SEEDS OF WARS
STRATEGY ROLEPLAY
BE A CONQUEROR OR A DIPLOMAT. BE A RULER!

Credits

SEEDS OF WARS
STRATEGY ROLEPLAY

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FOREWORD

Early in my game design career, I lucked into the best assignment you can hope to get. Back in the early '90s, TSR Inc. was committed to expanding the D&D universe with bold new visions of fantasy settings. Amazing new worlds like *Dark Sun*, *Al-Qadim,* and *Planescape* debuted in each new product year. In the fall of 1993, Colin McComb and I were picked to create the next fantasy world for the *Dungeons & Dragons* game. We had only one directive: This will be the setting where your character is a king.

Naturally, this presented two gigantic challenges. Not only did we need to invent a new world, we also needed to invent a whole new way to play D&D. I took the lead on that part of the job; I'd grown up as a fan of strategy games, and I realized that commanding a kingdom required "tech" from the wargame roots of the RPG hobby. (SPI's *Empires of the Middle Ages* was one of our office favorites at TSR; we played it every few months.) We understood from the outset that the game-within-a-game of running kingdoms was important, but it couldn't overshadow the traditional RPG—people play the game to be *heroes*, not pencil-pushers. Ideally, the kingdom-running decisions should actually generate adventure opportunities for the player characters to strap on their armor, grab their magic tomes, and go fight monsters. We hoped that those adventures would carry extra significance because the players were choosing what to do and when to do it, instead of waiting for NPC patrons to hand them quests. Finally, Jeff Grubb offered a key suggestion about making the divine right of kings something real and tangible in the setting. If you're reading this foreword, you're probably familiar with the result: the *Birthright Campaign Setting.*

Twenty-five years after *Birthright* was published, I still hear from fans who loved what we tried to do. Clearly, we got something right. Thanks to the efforts of the *Seeds of Wars* team, a whole new generation of RPG fans has the opportunity to explore the challenges offered by a game that casts you as both a hero and a king. Even more impressively, they've anchored this unique style of RPG play in a world with an epic story . . . one that may have new chapters in the future.

The throne is yours. What will you do with it?

Richard Baker

Being called into the boss's office doesn't usually end well. This is true even when you work for TSR, the developer and publisher of *Dungeons & Dragons.*

But when Rich Baker and I were called into the boss's office that day in 1993, we walked out with an incredible new assignment, straight from the top: We were to build TSR's new campaign setting from the ground up, and we were to make kings of our players.

Not a small order. Daunting, even. But with the help of artist Tony Szczudlo and editor Anne Brown, we got right to work constructing histories, cultures, nations, and provinces, along with intrigues, rivalries, bitter feuds, and rebellions. We'd have to figure out how our realms worked: trade, power centers, and roles for those who didn't want to be lords but still wanted to rule. We constructed ley-lines for mages, churches and religions for our priests, thieves' guilds for our rogues, mercantile houses and trade routes…

It was a lot of work, is what I'm saying. We had endless hours of discussion, playtests with victims we plucked from around the company to find the holes in our rules, and of course months of design, writing, and preparation. By the end of the process, we delivered the campaign setting called *Birthright,* and it won us an Origins Award for the Best Role-Playing Supplement of 1995.

TSR rolled out a number of supplements – explorations into new parts of the world, adventures, monsters, even books designed for players to get a better grasp on the realms they could rule. It was a sales strategy that was exhaustive, daring, and – ultimately – unprofitable. TSR wound up competing against its own game lines, and sold rights to its campaign worlds and intellectual property to Wizards of the Coast. *Birthright* vanished into the archives, and into the memories of its players.

Still, it was a good run. Not everything can live forever.

But now Specta Solutions has delivered *Seeds of Wars.* I've spent a month looking over their work, and I have to say I like what I've seen. It's an ambitious reimagining, an evolution of the genre, and a new chance for players to take a shot at the rewards, challenges, and perils of rulership.

It's about time. Time the genre was revived, and time to pass the crown to a new generation.

Here's to the future kings and queens, emperors and empresses – rule wisely and rule well. May your lineage continue unbroken.

Colin McComb

Foreword

Introduction

Thousands of years ago, the humanoid Vareene waged a brutal war against a galactic infestation known only as the Congregation. Caught in a desperate struggle, the Vareene buried their last hope on the distant, primitive planet of Ceres, where the Congregation would never think to look for it, and hid an outpost to protect it behind a shield that blocked detection and sensors. Cut off from their homeworld as the last teleportation gates were closed, the small enclave waited for the war to run its course, when they would return to a wounded but surviving Vareene Empire.

Alas, such was not fated to pass. The Vareene died out, leaving the small outpost on Ceres as their last legacy. The survivors integrated with the native peoples of the planet, giving rise to powerful bloodlines linked to the ancient technology of the Vareene, which eventually became known as magic. Over centuries and then millennia, the Vareene ceased to be as a distinct culture, and in time their origins and purpose became the stuff of myth and legend.

The truth was forgotten, but the power of the Vareene lingered in those descended from those original extraterrestrial visitors, including the key to unlocking the mythical Catalyst: a mighty weapon the folk of Ceres will need if their civilization is to survive.

It falls to the heirs of power to take up the reins of their ancestors' destiny before old foes return to finish what they began millennia ago…

What is Seeds of Wars?

This book presents a brand-new campaign setting for use with any roleplaying game system your table prefers plus a mechanical toolset for use in realm management on a grand scale. Inspired by classic realm management games like Sid Meier's Civilization® series or the classic Birthright® setting, *Seeds of Wars* characters are no wandering adventurers but the rulers of nations, high priests of powerful churches, heads of mage circles, leaders of thieves' guilds, or the architects of cultural movements.

How to Use This Product

The core *Seeds of Wars* (SOW) book can be used in a variety of ways, whether you incorporate it into an existing game or create an entirely new campaign. SOW is intended to be system-agnostic, in that it can be attached to any RPG without too much work. Following are the intended ways to utilize this book:

- **Realm Management Only:** The GM and the players control various factions (kingdoms, churches, trade consortiums, etc.) in a strategic game to control the continent of Ceres or a different setting (see **page 220** for how to adapt another setting for use with the system). You view events from a high level, controlling governments rather than specific characters. This style of play only requires this book and some dice.

- **Adventures in Ceres:** This book presents an entire campaign setting for play with any RPG system, and you don't have to use the realm management rules at all. Just run adventures in the continent of Ceres. This style of play requires whatever you need to run your favorite RPG.

- **Combined Campaign:** A combination of the two approaches above, this campaign spends at least some of the time zoomed-in on interpersonal play and some on zoomed-out realm management.

Chapter I
Playing Seeds of Wars

"Unacceptable!" The king slammed his fist down on the table, "You are the heir to my throne and the next ruler of this kingdom. If you do not attend the royal military parade tomorrow, what will the people think? You must capture their hearts and minds with your presence—your figure—your adherence to their customs! You do not have time to go gallivanting off into the wilds with your… your…" the king waved dismissively, "your companions."

Thalen wanted to retort, or else to scream, but the gentle touch of Zelmy, the wizard of their little band, eased the impulse. No words passed between them, but the peace in the wizard's bright green eyes cooled the heir's simmering impatience before it could boil over into impudence.

"Of course, Your Majesty," Thalen said with a gesture half-curtsy, half-bow. "I—and my companions—shall be most pleased to attend on your pleasure tomorrow," Thalen glanced pointedly at Zelmy, whose expression had drooped slightly, "all of us."

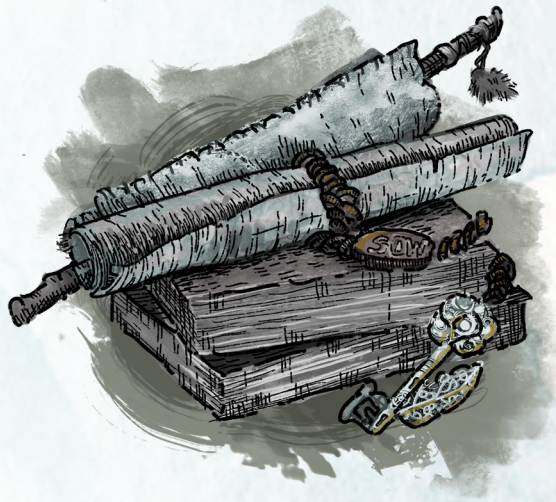
"Excellent!" The king's winning grin returned now that the specter of impertinence had passed. He bellowed to the attendants, "More wine for my child and his companions!"

Thalen could hear a chorus of quiet groans behind him, but couldn't help a small smile. There would be time enough for their adventure into the swamp after the parade, when the king and all his court were well and drunk. Perhaps they could be about their business and returned before His Majesty even realized they had gone.

Swords and Sorcery vs. Epic Fantasy

When it comes to tabletop gaming, there are two dominant modes that drive the industry: RPGs and wargaming. In the first, you guide a single character through a series of adventures, often in narrow confines such as dungeons, twisting streets, or isolated forest groves. In the second, you take the role of a commander issuing orders to an army, controlling tens, scores, or hundreds of individuals at a time.

Seeds of Wars seeks to combine the two core approaches into a single game.



In a SOW campaign, you are assumed to control not just a single individual, but an entire faction. This may be a ruling family, a council of powerful wizards, a church hierarchy of mighty priests, a merchant guild, or a group of artists who influence the culture of their land. When you "zoom out" (see below), you will decide how that faction flexes its power and uses its resources on the Ceres-wide stage.

You will have one character who is your primary mouthpiece, who is the primary decision-maker in terms of how the faction operates. At moments when you "zoom in" to what's going on at the personal level, you are assumed to be controlling that particular character. If that character perishes, then you can always establish a new leader in your faction to be your primary lens of interacting with the world.

Epic vs. Personal Focus

SOW allows for gaming at various levels, defined as the Epic Focus and the Personal Focus. The mechanics presented in this book are specifically built for Epic Focus play, where the player characters manage their realms, collect resources, etc. The Personal Focus of a game involves negotiations, formal events, and personal adventuring; SOW is intentionally left flexible enough to allow for any game system to represent Personal Focus play.

Epic Focus

During a SOW game, when your group manages resources, acquires and defends assets, and pursues interests on the scale of an entire realm, that is the game's Epic Focus. This is referred to as "zoomed-out" or "macro" play, where your actions are those of your faction on the level of competition between realms, and it is this level for which the mechanics of SOW (in subsequent chapters) were designed.

At this level, players take control of factions, not individuals, and use them to take actions to guide the shape and destiny of the world of Ceres. A player controlling an Order faction more than likely has access to military forces, and uses those forces as needed against antagonists and to defend their own holdings. Meanwhile, Magic and Faith factions provide powerful support or misdirection effects to this sort of activity, while Trade and Culture factions wage entirely different kinds of war for the hearts and minds of the folk, or at least their coin purses.

Actions at this level of focus represent the overall political and military consequences of smaller actions. In conventional tabletop RPGs, these events would be the backdrop against which the story takes place; possibly influenced by your actions, but rarely directly caused. In SOW, you make these things happen using the mechanics presented in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction* and beyond.

Personal Focus

"Zoomed-in" or "micro" play focuses on individual characters. Every player should be in control of a faction, and they control a single principal character (most commonly, the leader of your faction) who is essentially their mouthpiece. When you zoom-in, you will take the role of this character.

Your character might need to attend an important negotiation or deliver a personal challenge to an opposing faction leader on the field of battle. Perhaps it's time to take a break from realm management to go on an adventure: explore a crypt, find a relic hidden in a swamp, or brave the mountains of the Maelstrom in search of a pass through which an army could march. This level of play will probably be much more familiar to players of most tabletop RPGs, as it conforms to many of the tropes of such games.

The mechanics presented in this book are specifically for the Epic Focus of a game, not the Personal Focus. For adventures between and among individual characters, feel free and encouraged to use whatever gaming system you like. Based on the tropes and diverse creatures that make up Ceres, SOW assumes that you will use some variant of the world's most played roleplaying games, but the greater realm-management mechanics could in theory be bolted onto a game using any sort of system.

How Much Epic vs. How Much Personal?

Whatever combination of these two levels of focus works for your game is perfectly fine. If you want to play almost entirely at the Epic Focus level, with a group of powerful factions vying for control of Ceres as though you were playing a strategic wargame, go for it. If you wish to zoom in slightly so that you have realm management checks and actions only once or twice during a session, or if they occupy downtime between adventures, that's fine too. Whatever works for your game, SOW will support it.

The Passage of Time

Realistically speaking, realms often move slowly: like giants, the bigger they are, the more ponderously they act. Wars take entire seasons or years to wage to completion, and sometimes wax and wane in intensity over decades or even centuries. Compounding this problem is the relative snail's pace of communications and trade. Most fantasy worlds lack reliable long-distance message services, particularly instantaneous ones, so word and policy can travel incredibly slowly. Events that seem major in the city in which one dwells have massive ripple effects, yes, but it may take days, weeks, months, or even years for those effects to reach outlying counties, while word of relatively minor events might travel faster. If you were to run a simulation of actual, real-world government, you'd hardly get any gaming done at all.

In a fantasy story, this timeline is typically sped up, with characters and events moving at the "speed of plot", i.e., accomplishing what they need to accomplish in order to keep the story going. Even so, it takes time to marshal armies, collect taxes, conduct a census, establish a new church or influence doctrine, or weave a spell that is powerful enough to affect an entire realm, let alone reach beyond its borders.

The island of Ceres is a relatively small landmass, perhaps a thousand miles at its longest point, but even so, it is a much larger stage than the standard RPG experience of meeting in a tavern, venturing to a cavern outside town, and returning with bruises and loot. If you play a lot of Personal Focus adventures, things can seem fast moving, but even several days spent in a dungeon represent the same amount of time it takes to get one resource-gathering check accomplished.

Consider what this means for your characters at the table. How quickly does time pass in your adventure? If you make a number of realm management checks and actions during a session, how many days, weeks, or months pass during that time? Will your game continue to use the same leaders as your PCs from beginning to end, or do your principal characters grow old and retire, making way for their heirs to be your new PCs?

SOW deliberately leaves the answers to these questions somewhat vague, to allow you to decide on a pace of gameplay that works at your table.

Adapting SOW for your Game

As discussed above, *Seeds of Wars* is designed to be system agnostic: it is tailored for plug-and-play with any tabletop RPG system you want to use.

Whether it's a version of a classical roleplaying game or a smaller indie game, whether it's a system that uses dice-pools or goes entirely dice-less, you should be able to connect the mechanics of Realms Management to any gaming system.

The SOW mechanics are specifically designed to be independent and affect only the large-scale happenings within and between the realms.

That said, consider the guidelines below when adapting your game to make use of the *Seeds of Wars* concepts and mechanics, especially if you use the setting of Ceres for your campaign.

Races

The peoples of Ceres do not use the term "race" to describe themselves and are apt to become rather confused at its utterance. There is also little concept of racism or prejudice against species—even elves, dwarves, and orcs don't typically mind one another just on the basis of what they are—with the notable exception of the Shadowed, who are generally viewed with suspicion.

The realms of Ceres boast most of the standard fantasy RPG races, ancestries, and backgrounds, and there's plenty of room to insert more as needed. Dwarves are dwarves, elves are elves, orcs are orcs, etc.

If you want to create a homeland for one particular kind of people (for instance, if there are flying bird-people in your game), feel free to recast and reflavor one of the realms to that purpose.

The following notes are of particular use in mapping your RPG of choice to the SOW campaign setting:

- **Dwarves, rock gnomes, halflings,** and other such beings are descended from the dweor by way of the Vareene. They favor the hills and mountains of Ceres.

- **Elves, half-elves, forest gnomes, gnolls,** and other fae and fae-related beings are descended from the fae. They hail mostly from the forests of Ceres.

- **Orcs, goblins, kobolds, lizardfolk, bugbears,** and all manner of orc- and goblin-kin are descended from the orok. They dwell in the plains and swamps of Ceres.

- **Humans** are descendants of all of the above. Particularly, they perfectly balance all the strengths and weaknesses of orcs, dwarves, and elves. They live anywhere and everywhere.

- The **Drakakar** are a relatively rare group of bipedal dragon-like humanoids. They are a small people, rarely encountered other than as individuals, and make their living primarily as rovers, sellswords, and adventurers.

- The **Shadowed** are the equivalent of planes-touched beings descended from angels, demons, or devils. Most societies reject or at least distrust them. Their infamous "dark powers" are the same as whatever such creatures wield in your system of choice.

- Various sorts of **giants** dwell in Ceres, including **ogres** and **hill giants**, though their numbers are somewhat diminished after a great war against their kin a few centuries ago. Characters of exceptional stature or strength might be descended from these creatures.

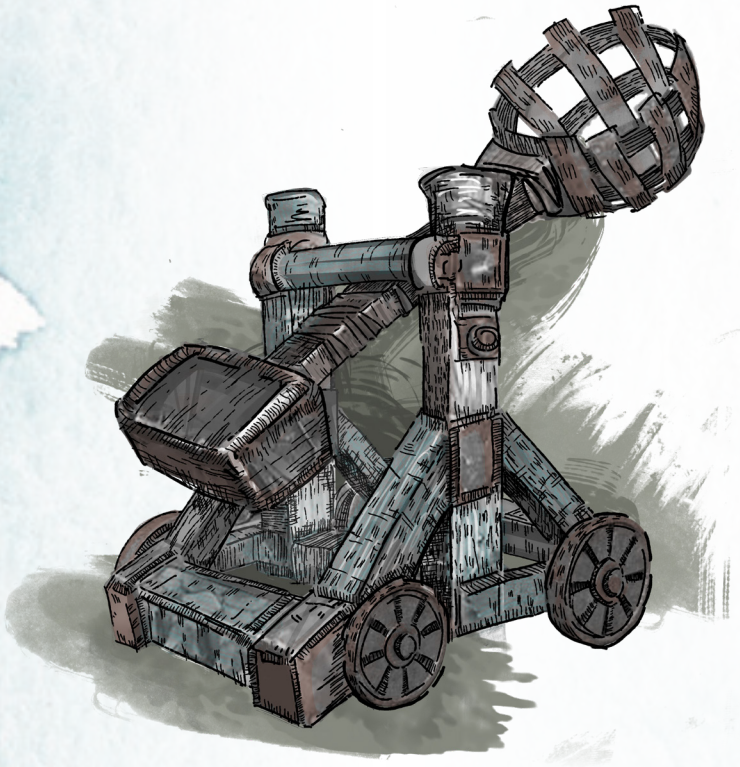
- While no underwater realms have been detailed in the SOW setting, it is entirely possible for enclaves of **aquatic beings** to make their home off the coasts of Ceres, which is essentially a massive island. It is quite possible that such beings have relations with the island realms of Galear and Rao, and perhaps they have claimed the island west of Cadelania as their own.

Classes

Many RPGs have a class system for character creation, which are typically broken into a number of general, overarching archetypes, most classes of which are some sort of combination of these tropes.

The SOW setting builds these five archetypes into the mechanics of the setting (Order, Faith, Magic, Trade, and Culture), and though a leader of a faction doesn't necessarily have to be of a class that belongs to their faction type, it is highly encouraged that your players run characters who share common interests with their faction.

If you are running a game system that has classes, consult the information below when constructing your principal character(s), i.e. the leader(s) of your faction and NPC leaders of ally/rival factions.



- Leaders of **Order** factions are typically warriors of some stripe: usually **Fighters** and other types who are focused solely on combat.

- Leaders of **Faith** factions are usually priests, naturally: **Clerics** or other characters focused mostly or entirely on the divine.

- Leaders of **Magic** factions are usually arcane spellcasters: **Sorcerers** and **Wizards** or other characters who pursue arcane power to the exclusion of other concerns.

- Leaders of **Trade** factions are usually skillful, subtle individuals who may or may not be thieves. **Rogues** or other versatile, skill-based classes.

- Leaders of **Culture** factions are usually broadly skilled entertainers: **Bards** or other characters who focus on charisma and charm.

- A number of common class archetypes cross over with various types of factions and might be leaders of various types of factions (including combinations):

  » Wild and linked to the natural world, **Barbarians** are most frequently associated with Order, Magic, and/or Culture factions. They frequently control factions active in less settled realms.

  » The stewards of the wilder places of the world, which are more likely to be empowered by undisturbed artifacts, **Druids** often control Faith, Magic, and Culture factions.

  » As combative, hand-to-hand warriors steeped in tradition, **Monks** tend to associate with Order, Faith, and Culture factions.

  » Many **Paladins** lead Order factions or Faith factions, particularly those that control some assets of the other type. Which faction they control typically reflects which side of their nature they emphasis: warfare or piety.

  » With their focus on combat, stealth, and also knowledge of the land, **Rangers** tend to have some combination of Order, Trade, and Culture. Realms that are heavily covered in wilderness or on the frontier often have a number of Rangers who wield power within them.

  » As spellcasters who obtain their magic from a powerful source, the **Warlock** fits the magic system of Ceres very well. Should they control a faction, they typically favor Magic and Trade factions.

If you are running a game system that does not use classes, perhaps a profession, career, or concept can guide your choice.

- Leaders of **Order** factions might be generals, governors, mercenaries, sailors, or soldiers.
- Leaders of **Faith** factions might be doctors, exorcists, missionaries, or shamans.
- Leaders of **Magic** factions might be alchemists, fortune-tellers, or scribes.
- Leaders of **Trade** factions might be craftsmen, farmers, fishermen, or merchants.
- Leaders of **Culture** factions might be architects, artists, courtiers, entertainers, or spies.

Building a SOW Structure for Other Settings

With over 30 realms, 100 potential factions, and some 900 distinct assets, the continent of Ceres is tailor-made to integrate well with the Realms Management mechanics presented in the following chapters, but the concepts therein can be theoretically applied to any number of other settings. You can populate your favorite existing campaign world or a homebrewed setting of your own design with the assets and resources you need to use SOW there.

Notes: Some pre-made settings provide this information right up front—harvest as much of that information as you can. Also, if you have a map, that will prove immensely useful.

You can do as much or as little of this work as you want to. Your players might be perfectly happy with just a few factions in the realm in which the game takes place, and you could run a perfectly sensible SOW game with just a dozen or so factions. Expand outward from there, building realms and factions for the surrounding lands, then go farther afield, until you have covered an entire continent, like Ceres.

You can build even further, if you want to expand your game, but anything past a large continent is beyond the scope of this book. Competition between nations on the global scale or even the galactic scale is the subject of future expansions to be released for *Seeds of Wars* at a later date.

For rules on creating custom Factions on Ceres or on adapting your own setting to SOW mechanics, please go to the Appendix located at the end of *Chapter 7: The World of Ceres*.

Chapter II
Running a Faction

Lena Blackcrown maintained a tight rein on those who served her. She knew them all by face and name, knew their comings and goings, and anything she did not know, she could easily find out. It was said the Bandit Queen had eyes and ears everywhere, both through her own magic and in the form of agents whose loyalty she trusted or whose obedience she guaranteed through other means.

She did not like relying upon servants of another consortium, but the potential gain of this particular venture had so far proved tempting enough to bypass her typical hesitation. So far.

"Give me hourly reports from the docks." She drummed her fingers on the leather-wrapped folio on her desk. "I want to know the instant that ship arrives."

"It will," her apprentice said with a smile. The boy's cheer and optimism were infectious, which never failed to sour Lena's mood. "The smugglers have as much to gain as we do if this deal goes well. We can trust to luck."

"Yes." She waved to dismiss the lad and mused at the irony. She had not reached her position as ruler of Prokoth by trusting to "luck" but through concerted, thorough groundwork.

She slid open the folio and looked at the documents therein: love letters, correspondence, and, most importantly, an account of the smuggler captain's illicit finances in Prokoth and Derarin. He would definitely be compliant—fate would demand it.

A faction's leader's precise duties and responsibilities depend on the game you are playing and how deeply the GM goes into the various tiers of play (see *Chapter 1: Playing SoW*). Typically, leaders are assumed to be of significant power and influence in their chosen field but could be nothing but a figurehead.

Leaders' backgrounds vary: they might be the heir of royalty or elected head of government, a wealthy power player in your locale, or even a scrappy commoner born into nothing who has climbed to a place of influence.

Faction: A group or corporation that employs people, owns resources and buildings, and is a major power player in the community.

Leader: The person in charge of a faction, responsible for making large-scale decisions.

No matter how they got there, the leader makes decisions on the part of your faction to fulfill its goals - whether this is keeping the peace, amassing wealth, or conquering the world.

The rules presented in this chapter detail how to rule your faction, the uses of assets, and the actions you can perform. Generally, the stronger and more numerous relevant Assets are to an action, the more likely the action is to succeed. Thus, to increase your power, you can build up existing assets or acquire more through conquest, negotiation, or other means.

Seasons and Time

Season: The measurement of a round in *Seeds of Wars*. Each season is three months of actions.

Month: Seasons are broken down into three months. Each month is a round of actions.

Faction Actions: Zoomed-out actions performed by a faction's leader or an advisor, typically taking a single month.

Action: Short-hand for a faction action.

Free Actions: An action which can be performed on your turn but does not consume any time.

In *Seeds of Wars*, actions and events take weeks of planning and/or execution. Examples of these faction actions include marching an army across vast terrain, planning the construction of new buildings, or holding a lavish feast for a foreign dignitary.

Each action is usually considered to take a player's turn, known as a month. Players (and the factions controlled by the GM) will take turns in initiative order for three cycles (see **page 37** for initiative), until the end of each three-month round.

This three-month round is known as a season. Seasons are vitally important to *Seeds of Wars*. Players will collect income at the beginning, pay expenses during, and finalize their actions at the end of each season.

You will see many faction actions referenced in this chapter. For details on each, see the relevant entry in the "Faction Actions" section towards the end of this chapter.

Some actions are called free actions. Normally, a leader can perform three actions per season, one for each month, and their advisors may each perform one action per season. Free actions can be performed during a faction's turn without counting towards the leader's or advisor's limit for that season.

Wealth and Influence

Wealth ● : A measure of financial power a faction has access to.

Influence ◆ : The ability of a character to manipulate their surroundings on a large scale.

Resources: Wealth, Influence, and Network Resources (explained later) are collectively known as resources.

Reputation: The maximum amount of Influence a character may generate.

No nation ever ruled without some measure of Wealth. Wealth is not simply measured in pure coinage, but promises, property, goods, and even people. Wealth is collected and spent each season and is the currency of kings.

A character's ability to manipulate their surroundings is their Influence. Whether this is a knack for negotiation, diplomatic charm, or preternatural attention to detail, Influence manifests itself in many ways. As a person becomes more responsible for others, their ability to affect their dependents, peers, and rivals grows.

The rulers of the land use these resources to obtain profitable trade agreements, attract loans for their business ideas, or convince a rival to back down.

Reputation

The Reputation that a character has is determined by a combination of the circumstances of their birth and the actions they undertook since: princes and princesses are born with a reputation that precedes them. The stable-hand who slew a rampaging troll with nothing but a pitchfork is known far and wide.

Reputation allows characters to obtain audiences with the members of high society and the power-players in their locale. The princess would have the ear of neighboring rulers; the troll-slayer is invited to feast with generals and merchant princes alike.

All newly-created characters in *Seeds of Wars* start with a Reputation of 25.

The maximum Influence a character can gain each season is equal to their Reputation score. The maximum a character can keep in reserve is equal to twice their Reputation score. Any extra Influence points gained beyond this are lost.

Example: *Harry creates his character who inherited the family business as well as his parent's Reputation. He records Reputation 25 on his Leader Sheet.*

Increasing Your Reputation

At the end of each season, if a character has more Influence than twice their Reputation, they must convert it to increase their Reputation.

The character *must* spend twice their Reputation in Influence to increase their Reputation by 1. This increase in Reputation will allow that character to earn and reserve more Influence per turn.

Example: *Harry's character has 25 Reputation and 40 ◆.*

In a season, he gains the maximum possible 25 ◆, bringing his total Influence to 65.

At the end of the season, if Harry's character does not get his Influence down to 50 or below (double his Reputation); he must spend 50 ◆ to increase his Reputation by 1.

The Faction Ecosystem

Type: Many mechanics are classified by one **of five types:** Order, Trade, Faith, Magic and Culture. Factions and assets always have a specific type, though types are an intrinsic part of many other mechanics in *Seeds of Wars*.

Asset: The buildings, people and resources through which a faction operates.

Asset Level: A comparative measure of an asset size and power, regardless of type.

County: An area of land in *Seeds of Wars*, where multiple factions may own assets.

Factions typically own multiple assets of varying levels. Asset levels are a way of measuring a faction's power in a county. An Order asset might be a collection of garrisons and training grounds, while a Trade asset might be a collection of merchants and their market stalls.

These are usually the same asset type as the faction that owns them, as it is harder to rule over assets of a different type to your faction. Exceptions to this do arise and will develop over the course of play. It is entirely possible to control a faction that has assets of all five types.

Example: *Harry decides he wants to play a character who wants to be as rich as possible. After discussing with the GM, they decide that Harry should play as the leader of a Trade Faction.*

Harry likes the idea of dabbling in other assets too but knows that managing his Trade Assets will be easier due to his faction type.

If you are looking to compete with factions that control many assets of a single type, you might be well-served to use your resources primarily to develop assets relevant to that type to meet them head-on. Then again, versatility might provide a winning edge in the struggle for dominance. The strengths and weaknesses of each asset type allow for very different competition than simple warfare.

Realms

Sovereign: A leader who owns at least one county.

Realm: The group of counties that a single sovereign owns.

A leader might exert control over their own assets, but the true mark of a ruler is to own a county itself. Any leader that owns the physical land of one or more counties may call themselves a sovereign. The county or counties they control are their realm.

The sovereign of a realm is responsible for leading the realm in both domestic and foreign affairs. They make and administer laws and engage in diplomacy as the head of state and legal ruler of the land.

Sovereigns that own more than one county are often considered to be of higher status than the sovereigns of individual counties. Regardless of the power of the realm, significant political power and rank is generally associated with the stewardship of a geographic area. Sovereigns are usually of the Order Faction, but it is not uncommon for sovereigns to attract a council of other leaders to support them in their governance of the realm. As you can see in the example below, all sovereigns are also leaders, but a leader is only a sovereign if they own one or more counties.

Example: *Princess Severina is the leader of The Grand Principality of Cadelania. Cadelania is an Order Faction and controls many Order Assets. However, the princess also owns multiple counties, making her the sovereign of those counties – her realm.*

Princess Severina is both a leader and a sovereign.

House Dressan is a Trade Faction led by Jisha, Count of Aseacia. Jisha is a leader, but because Jisha does not own any counties, Jisha is not a sovereign.

Treasuries

While adventurers might dream of massive piles of gold and gems, the reality of a faction's finances are less fantastical - a vast ledger of promissory notes, loans, and pledges to sell goods and food for prices negotiated long ago. Only the smallest fraction of a faction's Wealth is found in coin and that is quickly dispersed amongst faction members as payroll and gratuities. Indeed, it is considered an early warning for war if a faction starts to accumulate coin. Mercenaries are not known for accepting grain or goods as payment for their services.

A faction's unspent Wealth each season is kept in their treasury.

Maintaining a treasury is expensive, requiring guards, vaults, and other security measures. A treasury costs 10% of its Wealth each season (rounded down) to keep it safe.

Influence is free from this cost; as an intangible resource it does not require physical protection.

Counties

County Level: A measure of how developed a county is, from 0 to 10.

County Level Limit: The maximum level that a county can be raised to, dependent upon its terrain.

County Features: Individual modifiers local to that county which affect many different rules.

A county is a distinct geographic area defined by prominent topographical features, cultural and political traditions, and economic infrastructure. It can be rural, urban, or wilderness. Factions which do not own the county's land must dwell within the existing political space of the counties and realms.

Each county has a county level, which is the measurement of its known resources, established industrialization, and general efficiency of governance. It does not automatically include resources secured by independent populations, though the integration of such groups through respectful trade and acceptance of limited autonomy can often be a feature of increasing a county's level.

Ultimately, county level is a shorthand measure of political, military, and economic soft power. It provides a rough indicator of the taxes that can be obtained, the population that might provide such taxes, and the assets that might thrive in that region.

The level of a county limits the maximum total level of assets that can exist in that county.

County Notation

Counties are often noted in the following style:

Sovereign Owner, County Name, Terrain (County Level)

> ***Example:*** *Princess Severina of Cadelania owns many counties, including Lightborne, a level 4 county situated on a plain, and Sevybeth, a level 3 county whose terrain is hills. These would be noted as:*

- Cadelania, Lightborne, Plains 4
- Cadelania, Sevybeth, Hills 3

These can also be shortened to Cadelania, Lightborne 4 or even Sevybeth 3, depending on their context.

Terrain

Terrain Type: A brief description of a county's natural geography and the basis of the county level limit.

Mitigating Factors: Situational modifiers that alter a county level limit.

Coastline: A county adjacent to a large river or an ocean will have a coastline, which is useful for over-seas trade and building ships.

Two factors combine to determine terrain type: water and arable land. Where a county has little to none of either of these it is considered "Dangerous Terrain." Examples include the extremes of the Arctic Circle or land that was cursed long ago. If the county has some of one of these factors it is considered "Inhospitable Terrain" and some of both is considered "Hard Terrain." Once a county possesses at least one of these in abundance it is either "Dense" or "Light Terrain" depending on whether the native flora has been tamed.

Over the millennia that followed the crash of the Vareene mother ship, their Essence has spread from the Maelstrom to the edges of Ceres, impregnating all living things, animal as well as vegetal. The power that flows from the Vareene Essence becomes more abundant in large concentrations of living beings – most notably humanoids, but also flora and fauna. The more fertile a land, the more potential for development and so the more attractive it is for leaders and sovereigns.

These factors combine to decide the terrain type and the county level limit. Note that not all terrain types below are found on Ceres.

Table II-01: Terrain Types

Terrain Type	Examples	County Level Limit
Dangerous Terrain	High Mountains, Desert, Tundra	2
Inhospitable Terrain	Mountains, Scrubland	3
Hard Terrain	Deep Forest, Jungle	5
Dense Terrain	Forest, Swamps	6
Light Terrain	Hills, Plains	8

There are some cumulative mitigating factors that can change the level limits of a county. If the county is situated on a major river or has access to the coast, it can increase its level as per the table below. If the majority of a county's population is specifically adapted to their terrain, then this can also increase the level limit. The maximum level a county may ever be improved to is its level limit plus its limit enhancers. No matter how many enhancers a county has, its level limit can never exceed 10.

Table II-02: Mitigating Factors

Factor	Type	Limit enhancer
25% Adapted Occupants (elves in a forest, dwarves in the mountains, amphibians on the coast)	Population	+1
50% Adapted Occupants	Population	+2
75% Adapted Occupants	Population	+3
Presence of roads	Connection	+1
Presence of a major river	Connection	+1
Presence of accessible coastline	Connection	+1
Fertile	Feature	+1
Blighted	Feature	-1

> ***Example:*** *The county of Highburn in the realm of Kaareb is mostly covered by deep forest, which would normally limit its level to 5. However, the land is mainly populated by dark elves, who are accustomed to life in such an environment, therefore increasing the maximum level of the county by 3. Furthermore, the county is also crossed by a large river, bringing the maximum level of Highburn to 9.*

The levels and mitigating features of each county are mentioned in the realms description in *Chapter 5: The Realms*.

Features

Counties may optionally have features attached to them. These tend to be created with the setting, either Ceres or the GM's own creation. Exceptional events can add or remove these features as decided by the GM.

Features can never be added or removed, except by GM's decision, and never require Maintenance.

Features Affecting Constructions

These affect the constructions in a county. They are treated as being one level higher but do not increase the Maintenance cost. A county with the "Open" feature and a connection level 2 will be treated as having a connection level 3 but the Maintenance cost will remain that of a level 2. The maximum level remains 3. Hence, there is no use in increasing the connection level in an "Open" county above 2.

Table II-03: Features Affecting Constructions

Feature	Effect	Description
Open	+1 level to Connection	This county has flat, easily traversed terrain. The foliage is light, the wildlife timid, the bandits tamed. Trade flows freely and travel is smooth.
Rugged	+1 level to Fortification	Gullies, badlands, cliffs, and canyons make this terrain traversable only by controllable passes. The inhabitants can gather at bottlenecks and chokepoints, making the county highly defensible.
Cove	+1 level to Seafaring	This county has a natural harbor protected from weather by a barrier island or other topographical feature. This ready access to the water helps make shipbuilding and sea travel safe and reliable.
Beautiful	+1 level to Prestige	The backdrop in this county is sure to amaze. Virgin forests, white sand beaches, and mountain vistas leave an unforgettable impression.

Features Affecting Assets

These affect all assets of the relevant type except assets at level 0. They increase the level of the assets by 1 for the purposes of collecting the ● and ◆ that they generate each season but not for other purposes such as network income or faction power.

Table II-04: Features Affecting Assets

Feature	Effect	Description
Peaceful	+1 Level to all Order Assets	Little changes in this county, new ideas appear slowly, and violence rarely happens within its borders. The people are comfortable and that makes them easy to govern.
Crossroads	+1 Level to all Trade Assets	This county benefits from that golden rule of location, location, location! Situated in a natural passage between valuable resources, imported goods of every variety are plentiful here.
Devout	+1 Level to all Faith Assets	Religion is a way of life here. People will ask their local priest for advice on any and every topic and follow the church's guidance in all affairs.
Educated	+1 Level to all Magic Assets	Scholarship itself is not a form of magic, but in a county where literacy is prized and unusual talents encouraged and explored, there are more arcanists of every variety to explore and advance the state of their art.
Cosmopolitan	+1 Level to all Culture Assets	History has made this a county of many peoples, races, creeds, and cultures. Ideas are plentiful here, locals are worldly, and prejudices are mild.

Features Affecting Networks

These features affect *all* networks of the relevant type that have their origin or destination in this county.

Table II-05: Features Affecting Networks

Feature	Effect	Description
Prosperous	+1 Resource from Trade Routes	It could be a gold, silver, or diamond mine, rare furs or ambergris; whatever the particulars, this county has something people want. It is easy to control the market by controlling the supply, making the merchants here rich.
Sacred	+1 Resource from Pilgrimages	"Sacred" affects Pilgrimages: something in this county has been touched by the gods in a memorable and resonant way. People have rapturous experiences here and will come from far away to seek a unique blessing or form of healing.
Ruins	+1 Resource from Ley Lines	The ancients left their mark on this county. Ancient ruins containing forgotten wisdom and artifacts are present here, even common. The local arcanists have ready access to the tools of their trade.
Storied	+1 Resource from Cultural Links	History has happened in this county; the great luminaries were born here. Everyone knows the county's name and people from less remarkable counties dream of visiting the home of their hero.

Miscellaneous Features

The GM is encouraged to add their own features if they wish, just make sure the players know what that feature's effect is.

Table II-06: Miscellaneous Features

Feature	Description and Effect
Fertile	Blessed by the gods, this county is fecund and lush. Crops and livestock are easy to raise and children easy to feed and healthy. This county's level limit is 1 higher than normal.
Blighted	Twisted, corrupted, or sickly, this county seems cursed. Plants wither, animals are stunted, and children malnourished. This county's level limit is 1 lower than normal.
Proud	This county has always been part of the realm and will always be part of the realm. Others might be fickle, but this is the heartland, and they will not waver. No matter the Loyalty Adjustment Roll, this county can never become Rebellious.
Seditious	The people of this county see themselves as conquered or oppressed regardless of the current administration. They were once free and whether their masters be benevolent or cruel there will always be an "us" and a "them." No matter the Loyalty Adjustment Roll, this county can never become Loyal.
Volunteerism	Regular military service is part of a normal upbringing in this culture. Once per season, the sovereign may discount their muster costs by 1 ●.
Pressgangs	The people here do not willingly serve in the military, seeing it as an odious burden and draft-dodging when they can. The first muster of the season always costs the sovereign 1 more ● than normal.
Informants	The people here accept invasive law enforcement and think it reasonable to inform on their neighbors and turn state's evidence, for better or worse. The Corruption level here is 1 lower than normal.
Privacy	People here value privacy, and close ranks against invasive authority. They don't like being questioned and they prefer to handle issues behind closed doors. This makes it much harder to enforce bureaucracy and taxes upon them. Corruption level here is 1 higher than normal.

Constructions

Construction: A non-Asset building with a specific purpose in a county. Measured from level 0 to level 3, there are **four different types:** Connection, Fortification, Prestige, and Seafaring.

Connection: The amount and quality of roads and facilities to allow people, goods, and armies to move through a county.

Fortifications: Military defenses of a county, which protect armies and their supply chains.

Prestige: Grandiose buildings that enhance the respect and diplomatic ability of the leaders.

Seafaring: Civilian ships, docks, and shipyards that conduct trade, travel, and possibly naval fleet construction. Only present in counties with a coastline.

While assets govern most of a county's structures and population, some specific individual constructions need to be considered separately. Next to its level, every county has four extra attributes, each having their own level ranging from 0 to 3: Connection, Fortification, Prestige, and Seafaring. Seafaring only applies to counties that have a coastline.

Constructions are large-scale local objects with a specific purpose useful to the county they are built in. There are many examples of what constitutes a construction and each confers significant advantages to both the county and the faction that builds it.

Building a construction can be performed and paid for by any leader, but only with the authorization of the county's sovereign because all constructions are owned and maintained by the sovereign.

Constructions are available in multiple levels whose effects become more beneficial as they are improved but also cost more in Maintenance.

Connection

The three levels of connection (tracks, roads, and highways) represent the infrastructure in place to allow faster movement across the county. Connections can be built by any leader or sovereign although a leader will need the permission from the sovereign ruling the lands on which the connections are built. Connections benefit the county's leaders and all its residents.

While almost all counties have simple tracks crossing their jurisdiction, highways are a step above the norm. Capable of supporting military maneuvers and regular travel without serious conflicts, a highway is not just a stone road. Highways have a series of rest and supply points such as travelers' inns, open fields for bivouacking troops, and semi-permanent marketplaces. A highway is a network of structures and paved surfaces connecting the towns and cities of a county to its neighboring counties (see *Chapter 3: Warfare* for more details on the use of highways).

Where a full-blown highway is not justified, tracks may be improved into roads. While roads are not designed to allow the mass movement of troops, they are still suitable for trade routes, making them ideal for smaller counties looking to expand without the use of military force (see **page 29** for more details on networks).

Roads or highways also increase the county level limit by 1.

Table II-07: Connections

Level	Effects
0 No connection	No river crossings for anyone. Troop movement cost is doubled.
1 Tracks	Allows individuals to cross rivers to other counties with Tracks or better. Permits Faith and Culture Networks to pass through this county.
2 Roads	Allows troops to cross rivers to other counties with Roads or better. Permits Trade Networks to pass through this county. +1 county level limit.
3 Highway	Troop movement cost is halved to other counties with Highways. +1 county level limit (not cumulative with roads).

Fortifications

War is inevitable. At some point neighbor turns upon neighbor, empires fall and factions face off against each other. In these times, fortifications are needed and woe to the sovereign that allows them to fall into disrepair. The three levels of fortification (citadel, fortress, and castle) represent the size of the fortification and the defensive bonus it offers to the units behind the walls. Fortifications can be built by any leader but they remain under the authority of the sovereign ruling the lands on which the fortification is built. Leaders can help fund the construction in exchange for a promise from the sovereign that they will be welcome behind the walls in war time.

Fortifications require Maintenance every season and if this Maintenance cost is not paid, the fortification is reduced by one grade (a castle becomes a fortress, a fortress becomes a citadel, and a citadel is eliminated). Full rules for the use of fortifications may be found in *Chapter 3: Warfare*.

Table II-08: Fortifications

Level	Effects
0 No fortification	None.
1 Citadel	+1 Defense bonus to local units.
2 Fortress	+2 Defense bonus to local units.
3 Castle	+3 Defense bonus to local units.

Prestige

Some buildings exist purely to display the wealth of their owner. They are recognition of the status and bloodline of a leader. The three prestige tiers (monument, palace, and wonder) represent the size and the luxury of those buildings. These grand structures can be built by any leader with the permission of the county's sovereign; they benefit all courts present in the county.

Table II-09: Prestige

Level	Effect
0 No monument	None.
1 Monument	+1 to the Court Level when the court is in the county.
2 Palace	+2 to the Court Level when the court is in the county.
3 Wonder	+3 to the Court Level when the court is in the county.

Those prestigious buildings are an inspiring sight to behold so offer additional influence to the county's leader during diplomatic negotiations in his lands.

Common examples of monuments include massive statues, lighthouses, or coliseums. This list should not be considered exclusive and players should work with their GMs in determining the nature of their monument.

The bonus to the court level allows the leader to benefit from a court with a level exceeding the county level limitation. The Maintenance cost of the court is not affected by this bonus (see **page 25** for details about courts).

Example: *Princess Severina maintains a court level 4 in her seat of power: Lightborne 4. She orders a monument to be built and when it is finished, the Prestige Level of the county increases from 0 to 1.*

Her court is now considered Level 5 even though it could normally not exceed the county level of 4. The Maintenance cost of the court remains that of a court level 4 but the sovereign must also pay 1 gold for the Maintenance cost of the Level 1 monument in Lightborne each season.

Seafaring

The coastline is a vast opportunity for trade and expansion. The most basic harbor is only able to support small longboats and landing craft before it needs to expand. The three levels of seafaring (port, dry-dock, and naval dockage) represent the maritime infrastructure available in the county.

Table II-10: Seafaring

Level	Effect
0 No harbor	None.
1 Port	Allows sea-based connections.
2 Dry-dock	Allows building ships.
3 Naval Dockage	Allows building warships.

A port with its cranes, wharves, and warehouses allows for the docking of trade vessels and is the basic requirement for sea-based connections.

Dry-docks are more extensive repair and manufacturing sites. Consisting of a regular port, shipyard, and access to considerable lumber reserves, dry-docks can build and repair entire vessels. They are equipped with facilities that can lift damaged vessels from the sea and rebuild them from scratch.

While a port is suitable for trade, a naval dockage is required to engage in aggressive naval campaigns (see *Chapter 3: Warfare* for details on naval combat). With wider wharves for the mass loading of troops, suitable arsenals, and barracks for troops, a naval dockage will usually stand side-by-side with a regular port, though they are often segregated by a solid wall and armed guard. If a county does not possess a naval dockage, the county can only engage in defensive naval actions without penalty.

Taking Control of a County

There are four ways that a character might come to own a county: vassalage, inheritance, conquest, and uncontested claim.

Vassalage

A faction may decide to grant stewardship of one or several of their counties/assets to a loyal ally. This steward gains all the abilities of a sovereign/leader but must agree to become the original owner's vassal.

The master of the relationship is known as the "liege". The servant in the relationship is known as the "vassal".

This vassal could be an existing leader or sovereign, a family member or courtier, or could be a commoner rewarded for exceptional service.

Vassalage requires that the vassal shows loyalty to their liege. This is mostly shown through a regular payment of Wealth and Influence, but military promises and respect are also expected to be shown.

It is not unheard of for the kin of conquered nobles to become vassals of their conqueror. Generally, these conquered leaders retain whatever title they held under the old faction but are vassals in all but name. Lieges tend to accept some variation in the Wealth their vassals pay in tribute, but vassals who consistently fail to meet the expectations of their liege can expect to be replaced. Whether they are replaced through open warfare, imprisonment, or assassination is entirely up to the temperament of the liege and the military forces they can bring to bear.

Assigning a vassal requires a treaty (see the Diplomacy Faction Action on **page 43**) and both parties must agree on the terms.

SUITABLE LEVELS OF WEALTH AND INFLUENCE

The most common level of payment expected from a vassal is 50% of the Wealth and 20% of the Influence produced by the vassal's counties/assets. This indicates an arrangement where the vassal has been faithful for considerable periods of time. Where a vassal has come to power more recently the method of establishment will determine payment.

If a vassal is newly conquered or established, it may be expected to pay 100% of its Wealth and Influence until its status has been fully accepted. This is recommended to be a temporary measure, as it will inevitably result in the destruction of the vassal's assets if they cannot pay for their Maintenance.

Table II-11: Vassal Tribute Levels

Status	Wealth	Influence
Conquered	100%	100%
Bound	75%	50%
Established	50%	20%
Noble Friend	10%	10%

Inheritance

The death of a powerful leader may find their followers rewarded with their assets, Wealth, and diplomatic considerations. This succession by inheritance seldom runs smoothly: debts, internal conflict, and even civil war can be expected.

A shrewd leader will plan for their eventual end by naming their successor through the Edict Faction Action (see **page 46**). This means that their faction can be passed on to whom they deem fit with fewer problems.

If a leader dies without naming a successor, the GM decides what will happen to the faction. Suggestions include:

- Selling off each asset/county to the highest local bidder. Any that are not sold are destroyed. The faction ceases to exist.
- The faction appoints a new leader through their own arbitrary means.
- The closest blood relative of the previous leader inherits the faction.

Conquest

In the event of an armed conflict between leaders, counties can be conquered. See **page 79** in *Chapter 3: Warfare* for details on conquest.

The ownership of a conquered county can then be seized by the conquering faction using an Edict Action.

Uncontested Claim

The Edict Action may be used to stake a claim on an unowned county. If a faction is the only one to claim a county which has no sovereign for an entire season, they become its sovereign. Should another faction also stake a claim, the county will have no sovereign until one of the following is true:

- A faction conquers the county (as above), then seizes it using an Edict Action
- Factions drop their claims until one faction's claim remains, which is uncontested for an entire season. The uncontested faction becomes the sovereign.

Claims may be dropped by using a free action.

Assets

The various possessions, buildings, institutions, and military forces owned by a given sovereign are their assets. Assets represent centers of regional political power; they are the institutions that allow leaders to exercise power. Just as there are five types of faction, there are five types of asset and the cost of creating, maintaining, and improving these assets will depend entirely on the type of faction that the leader belongs to.

Asset Notation

Assets are often noted in the following style:

Faction Leader, Location, Asset Type, [Asset Level]

Example: *Harry's character, Jisha, leads a Trade Faction and owns many assets including a Trade 2 in Lightborne and a Trade 3 in Trorel. These can be noted simply as:*

- *Jisha, Lightborne, Trade 2*
- *Jisha, Trorel, Trade 3*

These can also be shortened to Lightborne, Trade 2 or even simply Lightborne 2 depending on their context.

Asset Types

The five types of asset represent different levers of power. All assets provide Wealth and Influence, but also the ability to manipulate others within their county.

Order Assets

Order Assets cover everything from administration of the land to the provision of military force. The least genteel of assets, Order Assets are vital for securing the county and allowing for other assets to thrive. Order Assets include citadels and fortresses, barracks, armories, and the actual units that make up a realm's armies. While Order Assets are normally connected to the sovereign of the county, this is not always so. A surprisingly well-trained peasant militia or a merchant guild's mercenary

force can also be an Order Asset.

Trade Assets

If it can be bought and sold, Trade Assets cover it. Whether a gilded guildhall or the darkest alley of the underworld-market, these assets facilitate the flow of property into and through the county. Vital in maintaining trade routes, Trade Assets create the contacts and opportunities which allow leaders to gain great riches.

Faith Assets

Faith Assets include temples, shrines, monasteries, religious monuments, and pilgrimage sites, all of which enhance the faith of the people and generate power and income for their owner. While this can get complicated in polytheistic counties and may sometimes require Order Assets to keep the peace, the presence of Faith Assets allows the faithful to muster their spiritual will and participate in vital pilgrimages.

Faith Assets are required for the casting of many Divine Realm Spells, covered in *Chapter 4: Realm Magic*.

Magic Assets

Magic thrives in areas where its use is integral to the very fabric of a county. For every ten apprentice mages who employ their craft as rat-catchers, farmers, or charm makers, there are the wizards that taught them and the master mage who taught the wizards.

Magic Assets can be hidden groves full of nature magic, sites of ancient rituals, magic academies, or even grand towers allowing wizards to reach sites high above the ground. Conversely, many a dungeon has been constructed so that a necromancer might tap into the power of vast underground rivers or caverns that have never felt the sun's warmth.

Magic Assets allow the use of Arcane Realm Spells, covered in *Chapter 4: Realm Magic*.

Culture Assets

Culture Assets include things that glorify history and material achievement over matters of faith. While they may be couched in religious terms and language, they are more humanistic in nature. Culture Assets include things such as museums, theatres, mausoleums, and any site used to tell the true history of a civilization revealing how political reality came to be.

If Trade Assets deal with the movement and exchange of money and goods, then Culture Assets deal with the movement of people and their ideals.

Asset Levels

LEVEL 0 ASSETS

While assets of level 1 or higher are the assets most relevant to the running of a county, this does not preclude factions from having lesser assets which they can later build on. Level 0 assets (a small church, faction enforcer, small library, etc.) can be possessed by all factions in a county and do not count against the county level restrictions.

These are often used to allow leaders access to affecting that county with certain faction actions.

Assets are measured in levels much like the counties in which they reside. An asset's level represents how powerful it is when compared to another asset.

If only one faction has a specific asset type in a county, it essentially controls that type of activity within that county due to a lack of competition.

The total levels of all assets of the same type cannot exceed the level of the county.

Example: *In the county of Lightborne* 4 *are the following Trade Assets:*

- *House Dressan, Trade* 2
- *Ratakka's Mice, Trade* 2
- *Nosdram Family, Trade* 0

As Lightborne's county level is 4, there is no more room for further Trade Assets. However, that has not prevented The Nosdram Family from creating a level 0 Trade there.

Assets and Faction Type

Each faction may control different types of asset but they always focus on one particular type, known as the "faction type." A faction's type is typically the asset type in which they have the highest total level.

Example: *Queen Nausicaä of Telimond owns multiple assets, 18 levels of Culture and 18 levels of Order. The faction type is currently Order.*

Should a faction gain or lose asset levels, this may change which asset type is the highest level. At the end of each season, the faction may change their faction type to the asset they have in majority.

Example: *Telimond gains a new Culture Asset, and now owns more levels of Culture than Order Asset. Queen Nausicaä may now choose to change the faction type to Culture, but this would be a one-way conversion unless her balance of assets change again.*

When a faction attempts to create or improve an asset that does not match their faction type, the final cost of the action in Wealth and Influence is doubled.

Courts

Court: The courtiers, aides, servants, and government that help a leader manage their faction.

Court Level: The size and effectiveness of a faction's court. Grants bonuses to diplomacy with other factions.

Seat of Power: The headquarters, capital, or head office of a faction, located in a specific county.

Courts are how leaders can show rivals the extent of their power and prestige. It is measured by its "court level," which reveals the number and quality of its courtiers as well as the lifestyles they have come to expect and the importance of the dignitaries that might visit. Courts are also littered with aides and servants, some loyal, others not so loyal.

Some courtiers may be entwined in a web of intrigue, passing information to rivals, or are long-term spies planted there to garner weaknesses in the court.

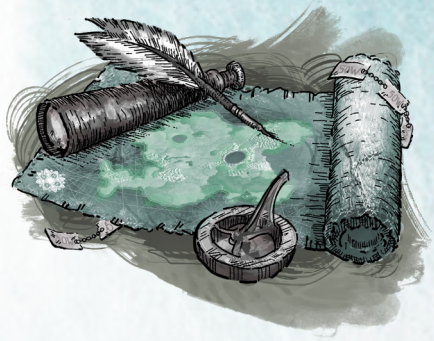
Every leader has a minimum court level of 1.

The moment a leader gains control of their first asset, that county becomes their seat of power. If the leader gained multiple assets from a single source (e.g. inheritance), they pick from those assets for a seat of power location. The new leader's court starts at level 1.

Increasing the level of the court requires use of the Edict Faction Action. Each court level costs 1 ● per season in Maintenance. Bear in mind that the court level cannot exceed the county level, except for modifications due to a prestige construction.

Moving an existing seat of power to another county is also possible through the Edict Faction Action. However, moving it to a smaller level automatically reduces the level of the court to the level of the county. Travelling with the court, even to a county of a lower level, does not change the level of the court. If the leader is unable to pay the Maintenance cost of the court, they automatically lose 5 ◆ points and the level of the court decreases by 1. Leaders with fewer than 5 ◆ points to lose instead lose 1 point of Reputation.

As a court becomes more powerful, it becomes a source of influence. Those who have heard of the opulence of a faction's court will usually react more favorably to its lords and emissaries.



When undertaking a Diplomacy Action (see **page 43**) with an external faction, a modifier equal to twice the level difference between the two courts is applied. Leaders only benefit from their court bonus when travelling with their court or if the action takes place in their seat of power.

Example: *Princess Severina, sovereign of Cadelania, pays a state visit to Lord High Justice Simon Audaire, the sovereign of Leanad. She does this by using the Diplomacy Faction Action to ask for a state visit, which Simon Audaire accepts.*

Princess Severina's court level is 3, and her seat of power is in Lightborne 3*. Lightborne has a prestige level of 1, so normally would increase the Princess's court level to 4, however as she is visiting another county, she cannot take her prestige bonus with her. Princess Severina's court level is 3 for this meeting.*

Simon Audaire's court level is also 3, but as the meeting is taking place in his seat of power, Lautrem 7*, he gets to add the prestige level of Lautrem, which is 2, to his court level. Simon Audaire's court level is 5 for this state visit.*

The difference between Princess Severina's and Simon Audaire's court levels is -2.

This would give Princess Severina a -4 on all diplomatic action rolls during this meeting, as she initiated the Diplomacy Action. Now is the time for her to ask for that military aid she desperately needs.

Had Princess Severina not travelled with her court, her court level would have been 0 and she would have suffered a -10 penalty on her diplomatic action rolls.

UPGRADING A COURT

Diplomacy in court is a razor-edged affair, as the best and brightest are often lured away through the machinations of larger courts and subtle maneuvers are required to keep masterful courtiers loyal and close at hand. Every season, a leader can use an Edict Faction Action to improve its court level by 1 or decrease its court level by up to 2.

A court can never be decreased below level 1.

Advisors

Advisor: A loyal retainer belonging to a faction. Can perform one faction action per season.

Faction Skill: A leader or advisor's ability to influence faction actions. There are five faction skills, one for each type and are ranked from skill level 0 to +5.

Resource Modifier: Actions with the resource modifier tag allow the spending of additional Wealth or Influence to improve the likelihood of success.

For every twenty useless attendants, one will have the wisdom and charisma to advise well. Advisors are the key members of a leader's faction.

A leader may, with a free action, promote a courtier or nameless aide to the role of advisor. This costs 1 ● and 1 ◆ per faction skill level they have.

Each advisor is associated to one of the different skill types: Order, Faith, Trade, Magic, or Culture. Advisors can only give counsel in their area of expertise and thus perform faction actions with no type or a type that matches their faction skill.

Each faction can maintain a number of advisors equal to their court level, but no more than one advisor of each type. Should the level of the court decrease for any reason, the leader will be forced to immediately dismiss advisor(s) down to the new court level.

Advisors can, each season, undertake one action for their leader. Though they may be talented, advisors do not have quite the same ability to affect the world as a leader can. This means they cannot spend more Influence or Wealth to improve an action roll with a resource modifier than they have in their faction skill.

Example: *Princess Severina is currently in need of more assistance developing her Order Assets so she hires an advisor with a faction skill (Culture) of +2. This costs her 2 ● and 2 ◆.*

The advisor later performs the Enhance an Action and Princess Severina wants to get the highest success chance possible by spending Wealth and Influence to improve her odds of success. Unfortunately, the advisor can only spend 2 ● and 2 ◆ maximum on improving the probability through the action's resource modifier.

If Princess Severina wanted to spend more resources on this action, she'd need to perform it herself.

Can my Advisor be a Spellcaster?

Advisors more often than not are skilled but mundane characters. If a leader wishes a Faith or Magic advisor to have Realm Magic abilities (see *Chapter 4: Realm Magic*), it will cost the Leader 1 extra ● and ◆ both when first employing the advisor and when paying upkeep. This does not mean that the spellcaster will cast spells just for the asking and the leader should expect to pay a reasonable rate for any spell.

Faction Skills

Award Units: The experience currency in *Seeds of Wars*, used to improve faction skills.

Each leader and advisor carries with them a mix of knowledge and experience about specific subjects. This gives them an edge over their competition in their specialties. This is known as a character's faction skill.

A faction skill will give their owner a bonus to performing faction actions of that type.

Advisors can only learn one faction skill type, but leaders may learn as many different types as they desire.

Newly created leaders typically start with a 0 in all faction skills except for the skill type of their faction, for which they start with skill level +1.

Newly created advisors can have only one faction skill. The level of their faction skill is freely decided by the recruiting leader, but they cost more to employ based on their skill level. Note that each faction may only have one advisor of each type.

Example: *Harry has already decided that his character Jisha should lead a Trade Faction. Harry records his starting faction skill (Trade) at skill level +1.*

He later decides to hire a new advisor, and thanks to his money-making schemes can afford an experienced advisor. After considering his options, he wants to hire an advisor with a faction skill (Order) with a skill level of +3.

Jisha won't be able to hire another advisor with a faction skill of Order, so when Jisha can afford to, Harry may want to consider replacing the advisor with a better one.

Improving Faction Skills Through Award Units

The same way the GM grants players experience points or other types of reward during their adventures, the characters can improve their faction skills by spending *Award Units (AU)*. There is no rule regarding the number of AU that should be granted by the GM but every character should get at least 1 AU at the end of each game session.

Extra AU could be given after a remarkable event such as a victory on the battlefield, the signing of an important treaty, or the successful resolution of a random event. Bonus AU can be granted for role-playing a realm or faction's values, and AU can be penalized for violating them. See *Chapters 5 and 6* for many example values.

Award Units can be spent at any time to increase a faction skill according to the table below:

Table II-12: Faction Skill Levels

Skill Rank	Skill Level	AU Cost
Novice	+1	10
Low	+2	20
Moderate	+3	30
High	+4	40
Epic	+5	50

Example: *Jisha started with a faction skill (Trade) +1 at character creation.*

After a few sessions, he managed to accumulate a total of 12 AU. He decides to spend 10 of those to gain a +1 Culture skill bonus, which will help him perform Culture faction actions such as Diplomacy. He could also have waited until he saved 20 AU to bring his Trade skill bonus to +2.

Loyalty

Every county has a separate opinion of each faction. This is broadly shown as loyalty. Loyalty ranges between out-and-out rebellion and total harmony.

Loyalty has an influence on most actions in the county. A modifier due to loyalty is added to most action rolls when the leader attempts an action in the county. This is described in "Faction Actions" at the end of this chapter.

A *loyal* county is one where the goals of the faction and the populace align in near perfect synchronicity. Local religions are respected, cultural taboos are avoided, and legal decisions are generally seen as fair. When the leader is spoken of, it is seldom in a negative way. In many cases, there is a cult of personality surrounding the faction's leader, which can lead to conflict with the sovereign.

A *cooperative* county is one that is more realistic in its view of the faction and its courtiers. There is often a central disagreement that prevents the county from becoming loyal and careful politicking is required to maintain the county's loyalty. Despite this "acceptance of reality" most people in the county will bow to the wishes of this faction's leader.

An *aligned* county is one that feels its current relationship with the faction is better than most other prospects. Conflict and tumult arise on occasion and can come from many places. An aligned county can take up a lot of the leader's time, as only the most well-planned strategies lead to an improvement in the situation.

An *unfavorable* county is one in which the populace questions their relationship with the faction and the leader's role in the county. They often demand that leaders explain themselves or submit to independent inquiries. Trust has been lost, but many people still believe that the situation is salvageable or at least tolerable.

Hostile counties are past the point of loyalty. Near constant arguments, demonstrations, and protest actions reduce the productivity of the county and cause trade routes and other resources to occasionally fail. Levies cannot be drafted in hostile counties (see *Chapter 3: Warfare* for more details on conscription rules).

Counties *hostile* to their sovereign have a 10% cumulative chance each season to become *rebellious*. The sovereign faces the likelihood of using martial force to bring the county under control. This percentage increases by 20% when the Taxation Level is high.

Rebellion

When a county is in rebellion, the sovereign and all factions present can no longer collect Wealth nor Influence points from the county. The only actions that can be taken in the county are Diplomacy, Espionage, Spellcraft, and Warfare.

The season following the rebellion of the county, the population takes up arms to oppose the sovereign. The maximum number of levies is automatically conscripted, which also reduces the level of the county by 1.

Example: *The county of Likkarn becomes hostile to its sovereign. During the next phase of Loyalty Adjustment (Step One of the season), the sovereign of Nawen, Archpriest Castenn, has 10% chance of seeing the population of Likkarn go into rebellion, but luckily he rolls 1d20 and and obtains a 4 (1 or 2 would have triggered the unrest).*

However, the Archpriest does not manage to improve the situation during his turn and he has to roll again the following season. This time, the chance rises to 20% (40% if the taxation level was high) and the Archpriest rolls a 4 again. Likkarn goes into rebellion against Nawen. Being a level 2 county, the Archpriest now has to deal with two hostile units of levies in addition to the lack of seasonal income.

Faction Networks

Network: A route that goods, services and people travel along.

Network Resource: The special resource that a network produces. Each can be exchanged for different things, at different ratios, most commonly Wealth and/or Influence. This exchange can be performed at any time.

Source: The asset and its county that mark the beginning of a network.

Destination: The asset and its county that mark the end of a network.

: Symbol representing Wealth (Points).

: Symbol representing Influence (Points).

One of the most consistent truths of being a leader is that interconnectivity leads to a thriving estate. Networks come in four types: Trade, Faith, Magic, and Culture. Order types do not have a network.

All networks may have different requirements and restrictions, but they all ultimately produce a resource specific to their type. This resource is then exchanged for either Wealth, Influence, or the ability to boost Realm Magic.

Connecting a Network

Networks are connected through a route – a series of adjacent counties that starts at the source and ends at the destination. Different types of networks have further rules and requirements specific to each type.

Each asset is limited to being involved in two networks. Level 0 assets cannot be a part of a network. If a leader owns a network between two counties, they may never create a second network of the same type between those two counties – they will need to change the source, destination, or type.

Sea Routes

If trade utilizes sea-based transit, then a number of suitable vessels with a cargo value equal to the level of the trade route must be possessed or the income of the route will be reduced to the available cargo limit (see **page 67** in *Chapter 3:Warfare* for details about the vessels cargo value).

Suspended Networks

A network can become suspended and put effectively on hold. That means it generates no resources and makes it immune to taxation (in the case of Trade Networks).

Reasons for networks becoming suspended are when:

- If the sovereigns of the source and destination counties go to war with each other.
- A sovereign along the route withdraws their permission for the network (as a free action). The GM may wish to apply a Relationship penalty between the sovereign and the owner(s) of the network.
- Any counties along the route become hostile towards an owner of the network.
- Any counties along the route are in rebellion.

Trade Networks (Trade Routes) have additional reasons for becoming suspended.

- The owners of a shared trade route go to war with each other.
- Either owner of a shared trade route decides to suspend the network (as a free action). The GM may wish to apply a Relationship penalty between the owners of the network.

As long as there are no reasons for a network to remain suspended, that network can be re-established with the Resume Network Free Action to begin earning resource next season.

Reasons for resuming a suspended network could be getting the sovereign to allow the network to resume (by asking them through a Diplomacy Action) or by altering the source or destination of the network (Modify Network Action).

Trade Routes (Trade Networks)

Trade Goods: The resource created from trade routes.

Shared Trade Routes: Trade routes between two different asset owners are shared, as are the trade goods they produce.

An economy runs on trade as goods flow from nation to nation along roads and seaways. The *Seeds of Wars* economy includes trade through the establishment of trade routes.

A trade route can be established between two counties and can cross multiple realms.

Special Rules

To establish a trade route between two counties, the following conditions must exist:

- Both source and target must have a Trade Asset present. These assets can have different owners, in which case the trade route is shared.
- The source and target counties must have a commodity that the other needs. Normally this is simulated by requiring each of the two participating counties to have a different terrain type. If they have the same terrain type, the GM can permit the creation of a trade route if they feel the counties would have a commodity each other would want.
- All counties through which the trade route passes must have a minimum connection level of 2.
- The trade route can also be traced through sea areas so long as the counties on either end of the sea route have both a minimum seafaring level of 1 in addition to the minimum connection level of 2.
- No county through which the trade route passes can be hostile to either partner.

Shared Trade Routes

Shared trade routes occur when a route is created between trade assets belonging to two different leaders. Both leaders are the route's owners and each receives exactly half of the route's income.

Illegal Trade Routes

By performing an Espionage Action (see **page 48** for details on Espionage), the leader's next trade route is created as an illegal trade route or a current/suspended route becomes illegal.

Illegal trade routes can be created without a sovereign's permission and ignore suspension. The same applies to the creation/ignoring suspension from two realms being at war.

Another Espionage Action can be performed to expose the illegal trade route.

Trade Route Taxation

A sovereign who owns a county through which a known trade route passes can tax it. They can demand 1 ● from the owner(s) in exchange for not suspending the route for that season. This is decided when the network produces its resource.

If the network is shared, both leaders may be individually taxed 1 ● to appease the sovereign.

This optional tax does not tend to reduce Relationship statuses between sovereigns and the network owners as it is justified by the Maintenance of the connections in those counties.

The owner can refuse to pay the tax – the typical response from the sovereign is to suspend the trade route on their next turn.

Trade Network Resource: Trade Goods

Trade routes produce a resource called Trade Goods that equal the average of the two Trade Assets connected by the route, rounded up.

If a trade route is shared, each owner gets half the average of the assets as Trade Goods. If the Trade Goods produced are odd in number, the owner with the larger asset gets the remaining Trade Good. Should both owners have equal level assets, the remainder is given to the faction that created the trade route.

One point of Trade Goods can be converted into one Wealth; two points of Trade Goods can be converted into one Influence. This can be done at any time, even during another player's turn.

Example: *House Dressan successfully creates a trade route between its Trade ⬢2 in Kiethien and the Trade ⬢3 of Ratakka's Mice in Legobeth.*

At the start of next season, the total asset level remains 5, which generates 3 Trade Goods. House Dressan will get 1 Trade Good as seasonal income. Ratakka's Mice will get 2 Trade Goods, as it has the larger of the two assets.

House Dressan chooses to immediately convert this 1 Trade Goods point into 1 ●.

As the trade route goes through the realm of Cadelania, the Sovereign Princess Severina demands a payment of 1 ● from Ratakka's Mice. Ratakka's Mice can either pay that 1 ● from last season's treasury or immediately convert 1 Trade Good into Wealth for the payment.

Ratakka's Mice chooses not to pay. Princess Severina is likely to deny the network access through her counties as a later free action, though that might upset House Dressan as well!

In a later season, House Dressan increases their asset's level to 3. The trade route still generates 3 Trade Goods, but now both owners are tied in how many asset levels they contribute. As House Dressan created the route, they would get the remaining Trade Good per season instead of Ratakka's Mice.

Pilgrimages (Faith Networks)

Sacred sites draw pilgrims, and pilgrims provide their temples with resources in the form of donations, influence and religious fervor.

Special Rules

In order to form a pilgrimage, the following requirements exist:

- Both counties must have a Faith Asset belonging to the same owner.
- The two Faith Assets need to be devoted to the same religion. On Ceres, this is rarely an issue, but if your campaign has rival faiths, this rule must be observed.
- All counties through which the pilgrimage passes must have a minimum connection level of 1. The pilgrimage can also be traced through sea areas so long as the counties on either end of the sea route have both a minimum seafaring level of 1 in addition to the minimum connection level of 1.

Faith Network Resource: Piety

Pilgrimages produce the Piety resource. A pilgrimage produces Piety equal to the average of the two Faith Assets that it connects, rounded up.

Two points of Piety can be converted to 1 ◆ at any time. Piety cannot be converted to Wealth.

Each point of Piety can instead be converted into one temporary level of Faith Asset, but only for the purposes of Divine Magic (see *Chapter 4: Realm Magic* for more details on Divine Magic requirements). If not used during the current season, the remaining points of Piety are lost.

Ley Lines (Magic Networks)

Ley lines are magical constructions that channel and enhance the natural magical energies of the land. Unlike trade routes and pilgrimages, ley lines are the mystical force of Arcana.

Ley lines can be created between two counties that contain Magic Assets owned by the same faction.

Special Rules

Magic networks do not suffer from the same material restrictions as other networks as nothing flows along the route except magic itself.

Due to this intangibility, ley lines do not require the permission of the sovereigns who control counties along the route. Nor do they require any levels of connection, but they can never cross seas.

In addition, ley lines ignore the loyalty level of the counties they pass through, as well as ignoring if the sovereigns at the source and destination are at war.

Ley lines can however, be suspended or destroyed by hostile Realm Magic (see *Chapter 4: Realm Magic*).

Magic Network Resource: Arcana

The amount of Arcana produced by a ley line is equal to the average of the two Magic Assets' levels, rounded up.

Two points of Arcana can be converted to 1 ◆. Arcana cannot be converted to Wealth.

Each point of Arcana can instead be converted into one temporary level of Magic Asset, but only for the purposes of Arcane Magic (see *Chapter 4: Realm Magic* for more details on Arcane Magic requirements). If not used during the current season, the remaining points of Arcana are lost.

Cultural Links (Culture Networks)

Cultural links are an abstraction used to show where a deliberate effort has been made to create a common culture between counties. This is often achieved using entertainment, such as bardic performances or plays, to spread information and ideas. While a cultural link may look harmless, to a canny sovereign it is another tool of statecraft and capable of conquering imaginations and hearts in ways that brute force cannot.

Special Rules

In order to establish and maintain a cultural link between two counties, the following must be true:

- Both source and destination assets must belong to the same faction.
- All counties through which the cultural link passes must have a minimum connection level of 1. The cultural link can also be traced through sea areas so long as the counties on either end of the sea route have both a minimum seafaring of 1 and a minimum connection of 1.

Culture Network Resource: Imprint

Once a cultural link is established and the two counties with Culture Assets are fully connected, it will provide a resource called Imprint equal to the average of the two connected Culture Assets, rounded up.

Two points of Imprint can be converted to 1 ● or ◆.

Each two points of Imprint can also be converted to provide a +1 bonus to any action roll. If not used during the current season, the remaining points of Imprint are lost.

The true worth of Imprint bonuses is that they can be traded to other leaders. They must simply be a sovereign of one of your assets or own an asset in the same county as you. Trading is a free action, but usually occurs as part of a Diplomatic agreement in exchange for something else.

The Season and its Steps

Each season represents three months. During each season, leaders check the loyalty of their counties, collect income, move armies, engage in diplomatic activities, etc. The turn sequence is listed below, followed by a detailed description of each step.

Step one: Adjust loyalty

Step two: Collect wealth and influence

Step three: Sovereign taxation

Step four: Calculate and pay expenses

Step five: Perform faction actions

Step six: Deposit treasury

Step One: Adjust Loyalty

At the beginning of every season, each leader who owns an asset in a county must adjust the loyalty of that county towards them.

Loyalty Adjustment

The Loyalty is adjusted by rolling 1d20, adding or subtracting the loyalty modifiers as appropriate and consulting the following table to determine the new level of loyalty. The sacking of a county immediately makes it *hostile* against the aggressor (see *Chapter 3: Warfare* for more details about Sacking). Counties begin the game as *aligned*, unless the GM rules otherwise.

Table II-13: Loyalty Adjustment

Current Loyalty	New Loyalty				
	Hostile	Unfavorable	Aligned	Cooperative	Loyal
Hostile	<20	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Unfavorable	<5	6-19	20-29	30-39	40+
Aligned	<1	1-5	6-19	20-29	30+
Cooperative	-	<1	1-5	6-19	20+
Loyal	-	-	<1	1-5	6+

Modifiers for Loyalty Adjustment

Many modifiers apply to the roll that determines the new loyalty of a county. The following modifiers are valid as long as the corresponding reason is applicable in the county:

Table II-14: Ongoing Loyalty Adjustment Modifiers

Reason	Modifier
Hostile Military Occupation	-10
Official Relationship with the County's Sovereign:	
Hostile	-2
Unfavorable	-1
Aligned	+0
Cooperative	+1
Loyal	+3
Stance/Treaty with the County's Sovereign:	
War	-10
Truce	-5
Non-Aggression Pact	+1
Right of Passage	+2
Alliance	+5
Control all of the Order Asset Levels in the County Control all of the Faith Asset Levels in the County Control all of the Culture Asset Levels in the County	+5
Control at least half of the Order Asset Levels in the County Control at least half of the Faith Asset Levels in the County Control at least half of the Culture Asset Levels in the County	+2
Control at least 1 Level of Order Asset in the County Control at least 1 Level of Faith Asset in the County Control at least 1 Level of Culture Asset in the County	+1
Control all of the Trade Asset Levels in the County Control all of the Magic Asset Levels in the County	+2
Control at least half of the Trade Asset Levels in the County Control at least half of the Magic Asset Levels in the County	+1

Modifiers of a different faction type are cumulative; modifiers of the same faction type are not.

Example: *Edaulla owns an Order 3 in Triran 4, which means it controls more than half of the Order Assets in the county, gaining a +2 bonus to the Loyalty Adjustment roll. However, this bonus does not stack with the +1 bonus granted for controlling at least 1 level of Order in the county. Edaulla also controls a Faith 4 in Triran 4, thus gaining a +5 bonus to the Loyalty Adjustment roll. The Order bonus and Faith bonus are cumulative, bringing the total bonus to +7.*

The following modifiers are temporary; they only apply to the Loyalty roll following the season in which they occur:

Table II-15: Temporary Loyalty Adjustment Modifiers

Reason	Modifier
For each Faction that attended your Grand Diplomacy in this County	*+5*
Held a Festival in the County last Season	*+10*
Solved Challenge	*+5*
Unsolved Challenge	*-10*
Increased County Taxation Level in the County (Sovereigns only)	*-10*
Victorious Battle in the County	*+5*
Victorious Battle in another County	*+1*
Lost a Battle in this County	*-10*
Lost a Battle in another County	*-5*
Victorious War	*+10*
Lost War	*-20*

Optional Rule: Adjusting Loyalty per Realm

Adjusting the loyalty of each county can result in a lot of rolls. The GM should feel free to use the same Loyalty level for all counties in the same realm or geographic area. Adjusting the Loyalty on realm level is recommended for leaders. For sovereigns however, the Loyalty should be adjusted independently for each county in their realm. When adjusting Loyalty by realm instead of by county, modifiers listed as "in the county," should instead be read as "in the realm."

Step two: Collect Wealth and Influence

The trappings of authority are all well and good, but they are nothing without the means to effect change on the wider landscape. Wealth and Influence are the means. Wealth is commodities offered up as barter, taxes, or seized as fines. The exact nature of the products is irrelevant as the actual value of Wealth greatly exceeds the commercial price of the products that make it up.

Sources of Wealth and Influence

There are four main sources of Wealth and Influence: assets, vassal tribute, networks, and county taxation. While any character can gain influence from their control of counties and assets, only a sovereign can create vassals and gain influence from vassalage. At the start of each season, each leader adds up their Influence and Wealth from these sources.

FACTION POWER

The amount of Influence a faction gains each season is equal to either its leader's Reputation or the Faction Power, whichever is smaller. The Faction Power is simply the sum of all its asset levels. For sovereigns, it also includes the sum of all the county levels of the realm.

Example: *Grand Princess Severina of Lightborne, sovereign of Cadelania, has a Reputation of 25. The Faction Power of Cadelania is 30 (21 county levels + 9 Order asset levels). Therefore, Severina will gain 25 points of Influence at the beginning of Step Two.*

Asset Income

Each faction asset, whether it is Order, Faith, Trade, Magic, or Culture, generates Wealth based on its level.

Example: *The Grand Principality of Cadelania owns five Order 1 in Chilidric, Kiethien, Legobeth, Rhilaria, and Trorel. Cadelania also owns two level Order 2 in Lightborne and Sevybeth. Adding together all these levels gives Cadelania a total Income of 9, which generates 9 ● each season.*

If the level 2 in Sevybeth were to turn rebellious, Cadelania would instead generate 7 ● each season from asset income.

Vassalage

Vassalage is essentially a power sharing agreement between a vassal and a liege. The county calculates its Wealth and Influence based on its loyalty to the vassal who must then share with the liege following the terms of their agreement.

Some vassalage agreements grant military protection or subservience, but that is up to the individual vassalage. The Diplomacy Action (**page 43**) has more details on treaties.

Networks

Where counties, vassalage, and assets provide Wealth and Influence, networks such as trade routes and pilgrimages grant a special type of resource. As described in the networks rules, these resources can be converted into wealth, influence, temporary Magic or Faith asset levels, etc.

Exchanging your network resource to Wealth, Influence, or a special effect can be done either immediately after the resource is gained or later as a free action.

County Taxation Income

Sovereigns who own counties gain Wealth through taxation. The income is based upon each county's level, modified by the taxation level.

Just as with assets, counties that are rebellious do not generate income through taxes.

County Taxation Level

The amount of Wealth generated by counties for their sovereign depends on the level of taxes and the level of the counties. The taxation level also has an impact on the Loyalty of the counties. The lower the Loyalty, the more difficult it is to increase taxes without degrading the Loyalty further. Not raising taxes has a very positive effect on the Loyalty of the county.

The taxation level can only be decided by the sovereign of the county and is only decided immediately before gaining tax income. It cannot be adjusted until the following season's taxation.

Note that when you increase the taxes in a county, the Loyalty Adjustment penalty is much higher the following season. Counties begin the game having undergone normal taxation the previous season unless the GM rules otherwise.

The table below shows the modifier based on taxes levied during the previous season:

Table II-16: Taxation Modifiers

Tax Level	Income	Loyalty Modifier
None	0	+10
Light	County Level -1	+5
Normal	County Level	+0
Heavy	County Level +1	-10 (*)

(*) Collecting heavy taxes in a hostile county double the risk of seeing the county become rebellious (20% instead of 10%).

Example: *Cadelania controls the following counties: Chilidric 3, Kiethien 2, Legobeth 3, Rhilaria 3, Sevybeth 3, Trorel 3, and Lightborne 4. At normal taxes, each county would generate its level in Wealth – a total of 21 ●.*

Cadelania is currently being invaded by Blackwood and Princess Severina desperately needs funds to repel the invasion. She decides to levy heavy taxes from all her counties. Kiethien 2 is currently hostile and is in danger of becoming rebellious, but the Loyalty Adjustment roll won't be made until next season, so she'll worry about that later.

Princess Severina records on her Realm Sheet the heavy taxation levels for this season against all of her counties.

Table II-17: Wealth and Influence Summary

Source	Wealth	Influence	Special
County	County Level	County Level	Wealth adjusted with the Taxation Level
Assets	Asset Level	Asset Level	n/a
Vassalage (Conquered)	100%	100%	n/a
Vassalage (Bound)	75%	50%	n/a
Vassalage (Established)	50%	20%	n/a
Vassalage (Noble Friend)	10%	10%	n/a
Trade Network Resource (Trade Goods)	1:1	2:1	n/a
Faith Network Resource (Piety)	n/a	2:1	1:1 Temporary Faith Asset Level
Magic Network Resource (Arcana)	n/a	2:1	1:1 Temporary Magic Asset Level
Culture Network Resource (Imprint)	2:1	2:1	2:1 +1 on any Action Roll, can be traded

Step three: Sovereign Taxation

Sovereigns have additional latitude when it comes to taxation in that they can tax an asset that belongs to a different leader if in a county they control.

To tax an asset, the sovereign must choose an asset of at least level 1 in that county and an amount of Wealth to tax up to the level of the asset being taxed. The owner of the taxed asset has two options:

- Accept the tax and immediately transfer that much Wealth from their Step 2 income.
- Refuse the tax and suffer the potential diplomatic consequences.

If the asset owner agrees to the tax, they lose that much Wealth from *Step 2: Collect Wealth and Influence* and the sovereign adds that much Wealth to their Step 2 income.

Example: *Cadelania still needs more funds to help repel the Blackwood forces from her lands. Princess Severina reluctantly decides to tax the following assets in her county, Lightborne:*

House Dressan's Trade 2 *is taxed for 1* ●. *House Dressan's leader Jisha decides to agree to the tax. Princess Severina is, after all, providing military protection against Blackwood's pillagers.*

The Trade 2 *belonging to Ratakka's Mice is taxed for 1* ●. *They refuse to pay. Ratakka's Mice and Cadelania haven't always seen eye to eye. Princess Severina may want to deal with this in her seasonal actions: Diplomacy or perhaps causing some Infighting? She will need to consider the implications carefully.*

The Nosdram Family's Trade 0 *cannot be taxed as it is level 0.*

Step four: Calculate and Pay Expenses

Once the total seasonal income of a leader has been calculated and any sovereign taxation has been applied, it is time to apply expenses. The expenses of maintaining a faction must be dealt with before their income can be added to their treasury.

Expenses come in two types, applied in order:

- Mandatory Expenses, which must always be deducted from seasonal income if possible. Heavy penalties arise if these cannot be paid.
- Optional Expenses, which do not have to be deducted, but apply a penalty if not paid.

Mandatory Expenses

These expenses *must* be paid if possible. If a leader cannot pay their mandatory expenses from their income, they must take the funds from their treasury. If they still cannot pay, severe penalties result from their bad management.

Corruption

As assets become larger, employing more and more individuals, they become more corrupt. Reasons for this include individuals filling their own pockets, not doing their job properly, or accepting bribes. Counties do not generate Corruption.

A leader first confirms the Corruption Level for every asset they control, each modified by their Loyalty as below:

Table II-18: Corruption Level Loyalty Modifier

Loyalty	Asset Level Modifier
Loyal	-2
Cooperative	-1
Aligned	0
Unfavorable	+1
Hostile	+2
Rebellion	(Assets in rebellious counties never generate Corruption as they do not generate income)

Once assets have their Corruption Level modified by Loyalty, each is further modified by the relevant faction skill of their leader.

Effective Corruption Level = Asset Level + Loyalty Modifier - Leader's Faction Skill

This Effective Corruption Level then generates Corruption according to the following table:

Table II-19: Effective Corruption Level to Corruption

Effective Corruption Level	Corruption
0-3	0
4	1
5	1
6	2
7	2
8	3
9	3
10	4
11	4
12	5

The cost of Corruption to a leader is equal to the sum of their assets' Corruption. This cost in Wealth is applied to a leader's seasonal income before any other expenses.

Example: *Earth and Sky owns only one Faith asset that is level 4 or higher – Lautrem 4. Lautrem is currently cooperative to Earth and Sky, so its Corruption Level is reduced by 1 to Corruption Level 3.*

Corruption level 3 generates 0 Corruption, which is ideal for squeezing every drop of income from this asset. This may change if the Loyalty drops.

Sevybeth 3 and Lightborne 3 are both unfavorable to Earth and Sky – their Faith Assets each generate 1 Corruption. Combined, this is enough Corruption to cost 2 each season.

If the leader of Earth and Sky had a faction skill (Faith) of 1, then these Corruption levels would each be reduced by 1, but only for their Faith Assets.

In a later season, Lautrem's Loyalty to Earth and Sky changes to rebellion. While it now generates no Corruption Points, it also generates no income. The Loyalty of Lautrem should be resolved as a priority.

If Corruption cannot be paid, then a county's Loyalty drops by 1 level for every asset the leader owns in that county.

Diplomatic Obligations

Some leaders may have a Diplomatic agreement with another leader which requires the payment of Wealth and/or Influence each season. This is usually a tribute from a vassal to their liege but could also be war reparations or a payment made over multiple seasons.

These Diplomatic payments are deducted from a leader's seasonal income immediately after Corruption and before any optional expenses are paid.

As these diplomatic obligations are effectively transferred to another faction, make sure to add these resources to that faction's treasury at this point. All obligations are performed simultaneously.

If a leader cannot pay their Diplomatic obligations, they should pay all they are able to. The GM or player involved now decides what punishments to bestow upon the leader who failed to pay their obligations. This could be anything from a warning from the leader who is owed money to an outright declaration of war!

Other penalties may be applied, such as an immediate loss of Influence or loss of Loyalty in some counties. Other leaders will also be less likely to trust the agreement-breaking leader in the future.

Optional Expenses

All other expenses are optional, but come with penalties if they are not paid.

Asset Maintenance

Every five assets rounded down (not asset levels) cost their leader 1 to maintain.

If a leader cannot or chooses not to pay Maintenance, for each 1 unpaid, 1 asset of the owner's choice is reduced by 1 level.

Construction Maintenance

Each construction in a county requires Maintenance by the sovereign who owns the county. A construction's maintenance cost is 1 per level of construction for fortifications or prestige, and 1 per 3 levels for connections and seafaring.

If a sovereign cannot or chooses not to pay Maintenance for a specific construction, that construction's level is reduced by 1.

Example: *The Realm of Derarin has counties connected with roads (2 x 1/3), a port (1/3), a naval dockage (1), and a fortress (2). The Maintenance cost of its constructions is 4 per season.*

Military Maintenance

Maintenance for military and naval units should already be calculated from the start of the game or from actions that add, alter, or remove units from a faction's military (Muster/Train). See *Chapter 3: Warfare* for more details.

If the full Maintenance is not paid, units will need to be disbanded until the Maintenance cost reaches an acceptable level for the faction that owns them.

Court Maintenance

Courts cost 1 ● per level in Maintenance. If this is not paid, the court level is reduced by 1 and its leader immediately loses 5 ◆ from this season's income (to a minimum of 0. The court level cannot be reduced to 0 even though its leader will still lose 5 ◆ every time they cannot pay its Maintenance. If the leader has less than 5 ◆ available to lose, they instead lose 1 Reputation.

Advisor Salary

Each advisor costs 1 ● and 1 ◆ to Maintain per level of skill bonus they have. Advisors with spellcasting abilities cost an additional 1 ● and 1 ◆ on top of this.

Failure to pay each advisor will result in that advisor leaving the faction immediately.

Embassy Maintenance

Each embassy (See the Diplomacy Faction Action) with another faction costs 1 ● per season.

If an embassy is not Maintained, it is destroyed and requires another Diplomacy Action to restore.

Surveillance Network Maintenance

Each surveillance network (See the Espionage Faction Action) with another faction costs 1 ● per season.

If a surveillance network is not Maintained, it is destroyed and requires another Espionage Action to restore.

Final Profit

Expenses are now resolved. The leader adds any remaining Wealth and Influence to their treasury.

Step Five: Perform Faction Actions

Initiative: At the start of each season's Step 5, the factions roll for initiative to determine the order of their actions.

Active Character: The faction's leader or advisor who currently has initiative and is performing a faction action.

Factions and their leaders act in turn every season based on their initiative. Each season consists of three months. Each month typically consist of one faction action from the leader but can include more if advisors exist.

Each faction action typically represents approximately one month's work. Some actions, like ordering the construction of a shipyard, will only take small portions of a character's concentration over the course of all three months. The acting leader or advisor must travel to the county where they are performing a faction action, but this doesn't require a separate action unless the travel to and from the faction's seat of power will take more than a month.

While there is an entire globe of realms and counties, the GM should not attempt to keep up with every single one. Concentrate on the realms and counties that border those where the players have active interests. These are likely to be the allies, enemies, and rivals of the PCs. More distant lands can be handwaved, as they are unlikely to be of immediate interest to the players. NPC rulers do not need to use all their actions. Most of their actions would likely be spent maintaining their realms. GMs should only be concerned with aggressive or expansionist actions.

Initiative

Each season's actions are taken in initiative order. Initiative order is determined by each leader rolling 1d20 and adding his or her highest skill bonus. The highest rolling faction goes first, followed by the second highest, etc. Ties are rerolled.

The GM may wish to insert important non-player factions into the initiative or may simply have a "GM Turn" in the order they wish.

The leader or advisor performing an action is known as the "active character."

Example: *Cadelania, House Dressan, and Ratakka's Mice are the three factions who are important to this turn. Cadelania and House Dressan are each controlled by a player, but Ratakka's Mice is controlled by the GM.*

The GM decides that Ratakka's Mice, being the main antagonist at the moment, should have their initiative known to the other players so these three factions will roll to determine the initiative order.

The sovereign of Cadelania's highest skill bonus is Order +3; a 15 roll has a result of 18.
Jisha of House Dressan's highest skill bonus is Trade +3, an 11 roll has a result of 14.
Ratakka's Mice also have a highest Skill Bonus of Trade +3. Rolling a 7, Ratakka's Mice's initiative is 10.

Cadelania will act first this month, followed by House Dressan, and finally Ratakka's Mice. This order will then repeat two further times until all three months of the season are complete.

Seasonal Turns and Advisors

A faction with advisors will be able to use each advisor once per season. They can perform a faction action using their personal skill bonus.

Advisors' actions may be used before or after the leader's action in whichever month the leader chooses. This allows a leader to perform two (or more, with multiple advisors) faction actions before another faction gets their turn.

> ***Example:*** *Cadelania and House Dressan just finished their first action. It is Ratakka's Mice's turn to act, and expecting some very aggressive moves from the players, the GM decides that they will use their advisors for this month.*
>
> *This gives Ratakka's Mice effectively two faction actions this month – one performed by their leader and one performed by their advisor.*
>
> *Advisors can only perform one action per season, so in the following months of this season, Ratakka's Mice will only be able to use the one action from their leader unless they hire more advisors.*

Step Six: Deposit Treasury

At the end of each season, all remaining Wealth and Influence are stored by the factions in preparation for the next season.

Any remaining network resources must be converted to Wealth/Influence or are lost. Applicable bonuses from network resources, such as enhancements to Magic or Faith Assets or the action bonuses from Imprint, always expire at the end of the season.

Influence is free to store, but Wealth costs 10% of the total Wealth stored, rounded down. This can never be avoided.

> ***Example:*** *Jisha has 14 ● at the end of his first season. He grumbles about having to spend 10% (1 ●) to protect his savings, but he knows it takes money to make money.*
>
> *Jisha will have 13 ● to carry forward into the second season.*

Free Actions

Free actions can only be performed on your turn but do not consume an action.

Adventure

The leader or advisor sets out to discover new lands and opportunities. Most leaders are looked on unfavorably for this sort of behavior until they return laden with treasure. The GM should manage this as an Adventure for the characters from a zoomed-in perspective.

Adventure should have rewards that benefit the entire faction. Classic adventures have a whole new meaning when a dragon's hoard can be measured in Wealth and rescuing a captured prince can be measured in Influence.

As the duration of an Adventure can take a varying length of time, it is up to the GM to apply penalties (if any) to the participants in zoomed-out play. This could be taking an action for all the participants to assemble at the location and explore the dungeon for a week, then return home. It could be an extra payment in Wealth/Influence as a faction is mis-managed by their courtiers in their absence.

The cost, risks, and rewards of an Adventure are all up to the GM.

Deny Network

A sovereign may suspend a target network running through one of their counties.

Either owner of a shared trade network may also suspend it if they wish.

Regardless of the method, Deny Network may cause a Relationship loss between the faction using this free action and the network owner(s). Of course, other diplomatic or military responses are possible too.

A sovereign may stop Deny Network at any time.

Drop a Claim

This allows a faction to cease their claim on a county. This could be due to a diplomatic treaty, a token gesture, or to prevent future hostility.

If Drop a Claim leaves an unowned county with only one faction claiming it, they will become the sovereign after a season as long as no one else claims it.

Hire Advisor

A faction may hire a new advisor. This costs 1 ● and 1 ◆ per the advisor's faction skill plus an additional 1 ● and 1 ◆ if that advisor is a spellcaster.

Factions may only have one advisor of each type. Should you wish to improve the faction skill of a currently employed advisor type, you can fire the current advisor and immediately hire a better candidate in their place.

Note that you will need to pay their hiring cost each season during the Paying Expenses step, but the extra action that advisors enable may be worth that cost.

Hold a Festival

For as long as there have been people in power, they have realized the importance of keeping the population content. If a county suffers from low Loyalty, a leader may want to bribe the locals with Hold a Festival. This could be a jousting tournament, a local holiday, putting on plays, or other festivities.

Regardless of the method, this allows a leader to target a county and spend Wealth to increase the success of that county's Loyalty roll at the start of the next season.

Spending 5 ● grants a bonus of +10 to the Loyalty roll; this cannot be used multiple times in the same county in one season.

Reduce Relationships

A leader may choose to lower their Official or Personal Relationship with another faction in response to a threat, attack, or insult.

Increasing Official and Personal Relationships is a lot harder to do, so use this wisely.

Resume Network

An owner of a suspended network may resume it if there are no reasons for it to be suspended any longer. A sovereign may stop Deny Network (you can ask through a Diplomacy action), a war may have ended, or the owner may move the source or destination of the network to avoid the reason for suspension (Modify Network action).

Share Information

Information can make or break a faction's ability to respond to or predict rival's moves. The action performer and what action they're performing is always known to factions who can affect the roll in any way.

Conversely, any faction that modifies an action roll is known to all other factions involved in that action. This is particularly important to actions with the asset, Order, or resource modifier.

The only exceptions to this are Espionage actions, though the GM has the final say on when the true origin of an action or modifier is known. Later Espionage actions can help to discover this.

If a faction wishes to share information they have with another faction, they can do so as a free action. How long that information takes to get to its recipient is up to the GM, though the standard travelling time of ten counties a week, assuming good weather, is a good guideline. A lone horseback courier with an important piece of information can turn the tides of war.

Trade Imprint Bonuses

Culture Factions may use Trade Imprint Bonuses as a free action. They can trade the Imprint Bonus to either:

- Another faction who has an asset in the same county as the Culture Faction
- The sovereign of the county in which the Culture Faction's asset is located

Imprint Bonuses are usually traded as part of a Diplomatic Agreement, as their effect of adding a bonus to any action roll is valuable to all leaders.

Faction Actions

Action Roll: The process of determining the success or failure of a faction action.

1d20: A 20-sided die.

Difficulty Class: The target you are trying to equal or beat with your action roll.

DC: Abbreviation of Difficulty Class.

Base DC: The starting difficulty of an action. The lower the Base DC, the easier the action is. An equal or higher result wins the action.

Free Action: An action performed during your turn that does not consume an action.

Action Shorthand

For every action, the faction skill, the Difficulty Class and the initial cost will be listed as such:

[Action Target, Faction Type, Base DC, Base Cost (●)|Base Cost (◆)]

Other action-specific modifiers may be present and will be mentioned in the beginning of that action's description.

If any section of the shorthand is marked by a dash (–) then the action does not have this requirement/cost. In sections marked as "varies," read the description of the action to find out more.

Target

"County" means that the action targets a specific county or an asset in a county. In order to perform this action, you must have at least one asset in the county or be the sovereign.

Faction Type

When an action roll is required, it will always be based on a faction type: Order, Faith, Trade, Magic, or Culture. The leader or advisor who is performing the action can add their relevant faction skill to their action roll.

Base DC

This is the base Difficulty Class (DC) for the action roll.

Base Cost (●)

The minimum cost in Wealth Points (●) of taking this action.

Base Cost (◆)

The minimum cost in Influence Points (◆) of taking this action.

Making Action Rolls

Many actions require action rolls to attempt. Once the action is decided, the active character rolls 1d20, adding any modifiers as described in the action as well as the action modifiers below. If the total equals or is above the target DC, the action is a success. If not, the action is a failure.

What happens on a success or failure is entirely up to the specific action and may require the GM to describe exactly what occurs.

A critical success (rolling a 20 on the die) for an action roll is always a success, regardless of modifiers. The action went so well that the character immediately gains 1 ◆ if they are a leader. There may be other benefits from this successful action, which is up to the GM to decide.

Conversely, a critical failure (rolling a 1 on the die) for an action roll is always a failure. The action has gone awry in an unpredictable fashion. The GM may decide to impose other effects of this failed action.

Action Modifiers

If a modifier shows (restricted) then only the sovereign and owners of assets matching the action's type in that county can be used. If the modifier shows (restricted + Order) then the above applies, but owners of any Order Assets in the county may also contribute.

Each individual action may have action modifiers that affect the action roll.

Actions that require an action roll may also use the modifiers below:

Faction Skill Modifier

The leader or advisor performing the action can add their faction skill of the same type to the roll.

Asset Modifier

When a leader performs an action, they must choose an asset they control in the county where the action takes place.

If the leader does not own an asset in the target county, they cannot perform this action in that county. An exception to this is the county's sovereign – they can use the action as if they had a single level 0 asset in that county. The Create Asset Action (see below) is also an exception to this rule.

The leader performing the action gains a +1 modifier per level of the applicable asset.

Other leaders who own assets of the same type in the target county can offer their assistance, granting a +1 bonus per level of their asset, or try to oppose the acting leader for a -1 penalty per level of their asset.

Aiding and opposing fellow leaders is a good way to improve Relationships or restrict your rivals.

Order Modifier

Some actions depend on the goodwill of the sovereign ruling the land in which the action is performed. For those actions, the sovereign can choose to apply a modifier to help or hinder the acting character. The modifier is equal to the sovereign's Order Asset level in the county.

If an asset was used for the asset modifier of an action, it cannot be used again for the Order modifier.

Loyalty Modifier

The Loyalty of the county where the action takes place towards the acting faction greatly influences the chances of success:

Table II-20: Loyalty Modifier Table

Loyalty	Action Modifier
Loyal	+3
Cooperative	+1
Aligned	No bonus
Unfavorable	-5
Hostile	-10

Resource Modifier

The active character may spend Wealth (●) and/or Influence (◆) to increase the chances of success. Some actions may allow only one of these resources to be used.

Each Wealth and/or Influence spent provides a +1 bonus but must be decided upon before the die is rolled.

The sovereign of the county where the action takes place and any leader who has an asset in the target county can bid resources to support or to oppose the action. Each 1 ● or 1 ◆ spent either provides a +1 bonus, or a -1 penalty, depending on whether the bidding leader is trying to help or hinder.

Bidding resources is performed in reverse initiative order. There is no limit to how many resources can be spent and the bidding continues until no leader bids additional resources.

Once all resources have been spent, the action roll is performed. No resources are returned regardless of the roll's outcome.

Leaders are unlimited in spending resources on a resource modifier but advisors may only spend Wealth and Influence up to their faction skill level. For example: an advisor with faction skill (Magic) 2 may only spend up to 2 ● and up to 2 ◆ for a resource modifier when they are the active character.

> ***Example:*** *House Dressan owns a Trade ⓪ in Sevybeth and is trying to Enhance it. Enhancing a Trade is an action with the Trade Type and the resource modifier is (restricted).*
>
> *This means that only other owners of Trade Assets in Sevybeth, such as The Nosdram Family and the sovereign, Cadelania, may spend resources to modify House Dressan's roll.*

Relationship

This only applies to the Diplomacy action. The Personal Relationship between two factions grants a modifier to any roll made between them.

Faction Action List

Build *[County, -, -, Varies]*

Modifiers: *None (Build does not require an action roll).*

The leader or advisor initiates a building project. There are two types of Build projects: Constructions and Navy.

This action is commonly taken by advisors due to the lack of an action roll.

Build Construction

Each construction level must be completed before the next can be attempted. You cannot build a level 2 fortification in a county until that county has a level 1 fortification.

The cost of the construction must be paid before the construction begins. A construction will also require months equal to its cost before it is finished. However, constructions only require an action to be initiated. Once started, no further actions are required.

The building cost must be multiplied by the target level of the construction. For instance, moving Prestige from 2 to 3 will cost 12 ● (3 * 4).

OWNERSHIP OF CONSTRUCTIONS

Constructions are always owned by the sovereign of a county and while normally built by sovereigns, they can also be built by leaders.

For a leader to build or upgrade a construction in a county, they must have the permission of the sovereign. When the construction is completed, ownership of it passes to the sovereign, who will then pay maintenance for it.

Table II-21: Construction Build & Maintenance Costs

Construction Type	Build Cost	Maintenance Cost per Season
Connections	1	1 per 3 levels in your realm
Fortifications	2	1 per level
Prestige	4	1 per level
Seafaring	2 (also requires a coastline in the county)	1 per 3 levels in your realm

Build Navy

Naval units are ordered using the same action. These must be built in a county with a minimum seafaring of 2 (3 for warships), and take one or more seasons to complete based upon the following table.

Table II-22: Ship Construction Time

Ship Cost (Co Rating)	Construction Time (Seasons)
1-4	1
5-8	2
9-12	3
13+	4

Ships are paid for before their construction begins and they become available at the beginning of their season of completion.

If a county is conquered by another realm before a naval unit is complete, the conquering force can choose to destroy any ships under construction or pay a portion of their cost equal to the percentage of time remaining before completion to continue construction as normal. On completion, the conquering power will control the naval unit.

Create an Asset *[-, Varies, DC 10, 0 /0]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Order, Loyalty, Resource.*

Creating a new asset is relatively simple: purchasing a business, hiring workers, or posting a few long-term scouts will result in a level 0 asset being created. The type created is entirely up to the active character and there does not need to be room for this asset to exist.

Level 0 assets serve two main purposes – a way to enable county-targeting actions in that county or to potentially enhance to higher levels for income and Influence.

While level 0 assets cost 0 / as their base cost, this increases by 1 and 1 for each county the target is away from your current assets. This makes creating a new asset locally quite cheap, but creating it far away will be expensive.

Any asset created not of the faction's type will cost double the Wealth and Influence to create.

For particularly distant asset creation, the GM may require the leader to travel to that county first or succeed an Adventure to found the asset.

> ***Example:*** *Jisha has his eyes on dabbling in Magic. He realizes the first step is to create a Magic Asset. He targets a county where he has no assets – Legobeth. Legobeth is only one county away from his nearest asset in Sevybeth, so this costs 1 and 1 .*
>
> *Jisha's faction, House Dressan, is a Trade Faction, so the Wealth and Influence cost is doubled for creating an asset not of his faction's type.*
>
> *Unfortunately for Jisha, the sovereign of Legobeth takes exception to this action and uses their Order 1 to try to prevent the creation of the asset for a -1 penalty.*

Create Network *[County, Varies, DC 10, Varies]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Order, Resource (restricted).*

This action includes the creation of all types of networks (see **page 29**).

The skill type for this action depends on the type of connection being created: Faith for pilgrimage, Magic for ley line, Culture for cultural link, and Trade for trade route.

The cost to create a new network is 1 and 1 per crossed county, excluding the county of origin but including the destination county.

The base DC for creating a new network is 10.

Each leader who controls an asset of that network's type in a county crossed by the new network may spend resources to support or oppose its creation.

> ***Example:*** *The Northwest Mages Society decides to create a ley line that would connect its asset in Druweth to its asset in Haegord's Dale. The two counties are adjacent so the cost to connect both counties will only be 1 and 1 .*

The base DC is 10. The leader of the Northwest Mages Society has a faction skill (Magic) of +2. He also decides to spend 3 ● for an additional +3 bonus to his roll. He rolls a 5, for a total of 10 and only just manages to create the ley line.

Diplomacy *[-, Culture, Varies, 1 ●]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Resource, Relationship.*

Diplomacy is a multifaceted tool for a clever leader. Diplomacy can be to improve one faction's Relationship with another, secure permission to march armed units across a sovereign's land, or get a rival to stop interfering in your affairs. It can be used to set up non-aggression treaties, joint defense agreements, or a simple ceasefire.

Diplomacy can technically be used for any purpose the GM and players see fit. Do not be afraid to ask for what you want, though be careful how you ask. Not every leader will take a rude request without a suitable response.

A Diplomacy action allows the active character to ask another leader (known as the recipient) if they would be willing to meet. This request happens as part of the Diplomacy action. If the recipient refuses to meet, the request can be sweetened by paying more Wealth. Both leaders must agree on a location to hold the meeting. This is usually at the recipient's seat of power.

Once the meeting is agreed, this action grants enough spare time for a court to travel for one week (four counties) in each direction in addition to attending the Diplomatic visit. On arrival, Wealth used to secure the meeting is transferred from the active character to the recipient.

Each petition during the Diplomatic visit requires a separate action roll and has a set Difficulty Class based on the proposal. A failure on this roll usually means that the gift is accepted to no result or hollow promises. A particularly bad action roll may result in the diplomat being expelled from the court they are visiting, ending the Diplomacy action.

Multiple petitions may be made during a single visit unless the acting character is expelled. Expelling a diplomatic visitor effectively ends the action and can be performed at any time during the Diplomacy action by the recipient.

Only the acting leader can spend Wealth and/or Influence to lower the DC of each petition.

The court level of each faction involved is used to modify the roll as either faction sees fit.

A prestige construction at the location of the Diplomacy action aids or hinders any Diplomacy rolls here, depending on how the sovereign of that construction wishes to use it.

Example: *Cadelania is visited by Jisha of House Dressan for a Diplomacy action. As Princess Severina is currently away leading her army, her advisor is acting in her place. Princess Severina left instructions for the advisor to decide in her stead, but the GM decides to treat Cadelania as an NPC for this action.*

Jisha and his court ask for financial aid due to the recent economic pressure in the area. His court level of 2 and his Culture skill of 1 gives him a +3 to his roll. Unfortunately, the prestige construction level 1 in the location is used to reduce this, so Jisha only adds +2 to his roll.

Jisha's Personal Relationship with Princess Severina is cooperative, which would normally give a +1 bonus, but the GM rules that as the princess is away it does not apply.

Jisha sensibly realizes the folly of spending resources to gain Wealth so doesn't spend any for the resource modifier. Neither does Cadelania's advisor. The GM says the difficulty is 15, and Jisha rolls… a 20!

Jisha immediately gains 1 ◆ for a natural 20 roll and his request succeeds. The GM decides that the advisor is thoroughly impressed with the argument put forward and gives House Dressan 5 ● from Cadelania's treasury.

Princess Severina may not be happy when she gets back!

Grand Diplomacy

If Diplomacy is typically when the active character wants to visit another faction for a one-on-one discussion, then Grand Diplomacy is trying to get multiple factions to come to you.

The active character begins this action by sending out letters of invitation and preparing feasts, events, tournaments, and fairs to entertain their guests. The active character is known as the host and must decide how many months until the Grand Diplomacy occurs. This action requires that their court be at their seat of power and ensures that the active character will attend.

Any faction may be invited to attend, regardless of the host's relationship with them. It is possible to "tempt" people to attend who might not otherwise with outright bribery of Wealth or promises of negotiating a certain deal with them.

For each faction invited this action costs 1 ◆ whether they choose to attend or not.

Factions who accept the invitation must travel to the host's seat of power. Grand Diplomacy cannot be conducted at any other location. It is up to each invited faction to travel to the host's seat of power themselves using a combination of Traveling and/or the Diplomacy action.

A Grand Diplomacy event typically lasts for two weeks for the purposes of Traveling. Any faction who doesn't have an advisor/ leader at the host's seat of power by the end of the month when the action takes place is unable to attend.

Example: *Princess Severina of Cadelania uses the Grand Diplomacy action to invite the following factions to her seat of power in Lightborne: House Dressan, The Northwest Mages Society, and The Guild of Fine Arts. This costs Cadelania 3 ◆.*

She decides that the event will be held at the end of the season. As this is her first seasonal action, each other faction has two (if they have initiative before her), or three (if they have initiative after her) actions to attend.

House Dressan's court is currently in Lightborne, so while it takes no time to travel there, they will still need to use the Diplomacy action to attend the event. They use an advisor's action to attend the event so send one of their advisors instead of their leader along with their court. Their Diplomacy at the event will use their advisor's Culture skill level.

The Northwest Mages Society declines the invitation, citing their relationship with Kedohaw as a conflict of interest.

The Guild of Fine Arts is currently holding court at Lautrem in Leanad. This is two counties away and although a river separates Lautrem and Rhilaria on the way, there are enough connections in both counties to allow travel across the river.

In a later seasonal action, The Guild of Fine Arts uses a Diplomacy action to attend. Traveling with the court (see **page 50***), they can cross two counties per week. Their Diplomacy action then uses one week to get there, two weeks to participate, and the remaining week to return home.*

If the distance was any longer, then The Guild of Fine Arts would have to use a Traveling action followed by a Diplomacy action to attend!

Although attending someone's Grand Diplomacy event costs an action to attend (at least one Diplomacy action is required to attend), the event is usually worth this action as you are able to perform Diplomacy with multiple other leaders at the typical cost of one action.

At the end of the month set for the Grand Diplomacy, any factions in the county are able to participate in the Grand Diplomacy.

Grand Diplomacy is a huge event where all participants are able to perform as many diplomatic meetings with as many other participating factions as they wish. Multi-faction alliances, military coalitions, promises of protection, threats, or simply as many one-on-one Diplomacy actions with different leaders as they see fit – these are the true value of a Grand Diplomacy event.

You may wish to host Grand Diplomacy events to facilitate an important story point in the running of your faction such as the coming of age of your heir or an important political marriage. Just bear in mind there is always the potential for disagreements between factions to escalate into fights in the halls or even full blown war.

The influx of important powers and the economy their courts bring to the area helps rejuvenate the area and populace.

For each other faction's court attending a Grand Diplomacy, the host will get a +5 bonus to their seat of power's Loyalty roll in the following season.

Uses of Diplomacy

There are three suggested uses of Diplomacy below, but it is up to the GM and the players to decide how complicated or simple Diplomacy actions become.

Relationships

Relationships between leaders, good or bad, affect Diplomatic actions. Each leader has an Official and a Personal Relationship towards the other leaders. These attitudes are identical to the Loyalty levels: Loyal, Cooperative, Aligned, Unfavorable, and Hostile.

As part of a Diplomacy action, leaders may alter their Personal and/or their Official Relationships with each other, though they must be in agreement. Reducing Relationships can also happen during Diplomacy actions.

The Official Relationship between two factions does not affect Diplomatic actions. It simply sends other leaders the image of the relationship that their two leaders want to give to the outside world. However, the relationship between a leader and a sovereign can help with the Loyalty of that county. Official Relationships are always public knowledge.

The Personal Relationship between the two leaders is normally kept secret and has the following effect on any Diplomatic action between two leaders:

Want to know the Personal Relationship between two leaders? The Espionage faction action allows you to discover it.

Table II-23: Diplomacy Personal Relationship Bonus

Personal Relationship between the Leaders	Diplomacy Action Bonus
Loyal	+2
Cooperative	+1
Aligned	0
Unfavorable	-1
Hostile	-2

Treaties

One of the goals of a Diplomatic action could be to convince another sovereign to sign a treaty. In a world where honor is still considered of very high value, having a signed treaty constitutes one of the best guarantees a leader can get.

There are typically four types of treaty:

- **Alliance:** The two parties swear to come to aid to each other in case of an external aggression.
- **Pact of Non-Aggression:** The two parties swear not to declare war on each other.
- **Right of Passage:** The two sovereigns allow military units to cross each other's territory.
- **Truce:** The two sovereigns agree on a ceasefire for a limited or unlimited duration.

Feel free to create your own types of treaty. A good suggestion would be to ensure a sovereign does not disrupt your network through their lands or they will suffer the same consequences as breaking any other treaty.

Nothing forces a sovereign to respect a treaty. However, breaking a treaty has consequences. The treaty-breaker immediately loses 10 ◆ and both Official and Personal Relationships with the scorned leader become unfavorable or hostile (GM's choice). Other leaders have their Personal Relationships to the treaty-breaker decreased by one level. If the treaty-breaker has less than 10 ◆ to lose, they instead lose 1 Reputation.

Treaties can always be ended without penalty by the mutual consent of both factions as part of a later Diplomacy action or by one faction giving enough notice that the treaty will end. How long "enough notice" is depends on the GM.

Embassies

Given a successful Diplomacy action with a DC of 15, a leader can establish an embassy in a sovereign's realm. An embassy has a maintenance cost of 1 ● per season but grants a +2 bonus to all Diplomatic actions in that realm.

Example: *Lena Blackcrown, the sovereign of Prokoth, would like to cross the realm of Derarin with her army to come to the aid of Qomas in its struggle with the orcish incursions of Migoch. Therefore, she travels with her court to Derarin's capital to negotiate a right of passage. Considering that it is also in Derarin's best interest to fight against those incursions, the GM decides that the complexity of those negotiations will be fairly low and set the DC to 15.*

The court level of Prokoth is 4 and Lena does not benefit from any prestige bonus since she is travelling outside of her seat of power. As Derarin's court is one level lower than hers at level 3, Lena gains a +1 bonus to her roll from her more impressive court. Lena additionally has bought a skill bonus (Culture) of +1.

While the official relationship between Prokoth and Derarin is "aligned," it is the Personal Relationship that is taken into account and as it is "unfavorable," there is a -1 penalty to the action roll.

Lena decides that this matter is important enough to justify spending some extra Wealth in various gifts, hoping this will "sweeten the deal." Lena pays the initial 1 ● and spends an additional 3 ● to give her a further +3 to her roll; the total bonus now stands at +4.

Luckily, she rolls a 11 and with her +4 bonus, meets the DC of 15 by the skin of her teeth. Derarin's sovereign agrees to open his borders and let Prokoth's army through… for now.

Edict *[-, -, -, 1 ●]*

Modifiers: *None (Edict does not require an* action roll).

The leader issues a command, setting the faction's agenda. This can be used to create vassals or heirs, declare war, or change the court level. There is generally no action roll needed for an Edict, but unpopular decisions can have later repercussions. The cost of announcing an Edict is 1 ●.

Beyond this, you can use Edicts for other reasons. What you can do with an Edict, how much it may cost, and what effect the Edict has is always up to the GM.

Declare War

This allows a leader to declare a formal war against another faction. Invading or conquering a faction with military force without first Declaring War could have severe political repercussions.

Invading without first declaring formal war should have a similar effect as breaking a Diplomatic treaty: the warmonger immediately loses 10 ◆ and both Official and Personal Relationships with their target's leader changes to hostile. Other leaders have their Personal Relationships with the invader decreased by one level.

Remember to check for any alliance treaties – there may be subsequent Declarations of War in response!

Staking a Claim

Staking a Claim can be a very useful tool for creating diplomatic intrigue. In our history, wars between great nations have been fought over the right to own a piece of land, regardless of how valid that claim is or how great the distance from that nation's seat of power.

The Edict action can be used by a faction to declare to the known world that they believe a certain county should be theirs. This is typically performed to claim ownership of newly discovered lands as revealed by the GM. Those lands may have natives or other difficulties with developing assets there, but that is entirely up to the GM to decide.

If a county is uninhabited or the locals who live there cannot offer any tangible resistance, then simply being the only faction to Claim a county for an entire season means that faction will own the county and rule as its sovereign from then on.

As Staking a Claim is public knowledge, other interested factions will have an entire season to react in kind. Should this happen, then a faction can either conquer it with a military force (following conquest rules on **page 79**) or convince the other contenders to drop their claim.

If there is any local non-civilized opposition (such as hordes of undead or hostile megafauna) or it is already owned by another sovereign, you will need to conquer it as normal. Staking a Claim only declares your intent to own the county and having a Claim to a county may make a later Declaration of War more acceptable to third parties.

Claims can only be removed willingly by the faction that has the Claim. Some Claims to counties can go back generations from previous wars while others are made up with scant legal evidence.

Seize a County

With the Edict action, a conquered county becomes owned by the faction controlling the conquering army. The previous sovereign removes the county from their Realm Sheet and the new sovereign adds it to theirs.

This is the most direct way for a leader to become a sovereign, though requires the sovereign to not be able to react in time before the aggressor's army can hold it for a season. If the land has no sovereign (due to it being a wild frontier land or the previous sovereign dying with no successor), this is much easier.

Seizing ownership of a county may cause outrage in the diplomatic community if it was aggressively taken, especially if the new owner had no Claim or justifiable reason.

Enhance a County *[County, Order, DC 10, 1 ●/1 ◆]*

Modifiers: *Loyalty.*

This action is an attempt to increase the level of a county by 1. This is usually done by the sovereign of the county, but can be performed by any leader; the only restriction is the faction taking this action must have an asset there. The sovereign cannot stop this from happening nor should they want to - they will reap the rewards of having a higher level county the next season.

Enhance a County has an initial cost of 1 ● and 1 ◆ and an additional number of Wealth and Influence equal to the current county level. For example, upgrading a level 3 county to a level 4 county costs 4 ● and 4 ◆.

The DC is 10 + the current county level. Unlike assets, Wealth and Influence cannot be spent to support or oppose this action roll and the acting leader does not benefit from any faction skill bonus. The Enhance a County action can only be performed once per season in the same county. However, the acting character benefits from a cumulative +1 bonus to their roll for each unsuccessful attempt. This bonus disappears as soon as the county is successfully enhanced.

It is recommended to mark a county on your Faction Sheet with a * for each unsuccessful attempt to Enhance it. This makes it easier to remember your cumulative failure bonus for the next attempt.

Example: *Princess Severina, sovereign of Kiethien ❷, attempts Enhance the County. The target DC is 10 + the county's current level. In this case the target DC is 12.*

Princess Severina cannot add her faction skill (Order) bonus, as the only modifier is Loyalty. Kiethien is currently cooperative which gives her a +1 bonus to the roll.

She tried to enhance Kiethien last season but failed, though a +1 bonus is granted for every attempt until it succeeds.

Rolling a 13 and adding her +1 modifier from Kiethien's Loyalty in addition to the +1 cumulative failure bonus is enough to generate a success. The county of Kiethien is now level 3 and Severina marks her Faction Sheet accordingly.

The asset owners and neighboring rivals are eyeing the new possibilities to expand in Kiethien – the balance of power there may shift very soon.

Enhance an Asset *[County, Varies, DC 10, Varies]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Asset, Order, Loyalty, Resource (restricted).*

Enhance an Asset attempts to increase an existing asset's level by 1 and costs a number of Wealth and Influence equal to the new asset level.

If the faction's asset type is of a different type than the asset being enhanced, the cost is doubled.

The skill modifier for successfully upgrading an asset depends on the type of asset. For instance, enhancing an Order Asset would make this action have the Order skill modifier. This means that the active character's faction skill of Order would apply (if any).

The DC is 10 + the current asset level. Successfully enhancing an asset increases its level by one.

The asset modifier is not applicable for the acting leader but is applicable for leaders who wish to support or oppose the action. All leaders with an asset in the county can spend resources to support or oppose the check.

Example: *Cadelania owns an Order ❶ in Chilidric ❸. Princess Severina decides to try to enhance this asset to level 2. This will cost a minimum of 2 ● and 2 ◆, as the asset would be enhanced to Level 2 (if successful).*

The DC for this action is equal to 10 + the asset's current level, which makes the DC 11.

Princess Severina's faction skill (Order) is +3. She also gains a +1 for having an Order ❶ in that county thanks to the Order modifier. Unfortunately, the Loyalty of Chilidric is currently unfavorable, which gives a large -5 penalty. This gives an overall modifier to her action roll of -1.

As there are no other Order owners in the county, she doesn't have to worry about other leaders contributing (or hindering) her attempts. She could spend more Wealth or Influence to improve her odds of success, but chooses not to.

She rolls 1d20 and gets 11. Subtracting her action roll modifier of -1, her result is 10. Unfortunately, this is lower than the target DC of 11. The action is a failure and the asset does not increase. The 2 ● and 2 ◆ used in the attempt are still spent – the princess may try again in a following action.

Espionage *[-, Trade, Varies, 1 ●]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Asset, Order, Loyalty, Resource.*

This action is used to engage in spying above and beyond normal information gathering or to make a deliberate effort to hide information or spread misinformation.

After spending 1 ● and taking an action, the leader makes the action roll. The DC is based on the difficulty to gather the requested information. The level of the Trade Asset of the acting leader decreases the DC. If there are any Order Assets in the county, their leader can choose to use their level as a bonus or a penalty to the roll. The acting leader can spend Wealth and/or Influence to lower the DC.

Given the secretive nature of Espionage, the GM may wish to prevent anyone other than the active character from contributing to the resource modifier.

Table II-24: Espionage Actions

Examples of Espionage Actions	DC
Gather rumors and common information (see below).	5
Learn the military troops and their owners present in a foreign county.	10
Discover attributes of a county (asset owners, constructions, Loyalty, etc.).	15
Establish a surveillance network (see below) -or- Destroy a known surveillance network. *	15
Reveal the Personal Relationship between two leaders.	20
Conceal an Infighting action (see below) -or- Reveal the true culprit behind an Infighting action.	20
Reveal the active treaties between two factions.	25
Ensure the next trade route created is illegal -or- Make a current/suspended trade route illegal -or- Reveal illegal trade routes that pass through a specific county.	25
Sabotage a construction (reduces its level by 1). *	30
Plan an assassination, corruption, or other covert operation in a county (effects up to the GM). *	30 +

** Aggressive actions can result in a loss of relationship at best or a declaration of war at worst.*

Example: *Before Blessed Archive of Theological Literature decides to initiate a campaign of infighting against The Devotional Artists Guild, it chooses to try and conceal the action with Espionage. The leader pays the initial cost of 1 ●. The base DC for this action is 20. Blessed Archive of Theological Literature does not control any Trade asset in the county and therefore does not benefit from any asset bonus. The leader of the Blessed Archive of Theological Literature has a skill bonus of +2. The Loyalty of the county towards him is "aligned" and grants no bonus/penalty. He decides to spend 3 ● and 3 ◆ for an additional +6 bonus to his roll. He rolls a 13 and thanks to his skill bonus and to his resource bonus, his next Infighting action will be concealed. If the Infighting action is successful, he will then be able to blame another faction for his misdeed!*

Gather Rumors and Common Information

A leader can seek to uncover a secret: whispered on the tongues of commoners, discussed in shady corners of inns, or simple hearsay. While lesser forms of Espionage are covered in this action, a successful action roll can alert the leader to any diplomatic talks involving the target faction, any network in a county, let them uncover the location of a specific character, or provide the GM with a way to establish a new hook or plot point in the game.

Conceal an Infighting Action

The leader can use Espionage to conceal Infighting actions. If the leader succeeds in an Espionage action before making a successful Infighting action, they can then either direct blame to a third party of their choice or to no-one in particular. If blame is directed to a third party, any loss of Relationship is directed at them until the true culprit is revealed.

A failure means that the next Infighting action will be common knowledge, but the attempt to conceal it can be attempted again in a later action as long as the concealment is done before the Infighting.

Establish a Surveillance Network

Given a successful Espionage action with a DC of 15, a leader can establish a surveillance network in a sovereign's realm. It has a maintenance cost of 1 ● per season but grants a +2 bonus to all Espionage actions in that realm. A surveillance network can be discovered and dismantled thanks to a rival's action of Espionage.

Infighting *[County, Varies, DC 10, 1 ●/1 ◆]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Asset (restricted + Order), Loyalty, Resource (restricted + Order).*

Leaders can often find themselves under political attack. Dark rumors, trade embargoes, agitation amongst the lower ranks of a faction, and petty snipes from the sovereign's officials can all add up to reduce the power of a faction.

The active character first chooses a target asset in the same county as one of their own assets. Leaders can normally only target an asset of the same type as one of their assets in the target's county, unless the active character's own asset is an Order Asset – these can target any asset type.

Initiating a campaign of Infighting costs 1 ● and 1 ◆ + 1 ◆ per level of the target asset. The base DC is 10 + the level of the target asset.

If the defender loses, the campaign is successful and the Infighting reduces the target asset's level by 1. If the active character beat their DC by 10 or more, the target asset loses an additional level. If the asset is reduced below level 0, it is destroyed.

The asset and resource modifier is limited to owners of assets of the same type as the target. Owners of Order Assets can always aid/inhibit Infighting actions made in their county regardless of target asset type.

Leaders seeking to gain the benefits of Infighting while ignoring the cost of their misdeeds can use an Espionage action to hide their involvement. This must be performed in advance.

Reducing the level of an asset or destroying it is comparable to an act of war and can have devastating diplomatic consequences. Loss of Relationship between the involved factions is the lightest escape in this situation.

Example: *The Deathworkers Guild's response to The Guild of Fine Arts' latest insult is to initiate a campaign of Infighting against them using their newly established Culture 0 in Kiethien. The Deathworkers Guild pays the initial cost of 1 ● and 1 ◆ + 2 ◆ (the level of the targeted asset).*

The base DC is 10 + the level of the targeted asset 2.

The Leader of The Deathworkers Guild has a skill bonus (Culture) of +3. The Loyalty of the county towards him is "aligned" so grants no bonus/penalty. The Deathworker's Guild's Culture 0 does not add any bonuses to the roll but Cadelania chooses to aid the roll using their Order 1 for a further +1.

The roll is a 12, adding modifiers results in 16, which is enough to succeed at the action and the target asset is reduced by one level. Should the result have been 22 or higher, then the target asset would have lost two levels!

Modify Network *[County, Varies, DC 10, Varies]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Order, Resource (restricted).*

It is possible to extend, shorten, or simply move an existing network. To do this, a faction must already have an existing network. This allows the owner to change either the destination or the origin of the network.

A common use of this is to resume a network that became suspended due to a sovereign using the Deny Network free action.

The roll is the same as attempting to create a network except the cost only applies to the difference between the old network's length and the new. In the case of shortening an existing network, this will not provide a refund.

If the Modify Network action roll fails, the network remains as it previously was: source, destination, and whether it is suspended or not.

Example: *The Northwest Mages Society decides to modify the ley line it created above, keeping the origin in Druweth but moving the destination to Aseacia.*

This new route would be two counties apart and the previous route was one county in length. This means the cost of modifying the network is 1 ● and 1 ◆, though they will need to roll with the modifiers to successfully alter their network.

Muster *[County, -, -, Varies]*

Modifiers: *None (Muster does not require an action roll).*

A Muster action allows a faction to produce military units in a single county. The total number of units Mustered in a county each season may not exceed that county's level. Additionally, a faction can only muster units with a cost lower or equal to twice the level of their Order Asset in the county or lower or equal to the level of any other type of asset they own in the county.

A leader who is not the sovereign of the county should ask for permission from the sovereign to Muster units there. If they do not obtain permission, the Personal and Official Relationships between the two factions drops one level. The sovereign may choose further responses on their turn, such as Declaring War.

Propaganda *[Asset, Faith, DC 10, 1 ● / 1 ◆]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Asset, Order, Loyalty, Resource.*

By taking the Propaganda action, a leader can make a Faith action roll to raise or lower the Loyalty of the county towards themselves or any other leader by one level.

The initial cost is 1 ● and 1 ◆ and the base DC is 10 + the total of Order Asset levels in the county.

Example: *The Path of Clear Skies, a Faith Faction, tries to lower the Loyalty of Alawyth, a county in the Realm of Ocia, towards the Defenders of Ceres, another Faith Faction present in the county. The Archpriest Ulgem Kestruim pays the initial cost of 1 ● and 1 ◆. The base DC is 10 + 1 (the total of Order levels in the county).*

Ulgem has a faction skill (Faith) of 2 for a bonus of +2. The Faith 2 of the archpriest lowers the DC by 2. The Defenders of Ceres's Faith is level 0 and thus cannot increase the DC.

No factions decide to spend additional resources. Ulgem rolls a 13 for a total of 15 vs a DC of 9. The Loyalty of the population towards the Defenders of Ceres goes from "aligned" to "unfavorable".

Spellcraft *[Varies, Varies, Varies, Varies]*

Modifiers: *Skill, Asset.*

The leader spends time in seclusion, researching magic and refining their spells. If the character can enchant objects, engage in ritual magic, or cast countywide magic, they may use this action to do this. A leader who wishes to learn a new Realm Spell does so using this action, making a Magic (Arcana Magic) or Faith (Divine Magic) action roll and paying 1 ● in research materials per spell level (see *Chapter 4: Realm Magic*).

Traveling *[-, -, -, -]*

Modifiers: *None (Traveling does not require an action roll).*

Many activities require Traveling and crossing great distances can take up a considerable amount of time. Reasons to Travel might be long-distance state visits, an Adventure in a faraway land, or escaping a war.

Here are some indications on the distances the leaders can travel per week depending on their means of transportation and the size of their equipage.

Distances traveled assume normal weather and terrain. The GM may reduce these speeds if the weather or terrain affect travel speeds:

Table II-25: Travelling Distances

Conditions	Distance
Alone (horseback)	10 counties / week
Alone (on foot)	4 counties / week
Military Escort	6 counties / week
With the Court	2 counties / week
Inland waterway (riverboat)	8 counties / week
Navigation at sea (ship)	16 areas / week

Example: *Jisha of House Dressan has heard rumors of foreign islands to the west with strange languages and stranger produce. He decides to go on an Adventure to learn more, but the GM requires him Travel approximately 20 areas beyond the end of his maps. This would take Jisha two weeks at 16 areas a week. Jisha hopes he can wrap up Travel there, learn about the islands for a month, then return home using another two weeks.*

Warfare *[-, -, -, -]*

Modifiers: *None (Warfare does not require an action roll).*

By using an action, the leader can marshal their forces and send them off to War as a strategic move (see *Chapter 3: Warfare*). This action includes sending a force to meet another on the field of battle or occupy an asset or county.

Occupation, warfare, and sacking are discussed in the *Warfare* chapter, but in general successful Warfare actions will lead to the defeated leader losing control of their asset or county. Often this will lead to the conqueror owning the county or pillaging the assets and reducing their levels, though the conflict can be quite protracted.

Optional Step: Challenges

Every leader is surrounded by happenstance and opportunity. Unplanned events occur infrequently but when they do occur, they have a habit of shaking up the status quo. The GM should use this table as inspiration, adding campaign-specific events to the chart and personalizing the events. Likewise, the GM should feel free to choose an event that takes the story in a direction they find interesting.

A challenge can be revealed to the players at any given moment – at the start of a season or even during a player's turn!

Resolving a Challenge

In many cases, a challenge can be resolved with a suitable action check. Making an action check requires spending an action, at which point the GM will decide on a suitable Difficulty Class (DC).

Unless specified otherwise, there is no modifier to this action check other than the character's relevant faction skill bonus.

The GM should listen to the player's planned method for resolving the challenge and base DC on the likelihood of the plan succeeding.

Table II-26: Random Challenge Table

Roll (1d20)	Challenge	Roll (1d20)	Challenge
1	Significant Occult Event	11	Judicial Matter
2	Assassination Plot	12	Rampaging Beast
3	Personal Challenge	13	Natural Disaster
4	Corruption	14	Trade Dispute
5	*Diplomatic Matter*	*15*	*Rebellion*
6	*Festival*	*16*	*Plague*
7	*Feud*	*17*	*Explosion*
8	*Rival*	*18*	*Foreign War*
9	*Intrigue*	*19*	*Discovery*
10	*Occult Event*	*20*	*End of an era*

1. Significant Occult Event

A universally-accepted omen occurs and warns of a natural ebb or flow of Arcana. Magicians with access to Arcana will find that over the course of the month, Arcana flows in an unusual manner. If the magician succeeds in a Magic skill test they can roll 1d6 and gain that much Arcana. Should this test fail, the magician will lose this much Arcana. If no test is made, the magician will lose 1 Arcana. In addition to this, an occult event occurs the month after the omen (see *Occult Event)*.

2. Assassination Plot

The leader comes under attack. This might be an attempted poisoning, a dagger in the dark, or even an attack by mercenaries disguised as courtiers. While the initial attack might be concluded as a single scene adventure, the GM should be prepared to put the campaign on hold while this is investigated and resolved. Will there be another attack? What is the true motivation for the attack? Does this reveal disharmony that was previously unknown?

3. Personal Challenge

Where an assassination plot involves secrecy and fatal intent, a personal challenge seeks to show that the leader is not as capable as they might let on. Challenges come in a variety of ways but almost always target places where the leader feels secure or where they have a hidden weak spot. Personal challenges must be answered or confidence in the leader will falter. This might lead an asset to lose a level or a county to lose a Loyalty grade.

4. Corruption

Corruption is uncovered in one of the leader's assets. This immediately costs the treasury 10% of its wealth. This might lead to an adventure where advisors must be investigated with the possible outcome of recovering part or all of the lost treasure.

5. Diplomatic Matters

An unexpected visit from an ambassador causes a whirlwind of activity across the faction. While the ambassador claims they have arrived to discuss a matter of import (military alliance, trade deal, or applying pressure on a third party), this is not necessarily the case. While diplomats engage in subtle negotiation, the court must be wary of spies and other plots. Engaging in diplomacy with the ambassador will cost an action, whether this is from the leader or one of their advisors. If the negotiation is successful after a Culture skill test, the ambassador will offer to attach himself as an Order or Trade advisor with a skill bonus of +2.

6. Festival

While it is rare for a month to pass without a small festival, this event indicates a major holiday. The leader must pay 1d6 ● to ensure that the festival is of suitable extravagance for the attendees. Attendees might include major nobility, senior clerics of a faith, numerous members of the petty nobility, and of course any entourages. The leader must spend their action interacting with these guests. Failure to impress, whether through a Culture or Order Skill test, will cause the leader to lose 5 ◆ and will cost a second action to make amends.

7. Feud

Two of the leader's advisors or senior associates are at each other's throats, perhaps literally. This disturbance temporarily reduces the level of one asset, chosen at random. Ignoring this rivalry will cost 5 ◆ as other rivalries start to emerge. Once the feud has been resolved, the asset's level will restore itself without the need for additional actions. Whether this challenge is solved through a skill test or a thorough investigation is up to the GM.

8. Rival

A pretender begins to gain greater Loyalty from the county than the sovereign. Civil discord costs all factions in the county 1d6 ● and causes trade routes to temporarily fail. If you are the sovereign, then the Loyalty of the county

drops by 1 level and you must spend 1 action to resolve this matter urgently. If the pretender is offered an advisory position, they will have to be persuaded into the role, where they can offer a +2 Order Skill bonus capability. Any lesser solution will be rejected unless it is suitably creative. Simply arresting or killing the pretender will cause the county's Loyalty to drop 2 more levels.

9. Intrigue

Rumors, both true and false, swirl around the faction. The leader can take an action and make a Trade Skill test to solve this challenge.

10. Occult Event

A strange occurrence threatens the county. The sovereign may choose to investigate themselves or simply command a leader to do it, but this occurrence is not one that can be left alone. This could be any spell of suitably high level, a series of summonings, or multiple signs of evil magic that cause an asset to fall to ruin. This should at the very least trigger an adventure for the PCs.

11. Judicial Matter

Whether sovereign or leader, those under your command will occasionally stray from the law. This legal matter is not a duty that can be lightly shirked; smaller matters will have already been subject to the attentions of your followers. Matters requiring the leader's attention include the theft of entire caravans of goods, the murder of citizens of status, or similarly weighty events.

If an action is not taken to resolve this matter, the sovereign will lose 1d6 ◆. If the leader can successfully construct a compromise that benefits and deprives all equally, they will gain 1d6 ◆. If the leader tries and fails to construct a solution, they will lose 5 ◆.

12. Rampaging Beast

While a single monster is enough to make life interesting for a village or asset, it is generally just a distraction for a leader. If the leader takes matters in their own hands, they can be assumed to be victorious at the cost of an action, though the GM may also wish to make the hunt an adventure of its own. Ignoring the beast is always a possibility, but this will decrease the Wealth and Influence of the leader by 1d4 every season that the creature goes ignored.

13. Natural Disaster

Devastating weather pelts the county beyond its means to cope; this could be a ferocious storm or drought or other similar wide-ranging event. All assets across the county are at risk of devastation. Roll 1d6 for each asset. If the roll is lower than the asset's level, the asset's level decreases by 1. Roll 1d6 for each construction. If this die rolls a 5 or 6, the construction suffers damage and will need additional maintenance. On a 5, maintenance must be paid a second time and on a 6, double that amount must be paid.

14. Trade Dispute

A trading partner becomes disinterested in maintaining the status quo. The amount of Trade Goods available from a trade route decreases by 1 until the partner can be convinced to resume normal relations. Every season this goes without repair, the trade route loses 1 additional Trade Good and the leader loses 1 ◆. Repairing relations will require an action to engage in negotiations and a Trade Skill test. Success in these negotiations restores the trade value of the route to normal.

15. Rebellion

An asset rebels against their leader. The asset refuses to answer summons and produces no Wealth or Influence until the rebellion is quelled by means of an action and a skill test based on the asset's type.

16. Plague

A significant portion of the asset's personnel become sick. This will lead the asset to temporarily depreciate by 1d3 levels. Medical care will increase the speed at which the plague is healed. The plague will last for at least one month. After one month, roll 1d20. On a roll of 15-20 the plague will end. For every Wealth spent on medical care, the leader gains a +1 to this roll. Once the plague has ended, the asset will slowly return to its normal level. Every month roll 1d20 and on an 11 or better, the depreciated level increases by 1. This ceases once the level returns to normal.

17. Explosion

A political rival has been assassinated explosively. One construction or asset determined by the GM has become damaged and requires repair, costing 1d6 ●. The construction does not provide any benefit and the asset cannot be used or generate Wealth until repairs are made. On top of the immediate financial issue, an investigation must be undertaken by means of an Order Skill test to determine the culprit or else all assets in the county will lose faith in their leaders and all leaders in the county lose 1 rank of Loyalty with the county.

18. Foreign War

Two counties, each under different sovereigns, have gone to war. Getting involved on either side is risky, but comes with significant opportunities. If the leader sends military units to assist a side, the leader must make an Order Skill test, consulting the chart below. GMs may wish to manage the conflict through the battle rules in *Chapter 3: Warfare*.

Table II-27: Foreign War Result Table

Warfare result	Outcome
1-4	Catastrophe. All units are lost.
5-10	Massive casualties. 1/5 of units are destroyed.
11-17	War, pure and simple. 1 unit is destroyed, and 5 ● is gained
18+	Glory. Significant victories lead to real rewards. Gain 10 ● and 10 ◆.

Regardless of outcome, the Relationship between the side allied with and the side opposed will be affected. The relation with the allied side automatically switches to cooperative, loyal if the leader suffered massive casualties or a catastrophe. The opposing side will become hostile.

19. Discovery

A rival has made a discovery that threatens the balance of power. Spies run rampant and varying factions attempt to seize the discovery for their own. It may be that the rumor is mere exaggeration, but can you take the risk? If you do nothing, at the start of next month roll 1d6 for each asset. If you roll less than your asset's level, you lose 1 ◆. You can spend 1 ● and take an action to make a Trade Skill test and resolve this challenge.

20. End of an Era

One of the advisors in a friendly sovereign's court has died. Attending the funeral is a must, as is sending gifts to the advisor's kin. This presents a unique opportunity, as leaders attempt to fill the vacancy with an agent under their control. The prize is rich; succeeding in planting an agent here grants the leader 1 ◆ and 1 ● every season. However, there will be much infighting between leaders keen on the prize.

Getting Started

There are a number of ways to use *Seeds of Wars* alongside your favourite tabletop roleplaying game system. This chapter shows you a number of ways you can use this content. Players should build their characters based on the rules of the system you are using with only a minor addition (at step 1, below). You should also already know who is taking on the role of GM. Many of the steps below are open to modification based on the kind of stories the GM wishes to tell.

1. Create your character using your standard RPG rule system.

2. Pick a faction.

3. Fill in the Faction Record Sheet.

Choose Campaign Type

As a group, decide which type of campaign you wish to run. While this could be however you wish to define it, broadly speaking there are five types of campaigns that can be played using *Seeds of Wars*:

- One of the players becomes the leader of an Order Faction and controls a realm as a sovereign. The other players control the other types of faction (one plays the head of a Faith, the other plays the master of a merchant guild and so on) in the same geographical region.
  The players can work together (or not), but the sovereign tends to receive most of the focus as they are the sovereign of most of the other players' assets.

- One of the players becomes the sovereign of a realm but the realm is divided into smaller parts (one or two counties each) and each other player controls a part of the realm under vassalage of that sovereign.

- One player plays a faction leader and the others play council members or advisors. It has the advantage of concentrating the action in one place if players don't mind playing secondary roles.

- Each player plays the sovereign of a different realm. This can be difficult to manage. Either the realms are close to each other and they will fight for resources or they are far apart and it will be difficult to interact.

- There are no faction leaders and players simply use the SoW setting as any other fantasy setting for their adventures.

Since many of these rules assume that players are taking on leadership roles from different factions and those factions are often related to the players' class, players are encouraged to build a balanced party.

However, having players who play the same faction type will result in a game that spans a lot of counties and increase the danger or attraction of player-versus-player actions. This may be what the players and the GM want!

Pick a Faction Type (or not...)

Regardless of the format, each player who leads a faction will need to pick a type: Order, Trade, Faith, Magic, or Culture.

Any combination of faction types is possible. The GM might want to play a campaign in which all players control a Trade Faction and are in competition with each other. Any number of players is also possible.

The rest of this guide assumes you are playing as a leader.

Pick a Location

Perhaps the easiest way to slot your character into the *Seeds of Wars* setting is simply to replace someone as the leader of a faction. The GM and the players should discuss which area interests them based on the realms and factions available, then pick a faction of their type to control.

We do make the following recommendations:

- At least one of the players should control an Order Faction and therefore be the sovereign of one of the realms. It helps when a member of the group is able to develop counties and create more space for new assets.

- Each other player should control a faction of a different type in the same region. One of each type would be ideal to avoid competition and encourage mutual support, complementing each other with their specific strengths.

When selecting the factions, the GM can follow those simple rules:

- Every Order Faction description in *Chapter 6: The Factions* includes the mention "Recommended: Yes/No". The GM is encouraged to suggest the recommended realms to the players. The others are either controlled by important NPCs or are too big or small to offer a real challenge.

- For the other faction types, the GM is encouraged to pick from the factions that are described in more detail, not from the ones that are simply mentioned with their list of assets.

- If you are really stuck, choosing factions in and around the realm of Cadelania may help as many of the examples in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction* relate to this area.

» Sovereign & Order: Cadelania
» Trade: House Dressan
» Faith: Earth and Sky
» Magic: The Northwest Mages Society
» Culture: The Deathworkers Guild

Fill in the Faction Record Sheet

Either you will be filling this out by copying an existing realm/faction or as determined by the GM. In the example Faction Record Sheet, we have filled out this sheet as if we are playing as Princess Severina of Cadelania.

Assets

The *very* first thing you will need to fill out on your sheet is your assets at the back of the sheet.

An Order Faction will want to keep track of all factions controlling assets in its realm's counties. Other types of factions may want to only keep track of faction assets of the same type and the sovereign of the counties they are in.

Once you have picked your faction, simply copy the information from the table in *Chapter 6: The Factions* and in *Chapter 5: The Realms* for Order Factions controlling a realm.

- **Realm:** The name of the realm that controls the county the asset is in.

- **County:** The name of the county.

- **Owner:** The faction that owns this county/asset.

- **Type:** The type of asset or simply "county" if you are recoding the sovereign's ownership of the county.

- **Level:** The level of the asset or county.

- **Loyalty:** The current Loyalty of the county towards this sheet's owner. All counties start with "aligned" Loyalty.

- **Taxation Level:** The level of Taxation in the county; only applies to lines where the type is county.

- **Income:** How much Wealth and Influence the asset/county produces, usually the asset/county level unless adjusted by Taxation (for counties) or hostile Loyalty (for all).

- **Corruption Level / Corruption Points:** As detailed on **page 35**, you may leave this blank for now.

- **Constructions:** The level of constructions in the county. You may wish to add these even if you do not own them to remind you of what's there. Mark them with a * if you do not own them to remind you not to pay maintenance for them!

- **Features:** The terrain of the county and any features are listed here.

General Information

- **Faction Name:** You can use the faction name mentioned in the book or choose your own name.
- **Faction Type:** The type of your faction, chosen in Step 2.
- **Leader Name:** The name of your character.
- **Reputation:** Each player character in *Seeds of Wars* is recommended to start with 25 Reputation.
- **Influence:** The GM can decide. A good number to start is the amount of Influence the faction earns per season, up to the maximum earnable per season (lowest number between your character's Reputation and the faction power).
- **Wealth:** The GM can decide. A good number to start is the faction power.
- **Court Level:** The starting court level is 1.
- **Faction Power:** The total number of asset levels of your faction. For sovereigns, also add the total levels of your counties.
- **Seat of Power:** For a sovereign, it is the capital county of their realm; for the other factions, choose a county in which you have an asset to be your seat of power.

Coat of Arms

You can add the heraldry or emblem of your faction here if you wish.

Skill Bonus

Skill Bonus: each new character gains a +1 bonus to the faction skill of their faction type.

Expenditures & Income

If you're happy with the contents of income in **page 37** then you can fill this out yourself, but the GM may want to go through the first season's income & expenditure phase as a group.

Advisors

The list of advisors of your faction. You don't have any for now unless the GM decides otherwise. See **page 27** for details about advisors.

- **Name:** The name of the advisor.
- **Type:** The specialty of the advisor (Order/Faith/Trade/Magic/Culture).
- **Bonus:** The skill level of the advisor.

Networks

The list of networks your faction maintains. You don't start with any networks unless the GM decides otherwise. See **page 29** for more information.

- **Origin:** The county of origin of the network.
- **Destination:** The county of destination of the network.
- **Type:** The type of network. Trade routes for Trade Factions, pilgrimages for Faith Factions, ley lines for Magic Factions, and bardic trails for Culture Factions.
- **Income:** The amount of Trade Goods/Piety/Arcana/Patriotism your network generates each season.

Vassals

Only relevant for sovereigns/realms.

The list of vassals of you have. You don't start with any vassals unless the GM decides otherwise. See **page 22** for details about liege/vassal relations.

- **Realm:** The name of your vassal.

Army

Only realms may start with an army.

In case a player starts play as the sovereign of a realm, the GM will decide their starting army. Other types of faction may muster troops in counties where they control an asset with the agreement of the county's sovereign. Armies and army units are described in *Chapter 3: Warfare*.

- **Unit:** The name/type of the unit.
- **Number:** The amount of these units.
- **Location:** The county in which these units are located.
- **Experience:** Indicates any experience bonus the units have. See **page 72** for unit experience.
- **Garrison:** Indicates if the units are in a garrison. See **page 73** for details on garrisons.
- **Maintenance Cost:** The maintenance cost of these units.

Treaties

Your realm will only start with a treaty if the GM deems it suitable. This is most likely to be a treaty between players. See **page 45** for details about treaties.

- **Realm:** The realm with which you have signed a treaty.
- **Type:** The type of treaty (alliance, non-aggression, right of passage, or truce).

Relationships

The list of Official and Personal Relationships your faction maintains with other factions, as described on **page 43** under the Diplomacy action.

By default, the Relationships with all factions at the start of the game are all "aligned", so there's no point in recording them unless the GM decides otherwise. It's often useful to record the names of "important" factions here so you can remind yourself of who your focus is on.

- **Faction:** The name of the faction with which you maintain diplomatic relations.
- **Official:** The Official Relationship level between your faction and the other faction. Aids Loyalty adjustment if you have a good Official Relationship with your sovereign.
- **Unofficial:** The Personal Relationship level between your faction and the other faction. Only you and the other faction know this information. This grants a bonus to Diplomacy actions between your two factions.

Surveillance Networks

The list of surveillance networks of your faction in the many realms of Ceres. You don't start with any surveillance network unless the GM decides otherwise. See **page 48** for details about surveillance networks under the Espionage action.

Embassies

The list of embassies of your faction in the realms of Ceres. You don't start with any embassy unless the GM decides otherwise. See **page 45** for details about embassies under the Diplomacy action.

What Next?

The GM ultimately decides what happens next, but it is recommended to work through a season: Loyalty Adjustments, Income, Expenditure, and Actions. Get used to the core mechanics of income and expenditure in your first season.

As for actions in your first season, we recommend the following actions for the following reasons:

- **Create Network:** Increase your Income by creating a network between your assets (Order Assets do not have networks).
- **Diplomacy:** Improve your Official Relationship with your sovereign (if you aren't one), seek permission for your networks, or establish a treaty with nearby powers.
- **Propaganda:** Try to improve the Loyalty of a county towards you, especially in areas which lose income to corruption.
- **Create Asset:** Establish a new level 0 asset of your type in an area next to where you are currently.
- **Hire Advisor (Free Action):** Recruit an advisor for your faction, but be careful you can afford them!

Sovereigns may additionally want to try **Enhancing a County** or possibly **Muster** or **Warfare** if they are expecting military action shortly. If multiple players are sovereigns and are friendly, then a **mock battle** between their armies is advised, in which the battle is performed as normal, but troop injuries are reduced/ignored.

After the first season, the GM may wish to subtly change the direction of the game towards their plan. Introducing a specific or random challenge from **page 50** can help to make the game feel more challenging and force the players to make tough decisions.

From here it's really up to the players and the GM to do what they wish. A canny GM can inform the players of what non-player factions did on their turns, send rumours of "armies gathering on the border" or standard adventure hooks to tempt the players into pursuing actions that they are interested in.

Action Flow

[GM] We've finished gathering Income and paying expenses, we'll now proceed to Step Five: Faction Actions. I need you both to roll for Initiative. As The Northwest Mages' Guild is currently important, I'll roll their Initiative too so you can plan around them. *rolls dice* The 5 roll plus their leader's highest faction skill of +2 puts them on 7.

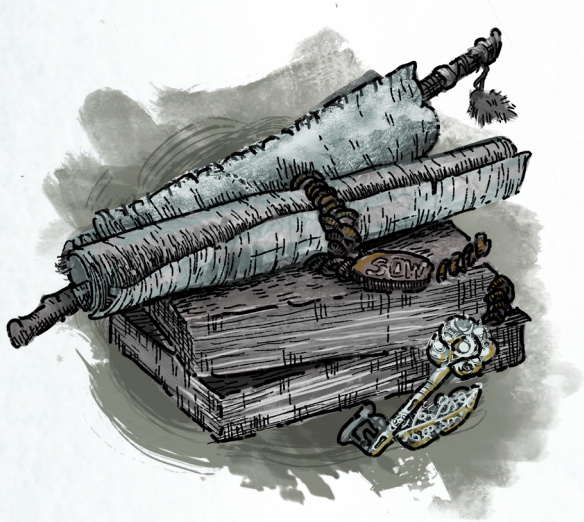
[Harry] I've rolled 8, plus Jisha's highest skill of +3 gives me 11.

[Kay] Princess Severina is still only at +1 skill, but I rolled a 15 so I guess I'm going first?

[GM] Absolutely; Kay, then Harry, then The Northwest Mages' Guild. Other NPCs might take actions during the round – if they become important, they'll be added to the Initiative.

[Harry] (To Kay) We'd better watch our backs!

[Kay] Right! Speaking of watching our backs, I'm expecting the Northwest Mages' Guild to cause us more problems this season. I need an alliance with a faction that can perform Realm Magic… Okay, I'm going to use the Diplomacy action to visit Leanad and formally ask for aid.



[GM] Looking at the Diplomacy action, you're close enough to perform this in one action, taking your court with you. Given your official relationship with Leanad is "aligned," they have no reason to refuse it. Make sure you mark off the 1 Wealth you spend for the action.

[Kay] Done! I'm taking my court with me of course.

[GM] Your journey to Leanad's seat of power is unremarkable, save for witnessing the devastation from the magical plague to your realm. On arrival, you're greeted with a modest feast and are invited to the sovereign's council room, a throne room in all but name. Both of your courts are present and will be aiding your rolls if required. The level 2 prestige building at the location may also work against you. What are you asking for? Both courts await your petition with suspense.

[Kay] I seek magical aid against the destruction of my land caused by The Northwest Mages' Guild! I would be prepared to pay for this.

[GM] Okay so you're using a Resource modifier for this to improve your roll? How much Wealth are you going to pay?

[Kay] No, I'm going to use this as payment for magical services if he agrees.

[GM] Your court Level is 3, Leanad's is 4, and their prestige construction at level 2 is going to aid them further so you're currently rolling on -3. Your faction skill in Culture is 0, but Leanad's is 1 which makes it -4 in total. Given Leanad's stance on being impartial and not involving themselves arbitrarily, the DC for this is 15.

[Kay] Got it, here goes nothing… a 12. My result is 8. I fail.

[GM] You do, and the leader of Leanad shakes his head: "I'm sorry my most noble neighbor, but we must remain impartial in these affairs. Though I must wonder what has you so convinced that it was The Northwest Mages'

Guild in the first place. I appreciate evidence may be hard to come by, but there are others who are capable of causing famine in your country," Leanad's sovereign stands up and gazes out the window. "Is it me or has there been a steady wind blowing from the north this month?"

[Kay] Princess Severina clenches her fist and mutters under her breath. "Kedohaw…" She nods thanks for the information, orders her court to pack swiftly, and heads back to Cadelania as fast as possible.

[GM] Harry you're next in the initiative; what's your action?

[Harry] I'm still trying to find out who caused Infighting in my Trade Asset in Kiethien. I'm going to perform an Espionage action there. I want to gather rumors and common information.

[GM] Espionage is a Trade action so you'll use your Trade Skill of +3 to modify your roll. Your asset got reduced to level 1 so is a further +1. It's unfortunate that the Loyalty of Kiethien is "unfavorable" as that gives you a -5 modifier to the roll, which now stands at -1. As Princess Severina is the sovereign of Kiethien and has an Order 1 there, Kay, do you want to help or hinder House Dressan in their investigation?

[Kay] Given the potential political ramifications of this, I'd better not.

[GM] Harry, it seems that someone is spending 2 resources to stop you for a further -2 modifier making it -3 now. Are you spending any resources on this aside from the initial 1 Wealth for the action?

[Harry] I'm trying to save Wealth but I'm fed up of this failing so I'll use 3 ◆ for a +3 bonus.

[GM] That makes your total modifier 0. Cadelania may now bid some resources if they wish.

[Kay] No, sorry Harry.

[Harry] The person responsible for this really does not want me to succeed! Let's do this – DC 5… A 9!

[GM] Good enough for a success so let me reveal to you some rumors… apparently there have been far more patrols and inspections along the border between Cadelania and Kedohaw and a huge one-armed man was spotted near one of your assets just before the Infighting began.

[Harry] Troops on the border? I bet that's Kedohaw's advisor; I saw him at court in Kedohaw last season. Just what are they up to? I'd better go see the princess about this. An invasion is likely and I'll need her protection.

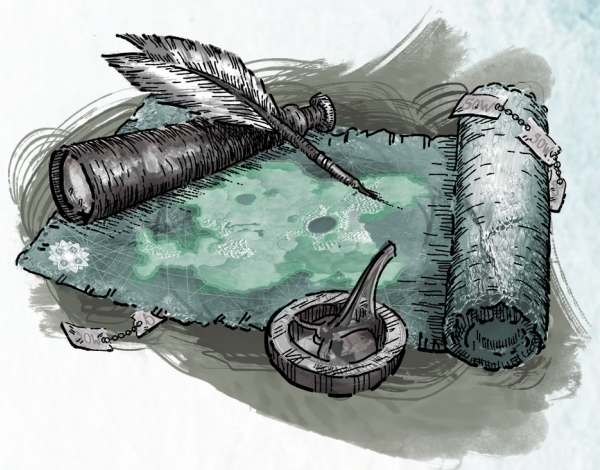
[GM] Not so fast - that's your entire action.

[Harry] I'll use my advisor to perform a Diplomacy action while it's still my turn and use that to send Cadelania some war funds. Bank-rolling the princess is probably why I'm in this mess in the first place, but her army is likely the best way out.

[GM] Understood; let's do your advisor's Diplomacy action right now. Luckily, by the time your advisor gets there, the princess has just arrived at her seat of power after rushing back so swiftly. Your advisor and the princess are about to have a hastily prepared meeting when the throne room's doors burst open, revealing a wiry messenger. "It's war, Your Royal Highness," he gasps, "Kedohaw has declared war!"

[GM] I've added Kedohaw to the Initiative track after Kay but before Harry; they used their action to Declare War using an Edict action.

[GM] Now Harry, let's continue your advisor's Diplomacy action with the princess…



FACTION RECORD SHEET (EXAMPLE)

SEEDS OF WARS

General

Faction name: *Cadelania*

Faction Type: *Order*

Leader Name: *Grand Princess Severina of Lightborne*

Seat of Power: *Lightborne*

Reputation	25
Influence	25
Wealth	30
Court Level	1
Faction Power	30

Coat of Arms

Skill Bonus

Order	+3
Faith	0
Trade	0
Magic	0
Culture	0

Expenditures

Corruption	0	Embassies	0	
Court	1	Surveillance	0	
Assets	1	Advisors	0	0
Constructions	8	Diplomacy	0	0
Military	45	Other	0	0

Income

Counties	21	21
Assets	9	9
Networks	0	0
Diplomacy	0	0
Other Sources	0	0

Networks

Origin	Destination	Type	Income

Advisors

Name	Type	Bonus

Vassals

Realm

Military

Unit	Number	Location	Exp.	Garrison	MC
Archers	3	*Lightborne*	0	X	1.5
Infantry	1	*Lightborne*	0	X	0.5
Knights	1	*Lightborne*	0	X	1.5
Artillery	1	*Lightborne*	0	X	0.5
				☐	
				☐	
				☐	
				☐	
				☐	
				☐	

Treaties

Faction	Type
Telimond	*Alliance*

Relationships

Faction	Official	Unofficial

Embassies

Realm

Surveillance

Realm

Assets

								Corruption		Constructions					
Realm	County	Owner	Type	Level	Loyalty	Tax	Income	Level	Points	Connections	Fortifications	Prestige	Seafaring	Maintenance	Features
Cadelania	Chilidric	Severina	County	3	Aligned	Normal	3●/3◆								River, Coastline, Beautiful, 50% Adapted Occupants
Cadelania	Chilidric	Severina	Order	1	Aligned		1●/1◆	0	0						
Cadelania	Kiethien	Severina	County	2	Aligned	Normal	2●/2◆			3	0	0	0	1	River
Cadelania	Kiethien	Severina	Order	1	Aligned		1●/1◆	0	0						
Cadelania	Legobeth	Severina	County	3	Aligned	Normal	3●/3◆								
Cadelania	Legobeth	Severina	Order	1	Aligned		1●/1◆	0	0						
Cadelania	Lightborne	Severina	County	4	Aligned	Normal	4●/4◆			3	2	2	2	5	Coastline, Storied
Cadelania	Lightborne	Severina	Order	2	Aligned		2●/2◆	0	0						
Cadelania	Rhilaria	Severina	County	3	Aligned	Normal	3●/3◆			3	0	0	0	1	River, Coastline
Cadelania	Rhilaria	Severina	Order	1	Aligned		1●/1◆	0	0						
Cadelania	Sevybeth	Severina	County	3	Aligned	Normal	3●/3◆								River, Informants
Cadelania	Sevybeth	Severina	Order	2	Aligned		2●/2◆	0	0						
Cadelania	Trorel	Severina	County	3	Aligned	Normal	3●/3◆			3	0	0	0	1	River
Cadelania	Trorel	Severina	Order	1	Aligned		1●/1◆	0	0						

Chapter III
Warfare

Waging War on an Epic Scale

On Ceres — and anywhere that greedy and foolish mortals dwell — warfare is all but inevitable. A ruler must face invasion by foes, civil conflict, or the challenges of building an empire. These rules can be used to simulate both large-scale strategic warfare and tactical-level battles. As such, they aren't intended as a full-scale combat simulation, but as a means of quickly and effectively resolving battles between realms. GMs who desire deeper or more realistic simulations can utilize dedicated miniature or tabletop wargames, using these rules for strategic army movement, logistics, or related details.

Units

A realm's army is made up of individual bodies of troops called units. Each unit has a series of statistics associated with it, reflecting its various offensive and defensive abilities. These are abstract values that do not necessarily reflect the actual bonuses, level, or game statistics of the warriors in the unit, but are used for comparative purposes in combat.

A military unit is approximately 200 light infantry, 150 heavy infantry, 100 light cavalry, or 50 heavy cavalry. While a military force of 1-2 units is common enough amongst factions, military forces of 5 units or more are unusual unless they are controlled by the Sovereign, especially if any of these are veteran troops. A military force of over 10 units indicates a realm with a powerful standing army.

Melee (Me): This statistic represents a unit's relative capability in hand-to-hand combat. Ratings higher than +8 are rare and represent exceptionally strong creatures, magical weapons, etc.

Rating	Example
+1	Levy, new recruits, peasants with improvised or minimal weaponry
+2	Troops with basic training and standard equipment
+4	Veterans, troops with above-average training and equipment
+6	Well-trained, highly-skilled troops with excellent equipment
+8	Elite troops with extensive experience, superior weapons, magic, etc.

Ranged (Ra): This represents a unit's effectiveness with bows, spears, slings, and other ranged weapons, and their training and relative skill with those weapons. Weapons with greater range and striking power receive higher Ranged ratings. As with Melee, ratings higher than +8 reflect exceptional abilities, magic, extremely powerful siege engines, etc.

Rating	Example
-	No missile weapons; unit cannot participate in missile combat
+0	Simple ranged weapons with little or no training
+1	Average weapons with minimal training
+2	Average missile weapons and training
+4	Missile troops with extensive training/experience
+6	Artillery, elite missile troops, magical attacks, etc.
+8	Siege engines, elite missile troops, or those equipped with high-quality or magical weapons

Defense (De): The Defense rating combines several factors, including armor type and composition and how well-trained a given unit is to operate effectively in armor.

Rating	Example
10	No armor or minimal armor/shield
12	Light armor (padded, quilted) or medium armor without shield
14	Medium armor (mail, studded leather, light plate) or heavy without shield
16	Heavy armor (heavy plate) with shield
18+	Magical armor, powerful monsters, etc.

Morale (Mo): Morale represents a combination of many factors from training and enthusiasm to leadership, equipment, and individual confidence. A unit of knights fighting for an unpopular king or at the end of a long and unsuccessful campaign may find itself with a low Mo rating while a band of raucous recruits after a series of military victories may be far more resilient.

Rating	Example
+0	Peasants, levy, poorly-trained recruits
+2	Troops with standard training and experience
+4	Veterans, seasoned troops with battle experience
+6	Troops with extensive experience, adventurers
+8	Elites, guard units, Special Forces

Hits (Ht): This represents how much damage a unit can take before it collapses and is eliminated. This is not necessarily a measure the unit's size or strength – a large unit can be fragile due to poor equipment or leadership, for example, while a small, tough unit may be able to take far more damage before being destroyed. Normally, human and humanoid units have a maximum Ht of 4. Higher ratings are possible for monsters and supernatural troops, but these are quite rare.

Rating	Example
1	A small or especially fragile unit
2	A standard unit with normal resilience or average size
3	Veterans or highly resilient troops
4	Elites, guards, or exceptionally tough troops

Move (Mv): A unit's Move rating reflects both the number of battlefield spaces it can move during a round of battle and the number of counties it can move through per Strategic Move. Both land and sea units have Mv ratings and they both function the same in tactical combat. Strategic movement for sea units is reflected by the Sail rating.

Rating	Example
1	Foot soldiers, siege engines
2	Light foot troops, scouts, heavy cavalry
3	Medium cavalry
4	Light cavalry
5	Mounted scouts

Sail (Sl): Naval units that are less capable in tactical combat are often capable of moving effectively on a strategic basis, so ships have two different Movement statistics. The Sail statistic indicates how many sea areas that a naval unit can move per strategic move.

Cost (Co): This represents the cost in Wealth Points (●) to raise a given unit. It includes the cost of recruitment, equipment, and basic training. A unit's Co rating increases as it gains experience, and the new Co rating is used to determine a unit's Maintenance cost (see Maintenance).

Rating	Example
0	Untrained levy, drafted peasants, etc.
2	Normal unit of foot soldiers
4	Normal unit of cavalry
6+	Elite troops

Cargo (Ca): Used primarily for merchant vessels, each unit of cargo allows the transportation of 1 ● worth of trade goods. This rating is used to determine the number of vessels needed for maritime trade.

Berths (Br): This rating represents the number of military units that a naval unit can transport. This includes their equipment, supplies, etc. Mounted units take 2 berths while infantry units take only 1 berth. Some ships have only a 1 Br rating which means they cannot transport mounted units.

Seafaring (Sf): The Seafaring rating represents the level of the "seafaring" attribute of a county necessary to build a naval unit. See *Chapter 2: Running a Faction* for more details on the seafaring attribute.

Unit Statistics

The armies of Ceres are divided into a number of generic categories depending upon their basic qualities and the roles that they play in battle. The following rules allow leaders to create their own unique troop types, beginning with purchasing a unit based upon its type then modifying it with training, weapons, armor, etc.

Unit Types

These are the basic units that can be found in armies throughout Ceres. The listed cost is for Green (minimally trained troops). They can be modified at purchase or they may be purchased at Green experience status and trained to gain better statistics.

Missile

The term "missile" includes all types of ranged troops: archers, slings, spear, javelin, crossbow, etc. They are usually lightly armored and mobile, trained to avoid melee combat. Missile troops gain a +2 bonus to Ranged attacks against mounted units.

Me: +0; **Ra:** +2; **De:** 10; **Mo:** +2; **Ht:** 2; **Mv:** 1; **Co:** .5 ●

Artillery

This unit includes a variety of siege engines and war machines including catapults, springalds, onagers, ballistae, etc., as well as ammunition, tools, and the highly skilled professionals who operate them. Artillery units can shoot at targets two areas distant and ignore both defensive terrain and intervening units.

Me: -2; **Ra:** +4; **De:** 10; **Mo:** +2; **Ht:** 2; **Mv:** 1; **Co:** 3 ●

Mounted

Mounted is a catch-all name for warriors on riding beasts and as such it includes human horse mounted, orcish wolf riders, dark elven lizard cavalry, etc. along with their basic weapons. Most mounted troops gain a +2 Me charge bonus.

Me: +2; **Ra:** +0; **De:** 10; **Mo:** +0; **Ht:** 2; **Mv:** 3; **Co:** 2 ●

Infantry

Individual unmounted foot soldiers, distinct from missile troops, are considered infantry. They range from untrained peasant rabble to veteran heavily armed and armored legionnaires with all manner of troop types in between.

Me: +2; **Ra:** -; **De:** 10; **Mo:** +2; **Ht:** 2; **Mv:** 1; **Co:** .5

Naval Vessels

Ships, their construction, and maintenance are discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*.

Armor

Once purchased, units can be further equipped with armor and trained in its use. Armor increases a unit's Defense, usually at the expense of mobility and Ranged rating. If armor reduces a unit's Ranged rating below 0, the unit cannot engage in missile combat. Note that armor can reduce a unit's Movement rating below 1, in which case the unit needs to receive extra training or special abilities to be able to move in combat. Units with a Mv rating of 0 are not allowed.

No Armor

Some units, such as mobile missile troops or ill-equipped levy units are not even given armor.

Modifier: None

Purchase Cost: +0

Light Armor

The unit is equipped with padded armor, layered cloth, or thin leather. Light armor provides its unit with a 12 De.

Modifier: None

Purchase Cost: +0.5

Medium Armor

The unit is equipped with boiled leather, mail, breastplates, etc. Units with medium armor have a 14 De.

Modifier: -2 Ra, -1 Mv

Purchase Cost: +0.5

Heavy Armor

This includes half-plate, reinforced mail, etc. A unit equipped with heavy armor has a De of 16.

Modifier: -4 Ra, -2 Mv

Purchase Cost: +2

Experience

Experience reflects the relative training and skill of a unit and its leaders. Most units are recruited at Standard Experience level, but they can also be recruited as Green (from among inexperienced recruits) or as Veterans (from soldiery with more extensive battle experience).

Green

These units are newly-recruited and basically just off the farm. They have no experience and often no concept of what combat is really like. Green units require training, battle testing, and leadership to be effective.

Modifier: None

Purchase Cost: +0

Standard

The units listed below (with the exception of levy) have a standard level of experience and training. This includes basic equipment, training in the essentials of combat, competent leadership, and sometimes a small amount of actual battle experience.

Modifier: +2 Me, +2 Ra (if any), +1 Mv, +2 Mo

Purchase Cost: +1

Veteran

Veteran units have been tested in combat and have a significant amount of training and good leadership. While units usually require several battles or campaigns to gain Veteran status, they may also be made up of hardened warriors or especially elite leadership.

Modifier: +4 Me, +4 Ra (if any), +1 Ht, +4 Mo

Purchase Cost: +2

Specialized Training

Some units are given more intense or specialized training that enhance their abilities and make them more effective on the battlefield. Green units cannot be given any specialized training, Standard units can be given one specialized training feature, and Veterans can be given two features.

Advanced Training

Units that have been provided with Advanced Training gain a bonus to their Melee, Ranged, Defense, or Morale Statistic.

Modifier: +2 bonus to Me, Ra, De or Mo.

Purchase Cost: +1

Berserker

Berserkers fight ferociously with little or no concern for their own safety. Some troops such as bugbears are already fairly berserk to begin with, and this has been incorporated into their statistics. Berserkers gain a +2 Me bonus when charging.

Modifier: +2 Me, -2 De, +2 Mo.

Purchase Cost: +1

Marines

Only infantry units can be marines, trained to fight on naval units, in boarding actions, or in amphibious warfare. While other troop types are penalized for shipboard fighting, marines engage in combat normally.

Modifier: Marines can fight normally in Naval combat.

Purchase Cost: +1

Scout

Units with scout training are skilled at stealth and concealment. They are typically sent ahead of advancing armies to reconnoiter marching routes or search for enemy forces. They are also sent into enemy territory to gather intelligence or even commit acts of sabotage. Scouts can be mounted or unmounted and the number of scout units in a given army modifies a battle's initiative roll. Unmounted units in light or no armor suffer no movement penalty from terrain.

Modifier: -2 Me, +2 Ra (if any), -1 Ht, +1 Mv

Purchase Cost: +1

Shieldwall

Only infantry units may be given the shieldwall ability. They are equipped with large shields which they can lock together to enhance their defensive abilities in both melee and missile combat.

Modifier: +2 De against Melee attacks, +4 De against Ranged attacks

Purchase Cost: +1

Pike

Only infantry may be given this ability. Pike units gain a +2 Me bonus against mounted units, and inflict double damage on mounted units that charged during their combat round. Non-pike infantry gain a +2 Me bonus against units with the pike ability.

Purchase Cost: +0.5

Tough

These units are either intensely trained or drawn from rigorously-selected recruits and possess higher morale and combat capabilities than other units.

Modifier: +1 Ht, +2 Mo

Purchase Cost: +1

Riverine

These are smaller, shallow-draft boats that can travel up major rivers. Naval vessels without this feature cannot enter rivers at all.

Standard Units

These units are found throughout Ceres and are common across several different armies. The standard units found in the armed forces of each of Ceres's regions are listed later, along with units that are unique to each realm.

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Skirmishers	+2	+4	10	+4	2	2	1.5	
Levy	+2	-	10	+0	2	1	0	Raised by conscription
Archers	+2	+4	12	+4	2	2	2	
Elite Archers	+4	+6	12	+6	2	4	4	
Infantry	+4	-	12	+4	2	2	2	
Hv. Infantry	+4	-	16	+4	2	1	3	
Legionnaires	+6	-	16	+6	3	1	4	
Pikemen	+4	-	14	+4	2	1	2	+2 Me vs. Mounted, double damage vs. charge, -2 De vs. non-pike foot units
Marines	+6	+2	12	+6	3	3	4	Marines
Lt. Cavalry	+4	+2	12	+4	2	4	4	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Mecharge
Md. Cavalry	+4	-	14	+4	2	3	4	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge
Hv. Cavalry	+4	-	16	+4	2	3	5	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge
Knights	+6	-	16	+6	3	3	6	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +4 Me charge
Infantry Scouts	+2	+4	12	+6	2	3	4	Scout
Mounted Scouts	+2	+4	12	+6	2	5	6	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge, scout
Berserkers	+8	-	12	+6	4	2	6	+2 Me charge
Artillery	+0	+6	10	+4	2	1	4	2 area range, ignore defensive terrain

Dwarven Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Artillery	+0	+6	12	+6	2	1	6	2 area range, ignore defensive terrain
Crossbow	+4	+2	16	+6	3	2	4	
Infantry	+4	-	16	+6	3	1	4	
Elite Infantry	+6	-	18	+8	3	1	6	

Halfling Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Archers	+2	+6	14	+4	2	1	3	
Infantry	+4	+2	16	+4	2	1	3	
Pony Riders	+4	+4	14	+4	2	3	5	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge

Gnomish Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Rock Gnome Crossbow	+2	+6	12	+6	2	1	4	+2 Mo in mountains/hills
Rock Gnome Warriors	+4	-	14	+6	2	1	2	+2 Mo in mountains/hills
Forest Gnome Rangers	+2	+8	14	+6	2	2	5	Scouts, +2 Ra/+2 Mo in lt./ deep forest
Forest Gnome Infantry	+4	-	14	+8	2	2	4	+2 Mo in lt./deep forest

Elven Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Archers	+2	+6	12	+6	2	4	4	
Cavalry	+4	+6	14	+6	2	4	6	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge
Knights	+4	+4	16	+4	3	3	8	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +4 Me charge
Infantry	+4	-	14	+8	2	2	4	
Dark Elf Lizard Riders	+4	+6	14	+4	3	3	6	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge

Orcish Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Artillery	+2	+6	10	+4	3	1	4	2 area range, ignore defensive terrain
Archers	+4	+4	12	+4	3	2	2	
Warriors	+6	-	14	+4	3	2	2	
Berserkers	+10	-	12	+6	5	2	6	+2 Me charge
Wolf Riders	+6	+2	12	+4	2	4	4	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge

Gnoll Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Warriors	+6	-	12	+2	3	3	4	
Hunters	+6	+4	12	+2	3	3	5	
Hyaenadon Riders	+6	-	16	+4	4	3	6	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks +2 Me charge

Goblin Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Archers	+0	+2	10	+0	2	1	1	
Infantry	+2	-	12	+0	2	1	1	
Bashers	+4	-	14	+0	3	1	3	
Dog Riders	+4	+2	12	+2	2	4	4	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks +2 Me charge

Other Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Lizardfolk Infantry	+4	-	14	+2	2	2	3	+4 Mo in swamp, can move along rivers, attack naval units on rivers
Undead	+8	-	12	-	3	1	-	Can only be raised by magic
Kobold Infantry	+2	+2	12	+4	2	1	2	
Ogres	+10	-	16	+4	4	2	8	
Bugbears	+8	-	12	+4	3	2	6	

Naval Units

For purposes of warfare simulation, naval units are treated similarly to land units, save that they can move on oceans and (in the case of smaller vessels) rivers. Each of these units represents a single vessel and its crew. They are ordered via a Build action and are completed after a period of time as described in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*.

Naval units must be built in a port and require a dry dock (for smaller naval vessels) or a full-scale naval dockage (for larger ships). These requirements are noted on the chart below.

Vessels with rams or reinforced hulls gain a charge bonus in the same fashion as land units. This represents slamming the vessel into an opposing ship, and is often used as a prelude to boarding actions.

Ship	Sl	Ca	Br	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Sf	Special
Coaster	16	1	0	+0	-2	10	+2	1	1	2	2	Shallow sea only, riverine
Caravel	12	3	1	+0	-2	10	+2	1	1	2	2	Riverine
Cog	8	3	1	+4	+2	14	+2	2	1	5	2	
Carrack	12	4	2	+0	-2	12	+2	2	1	5	2	
Longship	8	1	1	+4	-	12	+2	1	3	3	3	+2 Me charge, riverine
Galleon	12	6	3	+8	+2	16	+2	4	2	15	3	+2 Me charge
War Galley	4	1	1	+6	-	14	+2	2	3	8	3	+2 Me charge, no wind penalties
War Sloop	12	4	3	+6	+6	16	+2	3	2	12	3	Sunset Isles only
Elven Swanship	14	2	2	+6	+6	16	+6	3	2	16	3	+2 Me charge, riverine
Orcish Raider	8	2	2	+4	+2	14	+4	2	2	6	3	+2 Me charge, riverine
Dwarven Battlebarge	12	5	2	+6	+4	16	+6	4	.5*	12	3	Moves only on alternate turns
Halfling Armored Bumboat	8	3	1	+0	+2	10	+4	1	1	4	2	Shallow sea only, riverine

Coaster: As the name implies, coasters are vessels that carry cargo in the shallow water near coastlines. They are generally of shallow draft with small cargo holds and favor speed over capacity. While they are no good in combat, coasters are very fast and can often outrun pirates, raiders, and other enemies. They need to stick close to land, and many naval engagements involve more powerful warships guarding these less-capable vessels. Coasters are limited to travel on rivers or shallow seas.

Caravel: Small and nimble, caravels are used for both trade and exploration. They are sturdier than the coasters and have higher cargo capacity. Also unlike coasters, caravels can survive on the open sea.

Cog: Fitted with a single mast and square-rigged foresail, cogs are somewhat slower than coasters and caravels but are more capable of defending themselves and can serve as warships as well as merchant vessels.

Carrack: A larger version of the cog, the carrack usually has three masts and is intended as a cargo hauler with little, if any, offensive or defensive capability.

Longship: Superb open-ocean vessels, longships are versatile vessels used for exploration, trade, and raiding. Equipped with a durable clinker-built hull and square-rigged sail, longships can venture up rivers and weather heavy seas without damage.

Galleon: A massive ship that is equally at home hauling cargo or engaging in open battle on the high seas, the galleon has three or four masts and up to three decks.

War Galley: While most vessels travel primarily by wind power, the war galley is muscle-driven, with banks of oars to supplement its square-rigged sail. War galleys are slow in comparison to other ships, but suffer no Mv penalties for wind direction.

War Sloop: These elegant, white-hulled vessels are built by the Rao folk of the Sunset Isles and the secrets of their construction are closely-guarded. They are frequently found patrolling the seas near the isles or on long-range mercantile voyages.

Elven Swanship: The elves of Arendaniel and similar realms are master mariners and their graceful swanships are a sight to behold. These rare vessels can sometimes be seen guarding elven ports and coastlines or moving serenely along rivers, often with no apparent means of propulsion. Elven swanships suffer no penalties to Mv or Ra due to wind direction.

Orcish Raider: Orc corsairs, mercenaries, and plunderers sometimes build these ungainly but powerful vessels, incorporating their own eccentric designs along with pieces from other vessels. Orcish raiders have auxiliary oars and don't suffer Mv penalties for wind direction.

Dwarven Battlebarge: Unlike the elves, dwarves are not natural mariners, but this has not stopped them from trying. Dwarves who live in coastal areas sometimes band together to build these great ungainly vessels in hopes of hiring out as mercenaries or defending their communities from pillaging raiders. Dwarven battlebarges are driven by complex torsion-powered engines that move them at a virtual snail's pace, but they are nevertheless powerful, well-armed, and extremely difficult to sink. Battlebarges do not suffer Mv penalties for wind conditions (as they're already slow enough).

Halfling Armored Bumboat: The halflings who live in Ceres's seaports have developed a thriving trade in supplying anchored or docked ships with supplies and sundries. The small vessels used for this trade are known as bumboats and over the years they have grown larger and better-equipped to the point that some halfling captains have taken to coastal waters as traders, accompanied by halfling warriors or even marines to help defend against hostile forces or rival trade concerns. Gnomes and other smaller folk also serve on board these vessels.

The Humans of Ceres

The people of Ceres are numerous and varied. Most utilize a number of common military formations, while some have their own unique or elite units that embody their national strengths or martial philosophies. While most armies are primarily human, other species such as gnomes, halflings, elves, and dwarves serve in human militaries, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their human brethren in defense of their various nations. Pure non-human military units exist and are detailed after the human entries. The following entries list the various regions of Ceres and the standard units that can be found in their militaries, along with specialized or unique formations.

The Great West

Independent, broadly skilled, and mostly human, the folk of the Great West utilize a wide range of military units and formations. The broad open spaces of the West promote the use of cavalry and missile-armed troops, and older nations such as Astaeria can field large, well-equipped and -trained armies.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Elite Archers, Infantry, Legionnaires (Astaeria, Telimond, Cadelania only), Lt. Cavalry, Md. Cavalry, Knights (Astaeria, Telimond, Cadelania only), Mounted Scouts, Artillery, Halfling Infantry, Halfling Pony Riders

Naval Vessels: Coaster, Caravel, Cog, Carrack, Galleon (Astaeria, Telimond, Cadelania only), War Galley, Halfling Armored Bumboat

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Astaerian Home Guard	+2	+4	10	+4	2	2	2	Astaeria only
Horse Archers	+6	+4	12	+6	3	4	4	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +2 Me charge

The Northern Dales

With their more varied and rugged terrain and the constant struggle against the forces of the Maelstrom, the Dales produces sturdy, professional military units that are at home in a wide range of battle conditions. The swamp folk of Adiclya provide especially skilled scouts and irregular warriors, while the nation of Silvyre maintains a long and honorable tradition of military excellence in the face of the Maelstrom and its horrors.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Elite Archers, Infantry, Hv. Infantry, Pikemen (Silvyre and Unauwin only), Lt. Cavalry, Hv. Cavalry, Infantry Scouts, Berserkers (Silvyre and Unauwin only), Artillery, Dwarven Crossbow, Dwarven Infantry, Halfing Archers, Halfling Infantry, Halfling Pony Riders, Lizardfolk Infantry, Gnoll Hunters, Orcish Warriors, Rock Gnome Crossbow, Rock Gnome Warriors, Forest Gnome Rangers, Forest Gnome Infantry

Naval Vessels: Coaster, Caravel, Cog, Longship, War Galley, Orcish Raider, Dwarven Battlebarge, Halfling Armored Bumboat

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Adiclyan Swamp Scouts	+4	+8	12	+6	1	4	8	Scouts
Maelstrom Veterans	+6	-	14	+6	3	1	3	

The Wounded Lands

A particularly grim and comfortless region, the Wounded Lands are home to stern humans and even sterner dwarves. Most armies of the region are human and maintain small but well-trained forces, but the dwarves are the most martially advanced and dangerous of the peoples here. The dwarves here use explosive powders and alchemical bombs, which provides additional destructive power to their artillery.

Standard Units: Levy, Archers, Elite Archers, Infantry, Legionnaires, Lt. Cavalry, Infantry Scouts, Artillery, Dwarven Crossbow, Dwarven Infantry, Dwarven Elite Infantry, Rock Gnome Warriors, Rock Gnome Crossbow, Orcish Artillery, Orcish Archers, Orcish Warriors, Orcish Berserkers, Orcish Wolf Riders, Gnoll Warriors, Gnoll Hunters, Gnoll Hyaenadon Riders, Goblin Archers, Goblin Infantry, Goblin Bashers, Goblin Dog Riders, Ogres

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Dwarven Deathguard	+6	+2	18	+8	3	1	8	
Dwarven Cannon	+0	+8	10	+6	3	1	8	2 area range, ignore defensive terrain

The Darkening Heartwood

The elves remain in the Heartwood, grimly defending their homeland and fighting an increasingly bitter civil war between their bright and dark factions. Humans have continued to encroach on the elven forests, though they accomplish this mostly through diplomacy rather than through outright conquest.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Infantry, Lt. Cavalry, Infantry Scouts, Berserkers, Artillery, Forest Gnome Rangers, Forest Gnome Infantry, Elven Archers, Elven Cavalry, Elven Knights, Elven Infantry, Dark Elf Lizard Riders

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Elven Elder Knights	+6	+4	18	+8	3	3	12	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +4 Me charge
Dark Elven Assassins	+4	+6	12	+8	2	3	6	+2 Me charge

The Stalwart South

A region of forests, swamps, and mountains, the Stalwart South is home to aggressive and often quarrelsome humans, often with aspirations of military glory and conquest. Surprisingly, this has led to a diverse society, with humans rubbing shoulders with dwarves, elves, halflings, gnomes, and even orcs.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Elite Archers, Infantry, Marines, Lt. Cavalry, Md. Cavalry, Infantry Scouts, Mounted Scouts, Dwarven Infantry, Halfling Archers, Halfling Pony Riders, Rock Gnome Crossbow, Rock Gnome Warriors, Forest Gnome Rangers, Forest Gnome Infantry, Orcish Warriors, Orcish Wolf Riders

NavalVessels: Coaster, Caravel, Cog, Carrack, Galleon, War Galley, Orcish Raider, Dwarven Battlebarge, Halfling Armored Bumboat

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Engineers	+4	-	16	+4	2	2	3	+2 De vs Ra attacks
Town Guard	+4	-	14	+2	2	2	1	

The Jagged Coast

With a not-entirely-undeserved reputation as a place of violence, treachery, and lawlessness, the Jagged Coast is home to a dour and grim group of humans who are used to relying only upon themselves and their most trusted comrades. Piracy, crime, and corruption are rampant along the Jagged Coast, where both casual visitors and invaders should be prepared for an especially unfriendly welcome.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Infantry, Hv. Infantry, Marines, Lt. Cavalry, Infantry Scouts, Berserkers, Artillery, Halfling Archers, Halfling Infantry

Naval Vessels: Coaster, Caravel, Cog, Carrack, Longship, Galleon, War Galley, Orcish Raider, Dwarven Battlebarge, Halfling Armored Bumboat

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Corsairs	+4	+2	12	+2	2	2	3	Marines
Rogues	+0	+8	12	+8	2	4	4	Scouts
Slavers	+8	+2	12	+6	4	2	8	+2 Me charge

The Sunset Isle

This is a relatively peaceful region, home to the Raoi, a nation of intellectual astronomers and mathematicians, and the Galeans, a far more independent and expansive folk. While the Raoi are content to putter with their telescopes and develop complex mathematical theorems, the Galeans take an active role in defending the isles, maintaining a small but deadly navy. Their ships are highly advanced and of especially aesthetic design but also are more than capable of holding their own even when badly outnumbered by their foes. The Sunset Isles folk have also started experimenting with explosive alchemical substances and have developed an effective ranged weapon incorporating crude rockets.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Elite Archers, Infantry, Legionnaires, Pikemen, Marines, Infantry Scouts, Mounted Scouts, Artillery

Naval Vessels: Coaster, Caravel, Cog, Carrack, Galleon, War Galley, War Sloop

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Martial Artists	+2	+6	12	+4	1	3	4	Scouts, +2 Me vs. mounted
Rocket Batteries	+0	+8	10	+4	2	1	6	2 area range, ignore defensive terrain

The Maelstrom

Kurse the Harbinger is a ceaseless foe of all that is good and beautiful in Ceres and their unending quest to conquer the world has brought woe and destruction beyond measure. Yet every time they are defeated, Kurse returns with new armies and horrors. Kurse controls several small vassal states from which they draw many of their lesser troops, but many other creatures march with Kurse's armies, including monsters and corrupted non-humans; sometimes Kurse's forces emerge from the Maelstrom with new and even stranger beasts. This list represents typical Maelstrom forces, but can be modified with new and never-seen creatures by enterprising GMs.

Standard Units: Skirmishers, Levy, Archers, Elite Archers, Infantry, Hv. Infantry, Pikemen, Lt. Cavalry, Hv. Cavalry, Infantry Scouts, Mounted Scouts, Artillery, Orcish Artillery, Orcish Archers, Orcish Warriors, Orcish Berserkers, Orcish Wolf Riders, Gnoll Warriors, Gnoll Hunters, Gnoll Hyaenadon Riders, Goblin Archers, Goblin Infantry, Goblin Bashers, Goblin Dog Riders, Undead, Kobold Infantry, Ogres, Bugbears

Unique Units

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Demons	+8	-	18	+8	4	2	12	
Steel Guard	+8	-	16	+8	3	3	8	Mounted, -2 De vs. Ra attacks, +4 Me charge

Non-Humans of Ceres

The military rules assume humans are the default species of Ceres, but other species maintain armies or serve as warriors. The following rules provide guidelines for non-human army units.

Dwarves: Sturdy, strong, resilient, and hard to break on the field of battle, dwarves are born warriors. Dwarven units receive +2 to De and Mo. Cost: +2 ●.

Halflings: The small folk are smart, agile, and skilled with missile weapons. While they usually stick close to home and fight mostly in defense of their own territories, a few particularly adventurous types may be persuaded to march to war. Halflings most often serve as archers, though Halfling Pony Riders can fill the role of Scouts or Lt. Cavalry. Halflings cannot wear medium or heavy armor. Halfling units receive +2 Ra, +2 De and -1 Mv (to a minimum of 1). Cost: +1 ●.

Rock Gnomes: Like their dwarven cousins, rock gnomes are a race that is almost as tough as their stony homelands. Gnomes are less likely than dwarves to march to battle outside their homelands, though they will sometimes serve in a realm's army out of loyalty. A unit of rock gnomes receives +2 De. They receive +2 Mo when fighting in mountains or hills. Cost: +1.5 ●

Forest Gnomes: Wily inhabitants of the forest, this subrace is more agile than the rock gnomes and fight well in their home terrain. Forest gnomes receive a +2 Ra and gain a +2 Mo when fighting in light or heavy forest. Cost: +1.5 ●

Elves: A long-lived folk with many ancient traditions of martial achievement, elves may spend decades in training and are among the most skillful and deadly warriors on Ceres. Elves do not field artillery or levy and usually do not wear heavy armor. Elven units receive +2 to De and Mo. Cost: +2 ●

Half-Elves: Those of mixed elven ancestry usually work and travel alone – there are very few communities made up entirely of half-elves, so therefore it is rare to see entire units of them. Should this be the case, an entire unit of half-elves is considered to have scout training. Cost: +1 ●

Orcs: In many ways, orcs are synonymous with warfare. Better disciplined than gnolls and bugbears, but less disciplined than dwarves, orcs are nonetheless well-suited to warfare. Despite their cultural isolation from the rest of Ceres, they sometimes seek employment as sellswords. Orc units receive a +1 Ht and +2 Me bonus. Cost: +1 ●

Gnolls: A ferocious race that normally revels in battle and bloodshed, gnolls are frequently found working as mercenaries. They are fierce but brittle, gaining a +2 Me and a -2 Mo. Cost: +0 ●

Lizardfolk: Generally thought to be technologically primitive and tribal, some believe that the lizardfolk are an offshoot of the orog folk that also gave rise to the orcs and goblins. Whether this is true or not, the lizardfolk of today tend to stick close to their swampy or riverine homelands, which they defend fiercely. Some leaders have cultivated good relations with their lizardfolk subjects, and a few have even incorporated them into their militaries. In general, lizardfolk act as defenders of their own counties and rarely accompany larger armies beyond the borders of their home regions. A lizardfolk unit gains a +2 Me and -2 Mo, but gain +4 Mo when fighting in swamp, can move along rivers, and attack ships on rivers. Cost: +0 ●

Kobolds: These diminutive reptilian humanoids are common in mountains and underground spaces. They usually fight only in defense of their own realms, but sometimes an especially enterprising warlord might persuade a unit or two to emerge from their fastness to engage in battle. Due to their reptilian ancestry, kobolds will enthusiastically join the retinue of dragons or dragon-related leaders. A unit of kobolds receives a +2 De, -2 Me and +2 Ra. Cost: +1 ●

Bugbears: A giant-related species of dangerous humanoids, bugbears enjoy battle and violence but tend to disdain anything like organized warfare and chafe horribly under the leadership of non-bugbears. A unit of bugbears is a fearsome thing to behold, but sometimes is far more trouble than its leaders bargained for. They are most frequently found serving in the military forces of the Maelstrom. Bugbears receive +2 Me, +2 De, -2 Mo and +1 Ht. They cannot be equipped with ranged weapons and never wear armor. Cost: +2 ●

Mercenary Units

Sellswords are a common sight throughout Ceres and serve in many different nations' armies. They are free companies, loyal to no one save themselves. Mercenaries are usually experienced, veteran troops who live to fight, but will swiftly leave the employ of any leader who cannot afford them.

Normally, mercenaries are available in any friendly county and are paid for in the same manner as other units. They become available immediately upon payment and will fight as long as they are paid. Mercenary units are paid the same as the maintenance cost of conventional units with the same Co value. If they are not paid, mercenary units will desert and are immediately removed from the leader's army.

In addition, mercenaries dislike losing or unnecessarily risking life and limb with an unsuccessful commander. If they are on the losing side of a battle, mercenary units must roll 1d20 + Mo. The DC is 10 + number of enemy units – number of friendly units. On a failure, the mercenary unit disbands and is removed.

Unit Name	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co	Special
Merc. Archers	+4	+4	12	+2	2	2	4	
Merc. Infantry	+6	-	14	+2	2	2	4	
Merc. Md. Cavalry	+6	-	14	+2	2	3	6	+2 Me charge

Mustering Units

Mustering military units takes place during the seasonal actions phase and requires a Muster action. The total number of units mustered in a county each season may not exceed the county level. Additionally, a leader can only muster units with a Cost lower or equal to double the level of their Order Asset in the county or lower or equal to the level of any other type of asset they own in the county.

Naval units can only be raised at shipyards and are constructed using the Build action. While being built, naval units cannot be attacked, but an enemy force occupying the county has the option of either destroying naval units under construction or taking over the construction and completing them as friendly naval units.

Conscription

Units with 0 Co such as levy are considered to be conscripts or peasant militia and can be raised in a county without expenditure. A sovereign can declare conscription in a county and raise a number of 0-Co units equal to the county's level. These units also have no maintenance cost, but depriving a county of its able-bodied inhabitants can have a number of negative effects. After conscription, a county's level is permanently reduced by 1 and must be restored by seasonal actions.

Training

Units that are mustered or recruited can be trained to improve their ratings or can gain experience in battle. Also, units that were damaged or suffered ratings penalties can be retrained and reequipped to restore some or all of their losses.

Units that lost Ht in battle can be restored by spending 1 ● per Ht lost for infantry and 2 ● per Ht for mounted. The unit can only be restored to its original Ht Rating – it cannot gain additional Ht beyond its previous rating in this fashion.

Training and re-provisioning a unit takes a full month. During this time the unit cannot move or engage in combat. If it does so, it fights at its reduced value (any gains from previous months' training are retained) and any ● spent in the current month are lost.

Units can remain in training for as long as the owner wishes them to. Each month of training increases a unit's Me, Ra, De, or Mo by +1. Only one of these ratings can be improved each month of training, plus additional Ht for ● expenditures. The cost of this training depends on the unit's rating before the training began as shown in the following table.

Original Rating	Cost
+0 or +1 Me, Ra or Mo, 10 or 11 De	0.5 WP
+2 or +3 Me, Ra or Mo, 12 or 13 De	1 WP
+4 Me, Ra or Mo, 14 De	1.5 WP
+5 Me, Ra or Mo, 15 De	2 WP
+6 Me, Ra or Mo, 16 De	3 WP
+7 Me, Ra or Mo, 17 De	4 WP
+8 Me, Ra or Mo, 18 De	5 WP
+9 or higher Me, Ra or Mo, 19+ De	Not allowed (may only increase via experience)

Experience

The more actual battle experience a unit has, the higher its various ratings. If a unit survives a battle, even if it was routed or destroyed and then reformed after the battle (see Tactical Battle rules), there is a chance that it will gain experience. After each battle, units that survived all roll 1d20 + the number of battles they have survived. This is considered an opposed test against a number equal to 10 + the unit's current Mo rating.

On a failure, the unit does not gain experience or recover from losses suffered in battle. These losses will need to be restored by training. On a success, the unit restores any losses that it took during the battle, including penalties incurred for routing, and continues to function normally. The unit also gains +1 Me, Ra (if it had an Ra rating to begin with), Mo, or De. On a critical success, they gain a +1 to one of the above ratings and +1 Ht as well. This roll cannot raise a normal human or humanoid unit's Ht to higher than 4.

Maintenance

Units cost money to feed, house, keep equipped, and maintain effectiveness. Maintenance costs are paid during the Step 4: Calculate and Pay Expenses phase of each season. Each unit costs 1/4 of its current Co rating (including increases in its Co rating as a result of experience/training), rounded down to a minimum of .5 ●. A unit with an initial Co of 2 ● (Maintenance cost .5 ●) that has been raised to Veteran status through experience or training would have a total Co value of 4 ● and therefore have a Maintenance cost of 1 ●.

Garrison Duty: During a strategic move, a leader can declare that units are on garrison duty. These units will cost only half their normal garrison cost (to a minimum of 0.5 ●). Units on garrison duty may not make strategic moves during the season that they are garrisoned and if forced to engage in combat, they do so at a -1 penalty to Me, De, and Mo.

Failure to pay a military unit will reduce its Mo by 1 and the loyalty of the county by 1 stage. If this reduces the county to hostile the unit sacks an asset of the owner of the military unit for back pay. The unit's leader must depreciate their greatest asset in that county by 1 level.

Maximum Army Size

Armies are limited in size by logistics, payroll, supply, maintenance costs, and other factors. A faction can maintain as many armies as it can afford to maintain, but in most cases individual armies are limited to a maximum of five units. Larger and more influential realms can create larger armies and a realm's maximum army size is a number of units equal to the highest level county that it controls or to five units, whichever number is greater.

Normally, a faction can have only one army per county, though more than one faction can have an army in a given county. Two smaller armies of the same faction can be combined into a single larger army so long as the maximum army size is not exceeded.

Strategic Turns and Movement

Strategic turns involve large bodies of troops moving from one county to another and engaging in battle. A single strategic turn represents one month of time. Each season therefore consists of three strategic turns.

After taking a Warfare action, a leader makes strategic moves, moving all desired armies up to the limit of their movement allowance (usually that of the slowest unit in the army). If any enemy armies are encountered, Evasion may be attempted (see below). Once all strategic movement is completed by the leader, tactical combat takes place in any counties that contain opposing armies that have not evaded each other.

Opposed Check: An opposed check is a check whose success or failure is determined by comparing the check result to another character's check result. The higher result succeeds. In case of a tie, the higher faction skill modifier wins unless specified otherwise.

General: Character commanding the army and rolling the tests for the army. It may be a PC or an NPC leader or one of their lieutenants.

Strategic Movement

Units have a number of movement points equal to their Mv value. Each county that a unit moves through in a strategic turn costs between 0.5 and 3 movement points as illustrated on the chart below. This cost is determined by both a county's terrain and its relative level of development. An army that moves together must do so at the Mv rate of its slowest unit.

Faster units can leave their army, but they are no longer under the command of their general and must act independently of their army. An army can always move through one county per strategic move, even if it doesn't have a sufficient Mv score (such as an army with a Mv of 2 that wishes to move through deep forest or mountains).

Counties can have roads or highways (see Constructions rules in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*), but only highways provide any benefit to army movement. Movement cost is determined utilizing the following table.

County's Terrain	No Highways	Highway
Plains, Scrubland	1	0.5
Light Forest	2	1
Deep Forest, Jungle	4	2
Swamp, Deep Desert, Cursed Land	3	2
Hills	2	1
Mountains	12	4
Tundra, Arctic	3	2

Rivers

In some cases, a river forms the border between two counties. If a county has a connection level of 0 or 1, then an army must stop moving for one strategic turn while it builds rafts and temporary bridges to cross the obstacle. If the county has a connection level of 2 or if friendly naval units are present in the county (see below), the army can cross at a cost of 1 additional Movement point (units with Mv of 1 must wait one strategic turn to cross). A connection level of 3 allows the army to cross the river with no penalties.

Light naval vessels can move from county to county along major rivers. Moving downstream (toward the ocean) costs 1 MP per county, while moving upstream (away from the ocean) costs 2 MP per county. Light naval vessels in a county may not participate in land combat, but two groups of light naval vessels in the same county may fight each other.

Forced March

Units can be forced to continue moving beyond their normal range of endurance. Forced marches may help get an army to its destination quicker or help slower units to keep up with their faster fellows, but they also run the risk of fatiguing units and reducing their effectiveness. A unit may double its Mv rate by forced march, but its general must make an **Order Skill Test** (DC 10). If no general is present, the unit must make an unmodified 1d20 roll. On a failure, the unit is fatigued. On a success, the unit is not fatigued.

Evasion

When two armies occupy the same county, they will engage in battle unless they both wish to avoid each other or if one is able to evade the other. If neither army wishes to engage in combat, no battle takes place. If one army wishes to evade and the other wishes to bring it to battle, the commanders make an opposed Order skill test, with each adding +1 for each scout in the army. If the evading army's total is higher, it has successfully avoided battle and no combat takes place this strategic turn. If not, battle takes place.

An Evasion check costs the evading army one extra Movement point, though all units (even those with Mv 1) can make a minimum of one Evasion check per strategic turn. If the army has Movement remaining, it can continue to move out of the county and continue evading as long as its slowest units have Mv remaining. If there are any units with Mv 1 or if the army is out of Movement points, no further Evasion moves may be made.

Fatigue

Units that have reached the limit of their endurance through forced marches or combat are considered "fatigued." When fatigued, a unit's Me and Ra ratings are reduced by -1, their De and Mo ratings are reduced by -2 and its Mv rating is reduced by -1 to a minimum of 1. Units recover from fatigue by remaining stationary for one strategic turn. Units that move or engage in combat remain fatigued and will continue to do so until they can spend one strategic turn without moving or fighting.

Optional: Seasonal Moves

In most lands there is a war season and a peaceful season. During war seasons – usually the spring and/or summer – armies can move more readily due to clear weather and milder temperatures. In autumn and winter, the weather turns fouler and restricts army movement. To simulate this, the GM can use the following modifications to strategic movement during the appropriate seasons.

Spring: Heavy rains and planting prevent strategic movement in early spring. Strategic moves are not allowed during the first month of spring.

Summer: While hot weather may interfere with actual tactical combat, strategic moves are allowed for all three months of summer.

Fall: The weather worsens in later fall, and many realms are preoccupied with the harvest. Strategic moves may only take place during the first two months of fall.

Winter: Strategic moves are not allowed during the winter unless specifically confirmed by the GM.

Battle Resolution

The process of tactical battle resolution is quite straightforward and can be easily used to resolve battles in your campaign. The optional rules that follow can be used for additional complexity and realism.

Combat Procedure

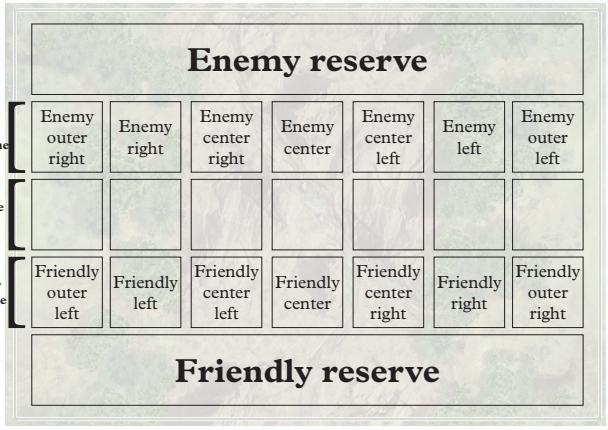
Once two armies occupy the same county and neither has evaded the other (see Strategic Movement), battle can commence.

The Battlefield

Seeds of Wars battles take place on a battle field divided into five areas – the Front Line (normally not initially occupied by units) plus Battle Lines and Reserve Areas for both sides. Units are first deployed into friendly Battle Lines, then the friendly Reserve Area. During combat, units may end their movement in any space except the enemy Reserve Area.

The number of Battle and Front Line spaces available for combat are governed by the type of terrain in which the battle takes place. Open field battles have a full seven spaces and can be highly mobile, while battles in forests (five spaces) or mountain passes (three spaces) will be more restrictive, usually making the attacker's job harder as fewer units are required to mount an effective defense. Use the following battlefield layout when deploying for combat. The diagram and chart below list the number of spaces available in each terrain type. Note that terrain also has effects on combat as described below.

Terrain Type	Number of spaces in Front and Battle Lines
Arctic, Deep Water, Open, Desert	7
Light Forest, Hills, Shallow Water	5
Heavy Forest, Mountains, Swamp	3



Tactical Combat

Each battle begins with deployment then proceeds to one or more combat rounds until a victor is determined, as described below.

I. Deployment

II. Combat Round

1. Recovery checks for Shaken or Routed units

2. Initiative

3. Movement

4. Ranged combat

5. Melee combat

6. Morale checks on units that took damage during combat

III. Determine Victor; if neither side is the victor, fight another Combat Round.

I. Deployment

The competing army commanders make an opposed Order Skill Test, with each adding the total number of scouts in their respective forces. The losing army deploys its army first. Units may deploy in any open space on their army's side of the battlefield or in the reserve. The two sides must completely fill their Battle Line spaces before deploying to reserve. Should the Order Skill Test for deployment result in a draw, the sides alternate placing units, with the defending side deploying first, until all units are deployed.

If one or both armies are accompanied by characters, the side that deployed first then places its characters, followed by the other side. Each side then determines which unit ratings their characters are going to modify and secretly makes a note of it (see Characters & Leaders below). The actual ratings modified by characters are not revealed until they affect combat.

II. Combat Round

Tactical combat takes place in rounds. Each round is divided into the phases described below.

1. Recovery Checks: Shaken and routed units roll 1d20 and add their adjusted Mo ratings. If the result is 10 or greater, the recovery check succeeds -- routed units become shaken and shaken units regain normal morale state. If the roll fails, the unit retains its current Morale state. Routed units that are in the Reserve area are removed from the battle. In this case a natural roll of 1 or 20 has no special effects.

2. Initiative: The army commanders make an opposed Order Skill Test. The winner with the highest total decides who moves first. This test may be made once per combat round or a single test may be made at the beginning of the battle, with the resulting Initiative order applying to the entire battle.

3. Movement: The side acting first moves one unit then the second side moves one unit. The sides alternate until one or both sides pass. If one side passes, the other may move the remainder of their units. Units may move forward, backward, or sideways up to their total Mv value. Units in the Reserve may move into any space that they have Mv to reach. Units may move through friendly units.

If a unit moves into a space occupied by a friendly unit, then the unit that originally occupied the space must leave the space immediately on the next friendly unit move.

Swapping positions or moving units into friendly spaces that are vulnerable to attack is a very risky act. If an enemy unit attacks a space that contains two friendly units in the midst of this process, the player must immediately move one of the two units to an adjacent unoccupied space. The unit that is forced to move in this fashion is fatigued. If

there is no unoccupied space available, the unit is routed and moved directly to the Reserve.

A unit must stop in a space occupied by an enemy unit and is considered to be in combat. It may not leave that space save as a result of Retreat Before Combat (see Melee Combat) or as a result of combat.

4. Ranged Combat: Once all movement is complete, any unit with a Ra rating that is not engaged in Melee combat may make an attack roll against an orthogonally (i.e. non-diagonally) adjacent enemy unit. The attacking missile unit rolls 1d20 and adds its Ra rating. If the result exceeds its target's De rating, a Hit is inflicted on the target and noted. If an unmodified 20 is rolled on the d20, note the damage and make another Ranged attack roll. These are open-ended rolls — if another 20 is rolled, roll again and continue for so long as 20s are rolled. An unmodified roll of 1 always misses.

If a unit has taken Hits equal to or greater than its Hits remaining, it is considered destroyed and removed from the battle.

5. Melee Combat: Melee combat now takes place between opposing units that are in the same space. Melee is considered simultaneous and can be carried out in any order that the players wish. Roll 1d20 for the attacking unit and add its Me rating. If the result exceeds its target's De rating, a Hit is scored on the defender. If the attack roll is an unmodified 20, the attack automatically inflicts a Hit and the attacking unit can make another attack roll and continue making attack rolls as long as unmodified 20s continue to be rolled. If the unmodified attack roll is a 1, the enemy unit may make one melee attack on the attacking unit.

If a unit has taken damage equal to or greater than its Ht value, it is destroyed and removed from the battle. If it is not destroyed the unit must then make a Morale check to see how well it withstands the damage (see next phase).

Retreat before Combat: If the defender is a unit with a Ra attack rating and has a Mv rating equal to or higher than the attacker, the Ra unit may attempt to avoid the attack. Each unit rolls 1d20 and adds its Mv rating. If the defender's total is higher, it has successfully avoided the attack and is moved directly to the Reserve. The attacking unit is left in the space.

Charging: Units with the charge special ability that are making their first attack against an enemy unit that they did not attack in the previous round add +2 to their Melee roll.

Flanking Maneuver: If a friendly unit occupies an orthogonally-adjacent square and has not exhausted its Mv during the Movement phase, it can provide a +2 to its ally's Melee rolls. Multiple units may provide cumulative flanking bonuses to either or both sides of a combat.

6. Morale: Once all Ranged and Melee combat is complete, any units that took damage during this turn must roll 1d20, add their Mo ratings, and subtract any Hits they have taken in the course of the battle (not just this turn). If the result is 10 or greater, the unit has passed its morale check. If the roll is lower than 10, it has failed.

Units in normal morale state that fail their Mo roll are shaken. If the unit was already shaken it is considered routed. If the unit was routed at the beginning of the Morale check and fails this roll it is considered destroyed and removed from the battle. There is no special benefit or penalty for rolling a 1 or 20 on a Morale check.

Morale States

Units can be in one of three morale states — normal, shaken, and routed.

Normal: Units begin the battle in normal state. While in normal state, a unit moves, shoots, and engages in melee normally, with no modifications or penalties.

Shaken: Shaken units incur a -2 penalty to its Ra, Me, and Mo rolls. Shaken units make Mo rolls at the beginning of the turn and regain a normal state if they succeed. A unit that is shaken at the beginning of its turn and does not take damage during the turn may make its Recovery roll without penalty. A shaken unit that succeeds on its Recovery roll returns to normal morale status.

Routed: Units that have been routed suffer a -4 penalty to Ra, Me, and Mo rolls. Like shaken units, any routed units still on the battlefield may attempt to recover at the beginning of a combat round. Routed units that begin their Movement in the reserve area are removed from the battle but may return afterwards (see "After the Battle").

Optional: Terrain Effects

Terrain can have a decisive effect on battle. While most battles take place in open country, these rules can be used to determine the specific terrain where combat occurs. Terrain rules are optional and can be used if agreed upon by the GM or the players.

Before battle, each commander selects a terrain type — this may be open terrain or the county's major terrain. If the commanders choose the same type, the battle takes place on that terrain. If they do not, then the commander who won initiative chooses the terrain.

Open: Includes unobstructed fields, farmland, plains, tundra, hard-packed desert, grasslands, etc. Open terrain is the default battlefield terrain and has no effect on movement or combat.

Forest: This terrain includes lightly-wooded areas and sparse forests that impair movement and visibility. Mounted units have a maximum Mv of 1 and no unit can make charge attacks. Ra attacks suffer a -4 penalty.

Deep Forest/Jungle: Thick woods or jungle present serious obstacles for movement and reduce visibility significantly. All units have a maximum Mv value of 1 and no units can charge or make Ra attacks.

Swamp: Coastal marshes, wetlands, fens, tropical bogs, and similar terrain are all considered swamp. All units have a maximum Mv value of 1, no units can charge, and mounted units suffer a -2 penalty to their Me and De ratings.

Hills: This terrain type can include rough foothills, dells, highlands, and similar regions. In Hill regions, based on the initiative order, the first player's units may not make charge attacks. The second player's units receive a +1 bonus to their De values and Ra attacks.

Mountains: Mountainous terrain almost always favors defenders and can be all but impossible to conquer. In mountain regions, based on the initiative order, the first player's units may not make charge attacks, suffer a -2 penalty to their De values, and may not make missile attacks on adjacent units. The second player's units gain a +2 bonus to De values and to Me and Ra attacks.

Deep Desert: Hot, arid, with extremely hazardous terrain such as rocky plains or vast shifting sands, deserts are an especially challenging environment for battle. All Mv is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1). Units from non-desert counties cannot charge and suffer a -2 penalty to Mo.

Arctic: This terrain type includes cold, frozen, or similarly treacherous regions. All Mv is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1). Units that are from non-arctic counties suffer a -2 penalty to De and a -1 penalty to Me.

Deep Water: Deep water is the aquatic equivalent of open terrain and imposes no penalties on naval movement or combat.

Shallow Water: Includes coastline, lakes, rivers, and shoals. Heavy naval units suffer a -2 penalty to their De ratings and Me attacks.

Optional: Weather Effects

Weather can have as decisive an effect on battle as terrain and when combined with negative terrain effects can lead to disaster for unprepared armies. Weather is less predictable than terrain, and is usually out of the combatants' control unless they have access to powerful magic. The GM may determine the prevalent weather or may roll 1d100 on the following table according to season.

	Clear	High Winds	Lt Precip.	Hvy Precip.	Ext. Temp.	Storm
Spring	0-65	66-70	71-85	86-95	96-99	00
Summer	0-60	-	61-65	66-75	76-95	96-00
Fall	0-50	51-55	56-75	76-90	91-95	96-00
Winter	0-40	41-55	56-70	71-80	81-90	91-00

These weather conditions have the following effects. They are cumulative with other effects such as Mo.

Clear: Normal weather without wind or precipitation has no effect on combat.

High Winds: Units may not make Ra attacks.

Light Precipitation: This represents light to moderate rain, snow, sleet, or hail. Units suffer a -1 penalty to Ra attacks.

Heavy Precipitation: Extremely heavy rain, snow, or other precipitation interferes with both movement and missile combat. Units may not charge and suffer a -2 penalty to Ra attacks. Mounted units suffer a -1 penalty to their Mv value (to a minimum of 1).

Extreme Temperatures: This condition represents extremes of both heat and cold, which sap units' strength and reduce their overall effectiveness. Units that fight in extreme temperatures suffer a -1 penalty to their Me values per turn, up to a maximum of -3. In addition, beginning on the third turn of combat, units' Mo values are reduced by 1 per turn to a minimum of 0. Also beginning on the third turn, units gain no bonus from charge attacks.

If the GM wishes, units that are native to regions that regularly experience extreme temperature may suffer fewer penalties or suffer no ill effects at all due to their equipment, preparation, and physical qualities.

Storm: This condition refers to a hurricane, sandstorm, typhoon, or other extreme weather. Combat cannot take place.

Forts, Castles and Storming the Walls

Armies on the march may create fortified camps or utilize local fortifications and strongpoints to aid in their defense. An army can do this by remaining in a county for one full strategic turn, not moving or fighting. Once this process is complete, all units in the army gain a +1 bonus to their De values for as long as they remain in that county. The bonus is lost to any unit that leaves the county. Garrisoned units cannot create fortified camps.

Fortifications such as citadels, fortresses, and castles are all constructions that are created with a Build action. Leaders who control a county with fortifications that is invaded by an enemy force may choose to meet the enemy in a field battle, in which case the fight takes place normally, or may choose to weather a siege.

If the defender chooses to endure a siege, its units all receive a bonus to their De values determined by the level of fortification (+1 for a Citadel, +2 for a Fortress, +3 for a Castle), but cannot move past their own friendly deployment spaces. Units cannot gain the benefit of both a fortified camp and a fortification.

Units lose any charge bonuses when attacking a fortification. Mounted units may not engage in Me against units in a fortification. In addition to their normal Ra attack, units in a fortification with Ra ratings may make a single Ra attack against enemy units engaging them in melee before the Melee round begins.

At any point after the first round of combat, the attacker may break off the attack and remain in the county for the remainder of the strategic turn. On subsequent strategic turns, the attacker may choose to abandon the siege and move out of the county or may make another attack.

Naval Units and Combat

Combat between ships is handled similarly to land units, but only ship units can participate. In most cases, while land units can be transported aboard ships, they cannot participate in naval combat.

Naval units use the same statistics as land units, but they represent somewhat different actions. A vessel with charge, for example, can be considered to be especially well-protected and equipped with a metal beak for ramming, while those ships with Ra ratings have on-board missile weapons or siege engines such as ballistae or cannons.

Wind Direction: Naval engagements are subject to the same weather conditions as land battles – if, for example, a storm is rolled for weather conditions, the naval fight may not take place due to heavy seas. In addition to the usual weather conditions, the two sides may make a contested

roll to see if either has managed to turn local weather conditions to their advantage. The combatants make an opposed Order Skill Test. The player with the winning roll is considered to have achieved favorable conditions, essentially entering battle with the wind at their back. The winning side's ships gain a +1 Mv and a +1 to Ra rolls, while the losing side suffers a -1 Mv penalty (to a minimum of 1 Mv) and -1 penalty to Ra rolls. Note that some vessels, such as war galleys, do not suffer Mv penalties due to being powered by oars rather than sails.

Boarding Actions: If two opposing vessels occupy the same space, an attacker may attempt to board and capture an enemy ship. Any units on board the friendly vessel then engage any units on the opposing vessel. The friendly vessel must attempt to maneuver close and grapple with the enemy. This is simulated with an opposed check, with each vessel rolling 1d20 + its Mv value. If the attacker wins, the ships are grappled and a boarding attempt may take place. If not, the defender has successfully evaded the attempt and combat continues as normal. The general (or, in this case, admiral) or characters aboard opposing vessels may add their battle bonus to the die roll as well, as described in the Characters and Leaders rules below. As noted, only one such character can benefit the roll at a time.

If the boarding attempt is successful, then any units carried by either vessel must engage in combat as a separate engagement. Each attacking unit chooses a single defending unit and engages in normal rounds of combat until one side is eliminated or surrenders. Characters may add their battle bonus to these engagements. Uncommitted units do not participate in combat until an opponent is available. The ships are considered locked together, their rigging and structures entangled, and cannot "break off" from this combat. It continues until a winner has been determined.

Marines (see Specialized Training) are experienced in shipboard combat and fight normally during boarding actions. Units that have not received marine training receive a -2 to their Me, Ra, and Mo ratings. Land units do not receive charge bonuses for boarding actions. Mounted units cannot participate in boarding actions.

The winner of the combat is considered to have captured its foe (this does mean that a defending ship can capture an enemy vessel). Captured ships do not participate in the remainder of the battle and must be returned to a friendly port to take on a full crew before they can participate in combat again as friendly units.

If one side has units on board and the other does not, the side with units automatically wins the combat. If neither side has units, then each ship makes a Me roll, with the winner capturing the loser. As with unit combat, characters on shipboard may add their battle bonus to the die roll. A vessel must provide a prize crew to sail a captured vessel – if it is not carrying units, a single ship can only capture one enemy vessel per engagement. Ships that carry units must reduce the number of units they are carrying by one to represent the loss of personnel to crew the captured ship. Effectively, a single ship may only capture a number of enemy vessels equal to its Br rating +1 in a single engagement.

III. Determining Victory

Battles continue until all units on one side are destroyed or one side surrenders. A battle also ends if all of one side's units are in the Reserve area. If one side surrenders and there are still units in its Battle Line, all surviving units are considered captured. If all of one side's units are in its Reserve area, the survivors can withdraw to an adjacent friendly county regardless of their Mv values. If there are no friendly counties available, the army must surrender and submit to capture.

After the Battle

Units that survived the battle can retreat to a friendly county as described above. Routed units that exited the battlefield must roll 1d20 + Mo, with a difficulty of 10 + current damage the unit has taken in Hits. On a failure, they are considered destroyed. On a success, they have survived the battle.

The fate of captured troops is up to the victorious side. They may be held indefinitely, killed, ransomed, or returned to their nearest friendly county. The GM may determine that units take losses to their various ratings as a result of being captured or having their equipment confiscated, etc. Such losses must be restored through training.

Conquer: If the victorious sovereign wishes to incorporate the occupied county into their realm, it must first be pacified and brought to heel. This involves the suppression or reassurance of the locals, elimination of rebellious communities, establishment of a new government, tax structure, etc.

A number of units equal to half the county's level must remain in the occupied county for one full season. During this time, the county generates no Wealth or Influence by taxation. If the occupying force falls below this level or leaves the county, the occupied county returns to its original owner and can be administered normally. This process can take place during seasons when army movement and combat are not allowed.

Once a full season of occupation is complete, the conquering sovereign is considered the owner of the county. If more than one army exists in a country who could conquer it, their owners must either reach a consensus on who will conquer it, or they will have to resolve their disagreement

on the battlefield. This will require an Edict action (see *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*) to be performed by the new sovereign but no action roll is required. Unless the GM decides otherwise, the county's loyalty level begins at hostile, but can be improved in the normal manner.

Sacking: The occupying force need not occupy or incorporate the occupied county. Rather than attempting to pacify the populace, the occupiers may simply run wild in the region, burning and pillaging. This requires a number of units equal to half the county's level to remain in the occupied county for one full season. The county does not generate Wealth or Influence during this time. This process can also take place during seasons when army movement and combat are not allowed.

Once this period is complete, the county's level is permanently reduced by 1. The pillaging faction receives a number of Wealth Points equal to the county's level. The occupiers can also reduce all of a county's constructions and assets by 1 level each per season, receiving 1 ● for every level destroyed. Occupiers can remain in a county, pillaging each season and gaining income based on its new level and that of its constructions and assets, until all are reduced to zero.

If the original owning realm successfully pushes the occupiers out of the county before the Sack is complete, the county returns to the original realm, but its Loyalty level is reduced by one grade due to dissatisfaction and general disruption.

Characters and Leaders

Naturally, if *Seeds of Wars* is being used in association with a roleplaying campaign, player characters may well be involved in military campaigns and battles. Leaders are, of course, the primary characters, and while they might not fight directly in their realms' battles, they may have others assisting them as either player or non-player characters. In many cases, a powerful character may be able to sway an entire battle.

Characters in Battle

If you're playing *Seeds of Wars* in association with a larger roleplaying campaign that involves the use of NPCs and player characters, the GM may wish to have characters who accompany units actually play out the fight in a roleplaying session and apply the results to the battle – this is beyond the scope of the current rules and is left to GMs to adjudicate. The following rules provide a more abstract system for including characters and can be used if influential NPCs are participating in a battle.

In combat, any number of characters may accompany a unit, but only one may use its attributes to modify that unit's ratings. Which character is aiding a unit and which rating it affects must be decided at the beginning of the battle and cannot be changed unless the affecting character is killed, in which case a second character present in the unit may be selected.

Characters may freely leave and join units and are considered to have sufficient Mv to move anywhere on the battlefield. A wounded character may, for example, withdraw to the Reserve and leave command to another character. Characters in the Reserve may leave the battle altogether, but cannot return.

As *Seeds of Wars* endeavors to be system-neutral in its approach to realm and faction management, characters are organized into generic classes that reflect their role in a campaign. These are not intended to replace the classes that may exist in the RPG system you are using, but are broad categories into which you can fit your player characters and NPCs.

It's also entirely feasible to adapt your RPG system's skill system directly to *Seeds of Wars*, substituting bonuses and skill levels for the bonuses provided below, adapting other systems to the d20-based system we have presented.

Battle Bonus

Characters who participate in battle provide a bonus equal to their highest faction skill bonus as described in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction* to the military unit they lead on the battlefield. This bonus applies to some of the unit's statistics, as described below.

Character Classes

Seeds of Wars assumes that characters and NPCs that accompany military units will each conform to one of the following classes:

Warrior: Martial characters such as fighters, monks, and paladins are most at home in armies and fighting battles. Warriors add their bonus to their unit's Me and De values.

Ranger: Scouts, rogues, and other specialists in reconnaissance, concealment, hidden movement, and ranged combat fit into this category. Rangers add their Bonus to the De and Ra values of their unit. They cannot add an Ra Bonus to any unit that doesn't have an Ra value. Rangers are also considered to be scouts when making Evasion and Deployment rolls.

Priest: Chaplains and battle priests can take several roles in combat, providing healing or inspiration to the troops that they accompany. They add their Bonus to the De value for unit they accompany. In addition,

during the Morale phase, priests with a damaged unit may make roll 1d20 + bonus with a difficulty of 10 + current damage the unit has taken in Hits. On a success, the unit regains 1 Ht.

Bard: A bard is more than simply a traveling entertainer. Bards are jacks of all trades and many have been known to lead entire armies, using their broad knowledge and charisma to command and inspire armies to perform heroic deeds. Bards add their bonus to the Mo ratings of the unit that they accompany and allow those which fail Morale checks to immediately reroll the failed check. The second result cannot be rerolled.

Spellcaster: Pure arcane spellcasters such as wizards, warlocks, and sorcerers fall into this category. Each turn a spellcaster can add their bonus to a unit's Me, Ra, or De rating. The spellcaster determines which rating is to be improved during each turn's Recovery phase.

Taking Damage in Battle

Entering combat is a risky proposition in the best of times. Characters face hostile forces, deadly melee, and determined missile fire and are often the direct target of enemy actions due to their fame, prominence, or position in their respective units.

When a unit that is accompanied by a character takes damage, the character must roll 1d20 + battle bonus to avoid harm, difficulty 10 + current damage the unit has taken in Hits. On a success, they avoid damage. On a failure, the character takes a number of Wounds equal to the damage inflicted on their unit in this attack.

Each Wound equals 25% of the character's total damage capacity (measured in Hit Points, Health Damage, etc.). After the battle, characters with captured units are also considered captured. The GM may allow a roleplaying session or skill test to see if they escape.

If a character is with a unit that is destroyed, they must roll 1d20 + battle bonus – the destroyed unit's Ht rating.

Roll	Result
<1	The character was killed along with the unit
1-10	The character is captured
11-15	The character has escaped but has suffered three Wounds.
16+	The character has escaped with no further injury

Surviving characters may redeploy to other units or reform their heroic unit, possibly at a lower level of effectiveness as determined by the GM.

Optional: Heroic Units

If the GM allows, leaders may be able to recruit heroic units for battle as well. These may represent adventuring parties, actual player characters, monstrous creatures, or other units that deviate from the norm of a fully military group. This may also represent an abstract representation of a group of player characters who wish to fight together, rather than spreading themselves throughout an army using the character rules listed above.

A heroic unit is composed of a smaller number of members, ranging from a single powerful monster to a group of ten or so adventurers. As noted, this is a somewhat abstract representation and for more detailed play, the GM should run an actual roleplaying session to follow the characters in battle. If a less detailed event is desired, the GM should determine the average power level of the party or monster and utilize the suggested ratings below, along with the cost of equipping and supplying the unit. All heroic units are considered scouts.

Heroic Unit Level	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Ht	Mv	Co
Novice	+6	+2	14	+4	2	2	4
Low	+7	+3	14	+6	3	2	6
Moderate	+8	+4	15	+6	3	2	8
High	+10	+6	15	+8	4	3	10
Epic	+12	+8	16	+8	4	3	12
Legendary	+12	+10	18	+10	4	4	14

Quick Battle Resolution

In many cases players won't want to go through the entire process of battle resolution and will prefer to resolve the fight with a single die roll, followed by checks on the fate of the units involved. In this case, use the following procedure.

1. Determine OV/DV

Determine the Offensive Value (OV) of each army by adding together the Me or Ra (whichever is higher) and dividing the total by the number of units in each army.

Determine the Defensive Value (DV) of each army by adding together each unit's De and dividing by the total number of units in each army.

2. Roll 1d20

Each army commander now rolls 1d20 and adds their army's OV. The die roll is modified by the following factors:

Each commander adds their **Order Skill Bonus** to the die roll.

- Add +1 to the die roll of the side with more units.

- Add another +1 to the die roll of the larger army if it outnumbers enemy units by 2-1 or more.

- Add a further +3 to the die roll of the larger army if it outnumbers enemy units by 3-1 or more.

- If you are using a level-based roleplaying system, add +1 to the die roll of the side that has more total character levels in its army. If you are not using a level-based system, add +1 to the die roll of the side with more player characters. If characters are present, the commanding players must determine which units they accompany in case those units take damage in battle.

3. Determine Victor

If one side's die roll exceeds the enemy's DV, then that side has won the battle. If both rolls exceed the enemy's DV, then the side whose die roll succeeded by more wins the battle. If both sides fail to exceed their enemy's DV or they succeed by the same amount, the battle is a draw.

If the battle is a draw, then each side must make a casualty check as described in Step 5, after which the armies may either remain in place and fight another round of combat or withdraw to an adjacent friendly territory.

4. Determine Level of Victory and Results

If one side won the battle, then the amount by which their die roll exceeded the enemy's DV determines the level of victory:

- **Marginal Victory:** Difference between the two die rolls was 5 or less. Each unit on the losing side must roll 1d20. If the result is greater than the unit's De rating, the unit suffers one Ht damage. On a roll of 1, the unit loses 1 Ht and is considered captured. Units that survive can retreat to an adjacent friendly territory.

- **Significant Victory:** Difference between the two rolls was 6-10. Each unit on the losing side must roll 1d20. If the result is greater than the unit's De rating, the unit suffers 1d3 Ht damage. On a roll of 1, the unit loses 1d3 Ht and is captured if it was not destroyed. Units that were not destroyed or captured may retreat to an adjacent friendly territory.

- **Major Victory:** Difference between the two rolls was 11-15. Each unit on the losing side must roll 1d20 +5. If the result is greater than the unit's De rating, the unit suffers 1d6 Ht damage. On a roll of 5 or less, the unit loses 1d6 Ht and if it is not destroyed it is captured. Units not destroyed or captured may retreat to an adjacent friendly territory.

- **Decisive Victory:** Difference between the two rolls was 16-20. Each losing unit must roll 1d20 +5. If the result is greater than the unit's De rating, the unit is destroyed or captured if the winning general wishes. If the result is less than the unit's De rating, it still takes 1d4 Ht damage. Units that are not destroyed or captured may retreat to an adjacent friendly territory.

- **Massacre:** Difference between the rolls was 21 or more. All units on the losing side are considered destroyed or captured if the winning general wishes.

5. Draw Victor's Casualties

Some victories are more costly than others. The winning side must check for casualties as well, making an **Order Skill Test**.

- On a 1-5, each unit must roll 1d20 and on a result greater than its De, the unit must take 1d4 Ht damage.

- On a 6-10, each unit must roll 1d20 and on a result greater than its De, the unit must take 1d3 Ht damage.

- On an 11-15, each unit must roll 1d20 and on a result greater than its De, the unit must take 1d2 Ht damage.

- On a 16-20, each unit must roll 1d20 and on a result greater than its De, the unit takes 1Ht damage.

- On a 21+, the general's army took no casualties at all.

If the battle resulted in a draw, both armies must make a casualty check.

BATTLE EXAMPLE

Example: King Velric Borgon of Kedohaw has declared war on Cadelania! Grand Princess Severina might question his motives, but first she must defend her borders. Highways run from her capital in Lightborne to his in Oneadien, so the battle is likely to take place in Trorel or Kiethien. They are each able to bring their entire force to bear, and the two rulers are themselves acting as generals. This grudge appears vicious and personal, and neighbors certainly take note.

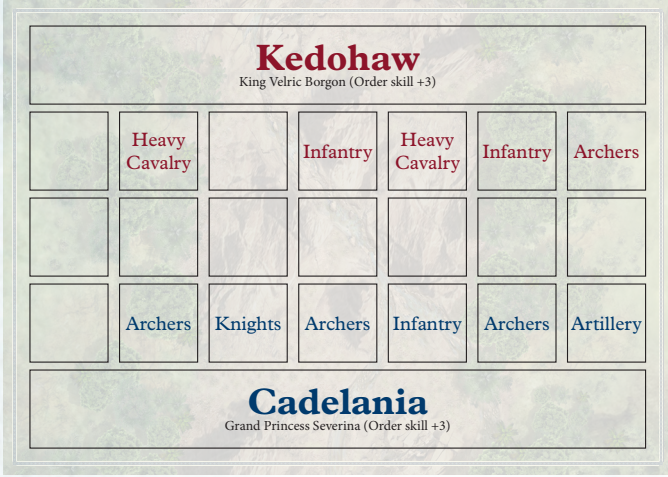
I. Deployment

Neither force includes any scouts. Severina has an Order Skill of +3 and rolls a 17 for a total of 20.

Velric also has a +3, and rolls a 16 for a total of 19.

The battlefield is open terrain, so the Front and Battle Lines each have 7 spaces, and the two forces place back and forth until all units are in the Battle Lines; none can be held in reserve since Severina has 6 units and Velric has 5.

Severina places herself with the artillery, and Velric with his archers. Neither is eager to find themselves on the Front Line, but they each keep this information secret.



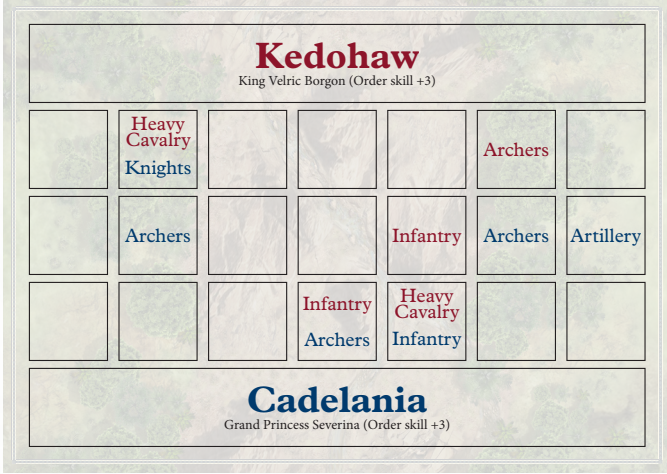
II. Combat Round

1. **Recovery Checks:** In the first round of combat, no unit starts Shaken or Routed, but Severina is a spellcaster and she gets choose where to apply her Battle Bonus in this phase.

She decides to boost her artillery's Ra rating by +3. Velric is a warrior, so his +3 applies to his archer unit's Me and De ratings.

2. **Initiative:** The GM decides to stick with the deployment roll as Initiative for the first round and waits to see how things go before deciding if they will require another Initiative roll in later rounds.

3. **Movement:** Both forces move according to their Initiative and the limits of their units' Mv ratings.



4. **Ranged Combat:** Kedohaw's archers attack Cadelania's right archers (1d20 + Ra 4 comes up 17, that's 1 Ht).

Cadelania's left archers attack Kedohaw's left heavy cavalry (1d20 + Ra 4 comes up 11, no damage). Cadelania's center archers are in melee and cannot attack. Cadelania's right archers attack Kedohaw's right infantry (1d20 + Ra 4 comes up 18, that's 1Ht).

Cadelania's artillery have double standard range and can attack Kedohaw's archers or infantry (1d20 + Ra 9 comes up 22, which destroys Kedohaw's right infantry).

5. **Melee Combat:** Cadelania's knights charged Kedohaw's left heavy cavalry, giving them a +4; Cadelania's left archers are adjacent and have unused Mv, so they count as flanking and provide an additional +2; Cadelania's knights roll 1d20 + 6 Me and bonuses for a whopping 29 (1 Ht), and Kedohaw's heavy cavalry roll 1d20 + 4 Me for a mere 7 (no damage).

Cadelania's center archers can attempt to retreat before combat because they have a Ra rating and a Mv equal to or higher than Kedohaw's left infantry.

The archers roll 1d20 + Mv 2 and get 8, and the infantry roll 1d20 + Mv 2 and get 20; the infantry wins, so combat proceeds. The archers roll 1d20 + Me 2 and get 11 (no damage), the infantry roll 1d20 + Me 4 and get 11 (no damage).

Kedohaw's right heavy cavalry successfully charged Cadelania's infantry, which provides a +2 bonus; the heavy cavalry roll 1d20 + Me 4 and bonus for a total of 10 (no damage), while the infantry roll 1d20 + Me 4 and get 13 (no damage).

6. **Morale:** Cadelania's right archers took 1Ht and Kedohaw's left heavy cavalry took 1Ht, so each must make a Mo check.
The archers roll 1d20 + Mo 4 and get 6, the heavy cavalry roll 1d20 + Mo 4 and get 23.
The archers fail and are Shaken in the upcoming round; the heavy cavalry pass and are unaffected.

III. Determine Victor

There have been some casualties, but Cadelania and Kedohaw are still on the field; it will take several more rounds of play before this battle is decided!

Chapter IV
Realm Magic

The swirling vortex of magical power ebbed as the spell lost focus before finally dissipating into a thousand glittering motes of light throughout the chamber. Grand Princess Severina of Lightborne, Queen of the Principality of Cadelania and seer of great power, leaned back from her divination pool with a throaty sigh of frustration and despair.

She needed this spell to work. She needed to see the vision that had been eluding her for weeks now: dancing on the edge of her awareness when she meditated, but always vanishing when she sought to take hold of it. There was simply no room for failure. She had to know.

There was a discreet knock at the door, and the elven sorceress sighed anew.

"One moment."

Severina ran her fingers through her dark hair and felt the sweat plastering it to her head. How long had she bided in her spellcasting chamber? How long could she afford to neglect the duties of her realm? Most days, she thought that she'd have been happier remaining as a mage in the guild here in Lightborne, where she would worry over matters like the accuracy of her incantations and the strength of her will, but of course she'd been chosen to rule Cadelania, and she would do her duty.

Again, the knock. "Your Highness?" came her handmaiden's gentle voice, "are you well?"

"Quite well," Severina said, though she knew it for a lie.

The fleeting vision teased at her mind once again and she grumbled under her breath.

She would cast the spell again when she had the chance. She would find the truth she sought.

There was no room for failure.

This chapter presents a number of rituals to enact powerful realms-shaking spells that can affect the game on the epic scale. They might increase resources by adding to the harvest or enriching one's coffers temporarily or they might grant special insight into the likely actions of rival realms.

Scaling Magic

The spells described in this chapter are intended to be used on the zoomed-out, epic scale level of play rather than on the personal scale. They are not the sort of spells one can cast in the heat of battle or even in an hour or so between encounters. These spells are long-term rituals that require the work of multiple casters, either to work the magic or provide the power source to fuel it.

That said, it is possible that some of the spells presented here might affect personal scale adventures or scenes. That is strictly up to the GM's discretion.

Types of Magic

There are two types of magic in Ceres: Arcane and Divine. Arcane magic draws energy (Magic) from the land and is used to cast powerful realm spells, while Divine magic is believed to come from the gods themselves (though some scholars and philosophers dispute the gods' existence, which would mean that Divine magic must have an entirely different and mysterious source). Arcane spells are cast by arcanists such as wizards, sorcerers, and warlocks, and Divine magic is under the purview of priestly types: clerics, druids, and similar professions. All magic in Ceres is sourced in Vareene technology and proficiency wielding it is at least partially determined by purity of Vareene heritage. People in Ceres refer to this proficiency as "the Gift" and it often manifests dramatically during an individual's youth.

Arcane magic requires an expenditure of energy which necessitates that the caster be connected to a Magic Asset, either through a ley line or directly from the county occupied by the caster. Most Divine spells also have prerequisites and always require the presence of a Faith Asset of a certain level. Both types of magic require the expenditure of Influence and Wealth as noted in spell descriptions below.

Arcane Realm Magic

Magic is a mysterious and intangible force that nevertheless dominates much of the history of Ceres. Though its true nature remains unfathomable, some scholars believe that its origins are buried in the mists of ancient history and may one day be discovered. Until that time, magic is a force that can be manipulated by spellcasters, priests, and others skilled in the mysteries of the Arcane or Divine. Magic Assets are vital to the survival of many kingdoms, demanding that rulers and leaders learn about its use or employ those who understand.

Creating and Enhancing Magic Assets

A Magic Asset is a place where the magical forces of a county are focused and can be drawn upon. They can be hidden groves full of nature magic, sites of ancient rituals, magic academies, or even grand towers so that wizards might reach sites high above the ground. However, until Created by a spellcaster, a potential Magic Asset is nothing but an especially interesting location that provides no practical use.

A Magic Asset can only be created by a powerful caster; ordinary sorcerers and wizards cannot perform the elaborate rituals involved. A Magic Asset is created in a county with a Create Asset Faction Action. This creates a basic Magic 0, which produces no actual Magic but has been appropriately prepared and consecrated through ritual and labor. Once created, the Magic Asset's level can be increased as described under Realm Actions. As with other assets, a Magic Asset can only be increased by 1 level per action up to a maximum equal to the level of the county.

Ley Lines

The Magic produced in a given county can only be used for Realm Spells cast in that county, but ley lines provide a resource called Arcana that can also be utilized to provide temporary boosts to available magic (see *Chapter 2: Running a Faction* for details on establishing ley lines and using the Arcana that they generate). Ley lines are tied to the leader who created them. If a leader dies, all their ley lines vanish and must be recreated.

Ley lines are normally invisible to all but their leader. They are noted in secret by their controlling leader but can be revealed through use of the Trace Ley Line spell. Leaders can ward ley lines against detection – these measures and countermeasures often lead to arcane cold wars between factions who are constantly probing, researching, and trying to locate each other's ley line networks.

Divine Realm Magic

The magic of priests, clerics, and druids operates quite differently from the spells of Arcane casters. As with Arcane Realm Magic, Divine spells can only be cast by powerful casters – the sheer strength of will and ability to channel the Divine magic is beyond that of ordinary priests. The precise nature of Divine magic is controversial, though priests naturally claim that it represents the channeling of their gods' will through worshippers and places of power. More pragmatic observers speculate that there are no true gods, so Divine casters must instead have the ability to transform worshippers' will and resolve into "miraculous" spellcasting. Needless to say, this is a topic of much debate.

Casting a Divine Realm Spell takes an entire month of game time and involves long, elaborate rituals performed with the aid of hundreds of worshippers. Accordingly, most Divine Realm Spells require the presence of a Faith Asset of appropriate level. Divine Realm Magic must be cast utilizing only the Faith Assets in the county where the ritual is taking place plus any Faith Asset level provided by the collection of Piety through pilgrimages (see Faction Networks in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*).

Learning Realm Spells

Realm Magic is far more elaborate and taxing than ordinary magic and can only be performed by casters of suitable ancestry and power. Casters with a Magic Skill Bonus greater than 0 can cast Arcane Spells while those with a Faith Skill Bonus greater than 0 can cast Divine Magic.

Realm Spells cannot be learned or cast unless the caster has a Magic/Faith Skill Bonus equal to or greater than that of the spell. The process to successfully learn a spell is arduous and can end in failure.

A caster who meets the requirements to learn a Realm Spell must spend one month in study and spend 1 in research materials per level of the desired spell. Once research is completed, the caster must roll 1d20 + Magic/Faith Skill Bonus. The DC is 10 + the level of the spell. On a failure, the spell is not learned and the caster is so exhausted that they must wait for one full month before making a new attempt to learn any Realm Spell (though they can still perform other actions). On a success, the spell is successfully learned and can be cast the following month.

Casting Realm Spells

Whether they are Arcane or Divine, realm spells can only be cast by powerful characters, most frequently by leaders themselves. Each spell takes a full action (month) to cast using the Spellcraft Action and the caster may take no other actions that month.

Range of Realm Spells

Unless otherwise noted, Realm Spells are cast in and affect only the county occupied by the caster. Some spells, particularly those that visit misfortune on rival realms, can be cast from a distance as noted in each individual spell description.

Spell Format

As these spells affect realms and armies, they are system-neutral. Each has several attributes described here.

Name: The spell name is followed by an A for Arcane or D for Divine. Some spells are both Arcane and Divine. Leaders with Magic skill bonuses may learn and cast Arcane spells, while those with Faith skill bonuses may learn and cast Divine spells. Advisors can only cast realm spells if they have been specifically trained and empowered to do so.

Level: Each spell has a level that corresponds to the amount of power and experience required to cast it. In order to cast the spell, the character must have a Magic/Faith skill bonus equal to or greater than the level of the spell.

Target: Normally a realm spell targets the caster's county, assets, or units within that county. In some cases, a spell can affect an enemy county, as noted in the spell description. If the spell affects more than one county, each affected county must be adjacent to another county affected by the same spell.

Range: If a spell can be cast on another county, the maximum distance that the spell can be cast is listed here.

Duration: How long a given spell lasts. "Immediate" spells take place as soon as they are cast and do not have a duration. Duration initiates when the month of casting concludes.

Cost: The cost in Influence and Wealth required to obtain proper ritual materials and spell components.

Assets: The level of Faith or Magic assets that must be present in the county where the spell is being cast and be controlled by the caster or their leader. These requirements can be supplemented by Piety or Arcana points as described in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*.

MB: Magic Skill Bonus of the caster.

FB: Faith Skill Bonus of the caster.

BLADES OF DOOM (A)

Level: 1

Target: 1 unit + **MB**

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 2

Casters can enhance the offensive strength of entire armies using this spell. Units under the effects of Blades of Doom are easily spotted, as their swords, axes, spears, and other melee weapons are surrounded by crackling clouds of magical blue-white energy. Units must remain in their county for one entire month while this spell is being cast and take no action. If they move from the county or engage in battle during this month, the spell is wasted and must be recast. Army units affected by this spell gain +2 magical enhancements to their Me ratings.

DISGUISE UNIT (A)

Level: 1

Target: 1 + **MB** units with Ra rating

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 2

This spell changes the outward appearance of army units to help conceal them from enemy reconnaissance. Units affected by this spell appear to be a different unit, as determined by the caster. Their true nature is revealed when they enter combat.

MYSTIC MISSILES (A)

Level: 1

Target: 1 + **MB** units with Ra rating

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 3

Units with ranged attacks can be enhanced using this spell, which transforms their bolts, slingshot stones, and arrows into fearsome flaming missiles of destruction. Units affected by this spell reveal themselves the instant they unleash their ranged attacks, sending fiery streaks through the sky toward their foes. Units affected by Mystic Missiles gain a +2 bonus to their Ra ratings. Units must remain in their county while the spell is being cast on them. If they move or engage in battle during this month, the spell is lost and must be cast again.

SCRY COUNTY (A, D)

Level: 1

Target: 1 county

Range: 1 + **MB/FB**

Duration: Immediate

Cost: 5 ◆ + 3 ◆ for each county distance (same county = 5 ◆, adjacent county = 8 ◆, etc.)

Assets: Magic 2 or Faith 2

The caster observes events in an entire county. This may be done through various arcane scrying devices such as crystal balls, mirrors, pools of water, etc. It creates nodes of arcane energy throughout the county that the caster can move and use to seek out secrets, hidden objects, people, creatures, armies, etc.

When casting this spell, the caster determines exactly what information is sought. The GM may set a Target Number for the information based upon how difficult it is to find, how well concealed it is, etc. The caster rolls 1d20 + **MB/FB** against the Target number. The following table gives guidelines for different types of information and their Target Numbers:

Information Sought	Target
Basic rumors and information about the county and its inhabitants	5
Location and type of military units present in county	10
Realm statistics such as loyalty level, asset levels, etc.	12
Details of diplomatic discussions between realms, plans for troop movements, etc.	15
Location of prisoners or well-hidden individuals, enemy spies, political refugees, etc.	20+
Identity of assassins, traitors, enemies of scrying leader that are in the pay of enemy	25+

The GM may allow a bonus to any rolls if the scrying caster is in possession of objects, clothing, hair, etc. that are relevant to the scrying attempt.

TRACE LEY LINE (A)

Level: 1

Target: 1 county

Range: 1 + **MB**

Duration: Immediate

Cost: 1 ◆, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 2

This spell enables the caster to detect the presence and nature of ley lines in a county. After the spell is cast, the caster learns how many ley lines pass through, begin in, or terminate in the county. If the ley lines pass through the county, the caster also learns the direction that Magic flows. If the ley line begins or terminates in the affected county, the caster also learns which leader controls the line.

WORD OF THE GODS (D)

Level: 1

Target: 1 unit

Duration: 1 month

Cost: 1 ◆, 1 ●

Assets: Faith 3

Battle is a bloody, ferocious, and terrifying thing even to the bravest warrior. Priests know this and can call upon the gods to fill their followers with courage and the will to fight. Units that wish (or are forced) to undergo this sacred ritual must be present at a Faith 3 or greater asset for the full duration of the casting. If they move out of their county or engage in battle during the month of casting, the Word of the Gods blessing is lost and the (likely frustrated) priests will have to start their invocations over from the beginning. While affected by this spell, units receive a +1 to Mo, Me, and Ra.

ARCANE PANOPLY (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 unit + **MB**

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 4 ◆/unit, 2 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 3

Some military units are especially powerful, celebrated, or valuable. The application of spells like Arcane Panoply provide such units with additional protections, sheathing them in shining cloaks of magical energy that enhance and strengthen their existing armor. Blades refuse to bite these units and missiles can be deflected or even consumed in fiery bursts.

Units that are subject to Arcane Panoply must remain in their county for one full month while this spell is cast on them. If they move or engage in battle during this month, the spell is lost and must be cast again. Once completed, the targeted unit receives a +4 bonus to its De and Mo ratings. Units bearing the effects of Arcane Panoply are obvious to all as they gleam and shimmer even in sunless conditions or exude darkness and corruption if they are especially wicked.

BERSERKER'S RAGE (A, D)

Level: 2

Target: 1 unit + **MB** or **FB**

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 3 or Faith 3

Ordinary warriors become foaming berserkers at the touch of this spell, fearlessly throwing themselves into battle with little or no regard for their own safety. They gain a +2 Me and Mo values and can never be routed. Any Morale roll that results in a routed condition is instead shaken. Unfortunately, units affected by this spell also suffer a -2 penalty to their De ratings to reflect their recklessness and lack of concern for their own safety in battle. These units must engage enemy units in melee and can only use Ra values if they are unable to enter melee. Units must remain in their county for a whole month while the spell is cast. If they move or engage in battle during that month, the spell is lost and must be recast.

CLOAK OF DARKNESS (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 + **MB** units

Duration: 3 months or until unit enters battle

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 4

The caster weaves a concealing arcane sphere around army units. Affected units are invisible and cannot be observed by reconnaissance during strategic turns. Units remain invisible for 3 months or until they enter battle with enemy units.

CONCEAL LEY LINE (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 + **MB** ley lines

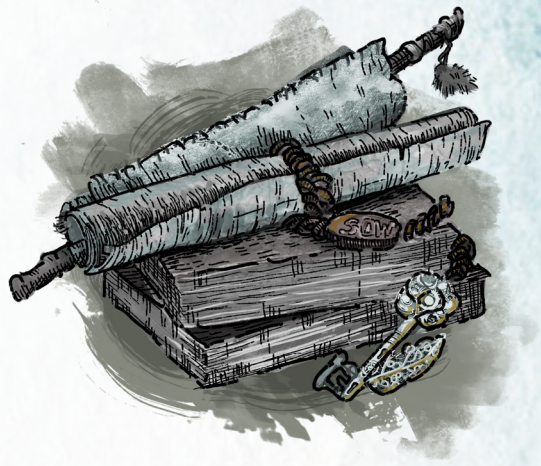
Range: See below

Duration: 1 year

Cost: 1 ◆/line, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 4

This spell hides ley lines from arcane sight. The presence of a ley line in a county can't be fully hidden, but this spell prevents the affected ley lines from being targeted by the Realm Spells Trace Ley Line and Sever Ley Line until it expires or is dispelled. The affected ley lines don't need to be in the same county as the caster but must be connected to the caster's county.



DISPEL REALM MAGIC (A, D)

Level: 2

Target: 1 county

Range: 1 + **MB** or **FB**

Duration: Immediate

Cost: ◆ equal to the level of the targeted spell, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 2 or Faith 2

This spell is used to counteract enemy spells that are affecting a county (including spells cast by the enemy to benefit its own counties). It cannot be used on spells with immediate duration, though if successfully cast on a county affected by Pestilence, it ends the plague's spread.

The caster of Dispel Realm Magic and the caster of the original spell must each make an opposed roll of 1d20 + **MB/FB**. If the dispelling caster wins the opposed check, the spell is interrupted and its ongoing effects cease.

ENERGY WARD (A, D)

Level: 2

Target: 1 county

Range: 1 + **MB** or **FB**

Duration: 1 month/asset level

Cost: ◆ spent to enhance the spell, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 2 or Faith 2

This spell guards a county against Realm Magic spells. This can function to protect a friendly county from hostile magic or to keep an enemy county from being enhanced by a rival leader. When initially cast, the Energy Ward's caster may enhance the spell with additional ◆ to help it to oppose other spells.

Any caster who attempts to cast a Realm Spell on the affected county must roll 1d20 + **MB** or **FB** + any ◆ spent to enhance the spell against the original caster's 1d20 + **MB** or **FB** + ◆ originally spent to enhance the spell. On a failure the Realm Spell does not take effect, while on a success the Realm Spell takes effect as normal. This spell does not affect Realm Spells already in progress, army units, or other mobile targets. This spell does not dispel the *Energy Ward*.

FLEETNESS (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 + **MB** units

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 3

This spell infuses units with speed and energy, adding +1 to the Mv Rating of affected units.

GUARD LEY LINE (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 + **MB** ley lines

Range: See below

Duration: 1 Year

Cost: 1 ◆/line, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 4

This spell places powerful arcane defenses on a specific ley line. Any attempt to affect the guarded ley line with spells such as Trace or Sever Ley Line triggers the defenses, creating a strong magical feedback that can shock or disable the intruder. Anyone casting either spell against the guarded line must make an opposed 1d20 roll + MB against the original caster. On a failure, the intruder is stunned and unable to take any actions for one month. On a success, the offensive spell succeeds.

The affected ley lines don't need to be in the same county as the caster but must be connected to the caster's county.

ILLUSORY ARMY (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 + **MB** units with Ra rating

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 3

This spell creates one or more illusory army units that can move and be observed like normal units. The type and appearance of the units is determined by the caster and they are revealed as illusions if they enter combat.

LOCATE LEADER (A)

Level: 2

Target: 1 county

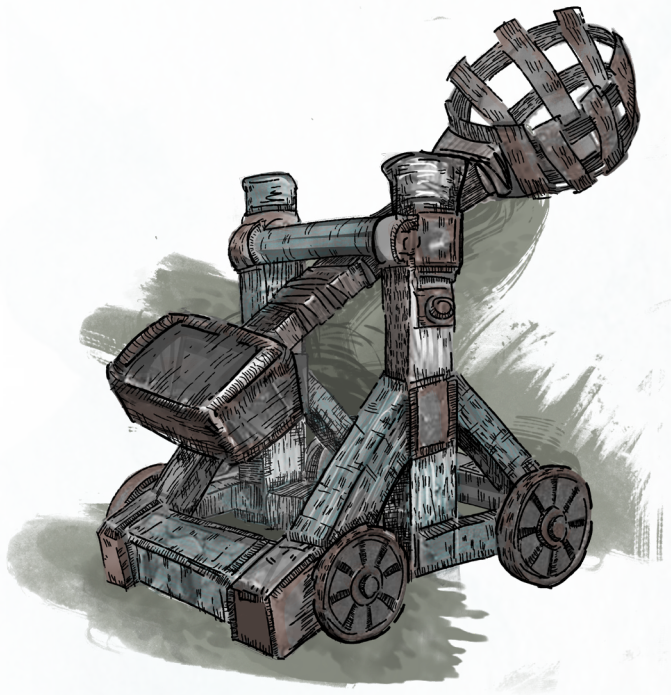
Range: 1 + **MB**

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 1 ◆, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 2

While all individuals on Ceres radiate a certain amount of magical energy, especially gifted individuals such as leaders burn like the sun for those capable of seeing it. This spell enables the caster to determine the location of any leader within the affected county. This spell does not identify a given leader but does indicate to the caster the number of leaders in a county, their location, and relative power level (determined by their faction skill bonuses or related measurement in other RPG systems). This spell is undetectable and its targets cannot avoid it.



SUMMON MONSTROUS ALLY (A)

Level: 2+

Target: See below

Duration: 1 + **MB** months

Cost: 5 ◆/unit, 2 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 5

Through force of will and manipulation of the primal forces of magic, the caster summons one or more units of monstrous creatures. These creatures are manifestations of the caster's will and as such are not "real," but will fight and take damage as normal army units. Summoned units do not require supplies or maintenance after their initial creation but disappear utterly once their duration is up.

The caster summons 1 + **MB** units. The strength and statistics of each created unit are dependent upon the power of the caster. The caster also determines the nature and appearance of each unit. This spell cannot be cast if any units summoned by the caster are already in existence.

Caster Experience

Magic Skill Bonus	Mv	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Hits
+2	2	+6	-	14	+4	2
+3	2	+8	-	16	+6	3
+4	2	+10	-	16	+8	3
+5	2	+12	-	18	+10	4

TRANSMUTATION (A)

Level: 2

Target: See spell description

Duration: Immediate

Cost: 4 ◆/● created, 1 ●

Assets: Magic 3

Canny rulers always have additional sources of income and magical rituals can sometimes be harnessed to create wealth. This spell allows a caster to transform base metals into gold. Each ● created in this fashion requires 4 ◆ to be spent. The total cost of the spell is 1 ●, so creating only a single ● means that the caster has broken even – more ◆ must be spent for the spell to return a net gain. The total number of ● created cannot exceed the level of Magic Asset used to power the spell – i.e. a Magic 3 can be used to create a maximum of 3 ● (total cost 12 ◆ and 1 ● for a net gain of 2 ●).

ARCANE TRANSPORT (A)

Level: 3

Target: See spell description

Duration: Immediate

Cost: 1 ◆/unit and 1 ◆/counties moved. Involuntarily moving a unit incurs another 5 ◆

Assets: Magic 5

The caster summons potent magics to move entire armies along ley lines. The caster can move 1 + **MB** units up to 1 + **MB** counties along a ley line.

The armies to be moved must be located at the start or termination of a ley line but can stop at any point along that ley line within the movement rules described above. This movement is not affected by terrain and units are not fatigued or otherwise negatively affected by the move.

This spell can be used to involuntarily move units or armies as well; moved units cannot avoid the involuntary movement but so involuntary movement costs another 5 ◆ per unit in addition to the normal ◆ costs.

CURSE REGION (D)

Level: 3

Target: 1 + **FB** counties

Range: 1 + **FB**

Duration: One season

Cost: 1 ◆/county, 1 ●

Assets: Faith 2

If this spell and Rain of Blessings are cast on the same county, they cancel each other out and the county collects income and taxes normally.

As the gods visit some counties with their benevolent blessings, so may they also be called upon to curse and befoul counties, bringing dismay and impoverishment.

The caster spends a month invoking the gods, asking them to turn their rage and disdain upon selected counties. The affected county is treated as one level lower for purposes of tax collection. All assets located in the affected county are also treated as one level lower for the purposes of collecting the asset income that they generate. This does not affect assets at level 0.

If this spell is cast mid-season it only reduces income on the first collection period after casting (i.e. it cannot be effective in two seasons).

DEMOLITION (A)

Level: 3

Target: 1 construction

Range: 1 + **MB**

Duration: Immediate

Cost: 10 ◆/level of construction destroyed, 2 ●/level of construction destroyed

Assets: Magic 6

The caster visits physical destruction and damage on a construction in an enemy county. The construction is reduced by 1 level per 10 ◆ and 2 ● spent (i.e. a castle is reduced to a fortress, a fortress to a citadel, etc.).

FLOODS (D, A)

Level: 3

Target: 1 + **MB** or **FB** counties

Range: 1 + **MB** or **FB**

Duration: 1 month

Cost: 3 ◆/county, 1 ●/county

Assets: Magic 4 or Faith 4

The caster commands the weather, calling down rains that swell rivers to overflowing, cutting commerce and restricting army movement. All counties and assets in affected counties are considered 1 level lower for purposes of tax collection and asset income during the next season's collection. In addition, roads and highways in the affected counties cannot be used for strategic movement for the duration of the spell.

HAND OF DEATH (D)
Level: 3
Target: 1 + **FB** units
Duration: Immediate
Cost: 5 ◆/unit, 2 ●/unit
Assets: Faith 4

The caster inflicts damage on enemy units in the county. Each affected unit suffers two hits. Units with two or fewer hits are reduced to one hit. Undead units heal two hits each up to their maximum hits.

HEALING AURA (D)
Level: 3
Target: 1 + **FB** units
Duration: Immediate
Cost: 1 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit
Assets: Faith 2

Battle damage to army units does not just represent loss of personnel; it includes damage to equipment, crippling injuries, and loss of unit organization and integrity. This spell restores health and morale to a damaged unit. Units affected by this spell must remain in the county for the entire month of casting and not move or engage in combat or the spell is wasted. The caster heals damage on friendly units in the county. Each affected unit heals two hits. Conversely, undead units take two hits each.

MALAISE (A)
Level: 3
Target: 1 + **MB** counties
Range: 1 + **MB**
Duration: 1 season
Cost: 5 ◆/county, 1 ●/county
Assets: Magic 4

The collection of taxes and influence is dependent upon the leader's skills and the enthusiasm, loyalty, and support of a county's people. A disheartened, sluggish population reduces collections; the Malaise spell spreads such sentiment across an entire county. Those counties affected by Malaise collect both Wealth and Influence at half rate for the duration of the spell (rounded down).

If this spell is cast mid-season it only counts for income on the first collection period after casting (i.e. it cannot be effective in two seasons).

RAIN OF BLESSINGS (D)
Level: 3
Target: 1 + **FB** counties (must initially be cast on caster's county)
Duration: One season
Cost: 1 ◆/county, 1 ●
Assets: Faith 2

If this spell and Curse Region are cast on the same county, they cancel each other out and the county collects income and taxes normally. This spell is cancelled by Pestilence.

Priests can appeal directly to their gods, drawing down divine bounty to bring prosperity to their counties. For an entire month, the caster engages in elaborate rituals of sacrifice and tribute, assisted by acolytes and loyal worshippers. At the end of this time, the affected county is treated as one level higher for purposes of tax collection. All assets located in the county are also treated as one level higher for the purposes of collecting the asset income that they generate. This does not affect assets at level 0.

If this spell is cast mid-season it only counts for additional income on the first collection period after casting (i.e. it cannot be effective in two seasons).

SEVER LEY LINE (A)
Level: 3
Target: 1 ley line within range
Range: 1 + **MB**
Duration: Immediate
Cost: ◆ equal to the level of the Magic Asset to which the ley line is connected + ◆ spent to enhance the spell, 1 ●
Assets: Magic 6

Ley lines are vulnerable to attempts to sever or outright destroy them, but such efforts can be costly and draining for their casters. When Sever Ley Line is cast, the caster must roll 1d20 + MB + 1 ◆ spent to enhance the roll against the opponent who rolls 1d20 + the sum of the levels of the Magic Assets that the ley line connects + 1 ◆ spent by the defender to oppose the roll.

On a failure, the ley line is unaffected. On a success, the ley line is destroyed and must be entirely recreated.

SOW DISSENT (A)
Level: 3
Target: 1 + **MB** counties
Range: 1 + **MB**
Duration: Immediate
Cost: 5 ◆ for each loyalty rank reduced
Assets: Magic 4

This spell uses magic to demoralize and dishearten, creating doubt, disagreement, and fear in affected counties, reducing their loyalty to their leader. For each 5 ◆ spent, the caster reduces the county's attitude by one level (i.e. loyal becomes cooperative, cooperative becomes aligned, etc.).

STORMS (A, D)

Level: 3

Target: 1 + **MB** or **FB** counties

Range: 1 + **MB** or **FB**

Duration: 1 month

Cost: 3 ◆/county, 1 ●/county

Assets: Magic 5 or Faith 5

Massive storms with huge waves and hurricane-force winds batter affected coastal counties. Any ships under construction in a shipyard are destroyed and each ship in port takes 1 Hit of damage. All counties and assets in affected counties are considered 1 level lower for purposes of tax collection and asset income during the next season's collection.

THE DEAD WALK (A, D)

Level: 3

Target: See below

Duration: Immediate

Cost: 4 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Magic 5 or Faith 5

While most armies on Ceres consist of living creatures, some particularly wicked leaders count the shambling legions of the undead among their military forces. The caster raises a number of undead units equal to 1 + **MB** or **FB**. These undead must be with an army unit at all times. If left alone in a county, they will collapse and be eliminated.

HERESY (D)

Level: 4

Target: 1 + **FB** counties

Range: 1 + **FB**

Duration: 3 months

Cost: 5 ◆/county, 1 ●/county

Assets: Faith 5

The Heresy spell affects the minds and spirits of a county's inhabitants, seeding them with doubt and theological confusion that weakens their belief and devotion to the gods and to the priests who serve them. Faith Assets in affected counties do not produce asset income for the duration of the spell.

PESTILENCE (A)

Level: 4

Target: 1 + **MB** counties

Range: 1 + **MB**

Duration: See spell description

Cost: 5 ◆, 2 ●

Assets: Magic 6 .

This spell cancels Rain of Blessings.

This terrifying spell visits horrific plagues on targeted counties. The Pestilence is first cast on one county within range, reducing its level by 1. On the following month, the plague spreads to an adjacent county (rolled randomly or

chosen by the GM), which does not need to be in range of the original casting. The plague does not continue to affect the previous county but continues moving to a new county every month until it is dispelled or until the maximum number of counties (1 + **MB**) has been reached.

SUMMON ALLIES OF NATURE (D)

Level: 4

Target: See below

Duration: 1 + **FB** months

Cost: 4 ◆/unit, 1 ●/unit

Assets: Faith 4

Druids and priests of nature can use this spell to call up legions of birds, mammals, reptiles, and even insects to defend their realm. These creatures emerge from wild areas in a county and act as normal army units but cannot leave the county in which they were summoned. The strength of the units summoned depends upon the county's terrain type (see **Table II-01: Terrain Types**).

The caster summons 1 + 1/2 **FB** units (rounded down). At the highest level, the summoner can call upon ancient forest spirits, living trees, or beings composed of the very bedrock of the realm, providing units of impressive power. This spell cannot be cast if any units summoned by the caster are already in existence.

Terrain	Mv	Me	Ra	De	Mo	Hits
Light/Dense	3	+4	-	12	+2	1
Hard/Inhospitable	2	+8	-	14	+4	2
Dangerous	1	+14	-	22	+8	4

Realm Magic Artifacts

The magical treasures of Ceres are powerful indeed and many can be used to enhance the spellcasting of leaders and other skilled individuals. These items are rare and even the most powerful kingdom only possesses a handful. Other artifacts exist throughout Ceres and the GM can create new ones using these as guidelines. All are physical objects that can be stolen by enterprising adventurers or agents of enemy kingdoms.

Mana Stones

These mystic crystals contain pure magical energy and a spellcaster with sufficient knowledge can learn to tap them for use in arcane spellcasting. A Mana Stone contains anywhere from 1 to 10 Arcana and acts as a mobile Magic Asset. The Arcana stored in a Mana Stone can be used as a substitute for Magic Asset requirements either if sufficient Magic is not available or to replace Magic in a place where a source is not available. A Mana Stone is a one-time only source of Magic and any amount of Arcana may be taken from a given stone, but once expended the Arcana cannot be replenished. When empty, the Mana Stone is nothing more than an attractive rock.

Sacred Orbs

Deceptively small shining spheres about the size of a grapefruit, Sacred Orbs are the Divine counterpart to Mana Stones. A Sacred Orb contains 1-10 points of Piety. As with Mana Stones, the Piety within an orb can be used to substitute for or in addition to Faith Assets required to cast a Divine Realm Spell. Once used, the Piety points within an orb cannot be replenished and an empty Sacred Orb ceases to be useful for spellcasting.

Crown of Glory

Crafted from many precious metals and gemstones as well as – unknown to all – ancient and indestructible Vareene alloys, the Crown of Glory enhances the wearer's wisdom and authority over all who gaze upon it. The loyalty of the county occupied by the wearer of the Crown of Glory is always considered as being one rank greater than its actual rank.

Book of Prosperity

This ancient volume is said to have been written in the far distant past, well before recorded history. Despite this, readers of sufficient power (usually monarchs, faction leaders, and other leaders) can read and decipher its meaning; its instructions provide its owner with greater prosperity and income. The Trade Asset in a county controlled and occupied by the Book's owner is considered 2 levels higher for purposes of asset income.

Key to the Treasury
A key that opens doors both literal and figurative. A legendary burglar found that it not only let him rob from the most tightly secured vaults, but he also found his way into the upper echelon of society until becoming a leader in his own right. A leader that possesses this item may reduce the Wealth and Influence cost of an action each by 1 to a minimum of 1 (you cannot reduce an action cost to 0).

Harp of the Master Minstrel
A gleaming, epically-crafted instrument with enchanted silver strings and an indestructible body made from strange and unidentifiable hardwoods, the Harp can captivate audiences, enhance rulers' abilities, and improve the cultural life of its nation. The Culture Asset in a county controlled and occupied by the Harp's owner is considered 2 levels higher for purposes of asset income.

Wand of Arch-Sorcery
Deceptively small, this rod is built of polished black metal and embellished with silver and gold decorations. No one knows who made it or its original purpose, but today it is a legendary item that draws powerful arcane energies, improving the magical qualities of its surroundings. The Magic Asset in a county controlled and occupied by the bearer is considered 2 levels higher for purposes of asset income.

Sword of Victory
There are many magical weapons in Ceres, but the Sword of Victory functions only for faction leaders when borne into battle. When carried by a general, the Sword of Victory adds +2 to a leader's Order skill bonus for all rolls described in *Chapter 3: Warfare*.

Raiment of Faith
These robes, along with their miter, cape, and stole, are shining white and shimmering gold. The wearer of this Raiment is acknowledged as the true leader of their church, and all look to them for faith and guidance. The Faith Asset in a county that is controlled and occupied by the wearer is considered 2 levels higher for purposes of asset income.

Orb of Truth
This mystical sphere of crystal is said to have existed for millennia, passing from ruler to ruler and granting a greater insight into the true intentions of others, even occasionally granting limited knowledge of future events. The bearer of the Orb of Truth gains a +2 bonus to all Diplomacy action rolls.

Gallatin's Warding
A carved stone altar surmounted by a pyramidal violet crystal, Gallatin's Warding is said to incorporate elven magic to help protect its region from hostile magic. When the Warding is present in a county, anyone casting hostile Realm Magic must roll 1d20 + **MB** or **FB** (whichever was used to cast the spell) with a DC of 10. On a failure, the spell fails and any resources use to cast it are lost.

Ring of Authority
While many cultures and societies will include kissing a ring as a way of greeting and showing fealty to a ruler or leader, this ring enforces said fealty. A ruler who practices this ceremony with the Ring on their subordinates will find their faction filled with fidelity. The leader's total corruption is reduced by 4 (to a minimum of 0).

Staff of Wisdom

A tall staff crafted of shining blue metal and topped with an ever-burning white gemstone, the Staff of Wisdom is of dweor manufacture and was built for the Vareene countless centuries ago. The bearer's court is considered 1 level higher while the Staff is carried.

Chapter V
The Realms

As shadows lengthened and green mist swirled past the dagger-shaped window, the Shadowed pored over a worn map of Ceres. The edges of the skin were tattered and burnt in places, and the borders between realms had been drawn and redrawn dozens of times over the centuries, but it still mostly held true. Well enough for Kurse's plans, anyway.

"All proceeds as you have planned, my Harbinger," said the little man. "The last bridge fell two days ago, and tensions grow close to boiling over."

"Yes." Kurse traced one barbed finger along the river that marked the boundary between Silvyre and Unauwin. Maelstrom saboteurs had destroyed every bridge over that river, making sure each side blamed the other, and keeping either realm armed against one another, rather than threats from without. Perhaps they would even go to war with one another, but in any case, by the time they put aside their petty squabbles, it would be too late, and their lands would belong to Kurse.

"Prepare our forces in Kaied and Asilith for the march," the Harbinger said. "The day approaches soon that the hills of Lightbank, Erihurst, and the Whitewater shall be ours."

Known as the Land of Many Kingdoms, Ceres boasts a surprisingly diverse array of peoples, cultures, and terrain types for such a small space. This owes primarily to the advent of the Vareene and the influence they played over the development of the land and its cultures, as well as the restricted size of the continent as a whole. Ceres is an island distantly removed from other landmasses, and the few expeditions launched over the past centuries to discover potential riches in new lands beyond the seemingly endless sea have either come back battered and empty-handed or never returned.

The result has been a hot cauldron of societal and technological development, kept in check only through limited resources, regular warfare and subsequent disease, and the predations of the vile Kurse. If lands were discovered across the sea and just one of these restrictions vanished as a factor in Ceres life, they would no doubt see significant development and flourishing of culture, learning, and growth.

THE REALMS DESCRIPTION

The following attributes are used to describe the Realms of Ceres:

Values: a few concepts that the Realm values. This should give an indication on how they handle relations with their neighbors and how they react to different situations.

Authority: indicates who is currently ruling the Realm and under what form the political power manifests itself.

Description: A short description of the Realm's culture, its way of life, history and what it's known for.

Counties: A few words about some of the counties and their significant features.

Key NPCs: The important lieutenants and NPCs that don't rule the Realm but are relevant to it.

Allies & Foes: The notable relations the Realm maintains with its neighbors.

Army: The current composition of the Realm's army.

Assets: A chart listing the counties of the Realm and all the Factions in presence, with their assets. It also shows the current level of infrastructure in each county as well as its mitigating features (see **page 17**).

Please note: not all descriptors are included for each realm. Information not included is left to the GM's discretion.

Regions

The lands of Ceres are split into several large regions, which share historic connections with one another culturally and politically. The terrain varies from deep forest to towering mountain, from tranquil waving grasses to bubbling swamp.

In many lands, there is relative peace, and the plains and hills of Ceres are some of the most restful places to be found. Generally speaking, the closer one comes to the Maelstrom, festering like a great sore at the heart of Ceres, the rougher the terrain becomes and the less peaceful everything seems. The evil of the Harbinger seeps into the land itself, infecting everything with the shadow of the coming doom.

The Great West

This region contains the lands under the aegis of Cadelania, Telimond, and the ancient kingdom of Astaeria. Most of the area is flat plain or gentle hills, blessed with rich soil and swept clean and fresh in the winds off the sea. Humans are drawn to the Great West, as well as a good sampling of many other peoples of Ceres, and it is a kind of cultural melting pot where merit and deed are more important than wealth or personal power.

The Great West also accommodates the smaller realms of Edaulla and Leanad, which have both found land aplenty to settle and rule over, buffered against most of Ceres by the stronger realms of Telimond and Cadelania. The westernmost lands are grassy and flat; the northern edge of the region abuts the sea in a series of rocky cliffs which smooth to sandy beaches along the western edge and along Telimond.

No realm makes a firm claim to the island off the coast of Leanad and Edaulla, which rises steeply out of the water like a plateau some fifty feet above the surf. For adherents of the Edaulla faith, it is a site of great import, and pilgrims brave its treacherous switch-back trails from the beach up to the island proper, where they have erected a shrine. For now, the potential strategic value of the island—supervising trade routes between the western realms and those of other lands—has not yet lured anyone into occupying it.

The terrain grows rocky and difficult toward the south of Telimond, with the Star Mountains of Astaeria cutting off the land from the wilder lands of the Jagged Coast. A narrow pass between the mountainous counties of Dalindra and Astracon provides a perfect location for the powerful port city Oendra, widely known throughout the region as a cosmopolitan wonder that attracts all manner of heroes and traders. The noble realm of Astaeria provides significant military aid to the West, and asks little in return.

The Great West has seen its share of violence over the centuries, particularly thanks to yearly raids by orcs out of Migoch, who sweep west across the plains and sometimes reach as far as the borders of Telimond. Their migrations have led to several semi-permanent orc settlements in the region, so travelers in Telimond and Astaeria would do well to take care on the road. Goblins out of the Blackwood are a constant nuisance to the surrounding lands, but would-be exterminators take care not to pursue them back into their homeland, as the dense forest in the county of Nydameth contains far worse dangers to those who would venture in.

Folk of the Great West

The people of the Great West tend to be independent-minded and hands-off as regards affairs of business and the law. If you are wronged by someone, your right to avenge yourself is widely accepted as good and just. There are laws, of course, but the magistrates of the Great West can be swayed more easily by mitigating circumstances than elsewhere.

Most of the folk living out in the west are humans, halflings, orcs, and other short-lived peoples. Elves are also relatively common in the Great West, and primarily make their homes in the scattered forests of the region. Dwarven traders with some connection to Oloeri live in enclaves out on the frontier.

Astaeria

Values: Grace, Education, Order, Responsibility, Harmony

Authority: Extensive genealogies are kept of the Astaer family, who by long tradition seek their spouses through multi-layered competitions, to keep the Astaer bloodline intelligent, stable, and healthy, and to keep the Gift strong within Astaer children. The heirs of Astaeria's throne are also chosen by competition, in which all those acknowledged as part of the Astaer line may test themselves against others of the blood, to ensure that the best ruler in seven key categories is chosen to lead Astaeria in every generation. These categories are: Administration, Combat, Diplomacy, Graces, Judgment, Leadership, and Strategy.

Description: Astaerian culture places great emphasis on dignity and appearances. While known for their libraries and centers of learning, as well as sweeping musical scores and refined art and theater, Astaerians are often seen by outsiders as cold, austere, or unreadable. Displays of emotion are discouraged, save where channeled into art or performance. Plain, muted garb is considered a sign of wisdom, while dark or pastel colors are for the young. Bright or patterned clothing is rare outside masked festivals, and formal wear is grey, black being reserved for the ruler and top three heirs.

Beneath this restrained veneer, however, Astaerian culture conceals a web of contradictions. Its poetry and theater, for example, are considered among the most passionate in the world, and Astaeria has what some consider to be shockingly libertine views of sexuality, permitting almost anything so long as consent and dignity are prioritized. Astaeria's vast legal code has sections on pornography, erotic performance, and other amatory enterprises that are themselves deemed obscene by the standards of some surrounding cultures. This "wild" licentiousness, however, must be pursued with grace and decorum, and must never disturb the peace. Traditional erotic poetry, for example, is couched in metaphor, thus seeming like mere fanciful imagery until one learns to interpret the explicit detail hidden within.

In addition to its surprisingly steamy night-life, "austere" Astaeria is a nation that values comfort and plenty. Astaerian homes are filled with as many cushions, plush carpets, and finely-quilted blankets as a family can afford, and cooking is seen as a holy art, engaged in prayerfully and with great care. If at all possible, too much food is prepared at every meal, and leftovers are distributed among the poor. Astaerian hospitality laws are generous and demanding, and taken as a sacred duty. When provision of hospitality is a burden on a poor family, wealthier neighbors are culturally expected to step in with aid. Inns are viewed as strange, foreign institutions and are rarely seen outside the largest cities.

Astaerian families are extended and loyal, and keep extensive genealogical records wherever possible. Inheritance is primarily matrilineal, though patrilineal inheritance is not uncommon. Marriage is considered a breeding institution, and is usually contracted as both monogamous and temporary. Astaerian culture values intelligence, emotional stability, and physical health in breeding partners, and while (dignified) romance and partnership is permitted with anyone of age, pairings intended to produce children are often arranged by the family. Intermarriage between nobles and commoners is normal, and has led to an unusually egalitarian flavor of feudalism, as one's subjects are quite often related to one's children.

One of the oldest, best established nations in its region, the line between history and theology in Astaerian thinking is often very thin. Astaerian libraries contain some of the most scholarly works about the Forbears, the Gift, and the Sage Artifacts, and Astaeria's greatest priests and scholars are quite often the same people. Astaerian spirituality is strongly tied to the natural world as well as historical records, and new scientific discoveries are typically lauded as religious revelations—an attitude that has benefited Astaerian medicine, but perhaps excessively empowered the Astaerian military, who use scientific discovery as a rationalization for weapons development. Astaerian siege equipment and defensive countermeasures are among the most advanced in the world.

Counties:
Astracon: Tucked safely away in the northern mountains of Astracon County is the Astaer winter palace, a sturdy fortress known as Stonefast. Stonefast is the Astaers' ancestral home, from which they allegedly unified Astaeria under their rule centuries ago. Though a bustling trade city has grown up around the squat old fortress, the winter court has never had the summer court's reputation for grandeur and style, in part by tradition. Astracon is also home to Astaeria's largest college of history and theology, and tends to be traditional in mindset.

Broehar: Astaeria's richest fields are located in Broehar County, and much is grown here that is later shipped all over the nation and the world. Broehar County is most famous for its annual Harvest Festival on a bend in the great Serpent Lake. This farmer's market is so grand that even rulers and heirs have come to preside in person. The countess of Broehar hosts a sports tournament and craft competition at the festival every year, and students of the South Broehar Bardic College present plays and concerts for the common folk, often spreading a bit of city culture out to the rustic countryside.

Crerraseth: The mountainous county stretching eastward from Port Raseth is a key mining region for Astaeria known for its copper, silver, basalt, and mineral dyes, but Port Raseth itself is Astaeria's second largest port city, a sprawling foothill settlement known for wide porches, balconies, and exceptionally broad stone-paved streets. Despite a reputation for decadence and depravity, Port Raseth is home to a diverse blend of cultures and takes pride in being Astaeria's most worldly city. Many of Astaeria's most innovative thinkers and artists were educated in Port Raseth.

Dalindra: Seat of Astaeria's riverside capital, Astra, as well as the Astaer summer palace and Astaeria's largest port city, Oendra, mountainous Dalindra is not the most habitable county in Astaeria, but it is the wealthiest and most cosmopolitan. Dalindra's leaders are some of the most influential in the world, as are Astra's and Oendra's art, theater, music, and fashion. The summer palace, around which Astra is constructed, is considered an architectural wonder with its sweeping spires, detailed bas-relief designs, and hundreds of marble arches.

Olaniel: Sharing borders with both contested Kiligan territory and monster-ruled Yishana, Olaniel has recently grown to unprecedented military significance. The miners and trappers that make up the majority of Olaniel's population are increasingly frustrated with the constant military presence, and the current margrave is said to be too indecisive and timid for so complex and strategically important a county seat. To make matters worse, Olaniel's iron mines seem to be bottoming out, making it currently the poorest county in wealthy Astaeria.

Woelith: A strategically important border county, Woelith is home to Astaeria's most prestigious military school, The Serenwen Academy of Arms and Tactics. Though considered a cultural backwater, Astaeria's most powerful families send children to be educated at Serenwen, and the margravine of Woelith County is arguably the most influential individual in Astaeria's military after the queen and grand duke.

Key NPCs: Though neither holds much legal power, two of Astaeria's most influential people are always the Astaer family Head Genealogist and the Royal Master of Ceremonies. The former holds authority over who is and is not qualified to compete for heir status in each generation, while the latter choses the contests, locations, and judges for the Seven Rulership Tourneys that select the top ten heirs in order of overall suitability for the throne.

The current Astaer Head Genealogist is Formuth Senren Astaer, an elderly historian with a stellar reputation in his field. Despite his ever-flawless, wise demeanor, F. Senren Astaer hides a secret addiction to illegal-in-Astaeria opium, and may be susceptible to bribery or blackmail in order to pursue his habit or protect his secret.

The current Royal Master of Ceremonies is Benlin Korel, a commoner cousin of the Queen. Korel is energetic, highly organized, and cool under pressure, known for her skill in managing large crowds. In wake of the recent deaths of two of the top ten heirs, Korel will soon organize a new round of Rulership Tourneys to replace them, and many seek to influence her choices of contest and location to their own or their children's favor. Korel is believed to be honest and law-abiding, but she is not above using others' machinations to her own benefit, to the full extent of what law and propriety will permit.

Allies and Foes: Valuing diplomacy highly, Astaeria has favorable trade agreements or even full alliances with the majority of its neighbors and a few more distant nations as well. Exceptions to this rule are quite notable, however, and include a cold hostility with nearby Qomas and only the wariest of trade with Qomas' ally, Calirien. Kiligan, sandwiched uncomfortably between Qomas and Astaeria, has become a contested vassal state, and the embittered site of what few open hostilities dignified Astaeria and greedy Qomas will permit themselves.

Though known for its imposing military, Astaeria is more likely to send forces to an ally's defense than to engage in conflicts on its own behalf. Even Qomas prefers not to challenge its rival openly.

Army:
- 3 units of archers
- 6 units of infantry
- 3 units of medium cavalry
- 4 units of knights
- 2 units of artillery
- 3 units of Astaerian home guard

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Astracon	Mountain	5	Astaeria 5	Sky Heart 2 Church of the Source 3	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	Kiligan 4	The Red League 4 The Blue League 1		River, Coastline, Proud
Broehar	Plain	4	Astaeria 4	Sky Heart 2 Church of the Source 2	Prokoth 2 Merchants Guild of Astaeria 2	Kiligan 2	The Red League 3	Highway	River, Fertile
Crerraseth	Mountain	3	Astaeria 3	Sky Heart 3	Prokoth 0 Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	Kiligan 2	The Red League 3	Road, Port	River, Coastline, Prosperous
Dalindra	Mountain	3	Astaeria 3	Sky Heart 3	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	Kiligan 4	Playwrights and Poets Consortium 2	Highway, Naval Dockage, Castle, Wonder	Cosmopolitan
Greywell	Plain	5	Astaeria 5	Sky Heart 3 Church of the Source 2	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 4	Kiligan 0	The Red League 3 Playwrights and Poets Consortium 2		River
Haieron	Plain	7	Astaeria 7	Sky Heart 4 Church of the Source 3	Prokoth 2 Merchants Guild of Astaeria 4	Kiligan 0	The Red League 4 The Blue League 0 Playwrights and Poets Consortium 2		River
Menodoch	Plain	3	Astaeria 3	Sky Heart 3	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	Kiligan 2	The Blue League 2	Highway	River
Olaniel	Mountain	3	Astaeria 3	Sky Heart 3	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	Kiligan 3	Playwrights and Poets Consortium 2		River, Pressgangs
Woelith	Plain	4	Astaeria 4	Sky Heart 1 Church of the Source 3	Prokoth 1 Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	Kiligan 1	The Blue League 3		River, Volunteerism

The Blackwood

Values: Blood, Entertainment, Power

Authority: The Blackwood is ruled by a king. That's what the creatures who emerge from it to raid and pillage have been able to explain to their captors. Precisely what that king *is* has been more difficult to decipher, as even his minions seem uncertain as to his species. He is basically human-shaped, but was never human, they say. He is older than the oldest living elf, but believed to be alive, rather than undead. They don't know if he can be killed.

A defeated hag minion believed that—like herself—her master was fae once, long ago, before terrible magics changed him into what he had become. Either fae, she said, or one of the mythical Vareene. Whatever he had become, though, she believed he was unique in all the world.

Whatever the king of the Blackwood may be, he rules by both physical might and powerful magic. He is crafty and knowledgeable, but possibly quite mad. He does not leave his small, twisted, magically-grown castle at the center of the Blackwood, apparently ever. His hench-creatures defend his forest and discipline his lesser followers. He appears to have no ambitions for greater territory.

Description: In an archaic Elven tongue, the Blackwood was called Nydameth. Roughly translated into Ceres' modern common tongue, Nydameth means Forest of Black Wood. Though always dark inside, sheltered from sunlight by close-growing, ancient trees, the Blackwood was beautiful once. Its name came from a type of tree unique to this one wood in all of Ceres. The tree had black bark, near-black wood when cut, and unusually dark green leaves, and still does to this day. An exceptionally magical species, the blackwood tree is impervious to fire and can be cut by only the strongest of rare, enchanted metals. For this reason, the wood was never cleared or conquered, and stood untouched for many centuries.

No one knows when the castle appeared inside it, but it has been there for centuries now, a rambling tower grown from five twisted blackwood trees of unusual girth and clearly-unnatural shape. Only the king's minions have ever seen inside it, but the goblins say it's quite nice. Cozy even. They especially like the throne of skulls and the blood-filled scrying pool.

By the time the blackwood castle was discovered by the outside world, the Blackwood had already become a haven for Ceres's monsters. Those who were driven from their

homes by encroaching civilization—and did not wish to join the Maelstrom—instead ended up in the Blackwood, where they could hide in the dark and avoid those who wished to hunt them down.

Some centuries ago, however, the Blackwood became unified under one sovereign. At this sovereign's command, goblins, werewolves, and more monstrous beasts ravage surrounding lands, sometimes apparently for violence's own sake. No army that has assaulted the place has gained more than a mile of ground before being routed or even utterly destroyed. The indestructible trees, combined with the king's and his best lieutenants' might are simply too good a line of defense.

More mysteriously still, when the Maelstrom launched its major assault on northwest Ceres a century ago, the armies of the Blackwood made their largest sortie ever recorded—to attack not the allied nations of Ceres, but the forces of the Maelstrom. Some historians claim that without the Blackwood's help, the Maelstrom would not have been turned back at Adiclya. After Kurse's forces scattered, the Blackwood monsters simply returned to their forest and to their murderous ways.

Key NPCs: Halgren Norveld is the "captain" of a pack of werewolves who are believed to not only raid surrounding communities but also to liaise with various criminal operations, possibly smuggling illicit goods through the Blackwood itself.

Allies and Foes: The Blackwood has no allies—not even among the Maelstrom.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Nydameth	Old Forest	0							River, Rugged

Cadelania

Values: Elegance, Mystery, Order, Honor

Authority: The Grand Principality of Cadelania is an elf-ruled kingdom, and all the old nobility remain elves to this day. The elves of Cadelania live steeped in ancient and exquisite tradition, and the royal line is no exception. Even more so than in Aielith, however, the line of the grand princes of Cadelania is failing. Princess Severina has no heir and is rumored to be mad. Near-frozen in tradition like shimmering moths in amber, Cadelania's nobility seem to have no plan in place for the grand princess's death without heir, such that—despite its wealth and its centuries of refined stability—Cadelania may now teeter on the brink of a chaos almost certain to upend the power balance of the entire region.

Description: Cadelania seems to outsiders like a land from another world. Its traditions are said to date back to fae practices from before the mythical Vareene ever came to Ceres, though even careful Cadelanian records do not date back quite so far. Whatever the case, the people of Cadelania walk an unusual tightrope between lavishness and restraint, civilization and nature, delight and despair.

Since ancient times, all nobility, most lower aristocracy, and over half of the common folk wear masks in public at all times. Though these usually cover only the top half of the face, showing one's full face in public is considered crass and common.

Odder still, all major business of government takes place at night, at parties. In the capital especially, the nobility do their work—bringing order to the land, settling disputes, making deals and planning projects—all at grand galas, night after night, spinning around the dance floor in gorgeous formal wear, to a background of fine music. During the day, nobles rest in the mornings and pursue private hobbies in the afternoons, until duty calls them to return to the dance.

Out in the city streets, order is maintained by a police force known as the Torturers. Clad and masked in deep grey, heavily cloaked and always outfitted for action, the Torturers drift through the city, keeping the peace. Another ancient tradition, the Torturers are known for incorruptible honesty and for defending the populace in dangerous regions. They also serve as executioners in cases of capital punishment and offer atonement services. In Cadelania, it has long been the social expectation that the profoundly dishonored must slay themselves, to protect their families from dishonor by association. Torturers can be hired as seconds in honor suicides to make certain that death occurs and to minimize suffering where necessary.

In recent times, Torturers no longer torture, per se, but can be called upon in a sanitized version of their namesake capacity to expiate wrongdoing through suffering. Pain is considered holy to the otherwise mostly-secular Cadelanian society, and professional application of suffering is believed to cleanse one's honor in all but the most extreme cases,

making the Torturers' punishments the only way out for some who wish to avoid suicide without shaming their families.

For all this, however, Cadelania is a prosperous nation. Strictly maintaining a small population on a large land area and maximizing laborers' outputs by providing them with all manner of magical support, even the poorest commoner in Cadelania fares better than the middle classes in some other nations. For all their grand balls, the elven nobility have no patience for waste or true decadence. Most of their wealth is invested back into the land and people.

Counties:
Chilidric: The only remnant of the legendary Old Fae Wood in Cadelania, Chilidric County feels almost like a park or a county-sized garden. Tidy and safe, traversable and elegant, Chilidric County is the tamest forested area in all of Ceres. The elven nobility that steward this land care deeply for its wildlife. A thriving diversity of native plants and animals fill the region in surprising harmony with the elven and other humanoid residents. Hunting and logging are permitted but strictly regulated, such that the forest's residents do profit from their lands, but take no more than is appropriate to the region's long-term balance. Chilidric's coast is also home to a world-famous industry of shipwrights.

Lightborne: The site of Cadelania's world-renowned capital city of Lightborne, this county is central to Cadelanian society. Every noble house keeps a mansion or palace in Lightborne, and the Cadelanian economy dances to the tune of the elegant music wafting from the nightly masked balls of Lightborne's elven nobility. The city of Lightborne was built perilously close to the sea, but uses an ingenious system of locks, canals, and bridges that protect the exquisite and ancient structures from even the highest of winter tides. Graceful boats called littletails are rowed by professional pilots as the primary transportation up and down the Lightborne canals. Littletails are named for the traditional curved "tail" in the rear of each boat, under which nestles a tiny but cushioned cabin for passengers.

Sevybeth: The least fantastical county in Cadelania is also its most beleaguered. Beset from the east by perilous creatures creeping up from the tainted Adiclya, and from the southwest by regular goblin raids and worse, the hills of Sevybeth are a constant concern to Cadelania's rulers. It is in this county that Cadelania's notorious Torturers are most likely to be welcomed in any village and lauded as heroes.

Key NPCs: Bolgrem Pellrian is the grand princess's chief aide and her liaison with both her army and her Torturers. Some believe he manages a world-spanning spy network for the mad princess as well. Others believe his loyalty lies not with Grand Princess Severina, but with some other master, and that he uses his position to manipulate the princess.

Allies and Foes: Cadelania enjoys a firm alliance with Telimond, good relations with Leanad, and a reasonable trade agreement with Unauwin. Its neighbors in the Blackwood are enemies to all, and while Cadelania engages in no overt hostility with Kedohaw, many believe that subtler measures are being taken to limit the Borgon king's capacities.

Army:
- 3 units of archers
- 1 unit of infantry
- 1 unit of knights
- 1 unit of artillery

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Chilidric	Forest	3	Cadelania 1	Earth and Sky 2	The Nosdram Family 3 Ratakka's Mice 0	Leanad 1 The Northwest Mages Society 2	The Deathworkers Guild 2		River, Coastline, Beautiful 50% Adapted Occupants
Kiethien	Plain	2	Cadelania 1	Earth and Sky 1	House Dressan 2	The Northwest Mages Society 2	The Guild of Fine Arts 2	Highway	River
Legobeth	Plain	3	Cadelania 1	Earth and Sky 2	Ratakka's Mice 3	Leanad 3	The Deathworkers Guild 2		
Lightborne	Plain	4	Cadelania 2	Edaulla 1 Earth and Sky 3	The Nosdram Family 0 Ratakka's Mice 2 House Dressan 2	Leanad 4	The Deathworkers Guild 2 The Guild of Fine Arts 2	Highway, Dry-Dock Fortress, Palace	Coastline Storied
Rhilaria	Plain	3	Cadelania 1	Earth and Sky 2	Ratakka's Mice 3	The Northwest Mages Society 2	The Guild of Fine Arts 2	Highway	River, Coastline
Sevybeth	Hill	3	Cadelania 2	Earth and Sky 3	The Nosdram Family 3 House Dressan 0	The Northwest Mages Society 2	The Deathworkers Guild 3		River Informants
Trorel	Plain	3	Cadelania 1		The Nosdram Family 0 House Dressan 3	The Northwest Mages Society 2	The Guild of Fine Arts 2	Highway	River

Edaulla

Values: Connection, Sincerity, Decency

Authority: Edaulla is governed by the clergy of the faith known as the Oath. The Oath ordains two kinds of clergy. The first is the kind most expect, able to channel and harness believers' faith for use in mass magics. Most of these are also healers. The second type is what the Oath terms "administrative clergy." These people are attuned instead to the day-to-day workings of their counties and serve as leaders in a more mundane sense. Only clergy that have proven able to function in both capacities may be chosen as archpriests, usually then taking on the title of Holy Matriarch or Patriarch.

Description: Edaulla was originally begun as an Astaerian prison colony centuries ago. When the best of the peninsula's small limestone quarries ran out, the prisoners who worked there were simply unchained and left to fend for themselves. Both the religion known as the Oath and the nation of Edaulla were born from the shared hardship of survival among abandoned and unwanted exiles eking out a living on a near-barren strip of rocky coast.

Against all odds, Edaulla has survived to this day, even occasionally prospering for a while. Its arrangements with Telimond have seen to it that Edaulla's citizens are the best off they have ever been, and as Telimond benefits from from the deal as well, both militarily and economically, the arrangement would appear to be stable. Proportionate to its history, Edaulla's future looks strangely bright.

Counties:
Baessa: Edaulla's peninsula is, in general, known for poor soil and Baessa County is also prone to late spring flooding, resulting in occasional massive crop-failures. Nearby Telimond has always been more geographically fortunate, and as part of an ongoing arrangement to support Baessa County (and, if needed, the rest of Edaulla as well) during bad years, Telimond has been permitted to use part of Baessa County as a supplementary naval base.

Etendav: Etendav County, like the rest of Edaulla, struggles to bring in enough greens and grain for a healthy diet. In bad years, the people subsist on fish, seaweed, and whatever preserved vegetables Telimond can supply. However, Etendav County's northwestern spur boasts excellent oyster beds; the pearls make Etendav a vital contributor to Edaulla's economy.

Triran: Edaulla's capital of Jenidav is located here, as is its grandest temple: the Blissful Sadaya Temple of Wedding Vows. Standing on a beautiful beach and looking out over the holy Isle of Promise (as Edaullans name the unclaimed island off their coast), the Wedding Temple, as it is more widely called, is a popular place for elopements especially. Triran County is also where one can board ferries to the Isle of Promise in order to partake in the various communal oathtakings that Oathism hosts on the gods' major feast days.

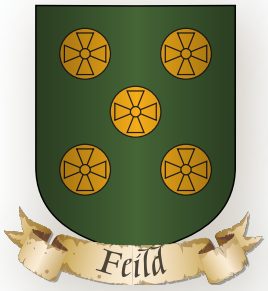
Key NPCs: Denlisa Watersprite, an immigrant from distant Woand, currently serves as the Island Caretaker, leader of the Oathist monastery that lives on the Isle of Promise year-round. Though little more than the head of a single monastery for most of each year, it is the Island Caretaker that is empowered to mediate and settle any disputes between Edaulla's traditional two archpriests. Given that the current Matriarch and Patriarch have very different philosophies of rulership and seem to rub one another the wrong way, Caretaker Watersprite has become a surprisingly important official in Edaullan politics, though she would prefer to be left in peace to spend more time meditating in her herb garden.

Allies and Foes: Edaulla is allied with Telimond and is relatively well-disposed toward Leanad as well. It has a more antagonistic relationship with Galear and Prokoth due to these nations' generally weak stances against piracy.

Army:
- 6 units of infantry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Baessa	Plain	2	Telimond 2	Edaulla 2	Feild 2	School of Theurgia & Goetia 2	The Guild of Fine Arts 2		Coastline, Peaceful
Etendav	Plain	3	Edaulla 1	Edaulla 3	House Dressan 3	School of Theurgia & Goetia 3	The Youth Garden 2		Coastline, Prosperous
Triran	Plain	4	Edaulla 3	Edaulla 4	Ratakka's Mice 2	Leanad 4	The Guild of Fine Arts 1	Highway, Fortress	Coastline
				Earth and Sky 0	House Dressan 2		The Youth Garden 2	Dry-Dock	Sacred
							Telimond 1	Monuments	

Feild



Values: Security, Profit, Dependability

Authority: The Feild Trust is run by the Jeraelith family, which is why the territory is sometimes called Jeraelith County in jest. The Jeraeliths have adopted an Astaerian-like system for selecting their leaders, albeit much simplified. Jeraelith scions who place in their family contests—Leadership, Strategy, and Financial Administration—join the Advisors Circle for the Trust organization and elect a chief from among their own for 10-year terms. All other authority in Feild is appointed by the Advisors Circle.

Description: The Feild Trust was founded by the Feild family, who were once the region's counts until a long-dry stream bed was discovered to contain significant deposits of easily-gathered alluvial gold. Every nearby nation began to fight over this gold, and the local residents suffered terribly.

The count at the time was a savvy man and excellent speaker. He traveled to each kingdom in turn and reasoned with the monarchs, eventually brokering a peace that all would accept. Thus was the Feild Trust founded, named for House Feild, who became the Trust's first rulers. Surrounding nations pitched in to defend this neutral land, which returned their contributions in annual tribute. At first, this tribute came in the form of gold flecks and gold ore, but House Feild invested wisely in mercantile ventures and soon became extremely wealthy. Feild has only increased its regional economic influence, even since its gold ran out.

Of course, since the neighboring Blackwood has grown so dangerous, the military contributions of surrounding nations have become more vital than ever to protecting Feild Trust participants' financial interests. This has in turn led to Feild gaining influence over much of the regional weapons trade, especially in Unauwin, which has fallen somewhat deeply into the Jeraelith family's debt.

Key NPCs: Lorweld Jeraelith is the eldest member of the Feild Trust Advisors Circle. He has served in the Circle for 44 years, and has repeatedly refused nominations that might have led to his election as Chief Advisor. Jolly, charming, and apparently humble, old Lorweld is also rumored to be indebted to the Nosdram family and wildly untrustworthy. Sweet and kind as he seems, he is truly a strange object for such a rumor. If asked about it, he laughs it off as the sort of thing that is inherent to being a rich old man and gives no sign of taking the accusation seriously.

Allies and Foes: The Feild Trust is allied with all its various business partners. Its only overt foe is the Blackwood.

Army:

- 2 units of archers
- 2 units of infantry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Jeraelith	Plain	6	Feild 6	Sky Heart 3 Church of the Source 3	Feild 6		The Yellow League 5	Highway Castle, Palace	River Crossroads

Leanad

Values: Justice, Order, Knowledge

Authority: The Bastion of Leanad is governed by the Court of High Justice, which is in turn led by the Lord High Justice, a position elected for life by the judges of the court. For complex historical reasons, most court members in the current era are mages or at least adept at the uses of enchanted items.

Description: Though tiny in land area, the Bastion of Leanad, known also by its ancient name of Lautrem, stands among western Ceres's most influential nations. Long ago, a general named Leanad was able to hold the small territory of Lautrem against the forces of a would-be emperor, halting his campaign of bloody conquest and ultimately slaying him. Lautrem then became known as Leanad's Bastion, and Leanad became a respected consultant on many disputes arising as a result of the war. The practice of consulting with Leanad became so commonplace that Leanad founded the Court of High Justice to facilitate matters.

After Leanad's death, Lautrem was officially renamed the Bastion of Leanad, and the Court of High Justice began to offer services aside from mere consultation. Over the centuries—what with one thing and another—the Court of High Justice now offers a surprising amount of magic. The Bastion boasts possibly the greatest public magic school in all Ceres, and Bastion mages are known for drawing the maximum potential out of even the trickiest of artifacts.

Though Leanad's sphere of influence has shifted somewhat, the current Lord High Justice, one Simon Audaire, is growing perhaps more famous and far-reaching in his effectiveness than even legendary Leanad ever was.

Key NPCs: Renen Josare was once a judge within the Court of High Justice, but when Simon Audaire was elected as his Lord, Josare suspected Audaire of using illicit means to secure his position. An experienced justice investigator and master of divinatory magics, Josare began a search for proof of these suspicions. Coincidentally, however, Josare was soon afterward accused of grand fraud and stripped of authority. Josare claims innocence, and is believed to be working from the shadows to this day to bring down Simon Audaire.

Allies and Foes: The Bastion of Leanad has mutually beneficial agreements with Cadelania, Edaulla, and Kedohaw, and positive trade relations with all its other neighbors—for now. Some believe that the current Lord High Justice begins to overstep the bounds of the nation's various agreements, perhaps preparing for a future power-grab. With Simon Audaire's clever charm at work, it will be interesting to see where the lines of loyalty are drawn should he ever decide he wants more than just Leanad's Bastion at his command.

Army:

- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of medium cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Lautrem	Plain	7	Leanad 7	Karnism 3	Ratakka's Mice 7	Leanad 0	The Guild of Fine Arts 4	Highway	River, Coastline
				Earth and Sky 4			Telimond 2	Castle	Educated

Telimond

Values: Harmony, Community, Beauty

Authority: Telimond is ruled by House Garden, of which only one member has ever existed: Queen Nausicaä of the Garden Throne, Master Weaver of Time and Life. Nausicaä is the absolute monarch, with little to no constraints upon her authority. A born diplomat, Nausicaä is popular with both her own people and surrounding nations, and so powerful a mage she has found herself able to do all of this *nicely*. Compassionate and generous, Queen Nausicaä stands among those rare individuals for whom absolute power not only appears not to corrupt, but is instead turned to the good of all the world around her.

Description: Telimond was originally two kingdoms: the human-dominated land of Briellon and the elven-ruled land of Ethea. As with human encroachments on many elf-ruled wild areas, the people of Briellon had little respect for Ethea's natural spaces and ignored native elven traditions regarding reverence for life and stewardship of the land. Villagers near the border even went so far as to poach Ethean trees for lumber. In retaliation, the people of Ethea began to disrupt and vandalize trade shipments between Briellon and Astaeria, of which Briellon was a vassal state.

The elves were careful in their disruption tactics, such that powerful Astaeria declined to involve itself in the dispute, but Briellon was severely disadvantaged by the interference, and eventually retaliated with violent force, attempting to conquer Ethean lands once and for all. This project was somewhat beyond the little nation's means, as Ethean defenses were far in advance of anything the Briellons could field. As a result, the ensuing war grossly reduced Briellon's production of food and goods for several seasons, which *did* impact Astaeria enough to inspire intervention.

Finding fault on both sides, but more so, upon examination, on the part of Briellon, the then-Queen of Astaeria made several decisions. She removed the Astaer cousin assigned to rule Briellon for Astaeria and instead asked the handsome young king of Ethea to end the conflict by agreeing to marry whomever she chose as the replacement regent. To this suggestion he reluctantly acceded. One of Astaeria's heirs, Princess Nalesala, volunteered for the assignment. Her reasons were largely philosophical and career-oriented, but upon meeting King Abarith the two found themselves to be kindred spirits and ultimately fell in love.

Their union created the combined nation of Telimond, and kind, wise Queen Nalesala proved most adept at smoothing relations between the two peoples. Just as peace began to reign, Queen Nalesala gave birth to her first child, Princess Nausicaä. The baby princess was decreed to be the first member of House Garden, the first ruling dynasty of the unified Telimond.

Since then, not all has been without sorrow. Queen Nalesala died young, while Nausicaä was still a child. King Abarith struggled, but did his best to raise their child in wisdom, and to honor his wife's legacy in ruling fairly over both nations while his daughter grew to adulthood. When he and Nausicaä agreed that she was ready, he abdicated in her favor as he and his wife had agreed upon their marriage, and he continues to this day to support his daughter's reign.

When Nausicaä finally took the throne some hundred years ago, she comported herself as a mature and kind-hearted young woman. In addition, she had grown into a remarkably powerful mage, able to aid and defend her people in every capacity they needed. Nausicaä has been an excellent queen ever since, her mastery of secret magics allowing her to renew herself after decades of aging, such that her reign may indeed last indefinitely.

Her stabilizing influence on the region has improved the economy of all of western Ceres, and allowed both her own nation and Astaeria to spare more resources for the war efforts against the Maelstrom in Unauwin and distant Oloeri and Silvyre. As Telimond grows ever more prosperous and unified, hope begins to grow in some hearts that not all will be swept away by the Maelstrom's rising tide.

Counties: *Telimond counties are called provinces.*
Arilim: The unified capital of Telimond stands in Arilim Province. Called Anelo, it is an old Briellon city that has greatly increased in importance since being chosen as the new capital for the united queendom. Anelo stands near the very center of Telimond, and is home to one of the three core campuses of the Telimond Comprehensive University. The Anelo campus is the elite College of Governance, exploring such topics as Meeting Basic Humanoid Needs, Peace and Conflict Studies, and International Commerce. It welcomes qualifying students from all over Ceres, some arriving from as far away as Ocia or Uneabard if they have the means to do so.

Adwilian: Adwilian Province was originally part of the kingdom of Ethea. Like mountainous Abarith, therefore, Adwilian Province has a high concentration of elves among the populace, and most of the nobility are elves as well. This province is also home to the exceptionally elite Telimond Comprehensive University College of the Weave. This tiny and remote campus hosts fewer than a dozen students at any one time and the magical lessons taught here are a time-honored elven secret, said to date back to the days of the mythical Vareene. Queen Nausicaä is a master graduate of this college, reputed to be numbered among the most powerful mages ever to complete its training.

Bradovia: The third of the three main Comprehensive University colleges is located in southern Bradovia Province. Like most of Telimond, Bradovia Province was originally part of Briellon and is primarily human in population. Its College of the Land is in some ways both the least exclusive and the most respected of the main University campuses. Dedicated primarily to agriculture, it also teaches traditional Briellon arts and crafts. The agricultural curriculum is renowned for its dissemination of the most innovative food production tools and techniques. Additionally, the Ethean influence on the university slants its methods toward long term stewardship of farmland and natural spaces, as well as the best means for large populations to subsist in harmony with the nature around them.

Northern Bradovia does experience some difficulty with raids from the Blackwood, but these have never penetrated deeply enough to threaten the college.

Key NPCs: Former king Abarith is in his mid third century and remains an influential figure in Telimond. Loyal to and proud of his daughter, he uses his continuing social clout to support her. Behind closed doors, he is said to advise Nausicaä honestly and speak his mind, but the two seem to agree in most cases. Refusing all titles after his abdication, Abarith (sometimes called Oppidan Abarith) has also been known to speak publicly of his regrets for having allowed his conflict with Briellon to escalate to violence in his youth.

Allies and Foes: Telimond is allied with or has mutually beneficial agreements with all of its neighbors save for the Blackwood. Queen Nausicaä has attempted to reason with and heal even that benighted land, but with no success thus far. Some believe that, given the opportunity, Queen Nausicaä would attempt to heal the heart and soul of even Kurse the Harbinger.

Army:
- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of medium cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Abarith	Mountain	3	Telimond 2	Church of the Endless Stars 3	Ratakka's Mice 3	SoTG 3	Telimond 2		River, Coastline
Arilim	Plain	6	Astaeria 2	Church of the Endless Stars 6	Ratakka's Mice 3		Telimond 5	Highway	River
			Telimond 4				The Youth Garden 1	Fortress, Monuments	Cosmopolitan
Bradovia	Plain	3	Telimond 3	Church of the Endless Stars 3	The Nosdram Family 3	SoTG 2	Telimond 3	Highway	River, Fertile
Adwilian	Hill	4	Astaeria 0	Church of the Endless Stars 4	The Nosdram Family 2	SoTG 2	Telimond 2		River
			Telimond 3		Ratakka's Mice 2		The Youth Garden 2		Educated
Legir	Plain	5	Astaeria 1	Church of the Endless Stars 5	Feild 4		Telimond 2		River, Coastline
			Telimond 3		The Nosdram Family 1		The Youth Garden 1		
Woassa	Plain	2	Telimond 1	Church of the Endless Stars 2	Feild 2	SoTG 1	Telimond 1		Coastline

SoTG: School of Theurgia & Goetia

The Northern Dales

Often referred to as the heartland of Ceres, the Northern Dales boast wide stretches of farmland and peaceful vistas as far as the eye can see. Here, much of the food that the folk of Ceres consume is grown, distributed, and shipped out on regular trade routes along south-leading caravan routes and by ship north of the mountains of Woand.

Gently rolling hills break up the landscape across most of Unauwin and into Silvyre, where plentiful barrow mounds hold the dead of a hundred bloody battles against the predations of the Maelstrom just to the south and east. Silvyre, bordered by the mountains of Woand to the east and the encroaching threat of the Maelstrom to the south, plays a key strategic role, frequently paying in blood to keep the Dales relatively safe.

The humid swamps in the damper parts of the Northern Dales provide a unique sort of terrain rarely found in Ceres. The great swamp of Adiclya is a recent development, having festered after a terrible battle between invading forces from the Maelstrom and a unified alliance of Aielith, Kedohaw, and Unauwin: over the last century or so, the land has withered, plants rotting and creatures becoming twisted. Dark creatures also dwell in the swamp of Brakagor, which is divided by the border of Aielith and Silvyre, posing a potential threat to nearby settlements, but the nearby powers have mostly managed to keep the machinations of the swamp dwellers contained within the county's borders.

At the far western edge of the Dales lies Feild, though folk of this land disagree about whether they are actually part of the Great West. Their location provides key political leverage and allows them to supply the several major realms that border them.

Folk of the Northern Dales

The folk of the Dales tend to be kind, compassionate, and welcoming, even to folk they don't know. Their emphasis on growing things and feeding people bleeds over into their general attitude toward life, which is that folk tend to be fundamentally good, even if they sometimes lose their way. Breaking bread or sharing a bowl of wine is a sacred thing to Dalesfolk, and even the worst of enemies treat each other like friends at a dinner table.

Some of the most populated and peaceful lands in Ceres, the Dales play host to many diverse communities of folk, especially humans, dwarves, elves, halflings, and gnomes. Their reputation for hospitality doesn't extend to all, however, and those of orc or goblin heritage, and especially the Shadowed, find distrustful glares if not open hostility.

Aielith

Values: Community, Family, Music, Nature

Authority: Aielith is ruled by the Keshrigans, whose dynasty has lasted 400 years now, according to record. House Keshrigan, and Aielith along with it, has had plenty of ups and downs over the centuries, and boasts a diverse—even bizarre—family history. The House is currently small and a bit sickly, but quite wealthy as well, and beloved by the people.

Description: Aielith, of all Ceres's nations who share no borders with the Maelstrom, is perhaps the most dedicated

to supporting its neighbors' war efforts. More populous than Silvyre and more fertile than even Unauwin, Aielith's policy for the last century has been to prioritize the safety of all Ceres in its trade arrangements with both Silvyre and Unauwin, donating a fair amount of food and goods outright.

Aielith is not much of a military nation, preferring to focus on family, craft, music, and nurturing the land. Thus the loss of the beautiful Adiclya marshes (whose name meant Frogsong in an older, mostly-forgotten dialect) hit the people of Aielith very hard. A whole mythology has sprung up, linking frogs and frogsong to the soul of Aielith, such that killing frogs or destroying frog-ponds is considered unlucky, and a national fixation on the healing of the Adiclya marshes has taken hold. Adiclya has become the symbol of Aielithi pride to give what they can in the fight against the Maelstrom.

Counties:
Aceriven: Aielith's largest port city, Mishoak, lies on the western coast of Aceriven County, a prosperous region of fertile farmland stretching along plentiful seas. Like Vibeth County to the south, Aceriven shares a border with the wealthier and more populous nation of Kedohaw. Though Kedohaw and Aielith share a basic peace treaty, border relations are always a bit strained, as Aielith's neighbor is ever greedy for more land to claim.

Adiclya: Once a beautiful and fertile wetland full of frogsong and medicinal herbs, Adiclya County has become befouled. Just over a century ago, a vast army from the Maelstrom marched out across Unauwin, toward Kedohaw. Unauwin, Kedohaw, and Aielith united to stop them, and it is believed that whatever the campaign's objective, it was defeated before reaching its goal. The final battle, however, was fought hip-deep in the mud in the Adiclya wetlands, and many bodies of the dead were never found, sinking instead into unmarked graves in the swamp.

As the site of so much death, it is perhaps not surprising that Adiclya County grew rife with disease after the allies' victory. Also the site of a great magical battle, the forms these diseases took were surprising and often horrifying, and their effects have yet to dissipate, even a century later. The mages known as Dartaran's Ravens have been studying the Adiclya Swamp in hopes of learning more about the Maelstrom's magics and how to counter them in future. Many hope that Adiclya County can be healed in the process.

Drekor: Despite containing what is technically part of the deadly Brakagor Swamp, Drekor is a prosperous little county that is mostly fertile farmland. Even much of the northern freshwater tidal marshes are considered useful by the residents for fishing, hunting, trapping, and herb-gathering. The occasional monster does wander out into the marshes from the deeper swamps, but Drekor County has nothing like the reputation of Onoak County to its south.

Gralehan: Though primarily full of flat and tidy farmland as far as the eye can see—like much of Aielith—Gralehan County is also home to Aielith's modest capital city of Aielwyst. All the major roads in Aielith converge at Aielwyst.

Onoak: Though southern and western Onoak County does contain some fine and stable farmland, Onoak County is most famous for its section for the perilous Brakagor Swamp. Even more so than the Silvyre side of the swamp, Onoak County's section of the Brakagor is infamous for attacks by strange monsters since time out of mind. As a result, Onoak County's residents are of a somewhat heartier breed than the average farmer.

Key NPCs: The Court Bard of Aielith's royal family is Keerlish Barrishen, renowned for heartbreaking lyrics and a pure, clear voice. Barrishen's best work may be the sort of sad ballads that speak to deep truths and are sure to endure for centuries, but the royal bard is also known for matching a razor wit to catchy rhymes and melodies. It is advised to stay on Keerlish Barrishen's good side if one does not wish to become a laughingstock throughout northwest Ceres. Barrishen often uses this talent in politically important ways, helping the poor or disenfranchised or shaming ill-behaving nobles into more responsible comportment.

Allies and Foes: Aielith is closely allied with Silvyre and Unauwin. Though its only true enemy is the Maelstrom, there is awkward border tension between Aielith and Kedohaw, with whom the alliance of a century ago has long since fallen apart.

Army:
- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of heavy cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Aceriven	Plain	3	Aielith 3	TNH 3	The Nosdram Family 2	Dartaran's Ravens 3	TGMPB 0 The Yellow League 3	Road, Port	Cove, Coastline
Adiclya	Swamp	2	Silvyre 2	TNH 2	The Nosdram Family 2	Dartaran's Ravens 2	TGMPB 2 The Yellow League 0		Blighted, River
Drekor	Swamp	2	Aielith 2	Earth and Sky 2	The Nosdram Family 2	SoRG 2	TGMPB 1 The Yellow League 1		River, Coastline Fertile
Gralehan	Plain	2	Kedohaw 2	Earth and Sky 2	The Nosdram Family 2	Dartaran's Ravens 2	TGMPB 2 The Yellow League 0	Highway Fortress, Monuments	Open
Onoak	Swamp	2	Aielith 1		The Nosdram Family 2	SoRG 2	TGMPB 0 The Yellow League 2		River Privacy
Qalith	Plain	4	Aielith 3 Kedohaw 1	TNH 3	The Trade League of Silvyre 2 The Nosdram Family 1	SoRG 4	TGMPB 1 The Yellow League 3	Road	River
Vibeth	Plain	3	Aielith 3	TNH 3	The Trade League of Silvyre 3	SoRG 3	TGMPB 2 The Yellow League 1	Highway	
Wedriwan	Plain	2	Aielith 1	Earth and Sky 2	The Trade League of Silvyre 2	Dartaran's Ravens 2			

SoRG: School of Runes & Geomancy | TNH: The Nurturing Heirophany | TGMPB: The Guild of Minstrels, Poets and Bards

Kedohaw

Values: Honor, Law, Tradition, Loyalty, Power

Authority: The Borgon family of Kedohaw has ruled for four generations, since the last queen of the Hesrian line died without an heir. Technically cousins to both House Hesrian and House Keshrigan of Aielith, the Borgon family has a different approach to rule than either of these, being more focused on accumulation of wealth and power. The current king seems to believe that with sufficient might, he will be able to stand alone against the Maelstrom itself.

Description: Kedohaw, though not particularly large, is one of the wealthiest and most influential nations in Ceres. It boasts well-kept roads, fertile fields, a thriving timber industry, and powerful magics. The forested cliffs of its north shore have sheltered Kedohaw from attack by sea, offering defense from the piracy and occasional monsters that have sometimes depressed development in other northwest coastal nations. These same forests, however—a strange, high-magic region filled to this day with perilous magical creatures—keep the Kedohaw population largely confined to its southern plains and meadows.

For this reason, southern Kedohaw has become the region of highest population density in perhaps all of Ceres. Even using the latest innovations in plowing, harvesting, and fertilizing their fields, and with all the magical aid that Kedohan wizards can muster, it is projected that in two or three generations, Kedohaw will no longer have enough land to feed its people. It is therefore perhaps understandable that the Borgon royal family has grown so acquisitive. Their methods may not be perfect, but their people do need more land, and land is costly in treasure, blood, or both.

Kedohaw's relationships with its neighbors have thus become strained in recent generations. Basic diplomacy has been maintained with Aielith to the east, though Kedohaw has bullied Aielith's queen into concession after concession, resulting in "agreements" that will ultimately strengthen Kedohaw at Aielith's cost.

What tension may lie with the southern Cadelania is harder for the general populace to read. Cadelania's queen is a strange one, and a seer as well. On the surface, tensions between Kedohaw and Cadelania do not appear to exist. Rumor has it, however, that Kedohaw and Cadelania may already be locked in a shadow-war, in a contest of intrigues instead of open warfare.

Whatever the case between Kedohaw and Cadelania, it is easy to see how the common folk in other nations find Kedohaw's lack of diplomacy in poor form. Right now, with the Maelstrom's looming might swelling by the day, northwest Ceres feels ever more strongly that other nations should not be starting side-wars. As sentiment against Kedohaw begins to grow, some even wonder if Kurse's corruption has infected the Borgon family, and if Kedohaw's king has allied with the Harbinger.

Astaeria's tensions with Qomas and military behavior in Kiligan receive nowhere near the scrutiny and distrust of Kedohaw's arguably more justifiable machinations in the north, so some of the failure on House Borgon's part is simply one of international diplomacy. The Borgons have been found by other leaders to be boorish and arrogant, earning them little sympathy compared to their neighboring counterparts.

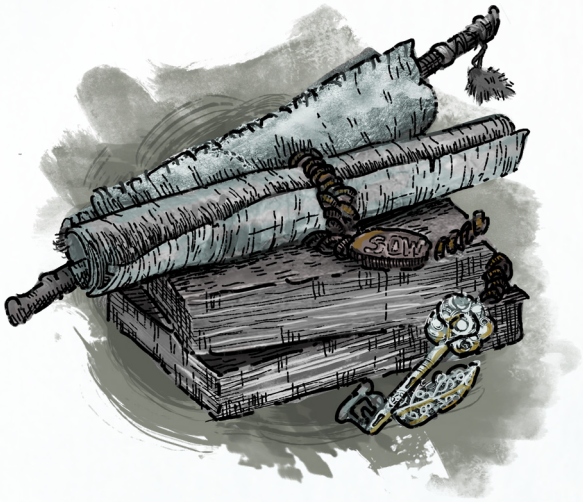
Counties:

Haegord's Dale: Haegord's Dale has long been considered a part of Kedohaw, but for most of those centuries it was an impassible wilderness, deadly and untameable. Just over a century ago, when the forces of the Maelstrom marched through Unauwin and into Aielith, apparently headed for Kedohaw, the last Hesrian queen hired a great wizard from Leanad to find a way to unlock the power of the Dale for Kedohaw's defense, in case the Maelstrom army broke through the allied forces.

The wizard succeeded, but his price was that Leanad be granted rights to half the magical power of Kedohaw's portions of the Faedeep Forest. The Borgon family has been trying to weasel out of this deal ever since they took power. Thus far, the Borgons have had partial success reworking the deal in Lancia and Mentaka counties, but Haegord's Dale and Druweth remain important magical resources for Leanad as well as Kedohaw.

Oneadien: The capital of Kedohaw, Fairflower, lies in east-central Oneadien surrounding the Kedohaw hill fort, said to be the oldest still-standing castle in all of northwest Ceres. Despite being surrounded on all sides by miles of gently rolling farmland, Fairflower is a regional trade hub, situated where the Great Western Highway crosses several local roads.

Lancia: A primarily wild area and major magical resource for Kedohaw, Lancia County is also known to contain a secret hideout of the infamous Nosdram family. The Lancia County coastline is mainly forested cliffs overhanging the sea, riddled hidden caves, natural harbors, and is ringed



by difficult-to-navigate currents. For these reasons, the Nosdram outpost has managed to operate with impunity for decades at least. Some believe that greased palms in the right places have made the hideout still harder to find, as it were.

Soron: Soron County is prosperous and cultured, with a high population and productive land. In recent years, however, there has been a rash along the Aielith border of Kedohan farmers moving their property markers inch by inch into Aielith territory. If Aielith farmers retaliate, it is the policy of the Count of Soron to respond harshly, to the fullest extent that Kedohaw's treaties with Aielith will allow. If Aielith's counts respond with similar not-quite-aggression, it is apparently the policy of Kedohaw's king to accuse Aielith of treaty-violation. This leads to a constant diplomatic dance over the exact demarcation of the Aielith-Kedohaw border in Soron County, much to Aielith's ongoing aggravation.

Key NPCs: The Witch of Mentaka is a figure of legend throughout northwest Ceres and beyond. Some believe her to be immortal, undead, or even imaginary, while others claim she's simply very old, or that "Witch of Mentaka" is a title passed down to the mage best able to master Mentaka's tricky mystical artifact in each generation. Whatever the case, a half-elven sorceress named Vimiana Zoraliel has recently gained fame as Mentaka's legendary Witch, and it is said that passage through Mentaka County is only possible with her permission. Other tales claim she keeps a pet werewolf, makes nightmares reality at a whim, and visits hideous curses upon local wrongdoers (for nefarious motivations upon which the rumors are not entirely clear).

The old "witch" legend aside, many believe that Zoraliel is an ally of Kedohaw's king and that these rumors are part of some political ploy, aimed at either Cadelania or Leanad (or both). What can't be denied, however, is that Zoraliel is a powerful spellcaster with a reportedly short temper.

Allies and Foes: Kedohaw is short on allies of late. While its international commerce continues apace, it leaders have grown unpopular with the people of Aielith and Cadelania. Neither neighboring nation has the power to threaten wealthy Kedohaw, but both have unusual diplomatic influence for their size, which could prove unfortunate for Kedohaw in the long term.

As for the rumors that Kedohaw's king works for the Maelstrom, these are almost certainly false. If the Maelstrom has influence in Kedohaw at all, it is undoubtedly using Kedohaw to sow distrust and disunity among Kurse's potential enemies.

Army:

- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of heavy cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Aseacia	Plain	5	Kedohaw 5	Karnism 5	House Dressan 3	The Northwest Mages Society 4	The Deathworkers Guild 3 The Guild of Minstrels, Poets and Bards 1		River
Druweth	Forest	1	Kedohaw 1		House Dressan 1	The Northwest Mages Society 1	The Deathworkers Guild 1		Coastline
Haegord's Dale	Forest	1	Kedohaw 1		House Dressan 1	The Northwest Mages Society 1	The Deathworkers Guild 0		River, Coastline
Lancia	Forest	1	Kedohaw 1	Karnism 1	The Nosdram Family 1	Leanad 1	The Guild of Minstrels, Poets and Bards 1		Coastline, Cove
Mentaka	Forest	1	Kedohaw 1			Leanad 1	The Guild of Minstrels, Poets and Bards 0		River
Oneadien	Plain	6	Kedohaw 6	Karnism 6	House Dressan 3	The Northwest Mages Society 5	The Deathworkers Guild 3 The Guild of Minstrels, Poets and Bards 3	Highway, Fortress Monuments	River Crossroads
Soron	Plain	5	Kedohaw 5	Karnism 5	House Dressan 3	The Northwest Mages Society 5	The Deathworkers Guild 2 The Guild of Minstrels, Poets and Bards 2	Highway	Proud

Silvyre

Values: Freedom, Knowledge, Power

Authority: Inspired by the Astaerian legal system, Silvyre has adopted a series of contests to determine rulership fitness. Unlike in Astaeria (or the similar Ocian system), Silvyren rulership contests are open to all willing to pay the entrance fee. Also unlike either Astaeria or Ocia, contest winners serve only seven-year terms, though rulers may serve as many terms as they win.

Description: Silvyre wants to be a land of cultured scholarship, fine art, and profound philosophy. What reality has forced upon it, however, is a grounded balance of abstract thought and practical application, with a side effect that every discovery is immediately co-opted by the war effort—the constant struggle to defend Silvyre's people from the forces of the Maelstrom. War and bloodshed aside, however, Silvyre is known for rich fields, fine universities, and cutting-edge knowledge of astronomy, magic, mathematics, and agriculture.

Seerism, a new religion imported from the Sunset Isle, has grown in popularity here recently. Seerism appeals to Silvyre's thirst for knowledge in its emphasis on divination, and to Silvyre's plight as front-line defenders against the Maelstrom's oppression in its emphasis on righteous defiance.

Counties:
Highpond: Silvyre's capital, Northfort, stands in central Highpond County. The county itself is named for its famously innovative artificial reservoir, fed by a world-renowned irrigation system drawing water throughout Highpond County and beyond, from the Gathlien River which marks Highpond County's border with Woand.

Moormead: The largest portion of the perilous Brakagor swamp is claimed by Silvyre as the county of Moormead. The nation's (and arguably the entire north's) most prestigious school of magic is located here, studying the strange swamp wildlife in hopes of better pinpointing the source of Ceres's magic. The school incidentally serves as a defense bastion to keep said wildlife safely confined to the swamp and away from outlying farms.

Strongland: One of two Silvyren counties that border on Maelstrom lands, Strongland, like its neighboring county of Lightbank, is heavily fortified and militarized. With Silvyre's fertile land area, diverse resources, and highly advanced scholarship, most believe that the nation could be a major power in Ceres. If it is not, the reason lies in the constant bleeding away of resources, promising young people, and literal lifeblood that the Maelstrom inflicts upon Silvyre's southern counties.

Key NPCs: Orbrens Sembrenal is the Headmaster of the Moormead College of Wizardry. He is said to stand among the greatest living wizards in Ceres, and many in Silvyre seek him out for counsel.

Allies and Foes: Silvyre's closest allies are Aielith and Unauwin, with whom it shares a mutual protection pact and many resources in the fight against the Maelstrom. Silvyre's only enemy is the Maelstrom itself.

Army:
- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 1 unit of pikemen
- 2 units of heavy cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Highpond	Plain	5	Silvyre 3	Astronomism 2 Seerism 3	The Trade League of Silvyre 5	Dartaran's Ravens 5	TKP 3	Road, Fortress	Educated River, Coastline
Icefay	Plain	2	Unauwin 1	Seerism 2	The Trade League of Silvyre 2	Dartaran's Ravens 2	TKP 2		River
Lightbank	Hill	2	Unauwin 1	Astronomism 2	The Trade League of Silvyre 2	Knights of the Red Staff 0 Dartaran's Ravens 2	TKP 1		River
Lockport	Plain	3	Silvyre 1	Astronomism 3	The Trade League of Silvyre 3	Knights of the Red Staff 2	TKP 2		Coastline
Moormead	Swamp	2	Silvyre 1	Seerism 2	The Trade League of Silvyre 1	Dartaran's Ravens 2	TKP 2		Ruins, River, Coastline
Strongland	Hill	3	Unauwin 1	Seerism 2	The Trade League of Silvyre 3	Knights of the Red Staff 2	TKP 2		Volunteerism, River
Vertpond	Plain	3	Unauwin 3	Seerism 3	The Trade League of Silvyre 3	Knights of the Red Staff 2	TKP 1		River

TKP: The Knowledge-Preservers

Unauwin

Values: Valour, Strength, Loyalty, Tenacity, Virtue

Authority: The last known scion of the ruling Erimere house of Unauwin was slain a mere three years ago in a pitched battle in Erihurst. Unauwin still mourns her loss, and no Unauwen noble family wishes to attempt to fill Erimere's shoes. In honor of traditional Erimere populism, therefore, the common people were permitted to choose the new ruling house of Unauwin in a crude electoral process from among the existing noble families. This move also helped Unauwin bypass internal conflict it could not afford under the circumstances.

The people chose House Keywood, whose count was also a popular general. He accepted the people's acclaim, but his loyalty to the fallen Erimeres runs so deep that Lorben of Keywood has refused to declare himself king. So long as he lives, he intends to remain Grand Duke Lorben of Unauwin. The rest of House Keywood has supported his decision for now, but other nobility have insisted that Unauwin not be "downgraded" to a grand duchy from a kingdom. Instead, Grand Duke Lorben speaks of the kings who will one day come again in Unauwin's hour of need.

Whatever the long term consequences of this choice may be, for the moment Grand Duke Lorben seems to have a good read on what the people of Unauwin need of their leader, and the first grand duke is exceedingly popular among his people.

Description: For centuries now, Unauwin has struggled to maintain its borders against the growing power of the Maelstrom. It has lost two counties, Asilith and Kaied, beyond all reasonable hope of recovery. It fears losing more. Unlike the dwarves of Oloeri, the people of Unauwin have no mountain fastness to help them in holding the line. They have only each other and what ingenuity, valour, and skill they can muster.

Unauwin was a different land once. Artistic and some say even decadent, historical Unauwens are credited with several inventions significant throughout Ceres, including three-part vocal harmony, distilled liquor, and the use of black powder, devices, and alchemical agents to create multicolored nonmagical pyrotechnics displays.

Before humans became common in Ceres, Unauwen people were primarily gnomes and halflings. Ancient records imply that some of the earliest populations of humans began in southeastern Unuawin, where a community of elven immigrants intermingled not only with the halfling and some gnome natives, but also with the orcs of a few friendly border communities from the days before Migoch shut itself off completely. Therefore, it is in Unauwin that the people of Ceres first reliably documented the strange interconnectedness of Ceres's species as well as the origin of what has become the world's most common language-capable people: humans.

In this era, Unauwin was a loose collection of city-states, competing and squabbling amongst themselves. The region only united under a single rule in response to the formation of Astaeria and other neighboring nations.

Then the Harbinger came.

Everything changed for Unuawin after that. Its former dilettante society was whittled away bit by bit, and the culture began to simplify down to one core value: hold the line.

Unauwin now revolves around resistance, but not merely of the body. Unauwens are conscious of defending more than simply borders. Theirs is a resistance of the soul as well, a stubborn insistence on retaining not only their lands and homes but also their capacity for virtue and love. United in purpose as few in Ceres have ever been, Unauwens stand together in a kind of extended national family, determined despite their mortal failings, to stem the tide of evil no matter the cost.

Counties:
Bywell: Sometimes considered the most beautiful place in Unauwin to live, indeed, among the most beautiful in all of western Ceres, Bywell is nevertheless not what it once was. While relations between Unauwin and Migoch have never been friendly, in centuries past the orcs merely kept to themselves. Sometimes they might raid a village or two during a difficult winter. Sometimes such raids were devastating. But they were rare, and hardly bloody. The orcs had no *ill* will toward Unauwens—they just wanted to live through the winter, even if it meant others had to die.

Things have changed, however, in recent years. The orcs raid more often and more viciously. They seem desperate, driven, and bitter to the point of hatred. The citizens of Bywell County were never understanding of their plight—why should they be? The orcs were hardly understanding of theirs. But now the enmity seems to escalate with every raid, every life lost to Migoch. The same can be said all along the Migoch border, but in Bywell County the change feels starker. Perhaps it seems incongruent that residents of such a beautiful place would hold something so ugly in their hearts, no matter how understandable that ugliness might be.

Erihurst: By far the most blood-drenched county in Unauwin, Erihurst has become almost entirely militarized. Families with children are fleeing to the far west of the county or even to other counties entirely. In the east and south, only the soldiers and forts remain, dug into the hills or patrolling the borders. Even three years after her death, a silent pall hangs over the county where what may have been Unauwin's last queen died in defense of her people. Erihurst remembers when Asilith and

Kaied counties were part of Unauwin. They know the risks and the costs of the Harbinger's ever-growing evil. They fear that they will be next, but still they stand strong, prepared to defend Ceres until the end.

Linlyn: Much like Sevybeth County in Cadelania, Linlyn County is sandwiched between the tainted Adiclya Swamp and the fearsome Blackwood. As they deal with constant attacks by dangerous creatures, the hearty and stubborn Linlyn County folk joke that their home is a training ground. "If you can survive a childhood here," they say, "you'll be ready to face the Harbinger by the time you're grown."

Newbush: Another ever-embattled Unauwen county, Newbush's southern and eastern borders are the second most militarized area in Unauwin. Never as lush or lovely as Bywell, Newbush County does not attract as many orc raids as its southwestern neighbor-county, but it does see orc activity and plenty of goblins and twisted fae threaten its east. Newbush County stands strong through all this, but its citizens have less of Erihurst's fatalistic tenacity about them. It is easier for Erihurst troops to strike back into the Asilith wastes than it would be for any force to assail the close and dark Kaied woods, and Newbush forces, feeling pincered between the Maelstrom and Migoch, feel less safe marching away from their homes to begin with. Though technically Erihurst faces more and greater dangers, Newbush County suffers perhaps the lowest morale in all of Unauwin.

Westerspring: Unauwin's capital of Lamphill stands in Westerspring County, near the county's namesake spring. Though tiny by Bywell and Astaerian standards, Westerspring Lake remains a beloved and holy place for Unauwens. In recent decades, pilgrims flock here daily to bathe in the water and pray for Unauwin's and Ceres's safety. Though Westerspring County is kept relatively safe behind the bulwarks of the southern and eastern counties, it contains no sense of ease or complacency. New recruits train here year-round, preparing to support their comrades and siblings on the front lines. Officials and even aristocrats scurry to and fro, always busy with matters of national defense.

People in other parts of Ceres may forget, now and again, the threat the Kurse the Harbinger means to all decent folk. The residents of Unauwin do not. Here things are boiled down and very simple: you defend Ceres or you die trying.

Key NPCs: Selweth Woodhome is a famous tactician and inventor working with the Unauwen military in a difficult-to-pin-down capacity—in large part because Master Woodhome seems incapable of the slightest comprehension of discipline or authority. A half-orc in appearance, Woodhome's mother was a half-elf, while his human grandfather takes pride in a gnomish heritage. So mixed a history typically results in a human appearance, but nothing about Selweth Woodhome is typical of any species.

Restless and constantly muttering to himself, in nearly any other land or era he would likely have been dismissed by his peers as mad. Ever since the Battle of Catsdale twelve years ago, when his tactics allowed Unauwen forces to route a goblin invasion without the loss of a single Unauwen life, Woodhome has become a staple of Unauwen military councils, and his ideas are said to be rapidly changing the face of war in Ceres.

Allies and Foes: Unauwin's allies include most nations in northwestern Ceres. Its enemies are many as well, however, including Migoch, the Blackwood, and especially the Maelstrom.

Army:

- 3 units of archers
- 3 units of heavy infantry
- 3 units of pikemen
- 3 units of heavy cavalry
- 3 units of berserkers

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Aelcoast	Plain	3	Astaeria 0 Feild 0 Unauwin 2	Karnism 2 Valism 0	The Nosdram Family 2	Knights of the Red Staff 2	The Yellow League 1 The Red League 1	Highway	
Bywell	Plain	3	Astaeria 0 Unauwin 2	Astronomism 0 Valism 3	R&R Investments 2 The Nosdram Family 0	Knights of the Red Staff 2	The Red League 1 TKP 2		River Beautiful
Deepby	Hill	4	Feild 0 Unauwin 3	Astronomism 3 Karnism 1	R&R Investments 4	Knights of the Red Staff 1	The Yellow League 2 TKP 1		
Erihurst	Hill	6	Feild 0 Unauwin 4	Astronomism 1 Valism 5	R&R Investments 4 The Nosdram Family 2	Knights of the Red Staff 2	The Yellow League 4 The Red League 2		River Volunteerism
Ipse	Plain	6	Unauwin 5	Astronomism 3 Valism 2	Feild 4 R&R Investments 1	Knights of the Red Staff 2	The Yellow League 2 The Red League 2 TKP 2		
Linlyn	Hill	3	Unauwin 3	Karnism 3	R&R Investments 3	Knights of the Red Staff 2	The Yellow League 1		River, Proud
Newbush	Plain	5	Unauwin 3	Astronomism 3 Valism 2	Feild 2 R&R Investments 3	Knights of the Red Staff 2	The Red League 2 TKP 3		Pressgangs
Westerspring	Hill	4	Silvyre 2 Unauwin 2	Astronomism 2 Valism 2	Feild 1 R&R Investments 3	Knights of the Red Staff 1	The Yellow League 2 TKP 2	Highway Castle, Palace	Sacred
Westpine	Plain	4	Unauwin 3	Astronomism 1 Valism 3	R&R Investments 4	Knights of the Red Staff 1	The Red League 2 TKP 2		River
Whitewater	Hill	4	Unauwin 4	Astronomism 1 Valism 3	R&R Investments 4	Knights of the Red Staff 1	The Yellow League 1 The Red League 2		River

TKP: The Knowledge-Preservers

Uneabard

Values: Duty, Labor, Loyalty, Community, Humility

Authority: The royal family of Uneabard is the Larishans, who have ruled for over 200 years and claim descent from a branch line of the Borrwek family who unified the nation long ago, according to a family timeline that contrasts wildly with more scholastic historical records. Regardless of whether the Borrwek family ever even existed, the Larishans today are blandly aristocratic, balancing wealthy arrogance with sober dignity, haughty pride with urbane diplomacy, and gross classism with an educated eye to the practical benefits of a contented populace.

Description: Among the oldest human-ruled nations in Ceres, Uneabard culture tends toward solid traditionalism and hardworking obedience to its noble houses. Outsiders have joked that all rebellion, imagination, and sense of humor have been either bred out or driven out of Uneabard's people long ago. That said, the poor of Uneabard are not notably worse off or less happy than the poor of most other nations, as even the aristocracy here seem too solidly traditional to ever quite descend into cackling villainy (at least, not in a long while).

However, laws in Uneabard are strict and unwavering, and hard divisions between the classes are maintained wherever possible. The Uneabard social hierarchy has four simple tiers: The nobility, the lesser aristocracy (including the upper clergy and many mages), the military (including most officers and all elite troops but excluding higher officers who are lords or nobles and common infantry who are technically peasants), and the peasantry. Intermarriage is only legal with classes one step above or below one's own, and children of mixed-class parents must pass a test of aptitude at age twelve to inherit the status of their higher-classed parents. Peasants may raise themselves to military status by earning officer rank as soldiers or even to lesser aristocracy rank by various other routes, but both achievements are rare, and most soldiers and lesser clergy remain technically peasants under the law.

Mercantilism is discouraged in Uneabard, as it is believed to promote hubris among the lower classes. Uneabreni are taught that only the aristocracy has the gods-given wisdom to manage large amounts of money or property. Peasants and soldiers should instead have what they need to be happy—ideally no more and no less. In practice, many peasants have a good deal less than they need, but between religious propaganda and the occasional magnanimous act of charity by some noble or other, most of Uneabard's people prefer to keep their heads down and accept their lots in life.

If nothing else, Uneabren law, however unyielding, has been enforced consistently, even among the upper classes. Also, Uneabard's leaders continue for the most part to keep their people safe despite the troubles to the south. Predictable stability seems an acceptable alternative to comfort in the minds of many of Uneabard's common folk.

Counties:
Baori: Though much of eastern and southern Baori County is rich farmland, orchards, fishing villages, and grazing lands like the rest of Uneabard, Baori County also contains Uneabard's two largest cities. Welshren is Uneabard's traditional capital, centered on Welshren Castle from whence the royal family governs.

Port Paerlian, located barely a day's walk to Welshren's north along the Uneabard Royal Road, is the site of the year-round Uneabren People's Market. Uneabard law, taxes, and tariffs are engineered to depress rather than encourage commerce among the common folk, so the People's Market is a ramshackle maze of ever-changing stalls and booths, run primarily on barter and a bit of illicit smuggling.

Haemeth's Folly: Haemeth's Folly and Taunyth Counties both lie on Uneabard's southern border with Kaareb. Like Taunyth County, Haemeth's Folly is constantly bristling with soldiers. While Taunyth shares its eastern border with Wigolath and has thus become a haven for all manner of illicit traffic to and from Uneabard, Haemeth's Folly shares its western border with Ethywen the Lost, and is seeing an encroachment of the Kaareb corruption into its southwestern forests. In addition to a strong military presence, therefore, Uneabard has concentrated its most powerful magical defenses in Haemeth's Folly in an attempt to defend the kingdom from whatever foulness is polluting the land in Kaareb.

Kaalil: Kaalil County is mostly swamp, but is considered among the most beautiful swamps in Ceres, dripping with willow trees and flowering vines, and full of frog- and birdsong. That said, Kaalil Swamp is nigh-impassible in all but the driest parts of the year, and as such remains almost entirely wild. Though it has not yet been tainted by the corruption oozing outward from Kaareb, Kaalil Swamp has always been known for its deadly, magical wildlife (both animal and plant).

Naturally-occurring bodies of water have so far shown an inexplicable resistance to the forest-taint, such that rivers, like the sluggish Kaalil River that feeds its namesake swamp, seem to slow the corruption's progress considerably. Nevertheless, few believe that the Kaalil Swamp will remain untainted forever, and many fear what it will become once this wrongness begins to amplify its already terrifying dangers.

Only a few settlements dot the edge of Kaalil County. These have seen an influx of refugees from Wigolath in recent years,

but so few make it through the swamp alive that they have as yet posed no hardship for local villagers. For the moment, therefore, the Uneabard authorities seem minded to ignore these immigrants' existence, but should they find a way to cross the swamp in greater numbers, it remains to be seen how Uneabard will respond to their plight.

Naellan's Pass: Located in the southeastern foothills of the Flintheart Mountains, the Naellan's Pass hills stand at a natural disadvantage against incursions from the corrupted dwarves of Ethywen. Much like Taunyth County and Haemeth's Folly, therefore, Naellan's Pass bristles with soldiers and fortifications year-round. Though Uneabard lands are more than plentiful enough to see these troops supplied without unduly depriving local residents, Naellan's Pass units have seen worse discipline problems than Uneabard's other threatened counties, and their leaders have trouble discerning why. This has led to dangerous unrest among the common folk of Naellan's Pass, which is a potential vulnerability that Uneabard cannot afford for long.

Key NPCs: Egarlind Greenbeard is famously the greatest wizard in Uneabard, and the leader of Uneabard's Mage Corps. He is an advisor to the queen and a close companion of the prince consort. Born a commoner, Greenbeard is now perhaps the most powerful of all the lesser aristocracy in Uneabard, making him a source of hope and inspiration for the poor and the object of much jealousy among his legal peers (and even some nobility) who disapprove of his still occasionally rough and common manner.

Olshren of House Kaerlath is the Marquis of Naellan's Pass. Only recently confirmed to his position, his grip on the country remains tenuous of yet. His father removed him from the line of succession after his open decision to become male by magical transition (thus ruining the family's plans for how to marry him off as nobles in Uneabard wed primarily for the purpose of breeding heirs). When the old Marquis died, however, Olshren's siblings petitioned the queen to reinstate their brother as heir, perhaps because they didn't want to deal with the messy unrest their father had left behind upon his death.

Olshren has been ostracized by other Uneabren nobles for perceived social gaffes during the severing of his former betrothal, and it seems likely that even his family is attempting to scapegoat him for the troubles in Naellan's Pass (which started before he was even born). For his own part, Olshren seems to be doing his best to root out the mysterious discipline problems in his county and to pacify his people, all while continuing to defend Uneabard's borders from Ethywen.

Allies and Foes: Uneabard maintains careful diplomatic relations with all the most powerful nations in Ceres (aside from the Maelstrom, of course). Its closest ally is Woand to the west, which is its staunchest trade partner. Uneabard's most dangerous foes are all of its other neighbors: Wigolath, Kaareb, and Ethywen, which perhaps explains why Uneabard is not keener to engage in trade with other nations.

Army:

- 4 units of archers
- 3 units of heavy infantry
- 3 units of heavy cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Agrilind	Hill	3	Uneabard 3	Astronomism 3	North Ceres Smiths Guild 3 Lavorre's Underground 0	SoDA 3	ATT 2		
Baori	Plain	2	Uneabard 2	Justicars of Tallis 2	Lavorre's Underground 2	SoDA 2	Royal College of Fine Arts 1	Road, Naval Dockage, Castle	Coastline, Privacy
Edigodon	Plain	3	Uneabard 0	Astronomism 0 The Path of Clear Skies 3	Lavorre's Underground 3	SoDA 2	ATT 1		
Gwealath	Plain	3	Uneabard 3	Astronomism 2 The Path of Clear Skies 0	Lavorre's Underground 0	The Night Circle 3 SoDA 0	Royal College of Fine Arts 1		Coastline
Haelalian	Plain	4	Uneabard 3	Astronomism 2 Justicars of Tallis 2	North Ceres Smiths Guild 1 Lavorre's Underground 3	SoDA 3	ATT 1 Royal College of Fine Arts 1		
Haemeth's Folly	Forest	3	Uneabard 2	Justicars of Tallis 3	North Ceres Smiths Guild 3	SoDA 3	ATT 2		River, Informants
Kaalil	Swamp	3	Uneabard 3	Astronomism 0 The Path of Clear Skies 3	Lavorre's Underground 0	The Night Circle 3 SoDA 0	Royal College of Fine Arts 2		River Beautiful
Naellan's Pass	Hill	2	Uneabard 1	Astronomism 1 Justicars of Tallis 0	Lavorre's Underground 2	SoDA 2	ATT 2		Pressgangs
Taunyth	Forest	6	Uneabard 4	Astronomism 3 The Path of Clear Skies 3	North Ceres Smiths Guild 1 Lavorre's Underground 5	SoDA 4	ATT 3 Royal College of Fine Arts 2		River
Zedien	Plain	2	Uneabard 1	The Path of Clear Skies 2	Lavorre's Underground 2	SoDA 2	Royal College of Fine Arts 1	Road	Coastline

SoDA: School of Divination & Astrology | ATT: Association of Traveling Troupes

Woand

Values: Freedom, Family, Perseverance

Authority: Authority in Woand is shared between the clan arch-elders and the territory chiefs. Clans are family bloodlines, and each clan has a matriarch, patriarch, or other arch-elder. Territory chiefs each rule a territory. They are nominated by the arch-elders of any clans with "a significant presence" in the territory, and then elected from these nominees. All territory residents who are both blooded warriors and acknowledged clan members may vote for chiefs. The territory chiefs and arch-elders select a high chief for ten-year terms. High chiefs and territory chiefs are expected to lead in battle as warriors, so high chiefs rarely serve more then two terms at most, and territory chiefs often die or choose to retire fairly young.

Description: Woand has been perpetually underpopulated since the devastating civil war that severed it from Ethywen. Once a primarily dwarven nation, Woand has long been a diverse region, now predominately human like most of Ceres, but with a high dwarven population and many other peoples as well. Woand is known for its small but effective military and for its excellent steel.

Counties: *Woand calls its counties "territories".*
Ariand: One of two Woandi territories that border directly on the Maelstrom, Ariand remains surprisingly unaffected by the corruption that has marred Kaareb and Ethywen. Ariand's mountains are so impassible that many believe Kurse does not want the place and has exerted no effort to corrupt it. The sparse population does face the occasional raid from Ethywen, but as counties adjacent to the Maelstrom go, Ariand is eerily peaceful.

Belil: The Belil territory is the most prosperous in Woand. In addition to the goats, furs, and various stones and metals that make up the backbone of the Woandi economy, Belil is also home to beautiful terraced farms, a prosperous fishing community, and Woand's capital, the coastal city of Wothranil.

Glindra: The territory known as Glindra has the misfortune of lying adjacent to Maelstrom land. Glindra was once an idyllic region full of waterfalls, wildflowers, and plentiful soil, but is now the most militarized region of Woand. Though southern Glindra has few natural fortifications against Agrakor to its south, the people of Woand have claimed Glindra as "the gleaming soul of Woand", and have erected a series of walls, forts, and castles, as well as magical defenses, to repel the Maelstrom threat.

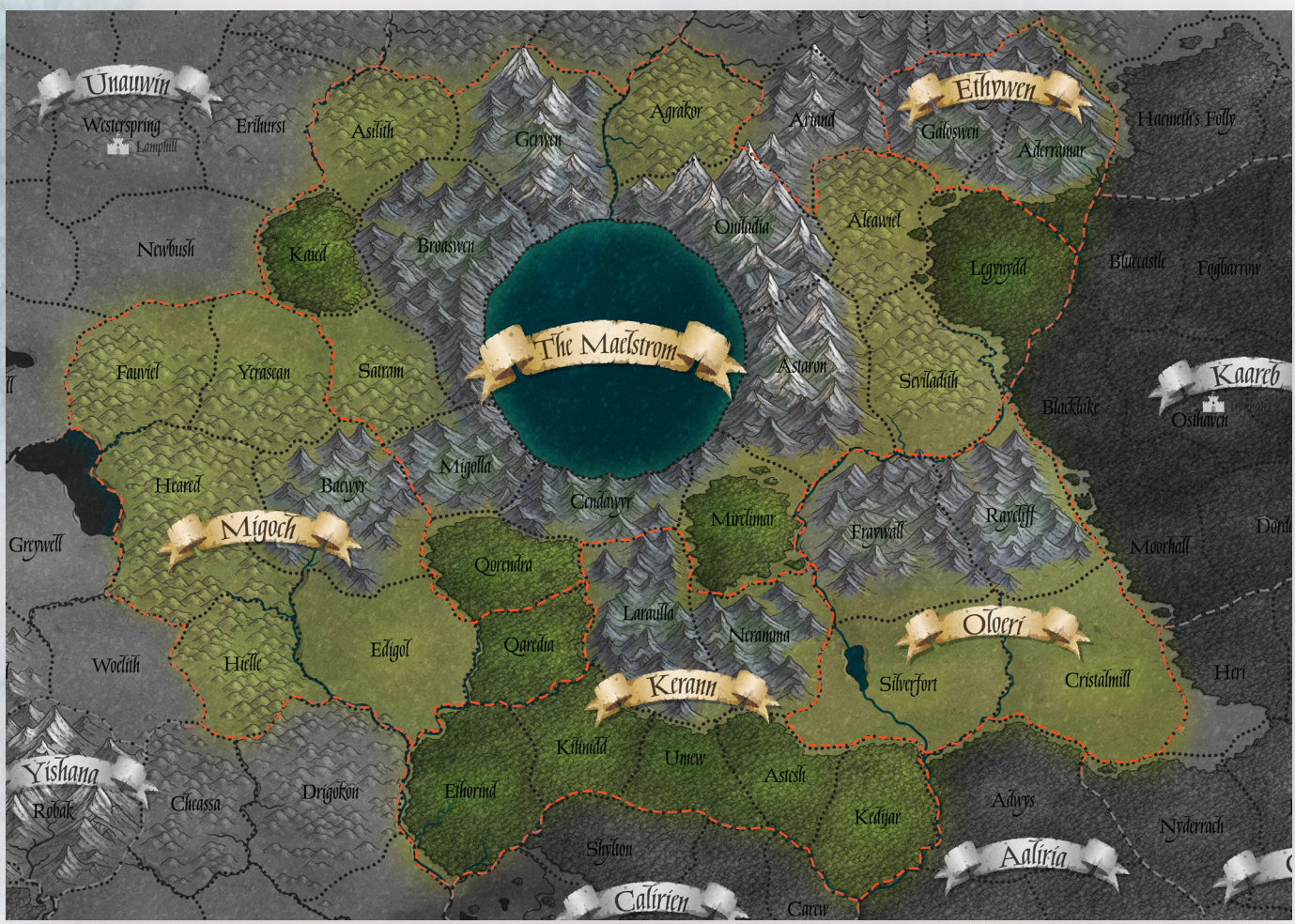
Occasionally, a chief of Glindra territory or even a high chief of Woand becomes convinced that the best way to protect "Woand's Soul" is to "reclaim" Agrakor, leading to the common phrase "the Red Hills of Agrakor" due to the copious amounts of blood shed there in attempt after failed attempt to wrest that territory from Kurse's grasp. Some believe that Woand could become a much more powerful nation if it would simply let southern Glindra (and especially Agrakor) go.

Key NPCs: By liberally adopting recent immigrants as full clan members, the Yarrow Clan has become the most populous clan in all of Woand. Yarrow clan-members make up a significant percentage of most territories in the nation, which gives the Yarrow clan matriarch, Jenielil, much say in Woand's governance. Some claim she is as powerful in her own right as the high chief himself.

Allies and Foes: Woand enjoys reasonable diplomatic relations with both Uneabard and Silvyre. Its enemies are Ethywen and the Maelstrom.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Ariand	High Mountain	1	Woand 1		North Ceres Smiths Guild 1	The Night Circle 1			25% Adapted Occupants, Rugged
Belil	Mountain	2	Woand 1	Matar's Triumph 1	North Ceres Smiths Guild 2	The Night Circle 2	Association of Traveling Troupes 2	Road, Port, Citadel	25% Adapted Occupants, River, Coastline, Prosperous
Calin	Mountain	1	Woand 1			The Night Circle 1			25% Adapted Occupants
Delithraniel	Mountain	1	Woand 1	Matar's Triumph 1	North Ceres Smiths Guild 1	The Night Circle 1			25% Adapted Occupants, River
Gathien	Plain	1	Woand 1			The Night Circle 1			River
Glindra	Mountain	2	Woand 2		North Ceres Smiths Guild 2	The Night Circle 2	Association of Traveling Troupes 2		25% Adapted Occupants, River, Volunteerism
Isyldor	Mountain	2	Woand 2	Matar's Triumph 1	North Ceres Smiths Guild 2	The Night Circle 2	Association of Traveling Troupes 2		25% Adapted Occupants, River

The Wounded Lands



A wound pulsing in the heart of Ceres, the Maelstrom draws all the lands around it into a state of constant vigilance broken by periods of crippling warfare. The closer one draws to the Maelstrom, the darker and stranger the landscape becomes, as the influence of ancient magic has seeped into the very ground and altered its nature. Floating rocks rise and fall like a tide, and more than one traveler has perished in forests of sharp rock formations, black sands that seem hungry to swallow up the unwary and treacherous precipices at seemingly random angles. Within the Maelstrom itself, a constant storm of swirling green and black magic can rip the very life from an unwary visitor.

In order to approach the Maelstrom, one must travel through any number of forbidding counties, all of them riddled with hazards. Kurse rules over several small vassal kingdoms, mostly mountainous, and over the centuries has annexed land from Unauwin, Woand, Kaareb, and Migoch. Though Migoch, a belligerent orc kingdom, technically owes no official fealty to Kurse, it is no more welcoming than any directly under the Harbinger's rule. These realms are harsh landscapes: broken, rocky badlands, dark forests, and towering, forbidding mountains.

Two realms stand against the Maelstrom, firmly opposing its predations by means of physical force and sheer pluck. Woand, a small and scrappy realm to the north that claims much of the northern range, holds constant vigil at the border of Agrakor, which was once a county under its banner. They exist in an uneasy stalemate with Kurse—unable to reclaim their lost territory but keeping the Maelstrom's attention placed firmly upon them. The ancient dwarven nation of Oloeri, composed of both deep mountain halls where weapons and armor are forged and gentle plains where crops are grown, stands strong against would-be invasions from the forest of Mirelimar and the badlands of Seviladith. They have not attempted to push back into the Maelstrom since the Second Age, but neither will they be dislodged.

The realm called Ethywen once belonged to Woand, but it lost control of these counties during a long-ago battle between dark elves out of Legynydd (then part of Kaareb) and orcs marching from Aleawiel. Neither side proved victorious in the campaign, but the constant fighting woke an ancient power from within the mountains that now rules Ethywen the Lost in their place.

Another odd realm in this region is Kerann, which has no official government structure and is instead controlled by a powerful wizard or perhaps a circle of wizards. The lands are strange, wild, and highly magical, and without a guide, one is doomed to lose oneself in bizarre forests that loop back upon themselves. Terrifying chimeric beasts roam the lands amongst flowers of unnatural color and size, and it is said that any living creature that enters Kerann will not leave the same way.

Folk of the Wounded Lands

The most populous pockets of civilization host mostly dwarven communities in the hills and mountains of Woand and their ancestral homeland of Oloeri. The dwarves do not suffer fools and are widely thought to lack any sort of recognizable sense of humor. The rulers of Woand are human, and they maintain grim standing armies at all times to keep watch over the Maelstrom.

The people of the Wounded Lands have a dark, almost fatalistic sense of humor. When one lives in such close proximity to evil and doom, it is hard to survive with one's innocence intact. The folk here see violence and death on a daily basis, and almost every one of them knows how to fight to some extent.

Ethywen

Values: Blood, Violence, Darkness

Authority: Queen Parra of Ethywen rules by merciless savagery. She is the biggest and strongest of her people and seems to accept that when this is no longer true, she will be killed and replaced by whoever is stronger.

Description: The mountains of Ethywen suffer from a similar corruption to whatever is happening to the forests of Kaareb. Little by little, over centuries, something has been tainting living beings in the Ethywen region, affecting each species of plant or animal differently, but always toward savage bloodthirst.

Ethywen was once part of a neighboring nation: Woand, a primarily dwarven territory in those days. Ethywen's separation was not peaceful. The war between Woand and Ethywen was so long and bitter that both nations were radically reduced in population by the time it ended. Ethywen cut off outside communication after that for over a century.

When they finally emerged again, the people of Ethywen had changed dramatically like the elves of western Kaareb. Their skin had paled and their eyes had turned an unnatural white. Unable to tolerate sunlight, the now-nocturnal Ethywyn residents became known as dark dwarves or night dwarves, but the changes they had undergone went deeper than the flesh. Though they remained possessed of a cruel cleverness, the night dwarves seemed otherwise to have lost all sense of civilization.

Behaving in an unnaturally bloodthirsty mimicry of animalism, Ethywen's former skill and craft have been turned exclusively toward methods of extreme violence. Their raids on surrounding communities are needlessly brutal and bloody, nightmarish for the few survivors.

Key NPCs: Queen Parra's chief henchman is a sorcerer who calls himself Worm. He specializes in creating darkness, allowing the queen and her strongest warriors to function at full capacity, even during the day if necessary. Though most dark dwarf attacks come at night, Worm and other mages like him can allow the warped people of Ethywen to surprise their frightened neighbors with the occasional daytime assault.

Allies and Foes: Ethywen is rumored to be allied with the Maelstrom and with Kaareb, though no one knows for certain if either is the case. All other nations are Ethywen's foes.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Aderramar	Mountain	3							75% Adapted Occupants, River, Blighted
Galoswen	Mountain	5							75% Adapted Occupants, Rugged

Kerann

Values: Magic, Secrets, Autonomy

Authority: The sole authority in Kerann is an individual known only as the Dragon. All who have met this being tell different tales, as the Dragon is a master of illusion. Often appearing as a humanoid (of any gender), the Dragon has also reportedly appeared as a literal dragon, a housecat, a vulture, and a writhing collection of shadows. Many rumors spread as to what the Dragon might actually be (including some ploy by Kurse), but magic experts assert that this is probably just a powerful wizard who likes privacy.

Description: Kerann is mostly wild forest and untamed mountains. A few settlements dot its southern edges, most too small to qualify as villages, but the "nation" is otherwise populated only by wildlife (both natural and magical) and the mages of the Dragon's Eyes. Kerann was a nation once, but it disappeared long ago. All contact with outsiders ceased, and when this prompted investigation, every village in the kingdom was found empty with no explanation. Centuries-old ruins still dot the land, now largely reclaimed by the forest.

After the Kerann Disappearance, monsters came, filling the land with blood and death. Surrounding nations bickered amongst themselves and took no action, while village after village succumbed to rampaging beasts or worse. Monster attacks continue to this day, though the tide has receded and the deaths from monster attacks at least rarely amount to whole villages. After the danger lessened, the Dragon's Eyes appeared—wandering wizards for hire bearing news that Kerann belonged to the Dragon now.

Now, centuries later, the Dragon has grown into a figure of legend, featuring in tales both heroic and infamous. And still, no one knows anything. Is the Dragon is a single person or a group of people? Does the Dragon yet live? Does the Dragon have loyalties? Those who have attempted to learn the answers to these questions have, as yet, always come away disappointed.

If the Dragon is a living person, it will be interesting, in the end, to learn what side Kerann's ruler is truly on.

Counties: *Kerann does not have counties per se, merely regions surrounding the various outposts of the Dragon's Eyes.* Ethorind: A village of orcs has been founded in this region: immigrants and exiles from Migoch and their descendants. These have begun wary trade with the villagers of northwestern Calirien, making this one of the friendliest orc villages in Ceres. Though watched over by the Dragon's Eyes, the Seergrek village orcs are only interfered with if they engage in behaviors that the Dragon deems potentially inconvenient.

Kedijar: With the Dragon's tacit blessing, Kedijar has become home to a village of Aalirian outlaws and rebels. Sometimes, the Dragon's Eyes supply these Aalirian immigrants with intelligence or magical support of various kinds on the Dragon's mysterious instructions.

Laraulla: The Dragon's maze-like fortress is supposedly hidden in the Laraulla region, which rumor whispers is the training academy for the Dragon's Eyes. It is said that the Dragon personally keeps the most dangerous threats from crossing the northern Laraulla border into Kerann, but if this is so, many of the "lesser" threats that sneak past still pose quite a danger to ordinary folk.

Key NPCs: Little is known about the Dragon's Eyes, and certainly not who is important to them. However, one elf, Nerenylania Treesnake, has become the subject of a rumor that "the Dragon" is an inherited title, and that she is secretly the third Dragon since the Dragon's Eyes' founding. Nerenylania is indeed a powerful wizard, and also horribly scarred, presumably unable to be magically healed. Perhaps these scars have frightened someone into spreading a strange rumor about her.

Allies and Foes: unknown, if any.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Astesh	Forest	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			River
Ethorind	Forest	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			River, Informants
Kedijar	Forest	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			River, Volunteerism
Kilinidd	Forest	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			River
Laraulla	Mountain	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			Rugged
Neramma	Mountain	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			River
Umew	Forest	3				The Dragon's Eyes 3			

Migoch

Values: Strength, Autonomy, Tenacity

Authority: Authority in Migoch is decided by ritual contest. Anyone may challenge any authority figure, but the local elders vote on the nature of the ritualized contest, with different traditional challenges for different sorts of authority positions. Some challenges are potentially deadly and some aren't, but all are intended to test the skill that Migoch tradition holds to be most relevant to a given position. The high king or queen of Migoch is always chosen by one-on-one combat, sometimes to the death.

Description: The orcs of the Migoch region long ago withdrew from the world around them, disapproving of what they saw as rampant decadence, corruption, weakness, and greed. Together, nine bands of orcs swore the Migoch Oath, a promise renewed by each new ruler and high ruler: no contact with outsiders. We support each other, defend each other, and to the hells with everyone else.

For reasons unknown, as Kurse's power rose, the Migoch orcs grew ever more insular, unwilling to ask for help from their neighbors despite the dire threat they faced. Already the Satram and Qorendra bands have fallen wholly under Kurse's sway, abandoning their oaths and offering fealty to the Maelstrom, and it appears as if the Baewyr and Qaredia bands may soon follow suit. Nevertheless, the orcs of Migoch cling to their doomed isolationism, interactions with surrounding lands almost exclusively in the course of their occasional supply raids on border villages.

Many wonder why the remaining Migoch Oathbound don't alter their pact and seek outside help before they are all corrupted and enslaved by the Maelstrom. If there is a good reason, even refugee orcs outside Migoch have shared it with no one.

Counties: *Migoch regions are not counties so much as territories claimed by specific orc bands.*
Baewyr: One of four Migoch territories bordering the Maelstrom, Baewyr orcs live in caves and tunnels in what they call the Jagged Bones mountains. Or at least they did. Very little reliable news reaches the outside world in Migoch's regard, but rumor has it that the Baewyr orc band has ceased all contact with the rest of Migoch. No one yet knows why.

Hielle: Rumor claims that the Hielle orc band is secretly in a trade relationship with Qomas to the south. If so, this is a violation of both the Hielle band's oaths, as most outsiders understand them, and Qomas's trade agreements with other neighbors.

Qaredia: Sandwiched between the Maelstrom and the Dragon, the Qaredia orc band seems to be falling into chaos. Some are said to be trading secretly with the orcs of Kerann or even serving the Dragon's Eyes. Others are said to have gone mad, altered somehow by Kurse's magic to uncontrollable bloodlust and attacking their own kind. In any case, the Qaredia band has withdrawn from the Migoch Oath and some say that territory will soon belong to either Kerann or Kurse.

Key NPCs: The current high king of Migoch is Darsast Iceheart, a truly massive orc of remarkable combat prowess and cunning. The current high chief mage is Logrost Yakbeard, who does indeed wear a long, shaggy beard. Yakbeard is subtle and patient, rumored to be quite treacherous.

Allies and Foes: Migoch stands alone against the world.

Army:
- 1 unit of orcish archers
- 2 units of orcish warriors
- 1 unit of orcish berserkers
- 2 units of orcish wolfriders

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Baewyr	Mountain	3							River, Privacy
Edigol	Plain	2							River
Fauviel	Hill	4							River
Heared	Hill	1							River
Hielle	Hill	4							River, Seditious
Qaredia	Forest	3							Ruins
Yerasean	Hill	3							

Oloeri

Values: Duty, Tenacity, Life, Love, Autonomy

Authority: Oloeri is a surprisingly democratic society in many regards, but only veterans of "the walls" are qualified to run for office. Since serving on the walls requires spending months at a time without seeing the sun, most find the duty odious to the point of unbearable. It is thus extremely rare for any but dwarves, better adapted to life underground, to hold office. Even military officers are elected democratically by their units, though once confirmed are expected to be obeyed without question, and a chain of command is always in place in case of incapacitation of officers during battle. The highest authority in the land is the Field Marshal General, who also commands the military.

Description: Oloeri revolves around defense against the Maelstrom.

This wasn't always the case. Oloeri City, also known as the Old City, was a dweor city long before the Vareene came to Ceres. It is among the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the known world. As the dweor people faded and were replaced by the dwarves, the Old City was maintained and occasionally even improved, until it became the grandest underground settlement in Ceres and among the grandest cities, full of sculpture and other wondrous artworks and grand halls where music, poetry, or wise lectures would echo far and wide, reaching nearly all who cared to listen.

As the corruption of the Maelstrom grew, however, the dwarves of Oloeri realized they would have to defend their home from the approaching horrors or they would lose it, as other lands had already been lost. The wise Oloeri leaders of that time ordered construction of perhaps the greatest fortifications in all Ceres into the Fastness Mountains, and the dwarves, realizing that this threat was one they would continue to face over and over for many generations, dug in to hold their ground for however long it took.

In this effort, most of the lands around Oloeri offer little support or even sympathy, merely glad it isn't themselves on the frontlines. Some Oloerin resent such folk and some are more generous and forgiving, but either way, they hold the line, and do not falter. They will defend their homes until the end.

The Oloerin do receive some financial support and occasionally supplies from various lands, including Astaeria, Arendaniel, and even some unexpected places like Calirien. Some young people who learn about the Oloerin line of defense travel long distances to volunteer as soldiers or healers. The bandits known as Xir's Foxes are believed to contribute whenever they can. And, of course, in any case where volunteering for the Oloerin war effort is a better option than staying in one's home, refugees from oppression come to Oloeri, and Oloeri gives them freedom and justice—and puts them to work.

Counties: *The Oloeri dwarves call their counties quadrants or regional quadrants.*

Cristalmill: The southeastern quadrant of Oloeri is Cristalmill, named for its largest city. The city of Cristalmill is in turn named for an advanced, labor-saving grain mill around which the city was built. The Cristalmill was invented by a gnome named Vemilsorolinayri "Naynay" Cristal and has been a great boon to the Oloeri supply line ever since.

The majority of the Cristalmill quadrant is farms, many of which are worked by non-dwarves. Some of these are heroic volunteers who have come to Oloeri to offer support in the resistance effort against the Maelstrom. Others are refugees from oppression in surrounding lands who are welcomed and cared for as long as they are willing to work in some capacity to support the war effort. Northeastern Cristalmill is dotted with forts and patrolled by most of the nation's non-dwarven troops, as raids from Kaareb stand among the greatest threats to the Oloeri supply lines.

Fraywall: The heart of the fray, the Fraywall quadrant is where most of the fighting happens. The north and west slopes of this section of the Fastness mountain range are where dwarven soldiers are positioned constantly, ever ready to do battle against encroaching forces of the Maelstrom. Other than "the walls", the Fastness range is a mazelike network of tunnels leading to and from supply lines, barracks, training halls, weaponsmiths and armorers, iron mines, temples, hospitals, and the Old City.

The Old City is Oloeri's capital, sometimes also called Oloeri City. Its beautifully carved caverns and halls were once known for merriment, great philosophy, and the finest metal- and gemcraft in Ceres. Now all its luxuries are repurposed for the resistance efforts, and all its entrances and exits stand heavily guarded, as the Old City is where many of the nation's dwarven children are raised and taught by community elders or anyone else who cannot fight. This, the people of Oloeri know: if the city falls, the nation is lost.

Raycliff: The Raycliff quadrant also has "walls" on its northern and eastern slopes. The fighting in Raycliff is generally not as constant or as fierce as in Fraywall, but it is nevertheless a major tactical region in Oloeri long-term strategy planning. The Raycliff Fastness peaks are tunneled similarly to the Fraywall quadrant, with many of the same facilities. Raycliff also boasts small mithril and adamantine mines, which are fortunately located in highly defensible areas in the southwest.

Raycliff's largest city is Determination, which, like the Old City, has been largely repurposed for the war effort. In addition to the quadrant's few civilian residents, Determination is home to Oloeri's primary military academy, where volunteers are taught from a very young age to wield the weapons and tools of war as well as the best strategies for wall defense and survival in both body and soul.

Silverfort: The Silverfort quadrant is another farming and supply region where much is constructed for use on the front lines—indeed, anything that does not benefit from being crafted underground will probably be crafted in some Silverfort settlement or other.

Silverfort is a bit safer than Cristalmill as the only attacks coming from Kerann are the occasional wild magical creature. Western Silverfort is still dotted with border forts, in case mysterious Kerann ever changes its mind, but for now Silverfort remains the most normal place to live in Oloeri, the closest to being at peace.

The Silverfort quadrant is named for Lake Silverfort, which is considered a precious water source by the war effort. Druids and animist clerics are organized night and day to guard this lake, and the river that feeds it, from all corruption or taint. Its silvery waters are the silver fort that defends Oloeri from within.

Like Cristalmill, Silverfort is home to many non-dwarven volunteers and refugees. All are required to work in support of the war effort, but all contributions are welcome. Residents of Silverfort are farmers, craftspeople, healers, food-preservers, tailors and cobblers, weaponsmiths and armorers, and anything else that the war effort finds useful. Efforts are made to find ability-appropriate jobs for everyone, so that everyone can contribute somehow. It isn't easy to keep so many soldiers fed and supplied, so the Oloerin welcome all the help they can get.

Key NPCs: Naynay Cristal, the gnome who designed the Cristalmill, is still alive, though she is very old. She still designs armaments and defensive countermeasures as well as mechanical tools for streamlining production efficiency. Her eyesight is going and her hands are not as steady as they once were, but she says she will never retire. A group of her apprentices has recently founded the Cristal School of Engineering, which is already turning out some truly innovative machines.

One group of students, led by Naynay's daughter Neeree Cristal, has made a name for themselves in experimenting with new ways to use fireworks or black powder in weaponry. Their new cannons are said to explode less often than any others in the world, making them much more practical and less likely to kill the user.

Allies and Foes: Oloeri's known foes are the Maelstrom and Kaareb and any who ally with them. Oloeri's allies are all those from outer Ceres who contribute as they can to maintaining the Fastness against Maelstrom incursion. Oloeri plays no politics. All who oppose Kurse can count on the Oloerin to do their part.

Army:

- 4 units of dwarven Deathguards
- 2 units of dwarven cannon

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Cristalmill	Plain	3	Oloeri 3	Dweorism 3	Zahn's Supply Line 3		The Society of Historians 3	Road	River, Storied
Fraywall	Mountain	4	Oloeri 4	Dweorism 4	Xir's Foxes 2 Zahn's Supply Line 2		The Society of Historians 3	Road Citadel	River, Rugged 75% Adapted Occupants
Raycliff	Mountain	4	Oloeri 4	Dweorism 4	Xir's Foxes 2 Zahn's Supply Line 2		The Society of Historians 2		River, Prosperous 75% Adapted Occupants
Silverfort	Plain	5	Oloeri 5	Dweorism 5	Xir's Foxes 3 Zahn's Supply Line 2		The Society of Historians 5	Road	River, Volunteerism

The Maelstrom

Values: Cunning, Dominance, Power, Ruthlessness, Treachery

Authority: The Maelstrom is under the utter and absolute control of Kurse the Harbinger, a warrior and magic-user the folk worship essentially as a god.

This is not to suggest that Kurse does not have to deal with insurrections and rebellions from time to time, as powerful warlords and would-be usurpers arise from the Maelstrom's vassal states every few years to challenge the Harbinger's rule. Such rebellions always end in tragedy for those who commit them as well as for anyone involved, no matter how tangentially connected or ignorant of the plot. Kurse is a powerful spellcaster who has endured for centuries.

Description: Stories abound of the dangers and perils of the Maelstrom: the unrelenting misery of the terrain, the harsh cruelty of the citizens, and the dark power that lurks beneath the blasted mountains. The stories are not far wrong, for the Maelstom is a deadly and treacherous place, where strength and ruthlessness gain more respect than kindness or compassion. One should not look for friends in this dark, barren place that the gods, if they ever existed, seem to have forgotten.

The Maelstrom is like a spreading cancer, slowly swallowing up its surroundings and frequently sending out agents to infect and undermine distant lands. Many who owe fealty to Kurse live in other realms in Ceres, where they work to foment unrest, sabotage economies, radicalize rebellions, and generally hamper and disrupt the aims and actions of those realms. This process also takes effect in the land itself: a bleak darkness extends gradually in all directions, particularly where the Maelstrom exerts influence. On this ground, elves and dwarves become darkened versions of themselves, crops wither and die, and folk sicken and grow weary easily. Strangely, halflings seem to escape corruption by this effect, though they may simply die under its influence. Natural bodies of water seem to slow or contain this effect, but in time Kurse will see that the darkness of the Maelstrom will spread over all of Ceres.

The foundations of the Maelstrom date back to the Calamity from the Skies, when a mighty meteor smashed into Ceres, devastating the lands all around for many, many miles. This is not entirely true, as it was no meteor but a Vareene craft carrying the Catalyst, but most sages and scholars of Ceres agree it was a meteor. The impact unleashed a massive storm of powerful energy that consumed and ravaged Ceres for miles around. The wreckage of the ancient craft still lies at the bottom of the vast lake, leaking its power into the surrounding land.

To this day, the crater of the Maelstrom teems and bubbles with dangerous, voracious magic, resembling a perpetual swirling storm of green clouds that circle above the water around a central point at the heart of the crater. The mountains that surround the Maelstrom, formed in that massive crash, provide a stout, nigh-impregnable barrier and the conditions are harsh enough that few have ever successfully ventured into the Maelstrom and returned to tell the tale. Those who have recount fevered tales of magic that drives folk mad, causes their bodies to decay as they walk, and warps the very ground and air around them. For this reason, in the previous age, the fledgling realms of Ceres often condemned their vilest criminals and unrepentant traitors to the mists of the Maelstrom, thinking it (correctly) a fate worse than death.

Still, the Maelstrom was simply a churning morass of chaotic magic until the arrival of the tainted creature Kurse at the beginning of the current age, 1,500 years ago. When the Maelstrom welcomed the weakened Shadowed into its embrace, Kurse set about building a realm that could challenge the autonomy and self-rule of all the realms in Ceres. The Harbinger actively seeks to recruit and corrupt powerful individuals from all over Ceres, with the goal of building an unstoppable force to spread the Maelstrom's dominance throughout the land.

As a colony of the disaffected, the traitorous, and the false, the folk of the Maelstrom comprise every ancestry known to Ceres, but are mostly human, Shadowed, and orc. Maelstrom residents are generally grasping, conniving, and untrustworthy—as liable to stab an ally in the back as lend a helping hand. They dwell in feudal kingdoms and townships that Kurse keeps in a perpetual state of uneasy competition with one another, on the belief that only the strong and cunning will survive. As such, the population of the Maelstrom is low compared to that of other lands, but the inhabitants are universally vicious, effective fighters and magic-users. The people live harsh, difficult lives where individual accomplishment is rewarded and reliance upon others is considered weakness. Kurse has mostly convinced the people that any misfortune that befalls them is their own fault, and they are encouraged to pluck themselves up by skill and resolve lest the other folk of the Maelstrom trample them down.

Most citizens dwell in or near the many crumbling castles in the mountains and hills or in secluded cities hidden deep within darkened forests. They are xenophobic in the extreme and very untrusting of outsiders, but they also have little trust for their neighbors. The longer one dwells near the swirling apex of the Maelstrom's power, the more of one's life essence is sapped away, so natives of the Maelstrom often acquire a kind of washed-out look, whereby they start to resemble the background, rather than drawing active focus. This aids them, of course, in escaping attention or working subtly when the situation calls for it.

Counties: *The counties of the Maelstrom were, by and large, suborned from neighboring realms through the machinations of Kurse. The folk of these counties are bleak in both appearance and temperament, partly due to the influence of the Maelstrom's foul magic but also because they live in a state of perpetual warfare, nearly constantly invading adjoining realms for more territory or, more commonly, routing would-be conquerors with the aid of their strong castles and the treacherous terrain.*

Asilith and Kaied were once part of Unauwin, but since their annexation some two centuries past, they little resemble that great land. The hills of Asilith have blistered and turned to shifting piles of loose rock, where travelers frequently contend with injuries caused by collapsing rock. Kaied is much the same, its haunted forests home to vicious, shadowy fae creatures and thousands of goblins.

Satram and Qorendra once belonged to Migoch, but the tribes controlling those regions have sworn fealty to Kurse. These counties resemble those of greater Migoch, but the sickness that is the Maelstrom has corrupted them. Satram has grown arid and exceedingly dusty, such that even light activity kicks up choking clouds, prompting the natives to wear masks or scarves over their faces at all times, while the forest of Qorendra is increasingly dying due to some magical blight. The desperate orc tribes here depend upon Kurse to protect them from these scourges.

Long ago, Kurse ripped the forests of Mirelimar away from the Dragon of Kerann in what many claim was a titanic battle of magical skill that left both significantly injured. Whatever the truth of this, the Maelstrom has moved against Kerann very little, and the forest of Mirelimar is still mostly untouched by corruption. It resembles a common forest realm and is little inhabited.

The connection between the Maelstrom and Kaareb is unclear, though many believe the dark elves are Kurse's minions and that they bequeathed the county of Legynydd to the Harbinger as tribute. Equally possible is that the Harbinger annexed Legynydd from the dark elves of Kaareb as part of their agreement for assistance in defeating the "decadent oppressors" of Arendaniel, allowing the Maelstrom to capture and rule several powerful assets in the county. Whatever the truth, the Maelstrom exercises sway over Legynydd, though it is still mostly populated with dark elves. There is a mighty relic hidden deep in this forest, making the region very powerful indeed.

The hills of Aleawiel and Seviladith were the site of much battle, as the Maelstrom drew would-be invaders into these counties to crush them in a two-pronged attack from the mountains and the forests. Most notably, a mighty battle known as The Judgment of Shadow drew united armies from Uneabard, Oloeri, and Aaliria into the field, only to see them utterly destroyed by the Maelstrom's trap, claiming nearly ten thousand lives. That battle, some five hundred years ago, marked the last strong effort of the realms to unite against the Harbinger. The counties exhibit great swaths of blasted, grey land where nothing grows, and any who venture in feel the chill of death always around them.

The only county to the north more sharply embattled, the "Red Hills of Agrakor" derive their name from the copious amounts of blood shed in the region. Agrakor is haunted by screaming ghosts that reenact their deaths on the blasted moors. The realms from which the territory that forms Agrakor was wrested, Woand and Silvyre, mostly lack the strength and will to attempt further invasions.

The little-populated, mountainous counties of the Maelstrom contain and conceal Kurse's true power base: the great crater itself. The terrain is difficult, riddled with jagged rock, deadfalls, and sheer drop-offs. The Harbinger resides in a castle in one of these counties, but none can say for certain which. In truth, Kurse keeps multiple castles and moves frequently and randomly between them, gripped by never-ending paranoia about assassins.

Each Maelstrom county boasts a single powerful Master, each of them directly and personally accountable to Kurse. Essentially the Harbinger's lieutenants, these Masters range widely in personality, heritage, and skill-set, but all are dangerous in their own way.

Key NPCs: The important folk of the Maelstrom are hardened by its cruel way of life, and each of them is a challenge for an entire band of heroes.

Aen Sellynd, a dark elf sorceress so depraved and treacherous that she was exiled from Kaareb, rules the county of Legynydd, where she nurses deep grudges against the elves of her homeland and works to harness the flesh-warping powers of the relics buried beneath her forest. Infamous for her beauty and her appetites, she is said to consume a hundred lovers a year to fuel her dark magic.

Truly formidable with their axes in their hands, the half-orc Goire the Unmaker has united the tribes of the western Maelstrom lands under their control and leads yearly horde forays into Migoch and Unauwin, losing thousands of orcs but caring little. In truth, Goire uses these invasions as a testing ground to winnow the weak from their ranks, the better to assemble a strikeforce that can overthrow Kurse someday.

The Shadowed necromancer Abadast, who looks like a walking corpse, favors ancient stylings and mannerisms from before the modern age. Those who have knowledge of the Vareene and their sciences might recognize his attire as a tattered jumble of scrolls and other writings that may in fact date from that period of pre-history. His powers are foul and his manner quietly murderous.

Allies and Foes: The Maelstrom stands in direct or indirect opposition to every other realm in Ceres. They may not exist in a state of active war with every realm, and frequently they are locked in conflict with only one or two realms at a time. This is to a purpose, as the Maelstrom does not wish to unite the other realms against it. Instead, they work to pit other realms against one another, sowing the seeds of distrust and antipathy, all the better to weaken their enemies and pave the way for eventual conquest. When the Maelstrom is not actively fighting another realm, they often send gifts and counsel to that realm (particularly if they have a new or easily manipulated ruler), but these gifts always turn out to harm the recipient in the end.

The dwarves of Oloeri represent a historically implacable foe, and their staunch defense has frustrated the Maelstrom's attempts to expand southward. The realms to the north maintain constant vigilance against the Maelstrom, but in truth Kurse has little interest in them. Most of the realm's activities are yearly incursions into the realms to the west and fomenting political upheaval to weaken the other realms of Ceres.

Army:

- 3 units of infantry
- 2 units of pikemen
- 2 units of heavy cavalry
- 1 unit of mounted scouts
- 3 units of gnoll warriors
- 3 units of gnoll hyaenadon riders
- 5 units of goblin infantry
- 4 units of goblin dog riders
- 4 units of demons
- 3 units of Steel Guard

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Agrakor	Hill	1	The Maelstrom 1	Cult of the Harbinger 1		The Maelstrom 1			River, Storied
Aleawiel	Hill	2	The Maelstrom 2			The Maelstrom 2			
Asilith	Hill	1	The Maelstrom 1	Cult of the Harbinger 1		The Maelstrom 1			River
Astaron	High Mountain	2	The Maelstrom 2			The Maelstrom 2			River
Broaswen	Mountain	3	The Maelstrom 3			The Maelstrom 3			
Cendawyr	Mountain	2	The Maelstrom 2			The Maelstrom 2			
Gerwen	High Mountain	2	The Maelstrom 2			The Maelstrom 2			River
Kaied	Forest	1	The Maelstrom 1			The Maelstrom 1			
Legynydd	Old Forest	4	The Maelstrom 4	Cult of the Harbinger 4		The Maelstrom 4			River, Ruins
Migolla	Mountain	3	The Maelstrom 3			The Maelstrom 3			
Mirelimar	Forest	2	The Maelstrom 2	Cult of the Harbinger 2		The Maelstrom 2			River, Seditious
Oniladia	High Mountain	1	The Maelstrom 1	Cult of the Harbinger 1		The Maelstrom 1			River
Qorendra	Forest	2	The Maelstrom 2			The Maelstrom 2			Blighted
Satram	Hill	2	The Maelstrom 2	Cult of the Harbinger 2		The Maelstrom 2			Volunteerism
Seviladith	Hill	2	The Maelstrom 2			The Maelstrom 2			River

KURSE THE HARBINGER

Identity: Kurse is undoubtedly the most important figure in the Maelstrom, though the supreme ruler's identity is ambiguous. The Harbinger has appeared in an assortment of forms, faces, and genders, but a few commonalities exist in all the stories: Kurse stands at an impressive height, has a terrifyingly intimidating mien, and can rarely be outwitted or outmaneuvered. When confronted in war, the Harbinger prefers to take to the field in blackened, spiked armor wielding both an axe and a flail.

Skills: Stories diverge about Kurse's exact powers, but most hold that the Harbinger is a powerful spellcaster, using talents ripped from prisoners and enemies, stolen from distant realms, and absorbed from the wide assortment of powerful Vareene artifacts that lie beneath the Maelstrom. When the occasion calls for subtlety, Kurse proves a talented negotiator, a cunning spy, and a vicious assassin. Through study and magical experimentation, Kurse's personal power has increased such that few mortals can stand against them in combat.

Ambitions: Kurse exists for nothing less than the total and utter domination of Ceres. The Harbinger works constantly to undermine neighboring realms, sabotage their alliances, and expand the Maelstrom's own power base. Kurse takes their self-appointed duties as the Harbinger very seriously, seeking to pave the way for the Congregation to return and destroy Ceres. On that day, Kurse intends to stand strong over the mortal world as its empowered ruler, loyal only to the darkness beyond the stars.

One relic Kurse particularly craves is the Catalyst, which the Harbinger obsessively pursues at every turn. Whether the Catalyst is missing or Kurse possesses it but has been unable to unlock its power is a question for the GM. Either way, when the campaign begins, the Harbinger does not initially control the Catalyst, but it is key to their ambitions.

Background: Fifteen centuries ago, an exiled, wounded, and weary Shadowed from Astaeria found welcome in the magical storm, rather than death. Even before their exile, Kurse demonstrated both an obsession for and vast potential with Vareene magic, and the relics of the Maelstrom answered this nascent power. Now attuned to the mighty relics beneath the storm, Kurse uses the mantle of "Harbinger" and works to prepare the world of Ceres for the return of the Congregation, the source of the realm's power and majesty. Even Kurse does not fully understand the truth of this great doom, believing the Congregation and the Vareene to be one and the same, but that has not slowed their quest to conquer Ceres.

In their time, Kurse has personally fought and overcome tens of thousands of opponents, amassing a significant power base and a very deep well of experience. That said, fate is not always on Kurse's side. On several occasions over the centuries, Kurse has led the Maelstrom in battle against the realms of Ceres, but never have such campaigns resulted in a lasting conquest. Still, Kurse is nothing if not patient: they continue to make progress, slowly conquering the continent whilst uncovering powerful magical secrets.

Playing Kurse the Harbinger: Kurse is a cold, cruel predator, the beneficiary of a millennium and a half of experience. They have seen and faced most types of people and knows exactly how to manipulate most opponents. Little surprises Kurse and only the greatest tacticians have a chance to outmaneuver the Harbinger.

A master of illusory magic, Kurse puts on whatever gender, persona, or appearance will best serve their goals in any situation. The Harbinger is more than happy to feign interest or approval of anyone in order to manipulate them and has been known to present themself as an ally or even a lover to those susceptible to their influence, but only as a ruse. Basically devoid of emotions or anxieties, the psychopathic Kurse believes that emotional connections are a manifestation of inner weakness and has neither the time nor desire for friends or family.

Ultimately, it is the Harbinger's inability to trust anyone that causes their downfall in most situations. Heroes who band together, gathering allies from across Ceres, may be able to overcome the Harbinger.

Winterkeep 2019

The Darkening Heartwood

The ancient realm of Arendaniel once held sway over this entire vast forest, which has stood since before the coming of the Vareene. Indeed, to hear the elves tell it, much of Ceres was one great forest and the mountains at its core only burst forth from the ground when the Calamity from the Skies descended upon the world. The Heartwood of today may not be as wonderous as that mythical place, but it is rich, verdant, and vast, covering most of the eastern half of Ceres.

As the elves replaced the fae, they began to lose some of their grip of their forest kingdom, a process grievously exacerbated by the rebellion of the so-called dark elves, who embraced the dark magics offered them by Kurse to turn against their own kin. At first, the elves drove the traitors to the farthest reach of their land, Legynydd, but did not have the heart to push them out of the forest. This was a mistake, as the dark elves retained their foothold in the forest and over the centuries have managed to push back and conquer nearly half of the bright elves' holdings. Pressure from other, shorter-lived peoples building on their borders has further compacted the once great realm. Even the Maelstrom has begun to take over Arendaniel through manipulating the dark elves of Kaareb.

The forests of Arendanial itself are beautiful, pristine, and peaceful, and it is considered a great honor and privilege to walk under the shadowed canopy of these ancient trees. Architecture incorporates nature and most residences are built into trees and natural caves. Such beauty and wonder stand in start contrast to the dark counties under the control of Kaareb, which have grown corrupted. Non-natives are never entirely comfortable in Kaareb as though the land itself rejects their presence, whilst at the same time longing to be pure under the rule of the fae once more. The trees there loom like hunting predators over unsuspecting travelers, and the shadows grow deep and long.

In the north, Wigolath broke off from Arendaniel during its troubles with Kaareb, and is now a haven for pirates and criminals, mostly operating against nearby Ocia. Elven resistance fighters constantly prowl its southern counties, angrily seeking to drive out the shorter-lived peoples who dared seize the forest, but they lack the numbers and equipment to drive them off.

Ocia is a thriving realm on the eastern peninsula of Ceres. The land is temperate and fertile, though lacking in the impressive beauty of the Heartwood itself. The folk of Ocia have gradually encroached on the forest for centuries, annexing county after county, mostly through a series of land deals with the elves of Arendaniel to provide space for an expanding population. Their theocratic vassal state of Nawen is somewhat more contentious, as when it was originally formed, it simply seized lands the elves could not well defend. To this day, the elves—naturally inclined to atheism—find it difficult to reason with people they see as particularly hard-headed.

Folk of the Darkening Heartwood

The dominant group of folk in the Heartwood is undoubtably the elves, though their civilization has suffered a seemingly irrevocable split between the dark elves and their bright kin. These two sorts of elves have the same basic behaviors—they are still elves—but their perspectives could not be more different. The bright elves of Arendaniel value living things and the preservation and creation of beauty while the dark elves of Kaareb crave destruction and corruption, gripped by their boundless ambition to tear down the works of the kin who exiled them.

Many humans and other peoples live in the realms outside Arendaniel, particularly in Wigolath and Ocia. They have decent relations with the bright elves, though the constant war between the two kingdoms of elves has left the folk of Arendaniel with little patience for the short-lived, and Kaareb hates outsiders with a passion. The folk in this corner of Ceres tend to be gruff, unwelcoming, and pragmatic, with little patience for the flippant kindness of the dales or the flamboyance of the stalwarts in the south.

Arendaniel

Values: Art, Compassion, Serenity, Simplicity

Authority: Arendaniel is ruled by councils of elders in a multi-tier representative democracy. The top tier is the Wisdom Council, made up of one elder from each of Arendaniel's seven marches; these representatives are selected by the people. The Wisdom Council Minister rotates every seven years to evenly distribute the influence of each march's people over national policies.

Description: Among the oldest nations in Ceres, Arendaniel is said to predate the Vareene and to have peacefully evolved into an elven nation after elves came to be. Arendaniel's new long-lived inhabitants valued history and learning over material gain and found their highest spiritual fulfillment in the realities of the natural world, rather than in any unconfirmable tales. Arendaniel has changed little since then, ever wise and distant, nigh untouched by the world around it.

Because they live so much longer than other peoples, the elves in Arendaniel have created a culture that most in Ceres find incomprehensibly abstract and dull, lofty to the point of arrogance, and patient to the point of indolence. A near-anarchistic legal system and distaste for commerce have done nothing to help matters, as most have found lackadaisical Arendaniel law to be inefficient at crime-prevention and modest Arendaniel living to be austere. Thus, while non-elves have always been welcomed in Arendaniel, the region remains primarily elven.

Outside Arendaniel, even elves see the place as monastically ascetic, though most Arendans feel the opposite, describing their homeland as prioritizing comfort, necessity, and "higher callings" over the pointless "distractions" of material success. Indeed, Arendaniel should never be mistaken for a poor nation, as its artistic and magical exports alone make it quite a powerful economy in Ceres and it has never shown the slightest lack of resources for self-defense at need.

In the last century, Arendaniel has been changing, with influxes of shorter-lived peoples in the Wrenne and Atlee marches. Arendan elves see this as a temporary circumstance and those who dislike it appear content to wait in northern Forde or western Savill for the newcomers to go away.

Some non-elven Arendans have been in Arendaniel for generations and love their home. These now petition for major legal changes, particularly lowering the age of "elder" status (and thus eligibility for public office) from 270 to 55, which would include quite young elves as elders. Various "proportional age" or "grandparent age" compromises are being considered, but the Councils of Elders remain, as yet, infuriatingly "patient" on the subject, and while three elder dwarves and one elder gnome have been elected to the Atlee Council in the last fifty years, two of the dwarves have already passed away and no other species can hope to live long enough to have a voice in Arendaniel politics as they stand.

Arendaniel law values rehabilitation over punishment and prioritizes caring for the poor and suffering without reservation. In that sense, Arendaniel treats all people fairly. Few laws are codified and compassion is cherished, so each criminal's sentence is personalized toward the individual's redemptive needs—insofar as 300-year-old elves can hope to understand the needs of humans or half-orcs. Many Arendans, elven and non, believe that shorter-lived peoples must have a voice in government if Arendaniel is to remain just.

Counties: *Counties in Arendaniel are called marches, which are divided into wards.*
Alard: Though quite cold in the winter, in summer and early fall the beaches of Alard are considered among the most idyllic in the world. Alard's highest population areas are fishing towns along what locals call the Gemsand Inlet. True to its name, the inlet's sands sparkle on sunny days due to nacre from shell fragments of a local species of sea snail.

Atlee: Situated on Arendaniel's southern Atlee Peninsula, the Atlee March boasts Arendaniel's most diverse communities. Most of the peoples of Ceres are represented among Atlee's various coastal communities and Atlee is famous worldwide for its art, music, and theater. It also enjoys more commerce than other Arendaniel marches and is home to Arendaniel's wealthiest citizens.

Eveas: The capital of Arendaniel, Arendisse, is located in east central Eveas. Here the Wisdom Council governs Arendaniel. Arendisse is a modest city, as local law prohibits commercial activity from interfering with the fair administration of governance. Twenty miles south of Arendisse stand the ancient ruins of Endanisse castle, the former capital, said to have been built by the fae before the Vareene arrived. Though little of the castle remains today, the overgrown ruins are often visited by artists and historians.

Like most of northwestern Arendaniel, Eveas March's western borders are guarded from possible Kaareb incursions by Ocian troops.

Wrenne: Sharing a long border with Ocel, Wrenne March walks a difficult diplomatic tightrope. Refugees from Ocel cross daily into Arendaniel territory here and the Wrenne Council of Elders struggles to maintain friendly relations with neighboring Ocel authorities while caring for their displaced. A long-term solution to the resulting social complexities has yet to be reached.

Key NPCs: Finrelle Seremchild, a dealer in magical weapons, and Alren Meralchild, a rare general merchant and art broker, are the two wealthiest people in Atlee, and thus all Arendaniel. Though neither is yet old enough to sit on a Council of Elders, many believe these two elves and their families engage in the greedy tactics of monetary influence expected in other parts of the world, trying to push Arendaniel's legal system in directions that will favor them personally.

Allies and Foes: Arendaniel's closest ally is Ocia, with whom it has a mutual protection pact: Ocia helps guard its western borders in exchange for quality magical items. Arendaniel has no official enemies, but relations with neighboring Ocel grow increasingly cool and stilted due to Ocel's harsh treatment of the poor.

Army:
- 7 units of elven archers
- 3 units of elven elder knights

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Alard	Old Forest	2	Arendaniel 1		Brightwater Shipping 2	Arendaniel 2	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 2		75% Adapted Occupants, Coastline, Beautiful
Atlee	Old Forest	2	Arendaniel 2			Arendaniel 2	The Cartography Company 2		75% Adapted Occupants, River, Coastline, Cosmopolitan
Dering	Old Forest	6	Arendaniel 4 Ocia 2		Brightwater Shipping 2 Dering Commodities 3	Arendaniel 6	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 4		75% Adapted Occupants, River
Eveas	Old Forest	2	Arendaniel 0 Ocia 1		Brightwater Shipping 2	Arendaniel 2	The Cartography Company 2	Citadel	75% Adapted Occupants, Ruins
Forde	Old Forest	3	Arendaniel 2			Arendaniel 3	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 1		75% Adapted Occupants, Coastline
Savill	Old Forest	3	Arendaniel 2			Arendaniel 3	The Cartography Company 2		75% Adapted Occupants, River, Coastline
Wrenne	Old Forest	4	Arendaniel 2 Ocia 2		Dering Commodities 2	Arendaniel 4	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 2		75% Adapted Occupants, River, Coastline, Cove

Kaareb

Values: Cunning, Magic, Secrets

Authority: The current king of Kaareb, Ukreth Badgerkin, is said to have gained the throne by poisoning his half-sister, Queen Felnarian. Felnarian was the first of the Badgerkin royal line, having reportedly wrested the crown from the dying grip of her cousin, Queen Delorainne Newtseye. The Newtseye line ruled for a century before that but were also rife with in-family assassinations and allegedly gained the throne by killing off the Youngnight royals. Assassination is rumored to be a cultural pastime in Kaareb, but the Badgerkin family has so far proved adept at its avoidance, as Queen Felnarian ruled for a solid forty years, and her possibly murderous brother has ruled for twenty-two so far.

Description: Kaareb was once a part of Arendaniel but seceded (semi-peacefully) centuries ago, when what is now known to be the forest's growing corruption changed northern Arendaniel's culture too far beyond what the people of southern Arendaniel could tolerate. Since then, the Kaarebi have grown ever more murderous and secretive as their forests close eerily around them, wrapping them in constant shadow and surrounding them with deadly plants and animals.

Always a primarily elvish land, the Kaarebi nation has exiled (and in some cases, allegedly slain) all non-elven residents, closing their borders to contact with any but elves. Eventually, even the Kaarebi's appearance began to change. Ordinary elven children would be leeched of color as they grew save for the reddening of their eyes. Now, even infants can be born already red-eyed and grey. Several Arendaniel mages have tried and failed to reverse this process.

In the last century or so, little intelligence reaches the outside world from within Kaareb, as the Kaarebi maintain a cool distance with even other elves. Prisoners from raiding parties in Oloeri are occasionally "persuaded" to share updated information about Kaarebi culture and politics, but much remains unknown.

Despite their love of secrets, it is Kaarebi tradition to translate most place names and family names into the languages of those one meets, as the Kaarebi feel that accuracy of meaning is more important than symbolic sounds. As such, the proper name for Kaareb in Ceres's common tongue is "The Shadowed Green."

Counties:
Ashvale: Fully half of Ashvale County is bordered by the pristine serenity of the healthy Arendaniel forests, and the people of Ashvale are different from the rest of Kaareb. Most are not notably divergent from Arendaniel elves, especially among the commonfolk, and all are still influenced by Kaareb's culture of distrust, bigotry, and heartlessness. The forests of Ashvale appear less corrupted and frightening than those elsewhere in Kaareb but are still prone to dangerous magical creatures and plants. Some in Arendaniel still believe that Ashvale should never have been ceded to the Kaarebi.

Blacklake: Originally named for a beautiful underground lake found in caves northeast of the Fastness Mountains, Blacklake County has become the most twisted and corrupted of all the regions in Kaareb unless one counts Legynydd, which has already fallen under Maelstrom rule. The elves of Blacklake are barely recognizable as elves, their eyes bright red and their skins and hair drained of all color to eerie greys, whites, and blacks. These "shadow-" or "dark elves" are known to be bloodthirsty and cruel beyond all reason and harbor intense hatred for the dwarves of Oloeri, whom they attack regularly.

Nearly all wildlife in Blacklake County is now warped by corrupted magics. Half the plants are poisonous to all but the tainted inhabitants and most of the animals are venomous, freakishly violent, or strangely mutated (or all three).

Osthaven: The capital fortress of Kaareb, Ironheart, lies in central Osthaven. This nigh-impregnable fortress is built half-underground inside a rocky, forested hill, while the half above ground is crafted partially from rare magical woods and metals, rendering the walls improbably strong. Though a small few of Osthaven's commonfolk and wildlife retain a natural appearance, most, especially among the nobility, have been mutated by the poison at the heart of the Kaarebi forests.

Key NPCs: King Ukreth is a hale young elf in his mid second century. Taken from birth by the corruption, he has silver-white hair and charcoal grey skin. He rules with cool practicality and razor-sharp genius, seemingly unaffected by the bloodthirst observed in much of northeastern Kaareb. Though known to be cruel and merciless, Ukreth nevertheless takes care to avoid provoking enmity with surrounding nations where possible (though relations with Oloeri were beyond saving long before he took the throne).

Allies and Foes: Kaareb may or may not be allied with the Maelstrom and may or may not have ties to the rulers of Wigolath or Ethywyn. In these matters, the dark elves guard their secrets closely. The Shadowed Green's only overt enemy is Oloeri, though none of the shadow elves' neighbors trust them.

Army:

- 4 units of elven infantry
- 2 units of dark elf lizard riders

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Ashvale	Old Forest	4							75% Adapted Occupants, Privacy
Blacklake	Old Forest	2							75% Adapted Occupants, River, Blighted
Bluecastle	Old Forest	6							75% Adapted Occupants, River
Dordale	Old Forest	3							75% Adapted Occupants
Fogbarrow	Old Forest	3							75% Adapted Occupants, River
Highburn	Old Forest	2							75% Adapted Occupants, River
Moorhall	Old Forest	2							75% Adapted Occupants
Osthaven	Old Forest	2						Citadel	75% Adapted Occupants, Rugged
Roselyn	Old Forest	3							75% Adapted Occupants, River

Nawen

Values: Destiny, Dreams, Love

Authority: Nawen has been a theocracy for over three centuries, and while the laity are stereotyped as lazy and whimsical, the clergy have become a well-organized and disciplined structure, practical and efficient. The Archpriest (a non-gendered title) is chosen by the consensus of the council of grand priests, one from each county. A complex legal system offers checks and balances to avoid nepotism and ensure advancement based on skill and temperament.

Description: Nawen is the home of Nawenism, a religion based on a dream its founder had long ago. Facing a long famine, Oracle Feire told her people that far in the south of Ceres was a place for them, and that they must journey by boat to the southern coast to find this paradise, which would be called Nawen. Upon arrival at the Avirtlac Peninsula, the Nawenists declared it Nawen and began to settle there, much to the consternation of the region's elves.

After initial hostilities, the Nawenists reached an agreement with the elves and relations with Arendaniel have been peaceful, if guarded, ever since. The people of Nawen have grown into a culture of primarily unambitious fishers who choose to keep themselves insulated from the troubles of the rest of the world. Until recently, their only major concerns were the occasional appearances of dangerous creatures from the sea and passing pirate raids. It is only in the last few years that Nawen has begun to be threatened by Ocel.

Most Ocel soldiers are convinced that Nawenism is a perilous and corrupting belief system that is a threat to the Ocelan way of life, but the clergy and theologians of Nawen insist otherwise. They have no quarrel with anyone, least of all for religious reasons. The Nawen way is love and song, stargazing with a liberal application of mead. But if Nawenism doesn't threaten the doctrine of the Holy Sky, why is Ocel taking (or feigning) such offense? Perhaps the same mystical substance found in the Aalirian coastal mines has been found on Nawen's coasts as well. Or perhaps Ocel is preparing itself for a larger campaign and sees Nawen (accurately) as low-hanging fruit.

Counties:

Bautrem: Nawen's capital, Nawen City, is located in Bautrem County, uncomfortably close to the edge of the Ocel district. Refugees fleeing religious persecution in Ocel were taken in by Bautrem, but still saw themselves as Ocelan. The Ocel district of Bautrem has recently fallen back under the control of the Ocel theocracy, and Nawen worries the Ocelans intend to use the land for a planned conquest.

Ybaunydd: Nestled between Arendaniel and Ocia, Ybaunydd has developed a somewhat different culture from the rest of Nawen, moderating some of Nawenism's stranger doctrines and focusing more on education and cosmopolitanism.

Yililoth: To settle an ancient debt from Nawen's early conflicts with Arendaniel during the nation's founding,

Ocel recently demanded full payment in the form of a patch of Yililoth coastline. Unable to determine what worth this featureless stretch of beach might have, and far outclassed by Ocel both militarily and financially, the Nawen theocracy gave in, and a new Ocel district is being built there. This has the people of Nawen, especially in Yililoth and Bautrem, very nervous.

Key NPCs: The most popular living bard in Nawen is Harper Seffa, and though she is rarely seen sober, all her songs are about love, understanding, and choosing gratitude for one's destiny.

Allies and Foes: Nawen has never bothered with strong diplomatic ties. Its relations with Arendaniel and Ocia are fine but hardly mutual protection pacts. Nawen has had little other contact with the outside world for centuries, but now appears to be threatened by Ocel.

Army:

- 1 unit of archers
- 3 units of infantry
- 1 unit of light cavalry
- 1 unit of infantry scouts

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Bautrem	Forest	5	Nawen 3 Ocel 2	Nawen 3	Xir's Foxes 2 Serenity Herbalists Guild 3	The Mystics of Nawen 5	Ocia 1 The Cartography Company 3	Road, Citadel Dry-Dock	Coastline Devout
Cires	Forest	2	Nawen 1	Nawen 2	Serenity Herbalists Guild 2	The Mystics of Nawen 2	The Cartography Company 2		Coastline
Dreajan	Forest	3	Nawen 2	Nawen 3	Xir's Foxes 0 Serenity Herbalists Guild 2	The Mystics of Nawen 3	Ocia 1 The Cartography Company 1		Coastline
Falehan	Forest	2	Nawen 1	Nawen 2	Serenity Herbalists Guild 2	The Mystics of Nawen 2			Coastline
Likkarn	Forest	2	Nawen 1	Nawen 2	Xir's Foxes 2	The Mystics of Nawen 2	The Cartography Company 2		River, Coastline
Ybaunydd	Forest	3	Nawen 2	Nawen 2	Xir's Foxes 3	The Mystics of Nawen 3	Ocia 1		Coastline, Cosmopolitan
Yililoth	Plain	1	Ocel 1	Nawen 0	Xir's Foxes 1	The Mystics of Nawen 1	The Cartography Company 0		Coastline, Educated

Ocia

Values: Courage, Compassion, Friendship, Simplicity, Wisdom

Authority: Like distant Astaeria, the rulers of Ocia are decided by contest. Unlike Astaeria, Ocia's leadership contests are not limited to participation by a single family. Anyone born in Ocia may compete in the heirdom competitions, a series of nine annual festivals held at both the local and national levels. In years when there are less than twelve current heirs-apparent at the national level, the national competition-winners at year's end fill in any vacancies at the end of the line of succession, and are mentored by retired heirs for rulership training. If there are no heirdom vacancies, the competition merely ends in a coin prize and a parade, prompting understandably fewer entries in such years.

Each winning heir is given authority over a single county, while the ruler runs the whole nation. Heirs and rulers have no term limits, but there is a strong expectation of retirement "in time to enjoy it," as simple pleasures shared with loved ones are highly prized in Ocian culture, arguably more than hard work. Thus, heirs and rulers rarely serve longer than thirty years even if they start fairly young.

The annual national-level rulership festivals in Ocia are intended to test several traits: Leadership, Administration, Community Improvement, Compassion, Efficiency, Strategy, Connection (to the land or local artifacts), Education, and Defensive Prowess. Most contests require contestants to perform month-long volunteer service projects to better their communities while incorporating valued traits, and these projects are presented and judged at the festivals. Connection is judged privately by all living heirs (both active and retired) and only announced at the festivals. It is not judged at all in years where there are no heirdom vacancies, though a festival is held anyway. Education, though judged with volunteer projects like most of the others, ends in a public trivia competition that is consistently popular.

The most beloved national competition is Defensive Prowess, held in late fall. In this, audience members volunteer to be "villagers" while soldiers, dressed as bandits and wielding padded practice weapons, attempt to "raid the village". Each contestant (usually just three or four remain by this final competition of the year) must defend a constructed mock-village from the "bandits" with minimal fortifications and only a small force of volunteer "villagers." Points are given for fewest "casualties" (double points for defending children), and for preserving the integrity of various "village" structures, especially the storehouse. The contest is held at the base of a short cliff, so that spectators may watch from above and cheer on their favorite commanders.

Description: Ocia comprises the majority of the Ocian Peninsula, which is some of the most fertile, productive land in all of Ceres with unusually mild weather year-round. For this reason, Ocian culture has traditionally been unambitious, generous, and amiable. Ocians grow food so easily that they always have enough without working hard, and with few hardships to face from nature—barring the occasional hurricane—the people of Ocia have historically needed little. Western and southern Ceres view Ocians as lazy and irresponsible, while northern Ceres see Ocia almost as a paradise.

In the last century or so, this tradition of affable indolence has been changing. However unambitious Ocia may be, it is also a culture that prizes education and wisdom, as well as kindness to one's neighbors. Ignoring the plight of their elven allies in Arendaniel or the beleaguered poor in Wigolath would sit poorly with Ocian values. It doesn't hurt that a recent population boom has left Ocia with a large and dangerously bored generation of young people. In response to these problems, both internal and external, Ocia has militarized to a higher degree than ever before, forming an army called the Ceres Defense Battalion. These soldiers are trained by foreign military experts with a decidedly Ocian spin, being taught that power and fighting prowess are both meaningless without something to protect and that defense of one's allies, loved ones, and the otherwise defenseless are all sacred duties.

Defense Battalion soldiers not stationed abroad or at sea are often set to hard labor to keep them occupied, building public works projects that allow Ocian food production and commerce to expand such as roads, irrigation canals, improved food storage facilities, better fishing barges and docks, and other (occasionally harebrained) structures intended to benefit all of Ocia.

While Ocia has profited greatly from these projects, Ocian culture has been changed by them as well. Hard work is now seen as morally valiant—a means to peacefully protect what one loves—and cheerful indolence has become the purview of the elderly. While this change has been mostly harmless, it has made room for less harmless changes, such as an increased focus on profits as a symbol of hard work and a subsequent increased tolerance of greed among Ocian commercial circles. Some Ocians fear that the nation's increased militarization, while still currently focused on defense and valour, may lead to a glorification of force or violence.

Thus far, Ocia remains a happy and prosperous place and the Ocian military is known by its neighbors as courteous and helpful soldiers who keep the world a safer place.

Counties:

Joham: While the majority of the Ocian coastline is devoted to farms, fishing, and simple village life, Joham is the site of Ocia's largest port city, Erwyth. Erwyth is sprawling, taking up an unusual swath of Joham County with its various neighborhoods. As large as Erwyth is in area, it is far from the most populous city in Ceres, as much of its space is used by wide, paved roads, community gardens and sports fields, educational institutions, and a series of year-round markets.

The most famous markets in Erwyth are the Imports Market near the port, the Farmers and Ranchers Market on the west end of town, the Arts and Crafts Market in the north, and the Mysteries Market in the south, for magical goods or the ingredients to craft them. Erwyth, along with outlying areas in Joham County, is riddled with inns and hostels, as far more people visit Joham County for trade purposes than live there.

Legarien: Legarien County is barely populated save by priests, monks, pilgrims, and other students of life's mysteries (both spiritual and otherwise). Like many of Ocia's forests, Lagarien is a difficult region to live in, full of steep hills and rocky cliffs covered in thick growth and teeming with wildlife. The county is known to be untamable, such that even the various idyllic temples, shrines, magic schools, and monasteries of the region struggle to grow enough in their gardens to feed themselves.

Donations from pilgrims allow for a pleasantly simple lifestyle at the more popular of these remote communities, but less well-known monasteries and shrines often scrape by in precarious poverty. Nevertheless, the Legarien County forests are considered so ethereally beautiful that even the poorest monks rarely express regret over their lifestyle choices.

Pikath: Another high-population region of Ocia, Pikath is home to the nation's capital city of Ocessi on the coast of the Gemsand Inlet. The safe and tranquil waters of the inlet make Ocessi Ocia's most active winter port. Less peacefully, Pikath County is known for Ocia's best military and naval academies and it is from Pikath's

shores that troops deploy to the various danger areas in the region, such as to aid in Arendaniel's defense or to ward off bandit raids from Wigolath.

A second large city, Clearlake, stands just north of Marlien Lake and exists to host the national level heirdom competitions. A large percentage of Clearlake residents are appointed contest administrators, judges, and staff who work year-round to set up, run, and clean up after the festivals. Because of the strong Ocian ethic of volunteerism, this is never as expensive an endeavor as one might think, but it does require massive logistical organization. In years with heirdom vacancies, the population of Clearlake (including festival attendees) can swell to a hundred times the city's usual size, occasionally making it the largest settlement in Ocia.

Key NPCs: Fenshal Lorrigan "Astaer," an Astaerian immigrant, is the headmaster of the Ceres Defense Battalion's military academy in Pikath County. A hard man to read, Astaer is a polarizing figure in Ocian politics, some finding him an ideal military instructor and others arrogant and cruel. Though he uses the name Astaer, he makes no attempt to hide the fact that the Astaer family rejected his claim of kinship and many rumors swirl around him, regarding his loyalties, motivations, and highly improbable tales of his either sordid or tragic past.

Alaria Woodcutter of Fraykith is Ocia's eldest living retired heir and county head. Though retired nearly twenty years now and never queen, none can argue that Woodcutter holds immense influence over Ocian politics. Rumored to be over ninety years old, she continues to travel the land, healing the sick, speaking out against injustice, and offering seminars to prospective heirdom contestants. She has been a chief advisor to three separate rulers, has mentored several current county heads, and is lauded throughout Ocia as a kind of living legend.

Allies and Foes: Ocia enjoys a mutual protection pact with Arendaniel and healthy trade relations with many coastal nations in Ceres. Its relations with Kaareb are coolly unfriendly, and the recent bandit conquerers of Wigolath are Ocia's outright enemies.

Army:

- 1 unit of skirmishers
- 2 units of archers
- 1 unit of infantry
- 1 unit of light cavalry

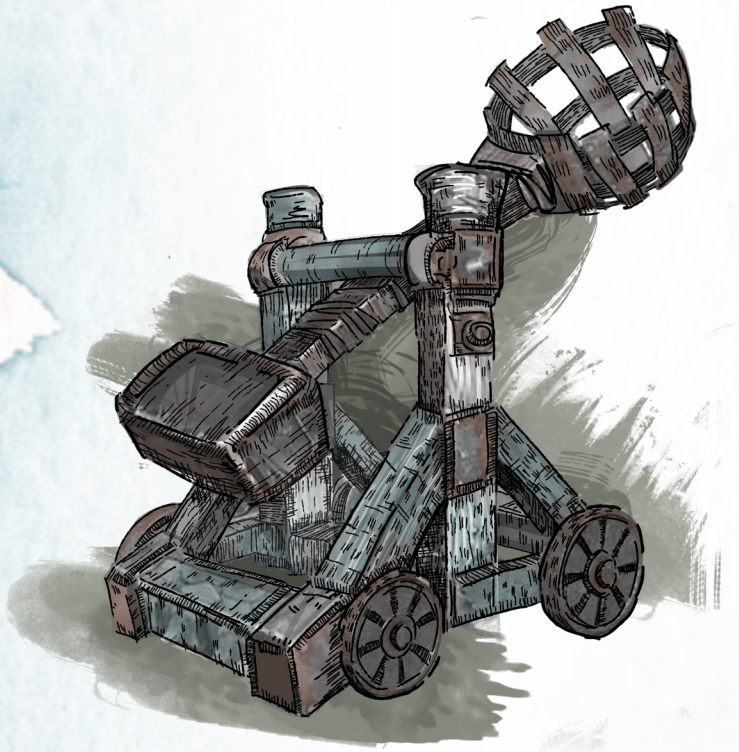
County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Alawyth	Forest	2	Ocia 1	Defenders of Ceres 0 The Path of Clear Skies 2	Brightwater Shipping 2	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 2	Ocia 2		
Arogan	Plain	1	Ocia 0	Justicars of Tallis 1	Xir's Foxes 1	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 1	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 1		Coastline
Calessi	Forest	1	Ocia 0	Defenders of Ceres 1	Quinzell's Mercenaries 1	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 1	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 0		River, Coastline
Eromar	Forest	2	Ocia 1	Defenders of Ceres 2 The Path of Clear Skies 0	Dering Commodities 2	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 2	Ocia 2		River, Coastline
Etalimos	Plain	2	Ocia 1	Defenders of Ceres 2	Serenity Herbalists Guild 2	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 2	Ocia 1		Coastline
Etherasa	Hill	1	Ocia 1	Defenders of Ceres 1	Dering Commodities 1	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 1	Ocia 1		Coastline
Fraykith	Plain	1	Ocia 0	Justicars of Tallis 1	Serenity Herbalists Guild 1	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 1	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 1	Road	Coastline
Joham	Plain	3	Ocia 2	Defenders of Ceres 0 The Path of Clear Skies 3	Xir's Foxes 3	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 3	Ocia 3	Road Naval Dockage	Coastline Crossroads
Legarien	Forest	1	Ocia 0	Justicars of Tallis 1	Quinzell's Mercenaries 1	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 1	Ocia 1		River, Devout
Pikath	Forest	4	Ocia 3	Defenders of Ceres 1 The Path of Clear Skies 3	Brightwater Shipping 2 Dering Commodities 2	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 4	Ocia 3 Scholars and Naturalists Guild 1	Road, Port Fortress	River, Coastline Volunteerism
Prinia	Plain	2	Ocia 1	Justicars of Tallis 2	Xir's Foxes 2	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 2	Ocia 1		Coastline
Voedia	Forest	2	Ocia 1	Defenders of Ceres 1 The Path of Clear Skies 1	Dering Commodities 2	Lach Lyrien A'Fae 2	Scholars and Naturalists Guild 1	Road	Coastline

Wigolath

Values: Strength, Skill, Luck

Authority: At least four people claim rulership of Wigolath, but who those people are changes with improbable regularity. However, the person with the best claim to current sovereignty is a drakakar named J'rakk. Clever, charismatic, and intensely skilled in combat, J'rakk commands an army of rogues and is attempting to unify Wigolath into a proper nation. Only time will tell if he will succeed or how long such a nation will last if he does.

Description: Wigolath was once a part of Arendaniel and made an independence agreement during the same era as Kaareb's secession due to longstanding disagreements over how to address the rash of human settlers in elven territory. After secession, Wigolath closed its borders to non-elves, offending both Ocia and Uneabard in the process. More closely allied at that time with Kaareb, Wigolath's diplomatic efforts with Arendaniel were sparse as well.



Thus when a human pirate king decided to claim the Caecan Peninsula as his territory, Wigolath could only call on Kaareb for aid; Kaareb refused. Caecan was taken, and Wigolath has never since regained it. The pirate and bandit problem swelled in surrounding waters, with outlaws from all parts of Ceres flocking to the Wigolath coast, stealing more land with every passing year. Wigolath's leaders did attempt to persuade their disgruntled neighbors to aid them, but in the end what support arrived was too little and too late.

While remnants of Wigolath's former inhabitants fight to this day in the hope of reclaiming their homeland, they have had little success against the superior numbers of the invaders. Many elves have been enslaved alongside imported slaves kidnapped from other parts of Ceres. Warfare is constant between elves and invaders or between competing outlaw bands. Chaos and bloodshed reign, and rumor has it that Kaareb may be deliberately orchestrating the ongoing instability of its neighbor.

Counties:

Coelian: Parts of what was once called Coelian County seem to be succumbing to the same foulness that corrupts Kaareb, the forests growing thicker, darker, and its inhabitants stranger. This corruption affects each species differently; humans, for example, show no physical symptoms but turn savage and murderous without warning or apparent cure. Affected halflings are similarly asymptomatic, and many seem almost indefinitely immune to the corruption, but a few have been known to drop suddenly dead. Other peoples have still stranger responses, mutating grotesquely. Folk in northern Coelian are beginning to flee to Uneabard through the perilous Kaalil Swamp whenever they can escape their cruel rulers' oversight.

Gliviel: The former county of Gliviel is typical of what Wigolath has become—a ruling class of bandits, pirates, and other rogues fighting amongst themselves and enslaving what remains of the former populace. If anything makes Gliviel unique, it is that—as the most centrally located coastal region of Wigolath—it sees more infighting than anywhere else and has grown nigh-impassible as a result.

Wirallan: Arguably the eeriest county in Wigolath, Wirallan, site of the nation's former capital, lies under a powerful spell. It is said that the last elven king, the wizard Ulrathien the Civil, sacrificed himself to save his last unconquered county before the invaders claimed it. As a result, violence is strangely difficult in Wirallan, though this unfortunately affects the defenders as harshly as the invaders and has not succeeded in keeping Wirallan free—just strangely calm. This has led to a misconception of the seriousness of Wigolath's plight among some residents of northeastern Arendaniel and slowed Arendan aid as the long-lived elven elders endlessly debate the topic rather than taking action.

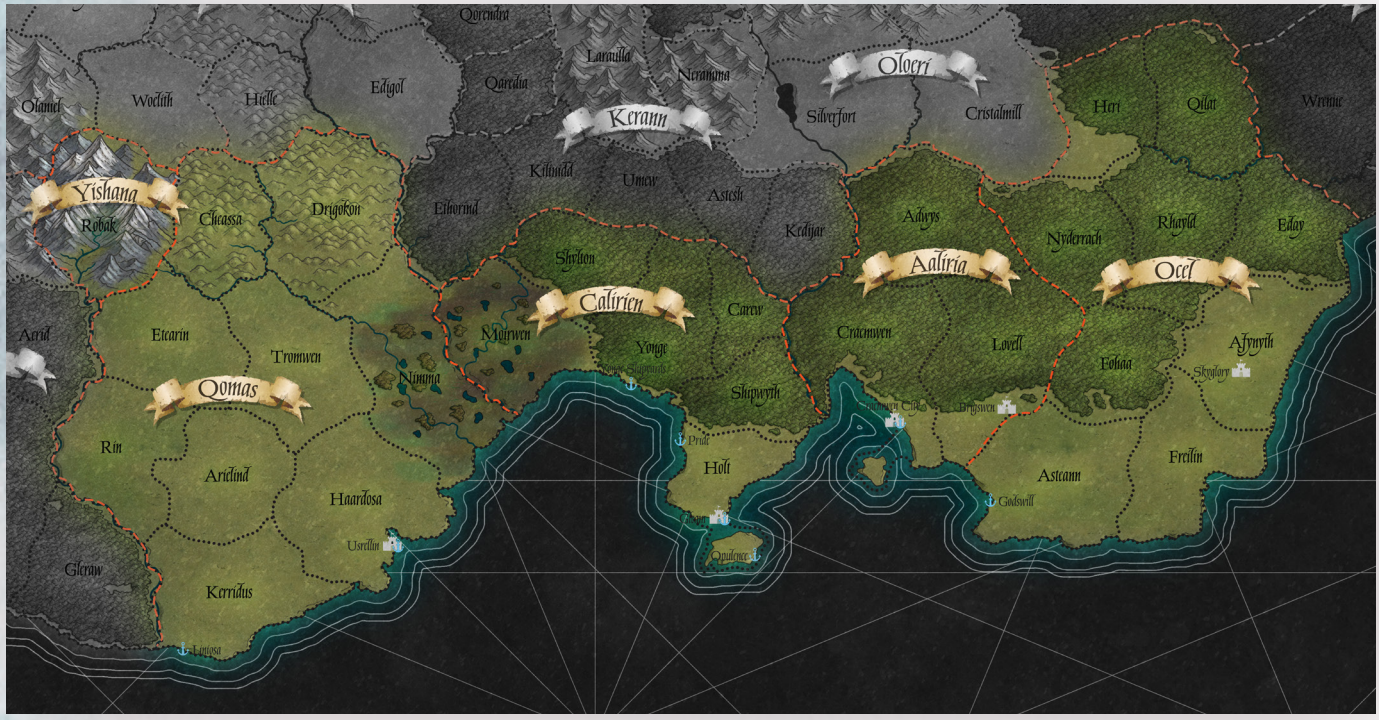
Key NPCs: Aside from J'rakk, other significant leaders in Wigolath include a human pirate named Nessha the Vengeful and the head of the elven resistance, Ellyrion Kelluvel. Nessha is known for extreme violence and cruelty to her slaves. She is just clever enough to make a fit rival for J'rakk and uncannily charismatic, but her sadism is so famously extreme that she rarely commands the kind of numbers J'rakk can, as his leadership approach is more practical and hardly crueler than average for a conquering warlord.

As for "Count" Kelluvel, he is an excellent fighter, scout, and speaker, but not as much a tactician and has had some ill luck in his last two supply officers. Without King Ultharien's dying spell allowing the resistance to safely regroup in Wirallan County, the natives might have fallen twice over by now. Kelluvel himself has said that he will gladly step down as soon as a better leader emerges, but for now he remains the best hope Wigolath has left.

Allies and Foes: Wigolath is insufficiently unified to have coherent allies or foes. Its resistance enjoys some small support from Ocia, Arendaniel, and Uneabard, while several opposed invading factions are all rumored to have allies in Kaareb.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Acerag	Forest	3							River
Caecan	Forest	2							Coastline
Coelian	Forest	3							River, Blighted
Gliviel	Forest	4							Coastline, Seditious
Rheralith	Forest	4							River, Coastline
Wirallan	Forest	2						Citadel	Coastline, Peaceful

The Stalwart South



Known for a cultural tendency toward stubbornness and trustworthiness, the realms of the southern half of Ceres vary as widely in their terrain as they do in their people. The southern reach of the Heartwood runs through northern Ocel, most of Aaliria, and Calirien, but it is much lighter and sparser than at its core in Arendaniel and Kaareb. Folk of all sorts dwell beneath its boughs and logging is a primary driver of economic growth in these lands. The weather is also somewhat warmer in the Stalwart South than in more northern parts of Ceres due to trade winds blowing in from the east.

The two most powerful realms in the region, Ocel and Qomas, compete for dominance, often playing their vassal states Calirien and Aaliria against each other. Neither has the space to launch a full-scale war as both must deal with invasions from their respective northern borders: Qomas with yearly incursions by orc hordes out of Migoch, Ocel with infiltration by the dark elves of Kaareb. The hills in the north of Qomas and the forests in the north of Ocel are dangerous places, full of the constant threat of marauders. It is widely speculated that Kurse manipulates these border aggressions specifically to keep the two nations off-balance and too distracted to forge an alliance.

Historically, the great Noimire swamp that overlaps Calirien and Qomas kept either nation from seizing the other as neither could mobilize an army without a logistical nightmare and neither wants to venture into the forests of Kerann. They carried out their conflict by means of diplomacy and treaties, whereby Calirien became increasingly economically important for Qomas and Qomas increasingly sent military support to Calirien to ward off Aalirian interests. Ultimately, they reached a vassalage agreement around 1000 VY, wherein Calirien swore to serve Qomassi interests; they have remained close allies ever since.

The last realm in this region is the Yishana Bastion, a mountainous region originally claimed by Qomas until one terrible season in which most of the populace of the country vanished in some dread event, leaving only a single lonely tower to stand vigil where once many kept watch over the border. Subsequent attempts to reclaim the area have seen horrendous losses at the hands of a great monstrous entity that claims Yishana for its own.

Folk of the Stalwart South

The folk of this region are energetic, passionate, and optimistic to the point of being impossible to dissuade from the course they've decided upon. They make for fast friends and terrible enemies. A much beloved cultural pastime is the art of boasting, whereby the folk of the South try to outdo each other in loud, wild boasts about their prowess or misadventures, often going to hilarious and impossible lengths in describing their valor and skill.

All sorts of folk live in the Stalwart South, including humans, elves, dwarves, and equal parts other folk. It is a truly diverse place with a high degree of cultural saturation and harmony. Even orcs and the Shadowed tend to be accepted here, though with some degree of caution owing to their dark reputations.

Aaliria

Values: Resilience, Selflessness, Tradition

Authority: Aaliria's official authorities are appointed by Ocel, but some communities remain loyal to Aaliria's ousted royal line or otherwise reject Ocel law. Aaliria's royals are themselves in exile in far off Astaeria, but communication with trusted Aalirian servants continues and there is always talk of their glorious return.

Description: Aaliria has always been sparsely populated. Most of the nation is covered by some of the thickest and wildest portions of the Great Eastern Forest and a steep terrain laced with hundreds of tiny streams and waterfalls has only further discouraged attempts to settle here. Massive and highly magical wildlife abound, especially in the north, where the forest is at its most impenetrable.

Some six decades back, a series of caves were discovered along Aaliria's southern coast containing strange ore veins that glowed and pulsed as if alive. Traditionally a humble fishing and farming area, Aaliria was unprepared when word of this bizarre material reached its more powerful neighbors. Qomas was the first to seek control of Aaliria's new mines and Aaliria's king beseeched Ocel's military for aid in fending off the Qomassi navy. The leaders of Ocel complied, but in the process occupied Aaliria, taking the mines for themselves and installing a puppet governor in the king's place.

Now, over half a century later, Aaliria remains in Ocel's grip and Ocel continues to insist that Aaliria is thriving under its nurturing protection and guidance. Meanwhile, the people of Aaliria struggle under crushing tax rates, oppressive laws, and are not allowed to even own—much less profit from—pieces of the strange ore being mined from their own lands.

Whatever the ore's true properties, Ocel—and any other power who happens to have acquired a piece—has been careful not to let the secret out. Many say that if the ore were merely pretty, this would be common knowledge by now. It must have some other utility.

Counties:
Adwys: This wild region is known for large and deadly wildlife. The anti-Ocel rebellion is said to be strongest here, supported by supplies smuggled from Oloeri or Kerann, but children and elders struggle to survive in these deadly forests, so Adwys's communities are hardly thriving.

Craemwen: Rabbit Island, off the coast of Craemwen, has become an Ocel military training facility and a prison camp for Aalirian dissidents. Craemwen's people are otherwise treated well to convince outsiders of Ocel's good intentions toward Aaliria. Craemwen City is currently the wealthiest in Aaliria and the site of the governor's palace.

Lovell: Site of Aaliria's former capital, Brigswen, Lovell is the worst-taxed region in Ocel-controlled Aaliria.

Key NPCs: Evdrel se Lembrek is the governor of Ocel-controlled Aaliria. Governor se Lembrek is a large and loud woman, fond of beer, sweets, and attractive young men. She is loyal to Ocel—save for a few petty crimes here and there to line her own pockets. Se Lembrek has three lieutenant governors, one for each Aalirian region, and unless directly ordered otherwise by her superiors in Ocel, she pays little attention to how her lieutenants choose to govern.

Allies and Foes: Aaliria has few allies, but Astaeria continues to offer safe harbor to the displaced royal family, and foes of Ocel are happy to use Aaliria's people as pawns, smuggling supplies to their rebellion efforts. Aaliria's only major foe is its oppressor, Ocel.

Army:
- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of medium cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Adwys	Forest	3	Aaliria 1 Ocel 0	Sadaya's Love 3	Brightwater Shipping 3	The Dragon's Eyes 3	The Devotional Artists Guild 1 Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 1		Seditious River
Craemwen	Forest	5	Aaliria 2 Ocel 0	Sadaya's Love 5	Brightwater Shipping 5	The Dragon's Eyes 5	The Devotional Artists Guild 2 Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 2	Road, Port, Fortress	Prosperous
Lovell	Forest	5	Aaliria 2 Ocel 0	Sadaya's Love 5	Brightwater Shipping 5		The Devotional Artists Guild 3 Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 2	Road, Citadel	Informants Coastline

Calirien

Values: Commerce, Profit, Success, Luxury, Entertainment

Authority: Calirien is ruled by a Council of Rulers elected by the members of a society known as the Golden Family. The Golden Family are all extremely wealthy and they choose the Council of Rulers from among their own, so Calirien's rulers are always members of the exceptionally rich. Laws in Calirien are grossly skewed to favor the Golden Family, though Family members make a show of being welcoming to "new cousins" should a poorer person manage to become wealthy enough to be admitted. Golden Family members who become poor are expelled from the organization.

Description: Calirien is a strange contrast of old and new, discipline and decadence, wealth and poverty. The six Calirien counties organized into a mutual protection alliance so long ago it predates local record-keeping. Calirien at the time (according to Arendaniel-kept histories) was sandwiched between two expansionist monarchies and its people held fast against these threats by banding together. Now, many generations later, Calirien still has never had a king. At first, each county was ruled by a local chieftain and these would unite under a temporary warlord when the region was threatened. As time went on, bit by bit Calirien's people found it beneficial to unify on a more permanent basis in order to compete economically with their neighbors.

The politics of that era convinced the Calirien people that only wealthy merchants had the financial understanding and administrative experience necessary to run an economically powerful nation. Thus, the Golden Family was formed of all the wealthiest merchants (which incidentally included all the old landowning gentry). The Golden Family would thereafter consist of any and all who were lucky, smart, hardworking, and "beloved by the gods" enough to be numbered among the nation's wealthy, defined loosely as the richest tenth of the Calirien people and determined once a decade by audit.

The Golden Family is empowered to nominate, hold, and vote on the selection of many government administrative positions, particularly the Council of Rulers, the County Executives, the Lord Treasurer, and the Lord High Executive. Family-elected administrators appoint all other government positions and make all the laws and judgments for Calirien. All positions are held for nine years, barring expulsion from the Golden Family. Multiple terms are permitted but may not be consecutive.

While this system seemed to serve Calirien well at first, over time it has led to increasing poverty among the common people even as Calirien's rich are numbered among the wealthiest in the world. As the situation steadily worsens, the Golden Family has turned to hiring traveling entertainers to convince the people that the Calirien system is the best and fairest in the world and that Calirien's poor could also join the Golden Family with enough hard work and perseverance. In addition, an annual national lottery grants a massive fortune to one lucky poor person, who is then welcomed into the Golden Family with great pomp and circumstance and allowed to remain so long as Golden Family criteria continue to be met. Since the poor are rarely blessed with financial education or networks of business collaborators, few of these "winners" manage to remain wealthy long, but the lottery gives many Calirish hope and serves its purpose of somewhat mitigating unrest among the poor.

The lottery and foofaraw can only accomplish so much; Calirien's poor grow increasingly unhappy, turning to foreign religions and philosophies for comfort and sometimes becoming fanatical or militant. Whispers of rebellion sound here and there and unrest is highest in the regions protected by foreign Qomassi troops. To outsiders, Calirien seems like a decadent, cheerful, and licentious paradise, as most of the nation's contact with foreigners takes place in Holt County, where everything is best managed (and from whence the poorest folk are exiled to other counties, lest their pitiful presence depress or worry anyone important).

Counties:

Holt: Everyone who's anyone in Calirien lives in Holt County. The capital city of Gleam sits on Holt's southern coast, and its other two largest cities, Pride and Opulence, are located on Holt's northwestern coast and southern island respectively. Central Holt County is home to all Calirien's farmlands and fishing villages dot the Holt Peninsula coast between cities. Many of Calirien's wealthy behave as if only Holt county exists.

Moirwen: The Calirien half of the Noimire wetlands, Moirwen County is sparsely populated and poor. Though a beautiful and peaceful region, Moirwen County's soggy soil is difficult to build on and therefore largely dismissed as useless by the Calirien government. This neglect has in turn led to a rise in dangerous local wildlife and rumor whispers of a dragon in the region.

Shipwyth: Sharing a long and forested border with Ocel-occupied Aaliria, Shipwyth has become a hotbed of smuggling activity and something of a haven for Aalirian criminal refugees. The Calirien authorities interfere only

when their logging operations are disrupted; this laissez faire policy has led to a cooling of diplomatic relations with Ocel in recent years.

Yonge: Yonge County tends toward simple, humble villages in the south and monster troubles in the Kerann-bordered north. Though the government has secured an agreement that includes Qomas military units to defend the forest's most commercially important regions, these soldiers have a somewhat antagonistic relationship with local villagers and are occasionally considered to be worse than the monsters. Yonge county fares better than similarly-positioned Carew and Shylton since its southern coastal shipyards are considered some of the best in the world, making Yonge the second richest county in Calirien, thus granting its people a modicum of respect and consideration from the Golden Family.

Key NPCs: Apart from the Council of Rulers and their Lord High Executive, the most powerful individual in Calirien is the Lord Treasurer. Elected by the Golden Family from among their own, the Lord Treasurer oversees all appointments and administration regarding tax collection, tariffs and fees, government investments and expenditures, and all financial auditing. Auditing is the key to the treasurer's power as financial audits determine who is and is not a member of the Golden Family and thus empowered to vote or hold office.

The current Lord Treasurer is Fillius Brenforth, a mercantile genius of young middle age and currently the ninth richest person in Calirien (and gaining). A human of recent dwarven ancestry (his maternal grandfather being a half-dwarf), Lord Brenforth is short, broad, and hairy in appearance with a large jaw and heavy-looking forehead for a human. The combination makes him look more like a warrior than a thinker, such that many find surprising his quickness of wit and subtlety of business acumen. Fillius is a long-term planner and many believe he will one day serve on the Ruling Council and even become the Lord High Executive.

Allies and Foes: Calirien is closely allied with (some say a vassal of) Qomas, and friendly with Derarin. It enjoys a somewhat predatory financial relationship with the Aalirian rebels and cool or wary trade with Astaeria and Ocel. Calirien is not on friendly terms with the Dragon of Kerann but has not yet found it profitable to take overt action there.

Army:

- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of medium cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Carew	Forest	4	Calirien 2 Qomas 2	Kingdom of Heaven 3	Calirien 4		The Devotional Artists Guild 2 Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 2		River
Holt	Plain	2	Calirien 1	Sadaya's Love 2	Calirien 2		The Devotional Artists Guild 2	Road, Dry-Dock, Citadel	Coastline, Proud
Moirwen	Swamp	3	Calirien 1	Kingdom of Heaven 3	Calirien 3		The Devotional Artists Guild 2		River, Coastline, Peaceful
Shylton	Forest	2	Calirien 1	Sadaya's Love 2	Calirien 2		Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 2		River
Skipwyth	Forest	3	Calirien 1	Kingdom of Heaven 3	Calirien 3		Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 2		River, Coastline, Open
Yonge	Forest	4	Calirien 1 Qomas 3	Sadaya's Love 4	Calirien 4		The Devotional Artists Guild 2 Blessed Archive of Theological Literature 2	Port	Road, Coastline Fertile

Ocel

Values: Honor, Order, Success, Purity, Loyalty

Authority: Ocel is ruled by the military arm of the Temple of the Holy Sky. The Knights of the Holy Sky are chosen and trained young, indoctrinated to extreme loyalty to Ocel and the Temple. Those who reach officer rank or higher among the Knights are often arrogant, self-righteous, and profoundly closed-minded. The highest authority in the Knights and the Temple is Ocel's Holy Monarch.

Description: The Temple of the Holy Sky began in Ocel as an offshoot of the Church of the Sky Gods—perhaps a bit strict and judgmental, but fairly ordinary. The Holy Sky religion spread throughout dour, serious Ocel, appealing to the culture already in place. Soon it was the dominant religion of the kingdom, but it was still no more than an unusually demanding take on the Sky Gods faith so popular throughout Ceres.

That changed when King Olgram the Faithless began actively persecuting the Temple. Ocelan histories paint him as exceedingly villainous, but even histories of surrounding nations mention King Olgram as a corrupt and sadistic monster, the nadir of greedy corruption that took hold of Ocel's aristocracy in that era.

Olgram's excesses went a step too far when he went up against the popular and tightly organized Temple of the Holy Sky. The Lady Highest Archpriest of the time organized a revolution to overthrow him—and the rest of the corrupt aristocracy—and was herself overwhelmingly acclaimed by the Ocelan people as their new Holy Queen.

Unlike in Nawen, where theocratic rulership is legally bound to avoid power-grabs or to twist the religion against the people, the Holy Queen and Temple of the Holy Sky were given absolute power. The people believed that the gods would be ruling them through their earthly servants. They had no desire to limit said servants' ability to lead them.

This state of affairs worked well enough for a few years, but then Holy Queen Deara decided that all other religions must be run out of Ocel to purify the nation. It was a strange and alien notion to Ceres at that time, and it remains uncommon to this day, that two sets of spiritual beliefs should not be able to coexist in harmony. Many Ocelans identified then as both Holy Sky and Sky Gods believers, or even Source believers. These now had to hide their secondary (or primary) faiths in order to remain Ocelan citizens and things grew worse from there.

Bit by bit, as the generations went by, the leadership of the Holy Sky became greedier for power over every aspect of the people's lives. At first this was like rule by aristocrats, but soon children were required to be educated in Temple schools, indoctrinated with Temple teachings. Art and poetry were censored if the Temple found them "inappropriate". The Knights of the Holy Sky were formed and children who showed aptitude were taken by the Temple to be raised in the Order. This last was considered a great honor, and often increased a family's status, but the children so raised always returned far more loyal to the Temple than to their own families—those who returned at all. War is a dangerous business, but some suspected that young "squires" who rebelled against their oppressive upbringings were done away with.

As conditions grew worse for the common people of Ocel, eventually no amount of indoctrination, censorship, and secrecy could keep an underground of resistance from springing up. As the poor grew poorer, ever more beleaguered by curfews, inspections, and harsh punishments for even the pettiest of crimes, the rich priests grew greedier and turned their eyes to other lands and greater power.

It wasn't until the Ocelan takeover of Aaliria (which to this day remains unknown to many Ocelan commoners) that the rest of the world realized what was happening to the Temple of the Holy Sky and to the people of Ocel. The current queen now appears to have set her sights on Nawen, perhaps because the ever-accepting Nawenish faith seems to threaten the Temple's control of its subjects. Since Nawenism is utterly non-violent and non-dogmatic, the true threat to Temple control is Temple oppression. Word has reached too many about labor camps in Heri and too many have been beaten near to death by passing Knights over sins as minor as disrespecting authority.

It remains arguable whether things are better in Ocel than they were under the aristocracy. However, conditions are far from happy and many wish for a change by any means necessary. One can only hope that this powerful nation will be recovered enough to fight for Ceres should conflict come to a head with the Maelstrom.

Counties:

Afynyth: Ocel's capital city of Skyglory is in Afynyth County. Most of Afynyth County is either settled or farmed and the entire county is very orderly and clean. Here is Ocel's attempt to realize paradise on earth and the will of the Sky Gods for their people. People not living up to paradisaical standards can be exiled out to other counties, where freedoms are more strictly curtailed. Most residents of Afynyth County are members of the clergy, the Knights, and their families. Sheltered as they are in idyllic Afynyth, many in Ocel's highest power echelons don't seem to realize how restless the common folk of Ocel are growing.

Asteann: The western port city of Godswill in Asteann County has more contact with the outside world than is typical for Ocelan cities. It is here that a local version of Nawenism was introduced to Ocel and slowly took hold. As Nawenism has grown in secret popularity over the years, spreading throughout the rebellious elements of Ocel from county to county, the Nawenist clergy found a way for Nawenist priests to be taught and ordained in secret throughout Ocel, making the Ocel branch of Nawenism an official arm of the Nawenist religion. The Nawenist clergy now travel throughout Ocel, healing the sick and ministering to the poor. This unofficial religion of the uprising has now gained a strong foothold in over half the counties of Ocel.

Heri: Heri County is perhaps the worst place to live in Ocel. Here "sinners" are sent to prisons, labor camps, or organized on "forest patrols" and forced to "support" the Knights whenever dangerous creatures or people enter Ocel from Kaareb. Few know how convicted sinners are treated in Heri County.

Key NPCs: Asren Yorems, an Ocel-born priest of Nawenism, is considered by many to be the leader of the Ocelan resistance. He preaches nonviolent resistance and love for the Knights and the Temple, but many believe that if the Knights were to catch him, he would be publicly beaten and sent to die in the worst of the Heri camps.

Allies and Foes: Ocel occupies Aaliria and small sections of Nawen. It has recently alienated most of its neighbors but appears to be no worse for its relative isolation as yet. It is far too powerful a state for any to wish to challenge directly.

Army:

- 4 units of archers
- 4 units of infantry
- 3 units of medium cavalry
- 3 units of infantry scouts
- 3 units of town guards

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Afynyth	Plain	3	Ocel 3	Temple of the Holy Sky 3	Asteann Outfitters 3	Children of the Sky 2	The Devotional Artists Guild 2	Road, Port, Castle, Monuments	Coastline, Devout
Asteann	Plain	6	Ocel 6	Temple of the Holy Sky 3 Nawen 3	Asteann Outfitters 5	Children of the Sky 2	The Devotional Artists Guild 3 BAoTL 1	Road, Naval Dockage	Coastline, Seditious
Eday	Forest	3	Ocel 3	Temple of the Holy Sky 3	Quinzell's Mercenaries 3	Children of the Sky 3	The Devotional Artists Guild 3		River, Coastline
Fohaa	Forest	6	Ocel 6	Nawen 4	Asteann Outfitters 5 Quinzell's Mercenaries 1	Children of the Sky 1	The Devotional Artists Guild 1 BAoTL 3		
Freilin	Plain	6	Ocel 6	Temple of the Holy Sky 1 Nawen 3	Asteann Outfitters 4 Xir's Foxes 2	Children of the Sky 3	The Devotional Artists Guild 2 BAoTL 2	Road	Coastline
Heri	Forest	3	Ocel 3	Nawen 2	Asteann Outfitters 3	Children of the Sky 3	BAoTL 1		Informants
Nyderrach	Forest	3	Ocel 3	Temple of the Holy Sky 3	Asteann Outfitters 3 Quinzell's Mercenaries 0	Children of the Sky 3	BAoTL 2		
Qilat	Forest	3	Ocel 3	Temple of the Holy Sky 0 Nawen 2	Asteann Outfitters 3	Children of the Sky 3	BAoTL 2		River
Rhayld	Forest	3	Ocel 3	Temple of the Holy Sky 3 Nawen 0	Asteann Outfitters 0 Quinzell's Mercenaries 3	Children of the Sky 3	The Devotional Artists Guild 3		River

BAoTL: Blessed Archive of Theological Literature

Qomas

Values: Strength, Loyalty, Expedience, Dispassion, Obedience

Authority: The ruling family of Qomas is the House of Xerent. The Xerents have ruled for nearly a century since the Ironwood Revolution that ousted the House of Greffeltine. Though they remain more popular with the people than the Greffeltines were, the Xerents are hardly beloved. They are known for cold militarism, even toward their own children. As they refrain from flagrant waste of wealth as well as from gratuitous torture of criminals, the people of Qomas are willing to count their blessings.

Description: Qomas is a dour and serious land and has been for generations, though many have wondered why. The nation enjoys a long, beautiful coastline, plenty of productive farm and grazing land, valuable stone quarries in the north, and has never had trouble producing enough of its own wealth to purchase any resources it lacks, such as timber for ships or iron for weaponsmithing.

Nevertheless, the people of Qomas are known for brooding dispassion and no sense of humor. Pessimism is said by outsiders to be the Qomassi national pastime and Qomassi poetry and spirituality are often seen as long-winded and depressing. The Qomassi take pride in their forbidding reputation and in the distilled spirits and sword dancing for which their region is also known.

As to whether the Qomassi are proud of their traditionally hawkish aristocracy, opinions are mixed. The Qomassi culturally value strength and in that sense they are pleased with their strong military. It makes them feel worthy of respect. On the other hand, most Qomassi wish their taxes were lower and believe they probably would be if the Queen would just quit competing with those damnable Astaers.

Counties:
Cheassa: Hilly Cheassa County is in a unique position in Qomas. To the west, its inhabitants face regular incursions of dangerous magical creatures from what was once their neighbor county of Robak (now Yishana). To the northeast, Cheassa County faces periodic supply raids from the orcs of Migoch, and to the northwest lies Qomas's only border with its major rival for control of southwestern Ceres: Astaeria. Cheassa is not a wealthy county, full of soil too rocky for much farming and wildlife too deadly to make a profit on herds. The number of troops needed to keep the county safe are quite a strain on local resources, and the bitter, old Cheassa count is unsympathetic to his people's poverty.

Drigokon: Count Tiama Kessore of Drigokon is a conniving bastard, slippery and subtle. Drigokon's residents seem to do significantly better for themselves than their Cheassa County neighbors on similar land, but rumors abound that Count Tiama is engaging in illegal secret trade with the orcs of Migoch and might also have some arrangement with the Dragon's Eyes of Kerann. There is even argument among Drigokon residents as to whether the count was born a boy or a girl, if either, a question not usually solved even after meeting Tiama Kessore face to face.

Etearin: Other than the monsters wandering out of Yishana, Etearin County has always been barely distinguishable from Rin County until recently. Something has happened to Etearin's groundwater supply. While the water from the Robak river seems fine, all the wells and some of the smaller mountain streams in northern Etearin have been causing mood swings in those who drink the water. Though no such incidents have yet been observed after eating plants grown with such water, many grow fearful of eating their own crops. No one yet knows what could be causing this.

Haardosa: Qomas's capital city lies on the coast of Temple Bay in Haardosa County with Xerent Castle just a little farther inland. Haardosa has been Xerent land for many generations and its people have done well in the near century since their lords came to the throne. Usrellin, Qomas's fortified coastal capital, is unusually dull as port cities go, but it still does a brisk trade and a large dockside market crouches outside the city walls year-round.

Nimma: Nimma, located on the Qomas side of the Noimire wetlands, has little land well-suited for building, keeping the population fairly low. It also has a problem with dangerous magical creatures, especially in the areas closest to the southern coast. Nevertheless, it is a beautiful and peaceful region, well managed by the local count. Despite the mosquitos (and monsters) the people of Nimma are said to be some of the happiest in Qomas.

Rin: Largely typical for Qomas, the people of Rin County are mildly overtaxed by their count, ruled with a somewhat heavy hand, and conscripted into the military at the Queen's whim. As one of Qomas's several central farmland counties, Rin at least eats well, with usually enough excess after taxes for a few decent festivals each year if they're careful. One thing that makes Rin County different is the constant, secretive traffic near the western border. The count punishes any who investigate the matter too closely, but most assume this is smuggling of supplies for the Kiligan war effort.

Key NPCs: The Spider is a legendary assassin, or group of assassins, supposedly operating out of the dock region in the port city of Libiosa in western Kerridus County. Though some suspect the Spider to be nothing but a story, other rumors claim they secretly work for the Qomassi queen as both killers and spies (or just the one killer and spy). Few know much more than that, but it is advised to tread carefully when asking questions near the Libiosa docks.

Allies and Foes: Qomas enjoys a solid alliance and vassalage agreement with Calirien and regular trade with many seafaring nations in Ceres. It has an adversarial rivalry with Astaeria, though lacking in open hostilities.

Army:
- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of medium cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Arielind	Plain	3	Qomas 2	Eshism 3	Etearin Imports & Exports 3	TGTAC 2	PaPC 2	Road	
Cheassa	Hill	1	Qomas 1	Eshism 1	Etearin Imports & Exports 1				River, Pressgangs
Drigokon	Hill	2	Qomas 1	Church of the Source 2	Etearin Imports & Exports 2		PaPC 2		River, Crossroads
Etearin	Plain	5	Qomas 4	Eshism 2	Etearin Imports & Exports 3		PaPC 4		River
				Church of the Source 3	R&R Investments 2				Blighted
Haardosa	Plain	3	Qomas 2	Eshism 3	Etearin Imports & Exports 3	TGTAC 3	PaPC 2	Road, Port, Fortress, Palace	Coastline, Proud
Kerridus	Plain	2	Qomas 1	Eshism 2	Etearin Imports & Exports 2	TGTAC 2	PaPC 2	Naval Dockage	River, Coastline
Nimma	Swamp	3	Qomas 2	Church of the Source 3	R&R Investments 3	TGTAC 2	PaPC 2		River, Coastline, Peaceful
Rin	Plain	2	Qomas 0	Church of the Source 2	R&R Investments 2		PaPC 1	Road	River, Open
Tromwen	Plain	1	Qomas 1	Church of the Source 1	Etearin Imports & Exports 1				River

PaPC: Playwrights and Poets Consortium | TGTAC: The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium

Yishana

Values: Treasure, Meat, Entertainment

Authority: The Yishana Bastion is ruled by a particularly bored dragon of an unknown variety. The dragon is multicolored and its colors change somewhat with its mood, though given its temperament, some believe this is accomplished by illusion and vanity as well as a desire to camouflage its true nature from observers. It is certainly the case that the dragon chose to hide itself from surrounding powers when it first claimed Yishana, such that Yishana's ruler remained mysterious for some years after the initial conquest. It still rarely shows itself, but a few reports have reached surrounding nations.

These reports describe the dragon as easily bored, easily distracted, but clever and observant. It is said to have a childish sense of humor but an adult's appetite for abstract conversation—indeed it can wax quite philosophical in a twisted way. It is murderous, but it has no taste for torture and apparently does not eat sentients. It does like to toy with people and threatens its "pet" humans into all manner of humiliating situations for its entertainment. Because its type is unknown, it is difficult to judge its age by its size, but it is at least an adult and perhaps much older. It likes shiny things and cows.

Description: Formerly a Qomassi county named Robak, Yishana now dances to the whims of a mysterious dragon.

Just a few years back late in the autumn, all communication ceased between Robak County and the outside world. The Astaeria border watchtower was found abandoned with no signs of struggle. Attempts to explore the county's interior led only to more missing troops. Then the snows set in and Qomas was forced to let matters lie until the thaw. In spring, Qomas set out in full force, but the mountainous terrain was used cleverly against them and the troops were beset by all manner of dangerous creatures as well as crude but deadly traps. Many lives were lost and Qomas retreated.

Ever-pragmatic, Qomas chose to watch and wait, unwilling to waste more troops without further information. They sent in the stealthiest rangers they could hire, but somehow these scouts, too, did not return.

After two and a half years of zero information, including from expeditions by other nearby nations, an emissary was sent to Qomas from Robak—a Qomassi human who had been captive all this time. The emissary was the first to give much of the known information about the strange dragon that now rules the land it calls Yishana.

Since then, other emissaries have emerged and the terms of a conditional cessation of hostilities have been agreed to by all parties, in large part because the dragon continues to hold Qomassi villagers—even children—hostage. It is certain, given Queen Pyrrisanne's temperament, that she will break her word to the monster the moment she sees a reasonable opening for regaining her land. If she is biding her time, it is because the dragon's position is simply that good.

Key NPCs: The chief ambassador from the dragon to Qomas is a woman named Yema Jerelind, formerly a village headwoman and cobbler. She is well-spoken and remarkably stoic, her grim solidity quite admirable to the Qomassi mindset. She returns to the dragon after each visit to the border because it is holding her husband and children hostage.

Allies and Foes: Yishana has no allies, and all its neighbors are its foes. Some believe the dragon probably knows this and plans to escape as soon as it tires of its tasteless game.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Robak	High Mountain	0							River

The Jagged Coast

Named both for its haphazard coastline and the tendency for visitors to get knifed in the back, the frontier in the southwest of Ceres is a rough, rowdy place where laws are few and far between, and strength is more important than order. The terrain is quite varied and it rains frequently in the Jagged Coast, giving it a reputation as a gloomy, drab area of downtrodden, grumpy folk. This is true to some extent, but the locals make up for it with loud music, dancing, and gladiatorial contests to entertain themselves at all hours of the day and night. If a visitor survives the trip to the Jagged Coast, they typically need to sleep for at least a week after the experience.

Derarin is the most prominent realm in the Jagged Coast, with extensive trade agreements with many realms (particularly Astaeria and Qomas), but many believe Prokoth is the real power in the realm. Derarin originally laid claim to the wild peninsula just to the west, and technically still maintains its rulership, but in name only. Pirates, slavers, and other criminals run Prokoth, particularly the ruthless Bandit Queen Lena Blackcrown, and because of extensive trade compacts with disadvantageous terms, Derarin can do little to clamp down on her rule without significantly damaging itself economically. And so Derarin sits, collecting gold from its lawless neighbor, and keeps the other realms at bay.

The narrow realm of Kiligan is a battleground between Astaeria and Qomas as the two realms constantly compete for control over its counties. In the mountainous north of Kiligan, the folk are more like those of Astaeria, while in the forested south they take after the folk of Qomas. Derarin has recently annexed part of Kiligan (Goremoth) for itself, ostensibly to protect a terrified populace from the ongoing war within its borders. Anyone with half a head for politics or economics doesn't much buy into the theory of Derarin's beneficence and suspect the acquisition has more to do with the recently discovered silver mines in the area.

Folk of the Jagged Coast

The Jagged Coast has a not entirely unfair reputation as a haven for criminals and social outcasts. The folk here are hard and not terribly sympathetic to anyone they perceive as weak or foolish. Not everyone in Derarin or even Prokoth is a thief or a liar, but few have entirely clean pasts. The bond of a native of the Coast is always in question, and even the noblest of adventurers who hail from the damp, dark region face a constant uphill battle to be trusted and respected.

The region is a melting pot of unsavory individuals from countless backgrounds. Orcs rub shoulders with exiled elves and drink with down on their luck dwarves desperate for the coin to return to Oloeri or at least somewhere more civilized. Outside the Maelstrom itself, the Jagged Coast is the most likely place for a Shadowed to live without being distrusted and hated wherever they go, or at least not because of their heritage.

Derarin

Values: Honor, Courage, Loyalty, Tradition, Duty

Authority: Derarin's current ruling family is the Telanchirs. This is the second time the Telanchir family has been the ruling house of Derarin as they have only recently reclaimed the throne from the reviled Bisremares. An old family with many ties all over Ceres, the Telanchirs are currently the poorest they have ever been and are far from the power and influence they wielded in the generations before the Bisremare coup.

Description: Derarin had a bad few generations recently. Traditionally, Derarin is a land of romance and glory, grand adventure and inspiring tales. Its nobles were said to be truly noble of heart as well as bloodline, and its champions were lauded as heroes wherever they went. If Derarin was ever as wonderful as the old stories say, that era has passed.

Night first began to fall on Derarin's glory days when its southern lowlands on the Sealion Peninsula—formerly the most populous region in all Ceres—were ravaged fifty-eight years ago by a magic-resistant plague. Only the most powerful of healers could cure it and usually only for one or two patients a day. Meanwhile, the illness spread and killed so quickly that the dozen or so regional priests advanced enough to cure it were ridiculously outmatched by the plague's advancement. In the end, over 30,000 people died before the disease ran its course (or, some say, was removed by the gods).

At the end of the plague, some four years later, Derarin was ruled by young King Fredlann Telanchir, a painfully shy and awkward young man, wildly unready for leadership, especially in the wake of such a crisis. Some say his grief for his parents and older sister drove him mad and that he never forgave the priest who healed him when his family had already died. In fairness to poor King Fredlann, with such a crippled infrastructure and demolished military, even the greatest and wisest kings in Derarin's history might well have been defeated by the treachery of the Bisremare count.

The Bisremares of Adonnon tricked the young king into allowing them to bring their armies to the capital. Convinced of the count's loyalty to the crown, King Fredlann was caught completely unprepared for Othswyr Bisremare's sudden seizure of power. Though Fredlann's young wife and daughter escaped into hiding, King Fredlann himself died not long after in the Wyryban castle dungeons.

So soon after so much death, none were prepared to contest the usurper's actions and "King Othswyr" put about far and wide that the plague had been visited upon Derarin as a punishment for crimes committed by the Telanchirs, claiming the gods had chosen him as their champion to remove the foul family from power. So charismatic was Othswyr, many even believed him.

King Othswyr's reign was unremarkable save in how little of note he actually did after taking power, but his descendants were worse. They maintained highly questionable trade connections worldwide and conditions in Derarin steadily declined into violent injustice for the next fifty-five years. The nation's reputation was grossly sullied even as formerly overcrowded populations saw the best surpluses and innovations in centuries.

When the people began to rise in rebellion, Fredlann Telanchir's wife, daughter, and grandson were finally able to convince the Queen of Astaeria to help the Telanchirs retake the Derarish throne. Even with Astaerian aid, the civil war was a difficult one and not all the people sided with the Telanchirs after decades of hearing Bisremare propaganda. At the end, the Telanchirs were so deep in debt to the Merchants Guild of Astaeria that when they needed more aid to keep the peace and establish their power, the Astaers refused to let them borrow more, and insisted, supposedly as a favor, on sending Astaerian troops instead of funds and arms.

The new king, Syrlann Telanchir, an educated and capable man in his thirties, was raised in Prokoth and educated in Astaeria. Despite his strange childhood in hiding, he has made several close friends among the sprawling Astaer family, so he has no desire for conflict with his benefactors and less for more violence in his kingdom. Nevertheless, he is not happy about his family's or his nation's situation, and few in Derarin know what the future will bring. Derarin has many resources however, and the Telanchirs do have other allies. King Syrlann's closest aides remain hopeful and report a certainty that their monarch has a plan to restore Derarin's former status as one of the greatest nations in all Ceres.

Counties:
Adonnon: Adonnon was the former Bisremare county seat and the newly ennobled countess of Adonnon seems uncertain how to tread. Some here remain loyal to the ousted usurpers, but King Syrlann has requested that they be won over with kindness rather than oppressed into silence.

Countess Zyrian has had little success with such endeavors thus far, and it is still uncertain how she will proceed.

Drazowyr: Largely cut off from the rest of Derarin by the eastern end of the Cormorant Mountain range, Drazowyr has a somewhat different culture than the rest of Derarin, mixing and matching tidbits from all the coastal regions around the great Summer Sea. Some in southern Derarin fear that in a conflict with Astaeria, Drazowyr would side with the Astaerians. Drazowyr lifestyle is gregarious and colorful, unlike prim, grey Astaeria. The two cultures share only a few foods and traditions.

Grymar: The Derarish capital of Wyryban is situated in Grymar County, as is the ancestral coastal fortress of the Telanchir family. Wyryban, on the Larimar Bay in the west, is recently fully rebuilt from the civil unrest that ended the harsh Bisremare dynasty and is doing brisk trade with Prokoth and other nations. Telanchir castle in the east is still under reconstruction, as the Bisremares did their best to bring the fortress down with them in defeat.

Therard: The map-drawn line between Derarish Therard County and Prokothan Niodrell County is largely arbitrary, at least near its center. This is because much of Therard County is uninhabitably steep rock face, home only to mountain sheep and monsters. The villagers of the habitable parts of Therard County tend to have more in common with their Prokothan neighbors than with Derarin lowlanders, though the people of Olaumos County to the east serve as a cultural bridge between the two, tying Therard more stably into Derarish traditions than Drazowyr County to the north.

Ybaliwen: The hills of Ybaliwen are beautifully terraced for farming and the southern Ybaliwen coast is the site of Derarin's largest city, Rothyr. A cosmopolitan and some say glamorous town, Rothyr does trade (both legitimate and illicit) with nearly every nation in Ceres and Ybaliwen is one of Derarin's most prosperous counties.

Key NPCs: Old Queen Hibania and Queen Mother Fredya do their best to support King Syrlann. Hibania is in her eighties, but some suspect she must have elven blood as she doesn't look a day over sixty and remains as energetic and clever as a woman half her age. She maintained many contacts and alliances in her decades of exile, and many whisper that the true current monarch of Derarin is the king's remarkable grandmother.

As for Fredya, daughter of Hibania and Fredlann, it is whispered that she has spent her entire life dodging Bisremare assassins and protecting her son from discovery. Some claim that in her prime she was a master of disguise and among the world's greatest swordfighters, fast as lightning and silent as shadow. It is unknown whether there is any truth to such tales or whether Fredya, now in her early sixties, could possibly retain such abilities. Whatever the case, Queen Mother Fredya's cool glance is enough to send shivers down many a strong warrior's spine.

Allies and Foes: Derarin's diplomatic situation is complicated and nuanced; many of the same kingdoms are, in a way, both allies and enemies. This is true of Astaeria, Kiligan, and Qomas in particular. The closest thing to a true ally Derarin has is Prokoth, and the closest to a simple enemy is Galear, but given the piratical inclinations of both nations, even here matters are complex.

Army:

- 2 units of archers
- 2 units of light cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Adonnon	Hill	3	Astaeria 0 Derarin 1	Eshism 2 Valism 0	Etearin Imports & Exports 3		The Blue League 2		Coastline
Drazowyr	Plain	3	Astaeria 0 Derarin 1	Eshism 0 Valism 3	Etearin Imports & Exports 3	The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium 2	The Blue League 3		Coastline Cosmopolitan
Goremoth	Hill	2	Derarin 2	Valism 2	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 2		The Blue League 2		Seditious
Grymar	Plain	3	Astaeria 2 Derarin 0	Eshism 3 Valism 0	Prokoth 3 Merchants Guild of Astaeria 0	The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium 2	The Black League 2	Road, Fortress Naval Dockage	River, Coastline Cove
Olaumos	Mountain	2	Astaeria 2 Derarin 0	Valism 2	Etearin Imports & Exports 2	The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium 0	The Black League 2		River, Coastline
Sirawien	Plain	3	Astaeria 2 Derarin 0	Eshism 3	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 3	The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium 2	The Black League 3		Coastline
Therard	Mountain	2	Astaeria 0 Derarin 2	Valism 2	Merchants Guild of Astaeria 2		The Black League 2		River, Coastline Rugged
Ybaliwen	Hill	5	Astaeria 2 Derarin 3	Eshism 2 Valism 2	Prokoth 3 Etearin Imports & Exports 2	The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium 5	The Blue League 2 The Black League 2	Road, Port	River, Coastline Fertile

Kiligan

Values: Food, Sleep, Quiet

Authority: Kiligan has two ruling families, neither of which can truly be said to rule. The Chirrins have one ancestral claim and the Norfelms another; Astaeria and Qomas seem determined to keep the two families fighting until not a single living soul remains in all Kiligan. In general, the Chirrins have done a better job of convincing the world they are in the right and better for Kiligan. They are supported by Astaerian troops. The Norfelms, on the other hand, are funded and supplied by Qomas. Some suspect magical support as well. They are seen as usurpers or terrorists by most outside Kiligan, but to the Kilian commonfolk the two families seem a bit like two peas in a pod.

Description: Kiligan was once known for charming folk dances and delicious cheese. These days, it seems all anyone remembers is that an unusually large vein of mithril was discovered in Ceat County's mountains and that two royal families have been fighting for an awfully long time over which of them has the better claim to the throne. The more tactically and economically educated know that Kiligan—with its inhospitable mountains, mucky forests, and unfarm-ably rocky hills—never had the population or military might to defend something as precious as a mithril mine from major powers like Astaeria and Qomas. Both nations want that mithril and Kiligan is paying the price. Some believe that even if the Chirrins and Norfelms made peace, the Astaerians and Qomassis would keep fighting.

Counties:
Aerid: In some ways, Aerid County typifies the kingdom. It is haunted by constant and unpredictable guerrilla-style warfare, and the common people are trapped between two forces who seem doomed to remain evenly matched and unable to ever gain a lasting advantage over the other. Like the other forested counties, Aerid is a wet, muddy jungle full of mosquitoes. If Aerid County is unique in any way, it is perhaps that all of this is compounded by occasional visitors from the Robak Valley to the north in the form of dangerous magical creatures.

Seribdis: Kiligan's capital, Falconsnest, situated near the southernmost shore of the Shepherdscrook Inlet, is a part of Seribdis County, just north of the Aeladric County border. Falconsnest Castle is currently occupied by Astaerian forces, presumably at the behest of Chirrin leadership. On the northwest Seribdis coast in the port city of Whalespout, the old Whalespout fortress and lighthouse have been occupied by forces of the Qomassi ambassador to Kiligan. He claims to be responding to legally legitimate requests for aid from the Norfelm king, who is supposedly also in Whalespout, though no one has seen him outside the fortress in months.

In Seribdis alone, a truce has been called and the county exists in a tense and wary peace as presumably someone is going about the business of negotiating the end of the long Kiligan civil strife. Or perhaps both sides are simply waiting to see how the fighting plays out in the hills, mountains, and forests to the east, each a tiger set to pounce the moment its opponent shows the slightest weakness.

Key NPCs: Fimria Kenshew Astaer is the general in charge of the Astaerian forces in Kiligan. Though she claims to be serving Jeslie Chirrin, most believe that the young princess holds little to no sway over the actions of the older veteran general.

Alandria Somon, Qomas's charming half-elven ambassador, claims to want nothing but peace and to only be interested in mediating the dispute between Princess Jeslie and the Norfelm king Quermot. However, no mediation meetings have yet been known to take place and Qomassi aid continues to fuel the ongoing conflicts throughout the Kiligan wilderness.

Allies and Foes: Unless one counts Astaeria and Qomas, Kiligan has no allies. Other nations are staying well out of this fight. Unless one counts Astaeria and Qomas, Kiligan's only enemy is greed.

Army:
- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of light cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Aeladric	Hill	6	Astaeria 3 Kiligan 3	Eshism 2 Vindicators of Althaer 4	Night Hornets 2	Kiligan 6	The Blue League 3 PaPC 2	Road	
Aerid	Forest	3	Astaeria 2 Kiligan 0		Night Hornets 2	Kiligan 3	The Blue League 3	Road	River Pressgangs
Asithien	Mountain	2	Astaeria 1	Eshism 2	Night Hornets 2	Kiligan 2	The Blue League 2		Coastline
Ceat	Mountain	2	Astaeria 1	Eshism 2		Kiligan 2	PaPC 1		
Gleraw	Forest	1	Astaeria 1 Kiligan 0	Eshism 1		Kiligan 1	PaPC 1		River, Coastline
Ibish	Forest	3	Astaeria 2	Vindicators of Althaer 3	Night Hornets 1	Kiligan 3	PaPC 3		River, Coastline
Revivia	Forest	3	Astaeria 2	Vindicators of Althaer 3	Night Hornets 3	Kiligan 3	PaPC 2		Coastline
Seribdis	Plain	3	Astaeria 2 Qomas 0	Vindicators of Althaer 3	Night Hornets 2	Kiligan 3	The Blue League 2	Road, Fortress Dry-Dock	Coastline Privacy

PaPC: Playwrights and Poets Consortium

Prokoth

Values: Profit, Freedom, Cunning

Authority: The Commonwealth of Prokoth is governed by the Prime Council, led by the Council-elected regent. The nine primes on the Council always choose one of their own as Regent, usually the prime with the most political and financial sway as well as long experience on the council. The primes, three from each county, gain their Council seats by ousting a sitting prime—though outright murder is disqualifying (if one gets caught). Primes and regent all tend to be clever, stubborn, savvy, and a bit paranoid, but charismatic enough to have many loyal followers.

Description: The perhaps euphemistically named Commonwealth of Prokoth is generally thought of as what happens when you put people nobody wants on land nobody wants. Perhaps that's fair to Prokoth and perhaps not, but with the help of the sea, some cunning, and a lot of stubborn tenacity, the folk of this little spit of mostly-uninhabitable mountain land have been getting by for quite a while now.

The current regent, Lena Blackcrown, is particularly beloved and feared, a sharp-eyed older woman with a look about her that says, "I crawled my way to the top from nothing. What have you done?" She is known as a skillful and efficient administrator and a brilliant negotiator, perhaps the most deserving regent Prokoth has seen in generations. Rumor also casts her as a sorceress, able to command malevolent powers, but that's not necessarily considered bad by Prokoth standards.

Officially, Prokoth is known for shipping, preserved fish, and fine wine from its mountain vineyards. Unofficially, Prokoth is known for pirates, smuggling, and powerful poisons.

Counties:
Niodrell: Niodrell and Asher Counties are both mostly mountain. Alpacas are herded for wool and goats for milk in the few settled areas, while the rest remains untamable wilderness, often plagued by dangerous magical creatures. Niodrell County is mostly wilderness, and the border between it and western Derarin is largely arbitrary on maps since no one language-capable lives up there to claim it. All that said, more of the Cormorant Mountains are settled than most realize, as a thriving underground community exists in tunnels all through the mountains. These "underfolk" are mostly pirates and smugglers, and the tunnels have access to many hidden and well-defended little harbors along the southwestern Prokoth coast.

In order to minimize criminal activity, Astaeria has demanded coastal bases from which they can police Prokoth's "troubled" coastline. These are proving mostly ineffective thus far, much to the consternation of the Astaerian navy.

Ticranys: The majority of Prokoth's population lives in Ticranys County and works on the sea. Prokoth's capital, Stormhatch, is a sprawling maze of tangled streets, most of it docks or market. Crime is rampant here, but the primes don't take kindly to crimes that disturb the peace or interfere with profits. It's considered best for everyone to avoid upsetting the primes.

Key NPCs: Granny Yaggi is just an herbalist, an ancient gnome with a big herb garden. That's what everyone says. What they don't and won't say, but might discretely hint among the right circles, is that Granny Yaggi is the best herbalist. What she can't make she can get and no matter what it is, she will sell it and it will work exactly the way she says it will, every time.

Allies and Foes: Prokoth has positive trade relations with Galear, Rao, Cadelania, Telimond, and Derarin, and warier relations with every other naval force in western Ceres, particularly Astaeria.

Army:

- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 2 units of light cavalry

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Asher	Mountain	4	Astaeria 3 Prokoth 1	Vindicators of Althaer 2	Prokoth 4		Guild of Private Entertainers 4		Coastline
Niodrell	Mountain	4	Astaeria 3 Prokoth 1	Vindicators of Althaer 4	Prokoth 4		Guild of Private Entertainers 3		Coastline Cove
Ticranys	Plain	4	Prokoth 4	Vindicators of Althaer 2	Prokoth 4		Guild of Private Entertainers 3	Road, Port, Citadel	Coastline, Privacy

The Sunset Isle

The realms of Galear and Rao share a single island off the west coast of Ceres, and while it is not too far from the mainland, it is noticeably different from the other realms. The forests here are thinner and lighter, featuring trees of lighter hue and thinner trunk than found on mainland Ceres. The mountain peaks are also narrow and tower to considerable height, even reaching above the clouds in several instances. It is said that the best place to watch the sunset in Ceres is from the summit of Ashvalon in southern Rao, which is the tallest mountain in all of Ceres.

Galear and Rao are close trading partners with robust pacts of economic and military cooperation. Their ports tend to be on the north side of the island, as much of the forest is unsettled and untamed. This offers a convenient series of coves for pirates and other thieves working the sea to weigh anchor and take refuge from pursuing authorities, but they run a constant risk of attacks from the island's wild inhabitants, which include forest spirits and animated trees.

Folk of the Sunset Isle

The folk of the Sunset Isle are a fiercely independent and thoughtful folk. Like the Stalwart family that rules Galear, they rarely stand on ceremony and often come across to more studied and "proper" folk as coarse and gruff, even belligerent.

The populace of the Sunset Isle, relatively small compared with all of Ceres, is mostly human, with a smattering of various other sorts of peoples.

Galear

Values: Fairness, Tenacity, Honesty

Authority: The ruling family of Galear is the Stalwarts. They have ruled Galear for seven generations, before which the eastern Sunset Isle was largely trackless, unclaimed wilderness. The Stalwarts traditionally have a casual and almost belligerent approach to leadership, priding themselves on their lack of ostentation.

Description: Other nations' histories claim that Veema Stalwart was a bandit queen who fled across the sea to the Sunset Isle and into haunted Shadehollow to escape the law. Galear paints her instead as an explorer and visionary "called" by Shadehollow's lost artifact to found a new nation on the island. Whichever version is closer to the truth, the Stalwart family have ruled Galear with fairness and savvy since the little nation's founding, fostering a culture where one's word is one's bond, all who swear fealty to the Stalwarts are treated equally, and bullheaded stubbornness is very nearly lauded as a virtue.

Though small, Galear is defended by impassible forested cliffs for most of its coastline, allowing the Galear navy to concentrate its forces on the Byness County coast.

Counties:
Byness: The only open plains region of Galear, Byness County grows much of Galear's crops. It is also the only region of Galear not protected on all sides by uninviting wilderness, making it the weakest point in Galear's defense. As such, this small nation keeps as strong a military presence in Byness County as it can afford to maintain and many forts dot Byness County's coastline and border with Rao.

Shadehollow: Surrounding nations have folktales dating back centuries that claim Shadehollow is haunted, cursed, or otherwise deadly to enter, but Veema Stalwart chose to explore it anyway. There she found not only a relic of the ancients, but also learned she possessed the Gift of leadership. Though retaining its ominous old name,

Shadehollow County has become the seat of Galear's capital city, Brightwood.

Key NPCs: King Shren Stalwart's closest counselor is Duke Rez Windhill, a former pirate who won Galean citizenship and, after swearing service to King Shren, was appointed to head Galear's navy. Duke Rez is a polarizing figure among the Galean people, some finding him to be heroic and entertaining, others barbaric and offensive.

Queen Mother Reesha Stalwart, Galear's retired former ruler, retains a great deal of influence behind the scenes. Indeed, some say she now secretly heads Galean intelligence. Outside Galear, many believe her to lead an international crime ring.

Allies and Foes: Galear enjoys a solid trade relationship with its island neighbor, Rao, and with Prokoth on the continent, as well as a wary lack of overt hostility with its other neighbors across the sea. In the case of Derarin, which claims to be the birthplace of the legendary "outlaw" who founded the Stalwart family, Galear's "lack of overt hostility" is in constant threat of becoming quite overt indeed due to a series of "misunderstandings" dating back almost to Galear's founding.

Army:

- 1 unit of archers
- 2 units of infantry
- 1 unit of pikemen

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Byness	Plain	4	Galear 2	Seerism 2	Vishal Exchange 4	Sphere of Wisdom 4	Guild of Private Entertainers 2	Road	River, Coastline
							The Black League 1	Port	Open
Shadehollow	Forest	4	Galear 3	Seerism 3	Vishal Exchange 3	Sphere of Wisdom 4	Guild of Private Entertainers 1	Road	River
							The Black League 2	Fortress	Ruins
Violetwick	Forest	2	Galear 1	Seerism 2	Vishal Exchange 2	Sphere of Wisdom 2	Guild of Private Entertainers 2		River, Coastline
Whitesilver	Forest	2	Galear 1	Seerism 1	Vishal Exchange 2	Sphere of Wisdom 2	The Black League 2		River, Coastline

Rao

Values: Freedom, Equality, Pleasure, Art

Authority: Rao has an unusual government that Raoi call a representative consensus. On the positive side, the Raoi are wildly happy with their leaders and laws. On the negative side, all decision-making is very slow, and many Raoi understand that if seriously threatened by any military force, it is highly unlikely that they would be able to respond to the threat in any sort of timely manner. They have been trying to solve this problem for a century now, but they have yet to propose a change that everyone will accept and consensus is key to their way of life.

Description: The Raoi have a different culture and language from anyone else in Ceres due to long isolation. Many have learned the tongue of their Galear neighbors in recent decades, but some isolated villages still have not bothered to do so.

The Raoi are peaceful and introspective and have focused most of their innovations since their isolation on art forms, musical instruments, medicines, and fishing techniques. They are also excellent astronomers and advanced mathematicians. Perhaps the most unusual part of their culture is that they have little concept of gender. Sex, to them, is no more relevant to a person's role in society than height or quality of singing voice—indeed, probably less. Their language uses only one third person singular pronoun for intelligent beings, and that is transliterated by Galeans as xe.

The Raoi began as a group of gnomes, halflings, and humans who landed on the Sunset Isle millennia ago, if their records are accurate. They settled the whole island then, but a disaster befell the region now called Shadehollow and none who saw it lived to explain what had gone wrong. The records only say that the people near the disaster and to the north and east of it no longer felt safe in the Siidav Forest or even the rich fields of the north.

The population was still few then, so the people crowded close to the mountains and learned how to live on their slopes, all save for the sacred Anvi grove, which was the only place left untouched by the mysterious disaster.

Generations went by and the Raoi stayed in the mountains. Some Raoi historians believe that perhaps the sea level was higher in that period and flooding both much more common and somehow more deadly than it is now. Whatever the case, the Raoi fully adapted to the mountains and stayed there in isolation for a long, long time. They saw other groups try to settle their island. Most, they saw, fled before they ever built structures. Those who stayed long enough to build homes, the Raoi would warn as best they

could and take them in if they would heed the warnings, but some didn't listen, and few of these survived, though Raoi records still fail to explain what specific disasters befell.

Finally, the Raoi were isolated so long that the rest of Ceres forgot they were there and their language drifted away until they couldn't understand the few people they encountered at sea. Sometime after that, the Raoi decided together that they had grown too crowded in the mountains and they thought they could be safe and happy in the Vishal lowlands so long as they didn't cross the Rao river or venture too far into the Siidav Forest. This expansion was successful and brought the Raoi wealth and comfort they hadn't known since retreating into the mountains. They were happy.

When the Stalwarts arrived and began to settle the eastern island, the Raoi had trouble communicating with them about their danger. The Stalwarts' people were respectful and brought the Raoi gifts, so they didn't want to see these new visitors harmed, but it took some time for each group to grasp the other's language.

And then, before the Raoi could properly explain the danger, Veema Stalwart marched right into Shadehollow, but no disaster occurred. Astonished, the Raoi deliberated long and hard, ultimately deciding the Stalwarts and their followers must be the right people to live in the Siidav Forest and the rest of the Sunset Isle's open beach. As relations with the Galeans have been peaceful and profitable, the Raoi are mostly glad of their new neighbors, but it will be some years yet before all the Raoi, especially the long-lived gnomes, finish adjusting to the change.

Counties: *Raoi call their counties clannings.*
Ashvi: The Ashvi and Suddu Clannings are sparsely populated, but some miners and goatherds do make a living on the mountain slopes and fishing villages dot the beaches below. The mountain villages are largely cut into the mountain itself with some amount of underground tunneling, though nothing on a grand scale. A few species of dangerous magical creatures make their homes on the Sunset Mountain peaks, but the Raoi that live near them have had many centuries to become experts in avoiding trouble with the wildlife.

Vishal: Most of the population of Rao is in the Vishal Clanning, though none of their settlements are very large cities. The Raoi are farmers, fishers, and herders and in the Vishal lowlands their lives are usually very easy year-round. They have long-established storm and flood plans and ways of dealing with dangerous sea creatures and worry about little else. In the last century or so, this has changed somewhat due to trade with Galeans and through Galear with the continent. Many Raoi in the Vishal Clanning are distrustful of Galean and foreign ways even now.

Anvi: Anvi is traditionally a sacred clanning, reserved for priests, pilgrims, and other devout. Most Raoi make a pilgrimage to the temple in the Anvi Grove within one year of the death of a loved one as well as to repent of wrongdoing or seek healing more advanced than the priests of other clannings can offer. For most of Raoi history, Anvi Clanning was all the land they claimed of the eastern Sunset Isle because they feared the magics and monsters of Shadehollow. It has not been easy for the Raoi people to adjust to Galean presence in what they call the Siidav Forest, but with time and patience, understandings have been reached and some Galeans are now even permitted to make pilgrimages in Anvi if they wish.

Key NPCs: Nishei, a respected priest of the Raoi, was an instrumental part of the Raoi decision to adopt Seerism as the Raoi religion. Since Seerism honors all gods, this has had little to no effect on traditional Raoi spirituality, which was never organized, save by consensus. Indeed, High Seer Barron, the current leader of Seerism, has been heard to say that xe's not certain Seerism's founder didn't get the idea from the Raoi in the first place, given that everything about their lifestyle is already perfectly in harmony with what he sees to be Seerism's deeper meaning.

Oshal, a Raoi sorcerer, leads a small Raoi thought movement called Leaderism. Leaderists believe that contact with the outside world has put Rao in terrible danger if it does not accept forms of leadership that can act more quickly than Raoi traditional methods. Oshal knows that xe can only make a difference by convincing everyone in consensus, but xe is determined and refuses to give up. Xe hopes that the adoption of leadership, in moderation, can protect the Raoi way of life from outside conquest.

Allies and Foes: Rao's allies include Galear and Prokoth, and Rao has not yet made enemies since returning to contact with the outside world.

County	Terrain	Level	Order	Faith	Trade	Magic	Culture	Constructions	Features
Anvi	Forest	2	Rao 2	Seerism 1	Vishal Exchange 1	Sphere of Wisdom 2	Guild of Private Entertainers 0		River, Coastline
							The Black League 2		Sacred
Ashvi	Mountain	2	Rao 2			Sphere of Wisdom 2			Coastline, Peaceful
Suddu	Mountain	2	Rao 2			Sphere of Wisdom 2			Coastline
Vishal	Plain	5	Rao 5	Seerism 3	Vishal Exchange 3	Sphere of Wisdom 5	Guild of Private Entertainers 3	Road	River, Coastline
							The Black League 2	Port	Fertile

Chapter VI
The Factions

Bren understood why her uncle had chosen her to succeed him as count. He'd died without children and among all his nieces and nephews, Bren had the most knack for the old ways of the aristocracy.

She also knew how to inspire people: how to influence them and mediate conflicts. Even Bren's siblings and cousins mostly agreed that their uncle had chosen well in naming her the next countess, whether or not they wished it had been otherwise.

The only problem was, Bren had no desire to be countess. She had a career as a singer and poet! She needed to travel and perform, not be stuck in some backwater county solving farming disputes among petty little barons and knights.

Worse still, not all of Bren's cousins agreed with their late uncle's choice of heir and Bren didn't like the rumors about how they intended to express their bitterness. To top it off, local farmers were complaining about a monster hiding in the fens, sneaking out to prey upon livestock and even children!

Bren needed to get rid of the monster, handle her cousins' intrigues, and juggle all her other new responsibilities, and she had to get everything done before her commanded appearance at the queen's midsummer festival in the capital, where she'd finally been asked to share her music with the court!

Bren had a lot on her plate, but she knew just what to do. It was time to call on her dearest friends for another adventure together!

Lasting power in Ceres takes one of five forms, as described in this section. Each player in a *Seeds of Wars* campaign is assumed to control at least one faction at the start of the game and may expand their power base to control assets belonging to other factions. There are over one hundred extant factions in Ceres, more than sixty of which are detailed below.

Also included are lists of other factions that control various assets in Ceres: these are provided to give players additional choices as well as potential ally/rival factions for the GM to use during play.

THE FACTIONS DESCRIPTION

The following attributes are used to describe the factions of Ceres:

Type: This is the primary faction type, which determines the cost break for Create and Enhance Asset actions.

Values: A few concepts the faction values. This should give an indication on how they handle relations with their neighbors and how they react to various situations.

Leadership: Sovereigns, leaders, advisors, and important courtiers are listed here, along with relevant Reputation and Faction Skills.

Description: Information to assist in understanding and role-playing the faction. In the case of realms, this may demonstrate some variance between the attitudes of the nation as a whole (as described in realms) and those of the people who rule them.

Associated Realms: A list of those realms in which the faction is actively involved.

Allies/Enemies: The notable relations the faction maintains with its neighbors.

Recommended: Yes or No. Factions not recommended for PCs are either ruled by an important NPC or are too large or too small to constitute an interesting challenge for the PCs.

Assets Table: A chart listing the assets controlled by the faction.

Order

The realms of Ceres took shape over the last millennium and a half, sometimes rising and falling but ultimately reaching the fractious political state they exist in today. Even the term "kingdom" is something of a misnomer: feudalism is the dominant political form in Ceres, but various nations practice different sorts of government.

Order Factions are widely, but not necessarily accurately, seen as the most powerful movers and shakers of Ceres. The political apparatus, legal infrastructure, and/or ruling family comprise the dominant Order Faction of one of Ceres's nation-states, able to call upon assets such as fortresses, keeps, barracks, prisons, and training grounds.

The leaders of Order Factions tend to be warriors of some stripe, specializing in the tactics and armament popular in their homelands. Realms ruled by leaders of Faith, Trade, Magic, or Culture Factions often follow the respective trends of those factions, but sometimes follow the more martial standards of their sovereign peers.

Military Power

Most armies in Ceres answer to the call of an Order Faction: their leader or family that rules their kingdom, the governmental organization that pays their wages, or some other form of authority. The life of a soldier in Ceres varies widely, depending primarily upon what realm employs their services, but warriors are commonly held in average to high regard within the context of Ceres entire.

Aaliria - The se Daughlyr Family

Type: Order

Values: Tradition, Patience, Duty

Leadership: King Unthren se Daughlyr (Reputation 25, Order +2), Crown Prince Xarten se Daughlyr (Advisor, Order +1)

Description: This former ruling family of Aaliria lives in exile in Astaeria and old King Unthren is no longer able to rise from his bed, leaving official matters to the crown prince. The se Daughlyrs cannot truly be said to rule Aaliria anymore, but loyal servants head the Aalirian Freedom Corps: patriotic rebels struggling to oust Ocel from Aalirian lands.

Associated Realms: Aaliria, Astaeria

Allies/Enemies: The se Daughlyrs (and their Freedom Corps) can still count on traditional ties with Brightwater Shipping and limited safe harbor in Astaeria, but with enemies like the Ocel Theocracy, few others will stand beside them.

Recommended: No. The se Daughlyrs have been divested of their realm and are not a competitive choice in their present state.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	1
Aaliria	Craemwen	2
Aaliria	Lovell	2

Aielith - The Keshrigans
Type: Order

Values: Safety, Serenity, Wisdom

Leadership: Umille of House Keshrigan, Queen of Aielith (Reputation 26, Order +3)

Description: Like many of Ceres's oldest royal lines, the Keshrigan Family is failing. The current queen, though beloved by her people, is young, sickly, and unlikely to be able to produce an heir. It is believed that her cousin and best friend, Prince Lirrith, will succeed her if the worst should happen, but many fear that Kedohaw's Borgons will attempt to install a puppet ruler instead.

Associated Realms: Aielith

Allies/Enemies: House Keshrigan is allied with the rulers of Unauwin and Silvyre and with the Guild of Minstrels, Poets, and Bards. It has a tense relationship with Kedohaw's House Borgon and is an enemy of the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Aceriven	3
Aielith	Drekor	2
Aielith	Onoak	1
Aielith	Qalith	3
Aielith	Vibeth	3
Aielith	Wedriwan	1

Arendaniel - The Wisdom Council
Type: Magic

Values: Compassion, Wisdom, Fairness, Fulfilment

Leadership: Wisdom Minister and Eveas Wise Councilor Tiram Felwenchild (Reputation 30, Order +3, Magic +3)

Description: Arendaniel's democratically elected Wisdom Council coordinates its local-, ward-, and march-level elders' councils, as well as overseeing ministration to the sick, elevation of the impoverished, rehabilitation of lawbreakers, children's education, and national defence. Though known for just compassion, the council allows only those 270 years of age or older to hold office, inadvertently barring most non-elves from political authority.

Associated Realms: Arendaniel

Allies/Enemies: The Wisdom Council works closely with the Scholars and Naturalists Guild and faces strained relationships with the Knights of the Holy Sky.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Arendaniel	Alard	1
Arendaniel	Atlee	2
Arendaniel	Dering	4
Arendaniel	Eveas	0
Arendaniel	Forde	2
Arendaniel	Savill	2
Arendaniel	Wrenne	2

Astaeria – The Astaers
Type: Order

Values: Decorum, Cunning, Strength, Charisma, Justice

Leadership: Queen Samille Winlyt Astaer (Reputation 47, Order +5), Crown Prince Grevin Dalour Astaer (Advisor, Order +5), Princess Philel Morrgin Astaer

Description: A massive, sprawling family, the Astaers are the ruling house of Astaeria. They claim descent from the founders for which their nation was named, though scholars dispute the likelihood of this tale.

Associated Realms: Astaeria as well as Derarin, Kiligan, Prokoth, Telimond, and Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: The staunchest of the Astaers' many allies include the Merchants Guild of Astaeria and The Blue League, while their most tenacious rivals are the rulers of Qomas.

Recommended: No. The Astaers carry the oldest and most prominent birthright in Ceres, an unfair advantage in competitive play.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	5
Astaeria	Broehar	4
Astaeria	Crerraseth	3
Astaeria	Dalindra	3
Astaeria	Greywell	5
Astaeria	Haieron	7
Astaeria	Menodoch	3
Astaeria	Olaniel	3
Astaeria	Woelith	4
Derarin	Adonnon	0
Derarin	Drazowyr	0
Derarin	Grymar	2
Derarin	Olaumos	2
Derarin	Sirawien	2
Derarin	Therard	0
Derarin	Ybaliwen	2
Kiligan	Aeladric	3
Kiligan	Aerid	2
Kiligan	Asithien	1
Kiligan	Seribdis	2
Kiligan	Ceat	1
Kiligan	Gleraw	1
Kiligan	Ibish	2
Kiligan	Revivia	2
Prokoth	Asher	3
Prokoth	Niodrell	3
Telimond	Adwilian	0
Telimond	Arilim	2
Telimond	Legir	1
Unauwin	Aelcoast	0
Unauwin	Bywell	0

SEVERINA OF LIGHTBORNE

Identity: A young elven woman in her early second century, Severina of Lightborne has exceedingly pale skin and long, shining brown hair. Her eyes are hazel green, large and expressive. Of average height for a human, Severina is shorter than most of her elvish subjects, with a surprisingly human figure as well. Always seen masked, per Cadelanian tradition, Severina's typical garb is formal and elegant. Her gaze is distant, her expression ethereal, as if she gazes always into another world.

Skills: Severina of Lightborne is a gifted mage and quite possibly the most gifted seer of her era. Consumed by her visions of Ceres's future, nearly all of Severina's skills and abilities are focused toward the gathering of knowledge—though in decades past she also traveled Ceres, exploring its wild places and battling strange horrors in pursuit of her goals. Among her companions of this period she was known as the Storm of Endings and she retains these mighty skills to this day, though few have seen her use any but her divinatory powers in many a year.

Ambitions: Severina's ambitions are mysterious, perhaps even to herself. Though she seeks information at all times, from all sources, she does not appear to use this knowledge to any purpose. Her courtiers plot against her and her rule hangs by a thread. She makes no attempt to stabilize her position or to beget an heir to continue her line. Some have called her Severina the Doomed and believe her to be lost to some despair that none around her can comprehend. It is possible, indeed, that she no longer retains ambitions at all. Then again, perhaps this is a ploy to mislead and manipulate her enemies. With Severina of Lightborne, it is difficult to say for certain.

Background: Raised to rule, Severina of Lightborne was educated in the city of Lightborne and later in Telimond to the south, soon after the union of the human Briellon and elven Ethea nations. A cousin of then-princess Nausicaä, daughter of King Abarith of Ethea and destined queen of Telimond, Severina struck up a friendship with the half-elven princess. At the time, the two were similar souls: full of vision, the darlings of the university and of the Briellon and Ethean courts.

It was in a visit to the magical library at the Ethea Province University campus that Severina first encountered the scholarly work of her late grandfather, Lucassë. His writings fascinated her as nothing before them had and drove her later travels and adventures. As she sought out the proof of Lucassë's theories, Severina's divinations gained in power and breadth. With his work to guide her, she understood what she saw in a way that no other seer could have.

The knowledge changed her forever.

She returned to Cadelania upon her father's death to take up her role as grand princess, but she was not the same person who left Lightborne decades before. Refusing to explain what troubled her, she assumed the throne as an already strange and distant sovereign. Known abroad as Severina the Seer by the courteous or the Fae Maid of Lightborne by those less charitable, Cadelania's nobility whisper bitterly behind her back, calling her Severina the Virginal for her apparent indifference to the failing of her ancient royal line, recorded to have ruled in Cadelania as far back as the records go.

Despite all this, Severina's former allies have not abandoned her, including powerful now-Queen Nausicaä of Telimond. With their help, Cadelania continues as it always has . . . at least for now.

Key NPCs: Severina and Nausicaä have another cousin, Adrastos of House Riverbright. Simple and loyal of demeanor, Adrastos once adventured as a warrior at Severina's side. He remains unthinkingly devoted to her to this day, the brother she never had and often doesn't seem to remember. Adrastos lacks both the skill and the subtlety to hold Severina's reign together in her place, but his poorly-scrawled familial missives to their cousin Nausicaä may one day prove a timely lifeline, as Severina seems unlikely to ever ask Telimond for aid on her own.

Playing Severina of Lightborne: Grand Princess Severina is quiet and unearthly. When she speaks, her words don't always make sense to the listener, though her nonsense does sometimes later turn out to have been prophesy. That said, Severina never quite seems mad in person, merely preoccupied and distant. Graceful and vaguely courteous, never unkind, she gives an impression of not quite hearing what is said to her. When her attention does focus on a speaker—perhaps someone offering knowledge she wishes to possess—Severina's gaze is piercing and intense, even uncomfortable, but still unreadable and strange.

Cadelania - House Lightborne
Type: Order

Values: Order, Grace, Tradition

Leadership: Grand Princess Severina of Lightborne (Reputation 25, Order +3)

Description: The elven rulers of Cadelania maintain its traditions as they have for centuries, ethereal and strange. With their unsettling Torturers to enforce the law and keep the peace, they rule a surprisingly prosperous land. Even so, the line of grand princes is failing and Grand Princess Severina is rumored to be mad. Should she die without an heir, it is unknown what will happen to Cadelania and its ancient dreamlike elegance.

Associated Realms: Cadelania

Allies/Enemies: The rulers of Cadelania are allied with Telimond and Leanad as well as Ratakka's Mice. In addition to the outright military action against the monstrous inhabitants of the Blackwood, the Lightbornes are rumored to be engaged in a discreet war of intrigue with Kedohaw.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Chilidric	1
Cadelania	Kerabard	2
Cadelania	Kiethien	1
Cadelania	Legobeth	1
Cadelania	Rhilaria	1
Cadelania	Sevybeth	2
Cadelania	Trorel	1

Calirien - The Golden Family
Type: Trade

Values: Success, Objectivity, Luxury, Pageantry, Urbanity

Leadership: Lord High Executive Ulthren Forgrels (Reputation 25, Order +3, Trade +2)

Description: The Golden Family consists of roughly the wealthiest tenth of the population of Calirien. These are the only people in Calirien permitted to hold positions of high authority or to vote in selecting the same.

Associated Realms: Calirien

Allies/Enemies: The Golden Family works closely with The Kingdom of Heaven and the rulers of Qomas. It is opposed by Sadaya's Love, and sometimes also by its own common people.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Calirien	Carew	2
Calirien	Holt	1
Calirien	Moirwen	1
Calirien	Shylton	1
Calirien	Skipwyth	1
Calirien	Yonge	1

Derarin - The Telanchirs
Type: Order

Values: Honor, Heroism, Valor, Wisdom, Duty

Leadership: King Syrlann Telanchir (Reputation 26, Order +4)

Description: Once a large, powerful family, only two Telanchirs by blood now remain: King Syrlann and his mother Fredya. Their kingdom, Derarin, has been restored to them, but they are deep in debt to the Astaers, and Astaeria now maintains "friendly" troops on Derarin soil. King Syrlann seems skilled at rulership so far, but the Telanchirs' future remains uncertain.

Associated Realms: Derarin

Allies/Enemies: The Telanchirs count on support from the Valist faith and Prokoth and have many other "allies" they're not sure they can trust, including the Astaers. Many might turn out to be enemies.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Derarin	Adonnon	1
Derarin	Drazowyr	1
Derarin	Goremoth	2
Derarin	Grymar	0
Derarin	Olaumos	0
Derarin	Sirawien	0
Derarin	Therard	2
Derarin	Ybaliwen	3

Edaulla - The Oath
Type: Faith

Values: Sincerity, Accountability, Love

Leadership: Holy Patriarch Nilro Woshram (Reputation 24, Order +2, Faith +3), Holy Matriarch Sira Pelros (Advisor, Faith +1)

Description: The Oath, also called Oathism, is an order of the Sky Gods' faith that focuses on promises made and kept. All societal duties are taken on as deliberate oaths in communal ritual. All laws in Edaulla, where Oathism is the state religion, center around promises between people. Oathism has spread to Cadelania as well in a nearly-atheistic form that emphasizes Oathism's teachings about vows between lovers and married couples—a popular aspect of the faith even back in Edaulla.

Associated Realms: Edaulla, Cadelania

Allies/Enemies: Oathism's prevalence in Edaulla has led to a reputation for trustworthiness among the Edaullan people that has redeemed Edaulla's image on the international stage. Oathism has an occasionally antagonistic relationship with House Dressan of Kedohaw and with Galear on the Sunset Isle.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Edaulla	Etendav	1
Edaulla	Triran	3

Feild – The Feild Trust
Type: Trade

Values: Security, Profit, Dependability, Consistency

Leadership: Chief Advisor Morgannon Jeraelith (Reputation 26, Order +1, Trade +5), Advisor Lorweld Jeraelith (Advisor, Trade +2)

Description: The Feild Trust Advisory Circle runs Feild as a business and in business, presentation is everything. Enlightened self-interest rules at every level of this individualist society, but that's not to say that they're an especially callous or avaricious people. The citizens of Jeraelith County will commonly say that their priorities are just better ordered than those of their neighbors.

Associated Realms: Edaulla, Feild, Telimond, Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: All the realms in which Feild operates are its allies; only the Blackwood stands against them.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Feild	Jeraelith	6
Unauwin	Aelcoast	0
Unauwin	Deepby	0
Unauwin	Erihurst	0

Galear - The Stalwarts
Type: Order

Values: Fairness, Tenacity, Cunning

Leadership: King Shren Stalwart (Reputation 25, Order +4)

Description: The Stalwarts don't seem like royalty in bearing or couture. If their orders are carried out without question, it is because of the mutual trust they have cultivated in their citizens. The Stalwarts make few laws and mostly allow their people to do as they will.

Associated Realms: Galear

Allies/Enemies: The Stalwarts have allied themselves with Seerism, the Guild of Private Entertainers, and the Prokoth Navy, but have never had good diplomatic relations with Derarin.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Galear	Byness	2
Galear	Shadehollow	3
Galear	Violetwick	1
Galear	Whitesilver	1

Kedohaw - House Borgon
Type: Order

Values: Power, Wealth, Expedience, Discretion, Preparedness

Leadership: Velric of House Borgon, King of Kedohaw (Reputation 27, Order +3)

Description: The Borgon family are the ruling dynasty of Kedohaw. Not well-loved, they are widely seen as greedy and short-sighted, engaging in activities that will ultimately strengthen the Maelstrom. Whether this is true or merely misperception, House Borgon's reputation is as bullies of smaller Realms.

Associated Realms: Kedohaw, Aielith

Allies/Enemies: House Borgon is allied with the Northwest Mages Society and House Dressan and is rumored to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the Nosdram crime family. Few wish to openly oppose the Borgons, but they are believed to have an enemy in the queen of Cadelania and are often mocked by the Guild of Minstrels, Poets, and Bards.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Gralehan	2
Aielith	Qalith	1
Kedohaw	Aseacia	5
Kedohaw	Druweth	1
Kedohaw	Haegord's Dale	1
Kedohaw	Oneadien	6
Kedohaw	Lancia	1
Kedohaw	Soron	5
Kedohaw	Mentaka	1

Kiligan - The Chirrins and Norfelms
Type: Magic

Values: Chirrin—Honor and Glory, Norfelm—Valor and Pride

Leadership: King Quermot Norfelm (Reputation 28, Order +1, Magic +3), Princess Jeslie Chirrin (Reputation 28, Magic +3)

Description: The Chirrins and Norfelms both have solid ancestral claims to the throne of Kiligan. Both command armies and battle-ready magical forces. Jeslie Chirrin is charming and an excellent speaker while Quermot Norfelm is a gruff tactician.

Note to GMs: If a player chooses to play King Quermot or Princess Jeslie, assume the PC is the "true" rightful ruler and adjust national stats as necessary. Otherwise, divide Kiligan faction assets evenly between the two NPCs. Either way, Princess Jeslie should have control of the Kiligan magical assets in Astaeria.

Associated Realms: Kiligan, Astaeria

Allies/Enemies: The Chirrins are supported by and provide magical support to Astaeria and the Vindicators of Althaer, while the Norfelms are supported by the Night Hornets and Qomas and are the current technical rulers of Kiligan. Their enemies are each other.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Kiligan	Aeladric	3
Kiligan	Aerid	0
Kiligan	Gleraw	0

Leanad - The Court of High Justice

Type: Magic

Values: Fairness, Stability, Power, Impartiality, Knowledge

Leadership: Lord High Justice Simon Audaire (Reputation 34, Order +1, Magic +4)

Description: An organization dedicated to the governance of Leanad and the mediation of disputes outside it, the Court of High Justice has wandered from its original intent. Through a complex history, the Court has become, over time, a primarily magical organization, deriving most of its influence through mystical might. In more recent decades, it has chosen a truly unusual Lord High Justice with his own peculiar way of doing things, and his influence is subtly changing the Court's values.

Associated Realms: Leanad, Cadelania, Edaulla, Kedohaw

Allies/Enemies: The Court of High Justice is traditionally impartial in all disputes. That said, The Guild of Fine Arts has proven supportive of the Court and the governments of Cadelania, Edaulla, and Kedohaw all have long-term contracts with the Court for the sharing of magical resources. Court mages are rumored to have a poor relationship with the Dragon's Eyes and the Night Circle and a less antagonistic rivalry with the Northwest Mages Society.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Leanad	Lautrem	7

Nawen - Nawenism

Type: Faith

Values: Destiny, Dreams, Love

Leadership: Archpriest Castenn (Reputation 28, Order +4, Faith +4)

Description: Nawen is ruled by the priests of the Nawen faith. Nawenism believes in millions of gods, with the Sky Gods at the top and tiny gods of individual plants or rocks at the bottom and every kind of god in between. Nawenism advocates simplicity and optimism, never fighting one's destiny. Nawenist ethics revolve around love and Nawenist doctrine is so accepting that almost anyone willing to claim to be a Nawenist is accepted as being one (though acceptance into the clergy is more exacting). Nawenism has recently gained popularity among the poor in Ocel, much to the annoyance of the Ocel authorities.

Associated Realms: Nawen, Ocel

Allies/Enemies: Nawenism has strong support from The Mystics of Nawen and is opposed by the Knights of the Holy Sky.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	3
Nawen	Cires	1
Nawen	Dreajan	2
Nawen	Falehan	1
Nawen	Likkarn	1
Nawen	Ybaunydd	2

Ocel - Knights of the Holy Sky

Type: Order

Values: Honor, Order, Success, Purity, Loyalty

Leadership: Holy Queen Nerex Tevryn (Reputation 32, Order +5), Anointed General Gelt Yaran (Advisor, Order +5)

Description: Ocel's Knights of the Holy Sky are the military and police of Ocel and Ocel-controlled territory. They are indoctrinated into extremist fanaticism from a young age and tend toward irrational loyalty to their order.

Associated Realms: Ocel, as well as Aaliria and Nawen

Allies/Enemies: The Knights of the Holy Sky work closely with The Temple of the Holy Sky and the Devotional Artists Guild supports Ocel's military as well. Ocel is not well-liked and its most overt enemies include Sadaya's Love and the Aalirian loyalist rebels.

Recommended: No. The situation in Ocel is best used as a plot device by the GM. Whether they ultimately ally with or oppose the free peoples of Ceres will be a dramatic turn of the larger story.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	0
Aaliria	Craemwen	0
Aaliria	Lovell	0
Nawen	Bautrem	2
Nawen	Yililoth	1
Ocel	Afynyth	3
Ocel	Asteann	6
Ocel	Eday	3
Ocel	Fohaa	6
Ocel	Freilin	6
Ocel	Heri	3
Ocel	Nyderrach	3
Ocel	Qilat	3
Ocel	Rhayld	3

SIMON AUDAIRE

Identity: Appearing to be a human man in his forties, Simon Audaire has lightly tanned skin and longish black hair with a hint of silver. His eyes are grey-green with a hint of laughing arrogance. Tall and slim, but with a wiry strength, Simon moves with a fencer's grace and dresses with impeccable—if flashy—style. He is confident, charming, handsome, and just a bit sly.

Skills: Simon is a mage and performer of legendary skill, with a haunting singing voice and spectacular flair for oratory. A cunning diplomat, politician, and, some claim, occasional thief, Simon is something of an acrobat when he wishes to be and a master with several types of blade. To the surprise of many, on top of all this he is a scholar of many topics, especially the craft of magic.

With this improbable breadth of ability, it is perhaps unsurprising that Simon Audaire is older than he looks. No one knows how old or why he doesn't appear to age. When questioned on this topic, he dismisses it as mere flattery and smoothly changes topics, often with keen insight into what subjects will distract his listeners from any inconvenient questions.

Ambitions: Simon Audaire seems a strangely unambitious man. He has whims, pursues them with dogged focus, and achieves them, usually making the process look easy. Then again, with the vast knowledge provided him by the investigators of Leanad's High Court, it is possible that Audaire's sly smile conceals some much deeper driving goal. If so, the old wolf prefers not to share his motives with others.

Background: Lord Simon's background is something of a mystery, even to his most inquisitive enemies. He appeared in Leanad some 30 years ago, attained the position of Lord High Justice in a mere seven years (by means some whisper to have been quite nefarious), and has reigned for the 23 years since then with such panache (and usually fairness) that many around him fail to notice his occasional flashes of wild caprice.

As for where he came from before Leanad, no one seems to know, but the legendary Witch of Mentaka is said to refer to him fondly as "the wolf" and to laugh when speaking of him, as if she knows some delightful secret. On the other hand, Queen Nausicaä of Telimond appears to hold the Lord High Justice in great curiosity. Both rulers are mages, musicians, and swordmasters of otherwise unparalleled might and charm, and both seem to be ageless. That two such persons should walk Ceres in the same generation could not possibly go unremarked. It would seem, however, that the two barely know one another—outside expected diplomatic circles.

Key NPCs: Lord Simon's aide, Emma Kelaine, is said to have come with him to Leanad from . . . wherever he was before. Discreet and taciturn, Kelaine seems the perfect confidante. She is also rumored to move more silently than a cat and to vanish at will without magic.

Playing Simon Audaire: Key roleplay notes for Simon Audaire must include: 1) He was born a wolf and is merely shapeshifted into a human. He will always think a bit like a wolf. His mastery of shapeshifting magic (among the many magics he knows) is in some ways a cover for him to return to his original form at his convenience. 2) He does have an agenda. He also has whims, but most of his "random whims" serve his far-reaching and inscrutable purpose. He is as intelligent as he is charming, and little surprises him or slips past his notice. 3) Though mostly of a merciful bent in recent years, Lord Simon has in the past been a ruthless killer (indeed, he could be again if pressed). For one who learned his true origins, it might not be impossible to make his past come back to haunt him. 4) Despite all of the above, Simon Audaire is first and foremost a charmer, witty, delightful, a graceful dancer, and always the center of attention.

Ocia - The Heirdom

Type: Culture

Values: Wisdom, Simplicity, Integrity, Leadership, Compassion

Leadership: Queen Naltha Quarrier of Ocia (Reputation 29, Order +4, Culture +4), Heir Apparent Gallimia Weaver, Countess of Legarien (Culture +4)

Description: The Ocian Heirdom is chosen by a contest of leadership ability from among any Ocian citizens who wish to compete. Heirs and rulers usually retire while still hale, but retain great influence throughout their lives. They serve as wise teachers wherever they feel called to do so, even in other lands.

Associated Realms: Ocia, also Arendaniel and Nawen

Allies/Enemies: The Ocian Heirdom is most closely allied with the Wisdom Council of Arendaniel as well as Lach Lyrien A'Fae and the Defenders of Ceres. The Heirdom is hated by the ruling bandits of Wigolath.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Arendaniel	Dering	2
Arendaniel	Eveas	1
Arendaniel	Wrenne	2
Ocia	Alawyth	1
Ocia	Arogan	0
Ocia	Calessi	0
Ocia	Eromar	1
Ocia	Etalimos	1
Ocia	Etherasa	1
Ocia	Fraykith	0
Ocia	Joham	2
Ocia	Legarien	0
Ocia	Pikath	3
Ocia	Prinia	1
Ocia	Voedia	1

Oloeri - The Oloeri Defense Assembly

Type: Order

Values: Duty, Tenacity, Cohesion

Leadership: Field Marshal General Bearfist Yorast (Reputation 29, Order +4)

Description: The Oloeri Defense Assembly runs all military and civilian life in Oloeri. It is a democratically elected governing body in which all adult war effort contributors (generally all adult citizens) have a say in their governance and all veterans of "the walls" are eligible to run for office.

Associated Realms: Oloeri

Allies/Enemies: The Defense Assembly is particularly supported by the Dweorism and Zahn's Supply Line and opposed by the forces of the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Oloeri	Cristalmill	3
Oloeri	Fraywall	4
Oloeri	Raycliff	4
Oloeri	Silverfort	5

Prokoth - The Prokoth Navy

Type: Trade

Values: Freedom, Cunning, Discretion, Profit

Leadership: Regent Lena Blackcrown (Reputation 40, Order +3, Trade +4)

Description: Officially the military of the Commonwealth of Prokoth, unofficially, the Prokoth Navy is somewhere between a navy, a pirate armada, and an organized smuggling racket.

Associated Realms: Prokoth, with underground operations in Derarin and Astaeria

Allies/Enemies: The Prokoth Navy enjoys profitable trade with Galear and alliance with the Guild of Private Entertainers. It walks a delicate diplomatic tightrope with Derarin and Astaerian authorities, disavowing agents who get caught performing criminal acts.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Prokoth	Asher	1
Prokoth	Niodrell	1
Prokoth	Ticranys	4

LENA BLACKCROWN

Identity: A human woman in her sixties, Lena Blackcrown has coppery skin and unruly white hair, once black. Her eyes are a piercing olive green. Just tall enough to make for a commanding presence, Lena has an aristocratic bearing and dresses with practical elegance. On her left cheek, a beautiful tattoo of the sun has faded to near-invisibility. Her gaze is intelligent, observant, authoritative, and—if she deems it necessary—cruel.

Skills: Lena is primarily a diplomat and businesswoman. Highly educated, she has excellent financial sense and reads people with near-mystical precision, always knowing the right thing to say, the right tone to use. She notices details and maintains an extensive information network. In her youth, it is said, she did the spying herself, and her employees claim she still moves as silently as a cat when she wishes. It is always best to assume she knows more than one expects.

Her strangest reported skill is her sorcery. Some say she knows only minor spells, useful for secret-gathering. Those who have had the misfortune to see Lena Blackcrown in towering grief or rage, however, tell tales of uncontrolled destruction and shocking power. If these tales are true, it is perhaps fortunate that Regent Blackcrown has such a calculating temperament—usually.

Ambitions: Even now that she leads Prokoth's Council of Primes, heads the Prokoth Navy, and is regent of all Prokoth, Lena Blackcrown remains ambitious. Not for higher position, perhaps, but for ever greater security and wealth. She refuses to ever return to the hardship and helplessness of her youth.

Background: Though rumored to be of noble blood, Lena was raised in a merchant's harem in Calirien and sold into illegal slavery in Qomas. Her adopted father (sold with her) purchased their freedom and Lena came with him to Prokoth at a young age. There they worked at a high-class brothel until Prokoth was hit by a foreign pirate raid—a retaliation for some inappropriate "naval action" on the part of Prokoth's "privateers." Lena's workplace was destroyed and her father slain, but the pirate vessel was immediately scuttled by a freak lightning storm. Lena is said to have been homeless after that and later kidnapped and re-enslaved by bandits whom she personally slew to escape, but many in Prokoth disbelieve these wilder tales. What is known is that Lena returned to Prokoth a wealthy young woman. She began several business ventures, establishing a broad and powerful organization, and ultimately seized a prime seat in Ticranys County as soon as she could. Proving herself the most able prime in generations, she grew widely respected, loved, and feared. When the old regent died, no one was surprised that the council chose Lena to replace her, and Prokoth has profited from that decision ever since.

Key NPCs: Sea captain Elspeth Bonne is an up-and-coming captain in the Prokoth navy. One of the wealthiest officers in the fleet, she is expected to make commodore soon. Though much younger than Regent Blackcrown, the two are rumored to have become close friends, and some whisper that Blackcrown is grooming the promising captain for an eventual seat among the primes.

Playing Lena Blackcrown: Lena is savvy and knowledgeable, cool in a crisis. She is long accustomed to authority and is proud without being arrogant. She carries herself like a queen, but is impossible to embarrass and has no squeamishness on any topic. Lena has killed and stolen at need, and would again, but never wantonly or for pleasure. She has access to a great deal of power and wealth, and is dangerous if crossed.

QOMAS - THE XERENTS

Type: Order

Values: Authority, Expedience, Discipline, Dispassion, Perseverance

Leadership: Queen Pyrrisanne Xerent (Reputation 26, Order +4), Princess Consort Neslynda Tovres-Xerent (Advisor, Order +5), Crown Prince Yantrek Xerent

Description: The Xerent family has ruled Qomas for five generations, ever since the bloody Ironwood Revolution that ousted the Greffeltine royals from power.

Associated Realms: Qomas, also Killigan and Calirien

Allies/Enemies: The staunchest of the Xerents' allies include the Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium and the Eshist faith, while the most tenacious of their many rivals is the Astaer family.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Calirien	Carew	2
Calirien	Yonge	3
Kiligan	Seribdis	0
Qomas	Arielind	2
Qomas	Cheassa	1
Qomas	Drigokon	1
Qomas	Etearin	4
Qomas	Haardosa	2
Qomas	Kerridus	1
Qomas	Nimma	2
Qomas	Rin	0
Qomas	Tromwen	1

Rao - The Raoi Will

Type: Order

Values: Freedom, Equality, Pleasure, Art

Leadership: Facilitator Ellram (Reputation 25, Order +4)

Description: Rao is just shy of consensus anarchy, but organized so carefully as to feel like a full government. All of the Raoi people are the government. The facilitator just helps make things happen. All major decision-making is slow.

Associated Realms: Rao

Allies/Enemies: The Raoi Will is supported by Seerism and by the Stalwarts of Galear. It has no enemies that it knows of, as yet.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Rao	Ashvi	2
Rao	Suddu	2
Rao	Vishal	5
Rao	Anvi	2

Silvyre - The Sovereigns of Silvyre

Type: Order

Values: Knowledge, Power, Honor

Leadership: Sovereign Alara Vatharn-child (Reputation 25, Order +4)

Description: The sovereigns of Silvyre are chosen by contest to rule Silvyre for a term of seven years (with no term limits). Silvyren rulership contests are known to be more cutthroat than those of Ocia, but more egalitarian than those of Astaeria or Feild.

Associated Realms: Silvyre, Aielith, Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: The Silvyren government is closely allied with the leaders of Aielith and Unauwin, as well as with the Trade League of Silvyre and the Knowledge-Preservers. Silvyre's rulers are opposed by the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Highpond	3
Silvyre	Lockport	1
Silvyre	Moormead	1
Aielith	Adiclya	2
Unauwin	Westerspring	2

Telimond - House Garden

Type: Order

Values: Harmony, Community, Beauty

Leadership: Queen Nausicaä of the Garden Throne (Reputation 46, Order +4, Culture +4)

Description: House Garden was created with the birth of Princess Nausicaä of the newly formed nation of Telimond. Thus far, it includes to this day only Queen Nausicaä. Her military and appointed representatives are devoted and loyal, and the good queen's charitable, artistic, and educational outreach are lauded far and wide.

Associated Realms: Telimond, Edaulla, Leanad

Allies/Enemies: Nausicaä's staunchest supporters are Grand Princess Severina of Cadelania and the Youth Garden, while the most immediate troubles plaguing her reign come from the Blackwood and the Nosdram family.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Edaulla	Baessa	2
Telimond	Abarith	2
Telimond	Adwilian	3
Telimond	Arilim	4
Telimond	Bradovia	3
Telimond	Legir	3
Telimond	Woassa	1

Unauwin - House Keywood

Type: Order

Values: Valor, Loyalty, Heroism, Tenacity, Duty

Leadership: Grand Duke Lorben of the House of Keywood (Reputation 31, Order +5)

Description: The ruling house of Unauwin, the Keywoods have come to power quite recently by popular acclaim. Benefiting from Unauwen cultural unity, they seem so far to also have the support of Unauwin's other noble houses.

Associated Realms: Unauwin, Silvyre

Allies/Enemies: Renowned for honor and honesty, the Keywoods are supported by most factions in Unauwin. Their enemies are Unauwin's enemies, with Kurse the Harbinger topping the list.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Icefay	1
Silvyre	Lightbank	1
Silvyre	Strongland	1
Silvyre	Vertpond	3
Unauwin	Aelcoast	2
Unauwin	Bywell	2
Unauwin	Deepby	3
Unauwin	Ipse	5
Unauwin	Erihurst	4
Unauwin	Linlyn	3
Unauwin	Newbush	3
Unauwin	Westerspring	2
Unauwin	Westpine	3
Unauwin	Whitewater	4

ALARA VATHARN-CHILD

Identity: A half-elf woman in her forties, Alara Vatharn-child has dark chestnut skin and woolly black hair which she keeps tightly braided. Her eyes are violet. Slim and slight, Alara looks far more intellectual than authoritative, and between her dark skin and her elven heritage, she appears deceptively young for her age, often mistaken for late adolescence. Her habitual garments are simple and scholarly, her expression serious, goal-oriented, and confident of her vision for Silvyre.

Skills: Alara is a wizard and scholar, knowledgeable on many topics. One of the foremost world experts on Vareene artifacts and lore, she has a better grasp on the workings of Ceres's magic than almost anyone alive today.

In addition to her hard-won wizardly power, Alara is inherently possessed of a more mysterious magic that earned her the title of Vatharn-child. Believed to be chosen by Vatharn to lead Silvyre in this time of strife, Alara has shown to exhibit unearthly power beyond her mortal means, but only when her need is truly dire.

Ambitions: Alara's core ambition is to make the world a better place for all people. To that end, she seeks both knowledge and power, but hardly at all costs. Alara understands that tainted means wreak tainted ends, and she has no intention of corrupting the world further than it has already been. In the short term, of course, Alara seeks to defend her nation from the threat of the Harbinger and to oppose the Maelstrom in all things.

Background: In her youth, precocious Alara made her fortune performing magical services and scholarly work. So devoted was she to her scholarship and duties, in her travels she came across truly ancient scrolls and tablets explaining Ceres's magical relics in ways she had never encountered before. Wishing to acquire a relic of her own to examine closely, Alara found that Silvyre's rulership contest might give her an opportunity to claim one. She studied the election contest obsessively, including historical reigns of Silvyren kings and priests, and in the process her point of view shifted. She stopped seeing power itself as something worth striving for, but rather as something to wield for the good of all. With this revelation, she paid the entry fee and entered to compete for the throne of Silvyre.

The contest came to a tie, requiring a personal duel—a tradition dating back to a harsher past, when Silvyre's rulers were expected to be warriors. As such, the duel was permitted to be fatal, and Alara's opponent turned out to be less merciful than she. Alara was almost felled, but her innate magic arose from within her, protecting her in a nimbus of golden light. She was hailed by all witnesses as Vatharn's chosen, a living representative of the Sky Gods in Ceres.

To this day, Alara does not know whether Vatharn or the other Sky Gods have chosen her, but she studies the gods and their most popular Silvyren interpretations, attempting to understand the unknown power in her blood.

Key NPCs: Alara's human mother, Jelann Zeras of distant Derarin, has relocated to Silvyre to support her daughter. A formidable scholar in her own right, Jelann has a fierce pride in the path her daughter has chosen and has become an influential figure in Silvyren social and scholarly circles. Though shorter than even her slight daughter—stout and matronly, with streaks of grey in her woolly black hair—Jelann Zeras's black eyes flash with fiery intelligence and a dedicated sense of purpose.

Playing Alara Vatharn-child: Alara is so serious and dispassionate as to be generally hard to read. Compassionate to what some consider to be a fault, Alara nevertheless comes across in person as coolly logical and occasionally awkward. She communicates with flawless eloquence and diplomacy when she writes or delivers a prepared speech, and as such she is quite popular among her subjects.

Uneabard - The Larishans

Type: Order

Values: Tradition, Decorum, Obligation

Leadership: Vemiri of House Larishan, Queen of Uneabard (Reputation 29, Order +5)

Description: The Larishans are perhaps the most traditional royal family in the world. Children born to House Larishan are raised with the best tutors from all over Ceres, but instilled with intensely traditional Uneabren values and pressured to meet high expectations for comportment. Those who cannot conform to familial requirements are often exiled to other nations so as not to embarrass their lofty relatives.

Associated Realms: Uneabard

Allies/Enemies: The Larishans are closely allied with The School of Divination and Astrology and the leadership of both the Path of Clear Skies and The Justicars of Tallis. Their enemies include the rulers of Kaareb, Ethywen, and Wigolath, as well as Lavorre's Underground, which runs a criminal operation throughout Uneabard.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Agrilind	3
Uneabard	Baori	2
Uneabard	Edigodon	0
Uneabard	Gwealath	3
Uneabard	Haelalian	3
Uneabard	Haemeth's Folly	2
Uneabard	Kaalil	3
Uneabard	Naellan's Pass	1
Uneabard	Taunyth	4
Uneabard	Zedien	1

Woand - The Chiefs of Woand

Type: Order

Values: Strength, Leadership, Freedom

Leadership: High Chief Calidor of Clan Roseroot (Reputation 24, Order +4)

Description: Elected semi-democratically, territory chiefs in Woand are expected to govern, but also to fight personally in their territories' defense. As such, most chiefs are excellent warriors of middling years, retiring before old age if they do not die in battle. Chiefs are nominated by and derive much of their authority from the arch-elders of Woand's family clans.

Associated Realms: Woand

Allies/Enemies: The chiefs of Woand are closely allied with Matar's Triumph. Their enemies are the forces of Ethywen and especially of the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Woand	Ariand	1
Woand	Belil	1
Woand	Calin	1
Woand	Delithraniel	1
Woand	Gathien	1
Woand	Glindra	2
Woand	Isyldor	2

NAUSICAÄ GARDEN

Identity: A half-elven woman appearing to be in early- or mid-adulthood, Nausicaä Garden has olive skin, auburn hair, and striking grass-green eyes. She takes after her human mother in height but her elven father in build, giving her a slim, fae elegance, which overlays the taut athleticism of a sword-dancer. In her official capacity as queen, Nausicaä favors simple elegance and floral patterns in her garb. Her gaze is open, intelligent, sincere, and kind.

Skills: Though she has worked the hardest to perfect her swordplay and magically-enhanced archery (both skills at which she excels), Nausicaä is better known for work in international diplomacy, and is legendary for her gift with an ancient magical technique known as the Weave. A closely-guarded secret taught only in Ethea, the Weave is a music-based magic that is rumored to fundamentally alter a thing's nature. It is believed that Nausicaä's apparent agelessness is somehow a result of the particular Weaving she has mastered.

Ambitions: Nausicaä was raised to believe that her calling was to unite the warring nations of Briellon and Ethea into a peaceful whole. Having devoted herself from birth to this worthy goal, Nausicaä has grown into a woman predisposed toward diplomacy and social healing whenever such options are available. When all lingering enmity is gone from Telimond, some say Queen Nausicaä will simply turn her sights toward the peace of the rest of the world. Indeed, many believe her work on that stage has already begun.

Background: As the only child of a marriage intended to end a war, much has been expected of Princess Nausicaä from the moment of her birth. Her mother, Queen Nalesala Astaer of Briellon, died young, but though Nausicaä never stopped missing her beloved mother, it seemed to many around the princess that the loss of her parent only spurred the child to greater and greater efforts, determined to live up to the task her mother had taught her only she could fulfill.

After her education in both Ethea and Briellon, Nausicaä traveled Ceres, learning from the wisest of foreign leaders and observing firsthand the suffering caused by cruelty and injustice. When she returned to Telimond, she and her father judged her ready for her destined throne. She was confirmed by the acclaim of her people and her father abdicated in her favor.

Since then, Nausicaä has ruled with celebrated wisdom and compassion, holding herself to a standard of open-hearted justice that perhaps few in the world could emulate. Though some find alarming the sheer scope of her power and her appearance of magical immortality, her people love her and reaffirm her rule whole-heartedly at regular intervals. Indeed, those who meet Nausicaä Garden find it difficult to dislike her and difficult to believe she is anything but what she seems: the healer and unifier of her queendom and perhaps much more.

Key NPCs: Queen Nausicaä's primary magic teacher was Ourani Ashleaf, a reclusive elf of mysterious past. Though renowned as an unparalleled educator, Ashleaf is also known for an impatient disposition. It is said that only Nausicaä has ever managed to charm this particular teacher. It is also said that only Nausicaä has ever been of use to Ashleaf's personal goals. Nausicaä bears great respect for her teacher, but others at court suspect Ourani Ashleaf's motives in their queen's regard.

Playing Nausicaä Garden: Nausicaä balances open sincerity with a painstaking avoidance of conflict and profound compassion with the strength to draw and defend those boundaries necessary in the defense of her realm. She is a rare blending of wise humility and supreme confidence, and though her expectations for herself push her ever forward toward greater heights of wisdom and excellence, she also believes in others' abilities to excel and improve, inspiring many around her to greatness in their own right, or even toward redemption where necessary.

Faith

Ceres is home to many religions of various configurations and traditions, most of them relating in some way to the Vareene and/or the three precursor civilizations—the fae, the dweor, and orok—which generally comprise the active Faith Factions in the world. Some are monotheistic, others polytheistic, and some pay homage to no gods at all, focusing on philosophical prescriptions for living one's life or upon atheistic mysticism.

Faiths often compete for followers within the realms of Ceres, though two or more very different religious traditions might well manage to coexist nonviolently. Ceres has seen its share of militant churches marching in crusade against another faith or kingdom, but rarely is such behavior tolerated for long.

The leaders of Faith Factions tend to be priests or holy warriors, devoted to their particular dogma and beliefs.

Churches and Cults

Most Faith Factions maintain a string of churches, shrines, and other such holy places, potentially in multiple realms. With several key exceptions, they exert political influence subtly and carefully, swaying the populace to their way of thinking and/or converting the political rulers of the realm to their faith. Many faiths attempt, at least ostensibly, to lead by example rather than force their views.

Astronomism

Type: Faith

Values: Knowledge, Power, Order

Leadership: Grand Holy Teacher Carilla the Virtuous (Reputation 28, Faith +3)

Description: Astronomism (more officially called the Temple of the Stars and Their Holy Names) is considered by some to be the purest extant version of the Church of the Sky Gods. Astronomism emphasizes study of ancient texts, artifacts, and (of course) astronomy, and values mathematics as inherently holy.

Associated Realms: Silvyre, Unauwin, Uneabard

Allies/Enemies: Astronomism is closely allied with the rulers of Silvyre and Unauwin as well as with the leadership of The Justicars of Tallis and the Path of Clear Skies. Astronomism is known within Silvyre to have an antagonistic relationship with adherents of Seerism and is generally unpopular with the poor.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Highpond	2
Silvyre	Lightbank	2
Silvyre	Lockport	3
Unauwin	Bywell	0
Unauwin	Deepby	3
Unauwin	Ipse	3
Unauwin	Erihurst	1
Unauwin	Newbush	3
Unauwin	Westerspring	2
Unauwin	Westpine	1
Unauwin	Whitewater	1
Uneabard	Agrilind	3
Uneabard	Edigodon	0
Uneabard	Gwealath	2
Uneabard	Haelalian	2
Uneabard	Kaalil	0
Uneabard	Naellan's Pass	1
Uneabard	Taunyth	3

Earth and Sky

Type: Faith

Values: Nature, Community, Freedom

Leadership: No official leader, but the most influential living priests are: Honored Orlina Rolyth (Reputation 25, Faith +4), and Honored Bellshana Norias (Advisor, Faith +3)

Description: The Earth and Sky faith, often called Treeism because a stylized tree is the faith's holy symbol, is a branch of the Sky Gods religion with heavy emphasis on animism and the living earth. Begun centuries ago in Cadelania, it is there considered an outdated and primitive religion. Recently, a highly intellectual offshoot has sprung up in Aielith.

Associated Realms: Cadelania, Aielith, Edaulla, Leanad

Allies/Enemies: The Earth and Sky faith enjoys good relations with The Nurturing Heirophany in particular. In Cadelania, it is associated with rebellion and crime.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Drekor	2
Aielith	Gralehan	2
Aielith	Wedriwan	2
Cadelania	Chilidric	2
Cadelania	Lightborne	3
Cadelania	Kiethien	1
Cadelania	Legobeth	2
Cadelania	Rhilaria	2
Cadelania	Sevybeth	3
Cadelania	Trorel	2
Edaulla	Triran	0
Leanad	Lautrem	4

Eshism

Type: Faith

Values: Detachment, Humility, Acceptance, Purification

Leadership: No real organization or central authority. Varies locally. The acting archpriest remains anonymous (Reputation 26, Faith +3).

Description: Eshism is an offshoot of Valism, founded by a student of Valin's named Eshal. Eshism emphasizes the inevitability of death, valuing equanimity and teaching that the afterlife will be better, especially if one is purified of corruption. Begun centuries ago in Qomas, Eshism has gained popularity in Kiligan and Derarin in recent generations.

Associated Realms: Qomas, Kiligan, Derarin

Allies/Enemies: Eshism retains ties to Valism, despite differences in doctrine. It is also encouraged by the rulers of Qomas. It has no known enemies, but its recommended lifestyle is difficult, dissuading many potential adherents.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Derarin	Adonnon	2
Derarin	Drazowyr	0
Derarin	Grymar	3
Derarin	Sirawien	3
Derarin	Ybaliwen	2
Kiligan	Aeladric	2
Kiligan	Asithien	2
Kiligan	Ceat	2
Kiligan	Gleraw	1
Qomas	Arielind	3
Qomas	Cheassa	1
Qomas	Etearin	2
Qomas	Haardosa	3
Qomas	Kerridus	2

Defenders of Ceres

Type: Faith

Values: Courage, Valor, Compassion

Leadership: Mother Callina Quartermaster of Legarien (Reputation 24, Faith +2), Father Ullomar Baker of Pikath (Advisor, Faith +1), Parent Kathlion Knapper of Alawyth

Description: Sprung up only recently in Ocia, the Defenders of Ceres are popular among Ceres's youth. Dedicated to serving the gods through the service and protection of others, Defenders are viewed many different ways by outsiders: naive children wasting time, pushy meddlers who should mind their own business, or inspiring heroes of peace and justice. Indeed, all three of these sorts of people can be found among Defenders of Ceres adherents.

Associated Realms: Ocia

Allies/Enemies: The Defenders of Ceres were founded by members of the Ocian Heirdom and are still led by retired heirs, closely tying them to the Ocian government. They are also said to be secret supporters of the bandit group known as Xir's Foxes. The Defenders of Ceres have made no overt enemies as of yet, but tend to clash politically with the leadership of Quinzell's Mercenaries.

Recommended: No. The Defenders of Ceres are currently too insignificant to be a competitive choice, but could serve as a welcome ally to players in need.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocia	Alawyth	0
Ocia	Calessi	1
Ocia	Eromar	2
Ocia	Etalimos	2
Ocia	Etherasa	1
Ocia	Joham	0
Ocia	Pikath	1
Ocia	Voedia	1

Dweorism

Type: Faith

Values: History, Presence, Community

Leadership: Chief Priest Merlinclaw Orvath (Reputation 25, Faith +3)

Description: Called variously Thennowism, Dweorism, and the Religion of Life, this faith has been passed down for centuries, evolving as needed in each generation, since the days before the Vareene ever came to Ceres. Dweorism honors the past and the present, teaching that the future can only be safeguarded by paying close attention to the lessons of then and now. Dweorism is considered both an animistic and ancestor worship faith, with emphasis on the latter, but adherents will explain that there is no worship in Dweorism, only community. The ancestors and the land are always with us and wisdom is attained by learning to hear their voices.

Allies/Enemies: Dweorism is involved in the Oloeri defense efforts, working in hospitals and safeguarding water resources. Like the rest of Oloeri, its enemies are all who serve the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Oloeri	Cristalmill	3
Oloeri	Fraywall	4
Oloeri	Raycliff	4
Oloeri	Silverfort	5

Karnism

Type: Faith

Values: Detachment, Equanimity, Serenity, Acceptance

Leadership: Heirophant Orvane Kerrow (Reputation 25, Faith +3)

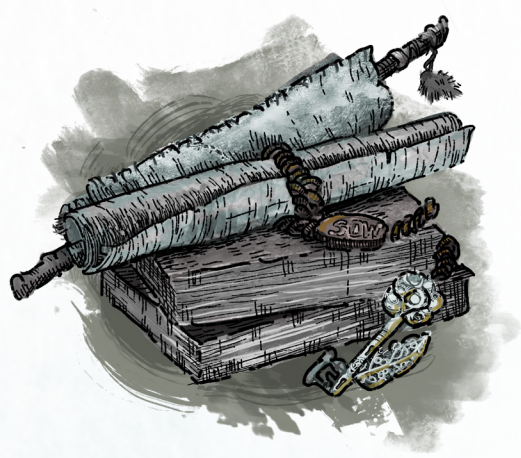
Description: Karnism, while honoring all of the Sky Gods, teaches that enlightenment can only be reached by focused devotion to Karn and the world beyond. Karnism teaches letting go of worldly attachments and avoidance of doing harm. Historically, it was founded in Cadelania by a retired Torturer, but it has never been popular there and retains no connection to the Cadelanian Torturers.

Associated Realms: Kedohaw, Leanad, Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: Karnism is allied with most other religions in the regions in which it is practiced as well as with the Deathworkers Guild. It is passively persecuted by the rulers of Kedohaw and illegal in some nations, due largely to misunderstandings and political posturing.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Kedohaw	Aseacia	5
Kedohaw	Oneadien	6
Kedohaw	Lancia	1
Kedohaw	Soron	5
Leanad	Lautrem	3
Unauwin	Aelcoast	2
Unauwin	Deepby	1
Unauwin	Linlyn	3



Seerism

Type: Faith

Values: Fairness, Freedom, Strength

Leadership: High Seer Berron Greycat (Reputation 24, Faith +3), Chosen Seer Lidja Featherlight (Advisor, Faith +5)

Description: Seerism is a fast-growing faith that began in Galear and has spread into Rao and distant Silvyre. Though divination-centric, Seerism honors all gods of all religions, encouraging individual interpretation. In spreading the faith, Seerism's leaders seek out discontented populations, preaching disobedience and revolution in order to realize a prophesied utopia.

Associated Realms: Galear, Rao, Silvyre

Allies/Enemies: Rulers, merchants, traditionalists, and other religions are often in conflict with Seerism, but for reasons of their own, Galear's ruling family have made themselves Seerism's ally.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Highpond	3
Silvyre	Icefay	2
Silvyre	Moormead	2
Silvyre	Strongland	2
Silvyre	Vertpond	3
Galear	Byness	2
Galear	Shadehollow	3
Galear	Violetwick	2
Galear	Whitesilver	1
Rao	Vishal	3
Rao	Anvi	1

Sky Heart

Type: Faith

Values: Hospitality, Generosity, Education, Modesty

Leadership: Grandfather Tordwen Heclam Wolgren (Reputation 26, Faith +3)

Description: The Sky Heart faith asserts that the Sky Gods wish for all Ceres's peoples to prosper together in love and wisdom. It encourages study of "the Sky Gods' works" (interpreted variously by different theologians), creative invention, and sharing with those in need.

Associated Realms: Astaeria, Feild

Allies/Enemies: Sky Heart practitioners are often also followers of The Church of the Source and vice versa. The greatest enemy of the Sky Heart faith may be corruption within its own organization, which has grown entangled with Astaerian politics.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	2
Astaeria	Broehar	2
Astaeria	Crerraseth	3
Astaeria	Dalindra	3
Astaeria	Greywell	3
Astaeria	Haieron	4
Astaeria	Menodoch	3
Astaeria	Olaniel	3
Astaeria	Woelith	1
Feild	Jeraelith	3

The Path of Clear Skies

Type: Faith

Values: Humility, Simplicity, Community, Gratitude, Trust

Leadership: Archpriest Ulgem Kestruim (Reputation 22, Faith +3)

Description: A long-established faith order, The Path of Clear Skies (more commonly known as Clarism) believes in accepting fate and trusting the plan of the gods. Though decreased in popularity in recent generations, two very different factions remain, located in Uneabard and Ocia. Both still follow the edicts of Uneabard's archpriest, but where Uneabard adherents focus on humility and trust, Ocian adherents emphasize community and gratitude.

Associated Realms: Ocia, Uneabard

Allies/Enemies: Clarism is often practiced simultaneously with The Justicars of Tallis and is closely tied with Uneabard's ruling family. Clarism's leaders have an oddly hostile relationship with the North Ceres Smiths Guild.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocia	Alawyth	2
Ocia	Eromar	0
Ocia	Joham	3
Ocia	Pikath	3
Ocia	Voedia	1
Uneabard	Edigodon	3
Uneabard	Gwealath	0
Uneabard	Kaalil	3
Uneabard	Taunyth	3
Uneabard	Zedien	2

Valism

Type: Faith

Values: Courage, Integrity, Compassion, Accomplishment

Leadership: Prophet Seesha (Reputation 28, Faith +4)

Description: Valism, named for its founder Prophet Valin, teaches that the Sky Gods were mortal beings, but that their spirits, and those of all wise ancestors, continue to aid and guide us. All admired ancestors are revered and Valist homes keep small altars for praying to the Sky Gods, Valin, departed loved ones, and others. Adherents strive to live such that others will want to remember them after death. Valin taught all over Ceres, but the prophet's teachings gained footholds only in Derarin and Unauwin.

Associated Realms: Derarin, Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: Valism allies with other Sky Gods or ancestor faiths and has a friendly history with the ruling family of Derarin. It is known to have a combative relationship with all forms of organized crime.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Derarin	Adonnon	0
Derarin	Drazowyr	3
Derarin	Goremoth	2
Derarin	Grymar	0
Derarin	Olaumos	2
Derarin	Therard	2
Derarin	Ybaliwen	2
Unauwin	Aelcoast	0
Unauwin	Bywell	3
Unauwin	Ipse	2
Unauwin	Erihurst	5
Unauwin	Newbush	2
Unauwin	Westerspring	2
Unauwin	Westpine	3
Unauwin	Whitewater	3

Other Faith Factions

Here is a list of the other Faith Factions, including their total number of assets in each Realm.

Church of the Endless Stars

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Telimond	Abarith	3
Telimond	Adwilian	4
Telimond	Arilim	6
Telimond	Bradovia	3
Telimond	Legir	5
Telimond	Woassa	2

Church of the Source

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	3
Astaeria	Broehar	2
Astaeria	Greywell	2
Astaeria	Haieron	3
Astaeria	Woelith	3
Feild	Jeraelith	3
Qomas	Drigokon	2
Qomas	Etearin	3
Qomas	Nimma	3
Qomas	Rin	2
Qomas	Tromwen	1

Cult of the Harbinger

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
The Maelstrom	Agrakor	1
The Maelstrom	Asilith	1
The Maelstrom	Legynydd	4
The Maelstrom	Mirelimar	2
The Maelstrom	Oniladia	1
The Maelstrom	Satram	2

Edaulla

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Kerabard	1
Edaulla	Baessa	2
Edaulla	Etendav	3
Edaulla	Triran	4

Justicars of Tallis

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocia	Arogan	1
Ocia	Fraykith	1
Ocia	Legarien	1
Ocia	Prinia	2
Uneabard	Baori	2
Uneabard	Haelalian	2
Uneabard	Haemeth's Folly	3
Uneabard	Naellan's Pass	0

Kingdom of Heaven

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Calirien	Carew	3
Calirien	Moirwen	3
Calirien	Skipwyth	3

Matar's Triumph

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Woand	Belil	1
Woand	Delithraniel	1
Woand	Isyldor	1

Nawen

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	3
Nawen	Cires	2
Nawen	Dreajan	3
Nawen	Falehan	2
Nawen	Likkarn	2
Nawen	Ybaunydd	2
Nawen	Yililoth	0
Ocel	Asteann	3
Ocel	Fohaa	4
Ocel	Freilin	3
Ocel	Heri	2
Ocel	Qilat	2
Ocel	Rhayld	0

Sadaya's Love

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	3
Aaliria	Craemwen	5
Aaliria	Lovell	5
Calirien	Holt	2
Calirien	Shylton	2
Calirien	Yonge	4

Temple of the Holy Sky

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocel	Afynyth	3
Ocel	Asteann	3
Ocel	Eday	3
Ocel	Freilin	1
Ocel	Nyderrach	3
Ocel	Qilat	0
Ocel	Rhayld	3

The Nurturing Heirophany

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Aceriven	3
Aielith	Adiclya	2
Aielith	Qalith	3
Aielith	Vibeth	3

Vindicators of Althaer

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Kiligan	Aeladric	4
Kiligan	Seribdis	3
Kiligan	Ibish	3
Kiligan	Revivia	3
Prokoth	Asher	2
Prokoth	Niodrell	4
Prokoth	Ticranys	2

Trade

Economics are the lifeblood of thriving nation-states, and those who control the flow of trade into and out of realms can wield significant power over the lives of the folk therein. Trade consortiums and guilds tend to be more ephemeral than other factions, as the whims of coin are tempestuous and potentially devastating. Trade Factions often operate in varied and diverse regions, going wherever they can establish a foothold. They control ports, counting houses, banks, and marketplaces, as well as spy organizations and information brokers.

The leaders of Trade Factions tend to be rogues and other highly skilled individuals, which is not to say that all merchants are thieves—merely that it takes a certain amount of cunning and skill to make it in business.

Merchants and Pirates

Those who wield economic power often have a flexible approach to ethics and morality and rarely does this go over well with the authorities, necessitating bribes or blackmail. When times are tough, even the most respectable sailor will turn pirate, and there is little skullduggery that doesn't have a price. For this reason, Trade Factions often employ charismatic spokespeople and engage in philanthropy to bolster their public image.

Brightwater Shipping

Type: Trade

Values: Quality, Reliability, Profit

Leadership: Mishwen se Fehmrer (Reputation 27, Trade +3)

Description: Founded two hundred years ago by Henma se Fehmrer, a cousin of the Aalirian royal line, Brightwater Shipping has grown into one of the largest shipping companies in southeast Ceres, serving both passengers and cargo.

Associated Realms: Aaliria, Arendaniel, Ocia

Allies/Enemies: Loyal to their Aalirian roots, Brightwater Shipping has boycotted Ocelan ports since the occupation of Aaliria. The Ocel navy often hassles Brightwater ships, accusing them of smuggling supplies to Aalirian rebels.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	3
Aaliria	Craemwen	5
Aaliria	Lovell	5
Arendaniel	Alard	2
Arendaniel	Dering	2
Arendaniel	Eveas	2
Ocia	Alawyth	2
Ocia	Pikath	2

House Dressan

Type: Trade

Values: Profit, Power, Elegance

Leadership: Jisha of House Dressan, Count of Aseacia (Reputation 27, Trade +3)

Description: This noble family of Kedohaw, distant cousins of both the Borgons and of the Keshrigans of Aielith, has spent centuries investing in trade. The Dressans own several shipping companies, hundreds of individual business establishments, and finance dozens of traveling merchants.

Associated Realms: Cadelania, Edaulla, Kedohaw

Allies/Enemies: For reasons of their own, the Dressans are supportive of House Borgon. They are also rumored to have connections with the Nosdram family. Diplomatically-minded, House Dressan has no overt enemies, but treads carefully in Cadelania and competes fiercely with other merchant organizations.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Lightborne	2
Cadelania	Kiethien	2
Cadelania	Sevybeth	0
Cadelania	Trorel	3
Edaulla	Etendav	3
Edaulla	Triran	2
Kedohaw	Aseacia	3
Kedohaw	Druweth	1
Kedohaw	Haegord's Dale	1
Kedohaw	Oneadien	3
Kedohaw	Soron	3

Merchants Guild of Astaeria

Type: Trade

Values: Quality, Efficiency, Profit

Leadership: Minister of Commerce Vincerin Desric Astaer (Reputation 33, Trade +4)

Description: The Merchants Guild of Astaeria is legally empowered to run all commerce in Astaeria. All vendors of any kind must obtain guild licenses in order to legally engage in trade in Astaeria.

Associated Realms: Astaeria, Derarin

Allies/Enemies: The guild is closely tied with the ruling Astaer family. It is in competition with all foreign merchant organizations and is hated by poor shopkeepers and by smuggling ventures in Astaeria.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	3
Astaeria	Broehar	2
Astaeria	Crerraseth	3
Astaeria	Dalindra	3
Astaeria	Greywell	4
Astaeria	Haieron	4
Astaeria	Menodoch	3
Astaeria	Olaniel	3
Astaeria	Woelith	3
Derarin	Goremoth	2
Derarin	Grymar	0
Derarin	Sirawien	3
Derarin	Therard	2

Night Hornets

Type: Trade

Values: Stealth, Discretion, Precision

Leadership: Hive Queen Xandrisa Foxheart (Reputation 24, Trade +3), Sting Captain Warsram Hawktalon (Advisor, Trade +1)

Description: Originally a criminal organization, the Night Hornets now work for the Norfelm family, or possibly Qomas, as smugglers, spies, saboteurs, guerrilla fighters, maybe assassins, and arguably either heroes or terrorists.

Associated Realms: Kiligan

Allies/Enemies: The Night Hornets have alliances with Norfelm-controlled Kiligan and Qomas's Xerent family, while opposed by Chirrin-controlled Kiligan, the Astaers, and much of the outside world.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Kiligan	Aeladric	2
Kiligan	Aerid	2
Kiligan	Asithien	2
Kiligan	Seribdis	2
Kiligan	Ibish	1
Kiligan	Revivia	3

North Ceres Smiths Guild

Type: Trade

Values: Quality, Durability, Elegance

Leadership: Yalrick the Delver (Reputation 25, Trade +2)

Description: The most famous smiths' guild in Ceres, the North Ceres Smiths Guild (sometimes called simply The Smiths Guild) is known for the best steel in the world. Their swords are said to be unbreakable.

Associated Realms: Uneabard, Woand

Allies/Enemies: The Smiths Guild cultivates trade partnerships with many merchants in order to expand clientele beyond their various permanent smithies. They have regular troubles with lesser smithies using forgeries of their guild-mark and with thieves and smugglers intercepting their products in transit.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Agrilind	3
Uneabard	Haelalian	1
Uneabard	Haemeth's Folly	3
Uneabard	Taunyth	1
Woand	Ariand	1
Woand	Belil	2
Woand	Delithraniel	1
Woand	Glindra	2
Woand	Isyldor	2

Ratakka's Mice
Type: Trade

Values: Secrets, Stealth, Discretion

Leadership: Unknown, but the organization's face is a man called Heston the Owl (Reputation 28, Trade +3)

Description: Ratakka's Mice is the street name for a spy organization of unknown loyalties. Working throughout Ceres but most active in the west, Ratakka's Mice are said to serve Grand Princess Severina of Cadelania, Lord High Justice Simon Audaire of Leanad, and several others, possibly at the same time.

Associated Realms: Any, but especially Cadelania, Leanad, Telimond, and Edaulla

Allies/Enemies: The true loyalties of Ratakka's Mice are unknown, but they are believed to support House Lightborne in Cadelania, to both liaise and compete with the Dragon's Eyes of Kerann, and to be an occasional thorn in the side of the Nosdram Family, particularly in Telimond.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Chilidric	0
Cadelania	Lightborne	2
Cadelania	Legobeth	3
Cadelania	Rhilaria	3
Edaulla	Triran	2
Leanad	Lautrem	7
Telimond	Abarith	3
Telimond	Adwilian	2
Telimond	Arilim	3

Serenity Herbalists Guild
Type: Trade

Values: Pleasure, Relaxation, Trust

Leadership: Cinnamon Oddweather (Reputation 25, Trade +2)

Description: The Serenity Herbalists Guild specializes in recreational and (in their opinion) spiritually uplifting herbs, fungi, concoctions, and potions. While they make most of their money with the transport and sale of alcohol and other legal intoxicants, they also sell medicines and spell components and are rumored to engage in less legal (and less benevolent) commerce as well.

Associated Realms: Nawen, Ocia

Allies/Enemies: Tolerated by the Nawenish church and reportedly popular among the Mystics of Nawen, the Serenity Herbalists Guild is viewed with suspicion by the rulers of Ocia and is legally barred from activity in many other nations.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	3
Nawen	Cires	2
Nawen	Dreajan	2
Nawen	Falehan	2
Ocia	Etalimos	2
Ocia	Fraykith	1

The Nosdram Family
Type: Trade

Values: Profit, Discretion, Influence

Leadership: Patriarch Zorek Nosdram (Reputation 29, Trade +3)

Description: Perhaps the most notorious crime family in Ceres, the Nosdrams run the criminal underworld in most of Ceres's northwest nations and dabble in illicit dealings throughout Ceres. Though rumored to be honorable thieves who would never stoop to working with the Maelstrom, it seems likely that this is mere romanticizing of the Nosdram Family's supposedly traditionalist values.

Associated Realms: Aielith, Cadelania, Kedohaw, Telimond, Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: The Nosdram Family is rumored to have working relationships with every criminal organization in Ceres, sometimes including the Maelstrom. It is opposed by every legitimate government in Ceres, though individual government agents may not be above making use of or taking bribes from the Nosdrams now and then.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Aceriven	2
Aielith	Adiclya	2
Aielith	Drekor	2
Aielith	Gralehan	2
Aielith	Onoak	2
Aielith	Qalith	1
Cadelania	Chilidric	3
Cadelania	Lightborne	0
Cadelania	Sevybeth	3
Cadelania	Trorel	0
Kedohaw	Lancia	1
Telimond	Adwilian	2
Telimond	Bradovia	3
Telimond	Legir	1
Unauwin	Aelcoast	2
Unauwin	Bywell	0
Unauwin	Erihurst	2

The Trade League of Silvyre

Type: Trade

Values: Fairness, Reliability, Profit

Leadership: Master of Finance Lorfeth Yarrist (Reputation 28, Trade +3)

Description: The Trade League of Silvyre is intended as an organization for ensuring fairness of trade in participating counties for all merchants who do business there. Some league members do live up to this ideal, but others favor wealthier merchants over poorer ones or even misuse or overcharge for league membership fees.

Associated Realms: Silvyre, Aielith

Allies/Enemies: In its honest form, the Trade League of Silvyre is closely allied with the government of Silvyre. In its less honest form, the League and Silvyre would in theory be opposed, should the perpetrators of such corruption ever get caught.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Highpond	5
Silvyre	Icefay	2
Silvyre	Lightbank	2
Silvyre	Lockport	3
Silvyre	Moormead	1
Silvyre	Strongland	3
Silvyre	Vertpond	3
Aielith	Qalith	2
Aielith	Vibeth	3
Aielith	Wedriwan	2

Xir's Foxes

Type: Trade

Values: Justice, Compassion, Courage

Leadership: Greylan Greystar (Reputation 27, Trade +3), Flynn the Gryphon (Advisor, Trade +5)

Description: Xir's Foxes are outlaws grown recently infamous in some regions and celebrated in others. They are said to have safe houses in Nawen and Ocia and regular operations helping the oppressed in Ocel and the war effort Oloeri. They are wanted as bandits all over southeastern Ceres, but are said to steal only from the greedy and cruel.

Associated Realms: Nawen, Ocel, Ocia, Oloeri

Allies/Enemies: Xir's Foxes have no overt allies, but some Nawenist priests are believed to be sympathetic. Their enemies are all legal authorities, especially in Ocel.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	2
Nawen	Dreajan	0
Nawen	Likkarn	2
Nawen	Ybaunydd	3
Nawen	Yililoth	1
Ocel	Freilin	2
Ocia	Arogan	1
Ocia	Joham	3
Ocia	Prinia	2
Oloeri	Fraywall	2
Oloeri	Raycliff	2
Oloeri	Silverfort	3

Other Trade Factions

Here is a list of the other Trade Factions, including their total number of assets in each realm.

Asteann Outfitters

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocel	Afynyth	3
Ocel	Asteann	5
Ocel	Fohaa	5
Ocel	Freilin	4
Ocel	Heri	3
Ocel	Nyderrach	3
Ocel	Qilat	3
Ocel	Rhayld	0

Calirien

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Calirien	Carew	4
Calirien	Holt	2
Calirien	Moirwen	3
Calirien	Shylton	2
Calirien	Skipwyth	3
Calirien	Yonge	4

Dering Commodities

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Arendaniel	Dering	3
Arendaniel	Wrenne	2
Ocia	Eromar	2
Ocia	Etherasa	1
Ocia	Pikath	2
Ocia	Voedia	2

Etearin Imports & Exports

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Derarin	Adonnon	3
Derarin	Drazowyr	3
Derarin	Olaumos	2
Derarin	Ybaliwen	2
Qomas	Arielind	3
Qomas	Cheassa	1
Qomas	Drigokon	2
Qomas	Etearin	3
Qomas	Haardosa	3
Qomas	Kerridus	2
Qomas	Tromwen	1

Feild

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Edaulla	Baessa	2
Feild	Jeraelith	6
Telimond	Legir	4
Telimond	Woassa	2
Unauwin	Ipse	4
Unauwin	Newbush	2
Unauwin	Westerspring	1

Lavorre's Underground

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Agrilind	0
Uneabard	Baori	2
Uneabard	Edigodon	3
Uneabard	Gwealath	0
Uneabard	Haelalian	3
Uneabard	Kaalil	0
Uneabard	Naellan's Pass	2
Uneabard	Taunyth	5
Uneabard	Zedien	2

Prokoth

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Broehar	2
Astaeria	Crerraseth	0
Astaeria	Haieron	2
Astaeria	Woelith	1
Derarin	Grymar	3
Derarin	Ybaliwen	3
Prokoth	Asher	4
Prokoth	Niodrell	4
Prokoth	Ticranys	4

Quinzell's Mercenaries

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocel	Eday	3
Ocel	Fohaa	1
Ocel	Nyderrach	0
Ocel	Rhayld	3
Ocia	Calessi	1
Ocia	Legarien	1

R&R Investments

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Qomas	Etearin	2
Qomas	Nimma	3
Qomas	Rin	2
Unauwin	Bywell	2
Unauwin	Deepby	4
Unauwin	Ipse	1
Unauwin	Erihurst	4
Unauwin	Linlyn	3
Unauwin	Newbush	3
Unauwin	Westerspring	3
Unauwin	Westpine	4
Unauwin	Whitewater	4

Serenity Herbalists Guild

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	3
Nawen	Cires	2
Nawen	Dreajan	2
Nawen	Falehan	2
Ocia	Etalimos	2
Ocia	Fraykith	1

Vishal Exchange

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Galear	Byness	4
Galear	Shadehollow	3
Galear	Violetwick	2
Galear	Whitesilver	2
Rao	Vishal	3
Rao	Anvi	1

Zahn's Supply Line

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Oloeri	Cristalmill	3
Oloeri	Fraywall	2
Oloeri	Raycliff	2
Oloeri	Silverfort	2

Magic

Throughout Ceres, the rarest but no less mighty sort of power comes in the form of magic. Magic blooms in various folk of Ceres as a result of the interface between their latent genetic heritage from the Vareene and the buried technology left behind by their ancestors from beyond the skies. Naturally, wielders of magic gather together in the shadows to share secrets and keep them safe from those who lack the Gift.

The leaders of Magic Factions tend to be spell casters, usually of the same sort that makes up their faction (for instance, the leader of a circle of magical spies likely focuses on divination magic).

Cabals and Mage Circles

Magic Factions tend to be significantly more secretive than factions that wield other sorts of power, in part because hording so much magical power makes them potential threats and because unless they jealously guard the sources of their power, they run the risk of losing them. To this end, most organizations of spell casters and masters of arcane lore operate underground or behind closed doors and the average citizen on the streets of even Ceres's largest cities knows little of magic other than superstitions and whispered rumor.

Children of the Sky

Type: Magic

Values: Spirituality, Knowledge, Community

Leadership: Elder Sister Norgor Tessha (Reputation 27, Magic +3)

Description: The Children of the Sky is an organization of religiously inclined mages sponsored by the Temple of the Holy Sky. Rumor has it that some Children members sympathize with growing anti-Temple sentiment and help smuggle messages and aid for those worst persecuted.

Associated Realms: Ocel

Allies/Enemies: If rumor is accurate, the Children of the Sky can count the Knights and Temple of the Holy Sky as both allies and enemies.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocel	Afynyth	2
Ocel	Asteann	2
Ocel	Eday	3
Ocel	Fohaa	1
Ocel	Freilin	3
Ocel	Heri	3
Ocel	Nyderrach	3
Ocel	Qilat	3
Ocel	Rhayld	3

Dartaran's Ravens

Type: Magic

Values: Knowledge, Magic, Life

Leadership: Guildmaster Velmesh Forrengreth (Reputation 25, Magic +3)

Description: Dartaran's Ravens are devoted to the study of the magic of life, particularly magical creatures and plants. Some members specialize in the study of magical corruption, such as the blight afflicting Adiclya Swamp in Aielith. A few Ravens travel throughout Ceres studying similar phenomena.

Associated Realms: Silvyre, Aielith

Allies/Enemies: Dartaran's Ravens have a somewhat antagonistic alliance with the Knights of the Red Staff and are said to work with any true scholar in pursuit of greater understanding, regardless of allegiance. That said, the Ravens work tirelessly to mend the ills visited upon Ceres by Kurse and the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Highpond	5
Silvyre	Icefay	2
Silvyre	Lightbank	2
Silvyre	Moormead	2
Aielith	Aceriven	3
Aielith	Adiclya	2
Aielith	Gralehan	2
Aielith	Wedriwan	2

Knights of the Red Staff

Type: Magic

Values: Defense, Power, Life

Leadership: General Otren Somrast (Reputation 26, Magic +3)

Description: The Knights of the Red Staff are battle-mages, trained for mass combat and the support of military units. Though many are eclectic or even rude, most are tactically knowledgeable and hardened veterans, vital to the war effort in both Unauwin and Silvyre.

Associated Realms: Unauwin, Silvyre

Allies/Enemies: Closely allied with the rulers of Unauwin, the Knights of the Red Staff have an awkwardly competitive alliance with Dartaran's Ravens as well. Though disliked by many, the Knights' only true enemy is the Maelstrom.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Lightbank	0
Silvyre	Lockport	2
Silvyre	Strongland	2
Silvyre	Vertpond	2
Unauwin	Aelcoast	2
Unauwin	Bywell	2
Unauwin	Deepby	1
Unauwin	Erihurst	2
Unauwin	Ipse	2
Unauwin	Linlyn	2
Unauwin	Newbush	2
Unauwin	Westerspring	1
Unauwin	Westpine	1
Unauwin	Whitewater	1

Sphere of Wisdom

Type: Magic

Values: Knowledge, Experience, Discovery

Leadership: Cerenisse se Rose (Reputation 27, Magic +3)

Description: The Sphere of Wisdom is a recently organized mages guild on the Sunset Isle, the term "organized" used loosely. The Sphere is officially dedicated to helping mages to find freelance work. Unofficially, its reputation is more of a debauched social club for sorcerers.

Associated Realms: Galear, Rao

Allies/Enemies: The Sphere of Wisdom has made no friends yet, but is still tolerated by the governments of Rao and Galear. It has already made enemies of the Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Galear	Byness	4
Galear	Shadehollow	4
Galear	Violetwick	2
Galear	Whitesilver	2
Rao	Ashvi	2
Rao	Suddu	2
Rao	Vishal	5
Rao	Anvi	2

The Dragon's Eyes

Type: Magic

Values: Knowledge, Power, Secrets

Leadership: The Dragon (Reputation 30, Magic +5)

Description: It isn't easy holding a large territory with a tiny army, but the Dragon, ruler of Kerann, has an extensive spy network to help. Acting as mages for hire, the Dragon's agents keep their master informed of all they observe in their travels. Though the Eyes only maintain permanent outposts in Kerann and Aaliria, individual agents travel all over Ceres.

Associated Realms: Kerann, Aaliria

Allies/Enemies: The Dragon's Eyes' only true enemies are the forces of the Maelstrom, but Eye agents are not typically welcome much of anywhere.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	3
Aaliria	Craemwen	5
Kerann	Astesh	3
Kerann	Ethorind	3
Kerann	Kedijar	3
Kerann	Kilinidd	3
Kerann	Laraulla	3
Kerann	Neramma	3
Kerann	Umew	3

The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium

Type: Magic

Values: Scholarship, Discovery, Advancement

Leadership: Grand High Master Felgram Poryswythe (Reputation 25, Magic +2), Master of Admissions Kethsrian Galandrin (Advisor, Magic +2)

Description: The Gleaming Twilight Arcanists Consortium is a guild of wizards, most of whom work as magic teachers, though rumor claims the organization harbors a fouler secret purpose beneath.

Associated Realms: Qomas, Derarin

Allies/Enemies: The Consortium has excellent relations with the rulers of Qomas and a warier rapport with the rulers of Derarin.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Derarin	Drazowyr	2
Derarin	Grymar	2
Derarin	Olaumos	0
Derarin	Sirawien	2
Derarin	Ybaliwen	5
Qomas	Arielind	2
Qomas	Haardosa	3
Qomas	Kerridus	2
Qomas	Nimma	2

The Mystics of Nawen

Type: Magic

Values: Magic, Beauty, Nature

Leadership: Varies locally, no central leadership. The acting Wise One remains anonymous (Reputation 26, Magic +2)

Description: A loosely-affiliated collection of sorcerers, bards, druids, and the occasional lazy or drunken wizard, the Mystics of Nawen are a social and information network for Nawenish mages of any kind. Even some clerics participate, especially those not part of the Nawenist clergy.

Associated Realms: Nawen

Allies/Enemies: The Mystics tend to be on good terms with local priests and temples. They have no official enemies, but have been known to cause mischief for Ocelans near Nawen's Ocel districts.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	5
Nawen	Cires	2
Nawen	Dreajan	3
Nawen	Falehan	2
Nawen	Likkarn	2
Nawen	Ybaunydd	3
Nawen	Yililoth	1

The Night Circle

Type: Magic

Values: Knowledge, Influence, Discretion

Leadership: Unknown, if any. The acting Dark One remains anonymous (Reputation 25, Magic +2)

Description: In remote places of power in parts of Woand and Uneabard stand stone containers called wish-boxes, marked with a triple moon. Through a slit in the top, a wisher drops in a note with a wish and an offered reward. If the Night Circle agrees to the job, a Circle member, bearing the triple moon tattoo, finds the wisher and strikes the deal, flawlessly tracking down each wisher. No one knows the Circle's motivations, but all agree that—should the Circle accept an assignment—it is wise to pay the offered price.

Associated Realms: Uneabard, Woand

Allies/Enemies: Mysterious, though some believe the Circle to be an offshoot of the Dragon's Eyes.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Gwealath	3
Uneabard	Kaalil	3
Woand	Ariand	1
Woand	Belil	2
Woand	Calin	1
Woand	Delithraniel	1
Woand	Gathien	1
Woand	Glindra	2
Woand	Isyldor	2

The Northwest Mages Society

Type: Magic

Values: Magic, Knowledge, Innovation

Leadership: Archmagus Ynrissa Rilann (Reputation 25, Magic +2)

Description: The Northwest Mages Society is ostensibly a guild devoted to the acquisition and sharing of magical knowledge. In practice, the Society's motives are more oblique, varying from region to region. The Witch of Mentaka is also rumored to be a member in good standing.

Associated Realms: Cadelania, Kedohaw

Allies/Enemies: Believed to be allied with Kedohaw's Borgon family and in open competition with Leanad's Court of High Justice, in truth, none can say where individual members of the Northwest Mages Society truly stand.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Chilidric	2
Cadelania	Lightborne	2
Cadelania	Legobeth	2
Cadelania	Sevybeth	3
Kedohaw	Aseacia	3
Kedohaw	Druweth	1
Kedohaw	Haegord's Dale	0
Kedohaw	Oneadien	3
Kedohaw	Soron	2

Other Magic Factions

Here is a list of the other Magic Factions, including their total number of assets in each realm.

Arendaniel

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Arendaniel	Alard	2
Arendaniel	Atlee	2
Arendaniel	Dering	6
Arendaniel	Eveas	2
Arendaniel	Forde	3
Arendaniel	Savill	3
Arendaniel	Wrenne	4

Kiligan

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	4
Astaeria	Broehar	2
Astaeria	Crerraseth	2
Astaeria	Dalindra	4
Astaeria	Greywell	0
Astaeria	Haieron	0
Astaeria	Menodoch	2
Astaeria	Olaniel	3
Astaeria	Woelith	1
Kiligan	Aeladric	6
Kiligan	Aerid	3
Kiligan	Asithien	2
Kiligan	Seribdis	3
Kiligan	Ceat	2
Kiligan	Gleraw	1
Kiligan	Ibish	3
Kiligan	Revivia	3

Lach Lyrien A'Fae

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Ocia	Alawyth	2
Ocia	Arogan	1
Ocia	Calessi	1
Ocia	Eromar	2
Ocia	Etalimos	2
Ocia	Etherasa	1
Ocia	Fraykith	1
Ocia	Joham	3
Ocia	Legarien	1
Ocia	Pikath	4
Ocia	Prinia	2
Ocia	Voedia	2

Leanad

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Chilidric	1
Cadelania	Legobeth	3
Cadelania	Lightborne	4
Edaulla	Triran	4
Kedohaw	Lancia	1
Kedohaw	Mentaka	1
Leanad	Lautrem	0

The Maelstrom

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
The Maelstrom	Agrakor	1
The Maelstrom	Aleawiel	2
The Maelstrom	Asilith	1
The Maelstrom	Astaron	2
The Maelstrom	Broaswen	3
The Maelstrom	Cendawyr	2
The Maelstrom	Gerwen	2
The Maelstrom	Kaied	1
The Maelstrom	Legynydd	4
The Maelstrom	Migolla	3
The Maelstrom	Mirelimar	2
The Maelstrom	Oniladia	1
The Maelstrom	Qorendra	2
The Maelstrom	Satram	2
The Maelstrom	Seviladith	2

School of Theurgia & Goetia

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Edaulla	Baessa	2
Edaulla	Etendav	3
Telimond	Abarith	3
Telimond	Bradovia	2
Telimond	Ethea	2
Telimond	Woassa	1

School of Runes & Geomancy

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Drekor	2
Aielith	Onoak	2
Aielith	Qalith	4
Aielith	Vibeth	3

School of Divination & Astrology

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Agrilind	3
Uneabard	Baori	2
Uneabard	Edigodon	2
Uneabard	Gwealath	0
Uneabard	Haelalian	3
Uneabard	Haemeth's Folly	3
Uneabard	Kaalil	0
Uneabard	Naellan's Pass	2
Uneabard	Taunyth	4
Uneabard	Zedien	2

Culture

A nation-state is only as mighty as its people, and Culture Factions wield power by enflaming the hearts and minds of the common folk. These fundamentally artistic organizations run public gathering halls, coliseums, museums, opera houses, amphitheaters, and the like. They may stand for enlightenment and progress or they might zealously guard the purity of the local culture from the perceived corrupting influence of rival organizations and Realms.

The leaders of Culture Factions are often bards or other heroes of flexible abilities and skills. They are often highly charismatic folk and may find themselves in positions of power as ambassadors on behalf of a friendly Order Faction.

Jacks of All Trades

Of all the types of factions, Culture Factions work best with others. They have aspects in common with all other types and recognize that a kingdom needs all these power sources to function and so they forge alliances of mutual benefit and support. Rarely will a Culture Faction go out of its way to antagonize or make an enemy of another faction; more likely, the faction will attempt to remain on good terms with as many would-be rivals as possible.

Guild of Private Entertainers

Type: Culture

Values: Sensuality, Consent, Freedom

Leadership: The Guild is led by an elected council of nine equal members with a yearly rotating chair. Most councillors are rogues, bards, or experts, of low-middle levels. The acting councillor may vary (Reputation 26, Culture +2).

Note to GMs: If a player wishes to play on the council, the PC should be assumed to be unusually influential.

Description: The Guild of Private Entertainers is a group of professional comfort and pleasure experts who have banded together to ensure their own enjoyment of their chosen professions as well as their own empowerment as entertainers.

Associated Realms: Galear, Rao, Prokoth

Allies/Enemies: The Guild is relied upon by Galear, Rao, and Prokoth to safely and ethically regulate all relevant industries. Its comfort ships are often harassed by vessels of less permissive nations.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Galear	Byness	2
Galear	Shadehollow	1
Galear	Violetwick	2
Prokoth	Asher	4
Prokoth	Niodrell	3
Prokoth	Ticranys	3
Rao	Vishal	3
Rao	Anvi	0

Playwrights and Poets Consortium

Type: Culture

Values: Artistry, Meaning, Beauty, Refinement

Leadership: Grand Phoenix Oria Eftren (Reputation 31, Culture +4), Secretary Konren Ishrett Ogbors (Advisor, Culture +5)

Description: This organization is devoted to the discovery, promotion, and dissemination of fine poetry, theater, prose, and song lyrics. It runs theaters, annual contests, poetic libraries, and bardic colleges, and offers aid to "wordsmiths" considered sufficiently refined for membership. Though run by its elected secretary, the official head is the current Grand Phoenix title-holder in the organization's ranking system for contest winners.

Associated Realms: Astaeria, Kiligan, Qomas

Allies/Enemies: Though few factions officially support or oppose the Consortium, any wealthy person might be a patron, and fans and critics are everywhere.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Dalindra	2
Astaeria	Greywell	2
Astaeria	Haieron	2
Astaeria	Olaniel	2
Kiligan	Aeladric	2
Kiligan	Ceat	1
Kiligan	Gleraw	1
Kiligan	Ibish	3
Kiligan	Revivia	2
Qomas	Arielind	2
Qomas	Drigokon	2
Qomas	Etearin	4
Qomas	Haardosa	2
Qomas	Kerridus	2
Qomas	Nimma	2
Qomas	Rin	1

Scholars and Naturalists Guild

Type: Culture

Values: Knowledge, Discovery, Stewardship, Elucidation

Leadership: Archchancellor Limlian Henlirchild (Reputation 25, Culture +2), High Principal Hirrim Banlienchild (Advisor, Culture +2)

Description: The Scholars and Naturalists Guild was founded centuries ago in Arendaniel to preserve, discover, and impart knowledge. While some guild members wander Ceres, teaching the poor for a meal, a night's roof, or a bit of coin, in Arendaniel and parts of Ocia, the guild has founded full universities for the edification of all.

Associated Realms: Arendaniel, Ocia

Allies/Enemies: The guild works closely with the Wisdom Council of Arendaniel and allies all other reputable teachers and scholars it encounters. Guild members are banned from teaching in Ocel.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Arendaniel	Alard	2
Arendaniel	Dering	4
Arendaniel	Forde	1
Arendaniel	Wrenne	2
Ocia	Arogan	1
Ocia	Calessi	0
Ocia	Fraykith	1
Ocia	Pikath	1
Ocia	Voedia	1

The Deathworkers Guild

Type: Culture

Values: Dignity, Discretion, Reverence

Leadership: Guildmaster Bethlina Neressania (Reputation 26, Culture +3), Guild Secretary Charlenion Sorvel (Advisor, Culture +3)

Description: In regions where death and the funeral process are held in particular reverence, some undertakers, cemetery keepers, and other funereal process workers join the Deathworkers Guild, devoted to respectful treatment of the dead.

Associated Realms: Cadelania, Kedohaw

Allies/Enemies: The Deathworkers Guild is supported by the Northwest Mages Society and Karnism. It has no enemies as such, but many outside Cadelania and Kedohaw find such open discussion of death to be distasteful.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Childric	2
Cadelania	Lightborne	2
Cadelania	Legobeth	2
Cadelania	Sevybeth	3
Kedohaw	Aseacia	3
Kedohaw	Druweth	1
Kedohaw	Haegord's Dale	0
Kedohaw	Oneadien	3
Kedohaw	Soron	2

The Devotional Artists Guild

Type: Culture

Values: Purity, Tradition, Devotion, Humility, Righteousness

Leadership: Laris Frena (Reputation 29, Culture +4), Laris Oben (Advisor, Culture +3)

Description: Founded by renowned sculptor Laris Osren and run by her grandchildren, the Devotional Artists Guild exists to sponsor holy art, music, and theater. Laris Frena paints and is a wealthy art merchant, while Laris Oben is a sculptor as celebrated as his grandmother.

Associated Realms: Aaliria, Calirien, Ocel

Allies/Enemies: Though lauded by the priests and leaders of Ocel, the Devotional Artists Guild is often in conflict with other artistic organizations.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	1
Aaliria	Craemwen	2
Aaliria	Lovell	3
Calirien	Carew	2
Calirien	Holt	2
Calirien	Moirwen	2
Calirien	Yonge	2
Ocel	Afynyth	2
Ocel	Asteann	3
Ocel	Eday	3
Ocel	Fohaa	1
Ocel	Freilin	2
Ocel	Rhayld	3

The Guild of Minstrels, Poets, and Bards

Type: Culture

Values: Entertainment, Education, History, Art

Leadership: Storymaster of Aielith, Renshir Calibeth (Reputation 25, Culture +2), Storymaster of Kedohaw, Faelila Resslian (Advisor, Culture +2)

Description: The Guild of Minstrels, Poets, and Bards operates primarily in Aielith and Kedohaw, though members do travel throughout Ceres to spread and gather news, stories, songs, and poems.

Associated Realms: Aielith, Kedohaw

Allies/Enemies: The Guild is allied with and patronized by the royal family of Aielith and enjoys good relations with most educational and artistic institutions in both nations. It has a somewhat antagonistic relationship with the leaders of Kedohaw and a competitive rivalry with several more distant artistic or poetic guilds, particularly the Playwrights and Poets Consortium.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Aceriven	0
Aielith	Adiclya	2
Aielith	Drekor	1
Aielith	Gralehan	2
Aielith	Onoak	0
Aielith	Qalith	1
Aielith	Vibeth	2
Kedohaw	Aseacia	1
Kedohaw	Oneadien	3
Kedohaw	Lancia	1
Kedohaw	Soron	2
Kedohaw	Mentaka	0

The Knowledge-Preservers

Type: Culture

Values: Knowledge, Continuity, Progress, Discovery

Leadership: Guildmaster Ryman Jenslar (Reputation 28, Culture +3), Secretary Vaerri Iverdoor (Advisor, Culture +3)

Description: The Knowledge-Preservers are a guild of traveling teachers and scribes who seek to record, recover, and disseminate all available knowledge. They feel that too much of Vareene teaching has been lost and they wish for no knowledge to ever be lost again.

Associated Realms: Silvyre, Unauwin

Allies/Enemies: The Knowledge-Preservers enjoy a positive relationship with the leaders of both Silvyre and Unauwin and with most schools in both nations, both magical and mundane. They are sometimes targeted by bandits when they transport rare tomes or scrolls with high resale value, and highly-skilled Knowledge-Preservers have also been known to disappear as if kidnapped after traveling too close to Maelstrom borders.

Recommended: Yes.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Silvyre	Highpond	3
Silvyre	Icefay	2
Silvyre	Lightbank	1
Silvyre	Lockport	2
Silvyre	Moormead	2
Silvyre	Strongland	2
Silvyre	Vertpond	1
Unauwin	Bywell	2
Unauwin	Deepby	1
Unauwin	Ipse	2
Unauwin	Newbush	3
Unauwin	Westerspring	2
Unauwin	Westpine	2

The Youth Garden

Type: Culture

Values: Education, Compassion, Vision

Leadership: Klytië Farigir (Reputation 25, Culture +2)

Description: The Youth Garden was founded by Klytië Farigir, a half-elf of Telimond and lifelong admirer of Queen Nausicaä. Funded entirely by donors, it offers free education to young children, teaching literacy, interpersonal communication, care of nature, and basic arithmetic.

Associated Realms: Telimond, Edaulla

Allies/Enemies: The Youth Garden strongly supports the Queen of Telimond and her various cultural and charitable outreach projects. As such, any who dislike Queen Nausicaä find the schools to be dangerous propagandism, but such folk are rare.

Recommended: No. The Youth Garden is too insignificant for competitive play and is largely a yes-man for Telimond.

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Edaulla	Etendav	2
Edaulla	Triran	2
Telimond	Adwilian	2
Telimond	Arilim	1
Telimond	Legir	1

Other Culture Factions

Here is a list of the other Culture Factions, including their total number of assets in each realm.

Association of Traveling Troupe

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Agrilind	2
Uneabard	Edigodon	1
Uneabard	Haelalian	1
Uneabard	Haemeth's Folly	2
Uneabard	Naellan's Pass	2
Uneabard	Taunyth	3
Woand	Belil	2
Woand	Glindra	2
Woand	Isyldor	2

Blessed Archive of Theological Literature

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aaliria	Adwys	1
Aaliria	Craemwen	2
Aaliria	Lovell	2
Calirien	Carew	2
Calirien	Shylton	2
Calirien	Skipwyth	2
Calirien	Yonge	2
Ocel	Asteann	1
Ocel	Fohaa	3
Ocel	Freilin	2
Ocel	Heri	1
Ocel	Nyderrach	2
Ocel	Qilat	2

Ocia

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Nawen	Bautrem	1
Nawen	Dreajan	1
Nawen	Ybaunydd	1
Ocia	Alawyth	2
Ocia	Eromar	2
Ocia	Etalimos	1
Ocia	Etherasa	1
Ocia	Joham	3
Ocia	Legarien	1
Ocia	Pikath	3
Ocia	Prinia	1

Royal College of Fine Arts

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Uneabard	Baori	1
Uneabard	Gwealath	1
Uneabard	Haelalian	1
Uneabard	Kaalil	2
Uneabard	Taunyth	2
Uneabard	Zedien	1

Telimond

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Edaulla	Triran	1
Leanad	Lautrem	2
Telimond	Abarith	2
Telimond	Adwilian	2
Telimond	Arilim	5
Telimond	Bradovia	3
Telimond	Legir	2
Telimond	Woassa	1

The Cartography Company

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Arendaniel	Atlee	2
Arendaniel	Eveas	2
Arendaniel	Savill	2
Nawen	Bautrem	3
Nawen	Cires	2
Nawen	Dreajan	1
Nawen	Likkarn	2
Nawen	Yililoth	0

The Guild of Fine Arts

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Cadelania	Lightborne	2
Cadelania	Kiethien	2
Cadelania	Rhilaria	2
Cadelania	Trorel	3
Edaulla	Baessa	2
Edaulla	Triran	1
Leanad	Lautrem	4

The Black League

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Derarin	Grymar	2
Derarin	Olaumos	2
Derarin	Sirawien	3
Derarin	Therard	2
Derarin	Ybaliwen	2
Galear	Byness	1
Galear	Shadehollow	2
Galear	Whitesilver	2
Rao	Vishal	2
Rao	Anvi	2

The Blue League

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	1
Astaeria	Haieron	0
Astaeria	Menodoch	2
Astaeria	Woelith	3
Derarin	Adonnon	2
Derarin	Drazowyr	3
Derarin	Goremoth	2
Derarin	Ybaliwen	2
Kiligan	Aeladric	3
Kiligan	Aerid	2
Kiligan	Asithien	2
Kiligan	Seribdis	2

The Red League

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Astaeria	Astracon	4
Astaeria	Broehar	3
Astaeria	Crerraseth	3
Astaeria	Greywell	3
Astaeria	Haieron	4
Unauwin	Aelcoast	1
Unauwin	Bywell	1
Unauwin	Ipse	2
Unauwin	Erihurst	2
Unauwin	Newbush	2
Unauwin	Westpine	2
Unauwin	Whitewater	2

The Society of Historians

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Oloeri	Cristalmill	3
Oloeri	Fraywall	3
Oloeri	Raycliff	2
Oloeri	Silverfort	5

The Yellow League

Kingdom	County	Asset Lvl
Aielith	Aceriven	3
Aielith	Adiclya	0
Aielith	Drekor	1
Aielith	Gralehan	0
Aielith	Onoak	2
Aielith	Qalith	3
Aielith	Vibeth	1
Feild	Jeraelith	5
Unauwin	Aelcoast	1
Unauwin	Deepby	2
Unauwin	Ipse	2
Unauwin	Erihurst	4
Unauwin	Linlyn	1
Unauwin	Westerspring	2
Unauwin	Whitewater	1

Chapter VII
The World of Ceres

Tribes

In the First Age, before recorded history, life evolved through various stages from the primordial ooze of a dimly understood age. Untold years saw the rise of mighty beasts of feather, scale, and claw and the weaker creatures that emerged alongside them had to content themselves with the scraps of their hunts. In time, as the climate changed and became better suited to accommodate smaller forms of life, humanoids began to appear, consisting of three distinct species who constantly warred among themselves for dominance.

Known for their great intelligence and beauty, the fae created the first faerie circles and the first bow; they ruled over the peaceful plains and deep forests of the world. Mythology looks upon them as impossibly elegant and graceful—beings naturally superior in every way to their more mundane kin—and most tales of ancient lore feature fae creatures in positions of authority or as tricksters. The fae were notoriously stringent with bargains, typically outwitting all but the cleverest heroes, and always hewed strictly to the letter of their words, if not the spirit thereof. The fae were also notoriously atheistic, refusing to make up tales of supernatural beings that had created their world.

The dweor, on the other hand, took glory in their great wisdom and skill with stone; they claimed the tall mountains and wind-swept hills as their homes. Theirs is a tale of industry and labor, of wise but hard choices in the deep darkness below the ground. They tended to take a very careful, studied outlook on any decision. Mythology looks back upon the dweor as hardworking, determined, and plucky. In tales, a dweor is typically cast as the hero, albeit usually a reluctant one. They tended to practice esoteric philosophies and follow religions that were atheistic but strictly codified in terms of moral and ethical standards.

That left the turgid swamps and broken badlands to the orok, a people of great strength and bravery, constantly warring amongst themselves and against the beasts of Ceres. Indirectly, it was through their blood and sacrifice that the other humanoid peoples persisted through the ages, though the myths rarely credit them this glory. In most tales, the orok are presented as brutish and stupid, only a little elevated above the animals they fought against.

Most myths refer to the orok as, if not the actual antagonist, at least as a lesser or inconvenient companion to a fae or dweor hero. It is little wonder, then, that the orok grew to resent the other peoples of Ceres, out of both jealousy for their favored status and contempt for their weakness. The orok were a superstitious people and followed animistic religious practices.

The three built great empires in the early age of Ceres, the ruins of which can be seen to this day. Ancient faerie circles loom out of a deep forest, delvers find forbidden halls buried beneath the mountains, and tall barrow mounds mark the sites of ancient battles.

None of these primitive people persist to this day. Had they been left to their own devices, they might have wiped one another out in an endless cycle of warfare, and likely the orok would have emerged victorious in bloody fashion. But something happened that would change the course of history forever: the coming of the Vareene.

Arrival

In what would come to be known as the Second Age, a great calamity descended from the skies.

Unbeknownst to either the people of Ceres or their coming descendants, a great battle was being waged amongst the stars. The interstellar empire of the Vareene waged a brutal war against a galactic infestation known only as the Congregation. The humanoid Vareene sent their last weapon–a powerful artifact called the Catalyst–rocketing across the galaxy to their outpost on the primitive planet of Ceres, where the Congregation would never think to look for it.

The Vareene were not newcomers to Ceres. They first established small outposts there a century earlier in order to study the planet and its indigenous life to potentially harvest it for resources. They remained connected to their greater empire by way of galactic space-time warping portals called voidgates. The Catalyst was too delicate to be brought to the planet by means of one of these gates, and instead it arrived by means of one of the Vareene's spacecraft.

The plan went awry, however, and the ship was damaged in its escape; what was meant to be a safe and subtle landing on Ceres turned into a terrible crash that damaged the ship beyond repair. This is the source of the great crater at the center of Ceres that has become known as the Maelstrom, where leaking magical radiation has caused a permanent storm to rage uncontrolled within its depths. Over the centuries, the crater filled with water coming down from the surrounding mountains and the shipwreck now lies at the bottom of a lake with dark and unfathomable waters.

The Vareene stationed on Ceres managed to recover the Catalyst and store it away in a secret, safe location far from the Maelstrom so that they might continue with the plan. They erected an interference shield around the planet that scrambled sensor and communications technology and blocked detection from orbit and closed all the voidgates but one, leaving it as their last link with the empire. Thus they waited either to be called upon to return the Catalyst that it might be used against the Congregation or for news the war had run its course, that they might return to a wounded but surviving Vareene Empire.

Alas, such was not fated to pass. The galactic empire of the Vareene fell, and no further communication came to the outpost, save that the last voidgate—to the Vareene home world—went inert from the other side. They lacked the technology to leave Ceres and investigate, nor had they the will to do so. For all the local Vareene knew, they were the last survivors of their entire species.

Eventually, the survivors of the Vareene integrated with the native peoples of the planet. The Vareene themselves rarely bred with each other: during the Diaspora of their galactic empire, fertility rates had plummeted, and the concept of producing offspring drew many to the surrounding worlds. There, their omnigenetics made them able to conceive viable offspring with each of the three distinctly different humanoid species of Ceres, who were naturally infertile with one another.

Regardless of which branch their ancestry climbs, children born to this day may inherit genetic markers that link them to the ancient technology of the Vareene, which eventually became known as magic. Over centuries and then millennia, the Vareene ceased to be a distinct culture and their origins and purpose became the stuff of myth and legend.

The truth was forgotten, but the power of the Vareene lingers in those descended from the original extraterrestrial visitors, including the key to unlocking the mythical Catalyst–which the folk of Ceres will need if their civilization is to survive.

Bloodlines

Unlike most planets in the galaxy, whereupon a singular or perhaps two species emerge as dominant after having crushed all the others, the influx of Vareene blood into the populations of Ceres gave rise to a new era of cooperation at best or a stalemate of equal power at worst. The Vareene bloodline beats within all the most powerful peoples of the continent of Ceres, and access to their technology—also called magic—works as a kind of equalizer to permit such a balance of power.

To all of these disparate peoples, the Vareene brought their ideas of civilization, organization, and most importantly, technology to varying degrees. Most of the tech they brought from their home world ceased to function when cut off from the greater empire or broke down thereafter, but the Vareene could teach various concepts and accelerate their development to a particular phase.

The Origin of Ancestries

The Vareene had a unique sort of genetic makeup that made them naturally fertile with practically any humanoid creature, and their genes led to the rise of scores of new peoples and ancestries:

- Science-minded Vareene often bred with the fae (producing elves, sylvan gnomes, and other sylvan and faerie creatures) then taught them secrets of accessing their technology and using the power of their genes as magic. Fae exposure to the magical radiation of Vareene technology buried in the wilder places of the world blessed them with long-life and a propensity for the magical arts.

- Mechanical Vareene were drawn to the dweor (giving birth to dwarves, rock gnomes, halflings, and other stout-hearted peoples), to whom they taught secrets of engineering and mechanics. These descendants of the Vareene tend to invent their own technology and disdain the use of that which they don't fully understand, such as what modern folk call "magic."

- Vareene who felt powerless and enraged at the downfall of their empire often turned their back on the civilized ways of their people and integrated amongst the orok, drawn to their lust for battle and bringing a keen insight into warfare to their descendants (orcs, goblins, and reptilian humanoids trace their heritage back to such unions). These children bred quickly and true, overwhelming the lowlands with hordes of Vareene-blessed warriors, but quick generational turnover meant that much of the original Vareene heritage disappeared over a relatively short time.

The Disappearance of the Forebears

Over time, though the Vareene and the original three masters of Ceres persisted for generations (centuries, in the case of the fae), their descendants eventually superseded them and they vanished from history. By the end of the Second Age, which lasted some four or five millennia, the original peoples of Ceres had all but vanished.

In part, this came about due to a correlation between inherited Vareene genetics and improved fecundity, but the influx of Vareene genetics strengthened the peoples of Ceres in many other significant ways. The hybrid children of these disparate peoples tended to live longer to reproduce more often; for instance, elves lived longer than fae, and dwarves outlived their dweor forebears.

MONSTERS OF CERES

Not all the inhabitants of Ceres are humanoid beings. Powerful beasts have always walked the land, and under the influence of leaking Vareene technology (called "magic" by the relatively primitive people of the world), they evolved to become strange and fearsome. Dragons fill the tales of myth and legend, as do chimeras, hydras, and countless other nightmare creatures. These beasts are the subject of the Bestiary.

Orcs were naturally stronger and more robust than orok, leading to their emergence as the dominant force among their people.

It is still theoretically possible to come across a full-blooded Vareene or a member of one of the three forebear folk on the continent, but this would require powerful alien technology or a magical explanation.

The Advent of Humanity

The descendants of the Vareene were not so very different from their indigenous forebears. Elves and their sylvan cousins continued to keep to the forests, though now they practiced magic in its defense. Dwarves and halflings continued to burrow deep into mountains and hills in search of great treasures, though now they sought to fuel their machines. Orcs and goblins were even better suited to battle than their ancestors and took to it with relish.

Eventually, these three general factions would have destroyed one another, if not for the very same mechanism that had given birth to them from the Vareene: interbreeding. While the fae, dweor, and orok had been too genetically distinct to produce offspring, their descendants were often fertile with one another, due to the Vareene's genetic makeup. Millennia of this process gave rise to an entirely new species on Ceres: humanity.

GODS FROM BEYOND THE STARS

The impact that the Vareene's advent had upon Ceres cannot be overstated, not just in terms of the evolution of the peoples of the world, but also in its effects upon Ceres itself. It essentially short-circuited their natural evolutionary cycle and forever altered the flow of their world's destiny.

Other than their name and that they came from the skies, little is known for certain of the Vareene and most of the truth that has endured the ages is steeped in myth and legend. Some claim they were humanoid men and women, just like most of the folk in Ceres, while others believe them to have transcended the bounds of physical form and gender. Most agree they were divine in some way and far above mortals.

Typically, when folk speak of the Vareene, they use the term "Them" and "Their," rather than give them something as anthropomorphic as a gender.

Humans are genetic hybrids of various ancestries, heir to none of the strengths or weaknesses of their forebears, but also perfectly capable of adapting to almost any situation. Versatility is their defining trait, as well as a general baseline neutrality with most of the other people of Ceres. They are extremely fertile, live a moderate life, and are capable of conquering most challenges set before them.

Biologically, humans could result from a union between people of various ancestries, such as an elf and a dwarf, an elf and an orc, etc., and humans tend to produce more humans regardless of partner (the most common exceptions being half-elves and half-orcs because both of those ancestries often breed true). Consequently, many orcs, goblins, and other descendants of the orok have a slight antipathy toward humans, who they typically see as a bastardized, weaker version of themselves, but humans are able to prove them wrong in most instances.

Once humanity emerged as a force in the world, Ceres reached the peak of its development culturally, developmentally, and genetically. Thus began the Third Age.

Humans were a stabilizing force that kept the other descendants of the Vareene from lashing out at one another in their natural drive to vie for dominance. Of course, conflict over resources and politics still occurs, but on the societal level; there is no longer any concept of genocidal war or an eternal struggle between different sorts of folk.

By the present year of 1500 VY, humans have risen to control and rule many of the kingdoms of Ceres and they are widely considered the dominant people of the world.

The Shadowed

Something very insidious and frightening has happened to many folk over the course of history. Due to a genetic anomaly, certain children born to any number of parents may be born "wrong." They look much like a human but might have pupil-less jet-black eyes, an unusual number of digits (usually three or six fingers on either or both hands), or even more overtly unsettling features like horns, a tail, or a forked tongue. Known most commonly a "The Shadowed" but sometimes also as "devilborn" or "fiendlings," such folk have abilities unlike those of their nominal ancestry and often manifest significant magical talent. While not inherently evil or malevolent, such folk often find themselves isolated from society and driven to crime or shady alliances with less than upstanding figures. The most notorious instance of a Shadowed is Kurse the Harbinger, the ruler of the Maelstrom.

Ceres Today

The year is 1500 in the Third Age, also known as the Age of Kings. It is a place of many lands and many peoples, constantly competing by force of arms and political machinations. The tribalism of past ages has given way to nationalism and loyalty to small organizations called factions that vie for increased power by varying means.

AGES OF CERES AND THE VAREENE YEAR CALENDAR

The First Age of Ceres is known as the Age of Myth, before the coming of the Vareene. It lasted many thousands of years and culminated in the Calamity from the Skies.

The Second Age of Ceres, also known as the Age of Rebirth, lasted some 4,000-5,000 years, during which the Vareene bred with the existing peoples of the world to produce the folk we know today.

Most historians date the beginning of the Third Age, the Age of Kings, measured by the Vareene Year calendar, to when humans erected the great throne of Astaeria. The present year is 1500 VY.

The folk of the Maelstrom follow the same calendar, but they mark the beginning of the Third Age as the founding of their own country after their exile from Astaeria.

Every nation is different, be it in terms of their government, their magic, or their culture. The folk of Ceres are a vibrant, diverse lot, varying widely in ancestry, skin tone, and facial features. Though they may be very different, what unites the people of Ceres is a clear, common ancestor: the Vareene. People view these ancestors in different ways, and that has led to a number of significant squabbles over the centuries in addition to wars over land, resources, and influence.

Though the realms of Ceres vary widely in power and influence, none towers over all the others. Astaeria has a well-deserved reputation for a cosmopolitan culture and is widely known as the oldest human kingdom, founded at the very beginning of the Third Age, but the nation of Unauwin attracts more trade and religious factions and its cultural institutions are unmatched in their variety and power. The star may have faded somewhat over the elven realm of Arendaniel, often called "The Blessed," and Ancient Oloeri, the strongest dwarven kingdom, with its emphasis on trade and craft, but they are both nations to be reckoned with that have stood the test of millennia. Far-flung lands like Derarin and Ocia maintain significant power on the outskirts of civilized Ceres, and the island nations of Galear and Rao guard the western flank of the continent.

The great Barrier Veil has hung over the world of Ceres for millennia, and most assume that it is a constant and unchanging part of the world. It paints the skies with myriad, shifting colors, particularly late in the day or early in the morning as the sun's light diffuses through the veil at varying speeds, setting it to gleaming.

And beneath the ground, buried deep below the political intrigue of courts and the march of armies, ancient secrets lie in wait.

THE MANY VARIED FOLK OF CERES

The folk of Ceres do not use the term "race" to define themselves, for they are all one people who share a common ancestor: the Vareene. In fact, they consider the concept of "race" to be quite rude; they prefer the term "ancestry" or "heritage." On occasion, there have been attempts by vile folk gripped by murderous hate to wipe out one people or another, but if one value unites the diverse peoples of Ceres, it is a celebration of their diverse heritage. The disparate kingdoms of Ceres have united more than once against a genocidal dictator who sought to oppress one ancestry or another.

A key point to recall is while Ceres folk have cultural tendencies—elves tend toward atheism and magic, dwarves toward engineering and mountains—not every individual member of a particular group bears out that tendency. Humans are the most diverse of all, precisely because they are born of many ancestries. Also, no group of folk in Ceres is inherently good or inherently evil. All of them are merely people with their own wants, desires, and dreams.

Threats

In Ceres, conflict and competition are commonplace and few people from any walk of life have escaped the dread of war. Death is a daily companion in many parts of the world, and Ceres is a world of struggle and striving. Above and beyond the threat of fellow folk, a great number of monsters infest Ceres despite attempts in the more advanced and powerful kingdoms to cleanse them from the land.

Two great perils loom over the world of Ceres, one widely known and dreaded, the other hidden and inevitable.

Kurse the Harbinger, Lord of the Maelstrom

The darkness of Kurse, also called the Great Betrayer, is a common theme of dark tales and suffering in Ceres. Rarely does a generation pass where the dread lord does not attempt at least one invasion into the lands of light, thirsty for power and dominance over all. Kurse is the subject of fireside whispers, bardic tales after midnight, and countless nightmares across Ceres. As long as anyone living on Ceres has been alive, there has always been a Kurse ruling over the Maelstrom.

No one can say for certain whether Kurse is man or woman, neither or both: equally as many tales exist that cast Kurse as any number of genders. What the tales agree upon is that Kurse is a tyrant, a trickster, and a manipulator working behind the scenes. Kurse definitely has some degree of magical talent, with the inherited power of the Vareene strong within their blood, and they have access to a huge host of Vareene artifacts kept safe within the ever-swirling Maelstrom. The Harbinger has worked for 1,500 years to accumulate both political and magical power and stands upon the brink of achieving their goal: subjecting the lands and folk of the continent of Ceres to a great purge, so that they might clear the way for the world's inevitable doom.

Over the centuries, Kurse has attempted to exert power over many rulers of various nations by coercion through blackmail, the promises of power, influence, or revenge, or outright seduction. Kurse is the world's "bogeyman"—a haunting figure that will swoop down and consume naughty children and weak nations with equal relish.

Scratch the surface of many of the conflicts and disputes among the various realms of Ceres, and one can find Kurse's agents exacerbating already fractious relations to make them boil over into full-blown war. Kurse takes great care never to unite the realms against the Maelstrom, as that might spell the end for Kurse, but rather to pit them against each other and spread chaos. Dynasties have risen through Kurse's influence and fallen just as quickly when they no longer serve the Great Betrayer's will.

It is possible that, without Kurse's influence, the nations of Ceres would have united long before now, but who can say for certain?

Rise of the Harbinger

The exact nature of Kurse the Harbinger is a mystery. It is commonly agreed that the creature who would become the Great Betrayer was born a Shadowed citizen of what is now Astaeria, and in time rose to become a powerful necromancer known for darker-than-dark magic and the theft of priceless Vareene artifacts, often involving murder, treachery, and perversions of the natural order. A union of heroes banded together to overcome and defeat the traitor, who was then cast into exile in the Maelstrom at the heart of the lands of Ceres.

Always in the past, people condemned to the vast crater had perished in the high winds and scalding magical storm that constantly rage over the Maelstrom, but the Shadowed exile did not die. Indeed, the lingering radiation of the Vareene artifacts the traitor had used in Astaeria called to the Maelstrom, and it answered in kind, destroying and rebuilding the Shadowed's broken body into something stronger and more powerful. Magic flowed easily to the Shadowed traitor, who perceived in the depths of the Maelstrom a quest to prepare the world of Ceres for an inevitable purging from beyond the stars.

The traitor took the name Kurse, in order to be a curse upon the lands of Ceres, and Harbinger, in order to honor this impending destiny.

Vassals of the Shadowed Tyrant

The tyrannical Shadowed master of the Maelstrom has annexed a number of subservient kingdoms over the centuries to supply the bleak nation of the Maelstrom, fuel their armies, and serve as buffer states against the goodly folk of Ceres.

The people of these lands are not necessarily evil themselves, but they are sufficiently oppressed and controlled so as to remain absolutely loyal to Kurse. Rebellions from within and attempted coups inspired by foreign agents have sought to throw off the power of the Shadowed tyrant, but inevitably all of these uprisings have only left the Maelstrom in tighter control over these vassal kingdoms.

More detail on Kurse and the vassal kingdoms that make up the Maelstrom can be found in the kingdom entry for the Maelstrom in *Chapter 5: The Realms*.

THE BETRAYER'S DESTINY

Kurse is intended to function as an archenemy for all of Ceres. No one kingdom can oppose Kurse alone, and even a collection of realms stands only a marginal chance of defeating the Great Betrayer. Only with all of Ceres united under a single banner can victory over the great villain be assured. Kurse knows this, and subtly manipulates one land against another, then aggressively exploits the resulting weakening of either or both realms. The folk of Ceres are notoriously afraid of Kurse, and turning them as one against the Maelstrom is no easy feat: it can only accomplished through ingenious diplomacy, conquest, or a miracle.

THE SEARCH FOR THE CATALYST

After the defeat of Kurse, the people of Ceres will uncover the wreck of the Vareene ship at the heart of the Maelstrom. Much of it has degenerated, but the Harbinger saved what they could, and enough remains to change the very face of Ceres. The information within, coupled with the weakening of the Barrier, will convince the brighter minds of Ceres that they face an imminent threat. People will face a crisis of faith: are the Congregation and the Vareene one and the same, as Kurse believed and as their records indicate? A key question will be raised: what is the Catalyst, and where can it be found? It is the key to the world's salvation. Fortunately, the hulk also provides a potential solution, because it helps scholars unlock Vareene technology and magic on an unprecedented level. The resulting improvements to travel and communication catapult the realms of Ceres into an age of exploration, and that will bring *Seeds of Wars* forward into a modern age.

The Congregation's Return

Between fractious political relations, border disputes, the incursion of monsters, and the omnipresent threat of Kurse and their agents, the folk of Ceres have plenty to fear already. Their greatest threat, however—the doom almost certain to spell the end of not only their civilizations, but all life on Ceres—comes from a far-flung source.

For you see, the Congregation have not forgotten about their old enemies, the Vareene. In fact, their greatest weapon—the Catalyst—slipped through the Congregation's net, and its absence has unsettled the great empire for all the millennia since its disappearance. The Congregation long to possess this greatest weapon of their vanquished enemies, and so they have been sending scout ships to the countless planets across thousands of star systems in the greater galaxy, seeking signs of their old enemies.

Their sensors cannot breach the Vareene's established protection for now, but this state of affairs will not last. Perhaps due to decay from millennia of operation, or perhaps due to energies released with the defeat of the Harbinger, the Barrier Veil will eventually lose power: it will flicker, dim, and go out in patches. When it goes down for good, there will be nothing to stop the Congregation locating the markers of their old nemeses. The Vareene on Ceres lacked sufficient strength to repel even a single scout ship, and considering how far their technology has fallen since, the world as we know it stands little chance against the highly advanced Congregation.

Religious Traditions

Ceres boasts many religious orders and philosophies from big, realms-spanning churches with thousands of members to isolated, rural shrines with only a few attendants from the local farms.

Most of the faiths of Ceres are in some way related to the Vareene, the so-called "Gods from Beyond the Skies," who directly aided in the evolution and rise of the peoples of the land. Some see them as gods—beneficent, divine entities who actively guide the destiny of Ceres—while some think they no longer exist but have left a powerful legacy that must be fulfilled.

Still others reject the influence of the Vareene, considering anything to do with their power or history to be profane—these orders think of the influence of the advent of these otherworldly beings as the worst thing to happen in the history of the world.

The Elves and Religion

Elves are notoriously atheistic in their views, having little to no cultural religious tradition, but they usually do not judge those who have faith. Their most common attitude toward religious faith is best described as "indulgent" or "benevolently contemptuous." Those elves who do subscribe to a religious tradition are often considered iconoclastic rogues, scandalizing most "proper" elven elders.

Theistic Religions

The Church of the Sky Gods held great influence over the folk of Ceres since before the beginning of the Third Age but is now fragmented and no longer exists in its original form.

One of the oldest faiths in Ceres is the Church of the Source, active primarily in Astaeria, from which grew the Church of the Endless Stars (see below). Followers of the Source believe in the significance of the Sky Gods but downplay them in contrast to the great unifying cause they serve: the Source Beyond the Stars, from which all life is derived. Adherents of the church believe the Sky Gods to be allegorical rather than literal—figurative rather than physical—and when pressed, may confess with a long-suffering sigh that they do not really exist at all.

The Church of the Endless Stars is one of the oldest and most powerful faiths active in Ceres. According to church dogma, the Vareene exist today, divine and above mortal life, and guide the actions of the faithful and events of the world. The church recognizes multiple specific deities, who are typically considered gender-fluid (as many stories exist describing Althaer the Avenging as male as female, for instance), and adherents pray for aid and guidance to the deity who embodies their situation at the time.

Numerous churches have sprouted up throughout Ceres focusing on one Sky God or another to the exclusion of the others. They recognize the divinity of the whole pantheon, perhaps, but their chosen deity is the one to whom they devote their lives. These cults and orders tend

to be more specific in how they see their deity and less tolerant of those who serve a different Sky God. Most of the religious conflicts and wars that have gripped Ceres over the last few centuries owe their start to tensions between followers of one Sky God versus another.

Finally, in some cases, folk seeking religious freedom have broken off from a larger church in their homeland to found a smaller splinter sect of that church, such as the Church of Edaulla, which started as a cult that celebrated a great prophet and martyr of the same name. The faith originated in Cadelania, but they were driven out of that country and found their way to the western coast of the continent of Ceres, where they could form their own kingdom and practice their specific form of worship as they saw fit. In time, it became the state religion, and inhabitants who cling to a different faith find the atmosphere oppressive and minds closed.

Animist Faiths and Ancestor Worship

A number of faiths in Ceres hearken back to older ways that predate the advent of the Vareene, worshipping similar spiritual forces to those recognized by their forebears.

Several powerful factions, particularly those who operate in less settled realms, advocate belief in spirits in the land, water, and other geographical features of the world. Some of these are primitivist, seeking to preserve the ways of the ancient dweor and orok specifically, while some of the faithful are highly sophisticated and philosophical. There is some overlap with the influence of the Vareene in such beliefs, as their buried relics seep radiation into the surrounding area, particularly in wilder places full of magic, but animistic faiths are not necessarily connected to them directly.

The dwarves of Oloeri and several other peoples strongly tend toward a kind of ancestor worship. They do not precisely see their ancestors as divine, but they seek to emulate their actions and consider them worthy of veneration. Some, however, see death as a mere stepping stone to a transcendent, divine life beyond.

Philosophies and Mysticism

Numerous religious organizations exist that view the Vareene as mortal creatures—important, but not divine—and seek to emulate their example through study, understanding, and progress of society. Such organizations often seek out Vareene artifacts or grow up around one or two specific treasures, particularly artifacts that present some sort of conundrum or puzzle.

Still other faiths do not venerate the Vareene at all and are instead sworn to a principle or concept rather than any sort of deity. They may or may not aggressively deny the existence of any divine reality, and generally see divine magic as fundamentally the same as arcane magic. Priests of such sects derive power through their conviction to their cause. For instance, Seerism, a cult that has grown up in Galear and Rao in recent decades, venerates knowledge and the divination thereof. It respects the various deities of Ceres but rarely addresses any of them directly.

Deities of Ceres

The most commonly worshipped deities of Ceres are the Sky Gods. None are specifically a "god" or "goddess." They present various genders and take on varying aspects. These gods are worshipped by various peoples (humans, orcs, etc.) who sometimes call them by varying names.

Althaer the Avenging Angel

One of the most widely venerated gods, Althaer is the divine essence of animus and passion, representing the mortal drive to accomplish one's goals and exact retribution on one's foes. Althaer is commonly depicted as a powerful human warrior, sometimes with an idealized male humanoid form, usually wearing little or no clothes and armor. Althaer is widely worshipped among humans and orcs.

Bellêt the Nurturing Hierophant

Portrayed as the source of Ceres's agriculture and its shifting seasons, Bellêt is a wise and parental deity who represents the wisdom and knowledge that come with age and experience. In many lands, Bellêt takes on a maternal character without necessarily being seen as a female entity—the god oversees the birth, life, and death of all people. The elves who worship the Sky Gods often revere Bellêt.

Dartaran the Restless Wanderer

The spirit of adventure and exploration, Dartaran pushes all people to venture beyond the familiar and explore the new and potentially dangerous. This deity of the restless is depicted as carrying both a walking staff and a keen sword, and drives all to push themselves beyond their limits. Dartaran is the patron deity of many half-elves and explorers.

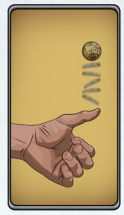
Karn the Bringer of New Life

The closest any Sky God comes to representing death, Karn offers a kind of spiritual renewal through shedding the constraints of the physical. The way of Karn bids followers to abandon the concerns of the flesh and focus upon the enlightenment that transcends them. The dark elves and dark dwarves of the lands near the Maelstrom often revere Karn, highlighting the deity's more destructive aspects.

Matar the Knight Errant

Patron deity of strategy and the eternal quest for the perfect victory, Matar teaches that confidence, tempered with skill at arms, can overcome any obstacle. Popular among warriors and soldiers, Matar always has a place on the battlefield, and it is said that triumph comes only through Matar's favor. Those dwarves drawn to the Sky Gods often choose Matar as the focus of their reverence.

Ratakka the One Who Smiles



Fortune favors the bold and foolish, so Ratakka loves both. A deity chaotic in temperament and unpredictable in favor, the Divine Luck is a fickle force but a powerful one. Followers of Ratakka come from all walks of life, as good luck shines as it wills. Halflings are particularly drawn to Ratakka.

Sadaya the Eternal Lovers

An entity that is both one and multiple, Sadaya stands for all relationships, from the physical to the psychological, from the platonic to the romantic. Sadaya is known in some aspects as a fertility goddess and in others as a god of romance and courtly love. Most conceptions of the deity (or deities) conceive of Sadaya as fundamentally benevolent, even innocent, but also powerful and vengeful if crossed. Humans make up most of Sadaya's followers, as well as gnomes, halflings, and the occasional elf.

Tallis the Tireless Justicar

The strong arm of justice, Tallis is the patron deity of magistrates and those who seek to enforce the laws of the land. Tallis is notoriously even-handed and fair, dispensing punishment and mercy in equal measure. Warriors of all stripes, particularly human and dwarven, revere or fear Tallis.

Vatharn the Ruler of Heaven

This deity represents authority, given by the endless void beyond the stars, and is typically seen as the most influential of the Sky Gods, if not the most powerful. Prayers to Vatharn typically invoke the qualities of kings and queens such as patience, power, and discipline, or else appeal to the deity for guidance in being persuasive or assertive in negotiations. Vatharn's worshippers come from many backgrounds, but most are folk of power and prestige, like the rulers of kingdoms.

Xir the Faceless Friend

One of the most mysterious of Ceres's deities, Xir appears in almost every story told about the Sky Gods. A force of compassion and kindness that moves through all the lands of Ceres, Xir is known alternately as a trickster god and as an unshakeable ally to all impoverished, marginalized people. Xir is the patron deity of the Shadowed and all those, fairly or unfairly, turned aside for who they are.

Magic

The Vareene long ago transcended such things as passwords, thumbprints, or facial recognition access to their technology. Instead, their technology reacts to them on a genetic level, unlocking and activating in the presence of a true descendant, as though for the Vareene scientist themselves.

In a world that knows nothing of aliens or genetics, this heritage is called by another name: *magic*.

Wielders of Magic

While most of the folk alive in Ceres today technically have at least one Vareene ancestor, the level of magic in one's blood can vary wildly, even within the same family. "The Gift" is genetic and its manifestation and strength depend on a variety of factors not easily replicated or predicted, particularly in a world that doesn't even grasp the concept.

Extensive breeding programs have been enacted at numerous times throughout history to try and "preserve" strong bloodlines or breed a powerful magical practitioner, but these have met with mixed success. The Gift and the resulting manifestation of magical power seem essentially random and, thus, miraculous.

Many societies have a rite of passage by which young people are exposed to an artifact of Vareene technology, to see if it reacts in their presence. If it does, they take that as a sign that the person is blessed by the ancestors and has inherited the Gift of the Vareene. It should be noted, however, that the Gift does not always manifest early in one's life, and there have been accounts of middle-aged folk spontaneously manifesting the Mark or the elderly suddenly wielding the Gift from their death beds.

The Mark

Once it has been unlocked, an individual who bears the Gift of the Vareene typically reveals their potential by means of a visual effect. The Mark reacts to magical radiation and the presence of Vareene artifacts, sometimes flaring brightly at unexpected moments.

The magic of the Vareene is complex and could take any number of forms. Commonly, wielders develop glowing veins of various colors (the most common are blue and green) that light across their skin when they use the power and shimmer dimly when it lies quiescent. The Mark has also been documented to take the form of glowing eyes that glow brighter when one casts magic, colorful fiery breath (like steam from one's mouth on a cold day), or changes in the skin or shape of a wielder's limbs.

Note that while magic does reveal itself by default when used, clever spellcasters can find ways to disguise and hide their use of the power. This technique is called the "Mark and the Mask," and often involves casting spells without verbal and/or somatic components.

The Gift

Once identified, exactly how the Gift of the Vareene manifests in a person can vary considerably. Some are able to unlock their magical abilities through study and practice, while some wield it as naturally as breathing and only grow weary when they look at books.

Those with a minor talent often manifest it as a natural support to their normal activities, such as a warrior who discovers she has the Gift and uses it to enhance her strength or stamina in battle, or a thief who learns how to obscure himself from view and deaden the sound around him.

Magic and the World

The Vareene maintained only a small network of outposts on Ceres, but the amount and power of their technology is significant and varied. Over the ages, many of their installations and waystations have fallen into the shadows of forgotten memory, waiting to be unearthed. These are potentially sources of great power, but excavating them can be dangerous and have lasting consequences.

A clear connection has been drawn between the Gift and areas of powerful magical resonance. Usually, these are undeveloped wilderness areas that have been touched, for one reason or another, by the power of the Vareene. Magic is strengthened in the presence of radiation that has leaked into the land, and wielders of the Gift may find themselves losing control in areas of high magic power, such as within the Maelstrom.

Languages

The folk of Ceres speak a number of languages, mostly originating from their ethnic ancestry.

Elves, for instance, have their own tongue that hearkens back to their fae forebears, while dwarves use a mixture of low-pitched tones and sounds that sound like the tap of hammers or chisels on stone. The highly-emotive orc dialects are made up of a wide variety of grunts and growls coupled with clear body language to make up a method of communication that is difficult for a non-orc to learn.

Most folk speak at least some of the trade tongue called Ceran, or "common" as many refer to it. This is a pidgin language comprised of a collision between various other languages, especially elven and dwarven, with a good number of orc words thrown in to make aggressive points. Most of the profanity in Ceran comes from orc battlefields, but so does much of the verbiage describing strong passions like romantic ardor, undying hatred, and powerful drive. Elven words in Ceran typically describe abstract or intellectual things, particularly in philosophy or high-level discourse. Dwarven words are gruff, direct, and practical.

Scholars disagree on the origin of the tongue of Ceran, but a strong argument can be made that the basis of the language is actually Vareen, which exists to this day as primarily a written language, deciphered from the texts found in old crypts and buried storage sites for Vareene artifacts. Whether the ancient folk from beyond the stars actually spoke a language that sounds anything like what passes for Vareen now is anyone's guess, but it is a mark of class and education to call oneself "fluent" in the ancient tongue.

Many ancestries have developed their own specific languages to communicate with one another, even across ethnic lines. For instance, rock gnomes typically speak Dwarvish and forest gnomes Elvish, but with each other, they speak a surprisingly complex tongue that combines elements of the two and also incorporates sounds entirely alien to either. Halflings all over Ceres know a specific set of words and gestures that convey feelings of warmth, happiness, and peace. Goblins speak their own nasal language that sounds unpleasant to the ear of most other peoples, and giants speak a rumbling, powerful series of hums and growls that can make the faint of heart feel weak. Humans have no language of their own and most speak Ceran, which is, like them, established out of many ancestries.

Rarer languages on the continent have their own unique character. Sylvan is a sibilant language that sounds a bit like wind whistling though trees, while Draconic is composed mostly of guttural sounds difficult to emulate with human or elven vocal cords. In the Maelstrom, the blood of Kurse has fashioned its own language, which often gives headaches to folk unaccustomed to its dark pronouncements and utterances.

The following are some of the languages spoken on the continent of Ceres:

Common Languages:

- **Ceran**, the melting pot "trade" language everyone speaks
- **Raoi**, the language spoken in the realm of Rao, on the Sunset Isle
- **Dwarvish**, the practical language of dwarves, rock gnomes, and other creatures of earth
- **Elvish**, the graceful language of elves and forest gnomes
- **Giant**, the rumbling language of giants and giant-kin
- **Gnomish**, the quick language gnomes use with each other
- **Goblin**, the keening language of goblins
- **Halfling**, the tranquil language of halflings
- **Orcish**, the aggressive language of orcs and their kin

Rare Languages:

- **Draconic**, the threatening language of dragons
- **Mael**, the dark language of the Maelstrom
- **Sylvan**, the tricky language of faerie creatures
- **Vareen**, the archaic language of the folk from beyond the stars

Names

In Ceres, folk often take names based on the dominant culture of the area in which they live, rather than based on their heritage. An elf living in Oloeri, for instance, is likely to go by a dwarf name, whereas an orc who makes his living in Arendaniel might have an elven title for a name, rather than whatever he might have been called in his homeland to the west. Traditional naming conventions hail from the ancestors of the distant past, and how exactly one derives a name is as much a comment on where one's forebears were from as what region one calls home.

Like the fae of the Heartwood, elves have a tendency to use long names: three or four words, often with numerous vowels, and they are particularly fond of the letters "L" and "W" pronounced in a fluid or sibilant fashion. They usually append the region they hail from to their name, similar to how others might say "of this land." Many of their names are borderline unpronounceable by the tongues of other folk, so they translate them into concepts for speakers less familiar with (and more likely to butcher) the elven tongue. For instance, an elf named Wieth Waas Loth a'Wrenne might go by the title "Willful Breath of Spring Air, who hails from Wrenne." An elf's favored title might have little to do with their actual name, but merely be a poetic phrase they like.

As did the dweor before them, the dwarves of Oloeri and other such lands prefer practical names that usually consist of a short, clipped given name, such as "Dern" or "Sart," followed by a compound title that gives a sense of the individual's character or profession. This may be as literal as "Sellsword" for a mercenary or "Rockcarver" for a miner, or might be as thought-provoking as "Fallout." Folk with this naming convention typically use their parents' names in some combination, at least while they are young. If the dwarves in the above example had a child, for instance, they might refer to them by the name "Swordcarver" or "Rockseller" until the youth grew up and took up a profession of their own.

Like their orok ancestors, orcs favor sharp, guttural names, usually with two syllables, such as "Guldor" or "Hrothgorm." They rarely attach a surname, though they will refer to themselves by some sort of episode in their lives, such as "Guldor, Scourge of the Caves of Dalindra" or "Hrothgorm, Slayer of Spiders". These sobriquets might be deadly serious or they might be in jest, commemorating some momentous deed or a clumsy and foolhardy failure, serving as a kind of inside joke to the individual's companions.

Humans may have names like any of these, and whichever sort of name they bear is bound to evoke certain judgments in those around them. A human with an orok sort of name is immediately perceived to be violent or aggressive, a dweor name marks a bearer as dour and predictable, and a fae name suggests someone might be flighty or haughty.

The Shadowed are often named after some kind of misery or hardship they have imposed on their parents, such that no one ever forgets their shame. "Kurse" is the prime example of such a name, but other appropriate names for Shadowed children, regardless of ancestry, might be "Bane" or "Pox" or "Sorrow."

Calendar and Festivals

Most folk of Ceres use the Vareene Year (VY) calendar, which dates to the founding of what is now Astaeria, 1500 years ago.

The calendar itself has twelve months, each composed of four "weeks" of nine days, for a total of 36 days per month. Days are counted by the number of the day, the number of the week, and the number of the month, such as "the third day of the second week of the sixth month, 1500 VY," which is the 12th overall day in that particular month.

There are five festdays among these months, typically commemorating the seasons, as well as "Sky-Gods Day," which commemorates the ancient calamity from the skies. This day occurs when the sky turns a bright shade of orange and hexagonal shapes are visible above. It always occurs the same day every year: about halfway between the start of spring and midsummer. What exactly this phenomenon signifies is not entirely known, but most scholars speculate that this is the time that the great barrier refreshes itself to continue protecting Ceres for another year. The count of years is tracked from this day.

The months are as follows, with festdays marked by when they occur in the year.

Calendar of Ceres

Month	Event	Description
	Sky-Gods Day	*New Year's Day, commemorating the Calamity from the Skies*
1	*The Growing*	*Late spring, first month of the year and vibrant with plant growth*
2	*The Ripening*	*Early summer, when the first crops are harvested*
	Sun's Fire	*Midsummer's Day, the longest day of the year*
3	*The Burning*	*Summer, when the heat is worst*
4	*The Harvesting*	*Late summer, when the majority of crops are harvested*
5	*The Winnowing*	*When the crops are milled and food preserved*
	Old Dusk	*Festday to commemorate autumn and propitiate the dead*
6	*The Redding*	*Early autumn, when the leaves turn red and orange*
7	*The Planting*	*Late autumn, when the winter seeds are sown*
8	*The Chilling*	*Early winter, when the first snows fall*
	Moon's Frost	*Midwinter's Day, the longest night of the year*
9	*The Sleeping*	*Winter, with the days growing steadily longer*
10	*The Thawing*	*Late winter, when snows disappear and the fields are plowed*
11	*The Sowing*	*When the fields are fertilized and the spring seeds sown*
	Life's Dawn	*Last festday of the year, commemorating spring*
12	*The Blossoming*	*Spring, full of showers and last month of the year*

The folk of the Maelstrom keep a similar calendar, but their names for the months are different, and they date their calendar from the year Kurse first came to the Maelstrom in exile from Astaeria. The years are essentially the same, but their calendar starts later in the dead of winter, with Moon's Frost marking the beginning of their year. It was on that day, so legend holds, that Kurse first came to the Maelstrom and survived its destructive energies. Thus, most of the time, the Maelstrom calendar is one year behind the Vareene Year calendar (it is presently 1499 on their calendar and 1500 VY).

THE BLEAK MONTHS

For four months every year, between the Moon's Frost and Sky-Gods Day, the calendars are aligned, a period of time commonly known as "The Bleak." According to widespread superstition, the worst calamities to befall Ceres always seem to occur during this period of time.

There is some truth to the speculation, historically speaking. When they march, almost always during the winter, the Maelstrom's forces tend to be better equipped to deal with the snow and cold of the winter months, giving them a substantial advantage over defending realms lulled into relative hibernation in the cold. It is much more difficult to field a defensive army of one's own, let alone bring in allies from another realm. Most of the Maelstrom's gains of land and territory have coincided with these cold, bleak months.

THE DIVERSE MONSTERS OF CERES

When constructing your *Seeds of Wars* campaign, you can include virtually any sort of monster from any fantasy roleplaying game you like and it can be explained away by means of the strange radiation of Vareene technology and/or their omni-genetics. The contents of this section are not intended to be a comprehensive list—use them as inspiration for working your own favorite creatures into the setting.

Bestiary

Ceres is home to a wide assortment of fantastic, terrifying beasts that owe their fearsome nature and magical powers to the leaking radiation of the Vareene artifacts buried throughout the continent and dispersed throughout the skies when the Catalyst crashed into what is now the Maelstrom. The closer one comes to the Maelstrom proper, the more bizarre and unrecognizable the flora and fauna of Ceres become.

There are hundreds of different creatures that dwell and hunt in Ceres, but some of the most well-known and well-documented are listed below.

Chimeras

Vareene technology has worked subtle magic in shaping the creatures and folk of Ceres, giving rise to a number of diverse species that resemble each other in most particulars: bipedal, humanoid beings with the same basic internal organs and skeletal structure. They have more similarities than differences.

The leaking radiation has also produced creatures of profound difference, with multiple heads, forests of legs, wings, and other appendages, and sometimes various animals spliced together to produce a terrifying whole. Scholars know these creatures as **chimeric beasts**, and they are among the most unsettling and dangerous foes that the folk of Ceres might face. A relatively common and less dangerous, but still ferocious, example of such a creature is an **owlbear**, created through the fusion of its two originating animals.

Basilisks lurk in caves or secluded, swampy groves, waiting to turn creatures to stone with their haunting gazes. This produces a transmogrifying effect, wherein the magic actually turns a living creature into technological hardware, its purpose and use completely forgotten. The cockatrice's beak causes a similar effect, and such creatures have been known to secret themselves among otherwise innocuous flocks of chickens in more settled lands.

The **catoblepas** haunts swamps and wetlands far from cities and marks its territory with the desiccated bodies of its victims. Its fatal gaze drains the life energy from opponents in a process originally intended to enhance and strengthen the originating device, but the catoblepas itself lacks any capacity for metabolizing stolen life energy.

A creature called simply a **chimera**—the fusion of three animals, typically a goat, a lion, and a snake—can grow to massive size and pose a serious threat to mundane folk. These beasts might demonstrate any number of terrible powers, as they are essentially created by random mistranslation of their component creatures' genetic structure. Some breathe fire, some produce lightning, and still others can teleport from place to place, usually seemingly randomly.

Perhaps the most awful of all these beasts is the dreaded **hydra**, which can describe several species of creature that resemble many-headed snakes. Notoriously, they regenerate damaged flesh or even severed heads at an astonishing rate, though they always do so in a disgusting manner similar to rapidly spreading tumors. A hydra grows larger as it produces new heads, potentially entrapping it in an environment too small for its increasing bulk. A popular Oloeri legend describes exactly this effect, where a dwarven hero, unable to slay the beast single-handedly, managed to keep removing heads until it swelled to fill a vast burial hall to the point it could not move, whereupon it starved.

Dragons

Some of the mightiest and most terrible creatures in Ceres, **dragons** are quite rare and extremely reclusive. None can say precisely when dragons arose, but most scholars agree they predate the Vareene and have little to do with them, at least originally. There are myths that dragons were once the rulers of the world and only lost their hold after an assault of allied fae, dweor, and orok wrested it from them. Some dragons have embraced the power left in the land by the Vareene, using it to emulate magical effects and carve out their own small kingdoms in and amongst Ceres's many realms.

Elementals

Creatures of simple, primal elements given life by Vareene artifacts, **elemental** creatures are rare and dangerous. Their minds, if they even have them, do not function like those of a sentient being, and they are difficult to predict or anticipate. What is clear is that elementals often follow the natural course of whatever element spawned them: a fire elemental seeks to consume and destroy while a water elemental seeks to travel and nurture, or an air elemental rides the winds in search of new locations and an earth elemental prefers to stay in one place, unmoving unless provoked.

Historically, powerful sorcerers have been known to call up and command elementals in battle, where they become terrifying soldiers on the field, capable of wiping out entire opposing units with little to no trouble.

Fae & Hags

The influence of the Vareene's omni-genetics did not always have the same consequences for all exposed to them, and this was especially notable in certain children of the fae. Elves live much longer than most other people in Ceres, but fae creatures who were closer to their Vareene roots are nearly immortal. In its heyday, the realm of Arendaniel boasted a council of elven rulers who claimed to be over a thousand years of age, but they have since retreated into the mists of history.

All manner of fae creatures exist who are not quite elves or gnomes. **Pixies**, **brownies**, and other such tricksters roam the forests of Ceres, as well as numerous other entities who are not nearly as benevolent. **Dryads**, **naiads**, and **nymphs** are elf-like creatures that dwell in symbiotic relationships with trees, streams, and forest groves respectively, and they cannot long persist if removed from their source of power and vitality.

The fae have a dark side, and that is embodied in the **hags**. A hag might technically rise from any humanoid folk, though most were once human or elf, and while in the stories, most hags are female, hags may be of any gender. Mysterious, reclusive, and cruel, hags make deals with wanderers and

the lost, sometimes granting them what they think they want, but always at a cost. Folk tales provide dire warnings against any business done with a hag.

Giants

The **giants** of Ceres originate from the same stock as orcs, goblins, and other such folk: from the mingling of orok and Vareene genetics. In their case, they grew huge and strong, but over the centuries, their numbers—never particularly great—have diminished until they are extremely rare. Most common are **ogres**, who are much like orcs except for their massive size. They dwell in out-of-the-way places, rarely attempting to conquer any lands because they know they are not equipped with the numbers or the magic to hold it. Giants make staunch allies and powerful combatants on the field.

Infernals

Midnight black horses with hooves of flame stampede across the skies, bringing ruin to all they come near. Deep in the mist-shrouded moors, a hound born of shadow and hate bays for souls up at the silver moon. Entities of malevolent desires sit on a sleeping person's chest, crushing their lungs and heart as they feast upon their dreams.

The term "infernal" refers to entities seemingly touched by a dark power from beyond the mortal world. Numerous religious orders on Ceres believe these creatures spring from some underworld or hell dimension, and perhaps they are right. Most sages agree they were once mortal creatures whose evolution and development has followed markedly different paths from those of more mundane folk.

The first **barghest** was once a goblin, one deeply connected to the magic of the Vareene, who ventured into a particular tomb following rumors of an ancient power buried there. The goblin found more than it had bargained for, and emerged as a genetically and magically enhanced version of itself, mutated to something more bestial. Over time, this goblin learned to control these new powers and sought to reintegrate into goblin society, only to produce more barghests through its altered genetics. The creatures are now a self-perpetuating species that breeds true, though vilified and rejected by all but the most depraved of goblin societies.

Nightmares first appear in tales of a seemingly noble knight from the Second Age, who led an expedition into the Maelstrom, seeking to conquer its perils and purge the evil taint from the core of Ceres. His force was foiled and foundered at every turn, but the knight would not give up the pursuit, even when nearly everyone else had died or turned back. Driven mad by constant flurries of snow that froze his companions from the inside out, he eventually hit upon the wild idea of lighting himself and his steed aflame to protect them and light their way. The knight vanished into the gloom, only visible as a dim, flame-wreathed shadow, never to be seen again in life. It can be no coincidence that when the spring came, the first **death knight** appeared, roaming the fringes of the Maelstorm astride a steed with hooves and a mane of fire. To this day, many terrible creatures ride nightmares, such as hags, undead warriors, and Kurse the Harbinger.

Though widely seen as some sort of malevolent demon or devil, the creature alternately known as a **succubus** or **incubus** is, in truth, a gender-fluid entity that feeds upon the life energy of mortals to sustain itself, similar to but not the same as a **vampire** or other undead creature (see below). It can and does present whatever gender it wishes, either by personal preference or as a means to an end. These creatures live to seduce and corrupt mortals into parting with their souls willingly, as that consent sweetens the meal.

Sphinxes & Lamias

Though exceedingly rare, some enterprising travelers have encountered mighty half-lion, half-humanoid creatures of incredible intelligence, wisdom, and also arrogance. Ostensibly, a powerful **sphinx** ascetic dwells in the mountains of Ethywen, though acquiring its services or insight requires a would-be supplicant to face numerous dangerous trials that test their wit and sanity.

Lamias also dwell in Ceres, though they do not share the sphinx's pursuit of knowledge; their interests run to the accumulation of wealth, power, and prestige. To call someone a "lamia" is to denounce their lifestyle as greedy and superficial, and more than once an accusation (usually false) of a ruler being a lamia has drummed up support for an uprising or coup. More than once, ironically, such assaults have been orchestrated by actual lamias seeking to restrain the power accumulated by lesser, base beings.

Spiders

Arachnids of unusual size are a persistent plague in many parts of Ceres, but in the deepest forests—particularly the Blackwood, parts of wild Kerann, and Kaareb—they rule in much the same way as humanoid societies might. Here, **giant spiders** grow incredibly large, sentient, and manifest intelligence bordering on those of the finest minds in Ceres. They hunt humanoid prey the way common spiders hunt insects.

Stories have been told of **Veiled Widows**: spiders who can appear like attractive humans or elves to lure hapless fools into their webs, to mate and to feast. Indeed, some of the wilder tales speak of creatures seemingly half-spider, half-humanoid, who wield weapons and spin webs with equal facility. Such beings, if they exist, might well be the spawn of pairings between widows and their prey, conceived before the widow feasts upon its lover and victim.

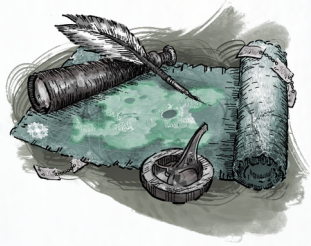
Undead

Necromancy is but one way in which the technological magic of the Vareene can be used, but it is powerful and terrible. Loathsome tyrants and unscrupulous magicians alike direct armies of **zombies** or **skeletons** into war, and while they rarely fight as well as living soldiers, they frequently require fewer resources to maintain and they can be replaced with relative ease. There is no shortage of corpses in war, after all.

Ghouls spring to life in areas of great death and bloodshed, such as in graveyards, crypts, or—most frequently—on battlefields. Within a day of a battle, unless the corpses are somehow removed in their entirety, at least one ghoul for every hundred or so bodies will appear, seemingly manifesting out of nowhere like vermin. Most armies maintain a contingent specialized in killing or driving off the foul creatures, and "ghoul-purging" duty is one of the worst assignments reserved for those soldiers a commander wishes to punish.

Mortal folk parted from their corporeal bodies give rise to tales of **ghosts**, **specters**, and **wraiths**, with varying levels of rage and dread in their individual tragedies. These creatures are particularly common on long-ago battlefields once the survivors have departed, the ghouls have eaten their fill, and only bones and ash remain. Incorporeal undead haunt these places full of pain and sorrow. Not all such entities are the product of spirits that linger despite death, but may be created by means of Vareene magic, sometimes entirely by accident, allowing them to retain their minds and personalities in many cases. These ghosts might be more tragic, as they endeavor to find some cure for their condition only to go mad as they almost inevitably fail.

Certain users of magic quest for ways to extend their lives, and they have found them in various instances. A **lich** is a spellcaster who has found diabolical techniques using Vareene technology to "live" forever, but their existence is an object horror, requiring them to preserve their physical bodies (imperfectly) or else replace them through a succession of victims, whose consciousness they expel and overwrite with their own. The first **vampire** came into being through magic that fractured the means by which the body sustained itself. No longer capable of processing food and drink, the vampire needed to consume life energy from other living beings to survive in a similar manner to the incubus/succubus (see above). The result was a kind of living death, which could be passed to others by means of blood and vile rituals.



Appendix I

Expanding Your Setting

You've read about ruling factions, tactical warfare, and magic on an epic scale, and seen those ideas applied in the realms and factions of Ceres. But, wait … there's more! *Seeds of Wars* was designed as a framework to use in your favorite game world, whether that's one of the fantastic published settings which have graced our hobby or that homebrew magnum opus you've been detailing for years. Here, at the end, we'll talk about how.

We will cover two possibilities, in increasing scope: creating your own realm or faction in Ceres or on any campaign world and breaking down an existing game world into realms and factions to play using *Seeds of Wars*.

Building Realms & Factions

If you'd prefer to create your own faction, you can do so in Ceres. The continent is intentionally left with some gaps for existing factions to expand and new ones to appear. The same is true of many campaign worlds, and settling the frontier is a powerful theme for any game.

First, you'll have to generate a starting Reputation score for your prospective leader or sovereign: simply roll 1d20+15. If your game has some general assessment of character advancement such as a level or an in-game mechanic for social advancement or leadership, you can use these to add an additional modifier of up to +15 to this roll. Faction leaders also begin with the Faction Skill of the skill type of their faction at +1.

For a recommended PC faction, double this starting Reputation score to get your initial creation points. For an especially powerful, not-recommended NPC faction, triple the starting Reputation to get initial creation points. You can spend the resulting points on any of the following:

- **Advisors**—1 point buys an advisor with a +1 Faction Skill, adds +1 Faction Skill to an existing advisor, or purchases the ability to cast epic spells for a Faith or Magic Advisor.
- **Assets**—1 point buys 1 level of Order, Faith, Trade, Magic, or Culture up to the maximum allowable within the county.
- **Constructions**—1 point buys 1 level of fortification, connection, prestige, or seafaring.
- **Counties**—1 point buys 1 level of a county; note that maximum county levels are restricted by several factors, as described in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*.
- **Military**—1 point to purchase 3 cost worth of military units; all purchase prerequisites and stacking rules must be followed, as described in *Chapter 3: Warfare*.
- **Networks**—1 point buys 1 trade route, pilgrimage, ley line, or cultural link; networks must follow all standard prerequisites, as described in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*.
- **Skills**—1 point to buy an additional Faction Skill at +1 for your leader, and an additional 2 to raise a Faction Skill from +1 to +2, 3 to raise a Faction Skill from +2 to +3, etc.
- **Treasury**—1 point to stockpile 2 additional Wealth or Influence; factions have an initial default treasury per GM discretion, as described in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction*.
- **Treaties**—1 point to establish a treaty such as vassalage, an embassy, or a surveillance network; the GM must approve this purchase as appropriate for the setting and story.
- Double the cost of any county or asset which is not connected contiguously with the initially purchased county or asset.
- You cannot purchase a construction or network where you do not have a county or appropriate asset.

Features & Values

Navigable rivers and coastlines should be noted and are needed for a county to build a seafaring construction. In addition, the Special Features in *Chapter 2: Running a Faction* are at the GM's disposal to customize and personalize the realm. Use these to encourage the story in a particular direction, draw the players' attention to something you consider important, or address some element of the county not sufficiently described using only constructions and assets. Finally, assign three or four values to help characterize the society and administration of the realm; some example values can be found in *Chapters 5 and 6*.

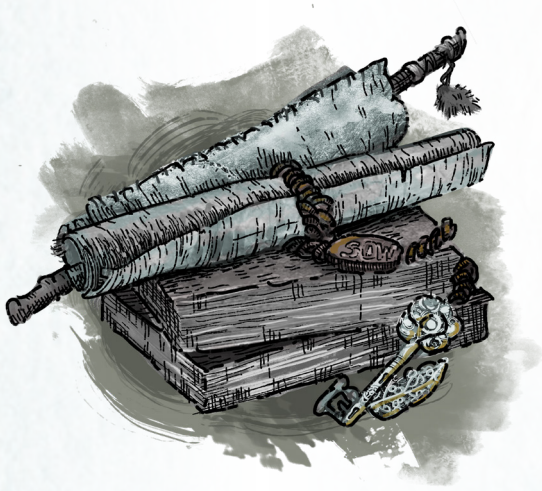
Adapting Game Worlds

Few role-playing games provide the level of organizational detail necessary for realm management and tactical warfare in the style of *Seeds of Wars* without some work on your part. This can be a fun process and extremely rewarding, but adapting an entire game world at once can prove tedious. We suggest that you select a readily discernible geographic region to work with at first, and adapt other regions as they become relevant to gameplay. Once you have a firm idea what you're working with, consider your chosen region in detail by following these steps:

Realms & Counties

What are the distinct nations, kingdoms, and city-states of your setting? Make a list of them, however large or small. If some owe fealty or are politically connected to each other, make a note of that.

Next, determine how many counties each realm would be broken into. Generally speaking, major cities each deserve their own county, as do economically or culturally-distinct areas within a realm. These can be specific or rough—whether you need to know the exact borders of each county at this stage is up to you.



Order Factions

Who are the rulers and power players in your setting? For each realm, write down the ruling family, council body, or other government organization keeping that realm going. These are the Order Factions of your setting.

Identify the key leaders of each faction, i.e. the primary decision-makers for each realm, including any identifying material you would need to run them as a character in your game.

Note that not all of these factions must be run by mundane humanoid creatures. Some of them might be under the sway of mighty, terrible beasts, but when conquered or allied with can still provide useful resources and assets for the player characters.

Order Assets

Also make note of major structures and edifices each Order Faction controls—these will be the assets under that faction's control. For instance, if the ruling family dwells in a castle, mark that as an asset; if they maintain a prison, that is also an Order Asset.

Every Order Faction that controls some territory must have an asset in each county they control. If several factions share control over a county or realm, they each have assets in that area. Vassalage works in a similar way: for any realm that has sworn loyalty to another realm, that larger, more powerful realm will have assets within the smaller realm.

Results

By the end of this process, you should have about as many Order Factions as you have realms: you might have more or less if some realms are essentially ungoverned, a royal family is in exile, or there are competing political bodies trying to control one or more realms. You should have a number of assets equal to the number of settled counties, plus a number of additional assets owned by multiple realms interested in the same land.

Other Factions

Repeat a similar process for the various powerful faiths, magical orders, trade consortiums, and cultural forces in your world. Most RPG settings have plentiful deities, archwizards, and powerful economic and cultural entities.

Faith Factions

Identify the key deities worshipped within each realm and create factions based upon this list. You can create more than one faction for a given deity, especially if there are multiple, possibly heretical sects of religious devotees sworn to that faith. There might also be factions based on causes or ideals, rather than deities or belief—these would also fall into the category of a Faith Faction.

Assets under the faction's control include temples, synagogues, churches, cathedrals, mosques, shrines, or other holy places where the faithful gather to worship or conduct their business.

Magic Factions

Identify magical orders, powerful sorcerers and wizards, or ancient liches active in your world. Some of these factions might not be humanoid, but instead ruled over by dragons or other powerful monstrous entities.

Assets under the faction's control include mage towers, colleges and schools, hidden ritual chambers and other such powerful sites.

Trade Factions

Identify thieves' guilds, merchant councils, economic organizations, and caravanners. These may cross over with the Order Factions if they exert economic influence over their realms, such as a merchant king or queen.

Assets under the faction's control include markets, counting houses, workhouses, manufacturing, and engineering plants.

Culture Factions

Identify adventurers' guilds, actor troupes, charitable organizations, and other such bodies. Bardic colleges and guilds of explorers make for influential Culture Factions.

Assets under the faction's control include museums, halls where artifacts and relics are collected, taverns, amphitheaters and monuments to history.

Results

By the end of this process, you should have about half to two-thirds as many factions of each type as Order Factions. For instance, if there are 40 realms in your world, that suggests about 40 Order Factions, so you'll want to have between 20-30 Faith Factions, 20-30 Magic Factions, etc., for a total of 120-160 factions. If, on the other hand, you want a smaller game, one with only 10 Order Factions, you are liable to end up with 5-7 factions of each other type, for a grand total of 30-40 factions.

Putting It All Together

Once you've identified the realms, counties, factions, and assets of your game world, refer back to Building Realms & Factions at the beginning of this Appendix, and repeat that process for each leader and sovereign you've identified. Finalize your county borders and note any vassalage agreements as you do so.

Feel free to edit the numbers a bit here and there or change your initial impression of the apparent leaders and sovereigns as you go through this process. There are going to be places where matching your game world with *Seeds of Wars* requires a little intuitive thinking, but that's why games have Game Masters!

Appendix II

• Character Development •

Just as you can expand the factions and realms of Ceres or your own game world, there are ways to further develop the leaders and sovereigns ruling them. These iconic PCs are a cut above the typical adventurer, not only in talent but in attitude.

It takes a special person to take the kind of responsibility needed to guide thousands through peace and war. Here, we discuss how an adventurer could transition to epic play, and how being a leader or sovereign affects personal play.

The Rise to Power

Player characters in *Seeds of Wars* are assumed to start as leaders and sovereigns, but if you're adapting the game for another world you may have characters you'd like to see make the transition from personal to epic play in a natural progression.

Even in a campaign or chronicle where epic play is already in place, it can be fun and interesting to follow a character's career from the beginning, before they became a leader or sovereign.

Joining a Faction

To start, GMs need to get each of their PCs involved in a faction. It can be challenging in a party-based game to find a way to hold the adventuring party together while still placing each in a potentially competing realm or faction. We recommend that you choose related factions for all the PCs in a given party—realms like Cadelania, Leanad, and Edaulla work well together and members of those factions might have similar overarching goals.

There are several ways to get your PCs involved in a larger faction: you could motivate them with a cause or ideal, tempt them with power and prestige, or pressure them with duty or obligation. Tailor your approach to each PC and faction in question, and try not to force the character into anything the player won't be able to enjoy and find advantageous.

Climbing the Ranks

Factions are excellent employers and quest-givers. As the PCs perform jobs for their faction, one of their primary forms of payment will be advancement within the faction. As the character gains trust within the faction, they will gain authority, independence, and insider information. They might become advisors, allowing them to develop Faction Skills before they grasp the reins of ultimate power. Roleplaying out the implementation of some faction actions on the ground can add perspective later, when the PC will be ordering their agents to engage in similar actions.

Becoming a Leader

The final promotion should be a culminating event that helps define the character and that the player will remember for a long time. Contests are popular in Ceres, and vicious intrigue and scandal or tragic violence are also possible roads to rulership. Sometimes, even an anticlimactic death in the night can create unsettling ripples that define the early years of a leader or sovereign's reign.

People might question what backroom deals put the PC in power, or acclaim the PC as the rightful heir. Rulership in *Seeds of Wars* is mechanically autocratic, so the character may have to go through a transition period of consolidation before being able to engage in standard epic play. The same storytelling methods you used while **Climbing the Ranks** can be used here to help the new ruler get comfortable in this advanced position.

Rights and Privileges

Leaders and sovereigns have a great deal of responsibility, but there are also advantages to positions of rulership. Having the agents of a faction or realm at your beck and call grants certain perks to an adventurer in personal play. Not every faction has resources beyond the scope of typical adventuring, however. For purposes of play, any faction with a treasury large enough to have a maintenance cost (10 or more in Wealth) is both significant and solvent enough that its leader or sovereign is able to draw upon the following benefits:

- The leader has a permanent retinue paid for by the faction, servants and guards sufficient to maintain the leader's comfort and general safety when camping or at court.

- Living expenses, including room and board, for the leader and the leader's retinue are covered by faction upkeep.

- The leader can levy specialized service from the faction's members. Asking a spellcaster from the leader's faction or an allied faction to use magic on the leader's behalf or calling upon faction agents to uncover a piece of information is appropriate once or twice per adventure.

There are also benefits specific to certain factions in particular, that may or may not require that the faction currently be significant and solvent in the region. Two examples follow:

- If the faction has some heirloom or birthright, such as crown jewels or a magic weapon, the leader is allowed to use or distribute such items as they see fit but cannot sell or destroy these items without suffering a faction-wide consequence such as a loss of Reputation.

- If the faction is also a realm, the sovereign is often the highest legal authority and is exempt from prosecution for misdemeanors. The sovereign may or may not be subject to prosecution for felonies, depending on the realm in question.

Feel free to develop more specific rights and privileges particular to a certain faction. Reactions to the character's presence by NPCs within the faction's territory are always going to be noticeable; the GM can use such interactions to provide comments or advice on actions in epic play for the attentive PC in personal play.

FACTION RECORD SHEET

SEEDS OF WARS

General

Faction name

Faction Type

Leader Name

Seat of Power

Reputation

Influence

Wealth

Court Level

Faction Power

Coat of Arms

Skill Bonus

- Order
- Faith
- Trade
- Magic
- Culture

Expenditures

- Corruption
- Court
- Assets
- Constructions
- Military
- Embassies
- Surveillance
- Advisors
- Diplomacy
- Other

Income

- Counties
- Assets
- Networks
- Diplomacy
- Other Sources

Networks

Origin	Destination	Type	Income

Advisors

Name	Type	Bonus

Vassals

Realm

Military

Unit	Number	Location	Exp.	Garrison	MC

Treaties

Faction	Type

Relationships

Faction	Official	Unofficial

Embassies

Realm

Surveillance

Realm

Assets

								Corruption		Constructions					
Realm	County	Owner	Type	Level	Loyalty	Tax	Income	Level	Points	Connections	Fortifications	Prestige	Seafaring	Maintenance	Features
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Thanks

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