

are conducted fairly in accordance with the law. The guild elects new council members every four years. In this election, the guild also selects the director of the council, who serves on the Sovereign's Council.

THE RHYDAN COUNCIL

Rhydan are recognized as citizens of Aldis and some choose to involve themselves in the affairs of the Sovereignty. Rhy-cats and rhy-horses make up the majority of this number. Communicating psychically, they discuss issues relating to the Sovereignty and the roles rhydan should take. Although humans call this “the Rhydan Council,” membership is not official and rarely together physically. Most never even come within a day's journey of the capital, and—except for a few rhy-bonded—non-rhydan rarely meet them. The only way in which the so-called council acts like the Noble or Guild Councils is by appointing a single representative to serve on the Sovereign's Council.

THE SOVEREIGN'S COUNCIL

The three members of the Sovereign's Council join the sovereign in administering the Sovereignty. Each councilor has a single vote, while the sovereign's carries the weight of two. This means the sovereign requires only a single ally to pass a resolution, while all three council representatives must vote unanimously to overrule the sovereign. Owing to custom and her desire for harmony (as well as her love of a vigorous debate), Queen Jaellin attempts to pass all resolutions by consensus, or with no more than one dissenting vote.

THE SOVEREIGN'S FINEST

“Sure as the seasons, and true as the Hart.”

— unofficial motto of the Sovereign's Finest

Specially trained and royally approved agents travel Aldis, frequently accompanying nobles, to provide defense, advice, and other assistance to the people. They comprise the Sovereign's Finest and are usually healers, couriers, scouts, rangers, and, occasionally, adepts and the rhy-bonded, typically working in small teams of three to six. The members of the Finest are formally known as envoys and owe their allegiance to the people, the Sovereignty, and the sovereign (in that order). The organization is sometimes called either the King's or the Queen's Finest, depending on the current sovereign, or simply “the Finest.”

In isolated areas, Finest teams may be the primary source of news and aid for defense, healing, or arcane problems. Few remote villagers are able to hunt down bandit gangs on their own, much less bands of shadowspawn or darkfiends. When troubled by such problems, communities welcome aid from the Finest.

The director of the envoys assigns the most skilled teams to patrol dangerous areas like the Veran Marsh, but even newly trained envoys are considered worthy defenders of the Sovereignty. In troubled times, the least experienced teams may find themselves patrolling untamed portions of the frontier or searching wilderness areas for bandits, raiders, and shadowspawn.

While experienced envoys have impressive reputations, merely wearing the uniform and badge of the Sovereign's Finest is enough to gain an envoy respect from most people. Some jaded urbanites, merchants, and nobles



regard newly recruited envoys with disinterest—or even disdain. To most of the Sovereignty’s citizens, however, envoys are heroes and often the only representatives of the crown they see. Although most envoys are not nobles themselves, isolated villagers make little distinction between a visting envoy and an actual noble.

Envoys receive monthly wages from the director, or the nearest regional noble, if their current mission has taken them afield. In truth, envoys have little need for money; one of the ways communities pay their taxes is by providing envoys with free food and lodging. If the locals are exceptionally poor or in the midst of recovering from some hardship, however, envoys are expected to pay their own way, and many do as a matter of courtesy much of the time.

Senior envoys oversee the work of others in the field, each administering an area of the Sovereignty or its borders. Elder envoys lead and oversee the Finest as a whole, including the council of four First Envoys and the Sovereign’s Envoy, first-among-equals and the director of the Finest.

The Sovereign’s Finest are administered from the Hall of Envoys, a building on the grounds of the royal palace. The director lives and works there, along with the First Envoys and many elder envoys. The Hall of Envoys contains offices for them, guest quarters for some five dozen envoys, and large stables, with an adjoining pasture.

Four teams of envoys are permanently attached to the court, reporting to each of the First Envoys. They scout the traveling court’s routes, accompany traveling dignitaries, and address problems in and around the capital. Other teams visit the court for reviews, additional training, briefings before special missions, and official inquests. Most teams visit the court no more than once a year. Ordinary assignments and briefings are handled via psychic communication. This type of remote direction works because each team of envoys is largely self-directed. Most only receive detailed instructions when there is some form of emergency, such as being sent to aid another team in trouble or to confront some great threat.

THE ALDIN GUARD

The Aldin Guard is the Sovereignty’s standing army. It is small but well trained and disciplined. Among its soldiers are some rangers and scouts and a few adepts. The army is capable of dealing with raiders, bandits, or bands of shadowspawn or the unliving. It is not large enough to protect the Sovereignty from a full-fledged invasion, however, or a large force of darkfiends.

To supplement its numbers, the Guard maintains a number of reserve forces, citizens in good health who spend at least one day a month drilling with weapons and learning woodcraft and other skills. In return for their dedication, they are given a modest reduction in their taxes and the knowledge they are ready to help protect the Sovereignty in times of need. Using the psychic arts, the Guard can call up the majority of the reserves quickly when there is a need.

In addition to defending the Sovereignty, the Aldin Guard is responsible for aiding people during disasters

and other emergencies. Soldiers stationed in the Sovereignty’s cities are trained to fight fires. If hurricanes, floods, or other disasters strike, the army mobilizes to rescue people, provide medical care, build shelters, and help rebuild damaged buildings.

KNIGHTS OF THE BLUE ROSE

The Knights of the Blue Rose are the elite division of the Aldin Guard. Commonly known as the Rose Knights, they are the military champions of the Sovereignty, at the forefront of the most dangerous military actions. They lead the rest of the army in charges and are tasked with confronting the most serious threats to the Sovereignty and its people. The Blue Rose Knights also patrol the Ice-Binder Mountains and other dangerous wilderness areas for bandits and other threats to peace and safety.

Only the most skilled, selfless, and devoted soldiers are permitted to join the Rose Knights. They are given special training, including knowledge of various arcana useful when fighting darkfiends and other unnatural foes. The most heroic knights are permitted the honor of riding griffons into battle in the most dire times of need.

UNIFORMS AND INSIGNIA

Each of the major professions employed by the crown has its own distinctive style of clothing. Regardless of whatever else they wear, the Sovereign’s Finest wear small medallions of gold with a cloisonné blue rose on one side and a golden hart on the reverse. They wear a small patch, embroidered with a golden hart, over the heart on their official uniform.

Nobles and couriers wear thigh-length military jackets while working. They have polished brass buttons, embroidered epaulets, wide cuffs, mandarin collars, and colored piping on the seams. Nobles wear black jackets with royal blue piping, while couriers wear green jackets with black piping. Nobles also wear a small patch embroidered with a blue rose, opposite a golden hart patch. Scouts, soldiers, and military rangers have similar jackets for formal occasion. Scouts wear dark red, rangers wear brown, and soldiers wear gray, all with black piping.

While independent healers, adepts, and spirit dancers wear what they please, any trained at the Royal College or employed as envoys wear uniforms. These consist of a pale-colored, close-fitting shirt under a garment halfway between a thigh-length robe and a jacket made without buttons and designed to be worn open. Made without lapels or cuffs, each profession wears a jacket of a different color. Healers wear white, with a hand-sized red ring embroidered on the upper right side of the jacket. When not attending formal functions, healers rarely wear white, but the red ring worn over the heart always identifies them. Adepts wear sky blue jackets with a quartered circle—representing the four elements, the Primordials, and the Wheel of Rebirth—on their right breast. Spirit dancers wear midnight blue jackets with a white outline of a hand on their breast. An envoy who does not belong to any of these professions wears a charcoal gray jacket marked only with the golden hart patch.