

# Who Are the Cerns?

The Cerns are a fantasy culture loosely based on real world dark ages Celts, Picts, and Gauls. There are differences however between earth and Midgard, in order to create a more inclusive narrative.



## CLIMATE & LANDSCAPE

The Crownlands border Cern to the south, Kraalings and Jotunar border us to the North and East, while Nordvik lands lay to the West. We enjoy the full spectrum of the Gods' seasons and though there is typically a good deal of sun, there is rain or snow on and off, throughout the year. This is especially true in the north. Flooding is common, and our winters are harsher in the highlands. Spring, summer and fall consist of some very fine weather, but summers in Call Godel and the southlands are typically hot. Except for the Plains of Godel, our lands are largely dominated by mountains. The Giants Backbone and The Fimmfjoll Mountains mark the western and northern edges while. The Maiden Peaks begin in the east along the Oskil Sea and extend west. The Plains of Godel lie between the Athon Nanoch and the Godel Mountains.

## POLITICS

We are a tribal-familial people currently embroiled in civil war. Two Ríoga claim to rule all the Cernlans but there are other minor Ríoga throughout our lands as well. These lesser Ríoga bide their time to choose the winning side or care only for their own lands and troubles. Royal power is held by those who can cobble together the support and strength of the Truvs, our word for Clann alliances. Truvs are traditional or circumstantial alliances formed between clans of a Dalaith, a cultural region of Cern. The leader of a temporary or permanent Truv is a Truvkinir, generally the most important Clannkinir involved in the alliance. Clannkinirs rule a Clann, a large inter-related family.

Each Ríoga maintains a council called a Comhair Ríogala, made up of the Truvkinir and Clannkinir who support them. Generals are familial warlords called Rhyfel and a great and famous warlord is named a Rhyfel Mor. The Comhair councils often call upon the advice and auguries of Druids and Arch-Druids who only answer to their own secret laws. Clanns themselves have a council of family elders called a Anum Onoir to decide small, local and familial matters and to advise their Clannkinir.

## SETTLEMENTS

Our clannhalls are scattered across the plateaus with towns and fortresses forming around the waterways and rivers that snake through the valleys. Buildings are circular with conical thatched roofs. Buildings are typically stone and timber with the dwellings of clans and their families surrounded by a circular rampart. Sometimes, this wall is made of earth, and other times stone. Most major towns have a central market, where fresh produce is sold and various artisans ply their trades. All smaller towns have a market day. Larger cities have separate markets specializing in items sold.

## DIET

We generally eat two meals a day, one in the morning and at the end of our work day. Most of us carry a small amount of dried fruits or meats, or nuts, to eat and root vegetables are a dietary staple that grow hardily across our lands. Almost every Cernish home has a root garden and a root cellar. Everywhere in Cern, ale is a staple and Uisce Beatha (whiskey) is the ríoga of spirits. However, we also drink mead from the Nordelans and wine imported from the Crownlands. Our Cheeses are exceptional, and we make very capable bakers; especially bread. Soda bread is one local favorite.

## PROFESSIONS

We are usually born into our craft. Except for the more adventurous sorts who break the mold and venture out on their own path, professions are usually passed down from generation to generation. Our linens and wools are thought to be of the finest quality in the world and the brewing of ale is a national pastime and point of regional pride. Differing clann and truvahn recipes, local water and wild yeasts makes for a wide variety of Cernish ales. However, Cernish work with precious metals, smithing and stonework is excelled only by the now missing Dverg and renowned across Midgar. Because of this, some say the Dverg were the ones who taught us what we know.

## COMMUNICATION

Though we have become accustomed to the tradition of “shaking hands”, we traditionally greet each other with the right hand over the heart and any number of warm greetings. It is said that we are slow to trust outsiders and newcomers but once we invite you into our homes, or friendship we are warm, generous and loyal. We aren't prone to garish displays of giving, and prefer actions over materialism to show commitment. Our authority figures are typically approachable, since most everyone knows one another, and a leader is often measured by the Duain or common folk.

## HISTORY

We migrated to the Nordlands over a millennia ago and settled in the lands we know as Call Godel. There we met the Nordvik, with whom we traded and eventually became good neighbors. Cern prospered and grew in the centuries that followed. Expansion brought us into contact with Trolls for the first time and led to the settlement of Bal Monadh, the future seat of power for the Cern nation. Five hundred years ago, this expansion led to war between King Balorrech of the Fimr Troll and all of Cern. After years of conflict Rioga Carodoc slew Balorrech and routed the trollish forces, but at the cost of his own life. However, the Fimr came again not two centuries later augmented by Thursars and Skogetrolls, led by King Balorann the Conqueror. Our ancestors were crushed, and only the Tuadlech Forest was left alone.

We were enslaved and Balorann married into one of the few clans that bowed willingly. “Traitor Clans” followed lead and intermarried with the Fimr, their offspring called Trolsir or Fimrish. The rest of us were slaves, living in squalor and dying in the thousands while the Fimr pillaged and extorted those who remained alive. Balorann was eventually poisoned and perished, though no culprit was found. Balodann, his heir set about changing at the facade of rule in Cern. Rather than “king”, Balodann was coronated as Ríoga and his court filled with Fimrish descendants of the traitor clans. He “freed” the Cerns in name, but, compelled submission via proxy “clanns” led by Fimrish. Life remained brutal, but docile clans were allowed to return to their lands. The Fimrish interbred with our people and spread throughout the Cernlans, especially in Bal Monadh. Over time they assimilated and some Fimrish became more Cernish than not.

However, a number of failed rebellions sprung up over some 300 years of Fimrish rule, with the long resisting clans in Dalriag and Druim Godel plotting a large scale rebellion for years. Denied weapons by Bal Monadh, they smuggled weapons and forged them in secret. This alliance revolved around the clans of the Amarach, clans that trace their heritage to Cernlan's earliest days. Some of the rebellions key supporters like the Ceannard's can even trace their lines to Ríoga Caradoc. Last year, in 813, the rebellion has erupted once again. The first weeks of the conflict were bloody and tragic for Fimrish and loyalist

clanns serving Ríoga Balodann, his forces dispersed and ill prepared. The highland clans, insular and distrustful, flocked down to join the fight. The rebellion swelled with success and hope. But after a few victories over small forces left to deny them forts and crossings the impetus of the rebellion began to falter as old Clann divisions sprang up. The marshaled host of Rioga Balodann, now concentrated, forced the rebels to give ground, hounding them and pinning them against the banks of the Loch Ríogala Mòr. Forced into a pitched battle the rebel army was shattered by the superior discipline and strength of the Fimrish and Balodann's Trolsirs. Many a brave Cern died that day, at the Battle of Loch Mòr, on both sides. Capitalizing on his victory Balodann divided his army to chase down the remaining rebels, to plunder their undefended homes and bring the Cernlans to heel.

It was in this moment that a conspiracy amongst his own warlords came to fruition and the Fimrish clans turned on each other as warlord after warlord tried to overthrow Balodann and seize the throne. The rebels, and those Cern clans that held back, cautious or cunning, from committing their forces now struggled with each other to claim the few remaining regions left unspoiled by war. Open warfare has devastated the Cernlans and many flee to the Nordelans to seek a new home or allies to help them reclaim their own. No true king exists to unite the people, the clans are shattered and hope, for now, is lost.

## TRADITIONS

**Hard Workers-** Hard, honest work is considered the righteous route towards success and prosperity.

**Music Is Important-** Song and celebration is infused into much of what we do, with the last day of each week used to unwind and enjoy culture and community.

**We Enjoy Poetry-** An important form of bardic poetry is the “triad,” a series of three thoughts that are connected by a common theme and are meant to be thought provoking.

**Do Not Waste-** All parts of slaughtered animals are used in some way. If proper rites have been observed, parts of the animal containing traces of the animal's spirit may be used in ritual.

**Family is Everything-** Unless one has been declared an outcast, a family or clann member in need has every reason to expect that their kinfolk will answer their call for help.

**Family Can Be Chosen-** Blood ties are established by birth, marriage, and clann-adoption. Marriage and clann-adoptions involve blood rituals. Lineage is determined through the mother's line.

**Non-Binary Gender Roles-** Everybody serves the needs of the clann as their skills, inclinations and the Gods dictate. As such, no roles, no titles, and not even day to day language, in Cern reflects an inclination to be gender specific. (Just Druid, rather than Druid & Druidess.)

## SUPERSTITIONS

**Give Offerings-** It is common for us to keep a candle or a small food offering in a window just inside the entrance of a home as an invitation to the spirits of our ancestors.

**Felling Trees-** With the spirits, gods and Jotunar to fear, we do not cut down trees arbitrarily. We prefer to use deadfall, and if compelled to fell a living tree, prayers of regret and gratitude are a must. In many cases, a druid is called upon, to sanction the act.

**Fear The Undead-** With the exception of our own burial grounds, we are reticent to enter into graveyards, cairns, crypts, etc.; out of fear, that in offending the Ancestors of others, we could bring misfortune upon our own.

**The Number Three Is Sacred-** Three is a sacred number. Natural happenings in sets of threes, such as sightings of three ravens together, births of triplets, or plants whose berries grow in clusters of three, are considered imbued with sacred energy and can be interpreted as omens of good or ill fortune.

**Salt Has Power-** Salt is regarded as a magic barrier and is spread around the borders of ritual spaces and across thresholds of homes.

**Magic Circles-** Within ritual spaces, once a working circle has been declared/cast, those within are bade stay through the end of the ritual lest the circle is broken, and no uninvited presences may intervene.

**Spare A Drop-** We never drink spirits without “sparing a drop” for the ancestors. Every round of drinking begins with a toast, even when drinking alone.



## THE CERNISH RELIGION

**We Worship the Three-** Nearly every Cern worships The Three, Alastrine, Aengus, and Eithne. We are grateful for and love them, yet one should always fear falling out of their favor. History says this can and will happen.

**Cern is a Blessing-** Though The Three oversee all peoples, we are their chosen people and Cern itself is a blessing bestowed upon us.

**Worship Your Ancestors-** It is every Cern's duty to worship our ancestors, and sometimes we even attribute them godlike powers.

**Spirits In All Things-** We are animists who believe that spirits inhabit animals, plants, and even objects. None are sacrificed wantonly.

**We Have Many Shrines-** Shrines, holy sites, and outdoor areas of worship dot the landscape. These places of power serve as a meeting locale for Cerns, and many house druids year round. While we are tolerant of others' beliefs, we are violently protective of any threat to these places.

**Oathbreakers-** Typically oaths involve swearing before The Three, and to break an oath draws their ire and is a stain on one's character.

**Beware The Traitor Clans-** There are some, particularly among the “traitor” clans that secretly believe the Jotunar are the first children of The Three; not the Cernish.

**Beware The Invaders-** Juvite missionaries have been active in the Cernlands for the past century. A growing minority of Cerns, particularly in Call Godel, have converted to Juvite. While strict Juvite teaching prohibits pagan worship, the most successful sects in the Nordelans are tolerant of “household gods”. Tolerant of other religious beliefs, so far the Druids have not acted in response except to condemn and oppose forced conversions, by the militant Order of the Sun.

# CERNISH Backgrounds

## AVAILABLE BACKGROUNDS

Conquered over 300 years ago by the Fimr and ruled by the Fimr since then, Cern is currently in a state of rebellion. There are several backgrounds that one can choose from, whether it is being a stalwart rebel, a member of the broken clans, a refugee, or even serve the Druids of the Three.



### THE REBEL

You rose up along side Rioga Ludovic Ceannard and fought against your oppressors to reclaim the Cernlans from the Fimrish and crown a new, true Rioga. But, just as victory was within sight, the rebellion was crushed in the Battle of Loch Mor, and your kith scattered or killed. You have journeyed to the Nordelans to recover, to gather your strength and make allies in the hopes of raising your arms in defiance again someday. Your symbol is the stag silhouetted by the moon and hope is not yet lost.

#### Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ Scars, battleworn equipment and trophies of war.
- ❖ A distrust or hatred of Jotunar and Fimrish *and* or of Balodann and his warlords.
- ❖ Loyalty to the idea of a true Rioga!

**FAMOUS REBELS:** Rioga-in-Exile Ludovic Ceannard, Rhyfel Bowdyn Ceannard, Saorise "Birdcatcher" Ceannard, Cannfort Faeleen Troll-Born.

### REBEL FACTIONS

**The Amarach-** The alliance that revolved around the clans of the Amarach, or clans that trace their heritage to Cernland's earliest days was instrumental in forming the backbone of the rebellion. Some rebels, like the Ceannard's, trace their lines to Rioga Caradoc and Cern's ancient heroes. Weapon smiths and smugglers, they are prepared to take their rightful home back by force. The Amarach still have shelter in the Dalaith Dalriag but are otherwise on the run.

**Former Loyalists-** Some of Balodann's greatest war leaders turned on him at the last moment, betting on the alliance and perhaps even some aimed for the seat of power itself. Their bids crushed, they find themselves amongst the rebels, looking for either atonement or perhaps simply biding their time. This group is likely to have Fimrish in its ranks.

### THE BROKEN

Your land was despoiled and your home destroyed. Trolls, Kraalings, Crownlanders, Vaesten, Nordvik, Fimrish and Rebels all fight and struggle churning the Cernlans to blood and rubble. Forced, by hunger and desperation, you turned to banditry and robbery. You have survived by your wits and this has made you hardened. You don't dare dream of finding a home again one day.

#### Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ Be suspicious of those outside your band, others always have desires, make sure your own are served as well.
- ❖ Choose which Culture, in particular, destroyed your home or killed your family it could be nearly anyone! You have a vendetta against them and their kind that will only be overcome by a great act of kindness or generosity.
- ❖ Poor or dirty clothing and equipment, or that which is secretly stolen or won with murder and theft.

### THEY DESTROYED YOUR LIFE

Your home was burnt and your family killed or carried off by one of the following:

**Nordvik Reavers** from the West.

**Crownlander Invaders** from the South.

**Vaesten Riders** from the East, cruel and merciless.

**Troll Pillagers** from the Mountains.

**Fimrish Soldiers & Former Loyalists** from Bal Monadh.

**Rebel Warriors** from the Highlands, fueling their desperate and ultimately doomed war efforts.

**Kraaling Raiders** from the Eirwood.

## THE REFUGEE

You have fled the troubles and calamity in the Cernlans seeking a new home before it is too late. Others have fled as well, are they friends or will their presence bring the wolves of war following them? When you find your new home, will you defend it to the death or do you wander in fear of settling down only to lose it all once more? Only time will tell.



### Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ A hold or home is a high priority to you. Once founded it will be a great source of pride, comfort and worry for you.
- ❖ Those that honor the old laws of hospitality are to be respected.
- ❖ You ancestors are left behind, unfed and forgotten, in their barrows in the Cernlans. Do what you can to honor them here, far from their resting place.

## THE DRUIDS

You are of Tuadlech, apolitical and untouched by the fires of war that seem to ravage everywhere beyond its green borders. The portents have been dire and whether a lesser Druid yourself or at the behest of one of their order you seek news and signs from far away lands as to what these omens mean. You may find yourself drawn to other Cern expatriates who need the guidance of the Druids now more than ever and the needs of the day to day will quickly outweigh dark words and dreams.

### Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ Seek out the signs of the coming Dammerung for you are to act as peacekeeper.
- ❖ Guide and foster the lost Cerns who have fled their homeland.
- ❖ Participate and help with the rituals of the Three and the honoring of the Ancestors.
- ❖ The Druids of the Three often train their charges to act as governing powers, healers, alchemists, and even administrators of justice; required to oversee trials and pass judgment.

# The Delaiths

## IMPORTANT REGIONS

Historically, Cern has been divided along Truvahn lines. These truvahn regions are called dalaiths. As clann loyalties change there are minor fluctuations in the borders of dalaiths, but the names of these regions were in place, well before Ríoga Carodac ruled Cern. The following Delaiths may help decide elements about your character whatever their background.



## IMPORTANT DELAITHS

**Ath Godel (Truv Cinnbresh)** I is the home of Aughrim's Glen, site of the last stand of Cernish hero Concovair Dunnagin. Plagued by Jotunar, it is the northernmost dalaith and has always been the most dangerous. There are powerful strongholds here such as Dun Agair, Dun Haugin, and Caer Fergin.

**Bal Monadh (Truv Ragnath)** - Bal Monadh is the seat of power in Cern and has the greatest concentration of artisans. The marketplaces here are immense and the merchant houses in Cala Solais and the capitol are wealthiest. Thoroughly under the thumb of Ríoga Balodann, Bal Monadh has stayed relatively peaceful, despite the sudden rebellion out west.

**Call Godel (Truv Blannlaw)** Call Godel is the breadbasket of Cern and is home to wealthy farmers and merchants. It is home to Henge Lach Ársa, Cern's most cherished ancestor worship site. Crownlanders have taken Call Godel in the wake of Cern's instability.

**Dalriag: (Truv Daghnehi)** Dalriag is the burial ground of many Cernish heroes and birthplace of the rebellion. Though the boot of the rulers from Bal Monadh, came down heavily upon the people of Dalriag, the dalaith has never truly been subjugated.

**Druim Godel (Truv Anchrí)** Famous for Shepherding and mining, it is the heartland of highland culture. Ancestor worship is extremely important here and Bards are held in equal esteem with warriors. They are a self-reliant and independent people.

**Eirlech (Truv Denachil)** The edge of the Eirwood is the frontier of Cernish experience with Krallings. It has long been patrolled by the Ahmadin Eirwood, a force derived from the small number of clans that live along the edge of the forest. Though nominally under Bal Monadh's thumb for centuries, the people of Eirlech were generally left to their own devices. Though there is no love for Balodann in Eirlech, there is no consensus to ally the Denachil to Ludovic and enter the rebellion.

**Tuadlech (Truv Servantantrí)** is home to Tuadlech forest and the grove of The Three, Center of Druidic worship. While the north has farms and settlements, there is some commerce and travel is relatively free and open. The south however is forested, and travel is restricted, the woods patrolled and protected by the tuadlech Ahmadin. These restrictions are lifted during holidays, regardless of political affiliation, and weapons are left at hospitality houses built for pilgrims many years ago. Of note, Jotunar have never attacked Tuadlech, and it has always been peaceful.