

You pause in your search. Dust that has lain in these ruins for centuries claws at your throat. Lifting the wineskin to your lips you notice an oddly-shaped stone just below the ruined carvings at the edge of the ceiling. Strange, you've looked there a dozen times and never noticed it before.

A shallow symbol is etched in the stone. Brushing away the accumulated grime and dirt, you see the Merithian character for "right hand". Smiling at that hard-won bit of knowledge, you turn to your right with renewed confidence in your quest. Ahead, something slithers in the shadows, and your sword seems to leap to your hand . . .

Wonders Out of Time presents a series of vignettes that can be used individually or together to enrich any fantasy campaign using the d20 game system. In it, you will find:

- an overview of the ancient Merithian civilization
- an abandoned manor filled with great and deadly secrets
- an old Merithian farm infested with marauding goblins
- hidden knowledge locked away in an ancient fortress that has become home to a group of ruthless brigands
- a mysterious temple ruined by exposure, failing magical wards, and destructive beasts
- a legendary library that may contain the keys to understanding the Merithians
- Derimos, the fabled capital of the Merithians, now ravaged by time and guarded by its most loyal defenders
- detailed information on Merithian Blood Sorcery, new items, new monsters and a new Prestige Class, the Centurion Knight

AN VIGNETTE SOURCEBOOK FOR CHARACTERS OF 1st - 12th LEVELS

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WONDERS OUT OF TIME

A VIGNETTE SOURCEBOOK
FOR CHARACTERS
OF 1st - 12th LEVELS

Requires the use of the
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, 3rd Edition,
published by **Wizards of the Coast®**

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PART ONE

ENROLLMENT

INTRODUCTION

Long ago, the Merithians were the most powerful civilization in the world. They made great sorcerous discoveries, infusing their own bodies with magic. With these discoveries, their armies rolled over their enemies, and they killed those who would not submit to slavery. But after centuries of this treatment, the barbarians in the hills joined forces with one another, and ransacked the Merithians' capital, destroying the greatest repository of sorcerous knowledge in the world. Crippled by this blow, the Merithians faded in power and were gradually absorbed into other cultures. Their splendid works were lost in the sands of time -- until now.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Part One: Enrollment is the material currently being read.

Part Two: The Merithians details the Merithian history and culture for use in these vignettes, or adventures created by the DM.

Part Three: Perinocles' Manor serves as a brief introduction to the works of the Merithians, and later, as the resting place of the greatest -- and most deadly -- of the Merithian secrets. It is designed for 1st to 3rd level characters.

Part Four: The Merithian Farm has been infested by a band of goblinoids. The knowledge to be gained there could lead to one of the greatest Merithian treasures -- if the PCs can recognize it as such. It is for 2nd to 4th level characters.

Part Five: The Lost Merithian Fortress has become the headquarters for ruthless brigands, who do not understand the value of the treasures sitting right under their noses. However, PCs may rediscover a style of fighting that was used by some of the most famous warriors in history -- the Centurion Knights. It is intended for 3rd to 6th level characters.

Part Six: The Merithian Temple presents dangers that may lead to a medical wonders -- as well as greater understanding of the Merithians themselves. It challenges 5th to 8th level characters.

Part Seven: The Great Library is unearthed by new construction. Among the ruined treasures within is the key to the Merithian language. It plays for 6th to 9th level characters.

Part Eight: The City of Derimos requires the outgunned PCs to gain the aid of the restless dead inhabiting the palace's lower reaches. In the process, they discover the location of the home of the greatest Merithian sorcerer who ever lived -- the manor where all this began. It is written for 9th to 12th level characters.

Appendix contains the new monsters and items introduced in this book, including detailed information on Merithian Red Sorcery, and the new prestige class, the centurion knight.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Wonders Out of Time is sourcebook detailing background material on the Merithian civilization, which may be used as part of any fantasy campaign. It is also a book of short adventures, or "vignettes," designed for use with the d20 system. They are suitable for parties ranging from 1st to 12th level depending on the vignette chosen.

The vignettes are not full-blown adventures, simply small, self-contained, mini-modules. They can be quickly dropped between the larger sessions of a regular campaign to provide a change of pace, or to involve the PCs while other plotlines develop. Alternatively, the vignettes can be used as part of a larger campaign should the DM choose to interweave one or more in a larger storyline. A DM might also choose to string the vignettes together to make larger adventure. Finally, links have been provided in a couple places to other books in the *Eden Odyssey* line for a truly grand campaign.

Before running the vignettes in this book, DMs should familiarize themselves with the Merithian culture in Part Two. This helps answer questions that may not be addressed in the individual vignettes. A photocopy of the important Merithian topics (see p. 4-5) may be kept nearby as well. As for the vignettes, italicized text in boxes is player information, which can be read aloud or paraphrased. Grayed sidebars provide important information for the DM, such as special instructions and links to other vignettes.

Unlike most adventures, the PCs may visit many of the areas described in this book multiple times -- not every secret reveals itself to them on their first visit. Often, they only discover the best-hidden secrets of the Merithians after gaining some crucial piece of information concerning this long-dead culture. In effect, the heroes are going to become archaeologists, delving into secrets long forgotten -- sometimes best left that way.

The focus in this book is on exploration and discovery rather than combat. PCs are rewarded more for careful thought and planning than they are for charging in with spells blazing. GMs may wish to increase or decrease the number of monsters and traps to fit their group's gaming style.

Finally, all the materials in this book may be considered Open Content, and may be used in accordance with the Open Gaming License, reprinted at the end.

GENDER

Every roleplaying game must decide what to do about third person pronouns and possessives. While the males reference (he, him, his) is customarily used for both male and female, there is no question that it is not entirely inclusive. On the other hand, the "he or she" structure is clumsy and unattractive. In an effort to "split the difference," the *Eden Odyssey* line varies between male and female designations when indicating a non-specific person or character.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin Wilson is best known as the co-designer of the *7th Sea* RPG. He is 26 years old and currently living in Southern California. Kevin has a BA in Cognitive Science (Artificial Intelligence) from U.C. Berkeley, and hopes to someday pass the Turing test.

THE MERITHIANS

Any mention of the Merithian Empire brings a smile to a well-read treasure hunter's lips. Tales of their sorcery brings out the avarice in even the humblest man. However, the Merithians were more than the wielders of an incredible magic -- they were a race of people who helped shape our world. They were born, they lived, they died, and each of them had a story all their own. As their remains are disturbed and their artifacts stolen, more and more of these stories are lost forever. The lessons we should be learning from history are vanishing day by day.

-- Excerpt from
*Yesterdays
Forgotten*, by
Ulnerius
Featherwright

How would one describe the Merithians in one word?

Complicated.

-- Excerpt from
*Yesterdays
Forgotten*, by
Ulnerius
Featherwright



INTRODUCTION

This section provides a broad overview of the Merithian culture that may be adapted and expanded to fit any campaign. This material should prove useful long after every vignette in this book has been played.

Whenever a new Merithian fact or name is devised, simply write it down in the margin next to the portion it falls under. This way, all Merithian information stays in one place for easy reference.

THE MERITHIAN EMPIRE

The Merithian Empire is loosely based upon the Roman culture. Their clothing and naming practices were much the same, but their philosophy was rather different. The Merithians were fiercely independent and proud, seeking to perfect themselves through exercise, meditation, and sorcery. They had few reservations about altering their own bodies with magic in order to accomplish their long-term goals. Their religion emphasized this pursuit of perfection, stating that it was every Merithian's duty to drive themselves as hard as they could, until perfection -- both mental and physical -- was in their grasp.

Ultimately, their pride was their downfall. Because the Merithians had accomplished so much, they began to believe that they were naturally superior to their fellow men. They forgot that their sorcery did not make them gods, until the barbarians who lived in the nearby hills invaded their capital and reminded them of that. The Merithians' ego could not stand the blow, and the Merithian Empire ceased to be.

USING THE MERITHIANS

There are several good reasons to use the Merithians in an adventure:

- To explore an ancient, exotic form of magic, particularly one that melds with its user or creates artificial life.
- To alert players that the adventure is puzzle- or tactically-oriented.
- To give a sense of antiquity to a location.

However, to get the best effect from the Merithians, follow these guidelines:

- Do not contradict hard evidence that the players have already collected about the Merithians -- stay consistent.
- Build upon previous Merithian adventures, but add a new wrinkle to their ruins each time.
- Do not fill Merithian ruins with lots of magical traps. The Merithians used traps selectively -- to guard their most precious possessions.
- Consider the effects of time and the environment on the ruin. Aging effects can range from none at all (such as the magically preserved manor in Part One) to heavy destruction (such as the ravaged temple in Part Six).

As for locations within an already established campaign world, the Merithian Empire remains may be placed in a remote mountainous area, perhaps as a fabled mountain kingdom in the clouds (like Shangri-la). Or they might be placed in a vast desert, buried under the sands of the ages or the result of some magical disaster. Wherever placed, they should be somewhat out of the way to help explain why no one has unraveled their mysteries until the PCs stumble upon them.

IMPORTANT TOPICS

Under each of the following headers, a number of sample Merithian topics are revealed for PCs who make a Knowledge (history) check. The DC for each topic is listed in parentheses before it. Occasionally, more than one DC is listed, in which case the PC receives all the information after the DCs that are equal to or less than his skill check. The DCs presented assume that the Merithians were as commonly known as the ancient Sumerians are today. These DCs should be adjusted depending on how widely known a DM desires them to be. For example, to make the Merithians as well known as the Romans, subtract three from all DCs below. To make them as obscure as the Olmecs, add three.

If the information has (GM) after it, it is GM info only, unknown to modern scholars. Some of these topics are not used in any of the vignettes in this book -- they are presented as launch points for the creation of new Merithian adventures.

Note to GMs: Feel free to create historical information, songs, plays, and works of literature to add to the stock of Merithian knowledge. As for day-to-day lives, a good deal of inspiration may be taken from books on Roman culture, including Will Durant's *From Caesar to Christ: A History of Roman Civilization (Volume 3 of The Story of Civilization.)*.



MERITHIAN HISTORY

General Knowledge -- (DC 10) The Merithians were famous for their knowledge in general, and their knowledge of sorcery in particular. They were at their height approximately 1,000 years ago, when a barbarian horde attacked their capital city Derimos and gutted it. After that, the Merithians went into a decline, and the Empire gradually fell apart. A man named Ulnorius Featherwright wrote a book about the Merithians titled *Forgotten Yesterdays*.

Building of Derimos -- (DC 20) The design for the city of Derimos came to the first Emperor of Merithia in a dream. It was modeled after crashing ocean waves and was built primarily of arches and other curving structures. (GM) The city has survived to modern times and has been taken over by a cult worshipping the false sun god, Manar.

Decline of Merithia -- (DC 20) After the Siege of Derimos, the Merithian national pride was destroyed. With the Emperor dead and the Centurion Knights decimated, no guiding hand held the Empire together, and it gradually fell to pieces.

Siege of Derimos (DC 10) -- The city of Derimos was destroyed by barbarians. (DC 20) The Centurion Knights were mostly wiped out in that attack. (DC 25) Before they left, the barbarians carved their names into the walls of the palace. The Emperor killed himself in humiliation because of this. (GM) The Emperor's personal guard was never called upon during the siege. Because of this humiliation, they haunt the palace to this day.

Ulnorius Featherwright -- (DC 15) A famous modern scholar who wrote a book on the Merithians. A PC who makes this check knows in which city Ulnorius currently resides.

MERITHIAN CULTURE AND ART

General Knowledge -- (DC 15) In general, Merithian art was quite formal, with paintings tending towards studies of the human body, while books and plays were typically either tragedies or comedies. Not many of these incredible works of art are still intact today. As to the way the Merithians lived -- almost nothing is known.

Ballad of Lenethe and Grisold -- (DC 25) A famous song written by Sophilias, a renowned Merithian bard. It is believed that all copies of the song have been destroyed. A surviving copy would be priceless. (GM) A copy of this song lies in the Great Library of Bastothenes.

False Friend -- (DC 25) One of the surviving plays of the famous Merithian bard Sophilias. It is considered one of the greatest classical works of literature.

Great Libraries -- (DC 15) The Great Libraries of Merithia were famous storehouses of knowledge, both mundane and sorcerous. (DC 20) The libraries were named after the first six Merithian Emperors (Meridius, Octavius, Therion, Bastothenes, Gregarius, and Collus). (DC 25) There was a central library in Derimos that was simply called the Great Library. (GM) The Great Library of Bastothenes, at least, has survived, buried under a modern town. It is unknown if any of the others are left, but the Great Library was probably destroyed in the Siege of Derimos and its contents scattered to a dozen barbarian tribes in the hills.



MERITHIAN HEROES

General Knowledge -- (DC 15) The greatest heroes of the Merithians usually came from the ranks of the Centurion Knights -- the Merithians' most celebrated fighting force. However, the Merithians also looked upon their Emperors, and a few of their Red sorcerers, as heroes.

Caius Orphellius -- (DC 15) The last Emperor of Merithia. (DC 25) Orphellius committed suicide in humiliation after the Siege of Derimos by drinking from a golden cup filled with nightshade.

Centurion Knights -- (DC 15) Remembered as one of the greatest fighting forces in history, the Knights were adept at wielding gladius and shield while wearing heavy armor. (DC 20) The Centurion Knights were mostly wiped out at the Siege of Derimos. (GM) A manual explaining how to train as a Centurion Knight still survives, hidden in a Merithian fortress.

Empress -- (DC 20) Little is known of the Empresses of Merithia, since historical documents never mention them in more than passing references.

General Mironades -- (DC 25) The commander of the Centurion Knights at the Siege of Derimos. Little is known of him except his fabled one-man charge on the barbarian hordes when he saw his men penned in and in trouble. He was gravely wounded in the charge, but supposedly survived long enough to write a first-hand account of the battle, which has never been found.

Perinocles -- (GM) The greatest of the red sorcerers. His manor survives to this day, and is the first Merithian structure the PCs stumble upon. He killed himself and his students when his advancing paranoia made him believe that one of his apprentices was a traitor.

Sophilias -- (DC 25) One of the greatest known Merithian bards. Most of his works have been lost to time.

MERITHIAN RELIGION

General Knowledge -- (DC 10) The Merithians worshipped the sun as a god. Not much else is known about their religion. (GM) This assumption is incorrect. The Merithians did not believe in the sun as a deity.

Greeting of the Sun -- (DC 25) The Merithians performed a ritual called the Greeting of the Sun every day. It is unknown what this ritual entailed. (GM) A copy of the ritual survives, hidden in a Merithian temple.

Priests -- (DC 15) It was said that the Merithian Priests had no faces and no form, but no one is sure what that meant.

Worship -- (DC 20) The Merithians believed that their sun god demanded a strict exercise regiment from them. (GM) Not really, the regiment served to aid the Merithians in their pursuit of perfection.

Funerals -- (DC 25) The Merithians believed that a toll must be paid for entry into the afterlife, so they were buried with a gold coin placed on each eye. (GM) A more detailed description of Merithian burial practices has survived in Perinocles' Manor (see p. 10).

MERITHIAN RUINS AND ARTIFACTS

Derimos -- (10) Derimos is the capital city of the Merithians. See also Merithian History.

Oracles of Aradinos -- (20) The Oracles of Aradinos were a series of superstitions that governed the design of Merithian buildings. No known copies of the Oracles remain. (GM) A copy of the Oracles survives in Perinocles' Manor (see p. 10).

Merithian Scrolls -- (15) The Merithians wrote by making triangular marks in clay cylinders. If the scrolls were meant to last, they were baked until dry.

MERITHIAN MAGIC

Bloodscrolls -- (DC 20) The Merithians used a form of magic that was said to be activated by the shedding of blood.

Golems -- (DC 20) The Merithians built golems that were faster and more powerful than those built by modern wizards.

Melding Weapons -- (DC 20) The Merithians supposedly used magical weapons that melded with their user's body when worn. Only a secret word unique to each item could remove these weapons.

Red Sorcery -- (DC 15) Merithian sorcery was named red sorcery, supposedly due to the color of the blood used in the spells. (GM) Actually, although red sorcery was named after the color of blood, it was because the sorcery flowed through the user's veins, not because blood powered it.

OTHER TOPIC DCs

Other sample DCs include:

- (DC 10) Spotting a Merithian artifact or building style.
- (DC 20) Identifying a major Merithian cultural icon.
- (DC 15-30, depending on obscurity) Recognize a particular Merithian place, person, or item.
- (DC 12) Recall a major event in Merithian history.
- (DC 20) Remember a central Merithian philosophy or religious tenet.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

Once the vignettes in this book have been exhausted, the PCs may come across other remnants of the Merithian Empire. Possible suggestions include:

- A haunted coliseum.
- A city buried by volcanic ash.
- A lich surviving from the Merithian time period.
- A dragon that frequently dealt with the Merithians.
- The final resting place of a great Merithian general (and his magical sword).
- A trip back through time to witness Merithia in its prime.
- An encounter with Ulnorius Featherwright, the famous scholar who wrote *Yesterdays Forgotten*, the definitive work on the Merithians. He is eager to trade information with the PCs.

Regardless, a good Merithian adventure should disclose at least one bit of information about the Merithians, and build upon what the PCs already know. Otherwise, it is just a dungeon crawl.