
An Introduction to Gwenthia

WHAT IS GWENTHIA?

Gwenthia is a fictional setting for roleplaying games, wargames and other creative pursuits, that mixes fantasy and SF. *Gwenthia* is the name of a planet where humans co-exist with alien races, genetically enhanced and mutated creatures, and magical entities. If you're familiar with *Glorantha*, *Jorune*, or *Tekumel*, *Gwenthia* has a similar approach and feel.

Gwenthia was conceived by Tom Zunder and developed by *The Design Mechanism*. It is a shared-world project in constant development. More information and detail can be found at www.gwenthia.org.

WHAT'S PLANET GWENTHIA LIKE?

Earth-like (for simplicity and ease of reference), and dominated by two large continents, Thurian (the southern continent) and Gwailan (northern). Lots of islands surround the continents, the foremost being Cromaigne and Kitar. Climate-wise, Thurian ranges from a mediterranean climate in the north, through deserts in the central areas, and down to jungles and rainforests in the south. Cromaigne, in the north, has a temperate west-maritime climate. Kitar, in the south, enjoys a south-pacific climate.

Gwenthia has seven moons, or orbs, which are worshipped as gods by some. An eighth was destroyed some 7,000 years ago, but still exerts a religious and magical power over the planet.

PEOPLE

Humans predominate, although they are not native to *Gwenthia*. They were brought (magically, some believe), to the planet 8,000 years ago to assist the Eighth Orb in a devastating war. Humans rebelled, and assisted a slave race called the Forerunners. Together humans and Forerunners created the mighty Meravae Empire that ruled *Gwenthia* for 3,000 years. In their 8,000 year presence, humans have come to dominate the planet, and have undergone some distinct alterations in some cases.

Thurian humans are African/Asiatic/Amerindian in terms of race. Caucasian humans are found in AurUrbis and Cromaigne. Another race worthy of note are the strange KiMentas of AurUrbis. Born to human mothers, KiMentas are genderless, diminutive, black-skinned, noseless, and hyper-intelligent. Their name means 'Those who Think', and they command AurUrban society, gently shepherding the human population towards spiritual and physical perfection.

The race native to Cromaigne, the Croman, are a result of interbreeding between the Forerunners and humans of the Meravae Empire. Ostensibly they are human in appearance, but have six fingers on each hand, and have longer life spans – both Forerunner traits.



HUMAN



CROMAN



FORERUNNER



KIMENTAS

RELIGION

Religion is integral to daily life. Religious belief tends to fall into one of four approaches:

- ❖ Heptaminist – worship of the 7 orbs
- ❖ Octaminist – worship of the 7 orbs, but including veneration of the destroyed 8th orb
- ❖ Monotheist – worship of a singular god: Quatzadua’s Earth god; Nhi Tual’s Khur Ishida; Gara Dien’s Lady of Doors; the Night Hag worship of the Evening Culture
- ❖ Animist – veneration of spirits and Gwenthia as a living/spiritual entity (some parts of Cromaigne and Kitar)

Religion dictates access to magic and supernatural abilities. And, as with all religions, one’s faith determines one’s acceptance of, and prejudices towards, other faiths.

HISTORY – ANCIENT AND MODERN

Gwenthia has a long and turbulent history. Ten thousand years ago, it was ruled by a race called the Ancients, who possessed terrifying scientific and sorcerous powers. The Ancients had a slave-race, the Forerunners, who were experts at sorcerous genetic manipulation. Somehow a third alien race, the Zathurians, were lured to Gwenthia by the Ancients and became stranded. A great war raged between them, and the Zathurians helped the Forerunners to rebel. The Ancients summoned humans to assist their cause, but found the humans joined with the Forerunners instead. The Ancients were eventually wiped out, and the Forerunners and humans assumed dominance of the planet. The Zathurians retreated to their sealed cities, and have spent their time watching humans and occasionally meddling in their fate to create variant races and species – either as experiments, or through a species’ requests.

Most of Gwenthia’s subsequent history has been concerned with adjusting to life after the disappearance of the Meravae Empire, and the struggles of individual nations to find their independence culturally, economically and religiously. Presently, no one power totally dominates Gwenthia, although many have ambitions. The Harmonious Empire of Gara Dien seeks to bring its philosophies to the whole of Thurian; the ambitious Kingdom of Telbrin sees itself as the inheritors of the Meravae Empire; AurUrbis quietly continues to direct the religion and trade; and Cromaigne – divided into three very different kingdoms – teeters on the brink of civil war.

And everywhere is the insidious influence of terrible, chthonic entities: the serpent-like, soul-less She Eth; the hive-mind Shasteen Horror; and the Night Hag...

THE NIGHT HAG

When the Eighth Orb was destroyed, it created (or allowed to manifest) an entity called the Night Hag. The Night Hag is an alien/supernatural intelligence that exerts direct power over darkness. For four hours of each and every night (a period called The Black Watch), the darkness becomes absolute as the Night Hag exerts her power, and her many, demonic children (called Night Spawn), are free to roam Gwenthia. Some Night Spawn are vicious, ravening killers with little or no interlligence. Others are highly intelligent, with agendas and purposes that they seek to accomplish through human agents. The Night Hag and her spawn were venerated by the ancient Evening Culture of Cromaigne, and are still secretly worshipped across Gwenthia by those who seek power through any means. The Night Hag and the Eighth Orb are often viewed as part of the same entity, although this philosophy is not shared by everyone.

WELCOME TO GWENTHIA!

A place of intrigue and adventure. We hope you enjoy your time roleplaying in Gwenthia, and return for a longer visit soon...

THE DESIGN MECHANISM