



# HEROQUEST



## HeroQuest Voices *Peoples of Glorantha*

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*A Personal View of Esrolian Life, Teachings of the Earth Woman*  
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*Legion are the peoples of the world, many and varied are their ways.  
All are connected by the cosmic webs of Arachne Solara  
Who brings and binds all together, in life as in this book,  
Who takes and rends apart those who would tear her webs.*



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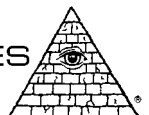
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# A Personal View of Esrolian Life

## What My Mother Told Me

### Who are you?

I am Imarjarin Seven-Shrines, I am your mother, and you love me. I am matriarch of our prosperous and healthy household, a Priestess of Ernalda Great-Mother, and a loyal follower of Queen Varadis of the Old Earth Alliance. I am the Walker of the Seven Clay Pot and Spoon shrines, who takes Ernalda's blessings to those who cannot come to the temple.

### Who are we?

We are the Hulta family, a lineage that has produced many priestesses. We are proud to be Esrolians.

### What makes us great?

The Goddesses make us great: they show us the better way to live and protect us from the competitive hierarchy of male rulers whose errors nearly destroyed the world. Imarja the Great Goddess, who made us one people in one land, saved us from destruction.

Women's wisdom makes us great: the Ring of Women took their rightful role as leaders after the Sword and Helm War, when so many men died that our people were doomed. But through their wisdom we found that there is always another way.

Love makes us great: we are filled with compassion; is not a mother's love the strongest thing in the world?

Fertility makes us great: our lands are rich and plentiful, our stores are full, our children strong and healthy and our herds are plentiful, all through the blessing of the Goddesses.

Community makes us great: we come together to talk and listen, to share and belong, and everyone is shown their place and knows their duties.

### Where do we live?

Our land is called Esrolia after Esrola, the Earth Mother. We are the Daughters and Children of the Earth. We live in Pennel, a fine river town in bountiful Esrolia, the "great-rivered land," of lush fields, glorious temples, towns and cities and happy homes. To the east is the bay of Choralinthor, a child of Esrola who gives up his bounty in honor of the Goddesses. To the south is volcanic Caladraland, which warms the Goddesses; to the north-east is the Shadow Plateau, which protects them for love.

### How do we live?

Most Esrolians are farmers, and most of the land is a vast patchwork of wheat, barely, oat, and rye fields. Where there are not fields there are orchards and vineyards of succulent fruit. Everybody's pantry is filled with good food, so every home is happy, and there is no reason to squabble or go hungry.

Women and men work together on the land, although it is the women who own the farms. We keep the men laboring: a well-worked man is a happy man, whose mind is far from war and discord.

Our villages and towns are central to our lives, where we work, pray, talk and sing together. The Councils, groups of elder women, guide the villages through day-to-day life. When not working in the fields, we set our hands to crafts; the women weave peace rugs, and use the time to plan and prepare for days ahead, while the men carve, hammer, and gossip.

Nochet is the greatest city in the world, a metropolis of a hundred thousand souls living in harmony under the leader-

ship of the matriarchs. Within the city, folk group together in great squares of houses centered on a shrine, market or craft hall. Crafters gather together into guilds to support one another and share their secrets. Traders sell their wares at the great daily markets, or travel through the villages to haggle for spare grain and local wares.

Many great and bountiful temples bless our land: huge complexes where great sisterhoods of priestesses gather to worship the Goddesses, guarded by Babeester Gor warrior women. The three greatest temples are Ernalda's Home at the heart of Esrolia, Asrelia's Retreat in the north where the Grandmothers divide the harvest, and the ancient Necropolis, where the Queens' tombs stand.

We are a peace-loving people: we are the great negotiators, and the Peace Rugs of Orventili are carried to every meeting, even in times of war. We always seek a peaceful solution to every argument; if two women cannot agree even after seven days of talking then they seek an arbiter to help their decision.

If war comes, then the Goddess made it that men can die, but the land and people can survive without them: we thank them for this, and are grateful. Before any husband goes to war he lies with his wife, so that if he dies his life may be reborn. Then he goes to the muster, led in our defense by the daughters of Vinga and the wisdom of the Queen.

### What is important to us?

Family, peace, community, and full stomachs: these are the things we yearn for and the things that the Goddess rewards us with.

### Who rules us?

Our Queens are all heirs to ancient earth traditions by birth or by choice: no one knows how many there are at any one time, as new queendoms are founded and old ones die out. The Queens establish how Esrolia is governed: it is they that rule us. They are all priestesses of the Goddesses, and so are led by divine inspiration as well as women's good judgment.

The Queens gather together into factions, each organized around a different Year Father. This is the name given to a ceremonial male deity important to the local religion. Once the wicked Pharaoh, so-called "God-King" of the so-called "Holy Country," usurped the position of Year King in most of the rites and tried to rule Esrolia, but he is dead now and the old rites have returned.

We are followers of the Old Earth Alliance, which is led by Queen Varadis; our Year Father is Fethel Bav, a son of Argar Argan. We work to reinstate the practices of the Rites of Darkness, which existed when the Only Old One ruled the land. Our faction has strong ties with the trolls of the Shadow Plateau, with the priestesses of Asrelia and within Nochet.

### What is evil?

There are those who will foolishly tell you that the rule of men is evil or that war is evil: this is not true, as both are just foolish and unfortunate. The true evil in the world is Chaos, which seeks to corrupt and pollute and destroy. Erveria's followers are able to sniff out Chaos and see through falsehood, and Belveren's healers can cleanse its curse, but you must fear it.

Failure to communicate is evil. If the other factions would only listen to Queen Varadis, this foolish civil strife would end.



### What is my lot in life?

You should work hard, respect others and do good things; for that, you will be remembered and blessed.

One day you will find a man who appeals to your senses, and want to marry. He will come to our home and live under our roof and his mother shall pay for his wedding. When you are ready we will call together your kinfolk and build you a home of your own. You will inherit my house one day and perhaps—if you choose—follow in the footsteps of your foremothers and become a priestess.

One day you may have children, girls to make you proud and boys to look after you in your old age, but both will leave worry lines on your brow.

One day, if the Goddess chooses, you will become a grandmother. Depending on the course of your life, you might perhaps sit and count grandchildren and corn with the priestess of Asrelia's Retreat, or mourn for your lost kin and tend the dead within the Necropolis.

### What is the difference between women and men?

Women are the landowners, the heiresses and the interpreters of the Goddess' words. Women dominate politics, trade and religion, which makes us different from those around us.

Men are great workers, our lovers and devoted husbands, and we cherish them dearly. Just as we represent the Goddess, so do they represent the Husband-Protectors, the gods who defended the Goddess. They fight for us if we cannot make peace, they lift us up when we stumble, and they hold our hands when we need comfort.

What men are not is leaders. This has been proven a thousand times. They are too warlike at heart, their focus blurs, and they soon forget their charges.

### How do we deal with others?

We love our families: they are the core of our lives and should be protected with all our strength. You may argue with your cousins and sisters, but these squabbles are soon put aside when crisis comes.

Our community is those people we live near in Pennel: Ivya the Council Woman, Felchari the fishmonger, Rolsa the baker, and many more. We seek their respect, and do good by them so that they will do good by us. They are nearly family and are to be defended in a crisis, as we hope they would defend us.

Friends are like family and should be treasured, but they do change and you can grow out of friendships. Cherish them while they last.

There are so many folk in Esrolia that you cannot know them all. You must use caution, so hail a stranger with Ernalda's Cheer to see if they are friendly. The bounty of Esrolia is great and her gifts attract foreign people to our villages and cities. If they come in peace, they are welcomed, but if they threaten you, then call the hue and cry!

### Who are our enemies?

Those who seek to steal our bounty are our enemies. We are fortunate that our good sense and peaceful nature do not lead us into conflict, but even so to the west the Warlord Greymane encroaches upon our lands, raping, pillaging, and tearing at our borders. Some ignorant factions say we should ally with him; the Old Earth Alliance knows that we must resurrect the Only Old One to protect us again.

### Who are my deities?

Ernalda the Earth is the greatest Goddess: she is the Allmother, the Healer, the Queen, everything to which we aspire, and we worship her in all her aspects. Esrola the Earth Mother is most beloved. Imarja is the great protectress who shows us the way to live and provides the simplest magic, yet she is beyond mortal comprehension. All of Ernalda's family are loved and held dear: Voria the Daughter, Redalda the Horse, Asrelia the Grandmother, Babeester Gor the Avenger, Maran the Shaker, Vinga the Protectress, and Ty Kora Tek the Crone are all revered.

These are just some of the Goddesses we know, but every farm, village or city may know a dozen or more daimones of the earth, land, and folk.

The men worship their own gods. Foremost are the Husband-Protectors: Argar Argan the Dark, Orlanth the Wind, Elmal the Sun, Rozgali the Sea, and Vestkarthen the Volcano. All defended Ernalda, even from their own kin. Other deities are known, such as Humakt the Sword, Epikhor the Librarian, Voudisea the Lance Goddess, and Harst the Reeve; but none is so beloved as Ernalda.



# Teachings of the Earth Woman

## The Esrolian Priestess Speaks

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### Where did the world come from?

Once there was nothing but darkness and the Endless Sea that covered everything. Imarja made the world grow, and Ga the Great Earth emerged from the depths. Mountains, plains, ridges, and hollows rose above the waves. Gata was born, and she in turn birthed the twin daughters Asrelia and Ty Kora Tek, who dwell within the earth. Asrelia's daughters were Maran and Ernalda, whose bounty and beauty brought the land to life. Ernalda was wooed by many suitors, and gave freely of herself, populating the world with goddesses and gods. This was the Green Age, when seeds filled all the world and no drought or famine visited the land. Everyone was equal, and all lived in eternal peace and plenty.

### Where did I come from?

You are made from the clay of the Goddess, born from her love and perfection. You were made in her form, a vessel filled with life. We are all children of the Goddess, treasured and loved.

### Why do we die?

We die because First Ancestor was murdered through the jealousy of men, and Ana Gor, Goddess of Death, came into the world to take all his children. Ernalda was once thought dead in the Gods' Age, but she only slept and drifted through the world to Hell in order to heal the world. Other goddesses slept with her to save the world, but all were reborn with her. You too will die.

### What happens after we die?

Nontraya was Ernalda's spurned lover who tried to steal her body when she slept. Her kin hid her body, thus our bodies too are buried, returning to the earth. Our souls go to the caverns under the earth, where Ty Kora Tek the Keeper watches over them until they awaken again to new life.

### Why am I here?

You are here to serve the Goddess, to populate the world with joy and children, just as she did. We are here to live, to love, and to seek peace within the world. Our endeavors will one day return the Green Age.

### How do I do magic?

The Goddesses give you your magic, the soul of our lives, that which animates our clay. Imarja and Our Good Friends give you Home Magic to make life easier, but it is Ernalda who gives you the greatest power: she blesses your home, ripens your corn, heals your children, and makes your life rich. The bounteous goddesses each have their gifts: Esrola and her children feed us, Vinga protects us, Asrelia keeps the harvest, Ty Kora Tek tends the dead, and all the good goddesses bless us.

### What about gods? Can you tell me the truth about them?

Men worship many gods, but it is the Husband-Protectors who help Ernalda, rather than try to rule her. Orlanth the Storm, Elmal the Sun, Rozgali the Sea, Argar Argan the Dark, Flamal the Green, and Vestkarthen the Deep are most revered. They protected the goddesses and even stood against their own kin to defend their wives, such was their loyalty.

### ...Argar Argan?

The Night Tribe attacked Ernalda without thought, but Argar Argan, Son of Night, loved Esrola and used words of peace to stop his kin. He was gifted with Ernalda's bounty, and showed us the way to deal with the darkness. Ezkankekko, our Only Old One, the son of Argar Argan and Esrola, led us wisely for over a millennium until murdered by the Pharaoh.

### ...Elmal?

The Sky Tribe formed the Stagnant Empire. The Emperor sent Angdartha to trick the foolish men of old. He killed them and kidnapped Esrola, but Ernalda showed the women the dances that forced him to free her. Bright Elmal the Sun turned against the Sky Tribe for love of Esrola, and he is now king of the Day Tribe. Ernalda made him her husband and set him in heaven to watch over her.

### ...Flamal?

Flamal is the father of plants, source of all things that grow. His greatest daughter is Aldrya, whose mobile children, the elves, worship the verdant earth. Although Aldrya is wild and unruly, Overdruva shows us how to communicate peacefully.

### ...Orlanth?

Orlanth is the King of the Storm Tribe, who defended Ernalda against his rapacious brothers. His wooing of the Goddess is legendary; eventually she consented, but only after teaching him self-control. Like all men, Orlanth was reckless, and his actions nearly destroyed the world. Ernalda left him, making him follow her to Hell to set the world right again and atone for his deeds.

### ...Rozgali?

Magasta is the King of the Sea Tribe. He flooded the world, but Rozgali his kinsman turned against him and warned Ernalda, who built a great breakwater to defend her people. His actions earned him the affections of the Goddess, even as his brother had once loved Esrola. The sea eventually quieted, and the goddesses calmed and loved the rivers that still remained.

### ...Vestkarthen?

Vestkarthen is the great lord of the fire within the earth. When Chaos came, he fell from the Sky into the Earth, who bore him children named Caladra and Aurelion. He was wounded unto madness, and so the Goddess sent Argar Argan to imprison him until the love of his children could tame his volcanic fury.

### I have heard of other powers. Can you tell me the truth about...

#### ...Chaos?

Chaos is the great enemy: what it kills cannot be reborn, what it destroys cannot grow again. Chaos creates monsters of children, devours communities from the inside, and eats away the world. Hate it and destroy it!

#### ...Mostal?

Mostal is the mechanical King of the Stone Tribe. He became cold and calculating when his brother Stone was killed and became unmoving, and now he seeks to undo that tragedy by repairing that which is not broken.





### ...Sedenya?

The Red Moon was once a mortal girl who coveted the power of Imarja, so she wrapped a piece of the earth around her and rose into the air, leaving behind a great wound that pains us yet. Her armies and priests seek to conquer the world, but when they tried to reach the Home of the Goddess they were halted by the Building Wall and turned away. The Goddess' wound must be healed, but like a patient mother she will wait until the right time to teach her errant daughter her lesson of life.

### ...Sorcerers?

Some people are like empty pots: they have lost Ernalda's spark in their lives and follow false hopes, seeking invisible powers that have no meaning. Sometimes this false worship can make new things, like Zistor the Machine, but when that was broken it was shown to be nothing but metal. We pity them, and let them live among us, hoping to fill their emptiness.

### ...Spirits?

Some spirits are remnants of the Gods War, some are unformed entities, some are the ghosts of the lost. The Earth Witch holds them for Ernalda, and the priestesses of Ty Kora Tek can send them to the Silent Caverns to be reborn as whole beings.

## Goddesses of Esrolia

### Imarja, the Great One, Our Savior

Imarja is the wise mother who saved her children from the wars of brutish men. She brought them to Esrolia and gave them the Eight Silent Songs binding them to their land, and the Ninth Silent Scream to halt men's follies. She is the primal feminine force, and the source of the Earth Tribe.

### Asrelia, Giver and Keeper of Plenty

Asrelia once roamed the world, beautiful and desired, but in the Stagnant Age she retreated into the earth. She took with her all that which the Earth Tribe's enemies coveted, including her daughters. She sustained them through the darkness so that the world could live again.

### Ty Kora Tek, Crone and Holder

Ty Kora Tek is the tender of souls, the keeper of all things good. When death came to the world, many souls came to the Underworld, where Ty Kora Tek dwelt. She aided and sheltered them, but she would not release them from her grasp. She kept everything back from the world until it needed it most, and only her love of her sister Asrelia weakened her hold at last so that she filled the sorry emptiness.

### Esrola, the Earth Mother

Esrola is the very fabric of the earth. All people, animals, and plants, everything within or upon the earth, is part of her. She is the mother of the Grain Goddesses, who feed us: Esra Barley, Pelora Wheat, Suchara Rye, and Usara Oat. She is mother of the Animal Goddesses, who serve and feed us: Uralda Cow, Entra Sow, Nevala Ewe, and Isbarn the Goose Girl. She is the abundance of the land and the great provider.

### Maran, the Active Earth

Maran is the creative and destructive energy of the earth. Once she danced to create the valleys and hills, shaping the world. Then she stopped dancing, summoning earthquakes against her foes. She fought until everything was dead, including herself. In the caverns of the dead she was reunited Ernalda and Esrola, and together they remade the world.

### Ernalda, the Great Goddess

Ernalda is the power that animates the world, so great it could not exist without her, so great that mortals cannot comprehend her. Instead, she manifests herself as the many Earth Goddesses.

### Ana Gor, Goddess of Death

She was created with the first murder, entering the world to become Death. Many stole her powers and drove her away, but she always comes back, forever a part of the universe. She comes to take the Year Fathers during the ceremonies to complete the cycle of fertility.

### Vinga, Defender of the Defenseless

Vinga is the warrior goddess who took the secrets of war from men and made them into the skills of protection. She is there when women need to defend themselves, when they must seek revenge alone, or when they must fight hard in childbirth.

### Babeester Gor, the Bloody Avenger

The Avenging Goddess was born when Ernalda lay dead, at the place where her Axe Hall now stands. She saw the dead goddesses about her, and leapt up with axe in hand to hunt down her family's murderers and take bloody vengeance. She is the defender of the temples, guardian of the Goddesses, and the wrecker of revenge.

### Voria, the Girl's Goddess

Voria was the herald of the first spring, when Life returned to the world after the Great Darkness. She is the goddess of young girls, worshipped for her innocence.

