THE WORLD OF MEDÈRRA

Medèrra

For almost a thousand years, dwarves, humans, elves, half-orcs, and halflings have lived beneath the banners of a single Empire, born at the end of a war that engulfed every kingdom and changed the history of these lands forever.

From war to unity

It all began with the ambitions of the Madrakì, the dragonfolk of Madhras, who drew the other kingdoms into a long war. The dwarves played a decisive role in their defeat, but it was the decision made at the end of the conflict that marked a turning point in history: rather than divide once more, the rulers of both the victorious and defeated kingdoms relinquished their crowns and recognised the dwarven king as the leader of a new Empire.

Thus Mediterra was born, as it was known then, destined to become the Medèrra we know today.

The Iron Pact

The founding of the Empire was sealed by the Iron Pact. Each of the peoples offered its own metal and a representative gemstone, while the dwarves contributed iron and pledged to protect everyone who had joined the union. This gesture also gave rise to the imperial emblem: a crowned iron fist flanked by four gemstones.

Unity, order, discipline, and rigour became the principles of the new society. The peoples retained their own traditions while sharing laws, institutions, and a pantheon that brought together the deities of their different cultures. The Pact ended the divisions between the kingdoms and laid the foundations for lasting prosperity, leaving a legacy that still sustains imperial authority today.

THE LANDS OF THE EMPIRE

A world of peoples and landscapes

Medèrra stretches from the frozen steppes of the north to the southern deserts, across mountains, fertile plains, forests, and cities linked by a dense network of roads and trade routes. Each region retains its own traditions and identity, while centuries of exchange have helped create a society in which different peoples and cultures live side by side every day.

The imperial regions

To the north lies Karcharia, homeland of the orcs, whose vast steppes reach the frozen sea, while the Atropoennini Mountains are home to the dwarven federation and city-states. Madhras, once the kingdom of the Madrakì, is now a land of fertile hills and thriving settlements, inhabited by settlers of every people and the only region of the Empire to have been demilitarised.

To the east stretch the plains of Totìa, homeland of humans and halflings, while south of Madhras lie the forests of Sylvania, home to the elves and crossed by numerous rivers. Farther south is Arenaria, a hot, arid region dominated by an immense desert, where imperial settlements are concentrated mainly in trading outposts and areas rich in resources.

The Mare Internum

Between these lands lies the Mare Internum, a vast inland sea that washes the northern shores of Arenaria, the eastern shores of Sylvania, and the southern shores of Totìa, as far as the Strait of Thalia. Its ports are important centres of exchange, and the routes across it carry goods and travellers between distant regions, sustaining trade and bringing different peoples together.

Cities and roads

Maxima is the capital and the centre of the Empire’s political, economic, and cultural life. From here, the Empire administers territories so vast that many citizens do not even know their names. Its main roads, generally safe, allow merchants and travellers to move between cities and provinces.

On the strait that connects the Mare Internum to other sea routes stands Thalia, a port city of white buildings dominated by a great library tower that also serves as a lighthouse. Once an imperial city, it is now governed by mages, who have made it one of the foremost centres for the study and practice of magic.

CRACKS IN THE EMPIRE

An increasingly fragile balance

Medèrra remains one of the great powers of the known world. Its legions guard the borders, its cities prosper, and most citizens continue to trust in the strength of its institutions. For some time, however, reports from the provinces have painted a less reassuring picture, and the first signs of discontent are beginning to emerge even in the wealthiest cities.

The burden of prosperity

The young Emperor Rufus II, of the Enobarbi dynasty, rules alongside the Senate and a vast administration that has allowed the Empire to maintain control over widely differing territories and peoples for centuries.

Yet this long prosperity has encouraged the concentration of wealth and power, and some among the ruling class now seem more interested in defending their privileges than upholding the principles of the Iron Pact. Abuses are multiplying, disparities between the provinces are becoming more evident, and discontent is spreading, although rebellions remain isolated incidents for now and imperial authority does not appear to be under any serious threat.

The silent fortresses

In the northwestern provinces, several border fortresses have been found completely deserted, with no signs of battle or any indication that their occupants fled. The gates were still closed, weapons hung on their hooks, and the rooms looked as though they had been abandoned without warning, as if the garrisons might return at any moment.

Some speak of the return of the Madrakì, the ancient dragonfolk of Madhras, but none of the rumours has been confirmed, and the soldiers’ fate remains unknown.

A faith that divides

A new religion is spreading through the southern regions. Its followers recognise a single god and reject the imperial pantheon. Their teachings condemn the greed of merchants and the accumulation of wealth, attracting a growing number of followers, particularly among those who view the privileges of the wealthy with increasing distrust.

The authorities are watching the spread of this faith with concern, as it challenges both the Empire’s religious traditions and the interests of those who hold power.

The question of magic

Relations between the Empire and the mages have also long been a source of tension. In Thalia, following an uprising that led to the city’s independence, government passed to a Council of Mages divided between those who favour isolation, those who advocate a harder stance against the Empire, and those who seek reconciliation.

Among the latter is Aurelius, an elderly dwarven mage who believes that magic can once again find acceptance through dialogue, without resorting to another conflict.

For now, the Empire’s institutions continue to hold, and most citizens go about their lives without major upheaval. Yet tensions are building, and the troubles running through Medèrra are becoming harder to ignore.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Medèrra: Archè

For centuries, no one had seen kobolds descend from the western mountains, a range of peaks considered impassable that marks the boundary of imperial lands. Now rumours suggest they have returned, and an old adventurer has decided to discover the truth.

Beyond the mountains

No one knows for certain what lies beyond the western mountains, and for generations few have dared approach their passes. Recently, however, some travellers have reported sightings of kobolds coming from those lands: creatures unseen in the Empire for centuries, now spoken of almost only in tales.

Most people dismiss these stories as mere rumours, but Aurelius disagrees and has set out to investigate.

Meeting Aurelius

A three-hundred-year-old dwarf, mage, and traveller, Aurelius has spent much of his life crossing Medèrra. He knows its roads and cities and has met people from every culture. Over the years, he has become involved in wars, disputes, and delicate assignments, learning to find his way through even the most difficult situations, often without drawing much attention to himself.

During his search, he meets the heroes of *Archè* and invites them to join him, promising a reward upon their return. The reports of kobolds deserve investigation, and Aurelius knows well that travelling with companions can prove far more useful than travelling alone.

The Medèrra saga

Archè is the prequel to the Medèrra saga and an entry point into its world: a Ready-to-Play fantasy adventure, compatible with 5e rules and designed for 3–5 players.

No Game Master is required. Players take on the roles of their heroes, read the story together, and decide how to approach the situations they encounter. They will be able to talk to other characters, explore unfamiliar places, overcome challenges, and face combat, discussing their decisions and the consequences of their actions.

Each hero has their own motivations, personality, and way of responding to events. The interplay between these personalities will help shape the journey.

Aurelius has a proposal for you and a reward to offer, but the decision to follow him is yours alone.

What will persuade your hero to set out with him?