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*This has to be done right, so I am going to do this myself, lad.  
People intend using this section to find stuff, not to giggle about  
your inability to arrange letters properly.*

• MERROX, MASTER OF THE HALL OF RECORDS •

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# INTRODUCTION

*As Throal goes, Barsaive follows. When Throal was under the yoke of Thera, the rest of Barsaive shared her chains. When Throal threw off the chains of Thera's oppression and slavery, Barsaive rallied around her and did the same. Truly, Throal is the heart of Barsaive.*

• KRATHIS GRON •

1

**T**he age of **Earthdawn** was an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought the Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the people of Barsaive hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

Now, the Scourge is over, and people have emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes stepped forward to champion their land, arming themselves with powerful spells and magical treasures. Through magic, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge, and fight the oppression of the Thera Empire. By doing so, they become Barsaive's living legends.

**Nations of Barsaive Volume One** offers gamemasters and players an in-depth look at the Kingdom of Throal. This book provides detailed descriptions of Barsaive's mightiest Kingdom, featuring revised and updated content, and new material for adventures in the world of **Earthdawn**.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

**Nations of Barsaive Volume One** is a sourcebook for the **Earthdawn** game. This book describes the vast underground realm of the dwarfs and its immediate surroundings, including the sprawling city of Bartertown and the Throal Mountains from which the dwarf kingdom takes its Name. Players can use this information to enhance their characters' backgrounds and increase their knowledge of the world of **Earthdawn**. Gamemasters can use the wealth of opportunities in this book to create new adventures, flesh out the game world, and expand the scope of evolving campaigns.

Aside from the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Guides**, the gamemaster and players need no other material to use this product, though gamemasters may find other published **Earthdawn** products useful; for example, more information on dwarf culture can be found in the **Namegivers of Barsaive** book.

This sourcebook begins with an overview of life in **The Dwarf Kingdom**, followed by a detailed history of Throal from its earli-

est days to the recent and infamous Death Rebellion. Additional chapters include an in-depth discussion of trade in the kingdom, complete with profiles of prominent trading houses and guilds, and a richly detailed description of the kingdom's cultural life.

**The Halls of Power** details the Throalic government and law, diplomatic relations with other influential powers in Barsaive, and gives overviews of important organizations in Throal, from its diplomatic corps to its army. **A Tour of the Kingdom** highlights places of interest to player characters who may live in or visit the dwarf kingdom. This book also offers a detailed look **Outside the Kingdom**; at Bartertown, for example, the scruffy but lively place where many adventurers may prefer to spend their off-hours, and describes areas of interest in the Throal Mountains from the treacherous underground chambers of Braza's Kingdom to the home of the cliff-dwelling, flying t'skrang. The final chapter offers guidelines for running **Adventures in Throal**, including several sample adventure outlines. In addition to these, brief adventure hooks are scattered throughout the book.

The second part of this book offers game mechanics and rules for situations that might arise when adventuring in and around Throal. The **Goods and Services** and **Magical Treasures** chapters include descriptions and statistics for various magical and common items that adventurers may encounter on their travels in Throal. Finally, the **Character Index** summarizes the many gamemaster and other characters described in the book, and a comprehensive **Index** completes this volume.

Like other **Earthdawn** sourcebooks, **Nations of Barsaive Volume One** provides the gamemaster with detailed background information to read at his leisure. It also offers plenty of solutions for problems that gamemasters are likely to run into in the course of an adventure. In a city environment like Throal, you may find it difficult to predict exactly where your player characters will go and what kinds of trouble they will stick their noses into. The purpose of this sourcebook is not to fill in all the gaps, but to open the doors of the gamemaster's and players' imaginations.

To give gamemasters and players a taste of the flavor of **Earthdawn**, first-person fictional accounts from **Earthdawn** characters are interspersed throughout the book. You can use them as a guide to the game's atmosphere, or as jumping-off points for story lines in which the player characters get involved.

Though the material offered in this book is presented as fact and should be treated as accurate in terms of **Earthdawn** continuity, remember that you are the ultimate author of your campaign. If

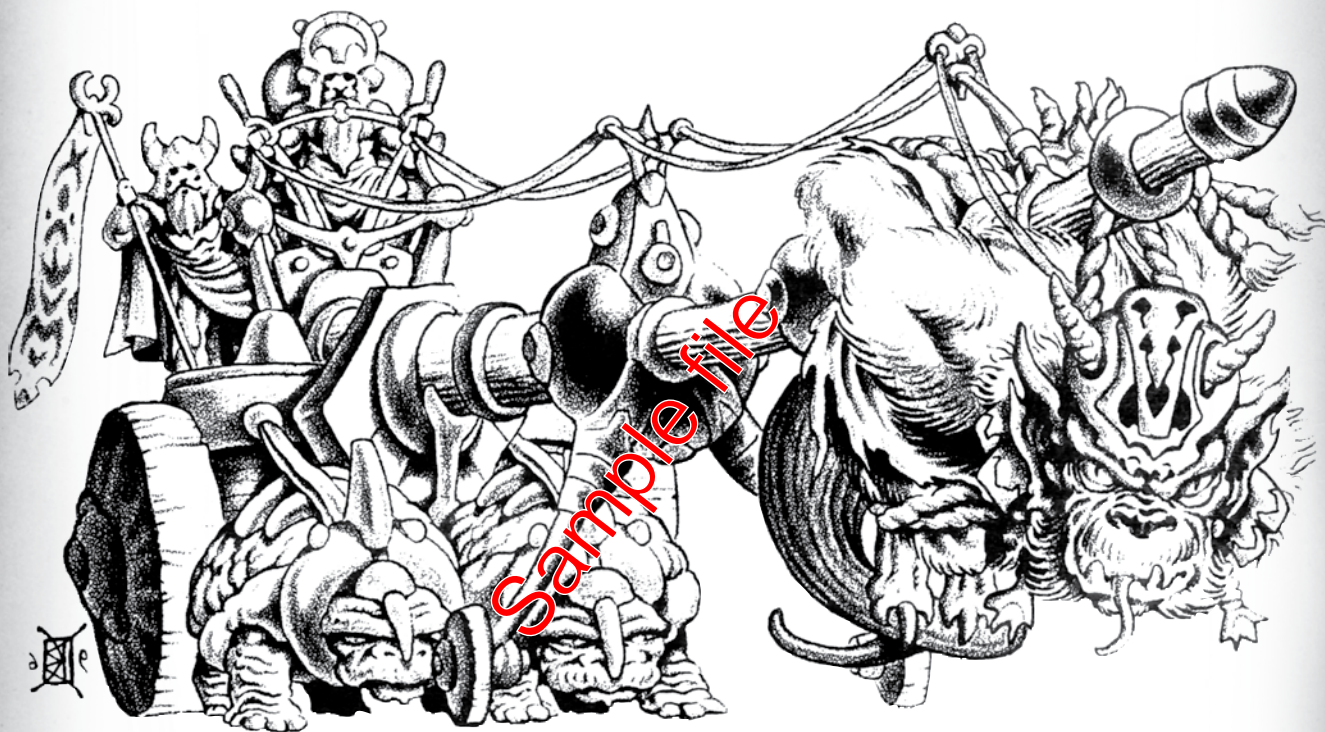


a fact in this sourcebook contradicts something you have already established in your game, or if you find it inconvenient, go ahead and change it. Any player who claims that the gamemaster is wrong about some detail of Barsaive deserves to have as many changes thrown at him as you can dream up. In some instances, this book presents contradictory accounts of a setting or character as **options** from which the gamemaster can choose. These options allow you to decide which version of the truth is real in your campaign.

## AT THE BRINK OF WAR

**I**n addition to providing gamemasters with basic information on the recovering civilizations in Barsaive, this book details several conflicts developing in the province. Whether groups

of adventurers explore or settle down in Throal to explore its mysteries, terrible dangers are brewing in the background. Barsaive has staged a remarkable recovery from the devastating effects of the Scourge, largely because of Throal's efforts. Thanks to the dwarf kingdom and a few legendary heroes, Barsaivians can live in relative safety in the province's larger cities and towns. However, this surface stability is currently facing a crisis. When the threat of the Horrors receded, the major powers of Barsaive felt secure enough to focus on their political and military rivalries. When the Therans established the fortress of Triumph near Lake Ban, a new, blood-stained chapter in Barsaive's history began.





# THE DWARF KINGDOM

*Throal stands as a beacon of civilization to all of Barsaive. We cannot bow to the pressure of hostile forces. To do so betrays the trust of those who look to us for guidance, and dishonors everything our late king worked for.*

• UMO YILWAZ, IN AN ADDRESS TO THE J'HAVIM OF HOUSE YILWAZ •

▲ ▲ ▲

I expected Throal to be a dank and musty place, like the countless derelict kaers in which I've risked my skin these past few years. I know we dwarfs are supposed to be earth-lovers, never happier than when we're traipsing around a big hole in the ground. Me, I like dirt and stone well enough, but I've always preferred it under my feet instead of over my head. Understand: I grew up in a wee speck of a farming village out in the hinterland, out on the plains, with nothing but miles of bright blue sky overhead. Just the idea of mountains makes me dizzy. And being underground—well, if it means treasure, I'll grumble and get on with it, but until I came to Throal, I thought anyone who wanted to live in a hole had to be cracked in the head.

When I stepped through those magnificent gates into the Bazaar, I realized that all my imaginings of the place were nothing like the reality. Throal was no more like a kaer than an ocean is like a huddle. The ceilings of the vast rock chamber were enormously high—thirty feet at their lowest point. The air smelled fresh and clean and cool, with no stink of dust or mildew like I'd expected. Instead, I could smell spices and perfumes. Nothing overpowering, mind you, just a few tantalizing, intoxicating hints. I'd expected grim pillars of crudely worked stone. Instead, I beheld polished marble, sparkling crystal, intricate mosaics of colored glass and semi-precious stone. All around me, walls and floor and ceiling caught and reflected the rays of dozens upon dozens of light quartz fixtures, each one more ingeniously placed than the last. There was nothing gaudy or garish about it, either; on the contrary, I found it deeply soothing. The architects who designed this place, and the craftsmen who built it, had created a light more beautiful than that of the sun itself! The light drew me through the Bazaar, pulled me deeper into the heart of Throal, as if it were welcoming a long-lost daughter. Tears spilled from my eyes and ran down my grimy cheeks.

I found myself in the middle of a throng, surrounded by all sorts of Namegivers doing business in the Bazaar. But by far the most common were dwarfs, clad in colorful silks. In other surroundings they might have looked foppish to some, plumed like foolish and preening birds. But together, under the harmonious light and dancing colors of the Bazaar, the assembled dwarfs became something else. They were a walking celebration of honest pleasure, of their community with one another, of life itself.

One of the patrons of the Bazaar, a dwarf woman some five years younger than myself, saw my tears. She approached me, and without a word wrapped me in her arms. Within moments, other dwarfs joined her. They enveloped me in a rough huddle of love and welcome.

After a long moment of silent communion, the young woman said to me, "Welcome, my sister. You are home."

—From the Journals of the Weaponsmith  
Javira of Awett, 1505 TH

▲ ▲ ▲

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THROAL

The Kingdom of Throal lies in the midst of the vast mountain range of the same Name. Founded a thousand years before the Scourge, it has become the dominant political and economic power in most of Barsaive, especially in the eastern region of the province. Roughly one-third of Barsaive's people live in Throal's underground passageways and cities, and new cities are under construction to accommodate increasing population. Dwarfs are the largest group of Namegivers in Barsaive at large, and are an even greater majority of the population in Throal. Though the kingdom encourages members of other races to settle within its stone borders, dwarfs remain in charge.

In addition to its sheer size and economic clout, Throal is best known for its cultural influence. During the years of Barsaive's domination by the Theran Empire, the dwarfs of Throal acted as intermediaries between Barsaive's people and its imperial rulers. In so doing, they shielded the people from the worst of the Theran brutalities, built a lasting network of trading and political contacts, and made the Throalic language the unifying tongue that bridges Barsaive's many disparate cultures. T'skrang traders from the Serpent River can communicate with troll raider chieftains of the Twilight Peaks, thanks to the common language given to them by the dwarfs of Throal.

Even more important than a common language, however, is the dwarf kingdom's contribution to Barsaive's common culture. The few common cultural threads that Barsaive has to draw upon exist thanks to the efforts of King Varulus I, who commissioned the *Book of Tomorrow*—a vast compendium of stories, facts, and essays on almost every conceivable subject. Barsaivians took copies of this book with them into almost every kaer and citadel during the Scourge, where it served as a reminder of everyday life during the awful days when the Horrors ravaged the earth. The *Book of Tomorrow* gave Barsaivians hope in the depths of despair, offering concrete proof that darkness and dank earth were not their only birthright. Because of this book's enormous influence over their lives in the kaers, Namegivers throughout Barsaive tend to think of Throal as the most important repository of learning in the land since the Scourge ended.



Throal's recent monarchs, the late King Varulus III and his predecessor, Varulus II, furthered the influence of Throal by promoting a sweeping political agenda. The most important expression of their reformist beliefs is the *Council Compact*, the legal code developed by Varulus II. Its principles mark a dramatic departure from the authoritarian practices of previous Barsaivian rulers, from the mighty Theran invaders to petty local dictators. The *Council Compact* affirms the fundamental equality of all Namegivers, setting forth the radical premise that no Namegiver is innately superior to another. More than anything else, the leaders of Throal want to spread this idea, along with their vision of benevolent rule, throughout Barsaive. Slavery is anathema to them, and they are fighting to abolish it by any means necessary. The Therans, who depend on slavery and intend to re-conquer the entire province, consider the *Council Compact* an open declaration of hostility. They would like nothing better than to see Throal destroyed and the idealistic beliefs of its rulers repudiated. The Therans are not alone; certain malcontents and would-be local tyrants claim the *Council Compact* is mere propaganda designed to camouflage Throal's own plans of conquest.

Though some people call Throal's motives into question, the kingdom so far has kept the loyalty of most of Barsaive's adepts, both legendary and obscure. The majority of them accepted Varulus III as a genuine reformer, a good monarch deserving of the aid of heroes, and continue to do so with King Neden. Others have less lofty reasons for using Throal as a home base. First, it is an extremely safe place to store treasure (magical and otherwise); second, it is a splendid place to recuperate after a dangerous mission; and third, it is the center of knowledge and scholarship in Barsaive. The renowned Great Library of Throal contains a great deal of information useful to explorers, mercenaries and other adventurers.



## ON EVERYDAY LIFE

**T**hough adventurers may think of Throal primarily as a rest stop, it is in fact a vast metropolis where thousands of Namegivers sleep, work, and enjoy themselves. Exotic though it should seem to players and their characters (unless they are natives of Throal), the dwarf kingdom's residents feel perfectly at home there.

If you use Throal as the setting of a scene in your campaign, the kingdom will seem much more alive if you take the time to describe some of the most striking features of daily life there. A few good examples are given below.

## ON ACTIVITY

Something is always happening during the day in Throal. Business takes place in large market areas, and also in any lane or public walkway. Vendors of snacks, sweets, toys, perfumes and other small items can be found everywhere, loudly extolling the virtues of their goods. Performers and musicians are just as common, from buskers hoping to earn enough for a meal to dedicated amateurs who simply enjoy entertaining people with their art.

Public spaces are also full of people engaged in debate: Throalites of all social classes are devoted to the art of the argument. Knots of onlookers often surround debaters. If the debaters are particularly eloquent, the crowd listens attentively. If they are merely average,

passers-by feel free to join in the controversy. The issues being argued may be obscure or trivial, or may be something everyone in Throal feels passionately about. Though manuals of Throalic etiquette claim that it is extremely poor form to display anger while debating, this custom is no longer much in evidence (if it was ever followed in the first place).

Most Throalites believe a little anger adds spice to a good argument, but to threaten violence in a debate is a grave offense. A good citizen of Throal is expected to be able to argue articulately, even passionately, but without completely losing control. Sometimes this leads to trouble between newcomers and longtime residents. Orks and trolls, for example, have a hard time keeping their emotions (and weapons) out of arguments. If a debate degenerates into a scuffle, Throal's omnipresent Royal Guards are quick to appear and wrestle the troublemakers into submission. This happens seldom, however, and usually because the participants have been overindulging at a nearby tavern. The people of Throal feel great respect for their guards; even the most notorious drunkards can be counted on to behave themselves when Royal Guardsmen show up.

Unlike the citizens of most other places in Barsaive, the people of Throal clearly feel safe and secure. Throal's reputation for secure streets and passageways is well known throughout Barsaive. Because Throalic law requires that the government reimburse those whose property is stolen within the kingdom's borders, law enforcement is extremely well funded. Throalic citizens love to grouse about high taxes, but they treasure their unequalled personal safety. Most Barsaivian adventurers are accustomed to cities whose people instinctively look over their shoulders for trouble no matter what the time of day. In Throal, people stroll around casually, afraid of nothing.

Throal's citizens love public life. It is considered strange, even sinister, to keep to oneself in Throal. Those who spend time milling about in public squares are not presumed to be lazy or shifty, but assumed to be waiting for something entertaining to start happening. In any well-traveled part of Throal, of course, something



entertaining is bound to begin at any moment. In the unlikely event that nothing interesting is happening, many a Throalite will happily create his own diversion, usually by striking up a conversation. Talk is the favorite recreational activity in the kingdom.

## HOW THE PERSONAL IS PUBLIC

Dwarfs throughout Barsaive are known for their inquisitive natures; they consider it rude not to ask their conversational partners a string of personal, probing questions. Those of other cultures who have lived a long time in Throal tend to pick up this habit. Total strangers may approach player characters when they enter the kingdom, wanting to know everything about them. Adventurers will most likely find this off-putting, as most of them have learned through bitter experience to keep a low profile in a new place. Player characters who intend to live in Throal, however, must learn to give up the idea of keeping secrets, at least within the kingdom's borders. Dwarf culture has turned the kingdom of Throal into a gigantic small town, where everyone is expected to know everyone else's business. The concept of gossip does not exist in dwarf culture; dwarfs see nothing shameful about wanting to know all the intimate details of another's life. They do, however, recognize a character flaw that they call *wech'nes*, an overwhelming or exclusive interest in the negative aspects of somebody's life.

The eagerness of the average Throalite to discuss personal business (his own and everyone else's) has several implications for adventures set in Throal. Player characters will often find it easier to get information out of witnesses when conducting an investigation, as no one will consider their curiosity suspicious or even unusual. Because Throalic informants tend to be forthcoming, the presence of a tight-lipped Throalic citizen is a clue in itself that something strange is going on. On the downside, enemies of the player characters also find it easier to gather information about them. When the adventurers do something impressive, word will spread quickly; unfortunately, reports of foolish or shameful acts will just as swiftly tarnish their reputations.

When player characters discover that Throalites easily give out information they would have to struggle to learn elsewhere, they may forget that even well-intentioned people can have one fact wrong. News in Throal passes by word of mouth, and people inevitably exaggerate some details and forget others as they recount stories. As an old Throalic proverb says, "Legends change as they dance across many tongues." This adage applies as much to rumors and minor details as to legends. From the gamemaster's viewpoint, an investigation need not be simple just because Throalites happily answer questions. A quick answer to a question is not necessarily the truth, and the Throalic gift of gab makes its people accomplished liars when they wish to be. In Throal, the trick is not to get someone to talk, but to discern the truth behind the person's words.

## ON MARKING TIME

In an underground kingdom, time is not measured by the rising and setting of the sun and moon. In Throal, as in kaers all across Barsaive, a variety of ingenious timekeeping devices substitute for the cues normally visible in the heavens. The people of Throal divide their days into twenty-four hours, but not into two twelve-hour halves. Instead of saying "Three p.m.," a Throalite would say "the fifteenth hour."

The most common clocks in Throal are candles made from a special wax that burns at a measurable, steady rate. The candles are marked with twenty-four stripes, spaced so that the time it takes to burn from one stripe to another is exactly an hour. These "hour candles" are placed in special holders equipped with a dial marker. The user then lights the candle and sets the dial marker to show the hour at which the candle was lit. To read an hour candle, look at

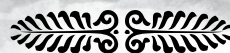
the dial marker and then count the number of stripes on the candle. Subtract this number from twenty-four; the result is the number of hours that have passed since the candle was lit. That number of hours, added to the hour shown on the marker, tells the reader precisely which hour it is: tenth, twelfth, fifteenth, and so on. Of course, hour candles must be lit on the hour in order to give the correct time; however, the low cost of hour candles compensates for the inconvenience.

More expensive timepieces include mechanical clocks, which measure time by keeping track of water that pours through them at a steady rate. The richest Throalites own costly magical clocks made from modified light crystals.

Though visitors to Throal can easily find out what time it is, they often find it difficult to adjust physically to a sunless world. All Namegivers, except for dwarfs and obsidimen, rely on exposure to sunlight to tell their bodies when to get tired and go to sleep. Though Throal abounds with light-quartz crystals that grow bright during the day and fade to dimness at night in the same manner as the sun, the lack of natural sunlight means that new arrivals in Throal often find it hard to sleep well. They may be prone to insomnia, have difficulty waking up in the morning, or feel drowsy or irritable during the day. After living for a month or so under the mountains, most Namegivers adapt and harmonize their internal clocks with those of long-time residents of Throal.

## ON THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOR

The dwarfs of Throal love bright, vivid colors, and the cheerful sight of the gaily clad residents helps compensate other Namegivers for the absence of the sunlight they love and miss. This tradition of wearing bright, colorful clothing began during the Scourge,



### ADVENTURE HOOK

After King Neden rebuffs a typically haughty Theran diplomatic overture, the Therans decide to teach Throal just how vulnerable it is. The Empire hires a company of mercenaries to infiltrate the dwarf kingdom, posing as traveling merchants, entertainers, and scholars. The group enters Throal over a number of days so as not to arouse suspicion; its members are of various races and backgrounds, making them difficult to identify as a unit. At a prearranged time, the infiltrators smash as many of the air sponges as they can find in one of the kingdom's Inner Cities. Within a day, the air in the target city will turn poisonous, so its residents must evacuate. The sabotage kills no one, but causes serious inconvenience for thousands and severely embarrasses the king's administration.

The adventurers are hired to track down the head of the mercenary company and bring him back to face Throalic justice—alive. Unfortunately for the adventurers, one of their quarry's underlings decides to assassinate him and take over his position. The player characters must not only find and capture a dangerous enemy, but must safeguard their prize on the long journey back to Throal.