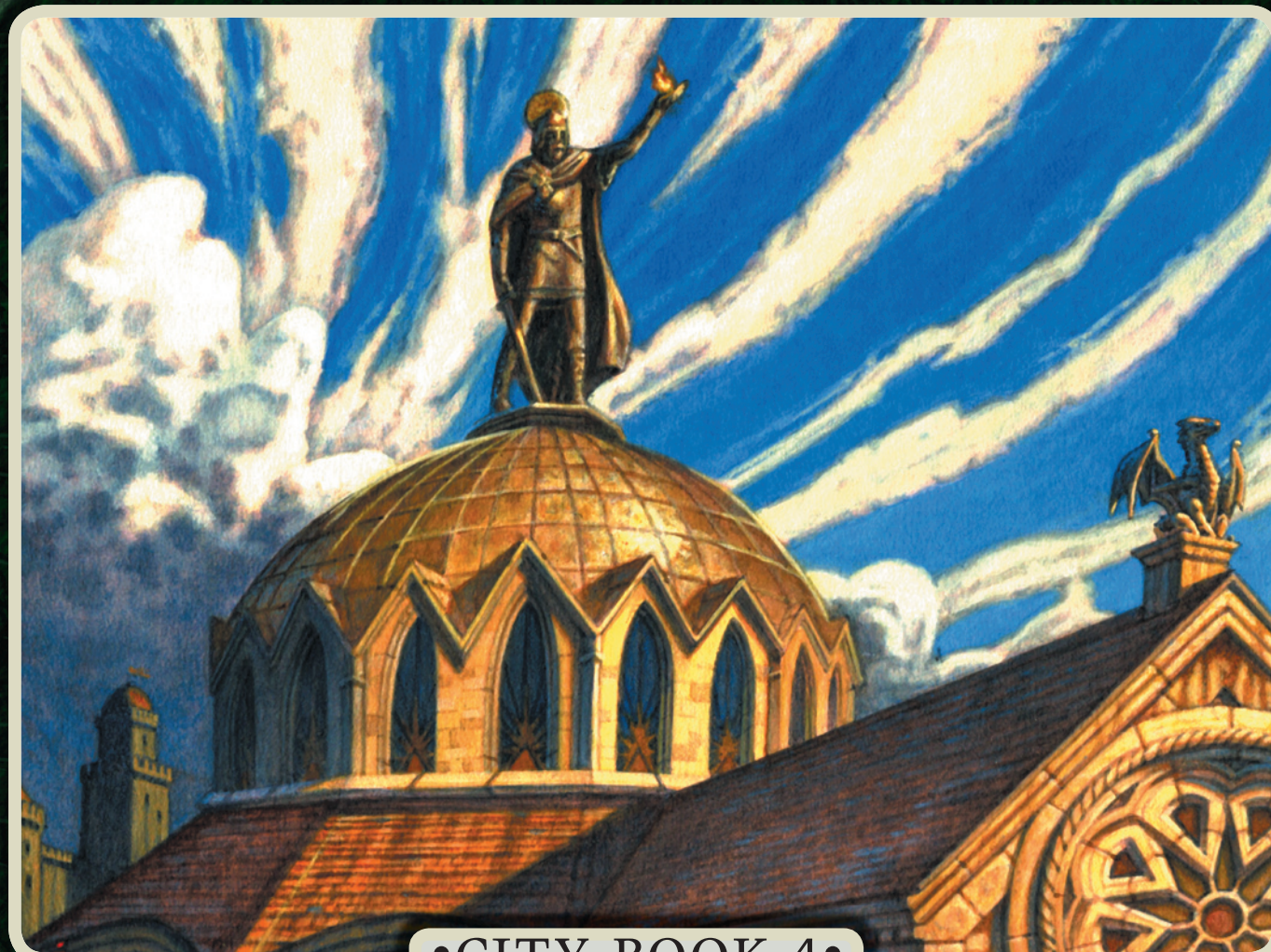


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PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

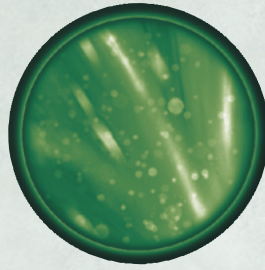
HELLFROST

•CITIES OF ROYALTY•



•CITY BOOK 4•





CITY BOOK 4 CITIES OF ROYALTY

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NEW ASPER



● HISTORY ●

Aspiria has been involved in every major historical event since its conquest by the Anari. Its fledgling armies weathered the dark storm of the Demongate Wars. It was a beacon of hope and light in the terrible crusade against the unholy forces of the Liche-Priest. Its legions stood strong in the face of the vast horde of the Hellfrost armies that poured from the north. It suffered greatly during the Golem Uprising. Yet New Asper makes no appearance in all these turning points in history.

Until its destruction, the capital was in Asper, further west. Historically, this made strategic sense—the location was easy to defend against hostile tribes and the trade routes of old were not as they are today.

Instead of rebuilding the shattered capital, the royal family decreed that a new capital city would be erected to the east—one better positioned for trade and defense. Thus it was that a low hill became the center of power in Aspiria.

Whereas the old capital had grown haphazardly from a core settlement, the new capital, unimaginatively named New Asper, would be designed from the ground up to be a modern, efficient city. Ample room was added for later expansion without the necessity to knock down and rebuild the city walls. Twice the size of the old capital and surrounded by sturdy walls, New Asper would be a throwback to the days of empire, when the Anari were the (largely) undisputed masters of the Hearthlands.

In order to ensure the safety of the workforce, the royal army stormed in the Eastern Marches, driving back the orc tribes that had long dwelt here. Such was the effectiveness of the war that the orcs would take the better part of two centuries to recover their strength.

Recover they did, though, and they turned their eyes to the hated blight that was New Asper. Had they stayed in the distant hills and limited their activities to raiding border villages, the orcs would likely have been ignored. Instead, they marched against the city.

Arguably their decision made sense—a bastion of civilization so close to their lairs posed a serious threat to their continued existence, for sooner or later the humans would seek to end the job they had started generations ago. Unfortunately, their failure to capture the city during a short-lived siege in 452 IR was a direct cause of King Halgroth IV's crusade against them.

Pragmatic, and with conflict against terrible foes a part of their rich and troubled history, Asperians refer to the siege only as “the Momentary War.”

In theory the king could have ignored the orcs—their strength was, it seemed, largely spent. To do nothing would be to look weak, however, something no king who wishes to keep his throne can afford. So it was that the royal army once again marched eastward. This time the orcs were ready. Sacrificing smaller tribes and weaker warriors, the bulk of their forces retreated deep into the mountains, there to patiently wait their time to relaunch their continued assault on Aspiria.

● SOCIAL HIERARCHY ●

The only nobles commonly found in New Asper are the royal family, senior courtiers and officials, and members of the Noble Council who call it home. The counts have estates here, but have absolutely no legal authority over the running of the city.

Although New Asper has upper, middle, and lower class citizens, where you live creates a second tier within each stratum. This is based on tradition rather than wealth. A merchant who resides in Var's Ward, one devoted to matters of trade, is considered to be of higher social standing than one who resides in Hothar's Ward, despite the latter being the reserve of the wealthy. There are exceptions to the rule. The arkhwisards, for instance, reside in their towers. Regardless of what ward they are in, their magical power and temporal influence ensure they are always in the highest echelons of the upper class.

RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in New Asper.

* **Justice for All:** The courts of New Asper are run by the cult of Hothar. In their eyes, all men are equal. As such, nobles do not gain the usual +2 Charisma bonus awarded them by dint of their social station when involved in court cases.

* **Languages:** Heroes used to conversing in Trader are out of luck in New Asper. Aspirian is the native language, followed by Tuomi. Very few natives speak more than a few words of Trader.

* **Respected:** Members of the Convocation and clerics of the Norns are treated with great respect. They have +1 Charisma when dealing with non-members or cultists.

GOVERNMENT

As the capital of Asperia, New Asper is the home of the king. On paper, he is responsible for overseeing the efficient running of the city. Of course, Halgroth V is far too busy feasting and hunting to bother about governing Asperia, let alone a single city with its myriad petty problems. That burden rests on the shoulders of his trusted seneschal.

As the king's official agent, the seneschal wields considerable power. Under earlier kings, seneschals would report to the king regularly and receive orders. Halgroth V has no time for such nonsense, leaving his underling to run New Asper largely as he sees fit.

Traditionally, it falls to the old king's second child to run New Asper. This keeps control in the family and gives the sibling a taste of power, thus reducing, in theory, the chances of him plotting to usurp the throne. When the king has no siblings, it has long been the practice to appoint a cleric of Hothar to the position. The only firm rule is that no member of the counts' families can ever hold the post. The current seneschal is Archduchess Cassandra, Halgroth's 22-year old sister. Cassandra was less than thrilled by her appointment—she had her sights set on becoming a priestess of Sigel.

As with the Noble Council acting as a check to the authority of the king, so the seneschal's reign is not absolute. Unlike the Noble Council, the City Council is made up entirely of commoners. Modeled on the higher council, it has an Inner and Outer Chamber.

The Inner Chamber is comprised of five members—the high priests of Hothar, Sigel, and Eostre Plantmother, the captain of the city guard, and an arkhwisard of the Convocation (elected by his peers to serve a three-year term). The Outer Chamber is made up of ten citizens. These are elected from five of the city wards (Sigel's Ward has no councilors) and serve for four years. Intended to allow the common people a voice, it is only the rich or influential who can sway the masses to support them.

The names, gender, race, and age of the Inner Chamber members are given below, along with a brief description of their primary duties. The details of the Outer Chamber are left for the GM to determine.

High Priest of Eostre: No wine is grown around New Asper, but it is the national drink and a major export. The cleric is responsible for ensuring his underlings elsewhere in Asperia strive for good harvests; *Incumbent:* Sower-Cultivator Serin Red-Lips (male, Anari, 43)

High Priest of Hothar: The senior judge in New Asper and responsible for ensuring the seneschal remains within the law at all times; *Incumbent:* Scale of Justice Fricor the Just (male, Anari, 67)

High Priestess of Var: Var receives little love elsewhere in Asperia, but New Asper exists primarily because it sits on major trade roads. The cleric serves as the city's treasurer; *Incumbent:* Profiteer Hansine of Parisi (female, Anari, 39)

Captain of the Guard: Responsible for overseeing the city defenses and guard. The position is very much a bureaucratic one. Were the city to come under attack, the king's castellan would assume control; *Incumbent:* Guard-Captain Abonde ap-Dragan (female, Anari, 50)

Arkhwisard: A general advisor appointed to strengthen the bond between the king and the Convocation, the arkhwisard has no specific duties; *Incumbent:* Arkhwisard Galerius Stone-Fist (male, Anari, 47)

LAW AND ORDER

Rather than use members of the King's Guard to patrol the streets, the cult of Hothar persuaded the kings of old to allow a civilian watch under its authority. This would, the clerics said, help ensure the monarch was viewed in a more favorable light (any corruption would not reflect on him personally) and better serve the cause of equal justice for all. Despite coming under the cult's immediate authority, they ultimately answer to the seneschal.

The watch is made up of just 200 members. Divided into two shifts, Day and Night, they patrol the five outer wards in five-man squads. In command of each squad is a novitiate or cleric of Hothar. Each outer ward has a single Ward-Captain, an experienced paladin of the god of justice. They in turn answer to the high priest of Hothar.

Thanks to the clerics' continual presence, the watch is both efficient and honest. While citizens feel safe on the streets, they are also careful not to infringe the law—the watch is rather zealous in its approach.

THE COURTS

Whether a count or a dung-collector, every citizen who breaks the law in New Asper must stand before the cult of Hothar to receive justice. Even the king falls under their authority, though it would take a powerful high priest to drag the monarch through the courts.

Lesser crimes are judged by a single cleric and greater crimes by a panel of three clergymen. In matters of religious and military crimes, they may appoint an advisor with specialist knowledge. Citizens have no right to trial

by ordeal—evidence is presented, witnesses are heard, and a decision is made.

Appeals are permissible, though an accused is permitted only one. In keeping with local laws, they are also heard by the cult—all that changes is that judges are assigned. Although duty-bound to hear them, the court dislikes appeals—they imply the original judge has made a mistake in interpreting the law. Those who appeal and are still found guilty receive a harsher sentence for wasting the court's time and insulting Hothar.

Every person accused of a crime has a right to an advocate to advise him on matters of law. One such body only too eager to help is the Guild of Lawyers. Independent of the cult, though many lawyers do take Hothar as their patron deity, they serve the needs of their clients before blind adherence to the law. Unfortunately, lawyers charge high prices, meaning only the wealthy can afford them. A person who cannot afford a lawyer may ask for the cult to appoint a legal representative. These are usually novitiates yet to master the nuances of the law. Still, the service is free.

As civil as the legal system seems, torture of suspects to extract information is permitted under certain circumstances. First, it may only be used in crimes that threaten the security of the city, such as treason and membership of a cult. Second, torture must be carried out by a paladin of Sanngetall (see *Matters of Faith*) and within the temple of Hothar.

Criminals may be fined, publicly flogged, sent to the eastern mines as slaves, or executed, depending on the severity of their crime and the recommendations of the law. Executions are always carried out in public—a warning to others of the fate that awaits them.

THIEVES' GUILD

No matter how tightly it squeezes, the cult of Hothar cannot stamp out organized crime. For every thieves' den raided and closed down, another springs up in its place within days. Championing the side of criminality in New Asper are the Crooked Fingers.

The ongoing battle between law enforcers and law breakers is as much religious as it is temporal—traditionally, the guildmaster has always been a cleric of Nauthiz.

EDUCATION

Education in New Asper is handled at the Royal College. Founded by the king's great-great-grandfather, it offers both rudimentary and advanced education. In theory, attendance is open to all. Alas, high fees make it the preserve of the rich. Despite its distance from some counties, many counts send their children here for formal education. Not only do they receive first-class tuition, but they begin to make contacts that will prove useful later in life.

Standard education begins at five and ends at 14. After

this, the student may either leave to begin his adult life or enroll for advanced courses.

Other options are available to those without sufficient means to buy a place in the Academy. Master craftsmen take on one or two apprentices a year, the cults are always seeking new novitiates, and the Convocation selects a handful of potential students to join their ranks. The cult of Hoenir tries its best to provide basic education to the masses, but class sizes are extremely large due to demand and a lack of clerics.

The official language of New Asper, spoken both in the royal court and on the streets is Aspirian, a variant of Anari, though one so far removed that it is now a separate tongue. Despite being of Anari ancestry, few citizens ever learn the language. For non-humans, the second language is that of their race. Among humans, Tuomi is actually the preferred second tongue. Classical Anari is the reserve of scholars, and even then it is only used by those who study old texts. As stated elsewhere, Trader is virtually unknown in New Asper.

RELIGION

The main deities of New Asper differ slightly from those of Aspiria in general, both in name and in ranking.

Although his cult has diminished since the Blizzard War, Sigel remains the protector of Aspiria, divine patron of New Asper, and is patronized by the royal family. Considered the god of war during the Blizzard War, that title has now returned to Tiw. Less concerned with his aspects of purity and good, the citizens of New Asper honor him as the god of light. As the winters lengthen and Hellfrost beasts advance closer to Aspiria, his cult is likely to grow in popularity once more.

Most Asperians are of Anari descent, but they have little love for the Anari Empire of old. For sure, there have been tyrannical and insane kings, but none came close to the excesses of the emperors, and none sought to turn the people into slaves. To that end, Hothar has a place in every Aspirian's heart, for it is he that ensures the land is well governed, society is orderly, that no man is greater than the law of the land, and that the nobles remember that fealty works both ways.

New Asper is a trading center. Var receives little worship elsewhere in Aspiria, but in the capital he is considered one of the major deities. While there are Thieftakers present, the cult has always been more interested in making money than catching thieves.

Wine is Aspiria's national drink and one of its bigger exports. There are no vineyards anywhere near the city, and yet Eostre Plantmother remains an important deity, albeit with a greatly reduced influence that in the Southern Marches.

Last among the major gods is Ertha. Her cult is strongest on the east, but there it is focused on mining and gems. In New Asper, a city that helps supply Aspiria with basic wares, she is the goddess worshipped by most

craftsmen. Gems remain big business, of course. With no passes through the mountains, raw gemstones are shipped to New Asper to be cut and polished, before beginning their long trek to foreign markets.

The Norns warrant a special mention. In New Asper they are considered a lesser deity, as they are in most lands. The cult has no temple and cares nothing for politics or courtly influence. New Asperians' love of revelry and living for the moment stems from the many disasters that wracked the land in times past. They have little interest in the future—sometimes it is better not to know, and even if one does know, fate is already written so why bother worrying about it? Clerics are always shown great respect for their role in ending the Golem Uprising, though.

Hothar and Sigel may be honored deities, but the New Asperians' love of revelry and wine, coupled with the age-old desires for social improvement and greater wealth, make them ideal targets for the cult of Vali. Although there is no evidence to support their claims, a growing number of citizens hint that Halgroth V has fallen under the cult's sway. Of course, he may just be a poor king.

New Asper might be the capital, but the majority of Aspiria's agricultural land, on which the nation depends, lies further south. Vali's pestilential aspect, while present, has far fewer adherents in the city.

By far the greatest threats to the city, at least in the eyes of its inhabitants, are the cults of Hela and Thrym. New Asperians have long memories, and they recall the horrors of the Liche-Priest and the Blizzard War. Even being suspected of dallying with either deity is enough to warrant a visit from paladins of Sigel.

FESTIVALS

In terms of major festivals, New Asperians enjoy only a few as city-wide public holidays. Every high holy day of Sigel is a cause of celebration and much of the city closes down completely. The first day of Oath Renewal Day (see *Matters of Faith*) is considered a holiday purely so the citizens have no excuse when it comes to renewing their oaths of allegiance to the king. The only other official high holy day celebrated by all is Grape Day. Despite having no vineyards, New Asperians lend their prayers to those of their southern kin. It is also an excuse to open a few extra bottles of wine. Other high holy days are celebrated, but only by those who patronize the appropriate deity.

New Asperians also celebrate a few non-religious festivals. The most important of these is New Asper Day. Held on the first Endedaeg of Werremonan, it marks the day the first foundation stone of the capital was laid. It is also a time for the people to reflect on why the construction of a new city was necessary. Starting the previous sunset, prayers are said and dirges are sung throughout the night for those thousands of innocents who died in Asper during the Golem Uprising. At sunrise, sorrow gives way to joy—and dancing, feasting, and drinking.

Aspiria's winters are relatively mild, but continual

periods of snow can still cause a cessation of trading caravans from the warmer southern regions. Throughout the winter, the citizens of New Asper are forced to consume their stocks of wine, even going so far as to water them down to make them last. Usually held during Eostremonan, Cask Day celebrates the first wine caravan of the new year.

A civic affair, contrary to what the cults of Eostre and Var claim, the high priest of Gullveig (see *Matters of Faith*) nevertheless plays a ceremonial role in the proceedings. Flanked by paladins, he stops the first wine caravan of the year outside the city gates. He is then given a mouthful of wine by each merchant. Regardless of its quality, tradition demands that he pronounce it drinkable and allow the caravan into the city.

MILITARY

New Asper is the king's city, and it is his army that defends it. The king's personal bodyguard, known as the King's Guard, comprises 2,000 soldiers.

The elite of these are the "war knights." Numbering just 250, they are divided into five companies known as lances. The 1st Lance comprises actual nobles, typically second or third sons with little hope of inheriting greater titles. The remaining four lances are primarily common men, though the captain and his sergeant are always nobles. The 5th Lance is actually a training company, its members largely untested in combat.

Service length and acts of valor see knights promoted through the lances. Eventually, a soldier may be knighted by the king and awarded a place in the 1st Lance, the king's elite bodyguard.

The bulk of the army comprises 1,500 heavy infantry. They are divided into three battalions, each in turn subdivided into five companies of 100 men. Battalions are commanded by a Knight-Captain (who is always a noble) and companies by a Captain of Infantry. Each captain is aided by a Sergeant of Infantry. With each battalion, three companies wield long swords and medium shields, one company battle axes and large shields, and one company carry halberds. All are clad in chain hauberks.

Lastly, there are two companies of leather-clad crossbowmen, each with a strength of 125 men. They are commanded by a Captain of Archers, with a Sergeant of Archers acting as his second-in-command.

On paper, the entire King's Guard is led by the king's marshal. In earlier times, he or she was a blood relative of the king. Since the formation of the Knights Hrafn, though, the position has always been given to a member of their Upper House. In part, they were chosen because they had the experience to lead a large force of soldiers. More importantly, though, they lack the aspiration to become king, and thus are unlikely to lead the army against their rightful master.

In reality, though, certain forces are under the command of the Captain of the Guard. He commands both

crossbow companies and the three companies of halberdiers. These men form the city guard, the body responsible for manning the walls and protecting the gates on a daily basis.

MILITIA

New Asper has no official militia, though this was not always the case. Stories abound of how the militias of old were vital in defending Aspiria from outside aggression. Since the founding of the new capital and an increase in the size of the royal army, the citizens have never been trained to fight in defense of the realm.

In theory, the king could order the summoning of a levy. This would entail every able-bodied man, and many female volunteers, to grab whatever weapons they can and march to war. Fortunately for the peasants, the summoning of the levy requires both the concession of the Noble Council and the cult of Hothar—the latter because the levy can only be summoned under strict conditions laid down in law.

PRIVATE FORCES

New Asperians have always eyed private troops with suspicion. Sure, a minor noble may want a few household guards to protect his property (or just to look more important), but the average citizen has no need of such things. To many, anyone else outside the high nobility paying for armed troops is either planning something unlawful or has no faith in the power of the king or cult of Hothar to maintain law and order.

Laws exist to prevent all citizens except the hereditary counts from maintaining an army in excess of a few dozen soldiers. In the eyes of the law, wearing any armor and carrying any ranged or any melee weapon larger than a dagger makes one a soldier. Hammers, picks, clubs, and other tools that could be used in a legitimate trade are not counted as weapons. Thus, while a knight may have a dozen well-equipped men-at-arms, a powerful merchant might have a 100 or more employees he can call upon to defend his property with force.

TRADE & TRIBUTE

Situated at the junction of one minor and four major trade roads, New Asper has developed into a center of commerce. Like most large cities, it is not entirely self-sufficient. It imports a variety of goods, including food, and exports an equally wide variety of locally produced goods, though in either case only a small handful count as major resources.

In terms of imports, metal for the forges and wine for stomachs are the largest. Beer is seen as the drink of barbarians and mead the drink of the uncouth Saxa nobility. Thus, once they are weaned off milk everyone drinks wine. The quality varies immensely. Commoners

down coarse wines, watered down both to dilute the sour taste and make it last longer. The cream of society drinks expensive wines with rich bouquets.

In terms of exports, the city has only one of note. Raw gemstones from the eastern mines are shipped here to be cut and polished into objects of beauty by skilled artisans before being sold to merchants. A growing minor export is glassware. That New Asper produces little glass is down to the powerful Guild of Glaziers and Glass Merchants' Guild in Glassport either refusing to sell glassware manufactured in the capital to placing an excessive levy on exports.

Given its location, it should come as little surprise that the merchants visiting New Asper are mainly fellow Asperians. Those from Alantaris Isle and the Magocracy end their trip at Glassport, while Chalcian merchants rarely venture further west than Chepwyke. The only frequent foreign visitors are merchants from Ludogov. For this reason, Tuomi is spoken more than Trader in the markets of New Asper.

TAXES

As required by law, New Asper follows the basic taxation policies of the rest of Aspiria.

Alchemical Tax: All alchemical devices except those sold by the Alchemists' Guild are subject to a 10% sales tax. This raises the cost of alchemical devices in Aspiria by a similar amount.

The king's decision to tax alchemical devices yet exempt the Alchemists' Guild (essentially part of the Convocation) has not gone down well with the cults. Unable to persuade the monarch to exempt them as well, the four major cults have taken matters into their own hands. Instead of selling alchemical wares, they give them away in return for a donation. Naturally, the minimum donation is exactly equal to the standard price of the device.

So as not to be seen to be snubbing the law, the cults only offer this service to those who have their deity as patron—other buyers must pay the inflated price.

Customs Duties: Imports are taxed at 4%, except beer and spirits, which are taxed at 10%, and wine, which is taxed at just 1%. Goods merely passing through on their way to a distant market are charged at 1%, but only if the merchant stays in the city for more than one night. To avoid this, many caravans carrying expensive cargo leave just before the city gates close and pitch tents outside the city walls.

Hearth Tax: All households pay 1 gs per annum for each fireplace in the home.

Income Tax: Although the citizens of New Asper are technically subjects of the king rather than a count, the seneschal, a noble, is their immediate feudal superior. As the seneschal represents the city, citizens pay 10% of their income directly to the coffers of the king and 10% to the city coffers.

Sales Tax: A fee of 3% is paid on each transaction.

Scutage: New Asper has no militia and thus every adult male must pay the 10 gs scutage tax. Even the very

HELLFROST: CITY BOOK 4



new asper

1. city gates & walls
2. elemental towers
3. royal castle
4. royal academy
5. livestock pens
6. temple of costre
7. alchemists' guild
8. temple of ercha

9. shrine of gullveig
10. iron guild office
11. temple of var
12. market square
13. warehouses
14. warehouse 13
15. the golem museum
16. assassins' guild

17. the hall of justice
18. lawyers' guild
19. wine street
20. burning man inn
21. pleasure district
22. the palace inn
23. noble estates
24. the temple of light

25. garden of heroes
26. the lance & sword
27. temple of eira
28. shrine of ermunaz
29. temple of tiw
30. the barracks
31. warmongers

population: 29,000



poorest rarely complain—the tax helps fund the military, and it is a small price to pay to avoid being butchered or maimed on the battlefield.

Tithes: Of the 10% of their income citizens pay in tithes, 25% automatically goes to the cult of Sigel regardless of the taxpayer's faith.

● ARCHITECTURE ●

Asper was a mix of traditional wattle-and-daub and wooden buildings and stone buildings. Befitting its status, and starting from the ground up, New Asper was built in enduring stone. Exceptions apply only on religious and common sense grounds. The temple of Eostre, for example, is built of wood, as are the animal pens in the livestock market.

Houses are typically one-story structures with slate tiles protecting the roof. One side effect of using granite and slate is that the city is a dull gray, the only color coming from the temples and the garishly painted homes of the rich. One thing most buildings have is windows with glass. Glass is expensive, especially if colored, and the homes of the lower classes typically have just one small window to let in light. By comparison, the manses of the counts have large windows in every wall.

Gray buildings aside, New Asper is also referred to as the City of Light. As dusk draws near, members of the Guild of Lamplighters (affiliated with the temple of Sigel) spill out onto the streets to light the large lanterns hanging on both sides of the major roads and from the outer bastion of the royal palace. Many businesses also hang lanterns, though this is more to deter thieves than to aid pedestrians. The largest lantern sits atop the temple of Sigel (see #24).

● THE SUN ●

As elsewhere, the inhabitants of New Asper base their working day on the rising and setting of Sigel's Hearth. Below are the local sunrise and sunset times and the hours of daylight for the first day of each month.

Month	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Snaermonan	0753	1613	8h 20m
Frostmonan	0734	1652	9h 18m
Eostremonan	0647	1738	10h 51m
Plohmonan	0551	1820	12h 29m
Sowanmonan	0454	1902	14h 8m
Werremonan	0411	1942	15h 31m
Scerranmonan	0355	2006	16h 11m
Hegmonan	0412	1959	15h 47m
Haerfestmonan	0448	1921	14h 33m
Falmonan	0528	1826	12h 58m
Huntianmonan	0608	1726	11h 18m
Fogmonan	0652	1643	9h 51m
Wulfmonan	0734	1604	8h 30m

MAJOR LOCALES

Constructed a little over 150 years ago, New Asper is a modern city in every sense of the word. Its layout, while not perfect, was designed from scratch according to its potential future needs, with clearly defined industrial, economic, and residential zones. Although the Anari Empire is long gone, New Asper is heavily modeled on older Anari cities.

New Asper is divided into six wards. Save for the royal castle, which sits in the center of the city, the wards are delineated by major roads rather than walls. While the major roads and buildings were laid out first, each ward has grown organically as the population expanded. Thus, the city is not as neatly organized as those in power say.

OUTSIDE THE CITY

Much of the land immediately surrounding New Asper is devoted to farming. Owned by the king, the produce is sold to local merchants to help feed the population. “Help” is the appropriate word, for the citizens consume far more than can be grown locally. However, the farms are extensive enough that subsistence level consumption is possible for a few months should disaster strike the central agricultural lands (given adequate storage in the granaries, of course).

DRAGO HALL

The decrepit ruin of Drago Hall (not on the map), the home of Baron Drago ap-Rabel until his mysterious disappearance three years ago, sits 11 miles from the capital. Locals avoid the crumbling structure, believing it to be haunted by the baron’s ghost. Everyone agrees the baron was a vile man. He was reputed to have strangled his wife and concealed her body, though no charges were ever brought against him. One story claims the baron cannot rest until his wife’s remains are found and buried.

1. CITY GATES & WALLS

New Asper is entirely surrounded by a strong wall. Standing 30 feet high and 20 feet thick, it has been tested only once since its construction and it withstood the assault with only minor damage.

Positioned along the wall are defensive towers. Save for those owned by the Convocation of Elementalists (see #2), each rises 10 feet above the battlements. New Asper has no artillery, and so the tops of the towers have pitched roofs rather than open platforms. Protecting the walls falls to the king’s crossbowmen and volunteers from the cult of Rigr.

Five major gates allow passage through the walls. In the northeast is the War Gate, so named because it is from here the army leaves when called to battle. Wine Gate, so-called because the trade road passing beneath it

ultimately leads to the southern vineyards, is located in the southeast. In the south stands Golden Gate, through which much of New Asper’s grain arrives. The western gate, Royal Gate, is the gateway to Asper. Finally, Foreigners’ Gate in the northeast provides access to the northern trade roads beyond Asperia’s borders.

The gates are part of a fortified gatehouse. Each gatehouse has two sets of gate, an outer pair and an inner pair. In times of crisis, an iron portcullis can be lowered between the gates for added security.

The gates are protected by heavy infantry wielding halberds—20 men during the day and double that at night. Save for the War Gate, which is never locked, the gates are closed and barred when Sigel’s Hearth disappears below the horizon and opened as soon it rises again. Access after dark is at the discretion of the guard commander. Unless the visitor is a nobleman, access frequently requires a bribe.

2. ELEMENTAL TOWERS

The Anari Empire may be a distant memory, but the Convocation maintains a strong presence in New Asper. As a sign of faith and friendship, King Anlar II donated four of the outer wall’s towers to the organization. The organization was further exempted from all taxation, though members had to swear oaths of fealty to defend the city in times of war.

Spread across the city, the mages maintain a fierce rivalry. Access to the libraries and laboratories requires one to have mastered the element first—elementalists with no practical knowledge of a particular element are only allowed on the ground floor level of each tower. The arkhwisards (each tower has two, the Tower Master and Tower Chamberlain) permit this rivalry as it encourages elementalists to master all four arts.

The towers are much wider and taller than their mundane counterparts. Each has six levels above ground and two below. The top level is reserved for the arkhwisards, the next level down for the maegisters, the two levels below for the magi, and the lower two levels for the prynciples and apprentices.

The subterranean levels house the kitchens and stores. They are only accessible by those of maegister rank and above, or servants granted special access (like the cooks). Rumors of secret laboratories and vaults are commonplace but unproven.

Additionally, rumors abound that tunnels link the towers and the royal palace. Not only does this allow the mages to visit the king or their peers without having to walk the streets, it also provides Halgroth with escape routes should the palace come under attack.

SIGEL’S WARD

God of light and good, Sigel is also the protector of Asperia and patron of the royal family. Little surprise, then, that the kings named their home ward after him. The entire ward is dominated by the royal castle.

3. ROYAL CASTLE

Dominating the city center and rising high above the surrounding buildings is the royal palace. The castle sits behind two walls, an outer bastion and an inner bastion. Two gates lead from the city into the castle grounds. Responsibility for protecting the palace falls to the King's Guard and they are not shy about flexing their muscle. Aside from servants and courtiers, and visiting nobles, few are ever granted access. The palace proper is guarded solely by War Knights.

The noted exception is the last day of each month. On this day, Halgroth invites the various nobles, arkhwisards, wealthy merchants, and anyone else who has caught his eye, to a party. Lavish affairs, they are hotbeds of gossip and political machinations. Halgroth forbids any talk of the orc invasion at these gatherings, something the eastern nobles resent, as it is one of the few times they can gain access to the king.

The king and his extended family reside in a four-story keep. Five small barracks, their decor in keeping with the status of the knights' lance, house the War Knights (though their mounts are stabled with the rest of the army). There is also a separate servants block, a building for workshops, and the like.

ERTHA'S WARD

The name of this ward has long been a bone of contention among the inhabitants. Trades related to livestock far outnumber those concerned with metal and gems, though the latter are arguably more profitable. Still, Ertha is the goddess of crafting in general and thus her name is used to denote the area. It is populated mainly by animal handlers in the north, craftsmen in the center and east, and laborers in the south and along the border with Var's Ward. Housing is a mix of middle- and lower-class, as are the goods and services.

4. ROYAL ACADEMY

Bordering the central thoroughfare, the Royal Academy was founded to provide education for all citizens. That lofty ideal was quickly crushed by the excessive tuition fees (an average of 500 gs per year for basic studies and twice that for advanced education).

The clergy of Hoenir are outspoken critics of the institution, claiming it is elitist. The king, who has direct authority over the Academy by dint of its royal charter, has waved aside their protestations, insisting that the royal charter is more than fair and that the fee is generous giving the cost of maintaining the building and paying the staff.

Built on a grand scale—the founder did honestly intend for it to be accessible by all—high tuition fees have kept the classrooms mostly empty. Keen to rectify this, the incumbent dean, Beauve ap-Mercadier, has actually sided with Hoenir's clergy, though only partially. Free education makes no financial sense, but reduced fees might attract

middle-class students in greater numbers. This would not only fill the coffers, it would improve the reputation of the Academy. Currently seen as a place where only Aspirian nobility seek education, a wider variety of students might in turn attract more foreign students. Beauve has petitioned the king to permit this change to the royal charter, but has yet to receive any reply.

The second part of his grand scheme to turn the Academy into a prestigious place to learn requires more effort. Beauve has heard of the great universities of Al-Shirkuh, but knows very little about them. He is prepared to pay the tuition fees of anyone willing to take several courses and report back as to how the institutions operate.

5. LIVESTOCK PENS/MARKET

The western fringes of the Eastern Marches are dotted with small herding communities. Goats and sheep graze on the tough grass over spring and summer before being driven to New Asper to be sold in the livestock market. The arrival of the flocks and herds is commonly known as Great Market Day. Citizens rush to purchase animals to see them through the winter months, the meat cured to preserve it. On any other given Marketdaeg citizens come here to purchase pigs, chickens, and geese.

The cult of Brúni, minor deity of dung (see *Matters of Faith*), which operates from the Animalmother temple, has exclusive rights to collect dung here. Every Marketdaeg the worshippers traipse to the neighboring livestock pens to scoop up the fresh muck. Most of the free resource is sold to the king's farms for fertilizer, but the cult shapes some in patties. Once dried, this is sold as fuel by poorer citizens. Urine is collected in buckets and sold to tanneries.

6. TEMPLE OF EOSTRE

Constructed from wood, the temple of Eostre is devoted to the goddess' twin aspects. Plantmother may be more popular with the people due to her association with wine, but it is her Animalmother side that occupies the larger part of the structure. Her side of the temple is clear to see, for the wood has been covered with tanned hides and felt taken from animals donated as sacrifices on Herding Day (see *Matters of Faith*).

Clerics of Plantmother are primarily involved in praying for a good harvest and blessing the king's fields. Animalmother's clergy, by comparison, have much to do—they are both veterinarians and midwives, and are heavily involved with the running of the livestock market.

7. ALCHEMISTS' GUILD

The Convocation has its headquarters in New Asper but the Alchemists' Guild, which it controls, is based in Glassport. In order to take advantage of the demand for alchemical devices, it operates a satellite guildhouse in the capital. As the only entity permitted to legally sell alchemical devices, the guild does a roaring trade.

While most elementalists prefer to manufacture devices in their tower, the guildhouse has a well-stocked laboratory. Using the equipment grants +1 to Knowledge (Alchemy) rolls when creating an alchemical device.

The facility is open to any spellcaster—only the selling of alchemical devices is prohibited outside the guild. In order to boost its supplies, the guild has imposed a simple rule—for every device created here, a duplicate must be made and given to the guild. The guild also buys existing alchemical devices, offering a flat 30% (regardless of any Streetwise rolls).

The devices the guild sells in the market are all legal. That is, none have any offensive capability. The counts, adventurers, and the city's various criminal elements often have need for more dangerous devices. Unwilling to sell such devices openly in case it threatens their monopoly or good standing, the guild hires out alchemists who can make anything to order. The cost is a flat 100 gs per day, plus the cost of the ingredients. Under guild law, no alchemist may work more than 16 hours in any one day.

8. TEMPLE OF ERTHA

Located in the heart of the Gemcutters' District, the temple of Ertha's position is marked by a stone dome. Stairs lead down into the temple proper. Nowhere near as large or as ornately carved as the great temple in Kingsmead (see *Hellfrost Atlas*), the hall of worship is actually rather bland. First-time visitors expecting to see the walls studded with precious stones are disappointed. Offerings of gems are made here, but all the stones are deposited deeper into the earth to renew the goddess.

The sole exception is a small side chamber. Here, laid out on an altar of polished granite, are perfect examples of every precious and semi-precious gemstone mined in Aspiria. The gems are not a focus for veneration—they are used purely for training purposes, for clerics must know how to recognize Ertha's bounty.

The chamber has been sealed off for several weeks. Forge Son Milon Glitter-Eyes, the resident high priest, has told his underlings the room is off limits while the stones are being polished and reconsecrated. In truth, the cleric noticed that several of the gems were elaborate fakes, the true stones having been stolen by an audacious ne'er-do-well. Before word gets out, he plans to hire adventurers to locate the missing gems and teach the thief a lesson. Payment will be made in gemstones.

Milon has few clues to go on. For sure, the theft occurred no more than a month ago—that was the last time he gave the stones a thorough examination. Second, the thieves' guild has long had an understanding with the cult that its property is off-limits, less fearful repercussions rain down on the guild. Third, it is unlikely, but not impossible, that the thief was a cleric of Ertha.

VAR'S WARD

Although there are warehouses in both Ertha's Ward and Kenaz's Ward, the majority is found in this district.

As well as being a place of business, it is also home to the city's merchants. Most of the richer merchants live in the middle, away from the homes of their workers and the warehouses.

9. SHRINE OF GULLVEIG

Eostre's son, at least in Aspirian mythology, Gullveig has his shrine away from his mother's temple. As elsewhere in the country, his clerics are known as Wine-Lords (priests) and Vine-Lords (paladins).

Currently stationed here are a single priest and eight paladins. No brewing takes place at the shrine. The clergy has three official duties. First, they are permitted to sample any shipment of wine to ensure the contents match what is written on the cask. Second, they bless the wine caravans as they enter the city. Third, they collect the tax on wine imports on behalf of the king. As a reward for this service, they are entitled to keep 10% of the tax. After taking their living expenses, the rest is donated to the cult of Eostre.

The paladins earn additional income by serving as guards for the various merchants that stock their warehouses with casks and barrels of wine or the city's many wine sellers (see #19).

The shrine is a statue of Gullveig. Twice the height of a man, it depicts the god not with his more traditional beard of bees (associating him with mead) but grape vines ripe with fruit. Originally white, the statue is now stained red, the result of worshippers throwing flagons of wine over him in return for a blessing.

10. IRON GUILD OFFICE

Life is very good for Gauntlet-General Roxane ap-Aubri. Aspiria might be mostly peaceful, but shipments of expensive glass and precious gems destined for Glassport are targets for bandits, and any caravan heading through the wilds of the Borderlands or the Eastern Marches is at risk of attack. Always ready to protect caravans, the Iron Guild's New Asper franchise currently has 100 Guildsmen and 30 Guild-Sergeants on its books.

Roxanne, a native Aspirian from a small farming village, joined the Iron Guild 36 years ago as a Guildsman. While her peers were happy to squander their income on good living, Roxane had a long-term plan. Living frugally for 25 years, she invested every spare scield with the cult of Var. Eleven years ago, she purchased a Guild-Captaincy at Kingsmead. Again, she opted for a simple life and investing her greater wealth. Six years ago, following the maturity of a long-term financial investment, the farmer's daughter who could barely read and write her own name when she joined the Guild, purchased the New Asper franchise with hard coin.

She may be in charge of operations, but Roxane continues to think like a Guildsman. She makes it a rule to be honest and open with customers, never trying to scare them into hiring more guards than are absolutely necessary. Similarly, she is quick to warn those who hire fewer

guards than required that they are placing their cargo and employees at unnecessary risk. Under her tenure, attacks against caravans have dropped dramatically.

11. TEMPLE OF VAR

Mostly ignored outside of Glassport and Chepwyke, the cult of Var has prospered since the foundation of New Asper. Keen to display its importance and wealth, the cult has spent a fortune on the temple's architecture and interior decor. So much so, in fact, that citizens refer to it as the Hall of Bottomless Coffers.

In addition to operating the market, the cult lends money, negotiates contracts, advises merchant families, invests in trade, hires out Thieftakers, and offers secure storage of goods in its warehouses. As a means of keeping taxation low, it offers clerics of Var and his associated minor cults very good rates.

12. MARKET SQUARE

The square is the heart of the market, but stalls actually run around the entire outside of the royal palace. Open every day from dawn until noon and until dusk on Marketdaeg, the market is always busy. Traditionally, shoppers begin by saying prayers outside the temple of Var in the hope of finding a good bargain and then move anti-clockwise through the main square and around the circular road.

Certain areas are restricted to specific types of stall. For instance, only sellers of parchment, writing equipment, and books may set up a stall outside the Royal Academy. Lantern, lamp, and oil sellers display their wares outside the temple of Sigel. Sellers of weapons, and the Alchemists' Guild, must hawk their wares outside the temple of Hothar, where clerics can keep an eye on both buyers and sellers.

The location of other stalls is determined by a seasonal auction held at the temple of Var. Since most shoppers visit the temple first, if only briefly, the most lucrative stalls are located outside its doors. Starting bids for these prime spots are high. Stalls on the far side of the royal palace go for considerably less. Part of the fee goes toward security, with Thieftakers patrolling the market to deter thieves.

13. WAREHOUSES

To help facilitate quick loading and unloading of supplies, the major warehouses are located around the main market square and the two access roads. Wide roads enable wagons to park up outside the buildings without blocking other traffic. From here, goods are transferred to smaller warehouses and businesses by burly porters from the Stevedores' Guild.

The stone warehouses, windowless and with strong doors to protect against thieves, may be owned by just one merchant family or by multiple merchants. Shared facilities are divided internally by thick walls. Every door is marked with the sign of the merchant family who owns

GEMSTONES OF RASSILON

Only 24 precious and semi-precious stones are known in Rassilon. Their name and color are given below. Information on enchanted gems and their relation to the major gods can be found in *Rassilon Expansion 2*.

Stone	Color
Alestone*	Purple to lavender
Beaststone	Lilac-red
Bloodstone	Dark green with red
Calmstone	Vibrant red
Earthstone	Brown or gold
Fatestone	Bright red
Hearthstone	Pale orange
Heartstone	Deep blue with gold
Huntstone	Green
Icestone	Pale blue to glacial blue
Luckstone	Green
Mindstone	Mottled pink to red
Mockstone	Pink
Moonstone	Milky white
Nihtstone	Black, opaque
Ragestone	Black, flecked with red
Seastone	Light blue-green
Shieldstone	Crimson to pale rose
Sightstone	Murky green
Speechstone	White or colorless
Sunstone	Deep gold
Walkstone	Apple green
Warstone	Turquoise
Windstone	Blue

* Also known as *healthstone*, *poxstone*, & *sickstone*

the warehouse. Those who pay the cult of Var to provide security also display his holy symbol. Falsely displaying the holy symbol is considered a crime and is punishable by fines.

14. WAREHOUSE 13

This nondescript warehouse is owned by the cult of Var. For the last 99 years, it has been rented by an unknown private client. Temple records indicate the building was rented for a century, with payment, duly adjusted for inflation, paid up front and in full. Since that day, the building has remained securely sealed.

Speculation as to the contents is rife among merchants and stevedores alike. Stories range from fabulous treasure to more sinister things. The thieves' guild has, by all accounts, tried to break in several times. If the tales are true, six of the curious criminals were found dead in the street, their faces twisted in terror, two went insane, and four disappeared, never to be seen again.

If the cult's paperwork is correct (and there is no rea-

son it should be erroneous), the contract is due to end in three weeks. At this time someone either needs to pay for additional storage time or the cult has the legal right to open the warehouse and sell the contents. Exactly how the cult might achieve the latter is unknown, especially since the building (or rather something protecting the structure) has resisted all attempts to pry at its contents or gain access, even through arcane means. According to one rumor, the cult of Var is in negotiation with the cult of Sigel and the Convocation to lend assistance.

KENAZ'S WARD

Named for Kenaz's aspect as god of the hearth and home, this district is mainly residential. Houses nearer Hothar's Ward are of better quality, as are the general services and goods. Deep in, toward the city wall, the streets become narrow and the houses more cramped and dilapidated.

15. THE GOLEM MUSEUM

Located in an old warehouse, the Golem Museum tells the story of the Golem Uprising. It is the brainchild of Lusiane ap-Jourdain, a female Anari with what many locals call an unhealthy fixation on golems.

After paying a 1 gs entrance fee, visitors can peruse the collection of texts and artifacts relating to the bloody conflict. A long tapestry tells the story of the devastating war from Aspiria's point of view and a large table depicting the final encounter is set out with painted miniatures. Lusiane has created a set of "rules of war," allowing visitors to play the part of the Asperians or golems in a tabletop battle.

As well as manikins dressed as Aspirian warriors, there are numerous golem fragments gathered from the ruins of Asper and the Battlefield and a small number of life-sized golem models. The various texts, primarily military accounts and firsthand stories, count as a small and very specialized library.

Specialties: Golems, the Golem Uprising in Aspiria.

Investigation Rolls: +2 for specialties only (no rolls concerning other topics are allowed).

Keen to expand her collection, Lusiane pays for golem parts. She doesn't actually care where they are unearthed. Word has reached her that the people of Al-Shirkuh still make use of golems. Although she has no idea how much one might cost, Lusiane hopes to raise enough money to buy one as the centerpiece of her collection (creating golems is banned, but owning them is not). She is also keen to explore the Golem Workshop, the location of which she believes she has discovered from piecing together various clues. To date, she has not been able to find adventurers foolishly enough to act as her bodyguards.

Lusiane has no idea that one of her employees is an agent for the Awakeners. He passes back information on her activities, paying special attention to anything to do with the Golem Workshop. Should Lusiane manage to gain entry, a party of Awakeners would be dispatched with all haste to plunder its secrets.

16. ASSASSINS' GUILD

Aspiria's laws on assassination date back to the days of the Anari Empire. It is neither illegal to wish for someone's death, nor to hire an assassin, though it is illegal to commit murder (whether for payment or not). However, ancient laws require that the Assassins' Guild send the intended victim warning that his life is in danger, giving him a minimum of 24 hours notice.

Hirer and assassin negotiate payment terms and deadlines, with the full fee handed over once an agreement is reached. Should the assassin fail to live up to his end of the bargain, the fee must be repaid. In many cases, the knowledge that an assassin has been hired is enough to cause the victim to make amends for any crime.

As one might expect, the cult of Niht has a strong grip on the Assassins' Guild, though membership is not compulsory. Captured assassins are routinely tortured to determine if they are followers of Niht before being handed to the local temple of Sigel for execution.

17. THE HALL OF JUSTICE

The largest temple to Hothar, this edifice is both a holy place and the supreme court. Under Aspirian law, trials are conducted in the capital of the county where the crime was committed. Those found guilty are entitled to one appeal, which is always heard in the Hall of Justice. It is also the capital's law court.

Traditionally, Oath Renewal Day lasts the whole of Eostremonan. In Aspiria, the counts, along with nobles directly behold to the king, renew their oaths on the second Sunnandaeg on Werremonan, just before the spring gathering of the Noble Council. (Nobles beholden to the counts perform their Oath Renewal Day in Eostremonan as normal.) The king takes the nobles' oaths on the steps of the Hall of Justice, a spectacle that draws a huge crowd. The Marketdaeg immediately before the ceremony is a great market.

The Noble Council meets in a lavishly decorated chamber located in an annex of the main temple building. While access can be gained without having to pass through the temple, so allowing messengers, servants, and guards to come and go without disrupting services, the councilors are expected to enter through the main temple. Here they pause to gaze briefly on the statue of Hothar as a reminder of their responsibility to serve the people of Aspiria to the best of their ability and not to abuse their position of power. For most, the gesture is purely symbolic, a tradition they maintain for the benefit of the masses.

18. LAWYERS' GUILD

Rich citizens forced to stand before the courts are quick to hand over money to the Lawyers' Guild. An officially recognized guild, they act as legal advocates on behalf of clients. They also advise merchants entering into business contracts, especially those who deal with the cult of Var (which uses complex language to confuse the ignorant).

The guild has three levels of workers. The lowest level

are clerks and scribes. They handle the paperwork and interview potential clients, but do not practice law. Apprentices have Knowledge (Law) or d6 or lower. They assist the trained lawyers in court and may sell general legal advice, but are not permitted to represent clients in court. That honor falls to the trained lawyers, all of whom have Knowledge (law) d8+.

Hiring a competent lawyer is advisable, but it is not cheap. The standard rate is 20 times the lawyer's Knowledge (Law) die. Above d12, there is an additional 50 gs per +1 bonus. If the lawyer has the Scholar Edge applying to Knowledge (Law) then there is an additional 100 gs surcharge. Finally, hiring a Wild Card doubles the total fee. All fees must be paid in advance. Additionally, if the hirer is a victim of crime and is awarded compensation by the court, the guild takes 20%.

It would be wrong to call the lawyers corrupt, but equally they are not sticklers for the spirit or letter of the law. They are masters of finding and exploiting loopholes, making witnesses look incompetent, discrediting evidence, and painting the accused as a paragon of virtue. Naturally, even those who hold Hothar as their patron deity are little loved by his cult.

19. WINE STREET

Whether one is seeking a gallon of vinegary wine for everyday consumption or a carafe of the finest vintage Aspiria has to offer, Wine Street is the place to shop. In fact, it is the only place to shop, for all the city's wine sellers operate here. It is also a favorite haunt for vagrants. Turning down offers of food or shelter, all the beggars want is wine to get them through the day.

Exactly where one chooses to purchase wine along the street is a sign of one's social status, or at least one's pretensions. The southern end, deep inside Kenaz's Ward, caters to the lowest end of the market. Walk north, and the quality of the wine improves and prices increase. The most prestigious establishments border Hothar's Ward.

Prices for wine vary from 2 ss per gallon (must be watered down to make it drinkable) to as much as 5,000 gs for a vintage bottle (4-6 glasses). Sellers stocking valuable wines happily pay a small fortune for complex locks, traps (magical and mundane), and the services of paladins of Gullveig and Sigel.

The next street over to the west sells drinking vessels (wooden, horn, or costly glass), glass decanters (very expensive), and wineskins.

20. BURNING MAN INN

Easily identified by its gruesome sign—a writhing man enveloped in fire—the Burning Man Inn is a popular haunt of young fire and water elementalists and novitiate clerics of Kenaz. They are drawn here not by the food or drink, which is adequate for an inn of lowly standing, but for the stories concerning the Burning Man.

According to folklore, a patron suddenly burst into flames. All attempts to extinguish the fire failed. Oddly,

the flames spread no further than the victim's body. Given the unearthly nature of the death, an investigation was duly launched by the cults of Hothar and Sigel, but the results were inconclusive.

The name of the inn came about a handful of years later, after a patron reported smelling burning flesh in the night. Since then there have been reports not only of the offensive smell, but also of a flame-shrouded specter stalking the inn. Reports of ghosts drew in the cult of Scaetha, but again, nothing untoward was detected. Many locals believe the story is false and the haunting faked—all designed to tempt curious outsiders into spending their hard earned money in the establishment.

21. PLEASURE DISTRICT

Catering to the excesses of rich and poor alike, this district contains many taverns, entertainment halls, gambling dens, and brothels. Here one can dine on exquisite foods, join in raucous drinking songs, make or lose a fortune, or engage in vices that appeal only to the darkest of souls. Whatever one's budget, whatever one's desires, it can be found for sale. Even hashish, a narcotic from Al-Shirkuh, is available, although the distance it has traveled makes it an expensive taste—50 gs per smoke.

The cult of Nauthiz has a hand in the gambling dens, but has little interest in the other services. That suits the cult of Vali well. Not prepared to enter into a turf war, the insidious faith is content to operate the seedier, and in some cases truly vile, aspects of the district.

Sigel's cultists rightly consider the district to be a den of vice and depravity. They have the legal authority to close down businesses engaged in illegal or sacrilegious behavior, but can do nothing about the legitimate businesses save vocalize their views and harass patrons with sermons threatening eternal damnation.

It is widely rumored that King Halgroth V is a frequent visitor to the district, though obviously he only visits heavily disguised.

HOTHAR'S WARD

Whatever the truth, the nobility like to portray themselves as followers of justice and order. Much of the ward is devoted to housing, with the hereditary counts each having large estates here. Shops and services catering to the needs of the wealthy are found on the edges of the neighboring wards.

22. THE PALACE INN

A grand three-story structure, the Palace Inn is the finest in New Asper. Finest also means most expensive—prices for all meals are three times those listed in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*. Unlike in other inns, there is no common sleeping area—patrons must reside in a one- or two-bed chamber. Prices start at 3 gs a night and increase depending on the size and luxury of the room.

One rarely finds visiting counts slumming it here,

but their senior officials and many local dignitaries congregate here to enjoy the like-minded company and reserved entertainment. Outside the Outer Council, more politicking takes place here than anywhere else in the capital. Heroes hoping to make the acquaintance of the city's movers and shakers need to dress appropriately—formal clothing is the minimum attire.

23. NOBLE ESTATES

Approximately two-thirds of the ward is made up of the estates of the seven hereditary counts. Since the foundation of New Asper, with its great castle, visiting counts have politely refused to accept accommodation in the fortress. There, they would be under constant surveillance and at the king's mercy.

The then king was not happy with the counts' request to construct estates within the city, but he could not refuse them—to deny the counts, who formed the Inner Council, a presence in the capital would make the monarch look like a tyrant. The king did, however, get his revenge. Land was duly allocated to the counts, but it was to be rented for a period of ten years. More importantly, the amounts were not fixed. Instead, each estate was auctioned, with those closer to the palace, being larger and grander having a higher minimum bid. The counts were furious, but there was little they could do—the people were hardly likely to rebel over the nobility having to spend money. The auction system remains in place. Overseen by the cult of Hothar, the next auction is due to take place in two years. The counts managed to force one small concession—the estates were, and still are, considered part of their fiefs, rather than the king's.

Most times the highest-ranking official present is a steward, appointed to keep his master's estate running smoothly in the count's absence.

Every count travels with a large entourage, and their arrival in the city is akin to a parade. Not that the high nobles are frequent visitors—the more distant ones visit only when the Inner Council sits, to swear oaths on Oath Renewal Day, and on the rare occasion they wish a private audience with Halgroth V rather than acting through a herald.

24. THE TEMPLE OF LIGHT

Constructed from highly polished yellow granite and topped by a magnificent dome paneled in beaten gold, the Temple of Purity is the seat of Sigel's cult in Asperia. Though the cult is always short of money, its assets are beyond calculation.

Every inch of the temple interior open to laity is covered in panels of beaten gold inscribed with prayers, stories, and imagery devoted to Sigel. (The places reserved solely for the clergy have bare yellow marble surfaces.) During the temple's construction after the Golem Uprising, the people were taxed heavily to provide the vast amount of precious metal required. Though their ancestors nearly revolted at the burden placed on them, their

modern descendants admire their "generosity," for the holy place is truly wondrous to behold.

Thrust into the top of the altar, which is said to be solid gold but is actually a block of white marble covered with a thick layer of beaten metal, is a greatsword. Inscribed on the blade in Draconic runes is a single word—Sunblade. According to ancient temple records, Sun Knight Anselm the Pure, a paladin-hero popular in stories even today, placed the sword here after the war against the Liche-Priest. Inscribed around the sword in Classical Anari are the words "Sunblade shall be drawn by the righteous hand when Darkness threatens Asperia." Paladins touch their weapons against Sunblade as a symbolic gesture during their final vows of ordination.

Studied many times down the centuries, the Sunblade is a true relic. Its sole power is the ability to create a burst of blazing light that burns demons and undead. No one can attune themselves to the relic while it remains in the stone. The Reliquary knows the sword's existence, but can do little to remove it—the altar weighs many tons and has proven resistant to damage.

Atop the great dome that sits directly over the hall of worship is a 30 feet high statue of Sigel. His halo is a disc of pure gold, his right hand clutches his sword, and his left palm is open and raised to face the sky. A flickering flame dances in his palm, its light visible for many miles after sunset. Known as the Flame of Righteousness, local folklore holds that Asperia will never fall so long as the flame burns.

Crafted by frost dwarf artisans, the statue is a marvelous feat of engineering. The figure is actually hollow and can be accessed from a hidden walkway near the top of the dome. Unseen from the ground, a wick as thick as a man's arm emerges from the god's left palm. The wick is fed by an oil reserve in the lower torso.

TIW'S WARD

Sigel may be the official protector of Asperia, but no king is prepared to offend mighty Tiw by ignoring him completely. Named after the god of war, the eastern district is devoted entirely to the needs of the king's personal army. The western half is a mixture of middle- and lower-class housing.

25. GARDEN OF HEROES

Formerly located in Asper, this memorial honored Asperia's heroes of the Demongate, Liche-Priest, and Blizard Wars. Transplanted to New Asperia after the Golem Uprising, along with the bones and grave goods beneath them, they line the edge of a grand park.

The original garden had hundreds of statues, each marking the grave of a named hero. Such was the devastation the golems wrought that only 25 statues remained recognizable. Added to their number are ten raised to honor heroes of the Golem Uprising. Dominating the center is a huge granite statue of a warrior wearing a full helmet. His face concealed, he marks the resting place of the heroes whose monuments were destroyed and whose remains could not be officially identified. Known

simply as the Tomb of the Unknown Heroes, it is the focal point of celebrations on Battle Dance Day, Standards Day, and Victory Day.

26. THE LANCE & SWORD

A well-known inn, the Lance & Sword caters for mercenary captains seeking employment, as well as small bands of heroes looking for adventure. Fights are common, though most are good-natured brawls rather than deadly combats.

Potential hirers inform the innkeeper, Milom ap-Aubri, a retired Sword of Tiw and former sellsword, of the services they require and then take a seat at a numbered booth. Captains and heroes entering or staying at the inn then talk to Milom, being directed to patrons whose needs meet their particular talents.

While mercenaries use their names, playing on their reputation, hirers are referred to only by their booth number to ensure anonymity. Given that many dignitaries are easily recognized, most act through intermediaries. Once a deal is struck and oaths are sworn, the patron may reveal his name if he so chooses.

27. TEMPLE OF EIRA

Eira's temple stands close to that of her ex-husband. Painted white to honor the goddess and mark it out as a place of healing, the temple is noted for its shape. The central worship hall is circular. Radiating outward are four buildings—two long halls (one north and one south) and two shorter ones (one east and one west).

The long buildings are dedicated to the needs of the city's inhabitants. As well as tending to injuries, the clerics sell alchemical healing devices, as well as curative and preventative herbal remedies.

The eastern arm is devoted to Kvarsi, the goddess of battlefield medicine (see *Matters of Faith*). Here, wounded soldiers can convalesce at the king's expense. In addition to their regular duties, all clerics of Eira stationed at the temple must serve for three months with the army to hone their mundane healing arts.

The western arm is the city's orphanage. It also doubles as a refuge for those escaping violent partners. Battered women, and occasionally men, may stay here as long as is necessary. During their time in the temple, they earn their keep by helping to educate the orphans.

28. SHRINE OF ERMUNAZ

A small hall situated between the temples of Eira and Tiw serves as a shrine to Ermunaz, god of unarmed combat (see *Matters of Faith*), and a training hall.

Eira's Peacekeepers in the city have long shunned the use of all weapons save for their fists and feet (and biting and head-butting). In their eyes, this better prepares them for life outside the temple, where one cannot always carry arms. Tiw's paladins practice unarmed combat partly because it is another form of combat and partly because it allows them to strike back even if disarmed.

Naturally, there is a great deal of rivalry between the two sets of paladins. Each year, both cults submit a team of champions to take part in a contest. If the clerics of Eira win, the hall teaches defensive and grappling techniques for the next year. If Tiw's paladins emerge victorious, the focus is on disabling your enemy as swiftly and thoroughly as possible. The cult of Tiw won the last match.

29. TEMPLE OF TIW

Standing on the western edge of the military zone is a large temple to Tiw. The main temple hall is circular. Standing tall in the center is a double aspect statue of Tiw. Viewed from the east, the god has his shield raised in a defensive posture. Seen from the west, he holds an axe and sword in aggressive positions. Large niches in the wall contain shrines to the minor deities Atriör (cavalrymen) and Boðgaeðir, (battle enhancement) and small statues of Tiw's many other aspects. In between are positioned racks of shields and weapons, mementos of priests and paladins fallen in battle.

Independent of the monarch's authority, the cult has never turned down a request to march to war, so long as due payment has been made. The last time this happened was the crusade against the orcs led by Halgroth IV. The temple is currently understaffed—dozens of clerics have headed into the Eastern Marches in search of combat opportunities against the new orc menace.

30. THE BARRACKS

The king's army stands at just 2,000 men, yet the barracks, which actually occupies half the ward, can house up to 4,000 in relative comfort. This additional space was added as a contingency should a dire threat ever march against the city, allowing the king to garrison troops supplied by the counts (assuming they actually answered his call-to-arms, of course).

Scattered throughout the district are barrack blocks (each designed to house one company), officers' houses, workshops, kitchens and mess halls, warehouses, a heavily-fortified armory (stocked with alchemical devices as well as mundane weapons), a meeting room (for officers to plan missions and exercises), firing ranges, open spaces for drill and parades, and stables (for the War Knights' mounts).

The city watch doesn't bother to patrol here—anyone brave enough to rob their comrades deserves whatever street justice is meted out.

31. WARMONGERS

Owned by a retired army captain, Warmongers sells weapons at 90% of the usual price. The quality is average, but it is not the array of weapons most customers come here for. In direct violation of the law, the shop sells alchemical devices on behalf of the cult of Tiw. Prices are as per the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*, but only known and trusted clients, or those that come with a recommendation from the cult, can purchase them.

RAVENSBURG



HISTORY

A casual glance at any map of the continent instantly reveals that Ravensburg is not ideally suited for a capital city. Ignoring Angmark, which arose later, it stands on the far west of the Marklands. Were it central, a more logical position, it would stand in southern Nordmark or northern Midmark. Its location was not a matter of whim or circumstance, however. Rather, it is directly tied to the birth of the Marklands.

Skaldic tradition claims that the land at the base of the Hearth Range was largely unpopulated. All that stood on the site of modern Ravensburg was a simple shepherd's hut. Legend has it that it was in this structure that the last Anari commander surrendered to the Saxa horde, thus ending what most people know as the Saxa Rebellion and the Saxa speak of as the Great War.

It was also here, crammed into the drafty structure, that the leaders of the rebellion met to decide the future of the Marklands and where the first High Cyning was crowned. Naturally, he claimed the domain as his own and the site became his capital. The hut is long gone, for the royal palace was built on the spot it stood.

Despite the passage of five centuries, little has actually changed. The city has grown and it now has a small population of foreigners (a term locals use to describe anyone not born in Royalmark), but it has remained staunchly traditional in its views and culture. Indeed, like the rest of Royalmark it is a throwback to early times, a snapshot of how the Saxa used to live centuries ago.

SOCIAL HIERARCHY

As with everything in Royalmark, the social hierarchy of Ravensburg is very traditional. Naturally, the High Cyning and his family sit at the top.

Beneath him are the city's noble families. They answer directly to the throne, and are thus independent of the jarls. While many nobles in foreign cities have grown rich from investing in trade, in Royalmark that is the domain of merchants, not rulers. Ravensburg's nobles earn their income from personal land they farm or land they tend on behalf of the High Cyning. As a result, they are often poorer than many of their peers in other realms.

The rest of Ravensburg's society is classed as per the entry in the *Hellfrost Atlas*.

Until the advent of the Marklands, the Saxa practiced enforced slavery. Known as thralls, slaves captured in raids or purchased on the open market worked the land and performed menial chores. Since overthrowing the Anari and reclaiming their ancestral lands, enforced slavery has been banned. Voluntary slavery, however, is still legal and continues to this day.

Under the new laws, any destitute or displaced citizen can agree to become a thrall. In return, they receive a roof over their heads and food for their bellies. Thralls retain the right to marry. Marrying a freeman does not automatically remove their thrall status, however—the noble to whom their partner is beholden must release them from their bondage. Since most thralls freed in this manner are female, the process is akin to the custom of the father of the bride giving away his daughter. Thralls never come with dowries, though. Even then, they are considered leysingi (see *Rassilon Expansion 2*).

GOVERNMENT

Ravensburg is both the High Cyning's home and the capital of Royalmark. Technically, it is the capital of the entire Marklands, though the title is rarely used outside of Royalmark. While High Cyning Eyolf directly oversees matter of criminal law (see page 19), the running of Ravensburg is left to underlings.

The most senior of these is the High Seneschal. Ap-

pointed by the king to serve in his name, he is the *de facto* ruler of Ravensburg, thus allowing his master to concentrate on affairs of state rather than the trifling issues of the local population. Regardless of his birth rank, he is awarded the noble title Thegn of Ravensburg.

THE BENCH

Although he is top dog, the High Seneschal cannot govern every aspect of the city alone. Aiding him are a number of other courtiers and officials. These underlings are arranged into a body known as the Bench.

The name stems from the royal court, where there are two benches arranged to face the throne for the king's advisors to sit. The High Seneschal, however, has just a single bench. Out of long-standing tradition, the High Seneschal is granted the authority to appoint his own advisors, so long as they are Saxa, citizens of Royalmark, worship an accepted deity, and swear allegiance to the High Cyning. Those who hold odd views (such as adopting foreign customs or marrying a non-Saxa) are rarely ever appointed to high office.

Advisors to the High Cyning, whose tasks relate to the country rather than the city, carry the prefix "Royal" in front of their roles. To differentiate them, and denote their lower standing, those who help run the capital receive the prefix "High."

Unless they hold a higher noble rank, Bench members are automatically awarded the title of Lendmann of Ravensburg in addition to that of their role. The noble title is purely honorific—it comes with no grant of land or additional authority. So as they cannot abuse their honorific or claim to be blood nobles, they must always use the full title of Lendmann of Ravensburg.

The Bench is not a democracy. While its members can make suggestions to the High Seneschal, only the High Cyning or the royal seneschal have the power to overrule him. On the rare occasions this has been done, it was due to the High Seneschal attempting to introduce foreign influences into the city.

The positions of the courtiers and their duties are described below, along with the incumbent's name, gender, culture, and age. Unless the heroes are major players with influence at court, it is these officials with whom they are most likely to interact.

High Seneschal: Governs Ravensburg as thegn on behalf of the High Cyning. He answers to the Royal Seneschal; *Incumbent:* Thegn Coellaf Athelgarsunu (male, Saxa, 58)

High Castellan: Commands the local garrison (but not the High Cyning's bodyguard) and the fyrd; *Incumbent:* Lendmanna Godwynn Sigestansdohtor (female, Saxa, 34)

High Chaplain: An intermediary between the High Seneschal and the city's cults; *Incumbent:* Lendmann Ealhmund Inredsunu (male, Saxa, 70)

High Reeve: Responsible for overseeing the workers and handling any disputes; *Incumbent:* Lendmann Hereric Edmundsunu (male, Saxa, 30)

High Provost: Although he is not a judge, he advises

RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in Ravensburg. Because they apply equally to the city, three of them are copied from the *Hellfrost Atlas* for convenience.

* **Bartering:** While foreign merchants demand payment in coin, local merchants are happy to barter, for this is the old Saxa way. Heroes trying to sell goods normally make a Streetwise roll to find a buyer. In Royalmark they can trade them for 25% of their value with no roll required.

* **Clueless:** Unless they have need to regularly deal with outsiders, denizens of Ravensburg have -2 to Common Knowledge rolls concerning Royalmark beyond the confines of the capital.

* **Languages:** Auld Saxa is the dominant language. Regardless of what languages an inhabitant actually speaks, strangers conversing in anything but Auld Saxa incur a -1 Charisma penalty.

* **Out of Touch:** The majority of Royalmark's citizens are out of touch with the rest of world thanks to their staunch traditionalism. While they accept that foreigners (i.e. non-Saxa) are naturally different, they react unfavorably to Saxa who sport unusual fashions, sing new songs, or honor the gods in different ways. Unless a Saxa hero from another realm adopts staunch traditional Saxa attire, mannerisms, and beliefs, they suffer a -1 penalty to Charisma in Royalmark.

* **Pipeleaf:** Pipeleaf is considered an unwanted foreign influence. It is available, but costs 45 gs per five smokes.

* **Stubborn:** This staunch conservatism of the Royalmarkers means many have the Stubborn Hindrance. This manifests openly when exposed to new ideas, especially foreign ones.

on matters of law; *Incumbent:* Hauld Botfrea Cuthnoth-sunu (male, Saxa, 46)

High Skald: The keeper of history and tradition, he ensures that foreign influences are kept out of the capital; *Incumbent:* Lendmanna Beronhild Leofwaldsdohtor (female, Saxa, 56)

High Treasurer: Handles trade agreements and mercantile disputes; *Incumbent:* Lendmann Eghelm Heahwigsunu (male, Saxa, 39)

BENCH CLERICAL

Balancing temporal and spiritual power in a society that is deeply religious and yet places nobility above the clergy has never been easy. Ancient laws prohibit clergymen from holding high civil office—no man may have two masters, and the needs of the physical world and the tenets of the gods do not always go hand in hand.

To ensure communication between king and cults, the first High Cyning created a council of clerics. The council,

known as the Bench Clerical, has no official power—it is nothing more than an advisory body—and lacks even the authority to punish religious crimes, such as blasphemy and heresy. Every acknowledged high priest may sit on the Bench Clerical.

It is actually very rare for the Bench Clerical to agree on anything—the wons of the cults are too disparate for a unified front. Naturally, this allows the king to play the high priests off against each other, thus ensuring they never gang up against him. While the high priests may sit in the presence of the king, in most cases the Bench Clerical interacts with the royal chaplain.

Basic details of the four most important, and thus powerful, high priests are given below.

Eostre Plantmother: Sower-Cultivator Wulfburh Beornothsdohtor (female, Saxa, 74)

Hothar: Scale of Justice Frithuheah Wihstansunu (male, Saxa, 61)

Sigel: Sun Priest Ealdgeat Cynegarsunu (male, Saxa, 47)

Tiw: Shield Inswith Godsigesdohtor (female, Saxa, 38)

LAW AND ORDER

Ravensburg has no separate police force. As the High Cyning's personal domain, responsibility for maintaining law and order lies with his bodyguards, the Ravens (see p. 22 and the *Hellfrost Atlas* for more details). Unlike other aspects of the city, the High Seneschal has no direct authority over them. Instead, those assigned to law enforcement answer to the royal provost.

Two companies of Ravens are always assigned to policing—one during the day and one at night. Not only does this enforce the king's rule, it also prevents the huscarls from becoming bored or lazy. Companies alternate between guarding the king and patrolling the streets every month. Each company is divided into ten patrols of equal strength. Led by a sergeant, they comprise eight huscarls, one paladin of Tiw (frequently, but not always, the ranking officer), and one berserker.

Although not mentioned in any official roster, each company of Ravens keeps 20 trained war dogs. In addition to its bipedal members, each patrol is accompanied by a snarling war dog.

THE COURTS

Ravensburg is Eyolf's city and the people all owe him fealty, but his authority over matters of law is not as absolute as outsiders might think. Again, this stems back to Royalmark's staunch traditionalism.

In keeping with ancient tradition, all civil matters, such as disputes over grazing rights or borders are handled not by the nobility or the cult of Hothar, but by the Ravensburg moot court. Meeting just once a year inside the temple of Hothar, the moot court comprises ten dooms-men. By law, these are elected by the citizens and cannot hold noble titles. The authority of the moot is considered legally binding and outside the interference of any nobleman (including the High Cyning). Those who go

to the moot must accept its judgment or be found in contempt (a criminal matter).

As well as settling rights issues, the moot can impose weregild as punishment for proven verbal insults and minor physical injuries. This is the limit of its sentencing powers, though.

Criminal cases are heard by the High Cyning in person—this is the one area of city life he has not handed over to his underlings. Although he is the final arbiter of the law and is expected to have a working knowledge of it, the High Cyning is not required to be a legal specialist. Assisting him in his duties are one or more clerics of Hothar and a skald versed in history and law. The king's word is final—there is no chance of an appeal once his verdict has been given.

Most cases are settled through fines rather than physical punishment. Serious crimes may warrant criminal servitude, in which the guilty party becomes a thrall to his victim. Typically this is for life. The most serious punishment is not death, which Royalmarkers consider barbaric, but outlawing. Under the terms of the sentence, the guilty party is given a three-day head start. After this time, he may be slain without fear of legal repercussion (blood feuds are a different matter) by any citizen of Royalmark if found within the kingdom's borders.

In addition to the moot court, the cult of Hothar, or the king, all citizens have the right to trial by ordeal. The accepted methods are the burning stone, holmganga, and shield judgment. See *Rassilon Expansion* for more on these, as well as justice in general.

THIEVES' GUILD

Ravensburg has no organized thieves' guild. This isn't to say that the citizens are all law-abiding, only that organized thievery is considered an Anari invention and thus has not found a home here. No thieves' guild also means there is no protection racket—every property is considered fair game by the nine thieves who live and work in the capital.

The resident thieves all worship at a secret shrine to Nauthiz, but consider themselves rivals. Each year, they count up their spoils. The thief who has garnered the most is given the title Master Thief of Ravensburg. The title is both acknowledgment of his prowess and a dig at the Bench, with their lofty honorific titles.

EDUCATION

Considered archaic, even quaint, in much of the Marklands, Auld Saxa is the predominant language in Ravensburg (and the rest of the country). Many citizens also speak a smattering of Saxa, but other languages are exceptionally rare outside of native speakers. Even Trader, a language spoken the length and breadth of the continent, is known only to those who must regularly entreat with outsiders.

The customs and culture of the Saxa are drummed into children from an early age. Children of other races or cultures are permitted to learn their native lore, but they must also master those of the Saxa if they are to fit into the insular society. Unless one has wealth to hire clerics of Hothar as tutors, formal education is non-existent.

Regardless of one's level of education, the introduction of outside influences is strictly forbidden, punishable by stiff fines and even exile. This places restrictions on what the cult of Hoenir may legally teach. To that end, rich citizens who want their children to receive a rounded education (which is not that many) send them to Nara for schooling.

Royalmarkers in general are ignorant of the rest of the world, though those living close to neighboring nations have at least a passing knowledge of their major customs. Far more insular, and many miles from any border, the inhabitants of Ravensburg show great ignorance even about large parts of Royalmark. To enlightened adventurers, the city-dwellers can come across as no better than uneducated country bumpkins.

RELIGION

As in other parts of Royalmark, the citizens of Ravensburg hold Eostre, Hothar, Sigel, and Tiw as the most important gods.

As far as the masses are concerned, Eostre is the main deity. Her cult certainly has the largest number of dedicated followers, for while it is a city, many of its people work the surrounding land. Her minor cults are especially active—those that exist here have at least one full-time cleric.

In the eyes of the upper echelons of society, Hothar is king. Not the most traditional of the Saxa deities, he has always been the protector of the royal family and the source of its power, as well as the guardian of traditional values. When a citizen swears an oath, it is always done in Hothar's name. His cult helps police the traditions of the city, ensuring that unwanted foreign influences are quickly stamped out and the perpetrators ejected.

This has led to friction with the cult of Hoenir, which aims to spread knowledge. More than once the Ravens have been summoned to break up fights between the bookish librarians and the traditionalist clerics. Not that there is ever much risk of serious harm being caused if just priests are involved—they tend to fight like young girls, slapping each other and pulling hair rather than throwing hard punches.

Tiw is the god of war and protector of the Marklands in general. All members of the Ravens are required to honor him, and thus his cult has considerable influence in the capital. His fortified temple is also home to clerics of Boðgaeðir (battle enhancement), Geirdrifur (spear throwing), Geirvaldr (the fyrd), Hildolfr (berserks), and Sigðir (knattleikr). See *Matters of Faith* for details on these minor deities.

Sigel, god of the sun and protector against the dark forces, is also the god of good morals and righteous behavior. Saxa in general enjoy drinking and feasting, singing and fighting, but in Ravensburg their festivities are always tempered by hard stares from Sigel's clergy. They do not mind the citizens having a good time, so long as they do so in moderation.

Scaetha has few devout worshippers in Ravensburg. Hela's madness was felt everywhere, but the subsequent war against the Liche-Priest, which saw Scaetha promoted to undead slayer, never affected the old Saxa realms. In northern Royalmark, where entities from the Withered Lands are a constant threat, Scaetha has assumed her full modern role. In Ravensburg, far from the danger of shambling undead, she is seen only as the goddess of death, a relatively minor deity subservient to Sigel. Despite this, there is a small temple in the city.

When it comes to learning, there are actually two deities. Hoenir represents the modern approach taken by other lands, with written words and access to knowledge from all lands. In Ravensburg, Hoenir is considered the god of foreign (read unwanted or corruptive) knowledge. His place has been taken by the Unknowable One, patron of storytellers. Although they have a written language, Royalmarkers still prefer oral history. In addition to being the traditional means of passing on lore, storytelling, unlike reading a book is a social affair.

Centers of power and population are natural draws for the cult of Vali the Corrupter, but Ravensburg has proven impossible to crack. Utterly adverse to new things, especially ideas, and quite content to know their place, it is only the nobility who crave more. Many nobles are already well down the road to the corruption, which makes the game little fun for the cult.

One aspect of Ravensburg's traditionalism is that the people do not grovel before the malevolent deities, a growing trend in other nations. In place of supplicating Thrym to make winter less arduous, they pray to Kenaz to warm their flesh and souls. Where others offer Vali sacrifices to turn his gaze from the harvest, Ravensburgers give their sacrifices to Eostre Plantmother to boost the yield. No one prays to Hela to ward off the attention of undead—they ask Sigel to shield them.

Irrespective of cult, tradition governs the workings of the cults in Ravensburg. In times of peace, only a priest may serve as high priest. In times of war, as determined by the High Cyning, the high priest is replaced by the senior paladin for the duration of the conflict. While it may sound odd to outsiders, the bonds of tradition run so deep that even the cults of malevolent deities follow this structure.

FESTIVALS

The inhabitants of Ravensburg enjoy many festivals. Every high holy day of the four main gods is a public holiday. Attendance is not compulsory, but followers of the relevant faith who do not attend may be given the cold shoulder by their peers for lack of devotion. Worshippers

are expected to, and indeed regularly do, attend services on holy days (although on their own time). Such devotion serves the cults well, ensuring the temples, and thus the coffers, are always full.

Raven's Day is held on Sangdaeg of Hegmonan and is a public holiday. On this one day of the year, candidates seeking to enlist with the Ravens pit mettle and metal against a serving huscarl drawn at random. Held in the market square, the event is a huge draw, with citizens traveling far and wide to watch the contests. The combats are always shield judgments, exciting enough for the spectators but without injuring either combatant.

During the summer months, when the crops are growing and the livestock is grazing, Saxa thoughts naturally turn to conflict—it is in their blood. In rural communities, people pacify this natural urge to wage war through cattle raiding. In the more civilized city, summer means it is time for the annual knattleikr competition. Patronized by the High Cyning, the tournament winners are assured riches as well as glory.

Held over the entire third week of Werremonan, with a break on Marketdaeg, the competition attracts players and spectators from across the Marklands. It also attracts people from other realms, which means the cult of Hothar must work extra hard to repress cultural tainting. The city's population can grow by as much as 50%, during this week. With no inns, visitors who have no relatives in Ravensburg resort to erecting a tent city on the outskirts of the capital. This actually suits the locals, as it means they can avoid unnecessary contact with foreigners.

Apples have never been big business in Royalmark, but everyone enjoys cheese and beer. In Ravensburg, the center of productivity, these twin staples are marked on Beer and Cheese Day. Held on Sangdaeg of Plohmonan, it is both a way to celebrate the industries, thank Eostre for her bounty, and reward the farmers who have, in theory, just finished plowing the soil.

The city's cheesemakers and the temple of Gullveig (the only brewery) offer free samples of their wares to the inhabitants. With so many to feed (attendance is very high), quantities are restricted to a small cup of ale and a knob of cheese.

While it is quite permissible for worshippers to devour these small samples as part of their devotions, many instead give them to Eostre's clergy. It is considered extremely rude for a cleric not to consume the ale and cheese in front of the donor. Alas, and despite the good intentions with which the offering is made, many end up drunk and with a terrible stomach ache. Another accepted tradition is to place the food and drink on the graves of ancestors.

MILITARY

Capital of Royalmark and chief city of the Saxa, Ravensburg has no palisade or ditch. This is not down to lack of threats, but to the perception of strength—by refusing

to construct any palisade, the High Cynings indicate that there is no threat they cannot overcome.

No palisade does not mean defenseless, however—the High Cynings can be arrogant, but they are not stupid. The city's western flank is protected by the Hearth Range, while six motte-and-bailey forts, each housing 100 huscarls, are located a discreet distance outside town.

In addition to these six companies, there are another four stationed within the city itself. Known as the Ravens, they are the king's bodyguard. As well as protecting the king's person, they serve to enforce law and order in his name. Each of these companies is commanded by a captain. To denote his higher status than an ordinary captain of huscarls, they receive the title High Captain.

As the royal bodyguard, the Ravens leave the city only in the presence of the king. In the rare instances a noble needs reminding who is in charge by a display of military power, the duty usually falls to ordinary huscarls. As a rule of thumb, one company accompanies the king whenever he visits places in Royalmark and two companies if he must travel beyond the borders. Only if Royalmark went to war would all four leave the city.

Also garrisoned in the city is a small contingent of mercenary cavalry. The High Cyning has two companies (200 men) at his disposal, but only one company is permanently stationed in the capital—the other company roams the countryside, ensuring the High Cyning's presence is seen, if not actually felt. Cavalry trained to fight in battle, an Anari concept, is one of the rare concessions the High Cynings of old have made to the modern world.

The growing trend across Rassilon is to hire Knights Hrafn as company captains and generals. Slow as ever to change, the High Cyning has rebuffed all their attempts to promote their staff as worthy leaders.

MILITIA

Being Saxa, Ravensburg has a fyrd. Including city dwellers and farmers within a day's march, a total force of some 1,500 warriors, around 10% of the local population, can be raised to help deal with emergencies. Although it trains regularly, summoning the fyrd is always a last resort—very few of the members have any real military experience and most possess only a short spear or bow (the latter predominantly used for hunting game). Armor is very rare among fyrdmen.

PRIVATE FORCES

As a martial culture, the Saxa have never placed restrictions on private citizens owning arms and armor, or equipping their servants with such. That said, weapons and armor are not cheap, and few outside the nobility or powerful merchant families can afford the luxury. While bodyguards are looked down upon in some cultures, or mocked by regular soldiers for being pretend warriors, in Ravensburg it is an honorable profession. After all, one has the responsibility for defending another person's life, and that is not a charge lightly undertaken.

TRADE & TRIBUTE

Firmly stuck in the past, Ravensburg indigenous art-work and jewelry have become something of a joke. No one doubts the skill that has gone into their creation, but the designs are centuries old. Far from the cutting edge of fashion, they appeal only to customers who want something quaint, who are interested in the old times, or are clueless as to modern Saxa fashions. With designs never changing, demand is slowly diminishing as foreign merchants look for new and exciting wares to tempt customers into parting with their hard-earned coin.

Its largest contribution to the export market is beer and cheese—the city accounts for around 20% of all exports. Although the recipes have not changed in many generations, this does not mean they are bland—Ravenburg's artisans have always prided themselves on good flavors. Competition from other nations is heating up, but when it comes to good food, tastes are slow to change.

The city imports large quantities of gold and silver. Much of this is destined for the royal mint, where it will be turned into currency. The rest goes to the city's gold and silversmiths for turning into jewelry.

One import the city does not want is pipeleaf. The paradox of staunch traditionalism is that it abhors change, and introducing a law making pipeleaf illegal would be a change. Instead, the substance is taxed excessively, making it far beyond the reach of most citizens.

TAXES

Royalmark is unified, but the jarls wield considerable independent authority. This is most notable when it comes to taxation, for the land has no central policy.

Heavy taxation is not the Royalmark way—until the Anari came about, most nobles earned their money from selling excess produce produced on their land and collecting fines, rents, hunting fees, tolls, and duties. The thought of taxing an individual purely as a means of raising money was something they had never considered. Even today, taxation in Ravensburg is very limited.

Common Burdens: Armies and fortifications are not cheap to maintain. As part of his feudal oath, every adult citizen agrees to pay 10% of his income per year (5% if he is a militia member) for this purpose.

Customs Duty: Imports of foreign goods for direct sale to the public are charged at 5%. Foreign goods merely passing through are charged at 2%. Exports are charged at 3%.

Excise Duty: Pipeleaf imports are charged at 100%.

Tithing: Paying tithes to temples is a legal requirement. Citizens are free to donate to a single temple or share their tithe around multiple cults.

MARKETS

In the old days, Marketdaeg was just that—the day on which the market was held. Elsewhere, markets are com-

monly held at least several times a week. In Ravensburg, stalls open for just one day a week, though high holy days of the city's four main deities are considered to be important enough to warrant a market.

No law prohibits a craftsman selling goods directly from his workshop, but when it comes to basic wares, citizens shop just once a week.

ARCHITECTURE

There are no stone buildings in Ravensburg. Wood has always been the Saxa's preferred construction material and they are masters of the art.

The majority of houses are long, rectangular structures and just a single story high. Roofs are steeply pitched, with an overhang to allow people and animals to shelter from rains, and covered in bundles of reeds (for the poor) or wooden shingles (for the rich). Grander houses follow the same shape as poorer ones, but are built to a larger scale. Although they typically have just a single floor inside, the main roof beam may be as much as three stories high. Very few buildings have windows.

Being made of wood does not imply the structures are dull to look at—far from it, in fact. Intricate knotwork designs, stylized animals (traditionally bears, boars, dragons, horses, and ravens), and holy symbols are carved onto supporting beams, doors, and over lintels. The houses of the truly wealthy may have a pair of tall wooden pillars outside, elaborately carved to resemble one or more gods seated one above the other.

Save for a high seat for the head of the family, few householders own a table and chairs. Instead, raised platforms along each of the long walls serve for seating.

Similarly, there is usually only one private bedroom in a standard house—that of the homeowner. Other family members and guests alike sleep in the main hall atop the wooden benches. In addition to providing sitting and sleeping space, the benches lift to reveal storage space beneath.

Internal decorations are few and far between. Walls may be covered with tapestries or pelts to keep out the draft, and many citizens own a small wooden carving of the house's patron deity. Too small to be considered shrines, in any meaningful sense of the word, they serve as both a protective force against evil spirits and show the gods the mortal's loyalty.

Even the homes of the rich and powerful lack what outsiders might consider modern necessities. In place of carpets or rugs, for instance, floors are covered with straw.

THE SUN

As elsewhere, the inhabitants of Ravensburg base their working day on the rising and setting of Sigel's Hearth. Below are the local sunrise and sunset times and the hours of daylight for the first day of each month.

RAVEN

1. hartstead
2. the court
3. the oath stone
4. hall of champions
5. the armory
6. the market
7. the sun hall
8. hall of memories

9. ancestors' hall
10. hall of the kings
11. cheesehouse
12. dogs of war
13. skalds' hall
14. ale-house
15. the shield hall
16. idol-maker

one square = 75 ft

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Ravensburg

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 17. the great temple | 25. barracks |
| 18. shrine of veth | 26. confederacy mission |
| 19. granaries | 27. translators' guild |
| 20. temple of gullveig | 28. troll hide tannery |
| 21. hall of ravens | 29. cavalry barracks |
| 22. hall of metal rain | 30. hall of joyous union |
| 23. heaumer | 31. lenko's exchange |
| 24. not ravensburg | |



Month	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Snaermonan	0734	1632	8h 58m
Frostmonan	0720	1706	9h 46m
Eostremonan	0641	1744	11h 3m
Plohmonan	0553	1818	12h 25m
Sowanmonan	0504	1852	13h 48m
Werremonan	0428	1924	14h 56m
Scerranmonan	0416	1945	15h 29m
Hegmonan	0431	1940	15h 9m
Haerfestmonan	0500	1909	14h 9m
Falmonan	0532	1821	12h 49m
Huntianmonan	0605	1730	11h 25m
Fogmonan	0640	1646	10h 6m
Wulfmonan	0715	1623	9h 8m

MAJOR LOCALES

The capital of both Royalmark and the Marklands, Ravensburg is a city from a bygone age. Its culture, its architecture, and its people are centuries behind the time and unwilling to move in the modern era. Quaint and rustic in equal measure, it is still a major settlement, and there is much for visiting adventurers to see.

OUTSIDE THE CITY

With houses constructed close together and divided only by tiny alleyways, there is no room in the city for gardens or allotments. The ground to the north, west, and east is relatively fertile. Almost every non-noble family rents a strip of land outside the city from the High Cyning (who naturally keeps the best land for himself).

Known as a hide, each strip amounts to 120 acres—enough to feed a single household. Typically it requires four ox teams to plow this much land in a single month. Note that in Ravensburg houses have several generations of the family under the one roof. In return, 10% of the produce is paid to the royal court.

INSIDE THE CITY

As noted elsewhere, Ravensburg has no palisade. In addition to being open to attack, it means the city has no defined border. When people speak of Ravensburg, they traditionally mean what is visible on the map. They also accept, however, that steads as much as three miles away are referred to as within the confines of Ravensburg.

1. HARTSTEAD

Cyning Eyolf's stead stands behind a wooden palisade. Too weak to withstand an assault, the posts serve only to mark out the borders of the royal palace.

The palace proper stands in the north of the compound, close to the neighboring temple of Hothar. Built in the traditional style, it differs from other houses only in its size and in the golden shields that serve as roof

tiles. The original shields, long since rotted away, belonged to fallen heroes of the Saxa rebellion. Today, they are donated by the cult of Sigel to remember paladins who have died in service to the god. Hanging over the front door, and giving the stead its name, is the skull of a gigantic deer, its antlers measuring over a dozen feet across. Legend claims that the mighty beast approached the first High Cyning, swore that the animals would obey his decrees, and promptly dropped dead.

The other buildings making up the palace are the king's private stables, workshops, storehouses, and quarters for servants, thralls, and craftsmen. The building in the eastern corner is occupied by the High Seneschal.

The High Cyning has his own carpenters, metalworkers, potters, and the like. To serve the king in this manner is a great honor and one fiercely competed for. Once appointed, a craftsman remains in position until dismissed by the king, he retires, or he dies. When a vacancy opens, craftsmen of the appropriate type are invited to submit their wares for royal inspection. The craftsman chosen to occupy the position becomes part of the royal household (albeit it a very lowly level) and receives a generous stipend from the king to keep him supplied with the appropriate goods.

2. THE COURT

The highest authority in the land, High Cyning Eyolf has elected to hold his legal court in the temple of Hothar, an imposing wooden edifice known simply as the Court. This has elevated the cult's status to a new high, something it is keen to maintain.

Although Royalmarkers favor an oral tradition, the library has a well-stocked library. As one might expect, the library is dedicated to matters of law and traditional Saxa culture. As impressive as the collection is, none of the volumes is particularly old—the earliest dates to 50 years after the foundation of Royalmark. As manuscripts become fragile with age they are copied, double checked to ensure no new ideas or translations have crept in, and then destroyed as part of a ritual.

The temple has a royal charter permitting the clerics to sell alchemical devices of their own making. These devices may only be sold to Royalmark nobles, however.

Although it has no direct authority over the moot, the clerics may be called upon to advise the doomsmen. The most likely to be summoned is Keeper of the Boundary Osfrea Aethelraedsunu, high priest of the cult of Farma-guth, lesser deity of boundaries (see *Matters of Faith*).

3. THE OATH STONE

Rising from the soil outside the Court is a towering stone. Known as the Oath Stone, it was on this steadfast rock that the last Anari commander swore to lay down his sword and disband his army. The great nobles placed their hands on this stone when they vowed to form the Marklands and serve justly and wisely. It is here that peasants and king alike come to swear holy oaths.

Once a simple stone, the modern Oath Stone is carved

not only with Hothar's holy symbol, but also those of Hefnd, minor goddess of vengeance and righter of wrongs (see *Matters of Faith*) and the Norns, who have already woven whether an oath will be fulfilled or broken. The stone is a dull red, the result of countless blood oaths being sworn upon it.

Centuries of sacred oaths and blood oaths have transformed the Oath Stone from a simple lump of stone into a sacred place.

Spirit Name: Oath-Binder.

Ambience: The surrounding area has no special ambience. Touching the stone, though, produces a sense of foreboding, a sixth-sense of dire consequences should fate not work out as the supplicant intends.

Deity: Hothar.

Senses: Notice d10.

Communication: Oath-Binder does not communicate verbally. Should the sacrifice be accepted, the hand prints of those swearing an oath here are stained into the rock so long as the oath remains in effect.

Sacrifice: To make an oath, a supplicant must slash open his palms and place them on the Oath Stone. He must then state his oath and swear to uphold it in the name of Hothar. Finally, he must state that Hefnd may strike him with curses should he ever break the oath. Inadvertently breaking an oath is no excuse.

Powers: A boast is more than bragging—it is an oath to commit a certain deed made before witnesses. A hero who makes a boast while placing his hands on the Oath Stone receives two benefits. First, he receives a bonus Benny. This may only be used in matters directly concerning the nature of the boast. Should the hero complete the boast, he receives an additional 1 Glory for a minor boast, +2 for a moderate boast, +3 for a major one, and +5 for a legendary one.

The presence of Hefnd's holy symbol is not idle graffiti. Should the hero fail in his boast, he has broken his oath and so must be punished. First, all Glory penalties are increased by the amounts listed above. Second, the oath-breaker suffers further punishment depending on the strength of his boast.

A minor boast causes him to lose one Benny for the remainder of the current adventure. A moderate boast leaves him Fatigued for the remainder of the current adventure, while a major one renders him Exhausted. Magic and rest cannot alleviate these conditions. A failed legendary boast deprives the character of all Bennies for the rest of the current adventure—and he cannot call upon divine aid during that period.

No character may make more than one boast here per year, nor may he gain a second benefit until any current boast is ended.

As well as boasting, the most likely reason for a player character to use the Oath Stone, the site is used for marriages, business deals, land exchanges, vows of friendship and fealty (such as are made on Oath Renewal Day), and all manner of other oaths. Any effects from such oaths must be determined by the GM based on specific circumstances.

4. HALL OF CHAMPIONS

In specific circumstances, Saxa law permits a person accused of a crime who has opted for trial by, or challenged to, holmganga or shield judgment to appoint a champion in his place. In Ravensburg, a champion must be a Saxa and must be registered with the cult of Hothar. Those accepted into the ranks of legal champions may hire their services through the Hall of Champions. Given that dueling is an accepted means of settling a dispute, the building is also known as the Hall of Duelists.

Any registered champion may reside in the hall for as long as he wants at no cost. Meals are provided, but they are simple fare. Guests are not permitted.

Once a contract is accepted, a champion is honor-bound to follow it through. Reneging results not only in being stripped of the right to champion another, but censure from the cult of Hothar for being an oath-breaker. The party who hired them is also entitled to financial compensation.

5. THE ARMORY

The main temple to Tiw, the Armory serves as an actual armory and a training ground for the Ravens. The forges are maintained by clerics of Kenaz. The clerics of Tiw serve their god first and Royalmark second, though all have taken vows never to fight against the High Cyning.

Aside from the main temple and high altar are separate shrines to Boðgaeðir, Geirdriful, Geirvaldr, Hildolfr, and Sigðir. Each minor cult has one or more priests and paladins serving here. As well as performing spiritual duties, they serve the High Cyning in accordance with their specialty. Clerics of Geirdriful and Geirvaldr, for instance, help train the fyrd.

Any worshipper of Tiw can find hospitality here, though he must amuse the priests and paladins with tales of his exploits. The better the tale, the better the hospitality he receives. Some boasting is expected, but lies revealed as such are met with the traditional rebuke of Tiw's clergy—a thorough pummeling.

6. THE MARKET

Open only on Marketdaeg and certain high holy days, the market square transforms from a quiet open area into a bustling throng of humanity. From dawn until dusk, shoppers haggle and barter for the best deals on everything from loaves of bread to clothing while the square echoes with the calls of tradesmen hawking their wares.

Rather than being overseen the cult of Var, it falls to the cult of Hothar to ensure that stalls are set up in the correct spot. There is no set order to the layout—the stalls occupy merely spots they have always held.

Although not permitted to act as general law enforcers, paladins of Hothar may be hired by private citizens to protect their wares. Only stalls stocking valuable goods can afford to pay their rates—most others accept that a certain quantity of goods will be pilfered.

7. THE SUN HALL

Facing onto the market square it is the temple of Sigel. The outward facing walls are painted yellow to mimic gold. Inside, the walls are coated in layers of small strips of beaten gold nailed to the thick mud plaster. Placed here by worshippers, the strips are inscribed with prayers to Sigel. The cult sells blank golden strips for 1 gold scield. Under cult law, prayer strips are only removed when the worshipper has died, for only then has he no need of Sigel's protection.

While some clerics feel the lure of the Hellfrost and duly head north to fight against the forces of Thrym, most are content to act as Ravensburg's moral police. They have no special authority to arrest lawbreakers, and moral crimes, such as excessive drinking, hold no weigh with the moot or court. That said, having a grim-countenanced paladin politely suggest you've had enough to drink and should go home is often enough to cause instant sobering.

8. HALL OF MEMORIES

Heavily reliant on oral knowledge, it is nonetheless true that a tapestry is worth a thousand words. Lining the walls of this long hall is a pictorial representation of Royalmark's history and the deeds of its High Cynings, beginning with the rebellion against the Anari.

Taking the form of a long, thin strip, the tapestry winds around the walls. Here are told the stories of mighty heroes, royal decrees and marriages, and other major events. Aside from an image of his coronation and marriage, the incumbent High Cyning has no representation—only when he has died is his story told. This prevents the king from having himself depicted in the manner he wishes to be remembered.

Although not consecrated as a place of worship, the building has traditionally served as a shrine for those who wish to pray to the Norns. Those who seek their attention leave a bundle of colored threads as an offering. The threads are then used to weave the next part of the great tapestry. The hall is further tied to the goddesses by another tradition. Responsibility for weaving the latest panel always falls to three women, an elder (a master weaver), a mature woman (a journeyman), and a young child (an apprentice).

9. ANCESTORS' HALL

This dour hall, its planks stained black, is the temple to Scaetha, goddess of death. Her clerics' main role is to perform funeral rites, though they also have responsibility for ensuring the local cemetery is not disturbed by grave robbers.

Aside from the high priestess, Eulogist Cynewynn Eorhelmsdohtor, the entire clergy is made up of dour paladins. Cynewynn, despite being born a Royalmarker, has never accepted the traditional stance of her cult in Ravensburg. Personal views aside, local tradition states

TRADITIONS & SINS

Since some cults have slightly different focuses in Royalmark, and Ravensburg in particular, players of clerics may wonder how this affects their sins. The short answer is that it doesn't.

While clerics of Sigel are under no obligation to venture north and seek out Thrym's minions, they are still required to combat them should they encounter the fell creatures. Likewise, Scaetha's cult being relegated to funeral rites in the city doesn't mean clerics can escape punishment for avoiding a tour in the Withered Lands.

At the end of the day, unless an exception is clearly noted in the text or a sidebar, the usual rules for sins always apply to clerics. Traditions are the work of mortals—dogma is the word of the gods.

that as a servant of the goddess of death, rather than undead-slaying, she cannot stir up support for the ongoing battle against the undead of the Withered Lands, at least not in Ravensburg. Thus, she spends much of her time in northern Royalmark and the Freelands close to the border, leaving her deputy to oversee funerals.

When in town, she is frequently at odds with Sun Priest Ealdgeat Cynegarsunu, high priest of Sigel. Although he is a staunch traditionalist, Ealdgeat's primary motive for not ceding Scaetha's cult its rightful position as undead slayers is simply because it gives his cult greater influence. Unwilling to tarnish her cult's name by arguing in public, she reserves her verbal fury for meetings of the Bench Clerical.

Ravenburg has a cemetery, but it lies five miles outside the city. Both inhumations and funeral pyres are accepted methods of laying the dead to rest. Physical inhumations are always accompanied by grave goods. Only nobles have burial mounds, though—the construction of them is beyond the means of the average citizen. The High Kings, in keeping with their lofty position, are interred in the Mounds of Heroes Gone. Unless they have performed some truly mighty deed, their grave mounds are located on the edge of the Mounds.

10. HALL OF THE KINGS

This magnificent mead hall, easily as grand as the royal palace with regard the workmanship used in its construction, is protected day and night by a detachment of the high cyning's bodyguard and paladins of Scaetha.

Without exception and on penalty of immediate execution, entrance to the opulently decorated interior is forbidden to all persons save the High Cyning, and he enters only on the eve of First Death Day. It is said that on this night, Scaetha permits the spirits of the High Cyning of old to return to the mortal realm to council the incumbent monarch. During his annual visit, security is increased to an entire company of elite huscarls, while the clerics sing dirges in honor of the dead.

It is rumored the interior is dominated by a vast table carved from a single tree trunk. Engraved around it in Auld Saxa runes are the names of every High Cyning since the foundation of the Marklands. That of the current High Cyning never appears while he lives, and a throne carved to resemble a storm dragon marks his position. No carpenter has admitted setting foot inside, and stories abound that when a High Cyning dies his name magically appears on the table's polished surface.

11. THE CHEESEHOUSE

Not the most precious of resources, cheese is nonetheless big business in Ravensburg. The cheesehouse, actually two neighboring buildings, is the center of productivity. While there is only one cheesehouse in the city, it is divided into separate workshops. Each belongs to one family producing its own specialty cheese. Within the cool interior, cow's, sheep's, or goat's milk is transformed into a variety of hard cheeses. Most cheese is flavored, either with natural mold or with a variety of traditional herbs and plants.

Among the more notable, and popular, cheeses are Ale Cheese (flavored with hops), Apple Cheese (flavored with apples), Kenaz's Hearth (a strong, mature cheese dusted with charcoal), and Old Horny (a pungent goat cheese said to inflame passions).

12. DOGS OF WAR

Saxa use both cats and dogs for hunting. The former are primarily used to catch rabbits and fish, while the latter are reserved for hunting boar and deer. Also known as war dogs, the latter are also used in battle. Dogs of War is a kennel where hounds are raised and trained. It is impossible to miss the place—the baying of hounds echoes across the city day and night.

A standard trained war dog costs 200 gold scields. For those with money, pedigrees are available for an extra charge. The following modifiers can be combined into a single hound.

Big: Size 0 and +1 Toughness (+450 gs); *Fierce*: Intimidation d8 (+200 gs); *Hound of Tiw*: the dog is a Wild Card (+1,500 gs); *Hunter*: +2 bonus to Tracking rolls based on scent (+170 gs); *Tenacious*: Spirit d8 (+200 gs); *Tough*: Vigor d8 and +1 Toughness (+400 gs); *Vicious*: bite damaged is Str+d6 (+300 gs).

13. SKALDS' HALL

As well as being entertainers, Ravensburg's skalds serve as keepers of history and custom (which they naturally pass on through stories). A center of learning it may be, but there are very few books in the hall. Wise in Royalmark's folktales, history, genealogies, and heraldry (and notably more ignorant in those of other lands), the skalds residing here earn a living as freelance scholars.

The hall contains a small shrine to both Hoenir (god of knowledge) and Galdráföör (minor god of storytell-

ers; see *Matters of Faith*). Out of long-standing tradition, any cleric of either deity or visiting skald or song mage may seek hospitality here. After three days he must either move on or earn his keep by serving as a scholar.

While the rich can afford to maintain a personal skald to keep them entertained while they feast, the peasants must rely on public storytelling events. Twice a week, on Marketdaeg and Milcdaeg eve, the hall opens its doors to Ravensburgers. Outsiders are permitted entry to these events only in the presence of a noble of Royalmark. No food or drink is offered, but patrons are free to bring their own (and usually do). As the communal feast unfolds, the words of poets and storytellers transport the revelers to distant times and places.

Legendary Endeavors: If you have this supplement, Skalds' Hall counts as a minor center of skaldic study. Students must speak Auld Saxa and the stories they learn must have either a Local (Ravensburg), National (Royalmark), or Cultural (Saxa) focus.

14. ALE-HOUSE

The nearest thing Ravensburg has to an inn is the ale-house. Supported by the royal treasury, under whose hospitality guests' reside here, visitors can enjoy flagons of small beer, a breakfast of porridge and cheese, an evening meal of bread, cheese, and roast mutton, and entertainment (usually a storyteller reciting tales in Auld Saxa) all for free. Visitors are only permitted three nights accommodation, however. After that, extra nights cost a mere 2 ss per night. Guests are permitted to bring their own provisions, and several small fire pits are available for those who desire something more substantial.

Save for daggers, the carrying of weapons within the ale-house is forbidden. All weapons must be handed over to the doorman, who secures them in a sturdy chest. Wearing armor is considered bad social manners, but is not expressly prohibited.

There are no private rooms. Lowly peasant or lofty noble, all must sleep in the communal hall. Naturally, more distinguished guests are given seats close to the hearth and receive thicker sleeping furs.

15. THE SHIELD HALL

Royalmark has never launched an invasion against its neighbors, nor has it suffered any major invasions, but war is in its people's blood. Those expecting, or actively seeking, trouble head to the shield hall for protection. The workshop is home to Ealdwald Beorhtgarsunu, a master shield-maker.

Ealdwald does not stock shields—every shield he manufactures is custom-made for its wielder to ensure it is the correct weight and size to afford the best protection. Unlike his Anari counterparts, many of whom now favor metal, Ealdwald only works with wood (although his shields still have metal rims and bosses).

A standard small or medium shield (he does not make large shields) costs as per the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*.

For an additional 10 gs, he adds a custom design to the shield face. Ealdwald also produces special shields for those with money. The modifiers cannot be combined into a single shield.

Light: the shield weighs one-quarter less than normal (+50 gs); **Strengthened:** the shield has +2 Toughness (+150 gs).

The use of magic in a shield judgment is forbidden. Ealdwald's shields, even his strengthened ones, are quite mundane, being a product of great skill rather than arcane arts. Anyone challenged to, or demanding trial by, shield judgment is quietly urged to pay a visit to the shield hall.

16. IDOL MAKER

From towering columns to versions that fit in the palm of one's hand, Ravensburgers own a large number of idols. Crafted to resemble one or more of the gods, the wooden objects can be found in everything from the largest temple (in the form of statues or shrines) to the smallest hovel (where they serve as places of personal devotion). Responsible for carving them is Leofgifu Ecgafsdohor. The most common size is that of an adult human head. Indeed, usually only the face of the god is shown as this scale.

Prices range from 5 gs (fist-sized and quickly carved) to 2,000 gs (an elaborately carved pillar). Regardless of size or the deity depicted, carvings that cost 200 gs or more possess the same basic ability as a Norn charm. The only difference is that the Benny only works for a follower of the god whose image he carries.

Idols that cost 1,000 gs or more and that are placed in a consecrated temple or shrine possess a greater ability. Although they still only contain a single Benny, it recharges on the anniversary of its use. Only the designated high priest can use this particular Benny, though he can nominate another worshipper of the deity to benefit. Most keep it for when they are casting resource miracles.

17. THE GREAT TEMPLE

The center of Eostre's cult, the Great Temple holds clerics of both aspects. Formerly just a single hall of worship, the temple has grown into a sprawling network of side halls and outbuildings containing granaries, barracks, stables, veterinary clinics, a midwifery, a smithy and farrier's workshop, and other such necessities. The cult of Eira maintains a small infirmary here. A few of these buildings are detailed individually below.

Most of the clergy are Sowers and Husbanders of the Cultivator sect, though a few Reapers are stationed here for security purposes. The clerics manufacture and sell a range of alchemical charms and herbal brews to anyone with the money. Many citizens living nearby get married by a priest of Hothar, but come to the Great Temple for Eostre's blessing. The service isn't free, but it is popular with couples who want children.

Every year the clerics hold a great feast two weeks

after Reaping Day. Food is parceled out to the citizens of Ravensburg, each receiving the exact same amount regardless of rank or status. Traditionally, the nobility is expected to refuse their share, ensuring that those more in need are catered for.

18. SHRINE OF VETH

Ravenburg has no sewers (an Anari invention), but it does have granaries, root cellars, and thatched buildings, all ideal homes for vermin. Officially charged with keeping the granaries vermin free, but available for private hire, is Mouser Coelgeat the Young. At just 16 years old, he lives up to his nickname.

Coelgeat had only just finished his training when the then high priest passed away. Being the only other priest in town, the High King promoted him to high priest. Fortunately, Veth's cult is small, with no complex hierarchy, vast number of followers, or wide-ranging duties.

Serving under Coelgeat are two paladins. While they think the youth lacks the experience necessary to hold a high title, neither desires it themselves—as paladins, it is forbidden. Thus, while they mock the boy behind his back and perform cruel impersonations (Coelgeat has a high-pitched voice) in secret, they obey his orders without question.

Three clerics is not much in a city with a population upward of 20,000. Aiding the clergy in their endless, and largely thankless task, are a large number of semi-feral cats and vicious dogs. The cats, their fur stained with Veth's holy symbol, have the free roam of the entire city. As sacred animals, harming one is a surefire way of being dragged before the court. The dogs are kept leashed except when actively hunting rats.

19. GRANARIES

Maintained and protected by the cult of Eostre Plantmother, the granaries are actually the property of the High King. Raised on wooden pillars to discourage vermin and keep the contents safe from flooding, unthreshed grain is draped across long horizontal posts. Only when it is required is it taken down and threshed. The floor is dotted with large, heavy wooden coffers. These are used to store root vegetables and smoked cheeses.

Common citizens do not store their produce in the granaries—every house has its own root cellar and grain is laid across the rafters. What rests in the granaries is the personal property of the High King and the cult of Eostre (which takes 10% of the king's harvest as payment for storage and various blessings performed throughout the year). Only in times of famine are the contents dished out to the people, and then only sparingly.

20. TEMPLE OF GULLVEIG

With the best will in the world, the honey gathered from the temple's hives and Gullveig's Meadow is barely enough to keep Ravensburg's royal court and nobility in

mead. Fortunately for the cult's master brewers, it is ale that slakes the thirst of the common man. (Wine, even that fermented in Nordmark, is far too Anari for Ravensburgers' tastes.)

Vast quantities of standard ale are brewed here for daily consumption. Additionally, the temple manufactures a small number of special brews. Too expensive for daily consumption by commoners, they are traditionally purchased only on important feast days. Among the special ales are Plantmother's Blood (7% ABV; a very dark ale), Storyteller's Bane (5% ABV; a light and refreshing brew easily downed in great quantity), and War-Axe (12% ABV; three pints will fell a normal man).

Even as high priestess, Ale-Lady Wigwynn Anfrithsdohtor, is only permitted to collect 16 pounds of honey from Gullveig's Meadow each year. Always desperate for more to add to her paladins' vats, she pays 10 gs pound. Such is her knowledge of the precious honey that she can tell it from normal honey with a casual sniff.

Wigwynn has never got on well with the cult of Sigel. A habitual drunk, and thus a constant sinner, they consider her to lack moral strength and integrity. The words she uses in return cannot be printed in this supplement.

21. HALL OF RAVENS

Thunor may not be an overly popular deity in Ravensburg, but his influence is still felt in the name of the city (which means "Fort of the Ravens"), the High Cyning's throne (known as the Raven Throne), and his bodyguard companies, and the presence of ravens at the Offering Stone (see *Hellfrost Gazetteer*).

According to local folklore, the trees surrounding this circular wooden hall have always been home to mated pairs of ravens. The birds, while noisy and something of a pest, are considered sacred animals. Harming one incurs permanent outlawing from Royalmark, while killing one gives the perpetrator a bad reputation across the entire Marklands.

The hall itself is a temple of Hoárri, minor goddess of divination (see *Matters of Faith*). Fluttering from the roof is a wind sock in the shape of a stylized storm dragon, a nod to Thunor's lordship over creatures of the air. Despite having no ties to the cult of Thunor, the clerics have long used the ravens in their divinations. By studying their raucous calls, their behavior, and their flight, the clerics can foretell things yet to pass.

On rare occasions, the oldest bird, a venerable avian known as Thunor's Herald who has been around for at least 50 years, converses with the clerics, passing on news from the heavens. Even more rarely, he alights near a citizen and reveals something of their future before flying away with a caw that sounds suspiciously like laughter.

Clerics of Hoárri or Thunor who pray here immediately before taking the Beast Master Edge may, at the GM's discretion, attract a talking raven. Aside from its ability to speak, the creature is a normal bird. See *Rassilon Expansion* for notes on talking animals.

The Norns' cult has long dismissed the ability to fore-

tell the future by watching birds as utter nonsense. That Thunor's Herald passes on news from the heavens is of no interest to the Norns—he is merely a messenger and herald, over which the god of thunder has some authority, and the news he carries has, as with all such things, been ordained by the goddesses. Thus, he reveals what is, rather than what will be.

22. HALL OF METAL RAIN

Bows have never been popular with Saxa huscarls. They are fine for the fyrd, but a true warrior uses short spears and throwing axes to strike his enemies dead at a distance. Sigegar Aethelgarsunu, a master weaponsmith like his father before him, is only too happy to provide the huscarls with the tools of their trade.

For those with limited budgets or who need a weapon in a hurry, Sigegar sells standard throwing axes and spears. For those with deeper pockets, or who pride themselves on carrying the best weapons available, the smith can create customized weapons. These fine weapons are balanced to perfection for the individual user. They grant +1 to Throwing rolls at medium and long range, but only for the person for whom they are made. Other users suffer a -1 penalty to all Throwing rolls using these weapons. Perfection comes at a price—throwing axes cost 100 gs each and short spears 150 gs each.

Creating one of these weapons takes four days, during which time the buyer must be available for measurements and test throws.

23. HEAUMER

A heaumer makes helmets. Saxa wear both pot helmets and full helmets. The full helmet differs in style from the Anari bucket helm. Instead of being a solid piece, it has a neck protector at the back, ear and cheek guards, and a nose guard.

In place of the nose guard, some full helmets have a hinged face guard. These are designed to resemble the wearer, allowing him to be identified on the battlefield. For 50 gs, Inlaed Ealhraedsdohtor can replace a standard face guard with one designed to resemble a ferocious troll. This gives the wearer +1 to Intimidation rolls, so long as the face gold is down. A new full helmet with a grisly face guard costs 200 gs.

24. NOT-RAVENSBURG

Long ago, the Hall of Kings lay on the outskirts of the city. Over time, the city grew larger and more buildings were constructed. Although it was never forced on them, many non-Saxa living in Ravensburg chose to set up home in the new suburbs. Given the strange customs that take place here, it has become known as Not-Ravenburg by traditionalist Saxa.

It is not fenced off from the main city, though its borders are obvious by the marked change in the style of houses—in place of longhouses, the residents prefer

square, wattle-and-daub construction—and the profusion of foreign tongues spoken here.

Foreign customs may be practiced openly here, so long as they do not slander Royalmark or involve sedition. The cult of Hothar is intolerant toward the denizens of Not-Ravenburg, what with their alien customs and all, but it is powerless to do anything about it—so long as they swear fealty and pay their taxes, the High King has granted the inhabitants permission to follow their foreign ways.

Even with the ale-house (see #14) open to all, many non-Saxa visitors prefer to seek hospitality here, something the native Royalmarkers are only too happy to oblige. Most householders are prepared to offer strangers of the same culture or race hospitality for three days, more if they bring gifts. Attempts to persuade the High King to allow the opening of an inn have fallen on deaf ears—that is a step too far for Eyolf.

25. BARRACKS

Separated by alleys just large enough to walk down, these four immense halls are the barracks of the Raven companies. Once located on the edge of town, they are now surrounded by part of Not-Ravenburg. The barracks are easy to identify from a distance, for fluttering from the roof of each dormitory is a colored banner marked with a stylized raven. The individual halls are little different to a conventional longhouse. Aside from the captain, who has separate quarters at the rear of the building, the men live and sleep in the communal hall. Meals are prepared by servants over open fires.

When practicing large formations, such as the boar's head and shieldwall, the Ravens train on the open ground south of the barracks. One-on-one sparring takes place in the temple of Tiw (see #5).

26. CONFEDERACY MISSION

With no easy access to Bridgewater by land or river, Royalmark's exports to and imports from the Confederacy pass through Scathmoor. In order to facilitate trade and smooth over any ruffled feathers, the Confederacy opened a trade mission in the capital. Given that Scathmoor profits most, it was decided that the mission head would always be a native of that town.

The incumbent, Edbald Herelafsunu, hates his posting. He is sick of sampling cheese and ale, tired of having to compliment artwork and jewelry generations out of fashion, and detests the high cost of local pipeleaf. To make matters worse, his knowledge of Auld Saxa is rudimentary and he speaks it with a heavy foreign accent that almost makes him impossible to understand.

Edbald was appointed here by Lady Skald Aenellion. A storyteller himself, Edbald has convinced himself that his stationing here was a direct way of preventing him from competing to become Scathmoor's ruler. Unfortunately, Edbald is deaf to his own voice, which is monotonous in the extreme. More unfortunately for the locals, Edbald

continues to try and impress them with tales and songs of his own composition.

Although his position warrants a property close to the royal court, Edbald has deliberately opted to live on the edge of town. He might not be able to mix with the rich and powerful here, but at least he can speak his native languages (Saxa and Trader) openly.

Despite being stationed in Ravensburg, Edbald is directly responsible for all trade between Royalmark and the Confederacy. While the problems in distant Ridderhill are a local matter, they are damaging trade. Possessed of little money, Edbald is prepared to pay adventurers in trade goods if they can end the deaths quickly.

27. TRANSLATORS' GUILD

While far from being dead, in the other Marklands Auld Saxa is the preserve of storytellers, scholars, and clerics. In Ravensburg, it is the official native language. The Translators' Guild is not an official guild (another Anari concept). Rather, it is a collective of multi-lingual people looking to make money from the ignorance of foreigners. For a mere 5 gs per day, one can hire a fluent translator to help interactions with the locals.

Conversing through a translator removes the -1 Charisma penalty (see p. 19). Royalmarkers will still see the character as a foreigner, but at least he has taken some steps to try and appease the locals.

28. TROLL HIDE TANNERY

A former apprentice at Troll & Toad Leather Goods in Bridgewater (see *City Book 3*), Cedric ap-Luther came to Royalmark to seek fame and fortune. He has only partly succeeded. Not as talented as his former master, he has only managed to transform troll skin into hide armor. Extremely durable, it is also very light—a suit weighs just 10 pounds. The rarity of troll skin and the added work required to turn it into a workable material means that a suit costs more than conventional hide—125 gs.

Cedric believes he can manufacture conventional leather than is thinner, and thus lighter, than normal, but without losing any of its strength. All he requires is a specific ingredient—troll urine. The raw resource is not available on the open market and Cedric would need at least a gallon (the daily output of two adult trolls) to prove his theory. Prepared to put his money where his mouth is, he has put aside 200 gs to pay any adventurers who can deliver a cask of troll urine to his workshop.

29. CAVALRY BARRACKS

The smaller of the two building is home to a company of mercenary cavalymen in the High King's army. Most of the warriors are of Anari origin and speak little Auld Saxa. As a result, they tend to keep to themselves (although they are hands-on with the locals' daughters).

The larger building is the stable block. Having no farriers or veterinary of their own, the mercenaries must

pay the temple of Eostre to see to the well-being of their mounts. As mercenaries, this necessity is paid for from their wages rather than the king's coffers.

30. HALL OF JOYOUS UNION

The cult of Gersemi (see *Matters of Faith*) occupies a strange place in the minds of Saxa. On the one hand, she is a traditional goddess associated with Eira. On the other, she encourages behavior considered unnatural by right-minded citizens. Ravensburg is no different to other settlements in that regard.

Unable to prevent the cult from opening a temple, the high kings ordered it constructed on the edge of the city. Because of the tradition requiring priests to hold the position of high priest, the cult of Gersemi the Matchmaker has an official presence at the temple. The honor of arranging marriages and uncovering skeletons falls to Matchmaker Angyth Cuthfreasdohtor. Elderly but still clear-minded, and extremely knowledgeable concerning the noble families of the region, it was she who arranged High Cyning Eyolf's marriage. Although she holds no official position at court, the king has been known to seek her advice on occasion.

On paper she is in charge of all aspects of the cult locally. In practice, she rarely interferes in the business of her seven underlings, all paladins of Gersemi the Consort. Heading the free love aspect of the cult is Companion Wulfhild Godredsdohtor.

One of the paladins, Edred Leofstansdohtor, newly arrived from southern Royalmark, is actually an unwilling spy for Jarl Wulfmund Angarsunu. Unless she extracts information from important courtiers and nobles, the jarl has promised that her family will be put to death in the most horrid manner imaginable. Edred dare not discuss her problem with her sisters in the faith or other residents of the capital just in case one of them also serves Wulfmund. Possessed of very little material wealth, she would be very generous with religious favors to any heroes who can bring her kin to Ravensburg.

Sigel's clergy frequently hang out outside the temple, berating worshippers as they leave for poor moral behavior and giving in to lust of the flesh.

31. LENKO'S EXCHANGE

The inhabitants of Ravensburg happily barter for goods, although Saxa can be extremely reluctant when it comes to accepting foreign wares. Such goods may look good, but they may also be a corruptive influence. Lenko, an engro, has no such qualms. He buys all manner of foreign or unusual goods with no questions asked, offering 20% of their true market value. In return, sellers can receive hard coin or locally manufactured trade goods.

Lenko sells his foreign goods to the inhabitants of Not-Ravensburg. Since everything is second-hand, he charges just 75% of the normal price. At the GM's discretion, visiting heroes can pick up tomes of lore and learning or alchemical scrolls written in languages other than Auld Saxa here.

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