

Prepared by Daniel Redbrook, Archwizard of Lightning and Lore for the court of King Mykel Endarr II.

Hadran: An Apprentice History

About eleven centuries ago, in the 4677th year after the founding of Quentari, the 57th year of the reign of King Galavier of Quentari, the father of King Elenaro (494 years before 1 ER of Evendarr), on the continent of Avalon somewhere North and West of Evendarr, a civilization developed. It was known as the Empire of Hadran.

Hadran was a mighty warrior who founded a city along a great river that flowed through a land of fertile soils and brisk climate. He named the city and the river in his own honor, and himself Lord of these lands. Hadran's city steadily grew over the years of his rule, and he was known as a fair man, with great ambitions. On his deathbed, Hadran ceded his lands and title to his oldest son, Hadran II, whom he charged to make Hadran a legendary land of might and power, so that all may revere it. In 23 HE, Hadran II took his father's words to heart, and dedicated his life to the task.

Hadran II was already an accomplished warrior, having served many seasons in the military of the country, fending off Barbarian and nomadic hordes. He knew that conquest in these lands could be accomplished swiftly by mounted soldiers. Hadran II developed a cavalry that was the equal of none on the continent. His warriors could take on twice as many normal cavalry, and ten times as many infantry without significant losses. Hadran II's first major victory was to crush the raiding Barbarian tribes to the north of Hadran. Not only did he rout the troops, but also he returned to the chieftain of the tribes and demanded an oath of servitude. When the chieftain refused, Hadran ordered his troops to commit genocide against the entire Barbarian population. Upon his return to the capital city, Hadran II presented the Barbarian chieftain's head to his citizens as proof of those who did not yield to the might of the new Empire of Hadran.

As the news of Hadran spread, many people came to experience the place themselves. Few left. The prospect of what benefits could be gained as part of the empire were far in excess of the calamities. The lands conquered from the Barbarians were, in the span of a few years, settled by farmers and merchants from the surrounding lands as well as from far away; even Elves arrived from a distant land they called Quentari. Hadran II realized his father's vision, and expanded on it. He assembled his army, and this time he went west and southwest of Hadran. His horsemen proved no match to the armies of the small civilizations he encountered. One by one lands and people fell to the onslaught of Hadrani troops, until the horsemen encountered a range of mountains near the middle of the continent. They tried to take the Dwarven surface settlement of Faragon Daxor, but were decimated in the process. Hadran II himself, who had led the campaigns, was severely injured, and the mighty Hadrani war machine limped away from the mountains.

Hadran II died permanently shortly after returning home from the campaign in 58 HE. His son, Shordan, succeeded him to the throne, and declared to the population of the Empire that he would continue the goals of his father and grandfather. Shordan, who had been present for the eight years of battles his father led to the west, learned one keen thing from the Dwarven encounter. The strength of the Hadrani armies and cavalry was fighting on level ground, and not up hills, and definitely not in mountains. He instructed his generals and his children, who would carry out the plans for imperial expansion, in these principles. He then decreed that, as Emperor, he would no longer be leading all military expeditions, but would see to the administration of his lands. Sending the armies down the River Hadran to ensure safe passage along it, Shordan then went about developing some of the services he required as Emperor.

Magic had fascinated him since he had first seen a Magic weapon. There had only been a few in the army, and they had belonged to soldiers who were such heroes among the troops, that he dared not commandeer them for sake of destroying the troops' morale. His grandfather's own blade had become disenchanting during Hadran II's great campaign. It had been destroyed at the "Dwarven Encounter", as it was now being called. Therefore he had the Mages and Healers in the Empire assembled, and to the most powerful among them he charged to build him a school where the Magic arts could be studied and propagated. He wanted to have Magic weapons, Magic horses, and Magic that would keep his troops from dying in battle.

The school was built as a beautiful citadel in Hadran city. It was completed in 71 HE. There were minarets of silver, steel, and stone. The walls were made of granite, but had no crenellations or walkways on top of them. The gates were made iron but secured with a simple lock. Both were permanently enchanted so that no one or thing could ever destroy them. Inside the outer wall of the citadel stood two towers, and a great, fortified hall. The hall was where the students and masters quartered, associated, and held events. The towers were the domains of the masters; they taught the students, researched information, and developed their craft. In the top of the taller tower, only the most dominant Wizards assembled to conduct their most delicate and powerful experiments into Magic.

As time progressed, Shordan and his heritage conquered the plains down river to the Great Ocean of Ice to the north. Though they had gained control over the river way, the river and the bay it flowed into froze over during late autumn, and was not clear again until late spring. The Hadrani also embarked on campaigns to the northwest, and southwest. To very little dismay or surprise, the campaign to the northwest returned, stating that the land was inhabitable only by wanderers (nomads), and that it should be left to them. The campaign to the southwest encountered the mountains of Faragon Daxor, and then, remembering the last Dwarven Encounter, journeyed south. In 92 HE, the general of the southern campaign returned to Hadran, claiming he had been to paradise, and every attempt should be made to capture it from the Barbarians who had presently controlled it. As Barbarians had never been well liked in Hadran, the new Emperor, Hadran III, agreed that they should seize this paradise. He dispatched two armies for this campaign.

One would travel down the River Hadran, to its source and seize it so that the Hadrani might control the entire river, and the second he would personally lead to "the paradise" to claim it from the Barbarians. The two armies left in 93 HE, shortly after the birth of Hadran IV.

The river army moved swiftly down the river, destroying goblins as it went, until it discovered that the river flowed out of a large forest. The army divided into three parts. One would follow the river through the forest, one would travel around the forest to the left, and the other would travel around the forest to the right. The three parts never fully regrouped. The part that traveled through the forest was slowly, and surgically destroyed by the Wild Elves that lived there using guerilla tactics. The wing that journeyed left encountered the River Teale, and waited for several weeks before traveling up the river into the Icewood Forest. The army settled there, and slowly assimilated into the small humanoid population. The final wing of the army, which traveled right around the Shimmerglen Forest, found the River Hadran, and waited for three weeks before breaking camp and traveling up river. The general, a man named Xakenna Gorm, brought his army down river to the Anymdin Mountains, where he established a town at the edge of the River Hadran, opposite the mountains. He called the city Gorm Kherz, meaning Gorm's Keep in Hadrani, and it was founded in early 95 HE.

The army led by Emperor Hadran III, fought its way through the local inhabitants of the area, which consisted of Ogres and an odd Lizard-like race of creature that could shapechange. Though this had a rather disquieting effect on the Hadrani, they managed to run off the few they encountered. The Barbarian tribes in the area fought bravely at first, but against such number they were routed in a matter of months. They fled south, past the Giantos Range, and into the lands later called Sutherland. Finally, in mid 95 HE, the army reached the Elcimi River, 200 miles west of the Ouachitamugi Mountains. The land was truly paradise to the Hadrani. The temperature was warm, the soils rich with crops, and the streams and ponds filled with fish and clear water. The Emperor decided that his people could live here happily. While touring his new conquest, the Emperor pointed to the mountains and hills in the distance and asked what they were called. A local, who had been retained to assist the victors in assimilating into their new region, responded "Ouachita, mugi!" This translated directly to "Your finger, fool!" but the Emperor liked it, and called them the Ouachitamugi. To this day, the few uncorrupted bits of civilization in the area talk of the fool King, who named mountains after his finger.

Emperor Hadran III, returned to Hadran in 97 HE. He was very proud of the new lands he had conquered. However, he was even more impressed with what waited for him at the Kidal Makil, or the Citadel of Magic. Angelica Rhizul, head of the Kidal, presented him with a powerful new Spell that they had spent years developing. As Emperor Shordan had requested, they found a spell that would keep his warriors from dying on the field of battle. They called it a *Life* spell, and it would revive a corpse if applied within five minutes after death.

In 100 HE, Hadran III celebrated the centennial of the Empire with a great weeklong feast in the capital city. One of the highlights of the feast was the poet Varkenbloot who told the most amazing tale of glory

and adventure surrounding the Imperial family of Hadran. The epic ended, and the citizens unveiled a twenty-foot tall statue of Hadran III leading his troops to victory in the south. In reaction to this appreciation, Hadran told his people that soon he would lead them south again, to claim the lands to the east of the Ouachitamugi Mountains, and that they could then set their sights on the entire continent. The crowd cheered mightily, and the celebrations continued. Hadran III spent the next three years fortifying his lands. He then began to worry about his other army that had departed ten years previous, to track the headwaters of his great grandfather's river. Had they been annihilated, had they reached the source yet, or where they returning? He expected his armies to be away for great periods of time, and would give them another year.

Meanwhile, Xakenna Gorm was carrying out his orders, which had been to find the headwaters of the River Hadran, and capture them. Since he had less than one third of his original force, he chose not to send back to the capital, but hold his position until he could afford to report to his Emperor. There were definitely fierce Barbarians in the Anymdin Mountains to the east, and on the plains to the west. Caught between them, Gorm barely held his own for the first two years, until he launched a massive, and extremely risky attack against the plainsmen, who were massacred by the ferocity of his assault. However, this maneuver left Gorm Kherz open to the mountain Barbarians. So instead of returning, General Gorm settled at an abandoned village, some thirty-five miles away, and established Xakenna. Early the next year, after much regrouping, training and re-supplying, Gorm rode forth to reclaim his stronghold. Much to his surprise, the Barbarians welcomed him to Gorm Kherz with open arms, and much celebration. They admired the fierce combat of the Hadrani, and offered them an alliance.

During the next ten years, the Ram Tribe and the Hadrani soldiers settled the region between Gorm Kherz and Xakenna. The Hadrani, recharged, started to conquer the lands around Gorm Kherz. They defeated the goblins, trolls, and humans in the area west of the Anymdin Mountains, and moved south towards the Green Mountains. What they encountered there were the outer fringes of the Kingdom of Quentari. The Hadrani were not skilled enough to fight in the forest. So instead they started the raids along the northern border of the Taursiloriel in 109 HE.

Finally, in 104 HE, Hadran III assembled his forces and marched south to conquer the new lands. 105 HE found him at the Ouachitamugi Mountains, overlooking the south plains. Ahead of him he saw plains, he saw forest, water, and privately he saw trouble. His great armies, that knew no problems would be faced with terrain that they could not fight on or in, and that worried him. He realized that the Hadrani fighting style was unmatched in their native environment, but was sorely pressed to equate elsewhere. Hadran III felt that this would be one of the last southern campaigns his troops would undertake. As the forces marched east to the new plains, they fought small bands of nomads, occasional Barbarian tribes, and orcs. This land was not settled by any group of beings. The land was flat, rich and inviting by Hadrani standards, why was it not full of life. The Hadrani traveled as far east as a large lake they called Loca Barnus, which meant "Lake of the Barren" (Lake Quentari).

Hadran then turned his attention to the south where he hoped the lands would be better. As the army crossed the Moonwyr River, they encountered plains of sand that were inhabited by a strange race of cat people. The Sarr, as they called themselves, were quite displeased about a strange army in their lands, and viciously attacked the Hadrani, and their horses. The horses, on the other hand were very unsettled about the Sarr, and did not react well to their presence. After some time, Hadran III decided that this land could wait before the Hadrani returned. He ordered his troops to fortify their position on the north side of the river, and to protect the Hadran people who settled the area from the Sarr. This done, Hadran III returned home shortly after Midsummer in 106 HE.

As the years passed, Hadran III sent a second army up the River Hadran, to collect any news of the first army. This army also split up when it reached the Shimmerglen Forest. The general ordered half of the army to hold this section of the river, while he would continue traveling to the left, around the forest. This army also followed the River Teale north to the Icewood Forest. But then traveled north again around the Icewood Forest. Neither the general nor his troops were heard from in Hadran. Rumors abounded that there was something at the headwaters of the River Hadran that was capable of destroying entire armies, without a trace. Hadran III decided that his domain had expanded southeast as far as it was meant to, and he decreed that further conquest concentrate on places to the west.

Hadran expansion continued westward for decades. The southeastern lands were not forgotten about, but were felt to be less important. This was until 189 HE, when Empress Lexa II decided to send her most trusted general, Reed Alakbir, with a quarter of an army of elite troops, to determine what had happened to not one, but two of her armies. Spring 190 HE, Reed Alakbir reached the Shimmerglen Forest, and chose to travel around it to the right. After passing the Dark Hills, General Alakbir turned south from the river, and rode due south. The charge took him through people who fought valiantly on horseback, but were poorly skilled in comparison to his own. Though he admired them, he cut a swath through them until he came to a small town. Alakbir laid siege to the town, half by cavalry, and half by dismounted soldiers. Very quickly, the general found himself in the center of town, that he modestly renamed Al Akbir, with the leaders of the townsfolk prostrated in front of him. He said he would grant them their lives if they knew where he could find any trace of generals Gorm or Hazhi. One old man suggested that if he were interested in the whereabouts of Gorm Kherz, he should try riding east until he reached the city. Astonished, that's just what Alakbir did.

The city of Gorm Kherz had aged nicely. Overtime, it had become the capital of a land that the residents called Hadran, and there was a statue of Xakenna Gorm in the center of the town. The general marched into town with his colors flying. He was greeted by curious people to whom his colors seemed correct, but peculiar in some way. General Alakbir strode into the main hall of Gorm Kherz, and demanded to see General Gorm. He was introduced to Lord Kommok, General Gorm's grandson. Lord Kommok answered most of Alakbir's questions satisfactorily. The general asked for troops and supplies from the Lord,

and informed Lord Kommok, that he would be heading towards Loca Barnus, and then due south. He also added that Lord Kommok should inform her Imperial Majesty the history and situation of Gorm Kherz, and that the land he, Alakbir, was about to conquer Kommok could keep.

In autumn 190 HE, General Alakbir left Gorm Kherz, and headed southwest to the Lake of the Barren. A summation of his journey reads much like any general's idyllic campaign. From Al Akbir, he marched in a line to Tirgu Oona, and conquered anything in his path, friend or foe. Turning south he roared down the coast of Loca Barnus, over the Mwoonyrr, and through the Sarr. He captured the town of Khiva, and held it for the colder part of the winter. Leaving a garrison, he left and continued between the Darkblood Mountains and Shakar Forest, and over the River Farrlirr.

General Alakbir generated the same amount of fear around Lake Quentari as a Pantherghast would at the Elven High Council at Din-Oth. Myrr and Quentari quickly conferred that something must be done. They ambushed Alakbir crossing the Gateway River, and Obliterated him. His troops, without their determined leader, lost purpose, lost their connections to the north, and settled into the lands south of Lake Quentari. The Hadrani Troops called their new land Khabad, or "forsaken" in Hadrani. They dedicated a city to their general, but named their capital "Kazyul", a word from their tongue that meant outpost.

The Empire received word from Lord Kommok of General Alakbir's actions, and sent troops to fortify the areas claimed. Khiva was held, in siege, by Hadran for four more years before the Sarr forced their return to Gorm Kherz, which had now become a major Hadrani settlement in the area. Lord Kommok was named Varkl (Duke) of the southeastern holdings of the Empire. The region prospered for the next two hundred and thirty years under the Gorm family's rule, and developed into a rich land, where many delights became part of the culture.

In 407 HE (5084 QY), Qerin Khiddi stood up against Gorm Kherz, and demanded that his people on the western expanse of Hadran be given freedom to act independently of the Varkl. He formed an army and captured Brer Carr, the largest town on the northwestern shore of Lake Quentari. His army held off the armies of the Varkl, who had been sent there to silence the insurrection. However, the Varkl's armies, consisting mainly of infantry, had lost the intensity of the cavalry charges of Hadran II, after many years of a sedentary lifestyle. In addition, a Great War against an evil force had spread across the Rintir River to their southeast, and their own people had suffered many losses. Varkl was forced to pursue a peace between the two factions.

The Varkl would personally attend to settling Khiddi's demands, and forge an agreement between the two of them. Groups of emissaries assembled at Coventry, a small trading outpost near the Green Mountains. Here an uneasy peace was forged, and after a large tribute was paid to the Varkl, his forces retreated from the area.

In 428 HE (5105 QY), the first waves of a Barbarian invasion filtered through the split between the Anymdin and Frostpeak mountains. The Hadrani people rallied to defend their territory against the

usurpers, and for a while seemed not even challenged. Then, in November 431 came a horrifying disease carried on the Barbarians that struck like a plague on the Hadrani. The losses the first winter were staggering, and the few people capable of Magically curing diseases were burdened to the point of depletion. The battle took on a greatly overwhelming cast, until Varkl Dorf was able to discover a cure through a source he would not reveal. Within two months the hordes had been driven back to the far side of Crystal Lake.

Varkl Dorf set about rebuilding his holdings, but found that too many of his people had been killed in battle or by disease, and under the circumstances did not particularly wish to involve himself with the reconstruction process. Therefore, he put a bounty on all the heads of Barbarians, so that they would atone for their crimes against Hadran by enforced servitude. This worked well, since a few bands of Barbarians still roamed the land. Though they despised their taskmasters, they worked hard and well to rebuild what had been destroyed during the fighting. The Varkl also used them to build several other structures that he felt his fief was in need of. When all was done, he offered to sell the Barbarians to the public for a fee, thereby instituting the practice of slavery.

All went well for the Empire of Hadran until 453 HE. It was then that the Kidal Makil in Hadran's capital city exploded, destroying all of the city and most of the Imperial family. The exact cause of the blast was the result of a mortal, who had mastered all formal Magics, tampering with Gating. The effect was a blast of force that laid waste to the countryside, and obliterated the foundation for the Empire of Hadran's system of government. With the Emperor dead, the Varkls and generals started warring with each other over who would assume power in the absence. Gorm Kherz did not even learn of the events until late 606 HE (5283 QY), when the Empire's leaders decided it would continue, and would be known as Hadran. The following year, the fortress of Gorm Kherz declared itself independent of all outside rule, and began to claim the lands to the north and east. Over time the realm expanded to its present configurations, and took for itself the old name by which it was known to the Quentari Elves: "Nimn", or "Niman" in Commonspeech.

In 494 HE (5171 QY), the Kingdom of Evendarr was founded far to the south. But by this time the Empire of Hadran was fading into the mists of memory. Without any central form of leadership, it fragmented into many smaller enclaves of despotic power. Today, all that is known of the remains of Hadran's Glory - at least to the southern realms of Avalon - are a few fortified towns along the River Hadran and Lake Quentari, several dingy villages scattered throughout the area from the Shimmerglen Forest to the Northern Wastes, and a wealth of ruins and legends. Stories, songs and Bard's tales tell of the powers of Hadran and the lost treasures of its heyday. Rumors continue to circulate about hidden towers of magic, treasures buried in dismal swamps and musty caves, and ruins that no seasoned traveler will enter - especially at night.

Copyright 1998-2003 NERO International Holding company, Inc., All Rights Reserved

NERO is the Registered Trademark of NERO International, Inc. US PTO Trademark Registration Number 2,270,409
Use of the NERO Name, Logo, or Game System© is strictly prohibited.
The NERO Rule Book© is Copyrighted 1989-2003 by NERO International Holding Company, Inc., All Rights Reserved.