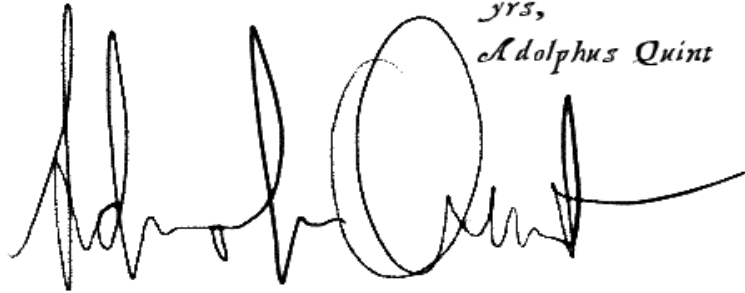




A Brief History of the Unification of Corvantin

Greetings, fellow seekers of knowledge! The Librarian has commissioned me, the redoubtable sage and explorer Adolphus Quint, to provide here for you a history in brief of the most formative period in the history of Corvantin, that time in which Corbrey Vanadon and those of his line shaped the lands we know today.

yrs,
Adolphus Quint



I warn you, though – while learned though I am, I am but a mortal man! I do not have all the answers, and indeed many answers merely open up yet further questions! I will not bore you with weighty tomes or treatises, nor bury you ‘neath dusty words and dry discussion.

While a more complete history of Corvantin and its peoples can be found in the Athenaeum, I feel it is useful to at least give a brief overview of the events around the eruption of The Shifting, the unification of central Corvantin and the consolidation of the numerous disparate fiefdoms into the Kingdom to which we now belong.



The Rise of Corbrey Vanadon

Some 200 years ago, the continent of Corvantin spanned substantially more acreage than it does today, and was bounded by the Forever Sea on all sides. Rather than the unified Kingdom we now have, the continent was instead divided into a number of independent fiefdoms, each ruled by their own set of noble houses, with a variety of titles, bloodlines, chivalric orders and the like as many and disparate as the colours on the Myriad Butterflies of Harrowfold Grove.

While there may have been some truces and alliances, these were always uneasy and, as might be expected, high politics at the time were akin to sticking ones hand into a nest of riled-up vipers – dangerous, frequently fatal, and rarely to good purpose.

Then, from nowhere, the Shifting erupted, rolling in from the coast and swallowing up land at a rate of several miles per day. Within a few weeks, all of the outlying fiefdoms were devoured and tainted, and the bulk of Humanity fled inwards to the central fiefdoms. The College of Enlightenment worked tirelessly on a solution, and– at the cost of the lives of their most



senior Earth and Fire mages – created the Anchors which protect our stability today. These Anchors were placed in concentric overlapping fields which enforced stability, threw back the Shifting, and managed to establish a frontier of normality.

Understandably, this caused a great uproar, throwing the whole continent into chaos and disorder. Fiefdom fought fiefdom fought refugees for resources and supplies, and the ensuing wars threatened to undo the great sacrifice of those mages and devour the entire continent into war.

However, one man was determined that this would not come to pass. Elector-Knight Corbrey Vanadon, head of the military wing of the fiefdom of Arador, looked at the chaos that was erupting and took a stand. First, along with some of his sworn brethren, Vanadon slew the ruling family of Arador and took the throne for himself. Not waiting to sit on his laurels, he then martialled both the Aradorian army, along with the whole wing of Knights Manticore, and the infamous Gryphon Legion mercenary corps, and marched the entire force around Arador, suppressing each minor rebellion and absorbing the conquered forces into his ever-growing war machine.

With Arador settled and united under his iron fist, he marched the forces into neighbouring Aesilon, making straight for the capital city of Helikon, and seized the College of Enlightenment, liberating it from siege and making an alliance with the mages and scholars within. With his force now backed by magical might, alchemical know-how, and prototype siege weapons, he was strong enough to crush all other opposition beneath him.


That is not to say that this was easy – the

ongoing campaign took some 15 years, with each conquered fiefdom swearing allegiance to Vanadon, now styling himself King – and their forces being absorbed into one unified army. Each fiefdom he captured he reconstituted into a Dominion, and set his own men in places of power and rule. Those noble who swore to him were allowed to retain their ranks and privileges, but on the understanding that there was a clear and immediate shift of power and expected loyalty.

While the ruling families of the various fiefdoms may have hated King Vanadon and fought against him bitterly, he rapidly became something of a hero to the common man. He was generous with the supplies he seized, and his rule over the average peasant was no harsher than their previous liege-lords – in fact, in some places, he brought them freedoms and soft treatment they had never before experienced. Likewise, he made sure the churches received their due tithes and respect, and commissioned healers and preachers to go amongst the common folk and lighten their spirits.

Corbrey Vanadon





The Rule of Corbrey I and the Emergence of the Shifted

The initial rule of King Corbrey I was, as may be expected, a tumultuous one. The conquered Dominions were still unsettled and chafed at the leash, and even following the unification there was a great deal of mobilised military action as one uprising after another was put down. Supplies were growing strained, especially when one considers that all access to the coastline was cut off. While there were still a number of bountiful rivers and streams crossing the land – the fish within somehow blissfully unaffected by the Shifting – the main sources of food came from the rolling pastures of Fallowmere and the hotly-contested fishing waters of the massive Lake Perivelle.

All of this paled into comparison, however, with the first encroachment of monsters from beyond the mists.

Ever since the initial eruption of The Shifting, those unfortunate individuals caught by it had Shifted into the 6 sub-races known today. At this time, the link between Affinities and the Shifting was not fully known or understood – all that the common folk could see was that their friends and neighbours were transforming into, essentially, monsters and creatures from myths and legends. That these transformations were often excruciatingly painful to experience – combined with the omnipresent fear and uncertainty – led the early Shifted to acts of bestial fury and terror, and is in no small part responsible for the way they re treated today.

At the time, this was thought to be merely a problem for the peasant class, with no surviving noble having succumbed. All that changed, however, in the 20th year of King Corbrey I's reign. At that time, while there

were reports of monsters coming from The Shifting, they were dismissed as fairy tales and scare-mongering. However, on the borders of Scarrow, an immense and monstrous force burst through and began ravaging the land.

The Jarl of Scarrow – a doughty fighter and former Knight Manticore named Silas Wyre – led his elite guard and the armies of Scarrow against this force, drafting in such Shifted as remained alive to serve as shock troops. The two forces clashed in mighty conflict, which lasted a distressingly short time – the misshapen creatures from beyond the Shifting knowing no fear or death nor understanding of tactics were mighty, but eventually buckled underneath siege artillery, cavalry charges and tactical wizardry.

Overcome with blood-fury, when the monstrous line finally broke and the invaders fled into the Shifting and the mists therein, Jarl Wyre led his forces into a thunderous pursuit, deep into the Shifting itself. Within a matter of hours, they were overcome by its effects, with every man of them changing and twisting. The lucky one managed to make it back to the relative safety of Scarrow's Anchor-protected soil. The Jarl and his huscarls, alas, were less fortunate. They Shifted even beyond what is usually seen, becoming fused and malformed monstrosities, and fleeing into the tainted side of Scarrow (and from there, presumably, into the lost land of Darkeil).

The effect of this loss sent ripples around the ruling courts. If even a pure-blooded noble such as Wyre could Shift – and Shift so profoundly – then anyone was at risk, be they noble or peasant, rich or pauper. The Churches rallied around the noble courts, offering guidance and support, although the overall view of the Churches of Enlightenment were by no means unified.

The Death of King Corbrey I

King Corbrey I died in his sleep at the age of 76, some 31 years after his Unification. His succession was hotly contested, with intrigue and murder being the order of the day amongst all of the ruling families of the Dominions. Indeed, the race to the throne became so fierce that the city-states of Croxin began an internal civil war which still continues on today!

After a rash of assassinations, civil uprisings and warfare, two contenders to the throne remained, with all other families united behind one or the other. The front-runner was a former priest turned ruler named Colum Grayling – as well as having the tacit support of Breslyn, Scarrow and Chasco behind him, he also had the backing of the Churches of Enlightenment. Standing against him was a relative unknown – the fourth cousin of King Corbrey and the only surviving member of the Vanadon line, Elissa Vanadon. While she had the support of Arador and Aesilon backing her, she had also managed to secure the services of that now much-renowned mercenary company known as the Gryphon Legion.



It all came down, in the end, to one pivotal battle. On the 21st October, 26 AS, in a hitherto-unimportant field in the north of Aesilon, the armies gathered. It was clear that Vanadon was outmatched and would be easily overwhelmed by the massed forces of Franks. As dawn broke, the clarions sounded, and the armies charged. The battle raged without surcease for over an hour, and corpses littered the field. Just when all seemed lost, Vanadon blew a piping call from her flute, magically enhanced for additional volume.

At that signal, the majority of the generals of Grayling's forces abruptly surrendered. His

elite guard turned on him, and beheaded him without ceremony or warning. It transpired that, during the course of the campaign, the Gryphon Legion had infiltrated Grayling's command structure and usurped it from within. The remaining generals were offered a stark choice – her father's choice. Bow your head – for good – or be parted from it. Unsurprisingly, they chose fealty, and the conflict ended. Since that time, the ruling house of Vanadon has remained in uncontested control of Corvantin.



*Elissa Vanadon Awaits
her Knights*

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Changes

Following this victory, it became clear that the Vanadon line was here to stay. Elissa Vanadon was crowned Queen of Corvantin within three days of her victory, and immediately began making a large number of changes to consolidate her powerbase and begin the laborious task of repairing the ravages of war.

The first and most notable of these changes was the moving of the seat of the Crown from Talrinar in Arador to Helikon in Aesilon, and the establishment of a firm and lasting alliance with the College of Enlightenment. As part of this move, Queen Elissa invited a representative of the College to sit on the High Council. This was both as a gesture of appreciation for the support the College had lent to her and her father, and also a deliberate snub to the Churches, who had opposed her. Indeed, it took her grandson, King Corbrey II, before the Churches were allowed to have a voice on the High Council.

The second major step was the establishment of the Aradorian tongue as the sole language across Corvantin. While previously each Dominion had, if not their own tongue, then at least a strong dialect. As part of her second unification, those tongues were vigorously discouraged, and indeed there existed a law (since repealed) that made it illegal for trade to be conducted in any tongue save Aradorian. While records of the older languages still exist – it has not yet been 200 years since this happened, after all! – they are now confined to old books and occasional sayings. Ironically, the most ancient of tongues – that of the dead Empire of La'tieri – remains far more widespread and common some millennia after it collapsed to dust than the Scarrowite language of a few short generations!


One of the other major changes Queen Elissa made, and the one which is most relevant to the discourse today, was the elevation of the Gryphon Legion. For the good and loyal services rendered by that nefarious company to two generations of Vanadon monarchs, they were raised from being merely mercenaries to being the Crown's elite soldiers.

Over time, this role has evolved from being merely a military organisation to being a group of specialists, who are employed by the Crown to undertake work either unsuitable for the standard armies and militias, to investigate crimes and events beyond the remit of local jurisdictions; and to pro-actively keep and enforce the Crown's peace and laws in the land. They are charged with the honour of the Crown and are loosed from many local restrictions and laws, on the proviso that they work for the best interests of the reigning monarch.

In Conclusion:

While this history may have been, perhaps, less concise than originally intended (one must forgive my scholarly enthusiasm!) I hope that it has provided you, dear reader and friend, with a grasp of the events following the emergence of The Shifting, the unification of disparate fiefdoms into the sole Kingdom of Corvantin, the establishment of the current royal line and, mayhap of more interest and importance to you, the founding of the august Order of which you now hold rare and blessed membership.

Aldolphus Quint, Purple Sage of Arador.

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