

Mapping the Otherworld

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I started making fantasy maps just to see if I could. As a young cartographer whose only experience with mapmaking was in a university classroom, the possibility of making maps without using a GIS was somewhere far from the forefront of my mind. But through the a cyclical process of gathering inspiration and then practicing, I began

to realize that fantasy maps represent a different way of approaching cartography. The maps themselves become part of a story, influencing plot and character development. In turn, the maps are altered to fit the story in a creative feedback loop that culminates with the completion of both narrative and graphic works. For consumers of



The Isle of St. Jezebeth

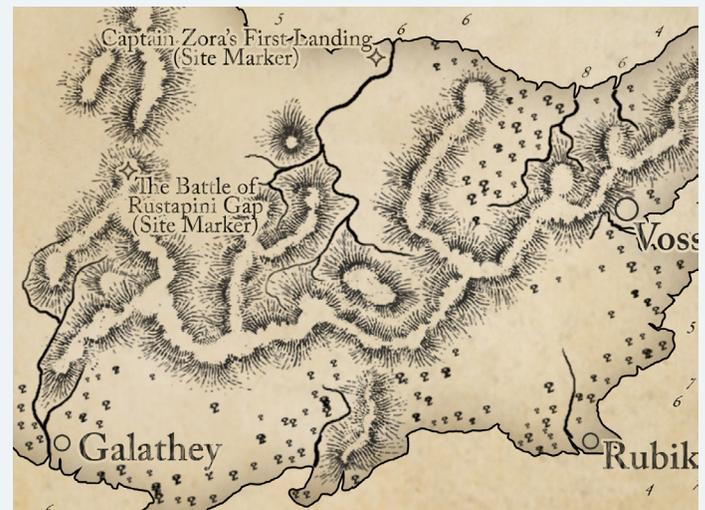
fantasy literature, film, or games, a map can be as valuable as the text of the story itself. In a setting that is necessarily opaque, maps can grant insights into the people, places, and ideas that are critical to otherworldly stories. Here are just a few examples of fantasy worlds I have created over the years.

THE ISLE OF ST. JEZEBETH

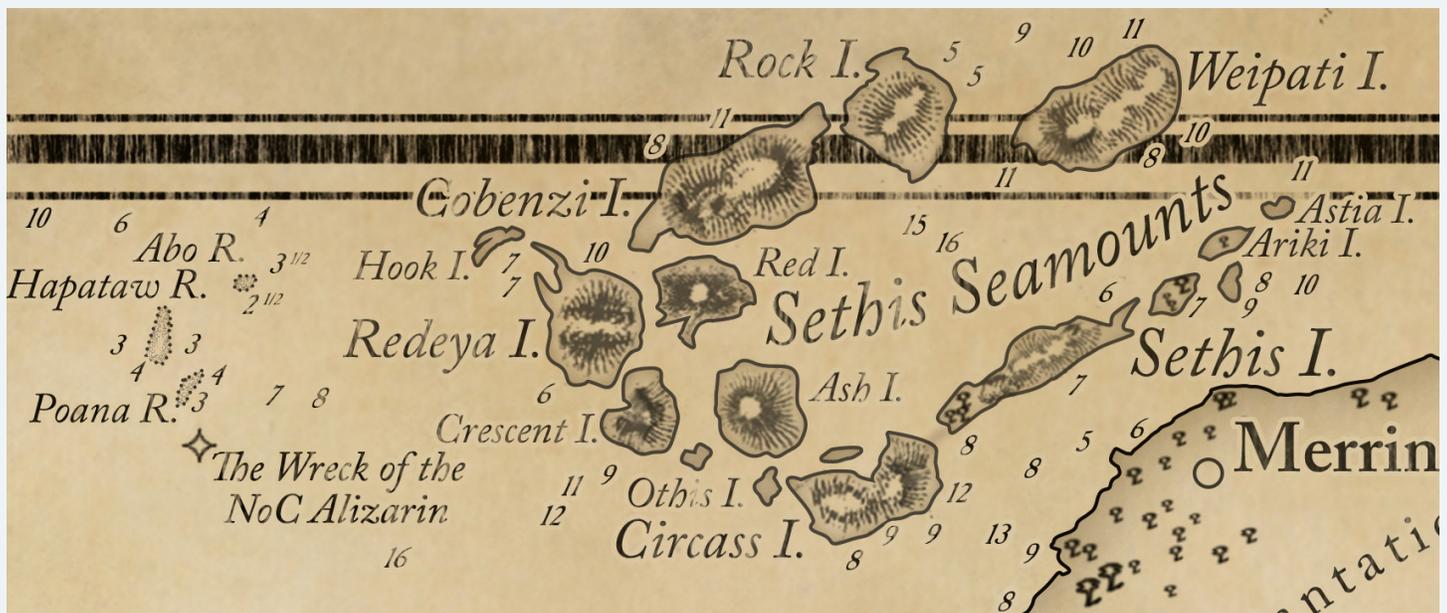
The native peoples of St. Jezebeth once considered their island, named *Noelani Re'o* in their native language, an oasis in a threatening sea—the end of the navigable ocean. To the east it is edged by sharp reefs with temperamental tides and jagged atolls that seem to appear from nowhere. Yet, the original settlers of the island saw fit to put down roots here. And why not? The island offers ample root crops to serve as a dietary staple, open shores for easy fishing to the south and west, and enough land to spread out while remaining one loose collective. *Noelani Re'o* seemed a fitting end to generations of seafaring and migration. There was not always peace among the various native peoples, but at least a communal sense of purpose united the island.

All of that changed with the arrival of the New Men from across the sea. In truth, they were explorers from the seafaring nation of *Cinza*. A sea captain named Zora finally made landfall after a handful of false starts and ships run aground on the serrated barriers west of the island. Discovering the wealth of natural resources before her, Zora returned to her home country and ushered in

successive waves of settlers, who brought conflict, trade, and ultimately conquest to the island, now named after the *Cinza* saint of splendor. What Zora, and all the men and women who followed, could not predict was that an unassuming plant, found high in the uplands of *Noelani Re'o* would contain an otherworldly force capable of threatening *Cinza* and its neighboring nations. Primordial forces deep below the island, funneled to the plant through the fertile volcanic soil, will soon ignite the ambitions of *Cinza*. But no such boon comes without cost, and soon that nation will be forced to reckon with the consequences of its imperial ambition.



The Isle of St. Jezebeth (detail)



The Isle of St. Jezebeth (detail)

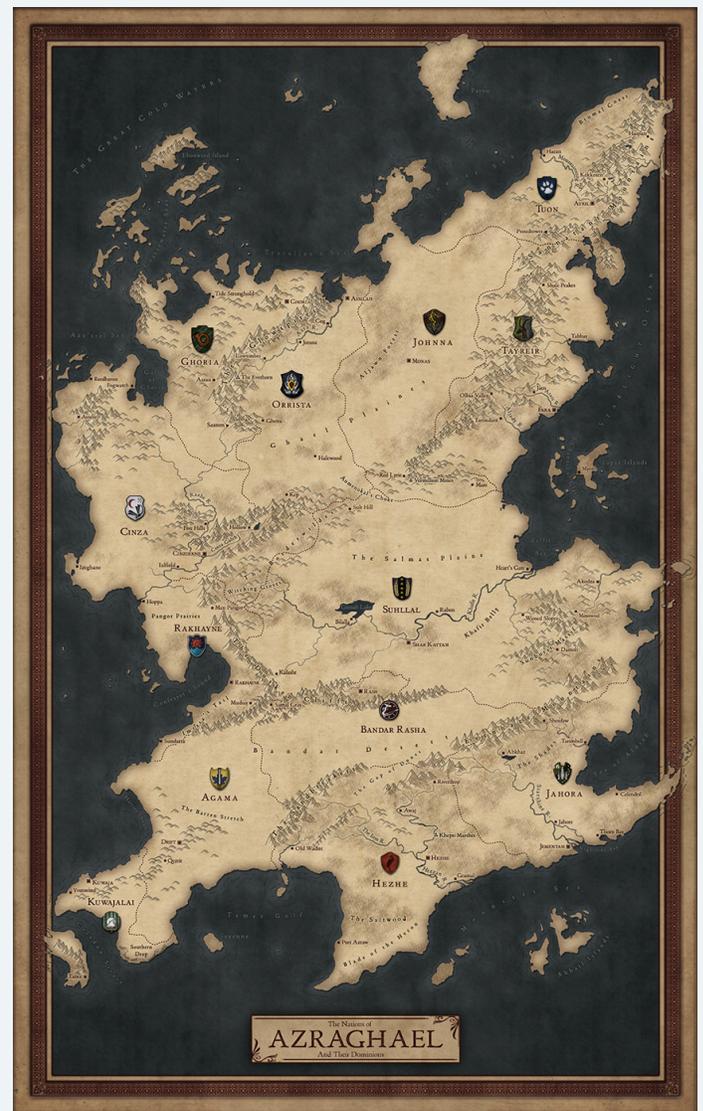
AZRAGHAEL

Azraghael is a continent on the verge of a radical scientific breakthrough. Universities routinely churn out brilliant scholars, artists, and philosophers. Aided by a new sorcery that allows a mage to place text on a scroll using only their mind, scholars in *Jementab* have begun a sweeping program aimed at spreading once-hidden knowledge. Thanks to the perfect confluence of physical resources and spells that distill the night sky into transportable instruments, navigators from *Cinza* have expanded *Azraghael's* collective knowledge of the skies, seas, and storms. Magic facilitating long distance communication and the flow of information has helped many of the nations of *Azraghael* to develop networks of scientific communities.

Still, *Azraghael* is not Eden. It is a patchwork of shifting alliances, a mottled quilt of historical conflict and marriages of power that are complicated by these recent scholarly advances. The barbarian tribes of *Tuon* are a looming threat. *Hezhe* marshals for war against *Jahora*, putting the security of these southern nations' staple rice crops in jeopardy and threatening the food supplies of their desert neighbors. And a growing demand for luxury resources spurs coastal nations into overseas expansion, conquest, and extraction. Across the sea, the nation of *Cinza* arrives on the shores of a previously uncharted island, returning to *Azraghael* with fascinating discoveries that could usher in prosperity across the continent—or spell its downfall.



The Isle of St. Jezebeth (detail)



Azraghael



Azraghael (detail)



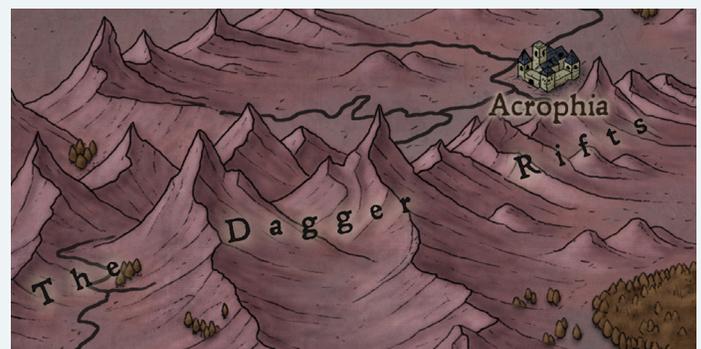
Azraghael (detail)

THE DUSKEN COAST

The Dusken Coast is a land of gloom, perpetual twilight, and paranoid intercity tension. Its cities are remote, confined by the grim and lifeless Twilight Dunes to the west, and endless Eventide Sea to the east. The stretch of coast is rugged, with jagged peaks, dense forests, and broad expanses of little but dry, craggy ground and barely arable soil. Rainstorms are rare, but the clouds never seem to part over this foreboding and unpleasant land.

Days of excess and prosperity are but a remembered dream, living on in the lore and decaying infrastructure of once-mighty cities. Whitewashed walls have aged into musty, stained relics. Civic structures crumble, and few, if any, statues have survived the intermittent periods of iconoclasm. Wars between cities have been bloody and never conclusive. Legacies of espionage, sabotage, and dark magic have poisoned the minds of each city against

the others. The citizens of *Belrynthia* have not forgiven the mages of *Acrophia* for delivering a plague of insects that destroyed valuable timber resources. Is *Acrophia* not responsible for the decline of *Ashold* as well? *Bremeander* will forever blame soothsayers in *Witchshore* for saltwater migration up their life-sustaining river.



The Dusken Coast (detail)



The Dusken Coast

This place is bleak, and the future holds promise only in the mind of the unreasonable optimists. Whispered prophecies spoken at a hermitage deep in the *Gloaming Mountains* tell a story of a great hero who will unify the Dusken Coast after one final, bloody conflict. Of course, everyone knows that prophecies never come to pass.

Visual Fields focuses on the appreciation of cartographic aesthetics and design, featuring examples of inspirational, beautiful, and intriguing work. Suggestions of works that will help enhance the appreciation and understanding of the cartographic arts are welcomed, and should be directed to Section Editor Matt Dooley: mapdooley@gmail.com.



The Dusken Coast (detail)