

THAYAN MILITARY MIGHT

Reports of Szass Tam's mindless legions of terrifying undead are borne and spread across the length and breadth of the Realms. The mere mention of these hordes in a council meeting in the far-off Dales is enough to see a motion to improve a town's fortifications approved. And there is good reason behind the terror that these swarms inspire.

Thay's undead legions operate like an army of unthinking and relentless ants. When confronted by an obstacle such as a river, they unhesitatingly plunge themselves into the water as more and more pile atop the underwater ones, to form a bridge/road across the torrent so the rest of the force can swiftly cross. They move themselves and whatever they are transporting over the submerged creatures finishing with the "drowned" undead walking up out of the water to follow as if the entire effort was no bother at all.

Yet thanks to the defenders of Aglarond, Thay has learned that Red Wizards should always reinforce undead armies. When they don't, enemy mages can readily set a battlefield of advancing Thayan undead aflame, then hold them off from behind a deep ditch and rampart until the ashes can advance no more.

Rational battlemasters across Faerûn suggest that despite Thay's staggering undead headcount the Red Wizards must follow some kind of martial doctrine or process. Unfortunately, very little is known about the actual makeup of Thay's armies and tactics outside of those that actively serve. What follows is a summary of the intelligence that has been recovered by agents of the Zhentarim and the Harpers; the veracity of these points is hotly contested by military powers across the world.

RANK INSIGNIA AND TITLES

Rank insignia are customarily worn on both shoulders, and they are the same for army and naval units. All elements of an insignia are depicted in crimson, on a black field. See the Current Military Ranks of Thay table on page 28.

Any Red Wizard attached to a military unit uses and is addressed by their customary rank. Any non-Red Wizard mage or sorcerer attached to a military unit holds Vardhond-equivalent rank and is called a "Nauthkir."

Thayan nobility are treated and addressed as their knightly ranks.

The title of "Autharch" is a Lord Mayor equivalent in the governing bureaucracy of Thay (i.e. the head administrator of a city), but is also bestowed as a military title for the Lord Commanders of standing garrisons (i.e. the commander of a fortress, or the troops guarding a city).

Despite the undeniable fact that Szass Tam's unlimited throng of undead is the central feature of Thayan military might, it is hardly the entire picture. Thay also boasts a standing army, navy and a division of secret police all composed of mortal humanoids rather than mindless undead. While fielding droves of undead that do not require either rest or food affords obvious advantages, the undead bring their own set of notable drawbacks as well, primarily among them from a military standpoint being the lack of ability to think tactically and to reason generally. This is where the Thayan Knights, the Water Fist, and the Probity Corps come in.



THAYAN
KNIGHT

WATER FIST



THAYAN KNIGHTS

In the present day, in addition to the throng of undead, the Thayan Army consists of the Thayan Knights. These highly trained and unfailingly loyal soldiers primarily serve as bodyguards/escorts for the famed Red Wizards, as castle/fortress guards (including all patrols and guards on the Plateau of Thay), and as commanders for massed undead armies in the field. Their organizational structure is similar to that of most traditional standing armies with titled ranks topping out at general.

Membership in the Knights is a position of privilege. It is reserved strictly for native Thayans that are of sufficient martial abilities, but most importantly, can demonstrate near fanatical loyalty to their Red Wizard masters. Once assigned to or appropriated by a given Red Wizard, a Thayan Knight's highest duty is to protect that Red Wizard. This sole duty passes as the Thayan Knight's code. This said, the vast majority of Thayan Knights do not directly serve specific Red Wizards. Most Thayan Knights fill out the ranks of gate-guards, harbor sentries, road patrols, wilderness wardens, and the rank-and-file officers in the army itself.

The funding, training, and equipping of each division of Thayan Knights is the responsibility of the individual Tharchions. This dynamic is a source of constant political tension in Thay as Szass Tam and the Red Wizards incessantly demand more troops from the Tharchions who in turn resist when convenient, citing costs and the shortage of suitable candidates.

Barring unusual situations—when battle losses necessitate a recent replacement, for example—any Thayan Knight encountered as a bodyguard knows well the habits and quirks of the Red Wizard they're guarding. They anticipate what interests their master, which way the mage customarily looks or turns, and what triggers them to anger. They know the areas of effect and consequences of their master's preferred spells (secondary fires, for instance) and will move and act accordingly. And they are *always* alert.

Thayan Knights Sigil/Dress: The Thayan Knights wear a kit featuring black armor bearing a circle device of eight red flames to represent the eight schools of magic/zulkirates.

CURRENT MILITARY RANKS OF THAY

Thayan Rank Insignia	Thayan Army Rank	Thayan Naval Rank	Rough Real-World U.S. Equivalent	Purple Dragons of Cormyr	The Talons of Turmish
	Irhrand	Irtane	Private	Blade	Sword
	Kelrhond	Vaethrar	Corporal	Telsword	Avondas
	Tarsabbar	Yoehvar	Sergeant	First Sword	Ralvondas
	Vardhond	Vornadar	Lieutenant	Swordcaptain	Khortal
	Khortalhond	Heemadar	Captain	Lionar	Larvant
	Marahond	Tantrar	Major	Ornrion	Vornral
	Ulthark	Aunkhlar	Colonel	Constal	Hahavrho
	Narantark	Ommondravar	Major General	Oversword	Ondaggar
	Vulthark	Soudravar	Lieutenant General	Battlemaster	Tavalant
	Zulthark	Zuldravar	General/Admiral	Lord High Marshal	Korondor



THE WATER FIST

Before the rise of Szass Tam, the Thayan navy was formally dubbed The Wave Serpents but no one but sages, pedants, and formal court documents calls them that these days. To one and all in Thay, they are colloquially “the Water Fist,” after a famous line Szass Tam delivered in a speech: “Thay has three fists: one in armor, one on the water, and one unseen until it’s too late.” That last one is his cute way of referring to the arcane magic of the Red Wizards, but nonetheless his words gave the navy its daily Thayan name.

The highly-efficient Thayan navy sails out of a base located on the island-tharch of Alaor. As such, the navy has traditionally fallen under the authority of Alaor’s Tharchion. Currently though, while Alaor’s Tharchion still maintains nominal oversight over the navy, as with just about every other important institution in Thay, the navy is now under the direct control of Szass Tam.

The naval vessels themselves are crewed by undead rowers, but also with actual living sailors to perform every other important function on each ship. As with the Thayan Knights, membership in The Water Fist is reserved for native Thayans alone. Sailors in the Thayan Navy, beyond enjoying the ubiquitous and substantial Thayan military training, occupy varying ranks/positions as found in other traditional

navies from rigging crew to carpenter and from ensign to admiral.

As the Water Fist plies the normally calm waters of the Sea of Fallen Stars rather than more tempestuous bodies such as the Sea of Swords, the Thayan Navy favors the sleeker hull designs of clippers and schooners over the wide and wallowing galleys and cogs more commonly found along the Sword Coast. These craft, either of two- or three-masted varieties, are built for speed and maneuverability. Typically, each is gar-risoned by both benches of undead rowers set to execute the complicated rowing instructions necessary for efficient broadside and boarding maneuvers, as well as well-trained sailors who know to quickly seize the enemy ship’s captain, “the head of the snake,” in order to rapidly bring a boarding action to a successful conclusion.

Finally, Thayan vessels favor traditional appellations borrowing magic-related themes such as spells, schools of magic, or famous wizards. Some examples of such are The Fire Ball, The Enchanter, or The Zhengyi.

The Water Fist Sigil/Dress: The device for the Water Fist is a black equilateral triangle surrounded by a circle of eight crimson tongues of flame, on a light blue field.

THE PROBITY CORPS

Pervasive undead performing manual labor or marching to war are facts of everyday life in Thay. The same can be said of the ever-present guards and patrols conducted by the Thayan Knights and other militia. However, for each and every citizen of Thay, the most terrifying branch of the Thayan government is unquestionably the Probity Corps - the secret police of Thay.

This innocuous sounding bureau is a source of daily anxiety for all members of the highly structured and stratified Thayan society because agents of the Probity Corps are immune to any and all social or political barriers. Reporting to Szass Tam directly, Probity Corps agents ghost through Thayan society and government on their merest whim. Known more colloquially as the “inquisition,” agents of the Probity Corps can be anywhere at any time.

Their enigmatic nature is the source of their greatest power—the ubiquitous fear that literally anyone can be an informant for the inquisition or

be an agent themselves. It would be a search indeed to find a Thayan who does not know or at least heard of someone “disappeared” by the Probity Corps. Enforcing absolute loyalty and obedience to Szass Tam, the Probity Corps are feared and hated by all Thayans. The rich and powerful of Thay particularly resent this omnipresence, because as secure as they may be in their strata from virtually every other segment of Thayan society, agents of the Probity Corps can suddenly rip them down from their perch without the least bit of warning.

Szass Tam himself delights in the terror inspired by his secret police. He has worked hard to see agents of the Probity Corps entrenched in every important layer of government and Thayan society. They are his most trusted servants.

Headquartered on Thaymount, little is known about the specific training that agents of the Probity Corps receive. The little that has been gleaned reveals that agents of the Probity Corps are subjected to extensive and fierce indoctrination as well as deep and rigorous training in both martial and arcane combat. Finally, agents of the Probity Corps are famous for their ability to catch an untruth, actual or perceived, and for then obtaining a confession for the lie.

The Probity Corps Sigil/Dress: While rarely openly displayed, the sigil of the Corps is a stylized scale with the golden key of fidelity on one side and the red heart of loyalty on the other.

PROBITY CORPS TITLES

The Probity Corps does not have “ranks” as such. However, the base title of any member of the Probity Corps is “Inquisitor.” Further, the Probity Corp has a commanding Inquisitor in each tharch called the “Inquisitor Superior.” Each Superior is personally selected by Szass Tam. Finally, the soldiers employed by the Probity Corps are referred to generically as “Troopers.”



THAYAN KNIGHTS
SIGIL



PROBITY CORPS
SIGIL



WATER FIST
SIGIL



CHAPTER 3

POINTS OF INTEREST

ALL ACROSS THAY CAN BE FOUND COMMON elements and themes. No matter how diverse the people are or how distant one tharch may be from another, some things are almost always the same across the land.

RED WIZARD COMPOUNDS

For reasons of personal security, it is rare for any Red Wizard to have any slaves within their compounds, though slaves may live and toil in an “outer ring” of paddocks, fenced or walled courtyards, granaries, stables, and warehouses.

In elder days, paranoid Red Wizards built such outer rings in a manner akin to many snail shells: from the outside, their entire length had to be traversed, circling the fortified walls of the inner compound, to reach the entrance to that inner compound, so defenders could contest every step of an advancing invading force, and sap the numbers of attackers with many pre-prepared traps (spiked pits, fire-barrels ignited from above and then spread by hurled flammable oil “bombs,” and so on).

Rather than the Red Wizard or any guests being served by slaves, servants drawn from Thay’s middle class work within the fortified inner compound, in the relatively luxurious surroundings of the Red Wizard’s home, which typically boasts a small, sumptuous, intended-to-impress guesthouse (with spies waiting in secret passages in the walls, to employ spying holes and their ears, to learn all they can); a central mansion furnished to the personal taste of the Red Wizard; a servant’s abode often sited between guesthouse and mansion to give warning (screaming servants) of an intrusion towards the mansion from the guesthouse; and lastly, often surrounded by protective earth berms (rings of raised earthen walls, intended to absorb and deflect upwards harmful magics), a spellcasting

chamber built like a double-walled warehouse, for use in practicing spellcastings and perfecting new magics.

Most Red Wizard compounds have a fortress-like gatehouse guarding the wagon-width main entrance: a massive stone building in the shape of a squared arch, surrounding the two-paneled gate that normally blocks the wagon-path leading inside. The gatehouse has thick stone inner and outer walls, each at least three courses of blocks in thickness, with an area twice that width or more between these walls that’s entirely filled with loose stone rubble—so someone breaching a wall will be buried in a heavy outflow of shifting stones.

The entry gates always open inwards and stand just in front of a rising slope of the wagon-path, so there’s no clear gap beneath them. They can be braced inside by massive timber beams that are slid out of holes in the sides of the gatehouse, through massive iron sockets bolted to the inside of the doors, and on into sockets on the other side of the gatehouse. Some of these bracing beams are stored in either side of the gatehouse, and so are extended out in both directions to hold the doors in place and brace them, passing through the sockets in the same manner as a waist-belt passes through cloth-strip “keepers” in a pair of breeches.

These beams may further be reinforced with angled braces placed between the inside surface of the gates and stone pockets sunk into the wagon-path (in locations intended to avoid wagon-wheels during normal daily passage of wagons in and out). There may even be additional top-down braces dropped from the “cross-header” of the arch down directly behind the gates, into stone pockets sunk into the wagon-path below.

All such beams are moved, with the aid of projecting-metal-spike “handles,” by zombies stored in interior rooms within the gatehouse. Such rooms are