

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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Thaelon Morgyr's Map

By Ed Greenwood

*How and where and when did the **Forgotten Realms** start? What's at the heart of Ed Greenwood's creation, and how does the Grand Master of the Realms use his own world when he runs **D&D** adventures for the players in his campaign? "Forging the Forgotten Realms" is a weekly feature wherein Ed answers all those questions and more.*

Probably everyone who loves fantasy, as well as every wargamer and board game player, has a love of maps. Gorgeous maps can suggest adventure, inspire with evocative names of distant Mount Grimmerfangs and Dragons Be Here notations, and provide shining cities afar or busy port-studded gulfs. And your average adventurer is familiar with dungeon maps that provide ways back out, and treasure maps that point the way to rewards—and danger.

Yet right now I'd like to describe another sort of map that's very common in the Realms, yet almost never talked about: the merchants' map.

A modern real-world motion-study expert might term it a "motion-study" map, and a real-world railroader might call it a "switching plan" or "a sequence of waybills." Most of us might opt for the wider term "flowchart."

A Merchants' Map

Simply put, a merchants' map is a diagram detailing the movements and steps in making an item that's then sold. A metal skillet with a lid is a good example.

Its raw materials are metal ores; they are mined somewhere, smelted either there or elsewhere, then in metal form taken (perhaps next door, perhaps to another kingdom) to a foundry or smithy or other workshop where they are made into things. In this case, iron is cast into molds to make raw pans and lids, which are then finished with surface treatments (polishing, drilling for handles and applying those handles, which are often of treated wood, and in rare cases—rare for an everyday object such as a skillet, that is, but common for armor and weapons—magical treatment with *everbright* to inhibit rust). They are then packaged against breakage (common for better sorts of earthenware, but again rare for skillets) or "shrinkage" (theft or loss due to simple bouncing and falling out, on the road), and transported to markets or shops for sale (sometimes to peddlers who travel and resell).

A merchants' map documents all the movements of the components or ingredients of a product, and then of the product itself. Costers in the Realms use them because they need to efficiently ship large volumes of bulk items, and they need to have them to muster and assign numerous wagons, beasts of burden, drovers, and the like—and plan routes with as much secure storage (warehouses or at least caravan paddocks) as possible along the way. Investors and entrepreneurs in the Realms consult such maps with an eye to shortening or combining movements and saving money. Both large wagon merchants (costers, again) and small try to arrange matters to minimize "empty runs;" in other words, movements where wagons travel empty or largely empty, as opposed to being stuffed full of non-perishable, non-time-sensitive partial cargoes (known in the Realms as "way cargoes") that are lying idle in a warehouse or shop, awaiting the next passing wagon with some carrying room to spare.

Thaelon

So why "Thaelon Morgyr's Maps"? Well, Thaelon Morgyr was a brilliant but quiet (and quiet-living), solemn, far-thinking man of Baldur's Gate and later Athkatla who rose to the notice of sages only after his death. At this point, he was found to be both incredibly wealthy (worth some sixteen million gold pieces, at conservative estimates) and the possessor of hundreds of merchants' maps he'd drawn up and modified, over time, as he refined processes to save money, or found ways he could insinuate his businesses into the mercantile and manufacturing processes of others, to make a few coins (as what we would term a "middleman"). Morgyr produced nothing and sold nothing to the general public, but made coins along the way as many, many things

were produced and later sold. Elminster termed what Morgyr and others have done as "grazing," and he once called Amn "a country of far too many grazers."

For merchants active in the late 1300s DR and for the first few years of the 1400s, the term "doing a Thaleon" on something meant refining a process to save coins or time or work or all three, and a slick or efficient business tactic was briefly known as "proper Morgyr-work." Interestingly, Thaelon never married and had no surviving kin, because he deemed supporting family or involving them in mercantile matters "inefficient, by nature." He put his effort into cultivating business friendships of mutual benefit "to build up trust, not obligations or liabilities," but by all accounts was a contented rather than a lonely man. Some Amnian adventurers report he invested in adventurers not just as guards for valuable cargoes, but to hear their stories and live vicariously through their exploits.

The Utility of Such Maps

To a thief, a merchants' map is a treasure map; to a fighter seeking casual employment as a warehouse guard or caravan escort rider, such a map can be a ticket to her or his next job. And over time, any successful adventurer has to be more than someone who charges into danger seeking treasure; as sinews and reflexes age, investments and semi-retirement "second careers" become increasingly important, and using merchants' maps to make oneself or one's property an indispensable way-station or rental storage or temporary security can be vital to a prosperous life.

And to a Dungeon Master improvising "on the fly," a fistful of merchants' maps can perennially answer the question of "What is inside all of these wagons, anyway?"

Not that any of us have time enough to sit around inventing dozens of such maps—not when running a campaign entails so much more (and more vital and, let's face it, more fun) bookkeeping—creating the next dungeon, for example.

Well, that's where I come in. Behold a sample merchants' map (minus the drawn lines that indicate shipments of materials, but preserving all the text that would be written along them). It can readily be modified for elsewhere in the Realms by substituting other names and places at each step.

Arthane Longswords

These "everyday, nothing special, sturdy" longswords are sold by the score in Waterdeep, and exported from there all over the Sword Coast North and Heartlands. The business is named for Eldegul Arthane, the founding human smith and merchant who first thought of undercutting the superior but pricier dwarf-forged blades (that grew scarcer and scarcer over the centuries of dwarven decline).

The current merchants' map for Arthane blades (sold scabbardless but "finished;" that is, with hilts rather than "naked," which means tempered but unsharpened blades that end in tangs around which an end user or seller must fashion a hilt) goes like this:

East of Beliard is **Arthane Furnace** (a "bloomery" furnace using local ores, local felsul and blueleaf trees for charcoal to derive charcoal for adding carbon to the smelt and to heat the forges, and local and Secomber-bought vine oils for quenching; "local" meaning the Arthane family long ago bought the lands from which these ingredients come). Here the metal is smelted and raw blades are forged, tempered, and then packed in barrels of vine oil and shipped to:

Secomber, where **Samril's Fine Blades** "work" the swords. Tangs are "mounted"—that is, fitted with hilts, then polished, sharpened, and packed (blades only, their oil sealed away from the hilts with canvas purchased in Secomber from divers sources, and gums derived by the Samrils by boiling down the local lalannas vine and bitterthorn roots) in fresh local vine oil in flat wooden chests, sealed with pitch, for shipment to Waterdeep.

The polishes used by the Samrils are stone powders (of specific flakes, crushed and mixed with particular oils in secret blends) provided by **Anastur's Abrasives** of Llorkh, Baelen Anastur being the aging gnome proprietor of this well-respected business that employs gnome and human prospectors who work the Delimbiyr vale for the needed manganese, "rust-rock" (iron oxide), and other rock chips.



Sharpening is done by the Samril halfling family, using their own secret blends of local woodland-derived oils and whetstones quarried in secret locations near Ironmaster by the **House of Yarthin** (a dwarven-human collective fronted by Alander Yarthin of Calling Horns) and shipped directly to Burlandin Samril.

Grips are made of High Forest duskwood (harder, longer-wearing) or blueleaf (more pliable/durable, but must be replaced more often than duskwood) pieces, the trees cut by woodcutters of Secomber such as **Maraszymo Darluth** (or anyone who will beat Darluth's prices; few do, and those who do are local cutters), and then cut up and lightly kiln-dried by the Samrils. Pieces of the "dry" are then shaped and fitted around tangs by the Samrils. The resulting grips are then wrapped in ox-hide or rothé hide, with horsehide or donkey-hide as fallbacks (dragonhide or other scaly so-called hides are slippery, brittle, and unsuitable), held on with twisted fine wire.

Preferred suppliers of cured hides are the **Falthryn and Daughters Tannery** of Lannort (a new hamlet just downstream of Loudwater), and **Sorkryn's Soft Hides of Scornubel** (the sly, debonair, point-bearded Ananduz Sorkryn is a notorious and unscrupulous "Master Trader" of Scornubel who sources hides and living beasts from all over eastern Amn and Tethyr).

Fine braided wire of copper is favored and bought from the dwarven firm **Gleskur's Finemetals of Secomber**, who draw wire in their workshops from copper purchased from secret dwarven sources who "covertly come calling" on a regular (and presumably nocturnal or underground) basis.

Pommels of Arthane longswords are usually round knobs (rarely, these are replaced by shaped metal plates, or even a curved metal guard, such as is customary for a cutlass) fastened to the end of the tang. Traditionally, these knobs are of ivory or (cheaper) bone (ideally the long-lasting and durable bones of the peryton, owlbear, dire wolf, or fire lizard), or of various cast metals (brass and other rust-resistant alloys being preferred over iron and materials that readily rust in contact with human sweat or blood). Brass and alloy knobs are cast by the Samrils from bulk ingots purchased from traveling traders operating out of Scornubel and Waterdeep, and come from many sources. Ivory comes from passing caravan "fartraders" on a random basis, if their wares are fine enough, or sourced from Waterdhavian shippers for specific orders if the fartraders haven't called by recently enough or offered enough. The bones come from **Galdegut's Boneyard** of Lannort, a glue-factory and alchemical supply shop run by the garrulous retired one-legged adventurer Morluth Galdegut, he of the "enchanted all-seeing eye" eyepatch and the many shady wandering associates and investments. Ivory and bone pommels are carved by the youngest Samrils, under the supervision of elders in their dotage.

Arthane blades reaching Waterdeep are cleaned, scabbarded, given a final sharpening by the Armory staff, using House of Yarthin stones and fashionable "fire oil" (a secret blend of oils that has nothing to do with fire at all, and is purchased from **Famryn's Fine Oils** of Baldur's Gate, an old gnome-owned but human-fronted firm) and offered for sale from **The Arthane Armory**, westfront The High Road, nigh Crossbow Lane, Castle Ward. The Armory resharpens and repairs blades of all makes, for fees (includes replacing grips and altering the appearance of a weapon).

Scabbards come from the long-established scabbard-makers **Whelanxdryn's of Elturel**, a large business that has its own tannery and "metalmount" smiths who fashion "mounts" to strengthen scabbards and line their tops with metal rings and their bottoms with metal points, and buys the necessary metals and cured hides from an everchanging array of passing traders to keep costs low. Currently headed by Maerilro Whelanxdryn, this business is expanding and currently becoming an important landlord and investor in Baldur's Gate and Iriaebor, as well as Elturel.

Some merchants' maps (such as those for glass vials and lanterns, candles, or even axes) are much simpler

than this one, but the maps for high-fashion jewelry can be far longer and more complex. These are details any DM can ignore if it doesn't suit them—or embrace if it will enrich their campaign.

When asked about that, Elminster of Shadowdale replied, "Some folk can't resist prying too much for their own good, can they?"

About the Author

Ed Greenwood is the man who unleashed the *Forgotten Realms* setting on an unsuspecting world. He works in libraries, and he writes fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and romance stories (sometimes all in the same novel), but he is happiest when churning out Realmslore, Realmslore, and more Realmslore. He still has a few rooms in his house in which he has space left to pile up papers.

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