

INTRODUCTION

What follows is a brief summary of what your character knows about the world around them. Most of this material has been taken from “HårnPlayer: A Player’s Guide to HårnWorld” by Columbia Games. Do not share this material with other players. While most of this material is common knowledge, part of it is specific knowledge of your character and others may have a different point of view.

FEUDAL NOBILITY

The distinction between gentle (noble) and simple (common) birth is the most significant in Hårnic society. The exclusive rights and privileges of the gentry include the right to bear arms, ride warhorses, organize military forces, hold fortifications, and dispense justice at feudal courts. Any simpleman who trespasses on these rights can expect harsh punishment.

MANORIAL TENANTS

SERFS & SERFDOM

More properly called *unfree* tenants, serfs possess few legal rights, but are not slaves. While they are bound to the land and the lord, and may not marry without the lord’s permission, serfs can not be deprived of their land or liberty without just cause, and are entitled to the lord’s protection and justice.

The reeve is the chief serf on a fief, elected annually by his peers at village moots, although most competent men in this job hold it for many years. The reeve decides what crops to plant, and when, supervises the formation of plough teams, organizes the harvest, ensures there is sufficient fodder stored for winter, sees that the lord’s livestock are penned and his fences mended, arbitrates the disputes of fellow tenants, and generally makes sure the fief runs smoothly. The reeve of Nubeth village is Ledrystra of Daarienna (Fyna’s uncle).

FREEHOLDERS

Freeholders are simply individuals who hold land on which no *unfree* obligations are due, a distinction that is often a matter of legal debate. Freeholders rarely own the land they work, paying rent or crop shares for its use, a legal process known as farming. Freeholders may come and go as they please, grow whatever crops they like, and appeal their lord’s justice to the king’s law.

YEOMEN

On most manors, one or two special freeholders called Yeomen exist. Yeomen assist with policing and defense of the fief, and perform others duties the lord and they agree upon.

The Beadle is the “village policeman”, an office commonly held by a Yeoman as part of his feudal service or by a trusted villain appointed by the lord. The beadle is responsible for the granaries, and especially for the preservation of seed – a particularly stressful task in years of famine. Other duties include impounding livestock that stray into cropland, keeping the punfold, and collecting all fines levied by the manorial court. The Beadle is rarely a popular man with the other tenants. The beadle of Nubeth village is a free yeoman named Corthaybron of Smythe. He taught Fyna many of her weapon skills.

PEASANT COTTAGES

Most rural peasants live in a timber-frame, daub and wattle cottage with a thatched roof. The interior is divided into two or three rooms, one of which will be a stable for livestock and

storage for a variety of agricultural tools; with a loft for storing a variety of grains in wicker baskets. Living space, heated by a fire in a stone hearth, is sparsely furnished with dirt-packed floor.

HÅRNIC COINS

Coins are struck at official government mints, or freemaster jewelers are awarded a license to strike coins for a fixed period. The penalty for making coins without such a license is death.

There are no bronze or copper coins minted on Hårn. The Khuzdul (dwarves) of Azadmere mint a gold coin called the Khuzan Crown, but most people have never seen one. The coinage system in use throughout Hårn is based on a single coin, the silver penny.

The farthing (f) is a silver penny divided (literally) into four quarters. The shilling (12d) and the pound (240d) are not coins, merely quantities of silver pennies. Coins contain about 75% of metal value, the difference due to the cost of minting and the addition of 10% tin for strength.

MILITARY WAGES

Military wages are traditionally paid quarterly. Considering the danger, wages are low, but there are some perks such as booty. Traditionally, a soldier may keep 2/3 of booty collected, giving 1/3 to the next highest rank, who gives 1/3 to the next highest rank, and so on. The commander of a large army can acquire quite a tidy sum in this way.

BEARING ARMS

THE RIGHT

In the strictest sense, only those explicitly granted the right or those who can trace their right to a grant of arms from the sovereign, through his vassals, have the right to bear arms. The practice, however, is more liberal. Like knighthood, the right to bear arms may be delegated by anyone who possesses it, so that a gentleman can arm his retainers, as long as they are in his employ

Towns charged with their own defense are usually given charter rights to organize militia and / or hire mercenaries. To assure themselves of legality, however, they nearly always hire knights to take charge.

DEFINING WEAPONS

One of the main difficulties is in defining weapons and armor. What constitutes a weapon and what a tool? Which is clothing and which armor? There are two subclasses of weapon, chivalric weapons which may only be used by gentlefolk and common weapons which can be used by everyone else.

THE UNFREE

The unfree have no right to bear arms or wear armor, except as granted by their liege-lord and gentlefolk are extremely hesitant to grant this right. The unfree have certain rights in exchange for their servitude. The most important of these is the right to the protection of their lords. A lord who conscripted his unfree tenants for onerous military service would probably be violating the contract between his family and theirs.

SIMPLE FREEMEN

The gray area has always been for simple freemen. Most gentlefolk acknowledge that it is appropriate for simple freemen to bear common (not chivalric) weapons. A modestly armed

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freeman will rarely be challenged. Many freemen make a point of carrying some visible symbol of their right to bear arms, a shortsword for example, on the theory that asserting a right is the best way to retain it.

THE GENTRY

The right to bear arms is most easily defined for the nobility. They can bear whatever weapons and armor they please. The social elite do, however, have social restraints. Nobles prefer to express their class, in part, with the weapons they bear, namely chivalric weapons, and woe betide any simple man who bears such weapons.

Gentlefolk consider certain weapons to be dishonorable. No gentleman would, for example, carry a bow; they are cowardly weapons that kill at long range and a true gentleman fights only hand to hand, close enough to his opponent to introduce himself.

Although gentlefolk consider bows beneath their own dignity, the less conservative are willing to accept the presence of a properly-disciplined contingent of longbowmen. These at least require some skill to use. Even so, most knights deem it inappropriate for archers to shoot at knights – this sets a poor precedent, simplefolk killing gentlefolk.

Crossbows are loathed by nearly all gentlefolk and even by most common soldiers. A crossbow is a coward's weapon, used by thieves and murderers from ambush, or occasionally by a hunter with warped sportsmanship, but never by a gentleman and rarely by a simple soldier of "good virtue". Bearing a crossbow is likely to be met with a violent challenge by any noble.

RELIGION

The majority of Hâmians believe explicitly in the existence of Gods. With inevitable variations and prejudice due to culture and location, most of the religious movements of western Lythia share a common of metaphysical beliefs, although all modify them to suit their ways.

THE GODS OF HÂRN

The inhabitants of Hârn (and most of Lythia) are pantheistic; they believe in the existence of ten major (and hundreds of minor) deities, but most worship only one of these. The ten major deities are named below:

Agrik (AG-rik): *Lord of the Four Horsemen*

Halea (ha-LEE-uh): *Mistress of Hearts and Loins*

Ilvir (il-VEER): *Prince of the Fatherless Multitude*

Larani (la-RAH-nee): *The Lady of Paladins*

Morgath (MOR-gath): *Lord of Chaos*

Naveh (NAH-vay): *Lord of the Pitch Shadows*

Peoni (pee-OH-nee): *Lady of Truth and White Virtue*

Sarajin (sah-rah-YEEN): *King of the Icy Wind*

Save K'nor (SAH-vay-kuh-NOR): *Keeper of the Var-Hyvrak*

Siem (see-EMM): *Lord of the Blessed Realm*

THE CHURCH OF PEONI

The Bringer of Life Renewed

Maker of Balms

Lady of Truth

Everliving Daughter of White Virtue

Guardian of the Meek

Lady of Industrious Labors and the Ripe Harvest

Confidant of Lovers

Peoni is the kindest and gentlest of the gods. She will accept into her fold any with an honest heart. She demands that her followers be gentle and kind, but is forgiving of those who transgress. Peoni is most often represented as a young girl with hands worn red from her labors and is symbolized by spring flowers or by the fruits of agriculture.

SOCIAL MISSION

Neither Peoni nor her followers press their religion by warlike means. Their weapons are persuasion and example, and they seek to convert the defenseless, who are often ignored by other religions. The Church of Peoni stresses the virtue of being satisfied with one's station in life knowing it helps to prevent civil unrest. It strives to ease the hardships of life by offering assistance to the poor and starving.

CALENDAR

The most important days of the Peonian year are the *Restoration Festival* on the fourth day of Peonu, and the *Harvest Home* on the fourth of Azura. The origins of these festivals are ancient. The Restoration Festival symbolizes the renewal of life after the cold of winter and the Harvest Home is a celebration to bless the harvest. The Harvest Home involves four days of prayer, meditation and fasting, concluding with as lavish a feast of newly harvested crops as possible.

ASTROLOGY

SKORUS: The Mixer

Ilvin 3RD – Navek 2ND

The Mixer symbolizes the blending of things to make new things. It lies at the transition of air and water and can represent condensation or precipitation, the kinds of transformation that can be brought about by love and learning, the result of thoughtful contrived harmony.

Skoruns often possess strong, motivated intellects. They are governed by emotion, but are aware of this. Their lives are often filled with sadness which they are able to absorb and learn from. They make good friends and delight in bringing people together although the results are not always what they expected. They have the capacity to enjoy life and to bring pleasure to others. They enjoy experiment and exploration, but are just as fond of home and family.