

## 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.

Gentlefolk receive better treatment before the law, which protects the privilege of rank. In a dispute between a noble and a simple person, there is rarely doubt as to the outcome.

A person whose parents are gentle has gentle status. Few commoners are admitted to this exclusive group, but it is possible by adoption or marriage, generally only when one parent is gentle, or by grant of knighthood, the most likely advancement. Gentle birth has somewhat more status than obtaining gentility by marriage or knighthood, although the grantor lends some of their own status to the grant – a man knighted by the king has more status than one knighted by an impoverished knight-bachelor.

## FEUDAL TITLES

Earls and Barons have heritable titles. These remain with the family unless formally stripped by higher authority. Loss of a heritable title is an extreme punishment reserved for grave crimes against the crown, such as treason or sedition, and is generally accompanied by a death sentence or at least banishment.

### Earls

Earl is the highest feudal noble (on Hårn). An earl’s seat will usually be a castle, sometimes a keep, and he will (typically) owe the king military services of 60-120 knights depending on the size of his holding. Roughly 80% of the earldom will be subinfeudated to vassal barons and knights. The rest will be held directly by the Earl, managed by appointed constables or bailiffs.

The Earls of Kaldor are Earl Curo of Gardiren, Earl Dariune of Kiban, Earl Caldeth of Minarsas, Earl Meleken of Qualdris and King Elendsa, who is also the Earl of Olokand.

### Barons

The word *baron* is a generic term on Hårn for any major landholding noble with less status than an earl. A barony usually contains a keep and anywhere from 10-30 manors. Regardless of the size of a barony, a few manors will be held directly by the baron, managed by his bailiffs, but most will be held by vassal knights. Some barons are vassals of an earl; some are tenants-in-chief, holding directly from the king.

The only Baron near Olokand is Baron Ethasiel of Setrew and his liege lord is Earl Curo of Gardiren.

## KNIGHTHOOD

Knighthood is not a feudal title. All barons and earls, and even the king, are knights. Anyone may theoretically be knighted, most often for exemplary military service to the crown, but most knights are born to the station.

The training for knighthood (apprentice knights are called squires) is undertaken when the young son of a knight is invited to foster at the household of another knight. Boys begin training at twelve, learning the “knightly virtues”, skill at arms, heraldry, and horsemanship. If all goes well, the squire can expect to be knights around the age of twenty-one.

Knighthood is an honor conferred on a person for his life only, and is not heritable. The son of a knight is gentle, but the status will lapse in the next generation, unless another knighthood is conferred. There are some female knights, but not many.

### Chivalry

The knight is expected to adhere to certain standards of behavior and morality and these standards are called *chivalry*. The chivalric virtues are prowess, generosity, courtesy, loyalty to one’s lord and one’s clan, and service to church and society. Because knights are human, it is accepted that most will fall short of the ideal. Sometimes the virtues conflict with each other or with the nature of society; loyalty to clan, lord, and church may blur in the political games played in most states. In some regions, chivalry has been replaced by religious and political imperatives, but everywhere, lip service is paid to the ideal.

### Courtly Love

The practice of Courtly Love is far from uniform on Hårn. Ideally, it is a pure form of sexless love between a man and a woman of gentle birth; the chaste respect given by a vassal to the wife of his lord is one example. In practice, Courtly Love often leads to illicit intimacies, but is acknowledged as the virtue from which all others flow, the true source of nobility and morality.

Poetry and music are the language of Courtly Love. There are elaborate schemes of meter and rhyme for each mood and season. Courtly Love is an art form beloved of bards and minstrels; their songs describe virtue and harmony, conflict and tragedy.

### Knights Bachelor

The number of knights on Hårn far exceeds the number that can be granted fiefs. While some knights will inherit or marry into land, most are landless *Knights Bachelor*. Some realize their burning ambition of obtaining a fief, but most spend their lives as the retainers of great nobles, or (gods forbid) by adventuring.

## OLOKAND

### Town Charters

There are two different kinds of town on Hårn; *freetowns* and *feudal* towns. Olokand is a feudal town held directly by the king. All towns tax their citizens and pay aids/taxes to the king or state.

The street names are not posted and tend to be a matter of oral rather than written tradition so they change from time to time. Houses are not numbered. There is no official post office

# ORIENTATION 2

---

and mail is carried privately at considerable expense. At night, the streets are dark and dangerous. Policing is in the hands of a corrupt and incompetent garrison. Riding horses or carrying weapons (other than a dagger) on town streets is illegal except to gentlemen and those known to the authorities.

## **Alderman**

An alderman is a custodian and expounder of the law and member of the town court. Alderman must be invested in their office by the sovereign (or his representative), but the office is often inherited, since this is the way that knowledge of customary law is passed from one generation to the next. Olokand has twelve aldermen; Haselun of Elathel (innkeeper of the Standing Bear), Nibinel of Falen (weaponcrafter), Harayn of Ashata (mason), Elemon of Vafeg (woodcrafter), Releyne of Lerik (lexigrapher), Akatern of Lemdos (brothel owner), Orhan of Ruyth (miller and millwright), Evin of Quenal (chandler), Othena of Terain (embalmer), Tinel of Portin (usurer and merchantlyer), Indalon of Ashance (salter) and Sirhet of Thatain (hideworker).

## **Mayor**

Only freetowns have mayors, as such, but all others have some official who is responsible for administering civil and financial affairs. Mayors are usually appointed by the aldermen, often from a short list of candidates supplied by the crown. This official will run a sizeable bureaucracy, including tax assessors and collectors. In Olokand, Honelon of Udibis (litigant) holds this position.

## **Warden**

The warden is the officer commanding the city garrison and responsible for maintaining civic law and order. A major expense for any city is its military budget. In Olokand, Mirild Harabor (son of the sheriff) is warden by appointment of the crown.

## **HÂRNIC 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 Hâr. 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 Hâr 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 gentlemen 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 gentlemen 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 areas has always been for simple freemen. Most gentlemen acknowledge that it is appropriate for simple freemen to bear common (not chivalric) weapons. A modestly armed 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.

Gentlemen 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 gentlemen 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 gentlemen.

Crossbows are loathed by nearly all gentlemen 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 Hâm (and most of Lythia) are pantheistic; they believe in the existence of ten major (and hundreds of minor) duties, 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 HALEA

*The Empress of Opulence*

*Queen of Pleasures and Self-Fulfillment*

*Maker of Bargains*

*Guardian of the Treasure Hoards of Heaven*

*Enslaver of Hearts and Loins*

*Mistress of the Stolen Moment Forever Lost*

*Unchast Lady of the Ten Forgotten Arts*

*Golden Temptress of the Crimson Chamber*

Halea is commonly portrayed as a perfectly proportioned, sensuous, human female. Her true form drives men mad with passion. Halea has many aspects, among them the helpless maiden, the worldly sophisticate and the canny usurer. Non-adherents have a tendency to perceive Halea as a goddess of little wisdom and her church as a shallow and spiritually bankrupt institution, but they underrate this shrewdest of schemers.

Halea is deemed an easy deity to worship, for she demands no conventional morality of her adherents and is willing to bargain for her favors. The highest ethic for a Hlean is fealty to the

goddess. Traditional concepts of social evil, right and wrong, have little bearing.

## Calendar

Haleans celebrate Low Mass (Shesneala Day) on the 7th, 17th, and 27th of each month. High Mass (Shesneala) is celebrated on the 7th of each month and an annual festival (Banquet of Delights) occurs from the 1st to the 7th of the month of Halane.

## A Prayer of Sacrifice

“O Mistress, accept this offering, and grant me blessings equal to my devotion”.

## A Daily Prayer

Said while counting one’s wealth, “O Mistress, I believe that each coin will beget seven pleasures, enhance all my senses and keep me mindful of your mysteries, that I may give pleasure as well as I get, and that one day I may do the same with you in Corsilea”.

## THE CHURCH OF LARANI

Larani is the benevolent goddess of chivalry and battle and the reluctant warrior. Her followers claim she is the greatest of the trinity of war gods but she is more constrained by honor and conscience than either Agrik or Sarajin. This is a weakness since Larani will not strike without warning nor without cause. It is also a strength since Laranians do not forget whose side they are on.

## ASTROLOGY

ANGBERELIUS: The Flaming Sword

Larane 5th – Agrazhar 6th

The swords represent dynamic action and conflict, destruction and surprise. Angberelius is shown as two weapons crossed from which flames are issuing; while the swords are solid and real, their conflict causes fire which is intangible, but no less real. They are the symbol of maleness, light, strife and glory, of victory that arises from piercing, cutting effort.

Those born under Angberelius tend to have exciting lives in which they are always striving against their environment to promote causes. This is the sign of the action-loving warrior questing for his grail. If he finds it, he may well experience dissatisfaction as its watery contents quell his personal fires. Angberelians are not prone to subtlety, except that of conflict. They prefer the direct approach, taking up arms and seeking to end their troubles by force rather than guile.