



THASSILON

NOTES ON A FALLEN EMPIRE

The Thassilonian wizard is a figure straight from legend: rune-marked, sneering, and powerful enough to destroy armies with a word or summon creatures who are now myths themselves. Their empire rose on the back of a prudent king and his seven greatest wizards, but magic and the corruptions of power unraveled it in the end. When wizards runemark their goods, they take part in the traditions of the Empire, where runes marked all the property of the great wizards, and giants and dragons bent to human will.

INTRODUCTION TO THASSILON

The sprawling empire of Thassilon was powered by conquest and its sophisticated rune magic. That magic defined the empire's rulers and included various forms of blood sacrifice, powerful glyph-laying, and dimensional warping. Without rune magic and the binding of the rune giants, the Thassilon legions would never have conquered their vast lands. With them, though, they were unstoppable.

The Laying of Runes

The early empire was not founded by the runelords who later grew to dominate it, but rather by the First King Xin, who was honored in the names of the empire's seven capital cities. More than 11,000 years ago, Xin established lawful orders of knighthood and wizardry, endowed monastic traditions, and devoted donations of the kingdom's wealth to charity and the end of hunger. Yet, more than a benevolent ruler, Xin was a visionary. In seeking to create a paradise of civilization within the span of his own lifetime, he called out to beings from beyond reality and bargained with ancient dragons. These mysterious accords granted Xin an understanding of rune magic—said by some to be the written language of creation—and brought the worship of the mysterious goddess Lissala to Thassilon. Inscribing his orders, contracts, and writs with these symbols of power, he regulated trade, established justice, and arranged his ever-growing lands into seven great domains with an efficiency inspired by magical aid and compulsion. Xin's just, magic-suffused decrees became known as the Rune Law, and brought about incredible works, empowered the servants of the domain, and compelled the creation of wonders, all of which motivated Thassilon's swift ascendance in power and influence. This was called the Celestial Age of the Empire.

Runelords and Rune Giants

Xin outlived his creation in some ways. Unable to keep track of all his swiftly growing empire's provinces, taxes, armies, and subjects, he appointed governors, favoring arcanists for their knowledge and the ease with which they could be bribed with insights into rune magic. The greatest of these magistrates were the seven runelords, powerful wizards who showed especial skill and passion for the use of runes and the imperial arcana, which would later be known as sin magic (see sidebar). Yet, as these wizards' powers increased, they grew discontent with servitude and living at the whim of the First King. In secret, they forged their own pacts with mysterious extraplanar powers, covetous dragons, and the devious aboleths. From these bargains, the first rune giants were born, 40-foot-tall paragons of strength and obedience that could in turn control the other giant races. With these armies of giant slaves the runelords erected not just roads and walls, but immense monoliths and statues in honor of—at first—the empire, but later, their own images.

Over time, the emperor's generals, advisors, and runelords saw that Old Xin (as he was called in his dotage) could not maintain his mastery of the realm or his potent magics. After ruling 110 years, Xin's magic consumed him in a conflagration of scarlet flames that destroyed much of the imperial palace, and left no remains

SIN MAGIC

Each runelord was a master of a school of magic, a specialist wizard of the deadliest caliber. In Thassilon, there were only seven recognized schools of magic (their wizards lumped divination magic into the universal school), and each school was associated with one of the seven virtues of rule.

Envy: The art of suppressing magic other than your own. *Related School:* abjuration. *Prohibited Schools:* evocation and necromancy.

Sloth: Calling agents and minions to perform your deeds for you, or creating what you needed as you need it. *Related School:* conjuration. *Prohibited Schools:* evocation and illusion.

Lust: Magically controlling and dominating others to satisfy your desires, and controlling other creatures' minds, emotions, and wills. *Related School:* enchantment. *Prohibited Schools:* necromancy and transmutation.

Wrath: Mastery of the raw destructive powers of magic, and channeling those destructive forces. *Related School:* evocation. *Prohibited Schools:* abjuration and conjuration.

Pride: Perfecting your own appearance and your domain through trickery and illusions. *Related School:* illusion. *Prohibited Schools:* transmutation and conjuration.

Gluttony: Magic that manipulates the physical body to provide an unending thirst for life. *Related School:* necromancy. *Prohibited Schools:* enchantment and abjuration.

Greed: Magically transforming things into objects of greater value or use, and enhancing the physical self. *Related School:* transmutation. *Prohibited Schools:* enchantment and illusion.

CAMPAIGN OUTLINE

Spanning the first six volumes of *Pathfinder*, the Rise of the Runelords Adventure Path takes PCs from 1st level and pastoral Sandpoint to higher than 15th level and the impenetrable spires of Xin-Shalast. For GMs preparing to run this campaign, the following pages present a brief outline of the upcoming adventures. GMs are encouraged to use these previews to foreshadow upcoming events and create side adventures custom suited to their campaigns.



POSITIVE THASSILONIAN RUNES

of the First King. Careless of their emperor's mysterious end, the runelords seized their domains for themselves, subjugating Xin's most powerful generals and viziers and leaving his eldest son a puppet emperor in the city of Xin—a small mountain prison where he could be controlled. The runelords themselves turned to greater plans, furthering their own control of the runes in hopes of subjugating their peers. Each meant to claim the empire for himself, master the runes as Xin had, and reap the wealth of the nation to fuel magics beyond any the First King had ever imagined.