

Nations of Théah: Book Four

Eisen

by Kevin Wilson



7th Sea



1668

Roleplaying Game

T.NIELSEN

Eisen

The Death-Soaked Fields



“The world is too ugly to be an accident.”

–Nicklaus Trägue







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This book is dedicated to my Grandmother, Oillie Wilson. She made sure that I have a healthy dose of Eisen blood in my veins.

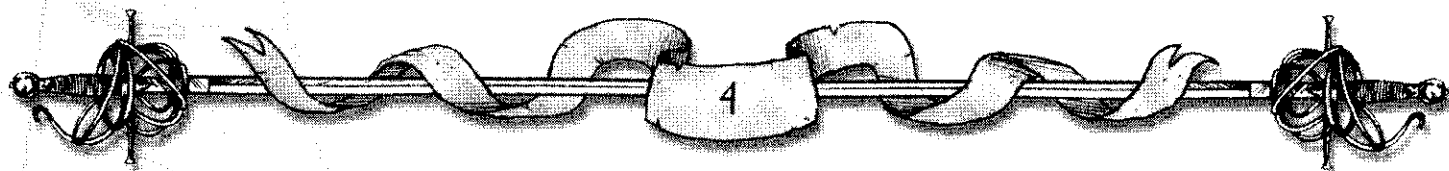




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...Ye Mighty, and
Despair, Part One

The world was resting that night, as gentle rain soothed its scars and eased its wounds. After thirty years of war, the tired earth had earned a moment of quiet.

Then the woods tensed. Birds awoke to chirp nervously as a rider galloped past. A mother songbird abandoned her nest and young as the rider passed under the tree. Twittering in panic, she flew into the night, never to return.

The rider's path ended in front of an impressive palace built deep in the woods. Dismounting before the gates, he waved a hand. Instantly, the gates opened and everyone in the palace fell asleep where they stood – save two.



Joseph, the Emperor's butler, rose at the sound of dishes shattering. Throwing on his robe and slippers, he lit a candle and moved to investigate. As he padded across the floor, a deep rumbling rose from around the corner. Grabbing an ornamental sword from a nearby suit of armor, he rounded the turn with a shout.

Mrs. Albrecht, the palace cook, stood snoring in the hallway. At her feet lay a broken plate, with sausages and sauerkraut scattered nearby. He shook her roughly, but she remained asleep. Genuinely concerned now, he made his way to the Emperor's chambers, only to find the door locked. He could hear shouting from inside; the Emperor's voice was indistinct, but he could make out a few words.

"Don't be absurd! What you're saying is impossible!"

A stranger's voice murmured briefly.

"GET OUT!! Get out of my sight, you demon!"

The door burst open, and a hooded figure strode calmly out of the room. Joseph could not see its face, nor did he want to. Something about its shrouded form caused him to shrink in fear as it walked down the hallway out of sight.

Nervously, he stuck his head into the Emperor's room and ventured a question. "Your Eminence, are you all right?"

Riefenstahl was at his desk, his head in his hands. "Get out, Joseph," he said quietly.

Gingerly, the butler closed the door. Pulling his robe tightly, he lay down in front of the door and went to sleep.



He awoke slowly as one of the palace guards shook him lightly. "Master Volker, are you all right?"

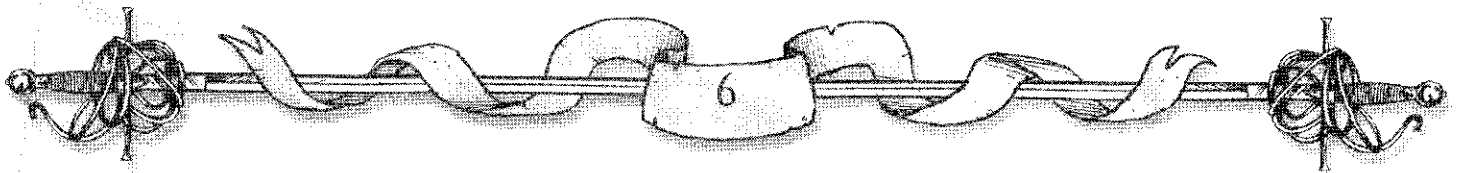
Joseph clutched his aching head. "I'm not sure. I feel like I'm shaking off a dream." He pursed his lips. "I need to check on the Emperor." So saying, he tried the chamber door. It was locked again. "Open this, please, Mr. Braun."

Fumbling under his shirt, the guard withdrew a large brass key and turned it in the lock. Opening the door, he peered inside. His face went pale. "Master Volker, look!"

The Emperor hung above the desk. Tied around his neck was one of the decorative tassels from the drapes. Judging from the state of the corpse, he had hanged himself hours ago. Pinned to his clothing was a letter.

Strangely calm, Joseph picked up the letter and read it, ignoring the swinging cadaver that had been his employer. When he finished, he sat down heavily. The guard was at his side in an instant. "Master Volker?"

He didn't look up. "It's all right, Mr. Braun. I've just become one of the nine richest people in the world."





Introduction



Introduction

*“How much does one man’s suffering weigh?”
—Traditional Eisen Riddle*

War is both the most compelling and the most tragic aspect of human existence, but too often, we only see romanticized images of it. Chess is an excellent example. It is a tool of war, but the emotional elements have been stripped away, leaving only an intellectual exercise. When you play chess, you don’t worry about whether a pawn’s family is going to starve, you just know that you have to take the queen or you’re going to lose the game.

This book is about the pawn’s family.

An enormous amount of suffering has poured through Eisen in recent years, leaving shattered families, orphaned children, and lingering disease in its wake. The survivors of the War of the Cross are still searching for each other and mourning their dead. Losses such as these leave scars that will never heal. A woman may never find her husband after the war, but she will never give up hope that he has survived either. This is Eisen’s sorrow.

An entire generation has grown up never knowing peace. They must learn to adapt to a world in which weapons are not the first and last answer to any argument. Until they do, Eisen will be caught in an endless cycle of war and destruction as father teaches son to hate and kill. This is Eisen’s regret.

Perhaps worst of all, the creatures that were once used to frighten children are creeping back out of the shadows to haunt the war-torn ruins. There are things in the dark forests and glens that are more evil than the most depraved man. While monsters do not live in bright towns, entire villages now lie fallow and uninhabited. Wise peasants know better than to enter these places. Travelers most often stumble upon them, little realizing the horrors that a rotting farmhouse can contain. This is Eisen’s fear.

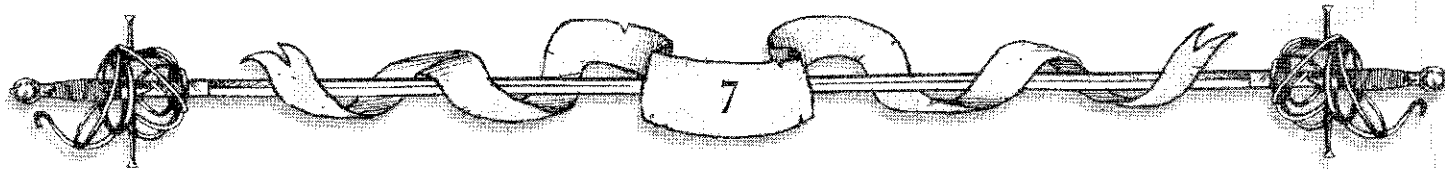
Despite all this, the people are resilient and coping with their losses as best they can. Most are attempting to reconcile their religious beliefs with the horrors they’ve seen. Many priests are faced with the problem of preaching for a church they no longer trust. In the midst of this confusion and grief, there are still heroes — men and women who have dedicated their lives to creating a lasting peace in Eisen, or pushing the foul things that have descended on the countryside back into the darkness. Some of these heroes only share their bread with starving refugees, but small kindnesses can make an innkeeper or cook into a greater hero than the mightiest dragonslayer. This is Eisen’s hope.

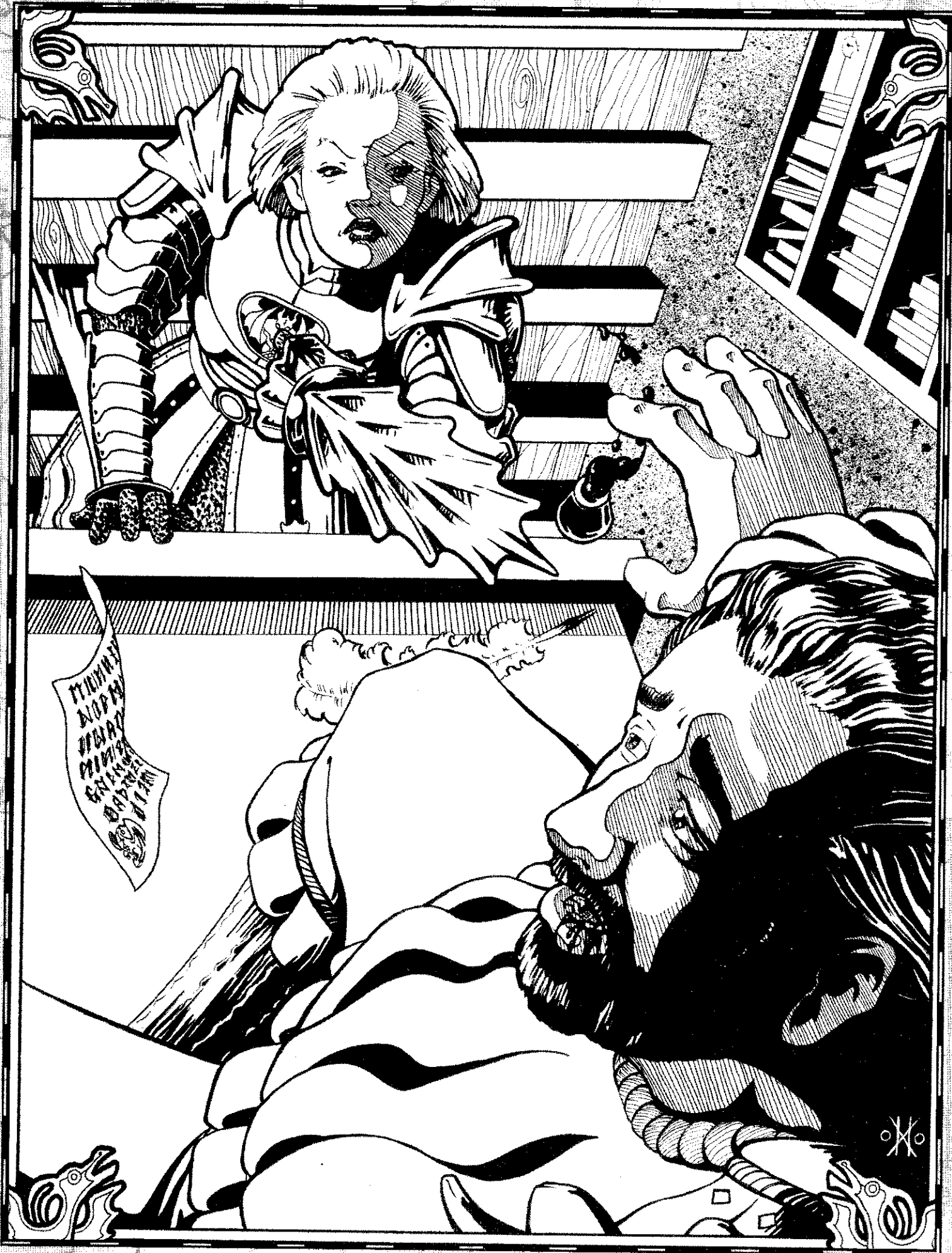
This book is organized into four chapters. We’ll start with **Eisen** and look at the places that make up the different kingdoms. In **Hero**, we’ll examine some of the nation’s most influential people. **Drama** gives you new mechanics and additional rules for making Eisen Heroes. **Courage** discusses the finer points of roleplaying the Eisen. There is also a section for GMs only, which contains secrets that players will not want to read. It also gives you some useful materials, such as several maps of Stahlfort, and some pre-generated Hero templates.

Eisen has a chance for a new beginning. The wars of the past can be forgotten and repeated forever, or they can be learned from. The people can drive away the horrors at their doors, but by so doing, will they become a force of destruction worse than any beast? This is Eisen’s story.

“As much as he allows it to weigh.”

—Answer to Traditional Eisen Riddle







Eisen

...Ye Mighty, and Despair, Part Two

"Lord Eckert, her Highness is ready to see you now." A page bowed before the larger man.

Smoothing his impressive black moustache, he stood, and with a flip, tossed his wolfskin cloak back to display his family sword. "She certainly took long enough," he snarled, then strode into her chamber.

A tall stately woman stood behind a desk. She glared at him as he plopped his impressive bulk into a chair. "Make your report, Eckert."

He frowned. "Lord Eckert if you please, your Highness."

"Get on with it, man."

He coughed, cleared his throat, and began to speak. "The crops this year were somewhat disappointing. The growing season didn't last as long as expected. I may have to ask you for a tax reduction, just for this year of course. Other than that, everything has gone smoothly. The peasants are content, the local bandits have been taken care of, and we have had no difficulties with the wildlife this year."

She smiled at him, walking around the side of her desk and picking up a sheaf of papers. "Good work, Eckert. I only have a few small concerns I'd like to share with you."

He nodded graciously. "Of course, Eisenfürst Pösen."

She began to pace the room as she read. "Your Highness, forgive me for not following the proper channels, but

something must be done. The crop this year was going splendidly, but then bandits descended from the mountains, stealing much of it, burning four buildings, and killing three villagers. Lord Eckert and his guards were away on a hunting expedition and unavailable to intercede."

Pausing, the Eisenfürst locked the door. Lord Eckert, who had grown increasingly pale, sputtered out his indignation. "Really! I won't endure—"

"Be silent. I'm not finished. 'Later that same month, the same group of bandits again raided the village, this time burning six homes and killing eight people. Again, Lord Eckert was absent. Please, Highness, something must be done. Signed, Father Stans Grumel, Hilstadt.'" Dropping the papers, Fauner Pösen reached into the pouch at her side and put on her panzerhand. "I know Father Grumel, and he would never lie to me. I *despise* liars, Eckert."

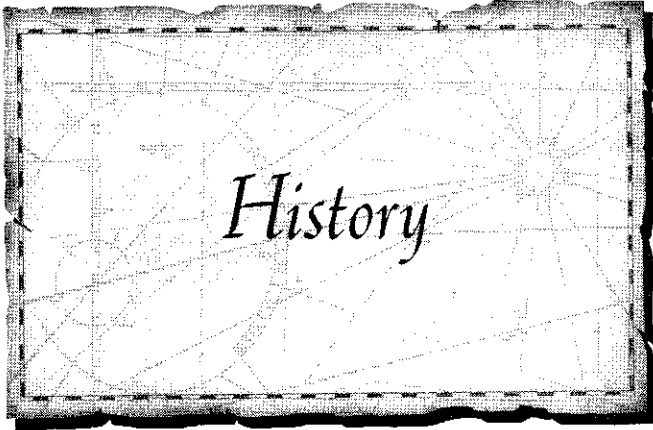
Lunging to his feet, Lord Eckert drew his sword. The dracheneisen blade gleamed a faint blue in the light. "I'll not allow you to slander me like that, woman!"

Her hand lashed out and plucked the blade from his hand before he could react. She stepped back and broke the weapon between her hands, strain evident in her shoulders.

His eyes widened. "M-my family's sword! By Theus, I'll kill you for that!" He charged across the room, growling like an avalanche of flesh. At the last moment, her foot shot out and hit his knee with a crunch. He fell forward, howling, and she caught him a blow to the cheek with her panzerhand, snapping his head back and shattering his jaw. Lightly, she stepped aside and watched him bounce slightly as he hit the ground. She turned and unlocked the door.

"Guards, remove this filth and tie him to his horse, then send him on his way. Also, I want to send a reply to this letter. Tell Father Grumel that he is the new Lord of Hilstadt. He can request anything he needs from me."

As the guards muscled the ex-lord's unconscious body out of her room, she picked up the broken sword, looked at it, and tossed it to a guard. "What a waste. Here, put this with the others."



Eisen has been a source of turmoil and fear since the days of the Old Republic. Its recent collapse was a welcome relief for many Théans. Others fear that the destabilization of Eisen heralds even more terrible things for Théah's future.

Ancient History

The Drachen

Before the Imperators, before the Iron Princes, before even the rise of humanity, Eisen was the home of the Drachen. These huge reptilian beasts founded an immense civilization. They carved communities out of huge caves in the Drachenbergs, and spread across the western plains to dominate all of Eisen. For all of their towering size and monstrous strength, they were quite intelligent; they communicated through an elaborate language of pictographs, and mastered sorcerous powers of staggering complexity. For thousands of years, they ruled the land unopposed.

No one knows what happened to the Drachen, or what befell their civilization. Some believe that they were wiped out by another Surneth race. Others maintain that their species degenerated over time, losing their intelligence and size until they were little more than savage beasts. They point to the contemporary drachen as evidence of this — creatures who lack any apparent sentience, and though still

immense, are nowhere near the size of their predecessors. Whatever the reason, the Drachen slowly faded, leaving a handful of ruins and strange artifacts buried in their mountain homes.

The Rise of Humanity and the Old Republic

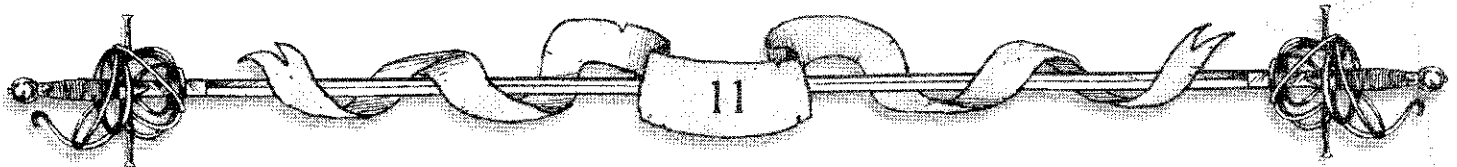
Eisen's people began as a group of barbaric tribes, fighting amongst themselves for land, food, and the scattered Drachen ruins. When not battling each other, they traded intermittently and eventually established the rudiments of a culture. Still, it took an outside force — the Old Republic — to focus their energies away from constant squabbling.

The Republic rose from the south, conquering much of the Vodacce peninsula and expanding north across the Great River. From 236–255 AUC, Numan legions launched numerous campaigns against the Eisen tribes known as the Brutomanni, the Alii, the Exomanni, and the Quidii. The barbarians responded with fierce determination, setting aside their differences to drive the invaders back. The legions were expelled from the northern land in 255, and the Republic constructed a wall along the southern bank of the River to keep the barbarians at bay. The tribes earned their reputation as powerful warriors during this period, a reputation which continues to the present day.

The Old Republic's Bane

The Republic continued its efforts to conquer the area for another three centuries, establishing colonies across the River and trying to "civilize" the savage natives with mixed success. Each effort was met with increased resistance. Their hordes grew larger, as the Brutomanni, Exomanni, and Quidii banded together to fight the invaders. From 502–508 AUC, a series of huge raids against the Republic colonies resulted in their gradual collapse. The last Republic colony was butchered to a man in 508, and the Numans retreated back over the River for good.

But the allied tribes did not stop there. For the next six hundred years, they were a constant thorn in the Republic's side, sweeping down into Vodacce to rampage and pillage wherever they went. The threat necessitated a constant military presence in northern Vodacce, which put strains on



the economy and increased tension throughout the Republic (by now an Empire). As time went on, the Empire continue to splinter, driven apart by political infighting, the rise of the Vaticines, and increasingly fierce raids. The Brutomanni struck the final blow in 297 A.V.: they sacked Numa, the capital of the Old Republic and the center of civilization. The remainder of the Empire collapsed and Théah's Dark Ages began.

Imperator Carleman

Eisen continued as a series of fragmented tribes for many years. The Dark Ages took their toll upon the land as fearsome monsters emerged from the forests and mountains. Vesten raiders preyed upon the northern coastline, while the Vaticine church slowly converted the heathen lands. Eisen's people dealt with these challenges as

they always had — with courage, defiance and stubborn determination.

The rise of Carleman in the seventh century gave the area its first taste of national unity. Carleman's empire stretched across most of northern Théah. He brought the squabbling tribes under his rule, established a functioning system of government, and struggled to bring enlightenment to the people beneath him. As he grew older, he decided to pass his kingdom on to his three sons, rather than let all that he had built fall apart again. However, Carleman had learned from the earlier example of Imperator Corantine (who had also split an empire among three children), and carefully tutored his sons in statecraft. The result was a somewhat more stable split after his death — and the beginning of Théah's modern nations.



The central part of his empire — the area that would become Eisen — belonged to his eldest son, Stefan. Unfortunately, Stefan did not get along well with his youngest brother, Iago, who had the eastern portion of Carleman's empire. The two bickered over border disputes while their middle brother, Charles, grew sick and died, leaving the western portion of the empire in the hands of his wife, Isabeau Montanus. The two brothers challenged her claim, but were unwilling to go to war when the Montanus family refused to back down.

The Discovery of Dracheneisen

In 686, two cartographers working for Stefan discovered the first dracheneisen mines and found ways to work the marvelous metal. In gratitude, he made them barons and gave them the lands that would eventually become Pösen and Heilgrund. It became a tradition that anyone who discovered a dracheneisen mine was rewarded with land and title. Stefan's stubborn refusal to allow either Iago (and his Fate Witch wife) or the Montanus family access to the dracheneisen was the source of bad blood between the kingdoms for centuries to come. However, Stefan rightly felt that allowing either group use of the dracheneisen would result in the loss of his entire empire. Instead, he armed and armored his own men with the metal, ensuring his military superiority for the foreseeable future.

The Founding of Eisen

In 691, Stefan realized that the three kingdoms of Carleman's empire had drifted so far apart that they could no longer remotely claim kinship. So, following the example of the Montanus family (who had renamed their kingdom "Montaigne" upon Charles' death), Stefan named his fledgling country "Eisen." The word meant simply "Iron" in the local language, and symbolized both the primary industry of the kingdom and the character of her people, at least as Stefan saw them. Long after his death, the kingdom remembered him as a wise and canny ruler, and the name "Stefan" is still in common usage in Eisen today.

Medieval History

Ironically, after causing the downfall of the Church's first home (the Old Republic), the Eisen went on to carve out a new empire for the Church. Thanks to Carleman, the Vaticine faith had become widespread, and Eisen wielded its newfound military prowess in numerous wars of conquest on behalf of the Church. The nation expanded beyond its initial borders; Montaigne lost several large pieces of land to invading troops, while Ussura's strange weather repulsed no fewer than four invasions. Vodacce found its mainland almost entirely subjugated, which led to the creation of the Holy Republic. Only Avalon, Castille, and Vestenmannavnjar were far enough from Eisen to be spared.

The Holy Republic

One of Stefan's descendants, Gottschalk I, conquered much of Vodacce in 782 using troops armed with dracheneisen weapons and armor. He set aside land surrounding the Old Republic capital, Numa, for the Hierophant of the Church of the Prophets to rule as his own. In return, the Hierophant crowned Gottschalk the first Emperor of Eisen. This set the tone for a close relationship between the Emperor and the Hierophant that continued for many years.

Power constantly shifted back and forth between the two. Sometimes the Hierophant was nothing more than the mouthpiece of the Emperor, and sometimes the Emperor was a puppet of the Church. Eisen and the Church were so closely associated with one another that people began calling Eisen "the Holy Republic", though the name was never officially recognized.

This state of flux continued until the Third Prophet appeared in Castille, and the Hierophant War broke out. Tired of constant arguments with the Vodacce Hierophant, Emperor Friedrich II threw his lot in with the newer Castillian Church and helped them conquer the Vodacce. In return, Friedrich asked the new Hierophant not to interfere in the governing of Eisen, a pledge they kept for almost six centuries.

The Objectionist Movement

Eisen continued to expand its borders and developed an unsurpassed military reputation. By the 15th century, many considered Eisen second only to Montaigne in power and political influence. Then in 1517, the first cracks appeared. A monk named Matthias Lieber nailed a series of questions to his superior's door in southern Heilgrund. The screed indirectly accused the Church of violating its own tenets by withholding information on sorcery from its members and accumulating political power. This began a chain of events that led to the formation of the Objectionists.

Lieber was summoned to Vaticine City to explain his accusations before the Hierophant. In the conversation which followed, he accused the Church of abandoning its flock to chase after temporal power and demanded an explanation for their "inexcusable crimes." The enraged Hierophant had Lieber arrested on the spot; he was to be executed for heresy the very next day. (See the Objectionism section of the *Players' Guide* and pages 50–52 of this book for more on Lieber's accusations.)

Luckily, Eisen's Emperor, Franz II, had no intention of abandoning Lieber to the flames. Though a devout Vaticine, he saw wisdom in the monk's words and resolved to rescue him. He dispatched an elite band of knights to guard Lieber from a distance. When the Hierophant arrested him, they staged a daring raid, breaking him out of prison and smuggling him across the border back to Eisen.

Under the Emperor's protection, Lieber continued to advocate reform, beginning the Objectionist movement. His writings were published in a text called *Lieber's Book*, and quickly spread throughout Eisen. It was one of the first widely published books to be produced on the printing press, which had been invented there some eighty years earlier. The Hierophant, already outraged at Lieber's escape, demanded the monk's head. Franz demurred. The Hierophant threatened to excommunicate the entire country. Franz intimated that perhaps a new Hierophant would see things differently. Finally, the Hierophant turned to the King of Castille, threatening war if Eisen did not accept his demands. Franz invited Castille to take his

country if they could. The Castillian King, unwilling to launch a war against the greatest military power in Théah, declined.

Meanwhile, Objectionism spread like a wildfire across Eisen. Within the decade, it was practiced by nearly a third of the populace and had soon moved beyond its borders to the rest of Théah. Franz reacted to the developments with quiet alarm: he had wanted reform for the Church, not an entirely *new* faith. But with Lieber's teachings spreading quickly and the Castillians watching for signs of weakness, he kept his misgivings to himself. While he never accepted Objectionism, he refused to openly persecute its practitioners. Still, tensions between the two faiths remained high, fed by the Hierophant and his followers. It remained that way for the next hundred years.

Recent Events

The War of the Cross

The Eisen Objectionists were forced to practice their religion quietly for fear of reprisals until Weiss III (later known as Weiss the Great) came to power in 1587. He forbade the persecution of the Objectionists and ruled his people peacefully until his death in 1636. Weiss left the empire to his cousin, Reifenstahl. Unfortunately, Reifenstahl was a strict Vaticine, and the Objectionists in the south knew that they couldn't expect the same freedom they'd had under Weiss. They immediately revolted, throwing their Emperor-appointed governors out a window. Miraculously, the men landed in a snow bank and survived the three story plunge. This event started the War of the Cross, which divided Eisen for the next thirty years.

Reifenstahl sent his best general, the elderly but talented Helmut Stauss, to put down the rebellion. With the aid of some Castillian troops, the rebellion was crushed and its ringleaders scattered within ten days. Stauss stayed in the south to besiege the capital of Sieger, which he knew to be harboring Objectionist leaders. It looked as though there was going to be a united Vaticine Eisen for the first time in many years.



Stefano Wulf and the Death of Stauss

Before Stauss could finish off the rebels, however, a Vendel merchant leader named Stefano Wulf received an anonymous letter, appealing to him for aid in freeing the Eisen Objectionists from its Vaticine Emperor. Wulf was a devout Objectionist, and a great military mind as well; he gathered an army and swept down into Eisen from the northwest. Stauss pulled his army north to face the new threat, but died mysteriously before he could engage them. He had stopped briefly at his country estate, which lay along the route to Wulf's army. That night, assassins broke into his home and stabbed him to death. He was found the next morning in a pool of his own blood, leaving his army in the command of the incompetent General Dehmer. A lengthy game of cat and mouse ensued, as Wulf rampaged across Eisen pursued by the foolish and easily outwitted Dehmer.

Meanwhile, the conflict continued on hundreds of other, smaller fronts. Neighbor fought neighbor, village turned against village. Roving bands of warlords, claiming to represent one side or the other, pillaged the fertile land. Faithful foreigners on both sides swelled the ranks, coming for fight and die for their beliefs. As Dehmer and Wulf clashed again and again, the remainder of the country tore itself to pieces. The front lines shifted daily, and battles were so numerous that people soon lost count. All they could remember was the violence.

The War Grinds to an End

Finally, after decades of bloody conflict, Reifenstahl could stand Dehmer's failures no longer. He replaced him with a much wiler general named Gietl. In the meantime, the southern barons had been persuaded by the Objectionists to secede from the empire, and Gietl found that he had to fight on two fronts. He responded by throwing everything he had against both sides, launching a savage battle of attrition. The bloodshed went on for weeks, and ended only by a strange fluke: Stefano Wulf was killed by a young Vaticine bauer. Wulf had demanded the man give up his livestock to feed the Objectionist army. Realizing that he was going to die whether or not he gave up the livestock, the bauer pulled Stefano from his horse and thrust his knife

into the general's throat. Without leadership, the northern front fell to Gietl's pressure. The southern rebels, now without allies, dug themselves in and waited.

The Treaty of Weissberg

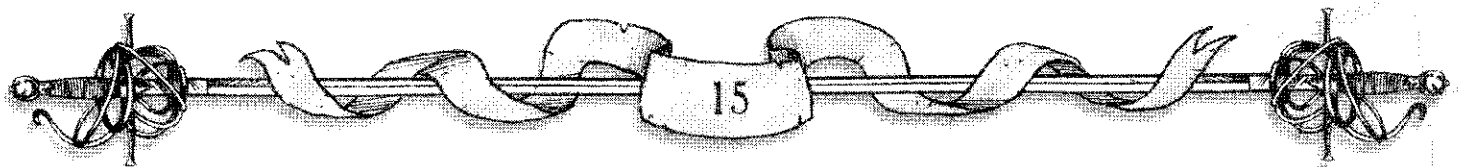
As Gietl turned south to end the war once and for all, a new threat arose. Seeing their neighbor weakened by the war,

Monsters in Eisen

Eisen's monsters have long been associated with the dark, with the shadows, and with the hidden places far from the sight of man. In early days, the Eisen huddled around their hearth fires and dared not look out at the encroaching night, for fear of what may have been lurking there. The Schattenmann... The Horror of Angonehm... Fleischwulf the Woodcutter... these creatures and countless others waited in the dark to devour the unwary. While a few brave heroes ventured forth to confront the nightmares, most Eisen huddled closer to their fires and prayed for deliverance.

The unification of the country in the 7th century began to change that. Under the Emperors, civilization expanded, driving the monsters back into the wilderness. Roads connected the great cities, armies rose to defend the populace, and *dracheneisen* weapons allowed heroes to slay the horrors that threatened their homes and families. By the 11th century, Eisen's fearsome monsters had been limited to a few wilderness areas. While they still had the power to frighten, their influence was drastically reduced.

Then the War came. The Eisen turned on one another and the country descended into an orgy of death and decay. The proud civilization which had held so much power and light came crashing to the ground, leaving nothing but mud and ashes. As night fell on Eisen, the darkness began to reclaim its lost territory... reaching forth from its hidden strongholds and sending all manner of horrors back into the world. Fleischwulf, the Schattenmann and all of their hideous ilk again stalk the roads of Eisen, and the people have learned to fear the night once again.





Castille and Montaigne moved armies onto Eisen soil in a simultaneous invasion. Gietl stopped his advance to deal with the foreign armies, but his men were decimated and exhausted by the fighting. They were expecting to fight equally-weary Objectionists, not fresh, well-trained soldiers. They were quickly brushed aside, and the Montaigne and Castillians advanced to the center of the country.

Imperator Reifenstahl looked around him at the devastation the War of the Cross had caused. His people were dying of starvation and disease, and each battle destroyed land and crops that could have gone to feed them. Reifenstahl did the only thing he could – he surrendered. The Montaigne and Castillians forced him to give them each one-sixth of his nation in what has come to be known as the Treaty of Weissberg. He consolidated what little power he could, and set aside portions of Eisen where Objectionists could live in without persecution.

The Emperor's Suicide

The nation was dealt one final, fatal blow in 1667. A cloaked figure visited the Emperor one night. Shouting was heard from within his chamber, and then a great roar of anger from the Emperor. The cloaked figure left, and the Emperor's butler came in to find Reifenstahl on the floor weeping. That night, the Emperor hanged himself, leaving behind no heir to the empire.

Rise of the Iron Princes

In the ensuing chaos, the barons of Eisen made their move. They split the country into a confederacy of seven kingdoms, or *königreichen*, each ruled by one of the former barons – now the self-proclaimed *Eisenfürsten*, or "Iron Princes." Each of these seven rulers had access to a small supply of dracheneisen, which served as the basis of their power. Religious differences were set aside for the most part and none of them laid claim to the country as a whole; no one had the desire or the energy to continue fighting.

Eisen Today

The nation today bears little resemblance to the strong, proud military power of a century ago. The war has touched every corner of the kingdom. Fields have been reduced to barren mud, roads destroyed, towns and villages burnt to cinders. The people struggle to rebuild, putting aside their long decades of division in the face of such destruction, but it's a hard road to trek. Bandits and warlords roam the countryside, preying on the weak and vulnerable. Entire provinces have been lost to the war, and once-fertile fields may never be capable of producing crops again. Almost half the populace has died from violence, starvation, or disease. Many of the survivors have fled Eisen for good. While rebuilding has begun, the nation remains a complete wreck.

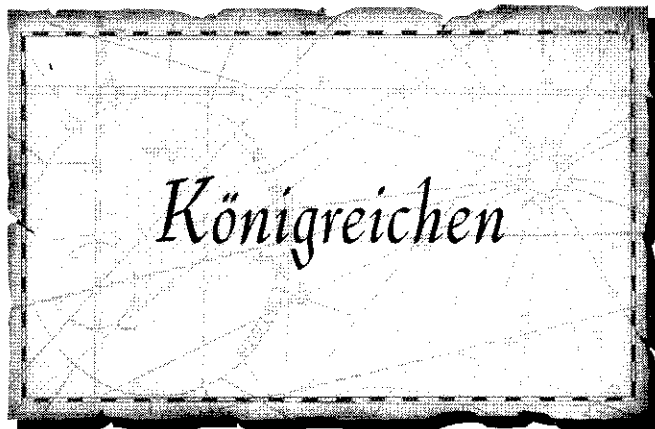
The Eisenfürsten have imposed a modicum of stability, but they bicker constantly among themselves and none of them has been able to reunite the country. Their borders have stabilized while they plot against each other, but they know that the situation cannot remain stable forever. Sooner or



later, one of them will make a move, and they want to be ready when it happens. Their political maneuvering has prevented them from focusing on rebuilding efforts, hampering the nation's recovery even further.

But beneath the mud and ashes, Eisen's heart remains intact. Her people struggle grimly against the worst crisis they have ever faced, but their spirits are strong and their will is unshakable. The Eisenfürsten remain powers to be reckoned with, for only they control the precious dracheneisen. Théah is slowly learning that this wounded giant is a long way from dead and watches with baited breath to see what will rise from the ashes.

In Eisen, there is no word for "surrender."



The kingdoms of Eisen are a motley collection of subcultures and governments. Some of them vary so wildly from one to another that they seem like entirely different nations to an outside observer. However, there are several elements that are common from one kingdom to the next.

Family Mottos

Each ruling family in Eisen has a motto that sums up its interests, philosophy, or governing style. Even Nicklaus Trägue bowed to this tradition, adopting the motto "No Questions" for his kingdom and himself.

Family Crests

The ruling families each possess a crest that represents their heritage, history, or motto. This crest is typically used as a seal when sending messages via courier. For instance, the Siegers' seal is a foot stepping on a serpent which is biting the ankle in return.

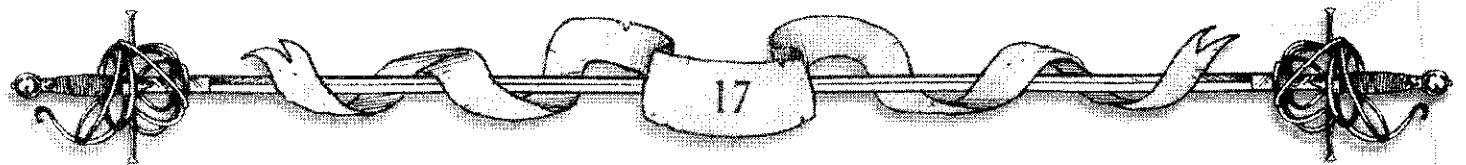
The Emperor's Armaments

Lastly, each family has received a piece of the Emperor's armaments. This tradition started back with Stefan I, who had an exquisite suit of dracheneisen armor, a shield, and a sword forged for himself. According to legend, the work took one hundred smiths an entire year to complete. Then, during the ceremony in which he invested his first two barons with their titles, he removed his breastplate and unsheathed his sword. Handing the breastplate to the new Baron Heilgrund, he said, "I do not need this any more. You will protect the heart of my nation. Remember, the center must hold, or everything else will be lost." Then, turning to the new Baron Pösen, Stefan handed him the sword. "I do not need this any more. You will be my sword when my nation is threatened."

Eventually, the Emperor distributed the entire suit to worthy subjects. Since then, many of the pieces have been lost, redistributed by other Emperors, or stolen. Certainly, someone who could bring the armaments together once more would have a strong claim to the throne of the Emperor. Of course, many pieces are still in the hands of the Eisenfürsten and other nobles; reunifying the armor is easier said than done.

The Iron Guards

Each of the Eisenfürsten has a group of guards that they use to enforce laws within their kingdom. Often, these guards have other duties as well — everything from acting as a bodyguard for their employer to sweeping the area for monsters. Naturally, there is a great deal of variation between the Iron Guards of the different kingdoms.





Laws and Justice

The laws are no longer the same throughout Eisen, and they are often enforced at the whim of the local law enforcement (typically one of the Iron Guards). Crimes committed in one *königreich* generally go unpunished if the perpetrator can flee to a different *königreich*. The Iron Princes are jealous of their neighbors, after all, and seldom cooperate. However, sometimes a criminal commits a crime so great that a member of the Order of St. Gregor (see page 35 for more information) will be hired to track him down and return him for trial. Since all the Iron Princes (except for Nicklaus Trägue) make use of the Order of St. Gregor, their authority is good anywhere in Eisen except Freiburg.

Below is a list of each of the different *königreichen*, including their cities, culture, and general state of affairs since the war. Numerous adventure hooks have been sprinkled throughout, giving enterprising Heroes a chance to right some grievous wrongs. Some are discussed further in the GM's section of Chapter 4. Others are left for individual parties to decipher and solve on their own.

Fischler

"Pride is a poor candle."

Crest: A church in a valley with a lit window.

Armament: A dracheneisen helmet in the shape of a drachen's head. Each scale is carefully depicted, and treated so that light gleams off the helmet to dazzling effect. A later Emperor had a set of Synchron stones added to the drachen's "eyes" to make them glow faintly. When Reifentahl presented the helmet to Faulk Fischler, he said, "I do not need this any more. You will be my eyes in the south. The Schwarzen Walden must be carefully watched." The helmet usually resides in Fischler's bedroom, atop the mantle, unless he is wearing it for a special occasion.

Overview: Fischler is a quiet kingdom surrounding the Südlache, where the people are mostly concerned with fishing and staying out of the Black Forest. Even the smallest village has a wall to keep out the marauding beasts, and those who live alone in this area are feared as much as the Schwarzen Walden itself. This attitude has created a reputation for cowardice among Fischler natives. However, they know that they are dealing with creatures who must not be given an opening through which to strike. What others see as cowardice, the people of Fischler see as prudence.

The People: People from Fischler have lived all their lives near the Südlache and the Schwarzen Walden. It's hard to grow up in this area without learning either how to sail a riverboat or how to pick your way through the woods. However, it's also difficult not to acquire a certain respect for the darker places of the world. *When making Fear Checks, your TN is always 5 higher than normal. The cost of all abilities that allow you to ignore Fear (even temporarily) are increased by 2 HP. In addition, roll once on the following chart:*

- 1-4 You gain the Riverboat Pilot Skill for free.
- 5-8 You gain the Hunter Skill for free.
- 9-0 You gain the Keen Senses Advantage for free.

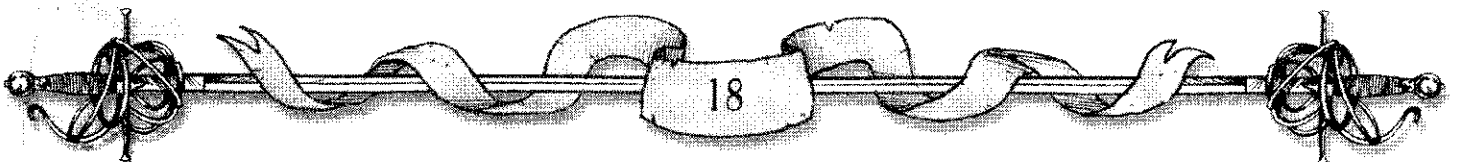
Cities

As mentioned above, even the smallest village or town in Fischler has a wall built around it. The proximity of the Black Forest makes the night very dangerous, and no one is allowed into the cities after dark. However, there are usually several small, sturdy buildings near the town gates. These are intended as shelters for those unfortunates trapped outside after the gates are closed, but often prove to be little more secure than spending the night up a tree.

Seeufer

Population: 50,000

Seeufer is a large town situated at the mouth of the Südlache. Its name means "lakeside", and most of the town's economy centers around fishing the mysterious depths of Eisen's largest lake. An enormous earth and wood



wall surrounds the town, patrolled by guards with torches each night. The wall cuts off the docks from the rest of the town, and fishermen are careful to be home and inside before the gates close; entire boats have been torn apart in the middle of the night. While attacks by nocturnal beasts are infrequent, the gruesome nature of the attacks greatly inflates the respect the townsfolk have for them.

The sole exception to this rule is an eighty-year-old man named Franz Behle. When he was a young man, he found himself trapped outside the gates after dark. He went to hide for the evening in one of the shelters near the gates, but a shaggy beast waited for him inside the door. Although he never speaks of that evening, townsfolk heard his deep voice lifted in song for several hours, and he was hoarse for two days afterward. Since that night, he has patrolled outside the walls after dusk, singing. His patrols seem to have reduced the number of attacks near Seeufer, and the grateful town ensures that he never has to worry about providing for himself: he can get some bread or stew, a bit of company, or even a place to sleep from anyone in town, simply by asking. The townsfolk know that he can't live forever, and they worry that the attacks will increase once Franz passes on.

Eisenfürst Faulk Tobias Fischler was born and raised in this town, and he has continued to live here after his sudden rise to power. He now owns a large manor located in the center of the town. The building is tall and stately, constructed entirely from Blackwood (see the *Schwartzen Walden*, below). The townsfolk mutter that it's bad luck to build with Blackwood, but Faulk is known to be a good and honest man, so they're more worried about his welfare than their own.

In spite of the dangers of the night, many of the sturdier citizens venture to the local taverns after dark to chat with their neighbors. Favorites include *The Pig and Whistle*, *The Shadow's Rest*, and *Lessing's Refuge*. Tavern-goers exchange news and gossip, and partake of an excellent local stout known as "Blökner's Comfort." Eisenfürst Fischler occasionally puts in an appearance at these drinking establishments when he's feeling lonely.

Once in a great while, a man is attacked while walking home by a small cloud of bat-like creatures, but no one has ever been killed or even seriously hurt by them. They're known as "Shepherd's Bats", since they drive their victim home in a hurry. Curiously, they only attack those who have been drinking.

Tannen

Population: 30,000

Tannen lies to the southeast of the Südlache. It houses the famous Kippe military academy, and is the last resting place of the Black Crosses, an order of crusading knights which was wiped out in 1411. Much of the town's economy centers around providing services for the wealthy students attending the academy. However, Tannen also possesses a healthy agricultural industry, and is therefore not entirely dependent upon the students.

A solid brick wall encircles the town, keeping out the dangerous creatures that roam the Eisen countryside after dark. The students patrol the streets at night as part of their training, and they all carry whistles to sound the alarm if they get in over their heads. Unlike many Eisen towns, Tannen has a busy nightlife. Taverns and houses of ill repute remain open for several hours after dark, except during new moons, when wise citizens shutter their windows and stay inside at night.

On a lonely hill overlooking the town stands an old graveyard. The graves are marked with black Prophet's crosses, and laid out in the shape of an enormous Prophet's cross. Each of the crosses is carved from Blackwood (see *Schwartzen Walden*, below). Tannen citizens often find forget-me-nots on the graves after a new moon, and shadowy figures walk through the town on those dark nights, leading many to conclude that the graveyard is haunted. Locals believe that the ghosts are seeking the Hierophant who betrayed them so many years ago. Failing that, any Vaticine will do. Because of this, many citizens profess to be Objectionist, hoping to avoid the ghosts' wrath. In spite of this rather fearsome reputation, citizens consider the graveyard a point of pride. No one has ever

been killed by the supposed ghosts, with the exception of one would-be murderer who was reportedly cut down as he threatened his victim. During the War of the Cross, Tannen was invaded only once by armed forces. The night before the attack began, it is said that the fallen knights rose from their graves and frightened off those who dared to threaten their resting place.

The Kippe academy stands on the site of what used to be the old Black Cross headquarters before it burned to the ground in 1411. It's an impressive sight, consisting of several large, elaborate buildings, a beautiful cathedral, and ten acres of carefully manicured grounds. Only students and faculty are allowed on the grounds, and they are sworn never to reveal the academy's training techniques. Graduates are changed men — quiet and often sullen even around loved ones or old friends. However, there is no denying that they are efficient and deadly killers — some of the best in Eisen. They usually receive “plum” assignments in foreign armies, but that's where their good fortune ends. There is supposedly a curse upon the academy, placed there by the dead knights so that the students will join them in death for having the temerity to build upon their old headquarters. Certainly, graduates of the Kippe academy suffer more than their share of bizarre and unexplained deaths, but that doesn't stop glory-hungry young men from attending all the same.

Other Important Sites

The two features that have shaped Fischler and its people the most are the Südlache and the Schwarzen Walden. Both are considered dangerous to the unwary, yet both are vital to the local economy. Men use both sites extensively, braving unknown dangers to procure fish, wood and other materials. Whether this is an exhibit of bravery or stubbornness remains to be seen.

Südlache

Its name means “Southern Puddle” — an enormous lake with an important place in Eisen history. It serves as a fitting companion to the Black Forest — bottomless, icy cold, and

unforgiving. The Eisen, never easily frightened off, have fished it for many years — albeit very carefully. The waters produce an abundance of carp, salmon and trout, which is enough to bring fishermen out in numbers despite the dangers. Lately, however, the boats have had to cast their nets deeper to make their catch, and it is uncertain what they might someday drag up from the depths of the Südlache.

The Eisen have learned to respect the lake over the years, never relaxing their guard towards it. For instance, it is considered dangerous to walk across the lake when it freezes over. Apparently, a fisherman walking home after doing some ice fishing vanished one night, and all they ever found was a broken hole in the ice fifteen feet in diameter, with blood and chunks of ice all around it. Only the incredibly foolish or the incredibly brave treat the warnings of the fishermen with contempt.

Schwarzen Walden

One of the single largest influences on Fischler society, the Black Forest has spread its shadow over the land for as long as anyone can remember. Its history is filled with tales of gruesome murders and monsters such as the Schattenmann, polluting the trees of the forest with their evil. Wood cut from the Black Forest is known as Blackwood and burns with dark red flames. The Eisen believe that the wood attracts monsters, so they generally avoid building with it. Worse, the monsters of the Schwarzen Walden can supposedly track a man by scent if he has any Blackwood sap on him or his clothes.

There are many creatures believed to haunt the forest. The smallest are called kobolds: vicious, leathery beasts about the size of dogs, with sharp claws and sharper teeth. There are also deadly varieties of trees and plants that can ensnare men in their grasp, and countless other horrible things that prey on the unwary.

The greatest of all the evils in the Black Forest is known as the Schattenmann: a giant, spindly creature with eyes like inky pools. It carries an enormous pair of shears, which it uses to carefully cut its victims into precise pieces, leaving



them neatly stacked by the trail like a cord of firewood. Scholars believe that the Schattenmann was once worshiped as a god of darkness, but its cult died with the coming of the Church of the Prophets. The pagan practice of the Shadow Fair (see below) is all that remains of this dark religion.

Local Customs and Problems

The people of Fischler are considered odd by the other Eisen. Their environment has taught them a respect for the horrors of Théah that their countrymen do not possess. Besides that, there is something eldritch about any group that would choose to live so close to the Black Forest. Other Eisen half-respect and half-fear Fischler folk, both for their odd notions of courage and their bizarre pagan practices.

Sehend

Those who live in Fischler often refer to themselves as *sehend*, or “sighted.” In spite of its mystic-sounding connotations, this has nothing to do with “second sight.” Instead, it refers to a clarity of sight – an understanding of your place in the world, and the knowledge that there is always something more powerful than you. There is a saying among them, “If you’re a fish, you don’t leap into the boat to taunt the fisherman.” To put it more simply: “Don’t take stupid chances.” This philosophy has given the people of Fischler a reputation as cowards, but those who know them better understand that they are simply practical, withdrawing until the situation is more to their liking.

The Shadow Fair

A holdover from ancient times, the Shadow Fair is held once a year in every town and village within a hundred miles of the Black Forest. It takes place on the night before the first Sabbath of each year, and does not begin until the sun dips below the horizon. In order to prepare for the Fair, the people of each village send a small contingent to the Black Forest to chop down one tree per crew. They then cut the trees up into firewood, which they bring back to their village. The Blackwood goes to create an enormous bonfire as the sun goes down, in “honor” of the Schattenmann.

The villagers dance and sing around the eerie red flames of the bonfire late into the night, eating rich foods and drinking black beer from a large feast that is laid out near the fire. A small loaf of pumpernickel bread sits in the middle of the feast table, reserved for the Schattenmann should he appear. According to folklore, anyone who eats it will suffer terrible misfortunes for the next year. The Fair winds up at midnight, when an enormous straw effigy of the Schattenmann is brought forward and cast into the flames. Should everything go as planned, it is believed that the Schattenmann will leave their village alone until next year. The Church has discouraged this practice, as it sees it as a throwback to the pagan practices of the Old Republic. It is unknown what the Schattenmann thinks of it.

Army and Organization

Fischler is run through a combination of democracy and dictatorship. Faulk, while he encourages his people to give him suggestions and ideas, maintains his power as the final say in the kingdom. Nothing that requires a large outlay of money or a great deal of manpower gets done without his say-so. However, he does his best to make himself accessible, frequenting taverns and learning people by name, with the idea that a bit of alcohol makes it more likely that he'll get the truth out of people.

As for armed forces, Fischler can mount a force of approximately 200,000 men, about 20,000 of whom are trained, professional soldiers. These men make up the artillery and cavalry forces of Fischler, while the more poorly trained men form blocks of pike and powder. Of course, these figures are only for a defensive stand; many of the soldiers are volunteers, who would undoubtedly desert if asked to mount an attack on another *königreich* (reducing the total manpower to perhaps 140,000, including the 20,000 professionals).

Freiburg

"No questions."

Crest: A man standing in the shadow of a tower.

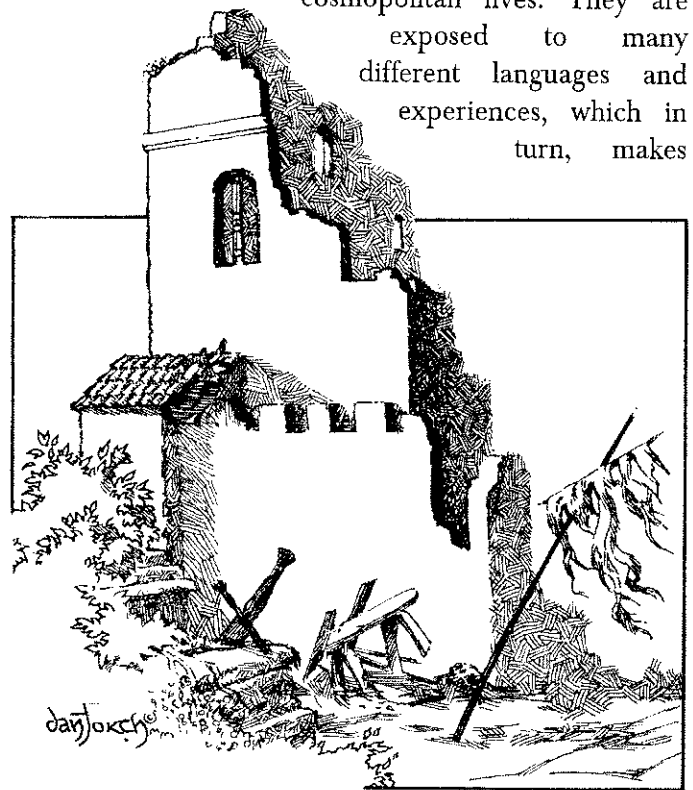
Armament: A right-handed dracheneisen gauntlet with a stylized drachen etched into it. The drachen is curled up and sleeping. The rest of the gauntlet is covered with carefully depicted scales, and the metal gleams even in dim lighting. When Emperor Reifenstahl gave it to Trägue, he said, "I do not need this any more. You will be my right hand. Greet those who come to Eisen with open arms." The gauntlet is currently held in a case inside Trägue's private office near the top of the Wachturm.

Overview: Freiburg is the smallest kingdom in Eisen. It consists of a circle of land with a radius of 30 miles

surrounding the town of Freiburg. This is all the land visible from the enormous Syrneth tower known as the *Wachturm* (located in the center of the town), and all that Nicklaus Trägue, the kingdom's ruler, lays claim to. Originally a fortress known as the Stein, the town of Freiburg was rebuilt as a trade city. Construction began in 1639 and was finished in 1664. Since then the town has grown quickly, reaching a population of nearly 600,000. It is one of the largest cities in Théah, due primarily to its policy of zero taxation and the enormous numbers of Eisen refugees flocking to it.

Nicklaus Trägue generally avoids day-to-day operations as much as possible, preferring to work on his tract, *Facts of Theus*. His chief advisor, Wilma Probst, runs the city in his stead, but Trägue has instructed her to attend only to absolute necessities. This has resulted in an anarchistic and unstable town that plays host to pirates and criminals of all sorts. Most of the people who live there wouldn't have it any other way.

The People: People from Freiburg lead fairly cosmopolitan lives. They are exposed to many different languages and experiences, which in turn, makes



them much more tolerant than those Eisen from the backwoods. See the *Eisen Accent Advantage* (page 95) for the linguistic benefits of a Freiburg background. You are unable to take the Hunter Skill, and all your Civil Knack rolls have their TN increased by 5 when you are not in a city. In addition, roll once on the chart below:

- 1-4 You receive 3 HP worth of languages for free.
- 5-8 You gain the Combat Reflexes Advantage for free.
- 9-0 You gain the Scoundrel Advantage for free.

Cities

There is only one real city in this kingdom: Freiburg itself. However, a shantytown has grown up surrounding the city proper, which the locals call *Verzweiflung*, or “Desperation.” The situation here grows more unstable by the month as refugees continue to pour in. The citizens who were here before the influx are becoming resentful as their quality of life continues to fall. Their resources are being shared among growing numbers of people, stretching food and other supplies to the limit. The city could reach its boiling point at any time now.

Freiburg

Population: 600,000

Freiburg has become very important to Théah in a very short amount of time. It serves as a black market, a sanctuary from the law, and a trade port for honest merchants all at once. Although Trägue himself is uninvolved with the city, Wilma Probst handles the organization of the few city-provided services — mostly aimed at directing citizens to employees of a certain type, such as porters. A small fee is charged for each inquiry, and the people who partake of this service are encouraged to share the information freely with their fellows.

The only other service provided is the city guard, and their salary is paid by merchants who wish to hire them to protect their goods. The guard charges high rates for this service, and uses the money earned to establish patrols for the rest of the city. Of course, Freiburg isn't the idyllic place that

some would like to believe. Since the central law enforcement depend on funds from wealthy merchants, the poorer sections of the city often have no protection when business is slow. Gangs of soldiers charging for protection have become the norm in the poor parts of Freiburg. Recently, the gangs began fighting one another for control of various portions of the city, and the situation has turned bloody. Worse, there are rumors of slavers and dealers in dangerous artifacts operating in some of the worst neighborhoods. Slavery is one of the very few things actively frowned upon by Trägue, and he's not happy about this news.

Two groups have emerged to combat this growing trend towards chaos. The first is the Knights of the Rose and Cross, whose night-time patrols have been greatly appreciated by the poor. The other is a group of nearly fifty Eisen warriors who call themselves the *Wachhunde*, or “Watchdogs.” These men wear white and black slashed shirts in the style of mercenaries, and a panzerhand on each hand, fighting with a style unique to Freiburg. They are dedicated to non-lethal combat, having seen their fill of death during the War of the Cross, but occasionally a criminal crosses their path who is so bloodthirsty and evil that they decide he must be destroyed. In this case, they set out as a group to hunt down the criminal and kill him. The *Wachhunde* refer to it as “setting the hounds on him.”

Nearly every Secret Society on Théah has at least one safehouse in Freiburg, and as a result the place is a hotbed of underground politics and plots. This doesn't help the stability of the town, and although Trägue studiously ignores the societies, he may be forced to take action soon.

Verzweiflung

Population: 100,000

Verzweiflung (“fairts-VY-floong”) is the shantytown that has encircled the city of Freiburg. Conditions are much worse here than in the city. Living space is more cramped, housing barely keeps off the rain, and both jobs and food are scarce. Approximately 500 people die here each month of disease or starvation, although new refugees replace them quickly

enough. The malnourished and glassy-eyed survivors have given the shantytown its name; muggings and murders occur with frightening regularity. Worse, human predators aren't the only ones stalking Verzweiflung. Kobold corpses have begun showing up, suggesting that the beasts have started hunting in Verzweiflung at night, carrying off the sick and starving to feast upon in their filthy lairs. The Rose and Cross and the Wachhunde rarely enter the shantytown, (their wealthy-looking agents are often robbed and beaten here), so it is uncertain exactly who or what is killing the kobolds.

Other Important Sites

The city of Freiburg has been built over what seems to be a drachen graveyard. Several drachen skeletons have made their way into the architecture of the area, including a bridge, a cathedral, and the Wachturm itself.

The Bone Bridge

The Rotstrom river flows through the center of the town. Several bridges cross it, one of which is natural. Ages ago, a drachen died lying across the river, and now its skeleton still remains and is used as a bridge. The bones are large enough to drive two carriages across side-by-side. There is even an inn called *The Drachen Wing* built on one of its shoulders. The inn is a popular spot for wealthy visitors to stay.

The Heart of the Drachen Cathedral

Originally just a drachen rib cage protruding above the ground, the cathedral was first founded in 1376. The fortress chaplain, Father Peissel, held masses here in order to give the soldiers something awe-inspiring to think about. Later, when the city was rebuilt, some of the best architects in Eisen were called in to build a cathedral around the rib cage. They took advantage of the natural framework and created a flowing, graceful church that used the bones as roof supports. The drachen's tail, which had been laying along the ground, was bent with the aid of two hundred men and eight teams of oxen to point straight up. A Prophet's cross was affixed to the end of the tail before it

was raised, creating an impressive sight some eighty feet above the ground. Ever since, a luckless acolyte has had to climb up and clean the cross every six months.

Wachturm

The tower at the center of the city stands about two hundred feet high, and is constructed from the skeletons of several drachen. No one knows who assembled the bones in their current configuration, but most agree that the feat is beyond human capability. Permanent Porté gates (see the *Montaigne* sourcebook; anyone using a gate suffers one Dramatic Wound after the trip is over) connect the base of the tower to its top. The gates were built long ago, when the city was still a fortress, as a gift to the Emperor by the King of Montaigne.

Local Customs and Problems

The culture here is a very new thing. Freiburg "traditions" have only been around for a few years — created by the living conditions surrounding the city and the hands-off rulership of Nicklaus Trägue.

"No Questions."

The motto of Freiburg has spread to many aspects of life in the city. It has even become part of basic etiquette here. It is considered extremely poor manners to ask about a man's past, his reasons for coming to Freiburg, his religion, or even his name. Falling afoul of this custom more than once or twice can lead to a person being labeled a busybody, or even a spy for the city guard. Insistent questions in the poorer parts of town can result in beatings or worse. The people of Freiburg want to leave the past behind, and they don't appreciate being reminded of bad memories.

The Unspoken Rules of Desperation

The people of Verzweiflung have fallen a long way, but most of them still follow a few rules of behavior to make life bearable. No one takes food from a child; anyone caught breaking this rule is apt to be set upon by an angry mob. They don't often get an opportunity to repeat their crime. The second rule is that everyone is on their best behavior



when employers come from Freiburg looking for laborers. No one wants to ruin a shot at a job, even if someone else gets it in the end. The third and final rule is that no one speaks to the city guard, even when questioned about a crime. The people of Verzweiflung have a strong sense of loyalty to one another; breaking one of the three rules is one of the only grounds for expulsion.

Army and Organization

As stated before, the government of Freiburg is loosely run. The city guard both administers and enforces the law. Any guard with a rank of Captain or higher serves double duty as judge and (occasionally) executioner, when one of their fellows brings in a suspect. The only rule is that they cannot try suspects they've arrested themselves. Obviously, the system lends itself to abuse and corruption. On the other hand, the guards are outnumbered (there is only one

guardsman for every 3,000 people), overworked, and frightened. This doesn't excuse their behavior, of course; it merely explains it.

There are few, if any, public works projects at this time. Local nobility and merchants pay to maintain the roads, food is sometimes distributed to the poor by those who can afford it (such as the Rose and Cross), and the city maintains only the barest relations with the other kingdoms of Eisen. Still, Wilma has been known to sober up Trägue when a wealthy visitor promises to donate money to the city. Because of Trägue's desire to eliminate taxes and tariffs, the city falls short of its monetary needs on a regular basis, and only the good will of the merchants and Wilma's sharp verbal skills keep it running.

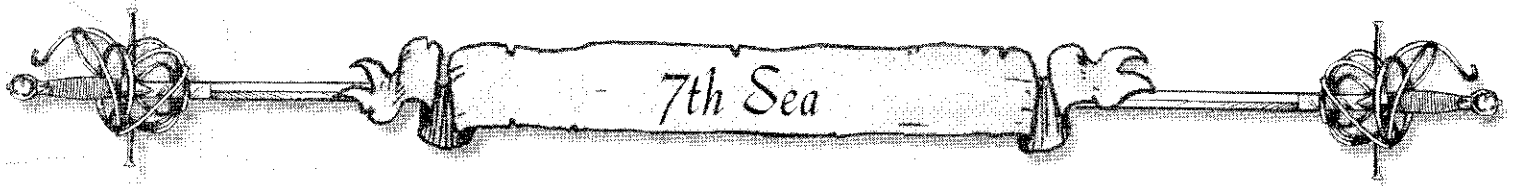
Freiburg can muster some 50,000 mercenaries in its defense — assuming everything goes right. A more realistic estimate is 10,000–15,000 men, the bulk of them city guardsmen. In other words, Freiburg would have little chance against an invader.

Hainzl

"The earth does not forgive."

Crest: An owl holding a *flamberge* blade in a talon.

Armament: A pair of dracheneisen boots. A drachen with its wings spread has been carefully etched on the front of each boot. They are covered in detailed scales, and have a "spur" on the heel. These boots always gleam as though brightly polished. When Emperor Gottschalk presented them to the Hainzl family many years ago, he said, "I do not need these any more. You will be the foundation on which the Empire stands." The boots are currently tossed in Georg Hainzl's closet — though he occasionally wears them if he's "playing" a militant character.



Overview: The kingdom of Hainzl lies in the southeast of Eisen, among very hilly terrain. Hainzl is the home of the finest iron mines in the nation, supporting the königreich's economy. The mountains also house the secretive order of dracheneisen smiths known as the *Nibelungen* (see page 44). Wise Eisen avoid them, even when they leave their mountain abode.

The iron of the area seems to give the people their character. They are solid, uncomplaining, and honest. However, much to the concern of the Church, they pay quiet homage to a mysterious figure they call *Opa Nacht*, or Grandfather Night, who they believe protects them while they work the mines.

The People: Many Eisen from this königreich are small and nimble, just right for squeezing through tight tunnels and caves. In addition, the enormous wealth that flows through Hainzl often trickles down to even the poorest bauer. However, there seems to be some sort of curse on the area that inflicts occasional mishaps upon its inhabitants. *Whenever more than one of your dice explode during a single roll, your GM receives a Drama die that may only be used against you. In addition, roll once on the chart below.*

- 1-4 You gain the Small Advantage for free.
- 5-8 You gain the Merchant Skill for free.
- 9-0 Your monthly income is increased by 25%.

Cities

The cities of Hainzl usually stand on the top of a plateau or at the base of a mountain. Because of limited space, the cities tend to grow upwards instead of outwards. The buildings have sharply sloped roofs, and the roads are often steep, winding, and hazardous.

Atemlos

Population: 30,000

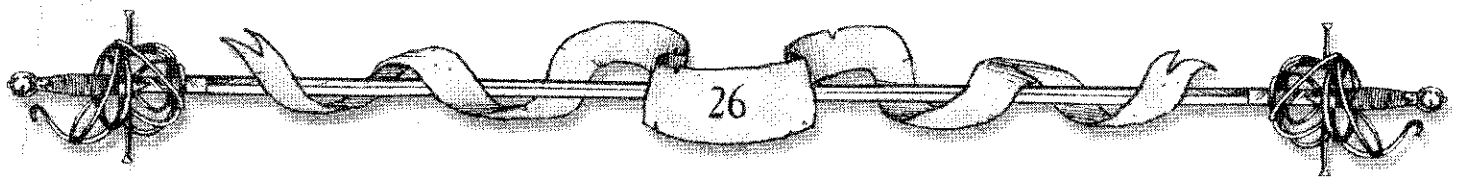
Atemlos is perched on the top of a mountain. Besides the usual residential buildings, the city is home to three important structures: Eulestein Castle, the Atemlos Opera House, and the Caves of Opa Nacht. Eulestein Castle serves

as Hainzl's capital, while the Opera House and the Caves are important sources of income.

Eulestein Castle is a work of art. It was built as the result of one of Georg Hainzl's last sane orders. He wanted a castle like the one described in the Eisen fairy tale "The Three Owls." The architects created a flowing, beautiful structure, incorporating every detail from the fairy tale, including the door that the luckless boy is forbidden to open and the sheer plunge to the rocks below. The castle servants have become very superstitious about that door. They believe that Georg Hainzl's madness began when he opened it. The only other man who has dared — a servant — was found dead on the rocks below the castle. Now, Hainzl's steward keeps the door locked, and is reluctant to loan anyone the key.

Hainzl himself designed and built the Atemlos Opera House; the Eisenfürst was a respected patron of the arts before his madness claimed him. It was here where he first saw "The Three Owls" performed as an opera, and where he conceived of his idea to build Eulestein Castle. Out of sorrow for his subsequent descent into insanity, "The Three Owls" has never been performed here again. Still, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the tragic tale associated with the Opera House, nobles flock here from all over Théah to watch the exquisite operas performed by the talented acting troupe. The shows are performed twice a week, and admission is 1G.

The Caves of Opa Nacht comprise the richest iron mine in all of Théah. Every day, the workers weave their way over a mile into the cave to their current diggings. On the way, they pass a number of natural formations that rival the greatest sculptures ever made by man. These include the Throne of Opa Nacht, Xavier's Spire, Theus' Light, and the River of Night. The Throne of Opa Nacht resembles a milky white chair, while Xavier's Spire is a stalagmite that stands over eighty feet tall. Theus' Light is a room of sparkling crystal straws that gleam in the light from a shaft in the ceiling. The sight is said to be so awe-inspiring that it once convinced a visiting noble of the existence of Theus. Finally, the River of Night is an underground river that



contains an abundance of white, sightless cave fish, but does not appear to surface anywhere. According to Hainzl tradition, the sun has never shone on the River of Night.

These caves are believed to be Grandfather Night's home, and the miners who work here are very careful to pay their respects to Opa Nacht at the beginning and end of each day.

The ore from the caves goes into an enormous smelting oven on the edge of the cliff, where it is first purified and skimmed, then poured over the cliff into another oven some five hundred feet below. A horn is blown for a full minute before the pouring process takes place, allowing anyone beneath ample time to evacuate the area. Although seemingly complicated, wasteful, and dangerous, this process is simpler than carting the ore down the narrow and treacherous road. After being smelted, most of the iron goes to Prachtig for export.

Prachtig

Population: 40,000

Prachtig is a port town located on the northern shore of the River. Roads lead to Prachtig from every settlement in Hainzl; nearly all the kingdom's exported iron passes through the town. Prachtig is the last civilized stop on the journey to Ussura. There are several small trade outposts further east along the River, but nothing that could be actually considered a city. As a result, riverboat captains can often be found here waiting for cargo or passengers to carry back downstream. The town caters to these men, providing them with all the services they could desire. Fine inns, taverns, and less savory businesses line the waterfront.

Prices are high in Prachtig, and a smart Captain will get his cargo loaded as soon as possible in order to avoid falling into debt. Although few believe it, there is a rumor that sailors who try to renege on debts here are thrown into a deep cave where Opa Nacht forces them to help him in his duties. Most sailors are nervous about running up too much of a debt in Prachtig.

The Three Owls

A miller's orphaned son comes across three magical owls in the woods. He shares his lunch with each, and is left with nothing to eat himself. Later, he comes across a beautiful castle in the woods. The gates are open, so he goes inside, where he is greeted by three beautiful princesses who feed and clothe him. The oldest sister tells him that he may stay as long as he likes, but he must never open the door leading to the roof. He lives there for several years, but finally his curiosity overwhelms him, and he disobeys their instruction, only to discover the three princesses as they are transforming into owls. The castle falls into ruin and the owls fly away, never to be seen again. The distraught boy hurls himself over the ramparts to his death on the rocks below.

A monastery of Matthiast monks overlooks the town. This Objectivist order espouses strange beliefs about the Prophet's Mass at the end of the year. The monks believe that they must be as pure as possible during that time, so they fast from the week before Prophet's Mass to the week after. During this time, they eat no solid food, subsisting on a strong "Matthiast ale" that they brew throughout the year. The drink is so fortified that it provides them with all the nourishment they need to survive the fast. Taverns in Prachtig often sell it as a novelty, although it is incredibly strong, and doesn't taste particularly good.

Other Important Sites

The strongest influence on Hainzl culture comes from the proud Drachenberg mountains. Almost all of their legends and folklore spring from these dark peaks, and the people of Hainzl treat them with reverence and awe.

The Southern Drachenbergen

Miners have worked the Drachenbergen for many centuries. As a result, the mountains are dotted with empty mines and abandoned buildings and towns. These places are considered haunted by the locals, who believe that terrible

creatures move into them once the humans move out. Indeed, bears, wolves, and other large animals certainly take advantage of the shelter, and if there *is* anything more sinister up in the mountains, it would almost certainly do the same. If any drachen have survived through the centuries, they would be found in the Drachenbergen.

As if the threat of monsters weren't enough, the mountains themselves are fraught with peril. Avalanches, blizzards, snowed-covered mine shafts, sub-freezing temperatures, and blistering winds can destroy even the most prepared travelers in a heartbeat. Still, there's always someone with an important enough reason to dare the crossing.

Local Customs and Problems

Cut off from the rest of the country, the people of Hainzl have developed a strong sense of mysticism. While some joke that the thin air has addled their brains, the Hainzl citizens know that ancient and mysterious things still dwell here, far from the haunts of man.

Opa Nacht

Grandfather Night, or Opa Nacht as the people refer to him, is supposed to be a small wrinkled man with long arms and enormous knuckles. He can sense imminent cave-ins by the aching in his knuckles, and he pounds on the cavern walls furiously to warn miners away from the area. When a Hainzl miner hears an unexplained knocking, he runs for the cave exit as fast as he safely can, assuming that Opa Nacht is warning him of impending disaster. A few jokesters over the years have imitated Opa Nacht as a prank or a way to get attention. Oddly, they all died in mining accidents within the month. The relationship that the miners have with Opa Nacht is similar to the relationship the Ussurans have with Matushka. Opa Nacht is considered a minor god, or a servant of Theus, and miners regularly leave him saucers of milk and honey in exchange for his protection.

In addition to his warnings, Opa Nacht is supposedly capable of leading miners to new veins of ore once the old one plays out. When this happens, they leave a sausage and a loaf of bread next to a pile of ore from the old vein. The

next morning, Opa Nacht will have supposedly eaten the bread and sausage, and left the pieces of ore in a trail to a new vein at least as rich as the old one. While these beliefs seem ridiculous, they might help explain why the mines of Hainzl are so prosperous.

A Curse of Ill Luck

Strange misfortunes occasionally befall those who live in Hainzl. It is uncertain what the cause of this "curse" could be, but the accidents started around the time that Georg Hainzl went mad.

Army and Organization

Because of the Eisenfürst's current state, the kingdom is being run by his family and friends. Hainzl can only gather an army of about 30,000 men. However, on the easily defended roads that criss-cross the mountains, that's more than enough. Still, Hainzl won't be invading any other kingdoms any time soon.

Heilgrund

"The center must hold."

Crest: A man crouching behind a shield as a drachen breathes fire at him.

Armament: A dracheneisen breastplate inscribed with a drachen and the motto of the Imperators, "Theus is the light." The drachen is roaring, with its wings outstretched. Like the other parts of the Imperator's armor, the breastplate is covered in realistic-looking scales, and the whole piece shines as though brightly polished. When Stefan I presented the breastplate to the Heilgrund family, he said, "I do not need this any more. You will protect the heart of my nation. Remember, the center must hold, or everything else will be lost." The breastplate is currently in the possession of Stefan Heilgrund, who keeps it carefully hidden in the Imperator's Palace, where he now resides.

Overview: As the traditional capital of Eisen, Heilgrund has a long and distinguished history of producing leaders, scholars, and great heroes. Almost every village has erected at least one monument to a native hero. However, it has been a while since Heilgrund has produced anything more than food. Its people ride the glories of yesterday instead of accomplishing great deeds themselves. Heilgrund has therefore become less and less important to the outside world. Nowadays, the name is seldom recognized outside of Eisen. Some people blame this on the “curse of the Undying Swamp”, which has been a source of evil and heartbreak for over fifty years, but others look to themselves for the root of the problem.

The People: Heilgrund natives are extremely proud of their ancient position as the seat of the nation. Heilgrund



has always been the source of many of Eisen’s heroes and great warriors, not to mention the national headquarters of the Vaticine Church. Unfortunately, many citizens of this königreich have lately been assailed by a strange wasting disease. *You always have 5 Flesh Wounds that never go away. You may have more Flesh Wounds than this, but you will never have less. In addition, roll once on the chart below:*

- 1–4 You gain the Ordained Advantage for free.
- 5–8 You gain the Citation Advantage for free.
- 9–0 You gain the Commander and Rider Skills for free.

Cities

The cities and villages of Heilgrund are built in the architectural style of the eleventh century – the height of the Holy Republic. As such, they have a much more medieval feel than the rest of Eisen. Certainly, the defenses have been updated, but Stefan Heilgrund lives in the same palace that Gottschalk I ruled from while forging the Holy Republic.

Gottkirchen

Population: 70,000

Gottkirchen is the ancestral home of the Heilgrunds, one of the first two families to be made nobility in Eisen. The city also houses a number of monuments dedicated to past heroes and scholars. At one time, people said that heroes were Gottkirchen’s biggest export. Sadly, this is no longer true. A strange lethargy has overcome the town – ambitious youths find their hopes dashed, while the less ambitious are blessed with good fortune and power. Very few have managed to escape this “curse”, and those who fight against it often find themselves inflicted with a strange wasting disease (see below).

The Steil Academy stands on the western edge of town, little more than a stone building and a fenced area for cavalry and infantry drills. The academy was founded in 1661 by Oskar Steil, a distant cousin of Emperor Reifenstahl. Master Steil’s relationship to the Emperor, not to mention Gottkirchen’s own reputation for turning out

heroes, contributed greatly to the success of the academy, and he has always had more prospective students than he has room to admit. However, applications are dwindling fast as Gottkirchen's reputation fades. Without a change in fortune soon, the academy may have to close down.

Other Important Sites

Undoubtedly the most important locations outside of Gottkirchen are the old Emperor's Palace and the Undying Swamp. Each has had a profound impact upon Heilgrund, particularly in the last few decades.

The Emperor's Palace ("Heilgrundstadt")

Gottschalk I built his palace far away from the cities for several reasons. Not only did it allow him to hunt to his heart's content, it also made sure that courtiers would travel for many miles on poor roads in order to reach the palace. This cut down greatly on the people who came to see him to ask for something. Last and not least, the Emperor was a private man, and didn't wish to live in a big city — always on display to his people like so many other rulers. With this arrangement, he was able to keep much of his private life to himself.

Its current occupant would like to change all that. After Reifenstahl's death, Eisenfürst Stefan Heilgrund moved into the palace; no one else wanted it. For now, he enjoys the privacy that the castle affords him, but in the years to come, when he unites Eisen again, he wishes this to be a new center of culture and learning. He has arrogantly begun referring to the palace as "Heilgrundstadt," the foundation of a new city which he will build when the nation is strong again. Whether such a city will actually arise — and what this bodes for Gottkirchen — is the subject of countless jokes at Stefan's expense.

The small, dark castle lurks on the edge of the Rotstrom river with little presence or fanfare. (The Eisen have never cared for gratuitous displays of wealth.) The walls contain a central building, where the Emperor's traditionally lived and held court, plus a stable, a barrack for the Emperor's

guards, and a kennel for the Royal Master of the Hunt, who was in charge of the Emperor's hounds.

Recent strange lights and noises from within the palace has led to the common belief that it is haunted by the Emperor's ghost. Most commoners avoid it if at all possible, but Stefan seems undisturbed by the castle's former occupant or any other supernatural enemy.

The Undying Swamp

The Undying Swamp is considered the source of the strange wasting disease that has infected Heilgrund. Eighty years ago, the river leading into the swamp was diverted by a landslide, causing portions of the swamp to dry up and others to stagnate. Odd creatures began showing up nearby. Bizarre-looking insects, deformed frogs, and poisonous thorns became common to the area. Then, a young man came back from a fishing expedition babbling about a white snake as big as a mountain that had killed and eaten three of his friends. According to him, the soil turned to ash wherever the snake's skin touched, and plants withered and died. Only by sheer chance did he manage to get away. The creature has since passed into local legend, and is known as the *Verschlingen*. No one goes to the swamp any more except for one old hermit who is occasionally seen pulling up roots on its outskirts. The locals know better than to bother him.

Local Customs and Problems

Heilgrund is a culture in stagnation. As the seat of the old Emperors, it was hotly contested during the war, and still has pockets of devastation. While the chance to rebuild might provide new opportunities for heroics, the people seem to have little interest. Their greatest victories have passed, they believe, and no new accomplishments loom on the horizon. Most of them are content to just sit back and watch the days roll past. There are a few folks left with the burning desire to make things happen, but they're now the exception rather than the rule.

Monuments and Memorials

Heilgrund is littered with memorials to great soldiers of yesterday and markers from important battles. In Gottkirchen alone there are no fewer than 87 monuments, although only a few are large or important enough to receive any notice. The greatest among these are the Walk of Remembrance and the Stauss Memorial. The Walk of Remembrance winds its way along the downtown area of Gottkirchen. Each stone in the walk is inscribed with the name of a man or woman who exhibited great valor at least once during their life. In order to be added to the Walk, a candidate must have been born in Gottkirchen, have committed a courageous act that at least two witnesses can verify, and receive 20G from a person who is in no way related to them, either by blood or marriage. The Stauss Memorial, on the other hand, is a tall black obelisk that stands in the center of the town. Three sides of the obelisk are engraved with a single word each – “Faith,” “Loyalty,” and “Charity.” The fourth and final side is left blank. A small bronze plaque inset at the base of the obelisk lists General Stauss’ greatest achievements and victories.

Besides the memorials, there are three museums in Gottkirchen – the Museum of War, the Museum of Art, and the Local History Museum. The Museum of War is devoted to collecting artifacts and accounts of battles that have shaped the face of Théah. Its current displays include several coins from the sacking of Numa, artifacts from the Wars of Conquest and the War of the Cross, and the uniform that General Montegue wore during his famous Stand. The Museum of Local History preserves the personal effects of famous or influential people born in Gottkirchen. Chief among the current exhibits is the robe that General Stauss wore when he was surprised and assassinated in his home. There are still bloodstains on the robe. The Museum of Art is more conventional than the other two, displaying works of art with no particular prejudice against foreign pieces. Their central exhibit is currently hosts a display of Vodacce sculpture, including a magnificent statue of a beautiful woman. The sculptor is unknown, and the statue came into the museum’s possession under mysterious circumstances.

The Wasting Disease

This odd disease began infecting the people of Heilgrund soon after tales of the Verschlingen began to circulate. It quickly spread outwards from the Undying Swamp until nearly everyone in the area bore its mark. Symptoms include occasional dizzy spells, weakness, a slight loss of the blood’s ability to clot, and shortness of breath. Strangely, the disease has remained largely confined to the Undying Swamp, only venturing about 100 miles from its borders. Stefan Heilgrund, believing that the Verschlingen itself is the cause, has placed a 5,000G reward for the creature, provided that the head is brought to him as proof of its demise. So far, six groups of mercenaries have ventured into the swamp, never to return.

Army and Organization

Heilgrund is run primarily by administrators appointed by Stefan Heilgrund. Although he insists on personally trying



any case involving the death penalty, Stefan generally does not wish to be disturbed with affairs of state. He was much more politically active during the early years of his reign, but once he became familiar with the other Eisenfürsten, he realized that trying to peacefully reunite them was futile.

Heilgrund can assemble an army of approximately 80,000 soldiers, although 50,000 of those would be poorly trained peasants. Regardless, he's quite capable of defending his kingdom against any other Eisenfürst except perhaps Fauner Pösen.

Pösen

“Stand against the avalanche.”

Crest: A drachen with its wings cupped protectively around a crossed sword and olive branch.

Armament: A dracheneisen broadsword of great quality. The hilt is carved from a gilded drachen's tooth, and the blade is perhaps the finest piece of dracheneisen smithing in history. It is incredibly sharp and well-balanced for its size, causing terrible wounds when it hits. Etched into the blade is the word *Totung*. When Stefan I presented the sword to the Pösen family, he said, “I do not need this any more. You will be my sword when my nation is threatened.”

Overview: Pösen's military tradition is famous throughout Théah. A commander who graduates from a Pösen academy is guaranteed a high rank in a foreign army. Even the peasants have a military mindset, and dress and act as efficiently as they can. Pösen was largely spared the horrors of the War of the Cross thanks to its well-prepared army. This has left the kingdom in an incredibly strong position.

With the exception of one or two stubborn Eisenfürsten, all of the Iron Princes would have to surrender if Fauner Pösen decided to reunite Eisen through military force. Fortunately

for them, she has not yet chosen to do so. Pösen's primary problem at the moment is an inability to adjust to a peacetime economy. The idle army drains the königreich's industry and agriculture. Unless something is done soon, the army could eat the people into the poor house. Pösen may decide to invade her neighbors simply to feed her soldiers.

The People: Pösen has a long tradition of military preparedness. Even the lowliest bauer stands a good chance of being trained with one or more weapons. Of course, this gives them a reputation as warmongers, but if war ever comes again to Eisen, they'll be ready. *You always receive one fewer Reputation die than normal (minimum 0). In addition, roll once on the following chart:*

- 1-4 You gain the Academy Advantage for free.
- 5-8 You gain the Heavy Weapon Skill for free.
- 9-0 You gain the Firearms Skill for free.

Cities

Cities in Pösen are designed towards either holding out during a siege, or defending an important piece of ground. Even the smallest villages are placed in defensible positions and fortified to take advantage of the surrounding terrain.

Insel

Population: 25,000

Insel was built on an ideal location. Most of the time, it is surrounded by water, an island in the midst of a large lake. When the tide is low, however, a narrow land bridge appears, leading to the city. A well-defended gatehouse and the start of a huge wall stands at the end of the land bridge. Insel is considered the greatest existing example of defensible terrain in Théah. More than that, though, it is a magnificent city — pleasing to the eye, prosperous, and safe to live in.

On the other hand, the city is in a constant state of near martial law. Curfews are imposed from sundown until dawn, and citizens may have to billet newly hired soldiers until permanent housing is available. Still, given the chaotic state

of the rest of the nation, most of the people who live here are glad to have the additional security, even at the expense of their own freedom. The few exceptions are careful to keep their opinions to themselves; Fauner Pösen is not receptive to criticism.

Insel has a number of landmarks that travelers often visit. The first is an incredibly beautiful chapel built by the Pösen family over 400 years ago to show their devotion to the Church of the Prophets. Tiny tiles of lapis lazuli and other semi-precious gems form a mosaic of the Four Prophets on the wall of the chapel, and each summer dawn a single ray of sunlight shines through a small stained glass window in the rear, illuminating the front wall with a shining image of the Prophet's Cross.

The city's Gelingen Academy trains many of Pösen's future soldiers. The building itself is unimpressive, dwarfed by a pair of boarding houses on either side. Inside is another matter entirely. The stuffed and mounted heads of no fewer than two hundred monsters hang on the academy's walls, including some fifty-odd siren heads, and even a small drachen's head — creatures that have been slain over the years by students on patrol. Gelingen Academy believes in the philosophy of learning by doing, so students patrol the nearby Salzsumpf in addition to their normal training. This sink-or-swim methodology is hard on the students — only about half of them survive — but it produces fast results, allowing the tiny academy to train a large number of students in a short time. When not busy with administrative

duties, Fauner Pösen oversees the academy and accompanies the students on patrols, much to the dismay of her advisors.

Other Important Sites

Most of Pösen is civilized and safe for travelers, but a few areas still hold out against mankind's incursion — the forests, Gregorskorn, and the Salzsumpf.

Monster Hunters

Most Gelingen graduates remain in Pösen all their lives, either joining the Swamp Dogs (see Chapter 3, pages 97–98), or serving the Eisenfürst in some other capacity. Those who don't usually turn mercenary, traveling across Théah and hunting down monsters for bounty. These "monster hunters" journey alone or in small groups, following rumors of marauding creatures and victims in need of aid. The greedy ones petition lords or dukes, promising to rid their lands of monsters in exchange for a huge reward. The more selfless ones work directly for the people, and usually get nothing more than a hot meal and a warm bed for their troubles.

The life of a monster hunter is hard; they face the horrors of nightmare with nothing more than their wits and Gelingen training. But the potential rewards far outweigh the risks — slaying a troublesome monster makes the hunter a hero overnight. Sometimes, it may only be a tiny village or even an isolated family that they save. But the look of gratitude in their eyes makes a hunter forget the danger and the long, cold nights on the road. Immortality, however limited, is a reward that few Gelingen graduates can refuse.

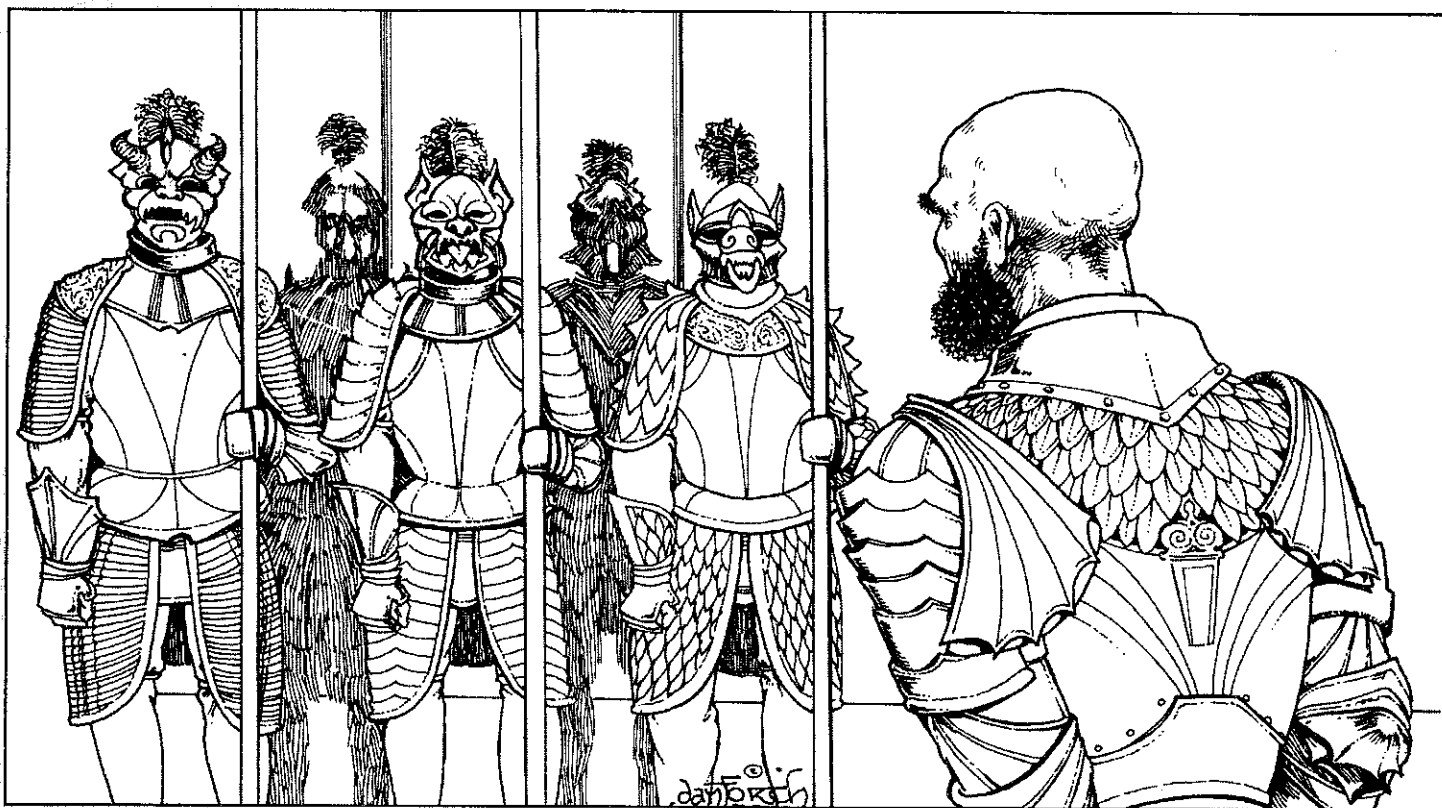
The Forests of Pösen

The two major forests in Pösen are much safer than the Black Forest, or at least they were until recently. Small bands of brigands — perhaps four to eight men per group — have begun using them as their hideout. Although Pösen has an impressive military force at her disposal, it's not easy to find six men in a 320 mile-wide strip of dense forest. The bandits target only non-military groups, hoping to capture supplies such as food and ammunition. When Pösen and her men come through, they simply lie low, hiding in the trees or one of the numerous caves scattered

around the area. Pösen is considering gathering her men for a thorough sweep of the two forests — a move that could turn up a great deal more than simply bandits.

Gregorskorn

High in the Drachenberg mountains lies a narrow series of canyons and switchbacks that wind around each other so erratically that they seem to be a natural maze. The area is



filled with cave entrances, canyons blocked by landslides, and a constant heavy fog. The clouds seldom part enough to allow a traveler to take stock of his location. Worst of all, Gregorskorn is believed to be the final stronghold of the drachen, which (if they still exist) are among the deadliest creatures in Théah. Confronting one in Gregorskorn, with its twisting canyons, poor visibility, and unpredictable terrain, would be madness. Yet there was one man, many years ago, who accomplished this very feat. His name was Gregor, and he had received a dracheneisen shield by the Emperor himself to go out and slay a rampaging drachen. He tracked the beast into Gregorskorn, and eventually located its lair, where they fought an epic battle. During the fight, the Emperor's shield was lost deep within the cave, but Gregor slew the creature, and was later made a saint by the Eisen people for his valor. To this day, the shield has never been recovered, and presumably lies within Gregorskorn still.

For more information on St. Gregor and Gregorskorn, please see the *Game Masters' Guide*, page 56.

The Salzsumpf

The Salzsumpf is a murky salt marsh just north of Insel. Students attending the Gelingen academy frequently train in the marsh, battling sirens, ruin monsters, and other horrors to hone their skills. One student even ran into a small drachen here about a hundred and eighty years ago — he managed to kill it, but was slain himself in the fight.

Townfolk occasionally venture here for another reason: this is one of the few places in Théah where eungéliion root grows. The roots have only a small tuft of grass and some plain white flowers to mark their location, but at night, they emit a soft trill by forcing air through the stalks of their flowers. (The noise attracts moths and other insects, presumably to aid in pollination.) The root of the plant possesses valuable medicinal properties and is highly



prized, although most folk are too timid to seek it at night when their harvest would be easier.

Local Customs and Problems

Pösen is home to several famous warrior orders – the Order of St. Gregor, an ancient order of bodyguards turned bounty hunters, the Tobians, a sect of fighting priests, and the Winged Kursars, an elite unit of cavalry looked upon with great respect throughout Théah. These groups are very selective about whom they allow to join, but the benefits almost always outweigh the effort.

The Order of St. Gregor

Founded in 988, the Order of St. Gregor was originally the Eisen Emperor's personal law enforcement unit. They all wore plain dracheneisen rings as a symbol of their authority, and all the Barons were forced to bow to their rulings. Of course, times have changed, and the Order has had to change as well. Now, they sell their services as bounty hunters, often to the Eisenfürsten themselves. They take advantage of the splintered nation to quietly move in search of their prey. When they catch their target, they attempt to incapacitate them, but will use deadly force if necessary ("live delivery only" can be specified at the start of a contract, but it costs triple). Payment is expected immediately upon delivery.

These bounty hunters currently make their home in the southern portion of Pösen, but they sell their services all over Eisen, with the notable exception of Freiburg. Nicklaus Trägue has forbidden them from operating in his city.

Many of the knights of the Order have left their fellows since the Emperor's suicide. These men continue to wear the dracheneisen ring of membership, but have remained true to their original purpose – the enforcement of law and justice throughout Eisen. They make their way around the country, working outside the normal legal channels; some are even wanted in several areas for holding unsanctioned "executions" of particularly evil men.

The Tobians

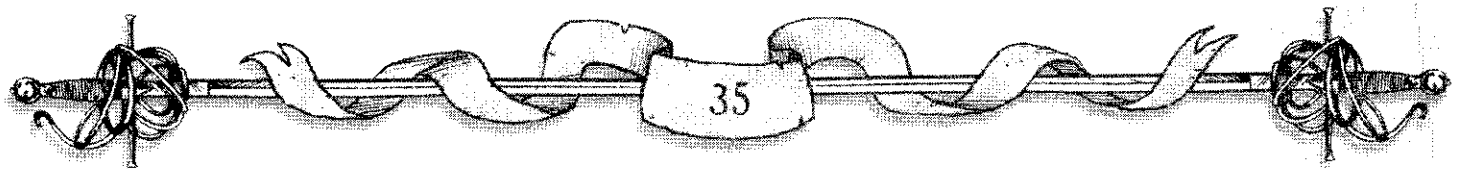
Before the War of the Cross, the Tobians were just another sect of Vaticine monks, until one of their monasteries was attacked and the brothers were all killed. The remaining monasteries, in an effort to protect both themselves and the nearby villagers, began training in self-defense. After a few repulsed attacks, the Tobians acquired a deadly reputation. Many of them became field chaplains, carrying the works of Theus to the armies who needed them the most. They performed last rites in the midst of battles, sewed wounds, kept up morale, and occasionally turned the tide of battle. During the last few years of the War they adopted the motto "Only with life may we teach, but only with death may we live." The motto carried the implied message that dead men cannot continue their good works on Théah, and that self-defense was a necessary evil due to Legion's influence upon the world. The Tobians are now typically sent by the Church into the most dangerous areas that need priests: small villages on the edge of the wilderness, war-torn cities, and the wilds of Ussura.

The Winged Kursars

Centuries ago, a minor Pösen baron was seeking a way to increase his cavalry's menacing image. He devised a framework of metal that could be worn on the back to resemble wings. These wings gave the men an odd, otherworldly appearance and even blocked occasional blows. He named them after the most fearsome group of warriors he knew of – the corsairs. The Winged Kursars have since remained one of the most famous and feared cavalry units around. They serve Fauner Pösen nowadays, although they share a fraternity beyond her jurisdiction and consider themselves outside the normal army's chain of command. Their precision charges, fearsome aspect, and deadly spears continue to make them a threat to infantry blocks even in an age of pike and powder.

Army and Organization

Though a fine commander, Fauner Pösen has immense difficulty letting go of her authority. Even when she assigns a job to one of her underlings, she often winds up doing the job again within a week thanks to her own impatience and



unrealistic standards. As a result, almost all important governmental decisions in Pösen must go through her. Naturally, this means that it takes weeks to get a decision made on anything. This constant drain on her time is one of the principal reasons she hasn't taken the Emperor's crown for herself.

Pösen boasts the most powerful army in all of Eisen. She has immediate access to 150,000 trained men, and can raise another 200,000 untrained men within six weeks. If she decided to embark on a war of conquest, it is unlikely that anyone in Eisen could stop her.

Sieger

"Surrender is death."

Crest: A foot stepping on a serpent, which is sinking its fangs into the ankle in turn.

Armament: A left-handed dracheneisen panzerhand with a stylized drachen etched into it. The drachen is clawing at the air and breathing fire. The rest of the gauntlet is covered with carefully depicted scales, and the metal gleams even in dim lighting. When Stefan I gave it to the Sieger family, he said, "I do not need this any more. You will be my fist. Make sure the barons see to their duties, and discipline any who disobey me." Erich Sieger usually wears the panzerhand.

Overview: Located in the southwest of Eisen, Sieger is one of the most devastated areas of the country. The kingdom used to be much larger and more powerful, but Reifenstahl decided first to use part of it to create Fischler and then to give a large portion of it to Montaigne in the Treaty of Weissberg, Sieger now retains only a fraction of its original size and influence. Erich Sieger only managed to retain the small kingdom through a desperate act. He destroyed his own fields, ruining the soil in an effort to make the area less attractive to the Castillians, who could

have certainly forced him out had they wished. The ploy worked, but now his people are paying the price, and many of them are fleeing to Vodacce rather than stay and starve under his rulership.

The People: Those Eisen from Sieger are among the strongest and hardest in all the nation. They are also famous for the excitement that seems to follow them wherever they go. Of course, this doesn't necessarily make people happy to see them coming. *You may not buy a Virtue, and you must take a Hubris, which only gives you 5 HP.*

1-4 You gain the Large Advantage for free.

5-8 You gain the Toughness Advantage for free.

9-0 You gain the Foul Weather Jack Advantage for free.

Cities

The towns of Sieger are solid and utilitarian. Their buildings have blocky, ugly lines, but their walls are extremely high and well-made. Captains docking at one of the port cities could be excused for believing that they had accidentally stopped at El Morro.

Stahlfort

Population: 25,000

The city of Stahlfort is one of the strongest fortresses in the world outside of Castille. The stonemasons painstakingly chipped out its foundation atop a rugged mountain, then carved a narrow road leading up to the first of its many gates. Invaders find themselves forced to assault one door after another while dealing with skilled archers, burning oil, dropping portcullis, and treacherous murder holes. Most decide that the effort simply isn't worth it.

A map of Stahlfort is included in the back of this book. Descriptions of the various locations can be found below:

Stahlfort Map Breakdown

1. *The Outer Gate* — An attacker, after battering down the gates, finds himself at what he believes is the final barrier. The imposing wooden doors may be set on fire using oil poured through a series of drain holes at their top.

2. *The Inner Gate* – Having breached the outer gate, the attacker must run a foot race across a 30-foot killing zone while being attacked by archers, crossbowmen, dropped stones, and flaming oil. The only cover available is beneath the overhang above the two large iron doors of the inner gate; the overhang has drain holes in the roof like those found over the outer gate.

3. *Military Stables* – These stables hold horses for the guards and soldiers. A man named Klaus Ulrich rules the stables with a firm hand; he occasionally threatens to put an unruly beast in the stewpot, but otherwise treats his charges well.

4. *Daubler's Folly* – This cave-in occurred when one of the mine supervisors, Daubler by name, followed a rich vein of iron, without accounting for the city above. The next time it rained, several small buildings above the shaft sank into the earth. Sieger, upon learning of the cause of this destruction, ordered the shaft filled back in – with Daubler at the bottom.

5. *The Stahlfort Mines* – These mines produce a steady stream of medium grade iron ore. While not as high quality as Hainzl iron, it serves Sieger's purposes.

6. *Stahlfort Smithy* – Here the mined iron turns into weapons, ammunition, and other needed items. There are three master smiths working here, along with five journeymen, and eight apprentices.

7. *Armory* – This is where weapons and ammunition are stored before being distributed to the guardsmen of the Clenched Fists. There are always two men armed with swords and pistols on duty, and a well stands nearby to provide water in case of a fire. After all, there's enough gunpowder here to blow up half the town.

8. *Hill Chapel* – This was a Vaticine church until Sieger kicked out the priests upon his return from the Treaty of Weissberg. Now the building is maintained by an agreement with several of the minor nobles in the town. Their servants help keep the building clean and repaired, and the nobles use it as a meeting hall and occasional house of worship.



9. *The Noble District* – Several petty nobles live in this part of town. Access is restricted to residents and their servants, and the two gates are guarded by an armed member of the Clenched Fists at all times. Of course, these men are often receptive to a well-placed bribe...

10. *Marketplace* – Residents of Stahlfort can shop for food and other necessary items in the marketplace. Several members of the Clenched Fists patrol the area armed with swords and pistols, and thieves are dealt with harshly.

11. *Slaughterhouse* – Livestock is butchered and prepared for sale in this building, which lends a certain rank odor to the area. The owner of the slaughterhouse is a large, bald man named Otto. Although rude and unpleasant, Otto is known to run a clean, safe business.

12. *Crops* – Although not nearly enough to feed the entire populace, these crops are intended to slow the consumption of the town's stores in the event of a siege.
13. *Farm Stables* – These stables house the plowhorses and mules for the mill. An elderly man named Cornelius runs the stables and treats the animals with love and attention.
14. *Silos* – Large quantities of grain are stored in these buildings, which are patrolled by ten cats. Aside from the occasional saucer of milk provided by Cornelius (see #13), the cats live entirely on the mice they catch.
15. *Mill* – This ancient mill grinds grain into flour for use by the town. Two mules from the farm stables (#13) turn the great wheel in the center of the mill. The mill owner, an old lady named Astrid, often lashes the mules to get them to work faster, which typically results in screaming arguments with Cornelius.
16. *Livestock Pens* – Pigs and chickens are raised in these pens. The pigs are intended for slaughter, while the chickens provide eggs. A young boy named Petr cares for the livestock, with the reluctant help of an "assistant" named Miguel Soldano de Acedo (see Miguel's write-up in Chapter Two for more information). If Miguel meets any Castillians, he will attempt to send a letter home with them.
17. *The Poor District* – This is where most of the miners and farmers in town live. The miners have a slightly better standard of living, but times are hard in Stahlfort, and prices are high.
18. *Clenched Fist Barracks* – The guardsmen of the town live in these barracks, and can often be found here dicing with one another when not drinking at the taverns.
19. *Gambling Houses and Taverns* – A favorite hangout of the Clenched Fists, these places of entertainment feature good beer, unusual forms of wagering such as rat races, and staffs of harried serving girls.
20. *Mess Hall* – The Clenched Fists eat here when they can't afford anything better. The food is edible, but only just.
21. *Amphitheater* – Originally built for the entertainment of Sieger's men, the amphitheater has proven popular with all the people of Stahlfort. The actors typically present lowbrow bawdy comedies and slapstick routines written by the troupe's director, a lovely but rather crude lady named Evelyn. Admission is 2c.
22. *Stairway to Ramparts* – An armed member of the Clenched Fists guards the stairway at all times. It is the only easy way to get up to or down from the outer wall.
23. *Outer Wall* – The outer wall stands approximately sixty feet high and twenty feet thick. It is constantly patrolled by five men armed with a sword, two pistols, and a musket each.
24. *Dueling Circle* – Dueling has been outlawed in Stahlfort, even for Swordsman Guild members, except within this circle of stones. Here anyone may challenge anyone else to a duel, although only fights to the death are allowed. Sieger finds that this cuts down on the number of duels, since most people aren't willing to put their lives on the line over a petty point of honor.
25. *Sieger's Keep* – Sieger can hold out in his Keep for up to six months even if the rest of the city falls. There is a cistern and plenty of storage in the basement, a ballroom on the ground floor (seldom used), and private quarters upstairs. Servants keep a roost of pigeons on the roof for sending and receiving messages.

Stärke

Population: 50,000

Stärke is a port town, dependent on the Trade River for its continued survival and prosperity. As such, the docks are the city's busiest area, with sailors and dock workers bustling about until late into the night. *Wasserkampf*, a form of arena combat, has become a very popular betting sport for the sailors and slumming Eisen nobles. Two men are lowered into hip deep water where they attempt to beat each other into submission by any means necessary (including drowning). A match ends when one of the fighters submits or is pummeled unconscious.



In 7th Sea game terms, the two men fight unarmed in shallow water, meaning that they use Balance as their Defense Knack and roll Brawn + Balance as their Active Defense. If one of them manages to successfully Grapple the other (see the Wrestling Skill in the Players' Guide), the grappled man is considered underwater until he breaks the grapple. Due to the extreme exertion of the fight, a man grappled in this manner can only hold his breath for a number of Phases equal to his Resolve. After that, he loses one Rank of Resolve for every 3 Phases his head is underwater, passing out when his Resolve reaches 0.

Besides Wasserkampf, Stärke is well known for at least one other thing – its beer. The taverns here sell thick, dark beers, strong enough to put even the stoutest drinker under the table. The most popular variety is known as *das Bärchen*, or “the little bear.” The city guards have little patience for drunken revelers who start brawls. They usually beat such revelers with two-handed clubs (Heavy Weapons) and throw

them into filthy cells to sleep it off. Assuming they don't die from the treatment, they are released once they can walk without falling over.

Stützung

Population: 40,000

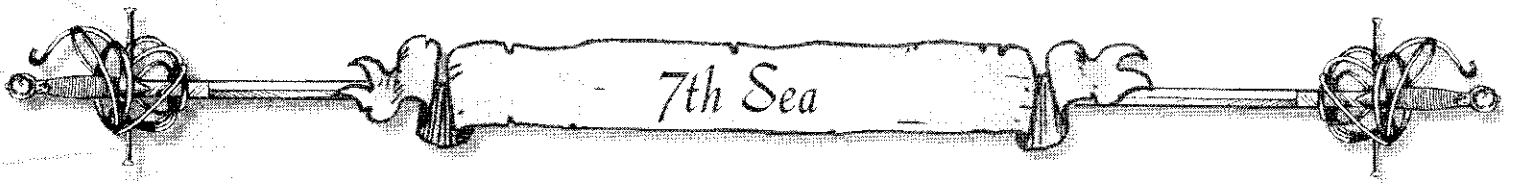
Before Sieger resorted to his current strong-arm tactics, Stützung was a wealthy trade city, with amusements available for everyone's tastes. However, since he created the *Mörderbande* (see page 40), his men have taken over the town, terrorizing the inhabitants and committing crimes that they cannot be held accountable for. A feeling of dread has settled over the city; even visiting sailors have felt it, for ships have begun to avoid docking at Stützung. For awhile, a cloaked figure who called himself the *Wächter* kept the *Mörderbande* in check, but they recently captured him by using a Jenny they had paid to act as bait. The *Wächter* showed up to defend her from a group of “attackers”, and they overbore him with their numbers. His cloak was removed, revealing the mayor's son, Hans Jost, attempting to do what his father would not – protect the city. He is currently in the custody of the *Mörderbande* and scheduled to be hanged within the month. Barbara Rainer, the Jenny who helped capture him, disappeared shortly after she heard the news.

Other Important Sites

Oddly, the area that has had the strongest impact on Sieger's culture is no longer part of Sieger at all. They currently belong to Fischler and Montaigne, greatly reducing the power and wealth of the kingdom. Erich Sieger and his people have resorted to desperate measures to avoid being absorbed by another kingdom or country.

Schwartzen Walden

Sieger's relationship with the Black Forest is much different than Fischler's. Where Fischler guards it, Sieger makes active use of the forest in his defense strategies. For instance, he has had his men tap several of the Blackwood trees at the edge of the forest for sap, which they then boiled down



into a highly concentrated syrup and placed in wax-sealed containers. A troublesome armed force later received a visit from one of Sieger's men armed with a container of syrup. Sneaking into the camp just after dusk, he threw the container into their camp in a high arc, then fled into the night. Later that evening, creatures from the nearby forest smelled the sap and came into the camps, killing everyone they found.

In addition to this gruesome tactic, Sieger has reportedly captured several creatures from the Schwarzen Walden, and is using them to guard certain portions of his keep in Stahlfort.

Sieger's Lost Lands

Before the formation of Fischler and the Treaty of Weissberg, Sieger stretched as far north as the southern shore of the Südlache and as far west as the Lockhorn forest on the other side of the Weissberg mountains. Erich Sieger grudgingly accepted the Emperor's decision to form Fischler. After all, historical precedent was on Reifenstahl's side. However, when the Emperor surrendered to a foreign power and turned over Sieger's land to them as tribute, the baron had had enough. He knew he couldn't protect his lands across the Weissberg mountains, so he accepted the loss and pulled back into a more defensive position. This breach of trust has ultimately shaped Sieger into the isolationist königreich it is today.

One final point of interest – Sieger's withdrawal from the Weissbergs has left an area of mountain villages that no one governs. When the Montaigne took possession of their new lands, they were much more excited by the prospect of lumber for their navy than the tiny mountaintop villages. Thus, the people have been left alone to do as they please, far from the politics of any nation, and have taken to calling themselves the *Mitte*, or "middle." So far, they have remained true to their Eisen heritage. With a longer period of isolation, however, that could easily change.

Local Customs and Problems

Sieger has undergone enormous cultural upheavals in recent years. The Eisenfürst has had to enact enormous public works projects in order to rebuild the kingdom, and hire murderous soldiers in order to terrify his enemies into giving him time to rebuild. Of course, these men have also committed terrible atrocities against the very people they are supposed to defend. As a result, peasants have left in search of better places to live, which has caused even greater upheavals.

Emigration

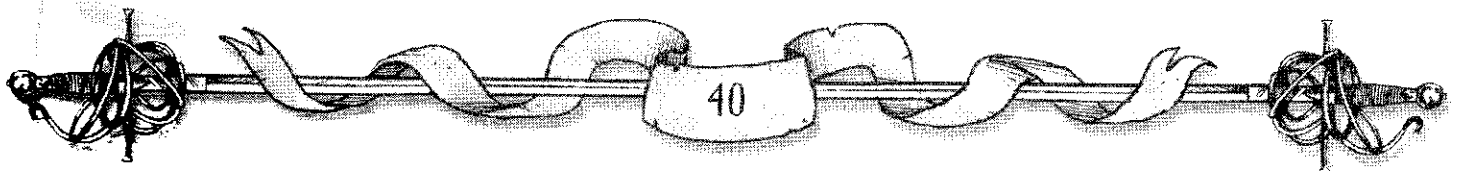
Sieger has had a great deal of difficulty with his people emigrating south to Vodacce. He has tried to keep them in his lands by cajoling, bribing, and even threatening them, but nothing has worked. If conditions don't improve soon, Sieger may finish his restoration projects just in time to rule over an empty kingdom.

The Mörderbande

Realizing that he could never hold his kingdom with the small number of soldiers he could hire, Sieger sought out the most vicious and depraved men for his guard, then provoked a minor noble into armed conflict and let loose his killers on the man's ill-prepared troops. Sieger's men committed terrible atrocities before killing all but a few of their enemies, who fled to recount tales of Sieger's "monstrous troops." Thus, while Sieger gained several enemies, he also acquired a reputation as a very dangerous man – someone who is not to be provoked. Eventually, the other Eisenfürsten will see through the facade and realize what a weak position he's in, but for now, the ploy has bought him time.

Public Works

When the peasants aren't busy growing crops, Erich Sieger has them hauling ruined earth from the fields and replacing it with soil dredged from the river. This soil is then fertilized with dung and allowed to lie fallow for a year before being planted. While this has not restored the land's original fertility, it has at least provided adequate fields to grow crops in.



Army and Organization

Erich Sieger is an efficient and ruthless ruler. He attends to many of the important governmental tasks himself, but unlike Fauner Pösen, he has some skill at delegating authority. He maintains a group of ten advisors that see to anything Sieger doesn't feel is worth his time.

Sieger can only field a small army of 20,000. However, he has shown his willingness to destroy his crops, his army, and himself – if need be – to fend off an attacker. This makes his army much more dangerous than its size would indicate, and the other Eisenfürsten realize that.

Wische

“Endure.”

Crest: Two men pulling at a chain that binds them together.

Armament: A finely worked sword belt with dracheneisen buckles and sheath. The sheath is worked to look like the tail of a drachen, and the leather parts of the belt are actually made from tanned drachen hide. The sheath shines brightly even in dim light and is covered in finely rendered scales. When the Emperor gave the sword belt to the von Wische family, he said, “I do not need this any longer. Your eloquence will bind the rest of my armaments to me. Should they stray from their duties, remind them of the oaths they have sworn and the debts they owe their country and their Emperor.” Shortly after Reinhard von Wische became comatose, the sword belt disappeared from its place in his great hall. A half-hearted attempt was made to find it, but the belt is still missing.

Overview: No other part of Eisen was hit as hard by the War of the Cross as Wische. Entire cities vanished overnight as armies marched back and forth across the land. Fields were burned and salted, and men and women went out of their minds with despair. Eisenfürst Reinhard von Wische

himself lost his family during the War and has not spoken a word since. Of all the Eisen kingdoms, Wische is closest to collapse and ruin.

The Waisen Packs

A Montaigne writing under the pseudonym Maurice du Paix returned from a visit to Wische. He wrote of the experience, “In Eisen, I stood among the walking dead, people known as ‘the Orphans’ or *waisen*. There was no indication that any of them knew I was there. Indeed, there was little indication that they were human at all. They shuffled along very slowly, mud and debris plastering their bodies. And their eyes... even a cat's eyes holds a certain degree of awareness – of cunning. Not theirs. If you came across one of them sitting still and looked into its eyes, you would swear before Theus and country that the pitiful creature was dead, and better off for it. I once saw a little child among them who greatly resembled my daughter. She had the same dead stare as the rest. It was all I could do not to go mad with grief as I tried to draw her gaze, to pull her back from whatever oblivion she had sought refuge in. In the end, I could do nothing for her. War, gentle reader, is not a journey to the Abyss as some have claimed. Instead, it brings the Abyss here, to Théah. I know, because I saw it in that little girl's face. In her glazed eyes – the eyes that haunt me every night when I put my daughter to bed.”

Waisen can be found all over Eisen, from the largest cities to the most barren wilderness. Wische alone hosts several packs of them, roaming the countryside like cattle and eating whatever they come across. It is unknown why they group together, but whenever a *waisen* comes across another, the two begin to travel as one – most often in a circular path that leads nowhere.

As for using sorcery to cure the *waisen*, a compassionate Fate Witch once walked among them, attempting to manipulate their strands to effect a cure. Within a week, she began mumbling “They are broken dolls. Dolls without strings,” over and over. The next week, she was found shuffling among the ranks of the *waisen* herself.



The People: The people of Wische are the most devastated by the War of the Cross. Scarcely any of them survived the experience unscarred by the experience, and even those who never suffered any trauma know someone close to them who has. To make matters worse, many of them lost their savings to looting soldiers or marauders. *You receive no starting income, and your monthly income is reduced by 25%.*

- 1-4 You gain a 3-pt. Orphaned Background for free.
- 5-8 You gain a 3-pt. Lost Love Background for free.
- 9-0 You gain a 3-pt. Waisen Dependent Background for free.

Cities

Most of the cities and villages of Wische have been reduced to rubble, or nearly so. About half of them are completely abandoned by their human inhabitants, making room for less savory things to move in.

Siegsburg

Population: 10,000

Siegsburg is sometimes referred to mockingly as the "living ruin." While over half the city lies in rubble, the townsfolk have yet to leave. Because of the economic depression that has gripped the kingdom, no one can afford to rebuild the ruined parts of the city, and most cannot afford to relocate. Thus, it's common to see a family living behind a partially collapsed wall or in the remains of an archway. Regular guard patrols have been established throughout the city to prevent ghouls (and other, more powerful creatures) from feeding on the sick and starving. The thought of ghouls has terrified the people of the city, who are afraid for their children and themselves. Many weakened citizens have killed themselves rather than risk being eaten alive by ghouls. Currently, the kingdom has sent out messengers to appeal for aid from any armed warriors they come across. Unfortunately, since the city cannot afford to pay anything for their services, assistance may not arrive.

Other Important Sites

The sole remaining means of rebuilding the economy may lie in the mountains to the west, where abundant gold mines once flourished. Nowadays, the people of Wische have only the ruined fields to turn to for sustenance.

The Blasted Fields

The fields of Wische have been trampled, burned, and torn apart by cannon fire so often that they may not grow crops again for many years. Wische is currently suffering from widespread famine. Hungry people often venture into the fields to overturn the dirt looking for a small morsel to eat, while livestock must range further in order to locate fodder. The local predators have taken advantage of this and have carried off many cattle and sheep.

The Weissberg Mountains

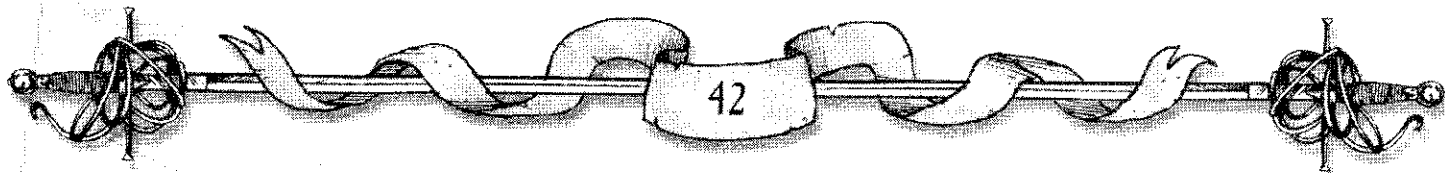
These mountains were once the location of several gold and iron mines that made Wische a wealthy area. These mines played out several years ago, and efforts to locate new veins of metal have been unsuccessful so far, although the expeditions into the area were grossly underfunded. The Treaty of Weissberg was held at a simple hostel located near a pass known as the Gold Divide. Local legend claims that Emperor Reifenstahl's ghost haunts the hostel.

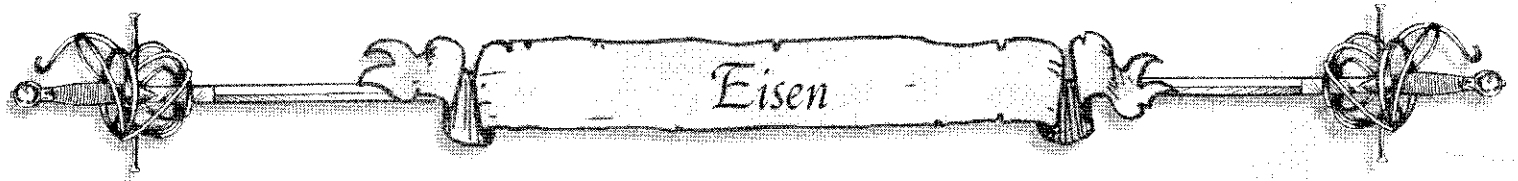
Local Customs and Problems

The War of the Cross has terribly scarred, perhaps even destroyed the culture that once existed here. Local customs now deal with handling sorrow and grief, since that's all the people of Wische have left.

Grief

A curious practice has arisen in Wische for dealing with grief. A person who finds himself crying picks up a pebble for every tear they shed. When the load of pebbles grows too big for them to hold in their hands, they scream out their anger and hatred at the world and throw the pebbles as far away as they can. If they still cannot stop crying, they repeat the process.

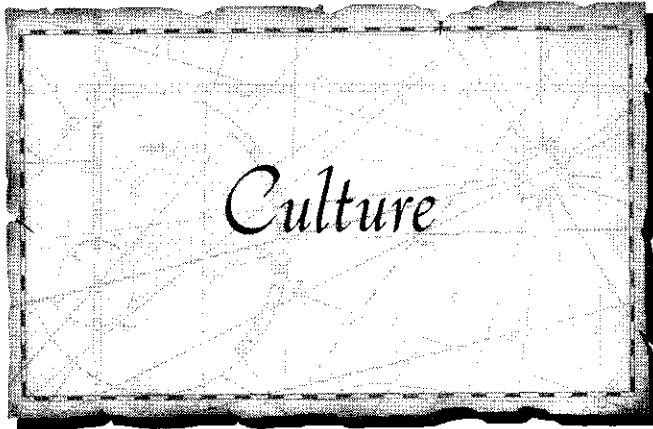




Army and Organization

Reinhard von Wische's regent, Gisela Hilda Inselhoffer, has hired several clerks to keep the kingdom running. They sign Reinhard's name to any documents that need it and prevent the kingdom from completely collapsing into ruin. People who wish to meet with Reinhard himself are generally told that he is sick and cannot speak with anyone.

Wische is only holding on to its army by a thread. The 5,000 soldiers and guards are being paid with IOUs, which won't keep them satisfied for very long. No one knows what happened to the money in the kingdom's treasury, and this year's taxes were far below expectations. Soon, Wische may find itself completely undefended.



The Eisen have had to reevaluate their culture over the last few years. Many old traditions have been cast aside as impractical, while others are still clung to in hopes of keeping the Eisen united in spirit, if not in fact.

The Impact of Dracheneisen

The existence of dracheneisen has had a profound aspect on the development of the nation. They have some of the finest weapons and armor available anywhere, and can accomplish incredible feats of engineering using small amounts of dracheneisen in strategic places. Even the mere study of this unusual metal has led the Eisen to great

advances in metallurgy. So what effect has this had on the Eisen people?

Social Impacts

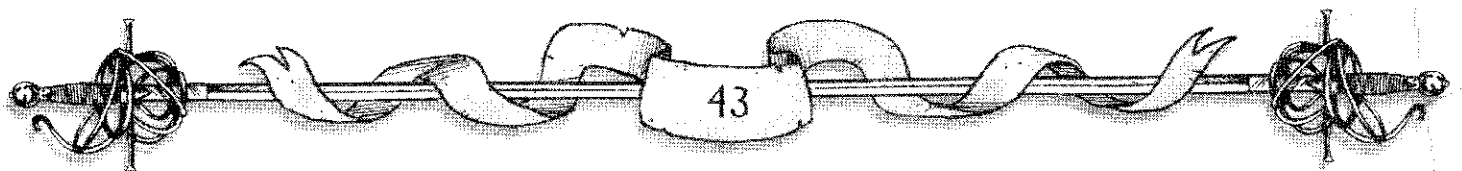
Among other things, it has made them very proud of their past and unusually disdainful of sorcery. Their "magic" comes from their own two hands — they didn't ask for it, they took it. In addition, it has made them somewhat protective of their privacy and distrustful of strangers. Any foreigner might be a spy seeking the secret of dracheneisen. Finally, it has their soldiers very confident, even overconfident. When swords and bullets are deflected from a man's body harmlessly, he tends to ignore defense in favor of all-out attack. This can be deadly when a particularly clever opponent lures a dracheneisen-clad warrior over a cliff or in front of a cannon. Something as simple as a poisoned blade can kill a man in spite of his "invulnerable" armor, and the Eisen sometimes forget this.

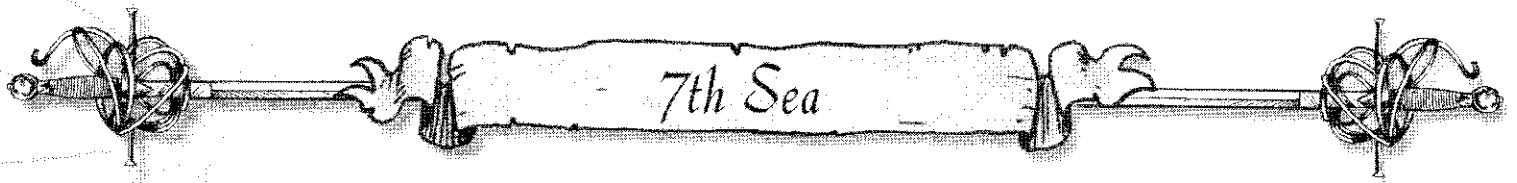
Physical Properties of Dracheneisen

Dracheneisen has two forms — a soft, malleable form before it is forged, and the extraordinarily hard form it is normally found in. In both forms, dracheneisen is about as dense as cork (15 lbs. per cubic foot), and has a melting point of 5,500 degrees Fahrenheit. In its "soft" form, dracheneisen can be pulled into wire and shaped like gold. However, once the Nibelungen perform their secret "setting" process, the dracheneisen becomes hard enough to scratch diamond.

Nobility

Beyond dracheneisen's influence on the national character, it has had a direct effect on the status of Eisen nobility. With the exception of the Emperor himself (whose power predates the discovery of dracheneisen), all claims of nobility are based on possession of the metal. Owning a mine automatically makes you an Eisenfürst, and should a new one be discovered, the founder would become the equal of any Iron Prince. Claims to the mines are based on family heritage, much the way castles and lands are elsewhere in Théah. Anyone plotting a coup against an Eisenfürst must first secure ownership of his or her mine —





an all-but impossible task requiring the approval of both the Emperor and the Eisen courts. (With the current state of the nation, however, a coup may be much easier than it once was...)

The minor barons and dukes beneath the Eisenfürsten also derive their power from dracheneisen, although obviously to a much lesser extent. Every Eisen noble family must have a piece of dracheneisen to prove their legitimacy. Most families received a weapon or suit of armor as a gift from their Eisenfürst, recognizing them as a member of the ruling class. A few gained such weapons on their own, when an ancestor fulfilled a task set forth by the Nibelungen (see below), but for the most part, they owe their status to their Eisenfürst superiors.

Like the mines, dracheneisen weapons have become a symbol of nobility – more important than land or any other trappings of power. Fathers pass their weapons down to sons before they die, and those who question a noble's status can be silenced with the merest flash of a blade. The most powerful nobles – controlling large segments of königreichen – have several dracheneisen items, while the pettiest may have only a single panzerhand to their name. But all of them have at least one piece to demonstrate their status. Those with dracheneisen *are* nobility, as simple as that. A family which loses its dracheneisen deserves to lose everything else it has.

Like so many other things, however, the War of the Cross has complicated this system. The death of so many has left their heirlooms scattered to the four winds; dracheneisen swords have been left abandoned on the battlefield for any scavenger to claim. With the death of the Emperor, the courts have fallen into disarray, which means claims to such items cannot be resolved. It's not unusual to see dracheneisen weapons in the hands of common thugs, while wandering nobles still cling to their weapons after losing their lands and other trappings of power. Telling the two apart can be very difficult indeed. While the Eisenfürsten have yet to be affected by this upheaval (it's hard to walk off with a mine, after all), the rest of Eisen's upper class find themselves losing that which has defined their power since

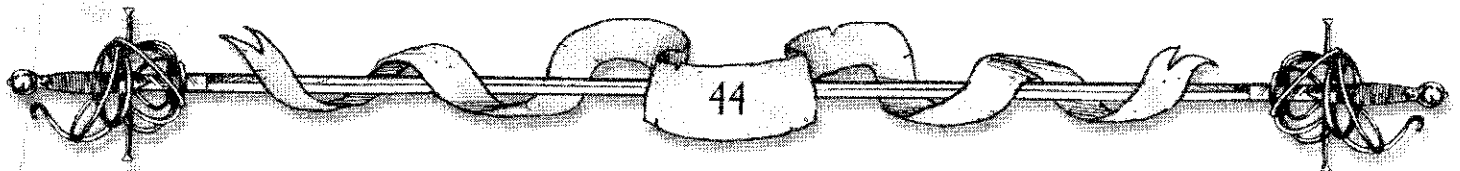
the founding of the nation. The implications of this could reverberate for centuries.

The Nibelungen

Dracheneisen's power stems from its immense strength, but also from its rarity and from the difficulty in replacing it once it's lost. Only a scant handful of men possess the secret of forging dracheneisen. They belong to an ancient order of blacksmiths called *Nibelungen* – an order as mystical as it is practical. No one knows how the Nibelungen learned their craft, how they discovered that dracheneisen could be molded from its soft shape into a nearly unbreakable substance. But they guarded their secrets jealously and never permitted outsiders to learn what they alone can teach. They are the sole source of dracheneisen's power.

Eisen legends paint the Nibelungen as near-godlike figures, gathered high in the mountains of Hainzl and chanting indecipherable incantations around huge bonfires. Many stories involve a particularly respectful and cautious Eisen who approaches them to beg a boon. In return for a small item of dracheneisen, the Nibelungen typically request a service of great risk and daring. For instance, one man was asked to bring them a rose from the Sidhe Queen's garden, while another had to steal the courage from a great warrior. They always honored their promises, however, and delivered the dracheneisen to those who proved worthy.

Today, they have lost some of their mythic trappings; they're not gods at all, nor do they possess any real magic. But their secrets remain as closely held as ever, and the Eisen continue to treat them with quiet awe. They gather in hidden, isolated places – the tops of mountains, deep valleys, forest clearings – to practice their art far from the prying eyes of their countrymen. The Eisenfürsten all know how to contact them (or at least where they are most likely to appear), and provide them with the raw materials for their work, but they have no real control over them. The Nibelungen follow their own code and no one challenges them. They are ultimately the Eisenfürsten's source of authority, after all, and no one wants to anger them.

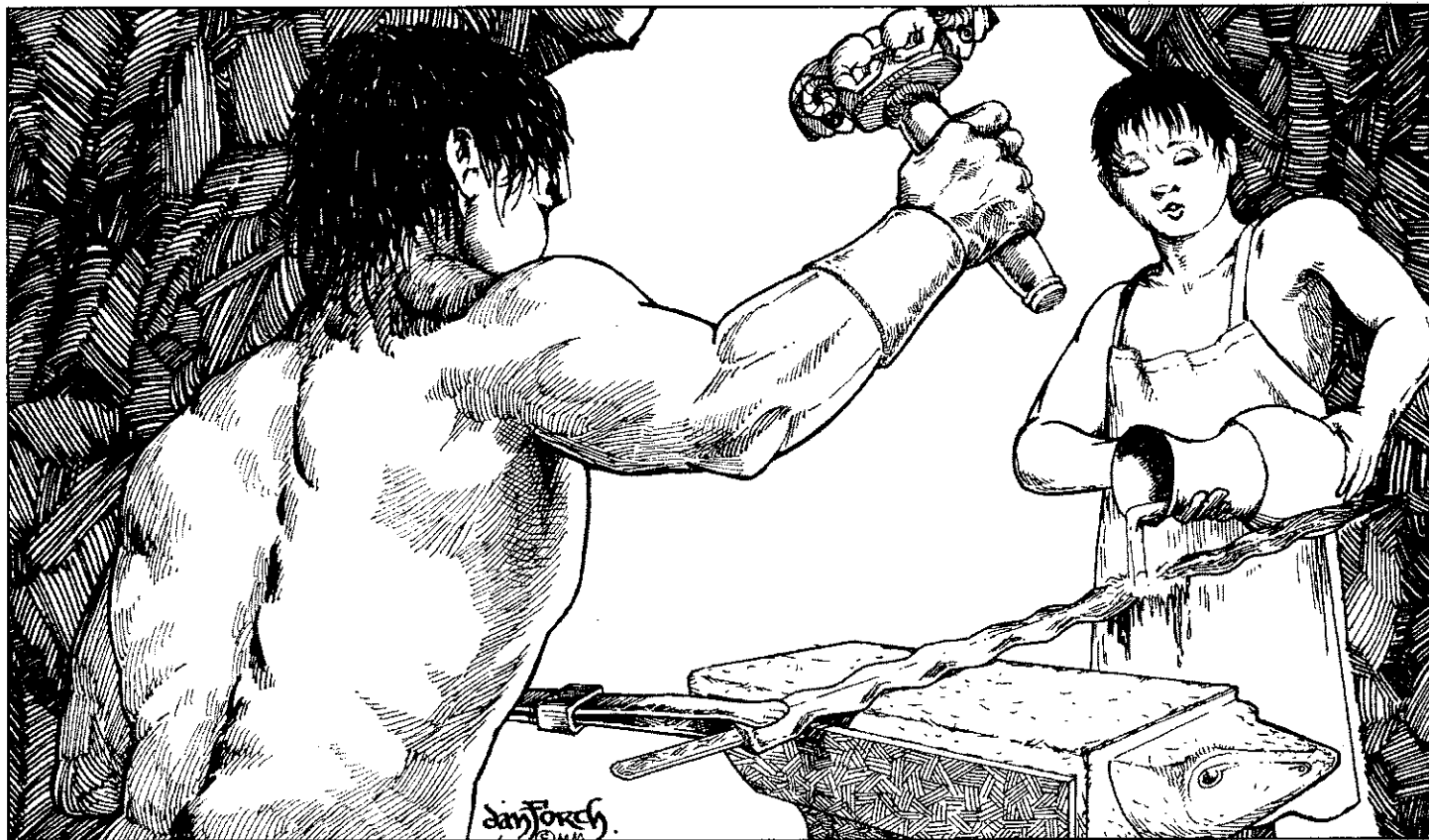


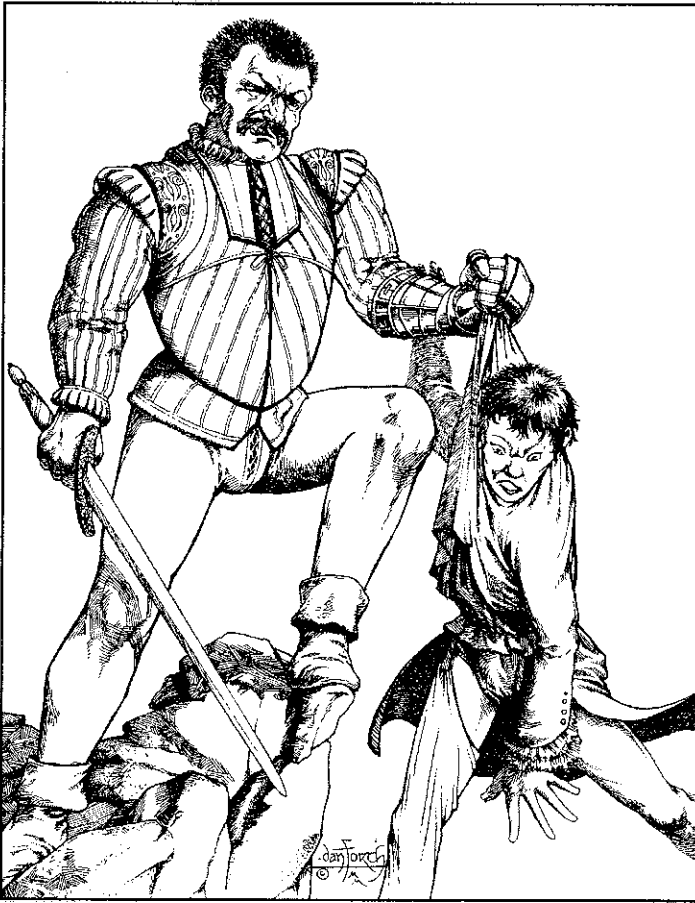
Joining the Nibelungen is no easy task; you cannot choose to become a member and those who ask are always refused. They carefully select those whom they train, appearing before young smith's apprentices and children who show particular promise. They never force anyone to join, but those who refuse membership never receive a second chance. Trainees travel with them deep into the southern Drachenbergs, where they receive years of teaching at a hidden locale. When they have passed all the tests and pledged to keep the secrets they have learned, they each forge a huge blacksmith's hammer for themselves – the symbol of the order and final proof of their skills.

A Nibelung's duties consist mainly of gathering at the appointed time, practicing his closely guarded craft, and embracing the ore's sacred duty to Eisen. As the legends state, the Nibelungen always request a service before giving someone a piece of armor. In this way, they ensure that only the strongest and bravest partake of their gifts. The

Eisenzürsten alone can request items without such fanfare, since they provide the Nibelungen with raw material. They must take care, however, not to push the mystic smiths too far – Eisenzürst who get greedy may find themselves cut off, unable to extract anything useful from their valuable mines.

When not chanting over their communal bonfires or working to create some new weapon or piece of armor, most Nibelungen lead quiet, solitary lives. They live in isolated cottages and dress in rough peasant's clothes, rarely entering towns or cities. Passersby often mistake them for woodcutters or hermits, never realizing the power behind their facades. They take care to conceal their hammers and never speak of their true allegiance. A few have even begun traveling the land, quietly lending their gifts to those they believe are worthy. None of them forget who they are, however, and all seem dedicated to keeping Eisen strong. For all the political turmoil around them, they remain at the





heart of their nation's power — and will continue long after the next Emperor lies dead.

More information on Nibelungen can be found in Chapter 3.

Practical Impacts

Dracheneisen items have several advantages over those forged from other metals. First off, they are incredibly sturdy. A sword made from dracheneisen takes approximately twice as much force to break as a comparable steel sword. Secondly, dracheneisen items are incredibly light (a full suit of dracheneisen armor weighs less than 5 pounds). There are recorded instances of warriors in full armor swimming out to ships in order to board them. Dracheneisen weapons are typically weighted with lead, gold, or iron in order to give them sufficient heft. Also, dracheneisen can be more finely forged than most other

metals and never loses its edge. While dracheneisen is being worked, it is soft and malleable; the nibelungen only endow it with its incredible strength after they have finished crafting it.

So why hasn't dracheneisen spread all over the world? Mostly because of the extremely limited supply. There are less than 1,000 full suits of dracheneisen in existence, and most have been split up into pieces over the years. Because it is so rare and difficult to find, the Eisen have developed a very protective attitude towards it, and while some pieces have made their way out of the country over the years, most thieves have found out the hard way that you shouldn't anger the deadliest warriors in the world.

Art

While Eisen art is sparse and drab compared to that of the Montaigne or Vodacce, it reveals a great deal about the people's inner beliefs. Most of their art is religious in nature, and depicts calm, peaceful scenes. It seems to show the world as the Eisen wish it could be instead of how it is.

Painting

While not as popular as opera, painting does have a respected place among the arts in Eisen. Most pieces are pastoral scenes, having little to do with war or violence. Recently, though, a painter named Johanna Huhn became famous for her "Field Marshal of Hypocrisy", an allegorical depiction of the War of the Cross. The painting depicts a grinning death in full military uniform, wielding a sword in each hand. The left-hand blade is old fashioned and elaborate, representing the Vaticine Church. The rapier in the right hand is polished and new, with few embellishments, and represents the Objectionist movement. Both swords, however, are killing innocent villagers in colossal numbers. The Church has denounced the painter, but this has had little impact on her popularity.

Sculpting and Jewelry

Most sculpture in Eisen is of a religious nature, featuring busts of the Prophets, Hierophants, saints, and other

important religious figures. Many soldiers wear *heiligen*, small necklaces devoted to the memory of a particularly famous warrior. These necklaces are worn in the hopes that the warrior will intercede with Theus on the wearer's behalf, perhaps preventing an early death on the battlefield. Warriors whose insignia often appear on *heiligen* include Stefan I (a drachen), Gottschalk I (a Prophet's Cross), Weiss the Great (a man with a crown of stars), Reifenstahl (a hammer), Stauss (a hawk in flight), Stefano Wulf (a wolf), and Gietl (a fox). Other figures exist, but these are the most common.

In addition to these religious figurines, another sort of necklace has become popular in Eisen – the lover's light. Using some simple glassblowing techniques, the sculptor creates tiny amber glass bubbles that seem to glow from within in dim light. These bubbles are common gifts among lovers, who create the necklaces themselves if possible.

Opera

Opera is the most popular of all the arts in Eisen. These dramatic tales of heroism and betrayal stir strong emotions within the hearts of their viewers. One of the most popular Eisen operas, *The Song of the Nibelungen*, depicts a young man's attempts to win his beloved's heart. She tells him that she can only love a noble, so he journeys to see the Nibelungen, and entreats them in the name of love to give him a dracheneisen sword so that he can marry her. The Nibelungen send the young man on three dangerous quests before he can earn his sword. First, he brings them a stone from the bottom of the Südlache, then he steals the shears from the Schattenmann, and finally he slays an ancient and fearsome drachen. Having accomplished all that they asked, he is given his sword, and weds the girl he loves.

Literature

Heroic sagas of the last few centuries dominate Eisen literature. Stories of St. Gregor and other men who faced insurmountable odds with courage and determination are the bread and butter of the Eisen. Perhaps the most famous author in this genre, Richter Masthoff, was wrongly sentenced to a life in prison some 300 years ago. He wrote

over fifty books in the twenty years before his death in prison, and many of them are still considered classics. Oddly enough, Richter simply used his writing to smuggle concealed messages to his wife. During his imprisonment, he orchestrated an elaborate peasant revolt by means of these messages. Thanks to his absentee leadership, the Baron who had imprisoned him was overturned. Unfortunately, the Baron ordered the slaughter of everyone he had imprisoned in his dungeons, including Richter. Three of Richter's known manuscripts have never been found, and would certainly be worth a fortune to collectors should they turn up.

A more recent trend in literature involves a book entitled *The Miner of Hainzl*. It could represent an entirely new philosophy in Eisen – one in which courage and heroism are not necessarily enough to win the day. In the book, a Hainzl miner is trapped by a cave-in, and slowly suffocates beneath the earth. When Death comes to claim him, the miner spins an elaborate argument stating that Death has no right to cut off his life in such an arbitrary manner. The argument spans 65 pages and quotes everything from the Book of the Prophets to the miner's fictional mother. In the end, Death agrees that the miner's argument is irrefutable – he has no right to claim the miner's life. Having said this, he reaches out and kills the miner anyway, whereupon the book ends. *The Miner* has only been in print for a few years, but has already spawned a host of imitators. The stories all stress value in the struggle, rather than the outcome – that meaning can be found in the fight, however futile or pointless it may be.

War

War in Théah has not changed much since the War of the Cross ended two years ago. Large blocks of cavalry and infantry are the rule, backed up with heavy and sometimes unreliable artillery. Cannons, while effective against tightly packed troops, really only truly shine during sieges, when they can pound even the thickest walls to dust.

Infantry

Units of infantry are most often “pike and powder”, a mixture of pikemen and musketeers. The pikemen keep any serious threats at bay while the musketeers unleash volley after volley of deadly shot. Other, less common types of soldier include the *doppel* soldiers, who are unique to Eisen. These zweihander-wielding swordsmen attack lines of pike, often lifting the polearms up with their enormous swords so that their fellows can duck underneath and close to hand-to-hand range. They receive twice the pay of a normal soldier because of their risky duty, lending them their name (from *doppelt soviel*: twice as much). Longbowmen (mostly from

Avalon), Eisen crossbowmen, and the Vestenmannavjar “bearsarks” also see occasional service.

Cavalry

Since the advent of pike and powder, cavalry has seen much less glory on the battlefield. Lighter, fast-moving horsemen armed with crossbows and spears have replaced the heavy chargers of yesterday. These mobile and versatile soldiers soften up enemy units before the infantry close to do battle. There are still a few remaining cavalry units of note left on Théah, including the Winged Kursars of Pösen (see page 35) who combine traditional cavalry techniques with terror tactics to great effect. Another cavalry band is the Vent Conquérant, an elite Montaigne unit that depends on its excellent Étalon stallions to kick and bite at anyone who comes near. Finally, there are the kazaks of Ussura – extraordinary horsemen skilled with spear, saber, and bow.

Artillery

Although cumbersome and difficult to move, cannons form an essential part of any modern army. Gunners fire their shots so as to bounce along the ground towards an approaching unit of infantry or cavalry. The resulting carnage as the ball smashes through man and horse alike is gruesome to behold. As units grow nearer, grapeshot and canister shot are used for wider effect at the cost of range. Every soldier relishes getting past a cannon to the lightly-armed men behind it. More than one cannon crew has suffered terrible retribution in return for their bloody rain of cannon fire.

Sieges

The days of square towers and thick stone walls are long past. In order for a fortress to function in modern Théah, several techniques must be used – cannon emplacements, earthen walls, strategically placed ditches, and cannon crossfire. Cannon emplacements allow cannons to move into favorable positions with little trouble. In addition, their sharply angled walls allow cannon shot to deflect off to one side, thereby saving a skilled crew and a valuable cannon.





It is not completely accurate to say that earthen walls have replaced stone walls. Rather, they are a refinement of earlier standards. Now, instead of wasting huge quantities of stone building thick walls, two thin walls are built – sometimes as far as twenty feet apart – and the space between them is filled in with dirt and sod. Even cannons have a difficult time blasting through a properly made earthen wall.

Sloping ditches often lie at the base of a fortress's walls. The idea is that advancing soldiers must drop down into the ditch and climb up the other side before reaching the wall itself. In the meantime, they are tempting targets for snipers positioned atop the wall.

A ruler can save on building enormous walls by making effective use of cannon crossfire. Fortresses are built at regular intervals with cannons that can fire near, but not directly at, each other. This creates deadly areas of crossfire between them: an enemy who tried to rush past would be torn to pieces. Opposing armies must stop and take out at least one of the fortresses before they can proceed, much as if a wall had existed in the first place.

That is not to say that these are the only innovations seeing use in Théah, merely the most common and noticeable.

Warbands

Many Eisen soldiers hire themselves out in groups known as “warbands” for mutual protection and companionship. A warband typically consists of five to fifty members, all trained fighters. Members of a given warband usually favor a particular fighting style, but some focus on diversity and adaptability instead. Warbands often have a Charter that dictates their policy concerning jobs and rates of pay as well as conduct. Those who do not follow the Charter's mandates are typically expelled from the warband.

The structure of a warband differs from group to group. All have a senior officer, but some also have treasurers, negotiators, and even historians who keep a log of the warband's deeds. Almost all of them carry a distinctive banner, since it's easier to fetch a higher price if a

prospective client recognizes the warband from a battle they've fought in.

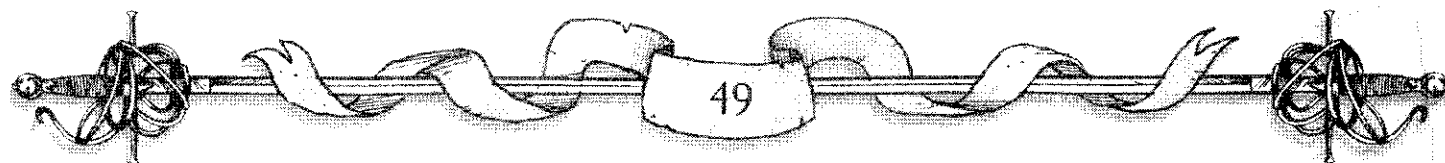
The most obvious advantage to joining a warband is having a number of skilled fighters who will back you up in a tight spot. However, membership comes with obligations, such as helping out when a job has been agreed to, and backing up other members when they're in tight spots themselves. Still, with the widespread destruction in Eisen, a warband is the closest thing many soldiers have to a family.

Science and Technology

Eisen has had few technological advances outside the battlefield, but those few have been extremely important. The Eisen invented the printing press, for instance, which has changed the face of culture and religion on Théah forever. (A Pösen monk named Tobias Vogel developed the invention in 1438 in an effort to spread the *Book of the Prophets* to as many people as possible.) Such innovations are rare, however, and often lost amid the more numerous developments of other countries.

On the other hand, when it comes to thinking up new ways of conquering their enemies, no one holds a candle to Eisen. Their artillery is considered the best in the world, packing a much bigger punch than any other nation's (although Montaigne artillery is slightly more accurate). In the field of fortifications, they are second only to the Castillians. The Stein (now Freiburg), Stahlfort, and Insel are regarded as three of the greatest fortresses ever built by human hands.

There is one area in which the Eisen are the undisputed masters – metallurgy. Their researches into dracheneisen has led them to numerous side discoveries that have given them harder steel, better mold techniques, and skilled laborers unequaled anywhere else. While the Montaigne or Castillians may have slight edges in a few areas, no one can touch Eisen engineering. Anyone who wants to build something impossible comes to an Eisen.





The Church in Eisen

The Vaticines and Objectionists dominate roughly half of Eisen apiece. Freiburg has little use for priests and religion, but the other six kingdoms are fertile grounds for the teachings of the Prophets.

The Vaticines

The Vaticines are a powerful force in northern Eisen. Pösen, Wische, and Heilgrund are all largely Vaticine kingdoms. There is even an Eisen on the Heiros Council, although she is currently in Montaigne on a diplomatic mission to the Empereur. Perhaps the most unusual Vaticine development to come out of Eisen is Pösen's order of Tobian monks. Other than the Tobians, the Vaticines of Eisen are solid traditionalists with a long history of close involvement with the Church – of which they are very proud.

The Objectionists

The Objectionists control southern Eisen. Fischler, Sieger, and Hainzl are all largely Objectionist. Objectionism was first founded in Eisen, and retains its strongest presence here. Specific beliefs differ from kingdom to kingdom, although they all espouse the basic Objectionist creeds (lack of church authority, universal communion with Theus, etc). They also include semi-pagan rituals such as the worship of Opa Nacht and the Matthiasts in Hainzl and the Shadow Fair in Fischler.

Mathias Lieber

The *Players' Guide* contains information on the Objectionist movement, its organization, and beliefs. The movement was founded by an Eisen, Mathias Lieber, who indirectly charged the Vaticines with corruption, hypocrisy and other crimes.

Lieber's ninety-five questions focused first on a particularly sensitive subject for the Church – repression of information about sorcery. The Church had many books in its possession that could shed light on the source and nature of sorcery, but it chose (and still chooses) to keep these books under lock and key. Lieber knew of this and believed that the Church was undermining its own teachings by keeping

these books away from its followers. Here is a small portion of a debate that raged between Lieber and Vaticine Cardinal Thomas Chandler at the Diet in Castille:

Chandler: With your questions, you seem to be accusing the Church itself of heresy, Brother Lieber. Is this what you intended when you wrote those words?

Lieber: No, your Eminence. I was merely drawing attention to what I felt was a grievous error in judgment on the Church's part.

C: Error? How so?

L: How can our followers better themselves when we deny them information? We have said that learning and knowledge are the path to finding Theus. The Church's part in suppressing information of any kind seems suspect in light of that.

C: Knowledge of Creation does indeed lead to the Creator, Brother. However, sorcery is not a part of Creation, and its presence pollutes Theus' work. That is why the information must be protected, lest sorcery spread across all of Theah and deliver Creation itself into the hands of Legion.

L: Shouldn't the people be allowed to reach that conclusion for themselves and reject sorcery based on knowledge rather than dogma?

C: It cannot be allowed. The information is too dangerous. As the First Prophet said, "Sorcery violates the sanctity of Creation, and is an unholy abomination in the eyes of the Creator."

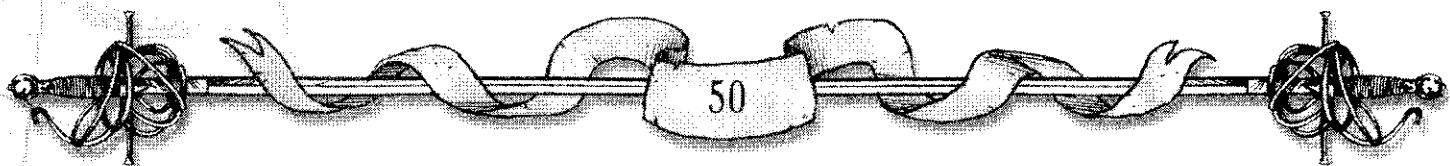
L: Point taken, Eminence. However, did not the Third Prophet say, "Our need to understand the Enemy is second only to our need to understand Creation?"

C: The Third Prophet was referring to the Church with that statement, Brother, not the common man.

L: Ah, but the common man is the Church!

C: Kindly do not raise your voice to this assembly, Brother...

The decision to suppress information on sorcery was only one aspect of Lieber's frustration. He also despised the Church's tendency to accumulate political power and wealth whenever the opportunity presented itself. Here is



another portion of the debate between Lieber and Chandler that touches on this subject:

L: Ah! So you do admit that the Church goes out of its way to acquire political power!

C: Of course, Brother. Our political influence makes it much simpler for us to reach the people with the Prophet's message.

L: But it violates our beliefs! Men should make their own decision on whether to follow the Church based on knowledge and a sense that our doctrine is the true path to the Creator, not based on laws that denounce other religions and bribes from the Church in the form of schools and hospitals.



C: You expect too much from overworked farmers, Brother.

L: On the contrary. You expect too little. Might I remind you that these "overworked farmers" are all part of Creation, and are therefore perfect in the eyes of Theus?

C: Careful, Brother. You are not in a position to dictate Church dogma to the Heiros Council.

L: But surely we must allow the people to reach their own conclusions – to find their own answers. To do otherwise is to insult the two greatest gifts we received from Theus – intelligence and free will...

Lieber never reached an agreement with the Vaticine Church. He felt that their methods were corrupt, while they believed in the necessity of their acts in order to prevent more grievous harm to their fellow man.

Lieber's line of questioning was considered insubordination by a Church already beset by external pressures. He insisted on an immediate release to the public of all books currently held by the Church and an admission of "oversights" concerning the relation of the Church to Theus. The Vaticines, for their part, felt that his demands could result in catastrophic turmoil. The argument grew more and more heated as the day dragged on. Perhaps things would have turned out differently if the parties involved had recessed to calm down. Instead, the debate culminated in this final exchange:

L: So, you will nothing to redress these wrongs, then? You will ignore the message of Theus and the Prophets in order to line your own pockets and keep the people under your control!

C: That's ridic–

L: (shouting him down) The Church has turned away from the path to Theus because of men like you, men who would take away Theus' gifts to his people simply to sleep more soundly at night! Well, I denounce all of you!

(At this point, the Hierophant rose from his seat and pointed angrily at Lieber.)

Hierophant: Be silent, Brother! We have endured your barbs long enough! The Church is the only defense against Legion, and we must do as we see fit.

L: A convenient excuse to ignore the words of the Prophets. I can no longer be a part of this fraud. I am going to walk among the people and tell them how they are being manipulated and lied to by you. I will cleanse this corruption, even if I have to destroy the Church itself!

H: I see. There is no other option, then. The Church must present a unified face to the world. There cannot be another Hierophant War. (He sighs) I hereby excommunicate you, Brother Matthias Lieber. Guards, remove him from the presence of this Council. He is to be executed tomorrow. I regret this decision, but the Church cannot protect the people if it is busy fighting itself.

L: (as he is led away) Killing me will not right the wrongs the Church is committing. The people will not be blinded forever!

Clearly, the Hierophant acted to prevent yet another Church split such as the one that moved it from Vodacce to Castille. Ironically, once Lieber escaped, the attempt to have him executed lent weight to his words and eventually

brought the Vaticines to their current sorry state. After all, without the split, there would have been no War of the Cross, and without the War, the King of Montaigne would not have had the opportunity to cast out the Church.

Objectionist and Vaticine Relations

Animosity between the two religious groups has mostly died off thanks to the War of the Cross. Everyone is simply too worn down to keep fighting, so they do their best to ignore one another. Naturally, this doesn't mean that the odd barfight won't break out if someone's a bit loud and opinionated about his beliefs, but pistols and knives are usually left at home.

Ceremonies & Special Events

Occasionally, a special occasion alleviates the monotony of even the poorest peasant's life. People get married, have children, and die, in addition to the holidays and celebrations such as the Shadow Fair. While these events aren't always welcome, they are at least a break from the grinding routine of day-to-day existence.



Marriage

Vaticine marriages in Eisen are normally performed by a priest, who leads the couple in their vows in front of at least three witnesses. An Objectionist marriage, on the other hand, typically forgoes the formality of a priest (although the local chaplain is usually present). The couple merely recites their vows and shares a drink of wine or beer from an ornate mug known as a stein. Most couples proudly display their wedding stein in their home for the rest of their lives. A mixed



marriage often performs both ceremonies, to appease both the groom's and the bride's family. After the vows comes a meal followed by loud music and dancing. Because of the current state of the nation, guests often bring food to weddings as a gift. This saves a poor couple any embarrassment by not being able to feed their guests.

Funerals

Among the Eisen, a funeral is a solemn occasion. Mourners drink a great deal of beer, shed many tears, and tell numerous stories about the deceased. Funerals take place within two or three days of death, with the corpse being buried in the local cemetery in a shroud. Coffins are disdained, since the living need wood much more than the dead; a coffin burial is usually a sign of excessive wealth. Often, fine clothing, a favorite possession, or a treasured weapon is buried with the deceased. However, dracheneisen is never buried — it's far too valuable and much too tempting to grave robbers.

Births

When a child is born, its father often takes it to a priest or a chaplain for an examination as soon as possible. He gives the new parent some suggestions on how to best take care of the child, and notes the birth in his records (if Vaticine). The father then returns the child to its mother and takes care of her until she regains her strength. One of the most important decisions new parents must make is the choice of an *ehrenname* (name of honor) for the child. If they name the child after someone living, that creates a bond between the two, almost as if the baby had an extra aunt or uncle. Parents will often choose rich friends or relatives for the *ehrenname*, although to do so without some existing contact is considered tactless. Others honor dead heroes or honored ancestors. Although the child does not gain the material benefits of a living *ehrenname* donor, he has a proud name that he can bear with honor for the rest of his life.

Economy

In most *königreichen*, the economy is in poor shape. Taxes differ between areas and fluctuate from month to month.

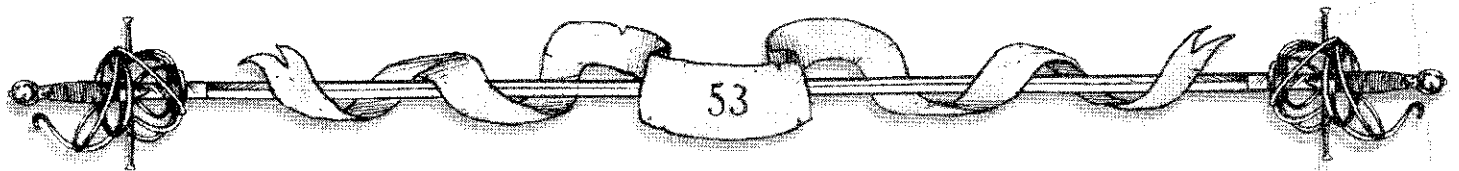
The peasants never know exactly what to expect from their rulers, which has caused many of them to pack their things and move away. For those who stay, there is seldom enough food to go around, and the provisions they *do* manage to procure are of such low quality that people from other nations would turn up their noses at them. The only Eisen making a comfortable living these days are the nobles and the soldiers. The nobles have their lands and their people to draw upon, while the soldiers have found their skills in high demand, and charge premium rates for them.

Riverboats

Rivers play a vital role in the Eisen economy, moreso perhaps than any other nation. The War of the Cross destroyed much of the country, leaving many roads all but impassable. With few easy overland trade routes, Eisen merchants have thus made heavy use of rivers to get their cargo where it needs to go. From the great River to the south to the Rotstrom to the north, Eisen's rivers have become arteries of commerce, supporting the nation as she struggles to rebuild.

Unlike the great merchant schooners of Vendel and Avalon, Eisen riverboats are usually small, flat barges pushed by long poles. Sailing ships don't function well in the shallow waters of Eisen's rivers and without sufficient space to tack, few wind-driven vessels can maneuver in such narrow straits. The dangers of the *Südlache* make large ships impractical there as well. While a few good-sized vessels cruise the River itself, most Eisen use barges to move trade goods.

Barges have a number of crewmen ranging from two to several dozen. Most of them work the poles (or paddles if the river is too deep). A pilot (usually the captain) works the tiller while a mate oversees operations. Most barges have a small sail for use when the wind is favorable, and a topman is occasionally employed for that. There's no navigator, since none is needed, and experienced pilots know how to gauge their speed by the landmarks they pass. A quiet rivalry has sprung up between riverboat crews and seagoing sailors, prompting countless brawls and tavern arguments in Eisen's ports.



Riverboat pilots see themselves as pioneers of a sort — free from the shackles of the königreichen, yet still serving Eisen. They haven't abandoned their country, or gone mercenary like so many of their fellows. Yet they do not swear loyalty to any one Eisenfürst. Their position allows them a great deal of freedom, traveling from one kingdom to the next with impunity (providing, of course, that they can pay the tolls). Many of them work for the Vendel, since Vendel merchants need ways of getting their products inland. When not helping their northern neighbors, some riverboat pilots have turned smuggler, since they can transport goods with ease. A few have also begun moving food and other vital supplies to devastated areas — often at considerable personal expense. Although not much now, their efforts have helped keep the country together, and may have a profound impact when and if the country finally reunifies.

Other Nations

Of the different nations of Théah, the only groups the Eisen actively dislike are the Avalons, the Montaigne, and the Vodacce. The Avalons have a reputation as tricksters and liars — a man can't be certain if what he sees is real when dealing with a Glamour Mage. The Montaigne's opportunistic and cowardly involvement in the War of the Cross is unforgivable, though most Eisen will overlook this if they're offered enough money. Lastly, Eisen greatly fear the Vodacce Fate Witches, which translates into a mistrust of Vodacce in general. What good is studying swordsmanship if a veiled woman can make you fall on your opponent's sword?

As for the other nations, the Eisen have no particular grudges against them. They get along passably with the Castillians, despite the ill feelings incurred during the last months of the war. The Ussurans are looked upon as well-meaning savages — good-hearted, but unsophisticated in the ways of the world. They know better than to try and educate them, however; four disastrous invasions have taught the Eisen that Ussura should be left alone. Vendel is a mixed bag, of course. They appreciate the Vendel's civility and sophistication, but can't stand the merchants'

shameless exploitation of Eisen's current sorry state. As for the Vestenmannavnjar... any Eisen general will tell you not to confront a cornered dog.

In spite of these generalizations, an Eisen judges the people he meets on their own merits and flaws. They are more cautious around groups they mistrust, of course, but no Eisen is going to attack a man simply because he's Vodacce.

Eisen Legends

While most folk legends in Eisen are heroic sagas, that does not mean that there are no cautionary tales circulating in Eisen — far from it. Many stories contain clues on how certain monsters have been defeated in the past. Two of these tales, as told by an Eisen miller named Gotthard Wernicke, are transcribed below.

The Schattenmann and the Willful Boy

What I am about to tell you happened many years ago in the town of Seeufer. There was a young boy who did not like to listen to what his parents told him. His mother, a wise woman, warned him to always make sure that he was home before dark, because the Schattenmann roamed the area in those days. The boy paid no attention to his mother, of course. A few days later, he went fishing in the Südlache and fell asleep on the shore in some reeds.

The other fishermen did not see him when they left for home, and by the time he woke up, it was already near dark. He was preparing to leave when he noticed the biggest fish he'd ever seen swimming in the water. The fish was so big that he felt he couldn't leave without at least trying to catch it. So the boy stayed and cast his hook near the fish, but it ignored the bait and just stared at him. Frustrated, he tried again and again as the sun disappeared below the horizon, but the fish ignored him until the very last ray of sunlight faded away. In that instant, the fish took the bait, and the boy jerked hard to set his hook. Suddenly, a column of water shot up into the air, and the boy felt himself pulled off his feet. There, holding him up by his fishing pole, was the Schattenmann itself. It peered into the



boy's eyes and said, "I've got you now, little boy. I'm going to enjoying gutting and filleting you."

The boy started screaming at the top of his lungs for help, and some nearby soldiers heard him. Grabbing their lanterns, they ran to where the scream had come from, but they weren't quite quick enough. By the time they arrived, the Schattenmann had fled their lights, leaving nothing behind but bloodstains on the shore behind.

That's not the end of the tale, though. A few days later, a fisherman came across a fishing pole braced against some rocks on the shore. The pole was bent, as though a large fish was hooked on it, so the fisherman pulled in the line. When he did so, his hair turned snow white, for there on the end of the line was the boy's severed head. The fisherman was so frightened that he never spoke again. As for the boy, that's what happens to children who don't mind their mothers — the Schattenmann gets them.

The Last of the Drachen?

The last man to slay a drachen was a monster hunter named Leopold Weidenhammer. A little over ninety years ago, Leopold was staying in the town of Insel when some farmers came, claiming that a drachen had eaten their livestock. This caused quite an uproar among the nobles; each was eager to claim the creature for himself. Leopold didn't think he would have a chance at the drachen himself, but he figured that he could at least get a look at the corpse,

so he went along. For several days, the nobles mocked Leopold endlessly. Accustomed to taking abuse, Leopold replied that he merely wished to watch the hunt.

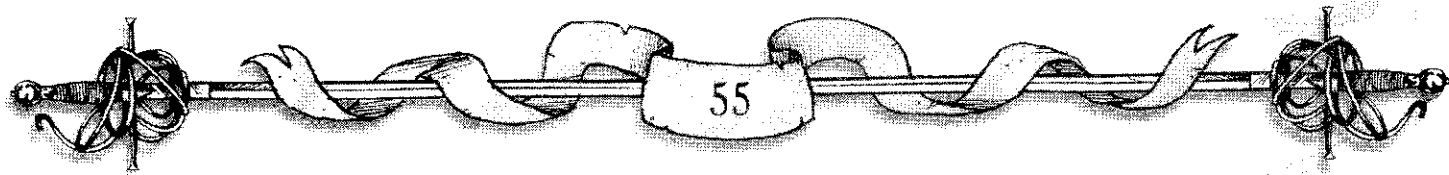
Eventually, the hounds caught the creature's scent, and the party raced ahead on their steeds. Leopold, having walked the whole way, was quickly left behind, with only a loaf of bread, a piece of cheese, and a jug of wine for company. Realizing that he could never catch up with the others, he sat down and began to eat his lunch. As he chewed on his bread and cheese, Leopold gradually became aware that something was watching him. Carefully looking around, he spotted a large reptilian creature staring at him from behind a rock outcropping. It was the drachen, which had apparently doubled back on its own trail to lose the hunters.

Hissing, the creature started towards Leopold. Taking one last swig for bravery, he

threw the wine bottle at the monster's head. Quick as a flash, it snapped up the bottle and swallowed it whole, even as Leopold was busily looking for a tree to climb. Fortune must have smiled on Leopold that day, for the wine bottle lodged in the drachen's throat, and it began to choke. It tried in vain to dislodge the bottle, but it was no use. Leopold almost felt sorry for the monster as it fell to the ground, shuddered, and died. Of course, his pity was nothing compared to the embarrassment the nobles felt when they came back. Although he could honestly claim the title of drachenslayer, Leopold never did — he never felt that a lucky throw merited such an accolade.

The Drachen in Eisen Culture

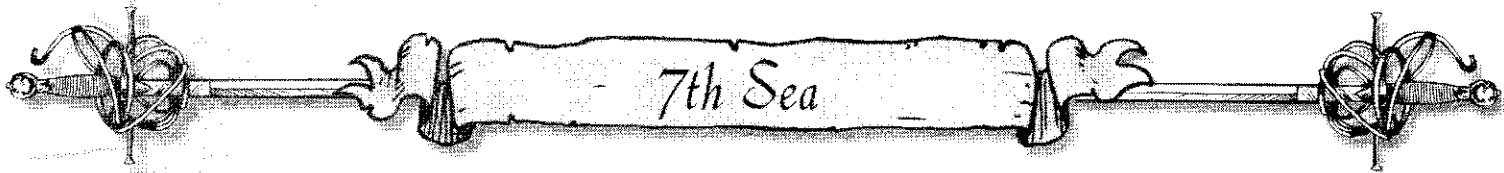
At the heart of Eisen culture lies the creature which has dominated the country since the earliest days of tribal barbarians: the Drachen. Early Eisen worshiped the monsters from afar, hoping to gain some measure of their might. As time went on, the drachen became ingrained into their society, representing everything from the power of the gods to the nobility of kings. Today Eisen view the drachen as a symbol of strength, willpower, and refusal to give in — everything the country once was and hopes to be again. But they also see it in a much darker light: as the uncontrollable power of nature, as the harshness of an uncaring world, as a force which can toss them aside like twigs. Both aspects resonate deeply with the Eisen, and both play a vital role in their society. Drachen images dominate Eisen artwork, tales of drachen form a pillar of literature, and soldiers often invoke the drachen before going into battle. These trends continue despite the fact that no one has actually laid eyes on a drachen for almost a century. For better or for worse, the Eisen consider the beasts a part of their soul, and woe be to any foreigner who makes light of it.







Hero



*...Ye Mighty, and
Despair, Part Three*

The cold stone walls loomed above the iron throne where Reinhard von Wische sat slumped. His hair was unkempt, his clothing in disarray, and his gaze fixed on a point three feet above the doorway, where a portrait of his family hung – a memento of better times.

Near the fireplace, several clerks huddled around a desk, reading and signing papers with the von Wische name. The newest of them paused and looked over at their lord.

"I wonder what's going through his mind," he mused.

"It's best not to think about it," responded one of his fellows, never pausing in his work. "If you could understand the thoughts of a madman, you'd be mad yourself."

The first clerk thought for a moment. "Is it true that he murdered the messenger who told him about his wife's death?" The second merely nodded, and signed a letter.

Behind von Wische's blue eyes, another world glittered...



"That's right, Kurt. Lay into him! Don't give him a moment to think! Josef, keep your blade up. Use your size to your advantage. Hans, hang back more and look for an opening. Don't be so eager!" He called directions to his sons, who were practicing their swordplay under the watchful eyes of their parents. The sun was shining over lush fields. He sat there for awhile, happier

than he could ever remember being. Then his wife leaned over to him.

"Dear, it's time to go inside."

He felt his chest tighten. He couldn't go inside. Something terrible would happen there. He could never go inside again.

"Not yet, love. Just a little while longer," he pleaded.

"Sorry, dear, but you have audiences to give," his wife reminded him gently. Above, the sky shattered into gray stones as the sun went out with a hiss.



Reinhard's finger twitched. The clerks never noticed.



"My Lord, I'm sorry. I bring terrible news from Siegsburg..."

That man knelt before him again. He had to keep him from talking. He had to stop him this time.

"It's about your wife..."

Drawing his sword, Reinhard leapt to his feet. "Silence!" he screamed, running the man through. A freezing wind blew through the room, stripping the flesh from the kneeling messenger until a grinning skeleton faced him. Its jaw opened and it spoke to him anyway.

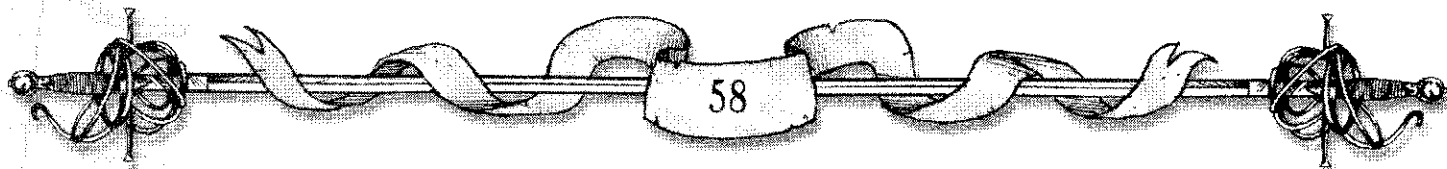
"There was a fire. She's dead."



His hands slowly clenched the sides of the throne. Deep cuts on his palm began to drip blood. Still the clerks continued with their work, ignorant of their lord's pain.



The skeleton was back. This time it pointed to Kurt, now a handsome young man seated to Reinhard's right.





"It's about your son, Kurt..."

Kurt slumped over in his seat, dead. Flames licked at his corpse, and in moments, there were only ashes left.

Reinhard stumbled from his throne, kneeling on the floor in front of the dead messenger. "Please, stop! What do you want from me?"

"I have a message for you. It's about your son, Josef," it continued, pointing at the sandy-haired boy who had just entered the room. Josef jerked, blood spreading across his chest as his eyes glazed over, and then slumped to the floor.



His entire body tensed as he sat forward in his throne, blood running down his hands. A low keening built up in his throat, and with dull horror, the first clerk turned to stare at him as though he were a corpse come to life. The other clerks scarcely seemed to notice.



He cradled Josef in his arms now, though he didn't remember crossing the room.

"Oh, Theus. No more! I will give you everything I own, just have mercy!"

The dead messenger was walking towards him now, a scroll in its hands. In an instant, he was on his feet, stumbling backwards away from the apparition. Josef's corpse had vanished like mist.

"Stay away from me! Take your message and go! I don't want it!"

Tripping, he fell backwards into the iron throne. Its metal arms gripped him tightly as the skeleton pressed the message into his hand. His hands seemed to have a life of their own, and fumblingly opened the scroll even as he willed them to throw it into the fireplace. As they had so many times before, the damning words hung in the air before his eyes.

"My Lord,

I have failed in my duties to you. Your son, Hans, was killed by a highwayman's bullet. I have sent this letter because I cannot face you again.

– Karl Thomas Steiner"

Reinhard felt his body grow limp, and his castle dissolved into ashes around him as he let the message flutter away in the wind. "I have become a Prince of ashes, nothing more," he murmured, and then the sky shattered into blue.

He sat down to watch his boys practice their fencing moves.



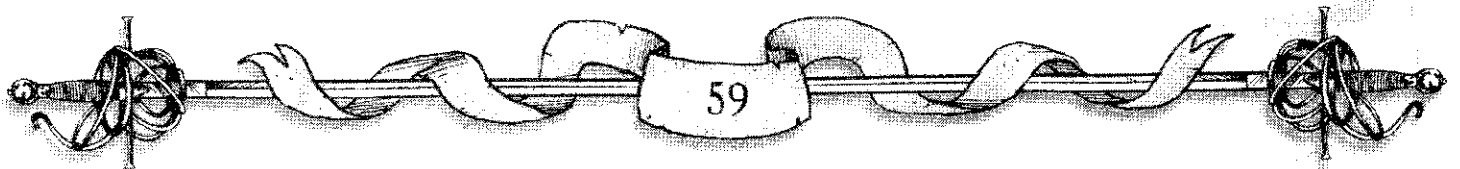
The keening sound rose to a heart-stopping moan of pain, like that of a dying animal. The Prince shook in his chair, unable to release his grip on the arms, as all his pent-up anguish rushed out into the world. Finally, he slumped back into the throne, and attendants entered the room to tend to his wounds.

The clerk licked his lips nervously. "Does he do that often?"

His fellows smirked at him. "Four times a day, without fail. You'll get used to it."

He studied their placid expressions, and thought again of the Prince's terrible scream. Shivering, he muttered to himself, "Mother was right. You *can* get used to anything."

Then, glancing over at the sweat-soaked figure in the throne, he corrected himself. "Then again, perhaps not."



Eisenfürsten

Faulk Tobias Fischler

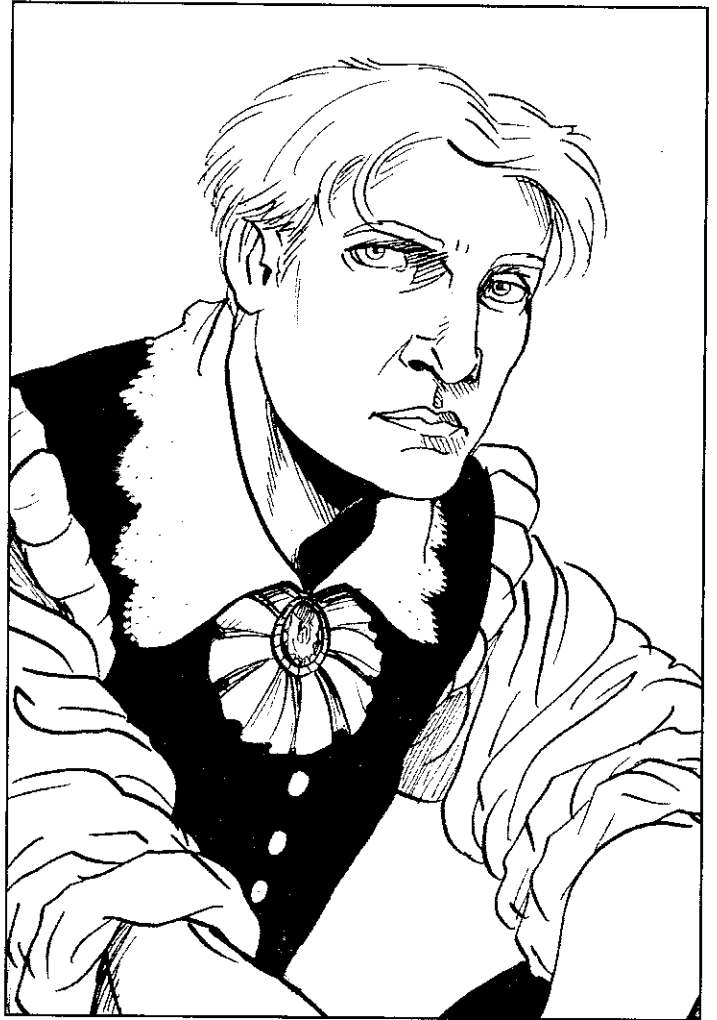
As a young boy fishing on the Südlache, Faulk dreamed of someday becoming a noble. He wanted to command the respect his father and mother gave to their lord. He wanted his words to have some weight. Most of all, he wanted to matter. Faulk was afraid that after he died, no one would ever remember him.

He knew that the key to becoming a noble was to find a dracheneisen mine, so he began carefully exploring the area. Seven years later, he gave up in disgust; it was clear he was going to be a fisherman for the rest of his life. That's when he stumbled across the cave, less than a stone's throw from Seeufer. It held a rich vein of dracheneisen. Fischler took a sample of it, and he and his little sister, Katerina, went to the Emperor's palace. According to tradition, the Emperor made him a Baron, splitting off a portion of Heilgrund and Sieger for the young man's barony. Since he was a fisherman by trade, the Emperor also charged him with the caretaking of the Südlache.

Unfortunately for Faulk, nobility was not what he'd hoped. The existing Eisenfürsten looked down on him. No matter what he did, the stench of his origins stayed with him. His old friends changed their attitudes towards him, either seeing him as a source of income, or treating him with such deference that he couldn't bear their company. Only his sister stayed by his side.

Things went from bad to worse a few years ago when he noticed that the Südlache was failing to produce as abundantly as it used to. Now, on top of all his troubles, he had to contend with a potentially catastrophic shortage of resources. Fortunately for him, a letter arrived from the Gaius Nikolovich of Ussura. It seemed that the Gaius' son had somehow seen a painting of Faulk's sister and wanted to meet her. Seeing the opportunity to perhaps save the kingdom, the two traveled to Ussura.

The Gaius was quite impressed; Faulk's fisherman origins fit in well with the man's notions of good leadership, and



Faulk Tobias Fischler

Katerina's beauty and common sense entranced both the Gaius and his son. She agreed to marry the Gaius' son, and in exchange Faulk would receive a lucrative food-for-arms trade that would allow him a few years to let the Südlache recover from being overfished.

Of course, that left Faulk entirely alone, except for his advisor, Franziska. She refuses to talk about anything but politics, however, so the Eisenfürst has been forced to haunt the pubs of Seeufer, where at least the bartenders will listen to him talk if he tips well.

Fischler is a blond man who looks much younger than his thirty-six years. For a noble, his hands are very callused, and his clothing rather poor – reminders of his past.

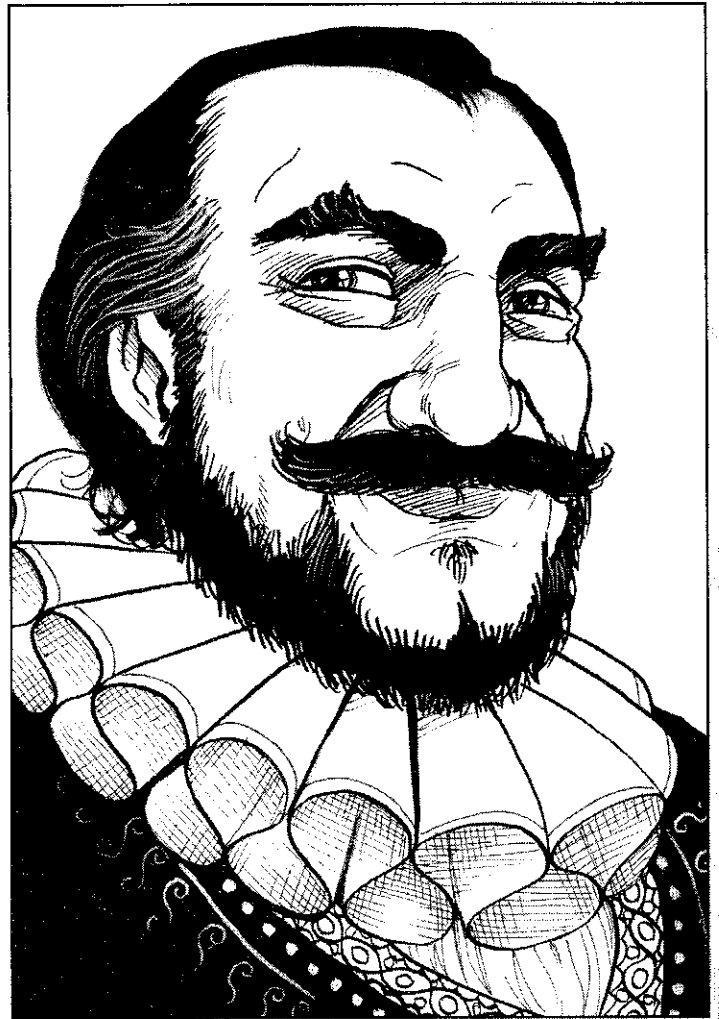
Georg Hainzl

More information on Georg can be found on page 59 of the Game Masters' Guide.

When he was a young man, Georg was a famous patron of the arts – particularly opera. He built an extravagant opera house in Atemlos and imported several skilled singers to indulge his hobby. One fateful day, the opera troupe decided to perform a work entitled *The Three Owls*, based on a piece of local folklore. Hainzl was so delighted with it that he decided to have a castle built just like the one in the opera – complete with the upstairs door which led to the main character's tragic death in the story.

Hainzl moved in once construction had finished, but he avoided the upstairs door out of a vague superstitious fear that like the boy in the story, it would destroy him. His fears got worse, until his heart pounded every time he walked past. Finally, in an effort to regain his peace of mind, he unlocked the door and went through.

When they found him the next morning, he was a raving lunatic. He hunched by the now-locked door in a state of high agitation and claimed to be a miner from a famous book. He was chipping away at the wall with a hammer he'd gotten from somewhere.



Georg Hainzl

Happily for Georg, he had loving friends and family. They took over the affairs of the kingdom for him, hoping that he would recover someday. So far, he has not shown any improvement; each day, he assumes the role of a different character, taken from an opera, a book, or a stage play. One day, he might be a tragic lover, the next a tyrant from ancient Numa. They've had to forbid him from attending the operas he used to love, because he can no longer tell reality from fantasy. The last time he attended a play, he assumed the role of the hero in the middle of the performance and stepped up on stage to fight the villain. Unfortunately, he was wearing a real sword at the time, and the actor only had a wooden one. They managed to restrain

Georg before he killed the poor man, but not before he had inflicted two nasty wounds on the performer's face, ruining his acting career forever. The family was forced to pay off the actor with a huge pension, and promised the company that Hainzl would no longer attend any performances.

The staff has learned to cope with Georg's madness. They keep real weapons out of his reach, supplying acting props if he demands them — he can't tell the difference anyway. More than one of the female servants has been kissed passionately, but they've learned to be quick on their feet when he's acting out a romantic lead. As for the male servants, they've gotten very good at dodging the occasional mock sword wielded by their Prince.

Hainzl is an older, overweight man with a mad gleam in his eyes. He has a large, bulbous nose, and his hair has begun to gray a bit at the edges. He dresses in outlandish costumes, based on whatever character he's "playing" at the time. No one knows what he saw to drive him insane, nor do they know the cure, but as long as his kingdom remains prosperous, his family continues to care for him.

Stefan Gregor Heilgrund III

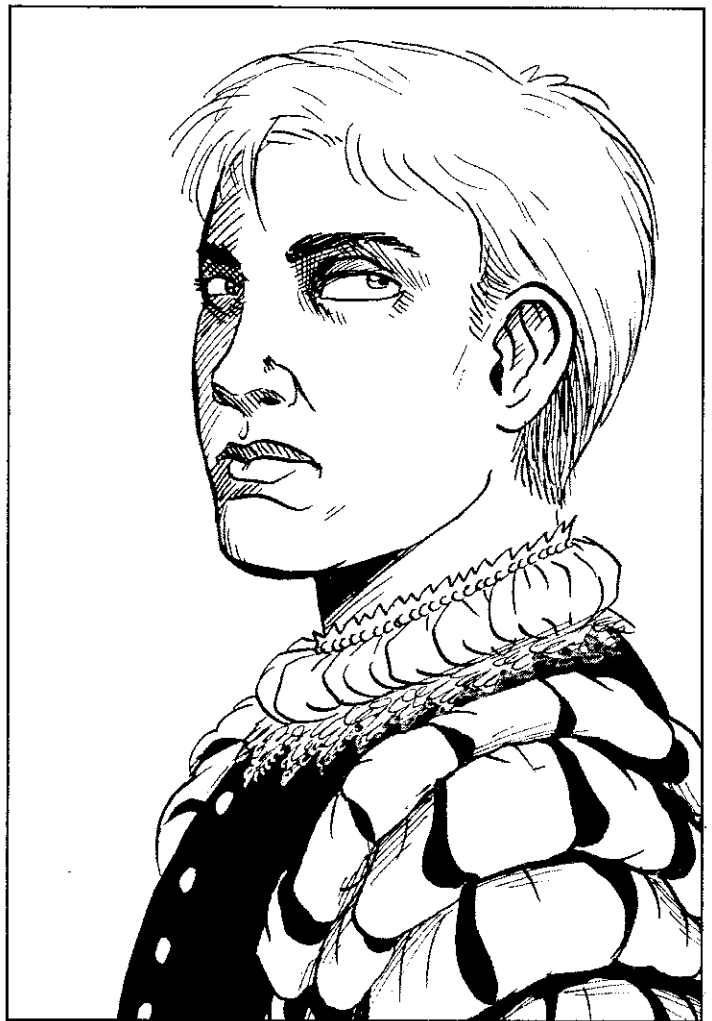
More information on Stefan can be found on page 59 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Ever since he was a boy, Stefan has been pressured to maintain his family's noble heritage. After all, the Heilgrunds were the first to receive a barony in Eisen, and by Stefan I no less. He has the bearing of an aristocrat without the power and dignity to back it up.

Stefan feels that he shamed his family even before becoming a man. He was staying in the palace as a guest the night that Riefenstahl committed suicide. To this day, he's uncertain exactly what happened. He was chatting with a young lady in one of the sitting rooms and the next thing he knew, it was morning. Realizing that some powerful sorcery was afoot, Stefan ran to check on the Emperor, only to learn that he had committed suicide the night before. Although nearly everyone else in the palace had a similar "blackout", he has always felt that he should have

resisted the spell somehow and gone to the Emperor's aid. The Heilgrunds had a duty to protect Riefenstahl, and he let them down. This guilt was reinforced later that year when his parents, horrified by the collapse of the nation, shared a cup of deadly nightshade, and were found dead in each other's arms.

Stefan burns for redemption. He plans to reunite Eisen, under his rule if possible, but another could serve if it helped rebuild the nation. Thanks to the other Eisenfürsten's arrogance, he's convinced that the only way to do this is to force their hands through military means.



Stefan Gregor Heilgrund III

Thus, he has begun conducting occult studies in an effort to find some sort of magic or device powerful enough to conquer the rest of the nation.

The other Eisenfürsten consider him something of a joke. He's extremely young, rather conceited, and often speaks his mind without thinking. Nicklaus Trägue keeps an eye on the boy, certain that he will be either very useful or very dangerous some day, but the others are content to either ignore or belittle him. For his part, Stefan has broken off relations with the other Eisenfürsten save Trägue, who seems to listen to him, and Fauner Pösen, whom he has a crush on.

Stefan is a young man with dull brown hair and sparkling blue eyes. He seems lethargic and bored most of the time, but those who know him realize that he has a great deal of energy and drive hidden within. He has acquired a reputation as an expert in Syrneth artifacts; he's a major patron of the Explorers' Society, and often purchases their smaller and more unusual findings. He even offers his expertise occasionally to those who bring an unusual object to him for investigation. His eyes burn brightly during these examinations, and his boredom vanishes beneath a wave of excitement. Stefan is quite intelligent, and notices far more than anyone gives him credit for.



Fauner Konrad Pösen

Fauner Konrad Pösen

More information on Fauner can be found on page 60 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Fauner was born during the third year of the War of the Cross. She has been surrounded by war and fighting all her life, and it shows. Her father, anxious for his daughter to be able to properly defend herself and run the kingdom, had her tutored by the greatest swordsmen and tacticians he could find. She excelled, delighting in the training and pushing herself far beyond anyone's expectations. She even invented several moves of her own that she has never taught anyone else.

Fauner has killed over one hundred people, nearly forty of them in one-on-one duels. She sees killing as a tool, and

uses it to reinforce her authority both with the other Eisenfürsten and with her own people. It is uncertain whether she feels remorse for these killings, or if she sees them as unavoidable acts.

She governs like a military commander, dispensing curt, easy-to-follow orders that she expects to be followed to the letter. Unfortunately, her inability to delegate and propensity to do everything herself prevents her from being as effective as she'd like. She can handle a single königreich, but may be too rigid to rule an entire nation. She could reconquer Eisen with ease if she chose, but wouldn't have the first idea



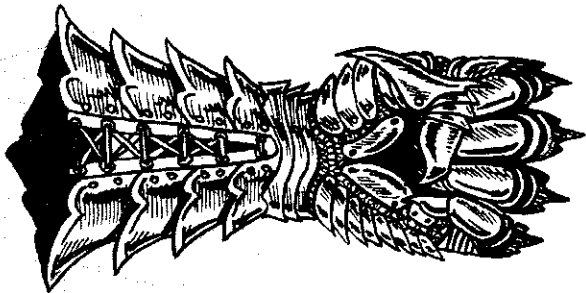
what to do with it. Fortunately for her and for Eisen, she seems to have little interest in a war of conquest.

When she was in her early twenties, Fauner took a lover. Unfortunately, he was faithless, and she caught him with another woman. Overcome with rage, Fauner reacted in the only way she knew how – she killed them both. She has since avoided romantic entanglements, convinced that they will only end in pain.

She is still frequently pestered by suitors, however. After all, she's powerful, rich, and beautiful. Frequently, once the men realize that she is not interested in them, they grow angry. She has had to kill several of her suitors when they overstepped their bounds, damaged her reputation, or (in one rather stupid noble's case) forced themselves on her.

Currently, her most persistent suitor is a man named Hendryk Brandt. A few days after being introduced to him in court, she awoke to hear him serenading beneath her window. Tired beyond her limits, she got up, walked over to the balcony, and pushed a small statue out the window onto him. Luckily for him, he managed to shield his face in time; he only broke an arm instead of his skull. Closing her window to block out his moans of pain, Fauner went back to bed. That didn't stop his ardent advances though, much to her disgust. The very next day he was smiling and waving to her (with his good arm) in court.

Pösen is a tall, athletic woman with an angelic face, short blond hair, and gray eyes. She carries herself like a warrior when she moves, and anyone who's seen her fight knows better than to insult her honor. Fauner has a reputation as the finest warrior in all of Eisen, but that doesn't stop men's hearts from racing when they see her.



Erich Sieger

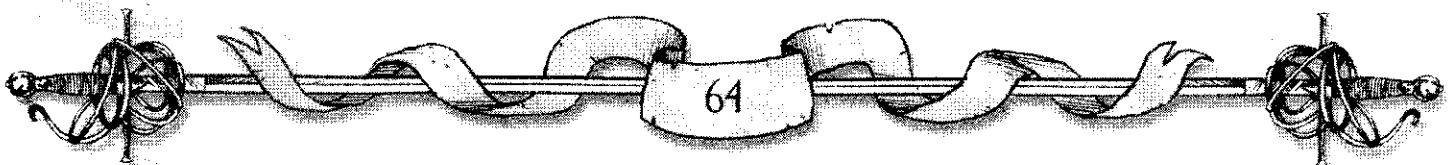
More information on Erich can be found on page 60 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Sieger was always extremely devoted to his ideals. During the War of the Cross, he and his father led a portion of the Vaticine forces into battle. The Objectionists had them surrounded, and his father planned to surrender to them. Erich tried to talk him out of it, but when it became obvious that the man's mind was made up, Sieger strangled him to prevent him from dishonoring the family name. Then he led his men to victory, advancing under the pretense of a white flag, then galloping through the Objectionist forces before they could react.

Until the end of the war, Sieger was a devout Vaticine. He fought and watched his men die in the name of the Hierophant. Then Castille and Montaigne invaded, and Riefenstahl was forced to give up a great deal of land in order to assure peace. He chose Sieger's land partially because it was close to the border, but mostly because he disliked the young ruler intensely. Sieger, feeling betrayed, returned to his lands in a fury. Not only had his Emperor turned on him, his Church had stood by, eager to take his land. He cast the Vaticine clergy out of his kingdom, then burned and salted the fields. If Castille and the Church were going to take his land, they'd get nothing but ashes. Almost to his surprise, the Castillians looked at the territory they'd received and decided they didn't want it. His strategy had succeeded beyond his wildest expectations, and his kingdom was safe for the moment.

Sieger has only ever been involved with one woman, a commoner he romanced in his younger days. His feelings for her died when she told him she was pregnant and tried to use the baby as leverage to marry him. Realizing that she'd been after his money all along, Sieger has never acknowledged her existence since.

His son, Logan Gottschalk Sieger, on the other hand, fills Sieger with pride. He has always taken an interest in the boy, and when he was old enough, he sent him to a military academy. Logan, deciding that he wanted to be a scholar instead, attended a university using the money his father



gave him. When Sieger found out, he was pleased rather than angry — his son was his own man. Rather than let the boy know this, Sieger wrote to him and told him not to come home, but to look for a job in Freiburg instead. He hopes that this will toughen Logan up enough to rule the kingdom when he dies; he has changed his will to ensure that Logan will inherit it.

Sieger is a large man with broad shoulders. He has short brown hair and hazel eyes. Although he is in his mid-forties, he looks at least fifty, perhaps because of the stressful life he's led.



Erich Sieger

Nicklaus Trägue

More information on Nicklaus can be found on page 61 of the Game Masters' Guide.

Nicklaus became a Baron when he was a soldier. He participated in one of the last battles of the war, after years of horror and bloodshed. The sight of so much pointless violence finally took its toll, and he fled the battle for the nearby mountains. He took shelter in a cave to escape a coming storm and nearly tripped over a rich dracheneisen vein. For his barony, he asked for the Stein, a ruined fortress at which he had once served, and which he believed held great potential. The Emperor agreed, and Trägue set about rebuilding the fortress into a trade city using the income from his mine to support it.

City completed, Trägue set up an administration to govern it, then sat back and started writing a book detailing some of his fundamental philosophical beliefs. For one thing, he's an atheist — not in the sense that he doesn't believe in Theus, but that he doesn't worship Him. Trägue has a cynical view of the world, and does not believe that any being who created such a cruel place could possibly have humanity's best interests in mind.

He also strongly dislikes organized religion. He sees it as a destructive influence on mankind, and unnecessary to the formation of a moral code. He cites the War of the Cross and the Crusades as perfect examples of why a small group of men should never dictate morality to anyone else — their personal biases can twist the minds of entire countries.

Although he allows the Explorers' Society to investigate the Surneth ruins near Freiburg, Trägue is uneasy about the influence of these old races. What use is a navigator when compared to a device that can locate a ship's position in seconds? Trägue believes that Surneth devices threaten to extinguish the spark of human ingenuity. Rather than forge ahead with their own ideas, gifted scholars spend their lives unlocking the secrets of these remnants of a race that has apparently already wiped itself out — perhaps with one of the very devices the scholars wish to decipher. Unless man turns away from this developmental dead end, Trägue believes that the race will follow the Surneth into extinction.



Nicklaus Trägue

Lastly, he has set forth the idea that sorcery is neither good nor evil, but that its use determines its moral standing. Many sorcerers have begun to embrace this philosophy, preferring to see their magic as a tool rather than a curse.

Of course, these are simply Trägue's opinions. Any or all of them could be dead wrong.

While he writes (or rather dictates to his scribe), he drinks, watches Freiburg expand beneath him, and attends to those few matters of state that merit his attention. He's less a ruler than an overseer — the alcoholic warden of Théah's most chaotic city. All that matters to him now is finishing his book. When he's done, he plans to drink himself to death.

Nicklaus is a tall, lanky man. He shaves his head, but he cultivates a black moustache and goatee. His bloodshot eyes have deep bags under them, the result of too little sleep and too much brandy. Trägue seldom wears bright colors, preferring a moodier, darker look.

Reinhard Dieter von Wische

Many years ago, Reinhard was happy. He governed wisely and well, and his people were happy and prosperous. He had a wonderful wife named Cornelia, and three handsome sons, each as strong and brave as any father could want. Then, while fighting a battle against the Objectionists, Reinhard received a message: his wife had been killed in a terrible fire. Calling the messenger a filthy liar, Reinhard stabbed him through the stomach. It took the man three days to die, in spite of the best efforts of Reinhard's personal doctor. Reinhard fell into a deep bout of melancholy, trying to deal simultaneously with his guilt and his grief. His eldest son ran the province for the time it took him to recover. Eventually, he put the deed behind him and resumed control of Wische, prouder than ever of his sons.

The War wasn't done with him yet, though. His kingdom had been ravaged, and the restoration plans kept him busy while his sons took command of the army. Reinhard was simply getting too old to charge into battle any more. Then he suffered another staggering blow. First, his eldest son was killed in battle, and then, not less than a month later, his second boy was killed as well. Once again, Reinhard felt his world crumbling around him, but he clung desperately to his final son as a life line. He became paranoid for the boy's safety and hired a bodyguard named Karl Thomas Steiner to protect him. For two years, everything was fine and Reinhard returned to some semblance of normality. He did, however, indulge in occasional bouts of drunken self-pity and acquired a superstitious fear of messengers, believing them vengeful phantoms of the courier he had slain. Still, he seemed happy enough.

Then came the letter that brought his world crashing down one final time. His last remaining son had been killed by a highwayman, and the boy's bodyguard, fearful of

Reinhard's anger, fled. He needn't have worried. Once he finished the letter, Reinhard let it fall from his limp hand and whispered, "I have become a Prince of ashes, nothing more." Then he stopped talking.

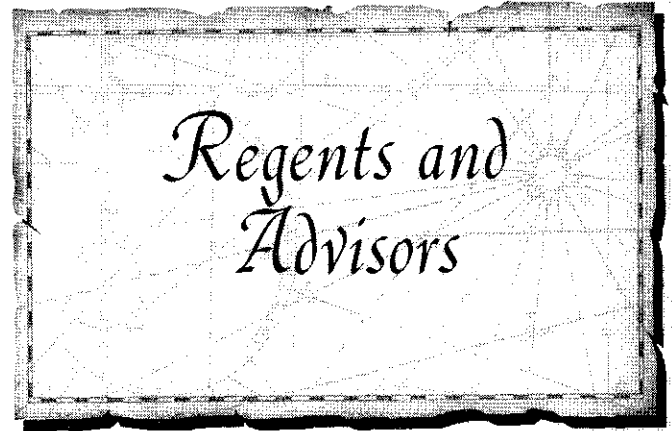
Ever since then, Reinhard has been an automaton. He eats whatever's given to him, and he walks on his own if led around, but otherwise, he just sits on his iron throne. Four times a day, his body tenses, his hands dig into the sharp edges of the throne, and he lets loose a terrifying howl of pain and anguish. His doctor, concerned about the damage to his hands, tried padding the throne, but Reinhard simply

picked it off. Apparently the pain was somehow comforting. Whether he will ever recover is uncertain, although the kingdom could certainly use his wise leadership these days.

Reinhard is a bearded, heavy-set man with dark staring eyes, a pale complexion, and deep scars on his hands. He never speaks, save for his repeated delusional ravings and the occasional agonized scream. His servants keep him fed and washed, but otherwise, he might as well be a corpse.



Reinhard Dieter von Wische



Odel Herrickson

Stefan Heilgrund's right-hand man never speaks of his past, but he shows the signs of having had Lærdom sorcery stripped from him, which involves a ritual scalping and the removal of the right arm. This unpleasant ritual is usually reserved for those Vestenmannavnjar who have seriously betrayed their people, and most do not survive the process.

Somehow, Odel has not only survived, but prospered as well. Although he can no longer use his sorcery, he has acquired a number of Sryneth artifacts with unusual properties that serve him well. Many of these are gifts from Stefan Heilgrund for his loyal service. Odel acts as an occult consultant for the Eisenfürst. He boasts knowledge of several ruins never before discovered, information key to understanding the Sryneth, as access to sorceries long forgotten by mankind.

Of course, Odel has a tendency to exaggerate his own knowledge. For instance, he once got himself into a great deal of trouble by assuring a Shield Man that he was familiar with the dangers of the Thalussian Isles, when in fact he had never even been there. While exploring an underground passage, Odel became separated from the group and wandered into some unexplored passages. He stepped beneath an arch that sprayed him with a fine mist of liquid, and for a while the ruin's deadly insect swarms ignored him. Then he got cocky and picked up a silver globe, which promptly exploded into a mess of sticky red liquid. The insects immediately started swarming after him

hungrily; his companions eventually found him breathing through a straw while submerged in an underground lake. When they pulled him out he explained that he'd been too afraid to poke his head out of the water and see if the swarm of ten second beetles was still hovering overhead.

Odel is an unpleasant-looking middle-aged Vestenmannavnjar. He's missing his right arm at the elbow, and he has been scalped at some time in his past, leaving a horrible scar on the top of his head. Odel and Stefan seem to get along well, with Odel's caution tempering the younger man's enthusiasm. The Vestenmannavnjar is not well liked among Stefan's servants, though. He has an annoying tendency to condescend to them, using small words and speaking slowly, even to people just as educated as himself. He hovers over the servants when he tells them to do something, waiting for them to make a mistake so he can correct them, speaking slowly, and using small words to make sure they understand his instructions this time.



Odel Herrickson

Gisela Hilda Inselhoffer

Gisela is Reinhard's regent, and keeps the kingdom of Wische operating in spite of his illness. She met him years ago, when his wife was still alive; her noble parents sent her to the von Wische castle to court his eldest son. A few months later, some kind of scandal arose and she was sent home, the tentative marriage plans canceled. After that, she refused all the matches her parents presented her with; she remained faithful to the von Wisches. When she heard of Reinhard's illness several years later, she came back to see if she could help out in any way. Although she did not officially have any authority to do so, Gisela hired some clerks to manage the treasury and slipped into the role of *de facto* regent.

Anyone with eyes can see that she's in love with von Wische. She carefully feeds him at every meal, binds his self-inflicted wounds, and reads to him whenever she can. Gisela desperately wants him to get better, but she's afraid that even if he comes to his senses he'll prefer the memory of his wife to her. Nonetheless, she has brought several doctors to see Reinhard, hoping that one of them will have

some kind of treatment – a pill, a spell, or a deal with Legion, she doesn't care which – that will put the light back in his eyes.

Recently, she has become embroiled in yet another scandal. It seems that funds have been disappearing from the treasury at an alarming rate. Accusing fingers have pointed at her, although the Roaring Drachen (Reinhard's Iron Guard) support her claims of innocence. She has fired several clerks and replaced them, but it hasn't slowed the steady trickle of lost monies. Her own brother, Klaus Inselhoffer, has threatened to unseat Reinhard if the



Gisela Hilda Inselhoffer

situation doesn't stop. She cannot meet his threats with military force, unfortunately, since most of the army has deserted after being paid with IOUs for several months – now only the loyal Roaring Drachen guardsmen remain at her side. Gisela knows that the proud Eisenfürst would never forgive her she lost his kingdom, so she has frantically sought a solution to the mystery. Her brother has given her exactly three months before his planned coup d'état.

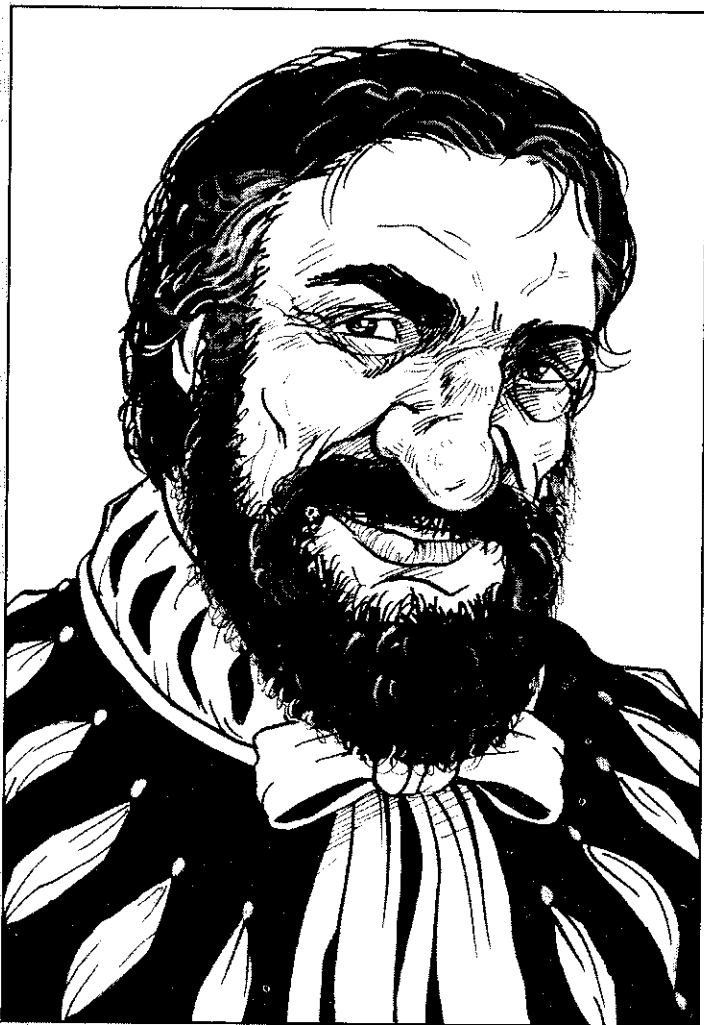
Gisela is a young woman with dark brown hair and emerald green eyes. She is tall and thin, and has a soft, pleasant voice. She dresses in smart, fashionable clothing designed to lend an air of authority. She has found that taking care of Reinhard and managing the kingdom at the same time is too much for her to handle. She desperately needs help if the kingdom is to avoid civil war and possible ruin.

Philip Knef

An ugly man with an ugly name, Knef handles the dracheneisen mines of the deranged Georg Hainzl. He's been a miner all his life, and digging is the only thing he truly understands. He spent the first twenty years of his life in the mines, starting as soon as he was old enough to lift a hammer. He was quiet and brave, which endeared him to his co-workers and impressed his supervisors. Even during the worst parts of the war, his services were in demand; he always earned enough to keep his family fed. As he grew older, he moved from mining to overseeing, and by the time the war ended, he was in charge of several high-output lodes. Most of his superiors had been killed in the fighting, and when Hainzl's new government formed, he was the only real choice to head up mining operations.

Knef soon found himself immersed in the erratic politics of Hainzl's court. His large nose and broken smile bore striking similarities to "King Digger," a character from the Eisen opera *Der Rabe*. Hainzl took great joy in Knef's appearances, promising him armies of men and piles of money to continue his operations. He took such promises for what they were worth, and soon learned to submit his requests by paper rather than in person.

He knows how to keep the mines running without consulting Hainzl, something which has made operations proceed smoothly. His success has made the Eisenfürst a very rich man, and given Knef *carte blanche* to act as he sees fit. Knef works hard and keeps quiet, as he's done all of his life. He never puts on airs and always speaks respectfully to those of higher station. The only exception comes when someone tries to tamper with his mines; then he becomes a tiger. He once broke an insolent adel's nose when the man suggested that safety cutbacks could save the province money. The act earned him many friends in Hainzl's court.



Philip Knef

Knef is a burly man with broad shoulders and a miner's corded muscles. His hair has begun to gray a bit at the temples, but he doesn't mind; he could never win a beauty contest anyway. His ugly face is marked with lines and his huge nose is still bent from a long-healed break. Even though he is too old to dig, he still carries a pick-axe with him: a reminder of who he was.

Franziska Köhl

The stubborn, no-nonsense Köhl has been Faulk Fischler's advisor for four years. She's kept his lands solvent, ensured that his forces are adequately armed, and even smoothed over relations with his neighbors. Of those surrounding Faulk, she is the only one who truly respects him — and the only one he trusts.

Köhl started out in life as the daughter of a minor lord on the Südlache. She oversaw most of the household's day-to-day duties, including organizing the kitchen staff and ensuring that her parents met all of their social obligations. She became used to living out of the spotlight and resigned herself to the role of blue-blooded bureaucrat. She married to secure a political alliance (the two hardly saw each other) and went about her duties.

The war put tremendous strain on the household; the Südlache was a key strategic point and with the men off fighting, it was up to Franziska to run things. One day, she awoke to find an enemy general camped around her walls. He said that her father and husband had been killed, and claimed their lands as tribute. He demanded that she open the gates and surrender to him. With her home under siege and her family dead, Köhl did what any Eisen would do — she spat in his face.

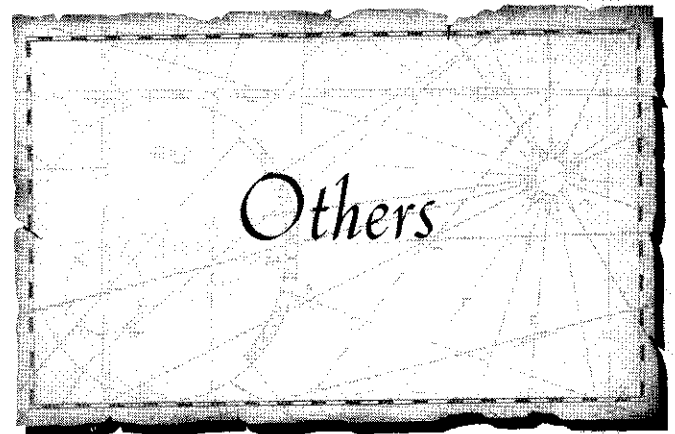
The siege lasted forty-five days, and ended only when an unrelated battle cut the enemy's supply lines. Köhl's organizational skills were instrumental in holding them off. In the last days, she had been reduced to hunting rats in the castle cellar for food, but as the enemy retreated, most of the inhabitants were alive and the walls still were intact.



Franziska Köhl

Hearing of her talent, Faulk Fischler sent a letter to her asking if she would be his advisor. Seeing a golden opportunity, she agreed, lending the upstart Eisenfürst her organizational skills and trying to keep his fledgling province running smoothly. Though originally contemptuous of him, she learned to respect his sharp mind and has forgotten his common roots. Her willingness to argue with him has solidified their mutual respect. She senses his loneliness and empathizes with it, but refuses to pursue any romantic notions. Isolation is the price of power, she believes — a lesson he must learn if he truly wishes to rule.

Köhl is a wiry, dark-haired woman in her late thirties. While not beautiful, she has a matronly handsomeness that has earned her some admirers. She's spurned them all. She wears her father's panzerhand as a symbol of authority and favors practical clothes at all times. She can be charming when she wishes, but usually speaks with the steel authority of a drill sergeant. Her mind is a finely honed weapon, able to balance countless facts and figures. Nothing ever surprises Franziska. Nothing.



Hendryk Brandt

Not all of Fauner Pösen's suitors are easily dissuaded, and not all court her out of ambition. Some are genuinely enthralled by the steely Eisenfürst and have the right mixture of stubbornness and stupidity to keep at it against all odds. Hendryk Brandt, for instance.

A wealthy noble from northern Eisen, Brandt fought in the War of the Cross without distinction. His land was spared the worst ravages of the war, giving him the time to engage in idle courtly duties. He worked to keep his people happy and ensure that none of his neighbors stole his territory, but

other than that, he was content to meander through life with no real goals or desires.

Then he met Fauner.

She swept into his life like a hurricane, all stormy eyes and flashing beauty. He had no idea who she was, and he didn't care. She snared his heart with a single glance and gave his life something it never had before: a purpose. He vowed to win the fiery beauty no matter what it took.

As it turned out, it took a lot more than he thought. The powerful Eisenfürst had countless suitors, each more



Hendryk Brandt

ambitious than the last. Brandt had to compete with them, as well as Pösen's own temper, in order to endure, but he's persevered admirably. He defeated two rivals in duels (his passion made up for his relative lack of skill) and shrugged off countless rejections at Fauner's hands (the worst one leaving him with a broken arm). At the moment, he's the only suitor left standing, or at least the only one willing to publicly admit his feelings. The dubious merits of such a position are hotly debated.

Unlike most of Fauner's admirers, Brandt has no interest in power. The position of Eisenfürst seems like a colossal headache to him, and the logistics of reuniting Eisen make his head swim. His lack of ambition ironically makes him a very honest suitor – he loves Fauner as a woman, and would continue to love her even if she lived in a peasant's hut and ate nothing but cabbage. He fervently believes that time and persistence will allow his beloved to see how much he truly cares for her – and give his bones a chance to knit.

Brandt is a small but handsome man with a ready smile. He is more polite than most Eisen, with a natural combination of grace and ease unusual in his countrymen. He could be a canny politician if he ever applied himself; his natural charisma is a formidable weapon. He dresses in the latest fashions, but with little flair. Brandt tries to stay well-groomed at all times, in case he ever bumps into Fauner.

Miguel Soldano de Acedo

Miguel used to haunt the court of Castille as the son of a wealthy don. He was much admired by the ladies, and his father was proud of his strapping son, yet somehow he attracted the ire of Esteban Verdugo, one of the King's advisors. Calling the boy into his offices, Esteban told him that he saw great things ahead for him, and assigned him to be the new Governor of Castille's lands in Eisen.

Castille never claimed those lands, as Miguel soon learned.

When he arrived in the kingdom of Sieger, he was more than a little dismayed. There was mud and ruin everywhere. By the time he had convinced some local peasants to direct him to the capital, he was tired, sore, and cranky. That's



Miguel Soldano de Acedo

when he met Erich Sieger, who rather pointedly informed the young man that the fields had been salted and the territory was worthless. Going home to Castille was not an option: because Miguel's "post" was a Royal Assignment, it would be death to abandon his "position." After a violent argument with Sieger, Miguel found himself assigned to feed the pigs near Sieger's keep. He wrote a letter home, but he's unsure if it ever arrived, or if a thoughtless traveler simply threw it away somewhere. In any event, he's had no word from Castille.

Miguel's "supervisor" is a young Eisen boy about eight years old. His name is Petr and he's as hard a taskmaster as

any ship's boatswain. Miguel has come to loathe the little terror, who constantly paws through his things, makes him do all the work, and teases him whenever he makes a mistake or the pigs get the better of him — which happens more than he'd care to admit.

He's not sure what foul pit spawned these pigs, but they're forever biting his legs, tripping him like cats, and escaping their pen so that he has to chase them down while teary-eyed Eisen men laugh at his antics. He's learned to hate the smiling advisor who placed him in this position. He doesn't even know what he did to anger the man, but Verdugo has caused him a world of misery and heartbreak. He should be back at court, wooing the lovely *señoritas* — not here, attending to a pack of demonic pigs.

Somebody is going to pay for this.

Miguel is a handsome man in his early twenties with beautiful long hair. He dresses richly, which has proven a problem when performing his current duties as a pig slopper. He can be quite charming when he wants to be, which unfortunately hasn't helped him against Petr. Anyone who could somehow liberate him from his current position would have a friend for life.







Drama



...Ye Mighty, and
Despair, Part Four

Erich Sieger stared at the document he had just been handed. He frowned. It was written in Castillian. Handing it back to the young man who had appeared on his doorstep, he asked, "What does it say?"

The young man looked surprised. "You do not speak Castillian? But surely, as governor of a protectorate of — no, never mind. It does not matter. This letter says that I am the new governor of this protectorate, effective today."

Sieger grunted and looked over the young noble's shoulder at the empty fields below. "Where is your army?"

The Castillian turned around to see what Sieger was staring at. "I do not understand, señor. I did not bring an army. I was told that this exchange was already arran—"

"You can sleep in the pigsty, boy." He didn't need this. Some Castillian noble was having a joke at his expense.

He turned to walk away, but the young man grabbed his shoulder. "Señor, perhaps you do not understand me. I am Miguel Soldano de Acedo hijo de José Garcia del Acedo de Castillo, and I have come to take power..." Miguel's voice trailed off. Sieger was staring at his shoulder.

"Remove that hand, boy." The Eisen's voice was very calm and soft. Miguel had heard that voice once from his father, after he had lamed a prize horse by riding it too hard. He had not enjoyed the experience. Carefully, he pulled his hand back.

Sieger turned to face him again. "Obviously you don't understand your position. First of all, nobody touches me, ever. Second, I don't repeat myself. I'm making an exception for you because someone's played a cruel joke on you. My lands are not a protectorate. I am not a governor. I am an Eisenfürst, like my father and his grandfather's grandfather before me. Currently I am a very busy and short-tempered Eisenfürst. You can sleep in the pigsty tonight, but be on your way home tomorrow."

Miguel stared blankly at the paper in his hand. "You do not understand, señor. This is a royal office, given to me by Esteban Verdugo himself. If I abandon my post here, the penalty is death. I will be burned alive."

Sieger turned to leave once again. "Not my problem, boy. Now get out of my sight."

Miguel fumed. There was obviously no way to talk to this man. Removing his glove, he stepped up to the Eisen, spun him around, and then slapped him with the glove. "I challenge you to a duel for leadership, you insolent dog!"

Calmly, the Eisen held out his hand behind him. "Charles, my whipping pistol." His servant pressed a heavy iron pistol into his hand, and his arm came down on Miguel's head. The Castillian dropped like a rock.

Erich returned the gun to his servant. "Charles, have his wound treated and throw some straw near the sty. It looks like he'll be staying."



Miguel awoke to a pink snout staring at him through the boards of a fence. His head was throbbing painfully, and the cold, moist earth had seeped through his cloak, soaking him. He shivered, hoping he hadn't been chilled too badly. Looking over at the pigs he noticed a young boy sitting atop the fence and staring at him. "Morning, Governor. So you're the new pig slopper. You'll want to spread a blanket under yourself tonight or you're gonna get sick."

It was going to be a long year.

The Destiny Spread

Fate Witches have a particular form of reading they use to give their querent a general idea of what his destiny is like. They use a 5-card spread from the Sorte deck in a cross formation to accomplish this.

The first card is the querent's Strength. This embodies his most noble quality.

The second card is the querent's Weakness. This shows his greatest flaw.

The third card is the querent's Past. This shows an important event that helped make him who he is.

The fourth card is the querent's Present. This shows his current situation.

The fifth card is the querent's Future. This shows an important event that is fast approaching in his life that he should be prepared for.

Normally, the first and second cards are selected from the Greater Arcana, while the other three cards are selected from the two suits from the Minor Arcana that are the most significant to the querent. Fate Witches traditionally leave the Court Cards out of these readings, since they signify events that cannot be controlled.

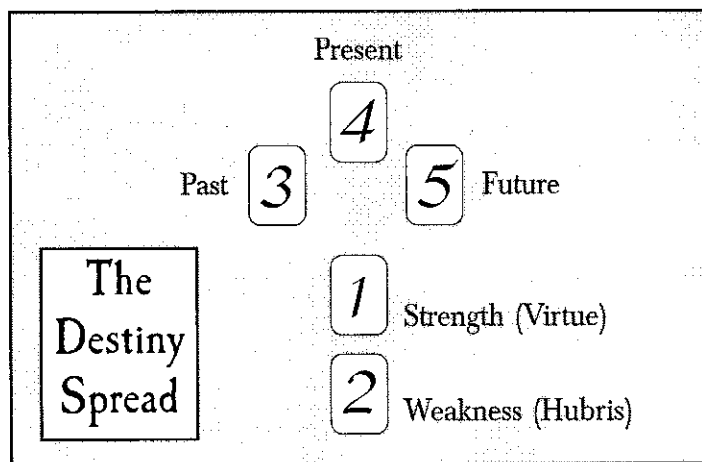
The Destiny Spread in Hero Creation

To use this system properly, you need a Tarot deck. Perform this reading right after assigning Traits and Nationality to your Hero, but before assigning anything else. Separate out the Major Arcana, shuffle them, and put them in one pile. Next, pull out the two suits that are most significant to your character – here, Staves and Swords – leaving out the Page, Knight, Queen, and King cards. Eisen have a strong affinity to the suits of Staves and Swords; Staves because of the political turmoil of the nation, and Swords because of their military prowess.

Shuffle the two suits together into a pile. Next, lay out the Destiny spread as described above. You must choose to focus on either your Strength or your Weakness. If you choose your Strength, your Hero gains the Virtue corresponding to that card, and you pay 10 HP for performing the Destiny Spread. If you choose your Weakness, your Hero gains the Hubris corresponding to that card, and you gain 10 extra HP to build your Hero with. Finally, consult the Past, Present, and Future charts to see what your Hero gained (or lost!) from those draws.

If you don't have a Tarot deck, it's hard to determine your Strength or Weakness at random, so have your GM select one. Then roll once each on the Past, Present, and Future charts (odd-Swords/even-Staves, then a die for the card number).

Note: In some Tarot decks, Swords are referred to as Knives or Blades, and Staves are referred to as Wands or Rods.

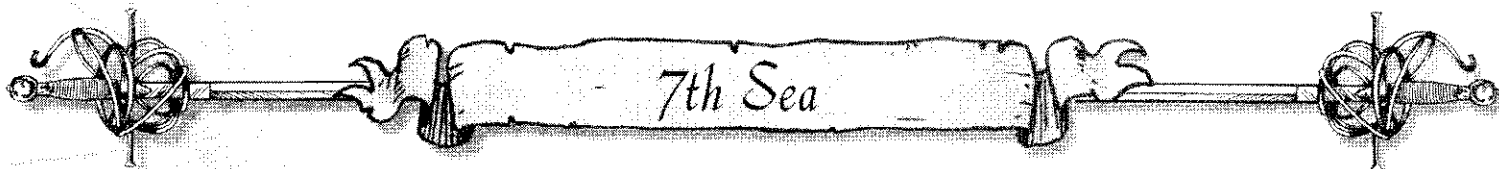


Past

These are the events that have shaped your Hero and made him who he is. Some of them may still hang over his head.

Ace of Staves: Your father was a respected officer, and he saw to it that you had every opportunity to follow in his footsteps. You begin the game with the Academy Advantage for free.

Two of Staves: When you were young, you stood up to the bullies in the town, even some of the adults. You now



feel obligated to protect those who are weaker than you. You gain the Indomitable Will Advantage for free, but must make a Resolve roll against TN 20 to avoid interfering in a situation involving a bully.

Three of Staves: One of your distant relatives died and left you part of his estate. Your starting income is increased by 200G.

Four of Staves: Your grandparents have given you and your cousin their farm. It is a small patch of land, barely capable of sustaining its occupants, but it is very comfortable, and you enjoy spending time there when you can. While you are away, your cousin tends to the farm. You begin the game with the Merchant Skill and one extra Rank in either the Butcher or Cooking Knack for free, not to mention a home to which you can return.

Five of Staves: There is a woman from your hometown whom you've never gotten along with. She always seemed to be just a little bit better than you were at everything. You wouldn't be so uptight about it, but you keep encountering her even when you visit other nations, and she's still showing you up. Begin the game with a 2-point Rivalry Background for free.

Six of Staves: You have performed an act of valor on the field of battle (whether or not you were actually serving in an army at the time). Receive the Citation Advantage for free, and come up with a story stating exactly what you did to earn it.

Seven of Staves: You were caught outside after dark one night, and a terrible monster made of shadows and mist appeared before you, but you put your trust in Theus and had no fear. You locked eyes with the creature and stared it down until it had to flee the rays of the sun. You gain the Faith Advantage for free, but you are also a magnet for the attentions of monsters (GM's discretion).

Eight of Staves: You were raised on horseback. You rode before you walked. Horses are your favorite companions. You gain the Rider Skill with an extra Rank in the Ride Knack for free.

Nine of Staves: Your local church was used as an emergency hospital following a battle in the War of the Cross. You volunteered to help with the treatment of the wounded as a stretcher bearer. However, due to short-handedness, you were asked to help with the surgical procedures, passing saws and bandages to the acting surgeon. You gain the Doctor Skill for free.

Ten of Staves: One night, you were having a drink with some friendly men in dashing uniforms who had invited you to join them. The next day, you woke up in their army. Since then, you have made the best of a bad situation and excelled at your job. You receive a 2-point Commission Advantage for free.

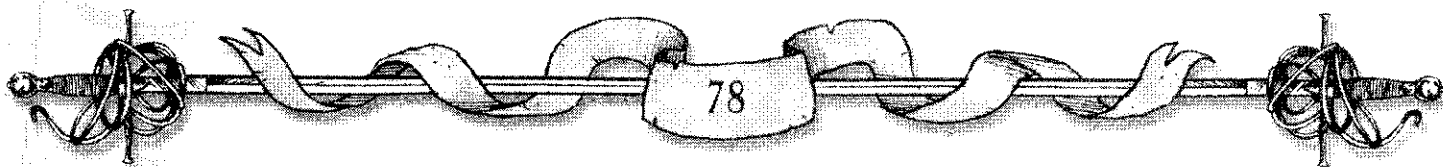
Ace of Swords: The War of the Cross virtually wiped out your whole village. Eager for revenge, you tracked down the commander who was responsible for the carnage, and he defeated you single-handedly. Ever since then, you have been trying to find him again and extract vengeance for his deeds. It has been several years since you last saw him, and your one consolation is that he is not getting any younger. You receive a 3-point Defeated Background for free.

Two of Swords: As a political favor, you received membership in the Swordsman's Guild. You receive the Membership: Swordsman's Guild Advantage for free, but will always be considered something of a joke by many of the other members.

Three of Swords: Your grandfather and his brother were on different sides of the War of the Cross, and the families have feuded to this day. You gain a 1-point Vendetta Background for free to represent your family's division.

Four of Swords: You spent a year as a hermit, trying to make some kind of sense of the world's injustice. You gain the Hunter Skill for free, but you must choose Survival, Fishing, and Stealth as your three free Basic Knacks.

Five of Swords: No longer able to cope with the horrors she has seen, your lovely younger sister has retreated into a world that exists only within her mind. You receive a 3-point Waisen Dependent Background for free.



Six of Swords: When you were fourteen, you left home and found work aboard a riverboat. You worked as one of the crew for the next two and a half years. Along the way, you learned just about everything there is to know about the daily operations of a river vessel. You gain the Riverboat Pilot Skill for free.

Seven of Swords: When you were a child, an old man with an eyepatch paid you a few coins a week to sit beside the road and keep an eye on a particular building. You had

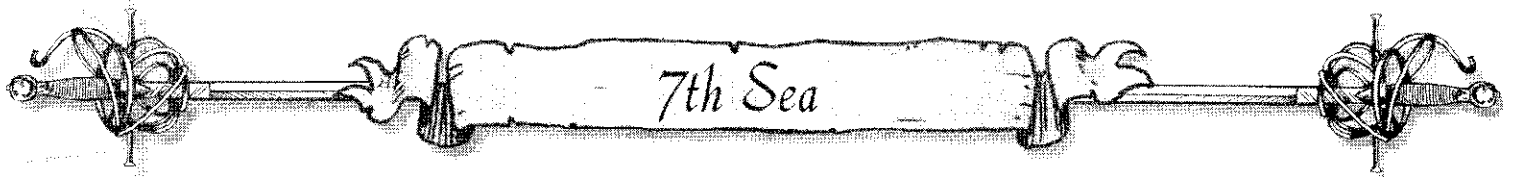
to watch for a pale woman with black hair leaving a certain building. After nearly three months, she finally appeared. Then, you had to follow her all over town, which you did for over three weeks, without ever learning her name. You found the old man dead one night, and you never saw that woman again. You receive the Spy Skill for free.

Eight of Swords: A few years ago, you were falsely arrested of stealing a ring from a nobleman. You escaped from prison after only a week, but you have not been forgotten by the authorities. You start play with a 2-point Wanted Background for free.

Nine of Swords: You were the child of a wealthy family, raised in comfort and warmth for many years. Then your home was burned to the ground and your parents were killed, leaving yourself and your siblings to the mercy of strangers. You receive a 3-point Orphaned Background for free.

Ten of Swords: The encounter with the Thing was so terrifying that it altered the course of your life forever. You still wake up screaming in the night when you dream about its smoky tentacles wisping towards you, twisting at your soul. If you chose your Weakness, your Past and Future cards are canceled and you instead receive a 3-point Fear Background for free. If you chose your Strength, your Past and Future cards are canceled and you instead receive 2-point Crisis of Faith Background and a 3-point Fear Background for free. However, until these two Backgrounds are resolved to your GM's satisfaction, you must pay two Drama dice to activate your Virtue instead of one.





Present

These events represent situations that your Hero could find himself currently entangled in. They will have to be dealt with soon, whether he likes it or not.

Ace of Staves: You recently had to make a long overland journey. Although unused to physical exertion, you found that you enjoyed it, and began exercising every morning. Now, you are in excellent shape, ready for anything that may come your way. You receive the Athlete Skill for free.

Two of Staves: You have recently served as the leader of a company of mercenaries. However, due to circumstances beyond your control, you had to disband the organization. You receive the Commander Skill for free.

Three of Staves: You've been taking lessons from a panzerhand expert recently, and you've shown so much talent that he has promised to introduce you to a man he knows in the Freiburg Guardsmen if you so desire. You receive the Panzerhand Skill for free, and you have a favorable letter of introduction to the Captain of the Freiburg Guardsmen.

Four of Staves: For the last two months, you've been working as a taster at a brewery. This has built up your resistance to alcohol a great deal. You receive the Able Drinker Advantage for free.

Five of Staves: You are a very fast runner and you have been competing in races against some of the fastest men in Eisen to earn your keep. If you purchase the Athlete Skill during Hero creation, you receive 2 free Ranks of the Sprinting Knack.

Six of Staves: You recently won a gentleman's wager on a horse race. Roll one exploding die and increase your starting income by that many Guilders.

Seven of Staves: Lately, you have been helping out the town watch by acting as one of their night watchmen on a volunteer basis. As thanks, one of the older guards has been teaching you how to use a spear. You receive the Polearm Skill for free.

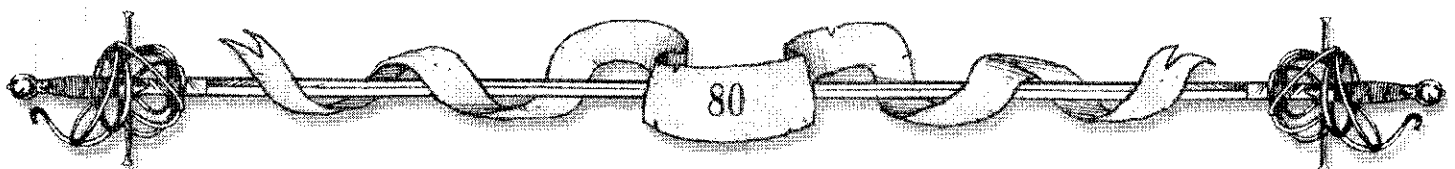
Eight of Staves: Last week, you found an inky black shard of metal lying near the road. When you picked it up, it dissolved in your hand, and the world seemed to stop for a moment. Then, everything began moving again, a little slower than before. You found that you now had reflexes like a cat's. You receive the Combat Reflexes Advantage for free, and you always roll and Keep one extra die when performing an Active Defense. However, the shard has had some unpleasant side effects as well. You find yourself unable to sit still, and you are concerned that you may be growing older at an accelerated rate. You roll and Keep one fewer die when making checks that require you to sit still (such as Stealth, Unobtrusive, and occasionally, Etiquette). In addition, you age two years for every year that passes.

Nine of Staves: You've just finished a year's stint as a road builder. You spent all day breaking rocks in the hot sun and were often bruised and sore by the end of the day. However, you are now much more resistant to pain and weariness than before. You gain the Toughness Advantage for free, and you may use the extra die it gives you to resist falling asleep or other forms of exhaustion.

Ten of Staves: A letter arrived from your sister today. She says that her son has disappeared, and that he may have run away from home to see you. You receive a 2-point Lost Relative Background for free.

Ace of Swords: While traveling in Avalon last year, you came across a small man pinned underneath a fallen tree. Straining, you managed to lift it while he slid out from underneath. As a reward, he waved his hand over you, and you felt dizzy for a moment. The man said, "There. You can be one of the strongest men (or women) in Théah, if you so choose." Then, right before your eyes, he turned into a deer and disappeared into the woods. You receive the Legendary Trait (Brawn) Advantage for free.

Two of Swords: In exchange for services that you have rendered her, a young noblewoman has hired a bodyguard for you. He is sworn to protect and aid you, and she pays his fees. You receive the Eisen Bodyguard Advantage for free.



Three of Swords: You were recently caught in the woods after dark. You lost track of time, and only noticed the dimming light as the sun was disappearing. You ran along the trails in an effort to get out of the forest before it got too dark to see, but along the way, you were bitten by an odd snake that seemed to be made of shadows. Feeling strange, you managed to stagger back to the village. Since then, you have found that you can fix your eyes on someone and force them to look away from your gaze nervously. You receive two Free Raises whenever you are attempting an Intimidation Action. However, you are concerned that this is only the first effect of the snake's venom and that other, more pronounced effects, may follow (GM's discretion).

Four of Swords: You have been relatively inactive of late, and have had time to catch up on your reading. You receive literacy in Eisen for free.

Five of Swords: You have been on a string of bad luck recently, and have had to put forth extra effort to make up for it. For the duration of your first Story, you may not spend any Drama dice. However, you receive 5 extra XP at the end of the Story.

Six of Swords: You have just returned from a journey along the river, where you stopped in Castille while repairs were made to the ship. You ended up staying for almost two months and picked up much of the language. You receive the Language: Castille Advantage for free.

Seven of Swords: Just two weeks ago, you saw some men forcing a young girl into a carriage against her will. Unwilling to allow this, you drew your sword and drove off the ruffians. It turned out that the girl's father was a powerful noble, and as a reward for saving his daughter's life, he gave you a dracheneisen dagger. Overwhelmed by his gratitude, you swore that you would be there whenever he had need of you. You receive a dracheneisen dagger (see the Dracheneisen Advantage) and a 1-point Obligation Background for free. Unless you purchase the Dracheneisen Advantage normally, however, you do not receive any discount on the Noble Advantage.

Eight of Swords: You were arrested for being involved in an illegal duel, which you won. After a period of two years, you have just been released from prison. You receive the Fencing Skill for free, but now have a criminal record.

Nine of Swords: You have just recovered from a serious illness, and are still weakened by it. All of your Brawn checks have their TN increased by 5 for the duration of the first Story.

Ten of Swords: Your best friend was slain yesterday by a famous swordsman. You have sworn to avenge him. You receive a 3-point Hunting Background for free.

Future

These are events that are looming in your Hero's future. They may have been caused by choices he made in his past, or choices he has yet to make. These predictions are all purposefully vague; your GM will work out the specifics of how they come into play.

Ace of Staves: You stand to inherit something wonderful some day. (Dracheneisen Heir 2)

Two of Staves: You will avenge your father's death. (Vow 2)

Three of Staves: You will have an exciting opportunity to seek your fortune. (Treasure Map 2)

Four of Staves: You will find marital bliss. (Romance 2)

Five of Staves: Be wary of old acquaintances. (Rivalry 2)

Six of Staves: Beware of strangers. (Nemesis 2)

Seven of Staves: You will come into conflict with unjust authority. (Wanted 2)

Eight of Staves: You may wish to change your travel plans. (Exiled 2)

Nine of Staves: There are those who would do you harm if the truth becomes clear. (True Identity 2)

Ten of Staves: You will meet with death and disaster. (Orphaned 2)

Ace of Swords: You will meet your enemy, but only one of you will walk away. (Nemesis 2)

Two of Swords: You will fall in love with a warrior. (Romance 2)

Three of Swords: Avoid entanglements with the children of vengeful nobles. (Hunted 2)

Four of Swords: Miracles do happen, as you shall see. (Moment of Awe 2)

Five of Swords: Losing a duel does not mean that life has to end. (Defeated 2)

Six of Swords: Do not travel over water. It will only bring you ruin. (Cursed 2)

Seven of Swords: Something very important to you will be stolen. (Hunting 2)

Eight of Swords: You will owe a debt of honor to an important woman. (Obligation 2)

Nine of Swords: An old flame will reenter your life, much to your sorrow. (Lost Love 2)

Ten of Swords: You will lose a loved one, perhaps forever. (Waisen Dependent 2)



New Backgrounds

Crisis of Faith

You used to be faithfully religious, but the horrors you have seen and endured have left you doubting your beliefs. Currently, you have yet to decide whether you will abandon your beliefs or return to the flock. The number of points in this Background determines how important religion used to be to you, and how conflicted you currently are.

Dracheneisen Heir (Noble Eisen only)

You are the next in line to inherit a dracheneisen item in your family. It could be a breastplate, a sword, or even a pistol. Whatever it is, it's part of your birthright, but you've got to wait until the relative who currently has it either dies or decides to pass it on to you. You receive XP for this Background whenever the Story centers around the relative in question, and this XP all goes towards the cost of the dracheneisen item (see the chart on page 94). When you've accumulated XP equal to three times the item's cost, you receive the item and lose this Background.

Orphaned

You were separated from your family, possibly in the War of the Cross. You don't know where they are now, or even if any of them are still alive, but their faces fill your dreams, and you'll never be happy until you find out what happened to them. The number of points you invest in this Background determines how difficult it will be to find your family, and how scattered they've become.

Waisen Dependent

One of your relatives or a lover had the light in their eyes snuffed out. Something so terrible happened to them that they retreated completely inside their mind, leaving a blank stare and a shuffling body behind. You are responsible for

their care and well-being. However, waisen are unpredictable – sometimes they will wander off looking for something only they can see, or stand near a priceless painting and idly pick flakes off of it. Still, you hope that someday you'll be able to restore their mind. Until then, or until you give up on them, you've got to keep them alive. The number of points you invest in this Background determines how close you were to the person before they became waisen, and how far they've retreated into themselves.

New Skills

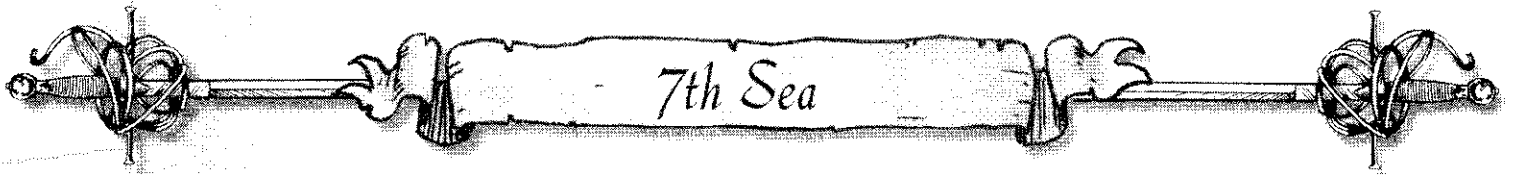
Riverboat Pilot (Civil)

The sailors who pilot the mighty rivers of Théah are a very different breed from those who ply the open sea. While their sea-faring brethren sneer at these "mud skippers", they know that only a riverboat pilot can assure a safe voyage through the temperamental river waters, which are filled with submerged rocks and logs.

Basic Knacks

Balance: When the ship tosses in stormy seas and the Captain tells you to climb the rigging and secure a mast, the Balance Knack will save your life. Quite simply, it's the Knack of not falling down, even under adverse conditions. This is used as the Defense Knack for those fighting aboard a ship at sea, or in situations where the footing is uncertain. The GM will give you the TNs for performing certain actions on board a sailing vessel, or with other special circumstances.

Knotwork: With this Knack you can tie all the essential knots a sailor needs to know, and you can tell the difference between a sheepshank and a two-half-hitches knot.



Rigging: You understand the intricacies of a ship's rigging. You know what a jib is, where the mainsail can be found, and how to batten down the hatches and trim the sails. Moreover, you can help to repair a shattered mast or a torn sail.

River Navigation: You have learned everything important there is to know about a fifty-mile stretch of a specific river. You know where all the submerged rocks and logs are, and you never need to make a Piloting check when sailing a ship through this area. You can learn one more fifty-mile stretch for each additional Rank in this Knack you purchase.

Advanced Knacks

Ambush: You have learned to spot likely places for an ambush to occur and to watch for signs that people have concealed themselves there. Naturally, this Knack cuts both ways, allowing you to set up an ambush of your own. Rules for the use of this Knack are located in the "Drama" section of the *Players' Guide*.

Bribery: Money, applied properly, can grease the wheels of bureaucracy, open doors, or cause guards to shift their loyalties. You know where, when, and how much to apply.

Cartography: You can make reasonably accurate maps using a set of cartographer's tools. Reliable maps can fetch a high price if sold to the right buyer. Success with this Knack grants legible, accurate maps. Failure might send the ship using them hurtling mercilessly into the Seventh Sea...

Diplomacy: The art of diplomacy is the art of peace; words have prevented more wars than guns ever caused. Your soothing reassurances can calm all but the most enraged duelist, and keep your blood where it belongs — in your veins.

Pilot: Using a compass, the setting sun, or the stars, you are able to steer a ship on a specific course given to you by the navigator, and are capable of spotting submerged hazards and shallow waters. You are also familiar with the tricks of keeping a ship afloat during a storm. Your GM has rules for sailing sea vessels in his *Guide*.

Swimming: Provided you aren't too heavily weighted down, you do a nice job of not sinking (stormy seas and sharks notwithstanding). Your GM has rules for swimming (and drowning) in his *Guide*.

Weather: Whether it's because your corns start to hurt, your joints begin to ache, or you've learned to identify the signs, you know when a storm is coming, and you can quickly get an idea just how bad the storm is going to be. Rules for weather can be found in the *GMs' Guide*.

Urchin (Civil)

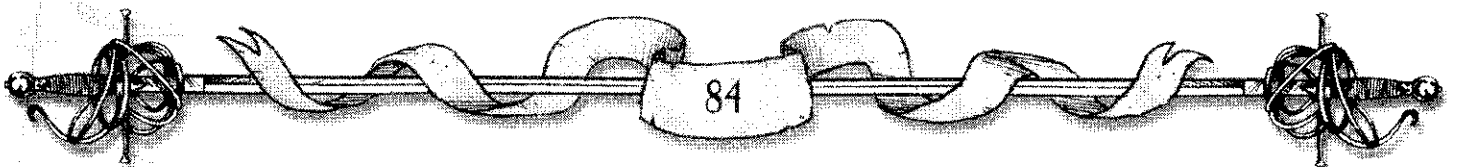
When you're raised in the streets or wilds with nobody to take care of you, you pick up certain skills, such as finding discarded food and begging for handouts. This sort of life often teaches a moral flexibility that says survival is more important than honesty.

Basic Knacks

Stealth: Stealth is the art of going unnoticed. You can use it to enter places you're not allowed, hide from your pursuers, or avoid being caught in a compromising situation. This Knack is commonly used as a Contested Roll against the victim's Wits.

Street Navigation: Racing through the streets at night is no time for you to acquaint yourself with the layout of the city. Without this Knack you may quickly find yourself lost or cornered in a dead end alley. Successful rolls with this Knack will grant you information about the locale, as determined by the GM. You are at a penalty of -2 unkept dice when using this Knack in a city that you are unfamiliar with.

Survival: Foraging for berries and nuts isn't exciting, but it's often necessary during the winter or in unfamiliar territory. With the Survival Knack you can always find enough food to survive on, although it may include such delicacies as mice, grubs, and termites. Your GM has rules for the use of this Knack, located in his *Guide*.



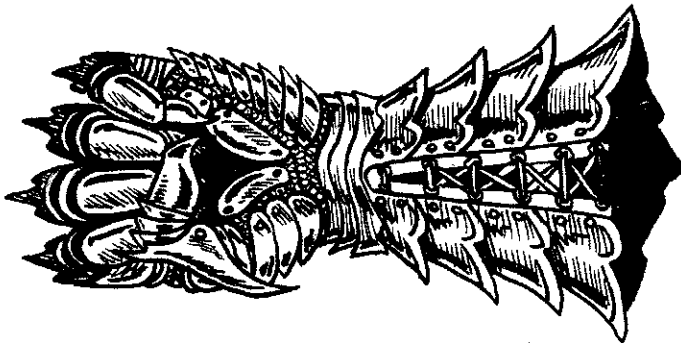
Advanced Knacks

Conceal: A woman with a dagger in her bodice has a means of defense, even though she may appear helpless. If you wish to get a pistol into a well-guarded ballroom, or a lockpick into a jail cell, you need this Knack. To use it, you must make a Simple Roll with it, and the total generated becomes the TN for anyone nearby to see through the concealment. Anyone searching you receives a Free Raise, and anyone thoroughly searching you receives two Free Raises.

Pickpocket: Armed with a feather-light touch and an arsenal of distractions, you are skilled at divesting passersby of their possessions without their knowledge. Your training could just as easily be used to plant evidence on an unsuspecting target or to quietly palm an item off a table. This Knack is commonly used as a Contested Roll against the victim's Wits.

Scrounging: You know where potentially useful trash is thrown. While it is unlikely for you to scrounge up a diamond, you would certainly know where to find food, a change of clothes, or a makeshift weapon. Successful rolls with this Knack will grant you items or resources found within the city, as determined by the GM.

Sincerity: Even the most adept lie is useless if the listener detects a tremor of fear or a pair of downcast, nervous eyes. While Oratory allows you to utter glib words for entertainment or impact, Sincerity puts the ring of truth behind them, concealing even the most bold-faced lie behind a veneer of honesty.



New Swordsman Schools

As the most militant country in all of Théah, Eisen has the widest selection of military academies to attend. Many of these academies teach not only fighting styles, but new ways of thinking and living.

Drexel

Country of Origin: Eisen

Description: This school was developed by a mercenary named Kristoff Drexel, the leader of the warband known as the Blood Spirits. He found that, as a mercenary, he was usually forced into unpredictable situations that called for flexibility in thought and fighting style. Thus, he devised several different ways to make use of the versatile Eisen zweihander. The Drexel fighting style is very popular among mercenaries because of its ability to deal with many different situations. Often, these mercenaries are referred to as *doppel* soldiers, a reference to their fees: they are paid twice as much as a normal soldier.

The Drexel school is well-known for its flexibility in combat. A Swordsman making use of it has more ways of attacking and defending himself than a Swordsman using another school. There are four Stances, or ways of holding the zweihander, that Drexel teaches. Each has certain advantages and disadvantages, and focuses either on offense or defense.

A student can quickly switch between these stances to adapt to a changing situation. However, because the school focuses on flexibility and quick thinking instead of repetitious drilling, there is sometimes a moment of hesitation when the fighting situation changes suddenly, which can be deadly to the student.

Basic Curriculum: Dirty Fighting, Heavy Weapon

Swordsman Knacks: Disarm (Heavy Weapon), Lunge (Heavy Weapon), Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon), Exploit Weakness (Drexel)

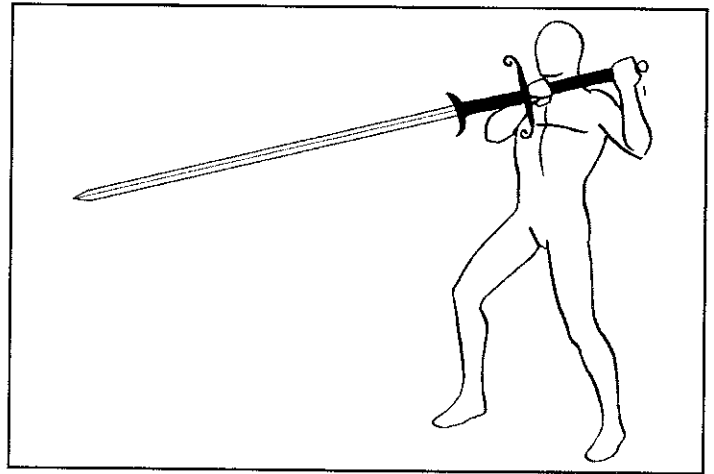
Apprentice: Apprentices of the Drexel school have learned some of the basics they will need to know in order to master the zweihander. You know 2 zweihander Stances (choose from the list below), and can use the Apprentice abilities listed under each Stance you know. In addition, you receive +5 to your Initiative Total when wielding a zweihander.

Journeyman: Journeymen have expanded their basic knowledge of the zweihander, and they have learned to use their strength and skill to intimidate their opponents (as well as their own men). You learn 1 additional zweihander Stance, and you can use the Journeyman abilities listed under each Stance you know. In addition, you receive a Fear Rating of 1. If you already have a Fear Rating, then it goes up by 1. You can use your Fear Rating to aid in Leadership checks, Intimidation attempts, and Panic Checks (see the Advanced Mass Combat rules, pages 100–103). You receive one Free Raise to your roll for every point of Fear. Lastly, when leading men (Henchmen and/or Brutes) against a creature or person that has a Fear Rating, your Fear Rating cancels out the effects of its Fear Rating on you and your men on a 1-for-1 basis until the end of the Scene (i.e. if the monster's Rating is a 3 and yours is a 2, the monster's Rating is reduced to 1, and yours is reduced to 0).

Master: Masters of the Drexel school have mastered all of the zweihander's secrets, and are feared warriors. You learn the final zweihander Stance and can use the Master abilities listed under each Stance. Your Fear Rating increases by an additional +1.

Zweihander Stances

A Stance is a particular way of holding and fighting with a weapon. The zweihander is a particularly flexible weapon that has four primary Stances. Each of the Stances affect how the zweihander performs. A student of the Drexel school can enter a Stance at any time by spending one Action as long as he is wielding a ready zweihander not currently waiting to be reset (see page 100 for resetting a zweihander and other zweihander rules). He may choose to start a battle in a Stance without spending an Action as long



The Bittner Stance

as he meets the above conditions. Wielding any other weapon besides a zweihander disallows the use of these Stances.

The Bittner, or Forward Stance: The zweihander is held at head level, almost like a spear. This Stance is mostly defensive, but it makes the zweihander much easier to maneuver. The zweihander deals only 2k2 damage in this Stance.

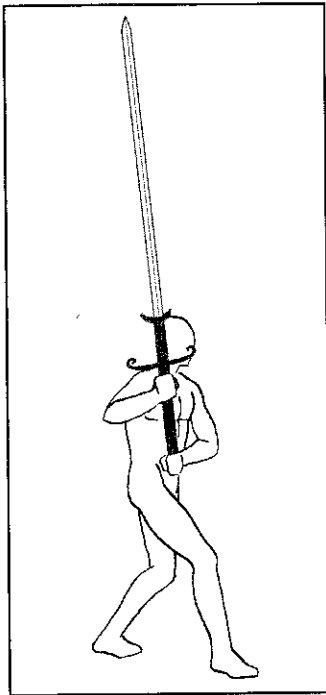
Apprentice: You do not need to take an Action to reset your zweihander and you receive one Free Raise to any Parry Active Defense.

Journeyman: You now receive two Free Raises to any Parry Active Defense. Your Action Dice are considered to be 1 lower (minimum 1) when performing an Active Defense.

Master: You now receive three Free Raises to any Parry Active Defense. Your Action Dice are considered to be 2 lower (minimum 1) when performing an Active Defense.

The Gerbeck, or High Stance: This is the Stance that most untrained people assume when handed a zweihander. The blade is held pointing upwards, with the hands near the face, and the weapon is used like an axe, making huge swings. In this Stance, the zweihander deals 3k3 damage.

Apprentice: You have learned how to attack an opponent while resetting your zweihander. However, the attack is



The Gerbeck Stance

weak, and the zweihander is only considered a 1k2 weapon for the attack.

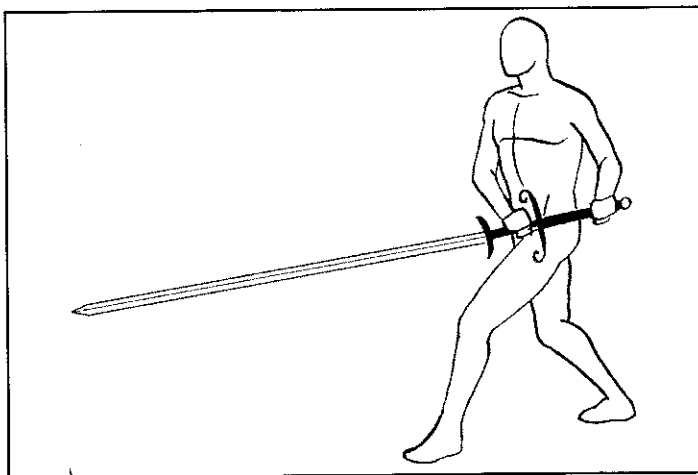
Journeyman: You have improved your resetting skills to the point where your zweihander is considered to be a 2k2 weapon during a reset Action.

Master: Your zweihander now deals as much damage as an ordinary Heavy Weapon (3k2) while being reset.

The Köhler, or Low Stance: In this stance, the zweihander is held horizontally with an overhand grip near the user's waist, pointing towards the opponent.

This is a very quick Stance, allowing rapid movements with the blade. In this Stance the zweihander deals 2k2 damage.

Apprentice: You receive +10 to your Initiative Total (in addition to your normal +5), and your Action Dice are considered 1 lower (minimum 1) when Attacking, resetting your zweihander, or performing an Active Defense.

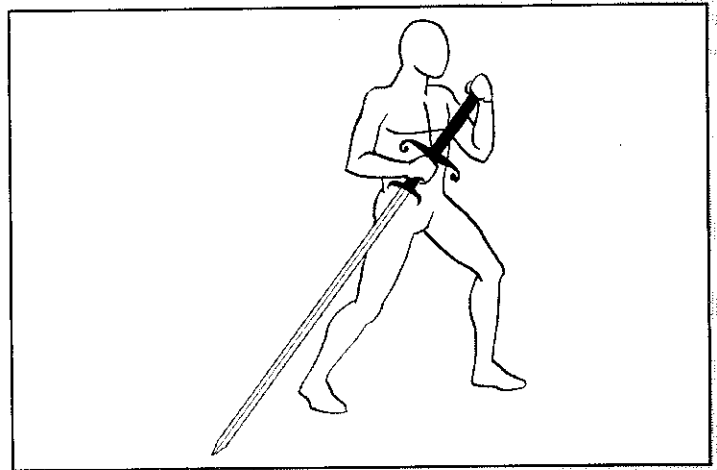


The Köhler Stance

Journeyman: Your Action Dice are now considered 2 lower (minimum 1) when Attacking, resetting your zweihander, or performing an Active Defense.

Master: Your Action Dice are now considered 3 lower (minimum 1) when Attacking, resetting your zweihander, or performing an Active Defense.

The Metzger, or Back Stance: In this stance, the sword is held like a broom, with the blade pointing at the ground a little bit behind the user. It is an extremely offensive Stance that allows for quick, surprising attacks. In this Stance the zweihander inflicts 4k3 damage, but the user's Passive Defense is reduced by 5, and the TN of any Active Defense the user attempts is increased by 5.



The Metzger Stance

Apprentice: Your Action Dice are considered 1 lower (minimum 1) when Attacking.

Journeyman: Your Action Dice are now considered 2 lower (minimum 1) when Attacking.

Master: Your zweihander inflicts 4k4 damage when it hits.

Gelingen

Country of Origin: Eisen

Description: This style of fighting was specially designed for use against non-human opponents. Students learn how



to look for weak spots in the anatomy of creatures they are unfamiliar with, so that after fighting a few monsters of that type, they know where to strike in order to do the most damage.

Tricks of the trade include aiming for joints such as knees and elbows, finding substances that are particularly poisonous to certain types of monster, and attacking soft portions of the creature's body, such as the eyes.

However, Gelingen is not particularly useful against intelligent opponents. Students learn to watch for predictable, repetitious movements, and intelligent opponents vary too much from individual to individual to establish any reliable, simple patterns for them.

Unlike other Swordsman Schools, Gelingen students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Basic Curriculum: Dirty Fighting, Doctor

Swordsman Knacks: Exploit Weakness (Monster) (See Below)

Apprentice: The student is trained to fight one type of monster (typically a common species, such as kobolds or sirens, but others are possible). You receive one Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knack (see below) at Rank 3 for free, and you may purchase up to three more at normal cost (as Advanced Knacks). You must have four Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knacks at Rank 4 to become a Journeyman.

In addition, when fighting a monster whose Exploit Weakness Knack you possess, you always add your Rank in the Knack to any Damage Rolls against the monster (increasing a roll of 17 to a 20 if you have a Rank 3, for instance).

Journeyman: The student has now learned to fight several different breeds of monster, and begun to identify common attacks and habits among them. When fighting a monster whose Exploit Weakness Knack you possess, you always add twice your Rank in the Knack to your Passive Defense when attacked by the monster.

In addition, your Apprentice bonus is doubled, allowing you to add twice your Rank in a creature's Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knack to your Damage Rolls against it. You must have four Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knacks at Rank 5 to become a Master.

Master: By this point, the student has begun to make broad generalizations in his training that apply to many different types of monster. You are considered to have a free Rank 1 in all possible Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knacks, and you may increase any of them (to Rank 2 or higher) as usual. You may now purchase as many Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knacks as you wish.

New Swordsman Knacks

Exploit Weakness (Monster): Whenever you fight a monster whose Exploit Weakness Knack you possess, you gain a number of unkept dice equal to your Rank in the Knack to all your Attack and Active Defense rolls. Types of monsters include: aspreys, kobolds, sirens, etc. Intelligent creatures, such as Sidhe and humans, are not considered monsters, since their tactics may vary so much that any standard tricks would be useless.

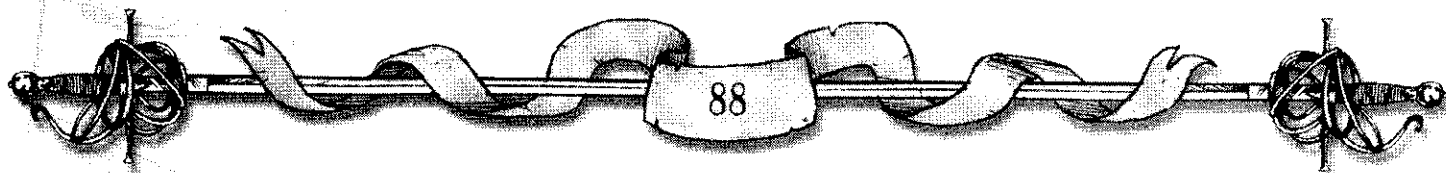
Buying Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knacks: Exploit Weakness (Monster) Knacks may only be purchased (at normal cost) after you have fought and defeated (or helped to defeat) a monster of that type, and then only 1 Rank per individual defeated. This rule does not apply during Hero creation – the Hero is assumed to have fought the requisite number of monsters sometime in the past.

Optional Rule: GMs may wish to permit Heroes to purchase normal Exploit Weakness Knacks in a similar manner, allowing them to increase their Knack Rank (at normal cost) by 1 for every Swordsman of a particular school they fight and defeat.

Höpken

Country of Origin: Eisen

Description: The invention of the crossbow was both a curse and a godsend to the Eisen. It could penetrate even



full suits of dracheneisen, a feat normal bows could not duplicate. And, although it was an expensive weapon, it allowed them to field their peasants effectively with little or no training. One of these peasants, a man named Adrian Höpken, became so adept at the crossbow that he passed on his techniques to a throng of eager students after the War of the Cross ended.

The Höpken style focuses on accuracy during firing and speed during reloading. In addition, Adrian developed a high-powered heavy crossbow that is even more likely to punch through dracheneisen. Combined with several gearing tricks and a device similar to a shoehorn, Adrian teaches his students how to reload their crossbows almost instantly.

However, the weakness of this school lies in the very tools it specializes in. The crossbows are only useful when the user is reasonably stationary, and the firing mechanism causes a slight twitch in the crossbow just before a bolt is fired, allowing an alert opponent to get out of the way.

Unlike other Swordsman Schools, Höpken students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Basic Curriculum: Athlete, Crossbow

Swordsman Knacks: Arc (Crossbow), Reload (Crossbow), Trick Shooting (Crossbow), Exploit Weakness (Höpken)

New Swordsman Knacks

Arc (Crossbow): While arcing a shot from a crossbow is very difficult, it is possible. For every Rank you have in this Knack, your crossbow's Range is increased by 5 yards.

Reload (Crossbow): For every Rank you have in this Knack, your reloading time for crossbows is reduced by 1 Action. This Knack is the same as the Reload (Crossbow) Knack found in the Crossbow Skill in the Player's Guide, but it is considered a Basic Knack for students of the Höpken school.

Trick Shooting (Crossbow): For each Rank of Trick Shooting, you subtract 5 from any penalties to your shot (range, cover, etc.). Trick Shooting cannot lower your TN below the base Target Number to be hit, nor can it be counted towards Raises to Damage. However, its bonuses can be applied towards Called Shots. For example, if a target has a TN to be hit of 15, plus 15 for modifiers (such as a Called Shot to the hand), a crossbowman with Rank 5 Trick Shooting would negate all 15 points of modifiers, but he would not lower the base TN to be hit (15).

Apprentice: Apprentices of the Höpken school have learned some tricks when firing a crossbow. You inflict an extra unkept die of damage when you hit (for a total of 3k3), and you may purchase the Reload (Crossbow) Knack as if it were a Basic Knack.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Höpken school have learned to use the crossbow to its best advantage, firing it further and more accurately than any untrained user. Your crossbow Range is increased by 10 yards, and your crossbow's Short and Long Range modifiers are reduced to -0 and -5, respectively.

In addition, you may build a special heavy crossbow that does 4k3 Damage instead of 3k3. This costs 5,000G. Anyone whose Brawn is less than 4 takes 3 extra Actions to reload the crossbow.

Master: Masters of the Höpken school are generally considered the most skilled crossbowmen in all of Théah. Your crossbow's Range is increased by 15 yards, while your Short and Long Range modifiers are reduced to +5 and -0, respectively. Lastly, you may raise your Reload (Crossbow) Knack from Rank 5 to Rank 6 for a cost of 25 XP, reducing your Reload time to 0 and allowing you to fire every Action.

Pösen

Country of Origin: Eisen

Description: This school trains its students in the use of the boar spear, a polearm often used from horseback for hunting boar. It has a crossbar on the blade to prevent the



boar from fighting its way up the blade to kill the horse and rider. Some of the more arrogant nobles began using boar spears to hunt enemy soldiers on the battlefield while arrows and swords bounced off their dracheneisen armor. Eventually, it became a method for nobles to prove their courage – a handicap to make up for the security granted by dracheneisen. However, methods were developed by the Pösen family that turned the boar spear into a brutal cavalry weapon. Now, it is less a handicap than an effective style of fighting that displays the fighter's noble pedigree for all to see.

The main strength of the Pösen school is its devastating initial burst of action. The student expends a great deal of effort at the start of the battle, then often retires to the reserves to rest and brag about the number of "pigs", or foot soldiers, he's managed to kill.

However, if the student's retreat is cut off, he's in a great deal of trouble. Pösen techniques leave a fighter exhausted after a very short time, and more than one noble has been pulled from his horse, stripped of his armor, and hacked to pieces by the "pigs".

Basic Curriculum: Polearm, Rider

Swordsman Knacks: Beat (Polearm), Charge (Polearm), Lance (Polearm), Exploit Weakness (Pösen)

New Swordsman Knacks

Charge (Polearm): Students of the Pösen school try to hit early and often, then withdraw to a place of safety. You may lower one of your Action Dice by your Rank in this Knack (to a minimum of 1) just before Phase 1 of the first Round of each combat.

Lance (Polearm): This replaces the Attack (Polearm) Knack when using a polearm from horseback. This is considered a Basic Knack.

Apprentice: Apprentices of this style learn to use their spear to keep their enemies at bay and to fight from horseback. You receive +15 to your Initiative Total during the first Round of each combat. Also, when you use your Lance (Polearm) Knack during the first Round of a combat,

as long as you have a decent amount of space to maneuver (at least a 20' x 20' area, using the GM's discretion) you roll and Keep one extra die of damage when you hit.

In addition, Pösen is most often taught to nobles, so you receive a 5-point discount if you purchase the Dracheneisen Advantage (which is a truer indication of Eisen nobility than the Noble Advantage, since so many nobles have lost their lands).

Journeyman: Journeymen have learned how to focus their strength early in a battle, doing as much damage as early as possible before retreating to safer grounds. During the first Round of each combat, you may choose to add 1 Rank to your Brawn, Finesse, and Resolve. If you do so, you must subtract 1 Rank from those Traits for the rest of the Scene. If this penalty brings any of your Traits to 0 (or you have suffered twice your new Resolve in Dramatic Wounds) you are immediately Knocked Out.

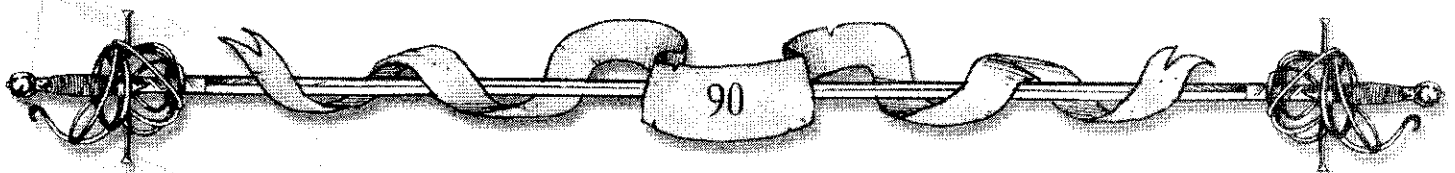
Master: The true Masters of the Pösen school know to attack early and often, and they appear as whirlwinds of steel as they sweep across the battlefield. At the start of a Round, you may choose to borrow against next Round's Actions. Thus, if your Panache is 3, you may perform up to 6 Actions this Round, but if you choose to roll all 6 Action Dice, then you receive no Actions next Round. You may use this ability only once every other Round.

Steil

Country of Origin: Eisen

Description: This school teaches a philosophy of leadership radically different from the Unabwendbar school (see below). Instead of trying to be more efficient and logical leaders, students learn how to inspire loyalty in their troops. It doesn't matter how good a tactician the General is if his men refuse to follow his orders.

This style of leadership is particularly suited for small units such as warbands or pirate ships, where good personal relationships between the commander and his men are essential.



However, by befriending his men, a commander puts his own emotional well-being in jeopardy, and risks making a rash decision that saves the lives of a few men only to throw the battle away – possibly killing many more in the process.

Unlike other Swordsman Schools, Steil students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive the Academy Advantage for free.

Basic Curriculum: Commander, Courtier

Swordsman Knacks: Orders (Advance, Charge, Envelop, Flank, Hold Ground, Regroup, Scout, Set vs. Charge, Trim Line, Withdraw)

New Swordsman Knacks

Orders (Advance, etc): Each of the Swordsman Knacks for the Steil and Unabwendbar schools correspond to entries on the Army Tactics chart on page 101. When a General chooses a tactic that he has the Knack for, he adds a number of points equal to his

Mastery Level (Apprentice = 1, Journeyman = 2, Master = 3) times his Rank in the appropriate Orders Knack to his Strategy roll for that Round of battle. Thus, a General who is a Master and has the Charge Knack at 5 would add 15 to his roll each Round he chose Charge.

Apprentice: Students of the Steil school learn to understand the emotions and reactions of their fellow man. This helps them in their day-to-day lives as well as making them better commanders. You receive one Free Raise whenever using or resisting the Repartee system. All NPCs loyal to you receive two Free Raises to resist other people's use of Repartee while in your presence.

In addition, you receive a 1-point discount on all Advantages that provide you with an NPC character who follows your orders (Servant, Bodyguard, etc.), and you may use the Experienced Henchmen and Brutes rule (see below). Of course, it should be noted that it is difficult to move large groups (more than 5 or 6) of armed men through peaceful towns without causing a stir.

You must learn four Swordsman Knacks at Rank 4 to become a Journeyman.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Steil school are taught to be more effective commanders. They are able to keep track of many men at once. You may team up (see the rules for Brute Squads in the *GMS' Guide*) with a number of Brutes under your command equal to your Rank in Wits + your Rank in the Leadership Knack. Any time a Brute under your command is Knocked Out, you may spend a Drama die to prevent it.

In addition, when using the Mass Combat rules, you may add your Mastery Level to your Personal Results roll in order to represent your men watching out for you.

You must learn five Swordsman Knacks at Rank 5 to become a Master.

Master: Masters of this school are extraordinarily charismatic men whose troops





would follow them into the Abyss. When using the Mass Combat rules and you are the General of an army, your ability to inspire the men is greatly increased. During the Set-up Phase of a battle, when you make your Wits + Incitation roll, you receive one Free Raise for every 5 points you roll instead of every 10. In addition, you may spend one Action, once per Scene, to lower the Fear Rating of an opponent by your Rank in the Leadership Knack.

Experienced Henchmen and Brutes: A Steil student may spend his XP to improve the abilities of any NPCs loyal to him. For a Henchman under your command, every XP you spend to improve him is worth 2 XP (any leftover points are lost). As for Brutes, you may increase the Threat Rating of a Brute Squad under your command by paying the following costs:

New Threat Rating	XP Cost
2	10
3	20
4	40

In addition, you may purchase Knacks for a Brute Squad (up to a maximum of +3) by paying XP equal to the new Rank of the Knack (i.e. increasing a Footwork +1 to Footwork +2 would cost 2 XP).

Losses to Brute Squads: Heroes should either roleplay out the hiring of replacement Brutes, or the GM can allow one Brute to be replenished at the end of every Act (the Heroes pick him up on the road). Losses do not affect any improvements that a Hero may have purchased for a Brute Squad – the replacements have the same skills as their predecessors.

Optional Rule: GMs may wish to make the Experienced Henchmen and Brutes rule available to all Heroes, doubling the costs for all non-Steil Heroes.



Unabwendbar

Country of Origin: Eisen

Description: The academy of Unabwendbar in Stärke is the only place to learn this philosophy of war; it teaches not to struggle against the inevitable. A good commander can see when a flank is going to collapse, or a unit is going to be cut off and killed, but many will throw away additional resources on a hopeless situation out of a misguided sense of loyalty. By allowing the inevitable to happen and planning to take advantage of it instead of struggling to stop it, the commander can often turn potentially devastating situations into victory.

Some of the greatest military minds in the world have been tutored in this philosophy. When sending forces against an opponent skilled in Unabwendbar, a commander must be careful to hold any celebration until the battle is over, since what looks like victory is often a trap laid by their opponent.

However, Unabwendbar does not instill the extraordinary loyalty that other philosophies of command do. Soldiers are notoriously unsympathetic to a commander who abandons them in a battle to place their army in a better position.

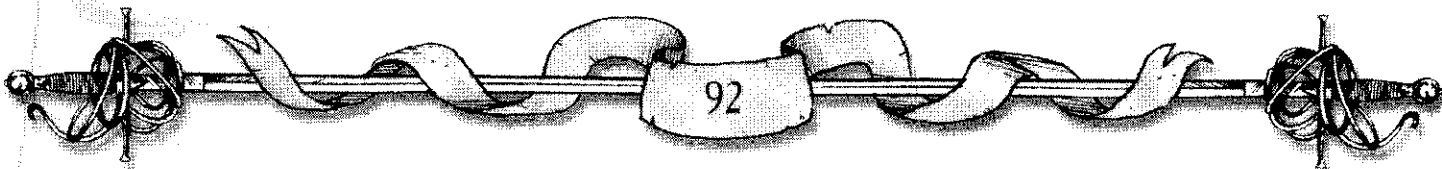
Unlike other Swordsman Schools, Unabwendbar students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive the Academy Advantage for free.

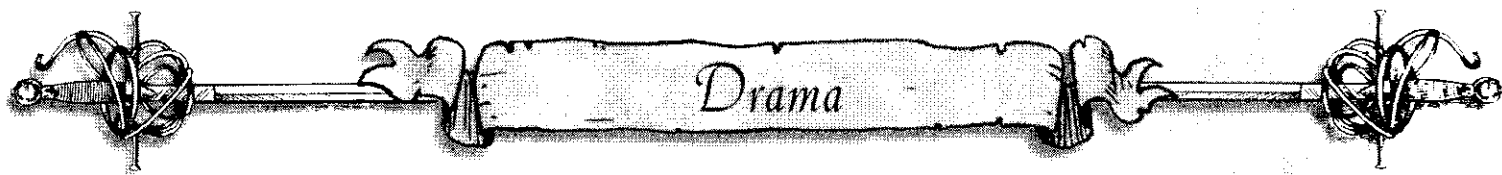
Basic Curriculum: Commander, Scholar

Swordsman Knacks: Orders (Advance, Charge, Envelop, Flank, Hold Ground, Regroup, Scout, Set vs. Charge, Trim Line, Withdraw)

New Swordsman Knacks

Orders (Advance, etc): Each of the Swordsman Knacks for the Steil and Unabwendbar schools corresponds to entries on the Army Tactics chart on page 101. When a General chooses a tactic that he has the Knack for, he adds a number equal to his Mastery Level (Apprentice = 1, Journeyman = 2, Master = 3) times his Rank in the appropriate Orders Knack to his Strategy roll for that Round of battle. Thus, a General who is a Master and has





the Charge Knack at 5 would add 15 to his roll each Round he chose Charge.

Apprentice: Apprentices of the Unabwendbar philosophy learn extraordinary discipline and concentration. For every Phase you Hold an Action before performing it (or every ten minutes, out of combat), you may add points equal to your Mastery Level to your Action roll, up to a maximum of five times your Mastery Level in this school (up to +5 for Apprentice, +10 for Journeyman, and +15 for Master). If you suffer a Dramatic Wound while Holding the Action, your concentration breaks and you must start over, but you do not lose the Action.

In addition, students of Unabwendbar may purchase the Man of Will Advantage (see page 96) for 20 HP.

You must learn four Swordsman Knacks at Rank 4 to become a Journeyman.

Journeyman: Having usually risen to leadership positions by the time they attain Journeyman status, students learn how to follow their general's instructions in battle and give orders to others. If you add your Rank in Leadership to your general's Strategy roll, you may ignore the normal penalty of -2 to your Personal Results roll this entails.

In addition, whenever more than one person in your party is performing the same action at the same time (such as attacking with identical weapons during the same Phase) you may add three times your Mastery Level to each of the participating Heroes' rolls.

You must learn five Swordsman Knacks at Rank 5 to become a Master.

Master: An army whose General is a Master in Unabwendbar has a distinct advantage in the battle, able to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. During the Tide of Battle roll for Mass Combat, you may, once per battle, convert one past

loss into a win in order to help accumulate the three wins in a row required for a victory. Thus, a Loss-Win-Win, a Win-Loss-Win, or a Win-Win-Loss can all become a Win-Win-Win, resulting in immediate victory for your army.

In addition, after anyone in your party (including yourself) has failed a roll, you may, once per Act, change their roll into the minimum number needed for success. However, this ability cancels the effects of any Raises that were made for the roll (preventing this ability from being used for special Knacks such as Eye Gouge, which require Raises to succeed). For instance, if you try to hit a TN 25 guard, and you Raise three times for damage, but only roll a 17 for your Attack, you could use this ability to increase the roll to a 25, but the three Raises you attempted would be discarded without effect.

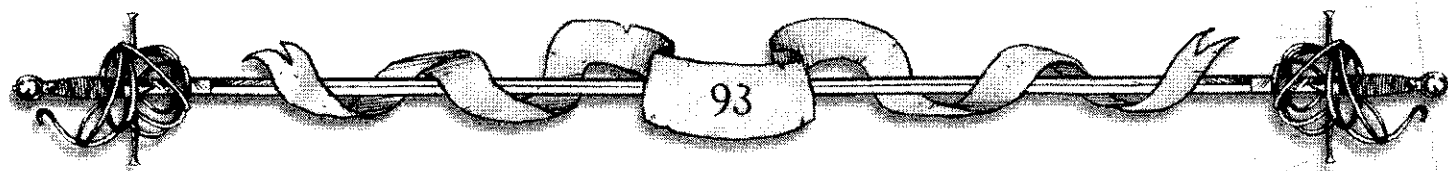
New Advantages

Dracheneisen (10, 20 or 40 Points, Eisen only)

The following list of Dracheneisen items supplements the one in the *Players' Guide*. It includes all the original items as well as several new ones that you may purchase. As before, you may select either Full Nobility or Minor Nobility, but in addition, a new category has been added that you may purchase for 10 Points – Petty Nobility. *All three of these categories qualify for the reduced cost of the Noble Advantage.*

Dracheneisen Armor Modifiers

Armor Points	TN Modifiers	Damage Reduction
1-6	None	-1 of the attacker's Kept dice (min. 0)
7-12	+5	-1 of the attacker's Kept dice (min. 0)
13-18	+5	-2 of the attacker's Kept dice (min. 0)
19-24	+10	-2 of the attacker's Kept dice (min. 0)



Dracheneisen Modifiers

Name*	Cost	Effect
Armor		
Arm Guard (2)	2	Armor**
Boot (2)	1	Armor
Breastplate (1)	6	Armor
Buckler (1)	4	1k1 Buckler, +1 unkept die when using Buckler Knacks
Gauntlet (1)	2	Armor
Helmet (1)	3	Armor
Leg Guard (2)	2	Armor
Panzerhand (1)	6	+1 unkept die when using Panzerhand Knacks, Armor (3 Armor Points)
Weapons		
Knife	2	1k2 Knife, +1 unkept die when using Knife Knacks
Fencing Weapon	3	2k2 Fencing Weapon, +1 unkept die when using Fencing Knacks
Heavy Weapon	4	3k2 Heavy Weapon, +1 unkept die when using Heavy Weapon Knacks
Polearm	5	3k2 Polearm, +1 unkept die when using Polearm Knacks
Zweihander	6	3k3 Zweihander, +1 unkept die to all Heavy Weapon Knacks
Crossbow	4	-5 to opponent's TN to be hit, Range is increased by 20 yards
Pistol	5	-5 to opponent's TN to be hit, Range is increased by 20 yards
Musket	7	-5 to opponent's TN to be hit, Range is increased by 20 yards
Miscellaneous		
Raw Dracheneisen	2	3 Units of Dracheneisen (see the Nibelung Advantage)
Lock	2	An unbreakable padlock

*Numbers in parentheses are the number of this type of item that may be purchased.

**Armor grants Armor Points equal to the cost listed above, except for the Panzerhand, which grants only 3 Armor Points (24 total possible).

Full Nobility (40 HP): 16 points to spend on the Dracheneisen Equipment table and Panzerhand Modifications.

Minor Nobility (20 HP): 6 points to spend on the Dracheneisen Equipment table and Panzerhand Modifications.

Petty Nobility (10 HP): 3 points to spend on the Dracheneisen Equipment table and Panzerhand Modifications (assuming you could somehow get a panzerhand).

After the number of Armor Points is determined (by adding the total benefit of all pieces you have purchased with your Dracheneisen points), the bonus to your TN to be Hit and Damage rolls made against you can be found on the table on page 93.

These benefits are total, *not cumulative*. Bonuses to TN gained from Dracheneisen cannot be negated normally, so a surprised or prone Eisen with +5 to his TN would still have a TN 10 to be hit.

Panzerhand Modifications

Note: You must have purchased a Dracheneisen Panzerhand to purchase any of these modifications. There is a limit of one modification per panzerhand.

Locking Grip (3 Points)

When using the Bind (Panzerhand) Knack, your opponent may not break your grip, and you may use the Disarm (Panzerhand) Knack or the Eisenfaust Journeyman ability. It requires a key and 3 Actions to release your grip, and until then, your off-hand cannot be used for anything else.

Mounted Crossbow (4 Points)

A 1k3 crossbow is built into the panzerhand. The crossbow is normal in all ways except for size and damage.

Built-in Pistol (5 Points)

A pistol is built into the panzerhand. When loaded (20 Actions), the first successful use of the Attack (Panzerhand) Knack causes it to go off, inflicting 4k3 Damage, +1 unkept die for every Rank of Brawn the wearer possesses.

Spikes (2 Points)

The panzerhand has spikes built into it, increasing its damage to 2k2.

Weighted Knuckles (1 Point)

The panzerhand is fused shut in a fist, and possesses heavy weighted knuckles. This increases its damage to 2k2, but it cannot be used for anything except punching, including the Bind (Panzerhand) and Disarm (Panzerhand) Knacks (although the GM can rule that certain actions are possible with this modification).

Eisen Accent (0 Points, Eisen only)

An accent is an identifying characteristic in the way a person speaks that indicates he's from a particular area. Only a Hero fully proficient in the language can identify accents, and non-Eisen may never have an accent. There are five primary accents in Eisen: *North*, *South*, *Hainzl*, *Republic*, and *Freiburg*. Eisen Heroes with one of these accents pay slightly different costs to learn foreign languages.

North: This accent indicates that the speaker is from Pösen or von Wische. This is considered a regal accent in Eisen. Speakers have a tendency to pronounce the end of a word with a soft exhalation. *Northern languages are easier for North Eisen to learn, while Southern languages are more difficult.*

South: Those with this accent are from Fischler or Sieger. This accent is often seen as a sign of common birth. *This is the Eisen accent described in the Player's Guide.*

Hainzl: This accent is found among Hainzl folk, and is believed to signify a worldly, cultured person. It is strongly influenced by Ussuran, and those who speak with it use many Ussuran words in everyday conversation. *Northern*

Eisen Language Chart

	South	North	Hainzl	Freiburg	Republic
Avalon	1	2	2	0	2
Castille	2	1	3	1	2
Crescent	3	3	2	2	3
High Eisen	1	1	1	2	0
Eisen	0	0	0	0	0
Montaigne	2	2	3	1	3
Théan	3	3	3	2	2
Teodoran	3	3	2	2	3
Ussura	2	2	1	1	2
Vendel	1	2	2	0	1
Vodacce	2	1	1	1	2

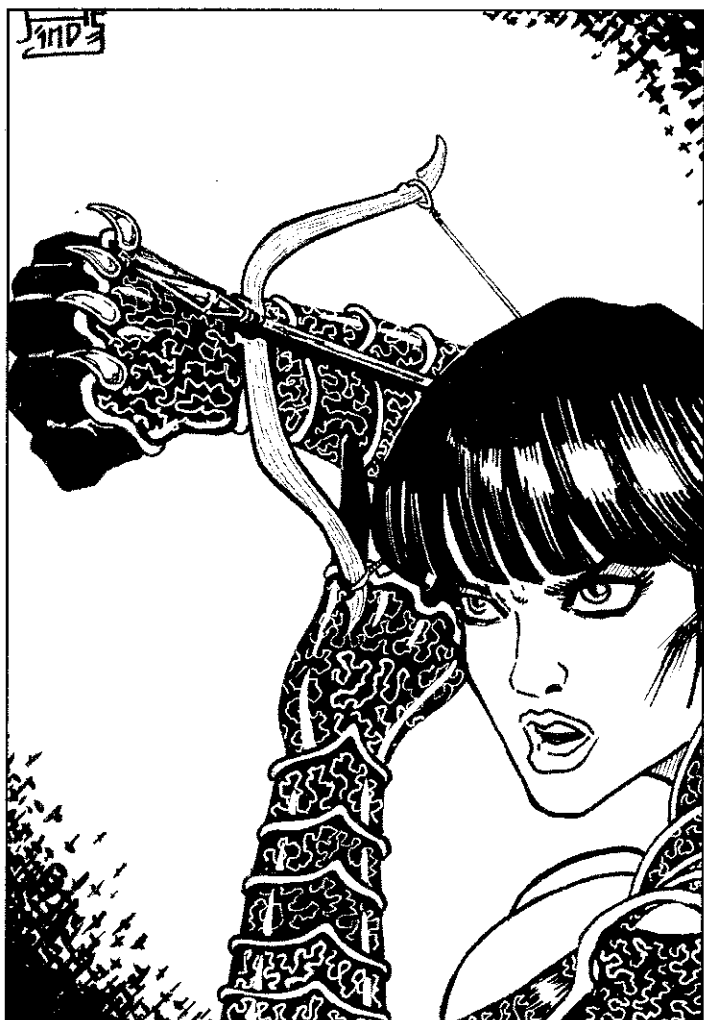
languages are harder for Hainzl Eisen to learn, while Southern and Eastern languages are simpler.

Republic: This accent is associated with speakers from the königreich of Heilgrund, and is believed to indicate a traditional, conservative background. *Because of their traditional views, Heroes from Heilgrund shun the languages of those countries that are mistrusted by the Eisen. On the other hand, even the peasants are tutored in the High Eisen tongue, and receive it for free.*

Freiburg: This accent is found among speakers from the city of Freiburg. It is easily recognized because of the generous use of various foreign words in everyday conversation. Other Eisen are often suspicious of them, due to Freiburg's reputation as a den of thieves and heathens. *Since they are exposed to many different languages, Heroes from Freiburg learn foreign languages more easily. In addition, they roll once on the Provincial Differences chart for Freiburg on page 23. However, they may not take the Linguist Advantage.*

Eisen Bodyguard (6 Points, 5 Points for Eisen)

You have hired a skilled Eisen soldier to be a bodyguard. He will remain loyal so long as you do nothing to seriously



upset him and he isn't offered a significantly better price to betray you. *The Bodyguard receives an Eisen Swordsman school in addition to the normal 75 HP a Henchman is built with.*

Man of Will (25 Points)

Some of the greatest warriors have learned to rule their emotions and their bodies. You are one of them. Your mind is a fortress, unaffected by the sea of emotions surrounding all other people. Peer pressure, emotional manipulation — even mind-altering sorcery is shrugged off and ignored. You are inhumanly calm. Not fearless or reckless, simply calm. *You may not take a Hubris, but a Virtue costs you only 5 HP if you decide to take one. By taking this Advantage, you are:*

- Immune to mind-altering magic, including *Sorte* manipulation of the Cups or Staves strand, emotion-affecting runes, and magical effects that deceive or beguile, even *Sidhe* illusions.
- Immune to the effects of the *Repartee* system.
- Immune to the effects of *Fear*.
- Immune to the effects of being *Crippled*. You still feel the pain, but you don't let it slow you down.

Note: Characters with any kind of magical ability may not take this Advantage.

Membership: Iron Guard (4 Points, Eisen only)

You are a member of an Eisenfürst's Iron Guard. Each Iron Guard unit has slightly different entry requirements (in addition to purchasing this Advantage) and grants slightly different benefits.

Fischler: The Wily Foxes

Fischler's Iron Guard are skilled hunters and trackers, and often venture into the *Schwartzen Walden* to rescue lost woodsmen or destroy some abomination. They wear black uniforms with green trim and arm themselves with heavy weapons.

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.

Wits and Finesse of at least 3.

10+ HP spent in Knacks from the Hunter Skill.

No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

Enforce the law within Fischler.

Obey Eisenfürst Fischler's orders.

Watch the *Schwartzen Walden* and report any activity.

Benefits

Wily Foxes have their equipment, room, and board all paid for by Faulk Fischler. In addition, they receive a stipend of 20G per month. Finally, they may appeal directly to the other Wily Foxes for assistance in times of trouble.

Freiburg: The Freiburg Guardsmen

Trägue's Iron Guard often serve wealthy merchants as bodyguards in order to pay the salaries of Freiburg's police force. They wear black uniforms with white trim and arm themselves with a pair of panzerhands, one on each hand.

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.
Brawn and Resolve of at least 3.
5+ HP invested in Knacks in the Panzerhand Skill.
No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

Enforce the law within Freiburg.
Obey Eisenfürst Trägue's orders (not that he gives any).
Act as a bodyguard when hired out to private citizens.

Benefits

Freiburg Guardsmen have their equipment, room, and board all paid for — either by the city or by private funds. In addition, they receive a stipend each month. Exactly how much they make during a given month is determined by rolling a die and consulting the following chart:

1	0 Guilders.
2-3	10 Guilders.
4-7	20 Guilders.
8-9	30 Guilders.
0	40 Guilders.

Finally, they may appeal directly to the other Freiburg Guardsmen for assistance in times of trouble.

Hainzl: The Steel Warriors

Hainzl's Iron Guard all receive dracheneisen arms and armor. They wear black uniforms with grey trim and arm themselves with heavy weapons.

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.
Wits and Finesse of at least 3.
10+ HP spent in the Dracheneisen Advantage.
No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

Enforce the law within Hainzl.
Obey the Hainzl family's orders.
Guard the mines against thieves.

Benefits

Steel Warriors have their equipment, room, and board all paid for by Georg Hainzl (indirectly, at least). In addition, they receive a stipend of 20G per month. Finally, they may appeal directly to the other Steel Warriors for assistance in times of trouble.

Heilgrund: The Ghosts

Heilgrund's Iron Guard are skilled in staying out of sight. They don't speak much, and it is difficult to notice them even when they're standing in plain sight; they even seem to blink less often than normal people. They wear black uniforms and arm themselves with heavy weapons.

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.
Resolve and Finesse of at least 3.
Rank 3+ in the Unobtrusive Knack.
Rank 3+ in the Stealth Knack.
Rank 3+ in the Shadowing Knack.
No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

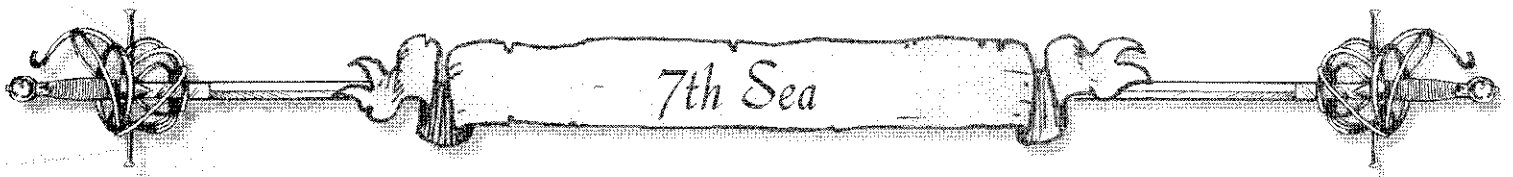
Enforce the law within Heilgrund.
Obey Eisenfürst Heilgrund's orders.
Speak to no one of Stefan Heilgrund's activities.

Benefits

Ghosts have their equipment, room, and board all paid for by Stefan Heilgrund. In addition, they receive a stipend of 20G (in Marks) per month. Finally, they may appeal directly to the other Ghosts for assistance in times of trouble.

Pösen: The Swamp Dogs

Pösen's Iron Guard are one of the most elite fighting forces in the nation. They wear black uniforms with blue trim and carry an assortment of weapons at all times. These men train at the Gelingen Academy before being permitted to



join the Guard, and they know a number of methods to defeat non-human opponents.

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.

Wits and Brawn of at least 3.

The Gelingen Swordsman School Advantage.

No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

Enforce the law within Pösen.

Obey Eisenfürst Pösen's orders.

Patrol and kill any encountered monsters.

Benefits

Swamp Dogs have their equipment, room, and board all paid for by Fauner Pösen. In addition, they receive a stipend of 20G per month. Finally, they may appeal directly to the other Swamp Dogs for assistance in times of trouble.

Sieger: The Clenched Fists

Sieger's Iron Guard are considered some of the most vile men around. They are typically murderers, thieves, and worse. They wear black uniforms trimmed with red, and always wield a panzerhand and carry a small spiked club (a 2k2 Fencing Weapon).

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.

Brawn of at least 4.

A Reputation of -10 or less.

No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

Enforce the law within Sieger.

Try not to kill anyone important.

Obey Eisenfürst Sieger's orders.

Benefits

Clenched Fists have their equipment, room, and board all paid for by Erich Sieger. In addition, they receive a stipend of 20G (in Marks) per month. Finally, they possess absolute authority within Sieger, and are immune to legal punishments there, although appeals to the other Clenched Fists for assistance in times of trouble are liable to be

laughed at. GMs should remember that a Hero becomes an NPC when his Reputation reaches -30.

Wische: The Roaring Drachen

Wische's Iron Guard are known as loyal, steadfast men. Even though they have been paid with IOUs for the last six months, many still remain on duty. Out of respect for their loyalty, many of Wische's citizens have accepted the IOUs as legal tender, even though they never expect to be reimbursed. The Roaring Drachen wear black uniforms trimmed with gold, and carry zweihanders. They are all skilled in the Drexel style of fighting, and most prefer the use of the Metzger stance.

Membership Requirements

Eisen Nationality.

Brawn and Finesse of at least 3.

The Drexel Swordsman School Advantage.

No fewer than three Martial Skills.

Duties

Enforce the law within Wische.

Obey Eisenfürst Wische's (or rather, his Regent's) orders.

Protect the people of Wische above all else.

Benefits

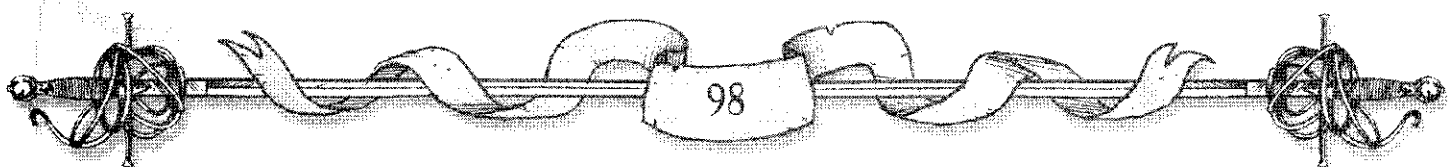
Roaring Drachen have their equipment, room, and board all paid for by Reinhard von Wische (again, through his Regent). In addition, they receive a stipend of 20G per month in the form of IOUs, which are accepted in about 20% of all the shops in Wische. Finally, they are greatly respected by the people (+5 Reputation Points), and can appeal to the other Roaring Drachen in times of need.

Nibelung (20 Points, Eisen only)

You are a Nibelung, one of the few entrusted with the secret of forging dracheneisen into useful items. This grants you several benefits.

Dracheneisen Forging

If provided with raw dracheneisen, you are capable of forging it into items. Each unit (1 lb.) of raw dracheneisen is



equivalent to one point on the Dracheneisen Equipment table. Thus, it takes 3 lbs. of raw dracheneisen to forge a Fencing Weapon. It requires two months and 1,000G per unit of dracheneisen to create such a weapon.

Nibelung's Hammer

Every Nibelung forges a blacksmith's hammer as their final test for acceptance into the Order. This hammer uses the Heavy Weapon Knacks and deals 3k2 damage, but only requires one hand to wield. In addition, it marks its holder as a member of the Order of Nibelungen.

Membership in the Order of Nibelungen

The political and social power of the Nibelungen should not be overlooked. Outside of Eisen, they possess little authority, but within her borders, no leader would dare oppose them, fearing that they might be cut off from their supply of dracheneisen forever.

Brew Dracheneisen Solvent

The Nibelungen have one final secret weapon – a solvent that will dissolve dracheneisen in a matter of moments. Each vial requires 600G and one month to brew, but when thrown onto an opponent wearing or wielding dracheneisen (requires a Finesse + Throwing roll against the victim's TN to be hit, ignoring any bonuses from armor), it will utterly destroy one of their dracheneisen items (selected at random, or the Nibelung may use a Called Shot to hit a particular item). The affected item turns green with corrosion before becoming brittle and useless. If the object is completely immersed in water within 2 Phases, the process can be stopped without serious damage.

Rücken (8 Points, 6 Points for Eisen)

An Eisen has sworn to be your Rücken. Whenever the two of you are fighting together, you can absolutely trust him to cover your back, but you must be willing to do the same for him. *Your Rücken is considered an absolutely loyal 100 HP Henchman, unless you betray or abandon him, in which case you lose this Advantage and he turns into a 3-point Nemesis.*

Reputation Actions

This Reputation Action is particularly appropriate for use in Eisen, and is listed here. It may be performed anywhere, however.

Monster Slaying

Killing a monster that has been terrorizing the local inhabitants is usually good for a bit of fame if word gets out. Heroes who help kill a monster each receive Reputation Points equal to the monster's lowest Trait. They may only benefit from this once per Story.

New Equipment

Eisen has created several unique weapons that often see use on the battlefields of Théah. These include the boar spear, the Eisen Roaring Cannon, and the zweihander.

Boar Spears

A boar spear is a polearm approximately five to seven feet long, with a crossbar behind the tip that can force opponents back away from the wielder. Boar spears require one hand to wield and inflict 1k2 damage. However, an opponent successfully hit by a boar spear must increase his lowest Action die by 1 (to a maximum of 10) for every 10 Flesh Wounds inflicted to him.

Eisen Roaring Cannon

As mentioned in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook, cannons can be incredibly deadly. The Eisen have built on this strength to make them even more powerful at the expense of maneuverability. When an Eisen Roaring Cannon is

fired, it sounds as though lightning has struck nearby. Men and horses evaporate as the screaming balls tear through the ranks, and the survivors often run for their lives. An Eisen Roaring Cannon deals 10k9 damage if it hits a Hero. If he fails his Wound Check, he suffers one Dramatic Wound, plus one more for every 5 by which he failed his check. This usually results in a messy death. In addition, anyone within twenty feet of a person killed by a Roaring Cannon is immediately subject to an Intimidation Action from the cannon (considered to have a Resolve of 3). If the target loses, then he breaks and runs away from the cannon.

It takes 50 Actions to reload a Roaring Cannon, but up to four people can contribute Actions toward loading it. The cannon may swivel up to 30 degrees or move up to 1/2" on the Action Map per Action spent.

Roaring Cannons have a Range of 300 yards, a Short Range modifier of +25, and a Long Range modifier of +35.

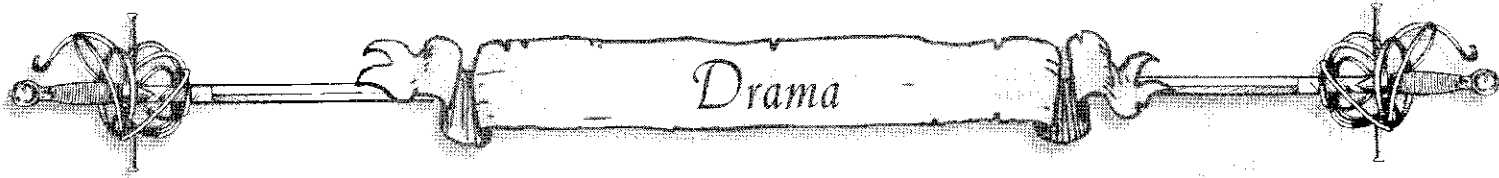
Zweihanders

Zweihanders are enormous swords that often stand taller than their wielder. The sword is designed to allow eight points of attack along its length. A zweihander is a Heavy Weapon that deals 3k3 damage. However, after every attack made with a zweihander, the Hero must either spend one Action to reset it before it can be used to attack or parry with again, or else drop the zweihander and switch to another weapon. *For example, Rodriguez is using a zweihander and rolls 1, 4, 6, and 8 for Initiative. He uses his 1 to attack. Now he can neither attack with the zweihander nor use his Parry (Heavy Weapon) Knack until he spends one Action to reset the zweihander, which he does in Phase 4. Now he is prepared to attack once again in Phase 6, and then reset his blade in Phase 8 so that it'll be ready for next Round. Instead of resetting his sword, Rodriguez could drop it and draw his pistol or another weapon, but he would still have to spend an action picking up the sword again before he could use it once more.*

Advanced Mass Combat

Here are several additions to the existing Mass Combat rules found in the *Game Masters' Guide*. The first is an Army Tactics chart that allows the decisions of the GM and the players to have more influence on the way a battle is fought. Next, some conditional modifiers are introduced to take into account things like terrain and numerical advantage. It also allows the Heroes to influence the battle more directly by placing themselves in greater danger. Finally, some





Army Tactics Chart

Attacker	Defender									
	<i>Adv.</i>	<i>Cha.</i>	<i>Env.</i>	<i>Fla.</i>	<i>Hol.</i>	<i>Reg.</i>	<i>Sco.</i>	<i>Set</i>	<i>Tri.</i>	<i>Wit.</i>
<i>Advance (Adv)</i>	0	0	-10	-5	+5	+5	0	-5	0	+10
<i>Charge (Cha)</i>	0	0	-15	-10	-5	+15	+10	-15	+5	+15
<i>Envelop (Env)</i>	+10	+15	0	-5	-10	+10	-5	+5	-15	-5
<i>Flank (Fla)</i>	+5	+10	+5	0	0	-5	+10	0	-15	-10
<i>Hold Ground (Hol)</i>	-5	+5	+10	0	0	-15	0	0	+5	0
<i>Regroup (Reg)</i>	-5	-15	-10	+5	+15	0	+5	+10	-5	0
<i>Scout (Sco)</i>	0	-10	+5	-10	0	-5	0	+5	+15	0
<i>Set vs. Charge (Set)</i>	+5	+15	-5	0	0	-10	-5	0	0	0
<i>Trim Line (Tri)</i>	0	-5	+15	+15	-5	+5	-15	0	0	-10
<i>Withdraw (Wit)</i>	-10	-15	+5	+10	0	0	0	0	+10	0

optional modifiers are provided for Heroes who serve in a cavalry or artillery unit instead of the usual infantry assignment. An artillery unit that is Heavily Engaged is in a lot more trouble than an Infantry unit in the same position.

Players and GMs interested in Mass Combat should note that both the Steil and the Unabwendbar Swordsman Schools (see pages 92-93) offer powerful abilities when using the Mass Combat rules.

Remember, the Mass Combat system is designed for large battles that the GM doesn't want to run in detail. Using it for small skirmishes (50 or fewer men per side, for instance) may not give desirable results.

The Army Tactics Chart

The Army Tactics chart adds an extra step to the Mass Combat rules, but it can also bring a lot of flavor to a battle that the Heroes are caught up in. To use it, the GM assigns one side to be the Attacker (generally the aggressor in the fight); the other army becomes the Defender. After the first Round, the side that won the previous Round of the battle becomes the Attacker. At the start of each Round, the players and the GM each choose one of

the ten tactics listed on the chart and write it down in secret. Both tactics are then revealed simultaneously and the chart is cross-referenced to see what the outcome is. The number shown is then added to the Attacker's Strategy roll. *For example, if the Attacker chooses to Charge and the Defender chooses to Envelop, the Attacker would subtract 15 from his General's Strategy roll for this Round.*

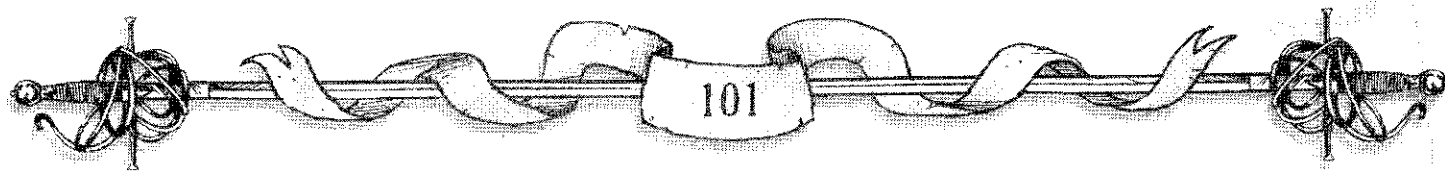
Each of the ten tactics is briefly described below.

Advance: The army moves forward in an orderly fashion, capturing ground as it goes. Advancing allows a good mixture of defense and offense, making it a reliable, low-risk tactic unless the army is caught in the crossfire of several enveloping artillery units.

Charge: The army rushes forward *en masse*, attempting to use its size and momentum to sweep the other army aside. This is best used when the enemy is hesitating or reevaluating their position, but an enveloping or flanking maneuver can mean disaster.

Personal Result Modifiers

	Reserves	Disengaged	Engaged	Heavily Engaged
Infantry	+0	+0	+0	+0
Cavalry	+1	+2	+1	-4
Artillery	+4	+2	+0	-6



Envelop: The army splits into two flanks and entices the other army into moving between the flanks, neatly surrounding it. This is one of the best responses to a charge, but a well-ordered and cautious army can easily defeat it.

Flank: The army sends a strong force to attack an army's side. Armies are big, unwieldy things, so it's difficult for them to react in time. The tactic is effective against aggressive opponents, but often easily repulsed by a cautious General.

Hold Ground: The army doggedly attempts to hold onto the ground it has gained. This is a very defensive tactic, but it can often be surprised by a charge where a slower assault would have failed.

Regroup: The army pulls back a bit, reorganizes its formations, and attempts to react to the enemy's movements. Very useful against defensive or slow-moving opponents, but futile against more aggressive tactics.

Scout: The army dispatches small units to probe at the enemy and see what reaction they can provoke. This is ideal for discovering holes in defensive formations, but an aggressive tactic can catch the army unprepared.

Set vs. Charge: The army plants its pikes in the dirt and braces to meet an oncoming charge. This tactic is only truly useful against charges and advances, but generally less risky than enveloping.

Trim Line: The army straightens out its formation, allowing units to support each other more efficiently. This is extremely effective against tactics that try to outmaneuver the army, such as Envelop and Flank, but careful probing or the sight of a retreating enemy can goad the men into abandoning their positions to attack.

Withdraw: The army begins an ordered retreat. This tactic is often used to draw the enemy into a trap or to pull back to a more defensible position when the enemy has attempted to outflank or envelop the army. This can easily turn into a rout against an aggressive enemy, however, and must be used with caution.

Conditional Modifiers to General's Roll

Terrain Modifiers

Army has the high ground	+5
Army on difficult ground (gravel, mud, etc.)	-5
Army attacked midstream	-10

Numerical Advantage

(These bonuses are not cumulative. Round down when determining the numerical advantage.)

2 to 1 Advantage	+5
3 to 1 Advantage	+10
4 to 1 Advantage	+15
5 to 1 Advantage	+20
6+ to 1 Advantage	+25

Hero Impact

Every Hero who was Heavily Engaged last Round	+5
Every Hero who died/was Knocked Out last Round	-5

Conditional Modifiers

The Conditional Modifiers chart allows a GM to modify the Strategy roll of a side in a battle based on considerations such as terrain and numbers. These modifiers are intended to give the GM a set of guidelines to work from when ruling on modifiers of his own. After all, it's impossible to cover every contingency that could spring up in a battle.

Fortresses and Fortifications

Castles and fortresses were built because it took fewer men to defend a fortified position effectively. In *7th Sea*, fortresses and fortifications have a Fortification Rating. When determining the numerical advantage modifier, multiply the number of men the side with the fortress has by the fortress' Fortification Rating. Thus, an army of 10,000 men inside a fortress with a Fortification Rating of 2 is just as effective as 20,000 men without the fortress. To get an idea of what Fortification Rating to assign to a fortress, consult the following chart:

Fortification Rating	Description
1.5	Fort
2	Small Keep
3	Large Keep
4	Small Castle
5	Large Castle
6	Small Fortress
7	Large Fortress
8	Insel
9	Stahlfort
10	El Morro

Casualties

To determine the number of casualties inflicted after a battle, roll a die and consult the following chart. Each entry is listed as *Percentage of Army Killed/Percentage of Army Wounded*. Wounded men will be fit enough to fight again in one month. Remember to base the losses on the actual number of men in an army – don't count any Fortification Ratings involved, or losses will be much higher than they should be. Although the percentage of men killed may seem low, remember that modern warfare takes a much higher toll than wars in the 1600s.

Die Roll	Winner	Loser
1	1% / 2%	2% / 5%
2	2% / 5%	5% / 10%
3	5% / 10%	10% / 20%
4	10% / 20%	20% / 25%
5	2% / 10%	5% / 20%
6	5% / 20%	10% / 25%
7	10% / 25%	20% / 40%
8	20% / 40%	25% / 50%
9	5% / 25%	10% / 40%
0	10% / 40%	20% / 50%

Cavalry and Artillery Units (Optional)


Although cavalry and artillery can be very potent in the proper circumstances, they are not as versatile as the staple of any army – the infantry. To reflect this, a Hero who serves in either capacity during a battle should apply



modifiers to his Personal Results roll each Round, depending on how heavily engaged he is (see the chart at the bottom of page 101). Cavalry is most effective when it is lightly engaged and has room to maneuver, but if the press of bodies around the horses grows too great, riders can be placed at a severe disadvantage. Likewise, artillery units need to be kept as far from heavy fighting as possible. Usually, the cannon crews are lightly armed and poorly trained, meaning that they tend to run at the first sign of trouble.

If this rule is used, Heroes should only be able to change their level of Engagement by one space in either direction each Round. Thus, an Engaged Hero could move to Heavily Engaged or Unengaged, but not to the Reserves. In addition, the GM can spend a Drama die to shift a Hero's level of Engagement by one space.





Courage

...Ye Mighty, and
Despair, Part Five

The room was dark and damp, filled with bizarre objects and ancient books. Odel didn't have a clue what most of them were supposed to do. His Lord was probably better informed, but since he'd been hired for his "extensive knowledge of the Syrneath", Odel thought it best not to tell Stefan that.

Almost as if hearing his thoughts, the young man looked up at him. "Odel, hand me that book. The one on the Thalussian Isles."

Stefan Heilgrund's assistant looked at the stacks of books, then over at his employer. "The one bound in crystal?"

Distracted, Stefan just nodded. "The very one."

Painfully, Odel Herrickson grabbed the book and rose to his feet, cradling it in his left hand and what was left of his right arm. "Here you are, my Lord. Have you discovered something?"

"Perhaps. I believe that this book contains some information on the source of sorcery, and it appears as though the green tablet we acquired last week—"

"The one from the Cathayans?"

"Yes, exactly. It seems that the tablet could be the key to deciphering the rest of the book. I'm close, Odel, very close."

"Are you sure about this, my Lord? Among the Vestenmannavnjar, we have a story about the Beast in the

Great Tårn Mountain, who tricked those who dealt with it. They were given power, but power so great they could not control it, and it eventually destroyed them."

"Have a little faith. I'm extremely careful, and leave nothing to chance. You know that."

Odel eyed his stump warily, and thought of the terrible scar on his head. "Sorcery is always more dangerous than you believe."

"Ridiculous. You simply have to understand it before you go playing with it. Sorcery's just like any other source of power — it can help or hinder, and it doesn't care which."

Stefan looked up as a messenger entered the room. Taking a letter from the man, he read it over quickly. "Ah, excellent. 'To Eisenfürst Heilgrund, from the pen of Nicklaus Trägue. I would be delighted to allow you to visit the drachen caves on my land. I am thrilled to hear of your interest in these ruins and would be glad to give you a guided tour myself. Sincerely, Nicklaus Trägue.'"

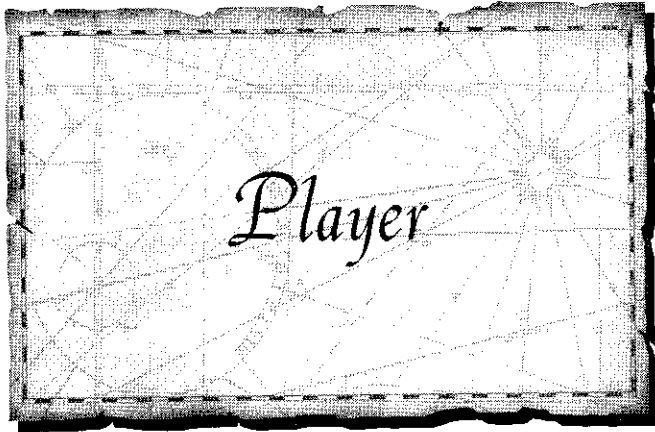
Odel had met Trägue, and doubted that letter had ever been near his pen. It didn't seem likely that the man would ever use the word "glad", much less "thrilled." As usual, he kept his opinion to himself.

Stefan beamed. "Marvelous. This should be of inestimable value to my research. Odel, go pack my things. I need to finish deciphering this book before we go."

Looking back at his young lord, Odel hoped he knew what he was getting into. If this obsession kept up, he could wind up serving a madman, or worse. Absently, he reached out to open a door with his right hand before he remembered it was no longer attached to his arm. He reproached himself for the momentary lapse, and felt the heat of Nød rise within him — heat that he could no longer reach inwards and grasp.

"Even a madman is better than the tender mercies of the Vestenmannavnjar," he muttered to himself.

Stefan continued his research, oblivious to the world.



Staring into the Abyss

There's one thing you must remember above all else when you're playing an Eisen...

Never give up.

No matter how hard life gets, no matter how cruelly you're treated, you stand your ground and spit in the faces of those who want to cause you pain.

Fear gives power to evil. Fear of pain or death. Fear of getting involved or getting hurt. These things lead men to watch timidly as others are abused, beaten, or killed in front of them. Inaction offers no protection against evil. Evil will turn its attention to you sooner or later.

Courage denies evil this hold over you. If you can stand up to your fear and throw it back in the face of your enemies, then others will follow your example. Even if you know you're going to lose the battle, the decision to take up the fight is a triumph in itself. The greatest Eisen heroes fought for what they believed in. Most died. Many failed even to achieve their goals. Not every maiden was rescued, and not every drachen was slain, but it wasn't for lack of trying.

For the Eisen, there is no dishonor in losing — only in refusing to fight.



“Will you be my back, Brother?”

As an Eisen, you will probably fight beside many men. Of them, you will meet a few who deserve your respect, and maybe one you would trust with your life. Such a friend is referred to as a Rücken or “Back” (see the *GMs' Guide*, page 51), and is considered closer even than family. Think carefully before you name someone your Rücken, however — an honor freely given is worthless both to the giver and the receiver.

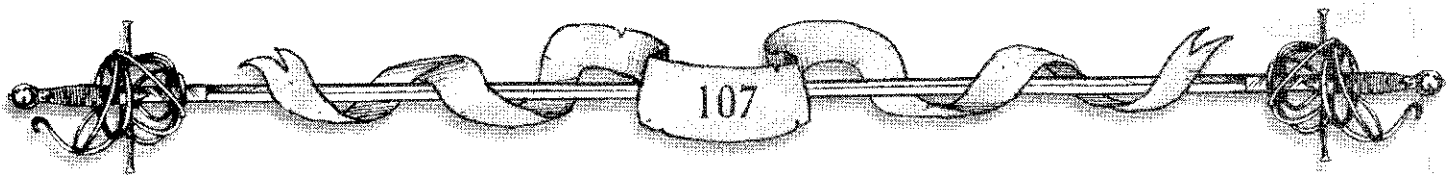
Andreas clasped his friend's hand tightly. “Will you be my back, Markus?” In response, Markus clapped his other hand on Andreas' shoulder. “Of course, Brother. You may trust me, always.”

When you make someone your Rücken, you enter into the strongest oath that an Eisen can give, except for (perhaps) the vows of marriage. You are saying that you will always be there for your Rücken; that he does not need to ask for help — you will freely give it. When you swear this oath, you promise to protect not only your Rücken, but also his relatives, loved ones, and friends. You are, in a very real sense, becoming a member of his family.

Markus opened the door to see who had ventured out into such terrible weather to visit him. Andreas stood in the pounding rain, tears running down his cheeks and mixing with the rain water. “It's Monica. They've taken her.” Without a word, Markus grabbed his cloak and sword. “Let's go.”

The worst betrayal an Eisen can make is the abandonment of his Rücken during a battle. Since your Rücken will never look back to check on you, leaving him without warning leaves him unprotected and vulnerable. Assuming he isn't killed, you will have earned his undying hatred. If you must leave your Rücken's side in battle for any reason, shout a warning and give him ample time to adjust his tactics.

They stood back to back, the brown-cloaked men swirling around them like a wolf pack that's brought an elk to bay. Through the dim light, Andreas saw his daughter being led towards a chopping block — but there were four able swordsmen in his way. “Markus! I see her! They're going to kill her!” With a vicious



overhand chop, Markus brought down one of their opponents. "Go to her! I'll hold them."

An Eisen will give his life for his Rücken without a second thought. His Rücken will ensure that he is properly buried, take care of his family, and avenge his death, if necessary.

With a roar, Markus turned and hurled himself onto the men blocking Andreas' path. They went down in a heap, and he shouted, "Go on! I've got them!" Hesitating for only an instant, Andreas leapt over the pile of bodies, hoping to save his daughter and return in time to help Markus...

When a man's Rücken has died, it is unlikely that he will take another. It is hard to recover from the loss of such a close friend, and most Eisen never completely heal. However, those who mourn too long might inadvertently dishonor the memory of their Rücken by not getting on with their lives.



Andreas strained under the weight of his Rücken's corpse. His daughter walked respectfully behind him, not wanting to disturb her father just yet. Andreas knew that he could never repay his debt to Markus, but he would start by hunting down and killing the cowardly dog who had stabbed his Rücken from behind and then fled while Andreas was busy finishing off the rest of the kidnappers. He would find the murderer, and when he did, not all the demons of the Abyss could save him – not even Legion itself.

In short, a Rücken can be a source of a lot of fun roleplaying, but if you treat the concept with the respect that your Hero would have for it, then you will find your enjoyment greatly increased.

Roleplaying Grief

Many Eisen have lost someone very important to them. Often, a death can have long-lasting effects on those closest to the deceased. The atrocities of the War of the Cross have left few Eisen completely unscarred. Psychologists have identified five stages a person goes through when trying to come to terms with such a loss – denial, anger, bargaining, sorrow, and acceptance. Some people become trapped in the early stages of grief, and never move on to accept what has happened. This can affect their personalities for the rest of their lives. Here are some suggestions on how to roleplay a Hero who is currently going through one of the five stages of grief.

Denial

A Hero suffering from denial refuses to accept the reality of his loss. He may act as though the deceased is merely away on a trip, or in extreme cases engage in a search for someone he knows in his heart to be dead. This can make for an interesting twist to the Lost Relative Background if none of the other players know that the relative they're helping the Hero look for is already dead.

Anger

In this stage, the Hero has accepted that his loved one is dead, and hates the world for taking him or her away. He

may take innocent remarks as a crack at the memory of his loved one and explode into violence with seemingly little provocation. Even being reminded of the situation in which the loved one died can make the Hero angry; for instance, a man whose wife was killed by robbers might become enraged upon seeing a woman being robbed. This can be an interesting explanation for the Hot-headed Hubris, or even the Altruistic Virtue. The Hero could also have a Nemesis or Vendetta Background against the person who killed his loved one.

Bargaining

During this stage, the bereaved Hero is desperate to undo his loved one's death. On Théah, this can mean a quest for an artifact rumored to have the power of resurrection, or dealings with sorcerers the Hero believes can restore his loved one to him. This stage of grief can be a good basis for the Hunting Background, and is more tragic if the Hero fails in his quest and must confront the finality of his loss. This could alternately be used as the basis for the Willful Virtue — a Hero who allows nothing to stop him in his quest to restore his dead sister, for instance.

Sorrow

After moving on to sorrow, the Hero often suffers from depression and feelings of hopelessness and despair. In severe instances, this can lead to thoughts of suicide or a lack of regard for the Hero's own safety. This stage of grief could explain a Hero with the Reckless Hubris, or a crippling Defeated or Fear Background.

Acceptance

In the final stage of grief, the Hero has come to terms with the loss of his loved one. He still has bouts of depression or intense loneliness sometimes, but he's not letting his grief run his life any more. Players whose Heroes are stranded in one of the previous stages of grief should consider letting the Hero move on when the time is right. A multi-faceted and interesting Hero should have more than one story during his career — players should be careful not to remain focused on one Background for so long that the Hero loses all identity except for that one aspect of his personality.



Players should stop reading now. This section of the book contains material for the GM only. Ignoring this warning will spoil countless surprises for you during the game.

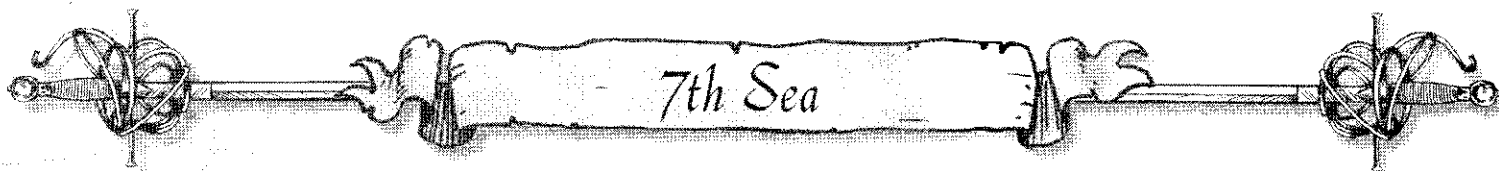
Secrets of Eisen

Reifenstahl's Suicide

The white-haired man who spoke to Reifenstahl before his suicide is named Herje, the embodiment of the Vestenmannavnjar rune of "ruin." He could be called a god, or more accurately, a man struggling to control god-like powers which occasionally overwhelm him and make him do terrible things, such as talking Reifenstahl into committing suicide. Due to his nature, he brings death and destruction with him wherever he goes. Currently, he is living in the Undying Swamp in hopes that he will do no more harm there. He is wrong, of course, as just his presence has spawned the Verschlingen, a monster of terrible power, which has in turn caused the Wasting Disease that is infecting Heilgrund. Herje is the old hermit who has been sighted in the swamp, but he will certainly not admit to his part in the mysterious goings-on in the area. More on Herje and his fellows will be found in the *Vendel* sourcebook.

What happened to the drachen?

The modern drachen have been driven to near-extinction by the incursions of mankind into their territory. Although



incredibly powerful beasts, man's persistent efforts to kill them through the years have paid off, for the drachen do not reproduce very often. Still, there are perhaps ten or fifteen drachen left (more or less if the GM desires), most of them in the Drachenberg mountains, whose inhospitable environment has prevented humanity from finding them.

What is dracheneisen?

Dracheneisen is not really a metal at all, although it resembles one in its hardened form. It is actually a result of magical energies associated with the old drachen ruins in Eisen. It has nothing to do with the living drachen, who are both less intelligent and less fearsome than their ancient predecessors (see the History section in Chapter 1 for more information). The magical energies react with certain minerals, creating a dense clay as hard as gold (dracheneisen in its soft form). The Nibelungs discovered that by heating this clay and adding certain rare plants and chemicals to it (the exact ingredients are left up to the GM), it hardens into a metal-like ceramic that is extremely strong yet light as cork. Once hardened, dracheneisen cannot be reformed, and once the dracheneisen is all used up, it is unlikely a new source will be forthcoming.

The Emperor's Armaments

The armor and sword forged for Stefan I are among the greatest pieces of craftsmanship the Eisen have ever produced. The armaments consist of one helmet (owned by Faulk Fischler), two arm guards (current whereabouts unknown), two boots (owned by Georg Hainzl), one breastplate (owned by Stefan Heilgrund), one gauntlet (owned by Nicklaus Trägue), two leg guards (current whereabouts unknown), one panzerhand (owned by Erich Sieger), one sword (owned by Fauner Pösen), one buckler (lost by St. Gregor somewhere in Gregorskorn), and one sword belt (once owned by Reinhard von Wische, but now missing). An Eisen Hero who could assemble the entire set (without stealing any pieces from the Eisenfürsten) would have a very strong bid at reuniting Eisen under his rule.

Each piece of the Emperor's armor is worth 1 more Armor Point than normal. If this brings the wearer's Armor Points to more

than 24, then the drachenschuppe will add +10 to his TN to be hit, and subtract 3 of the attacker's Kept dice (min. 0). As for Totung, the sword, it is a Heavy Weapon that adds +2 unkept dice when its wielder is using a Heavy Weapon Knack. The buckler gives +2 unkept dice when its wielder is using a Buckler Knack and adds +5 to the wearer's TN to be hit. Finally, the sword belt gives the wearer +2 unkept dice to Repartee actions taken against Eisen who recognize the belt. This bonus is only good in the hands of an Eisen; any foreigner caught with any part of the Emperor's armaments would be killed out of hand.

Where are the dracheneisen mines?

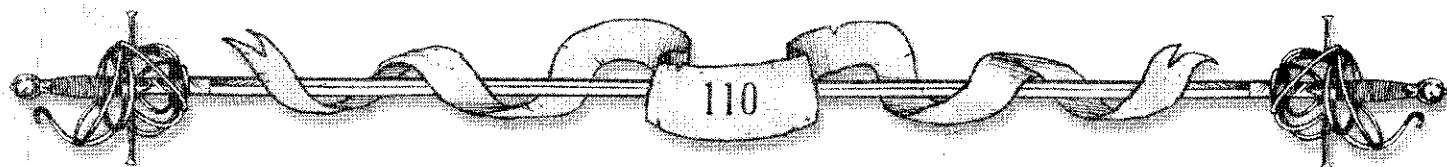
Faulk Fischler's mine is located in an underwater cave beneath the Südlache. Nicklaus Trägue's mine is indeed in the Weissberg mountains, as he has led others to believe. However, he has removed all the dracheneisen from the mine and stored it in a hidden chamber beneath the Wachturm. Hainzl has access to two huge dracheneisen mines located high in the Drachenberg mountains, far from the sight of man. Heilgrund's dracheneisen mine has actually been played out for many years. He has no source of new dracheneisen available to him, but he keeps this a secret. Pösen's mine is located in the northern Drachenberg mountains, far further up than Gregorskorn. Sieger's mine is in a concealed cave within the Schwarzen Walden. He is careful only to visit it in the early morning. Finally, Wische's mine is located in the Weissberg mountains near the Gold Divide, where the Treaty of Weissberg was signed. The sightings of the "Emperor's Ghost" in the area was one of the mine guards, dressed up to frighten away trespassers.

Secrets by Königreich

Fischler

Franz Behle — Franz found that his singing caused the monsters of the Black Forest to calm down and leave in peace. He has never met anyone else with this ability, and he doesn't know where it came from, but it is possible that he could "pass it on" to someone worthy when he dies.

Shepherd's Bats — These creatures are the result of Faulk Fischler's friendship with a strange being he met while



walking the streets at night. See Faulk's write-up on page 112 for more details.

The Ghosts of Tannen – As GMs may remember, Tannen is the recruiting ground for new members of die Kreuzritter. The “ghost” sightings are simply careless Knights letting themselves get spotted. When Tannen was threatened during the War of the Cross, the Knights used their fearsome reputation to drive away the invaders during the night. More information on Tannen and the Kippe academy will be found in the *Die Kreuzritter* sourcebook.

The Shadow Fair – The Fair was once indeed a rite of worship directed at placating the Schattenmann, and as long as it is performed, the Schattenmann will leave most humans alone, save those who harm its forest or burn it with light. Should the Fair ever stop, all bets are off.

Freiburg

The Old Drachen – The drachen left alive today are much different from the ones who built the ruins seen in Eisen, and anyone who sees one of the modern drachen should realize that they are far too small to have left behind the ruins. (See the History section in Chapter 1 for more).

The Mother Lode – Freiburg is a major source of the magical emanations that create dracheneisen. Somewhere beneath the city is a dracheneisen deposit that could make anyone an Eisenfürst ten times over, provided they could hold onto it. More on this will appear in the upcoming *Freiburg* boxed set.

Kobold Hunters – Although considered extinct by most Théans, the secret society of die Kreuzritter continues to thrive and retains strong ties to its homeland. When they learned that the poor and sickly were being preyed upon, they assigned several of their members to the shantytown to patrol the streets at night.

Hainzl

Opa Nacht – Opa Nacht is a real being that seems to have benign intentions towards the miners. A few have even met and spoken to this creature, and know that he intends them no harm.



The Hainzl Curse – The curse is being caused by the ghost of the servant who fell from the roof to the rocks below. Hainzl's ex-advisor Marcus Stefan Adolfo threw him off the roof to keep him from learning his scheme. The ghost is trying to get someone to investigate the roof so that they can realize there's nothing there that could have driven Georg mad. Perhaps a line of reasoning can then be constructed that will lead to Marcus and eventually Philip Knef. See Knef's and Hainzl's write-up on pages 113 and 117 for more information.

Heilgrund

The Wasting Disease and the Verschlingen – As mentioned under the secret of Reifenstahl's suicide, Herje is causing the Verschlingen to manifest. The monster's deadly toxin has spread the Wasting Disease across Heilgrund. Should the monster be slain, the Disease will end (although some fresh trouble will spring up if Herje isn't dealt with as well). Stats for the Verschlingen can be found later in this chapter.

Pösen

The Secret of Eungélon Root – This rare herb has strong medicinal properties, curing all Dramatic Wounds, as well as almost any disease or poison in those who eat it. However, the sirens value the roots quite highly, using them in some barbaric practice known only to themselves. They regularly come into the swamp to search for them; anyone harvesting the roots at night is in for a nasty surprise.

The Private Agenda of the Order of St. Gregor – The Order is actually looking for someone who can fill the role of Imperator. Their new role as bounty hunters is just a cover to get close to the Eisenfürsten and see how well they rule their kingdoms. It's entirely possible that the Order has one or more pieces of the Imperator's missing armaments, and could give them to a candidate they favored. Heroes who manage to procure a missing piece of the armor (through whatever harrowing and desperate means) may be approached by the Order with an offer to purchase it.

Sieger

Emigration – Sieger's "problem" with emigration is partially the result of a deal he made with Prince Alcide Mondavi, of Vodacce. Alcide provides Sieger with food for his people, and Sieger sends him peasants to help farm his land and soldiers to train his men. Mondavi hopes that these Eisen forces will help his bid to take over Vodacce. More on Mondavi's plan will appear in the *Vodacce* sourcebook.

Wische

The Missing Money – Gisela is innocent of the thefts, as the Roaring Drachen will attest. The real culprit is her brother Klaus, who needs an excuse to take over the kingdom. He has been stealing the money through a secret passage leading into the treasury that only he and a few others know about.

The Missing Sword Belt – The Sword Belt was originally stolen by a visiting Avalon merchant who hoped to sell it. It quickly proved too dangerous to keep, so he passed it on to a friend in Castille, who passed it on to a friend in Vodacce, etc. The GM should decide the Belt's final resting place and lead the Heroes on a merry chase if they try to recover it.

NPC Secrets

This section contains the secrets of the characters in the **Hero** chapter that were too sensitive to give to the players.

Faulk Tobias Fischler: Hero

Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 2
Resolve: 2
Panache: 2
Reputation: 60
Background: None
Arcana: Fortunate

Advantages: Able Drinker, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Noble

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 3, Swimming 5

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 1

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5


Hunter: Fishing 5, Survival 4, Traps 4

Streetwise: Socializing 2, Street Navigation 5

Faulk has found a friend in the world, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that a friend found him. He was walking home late one night after a long session of drinking, when he met a dark figure sitting on a barrel. He was listing to port rather heavily at the time, so he started up a friendly conversation. Although Faulk couldn't get a good look at him, the fellow seemed nice enough. As they were saying their farewells, his new friend said, "Build your house of Blackwood, brother, that my kin may know your smell," and then vanished into the shadows.

Although a bit nervous about the incident, Faulk took the strange man's advice, thinking that his friend wouldn't want to hurt him. Since then he has met odd people of all sorts and having the most unusual conversations during his late-night stumbles home. Still, at least he's making friends, and his friends quite like him. They're doing what they can to help him, like sending the bats to make sure he gets home

all right. Of course, the bats often confuse other tipsy townsfolk for Faulk, but there's no harm done. Yet.

Georg Hainzl: Hero	
	<i>Brawn:</i> 2
	<i>Finesse:</i> 2
	<i>Wits:</i> 3
	<i>Resolve:</i> 2
	<i>Panache:</i> 3
	<i>Reputation:</i> 70
	<i>Background:</i> Cursed <i>Arcana:</i> None

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Noble

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 1, Swimming 2

Commander: Strategy 2, Tactics 2, Ambush 2, Diplomacy 4, Incitation 1, Leadership 2

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Oratory 5, Diplomacy 5, Gaming 2, Politics 5, Sincerity 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 4, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 3, Parry (Panzerhand) 4

Performer: Acting 5, Dancing 4, Oratory 5, Singing 1

Rider: Ride 3

Scholar: History 2, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 1, Research 1, Law 2


Hainzl's most important secret is what exactly drove him mad. After building Eulestein Castle, he began to obsess unhealthily about the upstairs door. After all, in the story, opening it ended in destruction and death. He confided his fears in an advisor named Marcus Stefan Adolfo, a fatal error in judgment. Marcus secretly hated Georg and devised a plan to get him out of the way. He talked Georg into confronting his fears. On that fateful night when Georg finally opened the door, Marcus released three owls into the air. For Georg, a man who already had difficulties separating reality and fiction, it was as though his worst fears had come to life. By opening the door, he'd doomed

himself and his loved ones to die in the castle's collapse. Unable to bear the strain, his mind snapped.

Unfortunately for Marcus, he had no time to capitalize on Hainzl's misfortune. Philip Knef deduced what had happened, and arranged for a quiet accident to befall the treacherous advisor. Adolfo's body now lies at the bottom of a walled-up mine – his family believes that a wild animal carried him off. Knef didn't do this out of any loyalty or concern for his Eisenfürst; he simply doesn't want any competitors in his bid for power. (See Knef's description, below, for more information.)

As for the servant who ventured through the "cursed" door (see pages 26 and 111), Marcus killed him when he found owl droppings and other evidence on the roof. Now the poor servant's spirit is seeking revenge on Marcus, unaware that his nemesis has long since died. It will continue to haunt the palace until someone can convey Marcus's fate to it. Unfortunately, no one wants to go up on the roof and face it, fearing that "Hainzl's madness" will claim them too.

Stefan Gregor Heilgrund III: Villain

	<i>Brawn:</i> 2
	<i>Finesse:</i> 3
	<i>Wits:</i> 4
	<i>Resolve:</i> 3
	<i>Panache:</i> 3
	<i>Reputation:</i> -50
	<i>Background:</i> Hunting <i>Arcana:</i> Ambitious

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Thean (R/W), Crescent (R/W), Cathay (R/W), Linguist, Noble

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Sprinting 2, Throwing 4, Break Fall 2, Leaping 3, Rolling 4, Swimming 4, Swinging 5

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Diplomacy 3, Politics 3, Scheming 5, Sincerity 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 4, Examiner 5, Surgery 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 5, Reload (Firearms) 5

Scholar: History 5, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 1, Research 5, Astronomy 4, Law 2, Natural Philosophy 4, Occult 5

The other Eisenfürsten would be astonished if they could witness Stefan during one of his exploratory trips into a Surneth ruin. He comes alive then, revealing an energy and athletic prowess than could outmatch most Shield Men. In addition, he's discovered things the Explorer's Society would give their collective right arm to learn.

His biggest secret is known to no one but himself – not even Odel has an inkling of what he's up to. Stefan has discovered evidence through his research that one of the monsters of Eisen folklore bears similarities to the Sidhe and other beings that have historically been connected to the source of magic. So, his plan is very simple...

He's going to bargain with the Schattenmann for sorcery.

Fauner Konrad Pösen: Villain



Brawn: 5
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 5
Panache: 4
Reputation: -70
Background: Fear (of Romance)
Arcana: Proud

Advantages: Academy, Appearance (Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Dracheneisen, Eisen Accent (North), Indomitable Will, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Thean (R/W), Noble

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 5, Sprinting 3, Throwing 3, Break Fall 1, Leaping 3, Lifting 2, Rolling 4, Swimming 2, Swinging 3, Side-step 5

Commander: Strategy 4, Tactics 5, Ambush 5, Artillery 3, Diplomacy 2, Incitation 2, Leadership 4, Logistics 4

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Diplomacy 2, Politics 4

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Eye-gouge 5, Throat Strike 5

Doctor: Diagnosis 2, First Aid 3

Drexel (Master): Disarm (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Drexel) 5

Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

Gelingen (Master): Exploit Weakness (Bear) 5, Exploit Weakness (Ghoul) 5, Exploit Weakness (Horse) 5, Exploit Weakness (Kobold) 5, Exploit Weakness (Siren) 5, Exploit Weakness (Wolf) 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

Hunter: Stealth 3, Tracking 4, Ambush 5

Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 5, Parry (Panzerhand) 5, Uppercut 5

Polearm: Attack (Polearm) 5, Parry (Polearm) 5

Pösen (Master): Beat (Polearm) 5, Charge (Polearm) 5, Lance (Polearm) 5, Exploit Weakness (Pösen) 5

Rider: Ride 5

Unabwendbar (Master): Advance 5, Charge 5, Envelop 5, Hold Ground 5, Trim Line 5, Withdraw 5

Wrestling: Grapple 3, Escape 5, Head Butt 3

In addition to her formidable Martial Skills, Fauner possesses a full suit of drachenschuppe (24 Armor Points, +10 to her TN to be hit, -2 Kept dice from attacker's damage), a dracheneisen Boar Spear (+1 unkept die when using Polearm Knacks), and *Totung*, the Emperor's dracheneisen sword (+2 unkept dice when using Heavy Weapon Knacks).

Pösen isn't an evil woman, despite her status as a Villain. She has a strong sense of honor and genuinely tries to do the right thing. She has no current plans to reconquer Eisen – she's busy enough governing Pösen and doesn't want the additional responsibility. But she's inordinately stubborn and her harshness sometimes results in terrible repercussions. Many of the people she's killed did not have to die, and many of the policies she's contemplating may

spread further misery across Eisen. She's accustomed to managing a wartime economy, and she may start a war with one of neighbors simply to balance the books. The moral repercussions of such an act simply don't occur to her; it will keep her people fed, won't it? That's the nature of Fauner's evil – well-meaning, but ultimately very harmful.

Fauner secretly likes Hendryk Brandt, but she is afraid she's going to be hurt again – afraid he's after her money. He'll have to be a lot more persistent if he wants to win her affections. Luckily, he seems up to the task.

Erich Sieger: Villain



Brawn: 4
Finesse: 3
Wits: 3
Resolve: 6
Panache: 3
Reputation: -70
Background: Defeated
Arcana: Stubborn

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Dracheneisen, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Thean (R/W), Legendary Trait (Resolve), Man of Will, Noble, Toughness
Athlete: Climbing 4, Footwork 4, Sprinting 2, Throwing 4, Leaping 2, Swimming 3, Swinging 2, Side-step 1
Commander: Strategy 4, Tactics 4, Ambush 4, Artillery 4, Diplomacy 1, Leadership 2, Logistics 3
Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Diplomacy 1, Politics 5
Crossbow: Attack (Crossbow) 5, Fletcher 2, Reload (Crossbow) 5
Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5
Hunter: Stealth 3, Survival 4, Tracking 4, Trail Signs 2, Traps 2, Ambush 4

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 5, Parry (Panzerhand) 5, Uppercut 5
Rider: Ride 5
Scholar: History 1, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 1
Streetwise: Socializing 1, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 4

Sieger has a dracheneisen sword (+1 unkept die when using Heavy Weapon Knacks), a dracheneisen leg guard, a dracheneisen boot, and the Emperor's panzerhand (+2 unkept dice when using Panzerhand Knacks). This gives him 7 Armor Points, for +5 to his TN to be hit and -1 Kept die to attackers' damage.

Sieger has ordered boatloads of dirt shipped in to help him renew his kingdom. Two of these ships have been intercepted by pirates, much to the brigands' disgust.

Nicklaus Trägue: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 1
Wits: 5
Resolve: 4
Panache: 2
Reputation: 80
Background: Crisis of Faith
Arcana: Insightful

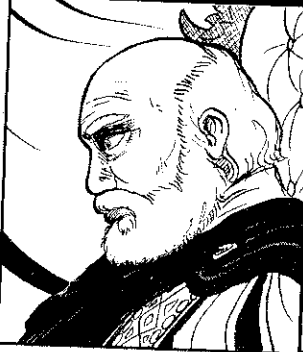
Advantages: Castille (R/W), Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Noble, University
Artist: Writing 4
Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Oratory 5, Diplomacy 5, Gaming 4, Gossip 1, Politics 5, Scheming 4, Sincerity 5
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3
Performer: Acting 3, Dancing 2, Oratory 5, Singing 1, Cold Read 4, Prestidigitation 3, Storytelling 3
Scholar: History 5, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 5, Research 3, Occult 2, Theology 5

Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 5, Shopping 1, Underworld Lore 4

Nicklaus Trägue will not defend himself in a fight, instead allowing his bodyguards to get him to safety.

Trägue's biggest secret is his reason for running (or rather, not running) Freiburg the way he is. He's using the city as a test of his philosophy, to see if man is inherently good or evil. With all the corruption that has developed so far, it looks like evil is winning out.

Reinhard Dieter von Wische: Hero



Brawn: 3 (0)
Finesse: 3 (0)
Wits: 4 (0)
Resolve: 2 (0)
Panache: 3 (0)
Reputation: 60
Background: Cursed (see below)
Arcana: Misfortunate

Advantages: Academy, Dracheneisen, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Castille (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Thean (R/W), Large, Noble, Toughness

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Sprinting 1, Throwing 3, Lifting 2, Swimming 1, Side-step 3

Commander: Strategy 3, Tactics 3, Ambush 3, Artillery 2, Diplomacy 5, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Logistics 3

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 5, Fashion 3, Oratory 5, Diplomacy 5, Gaming 3, Gossip 4, Politics 5, Sincerity 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4

Hunter: Stealth 3, Tracking 4, Ambush 3

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 2, Parry (Panzerhand) 4

Rider: Ride 4

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Law 4, Theology 2

The numbers in parentheses indicate Reinhard's Traits while he remains catatonic. He is unable to use any of his Knacks until he is cured. Reinhard has a dracheneisen

Heavy Weapon (+1 unkept die when using Heavy Weapon Knacks), helmet, and breastplate (9 Armor Points, +5 to his TN to be hit, -1 of the attacker's Kept dice of damage).

Reinhard's only real secret is the method to cure him. Nothing will bring him out of his catatonic state except seeing his wife or one of his sons again. That won't happen, but his regent has a plan that may produce the same effect. See Gisela Inselhoffer's entry below for more information.

Odel Herrickson: Henchman



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 1
Wits: 3
Resolve: 2
Panache: 4
Reputation: -30
Background: Exiled
Arcana: None

Advantages: Eisen, Vendel, Patron

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 5, Throwing 1, Swimming 2

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Occult 1

Odel is a lot of hot air. What he knows about the Synchroneth he's picked up from Stefan's conversation and his own harried experiences in the ruins. Although he hates venturing into the ruins, he's glad to work for Stefan, so he doesn't complain.

On the other hand, if Stefan ever wanted to know something about Lærdom, Odel could tell him just about anything he'd care to hear. Before he got caught selling Lærdom-enchanted items to the Vendel, he'd been a master Skjæren. The Vestenmannavnjar don't look kindly on selling magic items to their most hated enemies, so they enacted the horrifying ritual which cost him his scalp and his right arm. Ever since, Odel's been unable to work magic, but he still has his knowledge and can impart it to those willing to trust him.



Gisela Hilda Inselhoffer: Hero

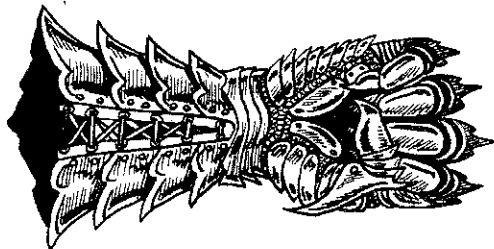


Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 2
Reputation: 5
Background: Waisen Dependent
Arcana: None

Advantages: Appearance (Above Average), Dracheneisen, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Noble
Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 4, Oratory 3, Diplomacy 4, Gaming 2, Gossip 2, Politics 4, Seduction 2, Sincerity 4
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 1
Merchant: Steward 4
Scholar: History 1, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 2, Research 1
Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 1, Shopping 1

Gisela is truly innocent of the crimes she's been accused of. She's not really sure what to do about it either — she's hoping that the Roaring Drachen will solve the mystery before the deadline.

In any event, she's planning to try one last desperate measure to cure Reinhard. Before her brother can attack, she's going to dress up as Reinhard's wife. She knows Cornelia's habits and remembers enough of her speech patterns to do a fair impersonation of her. She'll have to dye her hair blonde and wear Cornelia's dresses, which haven't been touched since she died. But she feels that if anything can bring him around, it's the sight of his wife. If she can't bring Cornelia back from the dead, she's willing to do the next best thing.



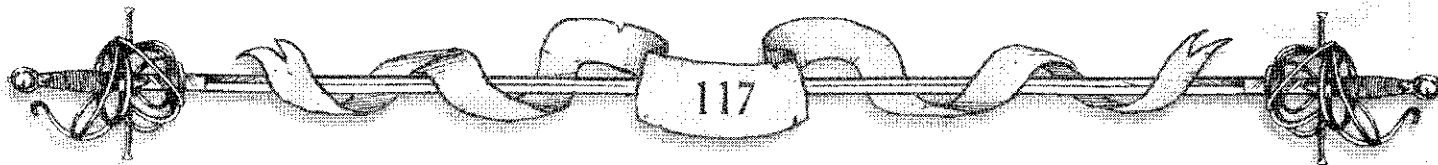
Philip Knef: Scoundrel



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 3
Resolve: 2
Panache: 2
Reputation: -20
Background: Moment of Awe
Arcana: Greedy

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Scoundrel, Small
Heavy Weapon (Pick Axe): Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 2
Merchant: Miner 5, Appraising 5
Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Footwork 3, Jab 4, Uppercut 2
Servant: Etiquette 4, Fashion 1, Menial Tasks 5, Unobtrusive 5, Accounting 3, Gossip 2
Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 3, Scrounging 2

Knef has been secretly hoarding dracheneisen from the mines. He and a small group of supervisors hide the metal in an abandoned shaft, where no one would bother to look. When they have enough, he plans to have the Nibelungs forge it for him, so he can raise an army and overthrow Hainzl. Hainzl's delusions are dangerous, he feels, and the disastrous war has proven that the nobility cannot be trusted. If a fisherman like Faulk Fischler can rise to the level of ruler, then so can Knef... and he's gathering the weapons to prove it.



Franziska Köhl: Hero

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 2
Reputation: 20
Background: None
Arcana: None

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Thean (R/W), Noble

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 5, Fashion 3, Oratory 3, Diplomacy 5, Gaming 3, Gossip 2, Politics 5, Sincerity 4

Merchant: Steward 5, Accounting 4

Scholar: History 4, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Law 4, Theology 2

Franziska has deliberately underestimated several key resources in Fischler's kingdom. He believes that they have far less than they do; she hopes to test his mettle by seeing how well he handles difficult decisions. With supplies in reserve, Fischler will be able to handle any crisis, or so she believes. It is worth noting that the fish shortage is real, not concocted by Köhl.

Hendryk Brandt: Hero

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 5
Panache: 2
Reputation: 15
Background: Romance
Arcana: Stubborn

Advantages: Appearance (Above Average), Dracheneisen, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Noble, Small, Toughness

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 5, Fashion 4, Diplomacy 4, Gaming 5, Gossip 4, Lip Reading 4, Mooch 5, Oratory 4, Politics 5, Scheming 3, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 4, Reload (Firearms) 3

Merchant: Steward 3, Accounting 5, Appraising 4, Haggling 3

Scholar: History 2, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 1, Research 2, Law 4

Streetwise: Socializing 5, Street Navigation 3, Shopping 3

Hendryk possesses a dracheneisen rapier (+1 unkept die when using Fencing Knacks).

Hendryk has no secrets. He honestly loves Fauner Pösen, and has no ambitions beyond wooing her. Everyone in northern Eisen knows of his campaign to win her heart, but most suspect him of some ulterior motive, which makes him appear more threatening than he actually is. Should he actually manage to win her heart, he plans to settle down, live an idle courtier's life, and devote every waking moment to making her happy.

Miguel Soldano de Acedo: Hero

Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 2
Panache: 3
Reputation: 30
Background: Nemesis (Verdugo)
Arcana: None

Advantages: Castillian Education, Dangerous Beauty, Castille (R/W), Eisen (R/W), High Eisen (R/W), Thean (R/W), Left-handed, Noble

Aldana (Journeyman): Feint (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 4

Athlete: Climbing 4, Footwork 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 3, Break Fall 1, Leaping 2, Swimming 3, Swinging 4, Side-step 2

Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Oratory, 3, Diplomacy 2, Gaming 4, Gossip 5, Mooch 3, Politics -2, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4



Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3
Rider: Ride 4, Mounting 3, Trick Riding 4
Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 4, Research 3

Miguel attracted Verdugo's ire when he picked up a letter the advisor had dropped and handed it back to him. Although Miguel paid no attention to the letter, it had the seal of the High Inquisitor prominently stamped on it, and Verdugo was afraid that Miguel had read its contents. He arranged for Miguel to leave the country, sending him to Sieger's kingdom, where he was sure the boy would get himself killed. Unfortunately for Verdugo, things didn't quite work out as well as expected.

As for Miguel's current situation, his "supervisor", Petr, is having great fun tormenting him. Petr gets up before Miguel and hits the pigs with a stick to make them angry, and occasionally lets one out of the pen for Miguel to catch. He lacks the nerve to simply abandon his post.

New Monsters

With the possible exception of Avalon, Eisen has more monsters roaming its ruined lands than any other civilized nation in Théah — from the tenacious kobolds to the terrible Schattenmann itself.

Drachen

Villains

TN: 15 (see Special Abilities as well)

Brawn: 8

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 10

Wits: 3

Panache: 3

Attack Roll: 4k2 Bite, 4k3 Claw, 4k3 Claw, or 5k1 Tail

Damage: 5k5 Bite, 4k4 Claws, 7k7 Tail

Skills: Ambush 4, Break Fall 8, Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Leaping 2, Tracking 7, Long Distance Running 7, Sprinting 2, Stealth 3, Swimming 2

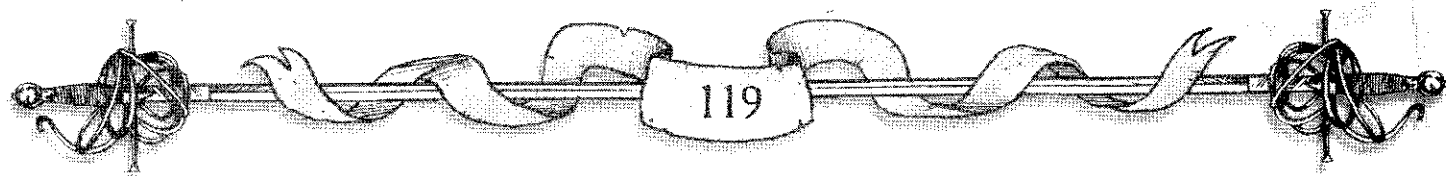
Description: These reptilian creatures are from 40–80 feet long, with powerful claws and crushing jaws. In addition, their hide is so thick that it turns aside many weapons without effect. Only dracheneisen weapons have full effect on them. They have adapted well to their mountainous home, proving more agile and quick than many humans would believe. They are deadly trackers and can chase their prey for days. They've even been known to leap off of tall cliffs to ambush interlopers. There are not many drachen left, but those who bring back proof that they've slain one can expect a hero's treatment from the people of Eisen.

Special Abilities: All damage against a drachen is divided by 2 (rounded down) unless it comes from dracheneisen, Sidhe or other "magical" weapon of some sort. However, drachens have weak spots, and a clever Hero can aim for them. Therefore, each Raise for extra damage against a drachen grants one rolled and Kept die of damage, rather than the normal unkept die.

For instance, Hans has a Brawn of 4, and is wielding a normal 3k2 Heavy Weapon. He successfully calls for and gets two Raises to hit the beast. Therefore, he rolls 9k4 for damage (7k2 for the weapon and Brawn, plus 2k2 for the Raises) getting a 43. This is divided by 2 (Hans has a normal weapon) for a total damage of 21. The monster easily makes its Wound Check with its 8 Brawn, and Hans realizes he is in for a long fight.

Barehanded damage, such as Pugilism and Wrestling, is useless against a drachen. A drachen cannot use any of its attacks more than once per Round — it must alternate between them. In addition, a Hero attacked by the tail cannot be hit by any other attack from the drachen that Round. A drachen's attacks cannot be Parried. Drachen are immune to the Repartee system and most types of poison. Drachen have a Fear Rating of 3 that cannot be reflected back on them by the Courageous Virtue, merely canceled.

Heroes who bring back evidence of killing a drachen immediately receive 10 Reputation Points apiece.



Kobolds

Brutes

Threat Rating: 3 (4 if winged)

Usual Weapons: Claws and Teeth (Small)

TN: 20 (25 if winged; 15 if winged but on the ground)

Skills: Footwork 3, Tracking 3, Ambush 3

Description: Kobolds are nasty, fanged beasts about the size of a large dog with tough, scaly skin and evil yellow eyes. While specimens can be found throughout Théah, they infest the *Schwartzen Walden* and have spread to all corners of the ruined Eisen countryside. Their exact appearance varies between individuals: some crouch on all fours, some walk upright; some are gaunt and skeletal, others are corpulent and thick. Some even have wings which they use to fly; flying kobolds are generally known as “gargoyles,” and can be found most commonly in the Weissberg mountains of western Eisen.



Kobolds run in packs, ranging from three or four to several dozen. They attack from ambush if possible, using their numbers to outflank opponents, then run them down. Their bite is mildly poisonous, and can cause illness if not treated (1k1 die of Flesh Wounds every three days). Kobold packs are very territorial, and won't move into a particular area if another pack occupies it. The practice of placing stone gargoyles on building began in Eisen as a ward against the encroaching beasts.

They hoard shiny objects like magpies, filching them from the bodies of their victims and collecting them in a common lair — a cave, burrow or hollowed-out tree. Some of the bigger kobold packs have amassed a king's ransom in gold and jewels... mixed in with piles of gleaming junk, of course.

Though killing a kobold is no easy task, many rural villages take pride in dispatching the beasts. Stuffed kobold heads are common decorations in roadside taverns, and some towns even mount them on their ramparts as a warning to potential foes.

The Schattenmann

Villain

Description: The Schattenmann looks vaguely like a very thin man standing approximately twenty feet tall. Its limbs are twisted and spindly, like pulled taffy. Its stomach is sunken, and ribs clearly show through its chest. Each hand has three large fingers that it can use to clumsily grasp objects. At the end of each of its fingers is a long, sharp nail. From a distance, these nails appear to be the blades of a pair of scissors. Worst of all, however, is the creature's face — it looks like an ancient, wrinkled human face, but where the eyes should be are only inky pools of blackness.

The Schattenmann normally haunts the Black Forest of Eisen, but it can venture out at night to nearby areas so long as there are no bright lights nearby. Typically it will only do this when the moon is new.

Special Abilities: The Schattenmann draws its strength from darkness, thriving in the unending shadows of the



Schwarzen Walder. When encountered in total darkness, the Schattenmann can be considered invulnerable to all forms of damage, can pass through solid objects such as trees and walls, and can kill a Hero with a single blow. In addition, it can move anywhere within the darkness in an instant. Contrary to popular belief, however, the creature does not kill without cause. It attacks anyone who has cut down a tree from the Black Forest within the last twenty days (it can smell the sap on them, regardless of how hard they try to wash it off), and will kill anyone who has previously harmed it by attacking it with light (see below), but otherwise is content to leave interlopers alone... most of the time.

Heroes can strike the Schattenmann (TN 20), but their blows never cause any damage. Not even dracheneisen or Sidhe-enchanted weapons can affect it. The Schattenmann has only a single weakness – light. When a Hero is in a lit area, the Schattenmann can only lash out at him from the darkness. The brighter the light, the poorer the creature's chance to hit the Hero and the less damage it inflicts. In addition, the Schattenmann takes Wounds from the light that can drive it away. The Schattenmann's claws are so fast that no one could hope to avoid them, and dracheneisen and other types of protection are useless against it. Instead, the Hero's TN depends upon how much light is present to blind the creature and throw off its aim. Consult the following chart for the Hero's TN and the damage inflicted in the event of a hit. The Schattenmann takes damage according to the Wounds column each time it attacks into light. When it suffers 50 Wounds, it creeps away to tend to its injuries until the following night. Even if caught in direct sunlight, the Schattenmann is not killed, merely incapacitated until sunset.

<i>Light Source</i>	<i>Hero's TN</i>	<i>Damage Roll</i>	<i>Wounds</i>
Match	10	7k6	1
Candle	15	6k5	5
Torch	20	5k4	10
Lantern	25	4k3	15
Campfire	30	3k2	20
Bonfire	35	2k1	25
Sunlight	—	—	50

The Verschlingen

Villain

TN: 10 / 15 while Swimming (see Special Abilities as well)

Brawn: 7

Finesse: 3

Resolve: 9

Wits: 1

Panache: 1

Attack Roll: 4k2 Bite, 5k1 Tail

Damage: Deadly Bite (see below), 6k6 Tail

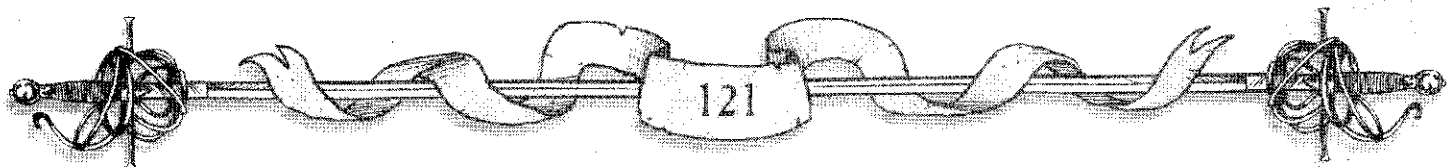
Skills: Ambush 4, Climbing 2, Footwork 1, Swimming 2

Description: The Verschlingen is an enormous albino snake nearly 100 feet in length. While not as physically imposing as a drachen, it has a much more insidious method of killing – it secretes deadly toxins that fill the air and water around it, poisoning the area. The effects of these toxins can be felt up to one hundred miles away, but they are only serious when within 10 feet of the monster.

Special Abilities: The Verschlingen ignores the first 10 points of damage from any attack. If this brings the attack below 1 point of damage, it glances off the beast's flesh. Merely standing within 10 feet of it causes 1 Flesh Wound per Phase; all Heroes and Henchmen must make Wound Checks automatically at the end of each Round if they have any Flesh Wounds. Brutes automatically pass out, dying if exposed for more than an hour.

Being bitten by the Verschlingen is grounds for instant death. The fangs leave two smoking puncture wounds in the victim, who convulses briefly, then expires. You may want to warn your Heroes by having it kill an NPC, and encourage them to save actions for Active Defenses... just in case. Finally, should all else fail, an NPC loyal to the Hero about to be bitten can jump in the way, taking the venomous bite himself. This shouldn't happen more than once; after the Heroes are clued in, all bets are off.






The creature's toxin is sorcerous in nature, and becomes inert upon the Verschlingen's death. Heroes who kill it and bring back proof receive 5 Reputation Points each, and 10 more when the Wasting Disease begins to fade.

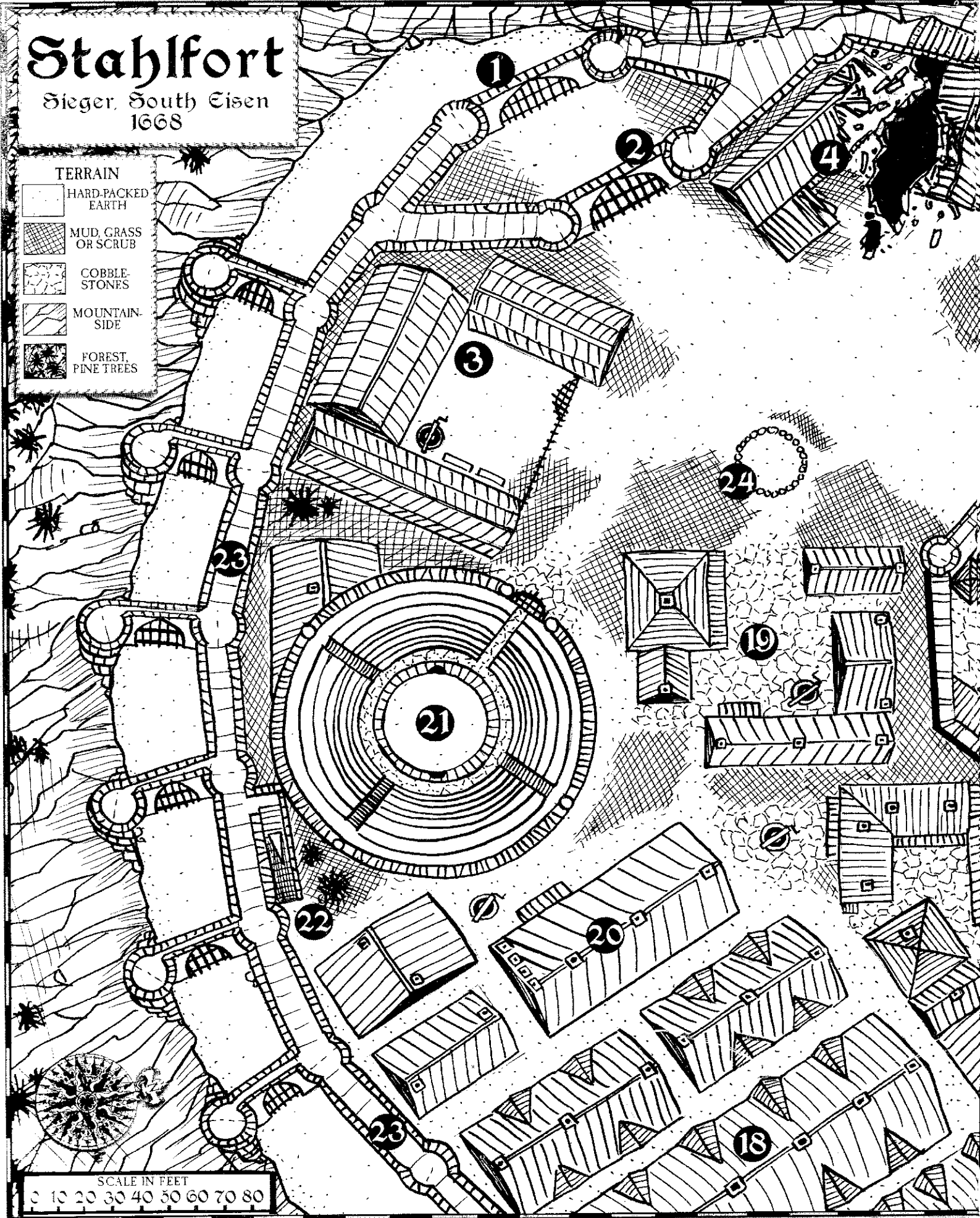


Stahlfort

Sieger, South Eisen
1668

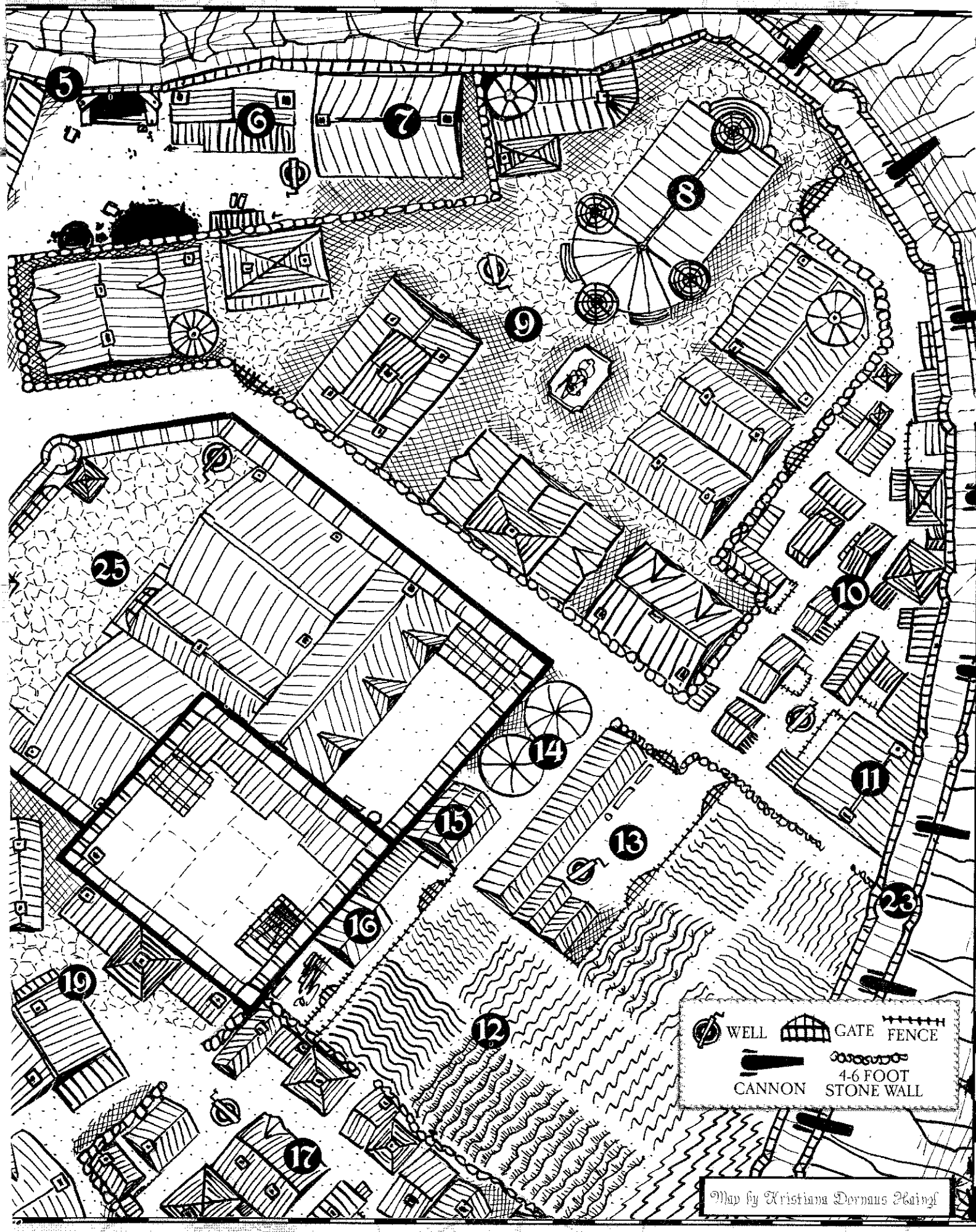
TERRAIN

-  HARD-PACKED EARTH
-  MUD, GRASS OR SCRUB
-  COBBLE-STONES
-  MOUNTAIN-SIDE
-  FOREST, PINE TREES



SCALE IN FEET

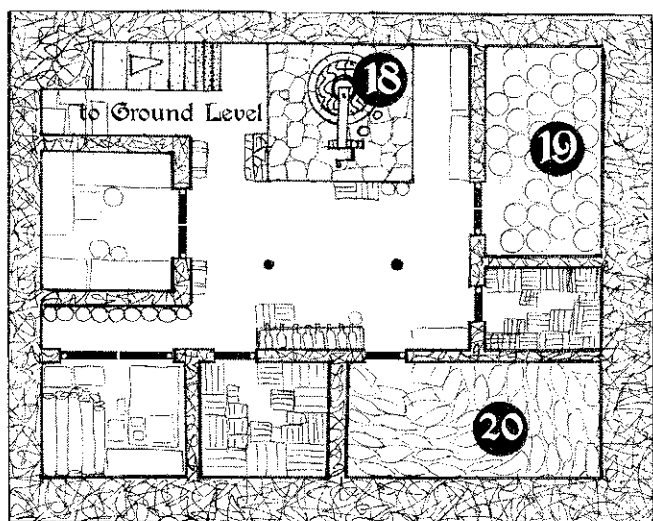
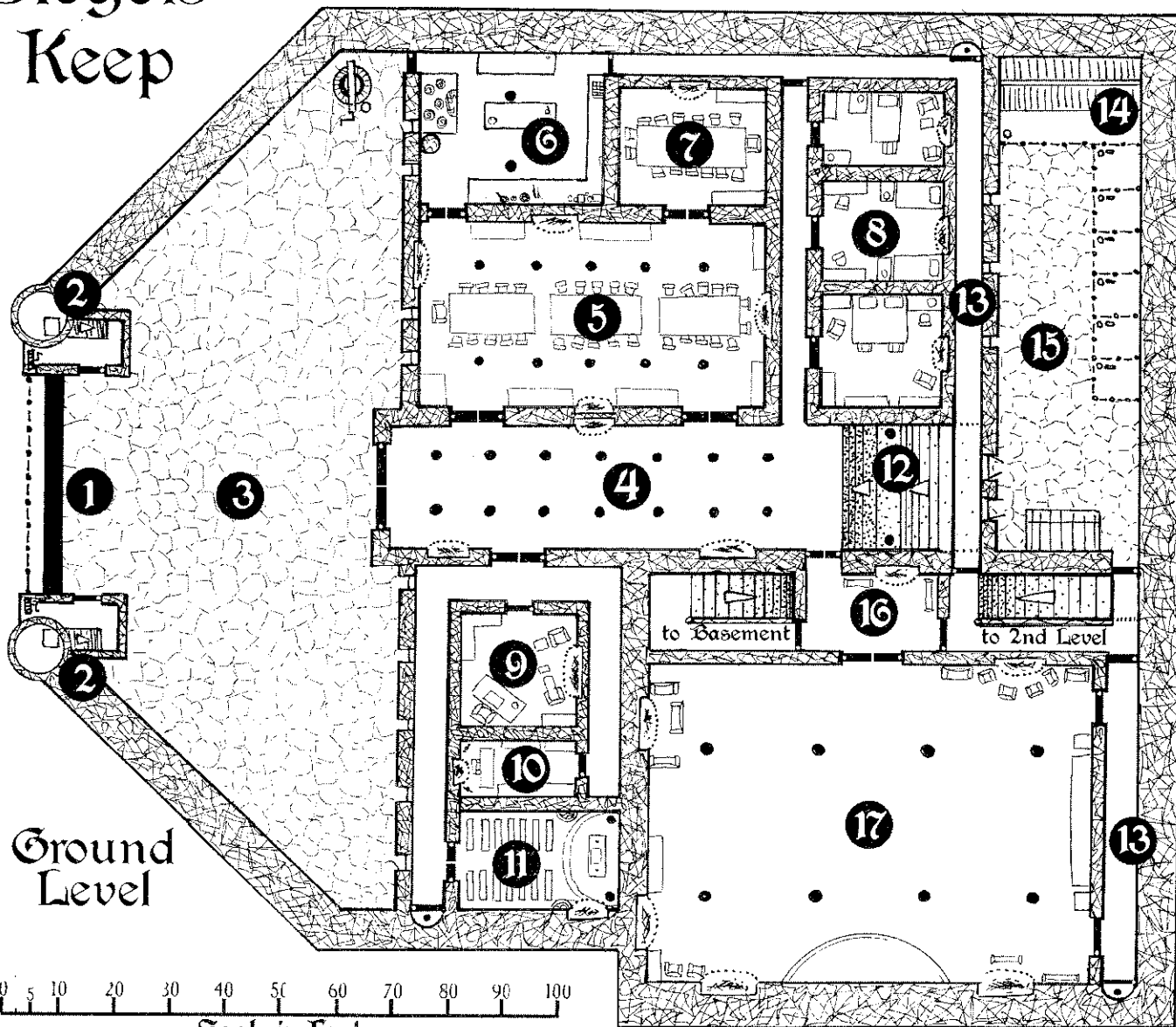
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80



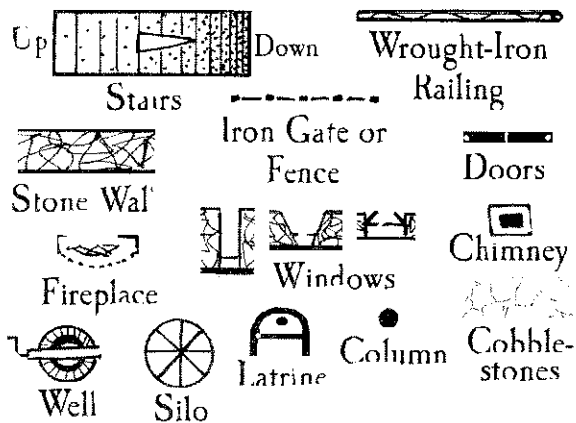
	WELL		GATE		FENCE
	CANNON		4-6 FOOT STONE WALL		

Map by Kristina Dernaus Hainz

Sieger's Keep



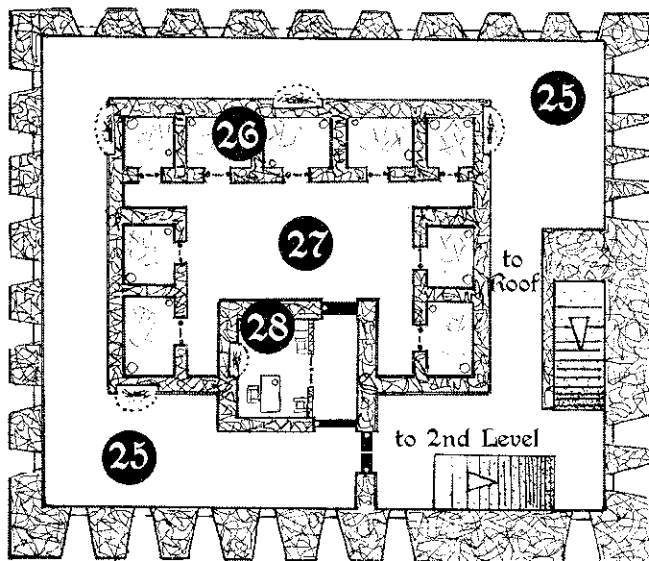
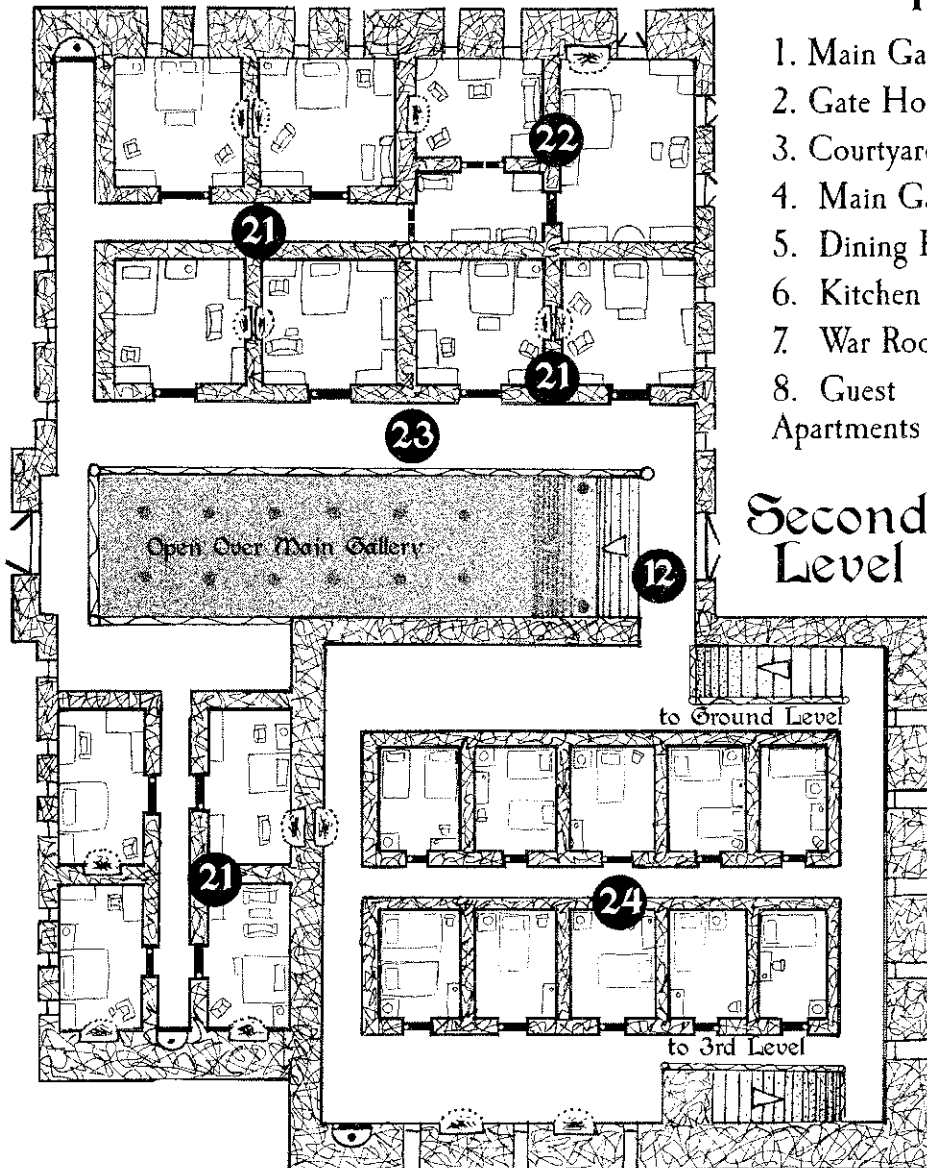
Symbol Key



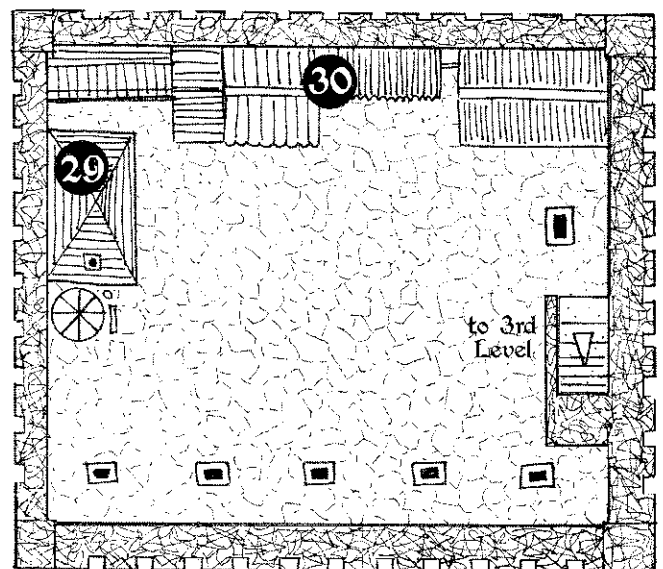
Number Key

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. Main Gate | 9. Sieger's Study |
| 2. Gate House | 10. Keeper's Office |
| 3. Courtyard | 11. Chapel |
| 4. Main Gallery | 12. Main Staircase
(Ground to 2nd Level) |
| 5. Dining Hall | 13. Servant Access Hall |
| 6. Kitchen | 14. Kennels |
| 7. War Room | 15. Dog Run |
| 8. Guest
Apartments | 16. Ballroom Foyer |
| | 17. Ballroom |
| | 18. Cistern |
| | 19. Water Storage |
| | 20. Grain Storage |
| | 21. Bedchambers |
| | 22. Sieger's Chambers |
| | 23. Balcony
(overlooks Main Gallery) |
| | 24. Servant's Quarters |
| | 25. Watch Stations |
| | 26. Dungeon Cells |
| | 27. Torture Chamber |
| | 28. Warden's Office |
| | 29. Hatchery |
| | 30. Aviary |

Second Level



3rd Level (Tower)



Roof (Tower)

Eisen Monster Hunter

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	2
Wits	3
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Swordsman School	(25)
Eisen Accent	(0)
Inheritance (500G)	(1)

Arcana: Loyal

Background: Crisis of Faith (1)

Civil Skills

Criminal

Gambling 1, Quack 2, Shadowing 1, Stealth 3, Ambush 1, Lockpicking 1

Doctor

Diagnosis 2, First Aid 3, Quack 2

Hunter

Stealth 3, Tracking 1, Traps 3, Ambush 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 2, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2, Lifting 1, Rolling 1, Swimming 1, Swinging 1

Dirty Fighting

Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 1, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 1

Gelingen School

Exploit Weakness (Your Choice) 3

Income: 500G starting/0G per month



Eisen Doppel Soldier

Traits

Brawn 2
 Finesse 3
 Wits 2
 Resolve 2
 Panache 3

Advantages

Combat Reflexes (3)
 Commission (4)
 Eisen Accent (0)
 Swordsman's Guild (0)
 Swordsman School (25)

Arcana: Hedonistic

Background: Rivalry 2

Civil Skills

Streetwise

Socializing 1, Street Navigation 2, Underworld Lore 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1

Dirty Fighting

Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 2

Drexel School

Disarm (Heavy Weapon) 1, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 1

Heavy Weapon

Attack (Heavy Weapon) 3, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 3

Income: 60G starting/20G per month

Note: You may select two Zweihander Stances of your choice.





Eisen Warlord

Traits

Brawn 2
 Finesse 3
 Wits 2
 Resolve 2
 Panache 2

Advantages

Dracheneisen (15)
 Eisen Accent (0)
 Noble (5)
 Swordsman's Guild (0)
 Swordsman School (25)

Arcana: Ambitious

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 1

Hunter

Stealth 1, Tracking 1, Trail Signs 1

Scholar

History 1, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 1

Martial Skills

Commander

Strategy 1, Tactics 2

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 2

Polearm

Attack (Polearm) 3, Parry (Polearm) 3

Pösen School

Exploit Weakness (Pösen) 1

Pugilism

Attack (Pugilism) 2, Footwork 3, Jab 1

Rider

Ride 3

Income: 1,500G starting/300G per month

Eisen™



*"War is my homeland, armor my house, and fighting my life."
– Eisen saying*

Once the mightiest military power in Théah, Eisen has been decimated by the thirty-year War of the Cross, leaving the survivors behind to pick up the pieces and bury the dead. Disease and famine continue to ravage the countryside, while the divided Iron Princes argue among themselves. Worse yet, the death of so many has attracted the attention of horrors thought destroyed centuries ago. Eisen desperately needs a hero – someone capable of reuniting the nation before it's too late.

The Eisen sourcebook includes:

- Information on the seven *königreichen* of the Iron Princes, complete with history, background information, and prominent personalities.
- Advanced rules for Eisen's favorite pastime – war.
- A wealth of new rules: six fighting schools, new dracheneisen items, and the *Nibelungen*, a secretive order of dracheneisen smiths.
- Descriptions of some of the deadliest creatures in all of Théah: the Schattenmann, the mighty drachen, and more.

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