

Who Are the Crownlanders?

Analogue of saxons, normans and frankish europe in the early middle ages and the 1st and 2nd crusades. there are also elements of teutonic in the north east and byzantine and mediterranean inspiration in the south. **This is a very difficult culture to play, as Crownlanders are villified by nearly every other game culture.**

The Crownlands are a bastion of learning, principle, law and tradition. The Crownlands are the richest lands, with the mightiest armies, expanding and conquering beneath the sun banner of their One God, Juve. The Great Work, the holy charge to unite mankind in brotherhood and servitude forged a kingdom into a vast empire. Eight hundred years of victory, eight centuries of growing strong and proud and now... the Crownlands burn under the twin lashes of famine and war. The sun, the symbol of life and hope is the very scourge that kills crops and drives menn mad. The greatest empire on Midgar toppling, it's people condemned to turn on each other in the coming dark days.

Preceding this time of doom was a time of hope, where lords and knights and commoners all journeyed North to the Nordelans to carve out a new home in a land yet green. Some came with their families, some came with swords, others with the words of the One God. They dared to dream that this would be their salvation, they fought and strove for that dream.

And so it was their salvation... For a time.

CLIMATE & LANDSCAPE

The Crownlands, geographically called the Midlans, stretch from the shores of Tyrol in the east, north to the lands of the Nordvik, west to the rocky coast lining the Bay of Bordogne, and south to the Sword Straight. The north is best described as temperate, with the south being mediterranean in climate. In the north and west, those without the protection of the Southern Mountains suffer great storms off the sea in the late days of Summer. Such storms would flood rivers and valleys, but cause soil to become renewed as the rainwaters receded. With the coming of the Dammerung, rain has become scarce. The great storms no longer bring destruction and renewal, and the land has begun to wither from the burning, endless summer. Only those lands along the great River Alda have been spared. But the rivers run lower each season and the harvests continue to grow smaller.

POLITICS & SOCIAL RANKS

The Crownlands is a vast feudal Empire with largely decentralized governance. The Midlans once were divided into dozens of petty kingdoms each ruled by its own regent. The Leovan dynasty has forced each one in turn to bend the knee or be destroyed. The petty kings were retitled Prinz or Margrave and now their descendents rule over their client kingdoms, all subservient to the current Leovan Imperator in Hochstad. Locally a feudal structure is used to ensure proper taxes are collected and levies raised to fund and defend the realm. Most civilians are serfs or villeins, bound to the land and at the mercy of the landowners. Rarely

urban councils of important Free-Cities or Abbots and Abbesses of particularly wealthy church holdings function as liege lords. After the seclusion of the Mad King's court in Hochstad, underlying tensions and regional tensions exploded across the vast domains. The Princes make war upon each other or ally to consolidate power. T knightly orders, obedient only to the Emperor (and nominally at that) now are free to raid those they swore to protect or carve out kingdoms of their own. Chaos reigns in the Crownlands.

NOBILITY

Emperour Austravinthus (the Mad), 32nd ruler of the Leovan Dynasty.

Regional Rulers- Prinz, Margrave, Comte, Baron, Lord

Dux: Noble General, temporary or permanent title.

Milites: Knight, usually also a landowner of an estate, responsible for their own arms and armor.

Erstritter: Veteran Knight with title to a fort and some land. Leader of a Lance of Milites.

COMMONER

Serjant: Common born Mann-at-arms, sworn to a noble family who armed them.

Burgher: General term for a city dweller, often implies a person of middling wealth

Freemann: A commoner who is free to travel, resettle and rent. Often a tradesmann.

Villein or Serf: A commoner who is bonded to their parcel of land, they are subjects.

HERALDRY & ARMAMENT

The Crownlands use simple heraldry with limited use of devices. Most heraldry is bands and divisions of color with, in some cases, a simple, single device. This is then displayed on shields, surcoats and pennants. Most nobly born knights wear their own colors and only display the colors of their liege on their pennant. Common soldiers and serjants will sometimes have the colors of their liege on their tunic, sleeve or shield. The Holy Orders alone have any concept of uniformity in their fighting forces.

SETTLEMENTS IN THE NORTH

Noth Thryden- with the recent conversion of Thrydegad the region of Noth Thryden has become the new frontier of Crownlander settlement. Here and in Suth Thryden the Nordvik reavers come to exact pillage and vengeance with the summer winds. There is always sword work to be had in the Nordelans.

Altegard- is a fortress on the edge of the Nordelans seized a century ago by the Order of the Sun. It is from here that the Crownlanders launch raids into the Bannerlands. The fortress has been expanded over the last forty years and now its walls and keep of stone are the mightiest bastion in the northlands. The Nordvik people that live in its shadow are subjugated, with any who resist conversion and servitude being driven from their homes.

Call Godel- Over the past century the Order of the Fist has conquered and claimed much of the Cernish lands in Call Godel, the people there divided by civil war. The lands of Call Godel are rich and bountiful, a rare prize in these harsh times. Many Cerns have embraced the worship of Juve and the Light of the Great Work here.

Staeffengard- The Order of the Fist built this fortress on a spur of a ridge overlooking the valleys of Call Godel. Employing Cernish smiths and Crownland tools has allowed the castle forges to produce some of the finest blades in the land.

Suth Thryden- was broken, conquered and divided long ago. The Northmenn that lived here once are dead or scattered. Now Suth Thryden is being transformed by the Great Work into a new, civilised home for many Houses and commoner families to resettle. Dansetr's pagan rulers were killed and now the port gives access to colonies across the Stahlfjord. Only in Hyflin does Nordvik defiance still stand.

Firingard- The Order of the Lion maintains a sprawling fort on the hills above the Wissefolc river. Each year it grows and expands, becoming more of a fortified town or city than a castle. In Firingard a growing court of Nobles has begun to exert their influence over the Order.

Wissefolc - a great river valley full of farms and new estates, the heartland of the Crownland resettlement.

Gebresaet- a small colony in the Vadfjord, the first Crownlander colony beyond the great waters of the Stahlfjord. Still undiscovered by the Northmenn, each day more boats arrive from Thrydegad and Dansetr.

Hamsaet- The people of Hamsaet have always been in the marshlands. They are a strange folk, insular and rustic, yet they already worshipped a apostatic form of Juve when first contact was made. Their long hatred of the Nordvik has made them ready allies and their stilt-villages are a safe harbor for any who wish the Northmenn harm.

RELIGION

“And from the East came the Measure, the most perfect of humanity and the highest standard mankind is held to. She who is the most beloved of Juve perished long ago, but Her dream of a united humanity under its rightful god has joined cultures, ended wars, and brought about a resurgence of human greatness.” ~Quote from “On Juvenism and Its History” by Adelbert of Yuern Juvenism originated during the excavation and looting of the old capital of the empire of the same name, its doctrine preserved in scrolls of gilded papyrus and upon tablets of the finest gold. These ancient texts speak of the Measure, a vague personage of incredible wisdom and righteousness of unknown gender, race, and place of origin, and were written by Their Disciples and devotees known as the Concur. Of the Measure, little is certain. For this reason, the Measure serves more as a touchstone within the myths of Juvenism rather than a messianic figure, a ‘measure’ of righteousness to emulate rather than an object or personage of worship. Through the Measure’s wit, strength of character, and utter devotion to Their fellow man, the ancient writings state that the entirety of the Old Empire followed the Measure before Their death, and by extension followed the Measure’s god, Juve.

Juve is also somewhat enigmatic. Some sects believe that Juve is the Measure, that the Measure became Juve after death, or that Juve is simply the original creator of humanity, and thus the most legitimate god for humans to follow. In any case, the Measure is Juve’s messenger and greatest triumph, the perfect person, and that which Juve wishes all humanity to become. Juve’s commands are thus:

TENNANTS OF JUVE

- 1. Hold no god above Juve, and no mann above the Measure.**
- 2. Speak, think, and act without malice towards your fellow mann.**
- 3. Seek to emulate the Measure and to better yourself and your community.**
- 4. Defend mann from its predators, within and without.**
- 5. Keep thine oaths.**
- 6. Do no harm unto children.**
- 7. Let ye the Great Work unite Mannkind.**

The Sects and their specific beliefs are countless. As such, every 20 years a great conclave, the Synod, is held in Hochstad to determine the new canon for the church. This ceremony begins with the burning of old holy books and ends with manuscripts being sent back with each attendee. The last Synod was ongoing when the emperor closed the city. None of the clerics within have been heard from since, and the church remains without a set holy book. Now schism, sectarianism, apostasy and heresy are rife within the lands forged by Juve's Great Work.

HOLIDAYS

Gaudeo (Spring Thaw) The yearly feast of rejoicing for another winter past and the triumph of the sun. The remaining winter stores are used in a feast and a ram is traditionally slaughtered and eaten.

Sunsolio (Summer Soltsice) The high summer feast, honoring the Sun (Juve) Enthroned in the heavens. Much merriment, songs and drinking. A Bull is traditionally slaughtered and eaten and the feast lasts until the meat is gone. Marriages are very common around Sunsolio.

Vigilia (Winter Solstice) A somber night where all observe a dawn until dawn time of silence and prayer for the victory of the Sun and a short winter.

TRADITIONS

Announcing Names- It is customary for guests to announce themselves by their full name and place of origin. Anyone not wishing to name themselves is up to no good.

Hierarchy- Though the social structure back home is in unheaven, we still cling to the old traditions. Show deference to those above and respect for those below.

Prayers- The traditional times of prayer are morning, noon and dusk.

Forgiveness for Sins- Confession is done in front of the congregation, for only exposing the truth to the Light will we be cleansed.

Duels- To challenge another to a duel is a serious matter, whoever loses or refuses was wrong. To challenge a weaker opponent is dishonorable.

SUPERSTITIONS

Sunset- If you see a sunset take a moment to give thanks to Juve for life and Creation. One day the sun will set never to rise again.

Hair & Clippings- Demons may steal your hair and nail clippings to give to sorcerers to enspell you. Always make sure to burn or bury these cast offs.

Monsters- lurk in the hills, serving the darkness of the Old World. Consort not with these Demons Made Flesh. Harm them if able.

Wedding Meal- A dish of rabbit or duck meat ensures a long and fruitful marriage.

Reflected Writing- Reading words reflected in a mirror can give you insight or drive you mad.

Prostration- Prayer is more powerful if it is done fully prostrated.

Fortune- picking a new leaf in the spring and carrying in your pocket helps grant good fortune that whole summer.

MAGIC

Juvenism has little tolerance for sorcery and witchcraft, denouncing such as meddling with Demons of the Old World or the Outer Dark. Wokacraft is often viewed with suspicion but still other priests say it is by Juve's guidance and power such things work. The only practice that has any acceptance is that of the Sigilari, an esoteric mystic art maintained by a few orders of monks and never taught to laymenn. The Sigilari know of great glyphs and sigils that, with patient mastery, can be inscribed in ink or ash that have miraculous powers. This knowledge was discovered amongst apocryphal scrolls and tablets found in vaults of the Old Empire and any similarities to the Galdr of the Northmenn must certainly be coincidental. Sigilari believe that the Holy Glyphs tie in and tap into the power of Juve bound into the fabric of this world during its creation.

Crownlander Backgrounds

THE INVADERS

Holy Orders Militant -The Holy Orders have carved out holdings on the borderlands of the empire over the past two centuries. The Orders Militant are knightly organizations, military in focus, who draw from the lesser nobility and second sons of the Midlan houses. Established and given royal writ to claim “as much territory beyond the borders of the empire as necessary to protect the peace” the Holy Orders are autonomous nations in their own right. They are nominally beholden only to the Temple, the Emperor and those nobles that fund them. The Temple or Crown has periodically authorized the Holy Orders to mount crusades of conquest and plunder into the neighboring lands, a call that many noble lords and their retainers join for spoils and glory. Now as the borders of the empire waiver under attacks and the Midlans is gripped by famine, drought and civil war the Holy Orders stand poised on the knife edge. Will they carve a new kingdom far from home or be destroyed from within as the Empire burns?

Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ **The Holy Orders take by force. It is by their might the Crownlands were kept safe, it will be by their might that a new home will be conquered for their people.**
- ❖ **The Holy Orders value piety, honor, martial skill and strength of will. Only the righteous serve.**
- ❖ **The Holy Orders obey their master without question. They serve their Order first, Juve second and the Emperor/Nobility third.**

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS

Knights are the most famous members of the order but they actually make up a small percentage of each order. Backing them up are Serjeants, Men-At-Arms, as well as a host of squires, pages, grooms, tradesmen and clerks of all types. Every member of an Order is expected to be able to fight.

KNIGHTLY ORDERS

The Order of the Hand

Fortress: Staeffengard - Call Godel, Cernlans

Crest: A Hand or Gauntlet

Colors: White, Blue, Black

The Hand controls much of Call Godel having seized vast swathes of rich farmland during the recent Clann War of the Cerns. Now many of that northern folk serve the Order and are slowly adopting its ways and religion. The Hand is famous for its strategy in battle and cunning in diplomacy.

The Order of the Sun

Fortress: Altegard - Noth Thryden, Nordelans

Crest: a Crimson Sun

Colors: White, Black, Red

The Sun was the first order to successfully lead a crusade and conquer most of the Thryden Coast two centuries ago. Rebuilding on old ruins they have reared the mighty fortress, Altegard and have bent the backs and knees of all northfolk who fall under their domain. The Sun is famous for its ferocity in battle, it's unshakeable knights and its unwavering Zeal in persecuting the Great Work.

The Order of the Lion

Fortress: Staeffengard - Suth Thryden, Nordelans

Crest: A Lion Rampant or Passant

Colors: White, Red, Gold

The Lion seized lands in Suth Thryden and Hamasaet importing large numbers of Crownlander farmers to found a province beyond the border. Their conquered lands are rich and except for a few remaining hold outs the north folk have been beaten and bent. Many young nobles are attracted to the easy glory and gold that The Lion promises. The Lion is famous for mounting expeditions to relieve other Crownland principalities or Orders who need their aid, often for concessions or a price.

The Order of the Tower

Fortress: Vestgard - River Polvo, Vaestelans

Crest: A Tower

Colors: White, Black, Gold

The Tower holds the shores of the great river Polvo with a series of forts and watchtowers, driving back every invasion from the Vaesten hordes that lurk beyond its vast dark waters. Each summer they sail the river destroying all boats they can find and each winter they cut the ice to force the desperate marauders to engage them at choice, frozen killing fields. The Tower is famous for the iron discipline of its brethren..

The Order of the Bull (Not-Playable in the Northlands)

Fortress: Solengard - Bafera, Sudenlans

Colors: White, Gold, Green

The Bull is besieged in their coastal fortress on the far side of the Sword Straight, thousands of miles from the Nordelans, in the sun-scorched Sudelans. Their sleek galleys sink every refugee ship they catch fleeing the doom of the Sudelans as the southern Crownlands cannot afford to feed even their own people. The Bull is far from the land of our Saga and the sad tale of the Orders downfall will be long, bitter and forgotten.

THE IMMIGRANTS

As famine, drought, strife and apostasy rock the Midlans many Immigrants of all social classes have left to seek out a new, safer home. The Nordelans are vast and green, there is a rush to go and claim, to stake your holding. Nobles, those of fallen Houses or with no inheritance, have come North to claim and found their own Houses and dynasties. Freemenn and Burghers head north seeking political and religious freedom or are drawn to the burgeoning towns and cities where guilds are yet to be established. Villeins flee their homes, as the fruitless toil of farming in drought is breaking the system which once bound and fed the teeming masses of the Crownlands. In the Nordelans they hear of green land with no owners, a dream, a mirage. In their multitudes they come leaving behind the old and rebuilding it anew in a strange northern land.

Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ **Desperation lurks at the edges of the mind, these lands may be the last safe haven for us.**
- ❖ **There are those who remain in the Crownlands, the resources of the north can be sent south to help kin and congregation that remain.**
- ❖ **Rebuild and reclaim your birthright in these new lands!**

WHO ARE YOU?

The Villeins- To those bound to the land, flight from said land is a grievous crime. To be an unlanded serf is to be a villein, something feared by nobility and freemenn alike. Still, in the face of such devastation, sometimes the most drastic route is the safest. Whether relishing freedom or seeking a new liege, the villeins clog the roads north filled with the spark of the most insidious of lies: hope.

The Freemenn- Cities have become targets by robber baron and corrupted knight alike. Their high walls and stocked granaries draw the desperate, and the Crownlander diaspora fleeing north have little qualms about raiding these places of plenty. To some of the residents of these cities, it is only prudent to take what they are able and to flee with the rest before loss of life and limb to the desperate mob and warlike nobles.

The Nobles- How the mighty have fallen. Who once were the lords of all they surveyed have been reduced to nobles in lineage only. War that has been absent from the Crownlands has erupted into a conflagration that consumes all and drives out those who had ruled lands for centuries. Perhaps in the north wealth and status could be regained under a liege less mad than the crazed Emperor of Hochstad?

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS

The nobles and people of the Crownlands that seek a new home. Refugees, hopeful settlers, fallen noble Houses and outlaws the Immigrants are the culture, learning and peoples of the Crownlands displaced and rebuilding.

THE OUTLANDERS

The vassal kingdoms on the borders of the Crownlands are full of a vast diversity of peoples and cultures. Though it is rare to see many of these Outlanders in the far Nordelans some few do come, brought by trade, wanderlust or fleeing in exile from their homes.

Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ **You are far from home, an outsider even among your fellow Crownlanders.**
- ❖ **Your clothing and equipment may come from faraway lands and each has a story.**
- ❖ **Do you preserve your heritage? Or do you adapt and change to this new, Northern world?**

WHO ARE YOU?

Tyros: A once powerful city state that dominated the cities of the Tyrossean Peninsula but, after a series of wars over a century ago, bent the knee and pays tribute to Hochstad. Tyros and its region has long worshipped Juve alongside smaller, local gods. The discipline of their military and the inventiveness of their engineers is well known throughout the Crownlands. (Inspiration: 6th-12th century Byzantine)

Vasserine: A freeport along the King's Sea. Vasserine's wealth has bought it a form of autonomy from Crownland politics. Vasserine is famous for its wines and oils. Court politics and familial feuds in Vasserine are vicious, even by Midlans standard. It is inspired by Sicilian and Andalusian culture. (Inspiration: 6th -12th century Mediterranean)

Sudelans: The regions of Befera and Mauretz have long paid tribute to the Crownlands after the Order of the Bull led a crusade there two centuries ago. Before the Dammerung the Sudelans were a cross-roads of vibrant culture and trade, now the terrible drought and sun-scourge is turning the Sudelans into a uninhabitable desert. Worse still, the dead no longer rest easy and the people of the Sudelans must go to extreme measures to protect themselves from the growing threat of what the Northmenn call: Afrgangr, the Again Walkers. (Inspiration: 6th-12th century North Africa and Levant)

Hamsaet: The Marshfolk of Hamsaet knew of Juve before the arrival of Crownlander missionaries, though, of course, they were mistaken about a great many things! Amongst their stilt-villages one can see old ruins, long sunken, remnants of the Old Empire. The Marshfolk hate the Northmenn passionately, having suffered their raids and predations for hundreds of years. Yet few know the ways of stealth like a Marshfolk who can melt into the reeds and trees of their home like phantoms. (Inspiration: 4th-10th century Bretons and Anglians)

THE MISSIONARIES

The Missionaries come bearing sacred word and holy book. Theirs is the sacred mission of all Juvendom, to spread the rightful faith to all of mankind. Most among the Missionaries are those ordained sacred fathers and mothers who fled with their flock. Now they are more important than ever, as most turn towards faith in times of crisis and truly it is the desperate that need faith the most. Whether they be mad prophets, compassionate laymen, or fiery preacher, their goals are the same: The End is Nigh, judgement is on the horizon. Save the souls of the heathens and tend the existing flock so that all may roam the fields of Paradise alongside the Measure. Preserve what peace can be had, and remind them that we are all menn bound together by the vision of the Great Work.

Suggested Roleplay:

- ❖ **The Great Work is all. To survive mannkind must be united under Juve and the Measure.**
- ❖ **Bring comfort and council to those that need it, show them the light and the way.**
- ❖ **Keep the faith, it is in this dark time that we will be tested.**

SUGGESTED CHARACTERS

Clerics and monks, apostates and heretics, denounced bishops and hermits. The Missionaries work to keep the faith alive and bring the Light of Juve to the barbaric peoples of the North. They often also preserve the arts of science, writing and mathematics as well as Philosophy.