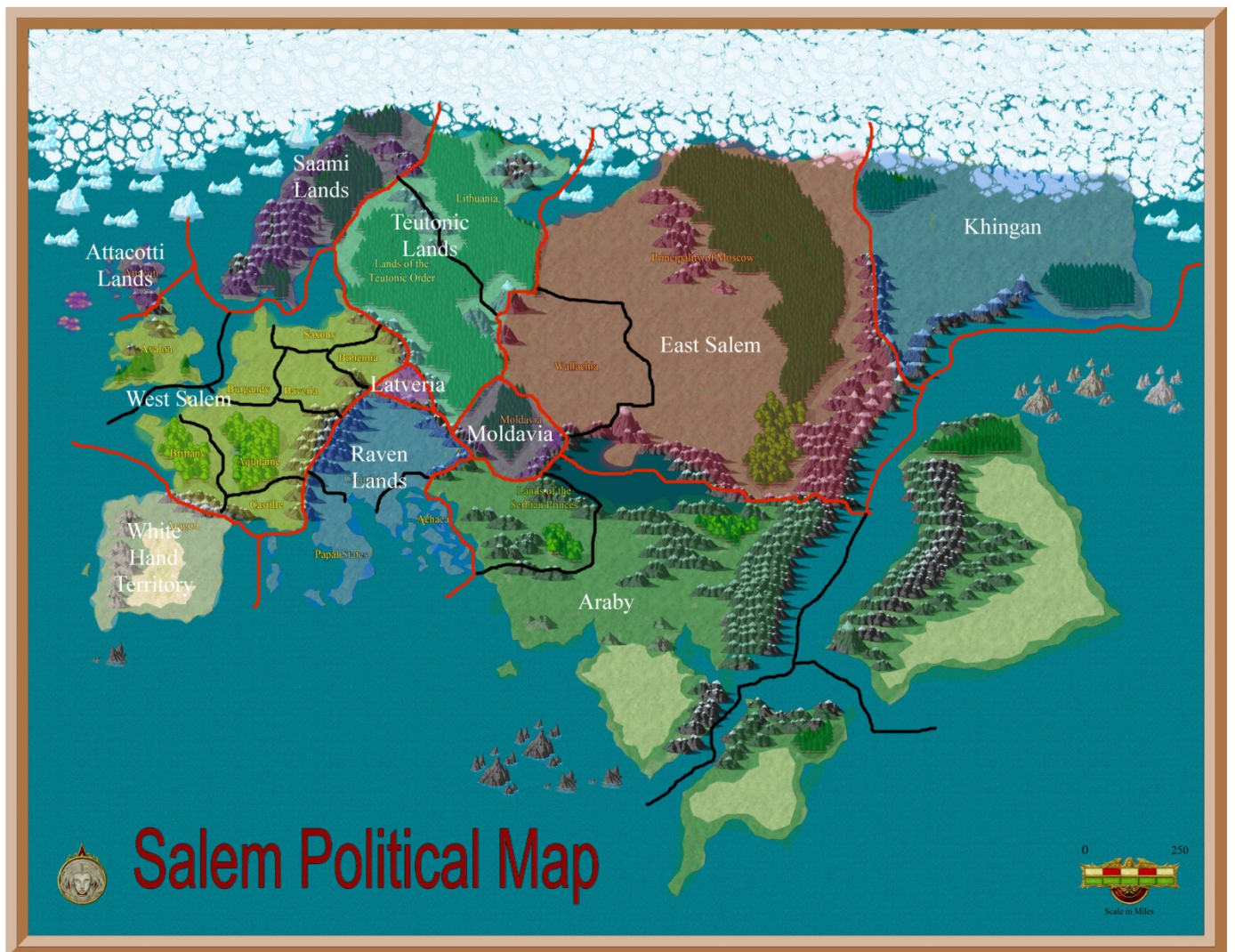


Salem



Map Valid AU23

CONTENT

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Geography, climate, bit of history, bit of politics, bit of history.

REGIONS

Individual regions their politics, location, and anything things players should know.

RACES AND CREATURES

Races playable or not playable, other common creature and a bit about them.

COSTUME

What we expect a player to wear if they build a character from a particular region.

THINGS TO NOTE.

Names of well know people and groups from the region, gods and essential snippets of information.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Salem is quickest described as a continent that mirrors in many ways 16th Century Europe. The main theme of Salem is extreme religious fervour. The church is in charge and defines what is acceptable, anyone different is burned as a witch or warlock

GEOGRAPHY

Salem has a climate and geography similar to that of Europe, with a few exceptions. The main Salem land mass has a temperate climate, with the extreme north being a frozen land and the south being a somewhat warmer having a Mediterranean climate. Technically a part of Salem, the southernmost region is Araby. The climate of Araby is very dry and warm, but not the bone dry deserts and rare oasis of Dust. Flood plains and rivers nourish and irrigate Araby, making it very fertile and prosperous region. A land bridge did exists between Avalon and the main land mass but was destroyed by floods and war.

POLITICS

To understand Salem history you need to understand a people who for their own protection have been oppressed and kept in the dark for many hundreds of years. Occasional uprisings do occur, but most strong freethinkers leave Salem seeing change as an impossible task. Most politics in Salem revolves around the machinations of the Dukes, the Emperor and the Church all lobbying for eminence. The population at large lives in a broadly feudal system where those at the top handle politics and they just try to grow enough food to survive and not draw too much attention.

HISTORY

Salem, for all its rigid politics, has changed itself more than any other region in the Shards world.

Much of Salem's history was burned and buried by its rulers as they tried to control the past and thoughts of its population.

If we go back to the last stable time we will find Salem ruled over by the religion of the one true God. Reading, writing and the telling of stories was strictly forbidden, except where licensed for approved use by members of the Church. All other lands were considered deviant, heretical places to be purged or converted if possible.

Many wars were fought over differences in dogma and interpretation of the Wissen (the Salem Church's equivalent to the Bible). In the end, however, religion was stopped on the night the Shards came together, all of the gods departed, Salem's one true God amongst them, never to be heard of to this day.

On Salem, priests continued to preach the teachings laid down in the Wissen, but their conviction was shaken, God did not answer their prayers and their sermons were hollow, empty words. So it was, that amid this massive loss of faith, a group long hidden among those in power acted and took control, the Thule Brotherhood.

In the year AU11 the Thule Brotherhood made their move, seizing the reins of power from the ailing Church. The Supreme Pontiff was murdered and many priests were killed at their hand or took their own lives as the Brotherhood declared the Wissen false and outlawed both the Church and belief in God. The Thule Brotherhood sought to achieve racial purity creating concentration camps, murdering and experimenting on all those not perfect in their eyes.

The Thules could not control the vast land and a division occurred in the west. Emperor Steiner took control and granted new liberties to his people. Other continents were no longer to be considered the enemy and so the people of Salem under his rule felt they had more freedom.

This proved essential when a race of undead-like creatures called the Forsaken rose from their graves and tried to gain control of Salem. A great battle was fought and Faerie, the Thunders, Frontier, Archipelago, Union and Dust all joined Emperor Steiner in a battle to defeat the Forsaken. A battle well won.

The Forsaken that remained, indeed many changed sides in the battle, were given lands and leave to live amongst the people of Salem.

No sooner had Salem solved this crisis, it then found itself the beach head of another invasion when Demons from another realm of reality tried to invade the land.

The Thule Brotherhood tried to support the Demons, this caused them to fracture as most were sane enough to realise the Demons intended to wipe out the world.

The Demons were defeated but at great cost, Salem paid this cost more than any other land and the following period of recovery left the land changed, the politics and borders of Salem have been re-drawn, the changes occurring so fast they are impossible to list and in the long run pointless, for the land is not yet stable and is what it is at any time.

REGIONS

WEST SALEM

West Salem, also known as the Holy Empire of the West, is ruled by an Emperor, and split into several smaller region each ruled by Duke or Duchess that follow the Emperor's rule. These are: Avalon, Castille, Aquitaine, Burgundy, Saxony, Bohemia, Bavaria, and Carinthia. The land is highly religious but not as fanatical as some. It will tolerate foreigners, even fey and those that use magic, but they are not popular and magic is best done quietly out of sight.

Avalon is worthy of note: once connected to the main continent by a land bridge it is now home of many of the Forsaken and the Duchess of Avalon is the Forsakens Queen. The main city in Avalon is Carnellium and at its centre on the banks of its main river is the core portal for Salem. This grants Carnellium an importance in Salem it may have struggled to realise otherwise.

West Salem is also the home of the Supreme Pontiff who holds great power over all those that follow the teachings of Wissen (Salems equivalent of the Bible). The Inquisition are nominally based here but something of a schism in their ranks has opened up and the more hard-line elements of their ranks have migrated to the Teutonic Lands.

Since AU19 the Baronies of Bohemia and Bavaria have lost their Dukes, Duchesses and whole family lines in the war and the claims on these are now in dispute.

Aragon was claimed by the White Hand while everyone was fighting demons, so it's leaders are in exile.

ARAGON

The Barony of Aragon once part of West Salem has been taken over by White hand and the dead guard its borders.

The White Hand have consolidated their power and are shaping their plans for the future.

EAST SALEM

East Salem was once vast but has been whittled away by war, disaster and treaty, it is still a large area but not as dominant as it once was.

It is ruled by the Military, under the autocratic command of the Commissioner General.

People are oppressed and free thought and free movement is not allowed, they follow the teaching of the Wissen to the letter, reading books is only allowed under licence where it is for the good of the nation.

Everyone is conscripted into the military for three years as they reach maturity, some remain, but most are assigned an occupation and whether you like it or not you do it or you get flogged, jailed or worse.

Like West Salem it will nominally tolerate foreigners, even fey and those that use magic, but they are not popular and magic is best done quietly out of sight. Any foreigner however is considered probably a spy or up to no good so may find themselves followed, interrogated and mostly excluded.

TEUTONIC LANDS

The Teutonic Lands covers much of the far north a great area once called the black forest, the people follow the rule of the Teutonic Knights with the Grand Master at the head. The Religious police at their side are lead by the Magistar who in turn controls the Military Inquisition lead by the Inquisitor General. The population have taken on the old ways, all books are burned bar the copies of the Wissen the religious text, reading anything else is an offence that receives a severe punishment.

The Laws of the Church are enforced with an iron hand by the Inquisition Office. Transgressors should expect no clemency, with sinners hunted down, tortured and publicly hung or burnt as a deterrent to others.

Any one that looks different, a foreigner, follows a different religion, should tread very carefully and remain hidden

The most important laws are the commandments of the Church which are

- *Worship no god but me.*
- *Do not bow down to any idol nor worship it.*
- *Do not use my name for evil purposes.*
- *Observe Mittwoch and keep it holy*
- *Respect your Father and Mother.*
- *Do not commit murder.*
- *Do not commit adultery.*
- *Do not steal.*
- *Do not accuse anyone falsely.*
- *Do not desire another man's belongings.*

ARABY

To the far south east is Araby a land that follows the teachings of the Wissen in a very different way to West.

The people of Araby take a quite liberal approach to the one true god and have no laws banning magic or reading, they believe god placed these tools in their hands for the benefit of all and they should be used.

A nation hungry for knowledge, a place which celebrates its libraries likes cathedrals in the west, books are prized and given attention. However cut off for many centuries by armies of Salem's they lack great swathes of knowledge and have developed their own ways of thinking.

One of the greatest wonders in Araby is the way they treat elementals, some elementals even follow the religion of the One True God. Elementals power much of their technology and do so willingly under strict contractual agreements as to their treatment and reward. Such is the skill of Araby's Theurgical engineers that they have been able to create idols that act like storage vessels for the faith of their congregation and keep evil at bay.

The land of Araby is ruled by many Princes and Princesses, no single noble seems to be in overall charge this creates a dysfunctional chaos as each Prince or Princess believe their way is correct for the future of the land. This leaves the peoples and advisers below running around trying to make the chaos work and ensure no one Prince or Princess gets left out.

Since the Serbian Princes joined their lands into the Arabic nation the chaos has become much worse and only time will tell if this book loving nation will find a Prince strong enough to lead them or if they will be forever ungoverned directionless mess where laws can change by the hours or by whichever Prince is present at the time.

ATTACOTTI

The Attacotti are a mysterious tribe that live in the north of Avalon, they do not follow any God, they are said to be cannibals and heathens.

They guards their lands well for they have never been conquered

Players cannot come from the Attacotti Lands

LATVERIA

In the midst of Salem this lies a land called Latveria, ruled by man called Victor Von Dumas, it is often an island in whatever storm besets Salem, although it's borders are normally shut.

Heavily protected by its geography, its people and by Lord Von Dumas himself, Latveria remains a free thinking oasis for religion and those considered different.

MOLDAVIA

Moldavia has been claimed by werewolves who have long sided with humans against vampires and fought alongside them against the demons. The werewolves keep to themselves but at the time of full moons no-one should venture out and think themselves safe.

Players can come from Moldavia but cannot play Werewolves..

RAVEN LANDS

The Ravens started the Thule Brotherhood who came to power in AU11 taking over most of former Eastern Salem and attempting to conquer the rest. They attempted to destroy religion, locking up or hanging priests. They made sure anyone they considered impure was hunted down, put in concentration camps, experimented on and eventually killed. They inspired a generation of fanatical followers called the youth league and their leader, Luca Raven, invented a way of powering machines with magical rituals.

All this came to end mainly when the Raven family was discovered to be a race of Gargoyles that supported the Demon invasion. They were attacked in a cunning war by the West, unfortunately during this war most of the Thules human followers defected, scattered and joined or formed other groups.

The Ravens still exist and still control some of Carinthia and all the Papal states. Since AU19 the Ravens have consolidated and are stronger than before the demon war. This is due to the Demons leaving them alone so as other parts of Salem were destroyed they gained power. Humans found themselves safe in the Raven lands and gladly accepted the Ravens as their leaders once again.

SAAMI LANDS

To the very North West of the Salem continent lies the Saami lands. Cut off from the rest of Salem by dense forests (filled some say with the webs of giant spiders and gaseous swamps), razor sharp mountains and unclimbable coastal cliffs. Rumours have it that these isolated lands are populated by evil witches who curse all who reach its borders and eight foot tall white haired apes that could tear a man in half. Or so the Salemite rulers would have us believe since nobody travels there, but perhaps they are right?

Players cannot come from the Saami Lands

KHINGHAN

The Khingan or Khinghan are nomadic herders (a sort of a Cossack/Hun/Mongol) in the far north-east, well beyond the western mountains of eastern Salem.

They live in small family groups following their herds of giant elk and reindeer. They travel the steppe between the hidden farm shrines of the Hind where they gift some of their herd to the shrine guardians who pass on the bounty of the Hind in the form of fruit and vegetables. The huntsman have no shrines but during each hunt the heart of the prey is eaten raw in the Hind's honour.

Khingan family groups are quite small, 2 or 3 families who are usually closely related, but in times of danger they will meet up with their extended family calling the clan together to face the threat. Larger threats see the gathering of the horde which then sweeps across the steppe leaving death and destruction behind it.

They have 3 main tribes or clans the Irtusk clan is the biggest rich in food and horses, the Tomsk clan they guard against Salem border, they are raiders and the finally the Siberian clan they are very tough, dress for extreme cold, ride reindeer and have access to rich minerals. These are not the only clans.

The one thing to note about the Khingan is they never lie, its against their religion rather than lie they will say nothing and walk away, players should always choose this flaw if they play Khingan,

In conversation the Khingan will generally provide one or two word answers, they are blunt, say what they mean and even what they think in a way that may seem rude to outsiders, they don't do small talk.

ROMA

(ROMA ARE INCLUDED HERE HOWEVER THEY ARE NOT A REGION BUT A GROUP OF PEOPLE)

The Roma are a nomadic people that travel the lands of Salem. Once they had a land they called home called Kintala but this was lost to them when the worlds rejoined as it was in the Netherworld.

The Roma travel as families only meeting up for the odd funeral or arranged marriages.

Death in Roma circle is considered impure and the deceased goods and immediate family seen as for a period of time impure after death, any goods that are not buried with deceased are then handed out to poor (or sold for modest sums, so they claim).

Marriages are always arranged many years in advance, the oldest women in each many family get together when large Rama gatherings take place and ensure the families don't interbreed. Any relationships outside the Roma community is strictly forbidden.

The Roma follow the one true god like most of Salem, but their customs and traditions are wildly at variance with the established church. They are a superstitious community, they love their curses and often bind them with strong magic to ensure they come true.

Making their way moving goods, doing odd jobs, telling fortune, they never stay long in one place, never stay long enough to make friends outside their community and so are not trusted by those that do not understand their ways.

They have been imprisoned in camps by Thules and persecuted by the Pope for their interpretation of Wissen, but they survive.

RACES/CREATURES

Below is bit of information on the creatures and races of Salem, it is by no means complete or accurate.

Playable Races: players who choose to play a characters with Salem origin can pick from these races,, Human, Forsaken. Any other race listed are for Salem background information.

HUMANS

Humans make up 95% of population of Salem.

FORSAKEN

Forsaken are one of the Servitor races, humans can become them through their bloodlines. The forsaken at first glance resemble humans other than they are pale or white, they have a very slow heartbeat and can live a very long time.

Those that have lived a long time however, tend to have changed and can resemble ghouls where their skins has rotted or wraiths where they exist more in the spirit realm than the real world. Players won't be changed in this way.

In many ways Forsaken resemble undead, but they are not: they still have souls; they are not affected by faith or things that would repel undead; they can die from blood loss; they can suffocate.

Players can choose to start with a Forsaken bloodline if they are from Salem, if they do all their stats are the same as human, but they appear pale and white. They were born human, forsaken do not give birth. A Forsaken player will have far less blood than normal human and take much longer to die from blood loss.

Forsaken mainly live in Avalon, but communities of them also exist in Saxony

WEREWOLVES

Players cannot choose to be werewolves.

Werewolves were created to fight vampires, the werewolves of Salem live in Moldavia and much about them can be found there.

Many werewolves can change from Human to werewolf and back at will, however on the night of the full moon and the nights either side they change without control. In werewolf form werewolves lose much of their intelligence and gain an aggression which makes them very dangerous to know peaking at the full of the moon in a sometimes totally uncontrolled aggression.

Werewolves have natural weaponry, incredible strength and regenerative powers, good night vision and doglike sense of smell, they are vulnerable to silver and wolfsbane.

VAMPIRES

Players cannot play vampires.

Vampires are undead; soulless; they are vulnerable to fire and sunlight; have increased vulnerability to Blood Oak; they must feed on blood.

Vampires, however, have many skills. The older they are, the more they have and the more they can use them. They are strong, can change form to bat or wolves, turn to mist, produce glamour's that make them appear as anything they wish or not there at all, they can dominate even the strongest minds, move faster than the eye, heal almost instantly any wound not caused by fire or blessed weapons.

Vampires can create more vampires by their infectious bite should they choose to feed and not kill, it will take more than one bite however, so get your bites treated.

Vampires hide themselves in Salem, they have been wiped out twice and so are very careful, and only the oldest possess all the skills we have listed.

Vampires are vulnerable to sunlight so in the day they are often hidden or guarded by Vampire Ghouls. Vampire Ghouls are humans linked and marked by their vampire masters, they are often imbued by their master with extra abilities, but they are and remain human.

RAKKEN

Players cannot play Rakken in Salem (note this race is playable with an Archipelago background)

Rakken are one of the Servitor races, they are rat like humanoids that mainly live in the ruins of Ravensburg where they mine Void Stone. They are often culled but they breed as quickly as they are killed.

Rakken carry disease and have poisonous claws.

They hunt in packs if you see one, then expect a hundred.

WHITE HAND NECROMANCERS AND OTHER UNDEAD

Players cannot play White Hand Necromancers.

Salem is land where the dead are best burned rather than buried, because where there are White Hand necromancers and buried corpses you have vast armies of things ready to be raised from the dead.

White Hand Necromancers are undead magic users who still have a soul, they hide or protect their soul in a phylactery, which means even if the bodies is totally destroyed it can still be reformed by magic. To kill a White hand necromancer you must find and destroy its phylactery.

White Hand necromancers are vulnerable to blessed items and spells that affect the undead.

White Hand necromancers' are capable of raising and animating large groups of Zombies and Skeletons. They are also capable of raising other more deadly undead such as Ghosts, the rest you will have to find out in play.

ELEMENTALS

While the rest of Salem denies the existence of elemental the land of Araby still has a population of Elementals that work with them.

Elementals are creatures that form parts of the 4 elements: Earth, Air, Water and Fire. These are part of the natural make-up of all the rains, winds, fires and rocks of the land. They vary from the tiny puddle, pebble or spark to vast clouds, rivers or bonfires. They have one purpose: to be what they are. They are semi intelligent, although the biggest of them may be communicated with if you have the skill. Full elementals cannot are not a playable race.

They should not to be confused with human elementals or half elementals players can chose as their racial Heritage.

Note this race is an elemental heritage but cannot be picked with Salem background

GARGOYLES

Gargoyles are an ancient race hidden among the people, when they die they can be resurrected by fire.

Players cannot play Gargoyles.

CRYNOS

The Crynos can only be found the Saami Lands, they are large Ape like creatures that have a freezing touch. Players cannot play Cynos.

DOOMBOTS

Doombots or Dumas Bots are lightening powered warriors created by Von Dumas, extremely capable and dangerous. Players cannot play Doombots.

NECRONAUGHTS

Necronaughts are a poor copy of Doombots but still very dangerous, they are piloted by the soul of Forsaken. None have been seen since the death of the Witch King. Players cannot play Necronaughts.

COSTUME

COSTUME OF THE SALEM

(excluding Araby)

Anyone from main Salem areas should dress in black, dark grey or other drab monochrome colours, with white or black shirts and undergarments, occasional purples and other colours such as red and purple are used in small amounts mainly to denote ranks.

Costume style and cut should mainly be chosen from the time of Puritans, or English Civil War but less colour, however it can be anything from early medieval through to early 18th century European so long as it includes plenty of black.

See examples below



TEUTONIC KNIGHTS AND THE INQUISITION wear black tabards with white Maltese cross

The inquisition can usually be picked out by the extra splash of red



THE THULE BROTHERHOOD wear blue doublets or blue armbands



WEST SALEM AND THE BARONIES

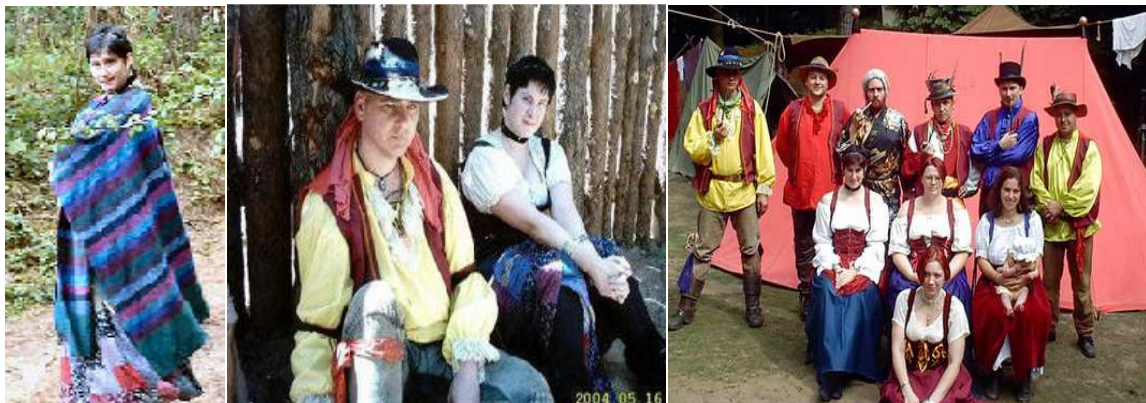
The Baronies military will identify themselves with coloured tabards bearing their coat of arms, use of colour is little more seen in the West salem and the Dukes and Duchesss will dress for show.



COSTUME OF THE ROMA

Roma costume is bright tops and waistcoats for men with hats including lots of feathers and decorations, for women a low cut blouse, colourful skirt with scarf tied around the head. They also carry and display many lucky charms.

Examples below.



COSTUME OF THE ARABY

(including the Lands of Serbian Princes)

Araby is an area to far southeast of Salem and people from this region dress in the style of tales of Arabian nights, wearing big baggy trousers, waistcoats, turban style headdresses. Costumes of arab countries from the medieval era. Avoid fez's as they are significant to other regions. Include plenty of bright colours and sparkly accessories.

See examples below



COSTUME OF THE KHINGAN

The Khingan dress in the style of the Hun with bit of cossack and mongol, they wear fur or fur trimmed leather clothing and headgear, even their armour is fur trimmed.

Predominant colours are browns and black.



THINGS TO NOTE.

NOTEWORTHY PEOPLE

- **Emperor Steiner** - Ruler of Western Salem
- **Victor Von Dumas** - Ruler of Latveria and master of technology
- **Luca Raven** - Leader of the Thule Brotherhood
- **Albrekt Von Salzer** - Grand Master of the Teutonic Order
- **Cardinal Vincenti** - Supreme Pontiff
- **Queen Morticia** - Leader of Free Forsaken and Duchess of Avalon
- **Saberhagens** - A vampire, one of the 13 that has threatened Salem
- **Prince Iosef** - Envoy of Araby
- **Prince Ademetus** - Prince of Serbia
- **Etzel Finkel** - Frontline man in the Beggars Roost
- **The Dukes and Duchesses** of the west each rules a province/Barony each has their own style.
- **Commissioner General Melenkov** - Leader of East Salem

GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

(not previously mentioned in regional backgrounds)

- **Brethren of Minuo** - A group of experimental scientists, known to be working with multiple sources.
- **Beggars Roost** - A organisation that looks after the persecuted in Salem
- **Black Sails** - A Navy that works for Thule Brotherhood
- **Cabal** - The Cabal is crime syndicate that includes, the Triads of Archipelago, The Knights of Discord & Misrule, The Crimson Brotherhood and the Sable Veil among others. In Salem they are just the Cabal.
- **Youth League** - The fanatical core of the Thule Forces
- **Salem 31st Occult Division** - A group of Thules who specialise in the supernatural.

GODS

The One True God

By far the most predominant religion followed by all but the Khingan and Sammi

People believe in 'The One True God' whether they are from West Salem, Latveria or even Araby, they do however often follow and interpret the 'The One True God' wishes in many different ways.

The Huntsman and the White Hind

From what is known the White Hind is the lady of the hearth and herd while the huntsman is her husband and lord of the hunt and warfare.

The Great Spider

A little known god followed by some cults in the very north and coldest parts of Salem. Players cannot pick this as their religion but may be aware of it.

NOTES

It is important to know your continent of origin and many of its features, since certain in game effects may target people from certain regions. If you are not sure of origin because of your back story then inform a ref and one will be allocated.

The colour of Salem is **White**, white signifies Magic, Air and Imbuing