

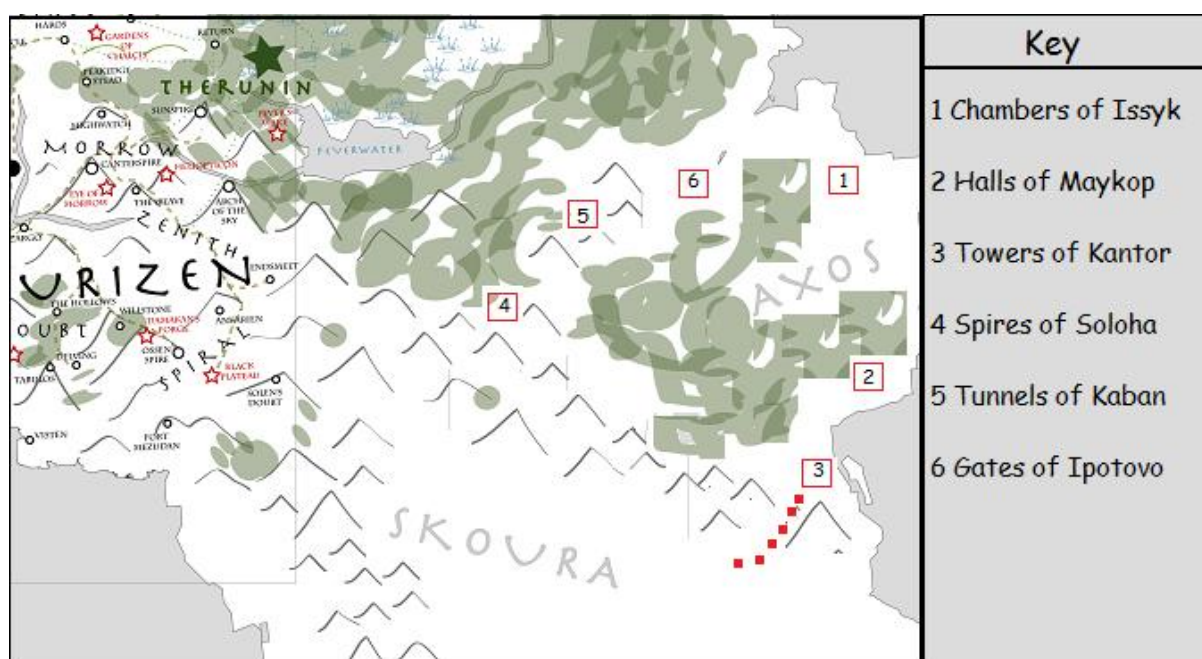
## Axos General Brief

Please read <https://www.profounddecisions.co.uk/empire-wiki/Axos> and [https://www.profounddecisions.co.uk/empire-wiki/Axos\\_religion](https://www.profounddecisions.co.uk/empire-wiki/Axos_religion), and see the additional information below.

### Axos Structure

Axou are formed into clans under the leadership of an Ilarch Sorcerer, who may be supported by lesser Ilae, all vying for the Ilarch's position. Beneath them in the hierarchy are the Kantus Mist Reaves, folk magicians, enforcers of the law and the lore and keepers of the traditions. Navarchos and Helots are the households of the Axou and the majority of the population. A household will usually be based around a trading vessel of some description, and the variety of supporting staff that this requires for this nation of traders.

### Places and Citadels



The six Citadels of Axos are (or were):

- The Spires of Solokha - on the border of the Mountains of the Moon. Something very bad happened there a long time ago, everyone there went mad and started killing everyone, and a lot of people in Axos blame the Empire for it, although the exact circumstances are lost to history. Where the ruins of it are, nobody goes. They *might* have actually know what was in the Mountains - but it was lost with them.
- The Halls of Maykop - isolationist, incredibly skilled at *necromantia*. Really keep to themselves...
- The Tunnels of Kaban - fell to the Druj a few years ago. Free-spirited and independent-minded - or they were. There's scattered rumours that they might be rebuilding now that the Druj forces have headed west, in the main.
- The Chambers of Issyk - used to be making quite a lot of overtures to the Empire, but were rebuffed. Known to be keen on alliance with Sarcophan, Jarm - and, some say, the Grendel.
- The Towers of Kantor - keen traders and the place that the trade advisor who communicates with the Empire's ambassador is based.
- The Gates of Ipotavo - only just resisted falling to the Druj thanks to the contribution of independent captains from the Empire. Generally the most pro-Imperial of the Citadels for that reason.

### Look and Feel

Most Axou avoid bright colours, or anything that would bring with it too much attention, black, grey and

brown along with shadowy hoods and cloaks or blankets drawn across the body. They often have many pouches, since they do not like to leave things lying around unless returned to their chambers at the citadel. They like soft leather and suede, and have a tradition of cultivating hides and skins. Some Axou still wear the bright colours of the Golden Age, but today it tends to manifest itself as small token gestures to a once glorious past.

They are a people living in vast tombs of their ancient glory, a powerful and vibrant people brought low by hubris and arrogance. The multi-coloured patterns of the days of glory are often worn as wristbands or good luck charms rather than articles of clothing. The ancient, crafted artwork is now subdued and worn, often passed down from generation to generation. Shields are crescent shaped or Persian shield shape, armour is scale or brigandine. They wear trousers marked with white etchings or patterns and wear long flowing coats which can also act as blankets. They wear hoods or phygian caps. The Look of the Axos is a cross between Scythian/Macedonian in mourning. The Feel is Voodoo Gnostic Macedonian Knights.

## **Brief for Tyrimmas (Kim)**

Your name is:

Tyrimmas, a Navarchos (merchant/trader/navigator) of the Clan Herros, of the Citadel of the Gates of Ipotavo. Some brief history: Ipotavo came close to destruction at the hands of the Druj, but thanks to the timely intervention of some independent captains (OOC: military units) from the Empire, the armies of the Axos were bolstered and the Gates held.

You are:

- Skilled in navigating complex politics:
  - The status of a Navarchos such as you is quite low in general, but you have been incredibly successful as a trader and merchant, helped by a natural gift for seeing the way political winds are blowing. You hope to help Theokleia, an Illae sorcerer who has been a good friend for a long time, to rise to the position of Ilarch of your clan soon. (Aleksandra, the current Ilarch of the Herros Clan, is quite old and it seems likely that soon she'll join the honored ranks of the ancestors - and with your careful and canny advice, Theokleia has done a good job of navigating the politics of the Illae who serve under Aleksandra.)
- Good-humoured
  - You have a pragmatic nature, and you enjoy slightly black humour about the inevitability of death - your demeanor is dark but not dour. While you're wary of mentioning it directly around Imperials, this is in some ways a bit of a religious matter to you: a personal "fuck you" to the Creator. "Happiness comes only from human endeavour", the Mist-Reavers teach.
- Inquisitive
  - One reason you've decided to visit the Empire is fundamentally, you're curious. While it was a long sea journey, it's worth it for new sights. You are, as many Axos are, risk-averse when it comes to personal safety, but you don't see why the traps of creation that the Creator has set for you ought to catch you - again, you seek to defy It.

Your personal ties and beliefs as follows are:

- **Defining Belief:** "I will defy the Creator and live a full life."
- **Major Tie:** "I will always be loyal to Theokleia."
- **Major Belief:** "Anybody can make someone agree to the impossible. It's just a matter of chutzpah."
- **Major Belief:** "It is always interesting to meet others who struggle against the Creator's yoke, however strange their culture."
- **Major Tie:** "I'm proud of my citadel; we've survived annihilation."

Your goals are:

- **Primary Goal: Lobby for the building of a spy network in the Mountains of the Moon**
  - There is a general desire within Axos for a land route between Axos and Urizen, which would unlock trade by creating an alternative to ship-based travel. This will economically benefit all the Citadels; helping this happen would be a big win for Theokleia and guarantee her ascension as Illarch of Clan Herros - and possibly even put her on a solid course for becoming the Grand Illarch of Ipatavo... with you at her side as her trusted advisor.
  - There is a single territory between Axos and Urizen (Zenith in particular): the mysterious Mountains of the Moon. Little is known of this territory (although see below).
  - The Mountains of the Moon must be understood and mapped before a land route can be created, and ideally the territory would be taken by either the Empire or Axos (realistically, the Empire are the ones who are likely to).
  - The first stage would probably be building a spy network to work out what's actually in the Mountains. What little folk memory there exists in Axos about this suggests that the Mountains are hard to traverse - it seems like madness to just move an army in regardless, although you could probably do it.
  - You are not here as an official representative - and indeed it would be illegal to claim to be. You are aware that the Grand Ilarch of the Towers of Kantor (one of the other citadels) has offered via the Imperial Ambassador five military units towards the operation of any spy network which is built. Axos are not inclined to commit the resources, however - they want the Empire to invest in this!

- There's general belief that they might otherwise be a bit of a fair-weather friend.
- You assume the Empire is also interested in the possibility of increased trade and so forth: although presumably sailors would not be keen on your plans...
  - OOC note: A spy network costs 10 weirwood and 20 crowns to build, and costs 2 Thrones per season to upkeep. This is quite expensive - only a very wealthy person would find this affordable, although there are some very wealthy people in the Empire. On the other hand: it only actually has to be operational for a single season. The Senate would have to pass a motion to build one - which they did last time but voted against! - or get someone with an Imperial Wayleave to use their one-off power of commission to do this.
- **Secondary Goal: Meet influential people within the Empire and make Theokleia known by them.**
    - This is a great chance to work out who the movers and shakers are in this *weird, strange, exciting* place. Anvil is the place where four times a year all the key political figures of the Empire travel to make critical decisions. While your eye's on the primary goal, you've another on the secondary one: Always Be Politicking.
    - You want to find the right people and introduce Theokleia to them, make them remember her, glad-hand afterwards.
    - You absolutely want people to come away with the impression that Theokleia is the rising star that she is. In many ways you're betting a lot on relations with the Empire improving - but there's lots of negativity about that back home.
  - **Tertiary Goal: Help Theokleia pursue her agenda on abolition.**
    - You don't have any strong opinions on slavery. Clan Herros owns a few slaves, but not that many; other Clans own more (some orcs, some humans).
    - On the other hand, Theokleia is a committed abolitionist, and you are absolutely loyal to her. She's interested in touching base with the Empire's vocal anti-slavery crowd; you see how to convert that into political capital. It's undoubtedly true that if there was a land route with the Empire - instantly making them Axos's biggest trading partner - the economic case for slavery would be much reduced. This will serve your primary goal.
    - Also, it's known that many influential people in the Empire have spoken out against slavery, even if they haven't always followed up on that with action. It seems a great way to make Theokleia a key link between the Empire and Axos, and that will serve your secondary goal.

You have:

- A season's worth of business income - this is to be used for any small bribes and paying for hospitality that are required.
- A few doses of Blackened Key, an Axos alchemical preparation unknown in the Empire, perhaps to sell or to use as something to garner interest.

## **Brief for Theokleia (Bex)**

Your name is:

Theokleia, a Illae (leader/sorcerer/administrators) of Clan Herros, of the Citadel of the Gates of Ipotavo. Some brief history: Ipotavo came close to destruction at the hands of the Druj, but thanks to the timely intervention of some independent captains (OOC: military units) from the Empire, the armies of the Axos were bolstered and the Gates held.

You are:

- A skilled and driven occultist.
  - By the power of the Illae are great magics wielded. You are skilled at the art of *necromantia*, the Axos magic of the dead; along with your fellow Illae and the clan's Illarch Aleksandra, you have performed acts of great ritual magic to pull back the dead from the grip of death and send them into battle to defend Ipotavo.
  - You know all the secret words and ancient gestures that can give voice to the voiceless dead and commune with ancestors who have been preserved on the threshold.
  - You seek more and greater power - not for its own sake, but because you know that only the strong can bring people together. You have ambitions to ascend to being the Illarch of your clan - or even beyond that, Grand Illarch of the Citadel, one day.
- Slightly naive when it comes to people.
  - When you spend all day talking to the dead and getting them to do your bidding, you start to forget how to talk to the living. Although you are confident in your personal power and can hold your own in conversation, you find others a little hard to read and often take them at their word or don't pick up on subtext.
  - Tyrimmas is great at helping you with this - you've been friends with him for a long time. You're very aware that without his wise counsel, you might have struggled to survive in the cut-throat personal politics of the Illae.
  - You don't understand why people talk around a point instead of getting straight to it. Say what you mean! You're aware that in the Empire you'll have to be careful what you say because of their strict heresy laws... but come on!
- Possessed of a keen and absolute moral sense.
  - You cannot abide cruelty or callousness, which in your own view of the religion of Axos is the great sin of the Creator, to be foresworn. Humans should be full of purpose and will, but they should not fall into barbarism and pettiness.
  - You have a great sense that some things are always wrong; lying, causing necessary harm - and above all else slavery, which you see as a great evil. This is exactly the sort of evil that the Creator does - why would we imitate him/her/it? We must rise above it! "The Creator holds us all in bondage; if we do the same to our fellows, are we any better?"
  - You can decide exactly what your red lines are, but whatever they are, you will not cross them.

Your personal ties and beliefs as follows are:

- **Defining Belief:** "Only I could rule in the right and moral way."
- **Major Tie:** "Tyrimmas is my greatest ally; I will always take his counsel."
- **Major Tie:** "Illarch Alexandra has taught me so much; I'll always be grateful to her."
- **Major Belief:** "Slavery is one of the great evils."
- **Major Belief:** "The Imperial Way is just another way of keeping the truth of the world from people; the priests of the Empire have to lie, all the time."
- **Major Tie:** "The traditions of Clan Herros are superior to all the other Clans of Ipatavo."

Your goals are:

- **Primary Goal: Network and meet those within the Empire who are pro-abolition:**
  - You are personally very opposed to slavery, although the Axos in general are... indifferent. Nobody's exactly saying it's fantastic, but there are lots of people who own slaves and it's the core of a lot of economic activity.
  - This angers you, but you know you can't change your own nation from within; you'd like to bring outside pressure to bear. This isn't exactly what the main contacts between Axos and the Empire are pushing... but you don't care.

- There is a general desire within Axos for a land route between Axos and Urizen, which would unlock trade by creating an alternative to ship-based travel. This will economically benefit all the Citadels; the increased economic and cultural links with the Empire could help to dissolve the case for slavery in Axos.
  - Your main goal is to meet people in the Empire and understand their perspective on slavery. This is, you understand, probably going to involve meeting some priests of the Synod, which is the Imperial body most opposed to slavery (although you're not sure of the details).
  - You don't like what you've heard of the Way, but you are - just about - willing to grit your teeth and work with these people who share a moral instinct (even if they are liars who hide the true horror of Creation from people).
  - You are not here as an official representative - and indeed it would be illegal to claim to be. But if you could achieve your political ambitions back home, perhaps you will be at some point. The key thing is networking - which Tyrimmas is keen on too!
- **Secondary Goal: Lobby for the building of a spy network in the Mountains of the Moon**
    - There is a single territory between Axos and Urizen (Zenith in particular): the mysterious Mountains of the Moon. Little is known of this territory (although see below).
    - The Mountains of the Moon must be understood and mapped before a land route can be created, and ideally the territory would be taken by either the Empire or Axos (realistically, the Empire are the ones who are likely to).
    - The first stage required would be building a spy network to work out what's actually in the Mountains.
    - You are aware that the Grand Illarch of the Towers of Kantor (one of the other citadels) has offered via the Imperial Ambassador five military units towards the operation of any spy network which is built, but Axos does not have the resource to build such a network itself.
    - It would be a big win for you if you could make this happen - Tyrimmas thinks it would guarantee your ascension as Illarch of Clan Herros when Alexandra passes - and her winter flu is not going away this year. This could be a chance to really do the things you need to do to make the sort of change happen you want. Not that you'll necessarily explain all this intricate political stuff to outsiders...
- **Tertiary Goal: View some Imperial rituals, perhaps even their necromantia.**
    - You're aware that the Imperials know various rituals which draw on the power of the dead in various ways. Probably nothing like as powerful or skilled as the Axos, you assume, but you are curious.
    - You'd like to see - while you're here - some examples of Imperial necromancy. Unlike your people - who jealously guard their ritual texts which are the only source of magical knowledge - here almost anybody in the Empire can learn any ritual? This seems... incredible, honestly.
    - Still, even if they are only talented amateurs working off hack scrolls, their work's got to be pretty interesting. You're almost tempted to critique techniques, although you suspect that's probably "undiplomatic".

You have:

- A season's worth of mana site income.
- Rank 4 Winter Magic, and mastery of (Axos versions of) the following rituals (unlikely to come up in play, but just in case...):
  - Mark the Flesh Incorruptible
  - An Echo of Life Remains
  - Clarion Call of Ivory and Dust
  - Whispers through the Black Gate
  - Winter's Ghosts
  - Sorin's Rite of Agony
  - Traitor's Fate
  - Freezing Brand of Irremais
- In addition to the basic spells, you know Voice for the Dead
- A Cowl of Ashes, giving you +3 rank to perform Whispers Through The Black Gate.

- A Doctor's Attire (an Axos version, anyway), giving you +2 rank for a single Winter ritual.

This means that with 10 mana and 5 liao you could perform, solo, "Whispers Through The Black Gate" (as long as you are in the Imperial regio). However, please don't feel any need to do this - rituals are tricky, of course. But if you want to talk about the kind of magic you can do, saying that you can with little or no aid summon spirits of the dead is very impressive.