

Alphistia Handbook
(A Short Description from 1970s Sources)
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Foreword

The amount of documentation from Alphistia's early period is scant. There is nothing prior to 1970, and the years between 1970 and 1975 also provide few artifacts. In March 1975 however, a 64 page booklet called "The Alphistian System of Government" was written by hand, and this document has survived. After that, almost everything created has been preserved.

Examining "The Alphistian System of Government and these other sources, it is possible to reconstruct Alphistia's 1970s "virtual reality" in some detail. While there was never anything encyclopedic about my imaginings about Alphistia, particularly put down on paper, I've realized that there is enough to describe what this very early Alphistia was like.

There are many similarities to the Alphistia from then compared to Alphistia as it is described 40 years later. It is still a social democracy with a mixed economy, a unique culture and identity, and is a very small country in size and population.

Virtual Alphistia

In 1974, the first period of Alphistian history ended. From 1967-74, there had been a "real, existing" Alphistia located on Putnam Street in Newport Kentucky, but by the end of that year, it fell apart. From then on, Alphistia was imagined virtually, on paper.

By early 1975, Alphistia was described as a small country that existed sometime in the "near future". The date was never clarified, but was presumed to be about 20 years after Alphistia's founding.

The key event in the establishment of Alphistia was what came to be known as the "Klava".

Although there are no written sources describing its exact location, it was assumed to have been a lightly populated area in the rural foothills of the Appalachian mountains, somewhere to the southeast of Cincinnati Ohio, in an area that formerly was part of the state of Kentucky. This assumption was because Anthony Skaggs, the creator of Alphistia, lived in a Kentucky town in the Greater Cincinnati area.

In early 1975, documents described Alphistia with three provinces: Saka, Tava, and Usta. The capital of the country was Entiba in Saka province. Usta was on the southern shore of Lake Usta. Usta was to the north of both Tava and Saka, and Tava was to the west of Saka.

In the late spring of 1975, Alphistia increased in size to eleven provinces. These were Saka, Tava, Usta, Karas, Telas, Voralas, Branoe, Pole (or Opole), Moria, Katova and Vakasa. Except for Saka, where the capital was Entiba, the names of the provinces and their capitals were the same. There were also about 90 other towns and villages.

The earliest maps extant are from summer 1977. One has a 5 kilometer distance legend. With this map and data from a document about the village of Tepetela in Branoe province, which dates from 1975-76, it can be estimated that Alphistia was approximately 15 km north to south and 22 km east to west at its widest. This would be about 9.5 miles north to south and 14 miles east to west. The surface area would be approximately 330 km square, or 125 square miles.

Population

There are no tables or firm figures for Alphistia's population when it was just the three provinces of Saka, Tava, and Usta. In the book "The Alphistian System of Government", there is the following text:

"The population of Alphistia would probably number only a few thousand, (and) should not be too small or too large. Each province should at least number 300 or 400, but should not exceed 2000. 2000 people would be too impersonal for local government purposes, 300 people would be too small to supply the labor force needed to run the province."

This would mean a population of 900 at the absolute minimum, 1,200 at the likelier minimum, to 6,000 at the maximum.

A document from the spring of 1975 lists the population of Usta city as 360 people, 280 of working age, and 65 students, children under 6, and the elderly. A document from about the same time lists 471 government employees in Entiba. Extrapolating from this, perhaps another 500 people would have been employed in Entiba in other jobs, and about 250 people not in the workforce, with a population of about 1,200. There is no data for Tava or other settlements.

There are detailed lists of Alphistia's population based on the maps of 1977. A gazetteer from the period exists, which lists all the towns and villages by province:

Saka	7928	7473(urban)	455(rural)
Tava	2423	1975(urban)	448(rural)
Usta	2139	1410(urban)	729(rural)
Vakasa	2146	1620(urban)	526(rural)
Katova	1678	1210(urban)	468(rural)
Branoe	1569	1040(urban)	529(rural)
Pole	1617	1070(urban)	547(rural)
Vorala	1393	930(urban)	463(rural)
Moria	1671	810(urban)	861(rural)
Telas	1669	1154(urban)	515(rural)
Karas	1222	616(urban)	606(rural)
TOTAL	24470	19204(urban)	6167(rural)

The towns were:

Entiba-5060

Sermota(Saka)-570

Tava-1500

Tilioma(Tava)-370

Usta-1410,

Vakasa-1250

Aviolta(Vakasa)-370

Katova-1210

Branoe-1040

Pole-1070

Vorala-930

Moria-819

Telas-650

Kiopse(Telas)-504

Karas-616

There were 15 towns, one large village of 106 inhabitants, and 101 villages of less than 100 inhabitants. The villages were generally very small, with the average having between 40-60 residents.

In the first draft of the gazetteer, Entiba's population was listed as 2500. This increased to 5040 in the totals table at the end of the document, however.

Language

The Alphistian language was invented in the late 1960s/early 1970s for use by participants in Alphistia on Putnam Street. It was never used as an everyday language, and the vocabulary was limited to several hundred words.

During the virtual period of Alphistia that began to develop after 1974, the Alphistian language was not emphasized. There is one document from February 1976 that indicates that at the time, Alphistian vocabulary was mostly of Romance origin, with some Romanian spelling features.

Although place names of the provinces and towns were Alphistian, and a few other words were in use, such as “perante”(the national currency), “Kilreti” (the national parliament) and “Spor”(the national leader), most terms were English. It was more common to refer to the national leader as The Premier in texts from this period. Names of national institutions and organizations were mostly in English, such as The Alphistian Broadcasting Service (ABS), the Alphistian Department Store (ADS), and the Alphistian Telephone Service (ATS) etc.

There was no mention in documents from this time that established the official language as Alphistian or English, but actual use was English. In drawings, maps, lists, and texts, only English terms are used, except for the rare instances such as words like perante and Kilreti.

Only in the early 1980s did Alphistian begin to be developed again, and become predominant in documents. Since the mid-1980s, the Alphistian language has developed with many words from Dutch, Norwegian, and other Germanic languages, although there has also been a trend to reclaim words from the earliest years of Alphistian. Words such as nomikle, pengo, ulanta, lesenum, yare etc are now an integral part of the modern language.

Government

In March of 1975, a 64 page booklet appeared called “The Alphistian System of Government”. This is the oldest book extant about Alphistia. It outlined the political and social system of the country, and is a treasure trove of information.

Alphistia’s political institutions date further back to around 1970, to the days when the “real” Alphistia existed on Putnam Street. The leader of the country was known as the Spor, and the legislature was called the Kilreti. There were various ministries, provinces, and from time to time, elections.

By 1975, the Spor was called the Premier, but the national assembly was still known as the Kilreti.

The Premier was elected by the people, independently of the Kilreti. He/she could serve a maximum of three six-year terms. He would form a government made up of the appointed heads of the ministries.

There were 16 national ministries listed in the booklet: communications, education, culture, industry, agriculture, justice, finance, planning, construction, medical services, social services, consumer industries, imports, foreign relations, security, and state policies.

The Kilreti was elected directly by the people. A Kilreti member could serve a maximum of three six-year terms, like the Premier. The parliament was unicameral. Each province would elect five representatives to the Kilreti.

Representatives were elected along party lines, but were organized into a unity coalition for matters of foreign policy and the preservation of the Alphistian state.

The Premier could veto legislation, which could then be passed if the Kilreti voted again to override the veto, with a three-fourths majority of the members.

The court system consisted of The Supreme Court, with three judges, provincial courts for Saka, Tava, and Usta (and later the other 8 provinces), and Citizen's Courts in the main towns. There is a mention of the possibility for juries in the 1975 book, but in later years, juries were not a part of the Alphistian legal system.

The penal system was explicitly based on rehabilitation instead of reform, and the death penalty was forbidden.

The provinces would have their own assemblies, modeled on the Kilreti. Towns would have elected councils, and groups of villages would elect their own community councils.

In August 1976, The Alphistian Constitution was written. This consisted of 36 articles describing the political organization of the state, as well as the political and social rights of the citizens. There was separation of church and state, guarantees for freedom of speech and assembly, the right to protest peaceably, the right to a fair trial, and the right to work, own a business, and have a guaranteed basic standard of living.

Economy

Alphistia's economy consisted of two sectors: production of goods and services for its own population, and salvaging of goods from areas that were previously populated, but were now abandoned.

Salvaging was very important, because such a small population could not produce all the tools and products of modern life. Expeditions would go to nearby emptied settlements and bring back goods and spare parts that could be re-used. This included not just equipment to make new products, but leftover consumer goods that could still be used.

Many machines could no longer be operated, but parts could be taken from them to build new machines in Alphistia. Cars and electrical appliances also deteriorated quickly, but what could be salvaged was taken.

Whatever could be used outright was sold to industries, farmers, and consumers. Whatever could be used to make new products was directed to the appropriate workshops and factories. Alphistians became expert at recycling goods, remaking and rebuilding them, as well as developing new products out of old parts.

Goods that could not be salvaged from pre-Klava areas were either done without, or produced domestically.

Factories were not large, and many were small workshops that produced items at a craft or artisan level. The output was small and intended entirely for domestic consumption.

There were no export markets, since Alphistia did not have relations with foreign countries. The post-Klava political situation was a vacuum for nation-states near Alphistia. There were mini-states far away, but contact with them was minimal.

Alphistia was not a “green” economy, since its primary focus was its own survival. It took advantage of the natural resources on its land, which included coal, timber, and some natural gas. However there were abundant hydro, wind, and solar sources, which were also used as energy.

Motor vehicles were not nearly as common as in pre-Klava days. Some were salvaged and brought to Alphistia, but since there was no gasoline, electric motors had to be installed. A few hundred cars were manufactured at an auto plant in Entiba, mostly from salvaged materials. They also ran on electric batteries which were limited in range, but since the country was small it was not essential to go long distances.

Farms were mostly owned by families who grew for their own use and for town residents. They sold their produce and products to co-operative food processing plants, or directly at farmer’s markets in each provincial town and Entiba.

Many town dwellers also had their own kitchen gardens, or plots just outside the city to grow their own supplies of fruits and vegetables, as well as to raise chickens for eggs and meat.

There were several kibbutz-style communal farms which shared land in common. They largely fed themselves and sold their extra produce, meats, and cheeses to the co-operative food processing organization.

Most factories in Alphistia were state-owned or organized as co-ops, although there were also many small workshops owned by individuals, families, or business partners.

Natural resources were owned by the state, as were the banks, insurance companies, transport services, and utilities such as electric power, heating, water, and roads.

The Bank of Alphistia issued paper currency and coins: the perante and the pengo. It also acted as the main investment bank for companies, industries, and farmers. There was also a savings bank run by the Post Office.

Broadcasting on radio and tv was also state-owned, while newspapers and magazines were formed as co-ops by writers and printers. Nearly all households had a radio and tv. Color tvs were not manufactured, so those for sale were salvaged sets brought from pre-Klava areas. They were very expensive and few households could afford them. Video-recorders were not available.

The telephone system was established using salvaged equipment. It connected all the country's settlements, but private telephones in homes and apartments were not as common as in pre-Klava days. There were approximately 5,000 telephones in the country, or one per five persons. 2,800 were private phones. About 30% of households had a phone.

Transportation

Alphistia in the descriptions from the mid-1970s did not have railways. After 1979 however, there was a developed rail network with passenger and freight services.

In the earliest virtual Alphistia descriptions and drawings from 1974-75, there were many pedal-operated vehicles that were used for passengers and light haulage. They were one or two passenger four-wheel vehicles with plastic shell coverings to protect from wind and rain.

In 1975, two door sedan autos appeared in drawings. The cars had the brand name Supra. There were also small buses and vans in these pictures.

Car ownership was not high. Extrapolating from a document from 1975 that gave the city of Usta 18 private cars for 360 inhabitants, indicated there was one car for every 20 persons. Based on the 1977 gazetteer statistic of a total population of 24,470, there would have been about 1225 private cars. With the average household having 2.5 members, there would have been about 9800 households. 12.5% of households then would have had their own car.

The towns were small enough to walk to work, shops, and schools, although there was a bus service in Entiba. Intercity bus service was provided by a company called TransAlphistia Bus, a state-owned firm. This connected the villages with the nearest bigger towns, and from these, there were connections to Entiba.

From 1979 on, there was the National Rail Company, which provided train service to all the provincial capitals from Entiba. A 1979 map shows two railway stations in Entiba, and a two-line metro system with about 20 stations. (By 1979, population lists indicate Entiba had a population of about 10,000 with several satellite towns nearby linked by rail to the capital.)

A list of the major companies in Alphistia included the Supra/Audo Works in Entiba and the Valta motorscooter and bicycle factory in Usta. Another company called Vovalen, made tractors and agricultural machinery.

One of the two oldest maps extant (both from the summer of 1977) shows the national road network. There were two lane hard-surfaced roads between the towns, and gravel lanes connecting the villages to the provincial capitals.

Housing

Alphistians lived primarily in apartments in the towns, and in cottages in the rural areas. Most homes were built of brick, with tiled roofs.

The apartments were mostly in 4 unit buildings called “quads”. There were a few high-rise apartment houses, but due to the lack of elevators, there were only about thirty-forty such buildings in the country.

The average apartment consisted of three/ four rooms plus kitchen and bath. Very few had five rooms or more, and few were single room apartments. Almost all had balconies or a small yard attached.

Most town residents rented their apartments from housing co-ops that were non-profit, or from the state. Only a few were privately owned.

Villages consisted mostly of cottages owned by farmers, or rented from housing co-ops. Few people lived on isolated farmsteads. Instead, most lived in villages, with their fields adjacent or a short distance from their homes.

The first few years, there was a great shortage of housing. New homes were built with salvaged bricks. Soon though, the construction of local brickworks, a concrete plant, and a glassworks made it possible to build whole new districts and towns.

Alphistian towns were compact, with no sprawl. The city centers were the main shopping districts, with a supermarket or co-op grocery, farmer's market, co-op department stores in bigger towns, and other shops and services, mostly privately owned.

Social Policy

Alphistia has always been a social welfare state, even during its "real, existing" period on Putnam Street. The oldest book extant, "The Alphistian System of Government", which was published in the spring on 1975, has a chapter called "The Policy of a Decent Living Standard". It describes the country's social policy in detail.

Alphistia's social system guaranteed work and housing, free education and

medical care, and pensions for the elderly and disabled. The model was the social democratic states of Northern Europe. Like Sweden, Norway, or the Netherlands, Alphistia had a multi-party political system, a mixed economy of state-owned companies, co-ops, and private businesses, and an autonomous trade union movement that was very active politically.

Alphistians lived in housing constructed and managed by several large non-profit co-operatives. National legislation required that rents be no more than 25% of household income. All schools were public schools and were free from kindergarten through university. Health care was provided through a universal, publicly funded system. The cost for visiting a general care physician or specialist was very low, and hospital stays and surgery were free for patients. Prescriptions were all generic and low cost. If a person became unemployed or disabled, or was a full time student at the university, the pension system would pay them benefits until they could return to the workforce or graduated. At the age of 60, workers could retire with a state pension.

These programs were paid for through a progressive taxation system on income, sales taxes, and taxes on profits, real estate holdings, and luxury consumer goods such as private cars. The traditional American system of profit before people was rejected and abhorred. All social services were provided on a non-profit basis.

The political parties debated the details of programs and funding them, but were united across the political spectrum that free education, universal healthcare, and adequate housing and pensions were part of Alphistia's national identity.

Women were encouraged to work outside the home, and there was national legislation for equal pay and equal treatment. There were daycare centers available at workplaces for children while parents were at work. The cost for these were subsidized by employers and the state.

There was no discrimination by race, national origin, sex, or religious belief. There was complete separation of church and state. There was no legislation discriminating against sexual minorities, but as was true around the world in the 1970s, there was no legalized same-sex marriage yet.

Education

Alphistia had only public schools. There were no private schools or colleges. Churches could organize classes for children outside of regular school hours, but not on school premises. Organized prayer in schools was not permitted.

The schools were funded by national taxes and budgets were controlled by the Kilreti. All schools were operated by the national Ministry of Education. There was a national curriculum at all levels, although there were several instruction methods, including Montessori-style programs and special education for disabled children.

Children would begin kindergarten at age 5 for a few hours each day. This was followed by elementary school for 6 years, middle school for 2 years, and high school for 4 years. Students could not drop out of school, but were expected to graduate at age 18. Technical training the last two years of high school was available for students who did not wish to go to the university.

In Entiba, there were separate buildings for each level and several elementary schools located in the capitals neighborhoods. In the provincial towns, all levels would usually be housed in the same school complex in the town center. Children from villages would come to school in town by bus, bicycle, or on foot, since distance was never more than a mile or two.

Alphistia had just one university: The University of Alphistia in Entiba. There were several institutes in provincial towns, providing specialized degrees in subjects such as agronomy or teacher training.

Schools were free at all levels. University students would receive a stipend for the years they needed to complete a degree. The only charges were modest textbook fees, and room and board at student hostels.

Teachers were required to have a university degree or to complete a degree program at the teacher's training institute.

Alphistia trained its own doctors, nurses, engineers, and other specialized professionals at the university. The system was a mentor/pupil program, with close work between studies and practical application of knowledge, at hospitals and clinics, construction sites or workshops and factories.

There was also a system of adult-lifelong learning programs sponsored by the local houses of culture. These often met in local schools in the evenings or weekends, and the cost was minimal.

Culture

National institutions of culture were in Entiba. A panoramic drawing of the west side of Three Golden Rings Avenue, drawn in 1976, showed the buildings of the Alphistian National Library, the Alpha Cinema, the TGR Bookstore (and a few blocks away, the seven story Three Golden Rings Publishing House), a used bookstore, and the Contemporary Drama Theater. There was also a concert hall just behind the National Library on Central Avenue, and several other cinemas in the capital. The Ministry of Culture had a committee of Fine Arts, which operated the National Museum and Art Gallery, and a committee for Cinema Affairs, which ran the country's film theaters. The Ministry also operated the radio and tv stations of the Alphistian Broadcasting Service.

Usta, the third largest city, had a cinema, as well as the Usta Drama Theater which provided a full season of plays, according to a list made in 1975. Drawings from the late 1970s show provincial towns such as Branoe and Voralá having their own Houses of Culture with separate library buildings.

Book preservation was an important part of salvaging, and as many books as possible from the pre-Klava years were brought to Alphistia. TGR Publishing and the state provided many books and publications as well. There was one daily newspaper: "The Alphistian Times", and several weekly and monthly magazines, including "This Week", a newsweekly and cultural magazine.

The University of Alphistia had its Institute of Fine Arts, which trained artists, writers, musicians, and dancers. In the town of Tilioma in Tava province, there was an institute affiliated with the University of Alphistia, which trained journalists, broadcasting professionals, and filmmakers.

For a very small country, cultural life was active and rich. There were always cultural events on weekend evenings all around the country. Both radio and television were guaranteed a certain number of hours per week for cultural and educational programming. Plays and musical

performances were often broadcast live on radio and TV. A few feature films were made each year on Alphistian themes, and cartoons were made for children. As many reels of pre-Klava films as could be found were salvaged and brought to Alphistia, as well as any music recordings that were still intact.

Flag

The Alphistian flag until the early 1990s was the one developed around 1972. It consisted of three golden rings, similar to the five multi-colored rings of the Olympic flag. Horizontal gold lines were at the top and the bottom of the banner. The rings and the lines were on a white field.

The three golden rings became Alphistia's symbol. They represented the three main provinces of the country: Saka, Tava, and Usta.

Currency

The Alphistian currency dated back to around 1970, and was called the "perante" (the origin of the word is not known). There were two perantes per dollar. A pengo was a coin and there were 100 pengos per perante. A small mimeograph was used to print out many perantes in various denominations from 1970-1972, but none have survived. The coins were made from the pieces of cracked flowerpots, roughly circular in shape. Their value was written on each piece using a black marker.

During Alphistia's mid-1970s period, paper money and coins were issued by the Bank of Alphistia. The exchange rate (for accounting purposes only) was two perantes per U.S. dollar. Credit cards were not used.

The Alphistian Declaration (1978)

To create a world of peace, where all men and women can live without fear of destruction.

To create a world of social justice, in which man's values and attitudes are not those of over-indulgent materialism and economic exploitation, but those of economic democracy and decency.

To create a world of equality: of the sexes, of nations, races, and peoples. The creation of equality of deeds, and not in words only.

To create a world of democracy: in which the basic human rights of all are respected and put into action. These include both political and social rights:

political rights, including freedom of speech, religion, action, assembly, press etc.

economic rights, including the right to a decent standard of living, education, work, medical care, social security etc.

To create conditions in which a world of peace, social justice, equality, and democracy can be established.