

UNGOLD ASS

A RESEARCH REPORT ON THIS  
MINE

AND

HISTORICAL SITE

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# INTRODUCTION

Sungold Pass lies high in the Opascari mountains. In the wake of a terrible storm that wracked northern Varushka shortly after the Autumn Equinox 381YE, it was one of several sites of interest discovered by the Empire along with the monument at Wendell's Hope, the Bredavoi Cave, and the foundations of Irontooth Keep.

Almost immediately, the pass became a source of contention between the Empire and the orcs of Otkodov; its position high in the mountains allowed both nations to claim it as part of their own territory.

The Imperial Senate laid claim to Sungold Pass and the ruins there, but the Thule immediately responded with claims of their own. The situation was eventually resolved diplomatically a year later when the Imperial Senate agreed that the pass belonged to the Thule as part of the negotiations around the Sungold Treaty securing the release of Imperial slaves by the northern orcs

# ECENT ISTORY

## UNCOVERING THE PASS

In the wake of the great storm in later 382YE, an avalanche rumbled down the eastern foothills of Opascari. Prospectors and wagon raiders keen to explore discovered that the rock fall had uncovered something entirely unexpected.

Above the treeline on the side of the easternmost peak, known for centuries by the peculiar name of the Traveller, they found the remains of an outpost carved into the stone walls of a high and hitherto overlooked mountain pass. Excited archaeologists and scholars were quick to declare that the structure was almost certainly Terunael in origin!

Some Thule remains found in the ruins suggested that the archaeologists were not the first people of the modern age to come here - but were still the first people to come here in the last century.

The exploration uncovered the remains of both orcs and humans, as well as a few minor trinkets that seem to date dating back to the time of Chaos after the fall of Terunael. Perhaps even more interesting was the discovery that these ruins were part of an extensive orichalcum mining and smelting operation. The peak is tricky to reach, and very cold indeed, but it was clear that with a little effort the mines could be reopened, and the primitive smelting facilities updated and expanded.

Some of the explorers also discovered what appeared to be

peculiar decorations - inlaid mithril designs that wound and swirled across the parts of the ruins. Quite by chance it was discovered that when these designs were warmed - by a torch or brazier or even by extended contact with human skin - they held that heat. Furthermore, if the heat source were strong enough, the warmth would spread slowly through entire sections of the ruins. It seemed obvious that these designs were intended to combat the bitter cold of the high mountains.

Obviously, there was some interest in these ruins among the Navarr. Speculation suggested that this ancient Terunael outpost was most likely connected with the city of Emrys in Sküld, the existence of which had only recently been rediscovered by Navarr scholars.

## ESCALATING TENSIONS

In Summer 382YE, Vuk The Wolfeater as Senator for Karov raised a motion supported by the Imperial Senate laying claim to Sungold Pass and its ruined mine. This motion may have been prompted by reports of Thule scouts undertaking their own exploration of the area. In the wake of the Senate decision, several bands of independent captains - mostly Varushkan in origin - took it upon themselves to keep a watch over the area.

For their part, the orcs of Otkodov refused to give up their claim to the high pass and the mine ruins. Almost immediately following the Senate's decision the Thule ambassador to the Empire, Rak Who Speaks For The Dragons Undivided, issued a formal announcement that the Dragons

did not recognise the Imperial claim. Rak claimed that while the Thule agree that the mountain known as the Traveller in the Empire lies partially in Opascari in Volodmartz and partially in Kogur in Sküld, that the "Sungold Pass" is on their side of the mountain. As such, the resources were theirs to exploit and the presence of Imperial forces neither welcomed nor appropriate. In the interests of preserving the peace between the Empire and their northern neighbours, however, the Thule agreed that the orcs would not begin to build there until the dispute was settled and sent their own soldiers to ensure that the pass remained undisturbed until the matter could be resolved.

### SENATE MOTION, SUMMER 382YE,

"The Senate reasserts that the Sungold Pass and the mountain known as the Traveller are part of the region of Opascari, in Volodmartz, and that the exploitation of resources in Imperial Land by foreigners without the direct invitation of the Empire is not acceptable."

### THE SNOWSTORM HENK INCIDENT

The situation came to a head in Spring 383YE. The Minister of Historical Research, Caleb of the Cenotaph, instructed the Department of Historical Research to prepare a report on the history of the area. As part of the commission, the adventurous Imperial Orc scholar Snowstorm Henk led a small team of orc researchers up to the pass. While exploring the area, the civil servants were taken prisoner by the Thule who accused them of trespass, theft, and espionage.

The researcher and four of his companions were imprisoned in the Thule camp on the northern slopes of the Traveller. A Navarr magistrate was grudgingly allowed into the camp to see them - and was consequently able to smuggle a short report prepared by Henk back to the Minister of Historical Research. After further negotiation, Yevgeni Katzev (the Ambassador to Otkodov) issued a formal apology to the Thule on behalf of the Empire, and Henk and his companions were released shortly after although the artefacts they had recovered from the mine workings in the Pass were confiscated by the Thule.

## THE SUNGOLD TREATY

Finally, in Summer 383YE, Yegeni Katzev prepared a treaty for ratification by the Senate, part of which concerned the disposition of Sungold Pass. Along with provisions for the return of Imperial slaves held in Otkodov, the Sungold Treaty formally conceded the Pass to the orcs. It was again proposed by the Senator for Karsk - Vuk The Wolfeater - and approved by the Senate. The Thule queried the exact language used, claiming that their understanding was that the treaty would recognise that Sungold Pass was in Otkodov rather than in the Empire, but they did not challenge the treaty.

Almost immediately, according to Varushkan observers, the Thule moved labourers and soldiers into the pass and set about constructing a fortified wall that coincidentally served to conceal the mine workings from prying eyes. It is believed that the mine has now been reopened, and that metal is once again flowing down the northern slopes of



the Traveller into Otkodov.

## SENATE MOTION, SUMMER 383YE

“To ratify a Thule treaty in which we cede the Sungold Pass and pay 300 Thrones in order to have 2900 Imperial Citizens returned, as well as all Navarri citizens freed, and assured Ossium defence for the next season.”

### RESTORING SUNGOLD PASS

Restoring the ruins would have required a commission. It would have cost 20 wains of mithril and 10 wains of weir-wood, with labour costs of 30 crowns. It would have taken a season to open the mines, restore the smelting facilities, and perhaps even replace some of the damaged sections of mithril designs. This would have created a title - Warden of the Sungold Pass - and the civil service suggested that it would function as a sinecure providing 20 ingots of orichalcum each season. The well worn path for appointing this title would have been through the Imperial Bourse - either a private ballot by the mine owners of Varushka if it were national, or a public auction if it were Imperial.

In the end, the Empire chose to go a different way. It is assumed that the Thule undertook this commission themselves following the ratification of the Sungold Treaty.

# ISTORIAL ESEARCH

“Historical Research by the Minister of Historical Research: To research the history of the Sungold Pass mine that the Thule are laying claim to on the boundary of Ot-kodov eastern foothills of Opascari.”

Announced by Caleb of the Cenotaph, Minister of Historical Research, Winter 382YE

Snowstorm Henk and his four companions - Skywise Slu, Blackbeak Ussa, and Snowstorm Makka - are the only Imperial citizens to have made even a cursory examination of the mine workings in Sungold Pass. Following their return to the Empire, the Imperial Orcs set about expanding the preliminary report they were able to have smuggled to the Minister of Historical Research. The report has since been made public knowledge by the Imperial Archivist

## PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS

Sungold Pass proved to be an enigma. None of the historians spoken to had any information about the place. A very old pre-Imperial document about the establishment of a vale in Opascari long-since overwhelmed by wolves made a tantalising reference to "the high passes of the Traveller" but nothing else was uncovered.

Before heading to the Pass, Snowstorm Henk and Blackbeak Ussa made the trek to the vale of Void in Brez. A

small party of cabalists had launched an expedition to explore the ruins shortly after they were discovered alongside a party of wagon raiders from drawn by the promise of orichalcum. They confirmed the supposition that the ruins were Terunael in nature, making use of divination rituals to explore the history of the place and the provenance of items found at the site. They were also able to examine some of the human and orc skeletal remains found in the upper mineworkings using Winter magic - among other things they were able to ascertain the names of the skeletons. The bones were found to have originated in two specific time periods. The orc remains, and a handful of human skeletons, dated from 276YE. The orc skeletons had Thule names, while the human bones appeared to have primarily Varushkan names. The remainder of the skeletons dated from the Chaos following the fall of Terunael. Specifically, they unearthed three sets of human remains from the Terunael period, interred beneath cairns, overlooking the mine workings. The bodies had been interred with grave goods which further confirmed that they were most likely Terunael who died around the time that Terunael fell. Of particular interest was the fact that each of the three wore an orichalcum medallion in the shape of a stylised sun which each bore a (long since faded) enchantment similar to that found on an Imperial Circllet of Falling Snow most likely marking them as having been magicians. The Varushkans confirmed that they had several items of interest recovered from the ruins in the pass and the upper mines, but declined to share them with the civil service scholars.

Following the meeting with the cabalists of Void, Henk met up with Skywise Slu and Snowstorm Makka on the lower slopes of the Traveller. The other two orcs had spoken with some of the wagon raiders who had initially discovered the mine in the Pass but confirmed that the raiders had mostly been interested in gathering as much orichalcum as possible before retreating back down the mountain. They claimed the ore - and the bars of processed metal they found scattered about the ruins - was good quality but not notable otherwise. It was not possible for the orcs to review any of the material as it had long since been sold on.

## THE MINE WORKINGS

Snowstorm Henk resolved to attempt to explore the ruins directly, reasoning that a small group would be able to get in and out without being noticed. His overconfidence very nearly proved to be his undoing, and he has been formally cautioned by the Imperial Archivist about refraining from any such foolish "adventures" in future.

The ruins above-ground ruins were not the focus of the expedition, but Henk confirmed what several Varushkan observers had reported - that there were signs of fortifications and barricades on both sides of the pass. Skywise Slu speculates in the report that the original Terunael builders who constructed the mine were as worried about attack from the south as from the north - perhaps understandable given the various horrors that populate the wilds of northern Varushka. In addition to smelting, sorting, and casting facilities clearly dedicated to the production of orichalcum,

iron, and gold, there were remains of several stone buildings that appear to have been warehouses, barracks, and living quarters - many still partially buried. It seemed the Terunael were refining the metal pulled from the bones of the mountain in situ before sending it on... wherever they were sending it.

## THE GOLDEN TRACERY

Henk reported that the tunnels leading deeper into the mountains were dangerous and prone to collapse. Several times promising avenues ended at solid walls of fallen rock. Blackbeak Ussa had been specifically recruited for their familiarity with mines - a skill the Liberated orc had gained through long years labouring in the mines of eastern Jarm. They confirmed that the mine workings were themselves a fine example of stone craft. The tunnels and galleries were narrow but well constructed as often. Where wood had been used to support the ceilings, it was generally weir-wood - meaning they had survived the centuries relatively intact. Still, many parts of the ruined mine was unstable especially the larger galleries where Blackbeak Ussa cautioned that even a loud noise might trigger a catastrophic collapse.

Part of the danger was presented by what appeared to be quite extensive flooding. The water was freezing - and indeed in many of the lower tunnels the scholars explored had frozen solid creating beautiful but deadly icicles and columns of frozen water. Indeed, the tunnels rapidly became cold enough that even orcs toughened by the cold winters of Skarsind and wrapped in thick furs were unable

to continue safely. Blackbeak Ussa speculated that any number of the lower galleries might be entirely choked with ice - although obviously how extensive the lower galleries and tunnels might prove to be was impossible to say.

The initial focus of the investigation were the mithril-tracers inlaid in the upper mine workings whose propensity for gathering and spreading heat had been remarked by the initial Varushkan exploration of the area. More thorough examination by the artisan Snowstorm Makka revealed that the metal used in these "decorations" was actually an alloy of mithril and orichalcum, spun and stretched to make wire, and then inlaid into the stone walls in sweeping, angular designs. The orcs speculated that the designs emanated from a single central point somewhere deep within the mountain - and further speculated that it was likely that wherever they came from there was likely to be a source of heat. There was no doubt that the heat-providing properties of the designs was intentional and exploited by the Terunael to keep the frigid air of the high peaks at bay - in several places the designs were also worked into the floor especially in the orichalcum mining galleries.

## RELICS

The upper mine workings had been largely picked clean of relics - either by the first Varushkan visitors or by the orcs of Otkodov. There was still some sign of the previous inhabitants however. In a narrow spur off one of the main tunnels on one of the upper levels, the orc scholars found four old tablets of slate covered in crabbed writing. A full

translation was impossible in the poor conditions in the tunnels, but Snowstorm Henk reports that from a preliminary examination they were the journal or last testimony of a person who had fled south from Emrys and become trapped up in the mountains by the weather. Their food supplies were running out, and the heat that made the tunnels habitable was slowly fading. There were no remains found with the slates however. Pushing further down, the orcs found several more of these slates, again covered in crabbed handwriting. They expected to be able to review them at their leisure once they had returned to civilisation. Henk speculates that they were left for the benefit of "rescuers" that the person writing them was sure would come in the Spring.

In addition to the slates, the orcs found signs of recent disturbance. They reported a broken pick handle carved with the runes Pallas and Verys wedged into a wall and some spent torches marked with the Rune of Revelation. These remnants were less than a year old, and conclusively pointed to the Thule having made their own exploration of the mines - indeed it looked very much as if they had made preliminary attempts to begin working the upper mines.

## MITHRIL

Perhaps more importantly, the orcs also discovered that it was not just orichalcum, iron, and gold that the Terunael had been mining in Sungold Pass; there was mithril here as well. Blackbeak Ussa confirmed the precious nature of the ore, and that while it certainly appeared to be a thin vein, it looked very much as if it went further down into

the mountain that the orcs were able to reach. The first signs of the mithril were in a lower area, sheathed with ice, and at the very limit of the orcs ability to tolerate the cold. The walls here were particularly thick with the mithril-orchalcum designs, but Snowstorm Makka reported that between them the spreading ice had damaged several of them to the point where they were uncertain if they would continue to operate even if heat were provided.

Given the location of the Thule relics, Henk is confident that the orcs of Otkodov are aware of the mithril - indeed it looks as if they had removed some samples of the ore given recent signs of excavation in the lower galleries.

## THE NORTHERN SLOPES

At the limit of their supplies, and with the cold only intensifying, Snowstorm Henk decided to end the expedition and return back down the southern slopes. Unfortunately, while leaving the mines the Imperial Orcs ran afoul of a Thule patrol and were taken into custody. Serendipitously, this allowed them to get a much better look at the northern slopes of the traveller as they were marched to the main Thule camp in the foothills of Kógur.

Carved onto the northern side of the mountain, invisible from Varushka, there is an immense sun design. The scholars were unable to get a close look at it but described it as "impressive" - hundreds of feet in diameter and intricately carved. Speaking to one of the slaves at the Thule encampment, Henk reports that there is some evidence that the design at one point was inlaid with metal - although this lat-



ter information apparently comes from the mutterings of the slave's ancestors so should be treated as unreliable.

In addition to the presence of the great sun design, the orc scholars also report that while the pass is difficult to reach from the Volodmartz side, there is an obvious road that winds down the slopes of the Traveller on the Otkodov side. At some points, there were even still-intact stone railings. There were also several ruined stone structures at the base of the road that appeared to have been watchtowers, perhaps part of a larger fortification partially buried in old stone. The Thule had converted parts of these ruins to make their encampment.

Much of the road showed signs of having been recently excavated however - it looked as if there had been a significant collapse of avalanche that had shattered much of the approach and buried the road in hundreds of tons of stone at some point in the distant past - before the recent storms had caused further collapse serendipitously revealing parts of the road again and allowing the orcs to begin clearing the rest.

## FINAL NOTES

Henk finished his report with some further speculation. It is his opinion that someone - probably the Terunael but possibly the Thule - was mining the orichalcum and the mithril up in Sungold pass, then taking it down the mountain on the northern side. Given the presence of the unique designs clearly used to heat the tunnels, Henk speculates that the mine workings must have been especially rich - if

only to justify the obvious expenditure of both orichalcum and mithril used to keep them habitable. There's no sign, incidentally, that the Terunael were moving anything either into the mountains or down to modern-day Volodmartz - the approach on the Varushkan side looks to have always been perilous and difficult.

The Thule themselves were aware of the ruins, but unable to reach them (or unwilling to spend the resources needed to reach them) until the great storm caused some of the previous stone blocking access to the ruins to be cleared. Indeed, Henk reported, the Thule were very interested in the ruins - to the degree that while the warlocks were interrogating the captured orcs there was often one of the Thule hollow present - the eyes and ears of one of the Dragons themselves.

# AFTERWORD

Through the Navarr, the Empire are the Heirs to Terunael. It is our Destiny to recover all that was theirs - and that includes Sungold Pass and its mine. That said, the Treaties with the Thule have allowed the Empire to concentrate its forces on more immediate issues. It is not worth starting a war over twenty ingots of orichalcum a season

But I suspect that there is much more to Sungold Pass than a simple orichalcum mine, even if there is also a seam of mithril. Let me martial my facts:

- † Scholars of Terunael will be aware that the lost city of Emrys (now known to be in southern Sküld) was said to be lit by a golden sun
- † There is an immense sun design on the northern slopes of Sungold Pass, facing southern Sküld
- † The workings of the mine are laced with a mithril-orichalcum alloy that absorbs, stores and transmits heat
- † Based on the design and layout of this lacing, the research team speculates that this network of “golden tracery” emanates from a central point deep within the mountain
- † It is known that, deep within the earth lie pockets of molten rock and metal known as magma. If one of these pockets is at the heart of Sungold Pass, then this source could have heated the whole of the mine

- † Any mineowner will tell you that their workings require constant maintenance to prevent flooding and cave-ins. This would not have been possible during the Fall of Terunael. This lack of maintenance would have disrupted the “golden tracery”, leading to the flooded and frozen state that the mines are in today
- † There is a legend that the sun design on the northern slopes of Sungold Pass was inlaid with metal

Based on this information, I speculate that:

- † Firstly, at the height of the Terunael Empire, the network of golden tracery in the Sungold Pass mine spread heat and light all the way from a pocket of magma deep in the mine, to the design on the northern slopes of Sungold Pass
- † Secondly, that this is the source of the legend of the Golden Sun of Emrys

I furthermore predict:

- † That a detailed map of Sküld will show that the Golden Sun design faces in the direction of the Vallorn that now emanates from what was once Emrys
- † That further investigation of Sungold Pass will show that the network of “golden tracery” extended into the design

I end with an Ambition. We know, through archaeology and Past Life Visions, that that the Terunael made their homes in the frozen north. We are the heirs to their Empire. As such, it is our Destiny not only to rebuild what was lost but to go beyond what our ancestors achieved

We must recover Emrys, destroy the Vallorn that is rooted there and then rebuild not just the city, but the Sun of Sun-gold Pass

Pride and Ambition demand nothing less





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