



HEART OF THE EMPIRE

Altdorf, as befits the capital of the largest realm of the Old World, is a great city. Straddling the Reik and linking the banks and dozens of small islands with hundreds of bridges, it draws much of the trade of the Empire through its markets. The Storm of Chaos left it largely untouched, so its splendours still awe those coming from the country, particularly from regions left devastated. Natives will happily tell outsiders of their city's glories and complain bitterly amongst themselves about its inconveniences.

The Imperial Palace, the Temple of Sigmar, and the Colleges of Magic are only the most important institutions found in Altdorf. Opera, theatre, soirees, markets, shops, taverns, pit fights, street brawls—Altdorf has entertainment suited to all tastes and all pockets. As the late Siegfried Johanson, noted rake-about-town, said “When one is tired of Altdorf, one is tired of life.”

This book includes an overview map of the city but not a street-level maps; the city is far too large, and in a few places the magic of the Colleges makes any map unreliable. Instead, this section provides material you can use to make the players feel as though they are in Altdorf along with their characters.

THE HISTORY OF ALTDORF

Altdorf began its life as a small Unberogen settlement on an islet in the river Reik. Known as Reikdorf (the city of the river), it offered good fishing, fertile farmland, and an excellent defensive position. Over time, this tribal capitol began to grow, spilling out of its islet home to cover the nearby western shore and many other small islands in the Reik. By the time Sigmar journeyed into the east, Reikdorf claimed to be the largest settlement in all the lands of men. Bridges were built, and the basic structure of the city formed.

As Sigmar's Empire spread, trade began to blossom. Farmland was claimed from the woods and the Goblin tribes. Many small settlements appeared across the Reikland, and the prosperity of the area began to grow. Most of the spare food from these farms found its way to Reikdorf, where it was shipped upriver for fine profits. Reikland wool, leather, and timber also moved across tribal borders. As this trade matured, attracting money and craftsmen to the settlement, Reikdorf began to specialise in forging, cloth, and fine ales.

WAR AND FORTIFICATION

From 300 IC onwards, the character of Reikdorf changed, as the prosperity of the surrounding lands began to wane. Long years of Goblin wars, internal strife, poor harvest, and social decline took their toll on the rich town. The sturdy stone temple of Sigmar was soon joined by defensive walls, as Reikdorf learned to fend off hard times.

The strong walls attracted many folk to the town, and by 500 IC Reikdorf had more than quadrupled in size. The ruling powers attempted to persuade the people to build in stone, rather than flammable wood, but this directive was cheerfully ignored. Despite all his efforts, Emperor Sigismund “The Conqueror” could not break the Reikdorf instinct to do things on the cheap. The Warrior Emperor formally named the place Altdorf (the old city) and ordered the place fortified in stone to better defend against the local warlords and bandit tribes. He died before his vision could be completed, and in 557 IC his son, Siefried “The Lawgiver”, moved to Nuln in disgust. The young Emperor declared, “The reeking streets of Altdorf can go

to Morr!” Hereafter, the city was known as The Great Reek.

From 600 IC onwards, the Cult of Sigmar began to root itself deeply in the bedrock of Altdorf society. The constant strife and battling of local warlords aided the growth of the cult, whilst growth of commerce repaired Altdorf's fortunes. Money flowed into the cult's coffers, and by 990 IC, the Grand Theoginist convinced Emperor Ludwig the Fat to grant the Sigmarites an electoral vote. Not content with this, the cult threw a lavish series of banquets and successfully lured the ruler's court to an Altdorf palace. Ten years later, the Cathedral of Sigmar was completed, exactly 1000 years after the Battle of Black Fire Pass. The Dwarf stonemasons who laboured on the buildings were granted freedom of the city and settled down to create what later became the Dwarf quarter. Religious feeling flowered, and the first great illuminated tomes of *The Life of Sigmar* were created.

PLAGUE AND PUNISHMENT

By Boris Goldgather's reign, Altdorf was a rich mixture of races, religions, craftsmen, merchants, nobles, and peasants. The Great Reek was famous for its thieves and riches—the Emperor being the biggest crook of them all. His heavy taxes and free-spending ways resulted in a season of riots and scandals. Several Sigmarite priests were exposed in public alongside their mistresses and harems, causing outrage, shock, and further riots. Martial law was imposed, but only the disastrous Black Plague of 1111 finally beat out the flames of insurgency.

The city folk cheered Goldgather's death in 1115 and attempted to stem the tide of anarchy that followed. This attempt failed, and as the merchants feared, trade took a turn for the worse. Matters became dire with the accession of Emperor Mandred Ratslayer in 1124 IC. The new Emperor set up his palace in Middenheim, and the focus of trade moved away from Altdorf. Chaos ensued as the luxury trade collapsed, debts went unpaid, and the nobility fled like rats from a sinking ship.