

[Campaign Setting Region Notes – Al'Arak](#)

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Al'Arak

Containing Regions: [Untin Plains](#), [Oen'Bemos](#)

Populace: Al'Arakian (Humans, Half-Orcs, Orcs, Goliaths, Misc Races)

Controlling Faction: [The Founders of Arak](#), [Arakian Houses](#)

Also Known As: The Capital of Criminals, Gem of the Plains, The City of Moon Towers

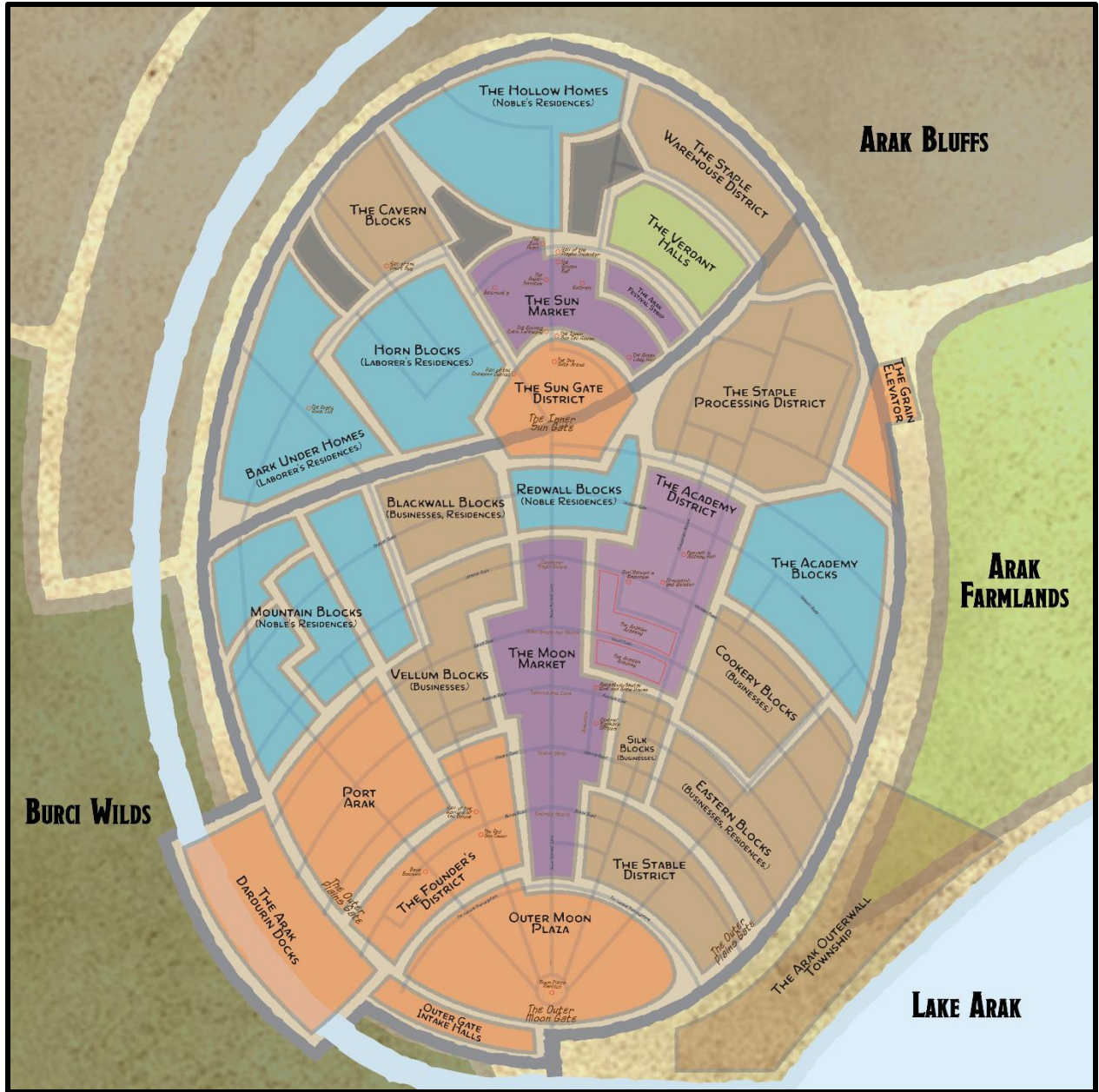
Al'Arak is one of the largest cities in [The Five Corners](#), at the west edge of the [Untin Plains](#), the southernmost and deepest inland city in Oen'Bemos aside from [The Eberwine](#).

The city dates back to before the [Fall of Oen'Derelai](#) (755 years ago), having been one of the great gnome cities of the old empire. Its current incarnation, however, is built atop ruins, and a hodgepodge of cultures and peoples have accumulated on the city since its fall. The culture of the city is deeply concerned with history and academia (magical and otherwise), developing centuries ago from a population of raiders, plunderers, archaeologists, and opportunists.

Visual Description

Thrusted towers with flat tops clump together like crystals bursting from the earth, framed on the west horizon by the distant peaks of Mt. Arci and Mt. Burci. To the east of the city walls can be seen forested cliffs, faintly revealing the southern edge of the [Untin Huntlands](#). These cliffs overlook farmlands below, the fields of which hug Lake Arak and taper down to the huddled low buildings of the [Arak Outer-Wall Township](#). The Dardurin river can be seen running through the docks that spill out of the western city walls, pouring forth to Lake Arak just after the grand bridge that leads to the city gates. Turning further south, one sees the vast Instus Fields, golden plains that create an agonizingly perfect view for nobles residing in the city's towers.

The skyline of buildings is occasionally spindled with bridges, though most of the towers are uncomfortably close together so that they appear more like a natural rock formation than architecture, a visual that becomes quite literal to the northern edge of the city, which appears to have been carved into and under the Arak Bluffs. When one looks closely at the towers, though, the details are too fantastic to be organic. Straight edges, diagonal lines, and corners make up the vaulted windows, balconies, and towers. These adornments become more impressive as one approaches closer to the city—each tower is a rounded column, with the straight-edged features seen from a front view smoothly swooping around the sides in profoundly architected curves.



Districts of Al'Arak

The Arak Outer-City Districts

All buildings and open-air areas that are not built within the Arak Bluffs. The outer-city starts at the city's gate, a hub called the Outer Moon Plaza. From this plaza hub spokes out five major roads, including the center main street known as Moon Market Lane.

The Founder's District - Where most of the city's government and bureaucracy is held, along with some estates of the wealthiest noblemen and traders of the city.

The Outer Moon Market - The major marketplace for standard trade in the city, world-famed and a crossing point between trade around Oen'Bemos and imports from the wider world shipped down the Dardurin river.

The Academy District - Home to *The Arakian Academy*, related domiciles, and locus of the most high-stakes legal magical trade in the city.

Port Arak and Dardurin Docks - This port is responsible for about 60% of import and export, with the other 40% coming from the plains-bound stretch of The Highway of Krat.

The Arak Inner-City Districts

Regions built inside of and below the Arak Bluffs (these areas often referred to as in the "underbluff"). About thirty percent of the city's area is contained in the inner-city.

The Hollow Homes - This is one of the wealthiest residential districts in the city, holding the estates of many of Arak's greatest Houses.

The Inner Sun Market - The businesses of this district include casinos, legal drug dens, seedier taverns and inns, brothels, and theaters.

The Staple Warehouse District - Part of the underbluff, these are vast storage halls dedicated to grain food stores. These stores have only steadily grown over the centuries, protecting Al'Arak from the harsh Oen'Bemos Famine Winds.

The Verdant Halls - These are vast magical glass halls built in the Underbluff of Al'Arak, restored from original Arak architecture. Part of the area is gardens, part is a zoo, but about a third of space is actually dedicated to agriculture (orchards and vineyards).

The Sun Gate District - The area around and past the Arak Inner-City Gate. Contains the Sun Gate fighting arena, and below is hidden the Sun Gate Dungeons.

The Cavern Blocks - Containing the "home offices" of various businesses, the management of major industries is handled in the cavernous structures here.

Bark Under Homes - Laborer's housing, lower class.

General Governance

Al'Arak is an independent city state, and it serves as a hub between the orc clans of Oen'Bemos and the city states of the *The Amber Cities*. As of *The Flame Concord* (46 years ago), the city falls within Oen'Untin lands, but that clan does not lay claim to the governance of the city, and instead exists in peaceful cooperation with it. The city's financial and political independence has been maintained for centuries, largely unimpeded by the constant warring of the orc clans.

The city has been well-maintained under The Founders and has seen such financial success that the people do not question their city's strange way of doing things. The nature of the Oen'Bemos plains and clans are such that no one in the city would ever consider expanding geographically, and so the populace of the city state is appeased with the current state of affairs.

The Founders of Arak

The city is ruled by *The Founders of Arak*, a governing council of merchant leaders, aristocrats, and bureaucrats (of note, this oligarchic system served as an academic inspiration to *The Conglomerate* of *The Melting Pot* and *The Esedrian Council*). Among this ruling body, there are few whose lineage does not extend all the way back to the Restoration Period (or even the Discovery Period).

The Founders of Arak is a strange council of families, complex lineages, and social connections, and as such, it is unconventional in its structure. It is a system that is defined by secrecy, with the balance of power being maintained through what is called The Mask of the Founders—a magic ritualistic system that enforces anonymity among the council when reaching major decisions.

Despite the mysteries that surround them—encapsulated by the common phrase “The Founders have many secrets”—the council is almost universally praised by the populace of the city (or at least all those whose opinions play a role enough to hold sway). Whatever the nature of the Founders' methods, the results have been unquestionable, as the council has, over the course of two centuries, turned the city into one of the most egalitarian, powerful, and wealthy independent states in the world, with a balanced pool of wealth and influence spread among several industries.

Law and Crime

Al'Arak is known for many things, but the thing that pops to most foreigner's minds is its “lawless” nature, garnering the nickname “The Capital of Criminals” among the noble castes abroad. The truth is more complicated, and those familiar with the city are aware that it only has a moderate amount of crime relative other major cities, which is credited to decriminalizing many things that other metropolitan cities would outlaw.

Drugs, alchemy, prostitution, and gambling are all regulated and legal enterprises in Al'Arak, with these industries being managed by members of *House Paelor Dicta* and smaller houses connected to them. The common crime enterprises that are illegal in Al'Arak are thievery, murder, and usury (unregulated, high-interest money lending). Those services can be found, but contrary to popular belief abroad, the legal ramifications of breaking the law in this city are incredibly harsh. High-stakes thievery, murder, and unlicensed moneylending can result in a death sentence or life imprisonment.

Law and Magic

The loss of magical practice (other than *Enchantment*, the creation of magical items) from the city was a slippery slope, mages first being banned from The Founders, then being strong-armed out of industry and academia with stricter and stricter laws being imposed on magical practice. Eventually, all of the prominent mages left Al'Arak, leaving the city with a dearth of expertise to bolster any further magical practice.

The laws left in their absence call for incredibly harsh penalties for any act of magic perpetrated against another individual. For example, any spell used to bring physical harm to an individual or to influence someone else's mind or behavior against their will is met with 50 years of imprisonment *at the least*. Depending on the severity of the circumstance, it can result in summary execution without a trial.

Courts

The city has courts that serve under The Founders and settle civil disputes and crime. There are legal procedures by which issues are elevated to the level of The Founders, and the council deliberates in private on these matters, though they will have public hearings to listen to witness accounts and gather information.

Police Force

House Kefn of *The Three Houses Red* holds many leaders among the Arak Legion, which accounts for watchmen and city guard, and the rest of The Red account for 90% of private security and mercenaries in the city. There is also a police force focused on criminal investigation called *The Moon Watchmen*, which has no representation on The Founders council, led by Cardinal Investigator *Graham Derrick Crick*.

Economy

In its later development, Al'Arak was a lavish city of wealth and decadence for the upper crusts of society. However, over the past two centuries, the city needed to focus on forming a sustainable economy that could withstand a lack of expansion and a dependence on incredibly long-stretching trade routes.

Many advanced social developments occurred to bolster and protect the city's economy, largely ushered forth by the "rational but mysterious hand of The Founders." The city is now in a similar situation to The Melting Pot, where the economy hinges on a delicate balance between the powers that rule the city. In this case, however, there is a larger focus on encouraging healthy competition between industry leaders.

The Labor Guilds

These Guilds are bureaucratic powers reporting directly to The Founders, responsible for upholding labor laws, assessing the viability of businesses at the macro and micro scale, and overseeing that the economy of Al'Arak remains healthy, competitive, and sustainable. The Labor Guilds have the power to revoke any business license, and strict laws restrict development of new businesses without going through the proper channels.

The Fair Competition Dictate

Because the city is so limited in its expansion, there is very little space for the introduction of new businesses. To motivate healthy competition and reduce the stagnation of industry, laws have been put in place wherein business licenses are regularly re-assessed within evaluation metrics determined by the city's Labor Guilds. Depending on the business sector in question, periodically new businesses are given the opportunity to bid on how they would significantly improve or out-mode any current businesses that appear to be showing a decline in growth, sustainability, and/or productivity.

The result of this economic model initially led to an enormous burst of innovation and competition, leading to many new practices and inventions of productivity across a variety of economic sectors that further developed and refined many aspects of the city, particularly in academia, agriculture, infrastructure, and transportation.

Labor Class

At this point in the social development of the city, worker's rights are the strongest they've been historically, and some of the best in The Five Corners. Workers are guaranteed weekends, and all industries are regulated by Labor Guilds that guarantee at least somewhat rational work hours and have the power to enforce other labor laws. There is a relatively strong health care industry that is made affordable for the practical ends of keeping the city running, and there is a public schooling system in place offering lessons in arithmetic and literacy.

However, there is little economic mobility for the majority of the population, with centers of capital and leaders of industry largely passing down through lineages among the Arakian Houses. Most laborers and craftsmen will be stuck within the profession they acquire in youth for their entire adult life, and it is a rare case for a laborer to rise in the ranks of industry or acquire the resources and connections to form a new business. In spite of this, the labor class has been made to be relatively satisfied in their position due to the social benefits and stability that Al'Araks labor laws offer.

Culture and Society

Capital of Enchantment

Around 750 PU, a while after The Founders of Arak first formed and took control of the city, mages were shunned from Al'Arak. First they were banned from participating in The Founders, and then in several ways they began to be strong-armed out of the city's functions and management. *The Arakian Academy* to that point was already far more invested in the relics of magic than in the practice of magic itself, and so the school ultimately survived the loss of its mages, making up for that loss by still having some of the best enchanters in the world. To this day, some of the best works of Enchantment are done by those who research that and adjacent fields at the Academy.

History

The Desolation Period (300 PU - 550 PU)

Al'Arak was a great city desecrated by the wars between the Bronzians and Cornians. At that time, it was second only to the central imperial city of *Kevesh* (now ruins). It took time for the magical residuum around the city to relax enough for inhabiting it to be safe, as the latent energies from the wars were powerful and spawned a variety of magical creatures and forces.

The Discovery Period (550 PU - 650 PU)

It did not take long for foolhardy individuals to risk exposure to such dangers in return for the possibility of plundering the ruins of a great empire. For a long time (blurring the line between the Desolation Period and the Discovery Period) there were only adventurers and treasure-hunters. Then came the mages, those who could contain and redirect the residuum and make the city habitable again. The city's heart began to throb, and the blood began to flow. Merchants and farmers came, filling a niche of supporting those who were now gaining a great wealth from the abandoned riches of the city.

The Restoration Period (650 PU - 800 PU)

Eventually the flow of trade shifted. The wealthy of the city no longer had need for the greater wealth that might be accumulated by pillaging what was now their home. Instead the revitalization of the city became the new goal—restoration of architecture and aqueducts, efforts to better understand the forgotten magitechnology that made the city thrive under the gnomes (technology that the surviving gnomes of *The Bronze City* would keep hidden and secret for centuries to come).

All along, the Warring of the Clans continued outside the city walls. The clans had no interest in holding or maintaining a city like Al'Arak. In the early days after the fall of the gnome empire, it represented to them a symbol of their former oppressors. As the orcs began to move on, as their history with the gnomes became more legend than reality, the

clans watched Al'Arak rise in power and looked at it incredulously. There were a few efforts to attack the city, but it was built to be defensible in its time, and in its regrowth, that power was bolstered.

The Amber Road Period (800 PU - 850 PU)

As Al'Arak rose to be a powerful city state, it eventually had to (more often than not) ally with the clans equally. To support one clan could mean bringing the wrath of any others, which became a danger to its trade routes. The city's ties to the other powers of the *Amber Peninsula* meant having to maintain trade routes over the Dardurin River and the west coast of Oen'Bemos. This eventually led to the restoration of the Highway of Krat, a momentous project titled Rebuilding the Amber Road.

Eventually, the balance of this relationship between clans and *The Amber Cities* turned Al'Arak into a hub of trade and culture between the strange world of the clans and all of the world outside of the plains of Oen'Bemos. Despite its odd position relative the rest of the influences of power in The Five Corners, Al'Arak has become a major player in trade, culture, and knowledge, and it will be hard to ever unseat given its stable wealth of Derelaic artifacts, treasure, and historical knowledge.

The Untin Accord Period (850 PU - Present)

The Founders of Al'Arak were a part of *The Flame Concord* (46 years ago), and agreed to officially allowing the boundaries of *Oen'Untin* Lands to fall around the city. Al'Arak had already often needed to rely on both manual labor as well as food and agriculture through trade with the various orc clans. The concord meant that a cooperative orc population would resent Al'Arak far less for favoring the closest clan in fiscal relations.

As a long-standing neutral ground, Al'Arak was in fact the location for the majority of the concord's peace talks. After the resolution of the concord, it is now the site of the annual Festival of the Flame, a gathering of the clans from across Oen'Bemos.