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1 Dawn people



Life in Dawn is a quest, a great contest in which the goal is to achieve **glory** at any cost.

The people of the Dawn are divided by the Test of Mettle. Those who have passed the Test are granted the status of nobility, the right to call themselves lord or lady, and entry into one of the **noble houses** that rule Dawn. Those who have never taken the test are **yeomen**, farming their land, fighting as rank and file in the Dawn armies, or serving as retainers to Dawnish nobility.

At the heart of each house is a powerful noble family, but the tradition of adoption means that many members of a house are only nominally related to each other. Membership is determined not by birthright but by passing the Test of Mettle set by the house. Each house is led by an **Earl**, selected by the nobility that make up the house. A member of a noble family who has not passed their Test of Mettle is technically a yeoman, although one that may enjoy significant comfort depending on their family.

Nobility and its trappings are widely and lavishly celebrated. Tourneys are held to mark religious celebrations, weddings, births - almost any public occasion will be used as an excuse for nobility to display their feats at arms. Not only knights take part - musicians, magi and craftsmen are all encouraged to participate in public demonstrations of (generally friendly) rivalry, with prizes awarded to those judged best by their peers.

Romance is a vital part of life in Dawn. The Dawnish pride themselves on their charm and good manners and they enjoy courting and flattery. Flirtation is commonplace and accepted even among married Dawnish, provided it does not go beyond words. But if an inhabitant of Dawn seeks more, then they must woo a man or woman to convince them to accept a marriage proposal. **Marriage in Dawn**, especially for the nobility, brings its own complications and challenges.

Apprenticeship, and the relationship between master and apprentice, is a common tradition for Dawnish yeoman. The children of nobility are more likely to be instructed by tutors, skilled professionals hired to teach them hunting, singing and the arts of war. Most tutelage include a series of ever more difficult, and sometimes dangerous, challenges.

Money is largely seen as something as the business of the yeomanry in Dawn. A noble enjoys the comforts and opportunities wealth affords, but few care where it comes from. A noble house usually employs a professional yeoman called a **seneschal** to manage their estates while a noble will keep a **retainer** to deal with the ignoble activities of counting coins, working out budgets and paying for things. When an earl decides to throw a tourney, they tell their **seneschal** to see that it happens. A noble who worries about money risks forgetting that what matters in Dawn is glory.

1.1 Names



Names in Dawn are inspired by chivalric French and Arthurian romance. Given names in Dawn are full of romance and meaning. Parents might name their children after great heroes, after beloved relatives or virtues to which they wish the child to aspire. A name should have a story, which the child should be ready to tell if asked ? ?I was named for my uncle, who fell defending the Barrens at the battle of the Seven Fords the year I was born.?

Formally, all nobles append the name of the noble house to which they belong. However, a noble may also be known for the manner in which they passed their test of mettle, for a distinguishing feature or for their heraldry. Geoffrey of House Rousillon, for example, might be known as Geoffrey the Brave, Geoffrey Wyrmsbane, Geoffrey the Short or simply Geoffrey Rousillon. An unpopular noble might find themselves mocked by the common use of an unflattering nickname.

Several noble houses retain the archaic prefix ?de? before the House?s name. The more traditional see this as mark of distinction and ancient lineage - other, newer houses have dismissed it as outmoded.

1.1.1 Sample names

- **Male:** Geoffrey, Kay, Gawaine, Roland, Bohemond, Hugh, Ancelyn, Balian, Stephen, Tristan, Rodric, Eddard, Phillip, Guy
- **Female:** Igraine, Alienor, Mathilde, Elaine, Melusine, Sibylla, Honour, Morgaine, Marthe, Isolde, Alys, Circe, Marguerite, Annice



1.1.2 Titles

Members of a noble house are addressed by their given name, prefaced with Lord or Lady (e.g. Lord Raynard de Courville). The head of the house may use only the house?s name (e.g. Lady Elaine de Courville, on rising to be the head of the household, is now addressed simply as Lady de Courville), but

all other members must also use their given name.

A witch who is the head of a House usually adds the epithet of 'Enchanter' or enchantress to their name. (e.g. Earl Raynard the Enchanter de Courville or often just Raynard the Enchanter.)

Yeomen usually take their trade as their surname (e.g. Fletcher, Steward etc.)

2 Dawn culture and customs

2.1 The Test of Mettle

The Imperial citizenship tests were created by the Dawnish but the Test of Mettle remains unique to Dawn. The test exists to judge who is glorious enough to join the ranks of the nobility. Passing a noble house's test makes the applicant part of that house. Consequently it is almost impossible to pass the test unless the noble house that is judging you is amenable to your success. Dawn legends are full of tales of heroic individuals passing the tests against such odds but the reality is usually more prosaic.

Any Imperial Citizen is eligible to attempt the Test of Mettle and most scions of noble houses attempt it. In theory any yeoman child can take the test, a fact of which the Dawnish are inordinately proud. In practice, while the rewards for success are high, the tests are difficult to pass without the support that an upbringing in a noble house provides. The tests are difficult even for noble children and groups of will often work together to help each other pass their test.

Ignominy befalls those who attempt the test and fail, whether yeoman or noble born, and the test is difficult to pass and often dangerous, not least because many Dawn children take the view that you should pass the test or die trying. For this reason most tests are deliberately open-ended, giving the aspirant as much time as is needed to prove their worth. Those attempting to pass their Test of Mettle are formerly called knights-errant and are often accorded some of the privileges of nobility.

2.2 The Test of Resolve



When a dispute arises between members of a noble house, it falls to the Earl to settle the matter. Usually the Earl sets a challenge to resolve the matter - a Test of Resolve. Choosing one side or the other risks favouritism. It is much more in the Dawnish spirit for the matter to be settled with a challenge. The loser faces the judgement of the Earl, which can be anything up to expulsion from the house. The penalty is announced before the test begins, which has led to several tragic incidents. Refusing to comply with or enforce an agreed penalty causes a great loss of renown for all involved.

A fair test is one that plays equally to both parties' strengths; if two knights are arguing then an Earl might order a bout of arms to settle their dispute. If a knight and a troubadour disagree, an Earl is much more likely to set them a challenge that does not favour either of their particular skills. It is possible for either party to employ a champion, to compete in their stead, but such an individual must be a noble of their house and should they lose, then they share the fate of the noble whose cause they championed.

Tests of Resolve are often offered to citizens of other nations who bring complaints against individual nobles. They are not always accepted; however facing such a challenge is a simple way for a foreigner to impress, especially if they can win, or at least lose graciously.

A Test of Resolve between members of a noble house is the only way for a noble to be ejected from the house. Such tests are rare for the challenger risks the same fate as the person they challenge; the loser is stripped of their nobility and reduced to the status of yeoman. Such a fate is almost irreversible; it is exceptionally rare for another house to allow a former noble to join. They must take a second Test of Mettle to prove themselves and such tests are fatally difficult; it must be clear to everyone who witnesses the test that it was difficult enough to erase the stain of previous failure.

2.3 The Test of Ardour

Marriage brings yet another challenge for the Dawn nobility. The suitor must put their troth to the house of their intended. The Earl of the house must set the suitor a test of their choosing, called a Test of Ardour. A request for marriage, like a request for a Test of Mettle, may not be refused. If the suitor succeeds then they marry their intended, who will join the suitor's house. If the suitor fails then the house may deny the marriage or else allow it to continue but the suitor must then join the spouse's house.

In theory such a troth can be put to a house without the understanding of the man or woman that the suitor seeks to wed. In practice such behaviour is more the stuff of legend than reality. A marriage test that appears fatally difficult is a sure sign of an unwanted affection. More commonly noble lovers conspire to decide whose Earl can be persuaded to set the easier test.

The Test of Ardour is just one of the many complex social rules surrounding marriage in Dawn.

2.4 Fostering and adoption

Before Imperial rule forbade war between the houses, it was commonplace for a defeated noble to swear oaths of fealty or good intention. To ensure these oaths were kept, all the noble's children would be taken as hostages. To avoid this fate, a noble would send every second child to be raised in the houses of friends and allies. Over time it became increasingly common for powerful nobles to adopt talented children into their own family.



This custom continued after the Empire brought peace to Dawn so that now children passed over at birth are raised as full members of the noble house that adopts them. Such children have the same rights and responsibilities as their siblings who are born into the house; the Dawn ideal is that an Earl should treat all the members of their house as if they were of the same blood. Tawdry tales of Earls who fall short of this ideal are common, but it is not unusual for an adopted noble to become Earl of a house.

It is possible, though rare, for yeoman children to be adopted by a noble family. Occasionally it occurs because a child catches the eye of a noble, impressing them with their potential, but usually this is done as an act of gratitude towards a parent by a powerful noble. A common tale in Dawn concerns a noble whose loyal **retainer** does them a great service, and the noble rewards them by adopting their child - after all, there is little advantage in adoption of an aged retainer to either party.

2.5 Heraldry



Every Noble House has its own unique heraldry. On the field, in camp and decorating every castle and manor house in Dawn is their distinctive and glowing heraldry, woven and embellished by the witches of the weaver cabals. Any noble of the House is entitled to bear its arms on their surcote and shield, and when the House marches to war they do so under their banner. Yeomanry require a noble house's permission to bear their arms, but most nobles prefer their retainers to be dressed in their colours, the better to emphasize the **glory** and majesty of their house.

Although **knights-errant** are not technically noble, they are permitted to carry the majestic royal blue national banner, displaying a blazing golden sun, and to display the device on their arms. For this reason, nobles who wish to conceal their identity, or house affiliations, sometimes choose to present themselves using Dawn's heraldry rather than their own.

Dawnish heraldry favours bold colours, high contrast stripes and chevrons and fantastical beasts as devices. Very complex heraldry with multiple divisions and colours is generally avoided as confusing and less splendid than a simpler but more striking design.

On the rare occasions when a noble is stripped of rank and exiled from their House, they are usually publicly stripped of their heraldry, their shield is defaced and their name struck from the House's records. In some Houses they are given a cloak or surcote in dull brown undyed cloth as a mark of shame before they are driven out.

2.6 Funerals and births

Funerals are sombre occasions in Dawn, accompanied by a period of public mourning for friends and relatives. A Dawnish funeral often represents a display of grief, an outpouring of passionate despair that a loved one has departed the mortal world. After the funeral itself, the friends and relatives of the departed celebrate the return of the soul to the wheel, and tell great tales of the dead to persuade the hand of destiny to speed the hero's return, but they do so in the knowledge that the parting of death is something tragic, not something commonplace.

After death, the body is normally interred in a grave, usually marked by flowering plants or trees. Where several people die at once, such as in the aftermath of a battle, a barrow mound may be raised. Graves in Dawn are generally well tended by surviving relatives, and as memory fades they are slowly forgotten. The graves of heroes, however, often become sites of pilgrimage for those inspired by their tales, who also ensure that the site is tended. Several great heroes are interred in the marble tombs of the [Necropolis in Highguard](#), but this is not commonplace. In a nation of glorious heroes, it requires something special for the priests to request that a body be interred in the necropolis to serve as an inspiration to the entire Empire.

There is a tradition of visiting expectant mothers and telling tales of great heroes, to awaken the heroism of the unborn baby's past lives. There is a folk belief that an unborn child has a close connection to the Labyrinth that may persist for up to a year after birth, and if a baby consistently seems to "react" to certain tales, it is taken as a sign that the child may be a reincarnation of one of the characters in that tale. The Imperial Synod does not endorse this belief, but it does not prevent the tradition remaining popular.

3 Dawn look and feel

3.1 Overview



Dawn is the land of valour; the classical images of gleaming plate, of brightly coloured banners and traditional heraldic devices provide the imagery for the nation. Where the Marches is gritty and down to earth, Dawn is the opposite in glowing primary colours. There is a sumptuous nature to the materials and tones used, idealistic in design instead of practical. The Arthurian, pre-raphaelite and neo-medievalism movements all provide strong themes and forms to the nation.

There is a touch of tragic flaw to the people here though also, with elements of Shakespeare's tragedies and Tennyson's poems threaded through their lives, leaving shadow in contrast to all the glorious polished armour.

Also see *Dawn Costumes and Dawn Icons and Artistry*.

3.2 Feel

Arthurian, competitive, gleaming, glorious, romantic, Shakespearean, tragic, triumphant.

3.3 Breakdown



3.3.1 Influences

Idealised high medieval, Pre-raphaelite, Arthurian

3.3.2 Materials

Linen, velvet, silk, damask, brocade, fur linings and trim, butter-soft kid leather and suedes.

3.3.3 Colours

The palette is summer, a meadow in full bloom. It's a myriad of bright, floral colours, accented with some darker jewel shades. Gold, emerald green, bright reds, clear sky blues set off against an occasional sumptuous black. Whatever the colour it should be vivid and lush but remain tasteful.



3.3.4 Clothing

The classic dress for both genders is a long robe with full sleeves or houppelande. The cloth may be silk, velvet, brocade or fine wool and could be subtly patterned. They are often fur trimmed. These are generally worn over a long shirt, well cut trousers and high legged boots.

Women might choose to wear a dress orbliaut instead, with simple flowing lines and quite a low neck line, possibly revealing a chemise or shift below. Sleeves are again often extravagantly long.

Men will wear their houppelandes over a long shirt, well cut trousers and high boots.

Headgear for both sexes is extravagant, and it is definitely headgear rather than hats. Men will wear a chaperon to impress, and women's headresses are the stuff of fantasy. Circlets and headbands are also popular for all whether made of gold or simple leather.

Jewellery is exquisite - a jewelled dagger sheath, a filigreed necklace, a pair of combs, even the poorest will have a piece of treasured jewellery handed down.



3.3.5 Armour

Most knights wear the heaviest and most flamboyant armour they can afford, often covered with a surcoat bearing their personal or house heraldry. Some will wear mail, some with plated reinforcement, and some a full harness. Knights Errant often wear less armour but everyone who is part of a noble house will sport their colours.

High quality leather armour mimics the form of plate ? breastplates, gorgets with articulated arms, vambraces etc may all be worn and often bear their owners? heraldry as a form of rich decoration. Full length ?coats? of leather scale or plates may be worn alone or under more leather armour.

The armour is designed not only to protect in war but also to proclaim their glory and make their deeds all the more memorable.

3.3.6 Shields

Shields are highly popular in Dawn, as much for their decoration as their ability to protect. Heater shields are the favoured shape, decorated with personal or household devices.

3.3.7 Weapons

The archetypal Dawnish weapon is the medieval broadsword, but ornate warhammers, maces and axes are also used. Missile weapons are rare; archery is seen as a fitting contest of skill, rather than a glorious weapon of war.

3.4 Male noble costume

Noble costume should be resplendent. The cut is simple - sleeves may be dagged but are not slashed or puffed - but the fabrics are luxurious, the colours are rich and hems are lined with fur or ermine. Often costume is in house colours or embroidered with the house?s device.





3.5 Female noble costume

Like the male costume, the cut is simple, but the materials, the colours, the linings and the trims are rich, detailed and luxurious. Silk, velvet and brocade are ideal.





3.6 Yeomen costume

Dawnish Yeomen wear less resplendent costume than their betters, but many are prosperous and most still dream of joining the nobility. They mix easily with the nobility and richer yeomen may look similar to nobles from an impoverished house.



3.7 Headwear

Dawnish Headwear encompasses all the more elaborate medieval variety of hats, up to the start of the Renaissance. Headgear for both sexes is extravagant, and it is definitely headgear rather than hats. Men will wear a chaperon to impress, and women's headresses are the stuff of legend - henins, crispinettes etc. Regal jewellery such as crowns and tiaras are common for all Earls and powerful nobles.



3.8 Jewellery

Jewellery is an important part of costume for male and female Dawnish nobility. Ideally it should be ornate and bejewelled to emphasize the status of the wearer. Jewellery is exquisite - a jewelled dagger sheath, a filigreed necklace, a pair of combs, even the poorest will have a piece of treasured jewellery handed down. Fillets, circlets and headbands are also popular for all whether made of gold or simple leather.



3.9 Plate

The very wealthiest Dawn Knights possess a harness of plate, but it is more than just armour. The nation, house or personal symbol maybe etched, engraved or decorated on the armour. Alternatively a rich embroidered cloak could be thrown over the plate. A beautiful surcoat or jupon like the one Henry V is wearing emphasizes the knight's regal nature.





3.10 Mail

Mail is highly valued, either worn under plate or by itself. Ideally such armour should include a surcoat or a robe decorated with a house symbol, often a fabulous beast like the dragon.



3.11 Leather

Leather armour is common in Dawn, and is often worn by [yeomen](#) and [knights-errant](#). It should range from simple protection to something designed to look as stunning as possible.



3.12 Shields

Shields are highly popular in Dawn, as much for their decoration as their ability to protect. Heater shields are the favoured shape, decorated with personal or household devices. The traditional Dawnish shield is a heater (as shown held by the woman below) or a kite shield. Whatever the shape, a shield is the perfect place for a Dawnish noble to display their personal arms or the insignia of their house.



3.13 Children

Young children are an opportunity for noble houses to display their wealth and power. **Squires** are dressed in robes decorated with the house symbols. Older children, noble or yeoman, want the most expensive clothes their parents can afford.



4 Dawn history

Dawn's forebears came from overseas, seeking to carve out a kingdom. Their early history is full of glorious battles, as noble houses fought against the orcs and drove them out of the fertile lands to found the kingdom. Rather than quarrel amongst themselves, the noble houses agreed to settle the throne's succession by tourney. The death of any ruling monarch would be followed by a grand tourney with the Earl of the winning house taking the crown.



In the years that followed the founding of the Kingdom, a group of disaffected Yeomen chose to leave their lord's lands. They marched across the country, heading for the western borders and the fertile plains beyond. They were joined on their pilgrimage by hundreds more disgruntled yeomen and became known as the Marchers. They had no real weapons or armour, and the nobility fully expected them to be slaughtered by orcs or die of starvation. Instead, the Marchers slaughtered the orc tribes they encountered and created a kingdom for themselves; the Marches, a patchwork of cleared lands controlled by a score of fractious yeoman households.

There were frequent but sporadic conflicts with the Marches in the centuries that followed. Occasionally one or the other would attempt to expand into the neighbouring nation's territory. To this day the westernmost parts of Dawn and the easternmost parts of the Marches are scattered with battlefields and castles that are largely abandoned since the formation of the Empire. Armed conflict is a thing of the past, with both the Marches and Dawn holding equal status within the Empire. but Dawnish who question the validity of their ancient traditions are often gently reminded that they *could* go and live in the Marches if they don't like it.

4.1 Joining the Empire

The story of Dawn's admittance to the Empire is considered one of the great romantic epics. Numerous songs, poems, stories and plays are written about it. The actual events have probably been blurred by the passage of time and the pens of the troubadours, but all agree that it hinged on the marriage of the Empress to the last Dawn King, Rodric of Astolat, called the *Lame*, a powerful *Enchanter*.



According to the troubadours, Rodric was a bachelor with unreasonably high standards who looked destined to die unwed. When Cien, a *naga* yeoman with aspirations to be troubadour, came to Rodric for the Test of Mettle, he was challenged to find the king a suitable bride. The task seemed impossible but with the assistance of a Navarr guide, Cien returned with news of a Highguard woman who was the match for any Dawnish noble. Impressed by stories of the women's prowess and fiery passion and smitten by Cien's description of her beauty, King Rodric vowed to make her his wife.

Acting on Cien's advice, the King ordered a splendid tourney in Astolat and invited all the powerful nobles of Dawn. The Empress arrived at the tourney in the company of Earl Elayne de Cervise but bearing the flag of Dawn, the traditional arms for a knight-errant. The king and everyone present was entranced by her power and bearing. Only nobles may enter the tourney, but before the assembled host, the Empress demanded a test of Mettle from Earl Cervise.

The Empress was challenged to make an impossible leap across the deep river that runs alongside the Castle of Roses, a traditional response for yeomen whose demands for a Test of Mettle were unwelcome. The Empress readily agreed; still wearing her armour she mounted her horse and together they jumped the river. The sight was so impressive - the more so for horses were practically unknown in Dawn - that it was impossible for any to deny her claim and she was accepted into the house of Cervise.

Cien urged his king to declare his ardour for the Empress before any other noble had chance to pledge a troth. Rodric declared his love for her and demanded the Test of Ardour from Earl Cervise. Before the assembled crowd, the Lady demanded the unthinkable - to prove his love for the new scion of the House Cervise, he must give up his throne - and granted Rodric until the start of the tourney to decide his response. The next morning, following a night of discourse with the Empress, Rodric agreed to abdicate his throne. In doing so he won the Test of Ardour and the Empress entered his house as his bride, whereupon she declared her intention to enter the grand tourney to become Queen of Dawn.

In the tourney that followed, Rodric and his bride rallied Earls who favoured entry to the Empire to their side to oppose those Earls who resisted the idea. It was made clear to all that the tourney was not just for the throne but for the fate of Dawn. The battle was fierce, but the Empress' forces claimed the field, and she was crowned Queen. In the weeks that followed she moved quickly to secure Dawn's place in the Empire, her victory in the grand tourney meant that even those Earls who had opposed her could not deny that she had followed the customs and traditions of Dawn and beaten them fairly.

Dawn has prospered under Imperial rule and grown in strength, gaining land as the barbarians have been driven back. When the Empire began to stagnate, the nation's emphasis on military strength meant that it was able to repulse the invaders. It is a source of enormous pride to the Dawnish that theirs is the only nation that has never lost a territory to the barbarians.

Dawn has often struggled to gain political support in the Senate. When Dawn armies successfully defeated the forces of the city of *Holberg*, League politicians were able to convince the Senate to assign the territory to League control. Despite support for Dawn from Wintermark and Varushka, a strong coalition of League and Marcher senators were able to convince Urizen and Highguard that the best thing for the Empire would be to allow *Holberg* to become part of the League.

While this defeat happened nearly five hundred years ago, it has not been forgotten. Centuries later, when the territory was lost to the barbarians, the loss was in no small part due to the political divisions the territory still evokes. Dawnish politicians know that *Holberg* is seen by many as a challenge to their claim to never have lost a territory to the barbarians. When celebrated League wit Gisel van *Holberg* said "*Dawn has never lost territory to the barbarians, but it has lost territory to the civilized*" during a tense debate in the Senate, she provoked Earl Jofre de Culwich so badly, the Speaker had to order him to leave the chamber.

5 Dawn leadership



Dawn is dominated by powerful noble houses. The houses manage their great estates and raise soldiers to fight for the Empire. Membership of a noble house is achieved by passing the house's Test of Mettle, although a degree of status is assumed by those sons and daughters who have been raised in a house (who are technically yeomen until they pass their test).

Each house sets its own test and only the behaviour of those who have passed the test reflects on the house. As a result a house must keep the tests difficult to maintain its reputation. Those houses that make the tests too easy face the very real risk of having no children placed with them by other nobles - no Dawn parent would want to place their child with a house that is tarnished by mediocrity.

Houses are led by an Earl who is selected from among the members of that house. Earls usually dedicate themselves to the advancement of their noble house. It is the responsibility of the Earl to set tests such as the Test of Mettle and the Test of Ardour. The accomplishments of a House reflect directly on its Earl, an acknowledgement of the role that the Earl plays in ensuring that every member of the house is given the support they need to triumph. Likewise the bearing with which an Earl comports themselves reflects on the whole house, so Earls are expected to take their responsibilities seriously, to conduct themselves with gravitas and to expect and receive respect from their fellow Dawnish.

Some houses also choose to appoint an heir-presumptive, an individual who the house agrees will take over the Earlship if the current Earl is no longer able to perform their duties. The heir-presumptive is often a staunch ally of the Earl, someone chosen to bolster his control of the house. But the role can just as easily serve the opposite function, some nobles choose an heir-presumptive to signal the limitation of the Earl's power and what might happen if they overstretch their authority.



Only nobles become Senators or Generals, although Imperial law prevents this being mandatory. While it is theoretically possible for a yeoman to be chosen for high office, a yeoman who showed the qualities that made them eligible for such a position would almost certainly be approached by Dawnish noble houses keen to attract a rising star whose glory would reflect well on them.

The Synod and the Conclave, by contrast, are open to both yeomen and noble alike, although again a yeoman who rose to prominence in one of these structures would likely attract a great deal of attention from the Dawnish nobility.

By contrast, it is considered demeaning for nobles to involve themselves in the business of the Bourse. Making money is simply not considered glorious in Dawn, it is the business of yeomen and not something that nobles should be worrying about. A noble who spent too much time in the Bourse might cause others to question their commitment to glory and to the furtherance of their house's goals.

5.1 Leading a territory

Each territory in Dawn sends a single Senator as representative to the Senate. To choose their senators, the noble houses compete in a grand tourney. Only nobles may participate in a Grand Tourney - Yeomen may take the field only to rescue defeated participants for medical treatment.

There is one contest for each territory, and no requirement that a candidate live in the territory for which a senator is available. The Earl of the noble house that wins a grand tourney appoints the Senator for that territory. A noble house that has won a Grand Tourney may not take part in any further Grand Tourneys while their chosen Senator is sitting.

Politics play a role in the tourney of course, but at the end of the day this is Dawn ? one cannot achieve glory by getting other people to do one's work. Several households may ally for a Grand Tourney, but in this case they all fight on behalf of one noble house. So if the House of Culwich, the House of Bardi and the House of Agaron fight as one side, they must declare before the battle which of their number will appoint the senator and if they are victorious all three of them are barred from future Grand Tourneys while the chosen Senator is sitting. It is not unknown for Earls to form unofficial alliances between their houses, supporting each other surreptitiously to avoid being recorded with the winner. This deeply inglorious tactic invites widespread condemnation if it is uncovered; it is impossible to forbid it but it is clearly against the spirit of the Grand Tourney.

It is not uncommon for the Earl of a victorious house to take the seat themselves, but many choose not to, preferring to leave the business of the Senate to those trained to it. The Senate offers opportunities for much glory, but is time-consuming - the Earl may find it better to appoint a member of their household. This leaves the Earl free to concentrate on the business of their house, but ensures that any glory achieved in the Senate still reflects on the house and by extension the Earl.

The political battlefield of the Senate is one that is difficult for many nobles to master. Dawnish Senators are often supported by an **advocate** - a yeoman who make a study of the Senate and the history of the Empire. While the nobles make impassioned speeches on the Senate floor, it is their retainers who help them prepare those speeches and work hard to ensure that the political realities of Imperial life do not scupper the nobles' plans.

6 Dawn military concerns

Dawn currently maintains three armies to fight in the Imperial wars and has provided four in better times when Imperial fortunes allowed. Very few endeavours provide as many opportunities for glory as warfare. Drawn to **glory** as it is, it is unsurprising that Dawn prides itself on its martial traditions. Not all nobles deck themselves in a harness of plate, but every noble looks for opportunities to fight their foes toe-to-toe. Not for the Dawnish noble is the cowardly ambush or the subversive flank - they seek to face their opponents directly.



The rank and file soldiers are eager **yeomen**, seeking opportunities for glory. They are led by the most capable nobles available who share their soldiers' ambitions. Few Dawn generals will lead from the rear. While there is some glory in a well-planned battle, little compares to the glory of a lord or lady who leads their troops to victory. As such most yeomen have an abiding respect for their military leaders, born of shared ambitions and shared dangers.

Shields are highly popular in Dawn, as much for their decoration as their ability to protect. Heater shields are the favoured shape, decorated with personal or household devices. Missile weapons are rare, and regarded with some suspicion. Despite their obvious uses, it's difficult to see anything glorious in shooting an enemy at thirty paces. Archery is seen as a fitting contest of skill, rather than a glorious weapon of war.

Dawnish men and women in the active pursuit of glory, particularly those risking their lives to do so, are often referred to simply as knights. Knightly behaviour on the battlefield is expected of nobles and yeoman alike. Those who identify themselves as knights are stating openly that they will act gloriously. Although only nobles may enter the Grand Tourney, the military strength of a noble house in battle is usually expressed as the number of knights they can field.

Men and women engaged upon a Test of Mettle, seeking to prove their glory, are called **knights-errant**. The term is used equally to describe anyone looking to prove themselves by seeking danger and adventure. Most often they are the sons and daughters of noble houses, but groups of yeomen who wish to attract the attention of the noble houses may also become knights-errant.

Some Knight-errant enjoy the life of high adventure so much that they continue the lifestyle after passing their Test of Mettle, declining the political life of a house noble. **Questing Knights**, as they are usually known, usually form a tight-knit group with other, similarly minded Knights, and often dedicate themselves to some great quest or higher cause that they know can never be completed. If such groups are perpetuated through the generations as newly ennobled Knights join the ranks to replace losses, they usually become a recognized **knighthly order**. Such groups are usually distinctive, perhaps a unique code of honour that every member must swear or an Eternal patron to whom they swear loyalty.

Bands of knights-errant and questing knights usually include a **troubadour** where possible, to inspire them to glory and to record their accomplishments for posterity.

7 Dawn economic interests

Money is a frequent challenge in Dawn, especially for the noble houses. There is no glory in making money; an obsession with money is seen as tawdry, something that is beneath those who have proven themselves, so most nobility express a very public disinterest for it. As a result merchants and those who handle money are almost always yeomen.



This can lead to unfortunate circumstances - many nobles are so used to the idea of having enough money for whatever diversion they turn their thoughts to that they have little concept of what something is actually worth. Their unworldliness is one of the reasons that they have difficulty maintaining support in the Senate, which (as far as many nobles can tell) spends more time worrying about budgets than it does about glorious battle against the enemies of the Empire.

Still, the bills must still be paid, so most houses employ at least one seneschal. Seneschals are a broad class of yeoman retainers who include chamberlains who organise and oversee the day-to-day household affairs of the nobility and castellans who see to the care and maintenance of castles. Regardless of their specific duties, seneschals are generally responsible for handling the finances of a noble house. A seneschal runs the house's affairs on behalf of the nobility, and can be one of the most powerful individuals in the house.

There is also an element of "problem solving" about the duties of a seneschal. Many nobles do not want to be troubled with the mundane details of a task, and it is common for a noble to announce a tourney with only a few days notice, or expect their trusted retainer to make a problem go away without offering any suggestions or guidance as to how such a task might take place. Occasionally, this trust may be abused - a seneschal might go too far in the service of their noble house, and bring shame to their house.

Seneschals tend to work on behalf of a noble house, and usually have a close relationship with the Earl of that house. The system works so well that a few nobles are attended by a yeoman, called a retainer, who acts in a similar but much more personal capacity. Dawnish retainers combine various elements of valet, maid, personal assistant and servant in one person. They attend and assist a noble, seeing to the day-to-day support of their patron. By necessity, there is usually a deep bond of trust between a noble and their retainer and they are often close friends. It is common for a seneschal to begin their career as the retainer of a noble who later becomes Earl of their noble house.

Dawnish merchants are almost invariably yeomen, but skilled craftsmen are more likely to be members of the nobility. The ability to make beautiful - and often magical - objects for the use of their fellow nobles is seen as a noble calling it its own right, and few nobles want to see a yeoman with such power over other nobles.

Noble craftsmen prefer to dedicate their time to making glorious weapons that can be wielded by great heroes, rather than producing a dozen breastplates for a unit of yeoman soldiers. Because of this most houses struggle to find ways to equip their soldiers, being forced to rely on seneschals to provide the weapons and armour their troops need. Seneschals in turn are forced to look to the more prosperous nations such as the Brass Coast or the League to equip their forces, a situation that their neighbours are never slow to point out whenever they want to irritate their Dawn neighbours.

8 Dawn religious beliefs



The Dawnish have little interest in impersonal sermons. They believe that a priest should move their congregation, to inspire them to greatness. Most noble houses desire to have a **troubadour**, who can perform tales and poems of the great Dawn legends. No Dawn inhabitant, **yeoman** or noble, can fail to be stirred to action when hearing the **glorious tales** of the heroes of the past. Troubadours provide moral guidance, filling the role of priests, as well as acting as historians, bards and keepers of legend.

The Dawn Assembly of the Imperial Synod is somewhat notorious for its competing troubadours seeking to use the Synod to validate and immortalise the subjects of their tales in fame - or sometimes in infamy. While some troubadours engage in the other business of the Synod, the majority put the interests of their own house ahead of any other duty or responsibility.

Embodiment is an important tradition for pious nobles of all kinds. A pious noble seeks to be recognised as a Champion of Virtue, embodying one of the Virtues to its greatest extent. Most nobles who aspire to be a Champion of Virtue are knights, especially questing knights. Each year during summer, aspirants who seek to be acknowledged as a Champion of Virtue meet with other aspirant Champions and the troubadours to share tales of their exploits.

The assembled troubadours award the accolade to the nobles who they feel best embody the Imperial Virtues - a position of great honour in Dawn. If they do not identify a fitting candidate for a virtue then they do not appoint anyone as the Champion. Lists are kept by the troubadours, who make a special point to repeat the tales of these pious individuals and encourage them to exemplify the Virtues not only to the people of Dawn but also to the rest of the Empire. Several Exemplars are known to have come from among the Dawnish Champions of Virtue, and at least one Paragon.

As with many positions of honour in Dawn, yeomen are not considered as aspiring Champions. If they had it in them to become honoured in this manner, they would be part of a noble house.

As far as the Imperial Synod is concerned, Dawn is one step away from being a hotbed of heresy. The people have adopted the Imperial Faith with gusto, but they continue to hold glory as the greatest calling, and often see virtue merely as a means to that end.

I write as one burdened by failure and shame. The Dawnish embrace their immortality far more readily than they do the Seven Paths of Virtue. Time and again, I have told them: Passion is not a Virtue; Glory is not a Virtue; Greatness is the product of Virtue, not its purpose.

Yet, for all my efforts, many still see virtue as a means to an end, not an end in itself. The Dawnish may aspire to match or exceed the Paragons' deeds, but only for the sake of their own Legends.

I am returning to the Chapter, but I bring with me a score of Troubadours who would have their living knights recognised as Exemplars, and pretty much all the dead ones as Paragons.

Simeon the Wayfarer, taken from Epistles to the Winds of Virtue, 14 BE

9 Dawn magical traditions

Those who study magic are called witches in Dawn. Witches can be men or women, and cover two traditions. War witches are magicians who master useful incantations and take the battlefield. Those that are part of a noble house are expected to fight with the rest of the household. War witches train alongside a house's warriors, using their magical skills to deliver aid at the most pivotal moments of battle. Some are skilled with weapons, but all are drilled so that they can keep their wits in the thick of battle, and skilled war witches are highly prized by their house.



Those who emphasize the study of ritual magic are usually referred to as witch weavers. They are named for their habit of focussing on weaving as part of their magic, but the term is used for anyone who uses ritual magic in Dawn. The glorious and forthright nature of Dawn means that they can be a little sceptical of the more group-oriented practice of ritual magic. Many noble magicians compensate for this by striving to be a powerful war witch as well, the two traditions being by no means exclusive.

While it is uncommon for a noble house to include an entire team of witch weavers, it is very rare for houses to be formed only of weavers, none of whom have any experience as war witches. More common are the weaver cabals, groups of witch weavers drawn from all elements of Dawnish society, who stand outside the direct control of the noble houses.

The first weaving cabals began as a place for noble magicians to trade skills and cultivate magical and crafting techniques, but eventually they found it more effective to leave their houses to work magic together. Over time the cabals became independent of the Dawn houses, choosing their own heads and even adopting their own children. As the cabals cannot set Tests of Mettle, they include yeomen amongst their numbers. It is not uncommon for a noble to forsake their noble house when they join a weaving cabal, as a form of self-imposed exile or retirement.

Much of their time is spent weaving cloth, embroidering banners and engaging in similar arts. As well as being beautiful and practical works of art, the items the weaver cabals produce tend to have protective charms woven into them. Some cabals now practice other forms of ritual magic but Summer magic remains closely tied up to the making and embroidering of cloth. A properly witch-woven banner from Dawn is the envy of every military unit in the empire.

Many weaver cabals perform magics to bring good fortune to villages, fertile harvests and good weather. As a result they tend to be more popular with Dawnish yeomen than the war witches prized by the noble houses. The popularity of the weaver cabals has translated into considerable political clout. As a result few noble houses will refuse a request by a noble witch to study with a weaver's cabal even if they harbour a fear that the student may not return to their house.

Although secretive, and rarely acknowledged, some weavers specialize in curses. Several famous tales (including the song [Weaver's Curse](#)) speak of knights who jilted their magical lovers, only to find their enchanted banner a curse that ensured their inglorious defeat.

The apogee of magical power in Dawn is the tradition of the [Enchanter](#), a witch who becomes [Earl](#) of a house. Wielding both the magic of incantation and ritual, enchanters are viewed as mystical powerhouses regardless of their actual abilities, not least because they often have the resources of their entire house at their command. Many make pacts with the Eternals to further enhance their arcane powers, and deal with Eternals on a more-or-less equal footing, backing up their magical might with political clout. Enchanters have played a key role in the history of the Dawn, and in stories are often portrayed as patrons and paramours of famous knights.

Of all the nations of the Empire, Dawn seems to be the most closely affected by the magic of the [Eternals](#). Heralds, the faithful servants of the Eternals, are a much more common sight here than anywhere else, and Dawn legends are replete with personal encounters between nobles and powerful Eternals. What is clear is that for better or worse, some Eternals take a particular interest in the Dawn people, particularly in the nobility.

10 Dawn hearth magic



10.1 Favours

A favour is an effective talisman that can ward off curses and the pernicious influence of **Eternals** but only if worn openly. The greater the affection that the donor feels for the recipient, the more effective the Hearth Magic becomes. Favours are also sometimes used to deliver curses, and there are plenty of tales of a stolen favour bringing ruin to the one who loses it.

10.1.1 Love

Love is a powerful force in Dawn, and its inclusion in magic can make effects more potent but also more unpredictable. Romantic love is the most powerful and most unpredictable, but filial love and even platonic love between friends have a power of their own. Dawnish tales talk of lovers or friends who return from death for a few moments to offer comfort or protect their loved ones, or to encourage them to seek vengeance on their betrayers. Love that is betrayed is said to give rise to curses of its own accord. Finally, love is said to be the one force that can bind souls together in the Labyrinth, and bonds of love may mean that two souls are reborn and driven to seek one another out through multiple incarnations.

10.1.2 Girding

Armour and shields are a hearth magic connected with identity in Dawn. Donning one's armour and girding oneself with weapons and armour before a battle, particularly with the assistance of friends and trusted companions, is seen as a way of "donning" a glorious persona. A knight becomes larger than life by girding himself in armour, and in a similar way a Senator may "gird" themselves with fine robes, documents and a short dagger before addressing the Senate to create a powerful persona so that others can see their glory.

There are stories of people who put on another's armour - again engaging in the ritual of girding themselves - and who either gain the strength of the person whose armour they are wearing, or perform some other great deed in their name, or who are mistaken for the person whose armour they don despite the unlikelihood of that actually happening. Most of these stories are romantic in nature, although several are tragedies in which someone dies in the place of their lover. A rare few are cautionary tales in which a villain masquerades as the hero to bring ruin down on her head after she has carelessly left her panoply where it may be stolen by her foe.

11 Dawn lineage and species attitudes



Any lineage is generally considered a mark of distinction in Dawn and individuals of every lineage, particularly the **changeling** and **cambion**, are common in many **noble houses**. Lineage clearly identifies an individual as being *special*, and great things are assumed of those who possess any amount of lineage. As a result, the **Tests of Mettle** are often significantly harder for those with lineage, not because of prejudice but simply because their "magical blood" is assumed to give them an edge. An exception to this is the treatment of the **briar** lineage. Following the events of the **Freedom Heresy**, there has been an undercurrent of suspicion towards those touched by the **Spring** realm.

The **naga** lineage prospers in Dawn, especially in the ranks of the **troubadours**. Their instinctive understanding of passion and the drives of their blood synergize well with the priestly calling of the troubadour; they follow the historical role played by Lord Cien in the **founding of Dawn**. Naga troubadours have an especial knack for, or interest in, arranging and nurturing romances between noble and yeoman alike, and many ensure that the tales of tragic romantic love that underpin many more glorious legends are not forgotten. There is a tacit understanding and acceptance in Dawn that **naga** troubadours play an active part in match-making between nobles and those seeking to arrange lovers' trysts will often seek out their assistance.

A small number of noble houses are pure-bred, setting their Tests of Mettle such that only those that share their lineage can pass them. These houses often send their human-born children to other houses, and prefer to foster lineaged children. They are often equally accepting of **yeomen** children with lineage, and some actively seek them out. This practice is particularly common with changeling houses.

Imperial Orcs are a difficult question for the Dawnish. They seem worthy of a measure of respect, and seem to understand the concept of **glory**, but no noble house would consider offering one a Test of Mettle. They are not human, and consequently while they may be valued allies, they are never likely to be accepted alongside the humans of the other nations of the Empire.

12 Dawn territories

Dawn is relatively flat, dotted with expanses of largely untamed forest and rocky crags. The forests are maintained by the noble houses of Dawn as part hunting preserve and part training ground. They are home to wild animals, bandits, monsters and ruins, and occasionally these inhabitants cause trouble for nearby villages.

12.1 Astolat

Central, well defended, civilized and beautiful, Astolat is the heartland of the nation. It is famous for its rose gardens, and the offering of a single Astolat rose is considered the perfect gift of true love (as in the Dawnish song [The Rose Garden](#)). In the north of Astolat, the majestic granite mountains are rich in ore, but occasionally threatened by their proximity to the wild forests which shelter beasts, barbarians and bandits..

Near the centre of Astolat is the Castle of Thorns, the seat of the old Dawnish Kings and Queens. Given over now to a great park, and almost completely engulfed in rose bushes, the Castle of Thorns serves as an academy for the training of civil servants, and is where most of the day-to-day business of running the Nation takes place. Each Dawnish Senator has apartments within this beautiful edifice, decorated with the produce and images of the territory they represent.

The River of Sighs runs past the Castle of Thorns. This wide, deep, fast flowing river was the site of the First Empress' legendary leap that won her entry to the house of Cevise. Traditionally set as a challenge for yeomen who were considered to be seeking to rise above their station, there are still knights-errant today who try to duplicate the Empress' jump, and the majority of those who fail are swept away and drowned.

12.2 Weirwater

The craggy hills of Weirwater are home of many weavers, and the noble houses here seem to have more than their fair share of witches. The territory itself is scattered with deep forests, maintained untouched by the noble houses and inhabited by Eternal Heralds, exotic beasts and an abundance of rare herbs. The caves of Weirwater have a dark reputation with the people of Dawn, and are said to contain mysterious magics.

The largest settlement in Weirwater is Culwich, a large town with a few outlying villages. Culwich has a long tradition of farming and is said to produce some of the best flax and wool in the Empire. The local merchants have influence with the weavers, who in turn offer them fine woven goods to sell to mutual profit.

Legend has it that long ago the Earl of Sedaret pursued a crusade against several cabals of weavers who refused to recognise her authority. At the height of a great banquet, thrown by the Earl to celebrate her apparent victory over the weavers, a great bell began to toll and the castle and its surrounding village was drowned beneath great waves and unrelenting rain. It is said by the people of Culwich that on Winter nights of the new moon when the sky is clear one can still hear bells ringing in the depths of the great lake, and see lights that are said to be those of the drowned Earl and her noble household, still celebrating in the depths.

12.3 Semmerholm

Semmerholm produces the majority of the nation's food, though it is closely surrounded by thick and dangerous forests. The dark forests here are home to vicious beasts, including boars, lions and bears, and hunting is a regular pastime for nobles. There are several well-fortified castles here at various strategic points along the border, protecting Semmerholm from the barbarians of the Barrens. The senator for Semmerholm is responsible for holding the border. This responsibility tends to weigh heavily on the head of the Semmerholm senator, with the realisation that if they fail at their task this will be the first land lost to the barbarians in Dawnish history.

12.4 The Barrens (never conquered)

The barrens describes an unconquered area to the east of Semmerholm. Dawn maintains a series of long-established outposts on the western edge that reinforce the border against the barbarians. The land is rich and fertile and there have been several attempts to settle it more fully, but the presence of several barbarian bandit tribes makes establishing permanent settlements impossible. Between 325 AE and 328 AE the barrens were the scene of a short-lived rogue kingdom called Montane following the events of the [Freedom Heresy](#). Since then a large proportion of the territory has been in the hands of aggressive barbarian orcs.

Nonetheless, the Dawnish refuse to abandon the Barrens and it serves as a common proving ground for knights-errant.

13 Dawn children



Despite - or perhaps because of - the warlike nature of life in Dawn, the children of **yeomen** and **nobles** alike are sheltered, indulged and encouraged to make the very most of their childhood. They are not expected to undertake apprenticeships or work for their parents until they are of age, but instead are allowed a great deal of freedom to play. It is a parent's responsibility to educate their children to a reasonable standard, and most can read, write, perform arithmetic and understand imperial and national history by adulthood.

Play, however, is not unstructured, and children are encouraged to participate in games which develop skills they make need later in life. Particularly popular amongst the noble houses are games of war, where children learn how to correctly handle weapons, fight individually and in groups and learn to command troops in miniature. Minstrels often teach such things, using the tales of great heroes to inspire and structure the games.

Children born into or adopted into noble houses are often given positions of responsibility as **squires**.

13.1 Things every child should know

- **A challenge lost makes you a better opponent next time** - Do not be afraid of failing, as long as you learn from it.
- **Follow your heart but use your head.** - Be true to yourself but make sure you think things through and ask the advice of those who can help.
- **Learn from heroes, do not copy them** - Heroes past and present have much to respect, but make sure you know how and why they accomplished their great deeds, not just that they did.
- **There is no honour in letting someone win** - Giving away your victory dishonours both you and your opponent. Once the **glory** fades, they will not thank you.
- **Be proud of your achievements, however small** - A small deed done today may lead to a greater one tomorrow.
- **Know what your name means** - Who are you named after? Be ready to tell anyone who asks a story about your namesake.

14 Dawn music

14.1 The Music of Dawn

14.1.1 Style summary

Arthurian high medieval, chivalric, courtly, 'high' culture, battle anthems, tales of love, [glory](#), and tragedy.

Dawn draws on the more formal folk and classical traditions of Shakespearean/Elizabethan period, for example madrigals, as well as fantastical folk tales from the English or Irish tradition.

14.1.2 Commonly known songs

- [Sweet Kate](#) - medium difficulty madrigal for 3 female voices
- [Dawnish War Song](#) - medieval song with drums and other instruments

14.1.2.1 A musical tradition

All sensible knights understand that for their glory to continue after death, you rely on the skill and conviction of minstrels and storytellers. What better way to earn glory and reputation than to let them see your deeds for themselves? Therefore it is not uncommon for questing knights to invite along the best minstrel they can find to accompany them on a quest - it goes without saying that the safety of the minstrel is paramount. The best singers and storytellers have a song or tale ready for the victory feast the same evening, and direct retellings of glorious battles and the valour of Dawnish knights in either victory or death are always enthusiastically received!

14.1.2.2 One for the kids

[Five Little Ploughboys](#)

14.1.3 Further examples

14.1.3.1 Songs

- [Sweet Kate](#) - medium difficulty madrigal for 3 female voices
- [Tam Lin](#) - fantastical folk tale, medium difficulty
- [April is in my mistress' face](#) - difficult madrigal set for SATB
- [Annan Water](#) - gloomy ballad about drowning, medium
- [Though Philomena Lost Her Love](#) - medium difficulty madrigal, 3 female voices.
- [My Bonny Lass She Smileth](#) - SATB madrigal
- [Weep O Mine Eyes](#) - SATB madrigal, hardish
- [Tanner's Hill](#) - fantastical ballad, easy
- [The Moon's Only Daughter](#) wistful ballad, easy
- [His Banner's Not Mine](#) Love song, easy
- [Weaver's Curse](#) cautionary tale, easy
- [Spinning Song](#) tragic love song, easy
- [The Rose Garden](#) Tragic love song, easy

14.1.3.2 Instrumentation and tunes

- Anything vaguely courtly using recorders, plucked strings, single drums, harps, autoharp, or similar.
- [Elizabethan recorder music](#) - very appropriate for Dawn, especially if played on recorders or harp with a single drum.

14.1.3.3 Other performance traditions

- Courtly dances.

14.1.4 How to adapt your repertoire

- Sing in a formal rather than bawdy style. Up the properness and pathos of your words. Strum your guitar like a lute. Roll your rrrrs!

14.1.5 Our sources

Thomas Morley, Kate Rusby, Bill Jones, Glasgow Madrigirls, the other Madrigirls who actually sing more madrigals,

Here is a [youtube playlist](#) to get you in the mood!

15 Dawn costumes

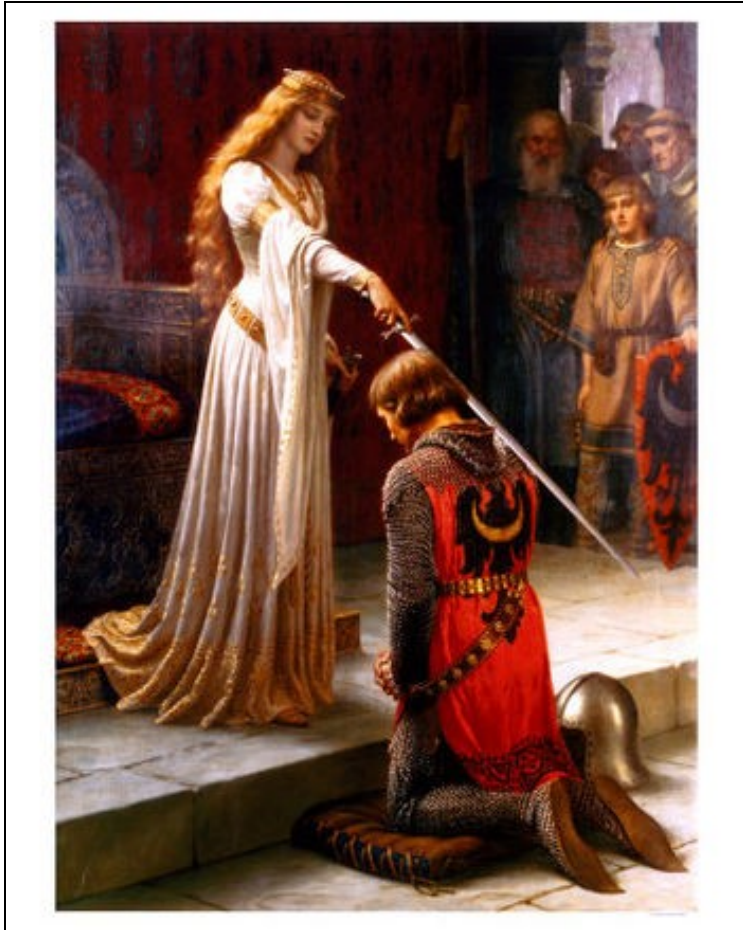
This is a placeholder page for content that PD are actively working on.

Note: The tone and style of this page may need editing. All costume advice pages should be written in third person voice, using verbs that make clear that this page is advice, not direction.

15.1 Overview

"Dawn is the land of valour; the classical images of gleaming plate, of brightly coloured banners and traditional heraldic devices provide the imagery for the nation. Where the Marches is gritty and down to earth, Dawn is the opposite in glowing primary colours. There is a sumptuous nature to the materials and tones used, idealistic in design instead of practical. Arthurian, pre-raphaelite and the neo-medievalism movements all provide strong themes and forms to the nation."

Clothing in Dawn draws inspiration from the clothing of 12th-15th Century England and France, Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Edmund Blair Leighton, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John William Waterhouse, and fantasies such as Lord of the Rings, Merlin and Game of Thrones. On the battlefield, the Dawnish are a pageant of glittering armour, blazing heraldry and exquisite banners; at peace, they wear elegant and well cut tunics, houpellandes and surcotes. Women may also choose to wear gowns, usually with a long, smooth silhouette, full skirts and either tight sleeves to the wrist, or flowing trumpet or bell sleeves that fall in folds from the elbow.



15.2 Fabrics

[A guide to fabrics for kitmaking](#)

Dawn is a country where you can really go wild with your fabrics and indulge yourself. For high status characters, rich wools, intensely coloured silks, fine linens and velvets are all a wonderful choice. Don't automatically assume that they're more expensive - like every fabric, there's a range, and if you shop carefully you can pick up some superb bargains. Ebay is always good. Try to stick to natural fabrics or natural/synthetic blends - pure synthetics are uncomfortable and wear badly, with very few exceptions.

Historically people tended to wear body linens - a soft white linen shift or shirt against their skin. This is a good idea not only because it's comfortable, but also because it protects your outer garments from sweat and stains. If you'd prefer not to use linen for reasons of expense or weight, a soft cotton muslin works beautifully for this. For outer garments, try fine wools, brocades, velvets and silks; for cloaks, cotton velvet and wool melton are ideal.

15.3 Similar nations

15.3.1 The Marches

Parts of the Marches were once Dawnish, so it should come as no surprise that there are significant similarities in the costume. Both draw their inspiration from medieval north-western Europe, so the bulk of the difference is in the materials used. The Marches tend towards a palette of natural colours in wools and linens, less lavish designs and simpler construction. The Dawnish, by contrast, favour bright, heraldic colours, contrasting trims and fabrics and more flowing garments using more material. Accessories play a big part in making an outfit look Dawnish - a colourful long belt, a jewelled dagger sheath, an ornate leather purse or a crown can all make relatively simple and understated costume look regal.

15.3.2 Wintermark

Wintermark shares some basic similarities in terms of garments and cut with Dawn, but it should be even less bright and less lavish than that Marches. Some very high status Steirn might wear something to the Senate that a Dawnish yeoman would wear in the fields - if you have a beautiful, simple tunic in drab colours, try accessorising it with a good belt, fine jewellery or a hood or mantle in a contrasting colour and suddenly it will look a lot more Dawnish.

15.3.3 The League

Though men's costumes should be fairly distinct, women's gowns, especially the Burgundian, can be similar in Dawn and the League. To keep the looks distinct, keep the lines of Dawnish costume clean and elegant, omitting any pinking or slashing, avoiding sleeve puffs and the very Italianate-looking Borgia-style gowns. As always a hat or headdress will help in keeping the look Dawnish.

15.4 Research

Re-enactment costume from the 12th-15th centuries is ideal, but imaginative use of historical costume with a fantasy flair is even better. Whatever look you go for, from the wide choices presented, make sure it's bright, glorious and fun to wear.

Movie Costume Research <http://www.costumersguide.com/ancient.shtml> <http://www.alleycatscratch.com/lotr>

Historical Costume Research There's an enormous wealth of information on the web aimed at re-enactors, larpers and SCA enthusiasts. Google searches on [Medieval re-enactment](#), [War of the roses](#) and [13th](#), [14th](#) or [15th](#) Century re-enactment will all provide helpful inspiration.

15.4.1 Reenactment groups

Some links to reenactment groups' costuming guides - a helpful source of inspiration and information.

- [Company of Saint Sebastian](#)
- [Buckingham's Retinue](#)
- [Company of Saynt George](#)
- [The Medieval Siege Society](#)
- [St Hubert's Rangers](#)

15.5 In detail

15.5.1 Men

For male costume, there are a wealth of historical and fantasy looks for form the basics of your costume. The look should be dynamic, dramatic and exude power. As always, try to steer away from flimsy fabrics, drab colours and any look which obviously belongs in another nation - Dawnish clothes should demonstrate the wearer's exquisite taste, rank and nobility.

15.5.1.1 Bliaut and Surcote



A man's bliaut is a 12th century tunic, worn often with a sleeveless overtunic in heraldic or house colours. It's an easy look to achieve, either from off-the-peg reenactment kit or through making your own, and with a hood and cloak can look really splendid.

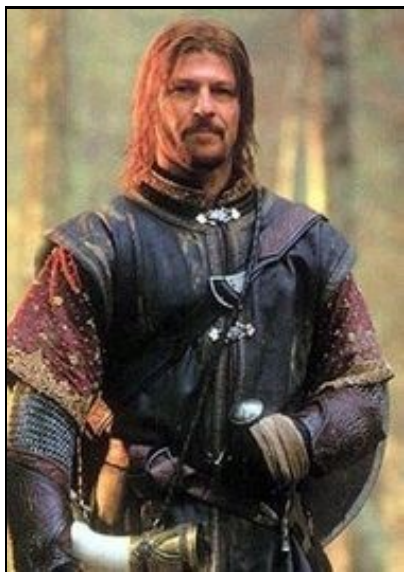
When worn over armour, a surcote is a great alternative to a tabard - unlike a flimsy cotton tabard a fitted surcote won't ride up, twist round your neck or tangle in your leg armour, and can look a lot more flash and substantial for relatively little extra work.

- [How To - Make a Bliaut](#)
- [How To - Make a Surcote](#)
- [An inspiring hood](#)
- [A good hood article](#)

15.5.1.2 Robes, gowns and cotehardies



On men, a gown is a reasonably close fitting robe, usually buttoning down the front, with long close fitting sleeves to the wrist. It persists to this day as the cassock and in the clothes of choirsters and some very traditional public school uniforms, all of which means both patterns and off-the-peg versions are fairly readily available.





It's a very adaptable look - a fantasy treatment could take the basic silhouette and standing collar, and shorten the overall length, either with full length or half length sleeves, as worn by Boromir, Uther Pendragon and Jaime Lannister for a "warrior's coat". It looks good worn open over chainmail. A close-fitting variant of this is the cotehardie which usually has lots of closely spaced buttons down the front and the sleeves - try googling "cotehardie". It can be a tough look to pull off, but well worth it!

Patterns:

- [Butterick 6844](#)
- [Simplicity 2235](#)
- [Simplicity 4697](#) (unfortunately out of print but you might get it on ebay)
- [Simplicity 2089](#)(this one would need a little adapting - closed sleeves rather than open, but would do a nice over-robe like Boromir's if you make a sleeveless version)
- [McCall 4745](#) This is actually a civil war uniform, but if you make up the blue version with an asymmetric closure it's very close to Jamie Lannister's coat above. Warning - the pattern runs a little large, so unless you're planning on wearing it over mail consider going down a size.
- [Reconstructing history man's cotehardie](#)

15.5.1.3 The Houpellande



This is a loose robe-like garment which can be knee or ankle length, with a variety of sleeves and necklines, which can be worn belted or loose. It's different from the style above as the waist isn't fitted - a great choice to show off lots and lots of thick and heavy fabric. It has the major advantage that you can just throw it over anything at all underneath and not worry about your under-kit being revealed. However, it really needs to be in fairly heavy cloth to look right, ideally wool, and can get a bit stuffy in hot weather. Team it with a chaperon hat for a really resplendent look!

- [Period Patterns 26](#)
- [How to draft a Houppelande pattern](#)
- [Houppelande drafting](#)
- [More drafting instructions](#)
- [Butterick 5626](#) (you could make a really fun houpellande out of this!)

15.5.2 Women

There is absolutely nothing to stop women wearing any of the styles above - the Empire doesn't require long skirts to be worn for modesty any more than it requires your hair to be covered. However, there's fun to be had in resplendent gowns - and you can be as historically inspired as you like without needing to choose an "authentic" but unflattering style.

15.5.2.1 Fantasy and "historically inspired" gowns



The blue dress is made of two contrasting fabrics - a gold brocade and a blue fabric which you could replicate with a richly coloured fine wool, silk or linen. Use Simplicity Pattern 4940 (<http://www.simplicity.com/p-2201-costumes.aspx>) view C (without the corselet/vest), and cut your centre front piece and lower sleeves out of the brocade to contrast with the blue. The pattern will give you a slightly thicker band of brocade at the neck, which you could easily trim down, and will sit on your shoulders rather than off (which is much more practical for active wearing). I'd suggest replacing the zip down the back with lacing - it's just as easy and lacing never jams or breaks in a field.

For the cream dress and the blue cloak, you could use [Butterick 4377](#), and sew it in a soft silk velvet or a good synthetic stretch velvet. If you use a decent heavy stretch velvet, you could omit the lacing down the back and just wear it as a pullover dress. For a different look you could use silk, lightweight wool or linen - just choose a lush, rich colour. For the neckline, you could cut a piece of brocade to match the curve of your neckline and carefully sew it on by hand, or you could get some fancy trim or ribbon. For the belt, try looking for a charity shop chain link belt, or make one out of a strip of silk and an old buckle, or use some fancy trim. eBay is a great source of trim - for some really splendid beaded trim at very reasonable prices I use [this](#) eBay shop. About 2m would do a great jewelled belt; they also sell shaped pieces designed to go on the necklines of dresses. For the cloak trim, the same ebay shop is good, or you could try searching for damask trim or brocade trim.



Lord of the Rings is a great source of inspiration for women's dresses. Simplicity 4940 is a good place to start, as is McCall's 4491. [alleycatscratch.com](#) breaks down every costume in the movie, and is a fantastic resource for choosing the right pattern, fabrics, trim and accessories - even if you don't want to exactly duplicate a LotR costume, it's full of useful information. A word of warning - while many of Arwen's gowns are ideal for Dawn, avoid the more oriental looking ones as they are probably better suited to Urizen. Eowyn's White Gown, Coronation Gown, Green Gown and Victory Gown are all ideal, but many of the others belong in Wintermark or the Marches.

15.5.2.2 Historical gowns

15.5.2.2.1 Houpellandes and Burgundian gowns



Houppelandes are great on women, too. It's not the easiest look in the book, but it's very striking. The one in the leftmost picture is velvet lined in fur, which gives it tremendous bulk and body - an alternative would be to line most of it in thick blanket wool, saving your fur or fake fur for the edges.

- [Period Patterns 26](#)
- [How to draft a Houppelande pattern](#)
- [Houppelande drafting](#)
- [More drafting instructions](#)
- [Simplicity 5925](#)
- [Reconstructing History 005](#)

The Burgundian gown is a later development of the Houppelande, usually closer-fitting with a deep v neck and and a broad belt just under the bust. Stick to the heavy draped versions; later Italianate ones in lighter silk with close fitting sleeves are more suitable for the League.

- [Simplicity 9058](#)
- [Reconstructing History 007](#)
- [More drafting instructions](#)

15.5.2.2.2 Cotehardie and Sideless Surcote





The cotehardie is a close fitting supportive gown, also known as the gothic fitted dress, usually buttoning down the front and the sleeves, and worn with a leather or metal belt around the hips. It's simple in construction, though needs a little fitting. One lovely historical example is the [Moy Gown](#), which has a unique construction pattern for the sleeves, and makes a lovely intermediate to advanced project. You can easily fake the look of a cotehardie with a [modern princess seamed dress](#).

For formal occasions, a great way to dress up a cotehardie is by putting a sideless surcote over the top, ideally in house colours and bearing your heraldry. Make a full length version of the pattern above, either adding lacing down the sides or cutting a little more away to reveal the gown underneath. Usually the belt goes over the cotehardie, under the surcote.

- [Simplicity 2573](#)
- [How to make a cotehardie](#)
- [How to make a heraldic sideless surcote](#)

15.6 Hats and outerwear

15.6.1 Hats, crowns and headdresses

Although not a required part of costume, a headdress, crown or hat can be the finishing touch that pushes a costume from good to fantastic. Men have a few options - a crown, either metal or a good substitute, can look fabulously regal on a noble or earl. A less formal look which still adds stature and majesty is the Chaperon, which was initially a hood worn sideways on the head and gradually developed into a more structured hat. Hoods are also good, particularly for yeoman characters, with particolouring, dagging and buttons helping to keep the look from sliding towards the Marches.

For women, looks are virtually limitless. Historical inspiration can be drawn from royalty of the 11th century (crown and veil), through the ever changing noble fashion of Templars, padded roll and veil, through to the elaborate steeple hennins of 15th century France, and the English butterfly headdresses of the same time. Even a simple padded roll, ren-fest style, can look good with a lower status costume.

Unsuitable hats - French hoods are a 16th century look and fall outwith Empire's inspiration period, as do cocked hats, tricorns and very structured gable hoods (early Elizabeth Woodville styled hoods are acceptable). Remember, headwear is for display and not for modesty, so consider rich, bright colours, and leave the white linen coifs to the Marches.

- <http://www.kats-hats.co.uk/index.shtml>
- <http://thecostumersmanifesto.com/costumeoldsite/history/100pages/chaperons.htm>
- <http://www.virtue.to/articles/reticulated.html>

15.6.2 Cloaks



A cloak is a near-essential part of your costume, and a great opportunity to give your kit a finishing touch and keep you cosy. For light fabrics, you can make a gathered-neck cloak with a drawstring for ease of construction- with heavy wools and velvet, a semicircular or circular mantle works best to reduce bulk at the neck and drapes beautifully. Try edging or lining your cloak in good fake fur for a really regal look, or adding a pelt around the shoulders (charity shops often won't sell fur coats up front, but store them in their back room and will allow you to make a donation in exchange for taking them away. If they don't have any, leave your details and get them to call you if any are handed in.)

<http://garbindex.com/cloak/patterns.html> <http://www.reddawn.net/costume/patterns.htm>

15.6.3 Hoods





Another very variable garment with dozens of options for length, colour and decoration meaning a hood can be a simple or fancy as you like.

- [Good information and patterns for hoods](#)
- [Cowl and hood](#)
- [Various hood patterns](#)
- [Reconstructing History 008 - Multiple head wear items](#)
- [Reconstructing History 009 - Multiple women's head wear items](#)

15.7 Armour

Plate armour is the ideal look for Dawn, but can be expensive. Re-enactment suppliers and ebay are a good place to look.

Plate armour: <http://www.whiteroseapparel.com/> <http://www.getdressedforbattle.co.uk/>

Chain mail supplies and finished items: <http://www.theringlord.com> <http://www.armchair-armoury.co.uk/chainmail.htm>

Lightweight polyurethane replicas: <http://www.nortonarmouries.com/>

Medieval plate style Leather armour: [Totally Leathered](#) [Totally Leathered](#) provides custom tooled leatherwork & bespoke armour. [Idiom Productions](#) Costume and Props Workshop creates custom hand-tooled leather armour, clothing and LRP weapons

Make your own: [Here's a tutorial on how to make moulded leather armour](#) [And here's one on how to make plate out of wonderflex](#)

15.8 Weapons

The classic Dawnish weapons of long sword and heater shield are fortunately widely available from LRP weapons makers. For swords, a classic cruciform shape is ideal, and detailing on the hilt can look as superb as the clean lines of unadorned quillions. If you're not fortunate enough to be commissioning a custom shield painted with your heraldry, consider making a cloth cover for your shield and appliquéing or painting your heraldic device onto it.

<http://www.skianmhor.co.uk> <http://www.saxonviolence.com/index.php> <http://www.tallowsfx.com/>

15.9 Heraldry



Heraldry is a huge part of Dawnish identity, and any member of a noble house or weaver cabal should define their group and personal heraldry, and consider working it into their costume. Even if a house isn't dressed identically, there's no doubt that using their heraldic colours in part of each member's kit makes a strong unified statement on and off the battlefield, and looks damn amazing too.

Here's a [project](#) showing you how to work a heraldic device into your costume: See also [how to make a surcote](#).

- [Medieval Art and Woodcraft](#) Historical and historically inspired banners, flags and livery badges.

15.10 Bibliography

- [The Medieval Tailor's Assistant](#), Sarah Thursfield ? Pretty much the bible for medieval costumes. Covers the layers from underwear to outerwear for the periods 1200-1500, plus headwear and accessories. Goes into detail about how to make the garments, which fabrics to use etc. A really excellent book.
- [Medieval military costume](#), Gary Embleton ? Very useful book using colour photographs of live models. Goes into detail about everything from 13th Century foot soldiers to 15th Century knights, with sections on underwear, armour, women's dress and Landsknechts.
- [Make Your Own Medieval Clothing for men](#), and for women, by W. Zerkowski and R. Fuhrmann, plus Headwear and Shoes available on the [German website](#). Great books, giving designs for lots of different garments, though few instructions on how to make them. This would be more suitable for an experienced costume maker.
- [Patterns for Theatrical Costumes](#) by Katherine Strand Holkeboer Gives scalable patterns.
- [Medieval Costume in England and France](#) - no patterns, but great for ideas on silhouette and style. Mostly black and white.
- [The Evolution of Fashion](#) Sadly out of print. A great introduction to how dress changes through the middle ages and up to the present day.

15.11 Costume sellers

- [The Midgard Seamstress](#) Custom made UK LARP and Re-enactment costumes
- [Arm Street](#) Medieval and Fantasy clothing from Russia (English language website)
- [Cloak'd and Dagger'd](#)
- [Historic Enterprises](#) American based costume company. Trades at TORM
- [Medieval Dress Company](#) Clothing and leatherwork
- [Matuls Clothing](#), armour tents and camp accessories from Poland (English language website)
- [Revival Clothing](#)
- [Sally Green](#)
- [Sew-mill](#)