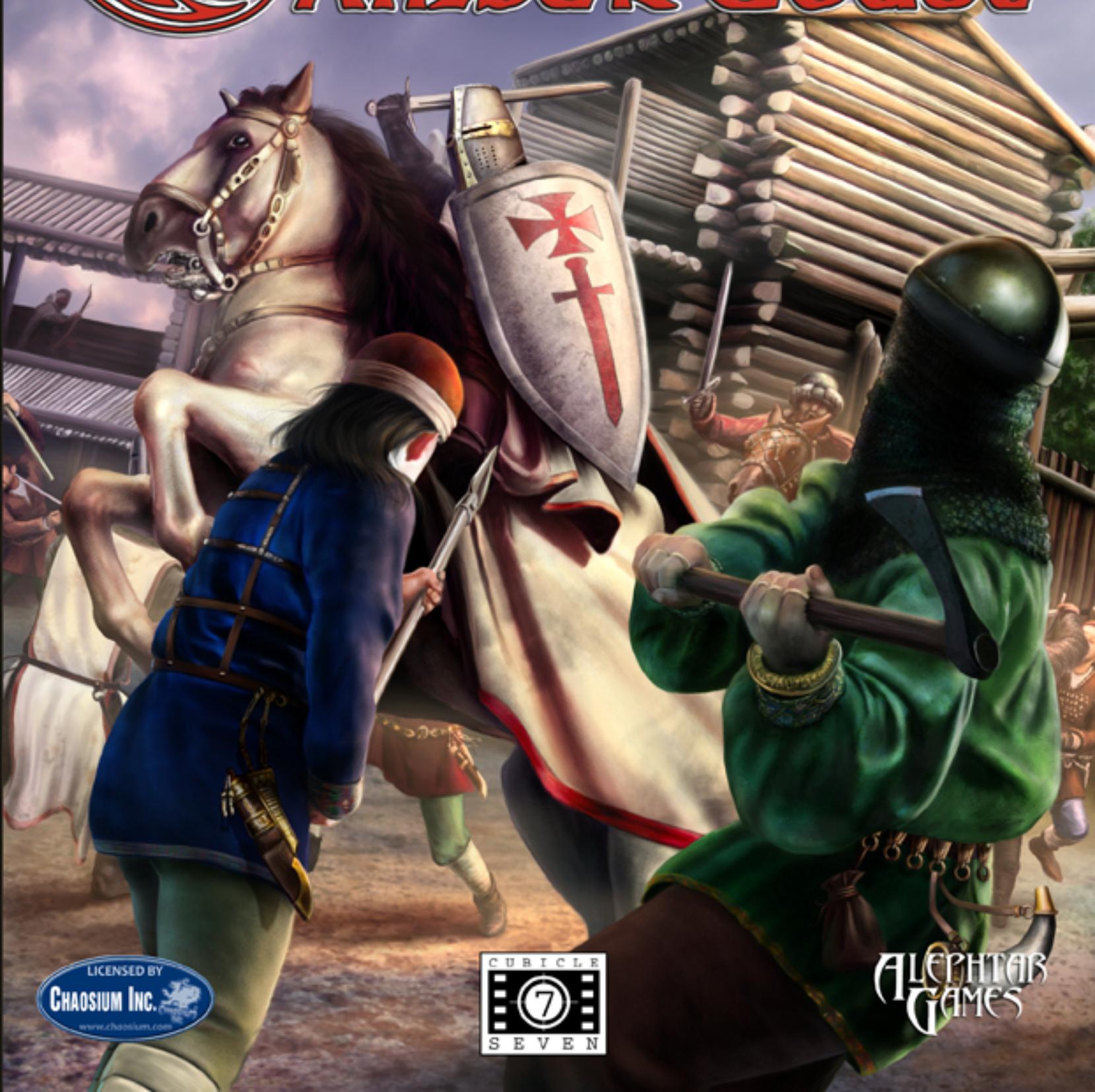


Basic Roleplaying

Crusaders of the Amber Coast



ALEPH TAR
GAMES



Crusaders of the Amber Coast



• **Author**

Paolo Guccione

• **Layout**

Dario Corallo

• **Cover art**

Tiziano Baracchi

• **Interior art**

Dario Corallo, Nicolai Nickson,
Miguel Santos, Nguyen Cao Viet

• **Maps**

Colin Driver, Dario Corallo

• **Editing and Proofreading**

Charles Green, Pete Nash

• **Playtesting**

Sergio Bonomo, Andrew Emery, Raffaele
Guarrasi, Chris Holden, Timothy Holden, Owen
Jonston, Manuele Verduci, Giovanna Zegarelli.

• **Special Thanks**

Agris Liepins for his reconstruction of the ancient
Latvian costumes and buildings.

The Christian Magic system for *Basic Roleplaying* has been co-developed by Paolo Guccione, Pete Nash and Simon Phipp. The spells of Luck, Speak with the Dead and Witch Flight have been written by Byron Alexander.

Basic Roleplaying ® is the Registered Trademark of Chaosium Inc., and is used under license.

Mythic Russia is a Trademark of Firebird Productions.

Stupor Mundi – Roleplaying in the world of Frederick II and
Merrie England – The Age of Eleanor are Trademarks of Alephtar Games.



<http://www.alephtar.games.com>

ALEPH TAR
GAMES





GING BACK with my mind to the moment when I started conceiving the Amber Coast supplement, almost ten years ago, I am amazed at how many things have changed during that time. Apart from my personal life, the game for which Crusaders had been designed has been changed a couple of times, and yet it has remained the same, enjoying a second, or maybe third or fourth, youth. How I wish it was the same for all of its fans. However, we are all young in spirit, are we not?

But more than the game system, it is my perception of the setting that has changed a great deal. The first time I looked at the Baltic epic I wanted just to find an alternate setting, other than Sicily, for my game set in the age of Emperor von Hohenstaufen, the *Stupor Mundi*, and I opted for the adventures of Hermann von Salza and his heroic Knights in the pagan lands of Lithuania. HeroQuest was still called Hero Wars at that time, and the game information about these settings contained in the *Mythic Russia* game was not yet available, so I made my own research. And what had begun as a collection of notes about the Teutonic Knights in the North eventually evolved into a voyage of the mind through a part of European history that few knew, although it is one of the most fascinating tales of the Old World.

For one thing, I had to dig into the subtleties of political intrigues between bishops and warrior monks – and learned that Hermann von Salza had rather little to do with those events, whose real shapers were rather King Mindaugas, the father of Lithuania, and the first Bishop of Riga, Albert von Buxhövden. And I learned the sad story of the Sword Brotherhood, the real conquerors of these cold but fertile lands. And eventually entering the Cathedral built by Albert, still standing there after eight centuries, gave me the same emotion that visiting the tomb of the *Stupor Mundi* still gives me when I go back to my hometown.

On the other hand, I had to learn something about the pagans that the Teutonic Knights fought. And there came the big surprise. There are a bit less than

one billion people of indo-european origin in the European Union, but less than six million still speak almost the same language their fathers spoke two millennia before Christ. Nevertheless, much of their ancient culture was lost during the centuries after the Crusades, and has been rediscovered only recently.

You may not know this, but the Balts really love their past. For non-trivial historical reasons, like the Cold War, roleplaying games have not been practised a lot in the Baltic Republics until the last two decades, so we Westerners have a historical advantage over them in RPGs. But while we Western old-schoolers, lazy old people that we are, waste our time each year playing our costumed games in the remains of the splendid castles that we find, already made, in the Rhine Valley, leftovers of an Imperial Age that has nothing to do with the tribal barbarians that we like to impersonate, the Balts took the time to rebuild the forts that their real ancestors – not the Germanized or Russified Balts, the real ones – inhabited. In real wood. And roleplay wearing the trinkets of the old, reconstructed from the leftovers of the ancestral burial mounds, something that I have had the privilege to wear even if I am no Balt. And even those Balts who do not roleplay, believe it or not, still love to gather around bonfires during the nights of the solstices, like their forefathers did four millennia ago.

If one loves his past so much, there must be some reason, don't you agree?

So, after nine years' elaboration and more than two years' research, and having had the opportunity to appreciate every possible beauty of the Baltic countries, I am pleased to share my discoveries with you, in the most pleasant way one can have to enjoy history – gaming. I now invite you to don the armour of a Sword Brother, or pick up the crooked staff of a Nattangian Griwe, invoke the help of God, or Dievs, and enter the most extraordinary epic that the Old World has ever witnessed.

It shall remain a secret between us, but it is a tale that has not yet ended.

Riga, New Year's Eve 2009

Introduction to the Amber Coast



The Baltic Crusades and the Stupor Mundi

Several years have passed since the publication of our Hohenstaufen era supplement *Stupor Mundi*, and people continue to appreciate our other Medieval Europe settings such as *Merrie England*. In

order to provide a wider range of opportunities for an exciting roleplaying experience that builds on history but includes plenty of fantasy elements, we are now introducing a setting that is closely related to the original *Stupor Mundi*, but focuses on an area that is definitely less known, but happens to have hosted the highest concentration of great heroes and adventures of the first half of the 13th

Historical accuracy



Little is known about the ancient Baltic nations. Some of them, like Old Prussia, have disappeared, while others, like Lithuania and Estonia, have been absorbed by their German or Polish or Russian invaders to the point of risking to lose their individuality. Their ancient pagan mythology, in particular, is definitely less known than that of other European cultures. The *Lāčplēsis* poem, written in Latvia in the 19th century, describes ancient Latvian mythology with great detail, but its accuracy might not be perfect. Several attempts were made during the 20th and 21st Century to revive the ancient Baltic religion, which have given birth to movements called *Romuva* in Lithuania and *Dievturība* in Latvia, but so little is known about this subject, beyond the few facts that have survived the centuries and Christian contamination, that we are not even sure that these names are correct.

In the end, while the facts about the German and Danish invasion of the Baltic coast told in this book are historically accurate, and have been checked with ancient writings dating back to the Middle Ages, like the *Livonian Chronicle*, all information about Baltic religion and folklore contains a great deal of speculation. Please take them as fiction rather than fact, and remember that a game's purpose is to let players have fun rather than teaching them history or anthropology.

Whenever some details are not historical, but have been made up by us, a small boxed comment about historical reality or archaeological evidence will describe what is an acknowledged fact about the subject and what is a speculation that we added to make the game more fun. Feel free to adjust the setting to your desired level of accuracy.

century: the Baltic coast, from Prussia to Estonia.

Many people may be familiar with S. Eisenstein's classic movie "Aleksandr Nevskij," which tells of the epic battle between the Russians of Novgorod and the Teutonic Knights, but not everyone is aware that it was Frederick II, the *Stupor Mundi*, who had sent the Knights to conquer land in the Northeast. Initially aimed at conquering savage Prussia, the Crusade soon extended to Latvia, and from there to the frozen lands of Russia, where only Prince Aleksandr's bravery stopped the knights. Besides this, it was not only Nevskij that was a contemporary of Emperor Frederick; two other characters who are halfway between history and legend were active in that area during Frederick's time.

The first of them is Temujin, the dreaded Genghis Khan of the Mongol Golden Horde. He died in the first years of the Crusades, but his sons continued to threaten the European princes for decades. Russia and Livonia were among the areas subject to Mongol raids. Russia was in fact considered a vassal state of the Mongols, and even Prince Nevskij had to pay homage to the Mongol Khan, as shown in the first scene of Eisenstein's film.

The second of the great heroes is Mindaugas the Great, the first King of the Lithuanians. His reign marked the birth of Lithuania as a nation, a nation that, for a short time, was the largest kingdom of all Europe. Mindaugas' fate was tightly tied to that of the Teutonic Knights.

With such heroes as Frederick the Second, Hermann von Salza, Gengis Khan, Aleksander Nevskij and Mindaugas involved in the fate of the Baltic Lands, can your adventure set in that fantastic place, among warring tribes, noble knights and pagan spirits, be anything less than a magnificent epic? Of course not. So, our faithful reader, take up your trusted dice and follow us through the fabulous world of the Baltic Crusades.

Amber

A piece of amber resembles a small yellowish gem, but in fact it is a drop of solidified conifer resin. Unlike gems, it can burn, and melts if heated on a fire. Amber can be polished and turned into real jewels, and often chunks of it that fall into the sea or a lake are naturally shaped by water into small transparent pebbles of regular shape. Small pieces of vegetable matter are sometimes caught in the resin drops before it hardens, and end up mysteriously encased in the gem. Even small insects can be found frozen in the eternal embrace of amber, adding a fascinating detail to the exotic nature of this vegetable stone.

It is clear that the ancient populations of Europe appreciated amber as precious stone and regarded it as a treasure. The Baltic coast was particularly rich in amber due to the presence of a great amount of conifer forests close to the sea shores, and amber, along with furs, was one of the most important commodities exported by the Baltic kingdoms towards the rest of Europe.

Hence the name Amber Coast that we have used in the title to indicate the Baltic nations. It is not an expression that was historically used, but it adds to the magical flavour of our mythic lands.

The Land

The region that we call Amber Coast goes from the Vistula Lagoon in modern Poland to the Gulf of Finland, which separates Finland from Estonia. The Baltic sea is a very shallow sea, originally a great lake, but its presence influences the lives of the populations that dwell on its shores as much as the Mediterranean and the Atlantic do.

The coastal lands are very flat and covered in rich vegetation. Forests are made primarily of pines and firs, especially in the Northernmost reaches. The river mouths have neither deltas nor estuaries, due to the weak currents of the sea, but coastal lagoons are extremely

common. Lots of ponds, bogs and marshes dot the landscape, and their murky, dark waters often house malicious spirits and creatures, or at least the superstitious natives think so. Due to the presence of these tricky waters, travel is very *difficult* in most of the land, except in winter when all water surfaces, including the Baltic Sea, freeze. This detail has a large influence on warfare, as German princes tend to wage war in Summer, while it is almost impossible to move a big army during the good season – a detail that native Balts know very well, instead.

All sort of animals live in the wilds: boars, otters, reindeers and European bisons. Bears and wolves prey on the herbivores. The rivers and the sea are full of fish. The natives breed cattle and a peculiar breed of horses that is a sibling of Mongol ponies.

Peoples of the Amber Coast

The Northernmost reaches of the Baltic shores are known as Estonia. This is a harsh, cold land, where farming is still possible but more *difficult* than in other areas. Its inhabitants are from the Ugro-Finnish racial stock, and speak a language similar to that of the inhabitants of Suomi (modern Finland). Like all Finns of the time, they practice a religion that is essentially shamanistic in its nature. The great Lake Chud marks the border between Estonia and the Russian Principality of Novgorod. The three great islands that separate the Gulf of Riga from the Baltic Sea, the biggest of which is Oesel, are inhabited by Estonians, too.

Immediately to the South is Latvia, a region that lives and thrives on the great river Daugava and the trade that it enables between Russia and the Scandinavian countries. An Estonian population, the Livs, occupies the shores of the Gulf of Riga, but their lands are seized by German invaders at the dawn of the 13th Century AD, and their culture has already disappeared in the period covered by this supplement. The rest of the Daugava area





is settled by a family of tribes (Curonians, Selonians, Latgolians and Zemgalians) that we will collectively call Latvians in this book, although they were not as politically homogeneous as the Lithuanians. These tribes are of Baltic origin, and their culture is very similar to that of Lithuanian and Prussian tribes.

Lithuania lies further South and is a flat, fertile land occupied by tribes of fierce warriors, ruled by ruthless dukes. The tribes, which share the same culture as the Prussian or Latvian ones, are somehow united in times of war under the command of a Grand Duke, but this is going to change during the time of the Crusades.

East of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania lies the land of the Rus. Although there are similarities between their cultures, and the Russian princes often extort tribute from the Balts, the Russian and Baltic peoples are different. Most Russians are Christian at this time, while the Balts fiercely retain their ancient traditions. The Russians are not a single nation at this time, but a patchwork of principalities. They are ruled by petty nobles, the Boyars, who effectively manage to keep their

power irrelevant by quarrelling among themselves instead of joining their forces. Principalities that are relevant to our narration are Vladimir (near modern Moscow), Polotsk (modern Belarus), Kiev (modern Ukraine) and Novgorod. The latter is a peculiar case among the Principalities, because it is ruled by its merchant class, which can choose its Prince, rather than its boyars, and it is often referred to as the Republic of Novgorod.

The Russians will become formal (and in many cases actual) vassals of the Mongol Horde during the 13th Century, although in the lands closer to the Baltic coast, the Mongol influence is less evident. The Golden Horde briefly touches the Baltic lands during its campaign to submit Russia and invade the rest of Europe, but the Baltic coast is never occupied by it. This does not prevent the Baltic people from being scared of it, once news of the destruction brought by the Horde in Russia spread to the Baltic.

Prussia is the inland region behind the two great lagoons of the Baltic coast. It is inhabited by a group of independent tribes whose ferocity has always defeated their neighbours' plans to invade the region, despite their lack of a centralized authority that can unite them against a common enemy in case of invasion.

South of Prussia lies Mazovia, a duchy that is ethnically Polish but somehow still independent of Poland at the time. Similarly, the Duchies of Pomerania and Pomerelia lie to the west of Prussia, and are formal vassals of Poland, but practically independent.

The Viking pirates have converted to Christianity and settled down by the beginning of the 13th Century, but the denizens of the Baltic coast still practice piracy. Travelling by ship can be dangerous, as can living on the coast without adequate fortifications.

During the years covered by this supplement, several of the lands described here are conquered by crusaders, giving birth to new political entities, mostly Bishoprics ruled by a Bishop-Prince, and



the Order State. Remember, though, that only the overlords of the newly formed states are German or Danish, while the populace is still of the original ethnicity and retains most of its original culture under a superficial film of Christian beliefs.

Baltic culture in brief

Ancient Balts are mysterious people. They are neither Vikings nor Celts, but they have some traits in common with them. They can be described as iron age, polytheistic barbarians with the classic clan/tribal organization. Each clan or tribe traditionally raids its neighbours to gain cattle, women and sometimes slaves. The clans are ruled by nobles, backed by warriors, who are often selfish and sometimes oppress the farmers, but are the only protection against foreign raiders. In some cases, a Russian Prince extorts tribute from a Baltic tribe, especially when the tribe dwells along the Daugava river.

Each noble controls one or more wooden fortresses, in which the population can find shelter in case of raids. Villages often develop around such forts, and are usually trade centres. This is particularly true of the region around the Daugava, which was a main trade route used by Russians to access the Baltic and Northern Seas. Forts abounded along the river, but they were present also elsewhere, such as along the rivers Nemunas and Neris in Lithuania.

Baltic religion revolves around worship of natural spirits, but it acknowledges a supreme deity, thus providing a prelude to monotheism. It appears that the Balts did not build covered temples, preferring to worship in the open, around sacred fires or sacred trees, or on the river banks. These pagan practices have survived until modern times.

The above fact were pivotal in the conquest of the Baltic coast by the Crusaders. Populations often rebelled against the Teutonic yoke, but since their

own rulers were not much less tyrannical, they sometimes preferred the relative safety that the Order could provide them and accepted baptism as a "necessary evil".

The Crusades

Between the end of the 12th Century and the beginning of the 13th, the German and Polish rulers, in need of more land, turned their eyes to the Northeast. There laid fertile plains and wild forests, inhabited by peoples who did not pay tribute to any civilised lord. Time and again had they tried to conquer these peoples, but in vain, as the stubborn barbarians managed to overthrow their rule as soon as their conquering armies left their lands.

At that time, pious Bishops and missionaries showed their lords where their mistake was: they did not attempt to convert these pagan souls to the One True Religion. Had they done this, they would have easily conquered their bodies along with their souls. Proselytism alone, however, was not enough, as more than one Holy Missionary had found the Blessing of Martyrdom while preaching to these pagans. Armies had to accompany the Holy Men in their mission, and the Bishops of the newly converted lands had to be protected by their own military once the land had been subjugated.

Later on, the Bishops realized one further fact: lay crusaders alone were not committed enough to their cause to guarantee victory against the pagans, so they needed a new type of crusader. Looking at the military orders of warrior monks that supported the Christian kingdoms of Palestine, the Bishops found an answer to their need. The basis for the temporal power of the Teutonic Order in Europe had been laid.

Creating a character

THIS CHAPTER explains how to create a character for use in *Crusaders of the Amber Coast*. It will guide you, the player, through the creation process, but always remember to check with your Game Master for advice. In order to create your character, you will also have to refer to Chapter Two of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

Why is my character here?

If your character is not a native of the Baltic lands, then he is a Western European (usually a German or Dane) who is taking part in the Christian colonization of Livonia, Prussia or Estonia. He or she may have come to the Baltic lands for two reasons: religion or profit (maybe both).

If your motivation is religion, then you may have come here in search of an indulgence, which is granted by the Pope to whoever fights against the infidels to convert them. Or, if your character is a cleric, you have come here to convert the pagans through preaching – although the increase in power granted by acquiring your own parish, or even abbey or bishopric, would not displease you, should you happen to grow so much in reputation and influence as to gain one. Finally, your character may be a novice Sword Brother, or looking for admission into the Sword Brotherhood.

If your motivation is profit, which is always a good reason to do something in a roleplaying game, then your character is a German or Danish mercenary in the employ of the Sword Brethren or one of the Bishoprics, and very little has to be added to his motivations. Incidentally, a





mercenary can be also a native Balt converted to Christianity. If your character is not the fighter type, he can be a crafter or trader coming from a German city belonging to the Hanseatic League or from Venice. You can find information about the Hansa in this book, and about Venice in *Stupor Mundi*. Your character in this case may be temporarily employed by the Brotherhood or a Bishopric, awaiting for a good opportunity to start his own business.

Even though it is possible to run a female character – and the default campaign will provide some interesting plot hooks for female characters – it is clear that a female player character poses some problems in a realistic Medieval game; remember that Jean of Arc has not been born yet, and above all, that she was burned at the stake for behaving exactly like a female character does in most fantasy roleplaying games. The recommended profession for a female Crusader character is that of a nun: although still being unusual for her to be adventuring among crusaders, it will at least be plausible to find her healing the wounded coming from the battlefield. If you want to play a more fighting female character, it is advised that you choose a pagan background, as gender roles are less strict, although clearly set, in a Barbarian society. A craftsman, farmer or hunter profession may be appropriate. A Baltic witch (*ragana*) could be a very interesting character to play, but hardly compatible with a party of crusaders.

Playing a Crusader

This book is about roleplaying characters who are involved in a conflict that has, at least nominally, a religious origin. In the world of the 21st Century, religious struggle has reappeared and is responsible for newer and bloodier atrocities, and the term Crusader has a lot of bad karma connected to it. Yet religious war and proselytism by the sword was the way the world worked at that time, so there is no reason not to roleplay a Teutonic Knight or a pagan who resists the Christian conquest with arms if you

wish so.

As usual, the recommended attitude for this is wit, humour and respect. In *Crusaders of the Amber Coast*, not only are you playing a character that follows a real world religion, but you are taking part in wars that have possibly caused tragedy and pain to some player's ancestors, centuries ago. It is important, then, that you play your character as what he or she actually is – a fictitious character with all of the fanatic beliefs of the Middle Ages – while keeping some distance from him or her. You may roleplay your character as being cruel or a fanatic, but always remember, and remind other players, that it is your character, not you, who is acting so, and that while you are having him or her act as it was common at the time, you do not necessarily endorse his or her behaviour.

A particular mention is to be reserved to the Sword Brothers and Teutonic Knights. These military orders were responsible for many atrocities in the area, as well as for beneficial deeds, and certainly there were historical Knights who were as cruel and ruthless as the ones who are described in Andrej Pumpurs' *Lāčplēsis*. But this is just a limited view of what the Knights were during the Northern Crusades, and players are certainly not urged to adhere to this stereotype. Remember, there were both good people and cruel villains on each side, be it Western, Baltic, Russian or Mongol.

What campaign?

This chapter assumes that you are creating a character for the campaign that comes with *Crusaders of the Amber Coast*, where the player characters start as Sword Brothers or mercenaries employed by the Sword Brethren. Of course, you could want to play another campaign specially designed by your Games Master, possibly a campaign focusing on native Balts instead of the Crusaders, so feel free to adapt character generation guidelines to your campaign needs.

New Professions

MONK/NUN

Use this profession for Christian holy men or women who spend their lives in a monastery or nunnery, praying, studying and practising a craft, or for members of wandering orders, such as Dominicans and Franciscans.

Wealth: Destitute to Poor.

See note on inability to own possessions.

Skills: Craft (Any), First Aid, Knowledge (Christianity), Perform (Ritual), Persuade, Piety, Sing, Teach. Pick Two: Insight, Language (other), Medicine, Perform (Oratory), Literacy (Latin), Research

Special: Your affiliation with your order grants you access to Christian magic.

Your character must take the appropriate Vows in order to gain blessings. Some monks are also priests.

The character generation process

The process used to generate a character is described in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, and it will not be repeated here. However, this section contains all the peculiar information that you need to generate your new character for the Baltic Crusades.

Choose Origin

Your character may either be a Christian Crusader or a native Balt. You should also choose your character's gender at this time, for running a female crusader, especially a fighter, could turn out to be rather unrealistic, and is therefore not recommended (see above).

Being a Crusader does not necessarily mean that your character is a fighter or a cleric. The colonization process that accompanied the Crusades attracted a lot of people who were there mainly to handle the logistics, and to profit from trade. Your Crusader character could then be a crafter in the Brotherhood's employ, or simply a merchant in search of interesting profit.

If your character is a native, he or she is probably a convert in the employ of the Order as a crafter, scout or militiaman.

Choose Nationality

If your character is a Crusader, he may come from almost any nation in Europe, although a German, Dutch or Danish origin is the most likely. If he is a trader looking for profit, he may come from as far a Nation as Genoa or Venice, but he is most likely from Lubeck or one of the cities which are about to form the Hanseatic League.

If your character is a native Balt, he or she may be of the Latvian, Lithuanian, Prussian or Estonian ethnicity. Keep in mind that Lithuanians will be regarded as enemies for the most part of the default campaign that accompanies this book. Also

remember that Estonian characters speak a different language, belonging to the Ugro-Finnic language family, making communication *difficult*, and that their religion is different, too. For a smooth start of the default campaign with a native, choose a Latvian character from Latgallija or Zemgallija.

Choose Faith



If you are a crusader, you are a Christian. How virtuous you are is up to you, and remember that often the Crusaders were far from the virtuous examples of Christianity that they had to embody. A player who wishes to play a Christian character should also decide, at this point, whether his character is part of the Livonian or Teutonic Order. This option is available to males only, and is not mandatory for fighter characters; crusading fighters who did not belong to the Order were common, too, as well as friars and priests who were there to proselytize. Belonging to the Order will have an influence on how much wealth the



character possesses, and whether he can know magic or not. A character from the Livonian Order has access to a restricted number of professions.

If you are a native, you may either be baptised or not. Many baptised natives tend to not take their conversion seriously, and retained their pagan practices in public. The best way to go for your character is to be officially Christian to gain the protection of the Church, but also retain his or her pagan ways to gain access to some magic. All native characters who come from the Daugava area can be initiate to a mother (Māte), usually Lauku Māte, who grants access to the basic healing spell. Initiation in more specialized cults like Laima or Saule require the character to belong to a magic oriented profession.

Choose Profession

Most crusader characters will end up being knights, whether secular or knight-brothers, or soldiers. Many others will be priests or friars. Priests were not part of the Order at that time, and they reported to the Bishop instead.

Many Crusaders were traders whose main goal was to establish trade relationships with suppliers of furs or amber. A Brother who is involved in administration rather than fighting (called a Grey Mantle in the Teutonic Order) is not uncommon at all, and in this case, your character's profession may be Merchant or Scholar. Many Brothers were healers, too, in accordance to the Rule of the Templar Order; use the Doctor profession for these Brothers.

The Wizard profession should not be used without explicit Game Master's permission, as it implies acquiring magic instead of divine blessings. Remember to carry some magic books with you if you want to play a wizard; you will not find many of them in the Far North.

Native Balts can choose any profession that suits their background. The Shaman profession should be chosen only with the Games Master's permission, as most native

characters will be employees of the Sword Brothers at the start of the campaign, and the Brothers would certainly not allow any active pagan worshipper in their entourage, at least not knowingly. Female shamans are considered witches (*ragana*).

Determine Starting skills

Determine skills by using a professional skill point pool and a personal skill point pool as described in *Basic Roleplaying*. The campaign power level for the default campaign should be Normal. For the sake of game balance, as there will be characters who have access to magic and others who will not, we recommend that you allow characters who do not have access to powers to use Step Six (personality) of the *Basic Roleplaying* character generation process (page 21), and forbid it to characters who possess magic.

Crusaders of the Amber Coast uses the Cutlural skills optional rule, as the starting value of some skills depend on the character ethnicity. The difference in starting values are explained in the New Skills section. In addition to this, native Balts get Language (German) at 05% plus any category bonus as an extra skill. Since Estonians do not speak Baltic, they usually use German to communicate with Latvians or Lithuanians. Crusader characters do not have the option of learning Language (Baltic) or Knowledge (Baltic) for free, but they can gain them with their personal skill points.

Characters can use their personal skill point pool (and even the professional skill point pool) to increase their Piety and Status skills, but we recommend that the starting values of these skills is limited to 50% (60% if the character has the skill among his or her professional skills).

Do not be afraid of learning skills that require items that you cannot initially afford, like Riding or Crossbow. Since your character usually starts the game with an employer, it is likely that his master will loan him a mount or a special weapon before any major battle.

New Professions

KNIGHT

Use this profession for a normal Knight taking part in the Crusades.

Wealth: Affluent
Skills: Brawl, Dodge, Etiquette, Ride, Shield, Status, Sword
Pick three: Command, First Aid, Knowledge (Christianity), Listen, Perform (Oratory), Spot, Melee Weapon (any other)

TEMPLAR

Use this professions for members of the Livonian or Teutonic Order.

Wealth: Poor. See note on inability to own possessions.
Advanced Skills: Dodge, First Aid, Knowledge (Christianity), Piety, Ride, Shield, Sword
Pick three: Brawl, Command, Listen, Perform (Ritual),

Medicine, Spot, Status, Melee Weapon (any other)

Special: Your affiliation with your order grants you access to Christian magic. Your character must take the appropriate Vows in order to gain blessings.

NEW SKILLS

The skills listed here are not really new skills, but rather the specialties of existing skills (Allegiance, Knowledge, Language, Literacy, Status) that should be allowed in a *Crusaders of the Amber Coast* campaign. The starting percentiles in these skills are often dependent on the character's nationality. Whenever two base percentiles are provided, the first is for Balts and the second is for non-Balts.

Knowledge (Lore: Baltic) (05% or 00%)

This skill allows your character to know the basic facts about geography and social customs of his native area, including its common myths. It can be used at its full percentile only with regard to a character's original tribe and its territory. When used to deal with another tribe or region, Knowledge (Baltic) suffers from the same penalty that apply for Language (Baltic) (see below).

Knowledge (Lore: Christianity) (00% or 05%)

This skill is a catch-all knowledge skill covering the religious, political and geographic lore of Western Europe, similar to the Knowledge (Academic Lore) skill described on page of *Basic Roleplaying*. It does not apply, however, to facts about Islamic or Russian areas, or folklore. Russian or Arabic characters have Knowledge (Lore: Russian) and Knowledge (Lore: Arabic) respectively.

Language (Baltic) (INTx5% or 00%)

Each Baltic tribe probably had its own language, but it is commonly accepted that tribes belonged to three families that correspond – roughly – to the regions of Lithuania, Latvia and Prussia. Note that Prussia is no longer a Baltic region and its ancient language, now extinct, has been completely replaced by German and Russian.

When dealing with a different tribe belonging to one's tribe family, Language (Baltic) is used at a -20% penalty, and when dealing with a tribe outside one's own tribe family the skill roll is *Difficult*. Crusader characters who start the game with this skill should note the tribe they learned the language from and at the Games Master's option they suffer from the same penalty for inter-tribe communication.

Language (Estonian) (00%)

The Estonians are an Ugro-Finnic people, so their language is totally unrelated to all other languages in the

area, except Finnish. Only Estonians can understand Estonian without acquiring it as a separate skill.

Literacy (Alphabet) (00%)

In order to be able to read or write a manuscript, a character must know the basics of the related alphabet. There are three main alphabets in Western Europe: the Latin alphabet, the Greek alphabet and the Arabic alphabet. The Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet is used only in the easternmost part of Europe. The Latin alphabet covers a wide array of languages, while the other alphabets are only used for one specific language.

In addition, Literacy (Latin) also teaches the basic syntax of classic Latin, so two erudite characters that are very skilled in written Latin can communicate in this language across the usual language barrier, although no one speaks Latin in everyday life any longer.

No matter how skilled he is in reading the related alphabet, a character's ability in reading a document can never exceed his ability to speak the language the document is written in. Apply the usual penalty for related languages before checking whether a character can use his full Literacy skill in order to read a text. Again, a passage that is written in plain Latin imposes no penalty whatsoever, unless the author used a very obscure style (such as, for instance, the phrasing used for a magic book).

The most commonly used alphabets in *Crusaders of the Amber Coast* are Latin, used for all Crusader manuscripts; Cyrillic, used by the Russians; and Futhark, used for runic inscriptions made by the pagans. Objects with Arabic inscriptions can be found on the Amber coast, however, brought there by Muslim merchants from the Black Sea.

Piety (05% or 00%)

Piety is a synonym of Allegiance (Christianity), and is used to determine how effective a character is in using Christian blessings. See the Christian magic chapter for a full description of this skill. Baltic characters gain a Piety score only if they are baptised.

Status (Organization) (00%)

Given the abundance of organizations that have power in the area, characters must record their Status with each one. A character's high reputation with the Hanseatic league, for instance, will be of little or no use with a Lithuanian Duke.

Determine Starting magic

Crusader characters who come from a Cleric background or belong to the Sword Brotherhood may acquire Divine blessings before play begins. In order to gain blessings, the character must take Religious Vows to increase his or her Holiness. He or she can then acquire blessings up to the limit of his or her Holiness.

Native Balts who have barely been baptised do not have access to Christian blessings, as they are not part of the Christian hierarchy. They can still acquire one-use pagan magic if they are in good terms with the pagan priesthood.

Native Balts who wish to start the game with knowledge of magic need acquire Initiate status in a Baltic cult. Members of the Latvian tribe family can begin play as Initiates of the Mother (*Māte*) who is more appropriate to their profession. Characters who wish to be initiated into another cult which is appropriate to their profession must have at least 30% in three of the cult skills. Initiate membership of greater cults like Saule, Pērkons or Dievs is usually achieved only through play.

A character who chooses the Shaman (Druid) profession can become an Initiate of whatever deity he or she wishes, provided he or she has at least 30% proficiency in all cult skills. However, the character is considered an Initiate and not a Druid. We recommend that Initiates of Dievs are allowed as starting characters only with Game Master permission. Note that female shamans are usually called witches (*Ragana*) on the Amber Coast.

A character who starts the game as an Initiate receives one runic charm per 10% or fraction of his or her Status (Baltic) skill. The character can then learn and memorize spell levels equal to his or her INT, provided that all the spells are tied to runes for which the character has a charm.

Native Balts who do not qualify for initiation because they lack a requisite attribute (usually POW), can still receive one-use charms with spells. Each character can start the game with charms containing one

spell level per each 10% or fraction of his or her Status (Baltic) skill. The spell selection available is usually limited to the spells taught by the cults that they could initiate to if they met the POW requirements.

Wealth and equipment



Economy was still heavily based on barter at that time, and most Balts never used coins during their entire lives. Unless your character is a trader by profession, resist the temptation of keeping considerable amounts of wealth in cash, as it could turn out to be useless in most adventure areas. Silver bars are commonly used by the natives for trade, while silver coins are more common among the crusaders and in Riga or the Russian towns. A silver bar is usually worth ten silver coins, but not all Balts will accept silver. Use shells or chunks of amber as an easy-to-carry alternative to coins, as they are more likely to be of use in the wilds.

Some items listed in the Ancient equipment list are peculiar to a specific culture in the 13th Century or are more appropriate to the Renaissance era, and as such should not be available for purchase at the start of the game. Specifically, longbows, rapiers, greatswords and plate mail suits are not available.

Crossbows were heavily used during the Northern Crusades, but since they were unknown to the natives and formally prohibited to Christians, they were usually not generally available for purchase. Consult your Game master before acquiring one at start of game (but you can nevertheless learn the skill).

Equipment for Brothers

If your character belongs to the Sword Brotherhood or to a religious order, he or she has taken the Vow of Poverty, which involves forfeiting all rights to own personal belongings. All of the equipment you carry belongs to the Order, and you are just borrowing it, not owning it.

Sword Brothers are usually provided with at least a tunic, a cape, two pairs of boots and a sword, but nothing more is granted unless they are on a special duty. Fighting Brothers are usually equipped with a short-sleeved chain mail suit and a shield when on guard duty, and a horse when sent on travel assignments.

Equipment available to a Brother or a friar should therefore be determined before each mission, based on its availability to the Order (the Dominican prior will usually have no swords in stock) and the character's Status. If a character wishes to borrow extra items beyond the ones that his or her Superior has planned, have the character roll Status for each item, modifying the roll according to the table below. Consult the wealth level table at page 79 of *Basic Roleplaying* to know what wealth level is the equivalent to his or her current status in the Order or Bishopric.

If a Brother acquires loot during an adventure, he is supposed to give it all to the Order. However, all loot given up counts as money spent on acquiring training from any Order chapel or church. Even if the Brother does not want to train after a given adventure, he can save the amount for a later time.

Monks and nuns are subject to the same restrictions as Sword Brothers, and they are usually allowed to carry only a robe, a pair of sandals and a walking staff, unless on a special mission.

Additional Information

Calculate Damage Bonus, Hit Points and Power Points as usual. In this book, we have used the term Mana as a synonym for Power Points, as it is more appropriate for a fantastic setting. We also recommend that you use the Hit Location optional rule.

Name

You should have already chosen your character's name, but if you have not, this is the time to do so. In the sidebar are some male and female names for Latvian characters. If your character is a crusader, instead, just choose a suitable German or English name that was common during the Middle Ages (anything but Ringo or Jessica should do).

Remember that most medieval Christians did not have family names, with some exception among the nobility, and the name of the city or monastery of origin was used to make the names unique (Berthold von Bremen, Simon of Birmingham, Lucien de Lyon). Balts did not use family names; add a nickname to your character's name if you wish to distinguish him or her more (Aldis the Smith, Zigvalda the Wise, etc.).

Male Latvian Names

Agris, Aldis, Alvis, Ceronis, Zemvaldis, Didzis, Edvarts, Ervīns, Gaidis, Gatis, Gederts, Otokars, Reinis, Saulnesis, Tenis, Varis, Vitolds.

Female Latvian Names

Anitra, Ariadne, Daiga, Daiva, Dēkla, Gunita, Jana, Laimdota, Tekla, Zalga, Zane, Zigvalda.

Character creation summary

	Language/Ethnicity	Religion	Recommended Professions
Crusader	Danish, German	Christianity	Knight ¹ , Craftsman, Doctor, Merchant, Militiaman, Monk/Nun ¹ , Priest, Scholar, Soldier, Templar, Wizard ²
Baltic	Latvian, Lithuanian, Prussian	Baltic Paganism, may be baptized	Entertainer, Farmer, Hunter, Shaman, Warrior
Estonian	Finnic	Finnic Paganism, may be baptized	Farmer, Hunter, Shaman, Soldier

1 – See the profession description in this chapter • 2 – Available only with Game Master permission

Christianity and Crusader Magic

Piety

One thing that all of the major religions have in common is that they expect their followers to be pious, that is to follow all of the precepts of the religion and to possess all of its virtues. The more pious the person, the holier they are. This adherence to the holy principles of a monotheistic religion is expressed in *Basic Roleplaying* with the Allegiance rules. For the sake of simplicity, from now on we will refer to Allegiance (Christianity) or Allegiance (Islam) with the term Piety, but all the rules regarding Allegiance that are not superseded by this description are still in effect. The rules for Allegiance are found on page 315 of *Basic Roleplaying*.

A character who is raised in a monotheistic culture starts the game with a Piety score of 5%. If you are using skill category modifiers, treat Piety as a Mental skill. During character generation, clerical or devoutly religious characters may spend some of their free skill points on improving it, but the Game Master should limit the final Piety score a character can reach during the initial process according to the power level he chose for his campaign, with 50% being the maximum for a normal powered campaign.

Characters may use their Piety skill to act in accordance with the teachings of their religion. A knight on the Crusades might have to make a Piety roll in order to resist the advances of a wanton hussy trying to seduce him, or a maiden might make a Piety roll to convince a brigand not to molest her, or to jump to her death from a window in order to thwart his advances.

The Piety skill can both increase and



decrease, depending on the actions of a character. Characters will lose piety with every evil act they perform, contrary to their religion. Examples of such include, but are not limited to: rape, murder, theft, arson, treason, sodomy and adultery. On the other hand, certain acts may increase Piety, such as giving alms to the poor, completing a pilgrimage, going on a Crusade, and performing exceptional good deeds. The usual Piety increase or decrease rolls should be between 1d3 and 1d10, and be the direct consequence of a character's actions, be they good or bad.

A pious character may pray for a miracle to happen. If the Game Master allows your character to call for a miracle, follow the procedure for Divine Intervention on page 317 of *Basic Roleplaying* to check whether it is granted.

Miracles cannot be manifested at short notice. The petitioner must show devotion by praying for an extended period, or perform an act of dedication such as a

Alternate procedure for Miracles

If the Game Master wishes to avoid excess resorting to miracles or excess randomness in their granting, he or she can adopt this alternate procedure. In order to ask for a miracle, the petitioner must sacrifice 1d6 POW from his very soul and succeed in a Piety roll (remember that 96-00 is still a failure). The POW is lost whether the miracle is granted or not, and the effect obtained, determined by the Game Master, should still be proportionate to the petitioner's Piety.



pilgrimage. The result of a successful miracle depends on the orthodoxy of the religion to which the worshipper subscribes, and how high their Piety is. Usually, if the miracle is granted, it will be something small and localised.

Common miracles include healing, multiplication of food, calling forth water, calming of beasts, fortuitous intercession of allies, and such like. Major miracles may occur when the Piety of the supplicant exceeds 100%, and involve more widespread and dramatic effects such as changing the weather, temporarily blinding an army, raising someone from the dead, raising or averting natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, etc.

Piety and Psychic Combat

Piety can be useful to religious characters when they face hostile disembodied entities. Whenever a character is engaged in Psychic Combat with an entity with much more Mana, he or she can opt to use a Piety roll instead of the usual Resistance Table roll when trying to inflict Mana damage to the disembodied creature. The other creature uses a normal Resistance Table roll to attack the character, unless it is an Angel or other creature sent by Heaven, in which case it may use its Piety as well. The character has no use for his or her Piety to counter this roll, but can use the Spirit Block divine blessing to make things harder for the enemy.

Saints

A saint is normally somebody whose Piety remains above 100%, and who has performed a major miracle before witnesses. Usually the formal acclamation is unofficial until canonised by the church, but this doesn't lessen the standing of the saint in the eyes of his or her followers.

Becoming a saint confers no special advantages, magical or otherwise, save that of being held in awe by those who witness his miracles. This status can be double edged, since it will make the character the

focus of political and ecclesiastical attention, often bad. In such circumstances a living saint can fall from grace or be martyred.

Followers of Judaism and Islam can also become saints, although there is no church involved in their idolisation. Jewish and Muslim Saints are usually revered after their deaths and their shrines become pilgrimage sites.

Holiness and Vows

While Piety determines how many blessings a character can invoke during an adventure, the number of divine spells a clergyman can know depends on his status within his church, and his adherence to the principles of his religion. This is expressed in game terms as Holiness. Holiness is usually gained through Vows that the character must take to increase his or her closeness to Transcendence. For every Vow taken, a character gains a given amount of Holiness. A character can only learn a number of Divine Blessings (not Blessing levels) equal to his or her Holiness, and if Holiness decreases he or she loses the ability to invoke one or more Blessings of the Gamemaster's choice.

Vows, however, are not mere game artefacts, and represent a strict discipline to which the clergyman must adhere, or difficult quests, usually pilgrimages or Crusades, that he must undertake. Only the most holy men can devote the totality of their minds and souls to Transcendence, whereas the common worshipper is usually limited to a fraction of his essence. Breaking a Vow results in immediate loss of Piety and a temporary or even, at the Gamemaster's option, permanent reduction of Holiness.

The Vows table shows the main vows that characters can take, the Holiness that they provide and the clergyman positions that usually allow a character to take that kind of vow.

Monks, Priors and Abbots also include

Vows table

Vow name	Holiness	Taken by	Explanation
Chastity, Poverty, Obedience	3	<i>Friar, Monk, Templar</i>	The standard vows for friars and nuns, they are taken all together and may include more restrictions prescribed by the Rule of one's Order.
Celibacy	1	<i>Priest</i>	Forbids marriage, not casual sex (which is nevertheless regarded as fornication). A friar who becomes also a priest cannot take this vow.
Ritual fasting	1	All	Should be practised at least once per week, and have some influence on the character (make Stamina rolls <i>Difficult</i>)
Pilgrimage	1	All	See the appropriate chapter. Some pilgrimages take several months and touch several locations and so may provide more than one point of Holiness
Pilgrimage to Holy Land	2	All	Visiting the Holy Sepulchre. Cannot be performed while on a Crusade.
The Hajj	3	Muslim	Pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the fundamental duties of Muslims
Crusade or Jihad	3	All	Declaring a Crusade against the Infidels (not necessarily Muslims) or promising to fight in it. This bonus is temporary and ends with the Crusade.
Permanent Crusade	1	Templar	Garrisoning a land that is constantly at war with the Infidels. This vow is subsumed in the Crusade vow if a real crusade is declared.
Tend to the Sick	1	Friar, Templar	Treat the wounded and sick, no matter who they are or what their ailments are.
Lead congregation	varies	Friar, Monk, <i>Deacon, Priest, Templar, Bishop</i>	See the secondary table below. This vow cannot be broken, as it represents the character's hierarchical position in the Church. However, the character can be removed from office or excommunicated, which has the same effect of breaking the vow.

their female equivalents. Positions in italics mark the fact that a character should take that particular vow upon reaching that position. Thus, friars, nuns, monks and knight-friars should take the three monastic vows as soon as they enter their order; deacons should take the Lead Congregation Vow upon being ordained, and take the vow of celibacy upon attaining priesthood. Exceptions may exist.

Note that where Templar is stated, Game Masters may substitute any member of a militant religious order, such as the Teutonic Knights. Only Archbishops and the Pope can declare a Crusade, while in Islam, almost all high-ranking clergymen can declare a Jihad. Note that if one of these clergymen declares a Crusade or Jihad and nobody goes to fight it – or the Crusaders do not reach the battlefield, something that actually happened in history – the Holiness is not gained but lost! The Holiness gained by fighting in a Crusade is temporary, and will fade after the Crusading army is dissolved, forcing

the Crusaders to lose some of their divine magic. However, if a character is a member of a permanent Crusading Order and he is stationed in a land that is at war with the Infidels, such as the Holy Land or Livonia, he can retain one Holiness point from Crusading even when there is no active Crusade declared.

In order to emphasize good roleplaying, we recommend that the Game Master limits the total Holiness a character can gain to his or her Piety skill divided by five, so that a clergyman who takes lots of Vows but has only a formal adherence to the principles of the Faith or is secretly an impious sinner is correctly penalized. However, the mere fact of being a Church leader, even if your character – like many historical clergymen – is hardly an icon of virtue, should be able to generate some Holiness. This is represented by the Vow of Lead Congregation that, unlike other vows, is not connected to a character's behaviour but to his or her rank in the Church hierarchy. We recommend that the

Holiness provided by such a vow be granted freely even to an impious character, as it represents the faith of his flock, rather than his or her own. Please note that this also links the clergyman's ability to invoke Blessings to his ability to gain and keep the trust of his subjects, and can provide interesting opportunities in game. How will the good people of a town react to the fact that the PCs have exposed their bishop as an heretic? Will he lose his divine powers when they send legates to the Pope asking for his removal?

In religious terms, the fact of leading a congregation should be a burden rather than an honour, although the converse is usually true. Nevertheless, taking this responsibility upon oneself is considered a Vow in game terms. Deacons and Priests acquire the congregation Vow immediately, as their position is that of spiritual leaders of the laymen, while friars and knight-friars only take this Vow when they are put in charge of an abbey or convent, or a fortress in the case of Templars. The Holiness that this Vow grants is better evaluated calculating the number of "souls" in the clergyman's flock, but for the sake of simplicity it can also be tied to the character's ecclesiastical rank. The Congregation Table gives the appropriate Holiness values for both calculation methods. Please note that clergymen who are not in charge of a congregation but help the person who is receive the same benefits decreased by one point. Thus, members of the Papal curia or Papal legates like William of Modena receive a Holiness bonus of 5 points like Archbishops.

Congregation Size	Rank	Holiness
01-99	Deacon, Templar Commander	1
100-999	Abbot, Templar Grand Master	2
1000-9999	Priest	3
10000-99999	Bishop	4
100000-999999	Archbishop	5
1 million+	Pope	6

Relics

All the major religions cherish relics, but the Catholic Church reveres them most of all. Relics are objects that have been touched with the power of the Saints. They can be clothing worn by holy people, items used by them or even parts of the saint's body. Each relic has a Piety score of its own that can be added to the Piety skill of anyone touching the relic or reliquary. A character can benefit from the bonuses granted by a single relic at a time, no matter how many of them he or she owns.

Owning a Relic also increases the Holiness of a character by one point, allowing him or her to learn one more Blessing. Note that even a character who is not a clergyman can thus learn a single divine blessing if he or she has a relic. Some relics allow characters to learn unique Divine Blessings not normally granted by the religion in general. These are normally held in churches or monasteries and are closely guarded. Learning and regaining these blessings involves travelling to the relic itself and praying before it. Some people do this as part of pilgrimages, whilst others decide to take up residence near to the relic's resting place and remain close to its holy aura.

Finally, each Relic also acts as a container of extra Mana for the character who is holding or using it. A relic provides 1 extra Mana per each 5% bonus it provides to Piety. Mana spent will regenerate on its own in one day, and can be used normally, although they should be employed only to power divine blessings. Using the Power of a Holy Relic to cast pagan or black magic is a blasphemous act, and will certainly damage the Piety of whoever commits such a sacrilege.

Type of Relic	Piety
Mortal remains of a saint	+5%
Item of mythical importance	+10%
Saint of local renown (St. Edmund)	+5%
Saint of national renown (St. Patrick)	+10%
Saint of global renown (St. Damien)	+15%
Major Saint (St. Peter)	+20%

Thus the Sword of St. Edmund would grant a Piety bonus of +5% (local renown 5%) and one extra Mana, while holding the Bones of St. Peter would give +25% to Piety (mortal remains 5%, Major Saint 20%) and five Mana, due to their holiness and renown.

The above table is suitable for both Catholic and Orthodox Christians, although the Orthodox started worshipping different saints starting with the 11th century. A similar one can be devised for Muslims, although the latter are way less dependant than Christians on physical items of worship.

Many blessed items have a relic of the saints enclosed in them. Sword pommels are particularly fit for holding such items.

Icons

Icons are holy images painted by a very pious artist, usually a monk. The artistic representation of a Saint, if pictured with this specific purpose, can transfer part of the painter's faith into the heart of the beholder. Icons are the object of a special veneration in the Orthodox Church, where they usually replace relics. Such is the affection that Eastern Christians show to icons that some Byzantine Emperors decided to prohibit and destroy them, thus generating the religious movement called Iconoclasm, which was later declared an heresy.

In order to create an item, a holy person who knows the specific artistic skill of icon painting must spend several weeks in meditation while painting (generally one week per each full ten percentiles he has in his Piety skill), possibly fasting and remaining silent.

When the painting is ready, the painter must make his Art (Icon Painting) roll. If the roll is a simple success, the icon is just a good work of holy art, although it might still have a minor detrimental effect on evil creatures like devils or vampires. If the roll is a Special success, then the Icon provides a Piety bonus equal to one twentieth of the painter's Piety (his chance for a critical success in a Piety roll). If the roll is a Critical success, then the Icon provides a Piety bonus equal to one fifth of the painter's Piety (his chance for a special success in a Piety roll). If you use the optional rule for Fate Points, the player cannot apply it to these rolls.

As icons can be less convenient to carry than some small relics, most Orthodox monks will have to travel to a church or sanctuary in order to benefit from an icon's presence. Nevertheless, small wooden icons may exist that are easy to carry around in a bag or pouch.

Blessings

By worshipping in a religion, it is possible to gain supernatural aid in the form of holy blessings. Blessings are a manifestation of the power of faith and God. In game terms, Blessings are simply Divine Magic spells. Most blessings can be learned at any church or shrine of the clergyman's religion, while some blessings require worshipping at a church or site dedicated to a given Saint, and unique blessings are gained from pilgrimage sites or specific relics.

Learning Blessings

Each major religion has its own set of common Blessings, available at any shrine or church dedicated to that faith, which can be gained by the simple act of praying. Only clergymen may gain Blessings, that is to say, priests or deacons. Most normal people are not members of the clergy and are therefore considered only Lay members of the Church. This means they do not normally

have access to Blessings. However, anyone possessing a Relic can use its sanctity to Bless others, and is accordingly allowed to gain Blessings. Also, anyone taking part in a Crusade can learn some Blessings.

A character cannot learn more Blessings if he or she already knows a number of Blessings equal to his or her Holiness. A character can forget a Blessing in order to learn a new one at any moment, but if he or she later wishes to gain the old Blessing again, then the character will have to undergo the entire learning procedure again, which can be very inconvenient if it includes a pilgrimage. If a character's Holiness decreases because the character has broken a Vow or lost a Relic, or because a Crusade has ended, then he or she must immediately lose Blessings until the total number of Blessings known is again equal to his or her Holiness.

Some Blessings are unique and only available at churches dedicated to specific Saints, and some very special ones are granted only by relics of those Saints. Gaining access to these involves a pilgrimage to the place where the Relic is kept. Once there, the clergyman may pray to the Saint to learn its Blessing.

Using Blessings

Blessings are cast like any other spells in *Basic Roleplaying*. No roll is required to invoke a Blessing, unless the caster is in a particularly unholy place that could shake his faith, like Hell or a temple of a Dark God. In the latter case, the Game Master may require a Piety roll to check if the Blessing is successfully invoked. Each Blessing costs one single Power Point to invoke, regardless of the Blessing level.

The spell description specifies the Blessing level for purposes of blocking or dispelling it with anti-magic powers, but each Blessing costs only one Mana to invoke, which represents the act of channelling one's spiritual focus to God to attract His attention, unless the Blessing is labelled as Powered. If the spell description specifies that a blessing is Powered, then its actual level depends on the number of Mana spent when it is cast, which must be at least one. We recommend to prohibit or restrict usage of external Mana sources to power divine blessings, as this kind of supernatural power is intimately connected to the character's own soul. However, a clergyman can use Ritual Blessing to call on the faith of others in order to provide a larger spiritual support for his blessings.

In addition to being limited by his Mana pool, a character has a limited

Blessings table

PIETY	TITLE	BLESSINGS PER HOUR/ENCOUNTER	BLESSINGS PER DAY
01-09	Novice / Deacon	1	1
10-19			2
20-29			3
30-39	Friar / Priest / Knight	2	4
40-49			5
50-59		3	6
60-69	Abbot/Bishop / Commander		7
70-79		4	8
80-89			9
90-99	Venerable	5	10
100+	Saint		unlimited



number of blessings that he can invoke in a given amount of time. This depends on his Piety, including any bonuses given by possession or worship of a relic. Consult the following table:

If not otherwise noted, each Divine Blessing lasts for one hour and can be cast on any target at a range equal to the believer's Piety in metres. Special duration spells last for a number of rounds equal to the caster's Piety, as noted in the spell description. Touch Blessings can be cast only on objects or beings that the caster is touching, possibly through their clothes, and Self Blessings can affect only the caster. The caster must be able to see or touch a target in order to invoke a Blessing on it.

If you feel uncomfortable with keeping track of game time to determine whether a particular Blessing has expired or your clergyman can call upon Blessings again, substitute the concept of hour with that of encounter, and make all "hourly" blessings last as much time as is needed to resolve the current encounter, be it a combat or a social conflict of some sort. Historical fantasy adventures do not usually include dungeons packed with rooms full of monsters, so it is appropriate to consider that the player characters will run into one encounter per hour.

Aura attacks

Some Blessings allow the caster to impair or defeat his or her opponents with an aura attack. The procedure for aura attack is described on page 214 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rules. However, to make things more suited to priestly magic, which relies on Piety rather than intimidation, we recommend that you use the following variations to the standard procedure:

1. The aura attack affects all opponents who intend to attack the character who is performing it, with the limits imposed by the blessing used (for instance, it may work only on animals).

2. During the power phase, the character using the aura attack makes a Piety roll and records the result.

3. When an opponent affected by the aura attack wishes to attack the character, it must first make an opposed Idea roll against the Piety roll made by the character. If the opponent wins, then it can attack normally; if the roll is tied, then the opponent cannot attack; if the character wins, then the opponent suffers the results described for a fumble in resisting an aura attack on p. 211 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rules.

Ritual Blessing

A clergyman usually invokes God's blessing during a communal ritual where he is the leader, and his congregation expresses its own faith in a worship service. To use the ritual blessing procedure, the leading clergyman performs a worship service, which can be rather long and require some particular props like incense or liturgy clothing. To determine whether the ritual is inspiring enough for the congregation, the clergyman must make a roll under his or her Perform (Ritual) skill. If this roll is attempted on a religious holiday, the skill roll is considered *Easy*. If this roll is a success, then each character who is taking part in the ritual and has a Piety score of one or more, including the officiant, can provide a single Mana to use for a Powered Blessing that will be cast at the end of the ritual. Whether the roll is a success or not, the clergyman cannot attempt another ritual blessing for one week, or until the next religious holiday.

Ritual blessing can be used only with powered spells. The officiant can choose to delay the activation of the blessing until the time he wishes, but the target – or targets – upon which the blessing will be activated is fixed and must be present during the ritual. Thus, a Templar knight may pray for health or protection during a ceremony and keep a pre-fuelled Heal Wound or Armour of Faith ready to cast on himself, but this will not work on anyone other than himself. Or a Priest can use the Ritual Blessing procedure to invoke protection from Evil Powers on a party prior to embarking on a dangerous expedition, thus keeping a very



powerful Soul Shield or Dismiss Magic ready to activate on the entire party. The number of people in the target group cannot exceed the number of Power Points invested in the Blessing. When the blessing is activated, it will be powered by the Mana provided during the ritual; the caster cannot add more Power Points, and need not spend even the single Power Point normally required for Divine Blessings. The pre-powered blessing counts as a normal casting, thus the caster must not have lost access to the Blessing and must not have reached his or her daily or hourly casting limit when it is activated. The clergyman can keep this blessing ready to activate for a number of hours equal to his or her Piety.

Conversion

Conversion is the process of renouncing one's own faith and taking up another. This normally works with Pagans becoming Christians, but it can equally well work the other way around, especially if marrying somebody of another faith. Christians are usually forced to become Muslims if their land is conquered by the Moors, and the process is reversed if the land is reconquered by Christian princes, as happened in the Iberian peninsula.

For most common folk, conversion makes little difference, save for any social stigma of changing their religion. When a clergyman converts to another faith, he must take the appropriate Vows for his new religion. This may mean that for a considerable period of time, he will remain more knowledgeable at invoking Blessings from his previous denomination.

The clergyman does not automatically lose access to the Blessings from his former faith, as long as the two religions remain compatible (for instance, Orthodox and Catholic Christianity) and the character keeps his Vows. Dual worship of this kind, if discovered, is considered heresy, and punishable according to the tenets of whichever faith discovered the crime. Usually this means death.

Divine Blessings

ARMOUR OF FAITH

SELF, 1 HOUR, POWERED

Special spell of Knights Templars and Teutonic Knights

Turns the recipient's faith into a magical armour that will protect him or her from any kind of damage. The caster must spend a number of Mana that will constitute a pool of damage points that the spell will block. The total size of the point pool cannot exceed the target's Piety. Each time the target is hit, magical and mundane armour is first subtracted and then the blessing absorbs the remaining damage. The points of damage soaked by the Blessing are subtracted from the point pool. If the pool contains less points than the rolled amount, the blessing will block only as many points of damage as there are points left in the pool. The soaking effect is negated by critical hits.

AURA OF HOLINESS

SELF, 1 HOUR

Special spell granted by St. Dominic

This spell makes all Charisma rolls *Easy* and allows the caster to make aura attacks (See p. 214 of the *Basic Roleplaying rules*) to prevent opponents to harm him or her in battle. If this spell is used during a social contest and the caster's opponents are affected by the Aura attack, they are considered to have lost the contest.

BLESS

TOUCH, 1 HOUR, POWERED

Items blessed with this spell provide a bonus of +10% to skills that requires their use. Thus blessed surgery instruments will allow a +10% to First Aid rolls, a blessed altar or chapel will grant a 10% bonus to Perform (Ritual), and a blessed sword will grant +10% to attack and parry rolls. The caster can bless one item or one square meter of terrain per Mana used. A Blessed weapon does at least one point of damage to creatures immune to normal weapons, even if the weapon is not under the effect of other weapon magic. Blessed holy



symbols or holy water have detrimental effects on undead or otherworldly creatures like vampires, and Blessed soil can prevent their passage. Blessing an item or an area can have other effects that are relevant in game terms, but these are best left to the Game Master.

COMMAND ANIMAL

RANGED, SPECIAL DURATION, LEVEL 2

Special spell granted by St. Francis

Allows the caster to force his or her will upon a mundane animal. This Blessing does not require the invoker to overcome the POW of the beast on the Resistance Table, but it will automatically fail if the beast's Idea roll percentile is equal or higher than the caster's Piety. The caster must be able to express its commands to the creature by either having a great familiarity with it or by having previously cast the Speak with Animals spell. The beast is under the caster's control, up to the limits of its own self-preservation, for a total time equal to the caster's Piety in combat rounds. This spell does not affect supernatural creatures like beasts native to the land of the Fey, Hell Hounds or the like.

DISMISS MAGIC

RANGED, INSTANT, POWERED

Cancels one level of Magic or Sorcery or other kinds of magic per Mana spent. If the magic spell to be dismissed has more levels that can be cancelled, then it will remain in place if it is a fixed level spell, or lose that many levels if it is a variable level spell – possibly becoming unable to affect its intended target. This blessing can dismiss more than one spell if it is cast on a target that is affected by multiple spells and it has enough Power Points backing it to eliminate several or all of them. This Blessing can affect more than one target at a time, whether living being, spirit or item. Mana in the blessing are split among the targets and the caster must specify how many of them he or she is using against each single target (not target spell). Spells are dismissed beginning with the largest that can be affected by the Dismiss

Magic, unless the caster specifies one spell, that he must be able to "see" or guess, as the intended target.

ENDURE HARDSHIP

RANGED, SPECIAL DURATION, POWERED

This blessing allows a target to survive in exceptional conditions for a certain time. The targets can remain without food for a number of days equal to the caster's Piety, without water for a number of hours equal to the caster's Piety, and without air for a number of minutes equal to the caster's Piety. The blessing can affect one target per Mana spent. The caster must remain in prayer, and in the company of the targets, for the whole duration of the Blessing effect. He or she cannot invoke other Blessings in the meanwhile, although he or she can travel and communicate with the Blessing's targets. At the end of the Blessing duration, the targets will become fatigued and must resume normal breathing, drinking and eating in a reasonable time, or they will begin to suffer the detrimental effect of air, water or food deprivation.

EXORCISM

RANGED, 1 HOUR

Allows the caster to initiate Psychic Combat with a being that is possessing the target. No matter the difference in power, the possessing being will be forced to fight, and if it loses, it must abandon the possessed body. If, however, the possessing entity wins, it can seize control of the caster's own body instead.

FEAR

RANGED, SPECIAL DURATION

Special spell granted by St. Peter and other Saints

Inspires awe into an enemy, rendering it unable to attack. The caster need not overcome the target's POW on the resistance table, but a target can be affected by this Blessing only if its Luck roll percentile is lower than the caster's Piety, or else the spell will automatically fail. While affected, the target will lose confidence in his ability to win and



possibly flee. If cornered or already engaged in combat, it will fight, but it will be unable to fire ranged weapons or cast offensive magic, and all of its attack rolls will become *Difficult*.

GIFT OF LANGUAGES

SELF, 1 HOUR

The caster becomes temporarily able to speak any foreign language as if he was a native speaker. The character's proficiency in the language is equal to his or her Piety. The ability to read or write is not affected by this blessing.

HEAL BODY

TOUCH, INSTANT

Special spell granted by the Holy Virgin
This bless instantly heals all damage suffered by the target. The effects of all disabling wounds suffered during the last

ten rounds (including maiming or severance of limbs but excluding death) are also cancelled. This spell cannot cure disease or poison, but if cast on the exact round that poison damage takes effect it can save a poisoned character's life.

HEAL WOUND

TOUCH, INSTANT, POWERED

Heals one point of damage per Mana spent. Each casting of this spell can affect only one wound or one hit location if the optional hit location rule is used. This spell can counter the effect of a Major Wound or the maiming of a limb if applied within ten rounds, and if the wound damage is totally healed by the spell. In order to reattach a severed limb, the spell must be cast within ten rounds, and be followed by a successful First Aid roll.

HOLY WAR

SELF, SPECIAL DURATION, LEVEL 3

Special spell granted by St. George

The caster becomes unbelievably heroic in combat for a number of combat rounds equal to his Piety. He can no longer defend himself in any way, but all of his close combat weapon skills are doubled. This may allow him to attack multiple targets in combat. In addition to this, he suffers no negative consequences from exertion, fatigue or encumbrance. He automatically passes any Stamina rolls, no matter the penalties, and poison always has minimal effect on him. He cannot be rendered unconscious and is immune to any magic that affects morale or muddles thought. Other consequences of damage, including loss of limbs and death at zero hit points, still affect him. The target is still able to tell a friend from a foe.

HEAVENLY ASSISTANCE

RANGED, 1 HOUR

The recipient's score in a selected skills temporarily becomes equal to his Piety. The character must have a skill of at least 1% in the skill for the Blessing to work. This blessing cannot be applied to weapon, language or knowledge skills, or to Status.

PRODIGIOUS FEAT

SELF, 1 ROUND

The recipient can substitute his Piety score for the percentile chance of one single Resistance or Characteristic roll he must make. The blessing must be invoked in the same combat round the roll is made. A feat that would normally be Impossible, like lifting a boulder of SIZ 50, cannot be attempted by means of this blessing, but any roll with a chance of at least 1% can be affected.

PROTECTION FROM ANIMALS

RANGED, 1 HOUR

The target cannot be attacked by herbivorous animals or small carnivores who cannot feed on him, like poisonous snakes or spiders. Hungry beasts of prey who would normally consider him a potential prey are subject to an Aura attack

and cannot attack if they target him or her in combat. This spell does not affect supernatural creatures like beasts native to the land of the Fey, Hell Hounds or the like.

PROTECTION FROM DISEASE

RANGED, 1 HOUR

The target becomes temporarily immune from disease. If he has already been infected, this blessing will not cure him or her, and Restore Health must be used.

PROTECTION FROM POISON

RANGED, 1 HOUR

The target becomes temporarily immune from poison. If he has already been poisoned when the blessing is invoked but the poison has not yet taken effect, then he or she will suffer only minimal damage from the poison.

RESTORE HEALTH

TOUCH, INSTANT, POWERED

Special spell granted by the Holy Virgin

The caster can cure one mundane disease that affects the target, or restore one point to a characteristic which has been permanently drained from the target by a Major Wound or another hostile effect. The effects of this blessing are not automatic; the caster's chance of success is equal to the number of Mana spent, and cannot exceed his or her Piety in any case.

SENSE MALICE

RANGED, INSTANT

This spell reveals if the target is consciously willing to hurt the caster. General hostility that will not result in violence will be perceived as a slight sense of unease that cannot be told from the rightful outrage caused by, say, opposing the target's point of view in a public debate. The spell can also reveal if the target is lying, if cast within ten seconds of a statement being uttered by the target, but this effect requires that the target's Idea roll percentile be lower than the caster's Piety, or the information provided will be confusing. The target will not know that the Blessing has been used.



SOUL SHIELD

RANGED, 1 HOUR, POWERED



Provides the targets with defence from hostile spells. Soul Shield will block one level of offensive spells per Mana spent in powering the blessing. Even if the defence is overcome by an offensive spell, it will remain in place. If the offensive spell effect depends on the number of levels the spell has and the spell overcomes the Soul Shield, the effect is nevertheless reduced by the Mana invested in the Soul Shield. This blessing can affect more than one target at a time; the Power Points in the blessing are split among the targets and the caster must specify how many of them he or she is using on each recipient.

SOUL SIGHT

RANGED, 1 HOUR

Allows the target to see the POW aura of living beings, and the Mana of magical or enchanted artefacts. The recipient will

be able to tell whether the creatures he or she is seeing have the natural POW aura of a living being, or the artificial aura of magic constructs – like undead. The target will be able to determine the approximate size of the aura for each living or enchanted item he sees. This spell allows the recipient to fight in the dark at no penalty by targeting the opponent's aura.

SPIRIT BLOCK

RANGED, 1 HOUR

Gives the target an advantage in Psychic Combat by making all resistance rolls made by his or her opponents *Difficult*. Rolls made by the target are unaffected by this spell.

SPEAK WITH ANIMALS

RANGED, 1 HOUR

Special spell granted by St. Francis

Allows the target to speak with friendly animals. The beasts must be able to vocalize – this spell will not work on fish, lizards or butterflies but it will affect crickets or frogs – and be friendly or neutral to the caster. If it is not willing to help him or her, then a Command Animal may be necessary to force it to talk. At the Gamemaster's option the caster can, however, attempt to use a communication skill like Persuade on a non-cooperating beast.

SWORD BLESSING

TOUCH, 1 HOUR

Special spell granted by St. George

This spell doubles the damage done by a sword or other weapon that is religiously significant to the caster. The damage dice are rolled twice and the result is added up, while any damage bonus is rolled normally. A Christian can only cast it on a cross-shaped sword, while a Muslim is restricted to a crescent-shaped scimitar. The weapon damage is capable of affecting creatures only vulnerable to magic, though in this case the damage bonus should not be added.

gods and Magic of the Amber Coast

Baltic cults

Ancient Balts acknowledged a wide pantheon of supernatural beings who usually embodied the forces of nature. They believed that the forests and lakes of the Baltic Coast were the home to myriads of lesser and greater spirits. The greatest of these spirits were regarded as gods, and worshipped by the population, although the Balts had no established temples. Many of the Baltic gods have an equivalent among the ancient Russian gods, and possibly even in the Scandinavian pantheon. Interestingly, all the Baltic tribes seemed to believe in a father of the gods (Dievs, or Dievas) who was more powerful than the other deities, often regarded as his offspring (*Dieva Deli* in Latvian), and was not very eager to mess with humans. This sort of proto-monotheism possibly helped integrate the ancient religion with Christianity after the conquest of the Baltic.

Baltic cults do not provide Divine Magic to worshippers but rather Pagan Magic, which is a variant form of Sorcery. Pagan Magic is usually taught only to members of cults, to whom we will refer, in game terms, as Initiates. However, since most Balts usually revere all of the deities of their pantheon, initiation into the cult of a specific deity is not a strict requirement for receiving magic benefits, and all Balts can be considered worshippers of their tribal pantheon. Please note that there are slight differences in these pantheons that will be highlighted in the relevant sections.



Initiates

The first rank of the Baltic priesthood is that of Initiate. A character is considered an Initiate if he can contact a spirit and speak to it, and learn knowledge or magic from it. The procedure for this is usually that of meeting the spirit or deity while dreaming, during a ritual or during hypnosis induced by some drugs.

Initiates are usually treated as junior priests; that is they can teach magic to other cult members and also initiate them into the cult, although the latter task is usually performed by druids. Most minor cults do not even have a priesthood and rely on initiates for everything. Village witches (*Ragana*), which are often the only source of magic for the commoners, are usually of Initiate rank in their cult, although the oldest ones are Druidesses. Characters may become initiates of several deities, as long as they perform cult duties for all of them.

A character can become an Initiate of a deity if he or she has a POW of at least 16 and therefore qualifies for learning Sorcery. This is called The Gift Of Magic. If the Game Master wishes, the requirement for the Gift of Magic can be changed in order to allow characters with a lower POW to become Initiates.. The character must also make an offering to the deity. The most common form for the offering is usually hunted game or small livestock, and any character succeeding in an *Easy Status* (Baltic) roll is able to present a gift rich enough to be initiated into the cult of a minor deity like one of the Māte. The offering for major deities such as Dievs, Perkons or Potrimpos should be richer, and a normal *Status* (Baltic) roll is required to be admitted.

An initiate is also able to initiate another character into the cult, although he is usually required to consult a Druid before doing so, if a Druid is available at all.

The main advantage of becoming an Initiate is that the cult will teach its magic to the character, and other initiates will usually be ready to teach skills and magic

to other cultists, too. Of course, this may be a negligible advantage for small cults with a tiny and loose organization, for which the Game Master might require a successful Knowledge (Baltic) roll even to locate a suitable teacher. However, since initiates of these cults are usually rare but socially useful, as they perform the duties of healers and priests, the real good reason to join a small cult is the social advantages given by the initiate position. Only Initiates can teach magic to other characters, and only those magic spells that are granted by their deity or deities.

As Initiates usually practice also another profession, when generating a character who is an Initiate of a Baltic deity, use one of the professions provided in *Basic Roleplaying* and simply give the character access to magic because of his or her Initiate status. When generating a village witch, use the Shaman profession, but treat the character as an Initiate and not a Druid.

Druids

A Druid is a Balt that serves as a full-time priest. It is unknown whether the Baltic priesthood was in fact the equivalent of the Celtic Druids, but given the nature of the Baltic religion this is most likely the case. In game terms, we will call a Baltic priest or priestess a Druid.

A Druid worships the entire Baltic pantheon, but is usually dedicated to one deity in particular. A character who wishes to become a Druid must already be an Initiate of the Baltic deity he or she chooses, have a POW of 16 or more, have a Knowledge (Baltic) skill of 50%+ and know Perform (Ritual) at 50%+ and one skill related to the chosen deity at 90%+.

Latvian druids have an additional requirement. They must also be an initiate of one of the Mothers (Māte), in addition to the chosen deity. A Latvian character cannot become a Druid by being an initiate of a single Māte as these cults are too small to main deity, but if he is an initiate of five different Mothers he is considered to meet the requirements to become a Druid.

Historical note

Very little is actually known about the ancient Baltic religion, and that little information has possibly been hybridized with Christian beliefs over the centuries. For example, many think that the Latvian goddess Māra may be in fact another name for the Virgin Mary. Movements that preach return to the old ways currently exist in the Baltic lands, called *Romuva* in Lithuania and *Dievturiba* in Latvia. But the fact is that we are not even sure that the ancient Balts called their religion this way. We hope that the ancient druids, as well as our readers, will forgive us if, in order to achieve Maximum Game Fun, we have inserted a lot of our speculation here along with the few historical facts that we had available. After all, this is just a game.



Druids who only worship the mothers are usually female and are called *Ragana*.

A character who becomes a Druid is not limited to the worship of a particular deity, even though he has become a Druid by devoting to a particular god or goddess. This means that he or she can become an Initiate of other deities, and in fact most Druids were initiates of all the local deities.

When generating a character who is a Baltic Druid, use the Shaman profession described in *Basic Roleplaying*. The character must use his or her personal skill points to increase the appropriate skills to the level required for a Druid. Note that since one of the requirements is to have a skill at 90%, a character cannot start the game as a Druid in a campaign of Normal power level.

The Archdruid of the Balts was the Kriwe, who lived in a Prussian forest sanctuary called the Romowe. His main deity was considered to be Daiwas (Dievs), and the Kriwe was the only Druid allowed to be devoted to the Father of the Gods directly. Nobody except the Kriwe was allowed to enter the Romowe, under penalty of immediate death.

Pagan Magic

Although your character actually believes in the gods and goddesses he worships, the ultimate reason why you, the player, wish to have him worship them is acquiring magic. In the Christian Magic chapter we have learned how to have your Christian characters perform magic through Divine Blessings, which are small miracles that God grants to faithful believers. In the pagan setting of the Baltic coast, however, the nature of the magic that the gods grant to their worshippers is different, more connected to natural forces than to piety and virtue. Each Baltic god or goddess represents one or more of the basic forces of Nature, like the Sun, the Storm, or the mystic Fertility of the spring fields.

Creating a Rune Charm

Pagan magic requires the usage of runic charms for spellcasting. Charms are small rune-inscribed objects, often decorated by leather strings that bear the actual inscriptions. A charm works only for the person it was created for; once the person is dead or the charm has been taken away from him or her, the charm becomes totally useless until the process of enchanting it and attuning to its new owner has been undertaken. It is not necessary to be an Initiate to use a charm, but only an Initiate can enchant one.

A charm is created out of a small item made of a substance appropriate to the Rune of the spell that the charm will grant. The rune is then inscribed into it, along with other magic symbols. To correctly inscribe a charm-to-be, the successful use of an appropriate Craft skill roll is required. Since many charms are attached to leather strings, Craft (Leather working) is usually enough. The character attempting to inscribe the charm need not be fully literate, as the Runes are fairly simple shapes and are only loosely connected to the Futhark alphabet used by the Balts. The transfer of knowledge into

Historical note

In reality, it is not known that Baltic paganism had a unique leader, but for game purposes we will assume this as the truth and call this figure the Kriwe as the Christian historians of the time called him. More likely, the word Kriwe, or Griwe, denoted all Baltic priests.

Historical note

Ancient Balts used lots of talismans and charms, and they knew the Runic alphabet, but there is no evidence that they used it for magic purposes like the Norse did. No evidence exists that they attributed magical qualities to amber, either. As usual, we have added these details to the magic chapter only to make the game more interesting.



the item is a transcendent process that freezes an empathic knowledge into a mystically significant shape rather than the logical procedure that reading and writing represent.

Most charms are made of Amber, a substance that is rather abundant on the Baltic Coast, but still rare enough to be considered precious. Although usually available on the surface of the world, Amber is shaped and sized like the gems that are usually found underground, and as such is used to create jewellery. Some pieces of amber include a small fragment of tree or even an insect that was trapped inside the drop that originated the item when the resin was still fluid. These amber pieces are the most valuable, and usually have additional magical properties.

Finding the suitable materials for a charm is usually handled with a Status (Baltic) roll, related to the Wealth level of the material needed for the charm. Amber is always considered of Inexpensive value, but if it contains a fossilized item it is raised to Average, and the Game master may limit access to such items in play. If the character cannot inscribe the runes himself, the value of the item must be raised by one wealth level to simulate the price for inscribing the runes.

The description for each deity mentions the most suitable materials for inscription of charms for spells granted by that deity. Using charms inscribed in another substance bestows a penalty to the enchanter's Perform (Ritual) skill when enchanting it. Special samples of the substance can instead have a positive effect on spell casting, as described for each individual deity or spell. Amber can be usually substituted to the more appropriate substance without incurring in penalties.

Once it has been inscribed, the Charm must be blessed by a mystically powerful person who is at least an Initiate of the deity granting the spell. This requires that he or she succeeds in a Perform (Ritual) roll, which will call upon the appropriate deity or spirit in order to teach the applicant the magic. If the charm is

inscribed in an inappropriate substance, then this roll is *Difficult*, while using a particularly appropriate substance makes it *Easy*. Usually, performing this kind of ritual requires a bonfire at night. The initiate will normally require the character to make a sacrifice to the deity, in the form of a small animal or some vegetables. This sacrifice can be abstracted with a Status (Baltic) roll, modified accordingly to the rarity of the spell taught, and can be skipped if the character is receiving the charm as a reward for some quest.

Using charms to cast spells

Since most characters do not have the Gift, their use of charms is very limited. Essentially, they use the charm to call forth a force they do not master, which has been enchanted into the item by an Initiate. Each charm allows its owner to cast a spell once, after which it must be re-enchanted by a character with the Gift. Each player must note whether a charm is currently "charged" with its spell or if it needs recharging. The player must also note the number of usable charms he has in his own possession and the total number of ready-to-cast spell levels they contain.

Success in the Perform (Ritual) roll made by the enchanting Initiate places the ability to cast the spell once into the charm. Since it is not the Initiate but the deity that teaches the spell, it is not necessary that the Initiate himself knows the spell or has it memorised. The Initiate need spend Mana to attune the charm to its owner. The number of Mana spent is equal to the total levels of ready-to-cast spells that the charm owner has in his or her possession, including the newly enchanted charm. If for any reason a previously enchanted charm is no longer in the character's possession, the spell levels in it do not count for the total, but that charm is instantly disenchanted by this process and if the character eventually recovers it, it must be re-enchanted. Initiates will often cast Chain of Being on the characters for which they are doing the enchanting and

have them provide the Mana required, especially if they already have many charms or if many charms are being enchanted at a time. Recharging several charms usually requires a bonfire and ritual casting of Chain of Being on a large group of worshippers at night.

Charms inscribed in a mystically significant substance can be enchanted with multiple spells, or even with multiple castings of the same spell, provided that all of these spells are linked to the appropriate Rune. A new Perform (Ritual) roll is required for each additional casting, and the power point cost is increased each time.

Characters with the Gift do not need to use charms to cast spells, as their deeper understanding of the Realm of the Gods allows them to store spells in their memory. If an Initiate enchants a charm for himself, he is considered to have memorized the spell instead of just stored it in the item if the spell levels are not beyond his INT limit. However, charms are useful also to those who have the Gift, as they can be used to store knowledge of spells that the Initiate cannot memorize. This means that a Baltic magician, instead of having a grimoire, will have a set of charms into which he will inscribe knowledge of his spells. The charms can then be used to relearn spells temporarily released from memory, and even to cast spells not in memory, subject to the normal casting time penalties for spells cast from grimoires.

If a Charm is destroyed or lost, its owner can no longer cast the related magic until he has created a new one. This limitation does not apply to spells that an Initiate has in memory of course, but should an Initiate release from memory a spell for which he has not got a Charm, he will be subject to the same penalties suffered by a sorcerer who loses his grimoire. A character without the Gift that loses his charms is not that lucky, and knowledge of his spells is permanently lost with his charms. A character can voluntarily destroy a Charm to attune a more powerful one, but he cannot trade his old charm to a different character in order to do this.

Gods of Latvia

The Latvian pantheon includes a multitude of gods, many of which are considered Dieva Deli, offspring of Dievs. Dievs is considered to be the king of gods, but he rarely interacts with mortals, leaving this task to his son Pērkons, the thunder god.

Dievs

Other names: *Dievas* (Lithuanian), *Daiwas* (Prussian)

Dievs is the god of the skies and the creator of everything. All deities are subject to his rule, and many of them are also believed to be his children, the Dieva Deli. He is usually depicted as a wise old man with a flowing white beard.

Dievs is seldom involved in human affairs.. As the ultimate ruler of the universe, he usually leaves the task of dealing with mortals to his son Pērkons, the Thunderous. Dievs sometimes appears among unsuspecting mortals, disguised as an old man travelling through the land.

Cult Ecology: Most Latvians do not worship Dievs directly, but are initiates of one of the Dieva Deli.

Initiate membership: candidates must be Initiates or Druids of one lesser deity.

Druid membership: only the Kriwe of Romowe, in Prussia, is a full Druid of Dievs. The previous Kriwe must be dead before a new one is chosen.

Cult skills: Knowledge (Baltic), Persuade, Insight, Disguise, Perform (Oratory).

Runes: F (Fehu), L (Lhwaz), O (Ôthilaz), M (Mannaz)

Cult spells: Beauty of Dievs, Chain of Being, Liken Shape, Refutation, Undo Magic, Wisdom of Dievs, Witch Sight.

Where is this spell description?

For colour reasons, we have renamed many of the sorcery spells found in Basic Roleplaying to better fit the Baltic religion. However, the original spell should be easy to identify. In most cases the term "Sorcerer's" has simply been omitted.

Spells and skills in *Italics* are new spells described in this supplement, instead.

Cult format

Initiate membership: any requirement peculiar to this cult, if any.

Druid membership: special requirement for becoming druids, if any.

Cult ecology: who is usually a member of this cult and what is his or her role in the community.

Cult skills: skills favoured by the god, for which an initiate will usually be able to find an instructor among other cult members.

Cult runes: the runes normally associated with the deity and inscribed in charms.

Cult spells: the magic taught by the cult.

Laima

Laima is the goddess of fate and good luck, the one who determines the destiny of children and adults alike. She is also the patron goddess of mothers-to-be, the one who can ensure them a fruitful pregnancy and prevent miscarriages, and as such she is connected to Fertility. Latvians believe that there are three goddesses of fate: Laima, Karta and Dēkla, and that Laima is the eldest one. In game terms, treat the cults of the other two sisters as sub-cults within the cult of Laima.

Cult ecology: Most worshippers of Laima are women, and they are usually called *Ragana*, although the Balts do not associate any negative meaning to witchcraft. These witch/priestesses act as both healers and prophetesses in their communities, and as such they are much honoured and respected. They can predict the future from the entrails of sacrifices, both human and animal.

Initiate membership: The character must be chosen by Laima. This is usually abstracted by an Augury or Astrology roll performed by a *Ragana*.

Cult skills: First Aid, Insight, Knowledge (Baltic), Medicine, Persuade.

Runes: **ꝑ** (Perthō), **ꝑ** (Berkana)

Cult spells: Ear of Laima, Luck, Wisdom of Laima, Witch Sight.

As the origin of all riches that come from the soil, she is also the favoured goddess of traders. Considering that the Latvian tribes control trade along the Daugava, Māra's aspect as protector of commerce is not minor.

Cult Ecology: Most initiates of Māra are female. Only professional traders worship her among men.

Cult skills: Appraise, Bargain, Craft (any), First Aid, Perform (Oratory).

Cult runes: **ꝑ** (Wunjō), **ꝑ** (Gebō)

Cult spells: Beauty of Māra, Heal, Make Fast, Make Whole, Vitality of Māra.

Māte (the Mothers)

Latvian folklore includes dozens of small goddesses called the Mātes. They are considered all daughters of Māra, just like lesser deities are Dievs' Children (Dieva Deli). Each Māte is the patron of one aspect of nature or human life. Even if they are not very powerful as deities, the Mothers are an important part of Latvian life, and their worship is widespread, although limited to people whose everyday life involves the Mother's domain.

Jūras Māte is the mother of the seas, who brings plenty of fish to seafarers. Her worshippers are mostly fishermen and sailors. Her domains extends to the lagoons of the Baltic Coast, but not to the Daugava river, who is ruled by the Great Naiad Staburadze.

Lauku Māte is the mother of grain, and provides bountiful harvesting. She is usually worshipped by farmers.

Lopu Māte is the mother of cattle, who provides fertility to all herd beasts. Her worshippers are mostly herders.

Mēza Māte is the mother of the forest, protector of trees and all the creatures that dwell within the woods. She is usually worshipped by hunters and woodsmen.

Zemes Māte is the mother of the soil, who rules both the cycle of planting and harvesting and the cycle of human life,

Māra

Other names: *Māršava* (alternate Latvian spelling)

Māra is the good goddess of earth who protects women and harvests alike. She is the granter of all the boons that come from the earth, and protector of families. Together with Laima and Dievs, she forms the Latvian trinity of deities that is invoked to protect the people and keep the evil spirits away.

through burial rites. She is worshipped by both farmers and craftsmen such as potters or smiths.

Cult Ecology: All Latvian characters are considered worshippers of the Mothers, although they are usually devoted to the one who best fits their profession. Starting player characters can become Initiates of the appropriate Māte if they wish so, but although worship of the Mothers is a fast way to get some useful magic, players must keep in mind that only worship of greater gods can allow them to reach the top of magic power.

Cult runes:

Lopu Māte: ⚪ (Ūruz)
Zemes Māte: ⚫ (Ingwaz)
Lauku Māte: ⚮ (Jera)
Meza Māte: ⚯ (Algiz)
Juras Māte: ⚰ (Laguz)

Cult spells:

Lopu Māte: Fury, Strength of the Māte, Talons of the Māte.
Zemes Māte: Make Whole, Rat's Vision, Plasticity of the Māte
Lauku Māte: Heal, Vitality of the Māte, Unbreakable bonds
Meza Māte: Sharp arrow of the Māte, Speed of the Māte, Sureness of the Māte
Juras Māte: Breath of Life, Leap of the Māte, Suppleness of the Māte

Mēness

Other names: *Menuo* (Lithuanian)

Mēness is the Baltic moon god, the astral body that shines in the sky at night, where his wife Saule shines during the day. The myth tells that Mēness counted the stars and found that Auseklis, the morning star god, was missing. At this point the moon god kidnapped the star god's bride, with which he had fallen in love. For this

adultery Saule is constantly enraged with Mēness.

Mēness is also the god of warriors, because the dim light he sheds during the darkness of the night allows fighters to strike their enemies by surprise. This particular points out how treacherous the Balts may be when it comes to warfare.

Cult Ecology: Initiates of Mēness are almost always male. The moon god is worshipped by both thieves and warriors. However, there is no great difference between the former and the latter, because warfare among the Baltic tribes is usually a matter of cattle raiding.

Cult skills: Dodge, Fast Talk, Hide, Listen, Stealth.

Cult Runes: ⚪ (Hagalaz), ⚮ (Tîwaz)

Cult spells: Armour of Mēness, Cover of Night, Hammer of Mēness, Midnight, Moonbright, Razor of Mēness.

Pērkons

Other Names: *Perkunas* (Lithuanian), *Perkunis* (Prussian), *Perun* (Rus)

Pērkons is the Baltic god of thunder and lightning. He is also a provider of fertility, as the rain he sends allows the crops to grow plentiful. He is a powerful god, the strongest of the Dieva Deli, and since Dievs rarely interferes with the affairs of mortals, most Balts consider him the chieftain of the Gods. Pērkons is usually portrayed as an armed and armoured man, but he is not a war god, at least not in every version of the Baltic pantheon. His worshippers, however, are usually good fighters, and the deity provides some useful combat magic, especially when Velns is the enemy to drive away.

Pērkons is in particularly bad terms with Velns, the Devil, whether this term refers to an evil deity or to a race of stupid supernatural creatures that are usually malignant to humanity. Latvians believe that when lightning strikes a tree, it is

Pērkons that is driving away a Velns that was hiding among its roots. All runic charms made by a worshipper of Pērkons do 1d3 burning damage to all Velns if they strike their naked flesh. Also, all damage done to Velns by the magic of Pērkons is doubled.

Cult ecology: Pērkons is worshipped everywhere in the Baltic area, usually by males. Shrines to him are common in all Livonian, Prussian or Lithuanian cities. The oak tree is particularly holy to Pērkons, and charms for his cultists are usually carved out of oak wood rather than other types of wood or amber.

Initiate membership: Anyone who can provide evidence of having killed a Velns is automatically accepted.

Cult skills: Jump, Knowledge (Baltic), Spot, Throw, one Weapon skill.

Cult Runes: **Þ** (Thurisaz), **R** (Raidô)

Cult spells: Armour of Pērkons, Bulwark of Pērkons, Hammer of Pērkons, Razor of Pērkons, Thunder of Pērkons.

Saule

Saule is the Baltic goddess of the sun, the most powerful and most beautiful of all female deities. She rides her magic chariot in the sky during the day, and sails on the waves of the world sea during the night. Saule is the bride of Mēness, but is constantly enraged with him, because the Moon God has cheated on her. For this reason the two deities do not meet each other in the skies.

Cult ecology: Despite her power, not many people worship Saule directly, since most Balts prefer to make sacrifices to lesser gods that provide more immediate benefits. Druids devoted to her may be male or female, and are highly respected.

Cult skills: Jump, Knowledge (Baltic), Perform (Oratory), Ride, Spot.

Cult Runes: **S** (Sôwilô), **H** (Dagaz)

Cult spells: Bird's Eye, Moonbright, Ear of Saule, Sharp Flame of Saule.

Velu Māte

Velu Māte is one of the Mothers of ancient Livonian religion, but her role in the Baltic pantheon is so peculiar that she requires a separate treatment. Velu Māte is the guardian of the realms of the Veli, the astral bodies of the deceased. She welcomes the souls of the deceased at cemeteries, and takes them through the gates of Vinsaule, the Otherworld.

Cult Ecology: Very few people worship Velu Māte directly, and all those who do are regarded as *Ragana*, by other people. . Despite her association with death, the Māte herself is not considered an evil deity.

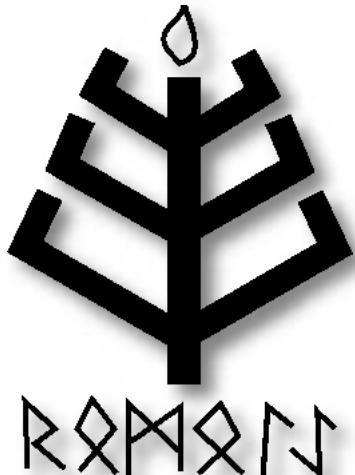
Cult skills: Insight, Knowledge (Baltic), Knowledge (Demonology), Listen, Research.

Cult Runes: **F** (Ansuz), **Λ** (Kaunan).

Cult spells: Soul of the Māte, Pox, Speak with the Dead, Spirit Bane, Witch Sight.



gods of Lithuania



The Lithuanian pantheon, not surprisingly, has elements in common with both the Latvian and the Prussian version of Baltic paganism. It contains fewer female deities than the Latvian pantheon, but some feminine elements are still present in it.

For more information about Lithuanian deities, you can also check the game *Mythic Russia* by Firebird Productions.

Dievas

The King of the gods is regarded as the father of all other deities and creator of the world. He rarely interferes with human affairs, but sometimes likes to disguise as an old man and wander the realm of mortals.

For all other game related information see the Latvian deity Dievs.

Perkunas

Other Names: *Perkunis* (Prussian), *Perkons* (Latvian), *Perun* (Russian)

Perkunas the thunder god is a very popular deity in Lithuania.

For all other game related information see the Latvian deity Perkons.

Menuo

Other Names: *Meness* (Latvian)

The Moon god is present in the Lithuanian pantheon, but is less important here than in Latvia, as the role of the war deity is performed by Perkunas. The only power he grants is that of illuminating the night or making it darker.

Cult Ecology: Initiates of Menuo are almost always male. The moon god is worshipped by thieves.

Cult skills: Dodge, Fast Talk, Hide, Listen, Stealth.

Cult Runes: **ᚦ** (Hagalaz)

Cult spells: Cover of Night, Midnight, Moonbright.

Potrimpos

Potrimpos is a friendly spring deity, always represented as a jovial young man showing very good health. His domain is fertility, particularly that of vegetables, and good luck.

For all other information, see the paragraph in the Prussian pantheon description.

Saulė

The Sun goddess is revered by all Balts, so she is present also in the Lithuanian pantheon.

For all other information, see the paragraph in the Latvian pantheon description.

Velnias

Other Names: *Patollos* (Prussian), *Velns* (Latvian)

Velnias is the lord of the Underworld, the deity that welcomes the dead in the afterlife. He is described as a grim deity, sometimes opposed to Dievs in the creation of the world, but not as an evil god. Still, the name Velnias is the equivalent of the Latvian term Velns, which is the word for Devil.

For all other game related information see the Prussian deity Patollos.

gods of prussia

Spell names

The standard names for Sorcery spells provided in the Basic Roleplaying rulebook are not really suitable for Baltic magicians, who are not Sorcerers but Witches and Druids. In order to remark this difference many of the spell names have been changed, replacing the word "Sorcerer's" with the name of the deity who provides the spell. This is a totally aesthetic change, and the spell effects, if not noted otherwise, is exactly the same as the original spell. Moreover, if the spell is granted by more than one deity, the spell name can be different if learned from different cults, but the spell is the same under all regards. In any case, you can choose to ignore the reference to the deity's name in the spell description and simply call it with the name of the effect it provides. For instance, the spell that provides physical protection from attacks can be called Armour of Mēness, Armour of Pērkons or simply Armour. To stress this fact, the deity's name is enclosed in brackets in the spell description.



According to what is left of the ancient Prussian culture, the Prussian pantheon included fewer deities than its Latvian or Lithuanian equivalent, although many gods, like Perkunis, were the equivalent of other Baltic deities. Prussian gods are also more fierce and war-like, and the divine Trinity is composed of male gods only, whereas goddesses are very important and prominent in the Latvian pantheon.

Daiwas

Other Names: *Dievas* (Lithuanian), *Dievs* (Latvian).

Daiwas, which the Prussians call also Uckapirmos, is the supreme deity of the Prussian pantheon, the ruler of the skies. As in other local pantheons, the supreme deity is rarely involved in mortal affairs, and leaves most of interaction with humans to lesser deities, particularly to the three who make up the so called Prussian trinity of deities: Potrimpos, Perkunis and Patollos.

Cult ecology: Prussians rarely worship Daiwas directly. In case a character does, see the Latvian deity Dievs for all game related information.

Potrimpos

Potrimpos is a friendly spring deity, always represented as a jovial young man showing very good health. His domain is fertility, particularly that of vegetables, and good luck. In accordance to the bloody nature of Prussian religion, however, this deity was often appeased by the sacrifice of young people rather than animals.

Cult Ecology: Potrimpos is the god of most non-warrior Prussians.

Cult skills: Appraise, Bargain, First Aid, Knowledge (Baltic), Persuade.

Cult spells: Heal, Leap of Potrimpos, Make Fast, Make Whole, Plasticity of Potrimpos, Rat's Vision, Strength of Potrimpos, Suppleness of Potrimpos, Vitality of Potrimpos.

Perkunis

Other Names: *Perkunas* (Lithuanian), *Pērkons* (Latvian), *Perun* (Russian)

Where Potrimpos is the Spring deity of fertility, Perkunis is the autumn god of Thunder. Prussian warriors worship Perkunis, who acts as a war god as well as a Thunder God in Prussia.

For all other game related information see the Latvian deity Pērkons.



Patollos

Other names: *Pikuolis* (Christian corruption of name), *Velnias* (Lithuanian)

Patollos is the charitable god that welcomes the dying in the realm of the Otherworld, a place that the Prussians do not consider scary or evil, unlike the Christian Hell. Christian missionaries teach their Prussian converts to consider him like a Devil, and call him Piculs, or Evil Deity.

Prussians do not believe that the dead return to their homes in autumn, but they believe in evil ghosts that haunt evil places, searching for vengeance for crimes committed against them in life. Patollos provides magic that can help defeat these creatures and put them to rest.

Cult Ecology: Very few people worship Patollos directly. In traditional Baltic religion, however, he is not considered an evil deity.

Cult skills: Insight, Knowledge (Baltic), Knowledge (Demonology), Listen, Research.

Cult Runes: F (Ansuz), K (Kaunan).

Cult spells: Bird's Vision, Fury, Pox, Speak with the Dead, Spirit Bane, Talons of Patollos, Witch Sight.

Pagan spells

Pagan spells are the equivalent of sorcery spells described in *Basic Roleplaying*. Some spells have been modified to better fit the environment, and other spells have been added. Usage of Summoning spells is restricted to worshippers of dark gods, who are seldom player characters, and elementals are not present in this setting, so Summoning spells are usually not available to player characters.

Spell description

For all details not mentioned here, the Sorcery spell list on page 128 of *Basic Roleplaying* takes precedence. Spells not mentioned here are not available to Baltic magicians. Note that the some spells are labelled as "Vilkacis", meaning that evil magicians – usually werewolves – can learn them by worshipping the Dark Gods. If a spell is listed as being provide by Vilkacis only, then it is generally available only to evil cultists, and it is regarded as an evil spell.

Feel free to add spells coming from other *Basic Roleplaying* supplements to this list, as long as they are consistent with the Baltic deities' ethos or they are limited to evil magicians only.



ARMOUR [OF DEITY] (1-4)

↑ - Mēness, Pērkons

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell
Sorcerer's Armor.

BEAUTY [OF DEITY] (1-3)

Η - Dievs, Mara, Vilkacis

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell
Sorcerer's Beauty, except that there is a
risk of the spell becoming permanent
only if the caster learned the spell from
the Dark Gods.

BIRD'S VISION (1)

Μ - Pērkons, Saule

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, p. 128.

BRAZIER OF POWER (4)

† - Vilkacis

As per *Basic Roleplaying*. This spell is
usually not used by Balts, as they rely
on Chain of Being instead, but evil
practitioners of magic might resort to it.

BREATH OF LIFE (1)

Γ - Jūras Māte, Staburadze

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

BULWARK [OF DEITY] (1-3)

↑ - Pērkons

This spell must be cast on a shield. Each
level will add 20% to the shield's chance
of blocking missile weapons.

CHAIN OF BEING (4)

Π - Dievs

As per *Basic Roleplaying*. The Baltic
version of the spell is only effective if
cast around a bonfire at night.

CLOAK OF NIGHT (1-4)

Η - Mēness

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

CURSE OF SORCERY (4)

↓ - Vilkacis

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

FURY (1)

↑ - Lopu Māte, Patollos, Velnias,
Vilkacis

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

HEAL (2)

↳ - Māra, Lauku Māte, Potrimpos

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, but if the
optional hit location system is used the
spell also restores functionality to a
disabled limb by bringing it up to 1 Hit
Point. The effect on general Hit Points is
still limited to 1d3.

LIKEN SHAPE (4)

Η - Dievs, Vilkacis

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, p. 128. This
spell is very rare in the Baltic lands, and
is usually taught only by evil magicians.

LEAP [OF DEITY] (1-4)

Π - Mēza Māte, Potrimpos

As per *Basic Roleplaying* spell
Sorcerer's Leap.

MAKE FAST (1)

Π - Māra, Jūras māte, Potrimpos

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

LUCK (4)

↳ - Laima, Potrimpos

For the duration of this spell, the caster
can choose to switch around one die
roll per round made against skills and
attributes, making the tens into the
units and the units into the tens (i.e.
upon rolling a 91 the caster may choose
to change it to a 19).

MAKE WHOLE (3)

Π - Māra, Potrimpos, Zemes Māte

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

MIDNIGHT (1)

↓ - Mēness, Vilkacis

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, p. 128.

MOONRISE (1)

Η - Mēness, Saule

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

MUDGLE (1)

† - Vilkacis

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

PLASTICITY [OF DEITY] (1-3)

☒ – *Potrimpos, Zemes Māte, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Plasticity, except that there is a risk of the effect becoming permanent only if the caster learned the spell from the Dark Gods.

POX (1)

☒ – *Dievs, Patollos, Velnias, Vēlu Māte, Vilkacis*

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

RAZOR [OF DEITY] (1-4)

↑ – *Mēness, Pērkons, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Razor, but the damage done can exceed the maximum damage for the weapon. The extra damage is not doubled in case of an impaling blow, and can harm creatures vulnerable only to magic like Vilkacis.

RAT'S VISION (1)

☒ – *Potrimpos, Zemes Māte*

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, p. 128. This version of the spell is not very common in Lithuania, where it is replaced by Zaltys vision.

REFUTATION (1-4)

☒ – *Dievs, Vilkacis*

As per *Basic Roleplaying*.

SHARP ARROW [OF DEITY] (1)

↓ – *Meža Māte, Pērkons*

This spell must be cast on an impaling missile or projectile that causes one single die of damage. If the missile hits and causes minimum damage, it is considered to have impaled the target as if the firer had rolled a special success, so the damage must be rolled again and added to the original result. In addition to this, if the missile impales its target, whether as a result of a special success or of the spell, the additional damage is considered magical damage and can harm creatures only vulnerable to magic. For instance, if an arrow under the effect of this spell is fired successfully from a short bow and the damage rolled is 2, then the total damage is 2 (non-magical) plus another 1d6+1 of magical damage.

SHARP FLAME [OF DEITY] (1-4)

↓ – *Saule*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Sharp Flame, but the damage done can exceed the maximum damage for the weapon. The extra damage is not doubled in case of an impaling blow, and can harm creatures vulnerable only to magic like Vilkacis.

SOUL [OF DEITY] (1-3)

☒ – *Vēlu Māte, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Soul, except that there is a risk of the effect becoming permanent only if the caster learned the spell from the Dark Gods.

SPEAK WITH THE DEAD (2)

☒ – *Vēlu Māte, Velnias, Patollos*

This spell is cast on the skull of a dead person. The rest of them need not be present, but the skull must be at least 95% intact (so if killed by a blow to the head the spell should still work, but if the lower jaw is missing it will not). The caster may ask the dead person one question and the dead person must answer honestly as far as their knowledge when they were alive will allow. The dead are not infallible, and any falsehoods they believed in life they will believe in death.

SPEED [OF DEITY] (1-3)

⤒ – *Meža Māte, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Speed, except that there is a risk of the effect becoming permanent only if the caster learned the spell from the Dark Gods.

SPIRIT BANE (2)

⤓ – *Vēlu Māte*

This spell is cast on a weapon and makes it able to hit creatures that are normally only vulnerable to magic like Vilkacis. It cannot be cast on a bow or crossbow, but it will work on an arrow or bolt. This spell is incompatible with other weapon-enhancing magic.

SUPPLENESS [OF DEITY] (1-3)

ℳ – *Jūras Māte*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Suppleness, except that there is a risk of the effect becoming permanent only if the caster learned the spell from the Dark Gods.

SURENESS [OF DEITY] (1-4)

ℳ – *Mēza Māte, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Sureness.

TALONS [OF DEITY] (1-4)

ℳ – *Lopu Māte, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Talons, but the damage done can exceed the maximum damage for the weapon. The extra damage is not doubled in case of an impaling blow, and can harm creatures vulnerable only to magic like Vilkacis.

THUNDER OF PERKONS (3)

ℳ – *Perkons*

This spell causes a lightning bolt to come from the sky and strike the target. The target can attempt to Dodge the blast as if it was a missile weapon, but only if it has not yet defended that round. If the target is hit, it suffers 3d6 damage, with metal armour providing no protection at all against it and all other non-magical armour being halved in its effect. This damage can strike creatures normally vulnerable only to magic, and Velns are particularly vulnerable to it, suffering double damage from the spell.

UNBREAKABLE BONDS (3)

ℳ – *Lauku Māte, Potrimpos*

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, except that this version of the spell only works when the target is close to some sort of plant at least as big as a bush, as the bonds are actually vines that entangle him or her. The caster must also overcome the target's DEX with his or her own POW for the spell to work.

UNDO MAGIC (1-4)

ℳ – *Dievs*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Undo Sorcery.

VITALITY [OF DEITY] (1-3)

ℳ – *Lauku Māte, Potrimpos*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Vitality, except that there is a risk of the effect becoming permanent only if the caster learned the spell from the Dark Gods.

WARD

ℳ – *Dievs*

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, p. 128.

WISDOM [OF DEITY] (1-3)

ℳ – *Dievs, Vilkacis*

As per the *Basic Roleplaying* spell Sorcerer's Wisdom, except that there is a risk of the effect becoming permanent only if the caster learned the spell from the Dark Gods.

WITCH FLIGHT (1-4)

ℳ – *Vilkacis*

This sorcery spell allows a witch to fly for the duration of the spell. The level 1 version requires an object large enough to sit on (usually a log for Baltic witches, although broomsticks were also used in Western countries). Each additional level allows the witch to take another willing person in flight. Flight control is automatically absolute: treat as Fly 100% for comparative purposes. Witch Flight can be remarkably fast, while flying the object should be treated as a vehicle with a rated speed of 12. Only evil witches use this spell, which is often their preferred way to reach a meeting with the Devil.

WITCH SIGHT (3)

ℳ – *Dievs, Laima, Vēlu Māte, Vilkacis*

As per *Basic Roleplaying*, p. 128.

ZALTYS VISION (1)

ℳ – *all Lithuanian gods*

As Rat's Vision, but works on a grass snake instead. As Lithuanians let these snakes into their homes, this can be a very useful spell in their land.

Rune table

RUNE DESCRIPTION	PREFERRED SUBSTANCE	SPECIAL CHARM	EFFECT OF SPECIAL CHARM ON SPELLS
ᚦ Fehu, the Herd, represents mundane wealth and mastery over other people.	CATTLE HIDE		
ᚦ Uruz, the Auroch, represents the strength and power of animals.	BULL HORN	A charm inscribed in the horn of an auroch killed (not butchered) by the wielder	Talons grants the ability to impale to natural attacks.
ᚦ Thurisaz, the Thunder, is the rune of all beneficial weather phenomena.	OAK WOOD	Charms carved in the wood of an oak that has been struck by Lightning	The Dodge roll to avoid being struck by Thunderbolt becomes Difficult.
ᚦ Ansuz, the Aesir, represents the beings that are beyond the realm of mortals, both gods and spirits alike.			
ᚦ Raidō, the Ride, is the rune of travel and change.			
ᚦ Kaunan, the Wound, represents pain that can eventually lead to death.	BONE	Bone is from an ancestor of the wielder	Weapons enchanted with Spirit Bane do +1 damage to affected creatures
ᚦ Gebō, the Gift, represents peaceful communication and trade between humans.			
ᚦ Wunjō, the Joy, represents what is desirable in life.			
ᚦ Hagalaz, the Hail, stands for the destructive fury of the elements.			
ᚦ Naudiz, or Need, represents all forms of distress and unease that hit humanity.			
ᚦ Isaz, or Ice, is the Rune of Trolls and other creatures that dwell in cold and darkness.			
ᚦ Jera, the Harvest, represents the plentiful gifts of the Earth.	ANY WOOD	Amber chunk that encases a fossilized piece of vegetable matter	Heal restores three HP automatically.
ᚦ Íhwaz, the Yew, is associated with plant life and the magical World Tree.	YEW WOOD		
ᚦ Perthō, or Wyrd, is the rune of fate, the destiny that all mortals cannot escape.			
ᚦ Algiz, the Elk, is associated with the fertility of all beasts, both wild and domesticated.	ELK HORN		
ᚦ Sôwilō, the Sun, is the heat that allows all creatures to survive			
ᚦ Tiwaz is the rune of War and conflict.			
ᚦ Berkana, the Birch, is associated with the fertility of vegetable life.	BIRCH WOOD		
ᚦ Ehwaz, the Horse, represents the life force that is present in all riding animals. Ehwaz runes are inscribed in horse hide.	HORSE HIDE		
ᚦ Mannaz, the Man, is the rune of human life.			
ᚦ Laguz, the Lake, is connected to all bodies of water.			
ᚦ Ingwaz is the rune of the Earth.	STONE		
ᚦ Dagaz, the Day, represents the light that invariably follows the darkness of the night.			
ᚦ Ôthilaz, the Estate, is associated with all that is made immutable by law, be it human or divine.			

Crusaders of the Amber Coast

Key

-  City (trade center)
-  Pagan Fortress
-  King's Castle
-  Bishop's Castle
-  Order Castle
- Trade route



Baltic Culture



geographical facts

The land we refer to as the Amber Coast is a long stretch of fertile plains that goes from the mouth of the Vistula river up to the Gulf of Finland, including the whole south-eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. Politically, it starts where the Holy Roman Empire ends, at the edge of the Duchies of Pomerania and Pomerelia, and ends with the barrier between the Northern Finnish

land (Suomi) and the Southern one (Eesti).

The Baltic coast is a cold land, inhospitable to man for many months a year. The beneficial influence of the Gulf Stream in the Northern Sea, which prevents Norway from becoming a frozen wasteland, does not extend to the great inland sea that often freezes in winter, even if it lies at the same latitude as Britain. Still, people can live and thrive there, and have inhabited it for several thousand years.

The most remarkable feature of this land is, of course, its sea. The Baltic Sea

used to be a huge lake just 10,000 years ago, and it was the opening of the Straits of the Sund between Denmark and Sweden that turned it into a sea, and even nowadays its waters are less salty than the Atlantic Ocean. It is a very shallow body of water, yet rather rich in fish, and still able to mitigate the harsh climate of the surrounding lands. Its northernmost part always freezes in winter, whereas the southern half does not turn into ice every year. But in most cases, it will be frozen from November to March. During the remaining months of the year, the Baltic Sea is navigable, and has been the favourite trade route of many cultures for countless centuries.

The other distinctive feature of the Amber Coast are the rivers. There are three of them that are important enough to deserve mention. In the West lies the Vistula, which drains the plains of Poland and keeps the Poles apart from the savage land of the Prussians. To the Northeast of the Vistula runs the Nemunas, which, together with its tributary Neris, is the river of the Lithuanians. The northernmost river is also the longest one, the Daugava, which originates in the land of the Russians and runs a long way down to the Gulf of Riga, allowing trade and communication between various communities. The rivers are often frozen in winter, too, so they never create a permanent barrier to travel and to population settlement and migration. The short running Vistula and Nemunas end in two large lagoons, called respectively the Vistula Lagoon and the Curonian Lagoon. These two extensions of brackish water are a distinctive feature of the Prussian section of the Baltic coast, providing easy access to fish and very little obstacles to sailing. The larger, longer running Daugava ends with a sort of narrow estuary which is navigable for the longest part of the year, and has allowed the enterprising inhabitants of Riga to build a large river port that functions, in practice, as if it was a sea port. The starting section of the Daugava runs so deep in Russian territory that it can be considered as part of the Dniepr and

Volga waterway system.

The last peculiar feature of the coast are the Estonian islands, Oesel (modern Sareema), Dago and Mosu. These are three large land masses that lie to the North of the Gulf of Riga. Being very easy to reach by foot when the Baltic Sea is frozen, these isles were settled by humans since prehistoric times, like Gotland in Sweden.

The land of the Amber Coast is extremely flat, with its most relevant elevation being less than 500 meters above sea level. The soil is relatively rich, being constantly washed by rivers and having known no draught in millennia. Volcanoes and earthquakes have no presence in these lands, either.

That said, one could think that this region is dull and its terrain not fit for epic adventure, but this is not the case at all. On the contrary, the land is extremely varied, as a side effect of the alternating still and running bodies of water that dot the coast and provide both danger and sustenance to the populace. The large rivers are often joined by smaller tributaries in a complex network of runways, and both the small and the large ones often exhibit the most sinuous courses one might imagine, with bends and curls that form large stretches of sand and frequent river isles sporting lush patches of vegetation. Even if less frequent than in Finland, small lakes and ponds are everywhere, preventing travel in spring and summer and providing natural skating arenas in winter. The most shallow of these ponds often form bogs and moors, especially close to the sea coast, that can bring death to the unwary traveller. For this reason, the dark waters of these moors have become the lair of all sorts of spirits and velns (devils) in the simple minds of the denizens of the Amber Coast. The closer you come to the sea, the more surface is occupied by small lagoons and bog-like river deltas. Of course, once this land is drained a little, it becomes very fertile.

But apart from the rivers and the ubiquitous ponds, it is woodlands that occupy most of the area. In the southern

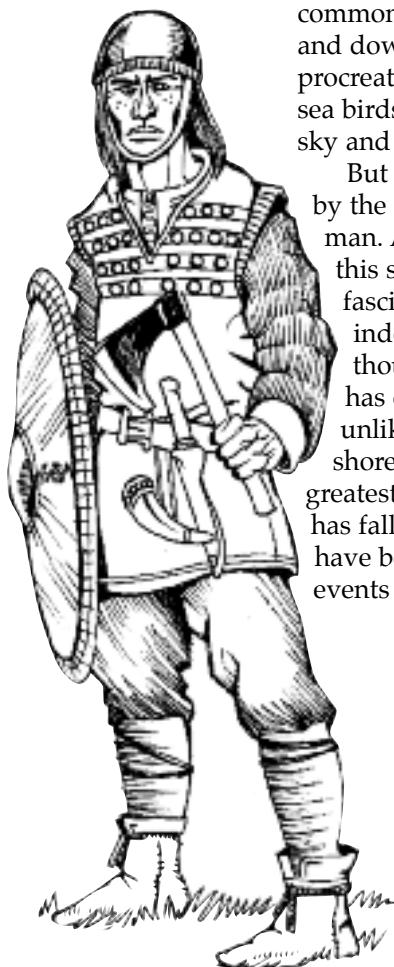




part of the Baltic Coast, elms, oaks and ashes make up most of the forests, with large extents of pinewoods here and there. To the North of the Daugava river, climate becomes more harsh, and woods become largely made up of evergreen plants. It is not yet the realm of taiga, but tall firs are dominant in Estonia.

All sorts of animals roam this savage land. Elks and aurochs (the now extinct wild breed of cattle) are common, and the forests are rich in deer. Herds of European bison run freely on the flat plains of Poland and Ukraine, wandering sometimes into those rare parts of Lithuania that are not covered by woods. Bears, wolves and lynxes prey on these beasts during summer, with the wolf packs plaguing human settlements in winter, while the other carnivores sleep. The rivers are full of all varieties of fish. Huge specimens of sturgeons and catfish are common, and salmons and eels swim up and downstream in order to mate and procreate. Upon all of this aquatic life the sea birds prey, undisturbed lords between sky and water.

But above all, the land is dominated by the most powerful of all prey beasts: man. At the dawn of the Baltic Crusade, this somewhat inhospitable but fascinating land has been home to indo-european tribes for three thousand years. In that time, Rome has originated from a small tribe not unlike the many that live on the Baltic shores, has risen to glory to become the greatest Empire in the Western world, and has fallen. And during this time, the Balts have been there, undisturbed, until the events we narrate in this book..



Civilisation

The social tissue of the Baltic nations is similar to that of all peoples which used to live in European areas not subject to a kingdom or Empire. The Balts used to gather in small groups linked by kinship, which we can call clans. All clans in a given geographic area can be considered to be part of a tribe. Clans in a tribe share common traditions and language, and they are clearly more related to their tribal cousins than to neighbouring clans from another tribe.

The tribe, led by a tribal king or Duke, is the largest functional organisation that exists in the ancient Baltic Nations. In case of extreme need, such as a foreign invasion, no more than two tribes join their forces to face the emergency, and until the crusader invasion this has been enough to keep the population relatively safe.

Nations

Although they never joined their forces in common efforts, these tribes could be roughly grouped in larger entities that had some cultural tracts in common, such as a common variant of the Baltic language or religion. We will call these entities nations for clarity's sake, although they never existed as actual political entities until long after the Crusades.

The northernmost nations is that of the Estonians, who occupy the coldest part of the Amber Coast and the three isles that border the Gulf of Riga. They are not really Balts, but belonged to the Ugro-Finnic ethnicity like their cousins, the Suomi, who live on the opposite shore of the Gulf of Finland. The harsh climate of their land forces them to rely equally on farming and hunting for survival, and the crops they grow are rather limited in variety. Their language is, even in modern times, not a Baltic dialect but a variant of Finnish, and their religion is closer to animism than any of the Baltic cults.

Close cousins of the Estonians are the Livs, who have moved from inhospitable Estonia to the fertile, warmer land of the

Gulf of Riga. The Southern territories allow a more varied kind of agriculture, including planting orchards and keeping beehives for honey. These people were the first to be subjugated by the German invaders who used the Daugava river mouth as their landing zone. At the times of the Crusades, the Livs have permanently lost their independence as a tribe and are totally under the control of the German aristocracy and mercantile bourgeois class of Riga and Kurland.

The Letts (modern Latvians) occupy the remaining part of the Daugava valley, just a few kilometres upstream of where the Livs are. This nation is of true Baltic origin and was made up of three tribes, the Latgallians, the Selonians and the Semgallians. The Latgallians occupy a large part of the right bank of the Daugava, while the Selonians live on a narrow stretch of land on the left bank, under the constant threat of their Lithuanian neighbours. It is believed that Mindaugas betrayed the Selonians by selling their land to the Brotherhood in exchange for the independence of Lithuania. Both these tribes used to own wooden forts on the Daugava, which were later seized by the Brotherhood. The Semgallians live in the basin of the Lielupe river, instead. The Latgallians are a thriving tribe by Baltic standards because they control trade on the Daugava, and have built a rich trade post at Jersika. This city, however, fell into the area of influence of the Russians, and paid formal tribute to the principality of Polotsk, a Russian city that lies upstream on the Daugava River, until the time it was conquered by the Brotherhood.

The peninsula of Curonia (Kurland) hosts a population of Livs in its northernmost tip, and in the South live the Curonians, a Lettish tribe which exhibits mixed Baltic and Finnish traits. The ancient territories of the Livs, the Letts and the Curonians make up the modern nation of Latvia.

The area of modern Lithuania hosts the Lithuanian nation, split between three large tribes. The Zemaitiai (Samogitians)

live in the Northwest, the Aukstaiciai occupy the lowlands of modern Lithuania, while the Lietuvai (Lithuanians) live in the highlands – which are not more than 300 meter high, in fact, but still highlands for Baltic standards. The Aukstaiciai and Lietuvai are ethnically separated but acted in a coordinated way in war time, much more than the other Baltic Tribes. While the Lithuanian nation obeys no less than five Dukes, it has a Grand Duke who is in charge in times of need. This situation is destined to change during the first period of the Crusades, in the middle of the 13th Century, when a clever, ambitious ruler named Mindaugas manages to change his status from that of Grand Duke to that of actual King, a title that no Balt has held up to that point..

The southernmost nation is that of the Prussians. Prussia is a patchwork of loosely connected, warring tribes. The Skalvians are a small tribe that rules the Nemunas delta and the northernmost part of the Curonian Lagoon. The Jotvingians are a group of four related tribes who live just south of the Nemunas river, which marks their border with the Lithuanians. The Sambians occupy the narrow stretch of land between the Vistula and Curonia lagoons, which is named Sambia after this tribe, and holds the richest amber deposits in Europe. Nattangians, Warmians, Pogesanians, and Pomesanians share the land on the shore of the Vistula lagoon, while the Bartians and Nadruvians live in the centre of Old Prussia. All of these tribes often war against one another, and they never manage to act as one in response to an external threat. Raids and pillaging is their most common way of interaction. This will be their downfall when the Crusaders come; old Prussians, as a people, are extinct now.





Social organisation

Most free members of a clan are farmers and herders who sometimes fish to expand their diet. As in most barbarian societies, most free males – and possibly some of the females – are also warriors when war breaks out and the tribal army (karya or karias) is mustered. Many clans have thralls, mostly war prisoners, employed to do the hardest work in the fields.

Most Balts live in small rural communities of one hundred or so souls, including several extended families. Each family owns its own homestead and accessory buildings, as well as livestock, but the crops and pastures are shared among the villagers. Starting with the beginning of the second millennium, the largest communities start to build a hillfort to provide shelter in case of foreign invasions or raids, and to host communal meetings. These communities can also afford to support full-time warriors for defence, who are often mounted, as horse breeding becomes more and more important for the Balts. As time passes, the fort begins to function as the permanent residence of the local noble, who is chosen

among the warriors.

The Balts are rather skilled in leather and metal working, and their ornaments are often very elaborate, despite the fact that they always wear very practical clothes that can easily double as blankets. The Lettgallian tribes have also learned how to use closed stoves and ovens instead of open hearths, and can engage in low fuel consumption production of pottery, which makes them even richer. Each tribe assembles in a meeting (wayde) to trade and administer justice. The tribal meeting also elects the Duke among the aristocracy.

The rulers among the Balts, as it is the case in most tribal cultures, are the ones who can afford to maintain a full time war equipment, including horses and light armours. Petty nobles rule the countryside communities, while each tribe has at least one Duke to lead it. Whenever possible, the noble sponsors a small army of full time warriors to complement the tribal army of free men, in addition to the wooden hillfort where the population can find refuge in the not-so-unlikely event of an invasion.

Buildings and fortifications

The Balts build their houses and fortresses exclusively in wood – when Bishop Meinhard builds his first stone castle at Uxküll, the Lettgallians simply cannot understand how the stones were kept together by mortar! Their wooden buildings use a peculiar technique for the joining of logs at wall corners that is both effective, easy to put in place and very decorative. You can appreciate the effect in the illustrations of Baltic buildings and forts in the book. Not a single stone is used for the buildings, not even for the basement or fortifications.

The houses of the commoners are small, one-story buildings, often made of one room and with very simple furnishing. Accessory structures like stoves, blacksmith foundries and ovens for pottery cooking are built close to them, always in wood,

using the same construction technique used for buildings. Small huts, partially open-topped, for roasting or smoking meat or fish are also common. Some of the humbler huts are built partially below ground level, with just a small part of the walls and the roof protruding from the earth, in order to save wood or heat.

The mansions of the nobles, often found only within the wooden castles, are definitely larger and built with multiple rooms. They often have two stories, with the nobleman occupying the upper floor, reachable through a stair or ladder placed outside the building. In any case, the rooms have a very low ceiling, as the average height of the population is extremely small for our modern standards, and the practical minds of the Balts do not contemplate wasting logs to create useless room above their heads.

The walls of the wooden fortresses are built on hilltops using the same technique. The only difference is in the stone ramparts that surround the walls and contribute to their stability and protection from incendiary arrows. The ramparts are also covered with secondary fortifications and plenty of wooden spikes and fences to slow down the advance of attackers while the defenders on the walls shoot arrows and darts from uphill. Contrary to some descriptions found in Western European sources, these forts are rather low-walled and particularly vulnerable to fire, but they serve their purpose when the conflict is among Balts. Unfortunately for the Balts, these fortifications are largely inferior to the stone castles of the Crusaders, and the accessory fortifications have little effect on the heavily armoured Germans who can fire crossbows at the defenders from outside the range of their short bows.

Travel

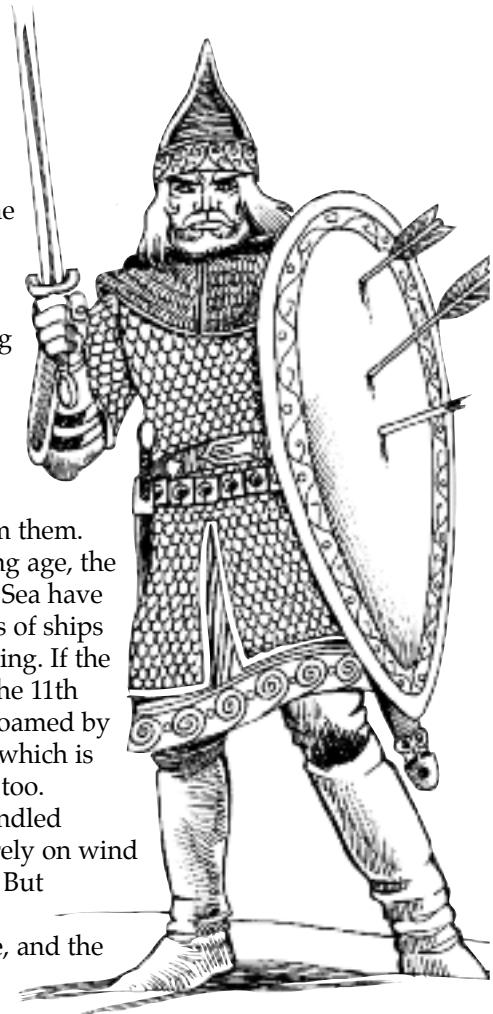
Travelling is not a trivial affair along the Amber Coast. Paved roads do not exist at all, and bridges are rather rare. Still, rivers are all but impassable; however, when you want to cross one, you can just wait until it

freezes! The real problem with land travel is the unpredictable amount of marshes and forests one will meet along his way, which are assured to slow him down and possibly endanger his personal safety and that of his mount and cart. Finding a spot of muddy soil is even too common when travelling during the good season. The terrain is reliable only in winter, when it is frozen, but then snow and storms more than make up for the mud and the swamps that are no longer there.

One cannot travel without an escort at all. Even supposing one could use fire and similar means to keep bears and hungry wolves away, this would not be enough for bandits. And all Balts behave like bandits when dealing with anyone outside their tribe.

Sea Travel

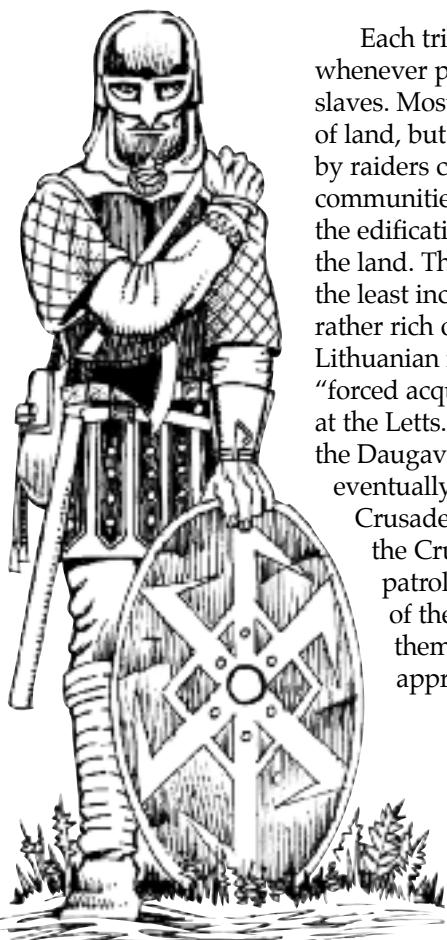
When someone really needs to go somewhere, the best solution is to travel by sea. Sailing is not possible during all months due to the waterways freezing, and the Baltic Sea or the rivers cannot take you everywhere, but going by water is almost always faster, and much more reliable than walking or riding despite the frequent storms. After all, the secret of navigation in ancient times is to keep close to the coast, and in the Baltic Sea you have few opportunities to go very far from them. By the beginning of the crusading age, the peoples who sail over the Baltic Sea have developed several efficient types of ships for both trading and troop carrying. If the Viking *Knorr* ruled the seas till the 11th Century, the Baltic seas is now roamed by the oar-powered Danish *snekke*, which is built by Slav and Baltic nations, too. Commercial traffic is instead handled mostly by wider vessels which rely on wind power only, called the *byrthing*. But navigable waters in the Baltic coast do not stop at the seashore, and the coastal lagoons and marshes



are the domain of the flat-bottomed pram vessel. And let us not forget river traffic; several kinds of boats are used to run along the Vistula or the Daugava. The ship designs are mostly of Russian origin, but the Balts soon learned how to make their boats and conduct trade along the river with their version of the Polovtosian *bolskip* and *skute*.

The only problem that travelling by land or by water has in common was that of bandits. Even though the Scandinavian have stopped going viking beyond the Sound, the Balts have always practised piracy in the Baltic sea. Their horizon is more limited, but their methods are equally fierce. The inhabitants of Kurland are particularly active when it came to sea raiding, but in turn they are raided regularly by the Swedish.

Raiding and warfare



Each tribe raids its neighbours whenever possible to gain goods, cattle and slaves. Most raids do not end in the capture of land, but nevertheless, the damage done by raiders can be great in the case of small communities, and this is the main reason for the edification of the many hillforts that dot the land. The Letts of the Daugava valley are the least inclined of all to raiding, being rather rich of their own, while their Lithuanian neighbours indulge in frequent "forced acquisitions", which are often aimed at the Letts. As a consequence, the banks of the Daugava host a lot of forts, which will be eventually replaced by the more efficient Crusader castles, built in stone. Having the Crusaders doing the guarding and patrolling and attracting the attention of the Lithuanian men-at-arms on themselves, is in fact rather appreciated by the denizens of the Daugava area, who, unlike their neighbours, were rather fast in accepting Christianity, and seldom rebel to the Christian yoke.

Warriors are equipped with a shield and two or three

spears, used mainly for throwing. In addition to this, they usually have a short but wide-bladed axe hanging from their belt, which is their main weapon in close combat. Nobles usually carry a sword. Swords are considered a mark of social status, as they are not crafted in Amberland but bought from the Vikings. Some very conservative tribes do not want to buy these alien weapons and go to war with axes and spears only.

Most warriors wear leather, fur or cloth protection in combat, and metal armour is usually limited to a conic helm – possibly not even that, as many warriors use fur caps. In some cases, metal discs are riveted to the warrior's tunic to enhance protection. Still, chain armour is not unknown among the Balts, and is sometimes worn as a shirt or vest, or used underneath the helm. These forms of light metal armour are best represented in game terms by ring mail, although the armour construction method was definitely different.

Although the fighting elite are mounted, the standard combat formation for the Balts is a triple infantry line with the most heavily armoured men in the front with hand weapons and shields and the lightly equipped militiamen in the back with bows and arrows. This means that in many cases the riders have to dismount before battle, and fight in front of the militia. It is absolutely undisputed that, at least in the 13th Century, the Balts are largely inferior to the Crusaders in mounted battle, and that whenever they have to fight the Brothers they avoid confrontation in the open, as they know they will be crushed by the Sword Bretheren's heavy cavalry. In fact, Lake Chud was the only mounted battle the Brotherhood lost during these times.

Most tribes do not have an organized army, although all clans had a small body of specialized warriors under the direct control of the local noble. The Lithuanians are the only exception, as they can muster a force of some two thousand men, most of which are mounted, under the command of the Archduke. This is the embryonic form of what will become the most powerful cavalry force of all Europe in the early Modern age.

Religion and worship

The Baltic religion originated from a shamanistic origin. Balts believe in spirits of the land, and often times in animal spirits. Their first priests were clearly wise men who could talk to the spirits of the land or of the deceased. Even later, when deities started to be differentiated from spirits, the priesthood (kriw or griw) was not made of specialized people, but rather of elders who led worship. Wise men carry a wooden staff with a crooked, spiral shaped end to show their holiness. This staff was called the Kriwulé. The Christian historians told that the Prussian Balts had an archpriest somewhere, called the Kriwe, but this is possibly not true. Kriwe or Griwe is, in fact, the name given by ancient Balts to all priests.

As these priests are also the elder of the rural communities, they are the clan rulers in the centuries up to year 1000, when the civil power has not yet fallen into the hands of the warring aristocracy. Later, the Duke, or military leader, becomes the ruler of the clan or tribe, but he does not take religious authority on himself. It is not clear if the priests are considered, at least formally, superior to the war leaders, but this is most likely not the case. The spiritual and mundane leader will probably cooperate with one another.

Baltic religion has many elements in common with most European mythology, and even if each nation has a different version of the common Pantheon, some figures are common to each variant. In general, the Balts acknowledged the existence of one Father or King of the gods, Dievas (or Dievs or Daywas), creator of the world, who rules the heavens and does not like to be involved in the affairs of mortals, delegating this function to Pērkons. The primeval Baltic mythology includes a triad of major deities which was originally worshipped by all tribes. These are Pērkunas the thunder lord, Potrimpas the fertility lord and Patolas the lord of the

underworld. At the time of the Crusades, this triad is only prominent in Prussian mythology, while among the tribes of the North other deities have risen in importance.

The Prussian pantheon does not include any female figure of any relevance. On the contrary, the Latvian pantheon is rich in goddesses, with Laima and Māra being among the most popular deities. Pērkons (or Pērkunas) is the most widespread of the deities, appearing in all the versions of the Baltic pantheon, and even in Russian pagan mythology, where he is known as Perun.

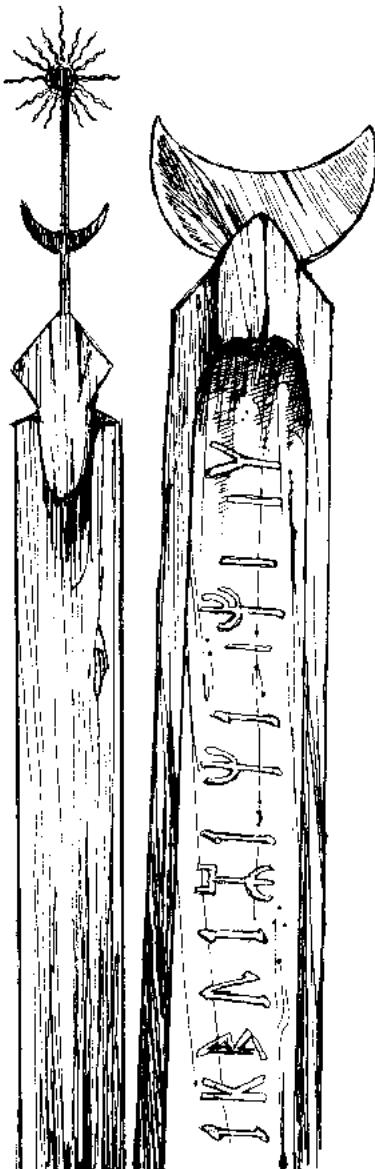
Places of Worship

Worshipping is not a very organized business among the Balts. Large fires are central in ceremonies, which are often held at night. A typical Baltic temple consists of an open area with a wooden pillar or a large stone at the centre, surrounded by one or more fireplaces. The largest sites have eight fireplaces. Stones to be used as altars have a large hole in the centre, a sort of small basin where the blood of a sacrificial victim is collected.

Not many communities have temples. Most worship sites are just made of a simple sacrificial stone. But the most common worship site is a simple sacred tree, evidently a relic of the times when temples did not exist. An oak, sacred to Pērkons, is the typical centre of worship for Baltic clans.

Burial rites

Baltic tombs are usually not very elaborate, but funeral rites are a very important part of Baltic culture. In many cases, the Balts cremate their dead, but this is not common for all tribes, and it has been discovered that the practice was, in times, adopted and abandoned several times by most tribes. In general, the population believes that the dead person's soul (veli or veles) will eventually return to its body, and

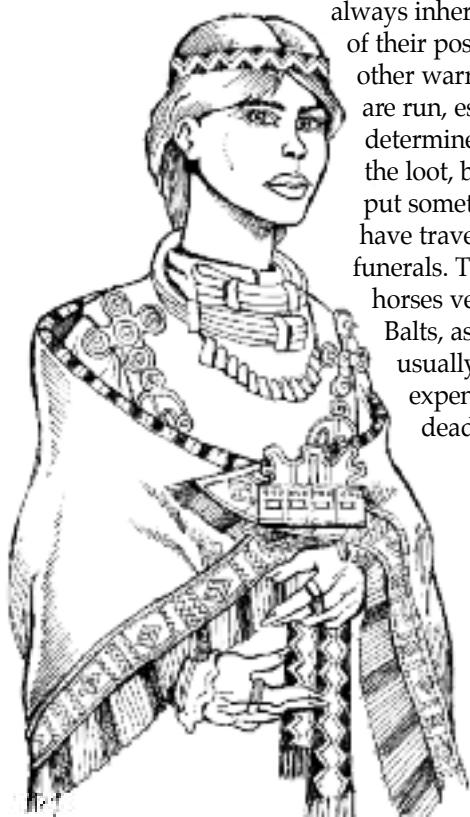


Latvians actually consider Autumn (*velu laiks*) as the time when the souls of the passed away come to visit family.

This belief leads the Balts to bury plenty of equipment with their dead. Women take elaborate garments with them to their graves, and men are entombed with weapons, and, in some cases even, armour. In general, each person has at least one small item of amber with him or her to take to the trip to the underworld. A custom that is peculiar to some tribes, particularly the members of the Lithuanian nation, is that of sacrificing one steed during the funeral and burying it with the deceased if he is a noble or a warrior. This reveals the high importance they attribute to horse breeding.

Funeral ceremonies are not held at all times; seasonal festivals are chosen for these rites. The Balts know how to exploit the low temperature to preserve a body for a very long time, so they can easily afford to wait for the Spring equinox to cremate or bury their dead leaders.

The Baltic tribes are in a proto-feudal state of civilisation at the time of the Crusades, and the wealth of noblemen and warriors is not always inherited by their offspring. Most of their possessions is distributed to other warriors at funeral. Competitions are run, especially horse races, to determine who will win the best part of the loot, but the clan elder will often put something aside for strangers who have travelled a long time to attend the funerals. This custom makes breeding horses very important among the Balts, as having the fastest horse usually means getting also the most expensive equipment from the dead warriors.



Locations

This list includes the locations that are under the control of native Baltic ruler during the times of the Crusades. They are mostly Lithuanian cities or fortresses.

Truso

Truso is an important Prussian trade centre on the border between Pomesania and Pogesania. It thrived on the commerce of wood and amber, which could be shipped both by sea and by river. In 1243, the Teutonic Order invaded Prussia, they captured Truso and built a castle named Elbing there. Elbing eventually became the capitol of the Diocese of Pogesania.

Kaunas

The great fortress of Kaunas lies at the border between Lietuva and Aukstaitija, at the confluence of the Neris with the Nemunas.

Kernave

Kernave is one of the best known settlements of old Lithuanians. It comprises one very large hill fort and a large settlement at its foot, with a large river port on the Neris river. It is the capitol of Lithuania during the Reign of Grand Duke Traidenis at the end of the 13th Century.

Tverai

Tverai is the main fortress of Zemaitija, seat of the most noble Samogitian Duke, Vykintas. The siege of Tverai by Mindaugas and his defeat of Vykintas is regarded by many as the moment when Lithuania was actually united under one crown, as the title of Grand Duke held by Mindaugas started to mean actual power over the other tribes that lived in the Nemunas valley.

Voruta

Voruta is the location at which Mindaugas' hill fort is located. Despite long studies, archaeologists have never succeeded in finding the actual location of the fortress of Voruta, which remains shrouded in legend like the tomb of Genghis Khan. It is said that Voruta was never taken by foreign troops. For game purposes, we have identified Voruta with Vilnius, like many do. But this is not an acknowledged fact.

Baltic Calendar

This is the traditional Latvian calendar, which is believed to date back to pre-Christian times. Ancient Letts used weeks (savaites) of nine days (dienas), with the ninth day being the holy day reserved to rest and religious festivals. Five weeks make up a month (laiks, which is also the word for time), and each laiks ends with a special festival day (svētki). Two laiki end with a svētki that lasts more than one dienas, and precisely Lieldienas at the spring equinox and Ziemassvētki at the winter solstice. These extended festivals are 2-3 days long and are outside the normal count of 45 dienas per laiks, so in a year (gads) you have 360 days within laiki and 5 or 6 days outside laiki, for a total of 365 or 366 days.

The fact that extra days are added to synchronize the 45-day

NAME	MEANING	DATES	ENDING FESTIVAL
Sērsnu Laiks	Frost Time	7 Feb – 23 Mar	Lieldienas (24-25 mar)
Pavasara Laiks	Spring Time	26 Mar – 9 May	
Sējas Laiks	Planting Time	10 May – 23 Jun	
Siena Laiks	Hay Time	24 Jun – 7 Aug	
Rudens Laiks	Autumn Time	8 Aug – 21 Sep	
Veļu Laiks	Spirit Time	22 Sep – 5 Nov	
Ledus Laiks	Ice Time	6 Nov – 20 Dec	Ziemassvētki (21-23 Dec)
Ziemas Laiks	Winter Time	24 Dec – 6 Feb	

cycle with the actual solar year reveals that the ancient Balts actually knew a lot about the stars and planets, and could use astronomic observation to match a given date to the corresponding date on the previous year, above and beyond the seasonal cycle. Leftovers of pseudo-religious artefacts that were probably used to observe the stars confirm this.

Timeline

- 1171 – Pope Alexander III authorizes a Crusade against the pagans in the Baltic
- 1185 – Meinhard is Bishop in Uxkull
- 1190 – Foundation of the Teutonic Order
- 1198 – Bishop Berthold killed by the pagans
- 1200 – Bishop Albert von Buxhovden founds Riga
- 1204 – Bishop Albert von Buxhovden founds the Livonian Order
- 1208 – The Sword Brothers build the castle of Wenden
- 1215 – Christian is consecrated Bishop of Prussia
- 1218 – The Livonian Order conquers Southern Estonia
- 1219 – Waldemar II of Denmark founds Reval and conquers Northern Estonia
- 1222 – Partition of Estonia between the Danes and the Livonian Order
- 1226 – Bull of Rimini: the Teutonic Knights are granted the lands they conquer in Prussia
- 1227 – Death of Genghis Khan. Ogodei is his successor
- 1229 – Death of Bishop Albert von Buxhovden
- 1230 – Gregorius IX calls for a Crusade against the Prussians
- 1236 – Mindaugas is Grand Duke of Lietuva
- 1236 – Battle of the Saule: the Samogitians of Duke Vykintas annihilate the Livonian Order
- 1237 – Remnants of the Livonian Order are absorbed into the Teutonic Order
- 1237 – Battle of Kalka River: first Mongol campaign against Russia
- 1239 – Second Mongol campaign against Russia.
- 1240 – The Swedes land in Russia but are defeated by Aleksander Nevskij
- 1241 – Death of Ogodei Khan and end of Mongol direct attacks against Europe
- 1241 – The Teutonic Knights capture Pskov, which is later retaken by Nevskij
- 1242 – Battle on the Ice: Aleksandr Nevskij defeats the invading Teutonic Order
- 1251 – Mindaugas converts to Christianity
- 1253 – Mindaugas captures Tverai and is crowned King of Lietuva
- 1253 – Albert Suerbeer is Archbishop of Riga
- 1260 – Revolt in Prussia led by Henry Monte
- 1262 – Death of Aleksandr Nevskij
- 1263 – Treniota assassinates Mindaugas
- 1270 – Taidenis is Grand Duke of Lietuva
- 1272 – Rebellion in Prussia quelled
- 1273 – Henry Monte killed by the Teutonic Order
- 1273 – Death of Albert Suerbeer

the Baltic Crusades



THE EXISTENCE of barbarian nations on the Baltic shore has been known since before Christ. Roman historians like Tacitus describe them, and even provide a realistic name for two of the Prussian tribes, thus showing that he had access to reliable sources of information. The Romans were particularly interested in these tribes because of the large amounts of amber they had available, and the Roman emperors often sent envoys to the Baltic to keep their monuments in supply of this weird stone, which the Romans greatly appreciated as a decoration for their gladiatorial games.

In the Middle Ages, contact between

the Balts and their neighbours went on, as did trade of amber, wax and furs. In some peculiar cases, the trade relationship even increased, like at the times when the Vikings sailed through the Nemunas and the Daugava to reach the land of the Rus. Along with trade relationship, military expeditions and raids in search of loot also took place. The Swedish kings, like their Viking ancestors, often raided the southeastern Baltic shore, and fertile Kurland was among their favoured targets for raids. Still, no actual attempt at conquering the lands took place until the 12th or 13th Century, as the German, Dane and Norse princes preferred raiding for loot to campaigning for lands.

This changed when religion was added to the equation. It is undeniable that political and economic reasons had a great influence on the decision to colonize the Baltic shores, as the Princes had started to be in need of new land for their peoples. But the official excuse for the campaigns that provide the background for this supplement was the decision to convert the last pagan stronghold in an otherwise uniformly Christianised Europe.

The first missionaries

The first attempts at converting the heathen of the Amber Coast was made by means of pious missionaries sent by zealous Christian princes. The Dukes of Mazovia, Denmark and Poland had noticed that their summer expeditions succeeded in defeating the heathen and obtaining their formal submission, but they could not keep the conquered region under their rule. Those lands of woods, river and hillforts were impossible to rule without converting their people to Christendom and civilization. So the princes started to employ the tools that had proved themselves the best for cultural assimilation of the barbarian populations so far: missionaries. Unfortunately, the princes had not yet understood the peculiar nature of the Balts and these early missionaries were rewarded with the most prized form of apotheosis for a Champion of the Faith: martyrdom. First of these was St. Adalbert of Prague, around the year 1000, who went to Prussia from Poland and never returned – at least not in one piece.

In the two centuries between the martyrdom of St. Adalbert and the creation of the first bishopric on the Amber Coast, several missionaries managed to reach the heathen lands and build churches there, but for one reason or another their efforts had little effect. Within a few years of their arrivals, the Christian priests became the target of



The Expulsion of St Adalbert

Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

violence. Note that this is not surprising at all, as almost anyone from alien lands tended to be the target of violence in the ancient Baltic society, once commercial exchanges with him were no longer profitable. Maybe it was only a matter of the missionaries not being prepared for this. Regardless, it soon became apparent that the holy men needed the assistance of the missionary's best companion in those dark times: cold steel wielded by a crusader's hand. In the cross-like shape of a sword, of course.

The creation of Livonia

Surprisingly, the territory where the Crusades were most successful was the basin of the Daugava. Well, this area has characteristics that make this fact less surprising than it could initially sound. The great river was already used by Christian merchants as a water highway to reach Russia, so travel to the area was less risky than an expedition to other parts of the Amber Coast, and the missionaries could rely on the infrastructures built by the merchants. Furthermore, the denizens of the area were the favourite target of raids coming from less rich parts of the Baltic



lands, like Lithuania, and were more willing to trade their ancient customs in exchange for the crusaders' superior capabilities in repelling raids.

Even though Livland made up only a minor part of the Daugava basin, the crusaders always called this part of the Baltic Coast "Livonia". It corresponds, more or less, to modern Latvia, which also includes Kurland.

The first missionaries reached the Daugava around 1180, led by an old Augustinian monk from Segeburg named Meinhard. He sailed along the Daugava and settled down several miles inland, in a place named Üxküll (Ikšķile) where he converted some of the Latgalian inhabitants of the area. After experiencing his share of the frequent Lithuanian raids,

Meinhard understood that the best way to turn his new flock to the True Faith would be providing them with better protection against robbery.

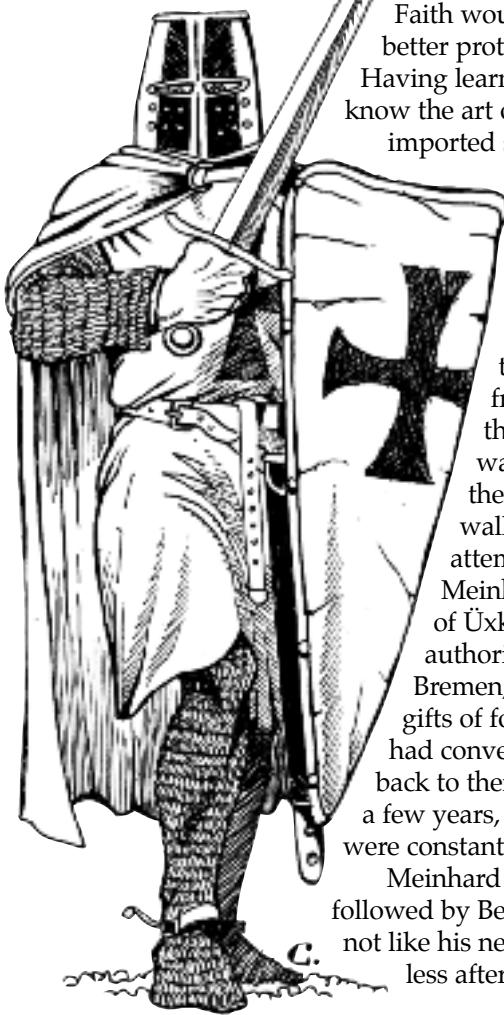
Having learned that the Balts did not know the art of stone masonry, he imported some crafters from Gotland and, in the summer of 1185, the first stone castle of the Amber Coast was built in Üxküll. The natives appreciated the gift, as it was instrumental in thwarting a subsequent raid from Zemgallija. Not knowing the effect of mortar on stone walls, the marauders thought they could break down the walls with mere ropes, but their attempts were totally ridiculed. Meinhard was consecrated Bishop of Üxküll in 1186, under the authority of Archbishop Hartwig of Bremen, but despite these useful gifts of fortifications, the natives who had converted to Christianity went back to their ancient pagan practices in a few years, and the missionaries' lives were constantly in danger.

Meinhard died in 1196 and was followed by Berthold of Loccum, who did not like his new diocese, and liked it even less after an attempt at his life by the

Letts. To settle the matter once and for all, he called in an army of crusaders which sailed from Saxony to the Daugava in 1198. This was the first time that the Christians tried to convert the pagans of Livonia with force, and it was also the first time the Letts of the Daugava met a heavy cavalry charge. The outcome was a dashing victory for the Christians, who overran the pagans and routed them in shame. Unfortunately, the Bishop himself fell in the battle, and this led to a very bloody revenge that the knights took on the native peasants. After suffering this hard punishment, the Letts accepted baptism, but as soon as the crusading army had sailed back to Germany they returned to paganism.

The Foundation of Riga

The third Bishop of Livonia understood his predecessors' faults very well, and changed his strategy considerably. His name was Albert von Buxhövden, and his actions shaped what is now Latvia almost as much as Mindaugas' policy did for Lithuania. A statue of him is still visible in the Cathedral he built for the Livs in Riga. Albert was born in Bremen in 1165, and had held minor clerical offices until Archbishop Hartwig of Bremen, who was his uncle, asked him to take care of Livonia. His first move was that of transferring the episcopal seat from Üxküll, which was hard to reach for crusaders coming from Saxony, to a more suitable location. So he chose a small fishing village close to the mouth of the Daugava and turned it into a walled city, which he populated with German craftsmen and traders, who soon asked to adopt the city law of Lübeck. There he decreed that his bishopric would have his seat, and in a few years, he started building a Cathedral. The metropolis of Riga had been born. Soon a great Cistercian monastery – Dünamunde – was built close to the city.



The Permanent Crusade

The original Liv inhabitants of the area never revolted afterwards – the wealth provided by the city, which was in constant contact with the rich port of Lübeck in the motherland, more than offset the displeasure of being forcibly converted to Christianity. However, taming the Latgallians and the Selonians, who inhabited the banks of the Daugava, a few kilometres inland was another story. Albert understood that a permanent state of crusade was required, and obtained from the Pope the special permission to declare a crusade on his own, which he did on each and every summer from 1198 to 1224, bringing new swords from Saxony once a year. But even this was not enough, for the crusaders were no longer there in winter, and the natives had got into the habit of performing the ceremony of "shrugging off Baptism" as soon as the last crusader had sailed off to Germany.

So Albert gathered some of the Crusaders and asked them to take permanent vows, like the Knights of the Temple did in Jerusalem. Some accepted, and in the year 1202 AD the Bishop consecrated them as knight-monks under the rule of the Templars and the guidance of *Herrmeister* Menno von Wingerden. The name of the Order was officially *Militia Christi in terra de Livonia*, but everyone referred to them as Brotherhood of the Sword, or Sword Brethren.

Secret weapons of the Sword Brethren

The Brothers may have not been as pious as the Templars, and they were more rebellious than anyone, acknowledging no authority – sometimes not even God's own – other than Bishop Albert's. But they knew how to fight, and in the following thirty years, they captured an unmatched amount of land: Kurland, the Daugava valley, and most of Estonia. The strategy they developed was later used by the Teutonic Order after

them, and it proved incredibly efficient, as no more than 150 knights managed to overcome entire tribes who could count on literally thousands of warriors.

Their first technique was that of relying on the collaboration of one tribe to subjugate the following one. They knew that all Balts loved to raid their neighbours, so it was just a matter of time before the weakest tribes would come to them asking for help against the most warlike ones. It is not a coincidence that the inhabitants of the Daugava area were their most loyal allies: they were usually rich enough without resorting to raiding, and delegating war matters to the Brothers was not against their interest. In fact, indulging in raiding the Estonians and Lithuanians instead of suffering their raids had its pleasant side, after all! So the Brethren could usually count on a sizeable force of Latgallian and Selonian auxiliaries.

The second winning factor in their strategy were castles. The Balts had already learned that each and every village or clan needed a fort to live safely, and the hilltops of the Lithuanian highlands and the Daugava basin were all occupied by wooden structures, sometimes small, more often rather elaborate. But these wooden buildings were puny and weak when compared with the stone castles that the stone masons of the Crusader armies could build. Moreover, the Balts used forts just to defend the civilians, while the Brothers used them as bases to launch counterattacks against enemy war parties, often turning raids into a slaughter of enemy tribesmen.

So it is no surprise if the Brothers managed to conquer the whole lower course of the Daugava in a handful of years. They conquered the tribal castles that lay on the banks of the river, razed them and rebuilt them in stone. The bishop's castles at Üxküll and Holm (modern Salaspils) were soon complemented by more mighty fortresses in Lennewarden (Lielvarde), Ascheraden (Aizkraukle), Kokenhuse (Koknese) and Krustpils. Once this castle line was complete, the Prince of Polotsk had to give up rulership over the trade post of Jersika, and the brothers also built an impressive castle north of the Daugava, at Wenden (Cesis).



The conquest of Estonia

Estonia was the only part of the Amber Coast that was conquered by a national army and not by missionaries. Even though the drive to expand eastwards was hidden under the pretext of spreading the faith, it was always the kings of Denmark who took initiative in all the military actions against the Finnish lands, both Suomi and Eesti. The last two decades of the 12th Century saw several Danish naval expeditions against the Finnish, both north and south of the Gulf of Finland. Like it had happened with the first expeditions against Prussia, the gain from those raids was always momentary. The loose political organization of the Finns did not allow the King of Denmark, who otherwise ruled the whole Southern shore of the Baltic Sea by means of Danish naval superiority, to impose vassalage on anyone. These peoples had no Prince who could submit to an Overlord's authority. In 1206, King Waldemar II landed on the isle of Oesel, subjugated its Estonian population and managed to build a fort there, but was unable to keep it for lack of men willing to garrison it.

Urged by the Pope, or perhaps envious of the success of Bishop Albert and his Sword Brethren, Waldemar finally started serious attempts at capturing land on the Amber Coast in the second decade of the 13th Century. Bringing with him enough soldiers and colonists to form a permanent outpost, as well as four Bishops to rule over the newly conquered land, in 1216 he set sail for the Gulf of Finland and landed on the rocky coast of Northern Estonia. There he founded a fortified town that he called Reval (Tallinn for modern Eesti). All Estonian attempts at driving the invaders away were crushed by the Danish military might, and in a short time, the king moved eastwards and founded another fortified outpost, Narva, which marked the border with the Russian land of Novgorod, which at that time was also trying to expand into

Finnish territory.

The technique used by Waldemar's expeditionary force was rather simple. They built castles and filled them with Danish merchants and crafters, as well as soldiers. In times of peace, the castles served as trade posts, which benefited both the surrounding population and the Kingdom of Denmark, which received tribute. In times of war, the castles were able to withstand prolonged sieges. This was enough to maintain control over the conquered lands.

However, the Sword Brethren were better prepared to gain control over the land, and they took advantage of the Danish invasion to push northwards from their strongholds on the Daugava and conquer the central part of Estonia, whereas the King's authority extended only to the coastal lands, including Oesel. The Brothers quickly conquered the fortified city of Dorpat (modern Tartu), and soon they reached Reval and threatened to steal it from the Danes – as the Brothers were in fact not as disinterested in mundane power and riches as their religious vows dictated. At this point, King Waldemar reacted with the most direct and effective reaction possible: embargo. The port of Lübeck, the key node for trade from the Baltic to the rest of the world, was closed to all ships coming from Riga, driving all trade business in Livonia on the verge of bankruptcy. The Brothers were forced to trade all their conquest in Estonia to Denmark, and the King almost succeeded in acquiring Riga as well.

In the following decades, the political status of Estonia was defined, as the result of treaties and Russian invasion attempts. The northern part remained under direct control of the King of Denmark, represented by a Bishop in Tallinn, and the central part was split between two independent Bishops, whose seats were in Wiek and Dorpat. The Bishop of Wiek controlled Oesel, too, where the fortification of Arenburg was erected. A stretch of Estonian land, too distant from the forts to be controlled easily, remained under the direct authority of the Livonian

Order. But central Estonia was under Livonian control, as the Bishopric of Dorpat was given to Hermann von Buxhövden, Albert's brother.

The final act in the formation of what is now modern Estonia took place in 1346, when another King of Denmark traded the Estonian colony to the Teutonic order as a pawn. The King was never able to buy Estonia back from the Teutonic Knights, or perhaps he never bothered. Even though Estonian language and culture are fundamentally different from the other Baltic lands, it became part of Livonia until the Teutonic Ordenstaat was dismantled.

The conquest of Prussia

Even if it was nominally very easy to reach on foot, Prussia was in fact less hospitable to Christians than Estonia or Livonia. Its fierce inhabitants did not welcome anyone who was not carrying riches for trade, and had blessed with martyrdom all missionaries sent to them before the 13th Century. But even the strongest of warriors has to find someone who can best him, sooner or later, and for the valiant Prussians this was destined to be Hermann von Salza and his Teutonic Knights.

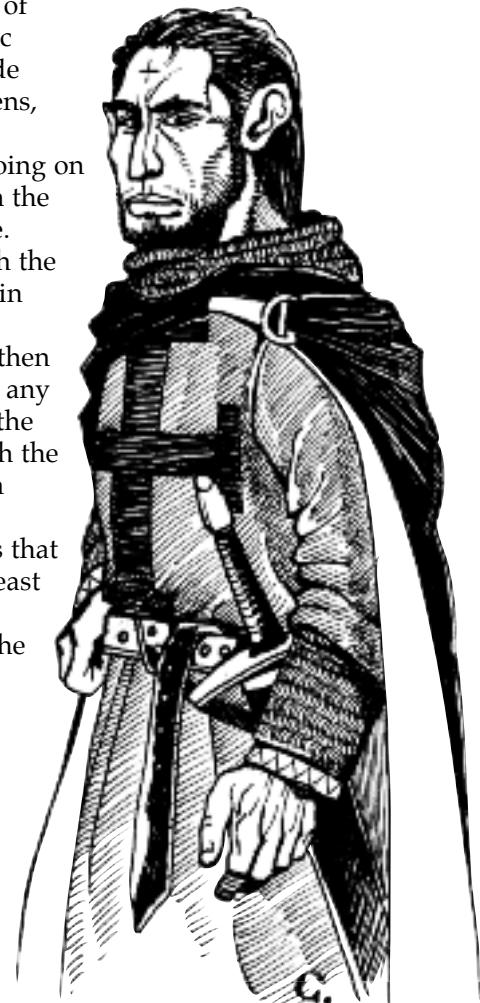
The Teutonic Order was founded at the end of the 12th Century as a gathering point for young German Crusaders who wished to take the Vows of the warrior monks. The Knights Templars and Knights Hospitallers, had mostly French and English knights among their ranks, and young German nobles did not feel at home in the two most famous orders. The Teutonic Order did not achieve much in its first years of existence, but when Hermann von Salza became Grand Master, things changed abruptly. This pious, but also politically intelligent, German man-at-arms won the trust of the new Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II von Hohenstaufen, the *Stupor Mundi*, and

became von Hohenstaufen's most trusted counsellor. Some believe that a great deal of the huge political achievements of the young Emperor were due to Hermann, and this can certainly be the truth, as the fortunes of the *Stupor Mundi* dwindled after Hermann's disappearance from the political scene.

The first great military adventure of the Order, and its first Crusade against the heathen, took place in 1211, when King Andrew of Hungary called for the Order's help to save Transylvania from the Cuman invasion. The Knights resisted the nomad raiders with the strength that only the warrior monks knew how to exhibit, and founded five castles. But in 1225, when they tried to keep the castles as their own, the King exiled them from his lands. Wise Grand Master Hermann von Salza learned a lot from this lesson, and when the Grand Duke of Mazovia called the Teutonic Knights for his new Crusade against the Prussian heathens, Hermann asked for more warrants, taking time by going on a Crusade in Palestine with the Emperor in the meanwhile.

The warrants came with the Papal Bull of Gregorius IX in 1229, which stated that the Order's Crusade in the heathen territory was not subject to any civil authority, but only to the Bishop of Prussia, and with the Emperor's Bull of Rimini in 1226, which granted to the Order all the heathen lands that they were able to conquer east of the Vistula river. The Grand Master's loyalty to the Emperor had paid well, as the *Stupor Mundi* had rewarded it with the permission to conquer a kingdom for his Order.

Von Salza took advantage of this situation and sent a major expeditionary force to Prussia, led by the brave





Hermann Balk, who took the title of *Landmeister* of Prussia. Hermann Balk crossed the Vistula and established castles in Kulm and Thorn. From there he launched assaults on the Prussian tribes, subjugating them with military might and building brick castles where the barbaric Prussians had their wooden forts. The fight was both epic and unequal, as the superior equipment and military training of the Knights was met by the larger numbers and savage bravery of the heathen tribes. Both parties included members of the fighting elites of two cultures that held bravery and valour on the battlefield in great esteem, and the battle reports tell of episodes of great heroism and unspeakable cruelty.

Tribe after tribe, the mighty Prussians fell. Had they fought as one nation like the Lithuanians did in the following centuries, they could have won. But they were divided: Pomesanians were used to fight against Sambians; and Nadruvians fought against Nattangians in countless centuries of continuous raids. There was no such thing as a Prussian army, or a

Prussian Grand Duke to lead them, and each time a tribe was weakened by fighting against the Germans, the neighbouring tribes, or the Lithuanians, took advantage of the situation to raid it.

The Crusaders' advance was not unstoppable, of course, and they suffered defeats and setbacks. Some early settlements were destroyed, and the Prussians tried to revolt against their invaders and to return to their old pagan ways time and again. Around 1270, the Nattangian noble Henry Monte led what was considered the most famous rebellion against the Teutonic Knights, succeeding in the difficult tasks of uniting several

tribes in the fight. But in the end, the Knights triumphed. Monte was slain, and Prussia started its transformation into a German land: steads became villages; German crafters were imported into the land; advocates and magistrates were established; advanced agricultural techniques were taught to the peasants; and the old sacred trees and altar stones were replaced by crosses, churches and statues of the saints. After Kulm and Thorn, the Crusaders fortified the port of Gdańsk (Danzig) at the mouth of the Vistula, and erected the castles of Elbing and Königsberg on the Vistula Lagoon, Marienburg in the inland of Prussia and Memelburg on the coast of Samogitia (Zemaitija).

Over the centuries, Baltic Prussia declined and disappeared. Of these fierce warriors, only their name remains.

The merging of the Orders

At the start of the fourth decade of the 13th Century, the Sword Brother's greatest problem was their lack of land. In order to fund their constant war against the heathen, they needed land, which was the main source of income at that time. They had learned how to exploit trade with the Hanseatic League to generate income, but this alone was not enough; they needed fiefs to support their elite cavalry, which needed expensive equipment; and to recruit militiamen from the subjugated tribes. Unfortunately, they could keep only one third of the land they conquered for themselves; the rest belonged to the Bishop. When Albert created the Militia Christi, he secured his control over the Order with this agreement, although the Brothers later felt this was too restrictive.

But the Sword Brethren had more trouble than just financial hardship. Their behaviour was inappropriate, to their religious status. A young Brother killed his first Grand Master, Menno, with an axe. More than once, the Pope had to send his legates, William of Modena and Baldwin of Aulne, to settle disputes between the Brothers and the established authorities. When William tried to have the Brotherhood release the Danish fortress of Dorpat, which they had captured (see the section about the conquest of Estonia), the Brothers put him, and their own Grand Master, under arrest. After a series of such incidents, almost everyone considered the Brothers too unruly to fill their role as Crusaders and defenders of the Faith. The death of Bishop Albert in 1229, whose authority was the only one the unruly Brothers did not dare to defy, dealt the final blow to their reputation. The second *Herrmeister*, Volkwin Schenk, had replaced Menno, almost immediately experiencing trouble, and soon realized that the Brotherhood was doomed if they could not get an external help to guide them and to restore financial stability, as well as a

minimum of credibility. For these reasons, as soon as he learned of the Teutonic Knight mission in Prussia, Volkwin applied for admittance into this much more reputable Order for he and his Brothers. But after a short time, the Teutonic Knights declined his request, having judged the whole of the Sword Brethren an unworthy lot.

Between 1234 and 1236, the Pope had found evidence of the Brethren's many misdeeds, including violence against the Cistercian monks of Dünamunde, forbidding pagans to be baptised in order to keep them as slaves, and ordering the slaves to pay financial compensation to the Church. The fine amounted to such a high figure that it was enough to bankrupt the Brethren. But they never paid it, as fate decided that their doom would be a bloody one.

Disaster at the Saule

In Spring 1236, a large contingent of Crusaders arrived from Germany, and Volkwin decided to lead them in a fast raid into Lithuanian territory, hoping to show to the new Lithuanian leaders, Grand Duke Mindaugas and Duke Vikyntas, who was the ruler of the Baltic lands. In this expedition, the Brethren even had the assistance of the Prince of Pskov, a Russian city. For a few days, they burned and pillaged between Zemaitija and Aukstaitija, then they headed back to Livonia. But the Lithuanians were waiting for them, and blocked their way at Siaulai.

The cunning Lithuanian commanders knew very well that their cavalry, albeit formidable, was no match for the Sword Brothers, and chose a marsh filled area for the final confrontation with the Crusaders. The "guest" knights initially refused to fight on that unwieldy terrain, but when the Lithuanians started to come at them in waves, the knights had no other choice but stand against them, and



die heroically.

More than half of the Order was destroyed in that battle, and the ones who survived were definitely not the most valiant ones. The Sword Brethren was no longer able to hold Livonia, and in order to avoid a pagan reconquest of the land, the Teutonic Order was forced, at the start of year 1237 AD, to concede what they had denied to the late *Herrmeister* Volkwin: integration of the Brothers into the Teutonic Order. The Livonian Branch of the Teutonic Order was still called Livonian Order, and its members were allowed to wear a red cross instead of the Teutonic black cross, but from that moment on they had to obey the Teutonic *Landmeister* of Livonia. Hermann Balk, who had distinguished himself in the early stage of the conquest of Prussia, was the first *Landmeister* of the Livonian branch.

expedition to Russia

After securing the old defence line on the Daugava and reaching a final agreement with the King on Denmark about ownership of the Estonian lands, the new masters of Livonia, Hermann Balk and Dietrich von Grüningen, assisted by one of the few survivors of the Sword Brethren, Andreas von Felben, were ready to resume conquest. The obvious direction to take was towards Lithuania, in order to retake the land lost after the Saule fiasco. However, they decided otherwise. The eastern regions, ruled by the Russians, were more attractive at that moment. The reasons were many.

First of all, the Russian princes were starting their own crusade to convert the Finns, and after some confrontation to capture the forts at the border with Estonia (Narva and Dorpat), they had started sending missionaries to Suomi. If this



Russian hyperactivity was not enough in itself, the King of Sweden was at that time looking at Northern Russia as his next conquest. He had already sent a fleet to the Gulf of Finland and secured a bridgehead in Russian territory, and it had been just a matter of luck – or so they believed – if a Russian army led by one young Aleksandr of Suzdal had been able to push the Swedes back to the sea. It was clear that the Russians would not be so lucky the following time, and the capitulation of the schismatic princes was just a matter of time, even if the Russian peasants were incredibly fond of this young prince and had started to call him "Hero of the Neva" (*Nevskij*).

In 1241, the Crusaders marched eastward, and an army of theirs, commanded by Andreas von Felben, besieged and captured the city of Pskov, on the Southern shore of Lake Chud, paying back the Russians for their ineffective help at the Saule. The door to Russia was open, as the immense territory of the Republic of Novgorod lay just to the east of Pskov. The Teutonic Knights started to assemble another army for the final attack on Novgorod in Dorpat, which was still ruled by the last survivor of the Von Buxhövdens, Bishop Hermann.

But the hero of the Neva, who had fallen in disgrace due to the envy of other princes (boyars), was recalled in active service by the burghers of Novgorod, who had more common sense than their nobles, and knew when their estates were at a stake. In a few weeks, Nevskij levied the city guard of Novgorod and marched on Pskov, retaking it. Then, in winter 1242, he broke into Estonia with a daring move, and was confronted by the mighty Teutonic army, which tried to kick him back to Russia. After a brief runaway towards Novgorod, the Russian army was intercepted on the narrowest section of the frozen Lake Chud, and there Nevskij chose to make his last stand. National rhetoric aside, historians agree that this battle marked the fate of the Baltic region for the centuries to come, as the mightiest armies that the Catholic and Orthodox factions were able to muster clashed.

Something unexpected happened. For the first time in the history of the Amber Coast, the charge of the Teutonic cavalry was stopped, and the Brothers were chased back towards Estonia in a dishonourable route, some of them even drowning in the icy waters of the lake as the weight of their armours broke the thin ice surface and dragged them down into a watery grave. Nevskij claimed that this was due to the hand of God, while historians tend to attribute this victory to the intervention of his Mongol horse archers. This was the Brother's last major attempt to expand eastward. They had learned their lesson, and from that moment on they would rather concentrate on Lithuania.

The Crusades afterwards

Even though this supplement focuses mainly on the first half of the 13th century, the Baltic Crusades lasted for centuries afterwards. The following centuries were not marked by the same heroic figures as the first decades: there will not be Bishops of Riga as famous and powerful as von Buxhövdens; the Russians would never find a war leader like Nevskij; and Mindaugas is still considered by the Lithuanians as one of their founding fathers. But battles, conquest and colonization would continue for a long time. The Order State was there until the seventeenth century, so the Crusades officially lasted for more than four centuries!

But without exaggeration, we can say that the crusades went on for at least one more century. Two facts were important for their continuation: the integration of the Christian Faith in Baltic culture, and the struggle between the Ordenstaat and the Lithuanians.

The two most important characters in Baltic history in late 13th Century are Albert Suerbeer, the first Archbishop of Riga, and Mindaugas, the first King of Lithuania. Therefore, you will find more information about what happened in the second half of the century in the Famous Characters sections about these two personalities.

More information

If you are interested in setting your Amber Coast games in the years after the ones described in this book, you can find more information about the battles of the Teutonic Order and the Lithuanians against each other and against the Russian, in the 14th Century, in the game Mythic Russia by Firebird Productions.



The spreading of Christianity

One at a time, the Baltic tribes had accepted their new German rulers. Some tribes were decimated, while others were forcibly moved out of their lands. Others moved spontaneously into Lithuanian territory, hoping to remain free, although the Lithuanians did not always welcome them and sometimes just "sold" their lands to the Crusaders to gain some advantages or a truce. Many more just found it convenient to be ruled by the Crusaders.

This meant, of course, that Christianity would, over time, become their main religion. The acceptance of the new faith was initially rather formal on the part of the Balts. The first Livonians were rather clear to Meinhard when saying that they wanted to reject his faith even after accepting his gift of a castle, and underwent a ritual in which they shrug off the water of Baptism (pagans and Jews tend to give more importance to Christian symbols than Christians do, and treat Baptism very seriously). Later, the population tended to accept Baptism without complaining too much, but also remained faithful to its old beliefs. This produced, as it had happened in the rest of Europe during the Dark Ages, a mingling of Christian and polytheistic worship, the result of which is the modern Baltic culture, in which the elements coming from the two sources are currently rather difficult to tell from each other. Throughout this book, for instance, we talk about Velns, the Latvian Devil, but how many details about this mythological figure come from Christian tradition and how many from the ancient Baltic underworld god Velnias? It is impossible to tell. What is certain is, that, over time, the name of the Baltic Ruler of the Gods, Diev(a)s, has become used to identify the Christian God.

The independence of Lithuania

Lithuania is the only Baltic country that resisted conquest by the large European empires until the Nineteenth Century. During the times when the crowns of Poland and Lithuania were united, Lithuania was possibly the largest nation in Europe, and certainly the most militarily powerful, as its powerful cavalry was ready to intervene anywhere in its territory in a matter of days.

This is most likely the result of a strong, neat national pride that pre-dates the birth of the national self-consciousness of, say, France or Spain, which were the first continental European nations to develop national feelings in the modern age. This feeling probably originated with the kingdom of Mindaugas, and went on under the following Archdukes during the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the most famous of which were Jogaila and Vytautas.

But what really forged the cohesion of Lithuania as a nation during the early years of its existence, was the fight for independence against the Teutonic Order. Time and again, the Grand Masters of Prussia and Livonia tried to conquer Lithuania, but in vain. For decades, if not for centuries, they tried to secure Samogitia in order to allow their troops to move freely by land from Marienburg to Riga – and they failed. Even if their shock troops were unbeatable in the open field, the Lithuanians were just impossible to subjugate. Their land was never captured by the Order, and in time, it was the Order that was forced to defend against the Grand Dukes.

In the 14th Century, the Order finally managed to capture Samogitia – or better, it was the Lithuanian Archduke who betrayed the Samogitians and sold their land to the Teutonic Knights in order to gain some time and prepare for an assault against the Crusaders – but even after the region was formally Christened, its inhabitants retained their pagan beliefs in secret, and in some cases overtly. The Order's control over



Samogitia was so poor that travelling between Prussia and Livonia was impossible for Christian caravans if not escorted by armed men.

At the end of his reign, Mindaugas had formally converted to Christianity in order to negotiate some form of ceasefire with the Teutonic Order. Even if this was regarded as a betrayal of his fathers' faith by many of his subjects, this move was wise, as it allowed the new Grand Duke to consolidate his rule over the tribes he controlled and turn them into a kingdom. Many Christian historians relate that Mindaugas showed reverence to Christ with his words, but he still sacrificed to Perkunas in secret. After the death of Mindaugas, Lithuania reverted to paganism, and remained the last unconverted nation in Europe until the end of the 14th Century, when Grand Prince Jogaila finally gave up the old faith and made his nation a Christian one.

The Hanseatic League

The official motivation for the Baltic Crusades was converting the heathen of the east, but the actual colonization of the area was carried over by traders who travelled to the Amber Coast for profit, and founded several cities as trade outposts.

Viking merchants had traded with the mainland of the Baltic region since the 9th or 10th Century. They came to the area in search of furs, timber, wax and amber, and went all the way to Russia in their travels. By using the rivers as routes, the cities of Novgorod, Polotsk and Kiev were able to trade with Scandinavia and Germany via the Baltic Sea, which was much safer than land for merchants. The main base of Scandinavian traders was Visby, on the island of Gotland.

Starting with the 12th Century, the Wendish city of Lübeck started to develop an important trading relationship with the Eastern Baltic coast, exporting the commodities produced on the Baltic shores to England, France and later even the Mediterranean. Eventually, this put Lübeck in

direct competition with Visby, and the two trade centres came to terms and formed an alliance. Being the most prosperous of the two, Lübeck became the dominant party in the alliance, which at that time already counted several other cities like Hamburg and Danzig.

One of the peculiarities of Lübeck and the other trade centres, which differentiate them from other commercial powers of the time like Genua or Venice, was its peculiar form of government. Whereas the Italian sea powers were controlled by a military oligarchy, Lübeck was ruled by the council of its merchant guilds (*Hansa* in German). Each guild had to contribute personnel and resources to the common welfare of the city, and only guilds had the right to membership in the city council. The council elected the city Bürgermeister - often more than one - who actually ruled the city. Even though Lübeck was formally part of the Holy Roman Empire, this municipal law granted it some form of self-regulation that was not tolerated, for instance, in the rebellious Italian communes. Basically, the city acknowledged the rulership of the Emperor and paid tribute when needed, but it was absolutely free to organize its trade and even its self-defence as the council pleased. This form of government was called Lübeck Law, and was clearly an anticipation of the modern democratic institutions, as well as the prologue of the dominance of burghers over nobles that will mark the passage from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age. Novgorod in Russia had a similar form of government, and the Teutonic Order granted Kulm Law to the cities they controlled in Prussia, like Kulm, Thorn and Marienburg.

Starting with the period covered by Crusaders of the Amber Coast, several other cities on the Baltic coast were granted Lübeck law by the Emperor or the Pope because their main sustenance was provided by trade, and their guilds needed more power. As the Baltic Sea and the inland housed all manners of pirates and robbers, the cities had to develop militaries of their own to escort their ships and caravans. At one point, the cities started to ally with each other to obtain advantages in mutual defence. They formed what was initially just a network of interlocked trade



guilds, but would eventually become a military power in the following centuries. Starting from the 14th Century, the league of cities was officially called the Hanseatic League, but it had been a political entity for a long time before this name was adopted. For game purposes, we will refer to it as the Hanseatic League, or the Hansa, even though this name was not used in the 13th Century.

The merchant from the German guilds had a prominent role in the formation and evolution of the Crusader cities. Riga itself, since its foundation, was not only the seat of the Bishop of Livonia, but also the most important trade centre of the Amber Coast. Eventually, all of the cities of Livonia and Estonia joined the Hanseatic League, and were granted the privilege of the Law of Lübeck. In game terms, you can expect to find representatives of a German Guild in all of these cities as soon as they are conquered or founded, and after a few years you will find local Guilds, too.

The cities of the Amber Coast that were part of the Hanseatic League can be divided into two circles: the Livonian circle led by Riga, which included Dorpat, Reval, Narva, Kokenhusen, Wenden, Windau; and the Prussian circle, led by Danzig, which included Breslau, Kulm, Elbing, Königsberg and Thorn. Visby was still an important station in the middle of the Baltic Sea, and several other ports on the Swedish shore were also part of the League.

The Hansa placed a trade outpost (Kontor) in the most important foreign cities with which they wanted to trade. So a Hansa Kontor will be found in the principal Russian trade centres like Novgorod, Pskov, or Polotsk, and in the main Lithuanian cities like Kaunas or Vilnius (Voruta). Unlike the guilds found in cities under the Law of Lübeck, these posts have no political power in the city that hosts them, but can provide refuge and support to characters with a good Status (Hansa) score. Most cities that lie inland and are not connected to the sea by a big river, like Dorpat or Thorun, initially hosted only a Kontor, and usually joined the league as full members later.

Crusader outposts and cities

The name given is the original German. Alternate names are the modern form of the city name in the local language, either Estonian, Latvian or Polish. In rare cases, an ancient non-German name exists.

Danzig

Other names: *Gdańsk* (Polish)

A pagan settlement had existed in the area since the 7th Century, but Gdańsk was officially founded in 997 AD by Mieszko of Poland. By the time of the Baltic Crusades, the city had grown in size and become wealthy due to its favourable position on the Baltic Sea. Gdańsk was never a Crusader town, but a trade center, even when it was later annexed to the Teuton State. It was one of the first towns to join Lübeck in the Hanseatic League.

Dorpat

Other names: *Tarbatu* (Ancient Estonian), *Tartu* (Modern Estonian), *Yuryev* (Russian)

Tarbatu was a very ancient Estonian settlement at the confluence of two rivers that drain into Lake Chud. In the 10th and 11th Century, the princes of Kiev took formal control of the city and built a fortress there. Dorpat became a Russian fief, inhabited by Estonians. In the 13th Century, the Sword Brethren captured the city when they conquered Estonia, but both the Estonians and the Russians retook it several times, until its final reconquest in 1224. Afterwards, it became the seat of the See of Dorpat, and independent Bishopric. The first Prince-Bishop was Hermann of Buxhövden, Albert's brother, in order to consolidate Albert's power on Livonia, despite the fact that the land was formally subject to the King of Denmark. In the following centuries, the city's position at the



southern border between Estonia and Russia made it the theatre of several confrontations between the Crusaders and the Rus.

Elbing

Other names: *Elblag* (Polish), *Truso* (Old Prussian)

Truso was an important Prussian trade centre on the border between Pomesania and Pogesania. It thrived on the commerce of wood and amber, which could be shipped both by sea and by river. In 1243, when the Teutonic Order invaded Prussia, they captured Truso and built a castle named Elbing there. Elbing eventually became the capitol of the Diocese of Pogesania.

Königsberg

Other names: *Twangste* (Old Prussian)

This city was founded in 1255 as a Teutonic stronghold in Sambian territory, and later became the seat of the Bishop of Sambia, as well as the capitol of the Teutonic Order State. A Prussian fortress called Twangste was conquered and razed to make room for the new fortification. Königsberg is located on the Vistula Lagoon, in its point that is farthest from the Baltic Sea. It is also on the southern edge of the Sambian peninsula, and the Crusaders used the fortress to subjugate the rebellious Sambian and Nattangian pagans.

Despite its importance in further developments of Prussian history, Königsberg is still a pagan settlement in the time covered by the *Crusaders of the Amber Coast* campaign.

Kokenhouse

Other names: *Koknese* (Latvian)

Koknese was a small settlement on the Daugava, originally ruled by a Russian boyar, Vetseke, who was vassal to the Prince of Polotsk. This petty noble initially sided with the Crusaders to get their help against the frequent Lithuanian raids, but as the

Crusaders began to take control of his hillfort, he rebelled and slaughtered many Germans. At this point, the Bishop of Riga ordered the Sword Brothers to capture the fortress and transform it into a stone castle. Vetseke fled to Russia and later sided with the Estonians in their resistance against the Brotherhood, but was killed in this attempt.

Leal

Other names: *Lihula* (Estonian)

Leal was the fortress in Estonia where the Bishop of Wiek resided. The Bishop also ruled the See of Oesel, which included most territories of the Estonian islands of Oesel, Dago and Mohu, so he controlled also the island fortress of Arensburg.

Lennewarden

Other names: *Lielvarde* (Latvian)

Lennewarden was one of the first fortresses on the Daugava to be seized by the crusaders, although we do not know if by force or by peaceful submission of its lord.

Kulm

Other names: *Chelmno* (Polish)

Like Danzig, the city of Kulm was probably founded around the 11th Century as a trade centre. It became militarily important only when it was chosen as the Teutonic Order headquarters at the beginning of the invasion of Prussia. However, as the city had developed as a trading post and not as a fortress, it soon applied to the Order for a special status. The city was then granted a particular city law that favoured trade and allowed self-government, sponsored by the merchant guilds. This special charter was named Law of Kulm, and was an analogue, but not identical, to the Law of Lübeck, and it was eventually adopted by many cities founded by the Crusaders in Prussia, as they developed from castles into trade centres. Kulm eventually joined Danzig and Lübeck in the Hanseatic League.

Memel

Other names: *Klaipeda* (Latvian)

Klaipeda was a small Baltic settlement located at the northern end of the Curonian Lagoon, close to the only navigable passage between the Lagoon and the Baltic Sea. It was placed at a strategic location, but apparently its inhabitants did not exploit this fact until the Crusaders came. In the second half of the 13th Century, the Livonian Order built a castle there, which they called Memel. The city that replaced the old Curonian village was then called Memelburg. The fort was used as a stronghold to subjugate the rebellious population of Curonia and to launch attacks towards Sambia and Samogitia. It also lay on the only land route that connected Livonia to Prussia. As this route was anything but safe for travelling Crusaders, the castle was an important way point where travellers could rest in a secure place.

Klaipeda is still a pagan settlement in the time covered by the *Crusaders of the Amber Coast* main campaign.

Mitau

Other names: *Jelgava* (Latvian)

Jelgava was a small settlement some miles upstream from the mouth of the Lielupe river. The natives had built a small river fortress on one of the many isles, called the Island Castle (Pilssala). The Crusaders eventually captured this fortress and built a new one there, called Mitau.

Narva

When the Danes came, an Estonian settlement had existed for millennia at the mouth of the Narva, the river that drains Lake Chud's waters into the Gulf of Finland. This post was often used by traders from Novgorod, and the Danes contended it to the Rus for a long time, as Narva marks the border between Russia and Estonia. In the second half of the 13th Century, the Danes built a mighty castle there to resist invasions from Novgorod. Narva acquired city rights under the Law of Lübeck in the 14th Century, but never joined the Hanseatic League.

Reval

Other names: *Lyndenisse* (Ancient Estonian), *Tallinn* (Modern Estonian)

The ancient Estonian settlement that the Danes captured in their invasion of Estonia was probably called Lyndenisse or Kalevin, both names that refer to characters of the *Kalevipoeg* epic poem. The old fortress was destroyed by the invaders and replaced by a fortified city that controlled the surrounding pagan lands, and was used as a base for forced conversion of the natives. It became the capitol of Danish Estonia and the seat of a Danish Bishop that King Waldemar put in charge of the situation, both spiritual and mundane. The city was built and equipped so that it could withstand a prolonged siege, a detail that reveals that it was, like most of the Crusader cities in the initial years, just an island of Christianity in the middle of a hostile land. However, Reval eventually developed into a trade centre and soon joined the Hanseatic League.

Riga

Founded by the long-sighted Bishop Albert von Buxhoven where a small hamlet of Liv fishermen used to be, Riga is in the perfect position to control traffic on the great river Daugava, which the Russians call the Dvina. The town lies on the right bank of the river, separated from the sea by several kilometres, somehow sheltered from pirate raids. Yet, ships docked at its harbour can still reach the Baltic Sea in a matter of hours – when the river is not frozen, that is. The city was already relatively large a few years after it was built, thanks to its strategic position. It was essentially a German city taking advantage of Livonian labourers for the first centuries of its existence.

The See of Riga was instituted under the authority of the Archbishop of Bremen in 1200 when the episcopal seat was moved from Üxküll by Albert von Buxhövdén. It later became an Archbishopric under Albert Suerbeer, gaining formal authority over the Sees of Oesel-Wiek, Curland and Dorpat over which it formerly had only a moral authority in the times of the von Buxhövdén.

The great cathedral was built as soon as the city was founded, and is still where Bishop Albert placed it, although it is no longer Riga's Dome. In game terms, treat it as a Great Church where all common Divine Blessings can be gained, in addition to those peculiar to St. Peter and other Apostles.

Close to the city was a fortified Cistercian abbey called Dünamunde, which was often used as a refuge by the Bishops and the Papal legates when the Brotherhood tried to settle political disputes by arresting them and keeping them in jail until they agreed to their terms. Apart from being a fortress, the abbey can provide the magical support that is peculiar to the Benedictine Monks. By 1230, the Dominicans and several minor orders had a base in Riga, too. St. George's Castle, which was inside the city walls, was built by the Brotherhood as soon as it was formed, although they did not use it as their main base at first. The current Riga Castle was built only in the 14th Century by the Teutonic Order.

Segwold

Other names: *Sigulda* (Latvian)

Sigulda is one of the pagan fortresses that the Brotherhood captured in its advance towards Estonia in the years after the conquest of the Daugava basin. A mighty stone castle was built there, most of which is still visible in modern times. Turaida, another pagan fortress, was close to Sigulda and was gifted to the Bishopric by its owner, Caupo, who had converted to Christianity.

Üxküll

Other names: *Ikšķile* (Latvian)

Erected in 1186 AD, Üxküll Castle was the first stone building of Latvia. Bishop Meinhard donated it to the Latgallians to persuade them to embrace faith in Christ,



but this valuable gift did little to win their permanent loyalty. It was the seat of the Bishop of Livonia for about fifteen years, until Bishop Albert moved it to Riga in 1200 AD.

Wenden

When the Sword Brothers conquered the Aa River basin, between Estonia and the Daugava river, they first captured the timber forts of Sigulda and Turaida and turned them into stone castles. Later, in 1208, they founded another stone castle to the Northeast of Sigulda, and named it Wenden. Even in its original form with only one big tower, it was so magnificent that the *Herrmeister* moved his headquarters there from Riga. When the Teutonic Knights took over Livonia, they kept the headquarters of the Livonian Order in Wenden and expanded the original structure by adding more towers and making the castle more like a convent. Wenden contained all the archives of the Order, and if a secret about the Sword Brethren must be located somewhere, it is almost certainly in the its library.

the Brotherhood



MOST ROLEPLAYING gamers are familiar with the stereotype of the Knight-Monk, which has been made famous by the character template of the Paladin; a warrior who devotes himself to the cause of Good, personified by the deity he worships. This means that organizations like the Livonian Order, a mix of a religious order and a military corps, are not new in the roleplaying ecosystem.

However, when the words Crusader and Crusading Order are used, most

people think of the Templars and Hospitallers, who are thought to have only fought in the Holy Land. In reality, the knightly orders were active also in Europe, and the Saracens were not their only opponents. The Teutonic Knights started, like the Templars, as a full time military in defence of the Holy Land, but few people remember that, after the reign of the Stupor Mundi, their main focus became Eastern Europe, where they ruled over a theocratic state for four centuries. Even fewer know that the Teutonic Knights were briefly preceded in this mission by a fierce group of Knight-monks called the Sword Brotherhood. We have already discussed the historical events that led to the formation of the Livonian Order and of the Teutonic Knights in the historical chapters, so this chapter will focus on the Brothers' organization and way of life, in order to provide a good knowledge base for both the Game Master and the players who wish to play a Brother.

In this chapter we will refer to both the the Sword Brothers and the Teutonic Knights as Brothers or Knights. Unless noted otherwise, all details provided are valid for both Orders, even before the Brotherhood was incorporated into the Teutonic Order.

The Order and the Church

The agreement between the Brothers and the Church at the moment the Livonian Order was founded was that the Brothers could keep one third of the land they conquered as theirs, while the other two thirds belonged to the local Bishop, who was the actual landlord in the theocratic vision of the Middle Ages. Thus much of the land the Brothers conquered was placed



under the control of the Bishops of Riga, Kurland, Oesel-Wiek and Dorpat. Keep in mind that in the 13th Century, despite the rising influence of the mercantile classes in the cities, marked by the appearance of the Hansa, real wealth came only from possession of land.

Even though the Order's military superiority was due to the Brothers themselves, the Brethren needed considerable funds to maintain their auxiliary troops, which made up the bulk of their armies. And even if the Brothers received no salaries, their heavy cavalry equipment was extremely expensive, not to mention the huge cost of building and maintenance the stone fortifications.

All this meant that the Brothers needed land in order to fund their campaigns, but they were in competition with the Bishopric for possession of the conquered territories. This was aggravated by the fact that each Bishop, being a Prince-Bishop in all respects, owned several castles, and needed funds for their upkeep, too. During the time of Bishop Albert von Buxhövdén, the Livonian Order avoided any conflict with the Bishop of Riga, and instead tried to steal land from the King of Denmark in his newly conquered province of Estonia (which were governed by another, Danish Bishop).

However, under the rule of the following Bishops and Archbishops of Riga, the situation was different, and open conflict was not uncommon between the Brethren and the official ecclesiastic hierarchy. Keep in mind that Rome had less control over the peripheral organizations of the Church, so even if both the Order and the Bishopric were officially acknowledged by the Pope, they were not necessarily friendly to each other.

A similar agreement existed in Prussia after the Papal Bulls that allowed the Teutonic Knights to conquer their own kingdom there, as the conquered lands were officially subject to the rule of the Bishop of Prussia. Prior to the advent of the Teutonic Order, and in an attempt to replicate the success of the Sword Brethren, the Bishop had fortified the town of Dobrzyn, and given it to a small group of warrior monks.

However the Bishop himself was held prisoner by the Prussians for years, so he had no opportunities to build up his own fortifications, and his Knights of Dobrzyn were later incorporated by the the Teutonic Knights. These events, and the superior diplomatic skills of the Knights, made the situation in Prussia different from the one in Livonia, and the lands conquered there were never actually disputed between the Order and the Church. The Order was the sole ruler there.

With the arrival of the Teutonic Knights in Livonia, things changed there too. First of all, the quota of land that the Brethren could keep was raised to two thirds. Eventually, with the advent of the new century, the power of the Prince-Bishops faded, and the Order started to gain total control over the lands of Prussia, Livonia and Estonia.

Monastic Life

Even if they were full-time soldiers, the Brothers were also monks. They lived, secluded, in a fortified complex like the Cistercian or Augustinian monks. The Commander (Komtur) of the fort was the equivalent of a Prior in a monastery. Most Knights were not ordained, but some among the Brothers, devoted to logistics and assistance, were also priests. All Brothers swore a vow of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, and to assist the wounded, like the Knights Templars did. Please note that these four Vows are relevant in game terms, and give any Brother Player Character a wide range of Blessings to choose from.

The living conditions in the castle-monasteries were very frugal, with the Brothers living more as monks rather than the rulers they were. Meals were nutritious but not luxurious, and each Friday was devoted to fasting. The Brothers would recite all the daily prayers of priests while living in their castle, and sometimes also when on a military campaign. Each Brother had a very basic set of possessions: a tunic, two pairs of boots, a belt ,a cloak, and, usually, a sword. The castles held a

Oath of the Teutonic Knight

*I, <Name> von
<Origin>, do profess and
promise chastity,
renunciation of property,
and obedience, to God and to
the Blessed Virgin Mary,
and to you Brother
(Hermann Balk), Master of
the Teutonic Order, and to
your successors, according
to the Rules and Institutions
of the Order, and I will be
obedient to you, and to your
successors, even unto death.*



considerable amount of war supplies, so the Brothers were often given armour and a mount. Whenever possible, a lay fighter called a sergeant acted as a squire for each Brother.

Most Sword Brothers came from noble families, which was an important requirement, as the Brothers were supposed to have some military training when they were admitted into the Order. Some entered the Order to cleanse their souls of sins, but many others did so because they would never inherit their family possessions, and needed an alternate career to gain fame and renown. In some cases, passing from the pleasures of a court to the harsh life of the Sword Brother, especially with regard to the absence of women was a hard condition for the young squires. Yet there was little to be done to obtain female companionship, except when campaigning. Most warriors indulged in rape during raids and conquest, and many of the Brothers must have "fallen into temptation" as well.

Hierarchy and Organization

The Sword Brothers were all fighters of noble origin, with a few Brothers in charge of the logistics. The Teutonic Order was instead made of a core of noble Brothers who were Knights or – less frequently – Priests, and an auxiliary body of lesser Brothers who handled the logistics and the hospitals. The latter were called Half-brothers, or "Grey Mantles", as they wore a grey garb, opposed to the white one worn by the fighting Knights. During the period described by this supplement, there were no women in the Order, not even auxiliaries handling the logistics.

The organization of the Sword Brotherhood was very simple, with a Herrmeister who ruled everyone from his headquarters in the castle of Wenden. The Teutonic Knights, instead, had a more complex hierarchy. Each Command (Komturei) was overseen by a military

Commander (Komtur), usually in charge of a castle, who was aided in the administrative duties by an Advocate (Anwalt). Each Komtur reported to a Landmeister, of which there were two in the Amber Coast: one in Prussia and the other in Livonia (the latter being the successor of the Herrmeister of the Sword Brethren). Above all of these officers was the Hochmeister, or Grand Master, who was aided also by a Grand Marshal (Ordensmarschall) and a Treasurer (Ordenstressler).

The Military

The military machine assembled by the warrior-monks was the most efficient military organization present in the West during the Middle Ages, second only to the Mongol Horde in effectiveness (note that these two armies never met in real history, so your Crusaders of the Amber Coast game might be a good opportunity for a what if scenario).

The core of the Crusader army was its heavy cavalry, made up almost entirely of Brothers in heavy chain mail armour. The rest of the army was made of auxiliaries recruited among the subjugated Balts, baptised or not. These forces sometimes turned against the Brotherhood in battle, but in most cases fought effectively. During the fair season, support armies of secular German or Polish Crusaders often joined the warrior-monks.

The Knights' charge was considered unstoppable by Baltic standards (even the almighty Lithuanian cavalry did not charge into combat but dismounted and joined the infantry rank), and after the first defeats, the Balts learned that challenging the Crusaders in the open meant only defeat. The pagans then developed alternative tactics, relying on their knowledge of the landscape to ambush and bog down the Knights. Another advantage that the Livonian order had against the Balts was that of crossbows and siege engines, which rendered the elaborate Baltic fortifications, devised to keep the opponents out of archery range, almost useless. The Pope had forbidden using crossbows against Christians, but since the Balts were not



baptised...

A further reason for the successes of the Order in the Baltic lands was the tactics they used against invasions. Most of the forces that opposed them (with the exception of the Lithuanian army) were a patchwork of tribal gangs assembled by a temporary leader, trained in raiding rather than in warfare. When one of these armies invaded, it was almost impossible to intercept it and prevent damage, but catching the robbers on the way back was another story.

Once a crusader castle was built in an area, all raids had a good chance to end in failure. While the raiders were pillaging, the Knights mustered an army in the safety of the castle, and proceeded to intercept and destroy the robbers while they were heading home, when they were slowed by the stolen cattle and the prisoners. This tactic was extremely successful, and in a few years the neighbouring tribes learned that it was safer to raid where the Crusaders were not present. In several cases, the tribes of Livonia explicitly asked for help from the Brothers against Lithuanian or Estonian raiders, offering to

convert in exchange for their intervention. Despite the general anti-crusader sentiment of the Balts, such cases were not uncommon.

Brothers as characters

The procedure for generating a player character who belongs to the Livonian Order or to the Teutonic Order has been explained in the Character Creation and Christian Religion chapters. In the Magic chapter, you will find mostly references to Templars, but anything that is defined for a Knight Templar is also valid for a Teutonic Knight.

Player characters who belong to the Order have the disadvantage of not being able to own possessions (formally), but they gain the considerable advantage of Blessings. The Brothers do not have access to all Blessings, and can only gain the blessings granted by their patron saints. The Teutonic Knights' patrons are the Blessed Virgin and St. George, who represent, respectively, the healing and the fighting aspects of a Knight's duties. They provide the following blessings, available to all Knights:

Blessings of St. George

(available at all castle chapels)

Armour of Faith, Bless, Heal Wound, Holy War, Sense Malice, Soul Shield, Soul Sight, Sword Blessing

Blessings of St. Mary of the Teutons

(available at major centres like Kulm, Wenden or Riga)

Heal Body, Heavenly Assistance, Protection from Disease, Restore Health

Brothers can learn other blessings, up to the limit of their Holiness, but they must ask permission for this from the secular clergy – which depend on the Bishop, who, as explained earlier, is not automatically friendly to the Order – or perform some pilgrimage or gain access to a Relic. Thus, in general, the blessings known by a Brother Player Character will belong to the above list.

Famous Characters



Genghis Khan

LORD OF THE DEVIL'S RIDERS

GEN THOUGH he never entered the Baltic lands or Russia himself, Genghis Khan with his Mongol horde was possibly the most influential political power of the 13th Century in the Amber Coast and its immediate surroundings. We will describe his deeds in brief in this paragraph and in the boxed section about the Kalka River campaign, in order to give the reader some information about his origins and conquests. The historical facts which have significant impacts on the campaign, however, are narrated in the section about Genghis Khan's successors.

Born around the year 1162 AD from a Mongol chieftain of the Borjigin clan, Temujin was just another warrior noble among the nomads of Central Asia for the first decades of his life, when he and his clan fought other nomads in a pointless struggle for supremacy that did little for the benefit of the Mongolia. In 1202, the young Temujin allied with the Keraiti clan and married the daughter of the Keraiti chieftain, Borte.

From that moment on, Temujin acts would influence the destiny of all nomads, and eventually of all peoples in Asia and much of Europe. It was at that time that he assembled his group of four generals, which he called his wardogs. The most cunning of the four, Subodei, was the man who forced Russia to bow before Temujin's feet, and almost succeeded in conquering the whole Europe. In just four years, Temujin defeated all of the other nomad warlords and achieved the title of Khan of Khans. But his subjects started to give him another, more impressive title: Genghis Khan, or Universal Khan.

At the start of the 13th Century, the Mongols, who had always been beaten by the Chin Kingdom so far, started an impressive military campaign under the leadership of Genghis Khan that would make them rulers over the Chinese people, and most peoples of Asia. Temujin attacked the Chinese kingdoms one by one: first Xixia, then Jin, and his descendants would go on with the Sung kingdom, and Korea as well. But China was not his only target. Temujin also moved Westwards, and conquered the lands between India, China and Europe, nomad inhabited steppes that controlled trade between the cultivated extents of land. Bukhara in the Persian empire fell in 1219, and the rich trade post of Samarkand in 1220.

Genghis Khan died in 1227, while he was struggling to strengthen his dominion over China. His descendants would expand and consolidate his Empire over almost all of Asia. Despite the fierce nature of the Mongol nomads, the expansion of Temujin's empire brought civilization as well as destruction, and shaped the laws and customs of Asian people for centuries.

Batu, Ogodei and Subodei

LEADERS OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

GENGHIS KHAN died in 1227, and his third son, Ogodei, succeeded him. Ogodei integrated several nomad peoples, which were previously just subjects, into Mongol society, thus creating what was later called the Golden Horde. The horde was the most formidable war machine the world had ever witnessed, stronger even than Alexander's phalanxes. The opponent against which it was destined to show its might was Russia.

Under the rule of Gengis Khan's grandson Batu, the western section of the horde headed for Russia again in 1237. Batu Khan was helped by his brothers, each of which led one of the hordes of the Mongol army. But above all, the leader of that expedition was Subodei Khan, Temujin's most experienced general who had already humbled the Rus and Kipchaq at the battle of Kalka river (see box).

Knowing that winter was the best season to wage war against the Russians, as the frozen ground actually made the Mongol cavalry faster, Subodei ordered the Horde to advance in December, and burned and pillaged the great cities of the Rus one by one. The city of Riazan was first, and the Mongols left no one alive in it, in an slaughter that Russian tales tell with horror. Then they headed for Suzdal and pillaged it. The capitol, Vladimir, was now outflanked and the Mongol army besieged it while the Grand Prince Yuri was not in the city. The fortified city fell in a few days, as Subodei had learned to use siege machines from the peoples that had been integrated into the Mongol Empire, and fortifications were no longer useful to stop the Mongol army. Then the Grand Prince marched against the Horde with a great army to avenge his family and people, but the Horde simply destroyed the army and slaughtered the Prince of Russia. Subodei then sent his army to take the city of Tver.

Only Novgorod, the richest of all Russian cities, was still to conquer, but Spring had come, and Batu and Subodei knew that marching on the thawing snow would put the Horde at a disadvantage. So they headed back to Asia, after affirming their dominion over Russia with blood and fear. From that moment on, all Princes of the northern Rus, including the new Grand Prince Yaroslav and his young son Aleksandr, were in fact vassals of Ogodei Khan, and had to bow to the Mongols and pay them tribute.

In 1239, Batu Khan and Subodei resumed their conquest of Europe. First they subjugated the last Khans of the Kipchaqs, then they attacked the second ethnic group of

Russians, the Kievan Rus – who lived in the land we now call Ukraine. At that time, the domination of Kiev over other Russian principalities had ended, and Kiev itself was ruled by the Prince of Galicia, Daniel, who was allied with the Lithuanians in the North. The Mongols conquered the city of Chernigov, then they sent ambassadors to Kiev, ordering his governor to surrender and accept the rulership of Ogodei Khan. Once again, the proud Rus killed the ambassadors, and this was their downfall, as the Mongols stormed Kiev and killed all of its population. All of Russia was under the "Mongol Yoke".

The Horde then proceeded against central Europe. Subodei first ordered a raid against Poland. Such was the fear that the thought of the Mongols inspired into the hearts of their enemies that Krakow and Wroclaw were taken without resistance, and the Polish counterattack at Leignitz turned into yet another onslaught. Then the Horde moved against Hungary, planning to use its grazing lands as a base from which to expand into all Europe. Here they were met by King Bela of Hungary and his new allies, the Kipchaq who had fled from their lands after the defeat at Kalka and the fall of Kiev. The irony in this is evident, as you may remember that King Bela of Hungary had called upon the Teutonic Knights decades before in order to defend Transylvania against the Kipchaqs! Internecine conflicts between Hungarian nobles and the – predictably – troubled relationship between the Hungarians and the Kipchaqs weakened the Hungarian defence. Thanks to this, Subodei was able to teach another strategy lesson to his European foes at the battle of Mohi. The doors to Europe were open, and lesser detachments of Mongols raided as far as the Balkans, arriving within sight of the Adriatic Sea.

But destiny had other plans for both Asia and Europe. In 1241 Ogodei Khan died, and Batu and Subodei were recalled to the Imperial Court to take part in the election of the new Grand Khan. The Devil's riders would never return to Europe in force again, but the fear they had instilled into the hearts of Eastern Europeans would last for centuries, and certainly they were able to extort tribute from the Russians for generations to come.

For more detailed information about the Mongol empire and the Golden Horde, we suggest that you consult the game *Mythic Russia* by Firebird Productions and its expansion *The Birchbark Chronicles*.

Aleksandr Nevskij

THE HERO OF THE NEVA

THE GREAT RUSSIAN national hero was the son of Jaroslav, a Russian Prince of Suzdal. By 1236, as his father was crowned Great Prince of Kiev, Aleksandr Jaroslavich became Prince of Novgorod. However, this position was, at the time he reached it, little more than a honorific title. The real rulers of the rich city of Novgorod were its wealthy merchants. The Mongol's Golden Horde was expanding towards Northern Russia.

In 1239, another powerful enemy appeared on the horizon, threatening Novgorod's freedom. The Christian Princes from Germany and Scandinavia started to colonize Baltic and Russian territory. After the capture of Estonia by the Danes, the King of Sweden landed with a powerful army on the frozen shores between Finland and Estonia. Warned of the danger by the friendly Estonian tribes, Prince Aleksandr mustered an army and, in July 1240, he force marched towards the Swedish bridgehead on the River Neva. There he addressed his men, who were inferior in number and equipment, with his most famous quote, "God is not with the strongest, but with those who fight for the True Cause".

Catching the enemies by surprise, Aleksandr adopted hit and run tactics aided by the mist that covered the river in the morning. With their troops still landing, the Swedish were totally overwhelmed and forced to flee, leaving many casualties behind them. After this battle, Aleksandr gained the nickname Nevskij, or Hero of the Neva.

This victory, however, generated more envy than admiration among the other Russian nobles. In 1241, when another Western army, this time lead by the Danes and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, captured Pskov and threatened Novgorod, the Boyars prevented Aleksandr from leading the Novgorod armies against it. Enraged by the short sight which his peers showed, Aleksandr retreated to his fief, but the burghers, who were smarter than their petty nobles, soon recalled him to ensure the independence of Novgorod. Aleksandr mustered an army again and marched against Pskov, besieged the western troops in it, and retook the city. Then he headed towards the invading army, which was in the Danish fortress of Dorpat in Estonia. The two armies met on the frozen surface of Lake Chud, in an engagement that would decide the final destiny of Russia. With a careful use of his wings of light cavalry, and possibly of mounted Mongol archers, Aleksandr managed to overwhelm the supposedly invincible Teutonic heavy cavalry. The legend says that many knights drowned in the lake, dragged down by the weight of their own armour. Certainly, the Teutonic



Knights did not dare to move against Russia any longer.

After this victory, Aleksandr became the undisputed ruler of Novgorod, and after his father's death, he was Prince of the Russians. However, the last battle fought and won by Aleksandr was not a military one, but his victory against his own pride. When the Mongol Horde summoned him to pay homage to the Khan, Aleksandr had to choose between a doomed rebellion against the Mongols and a shameful submission that would ensure his people's survival. As a wise ruler, he chose the latter solution and paid homage to the Khan. Impressed by the tales of his valour, the Mongols honoured him and did not demand that he worshipped their idols as they had done with other Russian princes. Until his death in 1262, Aleksandr managed to keep a costly but stable peace with all the external enemies of Russia, using military might against Sweden and tribute with the Mongols.

Mindaugas

THE FIRST LITHUANIAN KING

GRAND DUKE Mindaugas was the first, and only, crowned King of Lithuania, and possibly one of the best politicians of the Middle Ages. Starting only with the resources of a Baltic tribe or two, he alternated diplomatic wisdom and raw military might to lay the foundation of what would become, centuries later, the largest nation in Europe.

Mindaugas was born around 1200 AD and was, at first, just one Duke among the many nobles of Lietuva. He managed to increase his power by killing or exiling all the other Dukes who opposed his rule, many of which were of his own blood, and by 1236 he was Grand Duke of the Lietuvai, and possibly also ruled Aukstaitija. Only Vykintas, Grand Duke of Zemaitija, could cast a shadow over his fame and authority. This was strengthened by the fact that Vykintas led the victorious army that almost destroyed the Livonian Order at the Battle of the Saule. It is uncertain whether Mindaugas took part in this battle, and, in any case, the victory is ascribed by the chroniclers to Vykintas.

In the years following this victory, Mindaugas tried to consolidate his power among the Lithuanians with diplomacy, and to acquire more lands in Belarus with military campaigns. But at one point, his enemies realized that he had become too powerful, and created a coalition to destroy him. In response to this, Mindaugas secretly made an agreement with the Livonian Order, exploiting the rivalry between the Order and the Bishops to win papal favour. Since Vykintas, whom the Brothers blamed for their defeat at the Saule, was among his enemies, Mindaugas did not need much to persuade the Order to come to terms with him, too. In 1251, Mindaugas and his family were baptised. They built a cathedral in Vilnius shortly after their baptism. This was probably a totally political move, as Medieval historians relate that he continued to sacrifice to pagan gods. In response to this, his enemy Tautvilas attacked Mindaugas in his fortress of Voruta, but failed to capture it.

Once the truce with the Order was signed, Mindaugas turned his attention to his Lithuanian enemies and assembled a great army with which he attacked Samogitia. He laid siege to Tverai, stronghold of Tautvilas and Vykintas, routed the former and killed the latter, thus eliminating all opposition to becoming King. In exchange for the truce, Mindaugas ceded some lands over which he had a loose control (part of Samogitia, Selonia and part of Yotvingia) to the Order. In 1253, Mindaugas was crowned King of Lithuania with the blessing of the Pope. This date is usually acknowledged as the foundation of modern Lithuania, although none of the



subsequent Grand Dukes were crowned kings.

During the ten years of his reign, Mindaugas tried mainly to consolidate his conquests in Black Ruthenia (now Belarus), and in so doing he confronted the Mongols of the Golden Horde. He also turned his back to the Teutonic Order as soon as an opportunity presented itself to defeat them, and probably returned to paganism, too. Later on, his nephew Treniota formed an ally with the Russians to counter Mindaugas's power, and in 1263, Treniota succeeded in assassinating Mindaugas and two of his sons, became Grand Duke and had Lithuania officially return to paganism.

Mindaugas had at least two wives, possibly more, and several children, but none of his surviving descendants held any office in Lithuania in the following years. Treniota himself and two of his successors as Grand Dukes were assassinated, and only with Grand Duke Traidenis in 1270 did Lithuania return to stability. Even if his rule was characterised by lights and shadows together, Mindaugas certainly managed to succeed where the other Baltic leaders of his age failed.

henry Monte

THE ROBIN HOOD OF PRUSSIA

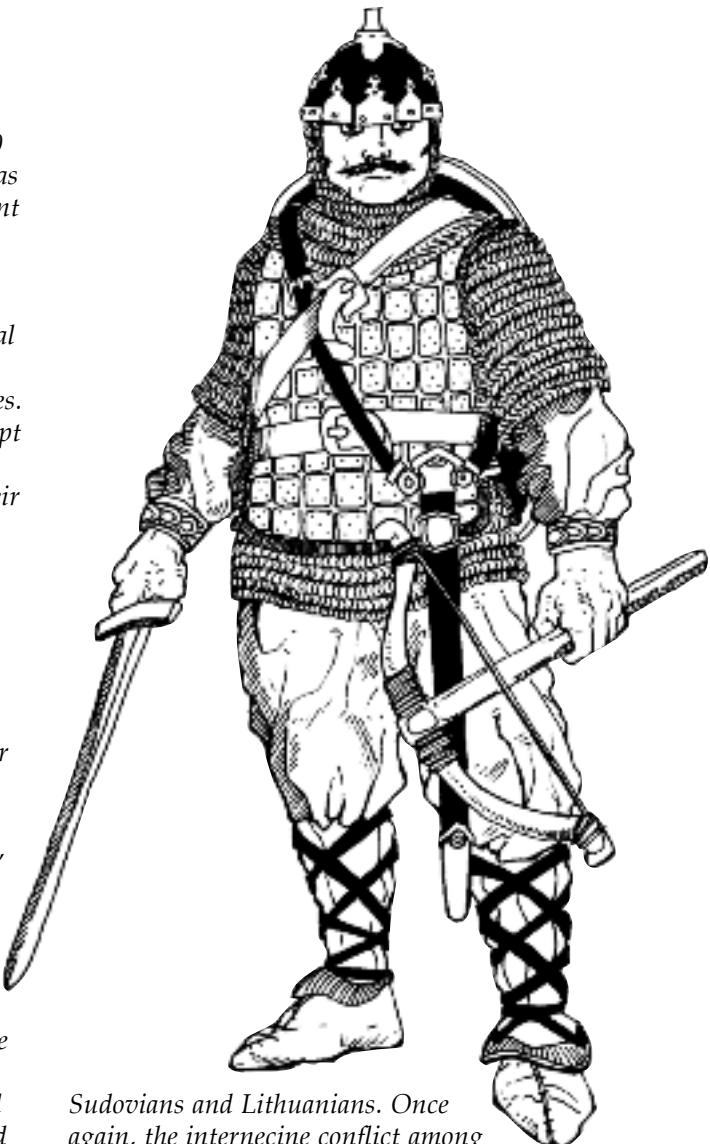
HENRY MONTE was the son of a Nattangian noble. The Nattangians were one of the first tribes to fall to the Crusaders, and so in 1240 AD, when he was twelve year old or so, young Henry was taken as hostage by Duke Otto of Braunschweig and spent his youth in Magdeburg, learning the language and customs of his enemies.

Although the Crusaders were able to penetrate deep into Prussian territory in the first years of war, the actual pacification of the rebellious Prussians was not so fast, and cost the Teutonic Knights many years and many lives. More than once, the fierce Prussians revolted and attempted to throw away the civil and spiritual yoke of the Crusaders. For this reason, the Teutonic Knights and their secular allies used to take hostages from the Prussian noble families, in order to keep their relatives tame. The Crusaders hoped that living in a more civilized country would show the hostages the superiority of the Christian way, but this did not work in every instance.

In 1252 Henry, now a man, returned to a pacified Nattangia, and fought alongside the Teutonic Knights against the Sambians and the Yotvingians, in yet another war of expansion and forcible conversion.

In 1260, Henry took part in a bloody battle against the Zemaitiai, and seeing an opportunity to switch sides, he and his men fled, leaving the remaining Christian forces to be slaughtered by the Zemaitiai. From that moment on, and for about twelve years afterwards, he fought against the Teutonic Order, and dealt it some memorable blows. Having been trained in combat by the Teutonic Knights themselves, Henry knew how to use captured crossbows, and how to build and use siege engines to capture the stone castles that no Prussian had been able to storm before him. In a few years, he captured the fortresses of Nattangia and Sambia, and managed to raid into Teutonic territory, looting even the headquarters of Kulm.

During this first phase of his rebellion, Henry joined forces with the Sambian, Warmian and Bartian tribes, thus mustering an army that had no equals in the history of Prussia. Later on, however, this unity of the tribes that had been missing in previous Prussian history, and was the secret behind the success of the Lithuanians, ceased, as the Teutonic Knights' retaliation struck and left the revolting tribes open to the raids of the neighbouring



Sudovians and Lithuanians. Once again, the internecine conflict among the Baltic tribes did more than the German military machine could do, and in 1272 the Nattangians gave up their rebellion. The Teutonic Order, this time, did not allow the Nattangian nobility to remain in charge and replaced it with German overlords. Henry, who had become a mythic figure, was forced to flee, as he knew that there would be no mercy for him. His career ended in 1273, when a patrol of Teutonic Knights met him alone in a tent near Christburg and, having recognized him, executed him on the spot. Prussia's last hope of remaining independent died with him.

Albert Suerbeer

THE FIRST ARCHBISHOP

ALBERT SUERBEER was born in the German city of Köln around 1200, and was a very learned clergyman, serving under the Archbishop of Bremen – from whom the Bishops of Livonia depended. Suerbeer was a very loyal supporter of Papal authority, and when the Archbishop appointed him Bishop of Riga in 1229 to replace the “other” Albert, the Livonian clergy rebelled against the authority and elected another, local bishop, Nicholas. After a political struggle with the local nobles, who supported Nicholas, Suerbeer had to leave the See of Riga to his rival and settle with the position of Archbishop of Armagh, which also included the title of Primate of Ireland.

His stay on the seat of St. Patrick did not last for long, however, as Pope Innocent IV knew that Albert was among his most loyal and effective supporters in Germany, where the new Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II the Stupor Mundi, was undermining the Church authority over the Empire. Albert was made Bishop of Lübeck in 1247, and given authority over all the Bishops of Livonia and the papal legates to the North-Eastern lands. In 1253, after Nicholas had died, the Pope appointed Suerbeer Bishop of Riga, and this time no complaint by the local clergy was enough to change his mind. Albert left the seat of Bishop of Lübeck and moved to Riga, which became the seat of an Archbishopric that had authority over the four Bishopric of Livonia (Riga, Oesel-Wiek, Reval and Kurland) and the four Bishopric of Prussia (Sambia, Pomesania, Warmia and Kulm). Basically, all the clergy on the Teutonic Order lands was under Suerbeer’s authority. This worried the Order a lot, as Suerbeer acknowledged no authority save that of the Pope, and the Teutonic Knights were struggling for their independence after the death of their great supporter, the Stupor Mundi.

Suerbeer acted as a ruthless and efficient ruler in Livonia, and made several attempts to cancel the effects of the religious schism of 1054 and bring Russia back into the influence sphere of the Roman Church, but with little success. His attempts at limiting the power of the Order were thwarted, too, as the Knights eventually imprisoned him. In order to be released, Suerbeer had to promise to recognize their authority until his death in 1273.

Albert von Buxhövden

THE FOUNDER



LSO KNOWN as Albert of Riga for obvious reasons, Albert was born in Bremen in 1165, and followed the clerical career since his youth. He could have been just another clergyman in Saxony, if the Archbishop of Bremen, who was his uncle, had not chosen him to replace Meinhard as the Bishop of Livonia after Meinhard’s death in battle. His deeds from that moment until his death in Riga in 1229 have already been described in the historical chapters, as his personal history is completely interwoven with that of the peoples of Livonia. With an impressive display of oratory skills when he preached his yearly Crusade in Saxony, political intelligence when obtaining the help of the merchant guilds to found his city, and charismatic leadership when keeping the unruly lot that he had turned into a military Order under his control – something no other Bishop was able to do – Albert carved a place for himself in the history of the Amber Coast.



Creatures

THIS CHAPTER includes some mundane creatures that are not described in the *Basic Roleplaying* book, as well as supernatural beings that are typical of Baltic folklore. Other mundane creatures like bears, horses and wolves are described in *Basic Roleplaying* on page 334.

Bison

Now almost extinct, these furry bovines used to roam the plains of Poland and Ukraine during the ancient times.

Characteristics		D20	Hit Locations	AP/HP
STR	3D6+30 40	DB +4d6	1-2	Right H Leg
CON	3D6+9 20	HP 30	3-4	Left H Leg
SIZ	3D6+30 40	Move 12	5-7	Hindquarters
INT	4 4		8-10	Forequarters
POW	3D6 10		11-13	Right F Leg
DEX	2D6 7		14-16	Left F Leg
			17-20	Head
				4/10

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Butt	50%	2d6+1/2db	impale
Charge	50%	2d6+db	impale
Trample	75%	2*db	crush

Armour: 4 point hide

Special: the trample attack is effective only against a downed foe. When the bison horns impale, they deal 3d6 damage, not 4d6. If the horns remain stuck in the opponent's body, the beast will try to shake the foe away by dragging him around. This can be a really, really sorrowful event.

Skills: Listen 50%, Spot 50%, Sense 50%.

Lauma

Other Names: *Laume* (Lithuanian)

Lauma is the Baltic name for wood fairies. A Lauma is believed to be a heavenly maiden, unable to bear children on her own. The sorrow caused by her being infertile in spite of her deep knowledge of the forces of life has lead this creature to leave the sky realm for the earth realm, where she now dwells in the woods.

Laumas often take care of human orphans, particularly the ones whose mother died in childbirth. Their empathy and knowledge of the healing arts make them wonderful midwives. Laumas are rarely seen if they do not want to be seen. Their presence is often revealed by their delightful voices and beautiful songs. Laumas can use their chants to cast their healing and emotional spells on targets that they cannot see, although this requires double the normal Mana cost for the spell.

A Lauma is believed to be immune to mundane weapons, but her physical form is as vulnerable to harm as a human. However, if her material body is destroyed, it will reform as soon as a child is in danger or distress within POW kilometres of the location where she was banished to the spirit world. In the latter case, the Lauma will seek out the cause of the child's distress and seek revenge.



Characteristics		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6 7	DB -	4-6	Left Leg
CON	2D6+6 13	HP 12	7-9	Abdomen
SIZ	2D6+2 9	Mana 16	10-12	Chest
INT	2D6+6 13	Move 10	13-15	Right Arm
POW	3D6+6 16		16-18	Left Arm
DEX	3D6+6 16		19-20	Head
APP	3D6+6 16			-/4

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Unarmed	40%	1d3+db	crush

Skills: Dodge 70%, First Aid 90%, Hide 60%, Insight 70%, Knowledge (Baltic) 90%, Listen 70%, Medicine 40%, Perform (Sing) 90%, Spot 50%, Stealth 70%, Track 50%.

Armour: none

Powers: Super Sense (Night Vision, Emotion Sensing). Laumas can sense the life force and emotions of humans at a very long distance with an Insight roll.

Magic: Heal (2), Sureness of the Laima, Unbreakable Bonds (3).

Moose

These great herbivores are common in the temperate forests and frozen taigas of the Amber Coast. Moose are not dangerous to humans, unless the latter decide to hunt them, in which case a moose is more than capable of defending itself. The statistics provided here are for a male specimen; females are smaller and weaker by 8-10 points of both STR and SIZ and lack antlers, so they are less dangerous.

Characteristics		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+20 30	DB +3d6	1-2	Right H Leg
CON	3D6 10	HP 20	3-4	Left H Leg
SIZ	3D6+20 30	Move 12	5-7	Hindquarters
INT	4 4		8-10	Forequarters
POW	3D6 10		11-13	Right F Leg
DEX	2D6+6 13		14-16	Left F Leg
			17-20	Head

Weapons	Skill	Damage	Special
Butt	60%	1d10+1/2db	crush
Charge	40%	1d10+db	crush
Trample	75%	2*db	crush

Armour: 2 point hide

Special: the trample attack is effective only against a downed foe, and has always a 75% chance to hit.

Skills: Listen 60%, Spot 60%, Sense 30%.

Pūkis

Other Names: *Aitvaras* (Lithuanian)

A Pūkis is a familiar spirit in the form of a small drake that helps his master by bringing him stolen goods, usually coins or grain. When a person suddenly becomes rich without any reasonable explanation, the reason may be a Pūkis.

Characteristics		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6 7	DB -1d4	1-2	Right H Leg
CON	3D6+6 16	HP 10	3-4	Left H Leg
SIZ	1D4+2 4	Mana 16	5-7	Hindquarters
INT	1d6 3	Move 8	8-10	Forequarters
POW	3D6+6 16	(12 flying)	11-12	Right Wing
DEX	2D6 7		13-14	Left Wing
APP	1D6 3		15-16	Right F Leg
			17-18	Left F Leg
			19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	40%	1d8+db	bleed

Skills: Dodge 50%, Fly 40%, Stealth 50%.

Armour: none.

Powers: Super Sense (Night Vision)

Special: Targeting the creature when it is flying is *Difficult*, in addition to any penalties for darkness.

Ragana



Ragana is the Latvian name for a witch. These creatures, deeply connected with the realm of the Veli, were originally sent by the gods to warn mortals about their fate. As such, they were regarded as prophetesses by humans, who treated them with great respect and gifted them with all sorts of offerings. As time passed, however, a few mortal women became more and more aware of the intricacies of fate through the worship of the three Laimas, and slowly took over the position of Raganas among men. So in the present days the title of Ragana is used for mortal witches rather than the spirits that originated Latvian witchcraft. The few true Raganas who still dwell in the domain of mortals, always in gloomy and haunted places, have become rather hostile to humans, and delight in causing harm and fear by revealing bad omens and fateful predictions.

A being identified as a Ragana, whether she is an embodied spirit or a village witch, usually worships Laima or *Velu Māte*, or both, and has acquired all the appropriate charms and spells.

Characteristics		D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+2 9	DB -	1-3	Right Leg
CON	3D6 10	HP 10	4-6	Left Leg
SIZ	2D6+4 11	Mana 16	7-9	Abdomen
INT	3D6+6 16	Move 10	10-12	Chest
POW	3D6+6 16		13-15	Right Arm
DEX	3D6 10		16-18	Left Arm
APP	1D6 3		19-20	Head

Weapons	Skill	Damage
Claw	40%	1d6+db

Skills: Dodge 70%, Persistence 90%, Resilience 70%, Perception 50%, Survival 90%, Craft (Poison) 90%, Astrology 90%.

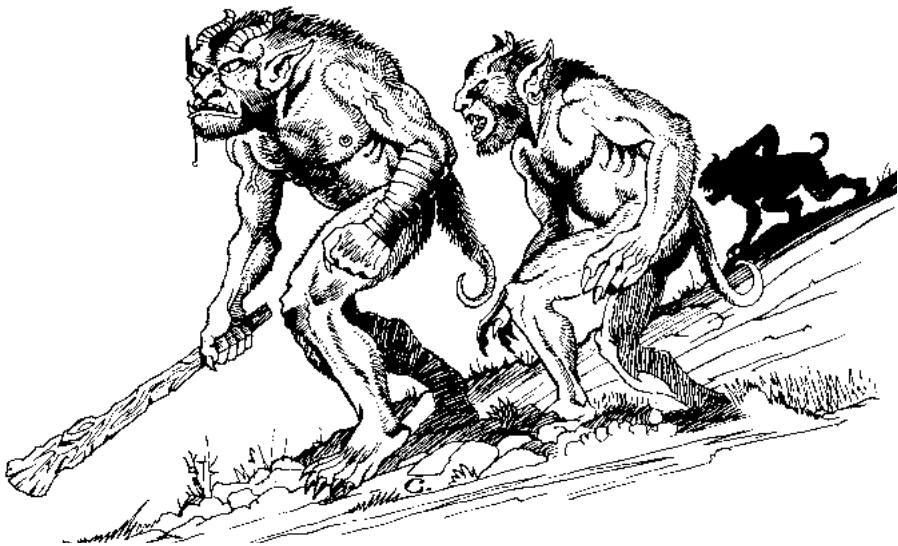
Armour: none

Special: Raganas can see in the dark, but, unlike Laumas, are banished forever if their physical form is destroyed.

Magic: all those provided by Laima, *Velu Māte* and *Vilkacis*, plus Summon Pukis (A). Usually favours Brazier of Power, Curse of Sorcery, Muddle, Pox, Rat's Vision, Speak with the Dead, Witch Flight, Witch Sight.

historical note

It is clear that the Velns of Latvian folklore is some sort of contamination of the traditional cult of the dead and Christian beliefs about the Devil. Still, as the resulting description is perfectly fit for a fantasy game, we have incorporated its description in the body of beliefs of medieval Balts. We apologize with the historians among our readers.



Veli

Livonians believe that each human being is made up of a physical body and an astral body, or veli. When death occurs, the veli survives the decaying body for a long time, and moves to Vinsaule, the Livonian Otherworld, ruled by Veli Mate. From there, the deceased may occasionally return to their old homes, and communicate with their living descendants, particularly if the latter are in some danger. The barriers between the mortal world and the realm of the dead are particularly weak during the first part of autumn (Veli laiks, or Spirit Time), or at cemeteries, the places where Veli Mate greets the deceased. When a person dies and is not given proper burial rites, his veli cannot enter the realm of the dead, and stays near the place of his death as a restless ghost until his body is buried or revenge is taken upon his slayer.

Note that Latvian religion does not regard Veli or Veli Mate as evil, and there is no connection between Veli and Velns, although Christians often mistake one for another.

Characteristics

INT	2D6+6	13	Mana 16
POW	3D6+6	16	Move: as POW
APP	3D6	10	

Special: the Veli cannot interact physically with the mundane world, but can engage embodied creatures in Psychic Combat, and if they approach its unburied body it can manifest on the mundane plane and cast magic. **Spells:** When guarding his unburied body, a Veli can use his old runic charms, if still on his body, to cast magic. The particular nature of the Veli modifies the relationship between the soul and the charm, so that the spell is not wasted after use.

Velns

Other Names: *Jods* (Lithuanian)

The word Velns described the entity that Latvians know as the Devil, but it is not the same as the Christian Devil. In Latvian folklore, the Devil is a black creature that lives in the wilderness, and comes out of it to harass or rob humanity, often kidnapping attractive young maidens. It is strong and dangerous if confronted physically, but so utterly stupid that it is rather easy to fool it. Despite the similarity in name, there is no

connection between Velns and the Lithuanian god of the Underworld, Velnias. Velns do not inhabit the underworld, living in a dark cave at most, and have nothing to do with the spirits of the dead, although their name is so similar that Christians often mistake one for the other.

Velns are particularly afraid of Perkons and his magic, which has double effect on them. The oak tree, sacred to Lord Perkons, is also particularly obnoxious for them: weapons made entirely of oak wood do double damage to Velns.

Characteristics	D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR 2D6+12	19	DB +1d4	1-3 Right Leg -/5
CON 2D6+6	13	HP 13	4-6 Left Leg -/5
SIZ 2D6+6	13	Mana 10	7-9 Abdomen -/5
INT 3D6	10	Move 10	10-12 Chest -/6
POW 3D6	10		13-15 Right Arm -/4
DEX 2D6+6	13		16-18 Left Arm -/4
APP 1D6	3		19-20 Head -/5

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Claw	50%	1d6+db	bleed
Club	30%	1d8+db	crush
Thrown rock	30%	1d2+½db	crush

Skills: Dodge 30%, Hide 40%, Listen 30%, Spot 40%, Stealth 50%, Throw 30%.

Armour: none natural, can wear scavenged armour pieces.

Spells: the very few Velns who know magic use the same spells that are available to Vilkacis. Consult the Vilkacis chapter for more information.

Zaltsys

Zaltsys is the name that Lithuanian people give to the common grass snake. It is a harmless creature that brings luck and good harvests in their minds, and they usually let it enter their houses and sleep under their beds. The Zaltsys is a sacred creature in Lithuania, and killing one is believed to cause great misfortune.

A Zaltsys is essentially a harmless creature, so no statistics are provided for it. Should the adventurers need to track and capture one, possibly because it is controlled by some evil entity, give it the following skills: Dodge 50%, Hide 80%, Stealth 90%.

Zilvinas

In Lithuanian mythology, Zilvinas the Serpent King rules a Kingdom that lies beneath the Sea. He marries the beautiful maiden Egle, and is eventually killed by her jealous brothers. Lithuanians usually regard Zilvinas as a single creature, but it is possible that there are several rulers in the Serpent Kingdom, all of which take the name Zilvinas when dealing with humanity. Like all Zaltsys, Zilvinas can bring fertility and good luck to humans, or calamities and disaster if angered. His powers are great and mysterious, and ordinary people usually fear him.

Zilvinas can appear in snake, human and dragon form. His INT and POW are the same for all forms, while all other characteristics are different in each form.



ZILVINAS, SNAKE FORM

Characteristics			D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	1 1	DB -1d6	1-20	Body	-/4
CON	2D6 7	HP 4			
SIZ	1 1	Mana 20			
INT	2d6+10 17	Move 6			
POW	3D6+10 20				
DEX	3D6+15 25				
APP	1D6 3				

No effective attack

Skills: Dodge 90%, Hide 90%, Spot 70%, Stealth 90%.

Armour: none

ZILVINAS, HUMAN FORM

Characteristics			D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	6D6 21	DB +1d6	1-3	Right Leg	-/6
CON	4D6 14	HP 4	4-6	Left Leg	-/6
SIZ	2D6+6 13	Mana 20	7-9	Abdomen	-/7
INT	2d6+10 17	Move 10	10-12	Chest	-/8
POW	3D6+10 20		13-15	Right Arm	-/5
DEX	4D6 14		16-18	Left Arm	-/5
APP	6D6 21		19-20	Head	-/6

Weapons	Skill	Damage	Special
Unarmed	90%	1d3 + db	crush
Staff	70%	1d8 + db	crush

Skills: Climb 70%, Dodge 60%, Jump 90%, Knowledge (Baltic) 200%, Listen 60%, Spot 70%, Swim 100%.

Armour: can wear any.

ZILVINAS, LIMBLESS DRAGON FORM

Characteristics			D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	10D6 70	DB +8d6	1-6	Tail	10/14
CON	4D6 14	HP 42	7-14	Body	10/17
SIZ	10D6 70	Mana 20	15-20	Head	10/14
INT	2d6+10 17	Move 10	15-20	Head	10/14
POW	3D6+10 20				
DEX	3D6 14				
APP	4D6 21				

Weapons	Skill	Damage	Special
Bite	40%	1d8 + ½db	bleed
Constrict	75%	db	crush

Skills: Spot 70%, Swim 100%.

Armour: scaly skin (AP 10)

Magic (all forms)

Spells: Breath of Life, Heal (2), Luck (4), Pox, Talons of Zilvinas 4, Undo Magic 4, Zaltsys' Vision.

Vílkacís

Nature of the Vílkacís

A werewolf (Vílkacís or Vílkatis in Latvian, Vílkolakis in Lithuanian) is a human being who has the ability to assume a wolf nature. A female Vílkacís is called a Vílkata in Latvian. At some time during the person's life, he or she starts to partake of the animal nature of the wolf, and soon starts to take the animal's shape, too.

This transformation is initially viewed as benign in the nature-worshipping culture of the Balts. Vílkacís prey on cattle and sheep, killing the weak individuals and preserving the natural balance. Werewolves live on the fringes of human civilization, occasionally joining wolf packs while in animal shape and reverting back to their human form at will. Some of them lose their ability to retake their human appearance because of wounds taken while transformed, although it is not clear whether this implies that they continue to exist as wolves or that they die for this reason. In other cases, the legends say that they were forced to keep their wolf form for several years after committing a crime against nature. The detail of the wound inflicted by human herders could simply be a consequence of retaliation for them killing too many animals or attacking healthy individuals in a herd or flock.

However, a wolf is a prey beast and these transformed individuals often develop an insatiable, uncontrollable craving for cattle, and in some cases, they start to appreciate the taste of humans, too. It is stated that the Devil, which in this case is not the stupid creature known as Vélns but one of the Dark Gods, spoke to the Vílkacís, and leveraged on the animal parts of their hybrid souls to turn them to Evil. The legendary tales also state that the Devil turned their lust for meat and blood into a craving for human souls, transforming them into vampire-like creatures. Good Vílkacís no longer exist on the Baltic coast at the time of the Crusades, although history and later legends hint at the fact that some of them eventually turn back to Good and help the peasants against the oppression of foreign feudal lords. The rest of this chapter, however, assumes that all Vílkacís are servants of the Dark Gods, and that transformation into a werewolf implies initiation into an unholy cult.

It is not possible to tell if a person is a Vílkacís by any means, including magic. The only way to provide evidence that a suspected individual is a werewolf is to have him or her confess or transform in front of witnesses. During the centuries, many Balts accused of



witchcraft by the Inquisition "confessed" under torture and were burned alive. Maybe they were actually Vílkacís, maybe not.

Becoming a Vílkacís

The legends say that one can turn into a Vílkacís by simply donning a wolf fur. While this may have been a common tactics used by hunters to approach wolf packs and get hold of more pelts, it is clearly not enough to become a werewolf. Contrary to the Central European legends, you cannot become a Vílkacís by being bitten by another one. A particular ritual,



involving acceptance by the werewolf-to-be, is required.

The actual details about the components required for this ritual are best left to the Game Master, but it should involve at least the presence of a wolf fur, possibly still soaked by the blood of the beast, and travel to a magical place where the wolf spirits are stronger. Drinking rainwater that has accumulated in a wolf footprint may be required, too.

Knowledge of this ritual is usually imparted by an elder Vilkacis to a candidate for transformation, and can be treated as a peculiar variation of the spell Liken Shape. A Teach skill roll made by the teacher, or a Knowledge (Baltic) roll made by the student, may be required by the Game Master for the instruction to be successful. The likelihood that a character can become a Vilkacis by chance, or learn the ritual without the assistance of a master, is best left to the individual Game Master.

Once he or she has performed the ritual, the candidate is transformed into the simplest stage of werewolf, a Spirit Vilkacis. The new werewolf is not bound to his teacher in any way, but he has little or no idea about his new powers, so if he is deprived of his master's guidance, he has limited chances to be able to progress towards the next level of lycanthropy.

Transformation

Vilkacis can usually turn from their human shape into their wolf form at will. The procedure that allows them to do so varies according to the stage the Vilkacis is at, and is usually voluntary. Vilkacis, however, usually only shapechange at night, when their feral instincts and senses give them a greater advantage over mere humans. Some legends say that the Vilkacis cannot resist the urge to transform on nights with a full moon, but this is in contrast with Baltic culture and is probably a contamination with German influences.

It is true, however, that the creature cannot resist the urge to transform when in certain unholy places, usually the same that allow the initial transformation into a Vilkacis. If a werewolf is confronted with potential prey or with any incident that can stimulate his bestial nature while in one of such places, he will transform into a wolf, even if this means revealing his true nature to onlookers. It is obvious that, should this happen, the werewolf will try to get rid of any witnesses that could eventually give away his true nature.

Spirit Vilkacis (First Stage)

A spirit Vilkacis is nothing more than a feral spirit in the shape of a wolf who has succumbed to his predatory instincts. A man who turns into a spirit Vilkacis simply lets his soul exit his body and take the form of a wolf while disorporate. For several

reasons, a Spirit Vilkacis may be unable to re-enter his body for a given amount of time. This does not necessarily kill the creature, but his body may starve to death if the separation lasts for too long.

While in spirit form, the Vilkacis is able to prey on physical creatures even though it actually exists on the spirit plane. Eating the flesh of cattle allows the creature to find spiritual sustainment and facilitates return to the human body.

Worship of the Dark Gods, however, has taught the Vilkacis the secret of preying on souls rather than on bodies. Biting and eating the spirits of the dead increases the Vilkacis spiritual power, while in the process tainting him with the evil influence of the Dark Gods. While feeding on cattle is a natural instinct for him, a Spirit Vilkacis needs the instructions of a master, usually the elder Vilkacis that turned him into a werewolf, to learn how to prey on souls. Learning how to consume souls is the equivalent of initiation into the cult of the Dark Gods, and gives the initiate a skill of 1d6 in Allegiance (Dark Gods). For each soul consumed, the Spirit Vilkacis can roll against its Allegiance, and if the roll is higher its score goes up by 1d6.

Once the Spirit Vilkacis has consumed enough souls to bring his Allegiance (Dark Gods) to 50%, it is ready to progress to the next stage.

Beast Vilkacis (Second Stage)

When he reaches the stage of Beast Vilkacis, the werewolf is no longer a nature spirit but a being totally tainted by evil. He can still shapechange, but instead of letting his spirit wander far from his mortal shell, his entire body becomes that of a wolf. This transformation also bestows upon him an uncontrollable feral rage and immunity to all non-magical weapons. As his powers come from the Devil, however, the Beast Vilkacis acquires some of the weaknesses that Velns show when hit by Perkons magic. He can, therefore, be hurt by weapons made exclusively of oaken wood, although these do not do him any extra damage.

A Beast Vilkacis can start to learn Black Magic, which is a dark version of Pagan Magic connected to the worship of the Dark Gods. Some evil spells, like Curse of Sorcery or Muddle, are only learned by practitioners of this kind of sorcery. Female Vilkata often devote themselves to magic and become powerful witches, while male Vilkacis usually learn only those spells that are useful for performing their vile deeds of pillage.

When a Beast Vilkacis changes to his feral form, his clothes do not shapechange with him, so he usually strips naked and hides his possessions before assuming wolf form. Shapechanging against his will can be particularly inconvenient for the Vilkacis in this stage, as he risks losing or damaging his clothes. When the werewolf is transformed, he cannot wield weapons or carry items, nor can he cast magic of any sort. Despite this, Beast Vilkacis tend to wear their

Historical Accuracy

The actual origin of werewolves is a very blurry fact in ancient Baltic legends. This is possibly due to the nature of legends themselves, which, not being based on facts, tend to vary a lot depending on the person who tells them. The advent of Christianity may have changed the view people had on Vilkacis, as they are sometimes described as some sort of Robin Hood fellows who only preyed on cattle belonging to German barons, or sometimes the Crusaders themselves were seen as evil Vilkacis because of their predatory behaviour.

As a result of this, most of what is written here is not based on transcripts of old legends. The Vilkacis described here are just an author's speculation intended to provide more fun for your games, particularly if you want to play the standard campaign for Crusaders of the Amber Coast, which features lots of Vilkacis villains. As always, feel free to adjust everything to suit your game needs: if you want your heroes to be "good" Vilkacis fighting against the evil Crusaders, go for it.



shapechange on full moon nights.

When the Beast Vilkacis has reached 90% skill level in at least three skills out of Allegiance (Dark Gods), Bite, Dodge, Knowledge (Baltic), Stealth and one other weapon skill, he or she can progress to the next stage.

Elder Vilkacis (third stage)

When a Vilkacis becomes an Elder, his human and bestial nature start to merge under the guidance of the Devil. In fact, an Elder's natural state is that of a beast in human form, and he is actually wearing his human appearance as a disguise. The Elder can still lose his control when in a Place of Power, and change into his wolf form against his will, but this is less dangerous for him than it is for a Beast Vilkacis.

When transformed, the Elder looks like a furry human with a tail and a wolf head. He can walk either on two legs and on four, and his fore limbs are perfectly able to manipulate items. An Elder Vilkacis can wield weapons and cast magic when in wolf form, and is immune to non-magical damage. In addition to this, he can still wear clothes and armour. The only disadvantage of wolf shape for an Elder is that normal helmets do not fit their head shape, preventing them from wearing head protection other than a coif.

magical charms hanging from their necks, so that they can still carry them when they are in wolf form, and they have immediate access to them when they switch back to human form.

A werewolf in his second stage no longer needs to feed on cattle when in animal form, but he often does so for pure pleasure. Instead, he gains 1d6 Mana for his vicious practices whenever he kills a sentient victim. These extra Mana cannot exceed double the creature's original POW and will expire at the next sunrise or sunset, whichever comes first. On the night that a powerful Vilkacis sorcerer chooses to perform his dark rituals, humans wandering in the dark are found slaughtered. These rituals are usually performed when Mēness is shining mostly in the sky, and this is probably the reason why humans mistakenly believe that Vilkacis only

Vilkacis Lord (final stage)

There is only one Vilkacis Lord at a time, or at least only one for each tribe of Vilkacis. Becoming a Vilkacis Lord involves challenging the existing Lord to a mortal duel of steel, magic and fangs. Candidates usually summon the Devil and try to win its favour before issuing the challenge, as support from the Lord of Evil is essential to win the confrontation. The Vilkacis Lord's soul is tainted beyond any hope of redemption, and becomes a permanent vessel of the Devil's powers in the world.

Even though they are similar in nature to those of an elder Vilkacis, the Vilkacis Lord's powers are greater, and they are not limited to his wolf form; some of his otherworldly abilities manifest also when he is disguised as a mere mortal. No one has ever seen a Vilkacis Lord lose control and shapechange against his will, but this may be due to the fact that the Lord keeps away from places that can awaken his bestial nature when he is in human form.

Cult of the Dark gods

All Vilkacis who progress beyond the Spirit stage worship the Dark Gods and receive Dark Magic from them in return. The actual origin of this cult is unknown to both the Christian Crusaders and the Baltic priesthood. Christians will clearly speculate that these are just former Angels who, like all of their kin, live underground after falling from Heaven with Lucifer. The Baltic legends are not clear about their origin, and usually represent the Devil as having been the enemy of Dievs, or more frequently Perkons, since time began.

No names or mythology are given here for the Dark Gods. Both Christians and Pagans refer to them with the singular term of "The Devil". In fact, the Balts often seem to think that they are one single entity, although any in-depth investigation into the Vilkacis cults will reveal that they worship more than one deity.

In game terms, you can treat the Dark Gods as powerful demonic entities who have been confined to Earth aeons before the appearance of man. Their power is inferior to that of the Pagan gods, but nevertheless they can grant some useful magic to their worshippers. Most of all, the Dark Gods have the power to corrupt all men, although they usually choose the most powerful of them to become their servants. This is the main reason why they usually choose the Vilkacis, who are stronger than common men, as their servants, the second reason being that their innate bloodlust makes them easier to corrupt. These details are very similar to the Lovecraft mythos, so you can use Call of Cthulhu and all of its supplements, as inspiration if you wish to expand the information given here about the Vilkacis cults.

Statistics for Vilkacis

The game statistics given here are for an average individual of the given stage, in his or her wolf form. The statistics for the human form are the same as a normal human, except for the Lord.

Spirit Vilkacis

Its nature is that of a spirit in wolf shape, and as such it has only three characteristics: INT, POW and APP. All other attributes are calculated normally, except that the spirit Vilkacis has Hit Points equal to its Mana, it has only one Hit Location, and its bite is not influenced by any Damage Bonus.

As a feral spirit, the Vilkacis does not initiate Psychic Combat with his victims but manifests as a wolf on the mundane plane and attacks them in regular combat, doing physical damage to them and becoming vulnerable to physical attacks that have been enhanced by magic.

The creature's attacks can only be dodged, never parried unless the parrying weapon is enchanted, and it can be harmed only by spells, magic weapons or weapons enchanted to harm spirits. Oaken weapons and non-magical fire are ineffective against it, and the creature can still Dodge magic weapons.

Characteristics	D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
INT 2D6+6 13	HP 14	1-20	Wolf
POW 4D6 14	move as POW		
APP 3D6 10			

Weapons	Skill	Damage	
Bite	40%	1d4	

Skills: Dodge 30%, Listen 50%, Sense 60%, Spot 40%, Stealth 40%, Track 60%.

Armour: none

Powers: Super Sense (Night Sight), Immunity to non-magic weapons

Beast Vilkacis

The creature at this stage is just a magical wolf. It is totally immune to mundane weapons, unless they have been enchanted with damage enhancing or spirit-affecting spells like Sword Blessing or Spirit Bane. Totally oaken weapons and fire can damage it, too. Its fur can still block part of the damage that would otherwise affect it.

When in wolf form, the creature's strength is doubled, increasing its damage bonus, but its feral instincts take his will over halve its INT characteristic.

Characteristics	D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR 3D6x2 20	DB +1d6	1-3	Right Hind Leg
CON 3D6 10	HP 12	4-6	Left Hind Leg
SIZ 2D6+6 13	Mana 14	7-9	Hindquarters
INT 2D6+6 x 1/2 7	Move 12	10-12	Forequarters
POW 4D6 14		13-15	Right Front Leg
DEX 3D6 10		16-18	Left Front Leg
APP 3D6 10		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	80%	per weapon	varies
Shield	80%	1d2+db	knockback
Wolf bite	80%	1d8+db	bleed

Skills: Dodge 50%, Jump 70%, Listen 70%, Sense 80%, Spot 60%, Stealth 60%, Track 80%

Armour: Hide (AP 1)

Powers: Super Sense (Night Sight), Immunity to non-magic weapons. May know magic, but cannot cast it while in wolf form.

Elder Vilkacis

At this stage, the creature's body pattern becomes that of a human, although its head is still canine and the body is covered in fur. The Vilkacis retains his weapon and magic skills while in wolf form, but with the additional protection of weapon immunity.

The feral nature of the creature no longer has the upper hand when the Elder is transformed, either, and its INT score remains the same when in wolf form.

Characteristics	D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR 3D6x2 20	DB +1d6	1-3	Right Leg
CON 3D6 10	HP 12	4-6	Left Leg
SIZ 2D6+6 13	Mana 14	7-9	Abdomen
INT 2D6+6 13	Move 10	10-12	Chest
POW 4D6 14		13-15	Right Arm
DEX 3D6 10		16-18	Left Arm
APP 3D6 10		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special
Weapon	80%	per weapon	varies
Shield	80%	1d2+db	knockback
Wolf bite	80%	1d8+db	bleed

Skills: Super Sense (Night Sight), Immunity to non-magic weapons. May know magic (see below).

Armour: Dodge 70%, Jump 70%, Knowledge (Baltic) 70%, Listen 90%, Ride 60%, Sense 90%, Spot 80%, Stealth 80%, Track 90%

Armour: 1 point fur, upon which it can wear other armour, usually leather leggings and a light mail shirt. Headgear must be specially crafted to fit the wolf head. Normal armour can stop the magical damage that could theoretically harm the Vilkacis.

Magic: usually can cast at least its INT worth of pagan/sorcery spells from charms, chosen among the ones available to Vilkacis magicians. If the Elder Vilkacis has the Gift of Magic it will know at least four times its INT worth of spells, some of which will be memorized.

Vilkacis Lord

A Vilkacis Lord has the same characteristics as an elder Vilkacis when in wolf form, but its STR is doubled even when he is in human form. Of course, a Vilkacis Lord is master of all skills and magic taught by the cult of the Dark Gods.



the Crusader Campaign



THIS LAST PART OF THE BOOK contains a complete sequence of scenarios, ranging from 1234 to 1242, that can introduce players to the world of the Northern Crusades. The main plot in the campaign involves a Vilkacis conspiracy aimed at using the Crusaders to gain control over some of the lands that they conquer, turning them into devil-worshipping kingdoms instead of

Christian lands. From the very beginning of the story, the player characters will be a thorn in the side for the forces of Evil, and at the end of it they will be the only ones aware of what is really happening and able to thwart the plans of the Vilkacis Lord. The climactic ending of the campaign involves the PCs taking part in the Battle of the Frozen Lake and causing the defeat of their own forces by the hand of



Aleksandr Nevskij in order to stop the spreading of corruption among the ranks of the Brotherhood.

The player characters will work for the Christian invaders in the beginning, but will have plenty of opportunities to interact with the creatures of the Baltic folklore, learning that they are not evil and being forced to request their help in order to battle the real Evil that is slowly corrupting the Livonian Order and the Bishoprics. This will, of course, provide the players with plenty of moral choices to make. Although the main plot described here will be the same whichever side they decide to ally with, the player characters will be allowed to choose to whom they swear allegiance, whether the Brotherhood, the Bishopric or the Pagans. Enterprising characters could choose to work for the Hanseatic League, too, which is a rising power in the Baltic at the time.

Crusaders of the Amber Coast and Latvian epic

Many of the ideas in this campaign come directly from the classic Latvian national epic, *Lāčplēsis* or The Beardslayer, written in the 19th century by Andrejs Pumpurs. Here the hero is seduced by the beautiful witch Spīdala, is saved by the Lady of the Daugava, Staburadze, and fights against evil Teutonic Knights who bargain with the Devil. However, much of the references to the poem have been altered for plot reasons. Spīdala, for instance, is a witch but not a werewolf in the poem. Of course, if you like the epic, you are encouraged to add more content from it.

If your players have access to the Latvian epic or usually look things up on the Internet, you may want to change some details that might act as spoilers. For instance, you might want to rename Spīdala in order to mask her nature as an evil witch.

Name her Laimdota, who is the good female character in the poem, and any player who delights in «knowing too much» will be headed in the wrong direction.

Creating Characters

Characters for this campaign can be created with the standard rules found in the character creation chapter. The adventurers start the game as retainers of the Sword Brothers, and some of them may be Brothers themselves. Explain to the players that their characters are not supposed to go wandering about the Baltic Coast and should have an employer for the duration of the campaign, but hint at the fact loyalties are allowed to change. Christian characters who are not Brothers are probably there to cleanse their souls from some sins, which means serving a two-year term as a crusader or as logistic support for the crusading army. Have him or her specify what are the sins he or she is willing to get rid of, as this will provide interesting motivations for the characters.

Natives are allowed as player characters, as they are usually employed as militiamen or support troops by the Brethren. It's suggested that any native characters be baptised, but this does not mean that he or she cannot worship the Baltic deities in secret.

Finally, a player could take on the role of Tekla. Adjust the statistics for the girl and make her slightly older, say fifteen, in this case, and leave her skills low – magic will compensate the disadvantage. Clarify to the player, in private, that the character is supposed to evolve into a witch and that she is crucial to the plot. Tekla remembers almost nothing about her family, and has a rather blurred memory of the time spent with the Laumas, but her memories will surface, a little bit at a time, during play. Use the «Starting as a captive» section to introduce the player character into the game.

MORALE AND MOOK RULES

During this campaign the player characters will have to face several combats against a large number of opponents with similar statistics, while leading support troops who are equally faceless for game purposes. Handling all of these confrontations with the detailed combat rules used in Basic Roleplaying may cause battles to drag, turning encounters that should be fun to play into endless sequences of die rolls.

To avoid keeping track of multiple location damage and Stamina rolls for each "cannon fodder" NPC and preventing these expendable pawns from continuing to fight after receiving several wounds, we suggest to use the following morale rules for non-significant characters in combat.

1 All nameless underlings in a group have their statistics and skills detailed. However, instead of keeping track of hits and wounds, the Games Master will handle underlings using a Morale score. Morale totally replaces Hit Points when an underling suffers damage, and it represents both physical resistance and willingness to continue fighting.

2 Even if the optional hit location rule is used for Player Characters and important Non Player Characters, it is not in effect for underlings in mass battles.

3 Underlings have a starting Morale score equal to their average POW, or their leader's APP if they have a leader, whichever is higher. The Games Master may wish to adjust this number to reflect better leadership, particular conditions or simply the fact that a group is made of more than ten or twenty individuals.

4 When a character's Morale drops to half its original value (rounded down), the NPC will surrender or flee. If Morale drops to zero or less as a consequence of a blow, and the underling fails a Stamina roll, he is knocked

out instead, and can be captured or looted after the battle. If an underling flees while engaged by an adventurer, allow an opportunity attack at the routing opponent, granting a chance to defeat and eventually loot or ransom the NPC.

5 Morale-decreasing spells automatically drop an underling's Morale to half its original value. Morale-increasing spells automatically restore an underling's Morale to its starting value, unless the underling has already been knocked out.

6 For each comrade who falls, surrenders or flees, an underling's Morale will drop by one point. This decrease is permanent, even if the comrade is healed and eventually re-enters the combat.

7 Leaders and significant non-player characters do not have a Morale score and will fight to the death or until the Gamemaster decides otherwise. However, if a leader is knocked out or flees, all the underlings on his side receive an automatic decrease in Morale equal to one quarter of his APP, rounded down, in addition to the Morale loss for the fallen comrade, and might decide to flee or surrender if their morale drops too low. In any case it is always possible that underlings are temporarily "frozen in place" by the loss of their leader.

8 If a fallen leader is healed and re-enters combat, the Morale lost by all underlings on his side for seeing him go down is instantly restored, and all routing underlings who are brought back to positive Morale can re-enter combat. If the circumstances of his healing are particularly noteworthy, then the Gamemaster may decide that this positive bonus is actually higher than the original penalty, up to half the leader's APP score. There is nothing that improves your morale like seeing that your commander is apparently immortal!



9 If there are underlings on their side, a successful use of communication skills by adventurers can and should alter their Morale. A successful Perform (Oratory) test made by the commander before a battle will boost Morale by 1d3 for all underlings. If general Morale drops during a battle due to casualties, a successful Command roll made by an adventurer that the underlings know and respect can restore 1d4 morale to a number of them equal to the character's APP score, up to their original Morale. A Difficult Persuade roll can be attempted instead of the Command roll. If any of these rolls is a Critical success, the bonus is doubled and there is no limit to the Morale gained. All Morale affecting attempts during combat take one full Combat Round to perform.

10 The Game Master should use Status as a modifier to the above rallying tests. One fifth of the character's Status with the appropriate social group, rounded down, is added to his or her Perform (Oratory), Persuade or Command tests.

11 If an Adventurer is in command of a troop of underlings he should be aware of their Morale score at any moment during a battle, as it is his responsibility to keep track of it. An adventurer who has a military background or a particular insight in a combat situation can be informed about friendly troop Morale by the Game Master. Guessing what the enemy Morale might be during combat requires a successful Insight or Strategy roll.

COMBAT EXAMPLE

As an example of how to use these rules, let us examine what happens during the combat represented in the scenario "The Raid" if these rules are used. The pagan raider leader's APP is 12, higher than the average raider POW, so their starting morale is 12. They will flee when six of them are defeated, or when three of them and their leader are out of the battle. The Sword Brothers' Morale is equal to the Komtur's APP of 14. All surviving militiamen will flee when seven allies

are out of the battle, or when four of them and the Komtur are defeated. Neither side uses Perform (Oratory) or Command to boost morale before the battle, unless a PC wishes to do so.

If the initial crossbow fire causes casualties among the pagans, these are subtracted from their Morale before melee begins. However, as the pagan leader takes the Komtur down with his spell, the Brotherhood militia suffers a drop of three points in Morale and the Games Master should rule that they all stand behind cover instead of acting, until engaged in close combat. If any of the adventurers is a Sword Brother or has some reason to have a good understanding of the tactical situation, the Games Master should inform him of the current Morale score of the militiamen. At this point the adventurers can attempt a Persuade or Command roll to restore Morale to the underlings and persuade them to reload and fire the crossbows.

Another action that the Adventurers can attempt if they realize that Morale is compromised is to attract arrow fire on themselves, as all the militiamen are on the verge of routing and even one single well placed arrow can take all of them out of the fight.

The adventurers' goal at the moment the enemy closes to melee range is to engage and take out of the fight as many enemy warriors as possible, while keeping their own casualties low to avoid a rout. The enemy commander is an obvious, although hard, target, as disabling him will almost surely make the enemy flee. The Game Master should at this point briefly describe the combats that take place between the underlings on both parts. Both sides takes 1d4-2 underling casualties, plus any more casualties caused or suffered by the adventurers, per round until one side breaks and flees.

If the player characters perform poorly their local militia could be easily brought on the verge of routing before they have managed to defeat the pagans. At this point the Game Master should use the Komtur as a Deus ex Machina to save the day, staging the scene of his reappearance to boost Morale by seven points and having him finish off the enemy commander if the adventurers seem unable to do so by themselves.

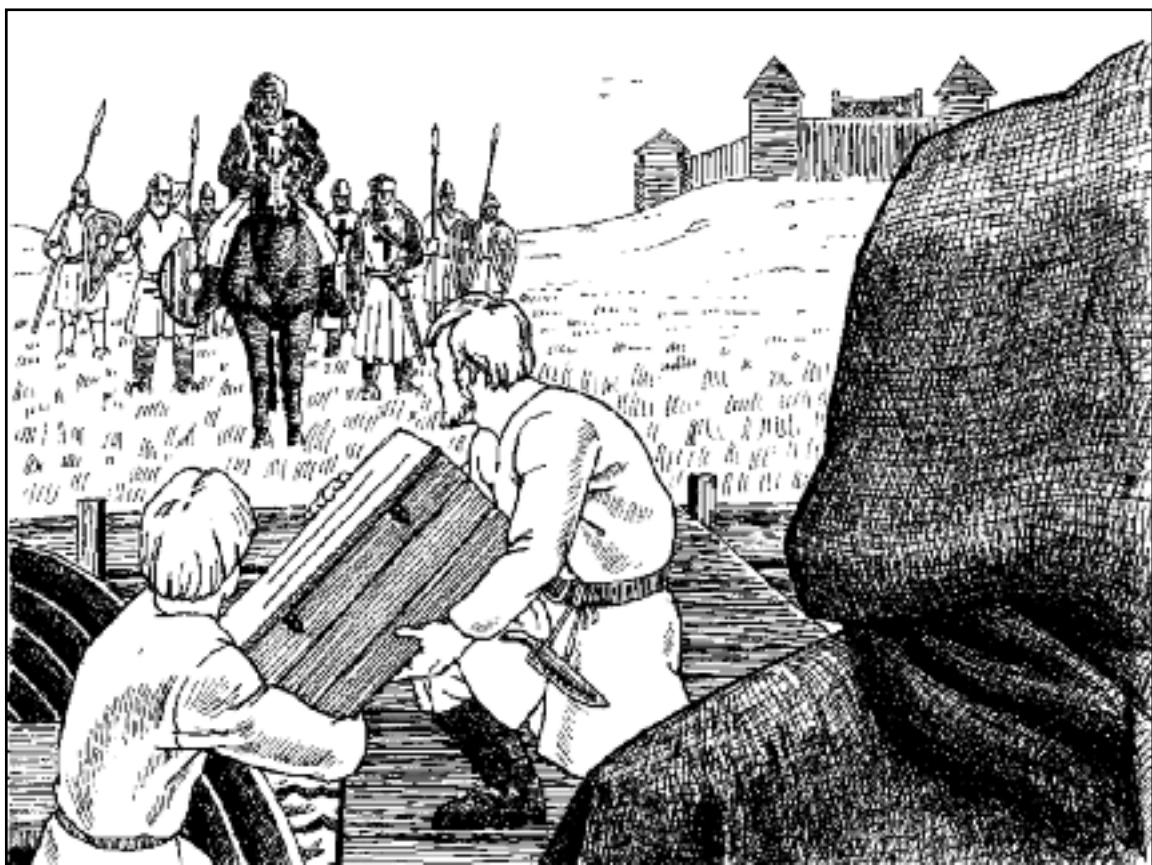


Arrival in Livonia

In the year 1234, Anno Domini, a group of adventurers met at the episcopal city of Riga, in Livonia. They were destined to have a great part in the events that ensued between 1234 and 1242, which would shape the destiny of the Baltic people for the centuries to come.

Starting as a prisoner

Some player character types, especially females and pagans, are hard to integrate realistically in a Medieval game where the majority of other characters work for a Military Order, and the GM needs an excuse to introduce them into the party. The raid can provide it, as the player characters can begin play as people who have been just captured by the raiders. Any captive PC has a rope tied to his or her neck and is guarded by a nearby Samogitian raider with a spear. The captive's weaponry and possessions are nearby, so the character is probably just waiting for an opportunity to escape when the rescuing party appears.



The Raft

SPRING, 1234 AD

THE ADVENTURERS BATTLE A RAIDING
PARTY OF SAMOGITIANS, ONE OF
WHICH CAN CAST POWERFUL SPELLS
THEY ALSO ENCOUNTER THE GOD
DIEVS IN HUMAN FORM

It is the second half of March, Anno Domini 1234, just before the pagan festival

of the Spring Equinox, or Lieldienas. The adventurers, or at least those of them who come from abroad, assemble in the city of Riga. Some of them have just arrived as Crusaders, others may be there as merchants in search of easy profit, and a few may be newly-ordered knights of the Sword Brethren. Whatever the reason why they are there, Grand Master Volkwin orders that reinforcements and supplies are sent to the fortress of Ascheraden, along the river Daugava. The player characters

are chosen by the Advocate of the Brotherhood as the expeditionary force, accompanied by a young Sword Brother if there are no Brothers among them. They are also given a couple of crates, holding eight crossbows of different sizes and plenty of quarrels, for the Garrison of Ascheraden, and commanded to deliver them to the Garrison Commander, Komtur Wilfred von Bremen.

The trip to the fort is uneventful, and costs nothing to the adventurers, as the Brothers supply the money to rent a small barge with two boatmen, and the many fortresses on the Daugava provide them with free food and shelter for the night. Exploit this trip to explain the political and military situation to the players: let them notice how many fortresses are present, and when they stop at Uexkull, tell them the story of Bishop Meinhard and how he gave this fort to the local population in exchange for their conversion to Christianity. After three or four days, the party reaches its destination.

Ascheraden is a pagan wooden fortress on the right bank of the Daugava, taken over by the Brothers not long before. Its old ruler, one Lord Aizkrauklis, converted to Christianity when his fort fell, in order to avoid losing also his life and lands.

Historical note

In 1234 the old wooden fort had already been replaced by a stone fortress built by the Brotherhood, but we will make a little variation to history to give the players the opportunity, and the fun, to do the upgrade themselves.

As soon as the barge docks near the fort, a group of combatants appears. They include the *Komtur*, Brother Lucién and several Latgallian militiamen lead by Akselis. They are rushing to the other side of the river because a Samogitian raiding party has invaded the Selonian lands on the other bank of the Daugava, and this insolence must not go unpunished. The *Komtur* seizes the crossbows and the barge

The Daughter of the Vilkacis Lord

Tekla is the lost daughter of Duke Vytautas the Vilkacis Lord, the campaign's main villain. She was destined to becoming a Priestess of the Devil and a Vilkacis herself, but her mother, a Lithuanian witch who was taken as concubine by Vytautas, wanted to save her from this fate and traded her to the Laumas, pretending that she had drowned in the Vistula instead. The Laumas raised her until she was five, as they do with human orphans they find, but eventually decided that she needed a human family and gave her to a childless couple in Daugdava. After she had spent seven years with her "parents", the raiders came and slaughtered them, taking the girl as a prize and gift for their overlord Vytautas, not imagining the connection between the two. The rescuing party managed to avoid the reunion of the two, which would allow Vytautas to go back to his original plan of turning his offspring into a monster like himself.

Tekla can become either the most powerful White Witch of the Baltic Coast or the most terrifying tool in the hands of the Devil, depending on the adventurers' choices. Each time her safety is at a stake or the adventurers do not know what to do with her, the Old Man in Grey will appear and help or advise them. He will try, however, not to give up too many details about her nature and story. She remembers very little about her early years, although she can still talk to the Laumas, and has some flashes of her past that hint at something supernatural in her origin. Asking around for information will reveal that she was a "child of the Laumas", that is an adopted orphan.

Tekla will possibly fall in love with one of the male player characters who is kind to her, although both the Old Man in Grey and Andra the Ragana will recommend that she is placed under the protection of a female player character if possible: they do not want to deal with children who could be turned into monsters by Vytautas if he realizes they are his grandchildren. If functional to the plot, however, she can marry a player character on or after her fourteenth birthday. It is up to the GM to decide the consequences of a relationship between her and an adventurer, and it is very likely that Andra will try and keep her childless with magic as long as there is danger of the Vilkacis recognizing her. Male characters can also take her as concubine against her desires if they wish, but this is not a virtuous action and the Old Man in Grey and the Kriwe will not react favourably to any character that does so.





and orders the player characters to follow the expedition as reinforcements or support crew. If some of the adventurers are skilled at using crossbows, the *Komtur* gives them permission to use one of them, but no other equipment is provided at this point. The small force lead by the Sword Brothers crosses the river and starts its pursuit of the raiders.

After a day's march in the swampy lands of the Selonians, the party reaches the Samogitian intruders, who have raided the small village of Daudzeva and are heading back to Samogitia (Zemaitija), the lowland part of Lithuania, hindered by the many cattle and women they have

captured. The raiders are about to settle down for the night, and the Crusaders position behind a small group of rocks between them and their homeland, crossbows ready. Then the *Komtur*, who is mounted like the Zemaitijan chieftain, reveals himself and demands that they surrender all their loot and captives. The Zemaitijans respond with their usual diplomatic action when facing an enemy: showing their bare buttocks. Unseen to everyone, the Chieftain draws a magic charm and begins chanting a spell.

As the enraged *Komtur* orders the crossbowmen to shoot, bolts fly through the air, killing some pagans, including the one who is guarding any player character who enters play as a prisoner of the raiders. Then in a matter of seconds disaster strikes: the pagan chieftain screams "Kad Perkūno!" and a lightning bolt comes from the clear sky under the Brothers' unbelieving eyes, hitting the *Komtur*'s leg with a crackling sound and sending a stench of roasted flesh in the air. The horse goes mad and drags Wilfred's apparently lifeless body away, while the Zemaitijans charge the petrified crusaders with a bloodchilling battlecry.

An incredibly messy melee follows. The pagans need two or three rounds to reach the Christians, so the player characters can arrange a couple more bolt volleys if they have the courage and skill to rally the crossbowmen, demoralised by the loss of their leader, before engaging the

enemy in close combat. Use as much tactical props as needed to stage this fierce battle, having each player character face and cut down one or two enemies before deciding that the pagans lose heart and route. The pagan leader will not cast magic again, preferring to charge the surviving enemies with his axe. This will expose him to the adventurers' retaliation: a great reward awaits the one who can defeat him single handed. Wilfred is not dead and can still heal himself: if things do not go well for the adventurers have him jump out of a bush where the horse had dropped him and invoke St. George's blessing on his sword (Truesword), and use it to harvest pagan limbs like wheat.

After defeating the pagans, the party can loot the fallen enemies. The cattle they were carrying must be brought back to the raided village, but the Samogitians' weaponry belongs to whomever fought in the battle. All characters who were prisoners can escape during the battle and need no further assistance. The *Komtur* appreciates their valour for freeing themselves and will allow them to apply as guards or retainers when they are back to Ascheraden.

There are women among the prisoners, and one of them, a beautiful young girl, maybe 12 year old, falls in the arms of the first player character who approaches the group and cuts her bonds. She was undoubtedly destined to become the slave wife of some chieftain, and is clearly grateful for being saved. An Old Man in Grey is among the prisoners, although he shows no sign of having been bonded, and looks at the girl, smiling. He tells the adventurer who freed her that he was very valiant for risking his life to save an innocent. The girl's name is Tekla, he says, and she is in need of help because her parents have been killed and she has not yet been married to a suitable good man.

The Old Man in Grey is Dievs, the King of the Gods, in human form. He was there to save Tekla from the raiders and spoil the Devil's plans but the adventurers did the job instead, saving him the trouble of messing with human matters, something

The Village

This is what the Christian player characters know about the village near the fort and its inhabitants.

The village is, or better was, under the protection of one lord Aizkrauklis, who is the former owner of the fortress and still inhabits a manor nearby. Many people in the village are baptised, but not everybody, and most still follow the Old Way. The real leader of the commoners is old Maksis the Hunter, a man who will never abandon the Old Gods. A strange old woman called Andra heals the sick and performs the rituals for the dead.



the god prefers to avoid doing. His goal is to keep Tekla hidden, so he will try to persuade the adventurers to look after her, as the Vilkacis Lord will never suspect that his lost daughter is with the Christians now. The Old Man will make his recommendations while revealing the least possible information to the adventurers, and then disappear at a moment while no one is looking. This can lead the adventurers to suspecting that they have encountered a supernatural being.

The Wolfrunner

AUTUMN, 1234 AD

THE ADVENTURERS ARE INTRODUCED TO THE CULT OF VELU MATE, AND TO THE VELI. THEY ALSO ENCOUNTER A PECULIAR TYPE OF WOLF-SHAPED SPIRIT, WHOM THEY LEARN IS CALLED A VILKACIS

It is the beginning of the month of October, Anno Domini 1234. Several people from the land of the Aizkrauklis come to the Ascheraden fortress, asking for baptism for them and their children and an exorcism ritual for their houses, stating that they will not return to their houses until it has been held. The Sword Brothers immediately send for an exorcist from Riga. Although the Komtur is happy with this favourable situation, the Advocate starts to wonder what it is, in fact, that is causing the peasants to convert to Christianity, and asks the adventurers to investigate.

In fact, the reason for these happenings is a young man from a nearby village, one Gatis, who has recently attained the status of Spirit Vilkacis and is feeding on the spirits of the dead, preventing them from visiting home in the proper time. Spīdala, who is the one who turned him into a werewolf, suggested him to do so, in order to train his abilities as a Vilkacis.

Interrogating one of the women who have moved to the fort reveals that the

spirits of the dead, who should be visiting the houses they inhabited in life during the autumnal Time of the Dead (*Velu laiks*), are not coming as usual. Strange lights are seen near the burial site at night, and the local peasants believe these are other dead spirits, unknown to them, who prevent their ancestors from visiting home. Andra, the local Ragana, can tell the party rather little, save that "The Dead are stirring". The reasons remain unknown.

While the adventurers investigate, they will meet a barrier of mistrust. The local pagan leaders, possibly incited by Spīdala, begin to think that the Christian religion has caused the dead to turn against the living. The adventurers are looked upon with suspicion, and an Easy Knowledge (Baltic) or Insight roll will let them notice that small groups of people assemble during their investigations to

Trading on the river

If the player characters do not think of it on their own, the Advocate of Ascheraden will ask the most suitable of them to take care of a trade business he is setting up. Basically, the Brother wishes to acquire furs and amber from the natives and send them via the river to Riga, where they can be sold to the Merchant Guilds of Lubeck. Brother Roger cannot be the front figure of this trade because of his Vow of Poverty, but will gladly trust the player characters with some of his money.

Agreeing to this allows the character or characters an experience check in Status at the end of each year, representing the increase in income from the trade. If the character is enterprising enough, he can take control of the Trade and begin a personal relationship with the Guilds, gaining the Status (Hansa) skill at a base percentile. Cheating the Advocate and keeping more of the money than agreed is possible, but it will eventually lead to an advantage only if the character has a direct connection with the Guilds. Brother Roger is a good accountant and will soon discover that something is not right, and because of his distrust the dishonest character's Status (Livonian Order) will drop by 1d6, offsetting any financial advantage gained.

Any player character who investigates the final destination of the money that Brother Roger receives will discover a hut in the village with a young girl and an apparently fatherless baby. If the PC guesses the truth about the baby, handling this information correctly can increase the PC status by a further 1d6. Possible options here are blackmailing the Advocate or reporting the information to the Komtur and having Brother Roger sent to a monastery for penance, leaving the player character as the sole owner of the trading business.



check what they are really doing.

In the meantime the exorcist from Riga, one Father Carolus, arrives in Aškere. However, since he sees no signs of malignant haunting, he limits his activity to some generic blessing rituals. If questioned, he will tell the adventurers that what is happening must be due to the pagans realizing what their religion really is, a mere superstition. One morning the party discovers that Father Carolus is wounded. His left arm shows the mark of some sort of biting. He tells the adventurers that the night before he met "a Wolf from Hell", who attacked him and he could barely send it away with prayers. His wound eventually becomes infected, as he refuses Andra's cures, and the priest must be transferred to the Brothers' hospital in Riga when he starts suffering from a strong fever.

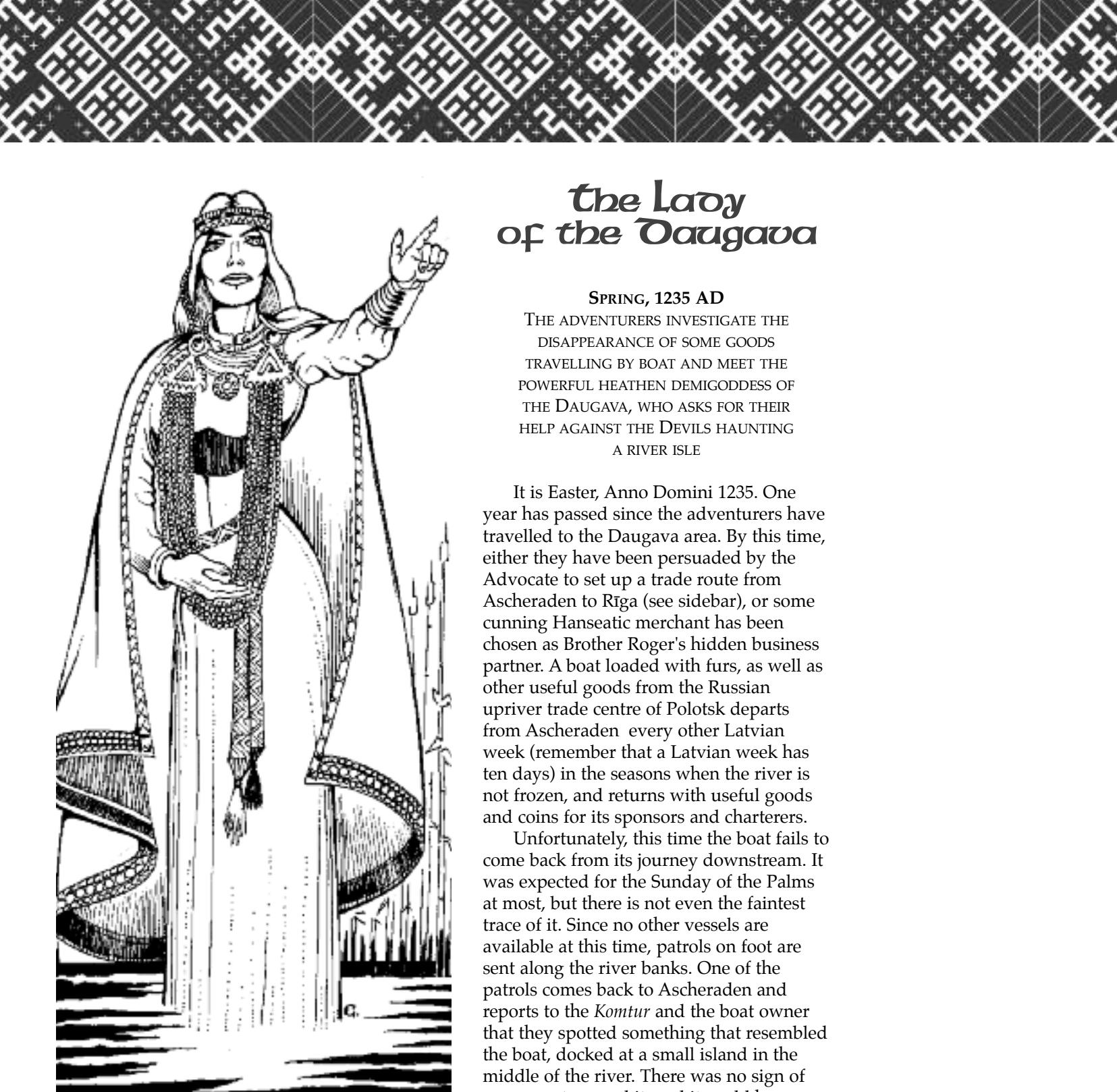
If the adventurers visit the Aškere burial site during the day, they discover nothing. When they ask Andra about a place to meet the dead, she will reveal that the spirits of the dead, whom she refers to as *Veli*, can be usually met at night. Andra will not accompany them at the burial site during the night, unless the Gamemaster believes that the party is too magically weak to confront the Vilkacis without her support, but she will give them advice about how to best prepare to confront a danger coming from the Otherworld.

When the adventurers return to the burial site at night they notice several dim lights wandering among the graves. These are identified as Will o'the Wisps by any Christian-related Knowledge roll. Magical means of vision can reveal that these creatures are actually human-shaped on their plane of existence, and they appear ragged and suffering. If the adventurers succeed in communicating with the spirits, they will tell that they are in fact the spirits of the dead of Aškere, and that a being they refer to as "The Wolfrunner" has been attacking them whenever they pass the gate from the Land of *Velu Māte* into the mortal realm. Soon after the adventurers have met the *Veli*, the Wolfrunner will manifest.

During the party's nocturnal visit to the cemetery, a group of Latgallian peasants follows them at a distance in order to discover what they are doing there. The men are not very clever at sneaking, and an Easy Spot roll will reveal their presence if someone checks for possible stalkers. The men cannot be peacefully persuaded to go home, however, since they have been incited by Spīdala in order to disrupt the player characters' plans, and remain outside the burial site while the adventurers investigate. When the *Veli* appear, the peasants start to become nervous and approach the party, revealing themselves if the adventurers had not yet noticed them, by lighting some torches. As soon as violence breaks out between the player characters and the Wolfrunner, the peasants scream "YOU have been harming the *Veli*!" and attack the adventurers.

If the adventurers can kill or drive away the Vilkacis, the peasants stop attacking them at the end of that round of combat. The men will not surrender their weapons, however, and will demand that wounded comrades be taken to a healer immediately. The small crowd will simply retreat and dissolve, once the wounded have been taken care of. They will not reveal that they have been incited by Spīdala, unless an adventurer who can speak Latvian succeeds in a *Difficult Persuade* roll.

After the battle, the spirits of the dead will come back to their relatives' houses, as it should happen in *Velu Laiks*, and the trouble in the village is over. Elder Maksis and Andra will be very pleased, and each adventurer should have his Status (Baltic) increased by 1d10, and be given the opportunity to acquire something from them, including magic if appropriate. Andra can tell the adventurers that the creature that they have faced is a Vilkacis, a spirit that "takes off his human appearance like humans do with clothes, and puts on the ferocity of a beast". The reason why this beast was disturbing the dead of Aškere remains unknown, though



The Lady of the Daugava

SPRING, 1235 AD

THE ADVENTURERS INVESTIGATE THE DISAPPEARANCE OF SOME GOODS TRAVELLING BY BOAT AND MEET THE POWERFUL HEATHEN DEMIGODDESS OF THE DAUGAVA, WHO ASKS FOR THEIR HELP AGAINST THE DEVILS HAUNTING A RIVER ISLE

It is Easter, Anno Domini 1235. One year has passed since the adventurers have travelled to the Daugava area. By this time, either they have been persuaded by the Advocate to set up a trade route from Ascheraden to Riga (see sidebar), or some cunning Hanseatic merchant has been chosen as Brother Roger's hidden business partner. A boat loaded with furs, as well as other useful goods from the Russian upriver trade centre of Polotsk departs from Ascheraden every other Latvian week (remember that a Latvian week has ten days) in the seasons when the river is not frozen, and returns with useful goods and coins for its sponsors and charterers.

Unfortunately, this time the boat fails to come back from its journey downstream. It was expected for the Sunday of the Palms at most, but there is not even the faintest trace of it. Since no other vessels are available at this time, patrols on foot are sent along the river banks. One of the patrols comes back to Ascheraden and reports to the *Komtur* and the boat owner that they spotted something that resembled the boat, docked at a small island in the middle of the river. There was no sign of movement around it, and it could have been stranded there for days. If the *Komtur* inquires about the reason why they did not go and salvage the boat with a raft, the locals who were in the patrol reply that "The island is haunted by Evil Spirits, everybody knows that. The boatmen must have been taken by the *Veli*, or even worse Things."

Since the adventurers have already

if the adventurers investigate a little in the surrounding region they will discover that a young man called Gatis has been found dead, in a nearby village, the very morning after their encounter with the Wolfrunner. No clues leading to Spīdala can be found, for now.

Fatigue on the island

Depending on whether you use the optional Fatigue system, the evil effects of the island's haunted air work differently. Check for effects once per minute, or once per round if facing the Stone.

If you are using Fatigue Points, each failed roll costs 2d6 Fatigue Points, while a passed roll costs only 1 Fatigue Point. No fatigue points can be regained by resting while on the island, the only solution is invoking Staburadze.

If you are not using Fatigue Points, each failed Stamina roll progressively halves all of a character's skill – including his Stamina roll. Once a character's skills are reduced to 1/8th of their base value, any further failed roll means that the character falls unconscious.

solved a trouble involving the *Veli*, the *Komtur* or the ship owner, assuming they have no direct interest in the fate of the boat, asks them to travel to the island, find out what happened to the boatmen and recover the cargo, and possibly also the boat.

Unless Spīdala has already seduced all the male characters in the group, she promises an additional, fabulous reward to the hero if he shows his bravery in recovering the lost boat and discovering the poor crewmen's fate. The nature of the promised reward is immediately obvious to the character, and she does this in such a manner that any other player character that has been her lover realizes what she means, thus creating internecine struggle in the group. Spīdala is in fact trying to provide more human sacrifices for the island shrine.

The island is no more than a day's travel from Ascheraden, and the adventurers have no trouble spotting the boat there, tied to a big willow trunk. For a mere twenty silver pieces in goods or food, two local fishermen who have lost faith in the old religion accept to assemble a small raft and take the adventurers to the island. However, no matter how much they struggle against the river, they simply cannot reach the island. Each time the raft is close to the island, the adventurers hear a beautiful female voice singing in the distance, and then the current takes them away from the island shore. After one day of useless efforts, the fishermen suddenly realize that their fathers' faith must not be so mistaken, after all, and give up trying, no matter how much the adventurers bribe or threaten them.

At this point the adventurers have three main options to reach the island.

First of all, they can handle the raft themselves and try again to row towards the isle, or even go fetch a better boat. In this case it takes a special success Pilot (Boat) roll to get to the island, and Staburadze will manifest by climbing on board before the raft reaches the island shore. This is the only way the adventurers can carry hirelings with them, if they have any.

Second, they can try and swim to the island. This is a rather suicidal act, but if a character is skilled enough at swimming he can take a long rope to the other side and then use it to help the others cross. As soon as the brave adventurer enters the murky waters, the Lady of the Daugava steps out of the river and asks him or her "Don't you have a better way of showing your bravery than feeding your soul to the Devil, foolish Christian?"

Third, if they can assemble a rope long and strong enough to draw it across the river (the Daugava is rather wide), they can tie it to a tree and take its other end by raft to another tree on the other bank, so that it traverses the island. Adventurers can then swing hand over hand across the river to the island. Making such a rope requires a Difficult Craft roll, but the rope can be made by hired artisans. It requires a Pilot (Boat) roll to take it across the river, and an Agility roll to move along the rope. As soon as the first character has progressed a couple of metres across the current, Staburadze steps out of the water and speaks as above.

Whatever the way she chooses to manifests, Staburadze appears in all of her glory and magnificence, a beautiful woman with a regal bearing, clad in a precious-looking turquoise robe that, much to the astonishment of the onlookers, appears to be absolutely dry just one moment after she has come out of the water! A successful Knowledge (Baltic) roll can reveal her true identity, but her appearance is more than enough to suggest her supernatural origin. As soon as she is sure that the adventurers are not trying to harm her, which is a pointless act since she cannot be killed while in contact with her river, Staburadze speaks, and the adventurers recognize her voice, which they heard singing while the current tried to keep them away from the island.

Staburadze explains that the island is cursed and haunted by a great Evil, and her power, which is undisputed in the waters of the Great River, stops on the island shore. The unlucky boatmen stopped on the island to rest, invited by a

treacherous half-woman who promised great pleasures to them, and now their souls and bodies are feeding the Devil. Such would be also their fate if they landed on the island. If asked about the alluring woman's identity, Staburadze does not speak her name, which she does not know yet, but she can give the adventurers some clues that lead them to eventually discover that the half woman is Spīdala.

At this point the adventurers will possibly ask Staburadze to let them reach the island to recover their possessions. Knowing that the adventurers are not defenceless against the forces of Evil, Staburadze accepts a bargain with them: she will provide all the help she can, but the player characters must also try and defeat the creatures that are on the island, in order to free the souls of those who have already fallen. And, above all, they must swear to take their lives if they are about to be captured alive, for even the sacrifice of one more soul could make the Devil's grasp on the island permanent, causing a wound in Staburadze's watery body.

If the adventurers accept, Staburadze gives them one big stone maul, covered in ancient runes, that is obviously magical in its origin. She also heals all wounds that the characters are suffering. Once the adventurers are ready, Staburadze tells them to put on all the equipment they want to carry with them and enter the river. As the adventurers step into the water, they feel that the naiad has cast some powerful magic upon them. When they are immersed in the water to the neck, the current overcomes them and drags them under, and at this point they discover that they can still breathe normally. After a brief moment of disorientation, something huge touches them in the darkness, and as the upper half of their bodies resurface they find themselves riding a scaly, slippery beast that swims towards the island. Staburadze has summoned several huge sturgeons that are carrying them to their destination!

In a matter of minutes, the party lands near the stranded boat. If they inspect the cargo, they notice that several items are





missing, but the coins are still there. Whoever looted the boat appears to have no knowledge about the value of money. Scattered around the boat nearby are the boatmen's personal items, including boots and pieces of clothes. A severed foot is still in one of the boots. Stains of blood are everywhere. The overall atmosphere is strangely creepy, the air is unnaturally moist and hundreds of small insects plague the unfortunate adventurers.

There is a supernatural effect connected to these uncomfortable sensations: for each minute spent on the island, each character must make a Stamina test or be Fatigued (see p. 32 of Basic Roleplaying). Once a character starts fatiguing, passing subsequent tests is more and more *difficult*, so fatigued characters have few minutes' time before passing out. Remind the adventurers that they must not be taken alive, and have them realize that if someone falls unconscious the others might be forced to kill him!

If an adventurer touches the water with his feet and invokes Staburadze's name aloud, his fatigue will be magically cancelled.

The island is rather small, no more than two hundred metres in length, but the thick vegetation makes it easy for its inhabitants to hide. It takes a successful Spot roll to notice a humanoid figure hiding in the scrub or between a willow's branches that reach the water surface. If the adventurers do not spot them, the Velns that inhabit the island will attack as soon as at least one character looks really fatigued. There are three to six Velns on the island at any time,

armed with clubs and rocks, and hungry for human flesh. Since these creatures are rather stupid, they will charge the adventurers with clubs rather than harass them with rocks until they fall asleep.

The Velns will avoid contact with the water at all costs, unless a character falls to the ground within one meter of the river, in which case cast their lust for human blood overcomes their caution and they approach the shore. Which is bad move, because immediately after reaching the shore any Velns will be attacked and dragged into the river by a huge catfish.

Hidden among the trees in the centre of the island is a big engraved rock, with a vicious-looking arcane symbol carved on its upper surface. The stone is covered by countless reddish stains, and looks like it has been soaked in blood not long ago. Heaps of human bones surround the sinister rock. A Velns that touches the stone can immediately heal 1d10 points of damage he is suffering, at the cost of an equal amount of power points. Any character that looks at the disturbing carving must make a Luck roll or be Demoralised. Even though he is not Demoralised, the character must check for fatigue loss every round instead of every minute while he is looking at the stone.

The evil symbol can only be destroyed with Staburadze's magic maul. To deface the stone a character must overcome all the negative consequences described above and attempt a Hammer Attack or a *Difficult* Effort test to strike the glyph. Once the stone is defaced, it splits in two, revealing the entrance of an underground passage. The character who broke the stone must take another Luck roll and then roll on the following table. If he succeeded in the roll the result on the left applies, if he failed the result on the right applies.

D6	Test made	Test failed
1-3	+10% to Knowledge (Baltic)	No effect
4-5	Gain the ability to cast Witch Sight once per day	Lose 1d6 Power Points
6	Gain 1 POW	Lose 1 POW



After the destruction of the stone the fatiguing effect immediately stops, though all fatigue hitherto suffered is still present, and any surviving Velns gets mad and throws himself into the river, only to die a heinous death in the jaws of Staburadze's minions.

The tunnel beneath the rock is dark and foul-smelling, and no sensible adventurer would dare its depths. If the adventurers try to explore it, they discover that the river is slowly infiltrating the passage, and after a few minutes it is filled with water and mud, and eventually collapses. Once the power of Evil is vanquished, Staburadze's might is claiming the island and its depths. If the adventurers ask her what was at the other end of the tunnel, she replies that the half-woman used it to escape, and she was not able to drown her. Again Staburadze will not reveal the witch's name, but can give clues about her identity.

Staburadze thanks the adventurers and offers to teach them magic or the Medicine skill as a reward. If they have defeated the Velns with no help from her, the demigoddess will also give each of them a special charm that holds one casting of the Breath of Life spell. In any case Staburadze will be friendly to the adventurers in any later encounter. The PCs gain an increase of 10 points in their Status (Baltic) skill, as news spreads that the adventurers are favoured by the Lady of the River. From that moment on, the adventurers will be able to contact Staburadze by standing at a quiet spot on the banks of the river, sacrificing a chicken or some other foodstuff – a catfish will immediately come and devour the sacrifice – and invoking her name aloud. Note, however, that such an act of pagan worship might cost a Piety loss if performed directly by any character who is a clergyman or a Brother.

The mundane reward for recovering the cargo is an additional improvement to a relevant Status skill of 1d4 for each character, or 1d8 if the character is actively involved in the trade operations.

The Witch

FALL, 1235 AD

FOR THE SECOND TIME, THE ADVENTURERS WILL CONFRONT A VILKACIS, WHICH IS SPIDALA HERSELF THIS TIME.

This episode may be skipped if the adventurers have found no clues about who was behind the threat in the cemetery or the stranding of the cog in the Daugava, or if, on the contrary, the Games Master feels they could overwhelm Spidala too easily and wishes to save her for the best part of the show later in the campaign.

The adventure begins one night, just after *Velu Laiks* in 1235, when a woman from Aškere comes to Ascheraden in a hurry, crying hysterically and asking anyone's help to recover her missing children. If calmed down and questioned, the woman, one Dēkla, explains that her children Bakis and Egle were out in the fields to gather wood and have not returned after sunset. The glade around which they were last seen is said to be haunted by malignant spirits at night, and the woman fears the worst.

Given their previous ability to deal with spirits that roam in the night, the adventurers are chosen to investigate. Dēkla leads them to the wood, but will not enter it, not even to look for her missing children. Magical senses reveal that the glade is in fact an unholy place, although no actual threat is visible. If the adventurers enter the wood, they will soon hear a faint cry coming from a bush. The young Egle is found hiding in the underbrush, scared to death. After she stops crying, she can tell the adventurers that her brother was "taken by ze wolf, ze wolf zat valkz on two legz!" A few hundred metres farther a gruesome sight awaits the adventures: young Bakis has been slaughtered and his body lies on the ground, his throat torn open by sharp teeth. The poor boy's hands are clearly missing, as if his killer had purposefully amputated them. Blood soils the ground,



and has left a clear track that leads somewhere.

If the adventurers are smart enough not to show the maimed body to the little girl, she recovers her senses enough to remember that there was also "a beautiful lady in ze woodz, one wiz golden lockz, juzt before we met ze wolf". The description is strangely similar to Spīdala, and the blood trail points directly to her father's mansion.

The glade is in fact one of the natural spots where Vilkacis can lose control of their bestial nature. Spīdala met the young children alone in the woods and her taste for children's hands, a delicacy for Devil worshippers, overcame her. A successful Knowledge (Baltic) roll can reveal that magic glades can make werewolves lose their mind.

The adventurers can now fetch back the little girl, and the boy's body, to the

woman, who will thank them anyway for recovering at least her daughter. If they go back to the fortress, they will find no direct connections between Spīdala and the incident on the next morning, as she has had the time to clean up all of the evidence save some of the bloodstains in the glade.

If on the contrary they follow the trail on that same night, they arrive at Spīdala's house with ease. A successful Tracking test lets them follow the path fast enough to see a woman entering Aizkrauklis mansion, although they cannot reach her before she passes the gate. If they approach the gatekeepers, he reveals that they are on alert, because their lady "Has been wounded by someone in the woods, as she had blood on herself when she came back!". The guards will let the adventurers in if they say they come on behalf of the *Komtur*, as Lord Aizkrauklis



recognizes the Sword Brethren's authority. The Lord is not at home at the moment, but the guards know that Spīdala is in her apartment.

Spīdala's apartment is on the first story of a two-story noble house, protected by several bodyguards, chosen among her father's household guard and "persuaded" to work for her. Use the statistics given for trained Livonian fighters, except that the guards have no bows. The guards will not let the adventurers into Spīdala's inner sanctum and will stop them at the feet of the stairway that leads to it, but if the adventurers cause enough trouble outside, the witch herself will show up on top of the stairs, and a sudden beam of the full moon will reveal that her clothes, possibly her hands and mouth, are stained by blood. Seeing this, the guards who are not working directly for her start wondering about what is really happening, and will not take part in any battle that breaks out.

If attacked, Spīdala will let the guards slow down the adventurers while she uses magic to disable them. If she uses Muddle spells to stop the adventurers, the guards are smart enough to stop attacking any disabled adventurer.

If all her guards are killed or disabled, Spīdala will likely flee, especially if she realizes that the player characters have magic weapons that could harm her in her wolf form. She will turn into a wolf and leap over the palisade, disappearing into the Baltic night. Only in case she feels strong enough to defeat the adventurers alone, or if the GM wishes to get her out of the adventurers' way, will she engage the player characters in melee, relying on her invulnerability to mundane weapons.

If the adventurers enter Spīdala's room after she is routed or killed, they find a small pot boiling, in which Spīdala was cooking the poor boy's hands. They can easily spot a small chest that contains several strange potions and items that can be identified as spell components. It also holds 2d6 chunks of amber worth one gold coin each, one of which holds one casting of Heal. In any case the adventurers will be allowed to search the

room for a few minutes only, so if they do not open the chest at once they will not be able to do so later.

If Spīdala is defeated but taken alive, her father will show up at once and demand the adventurers hand her over to him. He will show genuine horror in discovering that she practised witchcraft. Punishment for her will be harsh, but she will not be killed. In any case the adventurers have little or no time to interrogate her, so they will learn nothing about what will happen in the years to come.

The Komtur is very pleased by what the adventurers have done, showing that the Old Religion is all about evil witchcraft, and will help the adventurers in gaining new skills and magic to his best possibilities: their Status (Livonian Order) is raised by 2d6. Anyone who wishes to join the Brethren at this point is allowed to. Andra and Maksis are pleased, too, as they are not very friendly to Lord Aizkrauklis and they never liked Spīdala: the adventurers gain 1d6 to their Status (Baltic).

Alternate ending

It is possible that the player characters cannot track Spīdala and prove her involvement in the killing, or that they are defeated in the battle with the witch. If she captures them alive, her father will soon show up just in time to save the adventurers' lives (he does not want trouble with the Brethren) and the whole incident will end in shame (-1d4 Status) for the Player Characters. If you feel particularly evil, you can also have one of the PCs infected with lycanthropy while held captive...

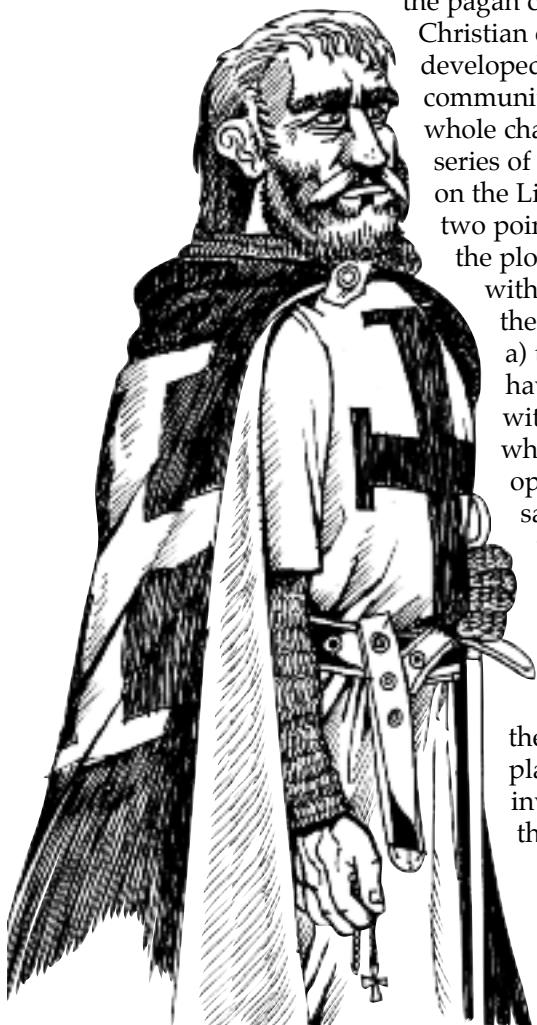
In both cases, Spīdala will clearly have a grudge against the adventurers from that moment on, and will probably scheme against them. The situation will become more dangerous if she is aware of Tekla and starts suspecting she might be connected to the Vilkacis, since she could see this as an opportunity to climb the ranks of the werewolf hierarchy despite the death of his pupil and her own exposure. Still, once old Andra is aware that she is a werewolf, her life becomes more problematic and it is likely that all of her plans will be thwarted. Eventually, she will leave her father's mansion and move to Vytautas's court.

Please note that if Spīdala is not neutralised then Andra will beg the adventurers to take Tekla with them when they leave Ascheraden during the next chapter, or at least to leave her with Staburadze. See the sidebar at the start of the next chapter about this occurrence.

Journey to Prussia

Win the year 1235 AD, Volkwin von Winterstein, Herrmeister of the Livonian Order, commands the player characters to travel to Prussia to aid the Teutonic Knights in converting the pagans there, and plead for acceptance of the Sword Brothers into the more powerful Teutonic Order. The adventurers cannot imagine that this is the last time they accept a mission from the Sword Brethren.

If the Games Master prefers to keep the adventurers in Livonia instead of moving them to Prussia, which might be the case if the pagan characters outnumber the Christian ones or the ties they have developed with the Aizkraukle community are too strong, this whole chapter can be replaced by a series of military adventures set on the Lithuanian border. Only two points are necessary to keep the plot on track and consistent with the events that come in the third and fourth chapter: a) the characters should have one more encounter with the Old Man in Grey, in which they have the opportunity to acquire the same clues that the Kriwe would give them in the adventure titled "The Romowe", and b), the characters must be away from Ascheraden in Spring of 1236, when the Battle of the Saule takes place, to avoid being involved in the massacre of the Brethren.



City Intrigues

FALL 1235 – WINTER 1236 AD

THE ADVENTURERS MEET THE RULERS OF LIVONIA AND HAVE THEIR FIRST SAMPLE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE BISHOP AND THE BRETHREN WHEN THEY GET INVOLVED IN AN INTRIGUE.

One more year has passed, and it is again *Velu Laiks*, this time in Anno Domini One thousand two hundred thirty -five. After the usual pagan festival, during which the player characters are treated as heroes by the Livonian populace, Master Wilfred summons them. The *Komtur* reveals that the Grand Master of the Sword Brethren has requested troops from all of the fortresses for a great military expedition, and he has decided that the adventurers are the most suitable for such an expedition. He assures to anyone who is there to serve his term as a Crusader that this will cleanse him of all of his sins. The *Komtur* is in fact a bit jealous of the popularity that the adventurers have acquired among the pagans, but he does not really want to harm them, only to keep them away for a while.

So it happens that the adventurers, just after Christmas, find themselves travelling again towards the wonderful city of Riga. All possessions that cannot be carried with them are best sold. Have the player characters take leave from their comrades in arms, who will hug them and become very emotional, especially Brother Lucien. This will enhance the horrific effect of meeting them again in Chapter Four. The adventurers can take Tekla with them, as she has an adventuring spirit, especially if she has become someone's lover or wife. This can create some complications, but will constitute a great

HANDLING STATUS SPECIALTIES

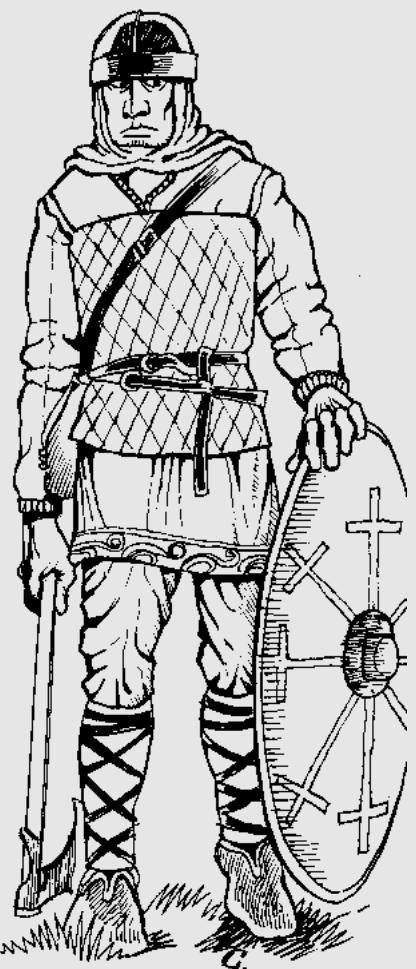
The adventures so far have been mostly single encounters, which increased the party's Status (Livonian Order) or Status (Baltic) if completed successfully. From the second chapter on, things become more complicated and the party has the option of choosing sides, allying with the Bishop rather than with the Order. It can then become important to keep track of Status specialties.

If the players are not very happy to take part in intrigues and are not likely to perform actions that change their individual status, you can choose to handle Status with a single score referring to the whole party. This will also simplify the task of keeping track of their reputation with the different organizations. In the next chapter we will in fact introduce a parameter named Party Status to better handle the party finances. However, we recommend that Status is recorded for each character and each organization: each player should understand that it is important to concentrate on relationship with one particular group (the Hansa, the pagans, the Order, etc.) and rely on other players to handle contacts with the other groups, something that is possible only if Status is recorded separately.

STATUS	USAGE	SUBSTITUTE
Livonian Order	Official dealings with the Brethren; gaining equipment for missions; gaining new magic for Brothers	Bishopric
Bishopric	Official dealings with the Bishop; dealings with the population of Riga; gaining new magic (for priests or friars)	Order
Baltic	Dealing with the rural population; acquiring goods from local merchants	Bishopric or Order
Hansa	Handling trade; buying equipment from abroad	None

In general, a character's Status roll with any Christian organization can be replaced by a Difficult roll of Status with any other Christian organization. In some cases, the Status a character has in a Bishopric can be used in another. For instance, Bishop Hermann of Dorpat will certainly welcome adventurers who are famous in the See of Riga, that has been ruled by his brother Albert. Status (Baltic) and Status (Hansa) are instead unrelated scores. The only exception is that a Difficult Status (Livonian Order) roll or Status (Bishopric) roll can replace a Status (Baltic) roll in areas that are under formal Christian control: basically, a player character can enforce his will on the natives if he has a good relationship with their lords, and they are expected to grudgingly grant his or her requests. Note that the reverse is not true, and a good Status (Baltic) score can never replace Status (Bishopric) or Status (Order).

In many cases, only the appointed leader of the party, if one exists, should roll his Status when called for by the Gamemaster. However, if one character has a higher Status skill with a certain group and the leader allows him or her to handle the communications, the former can roll his or her Status instead. Note that if the party does not have an established leader and the GM thinks that this is not appropriate in the highly-hierarchical feudal society of the Middle Ages, he may require that the character with the lowest Status score rolls, instead!





Tekla and Staburadze

One way to keep Tekla safe from danger if the adventurers do not want to bring her with them to Riga and then Prussia, is to send her to Staburadze's household. If the player characters have not yet provided a suitable solution for Tekla before leaving Ascheraden, Andra herself will recommend this, particularly if Spīdala is still around and dangerous.

In the Lāčpēsis epic, the hero, after being seduced by the evil Spīdala, is saved by Staburadze and hosted in her underwater palace under the Daugava. There he meets the beautiful maiden Laimdota, servant of the Lady of the Daugava, who is the positive female figure in the poem, opposed to the witch Spīdala. Apparently, the Lady likes to have servants and apprentices in her castle, so it is entirely possible that she accepts to keep Tekla at her side for some time, and even to teach her some magic. Staburadze will ask the adventurers for a favour in return, but will not tell them which and will not ask for payment of the debt immediately. Keep this in reserve as a means to prevent the party from doing something stupid or plot-disrupting at a later time, or just as a hook for more adventure.

If Tekla spends some time in Staburadze's service and is then returned to the party, she becomes an apprentice witch. Her powerful Gift will then manifest fully, and if the player characters have not yet learned her true nature from the Kriwe, then Staburadze herself, who in the meantime has spoken to the Laumas, will suggest that she is somehow connected to the werewolves. From this moment on, Tekla can become a powerful magical aid for the party, but it will become increasingly more difficult to hide her from Spīdala or Vytautas.

advantage when the adventurers eventually meet the Kriwe.

If the adventurers have become popular enough among the people of Ašķere, they can hire mercenaries of their own among the farmers. They can find one hireling per each full 10% they possess in the Status (Baltic) skill, possibly more if they succeed in a Status roll.

Once the adventurers reach Rīga, they are introduced to the presence of Herrmeister Volkwin von Winterstein, spiritual and military leader of the Sword Brethren, Nicholas, Bishop of Rīga, and William of Modena, Papal legate. They have heard about their prowess in battle against the forces of Evil and praise the adventurers, ordering them to escort Brother Dominic De Marseille, who is an Advocate and so is not versed in the art of self-defence, to the Teutonic fortress of Kulm in Prussia. Brother Dominic has an important diplomatic mission to accomplish with the Teutonic *Landmeister* in Kulm. The party has a short time to prepare for the expedition, after which they must leave.

During their stay in Rīga, any adventurers who are not formal members of the Brotherhood are approached by Werther, a Benedictine who offers them to work for the Bishop instead of the Brothers. Although Werther is actually working for Nicholas, the real power behind him is Albert Suerbeer, Primate of Ireland, who had been appointed Bishop of Rīga by the Pope, but had to yield this position to Nicholas because of important tasks he had to accomplish in Germany to consolidate Papal power in that land.

The party now has three options: they can decline the offer politely and just do what Volkwin asked of them, or they can accept the Bishop's proposal. In either case, they can choose to secretly report what happened to Volkwin or the Papal Legate, revealing the Bishop's real intentions.

If they tell Werther that they accept, whether they are sincere or they want to eventually inform Volkwin, the friar will



reveal to them that Brother Dominic's mission is to plea for acceptance of the Sword Brothers as members of the Teutonic Order. The latter order is more rich and influential, being backed and supported by the Holy Roman Emperor, and Volkwin hopes that being incorporated by the Teutonic Knights will solve the Brethren's financial troubles. On the other hand, Bishop Nicholas prefers that the Brethren remains independent, and asks the adventurers to secretly sabotage the diplomatic mission, although he recommends that Dominic is allowed to reach Kulm unharmed, to prevent the sending of another ambassador by Volkwin. Suerbeer supports the Pope in his struggle against the excommunicated Emperor Frederick II the Stupor Mundi, and since the Teutonic Grand Master Hermann von Salza is one of Frederick's most trusted allies, he and the Pope do not want the Teutonic Order to be involved in Livonia, regardless of the problems that the Brethren may currently have. Better that those heretic Teutonic Ghibellines stay in Prussia and be slaughtered by some pagans!

If the Papal legate is called in, he will tell the adventurers that perhaps Werther's offer is not the best way to do God's Will, but that the Pope will not be very happy if the Sword Brothers become Teutonic Knights, either. If the adventurers can talk William into revealing more, they can learn about the contrasts with the Emperor and about Suerbeer's involvement, which can be an important detail if you wish to continue the game past the campaign's end, as Suerbeer will become Bishop of Riga in 1253.

If Volkwin is informed of the Bishop's treachery, he shows cold and calm anger for this betrayal. The adventurers' Status with the Brotherhood is immediately raised by ten points, and Volkwin commends them for their loyalty and asks them to watch over Brother Dominic's safety more attentively now that the Bishop's treachery has been unveiled.

If the adventurers have told Werther

that they agreed to perform the sabotage, Volkwin asks them to meet the Bishop's agent again on the following evening. If they do so, the prelate meets them in front of St. Peter's Church in Riga at ten in the evening, and while he is speaking to them ten Sword Brothers show up and order him to surrender to the Order's authority! The poor Werther has no way to defend himself against this threat, and if the player characters do not help him to escape he will be arrested and carried away to the fortress of Wenden, where the Brotherhood will extort a confession from him with torture. Werther will not survive interrogation, and as they are reached by the news of the friar's death all PCs who belong to a religious order will feel guilty for this and require penance and pilgrimage to be forgiven of this sin. If they do not manage to help Werther, the adventurer have lost their last opportunity to help the Bishop and will have to stick to the Brotherhood's side for the rest of the adventure. If, on the contrary, they help the friar, they will have to explain to Volkwin why they have prevented him from acquiring evidence of the Bishop's foul behaviour.

This is the first time, but it will not be the last one, that the adventurers must choose sides between the Bishop and the Order. If they accept the Bishop's request, they will eventually receive substantial material benefits as their Status with the Bishopric increase, but the Brothers will be very displeased if they find out. This will not be a problem in the future, but the adventurers do not know it. On the contrary, siding with the Order will provide very few benefits to the adventurers once Volkwin and the other Sword Brothers disappear from the scene in the following year and are replaced by the Teutonic commanders. The only real benefit of supporting the Sword Brethren against the Bishop will show up in the final confrontation with Volkwin's shade, but this will happen a long time in the future.

Towards the Vistula

SPRING, 1236 AD

WHILE THE ADVENTURERS ARE ON A JOURNEY TO PRUSSIA, THE COG THAT IS CARRYING THEM IS ATTACKED BY PIRATES. AS THEY ARE THE ONLY REAL FIGHTERS ABOARD THE SHIP, THEY MUST SET UP ITS DEFENCE BEFORE IT IS BOARDED.



After the events described in the previous section, the party boards a cog in April of 1236 and heads towards Danzig, from where the boat will follow the river Vistula up to Kulm. Unfortunately, spring is a good season not only for sea travel, but also for piracy, and the Baltic Sea is well known for its many marauding fleets. While they are in the middle of their journey, the adventurers spot an

approaching long ship in the distance, something resembling a Viking knorr very closely. Since there is no way a cog can outrun a long ship and the local pirates are not known for showing mercy towards those who surrender, the adventurers soon realize that they must fight.

First of all, the adventurers must persuade the Brother they are escorting that surrender is not an option. Not being a man at arms, the poor fellow cannot handle the situation and tries to persuade the crew members to give up. The adventurers must wrestle control of the situation away from him. If reasoning is not enough, as he is rather fluent in his speech and not likely to be persuaded by sweet talk, the party might be forced to disable him forcefully, but he will be grateful to them for this later, assuming they can win the fight with the pirates.

The second step is setting up a hasty defence using only mariners against fierce pirates. In order to organize the crew effectively, once they have wrestled control out of the hands of Dominic, the players must choose a leader among them, obviously a Sword Brother or a knight if there is no Brother, and delegate command to him. If this is not done, the mariners will be confused, not knowing who gives the orders and their effectiveness in battle will be impaired. If the party has brought hirelings from Livonia, this will give them a great advantage, but remember to check losses among them afterwards. Morale is the key in this battle, as the pirates are not so many or so strong that they cannot be defeated if the defenders keep a tight line of defence when the ship is boarded, and the boarders will retreat if facing too much opposition. Furthermore, the boarding is preceded by five to ten rounds of missile fire (depending on the navigator's ability to handle the ship, which can be supported by any player character who has a mariner background), during which the adventurers can kill some pirates, but must be very careful to keep their militia safe from incoming arrows while still ready to repel the boarding as soon as it takes place. Careful usage of shields, if available, and

of the ship's sides as cover is vital here. Successful rolls of an appropriate Craft skill can produce impromptu shields that are effective enough to kneel behind during the exchange of missile fire.

Depending on how well they instructed the crew and handled the missile battle, once the ship is boarded have each adventurer face one to four pirates in close combat, one at a time. If the adventurers defeat all the pirates they face, the crewmen are assumed to do the same with little or no losses. If all or most of the adventurers are defeated, the crewmen's morale breaks and the pirates take over the ship. This will be the first battle where the adventurers take the role of leaders, but more will come in the following chapters. If your players prefer to have a more detailed control over their militia and some of them possess the Command or Strategy skills, you can instead use the rules given in the previous chapter to handle the skirmish.

If the adventurers are defeated they lose all of their possessions and are sold as slaves. Luckily for them, they are sold to the Kriwe, and the plot continues, because the Kriwe will set them free if they succeed in the next scenario. See the boxed chapter "Slaves" for how to continue the adventure in this case. If the adventurers are losing the battle and still have the magic stones given to them by Staburadze, they can also cast their magic on themselves and dive into the Baltic Sea, pretending to have drowned while they are in fact just hiding under the surface. After about one hour the pirates will abandon the looted ship, allowing them to board it once again. Returning to the mainland without their crew, however, will not be an easy task for the party.

If the adventurers win, instead, the long ship moves away and the adventurers acquire 2d8 one-handed weapons and 2d4 leather shirts and open helms as booty. Brother Dominic is extremely pleased of this, even in the event of having been disabled by the adventurers to prevent surrender, and the party's Status (Livonian Order) is increased by 2d6.

The Romowe

SPRING, 1236 AD

IN THIS VERY LONG AND DANGEROUS ADVENTURE, THE PARTY WILL HAVE TO VENTURE IN HEATHEN LANDS AND MEET THE KRIWE HIMSELF, IN SEARCH OF THE CURE FOR A MYSTERIOUS DISEASE THAT HAS STRUCK THE HOCHMEISTER OF THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS. THE KRIWE WILL ALSO WARN THEM ABOUT THE FUTURE, TELLING THEM THAT THEIR DESTINY WILL HAVE THEM CROSS THE PATH OF THE VILKACIS AGAIN.



After defeating the pirates, the adventurers land in Prussia, a savage land that has been just conquered by the Teutonic Order. Despite its proximity to Germany, Prussia is less tame than Livonia. The Teutonic headquarters in 1236 are in Kulm (modern Chelmno in Poland). Brother Dominic pays for a river trip along the Vistula and the journey is uneventful.

When the party reaches Kulm, Brother

Dominic manages to arrange a meeting with *Landmeister* Hermann Balk. However, when the meeting day comes, Dominic is sent back by the Teutonic Knights without any explanation, and this goes on for a week, with the *Landmeister* neither cancelling the appointment nor actually receiving him.

The adventurers will now face several days of inaction, waiting for the *Landmeister* to receive their employer. At the end of the week, if the adventurers have not yet discovered the truth by investigating on their own, the diplomat tells them that the *Landmeister* has been seized by a mysterious disease, and the Order healers fear for his life. The clergy suspects that the sickness is caused by a local pagan demon who hates the Soldiers of Christ, but all of their exorcisms seem useless. At this point Dominic recalls one fact that he has almost forgotten and says: "Wait! You, you have been recommended to me because you defeated the pagan demons in Ascheraden! God is smiling upon us. Will you go to the head quarters and volunteer to battle this demon for the *Landmeister*'s life?" There is a reward for the adventurers if they accept, and if they do not accept Dominic will have the Teutonic Order summon them directly.

When they reach the Order headquarters in Kulm, the adventurers are admitted to the presence of Hermann's second in command, Dietrich von Grüningen. Dietrich listens to their tales carefully, and accepts their help. He is, however, not willing to let them attempt any treatment or exorcism, as he has additional information to share with them.

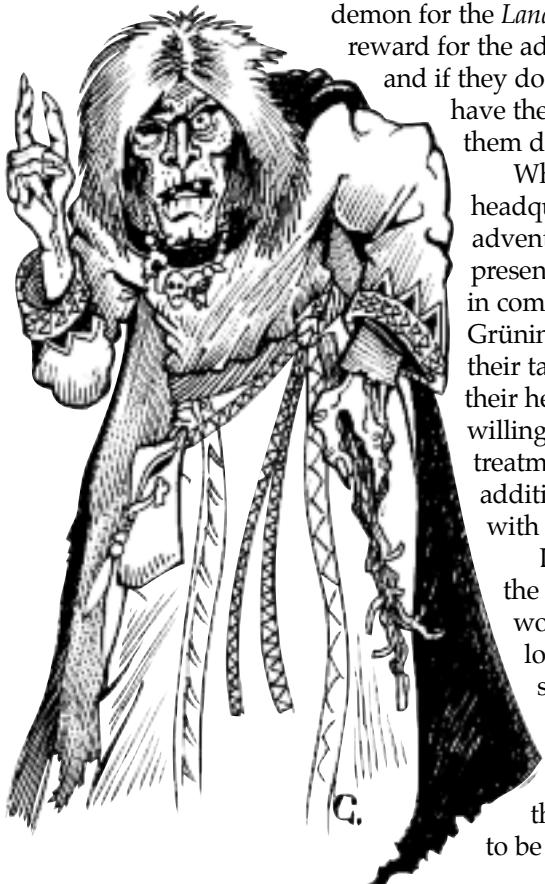
Dietrich then introduces the adventurers to an old woman, who is some sort of local witch and was stopped by the Order surgeons while she was trying to perform some malignant ritual upon the *Landmeister*, pretending to be curing him. The Brother

also shows them a strange medical tool that the woman was trying to use on Hermann's body. The adventurers will immediately realize that the small tool, covered in runes, is inscribed with at least two runes that were also on the magical maul that Staburadze gave them to destroy the Evil Stone on the Daugava. At this point they should be willing to interrogate the old woman.

The crone, who is named Kirs and speaks very little, refuses to answer any questions and only tells them that the *Landmeister* is "Consumed by the Devil, and will die soon." If the adventurers have any item with an "evil" rune with them – anything looted from Spīdala will do – and show it to the woman, she will show them a small piece of sheep skin with the same rune drawn on it. The Order healers will immediately recognize the rune, as the *Landmeister* has a small, purulent stain of the same shape on his skin.

At this point it becomes clear to everyone that the nature of the *Landmeister*'s disease is demonic, and that both the crone and the adventurers have some experience with its cause, whatever it may be. Dietrich starts threatening to burn the woman at the stake, but she quietly replies: "Kill me if thou wishest, I have already lived enough. But thy Lord is doomed in this case." Dietrich then tries to force her to lead them to the source of the illness, but the woman is still not afraid. She says, instead: "Thou art not welcome there. The Kriwe would take thy heart out of thy ribcage if thou didst enter the Romowe." Then she looks at the player characters and continues: "They can go. I sense the blessing of the Lady of the Daugava on them. The Kriwe would let them in and perhaps give them the cure."

Dietrich is clearly unhappy to be commanded by a witch, but immediately sees an opportunity to save the day without risking his life or his men. He asks the adventurers to follow the woman to this "Kriwe" she is talking about and look for a possible cure. Any reward promised by Dominic is doubled by Dietrich, and he assures them that the *Landmeister* will listen to their employer's petition if his life is





saved.

The adventurers are provided with food and all travel commodities that they might need. Sword Brothers receive leather armour from Dietrich, or a light chain mail shirt and coif if they succeed in a Status roll or have somehow managed to win the Teutonic Order's trust through roleplaying. Other requests like magical aid may be granted by the Teutonic Order, but they require a Status roll of the appropriate difficulty. Then the party leaves Kulm with the old woman. If they wish to take Tekla with them the crone will not object. Any hirelings the adventurers have with them will refuse to accompany the party, and it is absolutely clear that they are scared by the mere thought of entering the Sacred Romowe.

The trip is one week long, but not difficult. The adventurers are in a strange state of mind during their journey, and will not be able to find their way back to the Romowe in the years to come. The witch tells them that this is a trip of the soul, not just one of the body. The road passes through savage pagan land to the Northeast,

and the party meets several potential dangers, but nothing happens. During the last day's march they even meet a group of fierce Zemaitijans like the ones they faced during the first adventure, but there is no violence between the two groups.

At the end of the journey, the adventurers arrive at the edge of a great, dark forest. Kirs warns them that they must not dare to enter the trees or they will be killed on sight. Not far away there is a roundhouse built around a great oak tree that comes out of its roof and surrounded by a wooden palisade. When the adventurers approach it, they see a huge warrior standing guard in front of the gate. Kirs says something to the man, and he opens the gate and blows a nearby huge horn that sends a bellowing cry into the air. Kirs tells the adventurers that they can now enter, but she cannot follow them.

Several beautiful, half-naked females are attending various tasks in the garden beyond the palisade. A Knowledge (Baltic) roll will tell onlookers that they are not women but Laumas. There are several

Slaves

The main plot assumes the party has been able to fend off the pirates in the previous episode. But what if they were forced to surrender to the Sambian raiders? Slavery was rather common among pagans at that time, as well as ransom, so the adventurers, in case they are captured by the pirates, will not be killed but sold to someone powerful, who has some use for the ransom. This powerful person is the Kriwe, who lives just south of Sambia. Once the hierophant has the party under his control, he accepts the offer of ransom for Brother Dominic, but chooses to keep the adventurers in his household, where they will undoubtedly learn some weird facts from the Laumas. The Kriwe does not mistreat his slaves, and after some weeks, as soon as he realizes that the Root of Yggdrasil has been cursed, offers the adventurers an opportunity to buy back their freedom by breaking the Curse. Note that in this latter case bringing back a piece of the root will not be enough, the Kriwe would demand that one of them take the Curse upon himself, although he will explain how to do this to the party in detail. Once this happens, proceed with the main course of adventure from the point when the Lauma accompanies the party to the Cave.

The adventurers are robbed of all their personal items if

captured, of course, and only small magic items that can be hidden on their person, such as runic charms, or small scrolls of knowledge will not be looted. Once they are given their mission by the Kriwe, he will give them one small weapon each but no armour, and let them keep the weapons when he sets them free. Once the adventurers are freed from the Kriwe's service, Kirs will show up and accompany them to Kulm, where they will find their old employer, who is very impressed by the fact that they could buy their freedom back without external help.

If there are female characters in the party, it is better to avoid this plot branch, as it could have some unpleasant consequences if played out in a realistic fashion, and have someone rescue the adventurers while still on the ship. The only exception would be if Tekla is travelling with the party, as the Kriwe would immediately realize who she is and keep her in his household. If this happens, his respect for the adventurers will immediately increase even if they have been sold to him as slaves. The Kriwe might be willing to keep Tekla in his household if the party is enslaved and sold to him, but will give her back to the adventurers if they insist, as he acknowledges that their destiny is tied with hers. In this case he will make it very, very clear that Tekla must be kept as inaccessible as possible to the Lithuanian nobility.



braziers in the garden, and one of them is filled with a burning substance that produces high flames. A dark, rune-inscribed stone is in front of the house, covered in dark reddish stains that hint at blood sacrifices. Some of the Laumas have the adventurers sit down on a log in the garden and bring them fruits and goat milk. Other Laumas gather wood and light fires in the braziers, adding herbs to them that create an incense-like perfume in the air. The Laumas are very kind and nice but they will neither speak to anyone nor answer any question with anything but a smile. If, however, Tekla is with the party they will talk to her in an unknown language she seems to understand very well but no one else can recognize. Tekla refuses to tell anyone about her conversation with the ladies, but looks very happy, as though she had met friends long lost.

After half an hour, a man clad in a bear cloak enters the garden and moves to the flame that was already burning when the party came in. He stares at the flame with an intense look, then he gestures to the adventurers, inviting them to join him around the brazier. The player characters can guess that most items in the garden are magical or sacred, but cannot cast magic detection spells, as any magic cast within the garden by anyone but the Kriwe will be absorbed by the flame. If anyone attempts something violent, guards will come out of the house and slaughter everyone.

The man, who is the Kriwe himself, looks at each of the adventurers, throwing an object into the fire for each of them and invoking Potrimpos to reveal the future. If there is something notable in the adventurer's past, the Kriwe will comment about this, even if this means exposing some secrets that the other adventurers did not know before. Anyone who has slept with Spīdala will be frowned upon. If Tekla is with the party, the Kriwe will look at her and say: "Tekla Vytautasdottir, thou wert thought lost but here thou art again. The fairies took thee away from thy accursed parent, but lost thy trail when they brought thee back among the humans. We all feared thou hadst been taken back to your father's

house to partake of his dire kinship. And now I find thee again, in the company of these... Christians. It may be that they are not so useless, after all."

After exposing so many secrets that the adventurers did not tell him, the Kriwe asks them what they are looking for in the Most Sacred Romowe. After hearing their explanation about the *Landmeister*'s sickness, the Kriwe thinks about it a little and then answers: "And why should I help my worst enemy? Better if the Knights are busy curing their leader than raiding and pillaging among my people. But there is no honour in having one's enemy killed by the demons, and Lord Potrimpos told me that you have helped the Lady of the Daugava to fight evil, so I will give you a chance. But the Knights must restrain from attacking us for one year if I help you. Will you tell them so? I'll have to trust their honour, as well as yours, in this matter."

Once the Kriwe agrees to help the adventurers, he throws something else in the fire which causes it to make smoke. In this smoke the adventurers can see something that looks like a cave mouth. The Kriwe tells them that this is their destination if they want his help, and they must gather a piece of the Root of Yggdrasil and return with it.

"This Cave is magical and can take a traveller to the deep heart of the Earth, at a spot when the Roots of the Tree of Life, Yggdrasil, come out of the soil and small pieces of it can be harvested during the solstice festivals and used for Life Magic. The Vilkacis have placed a curse on the cave, and the Might of Lord Perkunis now strikes anyone who reveres Him and dares to touch the Root. In this way, they have ensured that only they, who loathe the mighty Perkunis, can now take advantage of the Root. But you Christians do not revere Lord Perkunis, so you can take a piece of the Root and possibly break the curse. Now rest for the night, and leave for the cave tomorrow at dawn. Be careful, for the cave is dangerous. Let your souls lead you, not your eyes."



Historical Note

The World Tree exist in all Northern Mythologies, and even in Mongol or Ugro-Finnic myths, from which it might have been imported. The Viking version is an ash tree and is called Yggdrasil, while the Finns and the Estonians called it Ilmapuu and thought it was an oak tree. The name that the Balts used for it is not known, but it may have been Yggdrasil as well.

The adventurers can sleep in the garden and are fed more fruit and eggs by the Laumas. The fairies offer to sleep with any male adventurer who wishes so, but if a player character has been seduced by Spīdala and wishes to spend the night with a Lauma, she will accept at first but flee the character as soon as she tries to hug her, screaming: "Ugh! You reek of wolf!"

In the morning the party will leave. The Kriwe gives them a small sickle and recommends that they use that, and only that, to take a portion of the Root. The Kriwe demands that Tekla remain with him, if she is with the party, as the cave is too dangerous for her. If the adventurers object, then the Old Man in Grey appears and offers to guard her. The Kriwe accepts

this proposal without questions, and the adventurers can notice that the Kriwe never addresses the Old Man directly. In any case, Tekla will refuse to enter the cave.

It takes about six hours' march to reach the cave mouth. A Lauma will lead the adventurers there. Once they are in front of the cave, the Lauma will stop and point at its dark mouth. The adventurers must now enter the subterranean passage. They may have torches with them, as the Teutonic Order provided them with supplies when they left Kulm. The party will find itself in a narrow tunnel heading directly towards the bowels of the earth, with plenty of roots hanging from the ceiling. In a matter of minutes, they encounter the first branching passageways, and start noticing strange movements in the distance, and chuckling laughter coming from the darkness. In one hour or so, they are lost in the maze and are back at the entrance. When they are back in the open, the Lauma is still there and points at their lit torches, shaking her head, then covers her eyes with her hands.

The party will continue to wander pointlessly until someone remembers that the Kriwe told them it would be a trip led by the soul and not the eyes, and they realize that they must extinguish the torches! When total darkness engulfs them,

Extending the Cave

The episode presented in this chapter is intended to be functional to the plot rather than being a combat encounter, and requires a certain degree of familiarity with magic and spirits to be overcome. If you wish to insert a more "hack and slash" dungeon in the plot, or feel that physical combat suits the party more than the options presented here, we advise that you keep the description provided for the final room that contains the Root, but run the cave as a classic RPG dungeon crawl with monster encounters appropriate to the party effectiveness in combat. Suggested monsters are Velns and a medium powered Vilkacis, which can also provide some useful loot to the adventurers. If you feel nasty and your party is powerful, you can even run both styles of encounters at a time, having the party face the Vilkacis and Velns in the final chamber after overcoming the spirits in the darkness.



the adventurers start hearing whispers of all kind, some gentle and some menacing, some not even human. It is possible, however, to proceed in the darkness by finding the tunnel walls with one's hand.

One of the adventurers must now take the lead. The leader must then succeed in three consecutive Luck rolls to find the right way in the underground maze. Using an appropriate Knowledge skill like Knowledge (Baltic) or Knowledge (Magic), but also Knowledge (Plant) if the character is using the roots as a tactile guidance, provides a bonus equal to the character's chance of a special success in the skill. Using a magic sight spell like Witch Sight or Soul Sight provides a +20 bonus, and lets the spell user notice that some of the hanging roots emit a faint glow.

Each time a roll is failed, not only must the character restart the sequence of tests from the beginning, but he or she has also run into a hostile otherworld creature. The spirit will attack the character once in Psychic Combat, and flee once it has damaged him or her. If however the

character is able to fight the spirit back, which includes being able to see incorporeal entities, the creature will not flee but stay there until one of the opponents is defeated. The sickle provided by the Kriwe is magical and can hurt spirits for 1d4 Power Point damage if a character who can see spirits uses it to attack the creature, in addition to the normal effects of Psychic Combat. Base chance to hit with the sickle is 20%. Each spirit defeated provides a cumulative bonus of +10 to subsequent Luck rolls.

As soon as the leading character succeeds in finding the way, a glow becomes visible in the distance. If the party proceeds in that direction, it will reach a large cave that is illuminated by the glow of a small section of root coming out of the earth. Torches can now be lit without fear of losing the way, as the party has reached its final destination. The root to which the section belongs must be much larger, but the earth is so hard that it is impossible to uncover any more of it. If any pagan approaches the root, it starts emitting sparkles, and each person present in the cavern has a flash vision of a treetop enveloped by a lightning discharge. Any pagan actually touching the root is hit by the equivalent of a level two Lightning spell per round, even if underground. Christian characters take no harm, but the root is totally invulnerable to all weapons and tools except the sickle provided by the Kriwe. To carve away a piece of the root a character must succeed in a Luck roll, representing his or her resistance to the mystic voices heard while touching the root with the blade. It is possible to carve multiple pieces of root away, but each Luck roll after the first piece is cut away is subject to a cumulative -20 penalty, and when the chance drops to zero the root starts casting Lightning against anyone who touches it, regardless of his or her religion. A fumbled roll means the sickle breaks.

After they have taken the first chunk of Root, the adventurers can try and break the curse. This is rather difficult, and it takes both use of a magic sight spell and a successful Knowledge (Baltic) test to guess

Yggdrasil and the Root

The adventurers are supposed to give the magic Root to the Kriwe at the end of this adventure, but players often have an unfortunate tendency to keep magic items for themselves. Besides, they can always try to take extra parts of the root and hide them from the Kriwe. So here is a brief description of the Root magic powers.

Yggdrasil is the World Tree of Germanic mythology. Its branches grow as high as the sky, and its roots extend over the realms of both gods and men. It is not clear whether it was known to Baltic populations as well, but the Kriwe is supposed to know more than normal worshippers in any case.

A piece of the Root needs to be treated with extreme care and kept fresh but not wet to preserve its powers. You can abstract this with a Knowledge (Baltic) or Knowledge (Plant) roll per Latvian season, with failure meaning that the Root loses its powers.

Using the Root for healing purposes provides several effects, but the user needs a successful Knowledge (Baltic) roll to discover each of them:

+20% bonus to First Aid and Medicine

double effect of successful First Aid

+4 bonus to CON when opposing disease

+4 bonus to CON when opposing poison

In general, the Root always provides an improvement to healing magic and skills.



how this can be accomplished, unless they managed to persuade the Kriwe to tell them the procedure beforehand. Each secret the party has learned about the Vilkacis and their dark cults, such as the fact that they may be overcome by bloodlust while in sacred groves, gives them a cumulative +10 bonus to this roll. The Curse cannot be broken if the party has already taken more than one piece of the Root, but additional pieces can still be harvested after the Curse has been lifted. Succeeding in the Knowledge roll reveals that the only way to remove the curse is to take it upon oneself. A critical success in the roll also reveals that this is not a totally detrimental event. If a character wishes to volunteer, someone must first spill his or her own blood on the root using the sickle. As soon as the Root is covered with blood, the bloodstained area is touchable by anyone without triggering the lightning effect, at least until the blood has dried out. A character must then succeed in an appropriate Weapon roll to hit the bloodstained section with a magically enhanced weapon, or the sickle, and then in a Luck roll. Failure in even one of these tests means that the character must try both tests again or give up, and failure in the Weapon roll means that the Lightning effect is triggered if the character is a pagan, as the weapon touched the part of the root that is not covered by his blood. Once both tests are successful, the character feels an intense pain as his or her body is traversed by waves of lightning, and eventually the character passes out. When the adventurer wakes up, he or she discovers that all healing, either magical or mundane, is halved for him: it takes him double the usual time to heal naturally, First Aid attempts fix half the expected points of damage, and magical healing effects are halved. This applies both to healing provided to the character and healing administered by him or her. Note that this does not affect Christian healing magic that does not heal fixed amounts of damage. The character's right hand, however, is now marked by a Thurisaz rune that functions like a runic charm, allowing the character to learn Perkons magic. The character also

does +2 damage to Velns and Vilkacis with weapons wielded in his or her right hand, although this is not immediately obvious and requires an explanation by the Kriwe. During the final stage of the campaign, this Curse can be removed by the Old Man in Grey, but the Thurisaz rune will stay, providing the character with a valuable advantage in the final confrontation against the Vilkacis.

Once the party has taken care of the Root, getting out of the cave requires only one successful Luck instead of three, although failure means, again, that a spirit attacks the party. All bonuses accumulated when coming in are still in effect.

The Lauma (and Tekla and the Old Man if present) are still there waiting for the adventurers when they come out of the cave. It is now dawn, as the party has spent the night in the cave. All of the adventurers are now very tired, as they have not slept for the whole night, but the Lauma offers them a herbal potion which dismisses their fatigue immediately allowing them to march back to the Romowe. Once they are back there, the guard blows the horn, and the adventurers meet the Kriwe again. If they give him the Root, the high priest is impressed by the party's valour. The Kriwe explains to them that the *Landmeister* has been cursed by a malignant magician, possibly a Vilkacis in the Devil's employ. The stain on his skin proves this. The Kriwe takes a bucket of water, blesses it and throws a leaf in it after drawing a Berkana rune upon it. Then he sips the Root into the water and the fluid immediately starts to boil. When the Kriwe takes the leaf out, the rune on it is shining as though it was painted in gold. The Kriwe adds: "This Berkana now has the power of Yggdrasil in it. Put it on the stain on your master's body, and he will live. Go now, your time is running out."

The Kriwe is now very pleased with the adventurers and provides magical healing to them. Each adventurer has his Status (Baltic) increased by 2d6. He will reveal them some secrets about the Vilkacis and

their powers, and tell them that they are destined to meet the Lord of Vilkacis, and



interfere with his plans. The Kriwe stresses the fact that the Lord is too powerful to be confronted directly with arms, nor can his plans be simply exposed in public as he is the Master of Deceit and no one will believe their accusations: the heroes will have to use their wits to find a weak spot in his schemes of corruption and thwart them. For the time being, the most they can do is to keep Tekla hidden from the Vilkacis. If Tekla is not present, the Kriwe then reveals to the party that she is connected to the Vilkacis and that their Lord must not be aware of her existence. If she is there, the Kriwe or the girl will give away some clue that points to the fact that she is the Vilkacis Lord's daughter. If someone guesses the truth and asks the Kriwe about Tekla, he will tell them that she has the same Gift as him, which means Magic, but despite her origin she will not become a Vilkacis unless she is initiated to Evil by the Lord, who is seeking her for this very reason! Realizing that they have done a great service to the Baltic populations by rescuing Tekla when she was about to be brought back to her father and by keeping her hidden from him, the adventurers gain an additional 1d6 in Status (Baltic).

If the party has removed the Curse, the Kriwe will also point them to a Druid that lives south of Kulm who can teach them Pagan Magic, but he cannot remove the Curse from the character who took it on him or herself, although he states that one day someone will be able to lift it. However,

bearing the mark of Perkunis increases the Cursed character's Status (Baltic) by an additional 20%. Unfortunately the Kriwe cannot teach anything to the adventurers himself, as the party has just the time to recover Tekla and bid farewell to the fairies before leaving again, accompanied by Kirs who has reappeared outside the stockade. The trip back is uneventful, and any attempt to draw a map that can take the adventurers back to the Romowe will fail. The adventurers arrive in Kulm just in time to help the *Landmeister*, when the Order healers have lost any hope of saving his life and he has received the Last Rites. It takes no effort to persuade Dietrich to try the pagan magic on Hermann's body, as he knows that there is no other way. When the leaf is applied, the rune slowly vanishes from it, and the stains that were plaguing the *Landmeister*'s body start disappearing. In a matter of hours, he will begin recovering. The magical leaf loses all of his properties after curing Hermann.

The adventures should now tell the *Landmeister* that his life must be repaid with a one year truce with the pagans. Being a man of honour, Hermann accepts and orders Dietrich to stop all military operations. This will in fact help, and not hamper, the Teutonic Knights in their expansion, as they will soon take advantage of the truce to send troops to Livonia to take over the Sword Brethren's role. If the party does not ask the Order to stop hostilities against the Prussians, they have broken their word with the Kriwe, and all adventurers lose 10 points from their Status (Baltic) score. Also, the Old Man in Grey will withhold his blessings from the adventurers in the final encounter if they betray the Kriwe on this subject.

Kirs disappears while the party is curing Hermann, and is never seen again in Kulm. The Druid Eiskers, if the Kriwe has told the adventurers about him, is the party's only contact with the natives for the rest of the time they will spend in Prussia. Any attempt to locate the Romowe again will fail. No other Christian will ever enter the Romowe after the adventurers.

Chapter Epilogue

SUMMER, 1236 AD

THE ADVENTURERS REMAIN IN THE TEUTONIC ORDER'S EMPLOY FOR SOME TIME, AND HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE THEIR WEALTH AS WELL AS KNOWLEDGE.

The party should now have definitely won the favour of the Teutonic Leadership. Whatever reasonable request the adventurers make to the *Landmeister*, up to what would be normally acceptable for their Status, is granted. For Sword Brothers, this includes armour, weapons or even magic. Each character gains 2d6 in Status (Livonian Order), and 3d6 in Status (Baltic) if they also obtained the truce with the Prussians.

Brother Dominic will now petition the Teutonic Order for acceptance of the Sword Brothers into their ranks. Dietrich will now suggest the *Landmeister* ask the Player Characters about the Brethren's worth. The heroes can now complete their mission: if they chose to actually work for the Brethren they can vouch for them, and if they accepted to sabotage the mission they can tell Hermann that all the rumours about the Brothers' sins and misdeeds are true. Hermann will choose accordingly to what the adventurers suggest, although his choice has no actual effect on what happens in the next chapters. The adventurers gain 3d6 each in Status with the side they chose to help. Note that in case there are Brothers in the party, even this apparent betrayal of their Order will

have no negative effect on their Status because of what will happen later.

If the adventurers have removed the Curse from the Root of Yggdrasil, they now have access to a teacher in Pagan magic, the Druid Eiskers. He can act as trainer for any skills related to the Baltic native culture that the adventurers want to learn while still in Kulm.

At the time the adventurers visit it, Kulm has been just granted the status of autonomous city state and its guilds are seeking acceptance among the Merchant Guilds of Lübeck (soon to be known as the Hanseatic League). Any character who has started a trade business when in Livonia will be contacted by Hansa merchants who are interested in buying his goods for a higher price than his or her current customers. If instead no one has been doing business in Ascheraden, the most suitable character will be contacted by the Hansa to become their new contact in the Daugava area. Anyone who accepts the deal gains the Status (Hansa) skill at a base score of 15% plus category bonus, or has his Status (Hansa) increased by 10% if he already possessed that skill.

The merchants are particularly interested in amber and furs. Any character involved in amber trade can eventually attempt a Luck roll once per year. If the roll is successful, he or she has found a special piece of amber among the normal ones. The exact effect of the amber chunk when made into a rune charm is up to the Gamemaster. Consult the Magic Chapter for sample effects.





the fate of the Brethren

In the year 1236, *Anno Domini*, the Sword Brethren have been almost annihilated by the heathen population of Lithuania at the Battle of the Saule, thus ending the Christian military supremacy in Livonia. The Teutonic Order is now forced to take over their role.

THE ADVENTURERS are sent back from Prussia to Livonia, in order to take control over the fortress where they once served as squires or mercenaries.

Back to Riga

SUMMER, 1236 AD – SPRING, 1237 AD
THE SWORD BROTHERS HAVE BEEN ALMOST ANNIHILATED BY THE HEATHENS AND LIVONIA IS IN DANGER OF FALLING INTO PAGAN HANDS AGAIN. WHAT WILL THE ADVENTURES DO?

At the start of Summer, 1236 AD, the Teutonic Order receives terrible news from Riga. The Sword Brothers have met the Lithuanians at the battle of the Saule, and they have been slaughtered en masse. The few survivors are not enough to remain in control of the castles, and the Bishop of Riga fears for the safety of all Christians in the area. Then a letter from the Papal legate William of Modena arrives, and it decrees that all surviving Brothers pass under the jurisdiction of the Teutonic Order. The Sword Brethren, with all its pride and its faults, is no more.

The adventurers realize that their mission to Prussia has saved them from a grim fate. Many of their former friends must be dead. Now they are faced by some inevitable choices.

If the adventurers are still loyal to the

Sword Brethren, then they are automatically under the command of the Teutonic *Landmeister*, who is friendly to them. All former Brothers become automatically Teutonic Knights, although they will still wear the red insignia of the Livonian Order. However, player characters who used to be Sword Brothers can exploit this situation to return to lay state if they have grown tired of their pseudo-monastic lifestyle (Spīdala might have something to do with this, but a player character might also be in love with Tekla and unable to marry her). If this is the case, the *Hochmeister* demands that any former Brothers serve as mercenaries for five more years in Livonia before they are released from their vows. In any case, the Master of the Teutonic Order decrees that all former Brothers and their assistants go back to Livonia to reorganize the Order there, so the adventurers must follow Brother Dominic de Marseille to Riga. If on the contrary the player characters are now loyal to the Bishop of Riga, their employer eventually sends Abbot Werther to order the party to travel back to Riga and wait for further instructions. If the party has not yet made any agreement with the Hansa, fur or amber merchants from Lübeck will contact them again and insist that they take advantage of the situation to start a trade relationship. A successful use of a social skill can yield a small cash advance for the party from one of the Hanseatic guilds.

The journey is uneventful. The adventurers are back to Latvia after two seasons' absence, in Spring 1237 AD. Very little has changed in the city, but the fortress that used to belong to Volkwin and the other Brothers is now under Teutonic command. The Bishop has exploited the turmoil that followed the change in leadership to strengthen his control over the city and the surrounding land, and is actively trying to get hold of several of the castles that used to belong to the Brethren.

In any case, the adventurers should by now be well-to-do, if not rich, from their adventures and trade. They should be able to equip and train themselves fairly, even without the Order patronage. And either the Teutonic Order or the Bishop will gladly help them in exchange for their services. Dietrich von Gruningen has moved to Riga to take control of the Livonian Order, although he is still subject to Hermann's authority, and his appreciation of the adventurers' services during the previous year's crisis will certainly help the party in their relationship with the Order's new leaders.

As soon as they land in Riga, the Bishop or Dietrich, depending on who is their employer, summons them and asks them to go back to Ascheraden and secure the fortress. The following episodes assume that the adventurers accept.

The adventurers meet all the characters they used to know in Ascheraden, except the Brothers and Akselis, who died in the Saule disaster. Maksis and Andra are now really old, but still alive. If the adventurers have left Tekla behind and none of them had any emotional attachment to her, they find her married to a young Selonian woodsman, and she will have only a minor role in the plot from now on. If Tekla was

with them in Prussia and has met the Kriwe, instead, Andra will now ask her to become her assistant, ready to take her place as Ragana as soon as she pays her final visit to Vēju Māte.

The first problem that the adventurers meet is that the fort has been looted and damaged by the heathen and Lord Aizkrauklis has claimed it back. He has only a dozen men-at-arms to defend it, and the walls are so damaged that it is impossible to keep any attackers out of it, but the adventurers should be encouraged to retake it by diplomacy, not by force. Threatening to spread the word about Spīdala's dire secret should be enough to make the enemy give up, as Lord Aizkrauklis is very ashamed of the fact that his daughter turned into a monster. As an alternative, if the adventurers already have a few soldiers available, it should be easy for them to dispatch the old baron. The villagers, lead by Andra and Maksis, might even help them, as heathen nobles were not so popular among their subjects. Either way, old Lord Aizkrauklis will stay out of the adventures' path from now on.

Historical note

From the plot's point of view, it does not matter if the party employer is the Teutonic Order which is rightfully claiming the wooden fortress that used to belong to the Brethren, or the Bishop, who has seized control of Ascheraden. Historically, the fortess always belonged to the Order.



RUNNING THE LOGISTICS

While the first two sections of the campaign have stressed the individual feats of each of the heroes, the third and fourth part of the campaign assume that the adventurers are in charge of a small fief, with its castle, and a small army of militiamen. This gives them a new kind of responsibility and requires them to start thinking not only in terms of one-on-one combat but also of having their troops fight effectively. To make their small army effective, the adventurers should now start improving their Command and Strategy skills. If the players insist on thinking in terms of personal effectiveness, have Dietrich or the Bishop contact them and tell them that he expects more than personal bravery from them from now on. The player characters should also select an official leader among them, to act as the person who is in charge of the castle. If they do not do so, their employer will appoint the Sword Brother – or the knight, if there are no Brothers in the party – with the highest Status as the new Komtur.

Finding the income necessary to keep their army and castle combat ready becomes as essential for the heroes as having the best equipment for themselves. Nevertheless, starting with this chapter, all player character equipment belongs to the party, even if there are Teutonic Knights or Dominican or Franciscan friars among them, as they are the actual managers of the castle equipment.

The players should now keep track of how many men the castle garrison includes, and how many are with the party when it leaves the castle. The actual number of fighters available will have a crucial role in the last part of the campaign, when the adventurers will have to leave Ascheraden and possibly take some troops with them, while not leaving the castle totally ungarrisoned. If the party has hired mercenaries during the previous chapter, any surviving ones are still with them. Militiamen cost money to support, of course, and building and maintaining the castle has a non-trivial impact on the party finances.

The money required to run the castle and upkeep the army can come from three sources. First of all, the party employer is supposed to send them support and financial aid. Secondly, the castle commander, as a feudal lord, can and should tax the surrounding peasants. In doing this he can choose to be a just ruler and rely on cooperation by the natives or simply try to extort money from an oppressed population. Finally, the adventurers can resort to trade along the Daugava, especially if they have befriended the Hanseatic League. They can simply tax the merchants of the Hansa travelling to and from Polotsk in exchange for protection against raiders, but this will eventually lead to diplomatic trouble. Using Ascheraden as a trading outpost and selling local products to the Hansa is more profitable, instead, albeit not chivalrous.

In order to provide a fast way to evaluate how much money the party has available from the total of each sources, the GM should introduce an abstraction called the Party Status. This will measure the party's ability to interact with all the communities mentioned above in

order to keep their fief running and well garrisoned.

How much financial support the employer will provide is measured by the party leader's Status with his employer, either the Bishopric or the Livonian Order. The relevant skill to obtain support from the peasant populace is instead his Status (Baltic) if the leader is just, or the military commander's Command or Strategy skill if the party oppresses the peasants with military force. If one of the characters has a higher Status score than the leader, he or she can add one fifth of this score to the leader's Status with any group as a complementary skill bonus. The leader can even benefit from one comrade's high Status with the Order and another's high Status with the natives, if he wishes. Finally, to measure the income coming from trade use the Status (Hansa) score of the character who is handling the trade business – who is not necessarily the leader. Allow this character to use a trade-related skill like Persuasion or Appraisal as a complementary skill to his Status (Hansa). If the party is not using their connection to Hansa to trade but just taxing the merchants, add a flat 20% to the Status score, and check for unrest as described below.

Once you have evaluated all of the factors outlined above, you can add them up together and thus obtain the Party Status score. Use the Party Status chart as a scoreboard to help you calculate the final value. The resulting score will be higher if each player specializes in one particular area (one deals with the employer, one with the natives, and yet another one with the Hansa) and adds his or her expertise to the Status pool.

Please note that if you cross-check the resulting status score and the reference table for the Status skill in a Medieval environment in Basic Roleplaying, the adventurers could turn out to be as rich as kings, or more. This is perfectly realistic if you consider this from the point of view of the barbarian society of the Baltic, as their task of rebuilding the castle as a stone fortress and ruling the surrounding area from it will make them more powerful and feared (and even respected, if they play their cards well) than a native tribal king, which usually had only a poorly manned wooden fort to ensure his people's safety. However, this does not mean that the player characters can easily adopt a king's lifestyle: see the paragraph about festivals below.

The players can now choose how much of this score to allocate to each expense chapter. The players should allocate at least 50 percentiles of their Party Status to the castle while they are rebuilding it, and 10 percentiles to its maintenance once the construction is finished. If there are party members with a relevant craft skill, like masonry, their ability can be applied as a complementary skill to the Party Status during the time the party is rebuilding the castle. The remaining Status can be allocated to the army and population entertainment. For each full 5 percentiles of the party Status allocated to the army, the party can support one militiaman. A newly trained fighter already has a spear and javelin and some soft leather armour. For each horse the adventurers

wish to have available at the castle, the adventurers need allocate 5 more percentiles of the Party Status.

Even though the feudal lord will not ask for taxes from a castle at the border with a hostile population, at the end of each season the party can choose to send a part of its total Party Status as tribute instead of allocating it elsewhere. This tribute accumulates, and once it has reached a value equal to the leader's Status with the employer, he is allowed to make a Status improvement roll as if he had gained an experience check.

Finally, the adventurers can sponsor festivals for the population. Each 5 percentiles of the Party Status that is devoted to this allows to hold a festival every other season, reduces the chances of a rebellion by 10% and allows the leader a Status (Baltic) experience check at the end of each year. Since the characters are supposed to maintain a frugal lifestyle, though, this kind of behaviour will be frowned upon by their employer. If the latter finds out that they are spending more than 10 percentiles of their party status for festivals, it will disapprove and cut their budget in order to stop the excesses, requesting them to fast in penance and applying a -20 penalty to their Status for two seasons (-40 if the party is working for the Livonian Order). Interestingly, if Spīdala is still around she will surely notice if the heroes throw parties, and join the merry company accompanied by plenty of naked women. If the ensuing festival turns, as predictable, into an orgy, and the adventurers do nothing to prevent it, she will then inform the authorities, thus triggering the punishment described below.

Each militiaman in the castle can eventually be trained to become a better fighter, but this requires some training by one of the adventurers possessing higher combat skills, and a Status roll to upgrade the soldier's equipment with better weapons. This status roll is not based on the Party Status, but only on a single PC's Status with one of the groups the party is interacting with, which is requested for more funds. Status rolls to upgrade militiamen to trained fighters can be attempted once per Latvian season. Each successful roll upgrades one fighter, and more rolls can be attempted but as soon as a roll is failed

all attempts must stop. Players can attempt similar Status rolls to buy new equipment and armour, but each player is limited to one roll per two Latvian seasons and the selection of items is limited to what the group petitioned can offer: for instance, the Baltic natives cannot usually provide metal weapons, while the Hansa, if petitioned, can provide almost anything, including heavy crossbows or ballistae.

If the party is oppressing the population and extorting taxes from them, there is a 20% chance per Latvian season that the peasants will revolt. If the party is taxing the traders, too, add 10% to this chance. Roll once per season to check for rebellions, but allow one of the adventurers an Oratory or Status (Baltic) roll: if successful, the chance will be decreased to 10%, or totally negated in case of a special success. If the peasants revolt, one Vilkacis will take advantage of the situation and become the rebel leader, making the peasant mob much more dangerous than the adventurers would expect.

If for any reason the party has not enough money to pay for some or all of the expenses, the castle will begin to fall apart in half a year, and soldiers will probably desert, or worse sell themselves to the Vilkacis as fifth columnists.

Evaluation of Status and allocation of resources should be made every other Latvian season, or every season if the players enjoy handling their "downtime" between adventures in this way. The choices made for each time segment may yield interesting results if the players experiment with different strategies and take the risk of allocating less funds to essential expenses such as castle maintenance or wages. The Gamemaster is encouraged to transform any event resulting from the fief management (rebellions, festivals, trading of unusual items) into an adventure. As it is virtually impossible to predict what the players will do with so much freedom of action, much is left to GM improvisation and the players' willingness to cooperate.

If the adventurers do not like to handle the logistics, have them hire an accountant with high Status or trading skills who can run the business for them. But is this advocate really trustful, or can he be bribed by the Vilkacis?

Party status chart

Use the Party status chart as a summary to evaluate and keep track of the party's ability to support Ascheraden.

	Basic skill	Complement	Final score	Rebellion %
EMPLOYER SUPPORT				
Status (Employer)	Use leader skill	Other PC status if higher		
TAX INCOME				
Status (Baltic)	Use leader skill	Other PC status if higher		<input type="checkbox"/> +20% if used
Command or Strategy	Use leader skill			
TRADE INCOME				
Tax trade	<input type="checkbox"/> flat +20% if used			<input type="checkbox"/> +10% if used
Status (Hansa)	Use best trader PC skill	Trade-related skill, same PC		
TOTAL				

LORDS of the Castle

SPRING, 1237 AD - FALL, 1238 AD

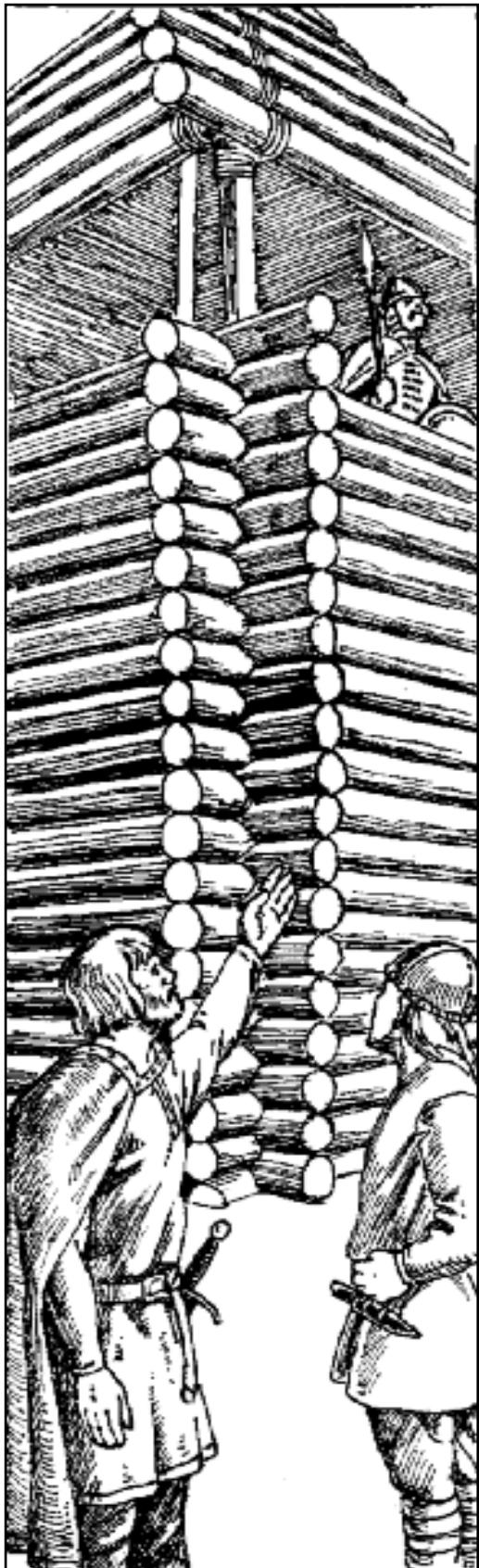
THE ADVENTURERS ARE BACK TO ASCHERADEN.

THEIR TASK IS THAT OF TURNING IT INTO A STONE FORTRESS, BUT THE VILKACIS HAVE OTHER PLANS IN MIND.

The adventurers are now the lords of the Castle of Ascheraden. Their employer, either the Order or the Bishop, orders them begin repairs and transform it into a stone or brick fort. The party's employer will provide a part of the sum needed, depending on the adventurers' Status with him, but the rest must be provided by the adventurers, who are allowed to tax the local population in order to gather the funds. Note that the natives are perfectly aware that the castle provides protection to them and their families, so it is rather unlikely that they revolt against taxation or forced labour, unless the player characters really bleed them to death with their demands, or the labourers are incited to rebellion by the forces of Evil.

If nothing interrupts the work, the adventurers will manage to complete the rebuilding before winter comes. But they will also have to face harassments and sabotage by their enemies. The Vilkacis lords, who are sponsoring the Lithuanian advance into Selonian lands, are unhappy with that fortress built so close to potential raiding targets. However, due to their secret alliance with the Teutonic Order, explained later, the Lithuanians dare not attack the castle with an army. So the builders are continually subject to harassments by supernatural critters, and will suffer a number of attacks. The adventurers must fend off all of these threats or they will face a slowdown in the building process, which can eventually put the completion of the castle in jeopardy.

First of all, the enemy will try to cause a revolt among the peasants. Spīdala





cannot show up in person, but she knows the weaknesses of the local community members, and will use this knowledge to spread fear and doubt among the villagers. Some suggestions about reasons for a possible revolt are included in the economic chapter. If this is not enough to start a riot, at one point, Elder Maksis is found dead, killed by a sword slash. Andra asks for Laima's help and the goddess explains to her that this death was caused by the interference of alien deities. Everyone will think that this indicates the God of Christians, while in fact Laima is referring to the hellish entities worshipped by the Vilkacis. At this point the adventurers must persuade the local villagers that they have nothing to do with Maksis' demise, or the building will slow down and require an extra 10% of the Party Status. If the party asks Andra for help or advice, the Ragana can clarify the real meaning of her prophecy by consulting Laima again. Depending on how friendly the party has behaved towards her so far, she might be willing to do so or not. Take advantage of this turmoil to have the players describe how the castle defences are organized while the work is in progress. It will be useful to set the stage for the next step.

The second attempt will be a direct attack by a group of Zemaitijans. Use a dozen of the sample Zemaitijan raiders that took part in the battle in the initial chapter, but without any leaders or magical support. The raid takes place at the end of a work day, with no warning whatsoever and all the labourers unable to fight back due to the fatigue accrued during the day. Have the adventurers place their defences as outlined during the first step, and stage the raid with the Lithuanian raiders coming out of a wood on foot and rushing against the routing labourers or targeting them with arrows. The adventurers and their hirelings must confront the raiders and protect the villagers. As soon as half of the raiders or two thirds of the workers are killed or disabled, the attackers retreat. In the event of heavy losses on the part of the work

crew, the building task slows down by 10% of the Party Status, and the raiders might try another assault if they suffered no casualties. If on the contrary the raiders are repelled with little or no casualties and identified as Zemaitijans, the building restarts with increased efficiency. No connection is found between the Lithuanians and the Vilkacis, unless some sort of mind controlling magic is used to interrogate a prisoner, in which case the adventurers might be able to identify Spīdala as the raiders' employer.

The third attack is more tricky, as it involves supernatural creatures only. One month after the first assault, small objects (shovels, picks, hammers and wooden tools) start disappearing at night from the building area. Wooden pins are found missing from cranes, which may lead to

Keeping things on track

Starting with this chapter, the adventurers have much more authority and freedom of choice. Still, the campaign presents a linear development that requires them to make certain decisions or take a well defined direction. Given the party's rising Status, it is not impossible that they try to influence their leaders' attitude with the local populace or with their enemies, once they discover who they actually are. This is good, as it implies that the players are actively trying to influence how the story evolves, an occurrence that is always positive in a good roleplaying game. However, this could also lead the plot to diverge from the final, and most epic, part of the campaign. As the Gamemaster, you have several choices about how to handle this:

- *Simply say no to the players requests and keep the plot on track. This is not the recommended solution, particularly if the adventurers are using skills and contacts that they have carefully developed over time to achieve their goals, as this would deprive them of a well deserved success.*
- *Allow the players to take control and change the plot accordingly. This will require a lot of work on your part, as the written campaign will no longer be there to help you, but might be the most satisfactory solution.*
- *Give the players a compromise victory that remarks the fact that they have won a battle but not the war: for instance, if they persuade the Bishop that he should not trust the Lithuanians, have him assassinated and replaced by an impossible-to-persuade Albert Suerbeer, but not before Nicholas has granted a second castle to the adventurers for their loyalty. Several alternate endings are provided for episodes that could mark a partial success for the Player Characters, but it is absolutely impossible to include guidelines for every possible outcome.*



dangerous accidents if the machines are activated before realizing that important parts are missing. The culprit is a Pūkis that Spīdala has summoned in order to harass the player characters. The spirit materializes at night and has been instructed by her mistress how to recognize useful objects to displace. If ambushed at night, the Pūkis is not so difficult to kill or dismiss by means of magic or missile weapons, but its flight ability allows it to flee the scene in a matter of a couple of combat rounds. If the adventurers are low on combat magic, they can call for help from Andra, but this should not be the case at this stage of the campaign. If the Pūkis is ambushed but not killed, Spīdala will proceed with the last part of her plan. If the adventurers manage to capture it alive and break the witch's control over it, it will reveal its mistress's identity to the captors.

Once the Pūkis is neutralized, or Spīdala has realized that the adventurers are standing guard at night, a more dangerous attack will come. Kangars, a beast Vilkacis who is Spīdala's new lover, will attack the castle accompanied by a group of Velns servants. Once again, have the players describe how they organized the guard against the thieving spirit, and then have the attacking force show up instead. This time the targets are the player characters, and the enemies will do whatever they can to kill or maim them. Kangars knows that the adventurers are dangerous and will cast all of his magic before entering combat. If he falls, the Velns will probably flee. If this attack fails, Spīdala will give up and let the adventurers rebuild the castle. If the attack succeeds in killing or hurting one or more player characters or mercenaries, the building process will slow down by another 10% of the Party Status, and if this brings the total delay to 30% or more the party's employer might, at the Gamemaster's discretion, decide to halt the building.

If the adventurers succeed in rebuilding the castle, the surrounding area starts to be a source of income for

them. If one of them has some proficiency in accounting or logistics, he can take the role of Advocate and manage the castle economy, including tax income from the nearby village or villages. Remember, however, that the castle requires maintenance and that the Castle Lord must supply the troops with weapons and equipments. Crossbows and siege arbalests are particularly important for the castle defence, as the specimens that the player characters had brought to Ascheraden in their first adventure have been looted or destroyed by the Lithuanians. The previous section about the logistics includes the suggested procedure to use Status to handle the hiring of militiamen and the purchase of any new equipments and supplies.

The Mongol Scouts

SUMMER, 1240 AD

THE PARTY HAS ITS FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE FIERCE MOUNTED CONQUERORS FROM THE EAST, THE MONGOLS OF OGODEI KHAN, SON OF THE FEARED TEMUJIN.

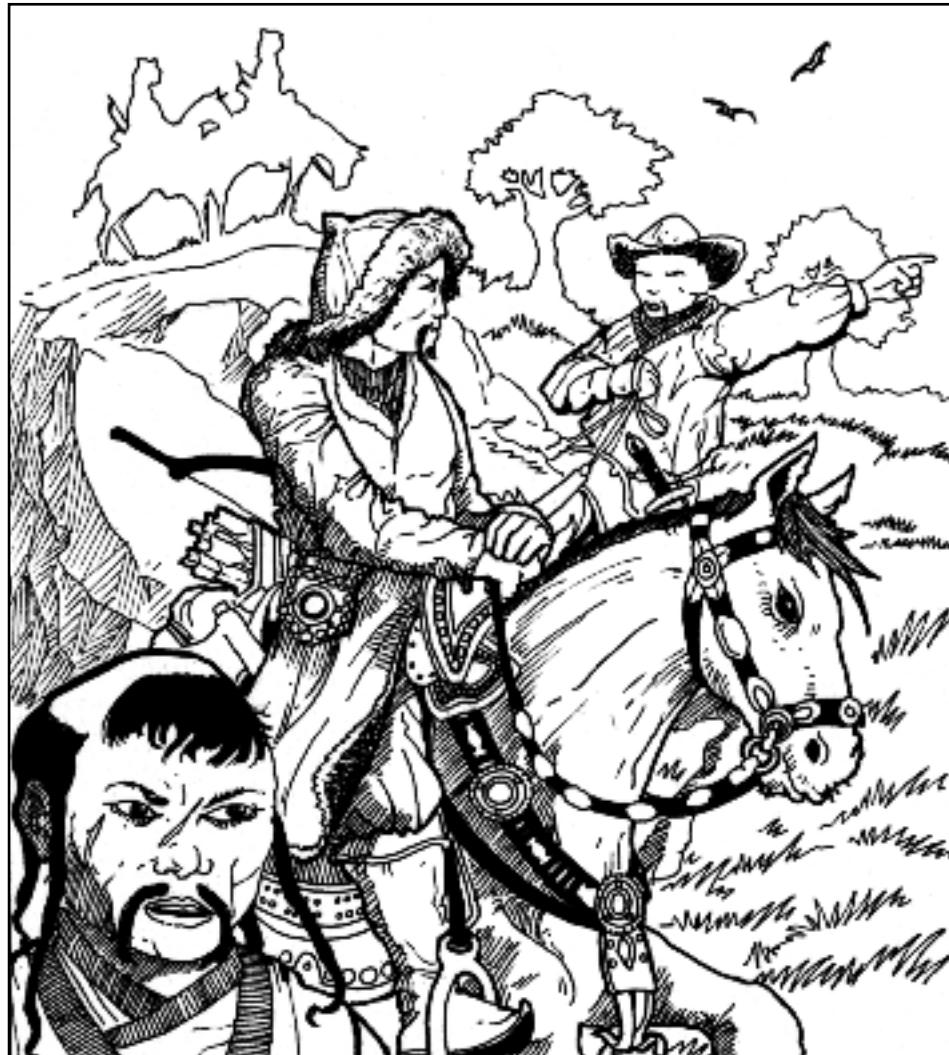
This encounter is unrelated to the main plot, and is provided just to avoid the player characters start thinking that everything around them is part of a Vilkacis conspiracy. However, if the player characters are clever, the outcome of this adventure can give them some advantages later.

The adventurers are now in full control of Ascheraden. Let them enjoy a couple of years of relative calm, during which they can devote to studying or practising their favourite skills and accumulating resources. During this time Andra passes away, and Tekla takes her place if the party has not actively involved her in its adventures. If Tekla has a major role as an NPC in the party, instead, Andra is not replaced by anyone and the village of Aškere becomes a Christian community under all respects.

During these two years, not earlier than 1239 and not later than Summer 1240, the disappearance of some sheep is reported. Suspecting raiders, one of the mercenary sergeants sends out two militiamen on a scouting mission. Neither of them returns. At this point the Sergeant reports to the Lord of the Castle that something unusual and potentially dangerous is going on, and requests that the Master himself takes action. Since the threat has not been identified yet and two men have probably been already lost, caution should advise the adventurers to go investigating in group rather than sending more small patrols towards a probable demise.

The disappearing patrol has last been seen heading NorthEast along the Daugava river. Following their trail, the investigating party spots crows gathering around a particular point, a clear mark that something dead is there. Once they have located the spot towards where the crows are headed, the adventurers find evidence of a corpse of some sort on the bottom of a crevice, not far from the river. The place is barely accessible, and the party must spend two hours with a successful Climb roll and the aid of a rope (four hours if the roll is not made) to simply get down to the corpse. A successful Spot roll reveals, before the climbing down begins, that the corpse is armoured and has a spear lying under it. Once the body is recovered, it turns out it is one of the two militiamen, and it has a strange arrow stuck in his left shoulder. The arrow is not poisoned nor did it cause a fatal wound, so the poor man must have been killed by the fall while he was fleeing someone who shot arrows at him. There is no sign of the other man, nor will the adventurers find him or anything belonging to him anywhere.

Anyone making an *Easy* Tracking or Search roll can see clear marks of horses moving away from the area. The track leads to the nearby small town of Kokenhusen, but deviates before reaching the urban area. To follow it further, the party needs another successful Tracking roll and a whole day's travel. If the roll is



not successful, the adventurers can only learn some scattered informations from nearby peasants, who speak of "yellow-faced riders with bows, curved swords and long moustaches". Any success in an appropriate Knowledge skill reveals they must be Mongols. The name Genghis Khan echoes in the adventurers' minds, although they should know that Temujin the terrible is now dead. However, the party cannot catch up with the Mongol riders, who seem to have disappeared.

If the Tracking roll is successful, the adventurers can learn all the above information, and they also find the actual direction the spies took on their way home. If they hurry up and travel only by horse or force marches, they will catch up with



their enemies just after they have settled for the night. The Mongols have hidden in a small grove, so a player character must succeed in an opposed Spot test against the lowest Mongol Hide skill (50%) in order to spot the camp. If the adventurers fail to notice the camp, the Mongols will not ambush them and will vanish forever on the following morning. In case the adventurers successfully spot them, instead, they can approach the camp silently.

The party is made up of one Mongol Spy and three to six Mongol Scouts. In any case there is at least one Mongol on guard at any moment, who will shoot a whistle arrow to wake the others up if he spots or hears the adventurers. If the scouts are not utterly surprised, they will shoot a couple of arrows each at the attackers and then jump onto horseback and flee. If they succeed at this, it will be almost impossible for even the best riders among the adventurers to catch them up again.

Any Mongol caught alive is worth a ransom to the Golden Horde, but the adventurers need to have contacts among

the Russian princes to get in touch with the Horde. The leader is worth as much as three underlings but he is very hard to take alive: he will rather cast his stealth magic and disappear into the darkness, leaving his underlings to their fate. However, if captured he will suggest to the adventurers that it is in their best interest to let the horde buy his life back. Interrogating Mongol prisoners yields no useful information, as the group was just on a routine scouting party, and the adventurers must find someone who knows their language if they fail to capture the leader.

Finally, if the adventurers report the incident to their employer, they will be informed that the Russians have been enslaved by the Mongols and this scouting party is probably just the vanguard of a mixed Mongol/Russian army. The employer is happy to know that the Ascheraden garrison has repelled these dangerous spies and the adventurers' Status with him will increase by 1d6, or 2d6 if they actually captured one or more of the spies.



embassy from Lithuania

FALL, 1241 AD

THE ORDER IS NEGOTIATING A TRUCE WITH THE LITHUANIANS, BUT THEIR LEADER DUKE VYKINTAS SENDS AN UNEXPECTED DIPLOMAT. MORE INTRIGUES AWAITS THE ADVENTURERS IN RIGA.

The adventurers are invited to a meeting that is held in the Bishop's Castle in Rīga. Vykintas, a Lithuanian Duke from Samogitia formerly hostile to the Brethren, is willing to make peace with the Christians and help them conquer Lithuania, so he is sending his ambassador Vytautas to negotiate with the Bishop and the Order alike. If the adventurers investigate about Vykintas among the natives, they soon discover that it was he who led the Lithuanian army that destroyed the Sword Brethren at the Battle of the Saule. If Tekla is usually involved in the party's adventures, it is possible that they want to bring her with them. In this case, have bad omens manifest to discourage the adventurers from taking Tekla to Rīga.

If the adventurers travel to Rīga by water, Staburadze will manifest on their boat and warn them that this voyage is dangerous, and that they will meet the enemy that vanquished their former allies and brothers. The Lady of the Daugava insists that they must be prepared for a defeat, but recommends that they act more wisely than Volkwin and the Brethren and manage to survive to fight another day. If Tekla is with them, she warns them that she must not meet the enemy, lest the fate of Livonia be sealed forever. If the party travels by land, instead, they meet the Old Man in Grey, who gives them the same advice as Staburadze would. If the party has access to augury or divination, Laima will tell them exactly the same things.

Once in Rīga the *Livländischer Landmeister*, Dietrich von Grüningen, greets the party and introduces them to the

new Leadership of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, which includes the military commander Andreas von Felben, one of the few Sword Brothers who have survived the disaster at the Saule. The adventurers, who have some experience in dealing with the pagans, are expected to watch over the diplomats and ensure that an agreement is reached. Dietrich is very clear about this: he wants a truce with the Lithuanians, at all costs. If the adventurers investigate his motivations, they discover that the *Landmeister* is planning a military campaign against the Cities of Pskov and Novgorod, in Russia, and does not want to risk a backstab from the Lithuanians while his troops are moving eastwards. King Eric of Sweden has attempted a landing assault on Novgorod early that year, although his forces have been stopped on the River Neva by one Prince Aleksandr, so if the Order does not hurry up the Kings of Denmark and Sweden will seize the rich Russian principalities for themselves.

Two days after the adventurers have reached Rīga, the embassy from Vykintas arrive. It is led by Vytautas, a middle-aged Lithuanian noble. If the adventurers have been given some hints about Tekla's origins, they will certainly notice that Vytautas shows an impressive resemblance to the girl. Much to their astonishment, the adventurers will now discover that one of Vytautas's retainers is Spīdala! The adventurers could now guess that Vytautas is a Vilkacis, too, and that he must be very powerful. Even though they may have no clues about Vilkacis hierarchical organizations, the adventurers will soon suspect that Vytautas may be a Lord among the shapeshifters.

No matter how hard the adventurers try to persuade him that Spīdala is an evil, child-eating witch, the *Landmeister* will want to go on with the negotiation, even if they suggest that Vytautas is a shapeshifting monster, too. The lack of information that the Order has about he Vilkacis makes their worries seem ludicrous: legends about werewolves were not so widespread in Western Europe at that time. Any attempt at Vytautas's or



Spīdala's life will be uncovered, and will lead to the adventurers being disgraced, even stripped off of their status and ownership of Ascheraden. Applying to the Bishop of Rīga will have no effect, either, regardless of any Persuasion or Status rolls: the Christians are too interested in a dealing with the Lithuanians to even consider a rejection of Vytautas' proposal. The only officer that has any tendency to listen to what the adventurers have to say is Andreas von Felben, who is still possessed by hatred against Vykintas because of what happened at the Battle of the Saule. But despite this fact, even Andreas cannot act against Vykintas or Vytautas, because the *Hochmeister* Gerhard von Malberg, successor to Hermann von Salza and backed by Pope Gregorius, wishes to sign a secret treaty with the Lithuanians and then move undisturbed against Russia. However if the adventurers persuade him that the danger is great, Andreas will favour them and possibly loan them resources, troops or even magic objects in the final chapters of the campaign.

The diplomatic talks last for two days. The adventurers learn that Mindaugas, the most powerful of the Lithuanian Dukes, killed many of his own relatives in order to extend his dominion, and that Vykintas, who is Mindaugas's nephew, fearing he could do this with him too, wishes to ally with the Order to better thwart his uncle's menace. Vykintas wishes in fact to overthrow his uncle's yoke and become Grand Duke himself, but this is never stated clearly by Vytautas during the talks and can be discovered only by separate investigations. One way to get more information is to seduce Spīdala, but anyone having an affair with her while the Vilkacis Lord is close risks being tricked into becoming a werewolf himself.

At one point during the talks, Vytautas has a secret night encounter with Dietrich von Grüningen, preceded by an encounter between Dietrich and Spīdala who presumably uses her courtesan arts to better "persuade" the *Landmeister*. Only if the adventurers are actively observing the

Vilkacis and if they succeed in an appropriate espionage roll (Stealth, or usage of an appropriate magic spell) do they realize that the two have met. This information can be sold to the Bishop, if the adventurers work for him, for a 1d6 Status increase. Vytautas even promises that he will be baptised as soon as he becomes Duke if the Order accepts to acknowledge him as the rightful heir to Vykintas (he actually worships the Devil, so it makes little difference for him to pretend to believe in Christ rather than in Perkunas). Another espionage roll coupled with a Listen roll for eavesdropping reveals that Vytautas actually plans to have Vykintas killed and then take part of his lands for him and leave the rest to the greedy Mindaugas. Gathering this information is definitely worth another 1d6 Status increase with both the Order and the Bishop, but not even this news will persuade anyone to take action against Vytautas or his master.

In the end, the adventurers will have to face the fact that the Order is now allied to their worst enemy. Spīdala will eventually talk to them and state that their lives have been spared because her master has more important matters to attend now, but this luck will not last forever. By saying this she confirms that Vytautas is the power behind all the trouble she has caused in Ascheraden, but this is all that the adventurers can do against her and the other Vilkacis. The prophecy made by Staburazde or the Old Man in Grey has come true, and they must accept that the best solution is to live to fight another day... which will come soon.

Alternate ending

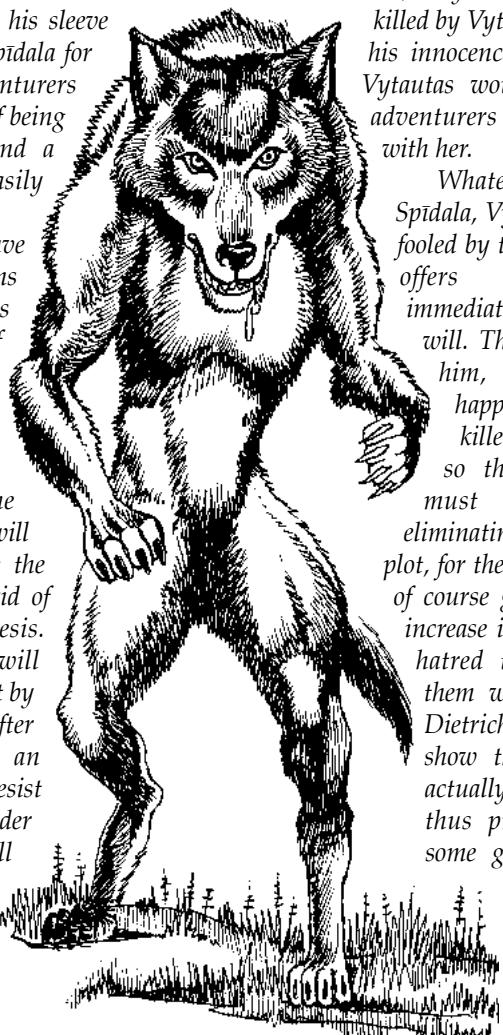
It is clearly possible that the adventurers behave so cunningly as to expose the evil plan of the Vilkacis to the Bishop or to the Brotherhood. Even though magic cannot reveal the nature of the Vilkacis, and even a Sense Malice spell cannot detect their plan as they are planning no direct harm for the Christians, appropriate use of espionage and diplomacy could expose more than the plot requires at this stage. As the gamemaster, you are now faced by two equally unpleasant alternatives: using a "deus ex machina" intervention in favour of Vytautas and so failing to reward the players' good achievements by negating them their diplomatic victory, or disrupting the plot and skipping the most epic part of the campaign. The best solution lies in the middle: have Vytautas draw an ace from his sleeve and find a way to blame Spidala for what happened. The adventurers have certainly accused her of being a bloodthirsty werewolf and a witch, so she is very easily turned into a scapegoat.

If the adventurers have cornered him with accusations in a diplomatic way, Vytautas will "discover" evidence of Black Magic in her possessions and hand them to the Bishop, who will immediately order her burning as a witch. The adventurers, or Vytautas, will have the honour of setting the pyre aflame, thus getting rid of their returning nemesis. Alternatively, Vytautas will simply force her to shapeshift by casting a Rage spell on her after wounding someone with an excuse. The witch cannot resist the smell of blood while under the effect of Rage, and will turn into a wolf, killing and maiming guards and brothers while she is invulnerable to normal weapons. If the adventurers

cannot kill or disable her very quickly, Vytautas will chop her down with a magically enhanced axe, thus proving that he was in good faith. Keeping her alive for interrogation in this case is very hard, as Vytautas will surely try to have her killed.

Despite what happens to her in the Läčplesis poem, Spidala cannot be redeemed and if taken alive and interrogated will not reveal Vytautas' plans, even if tortured. The adventurers cannot extort information from her, and she will be killed very quickly once she is recognized as a monster. It would be very, very difficult for the player characters to free her from the Bishop's dungeon, and she would betray and abandon the party very soon if rescued, only to be tracked down and killed by Vytautas to further prove his innocence. In the latter case, Vytautas would even accuse the adventurers of being in league with her.

Whatever happens to Spidala, Vytautas claims he was fooled by the witch as well, and offers to be baptised immediately to show his good will. The Bishop will believe him, no matter what happens, especially if he killed the witch himself, so the player characters must be content with eliminating Spidala from the plot, for the time being. This will of course grant them a further increase in Status. The look of hatred that Vytautas gives them while the Bishop and Dietrich are not looking will show them that they have actually damaged his plans, thus providing them with some gratification for their achievements, and with the realization that they now have a far more dangerous enemy.



to Novgorod!

In this final story arc, the adventurers will learn about the plans of the Vilkacis, but, much to their horror, they will discover that it includes the souls of the dead Sword Brothers. After discovering this, they will be forced to betray their masters in order to ensure that the forces of evil do not prevail.

The Northern Reaches

AUTUMN, 1241 AD

IN THIS EPISODE THE ADVENTURERS ARE SENT AS MESSENGERS TO THE BISHOP OF DORPAT, TO ASK FOR HELP AGAINST NOVGOROD, WHICH THEY OBTAIN.

The adventurers are recalled to Riga because of the frightening news of a Mongol invasion of Prussia. This is the last time they are in Ascheraden before the campaign ends, so take note of what they carry with themselves and what they leave behind, including soldiers. Also check carefully what happens to Tekla if she is still with the party.

Upon reaching Riga, the adventurers are informed that the Mongol Horde has invaded Hungary and is marching towards Poland and Prussia. The *Landmeister* of Prussia has sent some knights to help the Polish rulers, but there is no news about Mongols in Russia or Livonia. The player characters are requested to confirm that they have seen no evidence of Mongol presence in their lands since the incident in summer 1240, which the *Landmeister* Dietrich considers too old to be relevant. If the party requests permission to go back to Ascheraden, the *Landmeister* replies that if the Horde is coming it is better to have all the troops concentrating in one place, and demands that any player characters left behind are recalled to Riga. At this point the adventurers are given an update about

the overall situation.

Master Andreas von Felben is currently leading an army to the Northeast, heading for the rich Russian city of Pskov, which he expects to capture within the year. The arrogant citizens of Novgorod have dismissed the young Prince Aleksandr, the winner of the Battle of the Neva, and are now feeling safe in their irresponsibility, the living example of why God has given the burden of command to nobles and not to traders. Vytautas, whom Dietrich now calls Duke Vytautas even though he is not a Duke (yet), is assembling a force of Lithuanian warriors to help in the conquest of Novgorod.

Dietrich asks the adventurers to act as his diplomats, a task they performed rather well when they visited the Order in Prussia, and go ask for help in Dorpat. The Bishopric of Dorpat is independent of that of Riga, but it is now ruled by Hermann von Buxhövden, brother of Bishop Albert von Buxhövden, the founder of the Sword Brethren, so Dietrich expects the Bishop to be friendly to the Order. Dorpat is also close to the Danish colony of Estonia, so the adventurers can ask for Danish help, too. With an order signed by the *Landmeister* of the Teutonic Orders, which carries with itself both Imperial and Papal authority for a total +10% Status modifier, the adventurers are sent as envoys to the Fortress City of Dorpat.

The trip to Dorpat is long and difficult. The adventurers have travelled mainly by boat so far, so emphasize the difficulties of a path through 150 or so kilometres of partial wilderness, inhabited by wild beasts

as well as humans. As the first crusaders soon discovered, travelling through these lands while carrying supplies is easier in winter, when the ubiquitous swamps are frozen and easy to cross. At the moment the adventurers begin travel, most of the marshes and rivers are not frozen yet, or the ice is not thick enough to support a mounted man, forcing riders to dismount frequently and walk with extreme caution. The Gamemaster may call for Knowledge (Area:Baltic) rolls with appropriate modifiers for the character's background to keep a steady pace, with one to three weeks' delay being the penalty for failed rolls. In case the adventurers have not brought enough food with them, they can forage by hunting the large herbivores who dwell that region, but this will cost them extra time.

When the adventurers reach Dorpat, they are greeted warmly by Bishop Hermann, especially if there are survivors of the Order founded by his brother among them. The Bishop agrees that time has come to move Eastwards and starts mustering his army. However, he declares that the army could use some Estonian troops, and asks the adventurers to go visit the Danish feudal lords of the surrounding areas to levy some troops. Hermann gives them one more signed paper that bestows Episcopal authority on them, and gives them another +10% Status modifier.

The adventurers now have a little time to visit the nearby nobles and ask for help. Assume they have ten weeks (normal seven day weeks not Latvian weeks), but subtract the appropriate amount of weeks if they wasted time while moving from Riga to Dorpat. They can visit one fief per week, but if they can succeed in another Survival roll they can visit one extra fief. Even with the papers they are carrying, the nobles will not be very willing to help and one of the adventurers must succeed in a Status (Bishopric) roll in order to get their aid. Luckily, the reputation they gained in Riga with the Bishop can be used without modifications here in Estonia. If you have time you may wish to roleplay one or two of the encounters, in order to add colour to

the narrative and give modifiers to the Status roll. For instance, the noble might request that the party kills some bandits or tracks down ravaging wolves who eventually turn out to be led by a young Vilkacis.

Consult the following table to determine how many troops each noble will send.

Die roll	Noble will send later	Noble sends immediately
Fumble	-	-
Failure	1d4 militiamen	-
Success	1 Lance	1d4 militiamen
Special	1d4 Lances	1d6 militiamen
Critical	2d4 Lances	1d6 militiamen, 1 Lance

Militiamen are just Estonian auxiliaries with leather armour and basic training in the spear and shield. A Lance is comprised of one trained, fully armed and armoured feudal knight with a squire, a backup horse and a militiaman as escort. All troops marked as "Sent immediately" are put under the adventurers' command and added to any militiamen they chose to bring from Ascheraden, and remain with them till the end of the campaign unless killed. If there are lances among them and none of the player characters are knights, the knight in the lance might wish to take control of the expedition. Keep track of the troops accompanying the adventurers, as they will need them in the final part of the adventure.

Approximately one week before the Spring equinox, the party is reached by a messenger from the Bishop who tells them that Aleksander Nevskij has recaptured Pskov and is marching towards Dorpat with a Russian army. The adventurers must go back to the fortress at once. The trip back to the Bishop's seat is uneventful, and the messenger's presence avoids any further delays. Award the players experience rolls to improve the skills they used in this adventure, because they will certainly need them for the next encounters.

The Order Papers

Know Thee, Prince and Bishop of Dorpat, that these brave men are sent as legates of the Militia Christi in Terra Livonica, and so they come with the direct authority of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Roman Pontifex. It is the wish of the latter that thy forces join the Holy Crusade against the Infidels of the East, who sold their souls to the Tatar pagans of Temujin the Terrible.

*Dietrich,
Magister Militiae Christi*

The Bishop's Papers

O faithful servant of the King of the Danes, know that these men are righteously entitled to speak in the name of the Church. Pagans from the East do threaten Christ's reign in the land of Eesti. Remember thy oath of loyalty to the Church and provide the Army of Christ with as many arms and swords as thy fief can muster.

*Hermann,
by God's Will
Bishop of Dorpat*



The Defense of the Mooste

WINTER, 1242 AD

THE FIRST SKIRMISH AGAINST NEVSKIJ'S TROOPS
ENDS WITH A VICTORY FOR THE
DANISH/ESTONIAN ARMY. THE ADVENTURERS
HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THEIR VALOUR
TO THE BISHOP.

Once the adventurers are back to Dorpat, Bishop Hermann summons them and tells them that troops from the nearby fiefs are beginning to reach the fortress, as a consequence of their mission. Pleased by their success, the Bishop asks the adventurers to perform another task for him. They have to reach the bridge (Mooste in Estonian) that lies Southeast of Dorpat and secure it, preventing Nevskij's army from reaching the fortress before all reinforcements have arrived. The adventurers can count on all the troops they have brought with them from the Danish lords' castles, plus any troops that they can persuade the Bishop to grant them. Hermann will only give them militiamen, but he will surely provide them with food and winter camping equipment if they need it.

The trip to the Mooste lasts only one day, and the adventurers reach it in the evening if they exit Dorpat at dawn. The bridge crosses a creek that creates a small marshland. There is a small hamlet nearby and the peasants that live there are happy to see the adventurers, as they know that Russian, and possibly Mongol, raiders are approaching. The adventurers are very tired when they reach the Mooste. However, they should set up sentries and patrols to guard the bridge during the night: who knows when the Russians can show up? If they fail to provide a valid surveillance plan, give the Russians the advantage of surprise in the ensuing combat. If you wish, you can have them describe how the guards are placed at each end of the bridge and what sort of hasty fortifications they are building.

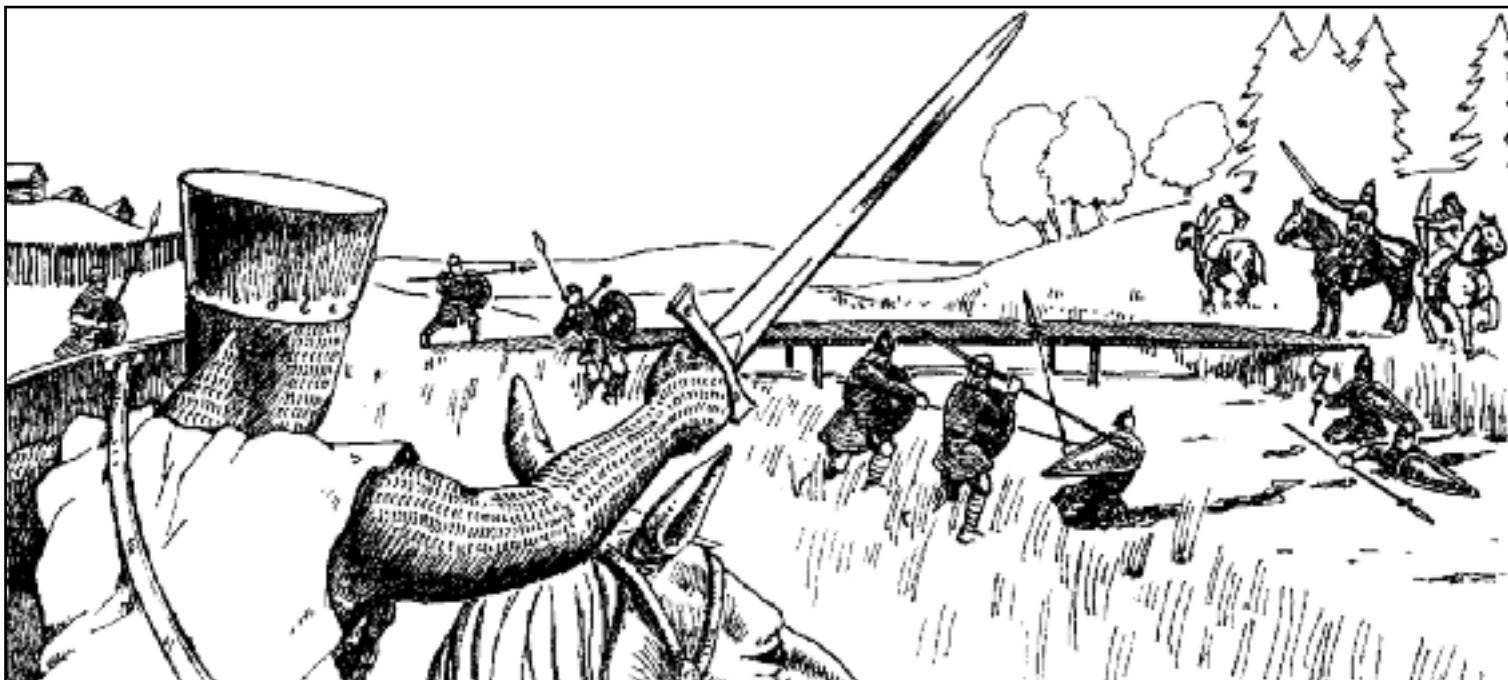
Just before dawn, Mongol assassins approach the sentries posted on the far side of the bridge, if any, and kill them silently. At the first lights of dawn, one sentry spots armed men in the distance and gives the alarm. The adventurers and their soldiers are awake in a matter of seconds, but there are already Russian warriors crossing the river when they are ready for combat.

Seeing that the adventurers are in control of the bridge, several foot soldiers are trying to cross the swamp that lies on both sides of it. The creek is partially frozen but the ice surface is not thick enough to support a man's weight, so the Russians are slowed down and unable to land on the adventurers' side of the creek in an organized formation. This means that the adventurers' troops can easily single out the Russian warriors and dispatch them, or take them out with missile fire.

But there are two or three mounted Mongol warriors, armed with deadly cavalry bows, who use the bridge to approach the defenders, shoot arrows and flee before their opponents can return fire. If the adventurers have built fortifications, however rudimentary, outside the village, they will be able to repel the Mongol riders rather easily, otherwise it is entirely possible that their militiamen rout under enemy arrow fire and some mounted enemies break through their defence. In any case, the adventurers should be able to repel the attack easily, with the price of tactical mistakes or failed rolls being only some lost militiamen. If you wish, you can use the skirmish rules presented in the first part of the campaign to run this combat.

Shortly after the Mongol riders have shown up, another mounted figure appears. It is the Russian leader, Domash Tverdislavich, sent by Aleksandr Nevskij himself. Domash is a tough opponent, a proud and fierce son of Novgorod, and will not retreat once things are beginning to go wrong for him. Defeating him requires player character intervention, and he will not surrender in any case, although he can still be incapacitated.

Once the final outcome of the battle is



clear, any surviving Mongols will flee like the wind, and the adventurers should already know that trying to pursue their fast ponies is pointless. On the contrary, any Russian soldier routing through the swamp is an easy prey. There are no more than 20-30 enemies attacking, depending on how many men the player characters have in their army. Once they are all killed or routed, nothing else happens during the day. Many of the villagers will flee to Dorpat, fearing the arrival of a bigger Russian army.

At the end of the following day, the Danish army appears in the distance. Bishop Hermann in person, clad in his armour, is leading it. He greets the adventurers as "worthy sons of the Church" and replaces their detachment with fresh troops as defenders of the bridge. If the adventurers performed particularly well or succeed in a Persuade roll he will replace the casualties or the wounded in their army with new spearmen. If the adventurers managed to win the battle with minimal losses or to capture Domash alive, they gain 1d6 Status for their deeds.

The Army of Lost Souls

MARCH, 1242 AD

THE ADVENTURERS REACH THE TEUTONIC ARMY THAT WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE IN THE FINAL BATTLE AGAINST THE RUSSIANS. BUT THE ARMY IS OF AN UNEXPECTED NATURE.

While the Bishop's army is still encamped at the Mooste, Dietrich and a small group of Teutonic Knights reach it from the South. They warn Bishop Hermann that the Russian army might be flanking them from the East and so it is time to intercept and destroy it. Once Nevskij is dispatched, nothing else will stand between the Order and the unbelievably rich city of Novgorod. However, the Western army is not yet at full strength and more reinforcements are coming from Riga, accompanied by the new Lithuanian allies of the Order. Dietrich orders the adventurers to move southwards in order to meet the reinforcement column and lead it to the main army.

Even if unwilling to do so because they



suspect some more treachery from the Lithuanians, the adventurers are forced to obey Dietrich's command and move southwards with the remnants of their small troop. Four or five days pass, and the adventurers are sleeping in their camp near a small grove in Southern Estonia when the last watch of the night spots something moving in the dim light of pre-dawn.

An unbelievable sight is in front of the amazed player characters. A column of mounted knights, probably hundreds of them, is moving directly towards Dorpat. They must have been travelling for the whole night, yet they show no sign of exhaustion: they simply go on, their horses putting one leg in front of another with a painfully slow but steady pace.

If the adventurers send one or more soldiers to meet them, the soldiers do not return. A successful Spot roll reveals what happened: the men are first cut down by the knights' swords, then they rise again

and join the sinister column in its restless march!

At this point the adventurers might want to approach the column themselves or use magical means of sight to investigate. The knights have clearly some enchantment upon themselves, although only a successful Knowledge roll by a character that worships *Velu Māte* or a similar deity can guess their real nature from afar. When approached by player characters or by a mixed group that includes player characters, the knights show no hostile behaviour but just continue marching. At first the party reaches the end of the column, which is still marching without a stop even several hours after dawn, and immediately notices something weird in the knights' appearance: they all wear the red crossed cloak of the Sword Brethren, but all of their tunics are torn, ragged and blood stained, their eyes are staring in the void in front of them, and some of them even have impaled arrows protruding from their bodies. After a few seconds of close inspection, the real significance of this sight shows up, for one of the adventurers recognizes Brother Lucien among them, then another sees Brother Roger, and finally one spots *Komtur* Wilfred von Bremen. But all of these Sword Brothers are surely... dead!

The whole column is made of dead knights!

Unless the adventurers decide at once that the situation is too risky, they will probably try to speak to one of their former brothers in arms from Ascheraden. This requires moving with the column for some time, and after some effort one player character will eventually succeed in attracting one of the Brothers' attention. He turns his head very slowly and stares at his comrade with his emotionless eyes, then greets him or her with a creepy voice that clearly comes from the Underworld. Whatever questions the adventurer asks, the Brother will not reveal much about his state, except the following:

"I fell at the Saule, fighting the heathen. I failed in my mission to defeat



the unbelievers, and lost my honour."

"Vytautas is a merciful man. He defeated us but only wanted to take our lives, not our honour. He called us back so that we could regain our lost honour."

"The Evil Prince Aleksandr is now a vassal of the Mongols and has worshipped their foul idols. By defeating his army of pagans we can keep our vows and cleanse our honour from the taint. So sayeth Vytautas the Wise."

"Brother, wilt thou help us regain our honour by fighting for the True Faith? Join us in the Painless Death, so that thy arm may become tireless like ours."

After this last statement is uttered, several of the knights start looking at the adventurers, and some of them slowly draw their swords. If the adventurers do not flee immediately, the knights try to slowly surround them, so that their intentions become clear. Have the undead dispatch all militiamen that have approached them while the player characters flee, and describe the horrible sight of the dead men rising again to join the column.

No matter what the party tries, they can neither stop the column nor extract more information from the dead brothers. Arrows and stones do no harm to the walking dead, and any attempt to approach them again results only in more soldiers dying and joining their ranks as spectral squires.

It should now be clear that the adventurers must reach the *Landmeister* and warn him of Vytautas' horrible witchery. If they do not know what to do or head for other directions, have Andreas von Felben or even the Old Man in Grey appear and put them back on the right course. The undead have the advantage of being able to march without rest, but they are slower than normal humans, so the party will eventually be able to reach the Bishop's camp a few hours before them. Spring is beginning but the snow is not thawing yet, so let the adventurers rejoin their army at the exact moment that is required for the campaign grand finale: the morning of April 5th, 1242 AD.

The Battle of the Frozen Lake

APRIL 5TH, 1242 AD

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH PRINCE ALEKSANDER NEVSKIJ'S FORCES TAKES PLACE JUST AS THE ADVENTURERS REJOIN THE TEUTONIC ARMY. THE KEY TO VICTORY OR DEFEAT LIES IN THEIR HANDS, AND THEY ARE CONFRONTED WITH AN ETHIC DILEMMA. WHAT SIDE WILL THEY SUPPORT? IF THEY CHOOSE WISELY, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO AVOID A CARNAGE AND UPHOLD JUSTICE.

One hour after dawn, a tired and very worried party of adventurers, accompanied by the survivors among their henchmen, reaches the Bishop's war encampment on the West bank of Lake Peipus, knowing that the undead army is only a few miles behind them, and advancing. The lake is the border between the Bishopric of Dorpat and the lands of Novgorod, and Hermann and Dietrich have followed Nevskij's army to this spot, where the Russians are expected to make their last stand in defence of their motherland (*Rodina*).

The Teutonic heavy cavalry has already left the camp and is charging the retreating Russians, battering their rear guard and flanks. Dietrich and the other Knights are there, accompanied by Vytautas and the other Lithuanian nobles who have arrived the day before. Only the Bishop is still at the camp, ready to move with the Estonian auxiliaries. The adventurers will probably want to talk to the Bishop, and he will grant them a brief audience while he is donning his armour. Unfortunately, a Teutonic Knight and a Lithuanian noble are also there, and they will swear that anything the player characters say about walking dead, witchcraft or anything supernatural is false, and that what they saw is just the reinforcement column from Riga they were waiting for that has finally arrived. The Lithuanian will also look at them with a grin on his face and add "Now that our Duke Vytautas has led the reinforcements here, His Grace the Bishop will certainly make him

Dievs and God

Christian characters whose beliefs are deeply rooted could frown upon accepting a pagan god's help in that situation, although having already met the demigoddess Staburadze they should now be rather used to such dealings. However, please note that Dievs has been identified with the Christian God after the Christian conquest of the Baltic lands (Dievs means simply God in Latvian, and the word has the same etymology as Deus in Latin). Dievs/Daiwas is considered as the supreme deity by Balts, the creator of the world, so the real difference with Christianity is only that the latter does not acknowledge the existence of lesser gods like Laima or Pērkons. This means that a Christian character could believe that the Old Man, who is clearly a benevolent supernatural entity, is in fact his deity. This kind of syncretism was actually unheard of in the Middle Ages, but this is a game, right? So if one of your players wishes to have his character believe that he has met God, even if the Old Man is clearly involved with pagan deities, then let the player roleplay it out. It will certainly be more fun.

Lord of Novgorod when we conquer it." At these words, both the knight and the Bishop nod. No matter what the adventurers say, the Bishop will not believe them and will just end the conversation abruptly and send them on exploration with the left cavalry wing. Another big grin from the Lithuanian noble (which is clearly a Vilkacis in disguise) greets their leave, accompanied by a whispered comment about "A new Duchy where the Ancient Powers will grow strong." Any religious Knowledge roll, or talking to Andreas von Felben, will reveal to the adventurers that if the battle is decided by an army of undead claiming to fight for Christ's sake, such a blasphemy will corrupt any Bishopric or Kingdom that may be born from it, as well as pollute the land and taint the Bishopric of Dorpat and the Order itself beyond any hope of redemption. In short, it will be the Vilkacis Lord's final victory.

At this point the adventurers might be tempted to disobey their orders or do something unexpected. Again, have Andreas von Felben intervene and show them that this is exactly what Vytautas' follower, who is accompanying the Bishop, is waiting for before having them executed for treachery, so it is better to wait for a later opportunity, although the moment of the final catastrophe is coming closer and closer.

The frustrated adventurers are now under the command of one Lars Svensson, a Danish Baron who leads the left wing. The final battle has begun, and the Teutonic vanguard has pushed the Russian forces towards the Eastern bank of the lake, through the narrow stretch of land that runs between the northern and southern halves of Lake Peipus. The forces of the Bishop are about to enter the battle, and the long black snake of the approaching undead column is already visible in the distance.

In fact, Nevskij is just trying to lure the enemy into a trap that he has set on the far shore of the lake, but the Danes suspect this and they are sending scouts to the North, across the frozen surface of Northern Lake Peipus. Seeing their unease and discomfort, Duke Lars sends the adventurers as one of these scouting parties, which they clearly see as a good opportunity to leave his sight and

look for some desperate action to do. After a few hundred meters of cautious advancing on the frozen surface of the lake, the adventurers are in sight of a small willow grove on the Eastern shore. Just as they are wondering what to do now, a single blast of lightning comes from the clear sky, hitting one of the willows and setting it afire. If a player character has taken the curse of the Root of Yggdrasil upon himself, the mark on his or her right hand will itch, sensing the power of Lord Pērkons. After the roar of thunder has died out, a familiar squealing voice comes from the trees, and the adventurers see a small Velns rushing away from the fire. Whether they charge it or not the creature falls dead on the snow in a matter of seconds, and another familiar, curved figure comes out of the grove, clad in a grey robe and walking with the help of a long staff. It is Dievs disguised again as the Old Man in Grey.

The adventurers will undoubtedly approach him. At this point, let them finally guess who the old man may be with a simple Knowledge (Baltic) test. The Old Man greets them but does not tell his name, and starts speaking: "Ahh, is it not better when Evil is easy to recognize? And how accurate is Lord Pērkons' aim, when he strikes Velns from heaven. Oh, but I remember you: you are the ones who killed Lord Pērkons' champion, Ceidvilas the Zemaitian, years ago. Ah, the impulsiveness of youth. Would you not prefer that he was alive now, fighting the Devil with Lord Pērkons' might at his command? A heavy responsibility you took upon yourselves with your actions. What you did cannot be undone, you can only take his place now and vanquish evil on his behalf." The Old Man looks at the advancing army of undead in the distance. "Although I see that there is not much time left. The harder these Christians are to defeat on the battlefield, the easier their heart is to seduce with the promise of lust, power or glory; or, as in this case, a false opportunity of restoring their honour. How easily do they fall prey of Evil's deceipts!"

The Old Man pauses, letting the adventurers ask him for advice. He will then ask if they know how Vytautas persuaded



the undead brothers that they are fighting for the Christ, while they are in fact doing the Devil's job. As soon as someone mentions that they think they are fighting against pagans, the Old Man says: "Alas, treacherous as always you are, O Lord of the Vilkacis. You know that Nevskij fights alongside the Tatars and you fooled the Brothers into believing he is a Tatar himself, while in fact Batu Khan sees him more as an ally than as a subject. And against the Tatars you will fight, O poor, fooled Brothers, for already I can see Nevskij's Tatars riding beyond this grove, their deadly bone bows drawn. O, what malice has befallen on this wretched land, when the champions of virtue fight for the Devil."

Pause for a few moments and describe the scene of the Bishop's Estonian troops entering the battle a kilometre or so to the South, and the rumble of the undead stallions' hooves in the distance. If no one has already suggested what is now obvious, have the Man in Grey add: "On the other hand, if someone was valiant enough to

stop, or even just delay, the Tatars before they make contact with the dead Brothers, maybe they could see through Vytautas' lies and be shaken out of their folly. Know you someone wise enough to show the truth to those hapless Brothers? And, more important, know you someone brave enough to stand in the way of one hundred galloping Tatars shooting the feathered death from their bows?"

At this point the characters should have guessed in what direction their destiny is heading and will certainly ask the Old Man for more advice and help. He will provide one or more support options chosen among those given in the paragraph labelled as "Old Man gifts", but not more than one option per character.

Once the adventures have received any required help, the Old Man will speak to the willows and ask them to provide passage to the adventurers among their branches. The party and their militia will be able to march through the trees freely for the duration of the upcoming battle, but all mounts must be left behind. As soon as they reach the other end of the grove, the adventurers will see the Tatars riding towards the battle a few hundred metres from them. The blessing upon them provides the adventurers with a +50% to their Stealth skill while in the grove or at its edge.

The adventurer's goal at this point is to distract the Mongols and have them move towards them instead of joining the battle. The grove can provide enough cover to the party to ensure its survival until the undead column has reached the Russian army. This is not an easy task, however, as the Mongols are very disciplined warriors and will not stray from the intended path without a good reason. The adventurers have no more than one minute to prepare for action before the Mongols pass beyond their position.

The most obvious way to delay the Mongols is to just stand in their way. This is possible, but it involves being subject to heavy missile fire while the mounted warriors charge them. If the adventurers are alone, the Mongols will simply overrun them after shooting at least 20-40 arrows at them. If, on the other hand, the adventurers

The Old Man's gifts

- Remove any curse, poison or disease that is affecting a character
- Completely heal any one wound a character is suffering, but not more than one wound per character
- Temporarily enchant the armour of one player character so that it absorbs 1-3 additional points of damage
- Temporarily enchant a character's weapon so that it does magic damage

have managed to keep their small force of militiamen in good health, they have some chances of stopping them. A single line of at least 10-15 spearmen, however unskilled, is too wide an obstacle for the Tatars to simply overrun them and will force the commander to stop the squadron and shoot an organized volley of arrows to disperse the enemy. This means notwithstanding two-three volleys of one hundred arrows each, but will do the job. The commanding player character will have to use his Command skill (or any other appropriate skill) to simply keep the spearmen from running away after the first volley. No spearmen will be alive after the third volley, and each Player Character who is in the line must survive 1d4 arrows per volley, shot against him or her at 60% skill. Reduce the number of arrows to 1d3 or 1d2 if the party has more than ten militiamen in the battle. Remind the players to use magic and Fate Points: they will need them.

If the players cannot or will not deploy a soldier line in front of the advancing Tatars, they must persuade them that they are facing a big enough threat to make them turn towards their direction, a task that is not very easy unless the party has access to spectacular magic, or crossbows. A volley of at least ten crossbow bolts can do the trick, but only if some shots hit and do actual damage, particularly if the players are smart

enough to aim at the horses.

Finally, the squadron is preceded by a group of three scouts who ride closer to the grove and are about one minute ahead of the group, which means that they will appear just in front of the party when it exits the grove. Killing or capturing the scouts with a very fast attack will attract the Mongol leader's attention and have him stop to assess the threat coming from the trees. The adventurers must find a way to keep the Mongols busy for some time, before their leader eventually decides to simply steer away from the grove.

Note that if the party captured the Mongol leader after the raid against Ascheraden in the previous chapter and then released him in exchange for ransom, then this Mongol is in the scouting group and the adventurers can easily recognize him and attempt to start a diplomatic talk with him in order to gain the few minutes they need.

If none of the above tactics can work or the player characters just fail to use them, then it is up to the players to find a suitable way to distract the Mongols and then flee into the grove. And when their task is over and the delay has achieved the desired effect, have the Mongols give up the fight and move towards the battle again. Any player character who is disabled but not killed is still alive when the Mongols ride away, as they are not looking for loot or slaves at the moment and do not stop to finish their enemies off.

Any player character who does not feel like fighting or feels his or her skills can be more useful in persuading the dead Brothers can be offered the opportunity to stay with the Old Man and move towards the battle scene. If no one volunteers or all PCs prefer to go with the main group, skip this scene and just let the party guess what happened after they have blocked the Mongols. If a player character follows the Old Man, instead, pairs of magical snowshoes appears under the couple's feet, as the disguised god starts running towards the clashing armies at supernatural speed. Five minutes pass, during which the other party members cross the grove and engage the Mongols to their best. Magically protected from the melee





that takes place around them, the two walkers dive into the heat of battle just as the Army of Lost Souls is arriving. If you have a digital copy of Eisenstein's movie and a player, show all players the scene of the Teutonic Knights' charge to set the mood and raise tension. If the other party succeeds in delaying the Tatars, the undead will reach the battle when the Mongols are still far away. At this point someone must try to reveal the truth to them. The Old Man in Grey will do this if no player character is present, but it is more appropriate that an adventurer, who may have met Volkwin when he was alive, does the job if one is present.

The Undead Knights at this point are galloping at unearthly speed with swords drawn. The unnatural red glow in their eyes is unnoticed by anyone in the heat of battle but visible to the adventurer. The Old Man stops just at the point where the army is headed to, and does nothing, letting the adventurer speak. The column, led by Volkwin's shadow, stops abruptly. If the player character has met Volkwin before, the latter shows to recognize him or her, then he speaks with a voice that sounds like it is coming from the deepest pit of Hell: "How dare thou stand between the Sword Brethren and the restoration of their Honour? Step aside or be shred to pieces!" At this point the adventurer has a few moments to use his or her diplomatic skills to show Volkwin his folly. The Old Man will discreetly cast a spell on him to give him a +50% bonus to his Persuade or Perform (Oratory) roll, if needed, but the player must also roleplay this out. If the party has revealed the Bishop's treachery to Volkwin in Chapter Two, then he recognizes the hero as "One who was loyal to the Brethren" and the player character has his chances of success doubled even without the Old Man's intervention.

Vytautas is visible in the distance, looking at the scene and wondering what is happening. Once the player character has spoken, he moves towards the group, overtly casting magic on his axe to dispatch the adventurer once and for all. Bishop Hermann, who is in the rearguard,

approaches on his horse, too, to check what is delaying the reinforcements. Seeing Volkwin, whom he knew, he startles and stutters: "Vo-Volkwin? What the...", but he cannot finish his sentence because Vytautas hits him with the flat of his axe and throws him off his saddle. But it is too late for the Lithuanian leader, as Volkwin's shade stares at him in anger and shouts: "Vytautas, thou liar! There are no pagans here, just Christians. Whom didst thou take us to fight against? What honour is there to regain? And what sort of hellspawn art thou? Brothers, we shall regain our honour by fighting against the Devil itself!". With these words, the glow in the eyes of all the Brothers suddenly becomes white instead of red, and they move against Vytautas like the waves of the Baltic Sea. Chased by the monsters that he himself has created, the Lithuanian noble is forced to ride away, followed by a couple of his retainers.

At this point, the adventurers who were fighting the Mongols should have crossed the grove again. The first sight that presents to their eyes is a mass of knights with red crosses on their capes, chasing a small group of riders on the frozen lake. Behind them, the German-Estonian army is beginning to retreat, caught between the arrows of the arriving Tatars and the impact of the Russian heavy cavalry of Aleksandr Nevskij. The Prince himself is leading this victorious charge that will save Novgorod and inscribe his name in history. In a few moments, the adventurers, now joined by the Old Man in Grey and any character who had followed the bearded god, hear Vytautas' voice invoking Powers Whose Name Should Not Be Spoken and throwing a weapon on the frozen surface of Lake Chud (it is Volkwin's magic sword, which he used to bind the dead Brothers to the material world as undead after the Battle of the Saule). Suddenly the ice seems to melt, and the undead knights are enveloped by a supernatural mist and then disappear, sent back to the Otherworld to face their final judgement. To the unwary eye, it is as though they and their mounts had sunk into the frozen lake, and this is what the Russian ballads will tell in the centuries to come.



Only a few people will know the unbelievable truth.

With the Germans routed, the battle is over. However, there is still one confrontation to fight. Vytautas, whose real nature has been exposed to the Bishop, spoiling his plans forever, sees the adventurers in the distance and has no trouble guessing what must have happened. He and his followers charge directly against the adventurers, using their remaining magic on their weapons. The player characters have a slight tactical advantage in this situation, as they can choose to recover their mounts and stand against the charge or to hide in the grove and react with missiles and spells. The Old Man in Grey will now disappear, after healing one wound per player character and casting some weapon spells if the party is low on magic weapons.

The battle with Vytautas is fierce. The Duke enters battle in his Vilkacis Lord form, immune to non magical weapons but able to wield weapons and covered in heavy armour. He is however vulnerable in his head, as he has had to take his helm off as it does not fit his wolf head any longer. He will use all of his magic to overcome the adventurers, as will his retainers. All minor Vilkacis characters who have not been killed before (Spīdala, Kangars, etc.) take part in the battle. Adjust the number of retainers to fit the number of player characters.

If Tekla is with the party and has received some magical training, this will give the party a great tactical advantage, as Vytautas will recognize her and restrain from harming her, as the other Vilkacis will do, while she can counter some of the werewolves' magic with counterspells. Tekla should now be aware of her heritage – and will learn it in this final battle if she has not guessed it yet – but she will not hesitate one moment to attack or kill Vytautas, as the Laumas told her that her natural father killed her mother, and she despises him for this. If on the contrary Vytautas has taken Tekla away from the party, but just recently, she is with him in this battle and has acquired a basic training in magic, but she can be brought back to the Good side if Vytautas is defeated and she is not killed.

Note that in this case she is now a Spirit Vilkacis, although this does not put her beyond redemption yet.

This fight is to the death: Vytautas shows no mercy, and is too dangerous to be taken alive. Now it is the time when having removed the Curse from the Root of Yggdrasil can make the difference, as the Vilkacis are particularly vulnerable to the mark of Pērkons' rune. In any case, the adventurers can still save the day with some tactics and some Fate Points.

Epilogue

The adventures have defeated the Evil that was looming upon them and saved the land from the Vilkacis. They can now go back to the Order and help it mend the damage caused by the lost battle.

Assuming the adventurers win and are able to cross the frozen lake and retreat towards Dorpat, the campaign is over. They will reach Dorpat in a couple of days, and there they will find the Bishop, Dietrich von Grüningen, Andreas von Felben and the surviving knights, who have conceded defeat and are very ashamed for trusting Vytautas. They ask the adventurers to keep their mouths sealed, and reward them very generously. For the centuries to come, the tales told by the Germans about this battle will be deliberately very, very vague about what actually happened.

The adventurers can now go back to Ascheraden if they wish. They will hear no more news about the Vilkacis in their lives, although perhaps their children will meet more of them in the future. More battles are expected, but none as deadly and glorious as the last one. Their exact nature is up to the GM, though.

Tekla, if still in Ascheraden, will soon start to acquire great powers, and one day she will travel back to Lithuania and become a great witch in Mindaugas's court. Maybe she has something to do with the return of the Lithuanians to their fathers' faith after Mindaugas's apparent conversion to Christianity.

Alternate endings

The description given here assumes that the players are driven along the lines of a preset storyline. The story manages to lead the player characters straight towards the intended ending, maximizing their frustration and sense of impotence before the final confrontation and their unexpected victory. Of course, not all GMs or players like this sort of fixed plot, so feel free to allow characters to change the course of action and go for alternate endings. Just take care to disallow stupid or plot-disrupting actions or to make clear to the players that these actions are foolish. For instance, attacking and defeating the undead army should of course be impossible: since no detail is known about the enchantment used to give them Unlife, there is no way to dismiss them until the Old Man in Grey suggests a solution (unless the GM wishes to let the adventurers know that Volkwin's sword, now owned by Vytautas, is the key to it). Similarly, trying to confront and defeat Vytautas while he is a guest of the Order or the Bishop should have a disastrous outcome. The story provides enough deities that the GM can use, literally, as *deus ex machina* to prevent actions that would lead to terminating plot twists, or suggest courses of action that are not covered by the intended story arc but would provide interesting alternate endings.

But what if the players act contrarily, or simply fail some tasks? What could the consequences be?

The most obvious consequence of the adventurers not following the intended plot is that the Teutons could win the battle. What happens to Aleksandr Nevskij in this case? The Landmeister and Vytautas will most likely try to kill or capture him, and the player characters could have a role in this. If Nevskij is captured, the Council of Novgorod or even the Mongol Khan could decide to ransom him, although from that moment on his future will not be as bright as it was in real history. Vytautas could decide that this opponent is too strong to let him live and have him assassinated on his way back to Novgorod, and the adventurers might learn about this plot and try to protect the defeated Prince in order to gain his support in a future battle against Vytautas.

The Undead Brothers will disappear after the battle, dragged towards Hell and the horrible doom that awaits supposedly pious men who actually served Evil. The land upon which they marched will not bear fruit for many years. Vytautas will accept Baptism and feign a conversion to Christianity, while in fact the Bishops and the Landmeister will become more and more like puppets in his hands, possibly becoming Vilkacis themselves. Soon Vytautas will scheme against his master Vikyntas, assassinate him and plan to become Grand Duke of Lithuania instead of Mindaugas. Will the player characters

help the Grand Duke, in order to prevent Lithuania becoming an Empire of Evil?

Finally, the players could simply decide that they feel evil and turn to Vytautas' side, possibly using their knowledge of the location of his lost daughter to attract his attention. Since very few people know of the disappearance of the Vilkacis Lord's daughter, just showing that they are aware of Tekla's existence will make Vytautas believe that they know where she is. At this point the Gamemaster has two different options. He or she can decide that Vytautas accepts their offer of help and gives them a position in the New Order that rises after Nevskij's defeat, possibly as Tekla's personal guards. The player characters could be given the option of becoming Vilkacis themselves. Note that if she is reunited with her father Tekla will soon become a powerful Werewolf Queen, possibly overshadowing her father's own power. Of course, the Gamemaster can still rule that Nevskij somehow manages to win the battle anyway, leaving the player characters with little or no reward for their wickedness.

Another interesting outcome in case the players exploit this option is that Vytautas may decide he does not trust them and betrays them after receiving their help. This will redirect the plot towards the original storyline, with one more reason to hate Vytautas, but with an increased difficulty to overcome to prevail against their enemy. Will they have to face Tekla, too, during the

final confrontation? Will the Old Man in Grey still help them if they made a deal with the Devil's spawn?



Cast of Characters

Komtur Wilfred von Bremen

COMMANDER OF THE ASCHERADEN GARRISON

(Noble bearing, Reflexive, Arrogant)

A nobleman from Western Germany, Wilfred killed one of his brothers in one of the many civil wars between Welf and Weibling. Even though the killing was perfectly justified, and the Bishop of Bremen never frowned upon it, the burden of having spilled his own blood was too much for the just man that Wilfred was, and he decided to go on a Crusade to expiate his sin. As there was no news of an expedition to the Holy Land at the time, he travelled to Saxony and followed Albert von Buxhövdén in one of von Buxhövdén's yearly recruiting campaigns. Wilfred has been a loyal Brother ever since, gaining prestige and achieving the position of *Komtur*.

He is an aged man in his forties, which not many people reached in the Dark Ages. He has seen many battles and is not eager to see more. Wilfred does not oppose the Bishop of Riga, but his loyalty to the Sword Brethren is total, and he will perform any deed that the Grand Master requests, rightful or not.

The *Komtur* may have suspicions about the Player Characters if they act weirdly or openly encourage pagan practices, but he will not take direct action against them unless they do something excessively wicked. At the beginning of Chapter Two in the campaign, Wilfred will become worried about the adventurers' growing popularity, but if they have not done anything to displease him, he will not become hostile, nor would he do anything to directly harm them.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 14	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	7/4
CON 12	Hit Points 12	5-8	Left Leg	7/4
SIZ 12	Mana 12	9-11	Abdomen	7/4
INT 16	Move 10	12	Chest	7/5
POW 12		13-15	Right Arm	7/3
DEX 9		16-18	Left Arm	7/3
APP 14		19-20	Head	7/4
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	80%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	60%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	40%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Command 60%, Dodge 40%, Insight 40%, Knowledge (Baltic) 50%, Perform (Oratory) 50%, Perform (Ritual) 30%, Piety 70%, Ride 80%, Spot 60%, Status (Order) 70%.

Armour: Full chain mail suit and open helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Bless, Heal Wound, Holy War, Soul Shield, Truesword.

Adventurer Interaction. The *Komtur* is the key to advancement in Status and Christian magic in the first part of the Campaign. Impressing him means gaining Status and being able to access the Blessings provided by the Chapel of Ascheraden. Even though it is the Advocate who actually provides goods and teaches Blessings, the decision to provide them belongs to the *Komtur*. Wilfred may also teach military skills to people who are instrumental to the defence of the fort. A Status (Order) roll is needed to persuade him to provide training, which becomes *Easy* if the requesting character is working for the Brethren. However, if they perform duties for the Order, the adventurers have little time to learn new abilities, and this may limit the amount of training actually available.

Brother Roger of Lübeck

ADVOCATE OF ASCHERADEN

(Silent, Cold, Witty)

Roger is a priest, from the merchant city of Lübeck, who has always valued profit over anything else. He was frustrated that his clerical condition did not allow him access to the Trade Guilds (Hansa), and when he one day heard Bishop Albert preaching his Crusade in the rich land of amber and furs, Roger realized that this was the opportunity he had been waiting for for years. He has never been attracted by the monastic life style of the Sword Brothers, but he tolerates it (with some occasional failing) for the sake of profit. The connections he still has in the major port of the Baltic Sea, in addition to his position of power in the Brethren, allow him to generate a cash flow from trade with little effort.

As the Advocate, Brother Roger handles the logistics of the fortress, and administers the surrounding lands, which provide the garrison with the wealth they need to continue their crusade. One of Roger's duties is organizing regular patrols against Samogitian raiders. Supposedly in order to defend those who have embraced the True Faith, these patrols in fact are because these robberies can cripple the fort economy. Being an accountant rather than a soldier, Roger does not lead the patrols himself, and leaves this duty to the *Komtur* or Brother Lucien, or perhaps even to a player character.

Roger has a mistress in the village of Aškere, who is currently with child. He is constantly in search of some spare food or coins to send her, while at the same time attempting to hide his fault. He will favour anyone who helps him hoard some goods away from the *Komtur*'s sight, or who can run a discreet trade business on his behalf. However, he might become hostile if the adventurers ask too many questions, or come too close to discovering where he sends the spare food he gets.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 10	DB -	1-4	Right Leg	-/4
CON 9	Hit Points 11	5-8	Left Leg	-/4
SIZ 12	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	7/4
INT 16	Move 10	12	Chest	7/5
POW 9		13-15	Right Arm	5/3
DEX 12		16-18	Left Arm	5/3
APP 10		19-20	Head	-/4
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	50%	1d8+1	20	bleed

Skills: Appraise 50%, Bargain 50%, Dodge 30%, Insight 60%, Knowledge (Baltic) 35%, Language (Latvian) 30%, Listen 40%, Literacy (Latin) 50%, Perform (Ritual) 50%, Persuade 60%, Piety 40%, Status (Order) 55%.

Armour: Short sleeved chain mail shirt. In the rare occasions when he enters combat, he carries also a helm and a shield, but he is not trained to use them efficiently.

Divine Blessings: Bless, Dismiss Magic, Heal Wound, Soul Shield, Soul Sight.

Adventurer interaction. Brother Roger is the interface between the Adventurers and the Order for the first chapter of the Campaign. It is he who decides whether the adventurers get extra equipment or are allowed special benefits, with the exception of religious and military matters that are always handled by the *Komtur*. Befriending him can provide mundane and material benefits, and make all Status (Order) rolls attempted to loan equipment *Easy*, but will provide a lesser increase

in Status than befriending the *Komtur* would.

The Advocate has access to the entire armoury of the fortress, which contains leather and short-sleeved chain mail suits enough to arm all of the adventurers, various types of close combat weapons and all the crossbows that the adventurers have brought from Riga.

If none of the adventurers wish to initiate a trade business on the River Daugava, Brother Roger will ask the adventurers to act as a façade for him in a trade business. See the "Trading on the River" boxed section about this. Brother Roger will not teach skills or magic to the adventurers unless he receives some personal advantage from this.

Brother Lucien of Normandy

SWORD BROTHER OF ASCHERADEN

(Jovial, Loud, Self-indulgent)

Lucien joined the Crusade because he was the cadet son of a Norman noble, and would not inherit anything after his father's death. He is a jovial man, more suited to the life of the secular knight than to being a Sword Brother. He loves beautiful women, and has been Spidala's lover for some time. He believes to have successfully seduced her with his charming manners, while in fact it is she who took advantage of him. At the Games Master's option, he could be still under the seductress's charm and join the fight on her side when the adventurer finally confront her. He could even, eventually, be turned into a Vilkacis if the adventurers fail to uncover Spidala's evil deeds.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 15	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg
CON 14	Hit Points 14	5-8	Left Leg
SIZ 15	Mana 10	9-11	Abdomen
INT 11	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 10		13-15	Right Arm
DEX 15		16-18	Left Arm
APP 15		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	70%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	50%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	70%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Dodge 40%, Knowledge (Baltic) 20%, Listen 40%, Persuade 40%, Piety 30%, Ride 50%, Spot 50%, Status (Order) 30%.

Armour: Short-sleeved chain mail suit and open helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Heal Wound.

Adventurer interaction. Lucien can be used as a support character for dangerous missions if the party needs one more blade or a little more healing ability. His low Piety makes him little more than armoured cannon fodder. He should be sent on a mission with the party only when the Gamemaster wishes so.

Lucien can also be easily seduced by any female player character of APP 9 or more, and will constantly threaten the virtue of any female adventurer of APP 13 or more, although he will never force a woman who rejects his attentions. If he has a relationship with a PC, a simple Charisma roll made by his lover will persuade him to secretly join any war party that leaves Ascheraden if the girl is in it, even if he has been ordered to stay at the castle. Note that if this happens and the *Komtur* learns it, then both Brother Lucien and the party might lose Status.

Finally, it is up to the GM to decide if Brother Lucien will try to seduce Tekla, and what the possible outcomes of this actions would be. The poor girl will be in great distress if she becomes her lover and eventually discover that Brother Lucien cannot marry her. This is an event that would displease both Andra and the Old Man in Grey, and the adventurers should make sure it never takes place.

Akselis the Convert

BUTLER OF ASCHERADEN

(Stubborn, Narrow-minded, Compassionate)

Akselis' family was exterminated by Estonian raiders in 1226, and he found consolation for not being able to save or avenge them in the words of Bishop Albert the Wise, who told him that seeking revenge is pointless, and a wise man should rather pardon his enemy. Later that year, the Brothers taught him that Justice is in fact allowed by God, as it is not Revenge, when they razed the Estonian fort from which the raiders came. Akselis was very pleased by these two faces of Christianity and happily converted to the new religion.

Akselis is one of the few Livonians in the area who no longer worships the ancient Baltic gods. He has been granted the position of butler and sergeant for this, and is in charge of the native auxiliary troops, who are a bunch of untrained, undisciplined people whom he keeps in line by means of his genuine faith and his impressive body mass. He also works as an interface between the fort garrison and the nearby village, passing Brother Roger's orders to the populace. He knows that Brother Roger is living in sin, but he is too scared of him to tell anything to the *Komtur*.

Akselis is rather bigoted and he would be horrified to see Christian fighters using pagan magic. News of such a feat, if witnessed by him, are likely to reach the *Komtur's* ears.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 14	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg
CON 9	Hit points 13	5-8	Left Leg
SIZ 17	Mana 13	9-11	Abdomen
INT 10	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 13		13-15	Right Arm
DEX 11		16-18	Left Arm
APP 9		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Club	50%	1d8+db	22	crush	
Med. Crossbow	40%	2d4+2	14	impale	50
Knife	40%	1d3+1+db	15	impale	

Skills: Appraise 40%, Command 20%, Craft (Blacksmith) 50%, Knowledge (Baltic) 40%, Language (German) 50%, Persuade 30%, Piety 20%, Status (Order) 20%.

Armour: Usually none. The statistics assume that he has been provided with a light leather armour for combat.

Adventurer interaction. Akselis will help the player characters and lead the native militiamen assigned to them in all combat missions, but only if requested by the Advocate or the Commander. Use a *Difficult* Status (Order) roll to persuade any of them to send Akselis and 2d3 militiamen as support for a mission where the plot does not include them. Note, however, that his leadership ability is too low to effectively control the troops in a combat situations, so an adventurer will have to help him control and rally the troops or the party will face desertions.

Akselis will also help the adventurers repair their weapons when needed, but will not forge new weapons unless ordered by Brother Wilfred. He lacks the skill to make special improvements for weapons. Even forging a sword is a *Difficult* task for him, as the Livonians usually buy swords from abroad.

Elder Maksis

MASTER HUNTER, INITIATE OF MĒZA MĀTE

(Suspicious, Proud, Arrogant)

Maksis is a renowned hunter, able to feed several families with the game he can catch in a single day. His skill and prowess have made him the most respected person in the village of Aškere and its *de facto* leader once the authority of the Lord Aizkrauklis has been undermined by the Brotherhood. He is stubbornly attached to the Old Ways, and will never accept baptism. This feeling has been aggravated by the fact that all of his children were killed or kidnapped in a raid several years ago, that the Brothers failed to stop.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 14	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	-/4	
CON 11	Hit Points 11	5-8	Left Leg	-/4	
SIZ 11	Mana 16	9-11	Abdomen	1/4	
INT 12	Move 10	12	Chest	1/6	
POW 16		13-15	Right Arm	1/3	
DEX 17		16-18	Left Arm	1/3	
APP 9		19-20	Head	2/4	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Spear	70%	1d8+1d2	15	impale	
Hunting Bow	90%	1d6+1+1/2db	6	impale	90
Knife	60%	1d3+1+db	15	impale	

Skills: Appraise 50%, Climb 60%, Craft (Leather working) 70%, First Aid 50%, Hide 60%, Insight 50%, Jump 70%, Knowledge (Baltic) 60%, Listen 90%, Spot 90%, Stealth 90%, Status (Baltic) 70%, Track 90%.

Armour: Leather jacket and fur cap.

Magic: *Bird's Vision*, Cloak of Night 2, *Eye of the Māte* 3, Heal (2), *Make Whole* (3), Sharp Arrow of the Māte, *Suppleness of the Māte* 3, *Sureness of the Māte* 4, *Speed of the Māte* 3, *Unbreakable bonds*.

Note: Spells in *italics* are usually held in magic charms and not in memory.

Special: His bow is of greater quality and has +10 range, although it requires STR 13 to wield.

Adventurer interaction. Maksis will agree to initiate any pagan character who qualifies as a skilled hunter or woodsman to Mēza Māte, provided they do not use Christian magic in front of him. He does not mind whether characters are baptised or not, although he frowns upon the practice of Livonians accepting the "Ritual of Water". Maksis can also provide characters with the one-use version of pagan spells he knows. He will grudgingly do so, even for characters who worship both Jesus and the Old Gods. He is a skilled crafter and can also make charms for a small price.

As the most respected person in the village, Maksis has the final word on whether the adventurers can obtain an item that can be crafted by the natives, like simple leather armour, wooden weapons or basic supplies. If the adventurers have developed a good relationship with him, no roll is required to obtain or repair such an item. In case the relationship is strained, then the Gamemaster is encouraged to require a Status (Baltic) roll to obtain even simple items.

Andra the Ragana

INITIATE OF LAIMA AND VELU MĀTE

(Sympathetic, Disillusioned, Sad)

Andra is the Wise Woman of the village of Aškere. She performs the rituals of life and death for the villagers, and appeases the spirits of the dead in autumn. She was a very beautiful woman in her youth, and could have been the wife of some rich noble if she had not realized that she had the Gift of Magic at the age of fourteen. At that time, she was taught how to talk to Laima during ritual dances, and the Goddess told her she had to guard the door between the Land of the Dead and the Land of the Living, until the moment would come to meet "The men with the Cross" and "The daughter of the Vilkatis, who dares break the Door for them". This refers to the Crusaders, of course, and to Tekla and to the Army of the Lost Souls, but Andra has not yet understood this last part of the prophecy.

Andra has no children, as worship of the Mother of the Dead has made her womb barren. She had a husband when she was younger, but he was killed by a Liv warrior who fought for the Crusaders. This has led her to distrust Christians, but her feelings towards the invaders are rather pragmatic and not as bitter as Maksis's: she knows that pillaging and killing has gone on for millennia, and the arrival of the Sword Brethren has not changed much. As long as she is allowed to do her job of talking to the dead ancestors, she tolerates the Crusaders.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 7	DB -	1-4	Right Leg	-/4
CON 12	Hit Points 11	5-8	Left Leg	-/4
SIZ 9	Mana 16	9-11	Abdomen	-/4
INT 17	Move 10	12	Chest	-/5
POW 16		13-15	Right Arm	-/3
DEX 9		16-18	Left Arm	-/3
APP 15		19-20	Head	-/4
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Staff	40%	1d8+db	20	crush

Skills: Craft (Leather working) 50%, Craft (Bone working) 50%, First Aid 90%, Insight 90%, Listen 40%, Knowledge (Baltic) 90%, Knowledge (Demonology) 30%, Medicine 50%, Perform (Ritual) 50%, Persuade 30%.

Armour: None

Magic: Bird's Sight, *Chain of Being* (4), *Ear of Laima*, Heal (2), Luck (4), Pox, *Soul of the Māte* 3, *Speak with the Dead* (2), Spirit Bane (2), Undo Magic 4, *Vitality of the Māte* 3, *Wisdom of Laima* 3, Witch Sight (3).

Note: Spells in *italics* are usually held in magic charms and not in memory.

Adventurer interaction. Andra is the primary source of Pagan magic for player characters while they are in Ascheraden. In the first group of scenarios, Andra is also the only accessible source of magical healing for pagan characters. She will also initiate any qualified character to the mysteries of Laima. She can teach spells to characters who can learn pagan magic, or provide non-spellcasters with the one-use version of the spells she knows. Normal rules for purchasing spells apply, but befriending the *Ragana* may grant a character a bonus to his or her Status (Baltic) rolls.

Andra will not teach skills to adventurers, unless she realizes that the requesting character has some chances of becoming a Druid or *Ragana* in the future. An enterprising adventurer, especially if female, can be allowed to replace Andra in the last sections of the campaign if he or she qualifies as a Witch. If a female PC has interacted heavily with the *Ragana* and has a good Status (Baltic), and, most important of all, if she has taken care of Tekla, Andra will probably insist that she does this, and even teach her any skills she is lacking to become a *Ragana*, as she sees the time of her final encounter with the Mother of the Dead approaching. This is the only case in which she will initiate anyone to Veju Māte. This could open new and interesting possibilities for such a player character, who would gain a position of great power among the still-pagan Balts.

Taksis Aizkrauklis

LORD OF AIZKRAUKLE

(Noble, Ruthless, Pragmatic)

Taksis is the Latgolian noble who used to rule the people of Askere. His grandfather built the wooden fort that is now Ascheraden, in order to stop the Estonian and Lithuanian raids. All of his male sons, born to his late wife, died in a hopeless attempt to defend the fortress from the Sword Brothers. Spidala is the daughter of one of his concubines, who was also a witch, and has managed to make her father sterile with magic to prevent him from generating more male heirs.

When he was in charge of the land, Lord Aizkrauklis was a wise ruler by Baltic standards; he limited the raiding and killing to the minimum needed to ensure the survival of his people, and relied on river trade rather than war to make his clan wealthy. He believes that his bloodline really deserves rulership over his clan, and being forced to forfeit his castle and land to the Brothers has angered him much more than his former subjects, who actually think the Brothers provide a better defence than him against raiders. However, being a pragmatic man, he knows that any attempt to regain control over the castle and the fief is destined to fail as long as the Sword Brothers can send for their unstoppable army from Riga. So he just waits for his former enemies, the Lithuanians, to teach the Brotherhood a lesson and give him an opportunity to retake what is rightfully his. Knowing them well, though, he will not go as far as making agreements with the Lithuanians, as there is no guarantee that they would actually spare his life.

Taksis really loves his daughter Spidala, and if he discovers that she is a werewolf, he will show her mercy and banish her instead of having her slaughtered. He will never readmit her to his household, as he fears the Dark Powers, but he will feel resentment against the adventurers who exposed his last surviving daughter and forced him to send her away.

At the Gamemaster's option, Lord Aizkrauklis himself can be a Vilkacis. In this case, it was he who turned Spidala into a werewolf. However, this can make things really difficult for the adventurers.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 9	DB -	1-4	Right Leg
CON 9	Hit Points 12	5-8	Left Leg
SIZ 14	Mana 12	9-11	Abdomen
INT 15	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 12		13-15	Right Arm
DEX 15		16-18	Left Arm
APP 9		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Axe	70%	1d8+2+db	15	bleed	
Shield	50%	1d2+db	15	knockback	
Javelin	50%	1d6+1/2db	15	impale	25
Dagger	40%	1d4+1+db	15	impale	

Skills: Command 50%, Insight 50%, Knowledge (Baltic) 80%, Language (German) 30%, Persuade 70%, Spot 70%.

Armour: short-sleeved mail shirt, leather leggings and open helm.

Magic (one-use charms): Heal (2), Pērkon's Razor 4.

Adventurer interaction. Taksis is diffident towards the Brethren, although he has learned to avoid opposing them directly, so he will not cooperate willingly with the adventurers if they work for the Order, and the *Kontur* will not force him to do anything as he does not trust him much and fears betrayal.

Once Spidala is exposed as an evil shapeshifter, his attitude towards the adventurers worsens, and he will decline any and all requests for help.

Spidala

WITCH, BEAST VILKACIS, HUMAN FORM

(Alluring, Cheerful, Devious)

Spidala is the daughter of Taksis, lord of Aizkraukle, and one of the local evil witches. She was introduced to the arcane arts when she was not even in her teens. Upon reaching the age of thirteen, she was turned into a Vilkacis by a Lord of the Velns she had summoned, and she has been a faithful servant of the Dark Gods ever since. Whether her father is a Vilkacis himself or not is best left to the Games Master.

Spidala is a mistress of seduction, and delights in alluring young and strong males into her bed and turning them into her personal pets. In the unlikely event that one resists her temptation, she will use love philters to coerce him. In the latter case, since the seduced victim is now aware that Spidala has unusual magic powers, he will soon become the victim of some gruesome blood sacrifice.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 11	DB -	1-4	Right Leg
CON 15	Hit Points 12	5-8	Left Leg
SIZ 9	Mana 18	9-11	Abdomen
INT 15	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 18		13-15	Right Arm
DEX 15		16-18	Left Arm
APP 19		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Dagger	40%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Craft (Courtesan) 90%, Craft (Leather working) 50%, Craft (Love Potion) 60%, Dodge 60%, Hide 60%, Knowledge (Baltic) 70%, Knowledge (Demonic Cults) 70%, Perform (Ritual) 50%, Persuade 70%, Stealth 50%.

Armour: none.

Magic: Bind Velns, Brew Love Potion, Muddle (2), Beauty of the Vilkacis 3, Eel's Sight, Fury, Liken Shape (4), Midnight, Refutation 4, Summon Demon, Summon Velns, Talons of the Vilkacis 4, Undo Magic 3, Ward (3), Witch Flight 4, Witch Sight (3), Zaltsys Sight.

Note: Spells in *italics* are usually held in magic charms and not in memory.

Special: If Spidala wishes, she can turn into her werewolf form at the end of a round of uninterrupted concentration. She is likely to do so only after she is out of mana and can no longer cast spells. Spidala has at least ten servants under her control at any times by means of the Love Potion and Bind Velns spells, usually three or four of his father's guards and up to seven minor Velns. She keeps the Velns on the cursed island on the Daugava in the first part of the campaign, and uses them as bodyguards for Kangars in the third part. The nature and composition of her retinue in the last part of the campaign is best left to the Gamemaster. The spells she has in memory reflect the fact that she has ten points of INT used up to keep her slaves under control. Spidala can also use eels as spies in Staburadze's domain, as the naiad cannot control them.

Adventurer interaction: Spidala will attempt to seduce any male member of the party, although she will not use magic to overcome a player character's resistance to her lust. Surrendering to her temptation can have unpleasant effects on a Christian character's Piety, especially if he is a Sword Brother or a friar. If a player character has become her lover, she will usually get tired of him in a matter of weeks, and pass on to a new concubine, unless the character is willing to become one of his servants. Only in exceptional circumstances will she teach magic or arcane knowledge to anyone, and this will always be the consequence of the character turning to evil (or pretending to do so).

In the third and fourth part of the campaign, Spidala returns as Vytautas' retainer, assuming she has survived the previous adventures. In this case, she will also act as a contact between Vytautas and any character who has turned to evil.

Tekla

GIRL WITH A WYRD

(Ingenuous, Shy)

This twelve year old girl is the daughter of Duke Vytautas, and a powerful witch, Aušrinė, who refused to let her become a Vilkacis like her father. Tekla's mother traded her child to the Laumas before Vytautas could turn the girl into a monster, and paid with her own life for this betrayal. The fairies transported the child to far away Selonia so that her father could never find her again. Vytautas believes her to be dead, and if he suspects his offspring is still alive, he will do anything to recover her.

The blood of the most powerful breed of Baltic magicians runs in Tekla's veins, and if turned into a werewolf, she will probably become the most powerful of all Vilkacis, and eventually take over her father's role as the leader of this cursed race. If, on the contrary, she remains human and Vytautas is defeated, her sons will eventually have a chance to claim her father's lands in Zemaitija (possibly requiring the assistance of the player characters or their own children). Should she receive training as a human magician, she would become an adept of the arcane arts in a very short time.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR	5	DB -1d4	1-4	R Leg	-/5
CON	17	Hit Points 13	5-8	L Leg	-/5
SIZ	8	Mana 20	9-11	Abdomen	-/5
INT	17	Move 10	12	Chest	-/6
POW	20		13-15	R Arm	-/4
DEX	11		16-18	L Arm	-/4
APP	16		19-20	Head	-/5
Weapon	Skill	Damage			
Throw Rock	15%	1d4-db			

Skills: Dodge 30%, Language (Lauma) 50%, Knowledge (Baltic) 30%, Sing 50%.

Armour: none.

Notes: Information spells like Soul Sight or Witch Sight may or may not detect Tekla's unnaturally strong aura, at the Game Master's discretion. Characters with a strong connection to Wyrd such as an initiate of Laima or the Kriwe are instantly aware of her uniqueness.

Tekla has a very strong Wyrd, and even if she is still untrained as a magician, she is allowed to use all the Fate Point optional rules presented on page 176 of Basic Roleplaying.

To simulate her growth, add one point to Tekla's STR, SIZ and DEX characteristics every two years until she is eighteen, and increase her skills according to the activities that the player characters let her perform and to the training she receives.

Adventurer Interaction. Tekla is very grateful to the adventurers for saving her from the Samogitian raiders, and she could fall in love with any male member of the rescuing party who is kind to her or otherwise attracts her.

If the adventurers are careless enough to let Tekla be kidnapped by the Enemy, or deliver her to the Lithuanian Vilkacis in order to befriend them, then Vytautas will turn her into a Spirit Vilkacis, and the girl will start to learn the arcane arts, becoming a powerful witch in a matter of weeks. If, on the other hand, the adventurers take care of her and have Andra teach her magic (which she will do only if they agree on using the utmost discretion about this), Tekla will learn very quickly. We suggest that the player characters are allowed to choose the direction that her magic training takes only if she is the lover or wife of an adventurer, and the player character actually treats her well (which includes not cheating on her with Spīdala).

Do not forget that this girl is favoured by the gods, and the party behaviour's towards her should be rewarded appropriately.

Staburadze

GREATER NAIAD OF THE DAUGAVA RIVER

(Charming, Noble, Sympathetic)

ON FREEZING MORN SHE MELTS THE FROST AWAY,
AND SAVES FROM HARM THE PLOUGHMAN'S TENDER CROPS.

SHE WARNS THE BOATMEN AT THE MIDNIGHT MOON,
LEST THEY SHOULD FALL INTO THE WHIRLPOOL'S GRIP.
TO SHEPHERDS AND TO TRAVELLERS AT THE NOON,
SHE GIVES FROM BUBBLING SPRINGS A COOLING SIP.

One of the major characters of the Lāčplēsis epic poem, Staburadze is the greatest nature spirit in Latvia, inferior in power only to the gods themselves. She is a benevolent goddess of fertility, who supplies water and fish to humans. Staburadze usually supports the Latvian populations against the Christian invaders, but she has no prejudice against Christians if they behave righteously (which many Sword Brothers do not do).

Staburadze has no organized cult, but many druids offer her sacrifice when fishing yields poor results. Any person who befriends her and proves worthy of her respect can also learn spells from her by offering the standard sacrifices for magic on a blessed spot on the banks of the Daugava river.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR	14	DB -	1-4	R Leg	-/6
CON	20	Hit Points 15	5-8	L Leg	-/6
SIZ	10	Mana 30	9-11	Abdomen	-/7
INT	25	Move 10	12	Chest	-/8
POW	30		13-15	R Arm	-/5
DEX	24		16-18	L Arm	-/5
APP	27		19-20	Head	-/6
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	
Staff	200%	1d8+db	20	crush	

Skills: Dodge 300%, First Aid 100%, Medicine 100%, Knowledge (Baltic) 200%, Knowledge (Daugava) 2000%, Persuade 100%, Sing 200%, Spot 90%, Stealth 100%.

Armour: none.

Magic: *Bounty of the Sea* (4), *Breath of Life*, *Heal* (2), *Liken Shape* (4), *Refutation* 4, *Staburadze's Suppleness* 3, *Staburadze's Vitality* 3, *Undo Sorcery* 4, *Bird's View*, *Witch Sight* (3).

Note: As she is one of the sources, rather than an user, of Pagan magic, Staburadze does not need to memorise spells and has free access to all the spells listed in her statistics. She regains 1 Mana per round when in physical contact with the waters of the Daugava.

Staburadze can command any water creature that was born in the Daugava river at the cost of one Mana per creature. Her influence lasts for one hour, and the creature cannot resist it. The river hosts some very large sturgeons that can easily transport a human-sized weight, and some nasty catfish whose bite can be dangerous to small creatures. Note that eels (ogre), which are very common in the Daugava, breed in sea water, so they are not influenced by Staburadze's commands. Spīdala knows this and has been known to use eels as spies.

Adventurer Interaction: if befriended, Staburadze can be called upon by simply standing on the banks of the Daugava and succeeding in a Knowledge (Baltic) or Perform (Ritual) roll. She can be a valuable source of information and advice for the PCs, and will most likely teach them some magic. She will teach the following spells to anyone that she believes worthy, provided that he or she has the appropriate charm for it: *Breath of Life*, *Staburadze's Suppleness*, *Staburadze's Vitality*, *Bird's View* (the version of the spell she teaches works only on water birds).

Volkwin Schenk

GRAND MASTER OF THE SWORD BROTHERHOOD (Brave, Cunning, Ambitious)

Little is known about the historical figure of Volkwin Schenk, save that he was a German noble from the city of Naumburg. Attracted to the life of the warrior monk by Albert von Buxhövden, Volkwin is the second and last Grand Master of the Sword Brothers. His predecessor, Menno von Wingerden, was killed by a rebellious Brother, and Volkwin has trouble keeping discipline among the ranks of the Brethren.

Volkwin is a valiant, ambitious man who really desires to uphold the reputation of the Brotherhood, but knows that this might be too heavy a burden for his shoulders alone; the other Brothers are too unruly to keep under control now that Bishop Albert has been called by the Lord. Volkwin's last act before his death will be looking for incorporation into the Teutonic Order, which he regards as an organization having higher moral standards and stricter discipline.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 13	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg	7/4
CON 9	Hit Points 12	5-8	L Leg	7/4
SIZ 15	Mana 19	9-11	Abdomen	7/4
INT 17	Move 10	12	Chest	7/6
POW 19		13-15	R Arm	7/3
DEX 13		16-18	L Arm	7/3
APP 18		19-20	Head	8/4

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	105%	1d8+1+db	30	bleed
Shield	90%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	70%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Command 90%, Dodge 50%, Knowledge (Baltic) 30%, Knowledge (Christianity) 90%, Knowledge (Military) 50%, Insight 50%, Perform (Oratory) 70%, Perform (Ritual) 40%, Persuade 60%, Piety 90%, Ride 90%, Track 50%.

Armour: Full chain mail suit and helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Bless, Dismiss Magic, Heal Wound, Holy War, Soul Shield, Soul Sight, Spirit Block, Truesword.

Special: Volkwin's sword is a product of fine craftsmanship. It has ten extra hit points and holds a holy relic of St. Damien (+20% Piety) in the pommel. Later in the campaign, Volkwin will be killed by Vytautas, who will loot this sword and use it to recall him and the other Sword Brothers from the Dead.

Adventurer interaction: Although not specifically foreseen in the campaign, clever adventurers could try and win Volkwin's favour in order to obtain mundane or spiritual advantages that may not be available through the Commander of Ascheraden. Volkwin will simply refuse to meet with anyone who is below 50% in Status (Order) or 75% in Status (Bishopric). If the adventurers have managed to reach the required Status, it will take a Status roll to have their requests granted.

Volkwin has access to the full resources of the Brotherhood, which are limited in mundane means but remarkable when it comes to magic. He can grant knowledge of any blessing available to the Order. A successful Status roll allows a character to get some extra equipment for a specific mission, and a Special success will grant temporary access to a minor magic Item (the Piety bonus is equal to the character's chance of a Special success in Status). Note that Volkwin is killed at some point in the adventure, so a cunning player could even "forget" to return the item to Volkwin's successor.

Brother Dominic de Marseille

ADVOCATE OF THE SWORD BRETHREN (Cowardly, Sympathetic, Talkative)

Dominic is a senior advocate whom Volkwin decided to send to Kulm in order to petition the Teutonic Order for incorporation of the Sword Brethren. A son of burghers, he is one of the few Brothers who are not from Germany or Normandy. He studied the human sciences and used to be a priest in Provence, until he had a dispute with his Bishop, who forced him to swear a Crusader vow. Not willing to travel to the Holy Land, he chose the Northern Crusades as an alternative, mistakenly believing that this would be less dangerous. Later in his Crusade, he realized that entering the Sword Brotherhood as an advocate would help him regain the prestige he had lost in his motherland, and has been a loyal Knight-Friar ever since.

Being in his fifties, Dominic is too old to fight actively, and he has never been a hero, so he acts as the Order's official diplomat with the other Powers of the Church. As such, he is very hard to fool. Knowing how dangerous the Baltic Coast can be, when he was put in charge of a mission to the Teutonic Order he immediately asked for an escort party, and Volkwin assigned him the player characters. He is a very cautious man and knows that his life depends on his bodyguards, so he will do his best to support them. Therefore, he will always be rather friendly to the adventurers, even in case they have to subdue him during the pirate attack, and will try to help them with whatever task they wish to accomplish, forgiving them if they sometimes stray from the path of virtue.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 5	DB -	1-4	Right Leg	-/5
CON 8	Hit Points 11	5-8	Left Leg	-/5
SIZ 14	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	7/6
INT 14	Move 10	12	Chest	7/7
POW 9		13-15	Right Arm	5/4
DEX 9		16-18	Left Arm	5/4
APP 14		19-20	Head	7/5

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword*	50%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Dagger	40%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

(*) Dominic is extremely clumsy when wielding a sword, due to his low Strength. His actual skill with that weapon is halved, making him almost useless in combat. He usually carries a dagger, instead, for self-defence.

Skills: Appraise 60%, Insight 80%, Language (German) 70%, Language (Baltic) 50%, Literacy (Latin) 70%, Knowledge (Baltic) 50%, Knowledge (Christianity) 90%, Perform (Oratory) 50%, Perform (Ritual) 40%, Persuade 90%, Piety 60%, Spot 40%, Status (Order) 70%.

Armour: Short-sleeved chain mail shirt, open helm.

Divine Blessings: Bless, Heal Wound, Soul Shield, Soul Sight, Spirit Block.

Adventurer Interaction: The adventurers will act as Dominic's bodyguards for two or three scenarios at least, but Dominic is far from his sphere of influence at that time, so obtaining a favour from him is of little use.

As the adventure progresses and the party is back to Livonia, however, Dominic may become a featured character in the cast, if the player characters have developed a friendly relationship with him. The Game Master may at this point use Dominic as the interface between the adventurers and the new leaders of the Order. Alternatively, the player characters could persuade Dietrich von Grüningen to assign him to Ascheraden as Advocate in order to help them run the fief. In any case, it is possible, and recommended, to re-use him as a supporting character in the second half of the campaign, but only if the adventurers are still working for the Order at that time.

Abbot Werther

DIPLOMAT OF THE SEE OF RIGA

(*Silent, Wise, Contemplative*)

Werther is a young, pious man from Saxony who was studying for priesthood when he met St. Dominic and decided to embrace his vision of the faith and become one of his followers. Werther travelled to the North upon request of the Saint himself, and stayed there as leader of the Dominican monastery, spiritual counsellor of the Bishop and chastiser of the heretics and the knave. After St. Dominic's death, Bishop Albert persuaded Werther to move to the secular priesthood, to better help him run the bishopric. He has used his rhetorical skills in several diplomatic missions for both the current and the late Bishop of Riga.

Although he does not get along with Bishop Nicholas as well as he did with Bishop Albert, Werther is completely loyal to the Church and to the Papacy, and will always act in accordance with these principles. He has no personal flaws that can be exploited to corrupt or blackmail him, so anyone opposing the power of the Pope or the Bishop in Livonia will find an opponent in him.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 9	DB -	1-4	Right Leg
CON 9	Hit Points 12	5-8	Left Leg
SIZ 15	Mana 15	9-11	Abdomen
INT 17	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 15		13-15	Right Arm
DEX 9		16-18	Left Arm
APP 15		19-20	Head
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP
Staff	40%	1d8+db	20

Skills: Appraise 40%, Insight 80%, Knowledge (Christianity) 70%, Knowledge (Baltic) 30%, Language (Baltic) 30%, Literacy (Latin) 70%, Perform (Oratory) 90%, Perform (Ritual) 50%, Persuade 70%, Piety 70%, Status (Bishopric) 70%.

Armour: None.

Divine Blessings: Bless, Heal Wound, Protection from Magic, Sense Malice, Soul Sight.

Adventurer interaction: Werther will probably make only a brief appearance in the story, unless the player characters side with the Bishop of Riga against the Order. If the adventurers choose to side with Bishop Nicholas and the Pope, then Werther will become their main contact with their employer, and an indirect contact with the Order. For this reason, we have not included statistics or description for the Bishop of Riga; assume all interactions are handled through Werther.

Werther will grant all reasonable requests for training, magic or equipment from the adventurers once they have taken control of Ascheraden. We recommend that the GM calls for Status (Bishopric) rolls if the request is of a special nature, comes immediately after another request or the party is actually employed by the Order and not by the Bishop. The Bishopric is richer than the Order, so all requests for equipment (except crossbows) are normal rolls, while requests for military training require a *Difficult* roll.

Werther will also perform missions for William of Modena, the Papal legate, so even if the player characters are still working for the Order in the second half of the campaign, he might be involved in case a scenario requires a papal intervention to solve a dispute. Such arbitrations by the Pope and his legates were not so unusual in the first few years of the Crusades, which were characterised by a struggle between the Brotherhood and the Bishops.

Dietrich von Grüningen

ASSISTANT TO THE LANDMEISTER, EVENTUALLY LANDMEISTER

(*Cold, Inquisitive stare, Never smiles*)

A cadet of a noble German family, Dietrich is a valiant knight, loyal to his *Hochmeister*, to the Order, and the Church. However, he is also very power hungry, and when the Pope granted lordship over Prussia to the Order, Dietrich saw an opportunity to capture land that Palestine would never give him and left for the North. Nevertheless, his Faith is true, and no matter what atrocities his troops may commit in war, he will never cooperate with Evil willingly. Unfortunately this does not prevent him from being fooled by Vytautas' cunning schemes.

Dietrich is in Prussia at the start of the campaign, as an assistant to the *Landmeister* of the order, Hermann Balk. When the Teutonic Knights incorporate the Sword Brethren, he is appointed Livlandisch *Landmeister* (*Ostmeister*), although Andreas von Felben retains a lot of influence in Livonia.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 16	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg
CON 14	Hit Points 15	5-8	L Leg
SIZ 16	Mana 17	9-11	Abdomen
INT 15	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 17		13-15	R Arm
DEX 17		16-18	L Arm
APP 12		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	90%	1d8+1+db	25	bleed
Shield	80%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	60%	1d4+1+1d2	15	impale

Skills: Command 90%, Dodge 70%, Insight 40%, Knowledge (Christianity) 60%, Strategy 60%, Perform (Oratory) 70%, Persuade 60%, Piety 80%, Ride 85%, Spot 70%, Status (Order) 90%, Track 40%.

Armour: Full chain mail suit and Teuton helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Bless, Dismiss Magic, Heal Wound, Holy War, Protection from Magic, Sense Malice, Soul Shield, Soul Sight, Truesword.

Special: Dietrich's sword is a product of fine craftsmanship with a holy relic of St. George (+10% Piety) in the pommel. It has five extra hit points.

Adventurer Interaction: Dietrich is the most important source of magic, training and equipment in the second half of the campaign. Any request for help, even if it is formally addressed to *Landmeister* Hermann Balk, is actually handled by him. Dietrich is usually friendly to the adventurers, especially after they have saved the *Landmeister*'s life and allowed him to take the credit for hiring them, but he will not grant any special bonus to party members unless they have committed themselves to serving the Order. In any case, we recommend that the GM calls for a Status (Order) roll before any request be granted by him while in Kulm.

In the last two chapters of the campaign, Dietrich will assume an even more relevant role in the adventure, as the *Landmeister* of Livonia. This is especially true if the adventurers stay in the Order's employ instead of siding with the Bishop, in which case he becomes their actual boss, and the party's relationship with him will strengthen with each successful scenario they complete. The Gamemaster must then decide if the adventurers can interact directly with Dietrich or they have Brother Dominic as an interface. Dietrich will possibly grant any reasonable request for training, magic or equipment from the adventurers. We recommend that the GM calls for Status (Order) rolls if the request is of a special nature, comes immediately after another request or the party is actually employed by the Bishop and not by the Order. The Order is not as rich as the Bishop at this point, so all requests for equipment are *Difficult* rolls, while requests for military training require a normal roll.

Kirs

PRUSSIAN WITCH

(*Silent, Unfathomable*)

Kirs is an old Prussian witch who used to live South of Kulm, in a village on the Vistula river, where she held the role of healer. The arrival of the Teutonic Knights has disturbed the harmony between Man and Nature that is the foundation of her powers, so she is trying to restore this balance. Being a woman and a follower of Potrimpos the Bountiful, she does not use violence to achieve her goals, but instead she tries to win the Order's trust by being friendly to the Knights. Unfortunately, when she decides to help cure the sick *Landmeister*, she does not sense that the curse laid upon him is beyond her powers to defeat, and is about to be imprisoned or worse when the adventurers show up. As soon as she meets them, Kirs senses the blessing of Staburadze on them, and attempts to take advantage of the situation to call the Kriwe in and place the Order in a state of debt towards the Prussians.

These statistics can be used for any other Baltic witch the party encounters during the campaign, too.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 5	DB -1d4	1-4	R Leg -/4
CON 11	Hit Points 10	5-8	L Leg -/4
SIZ 9	Mana 17	9-11	Abdomen -/4
INT 15	Move 10	12	Chest -/5
POW 17		13-15	R Arm -/3
DEX 9		16-18	L Arm -/3
APP 9		19-20	Head -/4

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Dagger	40%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Craft (Wood working) 70%, Dodge 40%, First Aid 90%, Insight 60%, Knowledge (Baltic) 70%, Listen 50%, Medicine 60%, Status (Baltic) 60%.

Armour: none.

Magic: Rat's View, Heal (2), Luck (4), *Potrimpos' Vitality* 3, Pox, *Unbreakable Bonds* (3), Undo Magic 4, Witch Sight (3), *Zalts View*.

Note: Spells in *italics* are usually held in magic charms and not in memory.

Adventure Interaction: Although she despises the Christian way of life, Kirs is a non-violent character and will act very friendly towards the adventurers. Of course, she will favour the pagans among them, as she distrusts Christians. Her attitude will change, however, if a Franciscan friar is in the party, as the little brothers' relationship to Nature is as friendly as hers. The old crone is particularly fond of Tekla if she is with the group, as her relationship with the Prussian god of Luck, Potrimpos, lets her sense the girls's Wyrd.

The plot requires that Kirs do nothing for the adventurers during the course of their trip to the Romowe, except perhaps provide some vague piece of information, and disappear after their trip back. However, if the characters have developed some sort of affection towards her, she could show up again. Kirs is an expert in vegetable ingredients and could concoct some interesting potions, but their effect is best left to the Gamemaster. She is also able to craft charms from any sort of vegetable matter.

The Kriwe

HIGH PRIEST OF THE ROMOWE

(*Arrogant, Inquisitive*)

The Kriwe is the highest ranking druid in Prussia, and possibly among all the Baltic nations. His authority is unquestionable, and only he can enter the Sacred Grove of the Romowe, the only sanctioned place of worship in the Baltic lands.

The Kriwe is one of the few people in Prussia, and elsewhere for what is worth, who worships Dievs directly, although he refers the King of the Gods with the name Daiwas. If he meets the Old Man in Grey, he will not talk to him directly unless questioned, and will not tolerate disrespect towards him.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 9	DB -	1-4	R Leg -/5
CON 12	Hit Points 13	5-8	L Leg -/5
SIZ 15	Mana 20	9-11	Abdomen 3/5
INT 18	(+staff 18)	12	Chest 3/6
POW 20	Move 10	13-15	R Arm 1/4
DEX 9		16-18	L Arm 1/4
APP 17		19-20	Head -/5

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	50%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Dagger	70%	1d4+1+db	15	impale
Crooked Staff	90%	1d8+db+1d6	20	crush

Skills: Appraise 100%, Dodge 90%, Insight 100%, Listen 80%, Literacy (Futhark) 70%, Knowledge (Baltic) 200%, Knowledge (Demonology) 40%, Persuade 75%, Perform (Oratory) 100%, Spot 60%, Sing 200%, Status (Baltic) 100%.

Armour: Leather cuirass and jerkin.

Magic: Heal (2), Luck (4), Muddle (2), Unbreakable Bonds (3), Undo Sorcery 4, Witch Sight (3).

Special: regains one Manager round while in the Romowe or its Sacred Grove. His crooked staff holds 18 Mana and functions as a wizard's staff (see p. 91 of Basic Roleplaying). The spells listed are the ones the Kriwe keeps memorised, as he knows all pagan magic except the few spells explicitly labelled as being provided only by the Dark Gods.

Adventurer Interaction: The Kriwe should only interact with the adventurers during the short time described in the section "The Romowe", and he should not have time to teach them any skills or magic. Use the Druid Eiskers to bestow any reward upon the party. The Kriwe can, however, give the player characters any amount of useful information about the Vilkacis and Tekla, if approached with the deference that his office deserves. He will not reveal much about the Old Man in Grey, but his attitude towards him, if he shows up, should provide some useful clues.

Interaction between the Kriwe and the party beyond the scenes described in the campaign is not recommended, as it would imply that the party has committed itself to the Old Way of the Prussians, thus cutting itself away from the Order and all of the Christian authorities.

Eiskers

WANDERING DRUID

(Mysterious attitude)

Eiskers is a sort of Prussian hedge wizard who lives South of Kulm. The Kriwe will direct the adventurers to his residence if there are pagan magicians among them, or any pagan characters are in need of a trainer. Add more magic to his portfolio if players need magical training.

These statistics can be used for any other Baltic Druid the party encounters during the campaign, too.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP
STR	8	DB -	1-4	R Leg
CON	15	Hit Points 13	5-8	L Leg
SIZ	11	Mana 18	9-11	Abdomen
INT	16	(+ staff 15)	12	Chest
POW	18	Move 10	13-15	R Arm
DEX	11		16-18	L Arm
APP	9		19-20	Head
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Crooked Staff	50%	1d8+db+1d6	20	crush

Skills: Craft (Amber working) 50%, Dodge 40%, First Aid 70%, Insight 80%, Knowledge (Baltic) 90%, Literacy (Futhark) 30%, Perform (Ritual) 40%, Spot 70%, Status (Baltic) 70%.

Armour: none.

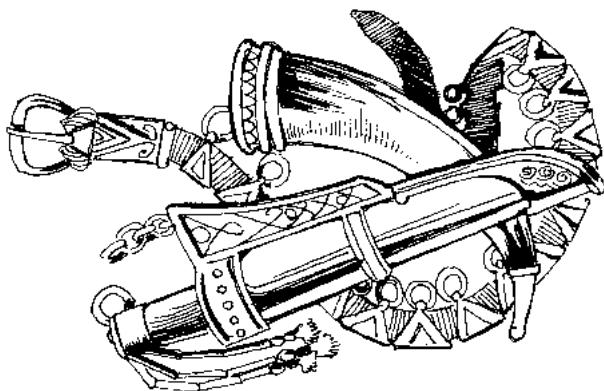
Magic: *Chain of Being* (4), Heal (2), Luck, *Perkunis' Armour* 4, *Perkunis' Hammer* 4, *Perkunis' Lightning* (5), *Spirit Bane* (2), *Undo Sorcery* 4, *Witch Sight* (3).

Note: Spells in *italics* are usually held in magic charms and not in memory. Eiskers can know and teach other spells, at the Gamemaster's option.

Special: His crooked staff holds 15 Mana, and functions as a wizard's staff (see p. 91 of Basic Roleplaying).

Adventure Interaction: The Druid will teach one spell, or offer mentorship in one skill for long enough to grant one increase roll, to any willing character if the party has befriended the Kriwe. *Perkunis' Lightning* will be taught only to a character bearing the mark of the deity on his body, i.e. to anyone who has removed the curse from the Root of Yggdrasil.

More training and magic can be obtained, but this will require a successful Status (Baltic) roll or performing some duty for the Druid. The Druid is skilled in amber working and runic inscription and can create amber charms, and has some interesting pieces of Sambian amber that he could be willing to trade.



Hermann von Buxhövden

BISHOP OF DORPAT

(Proud, Irascible, Penetrating stare)

Hermann is the youngest brother of Albert von Buxhövden, the late Archbishop of Riga and founder of the Sword Brethren. Hermann used to be a clergyman in Bremen until he became Bishop of Estonia in 1220, undoubtedly because of his brother's influence in the area. His episcopal seat was Leal, in Western Estonia, at first, and then Dorpat at the border with Russia.

Like his elder brother Albert, who was both a man of faith and a cunning politician, Hermann is interested in mundane power rather than spiritual supremacy. His main goal during the campaign is capturing Novgorod and placing a puppet Catholic prince in it. He needs the Teutonic Knights' assistance to further this plan, but he remembers the rapacity with which the Sword Brothers seized lands in Southern Estonia from the King of Denmark very well, and keeps an eye on the Order's claims over the lands they conquer "for the Church".

However, despite his preference for power over piety and tendency to use the Church to fulfil his power games, Hermann is a just man and does not normally tolerate a cruel or blasphemous behaviour by his subjects. This does not imply, however, that he will recognize the true nature of Vytautas and his retainers until the final episode of the campaign.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP
STR	9	DB -	1-4	R Leg
CON	9	Hit Points 11	5-8	L Leg
SIZ	12	Mana 8	9-11	Abdomen
INT	15	Move 10	12	Chest
POW	19		13-15	R Arm
DEX	9		16-18	L Arm
APP	9		19-20	Head
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	50%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	40%	1d3+db	20	knockback

Skills: Appraise 40%, Insight 60%, Knowledge (Christianity) 90%, Knowledge (Baltic) 40%, Literacy (Latin) 80%, Perform (Oratory) 90%, Piety 50%, Ride 50%, Status (Bishopric) 90%.

Armour: Full chain mail suit and open helm.

Divine Blessings: Aura of Holiness, Bless, Dismiss Magic, Fear, Heal Body, Protection from Magic, Restore Health, Sense Malice, *Soul Shield*, Soul Sight, Spirit Block, *Truesword*.

Special: Relic of St. Matthew (+30% to Piety). Spells in *italics* have been acquired as the consequence of the Crusade he has declared and will expire after the Battle on the Ice.

Adventure Interaction: Bishop Hermann is the leader of the campaign against Novgorod of 1242 AD. As such, he is supposed to be the adventurers' actual employer for the last chapter of the campaign, and will provide them with equipment and magic as needed. He nominally frowns upon people practising paganism after being baptised, but he does not really care, so all members of the party can appeal to him for help, even if they have strong ties with the pagan faith. A successful Status (Bishopric) roll is still needed to obtain some major benefit, beyond the ones listed in the campaign, from the Bishop. Hermann can provide access to a wide array of Christian Blessings, and has declared a Crusade against the Heretics (Orthodox Russians), so everyone fighting in his army can temporarily increase their Holiness and acquire more magic.

Andreas von Felben

TEUTONIC KNIGHT COMMANDER

(Strong, Loyal, Stubborn)

Andreas is a former Sword Brother who has been incorporated into the Teutonic Order. While most Brothers hail from Germany, he is from Utrecht in the Netherlands instead. Unlike Dietrich von Grüningen or Bishop Hermann, Andreas is more interested in converting the heathen than in political power games. He is probably the character in our story who most resembles the chivalrous ideals of the Knight-Monks, yet he neither gives any quarter nor shows any mercy when fighting. His loyalty to the Order prevents him from acting contrary to Dietrich's will, even when he knows that his commander's motivations are not exactly pious.

It is not clear whether the actual Livlandish *Landmeister* at the time of the Battle on the Ice is Andreas or Dietrich, but what is certain is that Dietrich is superior in rank to Andreas, as the latter has belonged to the disreputable Sword Brotherhood. Nevertheless, Andreas's prowess in battle, along with the trust his troops have in him, made him the military leader of the victorious expedition to Pskov, and his own reputation prevents him from being removed from his command post for political reasons. But should he fall in battle, neither Dietrich nor the Bishop would mourn him so much.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP
STR	13	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg
CON	14	Hit Points 15	5-8	L Leg
SIZ	15	Mana 13	9-11	Abdomen
INT	12	Move 10	12	Chest
POW	15		13-15	R Arm
DEX	13		16-18	L Arm
APP	14		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Mace	80%	1d6+2+db	20	crush
Sword	120%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	100%	1d3+db	20	knockback

Skills: Command 90%, Knowledge (Military) 60%, Literacy (Latin) 25%, Perform (Oratory) 70%, Persuade 60%, Piety 90%, Ride 90%, Status (Order) 80%, Track 40%.

Armour: Full chain mail suit and Teutonic helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Bless, Dismiss Magic, Heal Wound, Holy War, Sense Malice, Soul Shield, Soul Sight, Truesword.

Adventurer Interaction: Andreas is one of the Sword Brothers who survived the disaster of the Saule, and for this reason he distrusts the Lithuanians and trusts the adventurers if they express their suspicions about Vytautas. In many occasions, Andreas will be the only Brother who sides with the player characters when they express doubts about the Lithuanian allies of the Order. However, since his position is not as high as Dietrich's, his intervention will prevent retaliations against the PCs, but will not make Dietrich or the Bishop believe that the suspicions are true. Have Andreas tell this to the adventurers explicitly, so that they know that they cannot expect much from his help, but that helping him to stay alive is in their best interest.

Andreas can provide little help to the adventurers when it comes to acquiring equipment. He will, however, help any pious Christian character to acquire any Blessing that can be useful to him or her for the adventure.



Vytautas of Kiatlai

ZEMAICIAN NOBLE, VILKACIS LORD
(Double-faced, Jovial, Noble Bearing)



Vytautas is a middle-aged nobleman from Zemaitija (Samogitia, or lowland Lithuania), with some family connections to the Zemaitijai leader, Vykintas of Tverai. He has quite a reputation for being a fierce warrior and a ruthless man, qualities that Lithuanian rulers tend to appreciate, so Vykintas often trusts him with diplomatic duties, not knowing about the man's real nature. In fact, Vytautas is so power thirsty that he forfeited his own humanity in a bargain with the Devil, to become the most powerful Vilkacis that the Amber Coast has ever seen. The only creature that he fears is Zilvinas, the mythical Prince of Snakes, and so he tends to avoid contact with all the Zaltsys. This practice is very unusual for a Lithuanian, and is the only flaw in his image as a pious and noble ruler of his people.

Some twenty years ago, just after ascending to the position of Lord among the Vilkacis, Vytautas decided that his only heir would have to be his successor as Vilkacis King once he had become a ruler in Hell itself. Thus he killed all of his offspring who did not possess the Gift of Magic, in order to avoid succession by an heir who could not become ruler of

the werewolves. His only lover who had given him a daughter with the Gift at that time was a Yotvingian witch called Aušrinė. But when the woman realized that Vytautas intended to turn the poor child into a Vilkacis while she was still a baby, she gave her to the Laumas instead. Vytautas was enraged and killed the woman, suspecting the baby was still alive but being unable to locate her. Since that time, he has not been able to generate a suitable heir or heiress any longer.

If Vytautas ever realizes that Tekla is under the adventurer's protection, he will take no immediate action, but the girl will disappear after a few weeks, not to be seen again by the adventurers until the campaign ends. Spīdala is not aware that Tekla is her master's long lost daughter, but if Vytautas sees Tekla, he will recognize his own blood in a matter of moments. Even if the girl is carefully described to him he will suspect that she may be his daughter. The adventurers must be warned that this event is extremely dangerous for them and their employers. Tekla is powerful enough to carry on her father's plans if she turns to the evil side of witchcraft. And if the adventurers finally defeat Vytautas but he has recovered his lost daughter, then it is possible that the Vilkacis conspiracy is not over and that the party will have to face a new, more powerful foe a few years in the future.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR	*32	DB +2d6	1-4	R Leg	1/6
CON	17	Hit Points 16	5-8	L Leg	1/6
SIZ	14	Mana 21	9-11	Abdomen	6/6
INT	15	Move 10	12	Chest	6/8
POW	21		13-15	R Arm	6/5
DEX	15		16-18	L Arm	6/5
APP	15		19-20	Head	(4)/6
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Battleaxe	100%	1d8+2+db	20	bleed	
Shield	100%	1d2+db	15	knockback	
Javelin	90%	1d6+½db	12	impale	25
Wolf bite	100%	1d6+db		bleed	

Skills: Insight 90%, Knowledge (Baltic) 90%, Knowledge (Demonology) 60%, Persuade 70%, Ride 100%, Spot 60%, Track 80%.

Armour: Scale mail shirt and helm, leather trews. When in wolf form, add 1 to armour, except on the head that becomes AP 1, as he is forced to drop his helm.

Magic: Armour of the Vilkacis 4, *Bind Velns*, *Brazier of Power*, *Bulwark of the Vilkacis* 4, Fury (2), Muddle (2), Razor of the Vilkacis 4, *Summon Velns*, *Summon Demon*, Supleness of the Vilkacis 3, *Talons of the Vilkacis* 4, *Undo Sorcery* 4, *Witch Sight* (3).

Note: Spells in *italics* are usually held in magic charms and not in memory. Vytautas knows how to bind Demons and Velns to his service, but he usually keeps none of them bound.

Special abilities: Vytautas is a Vilkacis Lord, so he can become a human-shaped werewolf at will, but his STR is doubled even when in human form. While in wolf form, Vytautas is only vulnerable to magic and fire, but his armour protects him against this kind of damage.

Equipment: Fine quality battleaxe with +5 hit points. During the final encounter, Vytautas carries Volkwin's sword, which he has used to recall the Army of Lost Souls from the land of the dead.

Adventure interaction: If the campaign follows the intended plot, the only interactions between the adventurers and the Vilkacis Lord will be diplomatic conflict, and violence in the last episode. However, should the adventurers decide to turn to evil, then Vytautas will become their master and the ultimate source of magical and mundane benefits for them. It is up to the Gamemaster to decide whether he will actually trust the adventurers in this case or just plan to betray them at some time, but it is unlikely that he will believe in their loyalty unless they give Tekla back to him.

Opponents

Baltic Militiaman

Converted heathen warrior

Use these statistics to represent Livonian or Estonian warriors used as militia by the Knights. This kind of spearman has little or no military training, and relies mainly on his hunting and raiding experience. All soldiers levied by the player characters use these statistics, unless the soldiers are specifically trained.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 11	DB -	1-4	Right Leg	-/5	
CON 12	Hit Points 13	5-8	Left Leg	-/5	
SIZ 13	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	1/6	
INT 12	Move 10	12	Chest	1/7	
POW 9		13-15	Right Arm	1/4	
DEX 10		16-18	Left Arm	1/4	
APP 10		19-20	Head	2/5	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Long spear	50%	1d10+1	20	impale	
Short spear	50%	1d6+1+db	20	impale	25

Skills: First Aid 20%, Spot 30%, Track 30%.

Armour: Leather shirt, boiled leather helm.

Note: Carries an extra short spear for throwing when equipped for large battles. If using the optional rules for Morale, these fighters start all battles with 2 less Morale points than usual to represent their inferior training.

Trained Baltic Fighter

Converted heathen warrior

Use these statistics to represent Livonian or Estonian warriors used as troops by the Knights. This kind of fighter has undergone some military training and is fairly effective in organized combat.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 13	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	1/5	
CON 12	Hit Points 13	5-8	Left Leg	1/5	
SIZ 14	Mana 10	9-11	Abdomen	3/5	
INT 13	Move 10	12	Chest	3/6	
POW 10		13-15	Right Arm	1/4	
DEX 13		16-18	Left Arm	1/4	
APP 10		19-20	Head	3/5	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Battleaxe	60%	1d8+1+db	15	bleed	
Med. Shield	60%	1d2+db	15	knockback	
Bow	40%	1d6+1+1/2db	6	impale	50
Short spear	60%	1d8+1+db	15	impale	

Skills: Dodge 30%, First Aid 20%, Spot 40%, Track 30%.

Armour: Boiled leather hauberk and helm, leather shirt and leggings.

Note: Carries one of the following weapon combinations: axe and bow, axe and shield, spear and shield.

Junior Sword Brother

Crusading Knight-Friar

Use these statistics to represent both a Sword Brother and a Teutonic Knight. A typical full-time crusader will have this skill level, as he comes from a noble European family which has access to superior military training.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 14	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	5/6
CON 12	Hit Points 14	5-8	Left Leg	5/6
SIZ 15	Mana 11	9-11	Abdomen	7/7
INT 13	Move 10	12	Chest	7/8
POW 11		13-15	Right Arm	5/5
DEX 15		16-18	Left Arm	5/5
APP 10		19-20	Head	7/6
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	50%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	50%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	30%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Piety 30%, Ride 50%, Spot 40%.

Armour: Short-sleeved chain mail suit, helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Heal Wound.



Experienced Sword Brother

Crusading Knight-Friar

Use these statistics for a seasoned Knight-friar who has survived several years of campaigning in the Holy Land or in the Baltic region.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 12	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	7/6
CON 13	Hit Points 14	5-8	Left Leg	7/6
SIZ 14	Mana 13	9-11	Abdomen	7/7
INT 13	Move 10	12	Chest	7/8
POW 13		13-15	Right Arm	7/5
DEX 13		16-18	Left Arm	7/5
APP 12		19-20	Head	7/6
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	70%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	70%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	40%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Persuade 35%, Knowledge (Military) 30%, Piety 50%, Ride 70%, Spot 50%.

Armour: Full chain mail suit and helm.

Divine Blessings: Armour of Faith, Heal Wound, Truesword.

Zemaitijan Raiders

(Algis, Dravenis and Lasukas)

These are no more than farmers with weapons. They can be ransomed by their clan for 5 silver bars worth of amber and furs each.

Use these statistics for any further encounter with armed pagan people from the Baltic lands, adding some armour pieces or increasing their skills if necessary.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 11	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	-/4	
CON 9	Hit Points 12	5-8	Left Leg	-/4	
SIZ 14	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	1/4	
INT 12	Move 10	12	Chest	1/5	
POW 9		13-15	Right Arm	1/3	
DEX 11		16-18	Left Arm	1/3	
APP 9		19-20	Head	-/4	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Battleaxe	50%	1d8+2+db	15	bleed	
Shield	40%	1d2+db	15	knockback	
Bow	35%	1d6+1+1/2db	6	impale	80

Skills: Dodge 20%, First Aid 20%, Spot 40%, Track 30%.

Armour: Leather shirt.

Note: Carries either an axe and shield, or an axe and a bow.

Ceidvilas the Zemaitijan

Raider leader, Initiate of Perkunas

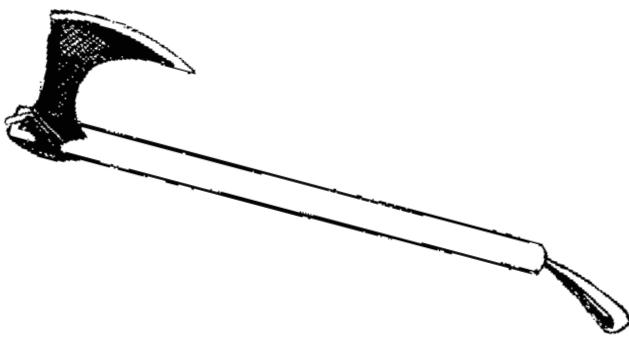
Ceidvilas is a brutal man, who relied heavily on raiding to build up his status among the Zemaitijans. His ransom is 40 silver bars in cattle if captured, but the Brothers will insist that he is killed instead, to discourage further raiding.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 13	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	-/5
CON 12	Hit Points 13	5-8	Left Leg	-/5
SIZ 14	Mana 15	9-11	Abdomen	2/5
INT 16	Move 4m	12	Chest	2/6
POW 15		13-15	Right Arm	1/4
DEX 14		16-18	Left Arm	1/4
APP 12		19-20	Head	2/5
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Battleaxe	70%	1d8+2+db	15	bleed
Shield	50%	1d2+db	15	knockback

Skills: Dodge 30%, Ride 70%, Spot 50%, Track 40%.

Armour: Leather shirt, boiled leather hauberk and cap.

Magic: Lightning Bolt of Perkunas (3), one-use.



Peasant Mob

Enraged Livonian farmers

Use these statistics for the peasants that assault the adventurers during their night trip to the Aizkere burial site, and for any other violent encounter with Livonian or Estonian commoners.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR 12	DB -	1-4	Right Leg	-/4
CON 10	Hit Points 12	5-8	Left Leg	-/4
SIZ 13	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	1/4
INT 11	Move 10	12	Chest	1/5
POW 9		13-15	Right Arm	1/3
DEX 9		16-18	Left Arm	1/3
APP 10		19-20	Head	-/4
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sickle	30%	1d6+1+db	12	impale
Pitchfork (2h)	30%	1d6+1+db	20	impale
Club	30%	1d8+db	22	crush

Skills: Dodge 20%, First Aid 30%, Stealth 20%.

Armour: None.

Special: Each peasant carries only one kind of weapon.



Gatis the Wolfrunner

Spirit Vilkacis

Gatis has not been a Vilkacis for long, and is still rather inexperienced when it comes to using his supernatural powers.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR -	DB -	1-20	Body	-/11
CON -	Hit Points 11			
SIZ -	Mana 11			
INT 7	Move 11			
POW 11				
DEX -				
APP 11				
Weapon	Skill	Damage		
Spectral Bite	40%	1d4		

Skills: Dodge 30%, Stealth 30%.

Special: It can only be harmed by magic weapons.

Feral Velns

Mindless demons

These brutish creatures are the most savage breed of velns, and are barely capable of communicating with their mistress in a language made of grunts and hisses. When it comes to combat, they are ruthless and dangerous, but will flee if confronted by an overwhelming force, or threatened by oaken weapons or Pērkons magic.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 17	DB +1d4	1-4	Right Leg	-/6	
CON 13	Hit Points 14	5-8	Left Leg	-/6	
SIZ 14	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	-/6	
INT 6	Move 12	12	Chest	-/7	
POW 9		13-15	Right Arm	-/4	
DEX 11		16-18	Left Arm	-/4	
APP 3		19-20	Head	-/6	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Club	40%	1d8+db	22	crush	
Claw	50%	1d6+db	-	bleed	
Thrown Rock	30%	1d2+1/2db	-	crush	15

Skills: Dodge 20%, Spot 30%, Sneak 20%.

Armour: none.

Powers: Super Sense (Dark Vision).

Special: Take double damage from Pērkons magic, like Skybolt, or weapons made of oaken wood.

Pirate

Seagoing scum

These water-borne bandits come from Sambia, the peninsula between the two great lagoons on the Baltic coast. They live on agriculture for most of the year, but when they see an opportunity for raiding, they never let it pass.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 11	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg	-/6	
CON 9	Hit Points 12	5-8	L Leg	-/6	
SIZ 14	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	1/7	
INT 11	Move 10	12	Chest	1/8	
POW 9		13-15	R Arm	1/5	
DEX 12		16-18	L Arm	1/5	
APP 9		19-20	Head	-/6	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Spear	50%	1d6+1+db	15	impale	
Shield	40%	1d2+db	15	knockback	
Axe	40%	1d8+2+db	15	bleed	
Short Bow	50%	1d6+1+1/2db	6	impale	80

Skills: Dodge 30%, Spot 40%.

Armour: Leather shirt.

Notes: Usually carry either spear and shield or axe and bow. To generate a pirate leader from these statistics, give him a hard leather cuirass and helm to the armour and add +20 to combat skills.

Prussian Warrior

Weapon Thane

Thanes from the Prussian area were the armed forces of Prussian princes. The nobles of Prussia used to rule the land with strong hand and this sort of warrior was the tool they used to do the job. Thanes were usually initiates of Pērkunis, who, playing the role of the destructive force in the Prussian Trinity, was regarded as a war god.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP		
STR 13	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg	1/5	
CON 12	Hit Points 13	5-8	L Leg	1/5	
SIZ 13	Mana 13	9-11	Abdomen	3/6	
INT 12	Move 10	12	Chest	3/7	
POW 13		13-15	R Arm	1/4	
DEX 12		16-18	L Arm	1/4	
APP 11		19-20	Head	3/5	
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Battleaxe	60%	1d8+2+db	15	bleed	
Shield	40%	1d2+db	15	knockback	
Short Bow	50%	1d6+1+db	6	impale	80

Skills: Dodge 40%, Ride 50%, Spot 50%, Track 40%.

Armour: Leather shirt and trews, cuirbouilli cuirass and helm.

Special: Usually carries either an axe and a shield, or an axe and a bow, but not both.

Kangars

*Beast Vilkacis, Animal form
(Bloodthirsty, Fierce, Resolute)*

Kangars is a young but experienced Vilkacis who can turn into a wolf. He wants to prove his worthiness to his witch and would rather be killed than retreat for any reason. Spidala has given him a charm with Vilkacis Talons 4 on it, and he will cast the magic before entering combat. Kangars is accompanied by three to six feral Velns when he attacks the adventurers' stronghold.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP	
STR *28	DB +2d6	1-2	R Hind Leg	1/4
CON 12	Hit Points 14	3-4	L Hind Leg	1/4
SIZ 16	Mana 15	5-7	Hindquarters	1/6
INT *6	Move 12	8-10	Forequarters	1/6
POW 15		11-13	R Fore Leg	1/4
DEX 13		14-16	L Fore Leg	1/4
APP 14		17-20	Head	1/5
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Bite	60%	1d8+db	-	bleed

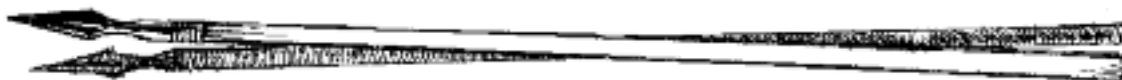
Skills: Dodge 60%, Hide 50%, Spot 60%, Stealth 60%.

Armour: 1-point fur.

Traits: Super Sense (Night Vision).

Special: Can only be hurt by magic or fire, and his fur will block 1 point of magic or heat damage.

Magic (one-use): (one-use): Vilkacis Talons 4.



Pakis

Flying pest

This flying pet drake is used by Spidala to slow work on the rebuilding of Ascheraden. It is basically harmless, but definitely hard to kill.

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 7	DB -1d6	1-2 R Hind Leg	-2
CON 15	Hit Points 9	3-4 L Hind Leg	-2
SIZ 3	Mana 17	5-7 Hindquarters	-4
INT 8	Move 8	8-10 Forequarters	-4
POW 17	(12 flying)	11-12 R Wing	-2
DEX 17		13-14 L Wing	-2
APP 6		15-16 R Fore Leg	-2
		17-18 L Fore Leg	-2
		19-20 Head	-3

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Special	Range
Bite	40%	1d8+db	bleed	
Firebreath	30%	1d6		15

Skills: Dodge 50%, Fly 40%, Stealth 50%.

Armour: none.

Powers: Super Sense (Night Vision), Heat Projection.

Special: Characters targeting the creature when it is flying are at -20% to hit, in addition to any penalties for darkness.

Mongol Scout

Vanguard of the Golden Horde
(Cunning, Cautious, Sneaky)

The standard strategy of Genghis Khan's Golden Horde included sending scouts and spies to gather intelligence about the territories the Horde was about to invade. Strictly speaking, Livonia is not a land that the Horde ever invaded, but the Mongols arrived very close to it in their invasion of Russia early in the 13th century, so it is possible that adventurers meet one or more groups of these mounted scouts.

Keep in mind that the scouts' purpose is reconnaissance, not violence, so they will generally avoid combat in all situations, even when they outnumber their enemies. Even in the case that they can dispatch their opponents and dispose of the bodies, their sudden disappearance might reveal the scouting party's presence. Only in the event that they are spotted do they resort to violence, and in this case they show no mercy at all in battle.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 11	DB -	1-4 R Leg	-5
CON 14	Hit Points 13	5-8 L Leg	-5
SIZ 11	Mana 9	9-11 Abdomen	1/5
INT 12	Move 10	12 Chest	1/6
POW 9		13-15 R Arm	1/4
DEX 12		16-18 L Arm	1/4
APP 9		19-20 Head	1/5

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Scimitar	40%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed	
Dagger	30%	1d4+1+db	15	impale	
Nomad Bow	50%	1d8+1+1/2db	12	impale	120

Skills: Hide 35%, Ride 50%, Stealth 50%, Track 40%.

Armour: Leather jerkin and fur cap.

Special: Each scout's quiver holds 20 arrows, and three special arrows chosen among the following:

D6	Arrow type	Effect
1-2	Whistle arrow	Used for signalling
3-5	Barbed arrow	+10% to impaling chance
6	Poisoned Arrow	Poison 2D6 POT

Mongol Spy

Scout Party Leader
(Daring, Ruthless, Cruel)

Each scouting party is usually led by a seasoned warrior that acts as a spy rather than a scout, and has the necessary skills to gather intelligence by casual eaves-dropping and interrogating captives. The interrogation techniques used by these spies are particularly gruesome, as were all the war habits of the Golden Horde. If the adventurers must interact diplomatically with a Mongol scouting party, the spy is always the only one who has some knowledge of the local language.

Even though the party leader is as cautious as his underlings when he has to remain under cover, he is the one who can assess whether a particular action may jeopardize the party's mission or not, so he will show much more bravery than his underlings if he believes his party has the upper hand. This also means that eliminating the party leader will force the surviving scouts to retreat towards the Horde as fast as they can.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 14	DB +1d4	1-4 R Leg	-4
CON 12	Hit Points 12	5-8 L Leg	-4
SIZ 12	Mana 12	9-11 Abdomen	6/4
INT 15	Move 10	12 Chest	6/5
POW 12		13-15 R Arm	1/3
DEX 11		16-18 L Arm	1/3
APP 10		19-20 Head	3/4

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Lance	40%	1d10+1+db	15	impale	
Scimitar	40%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed	
Nomad Bow	70%	1d8+1+1/2db	12	impale	120
Dagger	30%	1d4+1+db	15	impale	

Skills: Disguise 50%, Hide 50%, Language (Balt) 20%, Language (Russian) 30%, Listen 50%, Ride 80%, Spot 70%, Stealth 80%, Track 50%.

Armour: Leather shirt, lamellar cuirass, cuirbouilli helm.

Magic (one-use): Cloak of Night 2.

Special: Carries the standard complement of 20 arrows, and peasant clothes that let him Disguise as a local folksman.

Mongol Rider

Auxiliary cavalry of Nevskij's army

These warriors are trained in fighting with sabres, too, but their main weapon is the nomad bow. Use these statistics to represent both the warriors that accompany Domash Tverdislavich and the company of horse archers that are present at the battle of Lake Chud.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 12	DB -	1-4 R Leg	-4
CON 9	Hit Points 11	5-8 L Leg	-4
SIZ 12	Mana 10	9-11 Abdomen	3/4
INT 11	Move 10	12 Chest	3/5
POW 10		13-15 R Arm	1/3
DEX 12		16-18 L Arm	1/3
APP 10		19-20 Head	2/4

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special	Range
Nomad Bow	60%	1d8+1+1/2db	12	impale	120
Sabre	50%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed	
Dagger	30%	1d4+1+db	15	impale	

Skills: Dodge 30%, Ride 60%.

Armour: Leather jerkin, boiled leather cuirass and fur cap.

Domash Tverotslavich

Commander of the Novgorod militia

Little is known about this brave Russian fighter, save that he found a premature demise before the battle of Lake Chud. He is a Russian noble (boyar) from the Novgorod area, and probably also the commander of the Novgorod city militia.

Domash cannot speak either German or Baltic, so he cannot be interrogated unless the inquisitor can speak Russian.

Characteristics	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 14	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg
CON 11	Hit Points 14	5-8	L Leg
SIZ 17	Mana 12	9-11	Abdomen
INT 14	Move 10	12	Chest
POW 12		13-15	R Arm
DEX 15		16-18	L Arm
APP 9		19-20	Head

Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	90%	1d8+1+db	25	bleed
Shield	80%	1d3+db	20	knockback
Dagger	50%	1d4+1+db	15	impale

Skills: Dodge 30%, Command 60%, Ride 80%.

Armour: Scale cuirass and sleeves, short mail skirt, full helm.

Notes: Superior quality sword has five more hit points.

Spidala

Witch, Beast Vilkacis, Wolf form

Characteristic	D20	Location	AP/HP
STR *22	DB +1d4	1-2	RH Leg
CON 15	Hit Points 12	3-4	LH Leg
SIZ 9	Mana 18	5-7	Hindquarters
INT *8	Move 12	8-10	Forequarters
POW 18		11-13	RF Leg
DEX 15		14-16	LF Leg
APP 19		17-20	Head

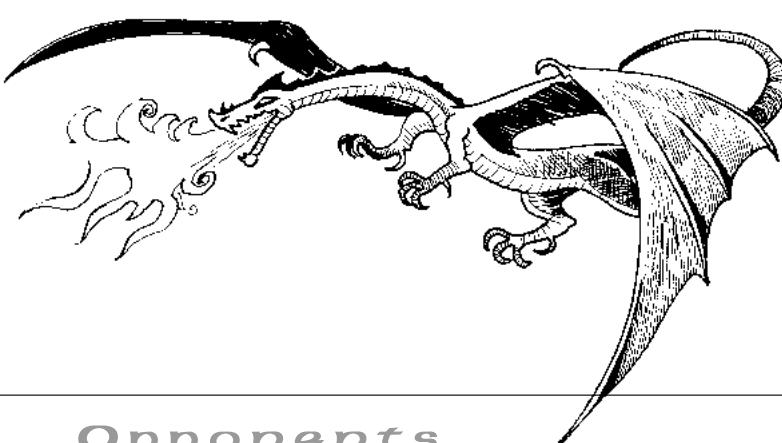
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Bite	50%	1d8+1d4		

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 50%, Listen 50%, Stealth 60%, Scan 40%, Track 80%.

Armour: Fur and hide (1 point).

Special: Can only be harmed by fire and magic weapons, and her natural armour will detract one point from the magic damage suffered.

Magic: Spidala cannot cast her magic while in wolf form, but she retains control of her human or Velns servants.



Opponents

Russian Warrior

Infantry of Nevskij's army

These warriors come mostly from the Novgorod militia, and are not very well trained.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP
STR 13	DB +1d4	1-4	R Leg	1/5
CON 12	Hit Points 13	5-8	L Leg	1/5
SIZ 13	Mana 9	9-11	Abdomen	3/5
INT 12	Move 10	12	Chest	3/6
POW 9		13-15	R Arm	1/4
DEX 9		16-18	L Arm	1/4
APP 11		19-20	Head	3/5
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Sword	45%	1d8+1+db	20	bleed
Shield	45%	1d3+db	20	knockback

Skills: Dodge 20%.

Armour: Leather shirt and trews, cuirbouilli cuirass and helm.

Elder Vilkacis

Lithuanian warrior werewolf

Use these stats to represent one of Vytautas' retainers. This Vilkacis has not learned any magic but is extremely powerful in hand to hand combat.

Characteristics		D20	Location	AP/HP
STR *26	DB +2d6	1-4	R Leg	2/5
CON 12	Hit Points 14	5-8	L Leg	2/5
SIZ 15	Mana 15	9-11	Abdomen	8/5
INT 12	Move 10	12	Chest	8/6
POW 15		13-15	R Arm	6/4
DEX 12		16-18	L Arm	6/4
APP 10		19-20	Head	3/5
Weapon	Skill	Damage	HP	Special
Battleaxe	80%	1d8+2+db	15	bleed
Shield	50%	1d2+db	15	knockback
Wolf bite	70%	1d6+1d8		bleed

Skills: Dodge 50%, Listen 50%, Ride 60%, Sense 60%, Spot 60%.

Armour: Light chain mail shirt, fur cap, leather trews.

Special: The Vilkacis retains his light fur cap in werewolf form. The Damage Bonus and armour listed include the STR bonus: if the Vilkacis is surprised in human form, the Damage Bonus is reduced to 1d4 and armour is reduced by 1.

When in wolf form, the Vilkacis is immune to non-magical weapon damage. When the Vilkacis is hit by magical weapons, first roll the full damage, including the damage bonus, and then deduct armour from it. The remaining damage is applied normally. However, the total damage dealt cannot exceed the part of damage that is considered magical (for instance, the 4 point bonus if the weapon is enchanted with Pérkon's Razor 4), so any damage in excess of that amount is ignored.

Índex



Adalbert of Prague, St.55
 Aitvarassee Pūkis
 Aizkrauklesee Ascheraden
 Aizkrauklis, Lord93,145
 Albert von Buxhövdén2,56,68,71,79,130
 Albert Suerbeer63,68,79,106,123
 Aleksandr Nevskij4,63,76,89,131-139,141,157
 Allegiance (skill)11
 Amber5,13,30
 Andra the Ragana93,94,144
 Andreas von Felben62,127,130,135,140,151
 Andrew of Hungary59
 Arabic11
 Arensburg67
 Aukstaicių47
 Aukštaitija52,61,77
 Bartia47,78
 Batu Khan75,137
 Berthold of Loccum56
 Bison5,46,80
 Blessings19
 Boyar6,63,76
 Cesissee Wenden
 Charm29
 Chelmnosee Kulm
 Chud, Lake5,50,63,66,68,135
 Congregation17,18
 Cumanssee Kipchaqs
 Curoniasee Kurland
 Curonian Lagoon45,47,68
 Dago45,67
 Daiwas36
 Daniil of Galicia75
 Danzigsee Gdańsk

Daugava5,7,11,32,45-47,50,54-59,62,67-6992-93,97-101,106,146
 Deacon17
 Dekla32
 Dietrich von Grüningen62,110-120,127-140,147,148
 Dieva Deli27
 Dievas27,35
 Dievs2,13,27-33,51,86,96,136,149
 Dniepr45
 Dobržyn71
 Domash Tverdislavich132-133,157
 Dominic de Marseille106-11,117-118,147
 Dorpat58-59,62-63,66,58-71,76105,130-136,140,150
 Druid28
 Dünamunde56, 61,69
 Eesti44,58
 Eizenstein, S.4,139
 Elbing52,60,66,67
 Elblagsee Elbing
 Estonia2,6,8,10-12,14,45-46,57-63,66-69,71,73,76,130-139,150
 Frederick IIsee Stupor Mundi
 Futhark12,29
 Gdańsk65-66,108
 Genghis Khan4,74,125
 Genoa10
 Gift of Magic45,51,65
 Gotland45
 Griwesee Kriwe
 Hanseatic League9,10,12,61,65-68,71,89,93,105,117-121,142
 Hartwig of Bremen56
 Henry Monte60,78
 Hermann Balk60,62,71,110,148
 Hermann von Buxhövdén59,63,66,130,150
 Hermann von Salza2,4,59,107,127
 Hohenstaufen, Frederick II vonsee Stupor Mundi

Holiness	12,16
Holm	57
Icons	19
Ikškile	see Uxküll
Initiate	28
Jelgava	see Mitau
Jersika	47,57
Jods	see Velns
Jogaila	64-65
Jūras Māte	32-33
Karta	32
Kaunas	52,66
Kiev	6,65-66,75
Klaipeda	see Memel
Knowledge (skill)	11
Kokenhuse	57,66-67,125
Koknese	see Kokenhuse
Königsberg	60,66-67
Kriwe	29,31,51,106,109-117,119,149
Kriwulé	51
Krustpils	57
Kulm	60,65-67,73,79,106-117,119,149
Kurland (Curonia)	6,47,50,54,56,57,71,79
Lāčplēsis	4,9,89,106,129,146
Laima	11,32,51,81,123,127,136,144
Lake Chud	see Chud, Lake
Lake Peipus	see Chud, Lake
Language (skill)	11
Latgallia	6,47,57,69,93,96
Latin	11
Lauku Māte	11,32-33
Lauma	80,89,93,106,11-115,140
Leal	67,150
Lennewarden	57,67
Letts	47
Lettigallia	see Latgallia
Lielupe	47,68
Lielvarde	see Lennewarden
Lietuva, Lietuvai	47,52,77
Lihula	see Leal
Literacy (skill)	12
Lithuania	2,4,6-7,10-1435-36,45,47,50,52,56,60-66,72,77
Livonia	4,8,10-11,17,55-59,62,64-66,68-74,79,92
Livonian Chronicle	4
Livonia Order	see Sword Brotherhood
Livs	5,46-47,56
Lopu Māte	32-33
Lübeck	10,56-58,65-68,79,95,117-118,142
Lyndenisse	see Reval
Māra	28,32,51
Mārsava	see Māra
Māte	11,13,28,32-33
Mazovia	6,55,59
Meinhard	48,56,64,67,79,93
Memel(burg)	60,68
Mēness	33-35,86
Menno von Wingerden	57,61,147
Menuo	35
Mēza Māte	32-33
Mitau	68
Monte, Henry	see Henry Monte
Moose	81
Mooste	132-133
Mosu	45
Mindaugas	2,4,45,52,56,62,63-66,77,128,140-141
Miracles	15
Nadruvia	47,60
Narva	58,62,66,68
Nattangia	47,60,67,78
Nemunas	7,45,47,52,54
Neris	7,45,52
Nicholas of Riga	79,106-107,123,148
Novgorod	4-6,58,63,65,66,68,75,76,127,130-141
Ogodei	75,124
Oesel	5,45,58
Patollos	36,37
Peipus, Lake	see Chud, Lake
Pērkons	13,28,31,33-34,51,82,85,86,115,136,140
Perkunas	35
Perkunis	36
Perun	see Pērkons
Piety (skill)	11,15
Poland	5,6,45-46,55,64-65,77,80,109,130
Polotsk	6,47,57,65-67,97,120
Pomerania	6,44
Pomerelia	6,44
Potrimpos	28,35-36,112,149
Prussia	4,6,8,10,12,14,29,36-37,47,51-52,54,55,59-62,66,67,71,78,79,104-118
Pskov	61,63,66,76,127,130-131,151
Pūkis	81,124,156
Pumpurs, Andrejs	9,89
Ragana	9,11,13,28-29,32,81,95,144
Relics	18
Reval	58,66,68,79
Riga	2,5,13,45-47,56,58,63-69,71,73,7992,95-97,104-107,118,127-130
Romowe	29,31,104,109-116,149
Russia	4,5,7,9,12-13,27,45,47,50,55,58,62-63,65-69,74-77,79
Ruthenia, Black	77
Salaspils	see Holm
Sambia	47,60,67-68,78-79,111,150
Samogitia	see Zemaitija
Semgallia	see Zemgallija
Saule (deity)	11,13,33-35
Saule, Battle of the	61-63,77,104,118-119,127-128,134
Selonia	47
Siaulai	see Saule, Battle of the
Skalvia	47
Spidala	89, 95-103106,118-124,127-129,140,145,157
Staburadze	32,89,98-101,103,106,109-110,127,136,146
Status (skill)	11,105
Stupor Mundi	3,4,9,59,70,79,107
Subodei	74-75
Sudovia	see Yotvingia
Suerbeer, Albert	see Albert Suerbeer
Suomi	5,44,46,58,62

Sword Brotherhood 2,8,9,11,14,50,57,58,61,62,66-69,70-73,89,105,118
 Tallinn see Reval
 Tartu see Dorpat
 Tekla 89,93-95,106,141,146
 Templar 11,14,17-18,21,57,59-65,70-74
 Teutonic Knights 2,47,11,17,52,57,58-65,70-74
 Thorn 60,65-66
 Traidenis 52,77
 Transylvania 59,75
 Tree, sacred 7,51,60
 Treniota 77
 Truso see Elbing
 Tverai 52,77,152
 Ugro-Finnic group 5,10,12,45,113
 Uxküll 48,56,57,68-69
 Veli 34,51,81-82,95-98
 Velnias 35,37,64,82
 Velns 33-34,45,64,82,84,100-101,113,124,136,145,152,155
 Velu laiks 52,82,95-96,101,104
 Velu Māte 34,81,82,95-96,119,144
 Venice 9-10,65
 Vetseke 67
 Vikings 7,50,54
 Vilkacis 37,81,84-88,93,95-96,101,103,113,115,121,124,127-129,131,136-141,145,146,152,154, 155,157
 Vilkata see Vilkacis
 Vilkatis see Vilkacis

Vilkolakis see Vilkacis
 Vinsaule 34,82
 Visby 56-66
 Vistula 5,44,45,47,59,60,93,108,109,143
 Vistula Lagoon 44,60,67
 Vladimir 6,75
 Volga 45
 Volkwin Schenk 61-62,92,104-107,139,141,147,152
 Voruta 52,66,77
 Vows 16-17
 Vytautas (historical Grand Duke) 64
 Vytautas of Kiaulai 93,103,105,127-129,130,135-141,146,152
 Waldemar II of Denmark 58,68
 Warmia 47,78,79
 Wenden 57,66,69,72-73,107
 Wiek 58,67-68,71,79
 Wilfred von Bremen 93-94,104,134,142
 William of Modena 18,61,106-118,148
 Yggdrasil 111-115,117,136,140,150
 Yotvingia 47,77,78,152
 Zaltys 40,82,83,152
 Zamaiciai 40,82,83,152
 Zemaitija 52,60,71,77,94,111,123,146,152,154
 Zemes Māte 32-33
 Zemgalija 6,10,56
 Zilvinas 83,152

Bibliography

BOOKS

Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades* (Penguin Books). A concise and easy to read report of the conquest of the Amber coast. A must read for those who want to know more.

Agris Liepins, *Sena Latvia* (Zvaigzne AB, in Latvian). An illustrated book that portrays costumes and buildings of the ancient Latvians, used as a reference for most of the illustrations of this book. Also, if you are into LARP or want to experience the real thing, you have to visit Mr. Liepins' reconstruction of a wooden fort in Lielvarde.

Andrejs Pumpurs, *Lacplesis*. The Latvian epic poem, written in modern times but still a good example of the Baltic culture. It is now public domain and the English translation is available online.

Stephen Turnbull, *Crusader Castles of the Teutonic Knights (1) The Red Brick Castles of Prussia* (Osprey). A military history of the Teutonic settlements in Prussia.

Stephen Turnbull, *Crusader Castles of the Teutonic*

Knights (2) The stone castles of Latvia and Estonia (Osprey) A military history of the Livonian Order settlements.

Unknown Author, *Kalevipoeg*. The traditional Estonian epic poem. Another public domain work that you can easily find online.

CD-ROMS

Lietuva iki Mindaugo (Lithuania before Mindaugas) A CD-ROM filled with information about the ancient Lithuanian and Northern Prussians. You cannot miss this one.

MOVIES

Sergei Eisenstein, *Aleksandr Nevskij*. If you have not seen this movie, you cannot know why the Balts were so scared of the Teutonic Knights' charge. Not historically accurate, but you cannot miss this one.

Basic Roleplaying

Crusaders of the Amber Coast

It is the year 1206 AD.

In the city of Riga, a Christian outpost in the pagan lands of the frozen North, Prince-Bishop Albert founds the Brotherhood of the Sword to subjugate the pagans and convert them to the True Faith. Knights, friars and colonists from all over the Empire move towards the Baltic Sea to find forgiveness for their sins and commodities for their trade, as the Baltic coast is home to the strangest of the precious stones: Amber.

The age of the Northern Crusades has begun.



This book contains all the information required to run your Northern Crusade game with the Basic Roleplaying game system, including magic rules for the Christian crusaders and the pagan druids and witches, as well as game statistics for creatures of the Baltic folklore. Create your own scenarios, with your heroes siding either with the Crusading invaders or with the Baltic natives, or play through the included campaign that spans over several years of game time and takes you through the most important events of the Baltic epic.



ALEPH TAR
GAMES

ISBN 978-1-907204-63-0 \$29.99



9 781907 204630

CB75802