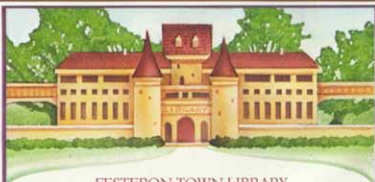


The Great Underground Empire: A History

by Froboz Mumbar

Frobozz Magic Book Company
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CHAPTER ONE

The Bellicose King



In 659 GUE*, the Kingdom of Quendor was relatively small, encompassing seven-and-a-half provinces on the western shore of the Great Sea, an agrarian land whose major products were rope and mosquito netting. It was the thirty-first year of the reign of Zilbo III, part of a dynasty dating back more than six centuries to Entharion the Wise, the first King of Quendor. However, that dynasty was about to end with the ascension of Duncanthrax to the throne of Quendor on the final day of 659.

Little is known about what became of Zilbo after 659. Some say he was killed during a palace revolt, or simply died from too much reveling while celebrating the upcoming New Year. There is evidence that he was exiled to a villa where he invented the card game Double Fanucci.

Likewise, historians disagree about Duncanthrax's life prior to 659. A petition signed by palace guards in 657, asking for an increase in the mosquito netting allotment, bears a signature that looks suspiciously like "Duncanthrax." Some historians insist that Duncanthrax was general of the Royal Militia. One

legend even suggests that Duncanthrax was a demon who assumed human form. Another legend describes him as a former rope salesman.

Whatever his origins, Duncanthrax quickly developed a reputation for cruelty, bloodthirstiness and aggressiveness, thus earning himself the nickname "The Bellicose King." He raised a tremendous army and began a systematic conquest of the neighboring kingdoms. Within three years, Duncanthrax ruled an empire that controlled virtually all the land between the Great Sea and the Kovalli Desert.



An ancient villa on the outskirts of Mithicus, similar to the one where Zilbo may have lived in exile.

* Adding "GUE" after a year did not become common practice until the latter part of the eighth century.

Questions, Discussions, Projects and Further Readings:

1. Would you have left a job as a rope salesman to become King of Quendor? List the pros and cons.
2. Find Quendor on a modern map. Is it a large area? What natural features of the area would have helped Quendor to conquer all the neighboring lands?
3. Do you think that Duncanthrax was a mean king for attacking other kingdoms? What other reasons besides meanness might he have had?
4. Stage a mock peace conference, with one of your classmates playing Duncanthrax and other classmates playing the kings of the surrounding lands. The other kings should try to convince Duncanthrax not to attack them.
5. Read *The New Year's Revolt*, by Jezbar Foolion.

CHAPTER TWO

An Empire Goes Underground

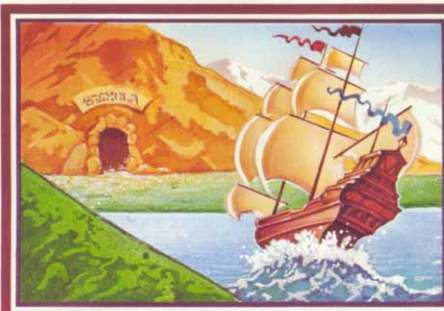


In 665, the forces of Duncanthrax vanquished the Antharian Armada at the famous battle of Fort Griffspotter. The island-nation of Antharia was, at the time, the world's premier sea power, and this victory gave Duncanthrax undisputed control of the Great Sea and put the superb ship-building facilities of Antharia at his disposal. (The conquest of Antharia also gave Duncanthrax possession of Antharia's famed granola mines. Unfortunately, no one in Quendor liked granola.)

Within months, Quendor's navy was returning from voyages with tales of a magical land on the distant eastern shore of the Great Sea. Duncanthrax was

incensed that this vast land existed outside his dominion, and spent many nights storming the halls of his castle bellowing at his servants and advisors. Then, one day, he had a sudden inspiration: assemble a huge fleet, cross the Great Sea and conquer the lands on the eastern shore. Not only would he extend his empire, but he'd finally have a market for all that useless granola.

As Duncanthrax's invasion swept across the new lands, he made a startling discovery: huge caverns and tunnels, populated by gnomes, trolls and other magical races, all of whom loved granola. Even as Duncanthrax conquered this region, his imagination was inspired by this natural underground formation.



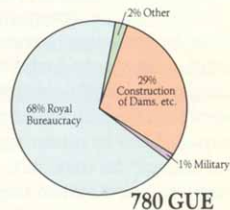
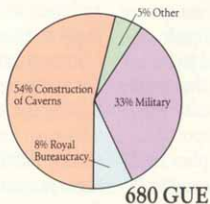
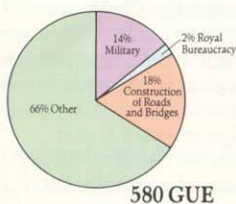
In 666, Duncanthrax's navy returned from its expedition to the eastern shore of the Great Sea with tales of a magical underground civilization (left) and giant red x's (right).

If these caverns and tunnels were possible in nature, so might they be formed by humans! Duncanthrax realized that by burrowing into the ground he could increase the size of his empire fivefold or even tenfold!

The Frobozz Magic Construction Company (the forerunner of the modern industrial giant FrobozzCo International) was formed to undertake this project in 668. For the remaining 20 years of Duncanthrax's

reign, cavern-building continued at a breakneck pace. The natural caverns in the eastern lands were expanded tremendously, and new caverns and passages were dug in the western lands, chiefly in the vicinity of Duncanthrax's castle, Egreth. By the time of his death in 688, Duncanthrax ruled virtually all territory in the known world, above and below ground.

EXPENDITURES OF THREE ROYAL GOVERNMENTS



These pie charts show the fiscal priorities of the Empire under three kings who ruled centuries apart: Bozbo IV, Duncanthrax and Dimwit Flathead.

Questions, Discussions, Projects and Further Readings:

1. What would it be like to live underground? If there are any caves near your home, spend a week underground to see what it's like.
2. Read *Construction of the Empire*, by Mumboz Agrippa, *Wouldn't It Be Fun To Live Underground?*, by Lorissa Frob and *The Seventy Year Snidgel*, by Harv Dornfrob.

CHAPTER THREE

The flatheads



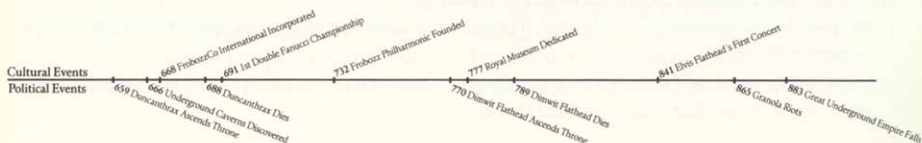
fter Duncanthrax, the throne was occupied by a long series of his descendants. These were unspectacular rulers, who took on the surname Flathead, for obscure reasons not necessarily related to the planar shape of their pates. During this period, there was very little change in the Empire, as the conquered kingdoms were assimilated into Quendor and the frantic pace of tunneling gradually abated.

In 770, nearly a century after the death of Duncanthrax, his great-great-grandson, Dimwit Flathead, assumed the throne. Lord Dimwit, as he liked to be called, was a colorful character, but was also the single worst ruler the Empire ever produced. His vanity was surpassed only by his outrageous sense of proportion. For example, his coronation took 13 years to plan (and therefore took place two-thirds of the way through his reign), lasted an additional year and a half, and cost 12 times the Empire's GNP.

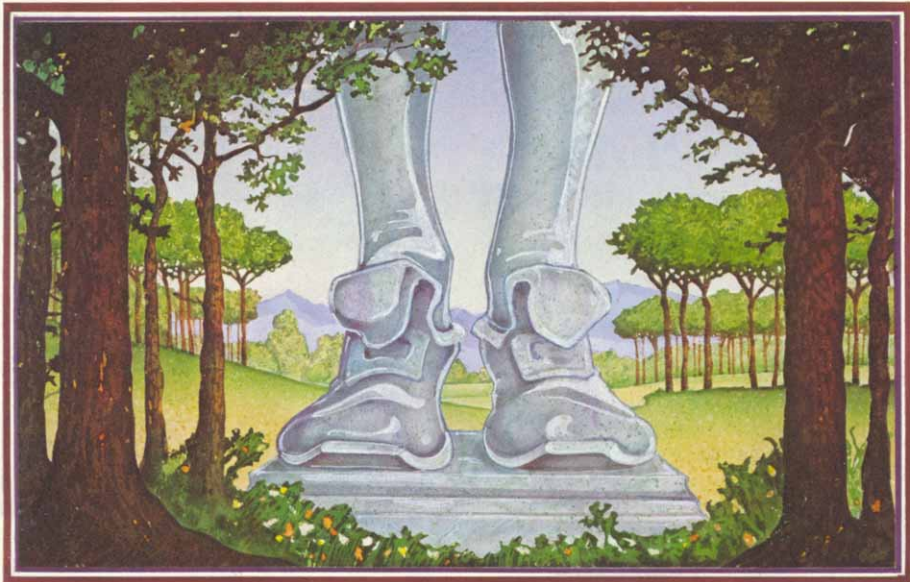
Dimwit was the first king to call Quendor "The Great Underground Empire," and within a few years the new name had completely displaced the older one. Dimwit also renamed the Great Sea "the Flathead Ocean," and seemed to prefer the newer lands on the eastern shore. He even moved the Empire's capital from Egreth (in the westlands) to Flatheadia (in the eastlands).

While Dimwit certainly inherited Duncanthrax's ambition and ingratiating personality, he directed them in a somewhat less productive fashion. Whereas Duncanthrax used his power to expand his empire, Dimwit was motivated to realize his bizarre whims. Raising the kingdom's tax rate to just over 98%, Dimwit began a series of grandiose projects that soon earned him the title "Flathead the Excessive." Among these projects: the construction of mammoth Flood Control Dam Number Three (a massive edifice with virtually no useful purpose, since it never rains under-

IMPORTANT POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS



This time line shows the dates of some of the events that shaped the history of The Great Underground Empire. Cultural events are listed above the time line and political events are listed below.



Lord Dimwit erected a nine-bloit-high statue of himself to lend credence to the Royal motto, "A truly great ruler is larger than life."

ground), the creation of the Royal Museum (to house the crown jewels), the defoliation of four hundred thousand acres of lush forest (to erect a nine-bloit-high statue of himself in the Publio Valley) and the production of the enormous granola smelters of Plumbat.

Just before his death in 789, Flathead was rumored to be planning his greatest dream: the creation of a new continent in the center of the Flathead Ocean. The outline and contours of the new continent would have been a gigantic reproduction of his own visage.

Questions, Discussions, Projects and Further Readings:

1. How many things can you think of that are named after the Flatheads? Make a list.
2. Try to collect 10 zorkmids from everyone on your block, telling them that the money will be used to erect a giant statue of yourself. Use force if necessary. See if the others on your block begin to resent you.
3. Read *The Lives of the Twelve Flatheads*, by Boswell Barwell.

CHAPTER FOUR

fall of the Empire



Although Dimwit was certainly the most flagrantly indulgent ruler in the history of The Great Underground Empire, most of the Flatheads who followed him did their best to uphold the tradition of excessiveness. The high level of taxation continued, although the money was increasingly spent not on massive construction projects but on extravagant parties and long vacation trips for members of the Royal Family.

In 883, after countless years of decadence and over-taxation, The Great Underground Empire collapsed, the Royal Treasury was sacked and everyone moved somewhere else.

THE KINGS OF QUENDOR

The Entharion Dynasty		The Flathead Dynasty	
Entharion the Wise	0-41	Duncanthrax the Bellicose	659-688
Mysterion the Brave	41-55	Belwit the Flat	688-701
Zylon the Aged	55-398	Frobwit the Flatter	701-727
Zilbo I	398-423	Timberthrax Flathead	727-738
Bozbo I	423-429	Phloid Flathead	738-755
Zilbo II	429-451	Mumberthrax Flathead	755-770
Harmonious Fzort	451-477	Dimwit Flathead	770-789
Bozbo II	477-481	Loowit Flathead	789-813
Thaddium Fzort	481-545	Duncwit Flathead	813-843
Mumbo I	545-569	Barbawit Flathead	843-845
Bozbo III	569-575	Idwit Oogle Flathead	845-881
Bozbo IV	575-619	Wurb Flathead	881-883
Mumbo II	619-628		
Zilbo III	628-659		

This table shows the rulers of Quendor, later known as The Great Underground Empire, through its collapse in 883 GUE.

Questions, Discussions, Projects and Further Readings:

1. Collect several horses for yourself and your classmates. Ride through the center of your town, pillaging stores, burning homes and slaughtering young children and old women. Afterwards, ask people around town what it was like to live in a lawless state.
2. Read *The Dark Age of Frobozz*, by Sybar Zeebin and *So You Want To Sack an Empire*, by Uncle Frobizzmus.

The faint-of-heart need not apply!

As for the dauntless, prepare to encounter the unknown. The long-abandoned Great Underground Empire — a fantastic realm of magic and mystery — is yours for the exploring.

Abandoned, yes — but the Empire is not totally uninhabited. Still lurking in its crags and crevices are numerous creatures with whom you must match wits, skill and bravery — a thief, a troll and other troglodytes of equally ill repute. Your survival depends on how successfully you vie with these denizens and solve the subterranean world's manifold puzzles. But before you can truly emerge victorious from the cavernous quarters of Zork, you must collect its many priceless treasures and safely bear them to daylight.

Courage, cunning and logic. You will need them all to triumph. The Great Underground Empire awaits. We dare you to enter it!

The Table of Contents for the manual is on page 11. Take a look at it to determine what you should read before you start the story.