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1 Wintermark Look and Feel

1. REDIRECT [Wintermark look and feel](#)

2.2 Recent History

In the Winter of 370YE the Jotun invaded in force, taking West Marsh and pushing into Skymark. Before they could consolidate their hold, however a joint campaign by Wintermark and Marcher armies drove them out under the leadership of a young Skarsind general named Britta. Without her excellent leadership and inspirational presence it is widely believed that both Sermersuaq and Kallavesa would have been lost to the orcs. Further attempts at invasion were stymied by the re-vitalised and re-equipped armies left behind to guard against another attack.

The Jotun returned in Spring 380YE, again attempting to conquer the western marshes. This time their invasion was stymied by magical protections conjured by the magicians of Wintermark. They doggedly persisted in their invasion until Autumn when they unceremoniously abandoned their plans to try and take the West Marsh having made no appreciable headway in nine months.

The marshes of Kallavesa are the final resting place of the great heroes and heroines of Wintermark. Alone of all previous Emperors and Empresses, Empress Britta was interred in the marshes rather than resting at Necropolis. The Highborn have built a shrine and appointed a Guardian of Britta's Shrine, but the body itself (or as much of it as was recovered from the Thule) rests beneath the waters of Kallavesa.

2.3 Major Features

2.3.1 Rundhal

Once the capital of Kallavesa, in Rundhal where mystics sent dreams to the Steirn, and where the wise met to choose the monarch of Wintermark before the Empire. It is still a place of utmost importance to those who follow the Kallavesi traditions, and is where many of the oldest traditions are passed on. Scops come to the round hall to learn the stories and songs that tell their nation who they are and inspire heroes across all of Empire.

2.3.2 The Pilgrim's Trail

Following the internment of Empress Britta in the Sovevann, an opportunity to help pilgrims visit the sacred waters of Kallavesa to honour the heroes of Wintermark. Senator Olle Markusson commissioned the Pilgrim's Trails during the Winter Solstice 379YE, and they were completed shortly before the Summer Solstice 380YE. The Trail consists of many roads and bridges built to connect the major religious sites across Kallavesa to each other, and to the rest of the Empire

The Senate decision to construct the Trails was enthusiastically supported by many of the Winterfolk. Wry comments were made concerning how people who thought the "Anvil mud" would react to what the people of Kallavesa call "dry land". The completion of the project became a point of pride, and donations came in from across Wintermark.

Surveyors planned an optimal route through the marshes, intended to minimise the number of bridges required while at the same time ensuring the trails passed through as many communities, and past as many shrines and resting places as possible. At the Spring Equinox 380YE, word came that an egregore had fallen valiantly in battle, and that an agreement with the Jotun meant that his body would be returning home - along with the bodies of many heroes who had fallen fighting the orcs. The builders were determined that the trails would be completed in time that the body of Guthwulf would be the first to pass along them. The last blocks for the last bridge were placed as the funeral procession was mere paces away. As the procession was crossing, in a flash of inspiration a builder who had not yet put their tools away carved into the side of the bridge the name of the egregore, Guthwulf of the Red Embrace.

The name was soon joined by that of the other fallen heroes of Wintermark who travelled across it, and in other parts of the Pilgrim's Trail mourners have begun carving the names of the dead into the fabric of the last bridge they cross on their way to their final resting place in the waters of Kallavesa.



Artist's impression of Gull Isle's Hall by Enchantress Rosalynn Asterion

2.3.3 Gull's Isle Hall

Following the [advice](#) of an appraisal overseen by *Naomi of Virtue's Rest*, the Aviary of Ishal was tasked with searching for a suitably storied site that could serve as the location of a new meeting place with the Jotun. Through a communal ceremony, mystics of Wintermark were invited to the Aviary to divine the significance of three such places. The location chosen was inspired by a vision of a Jotun ghodi and Wintermark mystic on Gull's Isle who were clearly well acquainted. In their old age they lamented that their children were not learning certain important things, so the two agreed to foster the other's child for a period of time so that these important lessons could be imparted.

Gull's Isle can be accessed on foot via tidal causeways that connect to both Skallahn and Kallavesa. After a parley with a delegation of ghodi to share the story associated with the island, the Senate passed a motion to [construct](#) a feasting hall along the shoreline. Built upon a solid foundation of white granite that sinks deep into the earth and supported above the high tide line atop numerous sturdy tree trunks from around the Gullet, the feasting hall faces out to both Imperial and Jotun lands. Around the island's perimeter, numerous standing stones dot the coastline, made from the same stone as the Hall's foundations. Carvings of protective runes face out towards the water, with images of the ghodi and mystic's story facing inwards.

2.3.4 The Beacons of Wintermark

Shortly before the Spring Equinox 383YE, the [beacons of Wintermark](#) were completed, covering [Hahnmark](#) and Kallavesa. This sequence of beacons and watchtowers protects both territories from surprise invasion and allows heroic individuals to contribute to the defence of Wintermark as if they were a [fortification](#).

2.3.5 The Sovevann

The weed-choked waters at the heart of Kallavesa, boundaries and waterways shifting and reform all the time, as small islands of floating reeds drift on unpredictable currents. Attempts to build permanent structures here are stymied by the chaotic nature of the floating islands and the presence of several large colonies of [marshwalkers](#) who will not tolerate the disruption of their boggy territory.

The Plants of Kallavesa

The Kallavesa swamps are home to many rare and unique forms of flora and fauna that are below our abstraction layer in the sense that they are important to the Kallavesi mystics, but not important enough to be one of the [five herbs](#). While many of these herbs have useful properties (such as [groveblossom](#) or [bitterweed](#)), they are very much along the lines of headache treatments or gentle sleeping draughts, rather than [purification](#) of an [envenomed](#) wound or [repairing a crippled limb](#). Other examples might include tobacco, for example, or flavoursome herbs used in cooking, as well as mild narcotics.

It is very common for the folk of Kallavesa (of all traditions) to reference odd herbs or animal extracts - but it is important not to let other players get the impression that these plants are a big deal, as this will cause confusion, or disappointment.

One possible opportunity these herbs present is for a character who wants an unusual or distinctive [farm](#) or [business](#). Like the [herders](#) you could define your business as trading in medicinal herbs, or your farm as growing minor medicinal plants - indeed it is easy and appropriate to [diversify](#) a farm to include some of the potent herbs produced by a [herb garden](#).

2.4 Regions

2.4.1 Kallavesa Marsh

- **Qualities:** Marsh, Haunted

Sandwiched between the Westmere and the Sovevann, this is the place most outsiders think of when they imagine Kallavesa. Boggy marsh, dotted with lone huts on stilts where pale herons stalk and burbling frogs maintain an eerie chorus at dawn and dusk. These are the haunted marshes where the heroes of Wintermark rest, and the few scattered halls here are generally given over to the study of [The Way](#) or serve as [hostelries](#) for visiting pilgrims come to honour the dead. The presence of a grove at the heart of the Marshes [consecrated](#) to the virtue of [Pride](#) with [true liao](#) serves as a [special place of pilgrimage](#) for Winterfolk - a constant reminder to the entire nation of the [heroism](#) of their ancestors - and has far-reaching consequences for the entire nation.

The largest settlement in this region is [Masi](#) home to the dead and those who guard them. [Funerals](#) are usually held here. On the rare occasions that a [Feni](#) or [Jotun](#) raid is not turned back at the borders, it is the warriors of Masi who force them back.

The presence of so many dead heroes gives the entire region the *haunted* quality; there are more ghosts here than anywhere else in the Empire with the possible exception of [the Necropolis](#) in [Highguard](#).

2.4.2 Rundhal Marsh

- **Quality:** Marsh

Site of [Rundhal](#), the largest permanent settlement in Kallavesa. It is a place dedicated to wisdom and the mystic learning of the Kallavesi. While Rundhal Marsh is boggy and damp, the western stretches towards [Hahnmark](#) are somewhat elevated and drier - here are found many copses of [beggarwood](#) and other softwoods, carefully tended by stewards who ensure their health and that the availability of wood for building the unique stilted buildings of the marshes.

2.4.3 Skymark

The northernmost of the Kallavesa regions is chilled by northern winds for much of the year, but is also home to rich [farms](#) and sprawling holds. Small fishing fleets are common here, and several of the villages here maintain ties with their cousins in [Sermersuaq](#) via the Rikkivesi and the Atkonarq. In southern Skymark is [Ishal](#), across the cold waters of Sovevann from [Rundhal](#) and Masi, furthest of the three settlements round the lake at the heart of Kallavesa. This is where the wise go to read the future in the flight of birds and the night skies, as the scops learn at Rundhal and the dead heroes rest in the marshes near Masi. It's a place for the old, for learning and for clear thought. "*Threes, and threes and threes,*" the seers say, those who foretold the coming of the Steirn. The [Aviary of Ishal](#) is a centre of learning for the [mystic](#) tradition.

On the waters of the Rikkivesi floats [Hyljehal](#), a unique hall [built by the Empire](#) to serve as a meeting place between the seal-shifter people and their Wintermark cousins. It may be moored along the shores of either Kallavesa or Sermersuaq. The [Mediator of Hyljehal](#) - traditionally a [Suaq mediator](#) is charged with maintaining good relations between the two people.

2.4.4 West Marsh

- **Qualities:** Marsh, Coastal

On the shores of the Westmere stands [Westerhal](#), home to the small fleet of Kallavesi boats that keep the coast safe from [Jotun](#) raiders. Its importance

has slowly dwindled, in part due to the rise of Meade in the Marches which has much better access to wood and stores, but the patrol ships of the Marches are uncommon this far north. Once it was the second settlement of Kallavesa, and there are residents who would like to see it take its place again as a centre of trade and defence of Wintermark - perhaps with a new fortification.

2.4.5 Wittal Grove

- **Quality:** Forest

At the heart of the grove stands **Wittal**, a place of learning and the study of herbs and plants. Many **grimmir** have spent a season or more studying here, as have healers from further afield, even a few from far **Urizen**. Some never return from foraging expeditions into the deep-woods; the **Feni** are usually blamed. The inhabitants of Wittal also maintain **The Tree of Swords**, a lone elm tree in a glade hung with the swords of dead Wintermark warriors that is also the heart of a strong Winter **regio**. Weapons are hung there of warriors who died with their quests uncompleted. It's said that if the tree ever flowers, the warriors will return.

Where the trees join the **marshes**, on the shores of the Westmere, stands the small port of **Fisk**. Before there was an Empire, Fisk was an armed camp watching the orcs of what is now **Mitwold** (and later, the Marchers who displaced them). After the formation of the Empire, the warriors largely left Fisk and the traders moved in. Today, Fisk is a small but prosperous port allowing adventurous **ship owners** to trade with **Meade** and the Marchers and even with foreigners across the sea as far as the **Sarcophan Delves** and the **Sumaah Republic**.



Rane Shardbearer, Senator for Kallavesa

Summit	Elected
Winter Solstice 387YE	Rane Shardbearer
Winter Solstice 386YE	Rane Shardbearer
Winter Solstice 385YE	Rane Shardbearer
Winter Solstice 384YE	Rane Shardbearer
Winter Solstice 383YE	Rane Shardbearer
Winter Solstice 382YE	Edythe Dunne
Winter Solstice 381YE	Edythe Dunne
Winter Solstice 380YE	Káre Markusdottir
Winter Solstice 379YE	Káre Markusdottir
Winter Solstice 378YE	Uskolli
Winter Solstice 377YE	Uskolli
Winter Solstice 376YE	Uskolli

2.5 Recent Senate Elections

As an Imperial territory, Kallavesa is represented by a [senator](#) elected in the Winter. This title is currently held by Rane Shardbearer; it will be reelected at Winter Solstice 388YE. The table to the right shows the citizens who have been elected to hold this title in the years since [Empress Britta](#) died.

2.6 OOC Notes

- All the regions of Kallavesa are under Imperial control
- Attempting to build a permanent [fortification](#) in one of the regions with the marsh quality is likely to encounter additional difficulties.
- While it is possible for armies to travel from [West Marsh](#) to [North Fens](#) in [Bregasland](#), it is not possible to cross the Westmere into [Ottermire](#); Imperial (or Jotun) forces will need to go through [Mitwold](#) if they wish to reach Ottermire (or Kallavesa Marsh).
- The [Beacons of Wintermark](#) are a unique wonder that [helps defend](#) the territory. They only inflict casualties on an attacking force in the region of [Rundhal Marsh](#).
- As long as the entire region of [Kallavesa Marsh](#) remains in Winterfolk hands, the nation can support an additional army as detailed [here](#).
- [Congregations](#) in the territory benefit from the [Pilgrim's Trail](#) and produce an extra 4 doses of [liao](#) each season.
- [Fleets](#) in the territory benefit from Trencher's Shining Ambition and benefit from an additional rank when engaging in [trade](#)
- [Herb gardens](#) in the territory benefit from the [Healing House of Wittal Grove](#) and produce an extra 3 drams of [cerulean mazzarine](#) each season.

3 Mystic

3.1 Overview

In Wintermark, mystics are characters who use their skills to help others unravel their **skein** and make auspicious decisions. The **Kallavesi** emphasis on wisdom and insight means that many fall easily into the role of the mystic, but there are **Steinr** and **Suaq** mystics in some halls. Most mystics are skilled magicians, using a mastery of **Night** magic to help them unravel the skeins, but even this is not mandatory. In Wintermark, any character that acts as an advisor or counsellor to others, helping them to make wise decisions, is called a mystic.

3.2 Playing a Mystic

Any character can aim to be a mystic; magic can help you, but it is not a requirement. What you need is to be able to effectively convince other players that your character can help them predict the future. This is not an easy skill but three suggested methods are discussed below.



Costume by [Custom Costume Company](#)

3.2.1 Using Magic

There are some **Day** and **Night** rituals that allow characters to make prognostications, effectively guesses at what will occur in the future. Of the two types of magic, night magic is likely to be more useful to a mystic, as the results are more open to interpretation and more suited to the numinous approach of the mystic. Although magic provides access to an external source of answers, it is unwise to try to rely solely on it to play the part of the mystic. The answers that magical rituals provide are available to anyone who plays a magician with those skills, and it is easy for other players to treat your character's skills as the basis for advice, rather than your character.

3.2.2 Divination

Mystics use a bewildering array of divination methods to unravel the skeins. The flight of birds is favoured when it is available, as is oneiromancy, the study of dreams, but droplets of hot wax in water and even runes from a bag can all be used. There is no external source of answers when using

divination methods: it is entirely up to you to create whatever omens and interpretations you feel are valid. Because many players know this, this method is the least likely to produce answers that other players accept. The key is to make the roleplaying portentous and impressive: the more you involve other players in what you are doing, the more they enjoy the roleplaying, and the more likely they are to respond positively to the advice you give them.

There are countless [methods that people have invented to divine the future](#), it is worth having a read through the list, and if you are planning to make use of this style, then spend some time thinking about what methods you can use that will be enjoyable for you and other players.

Because you are making up the answers, there is the potential to produce advice that supports or helps your character, rather than the person you are advising. This is fine, but it is worth appreciating that the more transparently self-serving your advice is, the less likely anyone is to want to follow it. The Kallavesi earned their position as advisers and counsellors by developing a reputation for delivering impartial wisdom - you will need to strive for this if you want to be valued as a mystic.

3.2.3 Giving Real Advice

Mystics act as advisers and counsellors to thanes and other important Winterfolk; their role is to help work out when decisions are important and what the most auspicious option is. Your character can have magical skills that help them do this or you can use the inherent mysticism of divination to create your own answers, but you can also just offer real advice. The more alert you are to the political situation, the more aware you will be when important decisions are being made. These are moments to point out that an individual's skein can be forked, that they have the opportunity to make a decision that will fundamentally affect their future. By staying alert to these moments you can help other players see when important decisions are being made and avoid them falling into things without spending time thinking about them and deciding what to do.

If another character turns to you for help, you should ask for as much information about the situation as they can give you. The more you know about the decision they face, the more you can simply give them some good advice based on whatever seems best to you. People making decisions often want validation of the decisions they have made, so that they feel more confident about them, or you can simply act as a counsellor and give as wise and shrewd advice as you can.

Like using divination to create answers, giving good advice means you will need to be careful to try and give impartial and genuinely useful advice when you are trying to build up a reputation as an effective and useful mystic.

4 Wintermark religious beliefs



A stormcrow provides the moral centre of a hall.

4.1 Overview

As with the other Imperial nations, the people of Wintermark embrace [the Way](#). For centuries before the foundation of the Empire, however, the halls of Wintermark practiced their own spiritual beliefs, rich with ancestor spirits and mysticism. These beliefs have largely fallen out of favour, but along with [heroism](#), some elements of these traditions have endured and become entwined with modern Wintermark practice of the Way.

Priests in Wintermark are a widely varied group. The three people traditionally tend to favour certain virtues over than others and priests often argue among themselves about the best balance between virtue and heroism for the Winterfolk. In addition to the priests familiar to Imperial citizens, some Winterfolk choose to adopt the calling of the stormcrows.

4.2 Stormcrow

Stormcrows provide spiritual and moral guidance through the tales of the greatest heroes of the past. Regardless of their tradition, they wear the familiar [Kallavesi feathers](#) and a black or grey tattered and layered robe. The stormcrows compose and recite verses which recount the feats of the paragons and other heroes.

A stormcrow provides the moral centre of every hall, pushing them to perform the deeds their souls long to achieve and to live up to the legacy of the heroes who have gone before. Their duties are often very serious, but many also strive to be the heart of the community, providing cheer through the dark winter nights and reminding their fellows of the joys of being alive. A stormcrow might find themselves preaching the need to laugh in the face of death, conducting grand and glorious death rites, or testing their congregation with riddles. Their preaching, rites, and riddles often refer to the [birds sacred to the Winterfolk](#). Whatever form religious observance takes, it usually ends with music, laughter, and feasting.

Inevitably the stormcrows favour those tales that sing to the Wintermark spirit. [Pride](#) and [Courage](#) are prized above all things followed closely by [Wisdom](#). Tales of [Ambition](#) or [Prosperity](#) are usually reserved for those thanes who seem to be exhibiting an unseemly tendency towards caution or miserliness. In battle, however, at least one stormcrow will endeavour to remain by the side of whoever has command. In this way they seek to remind them that it is a warrior's place to show Courage, but a thane's place to show Wisdom.



Stormcrows push others to live up to the legacy of heroes.

In Wintermark it is considered a cowardly, childish thing to gossip about the inadequacies or misdeeds of another. Instead the stormcrows serve as a sort of confessor. Anyone can go to them and share a story of a misdeed or failing they have witnessed, and then depart secure in the knowledge that the stormcrow will deal with it. The stormcrow seeks out the truth of the matter and deals with the situation as openly or discreetly as they see fit. When a stormcrow says *?the birds told me?* they mean that someone has confided in the stormcrow. They will not reveal the source. Likewise a person who feels guilty can seek out a stormcrow and confide whatever it is that is prompting the guilty feelings. A stormcrow can lay a penance, and witness the completion of that penance, effectively absolving the person of their shame.

Stormcrows also serve as witnesses to what their people say and do. In Wintermark it is important to carry through on any deed that you have claimed you will do. They have no patience for empty boasting. This embodies the virtue of Courage as well as the idea that it is important not to go back on your skien. Stormcrows fight alongside Winterfolk who have made boasts or claims for their achievements in a coming battle or who have otherwise set themselves a particularly dangerous task. In this the stormcrow serves two important roles. Firstly they can carry back the tale of a good death or vouch for the honesty of accomplishment if a person survives the battle. More importantly a stormcrow knows that by acting as a watcher they can bolster the courage of the person they are watching, helping them to stay true in the face of their fear.

During the [election](#) of the Wintermark [senators](#), the stormcrows are also responsible for distributing the coins used as part of the election to the poorest Winterfolk present.



The stormcrows must sometimes be hard.

4.3 The Frayed

Individuals who make inauspicious choices, committing crimes or making cowardly or greedy decisions that betray the trust of others, lock themselves into an unheroic skein. They incur the contempt of their fellows as their skein carries them towards [the Labyrinth of Ages](#) with their souls stained by their actions. They are called the frayed, a reference to the way their choices have damaged their skein. Wintermark heroes who are convicted of serious crimes, or individuals who feel great guilt over a personal failing, become frayed.

For the frayed to restore their skein to a heroic path takes a great deal of effort and wisdom; for most warriors battle is their only opportunity to achieve this. Here the frayed fight alongside a warband rather than as part of it and seek out the most dangerous fights in the hope of redeeming themselves. Those who do so and survive may eventually re-join their warband. If they became frayed due to committing a crime, then it is never mentioned again once their sentence is complete. Those who have not have been able to redeem themselves through acts of bravery and valour continue to fight as a frayed until they prove themselves or die.

It is common for several frayed to fight together in battle to improve the chances of all and some groups of frayed take an oath to continue to fight together as a warband until all have proven themselves. If worthy, such bands often attract a stormcrow, who fights with the band even though they are not frayed. The stormcrow provide spiritual guidance as well as witnessing their efforts to redeem themselves.

The Winterfolk are, by nature, a virtuous people and their stormcrows were teaching about Pride and Courage long before we arrived. Our words about the reincarnation of souls were also accepted as confirmation of truths already known to them. Their superstitions around birds are misguided, but I sense no idolatry here; merely the lingering traces of older traditions from less enlightened times.

Wayfarer Malachi in Epistles to the Winds of Virtue, 12 BE

Chronicle of Heroism

During the Summer Solstice 383YE, the Senate voted to support the creation of a "chronicle of heroes", allowing the priests of Wintermark to identify and record the heroic deeds of the scions of the storm. Taking inspiration from the assembly of [Prosperity](#), and their [Roll of Benefactors](#), the chronicle allows the Wintermark National Assembly to add a name to the chronicle by [raising a statement of principle](#), which must pass with a [greater majority](#). The judgement should include a clear description of the heroic deeds being chronicled, these would be added to the record along with the hero's name. As always with a statement of principle that receives a greater majority, there is some potential for additional effects.

The Chronicle of Heroism is recorded [here](#)

Non-Kallavesi Stormcrows

Players often ask what costume is appropriate for non-Kallavesi stormcrows. Remember all that is said is that they wear the traditional Kallavesi feathers and a black or grey tattered and layered robe. The main distinction of a Kallavesi stormcrow specifically is that they will wear a full bird headdress. The tattered and/or layered effect is meant to give the impression of feathers, and this is partly because we recognise that making costume that incorporates a lot of feathers can be tricky to achieve quickly. Instead of a robe, feathers can be incorporated in other ways, such as a mantle or collar, or as part of a Suaq coat, but the costume should include some black.

Many players want to make sure they retain their Suaq or Steinr identity whilst still appearing to be a stormcrow, but it is partially by design that stormcrows are instantly recognisable regardless of their tradition. The point is that Winterfolk are proud, and they need stormcrows to talk about sensitive matters they don't want to bring up in public - often related to shortcomings of themselves or others. For that reason it is important to be confident that someone is a stormcrow before they start the conversation. In addition to this stormcrows are meant to be a watchful presence, that encourages others to virtue by their presence. Further to this, remember the stormcrow tradition is an evolution of the religious traditions of the Kallavesi, so if the priestly garb of Wintermark has a slightly Kallavesi look, that is again by design.

4.4 Further Reading

Core Brief

- Introduction
- The people
- Culture and customs
 - ◆ Kallavesi
 - ◆ Steinr
 - ◆ Suaq
- Look and feel

Further Reading

- History
- Political leadership
- Economic interests
- Military concerns
- Religious beliefs
- Magical traditions
- Hearth magic
- Territories
- Children
- Music
- Archetypes
- Groups
- Egregore