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1 The League people



One people with four souls

The four great cities of the League give the nation her spirit. Her love of culture, the appreciation for fine things, opera, theatre, art and dance come from Sarvos. The determination to be the best, savouring every triumph, ferocious competition and ruthless nerve are born of Temeschwar. The problem-solving, imagination and sheer brilliance of Holberg has led to their mastery of surgery and engineering. The childlike delight with the cunning and the clever spreads from Tassato, where words are laced with more ambiguity than meaning and every ruse conceals another strategem beneath it.

While the character of each city can be clearly seen, it is important to appreciate that this is one nation, bound by their egreore and countless generations of migrations and marriages. "One people with four souls" is how the League often describes itself - and individuals and groups draw their strength and their character from the best qualities of the whole nation. Citizens of the League are always proud of their city and some strive to exemplify its attributes, but it is as if the qualities were in the cities themselves as much as the people who inhabit them.

True power in the cities is in the hands of the guilds. The guilds are exceptionally varied; some are organized to supply a single product or skill while others have no common basis beyond a group of people who join together to make money. There are guilds that are mercenary companies or theatre groups and some say the churches of the League are little more than guilds. What the guilds have in common is the expectation of loyalty, their ties are every bit as strong as the closest family. Loyalty to your guild is one of the great pillars of life in the League. The guilds have no formal powers so they use their stranglehold on economic existence in the cities to rule despite that; if you want to get ahead in the League - join a guild.

The League is committed to the Empire; Imperial law has brought peace and prosperity. The opportunities and the civilization that the Empire brings are things that many are prepared to die ? or preferably kill ? to preserve. Because the citizens of the League see themselves as the pre-eminent people of the Empire, they tend to view the Empire very possessively - as if the whole thing were arranged for their benefit.

League society greatly prizes loyalty, but scorns servility. Everyone is expected to give as good as they receive. They are relentlessly competitive in everything they turn their hands to, always seeking to outdo each other. They are not obsessed with money, as some claim, but money is a great way to judge success - a metric by which to quantify how well you have done. When outsiders point out that they seem to view life as a game they are playing then League citizens tend to agree - "someone is keeping score" is the usual response. But it is not a case of treating war, politics and trade like a child's game, it is a case of treating every game they play as seriously as if it were a war.



There is a merciless emphasis on the rules in the League. Crime is always a problem in the cities, but those who hold the reins of power regard it as a parasite, eating into their own profits. They ensure the laws are enforced with a brutal practicality and pragmatism, that stems in part from a cultural belief that those who break the rules have cheated in the game. It is not just the laws they hold in iron regard; a civil tongue, the customs of the city, her superstitions and her rules, are not to be broken. If an individual does not respect League society enough to play by the same rules as everyone else,

how can you be sure what other rules they will break? Such people are not trusted and in business, a lack of trust is fatal to your chances of success.

Famed for a devotion to the arts, the League claims to have invented opera and theatre and take constant joy in the novel and the clever. They appreciate flair and wit, as signs of a sharp mind. Witty banter and verbal quips are considered fine entertainment in the League. Those who can employ wit skillfully are given more license than others to break the social rules of respect with less chance to cause a scene - or a duel.

This is not a nation of effete libertines. Innovative gewgaws and beautiful artworks are prized, but they are nothing compared to the pride these people take in the exercise of their will, their ambition and their success. A clever quip is no substitute for wealth, power, influence and the will to employ them to meet one's goals. The Merchant Prince may continue to make ironic comments when a situation turns deadly serious, but never make the mistake of thinking that they are not prepared to do what it takes to ensure the outcome they favour. More than one guest has made an inappropriate "joke" and discovered themselves ejected from someone's home - often through a first storey window.

Any gutter urchin might be a merchant prince one day, so you must be careful, cousin. Kick a puppy today, and tomorrow it might have grown up to be the hound that has your hand in its jaws ...

Two Gentlemen of Tassato, Act I, scene ii

1.1 Names in the League



Each of the four cities of the League has a different flavour. We suggest Italian names for Sarvossian characters, Eastern European names for Temeschwari characters, German or Dutch names for Holberghan characters and Portugese names for Tassatan characters.

Most people in the League use their city as part of their name. They may use one of a number of connecting words - "di", "de", "van" and "of" are all popular and are used interchangeably across the League - but they firmly indicate the city they are loyal to. This is usually the city of their birth, but not always. Many League citizens have cause to move from one city to another at one time and some find themselves more at home in their new city than the place of their birth.

Many individuals do not bother with a family name, although they may take some element of their name from their guild.

1.1.1 Sample names

- Elsbet van Temeschwar, of the Black Raven
- Bertolli Giacomi di Sarvos, of the Giacomi Carta

2 The League culture and customs

2.1 Rules

There is a strong emphasis on rules in League society. They despise people who break the law, because they are seen as cheating and using unworthy mechanisms to take wealth and power from their more prosperous neighbours. The written rules are the Imperial Laws and breaking them is considered an act of utter desperation. To reduce an enemy to the point where they are caught breaking the law to try to keep their head above water is considered by many to be the ultimate defeat that you can inflict, the final mark of shame. Assassination, theft and murder only happen if a citizen of the League has no other card left to play, and in the knowledge that they have already lost.

The League has other rules besides Imperial laws, however. Manners are important; individuals are expected to remain polite even towards their hated enemies. While the League strives to be civil not servile, it is vital to display the respect due to those who have earned positions of importance in League society. A regard for punctuality is an element of this civility; if a party begins at sundown then you can expect to be turned away if you turn up an hour later. Breaking the general rules of civility and respect suggests you are the sort of person who cannot be trusted. If you cannot obey the small, simple rules how can you be expected to obey the important, complex ones?

2.2 Dead Reckoning

For centuries the citizens of the League have engaged in ruthless competition with each other. Wealth serves as a basic way of working out who is "winning" but it is a metric that lacks finesse. Ultimately, the League deals in favours and influence. Favours are more valuable than gold, because they represent the ability to influence other people in a more direct fashion than money. In the same way, every guild keeps a count of those who have worked against their interests in the past, because such offences represent a debt that is still to be repaid. This system, called Dead Reckoning, can be bewildering to outsiders, assuming it is even visible to them.

Some citizens of the League keep a physical ledger in which their favours and debts are recorded, often in the form of a personal journal or small notebook that is kept on the person at all times. **Guilds** do much the same, recording obligations owed in ledger books. It is very useful to know who owes a favour to whom, or who considers themselves to be owed a debt, because carefully navigating the tricky waters of the League sea of favours and debts is a key element in success at politics between the cities.

2.3 Hospitality

?The best of everything? might as well be the League motto. Wealth exists partly to "keep score" but its true value lies in its ability to acquire the fruits of civilization: beautiful things, comfortable clothes, delicate jewellery and inspiring entertainment. While outsiders sometimes criticize the League for being a den of greed and miserliness, this is largely unsupported prejudice. Wealth, after all, achieves very little if it is simply stored in a vault.

The nation is a crossroads for trade in all kinds of luxury goods, and being able to set a fine table for close friends and allies is the mark of a solid citizen, regardless of social position. It is clear, however, that such a table is by invitation only; life in the League is busy, and unexpected guests are an unwanted distraction. People wait to be invited to dine; anyone arriving at a League table with an assumption of hospitality will receive short shrift. To ensure that everyone has a chance to see the depth of their hospitality, most individuals and guilds prefer to throw a lavish party, at most once a year, to which they invite everyone they know, friend and foe alike. Balls and feasts are common, with hosts competing to offer the most lavish entertainment and finest distractions. A party is a serious business in the League because it is an opportunity to demonstrate one's wealth and social cleverness.



Citizens of the League are meticulous in recording favours done and favours owed, but when they give a gift to someone it is free of any obligation, even the expectation that the gesture will be returned. Gifts are given by the rich and powerful as a way of demonstrating their social standing but the cleverness and appropriateness of the gift is much more vital. Gifts that display insight into a person's character, or allude to their situation are more impressive than mere wealth. Gifts to political opponents are common; they carry a mark of respect and appreciation. It is the mark of a true Merchant Prince that they are as gracious in defeat as in success.

One gift that is almost never offered casually, especially to a citizen of the League, is that of a **ring**. Rings have powerful connotations to League citizens, and offering a ring is tantamount to asking the recipient to swear loyalty to the giver.

2.4 Duelling



Although duelling to the death is illegal, formal duelling is an accepted way of settling disputes. Challenges are usually publicized; bouts between well-known duellists can attract quite a crowd and the magistrates like to have one of their number present to ensure that no foul play occurs. The terms of the duel are set by mutual agreement by the participants, but usually both parties will use matching weapons and fight until one party submits or is too wounded to continue. It is accepted practice for powerful and wealthy individuals to employ professional duellists to fight in their stead.

2.5 Performance

Performance and display are important parts of life in the League. From the signs over every shop and the street vendors hawking their wares, the rumbustious displays of bravado by the Free companies and the dramatic duels between rival theatre troupes, to the ostentatious parties of the Merchant Princes and the displays of wealth and power, everything is on show in the League. Those who want to get ahead need to show everyone why they should be taken seriously; those who have achieved success want everyone else to know it.

Most people in the League implicitly understand the importance of image, even while they realize its artificiality. Nobody really imagines that the duels between rival actors are genuine, they understand that this is performance - indeed that is the very point of the exercise. The actors compete to be more brilliant and compelling and thereby win business for their troupe. The fights between bravos might result in broken bones, but their ultimate purpose is to demonstrate the capabilities of the Free Company they work for. The masks worn by the actors in the theatre are not real, but it is attendant on everyone to treat them as real, otherwise the play cannot proceed.

Remember always that the stage lies before you, and the mask you wear is the part you play in it. Rather a virtuoso villain than a mediocre hero, better a subtle servant than a heavy-handed prince. Don't be afraid to try on masks until you find the one that suits you best, but remember to change out of sight of the audience. Loved or hated, when the curtain finally falls for you, let them feel the world is a smaller place for your passing.

Cicisbeo Narante Garamul, Theatre and Politics

2.6 Relationships



Marriage in The League is not only a matter of love or romance. By choosing to wed, two individuals are swearing an oath expressing a profound loyalty towards one another on par with the loyalty others feel for their guild, city or nation. A wedding may be a joyous occasion, but it is also a serious business. Many League citizens who choose to get married do so later in life, in early middle age, rather than in the first flush of youth. Weddings between the young, especially by those in love, are seen as ill-advised.

It is entirely acceptable for lovers to live together, or raise children, without ever being wedded. These relationships may be as casual or committed as those involved are comfortable with. However, if someone is married there is an assumption of absolute fidelity - extramarital affairs are a serious business; they destroy the reputations of both the adulterer and their paramour. In a nation where trust is important, an affair is the ultimate expression of unreliability and treachery. The only exception is the cicisbeo (pronounced kick-a-BEY-o in Empire), a professional paramour sometimes hired by prosperous and well to do married citizens.

Committed lovers often wear **rings** to represent their connection to one another, and a wedding almost invariably involves the exchange of these rings. Powerful symbols of loyalty in The League rings can have a **magical significance** when exchanged in this manner.

2.7 Funerals



The League obsession with keeping score extends past death. League wills are full of bequests to charitable institutions, endowments for public memorials and most of all extravagantly planned wakes. It is common to hire mourners and traditional for the deceased to attend their own wake, in the form of a single masked performer. Attendees at the wake are given free license to say things to the death masque that they would have liked to say to the deceased were they were alive.

The richest will hire professional troupes to perform the highlights of their lives in theatre or music. True immortality is commissioning a play or song about your life to be performed long after you're dead. Of course, the writer may choose to subvert your memory cleverly if the actual truth doesn't agree with the public image you wished them to portray. Immortality can be for good or ill, after all.

The vast majority of League citizens are cremated and their ashes cast into one of the of the four great rivers. The exception are those few souls whose virtue has gained them the signal honour of a place in the great **Necropolis** of Highguard.

3 The League look and feel

3.1 Overview



The **League** is urban. The influences come from the Italian city states, the Hanseatic league, and Prague, as well as classic fantasy cities. This is a nation ruled by powerful guilds, and while there are poor people the cities are well maintained and are very different to the shambolic chaos of a Port Blacksand or even a Lankmar.

The League is rich. Fine fabrics showing the wealth and style of merchant-princes. Rich silks in the south and fur trim for the northern cities of Temeswar and Holberg. It is opulent not ostentatious, a purposeful show of wealth and power.

Also see *League costumes* and *League icons and artistry*.

3.2 Feel

Flamboyant, rich, urbane, ambitious, loyal, resplendent, flourish.



3.3 Breakdown

3.3.1 Influences

High medieval and renaissance luxury.

3.3.2 Materials

Velvet, Cotton, Silk, Fur Trim, Brocade, Damask, Jacquard

3.3.3 Colours

The palette is rich and autumnal. Wine reds, golden yellows, supported by rich oranges and deep blues and blacks.

3.3.4 Clothing

In the south, short doublets of richly patterned silks are cut to flatter. Sleeves are either tight with the undershirt puffing from beneath or occasionally full, and the effect is somewhat top-heavy, with trousers cut to a slender leg. Slashing is the height of fashion, particularly amongst the military whose taste verges on the gaudy.

In the north the climate is colder, and clothing reflects that. More fur trim, more layers. Perhaps a long sleeveless gown of velvet over the fashionable doublet, which might be made of leather not silk.

Ladies who do not favour doublet-and-trousers wear elaborate high-waisted gowns. The neckline may be lower than in other nations, cut almost to the waistband. An undergown, chemise or kirtle, often of a contrasting colour, is usually visible at the front. A fashionable lady of the northern cities will wear a long, full, gown, sleeved and high-waisted. To the south, the gown might be sleeveless, or with sleeves slashed like a doublet's. Ribbons are often used as decoration.



3.3.5 Armour

Armour is usually worn to allow the brightly covered clothing beneath to show through. A full harness is rarely worn, and heavy armour is usually concentrated over the vital areas, particularly the chest and head.

Those Free Companies that can afford it purchase matching armour. Those that must make use of what they can salvage combine it with matching costume to ensure that their group is identifiable as a single unit.

A starting Free Company may equip its members with a bright uniform in two contrasting colours and a quilted jack. Wealthier companies may have matching arming doublets, armour and helmets.

3.3.6 Weapons

Professional soldiers tend to prefer crossbows, long spears or halberds. Street fighters usually favour a light sword with a main gauche or stiletto for the off-hand. Shields are not common in either case.

3.4 Costume

League costume is beautifully tailored with layers of complex cutting and decoration. The ladies' gowns are high waisted with low necklines and complicated detailing such as puffed or slashed sleeves.

Gentlemen wear doublets with similarly complex decoration; sleeves are often laced on to the body of the doublet. The look is generally rather top heavy with slim fitting trousers or breeches and high legged boots.





3.5 Bravos

A **bravo** is usually light armoured if at all. They usually wield a rapier, sometimes paired with a short parrying dagger like a main gauche. Many bravos are part of a **free company**.





3.6 Free companies

The riotously bright uniforms of the free companies mostly comprise two colours, with sleeves and trousers in the main colour, slashed to let the contrasting colour show through. A steel breastplate and helm provides the basic armour.





3.7 Banners

An iconic impressive banner makes a bold statement for any free company.



3.8 Theatre and masks

The tradition of masked theatre runs strong in League cities, where it is an important constituent of the magic of a performance. Facemasks are also a common element of fashionable attire for individuals from all walks of life.

This custom sprang partly from the popular *Facio* style of masked theatre, where actors and even audience members swap characters as they swap masks, and partly descends from the traditions of cowls and veils in Highguard society. Masks allow an individual to cultivate anonymity and the air of mystery. Some groups ? military units and criminals especially ? may go so far as to all wear matching masks even in dangerous situations.

3.9 Churches

The heavily decorated robes of The League priests are in sharp contrast to some of the ascetics of other nations. Lavish embroidery, metallic threads and elaborate headdresses are all used to communicate their importance.



3.10 Children

The Empire outlaws children taking the battlefield until they have passed their citizenship tests, but some free companies include children of all ages. When employed as messengers, it is a matter of pride to dress them as well as the soldiers of the unit they represent.





4 The League history

Aldones di Sarvos was the Merchant Prince of Sarvos when the Empress and her supporters began their crusade. Conveniently for her, legend claims he was also the richest man in the world at that time and his silver flowed everywhere the Empress and her troops went. But Aldones was faced with a clear problem; the Sarvossians might consider themselves to be the most important people in the world, but the truth was a single city - even one with the power of Sarvos - could not compare with the power of the nations that were drawn to the Empress' banner. There were whispered suggestions among the Empress' supporters that Sarvos should become a Highborn or Freeborn territory.



Aldones met with Barell, Merchant Prince of Tessato, the fierce rival of Sarvos on the bay of Catazar and with Maria Ivanova, Boyar of Temeschwar, the greatest city of Varushka into which all the riches of that nation flowed. He introduced them to the Empress, and together they persuaded the two that their future lay with the Empire. But Aldones' plan was much more ambitious than even this. He convinced them that as the greatest cities of the world, they had more in common with each other than with the nations that surrounded them. His proposal went beyond the mere suggestion that become part of the Empire; Aldones proposed that they join together into a single League and thereby create an entirely new nation.

With their backing it was impossible for any of the Empress' supporters to gainsay Aldones's ambition and the League was recognized as the eighth nation of the Empire. The newly created egregore helped to bind the cities into one, allowing them to adopt the best of each other's customs. Their immense geographical separation means that each city still keeps something of its own character, despite the link to the egregore. As far as the League is concerned this is part of what gives them their strength; each city has a vital spirit of its own - they see themselves as strands of rope woven together for strength, distinct from each other but capable of pulling together when they choose.

In the years that followed, the Empire consolidated its control of the lands around the Bay of Catazar, driving the orcs into the wilderness. The cities of the League worked tirelessly to advance the Empire, but despite military successes the League were unable to identify any cities that shared their enterprising approach in the lands being conquered. They prided themselves on being first amongst equals in the Empire, but they began to whisper to each other about their loss of influence as other Nations gained new territories and senators.

As Dawnish forces pushed westwards they came to the walls of Holberg, a city so heavily fortified that it had never fallen. League forces offered to put the city under siege whilst the Dawnish armies pushed on, eager for glory in battle against the orcs that populated the surrounding lands. The League army encircled the city, but rather than starve them out and storm the walls, they began secret negotiations with the burghers who ruled the city. By the time the Dawn had completed their conquest, the clever words of the League's ambassadors and the gifts that accompanied them had been enough to convince Holberg to open its gates to the Empire. The city that has never fallen joined the Empire without a single life lost - as far any citizen of the League was concerned it was the greatest military triumph of the age.

Never before had the Senate been split over which nation might lay claim to a territory. The Merchant Princes seized this opportunity and with the help of an envoy from the city of Holberg they convinced the Senate to declare the city to be part of the League. The nobles of Dawn were incandescent with fury, regarding the territory as rightfully theirs by virtue of the blood they had spilled to conquer it. They denounced Holberg swearing that they would never lift a finger to aid the territory. Centuries later, the resentment still simmers - as Holberg lost land to the barbarians, there were never quite enough Dawnish Earls able to spare the troops to help the city - the political divisions of the past destroying the Empire's future - according to the League.

5 The League leadership

If you cross a bravo they might break your fingers; cross a merchant prince and they'll ruin you.

The League cities are administered by the Empire, but they are run by the **guilds**. These economic affiliations draw members from every section of League society united by common interests and a desire to work together to acquire wealth. The earliest types of guild were formed as confraternities of workers. They were organized in a manner something between a trade union, a cartel, and a secret society. Today only a few guilds limit themselves to just one craft; most have expanded to include merchants and traders and thereby cover any economic activities they can draw profit from.



Each guild is headed by a merchant prince - an honorific title for the most economically powerful individuals that harks back to pre-Imperial times. The title is the same for men or women, a mark of respect for Aldones di Sarvos, the League's first merchant prince. Together the most powerful merchants choose their senators but beyond this they usually leave the administration of the cities to the civil service, allowing them to concentrate on increasing the wealth of their guild.

The guilds are not merely a matter of shared interests, but also of oaths and loyalties. Membership of a guild represents one of the most important loyalties a citizen of the League can hold. It is considered at least equal in importance to the loyalty owed to the League, the Empire and one's city. Those who betray their guild find every door closed to them and face exclusion from society and economic life. This is a short road to ruin in the League, a fate that most citizens will do anything to avoid. It is their ability to apply these sanctions that gives the guilds much of the power and influence they wield.

In the League, people wear rings to demonstrate their allegiances, wearing one **ring** for each major loyalty they owe.

5.1 Leading a territory

Each city in the League is a territory of its own and so sends one Senator to the Imperial Senate. Any citizen of the League can have a say in the identity of their Senator - provided they are prepared to work for it. The Civil Service compiles and maintains records of what investments are owned by an individual, and they are allocated a number of votes based on the value of the properties they own in that city. These votes are represented by official "bonds", and during an election Senatorial candidates for a city try to convince the electors to give them their bonds to show their support. The bonds are then registered with the civil service. The candidate with the largest amount of support when the election ends, as represented by the value of their combined bonds, becomes the Senator.

Timing is important in League senatorial elections. Candidates must declare themselves before the election begins, and after that time no more candidates are admitted. When the elections formally open, they continue for three hours and then they close and no more bonds can be exchanged. Punctuality and good timekeeping are, after all, simply good manners in the League.

While the process itself is quite above-board, that does not prevent a fair degree of politicking behind the scenes. While uncommon, for example, it is not unknown for an individual to claim to be collecting bonds on behalf of one individual, only to then hand them over to another.

6 The League economic interests

The League is rich, and the cities have always been a centre of trade within the Empire. Anyone prepared to work hard who has any level of moxie or chutzpah can amass a respectable pile of coin. There is a poor underclass in all the cities of the League, but there is a widespread perception among many that these people are poor because they ?choose? to be. If they had any get-up-and-go they would join a guild and make something of themselves.



League entrepreneurs have expanded the Empire?s knowledge of foreign lands and even gone so far as to establish embassies and trade delegations outside the borders of the Empire. The Synod has expressed concerns about these embassies on more than one occasion, but the benefits they bring to the Empire have so far outweighed any danger peaceful relations with foreigners might represent.

The League is entrusted with the Imperial Mint based in Tasato, which produces all Imperial coins. At the Empire?s birth, every nation used different coinage, and trying to consolidate exchange rates and manage investment across the Empire was an economic nightmare. Issuing a new coinage was a way to support both economic growth and ensure a level of stability, and making that coin out of steel prevented coin clipping as well as strengthening the power of the Empire. The mint is run by the Civil Service, but defended by League troops and control of the Mint and its guards is a powerful political position.

The League was also ultimately responsible for the creation of the Imperial Bourse, which oversees and controls the distribution of bulk goods throughout the Empire. While they do not have a monopoly or control over this institution, more than any Nation save perhaps the Brass Coast they appreciate the opportunities for influence that the Bourse represents. Many merchant princes make a fortune in steel playing the Bourse, while others gain great influence within the Empire through clever manipulation of the markets.

The downside of the vast wealth of the League is that it breeds schemes to redistribute it and not everyone is prepared to play by the rules. There is always some up and coming individual prepared to risk hiring a few **Bravos** to extort a little money and there are always rumours of people who will do more for money than just threats and a beating. Those that want to be accepted into society make an effort to distance themselves from such methods as far as possible - the guilds have no time for organized crime and they work closely with the Imperial Magistrates to ensure that those involved are caught and punished. There is no sympathy for those operating outside the rules that everyone else chooses to abide by and a belief that tolerating lawbreaking undermines the fabric of League society.

To help the magistrates enforce the law, the cities employ professional thief-takers. These groups operate to identify and capture criminals, in return for bounties offered by the magistrates or by wealthy guilds and individuals. The first thief-takers were Temeschwari, but the advantages of the system spread across the League once the benefits were understood.

If the League has no truck with violent crime, they do have a love affair with confidence tricksters. Imperial law contains no protections for merchants or those who buy from them and in the League the art of the swindler is much admired. The best usually have some skill with magic and are called **mountebanks**, after the traditional theatrical character. They are part of League folk lore, selling the fish from an empty net to a wealthy priest or persuading a merchant prince to part with a fortune for a worthless glass bauble. Surprisingly, such deeds are perfectly acceptable within the rules of Dead Reckoning ? with one very important caveat - be careful who you tell. A merchant prince may applaud your ingenuity, provided her reputation is intact, but a mountebank who makes a fool of her in public had better have some very powerful friends.

7 The League military concerns

At present the League provides only a single army to fight in the Imperial wars. At the height of the Empire's power the League was able to field two armies, but since the territory of Holberg fell under the control of barbarians, the need for soldiers to defend the city has absorbed what military strength they can spare. It is a constant frustration for many Merchant Princes that they cannot match the military strength of nations like the Marches or Dawn. However, the structure of Imperial forces does not appeal to many citizens of the League and attempts to find additional volunteers have come to nought.



Most citizens of the League who seek a military life look instead to the **free companies** and it is here that the nation excels. The free companies are the mercenary units for which the League is famous. Threats are considered downright rude, but most guilds still employ mercenaries; only a fool relies on the rules alone to protect their interests. After all, not everyone *in* the League is *of* the League.

Joining a free company is a serious undertaking. A free company is like a guild; members are expected to show the same loyalty, and that loyalty will be tested on the field of battle. Although free companies are renowned for their discipline on the battlefield, they are equally notorious for their riotous behaviour on the streets. Not for nothing are their members called **bravos**, fighting by day and drinking through the night. When two free companies are housed in the same city then rivalry easily spills over into violence. Brawls and duels abound and running battles in the streets are not unknown. The leaders of the free companies turn a blind eye as long as the bills for the damage do not mount too high, and as long as civilians are left out of the conflict. The Imperial authorities turn a blind eye provided nobody is reported killed.

If the League lack military numbers, they strive to make up for it with competent generals. League tacticians are a byword for brutal brilliance; men and women prepared to contemplate the unthinkable to achieve victory. General Anke Carsten von Temeschwar infamously stated *?I am an artist, the battlefield is my canvas?* when called before the Synod to justify the cruel tactics she employed against the barbarians.

Crossbows are very much in favour with the League ? anyone from wealthy merchants to street bravos might tote one of these exquisitely made devices and the free companies have taken them up with great enthusiasm. While they may lack the range of a Marcher longbow, they are just as effective at short range. Crossbows are easy to produce and simple to master. Once the crossbow is cocked and ready, physical strength is irrelevant. There are not many bowmen in the League, and the bow is considered more of a "hunting weapon" than a weapon of war.

8 The League religious beliefs

Virtue made the Empire strong, *we* made it *great*

Bishop Gilde van Holberg, Address to the Assembly of Prosperity

To the eyes of an outsider, religion in the League seems a little transactional. Many religious buildings and celebrations seem to exist to take money or goods from the citizens in the most splendidly showy way possible. This certainly isn't to say that priests here are not fervent or devout in their beliefs. They simply recognise that they provide a service and should be recompensed appropriately. Competition amongst priests for provision of lucrative religious services, such as the marriage of a merchant prince or the funeral of a wealthy merchant, is fierce. The priesthood make an effort to provide a spectacle for such events, ensuring that they earn their wage.



The League quality of competition is as strong in matters of faith and spirituality as it is in every other aspect of life. A **bishop** of the League may be as pious as any priest of Highguard, but they can also be as ruthless and mercantile as any merchant prince. Where the guilds keep score with coin and favour, the bishops use the size and notable membership of their congregations. The most powerful include artisans, tradesman and in some cases mercenaries or dedicated soldiers as well as priests and layfolk. The bishops of the League together form the League Assembly within the Imperial Synod, and when united on a common purpose their political acumen can make them a potent force.

In addition to preaching **The Way of Virtue**, many of the churches in the League also operate on the basis of providing civic functions paid for by donations, often from the people they have helped. Some employ soldiers to patrol the streets and keep them free of muggers and pickpockets, while others operate schools and hospitals. Others look beyond the borders of the League, actively soliciting donations to help them in their "good works," seeing their city, their nation or even the whole Empire as their congregation and its defence and improvement their responsibility.

The most famous League church is the *Church of The Little Mother*. Originally based in Sarvos, churches dedicated to the Little Mother, an Exemplar of Prosperity and the matron of children and orphans, are found in all League cities and in some parts of other Nations as well. The Little Mother takes in orphaned or abandoned children, ensuring that they receive a chance in life. Children are taught basic numeracy and literacy before being apprenticed to a master in the city. The Church sustains itself with donations, often made by former beneficiaries, and is well respected by the Imperial authorities and League people. It can also wield a surprising amount of political power, as many influential people owe their start in life to the priests of the Little Mother.

A key figure in the religious life of many citizens is **Aldones di Sarvos**, who many look to as the founder of the League, and is recognised by the Imperial Synod as a Paragon of Ambition. Aldones started life with nothing and through his labours, fierce competition, skill and swordsmanship, created the first guild and declared himself a Merchant Prince. Aldones did many great deeds throughout his life, but all inspired by the love he bore his city. Aldones' legacy was affirmed when, through his vision and influence, he united the cities of the League, and helped forge a Nation. He disappeared - or ascended - shortly after his keynote speech to the newly-united League, and the final words of his address are inscribed on his memorial in Sarvos to inspire his successors to pursue their goals: "*In Highguard, they build castles and call them towns. We will build cities, and call them a nation.*"

9 The League magical traditions

Theatre is a vital part of League society, and theatrical groups called **troupes** are common. From the most bombastic performances in lavish theatre houses to the simplest productions performed in the streets themselves, the citizens love spectacle and little is more spectacular than League theatre. In part this is due to the common use of magic by a troupe's performers. Some of this magic is simple stage tricks, but skilled performers use can weave quite literally enchanting performances. Quite how many members of a troupe can perform formal magic is a closely kept secret. A troupe demands every bit as much loyalty as any guild and discretion about the abilities of the members is considered just another part of the rules. Whether producing a performance of Scillio's "*The Fallen Herald*" or attempting a dangerous ritual by command of a Merchant Prince, every member of a troupe plays a part.



To the League, magic is a commodity like any other. Although Urizen lays claim to the secrets of grand power and treat it with great dignity, in the League it is the money of a wealthy patron that pays for that dignity. As such, the show a troupe puts on is as important to their reputation as the results they produce. The performers weave knots in time as well as space, drawing influences from the past to spread their patron's influence in the future. They must make a show of invoking symbols of ambition, loyalty and prosperity, as much because a merchant prince enjoys watching a bravura performance as because of their importance to the ritual.

Most troupes wear masks when they perform ritual magic, and guard these masks carefully. The notion of taking on a character for the purposes of ritual is well established. When one knots the ties on a mask in order to perform enchantment, one does not simply wear a piece of cloth or leather or paper, one is wearing the combined weight of all the stories told about that character - and all the stories than can yet be told. The most famous masks in the League are in in the Armetto Theatre house, in **Sarvos**. These masks are old and, in some cases, nothing special to look at, but they are exceptionally potent in the hands of a skilled performer.

There is also a belief that these masks not only empower the ritual, but also ensure that any malign influences or backlash will fall on the mask, rather than the wearer because they conceal the identity of the magician. As a consequence, some masks are believed literally to be cursed items - items that cannot be destroyed because to do so is to cause the weight of the malign energies contained within to be released. Several stories - and indeed plays - tell of cursed masks and the trickery that causes their wickedness to be released on the undeserving. (see also **masks** in Hearth Magic).

Rivalry between troupes is famously intense, and long-standing feuds are commonplace. Troupes compete for the patronage of the most powerful guilds, and performers have even been murdered for changing troupe or giving a bad performance. Open violence is rare, but public duels between performers are an important part of advertising and promoting a troupe's plays - especially when an opening night is approaching. Such matches always draw a fine crowd as performers are expected to retort and riposte while they fight; the eventual victor will be the one who most entertains the crowd the most rather than the one who strikes the winning blow.

The troupes of the League would like to believe that there is no other tradition of magic in the cities, but this is far from true. There is an underclass of street-mage known as **mountebanks** - a derogatory term first used by the troupes that many of these street mages have claimed for themselves as a badge of pride. Their rough magic is more immediate and improvised, rarely for the benefit of a patron, and often performed on street corners. Many mountebanks are part conjurer, part con-artist, with a widely-held reputation for being crooks and scoundrels - or so the troupes would have you believe. While not all mountebanks are confidence tricksters, enough of them are that their entire profession is viewed with some suspicion.

Many mountebanks combine an understanding of incantations with a little ritual magic, and supplement their understanding with trinkets and even potions and elixirs. They tread a fine line between entertainer and criminal, and those who step over the line are in danger of the serious repercussions that face anyone who cannot follow the rules in League society.

The archetypal example of the mountebank con is the **shell game** - playing on the greed and hopefulness of their victims to trick them into making a wager they cannot win.

10 The League hearth magic



10.1 Rings

Rings have a power all their own. They are worn to represent loyalty, and become powerful symbols of oaths and promises. Stealing a ring from someone can result in the oath or loyalty it represents being damaged in some way, and there are stories of rings used to inflict terrible curses not only on the original wearer, but on all those who are loyal to them. There are also stories that rings gain a power of their own, especially rings that represent a profound, magical or hidden loyalty - stories tell of rings that draw the shades of the betrayed to drive a villain mad.

10.1.1 Masks

Masks represent anonymity, and are extensively used in magic, but they also represent a hearth magic. The mask conceals the identity of the wearer, or allows that identity to be confused or connected with that of another individual, especially an iconic character. The use of masks is traditional, and can be seen as an evolution of the use of veils and cowls among the Highborn. Masks are also extensively used in ritual magic by many League magicians.

10.1.2 Mirrors

A similar fascination with identity revolves around the use of mirrors. Mirrors show the face that others see, but also sometimes reveal one's true face. There are stories of mirrors that reflect murderers as if they were still covered in the blood of their victims, or of mirrors that show parted lovers the location or fate of the one they are bound to. Mirrors have no identity of their own - they only show what is placed before them. Some Leaguers have adopted a practice originally from Holberg that encourages those with worries or wracked with guilt to confide their problems to their reflection - engaging in imaginary dialogues as they work through the concerns of the day. There are stories of magical mirrors that allow the reflection to take on a life of its own, to serve as advisors to those who use them or to act out the repressed desires of those reflected in them.

11 The League lineage and species attitudes

The cambions? instinctive cunning and ambition mean that many of them find a spiritual home in the League. They are especially encouraged to enter the priesthood, and many consider it fortunate to have a cambion **bishop** perform important ceremonies. The most successful often follow the fashion of capping their horns with bejewelled gold to display their wealth.



The Reckoners of the great rivers are dominated by several families with strong **merrow** and **naga** lineage. They have done much to establish the position of their lineage in League society. Initially powerful in Tassato, the merrow boatmen of that city began by ferrying citizens across the wide river that separated the twin halves of that city. Over the years, they parleyed their knowledge of the secret assignations of citizens into political and then economic power. Although the boatmen were careful never to pry into the affairs of others, they became experts at deducing some of the nature of other people's business simply by knowing where they were going and who they were talking to.

When **Aldones di Sarvos** brought the cities of the League together the boatmen found themselves in competition with a guild of Nagas in Sarvos. This secretive guild made a living collecting and compiling lists of favours and debts owed by other guilds - and for a small price revealing the nature of those relationships. The two groups soon saw the benefit of cooperation and began to work together as the Guild of Reckoners.

Although there are now several different Guilds of Reckoners, they continue to display a great interest in secret affairs and espionage, supplementing their normal mercantile activities extensively with spying and information brokering. This suits both the merrow interest in truth and the naga interest in secrets, and serves as a lucrative sideline. As a consequence, many League citizens expect that any merrow or naga they meet will have the latest and most salacious gossip.

Briars find it hard to achieve high positions in League society. Their often blunt demeanour and tendency towards direct solutions means that they are regularly underestimated. The typical League prejudice is that briars are suited to be **bravos**, and little more. Many briars leave the League when their lineage becomes apparent - and not just because of prejudice. Living for extended periods in the sprawling cities of the League is emotionally and mentally draining for many briars, and the constant pressure of urbanised society can make it increasingly difficult for them to resist the destructive impulses that lurk in their blood.

If the lineages are generally respected and welcomed in the League, the same cannot be said for orcs. For most citizens of the League, Imperial Orcs represent the worst of both worlds; they constantly remind the citizenry of the barbarian threat and they often meddle in local schemes on behalf of their Imperial masters. Few Orcs are interested in deals or profit and thus there is little common ground between them and the average citizen of the League.

12 The League territories

The city is the mirror of the world. If we cannot master the city, how can we master the world?

Gidea di Sarvos, Reflections

Each territory in the League represents the land that extends around a single great city. Surrounding lands are tightly parcelled into estates, each of which is traditionally worked hard but may also be sculpted for maximum beauty. Commonly country estates are kept for show, but a Merchant Prince will only really relax when at their townhouse in the city, surrounded by the fruits of civilization. The League is small in terms of landmass compared to some other nations, but it still manages to have a sizable population.

Each of the four cities of the League has something of a character of its own. League citizens from that city may strive to exemplify what they see as the strong qualities of their city, but the truth is that all these characteristics are present in every citizen in the League. The physical city itself seems to have some effect, citizens from one city who move to another often find themselves reflecting the mood of their new home. How much an individual character or group chooses to emphasize the city of their birth - or the city they live in - is entirely up to the player.

12.1 Tassato Mestra and Tassato Regario

Peering at each other across the fast-flowing Vassa, Tassato is called the Twin City or the Split City. Providing the only easy way to cross the wide and dangerous river, Tassato is a city divided against itself. Tassato has originally two cities, Mestra and Regario, named for the feuding siblings who historically founded them on either bank of the Vassa. Over time, the cities spread along the coast and the river formed a natural boundary between them. Attempts to build bridges between the cities have always foundered and the people rely on boats and barges to cross the river.

The north-western part of the city is called Tassato Mestra, and the south-eastern is Tassato Regario. The people on either side of the river are historically rivals, and that historical rivalry occasionally boils up into open conflict. The two cities were unified under the control of Anabela di Regario, a merchant prince who ruled over a century before the creation of the Empire. Anabela was forced to contend with the constant rivalry between the two cities, open battles in the streets between bravos was causing widespread lawlessness and in the end the prince declared a ban on the open carrying of weapons. The ban had the desired effect, damping down the bloodshed although the rivalry was slowly transformed to verbal banter between the two sides. The ban endured until Tassato joined the Empire and in that time the people became famous for their wordplay, launching quips and insults at each other like arrows.

Today Tassato enjoys an unrivalled reputation as a city where the spoken word is an art-form. Tassatans take a delight in layered meanings, subtexts and unspoken communication. The city has provided several senators famous for their brilliant oratory and representatives from the city are usually regarded as the finest diplomats in the Empire. Of all the people of the League, Tassatans are most likely to view life as a game and they are notorious for their love of intrigue, not just for the sake of advancement but for the sheer pleasure to be had thereby. They regard cunning diplomacy more highly than armed conflict, not because they are peace-loving, but instead because they regard words as a more effective tool than weapons in destroying their enemies - better to set enemies against enemies than to face them yourself. Manipulation is high art here - no surprise that the first and the finest [mountebanks](#) hail from Tassato.

Tassato Mestra is famous both for its shipyards and for the boldness of its brothels. The north bank of the river is almost entirely given over to a gaudy display of brazenness, the so-called Street of Pleasures where anyone with the purse for it can buy company, narcotics and other goods of dubious virtue. The southern part of the city, Tassato Regario, is best known for its workshops and magicians. According to legend, the printing press was designed in Tassato Regario and the first presses were employed here printing religious tracts, scholarly treatises and political manifestos.

In the centre of the Vassa towers the Imperial Mint where Imperial coinage is produced. While the fortified building itself is operated by the civil service, its protection falls to the people of the League, and the Master of the Imperial Mint is an important title among its citizens.

Citizens of Tassato generally refer to Regario and Mestra as separate places, while everyone else refers to them as wards or parts of the same city.

12.2 The Jewelled City of Sarvos

Sarvos is constructed on an island just off the coast, like a beacon of light in the water. It is the cultural centre of the League, and arguably the whole Empire. It takes its common epithet from the many mirrors found upon the roofs of the city, said to "sparkle like gems" during the day. Folk legend suggests that if the mirrors are shattered the city will surely fall, and for this reason some citizens carry a mirror about their person, an affectation that encourages unfair accusations of vanity.

Sarvos is as driven as any city in the League, but art is its true passion. They claim to have invented theatre, a ludicrous claim but believable in a city graced with so many theatre-houses. They are certainly the originators of the magician [troupes](#) that are now commonplace throughout the League and they are usually the centre of League performance magic. Not just theatre is popular however; there are rival opera houses whose bitter divisions are every bit as keen as those of the leading theatre troupes. Several wealthy merchant princes have endowed their collections of art on the city and there are public galleries where the most beautiful pictures and sculptures can be viewed in exchange for a ring or two.

The land around the Bay of Catazar is lush and fertile, with low flood-plains; olive farms and prime grazing lands fed by the waters of four rivers: the lazy Couros that flows through Highguard; the flighty Gancio, whose capricious nature has drowned many an unwary river captain on its course through the Brass Coast; the broad-banked Scorrero, solid and well-defended, carrying goods from Temeschwar and Holberg; and the furious Vassa that flows down through Tassato. The four rivers are central characters in the art and folklore of the city. All the classic literature and theatre includes them in one form or another, whether as central characters or ?clowns? during the interludes. A popular game between playwrights and critics is to conceal the characters in some way and challenge the critic to locate them.

Art in all forms is held in high regard, Sarvos is famous for its architecture, but it is also a byword for excellent food, and every bar, street vendor and hostelry prides itself on providing its own speciality snack: perhaps a particular way of spicing ham, or salting and smoking beef, or an excellent dipping sauce for vegetables. It is said that an epicure can dine out every night of his life in Sarvos and never eat the same meal twice.

Cramped streets flow between soaring towers, choked with merchants, tradesmen and students. It is the site of Diora University, a prominent seat of learning that specialises in researching obscure topics for money. Here can also be found Capodomus Cathedral, one of the largest religious structures in the Empire, a towering monument encrusted with precious materials and objets d'art.

On the south side of Sarvos are the drowned streets of Caricomare ? a shattered ruin, waist-deep in water at its highest points and submerged entirely in others. Thirty years ago, it was a prosperous suburb of Sarvos. One night, however, a great storm came out of nowhere and the river burst its banks. The route of the river changed overnight and a mighty wave washed away the foundations of many buildings. In a single night, Caricomare was ruined ? buildings were toppled and the streets filled with saltwater. The repairs were considered too costly and the floods created a displaced populace, compounding the overcrowding in the city. Caricomare today is an abandoned, dangerous place, a maze of flooded streets and waterlogged buildings, but it is said that riches can still be found in the depths, for those brave enough to investigate.

12.3 Temeschwar

Temeschwar was once part of wild [Varushka](#), but it joined the Empire alongside Sarvos and Tassato, when the League was formed. Citizens of Temeschwar commonly make an effort to be as flamboyant as their southern fellows, but their dress is inevitably more practical, to accommodate the harsh northern weather. They are traditionally more brutally pragmatic than those who live on the bay. It is a foothold of trade to Varushka, Wintermark

and nearby Dawn. Trading in raw materials and crafted goods, especially weapons and armour, it is seen by many as the merchant capital of the northern lands.

Despite its good relations with Varushka, Temeschwar has always suffered somewhat from being distant from Sarvos and Tassato whose close proximity made them the natural heart of the League. Temeschwar may well be the richest of all the cities of the League, but it can never quite shake the fear that it is not as good as the others. This anxiety is just part of what drives the Temeschwari to be so competitive and so ruthless. Temeschwari strive to work that bit longer and that bit harder than anyone else in the League. If a Sarvossian closes his shop at sunset, his Temeschwari neighbour will light a pair of lanterns and keep trading for another hour.

The Temeschwari are not just the most competitive people in the League, they also have a well deserved reputation as the most ruthless. In the years before the creation of the Empire, the city was plagued by gangs of thieves and assassins who operated with open impunity despite the best efforts of the boyar, Ratibor. Thousands of inhabitants were linked with the different gangs who used tattoos to mark membership and enforce loyalty.

In the end Ratibor hired a force of Varushkan mercenaries and brought them in secret into the city during the depths of winter. In the notorious night of a thousand torches (named for the torches the soldiers carried to light their way) every inhabitant of the city was turned out of their beds, stripped and searched for marks. Anyone with a tattoo on their body was given a few minutes to collect their belongings before being forced from the city into the frozen snows beyond the walls. A few managed to bribe their way past the search but most were given over to the winter and were never seen again. The act was one of monstrous brutality, but it established the power of Ratibor as boyar and broke the power of the criminal gangs forever.

The Temeschwari wear their reputation for cold, hard dealing with pride. They view themselves as the strongest people in the League, combining the ambition and drive of the south with the strength and determination of the north. Physical as well as mental strength is prized here - Temeschwari bravos are as likely to favour the axe as the rapier - and her free companies have a reputation for toughness, as soldiers and as people. Most Temeschwari free companies are careful not to break the rules for they know the magistrates watch them carefully - but they will do almost anything required to win short of this. You can find many things in Temeschwar, it is said, but you will not find a scruple through you search the city from sunrise to sunset.

12.4 Holberg (Lost)

Build strong city walls and the world must come to you - and it *will* come to you, if only to marvel at your walls.

Holberg joined the League in 136AE under a riot of political strife in the Senate. The lands that surrounded the city were under the control of barbarian orcs until they were driven back in an epic five year war of conquest by Dawnish nobles and forces loyal to them. But Holberg itself was never conquered; the city was protected by a dozen high walls and the Dawnish armies had little taste for a lengthy siege. When the city was convinced to side with the Empire by League diplomats, it also successfully requested the Senate assign the territory to the League. Dawnish senators were incandescent with fury but there was nothing they could do and Holberg became the prosperous fourth city of the League.

In the decades that followed Holberg grew rich and prosperous. The lands around the city possessed a rich agricultural heritage, well known for their fine vineyards. In 346AE, however, barbarians attacked the territory, sacked the vineyards, and laid siege to the walled city. The Senate remained paralyzed throughout this time, unable to secure funding and forces to raise the siege and in the end the territory was lost to the orcs and remains under Orc rule to this day.

Holberg itself, however, has not yet fallen. Famous for its engineers, builders and architects, the city is immensely fortified and defenders still hold out to this day. The only approach to the city that remains viable is through a narrow pass that leads over the mountains and into Dawn. Every year their situation becomes worse. Citizens from Holberg clamour for the territory to be reclaimed, and press for the siege to be broken and the territory retaken. Unfortunately, while the city itself is still intact, the territory of Holberg is no longer under Imperial control so the city has lost their Senate seat until it can be reclaimed. The League lays part of the problem in regaining Holberg at the feet of the Dawnish. They claim that Dawnish Senators use every excuse to focus attention elsewhere, and Dawnish Generals actively resist plans that would allow the recapture of the city. Even the Empress seemed unable to break the deadlock.

Despite the currently tenuous situation, Holberg remains a vital part of the League. The city is notorious for its inventive brilliance, its ability to think of ingenious solutions to problems. Holberg invented the crossbow, but it is not inventions it is known for, so much as the ability of the inhabitants to use what they have to find solutions never before seen. Many Holberghians see life as a complex puzzle, one for which they are seeking the solution. They do not respect flights of fancy - but these people have found ways to build a city on a mountainside. They are utterly pragmatic but ingenious with it.

There is also an emphasis on learning and study that is found nowhere else in the Empire outside Urizen. Holberg already had its own university when it joined the League, something the other cities soon copied. It does not have great libraries to rival Urizen or Highguard but it is a centre of excellence for tutelage, particularly in practical skills like engineering and surgery. There have been several free companies from Holberg whose reputation as siege engineers was unrivalled throughout the Empire. Holberg gives the League a scholarly excellence that allows it to hold its own with rival nations like Urizen - they may not be able to retake the lowlands without help from the Empire, but they have ensured that the city will not fall.

13 The League children



The arrival of a child in a family is a time for great celebration and as a result, for the first few years of their lives, children are feted, celebrated and looked after by their family and older siblings; in the more affluent sections of society they are often bedecked in finery and brought out on show at balls and public events. While infants in League cities are treasured and cooed over, and every babe will have a dozen adopted aunts or uncles, older children are very much treated like miniature adults. Smart youngsters in League cities are apprenticed early and expected to learn the basics of how to thrive in League society.

Apprenticeship is very important in League cities. One will see young people in livery serving at the tables of a Merchant Prince or working as guides and messengers. It is expected that education will come as part of one's apprenticeship. The master one works for will also be responsible for teaching letters and numbers, or arranging tuition. In return, the child is expected to earn their keep. It is understood that League children must be kept busy; else they turn to the fine League tradition of Making Trouble.

The Church of the Little Mother is famed for drawing its members from the orphans of war who might otherwise be reduced to begging on the streets. The Church will take in children whose parents have been killed on the borders or at sea, offering apprenticeship. Many influential leaders of the League began as orphans in the care of the Little Mother.

13.1 Things every child should know

- People will expect you to do jobs for them. This is good ? keeping busy is fun and lets you see lots of different things. See how you can help.
- Lots of people have money and they should give some of it to you. You are working hard and deserve to be paid!
- A good price for a little job (such as running a message or carrying heavy things, or laying a table for a feast) is one Ring ? so ask for two!
- Keep your ear out for gossip. People like to know interesting things and some pieces of information might be worth money.
- Know who's in charge ? they're normally the people with the most money.
- Be polite ? you can get a lot further with people that way; and good manners are worth their weight in gold.

14 The League music

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

14.1 The music of The League

14.1.1 Style summary

The League is a combination of different cultures and its performance traditions reflect that. High art in all its forms, theatre and songs laced with innuendo and hidden meaning, characters who delight in cunning and trickery, flamboyance, opera and baroque/classical stylings accompanied by flutes, guitars, and even brass, themes of playfulness, loyalty and ingenuity. Low culture: comedy song, street magic, and clever rhyming, often poking fun at someone or something.

For the high art of the League, look to European and Spanish-influenced classical music, particularly Italian and German including arias, lieder, and classical instrumental music from Argentina. For low art concentrate on songs with the theme of deals, cunning, trickery, flamboyance, or loyalty and instrumental music with an Italian, Spanish, or Mariachi sound.

14.1.2 Commonly known songs

Pick a few examples from the list below to specifically promote as well-known within that nation. Provide lyrics and score/chords. Preferably in a range of difficulties.

14.1.2.1 A musical tradition

Suggest how the music fits into the cultural behaviour in general (e.g. battle hakas, wassails).

14.1.2.2 One for the kids

[Tower Song](#) - a silly round demonstrating League competitiveness.

14.1.3 Further examples

14.1.3.1 Songs

- [Uncle Vyig](#) - funny song about organised crime
- [Treggajoran Wartha](#) - song about rings and trickery
- [Say Gentle Ladies](#) - medium difficulty Mozart aria. A lovely English language arrangement is available to buy [here](#)
- [Flower duet](#) (Google it)
- [Lovely Joan](#) - medium song with a moral
- [Tower Song](#) - a funny round demonstrating League competitiveness.

14.1.3.2 Instrumentation and tunes

- Recorders, flutes and whistles, classically played guitar or stringed instrument, violin, classical accordion.
- [Elizabethan recorder music](#) which played on any classical instrument would be appropriate for The League.

14.1.3.3 Other performance traditions

- Theatre and acting. There is a lot more information about this in [The League](#) brief, in particular the page on [Troupes](#).

14.1.4 How to adapt your repertoire

- For 'low culture' sing in a tongue in cheek way, have a game or a joke with your audience.
- For 'high art' sing in an operatic way, up the drama! Have a listen to some Portuguese fado songs and copy the style.
- When playing folk tunes, try to pick ones that are a bit classical or baroque sounding, a good example is [The Gale by Susan Conger](#)

14.1.5 Our sources

Italian or German opera, Argentinian tangos and other S. American accordion music (cf. The Oxford Concert Party), classical poetry, Portuguese/Brazilian fado songs, Alejandro Toledo & The Magic Tombolinos

Here is a [youtube playlist](#) of appropriate or inspiring music.

15 The League 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 Look and feel



"The people of the League are city-folk through and through" - No farming or utility costumes here, and no agricultural class. Your clothes are City clothes and not designed for harsh climates or a manual or physical lifestyles. They should be as far from 'utility' as you can get them.

"In the League wealth is status" - As the most important people in the League, your costume should reveal your wealth and thereby status.

"Everything is on show" - Your costume should and will say something about you.

"Even the poorest of the League feel free to remark upon the fashions and actions of those around them" - In this nation your costume is more important than in any other. Expect to be judged in character so aim to keep upping your game and raising the standards around you.

"Masks represent anonymity, and are extensively used in magic" - Those playing mages should invest in one or several good masks and aim to adorn and personalize them

"In the south, doublets of richly patterned silks are cut to flatter. Sleeves are full, and the effect is somewhat top-heavy, with trousers fitted to a slender leg" - use bright jewel colors and lighter fabrics for the more southern cities. Hose are the historical option for trousers and easily sourced from reenactment sites. Other tight trousers will be appropriate however, and if only the legs are showing (rather than the crotch) leggings might be a good option and can be found in many colors at the moment. A beautiful doublet is easy to make - or make over an old one - as seams can be tied rather than sewn. The best investment will be a very full, light undershirt for both men and women.

"The northern cities are colder in climate, and clothing reflects that" - They are still city dwellers however and will not let inclement weather get in the way of good fashion. The northern cities will merely add more layers: a longer outer gown or a sleeveless surcoat or both. Fur is seen and heavier fabrics such as thick brocade and velvet. These may be darker in color but still sumptuous. In the north leather might be used in a very tailored way for garments. To the southern cities this might seem very drab indeed.

"Ladies who do not favour doublet-and-breeches wear elaborate high-waisted gowns" - These are typically the Italian style with a very small bodice and low neckline necessitating a segment of (often contrasting) fabric at the front and an underdress/chemise to cover the chest. The gowns may be sleeveless, have slashed sleeves or the segmented sleeves over the very full chemise/undershirt. In the northern towns the burgundian gown might still be worn with its attached sleeves.

"They'll never, ever shy from a fight" - Though the women of the League may like to display their wealth and taste with elaborate dresses they won't let a skirt stop them from proving their skill with a sword and outsiders should be wary of underestimating a Catazarri beauty.

15.2 Regional variations

15.2.1 The Bay of Catazarria

These stills are all taken from Neil Jordan's "The Borgias" - the setting and period are perfect for the southern cities of Sarvos and Tassato. The feel here is firmly Southern Europe. Colours are brighter and fabrics typically lighter. Natural colours are considered drab and utility materials such as wool and leather are very dull indeed.



15.2.2 Holberg

Costume in [Holberg](#) is less colourful than the southern cities. Materials are thicker and heavier.







15.2.3 Temeschwar

Temeschwar is further north still and the costume reflects that with the use of fur not just as trimming but as an integral part of the costume, and strong Varushkan influence.



15.3 Similar nations

Although doublets and long gowns will be worn in both the League and Dawn, follow these tips to keep them distinct:

1. Embellishment: The Dawnish like rich but clean lines and un-fussy tailoring. The League should be the opposite. Go to town on ribbons, flounces, slashes and puffed sleeves. Costume should be extravagant and flamboyant.
2. Waistlines: Fashionable waistlines for women's dresses are high. Full skirts should fall from the underbust. Dawn's low slung hip belts are thought to be a little provincial. Although high waisted houppelandes existed during this period I would advise avoiding them as they feature strongly in Dawn.
3. Slashes: A key look is to have bits of your undershirt displayed through the gaps in your gown or doublet. The easiest way to achieve this is by having sleeves that are tied on rather than attached. It would be quite easy to do this yourself if you have a doublet with integral sleeves. Replace the seams with ties and pull puffs of your undershirt through. (there will be more on constructing costumes later)

As Temeschwar was historically Varushkan, here there may be some influences from Varushka, perhaps displayed in the traditional style of hat or the cut of a coat. Fur is also common here. However, rich brocades and silks are rarely seen in Varushka.

15.4 Research

The League draws its influence from the latest and narrowest historical period of all the Nations. The key looks will be found in the late 1400s (1460-1500) and generally more central and southern Europe (Look at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1400%E2%80%931500_in_fashion). It is at the height of the medieval renaissance shortly before our Tudor period.



15.4.1 The Borgias

Most of the pictures in the look and feel section are taken from this series which really typifies the look. The costumes in the film are exceptionally high standard. Information on how to get the same look for far less cost are in following sections. Lots of detailed pictures of the costumes can be found here <http://theborgias.wetpaint.com/page/COSTUMES>



15.4.2 Zeffarelli's Romeo and Juliet 1968

The doublets and gowns in this production are beautiful. Inspiration for Bravos can be taken from the squabbling Capulets and Montagues.





15.4.3 Romeo and Juliet (unreleased)

Currently post production. So far the costumes seem to be suitable for this Nation.



15.4.4 Ever After (1998)

This film beautifully pulls historical and fantasy elements together to produce the excellent costumes. For instance, the prince's doublet in this first picture is not based on a historical pattern but nevertheless captures the feel of the League. Drew Barymore's Ball dress is lovely masquerade inspiration. Baroness Robmilla's green and gold dress would perhaps be perfect for Holberg as it uses heavier velvet and has darker colours. Its attached sleeves also suggest Holberg and the 'V' collar is similar to that of the burgundian gown.





15.5 In detail

For fabrics go all out for the richest and plushest ones. Try silks, cottons, brocade and velvets. Good imitations are available for lower cost online. The only fabrics I would suggest staying away from are shiny satin and stretch velour. Often fabrics can be picked up from charity shops. A great place to get vibrant and detailed fabrics at a reasonable price are saree shops.

Undershirts are best made of a thin and light material, highly gathered to give it the ability to be pulled through clothing in many places. A very light muslin might be a historical choice but actually a polyester, plain window 'net' can give a better effect.

Use rich embroidered or gold trims. Think about using ribbon for the ties on both men's and women's clothing.

Where possible use lacing (again consider ribbon for both men and women in Catazarria) and make sure the undershirt shows though at every seam and closure.

15.6 Specifics

15.6.1 The basic garments by layer



The single most important item of costume for the League will be a billowing undershirt - the more volume the better. If you cant make or source a round or square necked one as here, a standard larp shirt/chemise may do - try buying it oversized. Steer clear of shirts with a turned over collar. Women may wish to wear a long underdress/chemise or a shorter shirt tucked into trousers/hose.

Tight trousers are the ideal legwear. Hose should be the joined type. If you wear a more modern trouser style try hiding the fly and any belt loops with a wider belt or sash. If the top of your trousers is hidden by other layers and the bottom by boots, thick, plain leggings are a cheap and easy option for legwear. (Patterns and tutorials to follow)



The bodice or doublet should be tight fitting. The neckline can be any shape but avoid high collars on this layer - Ideally have it low to show the undershirt. It should ideally sit at the natural waist, at the top of the hose/trousers or shortly below. The sleeves should tie on rather than be stitched in. If you already have, or buy, a doublet or dress with attached arms you can unpick the arm hole seam and stitch on cord or ribbon ties to instantly transform it into a League costume. If making your own costume sleeves can be elaborately slashed or segmented to show the undershirt/chemise in as many places as possible. This is easy to do as rectangles can be sewn into tubes with a gap at the elbow.

(Patterns and tutorials to follow)

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The two outer garments shown could be worn by both genders. They both fall from the shoulders loosely and can be made from the same simple pattern. The overgown (Simar worn by the male figure) has loose sleeves and is typically tied closed with a sash. The surcoat worn by the woman is very simple but could have false sleeves or box pleats across the back if you are a more confident costumer. Cloaks are also suitable in most forms too.

(Patterns and tutorials to follow)



Armour for the League is discussed more fully in the armour section, however, for women the overgown could be open centre front and tucked back to allow free movement when fighting.

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15.7 Jewellery

Rings are very important in the League, representing loyalty and allegiances, and should probably be the first item of jewellery that a player invests in. A wealthy or influential man might wear a large heavy chain loosely around his neck.



For women the best way to adorn an outfit might be elaborate hair decoration. Otherwise gold and silver necklaces and bracelets with large stones will work in this nation. Fine chains are unlikely to be opulent enough.



15.8 Armour

Bravos are typically lightly armoured with perhaps a more substantive shoulder piece.



A starting Free Company may equip its soldiers with a quilted jack. Wealthier companies may have matching arming doublets, armour and helmets. A breastplate and helm are the basic armour but a full harness is rare. For the very wealthy their breastplate might be very ornately detailed. Scale and chain are unlikely to be seen here.





15.9 Resources

15.9.1 Patterns

How to make your own hose instructions http://historiclifecom/Essays/howto_hose.html

15thC doublet and hose. Ideally need to be unattached at shoulder <http://www.paulmeekins.co.uk/patterns/patternpages/RH003.html>

Early 16thC pattern but still ok as long as you keep the trousers tight, boys! <http://www.paulmeekins.co.uk/patterns/patternpages/RH502.html>

Pre-Tudor doublet and hose <http://www.paulmeekins.co.uk/patterns/patternpages/RH610.html>

Very simple women's overgown. You probably won't need to buy the pattern if you have any sewing experience. <http://www.paulmeekins.co.uk/patterns/patternpages/RH510.html>

The baggy sleeves on the gown are not necessarily perfect (try getting the segmented look by adding tight bands of fabric around the upper and lower arm to pull them in) but the bodice shape and skirts are great <http://www.paulmeekins.co.uk/patterns/patternpages/RH511.html>

Mens slashed sleeved doublet and hose. This simplicity Pattern is a little late in style but would still look right for the League. To improve it you could crop the doublet short so there was no flared portion over the hips. <http://www.simplicity.com/p-7206-burda-style-middle-age-guard.aspx>

Womens Gown. A little late in period but a lovely design. It could be improved by having the sleeves constructed separately and tied on and by raising the waistline a little. http://www.habithat.co.uk/product_info.php/products_id/12230

Once again a little late in style but has the right feel. Could be worn with a sleeveless underdress and with a chemise for a better look. The short version would be great for fighting style with trousers and undershirt/chemise. <http://www.simplicity.com/p-7937-misses-costume.aspx>

Chemise pattern <http://www.simplicity.com/p-1722-misses-costumes.aspx#t-0>

15.9.2 Reading

Have a look at the art of Albrecht Durer (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer), Leonardo Da Vinci (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_works_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci) and Sandro Botticelli (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botticelli>)

Useful, brief historical info, particularly the southern European Styles: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1400%E2%80%931500_in_fashion

This is quite interesting. Explains the fashion for showing your chemise/shirt: <http://www.homemade-costumes-from-history.com/showing-your-chemise.html>

<http://www.florentine-persona.com/femflorence.html> women's clothing in 15th c Florence

<http://realmofvenus.renaissanceitaly.net/>

<http://jessamynscloset.com/> image gallery includes 15thC

Detailed pictures of the Borgias costumes <http://theborgias.wetpaint.com/page/COSTUMES>

15.9.3 Shops

- [By the Sword inc](#) Armour and clothing (including reproductions of costumes from the Borgias TV series)
- <http://www.theknightshop.co.uk> Several different chemise shirt underdress styles
- [Armstreet](#) Chemises and undershirts. Not really any suitable doublets. One dress (renaissance nobility velvet dress) that although a little late in style would look in keeping
- [The Midgard Seamstress](#) Custom made UK LARP and Re-enactment costumes
- [Totally Leathered](#) provides custom tooled leatherwork & bespoke armour.
- [Idiom Productions](#) Costume and Props Workshop creates custom hand-tooled leather armour, clothing and LRP weapons

15.10 Things to avoid

The 16th Century This may be tricky. Unlike the other nations with strong historical influences, here there is a definite cut off. Although there will be some overlap into the 1500s it is important to keep the feel as late 15thC as possible. Here are some tips:

- 1) Avoid breeches if possible. Although they are "not wrong" they become the mainstay of legwear in the Tudor period. Several of the images in the guide have breeches in them but that is due to a lack of perfect images. If you wear breeches keep them tight to the leg. Do not wear stiff padded ones.
- 2) Avoid padded clothes of any kind. In general these are too late period.
- 3) Don't use straight or conical corsets or bodices - these will give a stiff silhouette and the wrong shape. In general, overbust corsets of any kind are wrong for the look. Underbust corsets could be used under clothes for a little extra control.
- 4) Keep waistlines high. For doublets should stop at the natural waist. For dresses the waistline is underbust.
- 5) The style is soft and almost a little lazy looking. Everything is loosely tied and shirts/underdresses should seem to fall out of the connecting parts. Overgowns and surcoats fall softly from the shoulders. Shirts and dresses are very full with metres of fabric yet men's doublets and women's bodices

look like there isnt quite enough fabric.

Dandies The League is a Nation of self-made men and women. There are no gilded spoons and no lazy person will achieve wealth. Although appearance is of critical importance it is not a substitute for ability and action. The typical makeup and dress of the European Dandy comes from the 18th century so is far too late in style.

Wench costumes