the attack on your person, following so soon upon the poisoning of your mother, suggests a serious plot against the rulership of Kucha.

Alas, the windings of secretive plots are often doubled. Unless your investigators can be sure that the perpetrator’s employers were in fact agents of Dayuan, and not third parties preying upon his sympathies hiding their real master, it is a grand risk to using this heinous attack upon your person as casus belli.

One of the lesser known tales of the Founders of the Paths has as its moral, “Revenge is a dish best served cold.” Those who strike with heat often strike with timing serving their enemies.

May I suggest that you answer the plotters with subtlety? It may be useful to pretend that you are still far from recovery, but to present yourself to the people at the times of seasonal ceremonies so they may take heart, yet to let the state appear to be run by a regent. Seeing how the agents of Dayuan, any possible confederates within the Court, or agents of other powers act when you appear to be indisposed may tell you who is truly seeking advantage. You will be ready to be decisive in

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sat Jul 18 19:30:22 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 10, Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Queen Shayn Re: Urgent questions

any of these matters while any adversaries within or without think you to be weak. It may be helpful to reflect upon who resisted your mother's rule or who suffered loss of power or prestige during the unification of Kucha. Sometimes hurt pride can be as much a motive as power.

Look for proofs of whether the perpetrator spoke truth, particularly if there are times, places, or persons within Kucha who may be verified. Severe ordeals can create stories which satisfy the questioners more than satisfying the truth; indeed, they encourage lying toward the preconceptions of the questioner. Encourage merchants and scouts – indeed, Kusinne pilgrims! – to give true reports concerning the situation in Dayuan.

I have myself been warned against plotting by Eonic devotees – not simple pilgrims, but some few fierce advocates – who make use of iron frogs to signal points of interest for their plotting. Jivamitra the Ironmaster made this claim to me after I sent him a curious iron frog I had found in the Abbey, thinking that it might be his work. At his warning, I have restricted access to the Abbey and regrettably to its gardens, and have arranged public meetings and ceremonies to take place in buildings outside the Abbey itself, outside the walls or within the city of Kucina. I have also directed that copies of the Abbey's most sacred writings be sealed in clay jars inside a crypt created by Master Liu as part of his drainage work some years ago, so that if there is any terrible calamity, the Way of the Book may preserve our wisdom.

For now I observe caution, and to you I recommend caution and cool clarity in your approach, so that all the threads of any adversary's plots may be laid bare. Let your judges and agents investigate; let your soldiers prepare; let your scouts observe; show yourself to the people; let your adversaries think that you are still gravely ill. You may respond with a sure, prepared act rather than committing to the course of blood upon the first instance. Those who begin a war rarely have the power to end it. Once they have mounted the tiger, it may ride far and fast, savaging friend and foe alike. Act with clarity and preparation.

And for now, I am supervising the excavations at the ruined fortress near Chayi. There is some talk of a "Brass Eagle", a fierce warlord of the past, and his magically trapped tomb. I see no evidence of such a fabulous occurrence here. Perhaps they are thinking of the great founder of the Middle Kingdom, whose resting place is surrounded by a moat of quicksilver and a vast army, complete with weapons and chariots, to testify to his greatness.

Our diggings in this more prosaic place have revealed more artifacts of the early days of Kusinne within this corner of the under-rooms of

the ruined fortress. I have been happy to see and rediscover cups with symbols of the Path of the Well, fire bowls dedicated to the Path of the Hearth, metal caps for pilgrims' staffs for the Path of the Road. But so few scraps of the Path of the Book! Indeed, early writings are my best hope as we look with utmost care (as a preceding treasure hunter was crushed by a great paving stone falling from the level above!) for the ways of our earliest predecessors in the Paths.

May the Guardians of the Paths protect you and all of us!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, from the camp beside the ruined fortress near Chayi

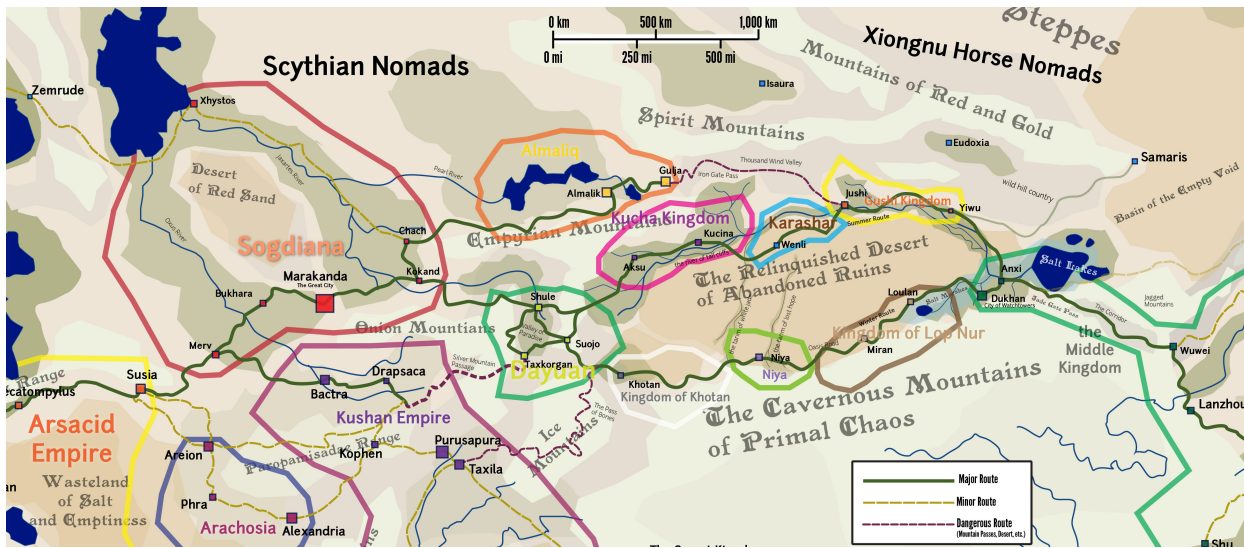


Figure 10.1: Cities of the Silk Road.

Re: [Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Iyimo the Storyteller

Most noble Vamto clan-head Farscry,

I have wondered in the past what farmers do when there is little work necessary in the fields, and now I have my answer: they have lives far more adventuresome than my own. It would appear your clansmen are tillers not just of the earth but of mysteries, harvesting not just golden wheat but golden treasures as well! It is to my shame and regret that I do not know for certain what the ruin on the map is. I have a notion that it was the martial monastery of the Brotherhood of the Last Step, those earlier followers of the Path who felt it their sacred duty to keep safe holy artifacts and writings, and to ward away bandits as far afield from their monastery as possible. I feel compelled now to visit this place. As this missive arrives to you I shall already be on the roads.

From: **Iyimo, Storyteller**

To: **Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan**

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 19 12:47:21 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: [Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Iyimo the Storyteller

Lyimo

The Frogs of Iron

An excerpt from a letter found in Miran Cache #25:

A great many small metal frogs have been spotted in Kucha, all of them pointing towards the capital. According to rumor, they are connected with Symness and secret meetings. There are mutterings in the streets about unholy rulers and of some kind of connection with the recently excavated tower...

<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/wiki/kucha/>

Fwd: Re:Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Is this your frog?

Sorry about that!

—— Forwarded message ——

From: "Jivamitra Kucha"

Date: Jul 15, 2015 11:19 AM

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Is this your frog?

To: "Nafisah Of Kucha"

Cc:

Honoured Abbess,

Selethen Varzakk is an honourable man and I am pleased to count him as a friend. I should also thank you for your hand in acquainting me with the head of the Vamto. Chayi is famously iron poor and this presents an opportunity for all to gain.

I am pleased that Farscry is a decent leader and his people do well in their new home. This cash of relics will serve to elevate the Vamto within the politics of the Oases. My heart is filled with joy at the recovery of Kusinne relics. Indeed it is wondrous that they have survived.

The Pilgrim Posts have proven exceptionally useful. I made use of them on my return to Aksu. Truly the welcoming arms of your Order have assured the blessings of many people in these time.

The frogs are not my work, nor do I know who wrought them. I have seen a number of them myself and have made inquiries. They match a style often seen in Shule. A handful of students at the academy agree

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Mon Jul 20 07:50:13 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd: Re:Cycle 8: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Is this your frog?

that it is an allusion to a Synmnic parable. There are a number of interpretations, but it seems that all of those are tales of a secret meeting, to a purpose of those who follow Symness against an unholy ruler. I made a few similar frogs and placed them in the Market of Aksu. My apprentice kept watch and viewed a number of travellers pass it, one turning it's face east, toward Kucina. The conclusion at the Academy is that these metal frogs are the sign of a cabal followers of Symness. Though their intent cannot be gleaned precisely I feel that they plan to attack the holy places of Kusine. Violence has never been beyond certain Adjudicators. These frogs are connected with the excavation of the Tower, and the spread of Kusine in the Oases.

Honoured one I urge you to take care.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

In the Court of Kucha

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

That year, Queen Shayn was often observed to be unwell and absent from the court. This did not go unremarked among the nobility, and many speculated that poison had affected her health severely, the same way her mother had been brought down.

A Town of Mysteries

An extract from a letter found in Miran Cache #25:

I am sorry to hear of your loss, old friend. I have lit a red candle and a white candle in memory of her last journey.

I write to you from the town of Chayi. That is a name I have heard often around the caravan fires this past season. From the stories I expected a town of great wealth and mystery. Well, it surely has the mystery. Wealth is a more tenuous claim: though the fields seem abundant, the region is poor in iron and they must import their metalwork.

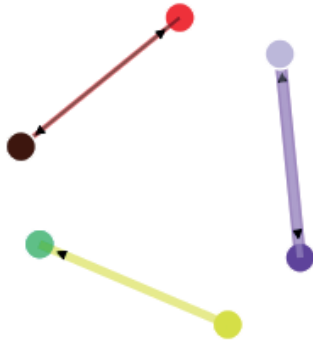
Lately, it seems, there have been some new decorations added: the ruins outside the town have apparently yielded many trinkets, with more to be found. There is an expedition of some kind excavating the ruined tower now, for some religious purpose. I talked to one of the nuns present, and she told me privately that she thought that the site originally belonged an ancient order of Path-followers.

The local Vamto clan seems to have become prominent in the wake of these discoveries; the religious significance of these finds has put them in contact with all sorts of dignitaries and honors. Mostly Kusine, of course—I am one of the few followers of Symness to visit.

Faithful to the Adjudicators,

Aspandhat

Cycle 10 Communication Web



[Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Lyimo the Storyteller

To the esteemed master of lore, Lyimo,

My appreciation for your response, and may you be in good health and spirits whenever this letter reaches you, hopefully in safe travels! You are most welcome to stay with my clan when you visit, my son and I will gladly escort you to the ruins. I cannot speak for all farmers, but I have always held a fascination with the lives of our predecessors; we

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Tue Jul 21 14:38:19 EDT 2015

Subject: [Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Lyimo the Storyteller

were unaware when we moved here from Yiwu that such a treasure of our history lay in wait!

During the growing season and cold season, there is only so much work to occupy oneself with in a farming clan such as ours, leaving much time to the pursuit of other interests. Some choose to pursue crafts, others hunting, and still others leisure, but some such as myself enjoy the pursuit of knowledge! It is why I am eager to read whatever I can acquire, and converse so readily with people both near and far. I hope that your visit will leave time for much discussion, as I am positive that I can learn much from you! I can offer you some payment as recompense, and see to it that you lack neither good meals nor a comfortable bed during your stay. You may even have the fortune of arriving while an expedition from the great Abbey of Kucha is here searching for artifacts relating to the Kusinne Path! May your journey be safe and sped along by good weather, master Lyimo!

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Items of Ceremonial Purpose

Catalog Item #651: Triangular coins. The dimensions are in a strict 3:4:5 ratio. Predates the founding of Chayi, but more recent than the ruins outside the town. Inscribed with Eonic writing, referring to mystical tenets of the Symness beliefs.

Catalog Item #612: Rug and cushion, decorated. Circa 5th century. Prime example of rugs used in practices of the Kusinne Path of the Well.

Catalog Item #390: Lamp and cup. 3rd c. Marking indicate connection with the Kusinne Path of the Well.

Catalog Item #292: Dish of earth. Predates early Oasis period, likely early Kusinne and used in religious practices. Excavated at Aksu.

Re: Re:A Pressing Matter

My Friend

I am pleased you remain well.

In my old age I seem to be getting busier and busier. My academy is growing; already fostering active discussion. My forges and mines continue in good stead overall, but I have noticed a decrease in willing miners. This decline is especially pronounced among the Eonics of Aksu. I have spoken to other heads of houses here and this seems to be more general than my rather remote mining operations.

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

Moderator

Date: Wed Jul 22 07:57:06 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: Re:A Pressing Matter

My overly humble friend, your knowledge of the Time of Devastations is indeed correct. This dagger sounds suspiciously like an ancient sacrificial blade wielded by the heretic Adjudicators in those dark times. A number of works which have been gathered at the Academy suggest that human sacrifices were to bring terrible magical powers to the High Adjudicators who worked the sacrilegious rights. We are all fortunate that the schism between Adjudicators was closed long ago, and that such rituals are long forbidden. I would examine it if you still possess it when you reach Aksu.

I hope that the road treats you well.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From the Expedition of 1836

15th Thermador, 1836: This has been a day of a great many discoveries!

Behind a wall in what I believe to be a salt cellar, we found a sealed chamber with a great many jars, each one containing what appears to be a sacred text. And not only that: some contained much more mundane records. One of them, for example, appears to be some kind of social register: the last entry announces the betrothal of an apprentice initiate of the order named Sugnumae to a nobleman. This must have happened shortly before the records were copied and sealed away. Another document makes mention of the Abbey being unexpectedly closed to visitors that season. Perhaps there is some connection there as to why the texts were sealed away.

Fwd:A Gift Before I Depart

——— Forwarded message ———

From: Jivamitra Kucha

Date: 22 July 2015 at 19:17

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] A Gift Before I Depart

To: Queen Shayn

My Queen,

Your kind words do me great honour and I pray by the Hearth that you recover quickly.

From: **Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha**
To: Moderator
Date: Wed Jul 22 19:18:44 EDT 2015
Subject: Fwd:A Gift Before I Depart

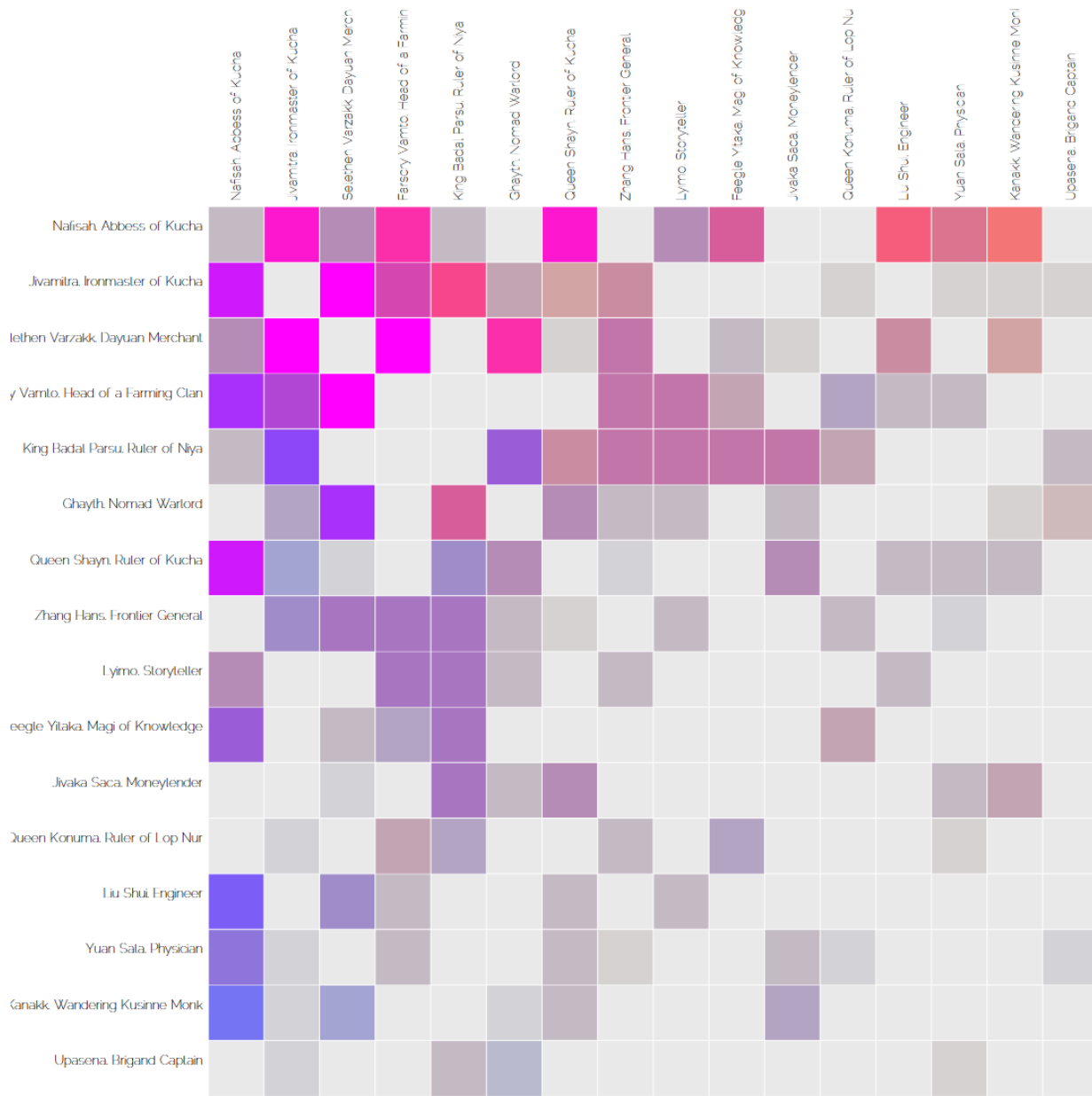


Figure 10.2: Matrix of the messages sent and received throughout the course of Tower of Callisto.

Thank you for your support of the Great Academy. Already the response has been greater than I ever thought it could be, and I am grateful for the guards and the coin. Both will ensure the continuance of the Academy. I have rented out a complex at the edge of the city, which is serving as the campus until preparations of the permanent edifice are completed.

I had not thought your absence strange, I had assumed you had sequestered yourself against assassins. It is unfortunate, but there seems to be a cabal in operation. They are using small iron frogs to organise covertly, thus far they seem to be targeting public spaces and institutions of Kusiunne. A new arrival at the Academy, Mandal Ashkashwar, has suggested it is a religiously motivated group of followers of Symness, seeking to impose direct rule of the Adjudicators in the Oases, as told in the Parable of the Frog. Your Highness would be a significant target of such a conspiracy.

Honour and Glory to You, Queen Shayn, Light of Kucha

Jivamitra

On 22 July 2015 at 07:11, Queen Shayn wrote:

Esteemed Jivamitra,

thank you for your generous gifts and your beautiful work. Your art is an important part of the renown of our beautiful nation in the Oasis Kingdoms and will contribute to spread Kucha's fame to the end of the earth. The wonderful lanterns you sent now adorn my audience chambers and the exquisite objects of art have found a place in the halls of my palace where visitors cannot but marvel at them.

Forgive my late answer. I have been sickly and weak for weeks now and although I am confident that I will eventually recover, I am forced to take things slow right now.

With all my heart do I welcome your idea of a Great Academy in Aksu! There is nothing more important to me than my people's culture and I will do my utmost to support your project. At the arts festival that I held last year in my late mother's honor, I have made the acquaintance of many great artists that I have contacted to invite them to teach at your Academy. I will be at the lookout for other potential teachers, but for the moment, I advise you to talk to Nafisah, the Abbess of Kucha [Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha], who has assembled impressive knowledge about our Paths and can certainly send you a pupil of hers or put you in contact with other scholars.

Thank you also for your warning considering the possibility of Symness unrest in Aksu or on our borders. My present state is certainly rather encouraging to forces who intend to harm our beautiful Kucha. To avoid

alarming these people, I would like to profit from the opportunity of your project and send you a small armed force disguised as workers to aid in your constructions. They will bring with them what funds I can contribute to your noble endeavor.

May your arm, heart and mind always be strong and the heavenly lights watch over you and your honourable project.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

Fwd:Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

——— Forwarded message ———

From: Jivamitra Kucha

Date: 22 July 2015 at 18:43

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

To: Nafisah Of Kucha

Revered One,

I am glad you have taken precautions, and yet hope they will not be necessary. Hopefully the cooling of weather will serve to cool the temperaments of all peoples and reason will prevail.

I am continually awed by the discoveries at the tower and I eagerly await further wonders of ancient Kusinne. I would love to recreate accurate replicas of the ancient lamp and cup for the faithful.

Relatedly it seems that someone has found (or perhaps fashioned!) a sacrificial dagger of the schismatic Adjudicators of the Time of Devastations. I will know more once I can examine it in person. In attempting to confirm the nature of the dagger my colleagues at the Great Academy have found several sources referencing a dark sacrifice used to create magical flamed which killed all the followers of Kusinne in a tower. I cannot help thinking that this tower of legend may be that uncovered and Chayi. Have you heard any news of a resurgent schism in Symness?

I bow the Divine in you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Wed Jul 22 19:19:11 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd:Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

Fwd:A Gift Before I Depart

From: **Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha**

To: Moderator

Date: Wed Jul 22 19:20:10 EDT 2015

Subject: Fwd:A Gift Before I Depart

———— Forwarded message ————

From: Jivamitra Kucha

Date: 22 July 2015 at 19:17

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] A Gift Before I Depart

To: Queen Shayn

My Queen,

Your kind words do me great honour and I pray by the Hearth that you recover quickly.

Thank you for your support of the Great Academy. Already the response has been greater than I ever thought it could be, and I am grateful for the guards and the coin. Both will ensure the continuance of the Academy. I have rented out a complex at the edge of the city, which is serving as the campus until preparations of the permanent edifice are completed.

I had not thought your absence strange, I had assumed you had sequestered yourself against assassins. It is unfortunate, but there seems to be a cabal in operation. They are using small iron frogs to organise covertly, thus far they seem to be targeting public spaces and institutions of Kusiunne. A new arrival at the Academy, Mandal Ashkashwar, has suggested it is a religiously motivated group of followers of Symness, seeking to impose direct rule of the Adjudicators in the Oases, as told in the Parable of the Frog. Your Highness would be a significant target of such a conspiracy.

Honour and Glory to You, Queen Shayn, Light of Kucha

Jivamitra

On 22 July 2015 at 07:11, Queen Shayn wrote:

Esteemed Jivamitra,

thank you for your generous gifts and your beautiful work. Your art is an important part of the renown of our beautiful nation in the Oasis Kingdoms and will contribute to spread Kucha's fame to the end of the earth. The wonderful lanterns you sent now adorn my audience chambers and the exquisite objects of art have found a place in the halls of my palace were visitors cannot but marvel at them.

Forgive my late answer. I have been sickly and weak for weeks now and although I am confident that I will eventually recover, I am forced to take things slow right now.

With all my heart do I welcome your idea of a Great Academy in Aksu! There is nothing more important to me than my people's culture and I will do my utmost to support your project. At the arts festival that I held last year in my late mother's honor, I have made the acquaintance of many great artists that I have contacted to invite them to teach at your Academy. I will be at the lookout for other potential teachers, but for the moment, I advise you to talk to Nafisah, the Abbess of Kucha [Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha], who has assembled impressive knowledge about our Paths and can certainly send you a pupil of hers or put you in contact with other scholars.

Thank you also for your warning considering the possibility of Symness unrest in Aksu or on our borders. My present state is certainly rather encouraging to forces who intend to harm our beautiful Kucha. To avoid alarming these people, I would like to profit from the opportunity of your project and send you a small armed force disguised as workers to aid in your constructions. They will bring with them what funds I can contribute to your noble endeavor.

May your arm, heart and mind always be strong and the heavenly lights watch over you and your honourable project.

Queen Shayn bat Fadya al-Manara

2015-07-03 3:06 GMT+02:00 Jivamitra Kucha <Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha>:

My Queen, Mighty Ruler of Kucha

I hope that this letter finds you well and accompanying the various gifts I have delivered. I am proud of all my works, and I hope that these will add to your armoury in these troubled time we live in. There are also a number quality lanterns and art objects. Some produced in my forges and some from my private collection. I especially am pleased to present a battle standard of Old Aksu, in immaculate condition. The influence of Kusinne is beginning to show in this standards use of the Circle of Roads. It was found in a stash in an old shaft that my survey crew has reopened.

I have enjoyed my season in Kucina, but am ready to return to my estates. There is much to do in Aksu. I have begun to seed the foundation of a Great Academy there. That knowledge may help your people, and keep Kucha strong. I have gathered a number of texts and a mountain of supplies in order to do so, but I have yet to find a great scholar to lead the pupils. I would appreciate any guidance you could gift me with.

I must finally implore you to move additional soldiers to ensure the security of Aksu. I know that many of the Eonic peoples have

embraced you, and that many have embraced that paths. As the true strengths in Kucha are revealed the Adjudicators will become more and more desperate. Inevitably some will consider their only solution to be violence. It is merely a matter of time. A merchant recently spotted a large settlement of Adjudicator loyalists near Aksu. They will not remain peaceable for long.

Honour to You, my Queen,

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

Re:Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Elder Farscry

I pray the changing seasons continue to shade you with kindness.

I am delighted to report the arrival of many youths to the Great Academy, those from Chayi have conducted themselves with aplomb. It is without exaggeration to say they are among the best and brightest pupils.

I was delighted to examine those strange ingots. I am amazed at how little they have succumbed to the corrosion of time. They also interact strongly with my lodestones. Due top these properties I conclude they are not iron, perhaps a special alloying of metals. I have arranged an experimental foundry for the students of the Great Academy, and we will attempt to separate one of the ingots into it's component pieces when it has been proven with flame. Are there many more ingots waiting in the sands?

It is believed that the Artifacts are part of early Kusine history. Indeed the ancient truths of Kusine may dwell in the Tower, but dark is the past and delving into it is raising the ire of those who see Kusine as an obstacle to their desire. Still the revelations and wonders of the tower seem more than worth these risks.

Have the locals attempted to seed their religious ideals amongst your peoples yet? I know that as Kusine has begun to push against the Symness in the West so to it is pressing into the Philosophy of the East. Such happiness always draw out conflicts, thought long forgotten, but merely hidden. There are few who deserve a good home as much as your hard working clan.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming
Clan

Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 23 21:00:06 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra
Kucha

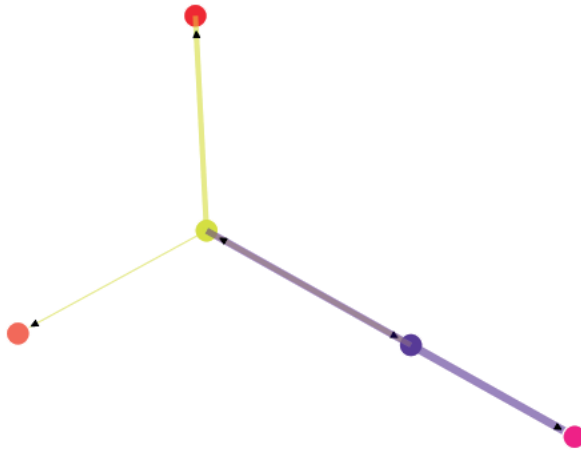
Ironmaster of Kucha

11

Cycle: *Year 116, Season of Withering*

At night, everyone in the caravan gathers around the fire, and tells stories appropriate to the season: stories of endings, the last time you saw someone, the thing you lost when you were a child.

This ends cycle 10 and begins cycle 11...



Messages Over Time

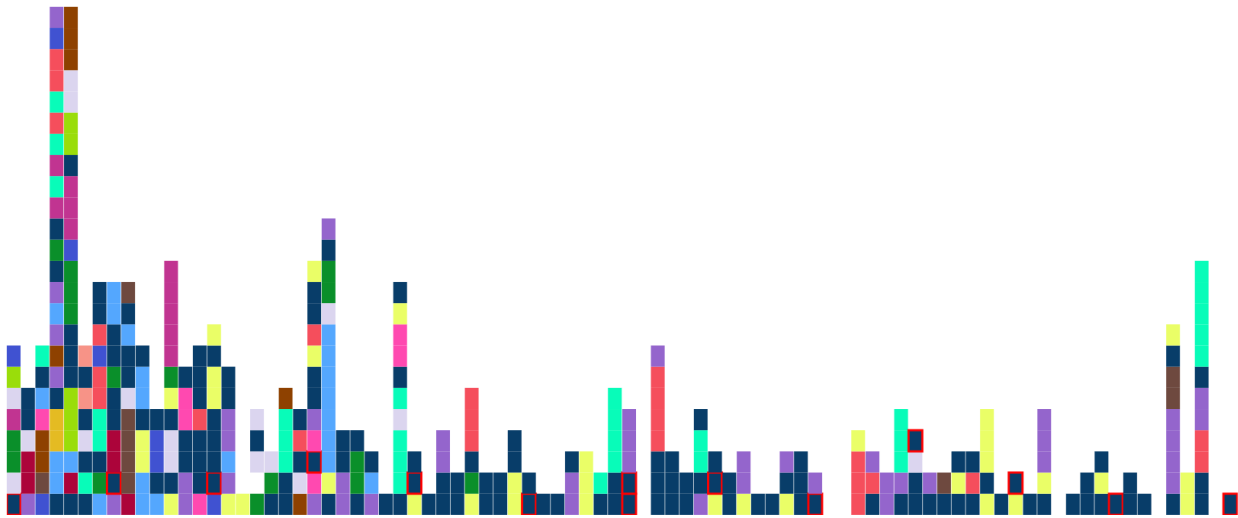


Figure 11.1: Bar chart of the messages sent per day, color-coded by sending player.

Lost and Found

Excerpt from a letter from Chayi:

With the Withering Season upon us, the laborers in the villages have left their fallow field and have taken up their other pursuits. Many seem to have occupied themselves with exploring the ruined tower and the surrounding environment. Not all of them: today I saw a blind girl, a daughter of one of the local clans, apparently. They seem to keep her sheltered in the village.

I have heard rumors that someone has found a dagger with a black opal in the hilt that sounds very similar to one that the heretic Adjudicators used during the time of Devastations. But many strange things are being found nowadays: there are many ingots recovered from the ruins, of some unknown metal that seems to react strangely to lodestones. Perhaps I will be able to tell you more of this when I see you next.

Faithful to the Adjudicators,

Aspandhat

Turmoil in the Courts of Kucha

From the Annals of the Oasis Kingdoms:

At that time the court in Kucina was disrupted by the sudden uncovering of dissidents in their midst. Acting on advice from trusted advisors, the Queen took advantage of her seclusion to allow her agents to ferret out adversaries among her own courtiers.

An Offer

Upasena, Brigand Captain

Captain Upasena,

I am Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Know that I am a well regarded notable and personally of means. Know also that I act in my own in this.

I wish the demise of a camp of Adjudicators and their followers in the area of Aksu.

The man who has presented you this letter is a trusted retainer. Amiir has the location of both the Adjudicator settlement and armed patrols in that part of Kucha. He also has brought a pair of horses in addition to his train. These two are gifts and are yours regardless of your acceptance of my proposal.

In exchange for the bloody work I offer thee following:

2 Score spearheads. The same number of sabres, helms and small buckling shields. A barrel of arrowheads and a small chest of silver.

I also demand that you do not attack anyone outside the camp. The people of Kucha are not targets

In good faith I have sent 5 helms and sabres. They do not bear my mark but trust they are mine. The remaining arms will be delivered upon your acceptance and the silver upon completion. You may take any valuables from the camp but you must not harm the books which are present.

Do let me know through Amiir your decision.

I bow to the Divine within you.

Jivamitra

Ironmaster of Kucha

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Upasena, Brigand Captain

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 26 11:58:21 EDT 2015

Subject: An Offer

Cycle 11: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

Estimable Ironmaster,

I appreciate your good wishes and thoughtful observations as always. You are an exemplar, a lantern of the Path of the Hearth.

As the season wears toward the darker cycle, I am preparing to return to the Abbey of Kucha near Kucina. Would that I could stay longer, but the nights of hard frost approach. Our workers are preparing to close the diggings, cover them, and secure them in some small way from vandals. One of the more restless workmen has proposed to create some diggings destined to lead nowhere or to dead ends. It is refreshing to see such energy, though perhaps his would be better applied to a grander project.

There has been a high, dry haze in the air, shrouding the sky for a number of days – have you seen it where you are? The days, under the haze, seem cooler already than I would expect for the season, and our water jars already are ice-rimmed of a morning. This one, myself, will be looking forward to a proper hearth and strong walls to keep out the chill drafts. We must leave eventually, for fuel and food must sustain the residents of Chayi and we cannot so presume (nor would my bones allow staying overwinter in a tent, I am sure).

Some of our furthest observations in the fortress's understory have indeed revealed scorch and smoke marks. In the outer chambers, these seem to be merely lamp soot, but in the chambers toward the center, there are heavy soot and flowing smoke marks on the walls. Whether this might be a witness to your ancient story, I do not know. But fire, unless kept tame, can be a grand destroyer.

We have had as our guest, several times, an Eonic devotee who calls himself Aspandhat. He is a restless fellow whose eyes dart this way and that. Though he was charming and full of stories, he seemed ill at ease. Perhaps something in the word of the ruin near Chayi has raised fears among those of his tradition. I have made him welcome as he flits between the fortress and Chayi. Of himself he seems harmless enough. Certainly, he bears no iron frogs upon his person, this fact being thoroughly checked as he lay in sleep after imbibing too much one evening. I have explained as best I can the circumstances of the Vamto clan's discovery, and what we know – the presence of early Kusinne relics – and what we do not! – who these people were, and when. We had a good laugh together about haunted scorpions and the "Tent of

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 26 15:38:15 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 11: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

Brass". Aspandhat endorses my notion that this may be a remembrance of a Middle Kingdom conqueror, though he supplies another candidate, the warlord Iskandar who came from the far west with armies of fierce discipline and bravery and rewrote the map of our world. I must admit that Iskandar seems as likely as Jinshi Huangti. Aspandhat is, of course, an agent for those of Symness, so I have been at pains to offer our best hospitality and ensure that he has a clear understanding of our work here, and discourage the wilder speculations of the younger members of our party.

As to those wilder speculations, well, some of our younger members have whispered about a secret, fierce sub-sect of Kusinne mixing the proud warrior traditions of the nomads and the mystic obsessions of word, number, and order known to a few of the Path of the Book. It is hardly a secret, of course. Those among the nomads who follow the Paths are apt to wear their allegiance in mystic tattoos designed according to principles of number and symmetry which memorialize maxims of the Paths in obscure symbolic form, their homage to the Path of the Book amongst a people who have none. Ha! Even I bear one upon my ankle, a girlish indulgence as I walked the Path of the Road. Its "secret" meaning is "The wisest preparation is to prepare to be surprised." A reminder of my vanity and self-importance every time I bathe, and to remind myself that even those of power and merit carry folly with them every step of their Paths.

I now hurry home to the Abbey. Sugnumae spoke of her nuptials being celebrated upon the New Year at latest, which means that there might be reason for her and her bridegroom to hurry the date. How I miss her already! Such a gift it has been that she has been staying in the Abbey while she could.

Blessings upon you, Ironmaster, in the Path of the Hearth, from myself in the Path of the Road,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

P.S.: Enclosed I send a number of small pieces of metal hardware which our party has been unable to puzzle out a purpose for, found in the deeper, soot-blackened chambers.

FW:Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

I think that Jivamitra forgot to forward this one, too. 22 Jul == Cycle 10?

NAoK:jm

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 26 15:39:24 EDT 2015

Subject: FW:Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

Date: Wed, 22 Jul 2015 18:43:42 -0400

Subject: Re: [Tower of Callisto] Cycle 9: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster: Safeguards

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Revered One, I am glad you have taken precautions, and yet hope they will not be necessary. Hopefully the cooling of weather will serve to cool the temperaments of all peoples and reason will prevail. I am continually awed by the discoveries at the tower and I eagerly await further wonders of ancient Kusinne. I would love to recreate accurate replicas of the ancient lamp and cup for the faithful. Relatedly it seems that someone has found (or perhaps fashioned!) a sacrificial dagger of the schismatic Adjudicators of the Time of Devastations. I will know more once I can examine it in person. In attempting to confirm the nature of the dagger my colleagues at the Great Academy have found several sources referencing a dark sacrifice used to create magical flamed which killed all the followers of Kusinne in a tower. I cannot help thinking that this tower of legend may be that uncovered and Chayi. Have you heard any news of a resurgent schism in Symness? I bow the Divine in you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Cycle 11: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: From the Ruins at Chayi; Investigations

Master Liu,

We so missed your presence at the ruined fortress near Chayi! I hope that your endeavors are proceeding with all success.

Working with caution, we excavated a set of side chambers and explored some deeper, soot-blackened rooms closer to the center of the ruined fortress.

We have hosted a traveler, Aspandhat of the Symness creed, who was curious about our work. I made sure to explain both the origin and the findings so far to him, so that he could give the clearest of reports to those he serves – for there is no doubt he is an informant serving some power within the Eonic hierarchy, whether the far-off Adjudicators or some nearer proconsuls.

We have found no riches or treasures as such, merely curiosities of everyday life and of Kusinne devotion, some in quaint and primitive form, but

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To: Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Sun Jul 26 15:52:01 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 11: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Liu Shui, Engineer: From the Ruins at Chayi; Investigations

as recognizable as those which might be found in some remote village shrine or household alcove.

Aspandhat seems to have made a friendship with a blind girl in the Vamto clan of Chayi. She insists on leading him about the village, introducing him to everyone and “showing” him the notable points. He seems personally harmless, though anxious and always looking this way and that. Who can know what he fears? At any rate, I trust we have assured him that he and Symness have nothing to fear from our discoveries of the ancient practitioners of Kusine in the fortress near Chayi.

Enclosed are more drawings of the masonry and room plans for your interest, and a number of geometric-numeric designs engraved into the walls that resemble the mystical tattoos worn to this day by the nomads who honor the Paths of Kusine – even, I am mildly embarrassed to say, myself – bearing a symbolic maxim upon my ankle from my young wanderings in the Path of the Road.

As the season turns to chill, I return to the Abbey of Kucha and look forward to attending the nuptials of my lay student Sugnumae with her noble groom.

In the Path of the Well, of the Hearth, and the Book,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Letters from Aksu

An excerpt from a letter by a citizen of Aksu:

... the city's forges have been quieter of late. I have been told that this is because the mines have run short of laborers, even though they were booming just a few seasons ago. It has been whispered that Eonic workers are avoiding the mines entirely.

I, on the other hand, am fully occupied. Thanks to an introduction from the Queen, I have been engaged at the academy that has recently been established in Aksu. I have been working closely with Mandal Ashkashwar and find that many of my students are gratifyingly eager to learn...

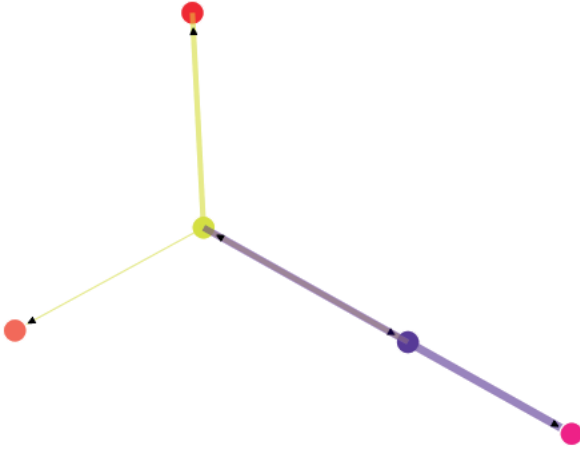
The Aksu Letters

An excerpt from a document found at Aksu:

...preparations are underway for the construction of a permanent edifice for the academy. Royal support has ensured that the project has favorable winds.

There have been persistent rumors that religiously motivated assassins are operating in Kucha, targeting public spaces and institutions of Kusunne...

Cycle 11 Communication Web



From the Expedition of 1836

17th Thermador, 1836: According to this letter from Hyronomous, the dig at Chayi has revealed evidence of smoke, seeming to point towards a large fire damaging the center of the ruined compound and possibly leading to its eventual abandonment.

Beneath the soot, there are engravings that resemble Kusunne religious tattoos: geometric-numeric designs with meanings encoded numerically into their symmetric designs.

They have also found several dead ends apparently intended to mislead looters. Curiously, they appear to date to much later than the original ruins. Possibly second century, according to Hyronomous.

Re:Cycle 11: Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

Revered One,

I have indeed noticed the chill, but I thought it my absence from my forge. The Great Academy is nearly all consuming.

The false leads are brilliant. The would be robbers would have to take great care along their excavations and explore the dead ends with care. A newcomer to the Great Academy claims to be an exiled builder from the far west. He has outlined a strategy for trapping and designing convincing false tunnels. His recommendations range from the simple to the outright ornate. I hope they may be of use.

I am convinced that Tower is the site of those dark rites. We are fortunate that the Symness has become more moderate with time. At least I hope it remains thus.

The Academy has a number of followers of the Symness and they resemble your Aspandhat, but they have made few overtly suspicious or outrightly hostile moves.

I do remain worried about the group of radical followers of the Adjudicators near Aksu. Though steps have been taken to keep our peoples secure.

High One I did not know you were of nomad ancestry, though I see their ancient resolve in your strong bearing and sense of duty in retrospect.

My heartfelt congratulations to Sugnumae and her bridegroom. It is wonderful to see the young finding love. My apprentice has also become engaged. He is a decent sort but I am not certain theirs is a relationship to last.

Blessing to you of the Path of the Road, High One.

Jivamitra

Ironmaster of Kucha

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Jul 30 14:33:15 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Cycle 11: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

Society Column

From the records of the Grand Abbey of Kuchina:

On this day there commenced the preparations for the wedding of Sugnumae, lay disciple, to groom of noble birth. Attendant to the rites of Kusinne and the customs of the kingdom of Kuchina, the groomprice has been recorded in the records. Her wedding is planned to take place before the New Year.

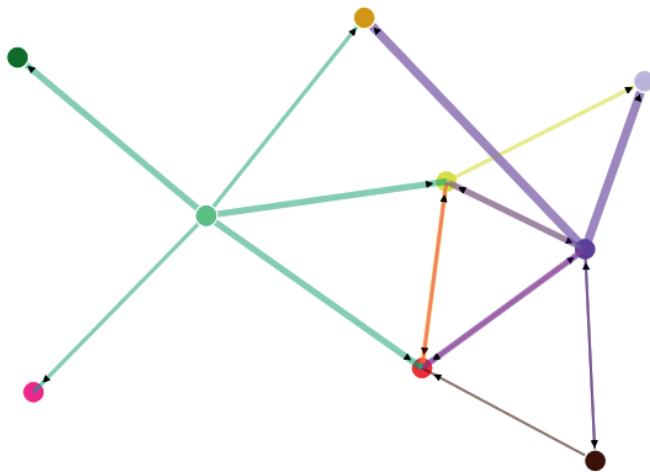
12

Cycle: *Year 116, Season of Hibernating*

Winter at an oasis is a busy time for the caravans. The local farmers may have left their fields fallow, but the road still calls to merchant and pilgrim alike.

In the villages, they look forward to the celebrations to come. As always, the year is coming to an end, reminding us that change is eternal and nothing can last forever...

This ends cycle 11 and begins cycle 12, the last ordinary story cycle. Following this cycle, there will be a concluding epilogue cycle to wrap things up.



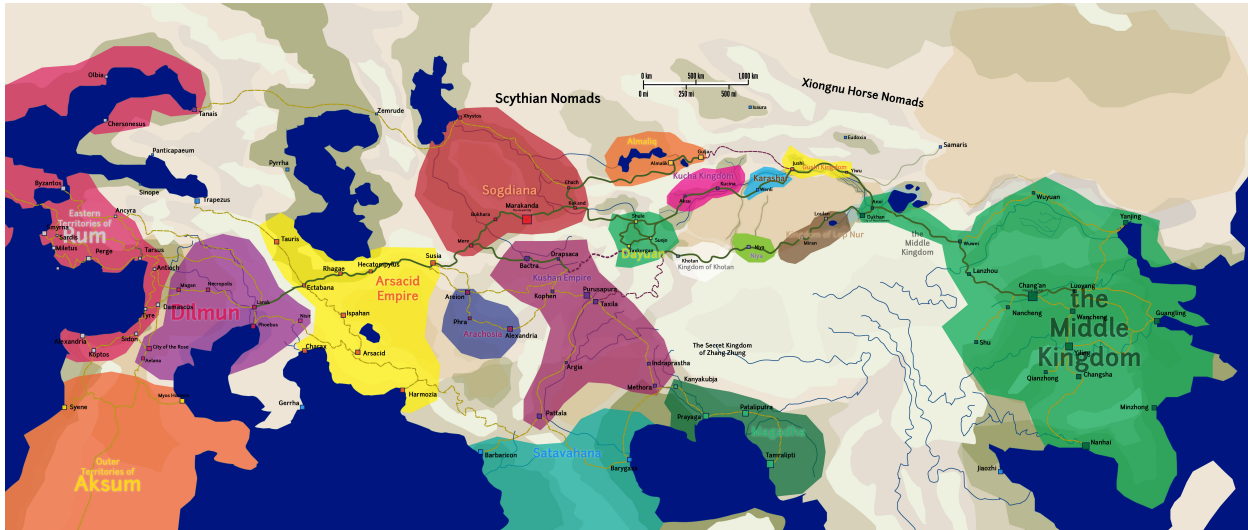


Figure 12.1: A map of the world.

Bandit Attack Near Aksu

A band of bandits have raided a settlement of Symness followers outside Aksu, leaving it devastated. The bandits attacked at dawn, their spears glinting in the light of the rising sun. They killed many, but left the camp unburned and partially intact.

Continued Discoveries at Chayi

From Miran Cache #25:

... I have several sources of information. The religious order conducting the excavation was almost eager to share with me the many things they have discovered. Mostly mundane items pertaining to the obscure Kusinne rituals of this region. Household shrine items and the like.

They wouldn't let me enter the excavations themselves, which seem to be unusually active even though they are supposedly leaving soon. They almost seem to be constructing new tunnels.

Secondly, I have befriended a blind girl of the local Vamto clan, who is very knowledgeable about the local people and has supplied me with much casual gossip, only a fraction of which is relevant. But it makes the locals much less suspicious of me, and gives me forewarning against them.

Faithful to the Adjudicators,

Aspandhat

Turmoil in Aksu

Except from a letter written by an herbalist of Aksu:

Apparently, the peace could not last forever: bandits killed many Eonic settlers recently, which only inflamed the tensions we had thought extinguished. It seems to spawn further violence: I treated one of the locals who had gone out to look at the site. He was attacked by someone with a black dagger, which left a nasty greenish wound.

The worst news was that some students from Niya were killed on the road. A very sad thing. They are at present unidentified, but their relatives in Niya will presumably be able to recognize the bodies.

I write in utmost respect,

Zhe Kesh

Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Lyimo, Storyteller: Taking the Path of the Road

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Lyimo, Storyteller, greetings.

So briefly did we see one another at Chayi! Well met, and you had a tale for the occasion. The tale of the Burrowing Rabbit was just the thing after all the time I had spent underground in the dusty cellars below the ruined fortress. I showed you something of the items we found there, from the early days of the Paths of Kusinne, but I did not tell you the last thing I found.

Soon before breaking camp and leaving, I asked to spend time alone in the chamber where the items from the Path of the Well had been found. I sat vigil the whole night, using the breaths and words to clear my mind and leave it open to draw deep from the wells within. Indeed I found something there that I had not discovered before within myself. When the season turns again and the roads open, I will, with the leave of Queen Shayn, put behind the chair of Abbess and return to the Path of the Road. There are winds of change blowing in the lands, and new voices picking up the old tales and making them new. In the Abbey I did my best to preserve the fragments of the past of Kusinne. Upon the road I will walk in the footsteps of its founders.

In the depth of the night, One came to me, and whispered of the duty I shall carry. I shall sing the ill and troubled to sleep, and when they rise, they will be comforted, enlivened, and healed. I shall travel to carry this duty. And some of those to whom I sing will be dreamers and singers

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Lyimo, Storyteller

Moderator

Date: Mon Aug 03 23:26:13 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Lyimo, Storyteller: Taking the Path of the Road

in their turn. So strange it is to find a new thing in a place so old. No doubt you have a story to speak to it.

If you would visit me, visit before the New Year's mark of Spring, or I shall be gone!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, in the Light of Kusine

Cycle 12, Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Queen Shayn: Request to Retire

Your Majesty,

May your reign shine in the memory of people for your strength and justice and your example of Right Living in the Path of the Hearth!
May your seat be secure, now that the dissenters in your court have been removed from any power to do harm.

I have returned from the cellars under the ruined fortress near Chayi with a heart full of hope and full of questions. Our expedition was fruitful. It found relics, markers, art and evidence for the ancient followers of the Paths of Kusine. Our scholars are describing each and listing them where and how they were found within the under-chambers, so that wiser heads which follow us may read their story as if they had been present. I am seeing that no thought or observation is lost. At the end of this season, should our progress continue as it does, I shall have an illuminated account of the site with plans, pictures, and notes ready to present to you.

Yet it was no work of art or architecture, no artifact or wall engraving that was the most memorable discovery at Chayi.

Upon the last night before our return at the end of the season, I went to sit alone in the underground chamber where we had found the tokens of the Path of the Well. Tomorrow we would fill the entrance. I knew not if I would ever return. And in the quiet depths of that night, I sat, reaching deep into the wellsprings within myself, asking for wisdom about this ancient place where the Paths had been practiced.

And One came to me with an answer in the darkness.

For many years I have gathered the fragments of our ancient founders' knowledge from stories on the road, from crumbling writings, and from copying, comparison, and correction of the accounts we have within the Library and those we have gained from our most diligent searching.

For me the time of gathering is done.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Aug 04 00:17:58 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 12, Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Queen Shayn: Request to Retire

I will set things in order in the Abbey in this season of cold and dimness. I will sort and count the stores. I will make the Library and Scriptorium to be in good order for scholars and copyists, and banish carelessness, clutter, and waste. I will make an accounting of all repairs which need doing upon the Abbey, its cisterns, drainage, approaches and outbuildings.

And before the New Year's celebration in Spring I wish to set aside my mantle as Abbess.

For when I sat in the darkness, I was given a new charge by the messengers of inspiration. I am to take the Path of the Road, yes, even I. I am to seek the ill and pained in body and spirit. And I am to sing them to sleep. They will rest, they will dream, they will waken comforted, refreshed, and somewhat healed. And some among those to whom I sing will become singers in their turn. And so I am called.

If it be your will, I shall take the mantle of a nun of the Path of the Road, even upon the New Year's.

If I must abide, I shall do so at your will, properly preparing for the time of my succession. I suggest Sister Cittern as a competent successor, well-regarded in the Abbey, with experience in travel, teaching, and organizing projects. I attach a list of other candidates and their qualities so that any others may be properly weighed.

My first companion upon the Path of the Road shall be Sarai Vamto, an honorable widow of the Vamto clan of Chayi, healed in her sleep from a deep melancholy and a weakness in her right side. She now walks with strength and endurance and will support me on my travels.

May the Light of the Paths illuminate and preserve Your Majesty's reign in eminence and justice.

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, from the Grand Abbey in the Season of Hibernation

Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk: The Path of the Road

Blessed Kanakk,

I am reading your contributions to the Pilgrim's Guide to Shrines, Hostelries, and Caravanserais. I am grateful at your generosity in writing of so many places of use and importance to the traveler, and I am filled with mirth at your tart, practical summations of many of them. Indeed, my gratitude will soon be a practical one.

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Tue Aug 04 00:28:29 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Kanakk, Wandering Monk: The Path of the Road

I am taking the Path of the Road, come the New Year.

Upon my last night in the ruined fortress near Chayi, meditating in the chamber devoted, in ancient times, to the Path of the Well, I found myself called to the Path of the Road with a special duty. I am called to sing comfort and healing to those ill of body and spirit, and for some few, my singing will awaken their own gifts of song and healing. My new companion Sarai Vamto of Chayi is living witness to my calling, having recovered from a crippling weakness in her right side and a deep melancholy. Now she walks strong at my side, having returned with me to the Abbey.

The Abbey where I have spent so many years, and am soon to leave, like a bird from the nest.

It is with joy that I contemplate the Path of the Road. May we meet there, break bread, and share stories. Or perhaps you will arrive at the Abbey before the New Year, and we will set out together.

In the Paths of Kusine,

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

P.S.: My lay assistant, Sugnumae, best of illustrators and scribes, full of quiet cheer, has married her noble suitor. They abide for a time in the Garden Pavilion at the Abbey.

Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi: Gratitude and Reunion

Honored Farscry of Clan Vamto,

Your timely message upon the ruined fortress brought a final gift to me as we prepared to leave our camp and return to Kucina. My undying gratitude for your discerning and generous action. May you and your clan at Chayi be an exemplar of the Path of the Hearth!

Upon the last night before leaving the fortress, I meditated in the cellars below, knowing this to be a place used for the devotions of the Path of the Well. I hoped to gain some insight upon our ancient predecessors in the Paths of Kusine, those who walked with wisdom, right action, and kindness long ago.

Instead I received a gift of inspiration for myself.

One came to me upon the dark of that night under the earth and charged me with a new duty for which I must put aside the mantle of Abbess. It is my task to bring comfort to those troubled in body and

From:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Tue Aug 04 00:44:02 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Farscry Vamto of Gushi: Gratitude and Reunion

spirit by singing them to sleep, and letting that blessed sleep grant them refreshment, restoration, and a measure of healing. And some few who hear the song shall take it up in their turn to comfort and heal others.

The first to be healed, you well know, is Sarai Vamto. You told me of her sorrows and her ailments, that for some time she does little but sit in the sun, mumbling to herself, perhaps speaking to those few she is closest to, moving slowly with a stoop when she must. Upon the morning after I sang her to sleep, she rose with a clear face and straightened to her full height, no longer looking down and mumbling. She asked to come with me, and I gladly accepted.

When we arrived at the Abbey, Sister Ghalami was most pleased to see Sarai, and surprised. For contrary to your daughter's last recollection, Sarai stood straight, walked with strength and purpose, and no longer held sorrow in her eyes. They embraced one another and had much to talk about.

Upon the New Year, I will depart with Sarai as my companion to take the Path of the Road, to bring comfort and healing to those who need it, with soothing song and with sleep, that gentlest of doctors. Sister Ghalami shall continue at the Abbey with her studies and devotions.

Blessings to you, honored Farscry Vamto, in the Path of the Hearth. May fortune favor your virtue and discernment with continued prosperity!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Re: [Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Lyimo the Storyteller

Farscry Vamto, I understand why your fellow farmers outside your clan call you the Peerless Tender of the Earth. Perhaps I am in a spiritual frame of mind from spending time with the former abbess, but it seems altogether like destiny framed our little time together under the earth.

I do hope my entertainment was amusing enough. The children especially love my partner's physical antics, and it was rewarding to pass along a tale that had not been heard over Vamto fires before.

My deepest regards,

Lyimo

From:

Lyimo, Storyteller

To:

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Tue Aug 04 12:11:20 EDT 2015

Subject: Re: [Tower of Calliso] Farscry Vamto to Lyimo the Storyteller

**Re:Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Lyimo,
Storyteller: Taking the Path of the Road**

Dear Nafisah,

I shall visit you as you take your leave from the abbey. You will need traveling companions, after all, and it may be of use to have someone who can express the teachings of the Road in a form the common folk will take to heart. The Burrowing Rabbit's tale was one of rebirth and reinvention, and it seems fitting for this time of change.

I hope I shall see you soon.

Lyimo

On Monday, August 3, 2015 11:26 PM, Nafisah Of Kucha wrote:

From Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, to Lyimo, Storyteller, greetings.

So briefly did we see one another at Chayi! Well met, and you had a tale for the occasion. The tale of the Burrowing Rabbit was just the thing after all the time I had spent underground in the dusty cellars below the ruined fortress. I showed you something of the items we found there, from the early days of the Paths of Kusunne, but I did not tell you the last thing I found.

Soon before breaking camp and leaving, I asked to spend time alone in the chamber where the items from the Path of the Well had been found. I sat vigil the whole night, using the breaths and words to clear my mind and leave it open to draw deep from the wells within. Indeed I found something there that I had not discovered before within myself. When the season turns again and the roads open, I will, with the leave of Queen Shayn, put behind the chair of Abbess and return to the Path of the Road. There are winds of change blowing in the lands, and new voices picking up the old tales and making them new. In the Abbey I did my best to preserve the fragments of the past of Kusunne. Upon the road I will walk in the footsteps of its founders.

In the depth of the night, One came to me, and whispered of the duty I shall carry. I shall sing the ill and troubled to sleep, and when they rise, they will be comforted, enlivened, and healed. I shall travel to carry this duty. And some of those to whom I sing will be dreamers and singers in their turn. So strange it is to find a new thing in a place so old. No doubt you have a story to speak to it.

If you would visit me, visit before the New Year's mark of Spring, or I

From:

Lyimo, Storyteller

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Aug 04 12:14:52 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Cycle 12: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha to Lyimo, Storyteller: Taking the Path of the Road

shall be gone!

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha, in the Light of Kusine

The End of One Path is the Beginning of Another

From the records of the Grand Abbey:

At the close of the year, the Abess Nafisah stepped down, forsaking her position at the abbey to follow the Path of the Road.

Meditating at the ruins of Chayi, she was shown a vision, in which she was shown how to give comfort and healing through song.

She was succeeded by Abess Cittern.

Re:Cycle 12: Jivamitra, Ironmaster to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Grand Abbess,

I write hurriedly, time is short and I am attempting to settle my affairs. I will explain all further, but I wish to first inform you that through the use of mild acids derived from arcane chemical processes we have restored the small metal samples you provided. The consensus is that they are the remains of a jeweled book which burnt in the fire. Some of the symbols are clearly Kusine, but other are more related to the Symness. It is a puzzling relic. I had proposed that they were from separate books (indeed still possible if they were made by the same artisan), but those more intimately acquainted with the study of past relics have assured me they are of a piece from several texts most incorporating both signs.

News of a brutal attack against the Adjudicator camp along the Road has undoubtedly reached you. After I learnt I and an armed party went to investigate. There was a handful of survivors and much in the way of relics and written works. Those unclaimed and deemed important have been brought to the Great Academy. They vary greatly: personal correspondence, religious treatises from a number of faiths, some appear to be lost schismata of the ancient adjudicators. A few have been copied and sent along with this message and more will follow.

Unfortunately while there a crazed adherent attacked my party with an opal hilted blade. Despite being only lightly scratched before she was subdued it seems the blade was poisoned and my life will continue

From:

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To:

Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Tue Aug 04 13:18:55 EDT 2015

Subject: Re:Cycle 12: Jivamitra, Ironmaster to Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

to drain from me for some time. The herbalist in Aksu says it is irreversible and thought I trust her I have written to the famed Physician Yuan Sala in hope a cure.

Additionally it seems the encampment was excavating some ruins. From your descriptions of the Chayi tower it seems they date from the same period. The camp has only tentatively excavated but a number of artefacts have already been found. I am certain more secrets lie within. I am saddened I will never see them

Lastly High one I wish to confess a transgression against the teachings of the Paths. In my fear of the growing numbers at the adjudicator camp I hired a group of bandits to disperse them. I feel wholly responsible for the death caused by them. Especially the loss of the Niyam party.

I ask humbly for your council and forgiveness before the I complete my time walking the paths.

I pray the hearth blesses us all and that the seasons pass on the road.

Jivamitra

Elder Farscry

I hope the seasons have left you in good health.

I write to say goodbye. I am suffering from a deadly poison, and have little time left.

I have not entirely deduced the nature of those ingots but I wish to purchase them all. The metal has unique properties, which allows new feat in iron working. I am hopeful my apprentice will succeed me in my post. Marysha is very capable and will undoubtedly continue to trade with your people.

I have dispatched a small mission of scholars to visit Chayi. They search for the source of raw ore which produced those ingots. If they find it, even in a small quantity, your people may expect substantial wealth to develop from its trade.

I must rest now. Here there is much I must complete before the end comes.

I bow to the Divine within you,

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

A Final Message and a Last Request

My Queen, Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

I have much good news for you my Queen, and some terribly distressing.

First know that I believe I am dying. Several days ago I was attacked with a poisoned dagger. The wound was minor, but the poison is slowly working its way through my body and my time is short. Zhe Kish has given me some potent herbs for the pain, but they dull my senses, and I have much yet to do.

I would be so bold as to offer my apprentice, Marysha of Aksu, as a more than qualified successor to my post as Ironmaster. She is young and strong willed. Clever and ingenious. I advise she takes up the post I will shortly vacate.

Marysha was instrumental in developing a new form of furnace for the refining of iron, based on those of the secretive Middle Kingdom. I have not the time to detail it, but it involves a tall furnace and an

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Moderator
Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Date: Wed Aug 05 17:57:34 EDT 2015

Subject:

From: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

To: Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Wed Aug 05 18:02:55 EDT 2015

Subject: A Final Message and a Last Request

ox driven bellows to heat the raw ore and several additives in addition to the charcoal. This process is more efficient and has allowed us to maintain a steady production rate in the face of the worker shortages in Aksu. Using some unique ingots from Chayi we have created a number of strong and durable weapons which resist breaking while remaining very hard and resist both tarnishing and rusting. I have sent a pair of spearheads made with this material along.

I should mention that the design was inspired by a number of eastern scholars at the school who were able to describe the general layout to us. The forges of Aksu will keep your troops defended for many years and the Great Academy is already provided varied insights into metalurgy, farming, and medicine.

Lastly the foundations of the Great Academy stand ready for the next building season. It will be magnificent. I hope it is as wonderful as the depictions and models I have seen.

I bow to the Divine within you, farewell my queen.

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

The Forges of Aksu

An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume II:

This refined method of processing the ore led to greatly increased efficiency. The folk traditions credit this discovery to Jivamitra, following his poisoning. What is indisputable is that the trade relations between Kucha and Chayi were greatly strengthened around this time period.

Lyimo the Storyteller

An excerpt from The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, volume XXVII:

Lyimo—One of the legendary companions of Nafisah on her grand pilgrimage. Traditional accounts credit Lyimo with composing the account of the journey.

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 10:14:13 EDT 2015

Subject: Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Farscry Vamto to Jivamitra Kucha

Honored mastersmith,

It is with a heavy heart that I received your last letter; I can only hope that the scholars and physickers are able to heal the poison which hounds your path! The villagers of Chayi have been delighted to hear back from the youths currently studying at your school; they speak highly of you and the education they are receiving. I anticipate that when they are able to return home with what they have learned, it will bring Chayi continued prosperity!

I am organizing with the village elder to put together a trading party who will bring you as many of the ingots as we can. News of the finds in the ruins here has brought far more people than we ever imagined, and unfortunately that means some of a rather unsavory sort. The ruins are guarded day and night now by the Kusinne Abbey, and it seems that they are becoming more reticent by the day with regards to the removal of any items. Be well, good Jivamitra!

May your path be straight and your mind at peace!

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Cycle 12: Farscry Vamto to Abbess Nafisah

Nafisah,

I use no title in greeting as I do not know that which gives you proper honor, but let it be known that I would greet you with every honor I could respectfully bring to bear! I was sad to hear that Sarai would be leaving us, as we still miss her sister dearly as well, but it is a sweet sadness to have two daughters receive the calling of the Kusinne Way so strongly! You have been kind and generous to my clan; you will always have a place at my hearth if you wish to rest with us on your journeys.

The village elder of Chayi and I continue to support the work happening at the ruins, though we were alarmed when monks began to guard the grounds with strict purpose. We have noted the increasing number of ruffians and brigands of seeking to scavenge there of late, however, so we understand the need for such measures.

If I could make a request of you, it is this: the master ironsmith of Kucha, Jivamitra, is suffering from some mysterious poisoning. From his letter, I think he is exhausting the knowledge of the physickers. If

From: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

To: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 10:24:10 EDT 2015

Subject: Cycle 12: Farscry Vamto to Abbess Nafisah

your journeys take you to Kucha, please call upon him and perhaps you can bring comfort and healing, or at the least ease his passing.

The blessings of the Four Winds upon your path, dear friend!

Farscry, head of the Vamto clan of Gushi

Cycle 12: Rafisah Pilgrim to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

Honored Ironmaster,

I bend my travels in your direction in the hope I may ease your suffering and provide some measure of healing.

Endure in strength.

In haste, from the road, among my good companions.

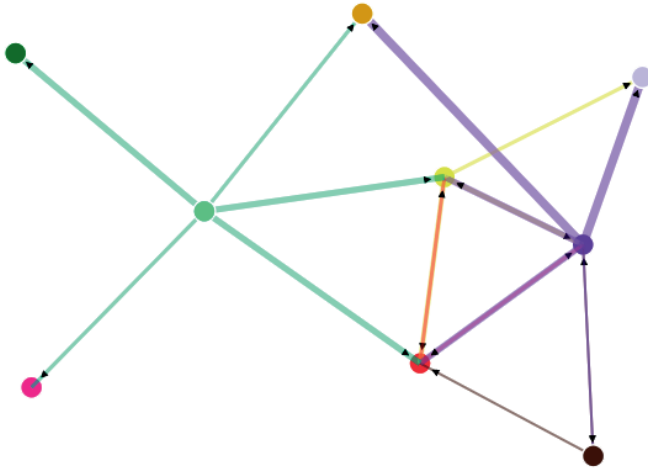
Nafisah Pilgrim

Cycle 12: Rafisah Pilgrim to Farscry Vamto

Headman Farscry, Many thanks for your news of Ironmaster Jivamitra.

I travel in haste to meet him, with my good companions and my strong walking staff. Nafisah Pilgrim

Cycle 12 Communication Web



From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha
Moderator
Date: Thu Aug 06 12:56:19 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 12: Nafisah Pilgrim to Jivamitra, Ironmaster

From: Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
To: Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan
Moderator
Date: Thu Aug 06 12:57:58 EDT 2015
Subject: Cycle 12: Nafisah Pilgrim to Farscry Vamto

Selethen Varzakk to Jivamitra Kucha

My assiduous forge master Jivamitra,

The pyre is not cold yet as I write this letter. I will finish it and send it after your body with the last embers of the fire. No one here explains me anything about the sinister way you died, but, after all, it is a fitting ending to this year of sorrows, pain and death. I will include you in my mourning as I did it with so many friends in the near past.

Be assured, I will see to it that no one's family of my circles will be starve, be cold or be in pain as long I have money to give. The last ones have to see to those left behind the earlier ones, as it's the will of the Adjudicators. And I will gladly comply.

May the flames of your forge never be quenched

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Selethen Varzakk to Liu Shui

Magnificent Friend,

I heard of the last demise and wish to send you my regrets. If there's anything to help you, don't hesitate to contact me. I'm sure the building was perfectly planned, but some careless builders may have ruined it before the world had the chance to look upon it.

Do not despond; this year has seen many a destroyed house. There will be enough opportunity to rise the fame you earn.

May the ground always welcome your art

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 15:53:00 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Jivamitra Kucha

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Liu Shui, Engineer

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 15:58:34 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Liu Shui

Farcry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

My exquisite busy friend,

After I left your home, I thought my travels would take a fairer look. In my naivety I took it that the Summer Route would be better than the Northern one. Alas, I may seem to be old, but still I'm not wise enough.

As you have gotten all that you required and you seem in no need for two caravans per year, I send you my decision to end my caravan days. This year was a difficult one, not on trading, but in humanity. The Beloved Blossom of my household will continue the travels, you will lack nothing she can transport.

I thank you for the many good talks we had, the warmth of your hearth and the laughter of your children.

I wish your place preferable weather and your family a merry laugh

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

Selethen Varzakk to Gayth, Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

My glorified friend Ghayth,

My road has become lonely in the near past, I'm tired and the wheel of time surges forward, as the Adjudicators have instituted it. I hope your endeavors this year have brought you and your clan what you needed.

If you have need for anything, the Beloved Blossom of my household will travel on, so you can trade in the next years without any change. We have founded a trading post in the east, south of Yiwu, outside of the Kingdom. We would be honored to greet you there, but I doubt that I will make the travel to this place very often.

My best wishes should follow your ways

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Farcry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 16:06:59 EDT 2015

Subject: Farcry Vamto to Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 16:15:47 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Gayth, Wolf of the Spirit Mountains

Selethen Varzakk to Kanakk

Esteemed friend,

Your wandering may lead you to the most wondrous places, but my road, which has become lonely, ended. This year convinced me to settle down for the last time. I wish you the best journey the Adjudicators have forecast to us lowly humans. If the Path may lead you one time to Shule again, I'll be delighted to harbor you.

May your holiness be everlasting!

Merchant of Shule

In the Valley of Paradise

Selethen Varzakk

From: Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

To: Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

Moderator

Date: Thu Aug 06 16:23:11 EDT 2015

Subject: Selethen Varzakk to Kanakk

13

Final Cycle: End of Year 116

The fire dies down as the caravan settles in for the long night, their stories concluded. There will be another journey tomorrow, more tales to tell. But those will be other stories around a different fire. This night, and these stories are now as silent as the stars that shine down on the ruins of a tower that watches over the level sands.

That concludes the game. Letters sent after this will be considered part of the epilogue. There will be a few more posts to sum up some behind-the-scenes thoughts, after a short break, and I'm working on the book. Thanks to everyone who participated!

Afterward

Tower of Callisto is the second game of Callisto that I ran. It was the result of months of effort. Not just from me—my players invested a lot. They sent hundreds of emails that gradually spun out into the stories that you've read here.

A great amount of effort on their part deserves a great monument to commemorate it, but they get this book instead. The bulk of it was automatically generated by the Arktikos management suite I developed to make it easier for me to run play-by-email games like this. I did some polishing up afterwards, but the software can now generate the text directly from the emails and output it as a book with L^AT_EX and Pandoc. At this point it's still a bit Tower-specific, but hopefully it'll make things easier for future game hosts to run more Callisto games.

The graphs and charts that are scattered throughout this manuscript are also products of that suite of tools. I used them to track what was going on in the game. The communication web graphs are the most useful application of the data. Each node is a player, and the thickness of each edge indicates how many letters were sent. The arrowheads indicate which direction they were sent. Using this, I could keep track of what conversations were happening and give things a nudge if some players got too isolated.

Once the game started, though, there's a limit to what the moderator can influence. The bulk of my work consisted of skimming the letters for the creative ways the players were using their narrative authorities. Writing up news reports does give the moderator quite a bit of power, but it's an entirely reactive experience.

For this game, I built on a conceit from some of the entries in Colony of Callisto and I wrote the bulk of the news as historical and archaeological reports from the future. Apparently, due to the player's actions, the French Revolution was somewhat more successful in this world, though their historical understanding of what actually happened in the Oasis

Basin sometimes leaves something to be desired.

Some of the references in the news were there to amuse me: You'll see mention of a Blackstone Dungeon Master's Guide, inspired by the naming pattern of early D&D campaign worlds: Blackmoor, Greyhawk, and for that matter Braunstein. I'd been reading Jon Peterson's *Playing at the World*. Appropriate, since *Playing at the World* was part of the inspiration for *Callisto*. "Blackstone" is also an indirect tribute to my great-uncle, who wrote a book on the magician by that name: *Blackstone, a Magician's Life*.

Character Sheets

Every player in the game has a character sheet listing their goals and their areas of narrative authority. This is the biggest source of Moderator input into how the game will turn out. Writing newsposts is important but not as directly influential. At the start of the game, the moderator sets up the map, hands out the character sheets and then steps back to watch how it's all going to play out.

For Tower of Callisto, I tried a few new things in the character sheets. The biggest is that each player has a long list of detailed narrative authorities, subdivided into sections. The narrative authorities included the questions and the retinue, though I'm afraid the rules were a bit vague on suggestions for how to use them. Many of the players were very clever with them, so it worked out in the end.

Next game, I'm going to try a pared-down, streamlined character sheet. Something where it's easier for me to keep track of the stuff I need to moderate. If you're moderating a game I suggest you do something similar, because the less work you need to do to moderate, the easier its going to be to run.

Queen Konuma

- **Name:** Queen Konuma, Ruler of Lop Nur
- **Home City:** Loulan
- **Motif:** trees
- **Starting Country:** Lop Nur
- **Current Location:** Loulan
- **Culture:** South Oasial
- **Religion:** The Philosophy
- **Finances:** rich
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are the ruler of Lop Nur, land of the saltmarshes. Your kingdom is near the outposts of the Middle Kingdom, and their influence is great. You periodically send them tribute for the privilege of trading with them, and in return your envoys receive valuable gifts. Simultaneously, you seek to expand your dominion over the other Oasis Kingdoms. Assert the hierarchy of kingdoms, and your rightful place over them as intermediary with the Middle Kingdom!

Immediate Problem: Salt is apparently in great demand elsewhere, though you have no idea why. There's a great lake of the stuff right here, after all! But it makes the perfect gift to present to foreign dignitaries. Find some foreign dignitaries to impress with salt.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the laws of Lop Nur, it is true.
- When you speak of the glories of the Middle Kingdom, it is true.

Reactive

- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by loyalty or treachery and it shall be so.
- When you learn about a change in the local economy, speak about how it has affected culture and traditions and it shall be so.

Questions

- What are the three greatest treasures of the Oasis Kingdoms? And what story do they tell about them?

Retinue

- a clever daughter
- the army of Lop Nur
- salt
- salt
- more salt

Liu Shui, Engineer

- **Name:** Liu Shui, Engineer
- **Home City:** Nancheng
- **Motif:** mirrors
- **Starting Country:** Middle Kingdom
- **Current Location:** Dukhan
- **Culture:** Middle Kingdom
- **Religion:** The Philosophy
- **Finances:** getting by
- **Popularity/Public Support:** none
- **Reputation:** unknown

Goals

Dream: You are one of the greatest engineers of the Middle Kingdom, having obtained the 9th rank solely due to your skill with architecture. If it wasn't for that unfortunate incident with the Emperor's child and the nightingale cage, you would be living in luxury rather than fleeing for your life to the frontier. Surely you'll be able to find some use for your skills out here.

Immediate Problem: You think you got through the Jade Gate unremarked, but they check the records frequently. Best to put some distance between you and the reach of the Middle Kingdom.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the technology and architecture of the Middle Kingdom, it is true.
- When you describe the architecture you see on your travels, it is true.

Reactive

- When someone asks you about a problem, speak what you need to build an engineering solution, and it shall be so.
- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by engineering or technology and it shall be so.

Questions

- What tower is the most beautiful?
- What tower is the most intimidating?
- What tower is the most secure?

Retinue

- identity papers (forged)
- water-powered musical puppet (damaged in transit)
- blueprints (stolen)
- mirror (cracked)
- monkey (untrained)

Jivaka Saca, Moneylender

- **Name:** Jivaka Saca, Moneylender
- **Home City:** Weni
- **Motif:** flowers
- **Starting Country:** Karashar
- **Current Location:** Weni
- **Culture:** Oasial
- **Religion:** The Philosophy
- **Finances:** legendary!
- **Popularity/Public Support:** weak
- **Reputation:** indifferent

Goals

Dream: You are a merchant and a money-lender. Your wealth has financed countless projects, but you have little recognition among the nobility. You desire land, a title, a position in recognized society, though these will not be easy things to obtain.

Immediate Problem: The former rulers of Niya and Kucha owed you money. The new rulers have many guards with pointy swords. Collecting may be a difficulty.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe secret societies or rumors of lost treasure, it is true.
- When you talk about one thing a city has in abundance, it is true.
- When you speak about the spread of plague and disease, it is true.

Reactive

- When you learn about a change in political power or law, speak about how it has affected culture and traditions and it shall be so.

Questions

- There are traces of habitation in the desert that go back thousands of years. What abandoned structure do you tell travelers to avoid?

Retinue

- A rich caravan
- Envious relatives
- A disappointing son
- A well-paid steward

Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge

- **Name:** Feegle Yitaka, Magi of Knowledge
- **Home City:** Shule
- **Motif:** cast iron
- **Starting Country:** Dayuan
- **Current Location:** Suojo
- **Culture:** Eonic
- **Religion:** Symness
- **Finances:** rich
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are a scholar of vast knowledge, but you fear that it could be lost. You long to create a culture of scholarship, train apprentices, and found schools.

Immediate Problem: Perhaps you could start by figuring out how to copy the books and records that you do have.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe the world's science, cosmology, or magic (if any) it is true.
- When you describe the stories the people tell, it is so.

Reactive

- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by ancient history and it shall be so.
- When you learn about a change in technology, speak about how it has affected the economic situation and it shall be so.

Questions

- You have heard of the creatures that live in the Thousand Wind Valley and guard treasures of gold. What are they called, and what do they look like?

Retinue

- an inept student
- a debt to an old friend
- an adopted daughter
- a chest of rare books

Lyimo, Storyteller

- **Name:** Lyimo, Storyteller
- **Home City:** Suojo
- **Motif:** stars
- **Starting Country:** Dayuan
- **Current Location:** Suojo
- **Culture:** Eonic-Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusine
- **Finances:** poor
- **Popularity/Public Support:** strong
- **Reputation:** unknown

Goals

Dream: You are a storyteller, entertaining and remembering the past and present. Gather stories so that you can write down the greatest collection of stories ever assembled. Secretly, you are also a master thief. Your dream is to steal impossible treasures and enter legend as the King of Thieves!

Immediate Problem: You'll have to start somewhere. Ask around for interesting legends and tales.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe a daring escape, rescue, or prison break, it is true.
- When you talk about one thing a city has in abundance, it is true.
- When you describe how others are respected or disrespected by their peers, it is so.

Reactive

- When someone asks for your advice, tell them a story. When you give them advice based on the story, it shall be so.

Questions

- What distant land do the people tell stories about?
- What impossible thing can be found there?

Retinue

- an amusing traveling companion
- a half-written book of stories

King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya

- **Name:** King Badal Parsu, Ruler of Niya
- **Home City:** Niya
- **Motif:** stones
- **Starting Country:** Niya
- **Current Location:** Niya
- **Culture:** South Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusinne
- **Finances:** secure
- **Popularity/Public Support:** approving
- **Reputation:** unknown

Goals

Dream: You are the newly crowned ruler of Niya. Perched on the edge of the desert, your city is wholly dependent on the waters that trickle from the mountains. Your traditional means have provided water for centuries, but with the growing population and the caravans, but you fear that a dry era will leave the city desiccated. Alas, while your people are experts at maintaining the ancestral wells, none of them has the skill to properly harness or capture the full extent of the water from the mountains, and much of it is wasted.

Immediate Problem: One of the city's major wells has turned bitter and salty. The people whisper about evil spirits, your councilors suspect a problem with the waterflow.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the laws of Niya, it shall be so.
- When you talk about one thing a city has in abundance, it is true.
- When you describe an obstacle on a route or road, it is true.

Reactive

- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by kinship or blood ties and it shall be so.

Questions

- You've heard stories about a fabulous gemstone that has magical properties that are invoked when someone holds it to their eye and gazes through it. What do the stories say that they see?

Retinue

- an inquisitive daughter
- a languid son
- untrustworthy nobles
- a motley army
- a newly rebuilt palace

Zhang Hans, Frontier General

- **Name:** Zhang Hans, Frontier General
- **Home City:** Qianzhong
- **Motif:** ash
- **Starting Country:** Middle Kingdom
- **Current Location:** Dukhan
- **Culture:** Middle Kingdom
- **Religion:** The Philosophy
- **Finances:** rich
- **Popularity/Public Support:** weak
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are a General (Frontier Division) in the service of the Emperor of the Middle Kingdom. Your mandate is to protect the trade interests and security of the Middle Kingdom. Being a general on the frontier, far from the capital, puts you far from the politics of the palace, but temptingly close to your ambitions of extending the Empire's reach. Will you be a forgotten frontier warden, or a renowned conqueror?

Immediate Problem: Soldiers on the frontier are a motley lot. Can you think of a way to inspire them?

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe the border regulations and procedures, it is true.
- When you talk about one scarcity that a city has, it is true.
- When you describe the maneuvers of the army of the Middle Kingdom, it is true.

Reactive

When you learn about a change in the local technology, speak about how it has affected culture and traditions and it shall be so.

Questions

There are traces of habitation in the desert that go back thousands of years. What abandoned structure do you tell travelers to avoid?

Retinue

- an eager daughter
- a competent sergeant
- The Frontier Army, fifty thousand soldiers strong
- six thousand horseriders
- a decorated war chariot

Rafisah, Abbess of Kucha

- **Name:** Nafisah, Abbess of Kucha
- **Home City:** Kucina
- **Motif:** ink
- **Starting Country:** Kucha
- **Current Location:** Kucina
- **Culture:** North Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusine
- **Finances:** secure
- **Popularity/Public Support:** approving
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are the abbess of the Grand Monastery of Kucha. Your religion, Kusine, has been present here for centuries, but you lack many of the sacred texts. You dream of recovering them from the distant lands where Kusine began, but you do not know where that might be.

Immediate Problem: The new ruler of Kucha is unfamiliar to you; perhaps with royal help you can ensure that the Kusine practices are renewed throughout the Basin?

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the practices and rituals of the Kusine religion, it is true.
- When you describe the obstacles and security that guard a treasure, it is so.

Reactive

- When someone asks you for advice on something they wish to accomplish, tell them how your religion shows you what they need in order to accomplish it, and it shall be so.
- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by religion or belief and it shall be so.

Questions

- What are the things used in the rituals of Kusine that unfortunately must be brought here from afar?

Retinue

- an innocent monk
- a singing nun
- a remembering nun
- a secretive nun
- The Grand Abbey of Kucha

Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha

- **Name:** Queen Shayn, Ruler of Kucha
- **Home City:** Kucina
- **Motif:** fruit
- **Starting Country:** Kucha
- **Current Location:** Kucina
- **Culture:** North Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusine
- **Finances:** secure
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** unknown

Goals

Dream: You are the newly crowned ruler of Kucha. Your kingdom is small, but you are determined that its fame will spread to the ends of the earth. Nurture the culture of your people, invite the practitioners of the arts of the world, and find other means to ensure that your kingdom will be remembered for its cultural legacy.

Immediate Problem: As you have recently ascended to the throne after the unexpected death of your predecessor, you need to oversee the burial and ensure that it is commemorated with all due respect.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the laws of Kucha, it is true.
- When you talk about one scarcity that a city has, it is true.
- When you speak of the artistic and material culture of the Oasis Kingdoms, it is true.

Reactive

- When you learn about a change in culture, speak about how it has affected religious practices and standings and it shall be so.

Questions

- In your kingdom, what spice is common as dust?
- In your kingdom, which spice is far more valuable than gold?

Retinue

- a sheltered daughter
- a martial daughter
- a pet dog, imported from the Middle Kingdom
- the city army
- a palace, surrounded by gardens

Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk

- **Name:** Kanakk, Wandering Kusine Monk
- **Home City:** Aksu
- **Motif:** labyrinths or mazes
- **Starting Country:** Lop Nur
- **Current Location:** Miran
- **Culture:** Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusine
- **Finances:** beggar
- **Popularity/Public Support:** approving
- **Reputation:** unknown

Goals

Dream: You are a wandering monk of the Kusine religion. You have dedicated your life to teaching the Kusine beliefs, because you believe that they are the best way for humanity to live. Sadly, in many lands, the practices of the people have fallen into neglect, and they do not behave as humanity should. Teach them the better way.

Immediate Problem: Finding a leader to support your mission would be a useful first step.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the philosophies and beliefs of the Kusine religion, it is true.
- When you describe the intrigues of the courts and nobles, it is so.

Reactive

- When someone asks you for advice on something they wish to accomplish, tell them what they need to sacrifice in order to accomplish it, and it shall be so.
- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by water or thirst and it shall be so.

Questions

- What does the name Kusine signify?
- In what distant land was Kusine first taught?

Retinue

- the clothes on your back
- the hospitality of the common people

Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant

- **Name:** Selethen Varzakk, Dayuan Merchant
- **Home City:** Shule
- **Motif:** wells or springs
- **Starting Country:** Dayuan
- **Current Location:** Shule
- **Culture:** Eonic
- **Religion:** Symness
- **Finances:** rich
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are a merchant of Dayuan. You have often traveled to lands to the East that follow practices that are strange when compared to your Eonic traditions. You wish to set up a trading colony in an Oasis Kingdom to act as a base of operations, but securing the cooperation of the local authorities may be difficult. Not to mention the barrier of continuing the practice of your traditions in a strange and foreign land.

Immediate Problem: Perhaps it would help to start by establishing a trade route as a show of good faith.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe the ruins of the desert, it is true.
- When you talk about a trade that you made in the city's market, it is true.
- When you speak about monsters and beasts of the wilderness, it is true.

Reactive

When you learn about religious change, speak about how it has affected the ruling political power and it shall be so.

Questions

The Eonic peoples are descendants of a legendary conqueror from the distant west. How did that conqueror fight, and by what secret name do you recall the conquest? What Eonic tradition do the Oasis people find strange?

Retinue

- a large caravan
- a cargo from your home city
- a skilled daughter

Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan

- **Name:** Farscry Vamto, Head of a Farming Clan
- **Home City:** Yiwu
- **Motif:** snakes
- **Starting Country:** Gushi
- **Current Location:** Yiwu
- **Culture:** North Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusinne
- **Finances:** beggar
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are the head of a farming clan. A plague has devastated your home city in Gushi, and you have reluctantly set out to find new lands where you can practice your traditional culture. Seek out a place where you can turn your skills and labors to tilling the earth in peace once more.

Immediate Problem: You can't stay here. Which direction are you going to travel towards?

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you speak of the laborers in the fields and cities, it is true.
- When you talk about one scarcity that a city has, it is true.
- When you speak of trouble caused by new ideas, it is true.

Reactive

When you learn about a change in the local technology, speak about how it has affected culture and traditions and it shall be so.

Questions

What are the funeral customs of your people, and why do outsiders object to them?

Retinue

- a dutiful son
- a dreaming daughter
- a tight-knit clan of farm laborers
- a child with a bad cough

Ghayth, Nomad Warlord

- **Name:** Ghayth, Nomad Warlord
- **Home City:** Nomad Steppe
- **Motif:** salt
- **Starting Country:** Nomads
- **Current Location:** Northeast of Yiwu
- **Culture:** Nomads
- **Religion:** The Way of the Sky
- **Finances:** secure
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** feared

Goals

Dream: You are acclaimed as a Fox of the Horse Nomads, leader of your clan. Generations ago, the rich lands to the south paid your people tribute, but your wars with the Middle Kingdom drove you back. Now the new Silk Road promises even greater riches to the one who controls it. You have migrated to the south to scout out these lands and see if you can test their vulnerabilities.

Immediate Problem: The iron weapons of these farmers seem impressive, but they're reluctant to sell you any.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe your nomad clan traveling cross country, it is so.
- When you talk about one thing a city has in abundance, it is true.
- When you speak about lost cities and tombs, it is true.

Reactive

When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by the desert or the wilds and it shall be so.

Questions

Why do the horse nomads revere the wolf?

Retinue

- a loyal band of war-riders
- the encampment of your clan
- your heir-in-training
- ten chieftains of other clans who will respond to your call
- a thousand warriors on horseback

Yuan Sala, Physician

- **Name:** Yuan Sala, Physician
- **Home City:** Louyang
- **Motif:** ivory
- **Imperial Social Rank:** 8th
- **Starting Country:** Middle Kingdom
- **Current Location:** Dukhan
- **Culture:** Middle
- **Religion:** The Philosophy
- **Finances:** secure
- **Popularity/Public Support:** weak
- **Reputation:** unknown

Goals

Dream: You are a skilled physician. While you are accorded the appropriate recognition for your skill, your lowly birth in a minor clan means that you lack the connections to achieve greatness. Now you have journeyed to the frontier, hoping that in one of these dependent kingdoms you will find a challenge worthy of your abilities.

Immediate Problem: You could really use an introduction to someone important. The rulers of these minor cities can't be that hard to impress, right?

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe healing and treating patients personally, speak of the price to be paid or the thing that you will need, and it will be true.
- When you talk about one scarcity that a city has, it is true.
- When you describe something that the Middle Kingdom has but that is unknown out in the hinterlands, it is true.

Reactive

When you learn about a change in an economy, speak about how it has affected the situation of the ruling political power and it shall be so.

Questions

At night in the desert caravans huddle closer to the fires when they hear a distant howling. What causes it?

Retinue

- a medicinal chest
- an upstart assistant
- a clever servant
- a book about training animals

Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha

- **Name:** Jivamitra, Ironmaster of Kucha
- **Home City:** Aksu
- **Motif:** lanterns
- **Starting Country:** Kucha
- **Current Location:** Aksu
- **Culture:** North Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusinne
- **Finances:** secure
- **Popularity/Public Support:** moderate
- **Reputation:** respected

Goals

Dream: You are the master of the Ironworks of Kucha. You oversee the mines and hold the secrets of purifying the metal and forging it into useful tools. Merchants travel for months to purchase the results of your labors. But in turn you hear stories of wondrous technologies and wonder if you could bring them here. You dream of making Kucha the technological center of the world.

Immediate Problem: You have completed your commissioned ironwork for the windows of the palace of Niya, but you have so far been unable to find anyone to deliver them for you.

Narrative Authorities

Active

When you describe metalwork and mining, it is true.

Reactive

- When someone asks your advice on a plan or device, speak of what is needed to construct it and it shall be so.
- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by hierarchy and procedure and it shall be so.
- When you learn about a change in political power or law, speak about how it has affected culture and traditions and it shall be so.

Questions

Your people have a legend out a great disaster in the distant past. What was that disaster, and what do the stories say about how it can be prevented in the future?

Retinue

- an overconfident apprentice
- a hardworking crew
- an iron mine

Upasena, Brigand Captain

- **Name:** Upasena, Brigand Captain
- **Home City:** Gulja
- **Motif:** doors or gates
- **Starting Country:** Karashar
- **Current Location:** Weni
- **Culture:** Oasial
- **Religion:** Kusinne
- **Finances:** getting by
- **Popularity/Public Support:** weak
- **Reputation:** dishonored

Goals

Dream: You've promised your band of brigands that you'll find them a hideout; a fortress hidden from prying eyes.

Immediate Problem: Looting some caravans would probably keep them happy for the moment, though.

Narrative Authorities

Active

- When you describe occurrences of banditry and attacks on caravans, it is true.
- When you describe of the clothing of the people, it is true.
- When you talk about a treasure that you don't have, it is true.

Reactive

- When you learn about an ongoing or impending conflict, speak of how it was influenced by resolve and force of will, or giving in and surrendering, and it shall be so.
- When you learn about a change in technology, speak about how it has affected the economic situation and it shall be so.

Questions

- What is it that keeps your band of bandits following your leadership?
- How do you plan to keep your band of bandits supplied and fed when it is difficult to find people to willingly shelter you?

Retinue

- a band of bandits
- a village that shelters you
- a village that pays you tribute
- a gem-studded sword
- a swift horse

Rules for Tower of Callisto: Tales along the Silk Road

Welcome

Callisto is a play-by-email game designed by Brad Murray and inspired by the early Braunstein games. In Tower of Callisto, players will take on the roles of merchants, brigands, rulers, and prophets during a tumultuous time along the early Silk Road.

<http://www.vsca.ca/Callisto/>

<http://arsludi.lamemage.com/index.php/104/braunstein-the-roots-of-roleplaying-games/>

You play the game by sending in-character messages to the players on your character's contact list, and they respond in turn. You CC the ref on all emails. If something your character actively does falls with your narrative authority, the ref will write up a news post incorporating that information, which will become true for all players.

Joining the Game

The game is open to adding more players! Go and fill out the form:
<http://callisto.isaackarth.com/register/>

You should also give me a heads up with an email to towerofcallisto@gmail.com. I need to send you your character sheet!

Let me know where you heard about the game! When you get your character sheet, please let me know if you have a particular character name or gender you'd like your character to have (family names are assigned, I default to your actual first name in the absence of character names).

You'll get a character sheet and a list of contacts.

Also bookmark the game site at callisto.isaackarth.com. While you aren't required to post much there, it is the primary location for news posts and the wiki of in-game information.

Publication

Like I did with the last game, I'm planning to produce a collection of the emails sent for this game, in a book, online repository, or other form. Your emails and real names would be redacted, of course. Please let me know if you have any issues or concerns with this.

Artwork

Many people have created artwork in connection with past games. I've added a section to the game site if you'd like to contribute your artwork.

I may contact you to ask for permission to use your artwork in the game book or the like.

Playing the Game

Your Contacts

You will start the game with a list of characters you can talk to, and their email addresses. If you want to introduce a character to another player, include their email address in angle brackets with whatever introduction you feel is appropriate, like so: `player@emailprovider.org`. When you contact a new character, be sure to introduce your character; the other character will have no way of knowing who your character is or what they want.

Your Inbox

Some people have setup custom email addresses to play; I recommend that you at least create a folder to store all the mail you are going to be getting. All game-related messages should have [Tower of Callisto] in their subject. When you send an email to another player in the game, you must also CC it to the moderator (at `towerofcallisto@gmail.com`).

Etiquette

The game works best for you when you assert things boldly. Don't wait for consensus, or say things like "With your permission I might..." or "I wonder if I should..." News only happens when you actually act!

One consequence of this that isn't always immediately obvious: if you have a secret, you have to tell someone about it! Err on the side of confession, boasting or just running your mouth: it is way more fun when you share a secret with someone.

You are always allowed to send a message. Even if you're trapped in the bottom of a deep dark well, you can always send a message. Make up a story about your well-trained messenger pigeons if you like.

If someone asks you a question that you don't know the answer to, make one up. It will probably be true!

Time

To keep things moving, the game's time will proceed in cycles. A cycle lasts for a week of real-world time and a season of in-game time. The game-calendar has six seasons: budding, blooming, growing, harvesting, withering, and hibernating.

News from a cycle will be posted during the next cycle's run, at staggered intervals, so you can expect to be informed of distant events a week or so after they happened. If you need more up-to-date news, you'll have to ask the other characters!

Message Limits

You are limited to sending one message per contact per cycle. However, if you have already sent messages to four contacts this cycle, you are allowed to send additional messages. Only messages you send count; you don't need to track who sent you a reply or whatnot.

The rule is:

- Send a message each
- To contacts four;
- Then you are allowed
- To send some more.

The intent is to get you to spread your letters around to multiple players.

Inside the Game

Narrative Authority

You have narrative authority over quite a few things in the game. First, there are the explicit statements on your character sheet. These are things that will be announced in the news when you use them.

Second, there are things that all of the character can do: travel, talk to others, describe your retinue, and so on. Remember, you can do quite a lot of things that aren't explicitly on your sheet! They may or may not make the news, but that shouldn't stop you from talking about them.

One of the hidden assumption is that you'll describe the things that you think make narrative sense. If you want something to happen, you'll establish it beforehand, or borrow the narrative elements the other players have established. As long as you're playing within the narrative consensus, you can get quite a lot accomplished.

News

The moderator reads the mail and makes news posts that summarize the things players have declared with their narrative authorities. Pay attention to the news! It will tell you what the other players are up to, and might offer an opportunity to react to it with one of your narrative authorities.

While players can't directly post news stories, there is a "Rumors" section of the site if you want to post something in-character, or display some artwork.

Natural Consequences

When a player describes something with their authority that is impending, ongoing, or otherwise doesn't happen immediately—such as a storm blowing into town, or a fire getting out of control—the moderator has the authority to extrapolate the natural consequences and give the other players opportunity to act.

Travel

Many routes are marked on the map, but you are not restricted to them:

- If the route is dangerous, describe your journey and how you paid its cost. You arrive at your destination.
- If you are travelling an unmarked route, describe how you got lost along the way. You are lost.
- If you are lost, describe what you gave up to become unlost. You arrive at your destination.
- If the route is known and is not dangerous, describe your journey. You arrive at your destination.
- If you wish to travel in secret, and you've traveled that way before, just send the move order.
- When you arrive at your destination, send an email to the moderator with the subject line "[Tower of Callisto] Move Order". You won't get a reply, but rest assured that I saw it. Handing out contacts will occur at the end of the cycle.

If have something in your Retinue, such as an army or a caravan, I'll assume you want to bring it with you unless you state otherwise in your move order. If you want to send a person or thing to someplace else, you'll need to take them there yourself, find someone to take it there for you, or get creative.

Projects

If you've played in a previous Callisto game I've run, you might be wondering where the project rules went. I'm playtesting a different approach to collaborative projects, this time, based on conflicts and advice. Try asking other players for advice or assistance with what you want to accomplish.

Advice

Some players have narrative authorities related to giving advice. If you ask their character for assistance, they can tell you an action that you can take that will give your actions narrative authority if you follow them. Of course, following the advice may introduce its own complications.

Conflicts

Occasionally, the news will report a conflict or dispute that has yet to be resolved. Some of these will be called out explicitly, while others can be inferred.

If you have a related narrative authority, you can describe something that influenced the outcome—an incident you witnessed, a rumor you heard, a legend you once read in a book—and it will influence the outcome of the conflict.

Worldbuilding

Callisto is, in part, a game about worldbuilding. We're building a setting together. Although the scenario references historical places, the world we are building is fictional, so feel free to go wild with your imagination. Because of the way the game works, you don't need to be afraid of contradicting other players. If someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer, make one up.

One note: No real world religions: make one up. Do draw inspiration from them, but don't just copy something verbatim.

DO: Avoid stereotypes, dig deeper for inspiration.

DO: Draw from many real-world historical sources for inspiration

DON'T: Use the map to navigate real-world Central Asia. I changed some stuff. You'll get seriously lost.

Representation, Orientalism, & Cultural Appropriation

The setting of Tower of Callisto deliberately takes inspiration from sources and cultures out of the typical gaming norms. This results in a few special challenges for both the designer and the players.

<http://www.tor.com/2015/04/27/why-minority-settings-in-rpgs-matter/>

First, the setting is unfamiliar, so it can be harder for all of the players to be on the same page. Fortunately, one of the strengths of Callisto is collective worldbuilding. While there are references to historical cultures, the cultures in this game are fictional, and will be greatly shaped by the players.

Second, stereotypes and orientalism are a concern: the easiest shorthand to create a character can sometimes be unfortunately derogatory. I encourage you, as you describe the cultures, to dig a little deeper and find more interesting human connections. Also, you don't need to limit yourself to a particular historical culture. Draw from as many sources as you like and find your inspiration.

Third, since it is unfortunately unlikely that most players will have any personal connection with region in question, there is the danger of cultural appropriation. I deliberately chose to reference cultures that are, for the most part, no longer existent, and in some cases we know very little about them. The cultures in the game are fictional, and I encourage you to treat them as such.

Despite my best intentions, there will doubtless still be issues. I believe that the benefit of depicting societies inspired by the less common historical cultures outweighs the risks, and with that in mind I encourage all of you to participate wholeheartedly.

Further Information

Additional Reading

- Primary Sources: Silk Road Seattle
- A Thousand and One Nights
- The Adventures of Prince Achmed (Dir. Lotte Reiniger)
- Journey to the West

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/texts.html>

- Romance of the Three Kingdoms
- The Travels of Marco Polo
- Invisible Cities, by Italo Calvino
- Anything by Jorge Luis Borges

The Rules

The full rules for Callisto, plus any future updates, are available as a pay-what-you-want (even free!) at <http://www.rpgnow.com/product/126704/Callisto>

Starting to Play Callisto

Since we have several new players, and the format of the game can sometimes be intimidating if you haven't played before, here's an introduction for new players.

Once you have your character sheet and contact list, how do you actually start to play Callisto?

The simple answer is: you send an email to another character.

But who do you send it to, and what should be in that email? Look at your character sheet. Read your name, what your role is, and what your immediate problem is.

Now look at your contact list. Does it sound like any of those characters will be able to help you with your problem? If so, that should probably be the first character you write to. If none of them sound likely to be able to help, go ahead and pick one that at least sounds like someone your character would like to talk to.

Now, write them a letter. Introduce your character. Use the details from your character sheet, and make some more up. Ask for help, or news, or for directions to the next town. Ask who they are, and what you can do for them. Tell a story, describe what your character has recently witnessed.

Sign it as your character. Put [Tower of Callisto] in the subject line, plus whatever you want the subject to be. Put their address in the "to" field, put towerofcallisto@gmail.com in the "cc" field. Send the message.

That's the basics. Once you've sent the letter, the other player will read it, and may even respond to it. Don't be too discouraged if they don't write back right away. It's nice to get a response, but just as importantly, the ref will read your email. As the ref, I'll be checking to see if any of the things you said in the letter fall under one of your Narrative Authorities.

Narrative Authorities are the things in the fictional game world where you have control of the facts. If you say something that falls under your Authority, it is definitely True. If you say something that isn't under your Authority it might be true.

When I read something that falls under your authority, I'll write a news post about it. The news posts are public, so other players will eventually learn about what you've said, and you'll learn about what they've said. You probably won't know what other players' narrative authorities are until after the game is over.

Advice on Letter Writing

- You can be as short or as lengthy as you like.
- Do let the ref know if you have questions, or you feel overwhelmed by all your mail, or you feel neglected because you haven't received any.
- Don't feel like you have to invoke your narrative authorities every time. It is better to keep the conversation going than it is to strain to justify everything.
- Do share your character's opinion on the news that you hear. Maybe your character saw something related to it, or was told something about it? You don't have to be physically present to comment on it, after all.
- Don't be afraid to be boring. That is, even if you can't think of something exciting or super-creative to say, the fact that it is coming from your character will have some meaning. The things that seem obvious to you might take other players by surprise.
- Do ask the other characters for advice or solicit their support, particularly if you can't figure out how to accomplish something that you want to do. Don't feel like you have to wait for their response or follow their advice, though.
- On the other hand, don't ask permission or wonder if you should act. Just do it! None of your characters need anyone's permission to take action. If you have an idea for what to do, go ahead and describe how you did it.
- If you don't know the answer to the question, make one up. Even if it isn't in your area of narrative authority. Another player might even put it in the news later.
- Each cycle of the game will be about a week of real-time and two months of in-game time. Your character can accomplish quite a bit over the course of a season.