

What is Uresia?

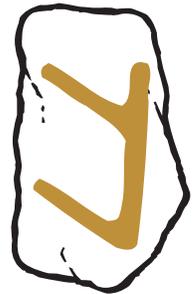
Uresia: Grave of Heaven is a traditional fantasy world warped through an anime lens, inspired by both Western swords-and-sorcery and things like *Slayers*, *Record of Lodoss War*, and *Bastard!* It's got slimes, long-eared elves, and all the trappings you'd expect from an anime fantasy world, and quite a few twists and turns that you might not. "Temphis" is one of the central island kingdoms of Uresia, and home of the world's most focal port city, Shadow River.

The Temphis Runes are designed to stand alone, but the folklore and history hinted at here are new material for Uresia fans, as a bonus! If you're interested in learning more about Uresia, get the book from Guardians of Order! You can visit them on the web at <http://www.guardiansorder.on.ca/>

both genders, either. The Lesser runes are entirely neuter, and considered weak, as runes go, at least on their own. In both fortune-telling and rune-carving sorceries, these runes bind and weave other runes together, a kind of "mortar" to the greater sigils' "bricks."

Writers, Runecarvers, and Oracles

Every major Uresian island uses the Temphisian Runes in some way, with only minor regional variation to the glyphs. While the languages of the kingdoms differ, they each use similar enough *sounds* to make the runes a nearly-universal link between the Uresian tongues. Most also use the runes for magic, although methods differ.



Birah and the Volenwood: Both lands prefer Nandrée, the ancient script of the Elves, to render their language, though in the Birah cities, at least, every citizen is familiar enough with the Temphisian Runes to make use of them – a remnant of the Koval Empire's influence. Use of the runes for magic, here, is unusual.

Boru: Boru uses the Temphisian Runes exclusively for writing, but only a little for magic, preferring their own native glyphs that the High Dreamer claims they stole from a ruined hall of Heaven.

Celar, Dreed, the Elu Islands, Kovalis, Rinden, Sindra, Temphis, Winnow, and Yem: In these lands, the Temphisian Runes are prominent, forming both the basic written alphabet and a complex body of potent magical lore. These nations include both rune carvers and practitioners of the Sindran Oracle, a system of rune casting to divine the future and more clearly understand the present.

Helt and Lochria: These are the only lands where the runes see virtually no use as a written language (the Heltish script resembles claw-marks), but runestones are still valued as enchanted items, and rune carving is common – blending the Temphisian Runes with local magic.

Laoch and Orgalt: In the kingdoms of the Dwarves, the runes are both alphabet and highly-respected symbols of magic, so much so that even common writings are often composed with the magical significance of each rune considered. Orgalt is the homeland of rune carving as a form of enchantment, and Laoch carries on the tradition. Sindran-style rune casting is unheard of, here: the Dwarves cast the runes, but in different patterns, and using their own preferred interpretations.

Songs, Dukes, and Others

The "alphabetical order" of the Temphis runes differs from our own, but the order has particular meaning in Uresia, where the distinction between a voiced and unvoiced consonant is known to have vital magical significance.

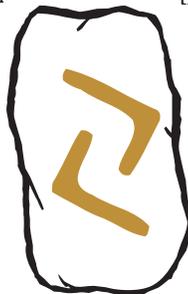


The first six runes, the Songs (vowels) are the considered the most powerful, and they're certainly the oldest, judging from pre-Skyfall ruins that adventurers have been pulling old pots and swords out of. The Songs are considered both "male" and "female" in nature.

The second set of six runes, the Whisperers, are considered feminine, and associated with darker, more secretive imagery than any other runes. They are all unvoiced consonants – sounds made with air across the lips and tongue, but no tone from the throat.

Each one of those is paired directly to its counterpart among the next six runes, the Dukes, also known as the Shouting Runes – a dramatic overstatement of the fact that these, by contrast, are voiced consonants. Each is considered the masculine "master" over its Whisperer counterpart, and these runes are broadly associated with daylight, and overt, honest action.

The remaining runes (Woda through Qalik) are the Lesser Runes. Unlike the Whisperers and Dukes, the Lessers are not assigned a gender, but unlike the Songs, they aren't assumed to include



The Whisperers: The Tale of Flori



Sora (ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, mapped to S), Féal (ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, mapped to F), Chesra (ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, mapped to C), Poros (ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, mapped to P), Kesra (ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, mapped to K) and Toloss (ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, mapped to T) tell the tale of Flori, a mythical girl from before the Skyfall who, according to legend, became the world's greatest thief and liar, and who seduced every king in the world. She died on a secret island of her own, surrounded by her wealth.

Sora, the first Whisperer, represents Flori's childhood in the Forgotten Port of Xan (Xan is also a lesser rune; see below). It represents water, darkness, and silence to the rune carvers. In the Sindran Oracle, Sora is associated with self-consciousness, sadness and sympathy.

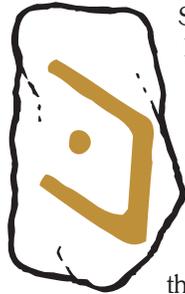
Féal, the second Whisperer, represents the deluge that destroyed Xan – a flood brought on by a terrible storm when the Sea Dragon fought Bortak and Nasho, the gods of the whale-hunters. Flori survived, but her family didn't. It represents the violence of nature to the rune carvers (it's carved on King Thorvald's axe, which strikes with the force of lightning), but also isolation (which is why the axe can also let Thorvald travel invisibly). The Sindran Oracle focuses on the second interpretation, associating Féal with separation, isolationism, loneliness, and sincere reflection.

Chesra, the third Whisperer, is called Flori's Awakening, and it represents her years as a wanderer, learning the trade of the thief and the skills of the seductress. This was her life of happy adventure, and the last time she would make any real friends. The rune carvers use Chesra as a symbol of skill and craftsmanship (like its counterpart, Jesra) but with connotations of unfairness – "the rune of special advantage," the cheating rune. It is also the symbol for sex. In the Sindran Oracle, the rune represents sensuality, friendship, and desperation.

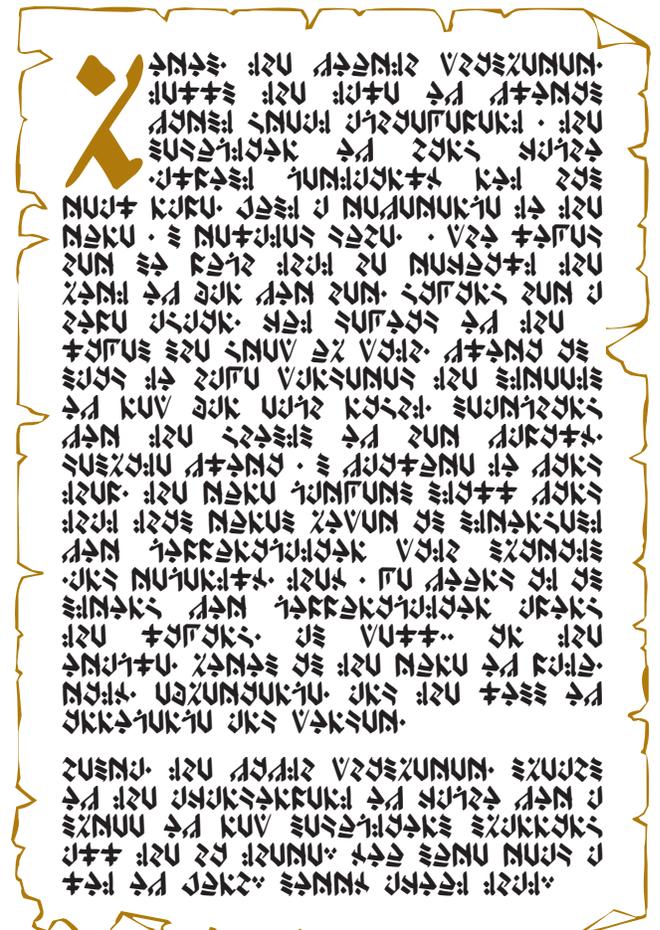
Poros, the fourth Whisperer, tells the tale of Flori's first great achievement – the seduction of King Bacho (almost certainly not his real name, just a reference to the rune's related Duke) – who loved her so much that he rebuilt the port of Xan for her, giving her a home again, but devoid of the lives she grew up with. Flori is said to have wandered the streets of New Xan each night, searching for the ghosts of her family. Despite Flori's failure to find them, the rune carvers still find that this rune's power is strongest for communication with spirits (and recently,

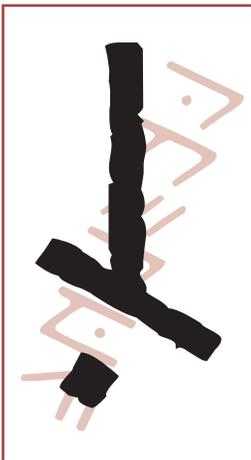
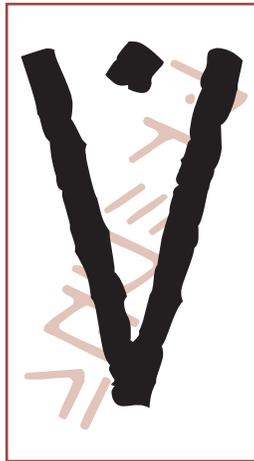
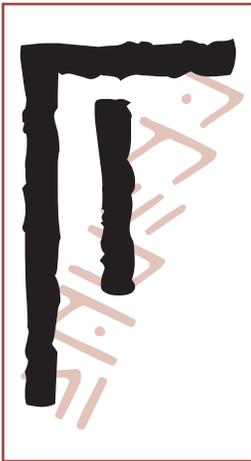
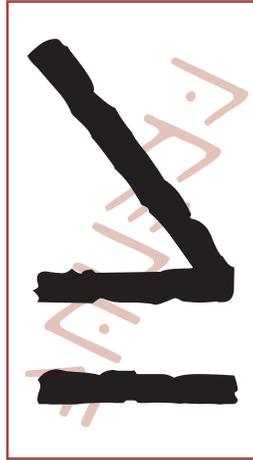
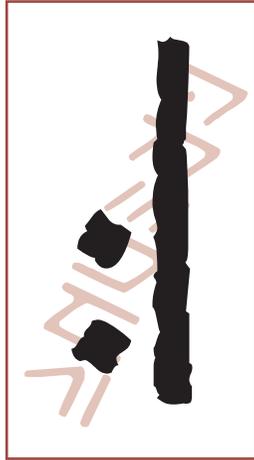
they've found it is strong for communication among the living, as well). In the Oracle, Poros is the rune of maturity, experience, and the loss of innocence and wonder.

Kesra, the fifth Whisperer, speaks of the abandonment of Bacho for a spree of new seductions spanning all the old empires of pre-Skyfall Uresia, and a series of outrageous related robberies (in one tale common in the Rindenland, Flori is said to have picked the pocket of Mlaatuk, the Sun God, not realizing that Mlaatuk's pocket is where he kept the moon during the day – she returned it to him, embarrassed by her only serious miscalculation, and never robbed a god again). This is the master rune of theft and deception to the rune carvers. In the Sindran Oracle, Kesra is the rune of freedom, dishonesty, and wanderlust.



Toloss, the sixth Whisperer, is the symbol of Flori's death, alone on a secret island of riches. King Bacho is said to have arrived in a rainstorm that same night, wearing a tattered cloak, having given up his kingdom to search for her all his life. He found her dead, and his weeping flooded the island and sank it forever beneath the sea. The rune carvers employ it as the rune of death, loss and mourning. In the traditions of the Oracle, Toloss is the sigil of secrecy, heartbreak, and fearlessness.





The
**Temphis
RUNES**

Copyright ©2001 by
S. John Ross. Permission is
granted to licensed users to
make unlimited hardcopy
for personal use.

www.cumberlandgames.com
CUMBERLAND
Games & Diversions