

A Short History of the Northern Kingdoms

About Two and a half thousand years ago Elves, Dwarves and other humanoid creatures ruled the lands we now call the Northern Kingdoms, many magnificent elven cities dotted the wild landscape, massive underground Dwarven cities hewn from the very mountain rock spanned hundreds of miles. Their architecture was truly a sight to behold, enough to bring a tear to the eye of even the most grizzled veteran.

But then the Conjunction of the spheres happened, an event where the barriers between the worlds blurred and conjoined. About One thousand Five hundred years ago this conjunction brought forth new creatures into the world, the Necrophages, the Relics, monsters from your most frightening nightmares and a far more dangerous and unpredictable force, Magic.

Then about five hundred years ago mankind arrived, an event called the landing of the exiles.

Sailing from unknown lands to the west, for reasons unknown, they made landfall at the mouths of both the Pontar and the Yaruga rivers, promptly they began expanding east into the Elven kingdoms.

The Elves avoided conflict initially with man believing that mankind would at some point stop their advance east, content with the land they had, and it would be a waste of lives to try and stop them, oh how wrong they were.

They gave up city after city to the seemingly unstoppable advance of the humans, who erected their own edifices over the remains of what the Elves had left behind.

By the time the Elves decided to stop and fight it was too little too late, some four hundred years after mankind arrived all lands from the great sea in the west to the Blue Mountains in the east and from the Dragon Mountains in the north to the Amell Mountains in the south were firmly the dominion of mankind.

And thus the Northern Kingdoms were born.

It was not long into their expansion before the established institutions of the North began to bicker, bribe, marry, blackmail, enter into treaties and eventually go to war with each other in an effort to expand their own kingdoms.

Non humans learned to their cost of the treachery of the Northern kingdoms; kings and queens would enter into treaties with them only to abandon them when it suited them. And after a slaughter of Elves by the kingdom of Redania at Loc Muinne, a second war erupted between Elves and men but the Elves were unprepared for the courage and the stubbornness of mankind. The Elves paid a horrendous price in that war, many elven youth died in those conflicts and it's a blow that the Elven race has never really recovered from.

All seemed well enough for the Human kingdoms of the north, that is until about 12 years ago when the Empire of Nilfgaard sent over thousands men over the Amell Mountains.

It is unknown for sure whether or not the peoples to the south were of any relation to those who settled in the north, to know for sure you'd need to visit the great libraries of the imperial city, but with such a different culture and a language based on the Elven elder speech it would seem unlikely that they were.

Over hundreds of years the Empire of Nilfgaard conquered and assimilated the smaller kingdoms south of the Amell Mountains, confirming the popular theory that the history of humankind is a history of conquest. Finally the empire stopped and settled at the natural border of the Amell Mountains, an almost impassable region bordering Cintra to the north and Nilfgaard to the south.

The Empire and the Northern Kingdoms, for a time, enjoyed healthy trade and prosperity as the Empire needed to sell its wares and the North could afford to buy them.

In a move that most scholars deem of little benefit to Nilfgaard, Emperor Emhyr Var Emreis sent an army, across the Amell mountains, along the Marnadal pass.

As it was almost impossible to hide an army moving along the pass, the army of Cintra had time to prepare and the two armies clashed at the mouth to the pass.

In a master stroke of tactical thinking, the emperor sent a large portion of his troops over the mountains to the east of the pass some time before marching his army up the pass to fight the Cintran army.

While the two armies clashed in the valley pass the mountaineering troops took up position and when the time was right they flanked and ambushed the Cintran army.

Only the Lioness of Cintra Queen Calanthe and a handful of cavalry made it back to Cintra; King Eist, Calanthe's husband fell heroically in that battle.

The Army of Nilfgaard fell upon the Cintran capital like a black wave and with the Cintran Army shattered, there was almost no defence and after four days of bitter fighting the Nilfgaardians rammed through the gates and entered the city.

The Cintran royalty retreated into the royal palace and barred all entry to the black ones as best they could, Queen Calanthe stood helpless as she watched the Nilfgaardians sack and burn her beautiful city. The Nilfgaardians were merciless killing men, women and children as they drove deeper and deeper into the city.

Queen Calanthe would not be captured, she was the lioness of Cintra and would not be a war trophy nor would she become a vassal to Nilfgaard, she threw herself from the palace walls, plummeting to her death.

Soon after, news of the slaughter of Cintra reached the ears of the kings and queens of the other northern kingdoms and also the sorcerers and sorceresses of the north who rallied together in an effort to repulse these southern invaders. What remained of the Cintran army began to rally and the news of Calanthe's suicide and the atrocities committed by the Nilfgaardians drew many commoners to the Cintran army, swelling its ranks.

The Nilfgaardian Army under the command of Marshall Coehoorn was ordered to cross the Yaruga river in order to capture lower sodden and the kingdom of Brugge.

Marshall Coehoorn's army clashed with the rallied Cintran army and twenty two mages from the lodge of sorceresses in a battle known as the battle of Sodden hill.

The battle was horrific, often the skies were darkened by arrows only to be lit up by mage fire and arks of eldritch lightning, man and beast fell in droves. The sorceresses fought on, even when mortally wounded their spells carved out huge gaps in the Nilfgaardian lines and the Cintran's capitalised immediately.

Nilfgaard was defeated having lost a third of it one hundred thousand two mages died in the battle and thousands of Cintrians were slain.

Nilfgaard was unable to continue the war having exhausted so many resources so the Emperor negotiated peace with the north and in return for ceasing his advance and giving up upper sodden he was allowed to keep those lands he had captured south of the Yaruga including Cintra.

And so ended the first Nilfgaardian-Nordling war.



That wasn't the end of the conflict between the Northern Kingdoms and Nilfgaard, six years after the first war ended plans were put in motion and the conflict began anew.

Since the end of the first war the Northern Kingdom were very aware of the continuing threat Nilfgaard posed being so close to their kingdoms just across the Yaruga river.

So King Foltest of Temeria, King Henselt of Kaedwen, King Vizimir of Redania, King Demevend of Aedirn and Queen Meve of Rivia and Lyria came together to discuss a way to retake Cintra but in a way that made Nilfgaard look like the aggressor.

It was decided that King Demevend would have a unit of his soldiers dressed as Nilfgaardians attack one of his outposts thus giving the rest of the Northern Kingdoms just cause to invade south and retake Cintra.

Meanwhile Emperor Emir has plans of his own.

The Emperor, who was well aware that the reason for his defeat in the first war was the North's unity; A unity that he would destroy.

Relying on their lust for political power, Emir reached out to the mages via Vilgerfortz of Roggeveen offering the sorcerers and sorceresses more power and titles in his empire should they assist him.

He also gained the support of the Elves of Dol Blathanna by promising them that they may have a free kingdom of their own, knowing of the persecution the elves faced at the hands of the humans; In particular the kingdom of Kaedwen.

Soon the time came for the North to put its plans in motion. That is until the circle of mages broke on the island of Thaned where mages secretly loyal to Nilfgaard and Scoia'tael led by Vilgerfortz attacked those who supported the north during a planned mages reunion. This attack took the mages out of the war that was to follow, just as Emir had planned.

At around the same time the small kingdom of Verden, to the south west of Temeria, declared its support for Nilfgaard and began to threaten Temeria's boarder. King Foltest, wise enough to know he'd been out played dispatched a messenger to King Demevend telling him to cancel the plan they were to set in motion.

The messenger never arrived. Emperor Emir had the disguised Aedirnian soldiers hung and this gave him the excuse he needed to launch an invasion into the North starting the second Nilgaardian-Nordling war.

The Imperial army marched into Aedirn and Lyria.

Without support from Temeria who were more focused on their southern boarders with Verden and Cintra or Kaedwen who were dealing with a non-human uprising, Aedirn and Lyria fell after a few short months of fighting.

The imperial army pressed north liberating Dol Blathanna adding elven troops to its armies.

Redania at this point was in no shape to join the fight; an elven mage had assassinated King Vizimir II triggering a purge of non-humans and mages in Redania. The purge was headed up by the Redanian secret service commanded by Sigismund Dijkstra. With their king slain and his son Radovid only a child, ruling Redania fell to the queen and a regency council until Radovid came of age.

Soldiers from the Nilfgaardian Elite Black infantry took the fort of Dillingin which guarded a bridge over the Yaruga into the small kingdom of Brugge allowing the Nilfgaardian western army group to cross into Brugge and with the help of Verden they took Brugge and Mayena.

Part of the western Imperial army group along with soldiers from Verden moved up the coast in an effort to take Gors Velen and cut off the supply lines between Redania and Temeria. Although they met with some success they were ultimately repulsed by volunteer armies, the Temerian army and raids along the coast by the Skelligans who by doing so threatened the western army groups supply lines.

The western army group pushed further into Temeria towards Maribor, once captured they were only a day's march from the Temerian capital of Vizima.

However with winter fast approaching Emperor Emir ordered his troops to retreat back to Brugge for the winter months ready to renew the offensive in the spring.

King Foltest could breathe a sigh of relief, his kingdom would at least last through the winter, he had time to organise and plan for spring.

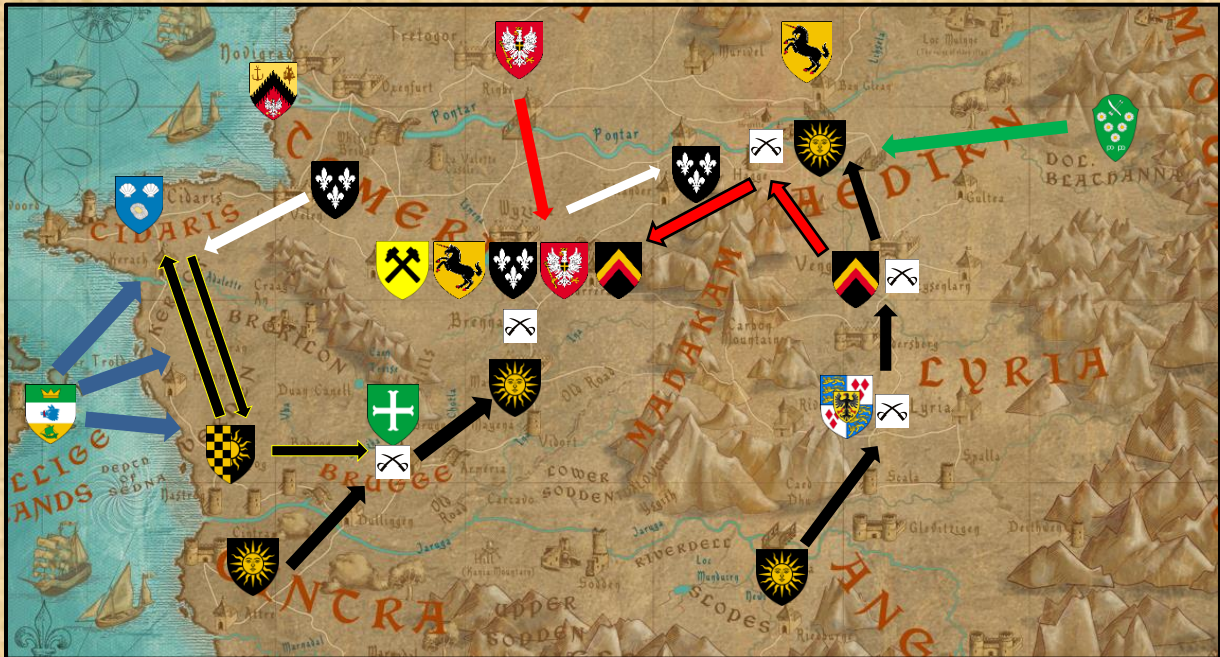
He met with King Henselt, the young Radovid of Redania and various other nobles in order to plan for the spring, if Temeria fell the rest of the North would surely follow. It was decided that the North would unite and throw its might into one decisive battle at a small little town called Brenna.

This small town with a population of no more than three hundred people swelled to over forty thousand as men and women from all over the Northern Kingdoms flocked, heeding the call to arms. Levies were raised for towns to conscript so many of their young men and Dwarven volunteers from Mahakham determined to put over grudges aside to defend their home joined the huge army made up of the Royal Redanian army, the Military of Temeria, the Kaedweni Dun Banner cavalry and the Free company mercenary army hired from Kovir.

In the east come spring the Nilfgaardian eastern group laid siege to the weakly defended fortress of Hagge which if taken would open up a back door to Temeria. The eastern army group couldn't invade Kaedwen for fear of the Temerian army attacking them in the rear from Hagge or cutting off their supplies. Unknown to them, Foltest had reinforced the fortress through the

winter with elite troops and stood upon the ramparts himself to defend the fort for a time.

The Eastern army group slowed and eventually ground down to a halt unable to push north or west, for the first time in the war the people of the north saw Nilfgaard not as an unstoppable force but a mortal foe which would bleed if cut and could be defeated.



Emperor Emir charged Marshal Menno Coehoorn with crushing the Nordling army at Brenna thus shattering any organised defence in Temeria. King Foltest deployed the Nordling army in a valley, to the south was a boggy marshland which would protect his right flank from being out flanked, just north of the marsh was golden pond, inbetween that and the marsh he deployed troops from Brugge, the Mahakham volunteers and the free company.

North of the pond deployed the majority of the Nordling army, Redanian, Temerian and Mariborian infantry and the PFI (Poor Fucking Infantry). To the north of the battlefield Foltest had hidden reserve cavalry from Redania, Aedirn and the famed Dun Banner elite cavalry from Kaedwen. Approximately around 43,000 troops.

Marshal Coehoorn set up his army, primarily made up of cavalry on the eastern hill opposite the Nordling battle line. His army included veteran heavy cavalry, the Alba Division and an elite elven cavalry unit called the Vrihedd Brigade, troops from the Nauzicaa and 7th Daerlan brigades.

In all Coedoorn's army numbered about 46,000 troops.

Coehoorn's early reconnaissance, afraid of venturing too close to the Nordling lines, failed to discover the reserve cavalry hidden behind a hill north of the battlefield.

Initially the Alba Division charged the Temerian infantry in the centre of the line and met with early success, driving deep into the line but before long

they began to get stuck, their heavy armour restricting their movement and making them easy targets for Temerian pikes and spears.

Coehoorn next ordered his own troops the Deithwen cavalry and Ard Feainn heavy battalion to attack the troops from Brugge near the pond.

The troops from Brugge managed to hold off the Nilfgaardians but morale was low, if it were not for the free company and Mahakham volunteers joining the fray the Nilfgaardians would have broken through.

The poorly equipped and novice PFI withstood charge after charge of enemy cavalry, fighting tooth and nail to defend their homeland. No one truly knows how these peasant conscripts survived and broke the enemies charge.

The battle raged for hours, both sides suffering countless casualties, at one point the Elven troops of the Vrihedd Brigade broke through the line and attacked the field hospital. Many wounded were put to the sword and if it were not for the reserve cavalry of Redania, Aedirn and the Dun Banner the unarmed medical staff would have surely been killed.

It was at this point the battle turned in favour of the Nordlings, the reserve cavalry swept down from the North catching the Nilfgaardians completely by surprise and crushed the right flank of the Nilfgaardian army.

Marshall Coehoorn soon realised he was defeated and at the behest of his subordinates attempted to flee the battlefield by the only available route, south, across the marsh he did not know was there.

Stuck in the marsh up to his waist in the bog the great Marshall Menno Coehoorn was struck and killed by crossbow bolts from the Mahakhan volunteers, though, better for him to die on the field than on the gallows as that would surely have been his fate if he had returned to Emperor Emir Var Emries in defeat.

The battle of Benna cost the lives of thousands of men, dwarves and elves and effectively ended the second Nilfgaardian-Nordling war. Soon after the battle a treaty was signed called the peace of Cintra that saw Nilfgaard return south of the Yaruga, Nilfgaardian settlers give up conquered lands in Brugge, Lyria and Aedirn and return to the south and the commanders of the Vrihedd Brigade arrested. The son of the king of Verden led an insurrection against his father and assumed the throne of Verden ending Verden's support for Nilfgaard.

But despite the great victory over the south the damage the Northern Kingdoms was extensive, Aedirns once flourishing industry was torn apart and shipped south to Nilfgaard, farmlands were put to the torch, kings were slain and any trust between men and non-humans, in particular elves, was shattered.

Despite the victory over Nilfgaard there was still a great deal of distrust for non-humans which came to a head in the city of Rivia a few months after the peace of Cintra was signed. The incident came to be known as the Rivian

Pogrom, no one truly knows how it started, some say it started with an argument that got out of control between Nadia Esposito and a group of Dwarves, other more imaginative folk say the Redanian secret service had a hand in it. What is known for sure is that the race riot claimed the lives of 184 men, women and children both human and non-human alike including the famed Witcher Geralt of Rivia and further eroded trust between humans and non-humans.

In April of 1271 some three years after the battle of Brenna King Foltest of Temeria is assassinated at Castle La Valette plunging the country into chaos as various lords scramble for power as Foltest had left no legitimate heirs to the throne. To make matters worse for the north King Demavend III of Aedirn was also assassinated, his son Stennis though a great tactician was not an effective ruler.

It was revealed at a summit of kings and sorcerers at Loc Muinne that the assassin was in the employ of Nilfgaard and in cooperation with the lodge of sorceresses.

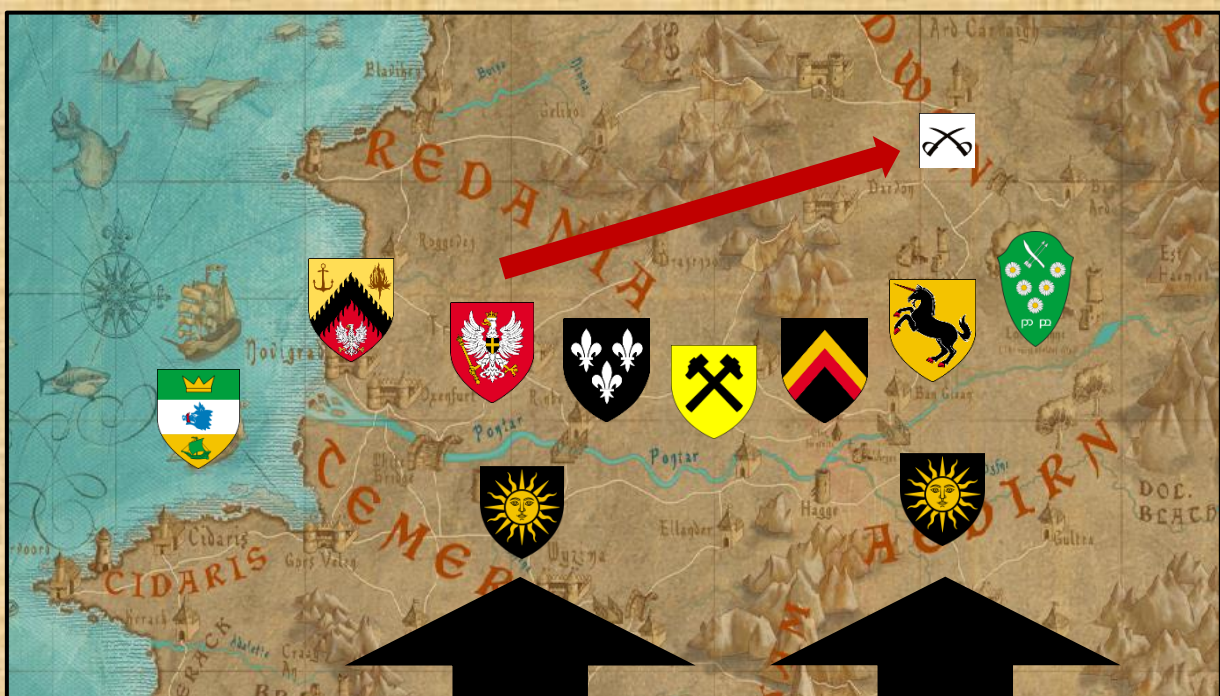
In August of that year Nilfgaard once again declared war on the Northern Kingdoms and its armies crossed the Yaruga soon after.

With both the Temerian and Aedirnian kings slain the empire of Nilfgaard had better success invading the North and by the beginning of winter in the year 1272 all the lands south of the Pontar river was firmly in the hands of Emperor Emir Var Emreis.

Believing that victory was assured the Armies of Nilfgaard made camp for the Winter ready to invade the weaken and fractured kingdoms of Redania and Kaedwen once reinforcements had arrive from the south.

Unfortunately for Emir, Radovid V king of Redania had invaded Kaedwen over the Kestrel mountains that divided the two kingdoms and crushed any resistance claiming Kaedwen for his own.

Instead of facing two weak armies come spring, Nilfgaard would have to fight a single strong unified Nordling force led by one king Radovid V.



The remains of the Aedirnian army and the Temerian military retreated north across the Pontar to further reinforce Radovid's lines.

Ever since the end of the second war, the Elves of Dol Blathanna have not received any aid from Nilfgaard. In fact their soldiers who fought with Nilfgaard during the battle of Brenna had been given up as scape goats as one of the terms of the peace of Cintra, the name for which was given to the peace treaty.

The Elves now seeing themselves as tools in Emir's game now fight against Nilfgaard; this does not sit so well for many humans in the North, especially for the Kaedwenis who still remember the war and the elven uprisings that caused so much chaos in Kaedwen.

The sturdy folk of Skellige have remained relatively untouched by the wars, happy to stick to tradition and their clan wars instead to look outwards. They were instrumental in stopping Nilfgaard's advance up the western coast of Temeria during the second war and currently their seaborne raids against Nilfgaardian supply shipping is hampering Emir's resupply. Its only a matter of time before the great sun of Nilfgaard shines upon the Skelligan islands.

Not much is known about the lodge of sorcerers and sorceresses, even since their role in the assassinations of the northern kings was revealed at Loc Muinne they have been very quiet. Rumours that they have disappeared into the wild or that they are still in collusion with Nilfgaard make their way across northern settlements and cities but none have a shred of evidence but the common folk are easily swayed and given the actions of the mages in the past it no wonder these rumours are taking root.

The free city of Novigrad, fearful of any mage or non-human, currently hunt and burn mages and non-humans for the smallest of crimes. The church of the Eternal Fire has dominion over the hearts and minds of the common folk, their witch hunters scour the city and outlying towns looking for any opportunity to bring to justice those who the Eternal fire deems heretical. The City thus far has remained neutral in the war but Radovid keeps pressure on the cities administration in order to break that neutrality and bring Novigrad's sizable naval fleet to bear on Nilfgaard.

Radovid was not going to rely on his armies alone; he sent envoys to Kovir and Povis who had always stayed neutral. Although these envoys failed to get Kovir and Povis to enter the war they did secure the services of the free company, a mercenary army led by the famous Julia Abatemarco, better known as pretty kitty.

King Radovid V charged Julia Abatemarco to raise a mercenary army to conduct guerrilla style attacks to harass the Nilfgaardians over the winter,

weaken their morale and destroy their supply lines. Radovid wants to take the fight out of the Nilfgaardians so that he had time himself to prepare for a counter attack across the southern front.

Posters went up in all the towns across the Northern Kingdoms north of the Pontar which asked for men, arms and money. All volunteers should come and sign up at Errdil's tavern in the Redanian town of Rinde.

It is winter of the year 1272.

Nigh is the time of the sword and the axe!

None will fight this war in our stead!

Nigh is the time of madness and distain!

(Unknown priest of the Eternal Fire)