

These are my revisions to the documentation.

What You Know...

This section is a summary of the key things to know so that you can dive right into your new apprentice bard, without reading countless pages of rich cultural lore. Remember, as an apprentice, or even a Seeker, you are role playing someone who can take their time learning how to be a Full Bard, and exploring the traditions and cultures of His Ivory. You needn't immediately know everything. There is opportunity for RP in knowing little, too. And there is tremendous room for growth. You are encouraged to make your way gradually through the compiled documentation here.

Bards in History and Culture:

The Silent Circle was once New Poets' Circle, and before that was Old Poets' Circle. Before that, Tuluk's bardic tradition came from the nomadic tribes united by Muk Utep. Throughout its cycles of creation and destruction, northern bards have successfully guarded the cultural identity of Tuluk with ruthless care, the stewards of history itself.

It is the dawn of the 23rd age. Tuluk's gates have reopened to the Exiled Known. An influx of change clashes with old traditions. Your role in this cultural milieu is to navigate the masses toward the values His Ivory holds dear through subtlety and Art.

The Silent Circle is for some, a way to cultivate reputation and tremendous respect, even social status, or caste. Though a Circle Apprentice might be considered only a little more recognized than your average street busker, a Seeker commands respect by merit of their title for many reasons. Full Bards are famous - part of the job description - while the Master Bards are rare and mysterious, part of an elite society of true legends.

As a Bard in the making, you seek to master what it means to be Tuluki. In everything you do, you seek to capture the ineffable essence of the Arts. Music, song, words, art, lore, blades... There are many arcs to learn from in the Silent Circle.

As a member of the Silent Circle, you are a cultural signpost. You set the standard for behavior. You measure the pulse on the streets of the city. And you exploit the nuances of the social order to play a grand game of social politics.

You know of five Circles:

Each Circle draws an immeasurable variety of artistic talent, but gravitates toward certain trends and subcultures within the overarching social order.

- Diamusek - bards concerned with etiquette, manners, politics and high society.

- Elkinhym- bards who ease the anxieties of the populace with all manner of comedy.
- Groot - bards who seek adventure and are grounded in rustic Tuluki values.
- Konviweddu - bards who bask in His Dream, spinning fantastical narratives and play.
- Rusalra - bards who appeal to the diverse non-human element within the Ivory.

There was once another Circle. It is now a forgotten Circle. Not much is spoken of it anymore. Hushed whispers traded only by the superstitious: Irofel. Folk don't tend to be too loud about it, unless they're looking to disappear.

Progression as an Apprentice:

There are only four traditional ranks in the Silent Circle, no matter ones circle inks, and each represents a dramatic leap upward in Tuluki social status:

- Apprentice
- Seeker
- Bard
- Master Bard

Seekers are so called because they are traditionally tasked to 'Seek Talent' outside of the Circle in order to replenish the ranks. In order for so-called 'Talent' to become an Apprentice, they must somehow gain the elusive attention, and express permission of the Master Bard of the Circle to which they seek to audition.

To be considered a Seeker by the Bards and Masterbards of the Silent Circle, an apprentice must fulfill certain requirements. They must learn instruments, songs, poetry, wordplay, blade, and a host of other basics.

Often, established Seekers can be coaxed into helping an Apprentice along, in return for favors or assistance. A lucky apprentice will attract the mentorship of an already recognized Bard, who might take them on due to some genuine hope that they have discovered a prodigy.

Finding a Patron, Working for Others:

A bard who works for a 'Patron' is called their 'Partisan'. These relationships are as varied as the individuals who make them up, and come in all manner of forms. A bard may even have more than one patron! You do not need to be in the patron's clan. Though an option, patronage is in no way the same as employment.

Patrons must always pay partisans to represent them in the Silent Circle. Bards have long memories, and keep track of who contributes to the artistic development of their membership. Considering that a couple of Seekers together can destroy the careers of even a Junior noble in a Surif House, it must be no great leap to imagine that everyone in politics should make finding a reliable partisan a priority.

You do not ever need to be under the full employment of anyone. Secretly, though you tactfully might never admit it, you know that any individual patron needs you more than you need them.

Noone in the Silent Circle will consider you for a promotion from Seeker if you are formally employed and occupied elsewhere. To enter the ranks of the elite Full Bards, and outstrip your Apprentice and Seeker origins, you must be working openly in the interests of the Silent Circle itself, and serve no other clan.

Joining Multiple Clans, an OOC note:

The Bards of Poets' Circle is not a traditional clan. It is a medley of interests working in harmony together. You are not as restricted in this clan as you commonly are in others.

If you find another clan you want to join, you may join it. You may join multiple clans, if the OOC rules governing those clans allow you to be in them. You will still have the option of reporting to both the Bards of Poets' Circle and the clan(s) to which you are a part of, in the request tool.

Good luck!.

The Place of the Silent Circle in Tuluki Society

This note should be available and posted on the following forums:

- The Bards of Poets' Circle
- Tuluki Templars
- House Dasari
- House Kassigarh
- House Winrothol
- House Tenneshi

The various bards of Tuluk, collectively known as The Silent Circle, are in their limited numbers, very respected members of society. Long gone are the days of every last performer being inducted into the Circle - it is now where the elite of the bards are located, as opposed to the common rabble of sellsongs, street buskers and artists, of which there are a great many. They are seen as a source of wisdom, often of very sound advice, and they are one of the few groups in Tuluk who are **allowed as well as expected** to speak truth to power.

The bards, while patriotic, are often very neutral in their standings - with the exception of those which are under the direct auspices of patronage. This neutral stance and placement is advantageous to the Faithful and Chosen as well as the citizenry of His Ivory... the citizens feel comfortable speaking to members of the Silent Circle and confiding in them for advice, and the

Faithful can be seen counting on them for opinions and advice as well, due to their boots-on-the-ground informed nature.

A mistake that is common to a few Faithful and Chosen out of every generation is to treat unaligned bards as defacto free aides or even slaves. These Faithful and Chosen have invariably either figured out the errors of their ways, or had sharp downturns in their reputations and ability to operate or pursue their own desires. With the bardic community being so small, and them being so tight knit, word of mistreatment spreads like wildfire. The Driamusek slip rumors to the Chosen whose children they help raise, informing them of mistreatment, which causes contracts and assistance to dry up. Groot and Rusarla bards mention issues of mistreatment openly to the populace (as is their job to do so) which causes the citizenry to become much more cooperative with **other** Faithful or Chosen. Contacts and options dry up like an open black leather waterskin left out at midday on top of the Shield Wall.

Some pertinent points for those in power to keep in mind:

- If you want a bard to do something for you - it should be done as a request, not an order. These are respected members of the community, and very useful allies.
- If a bard does do something for you, payment should be rendered. This is true whether you are their patron or not.
- Seekers and full Bards especially should be treated well. These individuals have proven themselves already as skilled and useful. Apprentices can be expected to be hazed a bit, but it should always come with a reward at the end. If displeased, Seekers can make advancement and contacts difficult, and full Bards or Masterbards can absolutely wreck a career.
- The Silent Circle should actively be employed as diplomatic forces towards outsiders or distrusted insiders. They are a very effective force of informational control. If a Faithful or a Chosen wants to find something out from an external faction, and they do not have an assistant or someone they patron, a bard is an excellent choice -- the importance of reputation to the bardic culture almost assures they'll do the best they can and take every possible route to success.
- Remember above all - Bards are not just singers and dancers and storytellers. They are influencers, they are rumor mills, they are movers and shakers that are well mannered and often have reach where even Faithful power can not go. They are potent allies, respected members of society, and often have criminal or external contacts that can filter in a lot of clutch information. Please treat them as such.

Tuluk is a xenophobic, hardass city state that can easily toe-to-toe with the Ancient Enemy Allanak. The reopening of the gates re-introduces a complex cultural setting for role play. Do your best to remember how different Tuluk is from Allanak, and to reinforce it at every possible moment. The patronage system is **awesome** and very distinctly different from Allanaki aide system. If you're rusty, review it when you can, and help keep this culture moving forward by making the proper waves.

This message will be posted to all Tuluki High Society boards.

Historical Introduction

Located in the northern section of the city of Tuluk, Poets' Circle was sometimes known as New Poets' Circle, a name which reflects the fact that it is a recreation of the original 'Old' Poets' Circle, destroyed in the Fall of Tuluk in 1450. The Circle formerly housed as many as a couple thousand bards of all walks of life, a true center of the civilized arts, but now plays host only to the most desperate, the listless, and animal scavengers.

When Tuluk closed her gates, the exiling of the Known World began. Bards of all types took part, with every single one of them, by deed or by word, having blood on their hands for the removal of malcontents and non-citizens.

Eventually things calmed down. Every single living humanoid within His City had a star of some sort on its hand, or had been burnt or pushed down for use as fertilizer. Things went well for a while.

Then came Ruk's Wrath.

The Uaptal Theatre was packed with over a thousand bards, and an equal number of commoners and chosen. Part way through a famous play about a gortok, the ground began to groan, and before anyone could think of escaping, many were thrown to the ground. Stone benches broke off of their supports, trapping people below, others were slain by falling masonry or collapsing doorways. Some survivors, of which there were exceedingly few, said that in some cases the ground literally opened up and swallowed people whole.

The destruction leveled most of Poets' Circle, taking whole huts and buildings down into the ground, never to be seen again. It is said that for as long as a week or two after the Wrath that the screams of the trapped and dying could still be heard from below the rubble and below the ground. Eventually there came the Silence.

Devastated, the bards of Tuluk were nothing if not resilient, and refused to succumb to depression or madness at the loss of so many. With several circles banding together, housing was found for the displaced within the similarly shaken and partially destroyed Tuluki Warrens. Medical aide given to those who survived and needed it. They started to rebuild anew - but many lived on with trauma, and some never smiled again, even when playing their favorite tunes, or telling their favorite stories.

Grim and determined, the circles refused to let the lack of their old home get to them, and many turned their back on the ruined Poet's Circle entirely, saying that it was haunted or cursed by the loss of so many at one horrible moment.

Poet's Circle as it currently exists is destitute ruin. Scrub weeds and thornbush have taken over large portions of what was once a well manicured environment. Chunks of broken stone,

smashed bone, and jagged chips of tile create a foundation that is deadly to those without boots and uncomfortable or even dangerous to well equipped feet. After a devastating series of earthquakes during The Fastening (when Tuluk had its gates closed to all comers), the entirety of the Circle and much of Tuluk was thrown into physical upheaval. Entire shops and houses were swallowed by the hungry ground and hundreds died. Those who lived through it said you could even hear people screaming from underground, trapped within the sunken edifices, for days or weeks afterwards until it became what it is now - **The Silent Circle**.

There are several notable ruins within The Silent Circle, including the former Lucky Ghaati, the Uaptal Theatre, and the House of Zelafin. The House of Zelafin is little more than a tumbledown wreckage of former glory, while the Lucky Ghaati and the Theatre have been a bit more lucky. Both are crumbled and cracked, still somewhat standing but a grim reminder of what once was.

Many young bards take it as a form of counting coup to sneak into the old Uaptal Theatre and sing a song which is never sung again - both to prove themselves strong and to give tribute to their fallen predecessors.

Every once in a while some bard or another decides they want to try to rebuild the old Uaptal Theatre, or clear out a portion of the The Silent Circle for themselves. Many have tried. Many have died. Some have simply disappeared. Others have gone completely mad. Every once in a while, one of them ends up being a permanent fixture of the ruins, shambling around as a Listless.

History and Origins

Old Poets' Circle

Long ago, before the cataclysmic events which destroyed Old Tuluk, Poets' Circle thrived in a little area just near the Pak Curachek Arena, filled with balconies, stages, bards, songstresses, poets and many other varieties of inspired artists. In the climate of old Tuluk, bards had often been known to also pass as peacemakers, advisors and diplomats. Due in part to the high respect for the art of assassination and general roguery, it was often held that some of the more adept of this type also came from Old Poets' Circle. But whatever the individual tendencies were, the bards were united by their deep passion for their art: music, song, story, poetry, painting, dancing, prose and so on.

Bards have always played a very prominent position in Tuluki society, but little is known these days of how, in the previous ages, the Old Poets' Circle functioned. It is a topic surrounded by mystery and intrigue, and varied accounts and tall-tales abound about the accomplishments of the more famous master bards of the age. Dominating the discourse between bards reminiscing about these times of lore are near-mythological legends such as Holt Irofel, the master bard who traveled the world embarking upon amazing and fearless adventures with his Troupe "The Sands of Irony", Reznor Elkinhym the jester who supposedly once posed as a Fale noble for a few years unnoticed, or Lashania Konviweddu, the reclusive master bard who was a cutting voice of dissent in her elder years during the Occupation and a cunning master spy. Each circle has their favorites, and precious ancient poems and songs still find their way about various circles from time to time, in the present day the coaxing of these stories from their dwindling sources has become an absolute requirement of study for many apprentices, though further embellishments, in good taste of course, are covertly encouraged.

Much of what once was is now lost, having fallen to 'shadows and dust' as the Konviweddu often say. Whatever the truth about the Old Poets' Circle, the stories of the close community's past are a favorite with all bards, and used to shape the ideals and ambitions of apprentices and master bards alike.

The Cataclysm and the Scattering of the Bards

Many a sad tale and song are still retold and sung of the destruction of old Tuluk. The ramifications of so many deaths (approximately 80-90% of all bards in the city at the time) and the loss of so much master-art and knowledge which had been passed through countless generations deeply impacted traditions and attitudes associated with death to this very day, a subject which is viewed most seriously amongst the circles.

In the dark years after Tuluk's destruction, turmoil spread rife through the region, and the tightly knit community of bards was far from spared. Retreating into themselves, bards of the Poets' Circle Tradition began to wear charm-strings and specific caste tattoos in order to identify themselves quickly to one another. Becoming widely traveled, and feeling no particular allegiance to the city, some even ventured south, to establish what life they could in the city of Allanak.

However, the majority of the artisans of Poets' Circle remained in close contact with one another, and the traditions between Master and Apprentice(s) began to emerge even more prominently. Schooling with weapons and combat became highly important, especially amongst the now quasi-nomadic bardic troupes, and some circles, especially Groot and Irofel began to see real adventurers amidst their ranks.

The later part of this turbulent era is where many of the master bards forged their legacies, as they traveled and resettled, seeking to make sense of life and continue along their old traditions.

It was with the inevitable expansion of the Obsidian Empire, however, that the remaining Bards of Poets' Circle faced their greatest danger, and risked extinction.

The Oppression of Allanaki Occupation

No period at any point in history has weighed so heavily on the current culture and traditions of modern bards than the era of Allanak's vast Empire of oppression, which swept across the Known World, crushing all resistance and conquering vast portions of new territory. The bards were hardly spared and were in fact often targets, as symbols of the North.

Having made cruel examples of all who were caught offering a dissenting voice amongst the populace, those true to the traditions of Old Poets' Circle were forced underground, and were severely restricted in both speech and action. Naturally repulsed by the starkly contrasting tastes of the Allanaki elite, and haunted by a pervasive atmosphere of fear and brutality, the Bards of Poets Circle quickly evolved toward perfecting the arts of secrecy and subtlety in much of their activity. Though a strong tendency for rebellion and freedom of expression remained at the core of their activities, they waited, patiently, concerned more with their own survival than risking to side with the more open and overt acts of opposition available.

During this time, an extremely subtle language emerged between the serious Tuluki players. Based on allusions to song or poetry, encoded within rhythm or spoken prose which contained double, even triple meanings, Poets' Circle bards learned to turn apparently innocent seeming conversation into a deeply veiled ulterior method of communication. Music followed suit with the trend, drums often being favored for direct encoding, thus the aptly named 'talking' drum still used today. This form of communication, known as Bardic Cant, is a secret closely guarded by the Circle, and still in use to this day.

Call and response in song, music, dance, and 'dueling' appeared amongst Circle bards during this time as well, for the tendency of rebels to use phrases and counter-phrases to pass messages back and forth swept, if slowly, through the whole of true-blooded northern populations. It is rumored that a few rebel bards had come up with this method of communication originally, but such things cannot truly be confirmed and are lost to the sands of time.

Many bards, like Kidjanja Groot, played their part in small and subtle ways, though none really stood out in a historical sense, preferring at the time, ironically enough, to stay in the background. The master bards used their subtlety and crafty positioning within the vast Obsidian Empire to act as informants, spies, assassins and secret conduits for widespread dissent and messages of hope for the future. Some Bards, however, chose to play a larger part in assisting and disguising themselves as the Chosen nobility of Tuluk, the role of a lifetime, a King's Age, sacrificing their lives so that the Chosen might remain anonymous and hidden amongst the common populace, suspicion diverted.

Liberation and the Political Economy of New Poets' Circle

The eventual victory over entrenched Allanaki forces, and their consequent slaughter in Luir's Outpost did more than free the people of the northlands and drive back the Empire--it prompted a cultural explosion amongst the bards everywhere. Long having dreamt of the day where old traditions and culture might be celebrated rather than oppressed, Masterbards everywhere migrated back to Tuluk, excited to fulfill their dreams and visions for a prosperous future, and a long discussed idea of a New Poets' Circle.

Every form of art and mode of expression previously frowned upon or even outlawed by Allanak sprung to life, providing a vibrant atmosphere for change and rebirth, the sound of liberation. Master Kidjanja Groot is noted for saying in her famous address to the other Masters and their apprentices, that "as the cries of battle fade across the lifting shadows of our lands, a New Poets' Circle will pulse again with life; the healthy, beating heart of a free North that shall haunt our oppressors for all eternity."

Obsidian poured into construction and labor, quickly sending Tenneshi and Winrothol into the prime spots politically. Meanwhile, the ambitious Masterbards began their appeals to the Lirathan order and the wealthy houses for aide on their own projects, and used much of their own coin as well, to establish what was being called excitedly "the new core of art and culture in the Known World."

Symbolism of the Silent Circle, and 'The Silence'.

The Silent Circle is the ruined, shattered gravesite of the former New Poet's Circle. After **The Age of Strife** (called by some bards **The Age of the Quiet Door**) began, the bards pulled together fully with several circles going so far as to offer cover, assistance, aide, and housing to bards which were either being chased by the Templarate or had other reasons to hide out. New Poet's Circle became the only place that bards were known to live for many years as the rest of the population of Tuluk became increasingly desperate for resources. At first, kindness and firm words were what was offered by the bards - interlopers driven off sometimes by giving them a loaf of bread for their effort after a stern warning. In time, the words were not enough, and beatings would be administered by the patrolling bands of bards who kept the borders of New Poet Circle's secure. On more than one occasion, large groups or whole gangs would attempt to force their way into the Circle only to be beaten back as the bards had had many years to work out solid defense plans through their arc of blades members.

This all came to a crashing halt during Ruk's Wrath. In a stroke of cruel fate, the Konviweddu had planned for a massive performance of a popular play that mocked the southern openness

to change and magick. Half way through the play, the ground shook with such violence that many were sent flying off of whatever seating they were on to find themselves on the floor with broken bones. Those that could run began to do so, only to find the ground below ripping open like a hungry maw to swallow them up. In places around the Circle, the ground became like liquid, leading to whole people, whole statues, whole buildings slipping below forever. With a last scream, or no sound at all heard above the quake, they dropped down in to the churning soil, disappearing entirely.

The long renown Uaptal Theatre was reduced to an empty husk, and it is now considered cursed - a curse which seems permanently bound to the Konviwedu Circle. Within the now hollow halls the performances are exceedingly rare, often very swift, and almost always grim in nature. Apprentices and even Seekers will try to prove their bravery and focus by performing a Dance of Whispers - a musical piece, often only played or sung once and then never again, that honors the fallen dead below the Silent Circle. Once the piece is performed, it is considered as dead as the bodies of the fallen, and to repeat it is not only very bad form, but is said to summon terrible misfortune.

The only voice often lifted within this place is an unnamed Listless who seems permanently stationed within the stage area.

Overview of the Individual Circles

The powerful Circles of olde exist in a shattered and fallen state from what they once were. Where once they almost rivaled some small merchant houses, they now limp on, a scattered handful to several dozen members at most, they continue to fight in any way they can to return Tuluk to the grandeur it once had.

Where once Poets' Circle could provide training, contacts, better prices on instruments, shelter and food, it now provides only what the senior members of the circles can directly provide for those apprentices they have under them. Many bards pride themselves on being highly self-sufficient, and will seek to tithe whatever they can to those who have proven themselves worthy to claim a home in the Silent Circle.

The few and the luckiest of the bards of Tuluk belong to "Bardic Circles", though well over fifty percent of Tuluki aspiring bards never find fellowship within the limited circles. Once, all this was almost destroyed by infighting during the year following the great earthquakes as the survivors struggled to gather what loot and knowledge they could from the ruins of Poet's Circle. Some of the circles fared better than other. Driamusek had many skilled members that were hidden away behind the high House walls of the noble estates, and were able to pass along the traditions and knowledge to the apprentices below them. Ruserla circle had a great number within the Warrens, and their resilient and resourceful members were able to come together in short order.

Konviweddu unfortunately had the great misfortune of being at the direct epicenter of Ruk's Wrath during the earthquakes, as they were putting on a massive performance in a now sunken minor theatre. All of the ranking members were in attendance save for a handful, and the Circle continues to struggle and fade to this day - having gained a new Master Bard recently (Ademi, some years after the gate reopened).

The remaining members of Circle Groot have limped on, though many of their original ways and rituals have been passed by. These bards have focused a bit more heavily on the arc of blades, now that it is fresh in their history that violence is a very real undercurrent in their once thought peaceful home.

Elkinhym is now a Bardic Circle quite small in number, but undeniably important to the continuation of the city. Forcing a smile even in the darkest hours, Elkinhym soldiers on, bringing what hope and levity they can to a city that exists mostly in ruin. Without them, some of the worst rioting would have surely not been quelled by force, and the powers that be know that the Silent Circle's power comes from their connection with the diverse people of His Ivory.

Irofel, the Forgotten Circle, is a shadow of its former self, in many more ways than one, and is rumored to be run by a shadowy figure from the underworld known only as The Grandmother. Bards and Master Bards of other Bardic Circles avoid speaking of Irofel completely, swiftly stifling such superstitious gossip from their Apprentices. Yet the whispers still remain.

The use of Arcs is now far more of an anecdotal preference than the taught-and-ritualized school that it once was. Notable bards that do declare themselves a "master" of one arc or the other often face endless testing from fellow bards which may or may not be fatal in nature.

While small splinter Circles, known as Troupes, appear and disappear on a regular basis, the Circles which have stood the test of time, and are remembered after the second Fall of Tuluk are:

Groot

Groot Circle, it is said, produces the best examples of percussion instruments in the city. It deals in raw materials, frequently supplying the other Circles with wood, tortoiseshell, and precious stones. It is also known for being one of the more pragmatic Circles, and has a reputation for its emphasis on the Arc of Blades. Many members of Groot are known to be prominent within the Levy, or even the Sun Legions. Since the gates reopened, they contain the most adventurers traveling abroad in the Exiled Unknown.

Circle Groot's ranks are filled with a menagerie of hunters, crafters, and 'outdoorsy' folk, and has a keen focus on the Arc of Blades. Most who join Groot are active, worldly people, who are very pragmatic and not incredibly intellectual. Mind and word games are best left to Driamusek,

according to Groot. The stereotype of Groot would rather focus on gathering the proper quota of Cunyati wood for the instrument workshop than enter any sort of political back-and-forth. They usually find luck in employment with the Greater Merchant Houses as hunters, or with a Noble House like Dasari as a partisan, and follow a similar path to Driamusek as far as split trust between the Circle and outside Employment. As such, most Groot remain Apprentices or Seekers, and comparatively few rise past the rank of Seeker to Bard.

Arc of primary focus: Blades

Arcs of secondary focus: Music (crafting, materials), Lore

Symbol: three small yellow circles positioned in a triangle

Population: **Perhaps forty.**

Favored Instruments: Percussion, both as accompaniment and solo pieces, using talking drums for the latter situation.

Masters: Lycel, Ashraf

Konviwedu

Konviwedu Circle once oversaw the now ruined and shattered Uaptal Theatre, and those members who claim Konviwedu wish to see it restored, as if to lift the curse that history has laid heavy upon them. They are the fewest in number of all of the circle bards.

Konviwedu are some of the more isolated and self-ostracized bards of the Circle, usually seeking company among their own rather than fraternizing with other Circle Families. Not necessarily loners, they always seem to be cracking inside jokes with each other, acting out scenes or monologues just for themselves, or otherwise setting themselves apart. When they do seek to engage other bards, they usually do so through performance, and have made themselves renowned for their acting ability and exquisite palate with words and storytelling in particular. They believe for the most part that what is said in a song is more important than the melody.

Arc of primary focus: Acting

Arcs of secondary focus: Words, Song

Symbol: a blue teardrop, superimposed over a white half moon

Population: **Perhaps a dozen in the whole city at any given time.**

Favored Instruments: Stringed instruments, they tend to stray from woodwinds as they limit speech.

Masters: Ademi - a recent development.

Elkinhym

The Talent that cultivates humor and irony tends to gravitate to Elkinhym Circle, which produces the majority of jesters as well as bards specializing in political satire. Members delight in playing practical jokes on each other, and a particularly successful and spectacular prank often works to elevate a member's standing in the Circle significantly.

Elkinhym is one of the most notorious Circles within New Tuluk, and a relative new-comer to the scene. They can trace their beginning back before the Fall of Tuluk, but not as far as Irofel or Driamusek. When questioned of their lineage back to Old Tuluk, they usually refer to such lines of inquiry as 'dusty and musty and boring'. They're responsible, nine times out of ten, for all manners of mischief and mayhem throughout the Poet's Circle, often egging each other on to perform more dastardly and embarrassing pranks on the other students and even ranked Seekers and Bards, both for personal entertainment, and potential advancement within Elkinhym. They place a vast emphasis on the ephemeral nature of life, and the enjoyment one can achieve through learning to laugh at one's self. No subject is taboo to the Elkinhym. Though they tread cautiously around political satire involving the Chosen and Faithful of Tuluk, even members of His Faithful have been known to find amusement in a brilliant prank pulled by a Master of Elkinhym.

Elkinhym are usually mercurial and unpredictable, often oscillating wildly between light, airy conversation, and dark, subtle repartee. They typically restrain themselves enough in public to achieve an image desirable for employment by the Nobility. Oftentimes, it is apparent that Chosen Lords and Ladies have no idea what they are in for.

Arc of primary focus: None

Arcs of secondary focus: Words, Acting, Song

Symbol: three horizontally overlapping orange triangle

Population: **About fifty.**

Favored Instruments: A range of instruments from percussive to melodic, with a tendency towards instrumentation that leaves a voice free

Masters: Loni

Rusarla

Circle Rusarla the most diverse family within the Poets' Circle, containing members from all walks of life, and more importantly, many different races. Elves, half-elves, dwarves, even half-giants (and even some humans that--to outsiders--might seem unlucky), are proud to call themselves Rusarla. A select few of these may make the rank of Bard and Masterbard. Humans interested in elven and dwarven tribes will gravitate towards Rusarla, especially if they have an interest in the more rare, exotic instruments usually only found within the ranks of Rusarla. Rusarla usually strive harder than most in the Circle to achieve any modicum of success, as they are met with real and imagined obstacles of racism around every turn and bend of their Arcs. Some of the Circle's most talented musicians and poets have come from Rusarla, though you would be hard pressed finding anyone outside of Rusarla admitting that point. They usually overcome this by learning, and dedicating themselves twice, three times as hard as the normal Apprentice or Seeker.

Rusarla prides itself on its diversity, welcoming people from any tribe or culture, in the hopes of assimilating their culture and stories and traditions into the Circle's own. They specialize in tribal traditions, storytelling, cultural phenomena, and rituals, though Groot has capitalized on creating a connection with the human tribes. While Irofel focuses on the world outside of Tuluk, and Driamusek the inner workings of the Ivory, Rusarla often attracts the most history and actual persona from the tribes of Gol Krathu. Members of several tribes have found a home in Rusarla at one time or another, and have shared their traditions in the hopes that their ways may survive the tests of time, or because they felt Rusarla was their new tribal "family." Regardless, Rusarla has become the lexicon of tribal beliefs and systems, working often in conjunction with Groot.

Arc of primary focus: None

Arcs of secondary focus: Lore, Words, Music

Symbol: a green lemniscate

Population: **Just over a hundred**

Favored Instruments: Rusarla has the most diverse racial and tribal roots, lending itself to all sorts of instruments, and the most rare and exotic.

Masters: Bricksy, Crusher Brigga

Driamusek

Many of the children of the nobility are tutored by bards of Driamusek Circle, which specializes in diplomacy, etiquette, and other social matters. Some Driamusek keep their ties to the Circle hidden so as to not make them an overly tempting target for other aides and assassinations. This is not universally true, and it is often believed that a full tenth of Driamusek 'bards' are only members by words alone and have lied their way into the position.

Driamusek are masters of subtlety and manipulation of words, making great orators and language masters. Many poets come from this circle as from Konviweddu, but where Konviweddu's words are meant to stir great passions, Driamusek's words are meant to persuade and sway a listener. The bards of Driamusek are generally a tight-knit group, all of its members sharing distinguished histories. Many of its members' families have rich pasts serving nobility pre-Occupation, and the family stories offer glimpses into history and lore even the Irofel do not have. It is the Driamusek who are most familiar with the duplicities of noble strife, and are the most comfortable in serving it, making Driamusek bards highly sought after by noble families as tutors and retainers, and making the Driamusek almost as proud and haughty as the nobles they serve. It is rare to find a Driamusek bard who isn't presentable from the time they wake up to the time they go to sleep.

Driamusek's emphasis on oration, etiquette, and the Arc of Words, has earned it the reputation of being one of the most stuffy and arrogant circles in the Poet's Circle. Driamusek requires its students to learn the techniques of verse and spoken prose, as well as the more 'refined' of instruments, as well as being versed in etiquette and pleasantries. Driamusek favors subtlety in all things, making them excellent diplomats and speakers and glib liars when need be.

Arc of primary focus: Words
Arcs of secondary focus: Lore, Acting
Symbol: a purple cross
Population: **Under a hundred and fifty**
Favored instruments: Flute.
Masters: Spak

Irofel

Forgotten but perhaps not extinguished, Irofel Circle has traditionally focused on lore, gathering knowledge and new songs wherever it can. Its emissaries once traveled across the Known World, although the Circle shared the knowledge gathered in this process primarily with its own members, parceling knowledge out carefully, and perhaps stingily. Irofel has always been known as secretive, but now is seen almost as downright paranoid. Many keep their tattoo, if they have one, well hidden even from lovers and family.

Irofel bards are historically cryptic, accentuating purposefully the Circle's overall air of mystery and secrecy. Circle Irofel has cultivated knowledge since the Cataclysm and Occupation of Tuluk, remaining one of the only Circles (the other being Driamusek) that can trace its lineage back to before these dark times. They once prided themselves on being the premier source of information, be it history of Tuluk, catalogs of stories, or lore on specific items.

Everyone knows that talking too openly about Irofel attracts the type of attention that gets you disappeared.

Arc of primary focus: Lore
Arcs of secondary focus: Words, Song
Symbol: two horizontally interlocking red circles
Population: **Unknown.**
Favored Instruments: Mandolin, Flute, Talking Drum, Lyre, Violin, Harp
Masters: The Grandmother, The Watcher, and Silent Story

*** Updated with Tuluk's re opening 7/26/2021

*** Updated by Erulyss 07/14/2023

The Ranks of Bards

A bard's rank is one of the most obvious ways to determine how they are viewed by the rest of Tuluk. Those within the Circle would know each other's rank on first glance, based on particular

tattoos available only to members of the Circle. It is rare that any member of the Circle would lie about their true rank, and those that do are punished with impunity by their betters. The tattoos are administered in the kitchen within the Bardic Compound, that is accessible only by Bards and Masters.

a colorful, dotted circle	Seeker
a colorful, arc-laden circle	Bard
a colorful, arc-laden circle inset with a blazing sun	Master Bard

Talent

The word 'Talent' is used to denote potential candidates. Apprentices generally get over excited about this, as not everyone is at all suited to become part of the elite Circles of bards, but one of the expected practices of Seekers is to 'seek Talent' to replenish the ranks, and draw its attention to the appropriate Circle Bards. The Master Bards are rarely interested in these starry-eyed hopefuls, they know there are thousands of them in the city.

To become an Apprentice, one has to secure an audition, at least from a Bard. But only Master Bards can authorize an audition, so in the end, it is a careful affair of making a good impression, and being at the top of one's artform, as far as it is expected of normal everyday folk.

Apprentice

Bards begin as apprentices. While some may begin with greater musical skills than others due to their background, apprentice bards are not expected to have more than a basic knowledge of one instrument or how to sing, and a vastly incomplete knowledge of lore and songs. Circle born Apprentices, on the other hand, are expected to have a pretty good understanding of one, or more, instruments and know a spattering of songs. Everyone has to start somewhere, and the Circle recognizes drive and some innate talent in Apprentices at auditions; no one is expecting tear-jerking performances or side-splitting comedy.

- Most reliant on the generosity of a bardic patron or patrons.
- Often take a route of being part aide/artisan/assistant as well as bard to their patron because it offers a stable income and experience in politics.
- Other bards understand that Apprentices are largely more molded to the will of their respective patrons, regardless of any private opinions on the part of the bard. However, they are expected to refrain from anything that acts against the Circle in any way. Though not at the expense of the Sun King's law.
- Level of trust with the Circles is low. Respect is earned, not granted.
- Level of influence among the Circles, other bards (of any rank), and among most people is low.
- It is possible to be lifesworn to an organization and be an Apprentice.

In order to merit the rank of Seeker, apprentices are expected to at least:

- Master the basics of 2-3 instruments, with a focus on a primary instrument.
- Build their repertoire of songs, stories, and lore, by learning from each other as well as from classes taught by Bards.
- Learn the basics of how a bard of the Circle should comport themselves; basics in etiquette between common and high-born, composure, oration, and singing.
- Learn the basics of how to maintain and repair instruments; begin down the path of lutherie and instrument creation.
- Learn the history of Tuluk and the Gol Krathu region, along with basics of the Known World surrounding the Ivory.
- Win a Circle Sanctioned competition.

Seeker

These are bards who have passed the Apprentice stage and have been promoted personally by a Master in their respective Circle, trusted enough to comport themselves fittingly and not disgrace the Circle. This is a process that can be hampered by a disgruntled or grudge-bearing Master, leading to talented (but usually indignant or stubborn) Apprentices that are not promoted for many years. Seekers actively pursue the Arcs of Learning in earnest at this phase, having passed their classes as an Apprentice. They often find themselves assisting Bards in classes, to enhance the knowledge they already have on the subjects, while pursuing their own goals. At this stage, Seekers will often travel abroad, to widen their horizons and give perspective to their time in the Silent Circle, as well as to come back with wild stories and various trinkets and keepsakes.

- Still somewhat reliant on the generosity of a bardic patron or patrons. However, Seekers can command more in the way of commissions, making it a possibility for the more talented Seekers to expand their horizons in this regard.
- Slightly less likely to be involved in the overall interests of a bardic patron or patrons, but slightly more likely to be involved in the overall interests of the Circle(s). Other bards understand that Seekers are a bit less molded to the will of their respective patrons. Simultaneously, patrons historically tend towards using Seekers as directly (and as often) as possible as extensions of their agendas.
- Level of trust with the Circles is higher. The title itself is a social symbol of respect.
- Level of influence among the Circles, other bards (of any rank), and among most people is higher.
- It is possible to be lifesworn to an organization and be a Seeker.

In order to merit the rank of Bard, Seekers must:

- Produce a sufficiently well-crafted instrument, which usually (but not necessarily) becomes a bard's signature instrument of choice.
- Learn at least one new language.

- Be able to pass a verbal test on lore, demonstrating that they have mastered or nearly mastered that Arc.
- Be able to play three instruments (one wind, one percussion, and one stringed) with enough skill for public performances.
- Be able to compose impromptu songs on a theme of the Circle's choosing.
- Compose at least one group piece in the tradition of their Circle - A historical play for Irofel, a dance performance for Elkinhym, and so on.
- Win a Circle Sanctioned competition as a Seeker.
- Know the intricacies of Tuluki etiquette and be able to interact smoothly with Surif and Faithful.
- Have a major role in at least one formal performance.
- Demonstrate they are competent with a weapon.

Bard

To become a Bard, Seekers must master two Arcs of Learning completely, though they are not expected to complete all six. Bards are the lifeblood of the Circle, teaching most of the classes that further the Circle's traditions to the next generation, and are vested with complete trust from the Masters. A Bard doing something against Circle wishes, or betraying the Circle's trust, is almost completely unheard of. At this point, those who joined the Circle without blood ties are 'joined' to the Circle (by means unknown to those below the rank of Bard) and their children usually take on the name of the Circle they belong to. Masters are careful to pair up mates in-between Circles, and those born outside of these pairings will often not take on the name of their father or mother's respective Circle. Bards are 'part of the family' now, proven beyond doubt to have the potential to, if deemed right, someday be recognized as a Master Bard.

- Not reliant upon the generosity of a bardic patron. Instead, bards are far more free to float between bardic patrons and tend towards partisanship arrangements that are very short-term. Bards typically command even more respect than Seekers, and thus gain better commissions.
- Not likely to be involved in the overall interests of a bardic patron. Much more involved in the overall interests of the Circle(s). Bards make the transition from "instrument of a patron" to "instrument of the Circles," which can be a difficult process for both potential patrons and the former Seekers. Allegiance, however, is first and foremost (at this point) to the interests of the Circles.
- Level of trust with the Circles is high. The title of Full Bard is the equivalent of the Master Bards bringing someone into their close family.
- Level of influence among the Circles, other bards (of any rank), and among most people is high. A Bard, at this point in their career, is famous.

It is not possible to be lifsworn to an organization and be a Bard.

It's increasingly a mystery of secret traditions how a Bard becomes a Master Bard. The outward impression seems to be that the Bard makes a 'bid' with some grand scheme that affects the Ivory and brings them legendary status, enough to earn a seat at the elite table of the Masters.

Master Bard

These are the legends. The enigmatic games that the Master Bards play among themselves, in their secret gatherings, are rumored to span the Ivory, even the Known, in scope and depth. Their hand is easily imagined by Apprentices and Seekers as being mixed into every subtle affair of the Circle. Their resources of cleverness and information seem inexhaustible. They have spent a lifetime dedicated to Tuluki Art. Increasingly, being spoken to by a Master Bard is an extensive honor, and Apprentices are right to be excited by such a rare event. Generally, Bards handle the affairs of the Circle, including the mentorship of Seekers, lessons of Apprentices and initiation of Talent. A Master Bard may keep abreast of such affairs meticulously, or not in the slightest -- no one knows how much attention they are paying at any given moment.

- Patrons? " Ha! You wish I'd call you a patron. Also, if you talk to me on any regular basis, I'm billing you for the time spent." (A masterbard would never say these things, but they'd probably think them.) People need deep pockets to have you at an event or to use your talents for any purpose.
- Patron interests? "Ha! Petty squabbles." The interests of your Circle become your interests. No one can call you a partisan but the Circle to which you belong. You may perform at an event, but you would likely be the main attraction. Simultaneously, you've learned enough over the years not to be a complete show-stealer from the lower-ranked brethren in the Circles, and as such, you'd be far more likely to be performing at the more important events.
- Level of trust with the Circles is unquestioned. They are the beating hearts, and living embodiments of Art in Tuluk.
- Level of influence among the Circles, other bards (of any rank), and among most people is the highest among bards of any rank, second only to more experienced Master Bards. When you are dealing with a Master Bard, you are dealing with a legend. Though not Chosen, this is among the most powerful castes a commoner can attain.
- It is not possible to be lifesworn to an organization and be a Master Bard.

Bardic Culture, Traditions, Rituals, and Punishment

The Cultural Identity of Bards in Tuluk

The individual Bardic Circles themselves are exceedingly scholastic in their own fashions, accommodating as equally the education of their members as they do the creation of new knowledge and productions. There are known to be eight major arcs of learning: Music, Song, Words, Acting, Lore, Blades, Thread, Stone, Secrets and Tales. Each Arc has various minor arcs, aptly named and commonly referred to as "tangents." Tangents differ widely from circle to circle, and are at their roots, the specific requirements for academic advancement. See the documentation for each individual circle as to what their tangents might entail.

Though rivalry and competition amongst bards is common, a certain collective ideology and communal cooperation rests at the foundation of the Circle, and tends to promote a strong level of respect amongst most Circle bards, despite any differences. The Masters are quick to act on any feuds that get out of control and provide long lecturing and discipline where necessary. The competition, especially in times of difficulty for the Ivory City, is often kept to friendly levels. The pulling of a blade is not unknown, but can often result in censure for a bard who does so to another bard.

The idea of "intellectual property" is not given much consideration amongst bards, though it is considered very impolite (more so, say, in Driamusek than any other circle) to use a recent work that someone else has composed without giving them credit for it. Some items have no known author, and so in this case, credit will be skipped. There are many exceptions to this general protocol, but it serves as a general guide for most bards.

The pre-Silence Circles were very driven to induct and indoctrinate any non-circle bard they came across. The same is not true these days. Many circles do not actively pursue every bard, but only the ones which have apparent talent or interest that aligns with the circle itself. In fact, there are a large number of bards who never seek a circle, and never get approached, but who will work with the circles on larger performances if requested. Non-circle bards who have proven they can do so are often referred to as Affiliates, and may even have that suffix tacked on to their name for distinction (so Amos the Bynner would become Affiliate Amos the Bynner.)

Culture of Master Bards

Shrouded in mystery and intrigue, master bards in the post Silence Tuluk have become much more reclusive. Master bards often will meet only directly with members of the Templarate or with nobles who can actually offer them something, leaving anything deemed beneath them to minors of the Circle. This is usually not seen as an insult, as bards are so rare in number that even getting the direct attention of a mid-level bard can be seen as a feather in the cap of the interested party.

The culture of the Master Bards is culture itself. Having dedicated their lives to becoming successful and recognized with their art, which is Tuluki Art, having mastered all aspects of the word, these figures are living legends or shadowed myth. Entrance into their ranks has the same popular flavor of joining an elite, secret society. It can be gained only by being petitioned by one's circle for candidacy, then winning a secret vote from the masters of the larger

community, which follows a thorough oral examination, interrogation and other rumored tests that are imaginatively speculated upon by potential candidates. The ceremonies themselves are taboo, and talk of them only whispered amongst enraptured apprentices, and fantasized and prepared for by Seekers who have such an inclination to advance further within the community. It is rumored that entrance into this 'society', or the True Circle as some call it, begins with promotion from Seeker to Bard, though none above the rank of Seeker will speak a word of what transpires before or after their promotion to Bard or Master.

Not much else is known about the doings of Masters with one another, as they are an exceptionally diverse lot. They each have unique agendas and interests that make little sense to someone not steeped in the motives and inspirations of Arts. Their activities are like a grand game with hidden rules. Their meetings are shrouded in secrecy -- Bards, Seekers and Apprentices are barred from attendance, and each subtle attendee has long since mastered the art of silence: knowing when indeed, not to speak, nor seem to know anything, at all.

Other Customs and Traditions

Art

Many Tuluki are concerned with the nature of art, and it is a wide and diverse subject and field. Most agree that art is paramount in every aspect of daily life, as well as song and warfare. Patrons vie for the most artistic partisans, as acquiring a good artist can bolster one's caste, which is fairly rigidly defined in Tuluk.

Subtlety is the High Art of Tuluk. But what is subtlety? Irony abounds, as it is hard to define, hard to place the exact meaning upon. Hard to put a finger on. This is how Tuluki cope with living in a benevolent dictatorship that heavily censors thought and speech. It is appreciated, like art, at every level of day to day life, and it is widely held that foreigners are incapable of it.

Peacemaking:

It is customary to bring the petty day to day disputes to bards, rather than Faithful or Chosen, and certain Circles (both Elkinhym and Driamusek at various levels of society) are perfect for peacemaking. Elkinhym might deal with a lover's spat, or hard feelings over a tavern fight, while Driamusek more elevated matters between merchants and nobles. Though apprentices might sometimes be entrusted since their services would be cheap, maybe considered good practice, this custom is extended to the Seeker rank more often as they are more skilled and more available.

Right For the Circle?

From time to time, an Apprentice (or even a Seeker) may find that they take poorly to the life of being a member of one of Tuluk's Bardic Circles. Should this occur, the Apprentice or Seeker simply makes it known to their Circle and moves on. In most cases, the Circles will not readmit the person should they change their mind for whatever reason. Exceptions are often made for

prospective bards that get in over their heads with a Circle in a manner they weren't expecting (not cut out for one, but more suited for another).

The Lucky Ghaati

The sacked out ruin that is the Lucky Ghaati is no longer a haven for high end clientele or tea, but a place of mild danger and sad memories. Ruined by Ruk's Wrath, the Ghaati still stands as a gathering point sometimes used by various bards, but no longer a focus for performances, negotiations, or pleasant evenings with a baked good.

Magick

The Bards of Poets' Circle attitude on magick, as can be expected, is one of fierce repulsion, and it is not tolerated at all by any bard raised in Poets' Circle traditions. Someone caught practicing magick will rarely make it to meet the Templarate if the opportunity to quickly and quietly dispose of them presents itself.

Roguary

As is evidence by the long history of Poets Circle, there is a propensity toward the more subtle, darker arts, such as spying, professional theft and assassination, which have long been regarded as a civilized art form, even a mode of expression. This is not to say that every bard doubles as a rogue, nor to say that any will readily admit it openly. Simply, that it is traditionally something that an Apprentice has access to learning, with the proper master. After all, in the immortal words of Lashania Konviweddu, "the criminal mind is simply an artist too oppressed to express himself otherwise."

Death

The death of a bard is different from many other deaths, though also greatly different from the pre-Silence tradition of holding a several day (or longer) period of mourning. Death is common in the streets of Tuluk, whether it be from disappearance, a falling stone from a crumbling building, a scavenging beast or a knife in the dark. The bardic community often see themselves as one of the last bulwarks against the downfall of the city, so to depress the masses with extended mourning is antithetical. Upon the death of a renown bard, a revel is typically thrown, where many bards and even highborn or Templarate will gather and extol the tales of the deceased. The bards will throw these celebrations and contribute as much as they can, with the primary contributors often being held in higher esteem for a month or so after for putting towards so much for the celebration of a fallen's reputation.

Birth

Birth is celebrated widely amongst the circle, and children fussed over by many. The tradition of naming has gradually become a very important and weighty matter, and a child born to one of the circles will spark much debate over the proper name for their future legacy. It is common to name the newborn with both a public name, and a hidden name - the hidden name being taken from one of those that was devoured by the shifting ground during Ruk's Wrath. Often the hidden name is of the opposite gender, which many bards believe will assist the child in learning how to portray themselves positively in either gender role.

Toasts

A bard will rarely pass up the opportunity to propose a toast, and has a wide variety of subjects ranging from general formal toasts, to more specific toasts oriented around praising the achievements of their colleagues, or honoring the fallen.

Charmstrings

Emerging during the Scattering after old Tuluk's fall, charmstrings serve to quickly identify a bard to another savvy member of Poets' Circle. It is taboo to 'lie' on one's charmstring, and doing so would draw quick ostracization from one's peers, and potential disciplinary action from one's Circle or the Circle at large. Charmstrings are strung to the bard's instrument of choice, and should always be displayed during a performance where an instrument is utilized. Performances without instruments do not require the charm strings' visibility. (See associated documentation for details.)

Street Singing

Street singing is a common occurrence amongst the bards of Tuluk and certain prime spots for doing so, such as near the entrance of the Cormani's Carru, are ardently vied for by bards who have passed the Apprentice stage but are still studying to become Bards. The practice allows them to perfect performances that they may rely on for coin when favored by patrons: romantic or sentimental favorites, ballads involving specific noble house history, comic pieces, etc, or to practice newly acquired instruments. Bardic battles of verse where both contestants either try to celebrate a certain subject or denigrate each other are not uncommon.

Troupes

Members of the community may sometimes form a smaller troupe for the purpose of group performances. Troupes are more often found performing at larger and more significant public events rather than individual bards. Typical pay for a troupe varies. The coins are divided among members, although the usual tithe is paid to the Circle. Many troupes contain members from disparate circles as well as Talent as the pickings are slim.

There are no traditions regarding unions or hand-binding, and any references to them found on the boards should be discarded. These traditions have been retconned and will not be revamped or revitalized.

The Dance of Whispers

A common practice among the newer bards is to travel into the Theatre on a grimly dark night when only the black moon is high, to do a performance for the fallen citizens who are lost forever below the ground. Those that return from this ritual known as The Dance of Whispers have proven themselves in the eyes of the remaining bardic community.

Discipline In the Circle

Discipline and punishment are not rare in the circles, though most punishments are designed to teach a lesson to the recipient, and are often made to fit the crime. The community places a heavy emphasis on secrecy, and does not abide those that kiss and tell. They are also prone to not beat around the bush when it comes to tithes, and short-changing what is owed, or drawing unnecessary attention from dangerous quarters.

Minor Offenses: Brief suspension from the Circle entirely, suspension from competing in an upcoming event, forfeit of instruments or charm strings for a period of time. Punishments last anywhere from five weeks to a year, or have more immediate consequences.

More Serious Offenses: Disbarment from the Circle, confiscation of instruments or charms, covering tattoos from public view, demotion, temporary removal of rights to perform in any manner. Punishments typically last a year at the minimum, though they have been known to last longer.

Most Serious Offenses: Exile from the Circle, or Tuluk, destruction of instruments and charms (either by someone else, or the transgressor), removal of tattoos, fingers, toes, or even permanent removal from public performance on pain of death. These offenses are typically so serious that general time frames could not be given.

Censure: When a bard has committed an act considered so heinous as to be unforgivable, it may be requested of the Templarate that the bard be Censured. In simple terms, Censure means Exile, but it also means that the bard then becomes a target for any other bard who seeks to prove their worth in the Arc of Blades. The Censured individual is considered disappeared, and never spoken of publically again.

The Arcs of Learning

Bards achieve the status of Master Bard by mastering what are called the Arcs of Learning. To be considered able to achieve the rank of Master, a bard must prove they have mastered at least five of the below arcs before being tested. Each Arc represents a basic area of knowledge, and a Master Bard will be skilled in each of the following:

Arc of Music: To master the Arc of Music, a bard must be able to play and create a musical instrument from each of the three major types: percussion, wind, and stringed. They must also demonstrate feats of skill, through flamboyance and restraint, to the Masters of the Circle, either during a competition, or through continued perfection and practice of the instrument and performance in public.

Arc of Song: To master the Arc of Song, a bard must know the standard repertoire of songs, as well as being able to compose an impromptu song on any topic when challenged to do so. The standard repertoire of song includes the following genres:

- Folk Songs: Songs of the country, or common folk, about other common folk, or simple themes surrounding love.
- Political Songs: Songs about Tuluk, its people, or the Faithful and Chosen, that shed Tuluk in a good Light.
- Political Satire: Songs about Tuluki Citizenry meant to poke fun in a tongue-in-cheek manner at all manner of folk, from low to high-born.
- Introspective: Songs about one's self, and delving into the psyche of a Tuluki, whether it be the writer of the song, or a character created to fit the part.
- Bawdy: Songs best suited to a party in a popular tavern, that rile the crowd up and get people to dance, drink and be merry.
- Instrumental: Songs without lyrics that provide background music, in a Tavern, or at an event for one of His Chosen.
- Historical: Songs which focus on the vast and troubled history of Tuluk, and properly reinforce the strength of its various peoples.

Arc of Words: To master the Arc of Words, a bard must know the standard repertoire of stories, from the humorous to the historical, as well as being able to create them. They must also have mastered the intricacies of Tuluki etiquette, the gentle art of diplomacy, and speak at least one language beyond sirihiish fluently. They must also have mastered at least two accents, besides that of Tuluk, to perfection. In this way, the aspiring Bard can prove their world-traveled nature, as well as their knack for the spoken word. Stories should be known in several styles, namely:

- Common Stories: The intonation used for these stories keeps the common folk of taverns and gatherings interested and on the edge of their seats. Usually exaggerates the action in the story, while down-playing big words and use of detail. Stories told in Common form are typically short and sweet, to lead to the biggest audience and quickest payoff.
- Highborn Stories: The intonation used for these stories is both long winded and detailed -- Most lasting over an hour at least. They are designed to appeal to the high-born, using fanciful words, long-winded phrases, reserved gestures, and non-linear subplots.
- Tribal Stories: The intonation used for these stories leans towards the common, but uses very simplistic imagery and are typically alien in concept. The simple images often stand in the place of characters in the story, such as using the Sun as the main protagonist. Often, these stories are parables, and meant to teach a moralistic lesson to the listener.
- Horror stories: Stories which are shocking in nature due to magery, demons, or worse. Stories which help reinforce Tuluk's insular nature and emphasize xenophobic behaviors as being good.
- Historical stories: These stories tie in to the arc of Lore, and should not only include historical truths but focus on how distinctly Tuluki outlooks either won the day, or how not having those outlooks properly in mind caused failure. They are moralistic, in this way.

Arc of Acting: To master the Arc of Acting, a bard must know the basics of the theatre: performing, costuming, mimicry, make-up, and crowd-control. A bard must have performed a central role in at least one major theatrical performance before being considered a master of this Arc. Bards are encouraged to work in tandem to achieve this, either by practicing in a troupe for a specific performance, or arranging a multi-talent performance at one of the public stages. It is incredibly rare for someone to succeed in this Arc purely by monologues, or by themselves.

Arc of Lore: To master the Arc of Lore, a bard must know both the history and geography of the Known World thoroughly, as well as demonstrate in-depth knowledge of at least one other area of specialized learning, such as herb-lore, a crafting skill, animal-training, and so on. They must show proof of knowledge in the form of objects, either gained during their travels, or crafted from their own hands. The more esoteric and lofty of lore subjects are often turned down outright by the Masters, as they usually wish to see physical results, and be able to grill the prospective student on their Arc.

Arc of Blades: To master the Arc of Blades, a bard must demonstrate him or herself competent with at least one weapon. The Arc of Blades is historically important, showing the Circle's resilience and willingness to fight, should Tuluk ever find conflict with Allanak again. A bard pursuing the Arc of Blades also has to show the qualities of leadership in battle, and often are required to serve either in the Legions directly, in the Levies, or in one of the lesser known factions of the military. It is not uncommon however for those who keep peace in the Warrens but do not wear a tabard or patch to be allowed entry if particularly skilled. More over, the bard must have proof of their skills and the time they have spent training as well as being willing to teach others.

Arc of Thread: The Arc of Thread is an arc that gained favor and rose after The Fastening, when the gates of Tuluk were shut. This arc focuses primarily on the care for and health of other Tuluki, and in that regard is two fold. A bard desiring this arc must show demonstrable proof that they have assisted those of ill health to full recovery and also have to have demonstrable proof that they are the key reason why infighting does not break out. The Arc of Thread binds Tuluki together, and keeps them strong in the face of external strife. Skills in the physician arts of bandaging and herbalism are key to the arc, as are the arts of mediation and discussion.

Arc of Stone: The Arc of Stone was put forth after the creation of The Silent Circle from the event known as Ruk's Wrath. Those bards that seek the Arc of Stone are the rebuilders of the various dreadfully damaged portions of Tuluk's current state. Whether focusing on The Silent Circle, Friel's, the ancient Ruins, or the Warrens, students of the Arc of Stone will be focused on making their name unforgettable not through tales, but through physical structures. Walls being repaired, buildings being erected, and statues with true purpose (not simply art, but something with historical or moral import) can qualify as proof of someone's persistence on the Arc of Stone.

Arc of Secrets: The Arc of Secrets is often pursued by those who fancy themselves the ability to properly skulk, and if they approach it in this fashion, they will never advance far. Yes, staying out of sight and silent is a portion of the Arc of Secrets, but the larger portion is very much the secrets themselves... and more importantly, gaining them first hand. Anyone with a talented mind can pry information over the way, but it takes a special kind of bravery to enter the lair of the enemy and overhear delicate conversations in order to relay them north. It is not uncommon either for practitioners of this Arc to attempt to liberate scrolls or whole volumes from oppression within the southern states and deliver them north.

Arc of Tales: The Arc of Tall Tales, or the Arc of Tales, is not at first what it seems. The Arc of Tales is denoted to those bards who falsely claim allegiance to the bardic community - but do so with such skill that they actually convince people of it for a time before they are discovered. Lying to some of the most skilled liars within the northern city (and also convincing them of your veracity) is a talent that few possess. The Arc of Tales is the one Arc that someone can gain by not even knowing it exists, and not even trying to attain it. It is (sometimes at knifepoint) explained to the bard who achieves a rank in the Arc of Tales that continuing down the path by lying to other bards would perhaps be quite unhealthy.

Charmstrings

Charmstrings are an old tradition of the Bardic Circles of Tuluk, and allow a bard to tell his or her entire history to a fellow bard with a single look. Made of braided, brightly colored cotton, they are worn on the bard's throat, wrist, ankle, even hair -- as long as it is somewhere visible. Bards collect charms for accomplishments: visiting a far away place, winning a yearly competition, houses that have acted as their patron, number of years as a bard, instruments they've mastered, etc. It should be noted that a bard is attached to his or her charmstrings, some of the more superstitious believing they contain some measure of the bard's creative spirit. While a bard may give away charms from a string, they will never dispose of the string itself.

The following list details the significance of many of the bardic charms. It is a serious breach of protocol for a bard to wear charms to which they are not entitled. Some non-bards may wear charms as adornments; this is considered more than a little gauche.

Circle Charms

What are these charms? These represent the bard's relationship with their own Circle.

How does one get these charms? Be a part of the Circle.

a white ceramic charm set with two garnet circles – red circles Irofel

a white ceramic charm set with three citrine hoops – yellow circles Groot

a blue teardrop shaped ceramic charm – blue teardrop Konviweddu

a ceramic charm inset with amber triangles – orange triangles Elkinhym
a white ceramic charm set with an agate – green lemniscate Rusarla
a charm of white ceramic and amethyst – purple cross Driamusek

Charms for Instrument Mastery

What are these charms? These charms represent a bard's mastery of an instrument per the Arc of Music.

How does one get these charms? Achieve mastery of one of the instruments mentioned. This should be done realistically (i.e., not overnight). Please research and roleplay this appropriately.

a cylini wood ukelin
an agafari lyre
a cylini wood mandolin
a tortoiseshell tambourine
a moonstone whistle
a turquoise ocarina
an amber drum
an ivory flute
a ceramic goblet-shaped drum
a tortoiseshell horn
an agafari harp
a set of tortoiseshell castanets
a wooden guitar
a pymlithe lute
a bone fiddle
a set of jasper pipes
a wooden ocadarji
a clear blue kithara

Year Marker Charms

What are these charms? These charms represent (in a quick, easy-to-see way) how long a particular bard has been a part of the Circles.

How does one get these charms? Be alive and be a member of the Circles in good standing.

a white feather ring (1 year)
a blue feather ring (2 years)
a green feather ring (3 years)
a yellow feather ring (4 years)
a red feather ring (5 years)

- a purple feather ring (10 years)
- a red and silver feather ring (20 years)
- a white and silver feather ring (30 years)
- a purple and silver feather ring (40 years)
- a black and silver feather ring (50 years)
- a silver and grey feather ring (60 years)
- a yellow and silver feather ring (70 years)
- a gold and silver feather ring (100 years)

Charms for Arc of Words (language mastery)

What are these charms? These charms represent mastery (fluency) in a given language.

How does one get these charms? One must be tested by a ranked Bard fluent in the language in order to receive the appropriate charm. While not forbidden, other bards generally find it gauche (and endlessly amusing) for a bard to add a charm for their language of origin (sirihish for a human, for instance, or allundean for an elf).

- a green and gold feather ring (sirihish)
- a yellow and gold feather ring (allundean)
- a red and gold feather ring (mirrukim)
- a white and gold feather ring (cavilish)
- a blue and gold feather ring (bendune)
- a purple and gold feather ring (anyar)
- a black and gold feather ring (heshrak)

Travel Charms

What are these charms? These charms represent a journey taken by a bard.

How does one get these charms? One must first request permission from their Circle for the journey. This is typically given approval. Masters generally seek proof of the journey, whether it be a physical keepsake or something more esoteric such as a song, a story, or a poem. The journey is expected to last for at least a few weeks and as much as a month in some cases.

- a tiny obsidian city (Allanak)
- a black outpost (Luir's)
- a grey silt-pearl (Sea of Silt)
- a tiny glass doll (Cenyr)
- a wooden halfling (Grey Forest)
- a black and red feather ring (Desert Elf Outpost)

House Charms

What are these charms? These charms represent a relationship that has been formed between the bard and the organization depicted by the charm.

How does one get these charms? Partisanship for a length of time (typically at least a year) with any of His Chosen or His Faithful usually leads towards the receipt of one of these charms. It is also possible to gain one for significant work done on behalf of one of these organizations (a great commissioned work, a series of commissions, performing a great service for said group). Unlike some of the other charms, these are doled out by the organizations themselves, and these organizations will frequently use that to their advantage.

- a tiny ivory alnon blossom (Dasari)
- a tiny red crescent moon (Jihaens)
- a tiny white crescent moon (Lirathans)
- a leather moneybelt (Kadius)
- a white ceramic scale charm (Kassigarh)
- a tiny spice-pipe (Kurac)
- a tiny, grey spiked mace (Lyksae)
- a tiny onyx quill charm (Negean)
- a tiny coffer (Nenyuk)
- a blue and silver feather ring (Reynolte)
- an obsidian sword (Salarr)
- a tiny hammer (Tenneshi)
- a wylrith plains-ox charm (Uaptal)
- a tiny kenku (Winrothol)

Competition Charms

What are these charms? These charms represent a bard's victory in a competition.

How does one get these charms? One must be declared the winner of a competition in order to receive the charm in question.

- a tiny drinking horn - drinking contest
- a yellow glass pepper – Luir's annual tall tale contest
- a tiny ceramic cup – Ghatti contest
- a coppery pyramid – Lirathan contest

Tribal Charms

What are these charms? These charms represent an investment of time and effort in learning about the mentioned tribe in a first-hand sense.

How does one get these charms? One usually spends significant time with the tribe in question. The cultural experience and knowledge gained should be proven to one of the Masters in order to gain a charm.

- a black and grey feather ring (Al Seik)
- a purple and yellow feather ring (Anyali)
- a red and blue feather ring (Arabet)
- a grey and blue feather ring (Jul Tavan)
- a blue and white feather ring (Muark)
- a red and yellow feather ring (Sun Runners)
- a gold-dyed feather ring (Bejeweled Hands)
- a black feather ring (Soh Lanah Kah)

Charms of Experience

What are these charms? These charms represent an experience that a bard has had in their life.

How does one get these charms? Experience is the only way to gain these. (The charms specific to the Arc of Blades imply competency in a style closely associated with that weapon.)

- a red and white feather ring (have played at Lucky Ghaati)
- a red and grey feather ring - fought gith
- a yellow and green feather ring - fought mantis
- a purple and green feather ring – fought kryl
- a laughing mask charm – Arc of Acting
- an agafari sword – Arc of Blades
- an agafari spear – Arc of Blades
- an agafari arrow – Arc of Blades
- an agafari shield – Arc of Blades
- an agafari axe – Arc of Blades
- an agafari club -- Arc of Blades
- an agafari leaf– Arc of Lore
- an agafari sun – Arc of Songs
- an agafari feather – Arc of Words
- an agafari root - Arc of Music