

THE IMPERIAL CALENDAR

There are many different calendars used in the Old World. Dwarfs and Elves each have their own system, but the Imperial Calendar is the standard in the Empire. It counts the years from the coronation of the Sigmar, who was able to unite the Human tribes after victory in the Battle of Blackfire Pass. *WFRP* assumes a current year of I.C. 2522, though individual GMs may choose to set their campaigns in different time periods. You may decide, for instance, that a campaign set during the Age of Three Emperors is so rife with possibilities that you have to try it. Since the basics of Imperial society have changed little over time, it's possible to set a campaign in nearly any period of the Empire's history and still be able to use most of the information in this book.

THE MOOT

Straddling the River Aver between Stirland and Averland is Mootland, or more commonly just the Moot, which is the land of the Halflings. Though its inhabitants are quite content with their lives of gluttony and constant procreation, and have little to do with the outside world if they can, Mootland is nominally part of the Empire and the elected Elder has a vote in Imperial Elections and a voice at the court of the Emperor.

Halflings breed quickly. Their over-extended families live in sprawling tunnel complexes and tottering multi-storey houses if they're too poor to afford a nice hole. Given that Halflings are natural hoarders, whole wings of Halfling-holes are used to store old piles of pointless knick-knacks and mementoes in sprawling unclean chambers. There is no concept in the Halfling mind for rubbish tip—even food scraps, such as they are, are fed to the dogs.

The Moot is blessed with beautiful scenery and fertile ground. This means that on first glance it is a land of rolling hills and fields, and pastoral peace prevails. The Moot is not immune to the outside world, however, and over the years its inhabitants have had to deal with the Undead threat of Sylvania and rampaging tribes of Orcs and Goblins from the World's Edge Mountains.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Binding together all of these disparate places is the Imperial electoral system. In the two and a half thousand years since Sigmar departed and the chieftains began choosing one from amongst their number to lead, the system has changed dramatically and yet has remained essentially the same. It has become common practice that the Emperor's heir will inherit the throne upon his death, unless another Count contests the accession. If this is the case, then the Electors will gather and cast their votes. An election will also be called if there is no clear heir to the title, and on two occasions has been convened to indict the current Emperor and oust him from power, as occurred when Dieter IV was bought off by the rulers of Marienburg.

Of course, life is never so simple. As well as the Elector Counts, of which there are now only ten, various other powerful positions have been granted the privilege of Elector over the centuries. These Electors cannot be Emperor, for votes can only be cast in favour of one of the Counts, but their votes can be crucial in a tightly contested election. Currently there are five additional Electors allowed to vote, though in the past there have been as many as eight and as few as one. At the moment three of these positions are held by the Grand Theogonist and two Arch-Lectors of the Church of Sigmar, while Ar-Ulric the head of the Cult of Ulric fills another, and the fifth is claimed by the Elder of Mootland.

It is the block vote of the Sigmar contingent that has held the throne in Reikland in recent times, leading to many claims that the cult of Sigmar has a disproportionate amount of power; claims usually made

by Ar-Ulric, who will traditionally cast his vote for the Count of Middenland, should he be a contender at the election. The Elder of the Moot is usually quite happy to vote for the heir of the previous Emperor, should there be one. However, it was the controversial vote of Elder Gumble Sparrowthew that hurled the Empire into nine years of anarchy following the death of Boris Goldgather in 1115. The crisis only ended with the election of Emperor Mandred in 1124.

If there is a strong contender, then Imperial Elections can be swift, simple affairs. However, more often than not, there is no one claimant that stands out as the best choice, and it is then that the internal wrangling and skulduggery begins. Bribery, threats and even open warfare can result from such situations.

It was just this type of collapse that began the decline of the Empire in 1152, when Emperor Mandred was slain. Following the failure of the Electors to agree on a new Emperor, war erupted between Stirland and Talabecland and after a century of bloodletting the Otilia declared herself Empress. For the next few hundred years the elections continued to take place without the participation of Talabecland, and so there were two Emperors.

The situation worsened when, in 1547, the Count of Middenheim claimed the throne for himself, claiming a true line of descent from Emperor Mandred. Imperial elections were all but abandoned during this period, known as the time of Three Emperors. Imperial elections were stopped completely when the Grand Theogonist of Sigmar refused to recognise the accession of Magritta of Marienburg on account of the fact that she was only a child.

For the next eight hundred years the Empire was beset by strife as the states warred with each other both with politics and armies, the weaker states often caught between the power plays of the stronger contenders. It was during this time of dissent that the Empire suffered greatly at the hands of its enemies, most notably the invasion of Gorbad Ironclaw, and the Vampire Wars against the von Carsteins of Sylvania.

When a massive Chaos incursion destroyed the Kislevite city of Prag and besieged the city of Kislev, it seemed as if the Empire was doomed by its own division. However, Magnus of Nuln rose to prominence and managed to quell the open warfare and bring the Counts together. Despite being a devout Sigmarite, to the extent that he is known to history as Magnus the Pious, he also managed to garner the support of Ar-Ulric and Middenheim, and with an army from across the Empire relieved the siege of Kislev and drove the Northmen and their bestial and Daemonic allies back to the Chaos Wastes.

Magnus was elected as Emperor, and the Empire began to rebuild anew. The legacy of Magnus can be seen in Altdorf, where the Colleges of Magic were founded, and in Nuln, where Magnus held court. Those who have chosen Ulric as their patron oft claim that they were betrayed by Magnus following his appointment of the Grand Theogonist and two Arch-Lectors as Electors, and this has

been a source of contention between the cults of Sigmar and Ulric ever since.

The Franz family, Princes of the Reik, have been Emperors since Wilhelm II was elected to the throne after Dieter the IV was deposed for the secession of Marienburg. It is a position they have held strongly for the last century and the reign of Karl Franz is said by many to have been profitable not only for the ancient nobility but also the merchant classes. It is expected that when the current Emperor eventually dies his son will claim the title without opposition.

By the terms of the ancient laws of the Empire, the Emperor can call upon the other Electors to supply troops for his campaigns and must

— INSIDIOUS THREATS —

The world is a dangerous place, and the Empire is no different. Despite the power of its armies, the patrols of the river and road wardens and the constant prosecution of their duties by the Witch Hunters, the Empire is constantly beset by human and inhuman foes.

Though the Empire is threatened on occasion by large invasions of Northmen, Orcs and other enemies, it is the constant, insidious perils that dwell in the hearts of its cities and the depths of its forests that plague the minds of men in power. Beneath the veneer of civilisation, sinister cults work to undermine the power of the Empire, while warbands of Orcs, Beastmen and Chaos followers lurk in the wilderness, ever ready to raid and pillage the farms, villages and towns of the Empire. Beneath the streets of the towns and in hidden caves and tunnels, the vile Skaven plot and scheme to overthrow those that dwell in the Over-Empire.

THE DARK POWER OF CHAOS

The threat of Chaos is the greatest, for it comes in many forms. Of all the mortal races, mankind has proven to be the most susceptible to the lures of the Dark Gods and the most eager to tread the path towards damnation. Man brings all his short-lived vigour and lust for dominion and immortality to the service of Chaos. That service brings power to the Gods of Chaos, and in return they corrupt and twist their followers. Mankind hungers for change and this drive has allowed man to spread across the globe and build great nations, and yet this toil is ultimately in vain. Although few men are aware of this, it is this drive and ambition that feeds and makes the Gods of Chaos grow bloated with power.

Since the fall of the legendary Old Ones many millennia in the past, Chaos has constantly endeavoured to destroy the mortal world, and bring about an eternal Realm of Chaos. Lives unnumbered have been lost, civilisations crushed and entire peoples destroyed in their resistance to the Dark Gods. When the gates of the north spew forth Chaos in great waves, dark armoured warriors and savage barbarians descend from the north with Daemonic warbands following in their wake. Horrific creatures, created by the mutating substance of Chaos, emerge from the shadowy forests and the dark places beneath the mountains to slay and burn.

Each time the armies of Chaos have been turned back, but every war leaves the Empire lessened, more weakened, and more rife with doubt. The Dark Gods are eternal, so they wait to send their armies, sensing and sowing discord amongst the people of the Empire the better to divide and conquer. It may take months, years, or centuries before the hosts of Chaos come again. But what does time mean to Gods who are immortal and supernal, who will see the death of the world and the realms of man reduced to dust?

send him a portion of the taxes they raise to support the Imperial institutions that have grown up over the centuries. In return, the Emperor is beholden to send reinforcements in times of war or provide relief and aid when famine or plague strikes. In addition, states may sign their own pacts for mutual protection. In fact, many such treaties exist and some are even adhered to. In the troubling times that have recently beset the Empire, it is proof of Karl Franz's statesmanship that despite the often conflicting interests of the other Electors he has managed to wield his power effectively to combat the threats of Chaos and religious division which seem to grow with every passing month.

BEASTMEN

It is not just the raids and onslaughts of the men of the north that imperil the Empire, for in the heart of the deep forests, the Beastmen gather in ever-greater numbers. Beastmen are the Children of Chaos itself, and their mutated forms and twisted minds are in the service of Chaos from birth. Beastmen are not natural creatures: they first came into existence when the gateway of the Old Ones collapsed, showering the world with mutating warpstone dust. It worked a dreadful change on many of the ancestors of humans and the animals of the world, causing severe mutations. Beastmen are the spawn of this horrid legacy, neither man nor beast, but a depraved hybrid of both.

Their numbers can only be guessed at, but they are certainly the most widespread of all the creatures of Chaos. Those scholars prone to dark thoughts and forbidden research fear that Beastmen are more numerous than even mankind. Living in roaming warherds, Beastmen infest the forests and the wastelands of the Empire and beyond, being most numerous in the Drakwald and the Forests of Shadows. They pose an unavoidable threat to the travellers on forest roads and to

