



THE WORLD
OF THE
WITCHER[®]

VIDEO GAME COMPENDIUM

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DARK HORSE BOOKS

CD PROJEKT RED

Head of Studio
ADAM BADOWSKI

Project Managers
KAROLINA LEWANDOWSKA, ASHLEY KARAS

Author
MARCIN BATYLDA

Translator
TRAVIS CURRIT

Proofreaders
ANDREW STONE, TRAVIS CURRIT,
KAROLINA NIEWĘGŁOWSKA,
JAKUB SZAMAŁEK

Editor
MARCIN BLACHA

Artistic Supervisor
PRZEMYSŁAW JUSZCZYK

Art Director
BARTŁOMIEJ GAWEL

Business Development Manager
RAFAŁ JAKI

VP of Business Development
MICHAŁ NOWAKOWSKI

DARK HORSE

Publisher
MIKE RICHARDSON

Editor
DANIEL CHABON

Assistant Editor
IAN TUCKER

Designer
DAVID NESTELLE

Digital Production
ALLYSON HALLER

THE WORLD OF THE WITCHER

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Dear Reader,

The tome you hold in your hands is a compilation of a multitude of notes and drafts, both those authored by myself and those I managed to acquire, copy, or otherwise procure during my many travels. For I have grown fond of collecting observations and information gleaned through lively conversation, so that they might serve posterity as inspiration or cause for reflection.

*Most of the notes penned by my hand served as the basis for the creation of my own great work: my memoirs, entitled **Half a Century of Poetry**. I shall hasten to add, happily spitting in the face of false modesty, that any person who would care for his reputation as an educated and well-read man, and not a simpleton and boor, should acquaint himself with that tome. For those not already familiar with this masterpiece of wit, thrilling adventure, and charming verse, it is undoubtedly available at your nearest purveyor of fine literature, or in the homes of your more cultured and discerning friends.*

Yet a great many of the documents I gathered could not find their way into the aforementioned book. These were, for the most part, texts written by persons other than myself, and therefore, quite understandably, they could not be included in my memoirs. Still, some of these were interesting enough that I decided to make use of them in the present tome—after, obviously, some careful editing and the addition of suitable commentary. I hope, dear reader, that perusing them will bring you much joy. First and foremost, however, I hope that it will grant you a wider perspective on things such as magic, sorcerers, the history of the world in general, the storied past of the witchers, and, in particular, my dear friend Geralt of Rivia.

—Dandelion



Samurai file



CHAPTER I

THE WORLD AND ITS INHABITANTS

The history of our continent has been described in many voluminous historical treatises and documents. The famous *The History of the World* by the splendid Roderick de Novembre must be mentioned above all. This was one of the students' favorite readings during my time at the Oxenfurt Academy, though that may have been because it was easy to use the huge tome being passed around the auditorium to conceal a bottle of vodka. I might add that I myself, never one to be swayed by scholarly eminence, always considered the much larger geographical atlas to be better suited toward that purpose.

As far as the actual content of *The History of the World* is concerned, many consider it to be somewhat controversial and anachronistic. At the least, the book's presentation of facts is not always free of bias. I hasten to add that by no means do I ascribe any ill will to Roderick de Novembre—for everyone, even the most respected of historians, is the child of his times, his culture, and his nation. It should consequently come as no surprise that a history of the formation of realms, wars, and racial conflicts that is authored by a human will always present the human—that is, the most widely known—point of view.

Therefore, I highly recommend the following chapter, which contains unique musings on our history and geography by a member of a completely different species. It was penned by Villentretenmerth, a golden dragon, known in his human form as the knight Borch Three Jackdaws. Due to his longevity and his ability to change shape, he has had ample opportunities to observe human society and the passage of many important events. Moreover, he has shown a particularly keen interest in our species, highly atypical for dragons, that is not limited to classifying us as a part of a menu. He has thus proven to be an exceptionally astute commentator on the history of both our species and of the world as a whole.

—Dandelion

THE WORLD AND ITS HISTORY

Your species likes to celebrate history, to put pen to paper, to commemorate, to organize, to systematize. You fill the pages of voluminous tomes with it, you write it down on parchment, you immortalize the deeds of the human race in songs. The roots of this passion are likely found in the distant past, when your species was still young. No matter the time or place or cultural group, once you are past the stage of shattering each other's skulls with a horse's jaw tied to a rod, you eagerly begin to contemplate how best to immortalize this fact, for your greater glory and for the memory of your descendants. Maybe that is why the history of mankind is inevitably the history of war and conquest.

The above statement is not born of prejudice. On the contrary, I am one of the few members of my species who have lived among you and might even be said to be somewhat fond of you. Therefore, I always eagerly observe your accomplishments, though some of your race's deeds and attitudes should, beyond all doubt, be condemned or held in contempt. I would even go so far as to say that said deeds warrant the use of the word *monster*, which you so often use to describe species different from your own.

But let us get back to history, or more precisely, the tales of this world. They too most often tell of a history of war and conquest, but were chronicled long before you arrived.

The First People of These Lands

It is said that ancient dwarven tales hold that the oldest inhabitants of this region of the world were the gnomes. Others claim that there is circumstantial evidence that races such as vrans or the nearly extinct werebbubbs also date back many thousands of years. As you, dear reader,

might correctly surmise, it is therefore difficult to ascertain whether the gnomes truly were the first people to dwell here. It is a known fact, however, that they had small colonies in the mountain reaches of Mahakam and Tir Tochair that existed long before dwarves arrived in these lands, some three to four thousand years ago.

The meeting between gnomes and dwarves was surprisingly peaceful. Truth be told, this may be the only case when the new arrivals did not begin their settlement by waging war on those who dwelled there before them. It is less surprising, however, when one considers that both races have similar preferences and habits, and could therefore coexist within a single society without much tension or infighting. Indeed, their good relations have continued to this day.

“Taking into account all the evidence at our disposal, an enlightened person must remain open to the possibility that other universes exist. The theory postulating that some of the stars seen in the sky are worlds separated from ours by time and space continues to gain more and more proponents among sorcerers, scholars, and astrologers. Though such deliberations are not viewed kindly by most members of the clergy, the priests’ protests should not stop us researchers from trying to discover the truth. For just as the shape of our sphaera mundi has been proven beyond all doubt, despite pressures from the priesthood, so may it be that the correct answer here will be found again not in religion, but in unbiased and unwavering Scholarship.”

—Anonymous



ual colonization of this region which lasted for ten centuries. That expansion was also relatively peaceful, though there were some conflicts. Anyone who has met an elf knows that their nature is not the most amicable, and it is therefore easy to surmise that they clashed with other races—vrans, werebbubbs, and dwarves. These quarrels, however, never turned into a total war or attempts to exterminate one’s neighbors. Perhaps that is why, despite all their cultural differences and

Next, elves arrived on the horizon. It seems most likely that they, like yourselves, came here from another world, undoubtedly through magical gates or portals of one kind or other. They appeared more or less two and a half thousand years ago, making landfall from their white ships. They promptly began a grad-

Human colonization of the Continent began with an unbroken series of conflicts and bloody wars with other races. Their outcome established mankind’s lasting dominance over today’s Northern Realms.



past feuds, relations between elves and dwarves remain fairly amiable.

The Arrival of Humans

It is common knowledge that your race arrived in this world alongside the Conjunction of the Spheres—the great magical cataclysm which remains largely unexplained to this day. That event took place around one and a half thousand years ago, according to human reckoning. It is difficult to determine how long this process lasted, but as a result, a great many other creatures appeared—creatures that without question were not originally born of this world.

The Conjunction of the Spheres also gave birth to another phenomenon—namely magic, which flowed into our

“The elven opinion that humans supposedly came to this world during the Conjunction of the Spheres is another proof of the vile perfidy of that deceitful, gods-forsaken race! For what was brought forth by that terrible event, that monstrous catastrophe cast down upon mankind to doom it? It birthed the foul and filthy magic, and therefore sorcerers, who dare to grasp at the powers and faculties that rightly belong to the gods! It gave life to disgusting beasts that threaten all gods-fearing and just men! To believe that we came to this world in that accursed hour is blasphemy! It is a plot by the so-called Elder Races, to mock the truth and usurp this world, which by divine decree is the inheritance of men!”

—From the sermons of Sigebert, priest during the witch hunt period (1272–1276)

world and became, one could say, its integral part.

Though, as I have said, fifteen centuries have passed since that time, proper human expansion in the region now known as the Northern Kingdoms began relatively recently, around five hundred years ago. It was then that the event now called “the Landing of the Exiles” took place, when

ships bearing men who would give rise to the kingdoms of the North made landfall in the Pontar Delta and the mouth of the Yaruga.

It is difficult to say where these “exiles” came from, as on this crucial detail the legends are remarkably silent. If they were indeed exiled, I daresay that it was not because of their gentle and kind natures. After all, over the past few centuries the descendants of these exiles have

Elven ruins bear mute witness to the rise, triumph, and decline of the Aen Seidhe. Few of their buildings have survived in good condition, for as the elves fled the human onslaught they destroyed most of their handiwork, not wanting to see it fall into the hands of the invaders.



THE WOZGOR AND THE DAUK

“According to Arnelius Grock’s classification, the Wozgor and the Dauk are counted among the ancient human cultures that arrived here directly after the Conjunction of the Spheres. They settled the lands between the Dragon Mountains and the Gulf of Praxeda that forms the current territory of the Kingdom of Kovir and Poviss (specifically the duchies of Narok, Velhad, and Talgar) and the principalities of the Hengfors League (the lands of Caingorn, Malleore, Creyden, and Woefield), as well as those of northern Redania (the Gelibol region and the Nimnar Valley). Fragmentary information about these peoples is mainly based on the remains of their material culture.

The surviving writings found on the Dauk menhirs and tombstones found in Wozgor necropolises formed the basis of several prophecies and divinations (vide: ‘The Prophecy of the Black Sun’), which remain questionable to this day (vide: ‘The Mania of Mad Eltibald’). Some scholars stipulate that the Wozgor and Dauk beliefs remain alive in the form of the religion of Melitele and lesser cults (cf. Coram Agh Tera, Veyopatis). The events which led to the extinction of both peoples remain sharply disputed among scholars.”

—Annianus Uldvikel, “Ancient Human Cultures and Their Relicts”

proven themselves to be a determined, bellicose, and intolerant people.

It is also unclear how that First Landing took place, and who were the first to encounter these new arrivals. If the exiles found any other human tribes here, they must have been quickly assimilated by the conquerors, for no trace of them remains in the chronicles. But they quite certainly met elves, who, as one of the already established races, painfully learned of the new settlers’ ambitions.

The Formation of the Northern Kingdoms and the Wars with Nonhumans

Initially, the elves held a significant advantage over the newcomers, but they unwisely disregarded the threat posed by humans. When the first clashes started to occur, they chose not to take up arms, reasoning that it was preferable to avoid bloodshed that promised to cost countless thousands of lives. Instead, they backed

away from the humans, no doubt believing that the new arrivals would at some point finally stop their relentless march to the east. They would later pay dearly for this assumption.

At the same time as they set out to conquer the lands of other races, the first human colonists began squabbling with each other. Indeed, those early times were once summed up with the caustic witticism that every four arriving ships gave birth to three kingdoms, as nearly everyone wanted not only to be his own master, but also to rule over others.

That is why the chronicles of early human history mainly contain descriptions of internal quarrels

Elves, then, gave way and even abandoned some of their cities. These were promptly taken over by the invaders, who raised their own edifices atop the elven foundations. Thus the elves lost their chance to “push the humans back into the sea,” as they like to cry today—too late by a mere half thousand years.

As I’ve said before, human history is invariably filled with conflict.

Centuries ago, most inland areas of the Continent were covered in primeval forests. As humans moved out from the mouth of the Yaruga, they cleared more and more woodlands, reducing the wilderness to stumps to make way for fields and farmsteads.



and wars, which have been given high-sounding names, such as “Shaping Statehood” or “Strengthening Royal Power.” As is typical in such times, the strongest, most ambitious, and shrewdest individuals—for simplicity’s sake, called kings (though a list of their myriad self-granted titles could itself fill several pages of this book)—worked tirelessly to incorporate, annex, and make vassals of the lands of their less crafty or more unfortunate neighbors. This was, of course, accomplished through the usual conquests, treaties, marriages, bribery, blackmail, and assassinations. Stronger realms consumed the weaker ones, uniting them under their dynasties. The kingdoms of men expanded, waging war on each other and on the nonhuman races. Step by step, vrans were pushed into the Blue Mountains. Werebbubbs faced a similar fate, with the survivors finding refuge in the remote regions of Mahakam and the Amell Mountains.

The bitter harvest sown during the elven wars is still being reaped to this day. Many Aen Seidhe refused to accept defeat and continue to wage a ruthless guerrilla war against men, one that claims both soldiers and peaceful merchants and villagers as its victims.

“No less than two dozen cities of the Northern Kingdoms are located on the sites of ancient elven settlements. Among them are the scholarly Oxenfurt and the Free City of Novigrad, as well as Temeria’s capital, Vizima, and the cities of Maribor, Tretogor, and Cidaris. As one can clearly discern from its name, the ruins of elven Xin’trea are also the site of present-day Cintra.”

—Fragment of second-year dissertation in the Faculty of History at Oxenfurt Academy

Several times, it seemed that humans would at last be content with what they had already conquered. In each case, such hopeful thinking proved a dire mistake. Treaties and nonaggression pacts were signed, agreements

were made—only to be broken when they were no longer useful to humans. The most characteristic example was the peace treaty with the elves, shattered just a few years later by the treacherous Redanian attack that led to the slaughter of Loc Muinne. Thus began the second war between men and elves, in which the latter faced the overwhelming enemy forces with all the courage and stubbornness of true heroes—and paid a horrendous price for doing so. The flower of elven youth perished in that terrible conflict, a blow from which their race has never managed to recover.

In this way, some four centuries after their landing, the men whose ships arrived at the mouth of the Yaruga had claimed all the lands between the Great Sea



in the West and the Blue Mountains in the East, between the Dragon Mountains in the North and the Amell Mountains in the South. Thus, the Northern Kingdoms were born.

The Far South

The lands south of the Amell Mountains developed independently of their northern neighbors. It is unclear whether the men who formed the southern kingdoms were members of a different ethnic group, or if they shared ancestors with the so-called “exiles,” and their paths diverged ages ago.

To discern the truth, one could examine their legends, the chronicles of their kingdoms, and the genealogies of their kings. But to do so, one would have to

SHAERRAWEDD

“Aelirenn, the White Rose of Shaerrawedd—it was she who led us into battle in that last, desperate clash two hundred springs ago. At that time, after human treachery had left the pavements of our white cities stained with the blood of our kin, we already knew we had no hope of winning the war. Our leaders thought only of preserving our people. They gave the order to leave nothing for the invaders to conquer. We were to destroy our homes, shatter the marble palaces, ruin the shimmering fountains, and bring down the slender towers—including the walls of our pride and joy, the beautiful Shaerrawedd. We were to flee, to fall back into the mountains and build new homes, to wait out the humans, like one endures a severe winter night, awaiting the day which will finally herald spring.

But not Aelirenn. She refused to run without a fight, to destroy our handiwork and all that we held dear. We followed her, though she fed us delusions of victory and in truth promised us only the chance to die with honor. And die we did—with her name on our lips. For her. For white stone and marble. And for our symbol, for Shaerrawedd.”

—Cuannah aep Finavail, comrade of Iorveth and member of the Scoia’tael



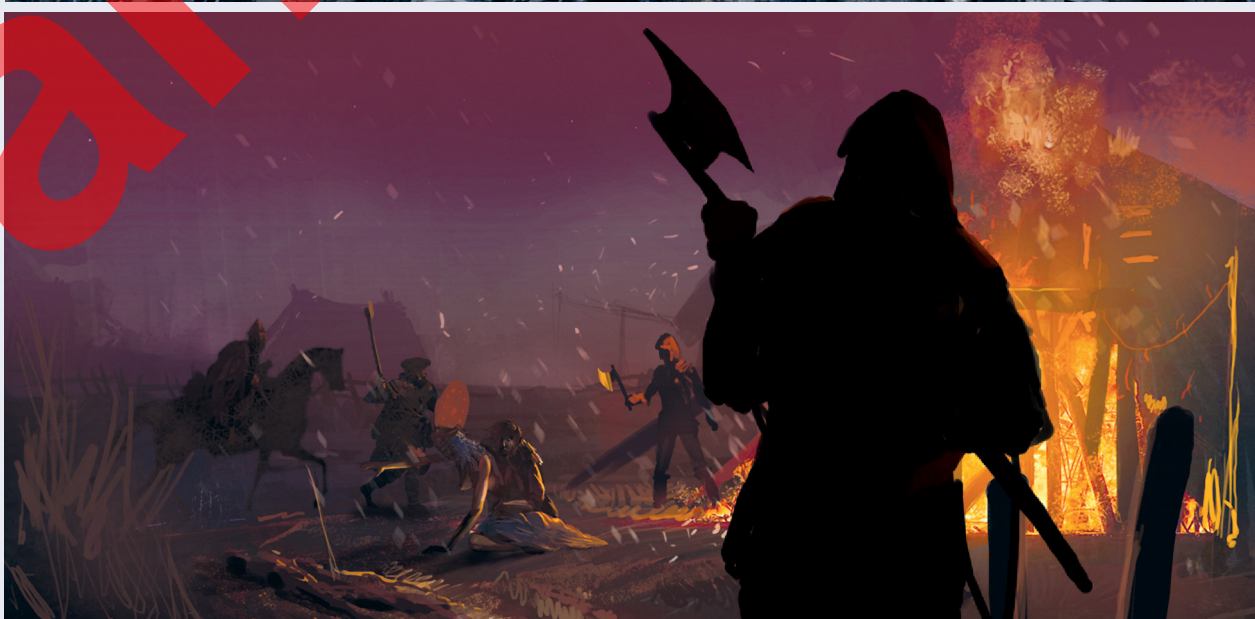
become the Nilfgaardian Empire, was indeed founded by a wholly separate people, likely present in those lands even earlier than five centuries ago. This claim is supported by their completely different language, based

travel far to the south and seek the tomes found at the Imperial Academy, for after these lands were conquered by Nilfgaard, most of their writings were deposited there. The peoples brought under the dominion of the empire were also expected to learn its official language and adopt elements of the victors’ culture. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain just how much the people of the South have in common with their relatives from the North.

It can be said with certainty, however, that at least one kingdom, which would later

To the south, the small kingdom of Nilfgaard slowly built its power by conquering one smaller neighbor after another. Soon its symbol, the Great Sun, would become the emblem of a newly formed empire, the greatest the world has ever seen.





on the Elder Speech, as well as their separate beliefs, customs, and more developed culture.

The history of the South confirms the aforementioned theory that the history of mankind is ultimately a history of conquest. In this case, the rulers of Nilfgaard turned out to outclass all competition in the race to subjugate their neighbors, with the help of, if I may, “the diplomacy of steel.” Over several centuries, Nilfgaard grew from a simple kingdom to a true empire, whose power finally reached the foothills of the Amell Mountains, which separated it from the Northern Kingdoms, a few decades ago.

The Conflict with Nilfgaard and the Northern Wars

At that time, it seemed that the empire had reached its final, natural boundaries. Many scholars and specialists hold the opinion that further march to the north was both economically and militarily pointless. Your historians, then, still hotly debate the reasons for the famous Northern Wars. Supposedly, Nilfgaard had no interests that would be served by war. The Nordlings were a warlike and battle-seasoned people, and it was more profitable to trade with them, as the empire needed external markets for its products. The aggression over the Amell

“Common Tongue—The language of the Nordling peoples, with the exception of the Skellige Islands (see: ‘Elder Speech, Skellige Islands Dialect’). The simple grammar and hoarse pronunciation clearly indicate its barbarous roots. It is likely an amalgamation of languages used by the Nordlings’ ancestors in their ancient homeland, which, after their arrival in the North, was supplemented by concepts and phrases from the local tribes and peoples. The final formation of the Common Tongue took place after the first settlement of the Nordlings at the mouth of the Yaruga.”

—Effenberg and Talbot, Encyclopaedia Maxima Mundi, Tome III

A little over a dozen years ago, the Nilfgaardian army crossed the Marnadal Stairs and crushed the Cintran army in battle at the mouth of the mountain pass. The imperial armies then descended into the valleys and stormed the kingdom’s fortified capital almost on the march, in what became known as the Slaughter of Cintra.

The Nilfgaardians then turned their attention to the Kingdom of Sodden. After crushing its armies in the first battle, the Black Ones conquered the southern part of that land, known as Upper Sodden, before crossing the river Yaruga and attacking the northern region of Sodden. There, the Nilfgaardian might at last met its match, for the empire found itself confronted by the armies of Redania, Temeria, Aedirn, and Kaedwen, united under the leadership of Vizimir, king of Redania, as well as the sorcerers of the Northern Kingdoms. In the famous Second Battle of Sodden, the empire’s seemingly unstoppable march was halted, and the Nilfgaardian army pushed back across the Yaruga. The First Nilfgaard War thus ended in a precarious stalemate, as the two sides eyed each other warily across the banks of the great river.

Mountains and the Yaruga River, therefore, promised few if any benefits, while being risky and extremely complicated as far as wartime logistics were concerned. Nevertheless, the ruler of Nilfgaard, Emperor Emhyr var Emreis, gave the order to attack.

His first victim was the Kingdom of Cintra.

War with Nilfgaard became another opportunity to persecute the elves, who supported the invaders in the hope of gaining back at least some of their lost lands. Tales claiming the Nilfgaardians, who speak a variety of the Elder Speech, were descendants of the Black Seidhe further increased racial prejudice.



The Escalating Conflict and the Second War

Such a tumultuous peace could not last, and both sides prepared for the inevitable renewal of hostilities. The leaders of the previous coalition—the kings of Redania, Temeria, Kaedwen, and Aedirn, as well as the queen of Lyria, were emboldened by their victory and sought to seize the initiative. They planned to launch a surprise attack that would recapture Upper Sodden and Cintra, and push Nilfgaard back beyond the Marnadal. They even took certain steps to prepare for this operation, but Emperor Emhyr var Emreis, the crafty fox, acted first, having secretly completed his own preparations for war.

Said preparations began with disposing of those responsible for the recent defeat—among Nilfgaard's own military commanders and its enemies in the North. The former quickly found themselves under the executioner's sword, and were replaced with young, ambitious officers

"The Battle of the Marnadal Dale lasted a full day and a night, as the Cintran army never gave way, fighting bravely even in the face of overwhelming odds. When King Eist Tuirseach fell, Queen Calanthe herself took command and prevented the army from fleeing. Gathering the scattered Cintran regiments under her banner, she pierced the enemy encirclement and made for the city. For a fearless heart beat in the chest of the Lioness of Cintra, who proved herself more valiant in that bloody battle than many a man. The brave queen personally covered the retreat, riding at the head of the Cintran knights in a desperate charge against the pursuing Nilfgaardian infantry. In the end, she had to be carried into the city by her loyal retainers, bearing grievous wounds from Nilfgaardian pikes.

The Black Ones then stormed the city on the march, for there were too few Cintran soldiers left to man the walls. Cintra was plundered and her people slaughtered over the course of several days. However, the royal castle itself stood defiant for a time, and when the invaders breached the gate, they found no one alive. For the defenders—a handful of knights, magnates, and their families—preferred to die than to be dishonored by slavery. Queen Calanthe herself asked to be killed, but nobody could bring himself to raise a hand against the beloved monarch. In the end, despite her wounds, she crawled to the battlements and leapt from the wall. So died Calanthe Fiona Riannon, the Lioness of Cintra."

—A tale of the fall of Cintra

enamored with the new strategy of lightning-fast war, or, to quote their own term for it, "blitz." The latter fell victim to a meticulous web of intrigue and conspiracies. King Vizimir of Redania, the leader of the Northern coalition, met his end from an assassin's dagger, plunging his realm into chaos. Meanwhile, Emhyr worked to cultivate internal strife among the sorcerers who'd so greatly contributed to his previous defeat. He promised power, wealth, and position to the greedy or discontented, feeding their ambitions and sowing discord within their ranks.

At almost the exact moment the Nilfgaardian armies suddenly surged across the Yaruga in its upper course, Scoia'tael units, swayed by the devious emperor's promises of elven freedom, fell upon the Nordling rear. The invaders concentrated the bulk of their might on the weaker coalition forces on their right flank, easily smashing the armies of Lyria and Aedirn. While the battles still raged, Kaedwen suddenly changed sides, breaking all previous

Imperial troops started off the war with a string of impressive victories, quickly breaking through the defenses of Lyria, Rivia, and Aedirn. Two weeks later the Nilfgaardian army crossed into southern Temeria as well, leaving a trail of corpses in its wake.

