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# INTRODUCTION

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# CRAVING A CULTURE?

Politics, economy, history, personalities, location ... every GM knows how challenging it is to balance all the elements that go into a good game world. In this book, we've collected seven separate, detailed, ready-made cultures that do the work for you. Each one is designed to fit easily into your game, and provides just enough hooks to entice your players to move right in.

Each entry talks about how the culture came to be, what forces shaped its development, and the current political situation. We provide a few examples of notable characters and places, as well as new rules to give the culture some extra surprises. We've also included detailed discussions about how to play a character from each culture, discussing outlook, opinions, naming conventions, and a host of other hints that will bring the society to life.

As with all Penumbra products, this book is meant to be modular in nature. We've done our best to make it easy for you to take whatever tickles your fancy and drop it into your game with a minimum of work. Whether you're looking for an interesting civilization for your players to explore, or a new culture to fill our your own character's background, you should definitely find something interesting here.

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## SECTION LAYOUT

Each of the civilizations in this books is presented in the same format for easy reference. Here's what you'll find in each section.

### OVERVIEW

Look here for a quick overview of the civilization. You'll get a basic feel for the people and setting, as well for how you can use it in your own game.

### PLACEMENT

Here you'll find important information on the culture's surroundings. Use this section to find the right spot for the civilization in your campaign world.

### HISTORY

This section talks about the origin of the civilization, its development, and the current situation it faces.

### LOCATIONS

Every civilization has its tourist spots. This meaty section describes the places that influence the people, including important buildings, natural spots, and other features. Scour this section carefully before your characters venture into the civilization, so you'll be ready when they do.

### PERSONALITIES

The people of a society steer its future. This section provides character profiles and statistics for the most important inhabitants of each culture, and for the most typical of its people.

### PLAYING A CHARACTER

This section takes look at the inhabitants' worldview and common opinions, giving hints about how to play a character from this civilization. Whether it's cultural norms or character names, you'll find it here.

### ADVENTURE SEEDS

When you're ready to use the civilization in your campaign, look here for ideas on how to develop your ideas into adventures.

# THE DRAGON KINGS

*Candlelight glittered off the dazzling array of costumes in the crowd below. Bright colors and threads of gold and silver decorated the guests' robes. Everywhere the gowns gaped to display a fine pattern of scales, or flared to suggest great wings, or tinkled with overlapping enameled medallions. The ball was a fine excuse for the participants to display their heritage, inflated though it may be.*

*Val Orbis leaned on the balustrade above the dance floor, drinking in the splendor of the guests. He seemed relaxed, but his eyes tracked relentlessly, following a couple through the bright confusion of an ancient dance. A small smile turned up the corners of his mouth, and his long fingers traced the carvings in the marble railing. With his dark skin and black cloak he blended with the shadows where he stood.*

*The objects of his scrutiny were a young man and woman, both of Copper lineage, stepping through an intricate dance with practiced indications of good breeding and education. The gentleman was wrapped in pale gray robes, embroidered with swirled scrollwork of copper thread, and his hair was a deep, burnished auburn. A fine ridge ran along his spine, which his robe was cut to reveal; his was a Regal bloodline. The lady was in white robes of silk, strung about with jingling chains and copper medallions. Orbis knew the medallions were actually coins stamped with the face of the last Copper Emperor ... he had helped her pick them out.*

*She was to be the focus of the little drama Orbis had planned. She was Nevanna Tal Ree, and her bloodline was Cadet, two full steps below her partner's Regal breeding. Knowing the love the two shared, Orbis had helped her and her paramour, Moban Gaim, arrange invitations to this exclusive evening ... invitations Gaim's parents did not have. An evening in the company of the younger generation, less concerned with the bloodlines than their parents were. An evening when they could dance, talk, and perhaps kiss without fear of word reaching the Moban family.*

*So when Moban Lesh burst through the door, bellowing for his son to leave the Cadet strumpet he was with, Orbis felt a surge of triumph. Lesh had cost him some support in the Conclave, but he felt repaid by the mortified look in his enemy's eyes. The scandal would cost the entire Moban family a great deal of face in society.*

*Lesh caught sight of Orbis on the balcony above the dance, and his face flamed with fury. Orbis smiled, bowed low, and whispered a quiet phrase that vanished him from the hall as quietly as he had entered.*

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## OVERVIEW

Ages ago, the Dragon Kings ruled the civilized world, by their reckoning. They mixed the blood and power of dragons into their own bloodlines, breeding powerful and dangerous sorcerers, and dominated all who opposed them. The entire world fell before their might and their magic.

Nothing lasts forever, though. Decadence brought about the end of the empire — though rebelling provinces helped — and they saw all they had built crumble before them. Now the Dragon Kings are a scattered remnant. They dwell in the shadows of their former glory, jealously preserving the bloodlines and what power they retain, dreaming of rising again to dominance.

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## PLACEMENT

The Dragon Kings exist alongside other cultures, mingled within them but partaking of a separate cultural identity and society. With no homeland of their own anymore, they've spread across the world, forming small enclaves and groups in many widely scattered cities and countries. They are bound by history and by blood, not by geography or nationality. Therefore, a Dragon King subculture can be added to any established society in your game world. While they are not a secret group, they are insular, and it's not unusual for ordinary people to be unaware of a Dragon King society living alongside their own.

Dragon Kings are attracted to power. They naturally congregate in national capitals and other large cities where they often become involved in politics. In rural settings, a Dragon King family may be the lords of a domain, but are likely the only Dragon Kings in the area; Dragon King families don't willingly submit to rule by another.

There is one last requirement: adding the Dragon Kings to your campaign means their historical empire must have existed in your campaign setting. You can easily change the size and power of this empire to fit the needs of your campaign, but at some point, thousands of years in the past, the Dragon Kings must have been kings in practice as well as name. Of course, they may have ruled from some extraplanar demesne now separated from your game world, if you'd rather not worry too much about ancient history.