
Hero Wars Keywords for Balazar and the Elder Wilds

by Oliver D. Bernuetz

Overview

Balazar is a region of rugged beauty that despite its long occupation by humans has yet to feel much impact from them. Originally the land was called Votankiland after the ancestor of all the Balazarings but the advent of Balazar who united the clans (briefly) into one big tribe led to a name change. (Though you will still hear the old name used by the more conservative tribesmen). The Balazarings still live in the same fashion as their distant ancestors. In distant times the Balazarings were saved from destruction by their oldest ancestors so they still venerate them by following the life (for the most part) that their ancestors showed them.

Mythology

A foreign great spirit named Cold Wind slew the Sun plunging the world into Darkness. People would have starved had not the Hearthmother gathered them to her, feeding them as best she could. Even then they would still have starved had she not discovered the Foundchild who taught the people how to hunt. He fathered a son on Hearthmother who was named Votank. Votank had ten sons in turn who he taught how to be men. These ten founded the clans of the region now called Balazar.

History

Years ago the hero known as Balazar came to the region then known as Votankiland. He introduced the worship of the great spirit Tharkantus and managed to unite the region as one kingdom named after himself. He had three sons one of which he intended to make his heir but he died in the Dragonkill War before he could name an heir so instead the kingdom was divided into three parts.

The three kingdoms or tribes often squabbled during the years that followed but were usually ignored by the outside world. This all changed in 1564 when Tarshite irritation over raids from the citadel of Elkoi finally reached the boiling point. A small Lunar force attacked the citadel and quickly conquered it. The ruling family was wiped out and a puppet regime put into place.

Recently, 1616, the other two citadels, Trilus and Dykene have been fighting over ownership of two magical boars that were discovered in 1615.

Land

Balazar is a rugged land bordered on the south and east by mountains, on the north by the Elf Sea and

on the west by lesser mountains in Immther. The Balazarings dwell for the most part on the flat plains and rolling hills of their land. Dakori Ingarth lies to the east, the Lunar Empire to the west and south and Pent to the far north.

People

The Balazarings share a common culture based on their ancestral worship of Votank, Hearthmother and Foundchild. Each of the ten clans worships their eponymous ancestor as do the citadel people who worship Balazar's children. Balazar attempted to introduce worship of Tharkantus (Yemalio) as a unifying force but this experiment failed for the most part.

The Balazarings live by hunting and collecting. The citadels rely more heavily on harvested wild grains and also raise swine, something Balazar taught them.

Families live in extended family units known as hearths. The size of the hearths vary depending on the time of year, growing and shrinking depending on the availability of food. Each hearth belongs to one of the eleven clans who were founded by one of Votank's sons. These clans average roughly 400 members of which just under two thirds are adults. Each of these clans is usually allied or aligned with one or another of the three citadels each of which heads one of the three tribes founded by Balazar's children. The most important relationship is with your hearth, then your clan and finally your tribe.

They are a semi-nomadic people who live in hide tents year round. During the winter months the hearths gather at their sacred winter hearths for mutual protection. These winter hearths belong to one of the ten clans that Votank's sons founded. The citadels belong to the tribe that lives there. Other than these areas no one owns any land.

The only rankings are due to personal ability and age. There are no hereditary rulers other than at the Lunar citadel of Elkoi. The other citadel kings have to possess actual ability to retain their rule. Descent is important but most Balazarings can trace their descent back to some important ancestor.

Both men and women are passionate and unpredictable. Gender roles exist but there are no firm rules, and women can become hunters of citadel guards and men can become gatherers.

Marriage is not as strong an institution as it is in other lands. Marriages last as long as both partners desire it to. Children are considered to be descended from both parents. Initiation rites for adulthood exist and are very important.

Religion

Balazarings believe that the spirits (especially their ancestors) guide everything. Events are interpreted as being spiritually influenced. People gain protection from the supernatural by respecting taboos and

following the rules established by their ancestors.

Most of the spirits worshiped by the Balazarings are considered to be their ancestors (with the exceptions of Brother Dog and Entra, the Sow Mother who are not related to the Balazarings. The Wild Mother is an ancestress of the Balazarings, through the hunting nymph wife of Balazar but she is more of a scary in-law to them rather than a beloved relative.

The major spirits worshiped are:

Votank: Sacred Ancestor, rule giver, men's special spirit guide

Hearthmother: The Gatherer, women's special spirit guide

Foundchild: The Huntsman, spirit of hunting

Tharkantus: The Light in the Hills, spirit guide of warriors and rulers

The Wild Mother, Great Spirit, provider of plants and animals

Minor spirits include:

Brother Dog: Friend and Helper to Foundchild

Rigtaina: The Huntress, Daughter of Foundchild and Mother of the Three Tribes

Balazar: The Founder. Spirit Guide for Leaders.

Entra, the Sow Mother, is worshiped in the Citadels.

Law and War

Disputes are settled by custom. There is a common body of law and custom that determines what is proper and improper. Societal displeasure is usually sufficient to prevent misdeeds. In the case of more serious transgressions exile is practiced. In very serious cases misdoers may be ostracized. This is for life and cuts the ties between clan and misdoer.

Most adult males are hunters, not warriors. Each citadel king has a guard made up of full time fighters who (usually) worship Tharkantus. Favoured weapons are spears and swords. Armour, especially metal armour is rare and prized by the warriors, if not the hunters.

Battles tend to be small, and are always preceded by boasting, threats, and challenges.

Uz (trolls), dragonewts, aldryami (elves) and mostali (dwarves) all live in the region and each race is avoided as much as possible. The Balazarings have a history of setting their non-human neighbors against each other to suit their own ends so the non-humans tend to distrust them.

Balazaring occupations are always tied to one particular religious keyword, i.e. if you're a hunter you follow Foundchild.

Note: Except where noted these keywords and cultural descriptions apply to both the citadel dwellers and other Balazarings. The only exceptions are that the occupations of pig tender and crafts person and the worship of Entra are not found outside the citadels. I do not believe as a rule that theistic worship is practiced in Balazar by the Balazarings. The theistic worship of Tharkantus was weakened and eventually lost when most of Balazar's followers died in the Dragon Kill war. Even in the citadels he is now worshiped in an animistic manner.

Balazaring Cultural Keyword

Physical Skills: Endurance, Move Quietly

Mental Skills: Balazaring Geography, Balazaring Customs, Balazaring Myths, Survive on Land, Craft [Leather, Stone, Bone, or Wood] (choose one), Spirit Combat.

Relationships: to Hearth, to Clan, to Tribe

Magic: Balazarings access spirits through a shaman. Occupation is the main determinant of which spirits you have access to. The Balazarings follow their Balazaring Tradition which has two main tracks as it were, the male Votank, Foundchild, etc. track and the female track, the Hearthmother.

Balazaring Occupation Keywords

Hunter

Most Balazaring males (and some females) are hunters. Next to the gatherers you are the most important members of the clans. During some seasons you hunt small animals on your own but in other seasons you have to hunt large herbivores in groups.

Physical Skills: Butcher, Set Traps, Stalk, Throw Javelin, Throw Javelin with Atatl

Mental Skills: Know Animals, Listen, Track, Peaceful Cut

Personality: Patient

Relationships: usual

Magic: Balazaring Tradition (Foundchild). Brother Dog and Rigtaina, the Huntress, (Mother of the Hunting Nymphs (Vila)) are fairly common additional paths.

Living Standard: Common.

Equipment: atlatl and javelins, snares and traps.

Warrior

You are a follower of Tharkantus and either serve in one of the king's guards at the citadels or act as a guard for a clan chieftain. Citadel guardsmen are mounted but never fight on horseback. Your duties are to guard your chief or citadel from attack.

Physical Skills: Acute Hearing, Running, See Long Distance, Spear and Shield Fighting, Throw Javelin, Horse Riding

Mental Skills: Stay Awake

Relationships: to Clan Chieftain or Tribal King.

Personality: Boastful, Brave

Magic: Balazaring Tradition (Tharkantus)

Living Standard: Good

Equipment: Leather armour and shield, javelins, spear.

Local Variation: The Dykene warriors can also choose Hawk Riding as an additional skill.

Gatherer

You're the people who feed the hearths most of the year. You raise the children, gather the food, tend the sacred hearth fires and make things work.

Physical Skills: Carry Heavy Weights, Throw Javelin

Mental Skills: Make Medicine, Herbalism (knowing the medical properties of plants), Know Animals, Know Plants

Relationships: to hearth and Hearthmother

Magic: Balazaring Tradition (Hearthmother)

Living Standard: common

Equipment: Knife, carrying bag, leather clothes.

Shaman

Entry Requirements: Must have a fetch that can be awakened. Shamans have no gender requirements and the Balazaring consider Shamans to be neither male nor female.

Physical Skills: Craft Fetish, Draw Summoning Circle, Drumming.

Mental Skills: Intimidate, Lead Ceremony, Spirit World Travel, Shamanic Escape, Spirit Combat, Spirit Sight, Tradition Knowledge

Personality: Crazy or Wise.

Relationships: to Tradition.

Magic: Follows either the Votanki or Hearthmother path of the Balazaring Tradition. It's not unheard of for shaman's to follow both traditions.

Living Standard: common.

Equipment: Drum, ritual equipment

Clan Chieftain

You are one of the leaders of the ten large clans that make up the Balazaring people (outside of the citadels that is).

Entry Requirements: chieftains are usually at least 34 years old and must be able to trace their descent from the clan's founder (one of Votank's eleven children). Chieftains are almost always men, though women can be chieftains as well.

Physical Skills: Imposing appearance

Mental Skills: Manage Clan Affairs, Politics.

Personality: Wise.

Relationships: to Clan, to Votank, to clan founder (one of Votank's eleven children). Many chiefs also follow Balazar and Tharkantus.

Magic: Usually the Votank path of the Balazaring Tradition. Balazar and Tharkantus are also common subpaths.

Living Standard: Common.

Equipment: Leather weapons and armour, crude jewelry. 3-4 followers who are always Tharkantus followers.

The following occupations are restricted to the citadels.

Pig Tender

You are one of the people who worship Entra, the Sow Mother and keep the sounders of half-wild pigs for the citadels.

Entry Requirements: None.

Physical Skills: None

Mental Skills: Know Animals (swine)

Personality: Placid.

Relationships: to Citadel, to Entra, to pigs.

Magic: The Entra path of the Hearthmother Tradition.

Living Standard: Common.

Equipment: Pigskin clothes and lots of pig by-products.

Crafter

You are one of the craftspeople that the relative surplus in the citadels makes possible. There are very few native craftspeople and none work in foreign materials.

Entry Requirements: none.

Physical Skills: none.

Mental Skills: Craft (clay, wood, bone, leather, or stone), Bargain, Know (clay, wood, bone,

leather, or stone)

Personality: Crafty (just kidding) actually any personality is possible from crazed genius to stolid craftsperson.

Relationships: to Clan, to Votank, to clan founder (one of Votank' eleven children). Many chiefs also follow Balazar and Tharkantus.

Magic: Usually the Votank path of the Balazaring Tradition. The Balazarings don't have any special spirits they worship that provide craft knowledge.

Living Standard: Common.

Equipment: Plenty of examples of their wares a portion of which is given to the clan chieftain and the rest traded for essentials.

Balazaring Magic Keywords

All the Balazaring deities receive ecstatic worship from their followers. This includes Tharkantus who is actually a foreign god now more commonly called Yemalio in other lands who was introduced by Balazar. The "masculine" path is that of Votank whose associated spirits are Foundchild, Brother Dog, Tharkantus, and Balazar as well as the eponymous spirit founders of the clans and citadels each of whom offers one or more special spirits to his (or her) followers. Most young male Balazarings dedicate themselves to Foundchild. Votank is followed mostly by shamans, old men and rulers. The "feminine" path is that of Hearthmother. Most propitiatory worship of the Wild Mother is done by women as well.

Rigtaina is only followed by women and either men or women can follow Entra.

Spirits are listed in alphabetical order, not in order of importance! Minor spirits like Brother Dog and Rigtaina are listed AFTER the major spirit they are associated with.

The special Tradition Knowledge skills listed under each spirit description indicates a specialized area of knowledge for the main Tradition known. This can be treated as an area where you know this specialized knowledge without improvisation modifiers someone not part of that special tradition might have.

e.g. Burning Willow is a follower of Foundchild. She can roll on her Votank Tradition Knowledge for lore on Rigtaina without any improvisation modifiers. Catches Eagles with Hands being a man cannot follow Rigtaina so if he wants to remember aspects of her worship he would have to use an improvisation modifier on his Votank Tradition Knowledge.

Foundchild

The Huntsman, spirit of hunting. Without Foundchild's skills the Balazarings would have starved during the Great Dark. He is very closely associated with Brother Dog, his ally and helper. A spirit of good natured rivalry exists between men and women with men bragging about how Foundchild saved the people. The women then remind the men that Foundchild wouldn't have come into being without Hearthmother's help. Foundchild defers to his son for leadership of the people as he is totally dedicated to the hunt. Foundchild is a great spirit like his son. Foundchild teaches hunters how to hunt.

Entry Requirements: Be a Balazaring. Always perform the Peaceful Cut ritual over slain prey. Never kill an animal needlessly.

Physical Skills: None additional.

Mental Skills: Foundchild (Votank) Tradition Knowledge

Traditional Spirits: **Hunter Spirits** (typical spirits include : Move Stealthily, Find Invisible Tracks)

Javelin Spirits (typical spirits include : Javelin Hammer, Winged Javelin, Multiply Javelin).

Animal Spirits (typical spirits include : Mimic Animal Sounds, Command [Animal]).

Tradition Secret: Take Prey's Seeming (This is Foundchild's ultimate tool for hunting. This secret allows hunters to adopt the appearance of a specific prey animal so completely that it fools the animal in question).

Worshippers: Hunters.

Other Side: Foundchild lives with his son Votank in the Green Place but spends most of his time out hunting for prey to feed the people.

NB The two following spirits are closely associated with Foundchild so they are listed with him.

Brother Dog

Brother Dog is an animal spirit who decided in the Great Dark that he would rather be Foundchild's helper than his prey. Until Balazar introduced pigs to the citadels dogs were the Balazaring's only animals. Most hunters will follow Brother Dog as well as Foundchild.

Entry Requirements: Must be a Hunter. Never harm a dog.

Mental Skills: Brother Dog (Votank) Tradition Knowledge

Traditional Spirits: **Dog Spirits** (typical spirits include Track By Scent, Command Dog, Speak with Dog, Brotherhood with Dogs).

Disadvantages: Brother Dog followers smell like dogs so animals respond to them the same way they would respond to dogs.

Rigtaina

The Huntress. The Wild Mother's Daughter, she in turn is the mother of the hunting nymphs or vila as well as the grandmother of Balazar's three children whom the citadels are named after. She is worshiped by Balazarings who are her descendants or are in need of her special spirits.

Entry Requirements: Be a Balazaring hunter. Be descended from her.

Physical Skills: None additional.

Mental Skills: Rigtaina (Votank) Tradition Knowledge

Traditional Spirits: **Vila Spirits** (typical spirits include : Command Vila, Summon Vila)

Tradition Secret: Swan Cloak (This spirit once incorporated allows you to fly like a Vila. This secret is only available to female descendants of Rigtaina).

Worshippers: Hunters and descendants.

Other Side: Rigtaina spends most of her time in the wilderness surrounding the Green Place. When she isn't wandering hunting she usually is at home with Balazar.

Note: Vila are dangerous spirits to meddle with and summoning and commanding them is rather dangerous.

Hearthmother

The Gatherer, women's special spirit guide. She taught women all the important skills that help keep the people alive and fed. Hearthmother teaches women how to be women.

Entry Requirements: Be a Balazaring.

Physical Skills: none additional.

Mental Skills: First Aid, Hearthmother Tradition Knowledge.

Traditional Spirits: Fire (typical spirits include : Cause Spark, Protect Fire, Fire Sleep)

Healing (typical spirits include : Heal Wound, Healing Sleep, Enhance Plant)

Nourishing (typical spirits include : Preserve Food; Feed the Hearth; Enhance Food)

Worshippers: Mostly women but some men do follow her as well.

Other Side: Hearthmother lives with her son Votank in the Green Place.

Other Connections: Generally received favorably by other Earth worshipers.

Entra

The Sow Mother. A spirit stolen from Dragons by Balazar she shows her followers the secrets needed to keep her children semi-domesticated.

Entry Requirements: Be a pig herder.

Physical Skills: none

Mental Skills: Entra (Hearthmother) Tradition Knowledge

Affinities: Pig Spirits (Command Pig, Pig Snout, Summon Pig, Tame Pig)

Worshippers: Balazaring swine herders.

Other Side: Entra now lives in Balazar's citadel on the other side in a special sty.

Other Connections: Entra has earth connections and connections to other animal cults/spirits.

Disadvantages: None.

Votank

The Great Ancestor, the one who taught men how to be men. He is actually Foundchild's son by Hearthmother but has grown in importance over Foundchild because he is not as focused as his son. He taught the people all the skills they need to survive in their traditional way of life in small clans. Foundchild and Brother Dog taught the people to hunt, Hearthmother teaches the women their special skills, Tharkantus taught the people war and Balazar taught the people how to live in the citadels. Votank gave the men their tools and taught the people how to venerate their ancestors, the proper way to treat each other, the rules and taboos by which to live by, shamanic magic and how to craft things. Votank teaches people how to be Balazarings and men how to be men. Despite all this mention of men women can and do follow Votank.

Entry Requirements: Live by Votank's laws, be a Balazaring.

Physical Skills: none

Mental Skills: Debate, Orate, Balazaring Taboos, Votank Tradition Knowledge

Traditional Spirits: **Ancestor Spirits** (typically provide a skill or personality trait.)

Rulership (typical spirits include : Appear Wiser; Commanding Voice; Shout of Silencing).

Guard Clan (typical spirits include : Guardian Spirit; Protector Spirit).

Tradition Secret: Channel Clan Ancestor (Incarnation ability.)

Worshippers: Balazarings who do not follow Hearthmother's Tradition. Normally only older men, shamans and clan leaders follow Votank directly. In the citadels craftspeople follow him as well.

Other Side: Votank lives in the Green Place, a beautiful rolling land that is lightly wooded. After death worshiper come to live him a while before rejoining the living.

Tharkantus

Tharkantus is actually the god Yemalio being offered false worship as a spirit. His worship was introduced by Balazar as a means to unite the region. He was originally worshiped in a proper theistic fashion and proved quite popular for his darkness fighting powers. Unfortunately most of his followers perished with Balazar in the Dragonkill war and proper worship of him was forgotten in a few generations. This holds true even for the citadels where animist worship of Tharkantus is performed in the old temples. Tharkantus teaches warriors how to fight.

Physical Skills: none

Mental Skills: Tharkantus (Votank) Tradition Knowledge

Entry Requirements: Be a warrior. Be a descendant of Balazar or one of his immediate followers. (These are quite common throughout Balazar).

Traditional Spirits: **Light Spirits** (typical spirits include : Catseye, Light, Lightwall)

Spear Spirits (typical spirits include : Spear Sharpen, Strike Hard, Spear of Light)

Protection Spirits (typical spirits include : Harden Armour, Hate Darkness (passion spirit))

Other Side: Tharkantus lives in his Tower of Gold on the border between his realm and a realm of darkness.

Other Connections: Tharkanti will receive a friendly welcome should they visit a Yemalio temple. They also are received in a friendly fashion by most celestial worshipers.

Disadvantages: Darkness related cults and individuals tend to hate them.

Balazar

The Founder. Spirit Guide for Leaders. Balazar taught the people how to rule. Balazar married into the Votankiland family by wooing and marrying one of Rigtaina's daughters, a vila (hunting nymph). Despite Balazar's importance among his people he is nowhere near as great a spirit as Tharkantus or Votank and only offers his followers one affinity. He is usually worshiped associated with Tharkantus.

Entry Requirements: be descended from Balazar (not all that uncommon)

Physical Skills: Lordly demeanor

Mental Skills: Organize Large Groups; Politics, Diplomacy, Balazar (Votank) Tradition Knowledge

Affinity: **Rulership** (typical spirits include : Command Human, Aura of Leadership)

Worshipers: Rulers among the Balazarings.

Other Side: Balazar lives in a great citadel near Votank's and Hearthmother's sacred hearth.

Other Connections: Balazar was formerly connected to the cult of Tharkantus but this relationship

does not exist outside of Balazar.

Disadvantages: Because of his light connections followers of Balazar have poor relations with creatures of Darkness.

The Wild Mother

Great Spirit, provider of plants and animals

Entry Requirements: The Wild Mother is honored among the Balazarings and offered thanks but most worship she receives is propitiatory in nature. Prayers of thanks for food are filtered through friendlier deities such as Foundchild or Hearthmother. Only a crazy Balazaring would try and worship her directly.

Physical Skills: none

Mental Skills: none (Hearthmother teaches means to placate the Wild Mother)

Traditional Spirits: The Wild Mother is associated with a great many different types of spirits most of which feel various degrees of antipathy to human life.

Worshippers: Balazarings who wish to offer her thanks, her children and grandchildren, the plants and animals. Foolhardy Balazarings wishing to unleash her creative or destructive powers.

Other Side: The Wild Mother is everywhere that wild things are.

Vila (Hunting Nymph)

Ages: All.

Distribution: Worldwide? (They are only recorded in Balazar and the Elder Wilds).

Habitat: Forests, and plains.

Vila are nature spirits like nymphs. They are associated with their mother Rigtaina and serve her and her mother, The Wild Mother. They are the embodiment of nature and the protectors of animals in their area. They range further than most nymphs and are fairly hostile towards human life. Despite this they still appear beautiful to humans having a number of forms that they adopt, a large bird sometimes appearing to look like a swan and sometimes like an eagle and sometimes a cross between the two. They also appear as beautiful women with swan's wings and this is the form that they adopt when dealing with humans.

Vila :

Typical Might: 5w.

Weapons and Armor: Javelins ^5 (these javelins are made from the bones of people slain by the vila).

Significant Abilities: Dodge Attack 5w, Lithe 15, Knowledge 12w2, Fly 15, Ranged Combat 5W.

Innate Magical Abilities: Alluring 2w, Command Natural Creatures Born in Home 8w2, Perceive Events in Home 5w.

Typical Talents: Panic Human, Panic Troll, Panic Dwarf, Panic Domestic Animal, Resist Magic, Douse Fire.

Tactics: Vila will observe any non-animal intruders into their territory and observe their behavior. If the intruders are just passing through without doing any harm and know the proper rituals or behavior when passing through wild lands they will ignore them. If the intruders do something unacceptable the vila will usually give warnings (branches move without any wind, domestic animals seem nervous), subtle at first and then increasingly less subtle. If these warnings are still ignored the vila will use her talent to panic any domestic animals and then attack imbuing her javelins with her Panic Human (or other appropriate sentient) ability. Vila have the ability to imbue up to 1/4 their Might in javelins at one time.

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2000/09/06