

**A Thoroughly Incomplete yet Orderly  
History of the Order of Observance  
By Zapfino Baskerville, published J214**

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The Order of Observance, previously the Watchful Order, has long been an elusive and secretive organisation known only by their spoken motivations and plain political machinations, the latter of which has grown more open to study in recent times. In this work, the latest in the Thoroughly Incomplete History series by Scholiast Zapfino Baskerville, the little that is known about this Order is explored chronologically right up to the present day.

Zapfino is a well renowned scholar from the Grand Library in Port Leostrada, best known for previous works such as *The Greying Wildlands: a Journey through the Grey Wastes*, *The Dead Empires*, and *Rise and Fall: how the Praetoria shaped an Empire*. His books have proven popular among audiences educated and interested both, and this addition will certainly be well-sought after by arcane practitioners and curios minds alike. I commend this book to you, and trust you will enjoy its contents, however brief they may be by comparison. - High Scholiast Tommen Wright, the Grand Library, J213.

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The study of the Arcane, both historical and practical, has attracted the devotion of the greatest minds of Lucidia throughout history, and the Order of Observance has been a near constant actor on this stage for more than three hundred years. While the exact founding date of the Order is not known, it has existed since before the beginning of the Justinian calendar 214 years ago, making it older than the Empire itself. Despite this long history, relatively little is known about the day-to-day practices of the Order, with many confusing it with nothing more than a wizarding school. In fact, education in the Arcane has only more recently become a feature of the Order's existence, with the founding of small schools across Lucidia during the reign of King Nicos at the turn of the first century. These schools serve a two-fold purpose: ensuring the continuation of the Order, and establishing their dominance in all things Arcane.

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The Watchful Order was founded before the start of the Theodesian Empire, sometime during the rulership of the Governess Leostrada of Theodyssia between J-40 and J-20. It is likely that the Order existed in some form before that, but there is no clear historical record. What is well recorded is that the Order was founded by the Governess's - and later Queen's - court mage Tannivah Undoviel, who some say remains the Order's Clairvoyant Transcendat to this day. His long life is associated with a strong Elven lineage, and he is often considered one of the last true half-elves of the modern age, though this just as likely to be common folklore as it is historical fact.

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As the Old Lore would have it, the Celestial Elves - henceforth just Celestials - existed alongside the Gods on the Prime Material Plane as their servants and messengers. This was well before the Calamity, the Godswar and the construction of the Divine Gate, before even any mortal race set foot on Archaea. The Celestials shared the Planes with the first giants and dragons, which are not the focus of this book, and later created the Mortal Elves to tend to the

Materium. There were many races of Mortal Elves, each created with a different purpose in mind. The dragons and giants did not take kindly to this interference, so the Celestial forged a demi-plane called the Aethelwaeld to be their home, somewhere between the Materium and Dulwenna.

The Celestials and Mortal Elves interbred to produce the Eladrin. According to the Old Lore, the Eladrin went on to parent all the fey denizens of Dulwenna, though this is almost certainly an over-exaggeration. After the Calamity, the majority of Celestials left the Aethelwaeld to reside on the Outer Planes, as many of the Gods had secured their homes there. It was during this time some four thousand years ago that the first large Elvish culture arose on the Materium, calling themselves the Syannhil, having fled oppression by their own kind in the Aethelwaeld. This is where myth ends, and legend begins.

This age remains an area of active study, though it is plagued by unanswerable questions and pure conjecture so I shall comment no more on it, other than to say that the Syannhil forged the greatest empires of all time, whether within ancient forests, deep in the World Below, or far above on floating cities. That they sided with both the Betrayer Gods and the Gods of Civilization during the Godswar shows that it is wrong to deify the Elvish peoples as fundamentally better than later races. Rather they were prone to good and evil, just as we are in modern times.

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The Order of Observance then, under the continued guidance of the Clairvoyant Transcendat, aims to collect Arcane knowledge from the Age of Arcanum when the High Elves of the Syannhil first decodified the Weave, transforming magic from something unpredictable and primal as it is on the Aethelwaeld into a well-defined study of the mind. Such knowledge is dangerous and unpredictable, they say, and poses a great risk to mortal society as a whole. By the same argument, rogue wizardry beyond the boundaries imposed by the Order poses many of the same dangers. The old analogy of playing with fire is sufficient to illustrate this point clearly; an arcane practitioner is able to blow up buildings with nothing more than a word, a flourish, some sulphur and the excrement of a bat. If this is only the simple magic of today, the ancient magic of the High Elves is less of a fire, and more a raging inferno. Surely, then, we should all be grateful that the Order of Observance is there to protect us?

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The agreement between Queen Leostrada and Clairvoyant Tannivah that the Order would protect the Empire from rogue arcanists has bought the Order almost complete freedom from scrutiny and the ability to go about their business freely within the Empire. While Massyli was still an independent merchant confederation during the mid J100s, the Order was largely unable to conduct itself within their borders. Such restrictions on independent Arcane practice were seen as bad for business, and members of the Order were thus distrusted. It is easy to see why such an agreement with the Empire has been maintained without issue for so long, since it is of great benefit to both parties.

This freedom has made it almost impossible to record the recent history of the Order, since it has been so free and able to conduct itself in private across the Empire. There is no reason to think that its aims and purposes have changed, and if the Clairvoyant Transcendat is indeed the same Tannivah as the one who served Governor Leostrada, First Queen of the Empire, then any change to its purpose is even less likely. However, some suggest that the Clairvoyant has changed many times over the Order's history, with Tannivah becoming part of the official title in memory of their founder. There may have been many Clairvoyant

Transcendat Tannivahs over the last three hundred years, but this is impossible to verify. On the other hand, the likelihood of such a strong Elven bloodline to extend the life by so much is a preposterous thing in this day and age, so long after the final pure-blooded Elven peoples of the Prime Materium vanished southward.

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What is clear is that the Order of Observance continues to guard both its own history, and the history of magic, with fierce jealousy. As magical knowledge grows ever rarer and the number of arcane practitioners diminish, the Order is ever better positioned to be the singular authority on all matters Arcane. What is interesting is that it has made little if any move towards such dominance, showing no interest in expanding its reach or integrating with the Empire. By all accounts, the Order remains interested only in its own machinations, rarely interacting with the wider world unless called upon directly by the authority of the King or Queen of the day.

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And finally, it is worth mentioning that, with the exception of the equally secretive Council of Tala'Quin, there remain no other large-scale Arcane institutions. Indeed, among some scholarly circles, even the existence of the Tala'Quin raises questions.

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As a Scholiast of the Grand Library, it has been intensely frustrating yet strangely rewarding to research and write this short history. Very little information on the subject can be found in the public writings, or even in the vaults of my institution, so I have instead been forced to go out and search for knowledge. This has reminded me of when I was younger man, and a number of the resulting conversations have proven useful in many other regards. But as I reflect on this work, I am confronted a lingering sense of incompleteness. It is a short history, and much more thoroughly incomplete than my others in this series. For that, I can only hope that the reader will forgive an old gnome and see it for what it is: a collection of knowledge that does not wish to be recorded.