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1 Wintermark



?The storm can never break us.?

Here is Wintermark, where the frozen wind howls down from the eternal storm of Sydanjaa to face a people stood shoulder to shoulder, holding steadfast against the cold. Revelling in battle, the indomitable Winterfolk stare down every threat with their heads unbowed, for they know that death is only the long sleep before the dawn. Always courageous, they commit themselves to every challenge, matching wits and weapons against worthy foes, forging victory from adversity on the anvil of the north.

The Winterfolk are three great peoples - the wise Kallavesi, the bold Steinr and the clever Suaq - wrought into a single mighty nation. Their banner flies the three rings joined together - three peoples bound with one breath, three voices raised together against the storm. Strength, wisdom, cunning, entwined together to form an unbreakable cord.

Wise Shamans untangle the skeins to peer into the future. The Thanes appoint banner bearers to lead the warriors to battle. The Grimnirs, forbidden from battle by sacred oath, minister to the wounded. All the while, the stormcrows watch, keeping the people's Courage in place and ensuring that no oath goes unheard or unkept. At the end, the scops gather up the dead, raising them up in song and poem, so that their deeds will echo through the halls of the dead.

This can be a harsh land, but it does not breed harsh people. They hone their minds with riddles and mysteries and their souls sing with poetry. They craft beauty for the dreadful arts of war, weaving runes into every axe, shield and helmet. Their wise traditions of weregild and moot laid the foundations of the Empire's law and governance. They are the beating heart of the Empire, and they know that if only the other nations followed their example, the Empire would rule the world.

1.1 Five things about Wintermark

- **Scions sired by a storm.** Wintermark is a harsh land. Mastering it has made us strong.
- **A hero's tale ends with a good death.** We glory in battle; we stand tall and do not skulk from danger.
- **Cold cannot compromise.** We do not compromise even with ourselves. Not even age or injury turn us from our undertaking.
- **A hero has a name.** We prize individuality; your name is the beginning of your story.

- **Three tears entwined.** The three peoples of the Wintermark are indivisible; they live together and fight as one.

1.2 What the Winterfolk are not

- **Vikings.** The Steinr are inspired by the Saxons and the Rohirrim from Lord of the Rings and they follow the Imperial religion. There are no longships, raiders or horned helmets, and Thor and the Norse pantheon are actively excluded from the brief.

1.3 Further Reading

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- Look and feel
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2 Wintermark people



2.1 Overview

The Winterfolk were once three separate peoples: the Kallavesi, the Steinr, and the Suaq. Although they unified years before they joined the Empire, they preserve the heritage that made each tradition strong. Which tradition you follow is not an accident of birth but a choice made by each Winterfolk child as they reach maturity. Just as one might be born a peasant and rise to become a Thane, so someone can be born to a Steinr family and leave to follow the path of a Kallavesi mystic or journey with the Suaq as a scout. Children gravitate towards whichever tradition calls most strongly to them as they come of age.

All three traditions are equally respected; they are all crucial to the survival of the nation. Although a single tradition predominates in each territory of Wintermark ? this is a consequence of landscape and history ? most communities include members of all three. They refer to themselves as Winterfolk, especially when talking to outsiders. They no longer consider themselves three peoples; they are one people, but with three traditions.

Many Winterfolk maintain the old belief in the Skein which says that when one decides to do something, one should be absolutely committed. Vacillation is anathema as is trying to go back on one's skein by trying to undo a decision one has made. When they hunt monsters across the icy wastes, they seek to kill all of them. When they design a fortress or a suit of armour, they strive to make it impregnable. When they go to war, they are prepared to die for their cause.

They judge people not by the company they keep or by their words, but by the things they do. They live their lives to the full, throwing themselves into whatever they are doing with gusto. They are generous in triumph but selfish in defeat. The mark of a Wintermark hero is that they take personal responsibility for their failings but they share their victories with everyone. The more people involved in a heroic deed, the more heroic it is seen to be. Whenever the Scops tell a tale of a battle, everyone who fought at that battle stands a little taller, even if their specific deeds are not recounted.

All Winterfolk admire personal heroism. They relish challenges as an opportunity to prove themselves. Battle is an obvious opportunity to show one's worth, but they also recognise the challenges that are overcome with cunning or wisdom. Whether triumph is won by force of arms, imagination and cunning or wise and profound insight does not matter to the Winterfolk. What counts is how significant and notable the triumph was and how many

benefit as a result of the deed. Winterfolk heroes are those whose prowess and noble qualities serve or inspire others.



Many Winterfolk maintain the belief in the Skein
While the stereotypical Winterfolk crafter is often thought of as a weapon or armour smith, they are also known for their expertise in civil and military engineering, their construction of great fortresses and other defensive structures and their delicately engraved jewellery. The Winterfolk prize individuality, not just as people, but in the things they do and the things they make. Winterfolk crafters take immense pride in incorporating complex runes into the things they create. The Winterfolk delight in this act of creation; they enjoy making beautiful and unique things, whether it be a torc, a weapon, or a poem.

2.2 Names

Winterfolk names are primarily Saxon and Finnish in flavour.

2.2.1 Sample names

Aarne, Agatha, Alric, Anja, Burmoth, Cynestan, Dunstan, Eadric, Eawyn, Edith, Elina, Eomer, Emma, Esa, Gytha, Inga, Kaisa, Kye, Lyydia, Maethild, Marko, Needa, Oswald, Reet, Ricola, Siward, Suvi, Theodric, Topi, Urho, Ville, Wulfric, Wynflaed, Ymma.

N.B. Whilst some names are inspired by real world names which may be given to specific genders, Empire is a gender blind setting and people of any gender choose any name they like that is appropriate to their nation.

When they are born Winterfolk take their second names from the thane's hall to which they belong, (which in turn will have been named after its founder) or less commonly they may take the name of one of their parents. In either case, the name is adjusted to make the name flow.

The Winterfolk strive to commit deeds worthy of a name, to earn a name. This name is bestowed by the scops and is a word or phrase that reflects the character's achievements. You can create a character who has already achieved their name or one who is still looking to earn their name.

- *{given name} {thane's hall}ing* e.g. Alric Marking (Alric of Marko's Hall), Reet Ceorling (Reet of Ceorl's Hall).

- *{given name} {parent's name}sson*, *{given name} {parent's name}sdottir* or *{given name} {parent's name}sbarn* e.g. Hrothgar Arnesson, Adla Runasdottir, Inga Siwardsbarn
- *{nickname and given name}* e.g. Wulfric the Bear, Wise Lyydia, Black Dow.

2.2.2 Naming resources

- Saxon names
- Finnish names

2.3 Further Reading

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3 Wintermark culture and customs

3.1 Skein

The Winterfolk believe that each individual has a skein, a path down which that individual travels. A person's skein is not predestined at birth, rather it is fixed in places by the significant choices they make as they pass through life. The steps along the way are only the consequences of your skein; the critical moments are the points at which the individual makes a momentous choice - this is when their skein can alter. In the Winterfolk view, what happens in your life, your skein, is a direct consequence of the choices you make, the path you choose through life - the key therefore is to make the right choices.

Obviously not all the choices that a person makes are notable; what is important are the key points when far-reaching decisions are needed. At such points an individual's skein forks with the opportunity for different consequences. The Kallavesi have handed down various methods to help them identify these moments and more importantly to be able to identify what the consequences might be. Those who can accurately read a person's skein and give them advice to help them make the most auspicious choices, called mystics, are important figures in Winterfolk society.

According to the mystics, once the skein has been forked then it cannot be reversed. A person's skein can only be travelled one way; decisions cannot be undone, so it is foolish to dwell on any decision once the choice has been made. By accepting that your skein is fixed, you can commit yourself to your course and make the best of what has been decided. By travelling forwards along your skein you can hope that the future will bring opportunities to make more auspicious choices.

3.2 Scars

Scars are important to the Winterfolk. According to tradition a warrior who emerges blooded from a battle has demonstrated heroism by finding a worthy enemy to fight, and is celebrated as a consequence. As a sign of recognition, some Thanes will cut a young warrior who has fought well in their first battle but not been blooded. Others will mark a young warrior before their first battle as a way to encourage them to avoid taking unnecessary risks. Some bands re-open old wounds before a battle begins so that those who face them can mark their courage. All such cuts are little more than a nick, but done with a sharp knife so that they bleed profusely.



When a warrior is wounded in a memorable fight, they will often encourage the grimnir to treat the wound "*so that it scars well.*" Scars are badges of honour; they serve as a visible mark of the warrior's skill and permit them to boast about the battle later - there is rarely anything to brag about a fight in which you didn't get a scar.

The bold, direct and uncompromising nature of the briar lineage makes them welcome among many Winterfolk, especially those of the Steinr tradition. The bark-like material that covers their wounds is treated like any other scar and a briar with strong lineage is often given additional respect as a result.

3.3 Hospitality

Any traveller visiting a hall in Wintermark may claim one drink, one plate of hot food and a bed by a hearth for one night, without any payment or even thanks. This generosity is mandated for one occasion only; beyond this a hall owes a traveller nothing and may turn them out into the night. However, a guest who works for their sustenance and shelter is entitled to hospitality for another night, and it is customarily unacceptable to refuse a traveller who offers to work. Wintermark folktales are filled with stories of unwanted guests who overstay their welcome which usually end when a cunning Suaq tricks them into taking unmerited food or drink, or into failing to complete their assigned work.

Some thanes choose to follow this tradition when camped with their people in the field, others refuse as tradition only demands they offer hospitality when in their hall.



Feathers are wound into the hair to gain mystic insight.

3.4 Birds and feathers

Birds are sacred to the Winterfolk, who believe that they bring a child?s soul at the moment of their birth and carry it away at the moment of death. Some wealthy Winterfolk keep birds of prey, to ensure that the heaviest and most powerful souls are brought to their children when they are born. Birds favour souls of their own nature, so a raptor usually carries the soul of a warrior or great hunter, while an owl or a raven usually brings the soul of a wise mystic or a cunning scout to be reborn.



Birds are often painted on clothing by the Suaq.
A bird?s wisdom is contained in the feathers that allow it to fly, and birds discard a feather when they are done with an idea or thought. Winterfolk of a particularly spiritual bent, especially stormcrows and Kallavesi mystics, often collect feathers and wear them for a lunar month. They seek to gain mystical insight by absorbing the discarded thoughts of the bird that shed the feather. Killing an animal specifically to collect its feathers is said to bring bad luck.

Birds are often used as symbols of the virtues in Wintermark. The raven symbolises Wisdom, the goose and the jay both symbolise Vigilance, the eagle, heron and swan all symbolise Pride, jackdaws often symbolise Courage, magpies symbolise Prosperity, hawks and falcons symbolise Loyalty, and the rook symbolises Ambition.

3.5 Scops

Scops are professional entertainers, often travellers, moving from hall to hall performing and looking for new material. Some Scops master an instrument, but many are poets; the most ambitious strive to master the high art of the Scop, the traditional Wintermark alliterative verse. Suaq and Steinr Scops traditionally give formal recitations of epic tales, favouring the stories of popular heroes. Kallavesi Scops often prefer to tell symbolic stories with complex imagery that are designed to help their listeners make auspicious decisions.

Scops have an important responsibility in Wintermark, for they are the ones who grant people their names. The scops watch the younger heroes of Wintermark, those who have still to make a name for themselves. Once an individual has performed a deed of note, they give them a name, to replace their childhood name. A scop is expected to craft a name that captures a person's greatest heroic achievement, raising them up in the eyes of their peers.



Many of the sagas are very long and a wise scop keeps a tankard close by to refresh their voice without breaking their rhythm.

3.6 Riddles

Riddles are a national pastime in Wintermark, and some scops make an effort to put the best riddles into rhyming verse and preserve them. The riddling tradition originated with the Suaq, who believe that creating and answering clever riddles helps a person grow more cunning, but is common in all three traditions. The Suaq like clever riddles with hidden meanings, while the Kallavesi prefer riddles whose answer reveals something about the nature of the person trying to solve them. The Steinr enjoy informal riddle-contests, where participants try to compose and answer spontaneous riddles on the spot. More formal riddle-challenges provide popular entertainment, and Scops are often called on to judge the best riddle in a contest, looking for the hardest, the most clever, the most eloquent, or the funniest riddle



3.7 The Good Death

The land of Wintermark is harsh but this serves to make the Winterfolk strong. It is the cold forge in which each of them is tempered. They face life unbowed by the ferocity of their land and refuse to acknowledge their own mortality. For this reason, death in their prime while striving to meet a challenge is preferable for many. Warriors seek the good death on the battlefield, but the good death is any ending that comes while pushing yourself to achieve one final act of heroism.

A few choose to walk north into the Heart of Ice, the great ice-storm Sydanjaa, and are never seen again. Legend says that they battle forever against the creatures deep in the storm. When someone chooses to walk into Sydanjaa they do not imagine it will achieve anything, but that it is preferable to a slow decline leading to weakness of mind and body in dotage. There is a widespread acceptance of the idea that those who challenge Sydanjaa find the good death in an attempt to unravel the mysteries and riddles of the endless storm.

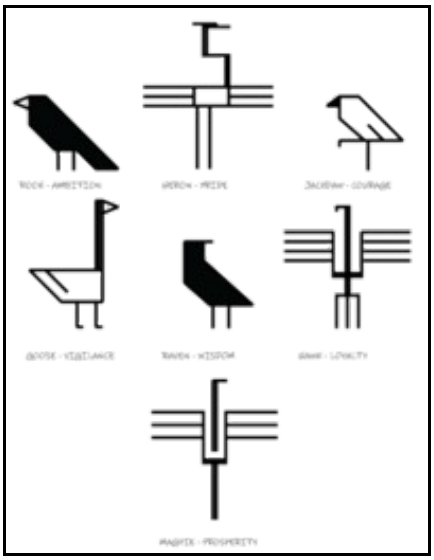
3.8 Funerals

Heroes are interred in the Kallavesa marshes, their bones lying in the dark waters alongside those of the first king of Wintermark and the great heroes who have come since. As a hero's life fed the nation when they were alive, their body feeds the marsh in death. ?*To sleep in Kallavesa*? is a powerful metaphor for the rewards of heroism, and to speak of ?*those who sleep in Kallavesa*? is to invoke the very heart of what it means to live in Wintermark.

Wealthy Thanes usually pay for a beautifully crafted wooden boat for their body which is then sunk beneath the waters. Paupers make do with a reed raft. Kallavesi mystics are skilled at preserving bodies for the long journey to Kallavesa.

In the past there has been conflict between the funereal mystics and the priests of the Necropolis in Highguard. The Highborn have strong traditions regarding the funerals of heroes and especially Emperors. Several times they have tried to claim that the remains of Winterfolk heroes who have done some great service for the Empire should be honoured by being interred in their cold marble crypts rather than lying in the swamp alongside their ancestors.

3.9 Icons and Artistry



On the battlefield, and as decoration in their halls, Winterfolk prefer brightly colourful banners with simple, clear symbols that can be seen well from a distance. A banner is a glorious shout or a challenge to the enemies of the Winterfolk. Those who take the battlefield without a banner are sometimes treated with suspicion due to the risk that they could do something shameful without being easily identified.

The Three Tears is the popular symbol for the nation of Wintermark. Usually white on a red or blue background, it references the gems set into the Crown of Three Tears. Another iconic symbol that specifically represents the unity of the three people is the Three Rings - a trio of interlocking rings woven together. Either of these icons is likely to be decorated with additional runes but precisely which runes varies from artist to artist.

Crafting is second nature to the Winterfolk. Stone, metal and wood are carved with runes, but they are rarely painted, coloured or enamelled, as crafters prefer to show the beauty in the underlying colours of the materials. By contrast fabric and leather are often decorated with carefully painted or embroidered images that complement their colour and texture.

There are no official or standard symbols for the Wintermark virtuous birds. Individual crafters are free to create their own sigils to reflect the virtue of a bird they are depicting. However you are welcome to use the beautiful designs created by Susan Cook which are available as a vector file or as a .pdf.

3.10 Further Reading

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4 Wintermark look and feel



Most halls in Wintermark have members from all three traditions.

4.1 Overview

Iron, hard, firm, strong, unmoving, earnest, well-crafted, perfectionist (Steinr), practical (Suaq), dreamer (Kallavesi), individual, heroic.
The Wintermark look is rugged and practical but strives to express the wearer's individuality. Each of the three traditions - Kallavesi, Steinr, and Suaq - has their own style of dress and way of expressing this unique personality. Sometimes minor elements of one tradition's style will be used by another, especially where a character has embraced an archetype more often associated with a different tradition (for example, the runesmith magical path is strongly associated with the Steinr, and Suaq or Kallavesi magicians who embrace it often include elements of a more Steinr style in their day-to-day garb). Regardless of these accents, it is generally a matter of pride for the people of Wintermark to demonstrate the style of their chosen tradition as strongly as possible.

Winterfolk art tends to be intricate and detailed. Stone, metal and wood are carved with runes, so crafters can show off their skills. The people of Wintermark use bright scarlet for things like banners because they can be seen for miles through snow and atop mountainsides.

See also Wintermark costumes and icons and artistry.

4.2 General Breakdown

The look of Wintermark is much more varied than that of some other nations due to the presence of the three traditions. Regardless of which tradition someone follows, however, certain traditional elements remain widespread through the entire nation. The differences between the three traditions are expressed in the way they add to and adorn this basic style.

The traditional costume for Winterfolk of any tradition is either a thigh-length tunic of linen or wool worn over trousers, or a close-fitting dress. In case, trousers are close fitting, often with wrappings ankle to knee.



Thigh-length tunics, tight or wrapped trousers, and tight
fitting dresses are popular regardless of tradition.
The Viking apron dress exists but is considered slightly old fashioned.

On the battlefield, Winterfolk favour heavy, layered armour with thick leather plates over chain. Only the Steinr make extensive use of shields, generally favouring round shields. Tear-drop shaped kite shields are also popular and provide an acceptable alternative to those who desire more full-body protection. Suaq and Kallavesi warriors tend to eschew shields altogether in favour of two-handed weapons, especially bows (for the Suaq) and spears (for the Kallavesi).

Weapons vary by tradition and individual choice, but are usually marked with runes. It is also common for Winterfolk - especially those of the Kallavesi tradition - to incorporate bird imagery into their day-to-day garb as birds hold a special place in Wintermark culture.

4.3 Kallavesi

- **Influences:** The Kallavesi tradition draws on images from Finland, the Kalevala, and the Crannogmen from *Game of Thrones*. As bog-dwelling shamans, their look is heavily informed by their mystic customs.
- **Materials:** Homespun checked wool, linen, fur, leather, wood and wicker, polished semi-precious stones.
- **Colours:** Greys, duns, moss, smoke, with occasional bright flashes of colour. Dark feathers, especially black feathers.

Kallavesi clothing consists of the standard Wintermark thigh-length tunic over tight trousers. Garments use drab colours that would not stand out against the bogs of the Kallavesa marshlands, and the fabrics used tend to be heavier and coarser than those used by Suaq or Steinr. Their clothing often includes a heavy cloak of wool or fur, often with a hood, designed to offer protection from the elements.

Feathers are a common decoration, especially the feathers of crows and ravens. The Kallavesi are even more likely than the typical Winterfolk to work feathers, avian bones, and bird imagery into their dress, in preference to runes or other animals. Fur - with the fur side facing out - is commonly used as an embellishment.

The Kallavesi are a tradition rooted in deep mysticism, and it is very common for even the most prosaic among them to wear personal totems, fetishes, and amulets with spiritual or magical significance. Masks are very common, usually depicting a favoured animal, especially a bird.

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4.3.1 Kallavesi Warriors

Kallavesi warriors favour leather and fur armour (both light and medium). When they want heavier armour, they favour leather or fur over mail. As with their clothing, armour is commonly decorated with feathers and beads. An animal headdress is sometimes worn as a helmet, sometimes in addition to more traditional head protection.

For weapons Kallavesi favour axes (especially long axes), staves, and fishing spears (often two-handed spears). Many carry an all-purpose gutting knife as a practical tool and for dispatching fallen opponents.

Kallavesi warriors rarely make use of shields. When they do they favour small wicker bucklers over the bulkier round- or tear-drop shields favoured by the Steinr.

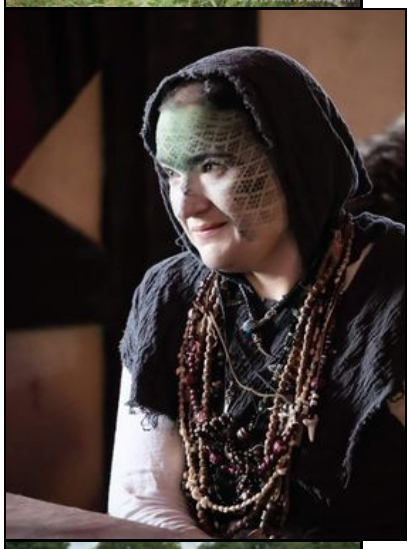
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4.3.2 Kallavesi Images

This gallery contains images of Kallavesi characters taken from Empire events.

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4.4 Steinr

- **Influences:** Saxons, Rohirrim, Tolkien?s Dwarves, Beowulf (2005), the Nords of Skyrim.
- **Materials:** Metals, furs, leather, stone, woollen cloth; richer fabrics may be appropriate for high-status Thanes.
- **Colours:** Dark shades of green, blue, red and brown, also dark metals ? iron, coppers, bronze.

As with the other traditions, the Steinr favour a thigh-length tunic over tight trousers. While still remaining practical, Steinr clothing is designed to show off the owner?s wealth. It may be dyed a bright colour (espcially bold reds), be intricately embroidered or have decorated hems in a contrasting colour or material. Steinr tunics may be layered to show off hems that are decorated with a contrasting fabric or braid. Theoden?s costume from Lord of the Rings is exactly the sort of outfit a wealthy or powerful Steinr might wear to display their prosperity - the tunic is made from a rich, intricately embroidered fabric.

Steinr enjoy wearing jewellery as another way to display their prosperity, with torcs and cloak pins being very popular. Silver and bronze are as popular as gold when it comes to Steinr jewellery - it is often the fine craftsmanship that attracts a Steinr rather than the monetary value of a piece.

Almost anything a Steinr owns might be inscribed, embroidered, or painted with one or more runes. The Steinr consider themselves the originator of the magical runes, and even the most prosaic is likely to trace or evoke one to aid them in a certain task.

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Lisa Curtis Photography
Roshar of Ashenhall

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4.4.1 Steinr Warriors

The Steinr have a strong warrior culture, and the Rohirrim from *Lord of the Rings* epitomise the look of their warriors. Armour is usually layered, with leather (or less commonly plate) worn over mail. The armour is often intricately tooled and embellished, again proudly displaying the wealth of the wearer. Conformity and uniformity are considered slightly distasteful by many Steinr - each considers themselves a heroic champion of their people and displays this individuality through their weapons and armour.

On the battlefield Steinr favour long swords, spears (both one- and two-handed), and Dane axes. Their weapons are heavy and practical, and as with everything else almost invariably decorated with runes.

When fighting with a one-handed weapon, the Steinr favour round shields, although tear-drop shaped kite shields are not uncommon.

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4.4.2 Steinr Images

This gallery contains images of Steinr characters taken from Empire events.

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4.5 Suaq

- **Influences:** Think of Sami reindeer herders and Inuit; independent scouts and hunters.
- **Materials:** Furs and hides, ivory, scrimshaw carved bone items.
- **Colours:** Light, washed out tones of cream, ivory, taupe, pale grey.

In addition to the thigh-length tunic, a Suaq commonly wears a heavy coat - an iconic piece of clothing for this tradition. These heavy coats protect them against the cold and the elements, and have become a symbol of their independence and self-reliance. Commonly made of reindeer and seal skin, they

are turned fur side in for warmth. Ideally, the heavy fur coats are richly decorated with important symbols ? designs of animals and symbols of enemies a warrior has killed are common as are the ubiquitous bird images and runes common to all Winterfolk.

While the traditional coat is heavy leather and fur-lined, in warmer climates, the coats may be lighter leather. In the imperial heartland in summer, sensible Suaq may choose to wear linen or canvas versions.

Jewellery is not unknown but tends to be more discreet than that favoured by the Steinr or even the Kallavesi. Shiny metal attracts attention and is often seen as at odds with the Suaq's role as hunters. Rather than metal torcs, rings, or bangles Suaq favour more natural materials - intricately tooled leather bracers, ivory or bone ornaments, feathers, and painted or engraved beads.

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Lisa Curtis Photography
Roshar of Ashenhall
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4.5.1 Suaq Warriors

Like the Kallavesi, Suaq warriors prefer leather armour for general use, and don mail shirts when they need heavier (and more restrictive) protection. As with their coats, Suaq paint their armour with symbolic designs of animals.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Suaq favour traditional hunting weapons. They are the Winterfolk who make the most use of bows, and they favour both one- and two-handed) spears in melee. Some also make use of staves, which serve the dual purpose of being weapons and aiding in crossing treacherous ice or snow.

It is uncommon for a Suaq to carry a shield, but when they do they favour leather stretched over wood frames or practical round wooden shields.

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4.5.2 Suaq Images

This gallery contains images of Suaq characters taken from Empire events.

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4.6 Magicians

Each of the three traditions has its own magical heritage. Any Wintermark magician might embrace any one of these paths, but they tend to be drawn towards the approach that matches their tradition. Where they follow a different path, they often combine elements of their tradition and their magical approach to create a unique look.

Runesmith

Runesmiths are a predominantly Steinr tradition. Even more so than other Winterfolk characters, their possessions will be marked with the powerful magical runes that are the focus of their study.

Mystic

Mystics are primarily drawn from the Kallavesi tradition. Most supplement their tradition's iconic costume with an animal headdress decorated with feathers and fur.

Icewalker

The Suaq make up the majority of the savvy icewalkers. They wear clothing appropriate to their tradition but supplemented with jewellery and amulets. Unlike runesmiths, their magical accoutrements are more likely to be adorned with stylised animals or symbols of a person's nature with only a scattering of runes. Non-Suaq Icewalkers may adopt the Suaq tradition of painting animals on their mage armour or clothing.

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Suaq runesmith

- 

Stenir and Kallavesi magicians
- 

Dramaturgist

- 

Kallavesi mystic
- 
Kallavesi magicians

4.7 Priests

In general, priests of Wintermark dress like the people they live alongside and counsel.

Those who embrace the path of the stormcrow wear a traditional ragged, heavy cloak and a costume adorned with tatters of material and fetishes. Even stormcrows who are not of the Kallavesi tradition are likely to incorporate some elements of the mystic look into their costume - especially when it comes to feathers and ceremonial masks.

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Lisa Curtis Photography
Roshar of Ashenhall
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4.8 Children

Children generally dress in the same style as their parents, at least until they are old enough to express a preference for one tradition or another. Even before they have passed their citizenship tests, some Winterfolk children feel drawn enough to a tradition that differs from that of their parents to favour dressing as if they were already a member.

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4.9 Camps

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Reshar of Ashenhall

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4.10 Inappropriate Costume

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

An LRP setting is defined as much by what you leave out as by what you include. In defining the Wintermark look we have actively chosen to exclude some elements. Please do not use any of the images or looks seen in this section. In particular please note that the Winterfolk were inspired by Saxons rather than Vikings and the setting does not include longships and the associated imagery.

4.10.1 Avoid: Hero Pants

The ideal Wintermark trousers are tight, not baggy. The more Viking or Rus style hero pants are perfect for Varushka. It's perfectly acceptable to wear hero pants in Wintermark, it is simply that they are more suited to Varushka.



4.10.2 Avoid: Thor?s Hammer

Thor?s Hammers have become as evocative and iconic as a crucifix. They are irrevocably associated with Thor, a deity that does not exist in the Empire game setting, so please avoid this specific piece of jewellery.



4.10.3 Avoid: Horned Helmets

The Steinr draw their inspiration from traditional Saxon imagery as well as the Rohirrim, rather than the Vikings. In particular horned helmets, like the one shown, are completely inappropriate for the nation.



4.11 Further Reading

Core Brief

- Introduction

- The people
- Culture and customs
    - Kallavesi
    - Steinr
    - Suaq
- Look and feel
- Hearth magic

Further Reading

- History
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5 Wintermark hearth magic



5.1 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, in Wintermark 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.

You can learn more about hearth magic, what it is and how it works, here.

5.2 Runes

The Winterfolk discovered the use of runes, and shared that knowledge with the Empire when they joined. The runes represent a potent magical tradition, but their use is by no means restricted to magicians. Beyond their immediate use in magic, they are also powerful symbols in their own right and are employed by people across Wintermark for countless purposes.

A baker might bake the Rune of Wealth into the crust of a loaf of bread, while a farmer might scratch the Rune of Fertility onto the handle of their plough. A tailor will think nothing of working the runes of wisdom and revelation into the hem of a garment he is sewing, while a woodcutter may quickly carve the rune of weakness into the trunk of a tree before taking her rune-marked axe to it. As a consequence, the baker's loaf might last a little longer before becoming stale, the farmer's field more fruitful, the thane wearing the tailor's tunic might find unlooked for moments of inspiration, and the woodcutter may find that it takes a little less effort to fell her tree.

One reasonably well-known method of harnessing the hearth magic represented by the runes is the creation of runeboxes. These weirwood or mithril alloy boxes are marked with the Rune of Might and the Rune of Secrecy to produce containers that are practically indestructible.

Runes in Play

While the use of runes in mundane crafting won't have any mechanical game effect, you can roleplay that a loaf of bread with a rune on it stays fresh for longer; that a rune-carved axe is particularly sturdy or never needs sharpening or cleaning, or that a tunic embroidered with runes means that you experience occasional flashes of inspiration or increased confidence. The effects of runes are subtle, but very real in the world, and you can choose how that affects your roleplaying.

Runes can also directly influence your roleplaying when you interact with them. Having a personal Rune of Wisdom, perhaps on an amulet, that you study for a few moments before making decisions can provide a cool character moment as well as buying you time to think things through.

Fortune telling with runestones is a simple activity that any mystic or similar character can use to add mysticism to a scene. It can also be used as a way to give someone advice that is backed up in-character with the power of hearth magic. Combining a little cold-reading with suitably mysterious pronouncements is a tried-and-true method of providing often eerily prescient-appearing in-character divinations.

5.3 Animals and Birds

The Winterfolk seek to draw on the laudable spiritual qualities that some animals symbolise. The three Wintermark traditions each have different ways of invoking this hearth magic. The Kallavesi create cunning animal masks that they wear when they want to draw on the animal's positive qualities. A magician might wear a bird mask to draw on the animals' wisdom, while a warrior might wear a bear or boar mask to draw on the creature's courage. The Suaq paint images of the animals on their clothing and equipment, or decorate their homes with icons and images of particularly favoured beasts. The Steinr work the images of animals into jewellery, and give people nicknames that draw on the symbolism of the animals they respect.

Birds are especially well-regarded in Wintermark; the Kallavesi in particular regard them as astute and powerful creatures. In addition to their spiritual qualities, every part of a bird contains magic. Their feathers help provide inspiration while their bones bring good health. Winterfolk often carry the hollow bones of a bird in a pouch. These are stroked with crossed fingers for luck at times of stress or when a wish is made.

Animals and birds in Play

The virtuous associations of birds are described here, while some of the qualities symbolised by animals are listed as part of beast magic. Adding feathers, bones, or painted animals to your costume is the common way to evoke this hearth magic, and working them into ritual magic even if you are not a practitioner of aspect magic can make any ritual feel more Wintermark.

This hearth magic explicitly gives you an in-character reason to change how you play your character. When you want to roleplay in a certain way, studying or touching an animal symbol, or donning the mask of an animal, can be used as a prompt to adopt the quality it represents. Masks in particular can create a profound change in your characterisation if you wish - effectively allowing you to play a pleasant or mild-mannered character most of the time except when you don your boar mask and become a confident and resolute warrior.

When you're describing someone, comparing them to an animal or bird can make your description more evocative.

5.4 Coins

In pre-Imperial times, the silver and gold coins minted by the kings and queens of Wintermark were stamped with the Rune of Destiny on one side and the Rune of Chance on the other, in recognition of their role as bearers of good fortune. Even if it is only a matter of a few rings, one or more coins given as a gift can bring fortune to the recipient. There is no particular hearth magic around paying someone what they are owed, only a coin that is unexpected or unlooked for brings good luck. One way some Winterfolk achieve this is by slipping in an extra coin when paying someone as a show of support for a job well done. This promotes a custom in Wintermark where some folk avoid counting coins paid to them by someone they trust in the hope of gaining good fortune.... Of course, if someone *does* count coins you have given them it implies they don't trust you and think it more likely you will have short-changed them than hidden a gift of good fortune in your payment.

The people of the Mark use coins to choose their leaders. Anyone may vote with a single ring, but those who want to show particular support use a coin of higher denomination. The more valuable the coin, the more good fortune it brings to the candidate. After the election, the coins themselves are given to the stormcrows to be distributed to the poorest. The good fortune accrued stays with the chosen candidate, however, even if they don't become Senator.



Curse coins bring bad luck to the recipient.
When folk in Wintermark wish a person ill, they may give them or pay them in curse coins, which bring bad luck to the recipient. The more numerous or valuable the cursed coins, the worse the luck. Curse coins are normal coins that have been blackened with soot, so they are readily visible to anyone who is paying attention, but one is easily overlooked in a pouch. Once the coin has been accepted, the curse cannot be removed by cleaning the soot off - the coin must be given to another to move the curse to them or else washed clean in the blood of an enemy, otherwise the curse remains. Wintermark folklore contains many stories of Suaq Icewalkers tricking people into accepting cursed coins or planting them on an enemy unawares.

Coins in Play

Not counting coins you are handed is a great way to demonstrate your trust for the person giving them to you, while pointedly counting them all out and double-checking your sums is a way for any Wintermark character to pointedly insult someone. Slipping someone a few extra coins without drawing attention to it may not have an immediate payoff, but can result in a moment of drama when the recipient realises what you've done.

Curse coins are a straightforward way to let someone know you're unhappy with them. A recipient might be tricked into accepting a curse coin in a pouch given in payment, but they work best when given openly.

A true Wintermark hero might choose to accept a curse coin, knowing they have wronged the giver and hoping thereby to find some way to mend their skein. Whether you trick another into taking the coin from you, or attempt to wash the coin in blood, lifting the curse can be a great part of any hero's story. Leaning in to the roleplaying around curse coins is a great way to create drama for yourself and others, even if that just means roleplaying that any misfortune that falls on your head is a result of the cursed coin.

5.5 Names

Naming something can imbue that person or object with power - provided it is done judiciously and truthfully. Parents often pick a name for a child that they hope will guide their path in life, naming them for a hero they particularly identify with. More important than a personal name, though, is the heroic name granted by the scops. This is a name that commemorates a great deed or expresses the recipients heroic nature, and it is always delivered in front of an audience of as many Winterfolk as possible so that they may witness the naming and grant it even more significance.

It is not just people who receive names - giving an identity to an object or place can also help to shape it. Steinr runesmiths in particular often name the items they craft in the understanding that doing so may imbue the item with a special power. Imperial techniques for creating artefacts are still based on the methods claimed by the Steinr, such that it is impossible to create an artefact without naming the item fashioned as part of the process. Likewise, it is impossible to hallow an item without naming it in some way. Traditionally the Steinr will give an item an evocative personal name such as "Foe-Smasher" or "Shieldbreaker" while the Suaq and Kallavesi usually favour more descriptive titles like "The Cup of Dreams" or "The Crown of Three

Tears".

Another powerful example of the importance of names lies with eternals - most of whom have more than one name. Eleonaris is known as the Sovereign in Scarlet and Gold, but also as the Lion of Summer and the Lady of Pennants and many other names. Icewalkers and others who deal with such beings are advised to proceed with caution. That the Lion of Summer is the same being as the Lady of Pennants is a fact that is long established and well understood - but the name an eternal chooses to use at any given moment may be important and significant - and it is imprudent to fail to acknowledge that fact.

Some mystics claim that just as a citizen of the League may take on another identity by donning a mask, so an eternal may take on another identity by donning a name. Those same magicians claim that most mortals are actually no different to eternals in this respect - just less careful.

Names in Play

Names are serious business for Winterfolk. You can learn more about Wintermark names here, and more about the heroic names given by scops here. Naming objects is also a significant action - artefacts and hallowed items always have names but it is entirely appropriate for your character to name objects that have great significance to them.

That is not to say that Winterfolk name every little item they own - only the most significant and important objects deserve names and once you give an item a name, it is rare and dangerous to change it. But as with runes, it is perfectly acceptable to roleplay that your named sword keeps an edge better than an unnamed sword, or that anything drunk from the named goblet that represents your love of your family tastes a little sweeter.

5.6 Crafting

If Urizen is the home of scholastic magic in the Empire, then Wintermark is the original home of the artisan. Isenbrad, one of the most renowned scions of the nation was famous for his skill as a smith. Inga Tarn, the nation's favourite hero was noted as the child of a blacksmith. The art of the crafter, whatever their calling, is known to encompass a powerful hearth magic. The longer an artisan labours over their work, the more intricate the designs, the more beautiful the piece, the greater the effect. The people of Wintermark prize such artistry, knowing that beautiful things can be potent in unexpected and unlooked for ways.

Wintermark artisans often name the things they create, for names are known to carry power and purpose. In fashioning of an item, and giving it a name, some Winterfolk believe that something of the artisan becomes part of the item. More common is the view that the choices that are made in creating and naming an important piece, are crucial and represent vital forks in the craftsperson's skein. It is not just the making of an item that is significant, but who it is intended for. All of these things are profound acts that carry great weight. A sword named *Trollslayer* that is gifted to a promising young warrior doesn't just affect the skein of the craftsman who forged it, it also sets the chosen bearer on a new path.

The provenance of the materials used is important. The ideal components are those a crafter has gathered themselves, but just as good are those gifted for the purpose by an ally. Some will seek out the rarest materials for their work, emphasising the heroism with which they are acquired. A Suaq hunter might chase a mythical red narwhal across the floes for years to capture its horn. Kallavesi mystics seek the perfect moment to cut the heartwood from a weirwood tree. A nugget of gold taken by trickery from a trolls hoard is more valuable than one simply dug from the earth.

Ultimately though, it is the artistry itself that is crucial for this forking of the skein. The more detailed the piece, the more elegant the work, the more the personality of the artist is reflected in their work - the more potent the resulting hearth magic.

Crafting in Play

While a magic item has simple rules for the materials needed to craft it, artisans are encouraged to roleplay how they made their item in ways that evoke more magical methods. Talking about how you mined the iron to make the steel for a blade by hand in a haunted mine, or how your sister hunted an albino deer across the tundra of Sermersuaq to get the hide for a suit of leather armour, can help turn an otherwise mundane magic item into something special. These tales don't need to be grandiose but it took your character a month or two to fashion that item - you're encouraged to make up a story about that.

Giving a magic item a name is a commonplace idea, but in Wintermark tradition it is the artisan who names the item. By giving a magic item an evocative name, especially an item you are making for someone else, you create a story around it. Telling someone "this is the sword Foecutter, if you take it up you will be called on to fight the enemies of Wintermark" is immediately a more memorable interaction than just handing over a Blacksmith's Wage. This works just as well if you are making magic items to sell - spelling out the name and the provenance of the item, and the way you hope it will influence the skein of the person who bonds to it, can make an otherwise straightforward transaction into a roleplaying moment. Use the name of your magic item if you bond it to someone, and encourage them to use that name when referring to the item.

With the assistance of someone with the hallow skill, you can further reinforce the naming element of Wintermark hearth magic. Any item that is hallowed not only gains an aura that helps to make it unique, but you must give the item a name that is recorded on the accompanying ribbon.

If you are acquiring an item, then ask the crafter how they made it, where they got the materials, and so on. If a Wintermark crafter gives you a named item, then it's up to you to work that name into your character's actions. Saying something like "Thanks to my sword Foecutter, which helps me fight the enemies of Wintermark, I ended up going toe-to-toe with the Jotun champion" is a great way to bring out this element of your nation's hearth magic.

Finally, if you're playing a Wintermark character, always remember that items fashioned by Wintermark artisans are just that little bit better than the items other nations churn out. They might have the same rules effects... but an apprentice's blade made by a Wintermark smith especially for your character will never rust or lose its edge. It will never turn in your hand or stick in the scabbard when you need it most. You're wielding a weapon forged by one of the finest smiths in the mortal world, so treat it with appropriate respect!

5.7 Witnessing

Everyone knows that promises have power, but the Winterfolk know that *real* power lies in vows that are *witnessed*. Speaking an oath may be powerful, but when one speaks that oath in front of a group, or when a promise is witnessed, the power of that declaration may become something more profound. Only a fool would break such an oath lightly.

Words can carry meaning even where none was intended. Empty boasts are dangerous if they fork your skein onto a path of action to which you later do not commit. Such boasting can bring ruin down on a would-be hero, even if they knew their words were false when they spoke them. The power of witnessing is such that it compels a person to make good on their boasts - or to suffer the consequences. Stormcrows have a particular calling to serve as witnesses to what their people say and do, and to remind them not to claim they will do things they have no intention of doing.

Witnessing in Play

Doing things in public is a strong way to create drama. Taking the opportunity to swear oaths, declare intentions, or demand recompense somewhere public not only draws out this hearth magic but creates opportunities for other people to get involved in what is going on. Bear in mind that you're asking for other peoples attention with this kind of roleplaying so aim to keep things short and sweet rather than let these scenes drag on.

Another way this hearth magic works out in play is through commemorating or marking significant deeds. While the scop has a specific role around witnessing and celebrating heroism, any Wintermark character can make up a story or pen a short poem lauding someone for what they've done in play and perform those pieces when the opportunity presents itself.

If you do say you are going to do something - and somebody calls you on it - then embracing your own words creates a better story for everyone then recanting them. It doesn't matter if you regret what you've said - indeed the more you regret it, the more dramatic the roleplaying is likely to be.

5.8 Further Reading

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    - Steinr
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6 Wintermark history



6.1 Origins

The people of the north, the Suaq and the Kallavesi, have lived in Sermersuaq and Kallavesa for longer than written records have existed.

The tales of the Suaq say that they are all descended from a single mother; the legendary Sermersuaq. Said to be so powerful that she could balance a kayak on the tips of three fingers, and kill a seal just by rapping it on the head with her knuckles, she rode out heavily pregnant from Sydanjaa on a mammoth. She gave birth to one thousand children, half of whom drowned themselves and returned as seals to provide food for the others. Some say Sermersuaq was an eternal and that all the Suaq share a trace of her bloodline while some others argue she is an allegory for the enduring and tenacious spirit of the Winterfolk. Some travellers claim that to this day eerie seal spirits who can take the form of humans still haunt the northern shores. They call them *Hylje* and consider them helpful, positive creatures who will aid a lost hunter or a sailor lost at sea.

The Kallavesi are the cousins of the Suaq. The stories of the mystics say that in ancient times a flight of crows flew over the marshes from east to west, scattering feathers into the waters below. Where each feather landed, a Kallavesi emerged from the marshes. Some scholars point to the sinister *mora* of Varushka and wonder if there is some distant connection; others suggest a similar link to an eternal - perhaps one of the wise powers of the Winter realm.

More recent scholars suggest that these stories - of seals and crows - are simply metaphors and that the forebears of the Kallavesi and the Suaq are the same people who would found the lands of the Ushka in the east, and eventually build the cities of Terunael in the south. No hard evidence one way or another has ever come to light, however.

For a time the Suaq and the Kallavesi traded and fought with each other, with the other early humans living in the northern lands of what is today the Empire, and with the ancestors of the Jotun. At some points, however, they became isolated from the rest of humanity by a troll kingdom that held sway over the mountain passes of Hahnmark and Skarsind. The trolls warred with the humans and forced them further and further into the cold, bringing them to the desperate brink of extinction.

Then the Steinr came. Their stories say that they fell from the heavens in a shower of falling stars. They claim that there is meteoric iron in their blood, and this is what gives them their indomitable spirit. Cousins to the Vard who conquered Varushka, the Steinr chose to head westwards while the Vard pushed east.

6.2 The Troll Wars

Caught between the orcs and the trolls the situation for the Kallavesi and the Suaq had become increasingly desperate. Salvation came when a small band of Steinr warriors made a heroic trek through the mountains. They followed visionary dreams that led them to seek out the Suaq and the Kallavesi, and the promise of a land to call their own.

A historic meeting between the warriors, the hunters, and the mystics led to a bold plan to defeat the trolls. The Suaq hunters and the Steinr warriors launched a coordinated campaign to harry their foes from north and south. At the height of the war, the Kallavesi performed a great ritual that collapsed the glaciers of the mountains onto the troll armies, sealing them forever in a frozen underworld.

After the war a victory celebration was held in Hahnmark. A traditional Steinr grand moot ? a Witan ? was called, where three representatives of each people spoke on the nature of their achievement and of what must be done next to survive. It is said that amidst the speeches the leaders of the Suaq, the Kallavesi and the Steinr each shed a single tear for the trolls, and that these three tears froze in an instant, becoming clear gems. These gems were collected by the most cunning of the Suaq hunters and set in a crown forged from the torcs and rings of the fallen heroes of the three people. The wisest of the Kallavesi mystics crowned wily Ulmo of the Suaq King of the Three Tears, ruler of a new nation, Wintermark. The crown was passed from monarch to monarch through the history of Wintermark; when a king or queen died the Witan would select another to take their place.

6.3 Wintermark

The three people joined Hahnmark. Sermersuaq, and Kallavesa into a single nation. The early decades were not without turmoil and conflict. The western orcs saw the opportunity for conquest, and a bitter war was fought that lasted nearly three decades until a peace was negotiated by the Kallavesi Queen Aku Millasdottir. War with the Jotun became a constant threat to the people of the north, with the orcs ever ready to fight their human neighbours.

Occasionally, the Thule orcs of Otkodov would attempt to push down into Sermersuaq through the Silver Peaks, but the united peoples were able to hold off their expeditionary forces. The northern orcs were much more successful in what is today Skarsind; for centuries the Winterfolk and the Thule fought back and forth over the north-eastern territory, neither side able to conclusively conquer the alpine wilderness.

The Winterfolk did not solely fight with the orcs; there were several clashes with the Navarr and the people of Varushka. When the Marchers claimed their lands south of Hahnmark, the border became the site of regular conflict with raiders from both sides eager to claim the wealth of the other nation. Over time, however, these conflicts became less common and less desperate. .

6.4 Joining the Empire

By the time of the First Empress the Winterfolk had learnt the strength that comes from standing together. Popular stories claim that King Alof Bearning - the last King of Wintermark - was known to be a confidant and friend to the Empress. When the Empress spoke of her vision of one people united in defence of humanity, he was amongst her first and most enthusiastic supporters.

Historians who look closer into the matter disagree with this straightforward, reassuring view of the relationship between King Alof and the First Empress. Before his coronation, the mystics explored a powerful vision that suggested the next ruler would be called on to make a decision vital to the future of Wintermark. Alof was chosen for his swift wits, clever tongue and cautious demeanour. Only six months after his coronation the First Empress held her historic meeting at Anvil and Alof attended. While he found the Empress' vision appealing he declined the offer to forge an Empire.

According to his contemporaries, he saw little benefit in an alliance with the distant Highborn. Another story suggests that a bitter argument between Marchers and Dawnish attendees (or between Urizen and Navarr ? sources give different versions) caused him to believe that the Empire would fail because it would be unable to achieve unity. The King was no fool however ? he knew that if the Empress did unite the Bay of Catazar, even for a short time, she would be irresistible. He returned to Kalpaheim full of uncertainty and sought the advice of his counsellors. In the end, the last king of Wintermark was persuaded that the grand alliance might in fact work, prompted in part by the advice of bold, cunning, and wise representatives of the three traditions, and the diplomacy of a Highborn wayfarer send by the First Empress.

When the nation finally joined the Empire, King Alof Bearning returned the crown to the Kallavesi mystics. It became not only a symbol for the unity of the three peoples of Wintermark, but for their union with the newborn Empire. The Kallavesi gave the crown to the Winterfolk hero they considered to best exemplify the virtues of Wintermark, until 373YE when the last wearer Inga Suvvisdottir was slain during the fall of Skarsind. The crown was not recovered until 379YE, with the aid of the Imperial Orcs.

Alof helped lay the groundwork for the Senate, and was instrumental in ensuring that the leaders of the Empire represented the people, rather than governed them. He ensured that the traditions of the Winterfolk were the model for Empire and the bedrock on which it was built, and it is certainly true that both the Senate and the Imperial legal system are based on those traditions.

6.5 Building the Empire

The Winterfolk were enthusiastic supporters of the Empire. They worked closely with Emperor Giovanni to lay the foundations for the Senate, and to define the basis for Imperial Law. Their armies fought alongside those of the Marches, Varushka, and the Brass Coast to secure the western and northern borders of the Empire. Their magicians helped to shape the Conclave, arguing for the same principles of debate, diplomacy, and democracy that made the Witan so successful.

Wintermark has given three Thrones to the Empire. First Guntherm the Bold, then Mariika the Cunning, and most recently the tragic Empress Britta, the bright flame who began the period of resurgence that continues to this day.

6.6 Recent History

6.6.1 War with the Thule

In 373YE a savage blizzard swept down out of the mountains of Skarsind, accompanied by an army of Thule barbarians. Using powerful Winter rituals to reinforce their armies with hordes of walking corpses created from battlefield dead, they conquered most of the territory. Some small pockets of resistance remained - mostly based around the mines and halls to the north-east - but the situation looked increasingly desperate - both the Crown of Three Tears and the young Empress Britta were lost trying to defend Skarsind from the brutal northern orcs. It was not until four years later in 377YE that Imperial forces were able to push into Skarsind and drive the Thule forces out of the territory and reclaim it for the Empire and for Wintermark.

In 378YE, the Thule attacked again, sending armies from Otkodov to invade the Silver Peaks, in an attempt to create a beach head in Sermersuaq. Barbarian and Imperial forces were well matched, but the advantage appeared to lie with the Thule as they slowly pushed the defenders back.

During the Autumn Equinox 378YE, the **Battle of Ikka's Tears** took place on the cold plains east of the glacier. The Thule had sent a large force of elite warriors, accompanied by a massive warbeast, to steal an artefact of unknown power from the Face of Ikka. They were intercepted by a warband of the Empire's heroes using the Sentinel Gate. This powerful barbarian army inflicted a painful defeat on the Imperial heroes, perhaps the most significant since the death of Empress Britta two years previously.

In Summer 379YE a delegation of Thule attended the Anvil summit and brokered a peace treaty with the Empire which the Senate eventually accepted. This required the Silver Peaks be ceded to the Thule, in return for land surrendered to the Empire elsewhere. With heavy hearts, the defenders of the northern mountains withdrew and allowed the Thule to take the Stonefield Ice Caves. This decision rankles with many Winterfolk, needless to say.

6.6.2 The Curse of Tradition

Beginning officially in Winter 378YE, and continuing through until the Spring Equinox 379YE, the folk of Wintermark fell under a malign curse that threatened to tear them apart. The three peoples of Wintermark were plagued by internal strife with no clear origin. The eerie influence caused some Suaq, Kallavesi and Steinr to factionalise - arguments between members of differing traditions became commonplace, and people increasingly sought the company of those who shared their cultural beliefs. When surrounded only by members of their own tradition, people reported feeling more comfortable and more confident.

The situation slowly worsened. When they worked together, members of the same tradition feel increasingly confident, stronger, more willing to take risks and trust that their fellows will support them. When working with members of the other two traditions, however, people began to feel less sure of themselves, less confident, suspicious of their allies from different traditions. Arguments became common; tempers frayed, enduring friendships were strained almost to breaking point, and there was even some (limited) violence. The growing rift caused serious tension within the Wintermark armies with some soldiers actively forming banners only with members of their own tradition, slow to respond to the orders of commanders from different traditions.

In the end, the heroes of Wintermark and their allies were able to trace the source of the curse to one of the dragons of the Thule - and discovered that the wicked malediction was being worked with the Crown of Three Tears itself. Eventually the heroes of Wintermark, with assistance from the Imperial

Orcs, engaged the forces of the dragon responsible for the curse. The fighting was fierce, but the Crown was recovered. Members of the Irontide and Skywise legions returned that potent symbol of Wintermark unity to the nation, but only after Winterfolk proved its worth to the Imperial Orcs. The Kallavesi mystics chose Erkenbrand of Tyrsholm as the latest champion of Wintermark, and the seeds were sown for the great gift that was to follow.

6.6.3 The Relinquishment of Skarsind

In Wintermark most orcs are regarded as worthy opponents, an enemy suitable to give or receive a good death from. The nation were quick to accept the Imperial Orcs once they proved their loyalty and it did not go unnoticed that the Imperial Orcs have often proved a more reliable and effective ally than some others nations of the Empire.

At the beginning of 379YE, the Wintermark people took the historic decision to bequeath that land to the Imperial Orcs. A motion was brought before the Senate to relinquish Skarsind so that it could be reassigned to the Imperial Orcs. The motion passed the Senate but could not be put into force without ratification by The Throne. This hurdle too was crossed when the Imperial Orcs acquired the Imperial favour of Empress Britta which granted the holder the ability to ratify a decision of the Imperial Senate. At that point Skarsind became an Imperial Orc territory.

6.6.4 Dogri Thulebane

Many existing residents of the territory resisted the urge to give up their ancestral homeland. Their protest found leadership under the influence of a charismatic Thane, Dogri Thulebane, a Wintermark hero who had fought the Thule all his life. Dogri claimed the old, isolated fort of Crow's Keep in the north, an ideal position from which to watch both Otkodov and the Thule-dominated mountains of Silver Peaks in Sermersuaq. After a year of arguments, the Empire was forced to act on news that Dogri planned to raise an army to take the fight to the Thule in breach of the existing peace treaty. Shortly before the Spring Equinox 381YE the cruel Varushkan army, the Iron Helms, conquered Crows Keep and captured Dogri. The Thulebane was taken to Anvil where he was tried and ultimately sentenced to be executed. Before the sentence could be carried out, several Wintermark heroes arranged for him to participate in a deadly skirmish against the Grendel and he died fighting the enemies of the Empire. Regardless, his death broke the spirit of those Wintermarkers who had hoped to hang on in Skarsind and most left soon after.

6.7 More Wintermark History

- Crown of Three Tears
- People of the North
- Steinr, Vard, and Jotun
- Malachai of the Winds of Virtue - Deals extensively with Alof Beorning, last king of Wintermark
- Apaay Ukiuking

6.8 Further Reading

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7 Wintermark political leadership

Wintermark remains sparsely populated and the only large town is the former capital at Kalpaheim in Hahnmark. The majority of Winterfolk live in one of the many small settlements, called halls, that dot the land. Each hall is led by a Thane, and although Imperial justice is now dispensed by trained magistrates, the Thane continues to settle disputes that lie outside the law and to provide civic and military leadership.

Traditionally the Kallavesi chose the Wintermark monarch, although they never chose one of their own. This tradition is reflected in many halls, with the Winterfolk looking to the wise and prophetic Kallavesi to choose the most able candidate from amongst the Suaq and the Steinr. There are halls with Kallavesi Thanes, but these are usually the exception and occur when the majority of the inhabitants of the hall are Kallavesi.



The Witan is a time for finding spouses and partners.
The Winterfolk prefer strong, decisive leaders who make bold decisions and stick with them. They have little time for people who vacillate or prevaricate. When the Kallavesi believe that a powerful martial leader is needed they tend to pick a Steinr Thane, if they feel the situation calls for a clever shrewd leader they choose a Suaq. In either case they make an effort to ensure they pick a Thane who the hall can unite behind, the people of Wintermark have little interest in strained loyalties and internal disagreement.

The forerunner of the Senate was the Witan, a grand moot held at Kalpaheim. Here the representatives of each hall met to discuss the business of the nation with the monarch. Today it is a festive gathering held at the start of the year; those who involve themselves in national and Imperial business gather to eat, drink and plan for the year ahead. It is also a time for finding spouses, for seeking out mentors or apprentices, resolving internal conflicts and generally keeping the nation of Wintermark functioning as a strong, healthy whole.

7.1 Leading a territory

The symbol of Wintermark is three interlocking rings, representing the belief that the nation is stronger for the influence and inclusion of all three traditions. To preserve this heritage the Winterfolk ensure that they pick a single Senator who follows each tradition. The Steinr select the senator for Hahnmark, the Suaq select the senator for Sermersuaq and the Kallavesi the senator for Kallavesa. When Skarsind was part of Wintermark before being ceded to the Imperial Orcs, the traditions rotated who selected the senator. For example, at the Spring Equinox 379YE it was the turn of the Kallavesa and in 380YE it would have been the turn of the Steinr.

For each territory, every candidate who wishes to be considered sets out a jar bearing their name. Any Winterfolk of the appropriate tradition who wishes to express support may openly drop a single coin into one or more of the jars over the next fifteen minutes. The face value of the coins is irrelevant, but by tradition, wealthy or earnest supporters will try to outdo each other by adding a more valuable coin. At the end of the fifteen minutes, the jar

containing the most coins bears the name of the new Senator. The money is given to the stormcrows to be distributed amongst the poorest Winterfolk present.

Although the senators are chosen by followers of a single tradition, in theory it is possible for any of the Winterfolk to stand as a candidate for any territory. In practice it is rare for the Steinr not to choose one of their own, and likewise for the Suaq and the Kallavesi.

The senators for each Imperial territory are re-elected at specific equinoxes and solstices during the year. The senator for Sermersuaq is elected at the Summer Solstice, the senator for Hahnmark is elected at the Autumn Equinox, and the senator for Kallavesa is elected at the Winter Solstice. Prior to the relinquishment of Skarsind, the senator was elected at the Spring equinox.

7.1.1 Incumbent

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

- Hahnmark - Bronn Dunwolf
- Kallavesa - Rane Shardbearer
- Sermersuaq - Fedelmidd Sydanjaa's Heart Floer

7.2 Further Reading

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8 Wintermark economic interests

8.1 Overview

Wintermark commonly exports crafted goods and imports food. Good relations exist between the Winterfolk and their southern neighbours in the Marches. The grain, barley and salted meat that flows north in exchange for beautifully crafted and enchanted goods ensures that since the foundation of the Empire the Wintermark has never suffered a great famine of the kind that was common before.

Merchants are important in Wintermark, but they are often regarded with caution. A merchant who uses trade to enrich themselves at the expense of their Thane and hall will be given short shrift, but a merchant who uses wisdom and cunning to bring wealth and prosperity to their hall and the warriors it supports will be held up as an example to all.

One of the most valuable exports for Wintermark merchants are crafted items marked with runes. Both magic items made by Wintermark artisans, and mundane items expertly marked with the runes, are prestigious items sought after in other Imperial nations, and by merchants from across the Known world.

8.2 Mediator



Costume by Jo Perridge

The most prestigious role for Winterfolk merchants is to act as a mediator, negotiating weregilds. A fair weregild is considered one that matches the severity of the crime and satisfies the victim but is accepted by the perpetrator. The Winterfolk tradition of weregilds has been incorporated into Imperial Law but now they are approved by the magistrates who took over responsibility from the Thanes. In order to benefit from a weregild arrangement the accused must ensure that agreement is reached before their trial and for this purpose mediators are often employed to negotiate with both parties to find the right weregild. Such negotiations must often be done in haste, so that all can see that justice has been done. Identifying the right weregild and convincing both parties to settle for it is considered an exceptional skill and talented mediators are in high demand and well regarded. By tradition they are expected to be paid in equal amounts by both parties.

The weregild not only replaces any compensation to the victim that would otherwise have been set by the magistrate, but agreeing this settlement with the victim is also taken into account positively during sentencing. Magistrates will refuse to take into account weregilds which are unfair to the victim. Even where the weregild is accepted, the Magistrate will still apply severe punishments if the needs of justice demand it.

The Winterfolk celebrate and remember the past, but they are never bound by it. This attitude to the past is the foundation of the Wintermark legal system where each transgression is judged on its own merits, rather than on the basis of past precedent. This practical attitude to legality helped to form the basis of the Imperial codes of law.

8.3 Maggot

Those who use their skills to enrich themselves are often called maggots. Maggot is Wintermark slang for a looter on a battlefield. Before the Empire, maggots who were caught were summarily executed, as Thanes expected to divide the loot from the field between their warband. That tradition is now rarely used except when Wintermark warriors are taking the field alone. Since the adoption of Imperial Law, a looter can only be convicted if they are stealing from the body of an Imperial citizen, not from an enemy. However the epithet remains a powerful Wintermark insult, applied to greedy merchants and camp followers. Ultimately anyone who makes profit from battle without taking the field themselves risks being reviled as a maggot.

8.4 Runesmith's Law



Isolde Hannasdottir

Runesmith's Law is a special body of artisan knowledge available only to the artisans of Wintermark. When the lost artisans of Gildenheim returned to Wintermark they brought with them the knowledge of how to create a number of unique magic items. They were prepared to share their knowledge, but only with their fellow Winterfolk. The Wintermark National Assembly sent the runesmith Isolde Hannasdottir to consecrate an memorial for Isenbrad in the chilly caves. This allowed the artisans and smiths of Runegrott to create the *Runesmith's Law*, allowing any Wintermark artisan to study there and master its secrets.

Isenbrad's Tomb is essential to support the Runesmith's Law. Those who wish to master the Law must travel there and train with the smiths and artisans who practice their craft at the tomb. There is a powerful aura of Wisdom in the tomb itself - the defenders of Runegrott will not allow anyone to study the Law until they have submitted to a powerful *geas*, never to share the Law with those outside Wintermark. The ceremony is conducted at the heart of the tomb in the presence of the Wintermark egregore. Those who later break their bond with the egregore find themselves unable to craft any of the items contained only in Runesmith's Law. Magical means to share this knowledge with someone outside the nation, even temporarily such as through the ritual Secrets of Skilful Artifice, also break the geas and cause the Wintermark artisan to permanently loses access to Runesmith's Law.



Adding a new schema to the Runesmith's Law requires the schema to be handed over to the artisans, runesmiths and stormcrows who tend Isenbrad's tomb at Runegrott. At present the best way to do this is to hand the schema to Wilda, the Wintermark egregore, during a summit. She will ensure that it is taken to Runegrott and placed with the others. Rather than being returned to the artisan, the schema is added to the body of Runesmith's Law and becomes available to any Wintermark artisan who studies at Runegrott following the summit.

It is not possible for the Conclave to use a declaration of dissemination or Imperial lore to affect a schema that is part of Runesmith's Law, nor is it possible to either remove a schema from Runesmith's Law, nor to recover the schema once it has been added to the body of knowledge.

The *geas* ensures that any former Wintermark citizen who leaves the nation loses access to items that are part of Runesmith's Law; they can be replaced using the normal process of changing mastery.

8.4.1 Items in Runesmith's Law

Item	Power	Form	Months	Green Iron	Orichalcum	Tempest Jade	Weltsilver	Ambergelt	Beggar's Lye	Dragonbone	Iridescent Gloaming	Total
Stalwart's Sword	You gain one hero point and the weapon counts as a *source of spiritual strength* for overcoming fear.	One-handed Weapon	1	10	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	18
Hero's Hauberk	You gain one rank of endurance and the armour counts as a *source of spiritual strength* for overcoming traumatic wounds.	Heavy Armour	1	0	7	0	2	0	0	2	0	12
Runesmith's Glare	You gain one rank of endurance and one hero point.	Full-sized Shield	1	8	7	0	0	3	0	5	0	23
Isenbrad's Legacy	You gain the ability to cast Timeless Hammer Rhythm on	Tool	1	7	4	7	4	0	6	0	0	28

Item	Power	Form	Months	Green Iron	Orichalcum	Tempest Jade	Weltsilver	Ambergelt	Beggar's Lye	Dragonbone	Iridescent Gloaming	Total
	yourself once per summit.											
Three Tears	You gain four hero points.	Battle Standard	1	16	10	0	0	0	10	14	10	60
Mediators Purse	You gain one rank of endurance and the armour counts as a *source of spiritual strength* for overcoming anger or confusion.	Light Armour	1	0	4	0	0	4	0	3	0	11
Four Spirit's Mask	Gain 1 rank for casting Strength of the Bull, Hammer of Thunder, Swan's Cruel Wing and Swift Leaping Hare.	Ritual Focus	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	3	3	11
Redwall's Wrath	You may spend a hero point to call STRIKEDOWN with this one-handed weapon.	One-handed Weapon	1	11	5	18	0	0	0	5	0	39
Icewalker's Anvil	Once per day you can use one personal mana as if it were crystal mana when casting a ritual.	Ritual focus	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	7
Thorn's Mark	Twice per day you may call STRIKEDOWN with this one-handed spear.	One handed spear	1	12	3	7	0	0	8	0	0	30
Kingfisher's Promise	Once per day you may use this ring to gain one additional rank of Autumn lore for the purposes of performing a single ritual, subject to the normal rules for effective skill.	Ritual focus	1	5	0	7	3	0	0	3	0	18

Item	Power	Form	Months	Green Iron	Orichalcum	Tempest Jade	Weltsilver	Ambergelt	Beggar's Lye	Dragonbone	Iridescent Gloaming	Total
Limbsetter's Point	You may use this tool twice per day to restore the use of a limb as if you were treating it with a dose of cerulean mazzarine. This takes 30 seconds	Tool	1	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	6
Talon's Alb	Twice per day, when you perform or cooperate in the performance of a religious skill, you may do so without using a dose of liao. Also counts as a *source of spiritual strength* for overcoming roleplaying effects that cause fear or confusion.	Vestment	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	9	5	21
Dissipating Silks	You may ignore the roleplaying effects of any single traumatic wound until the end of the battle.	Mage armour	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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9 Wintermark military concerns



9.1 Overview

Wintermark has a strong warrior culture. Everyone wants to be a hero, and there are many opportunities for heroic action on the battlefield. This means that while heroism does not have to mean fighting, it does for many Winterfolk. The warrior culture crosses all three traditions; while outsiders may think of the Steinr warrior in chain with runebound weapon and shield when they envision a Winterfolk warrior, the Suaq and the Kallavesi traditions stretch back to a time before the first Steinr set foot in Hahnmark.

The Steinr generally prefer close melee to archery or skirmishing, most often fighting with a one-handed weapon and shield and wearing layers of mail and thick leather. Their generals are often larger-than-life figures who lead from the front and seek out the counsel of the warbands they will lead before planning their strategies ? but who brook no disagreement once the plan is decided.

The Suaq employ their hunting craft equally well in the forest and on the battlefield; their archers give close support to their spearmen who in turn look to attack the flanks and other weak points in their enemy's lines. Suaq generals pick their battles carefully, looking to make best use of the terrain and any situational advantage they can create for their army.

Kallavesi warriors tend to favour the axe, either a shorter axe in either hand or a long handled axe near as tall as a person. In battle they often try to take on the demeanour of a ferocious animal such as a boar, wolf or bear. They are alert for omens, reading the flow of the battle around them and anticipating threats and opportunities. Kallavesi generals work closely with the shamans to pick the most auspicious locations and strategies for a battle.

The generals of Wintermark, regardless of tradition, have a responsibility for their people and are expected to call a retreat if it becomes appropriate. A futile death is not a good death and once the order is given, warriors withdraw without shame or ridicule. Winterfolk strive not to rout ? when they retreat it is a matter of tactics.



Some thanes reward victorious captains with marks of honour, a forerunner of the Imperial Guerdon.

9.2 Banner-bearers

At the heart of most Wintermark forces is one or more banner-bearers. The banner-bearers, also known as bannermen or bannerwomen, are an old Steinr tradition. They are warriors whose role is to inspire and enthuse the rest of the warband. Most banner-bearers are skilled warriors, but their purpose is to rouse the courage and fighting spirit of their band. The traditional responsibility of the banner-bearers is to carry a warband's banner, a difficult and dangerous job that makes it impossible to carry a shield. Even if they are not personally carrying the banner, they tend to stay close to it as it is the heart of the unit.

Banner-bearers find many ways to motivate their colleagues. Steinr banner-bearers often carry instruments of war, drums, horns and the like to perform music on the battlefield to lift spirits. Kallavesi banner-bearers prefer to anoint their fellows with oils and use ancient tales to remind their comrades of past heroes. Some Suaq banner-bearers prefer to lead their warriors in song while others learn the chirurgeon's art.

Winterfolk generals know that the banner-bearers are key to the battle, and encourage the Thanes to pick wisely; a few good banner-bearers can change the course of the battle with their skills. In some situations a good banner-bearer is more important than the Thanes who actually command, because their presence can keep a group of warriors focused and prevent them routing. A wise general traditionally wants to have the banner-bearers present when strategy is discussed. While the Thanes may have insight into the situation, it is the banner-bearers who are relied on to remember the plan and make sure their comrades keep to it.

9.3 Grimnir

Especially important are the grimnir, Wintermarkers who have dedicated themselves to the healing arts. They combine the study of herbs and traditional healing methods with practical experience that is invaluable to the militaristic Wintermark society. While they have an important role to play on the battlefield, they have a wider role to see to the health of everyone in their hall.

While Winterfolk warriors are highly valued, those who keep those warriors alive and healthy are valued even higher. By ancient tradition the grimnir are forbidden from the front lines of any conflict; they are expected to hang back and keep themselves out of harms way. After all, a dead doctor heals no warriors. Some grimnir push this tradition to the limit, staying just behind the front line, but most take their responsibility seriously and carry out their work a safe distance away from the fighting.



Wintermark fields four Imperial armies.
The grimnir are denied the obvious chances for heroism that warriors can find on the battlefield. Instead they work to the last to save the lives of their comrades rather than concerning themselves with renown. Most Wintermark warriors acknowledge this sacrifice, treating the grimnir with a profound respect. The grimnir can be all that stands between a warrior and a lingering, painful, futile death. During a battle it is normal for a grimnir to be accompanied by a few warriors, often those whose life they have saved. Unlike the grimnir, these warriors do not hang back; they are expected to fight their way through to the wounded and bring them to be tended by the grimnir.

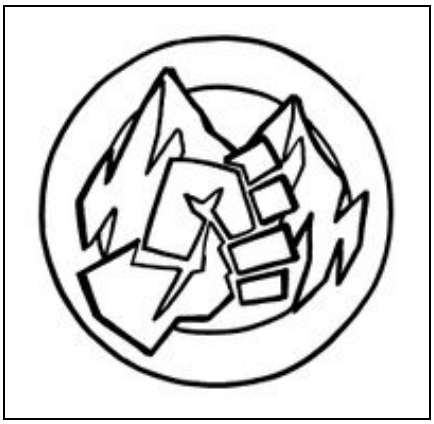
The grimnir tradition began with the Suaq. In the past, the healers of the Suaq did not accompany the hunters into the wilderness but instead maintained the camp and prepared to heal those who were injured by wild beasts. The Steinr added their own traditions wherein the chirurgeon responsible for tending the wounded was also entrusted with the task of maintaining the hall or home ? "*good health is founded on a strong hearth*". Consequently, while most Thanes aspire to be powerful warriors, it is not uncommon for a thane to be a sworn grimnir, seeing to the health of everyone who lives in their hall.

There are physicks and healers in Wintermark who are not members of the grimnir - they have not sworn the oaths to stand apart from battle and instead tend to the fallen. Such individuals are appreciated and valued, much as healers are in any land - it is merely that they do not receive the special kind of respect claimed by the grimnir by dint of the vows they have sworn.

9.4 Imperial Armies

Wintermark currently fields three armies: the *Green Shield Army*, the *Bloodcloaks*, and the *Narwhal's Spear*. The armies have undergone some change in recent years. partly as a consequence of a resurgent interest in heroism.

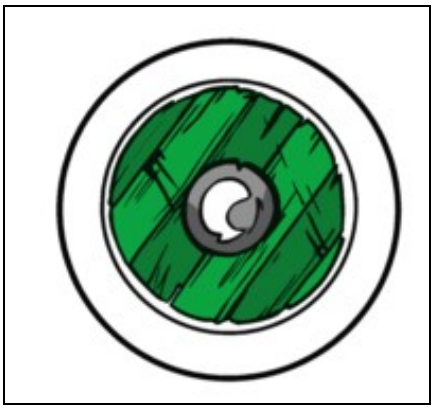
9.4.1 The Fist of the Mountains (Destroyed)



This army was supported by a number of miners, engineers and ex-prospectors, and the captains were regularly advised by clever icewalkers and proud scops. Centuries of fighting in the mountains of Sermersuaq, Skarsind and Hahnmark left their soldiers with a reputation for caution and for an ability to fight viciously in tight spaces over vertiginous drops. By heeding the words of farsighted advisors, the general was able to employ divination to allow them to find the perfect place to move their army. While such methods were unpredictable and difficult to make sense of, they meant the Fist of the Mountain was rarely where the enemy expected it to be - something made clear when the army prevented the Grendel from destroying the Great Harbour at Elos shortly before the Autumn Equinox 387YE.

The first Wintermark general led the Fist of the Mountains army, and was appointed at the Summer Solstice each year.

9.4.2 The Green Shield Army

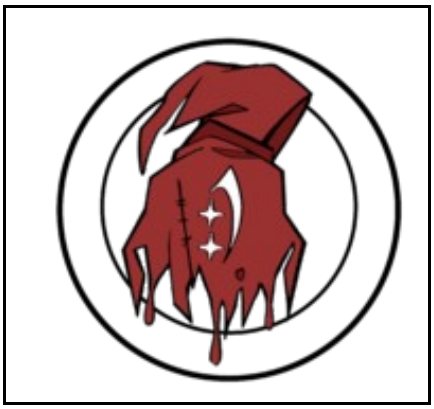


The army of the Green Shield have fought in almost every campaign in the northern empire and have a long history of supporting the Varushkan and Navarr armies on campaign. They are also one of the few armies outside Navarr that have any experience fighting vallornspawn, usually in Hercynia.

Each soldier is equipped with an axe and a wooden shield with a green covering, usually decorated with a symbol in gold or white that marks the regiment the soldier belongs to. They are famed throughout Wintermark for their heroic deeds, and the presence of the Green Shields has turned the tide of battle more than once. The soldiers of the Green Shields are capable of impossible deeds, and their spirit is undiminished in the face of any threat. They know that the hero's tale ends with a good death and they are ready to pay with their lives if they must. Their esprit de corps is peerless and their commitment to battle means they are prepared to make any sacrifice to achieve what must be done. This allows their general to issue unique orders, taking enormous risks where necessary.

The second Wintermark general leads the Green Shield army, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Winter Solstice each year.

9.4.3 The Bloodcloaks



The first Bloodcloaks army was destroyed by the Thule almost a century ago. Known for their crimson cloaks, the army was composed of many grimnir and mystics; all save a few were slaughtered in the reign of Empress Brannan during a disastrous retreat from Otkodov. They left behind a legacy of heroism and healing that was carefully nurtured by the descendants of its physicks. The various threads of the army's tattered skein persisted - a healer here, a family there. In Spring 379YE, the Imperial Senate refused to allow Wintermark to raise the Bloodcloaks standard once again; they did not relent until more a year later in Summer 380YE. The army finally mustered in Kallavesa shortly before the Spring Equinox 382YE. The army contains many grimnir, physicks, apothecaries, and magicians versed in healing magic, allowing them to offer aid and respite to allied soldiers who fight alongside them.

The third Wintermark general leads the Bloodcloaks army, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Spring Equinox each year.

9.4.4 The Narwhal's Spear



The Narwhal's Spear was founded around a solid core of Suaq enthused by the reclamation of Sermersuaq, with a focus on the recognition of heroism as demonstrated by the Suaq tradition. The motion to raise the army was passed by the Imperial Senate during the Winter Solstice 384YE following calls by the Wintermark Assembly the previous season. The Smokehouse of Atalaq was finished shortly before the Summer Solstice 385YE and the army finished raising in time for the general to be elected for the first time at the Spring Equinox 386YE.

The army draws on the paths of the mediator and the icewalker; working to uncover information about barbarians and ranging further afield. The army's mediators often try to encourage dealings with other nations as much as possible; it is much easier for a scout to range ahead of the main force if they can be sure of safe lodgings in foreign territories. The icewalkers use Day magic to scry their enemies but they combine it with guile and cunning to get where they need to be.

The fourth Wintermark general leads the Narwhal's Spear army, and is appointed (or re-appointed) at the Autumn Equinox each year.

9.5 Army Orders

Recent events have led to a change in the tactics of the armies of Wintermark, encouraging heroism rather than slaughter. Any Wintermark army that fights the Jotun will have their victory points increased by a tenth, but the casualties they inflict reduced by a fifth. The change of tactics that ensures this reduction of casualties will be apparent to everyone present in the territory where the campaign takes place. This represents the warriors of Wintermark choosing to fight the Jotun as equals in honour.

Furthermore, months of wrangling with the people of Varushka over the use of the Iron Helms led to a major rift between the armies of the two nations. The Varushkan people chose to stand with the Iron Helms, disregarding the concerns of both Wintermark and the Brass Coast. As a consequence, whenever a Wintermark army is involved in the same campaign as a Varushkan army, the Varushkans provide a tenth fewer victory points. If armies from both Wintermark and the Brass Coast are present, the penalty increases to a fifth.

Finally, as a consequence of decisions made during the Summer Solstice 382YE, any Wintermark general can issue the *Fight with Honour* order. The option to choose this order will endure for as long as Wintermark remains committed to the path of the hero.

Fight with honour

- **There are no modifiers associated with this attacking order**
- **Any allied force that issues with orders to *plunder*, *cut them down*, carry out a *merciless assault*, do *whatever it takes*, or employ *fire in the blood* is changed to a *balanced attack***
- **The presence of an army fighting with honour in a territory is always obvious to other armies in the same territory**

Any Wintermark army instructed to fight with honour will execute a balanced attack against the enemy forces arrayed against them. In addition, they will ensure that any Imperial forces that fight alongside them are prevented from taking orders designed simply to rob, kill or maim the enemy. This will inflame tensions between the two forces, but they will not come into armed conflict, Imperial discipline will be sufficient to prevent one Imperial soldier cutting down another - just.

In addition, the army will actively seek to protect innocent civilians on both sides. Settlements will not be looted and the occupants will be protected from harm by either side.

Fighting with honour does not prevent *enemy* forces from issuing orders to plunder or kill.



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10 Wintermark religious beliefs



A stormcrow provides the moral centre of a hall.

10.1 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.

10.2 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 skein. 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.

10.3 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.

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11 Wintermark magical traditions

The Suaq, Steinr and Kallavesi each had their own magical heritage long before they joined to create the nation of Wintermark. Although they have shared magical knowledge extensively since then, these approaches are as much an extension of the traditional beliefs and attitudes of the three people as they are to any particular magical skills. There are Suaq runesmiths or Steinr icewalkers for example, but they are uncommon. For the most part the three people have maintained their magical traditions along with their cultural heritage.



Runes represent primal power and are evoked everywhere from the wall of a castle to a loaf of bread.

11.1 Runesmiths

All crafting is magical to some degree, but the Steinr make the ancient magic of their runes an integral part of all craftsmanship. Whether or not the runes are visibly etched into the finished item, you can be certain the proper symbols were painstakingly inscribed during every stage of the construction. Runes represent primal powers and are used not just in metal and stonework but everywhere from a set of clothes, to a banner, to a loaf of bread.

The Steinr see magic as a potent weapon, every bit as deadly as an axe or a sword. Runesmiths who learn battle magic can make formidable combatants or powerful healers; they use the runes to enact immediate magical effects. The original runesmiths developed their strength working the anvil, but as they gained a reputation for daring in battle, more Steinr magicians began to emulate them. They prize boldness and vigour, and may be as comfortable in the thick of melee as any warrior. Many runesmiths wield a heavy oak staff or rod carved with runes when fighting, and like to spar with other runesmiths or warriors through unarmed combat, pugilism and wrestling.

Some runesmiths focus their attention on the mastery of the rituals, often of the Summer realm. These runesmiths use their runes to mark out their allies and grant them strength and protection. Others prefer to concentrate on Autumn rituals, feeling an affinity for the magics of skill and wealth.



The Suaq see magic as a practical tool

11.2 Icewalkers

The Suaq see magic as a practical tool, a key to open doors, a way to solve problems indirectly. The Suaq call those magicians who are thought to show wits and cleverness icewalkers - a title that confers a degree of respect and admiration beyond the ability to simply perform magic. Icewalkers strive to embody the best values of the Suaq people; erudite, pragmatic and shrewd.

Icewalkers favour using ritual magic of the Day realm to perform divinatory and scrying rituals to help find their quarry. Suaq magicians are widely known for their clever negotiations with eternals, trying to use their wits and glib tongues to negotiate bargains that favour the icewalker and their people more than they favour the eternals. Outwitting a powerful creature of another realm is sometimes seen as the pinnacle of heroism for an icewalker.

Ritual magic for the icewalkers often involves invoking natural things or creatures, and drawing parallels between them and the target of their magic. For example, an icewalker who wishes to divine an area might create a parallel between themself and a high-flying eagle, while one who wishes to grant their comrades great strength might compare them to a flood, storm, earthquake or herd of wild boar. They often cement this magical simile by painting or carving an appropriate rune onto the target or a piece of their equipment.

Icewalkers sometimes extend this practice as part of the magical tradition of aspect magic - specifically the use of beast magic.

11.3 Mystics

The Kallavesi see magic as a means to insight and wisdom. The enigmatic Kallavesi approach to life leads many of their heroes to become skilled magicians, of which the most famous are mystics. As well as magic, the mystics study the skeins, the idea that there are fated paths down which individuals travel. At critical points in life there are choices to be made, moments when your skein can shift, for better or worse, as a result of your decision. A mixture of magic, wisdom and divinatory arts are used to allow a mystic to determine the most auspicious choices to make.



The Saker coven of Kallavesi performing a ritual

11.4 Artok

In Sermersuaq, the most northern point of the Empire, lies Sydanjaa, the never-ending ice-storm, sometimes called the Heart of Ice. This vast blizzard is a great mystery, blowing night and day across the tundra without respite. Beasts emerge from Sydanjaa that possess magical powers and their bodies often provide magical components. One of the most important are the great ice golems known as Artok. These creatures emerge from the storm to tread fixed paths before they head back into the ice. They can be tamed for a time by carving them with runes, during which time they are potent weapons of war if they can be controlled. Unfortunately they are difficult to take south, as they need the cold to function for long.

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12 Wintermark territories

12.1 Overview

Wintermark lies in the north-west of the Empire. It is significantly colder than the lands around the Bay of Catazar, marked by high peaks, rolling tundra and great freshwater lakes. The four territories are scattered with settlements and criss-crossed by a network of watchtowers and beacons that allow the Winterfolk to maintain vigilance against barbarian attacks. Many of these beacons are isolated, but halls have sprung up around several of them, often taking their names from the beacons or watchtowers they protect.

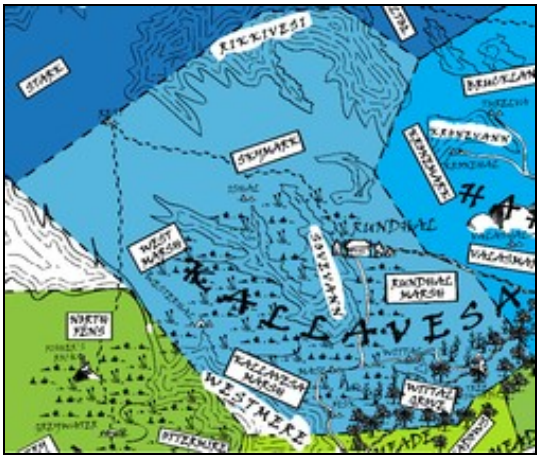
The wilderness between halls is often trackless, but there are many well-known routes between settlements. The land is known for its natural beauty; while it is cold, it is by no means an Arctic wasteland. In summer particularly the plains and woodlands of Wintermark teem with animal life. It is a hardy land, however, that breeds hardy folk. It is also a prosperous land - there is a great deal of hunting, fishing, herding. agriculture, mining and trade between halls and the rest of the Empire.

While three of the four territories are viewed as the "spiritual home" of one of the three peoples, all Winterfolk are welcome in all territories. While the halls of Kallavesa tend to have more Kallavesi members than Suaq or Steinr, it is a rare hall that consists only of folk from one of the three peoples.



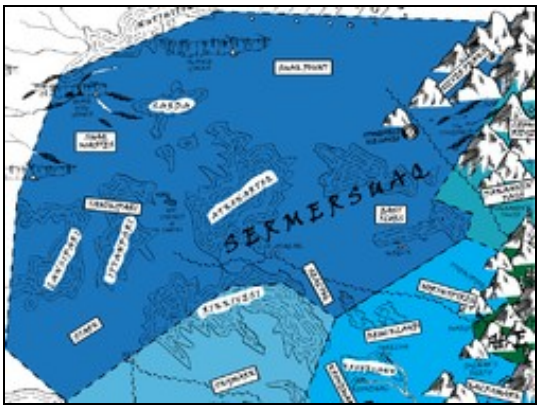
12.2 Hahnmark

The territory of Hahnmark is spread along a series of treacherous mountain passes, the rolling foothills beneath and the wide plains that stretch toward Sermersuaq and Kallavesa. In ancient times was the centre of the troll kingdom, but today is considered the ancestral homeland of the Steinr in Wintermark. It was here that the three peoples first came together to oppose their enemies, and to create the union that has made their people the strongest in the world. The territory is prosperous - as well as the farms of the lowlands and the mines in the mountainous foothills, the halls of Hahnmark are visited by traders from across the Empire. it is also a territory that revels in its strength - the sword-arm of the people of Hahnmark is ever ready to strike against the enemies of the three peoples and the Empire that is their home.



12.3 Kallavesa

This is the ancestral home of the Kallavesi, a land of cold stagnant bogs. It is a mournful land, beautiful as it changes through the seasons, but always possessing a feeling of brooding stillness. In the warmer months it is a boggy marsh cut through with streams and fjords. In the winter the waterways freeze over and the whole land is covered with frost and snow. Thanes' halls are traditionally constructed entirely from wood here and those built in marshy areas are raised up on stilts. The marsh serves as the national graveyard and this is a place of ancient secrets and mysticism and parts of Kallavesa, especially the West Marsh, have a reputation for being haunted.



12.4 Sermersuaq

Sermersuaq is the ancestral home of the Suaq people. The forests and tundra of this territory are rich with animal life that sustains the Winterfolk, ranging from great furred beasts to small game and hunting birds. The northern waters are home to seals and penguins, and full of fish and whales. As one travels further north, the land becomes colder and colder until a traveller comes to transient ice floes that mark the farthest extent of the land claimed by the Winterfolk. This fertile territory is under constant threat from both the Thule and the Jotun whose hunting parties also seek to exploit the profusion of life here, regularly engaging in skirmishes with the Winterfolk who live here.

12.5 Skarsind (no longer Wintermark territory)

Lost in 373YE, recovered in 377YE, ceded to the Imperial Orcs in 379YE 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. At its height, Skarsind was particularly noted for fine rune work, and artisans and runesmiths travelled here to study their craft. Gildenheim in the east was the second largest settlement in Wintermark, built over the entrance to a frozen underworld cavern into the walls of which are carvings in a mysterious alphabet that are said to be the source of the magical runes used throughout Wintermark. Today, Skarsind is the homeland of the Imperial Orcs, and is no longer part of Wintermark.

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13 Wintermark children



In Wintermark children may be a mixed blessing ... but nonetheless they *are* a blessing
Children are considered a mixed blessing in Wintermark, for every new child is another mouth to feed. While Wintermark has not suffered a major famine since it joined the Empire, there is still a tradition of giving new parents gifts of grain, or dried fruit, or meat to help celebrate the birth. Twins are considered unlucky by the Winterfolk, and it is still common for a childless friend or relative to adopt one of the twins and raise them as their own child even though the practical need to spread the burden of feeding babies and small children has mostly passed.

Older children are expected to work hard to help their parents. They are not allowed to fight before they are strong enough to hold a warrior?s sword at arm's length without shaking. No Thane will permit a child to take the battlefield with them unless they can pass this test.

Children are encouraged to talk to adults in the Hall, so that they may find a trade or calling that suits them, but never to pester them, lest they distract them from their business. Once a child is old enough to choose an apprenticeship, they are encouraged to stay close to their tutor where they can work to help. ?*Heroism is not found in the mouth*? is an old Winterfolk saying. Even before then, children are expected to act and to be treated as small adults.

When playing amongst themselves, however, children are encouraged to be boisterous and energetic. Children are often given wooden practice swords and will divide themselves into orcs and warriors to play-fight it out. Some stormcrows enjoy the company of children and will spend their time teaching them the legends of Wintermark heroes of old to inspire them.



13.1 Things every child should know

- **Stand on your own two feet.** Every person in Wintermark should be able to stand up for themself.
- **Heroism is not found in the mouth.** Listen to what adults are saying, and avoid spreading tales. If you must tell someone, find a stormcrow and let them know what you have heard.
- **Never back down when you know you are right.** Never let anyone bully you or keep you from your rights. The Winterfolk stand firm and keep what is theirs.
- **Be cunning as the Suaq, and wise as the Kallavesi.** Learn about riddles and challenge each other with them. Riddles will sharpen your mind like a whetstone sharpens a sword.
- **Choose your own path.** Learn about all three traditions of the Winterfolk so that you can decide which one you wish to follow.

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14 Wintermark music

14.1 The Music of Wintermark

14.1.1 Style summary

Alliterative poetry and heroic saga songs spoken or chanted, scraping fiddles, breathy pipes, and low drones. Themes of winter, seasons, mythical creatures, tales of hardship, dark wit, and of course riddles!

For inspiration for Wintermark look to the music of the old Americas, Scandinavia and Iceland, along with certain British folk with a minor or modal sound.

14.1.2 Commonly known songs

- Oy lay la loyla - one of several calls used when herding animals or bringing home a hunt

14.1.2.1 A musical tradition

From Wintermark Military Concerns#Banner-bearers: Steinr Banner-bearers often carry instruments of war, drums, horns and the like to perform music on the battlefield to lift spirits. Kallavesi Banner-bearers prefer to anoint their fellows with scented oils and use ancient tales to remind all of the heroes of the past. Some Suaq Banner-bearers prefer to lead their warriors in song while others learn the chirurgeons art. Most Banner-bearers are skilled warriors, but whatever their art, their purpose is to rouse the courage and fighting spirit of the band, supporting them on the battlefield.

14.1.2.2 One for the kids

Ho Ho Away We Go, very easy song with optional harmonies.

14.1.2.3 Funeral Songs

Low Down in the Broom

14.1.3 Further examples

14.1.3.1 Songs

- Cattle Calls
- The Snow It Melts the Soonest
- Two Men Came to Your Hall Door
- I Wish My Baby Was Born
- Low Down in the Broom
- My Ain True Love
- The Scop's Gift
- Lament for Skarsind
- Falcon Wings - A song commissioned by the former senator for Skarsind, upon the bequeathing of that territory to the Imperial Orcs, combining Winterfolk and Imperial Orc musical traditions.

14.1.3.2 Instrumentation and tunes

- Kalenda Maya - medieval fiddle tune that sounds great with drones
- Orcadian/Shetland tunes have the right sort of sound for Wintermark, as does the Swedish fiddle.
- Pan pipes, ocarinas, or low whistles could be used to great effect here too, using any breathy slow music.

- Scandinavian fiddle/folk resources: http://www.people.iup.edu/rahkonen/Fiddling/scandi.htm

14.1.3.3 Other performance traditions

- Riddles!

14.1.4 How to adapt your repertoire

- Whether singing or playing, get people to join in with a long low drone or untuned drums.
- When playing from your folk tune repertoire, flatten all your 7ths (turning the major scale into the mixolydian mode). Here is a search for mixolydian mode tunes
- Sing in a raw style and emphasise the story behind the song.

14.1.5 Our sources

- June Tabor, Vasen, Althing (vocal group), Ensemble Norma, Enkelit, Flight of the Condor soundtrack, Andean pipe music generally and processional songs.
- A great source of Swedish fiddle tunes: http://www.norbeck.nu/abc/index2.asp?cat=s&sort=title

Here is a youtube playlist of appropriate or inspiring music.

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15 Category:Archetype

15.1 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.

15.1.1 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.

15.1.2 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.

15.1.3 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.

15.1.4 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.

15.1.5 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.

15.1.6 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.

15.1.7 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.

15.1.8 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.

15.1.9 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.

16 Wintermark groups

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

16.1 Overview

There are many important halls in Wintermark. 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.

16.2 Halls of Wintermark

16.2.1 Halls of Hahnmark

16.2.1.1 Ashenhall



Ashenhall

- **Location:** Southridge
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Jag

What is now the town of Ashenhall has been through several tumultuous changes in recent history. For many years it was known as Steinhall and was in Skarsind. This changed when the occupation of Skarsind by the Thule began in 373YE. During the initial attacks, many of the town's residents fell defending the town and Steinhall itself was burned to the ground. Under Thane Cadarn the survivors spent the next four years evading the occupying Thule forces, operating mostly out of a nearby mine. When Skarsind was liberated in 377YE, the people of Steinhall returned to the site of their town and founded a new settlement: Ashenhall.

In 379YE the motion to relinquish Skarsind was ratified and the territory allocated to the Imperial Orcs, Ashenhall's Thane voted in favour of this motion in the moot. Following his example, the folk of Ashenhall made the decision to relocate once more. Ashenhall is now situated in Hahnmark near Southridge, south of Kalpaheim. Cadarn's successor, Thane Hellä, oversaw a new construction on the site of a reclaimed Imperial watchtower.

Ashenhall is a growing trading town built on foundations of diversity and hospitality. The people of the town remember what it is like to lose their home and to have to build it up again from nothing, and as a result they are a hardy folk, tempered in flames. With the guidance of Thane Jag, they strive to live forward-looking and virtuous lives, and to bring the same dedication to those values with them to Anvil.

16.2.1.2 Byrchenhal



Brychenhal

- **Location:** Southridge
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Lucan Leofsson

In very southern Southridge in the hills there was a copse of birch trees on a high hill. It was here in 259YE that Eldrea, later named *The Safeguard* held her people against the marauding Feni that had burned their former homes far to the north. Eldrea for her actions was named the first thane and that very same hill is where Byrchenhal now stands, constructed from those very birch trees.

Now over a hundred-and-twenty years after those events - and three generations of hard work - the hall and its people prosper once more, becoming rich in resources provided by the land and people from all three traditions of Wintermark. In 381YE Lucan Leofsson was made the newest thane. An ambitious man, he led Byrchenhal into wider Imperial affairs and there they have remained to this day.

All who are raised in the hall are raised upon tales of Vigilance, Courage, and Loyalty - symbolised by the three runes displayed upon the hall's banner. These runes are lasting reminders of their ancestors who - perhaps - weren't as rich in those Virtues as their descendants. Byrchenhal counts scops, stormcrows, artisans, and mystics among their number but all are ready to stand under the banner when the time comes to defend their home, Wintermark, and the Empire.

16.2.1.3 Dolmenhal



Dolmenhal

- **Location:** Bruckland
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Gytha Heartseer

Originally Dolmenhal was once a large and prosperous hall in the far north of Skarsind, established to enjoy the bounties the land and keep an eye on the Thule to the north. Their defences proved inadequate when the northern barbarians invaded in 373YE under the guise of a savage blizzard. Rather than lose their hall entirely to the threat of the Thule the elders of the hall sacrificed themselves to buy time for the younger members. They left to seek refuge in Hahnmark, harried by scouting parties as they fled through Pakaanen?s pass.

The survivors spent some years in Hahnmark, travelling and integrating with the people of the territory, enjoying some respite after their harrowing experiences at the hands of the Thule menace. The survivors eventually founded a new Dolmenhal, in Buckland, near the border with Kallavesa and Sermersuaq. Always they keep a watchful eye toward the Northspires, and the pass that leads to their ancestral dwellings. No strangers to hardship, in dire times they utter the hall words of their forbearers: "We shall weather the storm."

16.2.1.4 Dunhearth Hall



Dunhearth Hall

- **Location:** Wood Heath
- **Traditions:** Steinr
- **Thane:** Tobrytan Dunning

Located on the southern border of Hahnmark, the Dunnings are a grand family, collectively led by the Thane of Dunhearth Hall. This familial connection is paramount, a kinship that has existed in times of legend long before the Empire and even Wintermark itself. Their progenitors, The Great Dun and the mighty Kára, came to this world with Vard and Stein. The following tumultuous era saw great sacrifice; both Kára and their daughter Nál fell during a fateful raid against the trolls. Their other daughter Áma founded the Redfeldr, the red cloaks, with the many war orphans the family adopted. This has been the family?s military core since; the Dunnings? eagle banner leading their descendants through history. The Dun himself carries on as a figure in the family?s oral legend, variously as a gregarious operator, cunning warrior, and spiritual guardian until he leaves for the north, passing his authority to whomever the family appoints.

The first Hall was simply a tatty command tent that eventually settled in south Hahnmark during the war with the trolls. The town of Arnburh later grew from that first tent, founded by Gangrædan the first Thane of Dunhearth Hall. Once the trolls were defeated the Dunnings protected the southern border of the Kingdom of Wintermark against orc and human alike. Recently, the Dunnings were forced to relocate when Dunhearth Hall was swallowed by a terrible sinkhole leading to the foundation of New Dunhall shortly before the Autumn Equinox 381YE.

The modern family is one of incorporation, the strength of its legacy, and the skills and experience of those who are married and adopted in. This history has led to many familial lines but all politely refer to each other as ?cousin?. The hall is notable for its warriors, scops, and artisans. Sitting on a major trade route from the Marches, its prosperity has been ever fed into military support for the Empire. Likewise its brightest have served widely in the various Imperial institutions (although never the Throne).



Eagles Rest

16.2.1.5 Eagles Rest

- **Location:** Bruckland
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Vartija

After the collapse of The Two Houses, House Vartija struck out alone. Their home town of Turelva, and surrogate home of The Crows Teeth, gave them somewhere to think about the future. Orin, Vartijas grandfather, owned The Crows Teeth and offered it to the group as a place to rest after assisting in the war in Skarsind. Vartijas crest was a blue eagle head on a black and green field. The hall Eagles Rest was born from the embers of The Two Houses in respect of what Orin and The Crows Teeth had given them after Skarsind. Eagles Rest aim to prosper in the Empire and specialise in dealing with the ridiculous and dangerous.

16.2.1.6 Eira Spire



Eira Spire

- **Location:** Northspires
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Verdehil

In the Northspires of northern Hahnmark lies a small village at the base of the mountain. This village sits in front of a large wooden door embedded into the mountain; the entrance to the Hall of Eira Spire.

Once an isolationist group with a general fear of magic, in recent years the hall of Eira Spire opened its doors to help the rest of Wintermark and the empire, to reclaim Sermersuaq. The hall strives to improve relations between Wintermark and the other nations, be that with words, magic or action.

Eira Spire takes great joy in hosting others, and loves to share a drink round the fire. The hall prefer to take a positive outlook on life, celebrating a member?s passing with laughs and moments of their lives, instead of tears.

16.2.1.7 Fellowship of the Broken Willow

- **Location:** Northspires
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**



Fellowship of the Broken Willow
When Skarsind fell, many of its inhabitants were left without homes. The chaos that engulfed them also brought out some of the worst of many halls; families were torn apart and old wounds reopened. In response a wise and proud Steinr woman, Lora Windeltreow, resolved to form her own hall, one without any landed home, partially as a matter of practicality and partially as a small act of protest. The "hall" formed around a traveling caravan and they journeyed throughout Wintermark, trading for what was needed, accepting any and all - outcasts, lost teenagers, and vagrants - so long as they needed a new place to call their own.

Lora?s natural charisma drew many under her banner, and even those who had only intended to stay for a few short seasons found themselves compelled to stay longer. Lora passed away due to illness shortly before the 380YE Winter Solstice, a fact which left the rest of the hall reeling, and they initially struggled to recover. After the Spring Equinox, when Lora was committed to the marshes of Kallavesa, her successor was chosen as the group?s head grimnir, as the hall has a number devoted to that art.



Hyrst Hal
16.2.1.8 Hyrst Hall

- **Location:** Wood Heath
- **Traditions:** Steinr and Kallavesi
- **Thane:**

Hyrst Hall was built upon a wooded hill. Tall dark oak trees surround the small, fortified settlement. A small flock of ravens make their homes in the oaks - they alert the hall of dangers and in return the locals hang small glittering trinkets from the trees as gifts.

Hyrst Hall is a merchant hall first and foremost with proud traditions of trade and using their wealth in supporting military concerns.

16.2.1.9 New Ausland



New Ausland

- **Location:** Kronemark
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Kaarina Starborn

Situated on the border between Hahnmark and Sermersuaq the settlement of Ausland was once lively and prosperous. Unfortunately an attack by a raiding party of the Jotun wiped out much of the population and claimed their wealth.

The remaining villagers sought refuge at Eagle's Rest. When a travelling merchant visited the hall and heard their tale she vowed to help. The remaining villagers were simple folk who had enjoyed their previously quiet life so they quickly bestowed the title of Thane upon the merchant, who led them further to the border between Hahnmark and Kallavesa to found a new settlement where they could begin their lives again.

The hall of New Ausland was formed under the leadership of Thane Kaarina Starborn. Now they seeks to rebuild the settlement both in popularity and prosperity.



Oxenguard

16.2.1.10 Oxenguard

- **Location:** Northspires
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**

On the northern western boarder of Hahnmark made up of three small hamlets, each with in walking distance of each other. During the reign of Empress Varkula a soldier returned home after their two years of service, and built a mead hall in one of the hamlets.

Now the aim of the hall is to rebuild after losing a great many members in 376YE fighting alongside Empress Britta.

16.2.1.11 Renwaerd

- **Location:** Northspires
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Baedurof The Trunk of Whiteoak Heolstor "Scorched tongue"
- **Hall Banner:** White horse on a green background



Renwaerd

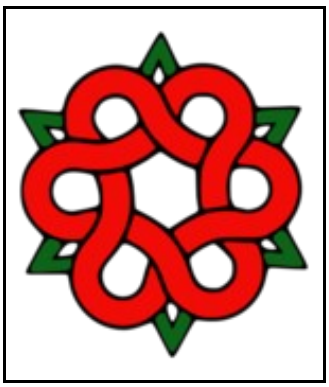
Born in the heart of Winter 376YE, Renwaerd is an alliance of four halls: Tyrshalt, WhiteOak, Ætheling, and Phoenix Guild. It serves as more than just a collection of names. It's a calling: to serve Wintermark and bolster the Empire's strength.

The hall points to the two crowns (the Crown of Three Tears and the Imperial crown) as evidence of their commitment. The Renwaerd have also served as stalwart defenders of Hulfi?s garden, many falling in the defence against the *scions* of Cold Sun.

Renwaerd thrives on strength, sharp strategy, and unwavering solidarity. They stand ready, with an eye beyond the battlefield. They strive to support Wintermark's warriors; whether that be in battle against barbarians or in the Imperial Senate. Their philosophy is simple: fight well, whether with steel or with words.

The Renwaerd tirelessly protects Hanhmark's northern borders, a bulwark against the unseen and the undeniable threats. Their commitment to Wintermark's safety and the Empire's prosperity is absolute.

16.2.1.12 Sigehold



Sigehold

- **Location:** Valasmark
- **Traditions:** Steinr
- **Thane:** Iron Osric

Originally established in Skarsind, after the territory was given to the Imperial Orcs, the Sigehold established a new hall on the Kallavesa border, in Valasmark. Before they left, the stormcrows of Sigehold gathered their Hall?s diverse traditions in a book to be given to the Skywise with whom there is a continued friendship.

The original Sigehold Hall was founded by Striking Ardith (first Warden of the Mark) after her band of resistance fighters had aided in the successful taking of Skarsind. It was formed of those of diverse fallen halls who had come together to fight against the Thule after the Fall.

The banner of Sigehold continues to be used to rally the Heart of the Mark in battle and Sigehold prides itself on its friendship with the smaller halls stemming from its history of being a home for those broken, dispossessed and needing refuge from the Fall. Hospitality in Sigehold is linked closely with food and especially Sigehold gravlax from their salmon farm.

16.2.1.13 Stenstorp

- **Location:**
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Sverri Hordson
- **Hall Banner:** Face of Sten Rockbeard in gold on a blood red background

Stenstorp hall was founded by Sten Rockbeard and his companions after a legendary encounter with the troll known to the hall as Toothcutter. Having driven the troll from the Vale of Kivikylma, Sten established a settlement there, which flourished. After a long period of relative peace bandit orcs attacked the settlement, and if the tales are to be believed, they were accompanied by the troll called Toothcutter. They came in such numbers that survivors were forced to flee the Vale of Kivikylma.

Following Sten's eventual passing, successive thanes and generations have sought for the Vale of Kivikylma in vain. Following the recent tragic death of Thane Algar, Stenstorp Hall adopted Sverrir Hordson, an experienced armourer and weaponsmith whom they had spent time with in Anvil, as thane.

Currently Stenstorp Hall is based at Sverrir's mining settlement and workshops, Malmurheim, in Hahnmark. It is not clear why the histories have not led Stenstorp Hall to find the Vale of Kivikylma. It is unlikely that the Hall will lose hope of one day returning to their original home.

16.2.1.14 Stormspire



Stormspire

- **Location:** Northspires
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Raknar Ravenstorm

Built atop the tallest peak of the Northspires in Hahnmark, the Stormspire has a commanding view over much of Wintermark and beyond. Their scouts watch the borders still for Thule aggression, a duty they take no less seriously for peace treaties. Should the signal be received the great beacon atop Stormspire is lit, followed swiftly by the others in the network; in this way all of Wintermark is warned of trouble.

As much a garrison as a true hall, their commander is known as the *Eyes of the North*; currently held by Thane Raknar Ravenstorm. Though known mostly for their warriors and scouts, they embrace all of Wintermark?s traditions with enthusiasm. Among their number they count many famous scops, runesmiths, icewalkers and more; their head grimnir, Lofyn Bloodbathed, is known across the Mark for her work to restore the Bloodcloaks. Likewise, they watch the roads of the Northern trade network, and their caravan patrols attract numerous traders to the spire. Many of their number were once refugees from Skarsind and elsewhere, Stormspire being both fortified and close to the border of that war-torn land.

It is the warrior tradition for which they are most famed. Their scouts travel the most inhospitable reaches of the 'Mark. Their warriors strike out in heavy armour, wielding spear and sword to cut down threats they find. Since the death of Empress Britta they have fought in many of the Empire?s major engagements. Their warriors personally recovered the Empress Britta's headless body from the Thule. They reclaimed Winter?s Fury, the banner of Queen Ilsin, from the vallornspawn of Deer?s Folly at a terrible cost. They fought and died at the Battle of Ikka?s Tears, helped recover both the Crown of Three Tears and the Imperial Crown, and were the first to breach the walls of Urith Barath, the great Druj citadel in Reikos.

16.2.1.15 Hall Ursus



Hall Ursus

- **Location:** Valasmark
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Revna Ursan

In Valasmark, close to the border with Rundhal Marsh, stands the hall of Ursus. All across the boundaries are engravings of sigils of bears - drawing on that animal's aspects of authority and leadership.

Now, the hall focuses on the Virtues of Courage, Loyalty, and Pride as they strive defend their land against the threats beyond the Empire and make their name in Anvil.

16.2.1.16 Wyverns' Watch



Wyverns Watch

- **Location:** Northspires
- **Traditions:** Steinr
- **Thane:**

Located amidst the snow-capped Northspires of Hahnmark, the Wyverns' Watch is a hall of warriors and hunters dedicated to protecting the citizens of the Empire from its many threats, particularly beasts, monsters and malignant spirits. Imperial citizens of every nation have been tormented by such creatures since the founding of the Empire and constantly seek aid. It is the ancient charge of the Wyverns' Watch to stand against such perils and lend their support to the Empire by facing these creatures on the battlefield.

Each member of the Watch is blood-sworn by sacred oath to fight and lay down their lives to protect their comrades, the nation of Wintermark and ultimately, the Empire. Three formations of the Wyverns' Watch have since passed, the old watches did their job well by eradicating numerous beasts from the north and were eventually disbanded.

The Watch's pledge is a declaration to keep constantly vigilant for all dangers but none more so than the infamous and legendary beast; The Wyvern. Called the Great Enemy, the Watch considers these creatures its mightiest foe and there would be no greater test of skill, courage and power for the hall to hunt down one of these menacing beasts and surpass the heroism of their ancient predecessors.

A young hall with an old name, the hall welcomes all souls to prove their worth and add their names to the historic roster of hunters.

16.2.1.17 Yrhara



Yrhara

- **Location:**
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Cynekendra

After their home of Skarsind was ceded to the Imperial Orcs in 379YE, the people (who would go on to become the Yrhara) scattered west to Hahnmark. After traversing the harsh lands of Hercynia they eventually rallied to a new hall founded by a thane, said to have been shown the way to their new home in a vision of a horned mountain hare, completing their journey the hall was named after the symbolic animal to which they owed their home.

The hall strives to pave the way for the next generation of heroes.

16.2.2 Halls of Kallavesa

16.2.2.1 The Æsclings



The Æsclings

- **Location:** West Marsh
- **Traditions:** Steinr
- **Thane:** Wilmær

The Æsclings are a hall based out of Kallavesa, formed of mostly Steinr. With strong, traditional values of hospitality, storytellling and heroism.

After the Troll wars and the conflicts that followed, the traditionally martial Æsclings hall found little need for their spear work in the lands of Wintermark. The Thane, Wealthwearer Wæcla, made the historic and unconventional decision to take the halls battle prowess further afield. Sailing out from the Westmere, the Æsclings offered their swords in foreign conflicts, both near and far, to great prosperity.

Since that time the hall has upheld a strong mercenary tradition, fighting alongside the other Imperial nations in their conflicts, as well as with foreign nations in theirs. However they do not forget their homeland, and return to Kallavesa regularly, both in leisure and at times when the lands of Wintermark are under threat.

In addition, due to their extensive travel, the Æsclings also have many adept traders amongst their number, with some members running the white wing trading company, which can often be found selling wares around anvil.

16.2.2.2 Corvenhal



Corvenhal

- **Location:** Wittal Grove
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Riskel Blood Warden

Corvenhal was founded on the border between Hahnmark and Kallavesa in Rundhal Marsh formed mainly of the traditions of Steinr and Kallavesi but settled in a new holding within the marshes of Kallavesa in Wittal Grove 383YE.

The majority of the hall is built on its martial power, leaning into the traditions of a kallavesi warband. Corvenhal is accepting of all traditions, and not all under the banner are fighters. Many grimnir, traders, and ritualists are within Covernhal, but all that have been sworn in are bound by a strong kinship.

16.2.2.3 Greyholm

- **Location:** Kallavesa Marsh
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**



Greyholm
Situated in the swamps of Kallavesa lit by the drifting will o? the wisps and the twisted, snaking forms of the ghosts of Imperial heroes is the settlement of Greyholm. Pallid mud clings to the stilted walkways and jetties that connect the lonely huts and buildings propped up over the generations to ensure the living don?t join the departed before the end of their skeins. Peat moss grows in clumps alongside the undersides of windowsills and doorways and hanging lichen stretches its ghostly fingers off quaysides and into the waters of Kallavesa. These faded shades the only indication of colour in the marsh

other than the greys of the wood used in the settlement's construction. Mired in the customs and hearth magic of Wintermark, Greyholm is a well know destination for the dead who will soon rest in the Sovevann.

Greyholm is a shelter to the disillusioned, its numbers swollen by refugees driven from their homes for whom it provides a tranquil sanctuary. With the increased number of casualties among the people of Wintermark, the need for grave keepers has also risen. Due to this many of the inhabitants of Greyholm have taken up this solemn duty of interning the heroes of the 'Mark in their final resting place. Many of the members of Greyholm are mystics, grimnir, or stormcrows who understand the importance for the preservation of life but also the need for a skein to end.

16.2.2.4 Ironclaws



Ironclaw

- **Location:** Skymark
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Wren Ironclaw

Years ago, the founders of the hall fled from unknown threats from the shores of the Gullet, abandoning their fleets behind and travelling inland to find a new home. There they found a home on the shore of one of the lakes of Skymark. They also found the "*ironclaw crabs*" which were monstrous crustaceans with shells as hard as iron and claws able to slay lightly armoured foes. The founders of the halls hunted the crabs to extinction, eating their flesh and remaking the shells left behind to serve as rudimentary armour. They chose to take Ironclaws as the name of their hall, acknowledging the beasts that they saw as their greatest challenge.

The Ironclaws are now a stalwart people with experience in both welfare and warfare. They accept refugees, understanding the suffering that comes with being forced to flee your home. The hall has a strong preference towards the virtues of Loyalty and Prosperity; those in the hall are encouraged to consider where their loyalties lie, and to use their wealth to support those struggling.

Since first visiting Anvil during the Winter Solstice 383YE, their ambitions have grown. The Ironclaws seek to further their connections, businesses and prosperity with the best and brightest that the Empire has to offer, while still remaining loyal to the traditions of their hall, the nation of Wintermark and the Empire as a whole

16.2.2.5 Greymantles

- **Location:** Westerhal
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Adarius of the Greywake

The Greymantles are a newly established Kallavesi hall of sailors, merchants, veterans and those seeking a second chance. The hall takes its name from the grey waves of Westerhal: waves that strike the shoulders, washing away the life left behind and offering the chance to begin anew.

The Greymantles are bound by a public blood oath. Those who take the grey mantle swear to keep faith with their hall, speak truth to their kin, honour every bargain and stand against those who would break their peace.

The hall is welcoming to those who deal fairly, whether merchant, sailor or stranger. Its members are expected to contribute through trade, labour and service, while in return receiving protection, training, favourable trade, fellowship and a new life.

"*Forget the past. Redeem the present. Earn the future.*"
The Greymantles seek prosperity, ships, contracts and influence, while remaining willing to follow whatever current opportunity presents itself.

16.2.2.6 Kingfishers of Fisk



Kingfishers of Fisk

- **Location:** Wittal Grove
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**

The hall was formed in 383YE by some of the most prominent tradespeople and ritualists of Fisk, the Kingfishers seek to enhance the prosperity and influence of their home by bringing their wares and expertise to Anvil. At the core of the hall is a coven of Autumn ritualists, who work to enhance the many businesses and fleets based in Fisk. An unusually high number of the hall members are of cambion lineage.

Among the trades represented in the Kingfishers are shipwrights and papermakers, who take advantage of the abundance of timber forested from Wittal Grove, food importers, who have easy access to the Marches and lands beyond the Westmere, and the herbalists, mystics, and apothecaries who maintain traditional local practices.

16.2.3 Halls of Sermersuaq

16.2.3.1 Akurend



Akurend

- **Location:** Suaq Fount
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Vama Derw

The hall lies on the Empire's northernmost border, deep into the harsh and cold lands of Suaq Fount. The Akurend remained after the Jotun were driven from the territory during the winter of 384YE. They chose to live a nomadic lifestyle, building temporary halls quickly before disappearing into snowstorms without a trace. As masters of the hunt, they seek to prove themselves, tracking down the deadliest of creatures, believing "the greater the risk, the greater the reward." They rely on their mastery of hunting mammoths to survive, leaving nothing to waste. This maintains their survival and provides them wealth and goods to trade with the southern halls.

16.2.3.2 Fjellreven

- **Location:** East Floes
- **Traditions:** Suaq
- **Thane:**
- **Hall Banner:** Blue three tailed fox on a field of white

Fjellreven Hall has existed in some form since before the formation of Wintermark as a nation. It was originally a Suaq hall but with the joining of the peoples a greater diversity appeared. The oldest surviving records have the Hall settled in the Silver Peaks near a mountain pass into Skarsind. However with the Silverpeaks being ceded to the Thule the Hall has moved south to East Floes and now sits between the lakes Big Sister and Little

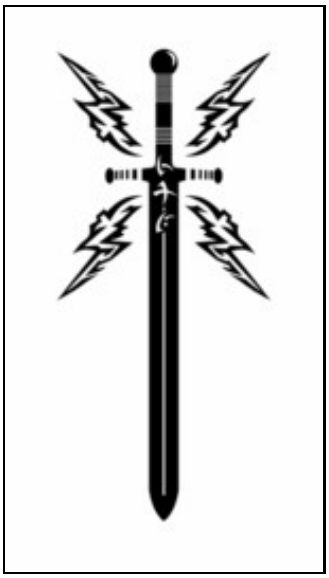
Brother just across the water from Wreck.

The Hall has a strong tradition of icewalkers, artisans and grimnir and has taken great pride in being a centre for the medicinal arts.

16.2.3.3 Saker

- **Location:**
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**

The Saker are a semi-nomadic collection of families (or 'hearths') who all band together. The Saker have lived in Sermersuaq (and occasionally outside it) for longer than even their story traditions recall. Since the death of Britta the Young, the Saker have come to Anvil in force and have been active in a variety of institutions of the Empire.



Steelstorm hall
There are strong changeling and draughir lines within the Saker, though they do not ascribe any large importance to such.

16.2.3.4 Steelstorm Hall

- **Location:**
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**

Steelstorm Hall is a relative newcomer to the politics of Anvil, and is slowly finding their feet. They are primarily compose of skirmishing warriors supported by a handful of magicians and artisans.

16.2.3.5 Sussivari

- **Location:** East Floes
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:**



Sussivari
Close to the border with Skarsind, the Sussivari hall rests on the trod running from the Stonefield Ice Caves across the border past the old site of Pakaanen?s tower. An old hall founded long ago by the Steinr Oystein Korpis, it has endured since before the creation of the Empire.

It is made up of a full mix of the traditions; members of the hall live and work together at the hall or, in the case of several of the Suaq, nearby in one of the small seasonal hunting settlements. A large number of the hall died fighting alongside Empress Britta whilst trying to defend Skarsind. Loyalty to their fallen kin inspired the new generation of the hall to make the journey to Anvil to take part in Imperial politics and warfare.

While the hall has always counted warriors, icewalkers, mystics, artisans and stormcrows among its number, it has developed a particularly strong arcane tradition in recent years with many members now practicing ritual magic of one form or another. Similarly, since the beginning of the Interregnum and now up to the present day, the hall has provided a high number of stormcrows that are active both within Wintermark and the Synod.

16.2.3.6 Tian?s Ravens



Tian's Ravens

- **Location:** East Floes
- **Hall Banner:** A white raven returning the sun, burning its claws in the process
- **Traditions:** Steinr and suaq
- **Thane:** Umarth Winter's Flame

Tian's Ravens runs an outpost at the edge of the East Floes, where they conduct trade and historically shepherded refugees from the western warfronts. Composed primarily of refugees themselves; some from Skarsind and others brought from Jotun-conquered Sermersuaq, the hall cares for those who remember the hunger and thirst of the long winter. Their banner has a sigil of the white ravens that once flocked in Gildermark, carrying aloft the sun as a reminder that it is the deeds of a hero who ensures that winter breaks and light illuminates the land again.

The hall?s words are, ?*I have come too far to end here.*? drawn from the Verse of Triumphant Return.

16.2.4 Other



Holt Hyrde

16.2.4.1 Holt Hyrde

- **Traditions:** Mixed

The Holt Hyrde are nomadic. The term Holt stems back from the earliest days of the Kallavesi. It originally referred to a small copse of trees ideal as a place to lay camp. Over time it variously became known as a word for home, house, hall of lords, and the place close to my heart that I consider my home. It has also often been used symbolically to represent the kingdom of Wintermark.

The Holt Hyrde are protectors of the borders of Wintermark. They seek not glory, and to lead others into glory. They do not seek fame, though the names of others will be sung because of them. They do not seek victory, though the Wintermark will see glory through their actions. They watch over the dark places beyond their homes, walk among the long shadows that threaten to reach out and take their precious lands from them. They learn of the ways of their enemies and seek to understand them, for through knowledge comes victory.

They count among their people the wise, the thoughtful, and the considered. The hunter, the mystic, and the crafter. They task themselves with guiding the stories of the great heroes of Wintermark. They take care in ensuring that heroic tales run longer than they otherwise might. They take pride that the songs or heroes ring with rousing choruses of victory. They take satisfaction in the splintering of the bones of their foes beneath their boots.



Kraken's Vanguard

16.2.4.2 Kraken's Vanguard

- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Elgar Angusson

Established in the Winter of 384YE, Kraken's Vanguard - known to its members simply as 'the Vanguard' - is a growing hall with a range of traditions from across Wintermark, Empire and even further afield. The hall relies on its vast network of traders and military units from their main settlement, Kraken's Rest, established in Rundhal Marshes in the months following the attacks of Cold Sun. The Vanguard traces its heritage outside of Wintermark but instead in the cities of the League; The "Brazen Masque Company" was originally founded in Holberg during the siege of the Druj and many founding members of the Vanguard were once employees. As a result, though the hall is now firmly of Wintermark, the Vanguard prides itself in operating a vast network of assets across the Empire. It boasts many members from other nations and hosts dozens of expeditions each year to show the folk of Wintermark the known world and to show the world the power of Wintermark.

"We're bound by oath, by blood, by duty. A life by sail and sword just suits me." From the Kraken's Vanguard Company Anthem.

16.3 Contributing

Any player character group in Wintermark 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 (hall or frayed). 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.
- Any Wintermark group that has a particular symbol associated with them can include an image. It can be included with your contribution.
- The name of your thane if you are a hall.

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 hall 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:

- Are there any particular archetypes the group is associated with that might be unexpected?
- Is your hall made up of just the one tradition or is it more mixed?

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 house does on the field at events

It's possible to update the information on this page over time (for example if your in-character group leader changes) with an e-mail to plot@profounddecisions.co.uk. en them after Skarsind. Eagles Rest aim to prosper in the Empire and specialise in dealing with the ridiculous and dangerous.



Eira Spire

16.3.1 Eira Spire

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
Eira Spire is a Hall of Wintermarkers of every tradition living in the icy cold tundra of the northspires in the Provence of Hahnmark. The proud settlement was first founded at a time before recorded history by Orvarin Lurask and his wife Madelyn and 30 of their bannermen and women. They were the original founders and discoverers of the ancient Troll cave that would become Eira Spire.

Eira Spire has traditionally been an isolationist group, preferring to keep to themselves as much as possible, while they are known to trade and communicate with nearby halls and towns as well as rally to the aid of Wintermark and The Empire. Despite their isolationist tendencies they would never turn a stranger in need away but preferring he move on as soon as he is able.

A defining event for Eira Spire was the invasion of Sermersuaq which deeply effected the suaq members of the hall and cause a renewed look inward at the halls military capabilities and tradition of isolation and opting eventually to abandon it and travel to anvil.

The halls traditions prefer to take a positive outlook on life, celebrating a members passing with laughs and moments of their lives instead of tears and with Thane Orvar Lurask taking the position of thane, the hall has begun to focus more and more on cooperation between wintermark and with the other nations of the empire.



Fellowship of the Broken Willow

16.3.2 Fellowship of the Broken Willow

Traditions: Mixed
When Skarsind fell, many of its inhabitants were left without homes. The chaos that engulfed them also brought out some of the worst of many halls; families were torn apart and old wounds reopened. In response a wise and proud Steinr woman, Lora Windeltreow, resolved to form her own hall, one without any landed home, partially as a matter of practicality and partially as a small act of protest. The "hall" formed around a traveling caravan and they journeyed throughout Wintermark, trading for what was needed, accepting any and all - outcasts, lost teenagers, and vagrants - so long as they needed a new place to call their own.

Lora?s natural charisma drew many under her banner, and even those who had only intended to stay for a few short seasons found themselves compelled to stay longer. Lora passed away due to illness shortly before the 380YE Winter Solstice, a fact which left the rest of the hall reeling, and struggling to recover. After the Spring Equinox, Lora was committed to the marshes of Kallavesa. Her successor was the group?s head grimnir, as the hall has a number devoted to that art.

Several members own property in Hahnmark, and there are numerous debates among members as to whether or not the hall should settle there permanently. Since Skarsind was given to the Imperial Orcs, these questions are becoming more prominent.



Grimm Dawn

16.3.3 Grimm Dawn

Traditions: Steinr

The Grimm Dawn are frayed. They are a hall for the broken, those who feel they have lost their way. They see themselves as "unfavourable" - those who have lost their ways and decided to find them again, to gain the ways their past action have caused them to lose. Members strive for a heroic life and an even more heroic death in honor of the Empire and all it stands for. Members of Grimm Dawn are willing to do what many will not in their pursuit of redemption. They are martially inclined, commonly acting as shock and harassment troops, although they also work to recover the fallen on the field of battle. Outside of battle, they still seek to offer aid to others, trading and healing with those who will deal with them.



Haddis Hall

16.3.4 Haddis Hall

Traditions: Mixed

Haddis Hall is a young hall built up by Steinr merchants looking to bring prosperity to themselves and to Wintermark. Members of Haddis Hall work together for a common goal of growing the hall and improving their nation wherever they can. Although the hall was founded by merchants, they welcome members of many other professions among their number especially capable healers and magicians.



Hendal Hearth

16.3.5 Hendal Hearth

Traditions: Mixed
Hendal Hearth Hall was founded by Winterfolk who left Skarsind following the Skarsind Motion in 379YE. They came from several halls, united by a decision to make a fresh start in Wood Heath. Many of Hendal Hearth still bear grudges over Skarsind, believing a trail of broken promises have followed in its wake - oaths not kept and weregild not paid.

Hendal Hearth itself was founded by the late thane, Bjarne, known as the *Faithful Defender*. The hall is known both for its extensive herb gardens, and for being home to the Winterforge Armouries.

While all three peoples are part of Hendal Hearth, by tradition a Kallavesi can never be thane. Instead, the Kallavesi choose the thanes and serve as advisors. They have chosen their most recent thane after the death of the founder.

16.3.6 Hounds of Fortune

Hall Banner: Blood hound with runes on either side
Traditions: Mixed The Hounds of Fortune represent a hall in Hahnmark, gathering together members from all over Wintermark. The group was formed in 381YE at Anvil during the Winter Solstice after two smaller halls - The Brothers Drunk and Storm Glade - united with the purpose bringing prosperity to Wintermark and the Empire. The group is very militaristic, always willing to fight for Wintermark on battles or skirmishes. They pride themselves on their resolve on the battlefield and will fight to the death to protect their own. The hall is always welcoming of new members who can provide useful skills.



Hyrst Hal
16.3.7 Hyrst Hall

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi
Hyrst hall was built upon a wooded hill. Tall dark oak trees surround the small, fortlike settlement. There were Ravens who also made their home there - they would alert the people of dangers and in return the locals hung small glittering trinkets from the trees as gifts for the birds.

Very much a merchant hall with proud traditions of trade and supporting military concerns.

A hall re-discovered on two age old families.



New Ausland

16.3.8 New Ausland

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
Situated on the border between Hahnmark and Sermersuaq the settlement of Ausland was once lively and relatively prosperous. Unfortunately a recent attack by the Jotun wiped out much of the population and stole their wealth.

The remaining villagers sought refuge at Eagle's Rest. One day when a merchant visited the hall and upon hearing their tale she vowed to help. The remaining villagers were simple folk who had enjoyed their previously quiet life so they quickly bestowed the title of Thane upon the merchant, who led them further to the border between Hahnmark and Kallavesa to found a new settlement where they could begin their lives again.

Thus the hall of New Ausland was formed under the leadership of Thane Kaarina Starborn. Now they seeks to rebuild the settlement both in popularity and prosperity.



Oxenguard

16.3.9 Oxenguard

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
On the northern western boarder of Hahnmark made up of 3 small hamlets, each with in walking distance of each other. In the year 150YE a soldier coming back from fighting barbarians, raised the coin out of his own pocket to build a mead hall in the biggest of the hamlets.

The current day aim of the hall is to rebuild after losing a great many members in 376YE fighting alongside Empress Britta.

16.3.10 Renweard

Hall Banner: White horse on a green background
Traditions: mixed
Renweard is made up of three halls - Tyrshalt, White Oak, and Ætheling - working together for the good of Wintermark and the Empire. They have been around since the death of Empress Britta and helped reclaim two Crowns for the Empire so far. They form part of the Iron Bastards. Eukenbrand, champion of the people is part of this hall. They strive to help Wintermark fight well on the field, in the Senate and other places of power.



Rune-sworn Quills

16.3.11 Rune-sworn Quills

Tradition: Steinr
Little is known about the original Rune-sworn Quills, other than the fact that their words and songs were said to have the power to shape history itself. On the day that Empress Britta died, the Rune-sworn were among the first to spill blood for the Empire and those that survived that day were the first to sing of Britta's heroism.

In 380YE, the Rune-sworn Quills were re-formed by a scop and a runesmith in the hopes of one day bringing the group back to its former greatness. Though the original were mostly warriors, those who today join the ranks of the Rune-sworn are just as likely to be heroic warriors as they are solemn scops, artful artisans or fearless physics. Being a Rune-sworn Quill is as much an oath of comradeship as it is a desire for wisdom, freedom, and truth.

As their name suggests, the Rune-sworn, like many from Wintermark, regard runes with much importance. Of all the runes, the Rune-sworn hold four with utmost importance. These are: Evrom, the Rune of Beginning, Sular, the Rune of Discovery, Jotra, the Rune of Battle, and Ophis, the Rune of Revelation.



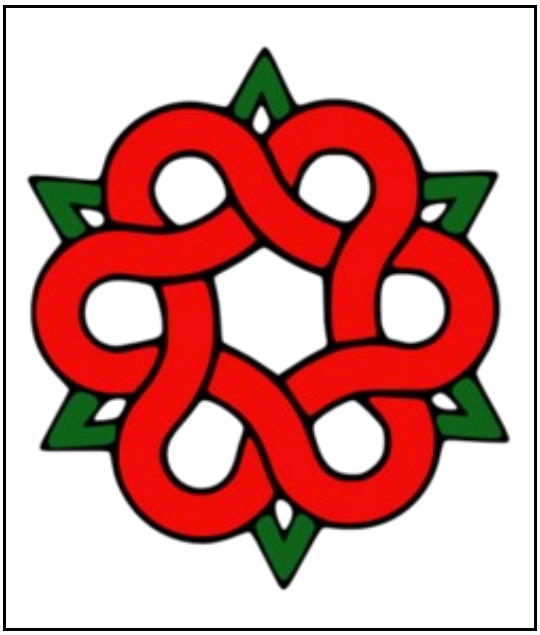
Sherard Hunters

16.3.12 Sherard Hunters

Traditions: Predominantly Steinr
Situated near the base of the Fingers in a fertile, wooded valley, Sherard Hall was founded around 270 YE by 'Old' Sherard The Hunter. Starting as little more than a shack but soon blossoming into a thriving homestead, it is used as a staging area for hunts in the surrounding countryside, including into Varushka, where people from all around can try and earn a name for themselves in an attempt to bring in some monstrous quarry from those haunted realms just over the border. As a result of this hub atmosphere, many potential hunters decided to stay and, although predominantly Steinr, members also follow the Suaq and Kallavesi traditions.

The main hall itself is magnificent, long and comfortable, with a fire always burning in the hearth. In the hall, high on the wall above the main seat hangs a great skull of a direwolf and anybody interested can ask for the exciting story of this beast which is tied to the hall's origins. All manner of people visit the Hunters for their famed hospitality and stories, healing ability and prowess in the realm of Spring magic, especially since their performance of an empire wide enchantment during the Spring Equinox 380YE.

They revel in assisting others on small or large scales and it is perhaps this that gives them their motto: ?Heart and Hearth?, which has never been forgotten in the hundred years since Old Sherard placed the first foundations.



Sigehold

16.3.13 Sigehold

Traditions: Predominantly Steinr
Originally established in Skarsind, after the territory was given to the Imperial Orcs, the Sigehold established a new hall on the Kallavesa border, in Valasmark. Before they left, the stormcrows of Sigehold gathered their Hall?s diverse traditions in a book to be given to the Skywise with whom there is a continued friendship.

The original Sigehold Hall was founded by Striking Ardith (first Warden of the Mark) after her band of resistance fighters had aided in the successful taking of Skarsind. It was formed of those of diverse fallen halls who had come together to fight against the Thule after the Fall.

The banner of Sigehold continues to be used to rally the Heart of the Mark in battle and Sigehold prides itself on its friendship with the smaller halls stemming from its history of being a home for those broken, dispossessed and needing refuge from the Fall. Hospitality in Sigehold is linked closely with food and especially Sigehold Gravlax from their salmon farm. The current Thane is Iron Osric.

16.3.14 Stenstorp

Hall Banner: Face of Sten Rockbeard in gold on a blood red background.
Traditions: Unknown
Stenstorp hall was founded by Sten Rockbeard and his companions after a legendary encounter with the troll Toothcutter, chief of the Rotting Tooth Tribe. Having driven the trolls from the lost Vale of Kivikylma, Sten established a settlement there, which flourished. After a long period of relative peace, barbarian orcs attacked the settlement - and if the tales are to be believed, they were accompanied by a returned Toothcutter himself. They came in such numbers that survivors were forced to flee the Vale of Kivikylma.

Following Sten's eventual passing, successive thanes and generations have sought for The Vale of Kivikylma in vain. Following the recent tragic death of Thane Algar, Stenstorp Hall adopted Sverrir Hordson, an experienced armourer and weapon smith whom they had spent time with in Anvil, as thane.

Currently Stenstorp Hall is based at Sverrir's mining settlement and workshops, Malmurheim, in Hahnmark. It is not clear why the histories transmitted have not allowed Stenstorp Hall to find the Vale of Kivikylma. It is unlikely that the Hall will lose hope of one day returning to their original home.



Stormspire

16.3.15 Stormspire

Traditions: Mostly Steinr, with some Suaq and Kallavesi
Built atop the tallest peak of the Northspires in Hahnmark, the Stormspire has a commanding view over all of Wintermark and beyond. Their scouts watch the borders for Thule aggression, a duty they take no less seriously for peace treaties. Should the signal be received the great beacon atop Stormspire is lit, followed swiftly by the others in the network; in this way all of Wintermark is warned of trouble.

As much a garrison as a true hall, their commander is known as the Eyes of the North; a title currently held by Thane Raknar Ravenstorm. Though known mostly for their warriors and scouts, they embrace all of Wintermark?s traditions with enthusiasm. Among their number they count many famous scops, runesmiths, icewalkers and more; their head grimnir, Lofyn Bloodbathed, is known across the Mark for her work to restore the Bloodcloaks. Likewise, they watch the roads of the Northern trade network, and their caravan patrols attract numerous traders to the spire. Many of their number were once refugees from Skarsind and elsewhere, Stormspire being both fortified and close to the border of that war-torn land.

It is the warrior tradition for which they are most famed. Their scouts travel the most inhospitable reaches of the 'Mark, and support the spy network on Verthandi. Their warriors strike out in heavy armour, wielding spear and sword to cut down threats they find. Since the death of Empress Britta they have fought in all of the Empire?s major engagements. Their warriors personally recovered the Young Empress? headless body from the Thule. They reclaimed Winter?s Fury, the banner of Queen Ilsin, from the vallornspawn of Deer?s Folly at a terrible cost. They fought and died at the Battle of Ikka?s Tears, helped recover both the Crown of Three Tears and the Imperial Crown, and were the first to breach the walls of Urith Barath, the great Druj citadel in Reikos.

16.3.15.1 Hall Ursus



Hall Ursus

- **Location:** Valasmark
- **Traditions:** Mixed
- **Thane:** Revna Ursan

In Valasmark, close to the border with Rundhal Marsh, stands the hall of Ursus. All across the boundaries are engravings of sigils of bears - drawing on that animal's aspects of authority and leadership.

Now, the hall focuses on the Virtues of Courage, Loyalty, and Pride as they strive defend their land against the scions of Cold Sun and makes their name in Anvil.

16.3.16 Wyverns' Watch



Wyverns Watch
Traditions: Steinr
Located amidst the snow-capped Northspires of Hahnmark, the Wyverns' Watch is a hall of warriors and hunters dedicated to protecting the citizens of the Empire from its many threats, particularly beasts, monsters and malignant spirits. Imperial citizens of every nation have been tormented by such creatures since the founding of the Empire and constantly seek aid. It is the ancient charge of the Wyverns' Watch to stand against such perils and lend their support to the Imperial Army by facing these creatures on the battlefield.

Each member of the Watch is blood-sworn by sacred oath to fight and lay down their lives to protect their comrades, the nation of Wintermark and ultimately, the Empire.

Three formations of the Wyverns' Watch have since passed, the old watches did their job well by eradicating numerous beasts from the north and were eventually disbanded.

The Watch's pledge is a declaration to keep constantly vigilant for all dangers but none more so than the infamous and legendary beast; The Wyvern. Called the Great Enemy, the Watch considers these creatures its mightiest foe and there would be no greater test of skill, courage and power for the hall to hunt down one of these menacing beasts and surpass the heroism of their ancient predecessors.

A young hall with an old name, the hall welcomes all souls to prove their worth and add their names to the historic roster of hunters.



Yrhara

16.3.17 Yrhara

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
"My labour and life for Yrhara, to forge the heroes yet to come. Let the virtues of the hara guide the way, for the hall is hungry and has many mouths to feed."

After their home of Skarsind was ceded to the Imperial Orcs in 379YE, the people (who would go on to become the Yrhara) scattered west to Hahnmark. After traversing the harsh lands of Hercynia they eventually rallied to a new hall founded by a Thane, said to have been shown the way to their new home in a vision of a horned mountain hare, completing their journey the hall was named after the symbolic animal to which they owed their home.

The hall strives to pave the way for the next generation of heroes.

16.4 Halls of Kallavesa



The Æsclings
16.4.1 The Æsclings

Traditions: Steinr
The Æsclings are a hall based out of Kallavesa, formed of mostly Steinr. With strong, traditional values of hospitality, storytellling and heroism.

After the Troll wars and the conflicts that followed, the traditionally martial Æsclings hall found little need for their spear work in the lands of Wintermark. The Thane, Wealthwearer Wæcla, made the historic and unconventional decision to take the halls battle prowess further afield. Sailing out from the westmere, the Æsclings offered their swords in foreign conflicts, both near and far, to great prosperity.

Since that time the hall has upheld a strong mercenary tradition, fighting alongside the other imperial nations in their conflicts, as well as with foreign nations in theirs. However they do not forget their homeland, and return to Kallavesa regularly, both in leisure and at times when the lands of Wintermark are under threat.

In addition, due to their extensive travel, the Æsclings also have many adept traders amongst their number, with some members running the white wing trading company, which can often be found selling wares around anvil.



Greyholm
16.4.2 Greyholm

Hall Banner: Side profile of boar on black background
Traditions: Steinr and Kallavesi
Situated in the swamps of Kallavesa lit by the drifting will o? the wisps and the twisted, snaking forms of the ghosts of Imperial heroes is the settlement of Greyholm. Pallid mud clings to the stilted walkways and jetties that connect the lonely huts and buildings propped up over the generations to ensure the living don?t join the departed before the end of their skeins. Peat moss grows in clumps alongside the undersides of windowsills and doorways and hanging lichen stretches its ghostly fingers off quaysides and into the waters of Kallavesa. These faded shades the only indication of colour in the marsh other than the Greys of the wood used in the settlements construction. Mired in the rituals and hearth magic of Wintermark, Greyholm is a well know destination for the dead who will soon rest in the Sovevann.

Greyholm is a shelter to the disillusioned, its numbers swollen by refugees driven from their homes for whom it provides a tranquil sanctuary. With the increased number of casualties among the people of Wintermark, the need for grave keepers has also risen. Due to this many of the inhabitants of Greyholm have taken up this solemn duty of interning the heroes of the 'Mark in their final resting place. Many of the members of Greyholm are mystics, grimnir, or stormcrows who understand the importance for the preservation of life but also the need for a skein to end.



Kingfishers of Fisk

16.4.3 Kingfishers of Fisk

Traditions: Mixed
The hall was formed in 383YE by some of the most prominent tradespeople and ritualists of Fisk, the Kingfishers seek to enhance the prosperity and influence of their home by bringing their wares and expertise to Anvil. At the core of the hall is a coven of Autumn ritualists, who work to enhance the many businesses and fleets based in Fisk. An unusually high number of the hall members are of cambion lineage.

Among the trades represented in the Kingfishers are shipwrights and papermakers, who take advantage of the abundance of timber forested from Wittal Grove, food importers, who have easy access to the Marches and lands beyond the Westmere, and the herbalist, mystics, and apothecaries who maintain traditional local practices.

16.5 Halls of Sermersuaq



Eldfjall Hall

16.5.1 Eldfjall Hall

Traditions: Mixed Eldfjall Hall is a small settlement on the edges of the Hot Springs of Taniki in Tanikipari. The land around the hot springs is particularly fertile, allowing Eldfjall to cultivate crops and raise small herds. Several springs are dotted near the Hall and are used for healing arts.

16.5.2 Fjellreven

Hall Banner: Blue three tailed fox on a field of white
Traditions: Primarily Suaq with some Steinr and Kallevesi
Fjellreven Hall has existed in in some form since before the formation of Wintermark as a nation. It was originally a Suaq hall but with the joining of the peoples a greater diversity appeared. The oldest surviving records have the Hall settled in the Silver Peaks near a mountain pass into Skarsind.

However with the Silverpeaks being ceded to the Thule the Hall has moved south to East Floes and now sits between the lakes Big Sister and Little Brother just across the water from Wreck.

The Hall has a strong tradition of Icewalkers, artisans and grimnir and has taken great pride in being a centre for the medicinal arts.

16.5.3 Rangers of Nanuk

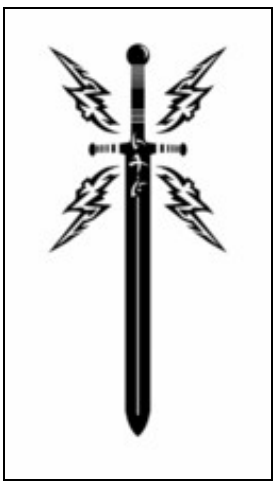
Hall Banner: Jotra, Verys, Tykonus, Yorn, and Ophis, surmounting a white Nanuk bear on a blue field
Traditions: Mixed
The Hall of the Rangers of Nanuk provides a last offering of warmth and comfort to travellers in the far north of Sermersuaq, a final light before the endless blizzards of Sydanjaa. Originally established by a group of Suaq hunters, the Rangers of Nanuk tasked themselves with guardianship of the north, each Ranger vowing to safeguard the south from the dire beasts that populate the edge of the eternal storm, and to share their knowledge with those who sought to enter it.

Despite their long and proud history, the Rangers first rose to full prominence after the invasion of Skarsind by the Thule empire, where their skill as scouts and couriers delivered vital information and supplies to Skarsind resistance fighters. When, with their assistance, Skarsind was freed of Thule influence, the veterans of that long service returned to the north, and now form the core of the hall's members.

Today, whilst the Suaq tradition is still prominent, the hall has only been strengthened by its inclusion of the Kallavesi and Steinr, where they remain famed for their hospitality and dedication to their duty. Any imperial citizen is welcome around a Ranger fire, where Courage, Loyalty, and ready hospitality are always to be found.

16.5.4 Saker

Hall Banner: There is no specific symbol that represent the Saker, but the iconography used is largely of the Saker falcon.
Traditions: An even mix
The Saker are a semi-nomadic collection of families (or 'hearths') who all band together under the Saker Mother, who as of Spring 380YE is Rheged Redspear. The Saker have lived in Sermersuaq (and occasionally outside it) for longer than even their story traditions recall. Since the death of Britta the Young, the Saker have come to Anvil in force and have been active in a variety of institutions of the Empire.



Steelstorm hall
There are strong changeling and draughir lines within the Saker, though they do not ascribe any large importance to such.

The Saker coven are a potent force with acknowledged mastery of Winter magic, and are known to be pragmatic in their application of magic - especially the grim ritual Quickening Cold Meat.

16.5.5 Steelstorm Hall

Hall Banner: A black sword on a blue background with four lightning bolts on each corner
Traditions: Mixed
Steelstorm Hall is a relative newcomer to the politics of Anvil, and is slowly finding their feet. They are primarily compose of skirmishing warriors supported by a handful of magicians and crafters but are actively looking for new recruits to expand their numbers.



Sussivari

16.5.6 Sussivari

Traditions: Mixed
Close to the border with Skarsind, the Sussivari hall rests on the trod running from the Stonefield Ice Caves across the border past the old site of Pakaanen?s tower. An old hall founded long ago by the Steinr Oystein Korpis, it has endured since before the creation of the Empire.

It is made up of a full mix of the traditions; members of the hall live and work together at the hall or, in the case of several of the Suaq, nearby in one of the small seasonal hunting settlements. A large number of the hall died fighting alongside Empress Britta whilst trying to defend Skarsind. Loyalty to their fallen kin inspired the new generation of the hall to make the journey to Anvil to take part in Imperial politics and warfare.

While the hall has always counted warriors, icewalkers, mystics, artisans and stormcrows among its number, it has developed a particularly strong arcane tradition in recent years with many members now practicing ritual magic of one form or another. Similarly, since the beginning of the Interregnum and now up to the present day, the hall has provided a high number of stormcrows that are active both within Wintermark and the Synod.

16.6 Halls of Skarsind

OOC Note: Skarsind is not a Wintermark territory; it is the homeland of the Imperial Orcs. As such any character with a personal resource in the territory suffers a penalty to their production. Following the conclusion of the Dogri Thulebane incident in 381YE, Profound Decisions will assume that there is no remaining significant population of Winterfolk in Skarsind. There remain some player character halls, but they are isolated and exceptional and it is our assumption that their numbers will slowly dwindle. It is no longer possible for new Wintermark players to start with their resources in Skarsind.



Blackwatch

16.6.1 Blackwatch

Traditions: Steinr and Suaq Founded during the winter of 377YE by the former huscarl of the Hel-brethren Resistance, the Blackwatch settled itself around a former watch tower bordering the Glen of Shadows in Hercynia that had been used by their now thane and his blood brother during the occupation war against the Thule. Initially a purely Steinr hall, they were soon joined by a number of Suaq over the following year as the hall grew into a small town. With the ceding of Skarsind to the Imperial Orcs the Blackwatch remained and now live alongside members of the Imperial orcs of the Legion Protectorate and the Stormcrows.

The Blackwatch pride themselves on their abilities in handling the Frayed, with the hall dedicating their time to searching them out and putting them on the right path by one of the oldest rites of Wintermark; regaining one's skein through the fire of battle under the watchful eye of the hall?s thane and their guard.

16.7 Other



Holt Hyrde

16.7.1 Holt Hyrde

Traditions: Mixed
The Holt Hyrde are nomadic. The term Holt stems back from the earliest days of the Kallavesi. It originally referred to a small copse of trees ideal as a place to lay camp. Over time it variously became known as a word for home, house, hall of lords, and the place close to my heart that I consider my home. It has also often been used symbolically to represent the kingdom of Wintermark.

The Holt Hyrde are protectors of the borders of Wintermark. They seek not glory, and to lead others into glory. They do not seek fame, though the names of others will be sung because of them. They do not seek victory, though the Wintermark will see glory through their actions. They watch over the dark places beyond their homes, walk among the long shadows that threaten to reach out and take their precious lands from them. They learn of the ways of their enemies and seek to understand them, for through knowledge comes victory.

They count among their people the wise, the thoughtful, and the considered. The hunter, the mystic, and the crafter. They task themselves with guiding the stories of the great heroes of Wintermark. They take care in ensuring that heroic tales run longer than they otherwise might. They take pride that the songs or heroes ring with rousing choruses of victory. They take satisfaction in the splintering of the bones of their foes beneath their boots.

16.7.2 The Winter's Levy

Hall Banner: The hall is currently represented by a green banner featuring three circling magpies.
Traditions: Mixed
The Winter's Levy is a hall with a long history of transformation. Valuing growth, the hall learns from the past but is ever looking forward, establishing an identity that reflects its members as they are now and not as they may once have been.

Whilst not exclusively Kallavesi, the Kallavesi membership currently dominates the hall and the main settlement is near Westerhal in Westermarsh. However, a number of members live nomadically across the marshes and further afield within Wintermark.

Prosperity, Loyalty, Pride in tradition, and artistic creativity are all crucial values to The Winter's Levy, with members often engaging merchant trade, creative endeavours, and traditional practices. The hall fiercely loves its homeland and comprises warriors as well as mystics, scops, artisans, and experts in herb lore and magic.

16.8 Prominent Halls in Play

This list is by no means exhaustive; efforts are made to keep it up to date but due to the sheer amount of work involved the onus lies with the Wintermark players to ensure the information is correct and current.

The majority of halls listed here represent player-character groups. It should go without saying that you should not create a character who is part of one of these halls, or has personal history with one of them, without first clearing it with the appropriate players. You should also check before including other players' houses in your background. The background team are unlikely to approve a background that significantly impacts or involves another player character household without their permission.

Included above are a handful of prominent NPC halls - you may be able to create a character associated with one of these halls but the situation will depend very much on your background and the house in question. It is unlikely that a player character will receive additional benefits for belonging to an NPC hall, and may find their game limited - the thanes of these halls are likely to remain NPCs for example, and are unlikely to give player characters much attention. -->

the ridiculous and dangerous.



Eira Spire

16.8.1 Eira Spire

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
Eira Spire is a Hall of Wintermarkers of every tradition living in the icy cold tundra of the northspires in the Province of Hahnmark. The proud settlement was first founded at a time before recorded history by Orvarin Lurask and his wife Madelyn and 30 of their bannermen and women. They were the original founders and discoverers of the ancient Troll cave that would become Eira Spire.

Eira Spire has traditionally been an isolationist group, preferring to keep to themselves as much as possible, while they are known to trade and communicate with nearby halls and towns as well as rally to the aid of Wintermark and the Empire. Despite their isolationist tendencies they would never turn a stranger in need away, but preferring they move on as soon as they are able.

A defining event for Eira Spire was the invasion of Sermersuaq which deeply affected the Suaq members of the hall and cause a renewed look inward at the hall's military capabilities and tradition of isolation and opting eventually to abandon it and travel to Anvil.

The hall's traditions prefer to take a positive outlook on life, celebrating a members passing with laughs and moments of their lives instead of tears and with Thane Orvar Lurask taking the position of thane, the hall has begun to focus more and more on cooperation between Wintermark and with the other nations of the Empire.



Fellowship of the Broken Willow

16.8.2 Fellowship of the Broken Willow

Traditions: Mixed
When Skarsind fell, many of its inhabitants were left without homes. The chaos that engulfed them also brought out some of the worst of many halls; families were torn apart and old wounds reopened. In response a wise and proud Steinr woman, Lora Windeltreow, resolved to form her own hall, one without any landed home, partially as a matter of practicality and partially as a small act of protest. The "hall" formed around a traveling caravan and they journeyed throughout Wintermark, trading for what was needed, accepting any and all - outcasts, lost teenagers, and vagrants - so long as they needed a new place to call their own.

Lora?s natural charisma drew many under her banner, and even those who had only intended to stay for a few short seasons found themselves compelled to stay longer. Lora passed away due to illness shortly before the 380YE Winter Solstice, a fact which left the rest of the hall reeling, and struggling to recover. After the Spring Equinox, Lora was committed to the marshes of Kallavesa. Her successor was the group?s head grimnir, as the hall has a number devoted to that art.

Several members own property in Hahnmark, and there are numerous debates among members as to whether or not the hall should settle there permanently. Since Skarsind was given to the Imperial Orcs, these questions are becoming more prominent.



Grimm Dawn
16.8.3 Grimm Dawn

Traditions: Steinr
The Grimm Dawn are frayed. They are a hall for the broken, those who feel they have lost their way. They see themselves as "unfavourable" - those who have lost their ways and decided to find them again, to gain the ways their past action have caused them to lose. Members strive for a heroic life and an even more heroic death in honor of the Empire and all it stands for. Members of Grimm Dawn are willing to do what many will not in their pursuit of redemption. They are martially inclined, commonly acting as shock and harassment troops, although they also work to recover the fallen on the field of battle. Outside of battle, they still seek to offer aid to others, trading and healing with those who will deal with them.



Haddis Hall
16.8.4 Haddis Hall

Traditions: Mixed
Haddis Hall is a young hall built up by Steinr merchants looking to bring prosperity to themselves and to Wintermark. Members of Haddis Hall work together for a common goal of growing the hall and improving their nation wherever they can. Although the hall was founded by merchants, they welcome members of many other professions among their number especially capable healers and magicians.



Hendal Hearth

16.8.5 Hendal Hearth

Traditions: Mixed
Hendal Hearth Hall was founded by Winterfolk who left Skarsind following the Skarsind Motion in 379YE. They came from several halls, united by a decision to make a fresh start in Wood Heath. Many of Hendal Hearth still bear grudges over Skarsind, believing a trail of broken promises have followed in its wake - oaths not kept and weregild not paid.

Hendal Hearth itself was founded by the late thane, Bjarne, known as the *Faithful Defender*. The hall is known both for its extensive herb gardens, and for being home to the Winterforge Armouries.

While all three peoples are part of Hendal Hearth, by tradition a Kallavesi can never be thane. Instead, the Kallavesi choose the thanes and serve as advisors. They have chosen their most recent thane after the death of the founder.

16.8.6 Hounds of Fortune

Hall Banner: Blood hound with runes on either side
Traditions: Mixed The Hounds of Fortune represent a hall in Hahnmark, gathering together members from all over Wintermark. The group was formed in 381YE at Anvil during the Winter Solstice after two smaller halls - The Brothers Drunk and Storm Glade - united with the purpose bringing prosperity to Wintermark and the Empire. The group is very militaristic, always willing to fight for Wintermark on battles or skirmishes. They pride themselves on their resolve on the battlefield and will fight to the death to protect their own. The hall is always welcoming of new members who can provide useful skills.



Hyrst Hal

16.8.7 Hyrst Hall

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi
Hyrst hall was built upon a wooded hill. Tall dark oak trees surround the small, fortlike settlement. There were Ravens who also made their home there - they would alert the people of dangers and in return the locals hung small glittering trinkets from the trees as gifts for the birds.

Very much a merchant hall with proud traditions of trade and supporting military concerns.

A hall re-discovered on two age old families.



New Ausland

16.8.8 New Ausland

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
Situated on the border between Hahnmark and Sermersuaq the settlement of Ausland was once lively and relatively prosperous. Unfortunately a recent attack by the Jotun wiped out much of the population and stole their wealth.

The remaining villagers sought refuge at Eagle's Rest. One day when a merchant visited the hall and upon hearing their tale she vowed to help. The remaining villagers were simple folk who had enjoyed their previously quiet life so they quickly bestowed the title of Thane upon the merchant, who led them further to the border between Hahnmark and Kallavesa to found a new settlement where they could begin their lives again.

Thus the hall of New Ausland was formed under the leadership of Thane Kaarina Starborn. Now they seeks to rebuild the settlement both in popularity and prosperity.



Oxenguard

16.8.9 Oxenguard

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
On the northern western boarder of Hahnmark made up of 3 small hamlets, each with in walking distance of each other. In the year 150YE a soldier coming back from fighting barbarians, raised the coin out of his own pocket to build a mead hall in the biggest of the hamlets.

The current day aim of the hall is to rebuild after losing a great many members in 376YE fighting alongside Empress Britta.

16.8.10 Renweard

Hall Banner: White horse on a green background
Traditions: Mixed
Renweard is made up of three halls - Tyrshalt, White Oak, and Ætheling - working together for the good of Wintermark and the Empire. They have been around since the death of Empress Britta and helped reclaim two Crowns for the Empire so far. They form part of the Iron Bastards. Eukenbrand, champion of the people is part of this hall. They strive to help Wintermark fight well on the field, in the Senate and other places of power.



Rune-sworn Quills

16.8.11 Rune-sworn Quills

Tradition: Steinr
Little is known about the original Rune-sworn Quills, other than the fact that their words and songs were said to have the power to shape history itself. On the day that Empress Britta died, the Rune-sworn were among the first to spill blood for the Empire and those that survived that day were the first to sing of Britta's heroism.

In 380YE, the Rune-sworn Quills were re-formed by a scop and a runesmith in the hopes of one day bringing the group back to its former greatness. Though the original were mostly warriors, those who today join the ranks of the Rune-sworn are just as likely to be heroic warriors as they are solemn scops, artful artisans or fearless physics. Being a Rune-sworn Quill is as much an oath of comradeship as it is a desire for wisdom, freedom, and truth.

As their name suggests, the Rune-sworn, like many from Wintermark, regard runes with much importance. Of all the runes, the Rune-sworn hold four with utmost importance. These are: Evrom, the Rune of Beginning, Sular, the Rune of Discovery, Jotra, the Rune of Battle, and Ophis, the Rune of Revelation.



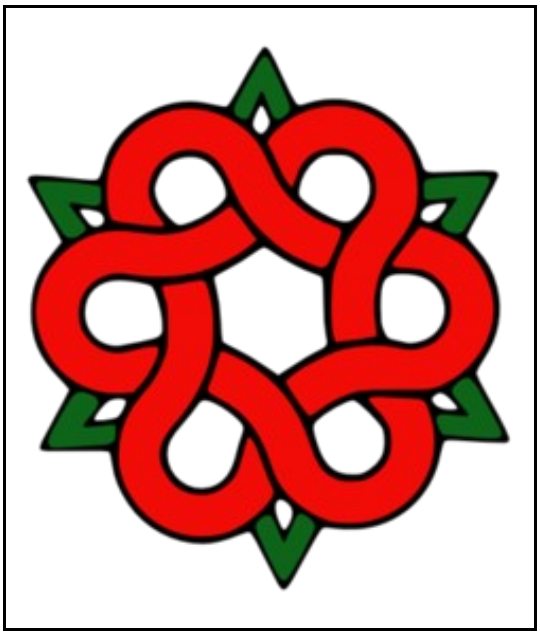
Sherard Hunters

16.8.12 Sherard Hunters

Traditions: Predominantly Steinr
Situated near the base of the Fingers in a fertile, wooded valley, Sherard Hall was founded around 270 YE by 'Old' Sherard The Hunter. Starting as little more than a shack but soon blossoming into a thriving homestead, it is used as a staging area for hunts in the surrounding countryside, including into Varushka, where people from all around can try and earn a name for themselves in an attempt to bring in some monstrous quarry from those haunted realms just over the border. As a result of this hub atmosphere, many potential hunters decided to stay and, although predominantly Steinr, members also follow the Suaq and Kallavesi traditions.

The main hall itself is magnificent, long and comfortable, with a fire always burning in the hearth. In the hall, high on the wall above the main seat hangs a great skull of a direwolf and anybody interested can ask for the exciting story of this beast which is tied to the hall's origins. All manner of people visit the Hunters for their famed hospitality and stories, healing ability and prowess in the realm of Spring magic, especially since their performance of an empire wide enchantment during the Spring Equinox 380YE.

They revel in assisting others on small or large scales and it is perhaps this that gives them their motto: ?Heart and Hearth?, which has never been forgotten in the hundred years since Old Sherard placed the first foundations.



Sigehold

16.8.13 Sigehold

Traditions: Predominantly Steinr
Originally established in Skarsind, after the territory was given to the Imperial Orcs, the Sigehold established a new hall on the Kallavesa border, in Valasmark. Before they left, the stormcrows of Sigehold gathered their Hall?s diverse traditions in a book to be given to the Skywise with whom there is a continued friendship.

The original Sigehold Hall was founded by Striking Ardith (first Warden of the Mark) after her band of resistance fighters had aided in the successful taking of Skarsind. It was formed of those of diverse fallen halls who had come together to fight against the Thule after the Fall.

The banner of Sigehold continues to be used to rally the Heart of the Mark in battle and Sigehold prides itself on its friendship with the smaller halls stemming from its history of being a home for those broken, dispossessed and needing refuge from the Fall. Hospitality in Sigehold is linked closely with food and especially Sigehold Gravlax from their salmon farm. The current Thane is Iron Osric.

16.8.14 Stenstorp

Hall Banner: Face of Sten Rockbeard in gold on a blood red background.
Traditions: Unknown
Stenstorp hall was founded by Sten Rockbeard and his companions after a legendary encounter with the troll Toothcutter, chief of the Rotting Tooth Tribe. Having driven the trolls from the lost Vale of Kivikylma, Sten established a settlement there, which flourished. After a long period of relative peace, barbarian orcs attacked the settlement - and if the tales are to be believed, they were accompanied by a returned Toothcutter himself. They came in such numbers that survivors were forced to flee the Vale of Kivikylma.

Following Sten's eventual passing, successive thanes and generations have sought for The Vale of Kivikylma in vain. Following the recent tragic death of Thane Algar, Stenstorp Hall adopted Sverrir Hordson, an experienced armourer and weapon smith whom they had spent time with in Anvil, as thane.

Currently Stenstorp Hall is based at Sverrir's mining settlement and workshops, Malmurheim, in Hahnmark. It is not clear why the histories transmitted have not allowed Stenstorp Hall to find the Vale of Kivikylma. It is unlikely that the Hall will lose hope of one day returning to their original home.



Stormspire

16.8.15 Stormspire

Traditions: Mostly Steinr, with some Suaq and Kallavesi
Built atop the tallest peak of the Northspires in Hahnmark, the Stormspire has a commanding view over all of Wintermark and beyond. Their scouts watch the borders for Thule aggression, a duty they take no less seriously for peace treaties. Should the signal be received the great beacon atop Stormspire is lit, followed swiftly by the others in the network; in this way all of Wintermark is warned of trouble.

As much a garrison as a true hall, their commander is known as the Eyes of the North; a title currently held by Thane Raknar Ravenstorm. Though known mostly for their warriors and scouts, they embrace all of Wintermark?s traditions with enthusiasm. Among their number they count many famous scops, runesmiths, icewalkers and more; their head grimnir, Lofyn Bloodbathed, is known across the Mark for her work to restore the Bloodcloaks. Likewise, they watch the roads of the Northern trade network, and their caravan patrols attract numerous traders to the spire. Many of their number were once refugees from Skarsind and elsewhere, Stormspire being both fortified and close to the border of that war-torn land.

It is the warrior tradition for which they are most famed. Their scouts travel the most inhospitable reaches of the 'Mark, and support the spy network on Verthandi. Their warriors strike out in heavy armour, wielding spear and sword to cut down threats they find. Since the death of Empress Britta they have fought in all of the Empire?s major engagements. Their warriors personally recovered the Young Empress? headless body from the Thule. They reclaimed Winter?s Fury, the banner of Queen Ilsin, from the vallornspawn of Deer?s Folly at a terrible cost. They fought and died at the Battle of Ikka?s Tears, helped recover both the Crown of Three Tears and the Imperial Crown, and were the first to breach the walls of Urith Barath, the great Druj citadel in Reikos.

16.8.16 The Tyliansson Ploughshare

Traditions: Mixed
Many hands make light work
Formed by the confluence of several smaller halls and disparate groups from across the Mark, The Tyliansson Ploughshare was founded in 384YE under the shrewd leadership of Thane Jaana Mordssen.

The Ploughshare was raised by its members around a derelict brewery complex at a crossroads bordering Hahnmark and Kallavesa, a day?s ride from Valashal. By working together, the rundown brewhouse and outbuildings are now repaired and home to the members of the hall. The long cold forge now rings with the sound of hammers on anvils, once abandoned gardens bloom with apothecary herbs, and fallow fields are now bounteous with hops and barley.

Bound by common cause, its members now have a home to put down roots; a safe haven from the war torn outer reaches of the Empire. A hall built on the understanding that many hands make light work (their hall words), and that the lifelong pursuit of virtue and heroism is less arduous with friends.



Wyverns Watch

16.8.17 Wyverns' Watch

Traditions: Steinr
Located amidst the snow-capped Northspires of Hahnmark, the Wyverns' Watch is a hall of warriors and hunters dedicated to protecting the citizens of the Empire from its many threats, particularly beasts, monsters and malignant spirits. Imperial citizens of every nation have been tormented by such creatures since the founding of the Empire and constantly seek aid. It is the ancient charge of the Wyverns' Watch to stand against such perils and lend their support to the Imperial Army by facing these creatures on the battlefield.

Each member of the Watch is blood-sworn by sacred oath to fight and lay down their lives to protect their comrades, the nation of Wintermark and ultimately, the Empire.

Three formations of the Wyverns' Watch have since passed, the old watches did their job well by eradicating numerous beasts from the north and were eventually disbanded.

The Watch's pledge is a declaration to keep constantly vigilant for all dangers but none more so than the infamous and legendary beast; The Wyvern. Called the Great Enemy, the Watch considers these creatures its mightiest foe and there would be no greater test of skill, courage and power for the hall to hunt down one of these menacing beasts and surpass the heroism of their ancient predecessors.

A young hall with an old name, the hall welcomes all souls to prove their worth and add their names to the historic roster of hunters.



Yrhara

16.8.18 Yrhara

Traditions: Steinr, Kallavesi, Suaq
"My labour and life for Yrhara, to forge the heroes yet to come. Let the virtues of the hara guide the way, for the hall is hungry and has many mouths to feed."

After their home of Skarsind was ceded to the Imperial Orcs in 379YE, the people (who would go on to become the Yrhara) scattered west to Hahnmark. After traversing the harsh lands of Hercynia they eventually rallied to a new hall founded by a Thane, said to have been shown the way to their new home in a vision of a horned mountain hare, completing their journey the hall was named after the symbolic animal to which they owed their home.

The hall strives to pave the way for the next generation of heroes.

16.9 Halls of Kallavesa



The Æsclings

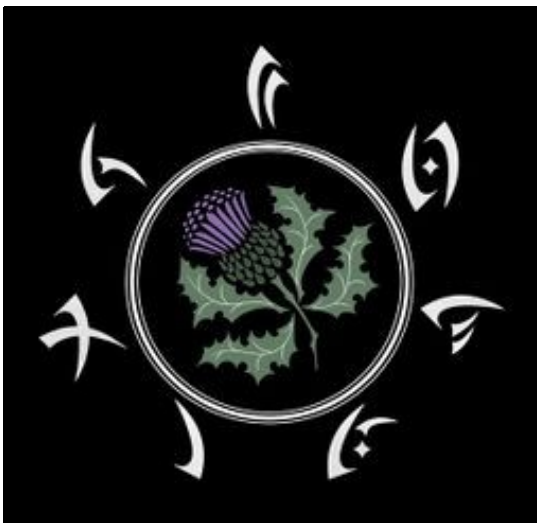
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The Æsclings are a hall based out of Kallavesa, formed of mostly Steinr. With strong, traditional values of hospitality, storytellling and heroism.

After the Troll wars and the conflicts that followed, the traditionally martial Æsclings hall found little need for their spear work in the lands of Wintermark. The Thane, Wealthwearer Wæcla, made the historic and unconventional decision to take the halls battle prowess further afield. Sailing out from the Westmere, the Æsclings offered their swords in foreign conflicts, both near and far, to great prosperity.

Since that time the hall has upheld a strong mercenary tradition, fighting alongside the other imperial nations in their conflicts, as well as with foreign nations in theirs. However they do not forget their homeland, and return to Kallavesa regularly, both in leisure and at times when the lands of Wintermark are under threat.

In addition, due to their extensive travel, the Æsclings also have many adept traders amongst their number, with some members running the white wing trading company, which can often be found selling wares around anvil.



Deamodrad
16.9.2 Deamodrad's Folly

Traditions: Kallavesi
Deamodrad's Folly is near to the border between Kallavesa and Hahnmark. For six generations the Deamodrad?s have sought after Prosperity, not just for themselves but for the entirety of Wintermark and ultimately the Empire. They believe that strength lies within a Virtues life, and that is the message they want to send forward.

Now they venture to the Anvil summits, seeking to give and receive Wisdom, and with Loyalty in mind, help those who are most in need to live Ambitious and Prosperous lives.

The Deamodrad?s believe that it is a people's traditions that make them unique, and rather than them separating the Empire, help to bind it strongly together. They uphold strong values in the Way, in Wintermark customs, and are ever loyal to the Throne, which they believe helps in forging heroes from stormcrows, mystics and warriors.



Greyholm

16.9.3 Greyholm

Hall Banner: Side profile of boar on black background
Traditions: Steinr and Kallavesi
Situated in the swamps of Kallavesa lit by the drifting will o? the wisps and the twisted, snaking forms of the ghosts of Imperial heroes is the settlement of Greyholm. Pallid mud clings to the stilted walkways and jetties that connect the lonely huts and buildings propped up over the generations to ensure the living don?t join the departed before the end of their skeins. Peat moss grows in clumps alongside the undersides of windowsills and doorways and hanging lichen stretches its ghostly fingers off quaysides and into the waters of Kallavesa. These faded shades the only indication of colour in the marsh other than the Greys of the wood used in the settlements construction. Mired in the rituals and hearth magic of Wintermark, Greyholm is a well know destination for the dead who will soon rest in the Sovevann.

Greyholm is a shelter to the disillusioned, its numbers swollen by refugees driven from their homes for whom it provides a tranquil sanctuary. With the increased number of casualties among the people of Wintermark, the need for grave keepers has also risen. Due to this many of the inhabitants of Greyholm have taken up this solemn duty of interning the heroes of the 'Mark in their final resting place. Many of the members of Greyholm are mystics, grimnir, or stormcrows who understand the importance for the preservation of life but also the need for a skein to end.



Ironclaws

16.9.4 Ironclaws

Traditions: Mixed
Years ago, the founders of the hall fled from unknown threats from the shores of the Gullet, abandoning their fleets behind and travelling inland to find a new home. There they found a home on the shore of one of the lakes of Skymark. They also found the "*ironclaw crabs*" which were monstrous crustaceans with shells as hard as iron and claws able to slay lightly armoured foes. The founders of the halls hunted the crabs to extinction, eating their flesh and remaking the shells left behind to serve as rudimentary armour. They chose to take Ironclaws as the name of their hall, acknowledging the beasts that they saw as their greatest challenge.

The Ironclaws are now a stalwart people with experience in both welfare and warfare. They accept refugees, understanding the suffering that comes with being forced to flee your home. The hall has a strong preference towards the virtues of Loyalty and Prosperity; those in the hall are encouraged to consider where their loyalties lie, and to use their wealth to support those struggling.

Since first visiting Anvil during the Winter Solstice 383YE, their ambitions have grown. The Ironclaws seek to further their connections, businesses and prosperity with the best and brightest that the Empire has to offer, while still remaining loyal to the traditions of our hall and the nation of Wintermark.



Kingfishers of Fisk

16.9.5 Kingfishers of Fisk

Traditions: Mixed
The hall was formed in 383YE by some of the most prominent tradespeople and ritualists of Fisk, the Kingfishers seek to enhance the prosperity and influence of their home by bringing their wares and expertise to Anvil. At the core of the hall is a coven of Autumn ritualists, who work to enhance the many businesses and fleets based in Fisk. An unusually high number of the hall members are of cambion lineage.

Among the trades represented in the Kingfishers are shipwrights and papermakers, who take advantage of the abundance of timber forested from Wittal Grove, food importers, who have easy access to the Marches and lands beyond the Westmere, and the herbalist, mystics, and apothecaries who maintain traditional local practices.

16.10 Halls of Sermersuaq

16.10.1 Eldfjall Hall



Eldfjall Hall
Traditions: Mixed Eldfjall Hall is a small settlement on the edges of the Hot Springs of Taniki in Tanikipari. The land around the hot springs is particularly fertile, allowing Eldfjall to cultivate crops and raise small herds. Several springs are dotted near the Hall and are used for healing arts.

16.10.2 Fjellreven

Hall Banner: Blue three tailed fox on a field of white
Traditions: Primarily Suaq with some Steinr and Kallavesi
Fjellreven Hall has existed in in some form since before the formation of Wintermark as a nation. It was originally a Suaq hall but with the joining of the peoples a greater diversity appeared. The oldest surviving records have the Hall settled in the Silver Peaks near a mountain pass into Skarsind. However with the Silverpeaks being ceded to the Thule the Hall has moved south to East Floes and now sits between the lakes Big Sister and Little Brother just across the water from Wreck.

The Hall has a strong tradition of Icewalkers, artisans and grimnir and has taken great pride in being a centre for the medicinal arts.

16.10.3 Rangers of Nanuk

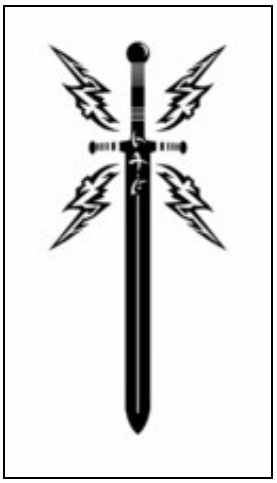
Hall Banner: Jotra, Verys, Tykonus, Yorn, and Ophis, surmounting a white Nanuk bear on a blue field
Traditions: Mixed
The Hall of the Rangers of Nanuk provides a last offering of warmth and comfort to travellers in the far north of Sermersuaq, a final light before the endless blizzards of Sydanjaa. Originally established by a group of Suaq hunters, the Rangers of Nanuk tasked themselves with guardianship of the north, each Ranger vowing to safeguard the south from the dire beasts that populate the edge of the eternal storm, and to share their knowledge with those who sought to enter it.

Despite their long and proud history, the Rangers first rose to full prominence after the invasion of Skarsind by the Thule empire, where their skill as scouts and couriers delivered vital information and supplies to Skarsind resistance fighters. When, with their assistance, Skarsind was freed of Thule influence, the veterans of that long service returned to the north, and now form the core of the hall's members.

Today, whilst the Suaq tradition is still prominent, the hall has only been strengthened by its inclusion of the Kallavesi and Steinr, where they remain famed for their hospitality and dedication to their duty. Any imperial citizen is welcome around a Ranger fire, where Courage, Loyalty, and ready hospitality are always to be found.

16.10.4 Saker

Hall Banner: There is no specific symbol that represent the Saker, but the iconography used is largely of the Saker falcon.
Traditions: An even mix
The Saker are a semi-nomadic collection of families (or 'hearths') who all band together under the Saker Mother, who as of Spring 380YE is Rheged Redspear. The Saker have lived in Sermersuaq (and occasionally outside it) for longer than even their story traditions recall. Since the death of Britta the Young, the Saker have come to Anvil in force and have been active in a variety of institutions of the Empire.



Steelstorm hall
There are strong changeling and draughir lines within the Saker, though they do not ascribe any large importance to such.

The Saker coven are a potent force with acknowledged mastery of Winter magic, and are known to be pragmatic in their application of magic - especially the grim ritual Quickening Cold Meat.

16.10.5 Steelstorm Hall

Hall Banner: A black sword on a blue background with four lightning bolts on each corner
Traditions: Mixed
Steelstorm Hall is a relative newcomer to the politics of Anvil, and is slowly finding their feet. They are primarily compose of skirmishing warriors supported by a handful of magicians and crafters but are actively looking for new recruits to expand their numbers.

16.10.6 Sussivari



Sussivari

Traditions: Mixed
Close to the border with Skarsind, the Sussivari hall rests on the trod running from the Stonefield Ice Caves across the border past the old site of Pakaanen?s tower. An old hall founded long ago by the Steinr Oystein Korpis, it has endured since before the creation of the Empire.

It is made up of a full mix of the traditions; members of the hall live and work together at the hall or, in the case of several of the Suaq, nearby in one of the small seasonal hunting settlements. A large number of the hall died fighting alongside Empress Britta whilst trying to defend Skarsind. Loyalty to their fallen kin inspired the new generation of the hall to make the journey to Anvil to take part in Imperial politics and warfare.

While the hall has always counted warriors, icewalkers, mystics, artisans and stormcrows among its number, it has developed a particularly strong arcane tradition in recent years with many members now practicing ritual magic of one form or another. Similarly, since the beginning of the Interregnum and now up to the present day, the hall has provided a high number of stormcrows that are active both within Wintermark and the Synod.

16.10.7 Tian?s Ravens



Tian's Ravens
Hall Banner: A white raven returning the sun, burning its claws in the process
Traditions: Suaq/Steinr
There is a Sermersuaq story told of the time that raven retrieved the sun from the bottom of the sea to bring its warmth and light to the peoples of the north. This is likely an allegorical retelling of the tale of Tian bringing fire to her nation, itself a tale of the ambition to achieve discovery.

Tian?s Ravens run an outpost at the edge of the East Floes, where they shepherd refugees from the north through the passes southeast, along with lost relics, which they exchange for goods to ship back north to trade to those further in the wastes. The hall was settled by steinr and suaq explorers who made their bond in the cold wastes. They learned and remember the hunger and thirst of the long winter, and raised their banner with a sigil of the white ravens that once flocked in Gildermark, carrying aloft the sun as a reminder that it is the deeds of a hero who ensures that winter breaks and light illuminates the land again. In the same way, they seek to ply their trades, discover knowledge, and bring it back to the people of Wintermark. Proud people, they are loyal to ancient oaths, and they seek to bring prosperity to Wintermark and the Empire through their ambition. In particular, they recognize the Winter eternal Sorin, a pragmatic but fair-dealing survival in the harsh north.

The hall?s words are, ?I have come too far to end here.? drawn from the Verse of Triumphant Return.

16.11 Halls of Skarsind

OOC Note: Skarsind is not a Wintermark territory; it is the homeland of the Imperial Orcs. As such any character with a personal resource in the territory suffers a penalty to their production. Following the conclusion of the Dogri Thulebane incident in 381YE, Profound Decisions will assume that there is no remaining significant population of Winterfolk in Skarsind. There remain some player character halls, but they are isolated and exceptional and it is our assumption that their numbers will slowly dwindle. It is no longer possible for new Wintermark players to start with their resources in Skarsind.



Blackwatch

16.11.1 Blackwatch

Traditions: Steinr and Suaq Founded during the winter of 377YE by the former huscarl of the Hel-brethren Resistance, the Blackwatch settled itself around a former watch tower bordering the Glen of Shadows in Hercynia that had been used by their now thane and his blood brother during the occupation war against the Thule. Initially a purely Steinr hall, they were soon joined by a number of Suaq over the following year as the hall grew into a small town. With the ceding of Skarsind to the Imperial Orcs the Blackwatch remained and now live alongside members of the Imperial orcs of the Legion Protectorate and the Stormcrows.

The Blackwatch pride themselves on their abilities in handling the Frayed, with the hall dedicating their time to searching them out and putting them on the right path by one of the oldest rites of Wintermark; regaining one's skein through the fire of battle under the watchful eye of the hall?s thane and their guard.

16.12 Other



Holt Hyrde

16.12.1 Holt Hyrde

Traditions: Mixed
The Holt Hyrde are nomadic. The term Holt stems back from the earliest days of the Kallavesi. It originally referred to a small copse of trees ideal as a place to lay camp. Over time it variously became known as a word for home, house, hall of lords, and the place close to my heart that I consider my home. It has also often been used symbolically to represent the kingdom of Wintermark.

The Holt Hyrde are protectors of the borders of Wintermark. They seek not glory, and to lead others into glory. They do not seek fame, though the names of others will be sung because of them. They do not seek victory, though the Wintermark will see glory through their actions. They watch over the dark places beyond their homes, walk among the long shadows that threaten to reach out and take their precious lands from them. They learn of the ways of their enemies and seek to understand them, for through knowledge comes victory.

They count among their people the wise, the thoughtful, and the considered. The hunter, the mystic, and the crafter. They task themselves with guiding the stories of the great heroes of Wintermark. They take care in ensuring that heroic tales run longer than they otherwise might. They take pride that the songs or heroes ring with rousing choruses of victory. They take satisfaction in the splintering of the bones of their foes beneath their boots.

16.12.2 The Winter's Levy

Hall Banner: The hall is currently represented by a green banner featuring three circling magpies.
Traditions: Mixed
The Winter's Levy is a hall with a long history of transformation. Valuing growth, the hall learns from the past but is ever looking forward, establishing an identity that reflects its members as they are now and not as they may once have been.

Whilst not exclusively Kallavesi, the Kallavesi membership currently dominates the hall and the main settlement is near Westerhal in Westermarsh. However, a number of members live nomadically across the marshes and further afield within Wintermark.

Prosperity, Loyalty, Pride in tradition, and artistic creativity are all crucial values to The Winter's Levy, with members often engaging merchant trade, creative endeavours, and traditional practices. The hall fiercely loves its homeland and comprises warriors as well as mystics, scops, artisans, and experts in herb lore and magic.

16.13 Prominent Halls in Play

This list is by no means exhaustive; efforts are made to keep it up to date but due to the sheer amount of work involved the onus lies with the Wintermark players to ensure the information is correct and current.

The majority of halls listed here represent player-character groups. It should go without saying that you should not create a character who is part of one of these halls, or has personal history with one of them, without first clearing it with the appropriate players. You should also check before including other players' houses in your background. The background team are unlikely to approve a background that significantly impacts or involves another player character household without their permission.

Included above are a handful of prominent NPC halls - you may be able to create a character associated with one of these halls but the situation will depend very much on your background and the house in question. It is unlikely that a player character will receive additional benefits for belonging to an NPC hall, and may find their game limited - the thanes of these halls are likely to remain NPCs for example, and are unlikely to give player characters much attention.-->

17 Wintermark Egregore

17.1 Sulkavaris

Sulkavaris, Knower of Names is the Egregore of Wintermark. It appears dressed in the traditional garb of the Winterfolk either as Suaq, Kallavesi or Steinr as suits its role. Sulkavaris particularly enjoys being told riddles or shown other examples of Wintermark art and children are encouraged to create riddles of their own to tell.

In midwinter, Sulkavaris gives blessings to the virtuous but is sometimes accompanied by a malevolent figure known as the Krampus. The Krampus is a strange being that dispenses curses, but only upon those who ask for them. Individuals who feel the need to atone for something, perhaps an infidelity or a moment of cowardice in battle, will approach the Krampus and whisper their crime in its ear. The Krampus curses them, but the curse lasts only until the next winter and those who survive the curse are absolved of any wrongdoing. An image of the Krampus is often worn as a symbol by the Frayed, although it has no particular affection for them.

17.1.1 Current Hosts

In recent years it has taken three hosts - although each follows one of the traditions, their activities are not restricted to the Winterfolk who follow that tradition by any means.



Drekki the Unyielding



Wilda


Lyla of the Kallavesi