

The Vales of Mephala [Regional Plan]

I. Introduction

“Walking these twisting paths — carved treacherously as though by Her very own Black Hands — has always been the cost of our bounty, outlander. Below these rocks, we follow behind the digging Kwama and harvest the wealth of Veloth’s soil. And though we abide by the Three and Their sermons, we still catch whispers of ancient secrets, echoed off the gorge walls, hinting to a primal past. A mer can’t help but hear funny notions deep in the egg tunnels. Even our Lords of the House Indoril fall sway to the Webspinner’s ways, plotting their claims to the bonestocks of lost Dun Aamul, smote to ruin in the Sharmat’s waking-hour.”

—Muthsera Vorith Odas, Yolk-Keeper of the Ud-Koona Tong, Muth-samaritan of the Twenty-First Shell, Hetman of Umul

II. Regional Overview & Map

The Vales of Mephala cover the tract of land separating the lowland woods of the Lan Orethan to the south — where one can find the Indoril’s most tranquil Gardens — from the tip of the Boethian Mountains to the northeast and the lands of the Telvanni beyond. It lies in between the Azurian Straits to the west and north and the Sacred Coast to the east. It occupies the following area in the worldspace.

[A nicer version of the map shown below goes here. Yeti asks someone with more talent and time to make one. Roughly, it should cover the current extent of the Mephalain Mountain, expanding into neighboring lands where it makes sense.]

III. Regional Wilder Characteristics [Climate, Flora, Fauna and Topography]

The Vales of Mephala are a rocky landscape of gorges and valleys rising above the coastal lowlands to the east and west. Settled sporadically by Velothi egg miners since ancient times, the region hosts a meager scattering of settlements nestled upon the few traversable roads. The region’s web of cliff trails, crevices and caverns form a network of hidden passageways off the beaten track, but only the hardest traveler can navigate it unaided. In some areas, plank bridges and walkways have been constructed to reach outlying egg mines, muck farms or the hideouts of egg poacher gangs. On its borders, the region gradually descends into rocky hills, with its higher terrain looming over neighboring territories.

On average, the region has very little vegetation, due in part to the largely infertile soil and overcast weather patterns. Corkbulb plants, dry grasses and the odd brittle tree sprout out of the clumps of dirt between rocks. Muck pods grow within and alongside pools of water that gather at the bottom of some gorges. For the most part, the landscape uses mostly earthy dirt ground textures, with a few small grassy patches. *(Yeti Note: My plan maintains most of the Mephalain Mountain’s current topography, though we should undertake an effort to make the region’s use of assets more consistent).*

IV. Regional Dungeons

Fitting its role as a rugged borderland, the Vales of Mephala should be designed as a region of moderately high difficulty. Though evenly settled for the most part, it's still largely on the fringe of civilization. Compared to the province's major population centers, it's hard to navigate and dangerous.

Caves: As a rocky region scraped by erosion, the Vales of Mephala possess a multitude of caverns. Egg mines and wild Kwama colonies are commonplace close to the region's natural pathways and roads. Bandits and egg poachers make their hideouts higher in the cliffs, while some of the more remote caves have become dens for Daedra and hiding places for reclusive Telvanni washouts.

Daedric Ruins: Soon after Veloth's arrival in Morrowind, the valleys and gorges to the west of Necrom's burial grounds became a focal point for Mephala worship. It should have several ruined pre-Tribunal shrines. Due to the secretive nature of Mephala cultists, most of these were built at the bottom of gorges, making them attractive gathering spots for cultists in the Third Era.

Strongholds & Velothi Towers: Though lightly populated today, the Vales of Mephala were even more off the beaten track in ages past. The Chimer never settled it in large numbers, and the majority of those making the trek into its web of canyon paths were Mephala worshipers on pilgrimage.

Indoril Ruins: The Indoril took longer than usual to establish a foothold in this region, due in part to its perilous terrain and remoteness. As such, the House only ever built one major structure in the Old Mournhold style within the Vales of Mephala.

Dun Aamul – Formerly the main Chapel that ruled over the Vales of Mephala, Dun Aamul was destroyed near the end of the Second Era by cataclysms from Red Mountain — specifically the shockwaves triggered by Dagoth Ur's reawakening and his initial confrontation with the Tribunal. The Chapel's crumbling ruins lie scatter within a wide canyon to the west of Dun Senim. In recent years, the Indoril House guards have failed to patrol the landmark regularly, and its deepest vaults have been overrun by vampires. Despite this neglect, many native noble families competing for lordship over the region trace their lineage and claims back to Dun Aamul's influential clan family.

V. Settlements Spaces & Roads

Though a rugged region, the Vales of Mephala support a modest population. Velothi settlements nestle themselves within the region's shallow vales and Indoril Chapels tower above the cliffs they stand upon. Egg mines form the region's economic backbone, though a few reclusive mer have established muck farms on the edge of the region's gorge-floor ponds. The Indoril maintain a strong presence on the border, though their authority has been weakened by competing claims to the local lordship.

Bet Yhdas (V): An estate built in the rocky eastern vales that border the Sacred Lands region, Bet Yhdas is the seat of Indoril Orm Iddaren, who feels strongly about weeding the region of Telvanni transgressors. He believes the other northern lords have failed at providing for the Velothi Dunmer living in Telvanni lands, along with enforcing Ordained Law upon the wayward wizards. His antagonistic behavior towards the Telvanni threatens to stroke tensions between the two Houses, though the nearby Wizard Lords mostly just see him as a bothersome nuisance.

Bis Indaryn (V): A tower built atop a massive cliff outcrop, Bis Indaryn overlooks a shriveled tributary of the Orethan River basin and the lower reaches of the Vales of Mephala. It is the seat of Indoril Vavs Drovin, a lord who shares an affinity with the reclusive and religiously cloistered Indoril of the Lan Orethan. She believes the other nobles of the Vales of Mephala have failed to adequately mold their daily lives in accordance with Ordained Law.

Dun Senim (V): Dun Senim lords over the Vales of Mephala, and is the seat of Indoril Ienen Tomaril. It is highly imposing and one of the more fortified chapels in the district. Its' presence is to establish Indoril control over the valley, as well as the Gardens-in-Denial to the north (Telvannis). It was rebuilt from the previous chapel at Dun Aamul, which was destroyed by cataclysms from the Red Mountain. Due to Tomaril being heirless, the chapel and its' territory will revert to family bonestocks, though that hasn't stopped other Indoril from attempting to assert their control over it.

Umul (III): Umul is a major town in the Vales of Mephala, east of the chapel of Dun Senim. Originally a neutral Velothi eggmining town built into the rock walls of a shallow gorge, its remote location has attracted attention from outlander guilds that have been unable to operate under the hegemony of House Indoril. Due to the dangers that plague the surrounding valleys, as well as the political intrigue regarding control over the area, the town's location makes it an ideal source of lucrative contracts. The town is also home to the Ud-Koona Tong, a fraternal egg-mining guild that takes a vigilante stance against the region's egg poachers (and unaffiliated egg miners and prospectors). Umul is also somewhat notable for being the site of the Shrine of the Yolk-Skin, which honors the first Egg Miners. (24-28 buildings)

Within these Prognosticating-Vales, Vivec coated his skin with Kwama-stench and taught Veloth's children how to deceive the Egg-Queens' hosts. Hereafter no colony fighter would ever lay tendrils upon the daring miner-mer who harvests the yolk of Resydayn's depths.

Ovood (V): Ovood is a small Velothi outpost on the roads leading into the Vales of Mephala from the Sundered Scar to the south, located perilously close to the ruins of Dun Aamul. It serves as a stopover point for peddlers and outlander mercenaries and "adventurers" heading north, most of whom stay at the hamlet's inn, which has attracted all kinds of lively characters in recent times.

Tahvel (V): Tahvel is a small collection of shack-dwellings that lies to the south of Umul, on a footpath leading into the Lan Orethan. Lately, the village's egg-miners are dissatisfied with their working conditions and blame the local hetman for not properly representing their needs to the lord of Bis Indaryn. (6 buildings)