

Atalan Overview

The Land of Atalan

Atalan was founded 5000 years ago by the god Poseidon, whose direct descendants rules the 8 kingdoms of the land to this day.

The land may be found in the midst of the great Atalan Sea separating three great continental land masses, Europos [YUR-oh-poz] and Gondwhana [GOND-wah-nah] to the East and the unnamed lands of the Kanaka and Quetzuatli [kez-wah-TLEE] peoples to the West. Atalan is larger than a great island, but smaller than a continent. She lies North of the *Isimerinos* [Equator], but is large enough that her lands have wet temperate weather in the North, and sub-tropical weather in the South.

The land is divided into 8 kingdoms, each owing allegiance to a great Emperor-Priest, who rules the entirety of the Empire. Each Priest-King [Priestess-Queen] governs their portion of the land as they see fit, but remits taxes, troop levies, trade goods, and other duties to the Emperor-Priest for the good of the greater empire.

The North and Western kingdom-provinces are somewhat mountainous and supply the realm with most of her metals and smiths, while the Central and Eastern portions gently slope from the mountains down into plains and tide flats which give the land most of their crops and herds. The Western kingdom of Psila Dytika [See-lah di-TEEK-ah] is one of the most important kingdom-provinces in the Empire, as it provides the orichalcum upon which Atalan's military strength is based.

To the South lies the jungles of the Kingdom-Province of Zounkletes [ZOON-klee-tehz], which provides much fruit and wood. This kingdom-province is also very important as she supplies the Atalans with one of their most important assets: elephants. In all the known world, the Atalan are the only people who have tamed the elephant for war and are the only people who can build ships sturdy enough to carry them. Elephants also provide incredible strength for work and in the lifting of heavy loads.

A Brief History of Atalan

Atalan was founded 5000 years ago when the god Poseidon gave children to the mortal woman, Cleito. She first bore him twin sons, the demi-gods Atalas and Gnoseios, who would grow to found the great city. Atalas was gifted with the powers Strength and Command and could inspire men to efforts beyond themselves and yet still lead by example. Gnoseios was gifted with the powers of Thought and Observation. He could see the world and how its parts all worked together and impart this knowledge to mortals.

The first thousand years were devoted to founding the basis of the Atalan civilization. Men learned to farm and to herd, to write and to teach, to make and to trade. The people were insatiably curious about the world and gave sacrifices to the all the gods in thanks for their many gifts. Poseidon, however, was held in special reverence. He is the Founder, who gave to a mortal woman the divine children that made Atalan what it is.

The second and third thousand years were ones of exploration, contact and expansion. Having mastered the basic lessons of the land, she now began to learn the ways of the sea. She built ships and sailed to the horizon to see what else the gods had put upon the Earth, and as she did so she learned navigation and engineering. She contacted other peoples and taught some of her ways, though not all. Many peoples did not have the divine spark that drove the Atalans and could not understand what Atalan tried to teach them. Many peoples tried to take from Atalan what she would not give and some thought they could make war upon the people of Poseidon. But they did not account for the powers of mobility at sea, weaponry and valor of the Atalan people, or the strength of the elephant. This taught Atalan that their people must also know the spear and shield as well as the sail and plow.

As Atalan bested foe after foe, many of her people became arrogant and prideful. Some of the most knowledgeable in the ways of Runes and mana began to see their fellow humans as chattel and sought to conquer them as slaves. These sorcerers turned away from magics that were respectful of the gods and sought new ways to harness the Runes, to possess them as a man might possess a wine cup or a pair of sandals. They began to interfere with the gods with their new magic and over time Hekate, Athena, and Zeus became angry at Poseidon's people for these crimes.

Poseidon sent to his children [implying the Emperor-Priests of the divine lineage that ruled the empire] omens and oracles that warned them of the gods' anger. But their counselor wizards whispered false counsel to the Emperors saying, 'The gods become jealous of their creation, the Atalans. As a child grows into adulthood, they often challenge their parents and thus we challenge our sires, the gods. They do not wish to share all the gifts of Olympus with us, their children, even as we approach their power...'

And as mortals often foolishly do, the Emperor-Priests ignored the warnings of the gods in favor of more power for themselves.

So it was that during the fourth thousand of years, the gods punished Atalan. Looking from Olympus the gods saw that two kingdom-provinces hosted the majority of the sorcerers. In these places the altars of the gods were barren, the priests old, and braziers cold. Sorcery was considered the way to power, power without conscience, power without restraint. And it was to these kingdom provinces that Zeus cast down his mighty thunderbolts, and Apollo cast fire from his bow, and Demeter withheld her bounty and Poseidon sent earthquake and storms. For five years did the Punishment of Atalan go on, until at last the kingdom provinces gave way and sank below the waves. And thus was the gods' anger spent.

The remainder of the fourth thousand years was spent in humility as the Atalans rebuilt themselves and slowly earned back the favor of the gods. Much work was needed, for the anger of gods wrought much change in the land. Rivers had changed course, water tables were disrupted, and fields once verdant became barren. Much that Atalan hands had built was broken and many, many people were slain.

Now is the beginning of the fifth thousand of years and Atalan has regained much of her former glory. She has mastered the changes of the seas and rebuilt her lands. It is time again for exploring and contacting the barbarian peoples of the wider world. Atalan trade ships ply the waves from the shores Kanaka and the Quetzal peoples through the Gates of Atalas into the Sea Between the Barbarians. The Empire has established a fortress at the Isle of the Gate [aka Gibraltar] and a trade city at Cades in the land of Hesperians, and these are the principal points of contact between the Empire and the lesser peoples.

And great change came to the barbarian peoples also. As a child learns from its parents, so too have some barbarians learned from Atalan. For example, on the

southern shore of the Sea Between the Barbarians lies the land of Kemet and in that land is a great river known to them as Itahru... THE River, and it is easy to see why. The land around Kemet is a sandy waste of dunes, barren stone, salt flats, and nomads scarcely more intelligent than the animals they tend, but where Itahru flows there is life. Plants like palms, fig and pine trees, reeds and grains, fruit trees and more spring up in green abundance along the riverbanks. And a great profusion of animals come to drink, to eat, to hunt and be hunted, to be tamed and to work.

And on this river the land of Kemet has begun to build something almost like a civilization. The Kemeti have learned to build, somewhat, making use of the soft sandstone native there and mud brick. They have developed a language of sorts made up of pictures and symbols. In this tongue they make great pronouncements and grandiose claims, but have no poetry or literature. They make long prayers to their gods, but have no philosophy.

But they also drink from the same river that is a sewer in the town just a few miles away. They enslave other peoples to build their monuments, but their own people live in mud brick huts. They waste much effort in the keeping of slaves, yet their own poor must do without work.

They are much like a man who dresses well but does not bathe, or a woman who uses large words for small meanings. They wish the fruits of civilization but they wish to leap ahead instead of learning from the beginning.

The Atalan People

The people of Atalan are the children of the god Poseidon and the mortal woman Cleito [kl-EYE-toh], though much diffused by time. The Emperor-Priest is Poseidon's mortal representative upon Earth and assumes demi-god like powers upon his ascension and the ruling King-Priests have lesser divine powers, but all are still mortals... they live, grow old and die, albeit at a slower rate than most mortals on Earth. It is not unusual for the Emperor-Priest to live 100 years and the longest reign among the Royal Cousins was that of Nikaia Poseiphilea, Beloved of the Sea and Shore, Queen-Priestess of Euborea, at 173 years [she was 202 when she died].

The vast majority of the Atalan people are wholly mortal, possessing very little divine blood or power. However, they benefit from living in the most advanced civilization in the world. All Atalans are literate and do arithmetic. All benefit from having the only sewage systems and fresh water available to all homes. They have knowledge of water tables so that their sewage doesn't pollute their water supplies and take care not to foul their harbors. Because of all this, they suffer much less infant mortality and disease than most of the rest of the world. Most Atalans can expect to live until 70 years, with men averaging slightly less and women slightly more.

Atalans are an olive-skinned people of average height and weight compared to other humans. While most are brown-eyed, some have eye colors that are very rarely seen in other humans: emerald sea-green and steel grey-blue. Among themselves, they describe the colors as 'the color of the living sea' and 'the color of the rage of Poseidon'. They feel that those with green eyes are calmer and more deliberative and that those with grey eyes are more impulsive and aggressive. All Atalans have gently curling hair of black to very dark brown. Red hair occasionally shows up in a child and is seen as attractive, especially if it persists into adulthood, though this is rare.

Blondes are not native to Atalan and are seen as a sign of 'barbarian blood'. Likewise, almost no Atalans show the ice-blue eyes and 'snow-skin' of those in the far North of Europos.

The ideal handsome man in Atalan is olive skinned with grey eyes. His hair is black, long enough to tie back and has a gentle wave to it. He is bearded, but it is kept trimmed. He is fit, slim of waist with strong arms. He wears no cosmetics not required by his trade [kohl about the eyes for sailors and hunters, for example] and

does not dither much over his appearance. He has strong, clean teeth. No matter his station in life, he keeps himself washed and tries to maintain at least one set of clean clothing.

The female ideal is a bit more variable. An attractive Atalan woman is well-proportioned to her height, with wide hips and shoulders. Her hair is long and wavy or curled. Like men, she has clean white teeth. Cosmetics are subtle, used more to accentuate assets rather than to hide flaws. Perfumes are often used, with flower scents and citrus being favorites, but are not heavily applied or cloying. She has intelligent, sharp eyes with emerald green being seen as most attractive. She, too, keeps herself clean in both body and clothing.

Jewelry is often worn by Atalans. Many materials are used, including bone, brass, bronze, copper, electrum, leather, silver and gold. Gems include a wide variety of precious and semi-precious stones, as well as beads of painted ceramics and fragrant woods. Coral and pearls are, unsurprisingly, especially prized. Pieces include necklaces [though not chokers], circlets, fillets, and headbands, rings on fingers [though not on the thumb or toes], bracers and bracelets [men tend to bracers and women to bangles], arm rings [at the elbow for women and bicep for men], and pierced earrings are all common. Ankle bracelets are considered feminine. Atalans do not pierce their noses or lips, considering it barbaric.

Clothing tends to practicality, with more coverage in cooler climes and less in the warmer. The basic garment is the tunic, an elbow-sleeved shirt pulled over the head with a length to about the upper thigh. Brachae [pronounced 'BRAK-ay], short trousers that extend to just below the knee and is held up by a drawstring. Footwear is either sandals or ankle boots, each with thick soles. The military has a style of ankle boot specific to their needs. This pattern is variable in that cavalry have full length boots to the knee and infantry use ankle boots to leave room for greaves.