



The Dark Eye

The Warring
Kingdoms
Nostria and Andergast

The Warring Kingdoms



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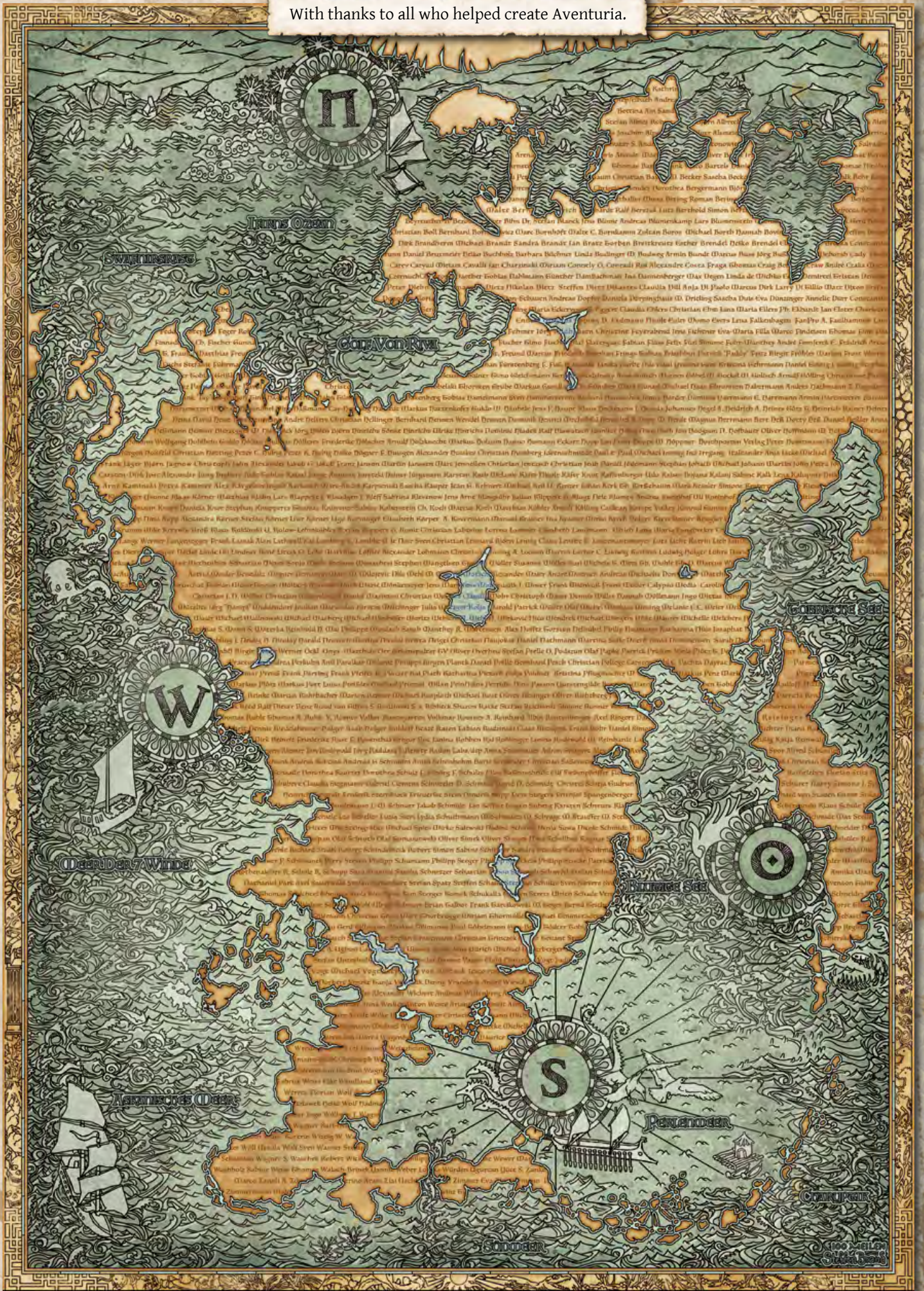



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Preface

You hold in your hands the first regional sourcebook for *The Dark Eye RPG*. It explores the setting in depth and shows you why the so called Warring Kingdoms of Nostria and Andergast are more than just two enemy realms that constantly strive to force each other to their knees.

The history of these kingdoms is shaped by constant enmity, which is why nearly every other region in Aventuria has heard about them. Others may view their inhabitants as backwards and cantankerous, but these kingdoms are among the oldest on the continent, and their citizens refuse to shed their ancient traditions. While the many wars have created poverty, they have also given rise to inventive problem solving. Heroes in the Warring Kingdoms must deal with many challenges. Secrets from past ages wait to be discovered in the wilderness of the Andergastan forest or the swamps of the Nostrian Lake Districts, and opportunities abound to explore primeval wilderness, go on a knight's quest, uncover stories of ancient cults and local nature religions, discover powerful magic, or deal with the influence of witches and sumes (druids).

May you have many exciting adventures in the Warring Kingdoms!

Daniel Simon Richter, on a rainy day in March in the Ruhr Valley

Introduction

The Warring Kingdoms welcome you!

You know the rules for *The Dark Eye*, and you have read the *Aventuria Almanac* to get a better picture of the setting. This regional sourcebook takes a closer look at two kingdoms and their many regions, stories, places, and names, giving you a wealth of background to spark fantastic adventures.

The Warring Kingdoms is written for GMs and players alike. With the exception of *Chapter 11: Mysteries and Arcana*, players may read this book without spoiling their fun.

How Is This Book Organized?

For consistency, this book's structure parallels that of the *Aventuria Almanac* and contains the same chapters and sections to help you find your way around. The book's narrower scope frees us to explore topics in greater detail.

Where Do I Begin?

Why, start at the beginning, of course. Each chapter in this sourcebook begins with the big picture, and, then, goes into detail. If you are already familiar with the setting, use the *Table of Contents* and the *Index* to find what you need.

GM Information

Chapter 11: Mysteries and Arcana describes many secrets about important NPCs, events, and the world. These secrets are marked with a symbol that we call the GM Mask. GMs should have no trouble finding their way around and following the trail of secrets using these symbols. To protect players from spoilers, entries from this chapter do not appear in the Index.



What Does My Character Know?

This book is intended mainly for players, as most Aventurians do not possess the knowledge collected in this book. Even scholars and well traveled adventurers learn only a few of these facts, rumors, and backgrounds over the course of their lives. But heroes from these regions should at least have a fundamental grasp of their home regions. We suggest discussing each hero's knowledge of a particular region, trying to find consensus between players and GM. The section, *What Does My Character Know about the Warring Kingdoms?*, on page 139, is a good place to start.

Can I Start Playing Right Away?

If you wish, choose a character archetype from the *Core Rules* and jump right in. Alternatively, you may create your own heroes and backgrounds using the new professions, skills, special abilities, spells, and more found in *Chapter 10: Heroes from the Warring Kingdoms*. Feel free to modify existing heroes by purchasing the new abilities and skills presented in this book.

• For bonus content, including additional professions tailored to the Warring Kingdoms, please visit the following link:


www.ulisses-us.com/downloads



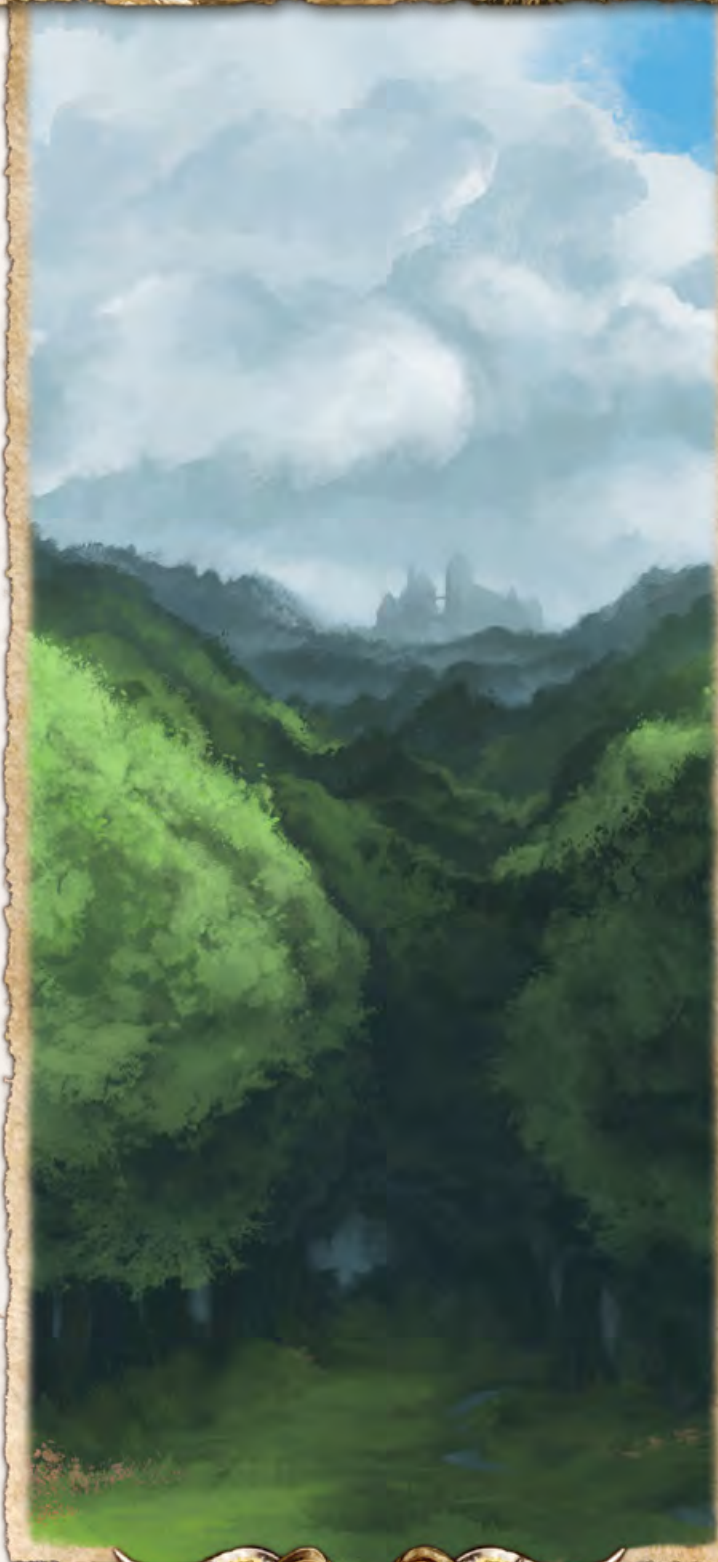
Chapter 1: The Warring Kingdoms

“Even though we didn’t start the war, we will fight, again and again, until we win. Many claim that the war was started by the creatures that live here, or even by the land itself, but I don’t accept that. Why look for a supernatural cause when I can see the very real enemy standing right over there? Those wicked cowards attacked us first. What kind of people think that plundering their neighbors’ land is a good idea? Who would attack the defenseless? Those grasping wastrels, that’s who! Only they would stoop so low! But they didn’t reckon with us.

We will not yield, and we will reclaim what those miserable warmongers took from us! Our lord marches us to war with righteous fury. The feud between our peoples is eternal, but right is on our side! What cowards we would be if we let that scum go unpunished! I fear that there will never be peace.

Right is on our side. We are the shield that protects our land, and we stand ready. When our knight calls, we will take up arms and join the battle. If we don’t take a stand, our children will suffer just as we suffered. This war must end. We must defeat the enemy. Then, and only then, will peace reign. True peace. The peace of the just winner, as the gods demand. This is the only way.”
( 175)

—Often overheard from combative peasants and free citizens alike of both Warring Kingdoms of their enemies, whomever they may be.



Overview of the Warring Kingdoms

The kingdoms of Nostria and Andergast, with their respective capitals of the same name, lie north of the Middenrealm principality of Albernia and southeast of Thorwal and the Orclands. The strife between the two realms has lasted two millennia, which is why all of Aventuria knows them as the *Warring Kingdoms*.

Perhaps each kingdom's rigidly feudal society shaped their conflict, or perhaps it was the difficult terrain and isolation that they shared. The dense, primeval area known as the Forest Wilderness, which separates the Warring Kingdoms, is home to many wild creatures that make human settlement difficult. Deep within the Forest Wilderness lies the river Ornib, the Warring Kingdom's true border (at least according to their original maps), but neither kingdom recognizes it as such. Villages and small fiefdoms often get occupied by enemy forces and change affiliation from one realm to the other with alarming regularity.

Nostria must also periodically fend off Thorwalers, daring and bold seafarers who repeatedly attack villages and sometimes try to conquer land near the coast. Wild and war hungry orcs often attack forested Andergast, which lies inland. They plunder and pillage but usually move on quickly.

The old enmity and constant threats made the Warring Kingdoms' inhabitants a sullen and withdrawn people, skeptical of new ideas. This means both kingdoms adhere to the notion that only traditions and feudalism are reliable and useful for survival. As such, Adventurians consider both regions to be especially backward, particularly in comparison to the Middenrealm or the Horasian Empire. In Andergast, people even think that women are inferior to men in many ways. This belief irritates much of Aventuria, which typically holds that women are equal to men in all pursuits.

Several things dominate the setting of the *Warring Kingdoms*: The eternal strife between Andergastans and Nostrians; the omnipresent danger of skirmishes and outright war; the extremely conservative nobles; the inhabitants' deep mistrust of strangers and new ideas; and presiding over it all, the primeval nature of the Forest Wilderness, with its many mysterious creatures and ruins. Rigorous feudalism, tradition-loving knights, general backwardness, and ancient nature religions are keywords you can use to characterize the region, create adventures, or develop a background for the heroes.



What Do We Mean by Setting?

The setting is the main thematic component of this regional sourcebook. The heroes act in front of this (usually) consistent backdrop and encounter repeating themes. Adventures in this region usually involve one or more of the themes presented in this book, but note that the heroes' experiences in the Warring Kingdoms need not always deal with the conflict between Nostria and Andergast. An abundance of plot elements ensures that the heroes can always find something to do, and neighboring areas exert a strong influence on the region as well. In the case of the Warring Kingdoms, such influences mainly stem from the Principality of Albernia, Thorwal, and the Orclands.



Summary of the Kingdom of Nostria

"Finally, we have overcome the torpor that held us back for so long. Maybe all we needed was a sign from the gods and a great deal of self-sacrifice from the brave Nostrians."

—Rondriane of Sapstem, Marshal of the Nostrian Defense, modern

"Inconceivable! These simpletons remain so stubborn, even when they do ask the witches for advice. These backward bumpkins see things only in terms of black and white, and their endless complaining about the Andergastans, their ancestral enemy, is terribly annoying."

—Mirhiban al'Orhima, Tulamydian fire mage

Borders: The Sea of Seven Winds in the west; Thorwal and Andergast to the north and east; the border runs along the Ingval to Joborn, follows the Ornib and meanders from the well of the Nib through the Forest Wilderness to Thuram Lake in the south. Nostria extends to Tommeldomm by the Tommel in the south, and the border with Albernia runs through the Lakeland to the coast.

Geography: Coast with wide areas of mudflats and marshes, the swampy Lakeland, the northern Tommellands, the lower Ingval Valley, the Forest Wilderness, Southern Thurania.



Important Cities: Nostria (6,000), Salta and Salterhaven (4,000), Lyckmoor (680), Trontsand (650), Oldhagen (540), Arraned (500)

Population: about 40,000 humans, plus more than 1,000 goblins and a few hundred orcs

Political Ties: independent kingdom, ruled by Queen Yolande II Kasmyrin

Form of Government: Monarchy with especially imaginative terms for nobles (they proudly call themselves *bombasts* and *voivods*).

Influential Families: Kasmyrin (royal house), Salis, Ingvalsröhdén, Hyttenhau, Sapstem, Thuranshag, Ansfinion

Veneration of Gods: Polytheism with strong connections to the Twelvegods (mainly Efferd, Travia, and Boron); blends of various gods (syncretism); other gods and nature spirits are especially popular among the common folk, with witches serving as intermediaries.

Trade Goods: Fish (mainly saltarels in various forms), grain, wood, chalk, salt

Real-world Inspirations: for the coastal region of Nostria, use Northern Germany, the Netherlands, and parts of the Lower Rhine during the early Middle Ages. Use the conflicts between the Angles and the Saxons in post Roman England, or the Hundred Years' War in England and France. Use themes and stories from Grimm's Fairy Tales and Czech fairy tale films, where merciless nobles exploit the common people, and every inch of land must be wrenched from the ocean's grasp via dikes and other massive earthworks.

Heroes from Nostria: An old-fashioned feudal knight, a witty mercenary, a mage from the Nostrian academy, a curious witch from the Tommel Meadows, a daring dike builder, or a fearless swamp walker.

Nostria in the Game: The conflict with Andergast shapes the land and people just as much as the terrible plague that ravaged the capital a few years ago. The connecting element with Andergast is the Forest Wilderness, in which, according to legend, two animal spirit kings, in the form of a crowned stag and an aurochs, struggle for supremacy. The Nostrians are pragmatic and know how to achieve much with very little, a side effect of their eternal fight against the power of Efferd (the sea).

The Bombasties of Nostria

The Royal Land of Nostria (N01)

Coat of Arms: White stag's head on black

Ruler: Queen Yolande II of Nostria

Important Cities: Nostria, Varnyth, Aspürg

The Maritime County of Sevenwind (N02)

Coat of Arms: Silver fishing boat on blue

Ruler: Maritime Count Hupart Hyttenhau of Sevenwind

Important Settlements: Trontsand

The Noble County of Salta (N03)

Coat of Arms: Silver fishing net on red
Ruler: Noble Count Albio III Salis of Salta
Important Cities: Salta, Salterhaven, Yoledamm, Lyckmoor, Oldhagen

The Old County of Ingvalsrohden (N04)

Coat of Arms: Silver bear on red
Ruler: Old Countess Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden
Important Cities: Nordvest, Vardall

The Forest County of Joborn (N05)

Coat of Arms: Three silver chalk cliffs on green
Ruler: Forest Count Eilert II Rheideryan of Mirdin
Important Cities: Ingfallspeugen, Northdrakecastle, Mirdin, Joborn (nominally)
Special: Joborn changed affiliation several times, but has remained in Andergast's possession since 1018 FB.

The Forest County of Thuranshag (N06)

Coat of Arms: Red goblin head on silver
Ruler: Forest Countess Silia Ornibian of Thuranshag
Important Cities: Fiolbar, Lakemeadows

The Border County of the Tommellands (N07)

Coat of Arms: Two silver crossed woodsman's axes on red
Ruler: Border Countess Elysthea of Sapstem and the Tommellands
Important Cities: Harmlyn, Arraned, Elger, Gevinsbar

The Noble County of Kendrar (N08)

Coat of Arms: A wild, silver and red cat, rising, on blue
Ruler: Noble Countess Silaleth Ansfion of Ingvalsrohden, as regent for Kendrar, a child who rules only nominally at the moment
Important Cities: Kendrar
Special: Currently occupied by a force of Thorwalers.

Summary of the Kingdom of Andergast

"The king is strong and from an ancient line. He will remember our traditions, ask the sumes for advice, and lead us to new greatness. What could the witch woman across the border do against him?"

—Korwin Egelingsfenn, Count of Thurana, modern

"You can only wonder... living remotely is one thing, but being backward and brutal is something else entirely. I've seen how they treat their women. It's disgusting."

—Carolan Calavanti, Vinsaltan vagabond, modern

Borders: Nostria in the south and west (the border runs through Thuran Lake and continues through the forest to the source of the Ornib, then a bit west of the Ornib and the Ingval, from Kalking to Angasal in the middle of the Ingval); Thorwal in the northwest (along Andraval to the Stone Oak Forest); the Stone Oak Forest in the north (officially the northern one, in reality the southern one); the Thash in the northeast; the Bladegrass Steppes and the Dark Ridge in the southeast, all the way to the foothills of the Kosh



Geography: Stone Oak Forest, upper Ingval Valley, Forest Wilderness, Northern Thurania, Theskalia, Thuran Lake, Bladegrass Steppes

Important Cities: Andergast (6,500), Joborn (1,000), Teshkal (900), Thurana (860), Oakhaven (800), Andrafall (720), Albumin (700)

Population: 38,000 humans, plus about 1,000 goblins and several hundred orcs

Form of Government: independent kingdom under King Wendelmir VII Zornbold

Influential Families: Zornbold (royal house), Egeling, Pawgrove, Bearvalley, Longford, Redtree

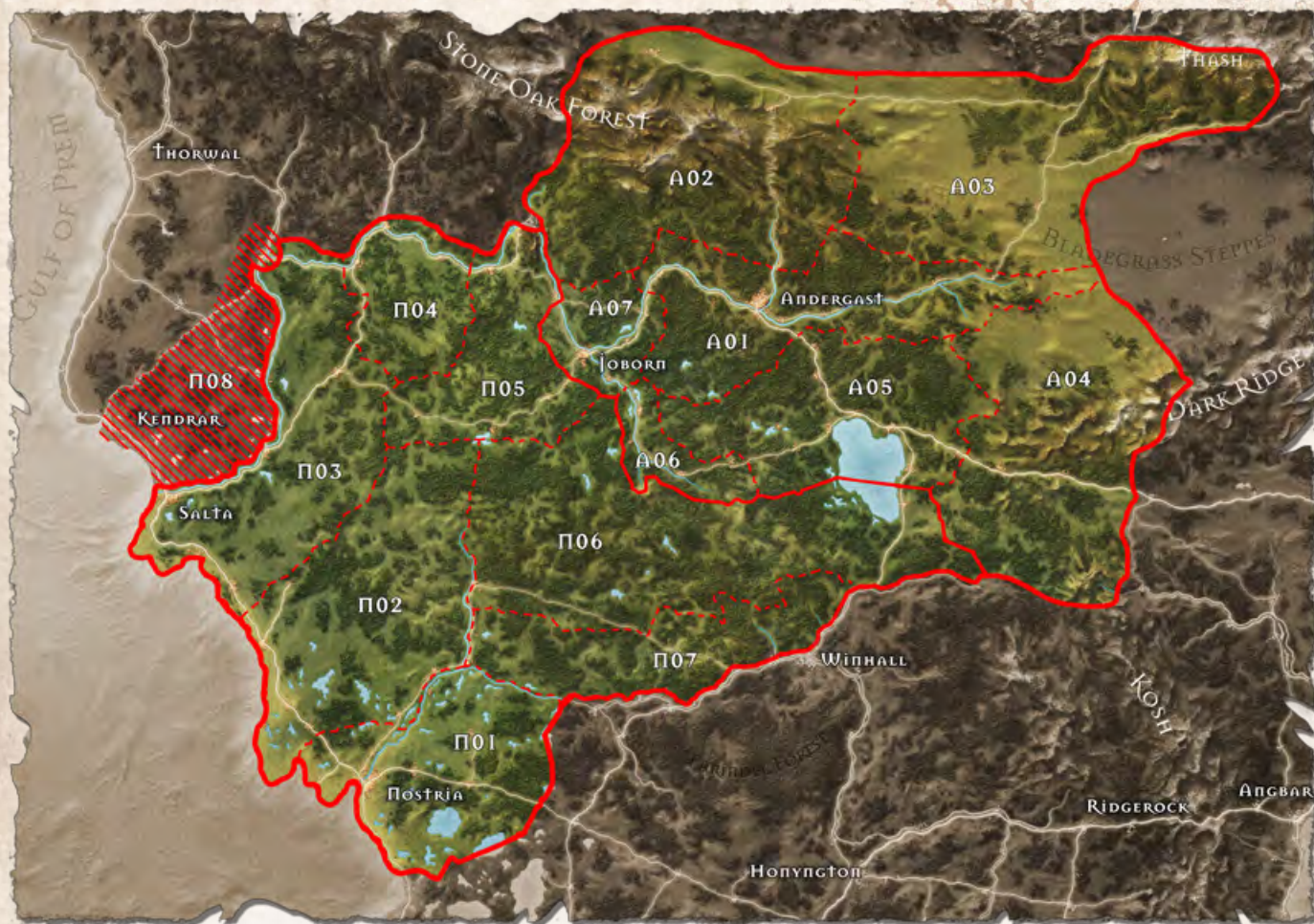
Veneration of Gods: Polytheism, with strong connections to the Twelvegods; blends of various gods (syncretism); Sumu is honored as leader of the gods, followed by Peraine, Firun, Travia and Rondra, who is favored by the knighthood. Common folk pray to countless other gods and nature spirits. The word of the sumes (druids) carries much weight here.

Trade Goods: Wood (mainly stone oak), fur, meat, leather, linen

Real World Inspiration: The forests of Middle Europe, Poland and Czechoslovakia in the early middle ages, with a strong dose of Cold War atmosphere. Many stories from *Grimm's Fairy Tales* or German legends fit locations in Andergast, where the nobles are often cruel, women do not have much of a voice, and common folk suffer under the rule of oppressive knights.

Heroes from Andergast: an old-fashioned feudal knight, a mage from the Andergastan academy, a reclusive druid from the Forest Wilderness, a daring scout from Teshkalia, or a smart noblewoman who knows to act demurely in front of men.

Andergast in the Game: Andergastans are conservative but inventive when solving problems with few means. The enmity to Nostria is omnipresent. Life in Andergast is shaped by the inequality of women, who exert little influence on public life outside of Teshkalia. Sumes, the druidic priests of Sumu, offer quiet advice to the land's rulers but work aggressively and tirelessly behind the scenes to influence politics.



The Baronies of Andergast

The Barony of Andergast (A01)

Coat of Arms: green oak branch on silver
 Ruler: King Wendelmir VII of Andergast
 Important Cities: Andergast, Oakhaven

The Barony of Andrafall (A02)

Coat of Arms: split (half blue, half silver)
 Ruler: Baron Waldomir of Bearvalley
 Important Cities: Andrafall, Anderstone, nominally Angasal

The Barony of Teshkalia (A03)

Coat of Arms: green horse head on black
 Ruler: Baroness Ossyra Redtree of Teshkal
 Important Cities: Teshkal

The Barony of Albumin (A04)

Coat of Arms: black gate on silver
 Ruler: Baron Wenzeslaus the Older Zornbold of Andergast and Albumin
 Important Cities: Albumin

The Barony of Thurana (A05)

Coat of Arms: two jumping dolphins, one above the other, on blue
 Ruler: Baron Korwin Egelingsfenn of Thurana
 Important Cities: Thurana, Egelingsfenn, Thurax

Legend

The Bombasties of Nostria

- N01 The Royal Land of Nostria
- N02 The Maritime County of Sevenwind
- N03 The Noble County of Salta
- N04 The Old County of Ingvalsrohden
- N05 The Forest County of Joborn
- N06 The Forest County of Thuranshag
- N07 The Border County of the Tommellands
- (N08 The Noble County of Kendrar)

The Baronies of Andergast

- A01 The Barony of Andergast
- A02 The Barony of Andrafall
- A03 The Barony of Teshkalia
- A04 The Barony of Albumin
- A05 The Barony of Thurana
- A06 The Barony of the Orniber Lands
- A07 The Barony of Joborn

Feel free to invent smaller fiefdoms for your own game and place them within the larger baronies and bombasties.



The Barony of the Orniber Lands (A06)

Coat of Arms: golden forest spider on green

Ruler: Baron Conrad of Pawgrove

Important Cities: Axetown, Nibwell

The Barony of Joborn (A07)

Coat of Arms: blue woodman's axe on green

Ruler: Baron Rufus Longford of Joborn

Important Cities: Kalleth, Joborn

The common people of the Warring Kingdoms are simple and down to earth, while the nobles are often arrogant and smug. Nevertheless, everybody knows their place and fulfills their roles valiantly and diligently. They give little thought to the outside world, as they need all their skills and knowledge to fight against their enemies, be they Nostrians, Andergastans, Thorwalers, or orcs.

While women are equal to men in every way in Nostria, life is quite different in Andergast. People there claim that women are inferior to men, and quote the laws of nature, as taught to them by the sumes, as proof.

Media for Playing in the Warring Kingdoms

This section lists some works that we feel inspire adventures set in Nostria and Andergast.

The following **Movies and TV Series** convey the proper atmosphere in Nostria and Andergast:

- *The War Lord* (with Charlton Heston, 1965)
- *Ronja, the Robber's Daughter* (based on the book of the same name by Astrid Lindgren, 1984)
- *The Black Cauldron* (Disney animated movie, 1985)
- *Robin of Sherwood* (1983-85, British TV show, available on DVD)
- *Game of Thrones* (since 2011, American TV, produced by HBO, based on George R.R. Martin's book series *A Song of Ice and Fire*)

Films such as *The Fog* (1979), *The Company of Wolves* (1984), and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) provide additional inspiration for adventures.


If you enjoy playing **background music** during your games, we suggest the following.

- *Clannad: Legend* (soundtrack for the TV series *Robin of Sherwood*)
- *Estampie: Ludus Danielis*
- *Michael Kamen: Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves*
- *James Horner: Willow*
- *America: The Last Unicorn*
- *Carter Burwell: Rob Roy*

For **books**, we suggest popular knights' tales, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, Ottfried Preußler's *Krabat*, and Theodor Storm's *The Rider on the White Horse*. The comic series *Complainte des landes perdues* serves as a source of inspiration as well.

For all gamers, we suggest the **computer games** by DAEDALIC Entertainment. The classic point-and-click adventure *Chains of Satinav* is set in and around Andergast (its sequel, *Memoria*, continues the story but veers away from the Warring Kingdoms in time and space).

Publications by Ulisses Spiele

- The music CD *Sounds of the Spheres, Vol. I: The Warring Kingdoms*, by composer Ralf Kurtsiefer, contains especially suitable background music for the setting and carries you on a musical tour of Nostria and Andergast. 
- The novel *Mehrer der Macht*, by Carolina Möbis, tells more about life in Nostria and Andergast, the rise of King Wendelmir, Queen Yolande's struggle against the rebellious counts, and the mysterious sumes, the secret power behind the Andergastan throne.
- The adventure *New Bonds and Ancient Quarrels* gives the heroes a first-hand experience of the deep-seated hatred between the two realms. A political marriage promises to secure peace, but someone kidnaps the bride, and the heroes must act quickly to prevent all-out war.
- Many adventures from earlier editions of TDE are set in the Warring Kingdoms. These titles include the classic *Wald ohne Wiederkehr* (*Forest of No Return*) from 1984, *Im Bann des Eichenkönigs* (*The Spell of the Oak King*), *Die Quelle der Geister* (*The Source of Spirits*), the two part campaign *Der Weiße Berg* (*The White Mountain*), *Die Zuflucht*, *Der Fluch von Burg Dragenstein*, or the solo adventures *Liebliche Prinzessin Yasmina* (*Sweet Princess Yasmina*), *Straßenballade* (*Street Ballad*), *Die schwarze Eiche* (*The Black Oak*), *Im Griff der schwarzen Eiche* (*In the Hand of the Black Oak*), and *Rückkehr zur schwarzen Eiche* (*Return to the Black Oak*).

• Many older adventures and novels are available in German from our e-book shop, at www.ulisses-ebooks.de

- Some older novels from the world of *The Dark Eye* are set in the Warring Kingdoms, either in whole or in part. For example, see Ina Kramer's two part series *Die Reise nach Salta* (*Im Farindelwald, Die Suche*), Karl Heinz Witzko's classic *Treibgut*, or the Andergast novels by Dietmar Preuß.

Geography

“Forest, forest, nothing but forest! You barely meet any people, and even if you walk all the way to the coast, you will not experience one day with dry boots. Mud as far as you can see. One finds sure footing only by walking on the dikes. This is not a good life, even though there is good gold to be had from both sides.”

—Geron Bladebreaker, Garetian mercenary



The Warring Kingdoms cover a large area with many different types of terrain. Nostria and Andergast are nestled between the Middenrealm province of Albernia and the mountain range of the Stone Oak Forest. The Kosh Mountains, the gloomy Dark Ridge, and the Bladegrass Steppes lie to the east, while the Sea of Seven Winds lies to the west. The coastal region is so swampy that the stretch between the capital (Nostria) and Trontsand is called the **Lakeland**. As its name implies, this area is known for its lakes and creeks, and the landscape largely resembles that of the lower Ingval Valley.

The **Sevenwind Coast**, which runs as far north as Thorwal, is characterized by flat, wide mudflats. Miles of dikes hold back the wind-whipped ocean, which constantly threatens

to overtop the earthworks and drown the land. Sharp winds often blow in from the ocean, driving rain clouds before them.

The upper course of the Ingval is densely forested, and only the banks of the river have been cleared and are inhabited. Towards the east, the **Ingval Valley** slowly gives way to the dense growth of the Forest Wilderness. Land is very fertile along the riverbanks, where many people live by agriculture and by what they can claim from nature.

Like the Garetian Realmwood or the Blue Pine Forest in Weiden, the **Forest Wilderness** is a remnant of the gigantic Middle Forest that covered the heart of the continent in ages past. Even the locals do not have a name for these hard-to-reach and largely unexplored areas. They simply refer to it as “the forest.” In the south, the Forest Wilderness turns hilly, while in the north, it is rather flat. The forest is dominated by old, primeval trees and travel is difficult. Wild creatures, goblins and roving gangs of orcs make it hazardous. The river Ornib marks the real border between Nostria and Andergast, but they fight constantly over the source of the Ornib and ownership of the river, and a particular realm’s claim changes from moment to moment.



The Forest Wilderness extends to the steep slopes of the **Stone Oak Forest**, which, despite its name, is actually a mountain range. Its slopes and deep chasms are covered by ancient stone oaks and dark cedar pines, and folks say that this is the site of the largest druid gathering in Aventuria. In reality, the Stone Oak Forest is the southern part of a double mountain range. The northern part is largely unexplored due to the threat of attack by orcs. Even though Andergastan woodcutters can earn a nice living in the southern Stone Oak Forest, treants and cave dragons guard this territory jealously, so the area is sparsely settled.

In the **Tommellands**, smaller areas have been cleared for agriculture. More than half of the population of Nostria and Andergast live on the coast or along the courses of the Tommel

and Ingval. All larger cities, with the exception of Teshkal, spread across the wetlands that surround these rivers.

East of the forest lies **Thurania**, in the midst of which lies the largest inland lake in the Warring Kingdoms: the bountiful Thuran Lake. This body of water, which is about 50 miles long and 30 miles wide, straddles the border of the two lands, and is often the scene of bloody border disputes and “lake battles.”

The **Steppes of the East** sit between the Southern and Northern Stone Oak Forest. The easternmost part is covered in sharp bladegrass and is almost impassable. This area is home to tough people who know how to survive amidst orcs goblins and other dangers.

Climate and Weather

“That’s what they call weather? Bah! I call it constant rain. Sometimes it only drizzles, but then it is as if Lord Efferd has opened all the gates. It’s rarely dry, and in summer, there’s barely enough sunshine to dry your shirt. No wonder that the people here look so grumpy all the time ...”

—Mirhiban al’Orhima, Tulamydian fire mage

The Course of the Year

The **summers** in the region are usually short, but warm and pleasant. Longer periods of sunshine are rare, though, especially at the coast, where the wind drives rain across the land even on warmer days. This is when traveling is the easiest, which leads many nobles to pursue their feuds in summer. This is when most work needs doing in the fields.

Autumn is characterized by strong winds, much rain, and dense fog. If the sun shines, the autumn forests show an impressive play of colors, which the Nostrians and Andergastans both call “Sumu’s splendor.”

Winters are long, difficult, and bitterly cold. Snow begins to fall in quantity as early as the month of Boron. It lingers until late **spring** or until the wind from the ocean brings rain to melt the snow.

The thaw often leads to damaging floods. Rivers and creeks become unpredictable and turn roads and paths into muddy tracks or drown them completely, rendering them impassable for long periods of time.

The Weather

The incessant winds blow from the sea and reach far inland, often driving rain clouds before them that spread Efferd’s blessing everywhere. Thunderstorms with dramatic displays of lighting are common, but rarely so strong that they damage houses or even knock down trees. The rains often last for days, especially in spring and autumn, and turn wide areas of land into squelching mud.

This weather makes travel challenging. The constant rain brings diseases like dullskull or the feared blue wheeze, which almost depopulated Nostria in 1027 FB (for more about these afflictions, see the *Aventuria Almanac*, page 162). The spring floods make it especially difficult to get around because roads become so saturated that travelers sink knee deep in the mud or must lead their horses by the reins. The strong snowfalls in the winter can isolate whole parts of the country, as paths become impassible or invisible under the white splendor. Ice forms under the snow on well-traveled paths, creating a hazard for the unwary.

Roads and Paths

Traveling through the Warring Kingdoms isn’t easy. The kingdoms’ largest settlements nestle by navigable bodies of water, following old explorers’ routes. Outside of these natural pathways, few built-up roads exist. For these reasons, inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms rarely travel alone. Only runaways or people seeking to conduct trade or fight a battle will journey beyond sight of the place of their birth.

Travel by Water

The two large rivers of the region, the Ingval and the Tommel, serve as the lifeline of the region, and most long distance traffic moves upon their waters. The Tommel is navigable from its mouth to its fifth tributary (the Ambla), the Ingval as far up as the town of Andergast. Anyone who wants to travel further needs a narrow raft or a small boat.

Traveling on the river is slow and dangerous, especially as one nears the headwaters. There are rocks everywhere, threatening to tear open the hull of a boat, and hidden shallows and dangerous currents can surprise even experienced sailors. Like all great rivers of Aventuria, the Ingval and the Tommel overflow their banks after the long rainy periods in spring and autumn, as well as during the snow melt. Then they carry dangerous driftwood that often remains hidden just beneath the surface, and many a solid ship has been sunk by an unexpected impact. Rafts stick mainly to the Ingval, and the logs that woodcutters float downriver frequently endanger ships. The Ingval wetlands are also hazardous because the river often finds a new riverbed when the flood has ended. Pilots and boatmen must scout these new courses to map all the shallows and rock outcroppings.

Crossing Rivers

The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms build sturdy bridges and dikes, but in remote areas it is often too expensive or difficult to maintain them. Waters from the next thaw could wash or tear them away. Travelers who must cross a river usually look for a ford and hope that there hasn't been any strong, recent rainfall. Fords commonly become impassable for several weeks, especially in winter.

Ferries abound in places where often used paths intersect larger rivers. The crossing cost usually depends on the number of legs transported, which can become expensive if you travel with mounts. Not all ferries are stable or large enough for carts, so they often only transport people and animals. Ferries often won't move if the current becomes too strong, out of caution.

Land Travel

Where there is no river, people must travel on foot. Only nobles and rich traders can afford mounts or draft animals, which is why people in rural areas often think every rider they see is a knight. Carriages are almost unknown because few roads are passable for such vehicles.

Most goods are transported on simple hand carts, and panniers are a common sight. Panniers are people who carry wares from marketplace to marketplace on wooden racks on their backs. Wealthy traders often use donkeys as beasts of burden. Ox carts are much slower and usually only used for especially heavy or cumbersome burdens.

Only two built up roads in the Warring Kingdoms meet the standard of Realm Roads, and they are in bad condition (see *Aventuria Almanac*, page 20). Even on these roads, good inns are rare. The *Nostrian Coastal Road* runs from Nostria over Trontsand to Salta, while the *Lord's Way* to Andergast passes through Thurana on its way to Griffonsford. Most other trails in the region are paths and simple cart roads that wind their way over the landscape and take long detours around bodies of water, steep slopes, or dense forests. Nobody maintains these paths. Damage is sometimes repaired, but only near villages or castles. Far from settlements, where no carts travel, the paths often aren't even wide enough for two people to walk abreast.

Borders

The borders between the two kingdoms cannot be precisely delimited in many places, often not even by their own provinces. Border stones or steles are often used to mark



paths, but such are rarely trusted as they are frequently moved or destroyed and replaced, again and again. In the wilderness, it is not easy to tell which kingdom you are in. There are no toll houses, toll bars, or anything similar to be found. This does not stop the local nobles from demanding taxes or tolls from travelers, especially when a road or path leads through their village. This might bring robber knights to Middenrealms's minds, but the noble who owns the land sets the amount of such tolls, which aren't fixed.

Distances

The following table presents common travel routes and distances in the Warring Kingdoms. Travel on foot, horseback, or ship is calculated using the daily distances from the *Core Rules*, page 349. Travel by river, per day, covers 40 miles downstream, 20 miles upstream, on average.

Route	Distance	On Foot	On Horseback	Upriver	Downstream	By Sea
Andergast to Albumin	155	5	3	-	-	-
Andergast to Teshkal	170	6	3.5	-	-	-
Andergast to Joborn	120	4	2.5	-	-	-
Andergast to Joborn (Ingval)	120	-	-	6	3	-
Andergast to Winhall	235	8	5	-	-	-
Andergast to Anderstone	145	5	3	-	-	-
Joborn to Salta	325	11	6.5	-	-	-
Joborn to Salta (Ingval)	400	-	-	20	10	-
Joborn to Oldhagen	150	5	3	-	-	-
Joborn to Thorwal	325	11	6.5	-	-	-
Nostria to Salta	190	6.5	4	-	-	-
Nostria to Salta (by sea)	200	-	-	-	-	2
Nostria to Winhall	265	9	5.5	-	-	-
Nostria to Winhall (Tommel)	260	-	-	13	6.5	-
Nostria to Honingen	265	9	5.5	-	-	-
Nostria to Fiolbar	120	4	2.5	-	-	-
Salta to Thorwal	195	6.5	4	-	-	-
Salta to Thorwal (by sea)	-	-	-	-	-	2



Chapter 2: Land and People

“Nobody challenges us without paying for it! We came here to defend the border, the king, and our own skin. Our armored cavalry slew them like a peasant mows the straw with a scythe. We scared them like a fox scares fowl in the yard, we did!”

The enemy had two-to-one superior numbers over us? Ridiculous! They are cowards who like nothing better than shooting at us from a distance with their damned longbows. Miserable elf weapons. Didn’t do them any good, though, did it? We are not that easy to kill! Even without my brave destrier, I could defeat them. Sumu’s power was with me! My squire handed me my Andergaster, and, then, I showed them what’s what! As long as their witches don’t curse me, I vow to bash the head of every Nostrian I see.”

—The Andergastan knight Orngal, as he was cut from his dented armor after the Battle of Tarlyn’s Height

“These fools! Regardless of why they ambushed us, we will always put these Andergastan bastards in their place. Countless troops wanted to meet us in battle. Their army gathered on our lovely land like blowflies. Again and again, they rode towards us, like madmen. Our infantry suffered badly in the first clash, due to their miserable cavalry. But we shot one of them after another from their horses before they could reach our line of archers. Their heavy destriers were too slow, which made them easy targets. We had plenty of time to choose the most colorful coats of arms to fell! And those ridiculous helmets!”

The shield of this one knight was covered in arrows, and he charged us like a madman after we had shot his horse out from under him. I wanted him to taste my steel! Even after the damage we inflicted, they kept on coming. My squire handed me my Nostrianer, and, then, I showed them what’s what!”

—The Nostrian knight Erywyn, as she was cut from her dented armor after the Battle of Tarlyn’s Height



Even though people speak of the Warring Kingdoms as two sides of the same coin, the two regions differ quite a bit.

Where Nostria is characterized by its coastal mudflats and marshes, Andergast consists mostly of woods and the ridges of the Stone Oak Forest mountain range. Within the two kingdoms, though, there are regions that differ from the main land and really stick out, like the wide steppes of Teshkalia.



The two kingdoms share the Forest Wilderness and Thurian Lake. These areas are contested so often that the border between the realms isn't always clear. By the Ornib, especially, people can never be sure which leader they owe allegiance to. The following pages discuss other differences and special features in detail.

Affiliation to one of the two Warring Kingdoms is indicated by the following symbols.

-  for Andergast
-  for Nostria

The Lakeland

Borders: southern Nostria between Trontsand and the Albernian border

Population: 7,500 humans, plus 100 goblins and 50 glade elves

Important Cities: Nostria (6,000), Varnyth (350)

Special: countless lakes, ponds, and smaller flowing bodies of water

Trade Goods: Fishing and sheep breeding

Major Routes: Harbor in Nostria, ship traffic on the Tommel, Coastal Road to Salta, Coastal Road to Havena, Causeway to Honingen, Way along the river

The Lakeland abuts the Middenrealmish principality of Albernia in the south and seamlessly joins the Albernian Lakeland beyond the border. The region derives its name from the countless bodies of water and the swampy ground. Twice a day, the tide washes far inland from the Sea of Seven Winds, and vast parts of the Lakeland flood, especially during storm surges or longer periods of rain. The water of the interior's countless lakes, ponds, and creeks grow increasingly salty as one nears the coast.

Many myths and legends concern these waters. Many are based on fact, while others arose from centuries of blending fairy tales and local superstition. Certain bodies of water conceal gates to the fairy realm, and river kobolds, nymphs, mermen, and even stranger creatures, like the half horse/half fish hippocampus, roam the deep. (🐉 180)

The locals have been trying to defy the ocean's force for centuries. They carve small, dry regions from the sea by building high dikes, but the ocean always finds a way to reclaim land that people considered safe. They build their farmsteads on natural or artificial hills in an attempt to avoid Efferd's rage, but somehow storm tides and broken dikes always cause some damage.

Flora and Fauna: The waters of Lakeland teem with fish, especially saltarels, which are very common near the Nostrian coast. Many types of birds live by the coast and the banks of the countless lakes as well. Small groves of trees, usually beech trees used as lumber, grow on the few patches of raised ground. Everywhere else, only swamp

The Dike Yeomen

According to ancient custom in the Lakeland, anyone who maintains and repairs a dike, and thus protects the land and its people, is free to claim and till the land created by that dike. Every Lakeland yeoman owns a *dike fork* (a type of spade), which is a symbol of freedom. Farmers often must give up their farmsteads due to storm surges and spring tides, so it is easy to find unoccupied land. Yeomen who give up their must leave their dike fork protruding from the top of the dike before they leave the area. Anyone drawing the spade from the dike assumes the duty of repairing the dike and immediately gains the privileges and freedoms of their predecessor. Many well-intentioned people misjudge the amount of work required to maintain a dike and give up after only a few months. Compounding the problem is the fact that newcomers are not well liked in many areas, due to either their inexperience or the locals' shared general contempt for immigrants (locals often help each other quite willingly, but newcomers are on their own).

plants, heather, and marsh grass can be seen. Farther from the coast, common alder and pine become more common.

Roads and Paths: Goods are usually transported via ship or boat, as the roads are often in disrepair. The harbor of Nostria has been silting over for years, rendering ocean-going ships impractical, so most have switched to other routes. The efforts of the queen and the extensive construction work are slowly bringing ships back to the capital.

The *Coastal Road* that connects Nostria with Salta is well maintained. The *Causeway* begins in Nostria and leads east to the interior. It runs along a raised dike for the most part, but it is often washed out. The *Tommel Way* mostly follows the course of the river, but the Tommel often changes its bed and the road that bears its name sometimes diverges away from the banks of the river for several miles.

Inhabitants and Settlements: The villagers that live in Lakeland are grumpy and aloof. They face a constant struggle against Efferd's power. Fishers and marsh farmers argue over who is the "true master of the Lakeland." Only in the harbor towns are people a bit more tolerant of strangers. Besides the gods, the Lakelanders honor many strange, ancient idols and fairy creatures. These creatures are usually connected to water, or else live in it. Settlements in the interior are usually located on small, typically artificial hills called terps, and rarely consist of more than a dozen houses, the largest being the residence of the local knight. Sometimes, the houses crowd around a motte (a type of tower castle built on a hill) that looms over the surrounding land.

Trade and Commerce: The salty ground of the Lakeland is ill suited to farming, so fishing is the most important source of income. The area is well known for its saltarels, a flatfish that only numerous enough around the Nostrian coast to be swept up by slow-moving trawling vessels common to the region. Elsewhere, people must use fishing poles or spears to catch them, which is a lot of work. The bulk of the catch feeds the larger cities of the kingdom, but many are salted and sold to the neighboring province of Albemia and even the rest of the world. This is the reason the saltarel figures so prominently on the kingdom's coat of arms.

Little agriculture is practiced on the land stolen from the ocean by the kingdom's massive dikeworks. Farmers here live mostly by sheep breeding, and Nostrian salted lamb is a well-known delicacy. Sea water is collected along the coast in large salt fields, channeled from field to field via

a complicated drainage system, and evaporated under the warm rays of the sun until it forms salt crystals. Salt is harvested from these large *crystal ponds* during a few short weeks in summer. During ebb tide, seaweed collectors roam the shore to harvest this excellent fuel, which also gives a unique flavor to smoked fish. Some types of seaweed find their way into tasty salads. Far from shore, farmers cut peat for building material and fuel.

Beachcombers

Some coastal inhabitants of the Lakeland and the Sevenwind Coast make a living as beachcombers, especially in the Lakeland. Contrary to popular belief, these are not necessarily pirates. Usually, they are commonfolk hoping for extra income or who are simply desperate. However, some villages on the Sevenwind Coast specialize in "stranding," that is, luring foreign ships close to shore with false beacons in order to attack them.

According to the common interpretation of the law, jetsam belongs to whoever owns the land upon which it appears. In the past, stranded ships have been declared jetsam to allow the nobles to seize the cargo or at least demand a reward for recovering it. Besides having its cargo stolen, a stranded vessel is also often scavenged for its valuable wood, which serves as building material and fuel. The law does not consider the coastal mudflats to be true land, and it can be highly risky to approach a fishing boat moored there during low tide.



The Sevenwind Coast

Borders: Coastal strip that extends from Trontsand to Kendrar

Population: 10,500 humans, fewer than 100 goblins

Important Cities: Salta/Salterhaven (4,000), Trontsand (750), Yoledam (400)

Special: large mudflats, risk of Thorwaler attacks

Trade Goods: Fishing, commerce

Major Routes: Harbor in Salterhaven, ship traffic on the Ingval, northern Coastal Road to Thorwal, southern Coastal Road to Nostria, Ingval Steps along the course of the river.

Unchecked, the winds blowing from the sea reach deep into the interior and carry rain and salt air across the land. Extended mudflats lie between the real coast and the ocean, making navigation especially difficult for large oceangoing vessels. These areas dry out at low tide, revealing that the Sea of Seven Winds is actually quite shallow in places along the Nostrian coast. During low tide, a seemingly endless expanse of grayish brown sand covered with random snaking lines seems to stretch to the horizon. Life on the Sevenwind Coast follows the changes in the weather and the tides, which are punishingly merciless but sometimes also benign.

Flora and Fauna: The coastal waters teem with saltarels but there are also whales and other ocean creatures such as sharks which hunt them. Many type of bird live along the coast and in the marshlands. Plants range from the typical grasses, beech trees, and alder trees of the coast and the Lakelands, to the maple and elm trees that grow in the interior.

Roads and Paths: Not surprisingly, the *Coastal Road* runs along the coast. It is solidly built and well maintained, and in some places, it even has the quality of a Crownroad. The condition depends on each landholder. During storm floods, the road is sometimes awash and barely passable, especially for carts. The natural harbor of Salterhaven is suitable for low draft and ocean going ships alike, but the shallow waters close to the coast cannot be navigated by ships with low drafts, even during high tide. The mudflat folk (local trawler crews) have learned a special trick for docking: they beach their barges, ships, and boats on the soft ground of the mudflats when the water retreats during low tide. Only when the tide rises again can their vessels sail away. Anyone touching one of these ships is hunted and punished severely by the mudflat folks..

Inhabitants and Settlements: The influence of the moody god of the oceans has left the people of the Sevenwind Coast grumpy and withdrawn. Near the Coastal Road,

people are accustomed to strangers, but one must expect mistrust and grudging hospitality when traveling inland. Those suspected of being a Thorwaler should expect open hostility. Too often, these pirates from the north have attacked villages, robbed them of everything, and left them to die. The threat posed by Thorwaler pirates has united many villages, which now build palisades and even ring forts on steeper parts of the coast to give their citizens a place to retreat when the Northerners come to pillage. Few of these forts have been completed, and it will be many years before this system of defenses is strong enough to discourage the Thorwalers completely.

As was mentioned earlier, many people along the coast worship old idols and nature spirits. Mudflat walkers, who know the inlets and tides, are well respected. They are said to be close to Efferd, the wind, or creatures of the sea and many become Blessed Ones. Some villagers pray to the water goddess Karyba, the merciless mother of Efferd, but she is mainly called upon out of fear of the power of the ocean. (🐟 178)

Further inland, witches are considered mediators to the supernatural, and most people consult them before undertaking important projects.

Many houses near the Sevenwind Coast are built in a semi-circle, using the frames of stranded ships for support. There are often figureheads above the entrance, but they only rarely have their real name. Instead, they are used to worship various maritime creatures or fairy beings.

Smaller fishing villages rarely have more than 100 inhabitants. In the hinterland, the farmsteads are smaller, with about 50 inhabitants, and often hidden, but with a direct connection to an ocean inlet depending on the tides. A special feature of this region, which also exists in the water rich Lakeland, are terps: small, usually artificial hills located on the mudflats and small islands along the coast. Usually, an offshore terp supports only a single



farm with space for no more than 20 inhabitants. Fishers or yeomen live there despite the constant dangers posed by storm floods, because, as inhabitants of the ocean, they are not subject to most taxes. Only the queen has the authority to command them, and they can even move their goods to Salterhaven or Nostria without paying tolls. The terp bombasts, as the few nobles here are called, are convinced that they are the most important landholders in the kingdom. Nobody has yet been able to convince them otherwise.

Trade and Commerce: Coastal residents are fishers or marsh farmers. Both groups must struggle against Efferd's powers in their own way and hope for his mercy. Saltarel fishing is the most important source of income in the region, which

is why Nostria's heraldic fish appears everywhere: smoked, fried, or as a hearty stew. Whaling is comparatively rare. Whales migrate along the coast, but the neighboring Thorwalers threaten to punish all whalers – and their whole village with them. It is said that many a village ruin results from a Thorwaler punitive expedition, as they worship whales, the holy animals of Swafnir. A rare few Nostrians see this as another good reason to defy them and become whalers. Whaling villages usually lie hidden near craggy, barely accessible parts of the coast, and the Nostrians who practice this trade are said to be especially daring, going out to sea in small rowboats to harpoon one of the ocean giants. Another group, the fearless *shark lancers*, hunts that infamous predator of the sea and sells their catch (shark meat and leather) all along the Sevenwind Coast.

The Ingval Valley

Borders: Course and banks of the Ingval River
Population: 27,000 humans, plus several hundred goblins
Important Cities: Oldhagen (540), Andergast (6,500), Oakhaven (800), Angasal (250), Ingfallspeugen (400), Joborn (1,000), Kalleth (450), Lyckmoor (680), Northdrakecastle (300), Nordvest (300), Salta and Salterhaven (4,000), Vardall (420)
Special: The Swamp of the Dead near Lyckmoor, the Chalk Rocks of Hallerû
Trade Goods: Wood, meat, fur, and leather products, honey, chalk, commerce, agriculture
Major Routes: Ingval, Sâlway, Ingvalsteps, Teshkaler Way

Even though the Ingval runs through the mostly unexplored Forest Wilderness, the river valley is one of the most densely populated regions and one of the most important lifelines of the Warring Kingdoms. It has been the launching point of countless expeditions, and many small villages and farmsteads along the river were able to save explorers who were down on their luck. At the upper reaches, the river often finds a new bed. There are also many cut off meanders or lakes that once were fed by the river. Downriver, the landscape looks more and more like that in the Lakeland. The hills from Rovamund on become more level, the Ingval gets wider, and its waters calmer, until the water seems to almost stand still. This is deceiving, as many unwary travelers have learned the hard way, and the many meanders accompanying the river are treacherous traps for the ignorant. The lower Ingval valley is covered by mud and treacherous swamps. Countless lakes, ponds, creeks and the river's many meanderings form a labyrinth of open water, reeds, hills, and swamps which are known only to locals. (🐉 180)

Flora and Fauna: The river winds its way through the dense oak or willow forests of the Forest Wilderness, whose branches lean far over the water. The meanders are often surrounded by dense rushes. Here, trout and sticklebacks live alongside frogs, toads, and water snakes. Some meanders are completely overgrown. Gnats and dragonflies buzz through the air over these putrid channels, which often end in squelching pits of mud instead of returning to the main river. Many supernatural creatures, such as tree dragons, nymphs, dryads, and rootbolds are said to leave here, and spooky stories tell of lost souls who haunt the area.

Roads and Paths: Few people travel the river paths by the Ingval's lower reaches without a *swamp walker* by their side. Swamp walkers serve as pilots for trade caravans and are sometimes hired by ships to navigate the dangers of the meanders. Many rafts and river boats became stuck in the mud of the banks or never found their way out of the labyrinth of meanders and dead ends.

The best travel path inland is to follow the course of the Ingval itself, which is rather quiet when it isn't flooding. Near Angasal, by the dangerous Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû, rapids obstruct travel on the water. Beyond Hallerû, most people go ashore or switch to smaller boats and rafts that can deal with rapids and shallow water. People heading downriver can travel with the rafters who bring logs from the forests to Salta. Most wood cut in Andergast is transported downriver on the Ingval. The Andergastan rafters, who float stone oak logs down the river in loose groups, are a very common sight.

The Sâlway follows the river through the Ingvaller Marshes, but it is often damaged by the flood, even though the noble count of Salta maintains it well.

The *Ingval Steps*, a reasonable road, begins in Lyckmoor. A hidden path winds through the swamps between Ingvalla in Thorwal and the village of Threebirches, but travelers are advised to avoid it unless a local swamp walker is acting as a guide. In Threebirches, travelers find the *Heather Steps*, controlled by the soldiers of the Thorwaler Hetman's Guard, who also control the city of Rovamund. Travelers and traders who want to reach the upper reaches of the Ingval without paying a toll to these Thorwaler warriors should stay on the *Sâlway*, as the inland road over Oldhagen is shorter and in better condition. Goblins, robber knights, and other cutthroats lurk in the forest.

From Nordvest on, the Ingval Steps rejoins the *Sâlway* again as it runs to its terminus in Joborn. To circumvent the Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû, which are viewed as eerie, it branches off at Ingfallspeugen and takes a shortcut around the river loop to meet the river again at Kalking. Here, travelers have the choice of continuing to follow the river, taking a boat upriver, or crossing over on the ferry to follow the new Forest Path to Kalleth. From Joborn on, the path along the river is called Lord's Road. It is well maintained and usually quite passable all the way to Andergast.

Inhabitants and Settlements: mainly Andergastans live at the upper reaches of the river, while it is mainly Nostrians who live at the lower reaches. They all have frequent contact with traders from their neighboring country, which fosters more tolerance towards the other side than anywhere else in the Warring Kingdoms. Andergastan lumber rafters and Nostrian traveling merchants often pass through here, and, in general, people along the Ingval are more open to strangers than in other places.

Most villages formed around fortified mottes or farmsteads of the local knights. Their quality of life, earned from trade, is better than that enjoyed by most other nobles of the Warring Kingdoms. Many settlements along the river

The Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû

"Locals consider the Ingval Arch to be one of the strangest geological formations on the entire river. Here, the Ingval loops around the Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû, forming a series of rapids called the Dragon Rapids, which sailors avoid. Tree dragons sunbathe along the Dragon Rapids without fear of humans, waiting for an opportunity to snatch shiny items. Not every boat that wrecks here did so because it smashed against the cliffs, and many a story tells about large, scaly bodies snaking through the foamy water and dragging innocent boaters into the depths.

At night, strange lights flit around on top of the cliffs, and eerie howling and laughter echo through the valleys. Locals lock their doors and windows and pray for morning to arrive quickly. No wonder people say the the Daughters of Satuarua meet twice a year at an inaccessible dancing site on these Chalk Cliffs. During these Witch's Night celebrations, which are held on the equinoxes, they deliberate, celebrate and, according to the stories, brew the famous witch's balm that allows them to fly. And, because this site is so strange and powerful, some believe that they also cast particularly powerful curses and perform great rituals. The woods on both shores of the river are full of creatures barely of this world. Rootbolds, tree shepherds, unicorns, mushroom heads, branchlings and wind kobolds roam freely here, and orcs, goblins and even Thorwalers avoid this area! Except for the witches, nobody seems to like this place."

—from the tales of the treasure hunter Pulcus de Parmese, 1025 FB

and in the surrounding hills are protected with palisades, especially on the Nostrian side, as too often Andergastan forces have tried to use the river as a gateway for invasion.



The long-suffering Joborners have changed their rulers so often in history that they feel no particular loyalty to Andergast or Nostria.

River pirates and other scallywags prowl the lower reaches of the Ingval, attacking unwary travelers. Crumbling ruins give silent testament to knights who tried to bring order to the region but whose attempts failed in the face of Efferd's power or the dangers of the wilderness.

The Forest Wilderness

Borders: Lakeland, Thurán Lake, Stone Oak Forest mountains, and the Tommel River

Population: 5,000 humans, plus more than 1,000 goblins

Important Cities: Axetown (390), Fiolbar (330), Mirdin (450), Nibwell (360)

Special: dense, unexplored forests with old goblin sanctuaries and many other secrets.

Trade Goods: Wood


Major Routes: mainly paths that follow the rivers; also the Thurán Steps, from Nibwell to Thurán Lake; the Forest Road from Harmlyn to Fiolbar; the path through the Forest Wilderness, from Joborn to Oldhagen, via Mirdin.


The forest. That's what almost all locals from the Warring Kingdoms call the dense and unbridled Forest Wilderness that sits in the heart of this region. This area is considered hostile to humans, but many maps show it only as a large forest. It is a remnant of the primeval Middle Forest, which once covered the center of the Aventurian continent. Only the most daring or desperate travel through its dark heart, a fact that lends weight to the idea that its shadows conceal secrets that were not meant for the eyes of mortals. Humans are spreading along the larger streams as they carve out fields and living spaces with their axes and saws, but even woodcutters and trappers, who live off the forest, prefer to stick to its edges. A common saying here is "Deep in the forest, you die a lonely death."

The southern Forest Wilderness is hilly and rocky. Small creeks cut deep gorges in the ground, the undergrowth is almost impenetrable, and swampy ditches are hidden everywhere. By comparison, the north is rather level and the woods are a bit less dense, but the undergrowth thrives in wet ground and swamps abound. North of the Ingval, the land begins to rise slowly and becomes drier, but it is also crossed by deep furrows and steep walls of rock which grow more numerous as one gets closer to the slopes of the Stone Oak Forest. This mountain range's foothills are rocky and steep, and rockslides are common. The valleys cut deep into the mountains, and caves and subterranean rivers are everywhere.

Flora and Fauna: The majority of the area is mixed deciduous forest with dense bushes and groundcover. In some valleys of the Forest Wilderness, trees that are

millennia old are jealously guarded by giant bugbears that are probably not much younger. Ubiquitous mosses and beard lichen emphasize this feeling of great age. Humans strongly fear various denizens of the woods. Tales of dryads and bugbears abound. Common folk fear the Lonely Wanderer, a horrible figure that is said to steal children at night and set bugbears and wolves to attack desperate forest farmers. Legends speak of a unicorn named Keldoran that is at war with the aurochs of the forest, and people tell stories of an old pine tree called Nornim that patiently watches the doings of humans and animals. Some folk whisper greedily of the lost hoard of the cave dragon Karmunir that is supposedly hidden somewhere in the hedge.

Many goblins live in the Forest Wilderness as well, defending their holy cave sites in the hills near the Stone Oak Forest and near the headwaters of the Ornib. ( 180)

Non-goblin travelers have much to fear here, as the goblins of the Forest Wilderness are keepers of ancient traditions and are considered especially aggressive. ( 176)

Roads and Paths: Whenever possible, travelers fall back on the larger rivers, as no human has managed to cut a true road through the Forest Wilderness. The courses of the Ornib and Urfan aren't always easy to navigate, as both rivers become unruly near their headwaters and become dangerous during strong rains or snow melt. The few attempts to create true paths through the Forest Wilderness are barely visible today, as the rampant green takes back all that was stolen. Travel is easiest by water. One good road is the narrow *Forest Path* from Joborn to Mirdin via Oldhagen, but it is little more than a narrow, hard-packed path through the thicket, and visibility rarely extends beyond the next corner. The wilderness was pushed back with axes, but the forest works tirelessly to reclaim ground, and the many roots in the soil make for a rather bumpy ride.

The Nostrian *Forest Road*, which leads from Harmlyn to Fiolbar, is very isolated. Its construction was accompanied by many strange events, and superstitious locals still avoid the path, which is said to pass too close to the homes of malicious forest spirits. Stories say that weird sacrifices were offered during the building of the Forest Road, and many small altars still exist where travelers can leave offerings to walk unhindered.

Inhabitants and Settlements: Inhabitants near the river are accustomed to strangers traveling through their land, and they are a bit friendlier than people who live in the smaller settlements in the Forest Wilderness. Resources are somewhat scarce here, and the rule in the Forest Wilderness is “every man for himself.” People are frugal, which affects how they treat strangers. Hospitality is a precious commodity, but people are advised to be wary when it appears to be offered unconditionally. To win the trust of the inhabitants of the Forest, one must work hard and talk little, as loquacious people aren’t well received.

The small villages of the Forest Wilderness are protected by palisades and situated in clearings amidst agricultural fields. Larger settlements almost always have a fortified knightly manor or a small motte, a wood or half-timber tower built on a mound. Many of these settlements crowded around a village square that often has an old tree at its center. Bake houses and spinning bees are also common and used by all the inhabitants. Deeper in the forest, reclusive communities usually receive visits of strangers once every few years. Here, prejudices increase with a person’s difference from the locals. The people here are extremely superstitious, especially regarding Sumu, the “giver of life,” and forest spirits of all kinds. There are many stories about the legendary Animal Kings of crowned stags and aurochs, as well as the Plant King of the oaks, whose secret home is said to be somewhere nearby. (🐾 174)

Sumes mediate between humans and the creatures of the forest, and enjoy great respect. They delineate areas where trees can be cut and allow or forbid the hunting of animals. Local Nostrians sometimes ask them for advice, a reality that is not appreciated by the Nostrian witches, who claim mediation between humans and forest for themselves and do not like the meddling of the sumes. Certain Daughters of

The Frontiersmen

The border between the Warring Kingdoms runs straight through the Forest Wilderness. Joborn and every settlement along the Ornib have seen many battles through the years and have changed hands between Nostrian and Andergastan lords countless times. The hardy frontiersmen have grown inured to this fate and are extremely adaptable, often to a disquieting degree. Some frontiersmen pretend to be passionate patriots, no matter which country they belong to. Others have resigned themselves to their fate or only pay lip service, making loyalties difficult to determine. They usually find that obeying the new ruler makes little difference to their private lives. People have even become more flexible where faith is concerned. Most no longer care whether they ask a sume or a witch for help, as long as they get help.

Saturia are thought to have made a deal with the sumes, and there is even talk of friendly relations between them in some areas.

Trade and Commerce: Survival in the Forest Wilderness is challenging, as supplies are rare and little trade reaches the interior. “The forest takes and the forest gives,” as the old saying goes. Another says, “Those who take only what they need, and nothing more, will never want for anything.” Forestry is by far the most important livelihood, but there are also charcoal burners who supply desperately needed material for forges. Hunters seek fur-bearing animals and game for their home villages, which turn their catch into meals or preserve them as dry sausage.



The Lone Wanderer

"It's bad luck to go out into the forest and cut trees as you like. Once there was a strong woodcutter named Borgast, who knew no fear and paid no attention to warnings. One day he went out in search of the most splendid oak in the forest, to cut it down and sell for good money.

When he found it and raised his axe for the first blow, a lone wanderer stepped out from the trees. This wanderer was slight of build, had no shoes, and wore only robes of rough, undyed linen. His tangled hair grew down to his belt, and his beard reached to his knees.

"Borgast!" the old man shouted, and Borgast wondered how the stranger knew his name. "Borgast, stop what you are doing. This tree's time hasn't come."

"Leave me alone," Borgast said, thinking only of the money he could make from this tree. When he raised his axe again, the old man shouted again, saying "Borgast, let it be. This tree is not meant to fall today!"

"Who's going to stop me?" Borgast laughed mockingly. He raised the axe for a third time.

And a third time, the lone wanderer said, "Borgast, heed my warning. This tree will not die today."

Borgast ignored him, and the axe blade cut deeply into the oak's bark. It cut so deeply into the tree that Borgast couldn't pull it back out again, try as he might. When he finally managed to wrench it free, the gap in the bark snapped shut on his beard. The axe spun far away. There Borgast stood, unable to move because his beard was stuck firmly in the wood.

"I warned you," the stranger murmured. "I hope you learn from it. And next time, listen to me when I tell you something." With these words, he turned and walked away, heading back into the isolation of the woods.

Borgast ranted and whined, but he was stuck. He had no means to cut off his beard, as his knife lay with his other belongings out of reach. All he could do was rant and whine, and nobody heard him.

Night came over the dark forest, and with it, wild beasts. A fox ate his provisions, crows pecked at his ears, and spiders and insects crawled over his body. Then a huge bear walked up and would have devoured him if not for the timely arrival of a group of brave heroes who had been asked to search for him in the forest.

Ever since then, Borgast won't cut a tree without asking the forest for permission."

—Legend of the Lone Wanderer from the Forest Wilderness

The Tommellands

Borders: the Tommel Valley, from Winhall to Elger

Population: 10,000 humans, plus several hundred goblins

Important Settlements: Arraned (500), Elger (440), Harmlyn (400)

Special: The Eagle of Gevinsbar

Trade Goods: Agriculture, forestry, trade

Major Routes: The Tommel River; the Tommelway

The wetlands of the Tommel Valley are the most fertile lands in Nostria, and thus among the earliest to be settled and now the most populous. Prior to the arrival of humans settlers, several families of glade elves lived by the upper reaches of the river. Now just a few relics hint of their ancient presence. The Tommel begins in the foothills of the Kosh Mountains, not far from Ridgerock in the Northmarches. The river is rather large by the time it reaches Nostrian land near Winhall, and it is navigable from Aran on. Below Fairngrove, it crosses through swampy land to Nostria. The narrow strip of land between the river and the edge of the forest easily supports new fields.

Flora and Fauna: Near the banks of the river, sparse fen woods of alders and willows grow between strips of cultivated land with colorful fields and fruit groves. The area's proximity to the Albernian Farindel Forest, home of many kinds of fairies, is a source of natural magical

spectacles. Well spirits jump with trout, vague forms take shape in the morning fog, and almost every meadow in the Tommellands seems to be home to spirits of nature.

Roads and Paths: The river has seen near-constant traffic since Admiral Sanin led his first expedition fleet up the Tommel. Even large sail boats can get as far as Fairngrove, but the bridge stops ships from going further if they have a high mast that cannot be lowered. Smaller boats can continue on to the ford near Albernian Winhall, where the Tommel Bridge arches over the water. This new bridge is protected on the Winhaller and Nostrian sides by strong gatehouses that serve as toll stations but are intended to ward off attacks by orcs (who burned down the old bridge). A ship that can pass below the bridge and avoid running aground in the shallows can sail as far as Albernian Aran. Towing boats assist ships following this route.

A journey on the Tommel isn't without its risks, despite the calm waters, as the river is used to transport Nostrian maple trees that are felled in the forests near the banks and floated to Nostria. Ships are sometimes struck by one of the huge wooden rafts or even single logs that drift just below the surface.

The *Albernian Road* runs alongside the Tommel from Winhall to Tommeldomm and is so named because it is often used by superstitious Albernians and other Middenrealms who wish to skirt around the legendary Farindel Forest.



Between Fairngrove and Tommeldomm, the road is in rather bad condition, and during the spring floods, it can become impassable for days. Beyond Tommeldomm, it narrows into a muddy path used mainly by towing teams.

Inhabitants and Settlements: All larger settlements are near the river, where humans till the fertile fields. Small farmsteads and settlements abound, and homes are often built with robust maple wood and clay.

The Tommel isn't only the region's lifeline, it is also the border with the Principality of Albernia in the powerful Middenrealm. Surprisingly, there have been few serious conflicts at the border. Most inhabitants of the Tommellands get on well, no matter who rules over them. Due to the regular contact with the Middenrealm, people here are considered rather progressive, at least by Nostrian standards.

Due to this open-mindedness, the faith in the Twelvegods is much stronger than, for example, deep in the Forest Wilderness. Supernatural phenomena are common in the Tommel wetlands, and its people also worship fairy creatures, especially the river lord, Tommel, and his entourage of nymphs.

Trade and Commerce: Most ships on the Tommel fly a Nostrian flag, and there is much trade with neighboring lands. The harvest often produces a surplus, so many agricultural goods are shipped to Nostria, where they are badly needed and can be sold for a good profit. People gather furs and other natural products from the Forest Wilderness to exchange in markets. The wood trade does well the Tommellands, but instead of stone oaks, Nostrians mainly float maple trees here for processing into raw lumber or use in strong furniture.

Thurania

Borders: around Thurán Lake

Estimated Population: 16,000 humans, plus hundreds of goblins

Important Cities: Albumin (700), Egelingsfenn (410), Lakemeadows (350), Thurana (840), Thuránx (280)

Special: Location of countless battles and skirmishes

Trade Goods: Fishing, flax cultivation, pig and sheep breeding, woodcutting, income from the Lord's Road (a trade route)

Major Routes: The Lord's Road in the north; the *Thuráner Boardwalk* on the east bank, which becomes the *Nabla Way* in the south.

The swampy border region of Thurania surrounds its namesake, Thurán Lake, the largest inland lake in the Warring Kingdoms. Its border with the hostile Forest Wilderness is difficult to determine, especially in the north and west.

Thurania was the location of numerous skirmishes and battles between Nostria and Andergast over the centuries. Some areas have more ruined farmsteads than operational ones. The remnants of the Andergastan Thurán Fleet, destroyed during the Battle on the Lake 30 years ago, can still be seen rotting away here near the shore. Occasionally,



a brittle raft with room for only a handful of archers, patrols the lake.

After sundown, no local goes out on the river by choice. Legends speak of restless dead in the dark waters, perhaps victims of the countless battles on the shore.

Flora and Fauna: Thuran Lake is full of fish, and the reeds are alive with buzzing, humming, and croaking. Gnats are a particular pest in summer, and the buzzing that heralds the approach of giant dragonflies is feared by all. Some folk whisper about demonic carpets of algae, which scholars call *ulchuchui*, that lurk in the the river, waiting for prey. There are also many spooky stories about the fen, the muddy wetlands on the western shore. Anyone traveling in the fen without a local guide or who does not stay on the walkway is as good as lost. Will o' the wisps are considered especially dangerous, as their light often lures wanderers to their deaths in the mud.

Roads and Paths: There are no fairies or regular shipping between the villages around Thuran Lake. If you want to cross the body of water, which has a size of about 50 on 30 miles, you have to own a boat. Otherwise, you can only hope to find a fisher that will take you to your destination for a reward. The *Lord's Road* on the north shore leads through Thurania and connects the region with the Andergastan Main Road in the West. In the east, it leads to Albumin. A cart path in better shape, the *Thuraner Boardwalk*, runs along the eastern shore and leads to the river Nabla in the south. There it meets the *Nabla Way*, which leads down to Albernian Winhall.

Inhabitants and Settlements: Many settlements around Thuran Lake are built on stilts, as they would otherwise drown in the mud of the shore or wash away during high water.

Here people use everything the land offers to build their houses. Huts are often made of reeds or a mixture of peat, and oak. Stone is usually only used far from the lakeshore.

Thuradians on both side of the border are sad that the war between the kingdoms seems to be escalating in the region, but they feel almost helpless to do anything about it. They look after their own and concentrate on survival. Thuradians in the north have made new trade connections and work hard for a modicum of wealth. This gives them some hope and leaves them more open-minded.

Trade and Commerce: In northern Thurania, which belongs to Andergast, at least some of the inhabitants enjoy a modicum of wealth. This is mainly due to the presence of the *Lord's Road*, which leads to the Margravate of Griffonsford. It is one of the most important trade routes between the northern Middenrealm and the west coast of Aventuria.

Around the shores of Thuran Lake, there are many overgrown pastures. The land has barely been touched since the war drove everyone away. The inhabitants around Thuran Lake usually live rather well from fishing and gathering peat at the edges of the fen. On the northern and western shores, people also grow flax, which they spin into Thuranian linen. This is a popular trade good in almost every house. Sometimes, daring smugglers use the water to avoid the toll between Nostria and Andergast, but the risk often outweighs the profit.

In the southern, Nostrian portion of Thurania, especially in the valleys of the Nabla, people are bitterly poor. They live from river fishing, cutting wood, char-burning, and the breeding of pigs and sheep. Trade, when it exists, is conducted with Andergast.

The Stone Oak Forest

Borders: the mountain range near the Forest Wilderness

Population: about 1,000 humans, plus several hundred goblins and orcs

Important Cities: Anderstone (120), Andrafall (720), Orc Hoard (solitary fortified farmstead)

Special: largely unexplored and isolated; extensive forests of stone oak trees

Trade Goods: Woodcutting, fur, honey

Major Routes: Andra's Steps

In the north, the Forest Wilderness transforms into a steep and barely-passable mountain range, misleadingly called the Stone Oak Forest, which serves as a natural border. This mountain range gets its name from the trees that cover its slopes. The name often confuses strangers, as most travelers presume that it is actually a forest. In reality, the range is comprised of two independent mountain ranges that meet only at their westernmost edge. When locals mention the Stone Oak Forest, they usually mean only the southern mountains. Most travelers never come any further north, and thus won't learn the difference anyway.

Along the southern slopes of the Stone Oak Forest, winds gather and whip around the barren rock with unusual strength. The weather can change at a moment's notice, and sunshine is often followed by heavy rains, strong winds, or fierce thunderstorms. Many legends and stories are told about these mountains. Several goblin tribes live in the area, and the heart of the mountains is said to be dragon country. With the exception of its southern foothills, the Stone Oak Forest is largely unexplored, and the humans in the area have yet to see and name all of its highest peaks. Steep slopes, deep gorges, and sheer rock walls dominate the landscape. Some gorges cross the mountains, and mountain creeks have cut deep channels in the rock.

Between the two mountain ranges lies a hostile, little-explored steppe that is difficult to cross and occasionally occupied by roaming bands of orcs who lay claim to the land.

Flora and Fauna: Dense forests of black spruce, cedar pine, and beech trees grow on the slopes as far as the treeline. The region's large, gnarled stone oaks, which give the mountain range its name, are famous across Aventuria.

Ogres, trolls, orcs, and goblins routinely give humans trouble, as do wild animals such as forest spiders, wolves,

and bears. Death squirrels lurk in the dense canopy, waiting to drop down on unwary wanderers and ram their sharp horn into their skulls. Many travelers have encountered kobolds playing tricks and causing strife among the creatures of the forest. Dragons live in the Stone Oak Forest, too. Cave dragons are said to conceal their hoards in the area's many hidden caves.

Roads and Paths: There are no true roads in the Stone Oak Forest, and only a few paths lead through the mountain range. A few daring scouts know paths that do not lead to certain doom. The *Andra Steps* is the most famous route, but it is impassable to mounts and carts. Even in good weather, it is considered dangerous and exhausting, and in winter it is impassable to all traffic.

Along the river and the *Andra Steps*, visitors can find many small shrines honoring Andra, the wife of the first lord, Argos Zornbold. After she sacrificed herself for the land, the locals renamed the river, the waterfall and the village of Andrafall in her honor.

Inhabitants and Settlements: Centuries ago, miners, shepherds, and woodcutters formed valley communities in the foothills of the mountains, promising to protect and assist each other in times of strife. Aldermen are selected from the members of the various valley communities to represent their people with the baron. This office usually passes from father to son, and aldermanic leaders of wealthy families often act like knights.

Somewhere between the peaks, there is said to be Castle Dragonstone on the White Mountain, which has been carried away from the world by sumes centuries ago. At the end of the Andra Steps, the fortress Andrastone guards the northern border of the kingdom. Its walls have often been attacked by orcs. So far, the Andergastans have always been successful in warding off the orcs, not least because of some mages of the Combat Seminar who perform their duty for the Crown here.

Commerce: Isolated mines that mainly produce iron exist in the border regions of the Stone Oak Forest. Working in these mines is difficult and dangerous, but it provides a living. These mines produce nearly all of the country's iron, and all of it must be transported to Andergast. There, the typically inferior ore is made into steel and used for everyday items and weapons such as the Andergaster.

The Stone Oaks and their Keepers

Nothing has done more to shape outsiders' opinions of Andergast like the majestic stone oak, which appears on the kingdom's coat of arms. Stone oaks are truly magnificent trees, and large stands make onlookers feel tiny and fleeting. Many of these trees have trunks so wide that a dozen people can barely reach around one. It isn't hard to believe that the oldest stone oaks were already growing when the great explorer, Admiral Sanin, first stepped on these shores. Some people believe stone oaks are immortal, even though many of these trees are showing their age.

Parts of certain trees have died off, and their trunks are hollow. Stories speak of sumes who found refuge within a hollow stone oak tree. These splendid trees grow everywhere, alone or in small groves, in the deep forests of the Forest Wilderness and on the banks of the Ingval. Only in the impenetrable valleys of the Stone Oak Forests do they grow in large and ancient forests.

In the religion of the Twelvegods, the stone oak is the holy tree of the war goddess Rondra. The tough wood is popular for mage's staves, which are said to be resistant to fire and even able to resist Rondra's lightning. Stone oak wood is Andergast's most important export, but cutting the trees is difficult work. Saws several yards long are necessary to defeat the thick trunks, and the tough wood can only be cut with heavy and hardened axes. Then, the giant logs must be dragged to the river by draft animals. The wood is precious and so it is rarely used as building material by the locals.

Defensive structures, such as mottes (wooden castles or towers on defensible mounds, favored by knights and barons) are traditionally built from stone oak wood. The wood is most often sold or used to build sturdy furniture, works of art, or weapons. Even treants are said to be envious of the stone oak's strength, and some of those famous tree shepherds are so ancient and large that they resemble stone oak trees, much to a rogue woodcutter's surprise...

The strangest legends speak of the Oak King, the plant king of all oaks, who is said to have taken root somewhere in the Forest Wilderness or the Stone Oak Forest. All stone oaks are said to have descended from him, and he can command them in times of need. But there are also rumors that he grows in the Garetian Realmwood or even in the heart of the elves' lands, the Salamander Stones, but these rumors carry little weight in Andergast. (🐉 174)

The sumes, the influential druids of Andergast, see themselves as guardians of the forest. Woodcutters must seek permission from a druid before felling a stone oak. Except when it concerns stone oaks, the sumes can calm treants and other creatures that would otherwise defend "their" forest without mercy.



The Dragons of the Stone Oak Forest

🐉 **Flame Eye**, a highly intelligent, ancient cave dragon, rules the dragons of the Stone Oak Forest and hates all warm-blooded creatures that walk on two legs. His hoard is thought to be hidden on the southern side of the mountain range.

🐉 **Delafir** lives in the forests north of Angasal. She seeks to usurp the rulership from Flame Eye and is deeply envious of his status. Luckily for nearby humans, the two dragons rarely engage in open battle.

🐉 Even among dragons, **Lepitopir** is considered insane and unpredictable. This ancient cave dragon has at least three hoards, but folk believe he lives in a cave below Two Horns, a distinctive peak in the central Stone Oak Forest. For many years, he held the legendary Cyclopean blade Gnorakir, also known as the Sword of Heroes, in his hoard, but it was stolen in 1014 FB by a daring hero who was blessed by the fox god Phex. Now Lepitopir hates humans even more, and his rage is widely feared.

Old Forests

“Humans will never be able to conquer the mountains known as the Stone Oak Forest. They are full of creatures waiting to kill or enchant humans, roast them with dragon fire, or turn them into trees. Giant cave dragons sit on their hoards and devour everybody who come too close. Man-eating trees lurk within the dense forests, and evil spirits of the woods lure people to their doom. Forest spiders spin their giant webs in the shadows, and bears and wolves pose a risk to lone wanderers. Goblins roam the area, and even orcs hunt here.

Deep in the impenetrable valleys, there are creatures that have no name, for no human has ever met one and lived to tell the tale. Giant ogres, harpies, stone trolls, moss goblins, rock cats, and giant snakes prowl the trackless mountains, where precipitous cliffs, seemingly bottomless gorges, and raging rivers appear

suddenly and hinder travel. Stands of stone oak trees as old as the world cover the mountain slopes and valleys, where the gods walked in ancient times. These oldest of all oak trees tower into the sky, and the branches of just one could shelter an entire village. Tree dragons and eagles roost in their crowns, and cave dragons sleep beneath their roots. Terrified travelers have reported seeing a tree staring out at the world with a knotty face. Some believe that these trees are humans who were transformed into oaks for their blasphemy. Some of these ancient trees can speak, and they know many secrets but do not like humans. Only the fairest of maidens can entice them to speak when they wish to remain silent. Blaspheme against the forest by lighting a fire, breaking a branch, or turning an axe against a tree and you will feel the forest’s rage. At that point, you’ll be lucky to survive the day...”

—Andergastan myth about the Stone Oak Forest

The Steppes of the East

Borders: expansive plains between the two Stone Oak Forests, Thash, and the Dark Ridge

Population: 3,100 humans, plus several hundred goblins and orcs

Important Cities: Teshkal (930), Crowsloft (forsaken fortress ruin)

Special: Bladegrass Steppes, no patriarchy, horse breed Teshkaler

Trade Goods: Horse, cattle, and sheep breeding, agriculture

Major Routes: Teshkaler Way, Northern Way, Lialin’s Way, plus some paths through the steppes

A wide plain stretches between the Stone Oak Forest, Thash and Dark Ridge. A few groves and forests survive in the western portion. The ground is barren, stone dry, and dotted with the ruins of long-forsaken farmsteads. Humans find little of interest here, if anything at all. If anyone rules this barren land, it is the orcs and goblins. All who dwell here live by the law of the jungle.

The eastern half of the plain gives way to bladegrass, making the region even more hostile. East of the town of Teshkal, this razor-sharp plant grows so densely that the locals call it the Bladegrass Steppes. The land claimed by Andergast ends here, as nobody can survive in this lethal terrain. Just traveling through the area is considered suicidal.

In reality, humans rule only only Teshkalia, as the area surrounding Teshkal is called. The barony in the easternmost portion of Teshkalia is the only region in Andergast that does not enforce a strict patriarchy. Women here enjoy the same rights possessed by women in most other lands of Aventuria. That is why many customs

and traditions common in Andergast aren’t worth much in Teshkalia. The land is even ruled by a woman, a fact that angers many Andergastan nobles.

Patriarchy, which is based on the sumes’ influence, never took hold here because Teshkalians always followed the laws of the steppes instead of the laws of the capital. In fact, Teshkalia managed to declare independence from Andergast several times over the centuries without much consequence, due to its remote location. However, the threat from orcs and other dangers has forced them to rejoin the kingdom several times, the last being in 1010 FB.

Flora and Fauna: From Teshkal on, the steppe is impassable, as it is overgrown by the bladegrass plant that gave the steppe its name. This waist-high, yellow-green grass has extremely sharp leaves (see page 103). During summer months, red poppies interrupt the billowing, yellow ocean of stalks, but the area supports some stout juniper bushes as well. Except for nimble rodents and several types of serpent, few animals can survive here, and there is not much to hunt. The one exception is the powerful wartrhino, whose thick skin is impervious to the razor-sharp leaves, and it is a popular game animal.

Every spring, the Theskalians must see to trimming back the spread of bladegrass on their land, and the work is difficult and dangerous. Military commanders dream of adapting the farmers’ long scythes for use in war. Burn clearance is frowned upon since fires can easily get out of control (besides, bladegrass is strongly resistant to flame).

At the western and eastern edges of the steppes, smaller forested areas become more common, especially closer to the mountains. The ground is just as dry and hard as the central plain, however, and robust steppe grass and tough bushes are the only other plants that survive here. Horned

dragons are often spotted above the steppes, and harpies sometimes circle the area, but they likely maintain their hoards in Thash or the Dark Ridge.

With regular occurrence, orcs swarm over the northern Stone Oak Forest and sweep down through the steppes to Anderstone as far as the vicinity of Teshkal, where the pickings are easy. Smaller groves are home to goblin families, which are led by powerful sorceresses and pray to mighty steppe spirits in addition to their gods. (🐉 176)

Roads and Paths: Despite the isolation, a few tracks cross through the Bladegrass Steppes, but only the North Way cuts directly through areas covered by bladegrass. It leads north from Teshkal to the deep valleys of the Thash. High in the mountains, in the ruins of the forsaken village of Thashcrest, the barely navigable path splits in two different directions. One path leads northwest, to the Orclands, while the northeast path leads through the Thash Gate to the Svellt Valley. The Orc Storm followed this route through Andergast on its way to the Middenrealm in 1010 FB.

Lialin's Ways (also called *Thash Way*) runs east before reaching the mountains and crosses the bladegrass at only a few points. It winds through the foothills of the Thash, passes the crumbling *Lialin's Tower* (🐉 180), continues through the Mourning Wood, past the fortress of Griffonstone in the Thundermarches, and finally ends in Yrramis in the Svellt Valley.

There are some paths in the Bladegrass Steppes, but they are recognizable only by small stone carvings. Since they are rarely if ever used, they tend to become overgrown quite quickly (losing one's way in bladegrass quickly spells death).

Inhabitants and Settlements: The Teshkalians hate orcs but generally disregard the national enmity for Nostrians, which most Andergastans consider so important. Their greatest passions are horses and storytelling. Strangers visiting the area find it easier to make friends among the locals if they praise their host's horse or tell an exciting story.

Teshkalians worship the spirits of the steppes but still place Rahja's winged sky horses (Tharvun, the Stallion of Night, and Sulva, the Mare of Day) above all other spirits on the wide steppes. Teshkal is the only large settlement in the area's hostile eastern region. A famous ruin lies hidden within the sea of bladegrass, jealously guarded by harpies. Called *Fortress Crowsloft*, it was built for creatures that were much larger than humans.

The few humans who live in the western reaches of the steppes have come to an arrangement with the orcs, though not always by choice. The inhabitants of several small, well-fortified farmsteads in the area know how to fight orcs, but some villages have shrines dedicated to the orc god Tairach, which must be blessed with blood every year. Manners are rough, and people claim their right with fists and shouting. Everybody faces the dangers of the wilderness and must know how to defend themselves. Women are no exception to this rule.


Trade and Commerce: The few fields of the region barely yield enough to supply the local population and some of its livestock, which usually includes only sheep and small cattle. Some land around the town was (painfully) cleared of its bladegrass and is now cultivated. The Teshkalers are especially proud of their centuries-old tradition of horse breeding, and these noble beasts freely graze around the town. They are very expensive, and many nobles travel a great distance to buy one of their carriage horses or destriers.



Towns and Villages of the Warring Kingdoms

Albumin

Albumin (INH 700, 10% dwarves) sits on the border between Andergast and the Middenrealm, east of the Albumin Gate, which is a hilly portal between the Dark Ridge and Kosh Mountains. Trade and tolls are important sources of income. The baron's residence enjoys the protection of so-called *dark dwarves* from the Dark Ridge. Baron *Wenzeslaus the Older Zornbold* (*978 FB; white hair; grayish-blue eyes) encourages their service. The father of King Wendelmir shows little interest in his town's business, as his duties as Master of the Army and Champion of Rondra often demand his presence elsewhere.

The grumpy and taciturn dwarves do not hide their disdain for the human inhabitants of Albumin. Every year, during the month of Ingerimm, a delegation of the dwarven King Bonderik comes to town to demand tribute for protection, which becomes more expensive each year. Even though orcs have often ravaged the area, they have spared Albumin every time. ( 181)

Oldhagen

Oldhagen (INH 540) sits nestled among one of the most fertile regions in Nostria. Even though the important Sâl Way trade route runs through town, Oldhagen has been spared the worst of the area's many wars due to the town's influential witch coven, which is led by the Oldhagener Sisters. The coven's festival ground sits in the hills west of town. A short walk outside of town lies the Roswillden Stud Farm, whose owner is a coven member of the Oldhagener Sisters. Their horses are very popular with Nostrian nobles. The town is probably best known for its Oldhagener dolls, life-like figures of wood and cloth that make popular children's toys. It is said that true masters of the art of doll making know how to instill life in their creations.

Few scholars are aware that Oldhagen is likely the oldest settlement in Nostria. When the Bosparans arrived, they found descendants of the Alhanians (the ancestors of today's Norbards) already living here, in a place they called Yosulinhome. Ruins of their cellars and storehouses are often discovered accidentally.

Andergast, Capital of Woodcutters

"Against the orcs and the miserable Nostriacks, we are a bulwark—steadfast and steely like stone oaks!"

—an Andergastan knight, 1039 FB

"Unwashed, backward, and misogynistic. I don't like them!"

—A female Horasian scholar, 1040 FB



Region: Capital of the Kingdom of Andergast, Barony of Andergast

Population: 6,500

Ruler: King Wendelmir VI. Zornbold, advised by the Guild Council

Temples: Hesinde, Ingerimm, Peraine, Praios, Rondra, Travia, Tsa; several shrines

Trade and Commerce: Collecting place for wood (mainly stone oak) and wooden items, products of pig farming, coal, horses (Teshkalers), gateway for trade with Thorwal, Nostria, and the rest of Aventuria

Special: King's castle; dirty and narrow alleys full of dogs and pigs; Combat Seminar of Andergast (mage's academy, gray, traditional combat mages); convent of the alchemists' alliance of the Red Salamander

Atmosphere in the City: dominated by men; insists on maintain old traditions; suspicious of all that is new; trusts authority

Andergast is the capital, and everyone with national pride wants to live here, near the king. There is much devious wrangling for audiences at court. Poverty and the almost unrestricted power of the nobles is accepted as a fact of life by many Andergastans. Rich burghers and craftworkers possess great influence and know how to use it—to the annoyance of the nobles. Thus the wealthy wood trading families of Oxbrecht and Birgeltree practically run the guilds, just like the Hufferich family, which wrested its salt monopoly from the lords many years ago. The common folk do not care whether they are exploited by knights or rich burghers—it's all the same to them.

Andergast sits where the Andra joins the Ingval, and is surrounded by extensive forests. Its walls are dark, the alleys lined with wooden houses are narrow, and its inhabitants are patriotic and traditional. King Wendelmir VI, a knight from the Zornbold family, rules over his subjects with a stern hand from his strong fortress in the center of town. The town almost bursts its seams with visitors during the knightly tournament held in Rondra, but at other times, it is a quiet, slow-paced town.

Only a few of the town's narrow and winding alleys are paved. Since they wind their way between two- and three-story houses, visitors often lose their way. The upper levels of these half-timber and wooden houses usually protrude out over the street almost as far as the neighboring structure. This has the effect of limiting the amount of sunlight that reaches the ground.

Rainfall is a common occurrence, and the ground often turns into a sticky mix of mud and filth. Middle class residents strap wooden racks, or *pattens*, under their shoes to protect their footwear and skirt hems. The smell



Andergast

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|------------------------------|
| 01 | Royal Castle | G01 | Rathskeller |
| 02 | Ingval Fortress | G02 | "Black and Red" (tavern) |
| 03 | Market Place | G03 | "Ox and Unicorn" (inn) |
| 04 | Town Hall | G04 | The Duck (tavern) |
| 05 | Armory | G05 | "The Succulent Ham" (tavern) |
| 06 | Harbor | T01 | Hesinde Chapel |
| 07 | Shipyards | T02 | Temple of Rondra |
| 08 | Blacksmith Guild House | T03 | Temple of Praios |
| 09 | Clothmaker Guild House | T04 | Temple of Travia |
| 10 | Bath House | T05 | Temple of Tsa |
| 11 | Royal Andergastan School of Arcane Combat | T06 | Temple of Peraine |
| 12 | Workshops of the Red Salamander | T07 | Temple of Ingerimm |
| 13 | Woodworker Guild House | S01 | Royal Town |
| S01 | Royal Town | S02 | Blacksmith Quarter |
| S02 | Blacksmith Quarter | S03 | Clothmaker Quarter |
| S03 | Clothmaker Quarter | S04 | Leatherworker Quarter |
| S04 | Leatherworker Quarter | S05 | Woodworker Quarter |
| S05 | Woodworker Quarter | | |

from burning peat or wood blends with a persistent smell of refuse and hangs over the city like a pall. The air can become so acrid during the summer that people try hard not to breathe.

Artful woodworking, pig farming, and trade take up the days of most townfolk, who are much more urbane than the Andergastan peasants. Strangers nevertheless often describe them as conservative and resistant to progress.

As the seat of the king, Andergast is technically under the direct rule of Wendelmir VI, but he cares little for bureaucracy and allows the town council to rule in his stead. The council consists of the masters of the craft guilds as well as representatives of important temples and the mage's academy. The council meets once per week and must present all decisions to the king for approval. The council elects a new council spokesman every four years. Wendelmir sometimes grants an audience to all burghers and free citizens who wish to petition the king. Women need a male intercessor.

Sons of Andergastan burghers gain the rights of burghers upon reaching their fourteenth year of life. Male immigrants who own their own house and have lived in town for 10 years may purchase a burgher's letter for a hefty 100 ducats. Only women who are Blessed Ones or mages can become burghers. In general, Blessed Ones and mages automatically become burghers the moment they become permanent residents in town.

The city guard maintains law and order in the town. This force consists mainly of landless knights, but also includes a few burghers and mercenaries. Guilds control their respective neighborhoods and maintain their own defenses, which often results in disputes over authority. Guild councils punish lesser crimes with fines. If crimes are severe or involve strangers or higher-ranked persons, the case heard by a knight appointed by the king. Especially severe crimes, such as the indictment of a baron, are heard by the Council of Champions, but sometimes Wendelmir sits in judgment himself.

A Walk Around Town

The town is divided into guild quarters, where the guilds collect taxes, provide protection against fires and enemies, punish lesser crimes, and settle disputes between citizens. Each guild enforces numerous laws, most of which are not written down. They are called *laws of common knowledge* because most people know them by heart. Outside of the order imposed by the guilds, citizens rely on the city guard, known as the Royal Guard, for large-scale protection. The Royal Guard oversees the city walls and gates, the river harbor, the king's castle, the Market Place, the Town Hall/Armory, and the mage's academy.

The Royal Town (S01)

The **town wall** is about 12' tall. The city guards patrols the walkway, which is crowned with battlements, and sees that everything is in order. The four **town gates** sit open during the day, while at night each portcullis is lowered, making the town inaccessible. The gate guards, which are members of the Royal Guard, check everyone who enters and leaves, and are in charge of collecting tolls. Strangers must pay one haler per leg (paid for mounts as well as pack and draft animals) to enter town, but townfolk, locals, and Andergastan nobles and their retainers can enter freely. People with "oversized weapons," "poison" or other "dangerous items" are refused entry, although how these terms are defined depends greatly on the gate guard, and often a small bribe can influence their decision.

The **King's Castle (01)** rises proudly above the confluence of the Andra and the Ingval. By Middenrealmish standards, it is only a medium-sized structure, but it is the largest fortress in Andergast. The building's pitch-black walls clearly show their age—more than a thousand years. The cellars are infamous for their constant clamminess, but the rest of the castle is cool and drafty. The castle wall surrounds a central building next to a square courtyard and several herb and vegetable patches.

The castle is home to King Wendelmir, his family, and dozens of servants, including two dozen knights who always accompany the king when he travels. When not serving as escorts, the knights undertake special missions.

A **Hesinde Chapel (T01)**, tended by Wendelmir's aunt Irinia (see page 128), sits in the western tower. Few scholars have visited the chapel to discuss religion and world events with Irinia since the coronation.

A five-arched stone oak bridge crosses the Ingval in the south and forms an obstacle for ships. **Ingval's Fortress (02)**, which guards the southern end of the bridge, is home to the knights of the royal bodyguard. Travelers do not pay a toll here unless they plan to cross the bridge and visit the city.

A guard gate stands in the center of the bridge, where all travelers must pay a toll to enter the city.

In the **Market Place (03)**, at the city center, locals and traders from near and far sell everything Andergastans might need. A farmer's market is held there once each week, and during the first weeks of Peraine, the city hosts a large cattle market. During the annual King's Tournament (in mid-Rondra), fighters face each other on foot here, but the riding disciplines and archery events take place outside the city walls.

Next to Market Place is the venerable **Town Hall (04)**. The town council meets in this dark but richly ornamented building to deal with daily business. The building also houses a scriptorium, where customers can dictate letters, have letters read aloud, or have a contract drafted, all for a fee. A side door opens on stairs that lead to the **Rathskeller (G01)** (Q5/P4/B-), a tavern for wealthy patrons. Its walls show scenes from the town's history. Next door to the Town Hall is the **Temple of Rondra (T02)**, a splendid stone oak building. The split log exterior has a martial cast due to the countless iron nails and thorns placed there by believers as gifts to the goddess. Inside, torn and bloodstained banners, broken shields and broken weapons decorate the walls. The temple's Blessed Ones are very patriotic, and their leader, Sword Brother **Ulfried Zornbold**, is a distant relative of the royal family. He is always happy to discuss theology with scholars and knights.

The **Temple of Praios (T03)** in Andergast is quite ornate. Its dome is made of shiny brass, and every full hour, acolytes ring a gong that can be heard at quite a distance. The temple leader, **Greifwin Heathenhunter**, who was originally from Gareth, has little love for the cult of Sumu and the influence of the druids.

Weapons (mainly pikes and short bows) are stored in the city's **Armory (05)** and handed out during attacks. The armory is also home to the city guards' main guardhouse, though the building's first floor houses men-at-arms and unmarried knights. Supplies for sieges are kept stockpiled in the building's cool cellars.

Each boat traveling on the Ingval River must berth at the **Harbor (06)** and pay a toll. Fishing boats sell their catch in the market but sometimes right from the boat. Next to the harbor, a small **Shipyards (07)** produces fishing boats and river cargo boats. Nearby is the humble **Temple of Travia (T04)**, which houses the poor who work in the nearby sawmill.

Paying customers may stay in one of the city's two, reasonably furnished, single-sex dormitories (Q3/P2/B20).

The Blacksmith Quarter (S02)

This area boasts farriers, weaponsmiths, and blacksmiths, but there are also armorers, wire drawers, and one goldsmith, as well as local potters. Since a destructive fire, wooden or half-timbered houses are forbidden in this quarter.



In the rather new **Blacksmith Guild House (08)**, a sparsely ornamented stone building, guild members gather for council meetings to advise the guild master and guard their interests.

The **Temple of Tsa (T05)** was newly built shortly after the town fire in 925 FB. Tsa is worshiped as the wife of Efferd, and as the only one who can soften his moods, and even a disaster like a great fire is considered a mood of the god. Priests of the rainbow goddess mainly tend to the town's orphans.

The town's mercenaries gather in the **Black and Red Tavern (G02)** (Q2/P2/B-). Besides being a rather tough tavern, the taproom, which is adorned with weapons, is also a shrine of Kor and a place for recruitment.

Clothmakers Quarter (S03)

This area is home to weavers, clothiers, and tailors, along with a rope maker and some furriers who do not want to be lumped together with the less respected tanners from the Leatherworker Quarter. The **Clothmaker Guild House (09)** is a modest wooden building that is mainly used as a shrine for their patron saints, Ysinthe and Alruna.

The **Temple of Peraine (T06)** is located on the border between the Clothmaker and Blacksmith Quarters. The temple's Blessed Ones run the local infirmary and tend to the sick and injured who cannot afford an expensive healer. The temple is led by **Atheldan**, the venerable Steward of the Land. Atheldan also serves on the Council of Champions (see page 69) as the Champion of Peraine.

For 3 silverthalers, patrons can enjoy a bath in one of the two large tubs in the **Bath House (10)**. Baths are strictly unisex. Private tubs cost extra (+2 silverthalers). For an extra fee, bathers can have food, drink, and even a bard brought in for entertainment. The owner, **Dittlinde**, keeps prostitutes away from her bathhouse. She also knows how to treat minor injuries and pull teeth.

A long-established Tavern, the **Ox and Unicorn (Q3/P3/B14)** (G03), is popular with craftworkers and travelers. The dormitory is considered very clean. Innkeeper **Bernfried** knows his town and its inhabitants well. For a small fee, he can reveal many secrets.

Leatherworkers Quarter

Everyone recognizes this quarter by the smell, as oak galls, urine, and other tanners' acids emit a potent stench. Only locals know that the leatherworkers hold their gatherings in a side room of the **Duck Tavern (G04)** (Q2/P2/B12), which is why it is considered their guild house.

The **Combat Seminar of Andergast (11)**, the local mage's academy (see page 116), is next to the East Gate. For many years, this magic school accepted only the sons of nobles as students. This policy has changed in recent years due to the influence of the king, Efferdan, as well as some smart gambits by the Gray Guild. Today, the academy is open to women and even students who aren't of noble birth. Guards of the Order of Gray Staves guard the school strictly and in a militaristic fashion.

The tavern known as **The Succulent Ham (G05)** (Q4/P5/B13) is the best and by far most expensive tavern in town. It caters to the needs of rich traders and nobles. Servants live in the building's dormitory, while guests enjoy single, double, and four bed rooms. (🍷 180)

The Workshops of the **Red Salamander (12)**, a stone building with small windows and thick walls, is located at the edge of the marketplace. Above the entrance is a brass shield with an image of a large, red lizard lounging on a pile of coal. The alchemists offer medicines and elixirs. Poisons and other dangerous substances are sold under the counter, if at all. The quality is usually good, but as the society has no competition in town, its prices are higher than average.

Woodworkers Quarter (S05)

Besides, woodworkers, this quarter houses craftworkers such as carpenters, boat builders, figurine carvers, shingle makers, as well as coal and brushwood traders, two architects, and the richest wood trader in town. The **Woodworker Guild House (13)**, made entirely of stone oak wood, is typical of buildings in this quarter. Lathed pillars, carved beams, filigreed wood window screens and doors with splendid inlay prove the artifice of the Andergastan woodworkers. The entrance hall is decorated with a life-sized wooden statue of a dryad stepping out of a stone oak. Guild members frighten young apprentices and strangers with a fairy tale, which says the dryad sometimes seduces humans and pulls them into the tree, which they can never leave.

The only one-story building in the quarter is the **Temple of Ingerimm (T07)**, which is covered with artful carvings. The temple's Blessed Ones hold surprisingly mystical attitudes, leading to arguments with the more practical guild masters.

Andrafall 🍷

Andrafall (INH 720) is the oldest settlement in Andergast and the most important town in the foothills of the Stone Oak Forest. Lumberjacks use the Andra to float mighty stone oaks, which seem to grow here in abundance, to other

regions. The only obstacle is the waterfall, but by means of a weir and strong draft animals, the rafters manage to haul the precious wood over a winding path and back down to the water, and thence on to the harbor.

The town was built on a clearing beneath a 120' tall cliff, over which the Andra plunges to feed a large lake. Those who worship Tsa think that the Andrafall is of great importance due to the rainbows that can be seen above the lake when the sun is shining.

Andrafall is surrounded by a mighty palisade of stone oak wood. Additional protection comes from the ancient fortress that rises on a small hill in the middle of town and serves as the seat of the barons of Andrafall.

By long-standing tradition, woodcutters attend a fair every year in Andrafall during the month of Praios, where they enjoy contests such as caber-tossing.

Arraned


Arraned (INH 500) is the largest Nostrian settlement in Thurania. The town is quite dangerous due to its many bored mercenaries and poor peasants, who quickly reach for clubs and knives to get their way.

A few miles north of the town, there is the fortress Gordelyn, a strong castle that guards the route from Thurana Lake to the south of Nostria. Known as the *Blood Fortress*, it is infamous for its large dungeon, which for centuries has served as a prison for disgraced Nostrian nobles. Many inmates disappear without a trace, leading to rumors that the fortress is alive and kills traitors in cruel ways.

Axetown

Axetown (INH 390), on the Ornib, has often been the location of campaigns and battles, and frequently suffers hunger and bitter poverty. The inhabitants of Axetown are more aloof than others in the Forest Wilderness, and they have little respect for strangers. The ruins of a battlement, walls, and trenches can still be seen around the village. The Axetowners did erect a palisade, but they maintain it rather poorly. A thick bramble hedge growing on the old village wall serves as a sturdy obstacle. On the west side of the river, across the village, sits an ancient wall, all that remains of a border fortress that was destroyed and burned countless times. Two large shrines, one for Firun and one for Tatuara, are referred to as temples by the locals.

Egelingsfenn

The small town of Egelingsfenn (INH 420) sits at the Lord's Road on the banks of Thurana Lake. Trade and fishing have brought the residents modest wealth. Castle Badgerstone, the seat of the Baron of Thurana, dominates the area. ( 181)

Oakhaven

The manners in Oakhaven (INH 800) are just as rough as strangers are common. The town is frequented by woodcutters, trappers, traders, and rafters, as well as Thorwalers, Nostrians, and even emancipated women.

Besides the usually cramped inn, the town offers five taverns. Guests can sleep on one of the benches in the taproom for a small fee. Prostitutes operate out of these taverns as well.


Temples of Firun and Efferd face each other across the town center, while outside town, hidden in the forest, is a formation of standing stones that serves as a sanctuary of Sumu.

In the forest north of Oakhaven, there are several hidden castles owned by robber knights who sometimes stop travelers and demand a toll.

Elger

The land surrounding Elger (INH 430) is fertile and beautiful. The little town is best known for its Lord Elger's Gardens, which sit on a hill near the settlement. Lord Kasimir III's plans to build a summer home here in 840 FB were abandoned soon after construction began, but the park, which was designed by his wife, Pearlinda, is still recognizable today. The park's otherworldly atmosphere leads many to believe that fairy creatures live within its boundaries. What is certain is that robbers and other sinister figures sometimes use the park as a hideout.

Angasal

Angasal (INH 270), an unimportant settlement in the border region of Nostria and Andergast, has changed rulers numerous times. One day, tired of war, a mercenary leader named  Garf (*983 FB; dark hair and eyes; deluded megalomaniac; usually drunk but in a good mood) declared the settlement's independence. He dubbed himself Duke Garf I and moved into the local castle, but given Angasal's location on steep cliffs and the fact that the town is difficult to reach, and since there were more pressing matters in Andergast, nobody cared. When he was still a prince, King Wendelmir and several companions visited the village several times to relax.

Even though it didn't quite fit into official Aventuria, the Duchy of Angasal was a beloved fan-written project that managed to sneak its way into publication and often resurfaces. The duchy plays no important role in the history of the Warring Kingdoms, but if your party enjoys humorous locations, have fun with it!

Empire as inspiration. In an unusual move, he ordered the peasants to cultivate wine despite the chilly weather, and now Angasaler wine is infamous for its tart, vinegar-like taste. Outsiders pity or ridicule the residents of Angasa for this madness. Travelers, though, know that the town's only tavern, the **Mare (Q3/P3/B20)**, offers comfortable beds, and shares its roof with a brothel.

Harmlyn

Strangers are well liked here, because Harmlyn (**INH 320**) sits on a trade route along the Tommel which is also often used by Albernians. The fortress of Harmlyn, which serves as seat of the old Nostrian family of Sapstem, rises on a steep hill above the town. Murals in the castle's Chapel of Rondra are quite mysterious to scholars. A fresco shows an unknown, three-eyed god of war that only locals seem to know.

It is said that Baron Hakon began making pacts with demonic powers here centuries ago during the Mage Wars, but he was slain by his own wife, Fiana, who is still worshiped as a saint by the locals. Hakon was buried outside town, in a Boron yard that is still considered cursed. The ancient graves there bear strange images which nobody can interpret.

On the far bank of the Tommel lies the legendary Farindel Forest. Locals avoid the creepy woods on the Nostrian side of the river because people often go missing there.

Ingfallspeugen

Most ship journeys up the Ingval end in Ingfallspeugen (**INH 400**). Only small boats and rafts can sail under the Ingval Arch, so many travelers disembark in Ingfallspeugen and walk to Kalkingen on foot.

Many locals make their living as carriers between Kalking and Ingfallspeugen. If needed, one can rent an ox cart to transport goods. The way is so rough, though, that

Garf I declared the Church of Rahja, long forbidden in this land, the new state religion and built a shrine for the goddess. He sees himself as a chosen one of sorts and sired eleven children: his heir, Prince Alriklas and Firunislaus the Pretty, both of which take after their father. Garf I also fathered more than a dozen bastards. He created impressive titles, uniforms, and medals for his servants, using his memories of the Horasian

a cart takes about twice as long to cover the distance as someone on foot. The town is known beyond the borders of the kingdom mainly for two things. One, the town's most famous son, **Praios Marshpadder**, has earned fame as a brave explorer. And two, heretical members of a blasphemous sect of Boron once settled here.

The Visarists began building the Temple of the Holy Song next to the local Boron yard in 1009 FB, but it burned to the ground five years ago. For several years, the mute Blessed One of Boron **Taia Marnion** has been working to rebuild rundown parts of the temple and catalog the mysterious artifacts of the secticians.

Joborn, the Warring Kingdoms' Bed of Unrest

"We have been occupied by troops too often for any of us to shout "hurray" for either side. Seriously, can't they just let us be? We don't mean them any harm. Maybe if they reflected on Saint Dorlen for a moment, we could all enjoy some peace and quiet."

—Fridulian Visserad, Foreman of the Baker's Guild of Joborn, 1039 FB



"I would have expected more cheer in this town. Instead, everyone is all business! Even the misogynistic Andergastans, the new lords of the town, have accepted the new Temple of Rahja, which was built to honor Saint Dorlen. I would have expected more than beer and pretzels from the seat of a Metropolit of the Church of Rahja..."

—Carolan Calavanti, Vinsaltan vagabond, 1039 FB

Region: Kingdom Andergast, Barony Joborn

Population: 900

Ruler: the Baron of Joborn (currently an Andergastan), advised by the Alderman of Joborn (elected from the guilds) and the highest-ranking Blessed One in town (who is almost always the Metropolit of Rahja)

Temples: two temples to Rahja (the Peace Cellar, in town, and, just outside of town, the Temple of Saint Dorlen, where the Love Light of Joborn is kept); united fortified temple of Peraine and Travia; shrines of Ingerimm and Kor

Trade and Commerce: Woodcutting, rafting, fishing, agriculture; cattle breeding; numerous crafts; famous for its pretzels.

Special: Temple of Saint Dorlen just outside of town (seat of the Metropolit and home of the Love Light of Joborn); Hill of Half (site of many battles); Castle Joborn (high motte; home of the baron); bell tower; Woodcutter King (the strongest woodcutter in the area; receives free schnapps in all taverns)

Atmosphere in Town: pragmatic and rather apolitical when asked about the Warring Kingdoms, proud of the return of the Church of Rahja to the town, slowly growing hope

The rulers of Joborn have switched allegiance from Andergast to Nostria and back so many times over the years that the residents are tired of the constant change. The leaders of the various Stone Oak Guilds (woodcutters and rafters), the Ingval Guild (boatmen and fishers) and the Ingerimm Guild (craftworkers) struggle to maintain their position in town, since they often have to deal with a new baron and always need help with their many obligations (maintaining the harbor basin, the palisade, and public buildings).

The town alderman, who is almost always appointed from the Ingerimm Guild, enforces the market laws and settles differences, and often employs strangers in the interest of neutrality. The baron knows only too well that he cannot afford a Nostrian rebellion and thus rules with a firm hand. Strife caused by agitators from both Andergast and Nostria remain a constant thorn in the baron's side.

Because it sits at the border of Andergast and Nostria, where the Ornib meets the Ingval, Joborn is the most contested town in the Warring Kingdoms and has changed rulership

more often than any other. To learn to live with this state, the Joborners developed a surprising adaptability (or indifference) concerning their lord. Depending on which side is in charge, citizens can be upright Andergastans or proud Nostrians. Currently they are Andergastans, and their baron is painfully aware that he will not be able to retain his land for long, as the husband of Nostria's queen, the forest knight Eilert, has made it clear that he wants to claim his family's ancestral seat.

A Walk Around Town

Joborn was built on the slopes of the infamous Hill of Half, site of countless battles between the enemy kingdoms. At its top sits **Castle Joborn (01)**, an old motte that is home to the baron and his family and servants. The **Fortress Temple of Peraine and Travia (T01)**, often the last refuge of townsfolk against the cruelty of the invaders du jour, sits within the enclosure of the castle at the end of the path leading up the hill. A watchman from town is always on duty in front of the narrow **Bell Tower (02)**, at the foot of the path to the fortress, keeping an eye out for danger.

Most houses in Joborn are half timbered, but there are also simple wooden huts. Near the **Market Place (03)** in the center of town opposite the Town Hall, stands **Rathskeller (04)** (Q3/P4/B-) and **House Joborn (G01)** (Q3/P4/B15),



the best inn in town. By the harbor there is **Ingvaller Inn (G02)** (Q4/P3/B20), mainly frequented by rafters. The **King Wendolyn Tavern (G03)** (Q2/P2/B-) and the **Ferry (06)** across the Ingval are near the **Fish Market (05)**. The harbor is especially important for Joborn, and tolls for trade on the Ingval are collected in the royal **Toll House (07)**.

The old **Water Mill (08)** on the eastern bank of the Orrib was inhabited by the now-deceased Blessed One of Hesinde, Hexander, for many years. He was the head of the Church for a short while and left many mysterious elemental signs behind.

The **Peace Cellar (G04)** (Q4/P3/B-), managed by novices of the Temple of Rahja, is in a side alley. A small shrine of the goddess sits in an alcove connected to the taproom.


The Love Light of Saint Dorlen, a plain lamp made of clay that burns fragrant oil, was enshrined in the new Temple of Saint Dorlen built in front of the town walls in 1034 FB. Pilgrims and devoted worshipers of Rahja traditionally drop off a stone to expand the small temple and make it even more splendid. The Blessed One **Raitjan Angmund** (*994 FB; brown hair and eyes; stout; plain; masterful singer with a strong voice; hard-drinking; aging gracefully), a Metropolitane of the Church and the Head of the Temple, is the Keeper of the Love Light. By means of this divine talisman, Saint Dorlen ended a fierce battle occurring near Joborn in 133 FB by removing the will to fight from the hearts of the combatants and filling them with love instead. This event, which came to be called the Joborn Friendship, went down in history, but it was also the reason that the Church of Rahja was outlawed in Andergast for centuries. Every year on the anniversary of this miracle, now known as the Day of Saints (17th of Boron), guests stay for free in Joborn.

Kalleth

An ancient, fire-blackened trunk of a stone oak stands in the center of Kalleth (**INH 450**), in remembrance of the attack of a vengeful emperor dragon from the Stone Oak Forest whose hoard had been plundered by humans. On the edge of this small harbor town, one may visit the only temple of the desert god Rastullah in the Warring Kingdoms. **Ali al'Rachmud**, a traveling merchant from the Khôm Desert, built it in 1004 FB. The locals view the god as a deity of vengeance who shares their hatred for Nostrians and will one day help them obtain victory. A winding forest path heads west from Kalleth, mainly serving to bypass Joborn.

Lyckmoor

Many poor peat cutters live on the edge of the Lycker Moor, and peasants farm the fields south and east of the town of Lyckmoor (**INH 680**). Peat cutters often find traces

of ancient battles fought by nonhumans. With the approval of the Nostrian witch covens, people have used the moor as a graveyard for centuries, and every settlement from Salterhaven to Oldhagen inters its dead in the moor with a solemn ceremony. Not every soul finds eternal rest here, however. Bodies, mainly of those who fell in battle, sometimes crawl from the swamp to hunt the living, and the area is known as a gathering place for ghouls that feed on the flesh of the dead. Locals remain frightened of dark witches and spellcasters who were buried here with mysterious rituals. Nobody dares to enter the moor after dark, and the tall, sturdy palisade that surrounds Lyckmoor is covered in strange scratch marks. ( 180)

Unsurprisingly, Lyckmoor has a large Temple of Boron. Its gloomy interior is decorated with artifacts discovered in the moor. The taciturn priest and his pale novice often walk through the moor, searching its narrow paths for unquiet spirits to lay to rest.

Mirdin

Mirdin (**INH 450**) is a remote town at the edge of the Forest Wilderness. Its buildings sprawl around the wall of a respectable castle. When Joborn is in the hand of the Andergastans, the castle serves as the residence of the forest count. The surrounding area is called Mirdiner Land, but it remains largely unexplored.

Northdragonburg

The barely accessible Northdragonburg (**INH 300**), which sits at the foot of the Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû, is rarely visited by strangers. Here people pray to the goddess Satuaria, probably because the most important dancing site of the Nostrian witches is located on an inaccessible rock plateau above the settlement. Here witches from across Nostria gather twice a year on the equinoxes to hold large celebrations. The local voivod, **Binula of Cres**, is a witch herself.

Nordvest

The well-fortified town of Nordvest (**INH 300**) lies a short distance from the castle of the same name, which is built on a rock spire that looks out over the Ingval. This castle is the ancestral seat of the traditional Old Counts of Ingvalsrohden, whose main hobby is the active obstruction of the royal family in Nostria.

Castle Nordvest cannot be taken without magic or treachery and has never once fallen to enemy forces. **Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden** (see page 127) frequently summons her forest knights here to renew their vows of fealty and loyalty in war. Her land suffers grievously from the Thorwalers who occupy Kendrar (the fiefdom of Kendrar rightfully belongs to Melanoth's husband and, if all goes well, will one day pass to her daughter).

Nostria, Capital of Fishers

"Our queen will restore our pride of old. Long live Nostrial!"

—A Nostrian grand burgher, 1038 FB

"Behind the public splendor lies a deep-rooted insecurity and brewing schism. The nobility is estranged, the queen hesitant, and the customs are downright archaic."

—A Horasian scholar, 1039 FB



Region: Capital of the Kingdom of Nostria, Queen's Land of Nostria

Population: 6,000

Ruler: Queen Yolande II of Nostria, represented by a female town magistrate

Temples: Boron, Efferd, Peraine, Rahja, Rondra, Travia, Tsa; numerous shrines, including a large shrine to Rondra at the royal castle

Trade and Commerce: minor but growing sea trade, fishing (mainly of the flounder-like salteral), ship building, numerous workshops, daily market in Freedom Square

Special: Stone of Nostria in Freedom Square, spacious royal castle with bewildering architecture; the Academy of Light and Darkness (just outside of the city; mage, academy, white, object); street after street of abandoned houses and dilapidated mansions that once housed wealthy burghers.

Atmosphere in the City: Conservative and backward, patriotic, newly hopeful after a long period of grim decline; optimism as many things are repaired or restored to working order.

The City in Play: The town is filled with a strange spirit of optimism. Where there was resignation after the great plague of 1027 FB, now much busy work is being done. The old wounds slowly heal, town repairs are underway, and people want to follow the young queen and her advisers. But there are also those that dislike the changes. There are shady characters that fear a loss of power, and some influential nobles see the development with distrust and try to stop it. The queen sends out expedition after expedition to explore the country's past and often receives guests from afar.

Nostria sits at the confluence of the Tommel River and the Sea of Seven Winds. At first glance, it may look proud and affluent, but its gloriously decorated facades hide a city in decline. The city's harbor, which for many years had been silting up, is once again becoming an important transfer point for many kinds of wares. Reconstruction is still ongoing in places, but the long-empty warehouses are beginning to fill again as trade with the interior increases. Tolls are once again collected by the harbor and at the town gates, the exact amount depending on the value and

scarcity of goods. However, necessities pay smaller tolls. There is no toll for common luggage, but the toll collectors decide which goods qualify as luggage and which as trade goods.

The city is still recovering from a terrible plague of the blue wheeze, which killed a quarter of the population in 1027 FB and hit the royal family especially hard. The disease's effects can still be felt, but ever since the young and inexperienced mage Yolande ascended to the throne, Nostrians have gone about their daily work with enthusiasm. The aristocracy proudly refer to themselves as bombasts. They strive to outdo each other in terms of pomp and showiness at court, but they regard even slow progress with great suspicion.

Queen Yolande II (see page 121) rules Nostria from here, but she has appointed her former tutor, the one-armed mage *Satuwina Hyttenhau* (see page 127) to serve as town magistrate. This unbribable but pedantic woman has begun to challenge the criminal gangs that have secretly ruled many quarters for years. There aren't enough city guards to maintain order in town, and unfortunately some guards are on the payroll of gangs of thieves, fences, and smugglers who desperately cling to their waning power. The city magistrate may call upon only ten knights and twenty men-at-arms to guard the gates, chase thieves and smugglers, and settle disputes.

A Walk Around Town

The **Royal Castle (01)** of the Nostrian ruling family is built upon a steep, 120' tall, white rock known as Harod's Rock, which rises above the town on the northern bank of the Tommel. Fringlas Kasmyrin began construction on the original fortress shortly after the Tommel outlet was explored, and subsequent rulers have expanded and remodeled the structure many times over the centuries. This strangely labyrinthine structure, which proves difficult to navigate at the best of times, could have sprung from the mind of a madman. The castle has two palaces, one large and one small, surrounding several large and small inner courtyards on multiple levels, plus several servant residences, workshops, storage buildings, and towers, all connected by lightless passages, steep staircases, narrow alleys, and tunnels.

Today, much of the castle stands empty. Only the large palace on the main courtyard and its surrounding buildings are inhabited. Visitors can wander the castle's long corridors and musty halls for hours without meeting anybody, watched only by stone statues and faded portraits of ancestors. Who knows what secrets might lie behind brittle tapestries, in cold chimneys and beyond doors that have not been unlocked in decades? Some rooms were walled up, and no doubt conceal forgotten secret passages.

The castle may contain hidden treasures, but it probably also contains much that should remain lost.

Law Town

The upper classes live in this upscale northern quarter, near the banks of the Tommel. The **Kaspomir Bridge (2)** leads to **Kasmyrin Square (3)**, the town's best hotel, called the **Nostrian Court (G01)** (Q5/P6/B40), and the gorgeous homes of burghers, some of which are up to three stories tall. All have showy facades. Staircases usually lie in exterior towers, arched windows bear rich ornamentation, and playful figures cavort above eaves. The town's streets are wide and cobbled, but the entrances to the **Old Sewers** were bricked up to solve problems with vermin. According to rumors, the sewers are home to so-called *rat people*, but this probably refers to poor townspeople who are only seeking shelter.

Royal Majordomo 🏰 *Toran of the Light* (see page 127), the royal treasurer and chief excise man, lives in the formerly splendid building of the **Nostrian Offices (4)**. This well-guarded building also contains the treasury, but the coffers have been empty for years (what little remains is now kept in a dungeon beneath the Royal Castle). Toran tries his best to implement his queen's orders, but the lack of funds often frustrates his attempts. This is strangely mitigated by the fact that the blue wheeze epidemic drastically reduced the number of spoiled courtiers that the royal castle was supporting to a bearable minimum.

It is quite obvious in Law Town that most of the inhabitants who could afford to move to Salta have done so. Many once-beautiful burgher houses stand empty and risk falling into ruin, but the number of empty homes decreases every year.

The **Great Armory (5)**, a massive, gloomy stone building, sits in Weapon Alley, not far from **Kasmyrin Square (3)**. It used to house weapons for the militia to use in times of war, but the armory is now largely empty, and hasn't even had an armorer for quite some time. The musty cellars now hold only brittle pikes, rusty shields, and unusable bows. Grocers and other service providers, along with the town magistrate, live in the upper floors. Residents include a medica, a clerk, a barber, a tooth-puller, a pawnbroker, and an astrologer who calls herself the *court astrologer*, even though Queen Yolande has never once made use of her services.

Across from the armory, next to a large tenement building, is the surprisingly plain entrance to the **Temple of Rondra (T01)**, known as the **Hall of Heroes**. Few locals visit it, but men-at-arms and travelers sometimes come here to pray to the Divine Lioness. Local knights pray at the shrine of Rondra in the Royal Castle. The temple is busy only during

the Royal Tournament in Rondra, when knights from all over the land come here to pray for Rondra's favor in the competition.

Old Nostria

The eastern, and oldest, part of town is called **Old Nostria**. It is not as richly ornamented as Law Town, and its small, stout, stone houses have tiny windows. The alleys are narrow and dark, and smell of excrement and other filth unless a gale is blowing. This quarter was hit especially hard by the epidemic, but most houses are once again inhabited, often by people who simply claimed them. In Old Nostria, what's left of the city's old gangs still maintain their headquarters in Old Nostria, and a bitter fight rages between the town guard and the criminals.

A 15' tall pillar called the Stone of Nosteria, which is the symbol of Nostria's independence, stands in **Freedom Square (6)**, the central town square. The **Royal Nostrian Archive (7)**, which was plundered several times during the plague, occupies the southeastern corner of Freedom Square. Entry today is limited to those with royal permission, although bribing the archivist doesn't hurt. North of the square, in Lysian Alley, bards and musicians often perform in the **Bittern Tavern (G02)** (Q3/P4/B-).

A gang called the Greencaps maintains a stubborn hold on this quarter. Their leader, known only as *Old Father*, tries to extend his influence from here. The gang has its headquarter in splendid **Fringla's Court (8)**. The Court is an old meeting place for nobles engaged in intrigue. It also used to be a site for duels to the death, but these are now fought on different premises.

Old Nostria is also site to the rarely visited **Convent of the Serpent of Knowledge (T02)**, a white magic order, and the colorful **Temple of Two Sisters (T03)**, which is nominally devoted to the goddess Tsa, although the interior bears a shrine to Satuarra, and the two goddesses are worshiped in sisterly unity.

Wermynhus

Most craftworkers in town practice their trades in workshops in a neighborhood of stone-and-timber houses on the south side of the city, near the Harbor Island.

The devoted Blessed Ones of the **Temple of Peraine (T04)** saved many lives during the blue wheeze epidemic. This temple is the most visited of those in town, primarily for gratitude. It gives 100% of donations to those in need. Peraine's growing popularity has led to a decrease in importance of the **Temple of Travia (T05)**. Ever since the temple's High Mother died from the blue wheeze, her husband 🏰 *Father Darislaus* has continued their effort to



Nostris

25 YARDS



- 01 Royal Castle
- 02 Kaspomir Bridge
- 03 Kasmyrin Square
- 04 Nostrian Office
- 05 Great Arsenal
- 06 Freedom Square and Stone of Nosteria
- 07 Royal Nostrian Archive
- 08 Fringla's Court
- 09 Tommelstomp and Daughter Print House
- 10 Lyngwyner Gate and Guard Tower
- 11 Sevenwind Promenade
- 12 Toll Castle
- 13 Wharf Quarter
- 14 Adademy of Light and Darkness

- G01 Hotel "Nostrian Court"
- G02 Tavern "Bittern"
- G03 Tavern "Swift Flounder"
- G04 Tavern "Hill of Half"
- G05 Dive "The Peg-Leg"

- S01 Law Town
- S02 Wyrmynhus
- S03 Old Nostris
- S04 Harbor Island

- T01 Temple of Rondra / Hall of Heroes
- T02 Convent of the Serpent of Knowledge
- T03 Temple of Two Sisters
- T04 Temple of Peraine
- T05 Temple of Travia
- T06 Temple of Rahja and Bathhouse
- T07 Temple of Efferd
- T08 Temple of Boron

feed the poorest Nostrians. He often works alone now in his soup kitchen, which he operates from the temple.

The **Temple of Rahja (T06)** is a unique combination of brewery and bathhouse. Visitors who desire to enter the sanctum must first bathe in the **Bathhouse (Q4/P4)**, which is operated by Rahja's Blessed Ones. The bath house is open to all residents, and, as with other temples of Rahja, offers the services of various male and female prostitutes.

Across the street, the **Swift Flounder (G03) (Q3/P3/B8)** offers a hearty meal. The **Tommelstomp and Daughter (9)** printing house, which occupies a half-timbered house near the channel, desperately tries to recreate the prosperity of earlier years when they owned a printing press with movable type. Since they must now rely on wooden type, they can rarely print pamphlets such as the *Nostrian War Trumpet*. Adventurers meet in the tavern **Hill of Half (G04) (Q3/P3/B-)**.

The **Guard Tower** rises up from the **Lyngwyner Gate (10)**, which is the town's southern gate. At 60' tall, the guard tower is the tallest building in town and houses the town

magistrate and the knights of the town guard. The Tower Watchwoman, whose duty is to warn of neighborhood fires and approaching enemies, lives on the tower's upper floor.

Harbor Island

The Harbor Island is separated from the town by a small inlet. Two old stone bridges lead to the island, which holds warehouses and the tiny huts of fishers and longshoremen. Conditions are improving here. The warehouses of the **Seven Wind Promenade (11)**, a narrow street on the west side of the island, stood empty for many years but are now active once again as ships from foreign countries berth at the quays. Sailors frequent a nearby dive called **The Peg-Leg (G05) (Q1/P2/B10)**.

The stout and well-fortified **Toll Castle (12)**, with its six-foot-thick exterior walls, is one of the oldest buildings in town. The toll collectors set their own terms here for many years, but recently the town magistrate has been cracking down on their corruption.

Business has also been picking up in the **Wharf Quarter (13)**, on the south side of the island. Mages come and go



from their workshop in the southernmost building, and watchful knights ensure that nobody enters without permission, for this is where they are building the first fisher boat with ancestor glyphs.

About 500 years ago, a storm washed a ship onto the southern end of the Harbor Island. This ship was decorated with images of aquatic creatures such as dolphins, whales, and mermaids, so the Nostrians converted the hull into the city's new **Temple of Efferd (T07)**. The structure was expanded over the centuries, but the ship's basic shape is still discernible.

Outside Town

A short distance outside town is the rather large **Temple of Boron (T08)**. Around back sits a sedate Boron Yard with many weathered gravestones from centuries of interments. A mass grave was added just north of the yard to accommodate victims of the plague who had to be buried quickly, no matter how well respected or wealthy they had been. Today, the area is surrounded by a hedge in the shape of a broken wheel.

The **Academy of Light and Darkness (14)**, Nostria's mage academy, lies about three miles upriver on the banks of the Tommel. It introduces students to a clearly defined, dualistic worldview of good and evil. The education is strictly academic and scientific, which renders cooperation with the influential witches impossible. A short while ago, Queen Yolande issued an edict to concentrate on the study of archaic magic. Not all tutors agree, but nobody dares openly disagree with the queen, who herself is an alumnus of this academy.

Salta and Salterhaven, the Secret Capital of Nostria

"Progressive and open-minded Salta is the true capital of the land. But it is only important because of Salterhaven."

—a fisherman from Salta, 1038 FB

"The least backward town in the Warring Kingdoms. It's bearable here."

—A Horasian scholar, 1039 FB



Salta and Salterhaven

Region: Nostria, Noble County of Salta

Population: 4,000 (about a third in Salterhaven)

Ruler: Noble Count Albio III Salis of Salta, represented by town magistrates in both towns

The Stone of Nosteria

"In the center of town sits an ancient stone covered with weird glyphs and images. The locals honor it as the Stone of Nosteria. During the rule of the five mayors, the land of Nostria grew and flourished. But in the days of Kasparyn, a hard winter refused to let go and the people went hungry. To help his people, Kasparyn sought advice from his wife Nosteria, as she was a powerful sorceress. She erected a large stone in town that was able to attract large schools of saltarels at any time. Now, each year, in her honor, villagers choose a fisher queen who bathes in the salty waters by the Stone of Nosteria, just as Nosteria once did herself. The people were so thankful to the mayor that they made him lord. All Nostrians gathered at the magic stone to cheer Kasparyn I and his wife Nosteria. That same day they swore never to bow to the Emperor in the south again, and to remain the proud and free people of Nostria. This event marked the founding of the realm of Nostria.

Each year, on the first new moon in Efferd, locals who earn their living by fishing, and many others who desire luck, throw a freshly caught, still-living saltarel into a large tub of salt water that is put up next to the Stone of Nosteria. Attendees choose a virgin to be fisher queen, who then bathes among the twitching fish. She then slaughters them with a knife until the water turns a deep red color. Next she spills some of her own blood into the basin and rises, naked as Tsa created her, covered in blood, and retraces the images and glyphs on the stone in briny water, to the cheers of the Nostrians. The celebration continues with a fair, and countless saltarels are consumed. Those who are especially lucky get to eat one of the fish slaughtered in the tub. The locals view this ritual as a service to Efferd, but to me, it seems more like an archaic superstition." (🐉 180)

—The Legends and Traditions of the Stone of Nosteria, excerpt from the Book of the Serpent, by Elderin of Lowangen, Blessed One of Hesinde, 901 FB

Temples: Ingerimm, Travia, Hesinde in Salta; Efferd in Salterhaven; many shrines in both towns

Trade and Commerce: most important trade town at the Nostrian coast, many firms working with stone oak wood, flourishing sea trade, fishing, shipbuilding; Sancta Elida is the honored town saint of Salterhaven

Special: Convents of the Anconites and the Draconites outside of the town

Atmosphere in the City middle-class, rivalry with Nostria, not as cosmopolitan as it claims to be; at least Salterhaven is as open-minded as Salta would like to be and has much contact with wealthy people from all over the world.

Salta thinks it is the true capital of the kingdom, and Count Albio does what he can to acquire influence. He has made a bitter opponent in the form of the commander of the Salt Fortress, who himself is trying to acquire power in Kendrar. The town's many trade houses view each other with suspicion and always seek ways to make greater profits. These opposing interests often need heroes to undertake large and small tasks under the cover of Phex.

Even though Salta and Salterhaven are really two towns, they are almost always considered to be a single town due to their proximity (they are two miles apart) and their common economic and political interests. Salterhaven is often seen as a remote neighborhood of Salta.

Originally, Salterhaven was built to deny the traditionally unruly inhabitants of Salta access to the sea. Salta then quit its struggle for independence, at least for a while. Later, as both towns grew, they became friendlier with each other. What once was a restriction now gives Salta access to a better harbor, one suited for large ships from Havena and Grangor, rather than its own badly maintained harbor. Salterhaven became the most important harbor for foreign trade in the land, much to Nostria's chagrin. By skillful tactical maneuvering, the father of the current noble count managed to keep the license to trade with Andergast, even during times of war. All attempts by the Nostrian lords and kings to make Salta see reason failed just as the count was threatening once again to lead Salta and Salterhaven to independence. Count Albio struggled to make Salta the new capital of the kingdom and seize power for a long time. But his grandiose plans failed due to the intelligent preemptive actions taken by young Queen Yolande, whom he had completely underestimated.

A Walk Around Salta

Salta does not show its age, as its inhabitants have used their trade wealth to replace many old houses with newer ones. Half-timber houses with two or three floors are common, and almost all have an antechamber to receive guests. A statue of Saint Elida stands in an alcove in every other house. This custom is based not on the locals' piety, but rather on their defiance. Years ago, every homeowner had to pay a tax on each lantern attached to the house. A smart female burgher erected a statue of a saint holding a lantern in its hand and, with the assistance of the Church of Efferd, had the statue declared a place of worship and thus tax-free. Soon other inhabitants followed her clever example, and the custom lingers today.

All larger streets in Salta are cobbled, just like the road to Salterhaven, where many craftworkers have settled. Carpenters, cabinetmakers, turners, figure carvers, button cutters, and more work here, processing stone oak wood

brought up from the Ingval. The heart of town is the **Market Place (01)**, which holds a large wood auction twice a year. Also on the market place is the richly ornamented **Town Hall (02)**, where the town magistrate lives, the new **Market Hall (03)** which is built in the Horasian style, a branch of the **Northland Bank (04)** and numerous kontors, which belong mainly to Horasian trading houses. This is also site of the overpriced **Hotel Golden Ingval (G01)** (Q4/P6/B25). **♁ Dardane Brusik**, the wealthy lumber trader, is the only local who can afford a house bordering the Market Place.

Nostrian Street leads south from the Market Place to a small neighborhood of smiths, where the **Temple of Ingerimm (T01)** is located. The local forges mainly produce anchors, metal fittings, and other equipment for ships. There is even a bell caster here. Near the town's southern gate sits a tavern called **The Trough (G02)** (Q1/P1/S-), a notorious dive.

The Kendraran Street leads north from the market place, to the **Ferry (05)**, where travelers can pay 1 haler per leg or wheel to cross the Ingval. Near the ferry dock the tavern **The Dancing Sea Horse (G03)** (Q4/P3/B-) is located. The hexagonal **Hesinde Temple (T02)** is also near the ferry dock, at Hexagon Square, which took its name from it.

Lyckmoor Street heads east from the market place. A short distance north lies the modest **Temple of Travia (T03)**. To the right, on the wide street, is the splendid **Griffon Residence (06)** in which Count Albio invested much. He even had several old houses knocked down so he could add a new wing to his domicile. Many consider it the most splendid defensible building in Nostria. Very close by is the **Old Governor's Residence (07)**, where the knights of the town guard and their retinues dwell.

A Walk Around Salterhaven

Salterhaven is very busy compared even to Salta. It sees much traffic from large foreign ships at its wharves, and new trade shipments enter onto the roads all the time, ordered by employers from various countries. But the town is most famous for building multi-masted cogs based on the design of the Bornian *hulk*.

The southern part of the harbor is known as **Dragon Mile (08)**. This walled-in area, guarded by fighters of the Thorwaler Hetman's Guard, is the site of many Thorwalian traders' warehouses. The Dragon Mile pales in comparison, though, to **Kontor Island (09)** near the outlet of the Ingval. This area belongs to the Horasian-Imperial Privileged Northsea Company, or HPNC. High brick walls and towers mounted with artillery guarantee the safety of the Horasians and their goods. Both areas are outside

Salta

- 01 Market Place
- 02 Town Hall
- 03 Market Hall
- 04 Northland Bank
- 05 Ferry
- 06 Count's Residence
- 07 Old Governor's Residence
- G01 Hotel "Golden Ingvall"
- G02 Tavern "The Dancing Sea Horse"
- G03 Tavern "The Trough"
- T01 Temple of Ingerimm
- T02 Temple of Hesinde
- T03 Temple of Tavia



- 08 Dragon Mile
- 09 kontor Island
- 10 Bragan Vaermhager (tattooist)
- 11 Lighthouse
- 12 Salt Fortress
- G04 Tavern "Great Whale"
- G05 Dive "Red Haler"
- T04 Temple of Efferd
- T05 Monastery of the Ancronics
- T06 Convent of the Draconites

Salterhaven



of Nostrian law, as Count Albio has granted absolute autonomy to Thorwalers and Horasians alike (and earns a nice sum on the side by doing so).

The town's focus is **Efferd Square**, with the splendid **Temple of Efferd (T04)** at its center. Even though Efferd is typically worshiped as first among the gods in coastal regions, the people of Salterhaven mainly adhere to the views of the Twelvegods faith. The altar dedicated to Saint Elida, patron saint of Salta and Salterhaven, is quite impressive and attracts pilgrims from many lands. The whale god Swafnir, worshiped mainly by Thorwalers, also has its own altar. Around the temple, several taverns serve food and drink to the many sailors and longshoremen. The neighborhood is a bit rough, but the prices are low. The tavern **Great Whale (G04)** (Q3/P3/B10) sits southwest of Efferd Square, while the dive **Red Haler (G05)** (Q1/P2/B8) is northeast. Nearby warehouses add to the atmosphere, marking this as a typical harbor town. Somewhat hidden in a side-alley is the workshop of the famous tattoo artist **Bragan Vaermhager (10)**, a talented half elf who creates tattoos of unique beauty and brilliance. Even Blessed Ones of Rondra travel here from all over Aventuria when they want to adorn their skin.

A **Light Tower (11)** watches over the mouth of the Ingval from the northern shore.

The queen's knights and men-at-arms reside a mile outside town in the **Salt Fortress (12)**, a small, shabby castle. They are here to remind the locals of their true leader, but this mission has met with little success so far.

On the road to Kendrar lies a **Monastery of the Anconites (T05)**, an order of healing mages. Its main building, which is connected to the Temple of Hesinde, was built in the Bosparanian style and is known for its impressive and beautiful architecture. The Anconites are skilled healers, but their services are expensive. The monastery also operates a tavern, the **Parlor of Wisdom (Q3/P3/B12)**, which is a favorite among scholars.

Further down the road, past some longhouses built in the Thorwalian style, sits the **Convent of the Draconites (T06)**. It is officially called the Arch-Hoard of the Westlands, but its inhabitants call it Vidagard. Its leader, Abbot **Fabius Toren**, is a talented botanist. The convent is believed to be haunted, and even Thorwalers avoid the area. Due to its quiet, secluded location, the facility is often used for secret negotiations between Count Albio and the Hetman of Kendrar.

Lakemeadows

The northernmost settlement of Nostria, Lakemeadows (**INH 350**) by Thuran Lake, was completely built on stilts due to the muddy ground. The place has been often besieged but rarely conquered because of the difficult terrain. Many inhabitants are peat-cutters who sell most of this coveted fuel to Andergast. Even though an important trade route, which connects Winhall with the Lord's Road, runs right past the place, the taciturn and eccentric Lakemeadowers prefer to stay among themselves. The town's only tavern sits directly on the road and not in the town itself.

A bit north of Lakemeadows, two small border fortresses, commonly referred to as the *Cantankerous Ones*, menace each other across the moor. Their grumpy garrisons thoroughly check each traveler before letting them walk on, and trade goods must be declared at arbitrary prices. A small extra fee speeds up the process and renders the search less thorough.

Often, the peat cutters find strange things in the moor: mummified bodies of various species, drowned buildings or strangely well-preserved items. The superstitious Lakemeadowers take most things back, only a few precious items are sold to the Nostrian mage's academy or the servants of the Nostrian royal family.

Teshkal, Town of Steppe Horses

"We stand watch for the people of the steppes. We know what we're doing. The orcs fear our horses, as they should. This misogynistic king in the south... I don't care for him at all."

—a Teshkaler steppe guard, 1038 FB

"They worship strange idols and breed exceptional horses, and you can always trust a Teshkahler's word."

—Geron Bladebreaker, mercenary, 1039 FB



Region: Andergast, Barony of Teshkalia

Population: 900

Ruler: Baroness Ossyra Redtree of Teshkal (the only female ruler in Andergast)

Temples: Rahja (Temple of the Divine Sky Horses), unified fortress temple of Rondra, Travia and Peraine; shrines to Orvai and Tairach

Trade and Commerce: Horse, cattle, and sheep breeding, agriculture

Special: Baronial Stud Farm for the Teshkaler horse breed
Atmosphere in the Town always ready to defend themselves, emphasizing the independence of the culture of the steppes; growing displeasure about the new Andergastan king's patronizing attitude

Teshkal is a town in which Andergastan women can prove themselves, and the steppes give them many chances to do so. Options include exploring the land, scouting out the orcs, learning to wield weapons, and studying the trade of horse breeding. As the only town in the Bladegrass Steppe, Teshkal often sees traders who have come far and seek shelter before their return journey. Surprisingly, there is little interfamily strife in town, but the old families (those from the steppes) are trying to shake off the yoke of the kings of Andergast.

Teshkal lies southeast of the Stone Oak Forest in the middle of the Bladegrass Steppe, far from the heart of Andergast. Some conservative knights doubt whether Teshkal is really part of the kingdom, partly because its customs differ so strongly from what is viewed as right and proper in Andergast, but mainly because the town and barony are ruled by a woman.

In general, women and men are considered equals in the steppe, a practice which hardened Andergastans often condemn as a filthy Nostrian custom. It is no wonder that Teshkal has gained its independence from the kingdom several times throughout the centuries.

The constant threat posed by orcs (and the orcs' pillaging of the area in 1010 FB) convinced the baroness to side with the Andergastan Crown once again. During the reign of King Efferdan, the relationship with the Crown seemed to relax, but since Wendelmir's coronation, Baroness Ossyra of Teshkal (see page 124) has been entertaining the idea of breaking with Andergast again, despite the danger. As royal stablemaster, she sits on the Council of Champions (as the Champion of Rahja) and therefore has access to the king. This influence allows her to maintain her barony's autonomy, so she has refrained from taking this drastic measure so far.

A Walk Around Town

The architecture of Teshkal is shaped by steppe tradition. Farmstead houses crowd around a central wooden tower, which houses the head of the family. The grass roofs of these all-clay buildings hang almost down to the ground. Round burial mounds often lie within these enclosures, too, and generations of inhabitants are buried there. Small palisades or fences surround each one of these family

castles, dividing Teshkal into countless parcels of land. The many orc attacks created the necessity of erecting an especially robust palisade of stakes around the town.

The town's spirit is exemplified by the **Baronial Motte (01)** on the hill. The building is surrounded by a moat and guarded day and night by an archer.

The wide enclosures of the **Baronial Stud Farm (02)** outside of town are visible for miles, and Teshkal is known mainly for its horse breeding (the horse breed being named after the town). This robust, shiny black draft horse is strong and untiring, which is why Andergastan knights are the breeders' primary customers. The baroness has final say as to which animals are allowed to mate, and she also sets the lowest sale price for the horses. Of course, she receives a portion of the proceeds, and her husband's grandmother is the most influential horse rancher in town. Ancient copies of the *Teshkaler Studbook* provide the oldest known evidence of planned horse-breeding in Aventuria.

A large **Horse Market (03)**, held each year during Ingerimm in the central square, draws many people from far and wide, and visitors shelter in a tavern called **The Bulwark (G01)** (Q4/P3/B20). The square also hosts a weekly market. Next to the square are a tavern called **Rahja's Honor (G02)** (Q5/P4/B12) and the proud **Temple of Sky Horses (T01)**, which is consecrated to Rahja. She is worshiped here as mother of Tharvun and Sulva, magnificent sky horses that fly through the air on huge wings. The locals believe that the stallion, Tharvun, rules the night, and the foam from his mouth after a long flight over the steppe is the source of morning dew. Sulva, it is said, brings the light of day.

The sky horses are both pursued by the Dragon of Yesterday, which seeks to swallow the world. To do this, it must first defeat the sky horses, but they always manage to escape. This chase is re-enacted by the priesthood each year on the summer solstice (the 1st of Praios), during which a chosen local circles the town twelve times in the temple chariot. Many horse and cart races accompany this celebration. In addition, the temple sponsors a wagon race from Lowangen or Joborn to Teshkal that runs from the end of Rahja to the 1st of Praios. Even though the race takes place during the Nameless Days, many people participate because it is seen as special test of faith.

The **Fortress Temple of Rondra, Travia, and Peraine (T02)** is protected by the Blessed Ones of Rondra, who also help defend the **Lowanger Gate (04)** and the **Andergaster Gate (05)** when orcs threaten the town. The head of the temple complex is a young, female Blessed One of Peraine who already has a reputation as an excellent animal healer.



Many travelers are surprised to find the **Shrines of Orvai (T03)** and **Tairach (T04)** in town. The statue of the hunting god Orvai, who is worshiped mainly by goblins, stands close to the central square under an ancient cedar pine. It depicts him as a strong man with antlers, and most strangers think it is a representation of Firun. The shrine of Tairach, the orcish death god, stands isolated by the wall and most inhabitants of the town avoid it. Nevertheless, some Teshkalers offer it fearful sacrifices in the hopes of being spared another orc attack.

Thurana 🌿

The largest town on the shore of Thurán Lake, where Hirm Creek meets the lake and the Nabla Way from Winhall meets the Lord's Road, is called **Thurana (INH 860)**. Two boat builders here, who each have their own wharf on the harbor, built almost every fishing boat on the lake. Fishing and growing flax are the town's other sources of income, and the resulting wealth is visible in the homes of Thurana. The town is composed of neat, whitewashed, half-timber houses, and a strong town wall protects the inhabitants from attacks.

Thuranx 🌿

Most inhabitants of the village of **Thuranx (INH 300)**, located by Thurán Lake, survive on fishing and agriculture. During the last major war between the Warring Kingdoms in 1010 FB, the village was almost completely burned down, and charred ruins still stand here and there in town.

Trontsand 🐟

Trontsand (EW 750), a large fishing town by the Coastal Road, is the seat of the Sea Count of Sevenwind. Trontsand became important because here the ocean is deep enough for ships with normal draft can enter the harbor without grounding on the mudflats during low tide. Even though the Coastal Road is a popular route in bad weather for traders, the natural harbor facilitates trade and allows fishing for saltarels with heavy trawlers.

The robust and heavy Trontsand cloth, created by weavers and dyed in many colors by wool dyers, is sold to many foreign countries. The town is replacing the old wooden palisade with a heavy wall of stone because the Thorwalers have tried to attack and plunder the town several times.

The harbor and oceanfront sections are already finished, but completion of the landward fortifications won't be completed for several years.

Vardall

Vardall (INH 420) is a small settlement on the Ingval. The Sâl Way runs past its gates. The settlement, which is protected by a robust palisade and a moat, often faces attacks by Andergastans, orcs, and wild animals from the forest. Unfortunately the moat is a breeding ground for many buzzing, stinging, and biting insects, which plague the town in summer and autumn.

Varnyth

Varnyth (INH 350) lies at the borders of the Lakeland. In its center is a dead Boron willow called Old Rysvik. For centuries, the tree was the home of a dryad named Varnyth, for whom the town was named. She is honored for offering protection to the first settlers.

When the ancient tree withered and died despite all attempts to save it, the dryad is said to have left her ancestral home and relocated to the Farindel Forest. People here worship Varnyth at Old Rysvik, as a goddess of

the forest. They hope that she will one day visit the willow and bless them.

Townfolk also worship Rahja and Satuarua together, and hold exuberant festivals in honor of both goddesses on the days before the solstices and the equinoxes.

Yoledam

Until 1027 FB, the largest Boron temple of Nostria sat on a hill in **Yoledamm (INH 400)**, a simple fishing village. Then the sanctum was plundered and burned down by pirates from Thorwal. Today the wind blows mournfully through the ruins of this temple on the coast. It is said that the "Golden Ghoul," as the inhabitants called the leader of the Northerners, drowned when the god sank his ship for this blasphemy. During the attack, the village lost its library, which contained many records of Nostria's history. All that survived was the mighty basalt plate in the sanctum, upon which was carved the names of the most important heroes since the time of settlement. Year after year, in the month of Boron, young men and women gather here to choose from their ranks a namekeeper for the following year. This namekeeper has the honored, and sometimes dangerous, task to maintain and protect the ruins and the plate from all threats.

Elderdonk: A Typical Village in the Forest Wilderness

Even though control of Elderdonk switches often between Nostria and Andergast, as it sits on the border of the Warring Kingdoms, its description does not change. To create the appropriate Andergastan or Nostrian feeling, the GM need only choose the appropriate NPCs from the descriptions for the taverns **The White Sow (G01)** and the **Herb Hut (09)** (see the GM text boxes in those entries). GMs should familiarize themselves with both taverns, as almost every character listed there can appear, with slight changes, in Elderdonk.

"The trouble all started when a broken-hearted knight named Elderieth drowned in the water. Since then, everything has changed, and we have become a plaything of kings and their vassals."

—An inhabitant of Elderdonk, modern

Elderdonk sits near the Ornib, on a swampy and tree-covered plain next to a small lake that serves as the village pond and a source of fresh fish. A small, forested island rises from the lake, but the suspicious inhabitants avoid it, as it is thought to be cursed by fairies or haunted by ghosts. Townfolk often claim that a nymph lives in the lake, and that her sad songs can lure the unwary to a watery grave.

Region: Forest Wilderness (border region near the Ornib)

Population: about 100

Ruler: Village Mayor Jindrich Applebrandter (Andergast)/Village Mayor Helasine Visserad (Nostria)

Temples: shrines to Firun and Travia

Trade and Commerce: Blacksmith, carpenter, cabinetmaker

Atmosphere in the Village: People are accustomed to the Forest Wilderness and have a steady income, though none can be called wealthy. Elderdonk has often been the scene of battles between Nostrians and Andergastans because it hasn't had a noble landholder in centuries. Knights and barons from surrounding lands often lay claim to the village.

The inhabitants know many myths and legends about the Forest Wilderness, especially ones concerning the Lone Wanderer (see page 25). Many elderberries grow in the area, which is where the village got its name. The lake is home to a lonely nymph named Isayala whose mournful singing lures young men to a watery grave at dawn. Many have drowned in the water while seeking this elusive maid.

• **Andergast:**
The village mayor Helasine Visserad is the innkeeper (see page 55).

Nostria:
The village mayor Jindrich Applebrandter is the innkeeper (see page 56).

The village itself is surrounded by a protective wall of earth crowned by a palisade. Two gate towers of massive wooden beams open on a path leading to the village square.

Travelers enter Elderdonk through the ground floor of two gate towers with double oak doors. On those rare occasions when a feud or an enemy force threatens violence, a bailiff or other inhabitant of the first floor keeps watch at the gate and controls who may enter.

On the village green, where one almost always sees pigs rooting around, is the village's only tavern, The White Sow, as proclaimed by a sign featuring a white boar above the entrance. The other buildings are almost all built of wood and stand in small, random groups within the palisade. Almost all have small gardens of fruit trees and vegetable patches surrounded by a short hedge.

Important Locations

Village Green (01)

The village green is dominated by a mighty stone oak tree surrounded by four dark stone blocks, each about 8 feet tall. In their midst is the shrine of Firun, where a human-sized wooden statue depicts the god of winter and the hunt as a powerful man with antlers and wrapped in a bearskin cloak.

○ The White Sow (G01)*

Prices and Services

Mug of oak beer.....	16 kreutzers
Mug of water.....	6 kreutzers
Cup of wine.....	3 halers
Small cup of apple brandy.....	2 halers
Rye groats.....	1 haler
Rosprik (vegetable stew).....	3 halers
Pork roast.....	7 halers
Roast goose.....	7 halers
Fish stew.....	6 halers
Bread plate.....	5 halers
Straw mattress in the dormitory.....	6 halers
Single room.....	3 silverhalers

This tavern, a half timber house with two floors, is the largest building in the village. Its taproom is large and comfortable, and Elderdonk's small shrine to Travia sits above the fireplace, where often whole pigs are roasted. A richly decorated, carved figurine depicts Travia as the Lady of Hospitality, whose warm light invites travelers to the hearth.

The dormitory on the upper floor has space for up to 12 guests on simple straw mattresses. The tavern even has two single rooms, but they don't meet a Middenrealm noble's expectations of luxury.

Most inhabitants of the village gather here in the evening to spend what free time they have playing tavern games and drinking beer of reasonable quality.

Village Hall (02)

Also at the village green, there is the village hall, not much more than a fireplace and a roof supported by eight, strong, finely carved wooden pillars. The pillars bear a weird depiction of the Twelvegods and other mythical creatures influencing the lives of the inhabitants of the Forest Wilderness. The village hall is the gathering place of the village and the spot where traveling merchants can sell their goods.

Elderdonk hosts a small market once a month that serves as the villagers' main source of income.

Yeoman Oxbrecht (03)

The large Oxbrecht family, which cultivates most of the fields just outside the palisade, lives on the largest farm in Elderdonk. Many yeomen and serfs work on these fields and seem to be content. Even though the family patriarch, **♁ Niobald** (*985 FB; 6'; thick gray hair; weathered and choleric) has a reputation for being a difficult man, he makes sure that all who depend on him have a reasonable livelihood.

Pig Farmer Onderbruk (04)

The Onderbruk family certainly is among the wealthiest in Elderdonk. Free-roaming pigs can be seen everywhere, begging for food when not herded into the forest to feast on acorns. Though they are seen as a rough and tumble lot, the swineherds of the Onderbruks are well-liked guests who often spend their coin in the White Sow.

Villagers whisper behind closed doors that those who annoy the Onderbruks or don't accept their terms end up as pig food. Folks are advised to avoid crossing **♁ Old Jasse** (*976 FB; 5'6"; white hair; bent by gout; scrawny; silent and calculating), the head of the family.



- Elderdonk, a village in the Forest Wilderness**
- 01 Village Green
 - 02 Village Hall
 - 03 Yeoman Oxbrecht
 - 04 Pig Farmer Onderbruk
 - 05 Forge
 - 06 Woodworker and Wood Storage
 - 07 Fisher
 - 08 Fruit Grove
 - 09 Herb Hut
 - 10 Elderieth Island
 - 11 Boron Yard
- G01 "The White Sow" (tavern)

Forge (05)

The forge sits close to the lake, partly to lessen the risk of fire but mainly for the ease of access to clay from the ground, which is used for building ovens and for certain hardening processes during the forging process. Elderdonk's blacksmiths do not produce masterworks weapons, but they can repair nearly anything. They are considered excellent makers of arrow tips.

Woodworker and Wood Storage (06)

The Haubeiler family built most of the houses in the village. **Bogumil** (*987 FB; 5'8"; bald; strong and stout, with nimble fingers and clear eyes; thoughtful craftworker), the oldest and most experienced of Elderdonk's carpenters, is known throughout the river valley for his excellent carvings.

Fisher (07)

The Islavia family has been catching fish in the lake for generations, and know of a hidden fish outlet used by woodcutters to bring their trunks to the Ornib and thus to towns by the river. Serving as guides on the lake brings

in a nice additional income for them, but they have a reputation for being friendly with nymphs, which raises some suspicion. It is said that their daughters' singing skill and exceptional good looks are due to some nymph blood in their veins.

The family sacrifices a silver coin in the ruins of Elderieth Island each year to appease the spirits of the lake.

Fruit Grove (08)

This open grove boasts almost a dozen apple trees. The innkeeper makes an excellent apple brandy from the harvest. A loud flock of geese can often be found here.

Herb Hut (09)

The people of Elderdonk often visit this plain and somewhat crooked hut, seeking advice and assistance. Next to the hut,

◆ **Andergast:**
The sume Ludewich lives here (see page 56).
Nostria:
The witch Iringrath lives here (see page 55).



Isayala the Nymph

The nymph always appears as a supernaturally beautiful, ageless woman. Ever since the baron of Elderieth enslaved her, she bears a wound that wraps around her neck like an algae-encrusted torus. She also is called the Lonely, because other fairy creatures avoid her. She directs her anger at all those who live on land, and she often tries to lure the young men of Elderdonk into the depths of the lake, where she can take them through the gate to her home....

Nymph

Size: 5 to 7 feet tall

Weight: 80 to 130 pounds

COU 13 SGC 13 INT 15 CHA 16

DEX 14 AGI 13 CON 11 STR 11

LP 24 AE 100 KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 7 SPI 4 TOU 0 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 8 PA 5 DP 1D6 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Good Looks II, Aquatic*

Special Abilities: Underwater Combat

Skills: *Body Control* 12 (13/13/11), *Climbing* 4 (13/13/11), *Commerce* 2 (13/15/16), *Empathy* 3 (13/15/16), *Fast-Talk* 7 (13/15/16), *Feat of Strength* 3 (11/11/11), *Intimidation* 4 (13/15/16), *Perception* 7 (13/15/15), *Seduction* 15 (13/16/16), *Self-Control* 3 (13/13/11), *Swimming* 14 (13/11/11), *Stealth* 10 (13/15/13), *Willpower* 6 (13/15/16)

Spells: *Bannbaladin* 15 (13/15/16), *Breathe Water* 18 (13/15/11), *Salander* 14 (13/15/11), *Satuarial's Splendor* 16 (13/15/11), others from Tradition (Fairy)

Number: 1

Size Category: medium

Type: Fairy, humanoid

Loot: none

Combat Behavior: Nymphs try to avoid combat. They prefer to flee or use their magic powers to counter threats.

Escape: per individual

Sphere Lore (Creatures of the Spheres)

- **QL 1:** Nymphs are fairy creatures that live in lakes, rivers, or other bodies of water. They try to seduce humans and take them to the fairy world.
- **QL 2:** Not all nymphs try to seduce people, but their beauty tends to drive men mad.
- **QL 3+:** Nymphs live near a fairy gate, to which they lead men they seduce. Such men do not return for years or centuries, if ever.

Special Rules

Life Bond: Nymphs lose 1 LP for each day they spend in Aventuria. Nymphs cannot regain LP with Regeneration Phases as long as they remain in the Third Sphere.

Pain +1 at: 18 LP, 12 LP, 6 LP, and 5 LP or less

About Fairies

Fairies come from regions known as Globules, unique enclosed environments that drift through Limbo. These magical creatures usually visit Dere through fairy gates, which is why they have corporeal bodies here. Fairies use the following rules.

- Fairies suffer conditions in the usual way
- Fairies suffer levels of the condition *Pain* for low LP (see *Core Rules*, page 34)
- Fairies exist physically on Dere and can be injured in the usual ways
- Slain fairies leave a corpse behind. In some cases, the fairy's soul returns to its Globule to be resurrected. A fairy's death can create strange and sometimes dangerous magical phenomena, as their bodies and minds are infused with magic.
- Attacks with mundane, blessed, and magical weapons cause regular damage
- Attacks with spells and liturgical chants can have a stronger or weaker effect than usual
- Fairies are immune to spells with the property of Illusion, as they can always see the magical nature of things
- Fairies are immune to poisons and diseases
- Fairies usually do not benefit from liturgical chants, but there are some exceptions
- Fairies benefit from Regeneration Phases in the normal way. In their fairy realm, they regenerate much quicker (about 5D6 LP per Regeneration Phase).

Aquatic (*)

Creatures from water habitats are accustomed to their surroundings. They move better in water than land creatures are able to.

Rules: Creatures with this advantage receive the automatic special ability Underwater Combat (the cost for the SA is included in this advantage). Aquatic creatures can breathe water and move through water with ease. They do not have to make checks to avoid drowning.

Prerequisites: Race, culture, or profession must list Aquatic as an automatic or suggested advantage.

AP Value: 15 adventure points

an impressive herb garden grows beneath a mighty elm tree. The village children claim that this tree sometimes takes a swipe at them. They are not lying, as the tree is actually a marwold (see page 99), a tree inhabited by a spirit. It sometimes becomes boisterous, and it defends the hut and herb garden from intruders.

Elderieth Island (10)

The proud motte Elderieth has stood for centuries on the island. People still say that the ghosts of the fallen from a large battle still haunt the place. This story has a kernel of truth: centuries ago, the baron of Elderieth made a deal with dark powers to bend the power of the fairy Isayala to his will. He was an extremely jealous husband who kept his wife locked in the highest tower of the fortress whenever he rode out.

The neighboring nobles envied the baron's newfound power, which is said to have granted him eternal youth. In the end, several knights joined forces, came to the island and slew the baron and his men-at-arms, who fought to the death. They found his starving wife in her bower, the whole room covered with strange symbols drawn in blood. Free from her chains, the nymph Isayala demanded an annual sacrifice in exchange for not punishing the people of Elderdonk for the injustice she had suffered. The knights burned down the motte and left behind a man-at-arms who was a local to oversee the sacrifice. As the nymph didn't seem to want to kill him, he settled in Elderdonk. He lived by fishing and founded the Slavvia family. It is said that he spent several years in the otherworld with the nymph, but nobody knows if this is true. The ghost of the baroness of Elderieth is said to haunt the isle to this day, seeking revenge against the living. Some villagers think that dark, arcane secrets of the baron still wait to be found in the ruins, but nobody has found anything yet.

Boron Yard (11)

Since Elderdonk was the location of several battles, a large Boron yard sits on the north side of the palisade. A tall weeping willow marks the entrance, and a large stone plate carved with a raven marks the site as a place of calm.

Important NPCs (Nostria)

Village Mayor Helasine Visserad ♀

Helasine is the innkeep for the White Sow and, as an acolyte of the goddess, tends to the shrine of Travia in the tavern. The stout, chubby-cheeked, well-respected innkeeper cares for the village community. Her apple brandy is popular throughout the region. The people of Elderdonk have learned to like her flock of geese, and not only because the White Sow often has roast goose on the

menu. These birds, which spend most of their time in the fruit grove, are excellent guard animals that have prevented quite a number of attacks.

Helasine tries to be friendly to everybody and gets angry only when someone disturbs the many wild geese that visit the lake in winter. She is especially proud of her youngest daughter ♀ *Franja*,

a 16; blond; brown eyes; tomboy; rarely without her snake), who manifested Mada's Gift and now studies with Iringath, the daughter of Satuarria, in the herb hut. Her oldest son, ♀ *Jaromir* (22; brown hair; a bit chubby; very quiet), who assists Helasine in the tavern and will most likely inherit the establishment one day.



Helasine Visserad (mid 50s; 5'9"; brown braids; brown eyes; good-natured and open; *Commerce* 6 (12/12/13), *Prepare Food* 9 (12/13/13), *Plant Lore* 6 (12/13/13), *Fast-Talk* 6 (12/12/13), *Willpower* 4 (12/12/13); SPI 1)

Iringath, Daughter of Satuarria ♀

Iringath is so old that most people in Elderdonk have called her "the old woman" since they were children. This quirky serpent witch likes to giggle, is well versed in herbs, and always carries her familiar, an adder named Gray-Head, with her in a padded basket.

She brews many potions and tinctures, which even attract strangers seeking to buy them. Just as well known are the strange things Iringath sometimes requests for payment. She is said to own



a large collection of hairclips. Many villagers believe that she is a chosen one of the Crowned Stag King. It is a fact that a set of 14-point stag's antlers hangs above her door.


slender; beautiful) as he hasn't found the right husband for her yet. Rusena is brave and highly skilled with the longbow.

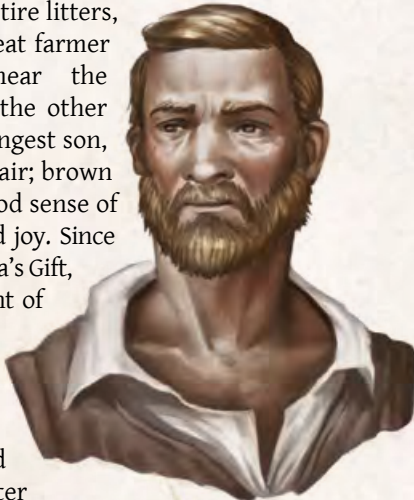
Iringrath (84; 5'5"; white hair; green eyes; slender and agile; curious; *Alchemy* 10 (14/14/13), *Fast-Talk* 3 (14/14/15), *Magical Lore* 8 (14/14/14), *Plant Lore* 7 (14/13/12), *Treat Disease* 8 (14/14/12), *Treat Wounds* 7 (14/13/13), *Willpower* 6 (14/14/15); *Balsam* 6 (14/14/13), *Powerful Greed* 8 (14/14/15), *Witch's Bile* 7 (14/14/12); SPI 2))

Jindrich Applebrandter (57 years; 6'2"; neat, dark-blond hair and beard; brown eyes; tall and energetic; *Animal Lore* 9 (12/12/13), *Commerce* 6 (12/12/13), *Fast-Talk* 6 (12/12/13), *Plant Lore* 6 (12/13/13), *Willpower* 4 (12/12/13); SPI 1)


Important NPCs (Andergast)

Village Mayor Jindrich Applebrandter

Jindrich is the wealthiest farmer in the village and a man who likes to tackle problems head-on. He despises people that sit around all day or waste their time with things that are of no use to the community. Jindrich's hobbies include raising horse and training dogs, which he sells as hunting or guard animals, and many roam around the village. His animals are so prized that many nobles from the region buy entire litters, and as a result, the great farmer enjoys something near the respect of a noble in the other villagers' eyes. His youngest son,  **Holmar** (16; brown hair; brown eyes; good natured; good sense of humor) is his pride and joy. Since Holmar manifested Mada's Gift, he has become a student of the sume, Ludewich, and now lives near the herb garden.

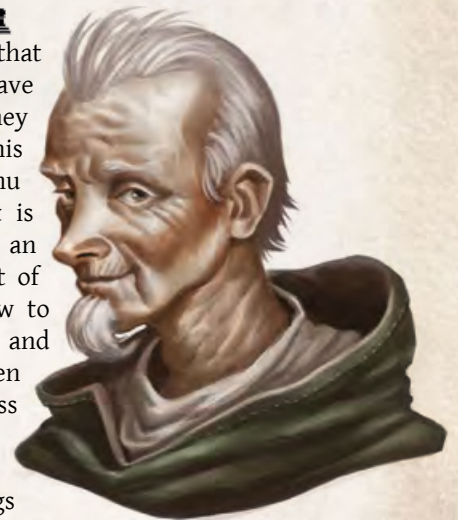


He is a bit worried about his oldest daughter

 **Rusena** (22; blond hair; brown eyes;

Ludewich the Sume

Ludewich is so old that most villagers have known him since they were children. This quirky servant of Sumu keeps to himself but is kindhearted. He is an expert on the subject of herbs and knows how to brew many potions and tinctures, which even attract the business of strangers. He is just as well known for the unusual things he sometimes requests as payment. For instance, he might ask for an insect collection comprised entirely of head lice. He is rumored to have met the Aurochs King.



Ludewich (84; 5'5"; white hair; green eyes; slender; agile, curious; *Alchemy* 10 (14/15/13), *Fast-Talk* 3 (14/14/14), *Magical Lore* 8 (15/15/14), *Plant Lore* 7 (15/13/12), *Treat Disease* 8 (14/14/12), *Treat Wounds* 7 (15/13/13), *Willpower* 6 (14/14/14); *Breathlessness* 7 (15/14/12), *Identify Pestilence* 6 (14/15/14), *Sumu's Elixirs* 8 (15/14/14); SPI 2)

Chapter 3: Culture and Science



“Finding the Warring Kingdoms is easy; just follow the rumors of secrets and treasures. Warriors are always welcome because war, destruction and contempt have ruled the day for ages. What I cannot quite understand is the supposed difference between the Warring Kingdoms, that is, where they differ as much as they claim. Sure, women in Nostria enjoy the same rights as anywhere else, except perhaps among the Novadi, that is. And yes, this is certainly different in Andergast, where people think that men are naturally superior to women, which is why women are excluded from public life, at least where fighting and ruling are concerned. But I cannot see where Nostria and Andergast differ otherwise, as their views on traditional values are so similar. Both sides are just as backwards, and neither accepts the innovations the gods gave us. Both kingdoms worship nature spirits and weird idols, and seek advice from spellcasters who follow Sumu or her daughter, Satuaria.

Even their enmity towards each other, instilled in Nostrians and Andergastans from birth, seems to unite them. The Animal Kings of the impenetrable Forest Wilderness, the fluid border between Andergast and Nostria, are said to be enemies, but I would have to ask an expert in animal lore whether normal crowned stags and aurochs hate each other. The longer I stay here, the more I believe in the legendary root of their hatred, which people only mention in whispers. However, as a foreigner, I should not interfere. As long as you haven't sworn allegiance to an enemy king or queen, you won't have too many problems, even if you're female. Avoid stating a position, whether good or bad, or you will face insults... or much worse.” (🐉 175)

—Excerpt from the *Book of the Serpent*, by Irian Nandurion of Abilacht, Blessed One of Hesinde, 1037 FB



Customs and Traditions

“Miserable, stubborn idiots who cannot accept a single idea they have not had themselves. There’s a difference between tradition and stupidity, but nobody here knows it. No wonder they are so backwards! Still, their stubbornness is very impressive, I must admit...”

—Arbosh son of Angrax, forge dwarf master smith



The humans of Nostria and Andergast are the descendants of settlers from the Bosparanian Empire. They have kept little of this heritage alive, though, as they cut their ties to the old capitol around 2,000 years ago. This, among other reasons, is why their cultures developed quite differently from those in the Horasian Empire or the Middenrealm. Yes, some things are the same. Men (and women, in Nostria) gain adult legal status at the age of 21. In Nostria, wedded couples adopt the name of the more influential family. In Andergast (a strictly patriarchal land), married couples always adopt the groom’s family name.

The culture is still mainly influenced by the eternal enmity between the two kingdoms, which began shortly after they were founded and hasn’t ended yet. Even at places where people have forged strong trade ties between the two countries, they continue to be shaped by deep suspicions, prejudice, and hatred. Countless wars and battles have bled both realms dry, making them one of the poorest regions on the continent. But this strife is an important part of their identity, and even when people have grown tired of war, it never takes long for the war to ignite anew.

Constant war has pounded fatalism into the Nostrian and Andergastan mindset. On the other hand, they have both learned to make the best out of a bad situation. They remain hopeful even when faced by evil twists of fate, and they always pick themselves up again. With good reason, the inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms have a reputation for producing surprising results with inferior tools and bad materials in their everyday lives.

It should also be mentioned that many inhabitants of these lands are not strongly initiated into the faith of the Twelvegods. The Twelvegods Edict of Silem-Horas wasn’t recognized in Andergast or Nostria, and many older forms of worship have survived, even those that have been eliminated in other countries. Even though the faith of the Twelvegods has earned much respect in the last twenty years, it is rarely encountered outside of towns. Nobles and commoners alike have always honored the practices of sumes (druids) and witches, especially in rural areas, and their beliefs and traditions concerning birth and death are exceptionally primitive. Wise men and women of the forest, and those who read the tides, perform blessings more often than true Blessed Ones. Instead of handing the dead to Boron’s blessed soil or the purifying power of fire, the dead are usually buried beneath the roots of old trees or given to the sea.

Near the Nostrian coast and in the Lakeland, Efferd is viewed as an especially powerful god who has little love for humans. Here, people see life as an everlasting struggle against the trials of wind and weather, and appeasing the moody god of water, his followers, and the ancestor spirits,



is considered all-important. In Andergast, people mainly petition druids, or sumes, as locals call them, to bring the blessing of the spirits of the forest and the mighty earth mother, Sumu.

People offer sacrifices to the Supernatural on small altars, to ask for their benevolence or protection. These powerful creatures are not always gods, and often are creatures of the river, lake, or forest. Many fairies, dryads, nymphs, and treants receive a great worship.

People in Andergast, mainly, believe that sacrifices must be made to the land itself. Sometimes this is a simple as pouring out a sip of beer, and sometimes villages decided that one of the locals must die for the land every few decades. Such customs appear strange or downright criminal to foreigners, but an even weirder practice is the blending of the Twelvegod faith with local nature religions (a practice called syncretism) or the inclusion of completely foreign cults. For example, people here fear the orcish death god, Tairach, whom they call the Dark Man, since they believe he can take anybody during the night. What appears at first to be a shrine to Firun might once have been a holy site dedicated to the goblin's god of the hunt, Kurim, a being the goblins ceased worshipping centuries ago.

People in Nostria and Andergast are not only shaped by their eternal strife and the everlasting struggle against the forces of nature, but also by their strong sense of community. The village community is cherished for its vital contributions to survival. Anyone who remains outside of such a group, whether willingly or no, is treated with suspicion. This is also true for traveling merchants, trappers, and charcoal burners, who are seen as shifty and unreliable or even suspected of hiding dark ambitions. In

contrast, the sumes, who voluntarily remove themselves to the isolation of the wilderness, enjoy fearful respect in Andergast. In Nostria, the Daughters of Satuarua enjoy the same respect, and under similar circumstances, as they like to keep to themselves, as well. "If you go out into the world to seek adventure, it's because you either don't have enough to do, or you are not quite right in the head, or you are suffering from an evil spell." At least, that's what people here think.

This suspicion towards strangers also leads to a resistance to change and new things, and this stubbornness is a part of peoples' nature. They have often heard empty promises that brought few if any changes to their way of life, and have rarely seen any true improvements. The last Andergastan king, Efferdan I, a Horasian by birth, had to learn this painful lesson the hard way.

Efferdan I fought to introduce many reforms that were doubted or refused by the people and openly hindered by the nobles from the outset. His successor, Wendelmir, suspended many of these decisions, earning the people's grudging respect for the first time, which is why they tolerate his somewhat harsh policies. The Nostrian queen Yolande has proven more skillful thus far. She seems capable of soothing the people's anxieties and gently leads them to new ideas by introducing subtle changes. But she must also fight the conservative voices in the land who envy her rule and influence and wish to see her put in her place.

The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms are keenly aware that other lands view them as backwards and primitive, but they stay true to themselves and face this derision with all the disbelief, obstinance, and defiance they can muster.

Languages and Writing Systems

"They call this a language? No sane person could read this miserable scribbling with its obscure jargon. And I know more than five languages and at least eight scripts. It's maddening!"

—Nacladora Berlinghan, Blessed One of Hesinde Draconite, modern



The language commonly used in the Warring Kingdoms is similar to Garethi. But as happened in many remote areas of the former Bosparanian Empire, the language changed over the years and now bears little resemblance to the scholarly High Garethi. Numerous dialects abound, and

the locals become increasingly difficult to understand the further one gets from the major trade routes.

A great deal of Thorwalian jargon has entered the language on the Nostrian coast, near the border with Thorwal. To the south, the Albernian influence is obvious; and, in the northern forests and steppes to the east, one can hear sounds that harken back to the orcish Ologhaijan tongue. In some backward villages, scholars stumble across words that stem from Bosparano and seem to have survived the ages with few changes. The courtly tongue of Nostria still uses many Bosparanian words, which make it sound pretentious and stilted.

The dialect near the coast is softer and easily understood by foreigners, but inland dialects use many more consonants and people tend to swallow syllables, shorten words, and use only short and simple sentences. In Teshkalia, the language is strangely throaty, something that is often explained by the proximity to the orcs. This reminds linguists of the Norbards' Alaani, which may explain the Teshkalers' tendency to use flowery and imaginative curses and insults. This is commonplace among Norbards and Tulamidyans.

"Weird folk! Instead of gods, they always speak of the Supernatural, and they even use that term for Satuarua or the forest spirits. As if mere mention of the name "Efferd" would bring bad luck..."

—Rovena, Bornian cat witch



Few people in the Warring Kingdoms can read at all. Neither nobles nor the commonfolk are overly interested in Hesinde's virtues, making scribes and readers their own professions. They are more common in larger towns. As there are few schools and Praiosday schools in Andergast are forbidden to teach girls, the majority of the population has never been able to read even the simplest sentences. Those that can read and write are considered scholars or perhaps as *chosen* by the Supernatural. Some sumes, witches, and priests make use of that fact to gain respect. That is, if they can read and write themselves.

Appellations

The deference and fatalism of the population is reflected by the appellations they use for nobles, priests, and other officials. Rulers of the land are always called "royal majesty." Barons and bombasts are called "ethelborn." Knights and other nobles are called "highborn." Priests enjoy the appellation "your grace." Sumes and witches are sometimes called "father," "mother," "brother," or "sister," depending on their preferences. The common greeting usually includes the name of the ruler. The phrases "the King's grace!" or "the Queen's blessing!" are very popular at the moment. The names of the Twelvegods are rarely mentioned; more often, people pray to the vague "supernatural."

What's In a Name?

Rural common folk do not have last names. Everybody has a first name. If more differentiation is needed, just add place of birth or profession, as in Gerswide of Ladewich, or Havel the charcoal-burner. Sometimes nicknames become part of a name without regard to preferences or the family's reservations.

Most people in towns adopt a last name that is usually derived from a nickname or profession (Holda the Baker, Gunar the Rafter), but this is not passed on to children. Only families with important ancestors (whether proven or not) have an inheritable family name. Often such people claim descent from the allies of Admiral Sanin, who explored the land more than 2,000 years ago.

Nostrian Names

Nostrians prefer giving their children long and complicated names that they often shorten for everyday use, like Adarilanda shortening to Ada, or Haldorion becoming Rion.

Male First Names

Short Form: Basilio, Bosper, Cargo, Dolfer, Esindio(n), Ettl, Franio, Gero, Halvo, Jasper, Melcher, Murro, Pipo, Polter, Ukko, Yeto

Possible Combinations: Ab(la)-, Al(rik)-, Anda-, An(s)-, Arn-, Belen(o)-, Bla-, Bos-, Cordo-, Dro(de)-, El-, Ferd(i)-, Fren(g)-, Frin(g)-, Gaspa-, Haldo-, Ingva-, Kar-, Kas(i)-, Kaspar-, Linn(e)-, Mo-, Nio-, Ora(s)-, Orni-, Per-, P(e)rain-, Rig-, Rod(e)-, Rud(e)-, Salvy-, Saper-, To-, Tomme-, Travi-, Urfa-, Valto-, Wald- // -bald-, -bian-, -bio(n)-, -eryn-, -finion-, -fold-, -gar-, -grimm-, -las-, -lian-, -lion-, -mir(yn)-, -mo-, -myr(d)in-, -no-, -r(i)an-, -ri(c)k-, -rigion-, -r(i)on-, -ryn-, -silas-, -sion-, -sius-, -tyn-, -val-, -van-, -vert-, -win

Female First Names

Short Form: Ala, Brea, Dina, Elle, Frada, Girte, Hetta, Idra, Linai, Lynia, Mona, Ovine, Pea, Selma, Zanya

Possible Combinations: Ada(ri)-, Al(g)-, Amen-, Ala(ra)-, Ara-, Asmo-, Bal-, Bele(na)-, Brin-, Caris-, Dali(d)-, Delu-, Effer(d)-, Eli-, Elys-, Finn-, Firu-, Fran(i)-, Ger(t)-, Gir-, Gyl(t)-, Hara-, Hela-, Ingva-, Isla-, Jels-, Jo-, Kas(my)-, Lys-, Mar-, Mis(a)-, Nora-, Nos(tri)-, Nuri-, Pera(n)-, Ro-, Nori-, Sel-, Sene(bi)-, Thala-, Tomme-, Travi(e)-, Tr(i)um-, Urme-, Wili-, Yan(n)-, Yas-, Yn- // -ai-, -ane-, -bet(h)-, -da-, -dette-, -dis-, -fine-, -ike-, -je-, -lais-, -landa-, -lant(h)a-, -leth(a)-, -lia(n)e-, -linde-, -lind(i)a-, -lin(k)e-, -loth-, -ke-, -mai-, -mina-, -mine-, -nai(a)-, -nia-, -nette-, -nke-, -pet(h)-, -ra(i)-, -rike-, -s(i)a-, -sine-, -sin(e)-, -thea-, -tje-, -tris-, -vi(n)a

Example Family Names

Damme, Dieckman, Fangiron, Ingvaler, Kirshner, Koyner, Linenweaver, Marshpadder, Nietendeeler, Notfink, Oskin, Pernstyn, Styper, Theuermeel, Turner, Viskoppen, Visserad

Possible Combinations: Breach-, Bram-, Darb-, Deick-, Elg(e)-, Gar(s)-, Hugen-, Köpen-, Krennel-, Lieken-, Riet-, Rik-, Try-, Wilm- // -dam-, -hard-, -hold-, -hork-, -husen-, -inger-, -ming(er)-, -moler-, -ryn-, -siek-, -stek-, -vard-, -vind-, -wind

Andergastan Names

Andergastans prefer old-fashioned names, especially names inherited from an ancestor. They use shortened forms to differentiate between overly long names or between living family members with the same name.

Male First Names

Short Form: Alf, Brin, Cord, Detter, Dolf, Firunz, Fran, Gilm, Gwinnling, Havel, Holk, Jarl, Kalle, Menzl, Niffl, Ogo, Rickl, Seff(e)l, Trauto, Ulf, Wenzl

Possible Combinations: Adal-, Al-, An(d)-, Ar(g)-, Arn-, Bar(n)-, Bartis-, Bear-, Bins-, Bir(n)-, Biro-, Blat-, Blathis-, Bogu-, Bork-, Boro-, De-, Die(t)-, Edel-, El-, Emmer-, Earl-, Firn-, Firunis-, Gas-, Ger-, Gilm-, Gis-, Gost-, Grove-, Hart-, Hol-, Hos-, Jago(s)-, Jin(d)-, Jo-, Kru-, Ladis-, Leave-, Lude-, Mar-, Mis-, Oak-, Od(e)-, Odo-, Ol-, Olde-, Oldi-, Os-, Owl-, Se-, Stanis-, Stein(is)-, Sumu-, Tro-, Uhl-, Ul(l)-, Uri-, Urich(s)-, Wende(l)-, Wendo-, Wenge-, Wenze(s)-, Yarus- // -bald, -beard, -bert, -bold, -bolff, -brand, -brecht, -erich, -fing, -fr(i)ed, -gar, -gor, -gos, -ganz, -grimm, -grove, -hard, -helm, -laus, -lin, -lyn, -man, -mar, -mil, -mislaus, -pert, -pold, -ran, -rat, -r(a)us, -rich, -rik, -ring, -ruk, -sold, -ward, -wine, -wich, -wulf

Female First Names

Short Form: Albi, Andra, Bari, Birsell, Core, Eigi, Fira, Gine, Gund(e)l, Hala, Hilda, Hilde, Ilme, Kari, Kosha, Larja, Lina, Mi(n)a, Nia, Pia, Renzi, Rosi, Stine, Traute, Vera

Possible Combinations: Adal-, Al-, A(r)n-, Doro-, Erd-, Earl-, Erm-, Far(n)-, Ger(s)-, Had-, Hild-, Hildi-, Hilm-, Hold-, Ifir(n)-, Ilda-, Immen-, In-, Inge-, Irmen-, Lud-, Kun-,

Mirn-, Ro(t)-, Ru-, Sil-, Sumu-, Trave-, Travi-, Va-, Wal(d)-, Wende- // -ana, -ane, -dela, -eria, -gard(a), -gart, -gret(e), -gund(e), -hild(e), -huta, -lieb, -lind(e), -line, -mila, -mine, -neld(a), -purga, -rada, -rella, -rena, -ria, -rike, -sena, -seni, -ta, -traud(e), -traut, -trud(e), -vana, -wena, -wid(e), -wiga, -wige, -wind(e)

Examples for Family Names: Bagger, Bodiak, Crutch, Dreub(n)er, Ewer, Fassbender, Funnel, Hatcheter, Joborner, Karden, Mildflock, Oakfeller, Peutler, Rafter, Wulfen

Possible Combinations: Alriks-, Bark-, Birgel-, Cow-, Mare-, Oak-, Ox-, Pine-, Seff(e)l-, Segge(n)-, Wood- // -brecht, -farmer, -grove, -gruber, -houser, -huber, -inger, -kop(p), -master, -mund, -tree, -wall

Insults

Each realm's people have their own terms for the other realm's populace. Nostrians like to complain about "fickle Joborners" or "Andergastan scum." Inhabitants of the other kingdom are often called "Andergardeners," "stone oak skulls," "wooden heads," "pig noses," "acorn eaters," or even "forest barbarians."

Andergastans like to refer to Nostrians as "Nostriotes," "Nostriacks," "fluke eaters," "dike gazers," "shovel heads," "bog bodies," or "miserable fish heads." These animosities have also had their effect on heraldry. Since the War of Pride (713-735 FB), the coats of arms of Andergastan knights carry a mocking image of a saltarel skeleton, while Nostrian soldiers wear the image of the stump of a stone oak on their shields.

Idioms and Superstition

"What? I can't slay two fish at once? I am a dwarf and my axe is up to the task, by Angrash's forge fire! They can keep their strange talk, which is as flimsy as the smoke of Father Arombolosh's pipe."

—Arbosh son of Angrax, forge dwarf master smith



In addition to the habit of insulting each other at every opportunity, Nostrians and Andergastans pepper their speech with peculiar sayings and idioms that are heard only in the Warring Kingdoms. Nostrians often color their speech with mentions of the popular saltarel or the much-honored crowned stag. Andergastans prefer the aurochs, and often compare things to their imperishable stone oak. The meanings of such idioms are quite clear to the locals, but for outsiders, they sound artificial or quite absurd.

For example:

- "If you want to get ahead in life, don't throw the saltarel at Gnitze, or you will have no fish soup at all." (Nostria)
- "A small acorn can produce a giant tree or fill a small pig's belly." (Andergast)

Many Nostrians wear amulets in fish or saltarel shape as a talisman. So-called *witch stones*, river pebbles with a natural circular hole in their centers, are also commonly worn. Andergastans prefer talismans shaped like an oak leaf, and they sometimes adorn acorns with precious metals or fashion them into jewelry. *Lucky pigs* carved from wood or cut from stone are also very popular. The fitting idiom "You're a lucky pig!" is commonly heard in other kingdoms in Aventuria, too. In Andergast the phrase is said to harken back to a Nostrian attack during some previous war. Those who managed to save their pigs were lucky, as they had food enough to endure a siege.

In Andergast, witches are feared. As detractors of the sumes, they are said to have opposing goals—when they aren't simply seen as servants of the enemy, that is. However, in some places, meeting a witch is considered lucky, if you give a polite greeting. If you don't, you might be struck with lumbago or other bad luck. Similar fears and customs focus on the Andergastan sumes.

Along the Nostrian coast, countless superstitions surround the tides, the building of dikes, and the many beacons. Dousing one of the coastal lights can doom the crew of a ship to drowning. If a dike threatens to break, one must offer sacrifices to Lord Efferd or the sea nymphs. Some believe that a dike will endure only if its foundation is built on the bones of animal or human sacrifices. The saying "Nothing good comes with the fog" probably originated in Thorwal, and many Nostrians fear that gray mist to this day. Only the bravest of sailors get underway in fog. Many rivermen also prefer to ask river spirits or the wind to clear

the fog away before sailing. In the Forest Wilderness, people know countless means of dealing with the various evils of nature. One way to divert the attention of malicious forest spirits is to tie bundles of grass and weigh them down with a stone. While the spirits try to open the knots, wanderers can proceed through the wilderness unhindered.

To turn away all kinds of evil, Andergastans like to *knock on wood*. And it's not only the smart woodsman that spits on his axe before felling an oak, as many knights pour water on their blades before battle to prevent them from breaking. In both lands, females are the target of many superstitions. Andergastans think that women are physically and mentally inferior to men. Moodiness among women is seen as a sign of weakness and proof of this so-called theory.

In Nostria, women blessed by Mada are considered especially noble creatures, and it is believed that more women than men receive Mada's Gift.

Measurement of Time and the Course of the Year

The most popular calender in Aventuria measures time since the fall of Bosparan, the destruction of the capital of the Bosparanian Empire marking Year Zero. As one might expect, the calenders of independent realms reflect special events from their own history or else the date that they declared independence from Bosparan. This also is the case with Nostria and Andergast, both former vassal states of that mighty empire.

In both countries' calendars, Year 0, the Year of Independence, is the year 854 FB. To convert Warring Kingdoms dates to the standard Middenrealm calendar, use the following formula.

Year in the Warring Kingdoms' reckoning + 854 = Year after the Fall of Bosparan

The calender based on Bosparan's fall is common with scholars and is gaining favor in the Warring Kingdoms. Newer documents now usually show both dates. • ○

Names of the Months

The Silam Horas Edict established the Twelvegods as the only true gods, but it has no authority in the Warring Kingdoms, and thus Nostrians and Andergastans do not have a common naming convention for the months. Scholars and people living in towns commonly name the months after the Twelvegods, beginning with the summer month of Praios, but they call them *godweeks*, not months. Regional names for months derive from local deities or weather phenomena.

• For consistency, most historical dates in this book use the fall of Bosparan as year 0, although there are some exceptions.

- **Praios:** Heatmoon, Praiosweeks
- **Rondra:** Applemoon or Grainmoon, Rondraweeks
- **Efferd:** Harvestmoon, Boronweeks
- **Travia:** Tithemoon, Traviaweeks
- **Boron:** Fogmoon, Phexweeks
- **Hesinde:** Short Moon (due to the short days), Hesindeweeks
- **Firun:** Icemoon, Firunweeks
- **Tsa:** Hopemoon, Peraineweeks
- **Phex:** Flowermoon, Efferdweeks
- **Peraine:** Rainmoon, Tsaweeks
- **Ingerimm:** Seedmoon, Ingerimmweeks
- **Rahja:** Witchmoon, Rahjaweeks
- **Nameless Days:** Stormdays, Empty Days, Darkdays, Ghostdays

"Year of Independence? Back then, they have fought neither on the side of Asralion Summerdew nor with the Murak Emperor. Which independence are they talking about? They're still in the dark in that subject, I think."

—Layariel Treetopglint, elven wyldranner



Hours and Days of the Week

The days are counted in weeks, but in many places, only the seventh day of the week actually has its own name. It is called Sumuday, Praiosday, Efferdday, or often simply Day of Rest.

In rural areas, separating the day into hours (let alone minutes) is unknown. People divide the day into morning, prenoon, noon, afternoon, evening, and night, and that is enough. In towns, where temple gongs or bells ring out the hours, people use the usual arrangement involving the Twelvegods (see *Aventuria Almanac*, page 100).

The Course of the Year

The course of the year roughly follows the one commonly used in the lands of the Twelvegods and is based in part on those areas' common holidays. The primary celebrations focus on the beginning of summer and winter.

Many areas celebrate additional local festivals based on ancient customs and religious activities, but sometimes celebrate the change of the seasons, the wind and weather, or, especially near the coast, the rise and fall of the tides.

Sumes, primarily, decide upon these dates and festivals in Andergast.

Praios

1st	Summer solstice, King's Day in Andergast, horse and wagon race in Theskal
Early	Woodcutter Games in Andrafall

Rondra

13th/14th	Royal Tournament in Andergast
13th/14th	Knightly tournament in Nostria

Efferd

1st	Queen's Day in Nostria
1st New Moon	Election of the Fisher Queen by the Stone of Nosteria
30th	Fisher Festival (mainly in Salta and Salterhaven)

Boron

22.	Name Celebration in Nostria (Memorial Day of Fallen Heroes)
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Firun

1st	Winter Solstice, Day of the Hunt (Hanging of the Winter Fiend; nobles' winter hunt)
11th	Day of the Crowned Stag in Nostria (often with bowyer's celebration)

Tsa

1st full moon	Day of Andra's Sacrifice in Andergast (Memorial Day in honor of Andrafall)
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Peraine

1st Week	Big Cattle Market in Andergast
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Ingerimm

1st Fullmoon	Bukenbrinn (Sumu holiday, honoring the sumes; watch against evil spirits)
	Horse Market in Teshkal

Rahja

End	Cart race from Lowangen to Teshkal (until the 1st of Praios)
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Nameless Days

Storm Time	Prayers to Elida, a saint of Efferd, especially in coastal regions and Salta
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Society and Social Classes

In the Warring Kingdoms, as elsewhere, the land, all treasures of the soil, and all that is upon it belongs to the king or queen. The land is divided into fiefdoms granted to the aristocracy, who in turn can grant portions of their land to lesser nobles, who then lease it to peasants in exchange for levies.

Each liege is obliged to obey their liege lord, bow to their judgment, accompany them to war, and pay annual levies. Levies aren't often monetary, but instead are paid in kind, usually in the form of natural produce.

Liege lords can't take fiefdoms away from their lieges, even if a liege is guilty of treason or other terrible crimes. The only punishment a liege lord can inflict is to force a liege to pass rulership to another family member. Titles

to fiefdoms are inheritable. Nobody can sell land because all land belongs to the monarch. Legally, every building in every town belongs to the king, too, no matter who built it.

The Status of a Nostrian

Nostrians, nobles and commoners alike, are born into their status and cannot usually break out of the structure all their life. In the eyes of the Nostrians, the gods have willed it to be so, and few Nostrians would even think of questioning the status quo. Elevation to the nobility is usually not possible, and marriage between members of various social strata is extremely rare.

Normally, people can only change position within their own status level, and marriages between the children of bombasts and the offspring of voivods are common.

Whether a bombast then becomes a lesser noble, or a scion of a voivod joins the ranks of the aristocracy, depends on the situation. If one member of the happy couple rules a fiefdom, then the spouse gains that status; if not, both take on the status of the lower-ranking spouse. This effectively places strong limitations on the population of the aristocracy.

Women who can use magic enjoy special standing in Nostria. They are often even favored in the succession. Many commonfolk think it's a good omen that a mage is now sitting on the royal throne. Most people don't understand that the rules separations between nobles and commonfolk are more lax in other lands.

The treatment that foreign nobles receive is based on their status and their pedigree (a noble who does not descend from a long line of nobles receives less respect in the Warring Kingdoms).

The Nostrian Noble Hierarchy

The Queen

The king or queen (until 999 FB, the Lord or Lady) sits at the top of the hierarchy. Since the land was founded, this office has always been held by the Kasmyrin family. A terrible plague in 1027 FB almost ended this dynasty, but young Yolande, a politically inexperienced and not particularly traditional mage, became the new queen. Her lack of experience, however, motivated many members of other noble families to secretly begin subverting the authority of the Crown.

Slowly, Queen Yolandes's enemies realized that she was following a clever plan with the goal to lead the land out of its centuries-old misery. She has made many enemies, but after her plans began providing tangible results, a grudging acceptance of change started to grow in the town of Nostria and the surrounding area. Of course, the conservative nobles are unhappy about her changes, but Yolande has managed to weather all resistance thus far.

The Lesser Nobles

There are about a hundred lesser noble families, which rank just below the bombasts. These either hold a *voivody* (and are thus called *voivods*) or else they serve a voivod or bombast (and thus are called knights). Voivods who received their fiefdom directly from the king are called *noble lords*.

There are no official titles for voivods and knights, but many different terms are common. None of these pretentious titles say anything about the rank or influence of their bearers.

The Nostrian Aristocracy

The Nostrian aristocracy includes many other families besides the **Kasmyrins**. Their leaders, who refer to themselves as *bombasts*, each rule over one of the eight *bombasties*.

The noble counts of **Salis**, from Salta, are the second-most powerful family in Nostria after the royal family, and over the centuries, they have been maneuvering more or less openly to become *the* most powerful. They have always been held in check, but the father of the current noble count used cunning trade policies to give Salta and Salterhaven a boost in economic strength that the capital of Nostria can only dream of.

The **Ingvalsrohden** family claims descent from Great Amilia, the ship mage of Admiral Sanin when he explored the Ingval. The family has ancient roots and thus bears the title Old Count.

The **Rheideryans** have the thankless task of ruling the forest county of Joborn, whose capital has fallen to Andergast many times, and it is currently in Andergastan hands. They gave up living in a castle in Joborn and now base their family in Mirdin.

The **Hyttenhau** family was important and influential many years ago, and many important military commanders came from its ranks. Today, their seat is near Trontsand.

The **Sapstems** are a large, extended family whose members are rarely noticed by outsiders. The family has produced many skilled strategists, and some advisers of lord and queen come from the border county of Tommellands. Their wisdom is sometimes overshadowed by their hatred for all that is Andergastan.

The **Ornibian** family rules lands in the Forest Wilderness, but wide parts of their domain belong to Andergast at the moment. A small castle in Fiolbar serves as the family seat, but the whole family usually stays at the Nostrian court and leaves the rule of the border county in the hands of their magistrates.

The **Ansfinions** have been members of the aristocracy since 879 FB, but many bombasts still ridicule them as upstarts. When the bombasty of Kendrar and its capital was conquered by Thorwalers in 1001 FB, the Ansfinions lost their domain and with it, the family's influence. After their leader Muratio was jailed in Fortress Gordelyn in 1036 FB for his role in a conspiracy to commit murder, few now trust the family.

Examples of Nostrian Noble Titles

(Arch) commander, arch noble, dike count/countess, enormity, fish count/countess, forest captain, free knight, junker, noble lord/lady, old count/countess, noble count/countess, rondrast

Due to Horasian influences, titles like cavalier, comptano, and marqueso have become popular, though mainly with knights from Salta and its surroundings.

The Nostrian People's Assembly

In one aspect, Nostrian customs differ sharply from the common pattern of noble feudalism. Influenced by Thorwalan *hjaldings* and Albernian *baihîrs*, the idea of the people's assembly has spread: About twice a year, all inhabitants of a bombasty or voivody gather together to discuss politics and rulings. The gathering place is usually a village green, a courtyard with an oak tree, a stone circle, or some other traditional place. These gatherings are usually led by an elder but sometimes by another respectable person, such as a Blessed Ones or an influential witch.

Judges settle conflicts and arguments held between those who are gathered, and people may raise complaints and suggestions, which are then passed to the bombasts. Attendees vote on many decisions, but only the head of each family or farmstead has a voice. Every free man and woman from the bombasty has the right to speak and make complaints. People from other provinces and those who are unfree, however, need someone to speak on their behalf.

When compared to the gathering of bombasts, the weight of influence of the people's gathering varies by area. At certain gatherings, bombasts are not allowed to speak or must follow the decisions of the gathering, while at other places, these gatherings serves more of a social function and a place to make arranged marriages.

The Lower Classes in Nostria

Civil Service

Nobles and others with title aren't the only people who hold important offices. While it is true that only nobles may hold certain positions, some are available to burghers and other free citizens.

The most well-known office is that of **dike count**, which is tasked by the king to build new dikes and maintain existing ones. This position of tremendous responsibility may only be held by a noble.

Some castles appoint a **majordomo**, who is responsible for the staff and housekeeping. Traditionally, this task falls to the noble's spouse, but sometimes nobles are unwed or a spouse prefers other tasks, such as going to war. In such cases, the task is given to another member of the family or even an unrelated lesser noble. Majordomos hold several offices in some houses. Toran of the Light (see page 127), who serves at the Nostrian Royal Court, is one such example.

Larger courts retain a **herald** who is knowledgeable with the coats of arms and family trees of all Nostrian nobles, and, if possible, those of neighboring countries as well. Heralds



advise their lords in all matters of etiquette and tradition and are responsible for details like drafting seating charts for receptions or hosting tournaments. Rarely does a commoner become a herald.

Another civil servant is the **Official**, a term that simply means *scribe*. Officials write letters and documents and read correspondence and other pieces of writing to nobles and courtiers. They must also calculate the levies that subjects must deliver to their liege lords at court. The position is one of great responsibility, as more than economics depend upon these calculations. Also, the official knows all secrets that are passed on in written form, so it is no surprise that this position is mainly granted to nobles, for who would entrust a commoner with such tasks?

Wealthier families can afford a **court mage** who serves as a scholar and adviser to the family head and may hold the post of official as well. Some houses appoint a **court priest** who sees to the salvation of the family's souls, according to the god(s) worshipped by that house (priests of Satuarua are usually witches). No law states that a court priest must be a Blessed One or even possess magical power. As with court mages, a court priest can also perform the duties of the official.

As with the nobility, pretentious titles and forms of address are commonly used in association with scholars. Terms such as *Fantast*, *Your Fulminancy*, *Your Arcanality*, *Your Competency*, *Your (Arch)Evidence*, and even *Your Responsibility* are known.

Noble lords normally select magistrates, while the most influential yeoman in the village usually becomes village mayor by default. Typically, neither is a noble. Instead, these people are usually peasants. Villages without a noble of their own choose a **magistrate** or **mayor** to act as spokesperson and leader for the inhabitants and serve as their liaison to the regional noble lord.

Free

Those who are free have the right to choose their place of residence and their spouse. Typically, the free lease land from a landholder, usually the local knight. Unlike the unfree, they have the legal right to break this lease. They must pay a yearly tithe to their lord, and must serve in the lord's army during times of war. Often, the free yeomen in a village are their own faction. They choose spouses only from within their ranks and view unfree peasants with contempt and arrogance.

Unfree

Wards of the landholder are less lucky, as the noble decides what land they may till, where they may build a house and

whom they may marry. Unfree peasants usually receive two acres of land, for which they must pay a yearly tithe. They must also perform serf labor and may only travel off their land with the permission of (or at the command of) their lord, and then only temporarily. The unfree are not required to serve in war.

Usually, the unfree are not permitted to learn a trade, but some lords grant exceptions. Apprentices in such cases become the ward of the master, but they become free at the end of their apprenticeship. Unfree peasants may buy their freedom by paying a sum named by their lord. A benign lord may free an especially cherished peasant who, for example, saved the lord's life. The children of peasants and yeomen are born unfree as well.

Burghers

Burghers of the towns of Nostria, Salta, and Salterhaven enjoy special standing among free citizens. Wealthy traders and craftworkers in these towns have used their economic power to gain autonomy from the nobles. They wielded their financial pressure to create town councils comprised of influential burghers. These individuals have a say in decisions regarding their town's well-being, and the councils have complete control over the town's affairs. To become a burgher on one of these towns, a person must either be born there or pay a yearly fee of 10 ducats. Only burghers can become guild members. Priests and alumni of local mage's academies automatically become burghers and are exempt from paying the fee. Temples claim at least one seat in their local town council. It is not possible to become a burgher in any town besides these in Nostria.

The Status of an Andergastan

In Andergast, where old traditions are cherished most of all, nobles keep to themselves, yeomen are proud, and the unfree are loyal to their noble landowner. The estate-based society is just as rigid as in Nostria. The Andergastan love for tradition renders social ruin quite difficult, as nobles can invoke the rights of their status when impoverished. Some claim the opposite is true, however, as Andergastan inheritance law does not focus solely on men.

Instead, upon getting married, a person gains the status of the higher-ranked partner and becomes part of their family. One especially prominent example is Efferdan, who gained the crown by marrying Princess Varena. This explains why there are so few marriages between nobles and commoners—the nobles cherish their privilege and want to keep it among themselves. Influential upstarts (so-called new nobles) from other lands are nonetheless recognized in Andergast with all rights, unlike in Nostria.

The Andergastan Noble Hierarchy

Even though titles might have different names in Andergast, its estate-based system works similarly to that in Nostria. The king sits at the top of the noble pyramid. Beneath him are the aristocracy, the lesser nobles, the officials, and the common folk. Sumes play a special role, as they have great influence and do not belong to estates.

The King

Only a man can rule Andergast. This has always been the law. And ever since the land was founded by Argos Zornbold, his descendants have ruled. Over the last few centuries, almost every ruler of House Zornbold married a noble woman from another realm, often from Albernia, but also from other Middenrealish provinces and the Horasian Empire. A reason for this could be the generous dowry these women brought to the marriage, but the Zornbolds also hope for assistance in their foreign politics.

The Andergastan Aristocracy

In addition to the **Zornbolds**, the Andergastan aristocracy consists of the families of the barons. Many baronies are little larger than the size of a knight's estate, but true power in Andergast is held by just a few families, and the rulers of these seven largest baronies wield the most influence.

Next to the royal family, **House Egelings**, the barons of Thurana, are the largest and most powerful family in Andergast. This tradition-loving and patriotic family, among the strongest political opponents of King Efferdan, proudly support the new King Wendelmir.

The ancestral castle of **House Bearvalley** family is located in Andrafall, the oldest settlement in Andergast. Because the Bearvalleys have ancient roots, people consider them an honorable house. Their barons have less hate for the Nostrians than most other Andergastan nobles, probably because their constant skirmishes with orcs and goblins in the forest require all their strength and concentration.

House Pawgrove is very conservative, even by Andergastan standards. They were among King Efferdan's most vocal critics, and are quite pleased with the coronation of King Weldenmir. These lords of the Ornib are very pious believers in Sumu and support the growing influence of the sumes. The druidic advisers have enjoyed great respect in Pawgrove lands for centuries.

House Griffonhall, the former barons of Albumin, are said to have died out, and **House Longford** (the current barons of Albumin) aren't taken seriously by the families of the aristocracy.

House Redtree also are outsiders in the Andergastan nobility. It is an open secret that they bowed to the king only to receive assistance fighting orcs, which often rampage through Teshkalia. It is just as well known that the kings don't think too highly of House Redtree due to its willingness to relax the rules of patriarchy for its own needs.

Lesser Nobles in Andergast

Approximately 40 noble families, all related to each other, rank just below the aristocracy. Most rule little more than a knight's estate, even if they proudly refer to their land as a barony. Unlike in Nostria, Andergast does not believe in flowery titles. They have knights and barons. The title of knight, however, gives no indication as to whether the bearer controls a fiefdom or in fact serves another knight or baron.

The Sumes

Outsiders think that the sumes, as the Andergastan druids call themselves, are nothing but quaint but uppity forest wizards who claim to be priests of a weird Sumu cult. The sumes wield great influence in Andergastan society, though much of it remains hidden behind the scenes. For centuries, little has happened in Andergast without the blessing or at least approval of the sumes. Nobles' decisions that do not have the approval of a sume are very unlikely to be enforced. Most sumes have no interest in playing a public role in politics and rulership, so disagreements between nobles and sumes are rare. Most sumes dwell in remote areas in the forest and only directly address topics such as the clearing of forested areas, hunting, or other encroachments into Sumu's realm.

The sumes currently wield more influence than they have for many years. They are not only exempt from all tithes, but they also enjoy special status under Andergastan law (see page 88).

The Lower Classes in Andergast

Civil Service

Important positions in Andergast have special responsibilities, too. For more information about the Nostrian offices of majordomo, herald, official, and magistrate, see page 65. These offices are held only by men, but some women serve as court mages and court priestesses. Court priests often are sumes.

The Burghers

Over the last thirty years, burghers have become more common in the town of Andergast, and the local guilds and the town council are relatively new. To become a burgher of Andergast a person must be male, have lived in the town for at least 10 years, and pay a burgher's fee of 100 ducats.

Womens' Status in Andergast

In Andergast, people say that women will never be able to make their own rational decisions. For this reason, each woman has a custodian: first her father plays this role, then her husband. If her custodian dies, the obligation passes to an heir: the brother of the father, the brother of the woman, or the oldest son.

Upon her wedding, a woman's dowry becomes the property of her husband. If her husband dies, their oldest son inherits everything (according to the law, a woman cannot own property) but is also obliged to take care of her. At public gatherings (such as court cases), local women are not allowed to speak. Instead, they must speak through an intercessor, usually their custodian. Strangely, none of these rules apply to women whose magical talent allowed them to receive an education from Blessed Ones or from a mage's academy. At this point, even though they must often struggle with prejudice, they gain the same rights as men.

The reasons for this special status are lost to history. The relationship to women from other lands is difficult, as the Andergastans have trouble ignoring the fact women are treated by their companions in a way that, at least in their opinion, only befits men.

Andergastans treat confident women from foreign lands with either defiance or bewilderment but often grant them the rights enjoyed by a female mage or Blessed One. This does not hide the fact that in some Andergastan families, women possess great influence. Those with strong personalities can be the ones who make all the important decisions, but this usually stays in the family. To others, a man must at least appear to be the patriarch of his family; otherwise his family can become the target of vicious mockery.

Sexual Inequality in the Game

For female players, enduring the cliché of women-hating Andergastans can quickly grow tedious. Constant discrimination and second-class status can easily spoil their fun in the game.

As GM, you should employ the male-dominated viewpoint of Andergastans carefully and then only with a specific goal in mind. Many Andergastans have grown used to accepting women from other countries as people worthy of respect. An Andergastan woman acting with so-called *unwomanly* determination might elicit surprise but she might also receive respect.



An Overview of Forms of Address and Titles

"Praios forbid and Rondra help us! They can't be serious. Bombast? Who does that bumpkin think he is? The count of Mendena? I hope he's not the Lord Commander..."

—A mercenary serving in the Tobrian Axes, 1038 FB



Where most realms have barons and counts, the Nostrian nobles are divided into two camps: the low-ranked voivods and the high-ranked bombasts. Pretentious titles (see page 65) are common but usually reveal little about the political status and level of influence held by their bearer. Bombasts are properly addressed as *Ethelborn*, while voivods and knights are referred to as *Highborn*.

At the moment, there is only one noble count—the Count of Salta—who ranks second only to the Nostrian queen. Next come the old counts, the lake and forest counts, and then the border counts. Dike counts hold special status, and some of them are ranked among the aristocracy. This ranking leads to much controversy among the bombasts and creates conflicts in the families of the aristocracy.

Andergast uses few titles. Here the proud barons and their families are counted among the aristocracy, while knights are considered lesser nobles. Andergastans address barons as *Ethelborn* and knights as *Highborn*. Each member of the Council of Champions has a right to be addressed as *Excellency*.

A Seat on the Council of Champions

Positions marked with an asterisk aren't officially claimed, and might appear in future publications as a pawn or knight (see the *Aventuria Almanac*, page 204).


Feel free to award these titles to player characters who make a contribution to the realm, or to NPCs with whom your players have a special relationship.



The Council of Champions

The **Council of Champions**, which advises the king, always has a special standing in Andergast. Nobles, priests, and, contrary to the usual customs, commoners can be members of this council. To become a champion, one must have served the realm in some way and (more or less) be the representative of a god. Each champion is said to be a paragon of the virtues of the immortal in the commoners' eyes. Which Supernaturals have representation in the council has changed often over the years, depending on the king's beliefs.

The Champions

The king himself is always the **Champion of Praios**, but he rarely participates in council meetings. Normally gatherings are led by the **Champion of Travia**, who for several decades has been the royal majordomo  *Bogumislaus of Neuendorf*.

Being appointed the **Champion of Rondra** is a rather dubious honor, as the spouse of Praios is said to be both cantankerous as combative. The current Master of the Army is Baron *Wenzeslaus the Older Zornbold* (see page 32), who never had any ambitions for the throne despite his noble birth. Baron Wenzeslaus rules the town of Albumin and is King Wendelmir's father.

The armorer of the king, who serves as **Champion of Ingerimm***, is cut from a different cloth and uses his position to enhance his authority.

The **Champion of Simia*** is a commoner, the guild master of the Andergastan smiths, who represents the interests of all craft guilds in the council. The **Champion of Firun***, a spokesman of all lumberjacks and hunters, but mostly wood traders, is also a commoner. He is constantly at odds with the Champion of Sumu (see below).

The **Champion of Efferd*** oversees all trade on the Ingval and must settle disputes with the wood rafters. *Atheldan* (see page 36), the venerable Warden of the Land and the highest Blessed One of Peraine in Andergast, represents the principles of faith. He has been the **Champion of Peraine** for forty years and is responsible for the infirmary and the town poorhouse.

Irinia Zornbold (see page 128), a Blessed One of Hesinde and the aunt of the King, is the **Champion of Hesinde**, but Wendelmir rarely takes her advice. *Ossyra of Teshkal* (see page 124), the **Champion of Rahja**, who oversees horse breeding, has similar problems. She was made the royal stablewoman by her predecessor to bind the baroness closer to the royal house. Because King Wendelmir needs Teshkaler horses, he hasn't removed her title.

The **Champion of Sumu** plays a special role. Over the course of history, many influential sumes have claimed the title of champion, but often the position remained vacant. Since his surprising return, young Kusmin (see page 125) bears this title, and due to his training by the sume Arbogast the Old he insists on having the last word in all decisions. He rarely uses this prerogative, and Wendelmir doesn't have to fear for his position or his reputation as unrestricted ruler. Instead, the king has used the establishment of the Champion of Sumu to bolster his rule.



Clothes and Garb

"I don't care if it is done that way here! By Swafnir's fluke, I will not wear a skirt like these Andergastan dolls!"

—Tjalva Garheltdottir, Hetja from Prem, modern



The typical clothing of common folk is simple on both sides of the border. It is utilitarian and very similar, and usually consists of long pants or leggings, an overshirt, and a jerkin when it's windy or cold. Depending on profession, women might also wear long skirts, colorful, embroidered shirts, and bonnets. It is considered inappropriate for women to wear pants in Andergast. Outside of Teshkal, custom insists that women wear dresses or at least skirts that extend to mid-calf.

It is common to wear a vest or tailcoat over legwear and shirt in urban surroundings. In rural areas, the heuke (a knee-length outer garment) is very popular, as is the doublet (a buttoned jacket). Shoes are mainly made of wood or leather, and often a hat, felt cap, or skull cap with a narrow brim completes the everyday ensemble.

The clothes of the common folk are made of wool or rough linen and are dyed only in earthy greens and browns or else aren't dyed at all. Muted colors, such as black or grayish blue, or sometimes a bolder blue or shiny green, are worn.

To avoid looking too drab, the inhabitants of Nostria and Andergast are fond of use adornment. Knops, colorful edging, or embroidered patterns are popular. These often make use of the national colors. Along the Nostrian coast and near the capital, adornments are mainly blue, while near the Forest Wilderness and Andergast, the dominant color is green.

Colorful cloth and more complicated fashions or even imported materials like cotton or velvet are a sign of wealth. They are mostly restricted to nobles, wealthy townfolk and traders, as is trim made from the fur of mole, beaver, badger, or rabbit. Nobles of both realms wear colorful clothes often richly embroidered or decorated with finely woven edges, when they can afford to do so,

Fur trim, buttons of gold and silver, or edging of gold or silver thread are status symbols, as well. Often, people wear richly decorated gambesons or tabards, or ankle-length gowns with billowing sleeves.

Noble women from Andergast (and some female nobles from Nostria) wear a long undergarment with sleeves, called a cotte. Above it, they wear an outer garment of the same length, with sleeve holes reaching to the belt.

Knights (both male and female in Nostria) wear chainmail or a byrnie during official events. These often bear the family coat of arms.

Combat and Warfare

"All the high-born tin cans tell us something about honor in war, but they have no more honor in their bones than an Al'Anfan harbor thief. And they pay about as well as a harbor thief, too."

—Geron Bladebreaker, mercenary, modern



Even though the history of the Warring Kingdoms is one of nearly constant war, neither Nostria or Andergast ever saw the need for a permanent standing army.

Most battles of yore were fought between noble knights and their lances (that is, their squires, armed followers, and advisers). Often these knights led men-at-arms and large groups of badly-equipped peasants who possessed no weapons training. Such forces usually marched to war wearing the national colors (blue or green) and often wore their coat of arms on their chests, leading many observers to conclude that each kingdom brought its own guard troop. In fact, true soldiers or guards are rare in the Warring Kingdoms.

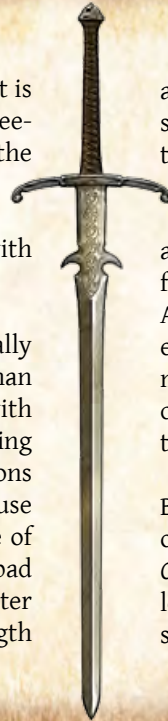
Only the royal houses always have some men (and women, in Nostria) under arms. The Nostrian Defense, commanded by Rondriane of Sapstem, suffered great losses during the recent war and still hasn't recovered from additional losses caused by the recent blue wheeze epidemic. In Andergast, King Wendelmir recently reconstituted the long defunct Oak Guard, which relies on free men-at-arms, supplied by his barons, to maintain its numbers. These soldiers serve directly under the Crown and perform required tasks, but the barons are not keen to follow the royal command, as the less wealthy among them are in need of people to assist with their fields or bolster their own forces. The barons also do not like to see that much power in the hand of a king who might interfere in their dealings...



The Andergaster

The Andergaster is a huge two handed sword that is almost 7' long. It is often mockingly called the "three-handed sword." Scholars aren't certain whether the weapon really was created to defend narrow paths or bridges, as is claimed, but masters of the weapon know defense techniques that fighters with shorter weapons have trouble bypassing.

This powerful weapon is used only by specially trained fighters who command much more pay than common men-at-arms. It is they who are tasked with stopping enemy knights, and they do so by smashing their destriers' legs. The use of such weapons by men-at-arms is hated in regions that espouse knightly or Rondrianic virtues, and even outside of the Warring Kingdoms the Andergaster has a bad reputation. The fighting skill of a good Andergaster fighter is impressive, though, and despite its length



and weight, this sword can be put through some surprising maneuvers. With one hand on the ricasso, the fighter can perform surprisingly fast and strong thrusts and levers. When combined with wrestling attacks, punches, and kicks, their fighting style almost resembles that of certain traveling swords from other lands. It is no surprise, then, that the Andergaster is most popular in foreign lands, especially among the Almadan and Horasian double-mercenaries. This famous two-handed sword is also common in Nostria, but they call it a *Nostrianer*, a term that never became popular outside of Nostria.

Both realms also manufacture an oversized version of this weapon. The Nostrian *Harmlyner* and the *Oakhavener* from Andergast are each about a foot longer. For the stats of the Andergaster (*Nostrianer*), see page 153.

The Nostrian Defense and the Oak Guard are rarely at full strength except in times of emergency. For example, the Nostrian Defense proved itself by safeguarding the system of emergency dikes during a bad storm. The members of the Oak Guard travel in all directions to fulfil tasks at the behest of the king.

Andergast and Nostria have trouble equipping their armies, due to the rather high price of steel in the Warring Kingdoms. Even the mines in the Stone Oak Forest do not produce high-quality iron ore, which means smiths can make only massive and heavy blades. Imported steel is expensive, and so most knights must be content with inferior weapons or those not wholly made from steel, such as maces, axes, and hammers. Plate armor is rare, and only two blacksmiths in the Warring Kingdoms (♣ *Master Emmerfried* in Andergast, and ♠ *Mistress Nia Firkober* in Salta) know how to create or even repair plate armor.

For protection, those who can afford to do so wear chainmail, which often shows signs of numerous repairs. Scale mail inherited from older generations is also common. Most fighters go to war in padded surcoats that are often reinforced with sewn-on rings.

Marksmen pose a great threat to riders and their men-at-arms, who are often heavily armored and armed with melee weapons. Crossbows are terrifying but almost prohibitively expensive. The longbow is almost as frightening, and is quicker to reload, too.

The Nostrian Longbow

The longbow, as it is built in Nostria, is the predecessor of the modern Aventurian war bow. Made of yew or ash wood, it is a weapon for skilled marksmen. Its use requires great strength, but its arrows can pierce plate armor. In Andergast, it is simply called a longbow, but it does not differ from its Nostrian counterpart in any significant way. Most knights train in the use of the longbow, but they use it mainly for courtly hunts (mostly battue) and not for war, as it cannot be used from horseback.

The longbow brings the long limbs of an elven bow together with the strength of a human who can draw its weight. The Nostrian longbow is not a weapon for hunting in dense undergrowth or attacking when flustered.

Rows of marksmen who can loose a hail of arrows on their targets have proven very effective in war, as even the armors of battle riders and knights does not protect against their arrows. For the stats of the Nostrian longbow, see page 153.



Just as the term *Andergaster* has become synonymous for an oversized sword, the *Nostrian* longbow has become the epitome of the *Aventurian* war bow. The *Andergastan* forces also count on the support of spellcasters. Alumni of the *Andergastan* mage's academy are skilled combat mages—and often their participation often means the difference between victory and defeat.

Knights

Knights (both male and female in *Nostria*) are battle or armored riders of noble birth. They bear the brunt of the battles of the *Warring Kingdoms* and usually lead their armies. Many knights wear simple chainmail and chain leggings. Only the wealthiest among them own scale mail or true byrnies with arm and leg plates. For head protection, they usually wear a pot helm or an open helmet with nose guard. Often this armor has been in the family for generations and has often been repaired or had its fit adjusted for a new wearer. In traditional families, the leader of a family sometimes wears a richly decorated byrnie that is centuries old, the symbolism of which is known to friend and foe alike.

The typical weapon for the charge is the war lance, then the side weapon is used in the melee: battle axe or mace, rarely a sword or morning star. In the left, the knight carries his rider shield decorated with a coat of arms. If the knight knows that he has to fight on the ground, he arms himself with a great shield instead of a rider's shield, which often is made from stone oak wood in *Andergast*.

The use of two-handed weapons is rare among knights, as they usually cannot be wielded from horseback. In addition, great swords such as two-handed swords and *Andergasters* are expensive.

Squires

A knight's training in the *Warring Kingdoms* differs little from that in other regions. Children start at age 6 by learning courtly etiquette as a page. At age 12, they are sent to a sponsoring knight to begin combat training, at which time they are called squires.

Squires tend to the horse, weapons, and well-being of

their lords and must protect them in combat when they are unable to do so themselves. When knights are badly wounded, their squires must act quickly to prevent them from being killed. Squires are armed only with short swords and small shields, but it is not uncommon for them to take up their knight's weapons in such a situation.

Respectable knights always take on squires, to whom they teach knightly virtues and the foundations of rule. Reading and writing are not included in this education, but squires are taught local law, heraldry, traditions, ancestral lore, and the care of weapons.

After many arduous and difficult years, a squire may be knighted during the ritual known as the *acolade*. The awarding of an honorary *acolade*, especially for those not of noble blood, is unthinkable in the *Warring Kingdoms*. Squires wear a gambeson at important events, but add a padded surcoat and a tabbard bearing their lord's coat of arms when in combat.

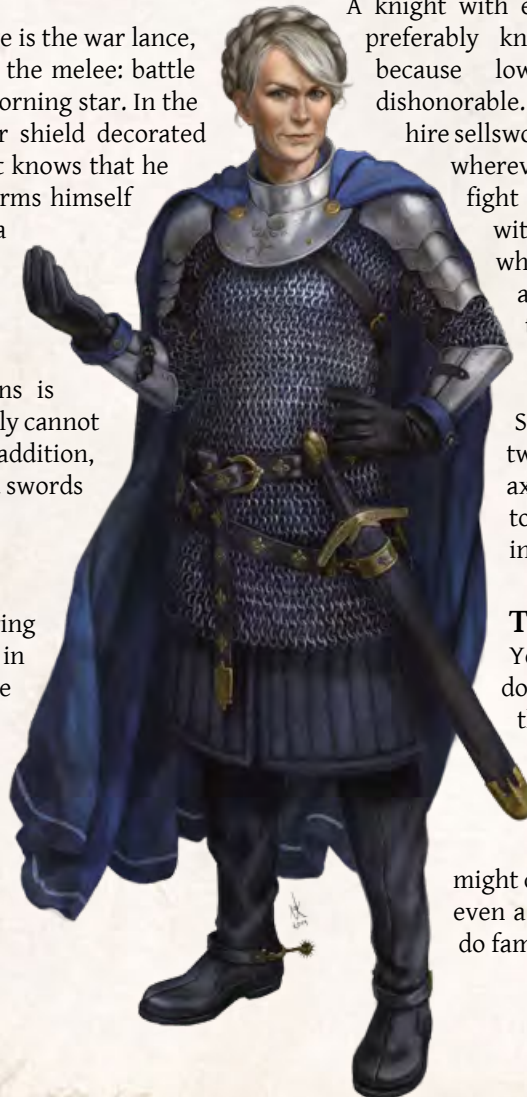
Men-at-Arms

A knight with enough money can hire mercenaries, preferably knights without their own fiefdoms, because lowly men-at-arms are considered dishonorable. Nevertheless, the royal houses like to hire sellswords, since they can be quickly deployed wherever they are needed. Men at arms rarely fight from horseback. Instead they fight with polearms such as halberds or spears, which they employ to unhorse knights, after which they throw themselves on the fallen knight in superior numbers and overwhelm him.

Some men-at-arms fight with longbows, two handed swords, and, rarely, great axes. Those men at arms who know how to use the *Andergaster* are especially infamous and well paid.

The Yeoman Draft

Yeomen, when forced to fight, usually do not use true weapons of war. Instead they use only what they can bring to war themselves: flails, scythes, axes, daggers, and clubs. Flails are easily converted to war flails, nails are easily added to clubs. Richer yeomen might carry a good hunting knife, a dagger, or even a short sword inherited from a well-to-do family member.



Non-nobles aren't allowed to wield weapons with blades longer than a typical short sword's. For this reason, bows are quite popular, as they are not restricted in any way and can be used to hunt game. Weapons training for drafted yeomen rarely last more than one or two days.

Because yeomen pay a very high cost in blood, their morale is rather low. Often men-at-arms are stationed behind ranks of yeomen in battle to prevent them running away.

Food and Drink

"By Angrosh's beard! Don't you have anything but saltarel on your menu? It doesn't have to be a roast. At the moment I would even settle for a nice chunk of cheese."

—Arbosh son of Angrax, forge dwarf master smith



People in the Warring Kingdoms eat what they can wrest from the land. This means that the menu in the region largely depends on the season.

Preserving food is difficult and risky, which is why most types of vegetable and fruit, as well as mushrooms, are available only for short times. Exceptions include sauerkraut and apples. Grain can be stored for a time, but ever since the blue wheeze swept through Nostria, people have been reluctant to do so (rats and mice attracted by the stored food can spread diseases). Food is sparse and bland during winter, and especially long or difficult winters can quickly result in famine among the common folk.

Pig farming is common in Andergast, due to the abundance of acorns with which to fatten them up. Many animals are slaughtered and served up in large feasts held everywhere in Andergast at the end of autumn, as people rarely have enough supplies to feed all their animals through the winter. While people dine on pork, bacon, blood pudding and other delicacies for days during these feasts, most of the meat is dried or turned into smoked acorn, crackling fat, or hard cured sausage, in preparation for winter.

Poultry, such as chickens and geese, are also popular. Peasants are usually more interested in the eggs these creatures produce. Along the coast of Nostria and in the Lakeland, people mainly eat fish. Fishing boats even work in winter, especially along the coast of the Sea of Seven Winds and Thurian Lake. In addition to the famous saltarel, a two-foot-long flatfish found in large schools along the

Nostrian coast, people also eat eels, tuna and Olporter herring (from the ocean) and freshwater trout, pike, pike perch and gnitzes. Though this diet consists mainly of fish, it is rarely boring (except during winter). The rest of the year brings a variety of ingredients and herbs that can be used for seasoning. As with so many other pursuits, Andergastans and Nostrians are very inventive and have learned to prepare many tasty dishes with few ingredients.

Delicacies

The Nostrian cuisine includes many fish dishes and about 217 ways to prepare the Nostrian saltarel—try it salted, or in beer-batter, or with various sauces or side dishes. Cucumbers pickled in vinegar, also known as false saltarel, are also popular. Along the coast, people like to have a Trontsander breakfast, which is a mush of chopped fish and onions. Across the region, *rosprick* is the general term for somewhat tasty vegetable stews with many variants.

Popular spirits include juniper brandy and the biting Lyck Schnapps, which Andergastans claim Nostrians distill from bog bodies. People in Nostria also brew a vegetable beer called *kmat* from spinach, but few foreigners can stomach it. Coastal communities brew a somewhat better drink called *Dune Brew*.

People in Andergast like everything that results from pig breeding. Ham made of pigs fattened with acorns and countless varieties of lard, some with grapes, others with apples, are as common in Andergast as blood sausage or blood pudding made with pearl barley and pig's blood. Fine bacon and pork roast are usually reserved for the tables of the nobles. You should avoid the Dragoncastle stonecake, as it is dry as dust and very hard. But it keeps for quite a while and makes popular provisions for travel. It is usually eaten with a quaffable malt beer or one of the many herbal infusions sold as bitter oak tea or elder tea. Oak beer, which is actually made of acorns, has a strange but palatable taste.

Games and Sports

“People here don’t often play games to pass the time. Besides, there aren’t that many people around to roll the dice with, and those that are here have so few coins in their purse that they aren’t much fun to play with.”

—Carolan Calavanti, Vinsaltan vagabond, modern



Life in the Warring Kingdoms is difficult, and the people have little free time to play games. Complex games like Garadan or Red and White Camels are practically unknown. There are even few boltan players in the taverns, mostly because there are only few sets of inrah cards in the Warring Kingdoms (and, of course, because taverns and inns are rare here).

Most peasants own dice made of wood or bone, with which they play common games like **Andergast (or Nostria) in Flames** (Gareth is Burning), **Bugbear Fence** (Ogre Wall), or **21 Kreutzers**. Another popular pastime involves Nostrian cone marbles, where players use fir cones or spindle-shaped balls to knock another ball over a white line.

The kingdoms many men-at-arms have spread knowledge of **wheel merels**, which is played on a circular board that looks like a common cart’s wheel (four spokes). In many taverns, the board has been cut into the table with a knife or drawn with chalk. Each player gets three identical stones or tokens of various shapes and colors. Early in the game, players take turns placing tokens on the intersections of the wheel and spokes, leaving the hub open. Once all tokens are placed on the board, players alternate moving them along the spokes or the circumference of the wheel to the next open position. Jumping of pieces is not allowed, and every player must move a piece. The game ends when one player manages to move all three of their tokens in a line through the hub.

Just as popular is the **acorn game**, played with a predetermined number of acorns. Players roll the acorns down a slope trying to hit the opponents’ acorns. Acorns thus struck are removed from the board. Once all acorns have been played, the winner is the one with the most acorns.

Many guild members in the towns make a competition out of their exercises in **archery**, in essence combining their obligation to their lord with a bit of entertainment.

Lumberjack games are common in towns in the forested regions of the Warring Kingdoms, such as Andrafall. These competitions include sawing logs, felling trees with axes, stripping bark from logs with a knife, and tossing thin trunks, which must flip end-over-end at least once in the air. These events serve to train agility and strength, as with archery, can also be viewed as a type of training. Thus, nobles allow their commoners to play these games, which often become the subject of a fair. Along the coast, people play similar games, which mainly deal with throwing fishing nets, hitting a small target with a hook and line, or playing tug-of-war with a ship’s rope. The Thorwalish game of **imman** is popular on the coast as well as in the Lakeland.

The nobles of the Warring Kingdoms have two leisure pursuits: hunting and tournaments. The courtly **hunt** always takes place on horseback, in competitive pursuit of the chosen game (boar, stag, or bear). Bows are frowned upon, as the intent is to face the creature and look it in the eye when it is killed. This can be quite dangerous, even though many peasants or woodcutters performing their serf labor assist with the hunt. Wild boars, especially, and bears are known to attack their pursuers, and some nobles have been badly injured playing this so-called sport. The most famous illustration of the dangers of this sport is the Andergastan King Efferdan, who died during a hunt in 1036 FB.

Falconry, as practiced in Middenrealmish Garetia, is frowned upon by the conservative nobles of the Warring Kingdoms, as are bows. Besides, few Warring Kingdoms nobles can afford to hire a falconer. Boar hounding is very popular in Nostria and Andergast. Typically, beaters and hounds range ahead of a hunting party of nobles to flush game animals from their hiding places. The Andergastans have even developed a special weapon for these hunts, called a boar spear, a type of thrusting spear that can be used while mounted or on foot. A crossguard below the spear’s broad blade ensures that the thrust doesn’t penetrate the animal’s body too deeply, and thus keeps it at a distance. The spear’s robust, leather-wrapped handle grants a firm grip. The boar spear has proven so popular as a weapon that men-at-arms now use it in wary. This has not lessened its popularity as a hunting weapon for nobles. Another popular invention is the boar-catcher, a dagger similar in length and shape to a short sword but with a wider tip.

Many nobles use a richly decorated version as side weapon. Boar-catchers make popular gifts for effective beaters. Peasants who own such weapons keep them carefully cleaned, and they become family heirlooms.



The Knightly Tournament

“What splendor! All the nobles of the kingdom have donned their finest armor, chosen their best horses, and brought their best weapons. The competition for the title of the best knight in Andergast can begin, and I proudly proclaim that His Majesty, Wendelmir VI, of the glorious house of Zornbold, will show his mettle by competing. We can expect difficult struggles ahead, but the victor’s glory will live through the ages!”

—The Andergastan tournament marshal and king of arms, Wolorion of Kolburg, at the King’s Tournament, 1039 FB

“She is a true force of nature! See as she sits astride her destrier, clad in an iron byrnie, mace in hand, like Rondra herself. If I could, I would write a song in her honor. Tomorrow I ride in the joust with her ribbon of favor, as she displays my bunting in green and black. I do not care that she is a Sevenwind woman from Nostris. I want to earn her favor!”

—The Andergastan knight Lodorin Redtree of Teshkalien, 1039 FB

Tournaments are popular among nobles everywhere, and this holds true for the Warring Kingdoms. Restricted entry makes the spectacle much more exclusive than the arena games that take place in Al’Anfa and other regions in the south. The unfree cannot participate, and some disciplines are open only to nobles.

Tournaments are an entertaining way for nobles to train and spend their time, but these gatherings mainly serve to settle differences. A tournament peace is enforced outside of the competitions, allowing people to settle feuds on the tournament ground without collateral damage to land and people. In such cases, the rule is: the winner of a passage at arms is right. If desired, participants can invoke a special type of divine judgment and use the tournament to prove righteousness before the law and supernatural agencies.

The Warring Kingdoms have always allowed nobles from enemy realms to enter their tournaments without fear of ambush. While traveling to the tournament, these individuals receive the protection of the Crown after crossing the border (this is known as the *King’s Peace*), and often they are met and accompanied by a herald who guarantees this protection. Even though they are protected from attack, nobody guarantees that they won’t be loudly mocked by the audience during the tournament.

Organization

“Where is the tournament marshal’s tent? I want to enroll in all of today’s disciplines. I couldn’t stand it if old Pawgrover got to participate in the joust and I couldn’t, just because he enrolled for the battle with sword and shield early. I desperately want to unhorse him!”

—Lodorin Redtree of Teshkalien, Andergastan knight, 1039 FB

Tournaments rarely last longer than two days, but the organizer sets the duration.

The fairground and battleground are usually located outside of the castle or town where the tournament takes place. Here, workers erect the barriers that defining the tournament field, next to which the nobles from afar pitch their tents. Participants either sleep in their tournament tents or try to find space with a visiting member of the aristocracy.

Only the most important guests receive a room in the organizer’s castle. A few sleep in a tavern where they must deal with commoners. Often, tournaments are accompanied by fairs, where acrobats perform and bards sing their songs. Some places also schedule markets at the

A Tournament Day

Usually, a tournament day starts at dawn with a loud fanfare of trumpets. The first competitions begin an hour later, after the audience gathers on the stands or along the barriers surrounding the tournament field. After a long noon break, another fanfare announces the start of the next competitions.

In the evening, participants with high status and important guests gather in the castle's hall or a richly decorated festival tent erected for the event, to share a meal. After the meal, people sit together, drinking beer and wine while being entertained by musicians, acrobats, and other performers.

Non-noble spectators and participants eat in a tavern or one of the many food vendor stalls, and then drink until the morning hours. A colorful spectacle and celebration on the fairground, with music and dancing, lasts well into the wee hours of the morning.

same time as the tournament, as these events usually draw many spectators and help fill the purses of merchants.

Enrollment

Participation in a tournament in the Warring Kingdoms usually requires payment of an entry fee, which can only be established only by the tournament organizer. These fees have helped refill the coffers of a local noble who had a heavy tax obligation.

The tournament marshal and his assistants answer questions truthfully and keep track of who participates in each competition. They also check the roll of arms and verify that traveling fighters may participate in the knightly disciplines. Participants' status increases with the size of the family tree and the number of knights in the family.

Due to their lengthy family lines, members of the royal family and the aristocracy are considered the most important and most honorable opponents to fight in a tournament.



The tournament scribe treats everybody according to their standing. Knights from other lands usually are treated graciously, as they enhance the glory of the events. Only women from Teshkalia or abroad can participate in most tournaments in patriarchal Andergast. All participants must enroll during the registration period. Late registration is permitted only with a convincing reason.

For free men and commoners, only the first name is written in the list. For competitions like the joust or the battle with sword and shield, scribes note the family name, title, and coat of arms. Participating nobles display their family banners at the edges of the tournament field and hang their heraldic shields on stands next to the tournament track. Pairings as well as the order of the competitions are either selected randomly or chosen by the tournament marshal. Participants in a joust can choose their own opponents by simply touching the opponent's heraldic shield with their lance.

Tournament Gear

The greatest hurdle to entering a tournament is equipment, as knights must usually provide their own weapons, armor, and destriers. Many lesser nobles from the Warring Kingdoms can't afford to enter and risk going into debt if they want to participate. For this reason, neither realm considers it dishonorable to borrow equipment for the duration of a tournament. This option is often employed so knights can save old but well-tended heirlooms for war.

The most expensive proposition is the supreme discipline, the joust. The necessary equipment quickly adds up to hundreds of ducats, not including the horse. Depending on their preferences or purposes, event organizers determine in advance whether participants must carry blunted tournament weapons or real blades.

Ribbons of Favor

It is common during tournaments for lords and ladies to hand their chosen champion a ribbon of favor in their colors or bearing their coat of arms, which the knight ties to lance, helmet, belt, or gauntlet during the joust. These ribbons are a sign of sympathy, but not necessarily of love. Ribbons from the royal family or unmarried members of the aristocracy are especially sought after. Wearing such a ribbon of favor can even improve a fighter's standing, as it makes the audience pay closer attention. And onlookers love few things more than tragic or happy love stories that stem from a ribbon of favor.

The tournament marshal's assistants check all weapons for suitability. Knights who are missing proper armor, destrier, or weapons must borrow or rent equipment for a fee. When necessary, the organizer can usually supply bows, arrows, or throwing axes.

Black, White, and Green Knights

In some tournaments, one participant competes as the **Black Knight**. Instead of a heraldic shield, they wield a completely black shield, a duplicate of which hangs next to the other shields near the track. Often their horse wears a black shabraque. Black Knights can ride with visors closed but must reveal their identities to tournament marshals (only). Many aristocrats participate incognito in smaller tournaments to protect themselves from too many challenges. Ostracized robber knights can demonstrate their virtue in the guise of a Black Knight (or at least earn back the price of entry if they fight bravely and skillfully).

White Knights never fight for their own glory. Rather, they serve as proxies who ride on the tournament field in somebody else's name. Such knights are common in Andergast, where women normally aren't allowed to participate in tournaments. When settling disputes, White Knights fight for the honor of aristocratic women or for those who cannot defend themselves. Some fight to enforce the claims of a commoner who is a friend. White Knights always wear a ribbon of favor obtained from those in whose name they ride. As with Black Knights, they must identify themselves to the tournament marshal (only), who presides over their participation and the matter at hand. Before each fight, the announcer reveals the cause for which they fight, making them popular with the common folk.

Green Knights are becoming more common in Andergastan tournaments due to the strong influence of the sumes. In fact, it is a revived ancient tradition. Green Knights have been common sights in other realms for years, and mention of them extends back to ancient times. Green Knights, who are always selected by the sumes, fight to avenge crimes or blasphemies against forest and land, or else to serve a cause for the sumes. They are the only fighters who don't have to reveal their identity to anybody—and it is commonly believed that most aren't of noble blood and have never even been knighted.

“Fighting with sharp blades is called ‘using Pervalian rules,’ because Emperor Perval wanted to see blood during the Imperial Tournament in 935 FB and prohibited blunted blades. I don’t care which rules they use, as long as I can participate. I don’t have the necessary standing to enter most tournaments.”

—Geron Bladebreaker, Garethan mercenary



Tournaments with Pervalian Rules

Tournaments that do not use the rules designed to protect fighters are named after Emperor Perval, a former ruler of the Middenrealm who was known for his cruelty. In such tournaments, weapons must have sharp blades. All other tournament rules usually apply, but these conditions often result in grievous injuries or even fatalities. The winner of a joust has the right to keep or sell the loser’s armor and horse, though the loser has the right to make the first offer to get their gear back, to avoid the next feud.

Tournament Weapons and Armor

Tournament lances are made of wood, so they will break on a good hit. Also, unlike war lances, they do not have a metal tip. The tournament sword is either made of wood or has a blunted blade, making it fragile, but cheap. Purpose-made two-handed swords are nicknamed *tournament two-handers*. The price for a tournament weapon is usually about half of the cost of a sharp, battle-ready weapon of the same type.

For jousting, the combatants usually wear special tournament armor, a type of plate armor that offers great protection but is extremely heavy. Moving on the ground is highly restricted. For stats for this type of equipment, see *New Weapons and Armor* on page 152. For prices, see the *Price List* on page 88.

The Contests

Three competitions sit at the center of the tournament spectacle: the joust, the melee with shield and one-handed weapon, and the melee with two-handed weapons. The joust, which is only open to nobles, is the most popular. Somewhat uncommon is the *buhurt* or grand melee, a free joust followed by combat on foot and involving numerous knights. *Buhurt* is more common in Weiden and other places. Tournaments usually offer games for commoners as well, and events such as the caber toss (a folk event from Andrafall), cross-country runs, and archery and ax-throwing competitions are common. Squires and commoners often try their luck with Tilt at the Ring or Shield versus a Wooden Alrik (a quintain made to look like an armed knight).



Rules for the Contests

Use the following tournament rules for heroes who wish to participate in competitions. Each includes prerequisites for participation, victory terms, suggestions for standard participation fees, and the actual rules of the contest. The GM is free to set tournament prices, the duration of a tournament, the maximum number or participants and other details. Most competitions place no limit on number of participants. Competitions that involve paired opponents (such as man-to-man combat or joust) require an even number of participants.

Tournament Disciplines

Large tournaments usually offer many different competitions, while small or regional events usually offer only two or three. Almost all tournaments hold a joust, a knightly and prestigious event. This section describes the best-known tournament disciplines. Some tournaments offer other events, such as daring cart races or challenging cross-country runs. Those participating in duels with two-handed weapons can remove themselves from competition at any time simply by surrendering.

Caber-Toss

Participants: no restriction (uncommon for nobles)

Prerequisites: none

Participation Fee: 1 silverthaler

Archery and Axe-Throwing

Participants: no restriction

Prerequisites: Bow or throwing hatchet

Participation Fee: 1 ducat

Shield and Ring Tilt

Participants: no restriction

Prerequisites: Horse, lance

Participation Fee: 2 ducats

Jousting

Participants: Knight (advantage Noble of at least level 1)

Prerequisites: Horse, plate or tournament armor (sometimes chainmail is allowed), shield and tournament lance; special ability Mounted Combat, Tilt

Participation Fee: 20 ducats

Duel (One-Handed Weapon and Shield, or Two-Handed Weapons)

Participants: Noble (advantage Noble at least 1), warrior's letter, man-at-arms serving a noble, or good reputation (for example, a known hero)

Prerequisites: appropriate weapon and maybe shield; some tournaments permit only certain types of weapons.

Participation Fee: 5 ducats

Caber-Toss Rules

- Each participant gets one attempt. This toss decides victory and defeat.
- To throw the caber as far as possible; make a check using *Feat of Strength (Lifting)*.
- The contestant with the highest QL tossed the caber furthest and therefore wins.
- A failed check means that the tree trunk wasn't thrown far enough and the contestant has no chance of winning.
- If two or more participants tie for the highest QL, they make another *Feat of Strength (Lifting)* check and add the QL to their previous totals. If another tie results, continue making checks until a clear winner is determined (in this case, the winner managed to toss the caber mere inches further than the others).

Archery and Axe-Throwing Rules

- Roll against RC stat for Bows or Thrown Weapons, depending on the competition.
- Apply modifiers for the range and size of the target. Participants make three sets of 3 shots/throws each. The first set is made at the close range category for that weapon. For each successive set, the target is moved one category further away (close to medium, medium to far). The target is small. For aiming purposes, the target's center is a tiny target.
- Each hit is worth 1 point. Hitting the target's center is worth 2 points. A critical success always gains 1 bonus point.
- Targets move to the next range category after everybody has finished their set of shots.
- The winner is the participant with the most points. In cases of a draw, what happens depends on the tournament rules. Some tournaments award equal prizes for a draw, while at others, tied participants keep shooting or throwing until one participant misses.

Tilt at the Ring Rules

- This competition requires checks against the AT of the combat technique Lances.
- Over three consecutive sets, riders take turns collecting rings by impaling them on their lances. The highest scoring half of all participants in a set advances to the next set.
- A competition usually has three such sets and a finale, and takes place over two days. Points reset after each set.
- Riders can try to impale a ring thrice in a set. The easiest ring is worth 1 point, the medium difficulty ring is worth 2, and the difficult rings are worth 3. Attack rolls to hit a ring suffer a penalty of 0/2/4 (easy/medium/difficult). A failed attempt is worth 0 points.
- The rider with the most points wins the finale. In case of a draw, what happens depends on the tournament rules. Some tournaments award equal prizes for a draw, while at others, participants continue with sets until a clear winner emerges.

Tilt at the Shield Rules

- This contest has no winner. It mainly gives knights a chance to exhibit their skills and curry the audience's favor before taking part in the joust. Squires and commoners often try to prove themselves during Tilt at the Shield.
- Attacks against the shield of a quintain (here called a *Wooden Alrik*) require an AT check with the combat technique Lances.
- A successful hit requires the rider to dodge the spinning weight with a *Riding (Combat Maneuvers)* check. A failure inflicts 1D6+2 DP and unhorses the rider (see *Core Rules*, page 340).
- Succeeding in Tilt at the Shield makes it easier for a knight to challenge higher-ranked opponents in the joust (gain a bonus of +1 when making an *Etiquette (Manners)* check to challenge someone).
- A knight who fails the lance attack or gets hit by the *Wooden Alrik* suffers a penalty of 1 on the *Etiquette (Manners)* check to challenge somebody for the joust.

Jousting Rules

- The joust uses the rules for mounted combat (see *Core Rules*, page 239). Participants must know Mounted Combat and the maneuver Tilt.
- Challenging somebody of higher social rank requires a check using *Etiquette (Manners)*. To succeed, the QL must be equal to or greater than twice the difference in social standing (see *Core Rules*, page 338). Opponents of the same or lower rank can be challenged without

a check. Failing a check means you can only challenge opponents of lower social standing.

- The mounts' initiative determines which player rolls to attack first. During a joust, opponents always strike each other at the same time.
- *Riding* checks are not needed for setting horses to galloping or steering them towards opponents.
- The joust with the higher horse INI rolls an attack with the combat technique Lances.
- If the check fails, the attack misses the opponent or otherwise has no effect.
- If the attack succeeds, the opponent can try to defend with a shield. A successful parry reduces the damage of the hit to half the damage (after subtracting PRO).
- Both participants use tournament lances, which deal 1D6+8 DP per hit (this value already includes all modifiers for damage).
- If hit, the opponent must make a *Riding (Combat Maneuvers)* check with a penalty equal to (damage suffered after subtracting PRO) x 2 to stay in the saddle. If the check fails, the opponent falls from the horse. The ground is considered soft, therefore reducing the DP of falls by 2 (see *Core Rules*, page 340).
- A hit with the tournament lance also inflicts one level of *Stupor*. The QL of the last *Riding (Combat Maneuvers)* check may reduce the duration of the *Stupor* (see table). One pass in a joust takes about 30 seconds. The length of time between the various sets depends on the riders' condition. Sometimes the joust can proceed at once, sometimes contestants need a few moments to replace broken lances or check on wounds. The tournament judge allows up to 30 seconds. A participant who takes longer than 30 seconds is disqualified.

Quality Level	Duration of <i>Stupor</i>
QL 1	3 hours
QL 2	30 minutes
QL 3	3 minutes
QL 4	60 seconds
QL 5	10 seconds
QL 6	1 combat round

- A tournament lance breaks when it inflicts 11 or more DP. To continue the fight, you need a new tournament lance, at a cost of 30 silverthalers per lance.
- Special, tailored tournament armor protects riders during the joust. These suits have PRO 8, ENC 5, and cost at least 3,000 silverthalers.

- The participant with the lower INI makes an attack, using the same steps.
- Since both attacks occur simultaneously, it is possible for both riders to be knocked from their horses.
- Repeat this process until one knight is de horsed, is incapacitated, or gives up.
- The winner is the one who stays in the saddle the longest. In cases of a tie, the joust usually continues until a clear winner emerges.

Dueling Rules

- Use the regular combat rules.
- Tournament swords inflict 1D6+1 DP (combat technique Swords, damage threshold AGI/STR 16, AT/PA modifier 0/0, RE medium). Attacks that deal 7 or more DP in a single blow cause the sword to break. This requires the attacker to change weapons, and scores 1 point for the enemy. Contestants receive 1 point for each blow that their opponents do not parry.
- The winner is the first to score 5 points.
- During two-handed fights, it is also customary to use blunt blades, usually tournament greatswords (1D6+3 TP, Combat Technique Two-Handed Swords, damage threshold AGI/STR 16, AT/PA modifier 0/-2, RE medium). Hits that inflict 9 or more DP in a single blow cause the sword to break. This requires the attacker to change weapons, and scores 1 point for the enemy. Contestants receive 1 point for each blow that their opponents do not parry.
- In a two-handed combat, the winner is the first to earn 3 points.

Prizes

Winners often receive monetary prizes in the form of an embroidered purse full of gold and silver coins, though it is more common to receive a beautiful weapon or piece of armor (such as a precious sword, an excellent bow, a particularly robust shield, or an ornately decorated byrnie). Some prizes or trophies are symbolic, such as a golden tiara or a silver arrow. Sometimes the winner of a joust receives another title or even a fiefdom. Such tournament prizes are extremely rare and only handed out on special occasions (for example, to celebrate the marriage of the king or the birth of an heir).

Important Dates

The two best-known tournaments in the Warring Kingdoms occur in mid-Rondra and are organized by the royal houses, as follows.

- 13th-14th Rondra: Knightly tournament in Nostria
 - 13th-14th Rondra: Royal Tournament in Andergast
- Other tournaments usually take place on festival days, or else accompany marriages or funerals

Jousting Against the King

It's always a special event if the king or a member of the royal family participates in the joust. The current king of Andergast often took part in tournaments as a prince—and he often won the joust. Nobody expects the Andergastan king or the Nostrian queen to join the tournament themselves, as they are much too important to risk their lives without good reason. They can easily choose a representative without losing face, as all knights are usually willing to fight for their monarch.

Everybody thinks twice whether they challenge a king to a joust for a simple insult. The king can challenge whomever he wants. For a participant of the tournament may challenge a member of the royal family or the ruler only if they belong to the aristocracy themselves (advantage Noble of at least III). Often a challenge to a ruler is tied to a challenger's cause, such as the revocation or confirmation of a judgment, an open rebuke to a rival, or rehabilitation if the challenger's family has been disgraced.

There are daring tales of knights claiming the royal blessing for a marriage that is not befitting their social status, championing for a beloved or asking for a private audience. The cause should be of a personal nature, as no Nostrian bombast should be able to demand of the Andergastan king to end a war or hand over a piece of land.

The tournament marshal decides whether such a challenge is legal, and heralds announce the decision to the audience. Only the ruler decides whether the favor is granted. There is no record of the rulers of Nostria and Andergast having ever met on the tournament field, probably because both royal tournaments are always held at the same time.



Crafts and Technology

"You've got to admire a people who can repair almost anything using just a few basic tools. Well, maybe not an interest spindle from Xorlosh, but why would they ever need one of those? I have great respect for the lad who patched up our wagon wheel.

By Angrosh's beard and jug! If I knew I was going to need somebody who could help me quickly and effectively, I would choose someone from the Warring Kingdoms"

—Arbosh son of Angrax, forge dwarf master smith



The Warring Kingdoms are far from the most advanced region in Aventuria and have little technical finesse. They lack the time and financial resources for research and have little desire to pursue a new idea that most of their citizens would view as modern nonsense anyway. In many towns, such efforts are seen as a waste of time, as there are often more urgent problems to attend to, such as when the dike is about to break, or when the hated enemy arrives at the gates with a couple of men-at-arms in tow. Some of this resistance against progress might stem from the nature of the people who view anything new with suspicion. Thus, few innovations from the forges and fine mechanical workshops of the dwarves or the Horasian Empire get established in the Warring Kingdoms. Nostria's young queen is a bit more open, but the old Nostrian nobility tries its best to rein in such influences.

Perhaps this is why the Andergastans and Nostrians are truly gifted at improvisation and solving problems in creative ways. If they lack tools, they use the simple things from everyday life.

When short of raw material, they use something similar. This was why they created oak beer, which is quite popular in Andergast—they simply brewed it with the acorns they had in abundance.



Traditional crafts are very important in the Warring Kingdoms. Weapons like the Andergaster (a powerful greatsword) and the Nostrian longbow are known and feared well beyond the borders. But these weapons aren't the only thing produced in the Warring Kingdoms, which are also known for their finely carved figureheads (Nostria) or splendid pictorial columns (Andergast). Almost every article destined for daily use is made from wood and artfully decorated. Their richly ornamented shields made from stone oak wood are prized by knights and warriors all across northern Aventuria. Some famous items make popular gifts, such as the Nostrian nutcracker (classical nutcrackers shaped like hunters), Oldhagener dolls (a set of special marionettes that always come in sets of three that depict a knight, a damsel, and an evil wizard), Albuminer pipemen (smoking pipes whose heads depict scenes of fairy tales from the Warring Kingdoms), Trontsander wooden ship models (small, detailed models of ships constructed inside bottles), or Thuranian beech rascals (small, scary, wizened figures that look like weird fairy creatures).

This love for decoration also shows in their embroidery. Many pieces of clothing are decorated with artful motifs, and almost every gambeson carries the embroidered coat of arms of the owner's land lord or kingdom. In Andergast, leather armor is common, and almost every piece is covered with artful tooling.

Dike building is its own art form, and even though the Nostrians are true masters of this discipline, the Andergastans also know how to build *cordero* roads and solid corduroy bridges. The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms have invented many tools, and almost all serve as weapons. The dike fork's 3' long wooden handle widens at the end, while the tip of the tool is shaped like a flat spade with two tines. It is a symbol of freedom that men on the coast carry with pride.

The punt axe, a long bearded blade with a hammer head, is used to work dike walls. The peat cutter fork is a fusion of a narrow spade and a saw blade with two spikes. Hunters use a special hunting spear called a boar spear, or else a boar-catcher, which is an oversized dagger.

In a land with so many rivers and lakes, most ships are also built to sail in shallow waters. Large ships that are also seaworthy are made only in Nostria or Salta. At the queen's command, mages have started experimenting with old magical glyphs in the capital, to see if it is possible to strengthen the hull of a ship or improve its speed. Fishing with line, net, and weir was perfected long ago, and people never lack for intelligent ideas. That the Nostrians invented trawlers with heavy wooden edges to catch saltarels should surprise nobody.

Comparison with Earth

Andergast and Nostria have a technological level comparable with Germany or the Netherlands during the Middle Ages. Some things, like modern dikes or the draining and reclamation of whole regions by the sea, were invented later in Europe, but they are facts of life in Aventuria.

Of course, the magic of sumes and witches, and the works of the gods, makes quite a difference when shaping and influencing land, weather, and other risk factors.

Art and Music

“Alright, they don't compare to the opera in Vinsalt, but there is always at least one skilled minstrel around to sing you a song. And the best thing is that they don't expect a large tip! Usually, all they want is enough to buy themselves a drink.”

—Carolan Calavanti, Vinsaltan vagabond, modern



People in the Warring Kingdoms usually have little time for leisure, but music and dancing are common and very popular. The common instruments include flutes, drums, and bagpipes. Stringed instruments are rare, but many Andergastan noble ladies (and men in Nostria) know how to play the harp. Lyre and lute are also popular. Dances are simple, but cordial, as usually the people just enjoy being close to others in happy moments.

Patriotic tunes, minnesong, and satirical songs are very common in the Warring Kingdoms. Few things create a stronger sense of community than taking a jab at those you do not like. Satirical songs usually allow listeners to join in, and even though it is common to mock unpopular nobles or enemies with whom one is feuding, most songs of this type are meant to insult an archenemy.

Nobles also love the arts, and few hold celebrations that do not include music and singing. Traveling bards and minstrels can earn good livings here, especially if they know their art and

can thrill an audience. Some members of this profession earn lasting fame.

In Nostria, people still sing the songs of the bard *Delusia Pernstone*, who wrote such popular tunes as *By the Stone of Nosteria*, the cheerful *The Happy Flounder Leaps*, or the sad ballad *Once Held Firm the Ingval*.

In Andergast, people still sing the tunes of legendary composer *Steinrich of the Hills*, who lost his life in the 15th War, during the Battle on Thurán Lake. People cherish his patriotic songs, such as *Ride On, O Knights*, *The Oak Never Falls*, *Sumu's Children*, and his early works, such as *The Fall of Beautiful Lady Andra*.

The High Art of Minnesong

A very popular form of song is *minnesong*, wherein a lady is the target of lyrical adoration. Clad in verses and melody, such a performance not only adds to the glory of the inamorata, but the wooer earns respect as well. Some female Nostrian knights have learned to play the lute so they can trill immortal verses to the young men of their fancy. Sometimes, the inamorata grants more than her favor to the minnesinger for his persistent wooing. The aristocracy's high art of wooing is spreading to the lower classes, and sometimes merchants' sons or the daughters of yeomen adore the target of their love in a similar way.

Marriage is not always the intended result of minnesong. Rather, it is the highest form of adoration, and this often public



longing and worship is never fulfilled. Even when the target of this adoration has already entered the alliance of Travia, the spouse often allows the minne to continue. Of course, some instances end in terrible scenes of jealousy.

When marriage is the intended result, whether such a performance can convince future in-laws of the singer's cause depends on skill, as well as on old enmities and everyday politics. Minne can easily grow to encompass more than mere adoration, especially among knights, which cannot accept the slightest insult to the honor of their chosen ones, and such slights demand a fight to save their reputation, sword in hand, if need be.

"Oh beautiful Andergast, land of proud oaks! Sumu's greatest pride on Dere! Wind rushes over the land, where proud knights hunt for orcs and goblins with sword and lance in hand. Your waters rush through exalted valleys, brining good harvests to the peasants, full nets to the fishers, and strength to carry the incomparable wood mile after mile. Your high mountains, crowned by impregnable castles, your flowering meadows, where pigs and cows grow fat, your idyllic villages, where proud champions show their strength and fair maidens weave flower wreaths—what land shall compare to thee? Since Lord Argos founded the first town here, since Andra sacrificed herself for the land, Sumu's love and care lie upon you. From the unexplored peaks of the Stone Oak Forest to the blue light of Thuran, from the Kosh Gate to the babbling Ornib, where else on Sumu's body can you find such grace and ferocity, such beauty and splendor? O Andergast, most beautiful of all lands!"

—Ode to Andergast, by the knight Osgar of Otterpaw, performed at the coronation of his friend Wendelmir, 1036 FB

*"Nostria, land of lakes and rivers.
Efferd's blessings at the coast,
Glittering rivers through the land,
That kissed the land with their grace,
From the deepest forest to the ocean's edge.*

*Nostria, land of noble souls!
Every young man splendid,
Every maiden beautiful,
Proud work of divine might,
Must praise you, must honor you.*

*Nostria, land of brave knights!
Hear the sounds of proud blades,
See them fight with courage.
I want to sing of their skill,
See them rush towards the enemy.*

*Nostria, land of the Lord of Stags!
Most beloved by the gods,
Blessed by the will of those above.
Land and people o so pure.
I think of you in proud silence."*

—Ode to Beautiful Nostria, by the bard Delusia Pernstone, around 1005 FB

Artisan Craftwork

During winter, when working in the fields is impractical, many Andergastans and Nostrians carve or embroider.

Every inhabitant of the Warring Kingdoms seems to share a desire to make everyday items as beautiful as possible. Thus, everything is a work of art that is splendidly decorated and usually shows a scene from mythology or history. Prized armor and weapons, beautiful tapestries and chests often pass from parent to child and stay within the family that created them, even though many of these pieces would certainly bring good money if sold on the market.



Chapter 4: Trade and Commerce



“It’s not always easy to find exactly what you need, especially outside of towns like Nostria, Salta, Joborn, or Andergast. Some things that are common in Gareth or Khunchom are the greatest challenge. And I’m not talking about exotic weapons, alchemical potions, or magical fripperies.

What they lack in goods and skills, people make up for with their generosity. These gifted folk can repair anything with the simplest tools. Unfortunately, I couldn’t find anyone who was able to repair my telescope. There doesn’t seem to be a single lens grinder in the whole region. The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms are inventive, I must say—Nostrians as well as Andergastans! Honestly, who else would think of brewing beer from spinach or acorns? Granted, it’s a bit weird, but that doesn’t mean you should deride it.

Never make the mistake of calling a thing by the wrong name! In Andergast, a greatsword is called an Andergaster, but never mention that word in Nostria where people refer to that oversized tool of murder as a Nostrianer (and no, that is not the term for locals, which are properly called Nostrians). The same goes for the Nostrian longbow—be sure to call it an Andergastan longbow in Andergast, or you will make an enemy.

I have often heard that some goods are sold only in one of the kingdoms, but you can obtain most of these things on the other side of the border if you know what to ask for. For example, when traveling through Nostria, if you want Teshkal gin, ask for Oldhagener gin instead. If you want a wooden doll in Andergast, ask for one from Andrafall, not from Oldhagen. You’ll get used to it in no time, you’ll see!”

—Blessed One of Peraine Brother Hilbert to an adventurer, modern



The range of available goods quickly shows travelers in the Warring Kingdoms that most people here earn their living from agriculture or fishing. Working people usually produce only what is needed, and few in rural areas possess specialized skills. On the other hand, most rural inhabitants can make plowshares with a hammer and an anvil, or repair a wagon wheel with simple carving tools and an axe.

Grocers are rare in rural communities. Traveling merchants, who come to town with hand carts or ox-drawn carts, are

high points of village life. Heroes must take advantage of these opportunities to buy things that aren't made in the village. It can be difficult to find a good dagger when a town doesn't have a skilled smith.

Almost every family bakes bread, brews beer, spins wool, and weaves cloth. Everyone knows someone who tans leather, builds furniture, weaves linen, or creates charcoal. The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms may be viewed as backwards, but they are true masters of getting by.

Currency and Payment

"What's that? You give me an andrathaler? Are you kidding me? Our bet was for a gold coin! This means you give me a shiny ducat with the face of the Horas or the Empress. If you have nothing else, I'll accept two andrathalers. Always remember: You must pay your gambling debt, by Phex!"

—Carolan Calavanti, Vinsaltan vagabond, modern



Coins are rare in many remote areas of the Warring Kingdoms. Bartering is the norm, where one party offers something they have in excess, or else something the other person needs badly. The kings and queens of the Warring Kingdoms have often tried to mint their own currency. But gold coins like the **andrathaler** or the **Nostrian crown** have such a low gold content that they are worth only 5 silverthalers, even in their own countries. Outside of the Warring Kingdoms, these coins either aren't accepted as payment or else trade at a terrible exchange rate. Both royal houses have stopped minting and circulating coins,

mainly because they never tried making anything smaller than a crown or thaler.

Of course, travelers should avoid using the enemy's currency in either realm. For that reason, the most common currency in the Warring Kingdoms is that of the Middenrealm and the Horasian Empire: one golden ducat is equal to 10 silverthalers, 100 bronze halers, or 1,000 iron kreutzers. Traders and craftworkers usually accept the coins of both great realms without question.

The practice of accepting hacksilver as currency has caught on due to the Warring Kingdoms' proximity to Thorwal. Silver is hacked into small bits, weighed, melted, and formed into rings or bracelets marked off with set breaking points to obviate the need for scales later. Bills of exchange, like those handed out by the Northland Bank, are almost unknown in the Warring Kingdoms. The only subsidiary of this famous Bornish bank is located in Salta, but it deals only in promissory notes.

Measurements and Weights

"Yes, I understand. A Thuranian cubit is equal to 20 inches when it is used for linen, and Thuranian cloth has an edge length of two cubits? Yes? Thank the gods! Now I can do my calculations in square yards!"

—A desperate trader from Griffonsford, 1039 FB

The measurement reform instituted by Shepherd of the Realm Rohal never really caught on here. Measurements in the Middenrealm and the Horasian Empire are determined by Imperial decree, but in Andergast, every landholder can decide on measurements and weights. Examples include the Mirdiner pound (which is only about 9 ounces), the Thuranian cubit (20 inches, when applied to linen), and the Nostrian jug (about half a pint). It's important to use

the correct cubit, pound, or jug, though, as measurements differ from region to region and village to village.

Thurnian cubits and Teshkaler cubits have a ratio of 1:3, which means that the Teshkaler cubit is 60 inches long. The Nostrian jug was more than one third larger in the past, but the Church of Rahja has been carefully molding it to Middenrealm standards in an attempt by the Blessed Ones to gain harmony (arguments between local and foreign traders were a serious problem). This change benefits trade, especially in larger towns. Older Nostrians sometimes still curse about the "half empty jug," though many of them mutter or are so drunk that it comes out sounding like "hempy jug."

Rohal's standard measures (the yard, the pound, and the pint) are now widely accepted by craftworkers and long-distance traders in many large towns due to pressure from foreign traders and travelers. Nevertheless, in larger

towns, some scribes still sell expensive conversion tables to strangers, although these tables aren't always correct, and some even slightly favor local traders.

Trade and Services

"These longbows are excellent, considering that they were made by humans. Really great work, even though you need immense strength to use this weapon to its fullest. I am always happy to visit my family, whose bowyers possess much greater skill, but real elven bows are rare. I heartily recommend Nostrian longbows to a strong human."

—Layariel Treetopglint, elven wyldranner, modern



Though scarce in rural areas, specialized craftworkers are somewhat common in towns. But the services of armorers, carpenters, alchemists and architects are often very expensive. In the Warring Kingdoms, craftworkers make clothes, most suits of armor, and, especially, bladed weapons such as short swords or Andergasters, only by request. Demand usually isn't great enough to prepare them in advance. After all, who knows if certain sizes, colors, or shapes would ever sell? The habit of decorating clothes with fine embroidery, or tooling leather armor with artful embossing, means craftworkers want to know their customers in advance rather than guess their preferences.

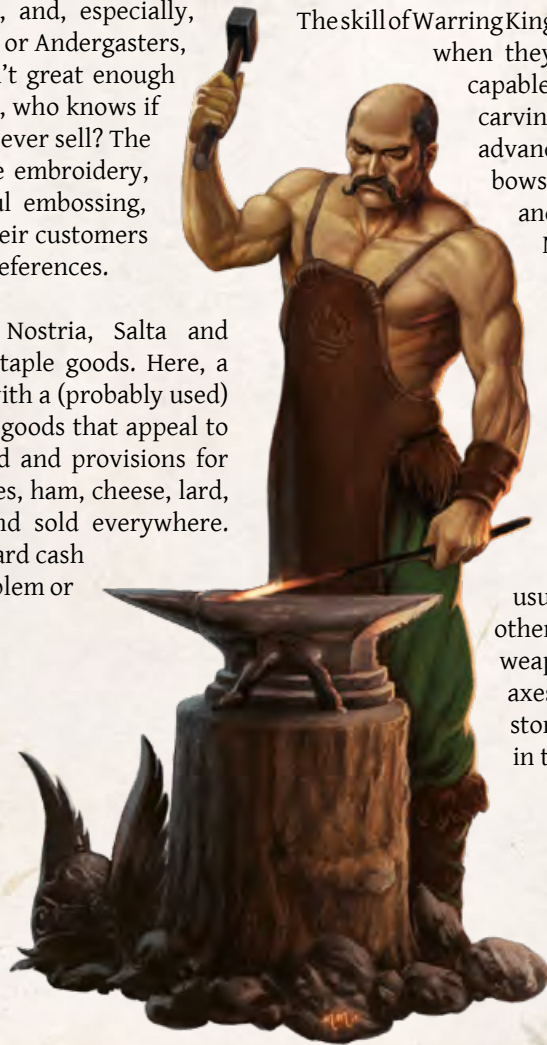
In larger towns like Andergast, Nostria, Salta and Salterhaven, grocers stock certain staple goods. Here, a traveler can replace a broken saber with a (probably used) weapon. Such shops choose to stock goods that appeal to as many customers as possible. Food and provisions for travelers (such as hard-cured sausages, ham, cheese, lard, and bread) are usually available and sold everywhere. Sometimes, the seller doesn't want hard cash and either expects help solving a problem or obtaining an item instead.

This practice is rare in larger towns but still an everyday occurrence in smaller villages. Everyday tools like dishes (usually artfully decorated and made of wood or clay), simple tools (knives, axes, saws, and so on), ropes, candles, and backpacks, or hunting and fishing equipment such as hunting knives, short bows, boar spears, or nets can be found almost everywhere. In rural areas, prices for such goods are usually higher than in the towns.

Uncommon regional tools, such as dike forks or raft hooks (which also serve as improvised weapons) are available in most large villages. The Warring Kingdoms mainly export wood and wood products. Special items made from the wood of the stone oak, which is very popular for its hardness, or the Nostrian maple, are favorites abroad.

The skill of Warring Kingdoms' artificers shines especially when they work with wood, as they are capable of creating very sophisticated carvings. Bow manufacture is very advanced, especially in Nostria, whose bows are famous across the continent, and their weapons are sold in the Middenrealm and across the north.

Metalworking produces other everyday tools as well as weapons and armor. The ore from the mountains of the Stone Oak Forest is seen as inferior (the steel it makes is rather fragile, and blacksmiths and armorers from larger towns usually import materials from other lands). For that reason, impact weapons such as maces or battle axes, those with handles made of stone oak wood, are more common in the Warring Kingdoms.



Price List

Weapons

Andergaster/Nostrianer	400 silverthalers
Battle axe	105 silverthalers
Battle scythe	60 silverthalers
Boar-catcher	60 silverthalers
Boar spear	100 silverthalers
Club	3 silverthalers
Druid dagger (flint)	15 silverthalers
Glaive	50 silverthalers
Halberd	160 silverthalers
Hunting knife	50 silverthalers
Long sword	200 silverthalers
Mace	105 silverthalers
Nostrian longbow	100 silverthalers
Oakhavener/Harmlyner	440 silverthalers
Short bow	45 silverthalers
Stag-catcher	100 silverthalers
Stone oak mage's staff (long)	320 silverthalers
War-flail	50 silverthalers
War-lance	100 silverthalers

Armor

Chain coat	120 silverthalers
Gambeson	75 silverthalers
Great shield	3000+ silverthaler

Helmet with nose guard	100 silverthalers
Scale mail	400 silverthalers

Tournament Gear

Tournament armor	3000+ silverthalers
Tournament lance	30 silverthalers
Tournament shield	50 silverthalers
Tournament sword	20 silverthalers
Tournament two-handed sword	40 silverthalers

Tools

Cutting tools	20 silverthalers
Dike fork	30 silverthalers
Punt axe	40 silverthalers
Raftman's hook	5 silverthalers
Saw	12 silverthalers
Scythe	40 silverthalers
Spade	8.5 silverthalers
Woodsman's ax	80 silverthalers

Artisan Craftwork

Albuminer pipeman	8 silverthalers
Nostrian nutcracker	5 silverthalers
Oldhagener doll	3 silverthalers
Thuranian beech rascal	5 silverthalers
Trontsander wood model ship	15 silverthalers

Law and Order

"A five silver fine just because I called him a pretentious show-off? You can't be serious, you greedy money-grubber. No, no, here, take this gold coin, this andrathaler. I want no trouble with you or your men-at-arms, highborn."

—Geron Bladebreaker, mercenary, modern



Laws used in most other realms, such as the *Codex Raulis*, the *Ius Concordia* (which separates church and rulers) or the *Garethan Pamphlet* (which prevents mages from ruling) have no authority in the Warring Kingdoms. The nobles make judgments based on traditions and personal feelings. This is why nobody ever felt it necessary to record laws, though there are a few exceptions.

The king or queen holds the highest authority in all matters of law.

The ruler is chosen by the gods and best suited to decide between right or wrong. Only a judgment by nobles chosen

by the ruler carries similar weight. In larger towns, the lord of the town often appoints a knight to attend to these duties. Such judges are usually nobles and officials who report to the rulers.

The **sumes** are above the law in Andergast and sometimes act as judges, advisers, or jurors in a trial. Whenever someone is accused of a crime, the council of sumes is asked to decide the punishment. Nostrian **witches** don't enjoy such privileges, but the judges tread lightly here, too, as nobody wants to stir up permanent trouble with the Daughters of Satuaria.

Priests or **Blessed Ones** of the Twelvegods have no special legal standing, but often, their crimes are considered venial (even their capital crimes, depending on severity). **Mages** live under the common law in Andergast, while Nostria adheres to the *Codex Albyricus*, which protects guild mages. Representatives of the mage guilds often ask for especially harsh punishments to avoid losing this privilege.

If the accused is a member of the **aristocracy**, or if the crime is High Treason or Rebellion, only the monarch has

the authority to conduct the trial and render judgment. Unlike the Middenrealm, **elves** and **dwarves** in the Warring Kingdoms cannot fall back on the *Trallopier Treaty* or the *Lex Dwarfia*; instead, they are judged as humans.

Crimes

Depending on the type of the crime, judges pass sentence immediately and without a trial for crimes like theft, robbery, slander, or fraud. Knights and noble officials can punish such crimes themselves. Capital crimes that fall under the high justice of the aristocracy are decided in an open trial. Such crimes include murder, treason, arson, forgery of seals, and desecration of temples.

Many areas forbid non-nobles from owning bladed weapons longer than a short sword, but offenses are usually punished with a simple fee. In reality, though, this ban has many exceptions. Peasants rightly say that their scythes and axes are tools, not weapons. However, men-at-arms without a warrior's letter or similar license can barely pursue their trade without their "tools," and nobles usually agree. Only nobles have the right to hunt big game, and the pursuit and punishment of poachers differs by fiefdom. In general, sumes punish poaching and desecrations of the forest, as they consider themselves the guardians of Sumu's body and all forest creatures. They have a different sense of justice compared to the ruling nobility, and render judgments based on the merciless laws of nature.

Judgment and Punishment

As with all official gatherings, only free locals are permitted to speak at trial. All others need an intercessor or may only speak when asked to. In Andergast, this also goes for women, no matter their station. The only exception is Blessed Ones and guild mages, who can speak freely.

The procedure of a trial is as simple as it is informal. Accusers present their claim, and those accused answer. Sometimes, witnesses are called to clarify a situation, or evidence is presented. Then the judge confers with the jury, if any, and passes judgment. If the verdict is guilty, the judge announces a punishment.

Imprisonment is uncommon, as nobody wants to take care of a convict. The exceptions are debtors, as it is hoped that relatives or friends will buy their freedom—and also pay for the cost of food and accommodation incurred during their detention. In Nostria, traitorous nobles are incarcerated in the Fortress of Gordelyn, where they languish until given a chance to prove themselves in war.

Those who can't pay a **punitive fee** must work off the sum or pay in kind. Judges often prefer these punishments, as they may keep part of the fee for themselves.

Corporal punishment is performed publicly as a deterrent. This involves beatings with sticks, being submerged in a river or lake, or presentation at the pillory. More extreme punishments include mutilation, branding, and blinding. Thieves can expect to lose a hand, and frauds receive a tattoo on their brow or cheek.

Murderers, robbers, and traitors are **executed**, but only nobles have the right to be killed with an executioner's sword. Most others go to the gallows, though impaling or breaking on the wheel are still common. Deserters and traitors may be drowned in a swamp, though this mainly employed in the Lakeland. Most of these souls find no peace and return as undead. Usually, burning at the stake is reserved for those who murder priests or desecrate temples.

Trials by ordeal are common in both kingdoms. In addition to the common duels to the death, Nostria also employs "sending" and "winding" (see below).

In Andergast, the most common trial by ordeal, called "chased into the woods," involves dressing the accused in only a linen shirt and chasing them into the forest.



During the highly nasty “badgering,” a delinquent is tied down over the entrance of a badger’s burrow for one day and one night....

Special Types of Execution

- During an **oaking**, boiling oak tar is poured over the condemned, or else they are beaten with heavy oak

clubs or struck with heavy oak logs until they stop moving. (Andergast)

- **Winding** means placing the accused in an iron cage that is then hung from a quay wall during bad storms. (Nostria)
- **Sending** means that the accused is tied to a log and tossed into the river. (Andergast and Nostria)

Taxes and Tolls

“You want me to wrap my sword up and sling it over my back, and then pay you a silverthaler to let me keep it? What type of customs schedule is that? Why didn’t your colleague on the last bridge tell me this? Here, take this andrathaler, before your toll fee doubles. It’s worth five silver.”

—Geron Bladebreaker, mercenary, modern



Nobles have the right and obligation to decide the level of taxes and tolls, how to collect them, and when. They also decide which goods to tax at higher rates, and which goods to outlaw.

Usually the **tax** on a free citizen is about 10% of what they earn for the year. This usually isn’t expected in money, so most countryfolk pay in kind. Yeomen and burghers must pay in cash. Taxes are always paid to the landholder. Inhabitants of the country usually pay a knight, who in turn pays his baron. All barons must give part of their earnings to the ruler. The royal houses of both kingdoms gain additional income through their personal estates.

Anything the unfree generate belongs to their lord and is added to the lord’s earnings. Blessed Ones and priests are exempt from paying taxes, as are witches in Nostria and sumes in Andergast (if they openly show what they are, that is). Landholders and town councils often demand **gate and road fees**, usually one kreutzer per leg and one haler per wheel. The same goes for causeways and bridges. If someone can’t pay, knights might send their men-at-arms to collect. Travelers can even meet bridge trolls in remote areas, but these creatures are usually satisfied if they receive a pot of honey or some sweets.

Many people also pay a temple tithe, nominally to ask for the assistance of the Supernatural. In the Warring Kingdoms, this paid not just to the Twelvegods but also to the priests of the various nature religions. The borders of the Warring Kingdoms are long and lonely, and border control is rare. Royal toll houses and border guard huts are only present on main trade routes, and most travelers do

not even realize when they cross into the other realm. Even border steles or coats of arms are also rare in most places, and in the Warring Kingdoms, such information usually isn’t reliable anyway. Toll amounts range from 1 haler for a peasant, to 10 silverthalers for warriors and mercenaries, to 5 ducats for guild mages and nobles from foreign lands. Blessed Ones and nobles traveling under the King’s Peace are exempt from toll payments. Often, the Daughters of Satuarria (in Nostria) and druids (in Andergast) are also exempt, if they can prove their status and residency.

Merchants and traders must pay an import tax of about 5% of the value of the goods they carry (this is rarely paid further from the main trade routes, though). In rural areas, local landholders or men-at-arms of the various noble houses enforce the king’s tax, but some unscrupulous landholders combine this duty with their right to set the tax rate to fill their coffers, just like robber knights. Of course, this doesn’t stop true robber knights from posing as vassals of the legitimate ruler to wring some coin from travelers. Border patrols are rare, and royal guards or knights make an appearance only when they wish to check on activities of the enemy.

As any traveler will attest, dealing with them can be wearisome, as they expect attacks and ambushes from all quarters. Without warning, an innocent stranger spending time near the border might be admonished, fined, or even accused of espionage or high treason.



Chapter 5: Flora and Fauna

“It’s the plan of Sumu’s world that we must care for the beasts and plants whose voices do not reach the ears of most humans. True, not many of them speak to us, but we have an idea what the forest needs, what a tree needs. And we can see what helps and hurts an animal. Sumu herself tasked the first of our kind with the protection of these special forests. But it is not only up to us, for there are other and much older powers also protecting the forest. Just think of the various tree shepherds, usually called treants. It is our duty to be mediators between them and humans, as humans could never win a battle with these primal forces. In the end, even burghers in their towns are nothing but children of Sumu. Here in the Forest Wilderness, the eternal combat of the realms is plain to see, my young student. Learn from the most noble inhabitants of the wilderness, the immortal kings of Aurochs and Crowned Stag, whose feud is as old as that between Andergast and Nostria. Learn also from the treants, but do not think that all of them are alike. Their moods are as numerous as the shapes of trees, and there is a reason they are called tree shepherds.

Angering a treant is foolish, but I will teach you how to placate these creatures. Then you will learn from them how to tell which woodsman can receive your blessing and which cannot, which tree can be cut down, and which may never fall. And, before you ask, even I have not learned whether marwolds, the trees-with-souls, were created by the treants. Sometimes I suspect that the souls of the dead are drawn to these forests, and the same goes for dark fairies and the spirits of Humus. I must continue to ponder this, and, I think, so should you.”

—Arbogast the Older, sume, to his student Kusmin Zornbold, 1034 FB



Plant and animal variety is greatest where nature rules and humans are relatively few in number, as they are in the Warring Kingdoms. The impenetrable Forest Wilderness, especially, is home to many creatures that were displaced by human encroachment. The fragrant herbs of forest

and meadow grow in abundance where there is little agriculture. The hunting reserves in the Warring Kingdoms may be large, but it is not always clear at first glance which is the hunter and which the hunted.

Flora and Fauna in the Warring Kingdoms

“The Old Man from the Mountain does not care if my spear claims stag or aurochs. The sumes can talk as much they want, they don’t understand everything. I hunt because it’s the way of the world, and in the end, it will be me who survives.”

—Kurwamir, Blessed One of Firun, modern

The Warring Kingdoms are fairly remote region, and in the primal forests and isolated bodies of water hold many animals and creatures that are rarely seen in more populated areas of Aventuria. Quite a lot of them pose a true danger for travelers.

The **Seven Winds Ocean** is full of fish. Saltarels, Olporter herring, cod, sprat, and haddock are common. Saltarels, flatfish that live on the ocean floor, can be caught with slow trawlers. Whales are uncommon in the region, but Olport whales, sperm whales, mink whales, and green whales are sometimes seen. Whaling as a profession is rare in the region, due to the proximity to Thorwal, where people worship the whale god Swafnir. Hammerhead sharks and tiger sharks are hunted by brave shark lancers. One sometimes sees dolphins, the holy animals of Efferd, as well as krakennewts, impressive decapusses, and even frightening sea serpents. At the coast, there are also many birds, such as blue gulls, spoon gulls, skuas, fish thieves, swoopers, and storm birds thrive on the coast, along with the rare great albatrosses and small golden plovers.

Animals abound in the sparsely wooded foothills and the omnipresent swamps and bodies of water of the **Lakeland**. Pika, redtuft, goose lynx, yellow fox, partridge, bustard, and wild cat are at home here. In the swamps, there is always the chance of attack from creatures like swamp krakennewts, morfus, or jumping leeches. Encounters with will o’ the wisps often end badly for the traveler. Grasses like fescue, foxtail, and pin rush, and weird herbs like mibel reed and hollberry grow here in abundance.

The forests consist mostly of birch, alder, willow, elm, and Nostrian maple tree. Pine trees grow where the ground becomes sandy.

The inland waters are full of fish as well as otter, beaver, Ferdoker trout, water wolf, Angbarer Rondra pike, redfin perch, angbass, and carp, and they are hunted by humans with net and spear.

Deciduous forests, whose branches stick out far over the water, are common on the Ingval and Tommel. The light green of willows, alder, and elm trees slowly gives way

to the primal forests of the **Forest Wilderness**. Oaks, especially the mighty stone oak, whose wood is extremely durable, are very common here. Copper beech, Nostrian maple, and horse chestnut are often felled here, too. Silver fir and Thurian spruce are less common. Deep in the forest’s interior, the trees become even more impressive and awe-inspiring, and the undergrowth is so dense that travelers must force their way through.

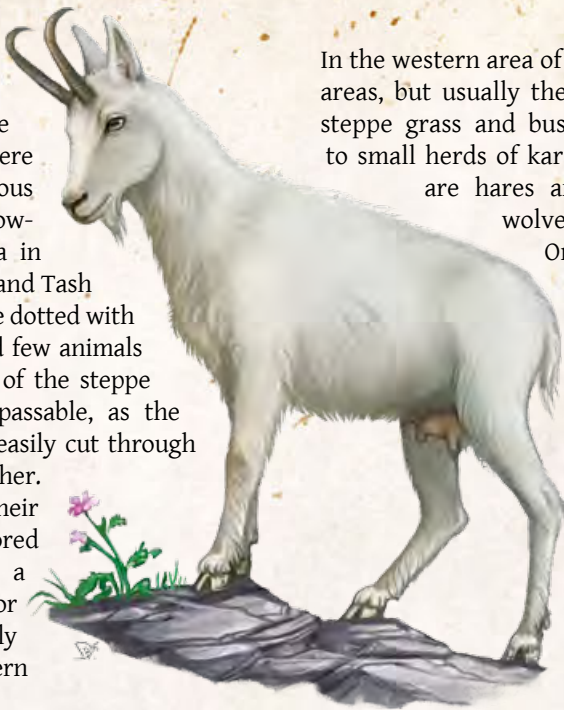
Groves of thousand-year-old trees, guarded jealously by treants that are not much younger, grow in places in the Forest Wilderness. They are covered in mosses and beard lichen that make them appear even older. Jorunga and lulany grow at the forest’s edge. In addition to the usual game, like deer, crowned stags, aurochs, boars, and rabbits, these woods contain dangers such as forest spiders, tree dragons, forest wolves, wild cats, and several types of bear. Goblin families dwell here as well, nominally to escape human encroachment, though they often conduct stealthy raids on human settlements.

At the edge of the Forest Wilderness, travelers might meet a noble hunting party seeking a splendid stag or bear. It is said that two powerful nature spirits, animal kings known as Crowned Stag and Aurochs, also live in the Forest Wilderness, and that they hate each other with as much animosity as that shared between Andergast and Nostria. Deep in the wilderness, south of Nibwell, there is a noticeable and unexplained abundance of giant stag beetles, shoving beetles, and other insects, as well as crypt louses. (🐞 177)

The Forest Wilderness is said to be home to scary trees, which people fearfully call marwolds. They are thought to be possessed by spirits, fairies, or the ghosts of the dead. They strike out at careless travelers with their branches.

Above the tree line of the **Stone Oak Forest mountains**, the barren land is home to stone oak chamois, mountain goats, and marmots. Mountain eagles circle in the air, and there are even some west wind dragons, harpies, hippogriffs, and even real griffons. Lower on the mountainsides, the slopes and valleys are covered with dense deciduous forests. The most famous are the stone oak forests, which in part are made up of huge, primeval trees. Grimwolves, mountain lions, cave bears, and tatzelwurms live here, and cave spiders have settled in the many caverns. A tree known as the King of Oaks, an ancient tree with a soul, is said to grow in the heart of the ancient forest and rule all life in the region as the king of the forests.

The **Steppes of the East**, often called the Bladegrass Steppe, spread out south of the Stone Oak Forest. West of Teshkal, there are only patches of the eponymous grass, but this waist-high, yellow-green plant covers a large area in the east as far as the Dark Ridge and Tash mountain ranges. The steppes are dotted with red poppy and elder bushes, and few animals can live here. The eastern part of the steppe from Teshkal on is almost impassable, as the robust leaves of bladegrass can easily cut through sturdy materials such as leather. Travelers are advised to plan their route through this little explored area, to avoid stumbling into a lethal dead end. Orcs are a major threat here, as they frequently range south through the Northern Stone Oak Forest.



In the western area of the steppe, there are small forested areas, but usually the ground is so dry that only tough steppe grass and bushes can survive here. In addition to small herds of karans and Halmaran antelopes, there are hares and rabbits, which are hunted by wolves, foxes, and lynx. Bark bears and Orcland bears also live here, as well as warthinos or woolly rhinos, or the very rare horned dragon. Andergastan pigs are a popular livestock animal, but Teshkaler horses are the area's best known export. *Teshkalers*, a cross between Svellt Valley horses and robust Orcland ponies, are draft horses with shiny black fur. They are bred in the steppes of eastern Andergast to serve as reliable mounts and excellent cart horses. They sometimes even serve as destriers in the Warring Kingdoms.

Bestiary of the Warring Kingdoms

"Strange beasts they got here. Ligorns and other crawlers, stag beetles, dragonflies, and big spiders... You should always have your axe ready."*

—Arbosh son of Angrax, forge dwarf master smith



This section gathers monsters and animals the heroes might meet in Andergast and Nostria. Some of these creatures are also common in other regions, where they can also make life difficult for the heroes. This chapter does not discuss goblins and orcs (for more info on these creatures, see the *Aventuria Almanac*, pages 150 and 154, respectively).

Additional Information about Creatures

Special Ability: Tradition (Unicorn)

- Unicorns do not need to make gestures or speak during spellcasting.
- Only unicorns can learn this Tradition. Unicorns cannot learn spells from other Traditions.
- Unicorns halve all penalties for spell modifications.
- Unicorns receive a bonus of 1 to spells with the properties Healing and/or Clairvoyance.
- Unicorns cannot learn spell with the property Demonic.
- The primary attribute of this Tradition is Intuition.

Prerequisites: Spellcaster must be a unicorn.

AP Value: 120 adventure points

Attack Weak Spot (Special Maneuver)

With this special attack, the creature can attack an unprotected part of the body.

Rules: This attack suffers a penalty of 2. The target can defend normally. If the AT succeeds and the target's defense fails, the attack ignores PRO stemming from clothes and armor. This attack cannot circumvent magical, karmic, or natural PRO, and such protection grants its full benefit.

Penalty: -2

Prerequisites: Creature must possess this SA naturally.

Trample (Special Maneuver)

Trampling is one of the simplest ways to attack an opponent and cause a great amount of damage. The creature makes a

kind of charge attack, but does not stop moving at the target's position and instead charges on, even if it hits other targets.

Rules: Trample is only possible if the attacker has a MOV of at least 4 *and* moves a distance of at least 24 feet before making the attack. The target can defend normally. If the Trample is unsuccessful, the target can make an attack of opportunity, but with an additional penalty of 4. If the Trample maneuver succeeds, subsequent attacks made by the target against the same creature during that CR suffer a penalty of 2. At the end of that CR, the creature ends its movement a maximum of (MOV/2) yards from the target (its choice), whether the Trample Attack succeeded or not. This special maneuver cannot be combined with the basic maneuver Feint.

Penalty: 0

Prerequisites: Creature must possess this SA naturally.

* Rogolan: unicorn

Aurochs

Aurochs have dark brown or black fur, shaggy manes, and impressive, slightly curved horns, and stand seven feet tall at the shoulder. They attack anything that threatens them in any way, and they have a deep, abiding hatred for unicorns. Aurochs usually travel in groups of three to five animals. The royal house uses the aurochs for its heraldry due to the creature's great strength.



Aurochs

Size: 6' to 7' long (without tail); 6'2" to 7'4" (with tail); 5' to 7' tall at the shoulder

Weight: 1,600 to 2,000 pounds
COU 12 SGC 9 (a) INT 12 CHA 12
DEX 10 AGI 12 CON 18 STR 23
LP 80 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6
DE 6 SPI -4 TOU 4 MOV 9

Horn Thrust (Bull): AT 9 DP 1D6+6 RE short

Horn Thrust (Cow): AT 9 DP 1D6+4 RE short

Trample: AT 8 DP 2D6+5 RE short

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Takedown (Horn Thrust), Trample (Trample)

Skills: *Body Control* 4 (12/12/18), *Climbing* (no check allowed, aurochs cannot climb), *Feat of Strength* 12 (18/23/23), *Intimidation* 8 (12/12/12), *Perception* 6 (9/12/12), *Swimming* 6 (12/12/23), *Self-Control* 6 (12/12/18), *Stealth* 2 (12/12/12), *Willpower* 12 (12/12/12)

Number: 1 bull +1D3+1 cows (maybe 1D3 calves)

Size Category: large

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 450 rations of meat, fur (2 silverthalers), trophy (horns, 2 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Aurochs try to trample humans, but after one attack, they allow the target time to get up and run away.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP

Hunt: -1

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Aurochs don't usually perceive humans as threats, but do sometimes attack people that enter their territory.
- **QL 2:** Their attacks are aggressive and involve little planning. Sometimes they fight like demons one moment and then sit peacefully the next.
- **QL 3+:** Aurochs hate unicorns and chase them for great distances.

Special Rules

Hatred for Unicorns: Aurochs feel strong hatred for unicorns. When a unicorn comes into sight, aurochs attack with the intent to kill.

Pack Mule: Aurochs can carry loads of up to 440 pounds.

Pain +1 at: 60 LP, 40 LP, 20 LP, and 5 LP or less

Cave Bear

Cave bears grow to a length of ten feet and have light-sensitive eyes, which is why they tend to remain in caves or caverns during the day. Their shaggy, gray fur keeps them dry and helps conceal them in low light conditions. Their thick layer of fat protects them from the cold. Cave bears are loners that usually live on a diet of plants and smaller animals.



Cave Bear

Size: 11 to 13 feet at the shoulder

Weight: 1,200 to 1,500 pounds
COU 14 SGC 12 (a) INT 12 CHA 12
DEX 11 AGI 11 CON 20 STR 23
LP 80 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6
DE 6 SPI 0 TOU 6 MOV 10

Paw: AT 12 DP 1D6+6 RE medium

Bite: AT 10 DP 2D6+3 RE short

PRO/ENC: 1/0

Actions: 2 (at most 1 x Bite)

Advantages/Disadvantages: Darksight II, Exceptional Sense (Smell)/Negative Trait (Curiosity), Susceptible to Light

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow (Bite, Paw), Takedown (Paw)

Skills: *Body Control* 4 (11/11/20), *Climbing* 7 (14/11/23), *Feat of Strength* 13 (20/23/23), *Intimidation* 11 (14/12/12), *Perception* 8 (12/12/12), *Self-Control* 13 (14/14/20), *Swimming* 7 (11/20/23), *Stealth* 2 (14/12/11), *Willpower* 5 (14/12/12)

Number: 1

Size Category: large

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 150 rations of meat, fur (25 silverthalers), trophy (teeth and claws, 15 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: When provoked or attacked, they stand up on their hind legs, attack with their paws, and try to bite their opponent.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP; when berserk (under the influence of *bloodlust*), bears fight to the death.

Hunt: -3

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Cave bears smell their prey from afar. You can avoid them by staying downwind.
- **QL 2:** They can become **berserk*** when injured or when their young are threatened.
- **QL 3+:** Cave bears's eyes are light sensitive. They don't like fighting in sunlight, which blinds them.

Special Rules

***Berserk:** Each time something threatens a bear's young or the bear receives a level of *Pain*, it must make a *Willpower* check. If the check fails, the bear gains the state *bloodlust*. This state ends with the opponent's death or after one hour.

Pain +1 at: 60 LP, 40 LP, 20 LP, and 5 LP or less

Crowned Stag

Crowned stags have light brown fur, long hair on their necks, long beards on their chin, and splendid antlers. The does live in small groups with their young, while the males are loners. The crowned stag is well respected in Nostria. Its speed and endurance led to its early adoption as the heraldic animal of the Nostrian Crown.



Crowned Stag

Size: 6 to 10 feet long; 4 to 6 feet tall at the shoulder

Weight: 360 to 520 pounds

COU 13 **SGC** 11 (a) **INT** 12 **CHA** 15

DEX 11 **AGI** 14 **CON** 14 **STR** 16

LP 45 **AE** - **KP** - **INI** 14+1D6

DE 7 **SPI** -3 **TOU** 0 **MOV** 16

Head-butt: **AT** 11 **DP** 1D6+3 **RE** short

Trample: **AT** 9 **DP** 2D6+2 **RE** medium

PRO/ENC 0/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Takedown (Head-butt), Trample (Trample)

Skills: *Body Control* 10 (14/14/14), *Climbing* 1 (13/14/16), *Feat of Strength* 9 (14/16/16), *Intimidation* 4 (13/12/15), *Perception* 7 (11/12/12), *Swimming* 5 (13/14/16), *Self-Control* 7 (13/13/14), *Stealth* 8 (13/12/14), *Willpower* 6 (13/12/15)

Number: 1, or 2D6+2 (herd)

Size Category: medium

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 110 rations of meat, fur (10 silverthalers), trophy (antlers, 15 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Stags flee from danger. When cornered or protecting their young, they head-butt with their sharp antlers until they get a chance to flee. Sometimes they simply try to trample their enemy.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP

Hunt: -1

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Crowned stags are the largest deer in Aventuria. Avoid them during the rutting season, as they can react aggressively to two-legged creatures, too.
- **QL 2:** A crowned stag's age can be determined by the length of its chin beard. The longer and grayer, the older and stronger the animal. Crowned stags remain healthy and strong until old age.
- **QL 3+:** According to legend, crowned stags dislike felines. As the story goes, a crowned stag once attacked and defeated a leopard on the prowl.

Pain +1 at: 34 LP, 23 LP, 11 LP, and 5 LP or less

Dragonfly, Giant

"These creatures, which can grow up to almost two feet long, attack humans and cattle in swarms during summer months, and even wild animals are not safe from them. They are nicknamed fireflies with good reason, for their bite is as painful as a serious burn, and their wings seem to flicker and glow like flames when they rise up to slake their thirst for blood."

—Haldoryn Salis, master of the hunt for the noble count of Salta, 1039 FB

These giant insects live mainly near lakes, rivers, and swamps, and reach a surprising length of 16 inches or even longer. Giant dragonflies take to the air in swarms of up to twenty animals to hunt for blood and meat, mainly during summer months. Such swarms are dangerous even to grown humans.

Giant dragonflies need to deposit their eggs in breeding ponds, to allow their larvae to grow. For many years, these creatures only lived north of a line drawn from Havena to Perricum. They were considered extinct in central Aventuria after several prudent emperors drained their original breeding grounds, but they have recently been sighted there again, possibly because something helped them cross the steppes of the Orclands.



These insects spend most of their lives as small larvae, which hatch in spring and quickly grow to adulthood. In summer, the beasts become ravenous and are not afraid to attack humans. The buzz and drone of the dragonflies' many wings and the glistening of their bodies can cause panic among peasants and men-at-arms alike. Reports from the Lakeland tell of battles that ended suddenly as both sides ran for cover when a swarm of giant fireflies approached the battlefield.

Giant Dragonfly

Size: 12" to 16" wingspan

Weight: 0.4 to 0.6 pound

COU 17 SGC 8(a) INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 12 AGI 14 CON 10 STR 8

LP 5 AE- KP- INI 16+1D6

DE 7 SPI 2 TOU 0 MOV 5

Touch, Bites, and Stings: AT 7 DP 1D3

RE short

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Attack Weak Spot, Flying Attack

Skills: *Body Control* 3 (14/14/10), *Feat of Strength* 1 (10/10/8), *Flying* 7 (17/13/14), *Intimidation* 4 (17/13/12), *Perception* 6 (8/13/13), *Self-Control* 11 (17/17/10), *Stealth* 4 (17/13/14), *Willpower* 4 (17/13/12)

Number: 1D20

Size Category: small

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 1 ration of meat (inedible)

Combat Behavior: Giant dragonflies hunt in groups and often attack human-sized targets. They try to kill their prey with countless touches, bites, and stings.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP.

Hunt: -2

Animal Lore (Monsters or Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Giant dragonflies attack in swarms of up to 20 animals.
- **QL 2:** Giant dragonflies consider human-sized targets as prey.
- **QL 3+:** Attacks against humans are more likely during warmer weather.

Pain +1 at: 4 LP, 3 LP, 2 LP, 1 LP



Emerald Adder

The emerald adder's scales are deep green in color and flecked with gold. These cunning animals grow more than six feet long and have a nasty bite, though they aren't poisonous. These handsome serpents are often chosen as familiars by witches of the Knowing Sisterhood.

Emerald Adder

Size: 6 to 7 feet long

Weight: 8 to 12 pounds

COU 11 SGC 14(a) INT 13 CHA 13

DEX 10 AGI 12 CON 10 STR 8

LP 10 AE- KP- INI 12+1D6

DE 3 SPI 2 TOU 0 MOV 3

Bite: AT 13 DP 1D6+1 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Attack Weak Spot (Bite), Feint I (Bite)

Skills: *Body Control* 8 (12/12/10), *Climbing* 4 (11/12/8), *Feat of Strength* 3 (10/8/8), *Intimidation* 6 (11/13/13), *Perception* 7 (14/13/13), *Swimming* 15 (12/12/8), *Self-Control* 7 (11/11/10), *Stealth* 9 (11/13/12), *Willpower* 7 (11/13/13)

Number: 1

Size Category: Small

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 2 rations of meat, skin (9 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Emerald adders attack human-sized targets only when threatened, though most bites occur only after a traveler fails to notice the snake's presence and its warning posture.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP

Hunt: -2

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Emerald adders are intelligent snakes that are pleasing unto Hesinde.
- **QL 2:** Despite their size and sharp fangs, emerald adder venom is not dangerous to humans.
- **QL 3+:** These snakes sometimes serve as familiars for witches.

Pain +1 at: 8 LP, 6 LP, 4 LP, and 2 LP or less



Forest Spider

“About forest spiders: These creatures sometimes cooperate to ensnare prey. Their tangle of nets and trip-lines is barely visible in the undergrowth. The equally well-hidden forest spiders attack from ambush and cut prey to pieces with their powerful mandibles. Anyone traveling through the forests of Nostria and Andergast would be wise to keep a sharp lookout for their webs.”

—From *Prem's Animal Life*, Revised Edition, 923 FB

Forest spiders are covered in dense, black fur and grow about 3 feet long (not including their legs). Their poison is not lethal, but they spin strong webs and trip-lines. They kill prey quickly only if it fights back, quickly dismembering it with their powerful mandibles. Forest spiders are adept at using their legs to hold prey immobile.

These creatures live in the remote forests of northern Aventuria, and are especially common in the Forest Wilderness that straddles the border between Nostria and Andergast. Their favorite prey includes rabbit, deer, and similar animals, and they are large enough to pose a risk to humans and even bigger animals that get caught in their webs. Forest spiders are usually solitary, but in some areas, they cooperate to build far-reaching tangles of webs, trip-lines, and signal lines. Anything caught in these large snares must fend off multiple forest spiders. *Scout* spiders keep watch and warn other spiders of approaching dangers. Aventurian scholars know that these efficient predators communicate across long distances, possibly by spinning specialized, barely-visible *talking* strands or by using some kind of telepathy, but nobody knows for sure.



Forest Spider

Size: 1 to 2 feet high;

3 to 4 feet long

Weight: 40 to 60 pounds

COU 11 **SGC** 9 (a) **INT** 14 **CHA** 8

DEX 12 **AGI** 15 **CON** 12 **STR** 14

LP 26 **AE** – **KP** – **INI** 13+2D6

DE 5 **SPI** 1 **TOU** 0 **MOV** 8

Bite: **AT** 13 **DP** 1D6+2 **RE** short

PRO/ENC: 2/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Darksight I, Exceptional Sense (Touch)

Special Abilities: None

Skills: *Body Control* 12 (15/15/12), *Climbing* 16 (11/15/14), *Feat of Strength* 7 (12/14/14), *Intimidation* 7 (11/14/8), *Perception* 12 (9/14/14), *Swimming* 2 (15/12/14), *Self-Control* 10 (11/11/12), *Stealth* 14 (11/14/15), *Willpower* 5 (11/14/8)

Number: 1D6 (spider nest)

Size Category: medium

Type: Animal, non-numanoid

Loot: 25 portions of guts (inedible)

Combat Behavior: Forest spiders lurk in trees, waiting for prey to stumble into their webs. Forest spiders also fight on the ground if approached too closely. They prey on creatures up to human size or even larger.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP

Hunt: -2

Animal Lore (*Monsters or Wild Animals*)

- **QL 1:** Forest spiders weave webs that can even catch humans.
- **QL 2:** They do attack humans, but luckily, their venom is not dangerous.
- **QL 3+:** Forest spiders sometimes link two or three spiders' webs together, creating a large snare that spans several trees.

Special Rules

Web: The spider's web can catch human-sized prey. Spotting a web requires a *Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of 1. If successful, the web may be avoided. Anything trapped in a web gains the state *bound*. Escaping from a web requires a cumulative check using *Body Control (Squirm)* (10 QL, interval 1 CR, 7 attempts). If this check fails, escape is no longer possible without outside assistance.

Pain +1 with: 20 LP, 13 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less



Forest Wolf

Size: 4 to 5 feet long (without tail); 6 to 7 feet (with tail); 3 feet tall at the shoulder

Weight: 100 to 120 pounds

COU 12 **SGC** 15(a) **INT** 13 **CHA** 12

DEX 14 **AGI** 13 **CON** 13 **STR** 13

LP 18 **AE** - **KP** - **INI** 14+1D6

DE 7 **SPI** -1 **TOU** 0 **MOV** 12

Bite: **AT** 13 **DP** 1D6+3(+disease)* **RE** short

PRO/ENC 0/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Darksight I, Exceptional Sense (Smell)

Special Abilities: Locked Jaws (Bite)

Skills: *Body Control* 7 (13/13/13), *Climbing* 0 (12/13/13), *Feat of Strength* 5 (13/13/13), *Intimidation* 7 (12/13/12), *Perception* 4 (15/13/13), *Swimming* 7 (13/13/13), *Self-Control* 4 (12/12/13), *Stealth* 7 (12/13/13), *Willpower* 4 (12/13/12)

Number: 1 or 1D6+2 (small pack)

Size Category: small

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 15 rations of meat (tough), fur (5 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Forest wolves normally attack only when hungry or threatened. They aren't afraid of fire. Packs are led by an alpha she-wolf. When facing forest wolves, determining if an alpha wolf is present requires a *Perception (Spot)* check. If the alpha she-wolf is killed, the rest of the pack flees.

Escape: Loss of 50% LP or when the alpha she-wolf dies.

Hunt: -2

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Unlike other wolves, forest wolves aren't afraid of fire.
- **QL 2:** Forest wolves can carry diseases.
- **QL 3+:** Killing the alpha she-wolf causes the rest of the pack to flee.

Special Rules

*) **Disease:** Forest wolves can carry diseases. Roll 1D20 for every full 10 DP suffered (after subtracting PRO), roll 1D20: 1-15 (no disease); 16-20 (rabies^{AAL129}). Those infected must make a disease check (see *Core Rules*, page 343).

Pain +1 at: 18 LP, 11 LP, 6 LP, and 5 LP or less

Forest Wolf

Forest wolves stand three feet tall at the shoulder, have deep black fur, and are the most intelligent species of wolf in Aventuria. Some people think they have their own language. Unlike other species of wolf, forest wolves are led by an experienced she-wolf and live in packs year-round.



Marwold

“The Marwold, or spirit wood, is a malicious creature, a blend of a tree and a being from another Sphere. It is unclear whether marwolds are possessed by minor spirits, demons, fairies, or even ghosts. The sumes of Andergast do not appear to know whether marwolds were created by treants or some other arcane phenomena, such as the planting of a tree on a magical ley line of power. I have been told that sumes and a few witches in Nostria are able to control these creatures via a complicated ritual. A marwold stays rooted to the ground and cannot move about, but blows from their branches can be very damaging.”

—Nacladora Berlinghan, Order of Draconites, Blessed One of Hesinde, 1036 FB

Marwolds are trees that are possessed by creatures from another Sphere. They live in many Aventurian forests and are quite capable of attacking anything within reach of their branches and roots. They are especially common in the Warring Kingdoms, but also in the former heptarchies in the Shadowlands.

Marwolds resemble common trees but are usually a bit larger and have more branches. Marwold forests have a magical aura which stems from the creatures that merged with the trees to create marwolds.

Contrary to popular belief, trees inhabited by dryads are not the same thing as marwolds. Marwolds are created when minor spirits, demons, elemental spirits, and ghosts merge with a tree, making it into what peasants call an *evil tree*. Elms and blood elms seem to be the species most often possessed and turned into marwolds.

Marwolds hate all other living creatures and strike at humans and animals that come within range of their branches. Some folk believe that treants, powerful druids, or ruthless witches can create and dominate such creatures via lengthy rituals to use them as guardians.

Marwold

Size: 9 to 18 feet tall

Weight: 800 to 4,000 pounds

COU 15 **SGC** 10 **INT** 11 **CHA** 11

DEX 11 **AGI** 11 **CON** 28 **STR** 28

LP 160 **AE** – **KP** – **INI** 12+1D6

DE 6 **SPI** 1 **TOU** 10 **MOV** 0

Punch: AT 14 DP 2D6+4 RE long

Kick: AT 12 DP 3D6+6 RE medium

PRO/ENC: 4/0

Advantages/Disadvantages: Afraid of Fire III

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I (Punch, Kick), Powerful Blows (Punch), Shield-Splitter (Punch, Kick), Takedown (Punch, Kick)

Skills: *Body Control* 2 (11/11/28), *Climbing* 4 (15/11/28), *Empathy* 3 (10/11/11), *Feat of Strength* 11 (28/28/28), *Intimidation* 12 (15/11/11), *Perception* 7 (10/11/11), *Swimming* 9 (11/28/28), *Self-Control* 12 (15/15/28), *Stealth* 7 (15/11/11), *Willpower* 7 (15/11/11)

Number: 1 or 1D6+1 (grove)

Size Category: huge

Type: Supernatural Creature, non-humanoid

Loot: Wood (1 to 30 silverthalers, depending on type)

Combat Behavior: Individual

Escape: Marwolds are immobile and cannot flee.

Plant Lore

◆ **QL 1:** Marwolds look remarkably similar to trees or treants. They are common in Nostria, Andergast, and in the Shadowlands.

◆ **QL 2:** Marwolds are susceptible to fire. Since they are rooted and cannot flee, this is a quick way to defeat them.

◆ **QL 3+:** Some scholars believe marwolds are possessed by beings from other Spheres, but whether by fairy creatures, demons, or something else entirely still isn't clear.

Special Rules

Susceptible to Fire: Marwolds take double damage from fire.

Concealment: When standing motionless in a forest, marwolds are almost indistinguishable from trees. They receive a bonus of 3 to *Stealth (Hide)*.

Walking Marwold: A rarer type of marwold can move about like a treant, but very slowly (MOV 4).

Pain +1 at: 120 LP, 80 LP, 40 LP, and 5 LP or less



Skull Owl

Skull owls can have wingspans of up to 10 feet wide. They get their name from the black beak and spots in the otherwise white feathers of their face, reminding people of a skull. They hunt mainly by ambushing much larger animals that are asleep and quickly flying off again after tearing a chunk of flesh from their victims' bodies.

Skull Owl

Size: 2 to 3 feet tall; 9 to 11 feet wingspan

Weight: 16 to 20 pounds

COU 12 **SGC** 14 (a) **INT** 14 **CHA** 13

DEX 12 **AGI** 13 **CON** 12 **STR** 12

LP 22 **AE** - **KP** - **INI** 13+1D6

DE 7 **SPI** 0 **TOU** 0 **MOV** 1/15

(on ground/in the air)

Beak and Claws: **AT** 12 **DP** 1D6+2 **RE** short

PRO/ENC 0/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Darksight II, Exceptional Sense (Sight)

Special Abilities: Attack Weak Spot, Flying Attack

Skills: *Body Control* 5 (13/13/12), *Feat of Strength* 4 (12/12/12), *Flying* 7 (12/14/13), *Intimidation* 6 (12/14/13), *Perception* 12 (14/14/14), *Self-Control* 4 (12/12/12), *Stealth* 12 (12/14/13), *Willpower* 4 (12/14/13)

Number: 1 or 2

Size Category: small

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 4 rations of meat, trophy (feathers, 7 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Skull owls attack larger animals, including humans, at night, pecking a chunk of meat out of their body before retreating.

Escape: Loss of 50 % LP

Hunt: +1

Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** The mere sight of a skull owl can frighten humans.
- **QL 2:** The skull owl is a nocturnal hunter. It is not very active during the day.
- **QL 3+:** Skull owls can attack human-sized targets, but do so only at night.

Special Rules

Intimidating Appearance: Anyone seeing a skull owl for the first time must make a *Willpower (Resist Threats)* check or suffer the disadvantage *Afraid of...* (Skull Owls) I, for one day. The disadvantage subsides when the owl is chased off or killed.

Pain +1 at: 17 LP, 11 LP, 6 LP, and 5 LP or less



Stag Beetle, Giant

Giant stag beetles are solitary creatures that grow up to a length of 8 feet. They can be a danger to humans who get too close. When attacked, they fight ferociously and relent only after their enemy is badly hurt. Giant stag beetles are trainable and serve as beasts of burden or guard dogs in some cities.

Giant Stag Beetle

Size: 8 to 9 feet long

Weight: 100 to 140 pounds

COU 15 **SGC** 9 (a) **INT** 11 **CHA** 8

DEX 13 **AGI** 13 **CON** 16 **STR** 14

LP 40 **AE** - **KP** -

INI 12+1D6

DE 7 **SPI** 0 **TOU** 2 **MOV** 3

Bite: **AT** 16 **DP** 1D6+2 **RE** short

Mandibles: **AT** 12 **DP** 1D6+4 **RE** medium

PRO/ENC 5/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I (Bite, Mandibles), Locked Jaws (Bite)

Skills: *Body Control* 4 (13/13/16), *Climbing* 4 (15/13/16), *Feat of Strength* 7 (16/14/14), *Intimidation* 6 (15/11/8), *Perception* 7 (9/11/11), *Swimming (no check allowed; giant stag beetles cannot swim)*, *Self-Control* 12 (15/15/16), *Stealth* 7 (15/11/13), *Willpower* 8 (15/11/8)

Number: 1, or 2 (when mating)

Size Category: medium

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 40 rations of meat, trophy (mandibles, 15 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Giant stag beetles usually avoid humans, but attack viciously when surprised and fight until badly injured.

Escape: Loss of 75% LP

Hunt: -

Animal Lore (Monsters or Wild Animals)

- **QL 1:** Giant stag beetles view human-sized targets not as prey, but as threats, and attack whenever they meet.
- **QL 2:** Their armor is much weaker on their underbelly.
- **QL 3+:** Young giant stag beetles can be trained and led around on a leash (this is especially common in Gareth). They are also sometimes used as guard dogs.

Special Rules

Weak Spot: Giant stag beetles have **PRO** 2 on their underbellies and **PRO** 0 on the joints at the base of their legs. For more information about targeting these areas, see the Level I Focus Rules for Hit Zones, in the *Aventurian*

Compendium. Otherwise, just attack with a penalty of 2 or 4, respectively.

Pack Mule: Giant stag beetles can carry a weight of up to 80 pounds.

Pain +1 at: 30 LP, 20 LP, 10 LP, and 5 LP or less



Teshkaler

Teshkaler horses are strong and fast, but stubborn. Even so, they are popular as carriage horses. These shiny black creatures are slender and muscular, and their manes, tails, and fetlock hair are long and dense. True Teshkalers have a special brand on their right thigh in the shape of a curved T next to a royal crown.

Horse (Teshkaler)

Size: 7 to 9 feet long; 5 to 6 feet tall at the shoulder

Weight: 800 to 1,200 pounds

COU 10 **SGC** 9 (a) **INT** 12 **CHA** 12

DEX 8 **AGI** 14 **CON** 23 **STR** 25

LP 80 **AE** – **KP** – **INI** 13+1D6

DE 7 **SPI** 0 **TOU** 0 **MOV** 12

Bite: **AT** 12 **DP** 1D6+1 **RE** short

Kick: **AT** 15 **DP** 1D6+5 **RE** medium

Trample: **AT** 14 **DP** 2D6+4 **RE** medium

PRO/ENC 0/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: none

Special Abilities: Powerful Blows^{AL149} (Kick)

Skills: *Body Control* 4 (14/14/23), *Climbing* (no check allowed; horses cannot climb), *Feat of Strength* 8 (23/25/25), *Intimidation* 2 (10/12/12), *Perception* 4 (9/12/12), *Swimming* 4 (14/23/25), *Self-Control* 4 (10/10/23), *Stealth* 2 (10/12/14), *Willpower* 3 (10/12/12)

Number: 1 or 3D20 (herd)

Size Category: large

Type: Animal, non-humanoid

Loot: 300 rations of meat, fur (20 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Teshkaler horses always try to flee. If they cannot flee or are startled too often, they kick to the front or back. Some horses have a bad habit of biting humans.

Escape: See Combat Behavior

Hunt: -2

Animal Lore (Domesticated Animals)

- **QL 1:** Horses are skittish animals by nature. You should be careful when approaching them from behind.
- **QL 2:** Oats are a good concentrated food for horses. When working hard, they need up to 10 pounds of oats per day.
- **QL 3+:** Beechnuts, chestnuts, and ivy are poisonous to horses.

Special Rules

Pack Mule: Teshkaler horses can carry loads of up to 400 pounds.

Pain +1 at: 60 LP, 40 LP, 20 LP, and 5 LP or less

Note: A Teshkaler is worth about 1,000 silverthalers.



Unicorn

“This proud horse with snow-white fur, long mane, silky tail, and golden, twice-wreathed horn on its brow is a wondrous creature from another age, curious and shy at the same time. Unicorn is only the common term for this creature. Scholars call it a unicorru. The Angroshim call it a ligorn, and the elves refer to it as a valdra. Unicorns are intelligent, even though they do not communicate with words, and many believe them to be blessed by the gods. It is also said that these immortal creatures love nothing more than purity, and hate nothing more than aurochs and orcs.”
—From the *Great Aventurian Almanac*, Vinsalt Edition, 998 FB

Most of these rare and shy animals use magic similar to that of the elves, though normally only spells with the properties Clairvoyance, Influence, or Illusion. Unicorns read thoughts and communicate images and feelings by projecting them directly into the recipient’s mind, and can travel to and from the fairy realms without restriction, which allows them to appear and disappear without a trace.

The alicorne, or horn, on their brow is the focus of their magic. Mages and alchemists consider these horns a potent ingredient.

Unicorns are encountered everywhere in Aventuria but prefer the remoteness of wild and untouched nature. They are most common in northern forests inhabited by elves and fairies. All unicorns are loners, and as far as anyone can tell, all seem to be male, which is why people believe they are immortal.

Unicorns usually avoid conflicts but are quite capable of defending themselves, especially against an aurochs or orc, which they attack with unexplained ferocity.

Unicorns symbolize Nandus in the mythology of the Twelvegods, but the extremely rare black variant is seen as a harbinger of the Demon Master, Borbarad.



Unicorn

Size: 7' to 9' long, 5' to 6' at the shoulder

Weight: 1,000 to 1,200 pounds

COU 14 **SGC** 14 **INT** 15 **CHA** 16

DEX 10 **AGI** 15 **CON** 23 **STR** 25

LP 80 **AE** 60 **KP** - **INI** 15+1D6

DE 8 **SPI** 4 **TOU** 3 **MOV** 12

Bite: AT 12 DP 1D6+1 RE short

Horn: AT 13 DP 1D6+3 RE short

Kick: AT 15 DP 1D6+5 RE medium

Trample: AT 14 DP 2D6+4 RE medium

PRO/ENC: 0/0

Actions: 1

Advantages/Disadvantages: Spellcaster/Negative Trait (Curiosity)

Special Abilities: Powerful Blows (Kick), Takedown (Kick), Tradition Unicorn, Trample (Trample)

Skills Body Control 4 (14/14/23), Climbing (no check allowed, unicorns cannot climb), Feat of Strength 8 (23/25/25), Intimidation 2 (14/15/16), Perception 4 (14/15/15), Swimming 4 (14/23/25), Self Control 4 (14/14/23), Stealth 2 (14/15/15), Willpower 10 (14/15/16)

Spells: Armatutz 10 (14/15/10), Balsam 10 (14/15/10), Blinding Flash 10 (14/15/16), Wall of Fog 12 (14/15/16) and other spells from Tradition (Unicorns)

Number: 1 or 2

Size Category: large

Type: Magical Creature, non-humanoid

Loot: 300 rations of meat, fur (400 silverthalers), trophy (horn,

2,000 silverthalers)

Combat Behavior: Unicorns usually flee from humans. When cornered or forced to defend themselves, they attack by trampling. If locked in melee, they then attack with their horn, hooves, and teeth. They always try to flee when given the chance.

Escape: See combat behavior.

Hunt: -5

Magical Lore (Magical Creatures)

◆ **QL 1:** Unicorns are shy but curious magical creatures that are extremely rare. They are said to have a connection to fairy creatures.

◆ **QL 2:** Their horn, called an alicorne, is a coveted magical component.

◆ **QL 3+:** Some scholars think that unicorns actually live in the fairy realms but like to visit Aventuria occasionally. Unicorns love everything that is pure and beautiful.

Special Rules

Fairy Gate: Unicorns know where to find gates to the fairy realm, and can usually open and walk through any fairy gate at will.

Natural Forbidden Gates: when they run out of AE, unicorns can continue casting spells using their LP, at a ratio of 1-to-1.

Fast Regeneration: Unicorns regenerate quickly, recovering 1D3 LP and 1D3 AE every five minutes.

Telepathy: Unicorns can communicate telepathically with all other creatures.

Pain +1 at: 60 LP, 40 LP, 20 LP, and 5 LP or less



Herbs of the Warring Kingdoms

"Of course, Mistress Peraine keeps a watchful eye on Nostria and Andergast, as the people here already endure enough. Thus plants and animals flourish here. Peraine has given the people many growing things to calm them and cure their wounds. Such things might not be easy to find, but Mistress Peraine values initiative and work, as is proper."

—From the *Tome of Herbal Lore*, collected and compiled by the Sisterhood of Mada, Grangor, 1005 FB

The Warring Kingdoms teem with herbs both curative and poisonous. Only those who are well versed in herbal lore know where to find them and how to use them best. The sumes of Andergast and the witches of Nostria are considered experts in this area.

Hollberry

Hollberries are about the size of cherries and have a deep pink color. They grow on dark green, hip-high bushes. Hollberries grow mainly in Nostria and Albernia, along forest edges and in clearings. According to folklore, they prevent unwanted intrusions by fairy creatures.

Hollberries have both poisonous and healing parts, and preparing each requires a different application of *Plant Lore*. Those seeking hollberries must decide whether they want the emetic berries (*Poisonous Plant*) or regenerative leaves (*Healing Plant*).



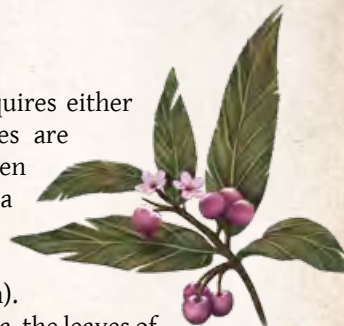
Search Difficulty: -2

Identification Difficulty: -1

Applications: 1/1/1/2/2/3

Effect: The desired effect requires either berries or leaves. The berries are slightly poisonous. When fermented, they make a powerful emetic that can cause persistent vomiting (no nightly regeneration).

When dried and made into a tea, the leaves of the hollberry bush grant calm and refreshing sleep. One dose of tea grants 1 reroll of the die when determining LP recovered during the next Regeneration



Phase (apply the better result).

Price: 4/8 silverthalers

Hollberry Emetic

The hollberry's poison causes nausea. Victims suffer extended bouts of vomiting and recover slowly.

Poison Level: 4

Type: Ingestion Poison, Plant Poison

Resistance: Toughness

Effect: Bouts of vomiting, no nightly Regeneration Phase/bouts of vomiting.

Start: 1 minute

Duration: 5 minutes (vomiting), until the end of that night's Regeneration Phase

Cost: 100 silverthalers

Bladegrass

The much-feared bladegrass plant can grow over 3 feet tall and has yellowish-green leaves that are tough as iron blades. Anyone lost in a field of bladegrass is as good as dead. It avoids water, so it grows mostly in the dry steppes between Riva and Mengbilla.

It is especially common in the eponymous Bladegrass Steppe west of Thash and the Dark Ridge, but also in the highlands and the fringes of the Khôm Desert. The grass is resistant to fire, including raging wildfires, which actually helps it spread even further. Few animals can survive in its presence. Some rodents and serpents eat the grass, and wartrhinos are protected from it by their thick skin. The only plant that can grow alongside the plant's hard stalks is poppy. Orcs and goblins make fire-resistant mats from bladegrass, and denizens of

the steppes often cover palisades with the hard leaves to form an insurmountable barrier.

Search Difficulty: -2

Identification Difficulty: 0

Uses: -

Effect: Touching the sharp edge of a bladegrass leaf causes between 1D6-1 and 1D6+1 DP. Travelers usually try to skirt around areas of bladegrass to avoid these dangerous plants. For each mile walked through knife, victims suffer 1D6+3 DP, but a successful *Body Control* (*Acrobatics*, *Balancing*, or *Jumping*) checks reduces this damage by 1 Dp per QL. Bladegrass cannot be used as weapon.

Price: -

Mibel Reed

Mibel reed grows among common reeds along lakeshores and in swamps. The plant has pale, cob-shaped flowers with pale violet and white stripes, and is protected by pointed

Smaller Doses

A dose of healing herbs has no effect when divided into smaller parts. For example, a hero must drink the whole dose of mibel reed tea to enjoy its effect.

leaves. Mibel reed grows along the west coast of Aventuria, between Salta and Mengbilla. It is especially common in the Warring Kingdoms on lakeshores and in meadows and swamps. A tea made from mibel reed gives clarity and agility, but consuming it in high doses or too often can lead to addiction.

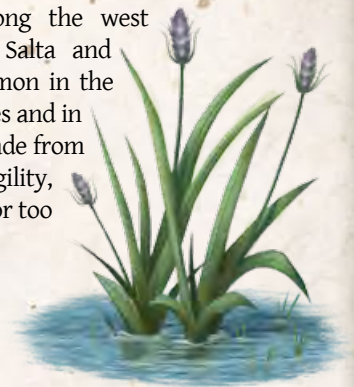
Search Difficulty: -3

Identification Difficulty: -2

Uses: 1/1/2/2/2/3

Effect: Crush both cob and stalk, and boil. The patient must drink one full dose of tea, and it takes effect after 5 minutes. The tea grants a bonus of +1 to the first partial check of a skill check using the attributes of SGC or DEX. The effects last 2D6 minutes.

Price: 12/24 silverthalers



Tarnele

The stalks of the dandelion-like tarnele are bright red and grow up to two feet tall. The stalk itself remains bare of leaves, but a cluster of foot-long, dull green leaves covered in tiny hairs grows in a circle from the base of the stalk. When crushed or made into a salve, it alleviates pain and promotes healing. The tarnele thrives in dark places and can be found growing between Gerasim and Mengbilla, mostly among thick grass and in boggy meadows. It also grows in forests, swamps, and, rarely, in the highlands.

Search Difficulty: 2

Identification

Difficulty: 0

Uses: 1/1/2/2/3/3

Effect: When applied to a wound, the tarnele grants +1 LP during the night-time Regeneration Phase.

Whether made into a long-lasting tarnele salve or used as fresh pulp, both work equally well when applied to wounds. Multiple uses at the same time have no additional effect. Tarnele also suppresses the effect of one level of *Pain* for one hour, but only if the patient has no more than one level of *Pain*. On patients with two or more levels of *Pain*, it has no painkilling effect at all.

Price: 3/6 silverthalers



Chapter 6: Gods and Demons



“People here are open, friendly, and eager to share their hearths in the spirit of our mistress. I feel very welcome, your eminence. Thanks for your heart-warming words. As you instructed, I plan to teach them the ideals of family life.

Yes, I know, the people here are a bit strange, probably due to the deep-seated ill will between these lands. With Travia’s blessing, maybe I can heal these wounds and make friends out of enemies. Convincing everyone to live together as family and friends, as we do—and as the Benign Goddess wishes—may require great strength, but my intentions are true.

One aspect of life in the Warring Kingdoms that still troubles me is the locals’ veneration of spirits of the forest. They offer sacrifices to standing stones, pour silverthalers in the bog by the handful, and hang votives and trinkets all over their seemingly endless forest. This isn’t right! And they way they speak of the Supernaturals! As if the good gods could or should be lumped together with creatures such as fairies! I suspect it will be difficult to show them the error of their ways. I now understand why you sent me here, eminence, for I can detect echoes here of the call of Pandlaril, the fairy-like mistress of lake and river from my home in Weiden. Who can hear aching call of that beauty and not be deeply moved, even if such cannot inflame heart and soul as much as the grace of Mistress Travia? My understanding of Pandlaril will no doubt aid my attempts to appeal to the human inhabitants of the forest, for they too share an abiding love of lakes and rivers.

We serve the Mistress of the Hearthfire, first and foremost! The family spirit of the congregation is eternal. Travia’s hospitality will ensure that we find followers here. Your trust in me is well founded.”

—Letter by Avonella, young Blessed One of Travia, to the head of the Temple of Travia in Baliho, 1039 FB



Few of the so-called Temples of the Twelvegods in the Warring Kingdoms really deserve to be called such, and these are found only in larger towns. On the other hand, the numerous shrines and sacred places for gods, demigods, and saints rarely that rarely follow the pure teaching of the Twelve. Most sit at the edges of villages or in castle

chapels, though a few can be found in houses, taverns, or inns within settlements.

Many such shrines, especially those dedicated to fairies, forest spirits, nymphs and other creatures of the forests and lakes, are located by springs, on hills, at crossroads and other special places.

Religion in the Warring Kingdoms

“They are so divided that they do not even view the Twelve as gods in the way we do. Andergastans primarily worship the Old Man of the Mountain, benign Peraine, and the divine lioness, while Nostrians pray mainly to moody Efferd and silent Boron. Both kingdoms seem to share the worship of the primal earth goddess Sumu, whether they are led to do so by the sumes, as druids are called in Andergast, or the Daughters of Satuaria, in Nostria. Lovely Rahja receives more worship in Nostria than Andergast, which outlawed her harmonious Church by royal decree many centuries ago. Mistress Hesinde be with us!”

—Nacladora Berlinghan, Blessed One of Hesinde Draconite, 1038 FB

When Silem-Horas’ Twelvegods Edict of 98 FB established the Twelvegods as the official gods of the empire, Nostria and Andergast had already become independent principalities, and thus the edict never took effect here. Andergastan kings such as Efferdan I tried vainly to establish the dominance of the Twelvegods faith, but all attempts failed due to the popularity of old superstitions, the nobles’ adherence to tradition, and the intervention of the sumes.

Local rulers accept the worship of almost any being that promises salvation or protection to humankind, as long as such belief poses no threat to the nobility—and is not seen as a god of the enemy. Thus, the belief in many old and forgotten gods survives here, and many new gods have been born out of a blending of divine beings with similar aspects. This style of worship, called *syncretism*, is best illustrated by the Warring Kingdoms’ version of Mother Earth, usually an aspect of Sumu who is often called Peraisumu or Tatuara, and sometimes as primal mother of all life, sometimes as goddess of fertility. Another example is Firun, the Old Man of the Mountain, who is sometimes mixed with the goblin god Orvai Kurim and worshiped as Kurim the Hunter.

Many Blessed Ones do not tend to their own temples. Rather they travel between various places of worship, where they organize services on a semi-regular basis. They pray for the blessing of their gods for the sake of the community, usually to mark marriages, births, and deaths. Whether a priest is actually A Blessed One gifted with karmic powers is

often of no importance to (and not even easily recognized by) commoners and nobles alike. Many priests of cults and faiths outside the Twelvegods are actually magical dilettantes who can produce impressive effects that are hard to differentiate from divine miracles or liturgical chants. Such individuals often cannot tell the difference between magic and liturgical powers themselves, but they believe that their (magical) gift comes from their god.

Many Blessed Ones from central Aventuria find this syncretic worship of the gods irritating or even insulting. In contrast, some Blessed Ones resent the growing influence of the Twelvegods in the Warring Kingdoms, and thus they find themselves estranged from their own Churches. Which gods receive worship, and in which way, can differ quite a lot between the Warring Kingdoms. People rarely use the term *gods*, and instead usually talk of the Supernatural, which includes not just the Twelve, but also any other creature said to have the power to influence the fate of humankind. Rahja is honored in Nostria as the mistress of beer, but Andergast outlawed her church long ago, even though she is still worshiped there, in Teshkal, as the mother of horses. Both of these cults have little in common with the pleasure-focused cult so familiar to other regions of Aventuria.

Often, the Supernaturals aren’t worshiped in temples, but in springs, hidden forest ponds, at stone circles or strange rock formations or old trees. This isn’t unknown in the Middenrealm, like in the shape of the River Father in the Great Lake of Albernia or the Lady of the Nine-Eye Lake in Weiden, Pandlaril.

Since the Twelvegods aren’t the focus of life in the Warring Kingdoms, ancient and sometimes crude beliefs, forgotten elsewhere since the fall of the Bosparanian Empire, survive and flourish in Nostria and Andergast. Even Dualism, as practiced in Lowangen, is popular here. Dualism groups the gods in two categories—Supernaturals that give, and those that take. Thus, Praios, bringer of light and god of the sun, is opposed to Boron, god of death and night, but both are worshiped equally as lords of the gods. All other gods are considered vassals of these two opposites. This dualistic way of thinking suits the black-and-white way

the people regard their archenemies. In Nostria, dualism is influenced by the mage's Academy of Light and Darkness in the capital, and often combined with the idea that a balance between good and evil must be maintained.

Some sumes hold a similar point of view and seek a balance between the powers, even though individual ideas about what constitutes good and evil can differ quite a lot.

The Pantheon of the Warring Kingdoms

As has been said, the Warring Kingdoms are home to many old cults and religions, even ones that were forgotten in other realms since the days of the Bosparanian Empire or outlawed in the Middenrealm long ago. Nostrians, for example, worship a three-eyed god of war who wears banded armor and is seen as lord of war, battle, and honor. (♠ 178)

Influences of ancient religions survive as do forms of worship that hide Norbard, Thorwalan, orcish, or goblin influences, and even demons and aspects of the Nameless God. Some nature spirits are worshiped as gods. That is why people speak of "the Supernaturals" and not of "the gods" or "the Twelve," for nobody wants to anger a supernatural creature. Sumu, the all-goddess (in Andergast) and Satuarua, the healer of Sumu (in Nostria) enjoy widespread worship. Almost every other god is viewed as subservient to those two or, as in the case of Satuarua, considered minor siblings.

Besides Sumu as creator, there is no unified pantheon, and even closely neighboring villages can worship different gods. But the locals' conception of the gods is not

necessarily the same as that taught by the Churches of the Twelvegods. Here, weird ideas seem to be the norm.

Trabina, the Nostrian goddess of family, hearth, faithfulness, and justice is sometimes depicted as a female eagle holding the sun in her claws, a concept that seems weird to the priests of Praios and Travia alike. Aspects assigned to the various gods are peculiar as well, and many gods and demigods gain the traits of saints or Alveranians. There are also many nature spirits, such as nymphs or treants, which enjoy almost god-like worship. These tend to be locally famous and cherished but unknown beyond their borders. Many locals who have regular contact with Thorwalers often add Swafnir to their pantheon.

The presence of many gods also inspires great religious tolerance. Nobody claims an exclusionary truth. If your neighbor worships a different god, this isn't a problem—unless you have reason to suspect that their god is dark and malicious, but even this is not reason enough to fear them.

The Twelvegods in Andergast

Sumu is worshiped above all others in Andergast. The primal giantess is viewed as the mother of all life and all the gods, which makes her the greatest goddess of all. All other gods must bow to her. The aurochs is honored as her envoy and herald of her will, especially the **Aurochs King**, who lives in the Forest Wilderness and is worshiped like a god.



For that reason, the sumes, the druidic servants of Sumu, are also highly respected in Andergast. Instead of temples, they use stone circles, trees, and springs as holy sites, where they can perform their mysterious miracles.

In the Andergastan worldview, Sumu is assisted by the **Sons of Sumu**, who each have various tasks to perform, aided by their priests. It's quite obvious to outsiders that these gods are simple translations of the Twelvegods, even if sometimes different names are used. Sumu's first-born son **Praios** (often Brajan) embodies the aspects of sun, rulership, and long-established law. The aspects of **Boron**, her second-born, are night, death, and dreams. He is also known as Bruun, but under this name he is the lord of back luck and the bringer of calamity. **Phex**, is the third-born, represents cunning, mockery, and adventurousness. Fourth-born **Firun**, also known as the Old Man of the Mountain or the lord of ice, embodies cold and and ice, as well as the hunt. As a hunting god, he is often depicted with antlers but if so, he is called Kurim the Hunter, or simply Orvai. Fifth-born **Efferd** (or Ephar) is the lord of water and wind and is said to have a large retinue of nymphs and sylphs. The aspects of **Ingerimm** (also called Angrosh), the sixth-born, are craftwork and mining.

The goddesses are viewed as submissive wives, sisters, or daughters of the male gods. They usually conduct their work unseen in the background, which is what Andergastans demand from human women.

Travia, also called Trabia, is the wife of Boron, and her aspects are domesticity and order. **Hesinde** (or Heshint) is responsible for ideas and prophetic dreams and is not well liked. **Peraine** (also Perin) is worshiped as the goddess of agriculture and plants. **Hesinde** and **Peraine** are seen as wives of icy Firun. **Tsa**, or Tatuara, is the spouse of Efferd. People call upon her for gentle peace and tranquility.

Rondra (also called Rondarra) is considered either the spouse or first-born of Praios. She embodies aspects of courage and combat, even though such traits are uncommon for a female goddess in Andergast, and the reasons for her special status are never quite clear. Sometimes she is the combative spouse of another son of Sumu, other times she is the reason for a feud. Thanks to the worship she enjoys as a goddess of storms and combat in other regions, Rondra's influence has spread into the Warribng Kingdoms through her knights, who often make her a subject of minnesong and ride with a blood-red ribbon of favor for the lioness when they wear no other.

Rahja's family relations usually remain unexplained. Her Church was outlawed in Andergast until 20 years ago, and she is slowly finding her way back into the hearts of the people. In Teshkal, she continued to be worshiped as the mother of the divine horses Tharvun and Sulva after her cult was forbidden, but this was based on a much older tradition. In Joborn, she is worshiped as the goddess of horses, geniality, and beer.

The Twelvegods in Nostria

Along the coasts, **Efferd** (or Ephard) is worshiped as lord of the gods, who punishes humans without mercy with his storms and lightning. He must be placated to avoid death. Many shrines that appear dedicated to Efferd actually honor the winds in Efferd's retinue (steady *Beleman*, which almost always blows over the coast; the calm fog-bringer, *Nuianna*; and the boisterous and angry *Rondrikan*, which many Nostrians view as either a vassal of Efferd or familiar of Rondra).

Peraine is worshiped as wife of Efferd and caring twin sister of the grim ice lord, Firun. Her aspects mainly focus on fertility and healing. **Rondra** is Efferd's younger sister, an untamed and brave mistress of battle.

Boron, who is treated with awe in Nostria and whose epithet "the Unnamed" often is a cause for confusion, is seen as the merciless lord of death, but also of the peace of the soul. **Firun** is the bringer of cold and darkness, but also lord of the hunt. As in Andergast, he is often depicted as the antlered hunter Kurim in Nostria. **Ingerimm** is worshiped as lord of crafts and artifice, but along the coast he is also the patron of levees and dikes. His divine brother **Phex** embodies the aspects of trade, subterfuge and cunning. **Hesinde** (or Heshina), who is called upon as bringer of knowledge and magic, is the younger sister of Travia. She is mainly worshiped by spellcasters and scholars, and often the much more well-known moon goddess Mada is connected to her as a bringer of magic, usually as daughter or sister. **Praios** (or Brajos) is seen as the guardian of the divine fortress of Alveran, which makes him the patron of the sun and one who can defend against evil magic. His wife, **Travia** (often called Trabina), represents order, hospitality, domesticity, and the eternal hearth fire. At some places, she is seen as mistress of faithfulness and justice. **Rahja** is respected as the goddess of joy and passion. She is also the patron of beer, and is viewed as the younger sister of Satuarua. Another relation is **Tsa**, a goddess of springtime to many.

Satuaria is seen as a great healer who is worshiped mostly by witches and wise women. She is the great mediator between the Supernaturals and humans. Commoners like to call her Zatura or Tsatuara, and she is said to bring good luck and beauty. Satuaria is often associated with the worship of Levthan, the ram-headed man. The moon goddess Mada is well liked because she rules over the tides, brings magic, and fulfills dreams.

Local Saints and Other Mystical Figures

Many heroes of mythology are worshiped as gods or viewed as children of the gods, and many have their own shrines.

Examples on the Nostrian side are brave **Asquenzio**, who slew the dragon Karmunir, or cunning **Alrigio Son of Alrigio**, who is called upon when somebody needs a cunning plan. People in Mirdinerland worship **Aerling**, who once lived as a hermit in the forest and tamed its terrors. In Salta, **Saint Elida** is the beloved patron of fishers and sailors. One of the few Andergastan saints is **Andra Zornbold**, the spouse of the father of the land of Argos. She is the epitome of faithfulness, and it is said that she gave her life to create a mysterious bond with the land. Whereas the Andergastans often worship beings that are considered Alveranians in other places, like **Bishdaniel**, **Kor**, or **Rethon**, the Nostrians include places and items in their religion. Alveran is worshiped as the homestead of the Supernatural, as are Praisos' sun wagon (**Ukoring**) and Rondra's sword (**Sok(r)amor**) and shield (**Mithrida**).

Sometimes, the goddess Tsa is replaced by Ingval in Nostria, also represented by a lizard. The worship of **Ingval** is particularly common along the river shore. The Tommel is said to have a soul, too, deeply honored in the shape of the **River Lord**, who is said to have a great retinue of nymphs.

People have blended many other nature spirits and fairies with the gods to create new creatures. Many dryads, nymphs, and fairies live in the rivers and forests, watching jealously that they receive enough worship from the humans. Beings such as the animal kings of Aurochs and Crowned Stag (🐄 174) are considered important envoys of the Supernatural. Small altars erected in remote locations, such as near springs and crossroads, on hills, and under ancient trees, are often lovingly created and supplied with many sacrifices.

The Love Light of Joborn

"When the Andergastan Lord Timodes II set out to conquer the Nostrian village of Joborn, his closest friend and lover, Dorlen, a Blessed One of Rahja, stepped in front of him and held up a lamp made of clay, which she had received from the goddess, and illuminated the battlefield. Though the lord ranted and raved like a true Zornbold, his own knights refused to follow him any further. The fighters on both sides halted their attack before shedding a single drop of blood and embraced each other as brothers. You must be as crazy as an Andergastan to understand why they think the Joborn Friendship was a brutal war."

—Nostrian report, about 200 FB

"The influence of female foolishness on the course of history is clearly illustrated by the Battle of Joborn. During this time, the Nostriacks ruled over the village with cruel stupidity. Lord Timodes II moved to liberate Joborn with his faithful knights. But the town was ruled by a deluded maiden named Dorlen who served the goddess of fornication and unfaithfulness. When she saw the knights draw close, she began to fear for her temple, which she had built out of vanity. In her foolishness, she called upon the help of her goddess without considering the consequences. And so it happened that brave men, who had just been fighting with blade in hand, removed their armor and pounced on each other as the lusty goddess commanded. There were some rough women fighting among the Nostriacks, as is their custom, but those confused by this divine intervention paid no attention to marital vows. Many a decent maiden, who had lived a proper life in Joborn up to that point, lost their virginity that day."

The lord tore his hair when he realized that he wouldn't be able to liberate Joborn. He could do nothing but banish Dorlen from his realm and outlaw the worship of the vain goddess, to make sure that this disgrace could never happen again. Joborn remained under the hard Nostrian thumb, and its inhabitants suffered for it."

—Andergastan report, about 200 FB

Faith in Everyday Life

"Spill some of my good beer on the ground? By the dragon, are you mad? This is what's supposed to placate the spirits of the forest? By Angrosh's hammer, you can't be serious!"

—Arbosh son of Angrax, forge dwarf master smith

Great temples employing lots of Blessed Ones and novices are rare in the Warring Kingdoms. Instead, people usually build small shrines for one or more gods. Some mixed temples, maintained by two or more Churches, exist as

well. Examples include the fortress temples of Peraine, Travia, and Rondra.

Traveling heroes face strange forms of worship in the Warring Kingdoms. Visiting a temple and dropping some coins in the offering box is rarely sufficient, and the Blessed Ones in Nostria and Andergast have often removed themselves quite a way from the teachings of their Church in other realms. They might worship the deity under different aspects or even with a completely different rite.

Some of the religious traditions common in these lands survive from antiquity. In some areas, it is the landholder's duty to unite with a priest or priestess of a life-giving goddess each spring, to awaken the fertility of the land. In some regions of Andergast, Andra's sacrifice is celebrated via the death of a woman who represents the primal goddess Sumu. Surprisingly, volunteers accept this fate for the good of the world. Usually, these are older women who have had several children, but young girls sometimes volunteer, too.

In Nostria, criminals are often handed over to Blessed Ones to be *given to the swamp* (that is, sacrificed by being tossed in a bog). This ensures that the blessings of the Supernaturals are upon them, and that their vengeful spirits never escape and remain bound forever.

The Faith of the Nobles

Traditionally, the nobles insist on being appointed by the Supernaturals, and therefore see their power as divinely granted. For that reason, two gods from the pantheon of the Twelve are especially popular among nobles: **Praios**, the sun god and patron of rulers, and **Rondra**, the goddess

of honor and battles. She is often seen as related to Praios in Andergast, and people watch to make sure that women do not pay too much attention to this special combative role or try to assume it themselves.

No Andergastan noble makes an important decision without seeking the advice of the **sumes**. Many Nostrian nobles consult a **witch** to make sure that they will succeed. In general, people in the Warring Kingdoms pay close attention to their surroundings, meaning nature with all its spirits. People have handed down some cruel judgments because they believed the land wanted a blood sacrifice.

It's also important which patron deity a family has chosen and how long they have been worshiping that deity. The Sapstem family, in Nostria, is known for the shrine of the three-eyed war god, a relic of ancient times, in their castle's chapel. (🐉 178)

Such ancient and strange beliefs rendered marriage of Andergastan or Nostrian nobles and members of Horasian or Middenrealmish families impossible.

The Faith of the Commoners

The commoners know many beings that must be placated or asked for assistance. **Travia** and **Peraine** are the most popular among the Twelve, even if they are worshiped in strange forms, such as **Trabina**, in the shape of a female eagle carrying the sun, or as **Peraisumu**, the all-embracing giver of life.

The belief that **Sumu's** body is the world is firmly established. That is why people ask Sumu and her representatives for advice. The common folk turn to **sumes** (in Andergast) or **witches** (in Nostria) for assistance with the big and small problems of everyday life.

This does not mean that the Twelvegods are unknown. **Boron**, the lord of death, is known to almost everybody. **Hesinde**, the patron of knowledge, is much less well known outside of the circles of mages and scholars. **Firun** is worshiped in various guises in almost every forest region. Sometimes he is the Old Man of the Mountain, sometimes Orvai or Kurim, depending on how many goblins live in the area. He usually takes the form of a merciless huntsman with antlers. **Efferd** is worshiped mainly in Nostria. As lord of water and wind, he is viewed as the creator of the world who stands above all other gods, but he is not believed to have a shape. Instead he is seen as primal force that must be placated.



The Opponents

“It is difficult to understand whom the locals fear as opponent or worship as gods, since all of them must be placated the same way. Though I had to learn that the Old Man from the Mountain is roughly as important as an archaic goblin goddess of the hunt, I was much relieved to discover that people in the Warring Kingdoms almost always consider the blood-drinking idols of the orcs to represent opponents of humanity. If only people here would offer more devotion to our wise lady! Few here know about the Golden Dragon, but it’s probably better that way. They easily fall victim to the temptations of the Nameless God, as he promises power and respect. So far, only a few demon worshipers or followers of the dangerous false teachings of the Borbaradians have been uncovered.”

—Eno Kariolinnen, arch-abbot of the Draconites and Blessed One of Hesinde, in a report to his abbot-primas in Horasian Thegûn, 1037 FB

People in the Warring Kingdoms worship many spirits, beings, and gods, any one of which would serve as an excuse to conduct an inquisition in the Middenrealms, but fortunately, they view the **Nameless God** as an opponent who must be fought and whose worship must be banned.

The followers of the Thirteenth God in these lands depict him as a faceless man with a skin of pure gold. The hangman’s rope he carries symbolizes his status as a judge with power over mortals. As they do anywhere else, the Blessed Ones of the Nameless God operate in the shadows in the Warring Kingdoms, working to sow strife and hatred and erode the influence of the other gods. Sometimes they even manage to hide in plain sight, as it were, pretending to be priests of another ancient god to keep their horrible beliefs hidden.

“It doesn’t matter if they bow to the orcish bull or the goblin boar, or whether they fear fairies or worship giants. We will pluck them like ripe fruit when the time is right. Once we defeat the Blessed Ones of the twelve false gods, everything else will fall into our laps! Sumes and Daughters of Satuaria are no danger for us, for we alone serve the true lord.”

—Arraloth Westfal, Hand of the Nameless God, 1038 FB



Over the years, strange cults merged with popular beliefs, especially in remote areas of the Warring Kingdoms.

Orvai and Kurim are two interpretations of the goblin’s god **Orvai Kurim**, who represents hunting and combat. His aspects are similar to those of Firun, and in many

Local Horror Stories

The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms believe that most natural phenomena arise from the actions of a Supernatural entity. Locals believe that the Ingval and Tommel Rivers have souls, which they sometimes refer to as River Lords or embodiments of Tsa or Tsatuara. Places with a strong belief in Supernaturals also have their horror stories, and the Warring Kingdoms are no different. One story tells of a red rooster named **Goldencomb**, which spreads fire or unspeakable diseases. **Bilwis** is a spirit of grains that moves through the fields at night to ravage or spoil the harvest. A **burz** is a ghost that possesses people and makes them sick or causes unrest in their houses. **Drudes**, mad bearers of divine will that look like harpies, suck life energy from sleepers. In the Forest Wilderness, the **Lone Wanderer** steals children and sends creatures of the forest to attack innocent travelers.

Other much-feared creatures include the **snatcher**, which is said to make crossroads impassable, the **Black Dog**, which harries its prey to death, and **Nehalennia**, the Dark Lady of Nightmares who causes the dead to rise from the grave. Her powers are only blocked by swamps or other bodies of water. Headless riders spring from countless battles to haunt simple-minded folk, and entities known as *ancient women* and *ancient men* are ghosts that plague a family that turned against them. One of the most famous figures of vengeance from Nostria’s past, still often used to frighten children, is the **Black Andergastan**. According to legend, he was the offspring of a human woman and a demon (or the other way around, depending on the storyteller) who rode a black horse and slaughtered many Nostrians.

places, the worship of these two deities has blended, or else Firun has been completely pushed aside. Even the dangerous conflation of Firun the icy hunter with the archdemon **Nagrach** has gained much ground in some areas, and believers are none the wiser. The Blessed Ones of the Churches of Firun and Ifirn work hard to expose this deceit, but they have had little success so far.

The practice of drowning certain criminals in the swamps of Nostria has a cultish aspect. To ensure that the spirits of these criminals do not take revenge or live on as revenants, executions always include sacrifices to the Supernaturals, especially dark **Nehalennia** (see below). These sacrifices are also meant to appease two beings—the bone-man,

Thargûn and the water-woman, **Karyba**—who would otherwise recruit these spirits into their retinue. (♥ 178)

The worship of the Aurochs King in Andergast does not arise solely from the will of the sumes. **Bull cults**, which are common in some regions, share aspects with the beliefs of the orcs, though these similarities are unclear to most humans due to their



ignorance of orc rites. Altars that survive from the time when orcs ruled this land depict the black bull of death (**Tairach**) or the golden bull of the sun (**Brazoragh**), which today are usually interpreted as depictions of the Aurochs King. Followers of the Twelvegods might be worried to learn that they are sometimes washed with blood to avert the gaze of the Supernaturals or placate them.

Churches and Cults

“By Rondra’s thunder! These madmen won’t bless my weapon because I am not a burgher of their kingdom. I curse them to the bone. If I survive this campaign, I swear that I will report this to the Lion Castle in Ferricum, as Blood-drinker Kor is my witness!”
—Thalevia of Uhdenberg, double mercenary, 1010 FB

The cultural influence of the Horasian Empire and the Middenrealm has been slowly strengthening the Churches of the Twelvegods in the Warring Kingdoms. Time and again Blessed Ones are sent to bring the *true faith* to the inhabitants of these *backward countries*. The greater the locals’ contact to strangers, the more their faith in the Twelvegods begins to resemble that practiced in the Horasian Empire and the Middenrealm. Various churches increasingly establish and fund temples that teach rather orthodox views on the Twelve.

Besides that, most Churches and cults in the Warring Kingdoms work a little differently than in other regions of Aventuria. The exceptions are the great **Orders** that have settled here, though they have not yet gained much importance or popularity. The **Draconites**, members of the Hesindan Order of Knowledge, and the **Anconites**, members of the magical healing order, are the only two that have managed to become well established here.

The Draconites, who have sworn allegiance to the goddess of knowledge and own a large estate near Salta, know these problems very well, as **Hesinde** is barely worshiped outside of scholarly circles.

Some temples of the Twelve are lavishly furnished, while those in other places barely have a small shrine. Their influence depends on whether the landholder endorses and supports their worship. Only the widespread worship of **Travia** and **Peraine** exists in a form and function close to the ideals of their respective Church leaders in Rommily and Ilsur. Blessed Ones of both Churches are well liked in

the Warring Kingdoms and welcomed everywhere. Here, **Tsa** is usually worshiped in her aspect of a transformer of things, but many Blessed Ones still have problems asserting the goddess’ teachings beyond the belief in Ingval. **Phex** is barely recognized as a god of trade outside the larger towns, and his Church acts only in the shadows.

Praios and **Boron** are often worshiped as divine adversaries, much as is taught in Lowanger Dualism. Praios is seen as the god of light and life, Boron as the god of death and darkness—a classification that pleases neither of the two churches, incidentally. The ancient elemental gods, **Efferd** (as god of water, wind, and fishing), **Ingerimm** (as god of fire and crafts), and **Firun** (as god of ice and the hunt), are well respected. Their churches are open enough to accept most types of worship. Recently, the Church of **Ifirn** has begun to maintain the temples and shrines of Firun.

At some places, the elemental gods and their followers (things like wind, tides, or forests) are so powerful that people offer them human sacrifices—a practice forbidden in most other realms. **Rondra**, the goddess of courage, honor, luck in battle, and honorable combat, is often invoked as a protector, and her Blessed Ones are usually welcomed everywhere, but in Andergast, women are thought incapable of fighting and the goddess is often depicted as a mere addition to her father or husband Praios, which causes much consternation within the Church.

Only the Church of **Rahja**, which assigned one of its Metropolitans to Joborn, accepts the deviations in the Warring Kingdoms with stoic calm. Whether the Warring Kingdoms worship the divine horses Tharvun and Sulva, or Rahja is seen as giver of beer and geniality, is of little consequence in Horasian Belhanka, site of the Church’s main temple. Of prime importance to Church leaders is the lifting of the ban against Rahja. Outlawed in Andergast until 1022 FB, its changing influence on politics began with the *Joborn Friendship* (see page 40).

Nature Religions

"I have heard that the Twelve are not worshiped properly in the Warring Kingdoms. Druids and witches are treated as priests and proclaim the will of the unknowable. Pretentiously, they call themselves sumes or Daughters of Satuaria and claim to read the future in the weather, the past in wind, soil, and water, and the present by observing the growth of plants or the movements of beasts. They even serve as judges and decide right and wrong. Maybe there is a kernel of truth in their faith, but I can only judge what I have seen with my own eyes. Even so, it is wrong to undermine the gods-given order in this way, and sacrificing money to appease an upset tree or lake does not seem very wise to me."

—Nacladora Berlinghan, Blessed One of Hesinde Draconite, 1036 FB



Sumes, as druids are known in Andergast, often take the role of priest and their influence extends to many different daily tasks. Adventurians ask the the Blessed Ones of the Twelvegods for assistance with births, marriages, and the favor of a deity, but Andergastans brings these concerns to the sumes, who are viewed as the only ones who can interpret the will of Sumu in its entirety. For this reason, sumes both live above the law and help to write them via their influence over the reigning nobles.

Few inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms can tell if the miracles of a sume are divine or arcane in origin, and thus sumes are seen as powerful and deserving respect. They are the chosen ones to whom treants listen, and the last word regarding felling trees or hunting animals. The Council of the Sumes is the most important gathering of priests in Andergast. They also supply the most important spiritual adviser to the Andergastan king in the form of the Champion of Sumu.

The same is true for the witches, the Daughters of Satuaria, in Nostria. The political power of the Inner Circle of the witches of Hallerû derives from the people, and even Queen Yolande, a scholarly Hesinden, would have trouble implementing policies that went against their will.

In the Warring Kingdoms, the worship of dryads, nymphs, other fairy creatures, the Animal Kings of aurochs and crowned stag, and the sad unicorn, Keldoran, is more common than worship of the Twelvegods. The Oak King, the legendary first scion of Sumu who is said to live somewhere in the Forest Wilderness, also enjoys much worship and is often called upon by sumes and witches to intervene on the faithfuls' behalf. (🐉 174)



Chapter 7: Spellcraft and Sorcery

“Of course some spellcasters, you might call them mages, insist that all magical work must be shaped by the mind and all spells must be understood inside and out. They use gestures and incantations to give form to Mada’s power.

Such nonsense! They forget that passion is sometimes necessary to ignite the first spark of magic! These mages are not unlike sumes in their stubborn and exclusive worldview. Like mages, druids also think that they are destined for greater things, even though they, too, only use magic. And they always act in secret, as if planning to unleash all the power of the moon on an unsuspecting world. Granted, they can be passionate, but I’ve seen mages cry over books. And accurate observation is not unknown to me, either.

We fly around on staves, barrels, and brooms treated with flying balm, while sumes have their stone daggers and wax dolls, which they are very powerful. What a load of bull! Mages have staves, too, and some even have a crystal ball. Oh, if they only knew to use their tools better! But where mages get distracted by Hesinde’s sheer might, sumes get caught up in their beliefs. And that is where they go wrong. Her body does not need protection. Sumu just needs to be brought back to life! Satuaria knows this, which is why she chose us. Mada’s power lets us do things few others can. But does that make us forget who we are? Is that what Satuaria wants for us?

No, our familiars prevent that, and I swear that sometimes my faithful Farlion knows better than me what the wind whispers and the water murmurs. And when I am angry, he brings doom on silent wings. I will not have my secrets stolen and written down in a dusty tome for some city child to read in a fairy tale! I won’t, I tell you!”

—Naringrath, Silent Sister from the Inner Circle of the witches of Hallerû, 1039 FB



Many inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms fear the power of magic because it is a great mystery to them. Druids and witches are often treated as the equals of Blessed Ones. The respect and rank of guild mages also differ from the other realms. As with the Twelvegods Edict of Silem-Horas, Rohal the Wise's rules governing magic and magical guilds, the *Codex Albyricus*, has no authority here because

the Warring Kingdoms had already gained independence from the empire when those laws were implemented. The Nostrians adopted it because their academy adheres to Rohal's school of thought. In the eyes of Andergastan nobles, however, the *Codex Albyricus* means little, and it is rarely invoked in legal discussions.

Magic and Everyday Life

Many beings in forests, rivers, lakes, ponds, and oceans can use magic. Beings like dryads, nymphs, or marwolds often are the source of fear and superstition, and humans stick to their fields and well-worn paths. Treants and unicorns aren't just legendary figures; they can have an impact on everyday survival. Many woodcutters who tried to cut down the wrong tree were beaten to death by a marwold, and many fishers were lured to a watery grave by a nymph. There are countless myths and legends about tragic events involving supernatural creatures. Nobody wants to get caught between an aurochs and a crowned stag, or stumble into the path of the unicorn Keldoran as he hunts aurochs in the Forest Wilderness. And the Oak King is said to have little tolerance for insults.

For many Nostrians and Andergastans, faith and magic are the same thing. People make sacrifices to many dryads at small altars to prevent attacks by treants on the woodcutters. In Nostria, people often throw coins into lakes and rivers to placate local nymphs or receive a bounty of fish.

So it is certainly no surprise that the simple folk of the Warring Kingdoms have great respect for those that use their magic for the good of the people, or for those who try to alleviate the malicious actions of dryads, nymphs, and other nature spirits. Since few of the inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms can read or write, stories of salvation and horror are twisted by word of mouth. Even scholars cannot tell which entity might have been the inspiration for a particular story. Swamps, where malicious spellcasters are buried, teem with countless ghosts and ghouls.

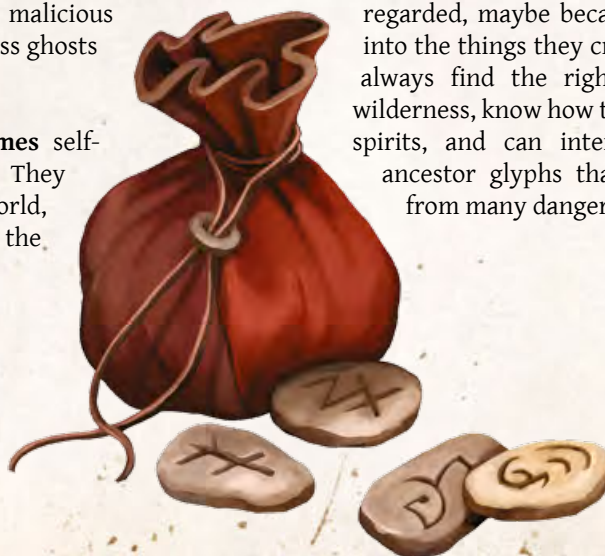
Andergastan druids call themselves **sumes** self-appointed priests of the primal goddess. They feel responsible for the balance of the world, and act as mediators between humans and the

forest and all that lives therein. Not even a conservative Andergastan noble would dare send woodcutters into the forest without first asking for the blessing of the sumes. Nobles also seek the advice of a wise man from the woods in important matters.

Witches enjoy a similar level of respect in Nostria, where people call them the Daughters of Satuarua and seek their advice in many matters, and they are often viewed as healers and wise teachers.

Guild mages, who enjoy great respect as scholars in other realms, here receive little respect because people view education as a useless waste of time, and magical power is viewed with more suspicion than awe. Guild mages are rather rare in the Warring Kingdoms (the only academies are located in the two capitals), and children with magical talents are often given to the local sume or Daughter of Satuarua, instead, for training. Nevertheless, spellcasters from other regions of Aventuria sometimes retreat to the solitude of the Warring Kingdoms, either to investigate its mysteries or to conceal their activities from others.

There are many magical dilettantes in the Warring Kingdoms, called Mada's children. They are people with a magical gift which has never been developed. This might be for a minor talent, or because there hasn't been a teacher, or maybe the power has been suppressed due to fear or superstition for so long that it can't reach its full potential anymore. Some of them are highly regarded, maybe because their magic flows into the things they craft, they mysteriously always find the right paths through the wilderness, know how to placate angry nature spirits, and can interpret the mysterious ancestor glyphs that promise protection from many dangers. (🐾 179)



Magical Traditions

“Yes, they have goblin sorceresses and orc priests here, but you needn’t fear. They are nothing steel can’t handle. The sumes and Daughters of Satuaria are more worrisome, if you ask me. The people and even the nobles respect them too much, so you cannot just slay one that is up to no good.”

—A Koshan knight to his squire, 1037 FB

The Sumes of Andergast

The magic of the sumes is very primal and reflects the forces of nature. Legends say that the sumes stopped Nostrian spellcasters who crossed into Andergast with demon allies during the War of Trees. Sumes are said to have destroyed the unconquerable fortress Ysraeth with an earthquake (🐾 180), and it is said that they made Castle Dragonstone disappear. Even an Andergastan lord is said to have suffered their wrath for trying to pollute the Ingvál and create a famine (see page 136).

In the philosophy of the sumes, humans are only a small part of creation and in no way above it. Sumes feel it is their responsibility to keep or create a balance between humans and nature (as well as between various aspects of nature). This means that sometimes they aren’t especially friendly to humans and aren’t necessarily on the side of the weak. In their worldview, it’s normal and proper that the wolf kills the sheep, or that the taller tree shields the light from the smaller one. Sometimes people claim that they have no pity, like the forces of nature they represent.

Sumes usually live somewhere near every estate owned by the aristocracy, as nobles like to ask for the sumes’ blessing in many matters of nature, especially hunting or cutting wood. But many sumes are hermits who avoid contact with other people and retreat far into the wilderness.

All sumes are male, which might be the result of their origins in patriarchal Andergast. By longstanding tradition, only boys with the gift of magic receive training as a sume. At irregular intervals, sumes meet at a hidden place in the foothills of the Stone Oak Forest to exchange knowledge, confer, and to confirm or rearrange hierarchies. Druids of other schools often attend these gatherings* and take part in the time-intensive rituals that are said to create great power. The extremely rare female druids are also allowed to visit these gatherings.

The schools of thought of the druids are similar to the covens of witches in that they serve to unite kindred spirits. For more information, see the *Aventuria Almanac*, page 195.



The common folk of Andergast refer to sumes with awe, whether they serve Sumu or belong to another druid school of thought, and augments of power and grove druids are all sometimes called sumes. Not all Andergastan sumes follow the same teachings. Yehodan (see page 126) is an augments of power, and Arbogast the Old (see page 125) is a servant of Sumu.

The Council of Sumes

The Council of Sumes has an ancient tradition. The five (or, depending on the story, three or even seven) most powerful druids are seen as the spokesmen of the aurochs, the envoy of Sumu. This council determines the goals of the sume community.

It is unknown how often and where this council meets. Most outsiders have no idea that it even exists. Members are not elected. Instead, they undertake magical tasks to prove their understanding of the nature of Sumu. Arbogast the Old and his former master student Yehodan are current members of the council, and they embody two very divergent schools of thought. The other council members move between these two positions. (🐾 178)

The Witches of Nostria

Many Nostrian commoners worship Satuaria. Witches, the representatives of this first and most important daughter of Sumu, are considered prudent advisers in all matters, and many villages are home to a Daughter of the Earth, a Seer of Today and Tomorrow, or a Silent Sister. Owl witches often serve as priestesses of Satuaria. • ○

Witches of the Sisterhood of the Knowing, who research and gather knowledge about magic and often keep serpents as familiars, are also common here. They are often seen as mediators to the moon goddess Mada. Fishers and sailors, especially, seek their council to learn the best times to go to sea. The Sisterhood of Knowing forms the core of Nostrian scholarship, as they maintain records of the traditions and stories of the land and people.

Several witches of the Beauties of the Night dwell in the towns of Salta and Nostria. Sadly, rumors persist of a community of evil witches that choose to live somewhere in the Forest Wilderness to avoid contact with the other sisterhoods.

Twice each year, on the equinoxes, the Nostrian Daughters of Satuaria meet

• For more information about sisterhoods and other covens of witches, see the *Core Rules* or the *Aventuria Almanac*.





for Witches' Night gatherings atop the Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû to discuss important matters, celebrate their faith, and brew their witch's balm for the upcoming year. The witches also take advantage of this time to cast especially powerful curses and rituals that require the power of the community.

The High Three

The Coven of Hallerû is one of the most powerful witch covens in Aventuria, even though it isn't as well-known as the councils of witches from the Garetian Realmwood or the Blue Forest in Weiden. The leaders of the coven, collectively known as the High Three, all hail from different sisterhoods and are elected or confirmed during Witches' Night celebrations. One of the High Three is a cat witch named Karlitta of Lyckweiden (see page 123). Her major rival in the coven is an owl witch named Naringrath (see page 123). Whereas Karlitta wishes to lead Nostrian witches to an open and scholarly future, Naringrath wishes to adhere to conservative tradition and secrecy.

Mada's Children

"Like the sun, the moon woman moves across the sky, shining her silvery light upon us, but her gifts are not received by all."

—Common saying in the Warring Kingdoms, modern

Many villages are home to unusually skilled craftworkers, bards whose songs can sooth angry ghosts, or particularly successful fishers or woodcutters who fear no treant. Some of these people are magical dilettantes, which people in the Warring Kingdoms often call *Mada's Children*. Even though these individuals' powers are surrounded by a great deal of superstition, they usually don't need to hide or conceal themselves in any way. Instead, Children of Mada are often viewed as priests or chosen ones of the Supernaturals.

The Mages of the Warring Kingdoms

"This is what these simpletons call magic? Ridiculous!"

—Hasrabal ben Yakuban, Mage-Sultan of Gorien, modern

Both kingdoms have their own principles for the education of guild mages, and they couldn't be more different. Nostria respects the *Codex Albyricus*, which protects guild mages from common law by ensuring that they are subject only to guild law, but even mages with academy seals enjoy no special privileges in Andergast unless they are currently serving the king or another noble.

The Mage from Andergast

"Only those who know what it means to obey should be allowed to command!"

—The Andergastan dean Aljawa Walsareffnaja, modern

The Combat Seminar of Andergast has served as a useful tool of the ruling class since its inception. Countless skirmishes and campaigns against Nostria were decided by these skilled combat mages.

For many years, law mandated that alumni serve the Crown for twelve years, and in many regions, trained mages are still expected to serve the kingdom. The academy traditionally gives student mages experience in war and wilderness survival, to provide veteran mage warriors or healers to serve the monarch, the nobles, or the armies of Andergast. This close connection to the kingdom has unfortunately led to the general impression that academy mages are stubborn, violent, and half-educated.

The traditional academy has implemented some changes of the curriculum that had been discussed for long under the rule of King Efferdan. Since then, the school has focused on tactics, expanded its magical research programs, and strengthened its connections to the gray guild. In exchange for spells like the powerful *Ignisphaero*, the academy agreed to pay more attention to the *Codex Albyricus*. This has unfortunately led to friction, as that famous book of law is still not accepted in Andergast, and alumni cannot legally claim any of the rights defined within.

Since then, many alumni prefer a commitment to the guild over military service, which is no longer obligatory. The new adepts can, for example, apply to work at an academy or commit six years to the *Ordo Defensores Lectoria* (ODL), a combat Order of the gray guild.

Social manners and daily life in the academy are rough, and practical skills are important. Lessons in staff fighting, the use of the stag-catcher, and outdoor survival skills prepare students for a difficult life outside the academy walls. Body and mind are hardened, and swimming in icy creeks helps students master the self-control needed for casting spells in combat.

Alumni who graduate with a result of at least *cum laude* (Bosparano: with honors) in their finals receive not only the guild seal but also a weapon created specially for them in the form of a stag-catcher, a heavy version of the boar-catcher that is wielded like a short sword and is about two feet long (the length of weapon permissible for mages, according to the rules of the *Codex Albyricus*).

Students have many opportunities to prove their skill with this weapon, not just during training, but when fighting Nostrians, outlaws, goblins, or wild animals.

Large parts of the education take place in the wilderness and accompanied by various nobles' men-at-arms, who show the students how to best use their abilities in combat. Most alumni are physically quite robust and know how to identify many plants and animals of the forest.

The education in theoretical knowledge suffers somewhat from this focus on practical skills, but experience in heraldry is important, especially in the borderlands, where recognizing friend from foe can be critical.

Dean *Aljawa Walsareffnaja* ♀ (*989 FB; 6 feet tall; bluish-black hair; tan; pointed ears), a half elf with Norbard roots, is said know the wilderness very well. She finished her education while still very young, and opened the academy to women, which made her friends in more places than just Andergast.

According to legend, sumes and Bosparanian mages cooperated to found the magical school, and it is said that the school is still in contact with those wise men of the woods today. Some even think that the academy has owed a great favor to the highest-ranking sume since the fall of Fortress Ysraeth in 615 FB. (♁ 180) While neither of these legends can be proven beyond a doubt, it is true that several druidic artifacts are kept locked away in the school's lead-lined vaults.

Overview: The Combat Seminar

Official Name: Royal Andergastan Academy of Arcane Combat for Defense against Nostria

Location: City of Andergast, in the Kingdom of Andergast

Guild: Great Gray Guild of the Mind

Specialty: Combat Magic

Preferred Properties: Elemental, Influence, Transformation

Dean: Aljawa Walsareffnaja

Professional Reputation: The alumni of the academy are tough combat mages with a large repertoire of damaging spells. Most Andergastan mages enter the service of the nobility or the guild, but some seek new challenges on adventurous travels.



Asmodeus of Andergast, the bastard brother of King Wendolyn, is one of the school's most infamous alums. He fought on the side the Demon Master, Borbarad, during the war, and entered into a pact with the archdemon Lolgramoth. Before his death at the hands of heroes, he cursed Rohaja, the Empress of the Middenrealm, with his last breath.



Overview: The Academy of Light and Darkness

Official Name: Arcane Teaching and Research Facility of the Dualism of Light and Darkness in Nostria; Royal Nostrian School of Magic

Location: City of Nostria, in the kingdom Nostria

Guild: Alliance of the White Pentagram

Specialty: Transformation of objects, light and darkness magic; in addition to mundane crafts

Preferred Properties: Elemental, Object

Dean: Caibre Arnstätter

Professional Reputation: Within the white guild, the Nostrian mages are seen as ethical but tolerant support. Other guild mages sometimes deride them or trust them to know only their specialized field. They are considered practical and skilled in crafts, but also as guild mages that have contributed little to academic research.



The Mage from Nostria

“Light is merely the absence of darkness. Darkness is merely the absence of light. Both are a part of life, entwined and inseparable. All beings must strive for balance and learn to love light and darkness the same. You must learn to fear only gloom.”

—Rohal the Wise

The Academy of Light and Darkness, as the Arcane Teaching and Research Facility of the Dualism of Light and Darkness is called in Nostria, is a pious white magic school of the guild. People ridiculed its lack of research until recently, but alumni of the academy are well received at many white and even gray guilds due to their tolerance and openness. Mages from Nostria are virtuous, diligent, and reliable. For many years, the curriculum focused on dualism, a minor doctrine espousing the opposition and unity of light and darkness. The alumni of the academy do not follow the Lowanger dualism, which sees and fears Praisos and Boron as opposites, but rather wish to sustain the balance of the world, as taught by Rohal the Wise.

Unlike Andergastan mages, Nostrian adepts view themselves as neutral in the struggle between the Warring Kingdoms. They want to use their magic for the good of humankind, even if humankind does not always approve, and there is no snobbery in the Nostrian academy. Many

alumni go into the world to advance the research of the queen. Others commit to the white-magic healing order of the Anconites for a time, or accompany the Mephalites on their search for new students for white magic schools. Nobles often cherish the blossoming of magical gifts in their children, as Mada’s Gift does not disqualify one from ruling here, as it does in the Middenrealm. Many townsfolk secretly wish that their daughters and sons could study at the academy and follow the example of their queen.

Magical education in Nostria is not at strictly regimented as it is in other white magic academies. Schools also focus on solid craft skills, as they believe that magic should be worked as diligently and carefully as when creating something by hand using tools. Zeal and motivation are important prerequisites for completing the curriculum. This is based on the ideals of great Rohal and focuses on self-awareness, fostering the virtue, modesty and down-to-earth sensibility that make a Nostrian mage a reliable companion.

Most alumni view themselves as warriors of the light who must face the darkness, of which they see an abundance and which they perceive as a threat. They always try to fight on the side of good, even if they sometimes hide this fact behind philosophical statements. All magisters and adepts of the academy elect the head of the school, something that is rather uncommon in Nostria, which is normally quite undemocratic.

Caibre Arnstätter ♀ (*1002 FB; 6’; gray eyes; long blond hair) currently holds the office of dean. The young mage was chosen in 1039 FB, after her predecessor was discovered heading a conspiracy of followers of the Nameless God. This pretty woman from Havena is helpful and practical and knows much about dark cults. Caibre supports the queen’s search for relics of ages past, but insists on the academy’s political neutrality.

Ancestor Glyphs

“Your excellency, we need your advice, as we have found surprising things in our kingdom’s history that no botanist or scholar of the arts can unravel. We have reached the limits of our knowledge and that of our teachers. Ancestor glyphs of unknown power have been found within our borders, and we cannot interpret them. We cannot even read the script used to pen this knowledge. The Hoard of Everlasting Knowledge acknowledges and applauds your expertise in languages and scripts and hopes that you can shed some light on what, if any, magic lies within these old symbols.”

Lady Hesinde protect us! We are dispatching heroes to find more of these ancestor glyphs and gather knowledge, but we need your assistance.”

—Correspondence from Nostria’s Queen Yolande II Kasmyrin to the Draconite Arch-Abbot of the North, Wulfhelm Tannhauser, 1037 FB

In Nostria these magical symbols are called *ancestor glyphs*. Thorwalers call them runes, Norbards call them spell signs and mages refer to them as arcanoglyphs. All of these have one thing in common, namely, that if their creator is gifted by Mada and knows the right techniques or rituals for their creation, they can unleash powerful magical effects.

• We are talking about the special ability *Magical Signs* (see *Core Rules*, page 285).

Aventurian scholars still debate the origin of the first magical signs. Almost every tradition employs similar signs for things such as warding and protective circles. There is even evidence that dragons worked their will in magical symbols in ages past to

protect their fortresses and hoards. The crystalomancers of the lizards are said to have learned this ability from the dragons, but trolls are also thought to use such signs in their complicated, three-dimensional writing.

Some of the fine ornamentation and embroidery of the elves have magical effects. Tulamydian mages and, intriguingly, the ancestors of the Norbards were skilled wielders of magical glyphs. Legends say that the goddess Hesinde appeared to the tribal leaders of the Al’Hani and the Beni Nurbad, the ancestors of modern Norbards. On Mount Ashub, she gave them magical writing, supposedly the first human written language. For that reason, Norbard zibiljas can create effective magical signs, as they are known among the Thorwaler rune-cutters, the Transysilian warding signs, or the mages of the Lands of the Tulamydes. Unlike most traditions that still use this art, Nostrian ancestor glyphs have been almost completely forgotten. Few spellcasters, among them witches and Mada’s Children living in remote villages, still know how to use the old art to create effective warding circles or imbue an object with magic.

Contrary to common belief, these magical signs do not always have to be painted on the item to take effect.

A knowledgeable user can weave ancestor glyphs into cloth, bind them into baskets, or even cut them into stone with a chisel. This may explain why they remained lost for so long, hidden in plain sight, as they were, in decorative patterns, scrolls, and banding.

While working ancestor glyphs still exist on old heirlooms and can in theory be reactivated, nobody alive knows the special command words. Nobles use such symbols on their heraldic shields, armor, and tapestries out of a sense of tradition, but these are mere copies that do not hold any magical power.

An expedition of Draconites sent by Queen Yolande made the first discovery of ancient glyphs on old ruins. Their script appears to combine elements of Bosparano, Alhanian, and Hjlaldingsh. Their meaning has mostly eluded scholars, one major barrier being that much old knowledge can only be found in the traditions of the common folk, sources that are considered unscientific at best.

Progress

No other traces of these magical symbols have been found. Since the Alhanian-Norbard heritage of Nostria is largely lost to history, Queen Yolande has had to start at the beginning. She has funded numerous heroes and several scholarly expeditions to pursue any new clues. Study proceeds apace, and most letters of the old alphabet have been deciphered, but not all of them can be enchanted by themselves. Some appear to require whole words or ligatures, or merge several letters together. Few Nostrians even know how to write, so expeditions often only recover everyday items bearing one or two faint symbols. Researchers are studying the technique whereby these symbols were applied to decipher their meaning and uses.

So far, researchers have successfully analyzed only one ancestor glyph: the Windcatcher. Since then, the queen has been directing Mada’s Children in the best weaving mills in the land to weave this glyph into large sails. The idea is to have these sails catch wind spirits known as sylphs to allow ships to sail along the coast with great speed. However, several challenges remain to be overcome, as not one of the text vessels has survived its maiden voyage. (♥ 179)

For more about ancestor glyphs, see page 172.

Chapter 8: Fame and Infamy



“You must always know with whom you are dealing, since many men of noble standing will try to win you over. Never succumb to the temptation! They will try to promise you girls and money instead of influence and power. Listen to your inner voice, always consult the priests of mother Sumu, and never hesitate to seek solitude to put your thoughts in order when you are beset by the words and flattery of the barons. As the Champion of Sumu, you do not have to explain yourself to other humans. Do what you want, when you want. Use your time in the forests to fathom the nature of Sumu and strengthen your soul for confrontations in the Council of Champions—and they will come, as certainly as the sun rises in the morning. But that is not where I was headed. I wanted to inform you about the nobles of Andergast, to allow you to judge these powers for yourselves.

The Zornbolds do not merely rule the region. They received their power from gods and spirits, and thus it is right that they are the chosen ones of the aurochs, the beast they use in their heraldry. The family tree of the royal house has many branches besides that of the king. It includes the lords of Albumin as well as the head of the alchemists of the Alliance of the Red Salamander.

Four other families of the Andergastan aristocracy enjoy the king’s special favor. The Egelings are the barons of Thurana. They are the second most powerful family. Then, there are the the Bearvalleys, the barons of Andrafall.

The Pawgroves, barons of the Ornib Lands, rule the oldest settlement in the kingdom, and the Longfords have the honorable and notoriously difficult task of holding Joborn. The Redtrees, who control Teshkal, must be mentioned, too, as they allow women to rule. No doubt you have already heard of Baroness Ossyra, the Champion of Rahja...

It’s also important that you recognize our opponents, especially House Kasmyrin, which produced the queen of Nostria, who has the gift of Mada. She isn’t a Daughter of Satuarria, as one might expect, but rather a mage with the seal of the white guild. This means that she can be very dangerous!”

—Arbogast the Old to Kusmin, his best student, 1037 FB





Yolande II Kasmyrin
Queen of Nostria

“If we want to grow, we must remember our country’s history— not to dwell in it, but to learn from it and choose the right path!”

Petite Yolande came to the throne unexpectedly, after the blue wheeze almost annihilated the Nostrian royal family. (♠ 179) As she is a mage with the gift of Mada, the people were hopeful. At first, the young woman seemed overwhelmed by high-level politics, but Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem took her under her wing. The queen ruled very hesitantly for ten years, but then seized the scepter with both hands in 1036 FB and now rules with greater confidence.

After her coronation, Noble Count Albio of Salta rebelled against her reign. When the feud between the noble count and the forest count of Eilert first broke out, the queen visited the marshal of Salta to broker peace, even though her advisers told her not to. Albio’s position weakened considerably after Yolande married his enemy. For a Nostrian noble, the queen is surprisingly open and humble. This wins her few friends among the bombasts, who feel threatened by her prudent and smart behavior and her girlish looks. Many members of the Nostrian aristocracy sneer at her so-called newfangled ideas.

The People’s Voice:

+ *“What could have been better than a spellcaster on the throne? Now things will finally improve.”*

- *“She is researching the history of our land, but is she keeping the old traditions? How many armies has she raised to fight against the enemy? This won’t turn out well, I say.”*



Lady Rondriane of Sapstem
Nostrian Marshal

“Pull yourself together and think of someone else for a change! If you won’t think of the peoples’ welfare, think of Nostria! You do have that much honor in your bones, don’t you?”

Rondriane has lived in the royal court of Nostria since she was very young. The inexperienced Queen Yolande appointed her Marshal of Nostrian Defense and queen’s personal adviser in 1027 FB, and she was long considered the secret power behind the throne of Nostria. It wasn’t long before she had to admit that young Yolande had her own ideas regarding rulership. Against Rondriane’s advice, the queen interfered in a conflict between Noble Count Albio of Salta and Forest Count Eilert, but things worked out well and the confrontation ended. The Marshal’s influence waned quickly after the queen married, since Yolande’s husband Eilert and his forest knights remained outside of her control. Officially she is still marshal and adviser to the queen, but Rondriane knows that Yolande now takes her advice with a grain of salt. She does not like this development, as her faith in rulers was already shaken by King Kasimir. Now she desperately tries to find ways to win back her influence and power, even if it means that she must secretly support the conservative nobles who work against the queen. (♠ 179)

The People’s Voice:

+ *“She has brought great honor to her family! She is a fighter who knows how to command. Just the person we need to bring Andergast to its knees.”*

- *“Instead of moping and retreating, she should listen to the bombasts and see to it that the queen speaks openly against cursed Zornbold!”*



Noble Count Albio III Salis of Salta
The "Schemer"

"We sit on the border, and because we do, we must look out for ourselves. Nobody would dare to threaten us. As long as we are free and independent, we are strong!"

Albio of Salta is a skilled politician and masterful schemer who has proven himself in merchant affairs and at negotiation tables, but not so much on the battlefield. His fondest dream is to make Salta a free city, and it's no secret that the Nostrian noble count strives for his bombasts' independence. Some even whisper that he secretly desires to be king and make Salta his capital.

Albio lost his heir, Albio the Younger, in a feud with Forest Count Elbert of Mirdin, and felt betrayed by the forced peace arranged by the queen's skillful tactical maneuvering. This defeat has stymied his plans, and for the moment, Albio can only sit back and watch the queen slowly improve the capital's fortunes at the cost of endangering Salta's prominent position. Rumors hint that Count Albio is gathering strength in the form of like-minded individuals who share his opposition to the queen's reforms. If true, it is only a matter of time until the noble count seizes upon the next opportunity to weaken the queen's rule. (♠ 179)

The People's Voice:

+ "A smart ruler, less focused on hatred and the sword and more on beautiful words and hard cash. He is the source of our prosperity. As long as the noble count holds the reins, we'll be in good shape!"

- "A vain fool who thinks he could be king one day. He hasn't reckoned on us. We, who always fight in the front lines when protecting the kingdom against Andergast."



Forest Count Eilert II Rheideryan of Mirdin
Prince of Nostria

"Everything centers on freeing the town from the clutches of the Andergastans and restoring it to its former glory. Joborn used to be the home of the forest counts—and it will be again!"

The forest count of Joborn, whose family lost their ancestral seat to Andergast, is more knight than noble and has no love for pomp. Eilert inherited the title only after his father and brother succumbed to the blue wheeze epidemic, and a robber knight killed his remaining brother. His face bears a disfiguring scar from an encounter with a Thorwaler occupation force in Kendrar. He is willing to do almost anything to achieve his goals, especially if it involves reclaiming his family home in Joborn. But his subjects' poverty is always his first and foremost concern. When he appealed to Queen Yolande for help in the increasingly poverty-stricken region, in 1036 FB, Noble Count Albio of Salta mocked him and called him a *beggar voivod*. This is now recognized as the start of the Bombast Feud, which ended with the Battle in the Snow (see page 138). The queen herself interfered and negotiated peace, and afterward offered her hand in marriage to the forest count.

Even though he is the now prince of Nostria, he hardly spends any time with his wife. Instead he travels the kingdom in her name or tends to the people of his county. He doesn't think much of some of the queen's modern plans, and is prudent enough to keep his opinions to himself.

The People's Voice:

+ "Now that he is prince consort, he will not rest until Joborn is liberated. And he has enough experience on the battlefield to do just that."

- "What a busybody! Maybe he's unstoppable on the battlefield, but what does he know about ruling? He can't hope to win the support of the traders of Salta."



Karlitta of Lyckweiden
Beauty of the Night

“Who cares if a mage is the one to explore the mysteries of our land? All that matters is what the queen does with this knowledge. She has my support, as whatever she gains will also help our sisterhood.”

Few would guess that one of the most powerful witches in Nostria lives in an unremarkable hut next to a small lake about ten miles south of Lyckmoor. Karlitta of Lyckweiden is a Beauty of the Night whose openness and eagerness to conduct research would suit a Serpent witch well. As one of the High Three, she leads the influential and widely feared Coven of Hallerû. Her potions and balms are coveted not only in her region, and many are willing to travel a great distance to obtain one of her rejuvenation potions (she is at least 50 years old, but doesn't look a day over 30). At least once a month, she travels to Salta with her tomcat Larion where she owns a house that is guarded by her young lover. (🐾 182)

There she receives customers as well as scholars from other lands, with whom she discusses philosophy and religion. She has met here several times with Queen Yolande. This has raised suspicion among the other witches, who fear that Karlitta might be maneuvering to gain even more influence or even betray the secrets of the witches.

The People's Voice:

+ “Few know the herbs of the region better than Karlitta. It is said that she is helping the Queen revive the mysteries of the past.”
- “You must be mad! The Witches of Hallerû are inscrutable, and that goes double for their leader Karlitta. If you're smart, you won't meddle in her affairs, or you will be hit by a curse.”



Naringrath
Silent Sister

“The land holds secrets that must be protected. It doesn't matter if they must be protected from the Andergastans or the curiosity of a queen who has no understanding for the things that grow!”

This ominous witch can appear anywhere in Nostria. Nobody other than her young student knows the location of her home, but some suspect it lies hidden in the beech groves of the Lakeland. Naringrath is another member of the High Three, the leaders of the Coven of Hallerû, and is considered an influential rival of Karlitta of Lyckweiden. She is said to be one of the most passionate protectors of Nostrian land, and some believe she is a chosen one of the Crowned Stag King or else kissed by Ingval. Naringrath enjoys the aura surrounding chosen ones, but she does not often speak about it. When she does talk, it is usually to discuss what should stay hidden and what may be revealed. People see the Silent Sister as the conscience of the wind, river and forest, and she uses this reputation to deliver her admonishments with force and gravity. People who do not heed her advice can expect one of her feared curses brought by her familiar, a skull owl named Farlion.

The People's Voice:

+ “When the Rondrikan came, I asked for her advice. “Do not worry. Cast brandy in the air,” she said, and my house was spared. Truly, she understands the gods!”
- “The mud of the Ingval will crush us! We should have listened to the queen when she told us to build a new dike. Sheep sacrifices haven't placated the river spirit! Ingval doesn't care about us!”



Wendelmir VI Zornbold
King of Andergast

“If they protest, disperse them. If they rebel, send knights to crush them. And never contradict me again, or you will regret it!”

When he was a bold but young prince, Wendelmir sat far down in the line of succession and thus enjoyed making the rounds of the taverns with his drinking buddies. He often bullied the common folk and bent the law as he pleased. His readiness and suitability for the throne was heralded by the appearance of the Aurochs King, the patron of Andergast, which offered to guide him. (♠ 174)

Wendelmir has grown more mature with the passing years, but many still consider him autocratic, brutal, and obstinate. He does appear to be more open to the advice of the sumes, but he revoked many of his predecessor's reforms, as he believes that traditions are very important. Sometimes his temper flares up, and he lets himself get carried away in revelry with his old friends, but in gatherings of the nobility, he shows openly how little love he has for barons who dare to oppose him. People were surprised when he brought a boy named Argos to court and began educating him. Whispers mention a political hostage, or even a bastard son....

The People's Voice:

+ *“It will take an unrelenting lord to smash Nostria once and for all. He is like the primal power of the aurochs, which is the patron of the Zornbold family for good reason.”*

- *“He is no friend of the Twelvegods. Stubborn and irascible—all things a ruler should not be. A king should know when to reward his vassals.”*



Ossyra Redtree of Teshkal
Champion of Rahja

“Why should it interest me if he is a knight with a good coat of arms? He insulted a woman and will pay the price—this is the law of the steppe. What a pity that he cannot run and hide in the court in Andergast.”

Not only has this aging baroness stayed strong and energetic, but as a ruler, she is still just as freedom-loving and stubborn as ever. Without these traits, she would have never been able to assert herself in the male-dominated Andergastan nobility, who view her as a cunning and skilled negotiator.

Her reputation as a skilled horse breeder and trader whose power and wealth stem partly from the oldest stud records in Aventuria earned her the office of Royal Stable Master. She is the only woman allowed to speak at gatherings of the Andergastan nobles, due to her position.

Her age is slowly catching up with her, and Ossyra has passed many of her duties to her oldest daughter, Sulvina, who is very similar to her in many ways.

The People's Voice:

+ *“She became wealthy and influential for a very good reason. She knows how to train horses, and she knows how to get her way with the stubborn barons!”*

- *“A female baron? This just can't be right. Where will it lead? Should we discard all our other values, too?”*



Arbogast the Old
Spokesman of the Council of Sumes

“The problems of humans aren’t important. Our first duty to Sumu is to maintain nature in all its glory. But don’t be fooled, my students. Humans are part of nature, too, so you must learn to find balance.”

The venerable and half-blind Arbogast was long considered the most powerful sume in Andergast. He is devoted to the old ways of not losing oneself in human matters and refusing to interfere in the strife between Andergast and Nostria. He withdrew to the solitude of the woods following a bitter argument on the subject with his favored student, Yehodan. After Wendelmir’s coronation, he presented his new student, Kusmin, the son of King Efferdan who had long been thought dead, and requested a private audience. As a result, Kusmin became the Champion of Sumu and thus the representative of the sumes at court. To the surprise and consternation of many, Arbogast continues to influence the fate of humankind.

The aged sume and wise teacher travels rarely, and prefers to spend most of his time in an isolated forest hut a day’s journey from Andergast. Kusmin regularly seeks his advice, and the sumes of Andergats have little doubt as who will lead them after Arbogast’s death.

The People’s Voice:

+ *“He is a wise intercessor to the Supernaturals, and always strives for a balance between the beings of the forest and humanity.”*
- *“Weird and reclusive? Ha! The doddering old coot is obsessed with power. What other reason could he have for demanding that the king appoint a Champion of Sumu?”*



Kusmin
Student of Arbogast and Champion of Sumu

“We must strive for a balance between the needs of humanity and the necessities of the forest!”

When Kusmin’s teacher, Arbogast, saved King Efferdan’s son who had long been presumed dead, Arbogast took him in and secretly trained him as a sume. Despite his youth, Kusmin has a rare understanding of the fate of the world and is patient enough to plan ahead. With Arbogast’s support, he was appointed Champion of Sumu after his return to public life and became the most influential adviser of the king. Now all nobles must seek permission from their local sume before making decisions concerning the forest or the animals therein. Neither king nor barons are especially happy with this arrangement, and many nobles believe that he now forces the king, albeit gently, to follow the will of the sumes. The common folk know that his compassion extends both to humans and the land, and he is widely admired, especially for declining the throne. Only time will tell if Kusmin will be able to juggle high-level politics and his duties as a sume. The other sumes already view him as a possible successor to Arbogast, a future that is greatly envied by the old man’s former favorite student, Yehodan.

The People’s Voice:

+ *“He might be young in years, but he is wise! He knows why he doesn’t want to rule. But he serves the people better as a sume.”*
- *“Instead on focusing how to defeat the witch woman from Nostria, he wants to help the land! No, he wouldn’t have been a good king.”*



Yehodan
Augmenter of Power

“Let them hate each other, the fools! There can be no balance, as only the strong prevail. That is the law of natures. I will make the aurochs the dominant force.”

This ambitious former student of Arbogast thought that he would one day lead the Andergast sumes, but his constant agitation for conflict between the realms led to a bitter falling out with his teacher. His views were not without company, for many discontented sumes saw Arbogast as too lenient. Today, Yehodan feels betrayed, for it was he who crowned the new king. (♠ 184) The young Kusmin now holds the office of the Champion of Sumu, a position to which he once aspired. The influence of the sumes has been greatly strengthened by Kusmin, a fact that is recognized and admired by the sumes, and most of Yehodan’s former supporters have turned away from him. Yehodan continues to stoke the hatred between the realms and does not tolerate any meddling of nobles in the sumes’ causes, as he believes only the sumes are the true servants of the land. Yehodan himself now has a student, Melanor, in whom he has much hope.

The People’s Voice:

+ *“The sume is right! The Nostricks should die! They don’t deserve the land!”*

- *“Even his teacher has no interest in his animosities. He would be better off listening to the spirits of the land instead of pursuing his vain longing for power.”*



The Red Bull
Robber Knight

“I don’t care whether you are Andergastan or Nostrian. Your coins are all that interest me. You have none? Then, you must die...”

The Red Bull gets his name from his red-lacquered armor, and he encourages the rumors that say the color comes from the fresh blood of his enemies. A greedy and violent man, he is the most feared robber knight in the borderlands. Even though he sometimes participates in tournaments, protected by the tournament peace, he does not practice knightly ideals. It is said that he is a bastard from Albernian, who is seeking his fortune in the Warring Kingdoms. He seems to care only for amassing as much gold as possible and creating an obedient retinue by sheer violence. Whereas the servants of Queen Yolande seem unable to track him down, the guards and forest nobles of King Wendelmir have been more successful at preventing the Red Bull’s depredations, so he usually operates on the Nostrian side of the border. But they can’t catch him, either, and just as word comes that he has been slain, he reappears again. (♠ 184)

The People’s Voice:

+ *“He kills anyone who refuses to join him or get in his way. And I say good thing, too. This is the route we should have taken a long time ago.”*

- *“Such a cruel lord, this can’t work out for long. He has killed so many barons and bombasts that surely the nobles won’t let it go on for much longer.”*

Other NPCs

“It’s not always the great folk of the realm that call the tune. Sometimes it takes small hands to do what is needed.”

—Brother Hilbert of Auen, Blessed One of Peraine



This section includes a variety of NPCs to use for your own adventures.

NPCs from Nostria

The old but fun-loving and always well-dressed countess **Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden** ♣ (*1004 FB; 5’10”); green eyes; red hair) always had to deal with envious people who believed that she could never rule a traditional bombasty. Her reputation began to recover, however, when she married the landless but respected Noble Count Muragio Ansfion of Kendrar. They both fought in the Siege of Salta in 1036 FB to stop Noble Count Albio’s plans, but her husband was convicted of a murder conspiracy and incarcerated in Fortress Gordelyn, the infamous *Blood Fortress*. Despite his imprisonment, she tries to maintain good relations with the queen. Some of the voivods of Ingvalsrohden claim that she no longer trusts in the protection of the Crown and relies instead only on the strength of her forest knights. Melanoth’s pride and joy is her oldest daughter, Silaleth, who shall become ruler of Ingvalsrohden and, hopefully, the occupied Kendrar, one day.

The one-armed mage **Satuwina Hyttenhau** ♣ (*991 FB; 6’4”); brown eyes; graying blond hair) is the town magistrate of Nostria. As the third daughter of an unimportant side branch of the family, she attended the Nostrian mage’s academy. She lost her left arm in a battle with Andergast and later returned to the school as a teacher, where she taught the young Yolande, who later appointed her town magistrate. The ambitious Satuwina is as pedantic as she is unbribable. As an upstanding Notrian, she cherishes chivalric virtues and is a loyal follower of the queen. She shares an intense love-hate relationship with Majordomo Toran of the Light, with whom she vies for the queen’s attention and favor.



The short and very formal **Toran of the Light** ♣ (*989 FB; 5’2”); white whiskers) is an experienced courtier whose whole family was taken by the blue wheeze. Where he was diligent before, he only lives for his office now. As majordomo he is the leader of the office, the Nostrian bureaucracy. He leads a retinue of countless clerical scribes, excisemen and tollkeepers, which the common folk call the *greedy hundred*. He had to get used to the rule of such an inexperienced queen, but now, he cherishes Yolande’s acumen and patience.

Lyssandra della Pallyo ♣ (*1005 FB; 5’7”); light-brown hair; gray eyes), a Horasian scholar from the University of Methumis, is traveling through the Warring Kingdoms at the behest of Queen Yolande to research old relics and writing. She has strong ties to the Draconites in Salta, where she often goes to catalog and store her findings, such as bronze weapons or stone idols. She was caught in the webs of forest spiders a few too many times, and has even been abducted by goblins, so now she always hires heroes as escorts. She often gets into trouble in Andergast because she is a woman, especially when she isn’t lucky enough to be mistaken for a foreign noble due to her exotic name.

Noble Princess **Lise of Sapstem** ♣ (*865 FB; 5’10”); green eyes; red hair), who comes from a side branch of the Sapstem family, has lived in the court of the border counts for almost 150 years, where she helped advance her family’s political ambitions and their standing with the Nostrian witches (she is an influential Daughter of Satuarial herself). Even though she still appears to be in her early 30s, people refer to this ageless, egg-born witch only as *the old woman*, a fact that she notes with a sardonic smile. People have great respect for this powerful witch, and many react to her with superstitious fear. Lise accepts both, and seems to enjoy the mystical aura it grants her.

Dike Count **Haldur Vesselbek** ♣ (*996 FB; 5’10”); bare scalp; brown eyes) comes from the Horasian Empire and is of low birth. When King Kasimir approved the marriage of the young son of a famous dike builder to the noble count of Kendrar, Haldur was elevated to the aristocracy. Now

the corpulent dike count is in charge of numerous dike and sluice masters, as well as workers, or *koyers*, whom he drives constantly, since he believes that only constant hard work can protect against Efferd's wrath. (♠ 188) Even though he has a curious view on the connection of land and water, he has little understanding of the superstitions of the Nostrians. This often impedes cooperation on the dikes, and nobles only reluctantly accept the assistance of the skilled builder.

Asmodette Tryming ♣ (*1011 FB; 6'; dark brown, braided hair; weathered skin) is probably the most infamous beach pirate along the Nostrian coast. Even though she is thought to come from Yoledamm, she is associated with many false beacons along the coast, from Salta to Nostria. Allegedly, she can control sea monsters and cause ships to beach themselves by intoning eerie songs.

Nobody knows how many ships she has wrecked and robbed. Stories agree that Asmodette and her merciless gang leave no witnesses alive. It is also said that she has amassed a huge treasure in a hidden cave in Trontsand, but nobody has yet been able to find it.

NPCs from Andergast

Wolorion of Kollburg ♣ (*972 FB; 6'; blue eyes; thin brown hair; distinctive, bony face) comes from lesser nobility, but has earned the trust of Andergastan kings as tournament herald, master of arms, and adviser in matters of tradition. The young and boisterous Wendelmir felt that his advice was restrictive during the early days of his reign, but the king now considers the tournament marshal something of a moral authority. Although he is very conservative, he has a keen eye for useful developments in domestic and foreign politics. Also, he is very skilled at stating policies of the king in ways that the common folk can understand, especially at tournaments and other festivities.

Princess **Irinia Zornbold** ♣ (*1003 FB; 5'8"; brown eyes; hazel hair), the aunt of the Andergastan king, began her training as a Blessed One of Hesinde in Kuslik at the age of six, due to her great talent. When she returned to Andergast, she built a chapel to the goddess in the royal castle and set about educating the common folk, but King Wendelmir quickly put an end to her efforts after his

coronation. Fearing for her life, she tried to escape but was caught. Now her movements are restricted to the chapel and the royal castle only. The king also had her and any of her possible offspring removed from the line of royal succession.

Varena II Zornbold ♣ (*1001 FB; 5'5"; brown eyes; white hair), the widow of the last Andergastan king, suffered extreme mental duress from the loss of her father and brothers. After the violent and shocking deaths of all possible royal heirs, and because a woman cannot rule in Andergast, her Horasian husband, Efferdan, a veritable stranger to Andergastan nobility, ascended to the throne. Varena lost their son to a deadly fever. When her oldest son Kusmin was presumed lost to a tragic accident, she suffered a mental breakdown and now spends her days in a dream world that nobody else can enter. She barely registered her husband's death from a hunting accident, and her illness seemed to improve for only a few days after her son Kusmin's miraculous return to court. She rarely leaves her chambers in the Andergastan castle, and the superstitious servants fear the fragile, pale woman who seems more dead than alive.

Bogumil of Langenmar ♣ (*1008 FB; 6'1"; red hair and beard; gray eyes), the king's affable, bastard half-brother, is the Baron of Beechcastle in the Stone Oak Forest. King Wendelmir first saw him as a complacent henchman, but Bogumil's shrewdness has since made him a close confidante of the king and he often handles matters of delicacy. His mother was a common servant girl, and he shares a bond with common folk. People in court know to go through him when they want to bring a matter before the king. The pragmatic Bogumil remains calm even when insulted. He is a better speaker than his brother and always chooses his words carefully.

Wenzeslausia Zornbold of Joborn ♣ (*1002 FB; 5'10"; blond hair; brown eyes), the king's sister, is almost as stubborn as he. Few take her seriously, but she has learned to manipulate the men around her via flattery, promises, and clear words uttered at just the right moment. She is difficult to intimidate, and it is said that she has big plans for her successors. Her marriage to **Baron Rufus Longford of Joborn** ♣ (*988 FB; 5'10"; red hair; green eyes) is often viewed as a cunning gambit rather than a bond of love.



Silvana of Gnitzenbach ♀ (*1015 FB; flaxen hair; blue eyes), the daughter of a robber knight, is a lesser noble of Andergast. This moody beauty was Wendelmir's lover up until his coronation, and rumors at court hint that she is the mother of the boy Argos, whom Wendelmir is educating at the royal castle. She hasn't been seen at court for years and her previous encounters with the king were often marked by mutual contempt. Some think she died, but others whisper that Silvana's deep hatred for the king has led her to become a spy for the Nostrians. (🦋 185)

Melanor ♀ (*1018 FB; 5'10"; brown eyes; ashen hair; wiry build) once aspired to be the student of Arbogast the Old. Today, this merciless and calculating man calls Yehodan master. The young but surprisingly powerful druid, who seems to have no scruples, sees people only as tools to enforce Sumus' will. (🦋 185) Even other sumes refer to him as friendless, but his teacher respects him very much. Currently Melanor is researching the Starfall, which he interprets as a disturbing sign of things to come.

Dairon of Grywhick ♂ (*985 FB; 6'; brown eyes; black hair), a controversial knight from the north of Andergast, has changed sides several times during battles against the orcs. Sometimes he cooperated with the orcs, at other times he fought them bitterly. Strangely, it was he who helped uncover a plot against King Efferdan, an act that earned him the king's favor. Dairon, who was long believed dead,

remains active, but his recent moves seem to indicate that he wants the orcs to rule Andergast and punish Teshkalia. It is even said that he worships the orc idols of Tairach and Brazoragh. Others say that Dairon is loyal only to himself. His lover, **Caldre** ♀ (*1005 FB; 5'9"; brown eyes and hair) was captured by the orcs and only managed to save herself by agreeing to act as their scout. A large bounty has been issued for Dairon's and Caldre's heads, but so far, nobody has managed to collect it.




The strikingly beautiful **Hulda of Thurana** ♀ (*1012 FB; 5'9"; blue eyes; golden-blond hair) is an Andergastan noblewoman who gets into trouble with alarming frequency. She often needs rescuing from one of her many husbands or from goblins, orcs, or even the attentions of a love-crazed Nostrian knight. She has always managed to escape with her skin intact and start a new life, but who knows how long her luck will last.

Ulward Dreubner ♂ (*1009 FB; 5'8"; dark red hair; light blue eyes) is a rafter on the Ingval who knows all the tricks in the book. He is one of the few who has sailed the Ingval's entire length. This seasoned Andergastan from Oakhaven knows the river and its meadows and inflows like the back of his hand and he has even survived the rapids beneath the Chalk Cliffs of Hallerû. He is said to have visited the Witches' Night there several times. He has won the lumberjack games in Andrafall several times and is a feared and respected opponent.



Chapter 9: Myths and History



“It’s exasperating! I begin to wonder if such a thing is even possible. Queen Yolande II of Nostria has tasked me with writing the chronicle of the Warring Kingdoms. She wants a work that brings together all historical events. But how can that be done when the Andergastans and Nostrians cannot even agree about the number of wars they have fought? The former says 16 wars; the latter only 15. Names like the Wretched War are fine, but how should I present all of this in a correct and meaningful order that is understandable and readable? Records are rare, anyway, as there is little respect for Hesinde in these lands, and few here can read or write.

Shoddy efforts like the Andergastan Almanac or the Gloria Kasmyria are not to be trusted, and even if I travel to see written records maintained in castles, it will be difficult. The barons and bombasts are not interested in the truth. They seek only to earn glory and laud the deeds of their ancestors. How could I separate exaggeration or outright fabrication from fact? How often did I find, upon visiting a castle, that the lord did not even keep accurate tax records?

The larger towns have chroniclers that appear to be somewhat reliable, but the many temples in the land are usually too small to support a proper temple library. Need I mention that there is only one site of worship for Hesinde in the entire region? It’s in Salta. And the only chapel in Andergast is in the royal castle! When it comes to history, I’m quite sure that the records of even the mage academies are tinged by their politics. They are so involved in the strife that separates Nostrians and Andergastans that I don’t believe any claims to the contrary. Mistress Hesinde be with me!”
—Lyssandra della Pallyo, historian from the Nandus School in Methumis, 1039 FB

The history of the Warring Kingdoms is shaped by eternal conflict, by countless battles and skirmishes, and by the unfettered hatred felt by the inhabitants of Nostria and Andergast for each other. For that reason, many events are hazy to the inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms. The tales about most battles are treated like legends in both lands, where few people seem interested in preserving historical facts.



The History of the Warring Kingdoms

Recorded History in Nostria and Andergast

The history of the lands of Ingval and Ornib is older than that of the Warring Kingdoms.

Little has been researched, as the regular wars in the region have left little time for historical studies, which are perceived as useless ways to spend one's time. This is why there is little to find today. Expeditions funded by Kuslik's Temple of Hesinde, which followed the tracks of Admiral Sanin, found strange stone idols in the forests, bronze weapons in the river sand, and large foundations of round towers in the steppes. The Bosparanians certainly weren't the first settlers. Maybe goblins, orcs, or trolls could reveal something about the time before human records.

For many centuries, humans have shaped the fate of the land. The rulers of Andergast and Nostria do not really care for documenting history. The few records that do exist are usually pure propaganda, the kind one would hear in a tavern or among fellow warriors after a battle. Everybody tries to outdo each other, and there are countless insults against the enemy. The deeds of individuals are exaggerated to the extent that one might think they fought the Nameless God himself. Since most inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms cannot read and have no appreciation for the worth of the written word anyway, most do not find this fact very troubling.

The largest historical documents in the region are the *Andergastan Almanac* and the *Gloria Kasmyria*, both of which were written in 1001 FB after Kendrar fell to the Thorwalers. Both works have been redacted and whitewashed by the scribes of their respective lords and now have little factual value. It's similar with the chronicles of individual castles, left to rot away in moist cellars or drafty towers.

The only somewhat-accurate records are the temple annals, mostly those from the Temple of Hesinde in Salta. But even there, one must know that the information can be inaccurate and the interpretation of the events depends as much on the reader's point of view as on the

author's. Myths and legends about famous heroes of the past are very widespread, but they rarely mention when those heroes lived or if they even existed at all. They are probably meant to strengthen hope and show that the actions of one individual can decide a battle. This might be true for heroes, but for the common folk, they are mostly traditional calls for perseverance.

The Rulers of Nostria

In Nostria, the Kasmyrin family line has ruled for almost 2,000 years.

About 859 b.FB	Mayour Fringlas Kasmyrin
854 b.FB	Lord Fringlas Kasmyrin
From 703 b.FB	Lord Kasparyn I
229 FB	Lord Andaryn II; after that, Elysmine under the same name
From 291 FB	Lord Kasimir I, "the Great"
From 431 FB	Lady Yasminas II, "the Lenient"
From 600 FB	Lady Lysiane II
Undated	Lord Kasparbald, "the Short"
Undated	Kasimir II, "the Fat"
Around 735 FB	Lady Yasemin
Around 840 FB	Lord Kasimir III, "the Wise"
962 FB-999 FB	Lord Kasimir IV
999 FB-1027 FB	King Kasimir IV
From 1027 FB	Queen Yolande II Kasmyrin

The Rulers of Andergast

The Zornbold dynasty has ruled Andergast for almost 2,000 years.

About 859 b.FB	Mayor Argos Zornbold
854 b.FB	Lord Argos Zornbold
Around 363 b.FB	Lord Wendolyn I, "the Grand"
Around 133 FB	Lord Wendelmir V
Around 480 FB	Lord Wendolyn III, "the Sad"
715 FB-717 FB	Lord Argos IV, "the Blasphemer"
From 717 FB	Lord Bogumil I
Until 994 FB	Lord Wendolyn VI
994 FB-999 FB	Lord Wendolyn VII
999 FB-1021 FB	King Wendolyn VII
1021 FB	King Wenzeslaus the Younger
1022 FB-1036 FB	King Efferdan I
From 1036 FB	King Wendelmir VI

Chronicle of the Warring Kingdoms

873 b.FB Admiral Sanin the Older explores the land along the Ingval and Tommel Rivers
 From 873 b.FB Founding of Nostria, Andrafall, and a settlement on what is today Salta; all are colonies of the Bosparanian Empire

The Wars between Andergast and Nostria

Nobody alive knows how many battles have been fought between Nostria and Andergast, and even the dates of many wars have been forgotten.

Around 340 FB, a scribe at the Andergastan court first recorded the order of the wars, to bring glory to the king's house. A few decades later, a similar chronicle was created at the Nostrian court, but it was different in one way. The seventh war, which ended in 133 FB with the Joborn Friendship (see page 135), is now viewed as an irrelevant skirmish by the Nostrians. They don't consider it a war due to the miracle of Rahja enacted by Saint Dorlen, and ever since then, the total number of wars as reckoned by the two kingdoms has differed.

Counting of the Wars

Andergast	Nostria	Epithets	Year(s)
1.	1.	First War	853 b.FB
2.	2.	War for the Lost Colony	~ 754 b.FB
3.	3.	Black War	~ 700 b.FB
4.	4.	War of Tears	504-324 b.FB
5.	5.	Battle at the Hill of Half	4 b.FB
6.	6.	-	undated
7.	-	Seventh War*	~ 133 FB
8.	7.	-	undated
9.	8.	-	undated
10.	9.	Wretched War	607-609 FB
11.	10.	War of Pride	713-735 FB
12.	11.	-	undated
13.	12.	-	undated
14.	13.	-	989-992 FB
15.	14.	Battle for Thurán Lake	1001-1006 FB
16.	15.	The Victory/The Shame of Joborn	1010 FB

*Not counted by Nostria, divergent counting from there on

854 b.FB The principalities of Nostria and Andergast declare their independence; the envoys of the Horas Emperor are chased away

754 b.FB Search for the Lost Colony (what is today Salta)

About 700 b.FB Orc Invasion

330 b.FB In the bloody Battle of Tarlynsheight, both lords die in the War of Tears

257 b.FB Andergast negotiates a treaty with the orcs

4 b.FB Battle at the Hill of Half (at what is today Joborn)

133 FB A miracle of Rahja results in the Joborn Friendship.

229 FB Peace efforts by Andaryn II of Nostria end with his fall from power.

From 607 FB Blue wheeze and bloody phlegm epidemics devastate the Warring Kingdoms

999 FB Both lords claim regality

1001 FB The Thorwaler Hetman Eldgrimm Oriksson conquers Kendrar

1010 FB Thorwalers occupy Salta; Joborn falls to Andergast

1015 FB Hauntings during the Night of Horrors in Salta make the Thorwalers retreat from the occupied town

1021 FB Andergaster Usurpation: Prince Wenzeslaus usurps the Crown after killing his father and brother

1022 FB The empires recognize Nostria and Andergast as independent kingdoms when a Horasian, Efferdan of Hussbek-Galahan, ascends to the Andergastan throne

1027 FB Year of Misfortune. The blue wheeze strikes in Nostria and eliminates almost the entire royal family. Yolande II, a mage, becomes queen. In Andergast, Crown Prince Kusmin suffers a terrible accident.

1036 FB Nostria holds its breath during the Bombast Feud of Salta, until the queen negotiates peace. King Efferdan dies in a hunting accident and is succeeded by Wendelmir VI

It makes no difference to history if such a battle took place 200 or 300 years ago, and arguments about what counts as a war are common in the Warring Kingdoms. Thus, we don't give a fixed date for certain confrontations. Set them at any time you like, to suit your campaign.

Zornbold. Kusmin, the heir of Efferdan who had been presumed dead, returns to court as a sune and is appointed the Champion of Sumu.

1037 FB Wendelmir VI reverses many of his predecessor's innovative policies in favor of a return to traditional ideals.

1038 FB Queen Yolande II promotes education and research throughout the land. Many of her policies fail due to opposition from the conservative bombasts.

1039 FB Nostrian Queen Yolande marries Forest Count Eilert

The Early Days (until about 900 b.FB)

Little is known of what transpired between Lakeland and the Stone Oak Forest before the members of Admiral Sanin's first expedition settled here. What is known to a few scholars and educated people in Aventuria, however, is the fact that other creatures ruled the world before the age of humans. This knowledge survives in Andergast only in the form of legends. Nevertheless, long before the first humans set foot here, towns and fortresses already existed, and their citizens sometimes fought horrific wars.

Anyone researching the legends and traditions of the trolls, elves, orcs, and goblins soon finds stories that all these peoples settled here a long time ago. But wars and other adverse conditions forced them to move and settle elsewhere through the years, even before the first settlers from Bosparan arrived and claimed the land.

At some inaccessible places in the depths of the Stone Oak Forest, there are piles of mossy rocks, which an experienced observer can identify as the remains of giant buildings. Nobody knows who worked these rocks a long time ago, and only one who has visited the mysterious troll forests can see similarities. Strange, weirdly shaped stone statues are scattered throughout the forest. They may once have depicted old deities, or might only have served as border stones or milestones. Their facial features and tusks strongly imply that they were erected by orcs or goblins, but some resemble small, stout humans.

Peasants living near Thurán Lake sometimes find items with unknown origins while tilling their fields. These are most likely relics of an ancient battle, but the weapons and arrow tips are weirdly shaped and often are not made of unknown materials instead of metal. Nobody knows who fought whom here. Old bronze weapons that do not seem to be made for human proportions are sometimes recovered from the river mud of the Ingval. Deep in the Stone Oak Forest, explorers find old caves whose floors are covered in dead insects.

Rumors hint that these caves not only reminded the explorers of gigantic insect hives, but allegedly the remains of six-legged creatures as large as trolls were discovered in their depths. (🐛 177)

In the steppes of the east, some round stone towers have resisted the millennia; of others, only foundations remain. Their unmortared stone walls resemble the troll fortresses at first glance, but the size and shape of windows and doors makes human sized builders the most likely explanation.



The Settlement (from 873 b.FB)

In **873 b.FB**, Admiral Sanin the Older sailed with his ship north from Bosparan along the west coast. When he found the inlet of the Tommel, he explored and mapped wide parts of the course of the river, and a bit later, the Ingval as well. Several reports about these voyages have survived, but they contradict each other on important points. Nobody knows what the Bosparanian explorers experienced, but much was invented by later legends.

It is certain that hairy, two-legged creatures—most likely goblins, maybe orcs—attacked their camp. Whether they actually encountered a giant, or if such was the exaggerated description of a troll, treant, or ogre, nobody knows. According to the expedition's report, the ship included settlers whom Sanin deposited at three locations to claim and farm the land for Bosparan. These settlements grew into the modern towns of Salta, Nostria, and Andrafall.

Three years later, Sanin returned with more settlers and equipment. During this second expedition, in **870 b.FB**, he met glade elves at the upper reaches of the Tommel. Even though Sanin promised to visit the settlements again soon, he couldn't spare the time, as the political situation in Bosparan required the admiral's presence. Ships from Bosparan did not return to Nostria again until at least **854 b.FB**.

But the locals, who had waited for a message from the south in vain for so long, had come to believe that they were fine on their own. They didn't show any respect to the envoy of the emperor. When the Bosparanians told the surprised Nostrians that the emperor demanded retroactive payment of taxes for the sixteen intervening years since their last contact, the village headman, Fringlas Kasmyrin, gathered his people and tossed the representatives out of the village. Tales of this defiance spread, and the Bosparanians met with similar responses all along the Ingval. They didn't even try their luck in Andrafall.

Independence (from 854 b.FB)

The Nostrians, who were proud of having chased away the Imperial representatives, proclaimed their leader, Fringlas, lord of the land of Ingval and Tommel. To emphasize their determination to remain independent, they created a new calendar that marked the year **854 b.FB** as the year 0, their year of Independence. Dates in the modern Nostrian calendar include the letters "oI," which stands for "of Independence" and refers to that famous day.

When the lore spread to Andrafall, the local leader, Argos Zornbold, arrogantly declared himself the ruler of the Stone Oak Forest. To assert his prior claim, Fringlas gathered his followers, but Argos Zornbold proved rather hotheaded. The argument devolved into a brawl, which modern scholars view as the first war between the realms. Both lords swore eternal enmity that day on the battlefield.

The third settlement, where Salta stands today, submitted to the Nostrians at first. But the relationship wasn't close, and a messenger sent to contact the village in **811 b.FB** couldn't locate it. A storm surge had annihilated the settlement, and the mouth of the Tommel had greatly changed. No survivors were ever found, and soon people spoke of the lost *third colony*. According to different tales, it was destroyed by Bosparan, torn from the world by mages, or swallowed by mysterious monsters.

Nostria and Andergast both sent scouts to find the lost settlement, but confrontations were inevitable, and soon the second war had begun.



"Very interesting! The Nostrians seem to have had trouble with the Andrafallers right from the start. The area around Fortress Andergast was settled later, if I interpret this right. But, well, relations are difficult enough between these foolish realms, Andrafallers or no."

—Mirhiban al'Orhima, Tulamydian fire mage

Two Millennia of Enmity (800 b.FB to Today)

The period discussed here was marked by rivalries and strife. The struggle for survival was difficult enough, but enmity began forging the realms we know today. Periods of anxiety-ridden peace alternated with wars sparked by reasons that might seem ridiculous to outsiders. The term *war* should be taken lightly, as many of these events were little more than skirmishes fought with bare fists or woodsmen's axes, pitchforks, and flails, and not weapons of war.

The Orcs and the Black War (704 b.FB)

Even though Andergast is not very far from the Orclands, humans initially had little contact with orcs. The occasional exploratory raid or ambush produced far too little loot to interest the orc war chiefs. This changed in **704 b.FB**

when orc occupiers were chased from Albernia, and the survivors fled north into Nostrian and Andergastan territory. Despite their mutual enmity, Nostrians and Andergastans fought side by side to repel the invaders. After the orcs were scattered and driven away, the humans fought a battle over the spoils, as the orcs had been carrying many fine treasures stolen from Albernia. The Black War, as it is now called, was the first large-scale destructive conflict between Nostria and Andergast, as the soldiers were still armed. The war lasted a year and a half and resulted in hundreds of deaths (a significant number in those days) and many times that number in casualties. The Andergastan lord moved his capital from Andrafall to the fortress of Andergast a short time later, and that city has remained the capital of the kingdom ever since.

The Dark Times (504-257 b.FB)

The next war, the War of Tears, began in **504 b.FB** after a misunderstanding regarding payment for a shipment of wood. Angered over the Andergastan's apparent breaking of a contract, the Nostrians moved along the Ingval, claimed the estuarial area of the Ornib and erected a small wooden fortress there. The Andergastans contested the claim by laying siege to the fortress to starve out the Nostrians. Then they roasted meat and held feasts outside the wall to break the Nostrians' morale, and the fortress surrendered. Their commanders were executed, but the soldiers were sent home without their equipment and weapons. Only a third of them survived the difficult trek through the wilderness. The Andergastans expanded the fortress, and settled soldiers nearby, creating the town of Joborn.

Nostrian chroniclers are strangely silent on this matter. Instead of the year **350 oI**, they record the year **530 oI** as the year of the war. When Middenrealmish scholars tried to create their first chronicle of the Warring Kingdoms in 500 FB, this and other differences became immediately apparent, but instead of dismissing it as a mistake, they incorrectly assumed the War of Tears was fought for 180 years. In their reckoning, the conflict lasted from **504 to 324 b.FB**, dates which are considered fact by Aventurian scholars as well as in both Andergast and Nostria.

Many skirmishes and other confrontations occurred during this time, but one of note was the Battle of Tarlynsheight, in **330 b.FB**. It claimed many lives, including those of both lords.

For a time after that, the land enjoyed something of a peace, as both sides had been weakened. The orcs noticed

this, too, and increased their raids starting around **300 b.FB**. Few settlements were spared their bloody attacks. In **257 b.FB**, a large army of orcs reached Castle Andergast. The besieged lord knew that its walls wouldn't survive their attack for long, so he reluctantly agreed to an alliance with the orcs and promised payments of tribute in the form of weapons and tools. He was also forced to concede trading rights and make guarantees of freedom of travel. Rested and well-equipped, the orcs left Andergast and moved east to pillage Baliho. (♥ 176)

The Downfall (133-630 FB)

Little remained of the modest wealth produced during the early years of settlement. The more the people suffered, the greater their hatred for the other kingdom became. The lords often called their subjects to arms, regardless of the need to plant or harvest crops, and this led to terrible famines. As a result, many people left the land for good.

No lord wanted to admit to causing this tragedy, and much time and energy was wasted maintaining the illusion of power in remembrance of former times. More bloody confrontations erupted, but the time between the wars grew longer. Occasional efforts to put an end to this eternal enmity always ended in failure.

The most famous example of this was the incident known as the Joborn Friendship: When Dorlen, a Blessed One of Rahja, witnessed a brutal battle for the border village of Joborn in **133 FB**, she prayed to her goddess for assistance. Rahja answered by blessing a clay lamp, which is now known as the Love Light of Rahja. When Dorlen lit the lamp and cast its glow onto the battlefield, all the soldiers suddenly forgot their hatred and their orders, lowered their weapons, and embraced each other in fellowship. The small village then held a great celebration in praise of Rahja.

Nostrian history barely mentions this event, but Lord Wendelmir V of Andergast was so enraged by this turn that he outlawed the worship of Rahja. This rash decision had the effect of strengthening the cult of the sky horses in Teshkal, which had formerly belonged to Andergast.

Another example is that of the young Nostrian Lord Andaryn II, who was overthrown in **229 FB** by his own sister just for making vague suggestions that a permanent peace with the neighbors might be possible. From her point of view, thoughts of peace were high treason, and a majority of Nostrian nobles agreed. Even though

war materiel had never been very abundant, in times of constant confrontation, it only got worse. The population was already making large sacrifices when Lady Lysiane II ordered the construction of Fortress Ysareth on the border near Mirdin in **600 FB**, to contain the enemy. Aided by powerful ancestor glyphs, the castle walls were impregnable, and the Andergastans failed to take it after many hard months of fighting.

When epidemics of bloody phlegm and blue wheeze swept through Nostria from 607 to 609 FB, fully a third of the population of Salta perished, and the Andergastans wasted no time in attacking their weakened enemy. Success was easy at first, but as time went on, their own people began succumbing to disease, and they had to retreat. Unfortunately they took the plague with them. This war is now called the Wretched War, as the men-at-arms mainly fought plagues, not human enemies. Soon it became common in war to cast the bodies of disease victims into wells, or hide clothing soaked with their blood, sweat, and phlegm in food shipments and storage areas. Even though open conflict ended in **609 FB**, most likely due to exhaustion, the two kingdoms never signed a peace agreement.

The next conflict started when the Andergastan lord convinced the Council of Sumes to move against the unconquered Fortress Ysareth in the Forest Wilderness in **615 FB**. How, exactly, he convinced the sumes to support a war, and what stories he told them about dangers to the land, dark magic, or even demon worship, are lost to the mists of time. It is also unclear exactly how they destroyed Ysareth. Legends speak of the sumes' rage shaking the ground, great chasms opening up, and the forest swallowing the enemy. (🐉 180) An agreement to end the fighting came in **630 FB**, and fragile peace once again became the order of the day.

All-Out War (713-735 FB)

The peace between the realms would endure for no more than two generations, mainly because Andergastan and Nostrian peasants had been bled dry. The old enmity soon stirred again, and both sides demonstrated unprecedented creativity in developing new methods of warfare, some of them quite strange. For example, during the War of Pride (**713 to 735 FB**), Andergastan Lord Argos IV ordered large amounts of dung poured into the Ingval near Kalleth with the intent to kill the fish along the Nostrian border and cause a famine. Some of the dung never reached the mouth of the river, and instead sank or became mired in the plants along the riverbank. Many tons of fish died, as expected, but the water below Kalleth began to putrefy. The sumes condemned this type of warfare, and when the

king refused to show regret, Andergast suffered a series of bad storms. Argos was afterward known as the Blasphemer. He granted liberal freedoms to the sumes to placate them, and even abdicated in favor of his son. It wasn't long before the enraged Nostrians invaded Andergast seeking vengeance for the sick and starving, who suffered only due to the dying fish. The war went back and forth for more than twenty years, and Joborn wasn't the only town that changed rulers about a dozen times during this period.

The Kingdoms (999 FB and following)

The lords of both lands began to lose their connection to reality. Appearances grew ever more important, and the true needs of the population went unheeded. Wendolyn VII Zornbold, who was crowned ruler of Andergast in **994 FB**, had an almost uncontrollable hatred for Lord Kasimir IV Kasmyrin of Nostria. And, even though they never met, it wasn't long before Lord Kasimir felt the same way. To show his dominance to his archenemy, Wendolyn decided in **999 FB** to crown himself king, probably inspired by the glory of the Middenrealmish Emperor Haal, and his people admired him for it.

Misery and hardship were more prevalent than any time before, but the Andergastans liked to be dazzled and remembered times of alleged greatness. But his rival Kasimir reacted quickly, and barely one week after receiving this news, he declared himself king of Nostria. The clever new monarch wanted to use the coronation celebration to remake the Nostrian nobility based on the Middenrealmish model. Due to overconfidence, or perhaps false information from the outside, King Kasimir granted many pompous offices and titles that seemed to come from the pen of an opera writer. The Horasian Empire and the Middenrealm refused to accept two small areas as kingdoms. In **1022 FB** they accepted the new state.

Territorial Losses and Gains (1001-1010 FB)

Awash in self-created splendor, Kasimir was caught off guard when Thorwalers invaded in **1001 FB** and captured the entire Noble County of Kendrar. The Eldgrimm Ottajasko, commanded by Hetman Eldgrimm Oriksson, claimed the county as Thorwaler land. Perhaps not unexpectedly, most of the inhabitants began to enjoy a better quality of life under the new rulers. With the exception of a brief period (**1023-1025 FB**) during the maritime war between Thorwal and the Horasian Empire, Kendrar remains in Thorwaler hands to this day.

The Andergastans watched the Thorwal attack on Nostria with interest and used the moment of weakness to annex the lands surrounding Thuran Lake. The Nostrians stopped mounting raids against the Thorwalers and once again

turned their attention to their archenemy. Strangely, local chroniclers called this confrontation (**1006 FB**) on the waters of Thurán Lake a maritime battle, even though the so-called warships were mainly hastily-built rafts and rowboats, and the ships' armament consisted only of longbows and javelins.

This time, peace lasted just four years. Fighting started again when the Thorwalers moved against Salta in **1010 FB**, conquering the town at the mouth of the Ingval as well as the Nostrian coastal regions as far as Trontsand. Again, Andergast took advantage of the distraction to conquer Joborn and southern Thurania. Nostria stopped their advance at Harmlyn, but only through the efforts of the knights and peasant army of the Nostrian Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem, who, in the following months, pushed the Andergastans all the way back to Thurán Lake. Unwilling to invest in a permanent presence in the conquered areas, the Thorwalers withdrew, the marshal restored law and order in Nostria. Only Salta remained under Thorwalan control.

The Third Orc Storm began later that same year, but the orcs largely avoided the Warring Kingdoms on their way to attack the Middenrealm. Only the free town of Teshkal was raided by the orcs, leaving its burghers no choice other than to kneel to the Andergastan Crown once again. Andergast welcomed the errant city back into the fold, but it came with a price, as the people had to accept a baroness, Ossyra Redtree of Teshkal, something they thought they would never see.

Borbarad's Return (1015-1021 FB)

Nobody in Nostria or Andergast suspected that the Demon Master Borbarad had returned to Aventuria in **1015 FB**. Hauntings in Salta and a strange, terrible storm over Thurán Lake went unexplained. The superstitious Thorwalers decided it was as good a time as any to end their occupation of Salta, and they retreated to Kendrar. The year **1021 FB** proved the most disastrous in the recent history of the Andergastan royal house. Events began when Prince Wendolyn the Older, who had been considering peace with Nostria for many years, was declared insane by the king and banished from the capital. A short time later, he was murdered in Oakhaven.

Then, King Wendolyn and three Blessed Ones of Praios were murdered in Andergast, all in the same night. Half a year after the coronation of Wenzeslaus the Younger, evidence emerged that showed the king himself had conspired with

his uncle, a Borbaradian named Asmodeus of Andergast, to murder his own brother and father. He died when righteous heroes brought his reign to a bloody end.



To the consternation of the traditional Andergastans, the Crown went to the Horasian noble Efferdan of Hussbek-Galahan, the wife of Wenzeslaus' oldest sister, Varena, in **1022 FB**.

Efferdan I had much trouble fulfilling the duties of his new office, especially because he was trying to lead Andergast out of its dark, backward ways and into a new era of progress. He lifted the centuries-old prohibition against the Church of Rahja in **1022 FB** and began promoting the Twelvegods. Many saw him as a weak king, and his decision in **1026 FB** to allow an orc army to move through Andergast and attack Weiden and Albernian still leaves many historians scratching their heads. Some believe this decision arose out of the kingdom's old pact with the orcs. (♥ 176)

The Year of Calamities (1027 FB)

King Efferdan suffered a string of horrible calamities in **1027 FB**, starting when his youngest son died of a fever. As his wife Varena sank deeper into depression, he suddenly lost his heir. Crown Prince Kusmin was drowned in the raging waters of the Ingval in a boating accident. Searchers didn't find his body, but the boy was declared dead soon after. That same year, the blue wheeze epidemic killed one out of four people in Nostria. The Nostrian royal household barred themselves in the royal castle, but the disease was already within the walls, and nearly the entirety of the aristocracy died within a week. When the king and his sons were found dead, a young woman from an unimportant side branch was chosen as heiress. (♥ 182)

Yolande Kasmyrin was attending classes at the mage's academy outside of town when the disease struck, which probably saved her life. She had no prior political experience, and for many years after her coronation, the Nostrian nobles refused to take the young queen seriously. Count Albio of Salta seized upon this chance to put his plans for Salta's independence in motion, but he had to be patient, as Marshal Rondriane of Sapstem took the young mage under her wing and began training her in the art of ruling. Yolande's coronation was seen as a good omen by the common folk, since women blessed with Mada's Gift are thought to be skilled rulers in Nostria. For almost ten years, Yolande II left many decisions to the marshal and was ruler only in name.

The Present (1036 FB to the present)

Albio's plans changed in 1036 FB.

The noble count of Salta's ambitions were thwarted by Rondriane of Sapstem, but his goal had always been the same. When Eilert II approached the queen at Court and requested assistance for the forest count's starving, much-beleaguered population, Albio mocked him as a beggar voivod. As he had planned, the situation escalated, and one of Eilert's knights challenged him to a duel. The noble count rejected this challenge with a laugh. The knight followed Albio when he departed, but the noble count took a detour through Kendrar to conduct some secret negotiations with the Thorwalers, and thus the knight reached Salta first. While waiting for Albio to appear, the knight got into an argument with Albio's oldest son and killed him, but he was captured and executed. Forced into publicly declaring a feud, Eilert moved against Salta with the support of Noble Count Muragio of Kendrar and his wife, Countess Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden.

The first battle of the Bombast Feud went to Eilert when he managed to surround the forces of Salta and Albion. Here, Queen Yolande showed her skills as ruler for the first time, apparently also going against the wishes of the marshal. She traveled incognito, accompanied by skilled negotiators, mediate a solution in Salta. When Count Firundûr of Thuranshag was murdered in Eilert's camp, all evidence seemed to implicate Albio of Salta. But Yolande wasn't fooled, and soon deduced that Noble Count Muragio had ordered the murder to prevent peace.

Upon this revelation, all those involved agreed to lay down their weapons and discuss terms. Muragio was incarcerated in Fortress Gordelyn, the infamous Blood Fortress, and the disloyal Count of Salta had to abandon his dreams for independence, at least temporarily. The queen's subsequent engagement with Forest Count Eilert was considered much more surprising than even the shocking end to the Bombast Feud. Eilert and Yolande were married several years later. In Andergast, King Efferdan died without an heir in 1036 FB from a hunting accident. The grandson of Wendolyn VI, who was known for his moods, then ascended to the Throne. (♥ 183)



The new ruler Wendelmir VI was a wastrel when he was a young prince and had little chance of gaining the Throne. His actions seem more prudent now, but he rules with an iron fist and has revoked many of his predecessors' hard-won innovations in favor of old traditions. He sees the Twelvegods as the enforcers of Sumu's will, and only the sumes are said to exert any influence on him. When he gained the Throne, he was never far from his advisor Yehodan, but today, only the young sume Kusmin is by his side. Kusmin, the heir of King Efferdan, was long presumed dead and renounced his claim to the Throne after he

reappeared. He now serves the land and people as a sume, thanks to Arbogast, who arranged to have him appointed as court adviser.

Currently, the Warring Kingdoms and their rulers have almost nothing in common: One monarch is an educated mage who wants to protect her realm and lead it to a modern age, while the other is a traditional, irascible king who feels he rules by divine right. Whether peace is now possible, or whether the realms are simply headed for the next bloody confrontation, remains to be seen.

What Does My Character Know About the Warring Kingdoms?

Many of the topics introduced in this book are known to PCs from the Warring Kingdoms. A Nostrian will view some things differently than will an Andergastan, and an inhabitant of the Forest Wilderness probably knows more about sumes than does a Lakelander, but locals of both realms receive a bonus of 3 for the checks listed below. Players should discuss their characters' level of knowledge with the GM. Foreign heroes use the check modifiers stated below.

Check using Religions

QL 1: The Twelvegods are less important outside of towns. Faith in the country mainly takes the form of old cults and the worship of the earth mother, Sumu.

QL 2: In Andergast, people consult sumes, as druids are called here, in all matters of faith. In Nostria, people seek advice from the Daughters of Satuarra, witches who live openly. Sumes and witches are seen as wise healers, seers, and intercessors to the Supernatural, as gods and spirits are known here. Many knights follow Rondrian ideals. Efferd and Boron are worshiped along the Nostrian coast. In many places in Andergast, the Twelvegods are subordinate to the earth goddess Sumu.

QL 3+: The Silem-Horas Edict, which established the official worship of the Twelvegods, does not apply here. In Andergast, the Church of Rahja was outlawed for centuries. The gods are sometimes blended together (a practice called *syncretism*). Fairy creatures, nature spirits, and beings such as nymphs or treants are worshiped and placated with sacrifices at altars.

Check using Geography (Nostria or Andergast)

QL 1: Nostria and Andergast are independent kingdoms (formerly principalities) in the north of Aventuria that have been warring for centuries. Nostria sits on the Sea of Seven Winds, while forested Andergast lies inland.

QL 2: Both lands are considered conservative and backwards, and their populations are very superstitious. Lumberjacks harvest prized stone oak logs in Andergast, while Nostrians are known for their famous saltarels, a popular type of flatfish. The border between Nostria and Andergast runs roughly through the impenetrable Forest Wilderness, along the rivers Ingval and Ornib.

QL 3+: The border often shifts due to the region's many wars, and villages sometimes change hands from one kingdom to the other with alarming regularity. The Warring Kingdoms are bordered by Thorwal to the north and northwest, the Middenrealm to the south and east, and the Orclands and Svellt Valley to the north and northeast.

Check using Etiquette (Rumors)

QL 1: Nostrian nobles are called *voivods* (lesser nobility) and *bombasts* (aristocracy). Knights, which sit just below the powerful barons, comprise the lesser nobility in Andergast, and women have fewer rights than men there, due to its strong patriarchy.

QL 2: Nostrian Queen Yolande Kasmyrin ruled only in name until she married Forest Count Eilert. Her marshal, Rondriane of Sapstem, was formerly the true power behind the throne. The Andergastan King Wendelmir Zornbold is a tough and irascible ruler. He abolished many innovations set in place by his predecessor, King Efferdan.

QL 3+: Wendelmir VII is not interested in the advice of the Twelvegods but leads the Council of Champions as the Champion of Praios. He greatly strengthened the influence of the sumes. The true heir of King Efferdan serves as a sume at his court. Yolande II sees education as the way to move to a new and better future, but she must fight the resistance of the bombasts, who fear her growing power. She receives the strongest resistance from Noble Count Albio of Salta, who periodically agitates for independence for his town.

Check using History (Nostria or Andergast)

QL 1: Envy and war have defined the relations between the realms for almost 2,000 years. For 40 years now, Both kingdoms have been ruled by kings for the last 40 years or so. Prior to that, they were independent principalities.

QL 2: Queen Yolande II Kasmyrin, an educated guild mage, has ruled Nostria since 1027 FB. King Wendelmir VI Zornbold rules Andergast. During the last war, which

occurred in 1010 FB-1018 FB, Nostria conquered parts of southern Thurania but lost the town of Joborn to Andergast. QL 3+: Both realms have their roots in settlements founded by Admiral Sanin the Older in the name of the Bosparanian Empire. The character knows some of the most important rulers and wars of the past (for lists, see page 131) and can place them in rough historical context.

Living History

Aventuria has what we call a Living History, meaning that the world does not remain static. New changes and new stories get revealed, and events come to a (hopefully) happy conclusion because heroes try to make a difference. Sometimes heroes find old secrets that shed new light on mysterious events of the past.

We invite GMs and players alike to use apparent or stated contradictions and contrasts for inspiration to create their own version of Aventurian history. We reveal major events in official adventures and sourcebooks, but we leave plenty of gaps for you to use your imagination and flesh out your game world.

NPCs that are important to the official Living History are marked with a special notation that we call the *Garadan System* (see *Aventuria Almanac*, page 204). This notation appears in all of our publications. In the Warring Kingdoms, little changes in the long term. Due to centuries of strife and the peoples' strong conservatism, the setting almost always resets to the status quo described in this book—despite all successes and setbacks on both sides. Characters (and players) can feel at home in Nostria and Andergast even after having been away for a long time.

• Andergastan King Wendelmir appears in the adventure series *The White Mountain* (*The Haven* and *The Curse of Castle Dragonstone*), and the heroes do not always experience him at his best.

• The Bombast Feud in Salta is described in more detail in the *Aventurian Herald* (Issues 162-164). Your heroes might influence the results of the events described therein. Other editions report on events such as the coronation of King Wendelmir (Issue 166) and the marriage of Queen Yolande and Forest Count Eilert (Issue 177, now available in English).

• The three adventures in the *Black Oak* series follow a hero's efforts to prevent a bloody war between the realms.

• The novel *Mehrer der Macht* by Carolina Möbis describes recent changes in Nostria and Andergast. Sumes and the two rulers of the kingdoms figure prominently in this story.



Chapter 10: Heroes from the Warring Kingdoms

“The inhabitants of the Warring Kingdoms? Ah, you shouldn’t make generalizations. Of course, we imagine that every Andergastan is a daring lumberjack and every Nostrian is a stoic fisherman, but that is only partly true. Nostrian knights from the Forest Wilderness have more in common with Andergastan knights from the same region than they do with dike builders from the coast. A swamp walker from the Lakeland has a very different viewpoint than a cloth maker from the town of Nostria. A steppe guard from Theskalia has little in common with an Andergastan blacksmith. Sumes and witches are completely different, obviously. Mages from the Warring Kingdoms are also very different. We have students of Rohal in Nostria and robust battle mages in Andergast. Do not underestimate the subtle differences between these regions. A deep, dark forest produces a different kind of person than does a wide mudflat by the ocean. Beliefs can also differ greatly. Yes, people fear dryads, but they must also deal with the powers of Efferd. Dangerous swamps come with problems that differ from those that come with bladegrass.

Nostria and Andergast are, with the exception of the capital and towns like Salta, rather backwards. Strange cults survive here and nowhere else because these kingdoms have been independent for so long. Both realms share this, even though the inhabitants do not like to hear it. They prefer to concentrate on tradition and reject things that might bring about changes. Every inhabitant of the Warring Kingdoms is stubborn, but they are also adept at improvising due to their sparse means and poor lands. If not for their deep-seated hatred, they could achieve great things. Just imagine if they focused more on Hesinde’s gifts. Ass of now, though, almost nobody here can read or write. And, of course, the Andergastans simply must learn to respect women.”

—Lyssandra della Pallyo, historian from the Nandus School in Methumis, 1039 FB

This chapter introduces everything you need to tailor existing characters to the setting or create new characters from the Warring Kingdoms. Sections cover new profession packages and character backgrounds, as well as new weapons, armor, and equipment, new special abilities, and exciting new spells and rituals.



Mundane Professions

Bowyer

Bowyers specialize in building bows, and as such are familiar with various types of wood and how to work with them. In the Warring Kingdoms, Nostrian longbows are widely feared, as their range is far greater than that of a common bow. Bowyers are respected, as few people know how to craft a weapon from wood and sinew.

Not every wood is suitable for either short or longbows. When seeking wood, good bowyers take note of the strength and height of the archer for whom the weapon is being built. Bowyers usually create arrows as well.

Equipment and Garb

Bowyers usually are passable archers themselves and use bows of their own creation as weapons. Like other craftworkers, they usually are not armed with more than a dagger for close combat. They usually don't wear armor, either while working or while adventuring, as it would hinder their use of the bow. Typically, gambesons or leather armor are the heaviest that most bowyers are willing to wear.



Bowyer

Profession Package

AP Value: 183 adventure points

Prerequisites: None

Special Abilities: 4 AP for Languages and Scripts, Skill Specialization *Woodworking*

Combat Techniques: Bows 12, Daggers 8, Brawling 8
Skills

Physical: *Feat of Strength* 3, *Perception* 4

Social: *Empathy* 2, *Fast Talk* 2, *Willpower* 2

Nature: *Animal Lore* 5, *Orienteering* 3, *Plant Lore* 5, *Ropes* 3, *Survival* 3, *Tracking* 4

Knowledge: *Math* 2, *Myths & Legends* 2, *Religions* 2, *Warfare* 4

Craft: *Artistic Ability* 2, *Commerce* 5, *Woodworking* 8

Suggested Advantages: Range Sense, Exceptional Sense (Sight)

Suggested Disadvantages: None

Inappropriate Advantages: Noble

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Bind, Restricted Sense (Sight), Incompetent (*Woodworking*), Maimed

Dike Builder

Along the coast of Aventuria, especially in Nostria, the population needs dikes. These monumental earthworks



ensure that fields and houses remain dry when Efferd is in a bad mood. Dike builders build summer, winter, and emergency dikes and protect coastal communities from the dangers of floods. For some jobs, piling up a simple earth wall is enough, but creating a secure dike to hold back the sea requires a good understanding of the tides, a true dike builder, and the centuries-old traditions of their art. Nostrian legends speak of dike builders who found treasures or encountered a fairy creature while working, and some of these fairy tales contain a kernel of truth. Dike builders rarely choose a life of adventuring, but some may travel as journeymen and some may be driven out into the world by fate or a judgment of Lord Efferd. Either way, heroes soon learn to cherish their practical natures.

Equipment and Garb

Dike builders are not warriors. They usually are free craftworkers who sometimes work at the dike only when there is an emergency. They carry a punt axe and a dike fork, which they can use as improvised weapons, but they are not really trained for combat. Most never wear armor, as armor can be dangerous to its wearer on a mudflat or in water. On the other hand, dike builders come with a lot of equipment: spades, hammers, and nails can be quite useful on an adventure.

Dike Builder

Profession Package

AP Value: 197 adventure points

Prerequisites: None

Special Abilities: 4 AP for Languages and Scripts, Skill Specialization *Earthencraft*, special ability Dike Builder

Combat Techniques: Brawling 8, Impact Weapons 8, Two Handed Impact Weapons 10

Skills

Physical: *Climbing* 6, *Body Control* 5, *Feat of Strength* 6, *Perception* 4,

Social: *Empathy* 2, *Fast-Talk* 2

Nature: *Animal Lore* 3, *Fishing* 4, *Orienting* 4, *Plant Lore* 2, *Survival* 2

Knowledge: *Astrology* 3, *Geography* 3, *Math* 3, *Mechanics* 4, *Religions* 3,

Craft: *Artistic Ability* 3, *Earthencraft* 6, *Sailing* 3, *Woodworking* 4

Suggested Advantages: Direction Sense, Range Sense, Resistant to Cold, Time Sense

Suggested Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Superstition), Obligations (Landholder)

Inappropriate Advantages: Noble, Rich

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Blind, Susceptible to Cold, Susceptible to Disease

Lumberjack

One of the most important building materials in Aventuria is wood. Whether spruce, beech, or stone oak, wood can be used to build structures, weapons, and ships. Without wood, people would freeze to death in winter. Nevertheless, the profession of the lumberjack often is not well-respected outside of Andergast, even though their work often involves a certain degree of risk, especially in the wilderness. Goblins and robbers roam the woods, and even wild animals can pose a danger. Monsters and magical creatures frequent areas with the best trees. Lumberjacks must always be on their guard, especially in remote and deserted areas like the Stone Oak Forest. Their survival depends upon teamwork, and many lumberjacks are superstitious and suspicious of strangers. Once given, a lumberjack's friendship is solid and dependable when the going gets tough.

Equipment and Garb

Anyone who can fell a tree can also fell a person. Lumberjacks know how to fight with axes, as they often must fend off wild animals, robbers, and even orcs in the forest. Some know how to use other weapons, such as crossbows or short swords, as well. They don't like armor, which is too expensive and too cumbersome for the job anyway. Instead, they wear simple, sturdy clothing made of wool or leather.

Lumberjack

Profession Package

AP Value: 228 adventure points

Prerequisites: None

Special Abilities: 2 AP for Languages and Scripts, Skill Specialization *Woodworking*

Combat Techniques: Brawling 10, Daggers 8, Impact Weapons 8, Two-Handed Impact Weapons 10

Skills

Physical: *Carousing* 2, *Climbing* 5, *Body Control* 4, *Feat of Strength* 6, *Perception* 3, *Self-Control* 3, *Swimming* 2

Social: *Intimidation* 4, *Willpower* 3

Nature: *Animal Lore* 4, *Orienting* 5, *Plant Lore* 6, *Survival* 5, *Tracking* 3

Knowledge: *Religions* 2, *Myths & Legends* 5

Craft: *Driving* 2, *Treat Wounds* 3, *Woodworking* 7

Suggested Advantages: Talent (*Woodworking*), Increased Toughness

Suggested Disadvantages: Decreased Spirit, Negative Trait (Superstitious), Personality Flaw (Unpleasant, Unworldly)

Inappropriate Advantages: Noble

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Decreased Toughness

Knights of the Warring Kingdoms

Traditional, old-fashioned knighthood survives in the Warring Kingdoms like it does in few other places in Aventuria, but with few exceptions, only men are knighted in Andergast. Female knights are more common in Nostria.

The knights of the Warring Kingdoms are especially patriotic, which renders them skeptical of and sometimes openly hostile towards their old enemy beyond the border. Fighters from the forested regions of Andergast are fittingly called *forest knights*. They know the wilderness well, as they must often cross many miles of forest just to get from one place to the next. Knights living along the coast of Nostria are likewise called *sea knights*. In addition to their knightly virtues, they are well versed in dike-building and fishing, just like other inhabitants of the coast.

Equipment and Garb

Knights from the Warring Kingdoms are usually skilled in the classic weapons of knighthood: sword, two-handed sword, and mace. Some also know how to use the infamous Andergaster or Nostrianer, two-handed swords that are heavier and longer than common great swords. Poorer knights—of which there are many in the Warring Kingdoms—sometimes carry battle axes or morningstars instead of expensive steel blades, but they never skimp on feeding or caring for their horses, as mounts are one of the badges of true knights.

Knights of the Warring Kingdoms

Profession Package

AP Value: 280 or 293 adventure points (depending on the selected variant; see below)

Prerequisites: AGI 13 (for the special ability Feint), CON 13 (for the special ability Inured to Encumbrance I), STR 13 (for the special ability Forceful Blow I), Culture Andergastan or Nostrian

Special Abilities: 4 AP for Languages and Scripts, Skill Specialization *Riding*, Inured to Encumbrance I, Feint I, Forceful Blow I

Combat Techniques: Brawling 10, Lances 10, Swords 11, Two-Handed Swords 11, one of the following combat techniques 10: Bows, Chain Weapons, Impact Weapons, Two-Handed Impact Weapons

Skills

Physical: *Body Control* 5, *Feat of Strength* 4, *Riding* 8, *Self-Control* 4, *Swimming* 3

Social: *Empathy* 3, *Etiquette* 3, *Willpower* 3

Nature: *Animal Lore* 3, *Orienting* 3, *Survival* 2, *Tracking* 3

Knowledge: *History* 2, *Myths & Legends* 6, *Religions* 3, *Warfare* 4

Craft: -

Suggested Advantages: Increased Life Points, Improved Regeneration (Life Points), Rugged Fighter

Suggested Disadvantages: Personality Flaw (Arrogance, Vanity, Prejudices against Andergastans or Nostrians), Principles I-III (Knight's code: behave honorably, protect the weak), Negative Trait (Superstition), Obligations II (Liege)

Inappropriate Advantages: none

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Fat, Frenzy, Weak Regeneration (Life Points)

Variants

🐾 *Sea Knight* (280 AP): *Fishing* 6 instead of 0, *Earthcraft* 5 instead of 0

🐾 *Forest Knight* (293 AP): *Survival* 5 instead of 2, *Woodworking* 6 instead of 0

Magical Professions

Gray Mage from the Combat Seminar of Andergast

The Combat Seminar of Andergast offers a physically demanding education where students concentrate on learning combat magic. Graduates often serve with the kingdom's army, and some join the Order of the Gray Staves (officially known as the *Ordo Defensores Lecturia*, or ODL). These mages are said to be conservative, somewhat backwards, and highly suspicious of Nostria and its mages, but not all Andergastan mages share these traits.

The Combat Seminar mage's academy may not have the largest library of all the schools of the gray guild, but at least its students learn enough about the world to form their own opinions. Andergastan combat mages often travel abroad after their education, as many prefer the life of a mercenary mage or free adventurer to a difficult life serving the Crown or some other noble, or else bolstering the forces of the border fortress of Anderstone.

Gray Mage (Combat Seminar of Andergast)

Profession Package

AP Value: 368 adventure points

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster (25 AP),
Special Ability Tradition (Guild Mage) (155 AP)

Special Abilities: 10 AP for Languages and Scripts,
Binding of the Staff

Combat Techniques: Brawling 10, Daggers 8,
Polearms 11, Swords 8

Skills:

Physical: *Carousing* 2, *Climbing* 4, *Body Control* 5,
Perception 3, *Self-Control* 4, *Stealth* 1, *Swimming* 3

Social: *Empathy* 2, *Etiquette* 3, *Willpower* 3

Nature: *Animal Lore* 4, *Orienting* 3, *Plant Lore* 4,
Survival 2

Knowledge: *Geography* 1, *History* 2, *Magical Lore* 5,
Math 4, *Myths & Legends* 4, *Religions* 3, *Warfare* 6

Craft: *Alchemy* 1, *Artistic Ability* 2, *Clothworking* 2,
Leatherworking 2, *Treat Wounds* 2, *Woodworking* 3

Spells: one cantrip from the following list: Clean
Weapon, Firefinger, Lucky Hand, Armatrutz 5,
Attributo (Strength) 4, Balsam 4, Blinding Flash 6,
Duplicatus 5, Fulminictus (Elves) 4, Ignisphaero 6

Suggested Advantages: Direction Sense, Improved
Regeneration (Arcane Energy), Increased Spirit,
Range Sense, Rugged Fighter

Suggested Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Curiosity),
Personality Flaw (Prejudice, mostly against
Nostrians and Women; Unwordly), Obligations II
(Academy, Guild, Kingdom of Andergast)

Inappropriate Advantages: none

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Decreased
Regeneration (Arcane Energy), Decreased Spirit,
Frenzy

Equipment and Garb

Due to the risks associated with daily life, a mage from Andergast usually owns a gambeson in addition to a staff, stag-catcher, and mage's robe. The Andergastans may be combat mages, but like other guild mages, they do not carry heavy weapons without obtaining the required license. Such licenses are rarely approved, even when mages join the army (mages do not need mundane weapons to inspire fear on the battlefield).

Where Do I Enlist?

It is common for alumni to spend a few years serving the Crown or a noble as either magical fighters, healers, or court mages. This is not expected from graduates of the gray guild or students from other realms, although such service is very much appreciated. Some foreigners have become passionate patriots after their time studying in Andergast.

Instead of playing a recent graduate, ask the GM if you can play a veteran with a long history of service to a lord. If yes, choose a higher experience level during character creation and spend the required AP to get higher attributes, skills, or spells befitting your character's status, position, and experiences.

Note: Women who express an interest in military careers often meet with shock and incomprehension, but not rejection. Andergast needs everyone, even if the enlistee is female.

White Mage of the Academy of Light and Darkness in Nostria

The only mage's academy in the kingdom of Nostria lies not far from the town of Nostria. The Academy of Light and Darkness offers a pragmatic curriculum. Students must take classes in various crafts in addition to the usual magical training, and thus Nostrian mages graduate with skill in tools, but their understanding of magical theory suffers somewhat as a result.

The academy does not focus on research, except regarding the recently discovered ancestor glyphs, but the Nostrians adhere to the rules of the white guild without interpreting them too strictly. The academy specializes in the transformation of objects, as well as spells dealing with light and darkness. They try not to get involved with the war between Nostria and Andergast, but are not always successful, and sometimes their efforts anger the Nostrian nobility.

Equipment and Garb

Almost every mage from Nostria obeys the clothing restrictions listed in the *Codex Albyricus*. These mages own a simple white gown, a mage's staff, and a mage's hat. Some carry a dagger, but they do not carry other weapons. Armor is also out of the question, but they do sometimes wear gambesons when traveling in the wild Nostrian wilderness.

White Mage (Academy of Light and Darkness in Nostria)

Profession Package

AP Value: 321 adventure points

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster (25 AP), Special Ability Tradition (Guild Mage) (155 AP)

Special Abilities: 10 AP for Languages and Scripts, *Binding of the Staff*

Combat Techniques: Brawling 8, Daggers 8, Polearms 8

Skills:

Physical: *Perception* 3, *Self-Control* 4, *Swimming* 3

Social: *Etiquette* 3, *Fast-Talk* 1, *Willpower* 3

Nature: *Animal Lore* 5, *Orienting* 3, *Plant Lore* 3, *Survival* 2

Knowledge: *Geography* 2, *History* 2, *Magical Lore* 5, *Math* 4, *Myths & Legends* 6, *Religions* 4, *Warfare* 3

Craft: *Alchemy* 2, *Artistic Ability* 5, *Sailing* 3, *Treat Wounds* 3, *Woodworking* 3, 6 AP to improve other craft skills

Spells: one cantrip from the following list: *Cooldown*, *Firefinger*, *Reading Lamp*; *Analys* 5, *Armatrutz* 5, *Caldofrigo* 5, *Corpofrigo* 5, *Darkness* 6, *Flim Flam* 4, *Wall of Fog* (Elves) 4

Suggested Advantages: Increased Spirit, Improved Regeneration (Arcane Energy)

Suggested Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Curious, Unworldly), Obligations II (Academy, Guild, Kingdom of Nostria or Order of the Serpent of Knowledge)

Inappropriate Advantages: none

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Afraid of... (Darkness), Decreased Spirit, Frenzy, Light-Sensitive, Negative Trait (Greed), Night-Blind, Personality Flaw (Arrogance, Vanity), Weak Regeneration (Arcane Energy)

Owl Witch

Witches do not always show themselves openly, as they were frequently persecuted by some Churches, the Inquisition, or self-proclaimed witchhunters in the past. The Daughters of Satuarua still encounter fear, superstition, and enmity in some regions. Even though witches play a special role as mediators to the earth mother Sumu, especially in Nostria, their memories of persecution led to the founding of the Silent Sisterhood, to which the owl witches belong. They view themselves as protectors of their communities and make a point of fighting witchhunters and other enemies of the Daughters of Satuarua. Like their namesake, most owl witches are nocturnal, and these proud hunters teach their prey the meaning of fear with spells and curses.

Owl witches live openly in Nostria but prefer to stay hidden among the people in Andergast and other realms, keeping track of all those who would persecute witches. They often keep their identities hidden from friends as well, as their trust is difficult to earn.

Owl Witch (Sisterhood: Silent Sisterhood)

Profession Package

AP Value: 430 adventure points

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster (25 AP), Special Ability Tradition (Witch) (135 AP)

Special Abilities: 4 AP for Languages and Scripts, 12 AP for Curses, *Flying Balm*, *Familiar Bond*, *Hide Aura*

Combat Techniques: Brawling 11, Daggers 11, Impact Weapons 10, Thrown Weapons 10

Skills:

Physical: *Body Control* 4, *Climbing* 5, *Dancing* 4, *Flying* 7, *Perception* 4, *Stealth* 6

Social: *Disguise* 6, *Empathy* 4, *Fast-Talk* 3, *Intimidation* 6, *Willpower* 4

Nature: *Animal Lore* 4, *Orienting* 5, *Plant Lore* 4, *Survival* 4, *Tracking* 3

Knowledge: *Religions* 3, *Magical Lore* 4, *Myths & Legends* 5

Craft: *Alchemy* 2, *Clothworking* 2, *Leatherworking* 2, *Treat Wounds* 3, *Woodworking* 3

Spells: one cantrip from the following list: *Snap*, *Spice*, *Stay Dry*, *Sweeping Broom*, *Ventriloquism*, *Witch's Gaze*; *Fighting Stick* 5, *Harmless Shape* 6, *Spiderwalk* 4, *Toad Jump* 4, *Witch's Claws* 6, *Witch's Knot* 5, *Witchwood* 4

Suggested Advantages: Resistant to Aging (only for Egg-Born), *Hidden Aura*

Suggested Disadvantages: No *Flying Balm*, No *Familiar*, Negative Trait (Curiosity, Short Temper, Vengeance)

Inappropriate Advantages: none

Inappropriate Disadvantages: none

Equipment and Garb

Like other Daughters of Satuarua, most owl witches have a flying instrument and a familiar that can be any type of owl, though they prefer certain breeds, such as skull owls. They usually dress plainly and adapt to their surroundings, appearing as a peasant, hunter, or ranger, as needed. All owl witches learn how to use weapons to deal with their enemies.

Serpent Witch

The Sisters of Knowledge, as the serpent witches call themselves, constantly strive to deepen and expand their magical skills. Unlike many witches, they try to maintain good relations with spellcasters of other traditions and some Hesinden orders, like the Sisterhood of Mada.

Even though few serpent witches would willingly reveal the secret spells and rituals of the Daughters of Satuarua to outsiders, their openness is often a source of strife with other sisterhoods, whose members sometimes suspect serpent witches of being too careless with secret witch knowledge or even accuse them of treason. Serpent witches are the most knowledge-hungry and scholarly of their kind, and their scientific curiosity approaches that of a mage. They tend to prefer summoning spells, but also use anti-magic and classic witch spells of transformation and control. They do not like the loneliness of the wilderness and prefer to live in human cities, which offer more opportunities for research.



Serpent Witch (Sisterhood: Sisterhood of Knowledge)

Profession Package

AP Value: 351 adventure points

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster (25 AP),
Special Ability Tradition (Witch) (135 AP)

Special Abilities: 10 AP for Languages and Scripts,
10 AP for Curses, Flying Balm, Familiar Bond

Combat Techniques: Daggers 8

Skills:

Physical: *Dancing 3, Flying 4, Stealth*

Social: *Empathy 6, Etiquette 2, Fast-Talk 4, Seduction 2, Willpower 4*

Nature: *Animal Lore 3, Orienting 3, Plant Lore 3*

Knowledge: *Astrology 4, Geography 3, History 4, Magical Lore 6, Math 3, Myths & Legends 5, Religions 4*

Craft: *Alchemy 3, Artistic Ability 4, Clothworking 2, Prepare Food 2*

Spells: one cantrip from the following list: *Fragrance, Witch's Gaze, Siren Call, Sweeping Broom; Ease Fears 4, Gaze into the Mind 6, Disruptivo 4, Harmless Shape 5, Witch's Knot 4, Serpent Call 6, Viper's Gaze 5*

Suggested Advantages: Resistant to Aging (only for Egg-Born), Hidden Aura

Suggested Disadvantages: No Flying Balm, No Familiar, Negative Trait (Curiosity, Short Temper, Vengeance)

Inappropriate Advantages: none

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Afraid of...(Snakes)

Equipment and Garb

Like most witches, serpent witches have a flying instrument and a familiar (such as an emerald adder). They do not usually carry weapons, as they have little skill for physical confrontations.

Their clothes and equipment fit the roles they choose in society. If their vocation is healing, they dress like a medica, and if a scholar, they wear, for example, the gown of an astrologer. Outside the Warring Kingdoms and in parts of Andergast, their society role also often serves as their cover identity (witches enjoy much more respect in Nostria than they do in other regions of Aventuria).

Augmenter of Power

Not all druids avoid people and larger towns. The Augmenters of Power are a subgroup among the druids who commit themselves to studying the human mind. They observe and study human behavior and subject humans to strong emotions or situations designed to make them reveal their true emotions. Many Augmenters of Power feel it is their duty to manipulate the fates of individuals or even entire regions, to their benefit or doom.

They are masters of control magic, but unlike other druids, their connection to the elements is weak. Also, Augmenters of Power do not necessarily crave power, but they are driven by their ambition. They prefer to live and work unobserved near their preferred objects of study, namely, other humans. They sometimes assume a public role in Andergast, where they are seen as especially influential sumes, which is not incorrect.

Druid (School of Thought: Augmenter of Power)

Profession Package

Druid (School of Thought: Augmenter of Power)

AP Value: 343 adventure points

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster (25 AP),
Special Ability Tradition (Druid) (125 AP)

Special Abilities: 4 AP for Languages and Scripts,
Binding of the Dagger

Combat Techniques: Brawling 8, Daggers 8

Skills:

Physical: *Perception* 4, *Self-Control* 4

Social: *Disguise* 5, *Empathy* 5, *Intimidation* 5, *Fast-Talk* 2, *Willpower* 5

Nature: *Animal Lore* 4, *Plant Lore* 4, *Survival* 3

Knowledge: *Astrology* 3, *Geography* 3, *History* 5, *Law* 4,
Magical Lore 5, *Math* 4, *Myths & Legends* 4, *Religions* 4

Craft: *Alchemy* 3, *Earthencraft* 6, *Treat Disease* 3, *Treat Soul* 5, *Woodworking* 3

Spells: one cantrip from the following list: *Beard Growth*, *Signature*, *Stay Dry*; *Forced Dance* 4, *Great Confusion* 6, *Horriphobus* 6, *Odem* 4, *Numbed Tongue* 5, *Respondami* 5, *Sensibar* 4

Suggested Advantages: Direction Sense, Improved Regeneration (Arcane Energy), Increased Spirit, Resistant to Disease

Suggested Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Curiosity)

Inappropriate Advantages: Iron-Attuned Aura

Inappropriate Disadvantages: Weak Regeneration (Arcane Energy), Decreased Spirit, Frenzy

Equipment and Garb

Equipment and clothing depends upon the individual Augmenter of Power's preference for settled regions or wilderness. Those who wish to remain unobtrusive usually dress like local burghers when in town, but they also like to wear comfortable scholar's robes. Augmenters of Power also carry the ubiquitous druid's dagger of flint, dark granite, or obsidian, when available. Like all druids, they avoid metal when they can, though this is often impractical when living in town.

Servant of Sumu

In Andergast, the sumes, as the druids are known here, mainly live in the Forest Wilderness and surrounding areas. They act as wise advisers, healers, and guardians of the forest, and people seeking the advice of a servant of Sumu usually meet them in the forest, at a sacred grove, or in their hut at the edge of the village.

Druid (School of Thought: Servant of Sumu)

Profession Package

Druid (School of Thought: Servant of Sumu)

AP Value: 330 adventure points

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster (25 AP),
Special Ability Tradition (Druid) (125 AP)

Special Abilities: 4 AP for Languages and Scripts,
Binding of the Dagger

Combat Techniques: Daggers 8

Skills:

Physical: *Perception* 3, *Self-Control* 4

Social: *Empathy* 4, *Fast-Talk* 4, *Persuasion* 4, *Willpower* 5

Nature: *Animal Lore* 6, *Plant Lore* 6, *Survival* 5

Knowledge: *Astrology* 5, *History* 5, *Magical Lore* 5,
Law 6, *Math* 3, *Myths & Legends* 5, *Religions* 4

Craft: *Alchemy* 3, *Earthencraft* 6, *Treat Disease* 4, *Treat Soul* 2, *Woodworking* 3

Spells: one cantrip from the following list: *Beard Growth*, *Berries and Nuts*, *Siren Call*, *Stay Dry*; *Breathlessness* 5, *Elemental Servant* 6, *Identify Pestilence* 4, *Lord of Animals* 6, *Numbed Tongue* 5, *Manifesto* 10, *Sumu's Elixirs* 4

Suggested Advantages: Direction Sense, Improved Regeneration (Arcane Energy), Increased Spirit, Resistant to Disease

They love nature and humans equally, and they strive to bring them into balance. The servants of Sumu have close connections to their homeland, but some undertake a long journey through Aventuria in their youth to acquire more wisdom, explore the miracles of Sumu, or study the magic of the elements.

They listen to the voices and creatures of the forest, but they worship Sumu above all. Even though they use spells, it is not unusual for people to consider them her priests in the Warring Kingdoms.

Equipment and Garb

The clothes of a servant of Sumu adhere to most Aventurians' stereotype for druids: a simple robe of linen or wool that extends down to the knee, plus a hood to protect against the rain and give their appearance some mystery. The druid dagger in Andergast is usually made of flint due to the lack of obsidian, but some are made from other tough types of rock. No servant of Sumu wears metal items willingly. They round out their equipment with pouches and a collection of assorted herbs.



Background for PCs from the Warring Kingdoms

Motivation

"Why do I travel? Isn't Aves' call reason enough? Just look at the world around you. There is so much to find, so much to do, and so much immortal glory to be won."

—An unknown adventurer from the Nostrian Lakeland, modern

There are many reasons for a hero from the Warring Kingdoms to venture out into the world, not the least of which is a love of adventure. Poverty or war-weariness can drive people to leave their homes and try their luck elsewhere. This section presents suggested reasons for taking up a heroic life.

- A knight from Nostria or Andergast sends his child to an allied noble in a neighboring county to become a squire. The child gets a look at the outside world for the first time and has many adventures as a traveling knight before returning home.
- A mage from the Combat Seminar of Andergast enlists in the gray-magic Order of Gray Staves (also known as the ODL), is sent to another land on an important mission, and soon develops a liking for travel and facing the challenges of Aventuria. An adept from Nostria travels to a foreign academy in search of knowledge about the ancestor glyphs but soon develops a curiosity for the rest of the world.
- A sume travels to learn about other forests or contact other Animal Kings, such as the Owl King, Oropheia, who lives in the Duchy of Weiden in the Middenrealm, and discovers that druids are not as well respected elsewhere as they are in Andergast. This creates a desire to travel through Aventuria and teach other peoples and cultures the respect for Sumu's gifts.
- Witches from all sisterhoods know stories of other powerful covens. A hopeful young witch sets out to gather foreign experience and learn from other witches, and maybe one day earn a spot among the High Three in the Coven of Hallerû. Notables to visit include powerful witches like Raxan Shadow-wing from the Realmwood (see the *Aventuria Almanac*, page 210), or the Thorwaler witch, Tula of Skerdu.
- A lumberjack or dike builder is exiled from the community due to dark omens, old superstitions, or simply for thinking thoughts that are considered outside the norm, and now must find a way to earn a living. Even though they might not provide much conversation on the road, they should have no problem fitting in, as they work hard and know how to defend themselves.

- A rafter, ranger, or swamp walker is hired for their area knowledge by a foreign expedition. Afterwards, they join the team permanently and begin to live the life of a true adventurer.
- A fisher or especially daring shark lancer is hired to train other crewmembers on an Albernian or Horasian vessel, or even a Thorwaler dragonship and now have the opportunity to see the wide world for the first time.
- An archer or man-at-arms grows tired of bad morale, stingy knights, or the seemingly endless wait to engage the enemy, and decides to act on a dream of joining a troop of mercenaries and getting paid in gold for once.
- A heroine from Andergast tires of no one taking her seriously. She has always been repressed and criticized for her lifestyle, which is uncommon for women. The last straw comes when her family attempts to force her into an arranged marriage, so she set out to try her luck in another land.
- The hero is impressed by stories from an ancestor, who fought on the side of Prince Kasparbald on the island of Maraskan (Nostria), or against the Borbaradians, in the Third Demon Battle (Andergast), and decides to visit other lands and be a hero.
- Beginning with the night of the Starfall, a heroine has visions that disturb her sleep: a giant spider with red, black, and yellow spots stalks a primeval jungle; a sky-high oak tree felled by a horned woodsman with a blood-red ax; thousands of dead fish floating in a purple, windswept ocean; dozens of oaks that uproot themselves and roam throughout the land. The locals can't help her interpret these visions, so she goes on a quest to find their meaning.
- Many of the hero's family members die during the blue wheeze epidemic (Nostria) or are slain by marauding orcs (Andergast), casting the hero into poverty. The hero's only choice is to live as a peon or pursue a living elsewhere as an adventurer.
- The hero comes from a family of infamous and ruthless robber knights. Out of remorse and shame, the hero flees and tries to build a new life elsewhere.
- A Nostrian hero, convinced of the kingdom's cultural blessings, assumes the duty of helping other lands partake in this bounty.

Background Events

"Rahja at the beginning, Boron at the end. That's life."

—Old Aventurian saying

The PCs' personalities are shaped by events before they became adventurers. Such events might include strange occurrences upon birth that lead to special treatment, calamities during childhood, such as the loss of a family member to accident or war, or influential events, such as an encounter with a treant, a brawl with lethal results, or a first crush.

Players can choose such events from the following charts or let the dice decide. These charts are meant to serve as inspiration and could lead to stat changes, so we recommend choosing appropriate skills, advantages and disadvantages during character creation.

Special Birth Events (Roll 1D20)

- 1 An owl (at night) or a raven (during the day) circles above the house and flies away at the moment of birth, calling loudly.
- 2-3 A sudden change of weather (sun after constant rain; early onset of winter; storm; hail) happens.
- 4-5 A nighttime birth is accompanied by lion stars (comets) and shooting stars.
- 6 The judgment oak of the area begins to exude blood-red resin (Andergast), or a dike breaks during a flood (Nostria).
- 7 A dead animal is found on the threshold; afterwards, many say that they can see aspects of that animal's attributed personality traits in the newborn.
- 8 Witch strand or Sumu's sign: The child is born with either a lock of hair in a noticeably different color, or else a large, bark-like mole. Both are seen as signs that Sumu or Satuarua looks upon the child with mercy.
- 9 The father doubts his relation to the child and angrily or disappointedly accuses the mother of an affair with a mortal enemy.
- 10-11 Trees in the area give out a loud groan (Andergast), or the waters of river and lake churn like never seen before (Nostria).
- 12 A (traveling) Blessed One of the Twelvegods blesses the newborn.
- 13 During a skirmish, the newborn falls (for a while) into enemy hands.
- 14-15 A local sume/local witch... (roll 2D6)
 - 2 predicts terrible doom.
 - 3 predicts a great future.
 - 4 predicts heroic deeds.
 - 5-9 gives a blessing.
 - 10 speaks in tongues for weeks.
 - 11 begins to laugh.
 - 12 dies the same day.
- 16 A splendid stag or unicorn (Nostria), or treant or aurochs (Andergast) appears at the edge of the village.
- 17 A close relative dies in a border conflict with the enemy.
- 18 Someone catches the biggest fish seen in years (Nostria), or the fattest pig delivers six lively piglets (Andergast).
- 19 A terrible storm hits/spares the house where the newborn lies.
- 20 A lunar or solar eclipse appears in the sky.

Childhood (Roll 1D20)

- 1 The child encounters an Animal King (in Andergast, the Aurochs; in Nostria, the Crowned Stag).
- 2-3 Due to its special talents or preferences, a grown-up adopts and educates the child. This mentor is... (roll 1D6)
1 a sume or witch.
2-3 a man-at-arms.
4-5 a rafter, woodcutter, fisher, or ranger.
6 a Blessed One or mage
- 4 The child meets a dryad (Andergast) or nymph (Nostria) near home... (roll 1D6):
1-2 and is afraid of the creature (suggested disadvantage: Afraid of... Level 1).
3-4 The encounter becomes an anecdote without consequences.
5-6 and becomes friends with the creature, which appeared at the most impossible of moments.
- 5 The landholder rewards the PC's parents for a special deed (Suggested advantage: Noble).
- 6 The family is ambushed by a robber knight and left destitute (suggested disadvantage: Poor).
- 7-9 An old fighter teaches the child to read and write (suggested special ability: Script I).
- 10-13 An old man-at-arms tells a tale of adventure and heroic deeds. The child is impressed and tries to follow the same example.
- 13-15 Orcs (Andergast), Thorwalers (Nostria), or the archenemy du jour plunder the PC's home settlement. Roll 1D6: on a 1-2, a family member dies during the event. The victim is ... (roll 1D6)
1 the father.
2 the mother.
3-6 a brother or sister.
- 16-17 The child falls out with a family member (see chart under 13-15).
- 18 The child is punished for something but is innocent. The judge...(roll 1D6)
1-4 shows mercy due to an intercession by a sume or witch.
5-6 makes a difficult judgment due to the advice of a sume or witch.
- 19 The child loses the way in the Forest Wilderness or the swamps of the Lakeland. The child survives, but is baldy hurt.
- 20 A family member dies (chart under 13-15) from a bad disease, such as the blue wheeze. On a roll of 1-2 on 1D6, the child catches the disease, too, but survives.

Youth (Roll 1D20)

- 1-3 The youthful hero experiences a phase of piousness and wants to be near sumes, witches, or Blessed Ones. After this time... (roll 1D6)
1-3 the character remains a stubborn follower of the faith.
4-6 the character turns away from the faith.

- 4 A famous knight, sume, or witch notices the young hero's special abilities and makes the PC a student; or the character receives a scholarship from one of the two mage's academies.
- 5-6 The young hero meets a famous person (see *Ch. 8: Fame and Infamy*, on page 120) and is impressed.
- 7-9 The young hero falls in love... (roll 2D6)
2-3 but the couple's difference in social standing is too great.
4-7 but the feelings are not mutual.
8-11 and the feeling is mutual.
12 but the object of this crush comes from the enemy kingdom.
- 10 The young hero develops a special passion for a craft, such as carving, embroidery, bowmaking, or instrument making... (roll 1D6)
1-3 and still pursues it as a hobby.
4-6 but stopped pursuing it years ago.
- 11-12 The young hero plans to hang images of insulting coats of arms (saltarel bones or tree stumps) in a neighboring border village, but... (roll 1D6)
1-2 fails and is severely punished.
3-4 fails, but gets away.
5-6 is successful and celebrated.
- 13 A friend or family member is executed for treason by the enemy in an especially brutal manner. The young hero witnesses the execution and is haunted by the experience.
- 14-15 An ancestor that dies in the war appears to the young hero and... (roll 1D6)
1 stares accusingly.
2-4 warns of great and imminent danger.
5 almost scares the hero to death.
6 introduces the hero to a cruel family secret.
- 16-17 The young hero has a rival. The rival...(roll 1D6)
1-2 is an old enemy of the family's.
3-4 envies the young hero.
5-6 was formerly the hero's good friend.
- 18 The hero witnesses the annual knight's tournament in Andergast or Nostria and becomes very patriotic.
- 19 The young hero is supposed to be married off, but does not like the future spouse and...(roll 1D6)
1-2 unwillingly agrees to the marriage.
3-4 severs all ties with the family and runs away.
4-6 prevents the marriage, but make several enemies.
- 20 Parents and siblings die during an attack by orcs and goblins (Andergast), Thorwalers (Nostria), or the archenemy. The hero... (roll 1D6)
1-3 tries to survive alone.
4 lives with friends.
5 finds shelter with a sume or witch.
6 seeks lodging with the local landholder.

New Weapons and Armor

This section introduces new close combat and ranged weapons, which add to those in the *Core Rules* (see page 366). For stats and prices for all equipment, weapons, and armor presented in this book, see pages 88 and 152.

Close Combat Weapons

Andergaster/Nostrianer (combat technique Two-Handed Swords): an oversized great sword with long ricasso and wide cross-guard, often with a ring; outside of the Warring Kingdoms, carried mainly by Almadan and Horasian double-mercenaries.

Boar-catcher (combat technique Daggers): A heavy dagger with a double-edged, teardrop-shaped blade and no crossguard; a popular hunting weapon.

Boar Spear (combat technique Polearms): a hunting spear with an iron-reinforced haft and a wide thrusting blade with a cross-guard that prevents the blade from penetrating too deeply.

Dike Fork (combat technique Impact Weapons): a tool that serves well as an improvised weapon; it consists of a wooden pole with a round, wide, stamp-like head on one end and an iron spur with a flat, serrated blade on the other.

Druid Dagger (combat technique Daggers): The defining ritual instrument of the druids, similar to a heavy dagger, but with a wide blade that is usually made of flint or obsidian.

Hunting Knife (combat technique Daggers): Usually a single-edged, slightly curved blade with a sawback and skinning hooks, used to skin game.

Stag-catcher (combat technique Swords): The stag-catcher is about as long and wide as a short sword but otherwise similar to a boar-catcher.

Punt Axe (combat technique Two-Handed Impact Weapons): a tool to work dike walls, with an elongated, beard-shaped blade and a hammer head.

Scythe (combat technique Polearms): a peasant's harvesting tool with a long, curved, single-edged blade; often used as an improvised weapon by territorial armies.

War Scythe (combat technique Polearms): a variant of the peasant's scythe, recast as a weapon of war; 7 feet long, with the blade attached in a line with the pole. When performed by a skilled blacksmith, this modification makes the weapon much more effective.

Tournament Lance (combat technique Lances): Instead of a blade, the tournament lance has a blunt head to

knock opponents out of the saddle without seriously hurting them.

Tournament Sword (combat technique Swords): similar to a long sword, but with blunt edges and a rounded tip to prevent serious injuries in tournament combat.

Tournament Great sword (combat technique Two-Handed Swords): a weapon similar to a great sword, but with blunt edges; the tip is rounded to avoid serious injuries in tournament combat.

War Flail (combat technique Polearms): a threshing flail with a handle and head reinforced with iron bands and studded nails.

War Lance (combat technique Lances): employed from horseback, this deadly weapon can pierce even the toughest armor; about 10 feet long with a hand guard and a sharp, usually triangular spear blade.

Woodsman's Axe (combat technique Two-Handed Impact Weapons): a tool normally used for felling trees, but which serves as an effective improvised weapon in combat.

Ranged Weapons

In addition to close combat weapons, there is also one new ranged combat weapon:

Nostrian Longbow (combat technique Bows): a bow made of ash or yew wood; usually as tall as the archer and with an enormous pull, but also with great range and penetrating power.

DP: Damage points

P+T: Primary attribute and damage threshold

AT/PA Mod: Modifier for the attack and parry of the weapon

RE: Reach

RA: Range

RT: Reload time in actions

Ammunition Type: What type of ammunition does the weapon use?

Weight: Weight of the weapon in pounds

Length: Length of the weapon

Price: Price of the weapon in silverthalers

Note: 2H: The weapon must be wielded with two hands. The use of a shield, a second weapon for two-handed combat or an additional parrying weapon isn't possible.

Improved: The weapon is improvised. When attacking or parrying, a rolled 19 is enough to make a confirmation roll for a botch (it is more likely to roll a botch). When defending against improvised weapons, the defender receives a bonus of 2 to defense.

Combat Technique Daggers

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost
Druid Dagger	1D6+1	AGI 15	-1/0	short	1 pound	12 inches	60 silverthalers
Boar-Catcher	1D6+2	AGI 14	0/-1	short	2 pounds	16 inches	60 silverthalers
Hunting Knife	1D6+1	AGI 14	0/-2	short	0.5 pound	12 inches	50 silverthalers

Combat Technique Impact Weapons

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
Dike Fork	1D6+2	STR 15	-1/-2	medium	1 pound	2 feet	30 silverthalers	improvised

Combat Technique Lances

Note These two weapons can only be used during a tilt.

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
War Lance	2D6+6	-	-	-	7.5 pounds	10 feet	100 silverthalers	-
Tournament Lance	1D6+8	-	-	-	6 pounds	10 feet	30 silverthalers	breaks when dealing 11+ DP in one attack

Combat Technique Swords

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
Stag-Catcher	1D6+2	AGI/STR 14	0/-1	short	2 pounds	2 feet	100 silverthalers	-
Tournament Sword	1D6+1	-	-	-	2 pounds	3 feet	20 silverthalers	breaks when dealing 7+ DP in one attack

Combat Technique Polearms

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
War Flail (2H)	1D6+4	AGI/STR 15	-1/-1	long	4 pounds	7 feet	50 silverthalers	-
Boar Spear	1D6+5	AGI/STR 15	0/-1	long	3.5 pounds	7 feet	100 silverthalers	-
Scythe (2H)	1D6+3	AGI/STR 16	-2/-1	long	7 pounds	7 feet	40 silverthalers	improvised
War Scythe	1D6+5	AGI/STR 16	-1/-1	long	3.5 pounds	7 feet	60 silverthalers	-

Combat Technique Two-Handed Impact Weapons

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
Woodsmen's Axe (2H)	2D6+1	STR 13	0/-4	medium	8 pounds	4 feet	80 silverthalers	improvised
Punt Axe (2H)	1D6+4	STR 13	0/-2	medium	6 pounds	3 feet	40 silverthalers	improvised

Combat Technique Two-Handed Swords

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
Andergaster/Nostrianer (2H)	2D6+5	STR 14	0/-4	medium	6.5 pounds	7 feet	400 silverthalers	-
Tournament Great Sword	1D6+3	AGI/STR 16	0/-2	medium	4.5 pounds	5 feet	40 silverthalers	breaks when dealing 9+ DP in one attack

Combat Technique Bows

Weapon	DP	RT	RA	Ammunition Type	Weight	Length	Cost	Notes
Nostrian Longbow	1D6+8	2 actions	20/120/180	arrows	2 pounds	7 feet	100 silverthalers	Prerequisite: STR 14

Armor

The armor presented here is designed specifically to protect participants in a tournament joust.

Tournament Armor: A heavy and cumbersome plate armor designed for use on horseback. A fighter on foot cannot effectively wear this armor. Tournament armor is usually splendid and richly decorated. These suits of armor are very rare in the Warring Kingdoms, as even the aristocracy can barely afford them.

Armor	Type	Protection	Encumbrance (Level)	Additional Penalties	Weight	Cost
	Tournament Armor	8	5	-	80 pounds	3,000+ silverthalers
Notes	While on horseback, reduce ENC of tournament armor by 2 instead of 1.					

Personality Traits

This rule is a Level I Focus Rule for the theme group Cultures.

If you think the rule for personality traits is too complicated, ignore it as you would any Focus Rule you dislike.

The following new personality traits help represent the peculiarities of the cultures describes in this book. Personality traits are small quirks that lend more flavors to the inhabitants of various regions.

Few personality traits cost adventure points because their advantages and disadvantages usually offset each other

- Each player can choose appropriate personality traits for their characters when meeting the Prerequisites
- Personality traits are grouped by level, indicating the degree of specialization with a region. Heroes can have only one personality trait from each level, and do not need those of lower levels to choose personality traits from higher levels. For example, a hero can take the personality trait Steppes of the East (Level II) without taking Typical Andergastan (Level I).

Example

Norla, a heroine from Nostria, has the personality trait *Typical Nostrian (I)*. She meets the requirement of *Culture: Nostrian*. The personality trait does not cost any AP. As Norla was born in the Lakeland, and her player wants to play out the peculiarities of the Lakeland, she also chooses the personality trait *Lakeland (II)*. This, too, costs no AP. She could have chosen to give her heroine only *Lakeland (II)* and not *Typical Nostrian (I)*. She could not have chosen both *Lakeland (II)* and *Ingvall Valley (II)*, as Norla can have only one personality trait of Level II.

Personality Traits of Nostria and Andergast

Typical Andergastan (Level I)

Tree Lover: As inhabitants of the forest kingdom, the Andergastans really know trees. If an Andergastan hero makes a Plant Lore check dealing with trees, they receive a bonus of 1 to the partial check using SGC.

Stubborn: Andergastans are stubborn and difficult to convince that innovations, progress, and improvements are worthwhile. The GM should ask for checks using *Fast-Talk (Flattery)* to give the Andergastan's companions a chance to convince them to do things a different way.

Make the check only in appropriate situations, if when it makes the situation more interesting. Consider this an amusing trait that should not make the Andergastan hero unplayable.

Enmity with Nostria:

Andergastans suffer a penalty of 1 to the first partial CHA check when making social checks (with the exception of *Intimidation*, *Empathy*, and *Willpower*) for dealing with Nostrians.

Prerequisites: The hero belongs to the culture Andergast.

Typical Nostrian (Level I)

Fish Expert: Most Nostrians really know their fish and are skilled in catching them. A Nostrian hero who makes a Fishing check concerning edible fish receives a bonus of 1 to the partial check using DEX.

Big Talker: Nostrians like to use complicated wording in everyday conversation, and they often exaggerate. As a result, Nostrians usually take twice as long as other people

to deliver reports and tell stories. For suitable cumulative checks, the GM can increase the time interval by up to 10%, as the Typical Nostrian loses time talking.

◦ This additional time is not invoked with every cumulative check. Some actions can be performed without speaking, and Nostrians don't speak constantly.

Enmity with Andergast: Nostrians suffer a penalty of 1 to the first partial CHA check when making social checks (with the exception of *Intimidation*, *Empathy*, and *Willpower*) for dealing with Andergastans.

Prerequisites: The hero belongs to the culture Nostria.

Ingval Valley (Level II)

Rafter: Inhabitants of the Ingval Valley know their rafts. When making *Sailing* checks, the partial check using AGI receives a bonus of 1 when it concerns controlling a raft.

Obedient Subject: The inhabitants of the Ingval Valley are accustomed to being ruled by those of higher station or those who are stronger. With successful competitive checks using *Intimidation* (*Threats* or *Interrogation*) their opponents receive +1 SP.

Can be combined with: Level I: Typical Nostrian or Typical Andergastan

Nostrian Lakeland (Level II)

Dike Builder: The Lakeland often floods, and each Lakelander knows how to build a dike. A Lakelander who supports the creation or maintenance of a dike using *Earthenraft* (*Dike Building*) receives a bonus of +1 to the first partial check with DEX.

Grumpy Fellow: Lakelanders are a grumpy sort. If a competitive check using *Fast-Talk* (*Manipulate*) results in a draw, their check counts as a success.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Nostrian

Nostrian Sevenwind Coast (Level II)

Salt Specialist: The inhabitants of the coast are masters of salting food. When an inhabitant of the coast with *Prepare Food* wants to find out what type of salt was used in a dish, the partial check with INT receives a bonus of 1. This person is also experienced in using salt, giving +1 QL for checks with *Prepare Food* (*Conservation*) to improve the shelf life of salted food.

Grumpy Fellow: Coastdwellers are a grumpy sort. If a competitive check using *Fast-Talk* (*Manipulate*) results in a draw, their check counts as a success.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Nostrian

Stone Oak Forest (Level II)

Lumberjack: Few grow up in the Stone Oak Forest without ever felling a tree. These folk know how to use an axe to defend against robbers, orcs, and trolls. A woodman's axe

grants a +1 PA bonus in their hands.

Bumpkin: There are no large settlements in the Stone Oak Forest. If an inhabitant of the Stone Oak Forest must make a check using *Streetwise* (*Asking Around* or *Judging Location*) in a settlement with more than 300 inhabitants, they suffer a penalty of 1 for the first partial check using INT.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Andergastan

Steppes of the East (Level II)

Horse Expert: The horse is the transportation of choice in the eastern steppes. Somebody from the steppes making an *Animal Lore* check regarding the breeding and care of horses receives a bonus of 1 to the partial check using CHA.

Rough Manners: The inhabitants of the eastern steppes have lived in close contact with orcs for many years and have an arrangement. But this also means that their manners are rather rough. Somebody from the steppes making an *Etiquette* (*Manners*) check suffers a penalty of 1 to the partial check using INT.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Andergastan

Thurania (Level II)

Open to... Andergast/Nostria: The Thuranians are rather open compared to typical inhabitants of the region. They receive no penalties when dealing with members of the neighboring kingdoms of Andergast or Nostria arising from those realms' different cultures or their old enmity.

War-Weary: Few regions in the Warring Kingdoms have experienced as many skirmishes as Thurania. The Thuranian are war-weary and do not look forward to another war. If a Thuranian is involved, checks with *Warfare* or *Fast-Talk*, which normally give advantages in fights, battles, and skirmishes, instead give a penalty of 1, no matter who actually makes the check.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Nostrian or Typical Andergastan

Tommellands (Level II)

Calm: Even though they dwell in the Warring Kingdoms, people from Tommelland are a calm and peaceful sort. When making a check with *Intimidation* (*Threats* or *Provocation*) against this character, the player can force a reroll of the opponent's partial check with COU. The opponent must keep the second result.

Believes in Fairies: The Tommellanders worship many fairies in addition to the gods and thus are more easily influenced by such creatures. Fairies receive +1 QL with successful social checks against Tommellanders.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Nostrian

Forest Wilderness (Level II)

Home Sense: Many people easily lose their way in the Forest Wilderness, but the locals can find their way home with surprising ease. When within 10 miles of their home village, they automatically find their way back. This ability

does not work in extremely bad weather (a hurricane or blizzard) or in situations that throw off senses of direction until the situation changes.

Bumpkin: There are no large settlements in the Forest Wilderness. An inhabitant of the Forest Wilderness who makes a check using *Streetwise* (*Asking Around* or *Judging*

Location) in a settlement with a population of 300+ inhabitants suffers a penalty of 1 for the first partial check using INT.

Can be combined with: Level I Typical Nostrian or Typical Andergastan

New Special Abilities

General Special Abilities

Dike Builder

Dikes are a common sight along the coasts of Nostria, as the earth walls offer protection against regular floods.

Rules: This special ability grants the new application Dike Building for the skill *Earthenworks*. It can be used to build dikes. Some dikes are complex and therefore require a trade secret.

Prerequisites: *Earthenworks* 4

AP Value: 2 adventure points

General Magical Special Abilities

Abort Spell

It's not always desirable to have a spell remain in effect for its entire duration. Some spellcasters develop the ability to bring a spell to an end prematurely.

Rules: The spellcaster may end an active spell at any time and does not have to wait for the duration to run out. Aborting a spell requires 1 free action.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, tradition's primary attribute 15

AP Value: 12 adventure points

Arcane Meditation

The spellcaster can use this technique to convert life force into arcane energy.

Rules: A spellcaster with Arcane Meditation can convert LP into AE. The caster must be in a quiet location (such as in a remote part of the forest, or a quiet room), meditate for at least 5 minutes, and make a *Self-Control* (*Ignore Distractions*) check. This converts a maximum of QL x 3 LP to AE. At the end of the meditation period, the caster loses an additional 1D3 LP, whether the *Arcane Meditation* succeeded or not.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 15 adventure points

Types of Dikes

The *winter dike* protects against especially high waves (summertime usually sees smaller waves, so shorter dikes are called *summer dikes*). *Water dikes*, which are built along the coast, are difficult to construct but protect especially well. *Interior dikes* sit a little in from the coast and leave a large part of the beach unprotected. *Emergency dikes* are usually built when it's almost too late to do so, as the name implies. They are rarely permanent and often don't last long anyway due to their method of construction.

Complexity of Dikes

Type of Dike	Complexity
Emergency Dike	Simple
Interior Dike	Simple
Summer Dike	Simple
Water Dike	Complex
Winter Dike	Complex

Trade Secrets

Trade Secret	Prerequisites	AP Value
Water Dike	<i>Mechanics</i> 4, <i>Earthencraft</i> 8	2 adventure points
Winter Dike	<i>Earthencraft</i> 8	1 adventure point

Druid Vengeance

This druidic ability allows the user to focus all his power, cast spells more easily and tap every last ounce of energy. Unfortunately, this also kills the druid.

Rules: The druid stands for a minute with legs and arms spread wide, looking east. He then says farewell to the world, as he has at most one more hour to live, but he gains the following benefits. First, the druid receives additional AE equal to his primary attribute. Also, the druid can use his LP to cast spells by converting remaining LP to AE at a ratio of 1 to 1, with no limit, and the druid can increase his AE above the normal maximum value. Finally, all spells cast during this time receive a bonus of 3, and the QL of

all successful spells increases by 1 (maximum 6). After this time, the druid dies. His body crumbles to dust or ashes, and he cannot be revived.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, Special Ability Tradition (Druid), COU 15, tradition's primary attribute 15

AP Value: 10 adventure points

Improvised Ritual

The conditions for rituals aren't always ideal, but spellcasters with experience can ignore certain adverse conditions.

Rules: The spellcaster reduces the penalty from 3 to 2 for unsuitable ritual spaces (see *Core Rules*, page 260).

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, INT 13, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 5 adventure points

Magical Mind Barrier

Spellcasters can shield their mind from control and clairvoyance magic by concentrating, but the effort is exhausting.

Rules: The spellcaster spends a free action and gains a bonus of 1 to Spirit vs. spells with the property Influence and Clairvoyance. All of the spellcaster's other checks suffer a penalty of 1. The mind barrier remains in effect as long as the spellcaster continues to concentrate. When in doubt, make a *Self-Control (Ignore Distractions)* check. The mind barrier ends when the spellcaster falls asleep, suffers the state *unconscious*, or voluntarily ceases to concentrate. After the barrier falls, the spellcaster suffers a level of *Stupor* due to exhaustion.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, COU 13, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 10 adventure points

Magical Regeneration I

With special techniques, concentration exercises, or an attunement to power flows in the area, some spellcasters can quickly refresh their arcane energy.

Rules: The spellcaster regenerates 1 additional AE per Regeneration Phase.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, tradition's primary attribute 15

AP Value: 12 adventure points

• This bonus is cumulative with the advantage Improved Regeneration (Arcane Energy).

Ranged Spellcasting

Spells normally have limited range, but some spellcasters develop a technique to extend this range.

Rules: After applying the spell modification Increase Range, the spellcaster may extend a spell's range by up to 50%. Ranged spellcasting must be announced prior to casting the spell. The basis for calculating the final range is the range of the spell *after* the spell modification Increase Range is applied. For example, if a spell has a range of 16 yards after applying Increase Range, then the new range after applying Ranged Spellcasting is 24 yards. The spell costs 50% more AE.

• This SA can be used only with spells, not rituals.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, SGC 15, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 15 adventure points

Rote Spell Repetition

Irritation arising from failing to cast a spell can make another casting attempt more difficult. Spellcasters who develop a casting routine find this irritation easier to deal with.

Rules: The spellcaster ignores the penalty of 1 for the first attempt at retrying a failed spell. If the spell fails yet again, the caster may retry again, as usual, but this time with a penalty of 1, and so on (see *Simple Checks*, in the *Core Rules*, page 25).

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, SGC 13, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 10 adventure points

Strong Concentration

Distractions can cause a spell to fail. Various techniques allow spellcasters to remained focused.

Rules: When casting spells, the spellcaster receives a bonus of 1 for checks using *Self-Control (Ignore Distractions)*.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, COU 13, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 8 adventure points

Tradition (Druid)

- A spell of the druidic tradition requires magical gestures and a line of sight to the target, but not spoken words.
- Druids receive a bonus of 2 instead of 1 when they use the modification Force Spell.
- Strong Iron Ban: Physical contact with smelted metals has a negative effect on a Druid's regeneration of AE and the casting of spells. Every two pounds of smelted metal the druid wears or is in contact with incurs a

penalty of 1. If these circumstances persist for more than half an hour, regeneration of AE drops by 1 per 2 pounds of metal per regeneration phase. This rule replaces the usual rule of the Iron Ban for Spellcasters (see *Core Rules*, page 255).

- Druids can create and use druidic traditional artifacts (such as the druid's dagger).

- This tradition's primary attribute is Sagacity.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, no advantage

AP Value: 125 adventure points

Weakened Spell

Sometimes it is useful to put less than the usual amount of power into a spell, such as when the intent is to reduce a spell's duration or harm rather than kill an opponent.

Rules: This ability allows the caster to withhold QL after making a spell check and not devote all the QL to the spell. For example, a mage who achieves QL 3 can decide to cast the spell with only QL 2 or even QL 1.

Prerequisites: Advantage Spellcaster, tradition's primary attribute 13

AP Value: 5 adventure points

Dagger Rituals

Druids use a traditional artifact known as the druid dagger, which is usually made of obsidian. In areas where this substance does not exist, the blade can be made of flint, granite, or other tough rocks. Like a mage's staff, the dagger can be imbued with a number of *dagger rituals*. Each dagger ritual uses up part of the *volume* of the dagger (the total volume is 15 points). Dagger rituals may only be cast and used by the druid that is magically bound to that dagger via a dagger binding ritual.

These rituals are normally performed in the wilderness and take several hours of preparation. It takes several days to attune other magical sources of energy, such as a nexus or ley lines, to the ritual. Casting a ritual on the dagger is of great personal importance to the druid but not too complicated. No check is needed.

Dagger rituals count as special abilities and are acquired as such. Activating a dagger ritual takes 1 action if it is the kind that does not remain permanently in effect. Some dagger rituals cost AE to activate. For purposes of anti-magic, magical analysis, and similar effects, treat dagger rituals as spells with QL 2 and apply the given property as usual regarding anti-magical countermeasures. The druid can end the effect of a dagger ritual at any time by spending a free action.

Definitions

Binding Cost is the cost in permanent AE necessary to bind the dagger.

AE Cost is the cost, if any, to activate the dagger ritual.

Binding of the Dagger

Effect: *Binding of the Dagger* is the first ritual cast on a druid dagger. It binds the blade to the druid and makes it unbreakable. At this point, only an *Ignifaxius*, a targeted anti-magic spell, or an elemental fire burning hotter than dragonbreath can destroy it. The dagger is a magical weapon and cannot be enchanted in other ways, such as with the ritual *Arcanovi*. A druid can own only one druidic dagger. *Binding of the Dagger* has a onetime cost of 2 permanent AE.

Druids may voluntarily release their connection to the dagger to, for example, bind a new dagger. The dagger loses its permanent AE and all magic within 24 hours of the druid's death.

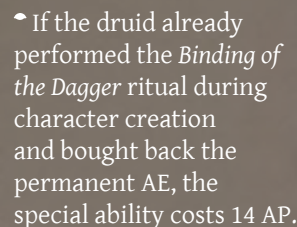
Prerequisites: none

Volume: 0 points

Binding Cost: 2 permanent AE

Property: Object

AP Value: 10 adventure points • ○



• If the druid already performed the *Binding of the Dagger* ritual during character creation and bought back the permanent AE, the special ability costs 14 AP.

Dagger Apportation

Effect: The druid calls the dagger to himself, and it flies via the shortest route with MOV 15, avoiding obstacles. Windows do not stop the dagger's progress, but walls of wood or stone do. The druid need not see his dagger to call it.

Prerequisites: Binding of the Dagger

Volume: 3 points

AE Cost: 1 AE

Property: Telekinesis

AP Value: 15 adventure points



Sight in Darkness

Effect: The druid cuts himself, preferably on the brow, which costs 1 LP. This allows him to see in darkness as if it were day, ignoring all visibility modifiers due to darkness. Other visibility modifiers, such as for fog, still apply. The ritual works against magical darkness as well, but does not work against darkness created by liturgical chants or ceremonies.

Prerequisites: Binding of the Dagger

Volume: 4 points

AE Cost: 4 AE (activation) + 2 AE per 5 minutes

Property: Transformation

AP Value: 10 adventure points

Strength from the Earth

Effect: The druid sticks his dagger into the ground for 5 minutes. When he pulls it out, he can choose between the two following benefits: the life force of the earth flows through the dagger, restoring 1D6 LP to the druid at once, or the druid can remove 1 level of any condition (with the exception of Encumbrance).

Prerequisites: Binding of the Dagger

Volume: 5 points

AE Cost: 4 AE

Property: Healing

AP Value: 10 adventure points

Wayfinder

Effect: Hang the dagger by a string or place it on a horizontal plane, and it immediately points towards the place where it received its *Binding of the Dagger* ritual. The druid's subsequent *Orienteering* check receives a bonus of 3.

Prerequisites: Binding of the Dagger

Volume: 3 points

AE Cost: 1 AE

Property: Telekinesis

AP Value: 5 adventure points

Combat Technique Daggers

Weapon	DP	P+T	AT/PA Mod	RE	Weight	Length	Cost
Druid Dagger	1D6+1	AGI 15	-1/0	short	1 pound	1 foot	60 silverthalers

Cantrips

This list of cantrips adds to the list of those available in the *Core Rules*. All cantrips use the same rules. The entry for Notes indicates which tradition(s) typically know that particular cantrip. Spellcasters from other traditions may learn these cantrips unless otherwise noted.

Beard Growth

This allows the druid to grow his beard to a length of up to 3 feet instantly. This hair is indistinguishable from natural hair. If the druid trims or shaves away hair grown with this cantrip, the cut hair dissolves at once.

Range: self

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Transformation

Note: Druids

Berries and Nuts

The druid can command a small, nearby animal (such as a squirrel or blackbird, for example) to retrieve a nut or some berries. This cantrip does not provide enough food to satisfy hunger. Obtaining the equivalent of 1 ration of food requires 30 uses of this cantrip.

Range: 64 yards

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Animals

Property: Influence

Note: Druids

Special Abilities Summary

Special Ability	Prerequisites	AP Value
Mundane		
Dike Builder	Earthencraft 42	2 adventure points
Magical		
Abort Spell	Advantage Spellcaster, primary attribute of the tradition 15	12 adventure points
Arcane Meditation	Advantage Spellcaster, primary attribute of the tradition 13	15 adventure points
Druid Vengeance	Advantage Spellcaster, special ability Tradition (Druid), primary attribute of the tradition 15	10 adventure points
Improvised Ritual	Advantage Spellcaster, INT 13, primary attribute of the tradition 13	5 adventure points
Magical Mind Barrier	Advantage Spellcaster, COU 13, primary attribute of the tradition 13	10 adventure points
Magical Regeneration I	Advantage Spellcaster, primary attribute of the tradition 15	12 adventure points
Ranged Spellcasting	Advantage Spellcaster, SGC 15, primary attribute of the tradition 13	15 adventure points
Rote Spell Repetition	Advantage Spellcaster, SGC 15, primary attribute of the tradition 13	10 adventure points
Strong Concentration	Advantage Spellcaster, COU 13, primary attribute of the tradition 13	8 adventure points
Tradition (Druid)	Advantage Spellcaster, no advantage Iron-Attuned aura	125 adventure points
Weakened Spell	Advantage Spellcaster, primary attribute of the tradition 13	5 adventure points

Special Ability	Requirement	Volume	AP Value
Dagger Rituals			
Binding of the Dagger	none	0 points	10 adventure points (or 14 AP without permanent AE cost during character creation)
Dagger Apportation	Binding of the Dagger	3 points	15 adventure points
Sight in Darkness	Binding of the Dagger	4 points	10 adventure points
Strength from the Earth	Binding of the Dagger	5 points	10 adventure points
Wayfinder	Binding of the Dagger	3 points	5 adventure points

Clean Weapon

This cantrip cleans a weapon completely, removing things like rust, blood, and dirt.

Range: Touch

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Object Weapon

Property: Object

Note: Guild Mage

Plant Empathy

By touching a plant and casting this cantrip, the druid gains an idea of its health and learns if it is plagued by vermin or has been poisoned, and so on.

Range: Touch

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Plants

Property: Clairvoyance

Note: Druids

Reading Lamp

A weak light shines from the mage's right index finger. The light is not bright enough to change visibility modifiers, but is sufficient to allow a person to read a book in darkness.

Range: 3'

Duration: 30 minutes

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Elemental

Note: Guild Mage



Spice

The witch can use this cantrip to season a simple dish, like soup, when necessary spices like salt and pepper are unavailable. Whether the seasoning turns out just right or, for example, overdone, depends on the caster's cooking skills. This cantrip can create only the tastes of spices known to the caster.

Range: 3'

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Object (food)

Property: Illusion

Note: Witch

Sweeping Broom

The witch can command a broom in range to sweep the floor in an area with a radius of 24'. The broom dodges obstacles and tries to avoid creatures of size category

small and larger. The cantrip ends when someone touches the broom.

Range: 24'

Duration: 30 minutes

Target Category: Object (broom)

Property: Telekinesis

Note: Witch

Witch's Gaze

This cantrip allows a witch to determine if the target person also knows Tradition (Witch). If so, the target's eyes briefly glow purple. This glow is visible only to the caster.

Range: 24'

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Clairvoyance

Note: Witch (may only be learned by witches)

Cantrips Summary

Cantrip	Range	Duration	Target Category	Property	Note
Beard Growth	self	immediate	Intelligent Creature	Transformation	Druids
Berries and Nuts	64 yards	immediate	Animals	Influence	Druids
Clean Weapon	Touch	immediate	Object (Weapon)	Object	Guild Mage
Plant Empathy	Touch	immediate	Plants Clairvoyance	Druids	Druids
Reading Lamp	3'	30 minutes	Intelligent Creature	Elemental	Guild Mage
Spice	3'	immediate	Object (Good)	Illusion	Witch
Sweeping Broom	24'	30 minutes	Object (Broom)	Telekinesis	Witch
Witch's Gaze	24'	immediate	Intelligent Creatures	Clairvoyance	Witch (no other traditions)

New Spells

Agony

This spell floods the target's mind with intense pain. In some lands, this spell is used in place of physical torture.

Check: COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: The target suffers pain that usually manifests as cramps. When torturing a target, *Agony* can substitute for the skill *Intimidation (Torture)*. The target must make a competitive *Self-Control (Resist Torture)* check against *Agony*, with a penalty equal to the pain level of the spell (in addition to all other modifiers). After casting the spell, the caster must touch the target within QL combat rounds for it to take affect, otherwise the spell simply dissipates. Touching an uncooperative target requires a simple Brawling attack with no successful defense.

QL 1: no additional effect

QL 2: 1 level of *Pain*, 0 DP

QL 3: 1 level of *Pain*, 1 DP

QL 4: 2 levels of *Pain*, 1 DP

QL 5: 2 levels of *Pain*, 2 DP

QL 6: 3 levels of *Pain*, 2 DP

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE

Range: Touch

Duration: 5 minutes

Target Category: Living Creature

Property: Influence

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: B

Attributo (Strength)

There are many variants of the spell *Attributo* in Aventuria. They can make people smarter, more agile, or tougher. The most common variant gives the target the strength of a bear.

Check: SGC/INT/STR

Effect: With the spell *Attributo (Strength)*, the spellcaster makes a target stronger and tougher. Targets receive a bonus for each QL. These bonuses are cumulative. For example, with QL 3, the target receives +2 STR and +1 TOU.

QL 1: +1 STR

QL 2: +1 TOU

QL 3: +1 STR

QL 4: +1 TOU

QL 5: +1 STR

QL 6: +1 TOU

Casting Time: 8 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE (activating the spell) + 4 AE per 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Duration: Sustain

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Healing

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: B

• This spell's bonus to STR and TOU has no effect on derived stats. Improving STR does not grant additional TOU. Improving STR does, for example, help targets exceed their weapon's *damage threshold* (see *Core Rules*, page 235).

Breathlessness

This spell causes shortness of breath, which makes many actions much more difficult.

Check: SGC/CHA/CON (modified by SPI)

Effect: Targets suffer immediate shortness of breath and gain a level of *Stupor*.

Casting Time: 1 action

AE Cost: 4 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: QL in CR

Target Category: Living Creatures

Property: Influence

Tradition: Druids

Improvement Cost: B

Claudibus

This spell seals locks magically.

Check: SGC/INT/DEX

Effect: This spell automatically closes locks and makes them difficult to open or pick. Checks using *Pick Locks (Bit Locks or Combination Locks)* or *Feat of Strength (Breaking and Smashing)* against the lock suffer a penalty of 1 for each QL.

Casting Time: 2 actions

AE Cost: 4 AE

Range: Touch

Duration: 30 minutes

Target Category: Object (Lock)

Property: Object

Tradition: Guild Mage, Witch

Improvement Cost: B

Corpofrigo

This spell lowers the target's body temperature, inflicting severe damage and causing muscles to stiffen.

Check: SGC/CHA/CON (modified by TOU)

Effect: *Corpofrigo* causes damage and levels of *Paralysis* based on the QL.

QL 1: 1D6 DP

QL 2: 1D6+2 DP

QL 3: 1D6+2 DP, 1 level of *Paralysis*

QL 4: 1D6+4 DP, 1 level of *Paralysis*

QL 5: 1D6+6 DP, 1 level of *Paralysis*

QL 6: 1D6+6 DP, 2 level of *Paralysis*

Armor provides no Pro against *Corpofrigo*. The target may not dodge or parry the spell, as it hits automatically.

Casting Time: 2 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE (you cannot use a modification on this spell's cost)

Range: 16 yards

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Living Creatures

Property: Elemental

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: B

Darkness

This spell creates a zone of darkness. The zone does not affect the spellcaster.

Check: COU/SGC/CHA

Effect: A sphere of darkness with a diameter of QL x 2 yards forms around the spellcaster. Visibility penalties increase by one level per QL. Neither natural nor supernatural light sources can pierce the darkness. The spellcaster does not suffer visibility penalties caused by this spell, but other visibility modifiers remain in effect. Prior to casting the spell, the spellcaster must decide whether the zone will stay in place or move (with the spellcaster at its center).

Casting Time: 8 actions

AE Cost: 16 AE (activating the spell) + 8 AE per 5 minutes

Range: self

Duration: Sustain

Target Category: Zone

Property: Elemental

Tradition: Druids, Guild Mages

Improvement Cost: B

Ease Fears

Witches know a spell that can remove fear from a person's heart. It cannot cure phobias, but it can restore courage temporarily.

Check: COU/INT/CHA

Effect: Depending on QL, this spell removes levels of *Fear* immediately. The effects do not stack. Use the effects of the highest QL.

QL 1: 1 level of *Fear*

QL 2: 1 level of *Fear*, +1 COU for 1 minute

QL 3: 2 levels of *Fear*, +1 COU for 1 minute

QL 4: 3 levels of *Fear*, +1 COU for 1 minute

QL 5: 4 levels of *Fear*, +1 COU for 1 minute

QL 6: 4 levels of *Fear*, +2 COU for 1 minute

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE

Range: Touch

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Influence

Tradition: Witch

Improvement Cost: B

Ecliptifactus

This spell grants demonic life to the spellcaster's shadow, which takes physical shape and fights at the spellcaster's side.

Check: COU/INT/CHA

Effect: The spellcaster's shadow comes to life and fights as an ally. This spell summons only one shadow, and the caster must wait for the spell to end before summoning another. For a shadow's stats, see the **Shadow** sidebar. The shadow's stats receive bonuses based on the spell's QL, as follows.

QL 1: No bonus.

QL 2: +1 AT, +5 LP, +1 SPI

○ **QL 3:** +1 AT, +1 PA, +1 DO, +1 DP, +5 LP, +1 SPI, Feint I

• **QL 4:** +2 AT, +1 PA, +1 DO, +1 DP, +1 PRO, +10 LP, +1 SPI, Feint I

• **QL 5:** +2 AT, +2 PA, +2 DO, +1 DP, +1 PRO, +10 LP, +2 SPI, Feint I

• **QL 6+:** +3 AT, +2 PA, +2 DO, +2 DP, +1 PRO, +15 LP, +2 SPI, Feint I+II

• Spells must have the property Anti-Magic to affect the shadow. Shadows are not affected by conditions. If the shadow's LP drop to 0, the spellcaster loses all remaining AE at once (2 points are lost permanently). The shadow takes 7 weeks to grow back, during which time the spellcaster has no shadow, cannot cast this spell, and suffers the disadvantage Stigma

until their shadow returns (see *Core Rules*, page 177). People without a shadow are stigmatized (mainly in lands where

• The shadow can use Feint I and Feint II even if it does not meet the Prerequisites.

Shadow

COU 15 SGC 12 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 14

LP 25 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 7 SPI 3 TOU 1 MOV 8

Attack*: AT 13 PA 8 DP 1D6+3

RE medium

PRO/ENC 2/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: None

Skills: *Body Control 7, Climbing 6, Feat of Strength 7, Intimidation 10, Perception 7, Self-Control 10, Stealth 12, Willpower 7*

Size Category: medium

Type: Supernatural Creature, humanoid

Combat Behavior: The shadow defends the spellcaster to the best of its ability. If the spellcaster is not being attacked, the shadow either attacks potential opponents or quietly follows along behind the spellcaster. The spellcaster cannot issue commands to a shadow. The shadow tries to remain within 13 yards of the spellcaster. If any actions force it out of this area, it tries to return as soon as possible.

Escape: The shadow never flees.

*) An animated shadow uses these stats, plus bonuses due to QL listed in the description for *Ecliptifactus*, regardless of the weapon(s) it wields.

people worship the Twelvegods) and viewed as possible demon worshipers or Blessed Ones of the Nameless God.

Casting Time: 2 actions

AE Cost: 4 AE (activating the spell) + 2 AE per CR

Range: self

Duration: sustain

Target Category: Living Creatures

Property: Demonic

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: C

Exposami

This clairvoyance spell locates living creatures nearby, and can even find hidden or invisible characters.

Check: SGC/INT/CHA

Effect: This spell can detect all living creatures in the area of effect, as long as they are at least as large as a rat. The spellcaster perceives their auras as green, shimmering spots. Sight is not necessary to detect living creatures. The spell does not detect plants, fungi, and creatures smaller than a rat. Structures made from the elements of Ore and Ice block the spell's effect. The spellcaster cannot detect

creatures behind a wall of stone or inside an igloo. This spell also identifies the living creature's Type (see *Core Rules*, page 355).

Casting Time: 2 actions

AE Cost: 4 AE

Range: QL x 2 yards

Duration: 10 combat rounds

Target Category: Living Creature (no Plants, Fungi, or creatures smaller than a rat)

Property: Clairvoyance

Tradition: Druid, Elf

Improvement Cost: A

Foramen

This spell opens locks or makes them easier to pick.

Check: SGC/INT/DEX

Effect: This spell automatically opens simple locks and renders complicated locks easier to open. If the QL is greater than the lock's modifier, the lock opens at once.

• Example: A lock has a penalty of 2, and the spellcaster achieves QL 3 with *Foramen*. Since this is greater than the lock's penalty, the lock opens automatically. With a lower QL, the lock would have remained closed, but it would still have been easier to pick.

If not, checks using *Pick Locks* (*Bit Locks* or *Combination Locks*) or *Feat of Strength* (*Breaking and Smashing*) against the lock receive a bonus of 1 for each of the spell's QL. The bonus remains in effect for the spellcaster and others trying to open the lock, for the duration of the spell.

Casting Time: 2 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE

Range: Touch

Duration: 5 minutes

Target Category: Object (Lock)

Property: Object

Tradition: Guild Mage, Witch

Improvement Cost: C

Forced Dance

This control spell might seem peculiar, but druids use it to hinder opponents for a time as they dance uncontrollably and cannot make any conscious actions.

Check: COU/SGC/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: This spell forces the target to dance uncontrollably and energetically. The target cannot move farther than QL yards from the place where the spell was cast. Targets avoid falling into gaps, chasms, and so on. While affected, targets gain the state of *incapacitated* but are not considered *prone*. Also, targets retain their normal Movement but may

use it only to dance. All attacks and ranged attacks made against the target suffer a penalty of 4, due to their erratic movements.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 16 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: QL in CR

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Influence

Tradition: Druids

Improvement Cost: C

Fortifex

This spell creates an unmoving, shimmering wall that protects the spellcaster and any allies hiding behind it.

Check: COU/INT/CON

Effect: This spell creates a transparent but slightly shimmering (and thus visible) wall that cannot be penetrated by physical objects. The wall stops things like arrows, bolts, *Ignifaxius* spells, and living creatures. It does not protect against heat, cold, light, gasses, incorporeal beings, or spells or liturgical chants that do not have a physical component. The spellcaster must choose a focus point for the spell that is within range. The barrier runs from there in a straight line QL x 2 yards long. The spellcaster decides in which direction the line crosses the focus point. The barrier is 9 feet tall, has no thickness, and can only be placed upright (it cannot lie on the ground or slant at an angle).

•• The barrier always runs in a straight line and cannot bend or go around a corner. The barrier moves if the ground it sits upon moves (such as when someone casts *Fortifex* on a ship's railing and the ship then moves).

The barrier wall has 100 structure points. If this total drops to 0 or less, the wall dissipates.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 16 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: 30 combat rounds

Target Category: Zone

Property: Telekinesis

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: B

Great Confusion

Druids can use this spell to confuse their enemies. Powerful druids can completely incapacitate their opponents.

Check: COU/SGC/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: The target suffers levels of *Confusion* based on the QL:

QL 1: 1 level of *Confusion*, but only for 2 CR
QL 2: 1 level of *Confusion*
QL 3: 2 levels of *Confusion*
QL 4: 3 levels of *Confusion*
QL 5: 4 levels of *Confusion*
QL 6: 4 levels of *Confusion*, but double duration
Casting Time: 2 actions
AE Cost: 16 AE
Range: 8 yards
Duration: QL x 3 combat rounds
Target Category: Living Creatures
Property: Influence
Tradition: Druids
Improvement Cost: C

Identify Pestilence

People say that druids send horrible diseases to punish those who blaspheme against the forests. They also say that druids are skillful healers who can diagnose patients by simple observation.

Check: COU/SGC/INT

Effect: The spellcaster can tell whether someone has a disease, and may even be able to identify it. The higher the QL, the more information the spellcaster receives about the disease, as indicated below. This spell also grants a bonus of QL/2 to *Treat Disease* checks when treating a patient.

QL 1: Reveals if the patient has the state *diseased*.

QL 2: Reveals the disease's level, and whether the patient has infected anybody else.

QL 3: Reveals the disease's name, and whether the target ever suffered from the disease before.

QL 4: Reveals the treatment for the disease.

QL 5: Reveals the cure for the disease.

QL 6: Reveals if there is anything unusual about this disease (for example, whether it is a magical disease)

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE

Range: 1 yard

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Clairvoyance

Tradition: Druids

Improvement Cost: A

Ignisphaero

A fireball forms in the spellcaster's hand, flies towards the target with great speed, and then explodes.

Check: COU/SGC/CON

Effect: A ball of fire flies in a straight line from the spellcaster's hands towards the target. The fireball strikes at the end of the casting time. This does not require an additional action from the spellcaster. The fireball explodes

upon hitting a target or any large, durable obstacle (like a wall or a shield). If the fireball leaves the spellcaster's sight without hitting a target, it dissipates. Ignisphaero has a radius of 5 yards and may hit the spellcaster's allies. The spell inflicts 2D6+(QL x 3) DP within 1 yard of the point of impact, to both animate and inanimate objects. Reduce the damage by 3 DP for each additional yard of distance from the point of impact. If the target does not try to defend itself, the fireball hits automatically. To avoid the fireball, the target must make a defense and a *Body Control (Combat Maneuvers)* check., the target manages to move 1 yard from the center of the explosion per QL.

Targets struck by Ignisphaero may apply their PRO. Flammable targets catch fire on a 1-3 on 1D6.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 32 AE (cost cannot be modified)

Range: 32 yards

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Zone

Property: Elemental

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: D

Klarum Purum

This spell can neutralize poisons.

Check: SGC/INT/CHA

Effect: The spell cancels the effects of poison. If the target poison's level is higher than the QL, the spell has no effect.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 3 AE per poison level (you cannot apply a modification to this spell's cost)

Range: 4 yards

Duration: immediate

Target Category: Living Creatures

Property: Healing

Tradition: general

Improvement Cost: B



Lord of Animals

Druids are masters of the magic of domination. They can control humans and animals with their spells. Many druids use this power to dominate a bear or wolf and use it as a guard or protector, or for other tasks.

Check: COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)

Other opponents cannot make an attack of opportunity against the defending target, as they have their own problems dealing with the explosion. This rule does not apply to creatures that are impervious to fire.

Effect: Druids use this spell to control animals of up to size category *large*. These animals obey the caster's commands (but must be physically able to do so) and fight to the death, if need be. They must also belong to the category Domesticated Animal or Wild Animal (not a monster). This spell affects freshwater and saltwater animals equally, and can only be used to enchant a single creature. The druid cannot command another animal while this spell remains in effect.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: SGC(a) of the animal in AE (you cannot use a modification on this spell's cost)*

Range: 8 yards

* Do not forget the AE cost adjustment based on target size (see *Core Rules*, page 239)

Duration: QL days

Target Category: Animals (Domesticated Animals or Wild Animals up to size category *large*)

Property: Influence

Tradition: Druids

Improvement Cost: C

Memorans

This spell allows the caster to memorize an event and recall it perfectly for as long as the spell remains in effect.

Check: SGC/SGS/INT

Effect: The caster memorizes everything that happens for QL x 5 minutes, as if via an eidetic memory. The caster remembers conversations, pages of text, travel routes, visual impressions, and scents.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 4 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: 1 year

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures (Self)

Property: Transformation

Tradition: Druid, Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: A

Numbed Tongue

This spell numbs an opponent's tongue, thus hindering speech. Druids normally use this spell as a punishment, but also use it on other spellcasters to prevent spellcasting.

Check: SGC/INT/CHA (modified by TOU)

Effect: The target's tongue and lips grow numb, rendering speech barely comprehensible. The target gains the state of *mute*.

Casting Time: 2 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: QL x 5 minutes

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Influence

Tradition: Druids

Improvement Cost: C

Sensibar

The spellcaster reads the target's emotions and draw conclusions about their mood.

Check: COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: The spellcaster can read another's emotions, but the spell only reveals feelings, not their causes. The spellcaster receives a bonus equal to the QL for checks on *Empathy* (*Sense Deception* or *Discern Motivation*) against the target. Targets may notice that something is peering into their mind by making a *Perception* check with a penalty equal to the spell's QL, though they cannot tell who is responsible for the intrusion. Targets can use Willpower checks, also subject to the QL penalty, to suppress (and thus shield) their emotions. A very emotional target may suffer an additional penalty of up to 3 points, at the GM's discretion.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE (activation) + 4 AE per minute

Range: 4 yards

Duration: Sustain

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Clairvoyance

Tradition: general

Improvement Cost: B

Serpent Call

Witches are said to be able to summon relatives of their familiars to defend them. The Sisters of Knowledge can call serpents to attack their enemies.

Check: COU/CHA/CHA

Effect: The witch summons up to QL x 2 serpents, which then enter the fight. The maximum number of serpents that appear is equal to the number of opponents the witch is facing. The serpents appear within a radius of QL/2 yards of a spot on the ground (within the spell's range) chosen by the caster. Afterwards, the serpents are free to move as far from the place of summoning as needed to fight. The caster chooses opponents for the serpents to attack, but cannot assign more than one serpent per opponent. A summoned serpent disappears the moment its opponent dies. Summoned serpents are made of pure magic and thus count as magical creatures. When the duration ends, the serpents simply disappear. They use the stats of the staff serpent (see *Core Rules*, page 330), but have no venom.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 16 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: until the serpents die, or 20 CR, whichever comes first

Target Category: Zone

Property: Demonic

Tradition: Witch

Improvement Cost: C

Sumu's Elixirs

This spell aids in the preservation of alchemical ingredients (such as herbs) and elixirs. This spell also improves the preparation of ingredients for elixirs, which results in a better quality for brewing.

Check: SGC/INT/INT

Effect: The druid channels AE into alchemical ingredients, improving the preservability of ingredients and/or alchemical potions. Also, the druid receives a bonus of 1 on the *Alchemy* check to create an elixir.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE

Range: Touch

Duration: QL in years

Target Category: Objects (ingredients for alchemical substances)

Property: Object

Tradition: Druids

Improvement Cost: A

Viper's Gaze

This spell allows witches to paralyze an opponent by staring at them without blinking.

Check: COU/COU/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: An opponent remains paralyzed as long as the caster stares at the target. The target suffers effects based on the spell's QL. Effects from multiple spells are not cumulative; use only the highest QL obtained.

QL 1: State of bound

QL 2: 1 level of *Paralysis*, state of bound

QL 3: 2 levels of *Paralysis*, state of bound

QL 4: 3 levels of *Paralysis*, state of bound

QL 5: 4 levels of *Paralysis*, state of bound

QL 6: 4 levels of *Paralysis*, state of incapacitated

For this spell to work, the witch must be able to stare into the target's eyes, during which time, all the witch's other checks suffer a penalty of 2. The spell ends when the target suffers damage or moves (or is moved) from its spot, the caster looks away or moves out of spell range, or if the caster shuts both eyes. If visual contact is interrupted (somebody runs past, the lights go out, or somebody covers the caster's eyes), the caster must make a *Self-Control (Ignore Disturbances)* check to sustain the spell. If visual contact is interrupted for more than 2 CR, the spell ends automatically. The target may not break eye contact. As long as the spell persists, the target may not make close combat attacks or ranged attacks, or attempt defenses.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 8 AE + 4 per 5 combat rounds

Range: 8 yards

Duration: Sustained, at most 50 CR

Target Category: Intelligent Creatures

Property: Influence

Tradition: Witch

Improvement Cost: C

Witch's Knot

Some Daughters of Satuarria know this powerful mental manipulation, which creates a seemingly impassable barrier. It derives its strength from the target's unconscious fears, and exists only in the target's mind.

Check: COU/INT/CHA

Effect: *Witch's Knot* creates an imaginary barrier for all intelligent creatures that come within 48 feet of the barrier. Each target perceives the barrier differently (for example, as a chasm or a wall of fire). Targets that realize the barrier is a spell cannot simply overcome the obstacle. The caster chooses a focus point within the range of the spell. The barrier must touch this point and runs in a straight line for QL x 6 feet. The caster also decides which part of the barrier touches the focus point.

Anyone trying to get past the *Witch's Knot* barrier must make a *Willpower (Resist Threats)* check with a penalty of 2 + QL. If successful, the barrier stops affecting them for the duration of the spell. If the check fails, the *Witch's Knot* remains an impassable obstacle. Attempts to overcome the barrier require one action. Heroes may make more than one attempt to succeed.

Casting Time: 4 actions

AE Cost: 16 AE

Range: 16 yards

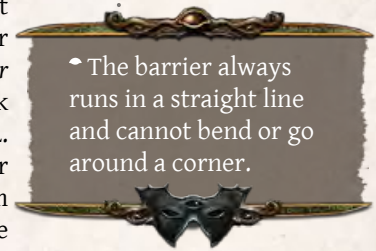
Duration: QL x 10 combat rounds

Target Category: Zone

Property: Influence

Tradition: Witch

Improvement Cost: C



Witchwood

Witches know a specialized form of the spell *Motoricus* that has greater range and can be cast more quickly but only affects items made out of wood.

Check: SGC/DEX/STR

Effect: This spell lifts and moves a wooden item through the air. The target can be made of several materials besides wood as long as its total weight is no more than QL x 40 pounds. It moves at a maximum speed of QL +2 yards per action. The spellcaster must spend 1 AE per 10 pounds of weight. Items piled onto the target add their weight for purposes of calculating total weight. The target moves sluggishly and cannot be used to attack or parry. Anyone attempting to stop a moving item, such as by grabbing it or pulling on it, must make a *Feat of Strength (Dragging and Pulling)* check with a penalty equal to the spell's QL.

Casting Time: 1 action

AE Cost: At least 4 AE (activation) + half of the activation cost per 5 minutes (you cannot apply a modification to this spell's cost)

Range: 16 yards

Duration: sustain

Target Category: Object (Wood)

Property: Telekinesis

Tradition: Witch

Improvement Cost: B

Other Spells in Tradition (Druid)

The following spells from the *Core Rules* exist in the druidic tradition as well.

- Spells: *Corpofesso*, *Eagle Eye*, *Gardianum*, *Ignifaxius*, *Paralysis*, *Placidity*, *Powerful Greed*, *Respondami*, *Somnigravis*, *Wall of Fog*
- Rituals: *Call Djinn*, *Elemental Servant*

Rituals

Caldofrigo

This spell changes an object's temperature. The spellcaster can make an object hot or lower its temperature below freezing.

Check: INT/CHA/CON

Effect: Change the temperature of an object no larger than a simple clothes chest by +/- 100 degrees Celsius (+/- 180 degrees Fahrenheit) from its starting temperature. The caster must state the desired change and cannot change it once set. Also, the temperature change works in one direction only (for example, an object cannot be cooled and then warmed using the same casting).

Anyone touching objects that are extremely hot (or extremely cold; just use the same rules) use the rules for Burning (see *Core Rules*, page 341). When the ritual ends, the object returns to its original temperature. Large temperature changes cause 1D6 structure points of damage to most objects. The GM has the final word.

Ritual Time: 5 minutes

AE Cost: 4 AE

Range: 4 yards

Duration: QL x 2 minutes

Target Category: Object (mundane objects of up to the size of a chest)

Property: Elemental

Tradition: Druids, Guild Mages

Improvement Cost: B

Nihilogravo

This ritual negates Sumu's grasp (gravity) and creates a zone of weightlessness.

Check: SGC/INT/CON

Effect: The ritual creates a cylindrical zone where Dere's gravity does not apply. The spellcaster chooses a spot within the spell's range. Gravity releases everything within a cylinder of radius QL x 15 feet from that spot, by QL x 15 feet tall. The unusual environments cause a penalty of 1 to all checks within the zone. To move while weightless, make a *Swimming (Diving)* check. If successful, you move 3 feet per QL.

Accidents, botches, and other effects (GM discretion) cause a person to drift out of the zone and fall back to the ground. Creatures in the zone when the effect ends suffer falling damage (see *Core Rules*, page 340) as they, too, fall back to the ground. The GM decides they distance they fall.

Ritual Time: 5 minutes

AE Cost: 16 AE

Range: 8 yards

Duration: QL x 5 minutes

Target Category: Zone

Property: Telekinesis

Tradition: Guild Mage

Improvement Cost: B

Domination Rituals

Druids know a special type of magic focused on controlling the human mind. These domination rituals always require some blood, flesh, or other piece of the target's body, but work over long distances. Like witch curses, domination rituals are used as punishments, and are one reason many humans fear druids. Domination rituals work just like normal rituals, and have improvement cost B.

Preparing Domination Rituals

Unlike curses, domination rituals aren't quickly cast at an enemy, as their use takes time and preparation, and the sun must have set before the ritual can even begin. Each domination ritual requires a component of the victim's body: a lock of hair, a drop of blood, or other body part. The ritual consumes this component.

Checks and Ending the Domination Ritual

All domination rituals have a ritual time of 8 hours. The ritual modifications Lower Cost and Extend Range cannot be used on domination rituals. However, the range of a domination ritual is much greater than that of a common ritual. Druid can affect victims over great distances, as the target needs only be on the same continent (Aventuria, Myranor, Uthuria, and so on). Spirit and Toughness provide only half their value in protection. Each domination ritual

has its own skill value, and all rules for skills apply. The effect ends when the duration passes, when the druid spends 3 AE to end the ritual, or when the druid dies. Anti-magic and liturgical chants protect against domination rituals, as well.

Examples of Dominion Rituals

Figurine of Pain

Check: COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: The druid creates a figurine of wax, wood, or other non-metallic material, embedding the physical component from the chosen target. Once cast, the druid stabs the figurine with a druid dagger, holds it over fire, or otherwise damages it to cause the victim to suffer pain. The target suffers 1 level of *Pain* for 24 hours for every 5 full minutes the druid damages the figurine. The ritual cannot cause more than one level of *Pain*. If the druid does not torture the figurine, nothing happens, but the magical connection remains in effect for the duration of the ritual. The *pain* fades within one hour of the duration's end.

AE Cost: 8 AE

Duration: QL/2 days

Property: Influence

Curse of Pestilence

Check: COU/SGC/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: The victim contracts a disease known to the druid, with the exception of the magical disease, duglum's plague. The disease's level cannot be higher than the caster's SR in the ritual. The disease runs its course as usual but isn't contagious.

AE Cost: 8 AE

Duration: Until the disease runs its course, but no more than QL x 3 days

Property: Influence

Curse of Sleeplessness

Check: SGC/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: Whenever the victim falls asleep for at least a few seconds, nightmares wake them up again, and they cannot benefit from Regeneration Phases. The loss of sleep makes them nervous and irascible, and they suffer from hallucinations. Per two days without sleep, the target suffers one level of *Confusion* for every two days without sleep. This condition fades only when sleep is possible again.

AE Cost: 8 AE

Duration: QL x 2 days

Property: Influence



Outbreak of Suppressed Emotions

Check: COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)

Effect: This ritual gives the target a Personality Flaw or Negative Trait. The victim suffers from the appropriate disadvantage while the ritual remains in effect.

AE Cost: 8 AE

Duration: QL in days

Property: Influence

Power over Sleepwalkers

Check: COU/SGC/INT (modified by SPI)

Effect: The druid burns a pile of mistletoe plucked by the druid's own hand, and adds a physical component from the victim to the fire. When the target next falls asleep, the druid makes the target sleepwalk. The druid sees what the target sees and has full control over the target's body. The sleepwalker becomes slow (half MOV) and clumsy (-1 to all skill checks; -2 AT; -1 PA; -1 DO). The physical skills, attributes, and combat stats of the target apply. For all other skills and mental attributes, use the druid's own stats. The druid cannot cast spells or liturgical chants through the target. If the target suffers damage, the domination ends. Targets that are ordered to hurt themselves or break their principles may make a *Willpower* check to ignore the command. The GM can award a modifier to the check. While using this ritual, the caster suffers the state *immobile*.

AE Cost: 32 AE

Duration: QL hours

Property: Influence



The GM has the final word here: No otherwise healthy person would jump off a cliff while under mental control, and a peaceful man would not assassinate his companions. A hero with applicable Principles as a disadvantage gains a bonus to the *Willpower* check to throw off the druid's control.

Domination Ritual	Check	AE	Duration	Property
Figurine of Pain	COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)	8 AE	QL/2 days	Influence
Curse of Pestilence	COU/SGC/CHA (modified by SPI)	8 AE	til the disease runs its course, but no more than QL x 3 days	Influence
Curse of Sleeplessness	COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)	8 AE	QL x 2 days	Influence
Outbreak of Suppressed Emotions	COU/INT/CHA (modified by SPI)	8 AE	QL days	Influence
Power over Sleepwalkers	COU/SGC/CHA (modified by SPI)	32 AE	QL hours	Influence

Ancestor Glyphs

Nostrian ancestor glyphs are a type of magical sign, and all spellcasters with the magical special ability *Magical Signs* (see *Core Rules*, page 285) can learn to use them. Currently, they are common only in Nostria. Each ancestor glyph counts as a separate special ability. These glyphs all use the same rules as warding and protection circles (See *Core Rules*, page 265).

Currently, the ancestor glyphs *Hardened Core* and *Abundant Catch* (see page 172) work only on small objects and in specific locations. This might change with future research.



- To use a glyph, one must know the glyph, have the advantage *Spellcaster*, and make the appropriate check(s). A glyph can be activated by someone other than the person who created it.
- Applying an ancestor glyph to an object requires a check using *Artistic Ability (Magical Signs)*, and usually takes 15 minutes.
- Not all ancestor glyphs are painted onto the object. They may also be carved into wood, woven into cloth, or chiseled into stone. This requires a preliminary sketch and a successful check with *Artistic Ability* and either *Earthenraft*, *Clothworking*, or *Woodworking*, depending on the object. Modifiers apply, such as when the substance is especially difficult to work, or when trying to render the glyph less visible. If either of the two checks fails, the ancestor glyph fails to activate. Depending on the material, no further attempt may be possible, and all time invested in its creation may be lost. The advantage of using carved, woven, or chiseled glyphs is their durability (they last longer than painted glyphs).
- To activate an ancestor glyph, the spellcaster must have the special ability *Magic Signs* and must spend 5 minutes performing a short ritual. The spellcaster does not need to know the ancestor glyph in question, but cannot be further than 24' away. Then the spellcaster must spend the required AE.
- When activated, all ancestor glyphs operate for one day. A glyph's effect ends if the glyph is destroyed, at which point it cannot be activated again.
- An item can never be affected by two or more identical ancestor glyphs at the same time. An item can have more than one glyph, but only one can be active. A hero cannot, for example, apply two *Named Bow* glyphs to a single bow to gain twice the effect.



Chapter 11: Mysteries and Arcana



“Slow down, you jumpy whippersnapper. Don’t rush an old tree. Sit down, so we can think. Time reveals all, as those whom you call sumes would say. The sumes are skilled, true, but they are often as restless as you. Ah, you had a question, am I right? You wanted to know about the Aurochs King and the Crowned Stag King? Hmm... You chose a difficult topic. Their story will take a very long time to tell, for they entered the world before I was even a seed. I cannot tell you about their origins. Even if I could, I would not tell, for they are immortal. One learns over the course of a long life that it is best not to interfere with immortals. They are rather peculiar in their ways.”

—Nornim, the old pine of the Forest Wilderness, modern

SPOILER ALERT!

This chapter is for GMs only! If you enjoy being surprised as a player and don’t want to spoil your fun with too much knowledge, please stop reading now.

This chapter is intended for GMs only, as it contains secrets the GM can use to create adventures in the Warring Kingdoms. It includes details about the NPCs and locations presented in this book, current (and future) events in both realms, and the enduring hatred that separates Nostrians and Andergastans. This chapter also contains adventure seeds, new locations, stats for generic enemies, and play tips.



Playing in the Warring Kingdoms

The Warring Kingdoms encompass many impenetrable forests and wide mudflat coasts. The hidden treants, nymphs, dryads, and swamp ghosts that make their home here often watch intruders in their territory very closely. Robber knights, cutthroats, and even gangs of orcs or goblins plague the land, and bridge trolls demand a toll from unwary travelers. Unicorns and other ancient beings, like the Animal Kings, about whom many legends are told, live deep in the woods.

The people here are stubborn and suspicious of all that is strange or new. Stern and often cruel nobles and knights rule villages as small as they are remote, imposing their autocratic will. The eccentric inhabitants follow weird

cults, believe in crazy superstitions, and have strange prejudices. Life in the Warring Kingdoms is sparse and simple, and often shaped by the constant struggle for survival with the forces of nature. It is a land of strife, whether internal or foreign, and its people are quick to threaten each other with axe or sword or even a gang of men-at-arms.

This description alone suggests myriad adventures and campaigns, and heroes can find much to do. The peace between the realms is fragile. Another war between Nostria and Andergast would have already started, if not for the actions of prudent advisers or resolute leaders. For more suggestions and adventure ideas, see page 187.

Secrets of the Warring Kingdoms

The Animal Kings

“When Los mourned Sumu’s death, his tears fell on her body. From these places grew the first living creatures, the animal kings. And all of these animal kings are immortal and friends of life.”

—folklorist rendition of a passage from *Annals of the Divine Age*

The kings of animals and plants are held to be first of their species and immortal beings of great power. It is said they know all languages and can peer effortlessly into the hearts and minds of men—at least according to those who claim to have met one and survived. Scholars disagree about their origins. The animal and plant kings have existed at least since the 3rd Age, and even the oldest living dragons learned about them in the days of their youth. Some legends tell how they were created by Los, while others say

that Sumu birthed them from her body. In truth, they were born of the actions of two other immortals. The skywolf Rippgrief created the animal kings. The creative goddess Tsatuara awoke the plant kings and gave both eternal life.

Two of these kings protect the Warring Kingdoms directly. The wise and brave **Crowned Stag King** is said to be very skittish. This sublime 36-pointer, the patron of Nostria, lives deep in the heart of the forest. The irascible **Aurochs King**, a muscular, majestic beast that is the embodiment of strength to Andergastans, roams through the thicket of the Forest Wilderness. There is conflict whenever the two meet, as the two realms that worship them are archenemies. It is said the land was shaped by their past battles (see also *The Root of Hatred* and *The Animal Kings and the Hatred* on page 176).



The **Saltarel King** is thought to bless the coast with good fishing, and the Nostrians hold a big feast in his honor every year at the Stone of Nosteria, where they elect a young woman to be the fish queen. Andergastans swear that the mighty **Oak King** plants his roots in the foothills of the Stone Oak Forest. Nobody has found him so far, and it's possible that he actually lives in the Salamander Stones or the Realmwood, instead.

Tales say that animal kings appear in times of great need to give humans courage and hope, and protect and guide them. Standing in the presence of such a powerful creature is said to be an almost religious experience, one that reminds of one's mortality. They reveal themselves to few, and those chosen individuals come away from the event either agitated and shocked or strengthened and inspired.

In the past, people often sacrificed to them to ward off anger or bad harvests. Andra Zornbold, the wife of Argos, the first Andergastan lord, sacrificed her life for the Aurochs King. King Wendelmir is said to have met him shortly before ascending to the Throne, but with the exception of the arcane sume Yehodan, there were no other witnesses to this event. In reality, Wendelmir was drunk, and the encounter was not quite as dignified as he remembers it. Whether he really had an encounter or only imagined it, the fact that it helped him claim the throne cannot be denied. Many Andergastans believe that the King, who had generally been a wastrel when he was a prince, owes all of his ability to shoulder the destiny of the kingdom to the Aurochs King.



The Root of Hatred

"If not for this eternal strife, this revulsion, they could achieve amazing things. The hatred is so deeply rooted in their souls of Andergastans and Nostrians that they cannot keep a cool head for long. Sometimes, I am very thankful for the hatred that divides them. War means business is booming!"

—Anonymous weapons trader, modern

Peoples of other lands often believe the conflict between the Warring Kingdoms is due either to a lack of diplomacy or simply their inhabitants' irascible and obstinate natures. The region's countless battles for supremacy are seen as little more than a flagrant example of the vanity of warrior academies and cadet schools, and the unending hatred that Andergastans and Nostrians hold for each other only fosters further misunderstandings.

Some mystics suspect there might be an as-yet undiscovered and far-deeper reason for this intense hatred, but only a few know this to be fact. Few understand that a well-known story from legend, often used as a metaphor, is the actual root cause of the hatred, and sumes, witches, orc shamans, female goblin spellcasters, certain dragons, and ancient avatars of Nature sometimes feel its power.

Nobody in Aventuria knows all of the events underlying this animosity, but this section presents an outline for the GM's benefit, to allow for the introduction of the mystery into the campaign. It all started like this: Once upon a time, the land known today as the Warring Kingdoms was once the domain of a powerful and immortal creature, and no mortal alive today remembers its name....

The entity's power was greatest during the Seventh Age, the Age of Insects and the Many-Legged, but after the turning of Ages, its strength faded quickly, and it fell into a deep sleep. It dreams swirl with rage over the decline of its power and its own failure, and it seethes with hatred. These emotions boil over into the real world and spread throughout the land like a malevolent spiderweb, spreading hatred for all soft-skinned creatures.

Thus the land itself infects the hearts of all those who dwell there with suspicion, resentment, envy, and blind rage. Orcs, goblins, and trolls learned this bitter lesson as they settled and subsequently fought bitterly over the land. Powerful beings formed alliances to dispel the eternal hatred. Orc shamans called upon their gods, goblins sorceresses and trolls wove their most powerful magic, and the Animal Kings lent their strength, but their united efforts could not drive away the malice. Their only chance was to guide the hatred and control it. The two Animal Kings volunteered to take it into themselves, and together with the mortals, they performed the necessary ritual.

The Animal Kings and the Hatred

Although they had been like brothers, the ritual transformed the Aurochs King and the Crowned Stag King into mortal enemies, but they retained enough wisdom to avoid each other from then on. On the few occasions they accidentally met, the land endured terrible battles, and their shouts of hatred echoed down through the centuries. Mortal peoples begged for peace by sacrificing to the Animal Kings and eventually settled the mighty forest. After many centuries of calm, the hatred that had been gnawing at the Animal Kings became too great to contain, and they needed another outlet. To keep form being overwhelmed, they sought to transfer a portion of this hatred to new vessels.

Battles between the peoples of the land grew more frequent but also became more focussed. No longer did small groups fight each other for myriad minor reasons. People under the influence of the Aurochs King began unting against the followers of the Crowned Stag King, and vice versa. Then, when humans began settling the land, the Animal Kings chose to appear to them directly and entered into pacts to help them settle the land. Andergastan legends frequently mention encounters with the Aurochs King. Nostrians have forgotten most of the old stories about the Crowned Stag King, but the coat of arms of the royal house still hints at their connection. This alliance between humans and Animal Kings planted the seed of hatred in the humans' hearts.

The Effects of the Hatred

Not everybody entering the Warring Kingdoms succumbs to the influence of the Hatred, and it doesn't affect all inhabitants in the same way. Those who have a stronger connection to the land often feel the effects more strongly as well. Peasants, fishers, and woodcutters usually suffer the effect more than urban craftworkers. Spellcasters seem more susceptible, though mainly those whose rituals make use of the connection to the land, such as in Andergast, where these rites are part of the belief in Sumu. This is why Sumes and their most devout followers feel the influence of the Aurochs King most keenly. But their culture values self-control and willpower, which grants them some degree of resistance to the influence. The passionate witches, however, find it more difficult to suppressing the associated feelings.

The Hatred and the Ruling Families

The pacts between the Animal Kings and the two leaders of those early settlements pass to succeeding generations via traditions associated more with their respective coronation ceremonies rather than their true origins. Nostria revised its coronation rituals when it became an independent kingdom, unknowingly weakening the Crowned Stag King's influence. In addition, the pact does not affect Queen Yolande as strongly due to her distant

relation to the previous king, despite her magical ability (though her training at the academy in Nostria, which focuses on balance, and self-discipline, might also account for a portion of this). As a result, the Hatred will either find another outlet or one day consume the Crowned Stag King.

The sumes' influence in Andergast ensures that the rituals continue to be performed in their original form. When King Efferdan, the stranger, broke with old traditions, his "politics of peace" almost destroyed the balance between the two lands, though he could hardly be blamed for not knowing.

His successor, King Wendelmir, renewed and strengthened his alliance with the Aurochs King, and now follows the advise of the sumes and his hatred for all that is Nostrian or different shows in his policies.

Orcs and the Hatred

Even though they are the keepers of tradition and the knowledge of their ancestors, few shamans of Tairach (and then only the most powerful ones) know the true background. Most orc tribes moved on to other lands when the Animal Kings began transferring their hatred into the peoples of the woods and steppes. The Aurochs King survives in their legends, and since their god Brazoragh is connected with blood buffaloes, the orc death god Tairach is associated with aurochs. Many ancient shrines in the Warring Kingdoms used to serve as orcish altars. Starting in 300 b.FB, the orcs began returning to the land to re-dedicate their altars, traveling even as far as the town of Andergast, where they made a new pact in 257 b.FB. The Orcs always wish to leave the "Land of Hatred," as they called it, as quickly as possible, and when allowed to pass unhindered, they refrained from murdering and pillaging (this may account for their extremely violent actions in the Middenrealm). Not all orc tribes have prudent shamans, though and some orc warriors enter the Warring Kingdoms intending to get drunk on the Hatred. Some families of orcs, as well as the *yurach*, the exiled orcs, choose to settle in the Warring Kingdoms, but they limit their plundering mainly to Teshkalia and areas south of the Stone Oak Forest.

The Goblins and the Hatred

Goblin sorceresses are torn between their fear of the Hatred and their desire to stay close to the Animal Kings. Some manage to resist the Hatred, but most succumb to it, and tribes still wage war on each other today. Certain old goblin ritual sites seem to lessen the effects and allow a comparatively normal life, though the knowledge of this protection has been lost over the centuries.

The Hatred and Heroes

The influence of Hatred is insidious and usually only manifests after a long stay in the Warring Kingdoms, but it may manifest quickly if a person's ancestors lived there

for generations and thus took the Hatred into its bloodline. People merely passing through the Warring Kingdoms do not suffer its effects, though they might notice that even educated, intelligent locals exhibit an inexplicable rage for their enemies, which they back up with faulty arguments. Visitors who appear to take the side of one faction might be met with the same prejudices and even open hostility. Some underestimate the strength of the locals' reactions and must quickly leave or else risk being killed.

Rules for the Hatred

The Hatred acts like a disease that causes the new condition *Animosity*. If not treated, it can make even an otherwise friendly or prudent person hate somebody from the opposing kingdom. Hatred manifests in different ways. Some people begin planning for a war that may still be years off, while others start taking immediate action.

Townfolk and Blessed Ones rarely suffer from this *Animosity*. A stronger effect is felt by magic users, inhabitants of border regions, and people who live near the Animal Kings or the valley that is the secret resting place of the creature responsible for the Hatred. The Hatred's influence cannot be detected with magic or liturgical chants. Like the Animal Kings themselves, it has become too much of a part of the land through the centuries.

The GM decides whether and how often somebody suffers a level of the condition *Animosity*. Most strangers passing through the land rarely suffer even one level. It mainly affects Nostrians and Andergastans who have lived here all their lives and their Hatred always focuses on the inhabitants of the neighboring realm. The Hatred usually takes many years to manifest. On the rare occasions when an outsider suffers a level of *Animosity*, the focus of their hatred depends on the local Animal King, which means they usually begin to hate the inhabitants of the land they are not in now.

Animosity does not disappear by itself, and usually only increases in intensity. *Animosity* is counteracted only by certain spells or liturgical chants, or the skill *Treat Soul*. Also, affected individuals lose one level of *Animosity* after spending at least four weeks outside of Nostria and Andergast, and lose another level for each successive month spent away. This does not mean that they automatically stop hating their archenemy, but at least their minds clear and they gain the ability to decide for themselves.

A successful check with *Treat Soul* removes one level of *Animosity*, though only one such check is allowed per week. Someone with *Animosity* level IV can only be treated by powerful magic or the will of the gods.

Animosity

Animosity Level	Effect
Level I	Suffer the negative trait <i>Enmity</i> towards <i>Andergastans/Nostrians</i> and actively insult, bully, or even attack the target of their enmity. <i>Willpower</i> checks to resist this enmity suffer a penalty of 1.
Level II	<i>Willpower</i> checks to resist the enmity suffer a penalty of 1.
Level III	<i>Willpower</i> checks to resist the enmity suffer a penalty of 3
Level IV	Receive the advantage <i>Hatred for Andergastans/Nostrians</i> . <i>Willpower</i> checks to resist the enmity fail automatically.

Advantage: Hatred for Andergastans/Nostrians

Hatred can be a source of strength. Nostrians and Andergastans are well known for their brutality when fighting each other.

Rules: Due to each culture's extreme hatred for the other, this character's close combat attacks against inhabitants of the named culture receive a bonus of +1 DP. Characters with this advantage must be aware of their target's nationality.

Prerequisites: *Animosity* level IV

AP Value: 5 AP • ○

The Valley of Hatred

A long-forgotten valley lies hidden in the heart of the forest, where humans rarely tread. Several millennia ago, a long-forgotten race of many-legged creatures worshiped the being that still sleeps under that valley. Its insatiable hatred is the source of the violent rift between the peoples of the Warring Kingdoms. Clues to the nature of this ancient being survive only in the stories and myths of the orcs, goblins, and trolls.

Shattered, overgrown remains of strange buildings hint that something once lived and ruled in this eerie place. Weathered images of huge, many-legged

• Base the cost of this advantage on the needs of the group and the setting. It should cost more if the campaign takes place in Andergast or Nostria, where people from these cultures are encountered often. Such encounters would be rare in a campaign set in the Khôm Desert, so the cost should be lower.

beings that look like a cross between wasp-like creatures, spiders, and beetles adorn disturbing, nest-like structures. The woods here teem with large beetles and ichneumons that buzz angrily as they attack intruders to plant eggs in their bodies. A large colony of forest spiders inhabits a neighboring valley, and the whole area crawls with giant stag beetles and other huge insects.

Furriers or prospectors sometimes speak of a forest region with many beetles, spiders, and vermin. But none who visit the Valley of Wasps has ever returned to tell the tale. Local goblin sorceresses declared the whole area “noornjas blogai” (Goblinish: evil home range) and try to prevent all non-goblins from entering. If you don’t want the heroes to rush off to this hostile place right away, feel free to sprinkle your game with clues about this distant past. Deep in the wilderness, they might find ancient caves with strangely shaped walls but no sign of tools or artifice. The ground in some caves is covered with countless remains of insects of various size, while other caves are full of iridescent chitin shells large enough to use as shields.

The Sumes’ Schism

“He does not accept the world as it is, he tries to change it! He does not even see how much he hurts the land.”

—Yehodan

“He has lost his love for humanity. Now he wants to spread wars and hatred. What have I done?”

—Arbogast the Old

The sumes know about the pact between the royal family and the Aurochs King, but only the wisest of them have any clue to the root of the Hatred. The sumes disagree on a solution to the realm’s conflicts, but the majority of sumes, who side with Arbogast, believe that humans can live in balance with Nature.

The Hatred is like a disease, and each member of the community must actively decide to resist it. Arbogast seeks a way to calm the rage of the Animal Kings and heal them of this malice.

Yehodan and his followers do not support Arbogast’s ideas. They think the land’s suffering will only increase if the Hatred remains suppressed for too long, and even though they do not know enough about the underlying cause of the Hatred, they might be right. Few can imagine what true peace would do to the Animal Kings, the brave entities that have born the Hatred for many centuries. Yehodan thinks humans should accept suffering, as he believes that only the strong should prevail. He sees war as an appropriate tool to channel the Hatred.

In fact, the heroes are not meant to solve this problem, as a permanent peace would have far-reaching consequences for the setting. It is important to strike a balance between moderate and aggressive influences. The sumes are correct that the land must be kept in balance. The heroes might find themselves fighting a desperate battle in one place, and then negotiating a surprising truce in another. Whenever the balance is threatened, the land needs heroes. Yehodan may often serve as a direct or indirect adversary, but he and his followers play an important role in keeping the Hatred from devouring the land and its people.



Mysterious Gods

“By Hesinde! I know I’ve seen this symbol somewhere... I just can’t think of where, or what it means.”

—Lyssandra della Pallyo, historian from the Nandus School in Methumis, 1039 FB

The images of many old and mysterious deities survive in the Warring Kingdoms. One of the most well known is the relief of the three-eyed war god wearing banded armor, found in the ancient chapel near Castle Harmlyn, the ancestral seat of the Sapstem family. Members of that family call him the Three-Eyed One, but nobody has yet made the connection with the god Shinxir, the hornet-shaped war god worshiped by the legions of Bosparan. His blessings and tactical skill were said to have rendered Bosparan’s forces unbeatable. Along the coast, there are rumors about caves occupied by decapusses and other tentacled creatures. Such places are sanctums of Karyba, an ancient name for the archdemoness Charyptoroth. The Lady of the Ghosts, Nehalennia, the Bone Man, and Thargûn are just aliases of the archdemoness Thargunitoth, even though both cults share traits with the divine worship of the Twelvgods.

Blood-smeared altars dedicated to the Aurochs King stand in the heart of the Forest Wilderness. The Aurochs King is sometimes called Zairak, and his cult shares similarities with that of the orcish god Tairach.

The Power of the Ancestor Glyphs

While studying at the Academy of Light and Darkness, Yolande came across records of an ancient magical tradition and now strives to research this ancient magic for the benefit of her realm and people. Yolande's research focuses on *ancestor glyphs*, symbols used by the Al'Hani people who left traces in Nostria while looking for a new home. Some Beni Nurbad settled in the region a long time ago. Among them were powerful sorceresses who worshiped the divine serpent. Most of the Beni Nurbad eventually continued north, but ruins and old mounds speak of their presence.

Traces of their old magic and their ancestor glyphs have survived in some villages, where peasants and fishers perform strange rituals whose full meaning is lost. The queen sponsors expeditions to retrieve relics and artifacts, and hires many researchers to study the old magic. Her alma mater, the Academy of Light and Darkness, always assists her endeavor.

Attempts to use the ancestor glyphs have been less than successful. The first ship's sail to receive the Windcatcher glyph was ripped apart by the power of the sylphs. The second attempt shattered planks, snapped ropes, and capsized the ship, drowning all aboard.

Researchers predict it will be many years before ancestor glyphs can be used safely. Nevertheless, research continues apace. After several years of failure, attempted sabotage, and disappointment, a special trade ship nears completion in the shipyards of Nostria. Its sails bear the glyph of the Windcatcher, and, maybe with the help of brave heroes, it will finally set sail on its maiden voyage... If it does, Salta's

continuing dominance of Nostria's sea trade is in doubt. Noble Count Albio of Salta is unhappy at this turn of events and plots to halt further progress.

Heroes may also play a significant role in researching a glyph used in ages past to strengthen walls and dikes. The queen's mages would be very interested in learning about experiments related to applying this ancestor glyph to other items. Other promising research involves creating transport boxes that effectively reduce the weight of their contents, or cooling boxes that keep food fresh for long periods. Only time will tell whether someone will learn how to make the ancestor glyph Abundant Catch available to all.

The Patriotic Alliance

"Whatever may happen, we are the true heirs of tradition and thus the true and only heirs of Nostria!"

—Comment by an anonymous voivod from the Patriotic Alliance, 1039 FB

Noble Count Albio of Salta created the Patriotic Alliance in 1038 FB to act secretly against Queen Yolande's research and attempts at modernization. This alliance of bombasts and voivods was originally just a means to an end for its founder and self-proclaimed leader, Albio. Over time, his creation slipped from his fingers. Instead of clearing the way for Salta's independence, as Albio had hoped, the Patriotic Alliance soon cared only for sowing unrest along the borders, insulting the Andergastan enemy, and reinforcing its members' own arrogance. Alliance membership grows daily from the influx of nobles who disagree with Yolande's decisions. Gatherings are rare and always held in secret, and communication between groups is carried out mainly via messenger pigeons and envoys. So far, nobody has openly proclaimed their membership because nobody wants trouble with the queen. Anyone suspected of being a member would face charges up to and including High Treason.

Acting under top-secret orders from the queen, Rondriane of Sapstem has spent several months trying to infiltrate the Alliance. She has made little progress thus far, mainly because Albio, her old archenemy, doesn't trust her.

The Lost Prince

It is unclear whether beloved Crown Prince Ingvalion Kasparbald Kasmyrin was home when the blue wheeze epidemic struck. Young Kasparbald was a daring sailor who led a hate-free life of adventure abroad. He traveled many lands and was often seen on the island of Maraskan, which he dearly loved. Some whisper that he still lives, believing that he was away from home or else used the plague as pretense to feign his own death and finally be free of all responsibility. The body in his grave was not, in



fact, his, but this is impossible to verify. Many impostors claimed to be the lost prince to earn benefits or cause unrest, but so far, much to Queen Yolande's relief, all have come from foreign lands.

Other Secrets

- Not even the innkeeper in the **Succulent Ham** knows that an old escape tunnel from the royal castle emerges in his cellar.

Mysterious Places

The Lakes of the Lakeland

“Deep in the waters of the Lakeland, one can find hippocampii, creatures that are neither fish nor horse. They have the head, neck, chest, and forelegs of a noble horse, and the hind-body and tail of a powerful fish. Their eyes glow both red and blue, and their long teeth are as sharp as the talons of a bear.”

—Nostrian legend

People routinely disappear in Finbair Lake, lured by a blue light, it is said, into the grotto of Luchargh, the most powerful hippocampus known. Luchargh rules over many strange animals in the lake, and it is said that he rises from the waters on nights of the full moon in the guise of a handsome man. Travelers are warned to avoid him, as hippocampii hunger for human flesh.

Weird creatures live in other lakes, too. One such creature is the sea serpent, Yennalin. Another is the Storm Knight, who rides across the waves on a hippocampus and drags the unwary to his watery realm.

The Moors of the Ingval Valley

The infamous Lycker Moor spreads across the land like a dark cloak. Various races have used this place as a cemetery for centuries, and the place is haunted by crypt fogs, night devourers and ghouls. The moor is a source of treasures that were not crafted by human hands, and daring souls come here in search of an old dwarf blade or an elven bow. Similar tales are told about the Ingvaller Marsh and the Salter Mire, where not even Blessed Ones of Boron dare to tread.

The Ruins of Ysraeth

One day's travel east of Mirdin, on the road to Joborn, there stands the ruins of a huge fortress once known by the proud name of Ysraeth. Lady Lysiane II of Nostria built it on the ruins of an even older edifice. In its day, it was considered unconquerable. The Andergastans laid siege to it in 615 FB, but after failing to seize the castle, they asked the combat mages of the Combat Seminar for help. These mages could not defeat the ancestor glyphs that strengthened its high walls. Mage allied with sume, and a never-before-seen army of spellcasters marched to Ysraeth. The wise men of the woods summoned hail, wind, and storms to assail the fortress. Lightning struck the battlements, and the earth shook until the walls fell down. Only the powerful Keep

of Thurgeth survived due to its powerful ancestor glyphs. People believe the moss-covered walls are cursed, and even though many magical secrets might lie here, apparitions of ghosts and elementals guarantee that nobody would even enter the ruins, let alone the Keep.

Until today, the Combat Seminar owes the sumes a favor for their assistance, but a terrible evil must happen in the land for them to claim it.

The Stone of Nosteria

The Stone of Nosteria was standing long before the first human settlers arrived in the area. Scholars usually interpret the images and signs on the stone as archaic depictions of the first settlers, but similarities of style with goblin rock images are noticeable. The goblins originally created the ritual site to forge an alliance with the Animal King of saltarels. This ancient alliance is the reason for the region's abundance of fish, though no human knows this. The pact renews each year during the annual celebration serves to renew the pact. Centuries ago, it was common to sacrifice the fish queen herself.

Goblin Sanctuaries at the Ornib

The goblins venerate a series of caves near the source of the Ornib. These powerful ritual sites and sanctuaries play an important role in the initiation of young goblin sorceresses. The uppermost sanctuary, a cave known as *Ruun suvii Urgutz*, cannot be entered by the uninitiated, and especially not by men. Countless traps and old magic protect these caverns, whose walls bear paintings depicting elves, dwarves, trolls, treants, dragons, and two Animal Kings (the Aurochs King and the Crowned Stag King). These images hint at the source of the hatred that infected the hearts of the Animal Kings.

Lialin's Tower

Not far off the Thash Way, on a steep hill grown over by purple plants, there stands an ancient and mysterious stone tower that rises 120 feet into the air. Nobody knows who built it, or when. Explorers identified the countless engravings on its walls as Hjaldinger runes and other ornaments that prove the Thorwalers sailed up the Ingval long before Admiral Sanin arrived. Many of these carvings are unreadable due to weathering, but magical analyses revealed traces of ancient protective magic emanating

from some of the runes. It does not look as if the tower was built to have a ceiling or roof, but a steep staircase made of stones jutting from the walls climbs to the narrow top of the tower.

It ends in a passage to a rocky tunnel encircling the top of the tower. Those making the climb enjoy a scenic view in all directions—west across the entire Bladegrass Steppe; south over the mysterious Mourning Forest to the mountains of the Southern Stone Oak Forest; east as far as the mountains of the Dark Ridge; and north, deep into the Thash.

The Pearlescent Temple

A large island stood in the northernmost part of Thurán Lake, within view of Egelingsfenn, until 1026 FB. Belivers converted one of its splendid rock grottos into a Temple of Efferd, adorning its walls with splintered seashells. Its shimmering interior was the source of the building's name, the Pearlescent Temple. The temple's Blessed One, Alagora, had the gift of prophecy. As the time of her death

drew near, she grew more and more despaired. Despite all her endeavors, she had not yet found a successor for her remote temple, and so she asked Efferd for help. The god responded by sinking the temple in the waves.

Especially pious believers in Efferd have been searching the depths of the grotto for the Blue Staff of Algora. According to legend, whoever finds it will raise the isle back to the surface and become the temple's new priest.

The Mines of Albumin

South of Albumin, on the slopes of the Kosh Mountains, the dark dwarves operate a rich copper mine where humans, some of whom are slaves, work under miserable conditions. The miner's homes are built on the steep slope like swallow's nests. Some rooms in these houses take advantage of natural alcoves or are cut from the rock. The dark dwarves sell this copper to the orcs, which is why the orcs do not attack Albumin.

Character Secrets

👑 Yolande II Kasmyrin, Queen of Nostria

The young queen (*1008 FB; 5'8"; brown eyes; braided, nut-brown hair; petite and girlish; always thinks before she speaks) is happy now that she rules by herself and is determined to work for the good of her land and people.

She gives much thought to decisions, and her growing experience in matters of rulership is building her confidence.

As a mage, she always tackles problems rationally, but she allows herself a little weakness in the form of her husband Eilert. The political marriage was a smart gambit to end the Bombast Feud, but she was only listening to her heart. She understands that she and her husband are very different people and might argue too much if forced to spend a great deal of time together, so she grudgingly accepts his absences.

Yolande has few real confidants at court or in the kingdom and often seeks validation for her ideas from scholars from other lands. Sometimes she succumbs to bouts of deep insecurity and withdraws into seclusion, but she usually returns from this self-imposed isolation after a few days of meditation, refreshed and ready to get to work again.

Queen Yolande in Play: The queen is a calm and diligent ruler who rarely leaps to conclusions, but she is quickly overwhelmed in situations where she is not given time to consider an issue from all angles. She doesn't hesitate to

seek advice and has been known to employ unconventional means to make decisions (she feels it is her responsibility to study the ancestor glyphs and the kingdom's history to lead Nostria to a new and glorious future).

👑 Lady Rondriane of Sapstem, Nostrian Marshal

The Noble Lady Rondriane (*981 FB; 6'; pale blue eyes; graying black hair; accustomed to giving commands) was at first affronted by the queen's rebukes. Her inability to gain control of the queen's husband, Eilert, and his knights was doubly hurtful, but Rondriane decided she had been wrong and pledged to regain the queen's trust with honest and unwavering support. She undertook a secret mission for Yolande, who asked her to distance herself publicly from the throne so she could infiltrate the Patriotic Alliance. She has been slowly building a network of spies for the queen to keep an eye on these rebellious Nostrian nobles. The experienced woman finds grim satisfaction in this task, as it affords her the chance to hurt Noble Count Albio of Salta, whom she hates with a passion. She also has to admit grudgingly that she is getting too old for the battlefield and may one day have to step back and let the queen's husband manage all affairs of war...but not yet.

Noble Lady Rondriane in Play: The noble lady is accustomed to command and power and often requires free agents for especially delicate tasks. Secretly she is once again working closely with the queen, though publicly she tries (not too obviously) to steer nobles away from the queen's chosen path. Sometimes she bumps heads

with Eilert concerning the disposition of troops, creating opportunities for heroes to support one side or the other or act as mediators.

🏰 **Noble Count Albio III Salis of Salta, the Schemer**

Albio (*977 FB; 5'9"; blue-green eyes; gray, pageboy haircut) lost his heir, many valuable resources; and much influence in the Bombast Feud, and he still hasn't fully recovered. This makes him even more dangerous, for he dreams of making Salta a free city-state. To hurt the queen, he secretly spreads strife on the Thorwal border by instigating skirmishes with hetmen and pirates. He created the Patriotic Alliance (see page 179), nominally to unite the nobles and various malcontents affected by these so-called attacks, and he still tries to undermine Yolande's rule whenever given the chance. Since the loss of his firstborn, Albio the Younger, the noble count has become more prudent, but also more ruthless. He rushes to teach his second-born Prince Oldan (*1010 FB; 5'8"; brown hair; blue-green eyes; chubby; charismatic; well-read) the art of politics.

Noble Count Albio in Play: Albio is a cunning and devious negotiator who puts his own goals above everything else. He knows to beguile the Thorwalers and the border nobles of Nostria, and is not afraid of using intrigue to ruin nobles who have lost his favor. He often seeks discreet negotiators or sellswords to perform his dirty work.

🏰 **Forest Count Eilert II Rheideryan of Mirdin, Prince of Nostria**

The forest count (*1000 FB; 6'3"; icy-blue eyes; dark-blond hair; obvious scar; rarely smiles) is a man of action. He has little love for life at court and little understanding of the queen's research, even though he loves his wife deeply. He is a traditionalist in his heart, and sometimes he hopes that she would remember what matters most for the land. They often argue when the topic is his ancestral seat Joborn, which he desires to reclaim. He still fights for the causes of the forest counts, and rides in the name of the Crown to protect the borders. He prefers to be where he is needed most. Since he was wounded in skirmishes several times, sometimes badly, he rides with trustworthy followers, even though he wishes he did not have to.

Forest Count Eilert in Play: Eilert does not like to leave a task unfinished, and even though he stands for knightly ideals, he is quite capable of making and acting upon difficult decisions. He aids Yolande's plans by hiring skilled henchmen when he is able, but he sometimes works against her out of sheer desperation when he thinks one of her plans is too dangerous.

🏰 **Karlitta of Lyckweiden, Beauty of the Night**

Karlitta (*987 FB; 5'8"; hypnotic, black eyes; rust-red hair; obvious serpent tattoo on her chest; looks much younger than she is; sometimes irritable) has in truth seen more than 50 years. She is a vain person who likes to wear jewelry and valuable but immodest clothes, and she loves expensive wines. Since she met her young lover, the serpent witch Ysolde (*1019; blond locks; petite; glasses; bookworm; serpent familiar named Ysra), she has grown into one of the most open of Nostrian witches and supports the sharing of knowledge. She now often seeks conversation with the queen. She hopes to one day become the sole high witch of Hallerû and lead the Nostrian witches into an open and enlightened future.

The Witch Karlitta in Play: Karlitta is an excellent alchemist. She demands a high price for her services, in coin or favors. If you need her services as a teacher or her rejuvenation potions, you quickly find yourself on a research quest for her.

🏰 **Naringrath, Silent Sister**

Naringrath (*997 FB; 5'9"; light brown eyes; dark brown hair woven in many braids; hard on herself and others) is the most well-known rival of Karlitta of Lyckweiden, whose self-love and openness she feels are dangerous. She truly wants to protect the creatures of Nostria and has even made pacts with some treants and dryads. She often wanders through the woods, hunting those who hurt or disturb the forest, or ensuring that nobody learns the secrets of the witches. Her habit of speaking in riddles angers many of her coven sisters, but as she is one of the few who knows how to create ancestor glyphs, her advice and actions are very popular.

Naringrath in Play: Weathered Naringrath is always calm on the outside and likes her vengeance served cold. She knows many secrets of the forest and its inhabitants, and her help can prove invaluable within its boundaries. Naringrath can be a very dangerous opponent to any who would harm the witches or oppose her goals. But she never kills without warning and always gives her target a chance to flee.

🏰 **King Wendelmir VI Zornbold of Andergast**

Wendelmir (*1006 FB; 6'3"; blue eyes; dark blond hair; irascible) is a choleric and cruel king who takes little interest in the well-being of his vassals or henchmen. Ever since the Aurochs King appeared to him, he has firmly believed in his fate and views himself as the rightful king, even though he never had any hope of attaining the throne before. After his coronation, Wendelmir quickly realized that he could not act as freely as he would have liked,

and would often have to bow to the will of the sumes. He fears that Kusmin will one day try to claim the throne. But Wendelmir is not ruthless enough (yet) to have him killed. Wendelmir does not know what to do with his bastard son Argos, who is cared for by nurses in the castle. So far, he has only used him as leverage over his former lover, Silvana. The time will come when he must decide for or against his firstborn.

The fact that Yehodan has told him that a sacrifice of royal blood would be positive for the land does not make the decision any easier. Wendelmir has likely fathered more sons, as well.

Efferdan's Death

Wendelmir tolerates Kusmin at court only because he promised that he wouldn't lay claim to the throne. After Wendelmir's coronation, Arbogast appeared and mentioned that he knew the true circumstances of King Efferdan's death. Efferdan was struck dead by a falling stone oak, a fate that was heavy with symbolism, but only Wendelmir and Yehodan know that it was Wendelmir who directed the king to Eagle's Castle—the hill where Yehodan murdered him, thus clearing the way for his ally's ascension. Wendelmir now regrets his deed, which is why his relationship with Yehodan suffered, but he does not want the truth to come to light. Nevertheless, Wendelmir and Yehodan are the only ones that know of the true circumstances of Efferdan's death. Arbogast was only bluffing, but he is quite sure in his presumption. Kusmin is unaware of all of this.



King Wendelmir in Play: Wendelmir is a warmonger who aggressively defends all that is his. As a ruler, he rewards those who follow him absolutely. He mercilessly punishes those who disappoint him or disagree with him once too often. Sometimes he sends the Red Bull out on brutal assignments, and sometimes he hires reliable heroes for delicate tasks, usually acting via his bastard half-brother, Bogumil of Langenmar.

🏰 Ossyra Redtree of Teshkal, Baroness of Teshkalia, Champion of Rahja

Ossyra (*981 FB; 5'7"; black eyes; gray hair; energetic but rough voice; horse expert) is feeling her age. She wants to pass on her knowledge to her daughter Sulvina (see page 184) before it is too late. The manners and customs of the steppe are more important to the old baroness than the male-dominated smalltalk at court. She is less interested now in accepting insolence just because she

is a woman, and often draws her sword when provoked. She is considering marrying her daughter to Prince Arlan of Lionhead from Weiden, to create and secure a lasting independence for Teshkalia.

Baroness Ossyra in Play: Ossyra tries to clear the path for her daughter in various ways. The baroness speaks plainly and is a tough but cordial negotiator. She often needs knowledgeable heroes to assist her with rooting out orc gangs, catching horse thieves, or transporting a valuable stud horse from a distant knight's land.

🏰 **Arbogast the Old, Spokesman of the Council of Sumes**
Arbogast (*955 FB; 5'8"; half-blind eyes; long, white beard; proud bearing; showing his age) usually acts as a friend of humanity but can be merciless when somebody breaks the unwritten laws of the forest. He is the most powerful sume in Andergast and knows how to get respect in his old age. Throughout his entire life, he has tried to maintain the balance between humanity and nature and tried to lessen the hatred between the realms, which he believes is damaging. Unlike many sumes, Arbogast does not blindly serve the aurochs. He was one of only a few who were permitted to see the Crowned Stag King and survive the encounter. Since then, he has been convinced that peace is possible, and he devotes all of his strength and power to see this come true (see *The Sumes' Schism* on page 178).

He sees a dark power behind the eternal strife, but can only guess at its identity. His former student Yehodan's betrayal cost him much, and the two are now bitter enemies. He has put all of his hope in young Kusmin, who will hopefully stop Yehodan's plans if Arbogast fails.

Arbogast in Play: Arbogast is a wise adviser who has people out searching for clues about the Animal kings and the Plant King in the hopes of learning how to deal with the disease that infects his land and its inhabitants. He is unaware that what he seeks is the root of hatred. The sume is a brilliant mentor and expert on animals, whose advice is often sought by the nobles of Andergast. He can decide which game may be hunted and which trees may be felled.

🏰 **Kusmin, Student of Arbogast and Champion of Sumu**
Kusmin Zornbold (*1018 FB; 6'; green eyes; dark-blond hair; pointed face) is in truth the oldest son of King Efferdan. After the attack on his life in 1027 FB, disguised as an accident by the sume Yehodan, he was saved by Arbogast, who trained his magical talent. His return to Andergast soon was noticed, as Kusmin looks too similar to his father. King Wendelmir could prevent a greater uproar, but he was forced to make Kusmin the Champion of Sumu for his refusal of the throne. The training with Arbogast has estranged Kusmin from the world of nobles, even

though he often wears courtly clothes today. As highest-ranked member in the Council of Champions, he mostly keeps out of political matters, as long as he has the final say in matters concerning the sumes. Even though he was taught differently by Arbogast, Kusmin has a strong love for humanity despite his calling as sume, which would make him the ideal ruler. But maybe he can do more in this kingdom shaped by strife when he doesn't rule.

Kusmin Zornbold in Play: Kusmin rarely uses the power over the king granted to him by his ancestry. As the power behind the throne, he knows well that he is a thorn in Wendelmir's side.

He feels it is his obligation to strengthen the king when he does good, and to gently stop him if he hurts the land. To advance the work of his mentor, or when life at court becomes too much for him, he sometimes retreats into the wilderness. He would be thankful if somebody managed to cure his mother's madness, or even tried to console him a bit.

Yehodan, Augmenter of Power

Yehodan (*983 FB; 6'; dark-gray eyes; brown hair; beard) once contacted Wendelmir and promised him to make him king. He planned to do this by killing King Efferdan, and in return hoped to be named Highest Sume. Meanwhile, he has distanced himself from his former school of thought, and all that remains of his past admiration for his old teacher is disgust. He thinks Arbogast is a madman who tries desperately to change the land and people and cannot accept that permeating hatred is part of the whole (see *The Sumes' Schism* on page 178). The intensification of the conflict between the realms has given Yehodan hope that he will soon have the king back under his control.

He has the support of his best student, Melanor, who shares his conviction that only strength can prevail in the end, and both men view humans as little more than pieces on a game board.

Yehodan in Play: Yehodan usually only serves as an unpredictable power in the background. He is a merciless and uncompromising man who often manages to involve innocent bystanders in his plans. He walks his path boldly and without regard for consequences. He is a classic archvillain who unknowingly finds a solution to the problem, but pursues it by absolutely the wrong means.

The Red Bull, Robber Knight

The knight known as the Red Bull (*996 FB; 6'7"; blue eyes; black goatee; physically intimidating; red-laquered armor) is secretly Akorius of Lnygwyn, the cruel bastard son of the baron of Westgate in Albernian. This infamous robber knight had to flee the Middenrealm to escape punishment for his

crimes. In Andergast, he goes by the name of Krusold of Barkwell, and he was made a baron as a part of his secret deal with King Wendelmir. When he isn't spreading chaos and unrest beyond the Nostrian border, he kills people at the behest of the king.

In his disguise as the Red Bull, he can let his violent streak run free. He has little to fear if someone learns his secret, for as a baron, he can have the witness killed at once. The Red Bull has recently begun seeking a partner to continue his cruel work and share his identity. So far, all candidates have proven bitter disappointments.

The Red Bull in Play: The Red Bull, whose real identity is unknown within the Warring Kingdoms, is a typical antagonist for your heroes. He is almost impossible to identify in his red armor. Also, he and his henchmen enjoy the secret protection of the king. The Red Bull spreads strife wherever he can and especially enjoys killing the defenseless.

Secrets of the NPCs from Andergast

Sulvina Redtree of Teshkal (*1002 FB; 5'8"; black eyes and hair; eloquent; skilled horse trainer; ambitious tournament rider) is not especially thrilled with the idea of being married off for profit. She flirts with brave heroes until she meets Prince Arlan of Lionhead, whom she is meant to marry, on a journey to the Thundermarches. But when she learns that Princess Dana of Westak-Tiefhusen is interested in the young duke's son, she begins to compete with her. Their shared hatred for orcs will unite the three in the end.

Wolorion of Kolburg (*972 FB; 6'; blue eyes; thin, brown-gray hair; angular, bony face; passion for heraldry) wasn't happy when his second-born son, Oakward (*1004 FB; 6'3"; dark brown hair, tightly braided; steely blue eyes; adept in the OGS) was born with Mada's Gift. Nevertheless, he follows his son's career very closely and hopes that the glory he receives as a spellcaster will outshine any stain he may accrue from other sources. If the heroes have a writ of escort by Oakward, who often travels for his Order, Wolorion will push away any snobbery and help them as his conscience allows.

Irinia Zornbold (*1003 FB; 5'8"; brown eyes; nut-brown hair; smart; very religious) serves on the Council of Champions as the Champion of Hesinde, but her word carries little weight (if Wendelmir even allows the "writing flunky" to attend sessions, that is). Sometimes she seeks the help of adventurers with a love of Hesinde to follow her girls in secret. Her liberal nature, gained from her time spent abroad in the Horasian Empire, makes life in Andergast difficult for her, and only her faith in Hesinde staves off her despair.

Rufus Longford of Joborn (*988 FB, 6'10", red hair and green eyes) isn't confident or smart enough to resist the influence of his wife Wenzeslausia. He would never admit it, but most of his actions are decided by his wife. To the outside, he presents himself as a stern lord protector and keeper of royal power.

Many in the kingdom already suspect that **Argos** (*1036 FB; ashen-blond hair; deep blue eyes) is Wendelmir's firstborn bastard. Argos' mother, **Silvana of Gnitzenbach** (*1015 FB; flaxen hair; blue eyes; moody; excellent liar) survived the rage of the sume Melanor, and is now forced to work as a spy for Wendelmir to protect her son's life. She takes any chance she gets to hurt the Andergastan king, at least indirectly, and as long as her actions cannot be traced back to her. Despite all of her reservations, she even works for the Nostrians sometimes. Heroes can meet her anywhere in the Warring Kingdoms as she pursues various agendas.

Ulward Dreubner (*1009 FB; 5'7"; dark-red hair; bright blue eyes; wiry; bowlegged; likes to smoke a pipe) seems to have magic in his loins, for he is very proud of having fathered two daughters and a son, all magically gifted. Until recently, his daughters lived happily with the witches and his son lived with some women down the river. But then his son was kidnapped by a sume. Ulward is proud of his Mada's Children, but he is becoming depressed as his children grow increasingly distant from him.

Secrets of the NPCs from Nostria

Melanoth of Ingvalsrohden ♣ (*1004 FB; 5'10"; green eyes; red hair) has always fought for the unity of Nostria. Her husband's murder conviction in the Bombast Feud has left her deeply shocked, but she still loves him and continues pursuing his goals in his absence. Her daughter

is in line to inherit, but she must first liberate occupied Kendrar to do so. Before that, Melanoth must secure the borders of Ingvalsrohden, and she often baits the forest counts to follow her. She despises Albio for his selfish striving for independence and is grateful to anybody who hurts him. Those wishing to curry her favor need only offer to smuggle a letter to her husband in the Blood Fortress Gordelyn or secure an opportunity for her to visit him.

Haldur Vesselbek (*996 FB; 5'9"; bare scalp; brown eyes; appears solidly rational on the outside but is actually superstitious) only pretends to be ignorant of local traditions. He is secretly convinced that every dam must contain the ghost of a person who worked on it, or else Efferd will not leave it standing. He sees himself as the enforcer of divine will and ensures that human remains wind up in the foundations of his projects. These so-called accident victims are mourned as sad examples of the wrath of the moody god. Haldur is neither a demon worshiper nor a Blessed One of the Nameless God, but simply a fearful man following ancient customs of the kind that weren't uncommon in the days of Bosparan.

Asmodette Tryming (*1011 FB; 6'; dark brown, braided hair; weathered skin) has hired many ships and experienced countless terrors at sea. She hates Middenrealms for keelhauling her father in front of her, just for saving his ship rations for his hungry family. Even though aspects of her attacks resemble those used by archdemoness Charyptoroth (signs smeared in blood, an octopus impaled on a stick, seaweed covered in alchemical substances tha glow in the dark), this is only a distraction. In truth, she believes in Efferd. Where many pirates succumb to the temptations of a demon pact, she is one of the most passionate enemies of Karyba and the cults of Charyptoroth.

Generic NPCs

In the Warring Kingdoms, the enemies that heroes encounter are most likely to be human. This section describes three enemies you can use for random encounters or as antagonists. Their experience level is Experienced. As with all intelligent enemies, we include stats for the experience levels of Competent and Masterly. Use these stats in place of the standard or base stats when facing these enemies.

Knight of the Warring Kingdoms

Knights in Andergast and Nostria are lesser nobles, but they are the local leaders heroes will most likely encounter. An Andergastan knight might be an opponent in a tournament, a Nostrian knight might be a cruel despot who tortures her serfs. Knights might serve as the rescuing cavalry when the heroes need to escape from orcs or a wild boar, or they might threaten the heroes with horrible punishment for a (made-up?) crime, or even demand a road toll like a robber knight. Knights are always prideful and ruled by strong prejudices, and almost always enemies with the other realm.

Knight of the Warring Kingdoms

(Experienced/Competent/Masterly)

COU 13/14/15 SGC 12/12/12 INT 13/14/15 CHA 12/12/12

DEX 11/11/11 AGI 13/14/15 CON 14/15/16 STR 14/15/16

LP 33/36/39 AE - KP - INI 12/13/14+1D6

SPI 1/2/2 TOU 2/3/3 DO 6/6/7 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 12/14/16 PA 7/8/9

DP 1D6/1D6+1/1D6+2 RE short

Longsword: AT 12/14/16 PA 7/8/9

DP 1D6+4/1D6+4/1D6+5 RE medium

Longsword with Wooden Shield: AT 12/14/16

PA 10/10/11 DP 1D6+4/1D6+4/1D6+5 RE medium

Mace/Battle Axe: AT 12/14/16 PA 6/7/8

DP 1D6+4/1D6+5/1D6+6 RE medium

Mace/Battle Axe with Wooden Shield: AT 12/14/16

PA 10/10/11 DP 1D6+4/1D6+5/1D6+6 RE medium

Andergaster/Nostrianer: AT 12/14/16 PA 3/4/5

DP 2D6+5/2D6+6/2D6+7 RE medium

Great Sword: AT 12/14/16 PA 4/5/6

DP 2D6+4/2D6+4/2D6+5 RE medium

Tournament Sword

AT 12/14/16 PA 7/8/9

DP 1D6+1/1D6+1/1D6+1 RE medium

Tournament Lance: AT 11

DP 1D6+8 RE medium

PRO/ENC 4/1 (chainmail)

(includes armor modifiers)

Advantages/Disadvantages: individual, typical are Negative Trait (Arrogance, Vanity)

Special Abilities: Inured to Encumbrance I, Mounted Combat I, Tilt, Forceful Blow I/Feint I, Forceful Blow II/Charge, Onslaught

Skills: *Body Control* 6/8/10, *Feat of Strength* 7/9/11, *Intimidation* 5/7/9, *Perception* 5/7/9, *Riding* 10/12/14, *Self-Control* 10/12/14, *Stealth* 0/0/0, *Willpower* 3/5/7

Combat Behavior: individual

Escape: Loss of 50% LP.

Pain +1 at: 25 LP, 17 LP, 8 LP, 5 LP or less/27 LP, 18 LP, 9 LP, 5 LP or less/29 LP, 20 LP, 10 LP, 5 LP or less



Bandit/Man-at-Arms

In a poor region like the Warring Kingdoms, some people must survive by ambushing travelers and taking their coins and other precious goods. Here, though, these highwaymen aren't always inexperienced peasants, fishers, or woodsmen. Many once served as men-at-arms

for a noble or the royal house and still own their leather armor, battle axe, and short bow or short sword, and have more than passing familiarity with these weapons. These stats also represent the men-at-arms that make up the retinue of a knight.

Bandit/Man-at-Arms (Experienced/Competent/Masterly)

COU 14/15/16 SGC 11/11/11 INT 13/13/13 CHA 10/10/10

DEX 13/13/13 AGI 13/13/14 CON 13/13/13 STR 13/14/15

LP 31/33/35 AE- KP - INI 12/12/13+1D6

SPI 1/2/2 TOU 2/2/2 DO 6/6/6 MOV 6

Unarmed: AT 10/11/12 PA 5/6/7

DP 1D6/1D6+1/1D6+1 RE short

Club: AT 10/11/12 PA 4/5/6

DP 1D6+3/1D6+3/1D6+4 RE medium

Battle Axe: AT 10/11/12 PA 4/5/6

DP 1D6+4/1D6+4/1D6+5 RE medium

Short Sword: AT 10/11/12 PA 5/6/7

DP 1D6+2/1D6+2/1D6+2 RE short

Short Bow: RC 10/11/12 RT 1 DP 1D6+4

RA 10/50/80

Nostrian Longbow*: RC 10/11/12 RT 2 DP 1D6+8

RA 20/120/180

PRO/ENC 3/1 (leather armor)

(includes armor modifiers)

Advantages/Disadvantages:

individual, typical is Negative Trait (Superstition, Short Temper)

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I/Feint I, Precise Throw/Shot I/Forceful Blow II

Skills: *Body Control* 4/6/8, *Feat of Strength* 4/6/8, *Intimidation* 4/6/8, *Perception* 3/5/7, *Self-Control* 3/5/7, *Stealth* 4/6/8, *Willpower* 2/4/6

Combat Behavior: per individual

Escape: Loss of 50% LP.

Pain +1 at: 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, 5 LP or less/25 LP, 17 LP, 8 LP, 5 LP or less/26 LP, 18 LP, 9 LP, 5 LP or less

Notes:

*) The use of the Nostrian longbow requires STR 14 or more.



Lumberjack

Wherever there is a forest, people fell trees. Lumberjacks are a rough sort, direct but rarely talkative. They often carry what little money they possess to taverns and inns, where they like to gamble or arm-wrestle. An insult to one

is an insult to all, for they depend on each other for survival in the woods and in town. A brawl can quickly turn lethal, as they know how to use axes. They can forget their anger just as quickly as they got angry—if you buy them a beer.

Woodcutter (Experienced/Competent/Masterly)

COU 12/12/12 SGC 10/10/10 INT 12/12/12 CHA 10/10/10

DEX 13/13/13 AGI 13/13/14 CON 14/15/16 STR 14/15/16

LP 33/37/40 AP - KP - INI 12/12/12+1D6

DO 7/7/7 SPI 1/1/1 TOU 2/3/3 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 11/12/13 PA 7/8/8

DP 1D6/1D6+1/1D6+2 RE short

Woodsman's Axe: AT 9/11/13 PA 2/3/4

DP 2D6+2/2D6+3/2D6+4 RE medium

PRO/ENC 0/0

Advantages/Disadvantages: individual, typical are
Negative Trait (Superstition, Submissive to Authorities)

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I/Shield-Splitter, Forceful Blow II/Onslaught

Skills: Body Control 4/6/8, Feat of Strength 7/9/12, Intimidation 4/6/8, Perception 3/4/5, Self-Control 4/6/8, Stealth 3/3/5, Willpower 3/5/7

Combat Behavior: per individual

Escape: one level of Pain

Pain +1 at: 25 LP, 17 LP, 8 LP, 5 LP or less/28 LP, 19 LP, 9 LP, 5 LP or less/30 LP, 20 LP, 10 LP, 5 LP or less



Adventures in the Warring Kingdoms

Heroes' Works in Andergast

The Battle of the Sumes

There is often the need to mediate between the schools of thought of the sumes and prevent the worst. Depending on which side the heroes support, either knowingly or unknowingly, they can bring an end to conflicts (Arbogast) or promote them (Yehodan), especially when it serves their own political goals or those of an ally or employer.

The King and the Sume

A baron or even the sume Yehodan plots to create a conflict between King Wendelmir and the sume Kusmin, or perhaps worsen the conflict with Nostria. Wendelmir and Kusmin sometimes work against each other unknowingly, as the king is too stubborn to admit he was drawn into a plot, and Kusmin is too unworldly to recognize a plot in the making. The heroes need special negotiations skills in court, where, oddly enough, diplomacy isn't very common.

Death to the Heir

Kusmin is well respected, but not everybody cherishes his influence over the king. The heroes might have to prevent an assassination plot hatched by an unhappy baron who

seeks to kill the king's heir "for the good of the kingdom." Yehodan, who already tried to kill Kusmin once, might try more brutal methods if the young sume continues to resist his influence. The heroes must save Kusmin's life and may also have to protect the stability of the realm if the murder plot comes to light.

The Root of All Evil

Arbogast the Old often sends heroes to explore old ruins and dark caverns in the Forest Wilderness. He hopes they'll find clues about old myths of the hatred between the realms, the strife of the animal kings, and the mysterious evil that moves in the background. He also often requires knowledge or rare herbs and ingredients for his rituals to heal the land. The heroes might even meet one of the legendary Animal Kings while they search.

Old Rites

Orcs have begun to push further into the Forest Wilderness, looking for an important but forgotten shrine of Tairach. It is rumored to be the resting site of the "Scourge of Rage," a powerful artifact sought by both a shaman of Tairach from the Dark Ridge named Greyhair, and the Aikar Brazoragh himself, who currently resides in Khezzara.

New Bonds

The increased presence of the orcs means that the Teshkalers are seeking new allies. Maybe the heroes can negotiate an alliance between the baroness and the Rondranians of the Thundermarches, that would prove reliable and effective against orc intrusions.

Dragon on the Battlements

Some dragons from the Stone Oak Forest are interested in finding a piece of meteoritic iron that fell from the sky, but the local knight plans to use it to make a new suit of armor. He would never imagine that one of these scaly beasts would terrorize his subjects just to get a lump of iron. If he can't be convinced to hire dragon hunters in time, the dragon might even lay siege to his castle.

Heroes' Works in Nostria

Looking for Ancestor Glyphs

The heroes might go look for ancestor glyphs for the Nostrian mage's academy or the queen (see *The Power of the Ancestor Glyphs*, on page 179):

- Sections of the Nostrian royal castle haven't been visited for centuries. Besides some restless souls, there might be ancient knowledge waiting to be found in its labyrinthine tunnels.
- Conducting an investigation among the witches is difficult, not merely because of the battle for dominance within the High Three. Karlitta of Lyckweiden shares here knowledge but rarely does so for free. Mysterious Naringrath seems to know more, but stays silent as the grave. Can the heroes convince Naringrath to open up by helping her to win over Karlitta?
- In Oldhagen, there are doll makers that can give magical life to their dolls. Some magical dilettantes among them even know how to recharge ancestor glyphs and make them work again, or even create new ones. They will hand over this trade secret, but only for a price.
- Goblin spellcasters protect their tribal caves with magical cave paintings from which living creatures can step. The queen has heard about it and wants to learn more, but the goblins do not want to hand over their magic. Blood will flow if the heroes aren't careful.
- Lialin's Tower on the slopes of the Thash (see page 180) might hide a fabulous treasure, but finding the right symbols among the many Alhanian and Hjaldinger signs can be difficult.

Trial and Error

Queen Yolande needs able-bodied heroes to protect her research on ancestor glyphs and guard a wind sailer that is under construction. Not all bombasts support these endeavors, and Count Albio, especially, wishes to prevent

the Crown from gaining more power. Saboteurs target the shipyard, the research, and the spellcasters' experiments before the first ship is even completed. The heroes can assist the queen by using their knowledge to make sure the prototype isn't damaged (see *The Power of the Ancestor Glyphs*, on page 179).

Stolen Scholar

Since Thorwalers jealously guard the secret of their rune magic, Yolande has a scholar kidnapped for her research. The queen knows about the risk, but she is careful to remain out of sight of the prisoner and denies all guilt if confronted by the Northerners. Heroes might perform the abduction, rescue the victim, or mediate in a complicated situation where they might accidentally learn the queen is actually the mastermind. Alternatively, instead of the queen, the mastermind could be a mage of the academy or a scholar who wanted to expedite their own academic promotion using the new knowledge.

Lost Dike Builder

A desperate townsman hasn't heard from his son for months. Last he knew, his son worked as a dike builder for Haldur Vesselbek. Does he lie buried beneath one of the dikes as a sacrifice to Efferd? Or did his love for a sea nymph cost him his life?

False Knight

Somebody suspects a treasonous plot, and the heroes must watch a suspicious knight at the Andergastan tournament. But the knight's need for secrecy is due to an unrelated reason: she is a noblewoman who loves tournaments and is riding in disguise. Does she intend to launch a rebellion against patriarchy, or fight for the honor of her family because her brother was injured in a skirmish, or does she simply love the idea of riding in a joust?

Robber Knights

When a Nostrian robber knight ambushes traveling merchants, she obtains an incriminating document that she uses to blackmail a member of the Patriotic Alliance. Fearing for his life, the bombast hires the heroes to catch the outlaw and prevent her from exposing his identity to the queen.

Rites of Water

The morning after the celebration, the newly elected Fish Queen is discovered missing, and the Stone of Nosteria is drenched in blood. Did some misguided cultist sacrifice the young woman? Did she fake her death to elope with her Andergastan lover? Or was she silenced after learning too much about Count Albio's plans while having a fling with his son, Prince Oldan of Salta?

Thorwaler Diplomacy

Friends of the Thorwalers might attempt to reduce Noble Count Albio of Salta's influence over the Northerners. Even though he has made allies of some hetmen via money and secret oaths, others are forced to serve him. He might threaten them with his men-at-arms or take their sons and daughters hostage.

Albio's Intrigues

The heroes work for the cause of the count and help move Salta further along the path to independence. Maybe the count hasn't been honest with them, and the heroes must make a difficult decision when they learn the truth. Do they foil his plans, or do they fear gaining a powerful enemy? Perhaps, under secret orders from Ossyra of Teshkal, they try to infiltrate his Patriotic Alliance, or maybe they work for the Andergastans, who would profit greatly from a strong Salta.

Adventure Seeds in Both Realms

Peace Negotiations

The heroes must quell a border conflict before it escalates, or strengthen one side to prevent the opponent from seizing land.

Stolen Children

Sumes and witches usually aren't particular and sometimes resort to kidnapping prospective students with talent, causing much grief for the parents. Maybe the kidnapped child is the only heir of a noble, which makes the situation even more complicated.

The Red Bull

Nostrria continues to suffer the depredations of the infamous robber knight. The heroes might hinder his plans, save an abducted noble from a cruel death, or act as go-betweens to deliver ransom money. Maybe they even learn his secret and manage to suspend the protection of the Andergastan king, forcing the Red Bull to be more careful.

To the Tournament

Heroes have many opportunities to prove themselves during royal tournaments, and not just in the competitions. Besides having a chance to meet rulers or other prospective employers, the heroes might put the Red Bull in his place when he threatens the tournament peace. Maybe they can unite a tragic pair of lovers, silence an instigator, or help an old friend survive a feud.

Curses!

A witch needs a lock of hair or some blood from an unwelcome noble to curse him. Her familiar is sick, and she needs a cure from a sume with whom she is currently feuding or else somebody to get the item for her. The heroes might prove to be a great help in this situation.

Rites of the Forest

The heroes are asked to escort the daughter of a townsman who has come into some money, but she has disappeared, and nobody in the little village in the Forest Wilderness seems to know anything. Everybody is a suspect. Then the heroes find out that the villagers abandoned her in the forest last week as a kind of sacrifice. The powerful treant with whom she now lives does not want to let her go.

Starfall

Due to the Starfall (see the *Aventuria Almanac*, pages 104 and 238) a meteorite impact dried up the lake of a nymph. If there is no way to refill her home, she must be brought to a fairy gate, or she will not survive the disaster. If the heroes are not present when the lake empties, an angry treant or worried villager could point them towards the problem.

The Evil Forest

Since a heavenly body came down in the Forest Wilderness, the local sumes have been extremely worried. They feel that something has awoken an old creature that is responsible for the hatred. The forest animals have been unusually aggressive, and nobody has reached the impact site so far. Some lumberjacks have even been attacked by marwolds. Can the heroes locate the palm-sized piece of meteoritic iron and take it away?

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AVENTURIA

The Warring Kingdoms Nostria and Andergast

by Florian Don-Schauen and Daniel Simon Richter
Additional material by Eevie Demirtel and Alex Spohr

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