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1 Imperial Orcs



A spirit woven from loyalty, battle, and the voices of the ancestors.
?One life - make it count?

The Empire was founded as an empire of humanity, but the Imperial Orcs are not human and never will be. Orcs exist in two worlds, guided by the whisper of those who have gone before in their souls, and many are driven by a lust for battle that burns in their blood. While the barbarian orcs embrace these urges, the Imperial Orcs strive to temper their primal instincts. They are few in number and can ill-afford to squander their lives recklessly.

The first Imperial Orcs were slaves just two generations ago. They won their freedom by strength and indomitable will, forcing the Empire to recognise the injustice it perpetrated against them. Reluctantly, the Empire gave them freedom - but nothing more. They were recognized as the tenth nation of the Empire, but they had no land to call their own. In the decades that followed they spent blood and tears fighting the Empire's wars, always pursuing the promise of a home where they might put down roots. Their wandering ended recently when the people of Wintermark relinquished the territory of Skarsind in recognition for the nation's great service.

Now the Imperial Orcs face an entirely new challenge - to build a nation worthy of their ancestors, and worthy of their descendants. The first sept of the Imperial Orcs, the descendants of those who fought under Thrace, now call themselves the Sunstorm. They are joined by five other great septs, the Tamazi, the Sannites, the Ethengraw, the Illarawm, and the Yerende. Each sept is a disparate family of orcs united by one or more common ancestors. The six septs must now find a way to live together: the one thing that unites them all is their loyalty to their nation.

Like the voices of the ancestors, loyalty is part of the orc soul. The barbarian orcs feel a powerful instinctive loyalty towards their nation; they need to feel as if they are part of something larger than themselves. When they lacked a land of their own, the Imperial Orcs strove to make the Empire their nation. Now that they have their own land, some are openly questioning what must come next. Should they strive to make Skarsind the greatest territory in the Empire or seek out new territories to conquer? Their efforts have won them recognition and a place in the great councils of the Empire, but they remain the smallest nation. They will need more before they can stand among the other nations of the Empire as equals.

All Imperial Orcs know they have only one life to live; they strive to burn brightly and leave a better world for their children to inherit.

1.1 Five things to know about the Imperial Orcs

- **Loyal to the core.** Our loyalty to our sept, our nation, and our Empire makes us who we are.
- **We are citizens.** We won the right to be part of this Empire and we are proud of our place in it.
- **We are building a nation.** We have a homeland now - but a nation is so much more than lines on a map.

- **War is in our soul.** Fighting is spiritual and it allows us to hear our ancestors.
- **Life is precious.** You have just one chance to make your mark. Do not squander it.

1.2 What the Imperial Orcs are not

- **Traditional orcs.** While the Imperial Orcs draw on some ideas found in other settings, they have their own unique culture and background. They are not the orcs of Lord of the Rings or Games Workshop's Warhammer setting; many elements of those settings do not fit and have been deliberately excluded.
- **Brutal or callous savages.** Imperial Orcs are few in number and if they are to build a nation they cannot afford to lose warriors every time they fight. They enjoy battle, but they strive to minimise losses and they take no particular pleasure in killing.



If you are planning to play an Imperial Orc please read the species brief as well as this page

1.3 Further Reading

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- Introduction
- The people
- Culture and customs
- Look and feel
- Septs
- Orc species brief
- Hearth magic

Additional Information

- History
- Leadership
- Economic interests

- Military concerns
- Religious beliefs
- Magical traditions
- Territories
- Children
- Music
- Archetypes
- Groups
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2 Imperial Orcs people



2.1 Overview

For many years, most Imperial Orcs were soldiers. They enlisted in one of the two Imperial Orc armies with the rest of their legion, fighting the enemies of the Empire. Orcs have an instinctive desire to belong to something, to be part of something bigger than themselves, and most enjoyed the camaraderie and the sense of commitment and purpose they gained from being part of an army. For an Imperial Orc, their legion, their army, and the Empire itself were fundamental to their identity. They took great pride in being part of something greater than any individual, and the triumphs of the Empire were their triumphs. For the Imperial Orcs, the Empire was their nation.

Even those who did not serve in the army tended to live in one of the many legion camps dotted around the Empire. Some dwelt there permanently, others moved from camp to camp with one of the Imperial armies. Life in the legion camps was crowded; orcs slept in large communal tents and ate, trained, and worked together. This military discipline extended even to those who were not formally part of one of the armies - most orcs are comfortable with the rough but unyielding discipline of legion life.

Now they have a homeland of their own. The military camps have mostly been disbanded, their inhabitants relocating to Skarsind. Where once the orcs lived in tents and makeshift buildings, they have begun to construct permanent towns, villages, and homesteads of their own. Human visitors often find these settlements a little cramped - the orcs have lost none of their affection for communal living.

This change has prompted some Orcs to question if they still need to devote their lives to martial service. Thousands of Imperial Orcs have given their lives already in service to the Empire. Nobody can question their sacrifice, but if their dreams of nationhood are to mean something more than endless war then the Orcs will need to find new ways to serve the nation. Others point out that martial prowess has always been the Imperial Orc's greatest strength. Are they to become a nation of bookkeepers to rival the League or farmers that can outdo the Marches? They have gained a measure of acceptance from the Empire, why give up the path that has served them so well?

The embrace of the new septs has only served to widen this debate. Some of the newcomers are every bit as keen for battle as the Sunstorm, the sept that founded the Imperial Orcs. The Ethengraw and the Sannites are fiercely competitive and with proud martial traditions of their own. But the three other septs, the Yerende, the Illarawm, and the Tamazi have other ways to commune with their ancestors and prefer to sublimate the urge to battle in favour of their own cultural history. Every orc, no matter what sept, feels the desire be part of something bigger than themselves. They are united by a desire to see their sept, their nation, and the Empire prosper, but now there are many different views on how that can best be achieved.



The Imperial Orcs have finally gained the chance to create structures more permanent than the army camps they once dwelled in.

2.2 A Different People

All orcs have an instinctive drive for Loyalty, to belong to something and to devote themselves to it. Imperial Orcs used to feel anxious and uncertain when alone, but the Illarawm have shared simple techniques to resolve those feelings. Even so, Imperial Orcs still prefer to act primarily in the interest of their sept or nation and they expects others to do likewise. They are particularly distrustful of individuals who claim to represent only themselves. They distrust those humans who appear to be self-serving and are highly suspicious of people who seem to stand for nothing and represent no one but themselves. An individual, or better still a group, acting on behalf of a larger body are usually much better received.

Nobody likes to be considered stupid, but Imperial Orcs take particular exception to the idea that they are uneducated or "slow." Some orcs react very negatively indeed to any suggestion that they might not be able to follow someone's train of thought, or might not be able to read something for themselves. They make little distinction between someone inadvertently patronising them in a well-meaning way, and someone who is trying to directly insult their intelligence. Actively mocking an orc's ability to read or write is to openly insult their status as a civilised citizen of the Empire.

Most Imperial Orcs identify with the Empire on a personal level, viewing its triumphs as their triumphs. They view a crime against the Empire as a crime against them personally; to an Imperial Orc a betrayal of the Empire is the same as being personally betrayed. Many even take a crime against another Imperial citizen as seriously as a crime against a member of their own legion, making little distinction between citizens in this regard. As such they are staunch supporters of Imperial Law and will go to great lengths to hunt down criminals. They especially despise thieves and robbers; the right to own belongings was denied to them as slaves and many Imperial Orcs see theft of their possessions as a crime that attacks their rights as Imperial citizens.



A passion for fighting burns in their blood.
In the mind of most Imperial Orcs, the laws have no grey areas - one is either innocent or guilty and punishment is required to absolve the guilty of their crimes. Although they accept the authority of the magistrates without question, Imperial Orcs believe that only retribution can allow a criminal to rejoin their legion with honour. In cases where individual circumstances have mitigated a crime and reduced the punishment imposed, Imperial Orcs often regard the convicted as marked and shamed, even going so far as to express open distrust thereafter. A criminal who *?gets off lightly?* is unlikely to be welcome in the Orc camp in the future, and some Orcs convicted of crimes have been known to ask that their sentences be increased to avoid such a fate.

2.3 The Lure of Battle

The Imperial Orcs are still a martial people - a passion for fighting is literally "in their blood". Like many humans they enjoy battle and take great pride in fighting for their Empire, but for Orcs the elation they feel during a battle goes much further - becoming a definitively spiritual experience. For many it is the only time that they can hear their ancestors communicating to them. Some hear only half-whispered voices urging them on or shouting warning or advice, some hear nothing at all, but almost all derive a cathartic fulfilment from the act of fighting. The fact that all orcs receive guidance from their ancestors is central to their religious beliefs.

The danger, of which the Imperial Orcs are only too aware, is that the thrill of battle is seductive and becomes addictive. Barbarians often lose their sense of self-preservation completely when urged on to fight by their ancestors, but their numbers are almost limitless. The individual barbarian dies, but the nation lives on. The population of Imperial Orcs by comparison is perilously small and they cannot afford to fight recklessly. Discipline does not come easily to the Imperial Orcs, but the legions train to ensure that they are capable of withdrawing when a retreat is called or holding themselves in reserve until the order to advance is given. Many Imperial Orcs have come to consider that this battlefield discipline and command of tactics is one of the things that makes them superior to their barbarian cousins. All are aware that it is essential if they are to survive long enough to win territories of their own.

2.4 Archetypes

Imperial Orcs
Archetypes

Imperial Orcs
Archetypes

Bonesetter Shaman
Oathwright Thief-taker
Pitfighter Warcaster
Preacher Warlord
Reaver

There are magicians, priests, warriors, and traders of every stripe in every nation in the Empire. An archetype represents a specific attitude or approach to a given role that reflects cultural values and common ambitions of a nation. Choosing an archetype helps to define your character; it provides roleplaying hooks and ready-made character goals, but it also places demands on your character in terms of how you portray them. Selecting an archetype is optional, and it's better not to pick one if none of them appeal to you.

2.5 Orc Names

2.5.1 Legion Name

Imperial Orcs who have served in the Imperial army use their legion name in a similar way that a human might use a family name. Most orcs put the legion name first, so an orc might introduce themselves as "Irontide Cled", "Bloodcrow Emmal" or "Sunhammer Sutin." Legion names tend to be two words that describe their goals, their fighting style or some major event in their history. For example, the Irontide Legion favours heavy armour, whereas the Bloodcrow Legion favours lightly armoured skirmishers and the Sunhammer Legion prides itself on its weaponsmiths and jewellers.

Those Orcs who have never served in the legion will usually adopt the name of whatever group or affiliation they have joined. For example a reaver who had never served in the Imperial army might call themselves Whiteclaw Neb setting the name of their reaving band before their own.

2.5.2 Personal Names

Literacy has only become widespread amongst the Imperial Orcs since they won their freedom. As a result, most names are short and simple and tend not to have silent letters - they are written the way they are spoken.

Most Orc names are clipped; short, sharp sounds. Orcs who want a traditionally masculine name adopt a short name with just two syllables.

Those who want a traditionally feminine name pick a two-syllable name with a double consonant in the middle. Most longer names are palindromes - written down they read the same backwards as forward. Very few of these names have more than three syllables.

Names that don't follow either of these approaches are usually viewed as gender-neutral.

N.B. Whilst some names are themed around specific genders, Empire is a gender blind setting and people of any gender choose any name they like that is appropriate to their nation.

2.5.2.1 Sample Names

Adda, Agga, Ar, Atok, Attra, Bannak, Brakklo, Brank, Brint, Cled, Col, Colla, Crillit, Dakktar, Dattia, Drok, Dakt, Drokkan, Durn, Emmal, Emme, Erken, Eft, Ferrak, Frar, Furit, Garrasha, Gillig, Grawik, Gru, Hajjah, Happak, Hent, Hollan, Hurd, Ikis, Illeska, Innar, Irek, Jannik, Jekri, Jinnij, Jord, Kabbak, Kalt, Kask, Kessek, Kressik, Kulid, Kulk, Likkil, Lunt, Lask, Mannam, Matal, Murn, Narrik, Natak, Nirak, Palt, Pest, Pessep, Presshak, Reller, Rilt, Roshhok, Rosslin, Rul, Sakkia, Sart, Sollos, Slu, Sutin, Talik, Takkat, Tammat, Tannap, Thada, Thonnot, Trast, Tullet, Urreska, Urt, Usak, Ussa, Usshak, Verrkan, Wesk, Werrun, Wessik, Yent

2.5.3 Honorifics

Imperial Orcs avoid boastful honorifics. An orc will use an Imperial title when on official business, but the rest of the time tends not to draw attention to it. Likewise, they avoid honorifics such as "the Mighty" or "Icebinder." The individual orc expects others to recognise them by their legion and personal name, and if they need to add some additional element detailing their deeds, they suggest their history or personal story is not strong enough to stand by itself.

"You don't think this enormous sash is a bit much?"

"It's fine, stop fiddling with it, just act like you wear it all the time."

"It looks ridiculous over my doublet, why would anyone believe I wear it all the time?"

"Because they don't like individuals and they don't like people who claim to work for themselves so **we** are buying this Biting Blade on behalf of the Illuminated Guild of Temeschwar, and that's why **we** are wearing sashes with lanterns on them. I've been through this with you twice, just stand behind me, nod occasionally and look like you care. You're getting paid 3 rings for this charade, think about that if it helps to focus your mind."

"Won't they realise you're just buying it for yourself?"

"Possibly... almost certainly if you can't play your part properly. But if they do, they'll still appreciate that I've made the effort. So I'll still get a cheaper price. But I hired you because you're supposed to be an actor, so for goodness sake, act."

"So long as I don't end up in the cooking pot. I hear they eat people they don't like."

"And I hear that failing actors who can't pay their debts displease the Prince."

2.6 Further Reading

Core Brief

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- Orc species brief
- Hearth magic

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- Egregore

3 Imperial Orcs culture and customs

3.1 Septs

The nation is divided into six great septs. Each sept is a vast extended family united by common ancestors and common beliefs and practices. All the septs are Imperial Orcs, they have embraced and been embraced by the egregore accepting what it means to be part of the nation. But each sept has their own unique history, beliefs and practices. The urge to be part of something more important than yourself is hard-wired into the soul of every orc, so every Imperial Orc *must* be a member of one of the six septs.

The Sunstorm are the first sept, they are the original orcs who fought the Empire, won their freedom, and founded the nation. The Ethengraw were once warrior kings and queens who created their own kingdom in Ossium before it was conquered the Druj. The Illarawm claim to be descended from the first ever orc ancestor and are masters of techniques to help them communicate with the ancestors. The Yerende dream of building a better world and claim to have knowledge of herb lore even the Druj lack. The Sannites include the proud gladiators rescued from Grendel slavery; they strive to prove themselves worthy and seek to raise a new legion of their own. The Tamazi came to the Empire from Axos eager to embrace the Imperial Orcs and hoping to leave a legacy in the process.

3.2 Worth

In addition to the intrinsic value of an item, Imperial Orcs believe that some items have an additional quality they call "worth" that is defined by their provenance. This quality is based on the history of an item, who made it, what happened to it and how it came to be in the Orc?s possession. It is based on the belief that a person?s unique personal effects are imbued with qualities of that person during important moments. Items gain worth over time, as they are passed down generations, so old heirlooms are particularly prized.

Items also have worth if they are fashioned by the individual that used them so most Imperial Orcs take great pride in creating and maintaining as many of their own belongings as they can. Few orcs have the time to master such skills, so their personal effects may often have a rough, crude appearance, but this is of little concern to an orc compared to the idea that their belongings should have worth. When an Imperial Orc dies in battle, those who fought alongside them will often take one of the fallen?s worthy items as a mark of respect. To be buried with all your belongings is considered a great shame for an Imperial Orc, an indication that your death had no worth.

In recent years, the Imperial Orcs have begun celebrating the Night of Worth during the Spring Equinox each year. This festival celebrates the history of the Imperial Orcs, and the deeds of their people, through the sharing of stories tied to items of worth.

3.3 Symbols

Orcs feel a strong need to be part of a well-defined group. They tend to see the group?s identity as an essential part of their own identity, and they like to have clearly visible symbols of membership. This group identity is almost never expressed as uniformity, as that would deny individual choice and hark back to the time when Imperial Orcs were slaves. They prefer the items they use to be unique to them and to have as much worth as possible. For orcs, the solution is to paint or carve symbols onto belongings like shields and armour, or to paint or embroider them onto clothing. In some cases specific items such as skulls or jewellery may be attached to equipment as a symbol. The ability of symbols to draw groups together and create identity is a form of hearth magic.

Orc symbols are usually added to items by the owner themselves. The simplest are painted or drawn, but more skilled orcs will burn, gild or embroider symbols onto their belongings. Orcs dislike uniformity so symbols are usually recurring interpretations of a theme rather than a specific design used by everyone. In a legion of orcs that use a dagger as their symbol for example, each design may be a slightly different shape, size and colour, but provided they make the individual?s legion clearly identifiable then they achieve their purpose. It is the underlying motif that is prized; the visible demonstration of allegiance.

When items change hands, old symbols are rarely painted over, rather they are allowed to fade, so that they become part of the story of an item, a way to tell its worth. New symbols are usually painted over the top of old symbols on items like shields, but multiple symbols of allegiance on clothing and armour add to the worth of an item so they are kept provided the bearer can still advertise their identity and allegiance clearly with their own symbols.



Many Imperial Orcs have adopted the Imperial Horse as the unofficial symbol of their nation. They embellish personal equipment with the image and incorporate it into banners and other symbols. Most orcs belong to a legion and the Imperial Horse usually takes pride of place next to the legion symbol.

3.4 Writing

Literacy is considered a defining symbol of adulthood by Imperial Orcs; in some ways more important than the ability to fight. As slaves, orcs were unable to learn to read and write and many older orcs endured years of difficult lessons following their freedom ? some still struggle to read or write well. Literacy has become a prized skill by Imperial Orcs, symbolic of the freedom they fought to achieve and children raised by Imperial Orcs have its value drilled in to them from an early age. Imperial Orcs assume that any orc can fight by the time they reach adulthood, but they do not take literacy for granted.

The written word is regarded with some reverence by many orcs. While books are less interesting to them, the idea that you can record the words someone has said, and thereby immortalize what would otherwise be lost, has a mystical quality to many orcs. This ability to continue to inspire or advise generations after the individual speaker has died is seen as akin to the way an ancestor can inspire or advise after they are dead.

3.5 Pit-fights



The wrist and neck wraps are a mark of solidarity.
Most orcs enjoy fighting or watching others fight in much the same way a citizen of the Marches might enjoy a ball game. Consequently wherever Imperial Orcs are found there is likely to be a place set aside for pit fighting. This practice allows for weapon training and grudge settling in front of an appreciative audience, while on a practical level fighting allows orcs to deal with frustration or boredom while keeping a clear head at other times. Pit fights are *never* to the death; killing someone in a pit fight is as much murder as killing someone in the tavern.

Some orcs find the experience of pit-fights to be so powerful that they dedicate themselves to be coming professional pit fighters, drawn by the roar of the crowd, the challenge, or by the profound spiritual experience of unleashing the violence that thunders in the blood of all orcs.

3.6 Clothing

Almost all Imperial Orcs wear wraps around their ankles, wrists and neck. When the first Orcs were freed from slavery the wraps were used to hide the scars caused by chains and manacles. Although there are few remaining Imperial Orcs who bear the scars of slavery, the wraps have became a mark of solidarity in the nation. Wearing them is seen as a acknowledgement of the past, recognizing the sacrifices made by your forebears.

Many orcs now use other garments to cover these areas, but almost all orcs cover them in some way. To leave the skin in these areas exposed is considered shameless by most Imperial Orcs - a taboo akin to public nudity - it is thought to show disdain for your parents and implies that the individual thinks they are better than older Imperial Orcs because they are not scarred. More than one young orc who thought to flaunt the custom has been taught the error of their ways in the pit.

3.7 Families

When they were slaves the orcs became used to the idea of raising their children, only to lose contact with them when they came of age. Imperial slave owners regularly sold young orcs as soon as they became adults. As such, orc parents came to believe that they had to teach everything their child needed to know about the world before they reached maturity. Even after they liberated themselves, the orc parents continued this tradition of preparing them to make their own way in the world.

A young orc is unlikely to follow their parent into the "family business". They are even unlikely to join the same legion as their parents. They are much more likely to join another legion, encouraged by family and stranger alike to make their own way in the world. In doing so they keep the nation strong, but they also keep it connected and prevent it breaking up into tribes - siblings in two legions maintain a bond and recognise each other as kin. Having blood relatives in many different parts of the nation helps the orcs maintain a sense of that nation as being part of their family.

Outsiders imagine that orcs do not care much for their children but this is an entirely mistaken view. They send their children away *because* they value them, wanting them to grow up to be strong and independent adults capable of taking responsibility for themselves. Children are so precious to Imperial Orcs that they find the idea of orphans horrifying. As a result it is not uncommon for Imperial Orcs to adopt abandoned human orphans and raise them as their own children. Such individuals must join another nation when they come of age, but most remain firm allies of the Imperial Orcs for the rest of their life.

3.8 Funerals

Imperial Orcs believe it is essential to stay together even in death. Every effort is made to ensure that the fallen are not left alone on the field of battle. Orcs bury their dead in mass graves and the fallen are carried in ceremony until they are joined by others or their bodies can be added to an existing grave. The Illarawm in particular, try to bring the bones of those who have fallen and store them together in ossuaries to help the reach their ancestors more easily.



3.9 Icons and Artistry

The Imperial Orcs have adopted the horse as their national symbol and usually depict it arrayed in armour for battle. It is often shown surrounded by chains, another common symbol for the nation. The chain serves as both a reminder of their history, and a symbol of their loyalty and unity. These images are used to embellish personal equipment and incorporated into banners, insignia, and markers.

Their art is usually stark, and hard-edged or stylised. Symbolic depictions of weapons or armour are favoured, followed by symbols of personal expertise or industry, like hammers, tongs and similar. Many designs use simple colour schemes made up of a handful of bold contrasting colours, with red, black and white being popular, as well as the occasional use of Imperial gold and purple. The best orc art is designed to either provoke a powerful emotional response or to convey an important message with as much clarity as the artist can manage.

Imperial Orc symbols are usually added to items by the owner themselves. The simplest are painted or drawn, but more skilled orcs will burn, gild or embroider symbols onto their belongings. Orcs dislike uniformity so symbols are often recurring interpretations of a theme rather than a specific design used by everyone. In a legion of orcs that use a dagger as their symbol for example, each design may be a slightly different shape, size and colour, but provided they make the individual?s legion clearly identifiable then they achieve their purpose. It is the underlying motif that it is prized; the visible demonstration of allegiance.

3.10 Further Reading

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4 Imperial Orcs look and feel



Hero belt and war skirt by Windee Works
This is a placeholder page for content that PD are actively working on.

4.1 Overview

The Imperial Orc look is a patchwork of second-hand clothing and equipment collected together. Equipment is aged and worn, a reflection of the Orc preference for old items with history and story over things that are new. Imperial Orcs have been free for barely the span of two generations, enough time to learn basic skills but not enough to master them. Moreover most orcs take pride in being able to make and maintain their own clothing and equipment but they have little interest in their appearance. As such Imperial Orc craftwork lacks sophistication - it is simple and practical.

Base colours are dull or dark; brown is seen as a practical colour that hides mud and dirt stains. These will be contrasted with stark colours like blood red or midnight blue. The surface of weapons and armour are often treated, dulling, darkening or painting the metal to protect them against further rust. Clothing and equipment are all marked with symbols of identity, painted, carved or stitched onto the surface.

Imperial Orcs are practical people who like their belongings to reflect their physical lifestyle. As a result clothing tends to be strong and hard wearing, to resist wear. Leather is common, as are linen and wool - practical materials that will wear well and can be patched and repaired. Tailoring is basic; most orcs wear a simple tunic often combined with a war skirt made up of pieces of leather hung from a belt.

Weapons are heavy and solid, designed to withstand the most brutal impacts without shattering and to pulverize bones rather than cut the flesh. Bows and crossbows are both used occasionally, but most orcs prefer to get close to their enemy.

4.2 General

- **Feel:** Proud, practical, poor, old, worn, independent, physical, fierce.
- **Influences:** Costume is heavily influenced by the Dark Ages; weapons and armour by the Lord of the Rings.

- **Materials:** Practical and hard wearing materials like wool, hessian, canvas and especially leather. Materials are usually dyed or stained to protect them and to hide mud or dirt. They also use iron reinforcing clothing with plates of iron and patches of chain.
- **Colours:** Dull or dark natural shades, particularly brown. Primary colours such as blood red or midnight blue may be used for contrast or to highlight an item.

4.3 Clothing

The basic Imperial Orc costume is a woollen t-tunic or similar linen tunic with a simple cut. Dark Age fabrics and costume patterns with their simple cuts are ideal for Imperial Orcs. Clothing is often supplemented with patches of mail or pieces of plate. Orcs are no more likely than any other Imperial Citizen to wear armour all the time, but armour is considered a mark of status, so small pieces of armour demonstrate the wearer?s right to dress as they please.

Many things owned by Imperial Orcs are ripped and torn or pitted with rust, their appearance hopelessly affected by the rigours of age and hard use. Orcs regard these signs of age as a necessary improvement for a thing to gain worth and care little for the aesthetics. As a result their appearance is usually a motley collection of clothing and items that have been worn and used for decades.

Imperial Orc clothing is often heavily patched and repaired. Being independent of others means being able to maintain your own belongings, so most orcs mend their own clothes. Ever pragmatic, the repairs are usually made with whatever materials are readily to hand.

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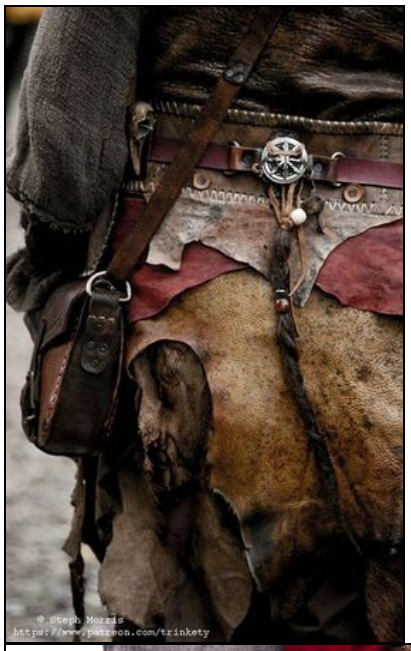
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4.3.1 War Skirt and Wraps

A war skirt is a common piece of Imperial Orc clothing, fashioned from layers of leather worn over each other and secured to a heavy leather belt or hero belt.

Almost all Imperial Orcs wear wraps around their ankles, wrists and neck to hide any scars once caused by chains and manacles. Many orcs now use other garments to cover these areas, but almost all orcs cover them in some way. To leave the skin in these areas exposed is considered shameless by most Imperial Orcs - a taboo akin to public nudity. Wraps are less common in battle, but heavy gauntlets and boots cover the ankles and bevors are a common piece of armour worn to protect the neck as well as cover it.

Wraps or similar are not essential, but they are a very effective way to easily hide skin on the wrists ankles and neck. This means you don't have to bother painting it and avoids all the usual complications and problems when make-up runs.

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4.4 Weapons and Armour

Heavy, layered armour, thick leather, mail and plate are common. Imperial Orc armour usually shows signs of wear. Mail and plate is often rusted while the surface of leather armour will usually be cut and notched. It is extremely rare for armour to be made as a complete suit - it is much more common for pieces to be cannibalized from various disparate sources.

They prefer weapons that can endure for generations without shattering or corroding away. As a result, they favour oversized weapons with plenty of heft designed to smash through bone rather than to thrust or pierce the flesh. Swords usually have thick heavy blades almost like cleavers. Many continue the blade over the guard of the handle giving the weapon a fierce and brutal demeanour.

Round shields are preferred, usually painted or daubed with crude symbols. Warcasters often use a kite shield rather than a round shield both to have the biggest shield possible and to make up for their lack of heavy armour.

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4.4.1 Mage Armour and Implements

Mage armour is often fashioned from thin leather with symbols interwoven with runes and other decorations.

Shamans prefer implements fashioned from or decorated with bone. Warcasters prefer heavy iron rods that can serve as effective weapons without the aid of magic.

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4.4.2 Jewellry

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4.5 Camp

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4.6 Less Appropriate

Whilst this look and feel page provides the ideal costume for the nation, it is important for players to familiarise themselves with the general costume rules for further guidelines, including those for inappropriate costume.

In defining the ideal look and feel for the Imperial Orcs we have chosen not to include some images. Orcs are a common feature in many settings but we wanted to create our own version of orcs that fit with the story and setting of Empire. For this reason we deliberately omitted elements from other settings that are so striking and memorable that it is impossible to see them without thinking of the game that created them. We've listed some of the items we chose not to include in the look and feel below along with a short explanation of why they are not perfect for the Imperial Orcs. It is okay to use these items as part of your kit, creating a costume is always a compromise as time and money are limited. What we want to do is be clear on the suggestions we are making, so that players who are looking to create new kit or add to their existing kit can be confident about what will look great for the nation.



4.6.1 The Lidless Eye and the White Hand

Orcs in Empire are far from the bestial creatures presented in the books and films but Tolkien's orcs are one of the inspirations that we have used. However neither Saruman nor Sauron exists in Empire so it is better to avoid their iconic symbols, the lidless eye and the white hand.



4.6.2 Warhammer and Warhammer 40K

The Games Workshop settings are legendary and memorable and have inspired many LRP characters. The imagery is instantly recognizable to anyone who is familiar with the games and conjures up images of the culture and style of Games Workshop orcs. We have deliberately chosen to draw most of our inspiration from the orcs and the Uruk-hai presented in the iconic live-action Lord of the Rings movies rather than the Games Workshop setting. For this reason it is much better to avoid iconic Games Workshop symbols like the yellow crescent of the Bad Moon Orcs or the vibrant green of their green skins.

4.7 Further Reading

Core Brief

- Introduction
- The people
- Culture and customs
- Look and feel
- Septs
- Orc species brief

- Hearth magic

Additional Information

- History
- Leadership
- Economic interests
- Military concerns
- Religious beliefs
- Magical traditions
- Territories
- Children
- Music
- Archetypes
- Groups
- Egregore

5 Sept

5.1 Overview

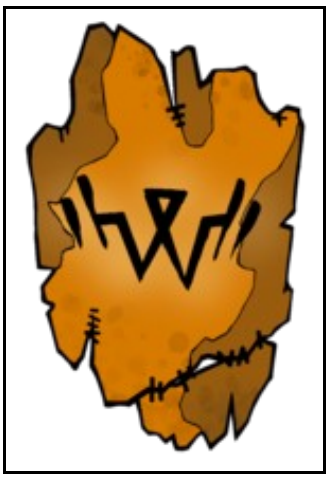
The Imperial Orc nation is divided into six great septs, each consisting of thousands or more orcs who share common ancestors and common beliefs and practices. The founders of the Imperial Orc nation now call themselves the Sunstorm sept, to distinguish themselves from those who came after - the Tamazi, the Ethengraw, the Illarawm, the Sannites, and the Yerende.

Each sept maintains their own unique legacy: a powerful oral history, coupled with distinct beliefs and practices. Having one or more common ancestors helps to keep the sept united, even when separated by vast distances.

The urge to be part of something more important than yourself is part of the essential nature of all orcs, so every Imperial Orc must choose to be a member of one of the six septs.

5.2 Choosing A Sept

Each sept has their own unique traditions and beliefs that are important to them. It is a good idea to spend some time reading the wiki page for a sept if you are interested in playing a member. They are all designed to give you some extra hooks for your character, things you can roleplay that will make your character stand out or help you when creating goals that your character can try to pursue. They include some advice for costume and the key bits of background that most members of the sept would know.



Ethengraw



Illarawm



Sannite



Sunstorm



Tamazi



Yerende

5.3 Changing Sept

For generations, the Imperial Orcs have believed that the only ways to hear an ancestor were to be a direct descendant of them, have known them well when they were alive, or to be a descendant of someone who knew them well. When the Illarawm sept joined the nation, they shared their skills and spiritual understanding. They showed other septs how to use meditation to still the voices of the ancestors; to allow them to connect to an ancestor whose advice they sought; and how to forge a permanent connection through the ceremony of the Living Bridge. Their techniques for embracing new ancestors are now widespread throughout the nation. The Illarawm have overturned accepted wisdom, demonstrating clearly that most orcs can embrace most ancestors.

These new techniques have been beneficial to all Imperial Orcs, not least because they make it easier for an orc to change sept should they feel the call to do so. Through the Living Bridge an orc can create a connection to the ancestors of a new sept, making it easier for them to find acceptance among their new family. While an orc might join the Yerende without the ability to hear *Runa*, the Soft-Speaker, it would be harder for them to embrace the sept's philosophy without the guidance of the most respected Yerende ancestor. Gaining the ability to share their ancestor with others has allowed the septs to take in those who seek a home with them. No orc would undertake such a thing lightly, for it usually means quieting the voices of familiar ancestors to make it easier to hear the voices that guide the new sept.

Those who join a sept discover the experience to be a little like the influence of the egregore on those who change nation. The presence of the new ancestor's voice encourages them to pursue the same approaches as other long-standing members of the sept. Orcs who change sept tend to adapt their views, their approach to life, and even their dress, accordingly.

This doesn't mean the orc stops hearing the voices of ancestors they were previously familiar with (although they may choose to do this through the Living Bridge ceremony, especially if those ancestors are an impediment to embracing the beliefs of the new sept). An Ethengraw, with a connection to the eponymous ancestor, who joins the Yerende will not automatically stop hearing that voice just because they changed sept. Over time, however, if they ignore Ethengraw's urging to act with dignity and achieve greatness in favour of Runa's urging to solve problems and explore the wider picture, they will find that Ethengraw speaks to them less and less, and the voice becomes harder to hear when it does speak.

5.4 Septs and Groups

Some Imperial Orcs see their loyalty to their sept as their first priority, just as some orc legions have long made the wellbeing and prominence of the legion their focus. However many Imperial Orcs see their first loyalty as either the Empire or the nation as a whole, rather than their legion or their sept. The septs are important because the beliefs, the traditions, and the history are all significant, but relatively few orcs are committed to advancing the interests of their sept.

It is perfectly acceptable to play a legion, a band of reavers, or a coterie that is made up of members of one sept only. Members of the same sept may have known each other for many years and developed long-standing bonds of trust. However, there is no need to do this - any Imperial Orc group can include members of any sept. A band of reavers might be led by a Sannite gladiator, backed by half a dozen Sunstorm and Ethengraw warriors and supported and guided by a pair of Yerende herbalists. A coterie dedicated to building a runeforge in Skarsind might be founded by an Illarawm artisan but grow to include Ethengraw smiths eager to embrace the possibilities that a runeforge would offer and Tamazi magicians keen to leave their mark on their territory.

The aim with septs is to give Imperial Orc players subtly different ways to create and play Imperial Orc characters, so you don't have to confine yourself to choosing the same sept as your friends.

5.5 New Septs

A sept consists of thousands of orcs or more. The Sannites are the smallest sept in Skarsind and there are several thousand of them. There are more than ten times that number of Sunstorm orcs. It is not possible for characters to create a new sept in play - there is no way to create thousands of new orcs with new traditions, background and history. The only way a new sept can appear as a direct result of player actions is in response to plots run by Profound Decisions that make that possibility clear.

6 Orc



6.1 Overview

Orcs are a tough physical people who are forceful and loyal. Their heavy bones and thick skin makes them well disposed to physical confrontation, and they derive a visceral enjoyment from conflict and physical competition. Orcs are as intelligent as humans, but they tend to prize simple resilient solutions to problems and disdain needless complexity.

There are only two options for player character orcs in the Empire. Most orcs are members of the Imperial Orc nation, and while the details on this brief are applicable to all orcs, they are written with the Imperial Orcs in mind. Following the city of Apulian joining the League, it is also possible to create an orc player character in that nation whose origin lies among its former Grendel citizens.

Orcs are most comfortable in groups with other orcs; they derive strength and reassurance by being surrounded by other members of the same legion or nation. When alone orcs tend to become anxious and lose much of their confidence and certainty. Orcs prefer their groups to adopt simple clear laws that are strongly enforced.

Orcs prefer roles where their natural strength, forceful personality and physical presence allows them to shine. They are drawn to military and religious leaders. The complex layered politics of the Senate often frustrates them, in the Synod and the Imperial Military their fire and enthusiasm for the Empire shine through.

Inspirations for orc characters include anyone strong and physical who revel in battle. Literary characters like Dr Edwin Hyde from Alan Moore's second League of Extraordinary Gentlemen graphic novel as well as figures like Hercules and Conan the Barbarian. Orcs are keen supporters of the law and characters like Judge Dredd, Johnny Alpha and Wulf Sternhammer have many orc qualities.



Orc leaders are usually forceful, hard-driving characters who derive their charisma and respect from their physical presence. The classic American tough-guy image of figures like Jesse Ventura, Arnold Schwarzenegger, George Patton or Dwight Eisenhower but also literary figures like the young Robert Baratheon, when he leads his rebellion against the Mad King.

The most important inspiration for orcs is the close physical camaraderie of soldiers. Marines and any mythical band of soldiers are a great basis for any group of orcs. Pvt. J. Vasquez and the other marines from Aliens, the squaddies from Dog Soldiers or the Vikings in 13th Warrior. Imperial Orcs find the discipline and order of the professional soldier appealing - the Ghurkas are a great inspiration for an orc legion.

6.2 What orcs are not

- **Warhammer orcs or goblins.** Orcs are a single species, rather than a set of related families of creatures encompassing goblins and other greenskins. Most orcs in the world of Empire have pale mottled skin as shown below, the bright green skin of Games Workshop orcs must be avoided.



6.3 Phys-rep

The Orc face and head is substantially different to the human visage. Unlike lineage, it does not vary wildly from one orc to the next- orcs are a single species that share a common appearance. To achieve the correct look requires a substantial prosthetic or mask which must cover most of the face as a minimum. It is advisable to leave the mouth clear, as this makes speech clearer and allows a much greater range of facial expression, but the rest of the face should be covered to achieve the right look.

It is not possible to achieve the required level of representation with a small prosthetic that covers just the eyes and temple or make-up alone, so please do not attempt this. Make-up is appropriate for all visible areas of skin that are not covered by clothing or prosthetics.

Players who are interested in creative looks using just make-up should look at the options available for humans with lineage.



6.3.1 Skin colour

Like human skin, orc skin colour covers a range of different shades, but most hues tends to be muted earth tones. Grey is the most common colour, followed by a dark drab olive shade. Black, brown and red-brown shades are also seen but are far less common, akin to true blonde hair colouring in humans. Some orcs have dark mottled patterns radiating from the temples to over the top the ears sometimes reaching as far as the back of the head. Old orcs often become albinos, their skin turning a bone white colour suddenly sometime past their sixtieth year.

6.3.1.1 Large ears

Orc ears end in points and most are much larger than human or even changeling ears. The ears usually sweep backwards following the curve of the skull and give the face a more feral appearance.

6.3.1.2 Upturned nose

All orcs have a large prominent nose. Many orcs noses have large forward facing open nostrils, giving the nose a flat face-on appearance. More human noses with down-turned nostrils are not unknown but in this case the skin over the bridge of the nose is often particularly thick and wrinkled. In some cases these folds continue up the nose and spread over the brow.



6.3.1.3 Bald head

Orcs never have eyebrows, and very few orcs are able to grow a full head of hair. Most have no hair on the temples and sides of the head and many are naturally completely bald. A very narrow crest of hair down the line of the skull like a mane or a single small patch near the top rear of the skull are normal for those orcs with any hair at all. Facial hair around the chin or cheeks is less common but not unknown.

6.3.1.4 Heavily Boned

Orcs have thick heavy bones (compared to a human of comparable height) which are prominent in the facial region. Highly defined cheek bones and brow ridges are common. Orc faces are rarely as expressive as human faces and orcs tend to use their voice and body language and gestures to communicate information rather than relying on subtle facial expressions.

6.4 Not Appropriate

- **No bright colours.** While many orcs have a greenish hue to their skin, no orcs have bright or lurid green flesh, this would be a sign of a deathly illness. Such an individual is not long for this world.

- **Tusks or fangs.** Most orcs have very human teeth if slightly sharper and more yellow than white. Very rarely orcs suffer from an infection in their teeth that causes them to grow in size becoming larger and more pronounced. This is very dangerous as the infection quickly results in the death of the orc if the enlarged teeth are not removed.

6.5 Psychology

Orcs are fundamentally different to humans in their psychology. They have different instincts, and these roleplaying effects are designed to try and draw out the alien nature of orcs.

6.5.1 Gregarious and Loyal

Orcs seek group identity; they want to belong to something, to be a part of a group that provides them with an identity and provides them with allies on whom they can rely utterly. These groups are usually close-knit and always fiercely loyal to each other, regardless of size. Most orcs are comfortable with this affinity and enjoy being part of a larger group, even while they maintain some sense of personal identity.

When orcs of the same group are together, even in small numbers, they gain confidence and mental and physical strength from each other. Orcs become more confident and more boisterous in the company of other members of their group. Without this support, they lose their natural assurance, and tend to become quiet, withdrawn and sullen. The more isolated the orc feels, the more they lose their confidence in themselves and their abilities.

Most orcs feel an instinctive loyalty towards their group that overrides fear or personal well-being. They put the best interests of the group first and make whatever sacrifices are necessary to do that. They want to be part of a group that expects this degree of solidarity, with clear rules that lays out what behaviour is expected. Betrayal of the group is a unforgivable crime in the eyes of any orc, but their loyalty to their group also tends to underpin a fierce support for the rule of law and order.

Groups cannot be arbitrary, they must be a fundamental part of an orc's identity. Most Imperial orcs live as part of a legion, treating all their fellow soldiers as brothers and sisters regardless of parentage. Barbarian orcs are divided into vast nations, with similar bonds of loyalty.



6.5.2 Revel in Battle

Orcs enjoy fighting. They are not battle-crazed or foolhardy, but they are not squeamish and their insensitivity to pain and injury means that they have little instinctive fear of being hurt. The flight-or-fight response in orcs is balanced differently than it is in humans, and orcs are much more likely to attack than they are to flee.

In battle groups of orcs can hear their ancestors talking to them and this further reinforces the strength they draw from each raising their spirits and enthusiasm further. Orcs thrive on the adrenalin of combat and conflict; fighting is physically exhilarating for orcs - a pleasurable experience that can become dangerously addictive for some.

Orcs are not blood-thirsty, it is the thrill of combat, the adrenalin of the fight response that they revel in. Without a challenge, without the tension and threat of a credible opponent there is no combat rush for them. Orcs swiftly lose all interest in fighting once an enemy is clearly defeated. They want to overpower their opponents, not to murder them.

Orcs also enjoy direct physical competition; violent confrontational sports are endemic in orc societies. The enjoyment of such bouts, by audience and

participants is based on the same responses that make orcs revel and exult in fighting and battle.

6.6 Rules FAQ

- **Orcs cannot use liao:** An orc that consumes liao feels dizzy and unwell, and often throws up shortly afterwards. They do not receive a vision from true liao.
- **Orcs cannot learn use Virtue skills:** They cannot learn or use any religious skills. They cannot be affected by dedication, nor does Excommunication have any effect on them. They can be affected by auras, including those created through anointing, hallow, and consecration. They can also be subject to an exorcism, have their spirits marked through testimony or be perceived by insight.
- **Orcs hear voices:** Orcs hear the voices of their ancestors when they are in a heightened state, especially when fighting, angry or afraid.
- **Orcs draw strength from numbers.** Orcs that are exposed to roleplaying effects that provoke them to question their loyalties or betray their group may respond by confronting the source of the effect if there is at least one other orc present who is a member of the same legion or band as the character.
- **Humanoid biology:** Orc biology differs a little from that of humans, but surgical skills, drugs and potions work on them the same way as they do anyone else.



6.7 The blood

Physiologically orcs are very similar to humans. They are hairy mammals with two sexes. They have slightly more bone and muscle mass, and build up and use fat stores more efficiently, as well as healing a little faster than humans do. They have roughly the same internal organs, and are capable of the physical act of mating with humans - although orc/human liaisons never result in offspring.

Until recently the average orc lifespan in the Empire was around 40 years due to the exertion and deprivation suffered as slaves. Since winning their freedom, improved nutrition and medical care has made it common for orcs to reach seventy or eighty years of age without showing any signs of slowing down. Despite this the normal maximum lifespan of an orc is equivalent to that of a human being.

Orcs mature at the same speed as humans, but they tend to stay vital and fertile for longer, It is normal for an orc of 50 or 60 to be as physically active as an orc of 20 years. The transition from adulthood to elder status is marked prominently in orcs. At some point after 60 years of age an orc undergoes a dramatic paling of the skin that takes place over the course of several months. This corresponds with the point at which an orc is no longer fertile. These albino orcs are respected as elders amongst most groups of orcs.

Orcs do not have lineage.

6.8 Lines of the Orcs

- The Imperial Orcs live in the Empire, where they form the newest of the ten nations. They are disciplined, loyal and civilised people very much at odds with the barbarians who surround them.
- The Jotun control the lands west of Wintermark and the Marches. A warrior-society with strong traditions of personal and tribal honour, and codes of behaviour in battle. They are known to enjoy warring with the Empire and engage in regular raids into Imperial territory.
- The Druj dominate the swamps and marshes to the east of Highguard and Varushka. They are notoriously devious and treacherous in their dealings with others. They make frequent use of poison on the battlefield, using herbs and magic to create powerful venoms to overcome their enemies.
- The Thule rule the wastelands north of Wintermark and Varushka. They are cautious and meticulous planners with a reputation for greed. They make extensive use of magic on and off the battlefield and often attack sites of power in the Empire.
- The Grendel are strongest on Attar, the great island south of the bay of Catazar. They have raided the nations on the shores of the bay in the past; although their individual vessels are no match for the superior Freeborn corsairs, their navies are a dire threat that the Empire struggles to match.

6.9 Suppliers

There is no requirement to use a mask from these suppliers but Mandala has been heavily involved with the creation of the visuals for Empire, and their orc masks have been created with the game in mind. The masks by Dogbane SFX are also valid for all orcs in the setting. Any mask that fits the description for the orcs in Empire is suitable, but if you want to check if a mask is ideal then you are welcome to email us.

- Mandala Studios
- Dogbane SFX

7 Imperial Orcs hearth magic

7.1 Overview

In the world of Empire, formal magic is the application of learning and willpower to create supernatural effects. There is another form of magic, however which does not require the user to be a magician. Hearth magic employs the innate natural magic of the world to produce subtle but significant effects in much the same way that a compass needle always points true north. The magic is not based on the abilities of a magician, but relies on the innate mystical properties of the world. Hearth magic is usually subtle rather than potent, and where formal magic is predictable and reliable, hearth magic is none of these things.

While the principles that underlie hearth magic are common throughout the world, among the Imperial Orcs, there are certain specific practices, customs, or traditions that draw on the power of the world's innate magic. Often these proud customs are nothing more than traditions - but sometimes their practice taps into some facet of the world resulting in a truly magical effect.

7.2 Worth

Conspicuous items that are owned and carried by individuals who achieve notoriety in some way often gain power of their own. Sometimes this process is miraculous, a relic left behind by a virtuous individual. Sometimes the process is notorious as with the crown of Alderei the Fair. The deeds of the bearer leave a permanent mark on items they carry as they journeyed through life. Usually these are items used to attempt important goals, often the objects for which a person is most well known.

As items gain worth, they pass the essence of that power on to their wielder. A sword used to perform courageous deeds helps the bearer be courageous; a sword used to perform cowardly backstabbing encourages the wielder to be a cowardly backstabber. Some items with worth are better off being destroyed. An example might be the crown of Alderei the Fair - nobody can deny it has worth but that worth is tainted and corrupt because of the terrible deeds it was part of. Anyone who takes that item runs the risk of becoming cruel and tyrannical.

Worth in Play

There is already plenty of guidance about worth of the wiki but it is worth reiterating that almost any item can begin to accumulate value and significance. It is a cliché of live roleplaying to wield your father's sword, but for the Imperial Orcs having a weapon, a shield, or a piece of jewellery that has been carried by someone you respect or revere can be a way to draw on some of that character's strength and personality, make it easier to hear their words, or demonstrate something about your character. Not every item needs to be imbued with worth, but having a carefully chosen item or two can help you strengthen your characterisation.

One way to draw out this hearth magic is to be interested in the provenance and story of items, and treat them with respect. Worth is not about hiding items away however; an item gains worth by being used in significant events. The idea of storing an item of great worth in a museum, rather than keeping it in play, is anathema to most Imperial Orcs.

7.3 Writing



All writing possesses an element of worth

The Imperial Orcs place great weight in writing - partly because they were forced to do without it for so long. Everyone in the Empire knows magical symbols such as the runes are powerful, but the Imperial Orcs know that *any* piece of writing is potentially magical. All writing possesses an element of worth, as it captures the essence of an event or person, and contains it within the text. This effect is most potent when the writing recalls a true account of an important event, especially one written by someone who was present or directly involved. Carrying such writing, and taking the time to read it, mean that subsequent events will be shaped and influenced by it. An account in which the author triumphed over a challenge may provide aid in similar circumstances, while the wise words of a revered hero may enable someone to act more like the figure they respect.

The act of writing is a crucial part of this hearth magic. Printed manuscripts may contain useful information but are rarely a source of hearth magic. Some orcs carry an important tome on their person or if a book is too precious to be carried around, they might copy a key section and carry that instead. Another approach is to choose a personal motto or aphorism and inscribe that on parchment, vellum, or leather. Every time the bearer reads the words that helps to reinforce their hearth magic.

This magic can be double-edged. Carrying a memoir of a time someone was betrayed will make you alert to similar treachery, but it risks inviting the same disaster to fall on your head. As a consequence, some Imperial Orcs are suspicious of grim Varushkan tales or scandalous League pamphlets that seem to actively encourage bad things to happen to the people who carry them.

When an Imperial Orc wants to curse someone, writing the curse in the presence of their target strengthens the hearth magic, as does reading it aloud before placing it on their person. If someone has cheated you or betrayed your trust, writing an account of the act invites the same betrayal to fall in their heads. If the writing is placed on their person, either unknowingly or openly, it brings misfortune down on their head. Such curses are dangerous, they are relatively new and there are no reliable ways to remove them at this time, so they are not to be treated lightly. Quite apart from any bad luck, carrying such a curse might mean that the weight of the words will drag you down when you try to cross the Howling Abyss.

Writing in Play

It takes time and skill to make an entire in-character book, but you can use this hearth magic with something as simple as a single piece of parchment with an account written on it. A story or poem that has significance for your character can create a useful prop that provides a foundation to your roleplaying. Write some story that fits with your character's background or wait until you've been playing your character awhile and write about some memorable success they achieved. Capturing the essence of the moment either in a factual record, a dramatised narrative, or a poem rich in metaphor

creates a cool memento of something important that happened in play.

Sharing such writings with others is a great way to show your character trusts them. If someone shares a written text with you, don't feel obliged to read more than a few words unless you want to, provided you acknowledge its significance. The ideal way to react is to treat the written word with reverence. If you respect the power a text has then you have every reason not to want to read it unless you want to be affected by it. Writing is most effective when read, but it can still have an effect on your character just by touching or holding it.

Putting a single written phrase on an item your character owns helps to make it unique and stand out. If you're struggling to think of something pithy you can always use the Imperial Orc motto, *"One life - make it count"*. Touching the writing, while mouthing the phrase to invoke its hearth magic reminds you of the choices you've made and the aspirations you've set yourself - it may help you find the resolve you'll need to face a challenge.

If your character is given a written account of your treachery or betrayal then you have been cursed! The more you respond to such a curse, the more fun you will have with it. You could just ascribe any bad luck that subsequently comes you way to the power of this hearth magic - but you could undertake a personal quest to ensure that your soul is not doomed when it comes time to cross the Howing Abyss. If someone writes about you in their own journals, or an article about your actions appears in one of the in-character newspapers, take up any inaccuracies with the writers. After all, writing down things that are untrue or that cast you in an unfairly bad light can be just as effective at bringing misfortune to you as an intentional attempt to curse you with the written word.

7.4 Insignia



Symbols are marks of identity and loyalty

Insignia are symbolic marks of identity and loyalty that are stitched into clothing or used to adorn banners or worked into items. They are especially common on armour, weapons, and shields. These culturally important symbols can be variations on a common motif, rather than being visually identical since the power of the hearth magic lies in the symbolic meaning of the imagery, rather than in the precise shape and colour. Employing a common symbol builds on the bonds between members of a band, strengthening loyalty, and making it easier for members to stay together. The decision to adopt a symbol is never taken lightly because Imperial Orcs know that it commits them to others who wear it. Most are extremely wary of the idea of being *forced* to take on an insignia, because it is reminiscent of slavery.

Some symbols and images have a power all of their own. The symbolic shapes of the constellations and the runes are each associated with powerful magical effects. Icons like the Wintermark birds and images of legendary beasts give the bearer a portion of the depicted creatures strengths and virtues. Many Imperial Orcs have adopted the horse as the unofficial symbol of the nation as horses are commonly associated with the virtues of Loyalty and Pride and qualities of strength and dignity.

Many groups choose a more personal symbology knowing that the nature of the symbol subtly influences the behaviour of those that bear it. For example, a warband that uses a thunderstorm as their symbol and tends to wear clothing with bold colour schemes may find it easier to work together on the battlefield, while a more meditative group that work eyes and symbols of Wisdom into their attire find it easier to explore mystical ideas together. Because of this, all Imperial Orcs know the importance of choosing the symbols they use to identify themselves carefully - it makes sense to form an initial opinion of someone based on the insignia they wear regardless of where they come from.

Insignia in Play

When designing the insignia for your group, you can look at the more formal sources of Empire symbols - the astronomantic constellations, runes, symbols of the Way, or various symbolic animals - but it is equally appropriate to create something whose meaning is more intimate to your group. Explaining the meaning behind your insignia to others, and questioning them about the significance of their own symbols, can lead to interesting roleplaying encounters. Indeed, if someone *cannot* explain the meaning of the insignia they wear that might suggest that they have not properly thought through their allegiances. You are encouraged to assume every insignia has deeper meaning, and reveals something about the people who wear it, not just those worn by your fellow orcs.

You can put your insignia on anything! Clothing and banners are common but marking an item of worth with appropriate insignia can reinforce its qualities or signal its importance. When something changes hands, Imperial Orcs will usually put their insignia next to any old insignia. If you're creating an item of worth as part of your backstory, you can include faded insignia of previous owners alongside your own design if you wish.

When you want to roleplay in a certain way, studying or touching your insignia for a moment can be used as a prompt to act in accordance with its meaning. Perhaps the storm cloud insignia mentioned above helps you to act in a bold and forthright manner, while the eye insignia would help you to explore a problem from a new perspective. It is particularly appropriate to call on the hearth magic of your insignia if you invoke your strength in numbers ability to reaffirm your commitment to your group. If your group take the battlefield, having an iconic insignia that is prominently displayed on your armour can actually make you more effective on the battlefield. You'll find it easier to stick together when fighting, especially if you have a banner and that will make you stand out more, be more effective, and be more likely to survive.

The insignia of others can influence your character if you bear them. As such you may want to be wary of wearing or carrying anything with another groups prominent symbol on it. You might take the time to add your own insignia to it, or you could roleplay feeling uncomfortable and distracted by your awareness of the symbol. It might even be fun to roleplay that the symbol is influencing your roleplaying making them sympathise with the other group.

7.5 Markers

A relatively new custom has emerged among Imperial Orcs who have settled in Skarsind. Some of those who now own land have taken to marking their estates with markers to indicate their control. As slaves, the idea of Imperial Orcs owning lands and estates was unthinkable, but even after winning their freedom, they have endured for decades without land to call their own. Now, many of those Orcs who have accepted Skarsind as their homeland are once more marking what is theirs. Some orc legions have put up banners around their homes proudly displaying their insignia, while others have painted the design on walls or doors. The wealthiest have created marker-stones, smooth four sided obelisks with their legions name and symbols carved into each surface. Whatever form they take, these markers proudly announce that this land is the dominion of the Imperial Orcs.

Those who have put down these markers say that the symbols make them feel more comfortable in their new lands. If that were the only benefits, then it is likely that this would be just another manifestation of the hearth magic of insignia, but farmers who have put banners in their fields claim that the land is easier to work, more cooperative than it was formerly. Herb gardens and forests seem easier to tend, while businesses are busier. The markers are serving to emphasise Imperial Orc dominion over the land.

Adoption of this practice has been encouraged by the Imperial Orcs barbarian ancestors, and all four large orc nations that the Empire is familiar with make use of similar hearth magics. The Druj hang tattered banners in every settlement they conquer - indicating who has claimed the land. The Thule are known to placed great carved statues of the dragons in their castles, keeps and towers, while the sails of every Grendel vessel are painted with symbols indicating which salt lord or wind lord owns the ship. The Jotun create totems to demarcate the edges of their territory in Liathaven, to keep the vallorn at bay, and exploration of Hordalant has suggested that this practice continues in the homelands of the western orcs. There are even reports from far-away Tsark that the orcs there establish circular monuments across the Mountains of the Moon that indicate they also recognise this hearth magic.

Markers in Play

If you have a tent, or an area of the Imperial Orc camp claimed by your legion, then you can decorate the area and evoke this hearth magic. That might be as straightforward as hanging banners with your group's insignia on the tent walls, or you could create a wooden plaque with the names of members and former members painted on it as a simple marker-stone. The Imperial Orc camp at Anvil already has a wall round it delineating the space from the rest of the field and giving the camp a military feel, but marking out your group's space within that area in some way will make it more personal and make the camp more vibrant for everyone.

It's up to you to roleplay the effects of your markers on yourself, but ideally members of your group will feel more relaxed and comfortable in their own space, but also more confident and more capable. You might insist on using your own area to hammer out difficult deals, perform minor rituals, or discuss pressing problems. You will feel more in control, and potentially be more effective, when negotiating with others on your home ground, after all. It is entirely appropriate to roleplay expecting outsiders or visitors to treat you respectfully in your dominion. At the very least, they should acknowledge that they are your guests, and are there at your sufferance.

You can still employ this hearth magic outside your camp. If your group do rituals, then it's a great idea to take banners, both group banners and Imperial Orc banners to decorate the ritual site, claiming it as your own, before you perform a difficult ritual. If you know you are going to a challenging political encounter in another camp, taking banners and other markers with you and insisting on setting them up in the area before any discussion begin is a good way of starting a scene. When you visit other nation camps, you'll encounter other groups who have hung banners in their tents or outside their camps and you can react to these markers and the influence they are having on you - reinforce the idea that you are in someone else's territory.

7.6 Further Reading

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8 Imperial Orcs history

8.1 Slavery

The Imperial Orcs began as slaves. By the time the First Empress was putting her Empire together, generations of orcs had been born, lived and died as slaves to the human nations. Slaves were rare in Navarr and Urizen, because they had little use for them, and in the Brass Coast because slavery was an abomination to many. However it was commonplace *everywhere* else in the Empire; just as it was common for humans to labour as slaves in the lands the Orcs controlled. For the forerunners of the Imperial Orcs the founding of the Empire swelled their numbers as more Orc nations were conquered but it brought no respite from their toil.

Orc children were traded like livestock. The old and the weak were left to starve. Thoughtless cruelty was commonplace. The most common attitude of slave owners was that orcs were lucky to be alive, the only alternative they saw was death for those who resisted the expansion of the Empire. Those orcs who escaped captivity were simply never seen again, unless they were hunted down and brought back to the camps to face execution as a warning to the others.

Orcs taken as slaves were deliberately separated from their families to make them easier to handle. The result was that the orcs had lost all sense of identity, stripped of their tribal heritage by generations of slavery. As a result when an orc managed to escape, they made no effort to rescue anyone else.



The orcs fought with the weapons and armour they could salvage.

8.2 The Uprising

The uprising began in Varushka with the legendary orc warlord Thrace. Young, confident and strong-willed, he saw something that no previous orc slave had seen. The other orc slaves were not strangers, they were part of his legion - his nation. Through force of will and physical might, he bound his fellows together. He engineered a collapse in the mine allowing the entire legion to escape as one. A single escape was not enough for Thrace and his legion - they had decided that all the slaves kept by the Empire were their people, and they set out to free as many of their nation as they could.

Thrace's legion began raiding nearby slave enclosures, freeing other orc slaves and appropriating weapons and food for their growing band. Wherever Thrace's legion went, they offered the slaves they liberated a simple choice. Join our legion and come with us, or stay by yourselves and try to make it alone. The majority chose to join the legion, and their numbers quickly grew. Throughout the Summer there were numerous battles with Varushkan troops sent to deal with the uprising, but the results were indecisive and with winter closing in, the Varushkans were forced to abandon the pursuit.

By this time the legion had grown so large that Thrace was forced to split his forces in three to allow them to survive the winter. They spent the cold months practising with the armour and weaponry they had captured. Messengers were sent to the orc nations, to seek aid, but they were bloodily rebuffed. If anything, the barbarian orcs seemed to hate the liberated slaves even more than the humans. From surviving emissaries, the news trickled back that no escaped orc slave had ever been accepted among the barbarians; those few who had survived the arduous trek to the lands claimed by the barbarians, and those slaves in territories that had fallen to the barbarians, were simply killed. In recent years there has been some speculation that this perception may have been intentionally encouraged by Imperial humans, rather than based on fact. The truth will probably never be known.

With the first thaws of spring, the Imperial army tried to catch the orcs in a decisive engagement, but Thrace and his warlords resisted. The Imperial generals called in reinforcements, and finally they managed to corner the orc force with no opportunity for escape. The orcs still had the advantage of numbers, but they had only a fraction of the weapons, armour and training of their enemies and it was clear that defeat was certain without a miracle of some kind. Determined not to allow the uprising to be crushed, the legion sent the best warriors out in small groups in the night with orders to slip past the Varushkan armies and carry the uprising to all the lands of the Empire. To give them cover to make their escape, Thrace led the legion in a surprise attack against the encamped Varushkan armies near Kolvy in Karov.

Woefully under-equipped compared to the Imperial troops, the legion managed to keep the Varushkans busy until late in the day. They fought valiantly, desperately, but they were no match for the massed might of two imperial armies. It is widely believed that Thrace died in the engagement with the Imperial armies. To date no Imperial Orc can claim reliably to have heard his voice and some believe this means he is not actually dead. It seems unlikely that he is alive, but equally unlikely that such a pivotal figure would not have become an ancestor after death.

The Empire crushed the slaves and on the orders of the Varushkan generals no prisoners were taken. Every orc not killed in the battle was executed, and survivors were mercilessly hunted through the early winter months. The bodies were burnt in massive funeral pyres, and the Empire considered the matter at an end.



8.3 The Revolt Spreads

On the first day of spring of the next year, the soldiers that Thrace had ordered to flee Varushka attacked slave camps in Wintermark, Dawn, the League and Highguard. They had spent the winter spying out all the weakest defended areas where slaves were being held and they fell on them slaughtering any Imperials not smart enough to run. Their numbers swelled rapidly, just as they had done in Varushka, while the Empire struggled to respond to a widespread threat erupting in lands it considered secure.

There were atrocities on both sides during this period - stories of entire camps put to the sword by terrified owners, or villages sacked and every human within slaughtered by rampaging orc slaves in search of supplies. Not all contact between orcs and humans was hostile however; a handful of notable Freeborn and League merchants realized the potential for profit and began to sell weapons and provisions to the orc legions in return for plundered ores.

While the orcs tried to avoid pitched battles, their groups became too large to move effectively especially in open lands. Several major engagements took place in Dawn and Wintermark and although the orcs suffered a number of defeats there were always more camps to raids so their numbers continued to grow. The message of the revolt spread through the orc population, no matter how hard the Empire tried to prevent it. "We are one nation," it ran. "We are one people, and we will not be slaves any longer." Several camps spontaneously revolted and while most such mini-uprisings were ruthlessly suppressed enough succeeded, forming new legions who set out to join up with their free fellows.

As the year drew on, the disparate orc forces created a massive encampment near the city on the League city of Temeschwar where thousands of slaves were held, The city was well defended however and it was clear that they lacked the numbers to take it so they pushed north into Varushka intent on surviving the winter there as they had done the year before.

It was there, that Emperor Ahraz of the Brass Coast made contact with them, initially via contacts cultivated by Freeborn merchants, and later in person. While the Empire tends to take a dim view of Ahraz, the orcs mostly speak of him as a man of great sincerity and passion who convinced them that he could not only save their people, but give them a purpose and a home. All they had to do was swear to serve the Empire and the Imperial Throne.

Several legions refused to accept Ahraz' offer - to join the Empire that had enslaved them - and even the Emperor could not ensure their safety. They headed into the Varushkan wilderness, and out of the Imperial Orc histories. Some were exterminated by the Imperial Armies, others were prey to monsters, and a few exist today as beleaguered groups of outlaws.

Those who accepted Ahraz' offer marched along with his forces to Anvil, in a calculated show of force, to where the Senate was sitting. The Emperor presented the agreement to the Senate, and hours of frantic politicking took place. The Emperor's faction won the vote. Several far-reaching changes took place as a consequence; it became it illegal to keep orcs as slaves and those who swore to serve the Empire were accepted as Imperial citizens.

8.4 Citizens of the Empire

Acceptance of the orcs as citizens of the Empire meant the end of slavery. Those orcs still enslaved were brought to the vast camps based near Anvil. Tents and provisions were provided but life in these refugee camps was crowded and dirty. As months passed these camps became the de facto home for the Imperial Orcs. The Civil Service made a great push to recruit orcs into the Imperial army; the discipline of army life suited the orcs and keeping their people together made it possible to exert leadership over them.

The years that followed also required each of the now-Imperial Orcs to take the Tests of Adulthood. They learned to read and write first from Urizen teachers, and then from each other. These were the first of the skills that the orcs had been denied as slaves, but others followed - metalworking, building, sewing - all had to be relearned.

Many orcs were keen to abandon the past and embrace the opportunity they had won for themselves as citizens of the Empire. The legacy of Thrace was to show the orcs that they were a people, and one that existed long before Ahraz made them citizens of the Empire. The orcs know that the Emperor did not make them one people, it merely gave their people a name.



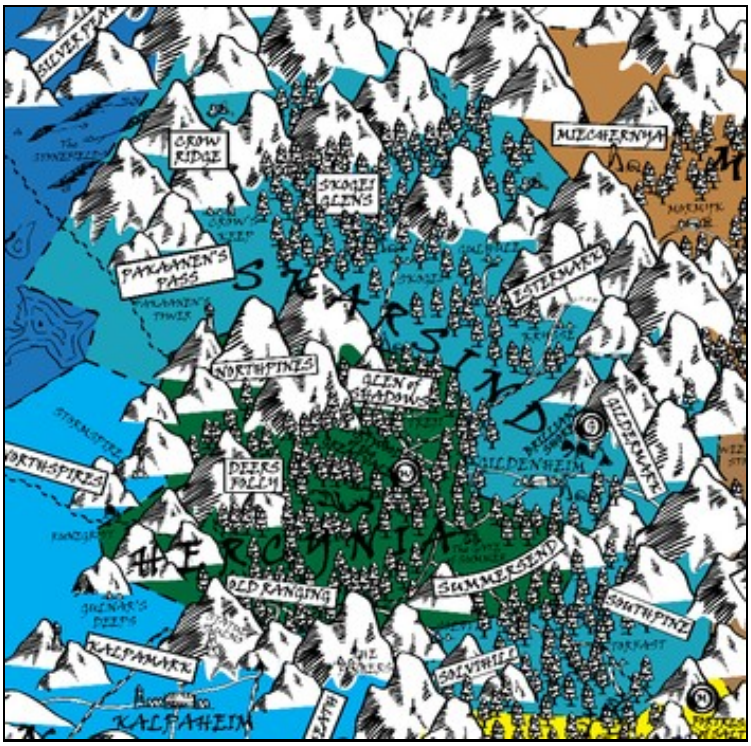
The Plan represented the first Imperial Orcs ambitions to secure a homeland.

8.5 The Plan

After the orcs agreed to join the Empire, the first problem that had to be addressed was where they would live. The human nations that had formed or joined the Empire held lands of their own. Territories that were liberated from the barbarians were incorporated into existing nations. But as slaves, the orcs claimed no lands of their own and no Imperial senators, not even the Freeborn were keen to offer the Imperial Orcs a home within their borders. To resolve the problem the representatives of the orcs proposed a simple plan - the orcs would become a nation without territories, claiming no land of their own until they could conquer one following Imperial statute. This proposal relieved the fears of many senators and helped to win the support of the League, although it was heavily criticised by the Highborn.

So the Imperial Orcs fought and died in the service of the Empire - always seeking to pursue "The Plan". Help the Empire conquer new lands and eventually the senate would assign one to the Imperial Orc nation so that they will have a homeland of their own. The Orcs were not naive about the obvious military, political and historical challenges they faced, but most believed that their journey to full citizenship in the Empire would never be complete until they held a territory. As a result the leaders of the Imperial Orcs and the legions themselves make a deliberate effort to keep the orcs together as a people, enduring the hard life in the legion camps as an essential sacrifice in order to achieve their ultimate goal. Individuals who settled down in other nations were seen as undermining the moral imperative for the Imperial Orcs to be given lands of their own and regarded with open hostility by many.

When Empress Britta took the Throne, she made overtures to the Imperial Orcs bringing them into the inner circle of her advisors. With their drive for conquest undimmed by the decades since the uprising, the Imperial Orcs were key to her ambitions to reinvigorate the Empire and take the fight to the barbarians who pressed their borders. Some claim that she made secret pacts with the leaders of the Orcs, promising them lands in return for their support. The truth of such matters probably died when Britta was ambushed and killed along with many of her most ardent supporters. However some years later, when the Imperial Favour of Britta was discovered - those who held it reported that it had been placed in trust for the Imperial Orc nation.



A place of alpine slopes and valleys

8.6 Skarsind

In 379YE the Imperial Orcs helped the Wintermarkers fight off a cruel assault by the forces of the Thule Dragons. During the battle, the Orcs recovered the Crown of Three Tears, the ancient Wintermark symbol of unity. After the fighting was complete, members of the Irontide and Skywise legions returned the priceless crown to their allies. It is claimed that this great gift was instrumental in awakening the Wintermark people to the long suffering of the Imperial Orcs. In gratitude Wintermark proposed to give the Imperial Orcs a gift that would far surpass even the crown - a homeland - the territory of Skarsind. There were significant political and constitutional hurdles to overcome but eventually the territory was relinquished and then assigned by the Senate to the Imperial Orcs.

Some of the history of that momentous decision and the events that followed is recounted here. A few Imperial Orcs remain conflicted about the decision to this day; they say that the Plan had always been to claim a nation through their own military force, not to gain land from the beneficence of others. For the majority however, Skarsind represents the culmination of three generations of struggle; the Imperial Orcs proved themselves time and again on the battlefield until eventually the Empire - led by Wintermark - saw fit to give them what was long owed. As the news spread, tens of thousands of Imperial Orcs from across the Empire moved to Skarsind, eager to finally put down roots and grasp the opportunity presented by this rich land. For many Orcs, Skarsind seems like everything they have ever wanted.

8.7 Coming of the Septs

For generations the nation saw its numbers stay roughly equal; as orcs died on the battlefield so they were occasionally recruited or came of age and became citizens. This changed first with the influx of the Liberated, orcs brought from the Principalities of Jarm, who joined what would be the Sunstorm. The numbers swelled with the arrival of roughly three thousand orcs of the Sannite sept after they were rescued from the gladiatorial arenas of Mareave, they returned with the Winter Sun to Skarsind and spent the next two years carving out a niche for themselves until they were recognised and named during the Summer Solstice 385YE. The Tamazi, orcs freed from the citadels of Axos, moved to Skarsind soon after but held off until formally joining the nation until much later.

The coming of the three septs of Ossium presented a fundamental shift in the nature of the Imperial Orcs. The septs were open to becoming part of the nation, but loathe to give up their pride, their unique traditions, and their important history. Each sept asked the Imperial Orcs to construct a great edifice, partly to honour the newcomers, partly to allow them to join the nation as equals, and partly to ensure that there would be a place for their ways in the nation. As the requests of each of the Ethengraw, the Illarawm, and the Yerende were accepted and constructed the egregores spent the time to travel the nation and understand the cultures of the six septs. When the three Ossean septs were finally welcomed into the nation during the Autumn Equinox 385YE it represented a change bigger than has affected any of the other nations of the Empire. What was a nation of one people became a powerhouse of six, looking to improve not only themselves but the Empire as a whole.

8.8 A Future Unwritten



What does the future hold for the Imperial Orcs?
Skarsind is the vision that Emperor Ahraz promised their forebears, this gift from Wintermark is Britta's legacy. It is in the nature of orcs to strive - the Plan may be over - but now there is a new challenge facing the Imperial Orcs. Can they unify the septs and build a nation worthy of Thrace and the other ancestors? Now they have a seat at the great table, can they build a nation to become the equal of any other?

8.9 Further Reading

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9 Imperial Orcs leadership



Irontide Vio was the first Senator for Skarsind - indeed the first Imperial Orc Senator - shown here with one of the many trophies the Imperial Orcs have taken in battle.

9.1 Overview

Few Imperial orcs have much time for or interest in the sophisticated political intrigues so popular in places such as the League. They are perfectly capable of understanding that a senator might say one thing and mean another, but among themselves they expect plain talking. In part this is because Imperial Orcs expect and demand an unyielding chain of command. Leaders amongst the orcs will usually explain the details of a plan because they want their followers to understand it, but they rarely if ever feel the need to justify it. In the view of most Imperial Orcs you either trust your leaders implicitly or you choose someone different to follow. Undermining your leaders weakens the nation, and is regarded with contempt when done to advance your own position.

Before the coming of the septs, Imperial Orc society was organised into individual legions, tight-knit groups of warriors who lived and fought together as part of one of the Imperial Orc armies. That situation is slowly changing with some Orcs preferring to join coteries. Originally a Yerende idea, a coterie is simply a group of orcs who unite behind a common purpose, plan or shared goal. Coteries appeal to those who seek a future outside of the Summer Storm, the Winter Sun, and the Autumn Hammers. Like reaver bands, they can offer more personal freedom, but they still satisfy the desire to be part of something significant, providing a close sense of kinship and mutual bonds around shared goals. Although they are unlikely to compete with the status and importance of the legions for many years yet, their importance is likely to grow as the new septs establish themselves.

When the Imperial Orcs had no territories of their own, they did not possess senators. As a result, the effective leadership of the nation lay with the warlords, the nominated leaders of the individual legions and most especially with the two Imperial Orc generals. Generals were chosen by bouts between legion members under rules agreed when the orcs joined the Empire. When they gained control of the territory of Skarsind, this process was abandoned in favour of appointing a senator who in turn appointed both generals.

This limited enfranchisement reflects the Orcs martial history and their militaristic nature. For a time, the Imperial Orcs appointed their senator through a vote of all "soldiers". Attempts exactly to define who a soldier was caused confusion, however, and within a few short years the practice was abandoned in favour of the new method. The new method was settled on following the landmark mandate upheld by the Imperial Orcs assembly in Autumn 382YE, and then put into practice by **Irontide Lok**.

Appointing the Senator

Every time an Imperial Orc allocates a military unit to support an Imperial army, they receive votes. A military unit provides 10 votes, plus an extra 2 votes for each time it has been upgraded. Only the actual rank of the military unit counts in this calculation. Enchantments, curses, penalties or bonuses for downtime effects and so on have no effect. When the senator is elected, the number of votes they have accrued over the previous year is tallied.

Characters new to the nation who have a military unit personal resource are assumed to have spent the previous year supporting an Imperial army. Likewise, players with a military unit who have missed an event are similarly assumed to have supported an army. We've made this rule for game balance reasons - so that new characters and players unable to attend every event are not unfairly penalised. If it becomes relevant, players are encouraged to create simple explanations as to how they have supported an army without showing up in the Imperial Roll of Honour or directly affecting the downtime campaign such as training new recruits, protecting supply lines, or the like.

Rituals which magically create a military unit such as Conclave of Trees and Shadow, Carve the Crystal Guardian, and Lions of Phoenix Reach offer an opportunity for orcs who do not lead a military unit to participate in the election. Any season during which these rituals are in place, and the magical soldiers summoned are supporting an army, the orc who commands the forest or mana site they are drawn from will receive votes as if they owned a military unit of the same rank.

9.2 Leading a territory

With the Imperial Orc homeland established in Skarsind, the Orcs now elect a senator to represent them in the Imperial Senate. Only an orc whose resource is in the territory whose senator is to be elected is eligible to vote. Any Imperial Orc citizen can stand for election as senator, regardless of their home territory.

Once the candidates have made themselves known, each in turn is invited by the egregore to present an item of worth and explain its significance to the candidate or the nation. The egregore has recommended this method because the Orcs need to be represented by someone who can hold their own in an arena where debate and the ability to express oneself are key.

Being the leader of a military unit is a prerequisite to vote, and only those who support the Imperial armies have a say in the appointment of the senator. An Imperial Orc receives a number of votes based on the quality of their troops and how often they have supported Imperial armies over the previous years. Voting is done openly - orcs are encouraged to proudly declare the number of votes they are placing behind their chosen candidate and then stand with them. Once everyone has voted, any candidate can call for a formal count with the aid of the civil service and the egregore, or (in cases where victory is obvious) they can concede and declare the winner by acclaim.

The senators for each Imperial territory are re-elected at specific equinox and solstices during the year. The senator for Skarsind is elected during the Winter Solstice and the senator for Mareave is elected at the Spring Equinox.

9.2.1 Incumbent

The current Imperial Orc senators are listed below - see the individual territory pages for a full election history for each position.

- Mareave - Pathfinder Gaddak
- Skarsind - Bloodcrow Rasp



9.3 Shamans

Shamans play an important role in the leadership of Imperial Orc society. Their link to the orc ancestors is considered to provide valuable insight and wisdom. By tradition shamans are consulted by Imperial Orc senators, generals, and warlords before significant decisions are made, so that they can provide the ancestor?s guidance. A warlord or similar individual might have a specific favoured shaman they regularly consult, but senators and generals are more likely to speak to all the shamans present. Individual Orcs also seek out shamans for advice when they make important decisions, either to receive guidance in making up their minds or to see how the ancestors feel about the course of action they have decided on.

It is not uncommon to ignore the advice shamans give though it should always be weighed and considered. The orcs' barbarian ancestors do not understand the life of the Imperial Orcs, and their voices tend to be the loudest of those heard by the shamans. There are exceptions; some shamans possess enough wisdom that their advice is valuable even when it does not come directly from an ancestor, and other shamans have an affinity for one or more helpful ancestors whose words often seem to be more relevant to their Imperial descendants.

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10 Imperial Orcs economic interests

10.1 Overview

Imperial Orcs see money as something that separates free citizens of the Empire from slaves. Perhaps more so than many humans they understand the freedom that comes with being able to buy and sell things freely. A number of the first generation were raised in League cities, and possessed a well-developed appreciation for the power that comes with wealth.

In keeping with their instinctual desire to be part of a group, however, many Imperial Orcs see a distinction between personal wealth - enough money to live in comfort - and the wealth of the legion - the wealth that comes from and is used to keep everyone in the legion well equipped, fit and capable of doing their jobs.



Bonesetters look to the health of their comrades, but their remit is much wider than that.

10.2 Bonesetters

Many legions pool the majority of their wealth and resources, using it to provide for the members of the legion on the basis of need. A warlord will usually appoint one or more individuals to look after a legion?s wealth. By tradition these people are called bonesetters and are usually trained apothecaries, physicks or both.

Bonesetters are expected to attend to the physical needs of the legion, but their remit runs well beyond this. Most bonesetters proactively work to enrich their legion, investing the legion?s resources as they see fit to try to increase the legion?s wealth. Bonesetters have no formal powers but they often broker deals for the skills of individual legion members or even the whole legion, if they are confident that their warlord will support them. A competent bonesetter who is working in the best interests of their legion can usually count on their support. Few Orcs want to annoy the individual whose responsibility it is to treat the wounded but more importantly, the genuine bonesetter is assumed to be making deals for the benefit of the entire legion.

Since the legions settled in Skarsind, many bonesetters have set up their own brokerages, supporting the health and prosperity of their neighbours as well as their legion. One of the most prominent positions a bonesetter can aspire to is the Bonesetter of Torfast Trading Post, responsible for overseeing the Imperial Orc trade hub that serves as the centre of the Northern trade network.

10.3 Reavers

A handful of legions no longer maintain links with the armies. They have come to enjoy the freedom and wealth afforded by mercenary work. These groups, called reavers, support themselves by raiding, adventuring, and hiring themselves out as guards and escorts to merchants prepared to pay to secure the martial might of an orc military unit. With their income not tied to the vagaries of the Imperial Guerdon, or the strategies of the Military Council, bands of reavers may quickly become wealthy.

Reavers are mostly tolerated by other Imperial Orcs; as often as not their wealth helps to enrich the Imperial Orc nation and thus can still claim to be serving the Empire in their way. The primary bone of contention used to be that reavers were often loyal to their own band first, and to the rest of the Imperial Orc nation and the Empire a distant second. However with Imperial Orcs legions increasingly abandoning the Summer Storm and the Winter Sun to follow the Guerdon, the distinction between the two groups is increasingly blurred.

Reaving is seen as a good way of life for those Orcs who chafe under the leadership or strict discipline of army life. Furthermore, the line between legions and reavers is easily crossed. Legions that find themselves unable to respect a general or the demands of the Military Council may up the reaving lifestyle, sometimes for years at a time. Reavers who become prosperous may enjoy the luxury of supporting one of the Imperial Orcs armies without concern for Guerdon shares, or as a route toward taking a more significant role in Imperial Orcs society.



10.4 Resources

Until recently most Imperial Orcs favoured military units and only a few invested in herb gardens, mana sites or other static resources. Now that their dream of a homeland of their own has been realized, increasing numbers of them are moving there to take up stewardship of the valuable resources left by the departing Wintermarkers. They are swiftly proving themselves to be capable as farmers, business owners and more, and for the most part they are able to fill the many needs of their nation's people.

However most Imperial Orcs still regard mines with a great deal of distaste and few Orcs can be convinced to work them. As a result the Imperial Orcs usually avoid them and those that do own them often have to hire Wintermarkers or other Imperial citizens to work them. The shortfalls in metals and other materials that the Imperial Orcs need were traditionally provided by reavers, but increased opportunities to trade with other Imperial nations and even the Thule means that there are now more options available to ensure that an Imperial Orc can avoid the stigma of having to work a mine.

The Steward of the Mines of Gulhule in particular plays a role in keeping the Skarsind mines operational. This ministry involves ensuring that sufficient mine workers are employed to exploit the rich mineral wealth of the Skarsind mountains.

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11 Imperial Orcs military concerns



Orcs revel in battle, and the Imperial Orcs are no exception.

11.1 Overview

At present there are three Imperial Orc armies; two of them roughly fifty percent larger than a standard Army. Plans have been mooted a few times for splitting the Winter Sun and the Summer Storm to try create three armies, but the two armies were created when the orcs joined the Empire and have a long and noted history that few orcs are willing to give up - most take great pride in their army's achievements. Imperial Orcs are also aware that much of their political unity arises from the tight-knit nature of the armies and the legions attached to them and they are keen to prevent their loyalties being divided amongst too many armies and generals. Ultimately though the biggest consideration has simply been the practical costs involved in reforming the orc armies - the costs involved, the loss of efficiency as the armies are reorganized, and the time in barracks required to complete the change.

It is commonly assumed that the orc love of battle would cause them to throw themselves into the thickest fighting without a care for their own lives. Such behaviour is sometimes observed of the forces of barbarian nations; their warriors are often overcome by battle-lust. However the Imperial Orcs are painfully aware of their limited numbers and the need to preserve every life to ensure that future generations of their nation prospers. The burden of this responsibility tends to fall squarely on their military leaders - the generals who command the armies and those who lead the heroes at Anvil. Life is precious - an orc has but one life to make their mark.

Although orcs strive to preserve themselves and their legion, cowardice is one of the most heinous of crimes ? an act of self-preservation which threatens others. By contrast, the truest form of courage an orc can show is to give their life so that the legion can survive: it is difficult to become an ancestor if you fall before old age, and as this is the very zenith of orcish achievement, it takes a truly selfless orc to make the hardest sacrifice. Tales are told of such heroes, but they are always tinged with regret at the waste of life. Every orc that falls in battle is seen as a cause for sorrow: an early death prevents them from becoming an ancestor as well as diminishing the strength of the legions.



The barbarian orcs once harboured a particular hatred for the Imperial Orcs, often singling them out on the battlefield where possible. Some claim this hatred goes back to the time of the uprising when the barbarians refused to aid Thrace and his kin and slaughtered any orcs who made their way over the border. In recent times however, this old hatred appears to have abated to be replaced by something akin to a grudging respect. There is a great deal of speculation as to why this may be the case, but no concrete conclusion has been reached.

11.2 The Legion

The legions, tight-knit groups of Imperial Orcs who live together and fight together, are the backbone of the Imperial Orc armies. Before the arrival of the septs most Imperial Orcs were (or still are) a member of one of these countless different units of tight-knit soldiers. Each legion has its own identity but most are organized along military lines, and are an official part of one of the three Imperial Orc armies. In practice the legions are a cross between a regiment and an informal family group. Although not all the members of a legion are warriors, or even members of an army, the camaraderie and mindset of the career soldier tends to permeate throughout a legion.

Each orc legion chooses its own name and symbols but most can also be identified by their favoured fighting style. One legion may have a bias for plate armour and pole-weapons, while another favours sword and shield. Warriors are usually expected to have at least a basic mastery of their legion's favoured style. Each legion is fiercely proud of its identity in battle, and a healthy, good-natured rivalry exists between legions with regard to tactics and combat style. This rivalry is put aside on the battlefield, and warlords are careful to ensure that it never undermines loyalty and service to the Empire; the place for combat between members of rival legions is the fighting pit, not the battlefield.

Banners and standards are particularly important to Imperial Orcs. Legion camps are often decorated with banners displaying legion symbols, as orcs find it reassuring to be surrounded by images that reinforce their group identity. Many bear an image of the horse as a symbol of the Empire alongside specific legion markings and colours. Imperial Orcs differentiate between banners, which are general symbols of legion identity, and a legion standard. Many legions have a legion standard, which is a symbol of the legion's pride. Trophies from particularly notable legion members or items of exceptional worth that once belonged to someone in the legion are often added to a legion standard.

Legions chose their own commanders, called warlords, with individuals chosen for their ability to provide clear effective leadership in battle, according to the traditions of the individual legion. Orcs expect their leaders to be inspirational as well as astute so the majority of warlords are powerful warriors who lead from the front. Those who lead by cunning alone need to be particularly smart and their legions are often small but very tight-knit. Warlords appoint members of the legion to a chain of command beneath them, so that if they fall in battle they can be quickly replaced ? the life of the legion is always more valuable than the life of any individual.

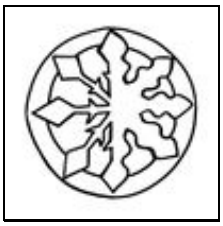
Most legions have a clear chain of command with harsh punishments for disloyalty or disobedience. Imperial Orcs usually have little sympathy for individuals who refuse to follow orders. In battle, those who find themselves at odds with a legion?s leadership face summary court-martial; at other times they are usually expelled from the legion. In such cases a group of orcs usually form their own rival legion, while an individual must attempt to join another legion or face existence alone.

11.3 Imperial Armies

The Imperial Orcs field three armies: the Winter Sun, the Summer Storm, and the Autumn Hammers. Although Imperial Orcs are increasingly putting down roots in Skarsind, the armies remain an important source of identity and a reminder of their people's history. Founded in the aftermath of the

revolt, membership of the armies was initially influenced by considerations of geography. Today, however, the third generation of orcs attach themselves to the army with which they feel the greater philosophical attraction, rather than basing their decision on which army their grandparents' legion belonged to.

Orcs do not generally wear a uniform symbol of the army they belong to, but some may add a white sun or a red lightning bolt. Since each army is made up of many different legions it has become common to refer to the armies collectively as "the legions" and in recent times Imperial Orcs at Anvil have taken to describe the Winter Sun and Summer Storm as the *First* and *Second Legion* respectively.



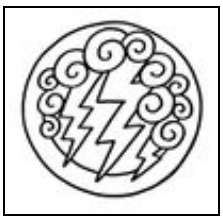
11.3.1 The Winter Sun

This army began with a core of orcs who had been slaves in Varushka, Temeschwar, and Wintermark. Vicious fighting against the Varushkan armies had decimated the numbers of the freed slaves in that nation, and harsh winters had contributed further to the death toll. After the revolt, their numbers were supplemented with orcs who had been enslaved by the Highborn. The first magicians among the Imperial Orcs belonged to this army; they found it easiest to absorb the teachings of the Varushkan and Wintermark tutors the Urizen mages arranged for them. The hard core of the army were made up of many who had known Thrace and the other founders of the revolt personally, and they continued to develop the vision of freedom that had first spurred them to escape the mines.

Today the Winter Sun is the more politically active of the two Imperial Orc armies, but it is also the army most likely to use magic in pursuit of their goals. They garner favours, both through military aid and careful use of their magical resources. More warcasters and oathwrights fight under the banners of the Winter Sun than the Summer Storm, and they have more preachers.

The Winter Sun is a large army with a history of fighting in difficult terrain. Following a ritual performed at the Autumn Equinox 381YE, the soldiers and associated of the Winter Sun experienced powerful visions of the many generations of ancestors who had lived as Imperial slaves. Embracing these visions, the general, Bloodcrow Morg'ur, helped to change the direction of the army towards fighting for freedom.

The first Imperial Orc general leads the Winter Sun, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Winter Solstice each year.



11.3.2 The Summer Storm

This army was formed from orcs who had originally been slaves in Dawn, the Marches, and the southern and eastern cities of The League. Their uprising had taken part in the rich heartlands of the Empire, and they did not need to deal with the harsh northern climate that troubled orcs in Varushka, Wintermark, and Highguard. They also tended to be better equipped; they were more able to loot weapons and armour, and were in a good position to deal with the 'war profiteers' from the Brass Coast and League cities. Perhaps just as importantly, the southern slaves were often surprisingly more well-versed in tactics, subterfuge, and trade than their northern cousins - many more of them had spent their time as bodyguards, bouncers, or gladiators than in the north.

Today the Summer Storm pride themselves on their military acumen. They are the hammer of the Imperial Orcs, well armed and armoured, versed in strategy and tactics, and supported by cunning bonesetters and thief-takers. They tend to be richer in terms of wealth and crafted items, and the first smiths and artisans were part of the Summer Storm.

Shortly before the Summer solstice 380YE, while fighting the Jotun in the Mournwold, the soldiers of the Summer Storm experienced a profound moment of connection with a Jotun ancestor, Sjöfn of the Bittenblade. Apparently an ancient Jotun who appears unconcerned by the nature of the Imperial Orcs, her voice encourages them to fight heroically, gloriously, and revel in the clash of steel on the battlefield. (**OOC Note:** Any Imperial Orc who might have been present during that campaign can hear this ancestor if they wish; she encourages them to take actions that are in line with the five

things of the Jotun.)

The Summer Sun is a large army, known for its ruthless commitment to the arts of war, and its indomitable fighting spirit.

The second Imperial Orc general leads the Summer Storm, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Summer Solstice each year.



11.3.3 The Autumn Hammers

This is a placeholder page for content that PD are actively working on.
The Autumn Hammers was raised from the Ethengraw sept after the Black Forge was constructed in Skarsind. The motion to raise the army was passed by the Imperial Senate during the Autumn Equinox 385YE after the sept joined the Imperial Orcs. The army benefited from Hammers of Fury and finished raising in time for the general to be elected for the first time at the Spring Equinox 386YE.

The third Imperial Orc general leads the Autumn Hammers, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Autumn Equinox each year.

11.3.4 Supply

The Imperial Orcs have long faced a crucial challenge posed by their relatively small population. For a long time they were able to maintain two large Imperial armies in the field - but only just, and only because so many of their people were members of the legions. Until very recently it was impossible for them to raise a new army, and if one of their existing armies were wiped out it was certain that it would be difficult for them to replace it. Imperial Orc generals learned to be careful about how they deployed their forces - preserving lives where they could - to keep the nation vital.

Gaining Skarsind gave the Imperial Orcs a homeland but did nothing to remedy the limitations of their sparse numbers. When the Highborn liberated Reikos, they were able to supply a fourth army as much because the people of Reikos stood ready to be part of that army as because of the wealth and prosperity the territory eventually regained. The few original inhabitants of Skarsind who still dwell there are Wintermark humans - so there is no indigenous population to swell their ranks.

This situation was somewhat mitigated by the raid on Beoraidh at the beginning of 383YE. With the support of the Winter Sun, a significant Imperial force launched a surprise attack on the Grendel town of Beoraidh on the Broken Shore. A large number of trained gladiators and orc slaves intended to be cannon fodder for the Grendel armies were liberated and brought safely back to Skarsind. With an influx of skilled warriors, enthusiastic supporters of the nation that helped free them from bondage, the Imperial orcs could raise a new army - *provided* they could gain a second territory - or in the tragic event that one of the existing Imperial Orcs armies were destroyed.

11.4 Army Orders

Following the decision of the Imperial Senate to send prospectors and miners to investigate the hills of Skarsind the Black Forge has access to enough metals to support orcs from across the nation.

Any Imperial Orc army can take the *forge hammers* defensive order, provided they are in Skarsind. The army musters at the Black Forge, and the smiths there work night-and-day to resupply them with the armaments they need - whether they are veterans or new recruits.

Forge Hammers

- **Can use the order to camp around the Black Forge in the hills of Skarsind above Gildenheim**
- **Casualties suffered by this army are increased by a fifth**
- **The ability of this army to defend territory is increased by three tenths**
- **For each wain of mithril used for emergency resupply provides an additional 5 army strength**

The soldiers of the army camp around the Black Forge, which turns mithril into the finest quality weapons and armour. The smiths both repair and replace the armaments of veteran soldiers, and provide new recruits with a top-tier loadout. The army is ready to defend the territory, and inspired by the

Epic of the Ethengraw, they will make the enemy fight for every inch of ground they try to claim. Only one army can use this order at a time; if more than one army uses it all armies involved instead take the heroic stand order.

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12 Imperial Orcs religious beliefs

12.1 Ancestral Voices

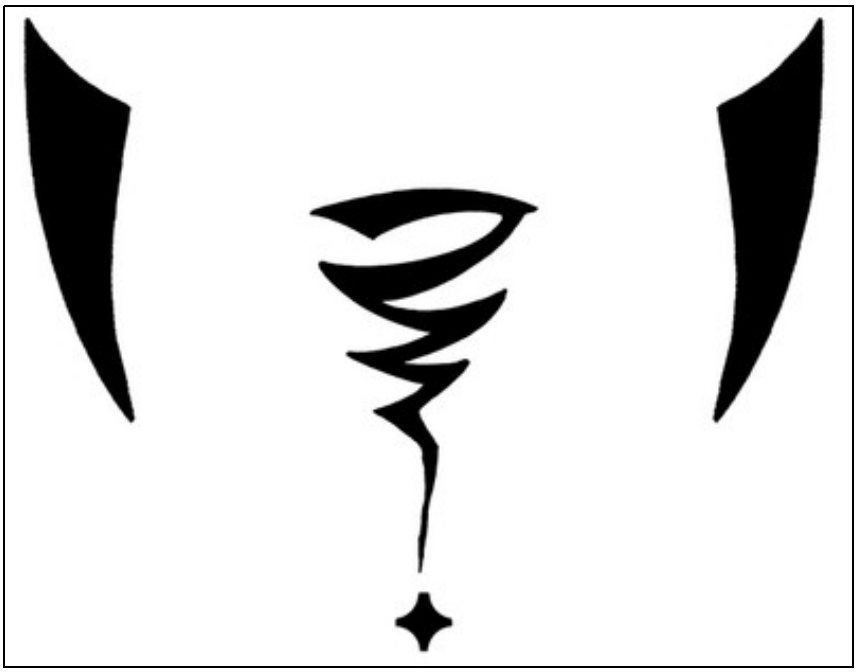
All orcs hear the voices of their ancestors. These voices are clearest and most powerful when an orc is in a heightened state of anger or fear, especially in combat. They are usually heard as a rumbling of many voices, where it is difficult to make our a specific meaning, but sometimes an orc hears an individual ancestor offering guidance. Typically an orc hears a specific ancestor if they are a direct descendant of them, knew them well when they were alive, or are a descendant of someone who knew them well. Thanks to the techniques brought to the Imperial Orcs by the Illarawm, however, this is no longer the only way an orc can become connected to an ancestor.

12.2 Liao and the Labyrinth

Imperial Orcs derive no benefit from taking liao and do not believe that they reincarnate. It is a key tenet of Imperial Orc belief that each orc has only one life, and that after they die there is no coming back.

Exactly what happens to the soul of an orc after death depends on how they have lived their lives. Most orcs believe they fall into the Howling Abyss that waits for them after death. The Howling Abyss tears their soul to pieces and casts those pieces into oblivion. Such orcs are utterly annihilated and gone forever. It is literally a fate worse than death.

Some humans claim that the lack of reincarnation is proof that orcs have no souls, but the Imperial Orcs believe that the souls of orcs are simply different to the spirits of humans. Experiments have shown that auras created with liao ceremonies still affect orcs as do ceremonies such as insight and testimony so the majority of synod members accept that orcs must have souls even if doubt remains over their ability to enter and pass through the Labyrinth of Ages.



Symbol of the Howling Abyss, as chosen by the Imperial Orcs National Assembly during the Winter Solstice 380YE.

12.3 The Howling Abyss

Most orcs believe that the greatest, the most powerful, the truly legendary orcs, those capable of inspiring a generation with their deeds, are able to cross over the Howling Abyss to the other side. What lies on this farthest shore is not known, for these ancestors never speak of it, but they are strong enough to pass back through the darkness. By doing so they are able to influence and guide their descendants, to speak to them, and to lead them through the Abyss after death - provided they are worthy.

Orcs who have powerful ancestors may receive help from them when they die. It is commonly believed that the ancestors come for those who have managed to achieve greatness, who strive and succeed against the odds, and help them cross the Howling Abyss. These orcs will return across the Howling Abyss many times, seeking to help their allies and offspring grow strong, but eventually they become too weak to make the journey and can no

longer return. Only the most powerful ancestors, those capable of making the journey unaided are able to continue to aid their descendants forever more.

To become an ancestor, an orc must be carried within the proud hearts of their people. They must pour their tale into the soul of future generations and become a legend while still alive, respected and admired by their peers and offspring. It is not, however, one that is easily achieved. Each victory in battle, each notch on their blade and each new story to tell around the fire adds to their legacy, and the quest towards becoming an ancestor. Some Imperial Orcs seek triumph in battle in the name of the Empire, aiming to fell the mightiest foes while still living to fight another day. Others seek to remain in the hearts and memories of their people for their wisdom or cleverness, strengthening and nurturing their fellow orcs and building an enduring legacy for later generations.

12.4 The Ancestors in Play

How well your character can hear the ancestors is left almost entirely to the individual player's character and roleplaying. The usual time to hear the ancestors is when you're in a heightened state of anger or fear, especially in combat. You become aware of them around you; usually it's a rumbling of many voices where you can't make out the meaning, but sometimes you can hear an individual ancestor offering guidance. This is especially true if your character has a strong connection to one or more ancestors; it is easier to pick their voices out of the background din and they are more likely to have guidance to offer you.

It is extremely unlikely that a ref will ever inform you that an ancestor is talking to you - or what they are saying. What is important to bear in mind is that you aren't just making this up - orcs *really do* hear voices when they are agitated, and when they compare notes they often hear the same kinds of voices telling them the same kinds of things. The ancestors *really do* move orcs to acts of heroism and glory, or try to encourage them to stab an insolent Dawnish knight in the guts in the middle of a tense negotiation...



12.4.1 The Living Bridge

Orcs can always hear the voices of ancestors, but it can be a challenge to determine *which* ancestor they are hearing, or hear a specific ancestor consistenty. The Illarawm techniques help orcs focus on the ancestors they want to hear, and cut out the voices they find disagreeable. The process for connecting with a new ancestor is available to every sept - it doesn't need the direct assistance of an Illarawm although it might still make for interesting roleplaying to seek one out.

The ceremony of "the Living Bridge" begins with a period of meditation, calming the body and mind, and quieting the voices of the ancestors. When complete, the orc feels a profound sense of being alone, as the background rumble of the ancestors' voices is silenced. They then engage in a period of intense roleplaying with someone who has a connection to the ancestor they want to hear. This generally involves being told stories of the ancestor, having the sensation of hearing them described and handling items of worth connected to them. If everything is working well, the orc becomes more aware of that ancestral voice growing in the silence, like an itch at the back of their head. Completing the process involves getting into an emotional state amenable to hearing ancestors - either through violent physical action such as a battle in the fighting pit, or an intense physical interaction of some sort; performing ritual magic that resonates with the ancestor in question; or engaging in ecstatic dance, music, or another group activity. Potions from the Unshackled Gift or Infusions of Feathers sets that induce altered states of consciousness could also be used as part of this process.

Once the ceremony is complete, the orc may have gained a connection to a specific ancestor, and begin to hear their voice more clearly. They can pick it out of the background din when the ancestors are all speaking at once, and are more likely to receive guidance from it. Most orcs can only be "connected" to a small number of ancestors at a time - with the obvious exception being the shamans. There's some evidence that the fewer ancestors an orc is strongly connected to, the more clearly they hear them. Some septs such as the Illarawm encourage an orc to connect with only a single ancestor while others encourage orcs to seek out many voices the better to receive useful guidance.

Being able to connect to an ancestor is an integral part of being able to change which sept a character belongs to. The ceremony of connecting to the new ancestor is a great opportunity for roleplaying with existing members of the sept, to mark the beginning of a new chapter in the character's life.

This same process can be used to quiet an ancestral voice an orc no longer wants to listen to. In this case, they meditate to quiet their ancestors, and focus on cutting a connection to the specific ancestor they no longer want to hear. When they end the period of calm and open themselves up the ancestors again, the voice in question is usually absent or so quiet as to be inaudible.

Neither form of the Living Bridge is infallible; it is up to the roleplaying of the player as to how effective it is. For example, while an orc may in-character wish to silence a disruptive voice that urges them to hunt and kill humans, it's fine for the player to out-of-character decide that the Illarawm techniques are not effective at silencing that voice.

12.4.2 Things the Ancestors Say

The ancestors are only dimly aware of your character and what you are doing, so the guidance they offer is invariably quite general in nature. In battle, they may alert you to imminent danger with a shout of warning. It is very common for them to exhort you to action but the words they use are never specific. If they do use a name, it is as likely to be someone else's name as your own. Despite this the advice given is applicable to what you are doing, at least most of the time.

Although it may sometimes appear as if the ancestors are talking to you, they cannot hear your words. The ancestors are only dimly aware of you and your actions. Long experience has taught the orcs that the ancestors cannot hear you speak and cannot hold a conversation with you; they have a message to deliver, and they deliver it.

When your grandad urges you to charge the enemy, and you do, there might be a few parting words of approval; if you decline to follow his advice, there may be a feeling of anger and some shouted abuse, but grandad does not enter into a dialogue about *why* he wants you to charge the enemy or what alternative courses of action might be equally good.

12.4.3 Ancestors and Hero Points

Orcs often hear the words of their ancestors most clearly in battle when they are roused to fury, or any time when their blood is pumping and their heart beating fast. When an Imperial Orc spends a hero point, they are much more likely to hear the voice of an ancestor. You may want to roleplay that an ancestor is guiding your hand when you use cleaving strike for example, or that it is the voice of an ancestor shouting at you that gives you the strength to get back on your feet when you are down. It is especially appropriate to roleplay hearing an ancestor when you use a hero point to change your response to a roleplaying effect - the urging of an ancestor lets you act in a way counter to that which the external influence is causing.

12.5 Shamans

Most orcs only experience communion with the ancestors when battle is upon them but a few individuals - called shamans - are able to hear the voices more frequently. Shamans occupy a unique position in Imperial Orc society, as a result, but many are moon-struck, their minds affected by the constant attempts by the ancestors to communicate with them.

12.6 Preachers

The Imperial Virtues are clearly a part of what makes the Empire what it is. As a result most Imperial Orcs at least pay them lip service and there is a drive amongst some orcs to embody the virtues as keenly as possible, to prove themselves the equal of any human citizen of the Empire. Those Imperial Orcs who embrace the Way and become priests are called Preachers.

Two such preachers, Bonewall Rek and Bonewall Cole - presented and secured a significant change of doctrine during the Symposium of Revelation of Winter 380YE. These changes incorporated the Doctrine of the Howling Abyss and the Doctrine of the Ancestors into the Doctrines of the Faith.

12.7 The Imperial Orcs and the Synod

Originally, the orcs did not have their own national assembly within the Synod. During the Winter summit of 377YE, a motion to create such an assembly was brought before the Senate by the Conscience of the Senate - the Imperial orc Skywise Gralka. The motion passed with unanimous support, and an Imperial Orc assembly was established.

During the Spring Equinox 383YE the Senate voted to change how membership of the Virtue assemblies was determined. This represents one of the most significant changes to the way the Synod operates since the reign of Empress Varkula. The change was proposed initially as a way to allow the priests of the Imperial Orcs to more fully participate in the Imperial Synod, by moving membership of the Virtue assemblies away from dedication and toward the virtues a priest actually preached.

12.8 Hearing the Ancestors

During the Autumn of 387YE, the Imperial Orc Assembly declared their highest calling to be creating a place where every orc within the Empire, and those still hesitant to join it, can know their Ancestors? voices will be heard. While the judgement was not without controversy, the septs broadly responded very positively. In particular, two initiatives have captured the imagination of the congregations of the Imperial Orcs.

12.8.1 Annals of the Ancestors

Shortly before the Winter Solstice 387YE, the Illarawm made an offer to the Unshackled Assembly that they could support the creation of an "annals of the ancestors", allowing the priests of the Imperial Orcs to identify the name, deeds and words of an ancestor each season. Taking inspiration from the assembly of Prosperity, and their Roll of Benefactors, the annal allows the Imperial Orc Assembly to add a name to the Annals by raising a statement of principle, which must pass with a greater majority. The judgement should name an important ancestor, describe their ancestor and provide a record of the most important words the Ancestor has spoken since passing over the Howling Abyss. The sept carves the words of the ancestor into the Grand Ossuary in Southpine.

When faced with the choice between death or protecting what is worthy, we face no choice at all. For if we stand our ground, our ancestors will welcome us on the other side of the abyss.

Jannik of the Rahvin

I am walking towards a bridge of renown across an Abyss that only cares for my legend.

Bloodcrow Knott

This land, our land, it belongs to you and me.

Udak

12.8.2 Spanning the Abyss

The Imperial Orc assembly also had an opportunity to reach out to other septs outside the Empire, to learn more of their beliefs.

- In the Winter of 388YE, they chose to reach out to the sept of orcs known as the Karass, who dwell in the Barrens. You can read more about this in the **Seeking the Karass** report.
- In the Spring of 388YE, they chose to reach out to the Great Forest Orcs, some of whom dwell alongside the Navarr.

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13 Imperial Orcs magical traditions

13.1 Overview

The magical arts were mostly lost to the Imperial Orcs during the generations in which they were enslaved. Since winning their freedom, they have experimented freely as well as employing techniques, spells and rituals learned from other nations. Urizen in particular was adamant that the orcs needed to learn magic and arranged for Urizen mages, runesmiths and icewalkers from Wintermark, and volhov and cabalists from Varushka to teach the orcs. The arrival of the new septs, especially the Illarawm and the Tamazi has helped the Imperial Orcs to hone their own approach to magic, as well as helping establish a new approach based on drawing power directly from their ancestors.

13.2 Ancestors and Rituals

Learning ritual magic proved a painstaking process for the Imperial Orcs. Attempts to incorporate loud passionate drumming to get the blood pumping in the way some barbarian nations perform rituals seems to draw the attention of the ancestors in much the way battle does. These ancestors were hostile and disruptive as is the way with many Imperial Orc ancestors and this made mastering ritual magic incredibly difficult. For a while some mages worried that the Imperial Orcs might simply be incapable of mastering the art at all.

Eventually the shamans discovered a way to solve their problems using a combination of two powerful Imperial Orc hearth magics. The first was to encourage as many members of a covens' legion to be present as possible, along with banners and flags bearing the legion symbols. Their presence helped to reinforce the sense of identity and belonging that all orcs feel and increased the chances that one of the legion's ancestors will be able to return to watch the ritual.

By itself this was not sufficient; it was combined with the second hearth magic, employing worth to try and ensure the right ancestor is called. Shamans and ritualists keep dozens of items of worth from older ritualists who have died. These trinkets are rarely weapons; magical implements are common but the best items are bone talismans, pieces of bone of varying size taken from a dead orc's body and carved or etched with the story of their worth. Using techniques of aspect magic taught to them by Winterfolk icewalkers, the Imperial Orc magicians invoke the names of their ancestors while presenting bone talismans and other items of worth linked to them. When done right it ensures that that ancestor comes to witness the ritual and if the participants have chosen wisely then they may provide advice and help.

By the time the Illarawm and Tamazi septs shared their respective knowledge of ancestors and magic with the rest of the nation, these traditions were well practiced and ingrained in Imperial Orcs ritual magicians. Indeed, it seems that many septs of orcs use similar techniques - drawing on the spirit of an ancestor to work ritual magic seems to be common practice. With the greater understanding of ancestors the Illaraawm provided, the threat of disruptive ancestors was pretty much neutralised, but the twin practices of calling the legion (or the sept) and using items of worth continues to this day. One of the reasons relates to the nuance provided by the magicians of the Tamazi.

13.3 Spiritweaving

The Tamazi have a relatively unbroken magical tradition that stretches back hundreds of years, kept alive during their durance, hidden under the noses of the Axou. Following the work the Imperial Orcs did to expand the College of Warcasting, the bonetenders of the Tamazi shared their understanding of ritual magic with their new allies. Their magical technique combines elements of both dramaturgy and theurgy, but is subtly different to both. Using this technique. orc magicians intentionally seek to attract the attention of a specific ancestor (or for very powerful workings, more than one). They do this by presenting their ritual as a re-enactment of a deed from the ancestor's life. In dramaturgical or theurgic terms, the ancestor chosen fills the role of both persona and inspiration. As the ritual progresses, the ritualists become more aware of the presence of the ancestor, feeling its energy within and around them, and often hearing its voice encouraging and supporting them.

The magic is further intensified by the use of items of worth, something Imperial Orcs magicians are familiar with. The Tamazi also make use of ritual foci carved from bone, and inlaid with dragonbone, that gain worth as they are used to perform rituals. Like the instruments of dramaturgy, or the props used by many magicians to work specific magic, they help focus the energy and add weight to the performance the magicians engage in. The Tamazi commonly act out the tale as a dramatic presentation, but there are also ways to work this magic by reciting a tale, with each contributor speaking part of the story or taking on the voice of one of the participants. Among themselves the Tamazi used a single specific tale to work a specific ritual, but since the end of their durance, and gaining access to Imperial lore, they have largely abandoned this practice due to the need to create a new tale for each ritual they wish to perform.

The nature of the ancestor is vital to the performance of the ritual. The Tamazi have a peculiar relationship with their ancestors, and encourage magicians of every sept to call on them to help perform their rituals. It's become clear reasonably quickly, however, that *any* ancestor might help with a ritual performance, and so the "roster" of available ancestors has increased. The Tamazi welcome this discovery thanks to their belief that when an ancestor helps with a ritual a fragment of the power involved goes to strengthen that ancestor in their battle against the Creator - and if other ancestors

can be evoked in the same way it implies that the Tamazi ancestors are not alone in their battle against the darkness at the end of creation.

The six Tamazi ancestors each resonate with a particular kind of magic - not a realm, but a magical purpose. The stories told about them further focus the kind of magic they are evoked to empower. Orcs who are not part of the Tamazi sept can still evoke these ancestors, even if they don't have a strong connection to them, as part of the practice of spiritweaving.

- **Korotiku the Clever** is a Tamazi ancestor who aids with magic that conceals or deceives, as well as magic that scries or reveals. In life she was a powerful magician, said to be a match for the sorcerer-kings of the Axou themselves, and is the ancestor the Tamazi evoke when they want to unleash powerful, primal forces. Candid and even handed, her voice urges orcs to consider a situation from all sides before acting, and to be sure they are prepared for the consequences of what they are going to do. The Sannite ancestor Sheanduir, and Illarawm both resonate with this kind of magic.
- **Jeyan the Steward** is the Tamazi ancestor who aids magic related to healing, renewal of body and spirit, communication, and fertility. He also helps with magic that uncovers hidden wisdom or secret things. In life he was the patriarch of one of the four families, a master farmer and tender of beasts. His voice is calm and lucid, and urges those who hear it to seek the path of least harm. The Yerende ancestor *Runa* also resonates with this kind of magic.
- **Vyana the Weaver** is the Tamazi ancestor who aids with the magic of conflict and risk, protecting those who need to go into dangerous places, strengthening and enhancing the capabilities of individuals who must face death, and binding people together. In life she was a powerful warrior, who died fighting the Axou. Her voice is confident and authoritarian, and urges those who listen to it to pick their fights carefully but once engaged gain victory at whatever cost. Ethengraw can also be evoked to serve as a patron of this kind of magic, as could the Sunstorm ancestor Sjöfn of the Bitten Blade.
- **Karash the Builder** is the Tamazi ancestor who best understands the art of the crafter, whether it is uncovering the provenance of an item, repairing a weapon, shattering a shield or a castle gate, or reinforcing a stone wall so it can withstand a siege. She also empowers warding magic, something of significant value to the Tamazi during their durance beneath the citadels of the Axou. In life she was one of the first generation of orcs born into the durance, and fought to ensure her peoples' traditions survived. Her voice is quiet, even, and urges those who hear it to hold to their beliefs in the face of adversity.
- **Tarasta the Grim** is the Tamazi ancestor who embodies vengeance, punishment, oaths, curses, judgement, and death. For all their apparently negative qualities, they are also a fierce protector. They are never evoked frivolously, and when their voice is heard it urges caution and proportion;but when one has decided on a course of action, they urge their descendants to be absolutely committed and absolutely merciless.
- **Esundahl the Keen** is the Tamazi ancestor that deals with wealth, prosperity, good fortune, passion, comfort, and influence. While the Tamazi were slaves, they were mostly evoked to help create hidden oases of quiet and comfort in the cold tunnels below the citadels. Now that the durance is over, they might be called to empower any magic related to wealth or success.Their voice is enthusiastic and full of energy, urging those who hear it to take risks and seize the prizes that they aim for by any means. The Sannite ancestors (and thus the Grendel ancestors) *Rucraic* and *Dubhtraig* also resonate with this kind of magic.

Certain magical tools also have particular resonance for certain kinds of magic. **The Bowl** is a symbol of healing and empowerment; **the Drum** is used to strengthen and enhance; **the Knife** is used for destructive or harmful magic; **The Mask** helps magic related to wisdom or divination; **the Rod** is used for magic related to authority or warding; and **The Bag of Teeth** is used for magic involving risk, chance, or wealth. For the Tamazi, these items are invariably crafted from bone; other Orc practitioners of this magic tradition seek out items of worth that fill similar roles.

OOC Note: While most magical traditions work for anyone, humans *cannot* use spiritweaving as a magical tradition. It's a form of magic that requires the ability to hear ancestors, which no human innately possesses. Attempts to use this tradition to work magic, calling on the orc ancestors in this way with a coven that contains humans, causes a ritual to fail without expending any resources.

13.4 Warcasters

The highly physical traditions of the Wintermark runesmiths appealed to some orcs who adopted a similar approach. As their confidence with magic developed they began to craft their own approach to battle magic and moved away from the runesmiths' emphasis on magical runes. What the warcasters wanted was a way to use magic whilst clearly remaining part of their legion. Two core approaches have developed, but regardless of the tactics they favour, all warcasters strive to be disciplined soldiers, used to fighting shoulder-to-shoulder in the thick of battle.

Some warcasters favour the best mage armour they can acquire, a heavy rod and a large shield. Unlike most Imperial Orcs, warcasters favour the kite shields more commonly seen among the Dawnish and Highborn. They also favour offensive spells that repel, entangle or paralyse their foes - many practice delivering a paralysis or entangle spell so as to get the best defensive benefit from their shields. These warcasters seek to fight alongside their legion comrades in toe-to-toe engagements with their enemies.

Other warcasters prefer to fight in the second rank, eschewing a shield and instead claiming the right to carry the legion standard. The logic for this honour is clear - the standard marks their location for the rest of their legion, but is less of an encumbrance than it might be for a warrior as it still leaves a hand free to cast spells. Warcasters who favour this combat style master support magic such as spells that mend or heal their fellow soldiers.



13.5 Oathwrights

The Oathwright tradition grew out of Imperial Orc experiences with the create bond spell. They began to question what exactly was happening when a bond was forged between an orc and an item. Discussions with several of the volhov tutoring the orc magicians led them to question how the bonding interacted with the concept of worth, and to become fascinated by the oaths and promises that served as the underpinning of some Varushkan magic.

The common attitude that a bond is simply a practical application that allows an individual to use a magic item is seen as naïve by these orcs. Imperial Orc items, especially magical items, often have worth and the decision to create a bond between a person and an item is not a decision to be made or unmade lightly. Oathwrights believe that the bond between an item and a person affects them both, items may gain worth by being owned and bonded to the right person and the right item affects an individual's hopes of becoming an ancestor.

Bonds between individuals are even more important and oathwrights take a special interest in these. They often help people craft oaths, offering words of caution and advice and helping them to create vows that are articulate but precise. All magicians can create bonds, but most Imperial Orcs prefer to seek out an expert in the field. Oathwrights take their responsibilities very seriously and often counsel against foolhardy oaths or question an individual about situations where they might feel compelled to break their oath. The best charge for their services, expecting to be paid for their time and their wisdom.

Their interest in oaths, agreements and bargains made them a natural fit for serving as diplomats to the eternals, where they work hard to extract binding promises from these powerful supernatural beings to aid the Empire and the Imperial Orcs.

13.6 Further Reading

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14 Imperial Orcs territories

14.1 Overview

The Imperial Orcs were granted freedom and citizenship of the Empire by Emperor Ahraz shortly after he was elected in 324YE, The Freeborn helped the Orcs to perform the ritual to create an egregore allowing them to become the tenth nation of the Empire - but there was nothing anybody would do to provide them with lands of their own. For over fifty years the Orcs fought and died in the Empire's wars, fighting for the promise of a land of their own. Not until 379YE would the Empire finally make good on that promise when the Wintermark people bequeathed Skarsind to the Imperial Orcs.

Now the Orcs have territory of their own, tens of thousands have travelled from across the Empire to settle the lands. The Imperial Orcs now have a homeland, senators speak for them in the Senate - but more than a few have begun to ask what happens next? Some believe that they should concentrate all their efforts on Skarsind; to make the territory demonstrate how powerful and prosperous the Orcs have become in such a short time. Others point to Mareave as the new frontier, a land of potential just waiting to be claimed. But others argue that it was military strength that caused the Imperial Orcs to be given Skarsind and assigned Mareave; that the only way honour their ancestors is to remain true to the Imperial Orcs' martial traditions and seek to conquer more land.

14.1.1 Skarsind

Skarsind is a place of alpine slopes and valleys, pine forests and rising mists, set in what's known as the Great Vale, a bowl of mountains that holds both Skarsind and the forest of Hercynia. Summer is short, but Winter is long, and haunted by eerie lights in the sky. The land has an ancient history - one that long predates the Empire or even humankind. The largest settlement - Gildenheim - stands over the entrance to a frozen underworld cavern into the walls of which are carvings in a mysterious alphabet that are widely believed to be the source of the magical runes used throughout Wintermark.

Now, the majority of people here are Imperial Orcs. There are still some Winterfolk here, but since the rise and fall of Dogri Thulebane, the number of Imperial humans living in the hills and forests of Skarsind has tailed away to a handful scattered here and there. The Imperial Orcs do nothing to make them unwelcome, but for many there is simply nothing left for them in Skarsind. Regretfully in many cases, they leave to start new lives in Hahnmark, Kallavesa, and Sermersuaq.

14.1.2 Mareave

Mareave has much more in common with the coast of Spiral and Redoubt than that of Attar; there are comparatively few natural harbours here, and the coastline is both rocky and raised into steep cliffs. Like the rest of the Broken Shore, it is warm and dry with little in the way of large-scale vegetation. The territory is shared with Beoraidh, an independent nation of orcs formerly of the Grendel. The land has a long history, but was conquered by the Empire and assigned to the Imperial Orcs in early 386YE.

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15 Imperial Orcs children



Children are very important within orc society, as the survival of the legions relies on the young. Most Imperial Orcs feel a special affection for children of their legion, even those that are not their own and will fight to the death to protect them from harm. Harm is seen as real risk to life and limb however; orc children are not spoiled. There is a belief that life is hard and that children must learn this from an early age. There is an orc saying that to shield the child is to expose the legion. Young children are never taken on campaign into enemy territory but they do travel with the legions as they march around the Empire. Sharing the harsh conditions that their parents experience is seen as character building.

Although children cannot legally take the battlefield before they pass their citizenship tests, they are still expected to serve the legion from a young age. Young children run messages for warlords, shamans and other important figures while older children work with bonesetters to acquire wealth and resources for the legion or acting as lookouts for thief-takers. Youth is seen as a handicap, since a child is prevented from taking the battlefield, they must compensate and look to help their legion in other ways.

When not working children are encouraged to fight and play games that teach them tactics and strategy or to study magic, literacy and history. It is accepted that children will want to engage in frivolous games that will not ultimately benefit them, but such things are seen as rewards for hard work.

Imperial Orcs live tough lives and those who fight in the Imperial armies know that death may find them at any point. As a result, they often look to pass on important belongings to children from an early age. Items of worth are particularly important. It is believed that learning to value the worth of an item,

being able to recite its history and legacy, helps a child learn what it means to be an Imperial Orc as well as inspiring them to worthy deeds of their own. Weapons are common, once a child is old enough to carry one responsibly but pieces of jewellery, bones and other worthy pieces are all considered suitable for children. A young orc who carries an item of worth is expected to know its provenance and be able to tell stories of the deeds that helped it acquire worth. Some adult orcs, especially preachers like to challenge youngsters carrying such items to tell these tales, as a way of instilling pride and building confidence.

Once a child has passed the warrior test they are then old enough to fight in the fighting pits. The first fight is often a short, nervous affair and considered something of a rite of passage by many parents, but young orcs are encouraged to treat the pits with due respect. An orc should have reason to go to the pits, not simply because they are looking to prove they have become an adult.

While younger orcs do not hear their ancestors as often or as strongly as adult orcs do, it is important to teach them the difference between 'good' ancestors (those who offer guidance that helps them grow as part of the Empire) and 'bad' ancestors (those who give bad advice, or encourage them to do things at odds with the Imperial Orc way of life). Children are considered part of the sept of one of their parents, but it's not unusual for a child to join a different sept when they complete their citizenship test.

15.1 Things every child should know

- **You have just one life, use it wisely.** It should be your goal to become an ancestor.
- **Your legion is your family.** Wear your legion's symbols with pride.
- **Support the Empire.** You are part of the greatest power on earth, work hard to be worthy of it.
- **Items have stories.** These stories tell you what a person or item is worth, learn them well.
- **Keep the laws.** Without law we are nothing ? Imperial law must be upheld at any cost.

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16 Imperial Orc music

1. REDIRECT Imperial Orcs music

17 Category:Archetype

17.1 The Brass Coast

Dhomiro	A dhomiro is a member of a Freeborn family who is chosen by the family to be their representative to the wider world; sometimes as a leader, sometimes as an emissary.
Kohan	Kohan are groups of volunteer and outcast warriors-without-family, who traditionally pledge loyalty to a group of hakima.
Sutannir	Sutannir perform inspiring religious ceremonies for the Freeborn, and encourage people to exemplify and celebrate Virtue.
Hakima	Hakima are highly-organised groups of magic-users whose loyalty is to the nation, not their family. They are taken to be wise.
Corsair	Freeborn corsairs are traders and privateers who deal with - and raid - barbarian shipping in the Bay of Catazar.
Scrivener	Scriveners are Freeborn contract-writers who help traders frame the terms of their deals, and then decorate them with artwork and calligraphy.

17.1.1 Dawn

Earl	The Earl of a Dawnish Noble House is the House's leader, who leads the House in all its great achievements and who sets its conditions of membership.
Knight-errant	Knights-Errant are engaged in their Test of Mettle. Still technically yeofolk they are expected - and are questing - to prove themselves glorious.
Questing knight	Questing Knights are those Knights who have proved themselves worthy in their Test of Mettle and have chosen to keep on questing for ever-greater glory.
Troubadour	A Troubadour is a priest who learns all the stories of their Noble House, past and present, and tells them in poetry and song to inspire their people to greatness.
Witch	Witches are Dawnish magic-users. In noble houses, they fight alongside the House's warriors. Most others belong to Weaver Cabals, independent groups of ritual witches which accept both yeofolk and noble members.
Guiser	Itinerant entertainers who often combine magic with their performances and practice dramaturgy. They are often (sometimes justly) accused of being spies, tricksters and mountebanks as well as performers.
Enchanter	Some Earls who have studied magic choose the title "Earl-Enchanter" or simply "Enchanter". Most learn ritual magic to benefit their people; some build relationships with powerful Summer Eternals.
Seneschal	A Noble House's Seneschal is a trusted yeofolk who oversees its financial affairs, arranging deals and trades and keeping the House solvent.
Advocate	Dawnish Advocates are yeofolk politicians who navigate the murky waters of Senate politics for their noble masters.
Retainer	A yeofolk Retainer is a Dawnish Noble's most trusted attendant, who works closely with a particular Noble, or sometimes for the whole House.

17.1.2 Highguard

Exarch	The Exarch, or Exarchs, are those who are appointed by a Highguard Chapter as their leader(s) as determined by the Chapter's creed, or by embodying its principles.
Guardian	Guardians form the core of Highborn military, taking on a range of roles in defence of their Chapters, and in prosecuting vigilant warfare.
Unconquered	The Unconquered are Highguard's elite guerrilla troops. They are prone to using ruthless tactics, even operating behind enemy lines, to destroy the enemy's capacity to make war.
Cataphract	Cataphracts are Highguard's elite heavy warriors, who once rode horses into battle but who, in modern times, represent a resolute and unbreakable wall of steel.
Wayfarer	Wayfarers are Highborn priests with a long-standing tradition of teaching the truth of The Way to the ignorant, and seeking out Exemplars and Paragons born in other lands.
Inquisitor	Highborn Inquisitors are zealous defenders of The Way from those that would threaten it, whether mortal or supernatural.
Steward of the Dead	Stewards of the Dead dedicate their lives to preserving the legacies of the worthy. This includes the interring of remains as well as the preservation of legacies and tales.
Magister	Magisters are the master magicians of Highguard, often with an affinity for Winter Magic. They shape magic using movement, sound and the chime of bells.
Benefactor	Benefactors are affluent Highborn merchants and tradesfolk who do not pursue wealth for its own sake, but who sponsor individuals, great works and endeavours.

Archivist	Archivists are a unique class of Highborn scholar dedicated to preserving the essence, or truth, of history, over and above accounts and evidence that may seek to undermine that truth.
Grey pilgrim	Grey pilgrims are a recent phenomenon. They walk the trods in a crusade to free the souls believed to be trapped between life and death by the vallorn, but they also oppose heresy and idolatry, convert foreigners to the Way, and seek to guide the other human nations of the Empire toward enlightenment.

17.1.3 Imperial Orcs

Warlord	Legions chose their own commanders, called warlords, with individuals chosen for their ability to provide clear effective leadership in battle, according to the traditions of the individual legion
Pitfighter	Professional fighters of the Pits in which the Orcs hone their combat skills; trading on the reputation for skill and strength that they have built up in previous fights, pitfighters build their careers until their notoriety means that other orcs begin to seek them out and actively challenge them.
Shaman	Most orcs only experience communion with the ancestors when battle is upon them but a few individuals - called shamans - are able to hear the voices more frequently; they are almost incessantly surrounded by the constant input of ancestral advice much of it bearing a contradictory or even hostile message.
Preacher	Those Imperial Orcs who embrace the Way and become priests.
Warcaster	The highly physical traditions of the Wintermark runesmiths has appealed to some orcs who adopt a similar approach and become Warcasters.
Oathwright	Oathwrights believe that the bond between an item and a person affects them both, items may gain worth by being owned and bonded to the right person and the right item affects an individual?s hopes of becoming an ancestor.
Bonesetter	Usually trained apothecaries, physicks or both, Bonesetters are expected to attend to the physical needs of the legion, but their remit runs well beyond this.
Thief-taker	Working closely with Imperial Magistrates, Thief-takers earn their income by collecting bounties on criminals who have fled the law and more rarely by taking payments from private individuals looking to identify perpetrators of crimes.
Reaver	Soldiers of the Legions who become dedicated to raiding and mercenary work.

17.1.4 The League

Merchant Prince	A Merchant Prince is the head of a Guild, the tight-knit mercantile organisations which define the shape of League society.
Bravo	Bravos are the members of the mercenary Free Companies, as rough and rowdy off the battlefield as they are disciplined and professional on it, and immensely proud of their Companies.
Bishop	The Bishops of the League are its high priests, who provide Virtuous guidance to any who can afford it, and who compete using the size and influence of their congregations.
Troupe Magician	Troupes are bands of actors who often go masked while performing, and when performing ritual magic. To them, magic is a commodity like any other.
Mountebank	Mountebanks are street magicians whose tricks may be sleight of hand or genuine magic, many of whom skirt the edges of the law playing short-cons and rigging street games.
Cicisbeo	A Cicisbeo is an expensive professional paramour, the only exception to League culture's absolute prohibition on extramarital relations.

17.1.5 The Marches

Steward	A steward is the chosen head of a Marcher household. However a steward leads their household only with the consent of the other yeoman.
Beater	Beaters are a roaming informal police force, learning every part of the land, watching for thieves, vagrants and other ne?er-do-wells. Beaters are often instrumental in settling land disputes between neighbours and they have a vital role in the tradition of beating the bounds. Most are skilled foresters or hunters.
Yeoman	The yeoman is to many the archetypal inhabitant of the Marches. They are a hard people, who own their own land and are well accustomed to a long day working it. Military service is a proud tradition in the Marches, and the majority of yeomen are also soldiers.
Monk	Monks minister to the spiritual welfare of the folk around their monastery, largely ignoring household boundaries. They divide their time between study of the Imperial Faith and working the farmlands claimed by the monastery.
Friar	Friars work their own land and provide spiritual advice and counsel to their fellow yeomen in their household. Many also serve as scholars for their community, acting as a chirurgeon, and teaching letters and history to young children.
Landskeeper	

	A landskeeper is a figure from the Marches magical tradition, who supports the territories or the nation as a whole. Landskeepers can use a variety of methods, from hearth magics and good practical advice to rituals.
Mummer	Itinerant entertainers who combine theatrical performance with magic using the techniques of dramaturgy. They attend fairs, markets and other regular gatherings performing plays and feats of skill but are often greeted with suspicion and (sometimes unfairly) accused of being tricksters and mountebanks.
Alder	Alders are the appointed leaders of market towns, and are the rough equivalent of the yeomen. In most cases these are wealthy merchants of the town, but often they include prominent town folk such as a friar or blacksmith who lives in the village.
Smith	A skilled crafter who has used a lifetime's experience selling their wares to become a canny trader and experienced negotiator.
Thresher	A thresher dedicates their life to tracking down those who use magic for nefarious purposes and finding ways to punish them.

17.1.6 Navarr

Brand	Navarri who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, who work tirelessly to aid others without fee. They might be from any profession - Thorn, Vate, blacksmith, tanner, it doesn't matter. They are named for the brand burned into the skin on their left cheekbone.
Dreamspeaker	Philosophers, visionaries, and activists who aspire to make dreams into reality.
Thorn	A Navarri sworn to service in battle - usually, but not necessarily, a warrior. Always tattooed, they often wear warpaint into battle.
Guide	A Navarri who follows the path of the Virtues, and takes it upon themselves to ensure that members of the Empire have found the place in society that they are best suited to.
Broker	A Navarri who serves as an intermediary between a buyer and a seller, usually claiming some sort of payment from the deal.
Vate	The magical practitioners of Navarr. Often called upon to perform rituals in service of the nation and the Empire, they are the Navarri most trusted to meet with eternals or their heralds.
Vine	A Navarr who has dedicated themselves to healing the wounds caused by the vallorn.

17.1.7 Urizen

Arbiter	An arbiter is the elected leader of the spires, citadels, and temples of Urizen. They are often called on to resolve disputes within a community or to represent it to outsiders.
Architect	Architects are interested in economics and how money moves around and the influence it exerts on the world.
Illuminate	Illuminates use their understanding of the Net of the Heavens to perfect the world; focusing on building up the virtuous... and removing the unvirtuous from prominence.
Mage	Mages are magicians motivated by politics. Ambitious and potentially ruthless, a mage understands that all magic is inherently political.
Seer	Seers believe that perfect understanding is they key to unlocking the Net of the Heavens. They seek out opportunities to get the right information to the right people so they can make the right decisions.
Sentinel	Sentinels study the art of war with dedication and commitment that matches that of any magician.
Stargazer	Stargazers are scholars of magical lore who love magic in all its forms; they are the theoreticians and debaters who push knowledge to its limit.
Sword scholar	Sword scholars are warrior priests with a passionate commitment to reason and wisdom. They exhort others to test what they have learnt.
Torchbearer	Torchbearers are dedicated to ensuring that as many people as possible know the truth. They work to keep fellow citizens informed about current events and abhor falsehoods and secrets.
Questor	Questors consider the Way of Virtue to be an unfinished work and the Doctrines of the Faith as incomplete. Questors are radical priests who are willing to tear apart the Way in their quest for perfection.

17.1.8 Varushka

Boyar	A Varushkan Boyar is the hard heart of a Varushkan community, whose first duty is as a strong protector of their people. Second to that, they arbitrate and govern their vale in council with their Wise Ones.
Warden	The Warden brotherhoods are heroic warriors who employ magical protection along with their armour and weapons to hunt down the terrors of the Varushkan wilderness, and to uphold Imperial Law.
Schlacta	The Schlacta are Varushka's well-organised bands of soldiery, who provide defence to a place or an employer.
Wise One	Wise Ones are the true hearts of Varushkan communities. They are the thinkers who deal with those problems which cannot be dealt with by strength, and who look through the appearance of things to discover the threats lurking beneath.
Volhov	A Volhov is a Varushkan who studies magic, particularly warding magic (so necessary to Varushka's safety) and divination, to uncover threats before they grow too great to deal with. They often find it necessary to deal with Eternals, and sometimes even to pacify

	Varushka's deadly Sovereigns with rituals or bargains.
Cabalists	Cabals are teams of ritual magic users, who often act as individual groups, independent of their vales. Each Cabal is different from each other, but their magical might grants them considerable influence.
Storytellers	Varushkan Storytellers are the nation's ragged priests, often itinerant, around whom entire communities will gather to hear news, entertaining tales, and spiritual messages told well.
Stzena	The inheritors of a tradition of night sentries, Stzena are bands of musicians who perform at local events.
Wagon raider	Opportunists who seek their fortunes by launching forays into barbarian lands to grab whatever riches can be found.

17.1.9 Wintermark

Thane	The leader of a Hall in Wintermark, a Thane settles disputes that lie outside the law and provides civic and military leadership.
Banner-Bearer?	Warriors whose purpose is to raise the morale and fighting spirit of their companions. Banner-bearers often literally carry their warband's banner.
Stormcrow	The ragged priests of Wintermark, who act as guides, witnesses and confessors, and who provide spiritual and moral inspiration and guidance for the Winterfolk.
Runesmith	Artisans who specialise in the magic of the old runes of Wintermark, who create engraved weapons and armour, or scribe warding marks to protect people or places.
Icewalker	The cunning mages of the Suaq, who use their magical skills and their knowledge of the Ice as part of their hunting tradition.
Mediator	A Wintermark merchant who specialises in negotiating weregild between aggrieved parties.
Maggot	A scavenger, a looter on the battlefield; "Maggots" are seen as scum by most Winterfolk.
Mystic	Deeply spiritual Kallavesi who make predictions about the future and advise their fellows on the wisest course of action. Often a magician, but some do it with hearth magic and intellect.
Scop	The professional entertainers of Wintermark, Scops are known for their mastery of saga and song, and their skill with alliterative poetry. They are responsible for granting an adult name to a child coming to adulthood.
Grimnir	The battlefield doctors and healers of Wintermark, Grimnir swear an oath to stay clear of the front lines.

18 Imperial Orcs groups

18.1 Overview

There are many important groups in the Imperial Orcs. Despite the number, only a comparative handful are involved in the affairs of the Empire (that is, attend the seasonal summits at Anvil). Their influence can wax and wane, and involvement in Imperial affairs is not always a reflection of their prominence within the nation itself. This page presents in-character information about the groups that attend, or have attended, Anvil ? the kind of thing that someone who asked about them might uncover from talking to their peers. In each case, the information is provided by the players and edited before being put on the wiki.

The majority of groups listed here are made up of player-characters. You should not create a character who is part of a group, or has personal history with one, without first clearing it with the appropriate players. You should also check before including other players' groups in your background. The background team are unlikely to approve a background that significantly impacts or involves another player character group without their permission. There are also a handful of prominent NPC groups included for completeness, but they are not intended for use by player characters.

18.2 Skarsind

18.2.1 Ashborn



Ashborn

- **Location:** Skogei Glens
- **Symbol:** An ash tree ablaze with the Hirmok rune shaped into the flames at the centre and a hammer on the trunk.
- **Colours:** Green accented with grey, brown and orange
- **Warlord:** Ashborn Vana

The Ashborn are fueled by the fires of Ambition. They believe that great deeds are the surest way to become an ancestor. Magical ability, military prowess, or devotion to the Way are all worthy ways to blaze a trail across the abyss and build a great pyre on the other side.

Flames birthed the Ashborn during the rebellion in the forests of Varushka. Once word of Thrace had reached the ears of the orcs enslaved in the logging camps, the fire was lit. That night, the sky turned a deep red, and the dark of the forest echoed with the sound of chains breaking under axes and screams of slavers. In the smoke that filled the air of the morning, the survivors made their escape into the woods. Smearing the ashes across their eyes, a symbol of remembrance for orcs that did not escape.

Once the Imperial orcs were accepted into the Empire, the Ashborn focused on Autumn magic. They fought for the Winter Sun and used the rituals taught to them by Urizen to bring victory. In more recent years, they?ve made a name for themselves for other things. Wielding strong magics in the coven, as well as having several of their members embroiled in various political houses of Anvil. The banner was integral in the formation of the Autumn Hammers. The Banner accepts orcs from any sept, provided their heart burns with the desire to get to work and make their legend.

18.2.2 Bloodcrows



Bloodcrows

- **Insignia:** Crow Skull, and in recent times a red Rhyv Rune etched on the skull head.
- **Colours:** Dark reds and Browns/white highlights

The Bloodcrows are one of the oldest legions. Their members are descendants of Varushkan slaves, many with distant Druj and Thule ancestry. Like most Imperial Orcs, the Bloodcrows have almost no connection to the barbarian septs but detractors point to an echo of the Druj bloodline in the battlefield cunning they display. During the Orc Rebellion it is said that the rivers of Varushka ran red with the blood with their kin and many, many humans. The Bloodcrows vowed to never forget. After the rebellion the Bloodcrows were led by a living legend, shaman named Fenrak who worked with Imperial magicians to help develop the modern orc approach to ritual magic. Ever since the Bloodcrows have been led by a so-called *Shaman Lord*, and have made a particular practice of winter magic.

The Bloodcrows strongly believe in the "old ways" (of Ancestors and the Howling abyss). For this reason the Bloodcrows look to build their legend in the eyes of their Ancestors and their people, rather than to the teachings of the Synod.

The Bloodcrow motto can vary and has traditionally been ?*Our souls. Our minds. Our flesh. Our Empire*?, though variations exist such as ?*Our souls, Our Way, Our Empire*?.

18.2.3 Bonewall

- **Insignia:** Bones in the form of the rune Tykonus

Founded by a visionary shaman of the Winter Sun, the Bonewall are dedicated to the soul of the orcish nation. They seek to bring the Way of Virtue and the Imperial Orc nation together, both by preaching the Virtues - the soul and centre of the Empire - to their fellows and by furthering understanding of the Orcish soul within the Synod and beyond.

Between summits, they are busy giving their extensive ossuary a more permanent home than the carts and tents it occupied before the Orcs were given Skarsind. The ossuary is a collection of bones of dead Imperial Orcs and records of their deeds, intended to aid future generations in communing with the ancestors.

The Bonewall are theologians first and foremost; many of them study the magic of Winter, but as a tool to further knowledge of death and the dead, rather than an end in itself.



Irontide

18.2.4 Irontide

Formed immediately following the rebellion, by one of Thrace?s closest comrades - Irontide Sutin - the legion swore allegiance to the Empire, proudly displaying their banners in the Empire?s name. Irontide history tells that the famed Iron Banner of the legion was stained with a drop of Ahraz? blood, a symbol of their bond to the Empire. Largely hailing from Jotun stock during the rebellion, the Irontide still maintain a strong tradition of a warrior culture, the majority of the legion being made up from professional soldiers in heavy armour and carrying shields. The Irontide harbour a seething hatred for the Jotun, seeing them as the worst of the barbarian nations, and will stop at nothing to see them crushed whenever they can.

Following the death of Empress Britta they have proudly led the Summer Storm army from the front, providing generals to lead the army to this day. Fiercely loyal to the Empire, they live by simple rules of battle, preferring to sell their lives rather than those of their allies: ?First in, last out?

18.2.5 Redhands



Redhands

- **Colours:** Orc browns with a red wrap on right hand and pennant of Red armoured hand in black and red

Redhands are the battle healers of the second army. Ready to pick up the fallen and return them to battle or patch them up to return home. They have spent significant time in the Mournwold supporting the army on the front lines. The Redhands have a broad objective of delivering medical assistance on the battlefield; the exact manner in achieving this is often down to the individual orc. Some are healers, magicians or bonesaws, who render aid to the injured. Some fight to push back the enemy so the fallen can be recovered, perhaps then standing over the healers as they revive their patients. A few are scouts, searching out the dying and alerting other Redhands to where their assistance is needed. Some simply fight with the Redhands knowing help is at hand should they themselves fall.

18.2.6 Skywise



Skywise

- **Insignia:** Single White Wing

A young banner of Imperial Orcs founded in Spring 379YE. The banner felt it was time for the Imperial Orcs to further explore their own history and discover missing pieces of the past for themselves rather than have their history told to them by others. It is their belief that by discovering their past, the Imperial Orcs could better understand the path to their nation?s future.

The Skywise are all magicians specializing in Day magic, mastering information gathering spells such as Clear Lens of the Eternal River, Skein of Years, and other forms of divination. It is believed that the founder was the first Imperial Orc to master the spell Skein of Years and the banner are said to record the stories of the objects they have cast the spell upon and hold them in vast collections.

In recent times the Skywise have split their duties between their birth army of the Winter Sun and establishing a home in Skarsind, in places known as the Iron Hearth and the former lands of the Sigehold Thane. Their shaman have also taken great pride in acting as conscience and good council to any who might seek their wisdom as well as offering guidance for those who hear the voices of their ancestors.

18.2.7 Stormcrows



Stormcrows
The Stormcrows are a reaving band of orcs, They are not soldiers; they chafe at the heavy hands of the army generals. Their ancestors spent their days being told what to do and it leaves a bitter taste in their mouths so for now they do as they please, They were given one life and they intend to use every aspect of it.

Some of their number hail from the legions and have turned away, others have heard the voice of an unknown ancestor urging them towards each other. They don't know the name of their shared ancestor but he has bought them together as a family, Their home has always been amongst each other aboard their fleet of ships, where they roam living the life of privateers or hunting supernatural beasts be it to fill a contract or because it feeds a desire.

The Stormcrows lean more towards the future and are willing to adapt and learn from their human brethren in the Empire, They also seek an active relationship with the Eternals through the Hall of the Worlds. Orc traditions are important to them but they know when change is for the better.

Amongst the banners fighters, the Stormcrow are filled with ritualists and healers often members are adept to filling in two or three of these roles. Almost everyone among their number can cast magic in some way. They support their family in their endeavours, are open-minded and will listen; they may not agree but everyone has the right to be heard. They also have preachers in their banner providing advice and insight into the Way.

They do not bind themselves with straight lines, rules and orders. They feel there is no wrong way to live a life as long as it is lived with pride, courage and to be ever vigilant, for subtle is the voice of corruption never will they fall to the heresy of freedom and luck. They have fought hard for all they are now and long may their wisdom prevail.

18.3 Mareave

18.3.1 MemoryKeepers



MemoryKeepers

- **Group:** Coterie
- **Location:** Icarion
- **Colours:** Black and white
- **Leader:** Ikahn

The MemoryKeepers are a group that aims to be the font of ancestral knowledge, its archivists and seekers of a greater understanding. To them the knowledge about shamans, mystagogues, ancestors and their influence on us should be universally understood, explored and shared. Its ideals came from its founder MemoryKeeper Ikahn, who spent most of his life supporting his shamanic brother; documenting his behaviour and how his struggles could be lessened. Wishing that others not have to face the same struggles he?s had with their own loved ones and pass down his knowledge.

The coterie strives to increase Imperial knowledge on the ancestors and to benefit future generations. A home for those living with the ancestors, those wishing to study and learn more about them, to care for those who are overwhelmed by them and to educate others on the ancestors. The group is divided into two halves: ?shamans? and ?guardians?. Members wear white stoles with designs intended to help outsiders identify their role.

"'?What we learn now, will help who comes next.″

18.3.2 Sand Vipers



Sand Vipers

- **Group:** Legion
- **Location:** Eoradal
- **Colours:** Green and brown
- **Leader:** Sand Viper IKK

The Sandvipers were once a Druj sept in the Forest of Ulnak, not mere subjects but true Druj, who lost out to rivals and were wiped out. The weak and the remnants of the sept were sold to the Grendel, who threw them into the Coliseum at the port of Beoraidh in Mareave. They took part in the Venatio, the grand hunts in the coliseum, and fought large beasts for the entertainment of the crowds. Fighting creatures as varied as wild cats, wolves and drakes, to elephants, land sharks and war rhinos, and even a few mandowla. Many of the sept perished, but some, the wiliest and canniest amongst them, survived to fight on as accomplished gladiators.

When the Empire sacked Beoraidh in Winter 382YE, **Bloodcrow Morgor** gathered members of the Sand Vipers into his arms and army. The legion travelled with him north, to the freezing cold lands of Skarsind. In the lands around the Skogei Glens, they settled and built a village. In 385YE, the legion was recognised as the Sannite sept, part of the Imperial Orcs but forever different to the Sunstorm; those who came from Thrace's rebellion.

When the Empire took Mareave, freeing more Sannites in the process, most of the legion moved back to Mareave and into Eoradal to find hidden places in the ruins and wood there to build a base and village.

We strike from the shadows and fade away,
We cut at the tendons to soften the prey,
We wound and weaken, make them pay,
Before we fall upon them and slay, slay, slay.

When the Empire found us we were but clay
Taken from the place where the Grendel held sway
Forged in fire, bile and venom so we can repay
Loyal to the Empire, we are here to stay, stay, stay

18.4 Contributing

Any player character group in the Imperial Orcs can submit an entry for this page. The entry should come from the out-of-character group leader and be emailed to plot@profounddecisions.co.uk.

It should contain the following information:

- Group archetype (coterie, legion, reavers). If your group doesn't have one of these archetypes, it will be listed in the "other" section.
- Territory and region where the groups lands are physically located.
- A description of your groups insignia, with an image if desired. Almost all legions have insignia, as do most coterie and reaving bands.
- If your group has specific colours, you can mention them here.
- The name of your warlord if you are a legion. If there is someone in your coterie or reaving band that serves as the in-character leader of the group, you can mention them and their title here

You should also include up to 250 words of description, detailing the kind of things that other characters might know about your group. Have a look at the description for a legion, reavers, and the leadership page for an overview on coteries for ideas on the kind of information that is useful. You should also include a few sentences of history, especially around the circumstances of the group's formation or origin.

Some other questions to consider include:

- If you are a legion, do you all serve with a particular army, and has that influenced your aims on the field?
- Are there one or more particular archetypes the group is particularly associated with? Are they focused around a particular sept? There is no requirement for, or expectation of, single sept groups, but does your group's ethos see a greater ratio of Tamazi?

Things to avoid include:

- Too much worldbuilding detail ? this represents information other characters may know about your house. It's not a place to define elements of the game world
- Lists of character names ? this isn't a place for getting your name on the wiki
- Too much emphasis on the past ? while it's useful to have a few lines of history, what matters in Empire is what your group does on the field at events

It's possible to update the information on this page over time (for example if your leader changes) with an e-mail to plot@profounddecisions.co.uk.

19 Imperial Orc Egregore

This is a placeholder page for content that PD are actively working on.



The Imperial orc egregore is the youngest of all, having been created during the reign of Emperor Ahraz.

19.1 Grud The Unshackled

Grud The Unshackled, sometimes called *White Death*, is the egregore of the Imperial Orcs. They are the most recent of the egregores to be created, having been brought into existence when the Imperial orcs were recognised as a nation in the reign of Emperor Ahraz.

Confusingly, perhaps, the hosts of the Imperial Orcs egregore often (but not always) takes the name "Grud", and rarely mention their previous name.

19.2 Current Hosts

19.2.1 Grud-Who-Thinks

The elder of the two hosts who regularly attends Anvil, this shaman is closed-mouthed about his past although it is believed he fought in the Orc Rebellion. He is known to be reasonably widely travelled, having spent years exploring the nations of the Empire and beyond. Unlike most Orcs he apparently spent a decade living by himself with only the voices of his ancestors for company, which by all accounts has made him one of the most peculiar orcs to appear in Anvil. It can be difficult when dealing with him to determine if one is speaking to the egregore spirit, the host, or one of his ancestors. He is often encountered deep in discussion with other shamans, magicians, or reavers; mumbling to himself about beards; arguing with his ancestral puppets; or shambling around the other nations muttering insults at passers-by and generally being unpleasant. There is some discussion among the orcs as to what aspect or aspects of the nation he embodies. He may represent the old ways, traditions and hearth magics of the Imperials Orcs prior to the rebellion that should always be remembered, or he may represent the brutal and bitter attitude of the freed orcs that really need to be forgotten before the Imperial Orcs can begin to look beyond the rebellion. No one, including Grud seems to know.

19.2.2 Grud (Na'grul)

Bloodcrow Na'grul, is a humble scout in service to the First Legion, beneath the banner of the Bloodcrows. A stalwart son of the untamed lands within the folds of the Imperial Orcs, he epitomises the disciplined strength and tactical acumen that resonates at the core of the nation. Raised amidst the primal rhythms of the wilderness, he proudly serves in the army of the Winter Sun. He is a quiet individual, observant and measured He offers advice and guidance to those who seek him, especially when they make decisions that could shape the destiny of the nation.



Grud the Elder is a mysterious figure who listens closely to the voices of his ancestors, which he sometimes claims are embodied in the puppets he carries with him. He is very peculiar, even for a shaman.



Na'grul was shaped by the rigid discipline and strategic prowess of a military scout. In the shadows of the untamed wilderness, he honed the skills that now help him act as a guide and guardian to the nation.

19.3 Former Hosts



Grud



Grud

19.4 Further Reading

Core Brief

- Introduction
- The people

- Culture and customs
- Look and feel
- Septs
- Orc species brief
- Hearth magic

Additional Information

- History
- Leadership
- Economic interests
- Military concerns
- Religious beliefs
- Magical traditions
- Territories
- Children
- Music
- Archetypes
- Groups
- Egregore